



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 May 1982

Dear John,

MS.

Prime Minute

To be aware.

Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB)

A.T.C. 7/5

In his minute of 21 January, Lord Carrington proposed a new approach to negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban. The paper attached to Lord Carrington's minute concluded that the best option would be a step by step approach to a CTB with the comprehensive ban itself being retained as a long term, rather than an immediate, objective. The Prime Minister agreed that these ideas should be put to the Americans.

We had several rounds of discussion with the Americans in January and February. In March the President approved an approach on broadly similar lines to the one we had suggested, placing the immediate focus on verification and compliance issues. The Americans also agreed that, in tactical and procedural terms, the best approach would be to seek agreement in the Committee on Disarmament (CD) to the establishment of a sub-group whose mandate would be carefully framed to ensure that focus on these particular aspects of the Test Ban problem would be maintained.

When we and the Americans put forward our ideas in the Committee on Disarmament, the reaction of the Third World countries (the Group of 21) was surprisingly receptive. Although they had clearly hoped for a more wide-ranging mandate (and will no doubt continue to press for this), they realised that both we and the United States were not prepared to tackle the wider aspects until the verification issue had been fully explored. It soon became clear therefore that the Group of 21 would go along with our ideas. The satisfactory upshot was that it left the Soviet Union and its allies isolated, a situation of considerable discomfort for them in the last week of the Spring Session. It was not until the last day of the Session (21 April) that the Russians and their allies finally gave way and agreed to a mandate on exactly the terms which we had agreed with the Third World group.

This small achievement should have a disproportionately beneficial effect in making it easier for the Americans and ourselves, indeed for the West as a whole, to defend our position on nuclear issues when these are discussed at the Second Special Session in New York. The sub-group will begin work when the CD resumes immediately after the Special Session. Of our allies, only the French appear to have some

/misgivings.



misgivings. They are of course traditionally opposed to the discussion of a CTB and, while it is unlikely that they will participate in the work of the sub-group, we have some reason to hope that they will not make a public issue of their opposition.

I am sending copies of this letter to David Omand (MOD), John Kerr (Treasury) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever.

Francis Richards

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Private Secretary

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17 MAY 1982

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THE SOVIET ARMS CONTROL PROPOSALS OF 16 MARCH

1. President Brezhnev devoted a large section of his speech at the Congress of Soviet Trade Unions on 16 March to arms control issues. These have been the subject of much subsequent comment in the Soviet and Western media. An eye-catching Soviet initiative to take advantage of the 2 month recess (starting 15 March) in the Soviet/US INF talks in Geneva had been hinted at by Soviet officials and came as no surprise

2. In the event, Mr Brezhnev announced that the Soviet leadership had decided on a unilateral moratorium on the deployment of medium-range nuclear weapons in the European part of the Soviet Union. They were freezing both quantitatively and qualitatively weapons of this kind already stationed there, and were suspending the replacement of SS-4 and SS-5 by SS-20 missiles. The moratorium would remain in force "either until an agreement is reached with the United States to reduce ... medium-range nuclear systems designed for use in Europe or until ... the United States leaders ... go over to practical preparations to deploy Pershing-2 missiles and cruise missiles in Europe". These proposals, which are in line with previous Soviet initiatives, had been foreshadowed by authoritative Soviet spokesmen including Zamyatin, who claimed that the Soviet Union had suspended deployment of SS-20 missiles since November 1981.

SS-20 Deployments

3. The Soviet Union has built up a completely one-sided superiority in intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF). Among these, Soviet SS-20 operational deployments (adding to the SS-4's and SS-5's already in place) have now reached some 300 missile launchers comprising about 900 warheads, with more bases under construction. Roughly two thirds of these could reach Western Europe from bases in the Western and Central USSR.

Implications

4. Mr Brezhnev did not specify what form the moratorium would take. The Soviet freeze on deployments is believed to take advantage of a current technical pause in the SS-20 programme. It is likely to have little or no practical effect on overall Soviet deployment plans. Moreover, Mr Brezhnev's announcement refers only to deployments in the European USSR, whereas most of Western Europe is within range of the SS-20 also from certain sites east of the Urals. Since the "dual" NATO decision of December 1979 to modernise its INF and to pursue negotiations for their reduction, the Soviet Union has markedly increased the number of its intermediate-range land-based weapons, in which it enjoys a monopoly. It now has roughly 200 SS-20s more than were deployed at the time of the dual decision. Even if the Soviet Union were to announce a global freeze on SS-20 deployments, this would do nothing to rectify the present gross imbalance in such systems.

5. Mr Brezhnev made maintenance of the freeze on Soviet deployments conditional on there being no "practical preparations" for cruise (or Pershing-2) missile deployment. His deliberately vague formulation on this could be taken to refer to initial site construction work in Western Europe. This is potentially highly restrictive, as some work on cruise missile site construction has already begun in at least one site in the United Kingdom. Mr Brezhnev has therefore provided himself with a pretext and justification, if necessary, for suspending the freeze at any time suitable to the Soviet Union. He also appears deliberately to have made a distinction in the language used, referring to a freeze on Soviet "deployments" while posing the condition that the West refrains from proceeding with construction.

Soviet Retaliatory Measures

6. Mr Brezhnev also threatened that if NATO deployment plans went ahead, there would be a new strategic situation which would require retaliatory steps which "would put the other side, including directly the United States itself, its own territory, in an analogous position". Although Soviet writers have on occasion warned in the past that if any nuclear missiles were to fly and hit

Soviet territory, US territory would not be immune from retribution, Mr Brezhnev's specific inclusion of the United States in this way is a new element. Previous threats in this context have generally been directed at Western Europe, such as the mention in Mr Brezhnev's interview with Der Spiegel on 2 November 1981 about the need for counterstrikes against mobile missile locations. In the same interview Mr Brezhnev had recalled the Cuba missile crisis but did not develop the argument. There has been much speculation that the unspecific threat of retaliation in Mr Brezhnev's speech of 16 March could have been intended to induce fears that the Soviet Union would be prepared to deploy missiles in or around Cuba, but Soviet spokesmen have since both publicly and privately dismissed such speculation as unfounded. This particular passage in Mr Brezhnev's speech should probably be seen as a generalised warning, intended to sound impressive without committing the Soviet Union to any particular option at this stage. Its aim appears to be to raise the stakes and to feed misgivings among Americans and Europeans alike about the likely political and military costs of proceeding with NATO's deployments.

Other Arms Control Initiatives

7. Mr Brezhnev also announced in his speech that the USSR "intends this year ... unless there is a new aggravation of the international situation, to cut its medium-range missiles by a certain number". This presumably refers to the older SS-4 and SS-5 missiles which are in any event being progressively phased out. The conditional nature of the offer leaves so much flexibility in Soviet hands as to make it practically valueless. Mr Brezhnev also called on the West not to deploy sea-based or ground-based long-range cruise missiles and said the Soviet Union would be prepared to discuss the restriction of combat patrol areas of missile submarines on both sides. Echoing an earlier Soviet suggestion, he also said the Soviet Union would be prepared to discuss the extension of confidence-building measures to seas and oceans, particularly the busiest shipping routes. The Soviet offers on cruise missiles and submarine deployments demonstrate how Soviet arms control overtures reflect known Soviet military preoccupations (in this case their relative disadvantage in the submarine-launched ballistic missile field and in anti-submarine

capabilities:- the USSR relies less than the USA on SSBN's for its strategic nuclear strength).

Conclusion

8. The Soviet proposal for a freeze on deployments of SS-20 systems would not entail any change either in the military imbalance in INF systems (which strongly favours the Soviet Union) or in Soviet deployment plans for some time ahead. If implemented with its intended consequences, the proposal would perpetuate the Soviet monopoly in longer range land-based missiles since not a single SS-20 missile would have to be destroyed, while NATO would be prevented from deploying any such missiles. These missiles, given their range and the ease with which they can be relocated, are a threat to Western Europe wherever they are located. The Soviet proposal would leave the USSR free to continue its build-up east of the Urals, well within range of Western Europe. The Soviet announcement's prime aim is to counter the United States "zero option" proposal announced last year. It is therefore to be seen at this stage primarily as propaganda, aimed at the peace movement in Europe and at opposition within some countries to the NATO modernisation decision. The ambiguity of the language used places a minimum of restriction on the Soviet leadership's room for manoeuvre. In addition, the timing of the proposal allows the Soviet Union to exploit current moves in the USA in favour of a general freeze on existing nuclear weapon levels; to try to regain the propaganda high ground following recent setbacks (the discovery of a Soviet nuclear-armed submarine in Swedish waters; imposition of martial law in Poland, etc); and, perhaps most importantly, to assess reactions in the West before deciding whether to formulate any serious proposals when the INF talks resume in Geneva in about 2 months time.

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THE FIFTH CONGRESS OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY

1. The Fifth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party met in Hanoi from 27 to 31 March 1982 in a very different mood from the previous Congress in December 1976. At that time the Party leadership, still enjoying high prestige from its military successes and from the reunification of the country, revealed ambitious plans for the rapid development of Vietnam's economy for which aid from many quarters was expected. Soon afterwards, however, Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia precipitated an open breach with China, a major reduction in aid from the West and from international bodies, and a growing dependence upon the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These factors contributed to the virtual abandonment of the over-ambitious 1976-80 Five Year Plan. The Party's prestige sank to a low level both internationally and at home. In local Congresses held in preparation for the Fifth Party Congress there was much criticism and debate of Party policies, notably of the more pragmatic economic policy, based on greater incentives for producers and more freedom for managers, which has evolved since 1979.

2. The main report of the Fifth Congress was delivered by Le Duan, the Party General Secretary, who admitted that many serious mistakes had been made during the past five years for a variety of reasons, notably an underestimation of the problems facing the country, lack of economic knowledge and lack of good management. Therefore, he said, "the Central Committee undertakes a severe self-criticism before the Congress...". Nevertheless he insisted that the general and economic lines set out by the Fourth Party Congress were correct and that the Party was successfully tackling the problems which had emerged.

3. Le Duan's political report and Pham Van Dong's economic report endorsed the new pragmatic economic policies and the lower targets set for the 1981-5 Five Year Plan. The rise in national income for example is set at 4.5 to 5% for 1981-5 compared to 13-14% in the 1976-80 plan, and grain production is set to rise to 19-20 million tonnes in 1985 compared to targets of 16 million tonnes for 1977 and 21 million for 1980. The highest total actually produced in

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1977-1980 was 14.4 million tonnes in 1980. Reports from the Congress contain no direct references to the major debate, previously mentioned in the official media, over the new economic policies which many attacked as the "trail end" of capitalism. The opponents of the new policies have been defeated, but they may have been placated to some extent by the pledge to proceed with and "complete in the main" by 1985 the initial collectivisation of the southern peasants. Although the importance of agriculture in general is increasingly stressed, reports to the Congress emphasise that the development of heavy industry is still a priority.

4. As expected the Congress reaffirmed Vietnam's close relations with the Soviet Union. There have been some signs of friction recently in Soviet-Vietnamese relations, partly because the Vietnamese appear to have wanted more aid than the Russians were prepared to give, and because the Russians themselves wanted their aid to be used more effectively and to receive a higher return. Nevertheless the two countries draw too many advantages from their alliance to allow any serious divisions to occur and the Vietnamese, however independent-minded they may be, realise that they have no other significant source of support for the policies they are pursuing in Cambodia.

5. In February, just before the Party Congress, two senior Soviet officials visited Vietnam: Marshal N V Ogarkov, Chief of Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces and N K Baybakov, Chairman of the State Planning Committee. The leader of the Soviet delegation to the Congress was M S Gorbachev, the Politburo and Central Committee Secretary responsible for agriculture. Presumably during these visits some agreement was reached on the level of Soviet aid and of Vietnamese repayment and the Congress itself was marked by fulsome praise for the Soviet Union from Vietnamese leaders. There was little sign in speeches at the Congress of any problems between the two countries but when Gorbachev referred to the development of economic co-operation between the two "on the basis of the actual possibilities of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam" he may have been suggesting that some Vietnamese expectations of aid had been unrealistic. He went on to say that "the turnover of goods between the two countries will double in the

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next five years". Russian comments on previous mistakes made by the Vietnamese in economic management and on the "realistic approach" displayed at the Congress suggest that they fully support the more pragmatic approach of the Vietnamese leaders since an improvement in the Vietnamese economy, notably in agriculture, would reduce the demand for basic aid from the Soviet Union.

6. It is significant that in his speech to the Congress Gorbachev did not repeat the more positive remarks about the Chinese made by Brezhnev in his Tashkent speech on 24 March. Doubtless because of Vietnamese susceptibilities Gorbachev reverted to the more normal level of Soviet criticism of China. Vietnamese statements on China were predictable and there was no sign of any flexibility over Cambodia.

7. At the end of the Congress the new leadership was elected. Contrary to much speculation the ailing Le Duan was re-elected Party General Secretary and there was no change amongst the top five members of the Politburo, but in the largest ever change in Politburo membership six middle ranking members were dropped, including General Giap who had lost his post as Minister of Defence in February 1980. Three of the others were veteran leaders who had lost senior ministerial posts at the same time. All six retained membership of the Central Committee. Four people joined the Politburo, including the Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co Thach (an alternate member) and the general in charge of operations in Cambodia, Le Duc Anh (a full member). The Politburo now consists of 13 full and 2 alternate members, compared to 15 full and 2 alternates before. In the Party Secretariat only 4 out of 10 men retained their seats. The Central Committee was expanded from 101 to 116 full members and from 32 to 36 alternate members. About 40% of members of the old Central Committee were dropped and about one third of the new Central Committee has been elected for the first time.

8. It is difficult to judge how far the changes in leading bodies reflect the varying strengths of any factions within the leadership. The extent of the changes suggest, however, that the top leadership (although it was unwilling to step down itself) may have concluded

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a significant number of senior officials should make way for younger, possibly more able men, in an attempt to improve the Party's performance and assuage some of the criticism from the lower ranks of the Party and from outside.

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SINO/SOVIET RELATIONS

1. In a speech delivered in Tashkent on 24 March while presenting an award to the Uzbek Republic, Brezhnev spoke about Soviet relations with India, Japan and China. His remarks on China were clearly intended to be read as a Soviet olive branch. They follow recent Soviet proposals for renewed border talks, visits to Peking by two senior Sinologists, M S Kapitsa and S L Tikhvinsky, and more positive statements on China earlier this year by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, N A Tikhonov and Politburo member K U Chernenko. Moscow appears to want better relations with the Chinese at state level, including better economic and scientific relations, and would apparently like to re-open border talks. But the Russians are unlikely to be prepared to make the necessary concessions to allow real progress even on border questions, let alone political relations as a whole.

2. Close examination of Brezhnev's statements in Tashkent reveals that they contain little of substance, nor any offer likely to persuade the Chinese of genuine Soviet willingness to start negotiating the fundamental issues. Brezhnev made a pointed reference to Soviet recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan, suggesting that one motive was to capitalise on current differences between Peking and Washington over Taiwan. He contrived to put the Soviet view of China in the best possible light, claiming that Moscow did not deny the existence of a socialist state in China. Soviet comment, however, normally implies that China is no longer socialist, and the term "socialist state" formerly used to describe China (eg in the Yearbook of the Large Soviet Encyclopedia) was dropped in 1973. Furthermore, the Russians have for several years proposed that relations between the two countries be conducted on the basis of "peaceful coexistence" - a term used exclusively to describe relations between socialist and non-socialist countries.

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3. On the border question, Brezhnev said that the Soviet Union had not had and did not have any territorial claims on China, and that the Soviet Union was ready at any time to continue border talks. He added that they were also ready to discuss possible confidence-building measures in the border area. However, the vagueness of this proposal, as with the earlier proposal on CBMs made by Brezhnev at the CPSU Party Congress last year suggests that the Russians do not envisage a positive Chinese response. The Chinese response to Brezhnev's Tashkent remarks was prompt and, not surprisingly, cool, objecting to the attacks on China which the speech also contained.

4. Moscow's overtures to Peking are in part prompted by concern at what it sees as a likely future shift in the strategic and political balance in Asia following the Sino/US rapprochement. Izvestiya on 26 March referred to "dangerous undercurrents that potentially are capable of chipping away at and eroding the security of many Far Eastern states", the most dangerous of which was the "US desire to secure its global interests" in the region. Although Soviet comment has made the most of the differences between Peking and Washington, and made it clear that it hoped the relationship would founder over the Taiwan question, there is a note of realism among some senior commentators that they expect relations to survive the various setbacks. N V Shishlin, Head of the Consultants Group of the Central Committee Department responsible for relations in the Communist countries said on Moscow Radio on 7 March that while there were real disagreements, it was also true that Peking and Washington were showing a desire to overcome them, but at others' expense. There have been a number of articles by senior Soviet commentators on the Sino/US rapprochement since the US offer of arms to China last June. The strategic implications are clearly of concern and Soviet comment has betrayed considerable anxiety at the prospect of a growth in Chinese and US influence in South and South East Asia.

5. An article in last November's issue of Asia and Africa Today by G Trofimenko, Head of Department at the Institute of USA and Canada said US/Chinese relations now bore all the characteristics of an emerging military alliance. Regular military consultation at a high

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level took place. There were agreed positions on foreign policy problems in Asia, exchanges of intelligence and cooperation in intelligence gatherings. US and Chinese strategic interests were now not just parallel but coincided. China had been classified as a "friendly" power. In contrast to the situation in the 60s, any US war in Asia would be waged not against China, but with it, or at the very least with a neutral China. However, US aims would be frustrated, according to Trofimenko, because Washington would not be able to manipulate China and Japan as it liked. Japan would have to take the Soviet factor into account, not just because of the strength of the Soviet Union and its role in the region, but to retain the freedom to decide its own foreign policy. Tokyo was already concerned at the growing military ties between the US and China. Tokyo and Washington would both compete for influence in China. These factors, together with the Soviet strength in Asia, and its ability to resist any US threat in the Far East, limited the great-power ambitions of Washington in Asia. Tensions, however, ought to be reduced before it was too late, by the adoption of Soviet CBMs in the Far East.

6. It remains to be seen whether Soviet hopes that Sino/US relations will be set back by the problems over US arms sales to Taiwan will be realised. A down-grading of diplomatic relations remains a distinct possibility. But even if this happens, it is unlikely to make China reconsider its opposition to Soviet strategic ambitions.

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THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP

1. Age, ill health and death are becoming increasingly important factors in the balance of power among the Soviet leaders.
2. The death in January of Suslov, a Politburo member for 25 years and a Party Secretary for some 33 years, removed a figure of great authority in the CPSU, one who was generally regarded as being instrumental in bringing Brezhnev to power and who certainly supported him thereafter. This departure has deprived Brezhnev of a valued and reliable prop. Suslov was not thought of as a likely successor to Brezhnev, but, had he outlived him, he would probably have had an influential role in the choice of a successor and helped to ensure a smooth succession with a maximum of continuity.
3. As it is, Suslov's death seems to have left the field open to rivalry among potential successors. Brezhnev himself has done nothing to indicate his own preference, nor has he shown any signs of planning to retire. On his 75th birthday last December, he said he wanted to carry on as long as he had the strength.
4. In the absence so far of personnel changes following Suslov's death, the next general secretary still seems likely to be chosen from between the two most senior current secretaries, Kirilenko (75) and Chernenko (70). Hitherto, Kirilenko, who has had a long and varied party career, and has been in the Politburo since 1962, has seemed the natural choice, but Chernenko, a protege of Brezhnev, who has been in the Politburo only since 1978, has recently seemed to take precedence over Kirilenko in protocol rankings. There have been suggestions that he has begun to take over some of Suslov's responsibilities for ideology and foreign affairs, but conclusive evidence for this has yet to emerge. The May Day parade was marked by the return of Kirilenko, who has been absent since 1 March, reportedly ill. At the parade the leadership seems to have made a deliberate decision to evade the issue of precedence between Kirilenko and Chernenko: in a pattern which differed from recent

years they were placed on either side of Brezhnev and at one remove from him.

5. There are, of course, other contenders for the leadership, notably Grishin, head of the Moscow Party Organisation, and Andropov, chairman of the KGB, but it seems unlikely that either of these would be transferred direct to the post of General Secretary without serving for a period as a Central Committee Secretary. By giving the key-note speech at the Lenin anniversary meeting on 22 April, Andropov drew attention to his qualifications for a return to the Secretariat, which he left in 1967 to take over the KGB. These men and their colleagues may also have their eyes on other leading posts, in particular that of President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and of the chairman of the Council of Ministers, at present occupied by a Brezhnev protege, Tikhonov (75). Brezhnev's successor as general secretary will not inherit all the authority that Brezhnev himself has built up over every arm of the Party and Government machine: it is quite possible that the Government side will initially regain something of the authority it had in economic matters and foreign affairs under Kosygin in the early years after Khrushchev.

6. Brezhnev himself suffered some minor affronts to his dignity after Suslov's death. A transparent lampoon on him in a Leningrad journal came to light, and lurid stories of corruption involving his daughter Galina and his son Yury were put about by Soviet sources. Whatever the explanation for these stories, they do not appear to have affected Brezhnev substantially: an old colleague of his was appointed First Deputy Chairman of the KGB, while Brezhnev himself carried out a fairly strenuous round of public engagements in February and March. These, however, took their toll of him, and he was evidently too ill to be shown on television when he returned from a trip to Tashkent on 25 March. He was absent on what Soviet officials called a "winter holiday" until the Lenin anniversary on 22 April. He has since also attended the May Day parade.

7. While attendance at Politburo and Secretariat meetings must have been ever thinner of late, this has had no discernible effect on Soviet policies. The experienced trio of Andropov, Ustinov and

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Gromyko, running the key areas of security, defence and foreign affairs, are still active, and the bureaucratic machine, which has been very stable under Brezhnev, is undoubtedly able to carry on implementing tried policies on the economy and agriculture for the foreseeable future, without the need for dynamic leadership. But the cumulative effect of the lack of such leadership must make itself felt in due course. As long ago as last November, Brezhnev promised a Central Committee plenum to adopt a "food programme", but it still has not been held, and Soviet sources have been putting about that it has been postponed till the Autumn. Meanwhile, a plenum should be held in the first half of 1982 and there are indications that one is planned for the end of May. To the outside observer there is a need for an infusion of new blood into the top leadership, for which the plenum would provide the appropriate occasion. There is no reason to believe, however, that the Soviet leadership will necessarily see things in this way. There is no statutory requirement for Suslov's position as secretary to be filled, nor do the Party statutes lay down any guidelines as to the optimum size of the Secretariat or Politburo.

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