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Defence



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

31 August, 1983

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*Detached to be
Pms party on am 31/8.
Pms comments conveyed
to FCO pm 1/9*

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2/9.*

Mr Andropov's Message to the Prime Minister of INF

The Prime Minister has asked to see an early draft response to the message from Mr Andropov which the Soviet Embassy delivered over the weekend and this I enclose. It is agreed by the MOD.

We understand that the other stationing countries (FRG, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium) and the United States have also received messages from Andropov, as well as some others, at least, including Canada. The text of the message to the Italian Prime Minister is attached. This is similar to ours.

Neither Andropov's message nor his Pravda interview contained anything which marks a fundamental shift in the Soviet negotiating position on INF. The message, which is a fairly hard line attempt at wedge-driving, is clearly designed for presentational purposes with the domestic audience in Britain and the other European members of NATO as the targets. It marks a further step in the Soviet campaign to identify the exclusion of British and French systems as the major obstacle to an INF agreement. (They have been by no means unsuccessful in this campaign as is demonstrated by the stress laid in recent public statements by Allies on this aspect; particularly, Genscher's recent open message to Gromyko which came near to dangerous ground in its assertion that the Soviet attitude to British and French weapons was the great stumbling block at Geneva. In discussion yesterday in the margins of the Special Council in Brussels, Genscher emphasised the importance of the UK and France taking every opportunity to make clear our position on this. Sir G Howe agreed with this but underlined the importance of not encouraging the Russians to focus on this point). The Russians may well have assumed that the text of the message will be shown to other Allies. Sir Geoffrey Howe believes that our reply should be drafted with these two audiences in mind and against the possibility that we may need to publish it or refer to its contents at some stage. The draft

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therefore acknowledges the concession - such as it is - which the Russians have made, but then points up the unreasonableness of their position and rejects the implications that we are to blame for the failure to reach agreement in Geneva.

The Russians can have little serious expectation that the message to the Prime Minister will cause any second thoughts on the cruise missile deployment programme in Britain. The Pravda interview has so far been reported in the Western media for what it is - viz essentially a restatement of the previous Soviet position. It is unlikely in itself to put undue pressure on the Alliance. But these are only the first shots in the Soviet autumn campaign and we must expect further moves which will be more difficult to counter.

The commitment to destroy some SS-20s currently deployed in Europe if an agreement at Geneva can be achieved is a not wholly negligible concession. The previous Soviet position had been somewhat ambiguous but this is the first time that we have seen an explicit statement that reductions in the SS-20 force would involve destruction rather than the movement of the missiles to Soviet Asia (whence of course they could easily be returned). It is of interest that the Russian leadership sees sufficient potential propaganda mileage in this to warrant overriding what we must assume to be the Soviet military's reluctance to offer to destroy such new and sophisticated weapons. The concession is fairly meaningless in security terms as long as it is not accompanied by an offer to limit the number of new missiles in Soviet Asia.

There is one possible signal, contained in the message to the Prime Minister, of future Soviet tactics. There are references to the present talks becoming 'meaningless' after NATO deploys INF; and to an agreement being possible before deployment (but, implicitly, not afterwards). It was perhaps never likely that the Russians would agree to the INF talks continuing after deployment as though nothing had happened, and we would not have expected them not to cause at least a hiatus. But we should not under-estimate the effect on other Allies, particularly the Germans, of an explicit threat by the Russians to discontinue all discussion on INF missile control, and this is a card we can expect to see played. It could even be coupled with a threat to walk out of, or suspend for some time, the START talks, though the Russians would need to think hard whether a lengthy break would not be detrimental to their security interests or whether it would be desirable from their point of view in terms of US domestic policies in an election year.



Sir Geoffrey Howe suggests that the Prime Minister might wish to delay sending a reply until after we have had time to consult Allies. We have a suitable opportunity on Friday 2 September when there are meetings in Brussels of the senior officials' group (the SCG) where we could discuss the response with the inner group of stationing countries and if necessary with the representatives of the whole Alliance. The purpose would not be in any sense to clear the Prime Minister's reply but rather to use it as a means of stiffening the responses of others. It is also in our interests to set the example to other Allies of initiating consultation about contacts with Moscow on this subject since this may help prevent some of them sending ill-considered messages to the Russians on future occasions. If the Prime Minister agrees, our SCG representative will be instructed to describe to the Allies the outline of Andropov's message and of the draft reply, to set out our analysis of Soviet motives and urge firmness in response (public or private).

Even if the Russians do not decide to publish the exchanges, it will be for consideration whether it would be in our interests to release unilaterally either the text or at least the gist of the Prime Minister's reply. The advantages of going public with our point of view are clear - it is important not to allow Andropov a free audience here without exercising a full right of reply; on the other hand we have in the past criticised the Russians for conducting the negotiation in public rather than in Geneva and should be careful not to lay ourselves open to the same accusation. This again might be a subject for discussion with the Allies. Sir Geoffrey Howe believes we should keep the contents of the exchange confidential at least until after the SCG Meeting but that it may be right to go public after that.

I might take this opportunity to report that the inter-agency review in Washington of the negotiating position on outstanding secondary issues in the INF talks (regional missile sub-limits, limits on aircraft etc) was completed last week. The President is now looking at option papers and may well send a message to the Prime Minister within a day or so if his decision is to propose to the Allies any shift in the negotiating position. The Americans are coming under pressure from the Germans to show flexibility on these secondary issues; but there should be no risk of their wishing to move on the major issues of principle.

You will have seen the letter from Mr Whitney's office of 23 August about the suggestion from the Greek Foreign Minister that NATO should postpone deployment for six months. Sir G Howe has approved a formal reply (copy enclosed), but its despatch will be delayed until after Mr Heseltine's visit to Athens on 2 September.

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I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram in the MOD.

*You are,
R B Bone*

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

T Flesher Esq
10 Downing Street

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DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO MR ANDROPOV

1. I thank you for your message of 27 August on the Geneva talks on Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and for sending me the text of your Pravda interview.
2. In response I should begin by re-emphasising to you, in absolute sincerity, the British Government's desire for the negotiations in Geneva to succeed. It is still possible to reach agreement to ban completely those weapons on both sides which are of particular concern - the SS20s, SS4s and SS5s on your side and the Cruise and Pershing II missiles on NATO's side. If such an agreement can be reached by the end of this year NATO need never deploy any of the new weapons.
3. I note with great interest your statement that, in the context of an overall agreement, you would be prepared to destroy SS20 missiles now stationed in the Western part of the Soviet Union. As you know we had been under the impression that you had intended only to move those weapons to Soviet Asia. This was unacceptable to us, firstly because these mobile missiles could quickly be moved back again to Europe in a time of crisis and secondly because we had no wish to increase the number of the weapons facing our friends in Asia. We hope you will expand upon your proposal when the negotiations at Geneva resume on 6 September.

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3. ^{note with great interest} I welcome your statement that, in the context of an overall agreement, you would be prepared to destroy SS20 missiles now stationed in the Western part of the Soviet Union. ~~As you know we had been under the impression that you had intended only to move those weapons to Soviet Asia. This was unacceptable to us, firstly because these mobile missiles could quickly be moved back again to Europe in a time of crisis and secondly because we had no wish to increase the number of the weapons facing our friends in Asia.~~

We hope you will expand your proposal upon the ~~the~~ negotiations Geneva resume on 6 September.

4. But I believe that your message reveals some misunderstanding of the basic security requirements which underlie NATO's position in the INF Talks. The security of Western Europe demands that a balance be allowed between Soviet and American intermediate range nuclear forces. It is simply not possible for us to accept that you should maintain a monopoly of missiles of this range while insisting that the Americans should not be allowed to instal a single missile. The problem of the disparity in these forces became acute for us when in the late 1970s the Soviet Union began the massive build-up of SS20s, for which we could see no defensive purpose, at a time when, as now, NATO had no comparable missiles. Our preference would still be that there should be no missiles of this type on either side. As long as this solution is not acceptable to you, we and our Allies will pursue an interim agreement; but this will have to respect the principle of balance between yourselves and the Americans.

5. It follows from what I have said that NATO cannot accept that the nuclear forces of Britain and France should be taken account of in the INF negotiations. This is a position unanimously agreed by NATO since 1979 for reasons of the security of the Alliance as a whole. Our nuclear forces are strategic weapons. The Soviet Union itself acknowledged during the SALT talks that this was the case. They have no place in negotiations on intermediate range weapons, where we need to address the problems of the Soviet and American ground-launched weapons which are of such concern to both sides.

6. I must say in all frankness that it is difficult to understand your preoccupation with British and French strategic weapons. They represent a tiny fraction of yours (the British deterrent is less than three percent of the size of your strategic missile and bomber force). They can have no significant effect on the overall balance of nuclear forces between East and West. They are weapons of last resort; our ultimate national deterrents. They are in no sense comparable to your SS20 force. But it is worth adding that we are not trying to claim that British nuclear weapons should never be the subject of any arms control negotiations. I repeat what I have said publicly before: if the Soviet Union and the US succeed in achieving in negotiations on strategic arms sufficiently large reductions in their own arsenals for present circumstances to be very substantially altered we will, of course, be prepared to look at the possibility of British nuclear forces being included in the arms control process. But they can have no place in any negotiations about intermediate range weapons.

7. I note with disappointment what you say in your message about Soviet intentions to take 'counter measures' following any new NATO deployments. If by this you have in mind steps towards increasing the nuclear arms race, that, as you say yourself, would be in nobody's interests.

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8. For our part we shall remain committed to the search for arms control measures which are balanced and thus protect the security of both sides. If it is necessary for NATO to begin deployment of the new weapons by the end of this year, this can be discontinued or reversed at any time that an agreement at the negotiating table warrants it. But, I repeat, our hope remains that there can still be an agreement this year which makes it unnecessary for NATO to begin deployment.