

Reference INF



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 September 1983

John Taylor

Mr Andropov's Message to the Prime Minister on INF

Robin Butler telephoned me on 1 September to relay the Prime Minister's initial comments on the draft reply to Andropov which we sent to you on 31 August.

There was as anticipated some discussion on the best way to respond to Andropov at the NATO Special Consultative Group (SCG) meeting in Brussels on 2 September. It was confirmed that Andropov had written personally to heads of Government of the five basing countries (UK, FRG, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium), President Reagan, Mr Trudeau, President Mitterrand and also (reportedly) to Mr Nakasone. (The Chairman circulated the text of the letter to Chancellor Kohl. The early parts of the text are identical to the letter received by the Prime Minister; there are divergences in the second half which make specific British/German points.) Our representative at the SCG told the meeting of the general lines of the reply which we had recommended to the Prime Minister and urged that others reply on equally firm lines.

/ I now send you a redraft of the reply which takes account of the Prime Minister's initial comments. MOD officials agree. New passages are sidelined. The passage in paragraph 6 as originally drafted on the position of British and French nuclear systems in arms control was drawn from three sources; the Prime Minister's interview in Time Magazine of 20 June; the Open Government Document on the Trident II programme which was put out by Sir John Nott in March last year; and statements in the Defence Estimates debate in July by / Mr Heseltine and Mr Pattie; I enclose the relevant extracts. In the redraft now offered we have also tried to take account of discussion at Chequers and the Prime Minister's view on that occasion. Thus the present formula steps back from the implications of the Prime Minister's "Time Magazine" interview ("counting in"). But it has the merit of underlining to the Russians that the onus is on the Soviet Union to change the overall strategic context by reducing the threat; and it firmly safeguards our position on the need to ensure minimum deterrence by avoiding any reference to the concept of reductions.

/As reported



As reported in my letter of 1 September about Sir Geoffrey Howe's recent meeting with the French, German and Italian Foreign Ministers, we are likely to come under increasing pressure from the allies, as well as perhaps from informed domestic critics in weeks to come to go further on the position of British systems in relation to future strategic arms control negotiations. The Dutch Foreign Minister made some unhelpful remarks in a parliamentary debate last week in which a motion was adopted which called for inclusion of British and French systems in INF and START. When Sir Geoffrey Howe took this up with Van den Broek in Madrid on 7 September the response included a plea (tacitly supported by the Danish Foreign Minister) for us and the French to find a more "credible formula", without selling the pass. Van den Broek said that the Italian Foreign Minister had made the same point to Cheysson recently. On 1 September the principal coalition Party in Belgium issued a statement on INF which included an acknowledgement that these systems should be "taken into account".

Gromyko, incidentally, continued to lay great stress on the need to take account of British and French weapons when he met Sir Geoffrey Howe in Madrid on 7 September. Although Genscher believes from his own meeting there with Gromyko on 8 September that the Soviet position is less absolute than formerly in relation to INF, there has so far been no indication of this at the negotiating table in Geneva. In his talks with Cheysson in Paris last week, Gromyko's line was as hard as ever.

The Americans said at the 2 September SCG meeting that they did not think that President Reagan would reply to Andropov for a few days at least in the wake of the Korean airliner outrage. There may be some merit in the Prime Minister also delaying her response; this would in any event give us time to consult the French about the reply. On this we would propose, once the Prime Minister has agreed precise wording, to ask the Embassy in Paris to show it to the Elysee/Quai d'Orsay and give the French an opportunity to say if they have any points to make on the passage on British systems. We would also propose to show the reply in advance to the Americans.

There remains the question of whether, when the reply issues, we should make it public. At the SCG the Americans said that they would almost certainly not publish President Reagan's reply since they did not believe it right to jeopardise bilateral confidential exchanges with the Russians by doing so. The Germans said they thought they might publish Chancellor Kohl's reply (but not Andropov's letter); the Italians are apparently releasing extracts from Mr Craxi's reply. We could consider the question further in the light of any developments before the Prime Minister replies. Our instinct here at this stage is that publication of the full text of a response to a confidential message might be unhelpful (unless of course the Russians go public) but that

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there would be no harm in your briefing the press unattributably. As you will see from the third paragraph of this letter, it would be helpful to at least some of our allies to be able to cite an up-to-date statement of HMG's position on UK systems in rebutting arguments that they should be included in the INF count as the Russians wish; if the Prime Minister agrees with it, there might therefore be advantage in releasing to the press, along with a summary of the rest of the reply, the text of its sixth paragraph.

I should add that Sir Geoffrey Howe, whom we have consulted on this by telegram in Budapest, has specifically commended the wording in the draft reply on British strategic weapons.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD) and to David Goodall (Cabinet Office).

T. M. M.

R. B. Bone

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MESSAGE

DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

The Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

Mr Andropov

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

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 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

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Enclosures—flag(s).....

/moved back

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moved back again to Europe in a time of crisis and secondly because we had no wish to increase the number of weapons facing our friends in Asia. We hope you will expand upon your proposal at the negotiations in Geneva and also address the important question of how destruction of missiles would be verified.

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 install a single new 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. We were thus forced to modernise our forces. To do so NATO planned to install Cruise and Pershing II missiles. We said from the start that we would review the plans if we achieved concrete results in arms control negotiations. 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.

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established

but we have always made it clear that there would be no increase in NATO's warheads as a result of this.

5. It follows from what I have said that NATO cannot accept that account should be taken of the strategic nuclear forces of Britain 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. That our nuclear forces in question are strategic was acknowledged by the Soviet Union itself during the SALT talks. 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 preoccupations with British strategic weapons. They represent a tiny fraction of yours (the British deterrent is less than three per cent 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 in no sense comparable to your SS20 force.~~ *in that they constitute our ultimate national deterrent they* ~~our~~ *which are in* ~~ultimate national deterrent.~~ *sense comparable to your SS20 force.* ~~They are the minimum force necessary for~~ compatible with effective deterrence. But it is worth adding that we are not trying to claim that British nuclear weapons should never be relevant to any arms control negotiations. ~~If, by the time the UK Trident begins to be deployed,~~ *strategic* Soviet and United States ~~strategic~~ *were to be* arsenals have ~~been~~ *had* ~~substantially reduced and no significant changes have~~ occurred in Soviet defensive capabilities, Britain would ~~consider how she could contribute to arms control by~~ *of course want to review her position and to consider how best* ~~placing verifiable limits on her strategic nuclear forces~~ *in the light of the reduced threat.* ~~at levels compatible with the need to ensure minimum~~

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final nuclear strategy base

deterrence. But I must repeat that ~~they~~^{we} 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 interest.

8. For our part we shall remain committed to the search for arms control measures which are balanced and can be verified properly and which 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 ^{a satisfactory agreement is reached.} ~~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.

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