

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

15 February 1983

*John Brown*

The attached cutting of Denis Healey's piece in the Observer at the weekend has prompted me to write the letter I had intended to pen last week in the context of the Secretary of State's Committee.

The Healey article is potentially very damaging. He says there is no military or political case for Cruise missiles in the UK; and that if deployed will make an arms agreement more difficult in view of their mobility and microscopic size.

These are points we need to answer. But this poses a wider question which already confronts me in my dealings with the Lobby. We undoubtedly hit the target last week; just how effectively was demonstrated by the Morning Star's wincing front page yesterday. But, quite apart from how we sustain the effort, we must also cope with the consequences of our success.

This manifests itself in the form of even more detailed questions about Cruise and its method of control. And given the enormous strength of opinion in favour of multilateralism, a nuclear deterrent and an independent one as well, the more the opposition will have to fall back on Cruise etc.

But how far do we wish to be driven into revealing even more detail about the joint decision arrangements? I feel that we are suffering from two things at the moment:

- a long slow slide into even more detailed revelations; and
- the impression which this creates of cover-up, shiftness, evasion, to use only a few of the terms in the propagandist armoury.

I would be much happier if I thought we were all clearer of the ground on which we are determined to stand and hold. I hope all this makes sense to you, and that you can get it considered urgently.

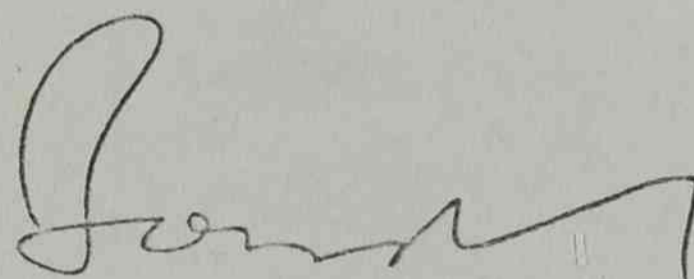
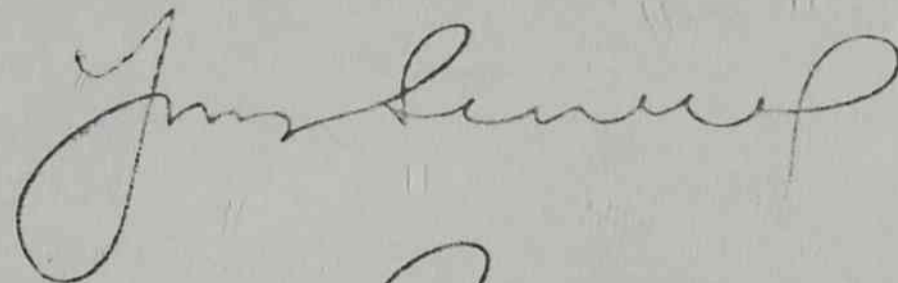
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Defence

Meanwhile, could I please reinforce my concern about an MoD survey or monitor of public opinion? Any such exercise will almost certainly become public, with irresistible demands for publication which may, or may not, be helpful. I do hope we can 'plant' appropriate questions by buying into other surveys.

I am copying to Neville Taylor and Roger Jackling.



BERNARD INGHAM

Moray Stewart, Esq.,  
Assistant Under Secretary,  
Ministry of Defence.

# The Case against Cruise

NOT for the first time, the Atlantic Alliance finds itself deeply and dangerously divided over a proposal which was intended only to unite it. The crisis over the cruise and Pershing II missiles is a repeat performance of the crisis over the Multilateral Force 20 years ago and over the European Defence Community 10 years earlier still.

The international context of the present crisis is, however, far more menacing. If NATO takes the wrong decision now, the consequences could be disastrous not just for the Alliance but also for the prospects of halting an arms race which is just on the verge of accelerating beyond control.

The analogy with the MLF crisis is illuminating. In the later years of the Kennedy Administration Washington became alarmed by what it saw as a growing distrust in Europe of America's readiness to meet a Soviet attack on her allies by massive nuclear retaliation, which was then part of NATO strategy. With encouragement from some European governments it offered to meet this distrust by deploying American nuclear weapons in European waters on ships with mixed polyglot crews provided by its allies.

This proposal caused deep divisions among the Europeans. I described it at the time as 'artificial dissemination,' because the Americans would have controlled both the trigger and the safety catch of the weapons themselves. It did nothing to reassure Europe and was a military nonsense. My first act when I became Secretary for Defence in 1964 was to persuade Washington to scuttle the MLF before it left harbour. There was a row at the time; but everyone breathed a sigh of relief and no one on either side of the Atlantic has felt any less secure as a result.



**DENIS HEALEY, MP, explains why the latest proposed escalation in the arms race offers no strategic advantage either to Britain or to the Atlantic Alliance.**

The proposal to deploy cruise and Pershing II as a response to the Soviet SS-20 was similarly put to NATO at the end of 1979 as a reluctant American response to worries expressed by Helmut Schmidt in a speech to the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London in 1977. Ironically enough, the relevant sentences of the speech were only added at the last moment by one of his officials. For the following 18 months his allies tried in vain to find out precisely how Chancellor Schmidt proposed to meet his own worries.

The SS-20 was nothing fundamentally new. As a continental land power with very restricted access to the oceans, Russia had always relied on land-based nuclear forces rather than submarine-launched missiles. When in the 1960s the Kremlin deployed its SS-4 and SS-5 missiles against European targets NATO responded not by deploying similar missiles on land, but by allocating some of her missile submarines to the NATO Supreme Allied Commander



Europe. These 'NATO' submarines at present carry 400 warheads—enough by themselves to destroy Soviet society.

Of course, the SS-20 missiles with which Russia has been replacing her SS-4s and SS-5s over the last five years, are more formidable in every respect than her older missiles.

They represent a Soviet escalation of the arms race, and should be dismantled. But the American submarines already allocated to NATO are just as adequate to counter them. There is no more need now than there was in the 1960s to counter them with similar land-based missiles.

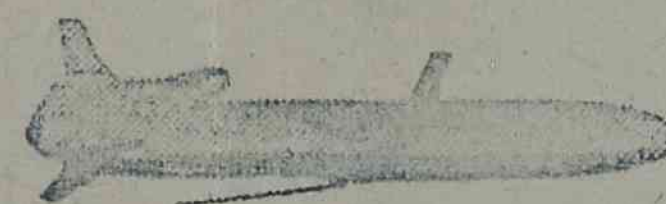
This is, in fact, precisely what the Callaghan Government argued persistently with its allies in its last 18 months of office. The inner group of Ministers which met continually over this period took the view that NATO strategy was explicitly incompatible with the idea of isolating one particular element of NATO's military strength, like land-based missiles, from all the others, and did not require the Alliance to match Soviet strength at every level. To borrow the phrase we often used at the time, if NATO had a sufficiency of nuclear strength it did not need equivalence. In other words, enough is enough.

Another argument against countering the SS-20 with similar land-based missiles in Europe also weighed heavily with the Callaghan Government. We believed that the whole concept of a nuclear balance limited to Europe would weaken the credibility of America's nuclear guarantee—that a separate Euro-strategic balance would decouple the United States from Europe. This argument has now assumed even greater weight since members of President Reagan's Administration have talked of

limiting a nuclear war to Europe alone.

The last Labour Government consistently took the view that there was no military or political case for cruise missiles in the United Kingdom. We rejected them even if the proposed arms talks should break down.

Like the MLF before it, the deployment of cruise and Pershing would be 'artificial dissemination,' since none of the allies would control either the trigger or the safety catch of the American missiles. But it would have enormous disadvantages even compared with the MLF—the missiles would not be far away at sea, but on land in heavily populated areas, where they would be sitting ducks for a surprise nuclear attack. The present Government plans to reduce this danger by moving the lorries which launch the cruise missiles from their bases at Greenham Common and Molesworth to prepared sites all over the



country in time of tension—a prospect which must be even less inviting for the British people, and which makes the Anglo-American agreement on joint decision about the use of bases irrelevant.

This case against cruise and Pershing is now enormously strengthened by their impact on the arms race. In December 1979 when NATO first agreed to deploy them if disarmament talks broke down, it was assumed that America would ratify the SALT II Treaty, which banned the deployment of ground-launched cruise missiles until the end of 1981, and that by the time this ban expired it would have been replaced by a further ban in a SALT III Treaty.

In fact, the American Con-

gress refused to ratify SALT II and President Reagan resisted further talks with the Soviet Union on strategic nuclear weapons until after the ban expired. He also insisted that the talks on intermediate range nuclear weapons should be separated from the START talks, limited to American and Soviet ground based missiles like SS-20, cruise and Pershing II, ignoring both the American nuclear bombers based in Europe and the British and French strategic nuclear forces, which in range and destructive power pose a threat to Russia similar to that of the SS-20 to Western Europe. Ministers concerned with such matters in the Callaghan Government decided that all these so-called 'grey area' systems should be included in SALT III and that Britain should seek direct participation in the talks.

If cruise is once deployed, it will make an arms agreement enormously more difficult since its mobility and small size make it impossible to discover by satellite photography (which is the only method of verification Russia has so far allowed). Moreover, any land-based system is now vulnerable to a surprise attack. It is certain that if the West deploys cruise and Pershing, the Russians will reciprocate. The balance of power will then become much less stable than it is today. In a time of tension each side will be terrified of a pre-emptive attack by the other—even the movement of the first cruise launcher from Greenham Common could trigger off a nuclear war.

For all these reasons, NATO must now abandon its decision of December 1979. The Labour Party is determined that Britain shall not accept cruise missiles on her soil. I believe the Alliance will be as grateful to us for grasping this nettle now as it was when we sank the MLF in 1964.

# The Case against Cruise

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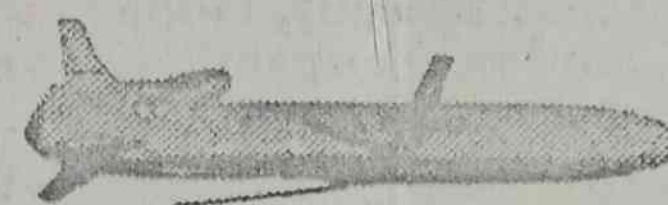
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JOHN SILKIN (LABOUR SHADOW DEFENCE SPOKESMAN)

Transcript from BBC Radio 4, Today Programme. 23 January 1983.

PRESENTER: PETER HOBDAV. Well earlier in the programme, Admiral Jean La Rock, former Planning Strategist in the Pentagon and now Director of the Centre for Defence Information in the United States, said that the decision to use American nuclear weapons in Europe would be a purely US decision. We then heard from Mr Heseltine, the Defence Secretary, that, in his view, since, in the British case, the US missiles (Cruise missiles, for example) in the future, were on British soil and in British Bases and, given the traditional consultation that exists between Downing Street and the White House, it is inconceivable that Cruise missiles, for example, could be fired without the consent of the British Prime Minister. Well with me in the studio is the Shadow Defence Secretary, John Silkin. Mr Silkin, whose right? Have the Americans got their finger on the trigger (and the Americans only) or do the British have the right of veto?

SILKIN: I think most Americans would believe that Admiral La<sup>2</sup> Rock is right and that, in fact, they do have the sole say in this; and I think most American Governments would take that point of view. I think that - as with all things - that there's a slight difference when you look at the reality. The truth is that, as far as Bases are concerned, we do have (Britain does have) a say in Bases on her own territory but the trouble with Cruise is that they're not necessarily fired from Bases but often from roads outside and then, I believe, the Americans would have undisputed control.

HOBDAV: So you see ..... really in Mr Heseltine's point that in a sense, since they're on British soil, since they're on British Bases with British personnel, that it's almost impossible

for the Americans - indeed it is impossible for the Americans - to do anything without the consent of the British and of the British Government and without prior consultation?

SILKIN: Well I think your almost might be more truthful than leaving that almost out. What he's really saying, surely, is that we would have so much influence we would be able to stop them if necessary. Well that's one of those questions that, frankly, I don't think is necessarily true at all. If one were in that position, I think the Admiral might very well be right: the Americans might fire 'em off and it wouldn't matter what we said.

HOBDA: But if we give Mr Heseltine the benefit of the doubt and accept the Defence Secretary's word that we do have those guarantees .....

SILKIN: I don't think guarantees - there are no guarantees, in my view - I don't think there ever have been. I think the guarantees apply to bases, they do not apply to the missiles themselves.

HOBDA: Mr Heseltine seems to be saying, though, this morning, that we have got that right. ....

SILKIN: He's been in the job a very, very short time .....

HOBDA: Going back to the water-workers' dispute and just talking about words. .... But, assuming that we have got some sort sort of guarantee .....

SILKIN: Well I don't think we have such a guarantee. We have a guarantee over Bases, not over missiles and not over the use of missiles. These can be used not on Bases but on the roads outside and they probably would .....

HOBDA: You're essentially saying, then, that Mr Heseltine is totally wrong to suggest that we have got - if you don't like the

word guarantee - safeguards over the deployment of .....

SILKIN: Neither. In fact, I pressed him on this in the House of Commons a few weeks ago but he wouldn't answer then: he can't answer. He's been in the job a months (longer or so now) perhaps after another month, he'll be agreeing with me.

HOBDAV: If he can come up with a satisfactory answer; if he can show, clearly and unequivocally, that there are a set of guarantees, a set of procedures which give the British the final word on the deployment of those US missiles: would that change the argument, then?

SILKIN: I think it'd change the argument to this extent: that the Americans would then say what on earth's the point of our having them any way? That the advantage to the Americans - as the Americans see it - is that they have got supreme control over them and, therefore, they can fire them whenever they wish. If you were to remove that control from them, I very much doubt whether they would see any advantage. So I don't think the argument is there at all. And, in any event, the Labour Party is dead against having Cruise missiles here, whatever happens, because it makes us a No 1 nuclear target for any enemy without giving us any advantage whatever.

HOBDAV: You're saying then that; even if the Americans were prepared to live with the British right to veto the deployment of those missiles .....

SILKIN: Which they wouldn't.

HOBDAV: But even if they did and the Labour Party came to power after the next election, you'd still get rid of the missiles?

SILKIN: We haven't yet got them. We would prevent them from coming here in the first place. That's the important thing.

HOBDAV: Mr Silkin, thank you.