



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 February 1986

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Dear Charles,

Arms Control : Response to Gorbachev Proposals

Thank you for your letter of 22 February enclosing a message to the Prime Minister from President Reagan explaining how he intends to answer Mr Gorbachev's arms control proposals of 15 January.

The Foreign Secretary notes that, following the consultation with the Allies, the President has modified his line on attainment of a nuclear-free world, putting heavy stress on the near-term objectives of nuclear reductions as agreed in bare outline at the Summit, and conventional arms control in parallel. He has also adjusted his response on LRINF, specifically re-emphasising the main NATO criteria and also verification (the four turrets at the top of page 4 of his letter). The interim proposal for 140 launchers on each side and the eventual step of global zero-zero are retained. Limits on SRINF, which would prevent circumvention of the agreement, are stipulated. These changes meet our main preoccupations.

The President's line on British nuclear weapons is satisfactory. Although the possibility of future "multilateral steps" is referred to, he firmly rejects Mr Gorbachev's conditions regarding third country systems and emphasises that the US can make no commitments for other nuclear powers.

Unlike Mr Gorbachev, President Reagan evidently intends to give adequate coverage to the non-nuclear arms control issues.

The latest reports in the press suggest that President Reagan has already replied to Mr Gorbachev. The US Embassy here cannot confirm this but believe it to be likely. However, this does not invalidate the effectiveness of a short message of support. I enclose a draft.

I will be sending you shortly a draft reply to Mr Gorbachev's message of 15 January to the Prime Minister.

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I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Len Appleyard
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Private Secretary

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