



Get Genned Up

on

the Government's

'Peace Game'

25p

Notes on The Peace Game

Introduction

As part of the Government offensive against the CND, the Central Office of Information has produced a film, "The Peace Game", which sets out the Government's case for nuclear deterrence and attempts to denigrate moves towards disarmament other than those based on multilateral agreements.

Current Government thinking, epitomised in The Peace Game, interprets history in terms of a hostile and aggressive Soviet Union held in check by a peace-loving but necessarily defensively strong NATO alliance. This attitude appears in the first few lines of the film, and is maintained throughout. The commentary contains phrases such as "Russia uses only the force she needs to get her way", and "Russia won't negotiate seriously with military weaklings". This attitude is based on a view of history which forgets the long trail of mistrust which led to the present situation. The history of Russia and her Eastern allies has been one of successive invasions from the West, and geographically the Soviet Union sees herself as surrounded by hostile countries on all sides. Western powers attempted to interfere against the Reds at the time of the Revolution, and since then have done much to poison Soviet perceptions of Western intentions. East is as much afraid of West as is West of East.

Attempts to achieve a state of balance have demonstrably failed. Each side overestimates the strength of the other, and uses its overestimate as an excuse to make more arms. In comparing strengths, each side categorizes arms in a manner which makes it appear that they need to build more to catch up. Each side is depleting its own resources in a mad race for military supremacy - resources which might otherwise go to social purposes, or to alleviate suffering throughout the world. Each side vies with the other in selling arms abroad, adding to misery and starvation world-wide. A continuing arms race can only lead to economic disaster in the short-term and eventually to a nuclear holocaust which will end civilization.

What we need, surely, are measures to build trust, East and West. Films such as this, which distort the facts and give one-sided view encouraging fear of and hatred for the Soviet Union and her allies, and give them further cause to fear and hate us, can only bring war nearer. The film is full of distortions and misrepresentations. Let us consider these, and then ask what better course could be taken.

'The Peace Game' — release script

Commentator:

The Western world looked on the ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, and swore that such a horror must never happen again. Before even twelve months had passed, America had offered an agreement to scrap every one of her remaining atom bombs.²

Russia refused the offer.

Russia had her reasons. She had set her own sights on nuclear supremacy.³

In the West, people demonstrated to demand that nuclear weapons must never again be used. To this day every Western government, of every political colour, has shared that resolve; for there are anti-nuclear campaigners who believe that we must disarm unilaterally — in a one-sided rejection of nuclear weapons which will, they hope, show the way for Russia to follow.⁴

Plenty of concerned people outside the organised protest movement, come to that, question our ownership of weapons which, if ever used, could spell the end of civilisation ...

Man: 'I share their concern.'

Man: 'We should stand, and not have no bombs.'

Woman: 'Well, I would like Britain to stay out.'

Man: 'I mean, how did we get stuck with nuclear weapons in the first place.'

Commentator:

We got stuck with them when world events took charge. In 1945, Soviet troops linked with ours in Germany, and the war in Europe was won. For the West, the first priority then was to get men out of uniform. Inside twelve months, Western forces in Europe had shrunk by four-fifths.

Not so the Russians.⁵ They'd already swallowed up three Baltic republics; now they backed the Communist take-over of five more nations. And two years after the war, Soviet forces in Europe out-numbered ours by at least nine to one. And they built up East German forces under Russian leadership, and so created another satellite, quite against the wishes of its population ...

... then they tried to starve us out of our rightful sectors of West Berlin, and only a massive Allied airlift of essential supplies saved the city from being swallowed whole.

1956, and the Hungarians rose to demand their freedom ... Russia replied with tanks in the streets.⁶

1968, and Czechoslovakia dared to demonstrate for independence ... Soviet armour rolled in again. And recently it was Poland's turn to feel the weight of Russian pressure.

Notes

NB Please see the film script printed alongside. The note numbers correspond to note numbers in the script.

1 The atom bomb was used by Americans against a far-Eastern country, Japan. The immediate reaction in the West was less than "horrified". On August 7, 1945 *The Times* reported that "Mr. Truman said the experiment had been an overwhelming success"; and on August 10, that "a large part of Nagasaki, a city of 250,000 people, no longer exists. ... General Spaatz said crew members report good results".

2 The reference presumably is to the Baruch Plan. This American plan would have allowed the United States alone to retain nuclear weapons until certain that no other nation was capable of acquiring them, and contained demands for control and inspection which, in the prevailing atmosphere of distrust, were unacceptable to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union countered with a proposal that all nuclear weapons in existence should be immediately destroyed and further production halted. This was unacceptable to the USA so long as she herself had the monopoly. While negotiations were proceeding, the Americans went ahead with an atomic test over Bikini atoll on July 1st, 1946, and this effectively brought negotiations to an end.

3 The Soviet Union has never had any prospects of gaining nuclear supremacy. Nuclear weapons were seen by the Soviet Union as necessary both to achieve equal "status" with the USA, and as defence against possible nuclear blackmail. The logic underlying Soviet policy was precisely similar to that of the West, and based on mistrust of the other side.

4 This misrepresents "unilateralism" by conjuring up a picture of the country suddenly discarding all arms. The aim must be to set in motion, in East and West, unilateral processes of disarmament to get the multilateral log-jam moving.

5 In the last year of World War II, at Yalta and Potsdam, the Western Powers agreed with the Soviet Union that they should have independent zones of influence in Europe. Poland was to have a Communist Government, and the presence of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe was accepted. Churchill stressed that Poland should stand "loyally as a barrier and friend of Russia".

By the early sixties the Soviet Union had seen how many of her German subjects were voting with their feet and migrating westwards; so she sealed the border with wire and minefields, and built the infamous Berlin Wall.

But still the escapers kept coming ...

But as early as 1949 Russia was plainly showing her belief that Soviet ideology must dominate the world, and her readiness to use military force to achieve that.⁷ In that year Russia put paid to the last hope of stopping an arms-race before it started. She tested her first atomic bomb.⁸

A war-weary West had seen this coming, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was our response — a defensive Alliance, today of sixteen countries, which would treat an attack on one as an attack on all.

6 The Soviet Union's repressive actions in Eastern Europe are not to be condoned. But they have stemmed, and continue to stem, not so much from a desire to spread communist ideology as from a desire to maintain a defensive belt against the West. In World War II, the Soviet Union lost 20 million people, including 7.5 million soldiers, compared with approximately 0.4 million soldiers lost by Great Britain. Whilst there had been cooperation with the Western powers in that war, the Soviet Union cannot easily forget events that preceded it. Both Britain and France attempted to intervene on behalf of anti-Soviet forces in Russia soon after the Revolution; Stalin's attempt to form an anti-Fascist bloc in the 1930's was rejected by Britain and France; the Soviet Union, an ally of Czechoslovakia, was not even invited to the Munich conference in 1938 at which Czechoslovakia's fate was sealed by Britain and Germany; the existence of the atomic bomb was concealed from Stalin at the 1945 Potsdam conference; after the War the Marshall plan for financial aid to Europe was perceived by the Soviet Union as evidence of American expansionism; Western military and financial interference in Greece and Turkey was perceived similarly; and the anti-Soviet stance of Western politicians was epitomised in Churchill's speech at Fulton (March 5, 1946), in which he suggested a military alliance against the Soviet Union. It must also not be forgotten that the Soviet Union sponsored free elections in Finland and Austria.

7 While it is true that Marxists believe that communism is the natural historical successor to capitalism, the Trotskyist belief that communism can or should be spread by force of arms was already partially rejected by Stalin and subsequently formally disowned by Krushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956.

8 Following on from the Bikini atoll test in 1946, the United States had been proceeding as fast as possible towards the development of the H-bomb. Great Britain was also working on atomic weapons. It was hardly to be expected that the Soviet Union would unilaterally opt out of the race for "great power status" or reject a possible means of forcing the USA to the conference table. Since 1945, the West has continually made the running in the deployment of new weapons.

And the need for NATO has been increasingly clear.⁹ By 1971 Russia was already outstripping America as the world's biggest arms-spender; and her arsenal today, nuclear and conventional, is many times greater than anything she could need for defence.¹⁰

So NATO too, is forced to keep both a nuclear and a conventional deterrent; firstly to show the Russians that they can gain nothing by attacking us, and secondly to encourage them to keep talking towards world nuclear disarmament.¹¹ For Russia has shown, time and again, that she won't negotiate seriously with military weaklings.¹²

Still, some people have doubts about the need for the nuclear part of our deterrent ...

Man: 'Surely our having conventional weapons is enough to maintain our defences; as in all the years nuclear weapons have been around, certainly Russia has never used them in any antagonistic way.'

9 In 1971, according to the US Arms Control and Disarmament Control Agency, the Soviet Union's arms-expenditure did exceed the USA's by 10%. But even in that year, according to the same source, the arms-expenditure of the Warsaw Pact as a whole still remained 20% below that of NATO as a whole (45% below according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). At no point have the Warsaw Pact countries "outstripped" the West. The current figures given by the US Centre for Defense Information are \$256 billion per annum for NATO and \$202 billion for the Warsaw Pact (though it should be noted that both as a proportion of GMP and per capital the figures for the Warsaw Pact are greater).

10 The Soviet Union's "needs for defence" are neither greater nor less than those of the West. Both sides possess arsenals far in excess of what could be justified in the defence of national interests.

11 The idea that NATO is "forced" to keep nuclear "deterrent" depends of course on the assumption that the Soviet Union has aggressive designs on NATO territory, and that these can only be thwarted by the threat of a nuclear response. If such a deterrent were really needed, it could be achieved without resort to the massive levels of overkill now deployed. But the belief that the Soviet Union is planning to attack Western Europe has no obvious political or economic rationale. And even if such an attack did in fact come, it would certainly begin as a conventional attack. The Soviet Union, unlike NATO, has announced that it will never be the first to use nuclear weapons. A conventional attack by the Soviet Union could in principle be deterred by conventional forces, as has been argued by General Rogers, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. In any case, the present NATO strategy of "flexible response", which envisages the early use of nuclear weapons, is self-defeating as it would inevitably lead to the destruction of Western Europe. The Soviet Union has recently offered a non-aggression treaty embracing conventional as well as nuclear weapons.

12 "Keeping talking" towards nuclear disarmament is, as the history of the last 30 years has shown, no guarantee of anything being done by either of the super-powers. But in any case, the goal of world nuclear disarmament requires, as a first and most urgent step, the prevention of nuclear proliferation to other countries.

Commentator:

Russia uses only the force she needs to get her way, and then only the force she dares. She's becoming bolder now, because she's stronger now — hence the outright invasion of Afghanistan, by contrast with the more softly-softly approach in Cuba in the sixties, and Angola and Ethiopia in the seventies.¹³ But all the time she's known that NATO's nuclear response exists — it's no coincidence that not one of the many wars fought since 1945 has touched Western Europe.¹⁴

And that can't be due just to our conventional deterrent; in Central Europe Russia and her satellites, the Warsaw Pact, outnumber NATO two-and-a-half to one in tanks, nearly three to one in guns, well over two to one in aircraft.¹⁵

Because when you're a totalitarian ruler you direct people and resources as you like — even if it means lower living-standards and compulsory military service. Can you imagine any peace-protest movements surviving here? ... Recent events have shown how effectively the KGB smothers them at birth.¹⁶

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Those countries which signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 gave their undertaking not to develop nuclear weapons on condition that the existing nuclear powers themselves took "effective measures" towards disarmament. The accelerating arms-race between NATO and the Soviet Union continues to undermine this treaty.

13 The invasion of Afghanistan, where there was already an unstable Communist regime within Russia's historical "sphere of influence", provides no clear evidence as to the Soviet Union's larger geo-political ambitions.

In 1980, the British House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, while strongly condemning the invasion, concluded that it would be wrong to see the Soviet Union's action as part of a grand strategy. The invasion came soon after the refusal of the US Senate to ratify the SALT II Treaty and within weeks of the NATO decision to deploy Cruise missiles in Europe: rather than being a consequence of Russia's feeling "stronger now", it may have been prompted by Russia's perception that East-West detente was coming to an end.

14 The historical record shows that every war which touched Western Europe in modern times was started by a country or countries which are now members of NATO. Since 1945, the political and economic interests of European nations have come together, and there has been no incentive for a European war — either between traditional enemies such as Britain, France and Germany, or across the frontiers between "East" and "West" Europe.

15 NATO's conventional forces in Europe are in fact a pretty good match for the Soviet Union's. Figures from the International Institute for Strategic Studies show that in 1981 NATO possessed a ten-to-one superiority in precision guided anti-tank weapons, and that NATO's ground forces in Europe exceeded those of the Warsaw Pact by more than 25% (NATO 2,123,000; Warsaw Pact 1,669,000).

16 The KGB's attempts to suppress the non-official peace movement in the Soviet Union are stupid and disgraceful, and both END and CND have protested against them. But life is not always easy for protestors in NATO countries (notably in Turkey, where members of the peace movement are currently on trial). In Britain itself, where the BBC did not show the "War Game", the Government does little to encourage free discussion about nuclear disarmament, while at the same time

modern times was started by a country or countries which are now members of NATO.

And a look at the newsreels of World War Two should dispel any notion of 'conventional' war as a comfortable sort of alternative. Fifty million people lost their lives in that conventional war, and ten million more since then; and as the Falklands conflict all too clearly showed, the conventional missile, the shell, the bomb, even the bullet of today packs a lot more destructive punch than its 1940's equivalent.¹⁷

Yet given the effectiveness of a nuclear deterrent, some still challenge the morality of it.

Women: 'Two wrongs don't make a right.'

Man: 'Well, I don't agree with it at all you know, I think it's against the betterment of world peace.'

Man: 'Well, nuclear weapons are totally immoral from my point of view.'

Commentator:

Question the morality of keeping nuclear arms, and we must question the morality of scrapping them in the face of a Russian nuclear threat. If Britain did that, how could we expect the protection of NATO? We'd have to leave the Alliance, which then would collapse, since we're one of its political and military cornerstones, and where's the morality there?¹⁸

promoting misleading propaganda films such as the present one. Nor is it only in the East that expenditure on armaments leads to "lower living standards". The recent decline in welfare services in Britain and the USA is in part directly due to increased military expenditure. In fact, although some American politicians see the destruction of the Soviet economy as a major goal of the arms race, there is widespread desire in both East and West to lower arms spending and redirect resources to other parts of the economy, especially to social purposes.

17 No one argues that conventional war is a comfortable alternative. The point is that the nuclear arms race makes war not only potentially more horrendous (especially in its effect on future generations) but also more likely to occur.

18 It is *people*, not countries or alliances, who take moral decisions. Unless we as individuals believe that the possible benefits of using nuclear weapons (in terms say of protection of the "way of life" of our families and friends) outweigh the certain costs (in terms of the suffering caused to countless innocent strangers), then we cannot morally support their being deployed on our behalf. And if we make that decision for ourselves we cannot wish other people to choose differently for us. Anyone who takes a moral stand against nuclear weapons will not therefore seek the "protection" of NATO's or any other alliance's nuclear defences. That said, it does *not* mean that NATO is an "immoral alliance" or that the way of life it seeks to protect is not worth protecting. NATO has political strengths – and military powers – which are *not* dependent on its nuclear arsenal. If Great Britain were to adopt a non-nuclear defence policy (as Canada and Norway have both done while remaining members of NATO) there is no reason why she could not, if she wished, continue to share with her NATO partners the common responsibility to resist aggression by all means short of using nuclear weapons. In the long run, the survival of NATO as an organisation or true allies, subscribing to similar political and moral ideals, probably depends on a change rather than a continuation of present nuclear policies. It is the existence of nuclear weapons rather than their absence which at present threatens to break up the alliance.

The West would be left wide open to Soviet blackmail, even attack — for Russia has announced repeatedly that she wouldn't disarm even if we did. Nor would she bother with arms-control talks — for she, then, would hold all the cards.¹⁹

Let the Russians even *think* we might ditch our nuclear weapons, and they'd block negotiations and hang on till we did. At least, today, we hold a balance — and it's given us peace with freedom for nearly forty years. Stick it out, and we can keep that peace.²⁰

Man: 'I think we should be striving for reduction-in-arms talks a little quicker than they are going on at the moment; I think they're very very slow.'

Man: '... to get some sort of agreement about getting rid of them; but really how that's going to be done, I just don't know.'

Commentator:

Well, no fewer than fifteen arms-control agreements have been signed since 1963, virtually every one resulting from a Western initiative. Britain has contributed to every agreement where there was a part for us to play, and right now we're playing our part in several more sets of talks.²¹

There are problems: no agreement can mean very much unless each side can verify that the other is going to keep it. And Russia isn't noted for welcoming observers into her own backyard.²²

19 The Soviet Union — just like the West — has announced repeatedly that she cannot "risk" disarming *unless* we do, and that she will in fact "be forced" to continue to arm until we stop. Nonetheless, the Soviet Union has recently made certain unilateral moves, such as a freeze on the deployment of SS-20 missiles in Europe and, more significantly, a commitment to a "no first use policy". Such moves have been scorned by Western politicians. President Andropov offered to "retain in Europe only as many missiles as are kept here by Britain and France — and not a single one more. . . . If later the number of British and French missiles were scaled down, the number of Soviet ones would be additionally reduced by as many."

20 Britain is not represented at the current Geneva talks on intermediate range weapons, and her "independent" nuclear force is not in fact taken into account by the Americans in calculating the balance in Europe. If Britain and France were to "ditch" (emotive word) their own weapons, the Soviet Union, far from breaking off negotiations, has announced that she would then find President Reagan's "zero option" acceptable.

21 Initiatives, such as there have been, have come fairly equally from East, West and non-aligned countries. But the net result is that neither side has had any serious restraint placed on the quantity or quality of its weaponry. Britain herself played no part in either of the SALT agreements. Britain's possession of an independent nuclear force continues to undercut the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and her importation of nuclear weapons into the South Atlantic during the Falklands campaign was (if the rumours are true) a direct contravention of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which in 1967 declared Latin America a nuclear free zone.

22 This is a real difficulty, though inspection is facilitated by satellite data. Even satellites are not infallible for some weapons, and the deployment by the West of Cruise missiles and tornado aircraft can only make verification more difficult. Furthermore, the Soviet Union is unlikely to become more willing to agree to inspection while Western statesmen (notably President Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher) continue to talk about ridding the world of communism, and do nothing to foster mutual trust. Propaganda films, such as the present one, which portray the Soviet Union in the worst possible light as a callous and dishonest "enemy" can do nothing to allay Soviet suspicions.

Yet there's a new mood in the air — a stability no-one would have dreamt possible in the tension of the sixties.²³ Without the Strategic Arms Limitation process there could be many more intercontinental weapons around today — and now new talks are out to reduce the ones that are.²⁴

Meanwhile, NATO has backed America in talks to reduce intermediate-range weapons in Europe. And if President Reagan's zero option won through we could get rid of the most deadly land-based missiles altogether.

Yet so long as Russia's build-up forces us to modernise our weapons, it's only natural that fear should grow. Hence the suggestion that total neutrality might be best for Britain ...²⁵

Women: 'I think that Britain should become a neutral country.'

Man: '... to adopt a more, sort of neutral status with less of a participation in nuclear events.'

Women: 'Well, can you just suddenly go neutral, though, you see?'

Commentator:

If we did, we'd break up NATO and leave the West wide open — the Iron Curtain could reach the Atlantic.²⁶

In 1940, Norway, Belgium and Holland were neutral; Hitler occupied them all the same. History is full of examples of bigger powers riding roughshod over the neutrality of smaller nations with weak defences.

A neutral Britain today would be a rich prize as a Soviet satellite. Is that what we want? — remembering how many millions of people since 1917 have died premature deaths under Russian rule?

'Better Red than Dead' is a cry we've heard, on and off, since the fifties. Well, the British Frontier Service in Germany have a closer view than most of what a 'Red' lifestyle must really be like ...

Frontier Service Officer: 'Well, this is where West meets East, beyond that post is East Germany. There's dead ground up to the first fencing, high single-mesh fencing, 3 metres 20 high. It is fitted, as you can see, with the automatic firing devices which are known as the SM70. They're attached to trip wires, and they fire along the fencing.'

'And immediately behind that fencing there's a deep ditch in the form of a vehicle hazard, it's a metre and a half deep, and then it slopes away gradually and joins up with a 6-metre strip which is ploughed and harrowed regularly; it's inspected daily for footprints; if they find that people are trying to get out, or have been successful in getting out, they increase security by increasing their patrols, either mobile or on foot, also of setting up trip-wire complexes or dogs on running lines but anything at all to stop the people escaping from the East into the West.'

'It's very difficult for you to imagine what kind of a regime they've got the other side, to impose all these installations here whereby people have got to risk death to escape from the East and to get into actual civilisation.'²⁷

23 The "new mood in the air" is one of extreme pessimism. Political tensions have increased and the military situation has become less rather than more stable. Such stability as existed in the sixties — precarious as it was — was based on the assumption of "Mutual Assured Destruction" in the event of nuclear war. This has now been repudiated by the substitution of a "Counter-Force" strategy: both sides

now fear the possibility of a first strike against their deterrent force, and are being obliged by military planners to adopt a launch-on-warning policy.

24 The USA has failed to ratify SALT II, and with the proposed deployment of MX missiles, seems likely unilaterally to break the terms of the treaty.

25 "Neutrality", in the sense of a lack of commitment to the ideals of Western democracy, is not of course an acceptable policy for Britain, and is not the goal of the British peace movement. There is however a world of difference between a commitment to defend democracy by conventional military means if necessary, and a commitment to act as a forward base for American nuclear missiles.

26 Britain, as the Ministry of Defence should know, is not in the habit of yielding up sovereignty to dictators of either the right or the left. Britain, adequately armed with conventional weapons, would make a *very poor* "prize as a Soviet satellite". In any case, the assumption that the Soviet Union is intent on a military occupation of Europe which "could reach the Atlantic" (thereby adding to the burden of the other "rich prizes" which she already possesses in Eastern Europe, e.g. Poland?) is without foundation.

27 While our way of life in the West is in many ways superior to life under communism, Western money and military power is nonetheless used to support repressive governments, such as those of Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, and Turkey, where righteous talk of "actual civilisation" would be an empty joke.

28 Reiteration of the belief that "deterrence has worked for forty years" does not amount to *proof* of anything.

29 The Cuban crisis, often cited as evidence for the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence, is in fact a very bad example. It was the Soviet Union's anxiety to "balance" American missiles in Europe with its own missiles close to the American mainland which led to the American threat of retaliation. Thus the Cuban crisis, far

Commentator:

In the East, 'Red or Dead' is stark reality; for the West, our deterrent policy has proved it for nearly forty years to be a totally bogus choice.²⁸

And in all those years, Cuba (in 1962) has been the one and only moment when we have come anywhere near the brink of nuclear war. It taught both sides a great deal, and so have events ever since.²⁹ So that accidental nuclear war, too, is now an impossibility ...³⁰

... for even an error in any link of the early-warning chain is detected at once. Each side regularly warns the other of test-firings, exercises, any move that might be misconstrued; and Heads of Government can get in direct touch with one another over the hot-line network. No move to push the button could ever be made without a positive decision by them.

But why, some ask, must Britain herself remain an independent nuclear power?

Woman: 'I'm not very sure that it's worth Britain having its own nuclear deterrent, just as a country on its own.'

Man: 'Well, I really don't think that Britain has a role in the nuclear arms-race at all.'

Commentator:

World War Two started by a terrible miscalculation — when Hitler invaded Poland, believing that Britain would back away from her treaty-obligation to defend.

The British nuclear deterrent today (mainly Polaris missiles) guards against any Russian belief that America might back away if the Soviet Union attacked us. We know the Americans would keep faith with us — but might Russia miscalculate their intentions as Hitler did ours? Our deterrent is our insurance against that, because even if the Russians were foolish enough to discount an American reaction, they would still have to reckon with an enormously powerful weapon in European hands.³¹

Lt. Cdr.: 'The idea of the Polaris weapon is not to be there to start a war; the aim of the Polaris weapon is a deterrent, and having been used, the weapon has failed as a deterrent. We see it as all the time we are operating it and not using it, that it is working.'

Commentator:

A deterrent is useless unless it deters — so the Russians must believe that Britain, or NATO, may use it. But the West would do so strictly in self-defence — President Reagan has made that very clear.³²

Reagan: 'No NATO weapons, conventional or nuclear will ever be used in Europe except in response to attack.'

Commentator:

Yet, despite that assurance, there are those who accuse the Americans of planning to limit a nuclear war to Europe and stay out of it themselves.³³

from being a dispute which was resolved by nuclear weapons, was a crisis entirely generated by them.

30 Accidental nuclear war is not impossible. Several times in recent years Western nuclear forces have been placed on full alert in response to a "false alarm" caused by technical errors or human failure. The same has presumably happened on the Eastern side. With both sides adopting a launch-on-warning policy, and with missile flight times being progressively reduced (18 minutes for submarine launched missiles but less than 8 minutes for the Pershing II missiles which are to be stationed in West Germany), such false alarms could all too easily prove catastrophic.

31 The Russians may be foolish, but they cannot be so foolish as to believe that a British Prime Minister would so far abandon British self interest as to authorise an independent nuclear attack on the Soviet Union, knowing that it would mean the total destruction of Great Britain in return. Since such independent action by Britain would in the event be quite irrational, so must be the threat of it.

32 President Reagan remains committed to a policy in which the USA could be the first to use nuclear weapons after the outbreak of conventional hostilities.

33 President Reagan himself declared in October, 1981, that he could envisage conditions under which there might be a nuclear war fought with American weapons but limited to Europe. His remarks produced an outcry in Europe and a succession of contradictory statements in the USA, but the President's remarks were confirmed by the Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, when speaking to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee shortly afterwards.

34 The film claims that Russia has a four to one supremacy in intermediate range weapons; the Institute of Strategic Studies says there is approximate parity. But in any case, comparisons of the numbers of nuclear weapons — here, "intermediate-range" weapons — are nearly always misleading because of the difficulties of defining the categories precisely and comparing like with like (in terms of accuracy, etc.). All nuclear weapons could potentially be used against European targets, and the US Center for Defense Information states that, at the latest count, NATO possesses 31,000 nuclear weapons against 20,000 for the Warsaw Pact. Tales of Western "inferiority" have frequently been used in the past to justify American arms programmes, only to be proved useless later.

U.S. Colonel: 'Well, I'm one of those Americans here, in fact one of those 500,000 Americans here in Europe; that should indicate considerable resolve; we include in our figures of Americans in Europe our families, my family is here; in fact my family has been with me for nine years in this theatre of operations.'

U.S. Pilot: 'There are a lot of Americans here with their families who are attempting to rebuild our facilities here, upgrade them, bring more people in, other units and what have you, we have plans for reinforcements to come over here in the event that there is an attack, in the event we are attacked by those over on the other side. So we do plan to stand and fight.'

U.S. Colonel: 'And indeed a threat here is not just a threat to West Germany, or to the Alliance, it's a threat to our way of life, to the Western way of life; and I certainly do not think that the Americans would stand by, having invested 36 years in an effort to maintain peace in this region, and let that way of life evaporate because of the threat right here in the central region.'

Commentator:

The Americans were committed to Europe when NATO was formed. In agreeing now to send Cruise and Pershing Two missiles to Europe, they've really put their necks on the block — for Russia has said that any American weapon fired her way, no matter where from, would be treated as coming from the United States.

And if anyone imagines nuclear war might be okay if you keep it limited, it could only be Russia.³⁴ Why else do her intermediate-range nuclear weapons outnumber ours today by something around four to one? Why else does she make a meaningless offer to pull back those weapons outside a European nuclear-free zone ... knowing full well that her Backfire bomber, and her mobile SS-20 missile launcher, have ample range to reach any target in Europe from deep inside the Soviet Union?

And every SS-20 has three warheads, which can be targetted to hit three different objectives. And all these weapons are in the line today, ready and aimed; failing an arms-control agreement, only Cruise and Pershing can deprive them of the edge they've got, and help restore the balance.³⁵

But Cruise, of course, is not without its critics ... it's even been claimed that its presence in Britain will make us more of a target.³⁶

But no matter what arms we have or don't have, we're a prime wartime target anyway. How could Russia ever secure Western Europe without neutralising Britain too?

Besides, what's so very new about Cruise? American nuclear arms have been based here for thirty years, under a proven system which makes any emergency use of their bases a matter of joint decision between our two governments.³⁷ F Treble Ones have carried American nuclear weapons for the last decade. Cruise will simply supercede them — and the RAF's Vulcans — for F Treble One is an ageing aircraft now, while Vulcan has reached the end of its useful life ...

35 The SS-20 was developed by the Soviet Union to replace her fixed-base missiles, which were becoming increasingly vulnerable to the new generation of highly accurate missiles introduced by the West as part of the counter-force policy. The SS-20 is mobile, but probably requires fixed launching sites. Its accuracy is not greatly superior to that of the weapons it replaces: the "kill probability" of its 150 kiloton warhead against a hardened target is about 14%. The Cruise missile is not only mobile but can be launched from land, sea, or air. Its novel guidance systems give it phenomenal accuracy (estimated at a few tens of metres) and its 200 kiloton warhead has a "kill probability" of 99%. The Cruise missile is thus a highly effective anti-silo weapon, whose performance far outstrips the SS-20. The Pershing II missile has a similar kill probability to that of Cruise, and in addition a very short flight time, which makes it even more suitable as a potential first-strike weapon. Rather than "helping to restore the balance", Cruise and Pershing are bound to be seen by the Soviet Union as evidence that the West has finally abandoned a pure "deterrent" strategy.

36 While a non-nuclear Britain would certainly suffer severely in the event of a nuclear war in Europe, the British Government's own civil defence plans (as demonstrated in the Square Leg exercise) indicate that the Government itself expects that it is the nuclear bases in Britain, including of course Cruise missile bases, which would be the prime target of a Soviet attack.

37 During the last decade American bases have in fact several times been placed on alert without prior consultation of the British Government, as during the abortive attempt to rescue the American hostages in Iran. Under present arrangements, Cruise missiles would not be operated under a dual-key system.

38 A more trustworthy poll of British public opinion (NOP poll in the *Observer*, October, 1982) recently found only 32% in favour of Trident, with 44% against it; and 39% in favour of keeping American bases, with 47% for closing them down.

39 These "men-in-the-street" slip, as the film itself does, from talking about nuclear disarmament to talking about unrestricted disarmament. Total disarmament has never been advocated by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Navigator: 'Even though the Vulcan is a very viable weapon system, we've got to go at low levels underneath enemy defences, and we're getting to the situation when they're plugging the existing gaps in those defences, and we now need something else which is perhaps less vulnerable and more able to cope with jinking through those defences. And the Cruise is an admirable replacement.'

Pilot: 'It's a very up-to-date, modern piece of technology, it's very difficult to shoot down, it's very effective, it's certainly a lot cheaper.'

Commentator:

Let's face it -- it would be idiocy not to be deeply worried by the need to avoid annihilation by holding the weapons of annihilation. We've shown just some of the people in Britain who feel that deep concern.

We talked, in fact, to many more -- no less fearful of the horrific consequences of any miscalculation. Yet we found, again and again, a firm conviction that Britain, and NATO, are keeping the peace in the only possible way ...³⁸

Man: 'I feel that if we don't have some form of defence of our own, you know, we're going to be in terrible straits otherwise.'

Women: 'I feel it's very necessary for Britain to have nuclear weapons. I don't ... I feel that if Britain were to disarm they'd be putting themselves at jeopardy, and at risk.'³⁹

Man: 'I don't think the CND's idea of us disarming is going to make any difference to either other Western powers, or the Russians.'

Man: 'One thing -- don't trust Russia. And at least talk and talk with them.'

Man: 'You have to have some kind of defence against dictators.'

Man: 'How people can say that the Russians will ever follow suit in unilateral disarmament is just beyond my comprehension.'

Man: 'If we don't have them and somebody else does, then one doesn't have a deterrent.'

Commentator:

And what of the men who, if the worst ever came to the very worst, could actually have to use nuclear weapons? Does anyone imagine they relish the prospect?

Chief: 'And people tend to forget that we have families as well, you know; my family isn't married to the Service, I've got a wife and children at home, I've got relations. I wouldn't be doing the job unless I thought it was necessary.'

Navigator: 'We anticipate that if we go, it's going to be because we're in retaliation for a previous strike here in the UK.'

Navigator: 'As a last resort, if you like.'

Lt. Cdr.: 'The idea of nuclear war is horrific to all of us, but we take this weapon to sea in a belief that it's contributed greatly to peace for the last 37 years, and while it's at sea will continue to do so.'

Commentator:

Peace, with freedom, for our longest period for over two centuries ... wouldn't it be criminally insane to throw away the means of that peace until we've a total nuclear ban to take its place?

Because it's not as if the Warsaw Pact has been content to match our deterrent - it's built up a vastly greater nuclear force, aimed today at the West ... many hundreds of SS-20 missiles, whole squadrons of Backfire bombers, and a fleet of new nuclear submarines - some of these three times the size of ours, and carrying up to twenty strategic missiles each.

Not that we need to match this obscene scale of overkill. We need just to keep up a deterrent modern enough to show the Russians they have no hope of winning any war they start, nuclear or not ...

... and to prove to them at the conference table that a workable disarmament agreement is as much in their interest as ours.

It'll be a hard slog. But over twenty years of talks have proved that perseverance works. Disarm on our own now, and far from taking a step towards general disarmament, we'd be walking right away from it. Because so long as negotiation can continue, so can peace. And so can the search for that ultimate, multilateral agreement ... our guarantee that the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which in war today could be multiplied a thousand times) can never happen again.

Conclusions

What, then, should be done? The overriding aim must be to build trust between East and West. The plans of the Western leaders to accelerate the arms race must be curbed. So far as Britain is concerned, the first priority must be to retire the Polaris submarines and cancel Trident, to refuse Cruise, to renounce the use of tactical nuclear weapons and further nuclear weapons research. Whilst maintaining our NATO obligations, we should rejoin our national sovereignty and insist on the removal of all American nuclear bases and their ancillary services from this country. For the present, this should be associated with the maintenance of defensive strength by conventional arms, with an emphasis on anti-tank weapons, fighter aircraft and a defensive navy. These measures should be taken in full consultation with our European neighbours. At the same time, we should actively seek a comprehensive test ban treaty, an agreement to stop the flight testing of the new nuclear delivery vehicles, the establishment of a European nuclear free zone, and the opening of international debate over control and prohibition of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes. Further details of these notes and proposals have been set out by the Cambridge University Disarmament Seminar in "Defended to Death", a Penguin book (1983) edited by G. Prins.

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