
Soviet — US Summit

On December 8th 1987, the Secretary-General of the CPSU Mikhail S. Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan signed in Washington a treaty eliminating medium-range and shorter-range nuclear missiles. Under the terms of the agreement, the United States will eliminate about 850 medium- and shorter-range missiles, and the Soviet Union will scrap about 1,750 missiles over all. Describing the event, Mr. Gorbachev said that December 8, 1987 was «a date that will be inscribed in history». (International Herald Tribune, Dec. 9, 1987)

The total number of these missiles to be eliminated over three years represents despite the large number, only 4% of the world nuclear arsenal. But the great importance of this treaty lies in the fact that it is the first treaty ever to eliminate an entire class of offensive nuclear arms. The treaty also represents a historical precedent that confirms the realistic possibility to eliminate nuclear arms and other arms of annihilation. Forty two years after the US dropped its first A-bomb on Hiroshima, initiating the nuclear arms race, the treaty now comes as a new hope for humanity to eliminate all classes of nuclear weapons, and as «The first step down the road leading to a nuclear-free world» as Mr. Gorbachev remarked. (IHT, Dec. 9, 1987).

Product of the New Thinking

This historical treaty represents the first outcome, on the international level, of the 3-year-old new political thinking in the Soviet Union. In contrast to the US's continuing in the SDI program, the Soviet Union has called for a halt to all programs aiming at developing and expanding nuclear arms, and to start negotiations to eliminate these arms. These peaceful orientations were materialized in the Soviet Union's unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, which started in August 1985. Despite the Soviet Union's appeals for the US to join this moratorium, the US continued its nuclear testing, unmoved by the world-wide condemnation. And on January 15, 1986, the Soviet Union called for

the elimination of all nuclear arms and other arms of annihilation before the year 2000, in addition to banning the militarization of outer space. The US rejected this plan when it was discussed at the Gorbachev-Reagan summit in Reykjavik, held on October 11-12th, 1986.

In February 1987, the Soviet Union suggested having a treaty to eliminate all medium-range and shorter-range nuclear weapons in Europe, while discussions continue to prepare a treaty for reducing nuclear strategic arsenals.

The US acceptance of the Soviet Union's proposals concerning the medium- and shorter-range missiles, paved the way for the Soviet and US negotiators in Geneva last April to outline drafts for this treaty. On October 30, 1987, the Soviet Union's foreign minister, Edward Shevardnadze and US secretary of state, George Schultz, signed the draft of this treaty, opening the road for the Dec. 7 summit in Washington.

Several factors have forced the Reagan administration to take the first step down the road of eliminating nuclear weapons, what it had rejected for decades. The US ruling class realized the difficulties facing its dreams of becoming the dominant force in this world. The Soviet Union and the socialist countries have established a defensive force capable of deterring the US—Nato military forces. This was manifested in the final joint US—Soviet declaration, which emphasized that nuclear war should never break out and that in such a war there are no winners.

In addition, the heavy economic and financial burdens of the arms race affects not only the Soviet Union but the US as well. This is clearly seen in the economic crisis of the capitalist world in general and of the US in particular, manifested in the increased deficits of the US budget and trade balance and the stockmarket's crash.

The consistent peaceful Soviet initiatives have added another factor. These initiatives gained world-wide support and have embarrassed the US «peaceful» rhetoric. And finally, Ronald Reagan is in his last year as the

president of the US, had failed for the past 7 years to strike a success in his foreign policies. And aspiring to win the Nobel peace prize, Reagan responded positively to Gorbachev's proposals concerning medium-range and shorter-range missiles.

Regional Conflicts

The subjects discussed at the summit included, in addition to the nuclear arms issue, the regional conflicts and the human rights issues. But the two sides have failed to score a success in neither the regional conflicts issue or the issue of human rights. This was due to the US' continued stubborn stand which views the solution to these conflicts in terms of US interests and the interests of its allies.

Concerning the Middle East conflict, the US attempted to sidestep this issue, concentrating instead on the Afghanistan and Gulf war conflicts. The Soviet Union reconfirmed its position concerning the Middle East conflict, and renewed its call for the convening of an international peace conference with the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and all concerned parties including the PLO on equal footing as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In his press conference in Washington before leaving the US, Gorbachev indicated that he had asked the US President to rethink the stand of the Reagan administration concerning the international conference. But this call was rejected by the Reagan administration.

Undoubtedly, the reason behind the absence of the Middle East conflict on the agenda of the regional conflicts is due to the Arab regimes' positions and particularly to the results of the Amman summit which considered the Middle East conflict a second priority to the Gulf war problem.

As for the other regional conflicts, the US rejected the Soviet proposal to form a UN naval force to guarantee the freedom of navigation in the Gulf. And the US administration rejected as well a halt to its military and financial support to the counterrevolutionaries in Afghanistan, despite the Soviet Union's declared readiness to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. ●