



RAMABF

10 DOWNING STREET

26 September, 1985

From the Private Secretary

MBFR

I enclose a copy of a message to the Prime Minister from President Reagan about the proposal on MBFR put to the US Administration earlier this summer by Britain and West Germany. As you will see, it conveys rather sharp reaction, particularly because of what are seen as the dangerous implications for other arms control negotiations of the proposal to defer prior data agreement. The President asks for the Prime Minister's views "in the coming days".

The Prime Minister would be grateful for advice which would enable her to reply.

8/1
You will be better placed than I am to judge the time-scale in which the Americans are preparing their position on MBFR. But I should be grateful for a draft reply, prepared in consultation with the Ministry of Defence and Cabinet Office within two weeks.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. Powell)

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

SECRET

JB

PRIME MINISTER

C.D.

MBFR

This message from the President deals rather crisply, not to say dismissively, with an initiative on MBFR which we and the Germans proposed to the US at Foreign Minister level (with your consent). The main worry seems to be the implications of our proposal for other arms control negotiations.

The President asks for your personal views. But I think we shall have to get advice from FCO (and Michael Alexander) and MOD. I'm afraid that I am no expert on the subject.

Agree that I can send the message to a very limited number of senior officials to get advice on a draft reply?

C.D.?

(C.D. Powell)

25 September, 1985

Yes

Subject

SEPTEMBER 25, 1985

ccops
master

US Declassified

DEAR MARGARET:

I HAVE FOLLOWED CAREFULLY THE EVOLUTION OF THE MUTUAL AND BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS (MBFR) NEGOTIATIONS, MOST RECENTLY THE PROPOSAL CONVEYED TO US BY GEOFFREY HOWE AND HANS DIETRICH GENSCHER. I WOULD BE INTERESTED IN WHY YOU BELIEVE A NEW WESTERN MOVE AT VIENNA IS NEEDED NOW AND WHY THIS PARTICULAR PROPOSAL HAS YOUR ENDORSEMENT.

IF YOUR NEW PROPOSAL SPRINGS FROM A DESIRE THAT THE WEST AVOID CRITICISM FOR NOT OFFERING A COUNTER-PROPOSAL TO THE EASTS PRESENTATION OF AN MBFR +MODEL+ LAST FEBRUARY, OR SIMPLY TO HAVE +SOMETHING NEW,+ I SUPPOSE I DISAGREE. THE WEST HAS SHOWN GREAT FLEXIBILITY IN CHANGING ITS MBFR NEGOTIATING POSITIONS IN 1979, 1982, AND 1984. OUR MOST RECENT EFFORT WENT VERY FAR IN SIMPLIFYING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN AGREEMENT. WE NARROWED THE SCOPE OF DATA REQUIRED, LEAVING OUT AREAS WHERE MOST OF THE EASTERN PROBLEM SEEMED TO LIE. REGRETTABLY, THERE HAS BEEN NO CORRESPONDING FLEXIBILITY FROM THE EAST, AND ITS REACTION IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR WAS CONSIDERED BY ALL ALLIES TO BE AN INSUFFICIENT RESPONSE TO THE WESTS APRIL 1984 PROPOSAL.

LIKE YOU, WE ARE EVALUATING THE POTENTIAL FOR POLITICAL BENEFIT TO THE ALLIANCE IN MAKING A NEW MOVE IN VIENNA. IN THIS CONTEXT WE HAVE TO CONSIDER BOTH MBFR FACTORS AND THE EFFECTS OF ANY SUCH CHANGE ON OTHER ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS. FURTHERMORE, EVEN IF WE ASSUME A POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR A NEW MBFR INITIATIVE, I BELIEVE WE MUST STILL ADDRESS THE MILITARY IMPLICATIONS INVOLVED.

FUNDAMENTAL SECURITY INTERESTS HAVE SHAPED THE WESTS APPROACH TO MBFR. THESE SECURITY INTERESTS ARE NOT MATERIALLY DIFFERENT FOR AN MBFR AGREEMENT LIMITED TO INTERIM REDUCTIONS OF US AND SOVIET FORCES ONLY OR TO A MORE COMPREHENSIVE MBFR AGREEMENT. I NEED NOT BELABOR THE GEOGRAPHIC ASYMMETRIES ALLOWING SOVIET RETURN TO THE AREA MORE QUICKLY THAN US FORCES COULD CROSS THE ATLANTIC. THERE IS A DANGER THAT THE SOVIETS COULD GO FAR TOWARD MOBILIZING A THREAT TO CENTRAL EUROPE -- A THREAT BASED LARGELY IN THEIR OWN TERRITORY -- WITHOUT VIOLATING MBFR CEILINGS, WHILE ANY SUBSTANTIAL WESTERN RESPONSE WOULD BE A VIOLATION, AND WOULD THUS COMPLICATE PRACTICAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS THAT COULD INHIBIT THE RETURN OF US FORCES DURING A CRISIS.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT DEFERRING PRIOR DATA AGREEMENT FOR FIRST PHASE US AND SOVIET CUTS, AS IN YOUR GOVERNMENTS PROPOSAL, COULD UNDERMINE THE ENFORCEABILITY OF AN AGREEMENT VIS-A-VIS THE EAST. SUCH A STEP IN MBFR WOULD SEEM TO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO INSIST ON AN AGREED DATA BASE IN OTHER ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS, INCLUDING THOSE ON NUCLEAR ARMS REDUCTIONS. POLITICAL REALITIES WOULD PROBABLY MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY TO OUR PUBLICS A FUTURE WESTERN REFUSAL TO EXTEND AN IMPORTANT EAST-WEST AGREEMENT EVEN IF EASTERN-SUPPLIED DATA WERE TO PROVE INACCURATE. FINALLY, SINCE OUR EXPERTS AGREE THAT THE EXTENSIVE VERIFICATION/INSPECTION PACKAGE IN YOUR GOVERNMENTS PROPOSAL WOULD LIKELY BE REJECTED BY THE SOVIET UNION AND THUS BE ESSENTIALLY NON-NEGOTIABLE, I HAVE SOME DIFFICULTY ENVISAGING ENDURING DIPLOMATIC OR POLITICAL BENEFITS FROM THE OFFER.

I AM WRITING TO ASK FOR YOUR PERSONAL VIEWS ON THESE ISSUES. BE ASSURED THAT I TAKE THOSE VIEWS VERY SERIOUSLY. I WILL LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR RESPONSE IN THE COMING DAYS, TO ASSIST ME IN DEVELOPING AND EVALUATING OUR POSITION ON MBFR, A POSITION ON WHICH I HOPE WE CAN REMAIN UNIFIED. I TRUST THAT YOU SHARE THE VALUE I PLACE ON ALLIANCE UNITY IN THIS IMPORTANT NEGOTIATING FORUM.

SINCERELY,
RON

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**PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T168185**

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AND HOW COPY MSDG MATE KKK