

Issue IV - NATO Nuclear Force - 1960-1965

During the period of 1960-63 the Conservative Government had to deal with the Norstad proposal for an independent nuclear force, and then Kennedy's offer to supply NATO with five Polaris submarines as the nucleus for a NATO force. In both cases the Government's attitude was that of silent rejection. When the first proposal was brought up at the Oslo meetings in 1960 Green reported back to the House that it was presented "as a concept only" and not an "actual proposal." The Minister said the idea would be given careful consideration, but went on to mention to problem of control.¹² When the Polaris proposal came up in May 1962 Green on returning from Athens insisted that the allocation of the submarines to NATO did not directly affect Canada.¹³ With the problem of tactical nuclear weapons raging at home the Minister had little desire to get embroiled in another nuclear force.

This attitude was taken up by the Liberal Government in 1963, but rejection was made more explicit when the MLF was suggested. Pearson in explaining the Canadian position to the House stated that:

I do not think that it will be likely that we would wish to add to our existing responsibilities and commitments by participating in this kind of multilateral nuclear force. But this is a matter which will be given the consideration it deserves.¹⁴

Martin was still referring to this statement in April of 1964.¹⁵ and in November of that year noted that "there has been general agreement not to press forward with this project by any particular deadline. This is a turn of events which we in Canada welcome."¹⁶

Issue V - France's withdrawal: 1965-1966

The divergence between France and the remainder of the alliance had been noticeable for several years before the break came in early 1966. The initial Canadian position was not too clear on this issue. France was essential to the alliance declared the Prime Minister to the Ottawa Canadian Club in early 1965, and it was "impossible to contemplate an Atlantic coalition without France." Mr. Pearson also made the point, however, that the future of NATO lay in the direction of coming "closer together, organically, on the old treaty basis,"¹⁷ but de Gaulle would not accept this approach.

When the break came in March, 1966 Mr. Martin lined up with the rest of the alliance by reading to the House a joint NATO statement. NATO is "essential to the security of our countries....We are convinced that this organization is essential and will continue. No system of bilateral arrangements can be a substitute."¹⁸ In a speech to the Windsor Rotary Club, however, the Minister expressed sympathy toward France while making it clear he was not persuaded by the French arguments.¹⁹ An attitude of conciliation toward France continued during the year while Canada and other member countries were adjusting to the NATO relationship. In his Springfield speech of June, 1966 the Prime Minister stressed the importance of France to the future of the Atlantic nations. "I do not see the Atlantic nations