

Prime Minister Jan P. Syse

Akershus Castle

27 August 1990

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Such a pleasure to see you all here. And so difficult to speak about hate, because the anatomy of hate has its roots planted on the dark sides of humanity, in the kingdom of night as Elie Wiesel puts it. The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity and the Nobel Committee have brought you together to cast light on these dark sides, to witness and to point forward.

In the midst of your reflexions, the Norwegian Government has invited you to the Akershus Castle. We have done so, not to interrupt your work, but to offer you a different setting. You are all welcome. We are honoured to have you as our guests. When I look at this impressive gathering, I remember what Benjamin Franklin said: "If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead, either write things worth reading or do things worth writing". Most of you have done both!

It may seem odd that we have chosen a military fortress for this occasion. But to us Norwegians the Akershus Castle 700 years old as it is, is a symbol of the independence and

integrity of our nation.

For decades the castle resisted foreign aggression. When it stood free - we were free. Fifty years ago, our former enemy and occupant established his headquarters here at Akershus. When it was under siege - we were under siege.

Thus, the history of the Akershus Castle is linked to the history of the Norwegian people. But monuments are themselves silent observers. Only when combined with man's memory do they bring a message to future generations. The burden of history - the awareness of man's constructive and destructive potential - can only be carried by man himself. Human experience, memory and faith - and only that - can bring testimony from one generation to another.

We have come together to contribute to that testimony. Elie Wiesel has set the example. He has rightly been described as a messenger. His message is as clear as it is fundamental: Those who forget their history are doomed to repeat it. Together with other victims of hate present at this conference his argument holds the immense power of being based on personal experience. If we forget the fate of those who died, then we condemn them to death once again. If we close our eyes to the risk of new atrocities, then we condemn ourselves to be their victims.

I am very proud to have you all here. You have indeed seen the wisdom of the words of the Revelation of St. John:

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot or cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth." Those gathered here will never risk that!

There are periods in history when history itself accelerates, periods when an accumulated pressure for change acquires the strength to tear down walls. We have the privilege of experiencing such a period. In Eastern Europe nation after nation have freed themselves from the chains. In South Africa, years of confrontation are gradually replaced by dialogue.

Change to the better. - But even that must be handled with wisdom, care and historic awareness. Inherent in all major historic changes lies the totalitarian temptation. It must be detected and warned against over and over again, as you do!

Today's events in the Middle East remind us in a dramatic way of the lessons of our own past. One military power - blinded by a totalitarian vision - violates the integrity of a small neighbour. We - the international community - cannot tolerate that international law be set aside by the law of the jungle. We shall meet this challenge and we shall meet it together. That is - and will continue to be - the position.

In front of the "Hotel de la Paix" in Geneva there is a quotation from Lamartine. It reads: "La liberté du faible est

la gloire du fort" - The liberty of the weak is the glory of the strong.

The words of Lamartine - written in 1841 - reflect the moral ambition of the League of Nations when it was created in 1919. These words inspire us.

The last few months have shown us that peace and stability is not only a matter of good relations between states. The peaceful European revolution has given people the right and freedom to cultivate their national and cultural identity. But it has also reminded us of a more somber dimension of our history; the conflicts between nationalities, and between ethnic and religious groups.

Our perspective must embrace conflicts between nations as well as within each nation. It must embrace the intolerance which exists between individuals as well as within each individual. Before conflicting interests escalate into hate and violence, the spiral must be broken. Governments cannot meet that challenge alone. Skilled and independent individuals as well as organizations have to carry their part of the burden.

Many of you do so already. Your work does not replace, but supplements what the United Nations and individual governments can do. Your efforts are not always known. We need professionals with discretion and without vested interests.

A few months ago, bringing exactly you present here together would have been impossible. A few years ago, it would have been unthinkable.

Your presence tells us - the governments - to be bold, to be ambitious, as so many of you have been as individuals. The struggles you have fought inspire all of us. For that we are grateful. Thank you. I wish the conference success.