

March 1, 1967

**Note for the Record [about a Meeting between the
Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and Lord
Chalfont at 6:50p.m. on 1 March 1967]**

Citation:

"Note for the Record [about a Meeting between the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and Lord Chalfont at 6:50p.m. on 1 March 1967]", March 1, 1967, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TNA, Records of the Prime Minister's Office (PREM), 13/1888. Contributed by Malcolm Craig.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/300408>

Summary:

Two "Notes for the Record" from March 1, 1967, describe the vigorous discussions between senior UK government figures, including Harold Wilson, Foreign Secretary George Brown, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Lord Chalfont, and chief scientific adviser to the government Solly Zuckerman. Brown argued that "our posture on the matter should be distinctively European rather than one of supporting the United States against other European countries." Wilson was even more explicit, stating that "our approach should be that of a European power discussing the matter with European partners and not seeking to fight American battles." Wilson was keen to let Washington take the lead so that his government might avoid upsetting the French, as had happened with the debates over De Gaulle's 1966 withdrawal from the NATO command structure.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

CONFIDENTIALNOT FOR THE RECORD

The Prime Minister held a meeting with the Foreign Secretary and Lord Chalfont at 6.50 p.m. on Wednesday March 1 at No. 10 Downing Street. Sir Burke Trend, Sir Paul Gore-Booth, Sir Solly Zuckerman, Mr. Halls and Mr. Palliser were also present.

1. The meeting approved in principle the attached outline Brief for Sir Solly Zuckerman's visit to Bonn.
2. The draft non-proliferation treaty, the problems of controls (Article 3 of the draft treaty) and the possible relationship between the treaty and the British approach to Europe

The Foreign Secretary said that he had no doubt of Sir Solly Zuckerman's ability to explain the technical issues to the Germans or of Lord Chalfont's to explain the technical issues in their political context when he visited Brussels on March 6 for talks with the EURATOM Commission. But we needed to establish whether our purposes should be to persuade the Europeans to accept control provisions which the U.S. Government wanted but to which the Russians were indifferent; or whether we should adopt a more European point of view. The Soviet Union would not refuse to sign the treaty without an article embodying the I.A.E.A. safeguards; and if we brought pressure to bear on the U.S. Government they too would accept it. If there were no such article in the treaty, member countries of EURATOM signing the treaty could nevertheless continue to operate EURATOM safeguards. In his view, having regard to the current British approach to Europe and to the fact that we ourselves would willingly give up the proposed article 3 if this were the only way to get the treaty, our posture in the matter should be distinctively European rather than one of supporting the United States against other European countries.

Lord Chalfont agreed that it was immaterial to the Soviet Union whether the treaty contained a safeguards article or not. But the Russians insisted that, if the treaty were to provide for safeguards, these should be under I.A.E.A. and not EURATOM. The present American position was that a treaty without a safeguards article was unacceptable. The U.S. Government might conceivably be persuaded to abandon this position but only with great difficulty. The U.S. Government believed that Congress would not ratify a non-proliferation treaty without a safeguards clause. The draft article would impose I.A.E.A. safeguards on all civil nuclear activities of non-nuclear signatories. The British attitude was that, despite our position as a nuclear power, we would accept the I.A.E.A. safeguards voluntarily and outside the provisions of the treaty. Accordingly he suggested that our tactics should be to use our unique position as a European power, with an existing nuclear capability but uncommitted to the safeguards article, to seek to establish the real extent of the anxieties of our potential partners in Europe and do what we could to set those at rest. If we failed to do so, we could then seek to persuade the U.S. Government to drop their insistence on the inclusion of safeguards within the treaty.

After further discussion, the Prime Minister said that Sir Solly Zuckerman and Lord Chalfont should take the following line in their forthcoming talks in Germany and with EURATOM. They should explain our reasons for being relatively unconcerned at the likely affect of the operation of I.A.E.A. safeguards; but that we equally would accept a treaty without a safeguards article. Without in any way appearing to speak as "American missionaries", they should explain that the U.S. Government had grave doubts about Congressional ratification of any treaty without such an article. This did not mean that we were urging the European countries to accept this article for the sole reason that the Americans wanted it. We thought that by a joint study of their anxieties, we might in the light of our experiences be able to set these at rest; and this was particularly the case because we were examining the whole question as a potential new member of EURATOM, with a powerful contribution to make to that organization once we had joined it. Our approach should be that of a European power discussing the matter with European partners and not seeking to fight American battles.

The Prime Minister said that it should emerge from Sir Solly Zuckerman's exchanges with the Germans to what extent it would be possible to allay their anxieties, on the

basis of the approach he had just outlined and of the technical arguments set out in the attached brief. If the Germans remained unsatisfied by these arguments Sir Solly Zuckerman should not undertake immediately to revert to the charge with the Americans. He should first report on his discussions to London; and, in the light of this report, it could be decided what further instructions to send him before he left Bonn; and what line it would be appropriate for Lord Chalfont to take with the EURATOM Commission in Brussels.

[signature]

March 2, 1967

Distribution:-

Foreign Secretary
Lord Chalfont
Sir Burke Trend
Sir Paul Gore-Booth
Sir Solly Zuckerman

[...]

CONFIDENTIAL

SIR SOLLY ZUCKERMAN'S VISIT TO BONN

1. The main object of the visit is to persuade the Germans that they will not be denied any aspect of the exploitation of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes,

- (a) if they are denied opportunities for developing nuclear weapons
- (b) and if they accept a general application of safeguards, whether they be
 - (i) EURATOM
 - (ii) IAEA

or (iii) Any other agreed safeguards to be administered through any Agency.

2. In technical discuss the Germans should be pressed to state the problems they envisage in specific and not in general terms. We should then respond with the counter arguments.

3. We can illustrate our own experience in developing nuclear energy for civil purposes without any dependence on spin-off from military work. Most of the AEA has never been exposed to military work. Canada is a prime example of a highly sophisticated nuclear power in the civil field, without ever having done any military work.

4. The UK already accepts IAEA safeguards at one of our civil power stations. We have said we would be prepared to accept them universally if that were to advance the cause of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

5. In accepting safeguards at one of our civil power stations, we exercise the right to refuse Soviet inspectors.

6. Effective safeguards must be seen to be effective and call for international rather than self or regional inspection.

7. IAEA is required to operate in a manner designed to avoid hampering a state's economic or technological development.

8. IAEA is required to take every precaution to protect commercial and industrial secrets.

9. In answer to the argument that nuclear explosions could be used for peaceful purposes, the Germans can be assured that:

- (a) the technical and economic advantage of these have yet to be demonstrated.
- (b) if they can be shown to have worthwhile economic advantages, these advantages

will be made available to the non-nuclear weapon powers. Similarly for any technological "fall-out" if there should be any, at some time in the future.

10. The Germans may be worried by the prospect of France developing as a nuclear weapon power, while not a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty and not subject to its safeguards clause. But if France were to sign the treaty immediately she would already be regarded as a nuclear weapon power and therefore not subject to safeguards under the treaty. In so far as she is still developing a military potential she is doing so in spite of Euratom safeguards.