

Statsminister  
Gro Harlem Brundtland

TALE VED REGJERINGENS MIDDAG FOR CORPS DIPLOMATIQUE,  
AKERSHUS SLOTT, 18.12.1990.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

It is in the true tradition of Norwegian Christmas celebrations to gather friends around you. This is also why the Government has made a tradition out of this annual dinner in honour of the Corps Diplomatique. It is a great pleasure and privilege for me once again to welcome all of you here tonight, old friends and new ones.

We are gathered at time of great activities on the international scene. This can entail good news as well as bad news. Among the good news is the fact that EFTA and the EC are having a ministerial meeting tomorrow. The bad news is that since both the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Trade and Shipping are attending that meeting, they were unable to join us here tonight.

Diplomacy has been described as "the world of telegrams and anger". This Government, committed as we are to international cooperation, will give you ample opportunity to produce the former while, I hope, little reason to feel the latter.

Some of you may already have undertaken to explain to your capitals why a non-socialist majority in the Parliament cannot sustain a non-socialist government. This is naturally a complex political issue. But if the number of representatives alone was decisive, the present situation indicate that Benjamin Disraeli was right in saying that "no government can be long secure without a formidable opposition"?

As we look to 1991, Europe is the focus of world attention. The winds of change and freedom are sweeping over our continent. As peaceful revolutionary changes demonstrate, it is useless to close the gates on ideas.

"A rising sun". This was how Benjamin Franklin once described democracy. Yet there are many examples of countries throughout the world where that sun has been eclipsed by long dark nights.

Individual success stories are often applauded by the international community, but unless we are able to provide broad and tangible support, the prospects of progress and stability can be reduced

The CSCE Summit in Paris responded to the ongoing changes by adopting the Charter for a New Europe. Rather than closing a chapter on the past it provides a common inspiration for the

future. And yet, the real challenge lies ahead of us. We cannot escape the fact that all our knowledge is about the past, and all our challenges are about the future.

We know that the political and economic process of transformation in the Soviet Union and the Eastern and Central European countries may be difficult and even painful. As the people of Central and Eastern Europe are taking command of their own future, we in the West must assist in the process.

We must open our international economic and political institutions to wider participation. There are limits to the hardship these countries can endure. We need short-term measures and consistent, long-term strategies, based on the recognition that economy and ecology are indeed one issue.

We must remedy the catastrophic environmental situation which has been revealed in many countries. Energy cooperation in Europe can spearhead economic revitalization in a sustainable way. We now have a unique opportunity to create economic growth throughout all of Europe while at the same time protecting and restoring the environment. We can provide the evidence that sustainable development is possible.

The end of the era of confrontation has provided us with a unique opportunity. We can join forces and reallocate resources in order to promote peace, justice and development for the world community. New opportunities in our own part of the world must not blind us to the need for common action at the global level.

Common challenges require common solutions. We need more effective political decision-making at the international level. The whole culture of international cooperation must be further developed. We have no choice but to work towards global democracy.

The GATT meeting in Brussels two weeks ago marked a set-back for international cooperation. Together, we must ensure that this setback does not disrupt the ongoing quest for an order where all countries can share the same ground rules.

We need a world based less on power and status and more on justice and contract, a world that is less discretionary, more governed by fair and open rules.

All lessons of reform within national societies confirm the gains for all in a process of change that makes the world a less unequal, a more just and habitable place. The great moral imperatives that underpin such lessons are as valid internationally as they were and are nationally.

The maturity and vitality of international cooperation will be put to the test in the coming negotiations on a climate convention. We must provide a truly global climate for change in order to protect the global climate.

Marshall McLuhan has asserted that "politicians offer

yesterday's solutions to today's problems". Our challenge is to prove him wrong, and to find solutions today to the problems of tomorrow.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

According to a Malay proverb, diplomats are like a liana, they can be bent, but they cannot be broken. We do not intend to test the truth of it. On the contrary, the Government will do its best to ensure that your stay here in Norway will be as rewarding and interesting as possible.

I would like to invite you join me in a toast to the Corps Diplomatique in Norway, and to continued fruitful cooperation in the year ahead