

# **NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**

By

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I N F TREATY - IMPACT AND OPTIONS  
FOR INDIA

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Dr. Tarneja, Principal Shirhatti, Students of  
Lala Lajpat Rai College, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here and deliver the Annual Lala Lajpat Rai Lecture for this year. Lala Lajpat Rai was a nationalist, a great freedom fighter and made tremendous sacrifices in the march towards Indian freedom and ultimately paid for it with his life in 1928. It is sixty years since he passed away. Many of us who have been enjoying the fruits of labours and sacrifices of this great man, the 'Punjab Kesari', have tended to take our independence and nationhood for granted. It is a difficult world we live in and over the past few decades escalation of tensions between the super powers has led to an escalation of the arms race, leading to a near nuclear armageddon. The voices of countries like India for de-escalation and a new world order without nuclear arms has been a cry in wilderness. It is only in the recent past that saner counsels are beginning to be heard.

During the past two years, there have been very positive and almost unprecedented developments in the area of disarmament and arms control negotiations and the new year has started on a bright and hopeful note. The major developments during 1986 were the Reykjavik Summit between General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan and the Delhi Declaration jointly issued by our Prime Minister and General Secretary Gorbachev. Although the Reykjavik Summit did not result in any formal agreement, possibly due to the controversial issue of the Star wars, the fact is that the two sides reached agreement on a number of important measures of arms reduction including proposals

to effect a 50 % cut in nuclear strategic arsenals in five years and to eliminate all strategic arsenals in the following five years. The Delhi Declaration, which came soon after the Reykjavik Summit, was a very important, cogent and forward-looking document which, apart from dealing with present-day issues, proceeded to lay down principles which should govern the new world order. The importance of these two major developments during 1986 cannot be minimised.

The high point of the positive developments of the last two years was without doubt the conclusion in December last of the treaty eliminating all land-based intermediate-range (1000 to 5000 kilometres) nuclear missiles and the short-range (500 to 100 kilometres) nuclear missiles. The agreement would involve the destruction of about 1550 Soviet nuclear war-heads and about 400 American ones. The missiles which are to be destroyed are not old and obsolete ones; they include the very modern nuclear weapons systems like the Soviet SS-20 and the U.S. Pershing. In terms of numbers, they may represent only about 4 % of the entire Soviet and American arsenals of nuclear weapons. However, the importance of the INF accord, as it is commonly referred to, lies not so much in the numbers of missiles covered by it, but on various other basic and important considerations. It is the first accord involving the destruction or elimination of a class of not obsolete but sophisticated and effective nuclear weapons since these weapons of mass destruction came into being some 42 years ago. The accord marks a departure from the concept of arms control which, in the past, involved only getting rid of old and obsolete weapons while retain at even higher levels the new and effective ones. The accord recognises and accepts the disarmament approach which during the past decade had been considered unrealistic and utopian. It represents the second agreement in the entire history of disarmament negotiations

calling for the elimination of a category of weapons and thus constituting a genuine disarmament measure; the first was the Biological Weapons convention which came into force in 1973. Apart from these historical factors, what is perhaps of the greatest interest and relevance for future agreements is the breakthrough achieved in the INF accord on the very sensitive and complicated question of verification, including on-site inspection, which had consistently blocked any progress in disarmament negotiations in the past.

The INF agreement will, no doubt, be ratified by the two Governments in the very near future and will thus come into force. Eminent personalities the world over, including our own Prime Minister, have welcomed it as an important and positive step towards nuclear disarmament, that is the total elimination of this class of weapons of mass destruction. However, and I say this without in any way minimising the great importance of the Treaty, we must not let ourselves be carried away in a wave of euphoria and jubilation. While the Treaty has, in general, been received well from quarters, there has also been opposition from very responsible and influential quarters. Many leading statesmen in the United States, including Henry Kissinger and Brezinski, have opposed it. Lord Carrington, the Secretary-General of NATO has cautioned the world against the euphoria and accord engenders which might 'push us towards some mythical non-nuclear Nirvana'. Mrs. Thatcher cannot stop talking about the virtues of nuclear weapons. The French defence Minister referred to the INF accord as a 'Nuclear Munich'. The military and strategic establishment in the West has consistently maintained that a nuclear weapon free world would be dangerous and unrealistic. It is certainly to the Credit of President Reagan that he has, in the face of so much still opposition from his own side, gone ahead and signed the Treaty.

The INF treaty is only a first step, however important, and welcome that step is, and unless the first step is followed by more steps, we shall remain where we are. We cannot forget what happened in the area of the testing of the nuclear weapons. After years of negotiations, the partial Test Ban Treaty was signed in 1963. This banned nuclear Weapon Tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water. But it permitted continued underground testing- The preamble to this Treaty referred to the need to achieve discontinuance of all tests of nuclear weapons and to the determination of the signatories to continue negotiations to this end. Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since such a pious declaration and we still have no comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The partial Test Ban Treaty was also hailed as an important first step at the time but the follow-up promised in the Treaty never materialised. Let us hope that the same will not happen to the INF Treaty. There is cause for a certain amount of optimism in the present instance because the super powers have clearly and in no vague or uncertain terms indicated that they expect to achieve the second step - a major one involving the 50 % reduction in strategic offensive systems - at the next Summit which will hopefully take place sometime this year. When this materialises, I believe one can, with a fair degree of satisfaction, accept that we are on the right path towards a world free of nuclear weapons. What is the impact of these developments on India ? What are the options available ?

There have been some statements from various quarters in India to the effect that with the conclusion of the INF Treaty India should give serious consideration to the question of our acceding to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Certainly, this is an understandable attitude because India's opposition to the NPT was essentially that it was an unequal Treaty, that it was one-sided

it did not conform to the basic principle enunciated by the United Nations in 1965 when the General Assembly urged the speedy conclusion of a non-proliferation treaty which should 'embody an acceptable balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations of the nuclear and non-nuclear Powers'. It is ironic that the very concept of non-proliferation' was an Indian initiative. Prior to 1965, the discussions at the United Nations centred around the need to prevent the spread of dissemination of nuclear weapons. It was India that, in 1965, forcefully argued that proliferation had two aspects - the vertical and horizontal and that the first was as, if not more, important than the other. The U.N. resolution to which I referred a moment ago accepted the two aspects of proliferation but the Super Powers, who negotiated the N.P.T. chose to ignore this basic principles. What emerged in 1968, though termed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, was in fact only a Treaty on the non-dissemination of nuclear weapons. Throughout the debates on the draft treaty, both in the negotiating forum in Geneva and at the United Nations in New York, India continued to express the overall objection that the draft prepared by the Super Powers dealt only with the question of horizontal proliferation and that there was only a very casual and passing reference in Article VI of the Treaty, to the issue of vertical proliferation. India, along with a few like-minded countries refused to sign such an unequal Treaty. Our stand was fully vindicated when the three Review Conferences on the NPT failed to achieve any worthwhile conclusions because of very strong objections from various quarters to the non-implementation of Article VI of the Treaty dealing with the issue of vertical proliferation.

The question now is whether with the conclusion of the

can now consider that our earlier objections to the Treaty are no longer valid. Personally, I do not think so. As I said earlier, the INF is important and it is a step in the right direction. But, I repeat, it is only a first step which does not have sufficient force unless followed by more steps. I feel that if the Super Powers, when their heads meet in Moscow later this year, agree on a Treaty involving a 50 % reduction of the nuclear strategic systems, the time may be opportune for us to have a look at the NPT. Quite obviously, the NPT, in its present form, will need to be modified in that Article VI will have to be expanded and elaborated. This may not prove too difficult if indeed there is, as we all hope, progress towards nuclear disarmament through steps such as the INF and the accord which we expect will be concluded later this year covering the reduction of 50 % of the strategic stockpiles. In such a situation, if there is a drastic reduction in the discriminatory nature of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, India will have to consider acceding to the NPT.

India has consistently opposed moves by certain countries to bring it to sign the NPT. The reasons for our not doing so, have already been stated by me earlier. With all the might of the Super Powers and various forums like the I.A.E.A., some countries notably Pakistan have been going ahead with clandestine Nuclear weapons programmes, and if one were to believe the International Press, Pakistan is pursuing a Nuclear Weapon programme vigorously and is just about a screddriver turn away from the nuclear bomb. The threat to India from this development



is abundantly clear. Our successive Prime Ministers have rightly stated in one form or the other that India would be forced to keep its nuclear option open under the circumstances. It would be foolish to isolate regional nuclear threats and issues from the larger global nuclear arms race. A world without nuclear arms is an ideal scenario, but a world where only a part of parts is nuclear arms-free is not what the world leaders should aim for. Annihilation of nuclear weapons from the face of this globe is what we should strive for in the years to come and given the mind of statesmanship provided by the super powers presently, there is some hope for optimism.