

In anticipation of Eastern objections to such stringent verification measures, Alexander offered several counter-arguments. In particular, he explained that the proposal for 30 on-site inspections<sup>2</sup> per year was commensurate with the task at hand:

*The West will be trying to verify force levels in the order of a million men spread over more than half a million square kilometres in more than 2,000 camps and barracks in three large areas. Against that background a proposal for 30 inspections per annum is fully in accord with the nature and scope of the agreement.*<sup>3</sup>

Eastern negotiators were, in fact, critical of the verification provisions of the proposal. The Soviet head of delegation, Ambassador Valerian Mikhaylov, said in a Foreign Ministry press briefing held in Moscow on 25 March 1986:

*As to verification and control, the NATO representatives simply lose all sense of proportion and reasonable realism...[The data exchange and on-site inspection provisions] are not at all commensurate either with the nature and content of planned agreement, or with real needs for the ensurance of its implementation, or with specific features of [the] present day military and political situation.*<sup>4</sup>

Within three months of the Western proposal, the WTO tabled a new draft treaty incorporating elements from its June 1983 draft treaty and February 1985 interim proposal, as well as revisions to the latter offered on 6 February 1986. The new draft treaty, presented on 20 February, called for the withdrawal of 11 500 Soviet and 6 500 American troops in the first stage of the agreement. In terms of verification, the treaty accepted joint monitoring at three to four permanent entry and exit points ("PEEPs") in the post-withdrawal period (this had been foreshadowed in Mikhail Gorbachev's disarmament speech of 15 January); allowed on-site inspection "on justified request" (with its implied veto power for the inspected party); sanctioned data exchanges on each country's army and air force, though not disaggregated to the battalion level; and, provided for a Consultative Commission.<sup>5</sup> NATO negotiators did not respond favourably to the draft treaty. They regretted not being given the opportunity to fully explain their December 1985 proposal, and criticized the East's continuing reluctance to embrace their comprehensive verification package.<sup>6</sup>

The complexion of conventional arms negotiations changed radically on 18 April 1986. In a speech before the Socialist Unity Party (SED) Congress in East Berlin, Mikhail Gorbachev proposed "substantial reductions in all the components of the land forces and tactical air forces of the European states and the relevant forces of the United States and Canada deployed in Europe" in an area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural mountains.<sup>7</sup> He hoped that broadening the scope of the question would cut the ever-tightening knot in which the two alliances found themselves in Vienna. In this speech, he also included a statement of principles for the associated verification regime: