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ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF LUXEMBOURG. MR. PIERRE WERNER.
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE MINISTERIAL SESSION OF THE
NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL IN LUXEMBOURG ON 17TH MAY 1982

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and people of Luxembourg, I am happy to welcome the North Atlantic Council to Luxembourg for its Ministerial Session.

It gives me special pleasure on this occasion to welcome the Hon. Mr. MacGuigan, President of the Council and Canadian Foreign Minister. Canada is a staunch and long-standing Ally of Luxembourg, as well as an eminent champion of transatlantic relations and solidarity, which are of such great importance for this Alliance.

The North Atlantic Council last met in Luxembourg fifteen years ago, in June 1967, and just a few of the participants at that Meeting are with us here again today. Among them, I am happy to see you, Mr. Secretary General. This time, you have come as one of our neighbours, from Brussels. The fact that the Council in Permanent Session is directed by a man of your dedication and political experience is a guarantee of the success of this Ministerial Session.

It would be remiss of me were I not to emphasize, in these opening remarks, how greatly we all welcome the impending accession of Spain to the North Atlantic Treaty. The fact that this proud country today wishes to join this partnership of ours bears witness to the attractiveness and vitality of the Alliance, which preserves the security of our member countries and safeguards ideals cherished by our peoples.

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, in a gathering such as this, there is no need to recall the radical changes and many new developments that have occurred on the international scene in recent years.

One rare feat during the decade and a half which has elapsed since the last Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg is the preservation of peace in the North Atlantic Treaty area where, for over thirty years, the Alliance has kept the peace and preserved freedom! In so doing, it has fulfilled, and continues to fulfil, in exemplary fashion the noble task assigned to it by its founders.

In the world about us, our common values and ideals are all too often disregarded or sacrificed to reasons of State. Peace, freedom and democracy unfortunately cannot be taken for granted: indeed, they can be preserved only by dint of a steadfast effort on the part of all the Allies. We have to face up to the fact that it would be a dangerous illusion to set any store by the

mollifying pronouncements of the Soviet Union and some of its allies when their true attitude, as betrayed by their actions, is devoid of restraint and respect for freedom.

I do not propose here to go into the topics the Council will be discussing in a few moments. However, I do want to take this opportunity to condemn once again the oppression of the Polish people. In violation of the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, the Warsaw military régime, aided and abetted by the Soviet Union, is denying its citizens the fundamental freedoms and the chance to give voice to their legitimate national aspirations.

Nor, too, is it possible here to disregard the invasion of Afghanistan and its occupation by Soviet forces for over two years. Apart from the misery this has inflicted on a people who have set their face against oppression, the ensuing instability throughout this part of South-West Asia calls for unflagging attention on our part.

In view of the Soviet Union's present behaviour, the Atlantic Alliance has no option but to devote all its efforts to preserving a strong defence posture able to deter any potential aggressor and induce our enemies to resume a constructive dialogue with the West.

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, today more than ever before security questions are coming in for spirited discussion. Some observers have no qualms about exaggerating the slightest differences of view among the Allies, so much so that doubts have emerged about Allied solidarity. At the same time, the debate on Allied security policy and on the best ways of safeguarding peace has become a current public issue in most of our countries. These questions are today the prime concern of some of our citizens. But neither the discussion that is going on among the representatives of our governments nor the questions being put by our citizens need give us cause for irritation: on the contrary, this cross-fertilization is the very essence of the democratic process in our Western society. Nor can there be any doubt that this respect for the sovereignty and independence of our States, as well as our citizens' right to express their views freely, are the very features which set us apart from the Soviet Union and most of its allies.

Our Alliance has always refused, and always will refuse, to impose solutions arbitrarily on its member countries or on its peoples: indeed, every one of us here today takes pride in the fact that the Alliance's policy is freely accepted by each and every Allied government.

Over the past decades, the effectiveness of consultation between Allies has enabled us to live up to this democratic ideal in every circumstance. I therefore warmly welcome certain recent moves designed to intensify the consultation process between our governments within the framework of the Alliance and to adapt it to a constantly changing situation. I also want to stress once again the importance for our common security of North America's military commitment to Europe and of the preservation of a harmonious trans-Atlantic relationship. To those, in both East and West, who claim to see cracks in trans-Atlantic cohesion or who seek to engineer such cracks, we must show irrefutable proof of our solidarity.

As for the issues which are in the forefront of political debate in our respective countries, we have every reason to be pleased with the increased efforts made by our governments in recent months to heighten public awareness of our commonly shared ideals, to explain the Alliance's defence objectives and its commitment to peace. It is our paramount duty to convince those fighting in all good faith for peace and security that the only worthwhile peace is peace to live in freedom.

This rapid review of the problems currently facing the Alliance makes it clear that the Council still has much to do. Luxembourg is ready and willing to do its bit in furtherance of our common purpose. My government is wholly convinced that the Alliance which has united us for thirty years is essential to the security and defence of a free, democratic and prosperous world.

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, it is now fifteen years since the idea of MBFR negotiations was conceived by our Alliance. In the interval, there has been a wide range of Allied initiatives in all areas of arms control whether it be MBFR or the proposed Conference on Disarmament in Europe which has the full backing of all member countries. I hope and trust that when the Madrid Conference is re-convened next Autumn, it will prove possible, thanks to the adoption of a more realistic attitude by the Soviet Union, to settle the complex issue of the Conference's terms of reference and more particularly of the definition of the area of application of future confidence-building and security measures.

In addition to these current Allied efforts in the field of conventional weapons, negotiations opened in November of last year in Geneva between the United States and the Soviet Union on intermediate range nuclear weapons. These negotiations are the follow-up to the offer which the Alliance made to Moscow on 11th December 1979 in parallel with its decision that, in the event of the break-down of such negotiations, new intermediate-range nuclear weapons systems would be deployed by the end of 1983 on the territory of certain European member countries. We believe that the zero option advocated by President Reagan in his speech last November will eventually be accepted by the Soviet delegation as a basis for negotiation.

We also welcome the proposals which were made last Sunday by President Reagan with respect to strategic weapons. It is my earnest wish that the Soviet Union will give serious consideration to this proposal to start negotiations at the end of June on the reduction of such armaments and that it will respond in positive fashion to an initiative which is designed to bring about a significant, two-phased reduction in the strategic arsenal of both sides while guaranteeing the principle of just and equitable security for all.

It was in 1967 that your predecessors produced the Harmel Report which laid the foundations for the present-day policy of the Alliance. In the course of your deliberations today and tomorrow you will, along with others, be preparing for the meeting of Heads of State and Government who, on 10th June next in Bonn, will renew the Alliance's commitment to peace. I am convinced that this meeting of the Council will be a resounding success and will lead to some worthwhile results. My pleasure in welcoming you today to the City of Luxembourg is enhanced by this expectation".