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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

26 November 1982

Dear Mr. Jost,

Thank you for your letter about our exchanges in the House yesterday.

I hope you did not misunderstand me when I said you had not criticised the Soviet Union for deploying SS20s. I know the Labour Party used to call for multilateral disarmament, including theatre nuclear forces such as the Cruise and SS20 missiles. As you say, your statement "Peace, Jobs, Freedom" called in 1980 for new agreements to "ensure that Cruise missiles and Soviet SS20s are both withdrawn"; and I do not think anyone doubts your desire to see a reduction in the numbers of nuclear weapons deployed. But calling for multilateral disarmament is surely not the same as directly criticising the Soviet Union for deploying SS20s. Your statement says the Labour Party "opposes the manufacture and deployment of Cruise missiles", but it does not say that you similarly opposed the deployment of SS20s.

I think this is important because no Cruise missiles have been deployed and none would be if the Soviet Union accepted the United States' proposals made at the current talks in Geneva. Meanwhile, SS20 missiles have been deployed on the ground in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since at least 1979 and there has been a steady build-up in these weapons ever since.

I think it is also important because you have now adopted a policy of unilateral disarmament. It may give people the

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impression that you are solely concerned to eliminate the NATO deterrent, without any thought for the enormous nuclear capability of the Soviet Union. That is why I was glad you took the opportunity of yesterday's exchanges to criticise the Soviet Union for deploying SS20s. As your 1980 statement said, the safety of the world "will be best secured by multilateral mutual disarmament".

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Rt. Hon. Michael Foot, M.P.