



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Prime Minister
 This could be
 very significant.
 Conceptually, the Soviet
 proposal is quite close to
 your own. Let's hope the Americans
 deal with it imaginatively, & don't
 Dear Charles, immediately rubbish it.

State of Play at Geneva

CDP 2/6.

During the Halifax NAC Ministers met on their own during the morning of 30 May. Shultz reported on a proposal the Russians had tabled the day before in Geneva, stressing that though what he had to say would probably leak (it has: see today's 'Guardian'), in principle it was for Ministers alone.

The new Soviet proposal, which had been presaged at a private session between Karpov and Kampelman, constituted a kind of opening offer in the space defence/START forum. At least it could provide a significant opening. Although the proposal was "off the wall" at least it represented a fresh move in the negotiation.

It was also significant that it had been preceded by "unofficial" discussion, and tabled privately. It might conceivably be serious precisely because of the way it had been presented.

It was also worth pointing out that the Russians had tabled this proposal after being thoroughly briefed on the US decision on SALT II. The Soviet Union would no doubt raise Cain about that decision, but it had not prevented them tabling this proposal. In it they had stressed the need to observe the existing treaties, but referred specifically only to the ABM Treaty, and not to SALT.

The Russians had proposed a "no withdrawal commitment" from the ABM Treaty for "a period of time". They had suggested 15/20 years, which in the US view clearly went too far. They had also proposed that terms like 'development', 'component', 'make-up', and 'model' should be examined and broadened; and that the open labs idea should be further examined as one of the means of verification, including the idea of instigating private US and allied research forums as a means of verification.

In the post-plenary session the Russians had suggested that this extension should justify acceptance of their 50% START proposals. Their proposal might thus be a move away from their earlier linkage with a proposed complete ban on space-strike weapons.

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The Soviet objective was obviously to secure some constraint on the SDI research programme. Shultz recalled that he had explained the day before why a strong SDI research programme was important: without one the US would not have been able to get the Russians to pay attention to or show interest in arms control at all.

The new Soviet proposal might come to nothing. But it did at least represent a response, and was therefore a development of some political significance.

I am copying this letter to John Howe (MOD).

Yours ever,

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