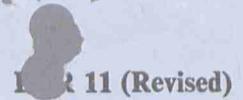
SECRET Foreign and Commonwealth Office London SW1A 2AH 23 March 1983 Agree manage?

Seather A.J. C. 23.

M. 24. 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 prosing 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). (R B Bone) A J Coles Esq Private Secretary 10 Downing Street SECRET



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	FROM:	Reference
	The Prime Minister	
	DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:	
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	TO:	Your Reference
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PRIVACY MARKING

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

SUBJECT:

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.

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 nearly 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.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

As you know, I share your veiw that the zero-zero outcome is the best solution. But, It is clear that in the immediate term this is not achievable. In my view, therefore, we should retain this as a longer term objective. I also welcome your proposal to call a meeting of SCG

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/principals

for comulation

attach particular importance to consultations in this forum.

Lalso 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. I am, however, content to leave this to your judgement. If 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.

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 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