

measures—JUNIUS.

Loyal to arms limits

Just when it looked as if Ronald Reagan had been tackled by his super-hawk defence adviser Richard Perle, he has broken loose and demonstrated that he has some residual interest in arms control and improved superpower relations. Just when it looked as if the President was determined to act without concern for the interests of U.S. allies, he has decided to be more of a team player.

In recent weeks, it had appeared that Perle's warlike wisdom had become the White House staples on arms control. Mr. Reagan spurned Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev's earnest pleas for a nuclear test ban — or even a summit to discuss this worthy idea. Instead, the U.S. made the earth move Tuesday in the Nevada desert with its tenth nuclear test since the Gorbachev moratorium was announced last July 29.

Just in case this disdain for superpower amity failed to register on Soviet seismic monitors, certain other U.S. affronts in recent weeks were hard to miss. These included U.S. demands for the Soviet Union to reduce its mission at the United Nations and the movement of U.S. naval vessels close to Soviet shores in the Black Sea. Nor could Moscow have been pleased by the Administration's efforts to step up help to rebel forces in Nicaragua, Angola and Afghanistan. Not to mention the U.S. muscle-flexing in Libya.

Yet the President has not warmed up the "evil empire" rhetoric with which he used to vex Soviet leaders. Equally important, he seems disinclined to break out of the 1979 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II). There were fears that, because of suspected Soviet arms control violations, Mr. Reagan would choose to stray from SALT II. Even though the U.S. has not ratified the treaty, Mr. Reagan had previously vowed to respect its provisions if the Sovi-

et Union would comply.

This will require that the U.S. dismantle two Poseidon submarines by the time a new Trident sub starts sea trials next month. Only the withdrawal of the Poseidons will keep the U.S. below the limit of 1,200 multiple warhead missiles which SALT II allows each side. Reports from Washington indicate Mr. Reagan will indeed scuttle the Poseidons. But further forbearance will be required later this year. The U.S. will have to retire older missile launchers to accommodate additional cruise-missile-carrying B-52 bombers if it intends to stay below the treaty limit of 1,320 on the combined number of multiple-warhead missiles and bombers.

U.S. allies, so wounded by America's penchant for unilateral action in Libya, should be comforted that Mr. Reagan has dispatched envoys to solicit their views on adherence to SALT II. Paul Nitze departed Tuesday to consult with European allies, while Gen. Edward Rowley departed Sunday to hold talks with Japan, China, South Korea and Canada. It is a fairly safe bet that all of these nations will press the U.S. to respect its SALT II vows even if it suspects the Soviets of being unfaithful.

White House officials have indicated that Britain's views will receive a particularly attentive ear. Since Canada, too, lined up with the U.S. on the Libyan raid, perhaps Ottawa's advice could also count for more than a pinch of SALT. President Reagan has not suddenly turned into Mr. Multilateral, but even the U.S. feels the need to carry its friends with it on arms control.

As Douglas Roche, Canada's ambassador for disarmament, has been saying on a cross-country speaking tour, "compliance with existing treaties remains key to a credible and viable arms control regime." The message deserves to be heard everywhere.