

U.S. Cautious On Prospects Of A-Ban Pact

By Chalmers M. Roberts
Washington Post Staff Writer

The State Department yesterday offered a balance of hope and caution in a formal statement on the Soviet-American negotiations for a treaty to halt the spread of nuclear weapons.

Spokesman Robert J. McCloskey told newsmen that "I think it is fair to say that some misunderstandings have been removed." But he also declared that "important issues remain" to be resolved.

The net result was to dampen a bit any immediate hope for a treaty created by visiting Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko after a working dinner with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and other officials on both sides.

A major American concern was the effect in West Germany of Gromyko's words and those of American officials on Wednesday who agreed that progress had indeed been made. State Department officials at once informed the Germans that there had been no fundamental change in the U.S. position.

The critical question of West Germany's role in the nuclear defense of NATO still remains to be resolved, however, officials said. But, for whatever reason, Gromyko for the first time had indicated that it could be resolved to Moscow's satisfaction. Just why remains a mystery.

To Inform Allies

McCloskey's statement said that "we shall make a full report to our NATO allies on the present state of discussions," adding that "of course no agreement will be reached in this matter without full consultation with our NATO allies."

The statement began by referring to President Johnson's

still operative, so far as I know."

He also said that the possibility of nuclear sharing within the alliance was still a question to be settled.

'Not Backing Down'

Other officials stated flatly that the United States had not backed down on finding a new role for Germany. For months the internal Administration argument has centered on this problem with a growing number of advocates favoring a consultative role rather than any so-called "hardware solution."

The "hardware" solution advocates want to create some sort of multilateral nuclear force (MLF) attached to NATO in which Germany would have a key role. This the Soviets contend would be giving the Germans "a finger on the nuclear trigger."

The United States denies this interpretation but under Presidential orders it has ceased to push the MLF and most diplomats consider it dead, though not formally interred. The Soviets want a formal burial.

Erhard Reluctant

The crux of the problem lies within the Bonn government. West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard is reluctant to give up the MLF "hardware" idea though some within his own Christian Democratic Party as well as the rival Social Democrats are prepared to do so.

The alternative, a consultative role, is now in the process of creation through the so-called McNamara Committee. This plan is due to become a formal part of NATO in December but so far Erhard has rejected it as a substitute.

The current American draft treaty is designed to permit creation of an MLF or a joint European nuclear force, if Western Europe should ever be unified politically. The Soviet draft treaty is designed specifically to prohibit either possibility.

The State Department statement yesterday specifically endorsed Gromyko's remarks that both nations were striving for an agreement.

repeatedly expressed "strong interest in finding a solution which will lead to a non-proliferation treaty." Every indication is that Mr. Johnson has been pressing the State Department to find a compromise.

McCloskey repeated what had been said the night before: that no effort had been made in the Rusk-Gromyko talks to discuss details of the draft treaties. Hence, he adding, the American draft "is