

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



Nuclear and Space Arms Talks

■ On 29 July the Soviet Union presented a detailed written proposal on the testing of missile defences in space. The proposal repeated a continuing Soviet preference for both sides to pledge adherence to the ABM Treaty for ten years. Soviet negotiator Aleksei Obukhov stated that research on strategic defences would be confined to laboratories and institutions "both indoors and out of doors." Most importantly the proposal called for negotiations between the two sides to determine what objects should be banned from space and presented a proposed list of those objects. This is the first time the Soviets have formally detailed the types of objects it would like to prohibit. Some observers think the proposal implies that some limited form of testing in space might be acceptable to the Soviets.

US negotiators expressed disappointment at the Soviet proposal saying that there had been no change in the Soviet position. President Reagan has ruled out any negotiation on the interpretation of the ABM Treaty and what might be allowed in space.

Two days later, on 31 July, the Soviets presented a draft treaty on reductions in strategic nuclear arms. Reductions in strategic weapons remain linked to limitations on activities in space. A new element included in the draft treaty was a proposal for a limit of 400 on sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) with a range of over 600 kilometres. In June 1986 the Soviets had proposed including SLCMs under the proposed war-

head ceiling of 6,000 but American negotiators have been unwilling to consider limits on SLCMs unless the Soviets can offer proposals for effective verification.

The US and Soviet Union continue to agree on the basic outlines of a fifty percent reduction in strategic arms. Both agree to a ceiling of 1,600 on intercontinental and submarine launched ballistic missiles and bombers and a ceiling of 6,000 on nuclear warheads. Each bomber will also count as one warhead under the 6,000 ceiling in order to take account of the bombs and cruise missiles they carry. The Soviet Union has also agreed to reduce its heavy intercontinental missiles (such as the SS-18) by half.

Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces

■ On 4 June the West German parliament endorsed the decision made by Chancellor Kohl to support what is known as the "double zero" option – the complete elimination of all intermediate range nuclear missiles (INF) and shorter-range INF (SRINF) from Europe. This position was then endorsed by NATO ministers at a meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland on 12 June.

Although this was an important step forward, negotiations seemed to stall while both sides traded allegations of foot-dragging via an exchange of letters between US and Soviet negotiators in the editorial pages of the *New York Times*. Although the US never tabled the proposal formally, American officials stated through public channels their preference for the complete elimination of all INF and SRINF missiles world-wide. This proposal would make verification easier since the existence of even one missile would be a violation.

On 22 July, in an interview with the Indonesian press, Secretary General Gorbachev recognized the US concern on this issue and stated that the Soviet Union would be

willing to eliminate all INF and SRINF world-wide. Four unresolved issues then remained:

The time frame for dismantling of the missiles – the US wanted the Soviets to reduce down to the level of US missiles before they began to dismantle; the Soviets wanted both sides to dismantle on a proportional basis.

Verification – the US was demanding continuous on-site inspection of missile assembly plants.

Conversion or refitting – the US reserved the right to convert the Pershing II missiles into shorter-range Pershings and refit the ground-launched cruise missiles into sea-launched cruise missiles. The Soviets were unwilling to allow this.

The West German Pershing IA missiles – the Soviet Union insisted that the 72 Pershing IA missiles deployed in West Germany should be dismantled under the treaty because their warheads are controlled by the United States. The US maintained that the missiles are third-country missiles and therefore not affected by the treaty.

After the Gorbachev announcement US administration spokesmen stated that the US was willing to compromise on three of the four remaining issues. They began refining their verification demands and adjusting the timing provisions in their draft treaty. Because they were now working an global elimination of INF and SRINF, Pershing II missiles could no longer be converted to shorter-range missiles because the shorter-range missiles were now also banned.

By the end of July the key remaining issue was the question of the West German Pershing IA missiles. As in May, Soviet concessions put pressure on the West German coalition government

which had been divided on the issue. Pressure increased on 28 July when the US agreed that all missiles and launchers covered by the treaty would be destroyed and the Soviets agreed to a visit by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze to Washington in mid-September. In early August there were some hints from the chief Soviet negotiator Obukhov that the Soviets would consider a compromise which would involve formal US assurances that the West German Pershing missiles would not be replaced or modernized when they became obsolete in the early 1990s. However, on 6 August Foreign Minister Shevardnadze made a strong speech to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in which he made clear that these missiles were the only remaining obstacle to agreement and suggested there was no room for compromise. If the missiles really are third-country missiles, he suggested, then the West Germans must be in breach of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

On 26 August the *New York Times* reported that the US had offered a new verification plan to monitor an INF/SRINF accord. The plan would involve fewer intrusive on-site inspections. It also modified an earlier proposal that called for surprise inspections conducted on short notice. These "challenge" inspections would, under this latest proposal, be restricted to facilities which were known to house the medium- and shorter-range missiles. The *Times* cited senior American officials as saying that there were still difficult details to be negotiated on the verification issue.

Meanwhile, Chancellor Kohl announced on 26 August that the Federal Republic would get rid of its Pershing IA missiles on the condition that the United States and the Soviet Union agree, ratify and put into effect, an accord which would dismantle all their