

LBJ-Erhard Talks Likely to Center On Atom Defenses

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Chancellor Ludwig Erhard will meet with President Johnson on Dec. 2 and 3 and the indications now are that their talks are to center on the possible deployment of American made medium-range ballistic missiles in West Germany under a NATO arrangement.

Both nations yesterday announced the dates, moved up a day from earlier plans. Bonn at first said the meeting will be in Washington but White House press secretary Bill D. Moyers said in Texas that the site had not yet been settled. The Germans very much want the meeting here, if the President's health permits.

Moyers yesterday also issued a statement detailing the rules under which nuclear warheads are now placed in West Germany and on the territory of other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The MRBM idea, talked up in Washington two weeks ago by two advance men for the Erhard visit, would, in fact, be an extension of this system.

The White House statement said:

"1. As has often been stated, we have made nuclear warheads available to our NATO allies, but custody of all warheads remains with the U.S.

"2. President Johnson is, and as Vice President was, fully aware of specific arrangements made by the Department of Defense with our NATO allies.

"3. As has often been stated, no nuclear warheads on U.S. weapons or held in U.S. custody for our NATO allies can be used without specific authorization of the President of the United States."

The statement was prompted

by a New York Times story on Sunday saying the President and other top officials were "largely unaware" of the arrangements and that American nuclear weapons were mounted on German and other NATO planes and missiles.

The fact, as has for years been well known here, throughout NATO and by the Communist nations, is that huge numbers of American nuclear weapons are deployed in Western Europe under the so-called "two key system." In Germany all such weapons are assigned to NATO for use in wartime and they can be used only with American consent. The President would have to notify the NATO commander, American Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer, who would then issue two sets of instructions, one down an American chain of command and the other down a NATO chain, to two men holding the keys, neither of which alone could make the weapons operational.

Under President Kennedy and at the urging of the Joint Congressional Atomic Com-

mittee, a "permissive link" system was set up to provide an electronic control for Washington to guard against unauthorized use.

This system is related to the Erhard-Johnson talks in this fashion:

The U.S. advanced a proposal for a multilateral nuclear force (MLF) of surface ships in which West Germany would have a major role. But this brought negative responses from most of the NATO allies and strong opposition from the Soviet Union on the grounds that it would give

Bonn control over nuclear weapons. The U.S. denies that contention.

Moscow, however, has not publicly objected to the two-key system. This is one reason there has been more and more talk of extending that system so that German desires for a greater voice in nuclear affairs could be satisfied without creating a new impediment to the idea, favored in Britain, of a non-proliferation treaty. The Soviets have called MLF just such an impediment.

The only possible extension so far discussed is creation of a modern medium-range ballistic missile system in West Germany. In 1959, under President Eisenhower, the U.S. did deploy such missiles, Jupiters and Thors, in Britain, Italy and Turkey but they have since been withdrawn as obsolete.

One of the chief proponents of placing MRBMs in Germany was the then Defense Minister, Franz Josef Strauss. But neither President Eisenhower nor President Kennedy would agree. Then the U.S. switched to the MLF scheme as a substitute. Now the wheel has come full turn, or appears to be doing just that.

Officials here concerned with the Erhard talks say "hardware is in the air." But they also say that "we'll be listening" to hear the Chancellor's ideas rather than advancing any firm American proposal. At least that was the situation as of yesterday.

No one here is certain, so officials contend, just what Erhard will ask. But the expectation is that he will want MRBMs unless some new idea pops up at the last minute. From a German standpoint, MRBMs would be a counter to the hundreds of Soviet MRBMs targeted at West Germany.

However, just because Moscow had raised no howl over the presence of nuclear weapons in Germany under the two-key system does not mean the Soviets would not strongly object to MRBMs under the same setup. In fact, as one official here put it, such an MRBM decision probably "would really make the Russians scream."