

October 2, 1967

**Letter from Derek Day (Foreign Office) to Michael
Palliser (Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the
Prime Minister)**

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Summary:

Responding to a request from Michael Palliser (Wilson's Private Secretary for foreign affairs), the Foreign Office's seasoned Europe-watcher Derek Day argued that the government needed to balance three – sometimes conflicting – UK interests. First, there was the position as a European power, particularly with regard to the ongoing EEC application. Second, there was the UK's status as a nuclear power, in which the UK shared “special responsibilities” with the US, exemplified by the UK's acquisition of Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missiles as its primary nuclear deterrent. Third, there was the desire to see a non-proliferation treaty concluded, which sometimes meant disagreement with both the United States and the Soviet Union. Day contended that the United Kingdom seemed to have been successful in positioning itself as understanding European anxieties, with Bonn having congratulated Wilson's administration on bring “good Europeans.” Day's assessment was seen and lauded by Wilson, who hoped that it was correct.

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Foreign Office

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2 October, 1967.

[Handwritten] *My dear Michael,*

You wrote to me on 25 September about the Prime Minister's comments on various Foreign Office and UKDEL NATO telegrams on the draft non-proliferation treaty.

To take first the specific points raised by the Prime Minister and set out in paragraph 2 of your letter.

In deciding our policy towards the treaty we have to try and maintain a balance between:

(a) our position as a European power, and in particular our present position as an applicant for membership of the European Communities;

(b) our status as a nuclear power in which we share special responsibilities with the United States; and

(c) our strong desire to see the successful conclusion of a treaty which means that at times we do not feel able fully to support either the Russian or the American line.

As regards our European status, we realise that the Soviet compromise draft of Article III raises certain difficulties for EURATOM. We have therefore made it clear ever since the Russians put forward their text that we were fully aware of these EURATOM difficulties and that we would take them into account in deciding our own attitude.

We think that we have been reasonably successful in persuading the Europeans that we are aware of their anxieties. [Following sentenced highlighted with notation in the margin] The Germans for example have twice congratulated us on the way in which we were showing ourselves to be good Europeans over this. Furthermore, the special efforts we have made to consult EURATOM members in advance has polished our image with them. It remains a fact, however, that we cannot fully share the fears of the present members of EURATOM since, even if we became a member of the Community, we should largely be excluded from any adverse effects by virtue of our being a nuclear weapon state. We must also bear in mind that there is some evidence of procrastination in all of this by EURATOM, particularly by the Commission itself, which fears for its continued existence, and by the Italians who have been most critical of a non-proliferation treaty. Successive meetings in NATO have gone by without the members of EURATOM having any definitive position. As time is becoming increasingly short and the importance of concluding a treaty remains as crucial as ever we would not want to do anything to encourage them in their intransigence.

On the second point mentioned by the Prime Minister the Americans are aware that we must show as neutral an attitude as possible to the Soviet text, and it is even more important that we should do so, so that we are not bracketed with the Americans as ganging up against the non-nuclear weapon states to force a treaty on them. At the same time we have to realise that something on the lines of the Soviet text will be our only chance of an agreed Article III and hope of an early non-proliferation treaty. [Following sentenced highlighted with notation in the margin] We have incidentally been shown an American reporting telegram to Washington from their NATO Delegation (not intended for our eyes and therefore the more genuine) saying that our handling of this issue has been extraordinarily helpful.

As regards the third point, the Soviet Union are well aware of the difficulties raised for EURATOM over safeguards, and in discussion at Geneva Mr. Roschin seems to have acknowledged that the Soviet text will require interpretations favourable to the West. Similar interpretations have already tacitly been accepted by the Russians in the case of Articles I and II. The Russians should not therefore regard this as trickery on our part.

As regards progress on the treaty itself, the present debate in Geneva itself has been somewhat desultory. A lot of discussion has however been going in the background on the terms of an acceptable Article III. These discussions have been taking place between the Co-Chairmen, within NATO and in EURATOM. [Following sentenced highlighted with notation in the margin] We no longer have much hope of an agreed draft treaty being initialled by the majority of members of the ENDC before a report

has to go to the General Assembly. If, however, we can get a complete draft text, including an Article III on safeguards, then we think that there will more hope of getting some satisfactory treaty through the General Assembly than if Article III is left blank and a variety of alternative texts are tabled.

The precise timetable is that the First Committee of the General Assembly should start its discussions on disarmament in New York on about 15 October. The ENDC will probably remain in session in Geneva until then. [Following sentence highlighted with notation in the margin] This means that there are only two weeks left for further negotiations in the more expert and reasonable atmosphere at Geneva.

[Handwritten] *Yours ever,*

[signature]

A.M. Palliser, Esq., CMG
10 Downing Street.