

Subject
: Defence
INF Pt 4



cc: FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

27 September 1983

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 141A/83

Dear Chairman,

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,

In response I must at once emphasise the British Government's sincere desire that the negotiations in Geneva should 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 11 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 missiles.

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 moved back again to Europe in a time of crisis and second because we had no wish to increase the number of weapons facing our friends in Asia. We hope you will

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expand upon your proposal at the negotiations in Geneva and also address the important question of how destruction of missiles would be verified.

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 the Soviet Union and the United States are permitted equal numbers of 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 11 missiles but we have always made it clear that there would be no increase in the number of NATO's warheads as a result of this. Thus, the deployment of new warheads would be accompanied by the withdrawal of old.

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.

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

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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.

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). In that they constitute our ultimate national deterrent they are weapons of last resort which are in no sense comparable to your SS20 force. They are the minimum necessary for effective deterrence. But it is worth adding that we are not trying to claim that British nuclear weapons should never be relevant to arms control. If Soviet and United States strategic arsenals were to be very substantially reduced and no significant changes had occurred in Soviet defensive capabilities, Britain would of course want to review her position and to consider how best she could contribute to arms control in the light of the reduced threat. But I must repeat that British nuclear strategic forces can have no place in any current negotiations at Geneva.

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.

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.

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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. But, I repeat, our hope remains that there can still be an agreement this year which makes it unnecessary for NATO to begin deployment.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher.

Mr. Yu. V. Andropov.