

Post 9/4/66

48 Senators Favor Troop Cut in Europe

Although opponents are flashing strong warning signals, sentiment among Senators willing to take a public stand is running nearly 3-1 for a substantial reduction of U. S. troop strength in Europe.

A canvass by the Associated Press turned up 48 members yesterday who favor action on a resolution to put the Senate on record for early withdrawal of at least two of the six American divisions now assigned to NATO defenses.

But 17 Senators who publicly oppose such action now seem to represent sufficient minority sentiment to force hearings at which all aspects of the impact of a U. S. cutback would be examined.

Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield (Mont.) said when he offered the troop resolution last Wednesday that he planned to call it up at an early date without referring it to either the Senate Armed Services or Foreign Relations Committees.

Long Wrangle Possible

However, the sharp dissent voiced to any such course seems likely to force Mansfield to abandon this procedure or face an acrimonious Senate wrangle that might last for weeks.

Senators who favor action now say that Western Europe, although well able to maintain its own defenses, is not contributing its share toward them.

Senators opposing the move say it would have all explosive impact on the delicate task of remolding NATO in

the aftermath of France's troop withdrawal, would strengthen French President de Gaulle's nationalist stance, would promote German demands for nuclear weapons and would invite Russian miscalculation of American intentions to defend the West.

Dirksen Wants More Facts

Republican Leader Everett M. Dirksen (Ill.) said the Senate can't take a chance of voting for the Mansfield resolution without getting more information than it has.

We haven't received all of the facts," he said. "We haven't heard from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. You just don't take that kind of shot in the dark."

Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy (D-Minn.) said he would oppose the resolution and called it "ill-timed and dangerous to stability and peace in Western Europe."

He said it might be defensible to make some adjustments in U.S. manpower in Europe by withdrawing logistic and service forces and possibly even making some reduction in combat strength. "Such possible changes, however," he said, "are not significant enough to warrant a Senate resolution of this kind . . ."

Sen. Clinton P. Anderson (D-N.M.), who favors a troop reduction, made the point that "the final decision must rest with the Commander-in-Chief."

Soviet Action Involved

Some Senators who favor scaling down the troop commitment specified that any action of that nature should be geared to a cutback in the number of Soviet forces deployed in Eastern European countries.

Sen. Joseph S. Clark (D-Pa.) said he would favor reduction of U.S. forces only on a reciprocal basis with a Russian troop cutback within the Warsaw Pact nations.

"If we are to reduce our troop strength in Western Europe—and I for one believe such a reduction is in the national interest—without getting as a quid pro quo a comparable reduction of Russian troop strength in Eastern Europe, we will have squandered away a splendid opportunity to reduce cold war tensions and to get ourselves back on the track toward meaningful arms control and disarmament agreements," Clark said.