

Med forbehold om endringer
SPERRET til 17.12. - kl.19.30

Statsminister
Gro Harlem Brundtland

TALE VED REGJERINGENS MIDDAG FOR CORPS DIPLOMATIQUE, AKERHUS
SLOTT 17.12.1986.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for the Norwegian Government to wish you all a hearty welcome to this dinner at Akershus Castle in honour of the Corps Diplomatique. As we are approaching the end of one year and anticipating the beginning of a new one, we have chosen the month of December to come together in surroundings that we hope you will appreciate.

We fully understand that for many of you this rather dark time of the year - and I am saying this strictly in the literal sense, Ladies and Gentlemen - may not be the easiest period of your stay in Norway. But let us recall the old Chinese proverb that it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. We have intended to light a candle together tonight to convey to you how much we appreciate the important work you are doing in our country.

Some of you will be leaving Norway shortly. The ambassadors of Israel, the United Kingdom and Japan will not be here in Oslo when the spring comes. So allow me to thank you for all you have done - I hope your stays have been rewarding and that we may count on you as friends of Norway in the years to come as well.

Diplomats and politicians really live in a most extraordinary symbiosis. We don't get to meet too often, but our work brings us close to one another - we are in fact

interdependent. The environment in which we work is one with a sense of history, and certainly with a sense of the future. We all take part in the process of shaping the future and we are in touch with evolving historical transitions. We know the importance of the ability of states to take action that is proper and relevant, and which at the same time will be understood and supported by others. This process is hardly conceivable without the active intermediation, interpretation and professional curiosity of the diplomatic corps.

Before coming here, I glanced through the first few pages of one of your basic manuals, Satow's guide. Satow's main definition of diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between states. I found that one more word could safely be added to this definition, and that is the word indispensable. Because you are indispensable. And by the way, so are politicians.

The year now coming to an end brought us events which will change the course of history.

We may point to Reykjavik, and to Chernobyl and safely say, - there - at that moment - the course of history altered - but we don't know as yet how much it has been altered. We politicians and you diplomats have the privilege of being part of a process that influences the answer to this. We have every reason to be cognizant of our roles and to take a professional pride in them.

Ernest Bevin once said "what you have got to do in foreign affairs is not to create a situation". And, still, Secretary General Gorbatshev and President Reagan did just that in Reykjavik. The situation was dramatic. Few had expected that contours of a real historical change would be tabled in Reykjavik. Agreement was not reached, but the challenge now must be for all of us to keep Reykjavik alive to give it momentum. I believe that smaller and medium sized countries will have a role to play in urging the USA and the Soviet Union to bridge the gap between them. The key

lies in the ability of the two parties to the ABM treaty to find a common denominator within the range of reasonable interpretations. We urge and expect that this will prove possible. So much is dependent upon a real breakthrough in East-West relations. It places a moral obligation on all of us.

Given the new possibilities opened up at Reykjavik, the role of Europe must be to promote disarmament and confidence building. Europe can play a powerful role in the crucial issues of our time. Throughout history Europe has been a generator of cultural and political forces. It has also been a cradle of innovation and ideas that have pointed to a better future, not only for Europeans themselves, but for the whole world. But Europe's role in the world today does not reflect its real potential or responsibility.

Europe is facing a challenge. It can influence the most critical issues confronting us. The real strength of Europe is its versatility and the magnitude of the force it generates. But the liberation of these forces, at different but parallel levels, is contained by a cobweb of borders, physical borders and technical borders of which the East-West divide is the most significant and challenging. To the east and west of this divide, Europe is presently engaged in an exercise of introspection, reviewing dispositions which should not make us lose sight of the real problem and real challenge.

The practical significance of that divide for all the people of Europe must be gradually reduced. Cultural exchanges and trade must cross that divide, not only for the sake of Europeans, but also because greater stability in Europe and confidence among Europeans will allow us to address the critical North-South issues with the forcefulness and determination which is now required.

Chernobyl demonstrated to Europeans that we are all basically neighbours. In the World Commission on Environment and Development, we have come to learn the extent to which national borders tend to isolate parts of problems from the

problems in their entirety. The development of a new form of international cooperation that is conducive to a development which can be sustained will, no doubt, entail enormous challenges for humankind as a whole. Politicians and diplomats will have to carry forward the ideas that will be decisive in shaping that future.

So as you understand, I have high hopes. The role of diplomats has been subject to discussion - at times somewhat heated discussion - throughout history. For example Field Marshall von Wrangel proposed to Bismarck that all diplomats should be hanged en bloc. President Wilson tried to formally abolish the important tool of confident negotiation. Other voices have raised criticism when politicians have indulged in the art of diplomacy. George Kennan denounced summit diplomacy by saying: "Senior statesmen cannot stay with a problem for any great length of time. Their time is precious; other responsibilities take them away". I shall not argue this, but merely add that there is not an either or. We supplement each other.

Finally, honoured guests, let me repeat that the Government has been looking forward to this occasion. We wanted to see you all in these historic surroundings, which have been the scene of so many important events in the political history of Norway. We are happy to have the Director General of the Central Office of Historic Monuments, Mr. Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, with us tonight. He knows more than anyone else about this castle and I know he will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

When we come to the dessert, Ladies and Gentlemen, we will be entertained by Miss Sissel Kyrkjebø, who is no doubt familiar to many of you. Miss Kyrkjebø is just starting her career, and is already well-known by all Norwegians. We are proud of her, and want to share her music with all of you.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the hope that your stay in Norway will be rewarding and memorable, I invite you all to join me in a toast to the Diplomatic Corps in Norway.