Telegram from the Foreign Office, London, to the British Embassy in Washington D.C. on Norwegian-Soviet relations, 10 March 1948[[1]](#footnote-1)

NO 2768

IMMEDIATE-TOP SECRET

Oslo telegram No. 104.

[1.] I fear that there is ground for Norwegian apprehension and that we shall in fact be shortly confronted by Soviet demands on Norway. As a first step I think we should instruct our representatives in Oslo to do their best to infuse some courage into the Norwegian Government. They could point out that Turkey and Persia have successfully resisted Soviet demands and that Norway would be ill-advised to put her foot on the slippery slope by sacrificing her right to conclude pacts with whomsoever she chooses. They could add that if Norway requires outside support to maintain her independence, she is much more likely to get it by showing resolution rather than by temporising.

2. I fear, however, that we cannot be sure that such language will suffice to induce the Norwegian Government to hold out. Nor can we afford at this moment to risk a Norwegian defection which would involve the appearance of Russia on the Atlantic and the collapse of the whole Scandinavian system. This would in turn prejudice our chance of calling any halt to the relentless advance of Russia into Western Europe.

3. We may thus be shortly confronted by two serious threats, the strategic threat involved by the extension of the Russian sphere of influence to the Atlantic and the political threat to destroy all our efforts to build up a Western Union. In this situation only a bold move can avert the danger. Moreover the pace set by Russia in Czechoslovakia, then Finland and now Norway, tells us that there is no time to lose [...]

6. I am convinced therefore that we should study without any delay the establishment of such an Atlantic security system, so that if the threat to Norway should develop we could at once inspire the necessary confidence to consolidate the West against Soviet infiltration, and at the same time inspire the Soviet Government with sufficient respect for the West to remove temptation from them and so ensure a long period of peace. The alternative is to repeat our experience with Hitler and to witness helplessly the slow deterioration of our position until we are forced in much less favourable circumstances to resort to war in order to defend our lives and liberty. We can turn the whole world away from war if the rest of the nations outside the Soviet system become really organised, and in turn save Russia herself.

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Keywords: post-war Western Europe

1. Handwritten postscript on top of the document: ‘PM approved’ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)