

**Prime Minister  
Gro Harlem Brundtland**

**Speech at dinner given by the Speaker of the Norwegian Parliament in connection with the Nobel Jubile Symposium, Oslo, 9 December 1991.**

Mr. Speaker,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

About 70 years ago, when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1922 for his relief work in the Soviet Union, the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen sat in his study outside Oslo writing a letter to a friend. The scene he saw from his window was peaceful, sunny and frosty. Nansen wrote:

" There is peace, profound peace, the world seems beautiful - and still men have made Hell out of it. It seems incredible; men cannot really be such stupid brutes as to obviously destroy all future possibilities of making existence better. We must awake one morning and discover that it was all a ghastly nightmare. Men are not bad after all, and the future is promising and rosy. But every day we run our heads up against brutal facts of reality, and they turn out to be even more brutal than we anticipated."

This was at a time when European nations were still struggling for territory and power. The people of Europe were being severely punished for the imperfections of Versailles. And the bodies set up by the League of Nations were only partially successful in solving some of the controversy.

Today, states created about 70 years ago are about to break up. In Yugoslavia thousands of people have lost their lives in an ugly civil war. Many countries have condemned the aggression of the Serbs, but the prevailing sense is one of frustration because we have so far been unable to remedy the situation. The people of the Soviet Union, which Nansen spent so many years helping, may be able to avoid similar upheavals. The democratic achievements of Russia and the Ukraine hold out hope for an orderly transition.

The creation of the European Community has effectively eliminated war between Western European countries. In our immediate neighbourhood, however, such security is still a remote luxury - and the economic prosperity which has come with stability is far from being shared by all Europeans.

The threat of East-West conflict which we faced previously is gone, but the current transition period entails new risks and uncertainties. We must guard against these risks and create new political and economic lines of defence. Obviously, as countries are breaking up, we are challenged to find new solutions to deal with possible internal conflict and

oppression.

Military power alone will not be the answer to internal unrest. Even if the right of humanitarian intervention is about to become more widely recognized as a legitimate measure in exceptional circumstances, few governments have a mandate from mothers and fathers to send their youth into armed struggle inside foreign countries.

We have, however, means at hand that were denied earlier generations. It has become possible to instantly mobilize international public opinion. This is perhaps the most effective defence against tyranny and oppression available today.

Through satellites and cables we receive images from all over the world, 24 hours a day. Atrocities and violations of human rights will become instantly known to the international community in an age of instant global television.

The situation of this year's winner of the Nobel Peace Prize is indicative of this new situation. When she is unable to be with us here today for reasons for which only the Government of Myanmar is responsible, that Government will know that it faces a formidable international opposition.

Today, the name Aung San Suu Kyi has been added to such names as Carl von Ossietzky, Andrei Sakharov and Lech Walesa. They were also unable to come to Oslo to receive the Prize. Those who prevented them have been proven wrong. The same historic judgement will be coming to the government of Myanmar. The detention of Suu Kyi will not stand.

What we are facing here is not only oppression against a single individual who dared to speak her mind and struggle for what she believed in. We are facing a defiance of the idea of democracy itself.

There is such a thing as a standard which must be met by participants in inter-state relations. We must defend democracy and human rights wherever and whenever they are being violated. We must use our means of pressure and implementation and we must strengthen them where they are imperfect.

Countries will continue to be sovereign, but their sovereignty belongs to the people and not to dictators or oppressors. Sovereignty will no longer protect a country from solidarity people to people.

In the time ahead, with all the uncertainties and potential disputes, aggressors and oppressors will have a hard time. The struggle for global democracy has not been won, but it will never be lost.

Fridtjof Nansen's words are still valid today. In a speech he gave 70 years ago he said that "no realpolitik in a civilized world is thinkable unless it is based on mutual caring and

sharing, mutual respect and mutual confidence."

In this spirit we must continue to upgrade our civilization. We will continue to need a strong international public conscience. We must continue to hold governments internationally accountable. Each of the Peace Prize winners who is present or represented here today have made and will continue to make a substantial contribution to this aim.

Thank you.