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PRIME MINISTER

SOVIET COMPLIANCE WITH ARMS CONTROL  
AGREEMENTS

I attach a draft message to President Reagan which I have prepared following your meeting with Mr. Nitze this morning.

Agree?

C.D.P.

CHARLES POWELL

23 April 1986

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

Dear Ron

I was grateful for your message setting out your tentative judgements on how the United States should respond to the Soviet record on compliance with arms control agreements. Thank you also for sending Paul Nitze to discuss this further with me. I am sure that he will have given you a full report on our talk in which I set out my views rather forthrightly (judging from his doleful expression!).

There seem to me two contradictory strands running through what ~~you propose~~ <sup>your proposals</sup>. On the one hand you intend to dismantle two Poseidon submarines. This is strictly in accordance with the United States obligations under the agreed SALT limits and I applaud it. On the other hand ~~you intend to announce now that you will break these same obligations in the autumn.~~ <sup>in envisaged</sup> ~~that you will break these same obligations in the autumn.~~ <sup>you will break these same obligations in the autumn.</sup> This seems to me to risk undoing all the good which would be achieved by the first decision. an announcement

I have put to you in the past my strong view on the importance of democratic nations observing their treaties strictly. Your record has been unrivalled on this and you have earned the world's respect for the United States. But if you now announce your intention to break those same obligations, ~~you will hand Gorbachev an enormous propaganda weapon which he will not hesitate to use.~~ <sup>to announce that</sup> It would be far better in the period leading up to your next Summit for the United States to be in a position of biding by its agreements while being able to point to a Soviet failure to do so.

I am also worried that the effect of ~~your proposed course of action~~ <sup>the</sup> would be divisive in the Alliance, at the very moment when we need to do everything possible to strengthen it. In the first place, I am not sure ~~you have yet made out a sufficiently clear and convincing public case on Soviet non-compliance, certainly not one which would carry conviction in Europe.~~ <sup>It is important that</sup> ~~You really have to be able to demonstrate firmly and beyond all doubt that the Soviet Union is not complying~~ <sup>convincingly</sup>

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non-compliance...  
is sufficient...  
clear & convincing...  
to carry...  
public opinion

*Handwritten notes in right margin:*  
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public opinion

with existing agreements and that the United States has specifically and repeatedly challenged them on their non-compliance in the Standing Consultative Commission. I have to say that our own assessment of the Soviet record is not as clear cut as yours. There seems to be real ambiguity in some areas.

and received no satisfactory reply.  
and received no satisfactory reply.

Secondly, there was a great feeling of relief in Western public opinion after your first Summit meeting and a belief that there was now a real prospect of moving towards reductions in nuclear weapons. A public announcement now by the United States that it did not intend in future to comply with existing agreements would have an electric effect on public opinion. It would lead to the West being in the dock, instead of the Soviet Union. It would be widely feared that such a decision would lead to cancellation or at best postponement of the next Summit. Everything that we gained by your outstanding performance at Geneva would seem to be put at risk.

I am sure that you are right to press ahead with your strategic modernisation programmes which can add to the security of the United States and the Alliance. I am also sure that you are right to deal firmly with the Soviet Union. But I do urge you most strongly not to tie your hands publicly now as to what you would do in the autumn. The United States' position would be immeasurably stronger if you confirm your intention to continue to abide by existing agreements, while repeating the strongest possible warning to the Soviet Union to match you in fulfilling their obligations scrupulously.

I have once again put my views <sup>very clearly</sup> ~~clearly~~ frankly, because I believe it is better <sup>to be clear</sup> ~~to be clear~~. I do not for a moment underestimate the difficulties for you of continuing unilateral restraint. But the issues go to the heart of Alliance solidarity at this crucial moment and I urge you to give the fullest possible weight to this consideration.

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With warm regards.

*Margaret.*

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