

## WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

By Diana Johnstone

## Germany enters the arms race with rocket production

**T**HE MILITARY ALLIANCE OF core NATO countries, called the Western European Union (WEU), held its 30th anniversary meeting in Rome in late October without any significant protest from the European peace movement.

The proposal made in Perugia last July by Green Bundestag member Roland Vogt—that the peace movement hold an educational conference in Rome at the same time in order to focus on the dangers in the WEU project—was taken over and diluted by European peace movement leaders who still seem to be making up their minds about the WEU. WEU critics, such as the German Greens and the small Italian party *Democrazia Proletaria*, were kept out of the preparations for a “vigilance” conference at which movement personalities from various European countries made speeches on various topics. The German leftist daily *Die Tageszeitung* called it “aimless peace palaver.”

At a Paris press conference a few days later, Sylvie Mantrant of the French nuclear disarmament committee CODENE, explained that the independent European peace movement's position on the WEU was still “hazy.” They want to see what is meant by the “European cooperation” in defense matters that the WEU is promoting. A report is scheduled for the European Nuclear Disarmament (END) conference in Amsterdam next year.

Meanwhile, the movements preparing the Amsterdam meeting prefer to concentrate on stopping American missiles in Holland and Belgium, where they still see the possibility of a refusal of American cruise missile deployment.

One reason for peace movement hesitation to condemn the WEU is its potential arms control function. One of the WEU's inter-governmental institutions is Europe's only Arms Control Agency (ACA), set up to enable the other member countries—France, Britain, Italy and the Benelux states—to monitor West German rearmament. But so far the most significant result of the French-sponsored WEU revival has been to drastically reduce its arms control role.

This year West German rockets have entered the worldwide arms race as a result of the WEU decision to eliminate the post-war ban on German production of long-range missiles. This could prove to be one of the most significant steps in the NATO arms modernization program that got underway with the famous December 1979 “double decision” to station U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe.

Although German industry showed lively interest in cruise missile development in the late '70s, any sudden decision at that time to produce long-range missiles in the Federal Republic would have been politically impossible. Today, however, in the wake of the controversial U.S. missile deployments and amid calls for European independence from the superpowers, it has been politically easy to lift the last remaining restrictions on West German conventional arms production, including missiles.

German industry is ready to take off. German know-how that developed the V1 and V2 “buzz bomb” rockets during World War II in the secret factory at Peenemunde has not been lost, even if some of the experts have gone on to lead the U.S.' space program. The *Orbit-Transport Aktiengesellschaft* (OTRAG), set up in 1974, took on former Peenemunde director Kurt Debus as its supervisory board chairman and Peenemunde engineer Richard F. Gomperts as its construction chief. Several former SS officers also reportedly worked for the secretive company, which apparently functioned as a research and development front and money-losing tax write-off for arms industry giants such as Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm (MBB). In 1974, OTRAG made a contract with Zaire reserving exclusive use of air space for testing over an area roughly the size of Austria. There were reports in 1976 and 1977 that OTRAG was developing cruise mis-

siles. Since the WEU banned production in Germany of any projectile with a range of over 32 kilometers, missile parts were flown from an airport near Stuttgart for assembly in Africa.

The huge African proving ground began to cause diplomatic problems for Bonn after Angola President Agostinho Neto complained in August 1977 that “the presence of West German missiles in Zaire is an immediate threat to the Angolan revolution.” The flap over the Zaire firing range may have made German industry feel cramped by the WEU restrictions. In the future there will be no need to assemble parts in remote places.

Now the problem is to get the Bundestag to vote the appropriations for the new generation of high technology conventional weapons, notably “smart” missiles. The Greens estimate the price tag will run to 240 billion marks (close to \$100 billion). Many Social Democrats agree with the Greens that the government arms modernization plan means tearing down the welfare state to pay for weapons that will increase the danger of war by shifting NATO strategy to the “deep strike” offensive posture advocated by NATO commander General Bernard Rogers.

But the Social Democratic Party (SPD) is divided. Many Social Democrats seem ready to buy the argument that a conventional arms buildup is the price to pay for reducing dependence on nuclear arms. But the price tag on the “emerging technologies” may simply be too high.

Aside from its Arms Control Agency with a permanent staff of 52, the WEU has a Standing Armaments Committee (SAC) with an international secretariat of 28 whose function is to facilitate joint arms production deals and sales—a matter close to the hearts of French leaders. There is also a WEU Assembly made up of 89 delegates and 89 alternates representing the parliaments of the seven member countries. As a recent Belgian government memo points out, the Assembly has the potential—but long unexploited—capacity to “sensitize public opinion” in member countries to military-security issues. The Belgian memo suggested that in the future, member states should take measures to see to it that “parliamentarians experienced in defense and security matters” are sent to the Assembly.

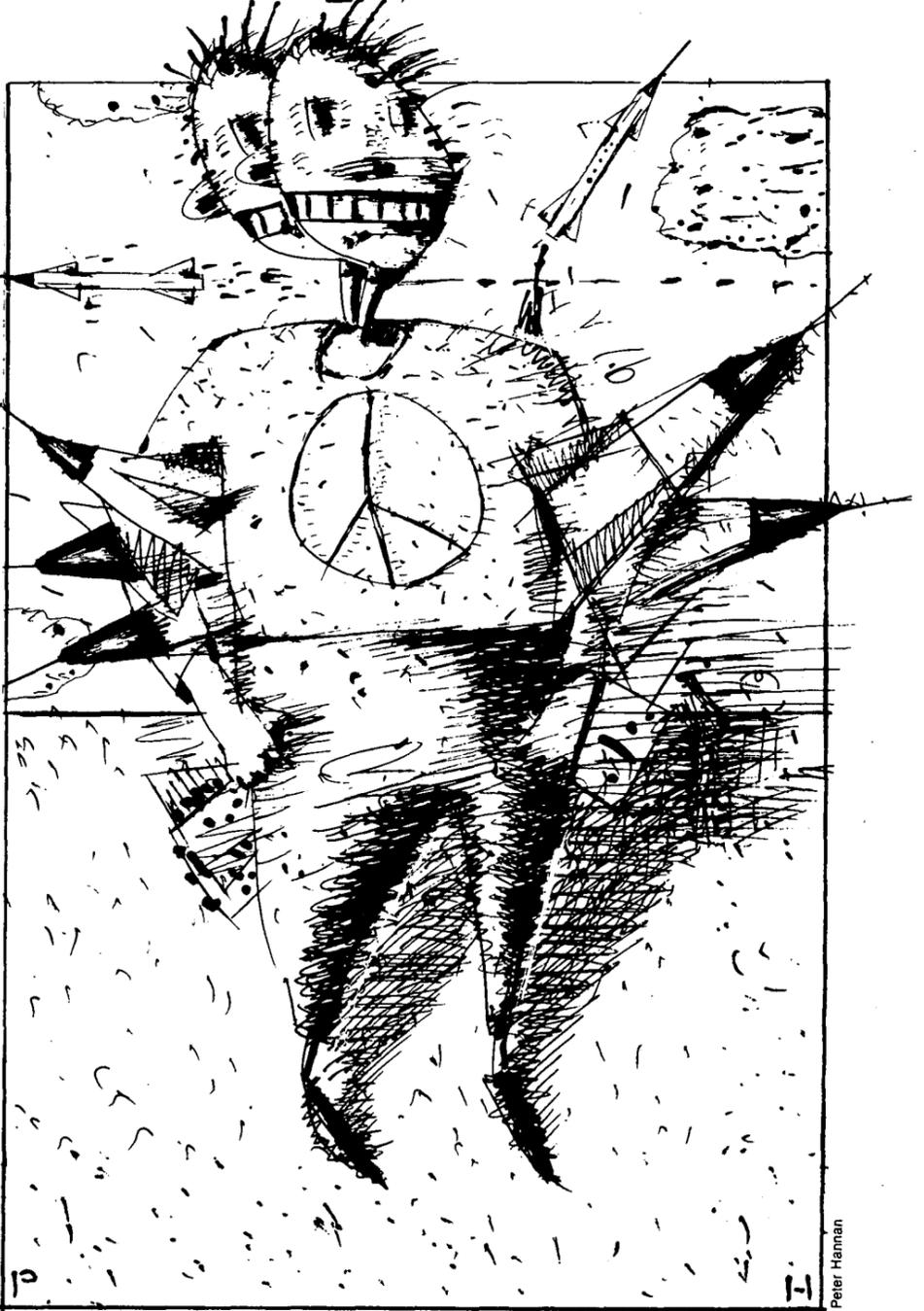
On June 12 the WEU declared that the essential function of the Assembly was to associate European public opinion with the effort member nations must make to ensure their security. The WEU Assem-

## Cruise missile deployment and a European move to independence opened the door.

bly seems destined to be used to help develop an arms lobby within European parliaments comparable to that within the U.S. Congress.

The Assembly itself has been kept under-informed about what is going on. A September confidential report by an Italian member to the Assembly's general affairs committee complained of having to work on the basis of “only vague knowledge of a fluctuating situation.” The Assembly is apparently expected to “sell” policy decisions, not to help make nor even to understand them.

The confidential Assembly report ex-



pressed puzzlement over the French-proposed changes in the function of the Arms Control Agency. The report noted that the ACA is the only European agency with the accumulated information and experts potentially enabling it to play some eventual role in international arms control. Besides checking on West German compliance with the long list of conventional arms restrictions now being lifted, the ACA kept track of Allied troop levels. This entailed checking to make sure that Britain was keeping its Rhine Army up to promised levels. France, however, unilaterally refused to allow ACA monitoring of French nuclear weapons.

According to the French proposal, the ACA will in fact drop its arms control functions in order to “reflect on problems of verification.” This may have something to do with the fact that the French—whose desire to develop new technology far exceeds their knowledge of what to do with it—have for some time entertained hopes of getting a head start in the development of satellites for arms control verification purposes. This relatively good idea risks being left far behind by the cruise missile race.

At the Rome meeting in October, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher did confirm that the WEU will study and research space technology.

One factor muting criticism of the WEU has been the impression that its revival somehow represents an attempt to assert European independence from the superpowers. This illusion may have been prompted by the mere fact that it was France, complete with Gaullist rhetorical flourishes against “Yalta” and the superpowers, that pressed for WEU revival. It

has further been promoted by the opposition of the British and Dutch governments, who consistently prefer American hegemony in Europe to the possible rise of a continental power, whether France or Germany or both.

But this Anglo-Dutch reticence has done nothing to block the WEU's main move—lifting of the German arms ban—and cannot have much effect in the future. This is because, first of all, the U.S. strongly (if somewhat discreetly) supports the revitalization of the WEU as a way to get Europeans to spend more on weapons. And second, because the Anglo-Dutch attitude only annoys the other European members who, as the confidential report stated, see Franco-German cooperation as a “warning” that if they do not take part “they will have no grounds to complain about the development of Franco-German bilateralism.”

The early rhetoric suggesting independence from both “superpowers” and blocs has faded fast. The June 12 memo stressed the “constant strengthening of Soviet military power” as a “subject of major preoccupation.” In reality, the WEU can only sharpen the division of Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Probably the most significant fact about the WEU is that, unlike NATO, there are *no geographical limits* to the alliance. That means it can be invoked *outside of Europe*, in case of armed conflict in the Mideast, in Africa or elsewhere in the Third World. The WEU is the perfect framework for a European superpower ready to strike southward to protect “European interests” in the Third World, such as control of oil or uranium resources. ■

### By Salim Muwakkil

*No more tears... We must harden our tears to icicles and use them to freeze the senseless violence in our communities.*

—Anna Langford, Chicago alderman at funeral of Ben Wilson Jr.

Benjamin "Benjy" Wilson Jr., 17, was murdered last month as he walked near his high school on Chicago's South Side. He was shot twice with a .22-caliber pistol and one bullet severed his aorta.

The suspects in his murder are two black, 16-year-old boys who were freshmen at a neighboring school. Statistically, the incident was nothing unusual; it merely underlined the distressing fact that young black men have become their own worst enemies. But Wilson also happened to be one of the best—if not *the* best—high school basketball players in the U.S. His star status provoked widespread interest in the incident and national attention became focused, once again, on the perplexing problem of black-on-black violence.

According to police reports, Wilson and two female classmates at Simeon Vocational High School were walking near the school during a lunch break when he bumped into three teenagers who were intentionally blocking the sidewalk. Wilson reportedly said, "Excuse me," and one of the three allegedly said, "Ain't no 'excuse me' today," pulled a gun and summarily fired three shots, two of which hit the 6'8" basketball star. He died the next day.

Wilson was perhaps the best known high school athlete in Chicago. As a well-publicized junior last year he led his team to the Illinois state championship and he was being fiercely recruited by most of the nation's top colleges. In addition to being widely admired for his skills on the basketball court, Wilson was also well-liked for other qualities. At a memorial service held at his high school, thousands of people, mostly young, came to pay their respects to their fallen hero.

"Benjy always had time for people," explained Tippi Hyde, a 17-year-old De Paul University student who was one of Wilson's closest friends and who spoke on behalf of the Wilson family at his funeral. "Everybody who knew him really liked him because he was so outgoing and because he was also so positive. It may sound corny, or like I'm trying to nominate him for sainthood or something, but really, just being around Benjy was inspirational. He always made you want to do better."

On a chilly afternoon in late November, crowds estimated in excess of 10,000 people extended for blocks outside of Operation PUSH's national headquarters where Wilson's funeral was held. Most of the mourners didn't know Ben Wilson, and though they realized there was little chance of gaining entrance to the packed PUSH auditorium, they were content to listen to the three-hour ceremony through truck-mounted speakers.

They huddled silently in the cold, everything immobile but their grimacing expressions and their flowing tears. Several admitted they didn't quite know why they came. It was as if they were drawn to Wilson's funeral for some mysterious reason they still couldn't fathom; perhaps they were hoping for some transcendental, grief-inspired answer that would halt the vicious cycle of violence that claimed his life. Many of the mourners told *In These Times* that the prominence accorded Wilson's death helped them realize just how routine has become the killing of black men by other black men.

"This boy's death is a tragic symbol of all that has gone wrong within urban black America," said John Dunham, a resident of Joliet, Ill., who traveled 50 miles just to stand in the cold for two hours and be counted. "It's also a loud, strong cry for action."

Inside the PUSH auditorium there were many other cries for action. Speakers, including Mayor Harold Washington and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, all urged a change in the community status quo. Calling Wilson the kind of "extraordinary young man who comes along once

in a lifetime," Mayor Washington, his voice occasionally cracking with emotion, said, "We must put an end to this gang violence and senseless attacks that stalk Chicago like a man-eater in the night. It is our duty to change this senseless violence and we've known all along that it was our duty. But now we can't escape it."

The Rev. Jackson struck a similar note: "All of the other murders we didn't react to set the stage for this one," he said. "We are losing more lives in the streets of America than we lost in the jungles of Vietnam.... There may be an explanation—based upon environment, sociology, *Thousands of students wait in line for Ben Wilson's memorial service.*

economics, split-level justice—but no justification. These senseless murders must end."

Although he took the opportunity to blast the covert war in Nicaragua and U.S.-South African ties, Jackson concentrated most of his ire on the internal problems that plague the black community. "I understand the system we're in," he said, "but I also understand the system that must be within us."

With varying degrees of ferocity, other speakers stressed the same theme of black self-responsibility and a no-nonsense approach to criminal activity. Even the idea of passing a city ordinance giving police stop-and-frisk powers (a risky proposition indeed, considering the reputation of

Chicago's Finest) met little dissent. Had someone been brash enough to caution the crowd against violating civil liberties they may well have been booed. Many expressed very definite ideas of what should be done to the young suspects. That they should be tried as adults was among the most benign of their comments.

William Moore has been charged with firing the shots that killed Wilson, and Omar Dixon has been charged as an accessory. Police have labeled them as gang members, but their friends dispute that designation.

"They weren't no gang bangers," explained a 16-year-old named Teddy, who said he knew both suspects well. "They just wanted to go for bad. Sometimes you have to go for bad just to stay out of gangs."

Moore (Lil' Billy), a freshman at Calumet High School, located just a few blocks from Simeon, is described as a shy, quiet boy who was raised in relative privilege. "He was spoiled sick by his parents and his grandparents," explained his aunt. "They never let him want for anything much and they always stuck by him. Sometimes," she said, "they stuck by him too much." She noted that Moore was strongly attached to his father, who died last September.

For most of his life, Moore has lived in a comfortable, family-owned bungalow located in a well-maintained, black working-class neighborhood, with both his parents and his maternal grandparents. "Lil' Billy was the main reason we bought this home and moved away from the problems over on the east side where we used to live," Moore's grandmother told *In These Times*.

"We had such high hopes and dreams for him. He was a New Year's baby, born on New Year's Day. But dreams can easily go up in smoke in a city like Chicago." His family was understandably stunned by what happened—his grandfather said he cried continuously for two days following the incident—but they intend to stand resolutely by his side. Moore was no gang member, his family insisted, but, they concede, he may have succumbed to what one of them called the "code of the streets."

And, despite the avalanche of gang-related headlines provided by the local media (hysterically led, of course, by Rupert Murdoch's *Chicago Sun-Times*)



## LIFE IN THE U.S.

# Slaying of 'Benjy' Wilson accents violence epidemic

