

---

# Defense Report

AUSA



---

## **A Freeze on Nuclear Weapons—The Public Knows the Realities**

Given the proper conditions, just about anyone would favor limitations on the number of nuclear weapons in the hands of the United States, the Soviet Union or any of the other current members of the nuclear "club." It is no small wonder, then, that the nuclear freeze movement has gained a substantial number of supporters. But in all the furor over the strength of the freeze movement little attention has been paid to solid evidence that the public expects difficulty in assuring Soviet compliance with such an agreement.

In September, 1982, a poll conducted by the Gallup organization for the *Wall Street Journal* reported that 66 percent of the respondents would not trust the USSR to abide by the provisions of an arms agreement. The same respondents had viewed the "pro-freeze" groups more favorably (44 percent) than unfavorably (33 percent), reinforcing the conclusion that the freeze is favored in concept but not considered a realistic possibility.

There is certainly nothing new about U.S. public attitudes toward the USSR. In a poll taken by Gallup in 1946, 72 percent of the people responding were convinced that the USSR would not let the United Nations prevent their manufacture of nuclear weapons. In 1978, 66 percent of those answering the NBC/Associated Press poll said the Soviets could not be trusted to live up to an agreement to relax tensions. More recently, a 1982 poll by ABC News/*The Washington Post* showed that 80 percent of the participants agreed that the USSR would cheat on any nuclear freeze agreement.

The pragmatism displayed by the respondents in that same ABC News/*Washington Post* survey should tell the supporters of the freeze movement even more. Of those responding, 55 percent said they believed the U.S. government would agree to some kind of a nuclear freeze, while 50 percent said the USSR would *never* agree.

Certainly, the limitation of nuclear weapons, even their elimination, is a worthwhile goal, but those who are now advancing a nuclear freeze proposal should be aware of and respect the long-standing and broadly based doubt that the Soviet Union will agree to any limitation, much less honor it.