

CC Sir AP (2)



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 October 1983

Prime Minister.

F.C.O. conclusions on how we should handle disarmament resolutions at this year's UNGA.

A.F.C. 7/10

UK Attitude Towards Disarmament at the UNGA

I am writing about the approach we should adopt towards the debate on disarmament issues in the UN First Committee this autumn, in the light of the views expressed by the Prime Minister to Sir John Thomson and Sir Antony Acland during her visit to New York. At that time the Prime Minister instructed that a greater effort should be made at the UN to present our case on disarmament more clearly and effectively in the First Committee, and to put forward our own proposals for progress in this area even when on occasion they would not command overwhelming support. You may find it useful to have a brief account of where matters now stand.

Following the Prime Minister's visit to New York, FCO Ministers considered the issue in detail. Sir Geoffrey Howe endorsed last week instructions to our Mission to the UN and to our Disarmament Delegation (which has the lead role in the First Committee), in line with the views expressed by the Prime Minister. In summary our representatives were instructed to review this area with special care and, following close consultation between the FCO and MOD, to pursue the possibilities of making our voting record on UN disarmament issues more attractive to domestic public opinion; to continue to avoid giving even UN respectability to resolutions with adverse implications to our security or other national interests; and to explore in the "Barton" Group of Western countries and with our closest Allies the balance of advantage in placing our views firmly on the record, even with the prospect of significant opposition being registered by other UN members.

We recognise that such an approach could give rise to new problems, particularly in the context of the UN, where the insistence by the Soviet Union, her allies and leading members of the non-aligned on "disarmament by declaration" provide an in-built majority for resolutions often contrary to Western interests. It is worth noting also that our own record in previous years of resisting such measures has been criticised by the Government's opponents and others who misunderstand the nature of the debate or the issues at stake. A review of our earlier record suggests that we will have little scope for changing our votes this year; indeed, we must expect that in 1983 we will face even more resolutions which we cannot accept.

/Our representatives

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Our representatives in New York have been instructed to continue to work for consensus on disarmament resolutions wherever this is possible without sacrifice of principle. They have also been told to encourage our Western partners to support separate Western resolutions on issues where the non-aligned and the Eastern Bloc are determined to press unacceptable proposals to a final vote which they will inevitably win. As a result, a contrary Western resolution may appear, in UN terms, to be a defeat for the West. However, it will enable us to get our own views firmly on the record and to make our subsequent justification of our voting record to domestic opinion that much easier. We do not under-estimate the problems for obtaining the necessary support for this strategy from enough of our Western partners to make it worthwhile (the Irish and the Greeks, at least, can be relied upon to be positively unhelpful); and we recognise that it may therefore be more prudent on occasion not to press our resolution to a final vote but to withdraw it at the last moment, having formally recorded our views in the earlier stages of the debate.

In the light of our experience during this session of the First Committee, we will review the application of similar tactics at subsequent sessions of the UN.

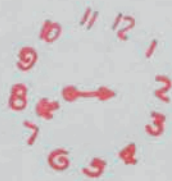
Your own

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

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UNITED NATIONS
Special Session on Disarmament
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16 JUN 1963





10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 October, 1983

UK Attitude Towards Disarmament at the UNGA

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your letter of 18 October.

E. L. COLES

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

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