



Prime Minister Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 March 1985

Charles Powell, Esq.,  
No. 10 Downing Street.

Despite what this  
letter says, he does  
take issue with the need  
for a nuclear deterrent in Europe,  
since he argues that deterrence  
enhances insecurity. CJP  
2/8.

Dear Powell,

CALL BY NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER, 4 MARCH 10.30 a.m.

As an addition to the briefing for Mr. Lange's call I attach  
a copy of the text from which he spoke in the Oxford Union  
debate on 1 March, the motion being that "Nuclear weapons are  
morally indefensible". The Times of 2 March carried a  
summary of the text, but the debate itself attracted very little  
notice in the British press.

There are no new points of substance in the speech. Mr.  
Lange is careful not to take issue with the need for a nuclear  
deterrent in Europe, and expresses his understanding of that  
need (middle of second page). He goes on to say, and the Times  
did not print this, that "I do not argue here or anywhere else  
for unilateral disarmament".

Mr. Lange's contention is that New Zealand and the South  
Pacific can be protected without nuclear weapons and that a  
Nuclear Weapon Free Zone will remove from both the fear and  
insecurity which nuclear weapons have bred in Europe. The  
contention is based on a number of simplistic assumptions:

- (a) New Zealand is under no nuclear threat;
- (b) a Nuclear Free Zone is an effective bar to the  
deployment of nuclear weapons;
- (c) conventional conflicts will not arise in the South  
Pacific and can be regarded with equanimity.

I am copying this letter and attachment to Richard  
Mottram.

Yours ever,

Peter Hunt

Resident Clerk

c.c. Mr. Richard Mottram, Private Secretary, S.of S for  
Defence.

EMBARGOED AGAINST DELIVERY: 10 P.M. FRIDAY 1 MARCH (G.M.T.)  
11 A.M. SATURDAY 2 MARCH (N.Z.T.)

SPEECH NOTES

RT HON DAVID LANGE

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

PRIME MINISTER

"NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE MORALLY INDEFENSIBLE"

(ARGUMENT FOR THE AFFIRMATIVE, OXFORD UNION, 1 MARCH 1985)

There is no moral case for nuclear weapons. The best defence which can be made of their existence and the threat of their use is that they are a necessary evil, an abhorrent means to a desirable end.

I hold that the character of nuclear weapons is such that their existence corrupts the best of intentions; that the means in fact perverts the end. I hold that their character is such that they have brought us to the greatest of all perversions, the belief that this evil is necessary when in fact it is not.

I make my case against nuclear weapons the more vigorously because I distinguish between them and all other forms of

coercive or deterrent power. I have no case to make against the policeman's truncheon. I accept that the state must arm itself with military force to protect its citizens against aggression or to defend the weak and helpless against aggression.

I do not accept that the state must for those reasons arm itself with nuclear weapons. That is a case I do not easily or lightly make in Europe where governments have held it their duty to arm themselves with nuclear weapons. I do not doubt for one moment the quality of the intention which led to that decision.

I freely acknowledge that the nuclear deterrent is maintained in good conscience with the honourable intention of preserving the life and freedom of the people of

Western Europe. Those governments are faced with the close presence of an alien and relentlessly oppressive regime and feel it their duty to prepare for their own defence by membership in a nuclear alliance. That is an assessment I understand and respect. I do not argue here or anywhere else for unilateral disarmament.

If I make that acknowledgement, I must then deal with the argument that it is the intention which determines the moral character of the action. My contention is that the character of nuclear weapons is such that it is demonstrably the case that they subvert the best of intentions.

There is a quality of irrationality about nuclear weapons which does not sit well with good intentions. A system of

defence serves its purpose if it guarantees the security of those it protects. A system of nuclear defence guarantees only insecurity. The means of defence terrorise as much as the threat of attack. In Europe, it is impossible to be unaware of the intensity of military preparedness. In New Zealand, the visitor must make an effort to find a military installation or indeed any sign of military activity, although it exists. There is no imperative in New Zealand to prepare for war; the result is that I feel safer in Wellington than I ever could do in London or New York.

Europe and the United States are ringed around with nuclear weapons, and your people have never been more at risk. There is only one thing as terrifying as the nuclear weapon pointed in your direction and that is the nuclear weapon pointed in your enemy's direction: the outcome of their use

would be the same in either case, and that is the annihilation of you and all of us. That is a defence which is no defence; it is a defence which disturbs far more than it reassures. The intention of those who for honourable motives use nuclear weapons to deter is to enhance security; they succeed only in enhancing insecurity. The machine has perverted the motive. The weapon has installed mass destruction as the objective of the best-intentioned.

The weapon has its own relentless logic, and it is inhuman. It is the logic of escalation, the logic of the arms race. Nuclear weapons make us insecure, and to compensate for our insecurity we build and deploy more nuclear weapons ... we know that we are seized by irrationality, and yet we persist.

We all of us know that it is wholly without logic or reason to possess the power to destroy ourselves many times over; and yet in spite of that knowledge the nuclear powers continue to refine their capacity to inflict destruction on each other and all the rest of us. Every new development, whatever its strategic or tactical significance, has only one result, and that is to add to an arsenal which is already beyond reason.

There is an argument in defence of the possession of nuclear weapons which holds that the terror created by the existence of nuclear weapons is in itself the fulfilment of a peaceful purpose: that the fear they inspire will prevent their use. I pass over here the preparations which are constantly being made for the winnable or even survivable nuclear war; I would ignore those and wholeheartedly embrace the logic

of the unthinkable war if it could be established that the damage which would result from the collapse of that logic would be confined to the nuclear weapon states. Unfortunately and demonstrably it would not. We in New Zealand used to be able to think that we could sit comfortably while the rest of the world destroyed itself; now we know that if the nuclear winter comes we shall join all the rest of you. It is a strange and dubious moral purpose which holds the whole world to ransom.

There is another assertion of the good moral character of nuclear weapons which holds that they are the armour of good against evil. It is the argument of the Crusaders: the evil which cannot be defeated by persuasion or example is to be subdued by threat of annihilation. The obvious difficulty

here is that evil has declined to be subdued; it will not accept annihilation; every attempt to subdue it strengthens its resolve to arm itself further. The will of the good is corrupted by the terrible force of the weapon into the will of the evil.

All of us everywhere, wherever we are, whatever we believe, live in fear of nuclear weapons. That is a community of interest which binds us all; it is common ground enough for all of us to wish to see the elimination of all nuclear weapons; yet nuclear weapons proliferate. They govern us. Their existence diverts attention from the fact that there are other ways of resolving the difficulties and tensions which will always abound in the world. Nuclear weapons are not needed. All the arguments which can be brought forward in support of

this evil come to nothing in the fact of its ultimate irrelevance. I do not make that assertion because I have some simple answer to the existence of nuclear weapons: all of you in Europe know that negotiating an end to nuclear weapons could hardly be more difficult, just as all of you know that we cannot negotiate control of them while the nuclear powers embrace the logic of escalation.

In New Zealand it is easy to accept that there is no need for nuclear weapons: The collisions and confrontations which take place in Europe are very far away from us. New Zealand is remote; it faces no threat; our close neighbours are like-minded states. We have been to war several times in this century, but never because we were attacked. It makes no sense for a country which faces no threat to seek to

surround itself with nuclear weapons. It makes no sense for that country to ask its allies to deter enemies which do not yet exist with the threat of nuclear weapons. It makes no sense for a region which is the most stable in the world to allow itself to become a strategic arena for the nuclear powers. Having considered all this, the people of New Zealand reached a straightforward conclusion: the nuclear weapons which defended them caused them more alarm than any which threatened them, and it was accordingly pointless to be defended by them.

In the South Pacific, it is not difficult to achieve the balance of force which allows you cheerfully to dispense with nuclear weapons. If you remove the nuclear weapons of your friends and allies you put all the nuclear powers on

the same footing. The South Pacific is not the North Atlantic. Nuclear weapons cannot be removed from Europe simply by dismantling the NATO arsenal; do that, and the other nuclear arsenal will still be here. But in the South Pacific there is at this moment the chance to turn away from the inhuman logic of nuclear weapons, to stand aside from the irrationality of the arms race and the doctrines of nuclear confrontation.

The government of New Zealand has excluded nuclear weapons from New Zealand; more than that, I hope that it and other governments in the South Pacific will shortly ask all the nuclear powers to honour a South Pacific Nuclear Zone. New Zealand has done that while honouring its longstanding commitments to the conventional defence of the South Pacific; to the economic and social development of the South Pacific; and to the security of South East Asia.

What has happened to New Zealand since the Labour Government was elected last year and began to implement its long-established policy is itself a commentary on the way in which nuclear weapons have assumed a moral life of their own.

New Zealand is not and has never been part of the strategic defences of the West. The nuclear weapons which our allies have in the past brought to New Zealand are tactical weapons. It is our view in New Zealand that being part of somebody else's tactical nuclear battle is as undesirable as being part of somebody else's strategic nuclear battle; but my point is that the decision of the New Zealand Government in no way weakened the deterrent power of the Western alliance. Yet we have been accused of undermining the West and giving comfort to the Soviet bloc. We have been told by <sup>Soviet</sup> officials in the United States Administration that our decision is not,

as they put it, to be cost-free; that in fact we are to be made to pay for our action. Not by our enemies, but by our friends. We are to be made an example of; we are to be ostracised and anathematised until we are compelled to resume our seat in the dress circle of the nuclear theatre. We have been told that because others in the West carry the fearful burden of a defence which terrorises as much as the threat, we too must carry that burden. We are actually told that New Zealanders cannot decide for themselves how to defend New Zealand but are obliged to adopt the methods which others use to defend themselves.

Lord Carrington, the Secretary-General of NATO, made a case in Copenhagen recently against the creation of nuclear weapon free zones. He argued that if the people of the United States found themselves bearing the burden alone, they would



tire of bearing it. That is exactly the point. Genuine agreements about the control of nuclear weapons do not cede the advantage to one side or the other: they enhance security, they do not diminish it. If such arrangements can be made, and such agreements reached, then those who remain outside those arrangements might well and truly tire of their insecurity. They will reject the logic of the weapon and assert their essential humanity. They will look for arms control agreements which are real and verifiable.

There is no humanity in the logic which holds that my country must be obliged to play host to nuclear weapons because others in the West are playing host to nuclear weapons. That is the logic which refuses to admit that there is any alternative to nuclear weapons, when plainly there is.

It is self-defeating logic, just as the weapons themselves are self-defeating: to compel an ally to accept nuclear weapons against the wishes of that ally is to take the moral position of totalitarianism, which allows for no self-determination. Any claim to a moral justification for the West's possession of nuclear weapons is thereby eliminated. We are no better than they are.

The great strength of the West lies not in force of arms but in its free and democratic systems of government.

That is why, in spite of all the difficulties New Zealand has got into with our friends and allies, I am not disheartened. I came to Great Britain by way of the United States, where I

put my case to the American people through the news media without any kind of hindrance from the United States Administration. Members of Her Majesty's Government have made it plain to me that they do not hold the views I hold, but nonetheless I am here and I can say freely whatever I please; just as any member of Her Majesty's Government would be welcome in New Zealand to expound any line of argument in any forum. That is the true strength of the West.

It is a strength which is threatened, not defended, by nuclear weapons. The appalling character of those weapons has robbed us of our right to determine our destiny and has subordinated our humanity to their manic logic. They have subordinated reason to irrationality and placed our very will

to live in hostage. Rejecting the logic of nuclear weapons does not mean surrendering to evil; evil must still be guarded against. Rejecting nuclear weapons is to assert what is human over the evil nature of the weapon; it is to restore to humanity the power of decision; it is to allow true moral force to reign supreme.

DEPARTMENT/SERIES ..... <i>PREM 19</i> ..... PIECE/ITEM ..... <i>1587</i> ..... (one piece/item number)	Date and sign
Extract/Item details:  <i>Minute from Cradock to Powell          dated 1 March 1985, with          attachment</i>	
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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

Prime Minister

Meeting with Mr. Lange.

Mr. Lange is proposing to

come with just his High

Commissioner. Are you content to

see him alone, with just me

present?

Yes Mr

CDP  
28/2.

File



cc: Sir P. Cradock

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

18 February 1985

MR. LANGE: SPEECH AT THE OXFORD UNION ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Thank you for your letter of 15 February enclosing a draft telegram of instructions to Wellington designed to bring home to Mr. Lange the implications of speaking in favour of a motion at the Oxford Union against nuclear weapons.

The Prime Minister has approved the instructions over the weekend, and your Resident Clerk was informed of this.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

Charles Powell

Len Appleyard, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

15 February, 1984<sup>5?</sup>

Prime Minister  
 Agree instructions?

CDP.  
 16/2.

Yes  
 ms

Dear Charles,

Mr Lange: Speech at the Oxford Union on Nuclear Weapons

As you know, Mr Lange, the New Zealand Prime Minister, is coming here on a private visit early next month. He is calling on the Prime Minister on 4 March and will also be having an audience of The Queen on 1 March.

While here, Mr Lange has been invited to speak at the Oxford Union. We now know that he is to propose the motion that: "All nuclear weapons are immoral".

The New Zealand MFA have taken the line with our High Commissioner that Mr Lange will studiously avoid saying anything which could be construed as damaging to the Western Alliance. Nevertheless, the Foreign Secretary is greatly concerned about the implications of Mr Lange speaking in favour of a motion on the lines apparently agreed. Anything said is likely to be given great publicity, particularly coming so soon after the public row between the Americans and New Zealand over ship visits and ANZUS. The subject chosen goes to the heart of a major political difference between the Government and Opposition. Although Mr Lange may possibly attempt to put his arguments in the context of multilateral disarmament, it seems inconceivable that his words will not be seized upon by the unilateral nuclear disarmament lobby. Furthermore, his speech is likely to be seen as an attack on NATO; as undermining the Western position on arms control; as adding to the difficulties on INF faced by some European countries; and as gratuitously offensive to the Americans. (The ANZUS row will be one of the subjects discussed during the Prime Minister's visit to Washington next week).

As a Commonwealth Prime Minister, Mr Lange is obviously free to come to this country and speak in the Oxford Union if he so wishes. There is a danger that, if we seek to dissuade him, this fact will deliberately be leaked in New Zealand. It could be portrayed as an attempt to "muzzle" Mr Lange and possibly attributed to American pressure. Any press stories of this sort in New Zealand would add fuel to the controversy already raging over ANZUS.

/Despite

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Despite these considerations, Sir Geoffrey Howe thinks it is essential that Mr Lange should be told quite clearly of the implications and dangers of coming to speak at the Oxford Union in favour of a motion on nuclear weapons being immoral. He proposes to do so on the lines of the attached telegram of instructions to our High Commissioner at Wellington and would be grateful for the Prime Minister's agreement for instructions to be issued in this sense.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD).

*Yours ever,*

*Len Appleyard*

(L V Appleyard)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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# OUT TELEGRAM

	Classification and Caveats <b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	Precedence/Deskby <b>IMMEDIATE 172300Z</b>
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NNNN ends telegram	BLANK	Catchword  harder
File number	Dept Private Office	Distribution Ltd SPD Defence D ACDD News D PS PS/Lady Young PS/Mr Renton PS/PUS Sir W Harding Mr Goodall Mr Weston Mr Wilson
Drafted by (Block capitals) PETER RICKETTS		
Telephone number		
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Copy to No 10



OUT TELEGRAM (CONT)

Classification and Caveats

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IMMEDIATE

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2 harder for the US government to keep the dispute within bounds.  
 3 3. Obviously, Lange as a Commonwealth Prime Minister is free  
 4 to take part in Oxford Union debates if he so wishes and to say  
 5 what he likes. In pointing out to him the dangers of what he  
 6 proposes we must avoid, if possible, any suggestion being  
 7 made in the press that we have tried to quote muzzle unquote  
 8 him. Rather than speak to the Acting High Commissioner here  
 9 therefore we think it better that you should speak to Lange  
 10 personally and to impress on him Ministerial concern about  
 11 what he apparently intends.

12 4. In speaking to Lange you should say that <sup>the</sup> Prime Minister  
 13 and Ministers are looking forward to seeing him here early next  
 14 month. They understand that he will also be speaking at the  
 15 Oxford Union. He is of course perfectly at liberty to do so  
 16 and to speak his mind. However, Ministers are very concerned  
 17 that, by speaking in favour of the motion proposed, he will be  
 18 involving himself directly in a subject which is a major point  
 19 of dispute between the Government and Opposition here. The  
 20 press are likely to represent what is said as an attack on  
 21 NATO: as detrimental to the Western position on arms control:  
 22 and as adding to the difficulties on INF already faced by some  
 23 European countries. (He should know that demonstrations have  
 24 already resumed here in the UK with preparations for the second  
 25 Cruise missile site). Ministers are anxious to do whatever  
 26 they can to ensure that the current difficulties within ANZUS  
 27 are resolved sensibly and without acrimony. They consider  
 28 that the sort of press publicity likely to be generated by  
 29 Mr Lange proposing a motion on the lines apparently chosen will  
 30 make this task a great deal harder. It will be virtually  
 31 impossible for Ministers here to avoid commenting on what  
 32 Lange has said, which would mean that we should be dragged into  
 33 the dispute.

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34 5. If necessary you should make clear that there have been no

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OUT TELEGRAM (CONT)

	Classification and Caveats <b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	<b>IMMEDIATE</b>	Page <b>3</b>
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1 >>>>  
 2 (no) discussions with the Americans about Lange's speaking  
 3 engagement here. The views expressed arise solely from the  
 4 concerns of UK Ministers at the damage which this action  
 5 would do to British and Alliance interests.  
 6 6. We are not clear whether Lange has publicly announced  
 7 his visit and the Oxford Union speech. If not, we hope that  
 8 he will avoid doing so until he has reflected on the Ministerial  
 9 views above.

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cc: SPC

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

29 January, 1985

Visit by the New Zealand Prime Minister

BF  
Thank you for your letter of 28 January about the private visit to the United Kingdom of Mr. Lange. The Prime Minister agrees to see Mr. Lange at 1030 on 4 March. I should be grateful for a brief by 4 p.m. on 3 March.

C. D. POWELL

P. F. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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JK

1030 4 March

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*ARC*  
①



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

It would be difficult  
not to see him as an  
old Commonwealth PM, though 28 January 1985

I don't think there is any need  
to entertain him this time.  
Dear Charles, we can fit him in the  
diary on 4 March.

Agree to  
see him?  
Yes not CDP  
207

Private Visit by the New Zealand Prime Minister: Possible  
Call on the Prime Minister

The New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr Lange, will be visiting the UK from 27 February to 4 March. His main purpose is to speak in a debate at the Oxford Union on nuclear weapons. From London he will go to Geneva where he will speak to the Committee on Disarmament. Mr Lange has asked whether he might call on the Prime Minister during his visit.

Mr Lange has now been in office for six months. A key element of the policies pursued by his Labour administration has been to reduce the use of subsidies in the management of the New Zealand economy. Our own relations remain very close. But a continuing problem which affects the Americans in particular but also the Western alliance in general, is that Mr Lange, although showing signs of greater realism since taking office, has not yet demonstrated any serious disposition in public to alter the policy his party adopted before the elections on the exclusion of nuclear armed or nuclear powered ships. We have been working on both the New Zealanders and the Americans in an attempt to get this policy changed so that ships' visits from both the UK and the United States can go ahead as before and Western strategic interests in the Pacific not be seen to suffer a setback.

The Prime Minister last saw Mr Lange when he was here in September. There are a number of subjects which could usefully be discussed with him including that of ships' visits. Mr Lange would be available at any time on Thursday 28 February or on the morning of Monday 4 March. If the Prime Minister was not able to receive him on this occasion, Sir Geoffrey Howe would be happy to do so: Mr Lange expressed the wish to see Sir Geoffrey if a call on the Prime Minister was not possible.

*Yes*  
*Peter Ricketts*

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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