

6 June 2006

Condemnation of the Franco regime on the 70th anniversary of Franco's coup d'état

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic and the 70th anniversary of the Fascist rising of 18 July which overthrew the democratically elected republican government and sparked off a civil war which subsequently led to a 40-year period of cruel dictatorship. The adverse effects on the Spanish population of the dictatorial regime headed by General Franco that was established by force with the support and involvement of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were to include a delay of several decades in Spain's involvement in the European integration project that led to today's EU.

The remarkable transition to democracy between 1978 and 1982 was based in part on the values and ideals of the Second Spanish Republic. To date, no moral reparation has been made to the victims of the coup and the period of dictatorship. More than one hundred thousand Spaniards were murdered between 1939 and 1975 and the remains of more than 35 000 people have yet to be uncovered in ditches and fields throughout the length and breadth of Spain, including those of the great poet Federico García Lorca. Torture and extra-judicial killings and other mass violations of human rights were common practice during the long period of dictatorship. Half a million Spaniards were forced into exile, including Juan Ramón Jiménez, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, and hundreds of thousands were imprisoned and detained in concentration and work camps, the last of which closed in 1962.

The Council of Europe recently adopted by a large majority a motion in favour of an 'international condemnation of the Franco regime'. This represented the first international condemnation of the regime. In this connection, the references which the Takkula report on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing for the period 2007-2013 the programme 'Citizens for Europe' to promote active European citizenship makes to the victims of dictatorships in Europe, among which the Franco regime in Spain undoubtedly occupies a regrettably prominent position, are in our view extremely significant.

The Members who signed this question wish to ensure that no Member State ever again undergoes a dictatorial regime such as that under which Spain suffered for four decades. We believe that the spirit of the European Union, based on the rule of law and the principles of freedom, democracy and respect for human right and fundamental reasons would take on even greater meaning if a veil of silence was not drawn over the atrocities of Europe's dictatorial regimes.

Would it not be appropriate for the Commission to take a stance on condemning the Franco regime? Does the Commission intend to take any action to help those who were, and still are, victims of the Franco regime?