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School Parade in Taiwan Featuring Swastikas and Nazis Unleashes Uproar

By CHRIS HORTON

Taiwan Student's Nazi Costumes Spark Outrage

A parade on Friday in which high school students dressed as Nazi soldiers and carried swastika banners in Taiwan was met with strong condemnation. The parade was part of Hsinchu Kuang-Fu High School's anniversary celebration.

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TAIPEI, Taiwan — A high school parade in Taiwan in which students dressed as Nazi soldiers and carried swastika banners has created a storm of criticism in one of Asia's most open societies.

Hsinchu Kuang-Fu High School in Hsinchu City held the parade, which focused on Adolf Hitler, as part of the school's anniversary celebrations on Friday. The parade also featured cardboard tanks. The students chose the theme, according to local news reports.

Photographs of the event spread quickly online, creating a backlash, with the unofficial diplomatic missions of Israel and Germany issuing letters of protest.

The episode resulted in the resignation of the school's principal, Cheng Hsiao-ming, this week.

Mr. Cheng said that he took responsibility, adding that the primary issue was "our education's problem," according to local news reports. "It wasn't necessarily a problem created by the children."

Taiwanese textbooks, like those in other Asian countries, focus on fighting in Asia during World War II, resulting in lower awareness of events in Europe.

In addition to the Israeli and German missions' responses, the Chabad Taipei Jewish Center also issued a statement expressing regret about "the use of Nazi imagery and logos by students in Taiwan, as it reopens historical wounds suffered by the Jewish people."

Ross Feingold, chairman of the center, said that many people in Taiwan were unaware that there were more than 1,000 Jews living among them, many of them long-term residents with businesses or investments on the island.

"Certainly it's not meant to be an act of anti-Semitism," Mr. Feingold said. "Holocaust education is extremely limited here."

The parade in Hsinchu is not the first incident in which Nazi references have offended Jews and other groups in Taiwan.

In 1999, an advertisement for German-manufactured DBK space heaters in Taiwan featured a smiling Hitler with the caption, "Declare war on the cold front!" The next year, a restaurant with a concentration camp theme opened, closing weeks after it became a source of outrage.

In 2001, the governing Democratic Progressive Party created a television advertisement contrasting Hitler with John F. Kennedy and other leaders, which the party modified after protests from the Israel Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei and others.

Officials at the school, which is private but receives subsidies from Taiwan's Ministry of Education, have said they will show their students movies such as "Schindler's List" to better educate them on the atrocities of the Holocaust.

"A one-off showing of a movie is not a sustainable program," Mr. Feingold said. "What is more sustainable is reaching out to the Jewish community that lives here in Taiwan, many of whom have relatives who died in or survived the Holocaust."

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