

NATO and Vietnam

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 West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard came to Washington to talk about dollars and marks, and left committed to "a searching reappraisal" of European defense needs, to be undertaken jointly with this country and Britain. The outcome is as satisfactory as anything of that nature can be without the French, who hold the key to Europe's nonnuclear defense and know it. It was sensible to try to extricate the security problem from the thickets of finance in which it is entangled, though the attempt was so clumsy it may yet fail. Defense Secretary McNamara showed surprising lack of sympathy for Erhard's money troubles considering that the Pentagon is behind in paying its own bills to defense contractors. McNamara demanded \$900 million from Erhard before next June 30; Erhard hasn't got it, his parliament has cut his defense budget, so he will have to borrow.

But after next June the Germans won't go on buying \$675-million worth of American arms every year, now that tension has slackened in Europe and nobody at present much fears the Russians. Anyway, this sum was set less with an eye to Bonn's defense needs, real or imaginary, than to offsetting the dollar costs of maintaining 225,000 American troops in Germany. This country doesn't need that many soldiers in Europe any more than the Germans want to pay us \$675 million a year for extra arms they have no use for. The obvious course was to try to find out what the real defense needs are, and this apparently will be done. The likely outcome is a considerable cutback in American, and also British, troop strength in Germany. The British have 50,000 men there and want to bring at least half of them home. The US may pull back over a period of time two or three of its six divisions; a cutback is demanded by 31 senators headed by Mike Mansfield, the Majority Leader.

Pulling American troops out of Germany won't contribute much to further easing of world tension if the troops are just switched to Vietnam. That war has to be got out of the way before the Russians agree to match Allied troop cuts with Soviet ones; otherwise Russia stands accused by China of freeing US forces for Asia. But, if Vietnam were solved, the way would open for a solution in Europe, too. The Russians don't want to keep an expensive military establishment in Europe any more than we do; at present they have 20 divisions in East Germany. The US not only has 225,000 soldiers on West German soil, it has 7,000 nuclear warheads there, more than double the number it had in 1961. The West Germans have 12 divisions, that is 500,000 soldiers, and almost 700 Starfighter planes that can carry nuclear bombs. Europe, not Asia, contains at the present

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time the greatest concentration of military power that the world has ever known.