

Ladies and gentlemen

I want to thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to participate in this discussion about an issue that is both important and relevant.

My starting point is Stasi and the East German espionage against Norway during the Cold War. The topical backdrop however, is the struggle against violent extremism and history's lessons about this. Unfortunately this is more relevant than ever, in the wake of a rise in both political and religious extremism in Europe.

In the years between 1969 to -89 more than 300 Stasi-agents reported about Norway. A total of 1.920 reports are registered in the SIRA-databases. 85 % of the reports are about political issues, armed forces and our intelligence services.

This invisible invasion continued right up till the collapse of the Wall. A qualified estimate is that more than 30 of the 300 agents were Norwegian citizens, spying in the favor of the DDR - a hostile country.

None of these are prosecuted and sentenced.

Why did so many Norwegians choose to spy for an authoritarian and oppressing system and a hostile country? While they themselves could enjoy the freedom in a democracy and the fairness delivered by the rule of law.

Does this question has any relevance today, someone asks me from time to time. Yes, very much so, is my answer.

The Cold War is an important part of our recent history. To a large extent it is unexplored. The Cold War shaped Europe politically and culturally. Therefore we must systematize and document the lessons learnt from this important period.

Ladies and gentlemen

Was it really so that as long as one was convinced that communism represented the objectively good - then some victims and sacrifices could be accepted? What happened was done in the right doctrine's name - you know...

Wasn't the rise of organizations like the Stasi alarming? The systematic repression, did it not made any impression?

Many of us can still hear the echoes of the debates from the Cold War.

The issue of extremism is just as important today as it was then. Then it was communism, now it is left and right wing extremism, as well as religious extremism.

First-time voters at the general election in 2009 were the first to be born after the fall of the Wall in 1989. They have no personal references to the Cold War. They must read about and learn from others what the cold war was all about.

A survey among Swedish adolescents recently, shows that 22% consider communism as a democratic society. In the same survey, 95% said they **know** about Auschwitz, but 90% do **not know** about the Gulag.

This indicates that there are large gaps in the rising generation's knowledge about our recent history.

In my country this is reinforced by the fact that the theme appears to receive little attention in the media and in academic circles. With some notable exceptions, there are very few Norwegian journalists and researchers who are involved in this area.

That is why I consider your work all the more important. And I hope my political involvement also will contribute to more general interest and attention about lessons learnt from the cold war.

Ladies and gentlemen

It is interesting to read that many of the psychological and social factors that drive people into radicalization are the same as before. Regardless of political, ideological or religious motives. Of this reason I see a relationship between the Cold War spies for communism and the current foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq.

Fascination of the fanaticism and the authoritarian is nothing new. But to prevent fascination becoming active action, we need a deeper understanding about the motivation for radicalization. Our recent history is probably our most important source for such understanding.

Here you have an important role to play.

This is also the reason I am engaged in learning more about the communist spies in Norway during the Cold War, and understand what motivated them to do so. The Stasi archive is a unique source for this knowledge.

But we need keys to find the relevant information in his huge archive. Many of these are likely to be found in the Rosenholz files. I am therefore very satisfied that my government has asked to get the Norwegian part delivered from the American authorities. The outcome from this request is too early to say.

Ladies and gentlemen

I mean we have a deep commitment to search for the knowledge, the truth and the experience that has shaped our part of the world. Even if it can be uncomfortable or difficult to access. This is especially important because it can contribute to a better understanding of how we can meet the driving forces behind threats against our values and our society today.

Thank you for your attention.