

Dear Milovan Djilas,

It is a great honor and indeed a pleasure to welcome you to this Meeting of the Central Board of the Norwegian Labour Party

There is no doubt that the Second World War, with all its tragedy, had a decisive impact on forging a lasting friendship between the people of Yugoslavia and Norway. Our common struggle against Nazi rule and oppression brought about a sense of solidarity and common purpose which to this day marks the special quality of our relations.

Our struggle against the tyrant was successful, but your own struggle for more democracy proved to be both enduring and difficult.

We know about your own role and effort in the process when Yugoslavia broke with the Soviet Union in 1948. Then you were truly in the first line of defence against Comintern's severe attacks, and indeed you showed firmness and managed to withstand this powerful opponent. In the following years, however, you experienced that you could not accept all aspects of the course of development in your own country.

We came to know you as a courageous, outspoken critic of what you saw as abuse of power. We listened to your warnings that freedom was threatened to suffocate under the crushing weight of bureaucracy.

You were yourself a part of the political leadership. We came to see you as a person of extraordinary integrity and human conscience. You chose to speak out in full candor. The reward for this outspokenness was denunciation and imprisonment. Your struggle continued with the weapon that oppressive politicians fear the most: The pen.

Your books, which gained you world wide recognition and respect, brought you no reward at home. But today, the 9 years of imprisonment stand out in striking contrast to the open criticism of the political systems in many countries in Eastern Europe - countries which today publish the books you were condemned for.

In your essay "My Nordic Dream", you write the following: "I wish that we would become a part of Europe, a part of a social democratic Europe, not a part of Balkan or of the Soviet Union. And one day we shall become a part of Europe, even if I shall not be allowed to see it happen".

I believe that the political landscape of Europe may be changing so quickly that all of us here will, as we already have to some extent, experience that traditional dividing lines through the heartland of Europe will become less significant, and that we may experience a period of gradual and peaceful change towards a situation where military alliances and non-alignment will not stand in the way of the restoration of greater cultural and economic unity in Europe.

We will always see you as a towering figure in the history of the international labour movement. You became the first reformist

among the communists, and later, the first communist who declared himself a social democrat.

Earlier in your life, you have not only experienced a cold political climate, you have also written about the cold of the unheated prison cells. As a tangible token of our warm affection I have the honor, on behalf of all of us, to present you with a Norwegian sweater as a symbol our shared hopes and expectations for a warmer political climate for all of us, regardless of where in Europe we happen to live.