

It has also been in Brussels that the seeds of the European movement were sown. The institutions of the European Communities centered in this city testify to the success and promise of this movement. We meet, therefore, in an environment which has solid European and Atlantic foundations. Progress at this meeting towards harmonizing our national views and interests - and we must make progress if the Alliance is to continue to serve our common good - will enrich the best traditions of this city, of this country and of the trans-Atlantic community which NATO represents.

We meet at a critical moment in the history of our Alliance. NATO has faced crises before and surmounted them. But our present crisis is of a different order; our problem this time is more internal than external. It arises out of the decision taken by one of the respected members of our Alliance to withdraw from the integrated military structure. The other members of the Alliance, known colloquially as the Fourteen, wish to continue to contribute to and participate in a collective defence programme. Particularly because of the central geographic position occupied by France in Western Europe, the process of adjustment is complex. However, this task is in hand, although it will take some time to execute.

In the process of carrying out the withdrawals required by France, the Fourteen have decided to make certain changes in the NATO military structure which should add to its efficiency. We need have no fears therefore as to the continuing defence and deterrent strength of NATO. NATO will continue to be a stout shield.

In the course of our meeting, it will be necessary to give approval to these changes which are consequent on the French action.