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Prime Minister

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 February 1985

Dear Charles,

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Soviet Message for the Prime Minister

I enclose a copy of a translation of the message to the Prime Minister from President Chernenko which, due to an administrative oversight of which he was not aware, Sir Geoffrey Howe received from the Soviet Ambassador this morning before we had received your views in response to Colin Budd's letter of 15 February. The Foreign Secretary has asked me to say that he is sorry this misunderstanding occurred.

Before passing over the message, Mr Popov made some introductory remarks. The Soviet leadership attached importance to exchanges with the British Government on arms control matters and particularly the question of arms in space. While the Soviet approach to the Geneva talks was serious and constructive, recent declarations by senior US officials had caused concern. The US was preparing for the stage when space weapons would be produced and deployed. At a later stage Mr Popov alleged that the increased capability of the Minuteman and production of mobile radar stations were both violations of the 1972 ABM Treaty by the US.

Sir Geoffrey Howe said he would convey the message to the Prime Minister. It would be studied carefully. The essential basis of our position was the four points which had been agreed between the Prime Minister and President Reagan in Washington which had preceded the agreement reached in Geneva. Neither side had a monopoly on research. The fact was that the Soviet Union made twice as many launches into space as all other nations combined. The figure of \$26 billion for research was well known and publicly discussed. Since the Soviet Government was not open, and this kind of information was not released, it was not possible to say how great their effort was. The Foreign Secretary concluded by saying that there were arguments that the Soviet Union was in breach of the ABM Treaty: both sides would be discussing this at Geneva.

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At the end of the meeting it was agreed that we would refer to Mr Popov's call as being to discuss matters affecting our bilateral relations and East/West relations generally. Mr Popov undertook to check with Moscow but thought it most unlikely that his authorities would wish to refer explicitly either to the fact of the message or to its contents.

I am sending copies of this letter to Richard Mottram, MOD, and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,*

*L. V. Appleyard*

(L. V. Appleyard)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

18 February 1985

SOVIET MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Colin Budd wrote to me on 15 February to convey the request from the Soviet Ambassador to call on the Prime Minister on 18 February to deliver a reply from President Chernenko to the Prime Minister's letter to him of 3 January.

The Prime Minister would have wished to see the Soviet Ambassador to receive this message. When I telephoned at 0915 this morning to inform you of this I was told that the Foreign Secretary was already seeing him.

The Prime Minister is very angry indeed at being pre-empted in this way and wishes this to be known.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

(CHARLES POWELL)

L.V. Appleyard, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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