



Statements and Speeches

No. 74/9

NATO'S TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY, A YEAR OF REVITALIZATION

An Address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, to the Atlantic Treaty Association, Ottawa, September 9, 1974.

I am particularly pleased that the Atlantic Treaty Association accepted the invitation of the Atlantic Council of Canada to meet in Ottawa in this the twenty-fifth anniversary year of the Alliance itself. I appreciate the opportunity this has given me, after having only recently been named Secretary of State for External Affairs, to comment on the Atlantic Alliance, which provides a framework for co-operation between Canada, Europe and the United States in the common security of our territories. As I am sure you are all aware, but three months ago the foreign ministers of the NATO nations met here in Ottawa and issued a document attesting to the continuing worth and vigour of the Alliance -- I am speaking, of course, of the "Ottawa Declaration". The signing of this singularly important document demonstrated the truly dynamic nature of our Alliance.

Looking back over the past 25 years, I am struck by the way in which NATO has maintained our common security through varied and changing circumstances. Despite the awesome technological developments in weapons of destruction, and especially nuclear weapons, and despite numerous challenges to our political ways of life, NATO has made and continues to make a fundamental contribution to the security of its members. With this increased stability came a period of relative peace and economic prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic. This is the tangible achievement of NATO's collective approach to security.

Twenty-five years ago the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington, giving birth to the Atlantic Alliance -- a unique association of 15 countries designed primarily to ensure the preservation of peace and the security of its members through a collective approach to defence. Faced with a threat to their security while Europe was still recovering from the ravages of the Second World War, the Western countries resolved to group themselves into an alliance that would give substance to a collective resolve to resist aggression. But can any truly viable alliance among such diverse nations as ours be forged from the mere will to resist aggression? It is doubtful to me, as I am sure it is to all of you, that a mere grouping of tanks, planes

and men could survive the changes that have taken place over the past 25 years without some common thread, some intricate link binding its members. Across the street from where we are gathered now is a building that symbolizes to all Canadians the true nature of our democratic process. I think it particularly appropriate that, when the foreign ministers of the NATO allies gathered recently in Ottawa, they were welcomed by my Prime Minister in that building. If there is an ingredient, a common link, a uniting thread that is prized by each of the members of our community of nations, it is the structure of freedom that such buildings symbolize: liberty of the individual, an understanding of our diversities and a belief in the necessity of the preservation of peace. If the vitality of this community is to be maintained, it will be because our organization, in spite of some failings, has succeeded in reflecting, in its policies and in its actions, the desires and aspirations of all men to reach a common understanding through use of words and not arms, through co-operation and not confrontation.

The tangible expression of these ideals is manifest not only in the forces we maintain for collective defence and security. Canadians have always attached importance to the North Atlantic Council as a forum for systematic consultation amongst close friends on a wide variety of questions of mutual interest. The exchange of views with 14 of our closest friends has, I am sure, been of benefit to us all. Eighteen years ago a report on non-military co-operation in NATO was produced by three distinguished statesmen, including the late Prime Minister of Canada, Lester B. Pearson. This report, which has come to be known as that of the "Three Wise Men", is indicative of a sensitivity to these broader dimensions of the Alliance that is more evident today than at any other time in our history. There is reason for satisfaction that this report provided, perhaps, the basic impetus that has guided us along the path of *détente*.

In our view, co-operation in NATO can extend, and has in fact extended, beyond the security and political fields with which the Alliance is principally identified. This was amply demonstrated in Ottawa last year during the plenary meeting held here of NATO's Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, and it will be demonstrated again in a few weeks time when the NATO Science Committee meets in this very chamber. In matters of science, technology and the environment, the Alliance has provided opportunities for an exchange of knowledge and expertise that has proved beneficial to all mankind.

Thus one distinct feature of our Alliance is that it is not simply a group of nations forced together by outward circumstances or by geography. We are neighbours who find cohesion in our common ideals. We can work in harmony because of our dedication to democratic principles. And so, in speaking of this twenty-fifth anniversary year as being the year of the revitalization of the Atlantic Alliance, we should bear in mind the evolution of the activities of our Alliance and its contribution over the past 25 years to improved conditions for all mankind. For, if we were to examine the activities of our 15 nations since 1949, it would become evident that the principles that guided our nations 25 years ago have continued in force throughout this period and remain relevant today.

This Atlantic Alliance was created by men possessed of wisdom and tenacity. Their concern a quarter of a century ago was the protection of our way of life from a common external threat. Today our civilization faces numerous challenges, some of them unforeseen then by even the most farsighted. It has been our willingness as partners in NATO to face up to these issues of change that has proved the strength of the Alliance. We consider that NATO continues to be a most useful international forum for exchanging and discussing the views of its various members, not only through its structured organs but, as well, through its adjunct bodies such as the Atlantic Treaty Association. This Association and the Atlantic Council of Canada enables parliamentarians and academics to involve themselves in foreign affairs and to expand and communicate their knowledge to others by discussing the vital issues of the day with their counterparts from other NATO countries.

As a representative of a Government committed to the principles and policies of the Atlantic Alliance, I hope that the exchange of views that takes place here this week will confirm the solidarity of the Alliance -- not for the sake of solidarity alone but as a result of a fundamental evaluation of why NATO exists and how we, collectively and individually, benefit from it. While an open examination runs the risk of disenchantment, it is my view that a continuing examination of the basic principles that constitute the underlying strength of the Alliance can only benefit its members.

The Alliance will remain strong as long as it enjoys wide public support in all its member nations. You have an essential role to play in explaining Alliance actions and policies to the people of your countries so that their support can be based on a proper understanding of what the Alliance is all about. In the end,

public support depends on public acceptance of the Alliance as a body to which each member nation should belong. This acceptance is threatened if it appears to others that a member nation is taking action in its own interest at the expense of others.

In a publication of my Department that will be released in a few months, I have included a section on Canada and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I should like to quote for you the last sentence of that particular section. It reads: "The Alliance allows, and obliges, Canada to take an active role in European affairs and enunciates the interdependency of Europe and the North American continent". This is one of the realities of which I have just spoken. It is, therefore, more important than ever that we learn to understand one another. The nature of our relations may have changed and evolved, but the interests, the dedication to common objectives and principles, that served as the basis for our Alliance 25 years ago still exist today and form one basis of our understanding. So, if we speak of this year as being one of the revitalization of the Alliance -- yes, I agree. Perhaps the Ottawa Declaration has caused us to focus more clearly on these principles because we have rededicated ourselves to them. But I maintain -- and I hope that you will agree -- that the Atlantic Alliance has constantly observed, and, I know, will ever continue to dedicate itself to those principles that underly its basic viability.

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