



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

4 October 1985

Prime Minister

A very preliminary  
analysis of the Soviet  
proposals.

Dear Charles,

Geneva Talks: Soviet Counter-Proposals

In his speech in Paris yesterday suggesting dialogue with France and Britain on nuclear weapons reductions, Mr Gorbachev also indicated that the Geneva linkage between all three elements under negotiation might no longer apply to the INF basket. In addition, he revealed the broad outline of the Soviet proposals tabled in Geneva on 30 September/1 October. The US have now provided us with a more detailed account of these "counter-proposals" (the US term). And the Soviet Charge called at the FCO today to hand over the text of Mr Gorbachev's remarks suggesting dialogue, with the request that they be drawn to the Prime Minister's attention. I enclose a copy of Paris telegram No 836, which contains the complete text.

The main elements in the Soviet proposals, as conveyed earlier this week and last to the Americans, are set out at Annex A. We shall be preparing, in coordination with MOD, a full assessment as soon as documents and all the details are available from Geneva.

On strategic defence, the Soviet position appears ambiguous. It is not clear whether the Russians have in fact conceded that laboratory research is permissible, as Gorbachev hinted in his Time interview, or whether they are still insisting on a blanket ban. The initial State Department assessment (largely on the basis of Mr Gorbachev's letter to the President) is that the Russians have conceded the permissibility of laboratory research.

I am inclined  
to think that in

On ...  
due course we should

reply formally to

the Soviet communication

An oral message from

you to Gorbachev

conveyed by Bryan Cutledge

to the Soviet Foreign Ministry

CDP/At/E



On offensive weapons, Soviet counting methodology remains unacceptable. They have gone all the way back to their original definition of strategic systems as those which can hit the other side's territory, rather than continuing to work (as they did under SALT) on the basis of defining such systems as those over 550km range. This allows them to include US LRINF, and carrier-based and other medium range aircraft, whilst excluding their own systems of a similar type. The Soviet counting rules also refer to nuclear charges, not warheads. This is a standard Soviet term but it could, for instance, enable them to equate free-fall bombs with MIRVed warheads and thus to distort the overall balance. Further analysis will be needed to establish how far the Soviet Union would be forced to constrain its own ICBM force as a result of a 60% limit on any one leg of the strategic triad; and whether in that case there would be any improvement from the US point of view in the present imbalance in throwweight.

The situation in INF remains unclear. The Russians seem to be offering two options:

- (a) to merge the two sets of negotiations (START and INF), but to constrain further US deployments of INF; or
- (b) to equate totals of Soviet INF missiles with UK and French strategic nuclear forces.

The first option seems to concede the principle that US INF deployments are permissible. The second option restates their previous position.

There are a number of elements in the Soviet proposals which are obviously unacceptable: these include not only their counting methodology but also the moratoria on INF deployments and nuclear testing. On the other hand, there may on detailed analysis and as a result of further contacts in Geneva turn out to be positive factors as well. It is in any case a step forward that the Russians have now come up with specific figures. And the fact that they have called for reductions in offensive forces as extensive as 50% might make it easier for the Americans to consider the sort of limited restraints on SDI deployment which the Prime Minister has canvassed.

The French have turned down the Gorbachev offer of dialogue on nuclear reductions, stressing that French forces are not comparable to Soviet forces. For our part, the offer on the face of it does not require us to alter our basic approach, set out in the Foreign Secretary's speech to the UNGA in September 1983. Nonetheless the current Gorbachev thesis, that British and French systems cannot be ignored at a time when major reductions by the superpowers are being negotiated, and his offer of dialogue, will both strike a favourable chord with public opinion. The Foreign Secretary is clear that we should avoid being bounced into a definitive reaction; he will offer advice on a response to the Soviet proposal after consultation with Allies, particularly the US and the French.



We must evidently beware of giving the Russians any more room to exploit one of their two INF options (paragraph 5(b) above): their attempt to exclude US forces from Europe by establishing a Euro-balance of their own INF against UK and French strategic systems. For the time being we can rest on our UNGA conditions. Whilst dialogue on the terms the Soviets propose and which are designed to drive a wedge between Western Europe and the US would not be acceptable, the possibility of a deeper dialogue at the bilateral level on nuclear issues need not be ruled out.

The Foreign Secretary believes that the need for flexibility in the US position at Geneva in the run-up to the Reagan/Gorbachev meeting may before long need to be re-emphasised. This could be done in reply to the message which Mr Shultz sent him on 29 September (copy enclosed): he would clear the reply with the Prime Minister in draft. Although the Americans have done very well in keeping us informed and have reacted with admirable public restraint to the Soviet counter-proposals, Western opinion is unlikely to remain steady unless a real effort is seen to be made to engage Gorbachev in a substantive negotiation on defensive systems as well as offensive nuclear weapons.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD) and Michael Stark in the Cabinet Office.

*Yours ever,*

*Le Appleyard*

(L V Appleyard)  
Private Secretary

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*From the Private Secretary*

7 October, 1985

**GENEVA TALKS: SOVIET COUNTER-PROPOSALS**

Thank you for your letter of 4 October setting out a preliminary analysis of the Soviet proposals on arms control.

The Prime Minister has read this with interest.

The question arises whether we should reply formally to the Soviet communication in due course and the means by which this should be done. It would be helpful to have your views on this.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. Powell)

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

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