

The Bielefeld Appeal (December 1980)

Abstract

To distance themselves from charges that the peace movement had been infiltrated by communists, various Social Democratic groups signed the Bielefeld Appeal, which reiterated the goals of the Krefeld Appeal.

Source

In the early 1970s we had great expectations for our party's policies of peace and détente. They produced a series of positive results (the relief of hardship, treaty policies, job security through trade with the East) that no one can deny and that also brought our party great gains in public trust. This was also reflected in election results, and many active young comrades were won over. Both trust and visible progress are now at risk.

A year ago, on December 12, 1979, the NATO missile resolution was passed in Brussels. By now, it has become increasingly clear that this decision was a fateful error. The expected ratification of the SALT II agreement by the American Congress was the prerequisite for the approval of this resolution at the SPD federal party congress in West Berlin and for the federal government. In his public statements, Helmut Schmidt assured that his government wanted to use the time between the approval of the resolution and the deployment of the new generation of medium-range American missiles in 1983 for talks on limiting the nuclear strategic potential in Europe in order to achieve a military balance at a lower level. He also emphasized the "dual nature" of the resolution and referred to the primacy it placed on the offer of negotiations. As yet, however, there have been no serious negotiations. Instead, all preparations are being made to introduce the new weapons systems and create a *fait accompli*.

This development contradicts the clear will of the SPD federal party congress. Party members must feel deceived, and the SPD risks losing its credibility among the people. If negotiations on the strategic weapons slated for deployment in Europe do not start immediately, then a new round of the arms race will commence with Europe at its center. "Security for Germany" would be at greater risk than ever before. We would be putting our future at the mercy of an American decision that says that it is possible to wage a limited nuclear war in Europe.

A president whose declared aim is to continue building up arms and who views the SALT II agreement as meaningless is now taking office in the United States.

The unchecked continuation of the arms race brings burdens of a previously unfathomable magnitude to the Federal Republic as well, and especially to jobholders. This is shown by the difficulties encountered in drafting the new government program. There were drastic cutbacks in critical social areas. The current economic crisis and social hardship—as is becoming increasingly clear—essentially have their roots in the continuing arms race. The demands, such as those of the United States, for extensive, real increases in the defense budget and NATO's three percent agreement are not acceptable. The critical forces in the coalition must finally make the necessary cuts in the weapons sector instead of promoting cuts in social services.

Even the economically strong and highly industrialized Federal Republic cannot afford unlimited cannons and butter.

Especially at a time when security policies urgently need a new direction (with the objective of guaranteeing social security and domestic stability), the policies of [Minister of Defense] Hans Apel—with military demonstrations, parades, the conferring of medals and public swearing-in ceremonies for soldiers—evoke the demons of militarism and create a psychological climate that also exposes Bundeswehr soldiers to irresponsible burden.

For all of these reasons, it seems urgently necessary to return to the original intention of the détente policies of ten years ago and to send a signal to turn back. Through the history of our party and our people, we Social Democrats are especially obligated to do everything in our power to assure that war never again starts on German soil.

We therefore call upon the federal executive committee of the SPD, the SPD party caucus in the Bundestag, and the Social Democrat chancellor to ensure that:

- talks are commenced, without further delay or extensive adjournments, to limit the strategic weapons systems in Europe (talking with one another instead of arming against one another);
- the deployment of medium-range nuclear missiles in Western Europe will still be prevented by withdrawing the NATO decision;
- the Vienna talks^[1] on troop reductions in Europe will be accelerated and intensified
- no neutron bomb is stationed in the Federal Republic;
- the defense budget will be lowered in favor of social investments (social security instead of military expenditures);
- a European conference on disarmament will be convened and held as soon as possible.

Helmut Schmidt developed his government program under the motto “Courage for the Future.” Perhaps he hopes this will help him win the voluntary approval of party members and of social democratically-oriented workers that for a strategy more fittingly described as a program of sweat and tears.

With our appeal we want to mobilize courage for a better future, not for a utopia, but for a policy that began very promisingly ten years ago by daring more democracy and a peaceful reconciliation with the East. We do not want the Social Democratic détente policies to degenerate just because the United States wants to return to global confrontation and knows of no other way to do that than by building the Federal Republic into an advance missile base against the USSR. We understand “Courage for the Future” to mean rejecting American presumption and daring to disarm and engage in peaceful competition between the systems. In view of the huge capabilities for destruction that already exist, we do not know what we have to lose.

In any case, we did not fight and win the battle against [Franz-Josef] Strauß only to have the Social Democratic federal government get caught up in the maelstrom of policies of a Ronald Reagan.

We want a *real* peace policy.

NOTES

^[1] Mutual and Balanced Forced Reductions, MBFR—trans.

Source: The Bielefeld Appeal (December 1980), *Vorwärts*, May 14, 1981; reprinted in Lutz Plümer, ed., *Positionen der Friedensbewegung. Die Auseinandersetzung um den US-Mittelstreckenraketenbeschluß. Dokumente, Appelle, Beiträge*. Frankfurt am Main, 1981, pp. 35–37.

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