

"LET'S NOT ESCAPE INTO SILENCE"

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The great promise of our time is that the human being has emerged at last from the shadows of great causes and has become a great cause in his own right. We no longer accept that the individual is but an insignificant instrument in the grand design of things. We no longer believe that he is a mere tool of impersonal forces, and we no longer view him as a means to an end. He no longer is an object of the kings' glory, the conquerors' spoil, or the coveted prize in a class struggle.

We cannot as yet congratulate ourselves for having transformed this promise of our time into a reality of everyday living. But we should take pride that we have begun.

And begun we have. A third of a century ago we pledged to banish the scourge of war and, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we began one of the most revolutionary and humane reappraisals of political, social and moral principles of international affairs.

And what began as a declaration of intent thirty-three years ago is slowly evolving into a global compact.

A set of rules--covenants and conventions--that proscribe and prescribe the behavior of governments towards their own citizens. The standards enumerated and outlined in the many international instruments have not been imposed on any of the nations. These standards are obligations voluntarily and freely entered upon and cannot, therefore, be disregarded under any pretext.

The fact that over fifty thousand communications are received by the Commission a year is a good indicator of how important this forum has become in the arena of the world's public opinion. If you consider that many, if not most, of those communicants risk their lives for contacting this Commission, you will agree with me that our business here is a serious affair.

We must be willing also to examine freely the human rights policies of each and every country. I know that, in this process my own country will also be scrutinized. As we have already heard in this forum, the U.S. is not immune from criticism. No nation, large or small, should be. No regional or political solidarity should prevent this. After all, the identification and attempt to eradicate human rights violations in all countries is the highest act of solidarity--a solidarity with mankind.

No culture or political doctrine sanctions summary executions, torture or denial of the integrity of the person.

Nor does it matter to the victim whether a regime claims as its justification the pretext of emergency, revolution or counter-revolution.

In this Commission, no virtue can be found in silence. If we do not raise our voices on behalf of the persecuted, the suffering and the victims of oppression--be they victims of political systems, ideologies, religious intolerance or simply barbaric brutality--who will defend them, who will come to their rescue?

Even if we are not always capable of swift and effective action, even if the remedies we offer are disproportionate to the enormities of injuries, we cannot remain silent but must arouse the potential power of the world's public opinion.

In silence there is complicity; in speaking out there is hope.

So who will raise the issue of the thousands of people who have disappeared in Argentina? Who will help the "Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo" -- some of whom have themselves disappeared -- to find their sons and daughters? And what of the disappeared and dead in Chile?

Can we close our eyes to the plight of hundreds of thousands of refugees in South East Asia? Can we disregard

the causes and conditions that make people, young and old, risk drowning, thirst, hunger and pirates in the open seas, or accept the degradation and humiliations of the refugees' fate rather than remain in their native countries? What a macabre twisting of the language it is to call prisons and labor camps in Vietnam "re-education centers."

The U.S. Delegation deeply regrets the failure of this body to discuss, as originally scheduled, the continuing abuse of human rights in Kampuchea which has been the subject of great international concern.

The great volume of eye witness reports concerning the abuse of human rights in Kampuchea, prepared for this body's review, document beyond doubt that abuses there must be described as the worst in the world. Refugee reports of mass executions, forced labor, forced marches, destruction of the family, are all too consistent in their detail to be dismissed as self-serving. It is clear that under the Government of Democratic Kampuchea, abuses relating to integrity of the person, legal and political rights and the denial of basic human needs have constituted a deliberate debasement of human life of nearly incomprehensible dimensions.

Tragically, recent refugee reports from Kampuchea indicate that the Government of Democratic Kampuchea has continued this pattern of human rights abuse in the territory it still controls. Moreover, in addition to the great sufferings already afflicting the Kampuchean people, there has been added the new cruelties of foreign occupation and war.

The United States supports the concept of a truly independent and neutral Kampuchea. The Kampuchean people clearly deserve at long last a genuine representative government responsible to their aspirations. Neither Pol Pot nor the Vietnamese-installed Hengsamrin regime fulfills that criterion.

We must reiterate our regret that this body has chosen to put aside consideration of the human rights abuses in Kampuchea, abuses which cry out for international attention and concern.

A significant proportion of the great mass of refugees that have fled from the Indochinese countries since 1975 have been Hmong hill tribespeople from Laos. Many of these have reported that in seeking to extend central government control over their homelands, Vietnamese and Lao military forces have resorted to harsh military measures,

including the alleged use of poison gas or other toxic agents. The reports are too numerous to ignore. They suggest a violation of one of the few restraints mankind has agreed to accept in the use of violence. International attention and concern is urgently required.

In Uganda, Idi Amin arranges mysterious accidents for his foes, and kills, tortures, and exiles thousands upon thousands. At this point, Mr. Chairman, I would point out a troubling aspect of the human rights problems in both Southeast Asia and Uganda. In both areas my Government and others have urged the international community to take action in time to prevent an appalling human rights problem from becoming an alarming international security problem. Regrettably all counsel was ignored until in both areas an international conflict resulted. In Indochina, the very countries that denied any human rights problems in Cambodia before Vietnam's invasion, the day after argued there had been a campaign of genocide against the Cambodian people which justified the Vietnamese aggression. Countries like the Soviet Union and Cuba were vehement in their denunciation of Pol Pot's sins. Mr. Chairman, nothing justified Vietnam's fundamental violation of its Charter obligations; equally nothing justified our earlier collective silence about the gross violations of human rights taking place in Kampuchea.

The link between human rights and international peace has also been forged in southern Africa. How can a country be called civilized that does not adhere to the most elementary norms of the rule of law, but in fact uses the law to perpetuate inequality and racism? South Africa does not just violate human rights, it systematically robs its citizens of their basic rights. Apartheid in South Africa is yet another monument to man's inhumanity and greed.

You all have read, I am sure, about the wall posters in China which advocate such things as human rights, democracy and freedom of speech and better living conditions. The Chinese Government has itself acknowledged in recent months that there have been violations of human rights in China. This acknowledgement is a positive development reflecting what we hope represents an intention to seek further improvement. During Secretary Vance's visit to Peking, he described the importance we attach to human rights, and the President also covered the subject during Vice Premier Deng's visit.

What did we say when perhaps as many as several hundred thousand Barundi people silently perished in a few months' time? Who in this Conference Room has raised his voice in defense of the signatories of the Charter 77

in Czechoslovakia? Has anybody tabled a resolution to demand the release of Hubert Matos, held in a Cuban jail for almost twenty years? Is there no sense of urgency to save the Greek Epirotan minority living in Albania, persecuted, harassed and systematically exterminated? Should we ignore the documented allegations compiled by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that Somoza's national guard have executed scores of young people between the ages of 14 and 20 and has imprisoned children?

Labor camps, political prisoners, harrassment of any who seek to emigrate--these are part of the fabric of political life in authoritarian countries. Regrettably such practices often seem particularly entrenched in political systems that proclaim through people's socialism that they have achieved a new meaning of freedom. Meanwhile, contempt for human rights leads to practices of religious and ethnic discrimination that conflict with the solemn obligations undertaken by those nations. This is not to deny that progress has been made in some of these countries. The harshness of political rule has been relaxed; immigration has been eased; and contacts with the outside world have been cautiously encouraged. It is necessary to underscore this.

Shall I continue with the gory details of man's inhumanity to man? Of how the ingenuity of man harnesses modern technology for the most bestial purposes? Of dumping prisoners from highflying airplanes into the sea as a new and clever way of burial? Or how electrical instruments are used to amuse sadistic torturers? Of how the techniques of surveillance and invasion of privacy have been perfected?

In this survey of the overall human rights situation in the world, there is one area that should command our particular attention. It is the right of everyone to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Freedom of religion is a freedom that is widely denied in the world today. There are countries today where Muslims are denied the practice of their faith, where Jews are discriminated against, where Christians are unable to worship freely.

In a similar sense, the right to organize and freely associate is becoming an endangered right. It is particularly true with respect to trade unions. At the heart of any healthy society lies a healthy trade union movement. History has demonstrated that when human rights are violated and tyrannies imposed, the first to resist and the first to suffer is the trade union movement. Let me be specific. In South Africa we are witnessing a stirring toward the development of black trade unionism. Will this Commission let them down and permit apartheid and racism to choke this

nascent hope? Free trade unionism is also beginning to claim a right to existence in Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union. Will we support this right which is explicit in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

These illustrations of what is happening to human beings at the very time when we are beginning to make human rights a central concern of our times is profoundly saddening, paradoxical and intolerable.

Mr. Chairman, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights first emphasized that "every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms." And the Helsinki Final Act confirmed "the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties" in the field of human rights and also confirmed "that governments, institutions, organizations and persons have a relevant and positive role to play in contributing toward the achievement of these aims."

Criticisms have been raised by our Congress, our press, private citizens and by other governments against alleged human rights abuses within the United States. Yes, Mr. Chairman, we have acknowledged

incidents of police brutality, overcrowded jails and denials in practice of equal opportunity because of race, age and sex. These criticisms have not only been raised in public fora, but many have also become the subject of government investigations. They have been the focus of reports of our National Civil Rights Commission and they have prompted enactment of a series of laws aimed at protecting the civil rights of our people. Additionally, they will be the focal point of a major study by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe--a Legislative/Executive Commission to monitor implementation of the Helsinki Accords. The study--a summary of US compliance with the Accords--will be a frank assessment of what the United States has and has not been doing to implement the Accords. The Commission has already been able to encourage the U.S. Government to do better in areas where it felt implementation was lacking.

That report will also be a study of the Soviet Union and other countries where national institutions are not designed to protect civil liberties. The report will also be a study of the Soviet Union and other countries where national institutions are not designed to protect civil liberties.

What recourse is available, however, to citizens in countries where national institutions are not designed to respond to citizens' complaints? When eleven Soviet citizens first met in Moscow to form the initial Soviet Helsinki Monitoring Group, they did so because they believed the promises their Government had made in Helsinki and Geneva.

As a result of their activities to promote observance of human rights, the Soviet Government detained seven of the monitors for over a year without a trial or defense counsel and sentenced twenty-two group members to internal and external exile, labor camps and prisons--many for as long as 15 years.

If we take seriously the words we have spent so many hours composing, then we must speak out for those individuals who have treated those words so seriously. We must speak openly of the 20 Soviet Helsinki Monitors who have been arrested and convicted, and the two who have been exiled because they believed that international commitments should be respected. We cannot forget the names of the twenty-two Soviet citizens who are now languishing in labor camps, prisons, or forced exile, because they dared to act in accordance with internationally promised basic rights:

From Soviet Armenia: Shagen Arutyunan, Ambartsum Khlgatyan, Robert Nazaryan.

From Georgia: Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Grigory Goldshtein, Merab Kostava, Viktor Rtshiladze.

From the Lithuanian group: Viktoras Petkus and Tomas Venclova.

From Moscow: Aleksandr Ginzburg, Pyotr Grigorenko, Anatoly Marchenko, Yuri Orlov, Anatoly Shcharansky, Vladimir Slepak, Aleksandr Podrabinek.

From the Ukraine: Levko Lukyanenko, Myroslav Marynovych, Mykola Matusevych, Mykola Rudenko, Oleksiy Tykhy, and Pyotr Vins.

These citizens, together with dozens more, formed public groups in Moscow, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia in order to call the attention of public opinion, their own Government and other Final Act signatories to document violations of human rights. They compiled and issued open, thorough reports on official practices toward religious believers, persons seeking to rejoin relatives abroad, persons confined in mental hospitals because of their political beliefs, persons confined in prisons, prison camps or internal exile because of their efforts to express such beliefs or disseminate their

views and information, and minority groups seeking cultural and political rights in the Soviet Union.

There is no time to mention, Mr. Chairman, all those, in many other countries, who have been persecuted and imprisoned because of their stand for the human rights of their fellow citizens. Let me just mention a few more names:

In South Africa -- Winnie Mandela, Byers Naude

In Czechoslovakia -- Jiri Lederer

As Nobel Laureate Andrei Sakharov eloquently remarked: "On the moral plane, there is a particular gravity in the persecution of persons who have defended other victims of unjust treatment, who have worked to publish and, in particular, to distribute information regarding both the persecution and trials of persons with deviant opinions and the conditions in places of imprisonment."

On both the moral and legal plane, there is particular gravity in the fact that these persons are being punished rather than protected in their pursuit of the rights of freedom of expression promised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Helsinki Final Act.

The Commission on Human Rights has a particular duty to defend their activities and protest their treatment, because they spoke out as a result of promises to which we have all pledged ourselves. To do otherwise makes a mockery of those words.

The existence of this very Commission is a living proof of how far we have come and a constant reminder of how much we have yet to accomplish. This Commission should no longer be considered as only a side-show, off the big stage of global diplomacy. Let it not be scorned then as

a comedy of good intentions. Nor should our failures to take action, our omissions and our slow pace be used as a convenient excuse to dismiss what we have already accomplished, serve as a trap of despair over how little we are accomplishing, or be a gift to our detractors to predict that nothing will ever be accomplished.

It is incumbent upon us to fulfill our mandate and therefore, we must do more than what we are doing. We are not here to denigrate each other but to improve the human condition all over the world.

Therefore, we must clearly set our goals.

In this Year of the Child we must concentrate our energies toward the elimination of abuses of children. The imprisonment of pregnant women, the separation of families and the use of relatives as tools of political vengeance. I call upon this Commission to hold open hearings on the reunification of families. I again make this plea as I did last year for open hearings.

We should also investigate the fate of disappeared family members.

And it is not enough to lament, to express revulsion, to declare or to solemnly pledge. Through the policies of our governments we must also give this Commission the wherewithal to transform moral statements into moral acts.

If we pride ourselves to be the conscience of human rights, let us say what is on our mind and in our heart. If we are a forum of global debate on human rights, let us not escape into silence. And if we are the hope of the persecuted, the imprisoned and the tortured, let us not let them down.