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PETER BLAKER MP

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Extract of a speech by Mr Peter Blaker MP (Blackpool South), Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to the Ealing North Conservative Association at Ealing Town Hall, on 3rd May 1983.

PETER BLAKER ATTACKS 'CLIMATE OF ALARM' CREATED BY ONE-SIDED DISARMERS

Armed Forces Minister Peter Blaker today attacked "those attempting to create a climate of alarm in Britain by exaggerating the risks of nuclear war". He said totally false claims about cruise missiles were a key element of this "mythology of misinformation".

He told the Ealing Conservative Association: "The plain fact is that the danger of nuclear war is no greater now than it was ten or fifteen years ago. Indeed it is less - so long, that is, as we stick to our policies.

"The epicentre of this nuclear 'alarm machine' is, of course, the leaders of CND, who are now crying 'foul' because some of us dare question their motives and their methods.

"The Labour Party have climbed cynically on to the bandwagon of one-sided disarmament in the hope it will help carry them to victory in the General Election. They of all people should know better than to lend their authority to the spreading of unnecessary alarm. In Government they fully subscribed to the sort of nuclear defence policies against which they have now turned their face.

"Soon they will discover the enormous cost in votes of that discreditable U-turn.

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"Also fuelling this furnace of alarm - often in a quite blatant and disgraceful manner - are many socialist local authorities; and using the hard-earned money of ratepayers to do so.

"I have just seen a leaflet produced by South Glamorgan County Council entitled 'South Glamorgan and Nuclear Weapons' which is a prime example of this alarm-on-the-rates. Its front cover is a lurid picture of a nuclear 'mushroom cloud' - a deliberate attempt to shock.

"The leaflet claims that the presence of cruise missiles will 'increase the chances of war manyfold' (which is rubbish), making the southern parts of Britain, including Wales, even more important targets (which is false).

"The leaflet ends by a clearly political exhortation to rate-payers to 'organise', 'demonstrate' and 'march' against this Government's defence policies, and gives the addresses of several one-sided disarmament groups including CND.

"There are many such examples of socialist councils using scarce resources for political propaganda directed at causing irreparable harm to the nation's defences.

"The numerous and utterly meaningless nuclear-free zones with which socialist councils have saddled their long-suffering citizens are another case in point. The recent repudiation by Bradford of this ludicrous concept is a welcome sign of retreat from this left-wing dreamland, the only effect of which is to give the Kremlin a totally false signal about our intention and willingness as a nation to defend ourselves.

"Another example of alarm-on-the-rates is the spending of many thousands of pounds by Sheffield on anti-government propaganda. Their measures include the appointment of a so-called 'peace officer': it remains to be seen just what sort of contribution to world peace he will make.

"These lunacies of the left will not go unremarked by the voters in the forthcoming local government elections. The vast majority of people see the nuclear 'alarm machine' for what it is - a politically-motivated attempt to persuade the country to abandon its defences, disown our American allies and enter some kind of fantasy world in which our peace and freedom would depend on the goodwill and decency of the Soviet Union.

"The reality, of course, is that the present well-tried system of nuclear defences, which has kept the peace since World War Two - and which has been supported by Labour as well as Conservative Governments - is the only guarantee of our safety and our liberty.

"The reality is that cruise missiles are not some frighteningly new weapon being forced upon us by the Americans. They are a new way of providing a deterrent capability which we have had up to now in the form of the ageing American F111 aircraft based in this country and our own now-defunct Vulcan bombers. The Soviet Union too has cruise missiles.

"The reality is that cruise missiles were asked for by us Europeans to counter the massive force of the Soviet SS20 missiles which threaten us so menacingly at the same time as our existing capability is declining.

"In the same way Trident will in the 1990s replace Polaris as Britain's independent nuclear deterrent - the ultimate guarantee of our safety. Polaris is getting old and weapons systems - like all other machines, be they washing-machines or motor-cars - wear out and have to be replaced.

"In no way - be it cruise or be it Trident - is Britain or the Western Alliance indulging in 'overkill'. We are taking prudent and necessary steps to continue to protect our people by bringing the means of our defence up to date. The fact is that the nuclear

weaponry of the Soviet Union ranged against us in Europe is far more modern and many times more powerful than that of the West. We do not seek or need to match them weapon for weapon, but we need to maintain sufficient modern forces so that they will never dare attack us.

"Since 1979 the Americans have withdrawn 1,000 nuclear warheads from Europe. As cruise is introduced so further warheads will be withdrawn on a one-for-one basis.

"At the same time we shall continue to talk to the Russians in an effort to bring about realistic and balanced multilateral arms reductions - arms reductions by both sides, not us alone, which would be madness.

"Commonsense, common purpose with our allies and sensible and modern means of defence - this is the way forward, not the pursuit of panic and the rejection of realism urged by the 'alarm machine' of the left."

END.