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SPEECH

given by

Mr. Pieter Dankert,
President of the European Parliament

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Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,
allow me to make a somewhat personal comment
on a subject which is at least as important
in intra-European terms as in terms of the
Atlantic relationship.

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1.

Barring a change of heart by either the Soviet Union or the United States comparable to St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, Pershing II and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles will shortly make their long-awaited and much-debated appearance on European soil. Their intended deployment will be accompanied by demonstrations of disapproval by large sections of European public opinion. The scale, intensity and duration of these demonstrations remains a question of speculation. But they will certainly be sufficient to demonstrate the divisive consequences of the NATO INF decision. They will also highlight the irony that a decision taken to strengthen confidence in Alliance strategy and the American nuclear guarantee has succeeded in weakening public confidence in both.

Western governments will doubtless ride the immediate storm of protest and many Alliance officials will breathe a sigh of relief and congratulate themselves on a job well done. For them, deployments will represent a moment of triumph, the Alliance will have held firm, American leadership will have reasserted itself

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and Soviet attempts at interference resoundingly defeated. Yet this moment of self-congratulation may be short-lived. Few but the most optimistic can hope that the protest movement will die away. For many of the anti-nuclear critics, the arrival of the missiles will confirm their worst fears, that the arms control component of the double track decision was always a convenient cover for obtaining deployments. Others, less cynical, will doubtless recall the insistence of Alliance officials that only if NATO demonstrated its determination to deploy - would it be possible to achieve an arms control agreement and a situation of mutual restraint. That may still be true, but it will hardly be in the near future and the immediate consequences of the new deployments may be sufficient to harden the opposition of the as yet unconvinced section of public opinion. Given the likely Soviet reactions, suspending their participation in the INF negotiations and engaging in reciprocal deployments of additional Soviet missiles, the public will be faced with a "worst of all worlds" situation. Having been promised arms control and restraint, they can see precisely the opposite, no arms control and a continuing proliferation of weapons on either side. Furthermore, in view of the current

rhetoric of the Reagan Administration, it will be by no means clear that this situation is entirely the fault of the Soviet Union.

INF will thus remain a smouldering issue, the deployed missiles will provide a focus for continuing protest and discontent, permanent reminders of failed promises and frustrated expectations, and most significantly, visible symbols of the eroding consensus of the requirements of Western defence.

There are those who will argue, of course, that we have nothing to worry about, that the anti-nuclear movement is merely a vociferous minority exercising its democratic rights. In strictly statistical terms, this view may constitute an accurate portrayal of the situation. However, in my view, the peace movement embraces too large a cross-section of our societies to be thus dismissed. A substantial proportion of our societies is concerned about current trends and policies and they should be listened to.

For the moment, official wisdom has prevailed, but my concern is the manner in which it has prevailed. What effect will the tactics used to secure deployments have upon future public attitudes to Western security requirements? In the coming months, what conclusions will people draw concerning the credibility and sincerity of our policies when they recall the official message this autumn which has been "hang tough and all will be well in the end".

This is a particularly serious issue because from now on any decision concerning nuclear weapons will have to take full account of public opinion. What was previously the private preserve of a few officials and academics, is now an issue of mass consumption. This poses an immediate problem because a strategy based on nuclear deterrence is not easily explained, nor are its requirements easily established. It is not easy to persuade people of the need for weapons whose use would result to all intents and purposes in mutual suicide, nor to explain the paradox that for weapons to be credible, they must appear to be usable, but that usability does not indicate the actual intention to use them.

Yet despite this complexity, these are issues with which we must come to terms. No matter how strong our aversion, nuclear weapons are, and will remain, for the foreseeable future, a fact of political life. They will continue to be a major element in the super-power relationship and we in Europe will continue to live under the shadow of, or under the protection of, Soviet and American nuclear weapons. We cannot therefore simply opt out. We can and should work towards the ideal of a disarmed or non-nuclear world, but in the meantime, we must aim for humbler but equally urgent objectives, notably the securing of a more stable situation through negotiated arms control agreements which achieve lower levels of forces, eliminate unnecessarily provocative systems and create greater mutual confidence on either side. But above all, we must accommodate nuclear weapons in our security policy in a manner that commands public support and acceptance. Our strategy must deter the Soviet Union, but in the current political environment it is equally important that, to quote Professor Michael Howard, "it reassures our own public opinion".

In achieving such a security policy, the question of INF will continue to play a central role. What then are the lessons that can be drawn from the INF decision?

In looking back at the origin and development of the INF decision, one can speculate endlessly on the details of the decision - on the choice of land-based missiles, the selection of a cruise and Pershing mix, the number of 572 and so on. But in terms of developing a security policy that will command the support and confidence of the majority of our citizens I believe several conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, we must ensure that our means - the capabilities that we seek - are proportionate to our ends - our political objectives. In evaluating our military requirements we must always maintain a sense of perspective, in particular we should avoid an obsessive preoccupation with imbalances in specific categories of systems. In view of the nature of nuclear weapons and the numbers available to either side, the demand for balance at all levels is both futile and in terms of public

opinion, counter-productive. In 1977, Alliance officials concluded that the Soviet leadership would detect a gap in our capabilities, yet common sense said that such a gap - even if it existed - was hardly exploitable in any meaningful sense of the word. Yet our preoccupation with closing imaginary gaps led us to seek an additional margin of insurance that not only was militarily unnecessary, but whose political cost in terms of Alliance cohesion, has far outweighed any conceivable gain in deterrence.

INF modernisation represented a degree of fine tuning to our strategy that was possible when security was the preserve of a small elite of officials and academics, but such changes become more difficult to justify under the more basic common sense approach of public opinion.

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8.

It is also important to ensure that military requirements are consistent with political and economic circumstances. Far too frequently, requirements and capabilities evolve from scenarios which have little to do with political reality. In this respect, much has been made of the SS-20, which has become the scourge of Europe. A system whose obvious function was to replace obsolete and unstable systems has become a system designed specifically for the purpose of decoupling Europe from the United States. Use or the threatened use of the SS-20 would, it is said, reduce Europe to a condition of subservience. In the words of the London "Economist": "Until there is a counter to Russia's SS-20, these weapons will tilt Western European to a choice between submission and obliteration." Yet in the real world what conceivable political or military gain could be achieved through the use of the SS-20, except the effective destruction of Europe as we know it, and the potential risk of global nuclear war? In other words, mutual suicide. And if the system cannot be used in

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any meaningful way, then suggestions of blackmail or intimidation are likewise devoid of meaning or substance.

All of this argues for the development of a security policy that avoids a dependence on worst case scenarios, assesses our military requirements within the appropriate political and economic context and ensures that these requirements are consistent with our political objectives. It should also be accompanied by a determination to limit the capabilities on either side through a credible and balanced arms control policy.

In this respect, our experience with INF is also instructive. From the beginning, the credibility of our position with regard to INF arms control negotiations has suffered from the apparent lack of enthusiasm of the Reagan Administration towards the arms control process. It was the Administration's initial reluctance which meant that the INF negotiations commenced in total isolation of negotiations on strategic arms. Given the public mood at the time, it is understandable that governments sought to

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distract attention from the modernisation decision by emphasising their willingness to pursue arms control. However, whatever the motivation, the direct coupling of modernisation and arms control was a mistake as it has made either component hostage to the other in a fashion that has been counter-productive.

Emphasis on the arms control approach has produced a requirement for numerical parity which is directly counter to the principal rationale underlying the modernisation decision. It has also increased the tendency to concentrate on the SS-20 and even to suggest that via the zero option arms control could provide an answer to NATO's problems. A logic that again ran directly counter to that present in the modernisation decision. These and other contradictions, all born from confusion over what we really require, have tended to undermine the credibility of our negotiating position.

Finally, the search for Alliance solidarity should not be allowed to run roughshod over national differences and impose policies in the name of Alliance unity that could undermine public support both for defence and Alliance membership in the longer term. Solidarity of purpose is important, but each nation contributes to the collective defence in its own particular way. We should remember that the very diversity of the Alliance which sometimes impedes collective decisions is one of its major strengths.

The most interesting consequence of the INF issue has been that it has highlighted the need for Europeans to begin to coordinate a unified and independent review of their security requirements. This development has been stimulated from several directions but its most pressing objective is the diminishing public consensus on defence. A predominant theme in the anti-nuclear debate is the somewhat inaccurate sentiment that Alliance policies, particularly nuclear, are dictated to the Europeans by the United States. This belief, accompanied by widespread unease with the rhetoric of the Reagan Administration has produced considerable criticism of the American role in the Alliance. Many Europeans want to feel that they have a greater say in their own destinies than now appears to be the case. Public concern in this respect could be satisfied if Alliance policies were seen to be influenced more visibly by European interests and objectives.

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To those familiar with the origins of the INF modernisation decision, these thoughts may seem somewhat ironic as it was European concern that first set the INF process in motion. However, as I have made clear earlier, the initial rationale for INF modernisation was articulated by a relatively small group of officials who took little account of the political consequences of their decisions. I suggest that in the much changed political and strategic environment of today, the question asked in 1977 would receive very different answers. In view of the drastically changed conditions I believe Europeans should begin to move towards a process where they can form an independent assessment of their security requirements, particularly the degree and type of coupling to the United States.

The need for greater coordination in European thinking extends across the security spectrum. A new debate is currently under way within the Alliance, partly as a result of the anti-nuclear movement, on the possibility of reducing our reliance on nuclear weapons through improvements in conventional forces and through parallel reductions in the number of

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tactical nuclear warheads in Europe. However, we should beware of false prophets as neither development will necessarily have any impact on the so-called nuclear threshold.

As yet, there are too many questionable assumptions and too many unanswered questions to place much confidence in these proposals - for example, Poland, when General Rogers says that under current conditions, he would have to request the release of nuclear weapons at an early stage of any conflict, on what scenario is this calculation based? Knowing the difficulty of satisfying the military's definition of adequate forces, how would we know when we had reached the point in our capabilities at which the nuclear threshold had been raised? And does the reduction in the numbers of nuclear warheads make any difference to the time at which nuclear weapons would be used?

Furthermore, proposals to improve conventional capabilities through new technology beg awkward questions, such as the reliability, availability and cost of new systems. More than

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anything, they avoid the question of acceptability. Improvements in conventional forces are obviously desirable but they must be made in ways that are compatible with the defensive orientation of our Alliance and consistent with our political objectives of achieving stability through increased mutual confidence. These requirements suggest that any improvement will come through steady incremental change rather than dramatic, highly visible changes in emphasis. The problem is whether steady incrementalism will satisfy the political imperative to "do something about the nuclear threshold". These are all issues that are central to the future of European security and on which Europeans should begin to develop and articulate independent thought.

Apart from the need to secure public support for defence, the requirement that Europe should develop a more independent approach has other motivations, most notably a need to address the growing friction within the Atlantic relationship and to provide a moderating influence on the rapidly deteriorating relationship between the two super-powers.

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It has long been apparent that there are serious differences between the United States and Europe over a broad range of issues, particularly on the appropriate policies the West should be following towards the Soviet Union. A collective and coherent European voice could help in both respects. An evident willingness by Europeans to adopt greater responsibility for their own security could greatly help offset the growing trend towards isolationism in the United States, particularly in the Congress. A coordinated European view would certainly stand more chance of influencing US policies than the present fragmented approach.

The political and institutional obstacles that currently inhibit such a development are, of course, formidable, and need no reiteration here. However, at the public level, developments in this direction are already discernible. Indeed, the existence of the peace movement itself represents the determination that European security policy must respond to European perspectives and to European requirements. Even within the European Community itself, despite

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considerable opposition, there are glimmerings of hope, as the process known as European Political Co-operation gradually intensifies and extends its scope. The European Parliament itself is also playing an important role in developing public consciousness of the need for a European dimension to security policy. Recognition by the Parliament of the need for a West European security concept is only a small step, but nevertheless it demonstrates that awareness is growing. No grand initiative could institutionalise West European security overnight. Rather, it will be achieved through a series of small, pragmatic steps, all of which will create among West European a consciousness of, and ultimately a willingness to accept, responsibility for their own security.