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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE

10 DOWNING STREET

SERIAL NO. 139/79T

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 November 1979

Dear Mr. President. 2.11.79

Thank you for your message about the NATO proposals for the modernisation of long-range theatre nuclear forces and for a parallel effort in the arms control field.

As you will know from my message of 28 July, I fully share your views both on the political and military significance of these efforts and on the soundness of their content. Like you, we have viewed their evolution with much satisfaction as a model of Alliance collective discussion and planning; and we have admired the very thorough staff work and the well-judged leadership which the United States has contributed. We support the outcome without qualification, and are giving it our strongest political backing. I myself have talked about the plans at length recently with Prime Minister Cossiga and Chancellor Schmidt; Francis Pym has had special discussions with his German, Dutch and Italian counterparts in the last fortnight; and Peter Carrington has raised the matter recently with Van der Klaauw and Frydenlund. In all these contacts we have made it very clear that we are not interested in ideas for reducing the scope of the modernisation proposal, or for any changes which would make modernisation a hostage to arms control negotiations. The Netherlands position apart, we have been generally encouraged by the attitudes we have found.

Like you, we think the idea of reducing by 1,000 the US warhead stockpile in Europe has much attraction, from several standpoints. We are particularly attracted by the fact that, in announcing the reduction of 1,000 warheads at the same time as taking TNF decisions, the Alliance would have a credible

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rationale for laying to rest the Option III part of MBFR. This tactic would be more effective if we can also demonstrate that we are prepared to give a new impetus to the troop reductions element of MBFR. Like you, I hope, therefore, that the Alliance will be in a position to announce new proposals in MBFR by the time of the NATO December Ministerial meetings.

The December decisions are indeed of crucial importance. A set back could seriously damage the Alliance's credibility and effectiveness; but success would be a major step forward for our common security. You can count on us for every effort to reach that objective.

Warm regards,

Yours sincerely

Rapant Tholke

The President of the United States of America

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