

Encouraged by the Catholic Church, the Italian populace accepted the deployment of cruise missiles with scarcely a murmur. The Sixth Fleet is stronger than ever. The number of ships remains at some twenty-six, but over the past thirty years the tonnage has tripled; carriers have fattened from 50,000 to 90,000 tons. Electrical power-generating capacity, to operate the sophisticated offensive and defensive weapons, is up sixfold. Twelve times as many targets can be reached by air.

While the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean is the subject of concern and elaborate surveillance, it is not considered an offensive threat. There are on average thirty-seven Soviet ships on station (including seven submarines), but only 35 per cent are combat vessels, with the rest support. The Soviets have no bases in the Mediterranean. In the event of a conventional war, the Soviet fleet would be out of action in a week. The superiority of Warsaw Pact forces makes no splash in the Mediterranean.

In the eyes of Washington thinktankers, there are two principal dangers to the NATO Fleet: a possible nuclear attack and the increasing difficulty of tracking Soviet submarines with existing electronic devices, owing to the buildup of noise clutter in the sea. The first would certainly put an end to any notion of deterrence and lead to an unprecedented situation. The second poses new problems in thinking about conventional war. At least 2,500 ships are in the Mediterranean at any one time, adding to ocean noise and to radar-identification difficulties.

As for nuclear arms control, the NATO advice is patience and perseverance in dealing with the Soviet Union. Too much is expected in this area, they say; the burden is too great. The one thing at which the Soviets have been successful is building nuclear weapons, and they are not likely to be flexible in this area short of a larger political agreement. This kind of negotiation does not seem to be in the cards anyway, given the ill health of Chernenko and the loss by Gromyko of his old touch. No one in the Soviet hierarchy seems to be balancing the Politburo factions, and certainly no one is offering bold new leadership. Patience and probing in other areas—economic, cultural—may be all that can be done at this time.

For the present the NATO deterrence shield is strong. But as with the arms talks, is too much being expected of this military alliance? It professes a very limited political and economic role, beyond the military facing-down of the Warsaw Pact. But it is precisely the political and economic factors that threaten the shield. Will the Dutch deploy missiles by the end of this year? And if not, what about NATO solidarity? The British Labor party continues to expound in its platform the virtues of British nuclear disarmament.

On the economic front, the European Economic Community in March could not even agree on a sum for its milk subsidy. If there is to be an increase in conventional forces to raise the nuclear threshold, which has become increasingly unconvincing, where will the additional funds come from?

All these factors keep the NATO planners at a high level of efficiency, working to deter the next war or, if that fails, to prevail in the last one. Political will continues to determine the outcome.

*Robert J. Myers is President of the Council on Religion and International Affairs.*

## EXCURSUS 3

### Stephen Brockmann on RUMBLINGS IN THE EAST

The recent uproar in both East and West Germany over the cancellation of East German leader Erich Honecker's visit to West Germany illustrates well the ambiguity of the relationship between the two nations and of each with its particular power bloc. The tensions between the Soviet Union and the East German leadership actually antedate the massive campaign that *Pravda* had been waging against Honecker's visit in the months preceding its cancellation, something often overlooked by the Western press. In fact, the tensions date back to the beginning of deployment of the American Pershing II missiles in West Germany in December of 1983 and are a function of two radically different views within the Eastern bloc of how to respond to this deployment.

Following the November, 1983, decision of the West German Bundestag to allow Pershing IIs on West German soil, the Soviet Union broke off negotiations in Geneva and went forward with plans to counter this deployment with new missile deployments in East Germany. As early as October of 1983, while Yuri Andropov was dying, the Soviet military had announced plans to proceed with deployment. At the same time, articles in the East German Party newspaper *Neues Deutschland* countered these Soviet plans with warnings that the Eastern bloc should not overreact to Western developments and that, as Honecker noted, "it is better to negotiate ten times than to shoot once." On October 22, *Neues Deutschland* had published a letter from Evangelical Lutheran Church members to Erich Honecker that offered the plain-spoken opinion not only of the small but growing independent East German peace movement but also apparently of the government itself: "It fills us with horror and dread that the deployment of American nuclear weapons in Western Europe, which we all condemn, should also lead to similar nuclear countermeasures in our own country, and that thus we and our children will have to live in close proximity to those weapons." Such open statements, highly unusual in an Eastern bloc country, indicated that sentiment in East Germany against new Soviet nuclear weapons might cause the Soviet Union as many problems in dealing with "its" Germany as the United States Government had been having with its own.

What was at stake were different ways of responding to American deployment. By November of 1983 the East German Government, with support from Hungary, had come down firmly in favor of a policy of *Schadenbegrenzung*, the containment of damage. This policy not only viewed the "counterdeployment" of Soviet missiles negatively; it also favored continuing negotiations with the United States, even in the face of further deployment.

Nevertheless, with the illness and then death of Andropov, the hard-liners in the Soviet Union, headed by foreign minister Andrei Gromyko, began to gain the upper hand. The December deployment of American missiles in Western Europe strengthened their position, and they and their supporters within the East German Politburo, headed by Defense

Minister Heinz Hoffmann, argued that it was pointless to negotiate with the West any longer and that all the West understood was force. As Gromyko noted: "To continue negotiations would simply mean that we would be continuing and contributing to the deception of the world's peoples." With the ongoing deployment of new nuclear missiles in West Germany this hard-line group grew in strength and became increasingly intolerant of the opposition that continued to be voiced in East Germany. The Russian hard-liners and their supporters, particularly in Czechoslovakia, accused East Germany of caving in to Western foreign policy to serve its own ends. As punishment for such opposition, East Germany was slated in May of 1984 to receive even more Soviet missiles than had originally been planned, while Czechoslovakia, faithful to the Soviet hard-line, was spared.

Yet it is virtually unthinkable that Honecker would have had the courage to voice his convictions so loudly had he not been well aware that the dispute between the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union reflected a quieter but no less intense dispute going on within the Soviet Union itself between the hard-line Gromyko faction, with its media organ *Pravda*, and the dovish faction then led by Andropov and now by Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov, with its organ *Izvestia*. By July, 1983, when *Pravda* had begun its final campaign against Honecker's visit to West Germany—the first ever for an East German leader—*Izvestia* had begun to come out in favor of Honecker. Though Honecker, who has to worry about hawks in his own Politburo, was finally forced to give in to the combined and repeated pressure of the hawks, the ultimate battle for control of Soviet policy—and for determining its relationship to its allies—is far from over. At present it appears that Honecker's cancellation and his subsequent concessions to the Soviet hard-line, including articles in the Soviet press, are no more than token moves. The outward display of unity hides a reality that is far more turbulent and far less monolithic than it appears.

Meanwhile, the squabble between East Germany and Hungary on the one side and the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia on the other displays a level of disagreement that can only be surprising for Western observers, accustomed to shows of fraternal solidarity. It is surprising too that in some ways Honecker has shown more courage in defying the wishes of his alliance than has his Western counterpart, Helmut Kohl, who is also confronted by strong internal opposition and a peace movement that refuses to go away. Most important, Honecker's perseverance and his ultimate defeat show that the reason originally given for the deployment of Pershing IIs and cruise missiles in Western Europe—to force the Soviets to negotiate—has in fact backfired: It has led the Soviets to walk away from the negotiating table, has given the upper hand to the hawks in the Eastern bloc, and has tended to undermine the efforts of Honecker and of the Eastern bloc's independent peace movements.

An interesting byproduct of the current dispute has been the reemergence in both Germanies of a discussion of German national identity. Both governments are to varying degrees—and sometimes with good reason—frustrated with the superpowers, and this frustration has led them increasingly to intra-German dialogue. The European equivalent of this dialogue—the increasingly broad discussions between Eastern and Western Europe about questions of European unity and peace—has gradually led many dissidents in both

East and West to conclude that they have more in common with each other as Europeans than they have with the superpowers. These developments promise to cause continued strains in relations on both sides of the Iron Curtain; and it is an open question whether the success of the U.S. and the USSR in forcing more nuclear missiles upon their European allies may ultimately, from the standpoint of allied relations, prove to have been a Pyrrhic victory.

*Stephen Brockmann is a Fellow in the German Department of the University of Wisconsin at Madison.*

## EXCURSUS 4

### Lucy Komisar on HONDURAS UPDATE

Only months ago Honduras was one of America's most compliant allies. Today, U.S.-Honduran relations are at a low point, and Hondurans both in and out of government are vigorous in expressing suspicion, resentment, and anger at the Americans for their failure to give Honduras an economic boost or show concern for its interests in return for use of the country as a *de facto* military base, as a staging ground for the anti-Sandinista guerrillas, and as a training site for Honduras's traditional enemy, El Salvador.

The first signs of a change came with the ouster of Armed Forces head Gustavo Alvarez Martínez on March 31. During General Alvarez's tenure the United States had completed or obtained agreement to build or improve eleven airstrips and four base camps for joint military exercises. Some of the facilities were also used to supply the "Contras" fighting in Nicaragua. But many Hondurans believed that Honduras had sold itself too cheaply—what, after all, was it getting in return?—and that the agreements it had made were damaging, even endangering, the country. They also chafed at the pressures exerted by U.S. Ambassador John Dimitri Negroponte and were embarrassed at the international reputation they had gained as lackeys of the United States. When the U.S. failed to pressure El Salvador to accede to Honduran demands in their border dispute, Hondurans asked themselves if they mightn't be training men they would be fighting one day, as they had in 1969. When the U.S. Congress refused to vote more aid to the Contras, Hondurans wondered if they weren't to be left holding the bag, forced to deal with some fifteen thousand guerrillas with nowhere else to go. There was an additional flurry of concern when, at about this time, the U.S. held several meetings with high Nicaraguan officials. Surely a deal was being hatched behind Honduras's back and the U.S. was going to make its exit, as it had in Vietnam and Lebanon.

Now the military, which is a deciding force in foreign policy matters, is asserting Honduras's national interest and insisting that the U.S. pay attention. It has ordered most of the anti-Sandinista guerrillas out of the country and told them to close their offices in Tegucigalpa, the capital. It has refused a U.S. request to allow the Contras to return to Honduras as refugees, if necessary, to enter camps run by the