

Reagan Launches Campaign for the MX

President Reagan's proposal to deploy the MX nuclear missile in existing missile silos has touched off a spirited congressional debate about strategic weapons. Under the proposal, 100 MX's will be swiftly deployed in southeastern Wyoming and western Nebraska. Meanwhile, research will begin on a new, smaller, single-warhead missile, which may or may not be deployed sometime in the future. The proposal was developed by a panel of former government officials and weapons consultants, and officially endorsed at the White House on 19 April (*Science*, 29 April, p. 486).

Much of the controversy stems from the fact that the missiles will be vulnerable to Soviet attack, and therefore useless unless fired quickly during a tense moment in superpower relations. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has told the Senate Armed Services Committee that a safer, less risky basing mode on land is simply not available. A decade of scientific effort to develop a survivable, practical basing mode has been without avail, he said. "By now it is clear that this [goal] was an illusion." It cost billions of dollars to recognize that fact.

The present plan has been endorsed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of State, who say that it demonstrates U.S. *machismo* and that it will facilitate Soviet concessions at the arms talks in Geneva. On the opposite side are a variety of liberal and conservative congressmen, lobby groups, and churches including the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Council for a Livable World, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the United Church of Christ, American Baptist Churches, the Catholic Social Justice Lobby, the United Methodist Church, the United Presbyterian Church, the Episcopal Church, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the National Education Association, the United Electrical Workers, the Sierra Club, and Friends of the Earth. They want the MX program shut down.

Paul Warnke, a former strategic arms negotiator and assistant secretary of defense, has noted that the

plan could actually torpedo the President's arms control initiatives. "You can't expect to get reductions in the number of ICBM launchers at the same time that you're deploying counterforce silo-busting ICBM warheads," Warnke says. "It interferes with [Reagan's proposal for] deep cuts in ICBMs." The President's panel of experts recommended modifications of the initiatives, but the President has thus far refused to go along.

Under a bill approved by the last session of Congress, the members have until the end of May to disapprove of the MX basing plan. Construction of the first ten missiles will proceed unless appropriations for the current fiscal year are rescinded. The vote is expected to be close.

—R. JEFFREY SMITH

Nuclear Club Certifies Israel's Membership

The United States is once again a dues-paying member of the global nuclear club known as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The United States rejoined the club in March after walking out 6 months ago to protest the treatment of Israel. The only unresolved question now is whether or not Congress will agree to restore \$4.5 million it cut from the "voluntary contribution" made to support IAEA research.

The Reagan Administration announced last September that it was boycotting the IAEA and withholding dues because a group of Third World nations voted to expel Israel from a meeting. (The expulsion was meant as a punishment for Israel's bombing of an Iraqi reactor the year before.) The U.S. delegates walked out of the IAEA immediately, saying that Israel's credentials were in perfect order and that the agency had better abstain from political gestures if it wished to enjoy America's continued financial support. There followed a period of "reassessment."

U.S. officials were just preparing to declare this period at an end when a new problem arose. Congress, eager to join the Administration in thumping the IAEA, tacked a disciplinary measure onto an appropriations bill in the

frantic last days of the 1982 session. Sponsored by Senator Robert Kasten, Jr. (R-Wis.), the amendment said that there would be no more U.S. contributions to the IAEA until the agency's board guaranteed Israel's membership and promised it would be able to participate in all meetings.

"It is hard to imagine a more damaging amendment," one congressional aide says. "We had withdrawn because the IAEA was becoming too politicized, and then Congress took a highly political action relating to the agency. Boy, it made us look bad." The Kasten amendment also cut \$4.5 million from the \$14.5 million U.S. contribution to research, much of which is spent on work on nuclear safeguards at American laboratories.

At the IAEA board meeting on 22 February, Director General Hans Blix mentioned that he intended to mail a letter to the U.S. government informing it of Israel's status as a member in good standing. American officials had consulted with Soviet and European delegates in advance, urging them to say nothing. "Everyone held their breath," says one observer, "and it passed the board without objection." Blix's note arrived at the State Department in March, and Congress allowed the dues to be forwarded to the IAEA in Vienna.

The Administration also seeks to restore the voluntary contribution to its full level in a supplemental appropriation to the 1983 foreign aid bill. The fate of this measure is uncertain, however, for all the aid bills are caught in the controversy that surrounds the request for emergency assistance to Central America.—ELIOT MARSHALL

Soviet Scientists Attack Reagan ABM Speech

Nearly 250 top Soviet scientists have denounced President Reagan's recent proposal for accelerated research on antiballistic missile systems (*Science*, 8 April, p. 170). In a statement appearing last month in *Tass*, the scientists said that Reagan's plan was "a dangerous illusion, which may cause an even more threatening spiral of the arms race. . . . The U.S. Administration displays utmost irre-