

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Germans fear U.S. strategic reversal

The word here is that behind U.S. threats against Germany, lie plans to lift the nuclear umbrella from Europe.

‘Sit here right next to me. But I warn you, it is very dangerous, because I have toppled numerous governments, you know.’ These were the words U.S. Ambassador to West Germany Vernon Walters used to greet a journalist of *Bild am Sonntag*, Germany’s largest Sunday tabloid, who had come to interview him for the May 7 issue.

Walters warned the West Germans that “the isolationists on our side are getting active again.” He said that without the modernization of the short-range Lance nuclear missile, U.S. troops in Germany would be unprotected against a Soviet conventional attack and would likely be pulled back to the States.

The ambassador was not the only one to threaten troop withdrawal. Also on May 7, Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said on ABC-TV, “The issue of no-nukes, no-troops starts to get into the forefront. It is a danger. It’s not this year, but I could see it down the line.” On the same program, U.S. Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney warned: “We do not foresee a set of circumstances in which you would have U.S. troops deployed in Western Europe, where you would not also have as a significant component of deterrent, short-range nuclear forces. That’s a fact of life.”

The message from Washington is simple: If you West Germans don’t agree with nuclear modernization, we will pull our troops out, and you’ll be blamed for it.

The conflict goes beyond a dispute over weapons systems. A *Washington*

Post feature appearing three days after the Vernon Walters interview attacked the Germans as the eternal troublemakers of international politics, having no national identity other than a special crime record in politics. The *Washington Post* declared the Germans the prime “enemy image” of U.S. policy.

“This is not the way an essential ally of the Americans like the Germans is to be treated,” Alfred Dregger, the chairman of the parliamentary group of the Christian Democrats in Bonn, angrily responded recently. Dregger reminded the United States that President Reagan and Chancellor Kohl had originally agreed to have U.S. talks with the Soviets on the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) in Europe, with the aim to achieve a common ceiling on these systems on both sides of the Iron Curtain. But then, Dregger remarked in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* May 5, the Reagan administration broke its agreement with Kohl, and signed a “zero option” for the INF category, “instead of the mutually agreed-upon common upper ceilings.”

This, Dregger said, “is the cause of the current problems the alliance is faced with, and we’ve predicted that.”

The opposition Social Democrats are mocking pro-U.S. Christian Democrats like Dregger for being “so naive about the U.S., which has long opted for a different course.”

In a discussion with a representative of this magazine, an aide of Dregger’s in Bonn said that the current resistance of the Kohl government is sparked by three motives: 1) the 1986

Reykjavik summit betrayal of the previous U.S.-German agreement on such talks; 2) the suspicion that the United States doesn’t want a longer-range follow-on system to the Lance, nor a modernized Lance either, but is only seeking a noisy pretext to justify their own troop withdrawal; 3) the certainty that Washington secretly decided, without consulting the West Germans (but in agreement with the Soviets), on a dramatic change of their strategic doctrine for Europe.

“The review of the strategic doctrine which was recommended by the Iklé-Wohlstetter Report has already become U.S. operational policy,” the source said, referring to the 1988 report of the President’s Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, which said that the idea of a U.S. nuclear umbrella over Western Europe was obsolete. “That is the way they think, now. They don’t want to keep the States in the partnership of nuclear risk with us Germans anymore.”

If the U.S. were really interested in keeping this deterrence, they would offer a longer-range follow-on system to the Lance, preferably an air-launched stand-off missile with which NATO could reach rear echelon Warsaw Pact bases and Soviet territory. The complete removal of the land-based INF missile category, which had this capacity, was a clear warning signal that the U.S. wanted to “pull out from the risk,” the aide said. All the German-bashing, he added, is intended to make the change of strategic doctrine complete.

Fears are increasing in Bonn now, in connection with reports that President George Bush will soon proclaim a new doctrine for Europe. Rumors have it that he wants to turn the NATO 40th anniversary summit in Brussels on May 29 into a forum for the “restructuring of European affairs.”