

6

SPEECH BY MR. JÓN BALDVIN HANNIBALSSON, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT THE CSCE CONFERENCE ON HUMAN DIMENSION, COPENHAGEN, 5 JUNE 1990.

-----

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates.

A long journey begins with a small step. We have come a long way since Helsinki, Stockholm, Belgrade, Madrid, Vienna: Once again these old European cities have made history. Then Paris, London, Bonn and now beautiful Copenhagen, when the Danes are celebrating the 141st anniversary of the adoption of their Constitution. And then we are on our way to Moscow in 1991.

And what is it all about?

It is all about people; people as individuals; people as nations - independent or subordinated; ethnic minorities, sometimes suppressed, even persecuted. It is about our hopes for a better world.

For centuries Europe has been a bloody battleground. The latest carnage is well within living memory - leaving tens of millions of corpses in massgraves all over the continent. The driving force behind this repeated urge to self-destruction is as ignoble as human nature allows: Greed, Envy, Hatred, Fear, Territorial conquest, religious fanaticism or ideological mass hysteria.

For the last 45 years we have enjoyed an unusually long stretch of Peace. But for some of us it was the enforced Peace of the Prison Camp. For all of us it was Armed Peace, based on fear and mutual mistrust. And all the time we were piling up now and more destructive weapons - threatening each other -

with mutually assured mass destruction, correctly initialled as Madness. We were blindly heading for Armageddon, the ultimate ecological disaster. The Final solution to all the problems humanity has created for Spaceship Earth.

In the last few years we have at last taken the first few hesitant steps away from the brink. It is the modest beginning of a hopefully long journey back to sanity, reason and responsibility. That is what it is all about.

But these are but the first small steps. The way ahead is uncertain and wrought with dangers. There are still quite a few warriors of the past waiting in ambush on the way.

We should therefore watch our step carefully. This is no time for euphoria - not yet.

The mental processes of the past are hard to unlearn, especially for those who thought they had discovered the Truth of History. There is a long way to go from hatred to harmonious co-existence, based on understanding and trust. For that we need time - plenty of time.

But on this journey from Helsinki to Copenhagen we have undeniably made some progress. We have agreed on the first measures to halt the Arms Race. We have even started the process to turn the swords into ploughshares. The Berlin Walls have started tumbling down. The nations of Eastern Europe, who suffered too long from under an alien system, that was imposed upon them by military force, have been set free.

The transition from totalitarianism to liberty is a tortuous one. Before things start to get better they may even get worse. But at least there is hope at the end of the tunnel. The main thing is that in place of prejudice we see people grappling with pragmatic solutions instead of confrontation behind fortifications. There is a longing for openness and a striving for co-operation. That is the most hopeful change that has occurred.

So far so good. Since we started on this long journey we haven't suffered any major setbacks. But Tiananmen Square, outbursts of ethnic violence in Eastern Europe, within the Soviet Union, in Kashmir, South Africa and elsewhere, are there to remind us, how precarious the situation is. And how easily the flames of hatred can flare up again.

We are talking here about the question of political leadership. It so happens that the president of the Soviet Union, Mr. Gorbachev, is acting out the greatest historical role of any statesman of the Post-War era. He has been the initiator of change, the pioneer of peaceful Reform. His refraining from the use of force to halt the Democratic Revolution in Eastern Europe actually made it all possible.

But every step that he takes from here onwards is wrought with dangers. The long delayed economic reform, within the U.S.S.R. may bring social upheaval in its wake. The use of force in repressing legitimate claims to independence of the

Baltic nations could destroy our confidence in our unfailing commitment to the universal human values of the rights of nations to independence and sovereignty.

We cannot pretend that the problem of the Baltic States can be glossed over or forgotten, lest we endanger the peace process. The simple fact is: Human rights and the rights of nations are indivisible. These universal human values cannot be handed out as privileges to be enjoyed by some of us, but denied to others.

The undisputed historical fact is that the Baltic nations were independent states, recognized as such by the international community. During the war they suffered the fate of military occupation and illegal annexation. The illegality of this act of war has been recognized by the Soviet Parliament.

There can therefore be no solution to this problem that is compatible with the Helsinki - Vienna process, other than full recognition of the Baltic nations' right to independence. At the same time the legitimate security interests of the Soviet Union in the Baltic area should be recognized and negotiated. Any use of force, be it economic or military, to keep these nations illegally and against their will within the Soviet Union, is in contradiction to the new CSCE - spirit and will unavoidably - put at risk our further progress towards a new and stable security order for Europe.

That would be a misfortune, not only for the Baltic nations

but for the Soviet Union themselves and the rest of Europe as well.

Peaceful negotiations, between the Soviet Government and the democratically elected Governments of the Baltic States, is a crucial test of the Soviet Union's commitment to the principles of peaceful reform and fundamental democratic values.

The same principles apply to the question of German unity. The rights of nations to self-determination mean that the reunification of Germany is for the German nation to decide, in free and fair elections. Since unification will hopefully be achieved without the creation of a new German state, it is for the citizens of that state to decide on Germany's place in the new European security order. Since the division of Europe is hopefully a thing of the past, we should not be thinking in terms of a balance between divided blocks of states. Rather we should think in terms of an integrated Europe, whole and free, politically as well as economically. But the German state is under a historical and moral obligation not to leave any doubt whatsoever as to the inviolability of the Polish/German Border.

Mr. Chairman,

Hopefully we are gradually unlearning the thinking processes of the past and moving away from their physical manifestations: Confrontation between antagonistic blocks of nations.

Hopefully we shall in the end succeed in replacing the old security system, based on blocks, with a new one, based on

universal acceptance of human rights and democratic values. Hopefully. But we are not there yet. And we should be wary of embracing simple patent solutions to complicated problems. If we should have learnt anything from the terrible mistakes of the past, it would be not to believe in the immediate coming of Paradise on Earth.

The way to hell is indeed paved with good intentions. Many a Prophet of Paradise on Earth turned out to be a deranged visionary of Fanaticism and Hatred,; and left behind a scorched Earth. Let's beware of them.

What we need is patience and pragmatism - and a lot of time. Man is fallible and he learns but slowly. And each generation seems to have to relearn the lessons of the past - through its own experience.

While we should therefore build on the organizations that are already in place there can be no question that the overcoming of the East - West divide has created ample scope for bolstering the CSCE - mechanism itself.

As co-operation replaces confrontation, consideration should be given, for instance, to more regular political consultations among all 35 participating states. In my government's view, such consultations should compliment - but not replace - the work of organizations, that through long years of experience have contributed significantly to the cause of European co-operation, security and stability.

Mr. Chairman,

It was with great pleasure that my Government accepted your graceful invitation to participate in this conference on the Human Dimension - in our old common capital city of Copenhagen. Coming to Copenhagen for an Icelander is always a "rendez-vous" with History.

For centuries my country was a Danish colony. It was here in the lecture halls of the University, in the libraries, cafés and pubs of old Copenhagen, that Icelandic patriots and intellectuals, poets, writers and politicians of the 19th century, started the long journey home, that ultimately brought us the restoration of the independent Icelandic Republic. That was in the aftermath of the 1st World War - at the same time as the Baltic States regained their freedom. Having won limited independence in 1918 it took us 22 years, and the dislocation of a new World War, to clinch the matter. I sincerely hope that the Baltic nations can give full meaning to their declarations of independence in a shorter space of time and without putting at risk the peace process, that is gathering momentum, based on unqualified acceptance of the universality of human rights everywhere.

Admittedly we need some time for our dreams to come true. But let us hope that for once, time is on our side.

