

will reduce the number of missiles it accepts: if the SS20s remain in their present capacity, as at June 1984, or are increased, they will deploy in full. In addition they are calling for a moratorium, and have halted all work on the planned cruise missile base at Woensdrecht.

The peace movement is a major factor in the Dutch delaying tactics. Over 70% of the Dutch population is opposed to cruise missile deployment; the peace movement permeates Dutch society. It is supported by the churches and trade unions and there are even NATO soldiers against nuclear arms, who march in uniform on demonstrations. The movement has its roots deep in all sectors of society — last autumn the Queen's sister spoke at a peace rally. Although the country has severe economic problems, peace and disarmament are the overriding campaigning issue for most Dutch people.

The government knew that simple agreement to deploy would result in riots. The current ruling coalition is made up of Christian Democrats and Liberals. Dutch Liberals (who are on the Right) favour deployment. The Christian Democrats are divided: some have an over-optimistic faith in negotiations but a group of 12 CD MPs who are against all nuclear weapons in Holland hold the political balance. The government is in a very difficult position poised between irreconcilable demands. Acceptance of the missiles would have led to considerable unrest; outright refusal to a fall in government. A left government with the Labour Party leading the coalition would of course have meant no deployment; and there will be a general election before the deployment date.

The Minister of Defence, Mr Jacob de Ruiter, described by a fellow MP as a

### THE DUTCH DECISION

On June 1, the Dutch government announced that they would delay deployment of their share of NATO cruise missiles for two years. They have walked out of the operational part of NATO's 'dual track' decision (ie, to combine deployment *and* negotiation) in the hope that the negotiations will be revived, and used to limit and reduce the US nuclear arsenal based in Europe.

The decision to deploy has been postponed until November 1985, eighteen months after NATO's original deadline. They will accept the 48 missiles allotted to the Netherlands in 1988, if the Soviet Union and the United States have failed to agree on an arms control pact. If talks are resumed and lead to a reduction, Holland



'stern Calvinist who puts moral judgement before political advantage' has been searching for a compromise since the spring. He suggested a plan under which the missiles might be stored in other parts of Western Europe or the USA, and flown into Holland in times of tension: this would place Holland in line with Norway and Denmark. All such attempts at compromise were heavily criticised by Thatcher (who characteristically described the Dutch as 'wet'), Heseltine, the US administration and NATO secretary general Luns. In March, Weinberger went to the Hague to try to impose a sense of responsibility on the Dutch arguing that they must come into line for the sake of the cohesion of NATO. However, in the past few weeks, since it became clear that agreement would not be reached, NATO criticism became muted. The White House is now regarding this move by the Dutch as a deferral of decision — publicly at least.

Mient Jan Faber, secretary of the Dutch peace group IKV, has described Holland as the 'mouse that roared', as it tries to force the superpowers back to negotiations. Holland, as a small country has little influence within NATO; the USA leads

the hierarchy, followed by the big four (FRG, Britain, Italy and France) and the small nations are at the bottom of the pile. Danish peace researchers say that since Denmark has refused to support the Euro-missiles they have been marginalised and edged out of the decision making process. Similar attempts will be made to dismiss the Dutch as irresponsible and negligible members of the pact. However collective European dissent is growing round established groupings working for Nuclear Free Zones in the Nordic and Balkan regions. The ground launched cruise missile, designed to symbolise unity in NATO, has had precisely the opposite effect.

From its inception, the dual track decision was supposed to be a parallel and complementary operation. The twisted logic of the pro-deployment lobby was that the missiles must be sited to force the Soviet Union to negotiate seriously. However, as the peace movement predicted, the Geneva INF talks failed and the Soviet Union announced counter deployment in the GDR and Czechoslovakia. Reagan is now using this same argument to justify his plans for Star Wars and MX the 'Peacekeeper'. Perhaps outside the look-

ing-glass world of Atlanticist and super power politics, the unilateral stand by the Dutch may result in the reduction of SS20s and cruise and Pershing II. It may also give courage to other European governments who seemed to have a genuine hope for the INF talks. So far the Belgians still have not given final agreement, and the Craxi government is talking of a moratorium. There will be a debate in the Dutch Parliament on June 13 in which the opposition parties will be calling on the government to persuade other European countries to work for delay.

From the middle of 1983, peace movement discussions involving groups from the US, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Holland have discussed the possibility and desirability of a delay to deployment. This was thought to be a mechanism that political parties — not peace movements — might use to break the deadlock at Geneva, by giving more time and providing tangible evidence of a political will for the negotiations to succeed. The Dutch independent unilateral action will be a strong boost for this strategy, and to the peace movement everywhere.

Meg Beresford

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