

SECRET



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

31

23 March 1983

Prime Minister

Agree message?

John Taylor,

See message

A.J.C. 23/3

M 24/3

INF

The Prime Minister has asked for a draft reply to President Reagan's message of this morning on INF in time for her box tonight. I enclose a draft. We have been able to consult Mr Pym during his stopover in Bahrain on the way to Bangkok and the draft has his endorsement.

It is gratifying that President Reagan has taken considerable account of our views, notably the points made to Vice-President Bush by the Prime Minister. The American review process has led to conclusions very similar to those which we reached here some time ago.

We think that there are strong arguments for shortening the recess even more drastically than President Reagan proposes: we need to be seen to be on the offensive in the Geneva negotiations rather than tagging along behind the Russians. Hence the reference in the draft to proising an even earlier date for the resumption.

You will note also that the draft suggests that the President might consider bringing forward his statement next week by 24 hours. It would be a pity if the President's statement did not get proper coverage in the UK because there are no national newspapers on Good Friday. If the President's statement is made on 31 March as proposed, reports on it would not appear in the British national press until Saturday.

The draft has been cleared with the Ministry of Defence.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (MOD) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

John Taylor
John Taylor

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

SECRET

Form 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: ~~XXXXX~~ letter/telegram/despatch/XXX

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

~~Top Secret~~
Secret
~~Confidential~~
~~Restricted~~
~~Unclassified~~

President Reagan

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

I was very grateful for your message of 23 March on the INF negotiations. I welcome particularly the close consultation between us which has marked our efforts to bring about progress in Geneva.

~~It is clear that your review of the negotiations has brought you to conclusions very close to my own. I therefore welcome your proposal to instruct Ambassador Nitze to put a concrete proposal to the Soviet negotiators in Geneva before the end of the current round. I believe this is particularly important. There is every advantage in your being seen to take the initiative before the coming recess and I am sure that this will have a favourable impact on public opinion in the West.~~

As you know, I share your ~~view~~^{view} that the zero-zero outcome is the best solution. ~~But~~^{but} it is clear that in the immediate term this is not achievable. ~~Therefore~~^{but}, we should retain ~~this~~^{it} as a longer term objective. I also welcome your proposal to call a meeting of SCG

had reached

for consultation

principals in Brussels on 25 March. ~~I know that our allies~~
~~attach particular importance to consultations in this forum.~~
 I also ^{and I} strongly endorse your idea of calling for a shorter
 recess. Indeed, there may be advantage in proposing a
 resumption even earlier than you suggest, say towards the
 end of April.

You asked for my views about whether the new initiative
 should contain specific numbers. I believe there is much
 to be said for instructing Ambassador Nitze to put forward
 a ~~concrete~~ proposal which would include a specific number
 of warheads set at a figure of 300 on each side. ^{but I} ~~I am,~~

~~however, content to leave this to your judgement. If you~~ *you -*
~~feel, from what you know of the negotiations and of the~~
~~views of our closer allies, that it will be better to~~
~~avoid specific figures at this stage.~~
your advisers will have the feel

May I add one further thought? You propose to make
 a statement on this issue on 31 March. This will mean
 that reports in the media in Europe can be expected on the
 morning of Good Friday, 1 April. In the case of the UK,
 there are no national newspapers on Good Friday. Would
 you therefore consider the possibility of bringing forward
 your speech by 24 hours? ~~I am sure that~~ ^{we} all ^{have} share an
 interest in ensuring that your statement is given the
 widest possible publicity. This will also help to pre-empt
 some of the impact of Easter peace movement demonstrations
 both here and elsewhere, ~~some of which are taking~~

~~place on Good Friday.~~