

TROMSØ 11.9.86

Med forbehold om endringer
SPERRET til 11.9.86 kl.13.00

Gro Harlem Brundtland

STATSMINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLANDS TALE VED REGJERINGENS LUNSJ
FOR STATSMINISTER THATCHER I TROMSØ 11. SEPTEMBER 1986

Prime Minister,
Mr. Thatcher,
Excellencies,
Honoured guests,

It is with great satisfaction and anticipation that we welcome you, Prime Minister, your husband and your delegation to Norway, and to Tromsø in particular, on your first official visit to our country. This represents Norway's first visit from a British Prime Minister since Harold Macmillan called on us in 1960. Our two countries, neighbours across the North Sea, have intermingled for centuries and the close bonds of friendship and alliance between us cannot be measured in terms of trade or business, but only in terms of abstracts such as shared values and ideals.

Surely the starting point for your visit could hardly be more appropriate. On this occasion you are seeing a part of Norway that is in many ways unique on a European scale. The distances here are vast and settlement is sparse. Nonetheless, the Norwegian welfare state thrives north of the Arctic circle, as well as further south. The Norwegian Government is determined to ensure that employment opportunities and social benefits are available to all of our residents, irrespective of where in this long, narrow country they happen to live, and Northern Norway is indeed important to all of us, not only here in Norway but also in the rest of Europe.

For centuries the sea has been the dominant factor in the

lives of the people of this area. Harvesting the sea has been a traditional means of subsistence, here, and the British too have at times been very interested in the abundant natural resources of this area. In fact, about 80 years ago British trawlers, backed by the incomparable Royal Navy, wanted to increase the amount of fishing they were doing in Norwegian waters. Britain's then Foreign Secretary, Viscount Grey, stated that Norway's insistence on placing a 4-mile limit on her territorial waters was an issue over which the UK was prepared to go to war. Luckily, we never needed to find out who would have won.

Today our countries have developed a form of cooperation across the North Sea which must be truly unique on a global scale. In this context I need only mention the oil fields which lie across the British-Norwegian continental shelf borderline - Statfjord, Frigg and Murchison.

Prime Minister, during these long years of good neighbour relations and alliance between our countries, which have given so many Norwegians the right to call themselves Anglo-philas, there cannot but be a few mars in an otherwise so smooth finish.

It is no secret that two nations cannot always agree on everything. South Africa is one case in point. And perhaps it is because Norway is such a mountainous country with vast expanses of wilderness, that we see the results of Western industrialisation at first hand. We are sensitive to environmental problems, and we are even more aware of the sensitivity of the environment itself. We know that the United Kingdom has reduced her sulphur compound discharge level considerably as compared with just a few short years ago. We are sincerely looking forward to establishing binding international cooperation with the United Kingdom on these issues.

Developments in weapons technology have placed a great deal of importance to the strategic location of Northern Norway which lies at a mid-point between the two superpowers. Today a long-term buildup of forces is being undertaken in our immediate proximity. In this context we are pleased to see the United Kingdom showing herself to be both willing and able to share in the responsibility for this part of Europe, politically and militarily. Norway is important to the security of the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom is vital to the security of Norway.

Today, your visit to Olavsvern has underlined the importance of the northern part of the Norwegian Sea to the defence and security of Norway, the United Kingdom and the Alliance in general. The Government is pursuing its vital task of preserving peace and stability in the North through combining a policy of determined defence preparation with a policy of reassurance vis-a-vis our neighbouring states concerning the defensive nature of our efforts.

Prime Minister, in a few hours we will be flying to Oslo, - a distance of 1000 miles - which is equal to the distance from London to central Poland or Austria. We are 4 million people. We are both vast and small, remote and close.

In concluding, Prime Minister, I hope that your visit to Tromsø and the High North will give you a more complete impression of Norway and her people. We are proud to have this opportunity to present it to you. Please join me in proposing a toast to our honoured guests Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Mr. Denis Thatcher and to the historical bonds of friendship between our two countries.