

Post 11/24/64

# Wilson Attacks Mixed A-Fleet Plan

By Flora Lewis

The Washington Post Foreign Service  
LONDON, Nov. 23—Prime Minister Harold Wilson today attacked the idea of a nuclear mixed-manned surface fleet.

The American proposal, he told Parliament, "adds nothing to Western strength, is likely to dissipate the strength of the alliance, and adds to the difficulties of agreement with the East."

His statement came during a House of Commons debate on preparations for Wilson's trip to negotiate on an Allied atomic force with President Johnson. At the end, Wilson's Labor government defeated an opposition Conservative Party challenge to its defense policies by 314 to 289, a margin of 25 votes.

During the debate Wilson rebuffed extensive efforts by Conservative leader Sir Alec Douglas-Home to get a pledge that Wilson would not give up Britain's withdrawal rights and its veto on any atomic weapon it contributes.

Since 1961, Wilson said, the Labor Party had taken a stand against an independent British deterrent and it was holding to it. He ridiculed Home's idea that a national force, or rights to withdraw Britain's atomic share of an international force in time of "supreme emergency," would really maintain this country's "authority and influence in the world."

On the contrary, he argued

that economic strength at home and full cooperation with the Allies, especially the United States, would bring more influence and authority.

Wilson's stand against mixed-manning was unexpectedly strong. He had made it before, as opposition leader, but it was the first time he had gone so far as head of the government.

The British are well aware that Washington considers a mixed-manned surface fleet an essential element of any Allied atomic force, and insists on British participation in the fleet if a larger, integrated command is to be set up.

Speaking privately, officials here have created the widespread impression that Britain will agree to put up a share of the fleet if it can get the larger bargain it wants in Washington. Wilson mentioned reports that the government had decided on taking a "certain percentage in a mixed-manned surface fleet," and added toughly, "we have not."

But both government and diplomatic quarters were convinced that his hard words were more a bargaining position than a fixed stand. They said they knew of no change of policy against making concessions in Washington during negotiations.

Still, Wilson's words will be available for both the opposition and his own left-wing to throw back at him on his return from the White House,

when he has promised another fuller debate on defense.

NATO's Secretary General Manlio Brosio is coming to London on Thursday for two days of top-level talks on the atomic issue.

Brosio has been arguing against proposals that might lead to an open split with France which strongly opposes the American concept. The danger of provoking a rupture with France was also an argument used by Home in his opposition to a force that would remove strictly national controls.

Government leaders, speaking privately, have said they refuse to be intimidated by President de Gaulle. Wilson has made flat public denunciations of de Gaulle's desire for a European atomic force.

The Prime Minister sketched only in the broadest outlines the objectives he will seek to gain in Washington. He listed them as:

- To strengthen the alliance, which is currently under "very grave strains and stresses."

- To change the "current negative picture of the alliance to something more positive and outward-looking" that would make disarmament agreements with the East "easier to achieve."

- To "increase our effectiveness outside Europe." He especially mentioned Britain's defense of Malaysia against Indonesia.

- To bolster the United Nations and strengthen its peacekeeping ability. He indicated that plans are being drawn to earmark British forces for U.N. peacekeeping missions.

- To get closer cooperation on problems of international finance, primarily of insuring "world liquidity." Wilson has long held that expanded world trade is endangered by lack of enough available currency support among big traders.

Because he is going to Washington in two weeks and wanted to hold his bargaining cards close to his chest, Wilson avoided specifics on his atomic policy. But the speech indicated that negotiations are likely to be tough.