

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 May 1986

ARMS CONTROL AND THE UK CONTRIBUTION

The Prime Minister has noted the Foreign Secretary's minute of 16 May and accompanying paper on arms control. She would prefer to have seen the effort involved devoted to one or two new ideas or initiatives in the different areas of arms control than to what is essentially a restatement of our existing policies. She agrees on the importance of getting the presentation of our policies right and securing credit for them. We have done this quite successfully so far. The best way to maintain our record is to continue to come forward with practical proposals, even if relatively modest ones, which will nudge arms control negotiations steadily forward.

There are two points on which the Prime Minister disagrees with the paper. The first is the formulation that the 'fundamental objective of arms control is stability'. In her view the fundamental objective of arms control is security, to which stability can contribute but is not decisive. Every proposal needs to be examined for its consequences for our security.

Secondly, the Prime Minister does not agree with the emphasis in the paper on developing European arms control policies. She sees nothing to be gained from exchanging the discreet but real influence which we have over the United States for hortatory European statements. Since only the United States is directly involved in all the arms control negotiations, which are vital to our security, we must continue to give absolute priority to influencing them, either bilaterally or with those few of our European allies whose views on arms control really count.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of OD and Sir Robert Armstrong.

CHARLES POWELL

A. C. Galsworthy, Esq., C.M.G.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

ARMS CONTROL

The FCO strikes again! The team which gave you eighteen ponderous paragraphs on SDI last week-end, has produced twenty-four on arms control this week-end.

I don't think you will find anything new. To the extent there is a message, it is two-fold:

- (i) we should claim more credit for our contribution to arms control;
- (ii) we should devote more effort to developing European arms control policies, even if it means being at odds with the US sometimes.

Unfortunately the first point is belied by the fact that the paper does not have a single new or specific idea for which we could claim credit.

I have read it through twice and can't think why it was written. There is nothing effective in it.

The second does not make a great deal of sense, when only the United States is directly involved in the principal negotiations and thus in a position to determine the outcome. There is nothing to gain from swapping discreet but real influence over the US for hortatory European statements.

There is an important point though. Arms control could be quite a big political issue in the run-up to an election. This points to three conclusions:

- (i) you should be seen to be active personally on arms control. This reinforces the case for a visit to Moscow.
- (ii) we must have some new and specific ideas. (Time spent producing leaden minutes like this could better be used on working up such ideas).
- (iii) we need to consider carefully how best to get over in public the ideas we do have, for instance those which

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

you put to President Reagan on the handling of SDI in arms control negotiations. There is something to be said for a speech by you on arms control, both to confirm that you are personally engaged and to place the definition of the policy firmly in your hands (the Foreign Secretary regards it as significant that the Chancellor and the Defence Secretary agreed with his minute on SDI).

C.D.P.

Charles Powell

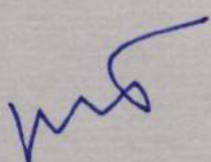
16 May 1986

DG2BBT

CONFIDENTIAL



✓ PC

PM/86/029PRIME MINISTERArms Control and the UK Contribution

1. I have been reflecting on the apparent growth in anti-Americanism in this country, most recently as a result of Libya, and its impact on attitudes towards foreign policy more generally. I hope shortly to let you and OD colleagues have some thoughts on the subject. Meanwhile I should like to offer some specific reflections on our contribution to the arms control process. I have discussed these issues with George Younger, who is - I believe - content with the overall thrust.

2. Public interest in this area has been sustained at a high level over the past three years. The new style in Moscow, the economic and political pressures on the US, and the domestic situation in Europe will all combine to keep arms control at the top of the international agenda. Most recently, we have had the Chernobyl disaster, with implications for all aspects of nuclear policy; and the latest Defence White Paper, which may stimulate the arms control debate, not least over our national deterrent. How then may we best tackle the main arms control issues in the months ahead, as we move towards the next General Election?

/3.



3. We have to strike a balance in three fundamental areas:

(a) we must be, and be seen to be, active in the arms control process, while avoiding threats to the continued effectiveness of our own nuclear deterrent;

(b) we should continue to try to exercise a maximum influence over US and, where possible, Soviet policy and we should take appropriate credit in public for doing so; and

(c) we ought to act, and to be seen to act, in support of identifiable British interests, while maintaining the solidarity of the Alliance.

4. I believe we have managed to come close to the right balance over the past three years, but I am less sure that we have received sufficient public credit for this. We all know that the Government gives an extremely high priority to arms control. Our task is to persuade others that this is so, that we are determined to achieve results; that those results will benefit not only our interests but those of our Allies and even our adversaries; and that we continue to tackle the whole area with a clear-headed assessment of what is in it for Britain. Thus we have to go on ploughing our own arms control furrow, but contributing to the joint Western effort where that best serves our interests.

5. For the purposes of OD colleagues who do not normally follow developments in this field in much detail, I enclose a background paper which sets out some of the key considerations, and an Annex with a short note on the state-of-play in each area. I do not think you need concern yourself with this background material, much of which will be already familiar to you. But you may find the following, more general themes of interest.



6. I think our conduct of arms control policy over the next year or so can be divided into three sections:

I. Conceptually, I recommend developing twin themes:

Security (a) that the fundamental objective of arms control is stability, to be achieved where possible at lower levels of forces, but above all by injecting into the strategic planning on each side a greater confidence about the capabilities and intentions of the other. This in turn can be more solidly based, if each can achieve a greater sense of predictability about the future activities, and force levels, of the other. There is of course a difference between this sort of predictability and the ability of an opponent to predict with confidence NATO's precise form of response in the event of an attack; in order to maintain deterrence the second form of predictability must be qualified. But this does not affect the pursuit of the first, which remains a prime goal in arms control.

(b) that a fundamental condition of a successful arms control process must be confidence on each side that the other is complying with its obligations under agreements. This in turn demands that such agreements contain adequate provisions for verification. The events at Chernobyl have underlined the legitimacy of our requirements in this area.

II. In specific terms,

(a) there should be mileage to be obtained from our Chairmanship this year of the negotiations in Geneva on chemical weapons, provided we can resolve our difficulties with the Americans over challenge

/inspection.



inspection. This may soon require us to deploy our own line more vigorously, at a risk of provoking criticism in some Washington circles, if the negotiations are not to remain stuck as at present;

(b) there will be considerable scope for UK continued activity in the other negotiations now in train on conventional arms control in Europe. We should be seen to be acting in concert, wherever possible, with our major European Allies;

III. We cannot however ignore the potential problems:

(a) we will need to meet and defeat the challenge of those in this country who criticise our adherence to the basic doctrine of the Western Alliance - flexible response coupled with nuclear deterrence;

(b) we will have to defend our realistic approach to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, and explain how it relates to the fundamental defence dilemma of the West;

(c) we must stand firm in our insistence on maintaining the modernisation programme of our own deterrent, despite the current criticism of the cost and increased capability of the Trident system;

(d) we will also need to hit back at opponents of our policy on nuclear testing, I may in due course wish to offer some further thoughts on this.



7. Overall, we must make it clear that our support for the policies and strategies of the Alliance and the United States does not reflect unheeding and unqualified adherence to the views of others; but represents a clear-sighted and committed defence of this country's fundamental interests. This will be particularly important in the aftermath of events in Libya.

8. There will continue to be points of difference with the US Administration over arms control. The terms of President Reagan's endorsement of a nuclear-free world will continue to require careful handling. So will the zero-zero option in INF, and the pressures (now dormant in the US) to commit us at this stage to reductions or non-modernisation of our own nuclear force. I do not take these potential dangers too seriously at this point. Your own relationship with President Reagan, and the record of US consultation in recent months, give me reasonable confidence on this front, at least for the present.

9. Nonetheless, we shall continue to need to be both active and alert. Until now we have been rowing with the tide. Our support for US arms control policies has not carried any significant political penalty in this country. The next 12 months may present a new set of problems. A misguided approach by the US to the compliance/SALT II problems could be a real set-back, as you have firmly warned President Reagan. Potential success at the next Reagan/Gorbachev Summit might be seen as blocked or threatened by UK (or UK and French) "intransigence" alone. The Opposition would try to exploit this to our discredit, although if we handle it right I do not believe they would succeed.

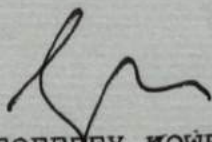
*It sounds
as though
we would
be passive
e asleep
if the
FO wasn't
here to
wake us
up!*



10. Perhaps most difficult of all, the next Summit may fail to produce any result which can be presented to public opinion as a success. Such a failure could tempt people in the West to pin the blame as much on President Reagan as on Gorbachev, particularly if it could be traced to an unwillingness on the President's part to accept the line on SDI which we have recently been commending, with the encouragement of Shultz. The degree of public credit then to be gained from our present support for US policies could diminish, and expose a different flank to domestic attack.

11. This problem would of course be exacerbated if the current levels of anti-Americanism in this country, encouraged by such controversies (however distorted) as Westlands, British Leyland, or the latest US action over Libya, were to rise further. It adds point to the need for the Government to be seen, where it makes sense, to be taking in this area its own line in defence of British interests.

12. I am sending copies of this minute and enclosure to OD colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.


(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

16 May 1986



Arms Control and the UK Contribution

1. No significant arms control agreement has been ratified by West and East for thirteen years, or even signed for seven years. The current state of play is summarised at Annex A. Insofar as limits and reductions in levels of military forces can enhance security, the continued absence of results is a strategic loss. It also feeds public anxieties. If support for Western defence policies is to be sustained, and the centre ground is to be held against "radical" disarmers, these concerns have to be allayed. Domestic pressures are more easily contained, and the public debate channelled into a positive direction, when HMG is seen to be playing a significant part in arms control.

2. The results of previous UK activity, following Ministerial consideration in OD in 1983, are also summarised at Annex B. These results were in general positive, and in recent months the Geneva Summit has stimulated the search for new agreements both between the US and the Soviet Union and in wider multilateral fora. HMG has played - and been seen to play - a prominent part in these activities. Meanwhile, domestic UK interest in arms control/defence policies has been maintained at a relatively high level, with no consensus on nuclear issues between the main political parties. It is therefore timely to review the contribution to arms control to be made by HMG over the next year or so.

/GENERAL



GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

3. Five related elements will affect our future conduct and presentation of arms control policy:

(i) (a) Pursuit of vigorous arms control policies can enhance the domestic standing of the Government. It can also raise public expectations of the eventual results.

But (b) arms control is not an independent goal, unrelated to wider security interests. Excessive expectations, if allowed to dictate negotiating positions, can actually damage those interests.

(ii) (a) Nuclear arms control has a far greater impact on public perceptions than any other form (confidence- building, conventional forces, chemical weapons, etc).

But (b) UK security interests require that the only direct input we could make to nuclear arms control - our own national deterrent - be excluded.

(iii) (a) Given its possession of most of the negotiating chips, the United States plays for the West the pre-eminent role in arms control. Our security interest also requires close nuclear cooperation with the US. The substantive UK contribution is made largely through Washington. In general we wield greater influence with the Americans to the extent that we provide advice privately.

/But



but we got lots of credit
for the Camp David 4 points.

But (b) the less public credit we claim for influencing US policies in the right direction, the less reflected kudos we achieve. Arguing with the Americans privately may be the most effective way in influencing them, but it gives a public impression of inactivity which may reduce domestic support for the Government.

(iv) (a) It is open to us to develop a more substantial arms control dialogue with the Russians, seeking to influence them in their negotiations with the Americans; and to demonstrate to domestic public opinion that we are doing so.

[but the
with
don't message
doesn't suggest
anything new]

But (b) the Soviet interest will be to split us from our Allies, and get a handle on our deterrent. The more active we are with the Russians, both in public and over the substance, the greater the opportunities we provide to the Russians to achieve their own ends, and the more concern we arouse both in Washington and in European capitals.

(v) (a) A greater focus on co-operation with Western Europe, in the formulation and implementation of arms control policy, could increase our own standing with both Washington and Moscow, consolidate our claim to a leading role in Europe, and enhance our ability to exercise influence across the board.

But (b) such a "European policy" on arms control may be no easier to create (thanks to the Irish, Greeks and others) than US-European agreement; and it would also have to be accompanied by readiness to face the consequences of periodic disagreement with the US.

/FUTURE



FUTURE CONDUCT OF POLICY

4. Progress in arms control is not autonomous, but dependent upon the wider relationship with the East, and on Soviet readiness to do business. Mr Gorbachev may have two possible strategies to deploy over the next 18 months. If this year's Summit produces concrete results, he may aim to conclude a substantive agreement. If not, he could seek to improve his chances of gaining advantage in the period after 1988 by playing on European and US public concerns, and hoping thus to secure the high ground from which to deal with the next US President.

5. We must continue to work within the Alliance, in the face of differences with the radicals (Greece, Denmark, Holland) and - of a wholly different quality - with the US. By exercising influence at times discreetly, at times publicly, at times bilaterally, at times in wider fora (NATO, the Twelve, WEU), but always working with at least one key element of the Administration, it may well be possible to make a worthwhile impact on US thinking. The optimum result was displayed in the Camp David Four Points, a private agreement on key principles which became a basis for the public US position.

6. The scope for UK initiatives covering directly European issues (eg the MBFR/CSCE complex) may offer more potential as political cooperation in the Community and WEU develops. Our deepening relationship with both the French and the Germans should make it easier to construct a credible European input. We will need to shape it our way, and to ensure we get the credit, rather than allowing others to reap most of the fruits. Even in the short term we can increase our influence within the Community countries so long as our voice is felt to be distinctive, not a dull echo of Washington. By exerting leverage on both ends of the

/Europe



They have
been very good
about consulting
me

Europe-US dumbbell, and in particular by increasing US sensitivity to the concerns of their Allies, we can carve out a more important, and domestically more impressive, role for British policy in this field.

7. This greater emphasis on the European dimension of the UK approach will be highly relevant over the next 18 months when the arms control agenda is likely to be dominated by the US/Soviet summits. An unsuccessful outcome would provide scope for the Opposition, CND etc forces to increase attacks on current Government policy. If it came to be widely felt that the White House was at least partially and perhaps largely responsible for blocking important progress in arms control, UK support for US positions would earn correspondingly less domestic credit. Nonetheless, support with the minimum of qualifications possible will continue to be essential, not only to maintain our ability to influence the Americans to change their policies where necessary, but for much wider and more fundamental security reasons, such as Atlantic solidarity and the continuation of the US nuclear guarantee.

8. The obvious folly of some independent initiatives - an offer to resume Comprehensive Test Ban negotiations; a No First Use of Nuclear Weapons pledge; an agreement to accept constraints on our own deterrent - should not blind us to the case for other areas for UK exploitation. These could comprise:

- [But
none
of these are
new] Security
- (i) emphasis on the prime objective of arms control as the enhancement of stability, ie more soundly based security; and - as a key element in this - of predictability (whether applied to offensive or defensive forces);

/(ii)



(ii) emphasis on the need for adequate verification to ensure confidence in compliance; and for agreements once reached to be fully observed;

(iii) earning credit for whatever progress is achieved in the Chemical Weapons negotiations, where in 1986 we shall be chairing the entire negotiations in Geneva on a total ban;

(iv) promoting measures - preferably in league with our European Allies - to reduce the risk of conventional conflict in Europe and conventional force levels themselves. The potential scope and importance of such measures should not be exaggerated. But limited moves may be possible;

(v) underlining the requirement for a balance of conventional forces between East and West, preferably at lower levels, if progress in nuclear arms control is to be made. We need to convince public opinion that the objective of a "world free from nuclear weapons" would make the world more dangerous (and Western Europe more vulnerable) unless the imbalance in conventional forces can be corrected. In this way we can counter the more unrealistic - or, in the Soviet case, propaganda - approach to nuclear disarmament.

9. The first two points are directly related to the major elements of the current arms control negotiations. They can provide us with a locus in the key public debate without having to introduce our own strategic systems. It can be said of the latter that they already provide us with a highly identifiable role in nuclear arms negotiations, ie our refusal to have them included. There may even be public credit to be gained if this refusal comes to be accepted as based upon a clear-headed and justifiable defence of UK

/national



national interests for the foreseeable future. A British role which is seen to be constructive in close contact with our European partners, and at times distinctive from the less popular approaches in Washington, will have much to commend itself, to both international and domestic opinion. We must avoid fanning the embers of anti-Americanism. But an identifiably British approach can rebut the crude anti-US line of some in the UK. It can also reflect a feeling which may be growing in the public debate, that in addition to the US guarantee our deterrent serves both UK and European interests. A stout defence of policy may be more productive than an attitude of semi-apology.

PRESENTATION

10. It will be important to emphasise the UK national interests - rather than an isolated preference for arms control - which our policy is designed to advance. At times there may be more to be gained from pointing to European support for UK ideas than to UK support for those of the US. It will be necessary to balance the credit to be gained domestically and among other Allies by proposing responsible views, against the credit we may as a result put at risk in certain circles in Washington and consequent implications for US willingness to live up to its transatlantic commitments.

11. Another possibility would be to emphasise for our public opinion, more than we have done up till now, our own input into the Alliance process and the degree of influence we exert in Washington. In the past we have tended in public statements to start from the position that we offer our full support to the US across the arms control board. Only thereafter do we express individual views, or claim credit for persuading the Administration or other Allies of

/a



a certain course. We have to bear in mind that American readiness to take account of our views may be reduced if they come to see us as regularly playing to the gallery. However, we have to weigh this potential loss against the danger that, by putting emphasis in the first place on our support for the US, we risk giving the impression that this is the major UK contribution to the debate.

12. Such a shift would of course need to be handled with particular care if it focussed not merely on prior UK action to restore Alliance consensus (the successful broker image); but also on a UK determination to stand apart from Washington (or Bonn or Paris) where necessary (the leader by conviction image). This position would be more easily sustainable, and in the longer term more salutary for the Alliance if, in cases of public disagreement with Washington, we had first made sure of full European backing.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

MAY 1986

UK APPROACH TO ARMS CONTROL: STATE-OF-PLAY

1. Geneva Negotiations : Proposals by each side in autumn 1985 and Geneva Summit the start of serious negotiations. UK supports objective of negotiations (ending arms race on earth and preventing one in space) and US approach. Gorbachev January agenda open to serious doubt: US proposals hold out prospects of real, deep cuts. Understand US refusal to abandon SDI in direct link with cuts in offensive weapons. US/UK dialogue on how to handle this problem.

2. START : Negotiations resumed March 1985, possibilities fair. Geneva Summit called for "early progress" and agreed principle of 50% reductions. Main British interest : to ensure significant cuts, greater stability, and exclusion of UK/French systems. Influence over specific issues, except over third country systems, not to be overestimated.

3. INF : Also resumed March 1985. At Geneva Summit Soviets agreed to negotiation on an interim agreement delinked from START/Space baskets. Latest US proposals in February give Russians variety of options. But major obstacles to progress; notably Soviet determination to secure constraints on UK/French systems.

4. British Deterrent : Need to keep UK deterrent insulated complicates UK approach to nuclear arms control. Broad public support for Trident, but concerns

(eg over costs) may increase.

5. Chemical Weapons (CW) Treaty : UK chairmanship of CW negotiations at CD, US decision to resume CW production and impetus of Summit process set stage for progress in 1986. Soviet willingness to conclude ban still uncertain. UK will press our institutional and verification ideas, especially (privately) on challenge inspection where we continue to differ from the US.

6. CW Use : Some evidence of use in Asia, continued Iraqi use in Gulf War proven. Danger that others will be encouraged to develop own CW capability. Limited progress in Western efforts to develop CW non-proliferation regime. Soviet interest in co-operation on this.

7. Nuclear Testing : Soviet/non-aligned pressure for resumption of CTB negotiations. Some signs of possible US-Soviet dialogue, but no chance of major steps being taken, given fundamental US opposition to CTB. US/UK on defensive, with little support from Allies. Scope for Soviet propaganda eg, moratorium proposal, pressure for resumption of negotiations.

8. MBFR : New Western initiative (at UK/FRG instigation) tabled December 1985. Won West public high ground, East on defensive with feeble response. Likelihood of agreement limited. Need in 1986 to consider relationship with CDE follow-up, after Vienna CSCE Review Conference.

9. CDE : Procedural progress in 1985 has opened way for initial drafting this year. Scope for worthwhile agreement on CSBMS, but pressure to go for a largely cosmetic mini-package.
10. Outer Space at CD : Committee potential safety-valve for non-aligned wish to be involved in space issues (SDI of more interest than ASATs), and for elaboration of Western positions. Need to avoid impact on US/Soviet negotiations, main operational focus.
11. "Prevention of Nuclear War" (PNW) : Soviet/non-aligned pressure at CD/UN to engage in substantive debate on preferred themes, most unacceptable to West. Little prospect of constructive discussion, let alone agreement.
12. Radiological Weapons (RW) : Potential Treaty blocked by non-aligned insistence on RW Treaty with wider scope. Little pressure on West to achieve result.
13. UN First Committee : Inherently weak Western position at UN makes major success unlikely. No question of altering basic Western policies to please UN audience. Effort needed to improve Western coordination; encourage greater American interest in UN disarmament process; and persuade moderate non-aligned to follow line independent of radicals.

14. Biological Weapons (BW) : BW Convention Review Conference due in September. UK aim to improve compliance provisions (without compromising Western position at CW negotiations), to avoid problems over scope of Convention, and to keep Russians on defensive.
15. Disarmament and Development (DIS/DEV) : UN-sponsored Conference on relationship originally due in Paris in July now postponed by French to 1987. Welcome to UK, who would have been on defensive, facing unrealistic demands from developing world for more aid.
16. Nuclear Non-Proliferation : NPT Review Conference hard-won success, though US and UK isolated on CTB. Now following up NPTRC recommendations on safeguards and peaceful use of nuclear energy. Long-term objective of promoting successful 1990 NPTRC, and continued health of Treaty. Little prospect of major new signatories. Special worries over developments in Sub-continent.
17. South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty : Nuclear powers to be asked to subscribe to Protocols in August. Strong French opposition, no US decisions. UK current approach to play long.

UK APPROACH TO ARMS CONTROL: PREVIOUS INITIATIVES 1983-85

1. In December 1983 Ministers identified specific areas where a particular UK role could be established, in terms both of private activity and public presentation:

- (a) improving the state of the East/West relationship;
- (b) re-examining the concept of arithmetical parity as a basic factor in the Western approach to arms control;
- (c) enhancing the Western performance at the UN in terms of the arms control debate there;
- (d) studying the consequences of a merger between the INF and START negotiations; and
- (e) pursuing with more vigour the then approaches to MBFR, CDE and the NPT Review Conference.

2. Subsequently, HMG played a specific role in all these areas:

- particularly in the improvements in the East/West relationship, with the Prime Minister in the van;
- Alliance thinking about parity became more practical;
- the Western performance at the UN improved; ??
- new movement was injected into the MBFR negotiations; and
- a good result was achieved - against the odds - at the NPTRC.

CONFIDENTIAL

3. In addition, the UK contribution to the development of the US and Alliance approach to the Geneva negotiations (including SDI), based on the seminal Four Points of Camp David, was recognised and generally welcomed. In other areas such as the chemical weapons negotiations we played an increasingly important and prominent part, to the approval of our Allies and public opinion.

CONFIDENTIAL