

May 18, 1967
Memorandum for the Prime Minister,
'Non-Proliferation'

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Summary:

By the early summer of 1967, Foreign Secretary George Brown felt compelled to comment that "if the situation should arise in which there is a direct confrontation between the United States and Russians on one side—and the members of EURATOM on the other, on the issue of the acceptability of EURATOM safeguards we should have to consider our position very carefully: the whole success of our European policy might depend on the choice we made. For the present it should therefore be a major aim of our policy at Geneva to see that things do not reach such a state." This came only a week after Wilson formally launched the UK's bid to become a member of the EEC, and two days after De Gaulle cast doubt on Britain's fitness to join the community.

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CONFIDENTIALPRIME MINISTERPM/67/51Non-Proliferation

You have asked for a note on the latest position of the non-proliferation treaty, and particularly on whether we might not be endangering our European posture for the sake of a treaty which might not be acceptable outside Europe and especially to the Indians.

2. John Freeman has discussed with L.K. Jha on his return the implications of the latest Indian position, and has reported his clear impression that, while the signing of a non-proliferation treaty by India is becoming more difficult, the door is not closed. Mr. Chagla's statements were not to be taken as meaning that India would not sign the treaty, but that they expected that the next round of discussions in Geneva should lead to further concessions by the nuclear powers.

3. We must not under-estimate the job of getting the Indians and others to sign the treaty. [Following sentence highlighted by a check mark in the left margin] I think that in the past the Americans have perhaps over-optimistically assumed that once there was agreement between themselves and the Russians all would be well. They have already discovered the snags to this within the Alliance, and the next round of discussions may well produce new difficulties with the non-aligned; but if we can persuade the Americans and Russians to remain reasonably flexible in their approach, and particularly to consider seriously the Indian proposals for a guarantee on which we are now working, I believe that these problems may be solved. We must not forget that if the Russians and Americans are really agreed on the need for a treaty, the resources of pressure that are open to them jointly, particularly in countries such as India, are very considerable.

[partially illegible handwritten note following this paragraph]

4. I agree that it would be foolish to put at risk our European position, particularly if we cannot be certain of a universal treaty. On the other hand, the declared position of the other Europeans has never been that they do not want a treaty, but only that they insist that their interest - the right to the free development of civil nuclear energy, the political future of EURATOM, the right to the European Federation Option, and all the rest of it - are not ignored.

5. We and the Americans have so far been able substantially to meet them on all these points. The Germans undoubtedly regard the treaty as a Soviet-American one and they have shown some signs that they value the United Kingdom's actions in trying to secure acceptable arrangements. In particular they have undoubtedly been impressed by our offer to put our own civil nuclear programme under safeguards and Sir Bernard Burrows has recently made some headway in persuading the German Ambassador in NATO that the American proposal to table the treaty with a blank Safeguards Article may in present circumstances be the best solution from the point of view of the European Community.

6. But although to table a draft with a blank Safeguards Article may serve the current need to get the negotiations of the treaty into the open, it does not solve the long-term problem of negotiability. We cannot rule out the possibility that the Russians will finally refuse to sign, unless there is a modification of European attitudes. [Following sentence highlighted by a check mark in the left margin] If the situation should arise in which there is a direct confrontation between the United States and the Russians on one side - and the members of EURATOM on the other, on the issue of the acceptability of EURATOM safeguards we should have to consider our own position very carefully: the whole success of our European policy might depend on the choice we made. For the present it should therefore be a major aim of our policy at Geneva to see that things do not reach such a state, and generally to co-operate as closely as we can with the Italians, as representing the voice of the EURATOM members in the Western Four. We have already told NATO that when the Geneva Conference reassembles we will do our best, together with the Italians, to ensure that the European view is put before the Committee.

7. During my visit to Moscow on the 19th of this month I shall also take the chance to urge the Russians to be reasonable on safeguards and we have told NATO that I would do so. I think that, without abandoning in any way our strong support for the non-proliferation treaty, [underlined in pencil] there is a place for us in the negotiations as an objective participant concerned to ensure that the treaty represents as fair a balance of obligations on both sides as is consistent with the nature of non- proliferation. At the same time by taking due account of the reasonable doubts of the Europeans, we can, I think, help the European Governments to keep their wild men, such as Strauss, under control.

9. [sic] All this will call for careful judgment at each stage of the game, which I am confident that [underlined in pencil] Lord Chalfont will provide with his detailed knowledge and control of our day-to-day policy. We expect the next public move today when the E.N.D.C. reconvenes and when as we hope, the treaty is tabled, with or without the text of the Safeguards Article. From that point on the treaty will be open for public debate, and we shall be able to get clearer signs of the real intentions of the parties and to take our decisions accordingly.

[signature]

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