

Statement by Mr. Wilgress

The North Atlantic Treaty was signed five years ago today. I have been associated with NATO for much of the five years of its existence. Looking back I can see a solid record of achievement. What has been accomplished is seen much more clearly in retrospect than through participation in the day-to-day work. Those of us who are in NATO often feel frustrated and impatient at the long delays in getting things done, but when we look back we can see the remarkable progress that has been achieved since the treaty was signed.

My first association with NATO was the meeting of the Council held in London in May 1950. At that time I was High Commissioner for Canada in London and attended the meeting in that capacity. I was, therefore, more or less in the fortunate position of an observer. I could detect the high resolve which animated the twelve foreign ministers who then composed the Council. At this meeting the decision was taken to set up the Council Deputies which was to have all the powers of the Council when the Council was not in session. Since the Council Deputies were to meet in London, I was asked to serve as the Canadian Deputy and to combine this with my work as High Commissioner.

The Council Deputies first met in July 1950. This was a month after communist aggression in Korea had revealed that international Communism was not above using force to accomplish its aims. The Council Deputies, therefore, entered upon their tasks with a sense of urgency. The most pressing need seemed to be a stepping up in the production of military equipment. Experience of the first two or three weeks of the activities of the Council Deputies induced me to fly over to Ottawa to report to the Canadian Government what I had learned. The result was a decision to embark on a mutual aid programme whereby Canada would provide military end-items to our partners in the alliance. I flew back to London at the end of August but three weeks later I had to cross the Atlantic again to attend a meeting of the North Atlantic Council which was being held in New York in September 1950.

At this meeting the United States announced their intention of adding to the divisions already in Germany for purposes of the occupation. This led to the proposal for an integrated force under one supreme commander. Canada decided to contribute one infantry brigade and an air division of twelve squadrons to this integrated force. At the September meeting there was first broached the question of a German contribution to the defence of Europe. From that time on the association of Germany with western defence became the chief subject of discussion in the Council Deputies. We had many meetings on this subject during the last months of 1950. Before the year was out a meeting of the Council was held in Brussels. At this meeting arrangements were concluded for the integrated force and General Eisenhower was appointed the Supreme Commander for Europe.

The year 1951 was characterized by the negotiations for the European Defence Community, by plans for the reorganization of NATO and by discussions pertaining to the accession to the alliance of Greece and Turkey. Commencing with the Ottawa meeting in September 1951, the Council became a body attended not only by foreign ministers but also by