

SALT file.

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc Mr. Ingham

Peter Jenkins of the Sunday Times talked to me yesterday about arms control, and the press reports emanating from Washington of differences between the United Kingdom (and other allies) and the United States about the US proposal to accept discussion with the Soviet Union on a zero-zero option for INF. He understood that our dislike of this option had been made clear to Mr. Nitze during his visit to London and subsequently reaffirmed in a message from the Foreign Secretary to Mr. Shultz. He suggested that there was a risk that the United Kingdom would appear to be blocking progress in the arms control negotiations. (This was the point made by Mr. Steel in the House on Tuesday.) This was likely to be the drift of the piece he was proposing to write.

I took Mr. Jenkins through the background of the Alliance's original rather reluctant support for a global zero-zero option for INF. Our concern with any reversion to this was three-fold: first that it should be genuinely global and deal with Soviet SS20s in Asia (this view was strongly shared by the Japanese); second that it should not be based upon restrictions on the UK and French forces; and third that it should take account of the role of Pershing/Cruise in the scale of deterrence in Europe. After the political effort had been made to secure stationing of INF systems, we should not lightly give them up. Our preference was therefore to focus on President Reagan's proposal of last autumn for an interim freeze. This could not be described as 'blocking negotiations' but as a prudent approach. The Soviet Union had to be smoked out on the conditions attached to their offer, in particular relating to third country systems. I emphasised that there was no confrontation between the United States and the United Kingdom on this. The issues were being argued out both bilaterally and in NATO.

/ Mr. Jenkins

Mr. Jenkins asked whether I thought that the United States would change its position under pressure from the United Kingdom. I said that I thought that the debate in Washington was being rejoined and that our views (and those of other Allies) would be given serious consideration. I did not know how the debate would come out. It might be that the Administration would tighten up the part of its proposal dealing with Soviet SS20s in Asia. Mr. Jenkins asked whether it was the case that the Prime Minister had put her views direct to the President on this. I said that the Prime Minister had seen Mr. Nitze. We remained in very close touch with the Administration at all levels, including the President, on arms control issues generally.

Mr. Jenkins also asked about Ireland and how the Government intended to handle the Unionists. I told him that we were just embarking on a road of discussions with the party leaders. These would be very difficult: unionist opposition to the Agreement remained very firm and there was no easy way to dispel it.

Mr. Jenkins made a number of remarks about Westland and the leak inquiry from which it was quite clear that he was very well informed about the Attorney-General's views and actions, and of details of the DTI officials' evidence to the inquiry. He thought the issue was dead, though if the Government subsequently got into trouble its problems would be attributed back to the Westland affair.

C.D.P.

(C. D. POWELL)

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