



10 DOWNING STREET

CC HO 2/T  
LCO CP  
HMT Defence  
MOD  
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LPSO

From the Private Secretary

14 May 1979

6/F 18.5.79

Dear George,

SALT: The Government's Public Reaction

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute (PM/79/43) of 11 May about the public response which the Government should make to the announcement of the US/Soviet Summit and signature of the SALT II agreement.

The Prime Minister has noted the formulation suggested by Lord Carrington in paragraph 8 of his minute, the first sentence of which reflects the press line which the Prime Minister has already approved. The Prime Minister has no objection to the subsequent statement that the Government "have long supported efforts to achieve strategic arms limitation". The Prime Minister is not, however, happy with the statement which follows, to the effect that "SALT II is an important step on the long road to a more stable and peaceful world": the Prime Minister is not yet fully persuaded that this statement is true. The Prime Minister has made no comment on the final sentence of the formula in paragraph 8 of Lord Carrington's minute. The Prime Minister recalls, in addition, that at her press conference with Chancellor Schmidt on 11 May she expressed the hope that the SALT II treaty, which has taken a long time to come to a conclusion, will be ratified; the Prime Minister would not object if any public comment were to repeat this hope. The Prime Minister would, however, prefer to avoid - at any rate for the time being and until the final text of the agreement has been studied - an unqualified expression of welcome for the SALT II agreement as such.

The Prime Minister has taken particular note of the statement in paragraph 6(a) of Lord Carrington's minute that if SALT II were to be rejected the Soviet Union would probably possess by the late '80s about 3,000 strategic weapons systems, including SS16s and with 30 MIRVs to each of their SS18s. The Prime Minister would like to know the provenance of this assessment. She has commented that if it is correct it is difficult to see why the Soviet Union is so pleased with the SALT II agreement. I should be grateful for advice.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD and to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,  
Bryan Carder

G.G.H. Walden, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Handwritten initials