

STATEMENT

BY

THE PRIME MINISTER OF NORWAY

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"INTRODUCTION - THE DEVELOPMENT IN EASTERN EUROPE"

THE MEETING OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

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INTRODUCTION - THE DEVELOPMENT IN EASTERN EUROPE

Mr. Secretary General,

"Sacharow addresses a relatively freely elected people's congress while Gorbachev listens". Until very recently this would have been seen as a bad taste joke. Today it has happened. It goes to prove that our traditional concepts of Eastern Europe must be rethought. Our handling of the new situation will be important for the continued process of change which is under way in Eastern Europe.

True, the picture is uneven. There is a widening gap between radical change and reform in Hungary and Poland on the one hand and the holding-the-line policy in the GDR and Czechoslovakia on the other - not to speak of Romanian retrenchment and the present policies on minorities pursued by Bulgaria. We are witnessing unprecedented changes in our immediate East European neighbourhood. Clearly there is new ferment in the wake of the policy of perestroika in the Soviet Union.

- Perestroika in the Soviet Union serves both as legitimation and inspiration for reformers who want to go further and faster in restructuring the economy and the political system,
- There is a critical need to improve the economic situation and raise the standard of living,
- New generations in Eastern Europe do not feel constrained by geopolitical considerations deriving from the experience of the Second World War in the same way as the older generation.
- The attraction of the West and the easing of East-West tensions have inspired hopes for reconnection with the mainstream of developments in the West.

How reversible is the ongoing process? While we may experience setbacks in certain areas, parts of the process have clearly become irreversible.

The future course may follow a variety of paths. Soviet choices will reflect first of all the dynamics of development in Soviet society, but they will also be shaped by the incentives and opportunities created by Western policies.

Eastern Europe has become part of a global communication network. Western media and other more or less formal information channels have such an influence on the people of Eastern Europe that it is no longer possible to maintain fundamentally different political systems in Europe. The technological development has come so far that countries can no longer by political decisions contain this process entirely or impose an information or knowledge black-out upon its population.

In our own countries we have seen how real democracy became a reality as a consequence of the general right to education. In a very similar manner we may now be experiencing the ascent of democracy where this seemed completely out of the question only 20 years ago.

We may experience Eastern Europe working its way towards a managed market economy. In my opinion, this is the only solution to their problems and the only workable solution.

A peace structure in Europe must be supported by a broadening net of cooperation in the fields of economy and trade, industry and technology, ecology and resources. Above all it must be meaningful for ordinary citizens by strengthening respect for human rights, freedom of conscience and religion, increasing opportunities for travel and access to information. The greater the level of people-to-people contacts, the more difficult it will be for the regimes to constrain such ties and isolate their societies from Western influence.

We can expect that Moscow will be on guard against destabilization and concerned about cohesion in the field of security and foreign policy. But we do not know where the line of tolerance may go.

Our policy should be aimed at fostering peaceful change. We should welcome and be supportive of reform and change in Eastern Europe in a

manner that will not give rise to any suspicion that we are attempting to force developments, create division and change security alignments.

Clearly, we should exploit the central role of the Helsinki process in all its aspects and in a balanced manner.

Bilaterally, we should strengthen the political dialogue, economic cooperation and cultural exchange with Eastern European countries.

We should welcome Eastern European countries' contacts with regional organizations in the West. One example is the invitation to Poland and Hungary to join in the cooperation under the Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe. A next step may be participation under the Human Rights Convention. In addition to ongoing cooperation within the UN Economic Commission for Europe, we should widen the contacts in the field of economic policy, development and ecology between the OECD and Eastern European countries.

Our offer of contacts should be open to all Eastern European countries which qualify for cooperation in the area concerned.

While we must act cautiously, should we not increasingly offer the possibility of studying and learning from the way our economic and social systems work. Should we not increasingly acquaint Eastern European countries with the role of our trade unions, our industrial federations, our quality standards and quality controls in industry and agriculture as well as our system of "ombudsmen" to safeguard the interests of consumers, women and children.

We should be prepared to discuss with Eastern European countries in a concrete way their needs and expectations for credits, investments, for development of cooperation in fields of research, technology and management and in solving environmental problems. I am neither advocating a Marshall plan for Eastern Europe nor a scheme for subsidizing ineffective economies. But I think time has come for a more generous approach to financial support and the transfer of know-how, based on commercially sound criteria, to individual Eastern European countries which have achieved a certain level of economic and political reform.

All Eastern European countries are facing a rapidly deteriorating ecological situation which increasingly will affect all of Europe. To meet those challenges we should propose cooperation in environmentally sound technologies.

As in earlier periods the combination of economic reform, political liberalization and East-West interaction could produce its own dynamism in Eastern Europe. We should not disregard the possibility that developments in Eastern Europe may get out of control and cause destabilization. Risks for setbacks should not, however, keep us from moving ahead with a broad programme of cooperation and dialogue. We need to be prudent and realistic in our approach and to continue close consultations within our Alliance.