

CONFIDENTIAL



70 WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Permanent Secretary to the Management and Personnel Office

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref.A083/1444

20 May 1983

Solly Zuckerman has been asked to contribute, as one of three "multilateralists" to a television discussion on the nuclear debate, to be screened during the Election campaign. The other two "multilateralists" would be Michael Howard and Neil Cameron. One of the "unilateralists" would be Jonathan Dimbleby. It would be a discussion only in so far as there would be one contribution from each side on three successive days; there would be some kind of summing up at the end of it.

Solly is still on the books of the Cabinet Office as a part-time scientific adviser. I have told him that, if he were a full-time adviser, I should instruct him to take no part in this debate. As a part-time adviser he is in a different position, and of course he has gone public with his views on nuclear issues on a number of occasions. They do not wholly coincide with Government policy. I have therefore advised him that he should not take part in this televised discussion, for fear that something he said could be taken up, possibly out of context, in the wider political debate and used to the embarrassment of the Government as a quotation from "one of the Government's own advisers".

Solly is clearly reluctant to take this advice, and has asked me to reconsider it, on the basis that what he would say would be wholly in accordance with Government policy and might have been written within Whitehall. He has sent me his draft of what he proposed to say; I attach a copy herewith.

Having read it, I feel inclined to say to Solly that it does not alter my advice: that whether or not the script is wholly consistent with Government policy (I doubt whether it is in fact), it would (given what is known of his views) certainly be combed for quotations which could be used to embarrass the Government, and that

/ it remains

C A Whitmore Esq CVO

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

it remains my view that he would be better advised, from the point of view of his relations with the Government and his position as a part-time adviser to withdraw from the discussion.

I think he will take the advice, but in talking to the producers he will certainly blame the Cabinet Office, and they may make some use of the allegation that he has been suppressed by the Government. I propose therefore to say that, as he is only a part-time adviser, I cannot instruct him, I can only advise him; and that my advice is irrespective of the content and based on the fact that as a part-time Government adviser he would do better not to get involved in matters of political controversy during an Election campaign.

I should be glad to know whether you, Sir Antony Acland and Robin Butler to whom I am sending copies of this letter and Solly's draft speech, agree. A word on the telephone during the course of the day would suffice; I ought to ring him before close of play on Friday 20 May.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

CONFIDENTIAL

(17.5.83)

Channel Four

It has taken an awful long time for the nuclear debate to open up ~~in the way it has~~ - and in a way I am glad it has - but I now see a danger that the central issues could become obscured in tussles between those who argue for CND, or for unilateral, or for multilateral nuclear disarmament, or for or against cruise. I say this as one who has been professionally involved in the nuclear problem for well over twenty-five years.

In so far as I understand it, when the CND movement started in the 1950s, people knew that the build-up of nuclear armaments spelt danger, but were more worried ~~that~~ radioactive fall-out from the testing of nuclear warheads, ~~went~~ ^{about the} a real hazard to health ~~of~~ - particularly ^{the risks} to infants. The fall-out problem was, to a large extent, solved by the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963.

Today, it is the possibility of nuclear war that is causing concern, with the overriding ^{fear} ~~concern~~ that the uninterrupted build-up of nuclear armaments means that such a war could destroy the Western world. It is ^{highly regrettable} ~~regrettable~~ that the issue of survival has now become polarised in arguments between unilateralists and multilateralists, when both sides have the same objective in mind -- to curb the nuclear arms race, to reduce the size of nuclear armouries, and to prevent any kind of nuclear war from ever happening.

The real problem today is not whether the number of Soviet SS20s matches that of American cruise and Pershing II missiles but, as Lord Carrington said not so long ago in a magnificent speech, in the fact that "the West will make a major mistake if it reduces East/West diplomacy to nothing but nuclear accountancy".

We are surely going to confuse the problem if today's arguments therefore just focus on the numbers and deployment of different weapon systems, be they Soviet or Western, be they SS4s, SS5s, SS20s, or cruise, Pershing II, Polaris or Trident -- not that these things aren't the major symbols of public concern today.

Let me start with a word about that problem. People began worrying acutely about what is in the nuclear arsenals of the NATO and Warsaw Pact powers as a result of a speech given six years ago by Helmut Schmidt, then Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. That was in 1977, at a time when the Americans and Russians were trying to arrange a bilateral treaty to limit the multiplication of their so-called strategic weapons.

Schmidt was concerned lest a deal between the two superpowers, which would seemingly lessen the direct threat which both ~~countries~~ faced, might reduce American interest in the defence of Western Europe. He knew that many people believed that some Americans wouldn't mind if a war erupted on European soil, even if that war became nuclear, provided that America wasn't hit. As a token of assurance, he therefore asked the Americans whether it would not help if they deployed in Europe an additional nuclear weapon system - specifically mentioning the neutron bomb. The

Americans said, fine, if you need any additional assurance about our commitment to your defence, you can have it. But as soon as what was afoot came out into the open, the public reacted in hostile fashion in almost every European country ~~that belonged to~~⁹ the Western alliance.

The idea of a neutron bomb was dropped. In its place the Americans offered to deploy cruise missiles and the new medium-range Pershing II ballistic missile, these being regarded as 'theatre' weapons, that is to say, they were American weapons which might be used in Europe if war ever broke out. The European NATO countries agreed only on condition that the two superpowers sat down in Geneva to consider how the nuclear threat to Europe could be reduced.

This led to President Reagan's 'zero option' proposal, a proposal which meant that the United States would not deploy any of its new weapons in Europe if the Russians dismantled all their SS20s which were targeted against European objectives. This proposal the Russians rejected, and they have gone on rejecting it. They regard it as a highly unfair gambit in the numbers game, since they would continue to be faced not only by the nuclear systems directly under NATO control - which include our own Polaris force and also the Polaris missiles that could be launched from American submarines - but also by the French nuclear armoury which is not under NATO control.

That, for all practical purposes, is where the argument stands today.

The French can quite legitimately protest that the argument

is not theirs. They are not part of NATO; they are not negotiating with the Russians. We haven't quite the same justification. I say "we haven't quite the same justification" because a condition of the Nassau agreement of 1962 which allowed us to buy Polaris missiles from the Americans was that they should come under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander, with the proviso that they could be withdrawn from his control only in conditions of 'extreme national emergency', conditions which of course it is impossible to define. Anyhow, the Russians have given every indication that they are unprepared to exclude from the nuclear accountancy of launchers or warheads any which might be launched against them given an European conflict. Let us be honest. I doubt very much if the Americans or ourselves would be ready to exclude from such an exercise, say Polish or East German or Czech warheads if these countries had them and they were targeted against us.

Helmut Schmidt is clearly taken aback by all that has happened. In February of this year he wrote that his hope now is that "those who bear the responsibility in Moscow and Washington, having wasted too much time already, will finally discern the whole instead of the parts, so that they can break through prefabricated ideologies" and get on with the business of safeguarding peace. More recently he has said that while keeping up Western military strength, we should seek cooperation and detente with the Soviet Union. Yet, he writes, the hoped-for cooperation "has become a dirty word". Like Lord Carrington, he sees little hope for the future if whatever the differences in our political philosophies, the countries of the Western alliance and

those of the Warsaw Pact do not find a way of living in peace.

My own view is that the new weapon systems we are arguing about pose no novel threat either to the USSR or to Western Europe, or indeed to the USA, except in so far as they increase the chances of war by accident. There are already thousands of nuclear warheads on both sides of the iron curtain, all pre-targeted on cities or airfields or harbours. The deployment of SS20s does not constitute a new threat to London or to Birmingham or to Liverpool, to Paris or to Brussels, to Copenhagen or to Oslo. They, and all corresponding Soviet targets, are already in the computer programmes of hundreds, of thousands, of ~~missiles~~ ^{launchers}.

For SS20s and cruise and Pershings are not weapons which can be used like conventional artillery or bombs against targets of opportunity - for example, bridges, ammunition dumps, and railway centres. If they were ever directed at the other side's targets in a 'theatre of war', each of their warheads in a flash would cause as much destruction as the cumulative total which resulted from weeks of strategic bombing in the second world war. They simply cannot be treated as weapons whose effects could be controlled by generals or air marshals.

And that also goes for the so-called 'battlefield' or 'tactical' nuclear weapons which are deployed by the NATO forces, or which the Russians could bring up were war to break out in Europe. Some of these so-called 'tactical' weapons have a yield of a megaton or more, yields which imply the total destruction of a big city and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. The shorter-range battlefield weapons, which were deployed by the

military without any idea of how they could ever be used in a controlled way, were designed by specialists simply because of their destructive power. When I became Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence way back in 1960, I carried out a number of war games, all of which showed that were the other side to start a nuclear exchange, ^{and we replied in kind} chaos would immediately result. I was officially encouraged to publish the conclusions of these studies. I questioned the deployment of such weapons, arguing that while their existence could deter hostile action, they ~~use~~ ^{cannot} defend in war. ~~use~~.

Since then any number of war games and exercises have confirmed this conclusion. What is more, military leaders on both sides have become quite frank about the whole subject. They know that they couldn't control a war in which nuclear weapons were used. The present Supreme Allied Commander has recently admitted that "you don't have a defence against nuclear weapons used against you". Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Lewin, who was Chief of our Defence Staff at the time of the Falklands war, doesn't know - and I quote him - that any one of his fellow commanders in NATO believes that a nuclear war can be fought and won.

The Soviet and American military leaders also know that once nuclear weapons started to fly, the exchange would escalate to all-out nuclear war, with the virtual destruction of Europe, the Soviet Union and the United States. In short, nuclear weapons have no military utility as weapons of war.

But that realisation has neither stopped their further development nor their deployment. In consequence, it is just

conceivable that they might be used either by NATO or the Warsaw Pact, or both, regardless of the mutual disaster that would result; of the fact that the end would be mutual suicide, or that their use would be an act of posthumous revenge by the side that had suffered the first nuclear blow.

The doctrinal notion that they might be used by the NATO Command in an act of despair or as a last resort in a policy of so-called flexible response does not alter the facts. Such words are a mere parrot-cry made by NATO military commanders who, when they are posted to the High Command, find themselves the inheritors of what is little more than a slogan.

Mutual national hara-kiri is not a sensible objective for the professional military man.

Battlefield or tactical or theatre nuclear weapons ~~are simply part of a spectrum of deterrence~~ ^{with} None will help solved political differences or disputes between the nuclear powers, or help one or other side gain an advantage. Their existence is a deterrent against the possibility that either side would threaten war or resort to war. This might happen if one or other threw down its nuclear arms - which is why I find the argument for unilateral disarmament so impossible to follow. Nuclear blackmail could indeed become an instrument of political blackmail.

But in saying this I realise that the situation is not the same in all countries, nuclear or non-nuclear. While I pray that sanity about the actual use of nuclear weapons will prevail between the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, I'm not so optimistic when I think about what could happen - indeed would be likely to

happen - if certain other countries I can think of were to get even a small nuclear armoury. I am utterly convinced that every effort must continue to be made to prevent any further nuclear proliferation.

The fact that I am convinced that unilateral disarmament for NATO and the Warsaw Pact would be politically dangerous in the world as it is, in no way affects another conviction of mine *and one which is an objective government policy*, namely that the nuclear arms race must be stopped. The nuclear armouries of the major powers are already far too big to make political sense. Nor are tactical and so-called European theatre weapons necessary bands in what is called the spectrum of deterrence. It is a clear mark of their lack of military utility that so many of our top military authorities [say they] are prepared to reduce their number, or to get rid of them altogether. And far from being a necessary band in the spectrum of deterrence, the chances are overwhelming that tactical nuclear weapons, if ever used, would trigger all-out nuclear war.

Whoever said that suicide was an act of defence ?

Don't therefore let us focus too much on those single weapon systems which now attract the limelight. Both sides already have too many warheads for the maintenance of mutual deterrence -- kiloton warheads which would totally wipe out a village or a small town, megaton weapons which in a flash would turn a city like London into burning radioactive rubble in which the bodies of hundreds of thousands of dead and wounded would add fuel to the flames.

But if I am opposed to the idea of unilateral disarmament,

that does not mean that in my view both the United States and the USSR could not start reducing the size of their nuclear arsenals unilaterally without any detriment whatever to their national security. They could halve them, reduce them to, say, a quarter of their present size, without eroding the assurance they now have of an ability to retaliate if the other side ever used any of its own weapons. That was the situation at the time of the Cuban crisis of 1962, and it is no different now that both sides have added thousands of new warheads - and several new weapons systems. There is no conceivable defence against an onslaught of nuclear warheads which could ever provide the political leaders of either side with the assurance that at least one in ten ^{nuclear strikes} would not ^{succeed} ~~get through~~. And one in ten would be more than enough to cause what is euphemistically called 'unacceptable damage'.

This piece of jargon came into the nuclear vocabulary in the early 1960s, when Robert McNamara, then the US Secretary for Defence, tried to halt the multiplication of American nuclear arms. At that time ^{what} the Americans ^{were developing would have been enough} ~~had it in their power~~ to kill outright a quarter of the Soviet population and to destroy half of its industrial capacity. That was the arbitrary standard of assured destruction that was then set. ^{And since there were no secrets about the matter, no doubt the Russians were getting ready to do the same} ~~was~~ If a hundred megaton warheads were launched at this country, and only ten got through, we would be finished; ten major cities in ruins and millions dead. And that goes for the USSR and the USA too. And remember, the use of any one nuclear weapon could trigger the lot, and technically there is no conceivable practicable defence against nuclear weapons.

Curbing the nuclear arms race is an absolutely prime necessity. The race goes on because there is an inner momentum in the modern world of technology to improve what already exists. It goes on because of inter-Service rivalry within countries. And it goes on because each side, being suspicious of the other's purposes, fear that it is secretly adding to its assumed military power. In my view, there may be point in a hostile and divided world for an arms race in conventional weapons. But there is absolutely none in a nuclear race between powers which already have more than is needed to maintain a state of deterrence. What is the point of a race to build new weapons when even a few would mean suicide for whichever side struck first ?

There is no meaning any longer in the idea of either West or East achieving nuclear superiority except in the ~~meaningless~~ ^{futile} exercise of nuclear accountancy - a nice term. Curbing the nuclear arms race does not mean unilateral disarmament. There is no finishing post to a nuclear arms race. The cost of either side trying to disarm the other in a first strike by force of nuclear arms would inevitably be suicide. But with the hostility that now prevails between East and West, I should be fearful if the present dangerous state of nuclear deterrence were exchanged for an equally dangerous one in which one side could apply nuclear blackmail to the other. The ideal now would be a steady reduction on both sides to the point where both have enough to provide them with the assurance that they could pose a retaliatory threat on each other, say to the level necessary to destroy utterly each side's ten major cities. Both sides could start destroying missile

systems and getting rid of nuclear warheads straight away - and that's not all too easy, - either unilaterally or bilaterally or mutually or multilaterally, call it what you will, without endangering their deterrent status.

One last word. Public pressure in the United States is at last making President Reagan more flexible. There is now talk in his circles of what they call a build-down of nuclear arms. Whatever ~~the supporters of the~~ ^{he said} may ~~say~~ about the supporters of CND, let us remind ourselves that the Catholic bishops of America who, after two years of close study, voted for a nuclear freeze, were not Soviet stooges. Nor is the Pope. Nor is the Archbishop of Canterbury. ^{Nor is the American Congress,} Nor is Cardinal Hume. Helmut Schmidt and Pierre Trudeau are not playing the Soviet game when they urge the President to be less strident and more constructive in his dealings with the Russians. ~~We should bow to the UK and find~~ ~~itself to the right of the present American line.~~ Do not let us be dupes of our own ignorance. ^{In the end} ~~For all~~, we all - Russians, Americans and Europeans - must learn to live together. The alternative is to die together.

It's not going to be easy to get agreement between the nuclear powers. Some twenty years ago, I had to negotiate on behalf of our Government a particular nuclear matter with the Russians, and had managed to get their agreement at the technical level as a preliminary to discussing the matter with our opposite numbers in America. At the end of our meeting, in a final toast, the leader of the Soviet team raised his glass and said, Remember that if you agree with us, the Americans won't (which is exactly

what happened). And if you agree with the Americans, we won't agree. And if we and the Americans agree, you won't.

If the Americans and the Russians can now agree in Geneva a cutback of any kind, I pray that in all our interests, we too shall agree.

Lord Zuckerman

May 1983