

Mr. Ridley

c Mr. Ridley  
7.4



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

TELEPHONE 01-218 9000

DIRECT DIALING 01-218.....

ANS to  
committee  
for 1st

DEFENCE

6.4.83

Dear Sirs

As promised a first draft.

Will work up for 2 submission.

But you are now at least

armed!

Yours  
[Signature]

THE PURSUIT OF PEACE

The European peoples have enjoyed peace for 38 years. There is no precedent for this in modern times.

Successive British Governments have made their contribution to the policies that have produced this remarkable achievement.

We seek to maintain the peace and we believe that the most likely means of achieving it lie in the maintenance of a defensive capability that makes incredible any possible gain for those who might otherwise contemplate aggression.

The essence of our strategy has been our unswerving support of the NATO Alliance, a conviction that we must back our conventional forces with a nuclear deterrent and that we should, in Britain, maintain our own independent nuclear capability as our last resort contribution to British and European defence.

We have as a Government fully carried through our commitment by increasing our defence capabilities in line with NATO targets of 3% per annum in real terms. We have ensured that our Services are properly paid and that their living standards are fully comparable with their civilian counterparts.

We have undertaken comprehensive modernisation of the equipment available to or in development for our forces.

There could be no greater testimony to the professional dedication and the quality of equipment of the British Armed Services than the brilliant military achievement of the recapture of the Falkland Islands in just 74 days.

But the risks today are as great as they have ever been.

The Soviet forces are better equipped than ever before. Their nuclear strength continues to grow despite the assurances of their propaganda machine.

And for the first time since the war the Labour party has abandoned our defence policy consensus that has preserved our peace.

Their policies aim to remove Britain's nuclear deterrent and prevent the use of US bases in Britain that are part of America's nuclear shield over Europe. The inevitable result of Labour's policies will be the break up of the NATO Alliance.

The next Conservative Government will continue the pursuit of peace through negotiation. We will fully support the attempts to reduce nuclear weapons deployed in Europe particularly the intermediate range missiles. But if the Soviets will not recognise

the legitimate fear of the West arising from the existence of over 1000 warheads on the SS20 intermediate range missiles now facing Europe and negotiate a fair and sensible reduction then we will proceed with the deployment of cruise missiles by the end of this year. The conference door will remain open for the removal of any missiles we deploy if the Soviets should decide in the future to take up the offers we have made to negotiate fairly to reduce or remove the missiles of both sides.

The next Conservative Government will not support gestures of one-sided disarmament. We believe that these are reckless and naive. There is no shred of evidence to believe any other country will follow such an example.

We will negotiate for peace but we will not gamble with our defence.