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SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

105 60 STOCKHOLM - Sweden

Speech by OLOF PALME  
at the hearing  
"Freedom to all peoples,  
peace in the world"  
Stockholm, March 13. 1982

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Speech by Olof Palme at the hearing "Freedom to all peoples, peace in the world", Stockholm March 13, 1982

Conference delegates,  
Friends from near and far

On behalf of the Swedish Labour Movement I wish to extend to you a very hearty welcome to this hearing, which has been organized jointly by the Swedish LO and by the Social Democratic Party.

I wish to extend a special welcome to our foreign guests who have come to share their experience with us, and also to those who have agreed to sit on the panel which is to lead our discussions. We felt it was important to hold this meeting on human and trade union rights, social justice and nations' right to self-determination .

We have chosen to focus our attention on four countries, four regions: Afghanistan in Asia, El Salvador in Central America, the Warsaw Pact's Poland in Eastern Europe and NATO's Turkey with its links both with Western Europe and the western part of Asia.

This sample, as it were, does not mean, of course, that we are indifferent to other struggles, other peoples' sufferings and fight for freedom.

We feel just as much solidarity with the peoples of South Africa and Namibia in their struggle against a hateful system of oppression. In the same way, we feel solidarity for the countries bordering on South Africa, which are exposed to provocations and terror by the apartheid regime. The death of trade union leader Neil Agget in an isolation cell in South Africa recently bears witness to the brutality of that regime against its own population. In the Socialist International we are in the process of preparing actions of solidarity with the people of South Africa one of which will take the form of a conference in one of the front line states this autumn.

We are also concerned over crisis spots in the Middle East and over the tragedy rooted in the fact that two peoples, the

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the Israeli and the Palestinians, link their history and their dreams for the future with the same territory. The Israeli Government has made a substantial contribution to increasing tension by its annexation of the Golan Heights, an act which is a contravention of international law.

We are deeply moved by the tragedy following in the wake of the wars in Indo-China with the vast streams of refugees fanning out over South-East Asia.

We have strong links with the struggles for freedom going on in Latin America, a continent where military dictatorships are the predominant form of government and where home-grown oppressors and foreign interests profit from people's misery.

The four countries we have chosen for this hearing may be taken as a symbol of the motto "Freedom for all peoples, peace for the whole world". These are countries where the people's longing for freedom and their struggle for national independence have become a focus of our interest.

We are examining developments in those countries so as to strengthen the public's rejection of oppression and foreign intervention and to give those peoples our support and the knowledge of our solidarity with them.

Our hearing will also be a protest against intervention by major powers and the hypocrisy which is often a characteristic of world policy.

One superpower supports the right of the Polish people to self-determination and the struggle of the Polish free trade union movement. This is praiseworthy. However, that same power is helping the regime in El Salvador oppress the workers and peasants. The US government imagines the spectre of the Soviet Union, communism and Cuba behind the liberation struggle in Central America. When the Danish Prime Minister pointed out this instance of hypocrisy, he had to withstand the cries of protest from the power in question and from the right-wing in Denmark. We say, "You did right, Anker, to call a spade a spade".

The other superpower supports the right of the people of El Salvador to self-determination and its struggle for freedom. This is praiseworthy. But at the same time it is denying the Polish people and the Polish working classes the right to decide their own future. The government of the Soviet Union seems to see the spectre of the USA and capitalism behind the liberation struggle in Poland. This is a way of shying away from the truth, which is that the Polish people have rejected the Leninist system.

The international Social Democratic<sup>ic/</sup> movement must be able to criticize instances of intervention and oppression by major powers, wherever they may occur. It should not be ensnared by a policy based purely on interests. It must be able to remain true to its basic ideals and as far as possible to be able to make its voice heard.

At the Socialist International's meeting of party leaders in Paris on 29th December last, a meeting called to discuss events in Poland, we unequivocally condemned the military coup and said that the Communist leadership is responsible for the threat to a continued policy of detente which the coup on 13th December represents. We said that neither democracy nor socialism can be based on decrees issued from "on high" nor on a return to the injustices and oligarchical system of the past. The Socialist International adopted the same stand of principle as we did on the Polish issue, a stand which also applies to the letter for, e.g. Turkey, Afghanistan and El Salvador too.

We should not overestimate our importance or our scope for influencing developments. But, it is important that there should be people who defend people's rights. It is in the interests of all small, medium-sized and non-aligned states to constantly defend individual nations' rights to independence and to protect the principles of democracy in a world very much dominated by major powers and transnational corporations.

Social Democracy has a century-long tradition of struggle for freedom behind it in our various countries and on the international plane.

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It was Social Democracy which secured basic human and trade uni-  
rights in country after country following a struggle with  
bourgeois society's powers that be. It was the labour movement  
which had to bear the brunt in the struggle against the ideolog-  
ies of violence in Europe. Tens of thousands of social democrat  
lost their lives for their belief in the need to fight Stalinis-  
fascism and nazism.

In Spain, Portugal and Greece our parties and governments  
played a major part in overthrowing dictatorships.

This tradition means that we feel a very strong bond and solid-  
arity with the forces which are today struggling for the same  
freedom and rights which we ourselves once won and have managed  
to retain, while patiently working to extend them.

Over two years ago now Soviet troops marched into Afghanistan.  
We condemned that invasion strongly and there is no reason  
for us to change our view on that score.

I said at the time that we were strongly opposed to the Soviet  
Union's intervention in Afghanistan, primarily for the  
following reasons.

Firstly, this is a case of brutal aggression, a flagrant violat-  
ion of every nation's right to self-determination, a contravent-  
ion of international law. It is never possible to justify milit-  
ary intervention in the internal affairs of another nation. The  
liberation of a people must be its own work.

Secondly, this contributes to escalating tension in the world,  
between east and west, north and south. This intervention is  
thus a blow to efforts being made to combat the arms race, fam-  
and colonialism in regions already in an unstable situation.  
They are exposed to further strain, not only in Central Asia,  
also in South-East Asia, which has already been devastated by  
war, and on the Indian sub-continent.

Thirdly, this gives the other superpower a reason for stepping  
its arsenals and increasing its presence in areas where the US

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 did not previously maintain military bases.

Fourthly, it is a severe blow to the non-aligned movement, of which Afghanistan was a member, and whose internal cohesion is now seriously threatened. The non-aligned movement has had an important part to play in efforts to achieve peace, disarmament and a juster distribution of resources worldwide.

These reasons remain just as valid today.

The intervention in Afghanistan was a very severe blow to efforts to achieve detente. It has been quoted as one of the main motives for a fresh escalation of the arms race and has put a great strain on the non-aligned movement. I am convinced that a continued Soviet presence in Afghanistan will remain a threat to world peace and detente.

Today's Soviet leaders have every reason to recall Lenin's instructions to the Soviet ambassador in June 1921: "Our policy in the East is not a policy of aggression. It is a policy of peace and friendship. In the course of your work you must systematically emphasize this basic fact and in particular in Kabul you must make our friendship with Afghanistan your prime goal.

He continued: "You must at all costs avoid the fatal mistake of trying to implant communism in that country by artificial means. We must say to the Afghan government that not for a minute are we considering forcing a system on your people which is alien to its present stage of development.

It is important for us not to forget Afghanistan. It is difficult to get news from there, from a country with closed borders and a closed system. The news which does reach us is often distorted and exaggerated. It is therefore particularly important for Håkan Hermansson from the newspaper Arbetet to be able to give his recent impressions from a trip to Afghanistan. He will be taking the floor shortly.

On 12th September 1980 Western Europe found a new military dictatorship in its midst. When the peoples of Europe had finally got rid of Franco, Salazar, Caetano, Pattakos and Papadopoulos we thought that a page had been turned in the history of our con-

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tinent. But once again we were to experience a military takeover of power, once again to, so it was claimed, "put a stop to terrorism and chaos" and to prepare the way for a "true democracy". Despite all this talk it was a real dictatorship that was born complete with torture, tens of thousands of political prisoners, trade union activist prisoners, mock trials and death penalties.

In Turkey we are witnessing a merciless, anti-trade union, anti-social economic policy, which is benefiting a few rich people at the expense of the masses. What we are in fact seeing there is a form of military capitalism.

One of the parties which is a member of the Socialist International, the Republican People's Party, has been dissolved by the military regime, as have other parties too. Its leader, our good friend Bülent Ecevit, was thrown into prison for his criticism of the torture and lack of democracy. Ecevit has now been released but is once again being threatened with further trials and penalties. In the past few days fresh raids have apparently been started against our brothers and sisters in that Social Democratic Party by the military regime.

At the same time, the public in Western Europe is becoming more and more aware of the situation and is condemning the oppressive system, while the United States, on the other hand, has stepped up its economic, political and military aid to the country. The generals in Warsaw are being condemned, while their colleagues in Ankara are being congratulated. This is hypocrisy. Last year the USA gave Turkey no less than 547 million dollars in aid and this year the President of the United States has asked Congress for over 700 million, 403 million being for military aid. No-one can say that here we are seeing sanctions being introduced in the name of freedom.

We must show our solidarity with the people of Turkey and in doing so always bear in mind the words of our Turkish friends: Don't demand less of Turkish democracy than you demand of your own. Turkey must not be regarded as having what at best could be described as a second class democracy. It must mean trade union and human rights and freedom for the people of Turkey.

On 13th December 1981 in the early hours of the morning what had been a promising period in the recent history of Poland was brought to a close. Someone is quoted as saying that the Poland of Solidarity disappeared as though swallowed up by a chasm. A regime which was incapable of providing food for the people, of obtaining spare parts for industry, was still capable of consolidating its hold over the country by violence.

The news reaching us from Poland now tells of bitterness and sorrow. Today, exactly three months after the military coup, none of the problems have been solved or even diminished by Poland's military communist regime. The economy continues to decline and the people's material well-being is deteriorating constantly. Enormous price increases have been introduced, and repression in Poland goes on. 5000 of Solidarity's members are said to be still in prison. A large number of people have been arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for alleged crimes under the laws introduced in connection with the proclamation of the state of emergency. Some have received heavy sentences for minor offences. Tens of thousands of people have been dismissed from their jobs over the past three months, or have been transferred to other jobs. These repressive measures are aimed at the free trade union Solidarity. The leaders have been imprisoned and others are being frightened into silence by further waves of arrests and heavy penalties. The regime is also trying to undermine the foundations for trade union activities by forcing people to move.

There are no signs of any wish to embark upon a dialogue with Solidarity, which without doubt represents public opinion to a very large degree and without whose enthusiastic participation in the decision-making process no lasting and constructive solution is possible.

It is possible to kill or to silence individual persons, but it is not possible to wipe out the memory of 16 months of experiencing what was an actual process of democratization, a dream of society where there would be no fear, no lies and no dictatorial rule.



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We reiterate the demands made by the Swedish labour movement and by the international social democratic movement:

release all trade union and political activists who have been imprisoned or taken into custody

let Solidarity conduct its trade union activities without restriction in conformity with the ILO Convention, of which Poland is a signatory; stop the repression and put an end to martial law.

One of the many Poles who have been arrested is Julius Wilczur-Garztecki. He is the general secretary of the Polish Socialist Party. His crime is that he signed an application for legalization of the party, whose traditions stretch back a very long way. The party has also said that it would be willing to be represented on the national conciliation front announced by the regime. When following the takeover on 13th December the party's members refused to cooperate on the regime's terms, Julius Wilczur-Garztecki was imprisoned. He has written to me describing his and other prisoners' situation. How can membership of the socialist party be a crime? We demand that Julius Wilczur-Garztecki be released.

The people's democracies of Eastern Europe were originally set up under the protection of the Soviet occupation forces. The Soviet motive was to create a buffer, but the regimes had no popular support. Or if there was any kind of acceptance by the population, this soon disappeared. These countries have since been burdened with economic problems, lack of political freedom and rigid bureaucracies.

At regular intervals too, crises have erupted, in East Berlin, in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia and now in Poland, which have been serious political crises for the whole of Europe and indeed for the world at large.

We very much hoped that the people of Poland would be able to implement their reforms by peaceful means and without interference from outside. That dream has for the moment been crushed.

And where will the next crisis occur - and when? Things are not

a standstill in Eastern Europe. It is not possible to put social and political development in moth balls. The forces of change cannot be halted, they continue to forge ahead. Eastern Europe must find a way of bringing about a continuous process of change instead of having these eruptions every ten years or so.

What can we do to facilitate that process of continuous change in Eastern Europe? One means is via increased economic cooperation and more extensive contact. But, we can also contribute by increasing confidence in the fact that change is not a threat to security.

Obviously we must show a reasonable amount of consideration for the security interests of the major powers. History has shown that the Soviet Union has very legitimate security requirements. But we will not allow this to encroach on the freedom of small nations.

The Swedish people has shown tremendous solidarity with the people of Poland in this troubled time. Sweden has provided material aid, but the people have also shown an understanding of the democratic ideas for a future of freedom of which Solidarity was an expression. We shall not cease to show our solidarity. Poland remains very close to our hearts.

In El Salvador last year more than 15,000 civilians were killed. And this figure represents only part of the picture. In El Salvador military and economic elites are systematically trying to wipe out political leaders, members of trade unions, priests, journalists and peasants. According to the former United States Ambassador, Robert White, they believe that they secretly have the support of the Reagan Administration because the alternative would be to hand over the country to the communists. Unfortunately, added Robert White, the President has injected new life into this theory by confirming that the government in El Salvador is making a resolute effort on behalf of human rights. The case, as we know, is quite the opposite.

Free elections, honest elections are, it goes without saying.

vital to democracy. We support the idea of elections in El Salvador, as we support this idea in other parts of the world. But honesty and integrity must be shown in organizing and holding elections. In El Salvador this requirement cannot be met, any more than it could be met in Guatemala the other week. Such parodies of elections also in fact harm the idea of free elections and democracy. Elections are to be held in El Salvador without the participation of the foremost political forces. Those forces rightly go in fear of their lives, which would be in danger if they were to publicly step forward and be nominated as candidates. In November 1980 the leaders of the FDR were murdered in a particularly barbaric fashion.

Despite all the ideological and geopolitical rhetoric there is today a definite way open to really bring the country out of the crisis. For a long time the opposition in El Salvador has been advocating negotiations and has submitted proposals for those negotiations. The FSLN in Nicaragua has submitted a five-point plan which could help reduce tension in the area. And recently the president of Mexico took the initiative in presenting a peace plan for the entire region.

We wholeheartedly support President Lopez Portillo's proposal. The president of Mexico explained the motives behind his initiative saying that Central America will be on the threshold of disaster if nothing is done and that this is perhaps the last chance of settlement before a major eruption. He warned the United States not to intervene and said that he was prepared to stake his administration and the authority of his country on the different points in the peace plan. Mexico would stand as a guarantor when it came to Latin America fulfilling its part of the bargain.

His plan is simple and clear:

The USA and Cuba must start talks and negotiations. Mexico has some ideas on this subject and is willing to participate in the initial phase of the process.

El Salvador must escape from the deadlock of "elections without negotiations and negotiations without elections". Instead it m

find a compromise solution subscribed to by the different groups. President Lopez Portillo is convinced that it would be possible to reach such a compromise and in a way which would allay the United States' fears over the possible consequences.

In Nicaragua the USA must refrain from exercising threats and violence in any form which is "dangerous, undignified and unnecessary". Balanced cutbacks in troops in the area must be started, e.g. the national guard loyal to the Somoza regime must be disarmed and the training of similar groups in the US must stop. Nicaragua for its part would then refrain from further military expansion. Moreover, pacts of non-aggression would be drawn up between Nicaragua on the one hand and the USA and Nicaragua's neighbours on the other.

This plan has received the support of the government of Nicaragua, of the FDR/FMLN in El Salvador, of the opposition in Nicaragua, of the Socialist International, of COPPAL, which is a wide spectrum of democratic parties in Latin America, of Cuba, and of widespread public opinion in the US, including 106 members of Congress.

Don't be afraid to negotiate, an American president once said. War can never be a lasting solution to El Salvador's problems. Give peace a chance.

Here in Sweden we must continue our campaign of solidarity. The Swedish government should declare its support of Mexico's peace plan without delay. It should also take the initiative at international level on behalf of the vast numbers of refugees in Central America. An effort on the part of Sweden could help improve the situation for the refugees and would give much needed political support to organizations and volunteers working in the region.

The Social Democrat Party has tabled a motion in Parliament calling for a grant of 100 million Swedish kronor as aid for refugees and victims of oppression in Latin America.

We in the Party will continue to give material support to the FDR and to our brothers and sisters in the MNR Party in El Salvador, support which is now in excess of one million kronor in monetary terms. We shall also continue to support social

democracy. The People's of Central America Movement's International Solidarity Fund and via the Socialist International.

The People's of Central America must finally be allowed to enjoy peace, independence and justice.

The struggle for human rights and trade union liberties applies to all peoples and all nations.

As long as there is oppression and lack of freedom, as long as occupation of territory and terror prevail individual persons, organizations and nations of East and West, North and South will seek to right wrongs and will rise up against injustice wherever it is found. It is difficult to stifle a person's longing for freedom.

The spirit of solidarity is being sorely tried at the present time. Hopes of freedom and democratic rule hinge on peoples' ability to withstand internal and external violence and on our being prepared to demonstrate our solidarity in supporting this struggle for freedom. Freedom, in the final analysis concerns us all.