

**United States
Information
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Washington, D.C. 20547

2169
Office of the Director



MAR 24 1987

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Dear Mr. Secretary:

As per your suggestion this morning, distribution of the attached report has been limited to:

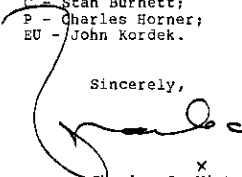
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Sincerely,


x
Charles Z. Wick
Director

The Honorable
George P. Shultz
Secretary of State

*USIA Briefing papers/British
Defense Issues*

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NSC # 8702169

Briefing Paper

United States Information Agency
Washington, D.C. 20547



Office of Research

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March 23, 1987

DEFENSE POLICY: BRITISH LABOUR'S ALBATROSS

Surveys sponsored by USIA and others in the last month show:

British Back NATO

The overwhelming majority of Britons (72%) believe that NATO is still essential to their security. By better than a two-to-one margin (58%-27%), Labour supporters share that belief, which Labour leader Kinnock has also expressed.

Defense Policy Tarnishes Labour Image

Labour is seen by a narrow majority of Britons as too extreme (53%), and its policy of getting rid of all nuclear weapons is thought to be dangerous (60%). Perhaps as the result of the well publicized internal quarreling over its defense policy, 56 percent judge Labour to be "too split and divided."

Most Britons Believe Nuclear Weapons Necessary

A small majority (53%) think nuclear weapons are necessary to deter a Soviet attack. Thirty-nine percent would rely on conventional weapons only. A similar majority (55%) reject the proposition that "Britain should get rid of its nuclear weapons whatever other countries do."

Unemployment is Labour's Biggest Asset

Seventy-three percent identify unemployment as the most urgent problem facing Britain today and, by a two-to-one margin, say Labour has the best policies to deal with that problem.

Continuing Volatility Among the General Public on Election Prospects

The Conservative and Labour parties have been trading the lead in election polls over the last several months by relatively narrow margins (1-10%). One February poll shows the Conservative Party ahead by 6 percent; the late February/early March Harris survey puts the Conservatives ahead by 3 percent. (See attachment).

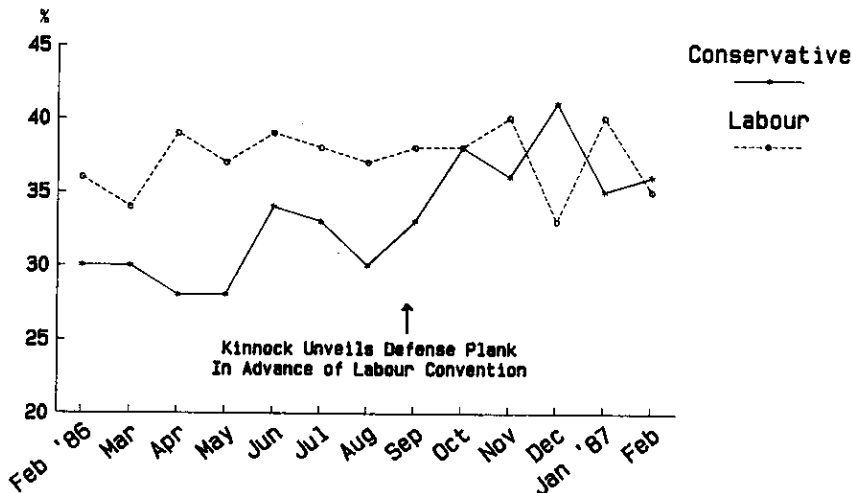
Prepared by: Barbara Smela R/WE

B-3/23/87

Approved by: Nils H. Wessell, Director of Research
485-2965

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Volatility Replaces Labour Lead As Defense Issue Becomes Salient



"If there were a General Election tomorrow, which party would you support?"

SOURCE: Gallup Political Index

Research Memorandum

United States Information Agency
Washington, D.C. 20547

Office of Research



USIA

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February 12, 1987

British Public Cool To Labour Party
Defense Positions: Students and Unemployed
Most Supportive

Summary

Analysis of survey research data on the highly publicized, and controversial, defense platform of the British Labour party suggests that Labour's security policy has had a negative impact on its election prospects. Many traditional Labour backers are wary of the Party's stated defense policy. Labour's strongest overall support comes from students and the unemployed, who are concerned primarily about domestic policies.

Introduction

The British Labour Party, at its annual party conference in Blackpool England, (September 29 to October 4) adopted the following defense platform:

- o unilateral British nuclear disarmament
- o dismantling U.S. nuclear bases in England
- o decommissioning Polaris submarines and cancelling Trident
- o a complete withdrawal from the shelter of the American nuclear umbrella
- o a total reliance on conventional forces for the nation's defense and its contribution to NATO.

This platform has led to speculation that Labour, if successful in future elections, might ultimately lead England to a disengagement from NATO, despite current Labour pronouncements to the contrary.

A poll conducted by the British Gallup organization shortly after the conference indicates that although Labour sympathizers have increased in numbers, the British public does not tend to support Labour's positions on defense and, in fact, opposes several positions and regards others as dangerous.

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Moreover, a British Gallup Poll conducted in mid-December showed a sizeable increase in the percentage of the public who now believe that defense is an urgent problem facing the country (up from 14% to 25% and second only to unemployment).

British Attitudes Toward Labour

Among the general public, support for the Labour Party seems to be linked primarily to domestic issues (mainly unemployment and poverty), and, in general, does not transfer to support for defense issues.

1. Elimination of U.S. Bases

Eighty percent of the general public believe that Labour's plans to expel American nuclear bases from Britain would have a negative effect on U.S./British relations. Over two-thirds (69%) of Labour sympathizers share that belief.

2. Elimination of Nuclear Weapons Dangerous

Sixty-two percent of the general public believe that Labour's policy of getting rid of British nuclear weapons would be dangerous, a figure that has remained the same for three years. This fear is shared by 39 percent of Labour sympathizers.

3. Labour Too Extreme

At the same time, half the general public continue to believe that Labour, in general, has become "too extreme", a figure that has remained consistent within a relatively narrow range since late 1983. Among those who show a preference for the Labour Party, however, only 16 percent share that belief.

4. Labour's Stress on NATO Accepted

Sixty-seven percent of the general public believes that Labour's defense policy would have a negative effect on NATO unity with only 6 percent of the public believing that Britain should get out of NATO. Positive attitudes toward NATO are shared by the majority of Labour Party supporters.

5. Neutralism

Perhaps because Labour's stated intention is to strengthen conventional forces with savings from the nuclear programs, 52 percent of the general public does not believe that it is likely that Labour would "run down Britain's armed forces." Two thirds of Labour sympathizers agree. A solid majority among the general public, as well as among Labourites, do not believe that it is likely that the Labour Party would "make Britain a neutral country by withdrawing from NATO."

With respect to subgroups of the general public, the following table indicates that:

- o Those over the age of 45 are more likely to hold positive attitudes toward U.S. policies while younger Britons are more likely to be critical.
- o Men tend to hold positive attitudes while women are more likely to have negative attitudes.
- o Conservative Party members tend to be supportive of U.S. policies while Labour Party members, in general, do not.
- o Full time and retired employees tend to have positive attitudes toward the U.S. while the unemployed and students generally have negative attitudes.
- o Union membership is generally unrelated to support for, or opposition to, U.S. policies.

Demographic Indicators of Attitudes* Related
to Support for U.S. Policies

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Perceive¹ Genuine U.S. Effort at Arms Control</u>	<u>Approve SDI² Research</u>	<u>Believe U.S.³ Promotes Peace</u>
<u>Age</u>			
45+	+	o	+
under 45	-	o	-
<u>Sex</u>			
Males	o	+	+
Females	o	-	-
<u>Party</u>			
Conservative	+	+	+
Labour	-	-	-
<u>Job status</u>			
Unemployed	-	-	-
Students	-	-	-
Full time	+	+	+
Retired	+	+	+
<u>Union memb.</u>	o	o	o

+ = more positive toward U.S. policies than rest of sample
- = more negative toward U.S. policies than rest of sample
o = no difference

*Multivariate analysis was used to determine which demographic characteristics could best identify the proponents of the various attitudes.

1. "Do you think that the U.S. is or is not making a genuine effort to reach a serious arms reduction...?"
2. "...What is your opinion of the U.S. continuing this research (SDI)...?"
3. "On balance, do you think that U.S. policies and actions during the past year have done more to promote peace or done more to increase the risk of war?"

A British "Silent Majority"

Employed workers and retirees who identify with the Labour Party tend not to go along with its more extreme defense policies. While the vast majority of the general public do not participate in any political activity and have positive attitudes toward the U.S. and its policies, those who show the highest levels of political participation tend to be the students and the unemployed who are the most negative in their attitudes toward the United States and who have the greatest amount of leisure time in which to pursue political activity. Those who are most moderate in their views tend to be the least active.

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