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Prime Minister's visit to NATO and SHAPE,  
17 February 1988.

NATO

February 1987.

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SUBJECT CC MASTER.

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

17 February 1988

Dear Tony,

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO NATO AND SHAPE, 17 FEBRUARY

The Prime Minister paid visits to NATO and to SHAPE today. UKDEL NATO will be reporting her address to the North Atlantic Council and the subsequent discussion. Her remarks at her press conference will be available to you in the verbatim series. This letter records one or two points which arose during her meeting with Lord Carrington and subsequently at Sir Michael Alexander's lunch in her honour.

Lord Carrington made three points to the Prime Minister. First, a number of people such as Senator Nunn and M. Heisbourg of the IISS were suggesting that NATO needed a new Harmel report. He thought that this was most unwise and hoped that the United Kingdom would not support the idea. The Prime Minister agreed: it was the equivalent of appointing a Royal Commission which she had never done in her time as Prime Minister.

Second, Lord Carrington drew attention to sensitivity on the part of some NATO Member States to the term "modernisation" when applied to NATO's nuclear capability. To respect their sensitivities, it was better to talk of updating NATO's nuclear weapons or making them more effective or some other anodyne phrase. It was also important not to talk of compensation or substitution for the weapons which NATO was giving up as a result of the INF agreement. The Prime Minister said that the two points were very different. It was absurd not to talk of modernisation of our nuclear weapons. Modernisation was a continuous process stemming from the Montebello decisions some five years ago. Heads of Government had a duty to ensure that NATO modernised all its weapons, nuclear and conventional. She agreed, however, that we should not refer to compensation or substitution for Cruise and Pershing. Rather we should speak of adjusting NATO's deployment of nuclear weapons to take account of the INF Treaty, while respecting its terms.

dg

Lord Carrington's third point was concern over the lack of progress in agreeing a mandate for conventional stability talks. The French were the main obstacle. He hoped that the Prime Minister would draw attention to the importance of the Alliance coming forward with a proposal soon. We could hardly say that there should not be negotiations on shorter range nuclear forces until a conventional balance was established if we were unable even to make a start on conventional force negotiations. The Prime Minister agreed that she would make a reference to this in her remarks to the Council.

At Sir Michael Alexander's lunch there was a good deal of discussion of the forthcoming NATO Summit and the difficulties likely to be encountered there. The Prime Minister referred to General Galvin's proposal that the Summit should begin with an intelligence briefing to bring home to the smaller Member States the continuing threat to NATO from Soviet military strength. They should not be allowed to escape reality. Lord Carrington doubted whether it would be possible to arrange this, given the very limited time available for Summit discussion as a whole (largely at American insistence).

Lord Carrington was worried about the likely difficulty of getting the smaller NATO governments to subscribe a strong declaration reaffirming nuclear deterrence and calling for modernisation of NATO's nuclear weapons. There would also be problems with the Germans over SNF, where we would have to settle for Reykjavik communique language ("in conjunction with the establishment of ...").

General Galvin pleaded for a clear message from the Summit on the importance of restructuring NATO's nuclear posture following the INF agreement and modernising (or maintaining the effectiveness of) its nuclear weapons. Without such a message it was very difficult to envisage any progress being made at the NPG meeting. He himself favoured quite a simple declaration which would take credit from what had been achieved, reaffirm NATO's basic strategy and the need for nuclear deterrence and set guidelines for the future.

General Galvin was inclined to doubt whether the Soviet Union would make unilateral withdrawals of conventional forces, on the grounds that the Soviet military would be very reluctant to do this and Gorbachev would be unlikely to press them. He agreed, however, that such a move by the Russians would put NATO on the spot as would a unilateral decision to reduce or eliminate remaining Soviet short range systems.

The Prime Minister will be discussing the prospects for the NATO Summit with the Foreign Secretary tomorrow. In general she was rather disheartened by her visit and by the likely difficulties of getting an adequately robust declaration. She sees the worst outcome as a Summit which has to engage in divisive argument about the text. She wants every effort to be made to agree it beforehand,

although not at the cost of accepting a feeble text. She would like to be kept in very close touch with progress.

I am copying this letter to Brian Hawtin (Ministry of Defence) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,  
Charles Powell*

Charles Powell

A.C. Galsworthy, Esq., CMG.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

E.R.  
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PRIME MINISTER

CABINET: VISIT TO NATO

You may like to say a word about your visit to NATO.

You visited NATO to see Lord Carrington and address the North Atlantic Council and then went on to SHAPE with General Galvin.

Your purpose was to give a bit of a boost to NATO, particularly ahead of the forthcoming Summit.

It is important that the Summit should be a success, particularly in a US Presidential election year. But there are disturbing signs of weakness on the part of the smaller NATO states and indeed of the Germans. It will be difficult to get a sufficiently robust statement, reasserting the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. They do not even want to refer to the need for modernisation of NATO's nuclear weapons. The real problem is that they are not frightened any more: the new-look Soviet diplomacy is having its effect.

In general you were not very impressed. The NATO Council has an air of torpor. We shall have to work hard to get a good result from the Summit: but we must get it.

CDP

CHARLES POWELL

17 February 1988

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B. R. (1)

PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO NATO

You read the meeting folder for your visit to NATO over the weekend and there have been no changes subsequently. I will take it on the aircraft. You have the top copy of the speech. Perhaps you would kindly bring it down in the morning.

C.D.P

(C.D. POWELL)

P.S. I have your brief-case

16 February 1988



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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London SW1A 2AH

cc/PC (2)

Prime Minister

15 February 1988

Dear Charles

M

All the more reason for you to speak up firmly on Wednesday

NATO Summit

Thank you for your letter of 10 February about the Prime Minister's meeting with General Galvin. Sir Michael Alexander has been instructed to pursue the Prime Minister's suggestion of an intelligence briefing at the start of the NATO Summit on Soviet nuclear and conventional strength.

15/1 -

Preparation of a Summit Declaration is showing that General Galvin's fears about reluctance on the part of some Allies to reaffirm their commitment to modernise nuclear weapons are well-founded. The Prime Minister may wish to be aware of the state of discussions on the declaration as background for her visit to NATO on 17 February.

All delegations have agreed to work on the basis of a UK draft (copy enclosed). The US and France support our draft very largely as it stands. Belgium is generally supportive. But the FRG, supported by Spain, Greece and to some extent Denmark, Luxembourg and Norway, object to paragraphs 4 and 5, which deal with nuclear issues. The Germans have said that the two paragraphs are unacceptable in their entirety. I enclose a copy of the language which they propose to replace ours. This makes no explicit mention of modernisation, merely undertaking to "sustain the requisite efforts" in the nuclear and conventional areas. When Chancellor Kohl was questioned at the Wehrkunde Conference last weekend, he avoided confirming that Germany's agreement to the Montebello recommendations still stood. He is visiting Washington from 17 to 19 February, and the Americans can be expected to put pressure on him over this issue, but we would not be surprised if there is no resolution of it before the NATO Summit itself.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Brian Hawtin.

Yours truly

(R N Culshaw)  
Private Secretary

Handwritten signature of R N Culshaw

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street  
PO1AAL

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German Delegation

GERMAN DRAFT

Brussels, 11 February 1988

Suggested language instead of paragraphs 4 and 5

Our Alliance has preserved peace for nearly forty years. Our strategy of flexible response is a strategy for the prevention of war. Our nuclear weapons have mainly a political function. They are a cornerstone of our strategy of deterrence. To be credible and effective, this strategy must continue to be based on an adequate mix of appropriate conventional and nuclear forces. We are determined to sustain the requisite efforts in both areas. Each of us will do so in a spirit of solidarity, reaffirming our willingness to share fairly the risks, costs and responsibilities as well as the benefits of our common efforts. To meet our security needs in the years to come will require even greater efficiency in the application of our resources. To that end, we are determined to expand our practical cooperation in the field of armaments procurement and elsewhere. Those of us who are members of the integrated military organization reaffirm the central importance of this structure, while welcoming the role which bilateral arrangements, the Western European Union and the independent European programme group can play in improving the Alliance's overall security.



BRITISH  
DRAFT

United Kingdom Delegation

2 February 1988

## DRAFT DECLARATION FOR MARCH 1988 NATO SUMMIT

A Time for Reaffirmation

1. We, the representatives of the sixteen members of the North Atlantic Alliance, have come together:

- to reaffirm the common ideals and purposes which are the foundation of our partnership;
- to re-emphasise our unity;
- to reassert the vital importance of the Alliance for the defence of the West, as well as the validity of our existing policies and of the strategy for peace enunciated in the Harmel Report; and
- to review the new opportunities and challenges which lie ahead.

The Purposes and Principles of our Alliance

2. Our Alliance is a partnership of free nations for the purpose of collective self-defence as recognised by the United Nations Charter. It is a voluntary association of democratic equals, unprecedented in its scope and in its success. It is united by common interests and values, and is entirely defensive in nature. None of our weapons will ever be used except in response to attack.

3. The freedom and well being of Western Europe and North America are inextricably linked. The long-standing commitment of the North American democracies to the preservation of peace and security in Europe is vital. Likewise a free and independent Western Europe is vital to North America's own security. The presence in Europe of the conventional and nuclear forces of the United States, as well as the forces of

Canada, is a tangible expression of the North American commitment to Europe and provides the indispensable linkage with the United States' strategic deterrent. This presence must and will be continued.

4. Peace is best preserved by maintaining credible deterrence. Our aim is to prevent war of any kind. History shows that in Europe conventional defences alone cannot ensure this. For the foreseeable future, there is no alternative to a strategy of deterrence based upon a mix of nuclear and conventional weapons. We therefore pledge ourselves:

- to maintain and improve our conventional forces in the European theatre.
- To continue the deployment in Europe of effective and survivable nuclear forces, based among as many European allies as possible.
- To retain those strategic nuclear forces which are necessary as the ultimate guarantee of our common security.

Sustaining the requisite effort in all these areas will be neither cheap nor easy. But we are determined to do so.

5. Our nuclear weapons are not intended for war fighting. They exist solely to keep the peace. We do not seek to predict in advance precisely in what circumstances our nuclear weapons might be used. It is this very uncertainty which lies at the heart of deterrence. In assessing the potential of new technologies, and in reviewing our military requirements in the nuclear field, our aim will be to enhance, and not to undermine, deterrence. Our decisions on the modernisation of our nuclear forces, to which we reaffirm our commitment, will be taken on this basis.

6. The search for better relations with the countries of the Warsaw Pact is a central purpose of the Alliance. Our goal is a just and lasting peace, in which the sovereignty and

/territorial

territorial integrity of all states are respected and the rights of all individuals are protected. We call upon the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe to work with us to secure a further relaxation of tensions, greater security at lower levels of arms, more extensive human contacts, and increased access to information. We will continue the effort to expand cooperation with the East wherever and whenever this is of mutual benefit.

Applying our Alliance's Principles to the East-West Challenge

7. We still face a basic challenge to peace: the instability resulting from the unnatural division of Europe. The fundamental source of tension between East and West is a massive Soviet military force, far exceeding the defence needs of the Soviet Union, and the repeated evidence of Soviet willingness to use that power against its neighbours. By denying human rights to their citizens, in violation of the international obligations they have undertaken, the governments of the Warsaw Pact have added to suspicion and mistrust between East and West

8. Today, we see encouraging signs of new thinking by Warsaw Pact governments. This promises greater openness in dealing with their own peoples and with other nations. We welcome these signs. We look for tangible and lasting policy changes going beyond pronouncements and addressing directly the issues dividing East and West.

9. The resolution of East-West differences will require progress in many fields. Efforts to reduce armaments must be accompanied by movement towards self-determination in freedom for all of Europe's peoples and the full implementation by the governments of the Warsaw Pact of all of the principles and provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. In this connection we call upon all participating states to join in achieving a balanced outcome in the CSCE Review Conference in Vienna.

/Genuine

Genuine and stable peace requires more than the absence of military conflict. Security cannot be purchased by acquiescence in the denial of human freedoms.

10. Therefore, we hope that at their forthcoming summit in Moscow President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev will be able to build upon the progress achieved at their Washington meeting last December. We join with the United States in seeking, through such high-level dialogue, early progress with the Soviet Union on a full range of issues, including arms control, a lessening of regional tensions, improved opportunities for bilateral contacts and cooperation, and greater respect for human rights. The speedy and complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the effective restoration of that country's sovereignty would be of major significance.

The Way Ahead

11. We will continue to be steadfast in the pursuit of our security policies, maintaining the effective defences and credible deterrence that form the necessary basis for constructive dialogue with the East. Each of us will do so in a spirit of solidarity, reaffirming our willingness to share fairly the risks, costs and responsibilities as well as the benefits that accompany membership of the Alliance. To meet our security needs in the years to come will require even greater efficiencies in the application of our scarce resources. To that end, we are determined to expand our practical cooperation in the field of armaments procurement and elsewhere. Those of us who are members of the integrated military organisation reaffirm the central importance of this structure, while welcoming the role which bilateral arrangements, the Western European Union and the Independent European Programme Group can play in improving the Alliance's overall defence capability.

12. Arms control is an integral part of our security policies. We do not seek negotiations for their own sake. We shall

/continue

continue to work together, on the basis of the closest consultation, in the pursuit of measures which can significantly reduce the risk of conflict and make a genuine contribution to stability and peace. Our work will be consistent with our comprehensive concept of arms control as this is further developed.

13. The recently concluded INF agreement between the US and the Soviet Union is a milestone in our efforts to achieve a more secure peace and lower levels of arms. It is also an important lesson for the way ahead, the impressive result of a policy of strength, realism and unity on the part of the members of the Alliance. The precedents of stringent verification and asymmetrical reductions which it establishes provide a sound foundation for *firm* agreements. We look forward to its early entry into force.  
*FUTURE*

14. In accordance with our overall arms control objectives:

- we warmly support the high priority assigned by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev to the negotiation of verifiable mutual reductions in US and Soviet strategic offensive nuclear systems by 50%.

- we seek to enhance security in Europe through the establishment of a stable balance of conventional forces at lower levels and through the introduction of far greater openness between East and West. We hope thereby not simply to redress current imbalances, but to reduce the serious risks to peace posed by the ability of the Warsaw Pact to initiate large-scale offensive action, particularly with little warning.

- we will work for agreement to eliminate chemical weapons on a global and verifiable basis, so that the security of all states may be enhanced. Regional developments have highlighted the particular importance of curbing proliferation of these weapons.

/Finally

- Finally, in connection with the establishment of a conventional balance and the global elimination of chemical weapons, we will consider the question of tangible and verifiable reductions of American and Soviet land-based nuclear missile systems of shorter range, leading to equal ceilings, consistent with the requirements of deterrence and the security of the members of the Alliance.

#### Conclusion

15. Reflecting upon almost four decades of common endeavour and sacrifice and upon the results achieved, we are confident that the principles and purposes of our Alliance remain valid today and for the future. We are united in our efforts to ensure a world of more secure peace and greater freedom. We will meet the opportunities and challenges ahead with imagination and hope, as well as with firmness and vigilance. We owe no less to our peoples.



15.11  
PM 88



UNITED KINGDOM PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL  
OTAN/NATO  
1110 BRUSSELS  
TELEPHONE 2426775

1 February 1988

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street

*Dear Prime Minister,*

1. Everyone here is greatly looking forward to your visit in two weeks time. It will be a major event for the Council and, as it turns out, singularly well timed.
2. The opportunities which NATO faces in the context of East/West relations are pretty obvious and need no rehearsing by me. You yourself have played a major part over the last several years in creating these opportunities and in showing how they can most effectively be exploited. The Council will be anxious to hear the conclusions you have drawn from your encounters with Gorbachev and your views as to how the situation can best be developed.
3. The problems which NATO faces are in part equally obvious but in part more insidious. It is in dealing with them that the Alliance is most in need of the clear lead which I know you will give in talking to them on 17 February.
4. The problems as I see them, very briefly, are:
  - (a) a mixture of over optimism and complacency. The combination of generational change, 40 years of NATO success and Gorbachev's charm offensive is a potent one. If the Soviet government continue to show their recent flexibility and opportunism it is not going to be easy in the months ahead to keep, say, the Greeks, the Danes and Herr Genscher on the one hand in the same negotiating boat as ourselves and the Americans on the other. The French will be unpredictable, agreeing with us on much of the substance, disagreeing on tactics. We may encounter difficulties in agreeing a joint Declaration on 3 March;

/ (b)





(b) a perception, palpably on the increase, that the trans-Atlantic relationship is changing and becoming less predictable. The Reykjavik summit, trade quarrels, US economic problems and burden sharing complaints, changes in US geo-strategic priorities, "Discriminate Deterrence" etc, are all being seen as part of a current which, if it cannot be reversed, badly needs to be controlled;

(c) emotional distaste for nuclear weapons and for strategies which rely on the threat of their use. The evident fact that nuclear weapons dismay many of our own people for exactly the same reason that they deter our enemies will become more of a problem as the threat from the East appears to recede. President Reagan himself provides the most prominent example of this attitude and of the consequences to which it could lead - especially when combined with a preoccupation about the security of the continental United States;

(d) growing concern on the part of military specialists lest the combination of budgetary cut backs, popular hostility or indifference and arms control reductions/constraints leave the Alliance without credible means of implementing its strategy. If the professionals lose faith in flexible response the Alliance will be in serious trouble;

(e) the pressing and now generally accepted need for Europe's defence effort within NATO to be improved and to be organised in a manner which enhances rather than undermines the overall strength of the organisation. Whatever the underlying realities, to the extent that France is allowed to appear publicly as the pace maker in advocating European defence cooperation the Alliance is likely to be damaged.

5. The speaking note which I enclose with this letter attempts, either directly or indirectly, to address all the above points. The Declaration which we are trying to negotiate for the Heads of Government meeting deals with the first four. Charles will have a copy of the draft if and when you wish to see it.

*Yours ever*

*Michael*

Michael Alexander



## PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT: 17 FEBRUARY

## REMARKS TO THE COUNCIL

1. In a fortnight's time NATO Heads of Government will hold their first full meeting since 1982. Next year we celebrate, in London, the 40th anniversary of the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty. Since 1949 the Alliance has preserved the security of its members more effectively than any other multinational organisation in history. The task of member governments and of the Council is to ensure that the Alliance is no less effective in the future.
  
2. 1988 will be a year of challenge for the Alliance and for its leaders. We are in a phase of history when the opportunities and risks facing us are large and evenly balanced. Major progress has been made in improving East/West relations. I hope this will continue. Whether it does will largely depend on how far we preserve our solidarity. We must recognise that our very success presents the Alliance with problems and challenges.
  
3. I am therefore looking forward to meeting my colleagues here at Evere in two weeks time. It will be an important meeting. The message which I would like to go out is that the Alliance:
  - is proud of its achievements and convinced of its continuing vital importance to the security of the West;

/ - is



- is confident of its defence and arms control policies;
- is determined to maintain its strength and solidarity;
- and is therefore soberly optimistic about the future.

#### East/West relations and arms control

4. The gains made by the Alliance have been largely due to its own firmness of purpose. We have kept our nerve despite long periods of frustration (13 years of MBFR) and briefer periods of tension (the shooting down of the Korean airliner and the Soviet walk-out in Geneva). We have been deterred neither by threats nor by demonstrations from taking the necessary steps to maintain our defence (deployment of Cruise and Pershing). A number of governments (notably the UK and the US) have significantly increased the level of their defence expenditure during the 80s.

5. The CPSU and the Soviet Government, forced to acknowledge the failure of their policies at home and abroad, installed a leader prepared to try reform and negotiation - a man with whom the West can do business. (Passage on the Prime Minister's impressions of Gorbachev.)

6. The West's leaders have welcomed the change in Moscow and have been, as always, ready to build on this. The Stockholm agreement and the INF agreement are the consequence. The INF agreement, in particular, is a major



success for the Alliance. I pay tribute to the US Administration's achievement and to the way they have worked together with the rest of the Alliance in bringing it about.

7. Beyond the ratification of the INF agreement, which is essential, this year will, I hope, see a START agreement - potentially even more important than an INF agreement; the successful completion of the CSCE review conference in Vienna - assuming we can record real progress on human rights; the opening of talks on conventional force levels in Europe; and further progress towards a chemical weapons convention.

8. All this arms control activity is to be welcomed. But it also contains dangers. Over-optimism is never a sound basis for policy. We must be realistic about the prospects and prepared for difficulties. As the agenda widens and negotiations become more serious, the need for Alliance strength and Alliance unity increases. These cannot be taken for granted. Conscious and continuing effort on the part of member governments will be required to channel international change in benevolent directions.

A strong defence

9. The maintenance of our strength means:-

- continuing to find the resources to allow our armed forces to do their job;

/ensuring



- ensuring that the Alliance has a clear, agreed view of what it is essential for its security;
- and taking care that arms control negotiations produce results which improve rather than erode our security.

10. The job of the armed forces is to deter aggression and if, but only if, deterrence fails to defeat the aggressor. To do this they need a credible conventional and a credible nuclear capability. I see no circumstances in the foreseeable future in which the Alliance could sensibly plan to protect Western Europe without an adequate nuclear armoury.

11. As the INF agreement is implemented we shall need to be sure that "adequacy" is preserved. This will mean, inter alia, pushing ahead with our modernisation programme: out of date systems are ineffective systems. I hope the Alliance Heads of Government will acknowledge this when they meet and agree that implementation of the Montebello decisions is even more important following the INF agreement. I hope they will also recognise the importance of keeping the burden of nuclear weapons distributed among as many European countries as possible. US offshore systems alone cannot constitute a credible deterrent.

12. The Alliance must not embark on new negotiations on nuclear systems in Europe before substantive results have

/been



been achieved in the chemical and conventional negotiations already in progress or about to begin. Insofar as the conventional negotiations are concerned it is important that we should soon be in a position to explain to our publics our political and military goals, even if we have still to finalise a precise proposal. As for the strategic talks, if a 50% START agreement can be reached there will be a practical need to digest its consequences before considering further steps. The negotiations on strategic stability three years before the end of a period of non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, as foreseen at the Washington Summit, will be very relevant.

13. The strategy governing the use of the armed forces which we make available to the Alliance must have the full support of the members. Flexible response is the only strategy which can meet this requirement. It can and must be adjusted but I see no reason to suppose it has outlived its usefulness. Alternative strategies implying movement in the direction of the "tripwire"; of markedly greater reliance on conventional forces; or of a nuclear war fighting capability are politically and militarily unrealistic. Attempts to introduce them will place the unity of the Alliance at risk.

#### Alliance unity

14. The Alliance's solidarity is its most precious asset. Of course there are tensions within the Alliance and I regret them. But the maintenance of our solidarity must be our first

/concern



concern whether we are considering trans-Atlantic relations, European defence cooperation or the flanks. In this context I welcome the increasing cooperation of France and Spain with the integrated military structure of the Alliance. I recognise the difficulties but have to say that the closer each country can get to practical integration the better for the Alliance as a whole. We in the UK for example would greatly welcome it if French forces were able further to support the collective Alliance efforts on the Central Front; if use of French ports and airfields for reinforcement could be exercised; and if our cooperation in joint exercises could be further developed.

15. The mutual commitment of North America and Europe to each other's security is the foundation of the Alliance success. The security of Europe cannot be assured without the certainty of US involvement in its maintenance. The security of North America would not survive very long if that of Europe were undermined.

16. The sharing of the common defence burden must be kept under constant review. If there is a perception in the United States that the balance is not right, the Europeans must take steps to correct the perception or the balance - or both. I am therefore all in favour of European countries increasing their cooperation in defence matters. I believe it is necessary that they should do so. The UK has played and will continue to play a leading role in recent developments in WEU. We

/support



support the work of the IEPG (Independent European Programme Group) recognising that cost effective collaborative procurement is becoming increasingly essential. Our participation in all this activity is solely on the basis that it is in support of the Alliance and contributes to the defence of Europe as a whole.

17. In saying this I am conscious that the unity of the Alliance is of particular importance to the flank countries, just as those countries are of particular importance to the Alliance. I can assure them that the UK advocates a closer integration of Europe's efforts and the better use of our resources exclusively in order to strengthen the Alliance. There is no threat to Alliance solidarity here.

#### Conclusion

18. If on 3 March we can communicate our pride in what we have achieved;

- our certainty that NATO will remain vital to the security of the West for the foreseeable future;
- our confidence in existing Alliance policies and strategy;
- our determination to make the efforts necessary to maintain NATO's strength and cohesion;
- and our optimism in a future which we will shape - then we will have done the West a service.

/The





The Secretary General

19. I have been forbidden to sing the praises of our Secretary General today. But the fact that he will be in the chair on 2 March gives me added confidence that the right message will be issued.

CDF

CONFIDENTIAL

SEMINAR ON NATO STRATEGY: CHEQUERS, 1 OCTOBER 1984

The Seminar - a list of the participants in which is attached - discussed the viability of NATO's strategy of flexible response and ways in which it could be implemented more effectively.

Several factors were suggested which made it timely to take a fresh look at the flexible response doctrine. These included the progressive enhancement of the Soviet capacity to attack on short warning, reducing the warning time which NATO could expect from 5/6 weeks to 2/3 days; the increased vulnerability of the process of reinforcing Europe from the United States by sea, given the Soviet capacity to attack convoys from an 800 mile stand-off; Soviet superiority in chemical weapons; NATO's possible loss of escalation dominance in the theatre nuclear weapon band of deterrence; and, more generally, the fact that the flexible response strategy, as enshrined in the NATO document MC 14/3, was now 17 years old and arguably in need of review.

There was, however, general agreement that flexible response was not so much a strategy as a description of whatever force posture the Alliance chose to adopt. Much of the discussion concentrated on the balance between the nuclear and conventional elements in NATO's strategy and in particular the proposition that growing doubts about the credibility of a general nuclear response meant that more attention had to be given to the Alliance's conventional capability.

There was no dispute that the nuclear element was an essential part of the Alliance's strategy. A conventional response alone was not an option: there would not be the money to pay for an adequate capability and it would not make the other side dispense with their nuclear weapons.

The Alliance's nuclear capability deterred not only nuclear war but conventional war. In this equation, the Russians were less impressed by Alliance doctrine than by Alliance capabilities. In the absence of a nuclear element in NATO's deterrent posture, the Soviet Union could contemplate waging a "limited liability" conventional war. In terms of military "prizes", 30 per cent of the Alliance steel producing capacity lay within two hundred miles of the East/West divide as compared with only 9 per cent of the steel producing capacity of the Warsaw Pact: considered on this basis, the Soviet Union might be prepared to take the risk of losing a conventional conflict in Central Europe if the deterrent element of intermediate range nuclear weapons did not exist. A strategy was needed which provided maximum uncertainty about Alliance intentions together with the flexibility not to use nuclear weapons if such use could be avoided. Flexible response provided this.

There was some discussion of the "nuclear winter" phenomenon. This was agreed to be plausible as a hypothesis but unproven: scepticism was expressed about the statistics on which the theory was based, with regard both to the megatonnage needed to produce the nuclear winter phenomenon and to the duration of the phenomenon itself. Although the possibility of self-destruction, through a shared nuclear winter, might constitute some inhibition against a nuclear first strike it was pointed out that the sheer number of nuclear explosions needed to produce a nuclear winter should in themselves act as a sufficient deterrent without the added threat of the phenomenon itself.

The credibility of controlled nuclear escalation was examined. The point was made that a Soviet attack against NATO was likely to be motivated either by the belief that NATO weakness or disunity made unprovoked aggression a low risk option; or by sheer irrational desperation which could result, for example, from a Soviet belief that the

United States was about to achieve a total military dominance in outer space which the Soviet Union could not challenge.

A danger was also seen in assuming too much rationality in nuclear exchanges: the decisions would be taken in conditions of extreme confusion and tension. Nice distinctions between the various rungs of the nuclear ladder might not be so relevant in actual practice. What mattered was that there should be a nuclear ingredient and a US readiness to risk all in the collective defence.

There was some divergence of view over the importance of readiness to envisage first use of nuclear weapons. Some saw this as a crucial element in deterrence. Others thought that too great a dependence on first use weakened flexibility. The political constraints on a decision to make first use affected its credibility. It was also divisive and caused alarm in public opinion. This was not an argument in favour of the Russian ploy of a no first use declaration. A no first use "agreement" would in any case increase the attraction to the Russians of a conventional surprise attack. It meant putting the emphasis in public discussion on deterrence rather than on threat of first use.

There was considerable debate on the utility of battlefield nuclear weapons. On the one hand it was argued that they would be useless in the likely circumstances of conflict in Europe in which Soviet and Alliance forces would be intermingled. It was doubtful that the Germans would ever be persuaded to agree to their use. Nor was there much likelihood of agreement in the Alliance on cross-border use. The dual capability of the weapons systems involved was a de-stabilising factor because it would be impossible to tell whether an enemy attack was directed at the nuclear or the conventional capability and thus what should be the appropriate response. If the military experts doubted the

utility of battlefield nuclear weapons, why pay the high political price of maintaining them? Savings from removing them could be used to strengthen conventional forces. Before long the prime military objective of nuclear artillery, namely to inhibit Soviet troop concentrations forward, would in any case be attainable by the latest conventional artillery.

Against this it was argued that it would be a mistake to remove them altogether, though they might be further reduced. They were an essential link in the chain of flexible response. Removing them altogether would give the Soviet Union a licence to concentrate its forces in forward areas, a risk it could not otherwise take. Public opinion did not seem particularly concerned about these weapons and the considerable efforts already made to reduce them had earned little credit. Nor were the Germans pressing for their removal. This was a strong argument for maintaining the status quo. The weapons had been there a long time and caused no real problems, so why offer the Soviet Union a military bonus by withdrawing them? To do so might be regarded as evidence of the Alliance's vulnerability to pressures from the peace movement and would increase efforts to get rid of intermediate nuclear weapons. Any savings would be minimal since the warheads were American. An alternative would be to base the weapons further back, while still preserving the capability to use them on the battlefield.

All agreed that the effectiveness of the conventional arm of flexible response needed to be strengthened. Congress would insist on this and Lord Carrington was proposing to take an initiative. But views differed as to where the priority for improvements lay.

Some argued the need to put it all "up front". It was crucial for the Alliance to be able to do well in the first

two weeks of a conflict and this offered the best chance of deterring the Russians from starting one. Resources should go to strengthening forces already in Europe rather than to preparing reinforcements. The psychology of Soviet Commanders was relevant. They were cautious about getting involved, but when they did so it was on a big scale. This strengthened the need for the Alliance response to be rapid, particularly to a Soviet probe out-of-area.

Others pointed out that the way in which resources were allocated was consistent with the shop window philosophy i.e. priority for hardware rather than sustainability. But as the use of nuclear weapons became more difficult to envisage extra days of sustainability became more important. A conflict was more likely to start on the flanks than on the central front, which again strengthened the argument for sustainability.

There were few specific suggestions for improving conventional defence. Full account needed to be taken of changes in Soviet military doctrine. The possibility of redeploying American Forces out of South Germany to a more central role was raised, as was that of encouraging the Germans to make a greater investment in fortifications. The Alliance must continue to press ahead with new technology. But it should not be obsessed with the most advanced kit at the expense of the rest. More than just technical improvements were needed, for instance improved training and tactics. There was likely to be a particular problem over manpower: in Germany the number of men of military age would decline by 30 per cent in the next 15 years. There were glaring weaknesses in the air defence of the UK. It was made clear, however, that there could be no question of driving up UK expenditure on defence further. It was up to the other allies to do more.

Great importance was attached to strengthening the political cohesion of the Alliance. Avoidance of war required not just a credible strategy for war itself but a demonstration of resolve and unity by all the members of the Alliance. The political battle, which was the decisive one, was being fought at the present time. This demonstration of will was also vital in order to preserve the US commitment to Europe's defence. A lengthening shadow over Western Europe of Soviet military superiority could lead to the establishment of a Soviet droit de regard over Western European policies and to a Soviet victory over the Alliance without a battle being fought. But if the political cohesion and confidence of the Alliance were to be maintained its military strategy, too, had to be credible and on two levels - those of its efficacy for the conduct of war and of its political cogency in time of peace. Particular attention was needed to the weaker brethren on the flanks.

It was as important to carry public opinion in the Alliance. Some thought that support for NATO in public opinion was as strong today as at any time in the Alliance's history. Others saw a risk of 'generational slip', because many of the issues and circumstances which originally shaped the Alliance seemed less relevant now. The problem was most acute in relation to the nuclear arm of deterrence. More needed to be done to bring home how dreadful conventional war would be and the role of the nuclear deterrent in preventing it. This could be done by portraying CND as 'conventional warmongers'. One should highlight the dangers of failure to deter rather than the risks of the deterrent. But a commitment to arms control was a necessary part of this.

Discussion of the role of chemical weapons was inconclusive. It was argued on the one hand that there was a tendency to over-estimate the military utility of such

weapons. They were indiscriminating and therefore difficult to use. There was evidence that the Russians were interested in negotiating a ban. The Americans should be pressed to modify the verification measures they were demanding.

Others thought that, if a ban could not be negotiated quickly, the Alliance had no alternative but to acquire a chemical weapons capability of its own as a deterrent to Soviet use of such weapons. It was more credible to have a chemical deterrent to chemical weapons than to rely upon a nuclear one. This was an unfinished discussion.

It was pointed out that the main risk of conflict lay in Soviet probing of Western interests outside the main NATO area. This argued for a conventional capability able to undertake out of area operations. At the moment too much was left to the Americans. It was pointed out, however, that this would not be a NATO capability as such but one possessed by certain NATO members. The main scope for improvement lay in improved coordination of their activities.

There was some discussion of France's role, with the feeling that while France would not become reintegrated in the military structure of the Alliance, she was moving towards closer military cooperation, particularly with Germany. It was suggested that France's nuclear strategy was not credible even to the French military themselves.

No formal conclusions were drawn. But the Prime Minister noted a number of points which were not disputed. The concept of flexible response would remain viable and credible so long as the Alliance retained the full range of capabilities, including a nuclear capability, needed to defend itself and the will to use them. But the cohesion of the Alliance remained a worry. There was a risk of



complacency about the situation on the flanks, about the Alliance's ability to reinforce the central front and sustain a long campaign, as well as about the absence of an Alliance capability for chemical warfare. There was no doubt that there would be pressure from the Americans to strengthen its conventional capability. But there were financial constraints for the UK in any further increases in spending on defence. There had been no consensus as to where this strengthening was most urgently needed or whether changes in the nature of the UK contribution were desirable.

At the subsequent restricted session attended by Ministers and officials only, discussion focussed on the Foreign Secretary's minute of 28 September, and in particular the implications for Britain of greater Franco-German cooperation.

The feeling was expressed that the UK was not getting credit for its contribution to Europe's defence; that the Germans had to be made to realise how much we did for them and that our contribution was vulnerable unless it produced more consideration for our political and financial interests; that Franco-German collaboration was giving France an undesirable hold over the FRG in a wide area of European affairs; that there was a growing instinct on the part of the US to look to France and Germany for discussion of Alliance matters; and that France derived unjustifiably large benefits from its fractional involvement in the NATO infrastructure programme. It was noted that France liked to keep Germany in a posture of penance and that the Germans for their part did not seem averse to this.

Against this it was argued that there was a strong element of rhetoric in the Franco-German relationship; that the French hinterland was of such great strategic importance to Germany that the latter needed constant reassurance about the role which France would play in a conflict; that the UK

was obtaining a healthy share of European defence procurement and not being squeezed out; and that, rather than try to divide and rule, we should seek areas of constructive collaboration with both France and Germany.

It was agreed that the proposals in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Foreign Secretary's minute needed further work by officials before consideration by Ministers. Doubts were expressed about a number of the proposals: in particular we should not give the impression of running after the French. The aim should be to ensure that the UK was not frozen out of Franco-German collaboration; to encourage the French back towards a more integrated relationship with the Alliance; and to ensure that the UK received not just credit for but business from collaborative projects. It would be essential to avoid anything, for instance in WEU, which undermined NATO; and to seek collaboration only in areas where we have identifiable interests in common.

C D P

3 October 1984

SEMINAR ON NATO STRATEGY AT CHEQUERS  
ON MONDAY, 1 OCTOBER 1984

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary

Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP  
Secretary of State for Defence

Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP  
Minister of State for the Armed Forces

Sir Robert Armstrong  
Secretary of the Cabinet

Sir Clive Whitmore  
Permanent Under Secretary,  
Ministry of Defence

Field Marshal Sir Edwin Bramall  
Chief of Defence Staff

Sir Percy Cradock  
Foreign Affairs Adviser to the  
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Sir John Graham  
UK Representative on the  
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