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Subject

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

SALT II AND CTB

Note of the Prime Minister's conversation with Lord Zuckerman at 10 Downing Street on 23 August 1979 at 1130 a.m. /Lord Mountbatten had suggested to the Prime Minister in a recent letter that she should ask Lord Zuckerman to call on her to discuss nuclear matters. ]

Lord Zuckerman told the Prime Minister that there was agreement among all the experts that the distance between any two population centres of any significance in Western Europe was two kilotonnes. He knew of no study of the consequences of an East/West nuclear conflict which did not conclude that the total devastation of Western Europe in such a conflict was inevitable and that the military machines of both sides would, in Europe, grind to a halt after 48 hours. The Prime Minister asked Lord Zuckerman whether the Soviet Union could not survive a second strike. Lord Zuckerman said that the Soviet Union could not; he undertook to send the Prime Minister reports produced both by the US Government and by Congress showing that the outcome of a US/Soviet nuclear conflict could only be the complete devastation of both countries.

Lord Zuckerman went on to say that he simply could not accept the concept of nuclear weapons being used in Europe: tactical nuclear warfare in that crowded continent was not credible. He commended to the Prime Minister a recent article by Professor Foot in "Foreign Affairs". The Prime Minister asked why, in that case, the Soviet Union had developed the SS20. Lord Zuckerman said that this was simply a result of the momentum of the Soviet weapons programme.

Lord Zuckerman went on to say that he did not dispute for a moment the necessity for the West to possess a credible strategic nuclear deterrent. The Prime Minister pointed out that Lord Mountbatten in a recent speech, had stated that the existence of strategic nuclear weapons only served to add to our perils: she took strong issue with

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this statement. Lord Zuckerman said that the purpose of nuclear weapons was to prevent a war. It would however be a mistake to assume that you could fight a war with nuclear weapons. Lord Zuckerman rehearsed the history of NATO doctrine of flexible response.

The Prime Minister told Lord Zuckerman that she was deeply concerned by the Soviet Union's lead over NATO in the field of chemical weapons: the use of such weapons could make nuclear weapons unnecessary. At present, the Soviet Union possessed a deterrent which the West could not match. Lord Zuckerman agreed that this was true. Lord Zuckerman pointed out, however, that the effect of the use of nuclear weapons was not simply on people but on the total environment: he undertook to send the Prime Minister a note on the subject. The Prime Minister asked whether any counter weapon could be developed which would divert or neutralise nuclear missiles. Lord Zuckerman said that, as the whole ABM experiment had shown, this was not possible.

The Prime Minister told Lord Zuckerman that she would be very interested to read the material which he had promised her. *DM.*

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