

East-West German Initiative (1983)

Abstract

Pointing to the massive protests against the deployment of U.S. medium-range missiles, citizens of both East and West Germany make a joint appeal to Bundestag representatives. They renew their demands for the withdrawal of NATO's Dual-Track Decision, believing that this would improve intra-German relations.

Source

We turn to you as members of parliament because the decision on the deployment of new American missiles depends essentially on your actions. According to the Basic Law, every member of parliament has to decide freely, according to his conscience. On this serious question you must decide without the pressure of party discipline and by secret ballot!

Say no to this new round of armaments! Send a signal for an about-face, for détente in the world and for disengagement in Europe!

We appeal to you to examine once more, and in the light of conditions that have changed since the NATO Dual-Track Decision, the arguments for and against stationing new missiles:

1. Is the argument put forth in favor of stationing new missiles compelling? Nobody should play down the Soviet SS-20s aimed at Western Europe, but must the advantage that the USSR has gained in the particular area of land-based, medium-range missiles be offset in kind by land-based American missiles? Indeed, when it comes to nuclear weapons, is equilibrium even the point? Certainly not if their sole purpose, to the extent that they even have one, is supposed to consist in acting as a deterrent. Are not both the French and English medium-range missiles, as well as America's sea- and air-based "forward deployed nuclear systems"—each on its own—more than sufficient as deterrents against the use of SS-20 missiles? It is precisely new, land-based, and thus vulnerable, missiles that cannot in the least serve to deter SS-20s. This fact notwithstanding, one must stick to the demand that the SS-20s have to be dismantled and scrapped.

2. The new American missiles would not serve as a mere balance against the SS-20s, but rather would constitute an escalation, since they could reach the Russian heartland with unprecedented accuracy in just a few minutes. This fact acquires greater importance in view of the plans of American government advisers to make a nuclear war in Europe limited and winnable. Even if it is to be hoped that the American president will not put these plans into action, the Bundestag needs to realize that by approving this deployment it will grant the head of state of another country the opportunity to start a nuclear war from German soil.

In the eyes of the Soviets, the mere existence of these plans is enough to make the stationing of the new missiles appear as an excessive threat. The consequence of this deployment will thus be an announcement from the USSR that the GDR and the other Eastern European states are "up-upgrading" their armaments. In the future, with every world political crisis, each side will have to fear a preventive strike by the other. In equal measure, there will be a heightened risk of a false alarm with irrevocable consequences. Will the stationing of new American missiles then not bring about the opposite of what it is supposed to achieve: a dramatic increase in the danger of an imminent nuclear war in Central Europe and an alarming reduction of security in East and West?

3. In the meantime, the federal government has put forth the necessity of loyalty as the decisive argument for the deployment. But should a member of parliament confirm and decide in favor of something he recognizes as wrong, indeed, something he knows can lead to collective suicide, simply in order to prove the Federal Republic's reliability and loyalty to the alliance?

Has the world not become too complex and dangerous in the atomic age for us still to view as a virtue the inability to revise a preliminary decision under changed circumstances? There are now even broad sections of the American people and important American politicians who hope that at least the Europeans will act reasonably.

4. A decisive return to a policy of *détente* and a great deal of imagination in reshaping it is necessary. In view of the immense nuclear and conventional weapons potential accumulated on German soil, it is the special obligation of German politicians to initiate a real disarmament. We appeal to the Bundestag to resist the policy of confrontation and unconditional bloc attachment, which threatens to deepen the division of Europe and, especially, Germany. The current federal government's expressed interest in better relations with the GDR is incompatible with carrying out this "closing of the armaments gap." Whoever is interested in better relations between the two German states and the welfare of the German people cannot approve of this deployment. It would also be a blow against the forces for peace in the GDR, especially against the independent peace initiatives.

The great majority of the population—as is clearly evident from public opinion polls—rejects the deployment and in every instance prefers the open-ended continuation of negotiations and the delay of deployment.

Together with millions of fellow citizens and many citizens from the GDR, we appeal to your conscience to reject a new step towards the continuation of the arms race, and we implore you: Say no!

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