



PM/82/6

PRIME MINISTERPrime Minister

- I understand that Mr. Nott agrees with this.
2. The main reason for doing something is that doing nothing would be likely to give fresh impetus to the unilateralist / peace movement.
  3. Agree that we should discuss the ideas in para 5 with the Americans?

A.J.C. 22/11

Yes  
msComprehensive Test Ban Treaty

1. It has been British policy for over 20 years to work for the conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT). By November 1980, the trilateral negotiations between the Americans, the Russians and ourselves had made some small measure of progress. With the arrival of President Reagan's Administration these negotiations were suspended pending a US policy review. The Americans have not got far with this review but they have now told us that they regard a CTBT as, at best, a long term objective.

2. A report by officials in February 1981 on nuclear test ban policy stressed the strength of support at home and, more particularly, abroad for a CTBT as a significant measure of nuclear disarmament. In the meantime the strength of the anti-nuclear lobby has, if anything, increased and, as you know, we and the MOD have undertaken a significant effort to tackle this problem by a vigorous presentation of Government policy. Several of our NATO allies, for instance, are among those who would like to see the trilateral negotiations on a CTBT resume. From what we know of discussions within the US Administration it is most unlikely that the Americans will be prepared to go ahead with these talks. They, like us, believe that a comprehensive ban in the near or medium term could damage Western security interests.

2. On the other hand, I do not think it would be satisfactory merely to allow these negotiations to remain in suspense without exploring less radical approaches to the test ban problem. This is particularly so in the run-up to the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament where the nuclear weapons states are bound to come in for a good deal of criticism, and not only from

/third world





third world countries. We in the UK may be a particular focus for criticism given our role in the tripartite negotiations and our decisions on the future of the British deterrent.

4. I believe therefore that we should look at alternative approaches to our test ban policy which, while avoiding the risks inherent in a comprehensive ban, nevertheless go some way towards maintaining a general momentum in the direction of tighter constraints on nuclear weapons testing. In the first instance I suggest that we should discuss our ideas bilaterally with the Americans. We need to do this fairly soon while we are in a position to influence the direction of their own review.

5. The attached paper examines the international and domestic difficulties. It concludes that the best option might be a step by step approach to a CTB, with a comprehensive ban being retained as a long term, rather than an immediate, objective. If colleagues have no objection, I would like officials to be able to put these ideas to the Americans as a basis for discussion.

6. I am copying this minute to the Defence Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Sir Robert Armstrong.

  
(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
21 January 1982