Opening Address

F.	Finn	Askevold
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Oslo

Finn Askevold, Head Physician, Psychosomatic Department, Rikshospitalet, Oslo 1 (Norway)

Dear colleagues and friends

It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to this unique conference. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that there is no formal organizational body behind these European conferences. They are no longer exclusively European but have gained international acknowledgement. The 25th anniversary of these conferences falls between this and the next one. They started out from a group of friends and colleagues working in the still vaguely defined field of psychosomatic medicine. Primarily they were from Holland and Great Britain, and they invited people from other European countries, whom they knew were working in the same field, to the first conference in London in 1955. Following the next two, in 1956 and 1957, they have been held biannually.

Some of the originators are still with us, some have dropped out to psychiatry proper, and some are deceased. To our great pleasure new ones are coming. These conferences are never officially announced. Invitations are sent by personal letters and are spread by a halo-effect, and requests for application forms only increase as a sign of increasing interest.

The goal of these conferences lies, in the main, to prompt interest in psychosomatic research, to improve methodology, and to foster inter-professional communication – not only within the different medical specialities, but also with other health professionals and workers in the social sciences.

As with all other far-reaching goals, and rightly so, it is not achieved but this only stimulates our endeavors.

This special conference – north of the polar circle – has chosen its location with the special purpose of exposing the participants to the living circumstances in the arctic region. This will be done not by personal experiences but by telling about the arctic winter, its storms, its snow, its darkness and cold, and about the life of the fishermen, the factory workers and miners in the climate within 23 degrees from the North Pole.

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We also hope to be able to show you the beauty of this particular part of Norway as it is in the practically nightless summer.

We, the small group of friends and collaborators who have organized this conference, hope that you will enjoy what we have thought you ought to enjoy in spite of the high cost. Hotel prices and the cost of living in Norway are among the highest in the world, second only, I believe, to Tokyo.

The travel distance to Bodø from London, Amsterdam or Bonn – just to mention a few of your places of embarkation – is as far from these same places as to the northern part of the Sahara

(also a place of stressful environment, by the way). We hope the expense in coming here will be felt worthwhile after the conference.

As president of this conference, I have the privilege and pleasure to mention, in particular, the two persons who have carried the heaviest workload. I can assure you they have invested a tremendous amount of work during the two years since Heidelberg. First, my co-president who is the organizer of all the local arrangements here in Bodø, Haakon Hals. Next, my daily collaborator in the department of psychosomatic medicine and who has been the organizer of the scientific program, edited the prepublications and taken care of all correspondence, Tmls-Eirik Mogstad. These two have made it quite easy for the other members of the committee – perhaps too easy.

If there is a correlation between the work invested and the success of the conference we

the other members of the committee

may sleep peacefully. With these concluding remarks I declare the 12th European Conference for Psychosomatic Research opened.