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Mr Weston
Parliamentary Unit

This does not amount to very much, I am afraid. *26/11*

SOVIET SS-20 PROGRAMME: STATEMENTS BY MR FOOT

1. No 10 have asked, through the Parliamentary Unit, for us to track down any occasion when Mr Foot criticised the Soviet SS-20 programme and which would have been brought to the Prime Minister's attention.
2. It is difficult for us to give anything like a complete picture of what Mr Foot has said since we do not normally keep a record of speeches or press conferences made by Members of the Opposition in this country. We have, however, looked at the papers on Mr Foot's visit to Moscow in September 1981 and what he said at that time.
3. As far as we are aware, Mr Foot did not, whilst still in Moscow, make any direct public criticism of the SS-20 programme although he did, according to the agreed TASS statement about the visit, express the strong desire of the Labour Party to see the negotiations about medium range missiles succeed and looked for progress on the basis of both sides 'being prepared to revise their plans'. Once back in Britain, however, Mr Foot was, according to the press, more explicit. Interviewed on the BBC's 'World This Weekend' on 20 September Mr Foot said, according to a report in 'The Guardian' on 21 September, that Labour would use its influence to try to make the negotiations (on medium range systems/INF) successful, to try to get the SS-20s and a lot of other weapons out of Europe.

26 November 1982

R. H. Gozney
R H Gozney
Defence Department

[Private Secretary] ✓
cc [PS / Mr Hurd] ✓ [Mr Wright] ✓
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Labour leader demands proof of 'previous commitment'

Foot challenges hoodwink claim over Russia's SS-20 promise

By Michael White
Parliamentary Correspondent

Mr Michael Foot returned to the attack yesterday over the Foreign Office's jibe that he had had the wool pulled over his eyes in Moscow.

He challenged Lord Carrington to produce evidence of the last time the Russians had offered to withdraw some of their SS-20 missiles.

Stung by the patronising remarks of the Foreign Office Minister, Mr Douglas Hurd, about his visit, the Labour leader declared on BBC radio's World This Weekend: "If they say that the same proposal was made by Mr Brezhnev to reduce SS-20s, prior to 1979 — and that is their charge against me — I would like to know the date, the proposition itself, and, even more, what was the answer of the British Government or even the NATO powers?"

At the heart of the row is Mr Foot's claim that his talks with the Russians constituted a breakthrough, a word his entourage now say was first introduced by a journalist, not by him.

Both Mr Foot and Mr Denis Healey, who accompanied him, believe that this unequivocal offer to withdraw some SS-20s in return for a NATO change of heart on cruise and Pershing missile deployment, is an important development which should not have been dismissed so lightly by the Government on the eve of the Haig-Gromyko talks in New York.

Yesterday Mr Foot pointed out that recently Mr Brezhnev had been offering no more than a moratorium on SS-20

deployment, a view echoed by Mr Healey in a Sunday Times article on the visit.

Mr Foot said in his radio interview that he and his deputy had cooperated "perfectly sincerely, genuinely and effectively" on the issue, and predicted that Labour would use its influence to try to make the negotiations successful, to try to get these SS-20s and a lot of other weapons out of Europe.

"And if we can succeed I think we can—maybe even in opposition—change the atmosphere," he said.

The government view is that the Russians have only agreed to talk at all on theatre nuclear weapons deployment as a result of the NATO decision in December 1979 to start deploying cruise and Pershing missiles in 1983.

Last night the Foreign Office said it was unable to give an immediate answer on Mr Foot's challenge, though Mr Hurd said on Friday that Mr Brezhnev's offer was simply an old one dressed up again for gullible European socialists.

Mr Foot said at a rally in Trafalgar Square yesterday that the next Labour Government would withdraw the British ambassador to Chile and stop arms sales to the country.

He made his promise at a rally to mark the eighth anniversary of the right-wing coup which ousted President Salvador Allende.

Mr Ron Hayward, the Labour Party general secretary, called for the cancellation of a visit to Britain next month of Chile's Minister of Mining, Mr Pinera.