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BRITISH EMBASSY,
OSLO.

22 September 1986

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
LONDON

Sir

THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO NORWAY

1. The Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, paid an official visit to Norway on 11 and 12 September 1986, accompanied by Mr Denis Thatcher. The visit was in response to a long-standing invitation from the former Prime Minister of Norway, Mr Kåre Willoch, who visited Britain as such in 1984. After his Government fell from power in May 1986 the invitation was warmly reiterated by his Labour Party successor, Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland. I attach a copy of the programme.

2. The Prime Minister and her party flew directly to Tromsø, well north of the Arctic Circle. They were met there in brilliant autumnal sunshine by Mrs Brundtland, her husband, the Governor of Troms county and other representatives of the Norwegian Government. Both Prime Ministers and their parties departed immediately by helicopter for Olavsværn, the maritime forward operating base for NATO in North Norway. Mrs Thatcher was briefed by Lt General Eide (Commander Allied Forces North

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Norway) and conducted around the underground facilities at the base, including the docks and berths for submarines and fast patrol boats. Mrs Thatcher was impressed by reinforcement and comprehensive mobilisation plans but stressed the importance of making political decisions early enough to get reinforcement in place in time. She suggested that politicians needed to exercise their role just as much as did the military. General Eide emphasised the importance of the part played by the United Kingdom/Netherlands amphibious force, and commended the Royal Marines as the best trained Arctic warfare troops in NATO (not excluding the Norwegians themselves). This praise was echoed by Mrs Brundtland.

3. The trip back to Tromsø was in four fast patrol boats, allowing the party a striking view of the fjord and the mountains surrounding it. On arrival in Tromsø the party was met by a small but noisy demonstration, largely against the Prime Minister's policies on South Africa and trade unions. An official lunch was held in an old Norwegian house, the Villa Bikuben. Mrs Brundtland, having warmly welcomed the Prime Minister, spoke of the close ties between our two countries but also touched on current points of difference between their Governments. Mrs Thatcher in reply referred to the long history linking the peoples of Great Britain and Norway, including the departure in 1940 for Britain from Tromsø of the King and Government to set up a Government in exile in London, after the Germans had occupied Norway. Her graceful reference to the demonstrators, and their right to express their point of view,

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made a particular impression, both on those at the lunch and on a wider television audience that evening.

4. After lunch the party visited Tromsø Museum, which houses a fine collection of Lappish exhibits, before flying to Oslo. The Prime Minister had invited Mrs Brundtland to travel to Oslo with her in the RAF VC 10 and the two-hour journey gave them an opportunity for informal discussions which I understand were useful and friendly. On arrival in Oslo Mrs Thatcher drove to my Residence (where she stayed the night) in order to prepare for that evening's banquet for 180 guests in her honour at Akershus Castle. Her departure for the dinner was delayed by some 40 minutes due to a demonstration outside Akershus Castle which got out of hand. The demonstration had been organised by an extreme Marxist group who chose as their subjects British policy on South Africa, Acid Rain and Northern Ireland. Danny Morrison, a leader of Sinn Fein, had come to Oslo to exploit the situation and the general ignorance in Norway of the complexities of the Irish problem. He did so with some success and those intent on a clash with the police were encouraged by the failure of the Norwegian authorities to provide anything like enough manpower to cope with the demonstration. It therefore took some time to clear the castle grounds and tear gas had to be used - a rare though not unique event in Norway.

5. After its delayed start the banquet passed off smoothly. In her speech Mrs Brundtland again referred briefly to the major areas



of difference between the British and Norwegian Governments (Acid Rain and South Africa). But the substance of her speech was devoted to the long, close and friendly relationship between our two countries, with special reference to Britain's military support during the Second World War and subsequently against the Soviet threat. In reply the Prime Minister gave a very well received speech in which she shrugged off the delay caused by the demonstration and humorously capped a number of Mrs Brundtland's remarks, as well as reiterating the close ties between Britain and Norway and their common defence of freedom. She also took the opportunity to announce the new British measures to alleviate the problem of acid rain.

6. On the following day, the Prime Minister's programme started early, with two ceremonies at the cemetery of Vestre Gravlund. Mrs Thatcher laid wreaths at the monuments to the Britons and the Norwegians who lost their lives in the Second World War. It was a simple and dignified act of remembrance which was greatly appreciated (and reported as such in the press). Some fifty war veterans turned up and much to their delight the Prime Minister managed to speak to many of them.

7. The party went on to Mrs Brundtland's office where a tête-à-tête was followed by more formal talks. These covered East/West issues including SDI, Norway's relationship with the European Community, South Africa, Acid Rain and nuclear energy policy and North Sea oil. On the first two and the last of these subjects there was a fair measure of agreement as well as a useful exchange. The talks,

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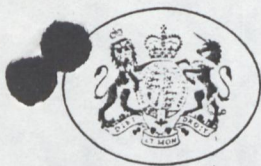
notable for their frankness, were a success. A particular aspect was the striking impression which the Prime Minister made on her hosts with her forceful exposition of British opposition to comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. Whilst it is not to be supposed that the Norwegian Government will significantly alter their policy on South Africa as a result it is good that they should understand our own at first hand. The detail of the discussions has been recorded separately.

8. Mrs Thatcher then visited the NATO Headquarters at Allied Forces North, at Kolsås just outside Oslo. There she received an excellent and succinct briefing and was shown around the war operations centre by CINC North, General Sir Geoffrey Howlett, and his staff. General Howlett said in welcoming the Prime Minister what an encouragement it was that in her busy programme she had taken time to visit two military installations. The Prime Minister replied that she appreciated both the importance of the Headquarter's role and the need for it to acquire adequate warning of an impending attack by the Warsaw Pact.

9. The Prime Minister subsequently had a private audience with His Majesty King Olav V at which she presented him with a picture of HMS Devonshire leaving Tromsø in 1940. The King was greatly touched by this gift which commemorated his departure, with his father King Haakon VII, for England after the fall of Norway. It will hang in the Royal Yacht. His Majesty then entertained the Prime Minister and other members of the delegation to a most

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agreeable lunch, at which he was in his best form. After her return to the Embassy, Mrs Thatcher had a half-hour meeting with Mr Kåre Willoch, the former Conservative Prime Minister and now Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs. The two know each other well from previous meetings in Britain and the talks were relaxed and friendly. There followed a press conference at which the Prime Minister expressed her satisfaction and pleasure with the visit and answered questions on a wide number of issues from South Africa to Acid Rain and oil policy. The conference received wide coverage in both the domestic and foreign press and broadcasting media and the Prime Minister impressed everyone by her confident and comprehensive replies to the questions. During the press conference, there was another, yet smaller demonstration but this was successfully controlled by the police who had belatedly learnt the lesson of the previous evening and provided adequate security - as they did throughout the day. There was then just time for Mrs Thatcher, accompanied by her husband, to visit two of Oslo's most famous museums: the Viking Ships and Nansen's polar exploration ship, the Fram. At the former museum there was an impromptu presentation of flowers by two Norwegian well-wishers, upset by the demonstrations of the previous night: this is still receiving wide and favourable publicity here.

10. That evening the Prime Minister and Mr Thatcher attended a reception in the Embassy for some four hundred guests including Mrs Brundtland and her husband, the Foreign Minister, and leaders of the main Norwegian political parties as well as leading figures

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in the economic, defence and diplomatic fields. Mrs Thatcher left directly from this reception, accompanied by Mrs Brundtland, for the airport and took off at 8.15 pm for London. There was a final reminder that Norway was not entirely immune from today's barbarities in the shape of a telephone call to a Norwegian newspaper saying that there was a bomb on board: but this was, as could be expected, a hoax.

Assessment

11. The visit was only the second official trip to Norway since independence in 1905 by a British Prime Minister, the first having been by Mr Harold Macmillan in 1960. Mrs Thatcher managed in a busy programme not only to see something of this country and NATO's Northern front, but to meet, and talk to or address, a great many influential Norwegians. She and Mrs Brundtland rapidly established a close rapport even though their political perspectives differ: thus, as I had expected, they gave the lie to press speculation that their personalities would clash. The Prime Minister impressed those of her hosts who had not met her before with her surefootedness in the public eye, the firmness and clarity of her views and her eloquence, her flair for improvisation in her public speaking (the banquet speech at Akershus delighted her audience) and her statesmanlike politeness throughout. The latter made an especially positive impression.

12. There is no denying that the violent demonstration before the banquet, and the consequent delay of the Prime Minister's arrival

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there, marred the occasion in some degree. As was inevitable both British and Norwegian press played the disturbance for much more than it was worth. It is also, incidentally, having a significant political effect in Oslo, where it is generally recognised that the precautions ordered by the Government and taken by the security authorities were wholly inadequate (as distinct from the anti-terrorist precautions, which were very good indeed). Heads will roll: it is not yet decided whose. More important for us, there is a widespread revulsion and sense of shame - given expression in numerous letters, telephone calls and verbal apologies to me, my wife and others in this Embassy - that the fracas should have been allowed to interfere with the friendly reception of a distinguished guest and the representative of Norway's oldest, and in many ways closest, friend. However, one aspect which it would be unwise to overlook is that, as well as ignorance in certain Norwegian circles of Northern Ireland and a wider naiveté about South Africa, the demonstrations also reflected widespread concern, even bitterness, at our industrial emissions and their effect on acid precipitation here. Mrs Brundtland made it clear that the latest British measures are welcome and greatly appreciated; but she added her hope that further such steps should be taken and we should be in no doubt that more will be asked of us in the future.

13. That said, it would be a mistake to give undue emphasis to the demonstrations in assessing the Prime Minister's visit. Despite the prominence given to this in the media the substantive

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aspects are much more important and were overwhelmingly positive. As was the intention the visit served to emphasise and underline the long-standing friendship and closeness of Britain and Norway and the common position which we adopt on most issues (despite the fact that Mrs Thatcher turned out to have a Labour hostess rather than a Conservative host). In the longer term perspective, that is the effect which the visit will be seen to have had. I am very grateful to the Prime Minister: I hope that she found her journey interesting, agreeable and worthwhile, and I am confident that it was necessary.

14. I am sending copies of this despatch to the Secretaries of State for Defence and for the Environment, to Her Majesty's Ambassadors at Copenhagen, Helsinki, Reykjavik and Stockholm and to the UK Representatives to the European Communities and NATO.

I am, Sir

Yours faithfully

William Bentley

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18 September 1986

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO NORWAY

I enclose a copy of a formal record of the Prime Minister's talks with Mrs. Brundtland in Oslo on 12 September prepared by our Embassy. I have amended it extensively. May I please leave it to the department to distribute as (or if) necessary.

(C. D. POWELL)

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 October 1986



Dear Charles,

The Prime Minister's Visit to Norway

I enclose a copy of
Sir William Bentley's despatch about
the Prime Minister's recent visit
to Norway.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

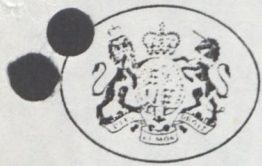
C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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CEPC (4)

Mr Prime Minister
You might read
paragraphs 11-13

of the despatch
CDP
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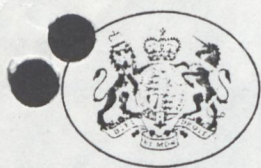
THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO NORWAY

1. The programme started in Tromsø, Northern Norway where the Prime Minister accompanied by Mrs Brundtland visited Olavsvern Naval Base and the Tromsø Museum before flying on to Oslo (Paragraphs 1 and 2).

2. The dinner held in the Prime Minister's honour delayed by an unruly demonstration. Both Prime Ministers paid tribute to the long and friendly relationship between Britain and Norway. Mrs Thatcher announced new measures against Acid Rain (Paragraphs 3 and 4).

3. The wreath-laying ceremony followed by successful talks with Mrs Brundtland and stimulating visit to NATO Headquarters (Paragraphs 5 - 7).

4. Audience with The King who then held a lunch for Mrs Thatcher. Talks with Mr Kåre Willoch, former Prime Minister of Norway followed by a well-reported and dynamic press conference. The programme allowed for some brief sightseeing in Oslo before a reception in the Embassy. Mrs Thatcher then returned to London (Paragraphs 8 and 9).



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5. A successful visit despite the well publicised demonstrations. The Prime Minister greatly impressed her hosts and reaffirmed the close friendship of Britain and Norway (Paragraphs 10 - 12).

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