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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 January 1985

Prime Minister
MS CDP
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Dear Charles,

Outcome of Geneva Talks: Soviet View

The Soviet Ambassador, acting on instructions, called on Mr Rifkind on 15 January to give the Soviet view on the meeting at Geneva between Mr Shultz and Mr Gromyko. Mr Popov's account added little to what we had already heard from other sources, but included a number of points of interest.

He described the Soviet objectives for the talks as follows:

- (a) on space weapons, the non-militarisation of outer space. This meant a ban on the development, testing and deployment of "attack space weapons", including ASAT and anti-missile weapons. Such a radical approach would allow far-reaching decisions in other directions (he did not refer to the research aspects of space weapons, but neither did he mention the possibility of "bracketing" research, as the Soviet Counsellor had done on 9 January in speaking to the Department);
- (b) as regards strategic weapons, a complete ban on attack space weapons would allow progress on radical reductions and a limitation on development and deployment of new delivery systems (including long range cruise missiles, ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers). There was a link with INF since NATO INF in Europe had a strategic capability;
- (c) for INF, the objective should be to stop the deployment of new US missiles in Europe, with a simultaneous halt in the implementation of Soviet counter-measures leading to subsequent agreement on reductions. British and French "medium-range missiles" should be taken into account.

Popov said the Soviet Union had rejected American claims at Geneva that SDI was a defensive system. They had also stressed the importance of solving questions which, although

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not directly linked with the agenda, could strengthen confidence, eg No First Use of Nuclear Weapons, a freeze on nuclear arsenals, the ratification of the 1974 and 1976 treaties on underground nuclear explosions, and complete and general prohibition of nuclear arms tests. The US reaction had not been encouraging.

Popov added that, contrary to press reports, no other questions (eg the Middle East) had been discussed at Geneva.

Mr Rifkind said we had been delighted at the outcome of Geneva, which offered the prospect of real progress. He repeated the standard position on the inclusion of British (and French) forces. In response to Popov's claim that Britain possessed more than 300 warheads and thus posed a major threat to the Soviet Union, Mr Rifkind underlined the stark comparison between the respective capabilities of the UK and USSR.

In reply to a question, Popov did not give a clear answer on how the Russians saw linkage between the three sets of talks, particularly in the event of progress being quicker in one group than in the other two.

The Ambassador asked whether there had been a change in British attitudes to the SDI. Mr Rifkind responded by referring to the terms of the Camp David statement.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram and Richard Hatfield.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

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