

SIR PERCY CRADOCK

MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN ON ARMS CONTROL

I attach a draft of a possible message following our discussion with the Prime Minister on Monday. I should be grateful for comments and amendments.

C.D.P.

Charles Powell

5 February 1986

28A

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN ON  
ARMS CONTROL

When George Shultz was here in December he suggested that I might let you have some thoughts on the handling of arms control issues at your next meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. At this early stage, I should like to put to you some general reflections. Nearer the time of the meeting I might - if you thought it useful - put forward some more specific ideas.

The starting point has to be how we assess Gorbachev's intentions. We have both had lengthy meetings with him. He is clearly a more astute operator than his predecessors, far more aware of the scope for playing on public opinion in the West. But under the veneer is the same brand of dedicated Soviet Communist that we have known in the past, relentless in pursuing Soviet interests and prepared to take his time over this. His main, indeed overriding, purpose will be to stop you from developing the SDI, both because he thinks it will give the United States a unilateral advantage and because he would much prefer to avoid the strain on the Soviet economy which having to match it or counter it will impose (though he will accept this if necessary). *He will also try to use the issue to split the Alliance.*

My judgment is that Gorbachev does not want a return to the pre-Geneva situation of no negotiation with the United States because he realises that this would actually reduce the Soviet Union's ability to exploit Western opinion. Equally, knowing at first hand the strength of your commitment to pursuing SDI research, recently reaffirmed in your State of the Union message, he cannot be optimistic that agreement on terms acceptable to the Soviet Union is attainable in the short term. My guess is, therefore, that he will not come to your next Summit looking for definitive agreements on the main arms control issues, though he may be ready for a  
\* separate or interim agreement on INF. Rather he will probably calculate that the process of talking serves him better than any agreement likely to be on offer.



My tentative <sup>assessment</sup> conclusion is that Gorbachev's purpose will be to spin out negotiations in the hope of being able to rely on a steadily mounting volume of pressure from Western public opinion to remove the "blockage" represented by the SDI, to give time for possible budget pressures to make your choices more difficult, and possibly to try to play the issue into the next United States Presidential elections. In other words he may conclude that his best hope of limiting or restricting SDI lies in sitting you out.

We also need to consider the wider context within which your negotiations will be taking place. When you launched the SDI, you set out the noble vision of a world without nuclear weapons. Gorbachev - and I think this is a good indicator of his shrewdness - has latched on to this and produced his spurious timetable of simple steps for achieving the goal by the end of the century. We both realise that for the most part his proposals are propaganda, although no less dangerous for that. In the real world, it's not going to happen like that. There are one or two points of genuine interest buried in the proposals, for instance on INF and on verification. These will need to be pursued.

Where it seems to me that Gorbachev's proposals are <sup>particularly</sup> dangerous is in the creation of unrealistic public expectations. <sup>The search for</sup> The approach of seeking a world without nuclear weapons holds far more problems for the West than for the Soviet Union. Such a world would be a very risky place indeed unless there were concurrent steps to reduce the massive imbalance in the Soviet Union's favour in conventional forces. In particular, the smaller nuclear powers, such as the United Kingdom and France, would be very much more vulnerable. There are the risks of further nuclear proliferation in the next few years, and we have to recognise that, while nuclear weapons themselves might in theory be abolished, the knowledge of how to make them never will be. But the risk lies above all in undermining public support for our agreed strategy of deterrence and flexible response. We must not allow pressures created by goals which may be morally desirable in the



X  
We are agreed that SDI must be pursued. But there remains the need to meet genuine Soviet anxieties as well as Soviet propaganda and to demonstrate that we continue to seek a stable international environment.

It would be possible to decline steadfastly - - - -

14



*This remains the key to our immediate security, and in face of the dangerous implications of Gorbachev's propaganda*

~~abstract but contain serious practical disadvantages for the West, to dictate our approach to actual negotiations. We must work up positions of our own which strike a balance between the realism needed for serious negotiations and maintaining public faith in our commitment to deep reductions in nuclear weapons:~~

*we need to reaffirm our determination to seek enhanced stability at lower levels of forces, both conventional as well as nuclear.*

Against this background, the crucial choice which you have to make is how to deal with Soviet insistence that there can be no serious progress towards reductions in strategic nuclear weapons unless you abandon the SDI. ~~It seems to me that, in theory at least, you have a number of options.~~

X-4

The first is to decline steadfastly to accept any constraints on the SDI beyond those which you have already implicitly acknowledged in the Camp David Four Points. You would continue to offer the Soviet Union a dialogue on moving from reliance on offensive nuclear weapons to greater dependence on strategic defence. You would no doubt keep open your offer to share the technology with the Soviet Union, though personally I do not think this offer will ever carry much conviction in Soviet eyes. The risk of this approach is that it would be relatively easy for the Soviet Union to cast the United States in the role of obstructing progress towards reductions in offensive nuclear weapons and would lead to steadily mounting pressures in Europe at least upon the United States to modify its position.

~~A second option might lie in pursuing SDI research but acknowledging that, in the event of an eventual decision to deploy, the Soviet Union would be entitled to some "compensation" for it. This would presumably be in terms of allowing them a greater number of strategic nuclear warheads than the United States, possibly expressed as a ratio which might change as the SDI developed. But I can see very little attraction in this for either side and do not intend to pursue it further here.~~



*Another*  
The ~~third~~ option is one which I mentioned in the note which I left with you in New York at the end of October last year. In effect you would offer the Soviet Union a greater sense of reassurance about the likely shape, scope and timescale of possible development of the SDI. You would propose a framework which would allow reductions in offensive weapons to take place over a measured period against a forecast of future defensive developments. Because of the inherent difficulty of predicting what those defensive developments will be, the constraints on them would be expressed in terms of what the United States would not do by a certain date rather than by what it would do. As I suggested at the time it could be achieved by a mixture of strengthening and further refining the ABM Treaty, extending the period of notice required for unilateral withdrawal from it and a commitment not to enter particular phases of defensive programmes before certain specified dates.

I continue to believe that this third option offers the most promising prospect. It emphatically does not make the SDI as such negotiable, ~~which I know you will not accept.~~ It would not restrict research which we both know to be essential and which anyway cannot be verified. There would be no Soviet veto. But the Russians would have reassurance against a sudden and unforeseen "break-out" in this area. I also believe that a position on these lines would command wide public understanding in the West. I should very much like to know whether you see merit in it.

There are a number of other points relevant to your meeting with Gorbachev which I shall mention only briefly at this stage. One is the importance of exposing and challenging the more dangerous elements in the recent Gorbachev proposals. I have in mind particularly the restrictions which would affect the United Kingdom and France such as a freeze on third country nuclear systems and a ban on transfer of strategic and medium range missiles. These would be seriously damaging to our national and to Alliance security and must be rejected. A second point is the need to persuade Gorbachev to negotiate



seriously in other arms control fields. As you know I am particularly concerned about chemical weapons where it seems to me that the Alliance is at the great disadvantage of having no credible response to a chemical attack other than nuclear retaliation. I hope that we can work closely together to overcome remaining differences on verification in the draft Treaty tabled by George Bush in 1984, so that we can have a strong and united Alliance negotiating position. The recent Western initiative also opens the prospect of making some progress on MBFR. Thirdly there is the question of Treaty compliance. As you know I regarded your decision last June to continue to adhere to SAL restraints as an important act of statesmanship. I hope that you will feel able to maintain that position which earned the United States enormous respect. Continued restraint will also be important in building public support for the US negotiating position in Geneva.

It was good of you to send Paul Nitze to brief me on your latest thinking. I was encouraged particularly by what he had to say on INF. I hope that our experts can stay closely in touch on this as well as on the wider issues. I shall be asking Sir Geoffrey Howe to let George Shultz have a more detailed note on these.



DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN ON  
ARMS CONTROL

When George Shultz was here in December he suggested that I might let you have some thoughts on the handling of arms control issues at your next meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. At this early stage, I should like to put to you some general reflections. Nearer the time of the meeting I might - if you thought it useful - put forward some more specific ideas.

The starting point has to be how we assess Gorbachev's intentions. We have both had lengthy meetings with him. He is clearly a more astute operator than his predecessors, far more aware of the scope for playing on public opinion in the West. But under the veneer is the same brand of dedicated Soviet Communist that we have known in the past relentless in pursuing Soviet interests and prepared to take his time over this. His main, indeed overriding, purpose will be to stop you from developing the SDI, both because he thinks it will give the United States a unilateral advantage and because he would much prefer to avoid the strain on the Soviet economy which having to match it or counter it will impose (though he will accept this if necessary).

My judgment is that Gorbachev does not want a return to the pre-Geneva situation of no negotiation with the United States because he realises that this would actually reduce the Soviet Union's ability to exploit Western opinion. Equally knowing at first hand the strength of your commitment to pursuing SDI research, recently reaffirmed in your State of the Union message, he cannot be optimistic that agreement on terms acceptable to the Soviet Union is attainable in the short term. My guess is, therefore, that he will not come to your next Summit looking for definitive agreements on the main arms control issues, though he may be ready for a separate or interim agreement on INF. Rather he will probably calculate that the process of talking serves him better than any agreement likely to be on offer.



My tentative conclusion is that Gorbachev's purpose will be to spin out negotiations in the hope of being able to rely on a steadily mounting volume of pressure from Western public opinion to remove the "blockage" represented by the SDI, to give time for possible budget pressures to make your choices more difficult, and possibly to try to play the issue into the next United States Presidential elections. In other words he may conclude that his best hope of limiting or restricting SDI lies in sitting you out.

We also need to consider the wider context within which your negotiations will be taking place. When you launched the SDI, you set out the noble vision of a world without nuclear weapons. Gorbachev - and I think this is a good indicator of his shrewdness - has latched on to this and produced his spurious timetable of simple steps for achieving the goal by the end of the century. We both realise that for the most part his proposals are propaganda, although no less dangerous for that. In the real world, it's not going to happen like that. There are one or two points of genuine interest buried in the proposals, for instance on INF and on verification. These will need to be pursued.

Where it seems to me that Gorbachev's proposals are dangerous is in the creation of unrealistic public expectations. The approach of seeking a world without nuclear weapons holds far more problems for the West than for the Soviet Union. Such a world would be a very risky place indeed unless there were concurrent steps to reduce the massive imbalance in the Soviet Union's favour in conventional forces. In particular, the smaller nuclear powers, such as the United Kingdom and France, would be very much more vulnerable. There are the risks of further nuclear proliferation in the next few years, and we have to recognise that, while nuclear weapons themselves might in theory be abolished, the knowledge of how to make them never will be. But the risk lies above all in undermining public support for our agreed strategy of deterrence and flexible response. We must not allow pressures created by goals which may be morally desirable in the



abstract but contain serious practical disadvantages for the West, to dictate our approach to actual negotiations. We must work up positions of our own which strike a balance between the realism needed for serious negotiations and maintaining public faith in our commitment to deep reductions in nuclear weapons.

Against this background, the crucial choice which you have to make is how to deal with Soviet insistence that there can be no serious progress towards reductions in strategic nuclear weapons unless you abandon the SDI. It seems to me that, in theory at least, you have a number of options.

The first is to decline steadfastly to accept any constraints on the SDI beyond those which you have already implicitly acknowledged in the Camp David Four Points. You would continue to offer the Soviet Union a dialogue on moving from reliance on offensive nuclear weapons to greater dependence on strategic defence. You would no doubt keep open your offer to share the technology with the Soviet Union, though personally I do not think this offer will ever carry much conviction in Soviet eyes. The risk of this approach is that it would be relatively easy for the Soviet Union to cast the United States in the role of obstructing progress towards reductions in offensive nuclear weapons and would lead to steadily mounting pressures in Europe at least upon the United States to modify its position.

A second option might lie in pursuing SDI research but acknowledging that, in the event of an eventual decision to deploy, the Soviet Union would be entitled to some "compensation" for it. This would presumably be in terms of allowing them a greater number of strategic nuclear warheads than the United States, possibly expressed as a ratio which might change as the SDI developed. But I can see very little attraction in this for either side and do not intend to pursue it further here.



The third option is one which I mentioned in the note which I left with you in New York at the end of October last year. In effect you would offer the Soviet Union a greater sense of reassurance about the likely shape, scope and timescale of possible development of the SDI. You would propose a framework which would allow reductions in offensive weapons to take place over a measured period against a forecast of future defensive developments. Because of the inherent difficulty of predicting what those defensive developments will be, the constraints on them would be expressed in terms of what the United States would not do by a certain date rather than by what it would do. As I suggested at the time it could be achieved by a mixture of strengthening and further refining the ABM Treaty, extending the period of notice required for unilateral withdrawal from it and a commitment not to enter particular phases of defensive programmes before certain specified dates.

I continue to believe that this third option offers the most promising prospect. It emphatically does not make the SDI as such negotiable, which I know you will not accept. It would not restrict research which we both know to be essential and which anyway cannot be verified. There would be no Soviet veto. But the Russians would have reassurance against a sudden and unforeseen "break-out" in this area. I also believe that a position on these lines would command wide public understanding in the West. I should very much like to know whether you see merit in it.

There are a number of other points relevant to your meeting with Gorbachev which I shall mention only briefly at this stage. One is the importance of exposing and challenging the more dangerous elements in the recent Gorbachev proposals. I have in mind particularly the restrictions which would affect the United Kingdom and France such as a freeze on third country nuclear systems and a ban on transfer of strategic and medium range missiles. These would be seriously damaging to our national and to Alliance security and must be rejected. A second point is the need to persuade Gorbachev to negotiate



seriously in other arms control fields. As you know I am particularly concerned about chemical weapons where it seems to me that the Alliance is at the great disadvantage of having no credible response to a chemical attack other than nuclear retaliation. I hope that we can work closely together to overcome remaining differences on verification in the draft Treaty tabled by George Bush in 1984, so that we can have a strong and united Alliance negotiating position. The recent Western initiative also opens the prospect of making some progress on MBFR. Thirdly there is the question of Treaty compliance. As you know I regarded your decision last June to continue to adhere to SAL restraints as an important act of statesmanship. I hope that you will feel able to maintain that position which earned the United States enormous respect. Continued restraint will also be important in building public support for the US negotiating position in Geneva.

It was good of you to send Paul Nitze to brief me on your latest thinking. I was encouraged particularly by what he had to say on INF. I hope that our experts can stay closely in touch on this as well as on the wider issues. I shall be asking Sir Geoffrey Howe to let George Shultz have a more detailed note on these.