



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-~~930 7022~~ 218 2111/3

MO 11/9/4

17th February 1983

*Dear Sam,*

INF: PRESIDENT REAGAN'S MESSAGE OF 16TH FEBRUARY

Roger Bone's letter of 17th February said that Mr Heseltine was being consulted urgently about the draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to President Reagan's message. The Defence Secretary has now been able to consider this and he has asked me to let you have the following points.

First, he thinks it important that the Prime Minister in her reply reinforces what the President says in his message about the paramount need to protect Chancellor Kohl's position in the run up to the German elections. With this in mind he suggests that a final sentence should be added at the end of the last paragraph of the draft reply on the following lines:-

"Finally, Helmut Kohl's reactions to your ideas will be most important: at the present juncture we must be very much influenced by what he says".

It would also be worthwhile slightly strengthening the beginning of the last sentence in the first paragraph to read:-

"I am sure therefore that it is right that we should not take such a step at this juncture ....."

The Defence Secretary is very conscious that we cannot attempt to write the President's speech for him but he fears that if what he says is based on his message to the Prime Minister, it will be an arid and bureaucratic presentation of the western case which will do nothing to meet the expectations of European public opinion. He recognises that if we go too far in offering ideas on what the President might say, this runs the risks of irritating the White House and so being counter productive. None-the-less, he thinks that it would be worth revising the second paragraph of the draft reply to read:-



"The Vice President's visit to Europe has however aroused significant public expectations in Europe that consideration is now being given to the possibility of an intermediate step on the road to our final objective, the zero outcome. A public statement of the kind you are proposing to make next week could therefore be an important measure to contain public expectations and to prepare the ground for a major new initiative after 6th March. For these reasons I hope that your speech next week can not only take the form of a clear and basic re-statement of the US position in the negotiations but also begin to indicate how that position might be developed. What I have in mind is that you might stress that NATO, with no INF deployed, is today at the level of the zero option; that we do not want to move from that situation but that we have been forced to prepare ourselves to do so by the Soviet Union's large scale deployment of INF; and that if only the Russians would accept the agreement which the US have offered them, NATO could remain at the zero level and be joined there by the Soviet Union. That remains the best prospect of removing a whole class of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. But you have also made it clear that in your search for peace you are not prepared to neglect any opportunity and that Ambassador Nitze has had instructions to examine urgently and with the utmost care any serious Soviet initiative ....."

Finally, Mr Heseltine does not agree that we should suggest to the President that he should omit from his speech any reference to his readiness to meet Andropov to sign an agreement on the zero outcome. While it is true that President Reagan undermined his proposal by his own remarks describing it as a public relations gesture, it would be incredible if, in a speech of the kind he is now proposing to make, he passed over his recent initiative in silence. Moreover, to suggest to the Americans that he should would probably only cause irritation.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Roger Bone (FCO) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Your car,*

*R. Mottram*

(R C MOTTRAM)