

FRANCE

EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENT BY MR. FRANCOIS MITTERRAND,
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, BEFORE THE BUNDESTAG
ON 20 JANUARY 1983

Despite multiple tensions, peace has reigned between the two major Powers and their dialogue has been almost constant, but the equilibrium between them has never been really stable, each of them having overtaken the other in its turn; recently, this situation has deteriorated. Two examples suffice to remind us of this: the occupation of Afghanistan and the events in Poland.

For its part, Europe has seen rises in the quantity and level of the weapons stationed on or aimed at its soil. Soviet conventional superiority and the already longstanding deployment of medium-range nuclear missiles led to the perfecting of American aircraft stationed in Europe and known for that reason as "forward-based systems". The Soviet Union used this as an argument for the installation of new, more accurate mobile missiles with three heads and a range of 5,000 km. Five thousand kilometres, enough to reach Europe, not enough to reach the American continent.

The member countries of the NATO integrated military command then responded by what is commonly known as the "dual-track decision", providing for the opening of negotiations on medium-range nuclear weapons on the European continent, negotiations on which will depend the level of deployment of the new United States missiles with effect from December 1983. I am reiterating these facts, you are familiar with them, but we are addressing ourselves to our peoples and it is helpful to know the background to these acts in order to try to identify today's solutions.

Our peoples hate war, they and the other peoples of Europe with them have suffered from it more than enough. French thinking is governed by one simple idea: war must remain impossible and those who might consider it must be dissuaded from doing so.

Our analysis and our conviction, that of France, are that nuclear weapons -- the instrument, whether one likes or deplors the fact, of that dissuasion -- remain the guarantee of peace as long as there obtains a balance of forces. All things considered, it is only that balance which can lead to good relations with our neighbours and historical partners, the countries of Eastern Europe. It has been the sound basis of what has been termed *détente*. It has enabled you to put into effect your Ostpolitik. It made possible the Helsinki agreements.

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But the maintenance of that balance means, in my view, that there must be no depriving whole regions of Europe of a parry to nuclear weapons specifically aimed at them. Anyone banking on "uncoupling" the European and American continents would, in our opinion, call in question the balance of forces and so the maintenance of peace. I think, and I will say, that "uncoupling" is dangerous in itself, and it is my earnest hope that the Geneva negotiations will lead to the averting of a danger that weighs singularly upon the non-nuclear weapon European partners.

That is why the common determination and the solidarity of the members of the Atlantic Alliance must be clearly confirmed if the negotiation is to succeed, the essential prerequisite for the non-installation of the weapons foreseen in the "dual track decision" of December 1979.

What we want first of all, and you too, is peace. Peace is only possible through negotiation. It is for those who negotiate to prepare the way to the indispensable harmony. It suffices for one, not to say two, of the partners to refuse this for agreement to become impossible. The conditions of the necessary balance must, therefore, be maintained, with the assurance, for the peoples concerned that they will not find themselves under the burden of foreign domination.

France is, you may believe me, conscious of that solidarity when it maintains in the Federal Republic of Germany a substantial part of the French First Army, of which it is at this very moment studying improvements in the mobility and fire-power. And France confirms that, at Berlin in particular, it is assuming and will assume all its responsibilities.

That, then, is how we see the defence of our territory and of our vital interests, at the same time as we affirm ourselves to be the loyal partner of the Atlantic Alliance and the friend, faithful and aware of his obligations, of the Federal Republic of Germany.

But let it be clearly understood — and there lies herein the expression of our differing situations deriving from the history of which we are not the makers — that France, which is not participating and will not participate in the discussions at Geneva, means to leave the negotiators free to decide their own conduct. It is for each to distinguish for himself what is good or what is lacking in the latest proposals. France, which has an interest like yourselves in the outcome of the negotiations, bases itself for their evaluation on a few simple points which I will now take the liberty briefly to restate. Firstly, one can only compare what is comparable: types of weapon, fire-power, accuracy, range. Secondly, between two countries which have the capability of destroying each other, if I may so put it, several times over — as is the case of the United States of America and the Soviet Union — and countries like my own, whose main possibility is of preventing a potential aggressor from hoping to benefit from a war, the gap is immense: there is a difference in kind ... I can explain that in more concrete terms by saying that, if one of the two largest Powers destroyed all its medium-range missiles, it would still have thousands of rockets left, whereas France would in the same circumstances lose a decisive element of its deterrent capacity and so the guarantee of its security, which, below a certain threshold, would no longer exist. Thirdly, the French nuclear force is and will remain independent.

That independence, with all that derives therefrom, is not merely an essential principle of our sovereignty -- it is on the President of the French Republic, and on him alone, that rests the responsibility for the decision -- it also increases, and I would ask you to ponder this point, it also increases the uncertainty for a potential aggressor, and for him alone. As such, it makes the deterrence and by that very fact, I repeat, the impossibility of war more real.

It is for specific and serious reasons that I affirm that the French forces cannot be taken into account in the Geneva negotiation by the two over-armed Powers. By this I mean that people are now turning to France -- as they did to the United Kingdom, and it is for that country to decide on its response -- in an attempt to assimilate the unassimilable. We have not to be taken into account by the two over-armed Powers and, in our opinion, any arrangement based on such a calculation would be decisively dismissed by my country ... I would add that it would, in the final analysis, be prejudicial to peace in Europe. The 38 years of peace that we have had in Europe have been due -- should one say happily, unhappily -- to deterrence. Of course, it is very regrettable that they should be due only to that, the balance of terror. Just think to what a pass mankind has come. It is, I repeat, regrettable that they should be due only to that and not to a more rational and more satisfactory form of collective security arrangement, which naturally remains desirable! But so long as this situation remains as it is, so long as collective security arrangements do not prevail, how could we deprive ourselves of that means of preventing a conflict?