

TOP SECRET

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42.84

CONFIDENTIAL FILING

Prime Minister's meeting with
Group Captain Chehine.

DEFENCE

September 1986

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
10.10.86							
20.10.86							
4.11.86							
30.12.86							
20-1-87							
 PREM 19 / 3651							



V/6

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

20 January 1987

MEMORANDUM BY GROUP CAPTAIN CHESHIRE

You wrote on 29 December enclosing some comments on Group Captain Cheshire's memorandum which I sent on to him. I have now received the enclosed reply which the Defence Staff will wish to peruse. But I see no need to continue the correspondence further.

CHARLES POWELL

David Ball, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

QTS

CAVENDISH
SUFFOLK

Telephone : Glemsford 252

CC PC

The Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

15th January 1987

Sec. M. Bearpark

Thank you for very kindly sending me the Defence Staff's response to my memo, 'The Defence of Europe'.

The case still seems to me open, and in the hope that it is in order I enclose my reply. Whatever the outcome, it is a great help to my thinking.

Yours sincerely,

Leonard Cheshire

Leonard Cheshire

THE DEFENCE OF EUROPE IN THE NUCLEAR AGE
REPLY TO DEFENCE STAFF COMMENTS

1. The arguments adduced in this paper, some of which attack a different proposition from the one I submitted, do not in my view justify the firm negative conclusion that is reached.
2. DS 1. Introduction. The statement, "conventional weapons threaten more than just armies", is not valid in a context which relates solely to the military realities of the NATO/Warsaw Pact forces in Europe. To cite the example of what happened to France in 1944/5 as an indication of what would happen in the event of war today is to infer that NATO's conventional defence forces would "ravage" the Soviet Union. The relevance of the Argument is unclear, for it is precisely the destruction Europe would suffer by deploying a conventional defence against a major Soviet attack, and which the Soviet Union would not, that underpins my proposal.
3. DS 2. "Some would say that 'a strong and vigilant frontier force' is what we have now". Assuming this to be a serious statement, this means that NATO lacks the conventional capability to hold out against a major attack, and is known to lack it. I note that my assertion to this effect is not contested. Yet, Paragraph 6 (III) states that "the requirement must be, by applying the minimum force necessary, to persuade the enemy to cease his attack and withdraw". How do these two statements reconcile? How is the enemy realistically to be dissuaded by conventional means only, the truth is that if he is sufficiently determined we cannot stop him short of the nuclear tripwire?

The second half of the paragraph states that the key weakness in my proposal lies in the phrase, "our options would remain open", and goes on to ask: "For how long; and how wide a range would we have?". But some qualifying clause had to be inserted here, to provide against automatic retaliation in response to a Korean airliner type incident, or to hot pursuit initiated by an over-zealous local Commander, etc. As to length of time, I would suggest an hour or two. As to range of options, the widest and most discriminative possible, within the nuclear spectrum. If my proposal does have a key weakness, as I am ready to admit it may have, I do not see it as lying here.

4. DS 4. Here there is a clear misunderstanding of my proposal, which has in mind a future strategy for the Western Alliance as a whole. That a nation within the Alliance, or even a whole group of nations, should unilaterally take a radical step affecting the security or cohesion of the whole is far from my thoughts. As to the USA, my feeling is that she would be happy, rather than sorry, to make substantial cuts in its European presence, and that such a reduction would not weaken Atlantic linkage. If it were to, then my own case is weakened.

5. DS 5. "Would there be huge savings in the defence budget?" Then, one cannot also be saying, in support of deterrence, that the greater part of defence spending goes on our conventional capability. My statement refers to the Western Alliance as a whole, but I concede I may have exaggerated.

"We would have to be sure we had the technical expertise against developing Soviet air defence and ABM systems." Yes, this is a substantial, possibly decisive, objection on which I can make no competent judgement, other than to point out that not just the Soviet Union, but we, too, would see it as the key area on which to concentrate. If there were real doubt, my proposal might well fall.

"No realistic prospect of Europe developing her own deterrent". This is not central to my case, and I am happy to let it pass, though I would have thought it was within Europe's capability, if the Western Alliance saw an advantage in it.

6. DS 6. Uncertainty I do not quite see how Flexible Response generates the greater uncertainty. Our intention is perfectly clear: we respond with "the minimum force necessary, to persuade the enemy to withdraw". The uncertainty only comes later, if the battle begins to go against us. Under my proposal, the enemy knows where the tripwire is, but he has no idea what will happen if he triggers it. The warning shot could be against a submarine under the ocean, or deep in his homeland.

Credibility. The paper asserts that we cannot put the tripwire on the frontier, for the principal reason that we do not know how the enemy will respond. True, we cannot be absolutely certain. But, by what reasoning does an act that is seen as irrational at zero hour become rational on, say, Day 5, when the enemy's response will be more difficult still to judge? The answer, not spelled out, but strongly implied (6. III), is that this is now our only hope. I sympathise with that, but I do not see it as sound reasoning.

7. DS 8. Defence strategies have evolved rapidly since 1945. MAD replaced a previous, wholly different, strategy, only to give way in due course to Flexible Response. My view is that there is now a new day dawning which calls for yet another system, a kind of modernised merger between the former two.
8. I would appreciate it greatly if what I have proposed could be looked at in greater depth to see if, despite its lack of professionalism, there lies the germ of an idea within it.

15.1.1987

Leonard Cheshire.



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

30 December 1986

Your memorandum, "The Defence of Europe in the Nuclear Age", which you kindly left with the Prime Minister, was subsequently passed to the Ministry of Defence for consideration.

I thought you might be interested to see the enclosed set of comments, albeit brief and informal, which the Defence Staff has now produced in response.

(P.A. BEARPARK)

Group Captain G.L. Cheshire, V.C., O.M.,
D.S.O., D.F.C., R.A.F. (Retd.)

SLS

DEFENCE : Meetings with. Ghoshan

Sep 86





10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

30 December 1986

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(P.A. BEARPARK)

Group Captain G.L. Cheshire, V.C., O.M.,
D.S.O., D.F.C., R.A.F. (Retd.)

SLS



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone 01-218 2111/3 (Direct Dialling)

01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

MO 18/1/2

29th December 1986

cefc

See above

*S.R.
Per type
P.S.*

MEMORANDUM BY GROUP CAPTAIN CHESHIRE

You wrote to John Howe on 4th November enclosing a memorandum left with the Prime Minister by Group Captain Cheshire. My Department took rather literally, I am afraid, your remark that it was not a matter of great priority, but has now produced the enclosed comments, which you may wish to relate back to him, along with a draft covering letter.

*Yours, sincerely
D C J Ball*

(D C J BALL)
Private Secretary

Charles Powell Esq
No 10 Downing Street

DRAFT

Your memorandum, "The Defence of Europe in the Nuclear Age", which you kindly left with the Prime Minister, was subsequently passed to the Ministry of Defence for consideration.

I thought you might be interested to see the enclosed set of comments, albeit brief and informal, which the Defence Staff has now produced in response.

Group Captain G L Cheshire VC OM DSO DFC RAF (Retd)

GROUP CAPTAIN CHESHIRE: 'THE DEFENCE OF EUROPE IN THE NUCLEAR AGE'

COMMENTS

1. Introduction, Paragraph 2. Surely conventional weapons threaten more than just armies? Possibly one of the reasons for France's single-mindedness about defence, especially nuclear defence, is the memory of the French people's experience of being ravaged by conventional war in the Second World War. Despite our best efforts to keep collateral damage to a minimum, even in the course of liberating France, we caused a great deal of destruction.

2. The Proposal - Paragraph 5. 'Strong and vigilant frontier force' - some would say that that is what we have now and, even now, it takes enormous effort and resources to maintain at an effective level in the face of massive Warsaw Pact superiority. But the key weakness in the proposal appears at the end of this paragraph, we suggest: 'Our options remain open' - but for how long? And how wide a range of options would we have? The proposal would prevent us from having the ability to select an appropriate type and level of response to any move the Warsaw Pact were to make.

3. Paragraph 6. It is almost impossible to imagine the Soviet Union giving up its large conventional army, for reasons of geography, history and temperament. One might add Russian conservatism; the army's symbolic role for internal security; industrial momentum; a need for conscription; plus the need to control the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries - all these factors seem to militate against such a radical move. It is suggested that 'we will respond with some form of nuclear strike'. Would we? What credibility would we have? We might think it would not provoke escalation - but unfortunately that is the enemy's decision, not ours. The essence of NATO's current strategy is the uncertainty placed in Soviet minds; it is important to avoid predictability of response.

4. Advantages - Paragraph 7. Of course it is desirable to negotiate reductions in forces on each side - this is the aim of the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions talks in Vienna. But a unilateral move by the West European nations would surely cause grave problems. First, what would be the US reaction - this would be a most serious implication to consider. It is hardly possible to imagine that the US Congress, already seriously concerned about European burden-sharing, would leave one million American servicemen and families in Europe when the European nations themselves were reducing their armies. And the fact remains that armies on the ground are a most important and visual symbol of the strength and cohesion of the NATO alliance.

They are a particularly effective illustration of how the United States is coupled to the defence of Europe. And if it were a purely British unilateral action that was proposed, what would be the reaction of the French and the West Germans?

5. Would there be the 'huge savings in the defence budget' - particularly given those 'other global threats'? After all, by most standards, we haven't very large forces even now. It is not our view that there is any realistic prospect that 'Europe could develop her own deterrent'. Which European nations is it envisaged would participate? What would be the French attitude? The paper makes no mention of the FRG nuclear problem. (Even if it did prove possible, we would have to be sure we had the technical expertise against the developing Soviet air defence and ABM systems - such development would surely be accelerated if they knew that that was all they had to defend against.)

6. Objections - Paragraph 8 and 9

I The problem with such a limited tripwire is its lack of credibility (the same sort of reason that NATO rejected it before). Would a potential aggressor be convinced of the Alliance's will to undertake 'some form of nuclear strike'? To raise doubts about the alliance's resolve to defend itself is to lessen deterrence and increase the likelihood of war.

II This is again a problem of credibility and uncertainty. We just don't know what will happen. NATO's policy through the strategy of flexible response is to deter all war, nuclear and conventional. If deterrence fails, the requirement must be, by applying the minimum force necessary, to persuade the enemy to cease his attack and withdraw; crossing the nuclear threshold is significant - we wish to delay this for as long as possible. Under the flexible response strategy, there could be no guarantee that an aggressor could control escalation beyond the conventional phase or beyond the tactical nuclear phase; the uncertainty thus created is itself a forceful deterrent factor. At the same time, NATO would have the fullest range of options at its disposal with which to respond to any aggressive act.

III There is surely something in the second formulation of the objection. To make the gamble of starting a conventional war seem more likely to succeed is surely not the surest way of preventing war and bloodshed.

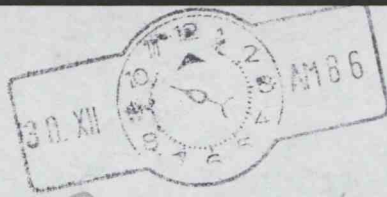
7. The unilateral case seems particularly unconvincing. It is just too risky and uncertain. As with all such unilateral proposals, it falters on the presupposition of the Soviet Union's trustworthiness. Multilateral conventional reductions

must, again for reasons of trust, be mutual, balanced and verifiable. In addition, given geographical and political considerations, conventional reductions must go hand in hand with balanced nuclear reductions.

8. A last point: the paper asserts that 'the advantages to the whole of mankind are so great ...' Is this sustainable? Surely, peace in Europe - despite first the apparent absurdity of MAD and then the difficulties inherent in Flexible Response and Forward Defence - has been sustained. Mankind nearly everywhere else in the world over the last 40 years has had a comparatively unhappy time.

9. In short, Group Captain Cheshire's proposals, it seems to the Government, would weaken NATO on the Central Front; make the nuclear deterrent less credible; and risk decoupling Europe from the United States. For these reasons, we do not believe that it would enhance the security of Western Europe.

Pm's mtgs.



with

Gen. Capt. Cheswell

DEFENCE Sept 86.

CP



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

4 November 1986

I enclose a copy of a memorandum which Group Captain Cheshire recently left with the Prime Minister. If someone has the time to draw up some comments on it which could be related back to Group Captain Cheshire that would be very helpful though obviously it is not a matter of great priority.

(Charles Powell)

John Howe, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

VC



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

4 November 1986

Thank you for your letter of 4 November and for considerably uniting your two memoranda. It was very helpful to have a single version. We shall be pursuing the points which you raised in your discussion with the Prime Minister.

With best wishes,

(Charles Powell)

Group Captain G. L. Cheshire,
V.C., O.M., D.S.O., D.F.C.

✓

THE LEONARD CHESHIRE FOUNDATION

Leonard Cheshire House,
26-29 Maunsel Street, London SW1P 2QN. Telephone: 01-828 1822

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen
Founder: Group Captain G. L. Cheshire, V.C., O.M., D.S.O., D.F.C.

Charles Powell Esq.,
10 Downing Street
London SW1

4th November, 1986

Jeas W. Powell

I fear that you must be getting fed up with letters from me. However, having the two memos on the one subject regarding deterrence seems untidy, and I therefore have combined the two into one, making one or two minor modifications, principally on the last page. If the matter is taken further, perhaps this paper could substitute for the two previous ones.

This requires no acknowledgement.

Kind regards.

*Mrs. Sincerely,
Leonard Cheshire*

Leonard Cheshire

Registered Office: as above

A company limited by guarantee, in London No. 552847. Registered Charity No. 218186

THE DEFENCE OF EUROPE
IN THE NUCLEAR AGE.

INTRODUCTION.

1. The elimination of nuclear weapons would not make the world a safer place. If they are assumed not to exist, Europe could almost certainly not be defended against an all-out, sustained Soviet attack.
2. There is a fundamental difference between the nature, and therefore the logic, of the conventional and the nuclear deterrents. Nuclear weapons deter in an absolute, or strategic, sense, by threatening destruction of the aggressor's homeland; thus they render nuclear war between nuclear powers no longer a rational option of state policy. Conventional weapons, on the other hand, even if backed by battlefield nuclear weapons, deter only in a relative, or operational, sense, by threatening the aggressor's armies. Provided their use does not automatically lead to nuclear escalation, as is the case in Europe today, they remain what they have always been, a rational option of state policy.
3. Given these realities, the question is: How does deploying a conventional as well as a nuclear deterrent make the defence of Europe more secure?
4. The conventional deterrent offers the hope that, should war break out between the two Alliances, it can be restricted to the conventional level. But it is by no means certain that this hope will be realised, nor that NATO will succeed in withstanding the onslaught; even if she does, much of Europe will be left devastated, and in all probability millions of lives lost. With the battle of wills over the strategic deterrent still to come, one wonders what point there was in the conventional defence. War with the Warsaw Pact forces has a significance for Europe that it does not have for either Russia or America.

THE PROPOSAL.

5. My case is that the only way to make Europe totally secure is to scale down our European conventional capability and rely on the

nuclear deterrent. That is, we maintain a strong and vigilant frontier force, so that there can be no incursion short of an unmistakable act of war, but we abandon any attempt at defence in depth. There is then conventional deterrence against localised intrusion, without the danger of all-out war in Europe, and nuclear deterrence against major aggression. Ideally, and if technically possible, the deterrent would be removed from Europe and dispersed under the oceans. If, on a judgement that we do not mean our threat, Russian does attack, we do not necessarily offer armed resistance, neither do we automatically launch a nuclear strike. Our options remain open.

6. One would hope that the Soviet Union could be persuaded to adopt a similar strategy, as serving her best interests too, but if not, I believe we could safely, and to our advantage, proceed unilaterally. We state that this major reduction in our European conventional forces is concrete proof of our frequently declared intention never to initiate offensive military action. However, we leave them in no doubt that, should they take advantage of our act of goodwill by an incursion of our territory and are not to be talked into withdrawing, we will respond with some form of nuclear strike. This would be a last resort action, aimed not at provoking escalation, but solely at restoring the deterrent, through inflicting punitive military damage - perhaps against part of the battle fleet.

ADVANTAGES.

7. Such a major disarmament step, taken unilaterally if need be, would surely bring many political benefits, especially on the international scene. There would be huge savings in the defence budget. Forces released from Europe would be available to meet other global threats, which call for a different kind of military preparedness. If it were thought advantageous to the Western Alliance, Europe could develop her own deterrent and look after her defence even without the American umbrella.

OBJECTIVES.

8. In addressing the counter arguments, I concede it is one thing for the armchair observer to be convinced of his case, and another altogether for the person responsible for the defence of

the realm to be so confident. Yet, I do not see how the case can be faulted in logic, and I feel that it merits the Government's earnest consideration.

9. The following are the most commonly advanced objections:

(I) "This is an extreme form of a "tripwire" strategy, such as, in a more moderate form, was rejected by NATO twenty years ago."

Whatever the terminology, the threshold that separates nuclear from conventional weapons constitutes a tripwire. The change from a strategy of Massive Retaliation to Flexible Response has merely pushed the tripwire back and left open the option as to where on the battlefield we place it. Since its purpose is to deter, not to bring an adversary down, its proper place is on the frontier itself, clearly signposted. Then there is no danger of stumbling over it in the heat of battle, nor of the adversary thinking he can get away with a limited conventional only attack.

(II) "It would not be credible to the Warsaw Pact. No government would conceivably launch a nuclear strike to recover a few hundred kilometres of territory."

But: does the argument not work just as forcefully in reverse? Is it credible that for the sake of a limited territorial gain the Soviet Union would risk nuclear retaliation, followed either by humiliation or nuclear war? The proposal pre-supposes that we have made it abundantly clear to the Soviet Union that we look upon an act of war by one nuclear Alliance against another as an international crime of the first order, and that we will respond to it with the same resolution as to terrorism and hijacking.

(III) "The proposition stands in logic, but would not be acceptable to public opinion." Or, as alternatively formulated: "It requires conventional war and major shedding of blood to trigger the nuclear decision."

This is a real, and possibly decisive, objection, but is not a valid argument against critically examining the proposition to see if it stands in military and political logic. If it does

stand, the advantages to the whole of mankind are so great that it is difficult to believe public approval could not be won.

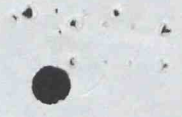
Further, in either formulation, is the objection morally sustainable? If a tripwire on the frontier is the surest way of preventing all war and all bloodshed, how does one justify not putting it there? Had we in the 30's opted for a conventional tripwire instead of appeasement and indecision, it is arguable that there would have been no World War II. Hitler launched his offensive on a judgement that he would not have to fight on two fronts at the same time, and on an assurance from Goering that no bomb would drop on a German city.

I venture to suggest that in voicing this objection we are speaking for our very selves, not just for public opinion. All of us, I suspect, whether upholders of deterrence or not, are seeking an inner moral purity which, in the sense we want, is not as yet attainable. Our hearts revolt at the thought of even threatening the use of nuclear weapons, but our minds tell us that their possession is a deterrent to any form of war between the two Alliances. In a word, we are desperately seeking for middle ground when in fact none exists.

CONCLUSION.

Let us assume that in 1939 both Germany and Britain had atomic bombs. Hitler, of course, could destroy us, but we too could destroy him, and where would his dreams of an Empire then stand? This is the new reality of the nuclear age, to which I do not believe we have fully adjusted; the major powers can contemplate the use of armed force only if to do so carries no risk of nuclear escalation. Therefore, we should close the door to all possibility of miscalculation, declare that no level of war in Europe is any longer admissible, and harness the "unusability" of nuclear weapons to relegate world war, as Pope John Paul put it, to the tragic past.

Leonard Cheshire



RESTRICTED



SECRET

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C/4

(A7)

CABINET OFFICE

Government Offices Great George Street London SW1P 3AL Telephone 01-233 7422

REPORT BY LEONARD CHESIRE VC

The report mentioned in your letter of 16 October 1985 is held on a Cabinet Office file (CAB 126/250), which is currently withheld under Section 3(4). However, the report itself is not considered sensitive from a Cabinet Office point of view and when the revision of the Atomic Energy 'blanket' is finalised, the file it is on will probably be released albeit with a couple of still sensitive papers extracted.

Subject to MOD's views, I would therefore have no objections to Leonard Cheshire being given access to a copy of this report.

I am copying this letter to Ian Brown in MOD.

Yours sincerely

COLIN SMITH

Miss P M Barnes
Library and Records Dept
FCO
2 Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith St
London SW 1

26 MAUNSEL STREET
LONDON SW1P 2QN
Tel. 01-828 1822

CCP
Prime Minister

CDI
20/x

The Rt. Hon. Mrs M. Thatcher PC
10 Downing Street
London SW1

20th October, 1986

Dear Prime Minister,

Following our discussion last Monday on the nuclear issue, I am enclosing a supplementary note which I feel is needed, in the light of the fundamental points you raised.

May I say how much I appreciate the time you gave me.

Yours Sincerely,
Leonard Cheshire.

Leonard Cheshire

GROUP CAPTAIN LEONARD CHESHIRE V.C. O.M. D.S.O. D.F.C.

26 MAUNSEL STREET
LONDON SW1P 2QN
Tel. 01-828 1822

Supplementary Notes to the Paper:

The Defence of Europe in the Nuclear Age.

Three principal objections listed and addressed:

1. "What is proposed is an extreme form of a "tripwire" strategy, such as, in a more moderate version, was abandoned by NATO twenty years ago as neither credible to the Warsaw Pact nor acceptable to Western publics".

Whatever the terminology, the threshold that separates nuclear from conventional weapons constitutes a tripwire. The change from a strategy of massive retaliation to flexible response has merely pushed the tripwire back and left open the option as to where on the battlefield we place it. Since its purpose is to deter, not to bring an adversary down, its proper place is on the frontier itself, clearly signposted. Then there is no danger of stumbling over it in the heat of battle, nor of the adversary thinking he can get away with a limited, conventional only, attack.

2. "This might carry credibility against a massive onslaught, but hardly against smaller incursions or peremptory Soviet demands which, whether by cold calculation or by just drifting into an untidy and escalating sequence, could wholly undermine NATO".

The argument in the opening line of Para 5 is over-compressed. What

is envisaged is no attempt at defence in depth, but a strong and vigilant frontier force, so that the Soviet Union cannot incur short of an unmistakable act of war. There is then conventional deterrence against localised action, without the danger of major war on European soil. If, on a judgement that we do not mean our threat, Russia does attack, we do not necessarily resist, nor do we automatically launch a nuclear strike. Our options remain open.

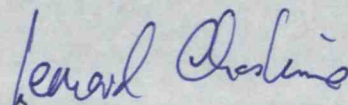
3. "The proposition stands in logic, but would not be acceptable to public opinion". Or, as alternatively formulated: "It requires conventional war and major shedding of blood to trigger the nuclear decision".

This is a real, and possibly decisive, objection, but is not a valid argument against critically examining the proposition to see if it stands in military and political logic. Further, in its alternative formulation, is it moral? If the proposition really does stand, the advantages to the two Alliances, indeed to the whole of mankind, are so great that it is difficult to believe that public approval could not be won.

I venture to suggest that in voicing this objection we are speaking for our very selves, not just for public opinion. I suspect that all of us, whether upholders of deterrence or not, are seeking an inner moral purity which, in the sense we mean, is unattainable. Our hearts revolt at the thought of using nuclear weapons, but our minds tell us; firstly, that without them there is no defence against

a nuclear armed aggressor; secondly, that, if both sides keep a minimum effective retaliatory capability, man will never again see a world war. Consequently we are desperately searching for middle ground when in fact none exists.

Let us put ourselves back in 1939 and assume that both Germany and Britain had the atom bomb. Hitler, of course, could destroy us, but we too could destroy him. Where would his dreams of an Empire then stand? The same holds good of today. If a regime is expansionist it can contemplate the use of armed force only if it carries no possible risk of nuclear escalation. Therefore our primary duty, not just to ourselves but to the whole human family, is to ensure that no possibility of miscalculation exists. This is the new reality of the nuclear age, to which I do not believe we have fully adjusted. Instead of bending our minds as to how, if the worst happens, we can fight a successful defensive war in Europe, we should assert the total inadmissibility of such war. We should harness the very "unusability" of nuclear weapons to relegate world war, as Pope John Paul put it, to the tragic past.



21.10.86

Leonard Cheshire



Handwritten signature or text, possibly "John Adams"

PRIME MINISTER

CF
I don't mind
keeping if you see
no need.
JL 14/10

MEETING WITH GROUP CAPTAIN CHESHIRE

Group Captain Cheshire is coming to see you at his own request on Monday. His letter, setting out the points which he wants to discuss, is attached. In essence he recommends doing away with the strategy of flexible response and reverting to the 'nuclear tripwire'.

You might:

- (a) ask him to recount his experiences of the first atomic bomb in 1945;
- (b) stress your support as evinced in your Party Conference speech for maintaining the effectiveness of our independent nuclear deterrent, which we retain at a level calculated to be able to inflict unacceptable damage;
- (c) question whether a threat of instant and massive nuclear retaliation for an incursion into Western Europe by Soviet forces would be credible now after the Alliance has depended for so long on the doctrine of flexible response;
- (d) question also whether public opinion would accept reliance on a nuclear response alone;
- (e) explain why we think that we could contain by conventional means a Soviet conventional attack at least by long enough to give time for contacts designed to avoid a nuclear exchange;
- (f) ask his views on the SDI; and

(g) confirm your interest in imaginative new ideas such as HOTOL (as you will see, he supports a European space shuttle).

CDP.

Charles Powell

10 October 1986

P.S. I have now obtained a
copy of Group Captain Cheskre's report
of August 1945. You will find it in
the folder. He will be much flattered
if you are able to find the time to
read it.

CDP.



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

29 September 1986

From the Private Secretary

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 26 September and its most interesting enclosure. She would very much welcome a chance to talk to you about it. Would you be free to come to No.10 on Monday 13 October at 1700? Perhaps you could let me know by telephone.

Charles Powell

Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, VC, OM, DSO, DFC.

✓/P



10 DOWNING STREET

~~Cardline~~

We shall obviously
have to give him
a time. But
no hurry - after the
first coffee.

CDR.

CDP.

13 Oct.

1700-1730.

CR.

GROUP CAPTAIN LEONARD CHESHIRE V.C. O.M. D.S.O. D.F.C.

26 MAUNSEL STREET
LONDON SW1P 2QN
Tel. 01-828 1822

The Rt. Hon. Mrs M. Thatcher PC
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Prime Minister

(F)

You will want to read (1)

Leonard Cheshire's thoughtful piece.

There are of course many objections to what he proposes. To my mind, the biggest is that having once moved away from massive retaliation to flexible response, it is simply not credible to move back again.

26th September 1986

My Dear Prime Minister,

I hold a radical view about the defence of Europe which differs from orthodox military thinking, but which I am so convinced is basically sound, and which offers such great advantages, that I am hoping you would most kindly let me discuss it with you in person. A brief outline of it I enclose.

The germ of this proposal was first expressed in my report of 21 August 1945 addressed to Sir John Anderson in Washington and sent the next day to the Cabinet Office. That report did not apparently find favour with Mr Attlee and still remains on the secret list. However it was on Mr Churchill's orders that I wrote it, and though I recognise that the mission on which he sent me was officially completed in 1945, I felt at the time that there was still something that needed to be said. Only in the last 5 years have my thoughts clarified, and at a personal level I shall not feel that my mission is truly completed until I have reported to you as Winston Churchill's present successor.

Do you want to see him?
Or ask George Younger to do so on your behalf?
CDP 26/9

Yours sincerely,

Leonard Cheshire

Leonard Cheshire.

I must see him
not

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DEFENCE IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

1. The elimination of all nuclear weapons would not make the world a safer place. If they are assumed not to exist, Europe could almost certainly not be defended against an all out, sustained Soviet attack.
2. There is a fundamental difference between the nature, and therefore the logic, of the conventional and the nuclear deterrents. Nuclear weapons deter in an absolute, or strategic, sense, by threatening destruction of the aggressor's homeland: thus they make nuclear war between nuclear powers no longer a rational option of state policy. Conventional weapons, on the other hand, even if backed by battlefield nuclear weapons, deter only in a relative, or operational sense, by threatening the aggressor's armies. Provided their use does not automatically lead to nuclear escalation, as is the case in Europe today, they remain what they always have been, a rational option of state policy.
3. Given these realities, the question arises: how does deploying a conventional deterrent as well as a nuclear one make the defence of Europe more secure?
4. The conventional deterrent offers the hope that, should war break out between the two Alliances, it can be restricted to the conventional

level. But it is by no means sure that this hope will be realised, nor that NATO will succeed in withstanding the onslaught; even if she does, much of Europe will be left devastated, and in all probability millions of lives lost, with the battle of wills over the strategic deterrent still to come. One wonders what point there was in the battlefield defence.

5. My case is that the only way to make Europe totally secure is to phase out our conventional defence capability in Europe and to rely solely upon the insurance of an upgraded, flexible response, nuclear deterrent. I would hope that the Soviet Union could be persuaded to do likewise, but if not, I believe we could safely, and to our advantage, proceed unilaterally. We tell the Soviet Union that this major reduction in our conventional forces is concrete proof of our frequently declared intention never to take offensive military action against them. However, should they take advantage of our act of good will by an incursion of our territory, and are not to be talked into withdrawing, we leave them in no doubt that our response will be some form of nuclear strike. This would not be aimed at defeating them, as with the old Massive Retaliation strategy, nor at provoking escalation, but solely at restoring the deterrent, though at the same time inflicting punitive military damage - perhaps against part of the battle fleet.

6. It is objected that this is not credible; no government would conceivably launch a nuclear strike for the sake of a few hundred lost kilometres of territory. I disagree. For one thing, the

argument works just as forcefully the other way round. Is it credible that for the sake of a limited territorial gain the Soviet Union would risk nuclear retaliation, followed either by humiliation or nuclear escalation? The proposal pre-supposes that we have made it abundantly clear to the Soviet Union that we look upon an act of war by one nuclear Alliance against another as an international crime of the first order, and that we will respond to it with the same resolution as we do to terrorism and hijacking.

7. There is, of course, no denying the force of this objection, and I realise that it is one thing for the armchair observer to be convinced of his case, and another altogether for the person responsible for the defence of the realm to be so confident. Yet, I do not see how the proposal can be faulted in strict logic, and I feel that it merits the Government's earnest consideration.

8. Although the primary objective of the proposal is to deny the Soviet Union any possible military option in Europe, irrespective of whatever unexpected technological advances or new forms of undercover warfare she may discover, the following considerable - if not revolutionary - benefits would ensue.

As a result of the huge saving effected in the defence budgets of the Western Alliance:

- i. Europe could develop her own independent deterrent and look after her own defence, even, if need be, without the American nuclear umbrella.
- ii. The conventional forces released from Europe could be redeployed,

and retrained, for security needs elsewhere in the world. Few people would question that the military threat to the West is shifting away from the set military battlepiece to other, more insidious, forms of warfare which require a different kind of military preparedness.

- iii. Funds would be available for us to develop our own space shuttle, to give the nation something to stand behind and be proud of, and to win for us a leading aerospace role, with all the benefits that this would bring, economic, political and military.

Edward Chesler

THE ATOMIC BOMB PROJECT.
-----AMERICAN REACTION TO THE PRESENCE OF BRITISH
REPRESENTATIVES AT TINIAN

On instructions from Field Marshal Sir Henry Maitland Wilson I reported on July 30th to the Commanding Officer, 20th Air Force, at Guam, as British representative on the Atomic Bomb Project. I had been informed that the Americans had not authorized my participation in the actual operation but that it was none the less desirable that I should witness the drop and that I should therefore do my utmost to be there. Before leaving Washington I had an interview with Major General Groves and asked him whether the decision against my participation was on grounds of policy or merely because there would not be available space in the aircraft. He told me there was no reason whatsoever why I should not participate and indeed said that he was very anxious that as a British representative I should. I then asked him who was the controlling authority and what procedure I should follow. He told me that the decision rested entirely with General Lemay as theatre commander but that Lemay would no doubt follow any recommendation made by General Farrell (General Groves' representative in the theatre).

I travelled out to the theatre with General Farrell who introduced me to General Lemay. Lemay did not wish to speak to me but Farrell asked him on my behalf whether I might take part in the operation as an observer. Lemay said there was no question whatsoever of this as he refused to allow anyone in the aeroplanes who was not vital to the operation. Farrell and I then both left for Tinian where the project was based. Farrell said he was sorry the theatre commander had taken that attitude and added that his permission was the only obstacle in my way.

A few days later it was decided to put a photographic plane on the operation on which there would be plenty of room. I therefore went across to the theatre commander on my own initiative and succeeded in obtaining permission from him to fly in this third aircraft. I unfortunately assumed that I was now fully cleared. A few hours before take-off Farrell informed me that I could not go because my name did not appear on the clearance list and that no one who was not mentioned in this list could participate. He showed me the list and the various covering letters, all of which had originated some few weeks previously, thereby indicating that he had known all along that the theatre commander's permission was not the only obstacle in my way.

It was by this time obvious that I was being prevented from participating because of some policy decision and that the Americans were trying to make it appear as though it were due merely to a number of unfortunate technicalities. Farrell and his deputy, Captain Parsons, showed obvious embarrassment in my presence and kept suggesting that I should wait a few weeks until the excitement had subsided and then renew my application. Penney, the other British representative, was in exactly the same position as I was.

On the assumption that we had correctly diagnosed the situation, Penney and I decided that if the Americans were to prevent our participation, they should not be allowed to do so on the grounds of technicalities. Since we were not allowed to send any communication to British authorities without first

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submitting it to Farrell and therefore could not ask advice, we despatched a signal to Sir James Chadwick through American channels indicating what had happened and requesting that authority for our participation should be obtained from Washington. This signal was not shown to Chadwick but he was told that we had requested permission to participate and was asked whether or not he agreed. On his saying that he did agree, General Groves signalled authority to Guam. This authority reached us some three hours prior to take off on the second operation and thus both Penney and I were able to ride in the observation aeroplane.

In conclusion I should like to state that we were shown every courtesy from personnel not concerned with higher policy. To a man everyone expressed great regret that we were not permitted to fly and stated openly that they considered it an insult to the British Empire, adding that it was perfectly clear that arrangements for our participation could have been made without any difficulty had the higher authorities so wished. They furthermore said that it was very different to the treatment they had received from the British when they were over in the European Theatre.

ORGANIZATION AT TINIAN.

The project was divided into two - the operational side under Colonel Tibbits, and the scientific side under Captain Parsons; the project being under the general supervision of Admiral Purnell and General Farrell. General Lemay had overall command, but there was no evidence that he played any part other than deciding the day of the attacks.

For an operation that had the highest priority and had been planned over a long period I was surprised at the lack of organization and co-ordination. Although the operation itself was a comparatively simple and routine affair, there was a great deal of excitement and confusion. Instead of appointing one man to act as intermediary between the scientists and the squadron, everybody appeared authorized to approach the squadron and stipulate how he wanted his particular part of the operation executed. The result of this was that the orders were continually being changed and the operations officer, who was responsible for the detailed planning, seemed at some loss to know exactly what was to be done. Until the actual time of final briefing it was impossible to find out how many aeroplanes were to participate, what role each one was to play and what was the exact plan. I heard at least four accounts, all of them different, and all of them from what I should have supposed to have been authoritative sources. There was, furthermore, a certain amount of friction between the air crews and some of the scientists, neither of whom showed any great inclination for each other's company.

THE TACTICAL METHOD OF DROPPING THE BOMB.

There are three main considerations: first to aim the bomb accurately; secondly to avoid the resultant shock wave; thirdly to make certain scientific observations.

Two aeroplanes are involved - one to drop the bomb, the other to make scientific recordings. The two aircraft approach the target in loose formation, the bomb carrier being

in front with the other some 4,000 yards behind and approximately at the same altitude. The bomb is dropped from between 30,000 and 32,000 feet by means of the Norden bomb sight, the duration of the bombing run being 15 minutes. This duration of bomb run is a tactical limitation imposed by the Norden sight which could only be accepted in Japan, where there are no effective defences. It is, furthermore, a limitation which necessitates first class weather conditions. The British counterpart, the Mk IIA SABS Bomb Sight, which requires a run of 30 seconds or less, would have been a far more efficient and satisfactory instrument.

15 seconds prior to the release of the bomb, the radio operator clamps his key on VHF, the signal being received in the accompanying aircraft. This signal is terminated at the moment of release, so that the observation plane may know when to drop his recording instruments. These instruments, which are shock recorders, are suspended by parachute and fall at a rate of approximately 3,000 feet a minute. Immediately after release of the bomb the two aircraft close their bomb doors and execute a 150° turn, at the same time losing some 2,000 feet of altitude. This turn in a B.29 takes approximately 25 seconds, at the end of which time the aircraft is flying directly away from the point of impact. Since the time of fall of the bomb is approximately 45 seconds, the aircraft will be some ten miles slant range away at the moment of explosion, and will thus be safe from blast, turbulence and radiation.

The squadron claims a practice range bombing average of between 500 and 600 feet, an average inferior to that obtained by 617 Squadron of the RAF. Its activities are restricted entirely to daylight fair weather bombing.

OPERATION AGAINST HIROSHIMA.

Zero hour was timed for 0915, August 6th, Tinian time. There were three participating aircraft - one to drop the bomb, the second to make scientific observations, the third to photograph the explosion. To my surprise the operation was executed exactly as planned, the bomb being dropped within one minute of zero hour with both the observation and the photographic plane in its correct position. On the explosion of the bomb the two leading aircraft had turned on a reciprocal course and were thus free from danger, while the photographic aeroplane was flying directly towards the target at a distance of some 25 miles. Two severe shock waves were felt which all aircraft interpreted as flak and consequently started taking evasive action. The scientific observations were successfully made and after watching the spectacle for a short time the aircraft returned to base. No defences of any sort were encountered.

The photographic aircraft carried two cameras in the nose, one of them being a Fastex and the other a 16 m.m. cine camera with a four inch focal lens and an aiming device designed by Penney. Neither of the operators were accustomed to photography however and consequently no photographs of any value were obtained. The bomb aimer who operated the 16 m.m. was so astonished at what he saw, in spite of very adequate briefing from Penney, that he missed the explosion completely and thereafter, with the exception of a few feet of film, appears to have aimed his camera at the sky and not at the smoke. The Fastex produced no results whatsoever, but I was unable to find out why not. Penney, who has considerable experience in photography and who was responsible for bringing the 16 m.m. camera down to Tinian, warned Farrell that successful results could not be expected from inexperienced personnel and

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requested permission to undertake the photography himself. This request however was refused.

Both Penney and I recommended on several occasions that urgent steps should be taken to obtain adequate photographic cover of the operation. We suggested that this would not only provide valuable technical information but was the only means of providing history with a tangible and accurate account of something that the world might never see again. We furthermore made it clear that air to ground photography can only guarantee good results if it is carried out by skilled personnel and then only after careful and adequate planning. Our representations unfortunately produced no result.

SECOND OPERATION - AGAINST NAGASAKI

The plan for this operation was exactly as that for the previous one. The three aircraft were to rendezvous over Yakushima, south of Kyushu, at 0915 and proceed in formation to the target, the primary target being Kokura and the secondary Nagasaki. Weather reconnaissance was carried out one hour prior to the attack so that the attacking aircraft could be diverted to whichever of the two targets was clear. In point of fact both targets were reported wide open.

On arrival at the rendezvous point the three aircraft failed to make contact, which did not surprise me in the least, since instead of orbiting Yakushima in a tight circle, they flew around in dog legs some 40 miles long at varying heights. There being no adequate arrangements in the event of contact not being made and the leader not being willing to break radio silence although there was no conceivable reason why he should not, the three aircraft continued to orbit for an hour and ten minutes. The pilot of the photographic aeroplane, in which both Penney and myself were riding, then proceeded to fly around the approaches of Kokura wondering what he should do. Eventually, almost two and a half hours after we had arrived at the rendezvous point, we noticed the explosion of the bomb some 80 miles to the west. The pilot said he was unable to go up to observe it since he was short of petrol. On my pointing out that we could always land at Okinawa he agreed to fly up and circle the target. We reached the target some 10 minutes after the explosion at a height of 39,000 feet. At this time the cloud had become detached from the column and extended up to a height of approximately 60,000 feet. From the bomb aimer's compartment I had an excellent view of the ground and could see that the centre of impact was some 4 miles northeast of the aiming point and that the city proper was untouched. Fortunately however the bomb had accidentally hit the industrial centre north of the town and consequently had caused considerable damage. Had it exploded in any other direction it would have fallen in open country. From the extent of the smoke and the activity and height of the cloud it was obvious that this bomb had exploded with considerably greater force than the first one. Furthermore, there were a number of fires some distance away from the main conflagration and outside the area of destruction by direct blast. The photographic aeroplane took no photographs because it was not within range of the target at the moment of impact, and once again no adequate cover was obtained.

From subsequent interrogation of the crew it transpired that three unsuccessful attempts had been made at bombing Kokura and that the aircraft had then proceeded to Nagasaki and had dropped the bomb on its first run, although the crew realized that it was not an accurate run. By this time the crew must

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have been tired and a little wrought up and I do not think that any blame can be attached to them for the gross error in aim. In my opinion the failure was due to bad organization and inadequate pre-flight planning.

GENERAL

In the course of my stay in Tinian I had many opportunities for conversation with the project personnel, and was able to learn a certain amount of unofficial detail.

Politics.

The civilian scientific personnel had much to say about the post war development of the project. They are all very anxious that they should have a free hand to continue their research. Very few of them wish to leave basic research and none of them wish to be told what type of research they should undertake. In particular, they are very much concerned lest the army should gain increasing control of the project and thereby control their activities. They do not like army interference and consider that if results are to be obtained they should be left to do their work in their own way.

They are exceedingly anxious that full British-American co-operation should continue. They seem to think, however, that the army is opposed to continuing this co-operation, and is liable to take the attitude that since they are the strongest military force in the world they do not require outside assistance, and will therefore make a bid to develop this and all other projects on their own. Their motives in wanting continued Anglo-American co-operation were, as far as I could see, twofold: In the first place they recognise that they need British scientific talents; in the second place they think that joint co-operation will make it more difficult for the army to control their activities.

They seem to know of the high level decisions that have been made regarding post war development, but are a little sceptical as to how long these decisions will remain in force. Some of them expressed doubt that the Government would succeed in controlling commercial research and development. They consider that American business is so powerful that in the course of time, when the memory of war has begun to fade, the big business combines may succeed in gaining a certain measure of control.

I am not in a position to form any conclusion as to the value of these ideas and I therefore submit them without comment.

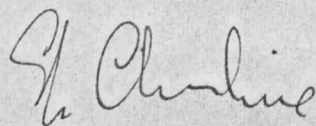
Post War Development.

I discussed at considerable length with most of the project scientific personnel the possibility of other countries developing atomic energy. I am convinced from what they say that this is not a possibility but a certainty.

There are two parts to the problem - research and production. On the question of research, they consider the project to be capable of solution by any team of scientists anywhere in the world, and one that should be accomplished at least within five years. In short, the only unique quality they attribute to their own team is the fact that the project

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was developed so quickly. On the question of production, they consider that the problem will be far simpler in the future than it was in the past. They consider that had the time element not been so critical, the expenses would have been very much less, and that the plants could have been reduced in number by 50%. This coming from Americans, who invariably use three times as many personnel as are actually required, is significant, especially since it ignores the assumption that, in the course of time, production methods will, as in all other projects, become simpler and more efficient.



G. L. CHESHIRE.
Group Captain.

18.8.45

Grey Scale #13



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