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THE PRIME MINISTER

24 July 1986

**PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T.139/86**

Dear Gen.

I am grateful to you for letting me know, in your message of 20 July, the details of how you intend to respond to Gorbachev's latest proposals on arms control. I welcome the overall thrust of your approach. I see your intended reply as an important step forward in these crucial negotiations.

But there is one major point in your proposals which causes me difficulty. That is the terms of your reference to the participation of "other nuclear powers" in subsequent arms control negotiations. Because it does not spell out the conditions which we have repeatedly set for our participation, it risks giving the Russians a false impression of what we are ready to do. If your proposals went forward unchanged, I should have to point this out publicly. In doing, I would at least implicitly appear to be putting some distance between your position and my own, something I am always anxious to avoid.

There are two ways round this problem. The first would be to spell out in your response the full set of British (and French) conditions for our participation. Paul Nitze did not seem very attracted to the idea. Nor was I to his various alternative formulae. The second solution is to omit any reference at all to "other nuclear powers". I hope that you will be able to agree to this.

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I have two other suggestions to make:-

- you might look again at references to the ABM Treaty, to ensure that there is no risk of them being interpreted as an intention on your part to move towards a less restrictive interpretation of the Treaty.
- while it must be for you to judge what is negotiable by way of cuts in offensive forces, I hope you will not neglect any opportunity to pursue the 50 per cent target. For both strategic and political reasons we need to set our sights as high as possible.

With these few comments I am fully behind your approach and congratulate you on the effort which has gone into devising it.

Finally, I want you to know how much I admired your speech on South Africa. I can well imagine the pressures which you face, but if Britain, the United States and the European Community stand together, that must offer the best chance of securing peaceful change.

Thank you for letting us have Nancy.
It was good to see her and she looked
stunning at the Royal wedding. What a
marvellous First-Lady she is!

Yours ever

Nancy

The President of the United States of America