



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~836 7022~~ 218 2111/3

MO 11/9/4L

10th November 1986

ms

Prime Minister

Dear Charles,

*1 year later
CDS went a bit
far.*

*CDP
18/K.*

ARMS CONTROL

At the Prime Minister's meeting on 3rd November the Chief of the Defence Staff was instructed to bring to the attention of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) the various arguments against basing deterrence solely on cruise missiles which had been instrumental in our own decision to acquire Trident.

Admiral Fieldhouse has talked to Admiral Crowe on the secure telephone link. He started by making the point that an independent nuclear deterrent was the corner-stone of our defence policy; that the cost of an alternative non-ballistic deterrent to Trident was staggering; and that, without US material support, maintaining the Trident as a unique UK system through full deployment life was out of the question. It was also particularly disturbing to read of recent comments by Mr Shultz to the effect that Europe could match the Soviets conventionally if they tried harder, and that there need be no specific linkage between the nuclear proposals and conventional reductions. CDS then asked how the JCS stood on 100% elimination of ballistic missiles.

Admiral Crowe's response was forthright and unequivocal. Although the JCS went along with the INF proposals, and a 50% ballistic missile reduction (though with some reservations in the latter case), they took vigorous exception to the 100% option and had represented this most strongly at the highest level. However, they had got nowhere and were now tasked with studying in detail just what 100% elimination would mean. It was already clear that it would prove enormously costly.

CDS commented that he understood Admiral Crowe's position, and clearly the JCS had no option but to act as directed. But Admiral Crowe could perhaps give early emphasis to the difficulties this was causing for America's principal ally. It was not just a military issue; the political implications were far-reaching both for the United Kingdom nationally and for NATO. Moreover this was equally true whether the 100% option was a genuine objective or was just a negotiating tactic. It

C D Powell Esq
No 10 Downing Street



represented a priceless gift for the Labour Party opposition and might tip an election outcome their way. The possible consequences of this included no nuclear weapons in the UK; no US bases in the UK; progressive weakening of European NATO; in short, a major victory for the USSR. The JCS should, CDS said, be clear on these counts.

Admiral Crowe indicated that such possibilities were not yet fully appreciated by the Administration where too many of those concerned were focussing solely on getting rid of nuclear weapons without considering the consequences. The implications had not been thought through militarily or politically. He undertook however to represent all that CDS had said. The JCS themselves were clear on the dangers. There had been a "lot of nonsense" in the papers about their position, but it had been necessary for them to keep a low profile because of the elections. From now on it was likely that their opposition would become more widely known. The impact of recent Senate changes was difficult to predict, but Senator Nunn was likely to oppose strongly anything involving substantial extra expenditure.

Turning to the Prime Minister's forthcoming visit, CDS made the point that an offer by the President that we could buy all the cruise missiles we needed to create an alternative deterrent would be no solution. Both costs and associated manpower implications would be unmanageable for us. Admiral Crowe made it clear that this was precisely their problem too. He fully understood the concerns CDS had identified and would make them known.

CDS undertook to ensure that Admiral Crowe's frankness was respected, and his comments used with the greatest discretion. Given that he was revealing a profound disagreement between the JCS and the President on a point of major policy, it is particularly important to protect this confidence.

I am copying this on a strictly personal basis to Tony Galsworthy in the FCO and to Trevor Woolley in the Cabinet Office. May I ask that they take no further copies.

Yours sincerely,
 John Howe.

(J F HOWE)



COMPTON

