



UNITED KINGDOM PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
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S. XI. 86,

Dear Charles,

Herewith a blind copy of the letter which I mentioned to the Prime Minister & you on Thursday. It is intended to do not much more than start the ball rolling - which given present attitudes in some quarters may be more difficult than it sounds!

Yours

Richard.



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UK SECURITY POLICY POST-REYKJAVIK

1. In my letter to Timothy Daunt of 30 September about a European defence identity, I commented on the general recognition which I had encountered during my briefing in London of the fact that relations between Europe and the United States were entering a new phase. This has been given additional point by what has happened in Reykjavik. It will of course be weeks or months before we can say whether the meeting between Messrs Reagan and Gorbachev represented a real watershed in either East/West or West/West relations. But whether or not the agreements sketched out in Iceland are formalised, the reverberations of the "near miss" are unlikely to die away for some considerable time - if ever. And it may be that it will be the consequences for West/West relations which prove the more lasting.
2. There is a great deal of work to do, nationally and multinationally, if the follow-up to Reykjavik is to take place in a controlled manner. In one sense this work has already begun. We have been making representations in Washington. We failed to get the Americans to adjust the presentation of their Reykjavik ideas in Geneva but in other regards I am sure that our concern is being registered. The Prime Minister will be seeing President Reagan at Camp David next week and will, I hope, be focussing on the aspects of immediate concern. This letter represents an attempt to focus attention on the next stage, to look a little further ahead but still in an "action oriented" rather than purely theoretical way.
3. My own view is that while the course of events at the summit was unforeseen, the behaviour of the US Delegation reflected an underlying evolution in the relationship between the United States and Europe which has been in progress for some considerable time. The SDI programme itself, and the way it has been handled, is a symptom of that same evolution. Even if, as must be probable, the Soviet Union prevents the Reykjavik programme being finalised in full, the process of change in West/West relations seems likely to continue. There is nothing new in this observation. But it may be that HMG

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ought to be considering more urgently whether or not our overall policy on international security issues needs to be adjusted to take account of the situation.

4. It seems evident that other NATO governments - and indeed the US Government itself - are reflecting in similar vein on the need for a reassessment. If this is right, HMG could and should play a prominent role in the collective rethink. In my 2 months here, and not least in the 3 days I spent in Washington last week, I have been much struck by the extent to which people expect the British to have an interesting and "serious" opinion on Alliance security issues - even to the point of waiting for us to formulate views before they formulate their own.

5. I do not mean that people always follow our lead. But they will certainly be inclined to pay attention to any lead we may care to give. It seems to me that in the recent past our policy on this complex of problems has been more reactive than it need be. It would in my view do HMG no harm, and might do the Alliance considerable good, if we were to pursue both at Ministerial and official level a rather more forward policy. This may mean rattling the odd window, eg in Washington or Paris. We should not aim to do so but equally we should not refrain from examining options simply because they may be feared to have this consequence.

6. If we are to give a lead we need, obviously, to have a clear idea - or at least a clearer idea - of how we ourselves would like the situation to develop over the next few years and what we might try to do to influence events in the right direction. Although there are many uncertainties - domestic as well as international - the basic issues are well known and the subject of constant debate, inside as well as outside government. What would now seem very timely would be an attempt (a) to analyse the way the issues and our attitudes to them interact and (b) to draw up an overview of the implications of the evolving situation for us and for the Alliance as a whole.

7. The issues which such a study might address would have to include:-

a. the implications of Reykjavik and of emerging attitudes in Washington (see Washington telegrams Nos 2678 and 2679 (not to all)) for current NATO strategy. **Would greater (or complete) reliance on airbreathing systems force us to reconsider the validity of extended deterrence and of MC 14/3? Or is it too soon to address the problem? (I believe that a start is being made on analysing these issues in preparation for the Camp David meeting. This preliminary analysis should throw up some useful pointers for future work.)**

b. the relative importance for the UK over the next decade

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of the United States and of Europe in the security field. Clearly the contribution of the US to our collective security will remain overwhelmingly important. But for how much longer can the Alliance go on as at present if the Europeans are not seen to be playing a still larger and more clearly defined role in the Organisation? At the risk of crying wolf, can we assume in the light of Reykjavik, Gramm-Rudman, etc etc that the level and composition of US forces in Europe will not change between now and the end of the century - a date now drawing close for many defence planning purposes? What can the Europeans do to maximise the chances that there will be no changes and to minimise the damage if there are?

- c. perceptions of the threat. Is there a growing difference in European and North American perceptions of the threat, of where it comes from and of how it needs to be handled?
- d. means of improving NATO's military effectiveness. Given that it is going to be difficult to maintain present levels of military expenditure, still less (pace Mr Shultz) to increase them, do we all need to look even harder at ways of getting a better return for our money? Since no-one is very likely at this stage to come up with new ideas, are there areas which would be susceptible to fresh political impetus? What about "specialisation", redeployment of existing forces?
- e. the European contribution. Are there means of raising the profile of the Europeans and the value of their input within the Alliance? Are there ways of doing this (and in the longer run of increasing European confidence in their own potential in the defence field) without alienating the Americans? Is it right to assume that in the short run - apart from whatever can be done under (d) above - this can only mean political gestures or institutional initiatives, eg rationalisation within a relocated WEU of the machinery for co-ordinating and hence for stimulating the emergence of a European viewpoint?
- f. co-ordination of the West's arms control rhetoric (or "vision") with our defence requirements to ensure that these remain in phase. Given that we have to have a serious and credible arms control posture (both because arms control agreements on the right terms are desirable and because our electorates demand it), how do we avoid getting into positions (zero-zero INF in Europe, 10-year programmes for the abolition of ballistic missiles) which do not seem to be in our interests?
- g. developing a sound Western position on conventional arms control issues. Since this is an area where Europe

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sits at the top table, is it not one which we should be taking very seriously indeed? This would seem to be an area where HMG should be playing a major role and where we should avoid allowing either the United States or France to call the tune;

- h. procedures for management and consultation. Assuming that we are already into a period of change and evolution, whose duration and intensity is unforeseeable, how do we manage it? Is it possible to persuade the Americans to consult with the UK and with others before rather than after they make up their minds? Can we hope to have detailed international consultation within the Alliance on other than a very limited basis, eg quadripartite? Can even quadripartite consultation address itself to longer term as opposed to immediate problems? Do we need to reassess the position of France yet again?

8. It would not in my view be right to launch at once a major, fully-staffed and definitive review of these issues. It would take a great deal of time and would undoubtedly leak. Nor probably would such a review be the right way to start. But I think there is a case for a pilot study carried out by 2 or 3 people - perhaps one each from the FCO, the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office - which would aim to sketch out fairly quickly the issues, to summarise the possibilities and to provide a basis for seeking Ministerial decisions on where we go from here. It might also provide material for some "balloon floating" speeches and for informal discussions by Ministers and officials with close allies. If the study could be done by officials taken off other duties temporarily a first result might presumably be available by the turn of the year. It would certainly be helpful here in Brussels to have something available within that kind of timescale.

*John*

*Michael*

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

cc: D Nicholls Esq CMG, DUS(P), MOD  
 Sir A Acland GCMG KCVO, Washington  
 Sir J Bullard KCMG, Bonn  
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