

## II - Canadian Political Parties: Attitudes Toward NATO

For purposes of analysis three main periods can be distinguished when considering the attitudes of political parties toward NATO. The first period, from 1949 to 1957, was one of relative party consensus marked with minor disagreement, and in many ways party attitudes constituted a bi-partisan approach to foreign policy. The second period, from 1958 to 1963, in sharp contrast to the first was one of acute party dissension and conflict over a basic issue: nuclear weapons. With the settlement of the nuclear weapons question, a third period seems to have started to take shape from 1964 to the present. There are two very notable features of this third period. The first is a search on the part of the Liberal Government for a more stable foreign policy than was visible during the period of party conflict; and the second is a slow movement in the direction of an all-party consensus on the future Canadian role in NATO.

An in-depth analysis of the attitudes and positions taken by the three major parties on the main issues which have involved NATO is not possible in a report of this length. Party attitudes, however, will be studied in each of the three periods in order to give a rough appreciation of attitude change over time.<sup>1</sup>

### Relative Party Consensus: 1949-1957

In the fall of 1948 general agreement existed among the major parties as all three had endorsed NATO at their national conventions, and in the election of 1949 the treaty did not arise as an election issue.<sup>2</sup> One reason for the unanimous acceptance was the insistence of the Canadian government to have Article Two included in the treaty, and all parties envisaged NATO to be much more than a military alliance. In November, 1949 during the debate on the signing of the treaty Mr. Pearson referred to the implications of the article hoping that the "widest possible economic collaboration" would be forthcoming. But it was made clear that NATO was a necessity because of the inability of the UN to solve the problem of collective security.<sup>3</sup> Gordon Graydon (PC), in replying to the Minister's speech supported NATO, was concerned about the future of the Canadian obligation. The CCF speakers tended to stress Article Two and Angus McGinnis was convinced that "we have not done as much to promote and co-ordinate economic co-operation among the nations signatory to the Atlantic pact as we have on the military side."<sup>4</sup> This led to a discussion by the CCF on the benefits of economic co-operation which was consistent with their prescribed policy outside the House of insisting NATO operate within the broad confines of the Brussels Treaty.<sup>5</sup>

During the early 1950's there was continued emphasis on the economic aspects of the treaty. But this was coupled with a growing awareness of the threat of communism which kept all three parties in fairly close agreement on the necessity of collective self-defence. Consequently, when Canadian troops were sent overseas in late 1951 there