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Earlier papers filed on Soviet Union: P2 PM's visit 13 November 1987  
From the Private Secretary to the Soviet Union 28/3-1/4/87

Thank you for your letter of 19 October which I have now had time to reflect on.

I very much agree that there is a risk of any dialogue with the Warsaw Pact on military doctrine becoming an unprofitable exercise in propaganda. As you say, NATO is a very different alliance from the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet Union might well feel that in a public debate on doctrine it has a number of plausible lines to follow - such as that of no first use of nuclear weapons - which could well strike a sympathetic chord in the West.

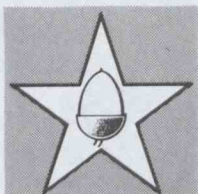
We are therefore taking very great care in considering our response to the Warsaw Pact proposal. I think that, despite the risks, there are also tricks that might be won. We should, for example, be able to direct attention in the course of any such discussion to the connection between doctrine and the military capabilities to which doctrine relates. This would put the Soviet Union on the defensive over its inability so far to discuss comparative force structures and numbers in a practical and detailed manner. The French idea of a three week long seminar, outside the context of specific negotiations, is one possibility although we must take care not to present the Warsaw Pact with an opportunity to score points at the West's expense. Alternatively, the subject could be addressed at resumed CDE or, conceivably, at Conventional Stability negotiations. In this way, we would avoid giving the impression that the West is reluctant to enter into a debate in an area relevant to the conventional imbalance to which we attach such importance and to which we constantly draw public attention. You yourself make the point that discussions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact on doctrine need not be a bad thing.

I am grateful to you for writing. The point that response to this proposal requires a careful assessment of risk and advantage is well taken, and is very much part of our thinking.

Charles Powell

C.N. Donnelly, Esq.

From: C N Donnelly



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19 October 1987

*Ken Clarke*

One aspect of the current arms limitation talks is causing me increasing concern. This is the Warsaw Pact proposal to discuss military doctrine with NATO. The points at issue are as follows:

1. Soviet military doctrine is a coherent and all embracing military and political philosophy, developed and maintained by a most impressive framework for 'academic' military and political research involving literally thousands of senior officers. It is implemented by a true General Staff copied from the Prussian model. It has its own vocabulary, and imbues words with very precise meanings.

2. NATO as an organization has a totally different function from that of the Warsaw Pact. It reacts and responds to the requirement of 16 nations, attempting to co-ordinate their different views. It neither initiates nor dictates policies to its members. Therefore, in Soviet terms there is no NATO 'military doctrine' at all. In fact, none of the major members of the NATO alliance have a true, formal military doctrine as does the USSR. The recent NATO 'Conceptual Framework' is a step in the right direction, but even its strongest supporters would admit to its inadequacies.

3. Unlike NATO, the Warsaw Pact is not a voluntary alliance of democracies, but

one of the means by which the Soviet Union co-ordinates the activities of its allies in support of Soviet strategic and operational plans. There is, therefore, no Warsaw Pact military doctrine distinct from Soviet military doctrine.

4. Consequently, if NATO engages in discussion of 'doctrine' with the Warsaw Pact, it is highly likely that, unless they are specially trained and prepared, NATO negotiators, however capable, will find themselves at a considerable disadvantage. The need to define their own terms, their ability to understand the implications of what their WP counterparts are proposing, and a total lack of standardization of concepts on the issue amongst NATO member nations, will render their task very difficult.

5. I do not think discussions between NATO and the WP on doctrine a bad thing, on the contrary. But I am most concerned that we might put ourselves in a position of serious diplomatic disadvantage, particularly in the eyes of our publics. The news that the French are proposing a 3 week long 35 Nation - East-West Seminar on doctrinal issues heightens this concern.

very truly  
Chin



*Sho*

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*From the Private Secretary*

22 October 1987

Thank you so much for your letter of 9 October, which I received on return from Vancouver, and for sending me the two papers, which I found very interesting.

I have also seen your further letter about discussions on military doctrine with the Warsaw Pact. I will reply to this as soon as possible.

CHARLES POWELL

C. N. Donnelly, Esq.

*h*

Chris DONNELLY  
5/11



VLB  
cc to PC

① 10/11

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*From the Private Secretary*

22 October 1987

I enclose a copy of a letter which I have received from Chris Donnelly of the Soviet Studies Research Centre at Sandhurst about a Warsaw Pact proposal to discuss military doctrine with NATO. The Prime Minister encouraged him to write in from time to time. I should be grateful for a draft reply.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Lyn Parker (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

CHARLES POWELL

John Howe, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

JK



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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MO 38L

12th November 1987

*Dear Charles,*

In your letter of 22nd October to John Howe, you asked for a draft reply to a letter you had received from Chris Donnelly (an MOD employee!) of the Soviet Studies Research Centre at RMA Sandhurst. I attach a draft.

I am sending a copy of this letter and of the enclosure to Lyn Parker (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

*Yours sincerely*  
*[Signature]*  
(I C F ANDREWS)  
Private Secretary

Charles Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

Bob

DRAFT LETTER FROM PS/PRIME MINISTER TO C N DONNELLY, ESQ

Thank you for your letter of 19th October.

which I have now had time to reflect on

I very much agree

The Prime Minister shares your perception that there is a risk of any dialogue with the Warsaw Pact on military doctrine becoming an unprofitable exercise in propaganda. As you say, NATO is a very different alliance from the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet Union might well feel that in a public debate on doctrine it has a number of plausible lines to follow - such as that of no first use of nuclear weapons - which could well strike a sympathetic chord in the West.

We are therefore taking very great care in considering with our allies our response to the Warsaw Pact proposal. But despite the dangers, there are also tricks that might be won. We should, for example, be able to direct attention in the course of any such discussion to the connection between doctrine and the military capabilities to which doctrine relates. This would put the Soviet Union on the defensive over its inability so far to discuss comparative force structures and numbers in a coherent, practical and detailed manner. The French idea of a three week long seminar, outside the context of specific negotiations, is one possibility although we must take care not to present the Warsaw Pact with an opportunity to score points at the West's expense. Alternatively, the subject could be addressed at resumed CDE or, conceivably, at Conventional Stability negotiations. In this way, we would avoid

I think not,

giving the impression that the West is reluctant to enter into a debate in an area relevant to the conventional imbalance to which we attach such importance and to which we constantly draw public attention. You yourself make the point that discussions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact on doctrine need not be a bad thing.

I am grateful to you for writing. The point that response to this proposal requires a careful assessment of risk and advantage is well taken, and is very much part of our thinking.

GA