

Med forbehold om endringer
SPERRET TIL 25.8.90

Statsminister
Jan P. Syse

MIDDAGSTALE - HOTEL BRISTOL

Kjære Annelise og Jo

Dear Marion and Eli Wiesel

Dear fellow-guests

You all know, as I know, the danger of giving a politician the floor at the end of a long day. He may claim the right of replying to previous speakers. He is also likely to think that there are wavering voters around the table who need convincing, and that he mustn't miss the opportunity.

I am thinking all that.

Besides, it is doubly tempting to take the floor and keep it when you actually are in a place called Bristol. After all, Edmund Burke's speech to the electorate of Bristol is one of the basic texts of politics. Particularly it is one of the basic texts of conservative politics. In that speech Burke developed his thoughts on the duties of the elected politician in relation to his voters: He would serve them best by being loyal to his own convictions.

I shall not, however, read out Burke's speech in Bristol to you. It is a sobering thought that his electors did not like what they heard. He was not re-elected. They went for another candidate at the first opportunity.

So the lesson to be learnt from Bristol is actually the first rule of political survival: dexterity should never be allowed to grow into foolhardiness. After all, we don't know if Burke lost his seat because he went too far, or if he talked too long. After the latest general election I met a rather dejected fellow member of the Storting. In his constituency his party had lost exactly as many votes as the number of people who had turned up at his meetings.

Now, all this may seem beside the point. I mention these things only to make the majority of tonight's guests know how lucky they are. They lead meaningful lives, they do important things for themselves and their fellow human beings, and they are not politicians. Where you are not, there's happiness. Wo du nicht bist, da ist das Glück.

My second apology for mentioning the duty of politicians is that our host, Jo Benkow, is one of the

politicians. At least he used to be, until he managed to hide the beast under all that common sense and friendliness which comes so natural to him, and which may lead you into thinking that Jo Benkow is one of you. But he isn't, he is one of us. Jo knows, as the rest of us, that the present-day politician should stand two tests:

1. He should have experience from real life, not only from politics.
2. He should have no proven connections with real life.

Some will say that a lot of today's politicians pass the second test very nicely.

I have already made a reference to Edmund Burke. Here is one more, - some of his words of wisdom; "When bad men combine, the good must associate, else they will fall, one by one". - "The good must associate".- That is why this conference will start tomorrow and I am sure that is why Jo has brought us together with Eli Wiesel tonight: to give us a reminder, because memory is basic!

Mr. Wiesel: It is a coincidence, but a very instructive one, that your visit here, and your

instructive one, that your visit here, and your conference, should come at the time of the Middle East crisis. In quiet times, in quiet countries, politicians have a tendency to grow words for their own sake. One tends to forget that words should be used to formulate thoughts which lead to action, to restore order.

One often forgets the real meaning of the very word resolution: which is that the parties concerned are actually willing to do something, that they are resolved. The more of us who remember this, the sooner the Gulf crisis will be over.

Tonight's a very special occasion. We feel privileged by being invited. We are especially privileged to be here together with Elie Wiesel. A man who has taken it upon himself to move mountains.

The particular reason for your being here is the conference on hate. It is a saddening fact that such a conference is required. But we are honoured to have it here in Norway, in Oslo.

It must have something to do with the importance of Norway, not to the world, but to you. You have some special friends here. You have actually nothing but special friends here.

We may ask: Can hate - violent hate based on deeprooted prejudice - can it ever be eradicated? Hardly. But it can be reduced. And it can be contained. Law and order are all-important, nationally and internationally. Lawful order can certainly never replace warm hearts and hospitality. It can never replace bridgebuilding between human minds. But it puts barriers to destructive elements and sick ideas.

We will never reach the point where the majority stops looking askance at minority groups, or minority groups at each other. But we can stop them persecuting and being persecuted. And one day, - in the end, - all men may have been added to the sum of what we fondly describe as our fatherland, our civilisation, our world. We have counted them in.

To get there, we have to stop the bullies, the thugs, whether they belong to the street mob or the aggressive dictatorships. It's not the whole answer. But it is the only answer as far as it goes.

What remains for me is to thank our host. Not because he is the speaker of the House, our only President in this happy kingdom. But because we feel that only Jo Benkow could rightly give a dinner like this.

And let me quote another speaker of the house, the American Tip O'Neil - we both appreciate this quotation and the attitude behind it. He said: It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice. That is Jo Benkow. It really lies in his name. In Norwegian jo is the affirmative expression of ja. Jo, det er riktig. Yes, that's right.

Mr. Wiesel,
That's Jo for you.

Skål.