

# INFs OUT OF EUROPE NOW!

A Gallup poll conducted in February of this year found that 86% of Canadians regard it as important that the US and the USSR reach an arms control agreement within the next few years. The recent Soviet offer for the removal of intermediate nuclear forces (INF) from Europe as part of the Gorbachev plan to eliminate all nuclear weapons needs world-wide public support to become reality.

The proposal to eliminate medium range missiles (1,000 — 5,000 km.) in Europe would involve Soviet SS-20 and SS-4 missiles, and US Pershing II and ground-launched Cruise missiles (GLCMs) within five years. If an agreement can be reached, it will be a significant first step for arms control.

Such an agreement, granted, would represent only approximately 3% of the nuclear forces on both sides. The Soviets would withdraw all of their approximately 270 SS-20 missiles (as well as nearly 100 SS-4s that are already being phased out of Europe), but it would be entitled to keep 33 INF missiles (100 warheads) in Soviet Asia. The US would remove its current 316 (of a planned deployment of 572) Pershing II and ground-launched Cruise missiles from Europe as well, but would retain the right to deploy 100 INF missiles on its own territory.

We need to be reminded of the fact that there have been no positive results since 1974 in regard to arms control negotiations. The US military-industrial complex with its right-wing allies in NATO have stalled any US-Soviet agreements since SALT I.

We are witnessing either an historic beginning for serious arms control and mutual security, or continued resistance and scuttling of any progress in this area. The

latter leads to a nuclear holocaust.

An agreement on this issue could be the first in which both sides would actually destroy a maximum of 1,500 warheads. All previous agreements have only set limits or caps on the number of warheads that could be deployed. The US would prefer to convert their Pershing IIs into shorter range missiles and deploy them in Europe. The Soviets want them destroyed because they can easily be converted back into their longer range format.

Other arguments put forward by opponents of an agreement include verification questions, conventional weapons imbalance, and remaining shorter range missiles.

The Soviets have indicated that they would be prepared to consider on-site inspection if it applied equally to both sides. Jack Mendelsohn, former member of the US SALT II and START delegations, stated the following in the April 1987 issue of *Arms Control Today*. "What you have to keep in mind when considering the verification issue is that we have been able to follow 441 Soviet SS-20s without elaborate verification procedures. We have also been able to follow the approximately 130 SS-12/22s and the coming online of the new SS-23s. We have extensive verification experience in dismantlement and destruction procedures under the SALT treaties without on-site inspection."

The US is insisting that their remaining 100 INF warheads could be deployed in Alaska where they would be within range of Soviet territory. The 100 Soviet INF warheads in Asia would be unable to reach either Western Europe or the United States.

Last October, at the Reykjavik summit, Gorbachev offered to negotiate the removal and

destruction of remaining shorter range missiles once an INF agreement is signed. There are no reasons to expect resistance from the Soviets to an agreement on both intermediate- and shorter-range missiles at the same time.

Numerous studies of the European conventional military balance, contrary to speculation in some quarters, indicate that the Warsaw Pact does not enjoy an overall military superiority over NATO. Also, everyone knows that a conventional conflict in Europe would lead to launching the nuclear weapons aboard US, French and British submarines in the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

We should welcome the positive statements of the Canadian government concerning current negotiations and also urge it to take more action to demonstrate that it is truly serious on this matter.

Essentially, the Soviets have offered the United States its own position. The ball is now in NATO's court, to be dealt with at its meeting in Reykjavik June 14. It will then become clear whether NATO is interested in arms control or whether it is opposed to this objective. The INF negotiations began in 1980 and we now have an opportunity to achieve a significant arms control agreement this year.

It depends on what we all do over the next few months to build massive world-wide pressure. Start now by writing to Prime Minister Mulroney and External Affairs Minister Clark, and phoning your local Member of Parliament as well. Tell them you want Canada to take a strong position in favour of an immediate INF agreement as a first step toward the elimination of nuclear weapons from Europe — where presently is deployed the highest concentration of nuclear weapons on this planet.

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