

ANNEX II

FORMAL SITTING — PRESENTATION OF THE SAKHAROV PRIZE

IN THE CHAIR: MR BARON CRESPO

*President**(The formal sitting opened at 12 noon)*

PRESIDENT. — I shall now ask the Secretary-General to read out a statement on the award of the Sakharov Prize

VINCI, Secretary-General of the European Parliament. — Mr President, further to the resolution adopted by Parliament on 13 December 1985, the enlarged Bureau, by decision of 6 July 1988, instituted a Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought. The prize is intended to honour commitments, activities or achievements in the following sectors: the development of East-West relations with respect to the Helsinki Final Act and, in particular, cooperation in humanitarian and other fields, protection of the freedom of scientific inquiry, the defence of human rights and respect for international law, government practice in relation to constitutional law.

The Political Affairs Committee, by letter of 9 November 1989, forwarded the list of candidates for the Sakharov Prize to the enlarged Bureau which, at its meeting of 22 November 1989, decided by secret ballot to award the Sakharov Prize for 1989 to Mr Alexander Dubcek. This decision of the enlarged Bureau was announced to Parliament at its sitting on 22 November 1989.

(Loud and sustained applause)

PRESIDENT. — Mr Dubcek, ladies and gentlemen, when peoples decide to speak freely, their societies march firmly forward towards justice and democracy. While silence favours oppressors, speech points the way to respect and dignity.

To the ongoing dialogue which has been taking place among the peoples of western Europe since 1950 has now been added a torrent of renewal and revolutionary change in other European countries. History, in its onward flow, nonetheless leaves on the present the indelible stamp of all truly enduring truths.

When we decided to honour Andrei Sakharov by giving his name to this prize, he was still living in internal exile. When the enlarged Bureau decided to award the prize to Alexander Dubcek, the latter was living, ignored and reviled by the authorities of his country, in his native Slovakia.

In recent months we have witnessed, with hope in our hearts, the profound political and social changes taking place in central and eastern Europe.

Prior to the terrible events in Romania and the subsequent popular uprising which put an end to the Ceausescu dictatorship, we had all hoped that the peaceful wave of change could spread throughout eastern Europe without bloodshed. Now we are very mindful of the fact that the new situation brings with it new responsibilities for all Europeans, and especially for the European Community.

Parliament has always been active in the defence of human rights and in condemning violations thereof throughout the world, and especially in those European countries under Soviet influence.

Allow me now, here where in the past we have strongly condemned the arbitrary detention and persecution of the writer, Vaclav Havel, to warmly salute President Havel and convey to him our heartfelt good wishes for the success of his mission and peace and wellbeing for Czechoslovakia.

Although, Mr Dubcek, this is the first time most of us have actually had the opportunity of meeting you, I am sure that for many of us it is though we are greeting an old friend who has

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been with us over the last 20 years and who is inextricably bound up with our youthful memories.

When your country was so brutally invaded in 1968, you were as old as I am now. That summer we, the young people of Europe, shared in our millions the frustration and disappointment of the Czechoslovak people, watching with a deep sorrow and sense of impotence as the abuse of strength and unreason barred the road to hope and democracy.

Before entering on political office, Mr Dubcek, you were a modest farrier, but above all an active fighter against the Nazi occupying forces. You subsequently studied law and led your country to what came to be known as the 'Prague spring'. In 1970 you once again became a simple citizen.

Since then, what solitude and silence must have accompanied your meditations in the forests of Bratislava! But believe me, there are times when silence speaks louder than millions of words of empty political propaganda.

Parliament's decision to award you the Sakharov Prize was taken in the same week that witnessed your re-appearance, addressing the crowds and claiming once again an active role in the political life of your country.

Just as in 1968 we were deeply moved by the sight of tanks in the streets of Prague, in November, I can assure you, we watched with astonishment, but full of hope and joy, as you once again stood before a cheering crowd in St. Wenceslas Square, putting paid with your words to a hopeless system and a corrupt and inefficient political class.

Now, as you did then, you support a peaceful transition to a new democratic order in which human rights are respected. I should like, on behalf of this House, to say to the President of the Czechoslovakian National Assembly, and to all his fellow citizens who are following this ceremony in their homes, that in awarding this prize we wish to send our affectionate greetings to the entire Czechoslovak people and to mark our heartfelt remembrance of those who gave up their lives in the fight for freedom and democracy.

Mr Dubcek, ladies and gentlemen, in November, when the award of the prize was announced, Andrei Sakharov himself expressed an interest in being present at the award ceremony. Subsequently, fearing that the award would be made in December and that he might not be able to attend, he wrote a message to be read out on this occasion. No one could then foresee that, sadly, his absence was to be permanent. His words, however, remain.

It is now, Mr Dubcek, my honour and privilege, as President of the European Parliament, to read the message which Andrei Sakharov wrote on 10 December 1989 and which his widow recently forwarded to me.

'It is with joy that I heard of the award of a prize to Alexander Dubcek, one of the principal leaders of the "Prague Spring".'

At that time, 20 years ago, his friends and enemies alike clearly understood the significance of the events in Czechoslovakia.

His enemies saw a huge threat to the positions of power they commanded, to their privileges, to their whole administrative and coercive, in essence, Stalinist system. They responded to 2,000 words with thousands of tanks, thus dropping their mask in front of the whole world.

His friends remembered for ever the tragedy and heroism of that August in Czechoslovakia, and the shame felt for their country, whose honour some reckless individuals tried to defend on 25 August in Red Square.

1968 influenced my own destiny. The spring brought hope; it encouraged me to work on my "Reflections". August destroyed my illusions and spurred my public activity. The same was true for many of my friends. The handful of Soviet dissidents drew from the Prague Spring the strength they needed to carry on a tough battle for many years, with *glasnost* their only weapon.

One cannot help thinking of the years of stagnation which followed the storm of 68 without bitterness. But the fire was smouldering underneath the ashes.

I am convinced that the "breath of freedom" which the Czechs and Slovaks enjoyed when Dubcek was their leader was a prologue to the peaceful revolutions now taking place in Eastern Europe and in Czechoslovakia itself. Again they are setting us an example! And again their enemies are afraid!

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I congratulate Alexander Dubcek with all my heart, I admire his perseverance and wish him strength, health and success. To him and all our friends in our stricken countries!
10 December 1989, signed Andrei Sakharov'

(Loud and sustained applause)

DUBCEK, *President of the Federal Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia*¹.
— Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, there are times in all our lives which we are destined never to forget. This is such a moment for me.

I spring from a people which began to build a State in the seventh century. When, in the ninth century and on the territory of the Greater Moravian Empire, Constantine and Methodius preached to the East the doctrine of tolerance and love of one's neighbour, they created the conditions for the mutual enrichment of the civilizations then extant and for the gradual development of a unique and intensely humane European culture.

These were the values invoked by George of Podebrady, King of Bohemia, when, in the second half of the fifteenth century, he sought to found the first European union. The same spirit animated Jan Amos Komensky, known as Comenius, the teacher of nations, who held that no nation should take arms against another. And, later, the work of Tomas G. Masaryk and Milan Rastislav Stefanik pointed towards a more just organization of Europe in which States, peoples and individuals would be richer and freer.

I owed it to myself to recall these pages of our history. When you took the decision to award me the Sakharov Prize, I was still a citizen deprived of his human rights. Since then, events in our country have developed at a vertiginous speed. The people of Czechoslovakia, as if wishing to make up for lost time, remembered its finest traditions and took its destiny into its own hands.

True to the humanistic and democratic traditions of earlier generations of Czechs and Slovaks, it set about the task of finding solutions to the problems confronting it with the methods which are characteristically its own. In doing so, it contributed, however modestly, to the creation of a community spirit in the Europe of today and tomorrow. It is for this reason that now, as I receive the Sakharov Prize, my thoughts are for those who have earned the right to the renewal and change currently taking place.

Even during the most difficult moments of their history, the nations which make up my country have never ceased to feel that they are part of humanity's great struggle for freedom. Right up to the present day, our history has been marked by the struggle for truth and the conviction that truth will be victorious, as well as a profoundly democratic spirit and the struggle for social justice.

The recent changes in Czechoslovakia, with is situated at the point where East and West meet, have contributed to the creation of a new situation in Europe. If together we could now find a solution which would enable our old and sorely tried continent to embark on an era of fruitful coexistence — an area which would mark a qualitative leap in the history of European civilization — we would no doubt be meeting a great need.

The changes taking place in our country offer Czechoslovakian politics the chance to contribute to this process by initiatives of its own which would allow all those European countries which so desire to pool their interests. The changes in Czechoslovakia have in particular shown that Europe is a living organism, bound together by the common history and destiny of its peoples and by the aspirations of the upcoming generations towards freedom and a better life. These changes have also demonstrated that barriers, whatever their nature, are an anomaly and that Europeans wish to live in a climate of understanding, unity and cooperation.

I and my friends wish to play an active part in developing relations in Europe.

Allow me to take advantage of the opportunity given to me today to make some remarks which I hope will help to clarify our approach to the development which we are currently living through.

The events now taking place in Czechoslovakia have their roots in the period which has come to be known as the Prague Spring. This was a movement whose programme

¹ Mr Dubcek's speech was delivered in Slovak.

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represented the first consistent attempt in Czechoslovakia to transcend the system of government bequeathed by Stalinism. The Prague Spring, with its programme of reform, profoundly shook the neo-Stalinist system and should, by its very nature, have led to the development in our country of a pluralist and democratic system.

It was no coincidence that this movement was born in Czechoslovakia. Between the wars Czechoslovakia was, from an economic, cultural and social point of view, one of the advanced countries of Europe. The process of reform in Czechoslovakia would no doubt have developed into a democratic system. However, the neo-Stalinist government of Brezhnev deemed developments in Czechoslovakia to be unacceptable. That is why they put an end to them via military force.

The Prague Spring was, it is true, crushed by this intervention. However, the ideals of freedom, sovereignty and social justice remained alive.

The people of Czechoslovakia, and in particular the younger generation, have embarked on a struggle to achieve a multifarious renewal of Czechoslovakian society in conditions which have now been entirely transformed. There are links between 1900 and today's revolutionary changes, but there are also differences between that movement and the one which we see today. In 20 years Europe and the world have changed, with major changes in the system of production, a general development of science and culture and major social progress in western Europe.

The politics of the countries of eastern Europe took no account of these changes in western Europe. The fact that they ignored them led progressively to general stagnation and to growing tension and discontent among the populations of the countries of eastern Europe. That was the main cause of the recent revolutionary changes.

Nonetheless, the true values of democratic and socialist movements still have, and will continue to have in the future, something to say to us, for we cannot shut our eyes to the paradoxes of the contemporary developed world. The most characteristic feature of the latter is the enormous inequality in the way in which it meets people's needs.

But there are also other problems which have not so far been resolved — those relating to food, health and the environment which are now coming to the fore. In his efforts to master nature and achieve ever greater prosperity, Man has reached the point where the success of his efforts has led to the devastation of nature's productive capacity and where this success is threatening the very basis of his existence. Moreover, funds are still being devoted to the manufacture of instruments capable of destroying humanity.

Contemporary developments in the world at large, in Europe and in my own country, ladies and gentlemen, are promising and fill us with hope. Let us do all that we can to ensure that these developments in Czechoslovakia and Europe are irreversible. Let us find ways, and do all in our power, to strengthen those tendencies which unite the peoples of Europe rather than those which still divide them. Let us together bend our efforts to finding the best possible solutions — those capable of placing the future of Europe on a secure foundation.

I wish, ladies and gentlemen, to take advantage of today's great event to state that all our programmes and declarations, all our invocations of order and the aspirations of the people must find embodiment in law. In my new role as the President of the Czechoslovakian parliament, it is my intention to seek to ensure that all international pacts and agreements on civil rights, from the UN Charter, through the Helsinki Final Act to the CSCE in Vienna, are incorporated into Czechoslovakian law.

We are going to act in such a way as to ensure that the democratic process for which various civic initiatives, groups, individuals and our two nations have worked are rendered irreversible.

It is for me a great honour that the prize awarded to me last November by the European Parliament bears the name of a great humanist, democrat and, above all, man — the unforgettable Andrei Sakharov. Mrs Bonner has said that Andrei Sakharov was a happy man. He was a man in advance of his time. His call for priority to be given to universal interests and for rapprochement within Europe are for us a constant source of inspiration.

I and my helpers will do all in our power to ensure that Czechoslovakia is at the centre of Europe not merely in a geographical sense, but culturally, scientifically and politically. I shall be more than happy to do all that I can to ensure that there is the same distance between Prague and Paris, London, Moscow, Rome, Madrid, Stockholm and other cities.

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By virtue of its revolutionary movement Czechoslovakia has opened its arms to Europe and the world. That is why I declare, from this podium of the European Parliament, that all citizens of Europe and the world are welcome in Czechoslovakia, without distinctions based on the colour of their skin, the languages which they speak or their political and religious convictions.

It is my hope that the Prague Spring will sound forth, in 1990 and all the years yet to come, to the tune of the great symphony of Europe's common spirit.

Thank you.

(Loud and sustained applause)

(The formal sitting closed at 12.30 p.m.)