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4 January 1985

Dear John,

Briefing for the Prime Minister on Arms Control

I am writing to record the outcome of our meeting yesterday which you, Nigel Nicholls (MoD) and other FCO and MoD officials attended to have a preliminary discussion of the briefing requirements on arms control subjects for the Prime Minister's planned visit to Washington in February for a further meeting with President Reagan. I have since clarified with Charles Powell at No. 10 some of the uncertainties which our meeting identified and this letter takes account of his advice.

2. We recognised that the final shape of arms control briefing for the Prime Minister's use on this occasion might depend on further exchanges with the Americans in the interim; but that in the meantime there was work which could usefully be put in hand straightaway. This should comprise:

- Chemical Weapons: a short paper, drawing on the work commissioned earlier and discussed by Ministers on 2 August 1984, summarising United Kingdom views on the present state of play in Geneva and, in particular, on the United States position on verification (Article X of the US Draft Treaty) and possible alternatives to it.
- Non-Proliferation: a short paper developing United Kingdom views on how the pursuit of limited measures on nuclear testing might serve the cause of non-proliferation.
- Nuclear Weapons: we agreed that it might be valuable, subject to the views of Ministers, to provide the Prime Minister with a summary of possible Western objectives in such East-West

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negotiations on arms control as may result from next week's US/Soviet meeting in Geneva, including the inter-relationship, in negotiating terms, between offensive and defensive weapons; and that further consideration should be given to this by FCO and MoD officials with a view to submission to Ministers.

- Conventional Arms Control: briefing prepared on conventional arms control for the Prime Minister's meeting with President Reagan on 22 December should be reviewed and brought up-to-date as necessary for inclusion in the Prime Minister's next briefing pack.

We agreed that (apart from the factual material which we are now assembling for a different purpose) the Prime Minister was unlikely to require further briefing on BMD/SDI for use at the February meeting; although a way should be found to ensure that the specific issue of ASATs is not lost sight of - the Prime Minister's projected briefing meeting (see below) should offer an opportunity for this.

3. We discussed the question of whether it was still realistic to retain the initial concept of the February meeting, which originated from the Prime Minister's conversation with Secretary Shultz in New Delhi on 3 November, namely that of a "high-level seminar" on arms control issues, given that there is now unlikely to be more than 2½ hours available for discussion of these matters during the Prime Minister's visit to Washington in February. I understand that the Prime Minister's preference is likely to be to retain the initial concept, despite the time constraint, in order to distinguish it from the more formal and structured format of a normal Summit meeting. The possibility (now confirmed in Charles Powell's letter of 3 January to Len Appleyard) that the Prime Minister might wish to authorise the handing over to the Americans, in advance of her visit, of papers setting out United Kingdom positions - perhaps including the composite paper already prepared on BMD/SDI and ASATs - together with the Prime Minister's probable wish to hold a briefing meeting on arms control issues at the beginning of February, points to a rather earlier

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deadline for completion of our briefing work than was envisaged in our discussion yesterday. I should be grateful if you and Nigel Nicholls would ensure that all the briefing material on arms control for the Prime Minister's February meeting with President Reagan reaches me here by noon on Thursday, 24 January, so that it can be made available to the Prime Minister for the following weekend.

4. We also discussed the question of whether the Prime Minister would still wish to devote a major speech to arms control matters during her forthcoming visit, as was envisaged at an earlier stage. I understand that although the Prime Minister is unlikely to wish to devote an entire speech to arms control and security matters, she may well decide to include a substantial passage on them in a speech covering a wider field. It would therefore be prudent to prepare a draft of an arms control/security section of a speech for eventual incorporation in whatever fuller text No. 10 may finally commission; we agreed at our meeting that the Prime Minister's next visit to Washington might provide a useful opportunity to highlight the contribution of the European Allies to Western defence and to counter tendencies in the US Congress to belittle it.

5. I am sending copies of this letter to Nigel Nicholls in the Ministry of Defence; to Charles Powell at No. 10; and, in view of your own impending absence, to Michael Pakenham and Christopher Crabbie in the FCO.

Yours ever,

Bryan -

B G Cartledge

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