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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

28 November 1991

London SW1A 2AH

Dear Stephen,

Meeting with President Mitterrand 2 December:
Nuclear Issues

The Foreign Secretary thinks that the Prime Minister's meeting with President Mitterrand would be an opportunity to discuss the control of weapons in the Soviet Union. He has approved the enclosed draft brief and, unless you think that there will be no time to raise the matter, we will include it in the briefing pack. You may, in any case, want a copy for your discussions tomorrow with Morel.

*Yours ever,
S. L. Gass*

(S L Gass)
Private Secretary

Stephen Wall Esq CMG LVO
10 Downing Street

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MITTERRAND, 2 DECEMBER

Nuclear Issues

Control of weapons in the Soviet Union

1. Mitterrand highlighted this issue in September with his proposal for a four-power conference for which the moment may now have come. The Foreign Secretary believes this is an opportunity to cooperate with President Mitterrand on a project close to his heart.

2. We cannot assume that the Russians and Ukrainians by themselves will be able to resolve the questions of the control, removal and destruction of these weapons. The international community will have to help. Urgent coordination is needed to:-

(a) put pressure on the responsible authorities in the Soviet Union to honour arms control and NPT commitments;

(b) provide an overall framework and some help to the republics (eg over monitoring, safeguards, storage and possibly destruction of the weapons - MOD are currently examining the scope for help).

3. We have already agreed with the US, French and Germans that we should work together and regulate our relations with the republics in the light of their commitments on nuclear safety and non-proliferation (inter alia).

4. Even assuming the necessary commitments are made, it will take a lot of further effort and cooperation to ensure that weapons in the Ukraine remain securely under central control, and are eventually removed or destroyed. President Mitterrand's proposal for a four-power meeting, could now be useful. We ^{could} get together representatives of the UK, US, France and Soviet authorities (including Russia and Ukraine) to discuss the transition of Ukraine and other republics to non-weapon state (NNWS) status, accession to the NPT and possible help by the Western nuclear powers (the US Congress has voted \$500m partly for this purpose). The Prime

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Minister might suggest an urgent preliminary tripartite meeting. You might however wish to forewarn Scowcroft of the line the Prime Minister decides to take on the Mitterrand initiative.

5. In the background we should also seek to engage the G7, to ensure coherence of approach with financial questions.

6. The Russians may demand some compensation in Western arms control, especially if the denuclearisation of Ukraine and Kazakhstan in due course reduces their arsenal below START levels. Both we and the French would take the view that our minimal nuclear forces should not be traded for reductions which the Soviets need to make to fulfil their non-proliferation obligations. Nonetheless the degree of destruction of its weapons and international supervision involved may be politically difficult for the Russian leadership. The question of any arms control link would be primarily for the Americans, and would need to be fully discussed with them.

7. The Prime Minister might accordingly say to President Mitterrand:

- like you we see nuclear security and dangers of nuclear proliferation in the Soviet Union as a top priority;

- glad our political directors have agreed that all must sing the same tune on recognition of Ukrainian independence;

- the nuclear issues will have to be dealt with internationally and at a high level; accent should be on helping the Soviet Union and republics to fulfil the policies which they have set for themselves;

- agree with you that a meeting of the four nuclear powers could now be very useful. Suggest we ask officials to meet urgently with US counterparts to discuss details.

Aim should be:-

(i) clarification of control arrangements in emerging republics. Control should remain with a single authority and the weapons should be removed or destroyed as soon as possible. Any arrangements whereby weapons remain on Ukrainian territory should be transitional only;

(ii) signature by non-Russian republics of NPT Treaty and achievement of NNWS status within a measured timescale;

(iii) international measures to help them to achieve this.

Bilateral Coordination

8. The shifting of the nuclear sands since the Soviet coup and the Bush/Gorbachev initiative requires us to coordinate our nuclear, especially arms control, policies even more closely with France. The Prime Minister might additionally say:-

- Want to keep in closest possible step bilaterally using the Wall/Morel and MOD channels. Issues of equal concern to UK and France which are now under discussion/challenge include:-

(i) future of nuclear testing;

(ii) ballistic missile defence;

(iii) further strategic arms limitations. See no need to change our criteria about further involvement at this stage.

(iv) TASM: Remain convinced of need for a UK sub-strategic capability. Still evaluating options;

(v) nuclear dimension of European defence: aim should be to keep US umbrella, not substitute our own.