

Gro Harlem Brundtland

STATSMINISTERENS TALE VED REGJERINGENS MIDDAG PÅ AKERSHUS SLOTT
TIRSDAG 26. APRIL 1988 I ANLEDNING STATSMINISTER PAPANDREOUS
BESØK

Mr. Prime Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic to Norway.

I welcome you as head of your country's Government for the last seven years, and as leader of PASOK. We associate the name of Andreas Papandreu with the fight for human rights and political freedom during the Junta military dictatorship, a fight which had the firm support of the Norwegian people.

The first known Greek visitor to Norway was Pytheas of Massalia, who in about 325 B.C. sailed along the coasts of Northern-Europe until he came to a land he called Thule. That must have been somewhere in Northern Norway. For centuries it was believed that Thule was the end of the world. Today, many Norwegians take the opposite view.

The first, and I believe the only, state visit took place 14 centuries later, when our King Sigurd the Crusader sailed a large fleet of Viking ships to the Holy Land to fight for its liberation. He then took a holiday on Cyprus and stayed in Greece for a while before he traded his ships for horses in Constantinopel and returned overland to Norway. It was a long and dangerous journey in those days.

Today, travelling has become slightly more comfortable. Tourism is an important factor in bringing our two peoples closer together. Last year more than 160 thousand Norwegians took advantage of your famous greek hospitality. They could enter charter planes in the morning, and swim in the Aegean Sea in the afternoon.

In Norway we learn how ancient Greece was the cradle of Western civilization. The knowledge of your gods and heroes, the Iliad and the Odyssey, the wisdom of Socrates and Plato are all part of our culture as well. The plays of Sophocles and Aristophanes inspired our own playwrights, such as Henrik Ibsen, and the runner from Marathon has inspired Norwegian athletes. Grete Waitz and Ingrid Kristiansen are women who are true front runners. Their competitors seldom see them from the front, but from the back, - if at all.

The British historian Kenneth Clark, in his personal view on civilization, focused on two human constructions which together depict the essence of European culture. The one depicts the permanent, a faith in a tomorrow, absence of fear, and belief in man's own ability. The other depicts courage, energy and

curiosity. The Mediterranean and the Atlantic. According to Clark they are the Greek temple and the Viking ship.

One upshot of the growing cultural cooperation is the recent decision of the Norwegian universities to establish a research institute in Athens for classical studies, archaeology and art history.

Tourism, cultural exchanges and trade are important elements of the relationship between our two countries.

Greece is a member of the European Community, Norway belongs to EFTA. IN recent years, an important development has evolved between the European Community and the EFTA countries based on the Luxembourg Declaration. It is of paramount importance that the EC/EFTA process is part of a wider European economic integration.

More than two-thirds of Norwegian foreign trade is with EC countries. The bilateral trade relations between Greece and Norway will to a large extent be determined by the framework of the EC/EFTA agreements, and the possibilities they give for increased trade and cooperation.

The potential for contact and cooperation exists in many fields. Our long coastlines have made us both shipping nations. As major cross-traders, we have concurrent interests to defend in international fora such as the IMO and OECD. We appreciate the liberal stand taken by Greece in the deliberations on the common shipping policy of the EC.

Greece will hold the Presidency of the Community in the latter half of this year. This will be an important period for the preparations and implementation of the European Internal Market. The Internal Market should not create new obstacles to trade in Europe, but on the contrary, enhance our mutual economic cooperation within a framework of a larger European Economic Space.

NATO is a vital factor in the security policy of Greece and Norway. We must continue to do what is necessary for defence and what is possible for detente and dialogue. We shall have to build a common security relationship between East and West, yet never depart from the principle of effective defence strategy.

We appreciate the valuable initiative you have taken within the group of Six to halt the dangerous nuclear arms race. The initiative of the Six is one important contribution in the ongoing process aimed at more security and more stability.

A concept of security in present day world must be expanded to encompass global threats. World poverty and economic imbalance, social injustice, environmental destruction, - these are all non-military issues that threaten to jeopardize our long-term security interests.

Mr. Prime Minister, I have previously had the privilege of meeting you on several occasions. But this is the first time we in Norway have had the pleasure of receiving you as Prime

Minister of Greece. The relations between our countries are excellent. We share a common responsibility for the future of this continent. And we share a common responsibility to restore and expand the role of Europe, and to offer more hope to the countries who are less fortunate than we are and to contribute to the broad international dialogue to promote a future which is more prosperous, more just and more secure.

Mr. Prime Minister, again I welcome you to Norway, - and to this table. This castle used to be a defence bullwark. Tonight it is where we receive a friend of our country. I propose a toast to your health, and to the excellent Greek-Norwegian relations.