

STATSMINISTERENS TALE UNDER MIDDAGEN 14. FEBRUAR 1984 PÅ
AKERSHUS SLOTT I ANLEDNING "VIKING SHIELD"

Your Majesty,
excellencies,
ladies and gentlemen,

It is, indeed, a great honour and pleasure for me, on behalf of the Norwegian Government, to wish you all heartily welcome to this dinner on the occasion of Exercise Viking Shield 1984.

Allow me to extend a special word of welcome, and appreciation, to His Majesty, King Olav, for being willing to honour this dinner with his presence. True to his longstanding and keen interest in matters relating to national and allied defense, His Majesty will again be attending also the exercise itself.

I would also like to express a special welcome to Secretary General Luns. We are most indebted to him for all he has done to further the aims of the Alliance throughout his long tenure as Secretary General.

I recognize around this table a great number of distinguished and prominent representatives of the allied nations most directly concerned with the defense of the Northern area. I interpret your presence here as a solid expression of the importance which your governments, like the Norwegian, attach both to the Alliance and to the challenging theme of this exercise - "The defense of the

North European and the Canadian area in the 1990's". We are, indeed, living in an exposed part of the NATO area, and I find it very appropriate that our defense will be discussed in this long term perspective.

I find it particularly pleasant to be able to receive you to-night at Akershus Castle, representing as it does the oldest integral defense fortification of Norway, and whose oldest parts date back to around the year 1300. This castle has never in the course of its long history been forced to surrender as a consequence of direct attack. Norwegians have always cherished this fact with pride, and attach to it a symbolic value for the nation.

Our Alliance has over the last few years been living through a rather difficult period with great challenges both to our security and to allied solidarity and unity. The heated debate which has characterized our own public opinion, and the intensive consultations which have been conducted at all levels of the Alliance, have revolved around the fundamental question of how to strike the right balance between the two equally important aspects of our security, adequate defense and arms control.

It must be admitted that in the field of arms control little progress has been made during the last years. The regrettable fact and the circumstances around it have contributed to the present serious situation in East-West relations.

But we shall now have to look to the future. In my opinion, the prospects are for the future not without some encouraging elements, provided that we remain united behind the Alliance policy: On the basis of a credible defense, we should constantly strive to build a more cooperative relationship to the countries in the East. We have made it abundantly clear that we are ready to return to the various negotiating tables without any preconditions.

In the "declaration of Brussels" the foreign ministers of NATO, last December, also extended an important offer to the Warsaw Pact countries to work together with them to bring about a long-term constructive and realistic relationship based on equilibrium, moderation and reciprocity, and advocated an open and comprehensive political dialogue.

Upon my return from Moscow this afternoon, I find it appropriate to express our sincere hope that the new Sovjet leadership, under Konstantin Tsjernenko, will be ready to respond to this invitation from the West and seize this opportunity to bring about a more constructive relationship between East and West.

Only a few weeks ago the Conference on disarmament in Europe was opened in Stockholm. That provided an important opportunity for a number of bilateral discussions between eastern and western foreign ministers, covering most outstanding problems between East and West.

At the Conference it will, for the first time, be possible to discuss confidence and security-building measures applicable to the whole continent of Europe. Agreement on such measures might pave the way for real disarmament negotiations later.

At the same time, arms control negotiations are only one, although an extremely important part of the East-West relationship. Political dialogue, mutually beneficial trade and cooperation in various fields are also essential means in trying to establish an increased level of trust and a more stable relationship between East and West.

On this cautiously optimistic note, I would like to conclude by emphasizing at the same time the fundamental importance which my country attaches to its membership in NATO. The Alliance has provided Norway not only with a constructive multilateral framework for safeguarding our security in freedom, but also for participating in the consolidated Western efforts to build a more stable relationship between East and West. Our participation in NATO is and will remain the cornerstone of our security policy. We are most grateful to all the allied nations who are helping us to maintain a credible defense in our part of the world.