

17 MAY... NORWAY'S CONSTITUTION DAY



Message of the Ambassador

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to introduce Norway on the day her constitution was signed in 1814. On 17 May each year all Norwegians in Norway and abroad commemorate the importance of having a democratic constitution and national independence.

The children procession has become a colourful focal point in the celebrations, from the most remote coastal settlements to the capital city of Oslo. Thousands of school children are marching under school bands and banners. Many children and adults wear national costumes. Each district has its own style. The fact that Norway has developed into a multicultural society adds value to the celebration.

Norway is an old country but a young nation. Norway has been a unified country since about the year 1030. From 1380 to 1814 Norway was ruled from Copenhagen, the Danish capital. During this period the country came to be regarded as part of Denmark, but Norway managed to retain her national identity. A Norwegian constitution was drawn up when the union with Denmark finally came to an end in 1814. However, in the same year Norway entered into a new union, this time with Sweden. Norway's demand for independence grew gradually stronger after 1850. Tensions were high on both sides of the border until the union was terminated peacefully in 1905, and the Norwegians through a refer-

endum chose Prince Carl of Denmark to be their king. He took the name of Haakon VII and became the first king of an independent Norway in 525 years. Today his grandson King Harald V is a modern king of Norway.

Although Norway and Bangladesh are very different in many ways, there are also a number of common characteristics between the two countries. Both Norway and Bangladesh are proud of their respective democratic countries and value their independence highly.

Culture has been an integrated part of nation building for both countries. Both countries have contributed to UN peace-keeping operations. And, last but not least, they are both fish-eating nations with water as a central element and resource, both for the culture and the economy.

In Norway, people have always lived by the sea, from the sea and on the sea. For hundreds of years the fishing industry has been one of Norway's most important export industries and has created basis of life and economic activity along our long coastline. Norway has been a major league player in shipping for 150 years. Furthermore, the broad spectrum of maritime activities that has been developed around traditional shipping operations today holds a strong position in the international market. Since

From the children's procession on May 17th in the main street in Oslo.



the middle of the 1970's the oil and gas activities offshore have been new important challenges for the Norwegians.

As a democratic country with an open economy, Norway has given priority to playing an active role in the international community. Norway was one of the first countries to provide peacekeeping forces under UN command. From 2001 Norway is a member of the United Nations Security Council.

The development co-operation between Bangladesh and Norway is an expression of the strong and friendly relations that exist between our two countries. Norway is proud to be a development partner with Bangladesh.

Development co-operation has broad support in the Norwegian society and the Norwegian Parliament. This support is based on two traditions: the ideas of solidarity and access to human rights and participation for all in society, and values of compassion towards fellow human beings.

The overall goal of the co-operation is to contribute to poverty reduction. Recipient responsibility is an important principle, implying that it is the recipient government or partner NGO that should be responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring of projects and programmes supported by Norway. A good dialogue is appreciated.

Norway's non-governmental organisations and other representatives from the civil society have been active in Bangladesh since the independence. Co-operation between universities and research institutions from the two countries is established and can be further developed.

There is a modest but increasing interest for extended co-operation in commerce and trade both from the government of Bangladesh and from private enterprises. A Bangladesh-Norway Chamber of Commerce and Industry was formally established in 2000. Norwegian investments in the telecommunication sector is an example of a potential for increased future co-operation between private enterprises in the two countries. 2001 is an election year in



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The Norwegian Royal Family waving to the parade from the Royal Castle in the center of Oslo.

development co-operation has concentrated on the education- and productive sector, as well as support to further strengthening of democracy and improvement of human rights in Bangladesh.

The major part of the Norwegian assistance to Bangladesh is channelled through the government structures. Norway also supports selected non-governmental organisations in their development activities.

A process has been initiated to evaluate the development co-operation programmes with Bangladesh. A new Memorandum of Understanding will hopefully be signed next year.

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History of Norway

9000 - 8000 B.C.	Earliest signs of settlement.
8000 - 4000 B.C.	Old Stone Age. Hunters and fishermen. Rock carvings. Milder climate.
4000 - 1500 B.C.	New Stone Age. Livestock. Early agriculture.
1500 - 500 B.C.	Bronze Age. Agricultural tools, jewellery, glass, weapons. Foreign trade.
500 B.C.-1000 A.D.	Iron Age. Iron ploughs and scythes.
800 - 1000 A.D.	Viking period. Longships, trade and conquest. Runic inscriptions. Voyages of discovery.
1030	Unification of Norway into one kingdom. Introduction of Christianity
1200	The Norwegian empire
1350	The Black Death. Population reduced.
1380 - 1814	Union with Denmark. Constitution adopted.
1814 - 1905	Union with Sweden.
1905	End of Union. Haakon VII crowned king.
1940-1945	World War II. German occupation.
1957	Death of Haakon VII. Olav V becomes king.
1970	Oil and gas deposits discovered off the Norwegian coast.
1981	Norway's first female Prime Minister
1991	Death of Olav V. Harald V becomes king.

Culture

Once upon a time..... is how most Norwegian folk tales start, and it was once upon a time in the 1840s that two Norwegians Asbjørnsen and Moe, started collecting and writing down the old folk tales which previously had only been passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation.

Many of these stories shared common roots with folk tale tradition in other countries and if you were to read one today, you would doubtless recognize many familiar elements.

Our most famous author, Henrik Ibsen, found inspiration in folk tales when writing his play Peer Gynt and most people have heard

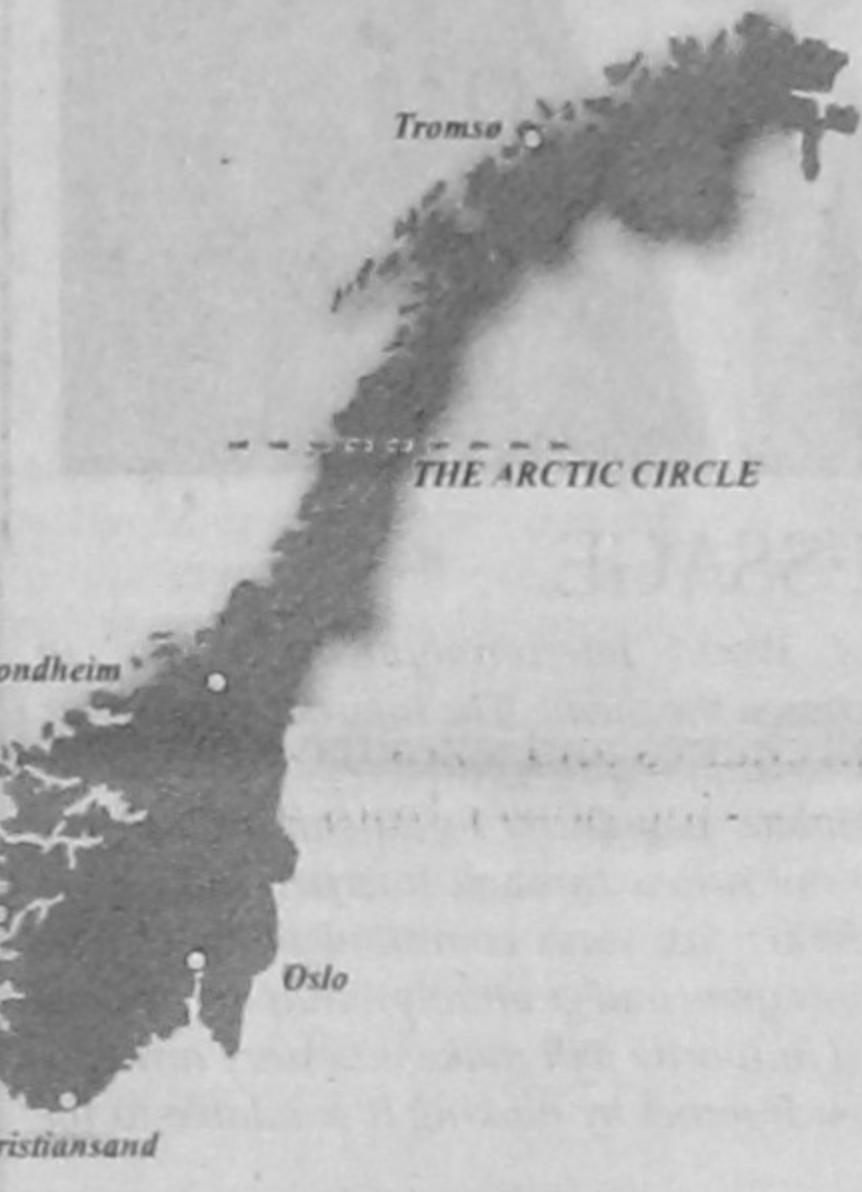
In the Hall of the Mountain King, music which was written for the play by Edvard Grieg, one of our greatest composers. Although young Norwegians are proud of Edvard Grieg, they do not listen to his

music very much. Like other young people, they are more interested in rock and pop music. Their favourites include both Norwegian groups and foreign artists.

The Norwegian painter, Edvard Munch, is today regarded as one of the greatest of modern artists. Although he is perhaps most famous for the painting Scream, he painted many other outstanding works.

Today cultural life in Norway finds expression in a variety of different fields such as the theatre, films, music, painting, arts and crafts, folk dancing and literature.

Cultural life in Norway is very varied and many Norwegian artists have achieved international fame. Norwegians sometimes wonder how a small country as Norway has been able to produce such a variety of great artists, but feel that it perhaps can be explained to some extent by the tradition of education for all, food for everybody and the absence of war. Culture is the opposite of war. Culture creates, but war destroys.

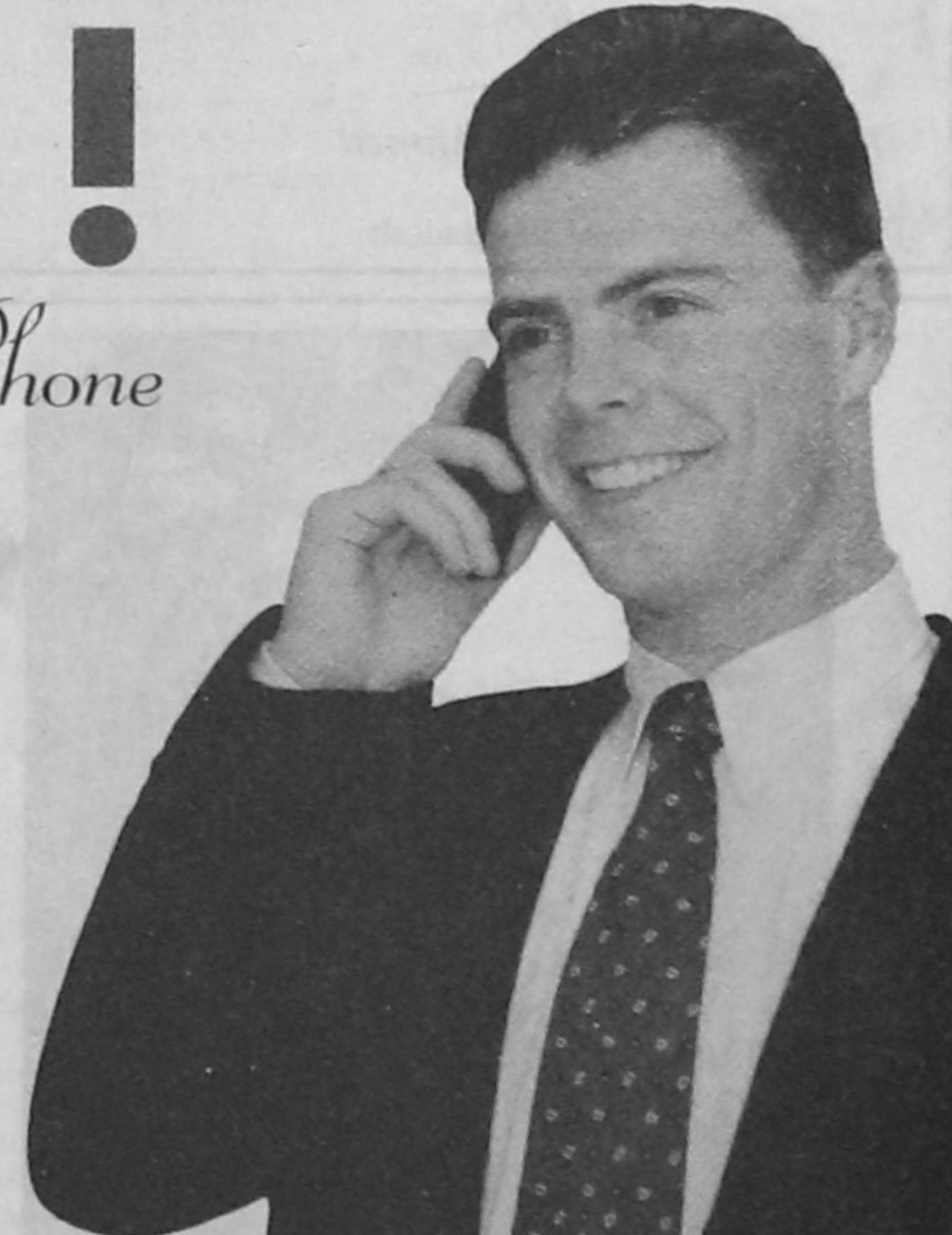


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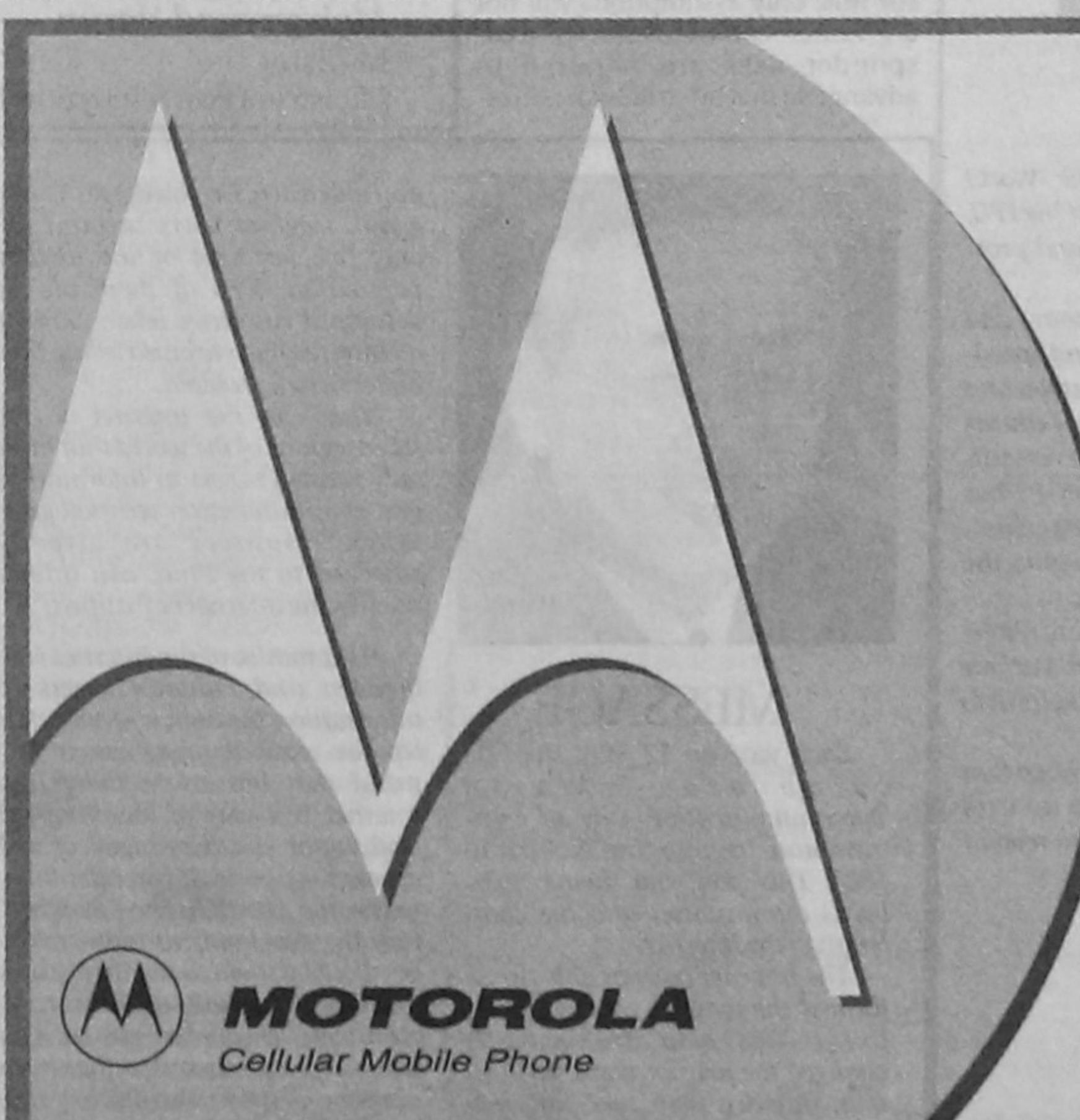
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