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From the Private Secretary

14 October 1986

Dear Colin,

PRIME MINISTER'S TALK WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN

My letter of 13 October recorded the principal points of the Prime Minister's telephone conversation with President Reagan about the US/Soviet summit in Reykjavik. It omitted a number of points which struck me as particularly sensitive. I record these below. I think that the Prime Minister would wish them to be seen only by the Foreign Secretary on return, the Defence Secretary and Sir Patrick Wright.

In the course of the conversation the President spoke dismissively of the ABM Treaty, in terms which suggested that he saw it principally as an obstacle. When you came to think of it, he said, the concept of a Treaty under which two governments undertook to deprive their people of the right to be defended was an extraordinary one.

The President also showed deep distrust of Soviet motives. Their attempt to freeze US research into strategic defence was a cover for them "to go ahead like crazy with their own missile defence plans".

When the Prime Minister repeatedly stressed the importance of nuclear deterrence in the face of the imbalance of conventional forces in Europe, the President's responses were rather vague. "We've dealt with that for a long time and believe we can cope The Russians don't want war, they want victory by using the threat of nuclear war I think we could have a strategy to meet that." He showed no sign of backing down from his concept of eliminating nuclear weapons within ten years, indeed showed considerable pride in it.

The President strongly commended to the Prime Minister a new book by the author of 'Red October' called (I think) 'Red Storm Rising'. It gave an excellent picture of the Soviet Union's intentions and strategy. He had clearly been much impressed by the book.

*Yours sincerely,
Charles Powell*

CHARLES POWELL

C.R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.