

Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished colleagues and guests, it is both a great honour and a real pleasure for me to welcome you here this evening. I am especially pleased to welcome Mr. Perez-Llorca and Ambassador Aguirre de Carcer, who of course were present this afternoon when we took the initial step toward bringing their great country into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization -- a memorable event in the history of the Alliance.

I trust it has not escaped your attention that our menu this evening has a distinctly Canadian content. In fact, all the items have been Canadian -- except for the coffee and two of the wines. More Canadian dishes could have been added.

Two Canadian animals, the great Canadian moose and the smaller beaver, might have been asked to contribute dishes. Beaver-tail soup could have been served, but at great inconvenience to a number of beavers. No agreement could be reached on how to serve the moose. Chocolate moose was rejected as impossible to prepare. We also considered serving the boiled bark of the birch tree but decided it is too indelicate a dish to eat in black tie. Another idea was boiled pine needles. The liquid produced has a distinctive flavour but is normally enjoyed only by people who feel that they are not getting enough vitamin C, hence the limited menu we have sampled.

I cannot help but think that in arranging the transportation of this food from Canada, which involved some rather split-second timing and close teamwork with the Hilton staff, we have provided a model for our military planners wrestling with the logistics of pre-stocking and rapid reinforcement. Indeed if our logistical efforts had failed, this dinner might have become a "super-restricted session".

It has been said that Canada was a "midwife at the birth of NATO". Indeed, it is a source of deep pride to Canadians that we were among the founding nations of the Alliance, that it was Louis St-Laurent and Lester B. Pearson who played instrumental roles in transforming the Brussels Treaty into a strong North Atlantic regional pact. For my country, NATO has a central importance which transcends its defensive role; for us, the Alliance provides an indispensable institutional link between Europe and North America -- if you will, a trans-Atlantic bridge. This close bond between the two sides of the Atlantic has been and remains a vital element in our foreign policy.

We have had, I think, a very full and useful day of discussions on issues of critical concern to the Alliance. Their breadth and scope testify to the central role NATO plays as a forum in which to shape and harmonize our foreign policies. Their candour testifies to the vitality of our consultative