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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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31 March, 1983

Your Hon.

Prime Minister
This is quite interesting. I understand that
letters received by the MOD reveal a
similar pattern. A.D.C. 5/4

Letters from the Public on Nuclear Disarmament

The Department have recently prepared an analysis of incoming letters from the public in the last two months on nuclear disarmament.

You may find it of interest to have the enclosed brief summary.

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

Your man
Robert Bone

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street



Letters from the Public on Nuclear Disarmament

1. In the period since 4 February Defence Department in the FCO have received 515 letters. This includes those addressed to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and follow up letters addressed directly to this Department. The overall volume of letters is showing a downward trend. From the peak level of about 600 in January, it dropped to about 350 in February and the March total looks like being under the 300 mark.
2. The deployment of cruise missiles remains far and away the greatest area of public concern. Over 50% of the letters focussed primarily on the cruise issue, a large majority expressing opposition to the missiles being deployed. The objections tend to be based on one or more of the following beliefs: that cruise represent an escalation of the arms race; that they increase the risk of nuclear war; and that they make us more vulnerable to attack. The under-current of anti-Americanism still runs strong. The fact that we have joint political control over the use of the missiles has not been adequately grasped by the public or else is viewed with suspicion. The impression persists that Britain is acting as a sacrificial lamb for the Americans. 8% of the letters specifically raised the question of control over the missiles. The nuances of the dual physical key argument have yet to feature prominently in the public correspondence.
3. A high proportion (about 80%) of the anti-cruise letters complained that the missiles were being stationed here against the wishes of the British people. The fact that the decision to deploy cruise has been debated and approved by Parliament on several occasions appears not to be widely known: a point which should perhaps be borne in mind for future Ministerial speeches. A small but significant number of people call for a referendum on cruise deployment.
4. Calls on the Government to support a nuclear freeze have remained steady - about 8% of the correspondence. About 10% focus on the disarmament negotiations of which the major concerns have been that multilateralism does not work, or that Britain/NATO is being unreasonable in the negotiations. US personnel changes have not helped matters. We need to put over even more strongly (a) our commitment to arms control and (b) the merits of the Alliance's proposals over those of the Soviet Union.
5. Other small (1 - 2%) but significant topics of concern are the size of defence spending, the failure of NATO to give a declaration of 'no first use', the allegation that NATO's weapons (particularly cruise) are intended for first strike; criticism of the proposed Government 'anti-CND' advertising campaign and doubt about the reality of the Soviet threat. Trident has taken



very much a back seat - only about 1% have specifically talked about Trident and Polaris and a similar proportion have queried the exclusion of the British deterrent from the disarmament negotiations. Letters often start by stating opposition to cruise and Trident but then proceed to launch into arguments solely about cruise.

The remainder of the letters fall into a rather amorphous but nevertheless highly significant (about 15 - 20%) category of people who, without necessarily having a specific axe to grind, are nevertheless concerned about the arms race, and the fear of nuclear war. This category includes many letters from pensioners, children, mothers etc and remarks are frequently prefaced by a caveat such as 'I am not a communist/member of CND/unilateralist but'.

'Truth Game' attracted quite a response (though by no means the flood one might have expected). Parliamentary debates rarely attract much notice and Vice President Bush's visit prompted virtually no correspondence. There is little evidence of correspondence being directly inspired by CND propaganda with the notable exception of a particularly effective anti-cruise leafleting campaign in the Stevenage area.

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6 April 1983

Letters from the Public on Nuclear Disarmament

Thank you for your letter of 31 March enclosing an analysis of incoming letters from the public on nuclear disarmament. The Prime Minister read it with interest.

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

JOHN COLES

R.B. Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.