

## THE NEED FOR BALANCED DISARMAMENT

The **Prime Minister** emphasised the Conservative Government's commitment to balanced disarmament in a speech to the National Young Conservative Conference at Bournemouth on 12th February 1983. She said:

'Those who want to work unremittingly for peace, for justice and for freedom have this Government on their side ...

'... Multilateralism is not an excuse to do nothing. It is the opportunity for genuine disarmament. Our commitment is to build a real and lasting peace in a just world. Arms control and disarmament are therefore key elements in the policy of this Government. And no country has been more patient, hard-working and determined in the quest for arms control and reduction than Britain.'

### The Folly of One-sided Disarmament

Mrs Thatcher remarked that:

'Peace is not bought cheaply. It cannot be won without cost. The cost of Britain's defence is the price we pay to prevent war. The money for our armed services is truly our 'peace tax'. What a cruel irony it is that the word "peace" has been hijacked by those who seek one-sided disarmament. Ironic because if only one side disarms the other is far more tempted to aggression. Unilateralism makes war more likely ...

'The deterrent has worked. Not only to prevent nuclear war in Europe, but conventional war as well. It would be madness to throw it away. The so-called balance of terror keeps the peace. But it still means that huge arsenals of weapons are piled high on either side. What we have to ensure is the progressive reduction of the level of weapons on *both* sides.'

### Deterrence and Balanced Disarmament

The Prime Minister went on to point out:

'The deterrent gives us the chance to seek balanced disarmament. Because neither side can see advantage in war, both sides increasingly become aware of the cost and the waste which the arms race involves. Slowly and patiently we can begin to disarm in a way which gives confidence to both sides.'

There are a number of different disarmament negotiations taking place at present, of which the most significant are:

(a) **The INF negotiations** between the United States and the Soviet Union on the reduction or abolition of land-based intermediate nuclear missiles. The Soviet Union has a clear and increasing superiority in European intermediate (or theatre) nuclear systems.\*

This imbalance in Europe has been growing steadily since 1977 as the Soviet Union has deployed over 220 SS20 missiles, each with 3 warheads, aimed at Western Europe. Each of these warheads is 36 times more deadly than the Hiroshima atom bomb. Each one would be able to strike nearly any target in Western Europe. In response to this growing Soviet threat, NATO decided in December 1979 to deploy 572 Cruise and Pershing II missiles in certain Western European countries from 1983, including 160 in this country, in default of a satisfactory arms control agreement with Moscow by then. So far as the United Kingdom is concerned, the first batch of Cruise missiles is due to be deployed at Greenham Common in Berkshire from the end of 1983 and the rest at Molesworth in Cambridgeshire in 1988.

The United States, with the full support of other NATO countries, put forward the "zero-option", when the INF talks opened in Geneva in November 1981. Under this plan NATO would no longer deploy Cruise

\* Intermediate nuclear systems are those which are capable of delivering nuclear warheads from the Soviet Union to Western Europe and vice versa, but not from the Soviet Union to the United States and vice versa.

and Pershing missiles in Western Europe from 1983, provided that the Soviet Union agreed to dismantle its equivalent missiles (the SS20s and older missiles called SS4s and SS5s).

When the zero option was first proposed, **Mr Michael Foot** supported it, saying:

'We greatly welcome President Reagan's statement. We hope that negotiations will take place on that basis and that they will be successful' (*Hansard*, 19th November 1981, Col. 416).

Now, however, Mr Foot has changed his mind and says that the form of zero option proposed by President Reagan is unsatisfactory and "quite unrealistic" (*Morning Star*, 3rd February 1983).

In December 1982 the Soviet leader, Mr Andropov, suggested that the Soviet Union would reduce the number of Soviet intermediate range missiles to the number of nuclear missiles deployed by Britain and France. This offer took no account of the fact that the SS20s have three warheads, whereas the British and French missiles have only one warhead. Furthermore, Britain and France have always regarded their deterrents as independent and strategic, and thus not part of the balance of intermediate range weapons.

There has been considerable debate recently about the arrangements for the control of Cruise missiles, if they have to be based in this country. The Prime Minister has stated that their use would be a matter for joint decision by the British and United States' governments in the light of circumstances at the time. This arrangement has been in existence for many years in connection with American nuclear bombers based in this country. **Mr Heseltine** emphasised on 10th February in London that: 'The British Prime Minister has to agree the use of any (American) bases ... And without her agreement there could be no decision to use the bases.'

(b) **The START negotiations.** Following the non-ratification of the SALT II Treaty, signed in 1978, the United States and the Soviet Union opened new negotiations on the reduction of strategic, intercontinental, nuclear arms in Geneva last June. The United States has proposed that missile warheads should be reduced to equal levels at least one-third below current levels. President Reagan has said that 'our proposals would eliminate some 4,700 warheads and 2,250 missiles. I think that would be quite a service to mankind' (Washington, 22nd November 1982).

(c) **The MBFR negotiations** in Vienna on the reduction of conventional forces in Central Europe. These talks involve seven NATO members (including Britain) and four Warsaw Pact members. They began as long ago as 1973 but have long been deadlocked, primarily because the Warsaw Pact claims that its current force strength is considerably less than NATO knows it to be in reality. NATO has called for both sides to reduce their force strength to 900,000 men and for a satisfactory system of verification.

### **Defence of Freedom**

As the Secretary of State for Defence said in London on 10th February:

'This Government's ultimate responsibility is the defence of our way of life and our institutions. It is not to bend to fickle movements in popular opinion or to risk the short cut because you fear to tell the truth. This Government will not gamble with the nation's freedom.'

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