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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

187/91

29 October 1981

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Handwritten notes:
The 10 Downing Street

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I was interested to read your memorandum - Cruise Missiles: A New British Role - and ^{again} that you for sending me a copy. John Nott tells me that he has talked to you about your ideas, and so I will not go over the ground which he will have covered with you. I would however like to comment on the political difficulties which I see your proposal creating for the Alliance.

The 1979 NATO decision in which the Government took a leading part was not only vital to our security interests it was also of the utmost political importance. The allies agreed unanimously that the system chosen for the LRTNF role must emphasise the need for both widespread and visible basing as a demonstration of cohesion and collective resolve. Ground launched cruise missiles were judged to be the best way of meeting these criteria.

The NATO decision was a twin track one: with the programme of deployment of GLCM goes a parallel arms control approach. If we abandoned our modernisation programme in favour of submarine launched cruise missiles then it would derail any movement on either track. The introduction of submarine launched missiles would enormously complicate arms control discussions as to which systems should be included, and we also believe it to be the case that only the firm resolve to proceed with the GLCM basing has brought the Russians to the negotiating table in Geneva next month. There is a great deal at stake, and I very much hope that you will agree that it would not be in our interests, or those of the Alliance, to have a public campaign running which could only alarm our friends abroad and bring comfort to those on the other side of the negotiating table.

/I ought

I ought perhaps also to comment on your description of the control of the ground launched missiles to be based here as part of the LRTNF modernisation. I am sure that you know that the use by the United States in an emergency of any base in the United Kingdom - including those on which the GLCMs will be based - would be a matter for joint decision (not solely United States decision, nor merely consultation) in the light of circumstances prevailing at the time. This is exactly the same arrangement under which the United States nuclear forces have been deployed in this country for nearly 30 years now. As we have pointed out on several occasions in the House we could have had a "dual key" for the GLCMs if we had been prepared to purchase the missiles and supporting equipment and to provide over one thousand additional British Servicemen to man them. This would have cost hundreds of millions of pounds, and would not have been a sensible use of our limited defence resources - especially since I am entirely satisfied with the existing arrangements for joint decision.

Please don't think that I fail to appreciate your sincere desire to find ways of increasing the effectiveness of Western defence in the face of what we all know about Soviet military capabilities. But I do not think that cause will be served by the promotion of the ideas in your memorandum.

Yours ever
Raymond

Sir Philip Goodhart, MP.

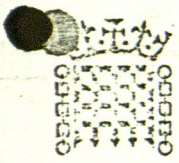
THE GOODHART MEMORANDUMCRUISE: A NEW BRITISH ROLE.

There can be no doubt that NATO's decision in December 1979 to modernise our long range theatre nuclear weapons by the introduction of 464 ground-launched Cruise missiles and 108 Pershing II ballistic missiles has sent a seismic shock through the soft centre of West European politics.

In Great Britain, the Conservative Party can watch with some satisfaction as Liberals and Social Democrats prepare to "fight and fight again" over this particular territory; but elsewhere in Western Europe - in Belgium, in Holland, and above all in West Germany - the Cruise missile issue adds substantially to the political instability of the existing moderate coalition Governments, and this in turn has a debilitating effect upon the Alliance as a whole.

It is easy enough to see how the decision to introduce land based Cruise missiles into Europe has provided the anti-nuclear and anti-NATO protestors with a powerful focus. After all, no-one, however robust, really relishes the idea of rockets at the bottom of his garden, and even the sturdy citizens of Utah and Nevada, while strongly supporting President Reagan's defence programme, have shown some reluctance in providing a home in their states for a new American MX missile system.

And then there is the fact that control of these missiles will remain firmly in American hands. As the delegate who led the opposition to Cruise missiles at the Liberal Party Conference said: "I ask you to reflect on the fact that Cruise is a single-key system, with the Americans holding the key. The power to launch the holocaust from our territory will not be with us, not with our Government, not with our democratic system, but with others."

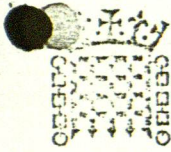


Is there anything that can be done to shift the balance of the argument so that the plans for the essential defence of Western Europe are presented in a less contentious form? I believe that there is. Those Cruise missiles currently earmarked for this country and other countries in Western Europe should be deployed under the sea, and most of them should be carried by the submarines of the Royal Navy.

The technical problems surrounding the deployment of these Cruise missiles in our submarines under the sea could be solved without difficulty. Meanwhile, the convincing arguments which are deployed in Paragraphs 39 to 43 of "The Future United Kingdom Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Force" against the choice of Cruise as a vehicle for our national deterrent do not apply with such force in the long-range theatre context.

Such problems as sea-room for our submarines, the scope for improvement in Soviet anti-Cruise defence, the speed of fire, dual-rolling, etc., which cumulatively constitute a powerful case against a Cruise-borne national deterrent, lose much of their force when we look at the long-range theatre role. But quite obviously the missiles which I propose should be carried by the Royal Navy submarines in the North Sea and North Atlantic could not be expected to reach targets in Southern Europe. Under present plans, of course, these targets would be covered by the hundred ground-launched missiles that have been assigned to Italy. These Cruise missiles could be carried by American submarines attached to the United States Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.

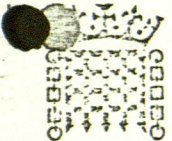
How many submarines would be needed? Four, or five, or even six submarines carrying sixty or more missiles apiece could be given the prime role of Cruise carriers. I understand that new submarines would not necessarily be needed, for as we know, Tomahawk is designed to be fired through the torpedo tubes of ships



now in service, and I am told that the modifications needed to allow some of our existing submarines to carry and fire these missiles should not be extensive. They would of course need even more complex fire control, navigation and communication equipment than our present Hunter Killer submarines possess, but as the Cruise carriers would never travel more than a few hundred miles from British territorial waters, the Cruise carriers need not be as expensive as our SSBNs.

Apart from the special Cruise carriers, some additional Cruise missiles could be based upon our existing nuclear submarines which are deployed in a Hunter Killer role. When the Government decided to reject the idea of entrusting our national strategic nuclear deterrent to Cruise missiles carried by our existing Hunter Killer submarines, it was argued that "our non-strategic submarine force is already fully committed to its existing tasks and the patterns of deployment and operation for the last resort strategic role are very different from those for seeking out and attacking other submarines and surface ships." This argument is clearly of enormous importance when considering the whole shape of the national deterrent, but the difficulties posed by dual-roling are much less inhibiting when one considers the long range theatre nuclear role.

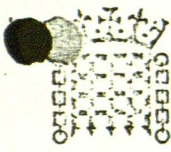
Who would control the use of these seaborne Cruise missiles? The ground-based Cruise missiles would have been controlled by SACEUR under the normal NATO guidelines. There is no reason why the existing chain of command need be fundamentally altered by a shift to the sea. It might be considered unusual for SACEUR, rather than NATO Admirals commanding the Atlantic and the Channel, to have control over the submarines which have the principal Cruise-carrying role, but this technical problem should not prove overly difficult. The question of ultimate political control over the right to launch these weapons is clearly infinitely more important. At the moment, SACEUR would have to get the permission



of the American President before firing the ground-based Cruise missiles. Under this new proposal there would at the very least have to be a two-key system for the missiles on the British submarines, so that the permission of the British Government as well as of the American President would have to be obtained before the missiles were launched.

In fact, I believe that the ultimate political control of these missiles on British ships should rest solely with the British Government. There is much to be said for leaving ultimate responsibility for launching these powerful weapons designed to protect Europe with a Government that is actually located in that theatre. The passage of ultimate control could mean, under American legislation, that the warheads would have to be produced in the United Kingdom. Again, that should not pose an impossible technical problem. But clearly there would have to be urgent discussions with the American Government on all aspects of re-deployment. They would, after all, have to provide the Tomahawk Cruise missiles, the guidance system, and for some time at least, the warheads, while the Cruise missiles now intended for Italy would always be carried on United States Navy submarines.

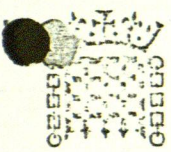
As successive American Governments have been willing to back our even more far-reaching strategic Trident programme, there is little reason why either Hawks or Doves in Washington should strenuously object. The cost to the Americans would be insignificant - indeed, there might even be some marginal savings in their colossal defence budget - and it would help them to cover their exposed diplomatic position in Western Europe.



Would our European Allies object? On the one hand it would give responsibility for long range theatre defence of Western Europe to a Government on the right side of the Atlantic, which was part of the European Community, and which shared in full measure the hopes and fears of her continental partners. On the other hand there is obviously a danger that British voters by design or accident would elect a Government that would then unilaterally reject these weapons and the agreement that had been made. But if this were to happen, America will in the foreseeable future have a large enough Naval capacity to devote her own submarines to this role without having to abandon other vital Naval tasks. At the same time, a majority of the present Labour, Liberal and SDP Members of Parliament are already committed to the basing of Cruise missiles in this country. Any British Government prepared to be a sensible member of the NATO Alliance should have little difficulty in maintaining this seaborne deployment.

Wouldn't this move look like a surrender to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the chorus of anti-nuclear protestors? Perhaps some crowing by NATO's enemies is inevitable, but they should not crow too loudly for the main weight of NATO's long range theatre nuclear force would be just as effective as that proposed in December 1979. Indeed, if a single protestor hadn't chained himself to a single fence surrounding a single missile depot, it would still be arguable that NATO's Cruise missiles should be sent to sea. In these days of precision guided munitions and highly mobile long range raiding parties, it is clearly better to have as many nuclear warheads as possible under the sea, rather than on land, close to the territory of a potential enemy.

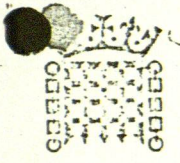
And then there is the fundamental question of how we would pay for this new and important role out of a budget which is still desperately tight, even after the traumas of the recent Defence Review. In fact, the cost should not be excessive,



even if the Americans were to charge us the full price for the Cruise missiles and the guidance equipment, and even if we were to receive no support from the NATO infrastructure funds earmarked for the original Cruise programme, or from European Allies. I believe that the money could be found, if necessary, by postponing the Trident programme for up to four years.

I have become increasingly convinced that our national deterrent should be carried by a very long range ballistic missile and that Trident is the best alternative available to this country. But would the delay of even four years in the programme be disastrous? The Trident programme in the United States of America has had its technical and financial problems. Within reasonable limits, the longer we delay our own Trident programme the more likely we are to learn from the Americans how to avoid the pitfalls that inevitably develop in any project of this size.

But of course the principal threat to the British Trident programme is political. If one can guarantee that a Conservative Government will remain in office throughout this decade it does not matter that the defence spokesmen of all other parties have firmly rejected Trident, but while Conservative Ministers must resolutely profess their belief in the continued certainty of "Conservatism in our time," others concerned with our long range defence programme can take a more pragmatic view about the political climate. If we assume that there is a chance of a Conservative defeat in the next few years, then the existence of such a large Trident element in the long term costings clearly makes the Royal Navy peculiarly vulnerable. It would be quixotic to believe that any alternative left wing Government would divert Trident money to bring frigates into service. It would be sensible to assume that the Trident money would be removed from our defence programme altogether and syphoned off into social programmes. A move to roll back the Trident costings could therefore reduce the existing vulnerability of the Royal Navy.



There could then be some substantial advantage to be gained by postponing our Trident programme; and even that need not necessarily delay Trident going into service with the Royal Navy. By the beginning of the 1990s, under present plans, the United States should have about 25 Trident submarines in its own fleet, and it is not beyond the realms of political possibility to imagine a friendly American administration leasing or lending us one or two Trident vessels to fill a short term gap that had been created by the diversion of funds to strengthen the Alliance as a whole.

I believe that the deployment under the sea of these Cruise missiles provides a credible and important nuclear role for this country, which could help to solve some of the problems currently besetting the Alliance.
