

Assembly Votes on NATO for Bonn

Test Vote Succeeds, 289 to 251

BULLETIN

The French Assembly will meet tomorrow at 4 p.m. for a new vote of confidence on West German rearmament. A last-minute difficulty arose just before 2 a.m. today when the Foreign Affairs Committee refused a second hearing for the proposal to admit West Germany to the Western European Union, but Daniel Mayer, chairman of the committee, announced that he and Premier Pierre Mendès-France had found a solution to this technical difficulty.

By Barrett McGurn

The French National Assembly reversed its attitude toward West German rearmament by approving early today the admission of the Bonn republic into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The vote was 289 to 251.

The vote implied that the Assembly will grant its approval to the formation of 12 West German divisions inside the controls of the new Western European Union when the issue is put to a second vote here later this week.

It was a 280-to-259 vote against formation of the West European Union, taken in the Assembly just before dawn Friday, that served notice for the first time that the Assembly was considering rejecting German rearmament for the second time in four months.

Simple "good logic" will require the Assembly to withdraw the vote against the WEU so long as approval is to be given to admission of West Germany into NATO, according to Premier Pierre Mendès-France.

Mendès-France Warning

The Deputies voted after a speech by M. Mendès-France asserting that the ballot on West Germany in NATO would "decide" the Assembly's attitude for or against West German rearmament.

The Premier coupled the comment with the warning that if France persisted in killing the new Allied plan for rearming the West Germans, the Western alliance would be broken, and France would find itself weak and isolated between East and West.

Although the United States and Britain agreed to the new WEU plan for rearming West Germany, after France killed its own original plan for rearming West Germany inside a pooled European army, the Western allies would not wait for some third new plan to which France might agree, the Premier said.

The Premier added that he would insist that the Assembly keep voting until it has reversed itself on the WEU, thus completing approval of the latest Allied plan for rearming West Germany, and that he would quit if the Assembly balked at any point. Voting is expected to continue at least until Wednesday.

Fails of Wide Backing

The Premier's plea picked up 30 favorable votes and cut out 29 adverse votes, compared with the vote of early Friday. However, his appeal failed to get him the broad national backing for the new German rearmament plan which he sought at the time the European Army scheme died. The 289 who voted favorably were only 46 per cent of the Assembly.

The reversed trend followed one of the most dramatic week ends in recent French Parliamentary history. Supporters of M. Mendès-France used their knowledge of the prejudices and convictions of dozens of borderline Deputies to get abstainers to vote favorably and opponents to abstain. Most

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Keystone.
Premier Pierre Mendès-France, shown with hand outstretched, has a moment of consultation during the day's session of the French National Assembly, with the Assembly President, André Le Troquer.

French Assembly Votes

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refused to risk the absurd position of voting one way Friday and one way last night, but enough were influenced to tip the balance.

In a speech before the vote M. Mendès-France helped the switch by telling the "Europeans"—advocates of a close Franco-German alliance inside an integrated and pro-American Western Europe—that half a step was better than none, and that France risked the loss of its ties with the West if it dared a second veto of Allied plans for West Germany.

Aimed at Catholics

This was aimed at the mainly Catholic Popular Republican Movement, which voted heavily against the new German rearmament plan early Friday on the grounds that it was inferior to the system of controls the European Army plan had offered. MRP opponents killed the European Army in August partly because it demanded surrenders of sovereignty from France as well as from West Germany. M. Mendès-France appealed to the Deputies to understand that a compromise was necessary. The vote indicated his appeal was successful.

The new vote reduced fears of an Atlantic crisis, but many French newspapers expressed worry that the damage to French prestige in Washington and London caused by Friday's vote may remain like the effects of "typhoid or a cerebral hemorrhage" for a long time to come.

Main Argument

One of M. Mendès-France's supporters used the point as one of the main arguments for a favorable vote.

"How will a representative of France ever again be able to act for our country in an international negotiation?"—if the Assembly were to kill the second French-signed agreement on German rearmament in less than half a year. Maurice Bourges-Maunoury, a former Cabinet member, asked.

M. Mendès-France had backed the demand for West German admission into NATO by a threat to quit office unless it was passed. Two or three more votes of confidence are expected during the rest of the week as other details are cleared up, but the NATO vote was considered the critical one.

The vote came at the end of an excited day of speeches and demonstrations.

Police Keep Order

Outside the Assembly's halls, dozens of large blue police vans and hundreds of police on foot kept order, pushing back crowds of curious and agitators. Some carried placards: "Remember Auschwitz!" (the German camp), and "Is the Wehrmacht to rise again?"

The demonstrations followed days of intense appeals from the French Communist party urging every cell to do its utmost against German rearmament in the remaining hours. Many Deputies are known to have been impressed, according to official sources.

Deputies had few illusions about the gravity of the issue. Newspapers warned them in banner headlines that they were making a "historic" choice.

Before the vote the Premier

spoke calmly for a half-hour. A veteran French Parliamentarian, he used a succession of arguments which seemed to touch the Deputies' consciousness.

The issue before the Assembly, he said, is the "capital problem" of whether France will agree to a set of Allied accords on which depend "the Atlantic alliance, the security of France, the eventual creation of a united Europe and the consolidation of peace."

Important Point

The insistence on the fate of the Atlantic alliance touched an important point. Many Frenchmen believe that their ties with the United States and Britain are essential to the defense of France even though very many also are convinced that Russia must be sounded out for a possible solution to the cold war.

France would, of course, still keep her seat in NATO if she rejected the latest of the German rearmament plans, "but what would our presence mean if all the others were against us?" the Premier demanded.

He appealed to the many backers of the European army plan, including ex-Premiers Georges Bidault, Robert Schuman and Antoine Pinay, who voted against the new German rearmament plan or abstained Friday. Many of them objected that the new scheme was less satisfactory because it did not push Europe fast enough along the road toward unification. Even the new plan takes a few steps in the direction of European unity, M. Mendès-France said.

"Do those Deputies prefer a void to at least some constructive effort?" he demanded.

Britain has offered to commit some of her forces to the European continent if the new plan is adopted, thus answering a long-ignored French appeal. It may be very long before Britain makes such an offer again, the Premier said. To miss the offer now, he insisted, would be "an unpardonable mistake."

The German offer to grant political liberty to the Saar and to permit the economic attachment of that former German area to France is another concession tied to the German rearmament plan "which we may never get again," M. Mendès-France added.

If France turns down the new agreements her credit among the nations of the world will be zero, the Premier declared. That will go for the Soviet Union as well as for the "Atlantic powers" because France will be isolated from her allies, he said.

The Western Allies agreed to discuss one last plan for German rearmament after France killed the European army in August but they will not discuss another, M. Mendès-France said. It is painful for all Frenchman to realize that German rearmament cannot be prevented any longer, but that is the fact, the Premier concluded.