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Prime Minister.

PM/87/006

PRIME MINISTER

A bit turgid. It sets out to tell you what you ought to think about your visit to Moscow - and ends up agreeing with what you already think!

I have no intention of differing from the U.S. line on SDI

But paragraph 5 worries me. If we encourage the Russians to settle their differences over SDI, we shall be confronted again with the proposals to eliminate strategic ballistic missiles.

Your Visit to the Soviet Union: Arms Control

1. It was very <sup>at trap</sup> helpful to have, in Charles Powell's letter of 7 January, an indication of your thinking about your forthcoming visit to Moscow. I agreed to let you have some thoughts on how the arms control element of your discussions with Gorbachev might be handled, in the light of my talks with George Shultz in Bermuda and Tim Renton's recent visit to Moscow.

2. There are still two months before your visit, during which there may be developments in the US/Soviet relationship at Geneva and elsewhere. I judge from Tim Renton's discussions that Gorbachev will seek to focus your talks principally upon arms control issues. On the other hand, I agree that arms control must not be allowed to dominate the visit. We therefore need to

we should leave this alone, e focus on AT Camp David priorities. CCP/3/2.



ensure that sufficient time, and Gorbachev's full attention, are given to human rights, regional causes of tension, and areas of bilateral relations where glasnost - which he repeatedly emphasised at the recent Plenum - may create opportunities for new and useful developments.

3. I see the arms control elements of your discussions falling into four categories:

- Areas where Gorbachev may hope to put you on the defensive and where you will need to counter-attack with vigour. These include the likely Soviet claim that the UK (under our management) represents a major "obstacle to peace" post-Reykjavik, and one of the few opponents of a nuclear-free world. In that context, our policy on our own deterrent and on a comprehensive test ban may be attacked.
  
- Areas where Gorbachev may take a more subtle approach, designed to separate us from the Americans. He will for example certainly complain about statements from Washington (especially from the Pentagon) about early deployments of SDI systems. These will need careful handling, if we are to avoid any



impression of distancing ourselves unduly from the US Administration, while affirming the importance we attach to the ABM Treaty.

- Arms control items where it will be prudent to do little more than take note of the current state of play. Into this category I place the prospects for a chemical weapons agreement. My talks with George Shultz in Bermuda indicated that our discussions with the Americans have not yet found the right point of balance for us to be able to concentrate our joint fire on the Soviet position. The chances of our finding common ground during the next few months are not very good. You will want to make it clear to the Russians that there is no prospect of our agreeing to an Anglo-Soviet package which leaves the Americans behind.
  
- Finally, the key areas of arms control in which you will have a positive and constructive message to get across to Gorbachev. In short, this means the propagation of the Camp David priorities for nuclear arms control, the message that continued Soviet harping upon SDI as the major obstacle to progress has now



become counter-productive, and the insistence that the linkage between INF and SDI is withdrawn.

4. As I have said, Gorbachev may well concentrate his attack on the ABM Treaty issues, testing whether we may be prepared to take a different approach from Washington. There were indications of this during Tim Renton's talks, particularly when Shevardnadze pressed hard for a special and "permanent" Anglo-Soviet dialogue on arms control. The response which I favour should not discount the scientific potential of current research on strategic defences (especially in light of the continuing work in the Soviet Union, which Gorbachev should be pressed to acknowledge).

5. At the same time, I am sure we should emphasise that this needs to be conducted within a strict framework of legal agreements, of which the ABM Treaty is obviously the most important. I see some scope for pressing Gorbachev, without entering the negotiations ourselves, to be more specific about the sort of regime he would like to see applied to research into strategic defences between now and the date for deployment decisions. I see the latest reports from Washington suggest, encouragingly, that the US and the Soviet Union may



already have begun to engage in a substantive dialogue on this question. It will remain a central issue: if we can ease that dialogue along, I think we should be ready to help. It may also be possible, in the light of our continuing discussions with the Americans between now and your visit, to pursue further some of the ideas which I canvassed with George Shultz in Bermuda and which still seem to me to offer a way forward.

6. It will be clear from all this that I very much agree with the overall approach outlined in your Private Secretary's letter. As far as your short-term aims at Moscow are concerned, we are most certainly not in the middle, between the Russians and the Americans. There is neither room nor cause for us to play the "honest broker" between Washington and Moscow. But that does not exclude the very positive role you might be able to play in shifting the Soviet leadership away from their present dogmatic and propagandistic posture and towards a greater realism which could open the way for real progress in nuclear arms control. We cannot, of course, be sure how far things will have moved at Geneva by the time of your visit. But at this stage it looks as though you may have the best possible opportunity to test whether Gorbachev really wants some agreement with the Americans during the Reagan Presidency.



7. As for the longer term objective, I see some advantage in leaving with Gorbachev the implicit but clear impression that Western Europe is not an adjunct to one superpower, let alone both. If he can be brought to recognise that, while remaining wholly committed to our North Atlantic Alliance, we have our own ideas to promote and interests to protect, that would not be a bad result. There are signs that Gorbachev is ready to treat the Europeans and, not least since Camp David II, particularly yourself, with increasing seriousness. We should encourage this trend.

8. Quite apart from the substantive business that you will want to cover, we must also be clear about the propaganda which Gorbachev will seek to advance. At one level he may really believe that he won some important tricks at Reykjavik and he may be determined to continue exploiting these. You will have the best opportunity to get across to him that he stands to gain little from such an approach; and that the main casualty would be the prospects for the practical progress on arms control which the Russians themselves claim to be looking for.

9. On another level, there is an obvious propaganda trap to which you have already referred. Gorbachev cannot seriously expect you to be in any way receptive to the



self-serving elements of the position he is likely to present at the beginning of your talks (no doubt at some length). He may be tempted to believe that if you reject these as firmly as they deserve, he may reap some benefit in terms of the domestic debate in this country, especially in the run-up to our Election. I do not believe that such a crude attempt to paint our Government as "an enemy of arms control" would be very successful either in this country or among our allies. But things could look different from Moscow.

10. Against this background, it remains important, as you have said, that we should discourage public expectations of the outcome of your visit (even though these already show some signs of building up). The substantive and the public relations objectives of your visit precisely coincide: your need to be, and to be seen as, the West's most effective advocate of human rights, of economic good sense and of the realistic options for arms control - and security for East and West alike.

11. The briefing for the visit which, in consultation with MOD, is already well in hand, will concentrate on the four categories I identified earlier. I envisage a fairly compact set of papers, which could be the subject of a further discussion between us early in March.

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Thereafter, and shortly before the visit, I expect you will wish to give President Reagan (and possibly the key European leaders) a general indication of your approach to the visit.

12. I am sending copies of this minute to George Younger and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

3 February 1987

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SOVIET UNION: PM's Visit Jan 68

