

STATSMINISTERENS TALE FOR INDIAS STATSMINISTER PÅ AKERSHUS

14. JUNI 1983

Madame Prime Minister,
ladies and gentlemen,

I have the great honour, and indeed the pleasure, to wish the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, a most hearty welcome to Norway and to this Government dinner at Akershus Castle. Our warm words of welcome are also extended to the members of your family as well as to your delegation. We appreciate very much having you as our guest and we feel convinced that the personal relations which will be established during your visit will also be

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beneficial to the further development of the cooperation between our two countries.

The Prime Minister of India has only once before paid an official visit to this country. That visit took place 26 years ago this month when the Norwegian Government was privileged to receive in this hall your father, the late Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru. During your visit a photo exhibition commemorating the first Prime Minister of India will be inaugurated at the Munch Museum.

The special position of India in international affairs has recently been further strengthened through the election of the Prime Minister of India as chairperson and leader of the world's non-aligned countries. We

appreciate the important international role played by this movement of nations which comprise more than half of human-kind. Your election to this high office also reflects the confidence enjoyed by you personally in the world community. I am very much looking forward to our political conversations to-morrow, which will provide an opportunity to exchange views with you on various international and bilateral questions.

There is a considerable interest for contemporary Indian history in Norway just now. For months, our cinemas have been showing the movie picture "Gandhi", thus enabling us to witness the great drama of India's struggle for freedom and independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and your own father.

Shortly following India's independence in 1947, diplomatic relations were established between our two countries. In spite of the geographical distance and the differences between our respective cultural backgrounds, our cooperation has been strengthened over the years. India became our first partner in development cooperation in 1952 with the Kerala project. Since the 1950'ies Norwegian development cooperation has been extended also to several other countries, both in Asia and Africa. At the same time, our bilateral relations have been further developed. The Fishery Development Project in Kerala is long ago taken over by the Indian authorities, but the development programme has continued to grow up to its present substantial level.

On this basis, as well as from the normal flow of trade, we hope to enhance and to diversify our economic cooperation with India, which is today the 10th largest industrial nation in the world. With your human and natural resources, as well as present and potential market, India's development will necessarily have an important impact on the world economy.

You have yourself, Madame Prime Minister, so many times pointed to the economic interdependence between the developed and the developing world. You have repeatedly advocated the view, which we broadly share, that it is necessary to maintain a high level of development in the Third World also in order to overcome the economic slump in the industrialized nations. It is with growing concern

that we have been watching developments, or rather lack of development, in the relationship between rich and poor countries. The so-called North/South dialogue has for the past few years at best been marking time, while the problems which it is supposed to solve or to alleviate, have been growing. The UNCTAD VI conference, which is going on just now, is the most important event in the North/South dialogue this year. According to our view, the goal of the conference must be to achieve results that will improve the developing countries' position in the world economy and which can also lead to increased growth for us all. The most important objective of the UNCTAD Conference is to work out a concerted programme for global economic recovery and development.

In the kind letter in which you, Madame Prime Minister, informed me about the Non-aligned Summit in New Delhi, you stated, quite correctly, that prosperity, like peace, is indivisible. There is a pressing need to arrest and to reverse the arms race in order to reduce international tension and to enhance world security. Priority must be given to questions related to nuclear disarmament. We are faced with the challenge of both preventing a further nuclear arms build up and a further proliferation of such weapons. At the same time, we must not forget the increasing destructiveness of conventional weapons. It is, in our view, essential to underline that any real and lasting disarmament can only be achieved through negotiations resulting in binding and verifiable agreements which provide for mutually balanced reductions

of armaments. It must be our objective that a balance of armaments be reached at the lowest possible level. Any superiority of forces by one nuclear power will only increase international tension and insecurity and act as a temptation to attempt nuclear blackmail. As a great country in the world community and as the present leader of the non-aligned countries, India has a special responsibility and role to play in dealing with these questions. Madame Prime Minister, I wish to express our confidence in your untiring efforts in finding solutions to these problems, as well as the specific problems of your own country. I am grateful for this opportunity to assure you of our whole-hearted cooperation in seeking a better future for all.

During your present stay in our country, you will also have the opportunity of visiting the west coast of Norway. Also in this respect you will follow in the footsteps of your father. As a young man he visited that region in 1910. As the hotel he was staying in, had no bathing facilities, he was advised to take his bath in a neighbouring stream. In his autobiography he describes how he slipped and was swept by the strong current almost to the brink of an enormous precipice. I can assure you that with the developments in our tourist business since that time, you will not be exposed to any similar experience.

Let me conclude by proposing a toast to the Prime Minister of India and for the happiness and prosperity of the people of India.

It is also our sincere wish that you, Madame Prime Minister, and the members of your family and delegation, will enjoy a most pleasant stay in Norway.