



cc:- FCO

*Vatican*

## 10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

12 January, 1982

Dear Dr. Perutz,

Thank you for your letter of 21 December about technical developments in nuclear weaponry and associated systems, and the concern that such developments might jeopardise the present relatively stable nuclear balance.

This concern is shared by politicians as well as military strategists and planners. It is true that technical developments have led to an evolution in thinking about deterrence. In particular, the deployment of highly accurate missiles has meant that, for deterrence to remain credible, we must have the ability to respond to limited, as well as strategic, nuclear aggression. This makes the maintenance of deterrence more complex. But it does not mean that the United States or NATO in general entertain illusions about waging limited nuclear war. Indeed, the general effect is to make the nuclear balance more stable than in the past because deterrence now rests on a much wider basis of possible responses to nuclear aggression than was available in the 1960s.

The vulnerability of land-based missiles is of course much debated at present. But we are convinced that ballistic missile carrying submarines will continue to remain immune to detection and thus invulnerable. They therefore provide an assured second strike capability and make it impossible to "win" a nuclear war by means of a disarming first strike.

In general, I believe one should be cautious in trying to deduce propositions about strategy merely from the particular characteristics of any given nuclear system. Presumably the Russians

/ must

*RM*



must know - as the Western Alliance certainly does - that the outbreak of nuclear war would be an unimaginable catastrophe, and that to gamble the fate of civilisation on an assumed technical virtuosity in the strategic nuclear field would be irrational, to put it mildly. This does not mean that we can afford to let it go unheeded if the Soviet Union seeks to disturb the existing relatively stable balance to its own advantage. But I do not accept the view that the United States is moving to a strategy of a disarming first strike. As President Reagan said on 18 November: "No NATO weapons, conventional or nuclear, will ever be used in Europe except in response to attack". The concept of a pre-emptive first strike has never been and is not a part of Alliance strategy.

At the same time, I fully agree with you about the importance of nuclear arms control. As you will know, negotiations on intermediate range nuclear forces are now under way in Geneva where the United States delegation has the full support of the European allies in proposing the complete elimination of long range land-based theatre missiles on both sides. We now look forward to the resumption of strategic arms reduction talks in the Spring. I welcome American statements of their intention to seek real reductions in strategic weapons. The achievement of verifiable and balanced measures of arms control is a major priority for the Government. I believe that these negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union offer the prospect of genuine progress towards limiting and reducing current levels of nuclear weapons.

Yours sincerely,

MARGARET THATCHER

Dr. M. F. Perutz, C.H., F.R.S.

file BK  
satuar

21 January 1982

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 18 January which she has read with interest.

The points you make have been brought to the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

A J COLES

Dr. M.F. Perutz, C.H., F.R.S.

*[Handwritten signature]*



*Vikings*  
*CF*  
*10/1/82*

Dr M.F. Perutz, CH, FRS.,  
42 Sedley Taylor Road,  
Cambridge,  
CB2 2PN

18th January 1982

*Dear Prime Minister,*

*P20*

Thank you for your letter of the 12th January 1982. I very much appreciate the time and thought you have given to the problems I raised.

I am reassured to know that you regard the prospects of locating submarines under the ocean as remote, and also that in your view neither the United States nor NATO in general entertain illusions about limited nuclear war. In your letter and also during our interview you raised verification as one of the conditions of balanced nuclear disarmament. Since opening the Soviet Union's frontiers to inspection is anathema to the Kremlin, this demand has been a stumbling block to agreement since the early fifties. I wonder whether surveillance from satellites has not made this condition obsolete, which might facilitate agreement.

I am glad that you are encouraging the Americans in their nuclear disarmament talks with the Soviet Union. Many of my colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic believe that the Reagan Administration is set on a crusade to re-establish the United States as the dominant nuclear power, a position which, thanks to its overall technical superiority, it has probably never really lost. My colleagues fear that the Administration may be undertaking these negotiations merely to pacify public revulsion against nuclear weapons in Germany and the Netherlands, but without any real desire to reach agreement on a reduction of nuclear weapons. I hope that the Americans' knowledge of the importance which you attach to the talks will raise their chances of success.

I was so pleased when the news came through that your son is safe and sound.

*Yours sincerely,*

*M F Perutz*

The Prime Minister,  
The Right Honorable Margaret Thatcher, MP,  
10, Downing Street,  
London,  
W.1.

A3c.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
London SW1A 2AH

10 January 1982

Type letter please.

FR 11/1

Dear Willie,

Letter to the Prime Minister from Dr Perutz

As requested in your letter of 24 December,  
/ I attach a draft reply for the Prime Minister to  
send to Dr Perutz.

Yours ever,

Franis Richards

(F N Richards)  
Private Secretary

Wille Rickett Esq  
10 Downing Street



DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

PRIME MINISTER

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

Dr M F Perutz CH FRS  
 42 Sedley Taylor Road  
 Cambridge CB2 2PN

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

Thank you for your letter of 21 December about technical developments in nuclear weaponry and associated systems, and the concern *that such developments might jeopardise the present relatively stable nuclear balance.* ~~they cause to scientists who advise the Pope.~~

~~The delegation's concern about technical developments which might jeopardise the present relatively stable nuclear balance~~ is shared by politicians as well as military strategists and planners. It is true that technical developments have led to an evolution in thinking about deterrence. In particular, the deployment of highly accurate missiles has meant that, for deterrence to remain credible, we must have the ability to respond to limited, as well as strategic, nuclear aggression. This makes the maintenance of deterrence more complex. But it does not mean that the United States or NATO in general entertain illusions about waging limited nuclear war. Indeed, the general effect is to make the nuclear balance more stable than in the past because deterrence now rests on a much wider basis of possible responses to nuclear aggression than was available in the 1960s.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

/The vulnerability



The vulnerability of land-based missiles is of course much debated at present. But, contrary to the view of the delegation, we are convinced that ballistic missile carrying submarines will continue to remain immune to detection and thus invulnerable. They therefore provide an assured second strike capability and make it impossible to 'win' a nuclear war by means of a disarming first strike.

In general, I believe one should be cautious in trying to deduce propositions about strategy merely from the particular characteristics of any given nuclear system. Presumably the Russians must know - as the Western Alliance certainly does - that the outbreak of nuclear war would be an unimaginable catastrophe, and that to gamble the fate of civilisation on an assumed technical virtuosity in the strategic nuclear field would be irrational, to put it mildly. This does not mean that we can afford to let it go unheeded if the Soviet Union seeks to disturb the existing relatively stable balance to its own advantage. But I <sup>do not accept the view</sup> ~~reject the implication in your letter~~ that the United States is moving to a strategy of <sup>a</sup> ~~disarming first strike~~. As President Reagan said on 18 November 'No NATO weapons, conventional or nuclear, will ever be used in Europe except in response to attack'. <sup>The concept of a</sup> ~~Pre-emptive first strike~~ has never been and is not a part of Alliance strategy.

At the same time, I fully agree with you about the importance of nuclear arms control. As you will know, negotiations on intermediate range nuclear forces are now underway in Geneva where the United States <sup>d</sup> ~~de~~legation has the full

/support

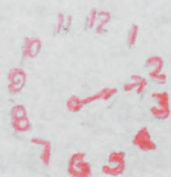


support of the European allies in proposing the complete elimination of long range land-based theatre missiles on both sides. We now look forward to the resumption of strategic arms reduction talks in the spring. I welcome American statements of their intention to seek real reductions in strategic weapons. The achievement of verifiable and balanced measures of arms control ~~are~~<sup>is</sup> a major priority for the Government. I believe that these negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union offer the prospect of genuine progress towards limiting and reducing current levels of nuclear weapons.

MC 11.  
1



71 JAN 1982





1127

BF 8-1-82

24 December 1981

I enclose a letter to the Prime-Minister from Dr. Perutz, following up his meeting with the Prime Minister last Friday as one of the Pope's delegates.

I should be grateful if you would provide a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to him by Friday 8 January.

WR

Francis Richards, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

11



jfh

24 December 1981

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your letter of 21 December.

This is receiving attention and a reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

WR

Dr. M.F. Perutz, CH, FRS.



R 23/12

Dr M.F. Perutz, CH, FRS,  
42, Sedley Taylor Road,  
Cambridge,  
CB2 2PN.

21st December 1981

*Dear Prime Minister,*

Thank you for receiving me last Friday in the somewhat incongruous guise of the Pope's messenger.

I am not sure that Professor Chagas mentioned one of the vital reasons for the scientists' deep concern. The eminent physicists who advise the Pope believe that technical developments such as the increasing accuracy of missiles, the growing vulnerability of satellites and the probable development of methods of locating submarines are likely to make the present, relatively stable state of mutual surveillance and deterrence obsolete. Technically each of the superpowers is already moving from a strategy of deterrence to one of destroying the other side's nuclear arsenal in a first strike. On each side there are said to be strategists who believe that a nuclear war waged in this way could be won. The scientists fear that these technical developments will lead to a situation of growing mutual suspicion where in an acute political crisis one side may be stampeded into pulling the nuclear trigger by fear that the other side is about to do so.

The scientists therefore suggested to the Pope to appeal to the Governments of the nuclear powers to do their utmost to bring about an agreed reduction both in the scale and quality of nuclear arms now before that unstable situation is reached.

As I said to you when I left, all my colleagues here enjoyed your visit last year enormously and felt very cheered by your great interest in our work. I hope that you will come again.

*Yours sincerely,*

*MF Perutz*

The Prime Minister,  
The Right Hon. Margaret Thatcher M.P.,  
10, Downing Street,  
London, SW1.