

THE PRIME MINISTER
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Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Olof Palme, to
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SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE NORDIC AREA

Twenty years ago, Finland's President at that time, Urho Kekkonen, addressed the Paasikivi Society. His message on that occasion has come to exert a strong influence on security-policy thinking in the Nordic area. It has made an important contribution to the work for peace and détente in Europe. I am honoured that I have today been asked to link up with this fine tradition.

I need not remind this audience of the lines of thinking presented by Kekkonen in 1963. We remember that the main aim was by mutual commitments to seek to establish the freedom from nuclear weapons in the Nordic area which we all feel to be an important asset in our common efforts to preserve the calm in our part of the world. The idea was to place the Nordic countries "irrefutably outside the sphere of the speculations caused by the development of nuclear-weapons strategy".

During the 20 years which have elapsed, the arms race has accelerated and the nuclear threat has constantly increased. President Kekkonen's concern about the consequences of the development of nuclear-weapons strategy - which also found expression in his speech to the Swedish

Institute of International Affairs in 1978 - has certainly proved justified.

Urho Kekkonen's proposal for a nuclear-weapon-free Nordic area bore the stamp of foresight. Today it is in the forefront of our debate.

But I should like to avail myself of this opportunity of recalling yet another historic event.

In this building a document was signed nearly eight years ago that has become a milestone in postwar history. Thirty-five heads of state and government together declared that they wished to work for a Europe where security is guaranteed by détente and disarmament, where peoples - respecting one another's integrity and political systems - develop close contacts and trustful co-operation, where the rights and freedoms of individuals are recognized and protected.

Looking back on the past years, there are perhaps some who think that the optimism associated with the Final Act has proved groundless and that this document has lost its significance as a foundation for a more peaceful and more stable Europe.

It is true that the differences and antagonisms between countries and groups of countries are many and often bitter. Trade between East and West has not developed as was hoped. Contacts between those working in cultural fields are still limited. Violations of human rights have not ceased. The debate across national borders, even on ideological issues, which some of us looked for, has not been possible. Distrust persists. The arms race has not been halted.

And - most important of all - the two superpowers have been incapable of taking the opportunity to initiate a dialogue on the fundamental issues of their mutual relationship. For more than thirty years they have been mechanically repeating that they feel that their essential interests are threatened by the other, and that they are compelled to continue building up their armaments in order to meet this threat. But they have not been able to talk with one another in order to ascertain whether the threat is real or, at least, if the nature and strength of the threat has changed, so that they can find out if their armaments bear any relation to reality. If this cramp is to be loosened up the small and medium-sized states will also have to take initiatives. They can be affected just as much as the superpowers themselves by a large-scale conflict. The furiously accelerating arms race also has them by the throat. They have a right and a duty to try to break this truly fatal deadlock. And to say in no uncertain terms that the power which resorts to nuclear weapons takes upon itself a terrible responsibility to mankind.

Nonetheless, the Helsinki Final Act has given us essential benefits. A number of important principles of international law were established. The principle of the inviolability of national borders was confirmed. The Helsinki document paved the way for the reunification of hundreds of thousands of people. A system of confidence-building measures was laid down in order to reduce the risk of military confrontation. Governments are forced to justify their actions both at home and abroad on the basis of the undertakings they have made in the Final Act. A machinery for continuing talks was created that has a value all its own. In Madrid, Sweden and Finland, together with the other neutral and non-aligned states, have been actively engaged in achieving a substantive final document. In our view, the remaining decisions must be taken shortly. This would mean, for instance, that a disarmament conference can be held which Sweden has offered to host.

The Helsinki document retains its validity as a guide for the actions of states and as a foundation for future co-operation. It has given us a framework for economic and cultural co-operation, for the upholding of human rights and for the emergence of a new policy of détente. We have reason to feel proud of having taken part in this historic course of events which led up to the signing of the Final Act in 1975, and which for all time will be associated with the name of President Kekkonen.

The Kekkonen Plan and the Helsinki Final Act are concrete evidence of the role Finland plays in international politics. They also underline the importance of the small states in the promotion of international security and stability.

The situation in northern Europe has long been characterized by calm and stability. For more than thirty years the pattern of security policy in the Nordic area has stood firm, despite external strains and a sometimes chilly international political climate.

This pattern has been determined and shaped by independent decisions according to the historical experiences and security interests of the various countries. Denmark and Norway have attached a reservation to their NATO undertakings whereby they do not permit the stationing on their territories of foreign troops or of nuclear weapons in peacetime. Finland pursues a policy of neutrality and maintains stable and trustful relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance. I wish here to express respect and admiration for the way in which the policy - which we also regard as being in Sweden's interest - is pursued by President Koivisto and the Government of Finland.

Sweden will be steadfastly defending and pursuing the policy of neutrality which we regard as the foremost safeguard of our peace and our independence. This is why we have patiently sought to build up the confidence of, and the clear awareness in, the rest of the world that Sweden pursues an independent policy, which keeps us outside alliances in peacetime and neutral in the event of war. We have affirmed our determination not to depart from this course even when subjected to strong external pressure.

The Swedish people stand behind the policy of neutrality. A consistent pursuit of this chosen course of action and its firm support by our people guarantee the durability of the policy of neutrality.

Our neutrality policy is supported by a defence which is strong in relation to our situation. We are confident in the strength of the Swedish defence and believe in our capability to defend our neutrality and independence ourselves in the event of an armed conflict.

The qualities which unite all the Nordic countries are the historical heritage, a common conceptive and cultural tradition, the democratic ideals, a relatively high degree of economic well-being and a great measure of social solidarity. Differences of opinion can certainly arise between our countries. But we preserve the will to come to agreement and we show respect for one another's stands on various issues. The fact that we are able to avoid conflicts between ourselves is also a source of strength from the point of view of security policy.

We are also united in the conviction that the absence of nuclear weapons in the Nordic area during the postwar period has been an essential contribution to calm and peace in our part of the world.

All in all, these elements form a unique community of interests and a pattern of security in the Nordic area.

This is not called in question by any other state. We take it for granted that its continuance is also in the interest of the world around us.

But nevertheless we in the Nordic area cannot rest on our laurels and be passive.

The calm and stability of this area are not assets established once and for all. We know that they must be constantly defended and promoted by a wise and foresighted policy. It is essential that we continually follow and seek to prevent a development which could threaten the long-standing stability. We must safeguard our security. Our policy must at the same time incorporate efforts to bridge gaps and to prevent conflicts which can affect our part of the world.

We know that the interest of the great powers in northern Europe becomes greater and more self-assertive when tension increases in the rest of Europe or in the world as a whole. Thus, the interests of security policy are clearly served by our promoting détente and by our taking an active part in disarmament and confidence-building measures.

It is true that the increased interest of the great-power blocs in northern Europe is mainly associated with the global struggle for power, with the development of the strategic balance and of the naval forces in our vicinity. But their dispositions also affect our own situation. Sweden has had very tangible evidence of the fact that military operations in the Baltic Sea have increased in intensity and scale.

The Report of the Submarine Defence Commission, as well as the consequent Swedish Government's statement and measures vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, are well known. There is broad consensus in Sweden that new violations of our territory must be prevented. Our naval defence is being strengthened. We are determined to assert our territorial integrity and the inviolability of our borders with all means at our disposal. I am convinced that the Swedish people are very determined on this point.

We must demand respect for the fundamental principles of international law as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. This is a matter of principles, the observance and preservation of which are vital to a peaceful development in the Nordic area and in Europe.

We have reacted sharply and emphatically also because we consider that increased tension and increased anxiety in the Nordic area cannot serve the interests of any state. Heightened tension in northern Europe can only put new obstacles in the way of the broader East-West dialogue which today seems more essential than ever before.

The aim of Sweden's policy is to promote stability in northern Europe, to reduce the tensions which may arise and seek to create confidence-building measures and bring about a disarmament process. We are supported in this aim by a growing public opinion which refuses passively to accept the march towards disaster which the continued, absurd nuclear rearmament actually is.

A policy promoting détente and co-operation across bloc borders in Europe should now, more than ever before, focus on reducing the role of nuclear weapons in international relations. It is only natural that in this context we should primarily look at the situation in the Nordic area. Today's debate on a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone reflects a genuine concern in our countries

that also we shall, in quite another way than before, experience the chill which characterizes relations between the great powers and which impedes real progress in the ongoing disarmament negotiations.

The basic purpose of a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone is to improve the security of the Nordic states. We want to reduce the nuclear threat to the Nordic area. This could be achieved through a combination of undertakings on the part of the Nordic states not to allow nuclear weapons on their territories, either in wartime or in peacetime, and a number of measures and undertakings on the part of the nuclear-weapon states. No threat of the use of nuclear weapons shall emanate from Nordic territory and, in return, the nuclear-weapon powers shall undertake not to use nuclear weapons against us or threaten to use them against us.

These efforts to increase the security of the Nordic area stem from a long-standing Swedish tradition of trying to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to reduce the risk of their being employed. In this context, one naturally calls to mind the initiative known as the Undén Plan.

It is not possible, nor is it a wise policy, to try in today's situation to formulate terms and provisions more precisely. We cannot now judge how a certain commitment from the one side will correspond with a commitment from the other side, so that the fundamental stability of security in the Nordic area will not be disturbed. This will require further thorough consideration and, in due time, negotiations.

Nevertheless, I should like to give a brief outline of some of the basic elements which in our view can and should be incorporated in an arrangement on a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The geographical extent of the zone should, in the first place, be the territories of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, including sea territories and the airspace above. Iceland, being a Nordic country, should of course be invited to participate.

A fundamental requirement is that the states included in the zone should undertake to keep their territories absolutely free of nuclear weapons. By their adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, all the Nordic states have undertaken not to acquire their own nuclear weapons, nor to acquire control over such weapons. In order to achieve absolute freedom from nuclear weapons, these states would also be required to undertake not to allow the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territories, either in wartime or in peacetime.

One pre-condition for a meaningful zone arrangement is that the nuclear-weapon states undertake fully to respect the nuclear-weapon-free status of the zone. In the first place, it depends upon the nuclear-weapon states to give clear and unconditional commitments not to attack or threaten to attack our countries with nuclear weapons.

We also consider that nuclear weapons which are primarily intended or suitable for employment against targets within the contemplated zone should be withdrawn from our vicinity. These nuclear weapons, both land- and sea-based, would in practice be superfluous.

We are obviously interested in there being no nuclear weapons in the seas in our vicinity. A zone arrangement must, therefore, also incorporate undertakings concerning a nuclear-weapon-free Baltic Sea. The extent and the more detailed conditions for this are issues which should be settled at negotiations.

We are convinced that a Nordic zone arrangement along these lines can make a real contribution to, and be an important element in, the efforts to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in Europe as a whole. A reduced nuclear threat and a reduced presence of nuclear weapons in our vicinity can contribute towards reducing tension between the great-power blocs. A nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Nordic area can thereby promote détente and strengthen the security of the Nordic area and of Europe.

The prospects of making progress in efforts to establish a zone would be promoted by the favourable development of negotiations on nuclear weapons in Europe and negotiations between the blocs on conventional armed forces. There is, thus, a connection between the zone process and disarmament efforts and measures to promote security in Europe as a whole.

The work on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Nordic area should not, however, be made consequent upon developments in the European negotiations. Progress on the zone issue can in itself make a constructive contribution to efforts for the gradual reduction of the role and number of nuclear weapons in Europe.

It is essential that we in the Nordic area develop the dialogue which has begun, and seek to create a common base for continued efforts. Talks should be held on the basis of the long-established and self-evident respect for the right of each Nordic country to make its own decisions concerning the policy which best serves its national interests. For its part, Sweden is prepared for open and trustful contacts of this kind.

Work to create a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone is in fact a continuing process, by which we ourselves can influence the political climate in our own region. This means that it has a confidence-building effect of its own.

The deterioration of East-West relations in Europe and the increased distrust between the superpowers cast their shadow also over development in our part of the world. We in the Nordic area have the right - and the duty - to try to contribute to a peaceful development in our region and to a change in the political climate which can ultimately lead us out of the dead-end of rearmament and military confrontation.

This is the light in which we should regard the idea of establishing a battlefield-nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Europe.

There is a considerable accumulation of nuclear weapons in the border zone between the two blocs - including artillery, short-range missiles and mines. Manoeuvres take place on both sides with simulated employment of nuclear weapons.

The direct confrontation of nuclear weapons ready for launching in the densely populated Central Europe involves an obvious risk of nuclear weapons being used at an early stage of a conflict and of a conflict being escalated because of an error. If nuclear weapons can be removed from a corridor on both sides of the bloc border, this risk would be considerably reduced.

Just as important is that an agreement of this kind would demonstrate a mutual readiness to achieve concrete tension-reducing results, which would in turn lay the foundation for a real reduction of nuclear armaments in Europe. In this sense, such a measure would have intrinsic worth as a confidence-building measure.

Negotiations on a corridor must be seen in a broader context, which also includes arrangements aiming at establishing balance between the conventional forces of both sides in Europe at as low a level as possible. Arrangements of this kind would make a further contribution to confidence and stability.

A while ago, the Swedish Government contacted certain other governments concerning their interest in a corridor free of battlefield nuclear weapons in Central Europe. We are now making a thorough study of the replies and reactions we have received, and intend to return to the issue. We are convinced that the future will demonstrate its validity.

The eyes of Europe and of the world are now on the negotiations on medium-range nuclear weapons. It is extremely important for the future security of Europe that these negotiations yield positive results. The best way to greater security for Europe is fewer nuclear weapons and an improved dialogue between East and West. I do not believe that the peoples of Europe, either in the West or the East, will understand the politicians who take upon themselves the responsibility of keeping or increasing the terrible arsenals of nuclear weapons which now hang like the Sword of Damocles over our continent.

It can never be said often enough nor strongly enough that the balance of terror, mutual deterrence, is a terribly fragile foundation for peace. In the long run, the risks of confrontation and war only increase. The future cannot be built on fear. More and more, and increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons with greater precision, shorter advance warning times and diminished vulnerability do not reduce the risk of war. The temptation to launch a first-strike - which would mean a world catastrophe - can in fact become greater.

Perhaps even more important is that the terrifying build-up of armaments - which an ever-growing public opinion refuses to understand - must be justified by caricature descriptions of the opposite party's aggressiveness and malevolent intentions. This polarization increases distrust and makes it more and more difficult to bring about the rational dialogue which is now so necessary. The small states must not tire in their endeavours to persuade the great powers to uphold and develop their contacts.

What has to be done is gradually to replace a security, which is dependent upon constantly increasing armaments, with a security which is basically political and which rests upon mutual trust. Political and ideological opponents must, despite fundamental differences of opinion, work together to avoid nuclear war. They can only survive together - or perish together.

We must be able to control not only technology and the development of weapons, but also our own fear and suspicion. President Paasikivi wrote in his memoirs about Finland's years of adversity that one could not "commit suicide for

fear of death". Even then these words had deep significance. Today, there are grounds for even more serious reflection and profound consideration.

The great powers have undoubtedly conflicting interests, which will probably persist during the foreseeable future. But there is also a mutual interest, overshadowing all else: and that is the interest in preventing a nuclear war which would destroy our civilization and extinguish all meaningful life on earth.

Starting with this basic insight, we must together stake out a course which leads away from the threat of war and destruction - towards a better world, a world of common security and faith in the future.

This we must do not only for ourselves, but also for the generations coming after us who have the right to demand that the leaders of the world shoulder their responsibility and allow calm and reason - and not weapons and violence - to guide their policies.