



Statements and Speeches

No. 75/19

FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY -- THE STRENGTH AND PROBLEM OF NATO

Remarks by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, at the NATO Summit Meeting in Brussels, May 30, 1975.

One of the principal paragraphs of the Ottawa Declaration proclaimed the continued dedication of each member of this alliance to the several principles of democracy, respect for human rights, justice and social progress.

That paragraph, more than any other in the Ottawa Declaration, serves to distinguish the NATO countries from those of the Warsaw Pact. More even than that, the dedication contained in that paragraph represents the fundamental strength of this alliance.

Yet, distinctive as they make us, strong as is our alliance because of them, democracy and freedom create for us problems of a kind unknown to the Soviet bloc:

Unlike the Warsaw Pact [leaders], it is not sufficient for us as government leaders merely to proclaim our support for NATO. We must be able as well to persuade our electorates of the benefits of the alliance if we are not to be swept out of office or forced to change our policies.

Unlike the Warsaw Pact [leaders], we are disinclined by instinct to accept without challenge charts and tabulations prepared by military advisers, no matter how articulate and competent those advisers may be. We, and our constituents, insist on the right to cross-examine, and on the right to question.

This freedom and this democracy, which unite us in their defence, are the source both of our resolve and our interrogation.

Without common resolve -- yet, equally, without full understanding of the goals of this alliance --, we cannot force from our peoples automatic acceptance of the NATO credo; we cannot, especially in times of economic uncertainty, count on the willingness of our citizens to bear without question the increasing cost of the defence burden; we cannot maintain indefinitely the necessary dedication of each succeeding generation.

I am satisfied that there is in Canada at this time overwhelming
