



—UPI photo

Leonid Brezhnev (left), general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, chats with President Nixon after offering a toast

to mark the initialling of the strategic arms limitation pacts reached during the U.S. President's visit to Moscow.

of the offensive strategic missiles agreement — the absence of effective qualitative restrictions, which means that, where improvement and replacement of existing weaponry is concerned, the nuclear-arms race can go on unabated.

There is every indication that it will. Both the United States and the Soviet Union are working on a new supersonic strategic bomber (the Soviet Union has already flown one). The Russians are modernizing their fleet of missile-carrying submarines, both by replacing diesel-powered units with nuclear-powered and by developing an SLBM with a longer range than the now standard SS-N-6, the SS-N-8. They are also experimenting with multiple warheads, though apparently not yet independently-targeted. The Americans, for their part, are in the process of updating both their *Minuteman* ICBM and their ballistic-missile submarine forces. They also intend to replace the ten oldest nuclear submarines, which are not slated for conversion from the *Polaris* to the *Poseidon* missile, with the new *Trident*-class submarines, which will carry the first SLBMs of intercontinental range. Finally, the accuracy of both the American and Soviet missile warheads is continuously being improved by better guidance systems. Much research and development work is also being done on manoeuvrable warheads that would be able to evade ABM defences.

In sum, the offensive strategic mis-

siles agreement can be called an arms-control measure only if one interprets that term very broadly. It *does* put an upper limit on the number of missile-launchers the two super-powers will have, and it *does* establish a rough equilibrium between American and Soviet capabilities in this field. On the other hand, at the end of the life of the agreement in May 1977, the offensive nuclear forces of both treaty partners will undoubtedly be quite a bit stronger than they are today. Their "overkill" capacity, already tremendous, will be greater still. One cannot know, of course, but a case could certainly be made for the contention that this increase in strength would not be much greater without a limiting agreement, so-called.

So, if one took into consideration only the hard-and-fast results attained, the final verdict on SALT I would have to be that it represents at best a tiny step in the direction of nuclear-arms control. It does not even touch the issue of nuclear disarmament.

Accomplishment in talks

As for the less obvious achievements of SALT, the one that should perhaps be classed as the most important is that the two super-powers persevered in negotiating for two-and-a-half years until they reached the sort of agreement that was sealed in Moscow last May. They did so in spite of all the difficulties that emerged

'Overkill' capacity will be greater by accord's end during May of 1977