

PRIME MINISTER

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ARMS CONTROL

President Reagan's proposal at Reykjavik for the elimination of nuclear weapons within ten years could be devastating both militarily and politically. One is tempted to say thank God for the Russians for having turned the proposal down. Even if one doesn't believe that it will ever happen, it could cause us immense presentational difficulties while it remains on the table.

Our present public line is - and there are good reasons for it - to encourage an early resumption of negotiations between the Americans and the Russians on the whole range of arms control issues. But our real interest seems to me that negotiations are not resumed too soon. We should prefer to see the arms control process slow down, to give time to get the American proposal modified or knocked off the table and more modest ideas substituted. We cannot afford to be seen publicly to be blocking or slowing down progress but there are a number of steps we could take:

- get the American proposal remitted for discussion in NATO with the aim of getting it well bogged down there;
- concentrate on trying to persuade the Americans to drop the idea of a time limit for getting rid of nuclear weapons so that it reverts to being a distant aim;
- encourage the Americans to remain firm over the SDI so that there is no strong incentive for the Russians to resume negotiations;
- try to direct any resumed arms control negotiations towards a partial or interim agreement on INF which

could be reached independently of agreements on START and space.

This issue is bound to play a major part in your talks with President Reagan next month. We need some hard thinking done but it is a very sensitive issue and it could be very damaging were it to become public knowledge that ideas such as those sketched out above were being considered. It would be helpful to have a word at some stage about how to organise any further work on this.

C.D.P.

(C.D. POWELL)

14 October 1986

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