

Nuclear Dilemma: Still No Answer

By Marquis Childs

LONDON—The present scramble for place in Europe is like the children's game called "Fruit Basket Upset." All the players are frantically searching for a chair that will have some relation to the realities of power in this moment of uncertainty.

That is to say, all the players but one. Standing in the center of the circle, President De Gaulle of France seems at least to know what he wants. If his goal is, as his accusers say, to destroy any hope of Atlantic unity and set the old nationalistic scramble going, then he has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams.

But just as in politics it is difficult to beat something with nothing so in international affairs a fixed policy, however bad, is likely to triumph over no policy at all. And the latter is unfortunately the plight of the other Western powers, diplomatic observers say.

Confronting a revived and powerful West Germany with a background clamor for nuclear parity is like confronting the riddle of the Sphinx. The answers are numerous enough but they tend to cancel each other out. So, as the time for decision draws nearer, the search for a solution takes on a note of urgency. In London and Washington—and in Bonn—there is agreement on the threat if a rearmed Germany, the greatest power on the ground in NATO, is denied a place at the high table of nuclear control. A Germany still divided with no prospect of reunification in the future and with 10 million refugees from the East constantly pressing the issue is bound to create division and dissension.

BUT AGREEMENT in the West stops at this point. The big difference is over how to give Germany a nuclear voice. It began with the American proposal for a mixed manned nuclear fleet, MLF, the multilateral force. Then abruptly a year ago—and British opposition leaders speak bitterly of this—the rug was pulled out from under MLF by Washington. The British had cooked up another version—ANF, an allied nuclear force with a pooling of nuclear weapons including Britain's own independent nuclear deterrent under some common command. Presumably one motive was to unload part or all of the cost of the four Polaris submarines Britain agreed to build at a cost of up to \$1 billion with Germany picking up a share of the tab. Now both MLF and ANF are in the deep freeze and they may never come out again.

Today the British are torn between

a realization of the need, constantly pressed by top American officials, to solve the German riddle and a determined hope for a nuclear proliferation treaty with the Soviet Union that will damp down the Cold War between East and West. That is why Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart is going to Moscow at the end of the month—he says he means to try to find out just how high is the price for a treaty in terms of allied unity and Germany's nuclear role.

GERMANY could produce weapons in a comparatively short time and a delivery system equalling or surpassing that which France is currently pushing with missiles and Polaris-type submarines. That is what sets Germany apart from France with its minuscule nuclear development which can hardly have more than nuisance value and Britain with a so-called deterrent dependent on V bombers nearly as outmoded as the stagecoach.

Viewed from the perspective of an imminent nuclear arms race, as many Britons see it, the nuclear proliferation treaty seems a last chance to hold back from the brink with the roar of the falls already audible. But the real danger in the view of top American policymakers is that Moscow will use the bait of a treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to break up the Western alliance. Here, too, unity is lacking, with American disarmers, headed by William C. Foster, believing that a nuclear treaty must have pre-eminence over any large concessions to Germany.

French Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville seemed to observers here in his recent mission to Moscow to be laying the groundwork for an old-fashioned French-Russian alliance only thinly disguised under the De Gaulle concept of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. With the sharpening hostility between Paris and Bonn, De Gaulle's Europe today would have a big gap in the center since Germany will not go along with the De Gaulle dream. Nightmare, no dream, is the look for most Europeans of a nuclear arms race in the framework of the old nation-state rivalries that led to two World Wars.