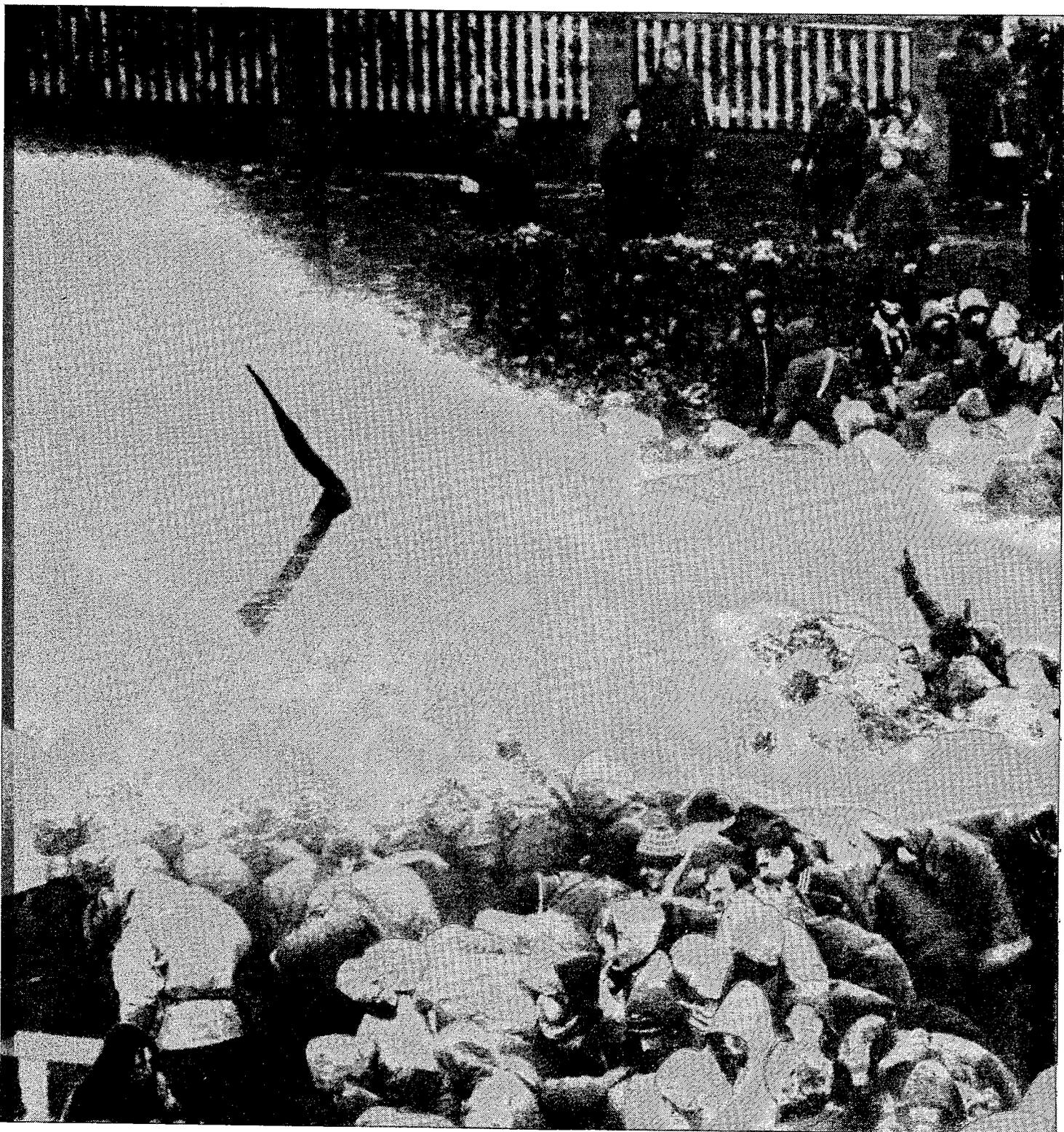


Hot Autumn, W. Germany:

# Not So Quiet on the Western Front



**"Every 'minor' crisis that such a country experiences discloses to us in miniature the elements, the rudiments, of the battles that will inevitably take place on a large scale during a big crisis."**

*Bonn, November 21, 1983—the day the Bundestag gave the missile deployment its seal of approval.*



by Koklu Kopus\*

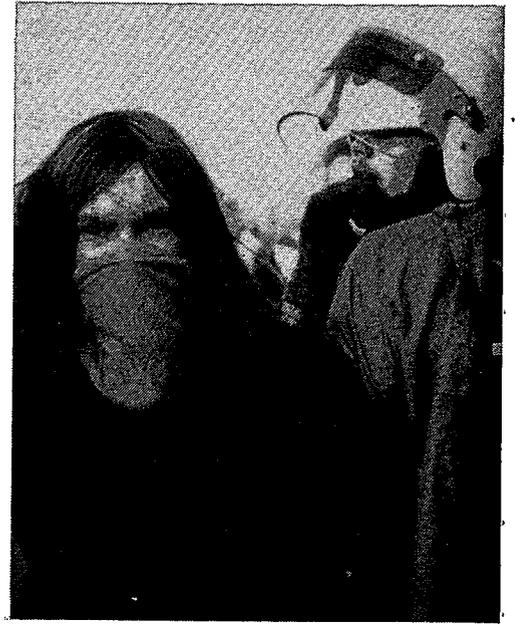
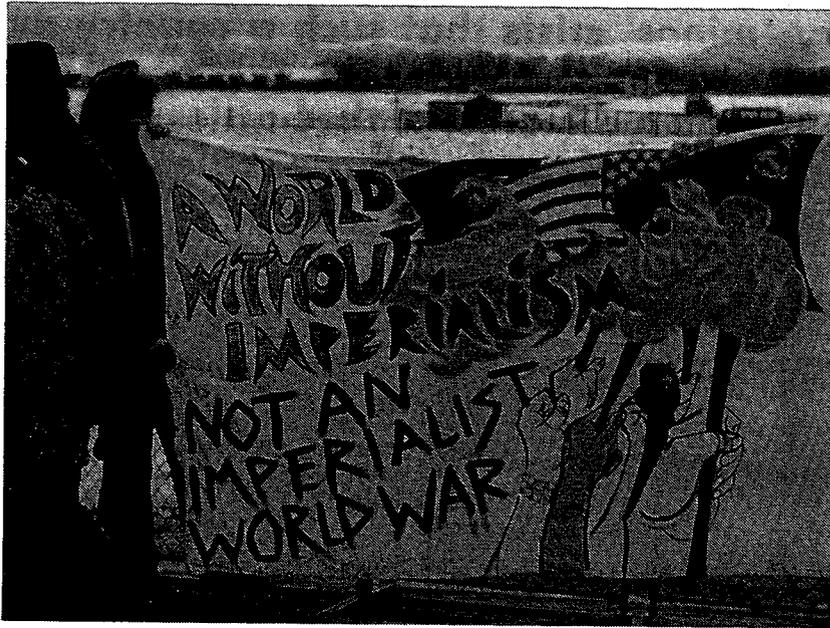
Lenin's famous point about crisis, while having universal application, has particularly important meaning for the development of a revolutionary movement—and the making of a revolution—in the imperialist countries. In the four decades since the end of World War 2, the ruling classes of these countries (especially in the West) have been able to benefit from a certain stability, based largely upon the super-exploitation they carry out in the oppressed countries.

Today, all the contradictions of the imperialist system are heightening and the threat of world war is rapidly growing. This increasing strain on the fabric of the imperialist system makes itself felt in an uneven, punctuated manner. The surface "calm" is more and more frequently interrupted by periods of intense minor crises of the type Lenin refers to above. Marxist-Leninists are being sharply confronted with recognising and making use of these "minor crises" in the imperialist countries to advance the revolutionary cause. For in particularly these types of countries it is in times like this especially that the revolutionary communists can make important advances both in welding a core of class conscious proletarians and expanding the influence of the proletarian revolutionary pole in society at large.

This article will examine the experience of one such "minor crisis": the "Hot Autumn" in W. Germany in 1983, when the first Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe were deployed, and the work and impact of advanced forces under the leader-

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ship of a revolutionary line in the midst of such a situation, specifically the World Without Imperialism Contingent—organised and led by the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA—together with activists from the Federation of Workers from Turkey in W. Germany (ATIF), strongly influenced by the line of the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist (TKP/ML).

Several dozen people from the United States (mainly youth), organised to travel to West Germany

as part of the World Without Imperialism Contingent, together with a few hundred class-conscious proletarian forces from Turkey were able to interject a whole new dimension into a very complex political situation. In fact this intervention took on a very real, material presence on 21 November in Bonn, the focal point of Hot Autumn, when thousands of people ended up following the revolutionary banner as the representatives of the bourgeoisie prepared to give the final go-ahead on the missiles inside

the sacred halls of parliament. This experience is a very positive example of the possibility for small forces to lead big battles—especially when the entire political atmosphere is charged as in such “crisis” situations. But this possibility can only be realised when the “small forces” concerned are guided by an overall orientation of taking responsibility for the movement as a whole. First and foremost this requires taking responsibility for analysing and solving the political and practical problems that are confronting the revolutionary movement and its further advance. Only if the advanced forces take themselves seriously will others do the same; and it is only on the basis of a correct understanding of the class forces and contradictions in motion that the advanced forces can play a truly leading role.

The political events of Hot Autumn centred around the stationing of the new U.S.-built Pershing II and Cruise missiles in W. Germany (to be followed by stationing in other NATO countries in Europe). These are the first land-based U.S.-controlled missiles in Europe capable of hitting the Soviet Union since the Jupiter missiles were taken out of Turkey as part of the settlement of the Cuban missile crisis. These missiles play a crucial role in the political and military preparations by NATO for World War 3.



For this reason they have become a central point of contention between the U.S.-led NATO bloc and its rival bloc of imperialists in the Warsaw Pact headed by the Soviet Union.

Most importantly, the missiles became and continue to be a sharp point of conflict between the ruling class in W. Germany and the masses of people there who have no interest in them or the war for which they are intended. Thus the intense political crisis that came to a head around the stationing was the result of these two separate but interpenetrating contradictions. With the passing of every day from the time that the decision to deploy the new missiles was first announced in December 1979 a showdown had been brewing—a confrontation which would have no small impact on the course of events in W. Germany and Europe, and even the world. In response to this situation each class was compelled to thrust onto the political stage its spokesmen and its program concerning the missiles.

The emergence of the movement against the missiles (and against imperialist war preparations generally) was and is of tremendous significance for the proletariat. For at the very time the imperialists most desperately need a loyal population to serve as cannonfodder on a scale as yet unseen in history, a broad mass movement in opposition to

those plans and preparations has developed to directly challenge all this. Further, this movement, even with its present shortcomings, has served to help create an overall mood of questioning many of the basic tenets of faith by which the ruling classes hold the masses' thinking within the logic of the present system. It is also an illustration of how objective developments can bring millions into motion and political life, and often very quickly.

#### Behind the Missiles

The rulers of the NATO countries have loudly and frequently proclaimed that the Pershing and Cruise missiles are a response to the "new threat" posed by the Soviet Union's deployment of the SS-20 missiles and therefore do not represent an escalation of the arms race on their part. Their official newspeak always refers to their new missiles as part of a "modernisation program"—nothing new, nothing to worry about. This line of reasoning (to describe it in generous terms) is designed solely for mass consumption by the imperialists' social base.

For all the ranting and raving about new Soviet missiles that threaten all of western Europe and to which NATO had no comparable response, in fact this situation had existed since the mid-1960s. By 1963 the Soviet Union already had about

600 SS-4 and SS-5 missiles capable of hitting almost any target in Europe. NATO went 16 years without declaring a need for such weapons. And even when the Soviet Union began deployment of the SS-20 in 1976, up until the NATO two-track decision in 1979, they had removed an SS-4 or SS-5 for each SS-20 deployed. In that respect, if the new NATO missiles are only a "modernisation" then the Soviet SS-20's are no less so.<sup>1</sup>

The origin of the SS-20 provides a good lesson in the character of imperialist "disarmament" treaties. At the time the SALT I Treaty was signed the Soviet Union was developing a mobile, 3-stage, solid-fuel ICBM. Under the terms of the SALT I Treaty they agreed to forego its deployment. But this did not mean that all that hard work was for naught. Soviet designers simply removed the first stage, thus reducing the missile's range to under 5,500 kilometres and taking it out of the ICBM class as defined by the treaty...the SS-20 was born.

What then was the real reason for the so-called two-track decision by NATO? This move by the NATO countries is a result of a fundamental shift in world relations marked by the emergence of an imperialist bloc led by the Soviet Union and the recognition by the imperialists of all the major western countries that the competition between the two blocs

<sup>1</sup>It is true that the SS-20 marks a real leap in military capability for the Soviet Union. The SS-4 and SS-5's are liquid-fueled, silo-based missiles of relatively poor accuracy by modern standards. Blowing away cities is no problem, but for military targets where smaller warheads and greater accuracy are needed they are hardly up to world standards. The SS-20 on the other hand is a piece of hardware that would make any imperialist warmonger proud. It is mobile and therefore harder to attack. It has solid fuel and therefore is more reliable and easier to handle and can be fired in a much shorter time from the beginning of an alert. It can carry up to three warheads and has much greater range and accuracy than the missiles it replaces. In short, from an imperialist point of view, it's a missile whose time has come.

and the crisis which fuels and intensifies that competition is impelling them more and more to seek a military solution. In this regard what is essential to understand is that while the U.S.-led bloc still commands a much greater empire, by the early 1970s the Soviet Union had achieved rough strategic nuclear parity with the U.S. Its bloc had become capable of militarily challenging the NATO bloc for world dominance.

It was a potential break in the ladder of escalation, and not the deployment of the SS-20's alone, that led Social Democratic Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to call for the new U.S. missiles in Europe in his now famous 1977 speech at the London Institute for Strategic Studies. The new missiles were designed to counter the danger of the "de-coupling" of the U.S. strategic nuclear forces from a war in Europe. Or as a White Paper issued by the W. German Defence Ministry in the fall of 1983 put it: "American nuclear weapons in Europe are the unforgeable link between the conventional armed forces in Europe and the American strategic nuclear-potential."

For the U.S. the apprehension existed that if this missing rung in the ladder of nuclear escalation was not replaced and its European allies reassured of protection by the U.S. strategic nuclear umbrella, the "allies" might seek some temporary accommodation with the Soviet Union on their own or even, in a

"worst case" scenario, attempt to sit out a U.S.-Soviet showdown. This "problem" was addressed by the development of the "shared risk" doctrine. The new missiles—capable of hitting the Soviet Union—would be deployed in Europe. The European allies would take on the "risk" of having important targets for any Soviet strike on their soil, and the U.S. would assume the "risk" involved in their use. Namely, as the Soviet rulers have repeatedly made clear, any U.S. warhead striking the Soviet Union, no matter where it is fired from, will result in retaliation against the continental U.S. Thus the two-track decision in 1979 (deploy and negotiate) formalised the terms under which NATO would enter WW3.

In fact, there was never much of a chance that the negotiations in Geneva would have resulted in the missiles not being deployed. For NATO the U.S. missiles are, as the W. German White Paper says, "unforegoable." And for the Soviet Union the SS-20's were not only a very important advance in its nuclear war-fighting capability, but also an important advantage over NATO. The proposals and posturing that did go on in the several years of negotiations were not mainly designed by each side to find any "agreement," but to place the "blame" on its opponent for this latest lap in the arms race.

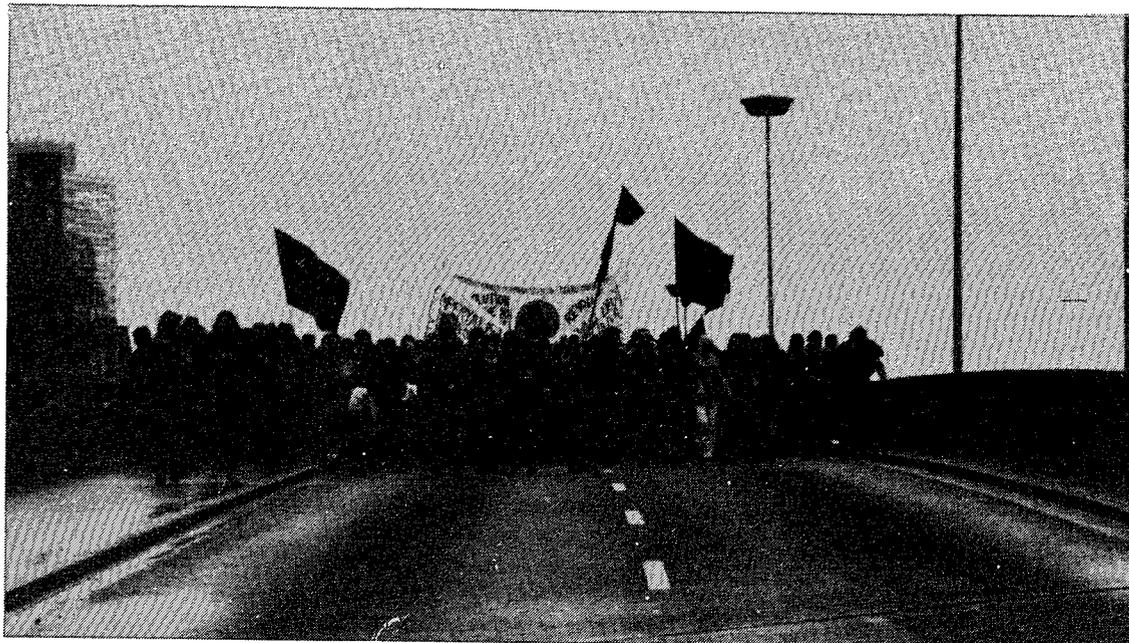
The Soviet Union took the course of trying to exploit its own advantages and the problems created

among its rivals' ranks resulting from the Soviet Union's achievement of nuclear parity with the U.S. The fact that the "two-track decision" was reached in 1979 did not mean that the missiles would be automatically installed or that this could be done without the USSR extracting a high political price. The conflicting interests inside the NATO bloc are real, even if they are subordinate to the overall common interests of the Western powers vis-a-vis the Soviet bloc. The "shared-risk" doctrine is itself just a way of institutionalising the various allies' attempts to see to it that it is not their own country that suffers the greatest damage and destruction in the war for which they are all preparing as a bloc.

The Soviet Union launched a campaign to attempt to drive a wedge into this crack within the NATO bloc, to actually bring about the "de-coupling" talked about. This campaign essentially consisted of a gangster threat in the form of pointing out that any country accepting the new missiles risked being relocated into the stratosphere by peace-loving Soviet warheads. Needless to say, with seven or eight thousand such warheads backing up this point, this is not to be taken lightly.

This campaign was particularly aimed at W. Germany—not just because W. Germany was the only country scheduled to get the Pershing II's (capable of reaching targets in the Soviet Union in six

*Anti-Imperialist Contingent in the streets of Bonn.*



minutes) nor because, being directly on the East-West faultline, it is the bedrock of NATO in Europe—there are also real material interests which both push and pull W. Germany eastward. Not the least of these is E. Germany and the desire for a reunited Germany dominating Central Europe. Connected to this is Germany's traditional sphere of influence that stretches all the way through the Balkans to Turkey. It is no accident that of the NATO bloc countries W. Germany has the most investments and loans in Eastern Europe and carries on the greatest amount of trade there.

Furthermore, the W. German ruling class must deal with the geo-strategic problem of being on the faultline. That is: how to avoid as much as possible the inevitable destruction that would be unleashed by the outbreak of fighting between more than one million of the most heavily armed troops in history already poised on each side of the border, literally only miles apart. Their spokesmen openly discuss the hope that the early use of the new missiles will lead to a quick escalation and a strategic exchange between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.—over European heads (of course the U.S. just as openly talks about its desire that especially nuclear destruction be confined to others' territories). Then there is always the joker in the deck: what if the Soviets strike first? Then the new missiles are only lightning rods of the worst kind.

In early 1983, French Socialist Party President François Mitterrand gave a speech before the W. German Bundestag (parliament), described in the *New York Times* this way: "In a direct, forceful presentation, Mr. Mitterrand said in substance that the debate on the deployment of the U.S. intermediate-range missiles in Europe was really less one of numbers than of political will, with the essential test for the Atlantic alliance being its ability to stop an attempt to de-couple the United States and Western Europe...."

"But the speech really reflected a deeper change in French attitudes about West Germany and France's willingness now to say out loud what is often thought but subliminated in



*Mutlangen, W. Germany*

other allied countries: that the question of maintaining West Germany's involvement in the West is now a serious one and the key stakes in the outcome of the missile issue."

In an editorial following the stationing in December 1983, the *Times* wrote: "The true contest concerns not Western Europe's weapons but its adherence to the U.S. Above all the struggle is about the future of Germany."<sup>2</sup>

Along with their open and slightly veiled threats, the Soviet rulers' campaign involved extensive exposure around the offensive and first-strike character of these new weapons based upon their capabilities and place of deployment. (And it is true that these weapons systems do have a sort of "use them or lose them" bias built into them in the event of world war.) The Soviets even went so far as to say that the deployment of the new missiles would bring about a situation in which NATO could launch a decapitating surprise attack against the Soviet Union that would leave it unable to respond. While these missiles hold important military advantages for the NATO bloc (including its capability to launch a first strike), it is not possible to avoid massive retaliation. Neither side has

or is likely to acquire such an advantage. Nevertheless, the point of this tact—which Soviet generals have contradicted in interviews with the

<sup>2</sup>The fact that the W. German rulers, along with their NATO partners, went through with the stationing in the face of massive opposition demonstrates clearly that, despite contradictions, they are economically, politically and militarily anchored in the U.S.-led bloc. And while it is true that all these contradictions will heighten a showdown approaches, it is at this time hard to conceive that they would attempt to switch sides or even take some temporary "neutral" stance between the two blocs (however tempting such a move might appear to a section of the W. German bourgeoisie). But even this is not carved in stone and in the midst of a global conflict there is no predicting exactly how things might develop. This would depend on the overall world situation at the time and very probably on whether or not one side or the other could gain some immediate advantage. (Of course all the imperialists' calculations would be thrown for a loop if revolution prevents them from launching their war, or, failing that, breaks out in a number of places shortly after the outbreak of inter-imperialist war.)

Western press since the fall—was to underline the threat that the very act of stationing the missiles could have so endangered the Soviet Union that it might feel compelled to launch a first strike of its own.

In the *Peace Manifesto* issued by the national delegates conference of the Green Party in October 1981, the influence of this line of reasoning was already evident: "This (the first-strike character of the new U.S. missiles—K.K.) could cause the U.S.S.R. to launch a pre-emptive strike against these dangerous weapons and turn all of Western Europe into a nuclear-contaminated desert."

In short, an aspect of the Soviet Union's rocket rattling was designed to and did add fuel to the fires of public opinion—fires that were already burning. The growing tension in the world and the increasing tempo of preparations for war—preparations which have pulled W. Germany into the vortex of world events—had already given rise to a powerful mass upsurge against the imperialists' glow-in-the-dark vision of the future.

Mainly based among the various sections of the petit bourgeoisie and the youth more generally, this movement (and the question around which this movement is centred) had spread to touch every class in society. Since 1979 there had been a growing number of demonstrations and various forms of clashes between the anti-war forces and those under the sway of the W. German bourgeoisie. The depth of the general dissatisfaction with the established parties—a discontent increasingly focused around the missiles and other war preparations—was further revealed by the leap of the Green Party into the Bundestag in the national elections in March 1983. This was the first time that a political party not representing the bourgeoisie (in this case one representing the petit bourgeoisie) had been in the Bundestag since the mid-1950s.

### The Anti-War Movement

The "peace movement" was and is a rather complex phenomenon. Its main political current reflects the fact that it is drawn from the middle

classes. This is the class basis for the prevailing political viewpoint which considers W. Germany (and E. Germany as well) a mere victim of superpower bullying. As we wrote in the pamphlet *High Treason in the Heart of Europe*: "Furthermore, what few are willing to say is that W. Germany is today one of the major imperialist countries. One which happily and heartily feasts at the imperialist dinner table and one whose ruling class (and here we are talking about the imperialist ruling class headquartered in Bonn and not Washington, D.C.) is just as eager and pressed as any other to acquire an even larger plate. Few today are willing to say that if the imperialists are successful in launching a third world war that the W. German bourgeoisie will be just as guilty as any other for its having taken place."

A good example of the Eurocentric thinking criticised here is to be found in this passage from the Greens' *Peace Manifesto*: "We must set ourselves the goal of overcoming the bloc confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact which is the source of the dynamic of self-destruction. The division of Europe under the hegemonial powers—the USA and USSR—and their struggle to rule the world keep the arms race in gear, continually bring new areas of conflict to the fore and allow numerous limited conflicts to become proxy wars; wars which threaten regional and even global peace."

This outlook is reflected politically in such slogans as "Atomic Free Zone in Europe" or "W. Germany out of NATO," etc. What stands out here is the complete lack of any grasp that it is a *world war* that the imperialists are preparing—and what's worse—responding to the threat of world war with "save us" and to hell with the rest of the world. The stand of these middle classes and strata on world war is very contradictory. They are opposed to it, have no interest in such a war and no long term interest in the system of which it is a product. On the other hand, their relatively privileged position acts as an anchor which prevents them as a class from making a radical break

with the system on their own. This is the material basis for what could be described as the W. German petit bourgeoisie's vision for how to avoid the inferno of WW3.

This outlook permeated the movement that developed in opposition to the deployment of the missiles and the further leap in the direction of world war which that represented.

The mainstream or "official peace movement" was centred organisationally around the Coordinating Committee for the Fall Actions (KA). The KA was actually a coalition of the various more established anti-missile groups including the Greens, various religious, pacifist and ecology groups—many of whose leaders are in or close to the SPD (Socialist Party of Germany) and the DKP (German Communist Party, the pro-Moscow revisionists)—and some independent organisations. The KA itself was not without some sharp contradictions. However the majority view was firmly united around the necessity of keeping the protests not only "non-violent," but also "non-confrontational" in both the tactical and political sense. This was actually raised above the struggle to *prevent* the deployment of the missiles—a goal which was given up in advance.

With this outlook, these forces launched a public opinion offensive in the spring that continued through the fall of Hot Autumn. The much touted film *Gandhi* which glorifies the latter's capitulation and service to British imperialism was pushed to the hilt. Camps were set up to train people in non-violence. Various "official" leaders proclaimed that a campaign of civil disobedience would be organised, in the style of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, and would not be stopped until the government backed down. Some of them even said that they were prepared to make the country *unregierbar*—a word meaning "ungovernable" which conjures up the spectre of the Weimar Republic. This was really talking tough. And it was necessary to combine such "tough" talk with the overall emphasis on non-violence because there

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was a lot of determination on the part of a section of the masses that these leaders had as their social base (and wanted to hold onto) to really stop the missiles. So they had to be able to explain how non-violence would "work."

For its part the bourgeoisie was truly concerned about the dramatic growth of the movement against war preparations and the possibility of events escalating out of control. They were not, however, worried about what was officially planned, because it was designed to keep things from getting anywhere near *unregierbar*. The planned "blockades" of the U.S. installations were in fact only to be symbolic (though in the fall this came as a rude shock to many). The official plan was for the Hot Autumn to culminate in a week of demos in *mid-October*—although the actual stationing was not supposed to begin until mid-December—and nothing further was planned!

In connection with these plans many official leaders began negotiating sessions with the authorities. In exchange for permits for the official symbolic actions, they agreed not to lead or call for any determined resistance, even of a non-violent type. And they agreed to work with the police to identify, isolate and even help arrest any so-called "troublemakers," "violence-prone *chaoten*," etc.

### The Greens

Though there was a certain basic unity around the plans for the fall, these official leaders did not all represent the same class forces and class viewpoint. The agreement of the various Green leaders with this strategy was fundamentally based on their class position as discussed earlier. They (or at least most of them) were sincerely opposed to the missiles. However, they are not fundamentally against the system which has produced them. They fear world war, but they also fear all-out rebellion against the source of such a war.

This position causes them to labour under some increasingly dangerous illusions. Foremost among these is that because of its

destructiveness nuclear war is not in the imperialists' interests, or at least not in the national interests of the W. German imperialists. And if they could just be made to see the irrationality of their actions, then perhaps enough of them could be won to change direction. The mass movement is seen by these people as a lever with which to pry loose a big enough section of the ruling class so as to put things on a "rational" course.

With this point of view—tied as it is with a firm belief in bourgeois democracy—it became very important for the movement against the missiles to appeal to the mainstream of W. German society. (Indeed, by mid-summer the opinion polls showed a majority against the stationing.) It had to be kept acceptable and non-threatening. Far from challenging the imperialist chauvinism which infects the thinking of the average German, it had to pose as the true defender of W. German national interests. The "practical" and "realistic" solution hoped for was to force a majority of the bourgeois parties in the Bundestag to vote against the stationing.

This strategy was really nothing but a pipe-dream. The bourgeoisie was fully able to recognise its own national interests without the help of the Greens, and the outcome of the parliamentary debate was never in doubt. In fact, the purpose of this debate all along was to derail the mass movement and prettify West German democracy while installing the missiles.

It should be remembered that up until late 1982 *all* the parties represented in the Bundestag (the Greens had not yet made their entry) were in favour of the missiles. It was only *after* the departure of the SPD from government that it began to hypocritically "waver" on the missiles—when it no longer had the responsibility for installing them! This was entirely in keeping with the SPD's recognition (and that of the bourgeoisie as a whole) that they were better off playing the role of an "opposition" than losing whatever credibility they still had left by remaining in government. Furthermore the election of Christian

Democratic Chancellor Kohl represented the mandate for the missiles that the bourgeoisie wanted.

Once it became evident even to the Green leaders that the Bundestag decision was a foregone conclusion, many of them began to talk of the battle being lost—even before it began. They hoped simply to wage a rearguard action and lay the basis for further electoral successes. Their long-term goal is for West Germany to get out of NATO or at least redefine its relationship to the Western war bloc in the way France did under DeGaulle.

### The W. German Communist Party (DKP)

The DKP's basic approach to the missile stationing is also quite instructive. Unlike the Greens their stance on this question is very much related to their strategy for gaining power. Overall they occupied a position to the right of the Green leadership. Their practical and often political unity with the SPD forces (in all their various guises) became known as the SPD/DKP axis and came to be thoroughly hated by all those who wanted to see the missiles really stopped. This SPD/DKP axis (along with what could be called the right-wing of the Green leadership, although they had their contradictions with the "axis") formed the firm mainstream pole of the "official peace movement."

The basis of unity of the axis included: 1. The movement must be kept to a single, very narrowly defined issue—the stationing of the U.S. missiles in W. Germany. This became known as the "minimum consensus." That the DKP didn't want the politics behind the peace-loving nukes of the social-imperialists to be called into question is understandable. Even so, when pushed into a corner on this question they were prepared to mumble their standard line, "We're against nukes in the East too, but the East can't disarm until the aggressive West does so first."

The SPD supported the DKP on the question of not addressing the nature of the nukes in the East because the DKP supported the SPD on another—and for the bourgeoisie overall even more important

point—namely, that W. Germany's role in NATO and relationship to the Western imperialist bloc in general (not to mention the nature of its social system) should not be called into question. This may seem a bit surprising given that the Soviet Union's overall effort was to split the Western bloc or at least create as many contradictions within it as possible. However, the mesh between the two can be understood considering that on the one hand the very fact of *not* stationing would have been a serious blow for NATO—regardless of whether it was a conscious goal of the anti-missile movement. In addition, the question of NATO is not at this point important to the DKP's strategy for power and may even be counter-productive at this time.<sup>3</sup>

That strategy bases itself on a potential shift in the world balance of imperialist power in favour of the Soviet-led bloc. The means for this are, among other things, the numerous divisions stationed literally but a few miles to the east of the frontier. The DKP's strategy also requires (though does not rest on) a social base. The DKP's target is what is now a part of the SPD's social base, namely the better paid section of the working class in large-scale industry and government jobs like the post office or railroad. What the DKP will have to offer is a reunited Germany in a "rationally" run "workers' state" where jobs and basic social services, etc., are secure and where the workers' welfare is officially enshrined as the goal of the state. Most importantly what will be offered is a stake in a post-war world order dominated by social-imperialism. What will be held out is a chance for Germany (in this case W. Germany) to be on the winning side of an imperialist world war for the first time. A radically new society is never promised—and is not what these workers (for now anyway) are seeking.

What's more this will be a German Germany. Not one polluted by the tinsel pop-culture and McDonald's cuisine the W. German imperialists have allowed to corrupt traditional German values. The German Democratic Republic (DDR—East Germany) has long since

postured as the true upholder and protector of German culture—Schiller, Goethe, Beethoven and Brahms find much greater official reverence than Lenin ever did. German nationalism is a very important ingredient in their brand of goulash communism. Instead of calling for world proletarian revolution, the DKP's banner will be inscribed with the slogan, "*Ordnung, Fleiss and Gehorsam*" ("Order, Hard Work and Obedience").

The social base for this line is not ready for and does not need to be confronted with the question of staying in or getting out of NATO. That question will be posed sharply enough in good time. And to do so now would not only create needless controversy, but would also lead to open conflict with the SPD at a time when, as the deputy chairman of the DKP was quoted as saying, "Unity of action" with the social democrats "is the centrepiece of our fight for peace."

2. The DKP agreed heartily with the SPD that the protests must be of the most orderly variety. They not only wanted to maintain their unity with the SPD, to appeal to the mainstream, etc., but also feared the potential effect on the DKP's secure rear area (as it were) if the situation escalated out of hand. These movements have a way of crossing borders—even between blocs. E. Germany had already experienced the birth of an anti-war movement outside of official control. What the rebellious youth of the East, and the workers as well, would do—how they would be influenced by a mighty clash of social forces—was (and remains) a joker in the deck for the social-imperialists. They like disorder in the West—but only to a point.

### Encirclement and Suppression

The W. German bourgeoisie was very much aware of the inflammable conditions and the sparks of political consciousness being set off by the missile stationing. Their response was encirclement and suppression. Encirclement meant doing everything to keep the inevitable mass protests not only within respectable bounds in terms of tactics, but politically within terms that did not

challenge the basic assumptions holding millions captive to imperialism's logic and alternatives.

The nationalist and Euro-centric trends were played up to the fullest. The most accommodating "spokesmen" were pushed to the fore by the media. The politicians of all parties spoke endlessly of their desire for peace, the need for arms reductions, *ad nauseum*. It would be a democratic process. With the decision long made within ruling class circles and forums, there would now be discussion, debate, even a little dissent and then—as befits a democracy the will of the democratically elected government would be carried out and the missiles put in place.

A key element in this encirclement was the SPD moving into the opposition (after being the ruling party for a decade). It became known as the "maybe missile" party. Though as stated, it never did come out unequivocally against the missiles and never did officially endorse *any* of the actions even during the October "Peace Week," the SPD (and the forces in the KA allied with it) posed as the "peaceful" and "rational" alternative. As Henry Tanner wrote in the *International Herald Tribune* (26/10/83): "The party leadership, which has been wavering, has decided to enter and if possible take over the peace movement. This is part of a calculated step to the left by the party which, during its last years in power, had been outmanoeuvred by the Greens on its left and had lost touch with the rank and file of its own youth organisation and the labour unions, as the March elections showed."

The suppression was clear and to the point. Demonstration laws were tightened. In addition to holding joint planning with the official leaders, the police established a massive presence. Theo Summer, a

<sup>3</sup>It should be noted that the SPD's participation in the anti-missile movement was premised on the view that it would not succeed in stopping the missiles. In the SPD's view the unity of NATO was not really threatened by the anti-missile movement and that therefore the principal task at hand was domestic political damage control.

leading bourgeois commentator (with somewhat liberal credentials) spoke for the ruling class when he warned in *Dissent* in early September that whilst there could be protest within prescribed limits, the anti-missile movement dare not allow itself to become a breeding ground for "revolution." Attempts to physically stop the stationing would be nothing less than "high treason" and would be dealt with accordingly.

The ruling class made one tactical move after another to be in the best position to contain and control the developing events. The more militant consciously anti-imperialist and revolutionary sections of the mass movements were targeted for "criminalisation." The magazine *Radikal* from Berlin, an important journal among these forces, came under attack with the jailing of two people associated with it for "aiding a terrorist organisation."

At the same time special attention was paid to foreign-born workers, the so-called "guest workers," the most politically volatile and radical section of the working class in W. Germany. Along with increased surveillance, harassment and even the banning of political groups among these workers, especially those from Turkey, the authorities stepped up the normal practices of denying visa extensions and carrying out extraditions to Turkey because of political activity in W. Germany.

While they wielded the stick, the ruling class' fear and fundamental weakness could not be hidden. A decision by W. Germany's highest court in the spring of 1983 caused the postponement of the planned national census, the *Volkszählung*. This so-called census amounted to nothing less than a house-to-house search for foreign workers without papers and an attempt to establish a computerised record of the residence of every person in W. Germany, with a special eye toward potentially disloyal sections of the population.

This census had aroused widespread opposition, including a very broadbased boycott movement. This movement itself had been declared illegal and the first fines and charges levied when the bourgeoisie decided it was just plain

bad tactics to go through with this particular clampdown at that particular time. This was because it would have hit and alienated exactly the strata which the ruling class wanted to hold within the circumscribed bounds of respectable dissent if they were able to succeed in implementing their strategy of isolating the more militant and revolutionary-minded forces during the fall.

### The Autonomen

These forces, at least the native-born ones, are best known as the Autonomen (though they do not all call themselves that). More than anything the Autonomen are a product of the international upsurge in 1979-80 which was marked by the revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua and at the same time saw an increase in tension between the two imperialist blocs and a stepping up of war preparations. When this is added to the complete collapse, following the coup in China, of the Marxist-Leninist movement in W. Germany (which was choking from within with economism and revisionism before that), it is not surprising that such a trend, and not one guided by or drawn to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, emerged.

The Autonomen are a loose tendency influenced by various forms of anarchism, Marxism, revisionism and anti-imperialism. They see the imperialist system as the source of oppression and exploitation and are not social-pacifist. An important principle is support for armed liberation struggles. However, because they tend to oppose theory and analysis of objective developments on principle, their understanding of imperialism is rather empirical. They see W. Germany as imperialist only because it is dominated by, or an extension of, U.S. imperialism. The Soviet Union is regarded with mixed feelings—"however bad it is, it does aid the liberation struggles." Few understand that an imperialist class rules there. This allows the various brands of ultra-"left" pro-Moscow revisionism to extend their influence and credibility. As a social force the Autonomen are drawn mainly,

though not exclusively, from various sections of the middle classes. As a political current they have had an important and positive impact on the various social movements of the last few years, including the squatters movement in Berlin and elsewhere, the anti-Startbahn West struggle (against the extension of the Frankfurt Airport runway to enhance its military usefulness), and the anti-nuke movement.

The strength of the Autonomen has been to raise sharply the question of the imperialist system, the connection of the struggle in the imperialist homelands with the national liberation struggles and the necessity of going directly up against the state and its various specialised bodies of armed men. Their weakness is that as a trend they do not see the possibility for revolution in the imperialist countries, especially W. Germany, even if many would like to see it. Furthermore, they don't understand that even in W. Germany there is a lower section of the proletariat which is the most important element of the social base for a revolutionary proletarian line. Of course, it's harder to see this proletarian social base when you're not looking for it.

In the end their perspective for W. Germany often comes down to aiding the national liberation struggles through concrete actions while developing a "lifestyle of resistance" that will draw increasing numbers of people into its ranks and 'hopefully one day be in the position to overwhelm the bourgeoisie. In fact, whatever the subjective intentions, this translates into being the most radical opposition within the framework of the present system.

As early as 1981, when the anti-war movement began to gather steam, the Autonomen had a difficult time understanding it and figuring out how to relate to it. Seriously underestimating the danger of a world war, they view the war preparations of the Western bloc as mainly aimed against the oppressed countries. To the extent the East-West aspect is acknowledged, it is seen as an attempt by the U.S.-led bloc to intimidate the Soviet Union into stopping its "support" for national liberation movements.

They generally view East bloc war preparations as a defensive response to Western preparations and tend to deny the Soviet bloc's interest in and necessity for a third world war. They cast a similar eye towards the W. German ruling class—which as pointed out earlier is not seen as imperialist in its own right.

From such a standpoint, how then to evaluate and relate to the movement brought into existence by the imperialist preparations for a war which is not really coming? Instead of helping to expose what would be the greatest single crime in history and instead of utilising the opportunity presented by the drawing of millions into political life, the Autonom trend as a whole (though not without exception) fed illusions that really something other than world war was at stake, downplaying both the danger involved and the profound crisis the imperialist system is in.

Related to this and equally puzzling for them was the dramatic change in the political landscape: where before the relationship had been thousands of Autonomen exerting a strong influence on tens of thousands of people in the mass movements, it was now tens of thousands of activists under other banners and leadership exerting influence over millions, with non-violence one of the key planks in the platform. In fact, one of the great weaknesses of the "apolitical" politics of the Autonomen was their inability to foresee, and therefore their inability to prepare for, this kind of situation when millions are jolted into political life. The result is that they abdicated their capacity to play a leading role when the stakes really did go up.

In contrast to this approach, the Autonomen tend to reduce the struggle against imperialism in the imperialist citadels to inflicting material damage in the belly of the beast. Thus they never did really understand the battle for public opinion that went on around the missile crisis. They wound up going from pillar to post: on the one hand they thought the main way the anti-war movement would be "radicalised" was concentrated in the struggle over tactics, without really grasping the

political content of the various positions on tactics. They fell into the error of making the violence/non-violence question *the* dividing line which, despite its obvious importance, had the effect of obscuring questions of even greater centrality. All this left them unable to carry out the necessary political struggle.

Reaction to what appeared to be an unbreachable stone wall of reformism and pacifism dominating the movement against the missiles led to a desire to not have anything to do with the struggle against stationing at all. However, the contradictions focused around the arrival of the missiles and the forces put in motion by this couldn't be avoided by anyone who wanted to remain active politically. Thus among the Autonom forces support grew for a campaign (originally conceived as lasting beyond the fall) to interfere with U.S. munitions transport from the port at Bremerhaven to U.S. forces throughout W. Germany. This, it was said, would throw "sand in the gears" of the NATO war machine. Here at last, many among the Autonomen reasoned, could more radical politics and tactics come to the fore.

#### Warm-up For The Fall

The "Hot Autumn" itself actually began in June in the city of Krefeld. This was the site chosen by the rulers of both W. Germany and the U.S. to hold a celebration of 300 years of German-American "friendship," in order to portray to the world the great unity between these two imperialist partners, and to counter the wave of protest and opposition against the stationing of the new Cruise and Pershing II missiles that had swelled to unprecedented proportions and was about to break across the political landscape.

Krefeld was probably chosen for these reactionary festivities because it is also where the famous "Krefelder Appell" originated. This letter of protest against the stationing of the new missiles had been signed by numerous prominent writers, actors, artists and academicians, and had gained over four million additional signatures.

While the counter-demonstration organised by the mainstream forces

of the anti-missile movement ran peacefully and well away from the official ceremony, the Autonomen crashed the imperialists' war party, creating an international incident as a number of Autonomen succeeded in breaking through the police cordon and stoned U.S. Vice-President Bush's car. Certain prominent figures, concerned particularly to set a framework for the coming fall events, immediately denounced them. Petra Kelly of the Green Party declared, "They were punks. They had nothing to do with the peace movement. They were punks, that's all."

In response to the events in Krefeld, and as part of their overall preparation for the fall, the mainstream leaders of the official peace movement held their symbolic blockade of the US base at Mutlangen in early September. Mutlangen was to be the site of the first Pershing II's and was a fitting target of protest. But more important for these forces was the symbolism involved in the way the protest was carried out and the politics it portrayed.

Everything went according to plan—that is, the joint plan of the official leaders, the police and the U.S. Army. Activity at the base was cut to a bare minimum and for the duration of the blockade all traffic in and out was stopped completely. The "peace prominents" like Günter Grass and Heinrich Boll, Petra Kelly and Gen. Gert Bastian were all on hand. The media was assembled in legion strength to report on this "historic protest." On cue the prominents sat down in the now-unused street in front of the now empty base and after the prescribed time were carried away by friendly police who after all sympathised with the demonstrators but had their job to do. The entire performance was hailed as a critical success—and as the mould for the big week of actions in October.

A small problem arose when some in the supporting cast argued that they were there to *stop* the new missiles and that playing charades was unproductive. They wanted to shift the protest to the nearby town of Schwäbisch Gemund and block the entrance to the U.S. barracks

there, since the base was too quiet over the weekend. A stormy debate ensued. Unable to say that the point of the action was *not* to have confrontation, the peace prominents mainly argued that such a disruptive action would "alienate" the local population. This line of reasoning was to become a very familiar theme in the fall.

Nevertheless when some decided they were going whether the media stars agreed or not, a compromise was reached: a contingent would be sent to the barracks, but the action would last only an hour or two. The press played down this "blemish" on what they considered an otherwise sterling performance.

### The October Protest

The anti-missile protest culminated in "Peace Week," lasting from October 15th to 23rd, in a series of local actions and mass demonstrations in cities throughout W. Germany. Several points can be made about these events: 1. They were enormous. Over a million people and probably closer to two million took an active part in one way or another, reflecting the breadth and depth of the political crisis around the missiles. 2. The huge numbers were drawn mainly from the middle classes and the protests were fueled by bourgeois democratic illusions and tainted with a "save Germany" nationalism. Overall, they remained under the leadership of the mainstream reformist elements and within bounds acceptable to the bourgeoisie. 3. The extent to which things did go beyond the limits of "respectability," both politically and tactically, was much greater than the bourgeois press was wont to admit. "Peace Week" was far from completely peaceful. There were thousands of arrests and dozens of actions large and small where club-wielding police backed by water cannons clashed with demonstrators. 4. *The absence of a proletarian vanguard party organised around a revolutionary communist line was painfully evident.*

While the bourgeoisie had overall been able to hold the lid on things during the "Peace Week," they had not as yet succeeded in stationing the

missiles. Where would the movement go from here? In a sense a political vacuum developed. According to the script of most of the peace leaders (and the ruling class) the *Heisse Herbst* was over. To a large extent, the people had remained peaceful and made their voices heard. The only thing to do now was to go home and await the decision of the politicians, statesmen and generals. No further actions were planned.

But for tens of thousands, including many who up to that point had been to one degree or another under the influence and leadership of the official leaders, the decision of those in power was all too clear and the point was not to be heard but to stop the missiles—and the coming war.

### The Bremerhaven Blockade

In terms of the overall effect on the radical forces in the fall, perhaps the most significant action was the blockade of U.S. Army port facilities in Bremerhaven, in northern W. Germany, called for and built by various Autonom forces. Although they had decided to *not* focus on the missiles, but instead on munitions transports, these forces felt they had to call a major action during "Peace Week"—an action that objectively became part of the protest against the stationing of the new missiles. Because of who had initiated it, it was also the one that was most likely to break out of control. There was the real danger of a contagious spill-over effect.

The bourgeoisie prepared to mount a massive show of force. Even more effective were the manipulations of the SPD/DKP axis which first opposed the action at regional meetings where the initiators sought to win broader support for Bremerhaven as a target. When the axis forces realised they couldn't stop it, they not only joined it, but moved to take it over. As a result, the 5,000 people who came out directly behind the Autonom banner were surrounded politically and physically by two or three times that number turned out by or at least following the general leadership of the SPD/DKP axis.

Despite some sharp clashes, from

both a tactical and political viewpoint the action was kept within "respectable" bounds. Contributing to the Autonomen's failure to break through the encirclement was their tendency to make a principle out of not having any leadership or organisation (not to mention a unified political line). Thus while their forces numbered in the thousands at the outset, they could not unify their own ranks to act decisively. In this case the whole became less than the sum of its parts. Their failure to understand the centrality of the political battle in such a situation led them to believe that militant action alone could win others to a more radical perspective. There is nothing wrong with militant action—in fact it is very necessary—but it is not the sole or main element in winning people to a revolutionary perspective. To do this it is crucial to take on the other political lines and programmes in the field, show what class interests they represent, and compare them to the programme of the only class whose interests demand nothing less than the complete elimination of imperialism (and social classes as well)—the international proletariat. Of course such work can in the final analysis only be carried out in a thorough and all-around way when a political party representing the proletariat is there to lead it.

In Bremerhaven the real prospect existed for winning over many under the sway of the SPD/DKP axis, who were (and are) not 100% locked into their political fold. This did not happen. The Autonom forces summed up the Bremerhaven action as a tactical and political defeat, which it was. Unfortunately many concluded from this that there was no more purpose in trying to influence the events in the fall. Everything was considered wrapped up tight by the reformist leadership. Some even began to regard the tremendous blow they had struck three months earlier at Krefeld as a defeat because of the busts and heavy charges that had come down (and the bourgeoisie was still in power, wasn't it?). Finally, some among these forces gave currency to the analysis that the "Hot Autumn" had all been a plot by the bourgeoisie designed to draw

the system's opponents out into the open so that they could be identified and crushed. All of this had a very negative effect on the role these particular forces played through the rest of the fall.

During the brief lull that followed "Peace Week" a flurry of summations from all the different corners fought for centre stage. The bourgeoisie summed up the beauty of democracy, prepared for the vote in parliament and broke ground at the missile sites. The range of reformist forces in the official leadership congratulated themselves for having "fought the good fight," and marveled over their newly developed "human chain" in which thousands of people would lock arms over hundreds of kilometres—the perfect self-imposed dispersal! The reformists, with their various motives, tried to shut things down for the fall and prepared to implement their longer range strategies. Most importantly, a section of activists in the movement became thoroughly fed up with all the symbolism and complete lack of determined resistance. These were mostly local and regional groups which were not tied directly to or led by the SPD/DKP axis or Green leadership and which tended toward some type of militant pacifism. The question was being posed more sharply than ever, "Which way forward?"

### World Without Imperialism Contingent

A significant new element appeared on the political scene with the arrival of the World Without Imperialism Contingent from the U.S. This was a diverse group of 25 to 30, drawn mainly from among the anti-draft, anti-nuke and feminist movements, from among students and proletarian youth, and organised and led by the RCP, USA under the banner "Desert America's War Mongering—Be At the European Frontlines." These politics were concentrated in the Contingent's two slogans: "Down With the Pershing and Cruise Missiles and All War Preparations Both East and West!" "A World Without Imperialism, Not an Imperialist World War!"

The young people in this Con-

tingent took part out of a sense of internationalism, and the desire to join in this extremely important battle. It was clear from the start that the presence of these forces with this kind of slogan and under the leadership of communists would go a long way towards projecting a revolutionary political pole into the movement against the missiles.

Upon their arrival in W. Germany the contingent met and united politically with activists from the Federation of Workers from Turkey in W. Germany (ATIF), an organisation decidedly influenced by the line of the Communist Party of Turkey (Marxist-Leninist). Not only was a political line reflecting the stance and interests of the international proletariat entering the fray but—in a more powerful and concentrated way than before—class-conscious proletarians as well.

### November 21: The Go-Ahead Vote

A national peace conference had been called for early November. The rapidly changing situation and shifting balance of forces was unmistakable. In the plenary sessions the official leaders came under sharp and repeated criticism for having led the movement down the ineffective path of symbolic resistance. The ability of the SPD/DKP axis to use its organised numbers to hold a lid on things was for the moment broken as the masses "spoke bitterness" and would not be intimidated.

There was a growing sense that the November 21st vote in the Bundestag would be the next focal point of the battle around the missiles. When the independent forces made it clear that they planned to demonstrate in Bonn on that day whether or not the conference as a whole and the KA approved, the SPD/DKP axis reluctantly went along. Their purpose was clearly not to build for it, but rather to be in the best position to control and restrain it.<sup>4</sup>

The forces for and against the missiles were facing off once again and this time the battleground was shaping up to be the Bundestag on November 21st, the day scheduled for the democratic seal of approval. The ruling class was sure to focus

public attention on this for its own purposes and it was incumbent on the forces opposed to them—especially those of the revolutionary proletariat—to mount the political stage the bourgeoisie was setting. In waging struggle in this type of situation it is important, as Mao said, "to pay attention to affairs of state." This does not mean becoming parliamentary cretins or always centring protest on parliament. Rather it means that one cannot ignore the political arena of the bourgeoisie, and in certain concrete circumstances focusing struggle directly in relation to parliament may serve to further the development of a revolutionary consciousness among the masses. In this case it was more a question of entering this arena by laying siege to it.

In the wake of the national peace conference, ATIF and the World Without Imperialism Contingent along with activists from *Fight Back* (a revolutionary newspaper circulating among U.S. GI's in Europe) jointly issued a call for an Anti-Imperialist Contingent at the demonstration in Bonn on the 21st of November. The political necessity and goal of this action was summed up in the call for this contingent (see box).

<sup>4</sup>An interesting note to this is that the "axis," along with a section of the Green national leadership, had already decided upon the next point of concentration for the movement: the launching of a *Volksbefragung* or straw-poll. The *Volksbefragung* was to prove that the majority opposed the missiles and that the government was acting in an undemocratic fashion, etc. Since the decision-makers in Bonn would never hold such a referendum (not "allowed" by the W. German constitution), the proposal was for the peace movement to organise unofficial polling places outside the polls for the European Parliament Election scheduled for June 1984. They had already printed 500,000 copies of the first issue of the *Newspaper for the Volksbefragung*. Despite the big push the whole thing never went anywhere. This was but another sign that events were accelerating rapidly and for the time being anyhow had wrenched the mass movement out of the grip of the "official" leadership.

## From the Call for an Anti-Imperialist Contingent

“A clear and powerful statement must be made in the streets of Bonn on November 21st, the day the parliament rubber-stamps the Pershing II and Cruise missile deployment. On that day, when they will claim to speak in the name of the ‘democratic mandate,’ and will declare their solemn approval for this calculated move toward war, they must be indicted, exposed and opposed by thousands in the streets. Let them declare their ‘right’ to approve these steps—while the whole world can see that their deliberations take place behind rows of barbed wire and their armed thugs....

“But a sharp question remains: when the eyes of millions (both in W. Germany and throughout the world) are focused on Bonn that day—when they evaluate the forces in the field over the question of this clear move toward war... what will they see? Will the followers of ‘NATO-Willy’ have the last word? Will the statement outside the Bundestag that day be little more than a last minute ‘beg-in’ attempting to loyally ‘pressure the elected representatives’ of the war-makers?

“NO! THIS CANNOT BE ALLOWED! It will not be allowed! A clear, unmistakable voice must be heard that dares to speak the truth, and that raises the indictment of the system of imperialism as a clear pole in the political arena that day.

“In this politically charged situation, we have both the possibility and the necessity to turn these aspirations into a material force—by erecting a political pole that indicates the source of the drive toward war, and points toward a way out of this crisis, a pole that can influence and attract forces that have newly broken into political life and the process of radicalisation.

“For these reasons, then, a call:

To all anti-imperialist forces (from pacifist to revolutionary): to join together in a single united anti-imperialist contingent for Bonn on November 21. To take part in the events of that day under the slogans:

**DOWN WITH THE PERSHING AND CRUISE MISSILES  
AND ALL WAR PREPARATIONS BOTH EAST AND WEST!  
A WORLD WITHOUT IMPERIALISM, NOT AN IM-  
PERIALIST WORLD WAR!”**

With the issuance of this call a new and revolutionary dimension was introduced to the swirl of events. In a number of major cities in W. Germany members of the World Without Imperialism Contingent and class-conscious proletarians from Turkey took it out widely and boldly on street corners, in cafes, on college campuses and even into the national convention of the Greens...no place was sacred.

There were two striking characteristics to this activity which both attracted attention and stirred up controversy. One was the political line being argued, with its decidedly proletarian thrust. To quote the call: “It is wrong to approach such questions [the danger of world war—K.K.] from the point of view of the interests of the people of any one country (especially an imperialist metropole country like W. Germany). Instead we must stand for something different and genuinely internationalist—approaching politics from the interests of the oppressed people of the whole world.” Such a stand was both a challenge to widely held prejudices and a breath of fresh air for those who had been choking on the Euro-centric tendencies of the mainstream.

The second and really unprecedented feature was the role played by class-conscious proletarians from Turkey. Of course, there had been contingents of proletarians from Turkey in demonstrations in the past around different issues, including against war preparations. But the full impact of taking up and projecting a revolutionary political line right into the midst of “German” oppositional politics, of building for this line among Turkish and German sections of the population alike—in short, of the proletariat coming to the fore as a leading political force—this had not been seen in this way in recent years in Germany.

The impact of the role of these class-conscious proletarians was both sharp and profound. Many people saw for the first time the potential role these proletarians could play in political developments in West Germany itself. The existence of a social base for revolution in West Germany, of which the im-

migrant workers are a vital part, became more visible to friend and enemy alike. The active participation of class conscious workers from Turkey was an indispensable part of constructing the kind of political pole demanded in the call for the Anti-Imperialist Contingent.

### Showdown in Bonn

November 21st in Bonn was a serious set-back for the ruling classes. Their dream of an anti-war movement broken and demoralised and nowhere in sight as the eyes of the world were fixed on the democratic decision to seal the NATO blood pact was literally trampled in the streets. Unfortunately for them, the vital assistance rendered by the official peace leaders in holding things in check had at that point been severely reduced. While these leaders had done nothing to mobilise for the day and were now discussing a "blockade" of Parliament—one that respected the "Bahnmile" (the area around the government buildings where demonstrations are forbidden)—many others, who had mobilised all-out, were now talking of a "siege."

And a siege it was. The "Battle of Bonn" reverberated across television screens and front pages throughout W. Germany and indeed around the world. Almost from morning's first light, the ruling classes were forced to abandon all hope of a "normal day for democracy" as thousands ignored the Bahnmile and the official leaders, crossed the bounds of respectable protest and marched on the seat of government. The ruling class' political frontmen were forced to circle the wagons and cower behind a wall of riot cops backed by tear gas and water cannon. For hours they battled with the demonstrators in an attempt to clear the streets and break the siege. To no avail. Such a scene had little precedent in the history of W. Germany. For the first time ever it was necessary to use water cannons in the capital in an effort to quell unruly "citizens."

The clash of fundamentally conflicting interests was unmistakable. It was clear that this protest was *not*

aimed at getting the politicians to represent the majority correctly in the national interests, but far more aimed at those politicians themselves and the state they represent.

There is a very definite relationship between political line and choice of tactics. The placid protest that the reformist leaders of the mainstream hoped for would have indeed promoted just that political perspective. Even as events were getting out of hand in Bonn, functionaries from the KA brought up sound trucks to the scene of the battle and attempted to persuade people to retreat from the line of cops and listen to the debate in the Bundestag that was broadcast on radio and television and which they were carrying over their speaker system!

The actions of the Green members of Parliament on the 21st are another case in point. Some in their ranks had suggested that instead of taking part in the vote, which was sure to be in favour of the missiles, they should denounce the whole farce and march out and join the demonstrations. Their proposal was quickly and sharply trounced by the majority as "unthinkable." After all, they had a responsibility to those who had elected them to exercise their voice in Parliament. The Greens provided a spectacle of impotency as they quietly voted and carried out a thoroughly respectable protest. This also illustrated vividly how the petit bourgeoisie as a class (whom the Greens as a party politically represent) is completely incapable of *leading* any kind of thorough-going opposition to imperialism and the world war it is preparing, even if it (or sections of it) and some of its political representatives can be won to supporting the *proletariat's* solution.<sup>5</sup>

But while the Greens in Parliament were finding it impossible to break out of the bourgeoisie's embrace, in the midst of the confrontation and on the very front-line was the Anti-Imperialist Contingent (with ATIF and the World Without Imperialism people at its core). A red flag carried by a proletarian from Turkey and a huge banner inscribed in German, Turkish and English with the words, "A World

Without Imperialism, Not An Imperialist World War!" were thrust to the centre of world attention. This political line did indeed become a major feature of the landscape in Bonn that day. This happened not just because those bearing it were at the front leading the push against the police or that thousands of leaflets were distributed, but also and very importantly because the proletariat had entered the political arena in the person of proletarians from Turkey in a decisive fashion.

### Impact of Proletarian Internationalism

The material effect of these proletarians promoting an internationalist line aimed at the world system of imperialism was tremendous; it significantly influenced thousands of the mainly middle class demonstrators. This was especially important because the motion of objective events—the vote that day for the missiles—was making clearer to them that appeals to reason aimed at the government and the powers-that-be would not stop the march toward war. This pushed them to look for those forces with whom they can unite to wage a more determined fight. Many also have a basic sense that proletarians like those from Turkey really do belong to a class that has no stake in this system and are less susceptible to being sidetracked by the siren call of bourgeois democratic illusions sweetened with imperialist privilege. Yet many too from the middle classes really did not believe that proletarians with a stand more radical than theirs existed or were capable of recognising the importance of the question at hand and acting. Thus the living expression of internationalism exhibited that day was for many both a surprise and an inspiration.

But even so it had not been easy winning forces to openly join the Anti-Imperialist Contingent. As

<sup>5</sup>This is further underscored by developments since the fall where in the Parliament in the state of Hessen the Greens entered into a de facto coalition government with the SPD despite strong resistance from a large section of the party's base and even within its leadership.

already explained, a large number of the Autonomen had decided to take no part in the main actions. Among many the question of going to Bonn or not was hotly debated and often not resolved until the last moment. And there was still hesitancy to be openly identified with something the Marxist-Leninists were helping to lead and organise. This is related to the particular history of the Marxist-Leninist movement in W. Germany and its collapse in the mid-'70s. There is a certain stigma attached to Marxism-Leninism, even though what is being rejected is not revolutionary communism, but usually revisionism of one form or another.

This is all the more interesting in light of the fact that once the Anti-Imperialist Contingent established its strong political and tactical role, many of these same forces came up and asked, "What are you going to do next?", "What do you think we should do?" After two to three hours of battle in front of the Bundestag, a breakaway march of about 1,000 people formed and prepared to head to the El Salvador Embassy and other political targets. As the march moved out, leading the way was the red flag and a banner brought over by members of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (youth group of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA): "Revolution in the '80s—Go For It!"

This is not to say that everyone or even the majority of those following behind agreed with this political statement, yet it was a glimpse of something very important. Only the proletariat has the strength, programme and objective position in society to lead a revolutionary upsurge to victory, the only fundamental solution to preventing world war. Just as those forces in Bonn found themselves in the heat of struggle compelled to relate to and even unite behind (to one degree or another) the banner being raised by the proletariat, so too will it be the case that as crisis and upheaval more and more mark the political landscape in countries around the world—and particularly as the imperialists drag things to the brink of world war—the proletariat will be in a position to rally and lead many from the mid-

dle strata who today are not winnable. This is exactly because there is no reform or half-way solution that can stop what is being prepared and will actually be launched if not stopped. The bankruptcy of reformism was particularly evident that day in Bonn.

As events in W. Germany showed—and particularly on the 21st in Bonn—there is the real possibility in the midst of accelerating events and unprecedented danger for a basic realignment to take place in society and an agenda implemented which is very different from that of the ruling class. As one of the members of the World Without Imperialism Contingent later wrote: "Our whole experience in W. Germany was incredible, like a lifetime compacted into a couple of months, the kind of thing you read about in books. We threw ourselves onto the front-lines, making our internationalist aspirations felt, and uniting broadly with people from all streams of society, entering the upheaval, debates and demonstrations. It was a first-hand experience in just what is possible in these increasingly explosive and turbulent times when amidst the stench and decay of the old, and the real dangers of destruction, people catch a glimpse of the new and fight for it. In refusing to be confined by the narrowness of 'tending to our struggle in the U.S.,' but rather, seeing things globally, we were able to literally stride across the world."

The battle around the missile stationing did continue to escalate. On the weekend of Dec. 12th, anniversary of the infamous two-track decision and the week in which the missiles were scheduled to become operational, there were three days of pitched battles in Frankfurt around the site of the repair depot for the Pershing IIs. In Mutlangen, what was planned as a Sunday stroll by the official leaders almost turned into a riot as members of the World Without Imperialism Contingent led thousands in storming newly erected barricades designed to keep demonstrators hundreds of metres from the base perimeter.

In addition to these actions, ATIF and the WWIC joined with a broad range of forces to sponsor a series of

conferences around the question of world war, its source and its prevention. These conferences, especially the one in Berlin which was attended by 150 people including proletarians from Turkey, Autonomen, squatters, students, Green supporters, etc., went deeply into these questions and the necessity of and possibility for revolution. That such a broad array of forces came together, as well as the debate itself, both further revealed the deep-going political questioning taking place and helped advance the process of establishing a proletarian revolutionary pole.

Still, while especially in the last month the movement against the missiles did significantly change the terms of the battle, overall events did not go as far as they might have—tactically or politically—in challenging the bourgeoisie's rule. There were a number of reasons for this, including the strength of the various class forces and different political lines contending in the arena and, not least, the absence of a vanguard party of the proletariat in W. Germany. But if the political crisis of Hot Autumn was replaced by relative calm, it is a very intense calm indeed—one in which the overall political situation has been profoundly shaken and re-shaped and in which further outbreaks of struggle and upheaval are inevitable. The very significant mass actions aimed at disrupting the 1984 Fall NATO manoeuvres are one sign of this.

The events of the Hot Autumn in the year of the Euro-missiles drove home the urgent necessity and possibility for revolutionary communists armed with a correct political understanding to maximise their political influence and help transform the movement against war preparations into a powerful component part of a movement aimed at destroying the rule of those whose system breeds war. Today, with the creation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, the possibility of doing this is all that much enhanced. But the realisation of this potential will not and cannot be accomplished without tremendous struggle and daring to solve the difficult political challenges posed today. ■