

Around the world, 1989 will be remembered as the year of European revolution. The Berlin Wall crumbled; the Iron Curtain disintegrated; totalitarian regimes collapsed; and a new Europe was born.

Canadians watched with wonder as what we thought would take decades came to pass in weeks. The impossible suddenly became possible and the dream became reality. But that reality, while hopeful, also carries heavy responsibilities - for Europeans and for Canadians.

If 1989 was the year of revolution, 1990 marks the beginning of a decade of reconstruction. Euphoria still lingers but the hard work now lies ahead. The events of 1989 swept away oppressive and outdated economic and political structures. But new societies and new institutions remain to be built. That task has only just begun.

The remarkable events in Central and Eastern Europe are intensely personal for millions of Canadians whose roots are there. Many have ties of language and family. Some were forced to flee by the very regimes which have now collapsed. Most have family or friends whose hopes were thwarted, or lives diminished, by those old regimes, but who have the prospect now of building new lives and new societies in old homelands.

Virtually no other nation possesses the web of intense personal connections to Eastern and Central Europe which we have in Canada. That gives us a special interest, and a special capacity, in helping those societies become prosperous and free.

The revolution of 1989 has fundamental implications for the entire European continent - and for North America which, in terms of culture and history, is Europe across the Atlantic. The requirement for leadership and imagination extends across all issues - political, military and economic. That requires a new Canadian approach not only to Central and Eastern Europe but towards the entire European region.

On February 5th, at McGill University in Montreal, I announced the initiation of a review of our policy towards Europe. The purpose of that review has been to define Canadian interests in Europe and to develop a strategy to secure those interests. I would like to share some thoughts with you that have arisen through that review.

I begin with two basic observations. The first is this: Canada's stake in Europe should not be taken for granted. We have interests around the world and our past preoccupation with Europe is no argument for a focus for the future. Nostalgia is no basis for policy. Our interests in Europe are real, contemporary and compelling.

The second observation is that Canada's wishes will not necessarily determine Canada's role. Powerful new economic and political forces are at work, forces over which Canada has limited influence. A European role will not be bestowed upon us because we decide it is in our interest. It must be earned. That requires imagination and realism and hard work.

What are Canada's primary interests in the new Europe?