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PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL



PM 83/1

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Weapons and Public Opinion

1. 1983 will be a crucial year in this debate. Following the useful work of the Liaison Office and Peter Blaker's two recent letters to you, I thought it would be useful to set out some of our own ideas for improving the Government's efforts.

2. We have been active, but our efforts have not matched the impact made by the opposition in its different manifestations e.g. the Greenham Common women or the Bishop of Salisbury's booklet. If the Government effort is too low key the parallel Party effort may sometimes run the risk of being in the wrong key. An energetic and outright attack on the peace movements heartens the faithful, but it does little to persuade the doubters that the Government is seriously working for a more secure peace through negotiated agreement. Thousands of people are coming into active politics for the first time through the peace movements.

3. The risk is two-fold:

- (a) the development of a mass movement of demonstrations and civil disobedience against Cruise in 1983 so widespread and powerful that deployment would actually become difficult or even impossible. I still would not rate this possibility very highly, but it is less inconceivable than it was six months ago;

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- (b) an intensification of public opinion against nuclear weapons so strong that large numbers determine their vote on this issue in favour of the Labour or Liberal Parties at the general election.

So both medium and message are crucial. I think our efforts need to concentrate sensitively and in simple terms on the primary issues rather than on the technicalities, namely peace, protection and realism. As to the mechanics for putting this across, I would suggest the following actions in addition to the work now in hand:

- (a) a small special unit in the Cabinet Office working to a small team of Ministers including the Chairman of the Party to inspire and direct the presentation of policy. I shall let you have shortly some more detailed suggestions about organisation;

- (b) a Round Table Conference in the spring which you yourself might chair including the Archbishops, the Cardinal, the Moderator, etc;

- (c) a series of rallies organised by the Party in each main city, to which representatives of the peace groups would be invited as well as our own folk, each to be addressed by a Minister. Each of these meetings should be linked to a special effort with the local media;

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would have thought



- (d) a special effort at and near Greenham Common e.g. a canvass by MPs, or one of us might address a meeting in Newbury.
- (e) an effort directed at making US servicemen here feel welcome e.g. a party at No 10.
- (f) a further Foreign Office pamphlet which would issue in my name.
- (g) a two-day debate in the Commons on Cruise ending in a vote on a motion approving the Government's policy.
- (h) if the Continental position on INF deployment holds, a joint declaration by the European governments (i.e. including us, excluding the Americans) explaining how deployment fits with our strategy for peace.
- (i) I have not specifically mentioned the Synod of the Church of England in February. This will be very important but open lobbying may produce the wrong result. We need to be sure that the Archbishops and the Bishop of London have the material they need.
- (j) last, but certainly not least, we need to find ways of making more impact on television which is devoting so much time to the other side.



4. No doubt there are other ideas. The above are concerned with imaginative presentation. They are not a substitute for sound policy to get us through 1983, which I think needs to include:

(i) some progress on a better definition of joint decision-taking on the US nuclear bases here.

(ii) a deft US response to Soviet ploys including a readiness at the right time to negotiate something other than the zero option.

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5. I should welcome the chance to discuss these ideas further with you and with Michael Heseltine and Cecil Parkinson, to whom I am copying this minute.

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(FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

7 January 1983