

file DF

PRIME MINISTER

FOREIGN SECRETARY'S SPEECH TO THE FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION

I showed you in the aircraft on the way back from Florence the passages in the Foreign Secretary's speech to the FPA next Monday dealing with the SDI. We agreed that these were unsatisfactory and required changing. I wrote in this sense to the FCO.

The revised version (attached) is not very different in substance, though paragraph 19 is rather firmer on the Soviet failure to negotiate. And the passage retains the reference to his objectionable RUSI speech last year. The Foreign Secretary claims that it would be politically damaging to him if he were seen to be making a U-turn and disowning that speech.

I am not sure how much you want to make of this. I think you will find the Foreign Secretary very obstinate about changes: and the passage proposed is not damaging as such, though it certainly inclines to a more sceptical view of SDI than you hold. I attach an alternative and much shorter passage (B) which removes the more objectionable aspects of his draft which I could try on him if you wish.

Do you wish me to try B?

Charles Powell

14 March 1986

RAMAFF



Draft Passage B:

The maintenance of deterrence raises the question of the relationship between offensive and defensive weapons. The United States has offered a dialogue in Geneva on this relationship. The need now is for a serious Russian response. I hope the Russians will move off their indefensible line that their research is legitimate but that the SDI must stop; I hope they will agree to engage in the proposed dialogue without making preconditions. Until they do, doubts will remain about their seriousness over negotiating reductions in nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, common prudence dictates that the massive Soviet research programmes into the new technologies should be matched.

It is no good the Russians sticking their heads in the sand. One of the keys to progress at Geneva could be action to strengthen the effectiveness of the ABM Treaty. Confidence as to the nature of the relationship between offense and defence might help to encourage the big cuts in offensive nuclear missiles which we all want the super powers to make: to quote the Camp David Four Points again, security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides.