

IB 18  
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PRIME MINISTER

You queried one passage in Mr. Pym's proposed letter to Harold Brown on strategic exports to the Soviet Union. This concerned release of computers and computer technology.

The Ministry of Defence tell me that this question has been on the agenda of COCOM for several years. Very firm national positions have been adopted by France, Germany, USA and ourselves. The Afghanistan problem has brought the issue to a head, but a very great deal of work would be necessary to find an agreed basis for changing the position. Further, in the short term we might stand to lose from changes in the regulations here, although the French probably have more of a vested interest.

Defence could probably find some more anodyne language to cover the point but the essential message is that we do not see much future in pursuing this particular point.

Content to let Mr. Pym write as he intends, perhaps softening the language a little?

Yes out.

MA

12 August 1980



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1  
Telephone 01-23007822 218 2111/3

MO 14/10

6th August 1980

1. don't like post  
2. It looks like a brush-off. Why?  
Ottawa agreed

Prime Minister  
To see Mr Brown's letter (A) and Mr Pym's proposed reply (B) content with draft, subject to colleagues' views?

John Paul,

COCOM: CONTROL OF STRATEGIC EXPORTS TO THE SOVIET UNION

MA 11/8

In the course of a meeting at No 10 in June, at which Lord Carrington and my Secretary of State were present, Dr Harold Brown, the United States Defense Secretary raised the question of additional COCOM controls on exports to the Soviet Union as part of the West's response to the invasion of Afghanistan. He has now returned to the same theme in his letter of 10th July (which, incidentally, took more than a fortnight to reach us), of which a copy is attached.

My Secretary of State has some sympathy with Dr Brown's approach. We understand that the Americans may not be dissatisfied with the course which discussions in COCOM has taken on the "no-exceptions" policy and on computers but they are showing some impatience at the lack of progress on process know-how and turn-key projects. My Secretary of State recognises the political and commercial interests involved both for Britain and our European partners but in view of the important defence implications he considers that we should discuss with the US their approach on turn-key projects in more detail. We understand that bilateral discussions with the Americans have been proposed, and Mr Pym hopes that these can be arranged soon.

P Lever Esq

SECRET



I, therefore, attach a copy of a draft letter from my Secretary of State to Dr Brown on which I should welcome your comments and comments from those to whom I am copying this letter.

I am sending a copy of this letter, the draft reply to Dr Brown and Dr Brown's own letter, to Michael Alexander (No 10), Stuart Hampson (Trade) Ian Ellison (Industry) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

*Your sincerely  
Jonathan Dawson*

(J D S DAWSON)

SECRET

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

49

10 JUL 1980

(Rec'd 25-7-80)

14/10

The Honorable Francis Pym  
Secretary of State for Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
Main Building, Whitehall  
London SW1A 2HB  
England

Dear Francis,

(C) During our recent conversations, we have discussed some of the troublesome aspects of advanced technology sales to the Soviet Union. My primary concern centers on the security risks associated with such sales. It should be understood that I am not questioning the role or wisdom of general trade between the UK and the Soviet Union.

(S) I am concerned that we not permit the transfer of advanced technology that would help the Soviet Union to overcome our technological lead in areas where that lead is of significant military advantage to us. COCOM was established to deal with this problem, but I believe that the present COCOM restrictions need to be significantly tightened. That is the purpose of the proposals which the US now has before COCOM.

(S) We have proposed that COCOM members grant no exceptions for the export to the Soviet Union of technology that exceeds existing control restrictions. We have proposed that exports of general purpose computers be held at the technical levels agreed to in 1974-75 and restrictions on specialized computers and software be increased. We have also asked that proposed exports of "processing know-how" for militarily relevant industrial projects with foreign input of more than \$100 million be the subject of informal consultations in COCOM.

(S) I understand that your government has expressed some reservations concerning these US proposals. However, we should all realize that lack of concerted action in the face of the continued military Soviet buildup, as well as the appearance of allied disunity on a vital security issue, would be very undesirable.

(C) I strongly urge you to take a personal look at further restricting transfers along the lines of the US proposals, taking into account the crucial security purposes which these restrictions will serve. Please call upon me for any additional information you may require. If you can identify an appropriate person to work on this issue, I will have someone from my staff contact him. I am confident that with proper consultations, we can reach a strong and unified allied position on this issue. I would appreciate your sharing this letter with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister.

Sincerely,

Classified by Sec Def  
Declassify on July 7, 1986

SECRET

Sec Def Cont Nr.

X09365

DRAFT LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE  
TO DR HAROLD BROWN

Thank you for your letter of 10th July on technology transfers to the Soviet Union. As you asked I have shown your letter to the Prime Minister and to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

✓ First, I should say that I share your concern about the implications of the increasing technological quality of Soviet military equipment. It is vitally important that the Soviet Union should not overtake the West's technological lead in those areas where that lead represents significant military advantage. I agree with you that our aim should be to avoid the transfer of advanced technology which would serve broad objective. ✓ The problem lies in translating that broad objective into specific measures which would be acceptable to COCOM as a whole.

In your letter you referred to the three main areas covered by the United State's proposals; I summarise below the United Kingdom's views on these points.

✓ First, together with our other COCOM partners we are participating in a "no exceptions" policy, although like you we think that there should continue to be a limited number of agreed exemptions. Second, a considerable body of evidence has now been accumulated in connection with the commercial and strategic factors affecting the release of computers and computer technology to the Soviet Union; this will need careful assessment to

provide a basis for any change in the existing regulations.

Third, we accept that there is a prima facie case for examining more closely the additional capability which exports of "processing know-how" confer on Soviet industry, and the further constraints upon exports which would be needed to bring this under control. At the same time, I am bound to recognise the problems involved, including the commercial investment in programmes of this kind both here and in other European countries. I understand that you are considering how this last proposal might best be pursued. We, for our part, stand ready to explore it in more detail, either on its own or in conjunction with the other matters you have raised, and my officials and officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are ready to participate in discussions with yours.

- 8 AUG 1980

