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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

2 October 1986

From the Private Secretary

Dear Colv,

ARMS CONTROL IN EUROPE: THE WAY FORWARD

The Prime Minister has considered the Foreign Secretary's minute of 30 September about the position which the West should take at the CSCE review meeting which opens in Vienna on 4 November.

The Prime Minister has raised a number of points about the approach proposed by the Foreign Secretary which she suggests might best be pursued by discussion in OD (or a smaller group if the Foreign Secretary prefers). It is not clear to her whether our proposal is put forward largely for presentational reasons or is intended to be a serious basis for negotiations. If it is the latter, she is not convinced that we have thought through all the implications of being drawn into negotiation on the basis of it. Her other concerns include the risk of launching such a proposal before the details are fully worked out; the importance of not distracting attention from what she regards as the main task of the Vienna meeting, namely focussing on human rights issues and on the Soviet Union's failure to live up to its commitments; and the importance of ensuring that any proposal, even in the formative stage, addresses the crucial question of verification.

I am copying this letter to Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,  
*Charles Powell*

Charles Powell

Colin Budd Esq  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

PRIME MINISTER

ARMS CONTROL IN EUROPE

The Foreign Secretary's minute attached outlines an initiative on arms control in Europe which he would like to launch within the Alliance and subsequently at the CSCE review conference in Vienna in early November.

The argument runs briefly as follows. The East will present at Vienna a re-packaged version of its Budapest appeal, calling for far-reaching cuts in forces in Europe. The Alliance has no counter-proposal ready. The MBFR talks lack credibility. We should therefore take the lead in the Alliance by bringing forward proposals for 25 per cent reductions in conventional forces in a European Arms Control Zone, leading to parity between the two military alliances. The details remain to be worked out. We would discuss the concept with the Americans, French and Germans. The Foreign Secretary would reflect the thinking in his speech at Vienna.

The Foreign Secretary feels strongly that the Alliance must have a counter-proposal. Indeed a high level task force is at work on one within the Alliance, but making little progress. He is also concerned about a rift developing between the French and Americans unless we can move quickly to table a concept acceptable to both. His ideas are apparently agreed by the Chiefs of Staff, John Stanley and the Defence Secretary. He seeks early agreement to them.

Acting as devil's advocate, there are a number of points which need at least to be tested:-

- (i) we don't always feel obliged to reply to Warsaw Pact proposals which are obviously long on propaganda and short on practical content, let alone mimic them. Are these serious proposals or

put forward just for effect? Have we thought through the implications of being drawn into negotiations on the basis of them?

(ii) is it wise to launch a proposal of this nature on the basis of a general concept before the details are worked out? Work out details first

*No - it's not wise*

(iii) shall we not just be playing the Soviet game by distracting the attention of the Vienna meeting from what ought to be its main concern with human rights? We ought to be focussing attention on their failure to live up to the Helsinki undertakings, and linking progress in other areas to an improvement in Soviet performance here (cf Sharansky). The Russians will be much happier swapping unrealistic schemes for reductions in arms.

(iv) the MBFR talks have got nowhere because the Russians have shown no serious interest in reducing conventional arms in Europe (and from their point of view, its not surprising) as opposed to making propaganda. Is it not a curious inversion of logic to argue that because we can't make progress in detailed negotiations on relatively modest reductions, we should promptly up the bidding by proposing negotiations on a higher plane of generality?

(v) verification is crucial to any negotiation in this area but the word does not appear in the Foreign Secretary's minute.

There are no doubt answers to these questions. And we have to have a position for the Vienna meeting. But you may feel that these ideas have not yet been subjected to the necessary destruction testing.

*1 qm*

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Content to let the Foreign Secretary proceed to explore these ideas with our Allies as proposed?

or

prefer a discussion in OD first?

*Yes*

*CDP*

Charles Powell

1 October 1986

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PM/86/065

PRIME MINISTER

Arms Control in Europe: The Way Forward

1, In my minute to you and other OD colleagues of 29 September I described the results of the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament in Europe. The successful conclusion of this conference and the public attention which it has attracted mean that we now need to consider urgently the way forward on arms control in Europe; and in particular the position the West should take at the CSCE Review meeting which opens in Vienna on 4 November, when I and other European Foreign Ministers will attend.

2. Security issues will of course only be part of the Vienna meeting's agenda: we shall be pressing hard to ensure that proper attention is also given to other areas of the CSCE process, notably human rights. But inevitably, given the success at Stockholm the question of how, where and with what purpose to pursue further negotiations on arms control in Europe will be one of the principal questions to arise. The Warsaw Pact already has its own ideas on the table, in the shape of its Budapest Appeal of 11 June, which called for far-reaching cuts in manpower and materiel throughout the whole of Europe. The West however is still deliberating internally within the High Level Task Force set up by the Halifax NATO Ministerial meeting in May. Although the Task Force has done some useful analytical work it is still rather floundering around on the question of future policy options. I had some discussion about this in New York last week with my Quadripartite colleagues (Shultz, Genscher and Raimond). It emerged that there are sharp differences of view, particularly between the French and the Americans, about

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how to proceed. We have instructed Political Directors of the Four to meet in London this week to try to iron out some of the procedural differences before the next meeting of the Task Force at the end of the week.

3. A continued absence of a coherent Western policy on this question will cause us difficulties at the Vienna meeting and, I think, more broadly. The East is likely to present at Vienna a repackaged version of its Budapest Appeal, in the guise of a follow-up to the Stockholm Agreement. What we need is a substantive Western response. We can of course point to MBFR. But after 13 years without any result the MBFR talks hardly carry much credibility; and our recent proposals there on small-scale initial reductions of US and Soviet forces appear modest when set against the grand design of the Warsaw Pact.

4. George Younger and I have therefore been looking at ways of ensuring that the East does not manage to seize the high ground in Vienna in November, thus to dictate the course of events once that meeting moves on to consider new proposals early in the New Year. We believe that a Western initiative setting out a vision of how we see the future of conventional arms control throughout the continent is needed. We consider also that Britain, supported ideally by the Federal Republic of Germany, should provide the impetus for such an initiative. If the two of us can agree on a set of substantive proposals to be put forward, I believe this could help to bridge the gap between the Americans and the French about procedure.

5. Having obtained the advice of the Chiefs of Staff we have now agreed upon the following as the outline of a possible new Western initiative:

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- the zone which formed the basis of the Stockholm Agreement, comprising European territory from the Atlantic to the Urals, should be accepted as the European Arms Control Zone;
- Western policy should be built on the twin pillars of confidence building and arms limitation/reduction;
- the ultimate objective should be reductions of the order of 25% in total conventional forces within that area, beginning with those of the Alliance and the Warsaw Pact;
- the aim of these reductions should be to bring about within the zone overall balance geared to the concept of parity between the military alliances, who should undertake a mutual commitment not to seek military superiority over the other;
- as part of this overall balance, the particular importance of the Central Region should be recognised, and the limited progress made at MBFR should be built upon;
- in parallel far-reaching Confidence Building Measures, designed to pave the way for 25% reductions, should be negotiated at a reconvened Stockholm-type Conference following the Vienna CSCE Follow-Up Meeting;
- the forum for the negotiation of arms limitations/reductions, and its relationship to the reconvened CDE should be discussed in the margins of the Vienna Meeting, both between East and West,

/and



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and with the neutrals present. The negotiations on reductions must effectively be limited to the members of the two military alliances, with collective presentation of policies directed at collective goals. Meanwhile, unless and until agreement is reached on any successor fora, MBFR would continue on existing terms.

5. An approach of this kind would build upon what has been achieved in the CDE and MBFR negotiations, and would be sufficiently far-reaching not only to meet the needs of the NATO Task Force mandate (which calls for "bold new steps") but also to match in breath and vision the Budapest Appeal. Unlike the Eastern proposal it does not sacrifice present gains in search of uncertain future goals.

6. It will of course require detailed elaboration with our allies, for example on the question of whether, and if so how, equipment should be specifically addressed in the notion of balance; and of how any eventual reductions should be distributed on the Western side. But it has been drafted with an eye on the particular concerns of our key allies, and should therefore commend considerable support. The Americans, in particular, can be expected to welcome the stress on parity between the alliances and on the need for a collective approach.

7. I propose first to send a short message to Hans Dietrich Genscher giving him an outline of our ideas and seeking his support for a Western initiative along these lines. Depending on the German reaction I would propose then to sound out the Americans and the French and thereafter the rest of the NATO Task Force.

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In the meantime, in the Quadripartite discussion on procedures we are basing ourselves on an approach which would be compatible with this initiative if we make it. My eventual aim would be to speak at the Vienna meeting in terms which reflect the thinking behind our ideas, in the hope that wider Western agreement would be obtained at the NATO Ministerial meeting in December for the presentation of a more specific proposal in Vienna early in the New Year.

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

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
30 September 1986

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Army Control : DEFENCE  
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