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USA : meetings
with Nitze:
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"K. P. Cadogan"

10 DOWNING STREET

5 February, 1986.

From the Private Secretary

Dear Sir,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR NITZE

The Prime Minister saw Ambassador Nitze this evening for a discussion on arms control issues. Mr. Nitze was accompanied by the United States Ambassador and by Mr. Ron Lehman of the National Security Council.

Mr. Nitze said that the US Administration had been studying the Gorbachev proposals of 15 January very closely. They had reached the conclusion that they were heavily weighted towards propaganda effect. In particular the proposals were front-loaded: the points of interest to the Soviet Union were all included in the first stage. The only evident movement was over INF. But even here there were important flaws in the form of the no-transfer provision, the freeze on modernisation of the United Kingdom and French deterrents, and the need for declarations by the United Kingdom and France agreeing to total elimination of their nuclear forces in the second stage. Moreover, the Soviet proposal made no provision for reductions of SS20s in Asia, although Soviet officials had indicated informally the possibility of a freeze on these. As regards START, the Soviet position was entirely unchanged and retained their objectionable definition of strategic systems. While at first sight there appeared to have been some change of position on strategic defence in terms of omission of any reference to research in the English text of the Gorbachev proposals, this too disappeared on closer examination. Soviet officials had confirmed that what they termed "purposeful research" would be prohibited. A final objection was that all the other elements in the Gorbachev proposals were linked to immediate agreement on a Comprehensive Test Ban.

Mr. Nitze continued that President Reagan had reached decisions on the broad lines of a reply to Gorbachev, on which he would welcome the views of the United States' allies. He then spoke broadly on the lines of the information in Washington telegram No.270. While reiterating the United States' commitment to elimination of nuclear weapons, the reply would point out the

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deficiencies in the Soviet proposals for this and would in practice leave it to one side. The focus should instead be on steps to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in strategic nuclear weapons applied to like weapons and on an interim INF Agreement. The reply would go on to say that the elimination of nuclear weapons would not dispose of the need for non-nuclear defences and would reiterate the United States commitment to SDI research. The US saw no need for fresh initiatives on START or strategic defence at this time. But the United States was ready to contemplate interim reductions in INF coupled with 50 per cent reductions in SS20s in Asia, as a prelude to a zero-zero solution for INF coupled with elimination of all SS20s west of Novosibirsk. There would also need to be agreement on a global LRNF ceiling and constraints on SRINF. (This was all rattled off from a piece of paper and I cannot guarantee the details. You will no doubt receive the fuller account tomorrow.)

The Prime Minister thanked Mr. Nitze for explaining US views. She would like to study them in detail before making definitive comments and in any event intended to let the President have a message setting out her views on arms control at the next US/Soviet Summit shortly. She welcomed the renewed commitment to SDI research. She thought that the US were right to try to set aside in practice the concept of elimination of nuclear weapons. This would have enormous risks for the West unless accompanied by measures to secure a balance in the conventional field. Indeed, she regretted that the West had bound itself to such an impracticable objective. She also had misgivings about a zero-zero INF solution although she would need to study carefully the precise conditions which the United States proposed attaching as regards Soviet SS20s in Asia. A zero-zero solution would call into question the NATO decision to deploy Pershing II and Cruise missiles as an essential part of the Alliance's spectrum of nuclear deterrents. In any case, our preferred solution was zero-zero on a global basis. A full exploration of the proposal would be necessary within the Alliance. But apart from this she found the President's general approach in replying to Gorbachev on the same wave-length as the United Kingdom.

I am sending copies of this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Yang Siewely,
Mathew Sauer (Duty Clerk)

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