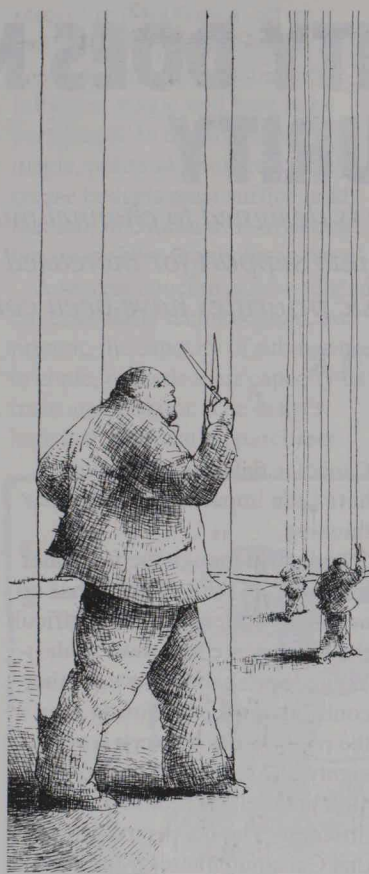


Chancellor Kohl's government expressed its support for SDI. Then a further difficulty arose. Soviet proposals to dismantle medium- and short-range missiles in Europe were accepted in principle by the Americans, and after some hesitation, by the British and French as well. After a great deal of wavering and an open split within the coalition government, the Federal Republic followed suit, but this only intensified the debate.

For the Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, a member of the Liberal party (FDP), the Federal Republic could not decline this opportunity to take a step towards arms reduction, a move consistent with longstanding German foreign policy. The Soviet proposals had the additional merit of meeting the demands which Bonn had consistently put forward since the end of the 1970s. Genscher also emphasized that Germany could not isolate itself or oppose the desire of the two superpowers to change the military configuration of Europe.

On the other hand, the Minister of Defence and Christian Democrat, Manfred Wörner, argued against the American proposals. His arguments and those of the right wing of the CDU may be summarized as follows: France and Britain can afford to favour the double-zero option because they can provide for their own security. The Americans have a natural interest in the withdrawal of all medium- and long-range weapons which can penetrate the Soviet Union and risk embroiling them in uncontrollable nuclear escalation. With the double-zero option the only missiles left would have a range of less than five hundred kilometres. In other words, the Soviet short-range missiles remaining could be used only against West Germany. One of the CDU deputies in the *Bundestag*, Volker Ruhe, expressed it this way: "The more feeble the range of the missiles, the greater their affect on Germany."

To Christian Democrats this situation seems all the more unacceptable because the double-zero option will see the dismantling of only three percent of the super-



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power nuclear weapons in Western Europe. The great majority of nuclear weapons are short-range tactical weapons intended for use on German soil. Not only do the superpowers retain some 50,000 nuclear warheads in their arsenals, but by eliminating the medium and short-range weapons they are simply getting rid of the systems which burden their strategy with incalculable risks. Double zero makes it easier to control any future conflict and confine it to the European territories which the superpowers "protect." In strategic terms this form of nuclear disarmament leads to fears that the US will abandon the strategy of nuclear deterrence it now extends to Europe. Germans who support the double-zero option maintain that these fears are not justified. According to them the US and its allies continue their commitment to Europe by their physical presence and by the vast number of warheads and other weapons they keep there.

THE CDU PAID A HEAVY PRICE IN the regional elections which took place in the Rhine-Palatinate and in Hamburg in May of this year for the government's hesitation con-

cerning the superpowers' arms control proposals. The results forced them to admit that disarmament proposals are popular with the German electorate. In June the *Bundestag* adopted a resolution in favour of a significant and verifiable reduction in Europe of all US and Soviet ground-based nuclear weapons with a range of from zero to one thousand kilometres, together with the achievement of a balance in conventional weapons and a world-wide ban on chemical weapons.

The euromissile crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s gave rise to increasing support for nationalistic neutralism on the part of the left. A meeting of minds from left and right in support of nationalism could pose serious problems for NATO and for the European Economic Community if it gained momentum.

The leader of the CSU (the Christian Socialist Union – essentially the right-wing of the CDU based in the state of Bavaria) Franz Josef Strauss, has been one of the chief participants in this important political debate. He believes there is no need to be obsessive in reminding the new generation of Germany's responsibility for the last war and the Holocaust. In addition, he keeps his distance from the government's disarmament policy and supports German arms exports to non-NATO countries.

THERE IS A CONVICTION IN Germany, which is quite widespread in the various political parties, that the structure of NATO is out of date. Strauss, like many Germans, believes that US nuclear "decoupling" from Europe is only a matter of time and that the day may come when it will withdraw part of its forces from the Continent. The debate over the double-zero option has increased the distance between Americans and Germans. As the American journalist, Elizabeth Pond, pointed out in the weekly magazine, *Die Zeit* (June 1986) a dangerous myth is arising according to which the West Germans have been abandoned to their fate. Nothing, she says, is being done to nip this notion in the bud.

This feeling of betrayal by its allies leads many West Germans to embrace nationalism. The Greens and certain elements in the SPD are discussing the ways in which Germany can best keep its distance from the East-West rivalry, and leaders of the SPD have begun to revive the expression "Central Europe." In the conservative camp Chancellor Kohl has taken advantage of this nationalist revival; in his speeches he talks of unity and patriotism and of the German identity. In July of this year one often heard in Germany the question: What will happen if Gorbachev decides to offer reunification of the two Germanies in exchange for neutrality (In 1952 Stalin made such a proposition to the three occupying powers – the US, Britain and France)? The conservatives devoutly hope that such a situation does not arise.

Recent polls show that two-thirds of West Germans would like to see reunification, but only eight percent believe that this will come about in less than ten years. They are wary of such an outcome because most of them remain profoundly western in outlook. And the Soviet Union, for its part, has no wish to lose its most dependable ally in Europe, the German Democratic Republic. For the West, the Federal Republic remains the most important ally in Europe and the keystone of the strategic balance between the two blocs. It is important that its allies understand German sensibilities. On the other hand, Germans must not forget that their country's freedom and security depend on remaining part of the West. □

translation by Mary Taylor

Further Reading

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