

Washington, 22 February 1990

Prime Minister Jan P. Syse

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It is a pleasure and a privilege to be here with you tonight.

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Looking around this table, I am pleased to see that I am not the only politician, but that American political heavyweights have been brought in as reinforcements. We shall certainly need each other against the diplomatic fraternity. Theirs is a close world, and it is difficult to bring it under proper political control. For most of us there was something oddly familiar with the British series "Yes, Prime Minister", where the Foreign Office view was that "it is simply too dangerous to let politicians get involved in foreign affairs".

We remember the revealing dialogue between the Prime Minister, Jim Hacker, and his Permanent Private Secretary, Bernhard Wooster. An international crisis

is coming up, and the Prime Minister is getting worried, because Washington is worried:

"Bernhard said he would arrange a meeting with the Foreign Secretary for this afternoon.

- You can get him to sort it out, he said reassuringly.

After all, they are on our side".

- Who are? I said

- The Americans, said Bernhard.

- Oh they. They are, yes. I thought for a moment you meant the Foreign Office".

Well, our party tonight has probably no trouble being on the same side. We are family. It goes without saying, really. There are more of us Norwegians living here than back home. Such bonds do not break. Neither can you help create a vibrant and dynamic society like America without its impact being felt. Awesome, but most of all invigorating.

In Norway we tend to keep track of Norwegians who came to riches and glory in the US. But we are less aware of all those who returned home, with new ways of thinking, new business ideas, new impressions. It was always a two-way traffic. Even for our famous writer Knut Hamsun, who became a brilliant critic of what he thought was the American way of life: It was over here that his artistic talent blossomed!

So it is an inter-change, in every field: Cultural, economical, political, environmental. I would like to say a few words about two of them. First trade. We are honoured to have Ambassador Hills with us. We know that your president has given you the order and the opportunity to promote US trade. Judging by last month's trading figures, you seem to make headway already. That is good news to all of us.

I know there is a debate going on in US whether one should go for fair trade or free trade. If there is any difference between them, I would opt for free trade. We both know that protectionism can not be successfully countered with protectionism. The opposite of a mistake is never the opposite mistake.

History is very clear about that. In 1929 the Wall Street crack was followed by 48 consecutive months of diminishing world trade, as each country tried in vain to protect its own industry by raising tariff barriers.

In doing so, they made misery for themselves and for all other nations, creating a prolonged international recession. We learned then, at a great cost, that markets really are like parachutes: They function only when open.

Trade is not the only field where countries often are inclined to apply short-term solutions to longterm

problems. As a young man I grew up with the so-called American challenge. The frenchman Servan-Schreiber wrote a famous book with that title, about American industry and American investors taking over Europe. The problem, however, went away before Servan-Schreiber had found any counter-measures against it. And what is more, it never was a problem at all. It was rather a contribution to a stronger Europe.

Politics are often like that. It is so hard to avoid meddling, to stay the course. During the eighties we had an uneasy debate going on in Europe, over how to cope with the deployment of Soviet missiles. There were many on the western side who wanted to cave in. But both NATO and the US refused to do so. And in the end it was steadfastness and strength that won the day.

You never know which straw it is that breaks the camel's back. But in retrospect we can see quite clearly that this particular show of Western resilience was one of the major straws that made the communist camel go down.

What shall we do with the western alliance now that everything has changed? We shall keep it. Because everything has not changed. The most important thing which remain the same, is that we are still unable to look into the future. We must still prepare for the unexpected. And that is what armed forces and alliances

are built for. Like fire brigades. To prepare for the unexpected. It's a nice thought that we now have reached the end of history. But I would not count on it. The problems of security and stability will never leave us.

Ladies and gentleman. Our two countries have stayed together in the years of cold war containment. North America and Western Europe shall need each other even more now, when our task is to bring about peaceful change. May I ask you to raise your glasses in a toast to Norwegian-American friendship. We know one thing for certain: It shall outlive us all.