

Bonn elite brave nuclear war test in bunker

From our Correspondent
In Bonn

SEVERAL hundred parliamentarians, ministry officials, psychiatrists, women secretaries and catering staff, simulating an "emergency government" yesterday disappeared into a nuclear bomb-proof bunker south of Bonn in which 3,000 of the country's political elite hope to survive an atomic war.

The six-day test, during which "laws" are passed and "ceasefire negotiations" held with an imagined enemy, is part of West Germany's contribution to Nato's Command Staff exercises that take place every two years.

It involves 22 selected Bundestag MPs, civil servants, and maintenance staff. Mr Waldemar Schreckenberger, one of Chancellor Kohl's chief aides, plays Chancellor and head of the crisis administration.

The anti-nuclear Green Party yesterday boycotted the test, saying that the party could not allow its MPs to take part in scenarios of a nuclear war that no one could survive.

The bunker, West Germany's most secret and expensive building project — estimated to have cost £1.4 billion to build and £8.5 million a year to run — is situated in the vineyards of the Ahr valley, some 15 miles from Bonn.

Yesterday, troops from the paramilitary border police blocked the main approach to the complex and patrolled the surrounding area in the wine villages of Dernau and Marienthal.

The few inhabitants of Dernau are probably not aware that one of the entrances to the concrete fortress lies underneath a children's playground in the centre of the village. Nor will they be pro-

tected by a bunker of their own despite the fact that the Government's choice makes them a likely target in the event of war.

Mr Michael Preute, the author of the only book on the project, has revealed that the bunker, completed in 1970, is situated below the former Dernau-Marienthal concentration camp where, from 1944, some 200 inmates were used as slave labour for a Koblenz building firm.

The bunker lies underneath an old railway tunnel used by Hitler to have V2 rockets assembled by "foreign workers" during the Second World War.

The citizens of Dernau do not like to be asked questions about the bunker or the concentration camp. An anonymous sign reading "To the Dernau KZ" was quickly removed during the peak of anti-nuclear protests in 1983.

The main entrance to the 20-mile long bunker, divided into three main sections, is a well guarded secret, one theory being that it has a direct link with the Defence Ministry complex in Bonn. A straight stretch of motorway running overhead could be used as an airport runway.

According to Mr Preute, those taking part in the exercise see only a small section of the vast complex — enough though to make the help of psychologists and psychiatrists necessary for the alcoholic excesses and nervous breakdowns that accompany the test period.

The several hundred military and civilian staff guarding the bunker have six weeks spells of duty, followed by two weeks off. Mr Preute's research has shown that the air conditioning system is insufficient, with the minimum temperature not

sinking below 24 degrees C. The neon lighting had to be largely replaced because of its "stress effects" on inmates.

The complex houses dormitories of six-bed conference rooms and one assembly hall for several hundred people. The bunker government will issue instructions to dozens of crisis committees from a "command centre," a room painted in "warm red and green colours."

Inhabitants can pass through the underground passages, miles long, not only on foot, but also by bicycle and with electric powered vehicles. German precision has not failed here, reminding inmates of a "three mile an hour speed limit" — except for pedestrians.

Other signposts serve as morale boosters advising those in the bunker that "ordering against the high precision of modern nuclear missiles," he concludes.

as a therapy to counter stress induced by the labyrinth.

Inmates have to wear on their bodies plastic identity cards with electronic cyphers which prevent them from crossing from one section of the bunker to the other. To complete the Orwellian picture, loudspeakers and sirens go on automatic warning when "sensitive areas" are approached, with automatic security gates closing in on them.

According to Mr Preute, the prototype project, designed by "strategists with a Second World War bunker mentality," adopted a momentum of its own. He maintains that those responsible "lost all sense of reality" and that large parts of the bunker are not nuclear proof. Concrete can do nothing against the high precision of modern nuclear missiles,

From Alex Brummer in Washington

President Reagan yesterday gave final instructions to his Geneva arms team calling for deep reductions in offensive flows, with a rhetorical flourish emphasising his longterm objective of eliminating nuclear weapons.

"We seek an agreement as soon as possible on real and verifiable reductions in American and Soviet offensive nuclear arms," Mr Reagan said, after meeting his Geneva negotiating team, which will be led by the veteran diplomat, Mr Max Kampelman.

Mr Reagan conspicuously eschewed any mention of limiting the role of defensive systems, such as Star Wars, simply noting that the march of "technology provides greater safety rather than greater fear."

The American negotiating team will be accompanied in Geneva by large delegations of congressional observers from both Houses of Congress and both major parties. The White House objective is to emphasise to the Russians that, despite disagreements over the size of the defence budget and the MX intercontinental mis-

sile, the United States is going to Geneva determined and unified.

It is clear from a series of briefings and conversations in Washington that the chances of a breakthrough in Geneva are remote. Mr Kampelman will have little room to manoeuvre in the discussions on strategic defences and anti-satellite systems.

According to high-level officials, the US will not propose any specific agreements, nor "rules of the road" — a series of understandings — at the talks.

Instead, it will continue its complaints about alleged Russian violations of the anti-ballistic missile treaty, notably the Krasnoyarsk facility in Siberia, and the recent upgrading of Russian surface-to-air missiles.

The US objective, according to the National Security Adviser, Mr Robert McFarlane, will be to "provide for the security of both the US and our allies by strengthening deterrence through greater reliance on defensive systems."

The US is largely counting on the strategic arms talks headed by former Senator

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John Tower, of Texas, to produce progress. However, the precise reduction in strategic systems which the US would seek in Geneva was still undecided almost to the last moment.

All that Mr McFarlane would say was that it would be "flexible," and that it would involve "tradeoffs of offence versus offence."

Mr Maynard Glitman, who will lead the talks on Euromissiles, will seek to pick up the pieces where his predecessor, Mr Paul Nitze, left off.

Officials say that the objective will be to bring down the number of deployed missiles

on both sides to an equal number — 300 was the figure mentioned yesterday. At present, the US and European commitment is to deploy 572 cruise and Pershing II missiles, and so far the Americans have refused to give in to Russian demands to forgo the Pershing.

In the build-up in Washington to Geneva, the strongest pitch from the US has come on the Strategic Defence Initiative. Both the President and Mr McFarlane have continued to introduce new concepts in defence of the SDI, in an effort to make its purposes more palatable and to counter the Soviet offensive about the militarisation of space.

By Richard Norton-Taylor

Legislation on telephone tapping should also cover the use made by the government communications headquarters (GCHQ) of private information, Mr Richard Holme, senior adviser to the Liberal leader, Mr David Steel, said yesterday.

Mr Holme, who is prospective Liberal parliamentary candidate for Cheltenham, where GCHQ is based, said that because advanced technology enables the centre to collect private communications indiscriminately, controls over its use of information were as necessary as those over the interception of communications by the conventional security services.

The Government's bill on the interception of communication, which receives its second reading next week, covers the harvesting of intelligence material but not the use to which

He said that because of its close links with the US National Security Agency and the sophisticated technology involved, GCHQ gathered in a wide harvest of communications with no bearing on national security.

"There has to be a clear undertaking about the use to which particular pieces of private information indiscriminately collected may be put by the security community, and on whose authorisation," he said.

A senior GCHQ specialist has already expressed concern that the ban on unions at the centre could lead to excesses in its intelligence-gathering operations.

It could also lead to staff in future being "in a sense political appointees." He has proposed an all-party committee of privy councillors to monitor the activities of

GCHQ data controls demanded →