

WHERE IS GERMANY GOING?

The possibility of a Soviet-American missile agreement has reinvigorated West Germany's domestic debate about its future within the Western alliance.

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THE ONGOING SECURITY debate in West Germany has been given an added dimension with Mikhail Gorbachev's proposals on arms control and the US reaction to them. Germany is concerned that Washington and Moscow might go over its head to settle the problem of European security. The Germans clearly think they must act decisively to avert this scenario, but how? Should they withdraw into the nationalistic neutral stance which seems to be gaining support? Where is Germany going?

SINCE ITS CREATION IN 1949 THE German Federal Republic has chosen to align itself with the West. Situated where East meets West and lacking nuclear weapons, West Germany is unable to defend its territory and freedom without the help of its NATO allies. Until now Bonn has been a strong supporter of strategic unity and allied solidarity. Although it has opted for closer ties with France in order to balance American ascendancy, it is well aware that French nuclear protection cannot replace the US nuclear umbrella.

Since 1969, successive West German governments have attempted to reduce tensions in central Europe, encourage East-West détente, develop links between the two Germanies, and promote arms control. Moreover within NATO, of which Germany has been a member since 1955, they have attached importance to strengthening the deterrent and sharing the nuclear risk with their allies by ensuring that nuclear weapons are not deployed exclusively on German territory.

Widespread domestic opposition to these strategic priorities has grown, particularly in the last few years. Germans are particularly conscious – more than North Americans or other Europeans – of the dangers inherent in nuclear war. They have on their territory, in the armies of half a dozen allied countries, a military force whose size is unprecedented for a democracy in peace time. To this impressive military presence can be added approximately 4,600 nuclear warheads, all under foreign control, sixty percent of which have a range of less than thirty kilometres. West Germans are aware that this is the greatest concentration of military force anywhere in the world and that they are potential targets for an imposing array of Soviet nuclear and conventional weapons across the river Elbe and just inside the Czechoslovak frontier.

The NATO doctrine of “flexible response” also gives West Germans cause for alarm, since it threatens the early use of nuclear weapons in the event of hostilities. In a war with the USSR, NATO may be forced to destroy Germany in order to defend itself against Soviet forces. This fear of nuclear weapons strengthens the pacifist movement and provides ammunition for other political parties.

BETWEEN 1983 AND 1987 THE GREEN party – which includes pacifists and ecologists from across the political spectrum – increased its share of the vote in Federal elections from 5.6 to 8.3 percent. The Greens' platform calls for Germany's withdrawal from NATO, the rejection of nuclear deterrence, the renunciation of nuclear arms, and the withdrawal of US forces.

It rejects the West's emphasis on economic growth, and would like Germany to adopt a neutral position while actively exploring the possibility of reconciliation between the two Germanies. The Greens are the most open supporters of nationalistic neutralism; a typical supporter is young, urban, well-educated and dissatisfied with the indecision of the social-democratic party, the SPD.

Since returning to opposition in the fall of 1982, the SPD quickly disassociated itself from the positions held by its most recent representative in the Chancellor's office, Helmut Schmidt. In August 1986, the SPD put forward a defence policy which included the withdrawal of Pershing II and cruise missiles from Germany, revoking agreements with the United States over SDI, a cut-back in defence expenditure, and a long-term restructuring of the *Bundeswehr* (armed forces) aimed at creating a purely defensive force. The SPD has also adopted what its opponents characterize as a “parallel” foreign policy – a unique procedure for a Western democratic party. It has concluded several draft treaties with communist parties of Eastern Europe, (thus effectively with the governments of these countries), which envisage the creation of nuclear and chemical weapon-free zones in both Germanies and beyond. The SPD has thus committed itself in advance to concrete measures to reduce the nuclear threat. These agreements are not binding; if the SPD were to come to power it would have to discuss these matters with its partners in a coalition government.

The leader of the SPD, Willy Brandt, retired in 1987 and was replaced by a moderate, Hans-

Jochen Vogel. At the same time, however, the minister-president of the Saar, Oskar Lafontaine, was elected by a large majority to the party's three-man directorate. Lafontaine has spoken openly of West Germany's gradual withdrawal from NATO and of the need for Germany to act as a bridge between East and West. The left wing, which holds nationalist neutralist ideas very close to these, is increasingly influential in the SPD.

When the Liberal-Conservative coalition (FDP and CDU-CSU) came to power in the autumn of 1982, it identified two new priorities in defence and foreign policy; to persuade the *Bundestag* (Parliament) to confirm the deployment of the euromissiles unless the Soviet Union accepted the so-called zero option; and to re-establish good relations with Washington. By accepting the euromissiles it brought to an end a debate of unprecedented intensity. The second objective was more difficult; the government wanted to appear conciliatory in its dealings with the Reagan Administration. Thus while the government found it very difficult to be openly critical of the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), they were afraid that SDI would compromise various elements of the strategic balance, particularly strategic parity, deterrence, the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and the arms control negotiations. Bonn would have preferred to imitate the Canadian model, and allow German industry to pursue contracts with the Pentagon as it saw fit without the direct involvement of the government.

This dilemma was finally resolved in the spring of 1985 when