

BERGEN, 8 MAY 1990

Check against delivery

Not to be released before 8 May 1990

12:30 hours.

Prime Minister Jan P. Syse

Your Majesty, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I shall be fairly brief - the occasion speaks for itself. We are embarking on a major international enterprise together. Your presence is much needed, and much appreciated.

We are deeply honoured by having His Majesty King Olav with us. Welcome to you all, and a special welcome to Your Majesty.

We have dealt this morning with the global environment - that is why we are in Bergen. I would like to say a few words, for the benefit of our foreign guests, about the local environment, about Bergen itself. And about the Bergensians.

As you can see for yourself, it is a lovely town - the city itself, and its surroundings. But there is more to Bergen than meets the eye. Even more than the sight of Bergen, it is the sound of Bergen. The sound of the Bergensians.

Nowhere in Norway is Norwegian talked as fluently as here. And nowhere is there talked so much of it. The Bergensians talk partly because they have a lot to say, but even more because they love to hear themselves saying it.

They are not really Norwegians. Most of them hail from Rostock, Kiel, Hamburg and the other Hansa towns, or from Holland or the British Isles. This being so, they are fiercely patriotic - mostly on behalf of Bergen, but even of Norway. They are very clannish. President Kennedy would have had no chance of coming here, declaring "Ich bin ein Bergenser". Someone would have pointed out that in order to claim citizenship, your family should have settled here no later than 100 years ago, and never married outside the city borders.

They are an enterprising lot - a shipping town - crosstraders worldwide, and merchantmen. Even the lyrics of the Bergen song deals with the joy of trading. "Everyone does it". It is the home town of some of our greatest authors, and composers and - for that matter - politicians. Its football club is called Fire. Their fire is extinguished every other year, but never their enthusiasm.

You would not believe it, but this is the rainy city -the all-year-round rainy city. And they love it.

So that's where you are. I hope you will enjoy being here, and enjoy this luncheon - the wine, the food, the friends. And the Bellevue. It is good to have you with us. And reassuring.

I propose a toast to the success of the Bergen environment conference.