

London Opposes Mixed Manning

British Revert to Pre-Election Policy, Deal Major Blow to Plans for MLF

By Chalmers M. Roberts
Staff Reporter

American plans for creation of the multilateral nuclear force within NATO received a major blow yesterday when the British Labor government reverted to its preelection policy of total opposition to its central feature.

That is the idea of mixed manning by sailors of several participating nations for the proposed 25 surface vessels armed with Polaris missiles.

After a long weekend of top-level policy meetings, Prime Minister Harold Wilson told the House of Commons that his government believes such a mix-manned fleet would add nothing to Western

strength, likely would dissipate the Atlantic alliance's current strength and might add to the difficulties of reaching new Western agreements with the Soviet Union.

There was no public American comment on Wilson's statement, coming as it did after his earlier talk and actions had led some here to think that he might agree to at least limited mixed manning as part of a bargain for bringing Britain into a modified and enlarged MLF.

Word of Wilson's remarks

Prime Minister Wilson attacks U.S. proposal for nuclear mixed-manned fleet.
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reached Secretary of State Dean Rusk while he was meeting here with West German Foreign Minister Gerhard Schroeder. They will take up the MLF problem today.

Schroeder later told newsmen that his government considers that MLF "will have an integrating effect" on the alliance and "we stick to it." He said it was "important in an alliance to get all together to work on nuclear policy irrespective of nuclear ownership."

And "up to now" the MLF is the best idea on how to do that, he added. He also said

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that "we expect to get some British proposals."

Bargaining Expected

Both in London and Washington diplomats tended to view Wilson's words as part of a bargaining position, though it was conceded in both capitals that they were very firm on the key issue of mixed manning.

"We know it's tough," is the way one official put it here.

The blow from Wilson, who will come to Washington to meet with President Johnson on Dec. 7, followed by a day another statement of opposition from French President de Gaulle.

The French leader on Sunday had reiterated his call for "a Europe independent, powerful and influential within the world of liberty" although "certainly allied to the New World." But Wilson a week earlier had struck at the de Gaulle idea of a separate European nuclear deter-

rent as "dangerous" and he called de Gaulle's views "nostalgic delusions."

Finger on Trigger

Central to the whole argument over MLF is the future of Germany in the alliance. MLF would give the Germans at least a partial finger on the nuclear trigger, though not a finger of their own alone. Wilson yesterday, however, reiterated the Labor Party's long-time opposition to "more fingers on the trigger," presumably meaning especially German fingers.

If Britain does not enter MLF and France stays out, as is expected, the new force would be basically American and German, with perhaps Italy and some smaller nations also participating.

Yesterday's Rusk-Schroeder talks were confined to a review of East-West problems and the old one of German reunification. It was agreed that little can be done with Moscow until the new regime there has shaken down and until the future of the Soviet quarrel with China is more evident.

Today Schroeder will confer again with Rusk, address the National Press Club and meet with Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara before flying to New York for a talk there with Vice President-elect Hubert H. Humphrey before returning to Bonn.