

for comprehensive disarmament, a short-lived prelude to the "spirit of Geneva" at that summer's summit conference.

The next major Soviet initiative toward dismantling all nuclear and conventional forces was made before the UN General Assembly on 18 September 1959 by Nikita Khrushchev, a three-stage, four-year plan, that appeared visionary but helped spark negotiations for several years. From then onwards and throughout the seventies, a fruitful period of arms control negotiations took place. As a result the two superpowers were jointly committed in the preambles to several treaties—the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the Seabed Treaty of 1971, the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, as well as the unratified Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974 and the SALT II Treaty of 1979—to seek general and complete disarmament in nuclear and conventional arms. And in the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 the idea of GCD was a central factor, still to be acted upon by both sides.

But it was not until after the INF and START arms control talks broke down in 1983 with a Soviet walkout, and the rise to power of the youngest Soviet leader in decades, Mikhail Gorbachev, that the Russians returned to the grand design in disarmament proposals, as a means of resuming negotiations with the United States.

In August 1985, the Soviets announced a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing until the end of that year, and in September tabled wide-ranging proposals at the Geneva arms control talks. In November came the first summit talks between President Ronald Reagan and any Soviet leader, sessions that at least appeared to break the ice in that relationship and suggested some new opportunities for future arms reduction negotiations. On January 1 the Soviet moratorium was extended.

THE GORBACHEV PROPOSALS

Secretary-General Gorbachev's initiative, presented on 15 January 1986, stated that "the Soviet Union is proposing a step-by-step and consistent process of ridding the earth of nuclear weapons, to be implemented and completed within the next 15 years, before the end of this century."

Saying that his country "as early as 1946 was the first to raise the question of prohibiting the production and use of atomic weapons and to make atomic energy serve peaceful purposes for the benefit of mankind," Gorbachev proposed a three-stage process to eliminate nuclear weapons completely.

In the first stage, over the next five to eight years, the USSR and the US would reduce by 50 per cent

those nuclear weapons "that can reach each other's territory." Each side would be allowed to retain "no more than 6,000 warheads" on the remaining strategic delivery vehicles. At the same time, the two superpowers would "mutually renounce the development, testing and deployment of space-strike weapons," the United States would join the Soviet moratorium on nuclear testing, and both would urge other states to adhere to such a test ban.

Also as part of stage one, the superpowers would eliminate their intermediate-range missiles in Europe, including Soviet SS-20s and American ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles. In addition, Britain and France would pledge "not to build up their respective nuclear arms" and the US would agree not to transfer its strategic or medium-range missiles to any other country.

In the second stage, starting no later than 1990 and lasting five to seven years, "other nuclear powers" would pledge to freeze all their nuclear arms and begin to eliminate any of their weapons installed in other territories, thus commencing the process of multilateral nuclear disarmament.

At the same time, the US and USSR would continue making reductions agreed on during the first stage and take further measures designed to get rid of their medium-range nuclear weapons and freeze their tactical nuclear systems.

Having completed their 50 per cent reductions of strategic launchers, the US and the USSR, along with all other nuclear powers, would eliminate their tactical nuclear weapons with a range of 1,000 kilometres or less. At the same stage, all the major industrial powers would mandatorily become members of the Soviet-American accord on the prohibition of space-strike weapons. All nuclear powers then would agree to stop nuclear weapons tests.

Finally, as an impediment to future weapons technology, there would be a ban, as Gorbachev put it, "on the development of non-nuclear weapons based on new physical principles," weapons whose destructive capacity is "close to that of nuclear arms or other weapons of mass destruction."

In the third stage, beginning no later than 1995, all remaining nuclear weapons would be eradicated and a universal accord drawn up proclaiming that no such weapons should ever again come into being. "By the end of 1999 there will be no nuclear weapons on earth."

In case the Americans or anyone else should be concerned at past Soviet reluctance to verify arms reduction programmes adequately, Gorbachev stated that destruction of weapons would be carried out on an agreed schedule for each stage, and verification would be carried out both by national technical means and through on-site inspection. "The