

AFTER DINNER SPEECH IN PARIS, FRIDAY 21, OCTOBER 1983, ON  
THE OCCASION OF THE BAPTISM OF THE KOSMOS PLATFORM

Mr. Chairman,  
Mr. Minister,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

First, I would like to express our sincere thanks to la Société Alsthom-Atlantique for your most kind invitation to this dinner, on the eve of the baptism of the KOSMOS platform at Saint-Nazaire. We are very much enjoying this opportunity to meet tonight with such a distinguished gathering of personalities from the French public and economic life.

I may add, I hope, that I personally enjoy particularly such a very special opportunity to talk politics in Paris. That may be considered kind of a family tradition: My great-great-grandfather, who happened to be my great grandfather as well, was in his younger days member of a French society somewhat different from tonight's august gathering. He was a member of the Jacobine society during the great revolution. There may be some differences between his views and mine, but on one point we would certainly agree most wholeheartedly; and that is on the importance of extending relations between France and Norway.

This occasion is really befitting for such considerations. We are here to celebrate the delivery of a great platform from a French shipyard to Norwegian owners, a platform which will be used by American field operators on the Norwegian continental shelf.

All this illustrates very clearly the willingness of Norwegian companies and authorities to permit and benefit from free trade and free competition across the borders, even in times with big difficulties in our shipbuilding industry and strong claims for protection rather than competition. We resist such claims because, as we have learned from history, more protectionism would create more unemployment.

The Norwegian Government is committed to the principles of free trade and shipping as the only sound foundation for economic cooperation between nations. But our ability to buy foreign goods is of course dependent upon the willingness of other nations to buy our export goods and services. On this occasion it is natural to mention also that shipping is one of our leading export businesses, and that our ability to buy from others is dependent upon the freedom of the shipping markets. And the ability of any government to resist claims for protection against foreign competition, is dependent upon the argument that the counterpart of free import is free access to the markets of others.

The Norwegian Government is most interested in an expansion of the economic ties with France based on the

principles of commerciality and competition. In this respect, I have noted with great interest a new initiative by the French Government lately, with the aim of bringing new dynamism into European industrial and technological cooperation.

It is generally accepted that the economies of the Western European countries are heavily dependent on each other. Thus, the efforts of individual countries to improve economic performance need to be harmonized. This means that governments will have to design policies that may, to some extent conflict with views dominating the national scene. It will be a test of the ability of the leadership to succeed in obtaining the necessary general public support for such international thinking. But we have to try for the simple reason that we will not win the fight against mass unemployment without improved international cooperation.

I must admit that the size of the trade between our two countries could be more impressive. The production on our continental shelf has, however, added new perspectives to French-Norwegian cooperation. Today's delivery of the KOSMOS platform to Norwegian owners is a great example of that. France has also in other ways played an important part in those activities. Highly respected French companies, as field operators, account for about a fifth of our total production of oil and gas.

In this connection I would like to turn for a moment to the question of future gas supplies to Europe. In 1982, about 12 percent of the total West European gas supply came from Norway. The Norwegian continental shelf contains very large reserves, which represent an important potential for improving the energy situation in Western Europe. And Norway will be able and willing to increase, on commercial terms, the deliveries of gas to Western Europe from the 1990's. Such deliveries of Norwegian gas would reduce Western European dependence on external sources of energy and will, therefore, also constitute a contribution to Western European cooperation and independence.

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Mr. President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for this opportunity to address you on a number of questions of importance, not only to our bilateral relations, but also when seen in a wider perspective.

And, I thank our hosts again, on behalf of all your guests, for your kind invitation and for this exquisite dinner. In conformity with a Norwegian custom, I raise my glass and conclude by proposing a toast to our hosts.