

I know that the changes gripping the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and East-West relations have triggered mixed emotions among Canadians of Eastern European and Russian ancestry. Many families bear the bitter scars of unbearable experience. These wounds induce a natural scepticism, and sometimes cynicism, about the meaning of perestroika.

But I also know that there is concern for relatives and friends who remain, a desire that things improve and a hope that they will. We cannot assume that the past will persist indefinitely into the future. Certainly, where real change begins, we should encourage it.

We must steer between the extremes of euphoria and retribution. Change will not be immediate. Set-backs will occur. But we should not react, knee-jerk, to such disappointments by withdrawing into our shells, or refusing to offer our hand.

Nor should we glide into complacency, confident that the world will evolve as it should, towards harmony and prosperity without effort or vigilance. Peace must be earned; it is not given.

We have to be alert to change. Real change is occurring in the Soviet Union, reaching into other countries, holding the prospect of a transformation in East/West relations. The change is based on the realization that the Soviet system doesn't work, and must be changed. There are many risks ahead, for Mr. Gorbachev and for all of us. We must act with prudence and imagination, conscious of the probability that we are part of a genuine watershed in modern history.

With effort, sincerity - and luck - we may be on the verge of the grandest reconciliation of them all.

I ask that we join together on this remarkable journey of such epic importance to us all.