

Reshaping East-West Relations

Address by Secretary General, Manfred Wörner to a Eurogroup Seminar on "NATO: Partnership and Prospects"

It is a well-known fact that historians do not like dates. It is not that they deny that celebrate events actually did take place in, say, 1066, 1492 or 1789; but they usually insist that these events are not as significant as we were taught to believe at school. We should see them instead as just convenient reference points in an ongoing historical process.

This is no doubt sound advice; but I am going to disregard it. For I firmly believe that 1989 will go down in history as a watershed in East-West relations, and as a decisive point in the evolution of the Atlantic Alliance.

In 1989, the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe began to crumble. It is not the fact that its internal contradictions are breaking it apart which surprises. But there are many who held that this could be a very long drawn-out affair. Yet with the onset of internal crisis, the Communist system has begun to unravel faster than anyone would have thought possible, and faster change has brought with it greater unpredictability. Senator Nunn has hit the nail on the head in this respect when he says that "Communism has lost, but democracy has not yet won"; but we have witnessed developments sufficiently important to make a return to the Stalinist past well-nigh unthinkable:

- Poland has elected its first non-Communist government in forty years with a Prime Minister who is a Catholic and, we have every reason to believe, a true reforming democrat;
- Hungary has braved the wrath of its Eastern neighbours by opening its border with Austria; moreover it has repudiated a bilateral treaty with its Warsaw Pact ally, the GDR, in order to uphold its commitments under the Helsinki Final Act. Hungarians are planning now for the first completely free election ever to be held in a communist country;
- the Soviet Union has held a partially free election and a new Supreme Soviet has been nominated. It is not yet a parliament that we would recognise in the Western sense, but compared with its predecessor it represents a minor revolution. It has already flexed its muscles in debating the Afghan War, corruption in the Communist nomenklatura, and the appointment of government ministers. Its main opposition movement has the nation's most renowned dissident as its co-leader;
- the Soviet Union, having announced unilateral force reductions last December, has begun to pull troops and equipment out of Eastern Europe; not as much as we would like, or need, but, again, a start.

Theorists of totalitarianism used to point to two essential features: it could not change internally, and it would not give up its military power. But those are two areas where the Soviet Union has begun to move in 1989. How far and to what purpose we cannot yet say. Most encouraging of all, perhaps, is that people living in totalitarian societies have not become passive and apolitical.

The people in Solidarity, the Hungarian opposition or the Soviet popular fronts would, I trust,

agree that they are both the beneficiaries as well as the instigators of change. Communism has not failed, nor is the Soviet bloc imploding, by accident. When the Atlantic Alliance was established forty years ago, it had a dual purpose: to give the West military protection; and to contain Soviet power in such a way that the Communist system would be forced to mellow. The first mission was ensured from day one; the second has taken until 1989. How was it achieved?

- by denying the Soviet Union the possibility of further expansion, thereby forcing it to fall back on its internal resources and systemic contradictions;
- by offering the Soviet Union and its allies the hand of dialogue and co-operation, encouraging them to change by making it clear that the West would not seek to exploit their difficulties; on the contrary we would provide them with help and a stable international environment;
- by keeping our Alliance strong and cohesive; our internal political stability, our dynamism and prosperity have opened up a widening gap vis-a-vis the East; the Soviet Union can no longer compete on the basis of Marxist-Leninist ideology and practice; it is falling further - perhaps irretrievably - behind.

The 40th anniversary of NATO has made the past look all the more positive because of the hopeful future that lies before us. The lean, Cold War years of frustration and perseverance have finally borne fruit. The status quo is condemned; that much is clear. We are responsible for change; Gorbachev is as much the product of our system as of his own. Certainly the dramatic suddenness of the decline of Communism, the pent-up frustrations and pressures that have been released, have made some wonder whether the old status quo of division and confrontation is not somehow preferable to the uncertainties we now face. But the status quo, in its own way, was dangerous and explosive. It gave us a hazardous military stability, and, more importantly, even less political stability. We neither could, nor wanted to, sustain it.

No doubt change is producing turbulence and instability; but these are the inevitable by-products of necessary change. We have to mitigate their negative aspects, and use our limited influence to ensure a peaceful evolution towards freedom. The imprints of change are obvious:

- more open borders; more flow of information; instant communications; increased human contacts;
- decentralisation of political control, of economic mechanisms;
- the emergence everywhere of organized opposition forces calling for reform;
- not just populations, but also Communist elites turning to the West for guidance, inspiration and help; using our concepts and values.

So, in Eastern Europe, the lesson of 1989 is clear: the question is not if, but when, and to what degree, the Communist systems will transform themselves by absorbing pluralism, human rights and market mechanisms. Their dilemma is embodied both in Mr. Gorbachev's defensive assertions that he is not abandoning socialism, and in the definition by an Eastern joke of "Socialism" as the long and difficult path from Capitalism to Capitalism. And it is not true, as

Mr. Shevardnadze and others have charged, that their dilemmas stem from Western efforts to destabilise the East, or forces of Revanchism. The fault is with them: the failure of their systems to meet human aspirations. I hope these people do not really mean what they say. For, if so, it means they have understood nothing about the reality they face.

Our Alliance has the political initiative. We must secure change, anchor it to a new stable and durable political structure in Europe. The NATO Summit reaffirmed the Alliance's political vocation; not only to preserve the integrity of its territory, but to build a new Europe in which security is preserved by common liberal values, not military straitjackets. Everyone now knows what our blueprint for the year 2000 is: a Europe undivided, based on self-determination, democracy and market forces. On the other hand, confusion still reigns supreme as to what Mr. Gorbachev means by a Common European Home. But from my reading of Mr. Gorbachev's speech in Strasbourg, it appears that his vision is essentially the preservation of the status quo, while ours is of a dynamic process of overcoming the division of Europe.

You have seen our Summit Declaration. It is a conceptual architecture for managing change in Eastern Europe; not only by the NATO countries but by the West overall. We are fully engaged in assisting Poland and Hungary with their reform effort. I do not need to describe in detail all the initiatives: food aid by the 24 "Brussels group" of Western nations; discussions on debt in the Paris Club; on fresh credits in the IMF; bilateral initiatives to set up private enterprise trusts, or train Eastern managers and civil servants. I am, of course, not claiming credit on behalf of NATO for all these actions. It is obvious that the Alliance does not have, and cannot have, institutional responsibility for such operational tasks. But they flow from the framework set by the Summit Declaration and they will be co-ordinated within the Alliance, where we can look at the integrated picture: economic, military, and political, and bring to bear the combined weight of North America and Western Europe. And the overall package does not simply add up to a short-term relief operation for Poland and Hungary: it is a long-term programme designed to fundamentally reshape East-West relations - and to allow Communism to phase itself out peacefully. If reform fails, the lessons will not be lost on the hardliners in Czechoslovakia and East Germany. But if reform succeeds, that success will generate irresistible pressures for similar change throughout Eastern Europe.

I like to emphasize that NATO is above all a political Alliance with an essential role as an instrument of peaceful political change. Less has been said about the future role of defence, as if it were suddenly less important.

But manifestly it is not. Our Summit meeting made clear that our ambitious political strategy will succeed only if it is backed up by a robust defence, based on both nuclear and conventional forces. Periods of great political change are also periods of greater risk. And the larger the risk, the more it has to be underwritten by a sound insurance policy. To guard against setbacks and disappointments; to provide a framework of stability that will maximise our control over the pace and scope of change; above all to convince an over-armed and disturbed Soviet Union that it has no military solution to its problems.

Now there is a paradox: for forty years, our military defence functioned on the whole well. It was our political strategy that seemed not to be able to break East-West relations out of the Cold War-detente-Cold War syndrome. Today as we move, to use President Bush's phrase, "beyond containment" into post-Communist Europe, we have a political strategy stimulating and

rewarding reform. But it is our military defence that has become problematic. As we become more long-term minded in the political field, we are threatened with "short termism" in the military field, looking for the immediate gain instead of the longer-term investment.

Take, for instance, structural disarmament. Even before we have concluded an agreement in Vienna, conventional disarmament by stealth on our side - the weaker one - has already begun. And we cannot even take credit for it. Modernisation programmes that were agreed within the Alliance in the early 1980s are now being scaled back. Only three Alliance nations are currently increasing defence spending - but only modestly. Three others expect no real increases in their defence budgets for 1990, and the remainder are cutting back - in some cases dramatically. Such an evolution would be worrying at the best of times. And we now have to contend with a US congressional resolution linking the US troop level in Europe to the maintenance of European force commitments.

The reduction in spending is already beginning to bite: less training, lower readiness, reduced draft periods, undermanned and under-equipped divisions, reductions in forces stationed outside national territory. Those forces that we do have, find it more difficult to train for their mission, due to understandable public opposition to peacetime military activity: low-level flying, field exercises, the reception of reserve and reinforcement units.

What concerns me is that we avoid assuming that major East-West conventional force reductions are just round the corner, and that we can anticipate these by cutting back now. The East-West military balance has not yet changed and the Soviets continue to spend and to modernize. If we unilaterally cut into our strength, Mr. Gorbachev will know that he does not need to reach a conventional arms control agreement with the NATO Allies to do so. We cannot assume that he will unilaterally give up his true military capabilities for nothing in return.

So structural disarmament is the enemy of genuine arms control and of genuine security. And when we do reach an agreement in Vienna, we will still need to pay for the destruction of equipment and verification. Moreover, we are not giving up our Alliance security system. We are seeking greater security, at reduced numbers. We will need to fund what we have left over: indeed the quality of our defence effort, when our forces are thinned out, will become even more important. So arms control is first about more security, and only second about financial savings. If the CFE negotiations are successful, we will save money sooner or later, but that should be seen as a beneficial side-effect, not as the rationale of this process.

How do we address burden-sharing in this historic context? My very first speech as Secretary General, here in Washington one year ago, warned that "the burden-sharing debate must not be allowed to degenerate into a numbers game or a transatlantic slanging match". I can say the same today, with even greater conviction.

You are as aware as I that burden-sharing is not an Alliance issue like all the others; rather it is an integral part of the Alliance itself. It is anchored in the geographic, political and economic disparities that make up NATO. Thus, it will disappear only when the Alliance itself disappears - or at least emerges with a totally new structural form. In recent times, we have used all sorts of defence and economic indicators to de-politicise burden-sharing and assess it more objectively.

Such an approach is valuable and necessary; but burden-sharing will always be a highly political subject, touching the most sensitive nerves.

At the present stage, I would posit three theses for your consideration. First, despite our inability to eliminate them, we do not accept inequalities in our society. Similarly, the lack of a firm solution to burden-sharing does not mean that we cannot improve on the present situation. Second, in the Alliance context, it is clear Western Europe must do more: politically, economically, militarily. Third, I believe that the burden-sharing will play an important role in the context of the CFE process.

On the first point, NATO is now moving ahead. You all know our report on the sharing of the roles, risks and responsibilities of collective security. Improved burden-sharing is a major feature of our 1989 Ministerial Guidance, the basis of our defence planning for the next two years. This November, ministers will be receiving a comprehensive progress report. Despite the gloomy budget outlook, it will contain many positive features:

- the decision by the Netherlands to deploy a new Army Corps Com-mand Unit in Germany this year;
- the Italian offer of an additional battalion for the ACE Mobile Force;
- logistics and training agreements between the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic;
- more stockpiling of ammunition in the CINCSOUTH region;
- the Italian offer to provide a base for the 401st Tactical Air Wing.

On the second point, hardly any one seriously contests the disproportionately large contribution made by the United States to allied defence - although I am happy to say, there is today more public understanding here in Washington of three basic truths:

- in protecting Western Europe, America is protecting its own vital interests;
- the European contribution to the common defence is greater than used to be assumed;
- the gap between American and European performance levels has narrowed in the wake of the sharp decline in the US defence budget since 1985; I heard Dick Cheney the other day speak of an 11% drop. In 1987, the US spent about 6% of its GNP on defence, and Europe, as an average, about 3%. Within five years, the US level will be about 4.8% if current plans hold, while the European level should remain relatively constant.

Thus, it is clear that the US has been shifting its resources from defence to other priorities. As the bearer of one of the heaviest defence burdens in recent years, this is, arguably, appropriate. But the fact is that in many terms normally cited, the transatlantic imbalance is not as dramatic as some would have us believe and is in fact righting itself. But we always come back to the key point: burden-sharing is not just a military or financial accounting exercise. It involves all types of burdens including political tasks that uphold Western interests globally. But we are still left

with the bottom line: Western Europe must do more.

Today I am more optimistic that things may finally be starting to happen. In the first place, the European Internal Market of 1992 is not only a slogan. It will be a reality - on schedule. Economists are predicting a 5% increase in overall Community GNP as a consequence of 1992. With its emergence as a major world economic centre, moving towards an ever-closer political union, I can foresee an invigorated role for Western Europe within the Alliance, with a larger share of both military and political responsibilities - in and outside Europe. After all, a solid Atlantic bridge must rest on a strong pillar on both sides of the ocean. I firmly believe this to be in the interest of the Alliance as well as of Europe.

Regarding my third thesis, we clearly have to assess the impact of arms control agreements on our future security needs. An accord in Vienna means fewer US troops in Europe: the agreed CFE proposal calls for withdrawal of 30,000 US troops and no European troops: a cut of up to 20% of US active duty forces at a stroke, in addition to reductions of defence equipment throughout the Alliance.

The outcome of CFE negotiations will have profound political implications. The allocation of force reductions among the Allies, affecting how the Alliance redistributes burdens and roles to maintain its defences, will be, I predict, a difficult and highly-charged process. We are already at work in NATO on ways to implement the reductions while preserving Alliance solidarity and a credible defence.

I do not want to be misunderstood: it would be a mistake to look at the conventional arms control process as a way simply to shed burdens and cut costs. This is both dangerous and illusory: dangerous, because our goal must be to improve security and stability; illusory, because the costs of disarming are likely to be considerable. We will not be in the business simply of removing assets from the field, and striking the corresponding costs from the ledger.

When I say that the CFE process offers an opportunity to find a more lasting improvement to burden-sharing, I mean that it is clear that there will be a proportionately greater reliance on European defence forces for the security of Europe. The Alliance will have to adapt to an evolving security arrangement which factors in a reduced - though still significant and essential - US presence. By the way, I think it would be a mistake to focus on manpower in the context of post-CFE and burden-sharing. The Allies will have to look again at the balance of capabilities, modernisation, flexibility and sustainability of our defence effort: across the Atlantic, and among Allies themselves. We will have opportunities to encourage tighter European defence co-operation, more intra-Alliance specialisation, and greater rationalisation. It is still too early to be precise, but we are well embarked on a historic road which, I believe, has an excellent chance of leading to the real stability and security we have long sought.

We will not solve the burden-sharing dilemma by devising ever more sophisticated measuring mechanisms. It is in overcoming the division of Europe and in creating a new more stable security structure that we will finally relieve burdens. We are at a historic watershed, with results uncertain. But at least we can finally imagine the realisation of our vision. It would be foolhardy in the extreme to allow ourselves to be distracted from our efforts. I remind you: democracy has

not yet won. The success of our political strategy is the key to our military strategy. Certainly there is much that we can do in the meantime to achieve a more equitable arrangement; but statesmanship will be required on both sides of the Atlantic. More important than anything else, a shift in NATO towards a lesser American and a greater European contribution will have to be skilfully managed, so as not to weaken the US role in Europe, nor its political engagement, and so as not to feed the false impression that Europeans can preserve their security or deal with the Soviet Union alone.

I am confident that we will avoid these pitfalls. Our prosperous economies, our dynamic peoples, our solid democratic traditions: these are already the ingredients of success. As long as we are far-sighted, and as long as we keep our eye on the essential, the future will belong to our great transatlantic Alliance of destiny.