



# Statements and Speeches

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No. 81/28

## NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE A BEDROCK OF SECURITY

An Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in his Capacity as Honorary President of the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Session, Brussels, December 10, 1981

...We are meeting today at a critical period in the history of the [North Atlantic] Alliance. The maintenance of an effective deterrent has never been more important — yet, significant segments of our publics, particularly young people, have become confused about the necessity for defence and disillusioned with the concept of deterrence. Worse, many of them simply do not believe that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is treading the path of peace. Some even believe that a nuclear war would somehow become more likely if the Theatre Nuclear Force (TNF) modernization decision is implemented.

We hear within our countries loud voices in denunciation of NATO's nuclear defences. We see street demonstrations directed against the TNF modernization component of our December 1979 decision. There are demands that NATO should forego its modernization plans regardless of whether the Soviet Union accepts corresponding reductions in its nuclear forces. At the same time there is all too little awareness of the arms-control negotiations component of the same decision, or of the awesome nuclear weapons of the East.

It is all too easy to discount this body of opinion as a vocal and bothersome minority. These concerns and apprehensions may be limited to a vocal minority but they are nonetheless serious. The existence of such concerns suggests to me that we in NATO must face up to the fact that there is a need for us all to do a better job of communicating with the public. We should make a more determined effort to inform those who have become disoriented in the stress of the nuclear era and who need to be reminded of the essential role our Alliance plays in safeguarding our societies from intimidation. We need to speak also to those for whom the North Atlantic Alliance is an institution created long ago, for purposes and reasons which are for them ancient history.

In speaking to our own peoples, including our youth, we need to remind ourselves of our origins, to reaffirm our faith in what we stand for and to recognize with clarity the challenge we face.

We can be proud of our achievements. For more than 30 years, this Alliance has been successful in doing the job it was created for: it has preserved the peace in Europe and has deterred Soviet expansion in the NATO area. It has, in fact, given Europe the longest period of peace it has known in this century. It has also proved its worth as a highly developed forum for political consultations and crisis management. Beyond that, it has fostered growing co-operation in a variety of defence-related fields on the basis of shared interests and values.

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Need to communicate