

Late last November, during one of the many massive demonstrations which filled Prague's Wenceslas Square, a sign was posted by a young Czech protestor. That sign told a story:

- Poland - 10 years
- Hungary - 10 months
- East Germany - 10 weeks
- Czechoslovakia - 10 days

And, five weeks later, he could have added:
- Romania - 10 hours

The pace and scope of change in Eastern Europe has been truly remarkable. Literally, no one predicted what has happened. And, more to the point, no one knows what will happen next.

The story is just beginning; it is only the opening act in a long drama whose plot we do not yet know.

In response to the revolution sweeping Europe, I initiated a review of Canada's policy towards the region. That review is almost complete, and I will be bringing the results to Cabinet in the next two weeks. Then I will bring the results of Cabinet discussions to the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade. This policy review is designed to help Canada participate as fully as possible in the historic changes in Europe. Because events are moving so fast, Canadian policy towards Europe will be under virtually constant review. What is happening in Eastern Europe is not just a change in current events, but a change in history. And we Canadians have an important place in that history.

What is at stake in Europe is nothing less than the successful replacement of the brittle postwar order which we have endured since 1945.

For 45 years, we have presided over a partial peace, a peace which has denied freedom to half a continent. It was a peace based on the constant threat of a new war.

We are presented today with the prospect for the first time in two generations of a Europe prosperous and free - a Europe woven together by a web of interdependence which would make the calculation of war irrational.

Who are the authors of this opportunity? The first is Mikhail Gorbachev, whose strong vision and steadfast purpose led him to openly acknowledge the abject failure of the 70-year old Soviet experiment, and to act forcefully upon that realization at home and abroad.

Abroad, by re-writing Soviet foreign policy, by making Moscow a responsible and reasoned great power in many corners of the globe and on most international issues.