



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE NEED FOR ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP

Remarks by the Prime Minister to the
Opening Session of the Tenth Annual Assembly
of the Atlantic Treaty Association, Ottawa,
September 14, 1964.

When I last had the pleasure of addressing you in Boston in 1958, I was able to do so with the confidence and freedom of one who no longer held government office. The restraints of office are upon me once again but, whether as a private citizen or a public servant, my views as to the need for evolution within NATO towards a united transatlantic community remain unchanged.

I am pleased that your Association is meeting in Canada, the "other" North American member of the NATO alliance. It will give you an opportunity to appreciate the importance Canadians attach to membership in an outward-looking and progressive Western alliance.

When I last spoke to you, I suggested that: "...my country's destiny cannot be realized in isolation and one way by which its greatness could be best displayed would be to work for the building of a true and united Atlantic community". I still believe this to be so but, unfortunately, in the intervening years there has been slow progress towards an interdependent Atlantic coalition, broader and deeper than a military alliance and with a true sense of partnership between its European and North American members.

Cohesive Versus Divisive Forces

We appear to be approaching another of those periods in the West when the basic forces that keep us together confront the forces that divide us. Military technology has made such swift progress, particularly in the development of thermonuclear missiles, that there is a danger of coming to believe that even the military links between the two sides of the Atlantic are no longer vital. There is also the danger that we may forget the lessons of the first part of this century and give up our search for an Atlantic community based on common beliefs and common heritage for the illusory advantages of a too narrow nationalism or a restricted continentalism. I support those who seek to improve a mutual awareness and a constructive partnership between the nations on both sides of the Atlantic. Neither Europe nor North America can afford to "go it alone" in the nuclear age.

It is at periods like this that your own Association can be so important. Unless our peoples understand the need for a Western alliance and unless they understand the dangers of "separatism" in the international sphere, then there is a limit to what governments can do. That is why your discussions of the future course of our alliance can be of real importance.

Areas for Improvement

I hope, therefore, that you will devote your energies and your collective wisdom to an examination of the main problems to which NATO should be addressing itself in the next decade. There are three main areas where I believe we must move forward if we are to retain our freedom, carry out our international responsibilities and maintain the values common to our Western society: first, relations with the Communist world; second, relations between the materially rich and developed countries and those that are poor and undeveloped; third, relations between ourselves inside NATO.

As to the first, there is, unfortunately, no reason to believe that there has been any basic change in the Communist threat to the West, nor in the expansionist aims of Communist leaders. We have every reason, therefore, to continue to co-operate even more closely within NATO in maintaining strong, well-integrated defence forces. These forces should recognize that the basis of collective defence has shifted from the year of NATO's birth, when the U.S. had a nuclear monopoly and Europe was weak and divided, to 1964, when there is a nuclear stalemate and Europe is strong and forward-looking.

There are, moreover, some encouraging signs that, in the long term, we may be able to establish a more civilized relation with the Communist world which ultimately may result in mere co-existence developing into greater co-operation. For example, among the reasons for the split in the Communist camp would appear to be the fact that the Soviet Union has come to appreciate the risks of the use of military force in the nuclear age and the danger and irresponsibility of threatening to use all-out nuclear war as a means to attaining national ends. On the other hand, the Communist Chinese appear more willing to risk major hostilities (recent events have made this only too clear) which could involve all of us in a thermonuclear catastrophe. The Chinese leaders do not appear to realize and, perhaps worse, possibly do not care much about the dangers and the consequences of nuclear war. China is arrogant both in its nationalism and its Communism and its leaders know little and understand less of the outside world. If we exposed them more to the views of the rest of the world, we might some day expect a more realistic policy from them. The present isolation of China encourages recurring crises.

Gap between Poor and Rich

Much has been said about the gap between the rich and poor countries and much has been done in the way of aid and assistance, yet the incontrovertible fact is that this gap is continuing to widen. Furthermore, the spread of political freedom makes the gap less tolerable to those who are its victims. Can we really expect to maintain our own expanding standards of living in a world divided between many poor and a few rich countries? Of course not!

In such a world, an explosion is inevitable. Self interest apart, the West has a responsibility in helping the new countries to help themselves. The NATO members have a continuing responsibility here for co-operation, consultation and assistance.

Finally, there are our own alliance and relations between the NATO countries. My own views of the need for an outward-looking transatlantic community are well known and I would only make two points. The first relates to attitude. Unless each of us has the will and conviction to work for such a community, no mere tinkering with the machinery of the alliance, of appointing "wise men" to produce formulas for quick action, is going to be of any avail. My other point relates to what I might call modern European and North American myths. Some in Europe think that any Atlantic system is bound to be an American-dominated system with no responsible role for Europe. Some on this side of the water think that the North American commitment to Europe must involve indefinitely the New World having to continue to redress the balance in the Old. At this point in history such views are outdated. If the West is to develop as a partnership of free sovereign nations united in a common approach to the problems of the thermonuclear and space age, we must accept that the Atlantic Ocean is a two-way thoroughfare and that the countries of Europe and North America must learn to practise a consultative partnership looking to the future as more important - even for their own national development - than a too exclusive preoccupation with the national glory and pride in the past.

May I wish your tenth assembly the greatest of success in its work? I hope that your meetings will be a contribution to the debate that must take place between our peoples and governments on the policies that are required to ensure that the Western coalition remains strong and unified to meet the challenges of the last part of the twentieth century.

I quote a few words on this point from the report of the Committee of Three on Non-Military Co-operation, 1956:

"The fundamental historical fact today is that the nation state, by itself and relying exclusively on national policy and national power, is inadequate for progress or even for survival in the nuclear age. As the founders of the North Atlantic Treaty foresaw, the growing interdependence of states, politically and economically as well as militarily, calls for an ever-increasing measure of international cohesion and co-operation. Some states may be able to enjoy a degree of political and economic independence when things are going well. No state, however powerful, can guarantee its security and its welfare by national action alone."

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