

Bonn's Nuclear Hopes Erode Ties

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PARIS — The most significant change which strikes a returning visitor to Europe today is the sudden and extraordinary deterioration that has taken place in relations between France and Germany.

A growing mistrust of Germany in France has been reported at various times. But one is hardly prepared for the depth and vehemence of anti-German sentiment which now appears to affect the whole of French officialdom.

The "German problem" has emerged as the one overwhelming French preoccupation, dwarfing even the problem of "American domination" in Europe.

Solving the German problem, one is led to believe, could transform relations between France and the United States. If President De Gaulle and President Johnson, as the French hope, meet early next year, the German problem will be at the top of the French agenda.

If the present trend continues, it is certain to have a profound effect on future political developments in Europe. The assumption of Franco-German cooperation, on which the whole structure of European development depends, is threatened today as it has not been threatened since the war.

Nuclear Ambitions

The focus of the new French mistrust is on Germany's growing ambition in the nuclear field. The French reaction is the direct result of demands in Bonn for a larger voice in nuclear policy within the Atlantic Alliance and participation in some form of allied nuclear force.

The importance which this issue assumed in the course of the recent German elections and the continuing emphasis laid upon it by leaders of the Erhard regime have given rise to the most profound misgivings here.

As the French see it, the Germans, in seeking an effec-

With France

Effective nuclear role, are embarking on a most dangerous course. Nuclear ambition, combined with rising nationalism, unresolved territorial claims and a permanent desire for reunification provide, in the French view, all the ingredients of a major catastrophe.

The United States comes in for a major share of the blame for the state of affairs.

American concern for satisfying anticipated German ambitions in the nuclear field is held responsible for having whetted the appetite which the leaders in Bonn now manifest. Any concession whatever to German nuclear ambition is likely to be denounced in Paris as "appeasement."

Sharing Approved

The French all along have opposed formulas for nuclear sharing suggested in Washington or London. Their opposition today is more determined than ever. Although none of these plans involves turning over nuclear weapons to direct German control, the French insist on viewing them as at least a first step in this direction.

Denials of the leaders in Bonn that Germany wants—or will ever want—a finger on the nuclear trigger do not impress officials in Paris.

Even the modest plan for consultation on nuclear strategy agreed to recently by a special committee of 10 NATO defense ministers is likely to provoke strong French objections.

In the view of these officials,

adequate machinery for consultation already exists within the NATO Council. Further concessions are looked on as both unnecessary and dangerous.

The force of this French attitude is already making itself felt in a variety of areas. Apart from seriously affecting relations between Paris and Bonn, it also accounts at least in part for a number of recent shifts in the European political lineup.

The virtually identical view of France and the Soviet Union on the German nuclear problem forms the basis for the increasingly cordial tone of the dialogue between Paris and Moscow.

De Gaulle has always seen the solution of Europe's problems—including the reunification of Germany—in terms of a gradual reconciliation between western Europe and Russia.

So far as the French are concerned a nuclear role for

Germany would be disastrous to East-West relations and foreclose any possibility of German reunification. The Russians, needless to say, strongly encourage this line of reasoning.

Recent French gestures toward Britain may also be explained in terms of the new tensions between Paris and Bonn.

As De Gaulle suggests, things have evolved considerably in a number of ways since his veto of Britain's entry into Europe's Common Market in 1963. Perhaps not the least important of these changes is the breakdown of Franco-German cooperation over the nuclear issue. And in his efforts to contain German ambition in this area, De Gaulle could well look on Britain as a potential ally.

For their part, the French make no bones about their determination to keep Germany, if possible, in its present subordinate position in the alliance

when it comes to the nuclear problem.

The argument is that the physical fact of Germany's division imposes special limitations on its military stature. Nothing short of outright renunciation by Germany of any significant participation in nuclear affairs will solve the German problem so far as the French are concerned.

Since this seems highly

unlikely in the near future, the outlook for an improvement in German-French relations is anything but bright.

To the extent that American policy, especially in regard to nuclear matters, has been designed to drive a wedge between France and Germany it has succeeded brilliantly.

But whether this course in the long run is the wise one to follow is at least open to doubt.