

PRIME MINISTER

ARMS CONTROL: MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

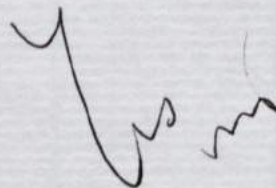
You did not like the original Foreign Office draft of a message to President Reagan on arms control.

After talking to you, I have had another go at it. I attach a revised version which takes account of one or two further points made by Percy Cradock, the Foreign Office and the Cabinet Office. I hope it is on the lines that you want.

Once you have agreed a message, I do not think you need bother with the text of the more detailed paper. It seems that this is more suitable for the Foreign Secretary to send to George Shultz - with the proviso that it must be fully consistent with your message to the President.

Agree the message attached?

CDP.



CDP

10 February 1986



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CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-233 8220

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10 February 1986

Kae Charles

SDI and US Strategy at Geneva: Message
to President Reagan

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 6 February to Len Appleyard.

2. I am much in favour of the draft message to the President which you have proposed. It follows well from the arguments deployed in the Prime Minister's letter of 12 September 1985 to the President and from her remarks to Paul Nitze on 5 February.

3. I miss only two points in your draft. First, you do not mention the possibility that Gorbachev underneath all the propoganda may have his own reasons for wanting if possible to get an arms control agreement. Second, the general thrust of the draft is to suggest how the President should react to Gorbachev's latest proposals, without making the case for exploiting them in the interests of the West. I suggest that one of the strongest arguments for the option on SDI which the draft advocates is that it could open the way to a serious negotiation on major cuts in offensive nuclear weapons; and that this is an argument which might well tell with the President, if he too is concerned that the Russians might play the arms control negotiations along until after he himself has passed from the scene.

4. I believe that these thoughts can be brought out without seriously lengthening your draft message, by two insertions:

- a. end of 4th paragraph: omit the final sentence which may jar with Reagan, and add:
"Our interest, on the other hand, is to find out whether, given the resource pressures on the Soviet leaders and other factors, Gorbachev can be brought to negotiate towards genuinely balanced agreements."

C D Powell Esq
No 10
Downing Street
S W 1

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b. first new paragraph on page 4: insert before the penultimate sentence:
"This option should enable you to press for major cuts in offensive nuclear weapons and thus to find out for sure whether, despite all the obvious propaganda in Gorbachev's latest proposals, there is any real willingness in Moscow to make progress on arms control. That is what we need to find out in order to exploit his proposals in our interests. That is how we can counter the probable wish on his part to spin out the negotiations in Geneva for some years. I also believe....".

5. I have a few suggestions on the drafting, partly designed to avoid wording which might seem critical of the President -

- x a. 5th paragraph: replace "latched on to this and produced" by "sought to distort this by producing".
- x b. 6th paragraph: amend the start of the third sentence:
"It is a world which we could not hope to achieve unless there were concurrent...."
- ✓ c. 6th paragraph again: amend the next sentence
"In particular Western Europe, and not only the United Kingdom and France as smaller nuclear powers, would be..."
- ✓ d. 6th paragraph again: at the bottom of page 2, I suggest "... the key to our security now and at least for a considerable period ahead;"
- ✓ e. middle of page 3: in the passage about the offer to share SDI technology with the Soviet Union, it might be preferable to say "... though personally I fear that it will be very hard to bring the Soviet Union to give this offer very great weight."

6. I am sending copies of this letter to Len Appleyard (FCO) and Richard Mottram (MoD).

Yours ever

Christopher

C L G Mallaby

Deltwick
SDI
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cc: Sir P. Cradock

10 DOWNING STREET

6 February, 1986.

From the Private Secretary

Dear Len,

SDI AND US STRATEGY AT GENEVA: MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

Your letter of 30 January enclosed a draft message from the Prime Minister to President Reagan supported by a paper on arms control issues at the next US/Soviet Summit.

The Prime Minister was not satisfied with the draft message and asked for a fresh version to be produced. I enclose a redraft. I must emphasise that this is on my own responsibility - though it has been seen by and takes account of some relatively minor amendments proposed by Sir Percy Cradock - and does not yet have the Prime Minister's approval (though I think it is on the general lines which she would want). There are a number of points which she may wish to add: for instance, I know that she agrees with President Reagan's view that a system of non-nuclear strategic defence is necessary in order to achieve elimination of nuclear weapons, and that this argument can be turned against the Soviet Union.

It would be very helpful to have early comments on and any necessary amendments to the draft from you and the other recipients of this letter. I propose to put it to the Prime Minister on Monday, 10 February.

The Prime Minister has not yet focussed on the more detailed paper enclosed with your draft message. It may be that this is better handled separately, either between the Foreign Secretary and Secretary Shultz or by officials. I propose to suggest this to the Prime Minister when submitting the revised draft message.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), and Christopher Mallaby (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

C.D. Powell

Len Appleyard, Esq., CMG,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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**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 assessment 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.

Where it seems to me that Gorbachev's proposals are particularly dangerous is in the creation of unrealistic public expectations. The search for 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. This remains the key to our immediate security; and in the face of the dangerous

simplifications of Gorbachev's propaganda we need to reaffirm our determination to seek enhanced stability at lower levels of forces, 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.

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 show that we continue to seek a stable international environment.

One option

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.

Another 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 ^{second} ~~third~~ option offers the most promising prospect. It emphatically does not make the SDI as such negotiable. 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. I was very glad to hear from Paul Nitze that you had identified these points as major objections to the Gorbachev proposals.

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. While I fully support the general approach of your proposed reply to Gorbachev's proposals, I have - as Paul Nitze will have told you - anxieties about your ideas on INF. We must be careful not to call into question the decision to deploy Pershing II and Cruise missiles as an essential part of the Alliance's spectrum of nuclear deterrence. 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.