
Bonn

Kohl capitulates, endorses zero option

by Susan Welsh

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl on June 1 ended months of vacillation, and agreed to accept a U.S.-Soviet "double-zero option" agreement, eliminating from Europe nuclear missiles with a range greater than 300 miles. The decision, which was approved on June 4 by the Bonn parliament, was the result of heavy-handed pressure by both the Soviet Union and the U.S. State Department, including a high-profile lobbying effort on the part of U.S. Ambassador Richard Burt. As State Department spokesman Charles Redman told journalists: "If we interpret the reports that our ambassador to Bonn, Richard Burt, is sending us, in the right way, the broad majority of the West German population is for speedy talks on the proposals made by Gorbachov. . . . After all, only a small minority has expressed concern about the double-zero option."

Indeed, it was more than a "small minority" that had reservations about the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear missiles from Europe, leaving the continent vulnerable before vastly superior Warsaw Pact conventional forces. But opposition to the superpower deal was stifled, as the Greens and the terrorists took to the streets, rioting "in protest against the warmongers," and the media hastened to blame electoral defeats for Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) on the party's failure to endorse the disarmament plan. Kohl's coalition partner, the Free Democratic Party, blackmailed the CDU with the threat of allying with the opposition Social Democrats, should the government fail to endorse the zero option.

Some sources in the CDU believe that the turning point in the debate came when the British government announced on May 14 that it was supporting the "double-zero" proposal. Now, of the major European powers, only France is opposing Gorbachov's "peace" plan.

In West Germany, the official line is appeasement of the superpower across the eastern border. Echoing the propaganda of the Social Democrats and the Greens, President Richard von Weizsäcker, who is planning to meet Gorbachov in Moscow on July 6, said in his keynote address to the Army Commanders Congress on June 2, that the German armed forces should have a more "defensive" outlook, rather than an "offensive fixation on the other side as an enemy." In the age of nuclear weapons, East and West should rather see

themselves as "partners for security," he said.

On the other hand, the Kohl decision has whipped up the "Moscow Faction" in the CDU to new cries of "betrayal!" and new demands for an accommodation with the Soviet Union. Bernhard Friedmann, the CDU parliamentarian who is a top advocate of the reunification and neutralization of Germany, charged at the session of the party's Bonn parliamentary group on June 2, that all of the proposed zero-option agreements mean the sell-out of Germany by the United States, and that hence the Bonn government should adopt "a course of German interests first."

Voices of opposition

The only consistent opposition to the zero-option deal has come from the Patriots for Germany party, whose chairman, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, campaigned against it during recent state elections in Rhineland-Palatinate. Franz-Josef Strauss, chairman of the Christian Social Union, the Bavarian counterpart of Kohl's CDU, has occasionally sounded sober notes of warning—interspersed with hopeful remarks about Gorbachov's alleged *glasnost* (openness). Following Kohl's capitulation, Strauss warned, "The whole thing naturally means a decoupling of America from Europe." Referring to those who supported the government decision with reluctance, he said, "I belong to the 'regretably' people."

Within the German military, there exists an understanding that the double-zero option will leave Europe *more* vulnerable to annihilation, and will make war *more* likely, not less. The inspector-general of the German Armed Forces, Adm. Dieter Wellershoff, addressed more than 450 generals, admirals, and senior Army officers in the city of Oldenburg June 3, explaining the fraud of Gorbachov's alleged desire for peace. "The final document of the recent Warsaw Pact summit has not changed a jot in Soviet military theory," he said. The Soviet Union's armed forces follow the same aggressive principles as ever:

- War, including nuclear war, remains the focus of Soviet strategic policy, and armaments are designed for that;
- Soviet military strategy is based on offensive combat operations, with the aim of carrying and winning the war on the enemy's own territory;
- A denuclearized Europe would make it a much easier prey for the Soviet military machine, given the disproportionate conventional might of the Warsaw Pact;
- The Soviet armaments program for conventional weapons has not slowed down, but has even been accelerated, and the Warsaw Pact has secured all its options for military offensive in all categories of weaponry.

"There is no such thing as a non-nuclear defense of Europe, without the troops and nuclear umbrella of the United States," warned Wellershoff. "The denuclearization of Europe will rather increase the threat of war."

Unfortunately, the U.S. administration itself has apparently "forgotten" this basic strategic reality.