

Nuclear Threat Escalated

Like the US's invasion of Grenada, its military intervention in Lebanon and the new accord with the Zionist state, the installation of cruise and Pershing II missiles in western Europe confirms that imperialism has chosen the war path. The decision to begin this deployment, despite broad popular opposition and the qualms of even some bourgeois circles, is not due to a Soviet "threat" or to weakened western defense. Rather it is a result of the depth of imperialism's crisis, and the fact that the most retrograde strata of the international bourgeoisie has taken the helm; this strata sees the military option as the primary means for resolving the crisis.

The installation appears to signal the end of the four-year period which began with NATO's 1979 decision to deploy the US nuclear missiles, if the US and Soviet Union could not reach a prior arms limitations agreement. Actually, it signals the beginning of a new stage in the arms race launched by US imperialism. It marks a qualitative and quantitative leap in the nuclear arsenal aimed at the socialist community, first and foremost the Soviet Union. It means a dramatic rise in the chances of nuclear war, which per definition cannot be limited, but will inevitably threaten all mankind, directly or indirectly. The population of Europe in particular has been thrust into a new state of existence, as hostages in imperialism's game of nuclear blackmail.

Quite literally, this is only the first step. In mid-November, as the first components of the missiles were being sneaked into Britain, West Germany and then Italy, the US Congress approved funding for the giant MX missile and for developing the Midgetman. While the MX is threatening in terms of its sheer size, one should not think that the label *Midgetman* denotes a weapon any less dangerous. On the contrary, its smaller size and being a single warhead missile, is to allow for the Midgetman being incorporated into a mobile storage system in order to insure *survivability*. The Reagan Administration, having succeeded in implanting new first strike nuclear weapons in Europe, is obsessed with developing the means for carrying on a nuclear war once it breaks out.

Sabotaged negotiations

Despite concerted Soviet attempts to engage in serious negotiations, it is not surprising that no agreement was reached to stop or delay the deployment. The installation of the missiles is not due to the break-down

of arms control talks, much less to Soviet "intransigence", as portrayed by imperialist officials and media. It is a result of the Reagan Administration's rejection of nuclear parity, instead insisting on posing a threat to the Soviet Union, and the West European governments' commitment to the US plans via NATO.

Throughout, the Reagan Administration's tactics were based on the assumption that the Soviet Union would not be ready for an agreement, i.e., relinquishing parity and compromising its security, until missiles capable of reaching Soviet cities in a matter of minutes were firmly in place. US Defense Minister Weinberger and others opposed opening the negotiations until the Administration's military build-up program was well underway. With this assured, the "zero option" was launched late in 1981, solely to "put the Soviet on the defensive," as stated by Richard Perle, US Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy. Richard Burt, then director of the State Department's Politico-Military Affairs Bureau, was even more frank. In 1981, he told his staff, "The purpose of this whole exercise is maximum political advantage. It's not arms control we're engaged in, it's



Protest at Greenham Commons.

alliance (NATO) management." (*Time* magazine, December 5, 1983). For US imperialism, the question has never been whether or not to deploy the missiles, but how to handle the political effects vis-a-vis its European allies, who were faced with massive opposition on the question.

The Soviet Union, however, did not fall for imperialism's blackmail. In the context of the sharpened global contradiction between imperialism and socialism, only nuclear parity can deter imperialism from using its nuclear arsenal as a threat to enforce its will, or in actual warfare. Accordingly, the Soviet Union found it necessary to announce plans for increasing the defense of the socialist community by stationing, for the first time, tactical nuclear missiles in Czechoslovakia and Democratic Germany.

Challenging the anti-war movement

The beginning of the deployment contains certain lessons which must be used by the anti-nuclear movement in rising to the challenge of the new stage. The first concerns the connection between the imperialist bourgeoisie's domestic and foreign policies. The determination of the Reagan, Thatcher and Kohl governments in particular to push through the deployment exhibits the same quality as their domestic austerity programs: blatant disregard for the welfare and wishes of the majority of the people, even in their own country. This goes hand in hand with increased deceit on the part of the top echelons, as exhibited by Thatcher's refusal to tell the House of Commons under what circumstances she and Reagan might decide to use the British-based cruises.

More limits on democratic rights are also part of the nuclear missile package. Increased internal repression has been a prominent characteristic of many capitalist states in the last decade, and this will only increase with the nuclear militarization of Europe. Already, hundreds have been arrested, especially in Britain and West Germany, for demonstrating against the missile deployment. One reported incident in Britain is probably no exception: In Birmingham, the Special Branch (of the police) normally concerned with combatting subversion, investigated a local peace group engaged in such activities as writing letters to newspapers against the missile deployment. Most blatantly, English Defense Secretary, Heseltine,