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US AND USSR REACH AGREEMENT ON NPT TEXT

The US and USSR, after 11th-hour negotiations in Geneva, placed a nonproliferation treaty text before the disarmament conference that reconvened there this week. Agreement on the draft came after Moscow accepted the US version of Article III--on safeguards--the main sticking point and a provision left blank in earlier drafts. The Soviets had previously insisted, against US wishes, that Article III should provide for the application of only International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards to nonnuclear states. If the Soviets had held to this position, an arrangement that would allow IAEA to work out a mutually acceptable safeguards system with EURATOM would have been ruled out.

The joint draft represents several other US-Soviet compromises, including agreement reached this week on provisions covering the duration of the treaty (25 years, after which a conference will decide its future) and the method for amending it (by a majority of its signers, which must include those who have nuclear weapons now and countries represented on the IAEA board of governors at the time of amendment). Additional concessions probably will be sought by some of the nonnuclear states at Geneva, but a majority of the delegates at the conference is expected to approve submission of the document to the UN General Assembly in March.

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