



Prime Minister 18
 Weinberger is now,
 like Schultz, canvassing
 the possibility of
 US withdrawal from
 the ABM Treaty.

C.D.P. 27/3

MO 26/7/4

PRIME MINISTER

STRATEGIC DEFENCE INITIATIVE

I have minuted separately about the US initiative on SDI research at this week's Nuclear Planning Group meeting. I should report separately on a more restricted basis about indications of the American approach on the wider issue of the deployment of defensive systems.

2. After our arrival in Luxembourg, we were faced with American proposals that in the NPG Communique the Alliance as a whole should not only note with concern (and rightly so) the extensive Soviet effort in the field of strategic defence but should go on to "deplore" the new phased array radar under construction at Krasnoyarsk "in violation of the ABM Treaty". This placed me in a difficult position because, as the Americans know, our expert advice is that it is not possible on the current evidence to determine whether or not the radar contravenes the ABM Treaty. I pointed out to the Americans in a private bilateral meeting that I could not agree to a categorical statement in the Communique which was unsupported by my own expert advice and suggested that the right course was to pursue the exchange between experts on both sides, which had already been arranged, in order to establish a jointly agreed position. Moreover, we had to bear in mind the link with the US modernisation of BMEWs facilities at Fylingdales, on which I shall be putting proposals to you shortly, where we could face charges from the Russians of a breach by the Americans of the 1972 Treaty. It seemed sensible therefore in our joint interest to



play down the radar argument at this stage. The crucial consideration for the present was to secure Alliance support for the SDI research programme, on which the British Government's position could not be clearer. It seemed unnecessary to muddy the waters by bringing in disputed violations by the Soviet Union of the ABM Treaty itself.

3. These arguments were not at all well received by Mr Weinberger and his team. They were dismissive of our reservations about whether a violation had been established almost to the point of arguing that they were the only people capable of reaching a judgement. They were uninterested in the potential link with their own BMEWs plans. Notwithstanding their argument that essentially they were dealing with a bilateral US/USSR Treaty and that they were best able to judge whether it had been breached, they were reluctant to accept as a corollary that any statement in the Communique about violations should be expressed as their view. They were determined to obtain a statement on behalf of the Alliance as a whole deploring Soviet violations. Because we could not agree in private, the argument had to be pursued in the NPG meeting itself and agreement on a form of words was eventually reached. This was all very tiresome. The interesting question is why the Americans attached such importance to an Alliance statement on treaty violations.

4. Based upon these discussions over the wording of the Communique itself, my own suspicion was that the Americans see it as an important plank in preparing the Alliance for the deployment of defensive systems to establish clearly in public a record of Soviet violations, coupled with the risk of a Soviet "break-out" from the ABM Treaty. The ground is being prepared - and this process will continue over a series of NPG meetings - for the argument to be used at the appropriate point that the regime established by the Treaty has effectively broken down because of Soviet behaviour and that there is therefore no reason for the US Administration to feel any obligation on its own part to uphold its provisions.



5. This can only be speculation. But its general thrust is reinforced by a comment made to me by Mr Weinberger in an entirely private conversation about the importance of not misunderstanding the significance of the second point agreed at your meeting with President Reagan in December, that is that "SDI-related deployment would, in view of Treaty obligations, have to be a matter for negotiation". He said that the reference to negotiation should not be interpreted in a way which could give the Soviet Union a "veto" over US deployment of strategic defences. The Treaty itself included a provision that either side could withdraw on 6 months notice (in the words of Article XV,2 of the Treaty: "if it decides that extraordinary events related to the subject matter of the Treaty have jeopardised its supreme interests").

The Weinberger interpretation of the need to operate within the framework of the Treaty and by negotiation may therefore be that at the appropriate time notice will be given that this clause is being invoked. The extraordinary events will by then have been set out in succeeding Alliance communiques. This emphasis is not, moreover, limited to Mr Weinberger. I noted with interest that, at your meeting with Vice President Bush on 13th March, Mr Shultz is recorded as making a broadly similar point.

Chavely
Why
with
this
circumstances?

6. Mr Weinberger in the course of my private conversation made the point that, if there was any misunderstanding between us, it should be cleared up quickly. You will appreciate that these events have a particular impact on our judgement about the likely prospects for a successful conclusion to the Geneva talks.

7. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Rumman
Ministry of Defence
27th March 1985

*(Approved by the Defence
Secretary & signed
in his absence)*

27 MAR 1985

12-23
B. 12-23

