

The tests are not to check the reliability of existing stocks of nuclear weapons. They are for developing new and more deadly weapons.

In fact, at a news conference given by leading US Congress members in April this year, it was announced that only 3.5 per cent of the tests carried out by the US since 1945 were to check existing stocks.

The Pentagon is developing a whole series of new weapons. Most of them are now in the stage of field testing. These include warheads for the latest MX, Trident-II, and Midgetman intercontinental ballistic missiles, as well as aerial bombs for the new B-1B and Stealth strategic bombers.

Trigger

And at the centre of these new developments is the Star Wars programme. The X-ray lasers, microwaves and particle beams this programme requires depend on using a nuclear explosion as a priming mechanism.

Indeed, one-quarter of the 18 nuclear tests in Nevada in 1985 were intended for the development of X-ray lasers.

None of these weapons are defensive weapons. They are part of the Pentagon search for military superiority.

But this is a mirage, and a very dangerous one. The Soviet Union has made it clear that while it will do everything possible to achieve disarmament, it will not allow US imperialism to gain superiority.

The Pentagon's latest weapons programme presents a qualitatively new danger to peace. We are actually at a watershed.

As Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov has pointed out, if we allow this new arms race to take off into space, it will quickly get out of control.

Its dependence on computers for making decisions radically increases the chances of war by accident.

Indeed Star Wars and the new generation of nuclear weapons

totally upset the military balance in a way that destabilises the world situation.

Now is the time to draw back. The way to do that is to ban all tests. For this would halt the whole development programme for Star Wars and the new generation of nuclear weapons.

In effect, it would freeze the

A new Soviet booklet, Stop Nuclear Explosions, exposes the US administration's ceaseless striving for nuclear supremacy and sets out Soviet proposals over more than 30 years to halt the nuclear arms race and abolish nuclear weapons.

It can be obtained from Novosti Press Agency, 3 Rosary Gardens, London SW7 and from progressive bookshops.

nuclear balance in the world — a necessary step for starting the process of negotiating actual reductions in armaments.

This is why the campaign for a test ban treaty is so vital for the future of humanity.

Hopeful Signs

The campaign for a test ban treaty is not only the most vital task in the struggle for peace today. It is also a campaign which can be won.

Washington's stalling arguments about verification no longer have any credibility.

For example, recently US and Soviet scientists placed the first of three seismometers near the

Soviet Union's testing site at Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan.

This arose from an agreement signed between a US environmental group based in New York, the Natural Resources Defence Council, and the Soviet Academy of Sciences last May.

In return, the group intends to set up seismometers near the US testing ground in Nevada to supply information to the Soviet Academy's scientists.

Mobilise

In a sense, this project will amount to the unofficial establishment of a form of on-site inspection in both countries.

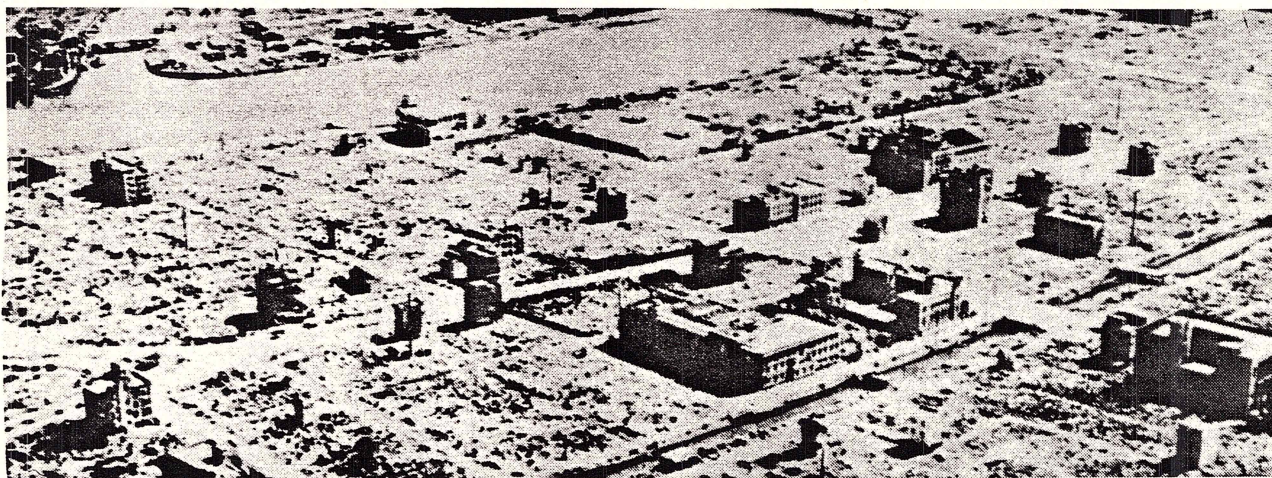
The US and the Soviet Union have agreed to discuss the possibility of a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests later this year.

These are hopeful signs. But the fight is far from over. Too much is at stake for the powerful military industrial complex in the US.

But there is also too much at stake for ordinary people in the world to let the Pentagon get away with it.

It is our responsibility to mobilise them as never before, so that they can impose their will for peace on the US warmongers.

Let us all pledge ourselves to do just that. There could be no better way of ensuring that there will be no more Hiroshimas and Nagasakis.



A Japanese city devastated — not to end the war quickly and save lives, but to ensure that Japan was occupied by the US and not the Soviet Union.