



RESOURCE 14

Andrei Sakharov (1921-1989) was a Soviet scientist, dissident and Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Sakharov was arrested on 22 January 1980, following his public protests against the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979. Simone Veil is a French politician and was the first woman to become President of the European Parliament.

Luxembourg, 24-1-1980

TELEGRAM

Dear Ambassador,

The Chair of the European Parliament's Political Affairs Committee has asked me to bring the following to your attention:

'The Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, meeting on 22 January 1980 in Brussels, has learned with great indignation that the Soviet authorities today arrested Mr Andrei Sakharov and stripped him of his Academician's rights and titles.

The Political Affairs Committee has expressed its full solidarity with Mr Andrei Sakharov, who is a Nobel Peace Prize winner and ardent defender of human rights in the Soviet Union, and its total condemnation of these measures taken against him, which violate the agreements signed under the Helsinki Final Act aimed at full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Political Affairs Committee calls for the Soviet authorities to reverse the measures taken against Mr Sakharov and also expresses its deep concern at this escalation of repression in the Soviet Union which has further undermined international detente.

The Chair of the Political Affairs Committee, Mr Emilio Colombo, has been instructed to ask the President of the European Parliament to inform the ambassadors of the Soviet Union accredited to the capitals of the Nine about the position taken by the Political Affairs Committee.'

Please accept, Ambassador, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Simone Veil

President of the European Parliament

*Source: EU historical archives, Oral history of the European Parliament Presidents,
http://www.epgencms.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/upload/1312bf12-e551-4e4f-a8d8-76056e8b7c89/Veil_Letter_Sakharov_1980_FR.pdf*

- What is the position and intention of the European Parliament in this message?
- On this basis of this action taken by its president in 1980, why do you think the European Parliament decided to set up the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought?

