

PRIME MINISTER

c. Mr. Gow
Mr. Jackling

Disarmament Debate (10/11 May)

We have a space in the diary to discuss this at 0945 on Tuesday, 3 May.

I attach a draft opening speech, based on material supplied by Mr. Gillmore.

The structure is:

- (a) Introduction
- (b) Basic principles of defence policy
- (c) The Soviet threat
- (d) HMG's attitude to disarmament
 - (i) START
 - (ii) MBFR
 - (iii) Madrid
 - (iv) Chemical weapons
 - (v) INF
- (e) Joint decision (to be drafted later)
- (f) Conclusion

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A.J.C.

28 April 1983

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MR. COLES CC RB

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Set parameters - Too discursive at beginning
New York speech
Protect way of life

Defence + deterrent policy has secured peace with freedom & justice.
Method Nato, balance + nuclear is part of deterrence.

Different problem of Russia + UK
Russia not import: UK import - have to defend seas.

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Cruise not a first strike weapon - too slow
Salt agreement - force structure

28 April 1983

RESTRICTED



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

6 April 1983

DISARMAMENT DEBATE

As you know, there is to be a disarmament debate shortly after Parliament returns from the Easter Recess. The precise date is not yet fixed.

On the assumption that Mr. Foot opens for the Opposition, the Prime Minister is likely to open the debate for the Government. I should accordingly be grateful if you could let me have a draft opening speech, agreed with the Ministry of Defence, by close of play on Thursday, 13 April.

I have not yet been able to discuss with the Prime Minister the line she will wish to take in her speech. But I enclose as an annex to this letter an outline which I think she might be disposed to follow.

In the context of preparations for this speech, the Prime Minister would be grateful if Mr. Gilmour could give her another oral briefing to update her on nuclear issues. A convenient time would be 3 o'clock on Monday, 11 April.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

bcwr

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B/F-

cc Defence, Jan 1980,
Defence Debates
on Nuclear
Weapons Issues.

COPIES

DISARMAMENT DEBATE : OPENING SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Introduction

① The Government warmly welcomes the opportunity for this debate. Defence and disarmament are questions of the deepest national and international concern. It is right that the House should discuss them frequently. This is the fifth occasion since January 1980 when there has been an opportunity for a full debate.

The existence of nuclear weapons, and our reliance upon them to deter aggression, raise issues of great complexity which engage our emotions as well as our minds. There is a strong temptation to look for simple solutions and to opt out of the situation which nuclear weapons have created. We must resist that temptation. It is the duty of the Government and this House to be clear-headed about the problems and danger we confront - and to be practical and persistent in our pursuit of arms control agreements which will enhance our security and reduce the risk of conflict.

Basic Principles of Defence Policy

Mr. Speaker, we have been blessed with the good fortune of living through one of the longest periods of continuous peace in the history of Western Europe. Some argue that this is not a result of the Alliance policy of deterrence; that peace has been

3 preserved despite that policy; that Western Europe would now be safer without the shield of deterrence, without the collective commitment to NATO by which Europe and North America combine to protect themselves from aggression.

Common-sense says otherwise. This Government - indeed all British Governments since NATO was created and all our NATO allies - have had no doubt that the peace has been kept precisely because of our policy of effective deterrence. We have not taken peace for granted. And we must not take it for granted now.

/ No potential

No potential aggressor must be allowed to believe that the Western democracies lack the will or the capability to defend themselves. My generation saw how the misapprehensions of a leader of an aggressive state led to tragedy on an appalling scale. We simply cannot afford to learn all over again the lessons of the past. The greatest risk to peace comes not from the provision of adequate defence forces, not from an unmistakeable willingness to defend our democracies and our way of life. It comes from the perception of a potential aggressor that our determination is not genuine and that we lack the means to demonstrate it. This Government will not allow that to happen.

{ We threaten no-one. } Our aims are purely defensive. But we must have weapons sufficiently powerful and effective to deter - and if we have such weapons, they will never be used. That is both the paradox and the logic of deterrence.

In the nuclear age in particular, there is no alternative to adequate deterrence. The advent of the ballistic missile and the nuclear warhead mean that now and for very many years to come there is no defensive system which can guarantee absolute security against attack. This may change one day. President Reagan has called on American scientists to investigate the possibilities. But any such change is far away. For so far ahead as we can see we have to find other ways of ensuring that no attack, conventional or nuclear, is launched. The basic requirement is that the Soviet Union, when it calculates profit and loss, must always reach the conclusion that no attack against the NATO democracies could provide an advantage which is not substantially outweighed by the damage and destruction which it would bring upon itself.

/ That is

That is why the basis of NATO's strategy remains the doctrine of flexible response. The Alliance has to be seen to be capable of meeting any form of attack, conventional or nuclear, with a response at the same level, while retaining the capability of raising the level of that response if necessary. So NATO needs a balance with the Soviet Union - a balance of conventional land, sea and air forces and a balance of nuclear weapons at all ranges. We do not need to match the Russians weapon for weapon and man for man. We have never sought this and we do not seek it now. But we cannot allow major imbalances at any one level.

Those, Mr. Speaker, are the principles which have governed the defence policies of successive Governments. They have been tested by experience and are valid now as they have been throughout all the years in which peace has been preserved. This Government will stick to them.

But there is another principle, to which I shall devote the rest of this speech. The Alliance has always sought to refine the practice of deterrence, to look for a safer and more stable balance of forces. It has worked for arms control and for disarmament. This Government wants both. But it wants real arms control and genuine disarmament which do not prejudice our security and freedom. We are not interested in slogans and foolhardy gestures which put our way of life at risk. Genuine disarmament must start with the real world.

The Soviet Threat

In the real world the NATO Alliance faces Warsaw Pact superiority in practically every aspect of military capability.

In Europe NATO has 84 divisions: Russia has 173, more than twice as many.

We have 13,000 main battle tanks: they have 42,500, more than three times as many.

Heavy artillery - 10,750 for us: 31,500 for them.

The same / ^{substantial} disparities apply in manpower, in armoured personnel carriers and in interceptor aircraft.

Then, nuclear weapons. The effect of the SALT Agreements of the 1970s has been to create a rough balance in strategic weapons, but on the basis of different force structures. For example, the Soviet Union has the majority of its strategic warheads on land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. Just over half the warheads of the American strategic force are at sea on submarines. It is the land-based intercontinental missiles which arouse most concern since, fixed silos being vulnerable, there is a risk that a potential aggressor will be tempted to use these missiles first for fear of losing them.

But it is another category of nuclear weapons - long-range intermediate weapons - which shows most starkly the current imbalance. Here again, a clear understanding of the facts is vital to policy.

Since 1977 the Soviet Union has brought into service 350 SS20s, each with 3 warheads, about two-thirds of which are targetted on the heartland of Western Europe. NATO has had no long-range INF missiles in Europe since the early 1960s.

The Soviet programme responds to no threat from NATO. There is no excuse for it. Their efforts to justify this monstrous programme have no shred of justification. No-one should be taken in by their propaganda. I select just one example. In March, 1982 the Russians announced a so-called unilateral moratorium on SS20 deployment. Since then they have targetted 108 more warheads on NATO in Europe. In other words, since that moratorium they have deployed against NATO as many SS20 warheads as NATO plans for its entire Pershing II deployment.

The Soviet military programme, unchecked by bad harvests, unimpeded by the needs of the Soviet people for improved social and welfare services, now absorbs about 14% of Soviet GDP, well over twice the NATO figure. The Soviet Union has the right of every sovereign state to ensure its own security. But this programme goes well beyond any conceivable requirements for national defence.

They assert repeatedly that they are a peace-loving state. Tell that to the Afghans.

They claim they seek only a military balance. But that is a term with which they play fast and loose. In 1979 Mr. Brezhnev said that deployment by NATO of new INF missiles would grossly violate the existing balance. The Russians arrived at a "balance" then by including missiles on American Poseidon submarines which were already limited and balanced under the SALT agreements. Later, they accepted the force of Western arguments and removed the Poseidon submarines from the calculation. And since Moscow's declaration/^{of a} balance in 1979 it has deployed over 210 new SS20 missiles. Yet it claims - and Mr. Gromyko said so again recently - that a balance still exists.

It is this sort of twisting of facts, distortion of reality, which has misled sincere people in the West to believe that there is nothing to choose between East and West, that both are wrong, that both are responsible for an unacceptable arms race. But the truth is otherwise. There is a clear Soviet threat, founded on a relentlessly expanding military programme. Any proposal for arms control or disarmament which does not take account of that fact and its implications is illusory and dangerous.

Moscow propaganda seeks constantly to portray the Soviet Union as a peace-loving nation, diligently seeking an accommodation with the inflexible and hawkish NATO Alliance. I do not think many people in this country are taken in by this but some are - so let us be clear what the real Soviet attitude to arms control is.

The Russian aim is to achieve and maintain military superiority over NATO and other potential enemies, particularly China. They try to prevent improvements in Western capability, partly by seeking to undermine our political will. They try to present themselves as a country so bent on peace that any further military build-up is unnecessary. That is the real purpose of the Warsaw Pact declaration made in Prague in January this year which called for a Treaty on Mutual Non-Use of Military Force. They seek to decouple the defence of Europe from the United States nuclear umbrella, in particular by weakening the link between deterrence in Europe and American strategic nuclear forces.

HMG's Attitude to Disarmament

Disarmament would be easy if Soviet policy was otherwise. But we must keep our eyes open and see the facts for what they are.
/ That

That is the only way that genuine disarmament which maintains our security can be brought about in the real world. I am not prepared, and no British government since the War has been prepared, to put this nation's security at risk for the sake of one-sided disarmament.

Disarmament which brought about instability, which simply increased the gross imbalances which we face already, would be irresponsible and dangerous.

Disarmament must be brought about by reductions on both sides. It must make the world more, not less stable. It must improve, not worsen the balance of forces. It must be verifiable.

Those principles underly a whole series of radical proposals for arms control and disarmament which the NATO Alliance has put forward. The Rt. Hon. Gentleman sometimes suggests that this Government is not interested in disarmament and supports his thesis with the argument that we take no unilateral initiatives. He is wrong. We have taken independent initiatives but we see no merit in acting independently for its own sake. We are a member of an Alliance and prefer to act with and through that Alliance, doing all we can to maintain its strength and solidarity. We are fully associated with all the Alliance's proposals and have helped to shape many of them. And if they were accepted the world would be a better place, a safer place, with many less weapons both nuclear and conventional.

I remind the House of the radical proposals which the Alliance has put forward.

In the START talks, the the Americans are pressing for major cuts. They want to reduce at once the number of strategic warheads on each side by a third. Over a half of the missiles on each side would be cut. The Americans are also ready to limit strategic bombers. The Russians have stalled. They argue that the US proposals would require the removal of large numbers of Soviet land-based missiles. But they ignore the fact the Americans would have to remove most of their missiles on Poseidon submarines which are an important part of their strategic force. The Russians' own proposals would reduce levels by only 25% below the agreed SALT II ceiling and they make it a condition that the US should agree not to instal Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. They are trying to make the all important START talks hostage to Allied acceptance of the Soviet position in the INF talks. Progress in the START talks is possible and possible soon - but only if the Russians negotiate seriously and remove the linkage with the INF talks.

I shall come to INF in a moment but let me first remind the House of other important Alliance disarmament proposals.

At the Vienna talks on Mutual Balanced Force Reductions in Europe NATO put forward nearly a year ago a comprehensive draft Treaty for a controlled phasing of reductions to a common agreed ceiling of 900,000 soldiers and airmen on each side, with detailed provision for verification and confidence building measures. The Soviet response has been to reject the need for agreement on the size of reductions and to put forward a vague prospect that after reductions there might be provision for verification, yet to be defined.

/ Then

Then at the Conference in Madrid of the signatories of the Helsinki Final Act, the West has been working for agreement to convene a Conference on Disarmament in Europe which would be specifically charged with agreeing militarily significant, binding and verifiable measures to improve confidence and security.

In March, my Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, visited the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva to table the latest in a series of British initiatives designed to achieve early progress towards a complete and global ban on chemical weapons. We have made constructive proposals for inspection of civil chemical industries, for a ban will be effective only if there is proper verification.

*Not work
on chemical -
then we have to
must information to give.*

/ INF Talks

INF Talks

I come finally to the Geneva talks on Intermediate Nuclear Forces. These are the principal focus of public attention at present. They are vitally important. Success in these negotiations could have significant and long-term benefits for peace and stability in Europe.

The origin of the problem, as the House well knows, is the Soviet programme of SS20 deployments which began in 1977 and which I have already described. NATO's response was its decision of 1979 on the one hand to negotiate for the removal of all weapons of this kind but, on the other, if that were not possible, to modernise and deploy its own weapons in response to the Soviet programme. Some honourable gentlemen opposite have been a bit inclined to try to rewrite history. But they know that the last Labour Government was closely involved in the Alliance discussions which preceded the 1979 decision. They know perfectly well that it was European concerns about the risks of decoupling the US strategic deterrent from the defence of Europe which led the Europeans to ask for modernisation. They knew of the increasing age and vulnerability of long-range US aircraft and that every new SS20 deployed made US aircraft on European bases more vulnerable. And they well understood that the reason the Allies decided to deploy Cruise and Pershing was to remove Soviet hopes that they might one day be able to threaten Europe without putting the Soviet homeland at risk. All those considerations are as valid today as they were in 1979.

/ It is once again

The Russians say that the new proposal ignores US aircraft based in Europe or on aircraft carriers capable of reaching the Soviet Union. But we do not ignore these aircraft. They have been discussed in detail at Geneva. NATO has made it clear that in order to make progress we intend to proceed stage by stage, starting with the land-based missiles which pose the greatest threat to both sides. We are prepared thereafter to tackle the problem of aircraft. But let it be clear that we shall then talk about aircraft on both sides, not just the curiously selective list of US aircraft which the Russians use.

At Geneva the Russians have proposed that reductions should be confined to a defined area centred on Europe, also that only systems with a range of over 1,000 kilometres should be involved. They do not tell us the point of a geographical boundary when supersonic aircraft can be moved from one side of the Soviet Union to the other in a matter of hours. Why do they try to include the American FB1-11 aircraft which is based in the United States outside the geographical area they propose and the F4 which does not meet their range criteria? Why do they exclude their own Fencer aircraft which do meet their criteria? The plain fact is that the Russians enjoy a vast superiority, not only in land-based missiles but also in nuclear capable aircraft. And it is to conceal that fact that they juggle with the facts.

Then, the Russians say, Soviet intermediate range missiles targetted on Asia should not be taken into account in the INF talks. The Alliance has proposed that there should be a world-wide ban or limitation on weapons of this type - and with good reason. The SS20

is a mobile system which can be transported quickly from the Soviet Far East to Europe. The Alliance has no wish to see the threat posed by the SS20 merely transferred to its friends in Asia. What stability would that achieve?

Finally, Mr. Gromyko claims that the American proposal is unacceptable because it does not take account of French and British strategic deterrents. I will dwell on this for a moment because I believe there is widespread misunderstanding of Soviet objectives. The British national deterrent is a strategic deterrent. It is by definition a system of last resort. We do not possess it in order to offer protection to our friends. We cannot do this; only the Americans have the capability. It is moreover a minimal deterrent. The Polaris submarine force cannot be reduced below the present level and remain credible. Members of the Opposition know this full well. It does not belong in negotiations about sub-strategic systems. It is excluded even by Soviet definition. The Russians, too, know that full well. Throughout the SALT process they had no hesitation in describing our systems as strategic. In considering our national strategic deterrent we must look to the threat it deters. This threat is not confined merely to the SS20. Even under the SALT II ceilings the Soviet Union possesses vast over-kill in its strategic systems. Many of these are targetted on Europe, including the United Kingdom. To attempt to equate our national deterrent with the SS20 is therefore artificial and wrong. To paraphrase Mr. Gromyko, we too have a right to ask if a Soviet strategic missile aimed at a target in the United Kingdom will bear the label "It is all right: I am strategic".

It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that the British Government has made clear the relationship between its national strategic

/deterrent

deterrent and arms control. We have said that the British force will continue to be of the minimum size compatible with ensuring a cost-effective deterrent at all times. If circumstances were ever to change significantly, for example if Soviet military capabilities and the threat they pose to us were to be reduced substantially, we would of course be prepared to review our position. [Let me amplify this for the House. Our readiness to review the position would apply if the Soviet threat were reduced substantially, in particular as a result of agreed major reductions in American and Soviet strategic systems to equal ceilings. Our position is clear and unequivocal. It is also fair and logical. It is indeed the position of the Alliance as a whole.]

Keep in
but in
square
brackets.

We must ^{all} ask why the Russians are setting up all these obstacles to a fair and balanced agreement. I ask the House to consider that the answer is in fact very obvious. The Soviet objective is to preserve the monopoly they now possess through their vast SS20 programme in INF missiles and at the same time to prevent the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles. To do this they have one argument and one argument only. It is also spurious. It is that a balance somehow or other exists, despite the SS20 programme and despite the superiority they enjoy in nuclear capable aircraft of comparable types. They

engage in these arithmetical contortions in the hope that their arguments will convince Western public opinion that they have a sound case. I do not believe they will be successful for the facts speak for themselves. And the facts do not suit the Soviet negotiating position.

Joint Decision (to be inserted)

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I understand the widespread public concern about the level of armaments of all kinds in the world. I share that concern. But it cannot be met by bogus reassurances, nor by misconceived policies. Even the most cursory reading of history demonstrates that the Russians will be persuaded in the end to negotiate seriously for reductions if, and only if, they see that the West will stand by its principles and will hold to its policy of strong defence, deterrence and multilateral disarmament. That policy has already produced significant achievements in arms control and disarmament. But there is not the slightest evidence that unilateral disarmament works. Unilateral measures by the West have evoked no response from the Soviet Union. And we all know, for Mr. Andropov has told us, that the Soviet Union will not disarm unilaterally.

The policies which the honourable gentleman opposite offers are a recipe for disaster. They assault the very basis of NATO's policy. They promise to renege on the 1979 decision, one of the Alliance's most fundamental decisions in recent years. And to what end? - the vague hope that other countries will follow his unilateralism. He has never told us which countries. To ask the question is to show how empty his hope is. As if half admitting that he tries to have it all ways - "unilateralism

/and multilateralism

and multilateralism must go hand in hand" we are told. Which, being translated, means the "Member of Leeds East and the Member for Bristol South East must go hand in hand". A likely prospect!

The issues are altogether too serious for such an approach. This Government has a serious policy which deals with real issues in the real world, together with our Allies. It is based on the principles which have proved to be the best protection for peace and security. We shall continue to maintain those principles.

The existence of nuclear weapons, and our reliance upon them to deter aggression, raise issues of great complexity which engage our emotions as well as our minds. There is a strong temptation to look for simple solutions and to opt out of the situation which nuclear weapons have created. We must resist that temptation. It is the duty of the Government and this House to be clear-headed about the problems and danger we confront - and to be practical and persistent in our pursuit of arms control agreements which will enhance our security and reduce the risk of conflict.