

Ref: B06920

PRIME MINISTER

c Sir Robert Armstrong

OD: East-West Relations

BACKGROUND

Neither the Cabinet nor OD has considered East-West relations in recent years other than in relation to particular events such as Cruise and Pershing II deployment, the destruction of the Korean airliner or the Siberian pipeline dispute. The paper circulated under cover of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 14 November provides a general overview of East-West and Anglo-Soviet relations and suggests guidelines which should govern United Kingdom policy over the next five years. The paper does not address arms control and disarmament issues, which will have been discussed in the more restricted forum of OD(D) on Wednesday 14 December.

FLA A.

2. The Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Defence (their minutes of 17 and 23 November respectively) have already endorsed the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's approach.

FLA B+C

3. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary takes as his starting point that East-West relations are now worse than at any time since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Public concern about nuclear war has been intensified by the Soviet walk-out from the INF negotiations (which has since been followed by their refusal to set a date for the resumption of the START talks). Doubts about the Soviet leadership, electoral considerations in the United States and conflicting currents of opinion within NATO are likely to make 1984 even more difficult than 1983 for the management of East-West relations. The central message of the paper is that change in the Soviet system will come, if at all, only very slowly and cannot be accelerated from outside; and that meanwhile

the West, while not allowing itself to be rattled and maintaining its defences, should seek to reduce the dangers of misunderstanding or miscalculation through Ministerial dialogue and various forms of contact. The importance of dialogue with the Soviet Union was overwhelmingly endorsed at last week's series of NATO Ministerial meetings in Brussels, at which the North Atlantic Council adopted a Belgian proposal for "a thorough appraisal of East-West relations with a view to achieving a more constructive East-West dialogue" and a Declaration reaffirming the defensive character of the Alliance and its commitment to the pursuit of equitable arms control agreements. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary suggests that Britain should seek to play a more forward and positive part in the East-West dialogue than it has tried to do since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

4. The Chief of the Defence Staff has been invited to attend.

HANDLING

5. You will probably wish to focus the discussion on the policy guidelines; and you might invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to introduce his paper. Other colleagues will then wish to comment, including the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the economic aspects, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the possibilities for closer relations between Eastern European countries and the International Monetary Fund.

6. Points to be covered in the discussion include -

a. is the central judgement right, namely that there is little the West can do to accelerate change in the Soviet system from outside?

b. how far is it realistic for the United Kingdom to pursue a distinctive policy towards the Soviet Union in the absence of a stable relationship between the Super Powers? How will the new policy be co-ordinated -

- i. with the Americans; and
- ii. with the other allies?

- c. specifically, is it agreed that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should invite Mr Gromyko to visit the United Kingdom in 1984 (paragraph 5 of Annex A)?
- d. are our existing aid policies consistent with what the guidelines suggest (paragraph 13(c)(i)-(v) of Annex A)?
- e. is the public line suggested in paragraph 15 of the paper right - ie no announcement of any change in policy? Or would it be advantageous to stress that there is some change of emphasis in our approach to East-West relations (as commentators have already been saying)?

CONCLUSION

- 7. Subject to the discussion, you might guide the Committee to the following conclusions -
 - a. approve the policy guidelines in Annex A of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's paper;
 - b. invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to give a brief account of the discussion and conclusions to the Cabinet;
 - c. invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to keep the Committee informed of progress in implementing the new policy.

David Goodall

13 December 1983

A D S GOODALL