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Background note

on

Developments in US-Soviet relations since the
breakdown in arms control negotiations at
the end of 1983

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Developments in US-Soviet relations since the
breakdown in arms control negotiations
at the end of 1983

1. The INF talks¹ were broken off by the USSR on 23 November 1983 without a date being set for their resumption. No date was set by the USSR for the resumption of the START² talks when the last round ended on 8 December 1983 and the MBFR talks³ were also subsequently suspended for three months on 15 December 1983.
2. Although the INF and START talks have not yet been resumed, the MBFR talks have restarted in Vienna and both the United States and the Soviet Union continue to participate in the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (which is taking place in the CSCE framework) and in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva which is seeking, amongst other things, to draft a treaty banning chemical weapons.
3. In January 1984, President Reagan declared that he was determined to pursue a constructive and realistic dialogue with the Soviet Union and proposed regular high-level consultations.⁴
4. On 13 February, Mr Chernenko, immediately after his nomination as successor to Mr Andropov, declared that he was in favour of dialogue with all states, but he denounced the acts of "the aggressive forces of imperialism".⁵
5. On 8 May 1984, the Soviet Union confirmed its boycott of the Olympic Games in Los Angeles. On 12 May, Tass strongly denounced the foreign policy of the United States.

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- 1) Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Talks.
 - 2) Strategic Arms Reduction Talks.
 - 3) Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks.
 - 4) Le Figaro, 28 September 1984.
 - 5) Le Figaro, 14 February 1984.

6. On 16 June, Mr Reagan indicated that he was ready to meet Mr Chernenko, provided that such a meeting was well prepared.⁶
7. On 29 June 1984, the Soviet Union proposed negotiations for the demilitarisation of space. The United States, in a move which is understood to have taken the Soviet Union by surprise, promptly accepted the proposal.⁷ However, following disagreement between the two sides about the agenda, these talks (which had been tentatively scheduled to commence on 18 September) did not in fact take place.
8. In his address to the UN General Assembly on 24 September 1984, President Reagan offered the Soviet Union regular consultation on regional issues, the exchange of military information and a new effort in arms-control negotiations.⁸ On arms control, Mr Reagan suggested that the United States and the Soviet Union should build a bigger umbrella under which it can operate. In his speech to the UN, Mr Gromyko accused the United States of "frenzied militarisation" and called for "concrete deeds and not verbal assurances." During the same week, Mr Reagan met Mr Gromyko, his first meeting with a member of the Soviet leadership.
9. In an interview published in the Washington Post on 17 October, President Chernenko expressed hopes for better relations with the United States and singled out a number of issues, agreement on which would help to improve Soviet-United States relations.
10. Immediately after his re-election, President Reagan called on 7 November for serious arms control negotiations with Moscow and the idea of global negotiations on disarmament was floated in Washington. (It is understood that the idea of such 'umbrella talks' is that they might bring together in one larger forum separate negotiations which have been taking place in several different fora⁹).

6) Le Figaro, 28 September 1984.

7) Le Monde, 4 September 1984.

8) The Guardian, 25 September 1984.

9) Le Monde, 18 November 1984.

11. On 21 November, the Australian Government announced that, as a result of an Australian diplomatic initiative, the United States and the Soviet Union had both agreed to send teams of experts to Australia early in 1985, in the context of the possibility of the resumption of arms control talks.¹⁰

12. A statement was simultaneously issued in Washington and in Moscow on 22 November 1984, indicating that the United States and Soviet Union had agreed to enter new talks with "the aim of achieving mutually acceptable accords on the entire complex of questions concerning nuclear and space weapons". Mr Schultz and Mr Gromyko are to meet in Geneva on 7 and 8 January and will attempt "to work out a joint understanding of the subject and the aims of such talks".¹¹

10) The Times, 22 November 1984.

11) The Financial Times, 23 November 1984.

