



Statements and Speeches

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ATLANTIC ALLIANCE DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF PEACE

An Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in his Capacity as Honorary President of the North Atlantic Council, to the Opening Session of the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg, May 17, 1982

...This ministerial session of the North Atlantic Council comes at a serious time, against the background of a disturbing international situation. For example, we cannot but be gravely concerned about the Falkland Islands crisis, where the United Kingdom is defending the basic principle of the non-use of force to settle international disputes. A series of meetings has been scheduled over the next few months which will have an important bearing on the nature of the East-West relationship in the years to come. Our own meeting presents us with the opportunity to lay the groundwork for our heads of state and government when they meet in June and for the second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in New York. These meetings will serve as occasions for taking stock of the present international situation and for exploring the path of future East-West relations.

The challenge

What are we up against today? What is the challenge facing us? There is no doubt that the hopes and expectations attached to *détente* in the 1970s have been badly shaken by such actions as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Soviet role in the imposition of martial law in Poland. But in my view *détente* is a process, not a policy, and the fact that the process has run into trouble does not necessarily mean all our past policies were wrong. If *détente* has run into trouble, it is not only because of the Soviet aggression; it is also because of disagreement between East and West over what could be expected from *détente*. Even within the West, there is disagreement on this.

For the East, *détente* represented a way of continuing the ideological struggle by all means short of war, while obtaining the maximum benefit from co-operation with the West, in particular access to western technology and credits, some of which in turn were devoted to improving the U.S.S.R.'s military capability.

For many in the West, on the other hand, *détente* represented easier, more normal East-West relations and reduced tensions, with tangible benefits not only in trade but also in the area of human contacts, family reunification and human rights. Unfortunately, we in the West were unable to succeed in ensuring that the relaxation of tensions was accompanied by restraint on both sides, that benefits were really reciprocal, and that unacceptable Soviet behaviour would inevitably affect the quality of the relationship.
