

William Beckett, former director of Nuclear and Arms Control Policy at the Department of National Defence, referred to the problem of defining what is, or is not, a “strategic” weapon. For example, Soviet submarine-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) would be able to hit targets in the continental United States. Were these to be counted? Mr. Bykov responded to this question by saying that negotiations should take into account everything which was capable of reaching the territory of the other side.

Proposals for a Test Ban

Just prior to the conference, Secretary General Gorbachev had announced a Soviet moratorium on nuclear testing and had invited the United States to join before the end of 1985. Jim Stark, of Operation Dismantle asked why this unilateral initiative had met with such a “spectacular” lack of interest in the West.

Mr. Bykov said that Soviet leaders had found the lack of response puzzling. The arguments against a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB), he said, were beginning to shift. Previously, Western negotiators claimed that a CTB could not be verified. Now the argument being put forward was the military necessity of testing in order to carry out modernization of weapons systems. Tests were said to be required so that more sophisticated weapons could be developed and deployed. This, said Mr. Bykov, brought up a point of utmost importance in any arms control restrictions: counterforce. One way to curb the development of more lethal counterforce capability was to stop the testing of new weapons.

Mr. Epstein argued that a Comprehensive Test Ban should be Canada’s number one priority at the United Nations. He suggested that the United States opposed a test ban simply and solely because they wanted to test new weapons. The Allies did not necessarily agree with this position, said Mr. Epstein, but they went along with it to maintain NATO solidarity.

Mr. Frye reminded the audience that there was widespread support in the US Congress for a CTB. However, it was important to note, he said, that a CTB at this point would not prevent the deployment of new US counterforce weapons, for example, the Midgetman or the Trident D-5 missile. In spite of a Congressional push for a CTB the Reagan Administration remained opposed to a ban on testing. A compromise had been proposed which included ratification of the Threshold Test Ban (TTB) and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (PNE) Agreement, and a resumption of talks on a CTB with an immediate quota of no more than five tests per year for each