



November 1974, U.S. President Gerald Ford met Soviet Leader Leonid Brezhnev at the Vozdvizhenka Military Airport in the U.S.S.R. The two men then took a 64-mile train ride to Vladivostok, where they concluded negotiations for SALT II.

either thought about by the Soviet attainment of parity.

In arms-control terms, SALT I could, most, be seen as a "confidence-building measure" and possibly a prerequisite for more substantial future agreements. And therein lay its main worth, as a symbol of equality and *détente*, of a new era of mutually-accommodating negotiations and agreements.

Hence also the follow-up accord that limited SALT-sanctioned BMD deployments to one site rather than two. The existing Moscow complex was vital to the U.S.S.R., as securing the heart of the nation against potential third-power enemies; continued BMD research was similarly vital to the prospect of perpetuating this "ultimate protection" — as well as to lingering aspirations for more ambitious security concepts. But the second was by itself of little value, since it could, at most direct attack away from one area to any one of a number of other similar but still unprotected targets. It therefore became a prime candidate for the moment when *détente* again needed political "boost", when the willingness to negotiate to mutual advantage had to be "proved" anew.

So also with Vladivostok. The equality there designated answered political

criticisms that rested on the mistaken impression of imbalance caused by SALT I's focus on missile-delivery vehicles. It also fleshed out SALT I's implicit acknowledgement of overall balance. Thus it underlined the equitability of SALT and made it more politically presentable. But it did nothing to alter the military irrelevance of SALT, nothing to alter existing dispositions or retard procurement of new weapon systems, nothing for hopes of arms reduction.

#### Lack of will

Today's SALT, foundering on the issues of the *Backfire* bomber and the "cruise" missile, merely reflect the lack of political will, the disrepair of *détente*. They are false issues, manipulated into artificially-presentable rationales for not negotiating. The U.S. insistence on including the *Backfire*, of which only a few are as yet deployed, is patently ridiculous — both in view of the fact that the plane could, in any case, only reach the U.S. on suicidal one-way missions at subsonic speeds (the vision of its refuelling in Havana in the midst of nuclear war surely deserves no comment!), and in view of the fact that the U.S. has more than 1,000 (FBS) fighter-bombers with a similar capacity to strike