

USSR," he said, "is ready to reach agreement on any other additional verification measures."

Summing up, the Soviet leader stated that "we propose that we should enter the third millenium without nuclear weapons, on the basis of mutually acceptable and strictly verifiable agreements."

Gorbachev made a strong pitch for his method of eliminating nuclear forces as opposed to President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative which would, in Reagan's words, make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete" by perhaps 2010. "Instead of wasting the next 10-15 years by developing new, extremely dangerous weapons in space, allegedly designed to make nuclear arms useless," the Soviet leader argued, "would it not be more sensible to start eliminating those arms and finally bring them down to zero?"

Emphasizing that his proposals were addressed, as he said, "to the whole world," Gorbachev tossed off a number of other suggestions, helpful to the arms reduction process, that could be initiated more immediately and which could involve many countries other than the US and the Soviet Union.

Referring to his extension of the Soviet moratorium on nuclear tests and his hopes for American cooperation in that field, he urged resumption of the trilateral negotiations, which included Britain, with the aim of drafting a comprehensive test ban treaty. He further expressed the hope that negotiations for a multi-lateral test ban could begin within the forum of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. He reiterated: "We declare unequivocally that verification is no problem so far as we are concerned." To complete the compass on banning nuclear explosions, he assured the non-aligned countries that the Soviet Union was ready to consult on amending the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty to cover underground, as well as underwater, atmospheric and outer space tests.

Although he inveighed against the weaponization of space, he did not propose any separate treaties on space or on anti-satellite weapons. He merely deplored the Star Wars programme and opted verbally for "large-scale projects of peaceful exploration of space by all of mankind."

He did argue that it was feasible, "even in this century" to completely eliminate chemical weapons. He urged that the talks at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament be intensified in order to conclude a convention banning chemical weapons and then destroying the stockpiles.

"We are prepared," he said, "for a timely declaration of the location of enterprises producing chemical weapons and for the cessation of their production." The Soviets were prepared to develop "procedures for destroying the relevant industrial

base" and then to eliminate the stocks, all under strict control, "including international on-site inspections."

Gorbachev also had suggestions for the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks in Vienna, as well as the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe. Pointing out that at last a framework for agreement was emerging in Vienna, he stressed adequate validation of any commitment to freeze troops at certain levels. To observe this, aside from national technical means, he proposed that "permanent verification posts could be established to monitor any military contingents entering the reduction zone."

As for the Stockholm talks, he said it was essential "to reduce the number of troops participating in major military manoeuvres notifiable under the Helsinki Final Act." But the bottleneck of these negotiations, he said, was the issue of notifications of major exercises. If agreement could not be reached on air, ground and naval issues now, perhaps a partial solution could be made involving ground and air forces and leaving the naval ones to the next stage of this conference.

Making a direct appeal to the Europeans for his peace initiative, Gorbachev argued that Europe had "a special mission. That mission is erecting a new edifice of detente." He applauded the role of the Europeans, as well as Canadians and Americans, in producing the "new thinking" involved in the Helsinki Final Act.

He also claimed that his disarmament initiative was aimed at providing "security in Asia," but it should not be dependent on resolving the "so-called regional conflicts" in Asia and elsewhere. He did suggest that the funds saved by this sweeping programme of disarmament would make available more funds for development in Third World countries, a timely reminder of the International Conference on Disarmament and Development which had been scheduled for Paris in the summer of 1986, but which has been indefinitely postponed.

Stressing at length the "pivotal" nature of peace and disarmament in Soviet foreign policy, Gorbachev stated that "the Soviet proposals place the USSR and the US in an equal position. These proposals do not attempt to outwit or outsmart the other side. We are proposing to take the road of sensible and responsible decision."

COMMENTARY

What are the aims of this unexpected and usually detailed proposal for world disarmament from the Soviet leader who has said that the present