



Statements and Speeches

No. 82/9

ATLANTIC ALLIANCE DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF PEACE

An Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in his Capacity as Honorary President of the North Atlantic Council, to the Opening Session of the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg, May 17, 1982

...This ministerial session of the North Atlantic Council comes at a serious time, against the background of a disturbing international situation. For example, we cannot but be gravely concerned about the Falkland Islands crisis, where the United Kingdom is defending the basic principle of the non-use of force to settle international disputes. A series of meetings has been scheduled over the next few months which will have an important bearing on the nature of the East-West relationship in the years to come. Our own meeting presents us with the opportunity to lay the groundwork for our heads of state and government when they meet in June and for the second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in New York. These meetings will serve as occasions for taking stock of the present international situation and for exploring the path of future East-West relations.

The challenge

What are we up against today? What is the challenge facing us? There is no doubt that the hopes and expectations attached to *détente* in the 1970s have been badly shaken by such actions as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Soviet role in the imposition of martial law in Poland. But in my view *détente* is a process, not a policy, and the fact that the process has run into trouble does not necessarily mean all our past policies were wrong. If *détente* has run into trouble, it is not only because of the Soviet aggression; it is also because of disagreement between East and West over what could be expected from *détente*. Even within the West, there is disagreement on this.

For the East, *détente* represented a way of continuing the ideological struggle by all means short of war, while obtaining the maximum benefit from co-operation with the West, in particular access to western technology and credits, some of which in turn were devoted to improving the U.S.S.R.'s military capability.

For many in the West, on the other hand, *détente* represented easier, more normal East-West relations and reduced tensions, with tangible benefits not only in trade but also in the area of human contacts, family reunification and human rights. Unfortunately, we in the West were unable to succeed in ensuring that the relaxation of tensions was accompanied by restraint on both sides, that benefits were really reciprocal, and that unacceptable Soviet behaviour would inevitably affect the quality of the relationship.

In sum, however, I think it is a reasonable assessment that the *détente* process did open up eastern Europe to improved contacts with the West, did create the possibility of developing mutual confidence, and did reduce the risk of conflict in Europe. Nor should we make light of its remaining assets, which include an extensive framework of East-West negotiating forums such as the Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe review meetings and arms control and disarmament talks, and a continuing dialogue between the super powers as exemplified by the possibility of a summit meeting later this year between Presidents Reagan and Brezhnev. But we must ensure a firmer foundation for the *détente* process if we are to achieve a more constructive, secure and durable East-West relationship.

Vital to such an achievement is a united alliance, able and willing to negotiate from a sense of strength and confidence. We demonstrated that we were capable of achieving such unity of purpose at our January 11 Special Meeting of the Council, at which we condemned the imposition of martial law in Poland. We have shown our resolve in our continued support of the 1979 two-track decision on the modernization of intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe, a decision which has already borne fruit by bringing the Soviet Union to the bargaining table in Geneva.

**Importance of
consultation**

Fundamental to the achievement and maintenance of alliance solidarity and sense of common purpose is adequate consultation among members. Ideally, consultation should seek at the outset to produce agreement on common objectives on the basis of joint assessment. But given the diversity of national interests, we should not always expect consultations to produce common policies. Consultations will, however, greatly increase the chance that conflicts of interest can be reconciled and policies harmonized. Nor ought consultations be limited solely to the threat to alliance interests posed by Soviet behaviour in the NATO area. Recent events have brought home to us again how out-of-area developments can affect us, and how important it is for members of this alliance to consult closely to define shared objectives whenever our interests are at issue. This is vital when individual allies are in a position to respond to requests for assistance in protecting the security of countries outside the NATO area. In such consultations, of course, it is not only the larger powers but also the smaller and middle-power members of the alliance who have a role to play.

We continue to face a challenge at home as well — that of ensuring that our publics understand and support our policies. In my address to you as Honorary President last December, I stressed my conviction that we had to do a better job in this respect. The need is no less clear today. It is characteristic of our free societies that our people have the right to be informed about our policies and the reasons for them, and equally important, have the freedom to express their opposition should they not agree. We cherish these rights and freedoms. Indeed they represent an essential difference between our open society and those of the closed Soviet system.

We have to take account of domestic public opinion, which in turn is influenced by

that of the international community. The Soviet leaders do not. They can even insulate domestic opinion from international opprobrium. For example, when the U.S.S.R. suffered a crushing defeat in the United Nations General Assembly vote on Afghanistan, the Soviet government saw to it that this news was never reported in the Soviet Union. But if ours is the more difficult kind of society to govern, it is also in the long run stronger and more enduring, when it is supported by a widespread national determination based on deeply held conviction.

Alliance
message

Last December we agreed on the need to convince our publics that the alliance's 1979 two-track decision was the necessary answer to the threat stemming from the build-up of Soviet nuclear forces in Europe. We saw that the peace movement had to be persuaded that the real campaign for nuclear disarmament must be waged not in the streets but at the bargaining table. We have had some success — and in this context I commend the international staff and the national delegations for their preparation of the NATO and the Warsaw Pact Force Comparison Paper — but we have hardly yet begun our efforts. In particular our publics must be constantly reminded that arms control forms an essential component of alliance security policy. Otherwise what is now a relatively small minority will continue to win converts to their "enough-is-enough" argument and to such simplistic solutions as a freeze and non-first use of nuclear weapons.

The argument that there are already sufficient weapons to destroy civilization many times over and, therefore, that all systems should be frozen at their present levels is deceptively attractive, and easily communicated to the uninformed. So is the apparently reasonable proposition that both sides should pledge not to use nuclear weapons first. Ours is a more complex message so we must exercise greater skill in communicating it.

Our message must be that the Atlantic alliance is dedicated to preserving peace, to renouncing the use of force to settle disputes, and to making the world a safer place. We must make it clear that for the West to accept "quick-fix" solutions, unilateral disarmament or any type of weapons freeze that perpetuates a superiority for the Warsaw Pact would more likely increase the risk of conflict than reduce it, and would leave us open to the danger of Soviet intimidation. Our message must also be that we are against the first use of force. Hostilities once begun create their own destructive and uncontrollable momentum.

Two-track
NATO
security policy

NATO security policy, proven successful for more than 30 years, is to maintain a combination of conventional and nuclear forces at the level necessary to demonstrate that aggression in the NATO area would not pay. But this is not all. A further component of our policy is that we are also committed to reduce through realistic, balance and verifiable agreements the level of both NATO and Warsaw Pact forces. Defence and deterrence on the one hand, and arms control and disarmament on the other, are two sides of the same security coin. They cannot be safely separated.

**Security is
collective**

They should not prudently be pursued in isolation from each other. It is through their mutual pursuit that we shall achieve balanced security.

We have to make all this clear to our publics. We must also explain to them just how each of our countries contributes to, and participates in, NATO's security policy. They must be reminded that our security is a collective one, and that the nuclear dialogue engages the interest of all of us. We all supported the December 1979 "two track" decision, and we have all through our membership in the Special Consultative Group played a role, under the lead of the United States, in designing the alliance's strategy for the Geneva talks.

Support for the two-track policy can of course take different forms. For our part, although intermediate-range missiles will not be stationed in Canada, we are negotiating with the United States an agreement under which unarmed *Cruise* missiles would be tested in Canada. Our purpose is to assist in the development of an improved deterrent posture for the alliance, and to contribute an additional incentive for constructive arms control negotiations.

Inevitably, arms control in one area and in one type of force is related to arms control in other areas and other types of force. I warmly welcome the recent announcement by President Reagan of United States' readiness to begin negotiations on strategic arms this summer. I applaud the United States' determination to seek radical reductions and support the emphasis on reducing destabilizing systems. I also welcome the United States' willingness to keep its allies fully informed and to consult them at every stage of the negotiations.

President Reagan's Intermediate Range Nuclear Force statement on November 18 and now his Strategic Arms Reduction Talks proposal of May 9 are up to this point the principal evidences of our collective disarmament policy, as expressed by the leading member of our alliance. We must underline them in every way possible, and communicate their seriousness as strongly as possible. For our publics, as well as for the world at large, the resulting negotiations will be a demonstration of our good faith and a test of the good faith of the Soviet Union.

The negotiating task we are setting ourselves is not an easy one. But given the choice between an arms race, and long and difficult arms control negotiations, we would all prefer the latter — as would the other side I am sure. There can be no doubt that the West, with its vast wealth and superior technology, would in the long run win any arms race with the Soviet Union. But to us, the idea of dedication to an arms race is profoundly repugnant, a mark of poverty of spirit rather than of the greatness of spirit which is characteristic of the West. The West has far more to gain than to lose from a balanced and verifiable reduction in the present level of armaments. Our dedication is, therefore, to undiminished security at lower levels of armaments, to a reduction of tensions, and to a safer and saner world for all.

S/C