

March 1, 1967

**Note for the Record [about a Meeting between the
Prime Minister, Sir Burke Trend, and Sir Solly
Zuckerman at 10:30a.m. on 1 March 1967]**

Citation:

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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.

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Transcript - English

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The Prime Minister held a meeting with Sir Burke Trend and Sir Solly Zuckerman at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 1 at No. 10 Downing Street to discuss nuclear weapon policy and recent Anglo-American exchanges. Mr. Halls and Mr. Palliser were also present. The following summarises the conclusions reached.

[handwritten in margin] *Top Copy on Atomic Energy Jan' 65*

It was agreed that Sir Burke Trend would seek to hold a meeting as soon as possible with Sir Solly Zuckerman and other senior officials from the Ministry of Defence with a view to reaching an agreed assessment of the present attitude of the U.S. Administration towards British nuclear policy and in particular towards future American co-operation and provision of information to Britain. Sir Solly Zuckerman said that the Ministry of Defence had not yet circulated a letter they had received from their own representative in Washington giving an assessment of the American attitude that was more pessimistic than that reached by Sir W. Penney and Sir W. Cook and much more in line with his own assessment as contained in his minutes and report submitted to the Prime Minister. It was agreed that it might not be possible to reach agreement in Sir Burke Trend's meeting on the present American attitude and it might be necessary to make further enquiries about this in Washington. It might also be necessary at some stage for the Prime Minister to raise the matter personally with the President. But the purpose of the official meeting should be [handwritten] *if possible*, to produce an assessment that would enable Ministers to examine the whole question of future nuclear weapons policy. The Prime Minister said that Ministers had taken the contingent decision at their last meeting to continue with the proposed expenditure of £17 million, but in his view this was reserved for final decision until June. He was not certain whether this view obtained within the Ministry of Defence and he was concerned that no decisions should be taken there which would irrevocably commit us to this expenditure before further Ministerial examination in the light of the conclusions reached at Sir Burke Trend's official meeting. For this reason he hoped that the meeting could take place before Sir Solly Zuckerman's departure on March 2 for Bonn rather than after his return some ten days later.

[marking from a red pen in the margin highlights the following paragraph]

The Relationship between British nuclear policy and the draft Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Prime Minister said that he thought the line being taken by the Foreign Secretary was correct; namely that we should not withdraw our support from the Treaty, and particularly from the proposed control provisions, but that we should lie fairly low and leave the running to be made by the United States. In the dispute over NATO, we had allowed ourselves to get into the position of apparently taking the lead in attacking de Gaulle. We should be careful to avoid the same mistake in relation to non-proliferation.

The Prime Minister said that Sir Solly Zuckerman should seek, in his talks with the Germans and other Europeans, to make the following points;

- (i) That industrial "spin off" from nuclear development in the military field was virtually nil.
- (ii) That as regards inspection we accepted the principle of this in despite the fact of being a military nuclear power; but we reserved the right, which the Germans and others would have equally to reject individual (e.g. Soviet) inspectors.
- (iii) That as regards EURATOM, the situation in this somewhat moribund body could be transformed by British entry and that this was a powerful argument in favour of German support for our current approach to Europe.

There was also some discussion of the French attitude to these problems. The Prime Minister agreed that Sir Solly Zuckerman should take the opportunity of a visit to Paris to have a frank and informal discussion of [handwritten] *the* various problems under discussion with Monsieur B. Goldschmidt, Chairman of the French Atomic Energy Commission. Before doing so, he should have a further discussion with the Prime Minister and Sir Burke Trend of the political implications, particularly in the field of future Anglo-French relations.

[signature]

[handwritten] *Copy to Sir B. Trend*

[handwritten] *done GF*

March 1, 1967