



‘One of the initiatives taken by the European Parliament to promote awareness of human rights questions was the institution of a prestigious prize for work to uphold freedom of expression and enquiry. The prize was appropriately named in honour of the Soviet physicist, Andre Sakharov, who made so courageous a contribution to the defence of civil freedoms in the Soviet Union, at great cost to himself ... [In 1990] the chosen candidate was Alexander Dubcek, the originator of the ‘Prague Spring’ in 1968. It was a great joy to welcome him to the Parliament, but it was not to be the only such joy. The winner of the previous year’s award was still in prison when the decision had been made. But Nelson Mandela won his release, and came in triumph to Strasbourg to receive the Prize.’

*Ken Coates MEP, chair of the European Parliament’s Human Rights Subcommittee, 1989-1994, welcomed Mr Mandela to the Parliament to receive the Sakharov Prize shortly after his release from prison.*