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20th October 1982

Dear John

PRESENTATION OF DEFENCE NUCLEAR POLICIES

My Record not on file
Peter Blaker has reported to me on the Prime Minister's meeting this morning. I very much share your concern about the strength of the CND movement and I agree that we need to devote increased resources to putting over the Government's case. I would agree in particular that there is a need for much wider Government and Party involvement in presenting our message (although the Young Conservatives have been doing an excellent job).

/ Peter Blaker has personally devoted a large proportion of his time to putting our case and colleagues might not have had the chance to see much of our material. As you know the audio visual presentation "A Better Road to Peace" is the COI Central Film Library's most borrowed item and leaflets such as those I am attaching have been widely distributed. Clearly, however, the more that can be done the better and I therefore welcome the suggestion of setting up this wider committee under your chairmanship. If I am able to attend, I feel that it would be appropriate if I were to be accompanied by Peter Blaker in view of his close personal involvement with this subject.

Personally I agree with your suggestion that we might profitably switch attention away from the Soviet threat towards the threat from, say, Libya or Iraq. This would certainly have an impact on public opinion, but there are major problems

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP

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associated with doing so - and there are strong arguments on the other side. In this connection I believe that we could not make such a switch in emphasis without the full co-operation of the FCO who have the major responsibility for disarmament and non-proliferation. In all this we have to catch the imagination of the general public without undermining current arms control or disarmament negotiations. Colleagues will have an opportunity of studying the problems and understanding them better, as they advise on a more active propagandist stance.

I shall, of course, be sending a further brief on where we stand as soon as possible.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Cecil Parkinson and Norman Tebbit.

John Nott

John Nott
John

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Econ Pd, Liaison
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CRUISE MISSILES

THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS



CRUISE MISSILES: THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Why do we need cruise missiles?

For many years NATO has based in Europe nuclear weapons capable of reaching the Soviet Union. It's all part of deterrence—NATO's insurance policy against a Russian attack. The jargon for these weapons is 'long range theatre nuclear forces.'

At present NATO's long range theatre nuclear forces consist of Britain's elderly Vulcan bombers, soon to be phased out, and American F111 aircraft—both based in the United Kingdom. The Russians have similar weapons. And for several years they have been modernising them. For example: there are the new SS20 nuclear missiles. Nearly 200 of them are now aimed at Europe. Each one with three nuclear warheads. Each one 36 times more deadly than the Hiroshima atom bomb. Each one able to strike any part of Western Europe—even from behind the Ural Mountains, deep in Russia. And the Russians are

building a new one each week. In addition they have other long range nuclear missiles and aircraft. So in total there are over 1,000 long range nuclear warheads targeted at Europe.

NATO's equivalent weapons are much older. And more vulnerable. That's why NATO decided to modernise by basing 464 cruise and 108 Pershing 2 missiles in Europe. Britain will have 160 cruise missiles, beginning to arrive at the end of 1983. The others will be based in several other European countries.

It's like bringing your insurance policy up to date to cover a new and frightening risk.

Will cruise missiles make nuclear war more likely?

No. The best way to ensure peace is to keep strong. We don't need to match the Russians weapon for weapon. But we do need enough weapons of the right sort to show them we could defend ourselves if they ever thought of attacking us.

It's the new Russian nuclear weapons aimed at Europe that have upset the balance between East and West. That is why we're forced to modernise our own nuclear weapons. And that is where Cruise comes in. Cruise will help NATO *prevent* nuclear war—by helping to *restore* the balance.

What's happened to 'arms control'?

Hand in hand with the decision on Cruise, NATO agreed that the United States should offer to negotiate an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union. This would limit the numbers of this type of nuclear

weapon on both sides. So it was a 'twin track' decision by NATO—modernisation of nuclear forces *plus*, at the same time, reducing the need for such weapons. In addition the Americans have already removed 1,000 nuclear warheads from Europe.

Will Cruise make us more vulnerable to attack?

No. Even if there were no nuclear weapons at all in Britain, we would still be a major Soviet target. We're important politically. We're important geographically. No aggressor would ignore us.

Cruise missiles will make us a *less* tempting target. They can move around so freely on their trucks that no enemy could be sure where they were—ready to hit back. That makes it less likely the Russians would risk any sort of attack in the first place—which is the whole point of deterrence.



Have cruise missiles been forced on us by the Americans?

No. Basing cruise missiles in Britain and Europe was a NATO decision. It was supported by all the countries concerned.

NATO had to take further steps to deter the Russians from contemplating an attack on Europe. The decision to welcome American cruise and Pershing 2 missiles was made unanimously by NATO defence and foreign ministers at a meeting in December 1979.

The European governments see these weapons as further proof of the American commitment to the defence of Europe.

Does Cruise mean the Americans are thinking of a European nuclear war – leaving America and Russia unharmed?

No. The most important feature of cruise missiles is their range – they can reach well into Russia. It's precisely this ability that is intended to convince the Russians that they couldn't confine a nuclear war to Europe. And – while

cruise missiles are essentially defensive – the Russians have made it clear that if they were struck by *any* American missiles, wherever they were launched from, they would hit back at the United States itself.

Are they safe?

Yes. Cruise missiles will not come to Britain until very thorough safety and performance tests have been carried out in the United States. There will be no test flights in this country. And, as with all nuclear weapons, the greatest care will be taken in handling them. Modern safety techniques mean even an accident involving leakage of radioactive material is a very remote possibility. An accidental nuclear explosion is virtually impossible.

Will only Americans control the cruise missiles in Britain?

No. The use of the cruise missile bases in an emergency would be a matter for joint decision by the British and American governments.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND PREVENTING WAR

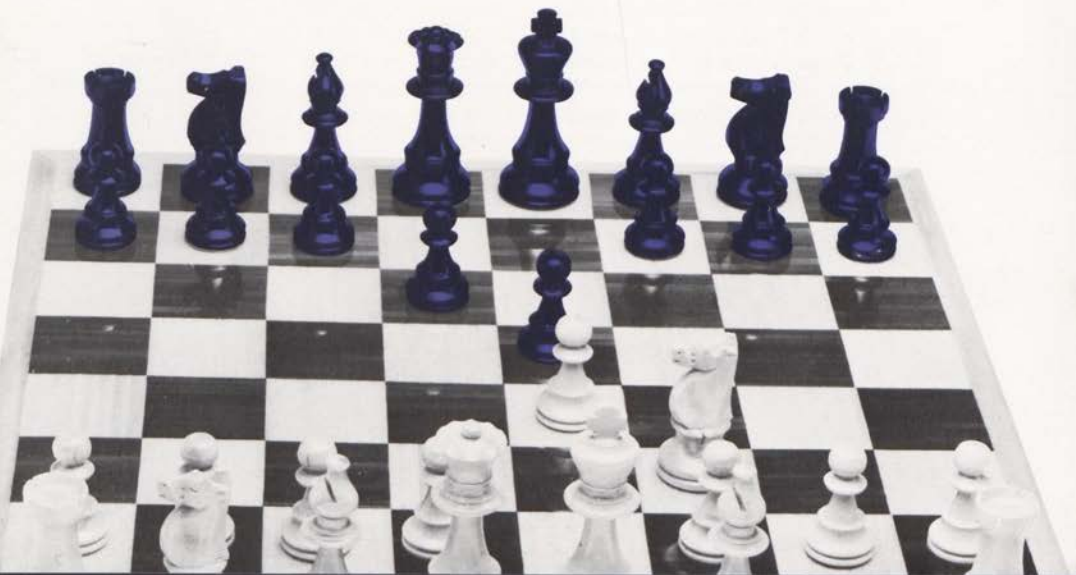
1 Nuclear weapons have transformed our view of war. Though they have been used only twice, half a lifetime ago, the terrible experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must be always in our minds. But the scale of that horror makes it all the more necessary that revulsion be partnered by clear thinking. If it is not, we may find ourselves having to learn again, in the appalling school of practical experience, that abhorrence of war is no substitute for realistic plans to prevent it.

2 There can be opposing views about whether the world would be safer and more peaceful if nuclear weapons had never been invented. But that is academic; they cannot be disinvented. Our task now is to devise a system for living in peace and freedom while ensuring that nuclear weapons are never used, either to destroy or to blackmail.

3 Nuclear weapons are the dominant aspect of modern war potential. But they are not the only aspect we should

fear. Save at the very end, World War II was fought entirely with what are comfortably called "conventional" weapons, yet during its six years something like fifty million people were killed. Since 1945 "conventional" war has killed up to ten million more. The "conventional" weapons with which any East-West war would be fought today are much more powerful than those of 1939-1945; and chemical weapons are far more lethal than when they were last used widely, over sixty years ago. Action about nuclear weapons which left, or seemed to leave, the field free for non-nuclear war could be calamitous.

4 Moreover, whatever promises might have been given in peace, no alliance possessing nuclear weapons could be counted on to accept major non-nuclear defeat and conquest without using its nuclear power. Non-nuclear war between East and West is by far the likeliest road to nuclear war.



5 We must therefore seek to prevent any war, not just nuclear war, between East and West. And the part nuclear weapons have to play in this is made all the greater by the facts of military power. The combination of geography and totalitarian direction of resources gives the Soviet Union a massive preponderance in Europe. The Western democracies have enough economic strength to match the East, if their peoples so chose. But the cost to social and other aims would be huge, and the resulting forces would still not make our nuclear weapons unnecessary. No Western non-nuclear effort could keep us safe against one-sided Eastern nuclear power.

6 An enormous literature has sprung up around the concepts of deterrence in the nuclear age. Much of it seems remote and abstruse, and its apparent detachment often sounds repugnant. But though the idea of deterrence is old and looks simple, making it work effectively in today's world needs clear thought on complex issues. The central aim is to influence the calculations of anyone who might consider aggression; to influence them decisively; and, crucially, to influence them before aggression is ever launched. It is not certain that any East-West conflict would rise to all-out nuclear war: escalation is a matter of human decision, not an inexorable scientific process. It is perfectly sensible—indeed essential—to make plans which could increase and exploit whatever chance there might be of ending war short of global catastrophe. But that chance will always be precarious, whether at the conventional or the nuclear level; amid the confusion, passions and irrationalities of war, escalation must always be a grave danger. The only safe course is outright prevention.



7 Planning deterrence means thinking through the possible reasoning of an adversary and the way in which alternative courses of action might appear to him in advance. It also means doing this in his terms, not in ours; and allowing for how he might think in future circumstances, not just in today's. In essence we seek to ensure that, whatever military aggression or political bullying a future Soviet leader might contemplate, he could not foresee any likely situation in which the West would be left with no realistic alternative to surrender.

8 Failure to recognise this complicated but crucial fact about deterrence—that it rests, like a chess master's strategy, on blocking off in advance a variety of possible moves in an opponent's mind—underlies many of the criticisms made of Western security policy. To make provision for having practical courses of action available in nuclear war (or for reducing its devastation in some degree by modest civil defence precautions) is not in the least to have a "war-fighting strategy", or to plan for nuclear war as something expected or probable. It is, on the contrary, a necessary path to deterrence, to rendering nuclear war as improbable as we humanly can. The further evolution in 1980 of United States nuclear planning illustrates the point. The reason for having available a wider range of "non-city" target options was not in order to fight a limited nuclear war—the United States repeatedly stressed that it did not believe in any such notion—but to help ensure that even if an adversary believed in limited nuclear war (as Soviet writings sometimes suggest) he could not expect actually to win one.

9 The United Kingdom helped to develop NATO's deterrent strategy, and we are involved in its nuclear aspects at three main levels. First, we endorse it fully as helping to guarantee our security, and we share in the protection it gives all Alliance members. Second, we cooperate directly, like several other members, in the United States power which is the main component of the nuclear armoury, by making bases available and providing certain delivery systems to carry United States warheads. Third, we commit to the Alliance nuclear forces of various kinds—strategic and theatre—under our independent control. The details of all this are matters of debate, which the Government welcomes. But the debate should recognise that positions which seek to wash British hands of nuclear affairs, while continuing (as NATO membership implies) to welcome United States nuclear protection through the Alliance, offer neither moral merit nor greater safety. Whether we like the fact or not, and whether nuclear weapons are based here or not, our country's size and location make it militarily crucial to NATO and so an inevitable target in war. A "nuclear-free" Britain would mean a weaker NATO, weaker deterrence, and more risk of war; and if war started we would if anything be more likely, not less, to come under nuclear attack.

10 The East-West peace has held so far for thirty-five years. This is a striking achievement, with political

systems so sharply opposed and points of friction potentially so many. No-one can ever prove that deterrence centred on nuclear weapons has played a key part; but common sense suggests that it must have done. Deterrence can continue to hold, with growing stability as the two sides deepen their understanding of how the system must work and how dangers must be avoided. Not since the Soviet gamble over Cuba in 1962 have we come anywhere near the brink. It is entirely possible, if we plan wisely, to go on enjoying both peace and freedom—that is, to avoid the bogus choice of "Red or dead".

11 To recognise the success of deterrence is not to accept it as the last word in ensuring freedom from war. Any readiness by one nation to use nuclear weapons against another, even in self-defence, is terrible. No-one—especially from within the ethical traditions of the free world, with their special respect for individual life—can acquiesce comfortably in it as the basis of international peace for the rest of time. We have to seek unremittingly, through arms control and otherwise, for better ways of ordering the world. But the search may be a very long one. No safer system than deterrence is yet in view, and impatience would be a catastrophic guide in the search. To tear down the present structure, imperfect but effective, before a better one is firmly within our grasp would be an immensely dangerous and irresponsible act.

**A
NUCLEAR
FREE
EUROPE?**

Why it wouldn't work



EITHER SIDE OF THE URALS - IT'S STILL TARGET EUROPE



ESTIMATED RANGE (about 3,000 miles) of Soviet SS-20 nuclear missiles if based behind the Urals.

THE FICTION

"The world would be a safer place if all nuclear weapons were withdrawn from Europe."

THE FACTS

Even if the Russians pulled their nuclear weapons out of Europe and behind the Ural Mountains, Western Europe still would not be safe – as the map in this leaflet dramatically shows. With their modern SS-20 nuclear missiles the Soviets could still strike most of the cities of Western Europe – including the cities of Britain. So could their supersonic Backfire bombers.

The Russians could quickly bring their nuclear arsenal back into Europe. But NATO would have to carry most of its nuclear weapons back across the Atlantic.

Far from reducing the risk of war, a European nuclear-free zone would weaken the West's security and put at risk the peace and freedom that NATO's policy of deterrence has preserved in Europe for 30 years.

Talk of a European nuclear free zone is one sided and naive. It ignores the realities of Soviet military power; it ignores the facts of geography.

The only answer is NATO's proposals for *balanced* reductions in the nuclear forces of both sides, combined with ways of making sure neither side cheats. We must strive to limit the numbers of nuclear weapons globally while also strengthening NATO's ability to maintain peace.