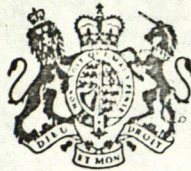


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Subject file Defence
- CTB - Pt 3.

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

**PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T.176/80**

15 September 1980

Your Excellency

Thank you for your letter of 23 August on the need to start negotiating on theatre nuclear forces in Europe.

I entirely agree about the gravity of this issue; it goes to the heart of European stability and security. It was to maintain this stability in the face of recent Soviet long range theatre nuclear deployments that we and our NATO allies agreed last December to modernise our own forces. In parallel we supported the United States' offer to negotiate on US and Soviet long range theatre nuclear forces in the framework of SALT III. This was a serious offer to start negotiations well before the US deployments in Europe are scheduled to begin.

Regrettably your Government did not accept this offer at the time and negotiations did not, as we had hoped, begin. I therefore cannot accept that the blame for delay can in some way be laid at the door of the United States as you suggest in your letter. I welcome however the fact that in July your Government dropped the earlier precondition that NATO should suspend its modernisation plans before talks could begin. At the same time you have suggested that American forward based systems be included in the negotiations. For our part we believe that the best hope for early progress lies in setting as the initial objective the establishment of limitations on Soviet and United States long range land based theatre nuclear missiles.

/ I very much hope

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I very much hope that negotiations can begin soon. We are continuing to work with our NATO partners to that end, as we have done consistently since the proposal for negotiations was first made in December of last year.

Yours sincerely

MT

His Excellency Mr. Leonid Ilich Brezhnev