

6. A COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR FREEZE

Background

Comprehensive nuclear freeze proposals generally call for a halt to all nuclear weapons production, testing and deployment in order to arrest the nuclear arms race while significant reductions are being negotiated. The concept of a nuclear freeze was frequently raised at the United Nations and was the subject of lively debate early in the eighties. In March 1980 Randall Forsberg, of the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies in Boston, drafted a resolution entitled "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race". The resolution stated that "...the United States and the Soviet Union should stop the nuclear arms race" and called for "a mutual freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and of missiles and of new aircraft designed primarily to deliver nuclear weapons."

The idea of a nuclear freeze appealed to many people who were increasingly concerned by the nuclear arms race. Their concern had been aggravated by the policies of the new Reagan Administration which appeared unenthusiastic about arms control and was slow to develop an arms control policy. Comments from senior administration officials suggesting the possibility of a limited nuclear war, and the impending deployment of US cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe did nothing to alleviate this anxiety. Support for the freeze movement grew quickly, therefore, in the first years of the Reagan Administration, generating a movement of substantial political strength. Early in 1982 a New York Times poll stated that 72 per cent of the American public were in favour of a freeze. And in June 1982 an estimated 750,000 people, including Canadians, staged an anti-nuclear rally in New York to mark the Second Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament.

While this degree of support for and awareness of a freeze was a relatively new phenomenon in arms control issues, the concept itself had been