

# Should we stop the Pershing?

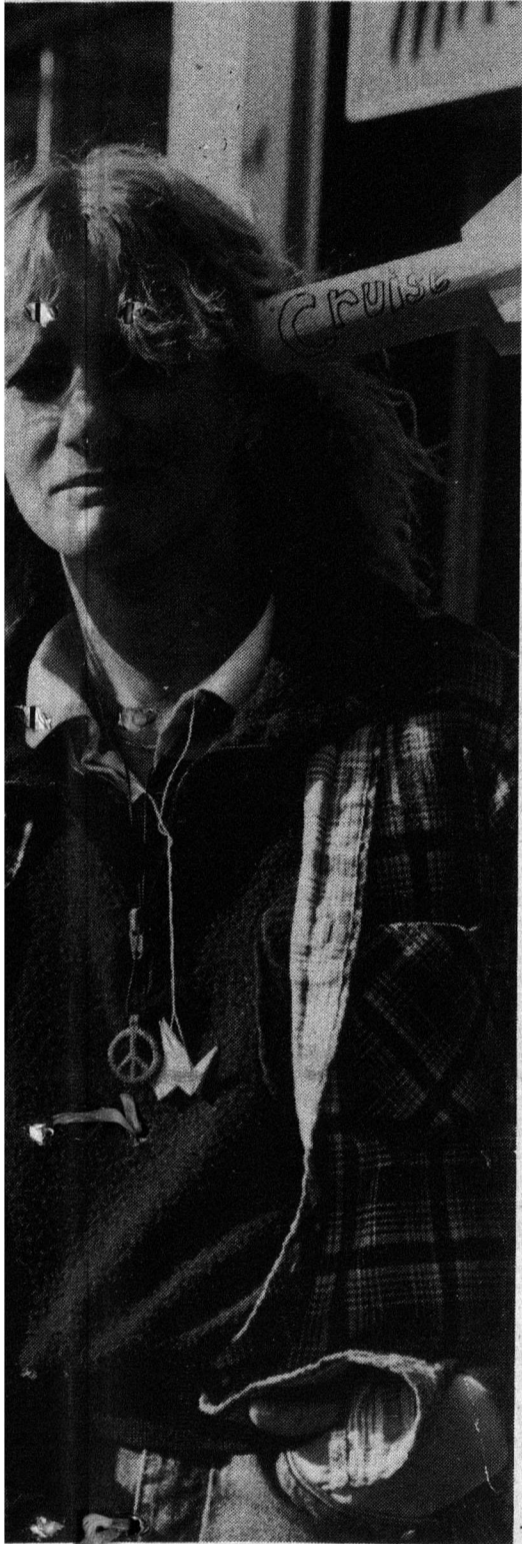


photo Angela Wheelock

testing issue. Except for Toronto, where 25,000 people have created the biggest march in that city's history, the size of the Oct. 22 demonstrations were down from anti-cruise protests last year.

In Vancouver, NDP MP Pauline Jewett vowed to continue the fight to reverse Canada's cruise agreement. But spokesperson Helen Spiegelman said the march of 4500 was purposefully downplayed by organizers, and in fact was merely a show of support for the European struggle. The previous April, 60,000 Vancouverites marched against the cruise.

And a peace camp erected last year at Cold Lake, Alberta, where the cruise will be tested, has closed for lack of popular support.

With the cruise issue gone by the wayside in Canada, so has a more fundamental question ignored by the peace movement; Canada's political sovereignty. American pressure to test its missile was quiet, but no doubt played an integral role in Canada's decision.

Trudeau countered anti-cruise protests in an "open letter to Canadians" last spring, placing the decision in the context of Canada's commitment to the North American Treaty Organization. The peace movement argued the testing agreement does not fall under the NATO charter, but shied away from talking about Canada's relationship to NATO and the U.S.

Even the NDP, whose standing platform is to oppose Canada's membership in NATO, would not voice that politically unpopular position in Parliament.

Aside from opposing the cruise missile, the peace movement protests the arms race in general, emphasizing the horror of nuclear war. And to an extent, the message has hit its mark. One participant at the Ottawa Oct. 22 rally expressed the fear that moved him to march.

"We've got to do something or we'll get blown up," said Dan Miller. "If everyone takes the attitude that nothing can be done, nothing's going to happen."

The movement has grown rapidly in the last two years, with coalitions forming in every major Canadian city, and representing a wide range of public opinion.

But the size of the October rallies could be a sign that the momentum is being lost. Rasmussen says the peace movement has grown largely because of a successful death scare - warning of the imminent destruction of the planet. And he predicts a movement based on fear will only motivate people for a limited

time unless it can show that change is possible.

And to make change, people must analyze how power is distributed in society, and what political interests fuel the arms race, he said.

In Europe, the cruise protest is not just a question of defense strategy, but of political sovereignty. "The cruise is not an important weapon militarily, but politically," Rasmussen says the threat to NATO solidarity presented by popular protest is actually a threat to American control over western countries.

The Cruise and Pershing missiles are launched at the sole command of the United States, therefore their deployment in Europe shows the surrendering of sovereignty.

And the cruise is not just a European issue. "They're putting 3,000 cruises on battle ships around the world. They're not Euromissiles, they're Third World missiles. Most of them will be aimed at the Third World - it's the most important weapon for oppressing Third World countries."

The Canadian peace movement is now looking for a focus for the upcoming national election. "Make Canada a peacemaker" is the general thrust of a \$300,000 Peace Petition Caravan campaign, aimed at making Canada a nuclear weapon free zone. Rallies, concerts, a cross-country caravan and election work will all be part of the campaign to stop Canadian research, production and testing of nuclear weapons systems.

The attitude of the Canadian peace movement is clearly to put faith in elected politicians, even though the government effectively bypassed parliament in order to ratify the cruise testing agreement. Canadians are not as politicized as the Europeans over the lack of say in matters of national defense, but the peace movement is certainly not helping them understand that powerlessness.

But people like Rasmussen represent a change in attitude.

In Europe, and in pockets in Canada, people are taking power over their destiny through civil disobedience. For example, in Grand Valle, Quebec, the people took over the town for 11 days in October to demand action from the provincial government over chronic unemployment.

"I don't think it's far off that people are going to get politicized... in the next five years there's going to be a recession. It's going to get worse - there's a slight upturn now. People are going to get politicized and take to the streets and take power into their own hands."

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