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REPORT

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In this report:

1. Speeches in English are reported in full.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised.
3. Speeches in German and Italian are reproduced in full in a separate document.
4. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1059A not later than 24 hours after the report has been circulated.

The contents page for this sitting is given at the end of the verbatim report.

Mr van der Linden, President of the Assembly, took the Chair at 3.05 p.m.

THE PRESIDENT. – The sitting is open.

1. Minutes of proceedings

THE PRESIDENT. – The minutes of proceedings of the eleventh sitting have been distributed.

Are these minutes agreed to?

The minutes are agreed to.

2. Address by Mr Buchkovski

THE PRESIDENT. – We now have the honour of hearing an address by Mr Buchkovski, Prime Minister of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Mr Buchkovski has kindly agreed to take questions from the floor after giving his address.

I will interrupt the list of questions at about 4 p.m. when we will start the debate on “Combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology”.

Are these arrangements agreed?

They are agreed to.

THE PRESIDENT. – Dear colleagues, I now have the honour of welcoming amongst us Mr Vlado Buchkovski, Prime Minister of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

Mr Prime Minister, the consolidation of democracy and democratic institutions in your country is the result of intensive dialogue and co-operation with the Council of Europe and its Assembly. In this context, I would like to pay tribute to the work of the Macedonian delegation to the Assembly, which makes a strong contribution to this co-operation.

Last year marked a milestone in your country's progress to become a full member of the European Union, not least with the assistance and support of the Council of Europe. However, European public opinion, mainly in western Europe, has become very doubtful about enlargement. The public climate has changed, and you must take this into account.

It is obvious that any further enlargement will be subject to strict scrutiny of an applicant country's performance. Your country, therefore, will have to demonstrate further progress and achievements in meeting the Copenhagen political criteria, which are in fact the Council of Europe criteria.

You have to be tougher on reform, uncompromising on corruption and determined to prove that Macedonia is a true democracy. Only then will you be able to quell fears in Europe.

The Council of Europe stands ready to help you to rise to these challenges. Under your leadership, your government has made progress in implementing the Ohrid Agreement. My congratulations on that. You have proved that it is possible for people of different cultures and backgrounds to live together in peace and harmony. Your immediate neighbours can learn from your experience and success in building a multi-ethnic democracy.

Prime Minister, you have the floor.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI (*Prime Minister of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”*). – Mr President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mr René van der Linden; Mr Secretary General, Terry Davis; distinguished members of the Parliamentary Assembly; ladies and gentlemen, first, allow me to thank you for the invitation to address the Council of Europe, which is the generator of European democracy. I must admit that it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to express my opinion on European efforts and perspectives on the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the entire Balkan region.

Let me extend the gratitude of my government and the Macedonian people to all members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and its President, Mr René van der Linden, as well as the Secretary General, Mr Terry Davis, for their continuing support.

Today, the Balkans is entering the stage of its redefinition mainly through the ongoing talks on the future status of Kosovo, the forthcoming referendum in Montenegro and the constitutional redefining of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In such circumstances, it is important to be reasonable and constructive. In that respect, my government has always been convinced of the fact that, regardless of future status, only full implementation of all standards in Kosovo regarding democracy, human rights and the rule of law will provide a solid base for political stabilisation and lasting peace in the whole region.

The Republic of Macedonia is helping the process in accordance with its capabilities. With its policy, Macedonia is an example for good neighbourly relations. Macedonia is a successful model of multi-ethnic and multicultural society. We believe that our model of the Ohrid Framework Agreement can be implemented in other countries in the region.

Within a relatively short period, the Republic of Macedonia has adopted all regulations deriving from the Ohrid Framework Agreement, including decentralisation, use of ethnic symbols, the opening of a new state university in Tetovo for the representatives of the Albanian ethnic community, equitable representation of the ethnic communities in state institutions, use of the languages of the minority ethnic communities and so on. Today, we have satisfying results in the sphere of decentralisation, which has been recognised by international institutions.

The Republic of Macedonia is at a very important stage of its development. Acquiring EU candidate country status represents a strong signal not just for the Republic of Macedonia but the entire Balkan region. Profound reforms in all spheres of the society – politics, judiciary, administration and business – are the major issues where we exercise even greater efficiency and dynamism. For this purpose, we have even amended the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

All our efforts in the previous period were aimed at meeting the obligations that emerged from different stages of our integration in the European Union. We have adopted a lot of reform laws and fundamental alterations have been made for their effective implementation.

Republic of Macedonia is facing another test. We are to conduct parliamentary elections that will, to a large extent, be decisive for our future. We have adopted the new electoral code in line with European recommendations and we hope that it will contribute a lot to fair and democratic elections. All the demands of the opposition are implemented in the electoral code. We have decided that the president of the electoral committee will be proposed by the opposition. That leaves no doubt about our desire for fair and democratic elections. But fair and democratic elections also mean accepting the results that emerge from the will of the citizens.

The Republic of Macedonia deserves to be considered as a leader in regional co-operation. We attach great importance to it and regard regional co-operation as an essential precondition for joint progress. We have recently joined the Central European Free Trade Agreement, and further liberalisation of trade in the region will follow the creation of a free trade zone, which will be a strong impulse for fast development. We strongly support this process and estimate that it will be a catalyst for development and Europeanisation.

In the economy, we have made successful reforms towards enhancing the business climate. The status of EU candidate country has started to produce results. The interest of foreign companies in investing in Macedonia is growing continuously. All this gives us the right to hope that this year will be the key year for improving the economy, for new employment and for a better standard of living.

I would like to mention just a few things that the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has done to make Macedonia an attractive business destination. We have adopted new legislation; we have implemented a one-stop-shop registration system; we have launched the reform of the real estate register; and we have amended many other laws. All these reforms will be very unpopular in the forthcoming elections, but they will be very important for future generations.

The Republic of Macedonia's membership of the Council of Europe on 9 November 1995 was the first cornerstone of the realisation of the European aspirations of the Republic of Macedonia. When we became a member of the Council of Europe, we agreed to respect the basic principles of the Council of Europe: democracy, human rights and the rule of law as common values.

For a long period, the culture of co-operation, solidarity and reaching consensus on important political issues among the member countries of this Organisation have been critical driving forces for the development of Europe in political, economic and cultural terms.

At the Warsaw Summit, the Council of Europe established several priorities. One of them has been co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union. One of the main topics in this session of the Parliamentary Assembly is relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union. In this regard, Mr Juncker, Mr Schüssel, Mr Popescu-Tăriceanu and the President of the European Commission, Mr Barroso, addressed this distinguished forum.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union ought to be the platform for future co-operation between the two organisations and contribute to their partnership.

The Council of Europe, as a genuine pan-European Organisation, creates the opportunity to enhance political dialogue between EU member countries and the countries that are preparing for membership, such as the Republic of Macedonia.

The Council of Europe, as the oldest intergovernmental Organisation in Europe that promotes the principles of fundamental values, has a vital role in the challenges of the 21st century, such as terrorism, crime, corruption, trafficking in human beings, xenophobia and intolerance.

The European Court of Human Rights is a special feature of the Council of Europe. The right of individual application that enables any individual to lodge an appeal against any state for the violation of individual rights is an essential accomplishment of the Council of Europe. The Republic of Macedonia supports the ongoing reforms of the Court, and we are looking forward to the report of the Committee of Wise Persons on this issue. I would like to point out that the Republic of Macedonia was among the first countries to ratify Protocol No. 14.

I thank Romania for its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers and for its contribution to the implementation of the Action Plan of the 2005 Warsaw Summit. We deeply appreciate all the activities undertaken in the field of the European Convention on Human Rights to improve its effectiveness, the protection of the rights of people belonging to national minorities and social cohesion and co-operation with European institutions and international organisations.

I also welcome the Russian Federation's forthcoming chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. We believe that that will add value to the implementation of the main principles of the Council of Europe.

The European future of the citizens living in the geographical area of Europe is not just a natural right, but an imperative in modern relations. The European idea has caused a radical switch in the awareness of the Balkan people, who today prefer co-operation and the joining together of the countries in the region. Today, more than ever, the common people of the Balkans are interested in the perspective of economic development and global progress both of the region and of Europe in general. Today, the citizens are even more convinced that joint co-operation and integration are an incomparable advantage compared with the old political disputes and wars.

In the Balkans, European affiliation and integration are also remarkable stimuli not just to regional peace and security but to the general development of south-east Europe and Europe as a whole. It will be good to continue to move forward in that direction. It is very important that the politicians in the region who have a very sincere European orientation receive stronger support. Otherwise, the old-fashioned politicians who usually offer nothing useful and who manipulate ethnic issues in their countries will be favoured.

Our efforts towards making accession to the EU a priority are based on the logical conclusion that Europe belongs equally to all its citizens and nations. Each problem in every part of Europe is, at the same time, a problem for the EU. European estimates are that it is necessary for the Balkans to import stability in order to prevent the export of instability from the region. All analysis regards the security of the entire Balkans as crucial to the security and progress of Europe in general. Despite numerous problems, the Republic of Macedonia is moving towards the standards for becoming an EU member state. Today the Republic of Macedonia is a good example of stability and tolerance within the region. In terms of inter-ethnic relations we have achieved great results in a very short time and have resolved problems very quickly.

In fewer than five years we have doubled the percentage of participation by other ethnic communities in public administration. In a few years, Macedonia has done what it took other countries decades to implement. Launching the talks on full EU membership will probably have an additional positive impact, not just for our country but for the region in general.

We have been working intensely on the approximation process of the domestic judiciary with that of Europe. We are making efforts to implement the obligation for compatibility of the new judiciary with the *acquis*. Yet we are taking into consideration the realities and resources as well as the guarantees for their realisation.

We are achieving satisfying results in accepting the values of the Council of Europe such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law and respecting and enhancing cultural values. We respect the highest standards in terms of protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities as well as decentralisation from Council of Europe conventions. As an illustration, Macedonia is the only country with a Roma municipality and with the Roma language as an official language.

It is clear that the republic of Macedonia is still searching for a more efficient dynamic in terms of faster economic growth, the more efficient functioning of state institutions and for a more efficient way of tackling organised crime and corruption. Nevertheless the EU also needs a more flexible approach to the countries that show commitment to the reforms. That should be done not just in the interests of those countries but in the interests of the EU. It is inevitable that we redirect the political energy of the Balkans more intensively towards greater support from EU member states and EU institutions in general. In addition there is a general political consensus in the country about strategic development issues.

It is logical that in this context the Republic of Macedonia is prepared for an even more dynamic plan from the European Union for finishing the process of reform.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you very much, Mr Buchkovski, for your most interesting address. You made a clear commitment to further reform and to a multi-ethnic society.

I remind members who have put forward questions that those questions should be limited to thirty seconds and no more. The first question is from Mrs Papadimitriou on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

Mrs PAPANIMITRIOU (*Greece*). – Mr Prime Minister, as a Greek parliamentarian, I welcome you to our Chamber. On 7 December 2005 in Paris, in response to Labour Member of Parliament O'Hara and myself, you stated that your country "is ready to be constructive. We are very happy for Greece to be one of our supporters in our application for candidate status on 15 December...I respect the Greek Parliament's decision to support my country's accession to the EU, either with the provisional name of the Former Yugoslav Republic or with a compromise name. We are prepared to continue the New York negotiations under the mediation of Ambassador Nimetz to find a solution as soon as possible."

Mr Prime Minister, are you prepared to confirm that your statements are still binding and that you are willing to continue those negotiations in a supportive spirit?

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – In the meantime, I have had a meeting with Prime Minister Karamanlis and such meetings will be important for our common future. I thank you for your support for our intention to be a candidate status country in the EU. It is very important for confidence-building between politicians, because the business communities of Greece and Macedonia co-operate extremely well; last year, Greece was still the biggest investor in our country. I would like to repeat our intention, after the parliamentary elections, to organise more frequent meetings with representatives from the Greek Government to try to find a compromise on the one issue between Macedonia and Greece, the difference on the constitutional name.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. The next question is by Mr Ivanov.

Mr IVANOV (*Bulgaria*) said that European Transport Corridor 8 was very important to the economy of South-eastern Europe. He asked Mr Buchkovski what projects his government was pursuing to speed up the construction of its part of the corridor.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – I would like to repeat our intention regarding Corridor 8. It is a top priority for the Government of Macedonia, but we have to be realistic. It has been a priority in our meetings for a decade at presidential, prime ministerial and ministerial level. We have repeated the same sentence; we are interested in the building of Corridor 8, but we await a concrete result. With Bulgaria becoming a part of the European Union from the beginning of 2007, we want to connect the two capitals, Skopje and Sofia, as soon as possible. We may need additional support from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, but we continue to promote common projects.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. Mr Ivanov, do you have a supplementary question?

Mr IVANOV (*Bulgaria*) thanked Mr Buchkovski for his answer. He said that there was also a pipeline project between the Black Sea and the Adriatic which would be vital to the oil supplies of South-eastern Europe, and asked if there was any prospect of speeding up progress on this as well.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – One year ago in Sofia, the former Prime Minister of Bulgaria, the former Prime Minister of Albania and myself signed a protocol of understanding and, together with Mr Ferguson, we are working on the AMBO project. I am not in a position to inform you as to how realistic our plan is to finish the project in 2007. I know that for financial construction from the United States, there will be a precondition to do with how quickly we start building the pipeline between Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Iwiński.

Mr IWIŃSKI (*Poland*). – Let me ask two questions. First, to what extent is the old challenge relating to refugees still important for Macedonia? By the way, we had a very interesting meeting in Skopje two months ago.

Secondly, you just informed us that you are tackling the problem of criminality and corruption. To what extent did the operation organised under concordia turn out to be useful and successful?

THE PRESIDENT. – I thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – On the refugee problem, as you know, we had a rich experience during the Kosovan crisis. Approximately 400 000 Kosovars came to our country as refugees. We have more than 1 000 refugees from Kosovo of Roma origin, and we are trying together with UNMIK to find a solution so that we can return the last group of Kosovars to Kosovan territory.

On our intention to be stronger in fighting organised crime and corruption, I am satisfied with our co-operation with the Council of Europe and the Group of States Against Corruption. We are building our capacity to be stronger in fighting crime and corruption. We have a project to build interrogative border management systems in the region, which involves more co-operation between customs officers and different institutions. This, I think, will be one of the preconditions if we are to be stronger in our fight against organised crime and corruption across the region.

In Macedonia, we want to promote co-operation between NATO and the EU after the successful mission undertaken by NATO during the crisis of 2001. NATO and the EU changed their role during the period of stabilisation in our country, and the Berlin-plus formula was one reason why the international community promoted the concordia mission in our country. That was extremely positive, and we are trying now to develop our relationships with our European friends as regards the processes of our police. We are preparing a new police law and we can expect to continue the reform process along with experts from the European Union.

THE PRESIDENT. – I thank you. Mr. Iwiński has a supplementary.

Mr IWIŃSKI. – Let me raise a different and slightly delicate issue, which is, to my mind, an important one. When I go to Macedonia as I have done many times over the last twenty years, I find that the position of Macedonia as an independent country is not well enough known and understood. To my mind, one of the reasons for that is that there is not enough diplomatic representation in Skopje. There are no more than 20 full diplomatic embassies – Poland is represented. What can you do about that? It seems we should ask colleagues from other countries to guarantee that they will have full diplomatic

representation in Macedonia. Those who are not present in a country cannot understand the situation there.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I give the floor to the Prime Minister.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – For your information, I may say that there are more than 40 representative embassies from different states in our country, but I agree that that is not enough. If we intend to promote Macedonia as a success story among the international community, it will be important to present our model of a multi-ethnic society. Disseminating our positive experience would be easier if representatives of European Union countries and others were present in Skopje.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Dzembritzki.

Mr DZEMBRITZKI (*Germany*) said that Mr Buchkovski appeared to be wide awake on European issues. He asked Mr Buchkovski if he could identify the problems that would arise and indicate the likely ensuing consequences should the path to EU membership be made difficult for “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, or if the door was slammed shut.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I give the floor to the Prime Minister.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – Dear German friends, it will clearly be difficult without a clear European and Euro-Atlantic perspective to exist in the western Balkans for pro-European and pro-democratic politicians. The debate in the European Union about the process of enlargement has a direct impact on Euroscepticism within the western Balkans. Our intention is to continue with the same rules, to respect the Thessaloniki principle and to keep the door open for the states of the western Balkans. After what we expect to be the successful entry of Romania and Bulgaria, the recognised leader in our region will be Croatia, and we expect Croatia to become a member of the EU in 2008 or perhaps 2009. After that we will be ready to be the leader in the rest of the western Balkans. We now have the status of candidate country and we expect a positive report in October if the Macedonian politicians and citizens organise free, democratic elections. We must recognise that Macedonia is important today not just to the region but for the process of Europeanisation. I believe that we will continue the debate in the European Union, with renewed energy in our reform processes, and that we will put pressure on Brussels and Strasbourg to keep the door open for Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.

THE PRESIDENT. – There is no supplementary. The next speaker is Mr Grzyb.

Mr GRZYB (*Poland*). – What is your opinion, Mr Prime Minister, on the process of Balkan stability and on how the Council of Europe and the European Union can support it?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – Dear Polish friend, in the Balkans we are in a crucial period for our future. There will be definitely be a referendum in Montenegro. There is the question of the eventual status of Kosovo, and there is the redefinition of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are big challenges not only for Serbs and Kosovars but for Muslims, Croats and Bosnians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for the international community. The role of the Council of Europe will be an important one, particularly for the Venice Commission, and on decentralisation. One of the key issues is the process of democratisation and Europeanisation in the region of the western Balkans. In our model of a multi-ethnic society, three pillars are part of the framework agreement: use of the mother language – the language of the Albanian community – active political representation and decentralisation.

In our case, we want to promote a new territorial organisation and multi-ethnic municipality, not mono-ethnic municipality as was proposed in Kosovo. That provoked a referendum with a vote against a new territorial organisation. In my opinion, it was the latest attempt by radicals and conservatives in our country to destroy the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. After that, it will definitely get easier. After the implementation, that will no longer be the predominant theme in the daily fight between the government and opposition. The situation is now similar to that in other western European nations, and economic and social life will be the predominant theme.

What will be the role for the Council of Europe in the western Balkans? Europe's role will be crucial for the western Balkans. Leadership is the biggest problem. We need leadership and a clear vision of a common future for all of us in a united Europe.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. As there is no supplementary question I call Mr Ivanovski.

Mr IVANOVSKI (*“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”*). – Dear Prime Minister, regional co-operation is one of the criteria for full membership of the European Union. If one lives in a state in the Balkans, it is the key criterion. What are the achievements of the Republic of Macedonia on that policy, and what are the plans for the future?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – Last week in Bucharest all states from southern and eastern Europe organised a meeting with Chancellor Schüssel of Austria, which has the presidency of the European Union, and Commissioner Mandelson. The topic of the meeting was regional co-operation, a precondition for growing closer to the European Union. One idea was for the European Commission to promote a southern European free trade area. We need stronger economic regulation between all countries in the region. Not only will that be training for the European Union, but it is important for us to implement the same legislation as EU states so that we are ready one day to become a full member.

Our intention as a small country in South-eastern Europe is to promote our positive experience. To co-operate economically, one precondition is to promote stability in the region. After the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, Macedonia is the only stable country in the region – that may be only my opinion. We need multi-ethnic stability and a multicultural society, especially now when international society is preoccupied with the problems in Serbia and Montenegro and in Kosovo. We should disseminate our positive experience. Our model is authentic, but perhaps with some changes it could be implemented in other areas in the region.

We insist on closer co-operation between those countries to promote a positive climate for politicians. We can compare that with the situation four or five years ago. There is a more pro-European atmosphere in the region and there are more frequent meetings, formal and informal, between politicians in the region because we are dreaming the same dreams – dreams of the EU and NATO. Without a clear European and Atlantic perspective, the situation in our region would be totally different.

THE PRESIDENT. – There is no supplementary, so I call Mr Steenblock.

Mr STEENBLOCK (*Germany*) said that on the 29 March “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” had promulgated a new law that was extremely important and for which it should be congratulated. He asked what steps and measures had been planned to improve the electoral process and what demands and challenges Mr Buchkovski anticipated in the context of United Nations best practice.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – Dear friend, we know that one of the preconditions for the European Commission sending a positive signal to Skopje about the date for starting negotiations is that we hold free and democratic parliamentary elections. In the meantime we have been more closely co-operating with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE in drafting a new electoral law. In doing so we have adopted all the recommendations made by the ODIHR. The law was adopted ten days ago by our parliament and we are now beginning the process of announcing a new state electoral committee.

It is our intention to promote a friendly atmosphere before the end of the campaign. We accepted a proposal by the opposition about the president of the state electoral committee, and on Friday I expect our parliament to announce a new structure and membership for the committee. In the meantime we have enough time to negotiate with our international partners – the OSCE, the European Union and the Council of Europe – the number of observers for the parliamentary elections. I am optimistic that we now have a more friendly atmosphere between the government and the opposition in our country, and all politicians know how important the parliamentary elections are for our future. I am sure that all the citizens of our country are ready to show you in the elections that European values and standards exist in our country.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. As there is no supplementary, I call Mrs Incekara.

Mrs INCEKARA (*Turkey*). – This year, the Republic of Macedonia will hold parliamentary elections. What steps have been taken by the government and the opposition to organise free and fair elections? How do you think the Council of Europe will assist in and monitor the process?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – The latest information is that the OSCE, the European Commission and the Council of Europe will send observers to our parliamentary elections. About 20 members of parliament from the Council of Europe will be present. In the meantime, we are trying to start a process of education in our country to eliminate irregularities. We have to recognise that the last local elections showed that we have a problem. With the support of our international partners we are trying to promote a positive climate. We anticipate that non-governmental organisations and other institutions in our country will be ready to prepare public opinion for our expectation. This parliamentary election must be the cleanest and fairest in our country.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. If there is no supplementary question, I call Mr Ertsborn.

Mr ERTSBORN (*Sweden*). – As you are well aware, Prime Minister, my colleague Dick Marty, the Assembly's rapporteur on alleged secret detentions, regards the case of Khaled Al Masri as a potential instance of CIA rendition involving authorities in Council of Europe member states. Would you care to use this platform to state your government's official position on that case?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – I repeat our government's official position. The Macedonian Government is ready to co-operate with the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and, in particular, German prosecutors. We have sent additional answers to additional questions to the Council of Europe, and we are expecting a special commission from the European Parliament to visit our Minister of the Interior on 28 April. We are in direct contact with our public prosecutor and the German public prosecutor about official legal investigations of the Al Masri case. We are keen to collect all the information as soon as possible, and to establish closer co-operation with all the institutions in the European Council and the European Parliament.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. Do you have a further question?

Mr ERTSBORN (*Sweden*). – I just want to thank the Prime Minister for his answer.

THE PRESIDENT. – The last question comes from Mr Jovašević.

Mr JOVAŠEVIĆ (*Serbia and Montenegro*). – Your Minister for Foreign Affairs recently said something about borders between the state union of Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia. What is your personal opinion on borders between the state union and Macedonia, what are your obligations arising from that state contract, and are you going to change basic principles confirmed by two governments?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – Our government intends the process of demarcation to involve technical issues – not political issues. We respect resolution 1244, and we are trying to solve the demarcation problem as soon as possible. Article 72 of Ambassador Einik's report stated that the eventual full status of Kosovo would be necessary to solve the demarcation problem. Now we are trying to find, on a technical level, contra-partners in the process of demarcation. We want the international community to help us find a solution as soon as possible, perhaps during the negotiation in Vienna between Belgrade and Pristina. It is important to us that Belgrade signed a special agreement with us on demarcation, but there is no chance of its being our contra-partner at present. Kosovans, on the other hand, would like to be our contra-partners, but that would have no international legitimacy.

Macedonia is in a very delicate position. We must be careful, but we must also be pragmatic and selfish. We should like to find a contra-partner as soon as possible to finalise technical issues relating to demarcation and borders.

THE PRESIDENT. – Do you wish to ask a supplementary question, Mr Jovašević?

Mr JOVAŠEVIĆ (*Serbia and Montenegro*). – I should like to know whether you are able to control the border between Macedonia and Kosovo.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, I call Mr Buchkovski.

Mr BUCHKOVSKI. – We cannot have any formal control of the border, because our contra-partner is KFOR. We have extremely good co-operation with KFOR in the administration of the border between Skopje and Pristina, and all citizens on both sides respect the Macedonian border.

(Mr Gardetto, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Mr van der Linden.)

3. Combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology

THE PRESIDENT. – The next item of business this afternoon is the debate on “Combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology” presented by Mr Margelov on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee, Document 10766.

The list of speakers closed at 12 noon. There are 24 names on the list. No amendments have been tabled.

I remind you that we have agreed to finish by 6.30 p.m.

I call Mr Margelov, rapporteur. You have eight minutes.

Mr MARGELOV (*Russian Federation*). – Last year the world community celebrated the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. We recalled not only the consequences of that massacre, which cut short 55 million human lives, and the great victory gained by Allied troops in the European battleground, but the causes of war, the fact that fascism arose in the centre of Europe and the fact that it was in Europe that outrageous crimes against humanity were committed, the Holocaust among them.

Today, when European human rights and values have been recognised far beyond the continent's borders, we should take a constructive look at European history – not to rewrite that history, as some tried to do, but to prevent the reappearance of those black stains.

European values must be protected, not from invasions from outside, but from phenomena peculiar to Europe, in particular, which is a most paradoxical fact. I refer to the alarming cases of the revival of Nazi elements and the reanimation of the neo-Nazi underground. There are objective reasons for considering the report on “Combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology”. It is necessary and timely.

I cannot contend that the idea of protecting European values is new and that this is the first time that we have discussed it. The results of the Nuremberg Tribunal have penetrated the legal systems of European states, and we are aware of the legal proceedings in Great Britain, Germany, Austria and Russia concerning people who committed Nazi escapades. We are also aware of the strict laws which forbid Nazism in Poland, Italy, Bulgaria and other European countries.

I shall not enumerate all the cases involving demonstrations of Nazism and their punishment. Everyone should know the state of affairs in his own country. My aim is to touch on a few tendencies that worry me, and I am sure that I am not the only one who is worried.

Young people march side by side with SS veterans along the streets of some European capitals, and coloured people are murdered in St Petersburg and Voronezh in Russia. That does not relate to a subculture; it constitutes the resurrection of a criminal ideology. Human rights activists fix many cases, but the force of neo-Nazism is not in the number of registered cases but in a society's connivance in them. It is indifference that permits the revival of an ideology that seemed to have been buried for ever. Do we need the schools of the Gauleiters in the 21st century?

Young German neo-Nazis and members of the English groups Combat 18 and the White Wolves take part in the pogroms. The number of neo-Nazi groups in Spain, Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany is increasing. Sometimes neo-Nazi unions dissociate themselves from violence and pose as observers, but they are “active observers” – as we all will be, if we continue to be indifferent.

The internet is full of neo-Nazi websites, including those in Russian. Their influence is obvious, judging by the recent incident in a Moscow synagogue. The Jewish Agency points to the growth of anti-Semitism in Russia as well as in Ukraine. We can find not only purchase-and-sale advertisements, but instructions on bomb making on those websites.

The borders of neo-Nazi group activities are flexible. German skinheads take part in actions in Czechia and racist publications in Russian are printed in Finland. Extremists have turned up in countries where tolerance is high. For example, the first murder on racist grounds in modern history was committed in Norway in January 2005. Five Norwegian neo-Nazis were arrested during the investigation.

Another disturbing fact is that some governments pursue a policy of consent to neo-Nazi propaganda. Only this year, the Latvian Government finally took some feeble measures against the march of former SS militants on 16 March. Meanwhile, the SS and the Gestapo were declared criminal organisations at Nuremberg. The Nuremberg Tribunal specified directions that coincide absolutely with the values of modern Europe.

The Council of Europe must give a resolute rebuff to Nazi actions, no matter where they take place. Neo-Nazism undermines European values from the inside. To put up with neo-Nazism means to deny everything that forms today's European identity, to lose attractiveness for the rest of the world and to lose so-called soft power. Peoples of all races and religions must feel at ease in the streets of European cities.

Europe is a fighter against terrorism and its target at the same time. Neo-Nazism, with its racial and religious intolerance, is a direct accomplice of terrorism. Its manifestations deny European integration, which is based on pluralism and cultural diversity.

Today, the treatment of immigrants in Europe has worsened drastically and hatred towards "coloureds" is not even concealed. It is used as propagandist material in elections and referendums. We cannot ignore it, as we are aware of the consequences of propaganda of this kind.

Nazi ideology – its manifestations and the actions that result from it – must be regarded as the challenge to the Parliamentary Assembly, which is the political body of the Organisation and responsible for defending democracy and human rights. We should continue to streamline our response to that challenge and reflect that in our resolutions and conventions. In that respect, I refer to the European conference against racism, organised by the European Commission, and the national "round tables" on that subject. We should keep to the guidelines accepted at the 3rd Summit of the Council of Europe in Warsaw, which call on us to intensify the struggle against racism and intolerance.

The fact is that all the ideas in the documents I have mentioned should be known to the public and to political leaders, which would force us to start an unbiased discussion of those issues. Otherwise, all we will do is repeatedly "regret" the increasing manifestation of Nazism.

We should keep it in mind that Hitler came to power through democratic elections. It seems paradoxical, but in Russia, Hitler's birthday has become a headache for law enforcement bodies.

The Assembly must initiate the convocation of an international conference on combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology. Among those who should participate are parliamentarians, members of governments, experts and public figures. Such a meeting could give impetus to the work on fighting Nazi manifestations and it would serve as an additional reason further to promote and confirm European values.

We must not allow Nazi ideas to gain new life in Europe. Can you imagine an SS division supplied with nuclear weapons? I can.

Last year, I initiated the motion on anti-Semitic manifestations in Europe, but my initiative did not create a response. Now, it is high time to speak about that again. Today, I ask you to support my initiative.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Margelov. I call Mr Goerens, on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Mr GOERENS (*Luxembourg*) said that the debate was taking place within a context that was very disturbing. There was an agreement that World War II had been terrible for everyone. Nazi acts during the war had been crimes against humanity. Not all crimes against humanity, however, were on a par with the Holocaust. He also wanted to draw attention to the dehumanisation of people for which the Nazis had been responsible: for example, Jewish people being referred to as vermin. Nazi ideology had always been based on the exclusion of certain peoples and had tried to establish a hierarchy of human groups. In particular, it was very anti-Semitic. It was necessary to continue to recall the Holocaust; this was not being done sufficiently well in schools.

He wondered why the international community had not dealt properly with the Rwandan genocide, despite knowing about it early on. It was necessary to establish an early warning system for such situations. The debate also raised the question of the human condition: in other words, how people react in extraordinary situations. Some people would ignore the things they saw, others would act as heroes. He concluded by agreeing with the final point made by Mr Margelov and argued that an international conference on the subject should be organised.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Order. Please finish your speech now. Before I call the next speaker, may I remind you that there are 24 speakers on the list? Will you please keep to your speaking times?

I now call Mr Messerschmidt on behalf of the European Democratic Group.

Mr MESSERSCHMIDT (*Denmark*). – At the last part-session, we had a great debate on condemning the crimes against humanity committed in the last century in the name of communism. I am proud to say that I was among those who supported that condemnation. I am equally proud to speak on behalf of the European Democratic Group in the debate on combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology. In the name of all the victims who suffered because of sick ideologies such as communism and Nazism, my group strongly supports the fight against the resurrection of Nazism. We must never forget the sufferings that our fellow citizens went through only a few generations ago. As a mark of respect to those victims of mad ideologies, we are obliged to fight the resurrection of those ideologies wherever that might occur.

As the well-written report points out, we are witnessing the activities of skinheads and neo-Nazis, so it is only reasonable for the Council of Europe to take action. However, having stressed my warm sympathy for the report, I must add that there is a crucial part of the problem of the resurrection of the Nazi ideology that it does not deal with.

Yesterday, here in Strasbourg, I witnessed one of the many demonstrations against the new labour market reform. As I was observing the protestors, I saw one of the banners with the text "Non au fascisme". I strongly regret this abuse of the term "fascism" and would like to stress that, in my opinion, it is helping the fascist movements in Europe to get a more human face, and it makes fascist ideologies look less awful.

The tendency of the left wing in particular to abuse the terms "fascism" and "Nazism" in condemning any of their many opponents makes these sick ideologies look less harmful. What are people to think when they see that the labour market reform is considered to be analogous to fascism? What does it say about fascism when it is used as a general term to express our lack of sympathy for such proposals? That takes the cruelty out of fascism. It makes Nazism seem an acceptable term and thereby creates the incorrect idea that such ideologies are less harmful. We cannot accept that. The resurrection of Nazism in Europe is much too serious to allow ourselves to devalue its cruelty by using words in the wrong way.

I therefore urge the organisers of the coming conference, which I strongly support, to take this problem also into consideration

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. The next speaker is Mr Einarsson on behalf of the Group of the United European Left.

Mr EINARSSON (*Sweden*). – Why is it that even though I agree with every word of the draft resolution in Mr Margelov's report on combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology, I am none the less a little disappointed? Perhaps the rapporteur answers this question himself in paragraph 41 of the explanatory memorandum. He says, "Unfortunately, I am certain of one thing: unless we mobilise society, and unless we engage political leaders and prominent public figures in a frank and open debate, we shall be left to 'condemn' and 'regret' the increase in the number of Nazi incidents and acts of xenophobia, while powerlessly observing the rise of Nazism in the form of various extremist parties."

The draft resolution "condemns" and "regrets", but there are few guidelines for political action. Instead, there is a proposal to organise an international conference to "carefully study the recurrence of racist and nationalist phenomena in European societies, exchange best experience and develop common approaches in combating the resurrection of Nazi ideas." That is of course a good proposal, and it should be supported. However, it is necessary to act now and not to wait for the outcome of a future conference.

Nazism – or fascism to use a broader term – is the negation of everything that we love to label as “European” values. Fascism is the negation of democracy, tolerance, enlightenment, rule of law, social cohesion, gender equality, peace and humanism. Fascism in its concrete historically realised form is not an ideology corrupted and distorted when implemented, but an ideology faithfully realised as war, dictatorship and genocide.

I wish to say two things about that. First, fascism is not just the opposite of European values; fascism is also part of the European heritage. Fascism is the child of European colonialism and imperialism – the horrible and extreme, but perfectly logical end point of centuries of exploitation and extermination of men and women regarded as inferior by Europe's political and economic elite. The building materials of fascist ideology were all European materials.

Secondly, the growing support for Nazi or other xenophobic ideologies in our time is not primarily a matter of ignorance or lack of historical knowledge by young people. Nazism is not bad behaviour that is the result of an inferior education. Unemployment, increasing social and economic divides in society, poverty and political marginalisation create frustration, anger and the urge for revenge. Such sentiments can easily be used by anti-democratic forces to build popular support, especially if the labour movement and the left is weakened or has even abdicated responsibility politically to become “new” and “modern” – that is, “not socialist”.

Nazi ideology should be condemned. Any attempt to resurrect such anti-humanist ideas should be fought politically and without ambiguity. However, the main threat to democracy today is not the rather small groups of skinheads with swastika tattoos shouting “Sieg Heil”, even though these groups are a serious threat to individual immigrants, homosexuals and left-wing activists and should be treated as the criminals they are. A more serious threat is the broader acceptance of xenophobic ideas by traditional parties and governments, which can be disguised as the protection of cultural values or of national labour markets, the broader acceptance of anti-democratic methods in the so-called war on terror and the demonisation of the Islamic world, which serves as a ideological motive for occupation and war. That is the breeding ground for today's fascism.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I now call Mr de Puig on behalf of the Socialist Group.

Mr DE PUIG (*Spain*) said that it seemed impossible, but was true, that after so many years the Assembly was discussing Nazi ideology and with justification. There were serious grounds for concern. So many years after the Nuremberg trials two particular concerns had arisen: firstly the rise of groups claiming to have adopted Nazi ideology; and secondly the penetration, including amongst some European elites, of some of the key Nazi ideas.

The Council of Europe must condemn groups which used violence and had adopted Nazi signs and emblems. It was not merely that they were misguided groups getting the wrong end of the stick about history, but also a question of the gross distortion of history. He referred to what the President of Iran had said recently. That was not just a renegade British historian, it was the President of Iran speaking, yet he was using the same type of language. There was a subtle percolation of Nazi ideas – intolerance, racism, hatred, attacks on individuals and glorification of the Nazi world and its propaganda. It was important to stand up against that development and to be counted.

The worst mistake was to downplay the phenomenon. Governments were sometimes too generous about freedom of expression. As a result, they did not always step in against Nazi ideologists. It was an error within the terms of freedom of expression to allow the expression of Nazi ideas. States must prosecute such expressions since they were criminal offences. The Council of Europe had a responsibility to explain, and to educate people about history as it happened, not as people claimed it had happened. The Assembly must stand up for its basic principles.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation).– Thank you. I call Mr Mihkelson on behalf of the Group of the European People's party.

Mr MIHKELSON (*Estonia*).– On behalf of the EPP group, I congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Margelov, on his excellent work. His well-balanced report is both topical and important, indicating as it does the present and growing threats to our common values and principles.

Incidents where we have seen the revival of Nazi ideology, xenophobia and growing intolerance have been witnessed, unfortunately, in several member states of the Council of Europe recently. Especially worrying is the fact that there have been a growing number of murders and violent acts carried out in the name of extremist ideologies, including Nazism.

The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly has this year adopted a resolution condemning the crimes of totalitarian communist regimes. The reports from Mr Lindblad and Mr Margelov serve to strengthen the foundation of democracy and the rule of law, the core principles of our Organisation.

We believe that a truly united and democratic Europe is possible only if we build our values on a strong common historical memory. In today's dynamic world we often lack an interest in our history. On the other hand, many myths, legends or misinterpretations of historical facts still exist. Such shortcomings could provide fertile ground for extremist ideologies and groups.

It is absolutely necessary to launch a Europe-wide awareness campaign, an issue relevant to the reports of Mr Lindblad and Mr Margelov. Only by making people aware once again of atrocities and crimes will we take steps to avoid their repetition in our continent.

Nazi ideology, xenophobia and intolerance could find supporters in societies where democratic values are challenged and civil society is weak, or in countries whose leaders lean towards more authoritarian rule. Due to a lack of an alternative in these societies, people there are easier to manipulate.

Confronting these concerns should be a high priority of all democratic political parties at a European and national level. Only if we are not indifferent to our core values and to European integrity can we be successful.

It is especially important that we do not tolerate situations in which openly and aggressively fascist or Nazi organisations are active in member states and, worse, supposedly supported in some cases by governments.

As the rapporteur points out, we should combine forces and co-ordinate action to combat any threats directed at destroying our democratic core structures and the existence of our free societies.

THE PRESIDENT.– Thank you. The next speaker is Mr Dzembitzki.

Mr DZEMBITZKI (*Germany*) thanked the rapporteur. He said that Germans were very well aware of Nazi ideology raising its head again. However, Germany was resolute that it would not allow the recurrence of such ideology to take root – indeed they were prepared to do something about it. It was most important to eradicate the circumstances which had given rise to Nazi ideology. The youth of today must be shown what such ideology would lead to, and that this was a situation far removed from human rights and democracy. In the middle of Berlin, there was a holocaust memorial, which reminded people that Jewish compatriots had been affected by the holocaust as well as those in the rest of Europe. There was also an information centre aimed at younger people to explain why this memorial was needed. Two years ago, there was a conference on anti-semitism. The Council of Europe was in a position to impede such ideology taking root, but the Council would not be successful if it merely swept the issue under the carpet.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation) – Thank you. I call Mr Rochebloine.

Mr ROCHEBLOINE (*France*) said that he noticed when he read the report a resonance with the debate today in France. In promoting values one must also demonstrate those values. France was the cradle of human rights and should therefore be vigilant in flushing out anything that threatened human rights. In 1972, France had introduced one of the first laws outlawing racism. Since 1990 it had had a holocaust denial law as well. In 2001, the whole of French society unanimously supported a law against the denial of the Armenian genocide. He recalled the words of Primo Levi that one should not forget the lessons of the past. Today's vote in the Assembly was about demonstrating commitment and the details would come later. However, it was not just a question of outlawing something, for that would make it a tempting forbidden fruit. Each state must take firm action to uphold human rights and combat threats such as Nazi ideology.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I call Mr Mignon.

Mr MIGNON (*France*) was disappointed that so few members were present for this important debate, but perhaps they were preaching to the converted. There had been many resolutions in the past which had not been followed up in practice. It was now up to the member states to follow up on their commitments. An earlier speaker had wondered what difference it would have made if today's forefathers had known of the concentration camps. He pointed out that today there are television stations showing live pictures of attacks and of people being killed. He was the mayor of a city in France. He had been to cenotaphs and heard stirring speeches saying, "never again," yet today the problems were continuing apace. A handful of young imbeciles were daubing synagogues with anti-semitic graffiti and their offences were rarely prosecuted.

He endorsed the excellent report and urged all member states to rise to the challenge. If they did not, people would start to question why the Council of Europe bothered to exist. The Assembly must produce its own bona fides in terms of its commitment to human rights.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I call Mrs Oskina.

Mrs OSKINA (*Russian Federation*) thanked Mr Margelov for his balanced and topical report. Since the war modern Europe had been invented as the antithesis of Nazi ideology in order to prevent the same atrocities occurring again. The Council of Europe was the oldest human rights organisation in Europe and had a responsibility to prevent the return of Nazi ideology. Paragraph 10.2 of the report had been particularly concerned with the desecration of the graves of soldiers who had fought against fascism. Some Nazis today were attempting to rehabilitate the reputations of Nazi soldiers.

In the list of countries where xenophobia was deemed to be rife there was no mention of either Latvia or Estonia. She found that surprising. In Latvia during 2005, the former SS guard had held a march and there had been a meeting of Nazi veterans in August. In Estonia former SS guards from all over Scandinavia and the Baltic states had met. In the same country there had been an attempt to re-establish a memorial to those who fought for Hitler. She was incredulous that this could happen in European Union member states.

She wanted to know if the condemnation of the Nuremberg trials was insufficient to halt the rise of fascism. Last year the United Nations had adopted resolution 6043 which condemned Nazi activity, but still such activity took place. It was a dishonour to the memory of all the victims of fascism. Neo-Nazi groups were multiplying. A Commission had been established in the Russian Federation to look at the recent murder of a black student in St Petersburg. The lessons of history needed to be learned to prevent the same from mistakes occurring again.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Vrettos.

Mr VRETTOS (*Greece*). – I would like to focus your attention on the most likely cause of the resurrection of Nazi ideology. The situation today has something in common with that in Europe in the late 1920s and the 1930s – high unemployment, particularly among people under 30. Of course, Europeans are not starving today, yet there are millions living on the various benefits given by the state. There are about 9 million such people in the United Kingdom, to mention just one of the large countries of western Europe. Such people feel, and indeed are, excluded from material and cultural developments; they just survive. There are about 30 million unemployed people in Europe.

In trying to find the causes of their misery, some of those people come up with an obvious explanation: foreign immigrants occupy millions of jobs. They are willing to work for much less than are members of the local work force, so they force wages down. They also happen to have skins darker than those of Europeans and come from different cultural backgrounds. In short, they are foreigners and they are different. They may be tolerated by the locals as long as the locals are not losing out to them. The whole European project of the closer integration of European peoples will succeed or fail on the single issue of unemployment.

Some things today are different from the situation in the 1930s. Working-class and trade union movements are not threatening the dominant position of capital. Socialism no longer exists, and there is no viable socio-economic alternative. There is no need for Christian Democrats in Germany, for example, to invite Nazism to power, as they did in the 1930s. Berlusconi for one used the situation for his own electoral purposes. In addition, the Catholic Church does not seem to tolerate positions of the extreme right within its sphere of influence.

In conclusion, we should take measures against all or most manifestations of Nazism as a racist ideology. However, it is positive measures that will play a significant part in the success of our European project – positive measures that offer each European citizen decent work and decent remuneration. On that we may succeed or fail.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Salles.

Mr SALLES (*France*) said that it was a privilege to discuss the issue. If Nazi ideology had prevailed, the Council of Europe would not exist. The Third Reich collapsed in 1945. The Nuremberg trials irrevocably condemned its actions. The perpetrators were found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Mr Margelov had underlined the fact that the Nazi ideology that was found to be so intolerable at the end of the war was now finding fertile ground again. Some people were using Nazi symbols and there was a high incidence of racially motivated insults and violence. In the face of the resurgence of Nazi ideology, indignation was insufficient.

France and some other countries had passed laws to prohibit Nazi activity. In France there had been activities to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the end of the war which warned people against any attempt to rehabilitate Nazi ideology. The Council of Europe had a leading role to play in the fight against fascism. It had published a number of resolutions and recommendations to combat the threat. It was committed to fighting racism, discrimination and all forms of intolerance. An international forum, such as the one recommended by the report, could provide a platform from which to issue a firm wake-up call to all those who chose to sleep whilst these dangerous ideologies took hold again.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I call Mr Pangalos.

Mr PANGALOS (*Greece*) said that, when the Nazi regime had turned on its neighbours, that was partly because of historical conditions: a sense of revenge for what occurred in the First World War. Before the Nazi planes were flying the ideological battle had already been lost. That was one reason why Europe had to remain vigilant and fight the ideological battle early on. Democracies could not outlaw their enemies, but had to show tolerance to them. However, nobody should show tolerance towards Nazi ideas, which originated in the darkest corner of the human soul.

Today Nazis were exploiting the anguish of the unemployed and impoverished. They were exploiting the national arrogance present in some countries towards other cultures. They were exploiting lies in order to facilitate horrendous behaviour, which occurred without shame. Recently, a certain European Prime Minister had made comments about another country to the effect that it used its babies as fertilizer. In the face of such intolerance, it became very clear how important it was to wage war against Nazi ideologies. Young people at football matches chanted slogans glorifying Hitler. History was being re-written. There was no nation in Europe that had not been attacked by the Nazi disease. It was not just a German or Italian problem. The Council of Europe had been built on the defeat of Nazism and was the guardian of Europe's democratic ideals.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I call Mr Mirzazada.

Mr MIRZAZADA (*Azerbaijan*) said that his ancestors had defeated fascism and had hoped that the dark page in history had finally been ended. The generation that had fought in the Second World War had paid a high price for the freedom of the current generation. The holocaust and the siege of Leningrad were evidence of that. Humanity had then been thrown backwards by several centuries. It had been thought that fascism was dead but it was now found still to be alive. Young people used fascist symbols, often without any understanding of their meaning. That was a very real threat to civilized values.

Sadly, fascism had found a footing in the current political system, sometimes even within official regimes. If the matter was not addressed a new Hitler would come to power. Democracy was the only salvation. People had voted for fascist parties because their slogans sounded so attractive, for example in areas where immigration levels were very high, or where territorial disputes were taking place.

Currently Armenia was occupying some Azerbaijani land. The local people had been evicted and their cultural heritage had been destroyed because it had been seen as alien. Armenia had destroyed not only cultural heritage, but also the Azerbaijani people who lived in the disputed territory.

There had been a number of instances recently in Russia when there had been problems with Azeris who were being attacked, both physically and by the media. People were seen as targets simply because of who they were and where they came from. Governments around the world were trying to

combat such racist trends, but more needed to be done, particularly by the Russian government. He quoted a proverb: "See that there is fascism and recognise it for what it is".

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I call Mr Bērzinš.

Mr BĒRZINŠ (*Latvia*) thanked the rapporteur. The report was very important and he was sure that it would prove useful in the future. Europe should be considered as the incarnation of the absolute rejection of Nazi principles in order to ensure that the holocaust would never happen again. Latvia was particularly concerned with any development which demonstrated a decrease in the conscientiousness of European people. The Council of Europe had to do its utmost to combat any form of totalitarianism. He stressed that the Russian delegation had taken on a prominent role in reacting against the resurgence of Nazi ideology. At the same time, he failed to understand how a country which had suffered from Nazism could find it so difficult to counter Nazi youth groups. He hoped that Russia would soon put an end to such youth organisations. Latvians firmly condemned the activities of those who had been indoctrinated with extreme ideas. It was necessary to fight against the illegal activities of all extremist groups. The report had drawn attention to a march in Riga. He stressed that there was no laissez-faire attitude in Riga.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Bērzinš. I call Mr Zingeris.

Mr ZINGERIS (*Lithuania*). – Dear Mr Margelov, it is time to thank you very much not only for your report, but for your efforts over the last year in erecting the little monument in front of our Council of Europe building and on the previous resolution on anti-Semitism. This shows the seriousness of our system of values.

I am of the second generation of holocaust survivors – all my family were wiped out during the holocaust. I am from the former capital, Kaunas, and my family were put in the Kovno ghetto. Later, they were put in the Stutthof and Dachau concentration camps.

My mother is still alive – she is 85 – and she always told me, even in former times, that in 1942 and 1943, in Germany, in the concentration camp, near the gas chambers and the horrible transportation of crying children, she looked to the sky and waited for the aeroplanes. She tried to work out which aeroplanes they were, but they were always Nazi aeroplanes. She saw no sign of American, Russian or British aeroplanes, which could have liberated her. For those people, every day of their life was like the last. When my mother was arrested, she was 18 and it was her last day at the gymnasium when she was put into the ghetto of Kaunas.

The people who represent victims now did not seem to exist then. They had no districts and no political power. Politicians did not listen to them. They were wiped out and their districts became Auschwitz, Dachau and Stutthof – the former sites of concentration camps, which are now museums.

So, it is a special honour to represent memory – not only that of the 6 million Jews killed, but of all the millions of people killed during this unique regime. The holocaust was unique and we are not undermining that. At the same time, we cannot forget that there are other regimes, which we have discussed, such as the communist regime and especially that of Joseph Stalin. We are not comparing them, but we must not forget that after the Second World War, Joseph Stalin's horrible regime blocked the authentic anti-Nazi feelings in middle Europe by artificial anti-Nazi propaganda.

Now, we face the problem that, after 60 years, after liberation from the communist regime, we need to create, without delay, authentic anti-Nazi feeling in liberated countries. That comes after 50 years of censorship, pressure, and artificial anti-Nazi ideology under the horrible regime of Joseph Stalin.

We are facing the same problem in middle Europe as was faced in western Europe: that of self-criticism. For example, in Lithuania, we have done our homework and researched local collaboration with Nazis. We have published reports about every battalion that participated in the killing of our people, and we have published books, including one on the 200 000 Russian prisoners of war killed by the Gestapo in the special concentration camps in our territories. Some countries have been extremely successful in vaccinating the new generation and every new generation should be vaccinated. The Germans now no longer have any Republicans in the Bundestag. Their parliament is clean of every party that would represent the Nazi ideology.

In talking about our targets, and to give the report 100% support, our consideration of the Nazi story should be a measure of our self-critical attitudes and a recognition of the symbols of totalitarian regimes, especially those of the Nazi regime. That will show how developed our societies are and the extent to which our societies are capable of self-criticism.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I call Mr Reimann.

Mr REIMANN (*Switzerland*) said that no reasonable individual who had a reasonable amount of intelligence could be against the general thrust of the report. He was grateful to the Rapporteur for drawing parallels with the odious Soviet regime. In the report a comparison had been drawn with Islamic fundamentalism. He considered that to be a greater threat to society than the resurgence of Nazi ideology. The report should have contained a clearer condemnation of that kind of fundamentalism. He did not think that the idea of an international conference was the right approach to take. Such a conference would be counter-productive and appeal to those who supported Nazi ideology because it would provide them with a platform and enable them to organise parallel events. He could see how the media spotlight on such a conference would result in the unwitting propagation of Nazi ideas. Instead, he would encourage action taken at a local level. From the 1930s until the collapse of the Nazi regime, Switzerland had been encircled, but had come through unscathed. Switzerland had also contributed to the rebuilding of Europe. However, young historians had begun to accuse Switzerland of being Nazi collaborators. Such views only served to give credence to Nazi supporters in Switzerland. He wanted to avoid rewriting history in that manner.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Ivanov.

Mr IVANOV (*Estonia*) asked whether there was sufficient immunity for people against being infected with xenophobia. The resolution condemning the crimes of communism was important, but the ideals of communism could not be equated with Nazi ideology. The Assembly recognised that fascism was a crime against humanity. In 2005, there had been a certain amount of anti-Semitic feeling on an Estonian website, which had caused shock. Indeed, only the day before, an editor of an Estonian gutter press newspaper had been giving away t-shirts with racist slogans. So there were problems in Estonia, but most Estonians strongly condemned such actions. It had also become clear that there were major problems in Russia, although the picture there was a complex one. There were a number of reports being received about violence against foreigners. The government was trying to do something about it, but clearly not enough was happening to address that phenomenon.

The main problem to consider was what kind of atmosphere or circumstances in society had allowed Nazi ideology to spread. It was a shame to see such developments in Russia, the country of his forefathers, which had paid such a terrible price in fighting Nazi ideology in the past. In conclusion he thanked the rapporteur. THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – That concludes the list of speakers.

I call Mr Margelov, rapporteur, to reply. You have four minutes.

Mr MARGELOV (*Russian Federation*). – As we have heard, memory can be selective, but we must not forget crimes against humanity. That is why I disagree with those who say that this is just one more resolution. We must decide whether this is a resolution that simply stays on paper or whether we work on an action plan that follows the resolution.

I fully agree with Mr Einarsson, who asked how we should act now. The answer is simple for all of us who are here at the end of the day discussing this matter. Each of us must take the resolution back to our national parliaments and revisit our national legislation. Is it suitable for combating Nazi ideology and intolerance? Is it good enough? If we have enough laws, how are they implemented? Do they work or not? Do they only stay on paper?

I do not believe that if we call the international conference on combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology, it will become a platform for Nazi ideology. On the contrary, it will be a forum for NGOs, parliamentarians and those who represent civil society to condemn an ideology that was condemned in 1945 at the Nuremberg tribunal but is still alive.

Perhaps the worst thing about Nazi ideology is that it is a European ideology. It is not a question of refusing to grant visas to those who support that ideology. The people who support it live among us and those who support the idea of an international conference as proposed in the draft resolution are correct.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation).– Does the chairperson of the Committee, Mr Ateş, wish to speak? You have two minutes.

Mr ATEŞ (*Turkey*).– The human mind has many weaknesses and deficiencies. One of them is that we forget things quickly. The crimes committed during the Second World War are one of those things. Some people have a tendency to forget the terrible things that happened at that time.

Therefore, the report reminds us that we should not forget the past. I would like to thank Mr Margelov and our Secretariat for this excellent report and I would like colleagues to support it.

I conclude by referring to our dear French colleague, Mr Rochebloine, who compared Nazi crimes with other historical incidents. That is dangerous and wrong. For example, is it possible to compare the Nazi crimes with what happened in Algeria involving France? No. We cannot do that. In order to be wise we have to be careful with the sentences and terminology that we are using. Therefore I ask colleagues to please study the history because without any knowledge we should not try to have an opinion.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation).– The debate is closed.

The Political Affairs Committee has presented a draft resolution. No amendments have been tabled.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Document No. 10766.

The vote is open.

The draft resolution in Document No. 10766 is adopted.

4. Date, time and orders of the day of the next sitting

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – I propose that the Assembly holds its next public sitting tomorrow at 10 a.m. with the orders of the day which were approved on Monday.

Is that agreed?

It is agreed.

The sitting is adjourned.

(The sitting was closed at 5.25 p.m.)

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1. Minutes of proceedings
2. Address by Mr Buchkovski
3. Combatting the resurrection of Nazi ideology

Presentation by Mr Margelov, on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee, of report (Doc. 10766)

Speakers:

Mr Goerens (Luxembourg)
Mr Messerschmidt (Denmark)
Mr Einarsson (Sweden)
Mr de Puig (Spain)
Mr Mikhelson (Estonia)
Mr Dzembritzki (Germany)
Mr Rochebloine (France)
Mr Mignon (France)
Mrs Oskina (Russian Federation)
Mr Vrettos (Greece)
Mr Salles (France)
Mr Pangalos (Greece)
Mr Mirzazada (Azerbaijan)
Mr Bērziņš (Latvia)
Mr Zingeris (Lithuania)
Mr Reimann (Switzerland)
Mr Ivanov (Estonia)
Mr Ateş (Turkey)

Draft recommendation contained in Document 10766 adopted.

4. Date, time and orders of the day of the next sitting