

Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland
Toast Speech
European Parliament 26 October 1988

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I listened to your generous words of welcome, Mr. President, I felt very grateful indeed. I recall also with great pleasure your visit to Oslo in May this year, which was your first official visit to a non-EC-member country since you became President of the European Parliament.

Let me thank you for the warm reception here in Strasbourg which I take as another expression of the very close and good relations between Norway and the European Community.

My warmest thanks go to the representatives of Strasbourg and Alsace for receiving us in this historic edifice, and for the hospitality extended to us.

Mr. President, when Prime Minister Thatcher spoke about Europe in Brugge recently, she commended the audacity of the organizers for having invited her. She said it might have seemed to some people like inviting Genghis Khan to speak about peaceful coexistence.

What should we say about your own courage? After all, you invited a Prime Minister of a non-member country to speak about the same issues.

But in accepting your invitation I was indeed eager to emphasize Norway's attachment to the ideals of European - and indeed international - cooperation, and to underline Norway's and my own personal vision of the future of Europe, a future where all Europeans are enjoying democracy, human rights, social justice and quality of life.

Like the 12 EC member states Norway is, of course, part of Europe. We Norwegians are a European people. Our history is European history. Our culture is a European culture. Our form of government is fundamentally European.

Thousand years have passed since our Viking ancestors travelled in Europe, in their own way, even as far south as Sicily where King Harald Harade conquered a number of cities in the 11th century.

The British historian Kenneth Clark, however, made some interesting observations in his personal view on civilization. He focused on two human constructions which together depict the essence of European culture. The one depicts the permanent, a faith in 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 Clarke they are the Greek temple and the Viking ship.

Today, we want to cooperate and contribute to a stronger Europe. We want to safeguard vital Norwegian, European and Atlantic interests. Our vision of Europe is one of full employment, of equal educational opportunities, of cultural and scientific exchange and of responsible international leadership.

For 2000 years Europe has been a cradle of innovation and ideas. I see no reason why this should not remain so in the future as well. We all need to take our share of the common responsibility to restore and expand the role of Europe, also to the benefit of the countries which are less fortunate than we are. We want to contribute to responsibly answering the threats to the environment and the global development crisis. We want to contribute to a broad international dialogue to promote a future which is more prosperous, more just and more secure.

The European Parliament has a responsibility but also an opportunity to enhance European cooperation and to make it better known and understood. I am certain that, inspired by the same vision and courage which launched the EC more than thirty years

ago, the European Parliament will make an enduring contribution to the hard work which lies ahead as we look towards the future with confidence and hope.

I propose a toast to the Cooperation between Norway and the European Communities, to the European Parliament and its eminent president , the Lord Plumb.