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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 April 1984

Dear Madam,

MRS. JEANE KIRKPATRICK

The above called on the Prime Minister at 7.00 p.m. on Sunday, 8 April. She was accompanied by Mr. Streator of the US Embassy.

The first subject raised was that of chemical weapons. The Prime Minister said that she was deeply concerned that the West at present appeared to have no adequate response to the impressive Soviet capability in the field of chemical weapons and that the use of these weapons by the Russians might therefore force us at once to nuclear retaliation. Mrs. Kirkpatrick said that the Foreign Minister of France had told her the night before that France would unhesitatingly respond with nuclear weapons to an attack upon it using chemical weapons. The US National Security Council had discussed this question in depth recently. It was recognised that chemical weapons were at least as menacing and as destructive as nuclear weapons and more difficult to control. Thus we were once again confronted with the situation where the only effective deterrent, miserably enough, might be the capacity to inflict similar damage on the other side. The US Government could not envisage an effective means of verification in this field. The Prime Minister referred to the proposals which we ourselves had tabled in Geneva on "challenge inspection". Mrs. Kirkpatrick said that the Americans were ready to accept this concept. But the recent case of use of chemical weapons by Iraq showed that the materials for making chemical weapons were available from a number of sources and their assembly was easy. This complicated the question of verification. The Prime Minister commented that this whole question needed much greater attention. She believed that public opinion would accept the building up of a chemical weapons capability for the purposes of deterrence if only because the alternative was to depend on nuclear retaliation.

The Prime Minister then said that she was concerned at the evidence in recent JIC reports that the Soviet Union believed that the United States might carry out a surprise nuclear attack. She recalled a report sent to her earlier by the Reverend Michael Bourdeaux (a copy of which had been passed to the Americans) which had described the effect on Soviet public opinion of the constant propaganda in the Soviet media about the possibility of a Western attack. When she had been in Hungary

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she had devoted much effort to attempting to persuade Mr. Kadar that the Western democracies were peace-loving and that, in particular, President Reagan genuinely sought peace and arms control. She had not felt that she had convinced her interlocutors. We had to take seriously this fear on the part of the Soviet Union and the East Europeans and try to remove it. She had asked Mr. Weinberger recently whether the Americans had been in touch with the Soviet Union about the Gulf. It was important to get the message through to Moscow that if the West did have to intervene in the Gulf it would do so only to protect freedom of passage and not to put the Soviet Union at a disadvantage.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick said that she had recently noted, in the Nicaraguan press, a communique which Nicaragua had signed with Iran following a visit to Tehran by a member of the Junta. The contents of the communique were less interesting than the fact that one had been signed. The Americans were a little concerned about Soviet penetration of Iran and it was in this context that the Nicaraguan connection might be significant.

She fully agreed on the need for caution with regard to the Soviet Union at present. The mood of Moscow was very strange. She instanced the fact that the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, who had attended the Gridiron Dinner for many years, had this year cancelled his attendance 24 hours in advance without an explanation. This had happened in the same week as Moscow had declined to receive General Scowcroft. All this was hard to understand. Did it reflect a struggle for power in Moscow? Or was there a determination to avoid giving any help to President Reagan in the election campaign?

The Soviet veto on the Lebanese Resolution in the United Nations had also been interesting. The US assessment had been that the Russians would not veto. They had recently learned from the French that the Soviet Ambassador in Paris had said the night before the vote that the Soviet Union would abstain. Dr. Kissinger had told the Administration that Dobrynin had spoken similarly two days before the vote. Nevertheless, the veto had transpired.

What now impressed the Americans about the Andropov period was how very little the West had known about it. It had taken a very long time to establish how ill Andropov was and what the nature of his illness was. We did not even know whether he had a wife. After he had been in office for three months the CIA had said that they detected a sharp upturn in Soviet disinformation. Nor did we know very much about Chernenko.

The Prime Minister gave Mrs. Kirkpatrick an account of her visit to Hungary. Mrs. Kirkpatrick said that the Prime Minister of Dominica had told her that just before Bishop was killed in Grenada he had given the OECS an account of a recent visit he had made to Eastern Europe. He had been enthusiastic about Hungary, and had said that that example convinced him that it was possible for a Marxist state to succeed. He had also claimed that Hungary was much freer than Cuba.

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She then asked whether the Prime Minister believed that the Soviet Union could count on Eastern Europe in the case of war - and did the Russians themselves believe that they could? The Prime Minister replied that this was a difficult issue but the large presence of Soviet troops in Hungary suggested doubt in Moscow.

The Prime Minister then asked Mrs. Kirkpatrick to comment on the US election campaign.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick said that she believed that Mr. Mondale would win the Democratic nomination. Gary Hart was a "truly disturbing" person. Whereas Mondale was a product of US establishment politics, and therefore predictable and responsible, Hart was a new breed. He did not know the world. His experience in thinking about foreign affairs was limited to the "McGovernite framework" - he was isolationist and Utopian. Moreover, there was a strange streak in him. He had changed his name, falsified his age, concealed the name of the college he had attended and had even changed his signature. He was a "fabricated" man. He was self-consciously trying to be John Kennedy, but the truth was that there was nothing there. The memory of President Carter harmed Hart - many Americans felt that they had had enough of novelty.

The campaign of the Reverend Jesse Jackson was likely to hit trouble soon. One of his close advisers, who was a black Muslim, had recently sent a letter to a black journalist on the Washington Post who had written an article criticising Jackson. The letter had threatened the life of the journalist concerned. The word was around that this sort of thing was going on more generally in the Jackson campaign. Mondale was a skilful man and an experienced campaigner and should not be under-estimated.

President Reagan's campaign was in good shape. It was important that his standing in the state polls was better than in the national polls.

The discussion ended at 7.40 p.m.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence). I should be grateful if all who see the record could protect its contents closely. It is important not to reveal that the Prime Minister and Mrs. Kirkpatrick discussed the US election campaign.

*You are
John Colas.*

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.