

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



Moscow Summit

■ Although it did not prove possible to finalize a strategic arms reduction (START) agreement at the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Moscow (29 May to 2 June), progress was recorded on a number of arms control issues. To begin with, the two leaders exchanged the instruments of ratification of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty (signed at last December's summit), formally bringing it into force. The US Senate had approved the Treaty by a vote of ninety-three to five on 27 May; the USSR Supreme Soviet had unanimously endorsed it four days earlier.

Also at the Moscow summit, US Secretary of State Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze signed an agreement on advance notification of all ballistic missile launches, providing at least twenty-four hours notice and specifying both the launching and impact areas.

Regarding the START agreement, the two sides reported progress on the issues of mobile ICBMs and air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs). On the key issues of sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) and the future of the ABM Treaty, however, little or no progress was reported, leading many observers to believe that a completed START agreement will have to await the coming of a new administration in Washington.

Nuclear Testing Talks

■ In Moscow on 31 May, Secretary of State Shultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze signed a 160-page Joint Verification Experiment (JVE) agreement. Under it, Soviet specialists will monitor a US nuclear test in Nevada on 17 August, and US officials a Soviet test at Semipalatinsk on 14 Sep-

tember, in order to help pave the way for ratification of the US-Soviet Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) of 1974 (which limits underground nuclear tests to 150 kilotons in yield).

Subsequently, on 28 June, the two governments exchanged seismic data on their previous tests within a range of 100-150 kilotons, marking the first time that the USSR had ever disclosed the size of its nuclear explosions. The same day, at the end of the second round of their bilateral Nuclear Testing Talks in Geneva, the US announced that the two sides were "close to agreement" on a verification protocol for the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (PNE) Treaty of 1976, a companion agreement of TTBT. This protocol was originally expected to have been ready for signing at the Moscow summit. The Soviets have insisted that finalization of a similar protocol for the TTBT will have to await the results of the Verification Experiment. The US hopes that the latter will convince them of the utility of the US "CORTEX" method of measurement for the verification of nuclear test limitations.

UNSSOD III

■ The Third Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament (UNSSOD III) broke up on 26 June without agreement on a thirteen-page draft final document setting out aims and priorities for the next five to eight years. The delegates proved unable to agree on a number of issues, including support for a comprehensive nuclear test-ban (opposed by the US), endorsement of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (opposed by India), authorizing the UN Secretary-General to investigate alleged non-compliance with the 1925 Geneva Convention banning the first use of chemical weapons (opposed by Iraq), enhancing the UN role in the verification of arms control agreements

(opposed by the US and many of its allies), promoting naval arms control (rejected by the US), and condemning reported Israeli and South African nuclear weapons programmes. Despite the failure to achieve a final document, US and Soviet representatives described the conference as "useful" for demonstrating a new understanding of the issues.

Conventional Arms Control in Europe

■ In a speech to UNSSOD III on 8 June, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze described a new Soviet proposal for European conventional arms control, which he said had been made by General Secretary Gorbachev at the Moscow summit a week earlier. It calls for a formal exchange of official data even before new negotiations begin, with verification by on-site inspection once talks are underway. The first stage of the actual negotiations would concentrate on eliminating imbalances and asymmetries identified as a result of the data exchange. The second stage would see reductions on each side of approximately 500,000 men, while in the third stage, apart from further reductions, "the armed forces on both sides would be given a defensive character, and their offensive nucleus would be dismantled."

At a conference in Potsdam two days later, West German Foreign Minister Genscher welcomed the new proposal, but other NATO delegates criticized it, noting that the East had blocked a meaningful data exchange fourteen years at the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks in Vienna. Similarly, on 24 June, a US State Department spokesman called the proposed data exchange a "fruitless" exercise which would perpetuate the stalemate at MBFR. Instead, both sides should clear away the hurdles at the Group 23 and CSCE [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe] talks.

The "Group 23" or "Mandate

Talks," also taking place in Vienna, are negotiating a mandate for an entirely new set of negotiations between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, commonly referred to as the Conventional Stability Talks (CST), which most observers expect to begin later this year. US Assistant Secretary of State Rozanne Ridgway stated on 23 June that two-thirds of the negotiating mandate had already been agreed upon, including the objective of eliminating, "as a matter of priority, ... the capability to launch surprise attack and large-scale offensive action." However, differences remain over the precise relationship of the new talks to the CSCE (with the US emphasizing their autonomy), and also over Soviet attempts to include references to tactical nuclear weapons or dual-capable systems (opposed by the West). Moreover, the US insists that the CST cannot begin until after the CSCE Review Conference, also underway in Vienna, has been successfully concluded. It is being held up by Romanian opposition to efforts at improving human rights practices.

During a visit to Poland on 11 July, General Secretary Gorbachev called for a "pan-European" summit conference to discuss conventional arms control in Europe, as well as the creation of a "European risk-of-war reduction centre" (presumably analogous to the recently established Nuclear Risk Reduction Centres in Washington and Moscow). He also offered to withdraw "matching aircraft from forward deployment sites in Eastern Europe" if NATO agreed to forego the planned basing of seventy-two US F-16 aircraft in Italy, following their expulsion from Spain. The latter proposal was rejected by NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner, who argued that the priority in arms control talks should be on land, rather than air, forces. □

— RONALD PURVER