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PM/86/031

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister C/PC ①

The Americans have behaved unreasonably on this issue of challenge inspection for too long. It's 95% Richard Perle's fault. The Foreign Secretary proposes that we should launch our own ideas in the Western Group at Geneva, even though the US may

Chemical Weapons and Challenge Inspection

disrupt. Personally I believe this is fully justified.

1. Recent events have confirmed the need for us to make progress towards the total ban on chemical weapons which we all wish to see:

- we face an increasing threat of CW proliferation, notably in the Middle East;
- the current controversy over the US modernisation of their CW capability is evidence of how sensitive public opinion is on the subject. It underlines the need to complement the modernisation approach with evidence of our commitment to the arms control solution as the preferable option; and
- recent initiatives by Gorbachev, with further details provided at the CD negotiations in Geneva, have created the impression of real flexibility on the Soviet side.

Agree the Foreign Secretary's message to Shultz?
 CDP
 20/5

2. The result has been that, increasingly if unfairly, the West is beginning to be seen as favouring re-armament over arms control. In the case of the chemical weapons negotiations, the inherent flaws in the US approach to a challenge inspection regime, incorporated in their proposed Article X, have actually begun to create the perception that it is the West which is blocking any progress at Geneva. As we have agreed several times in the past, Article X remains wholly unnegotiable with either the Soviet Union or the majority of other parties to the negotiations; as we have told the Americans repeatedly over the past two years, it is unacceptable to us because of the risks to which it exposes our own security; and as we have also told them, we believe that it is conceptually flawed as a verification measure.

Yes
 not



3. I set out some of this background in greater detail in my earlier minute of 23 December, and you subsequently indicated that you endorsed the approach I suggested. There has since then been a further exchange of messages with George Shultz, and has subsequently written to George Younger. You yourself mentioned to President Reagan in your February message the need to reach an acceptable compromise on the subject (you are also urging on Gorbachev that he show more flexibility on challenge inspection).

4. The net result of these US/UK exchanges, and an intensified discussion between officials, has been no shift in the fundamental US position. Mr Richard Perle in the Pentagon continues to insist - alone but to great effect - that the challenge inspection regime must contain a mandatory obligation to accept inspection "anywhere, anytime".

5. I do not believe, however, that we should treat this discouraging US response as the end of the road. For the reasons I outlined above, I do not think we can afford to let the negotiations in Geneva continue to stagnate; to allow the Russians to enjoy the initiative; and to risk confirming the general perception that it is we, not they, who are blocking progress towards a ban. The meetings which the Defence Secretary and I will be having with our US counterparts in the next week provide a valuable opportunity to go over the ground again at a high level.

6. George Younger intends to confirm to Cap Weinberger that we are still far from convinced by the familiar arguments in the latter's most recent letter, which do not in our view represent any sort of step forward. For my part, I propose to explore with George Shultz next week in Washington a way of moving the negotiations forward, by launching the sort of limited UK initiative to which your



Private Secretary referred in his letter of 19 May about our broader approach to arms control. What I have in mind is outlined in the attached draft message which I intend to send George Shultz before I see him, provided that you are content. There is of course some risk of hostility from certain quarters in the Pentagon but I believe that it will be in their own interest to keep the level of criticism down. They will for their own Congressional purposes want to avoid provoking an open split in the Alliance.

7. I am sending copies of this minute to George Younger and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
20 May 1986

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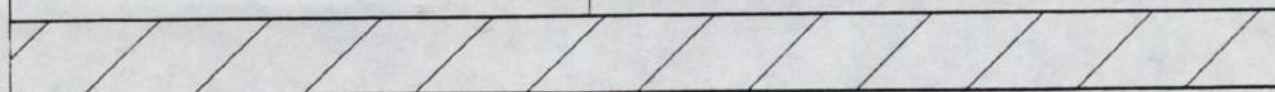
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2 In your earlier letter you expressed your certainty that
3 we would be able to achieve important progress during the British
4 chairmanship of the CW Committee in Geneva. You urged the need
5 for pressing ahead in areas where progress is possible,
6 rigorously testing the limits of Soviet willingness to engage in
7 serious negotiations, broadening consensus in areas relevant to
8 verification, and maintaining Alliance unity. I have to tell you
9 that I endorse all these objectives. But the first three months
10 of the British chairmanship have produced, to be frank, very
11 little but signs of increasing dissension within the Alliance,
12 and new Soviet proposals which have placed them in a good (but
13 wholly undeserved) light. The net result, coupled with the
14 debate over the binary programme, has been that the West is
15 becoming increasingly perceived as favouring re-armament over
16 arms control, and even blocking the chances of progress at
17 Geneva.

18 As you well know, we have long taken the view here that
19 the current Article X of your draft Treaty is not negotiable with
20 the Russians or other parties, is an inadequate deterrent to
21 cheating, and presents a security risk to our own interests. I
22 had hoped that our officials, as a result of their extensive
23 exchanges in previous months, would have been able to reach a
24 compromise agreement on the issue of access. But I now
25 understand that in some parts of Washington at least there is no
26 readiness to accept such a compromise.

27 The Prime Minister has therefore agreed that in order to
28 move the negotiations forward we should seek to launch our own
29 ideas with close Allies and in the Western Group at Geneva, and
30 see whether they enjoy consensus support there, with the
31 exception of the US. If that were the case, we would then
32 propose to table these in the CD. Conceptually, our ideas are
33 very similar to those which we had originally tabled in the CD,
34 with the support of the US, one month before George Bush tabled

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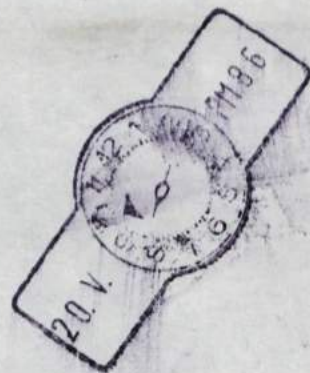
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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 May, 1986.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND CHALLENGE INSPECTION

The Foreign Secretary minuted the Prime Minister on 20 May about the continuing problems with the United States over Challenge Inspection in the context of a ban on chemical weapons.

The Prime Minister is content for the Foreign Secretary to send a message to Secretary Shultz in the terms set out in the draft enclosed with your letter.

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

(C.D. Powell)

A.C. Galsworthy, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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