

Statsministerens tale ved middagen på Akershus mandag 6. mai 1985 kl. 2000 til ære for det Diplomatiske Korps.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for my wife and myself to have the privilege of wishing you all a hearty welcome to this dinner at Akershus Castle.

We have choosen this date in early May - a time when spring is normally in full bloom in this country - in order to come together and get to know one another better, after having lived through one of the roughest winters we have had for years.

Personally, I consider all complaints about winter as a kind of un-Norwegian activity. But to those of you accustomed to warmer climates, it may be of some comfort to learn that we have an old saying about the weather in this country, - after a cold winter, there will be a warm summer!

I find it particularly appropriate that an event such as this - an evening in honour of the Diplomatic Corps in Oslo - should take place in these historic surroundings. If - as we are taught to believe - the past holds the key to the future, Akershus would

certainly be able to contribute to understanding Norway today. Like our national history, it has experienced ups and downs, war and peace, decline and renewal.

As you may know, this castle was built around the year 1300, at a time when medieval greatness in Norwegian history was nearing its end. Some seven decades later, Queen Margaret - wife of King Haakon VI (the Sixth) and soon to become the mighty ruler of all three Scandinavian kingdoms - lived at Akershus, and wrote to her father, King Valdemar of Denmark, of the hardships she had to endure in this place. I do hope that you will be more comfortable here than she was.

In the early 16th century part of the Castle was destroyed by fire, but was later built by the Dano-Norwegian Kings Fredrik II (the Second) and Christian IV (the Fourth), the latter of whom gave Akershus its Renaissance appearance. We might say that it is easier to praise the building activities than the political activities of these rulers.

In the course of the 18th century, the Castle fell into decay, particularly after the attack launched against it by the Swedish King Carl XII (the Twelfth) in 1716. He had very definite ideas about Nordic unity, which were, however, not generally adopted. King Carl did not manage to conquer Akershus, which during its long history has been besieged nine times, but never taken as a result of siege or attack.

In the 18th and 19th centuries Akershus was used for certain public and administrative offices, among them the State Archives. There was a famous Norwegian connected with Akershus in that period. I am referring to the poet Henrik Wergeland, who was appointed head of the State Archives in 1840. He was personally of the opinion that the illness which led to his untimely death was caused by the conditions in this castle. Again: I do hope that you will agree that everything is better now.

The poet Henrik Wergeland ranks among the great national figures in Norwegian literature and still remains an active force in the moulding of the Norwegian identity. He reacted strongly against prejudice, tyranny and injustice. But in spite of the negative forces he saw at work, both at home and abroad, he remained an optimist, saying in one of his best known poems:

"Young as yet the world must be;
All our long, long history
Still is but its cradle song,
And its childhood's fairy tale."

If we look at the world today and compare it to the world of the 1830s, when Wergeland wrote those lines, I am sure we would agree that, in some respects, the world has come a long way. But I am equally sure that we would also agree that, as regards basic values, such as tolerance and understanding, the world still has a long way to go.

One of your most distinguished colleagues, the American diplomat George Kennan - who, by the way, regards Norway his second home - has made some very wise remarks on the importance of the methods used in political life: "Objectives", Kennan wrote, "were normally vainglorious, unreal, extravagant, even pathetic - little likely to be realized, scarcely to be taken seriously. But methods were another matter. These were real. It was out of their immediate effects that the quality of life was really molded".

I would imagine that most diplomats - and many politicians - share this view of the importance of the manner in which we deal with one another. They also share a sense of history, of being part of an unending sequence of events. Recently we have seen some examples of the risks encountered when the importance of history - and, I would assume, the advice of diplomats - are overlooked.

These remarks serve to underline the importance which should be attached to the work of diplomats; to the contribution they can make to the political and cultural understanding among nations.

So much happens on the international scene and events are reported through the mass media so quickly, that unless we have a sound basis of knowledge and understanding, spur-at-the-moment-reactions may easily complicate rather than facilitate matters. The dangers

inherent in this situation are obvious. That is why we want you, as diplomats and friends, to understand our culture and our people thoroughly; we want you to know the positions we take and understand the reasons why we take them. That is also why it is so important to recognize and make use of the dual role of the diplomat: as spokesman of his government in the country where he serves and as interpreter of that country for his own government.

For Norway, and other smaller countries in a similar position, this dual aspect of diplomatic activity is particularly important. We want to reach out to you and through you to the countries you represent.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been said that the two principal functions of the diplomat are to conduct the business of his government and to discover the business of others. That may be as good a definition as any, provided, of course, that the activities of the diplomat take place within the internationally agreed framework. Having said this, I would also like to emphasize that we want you to discover us, we want you to get to know us and we are eager to show you what our country has to offer - including the Bobbysocks. Their success has shown us that Norway can do well in areas where we earlier were far from

prominent, and it has proved that a healthy enthusiasm is easily awakend in this country.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Above all we hope that your years in Norway will be memorable, enjoyable and rewarding, both for you and for us. Allow me to propose a toast to the Diplomatic Corps in Oslo.