



28

Prime Minister

PM/85/93

PRIME MINISTER

*We should consider  
in the light of the  
latest message  
re Ploughshare  
sub*

*I worked letter X over*

*The page is right?*

*Surely we should at least*

*ask the Americans whether  
they would like us to announce  
it before. (D.I) 4/xi*

Strategic Defence Initiative Research: United Kingdom Participation

1. I have read with much interest Michael Heseltine's account, in his minute of 31 October, of the stage now reached in the negotiations with the Americans on the terms and conditions for our participation. He did well to elicit from the Americans as much as he has, given the very considerable difficulties.

2. I think we are all very conscious of the wider problems for the United Kingdom economy and for the allocation of our scarce resources which are raised by the prospect of participation, and which we discussed at the meeting of OD on 28 October. At the same time, I recognise the political disadvantages if we were to draw back from such participation at this stage. I would have wished for concrete guarantees for the free flow of information from the joint research, and for our freedom to exploit it subsequently. However, in the light of Michael Heseltine's comments on the extent to which more could have been elicited from the Americans, I agree that we should proceed as he proposes.

3. I wish to draw attention to two specific points that I made in my minute to him of 29 October:

- (i) The importance of further discussions with the Americans over the legal implications of participation: there is a number of outstanding points which do not necessarily need to be resolved prior to any formal decision to participate, but will need resolving in further exchanges with US officials.





(ii) The need to drop the "European architecture study" from the list.

4. As regards timings, I endorse Michael Heseltine's suggestion that our commitment to inform WEU partners should be fulfilled at the Ministerial meeting which he and I will attend in Rome on 14 November. We shall need thereafter to inform NATO allies too.

X | I would prefer to delay a public announcement until the following week, after the Reagan/Gorbachev meeting. It seems to me that the balance of advantage is against being the only European or allied Government to sign up formally ahead of that meeting, unless the Americans particularly want the publicity and are making concessions in order to get it. Mr Weinberger evidently was not, and did not mind about precise timings.

5. I am copying this minute to other members of OD, to Keith Joseph and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

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

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

4 November 1985



