



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1990/92  
9 March 1990

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Forty-sixth session  
Agenda item 11

FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL  
FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF  
WORK OF THE COMMISSION

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS  
SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

CO-ORDINATING ROLE OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN  
THE UNITED NATIONS BODIES AND MACHINERY DEALING WITH THE  
PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Letter dated 9 March 1990 from the Permanent Mission of the  
United States of America to the United Nations Office at Geneva  
addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights

Please accept the enclosed United States of America statement by  
J.K. Blackwell as an official United Nations document. We would appreciate it  
if you could circulate it as an official document under item 11 of the  
forty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(signed)  
Armando Valladares  
Ambassador

Annex

CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONS

1. Just one month ago, Nelson Mandela was still a prisoner of Apartheid in South Africa. It is a measure of the speed with which events around the globe are moving that Mandela's voice, which only four weeks ago echoed off the four walls of a prison cell, now echoes in peaceful assemblies of tens of thousands of South Africans.

2. The unthinkable now seems plausible, almost mundane. A television production team headed by John McLaughlin came to Geneva last week. Among the interviews they conducted here was a joint appearance by Soviet chief arms control negotiator Yuri Nazarkin and U.S. arms control negotiator Ambassador Richard Burt.

3. The two negotiators had virtually confirmed that an agreement reducing strategic nuclear arsenals by thirty per cent and containing extraordinary provisions for verification is likely to be signed by President Bush and General Secretary Gorbachev at the June Summit.

4. One of the producers of the interview told me, with apparent disappointment, that despite this first-ever joint television appearance by the two negotiators, and despite the nature of their announcement, there was relatively little interest by other media in the event. Asked why that might be the case, the producer replied - "With a novelist heading the Czechoslovakian Government, with the Germanies uniting, with the Romanians overthrowing Ceausescu, with the Berlin Wall coming down, people here look at an arms reduction agreement between the United States and Soviet Union as natural, commonplace."

5. One should be pleased that the extraordinary is now commonplace.

6. But before too much is taken for granted, it would do us well to consider carefully the fragility of what has been achieved over the past year. We are in a decade of democratic revolution. Sometimes that revolution is peaceful and within a legal framework - as in Nicaragua last month; sometimes it is a tense revolution within a framework of massive civil disobedience as in East Germany and Czechoslovakia; and sometimes it is a violent revolution where freedom must be earned by sacrifice, as in Romania.

7. "Liberty", De Tocqueville said, "is generally established with difficulty in the midst of storms; it is perfected by civil discord; and its benefits cannot be appreciated until it is already old."

8. A glance around the globe at those places where we witness democratic revolutions confirms De Tocqueville's forecast of stormy weather. And this contemporary of the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century might well serve as our guide for the twenty-first century.

9. The report card on "freedom" shows many new countries in the democratic column. For the quest for freedom is a human instinct which cannot be stamped out by dictatorships of the right or the left. Yet while freedom is an instinct the folk ways of freedom - the democratic process must be learned.

10. Democracy is a fragile flower that seeks to take root everywhere. Our duty is to teach ourselves how to nurture and protect it whatever the environment.

11. The first and immediate challenge is to protect those democratic revolutions which have already taken place. Among the vital characteristics of a successful democracy are:

- Periodic and Free Elections;
- Freedom of Speech and Assembly;
- Fair Rules for Campaigns and Candidates.

12. New democracies must learn the rules of the game. Old democracies must remind themselves of these basic rules.

13. Romania today looks forward to free elections on the twentieth of May. Of all the countries in Eastern Europe to throw off the shackles of totalitarianism, none did so with the sacrifice of Romania.

14. It is known that thousands were killed in clashes between Ceausescu's supporters, the army and the revolutionaries. Yes, revolutionaries. A news producer who returned from Romania in early February after working on a documentary, told me of interviews with eyewitnesses in Timisoara, where the revolution began. Once the shooting started, people picked up broken shards of glass from shattered store windows to fight soldiers armed with pistols and AK-47 rifles.

15. In Bucharest, students rushed to the television broadcasting station, where Ceausescu's security forces - clothed in bulletproof battle gear - were beating Romanian army units who sided with the people. They picked up the rifles of fallen soldiers to fight on.

16. That was two months ago. Today Romania is ruled by an uneasy coalition of opposition parties and a hastily-created National Salvation Front composed principally of communist reformers.

17. When the National Salvation Front, headed by President Ion Iliescu and Prime Minister Petru Roman, announced last month that it would field candidates for the May elections, near-riots broke out, because at the time it held a monopoly on government power.

18. A compromise has now been reached whereby power is shared between the front and the opposition parties in an unequal formula, and there is some pessimism that fair elections in May are possible.

19. The United Nations can help consolidate the victories of democratic revolutions by focusing its attention on those aspects of the Human Rights Charter which address fundamental individual liberties.

20. This requires intensive monitoring of the sweeping political reforms and the potential for corrupting the momentum of revolution, and hijacking the hopes of those who long to live in democratic societies.

21. Lord Acton teaches that "absolute power corrupts absolutely." The American founding fathers intuitively understood this danger and sought to

develop limited forms of government with internal checks and balances. It is to such democratic institutions that we must turn our hopes, and our energies, as the storms are left behind and the period of civil discord begins.

22. Secretary of State Baker travelled to Romania during his visit to Eastern Europe last month to underscore the importance of fair and free elections, and the dismantling of the hated Secret Police - the securitate forces Ceausescu built.

23. Whether it is the STASI in East Germany, or the ZOMO in Poland, the secret forces built up by the totalitarian bureaucratic states of Eastern Europe throughout the long night of the Cold Water will not easily disappear.

24. Nor will the temptation to use those forces, overtly or covertly, to sate the lust for power.

25. Make no mistake, either, about the forces now at play.

26. Largely peaceful revolutions have overthrown entrenched Marxist régimes.

27. Many of those who built, maintained, and benefited from these régimes are still at liberty within them. There have been no wholesale purges, no mass arrests, no bloodletting to sap the will of the enemy.

28. Those who ran the Marxist bureaucracies constitute the potential opposition to the democratic societies that are replacing them.

29. Here again Romania is a good example, but one could as easily substitute Nicaragua, or even Poland.

30. Silviu Brucan, who was an opponent of Ceausescu's, but also a Stalinist and Romania's ambassador to the United Nations under the Eisenhower administration, was until recently a member of the National Salvation Front of Romania.

31. When a news producer recently conducted an off-the-record interview with Brucan, he was shown a copy of a paper Brucan had written explaining the collapse of communism. What struck the producer, who had studied Marxism at Oxford, was that Brucan's analysis was completed on entirely Marxist terms. In short, Brucan had not abandoned Marxism at all, even though he acknowledges its momentary collapse.

32. This paper had been prepared after a conference on the same theme in the Soviet Union. Brucan denied the producer a copy of the paper after being sharply questioned about its Marxist mode of analysis.

33. The producer drew the conclusion that Brucan is still a committed communist. Yet, when asked on the record about communism, Brucan says that "it is dead."

34. My point today, is that rumours of the demise of communism are greatly exaggerated.

35. Communism has its sympathizers.

36. We stand at a crossroads where democratic revolutions can be consolidated, so that flourishing democracies emerge. Or we can fail to meet the challenge, and watch as some countries collapse into undemocratic rule.

37. To others falls the task of worrying about economic assistance, trade relationships, and other material matters that will strengthen or weaken the revolutionary democracies.

38. It would be a tragedy if we failed to do all in our power to help those who with bare hands and broken glass fought for their freedoms against bullets and bayonets.

-----