

SECRET



FILE

Reg
Duplicate to MOD 9/10

8

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 October, 1985

Dear Ken,

MBFR

Thank you for your letter enclosing a revised draft message from the Prime Minister to President Reagan.

I enclose a shorter version which the Prime Minister has approved and which I am despatching on the direct line to the White House, together with the supplementaries.

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

Yours sincerely
C.D. Powell

(C.D. Powell)

L. Appleyard, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SECRET

CST.

SECRET

0-081845-2 IMMEDIATE

VIA WHITEHOUSE

cc Ops
Master

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF A MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER THATCHER TO
PRESIDENT REAGAN

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T175B/85

BEGINS:

Dear Ron,

Thank you for your message of 25 September. I am grateful to you for taking such a close interest in the Anglo-German proposal on MBFR, and glad to have the opportunity to give you my own views. My firm conclusion is that our proposal ought to be put forward in Vienna. My reasons for favouring the Anglo-German proposal are not just political and presentational. I agree with you that the East's last proposals were inadequate. We do not need 'something new' at Vienna just for its own sake.

The first test of any proposal is that it should enhance Western security. I believe ours would do so. The withdrawal of 13,000 US troops is no small matter. But we have offered it in previous Western proposals and we would hope you would keep them at active duty during the lifetime of the agreement. Meanwhile 30,000 Soviet troops would leave. They might well go no further than the Western Soviet Union though even that would be a gain. But the crux lies in the ability we gain to verify force levels inside Eastern Europe through a verification package more than three times more stringent than anything we have ever before sought. This would be a tremendous gain if we can get it.

A strictly time-limited agreement with this level of verification would enable us to establish the number of Eastern forces and get the agreed data we must have ahead of substantial reductions. It would clearly show up any Soviet cheating. It would also establish a precedent for intrusive on-site inspection. That precedent could be exploited in other arms control negotiations.

The main point of the proposal is to obtain reliable data on all forces in the area in a form which can be used publicly. Negotiation over anything beyond symbolic reductions would not

go ahead if we failed to get it. In short, data remains the objective of our approach. Our proposal is for a different way to obtain it.

I stress that verification in the way we have asked is crucial, otherwise the package falls.

My detailed answers to the specific questions you ask are set out in the attached paper.

With best wishes,

Margaret

ENDS

C.D.P.

Please also see Annex

ANNEX

MBFR: Questions and Answers

Q1: Why is a Western move desirable?

A: The East must not be allowed to claim that its inadequate proposals of February 1985 were a positive move which the Alliance is blocking, showing that it is cynical about force reductions in Europe. The East's February proposal exposed their flank, giving us an opportunity to out-manoeuver them and deny them the initiative.

Q2: Why the Anglo/German proposal?

A: It turns the Eastern proposal back on them. It is a first phase proposal, keeping options open ahead of the CSCE meeting in Vienna in late 1986, when the relationship between a possible CDE II and the existing MBFR forum will have to be considered. As a result of our concentrating on verification and postponing data agreement until the moment when we really need it, the Soviets will be put in the uncomfortable position of having to bring their force levels into line with the figures tabled under the information exchange (AM 6). It would offer the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries an opportunity to limit and cap Soviet forces on their territory.

Q3: Why not rest on the Western 1984 proposal, which already compromised over the data requirement?

A: The East has rejected that proposal and tabled another. The 1984 compromise over data was unsatisfactory not least for members of the Alliance. The East was allowed the opportunity to file inaccurate data which NATO might even have accepted (agreement on data "within an acceptable range of Western estimates" was stipulated) thus condoning a measure of Eastern cheating. Alliance unity was strained, and the Alliance has not even been able to complete the proposal by agreeing a verification package.

Q4: Are not military implications disadvantageous?

A: The withdrawal of 13,000 US troops and 30,000 Soviet troops is in line both with previous Western proposals and reflects the relative strengths in the NGA. They might well go no further than the Western military districts. But there would be political benefits as well as the gain in terms of intelligence and warning which would follow from the implementation of the verification regime. We would place a cap on further Soviet and Warsaw Pact increases. We would obtain, as part of this package of verification measures, the data we have been seeking for 12 years and in addition, would establish a treaty basis for a NATO response to the sort of sustained long term build-up in Soviet force levels in Eastern Europe to which some allies might otherwise be reluctant to respond. The overall security of the West would be enhanced.

Q5: Negative implications for other arms control negotiations?

A: The proposal does not weaken, let alone abandon, the West's insistence on an agreed data base, because data exchange, backed in this case by stringent checks, would remain an essential pre-condition for the negotiation of a comprehensive agreement, or indeed any continuation of this limited agreement.

The proposal would not imply Western acceptance, or codification, of the existing imbalance. It would not be a "freeze", but a time-limited no increase commitment providing the stability essential for effective verification.

Q6: The geographical asymmetry between East and West makes the proposed deal dangerous to Western security?

A: The adverse geography cannot be negotiated away, and militates against any MBFR proposal. What has to be looked at is the balance of the argument. Overall, an agreement based on the Anglo-German proposal would enhance security.

Q7: Does not deferring prior agreed data undermine enforceability?

A: Prior data deferral would not undermine the enforceability of the agreement, in that compliance would be with a no-increase commitment based on the information exchange after initial reductions. Whatever figures the East decided to file, the Alliance would still have a

database with which the East would have to comply.

Q8: Would not the agreement be extended in practice even if the East cheated?

A: No. It would expire after four years. The cut-off would be clear. A new arrangement would require Alliance consensus. Verification would be over three years and involve all allies in NATO: there would be no sudden decision at the end, but a cumulative process in which the truth would be extremely difficult to deny.

Q9: Could not the Soviets easily turn the proposal down because of "unreasonable" verification demands?

A: Of course the East will claim that enhanced verification demands are "unreasonable". However, Western minimal amendments to the East's own proposals would make it more difficult for the East to turn us down out of hand. They would no longer have the excuse about the "obstacle" of prior agreed data, and the pressure on the Russians, including that from their allies, to accept a verification regime (an issue they have always tried to avoid) would be real. NTMS cannot, on their own, provide us with the reliable and usable information necessary for conventional arms control agreements. Therefore an effective verification package is essential to any proposal. The prospect of eventual rejection by the Russians is no reason for allowing them to maintain the initiative when we can seize without risk to ourselves and with the possibility of major benefits in real and public relations terms.

C.P.