

Statsministerens tale ved middagen gitt av statsminister Felipe Gonzalez under det offisielle besøk i Madrid 7.-8. februar 1985.

Mr. Prime Minister and Senora de Gonzalez,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for the very kind words you have addressed to my country and to me personally.

I would also like to thank you for your kind invitation which has given my wife and myself this opportunity to visit Spain, where we have enjoyed a most pleasant welcome here in Madrid.

The emergence of a democratic Spain has been one of the most encouraging developments in post-war Europe. In Norway we have followed this transition with great interest and sympathy. You have demonstrated that, through a dedicated effort and a strong will to succeed, it is possible for a nation to change and shape its own destiny. This sets an example for other countries to follow. We know that you personally, Mr. Prime Minister, have played a major role in this process. If you will permit me, I would like to take this opportunity to express our admiration and respect for the political

wisdom shown by yourself and other democratic elements in this difficult period of transition.

We have also noted with appreciation that Spain, in addition to strengthening her own democratic institutions, has made a determined effort to develop closer relations with other democratic nations. In our experience, membership in the Atlantic Alliance has provided an outstanding opportunity to broaden political contacts with other democracies, both in America and in Europe. Your application for membership in the European Community no doubt also constitutes a major step towards closer cooperation in Europe. We consider such a development a return to normality - to a situation in which Spain plays a full part in European affairs, in keeping with its great potential and rich historical traditions. As Europe develops its relations with other parts of the world, an active role for Spain is indispensable - considering your country's close cultural and political ties to Latin America and to the Arab world.

For nearly three years, Norway has enjoyed close cooperation with Spain in the political institutions of NATO. Our efforts in the Alliance have a two-fold aim: to provide a credible defence and to promote detente between East and West - eventually leading, we hope, to broad and equitable arms control agreements. Popular support for the Alliance in Norway has increased steadily during recent years. More than a generation after Norway joined the North Atlantic Alliance, it is the

view of an overwhelming majority of the Norwegian people that NATO has greatly benefited peace and security of our country and of Europe as a whole.

We are now entering a very important phase in international affairs, as the whole range of nuclear and space weapons is being placed on the negotiating table. This is a development which further enhances the importance of the Alliance as a political instrument. We will all try to make our contribution to a favourable outcome of the negotiations, through detailed consultations in the Alliance and through a greater overall European contribution. To the extent to which the European pillar of NATO is strengthened, the whole Western community will benefit - since a balanced partnership within the Alliance is the best way of safeguarding the all-important Atlantic cooperation and securing its broad public support.

These considerations also determine the Norwegian attitude towards the European Community. We are broadening and intensifying our relations with the EC as a modest contribution to the development of a European political consensus. Spanish membership in the European Community would be an important contribution towards building such a consensus and promoting constructive and comprehensive cooperation in Europe. We wish you every success in the difficult negotiations that still lie ahead.

Our concern with facilitating multilateral cooperation should not keep us from recognizing the value of developing bilateral ties. The political relations between Norway and Spain have never been closer. In the economic field, however, there is room for considerable improvement. Recently, we have seen the beginnings of cooperation in new sectors: ship-building and offshore, oil and gas, fish-farming and various areas of high technology, including the field of military equipment. We are looking to Spain as an important future partner in a European economy where the visible and invisible barriers are gradually dismantled. We, for our part, welcome Spanish participation in the exciting developments on the Norwegian continental shelf. As you may know, Mr. Prime Minister, the Spanish company Hispanoil has been involved in oil- and gas-exploration in the rough waters of the Arctic Ocean to the north of Northern Norway. I hope that the talks here in Madrid will also serve as an impetus to strengthening and furthering the industrial and commercial cooperation between our two countries.

Mr. Prime Minister, going back several hundred years, we see how our ancestors managed to overcome geographical distance and create a common history. We both sent explorers westwards, across the Atlantic, to discover different parts of America at different times. However, I admit that our contacts in former times were

not always pleasant ones, as the Vikings raided villages in Galicia and Andalucia. Today a peaceful invasion of the Spanish beaches is taking place. Moreover, thousands of Norwegians, most of them elderly people, have settled in Spain more or less permanently. I should like to take this opportunity to thank you and the Spanish people for the very warm hospitality these many Norwegians have received in your country. I would also like to underscore our hopes that the Norwegian population, through personal experience as well as institutional cooperation, will be able to benefit more and more from Spain's tremendous contribution to European culture. In addition, we hope that the Edvard Munch-exhibition held in Madrid last year, and the Rolf Nesch-exhibition which I am to open tomorrow, will contribute to closer cooperation in the field of culture.

During the last few years we have seen an important increase in the contact between our two countries. We were most honoured and happy to receive Their Majesties, the King and Queen of Spain, on their very successful visit to Norway in the spring of 1982. Last year His Majesty King Olav V made an equally successful state visit to Spain. Norway and Spain are both constitutional, democratic monarchies; we both have the same European cultural roots; and we share the same ideals and hopes for peace and prosperity, for

social justice and for the protection of human rights. It is my strong conviction that more extensive cooperation between our two countries will be of benefit both to Norway and to Spain.

With these words, Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to propose a toast to Their Majesties, the King and Queen of Spain, to the welfare and prosperity of the Spanish people, and to the happiness of you yourself, Mr. Prime Minister, of Senora de Gonzalez and of your family.