From discord to cordiality, January–April 1965

From January to April 1965 the character of the Wilson–Johnson relationship traversed the spectrum from discord to cordiality. Discord erupted over the Vietnam War when Wilson telephoned Washington in the early hours of 11 February to suggest to Johnson an urgent visit to the White House. Wilson later claimed that he wanted to see the President to try to ensure that there was no dangerous escalation of American actions. In truth, he was concerned above all with convincing his critics in Britain – especially those on the Labour left – that he had some influence over the US President. The request to visit Washington was dismissed, as Johnson disdained advice from representatives of allied governments unwilling to commit troops to Vietnam and realised that Wilson was basically trying to shore up his domestic position. Subsequently, the White House regarded the Prime Minister almost as an irrelevance and was little inclined to consult him on American foreign policy. The President was also concerned in this period about British economic weakness. He despatched an adviser to London to see Wilson to try to investigate and possibly shape the British budget of 6 April so that it would harmonise with the interests of the United States. Wilson agreed to the US initiative, even though the visit might have caused a political storm in Britain had it become public knowledge – it would appear that the United States was dictating British economic measures. David Bruce, the US Ambassador to London, regarded Johnson’s initiative as a crude attempt to exploit British difficulties. Finally, Wilson managed to visit Washington, on 15 April. The visit went well, with Johnson giving the go-ahead to investigate the possibility of peace negotiations with North Vietnam. In these months, then, Wilson was notably compliant with American wishes and willing to tolerate poor treatment from Washington. A ‘close’ or ‘special’ Anglo-American relationship remained of great importance to him, both personally and as a means of trying to magnify Britain’s influence in the world.

Wilson’s telephone call to Washington, 11 February

On 11 February, Housing Minister Richard Crossman contended that Britain had put itself ‘in the hands of American politicians’, because of Wilson’s
determination to ‘recreate the Anglo-American axis, the special relationship between Britain and America’.

Although Wilson sought close ties with the White House, it is clear that if President Johnson wanted any such close relationship it would be with West Germany. As he told the West German Ambassador on 14 January, ‘There was no-one … who could bring about any division between our country and … Germany … for so long as he was President’. In June 1965, Johnson told Erhard that ‘he considered Germany the most trustworthy of all allies’. The President’s personal inclinations aside, West Germany was militarily and economically a rising power, in contrast to a declining Britain. For example, around this time West Germany’s armed forces exceeded those of Britain, at 430,000 to 425,000. On 15 March, Lord Harlech, the outgoing Ambassador to Washington, commented that Britain’s ties with Washington were to some extent a wasting asset. Although Britain was ‘still regarded as the most dependable ally of the United States and there is a deep and widespread affection for us’, Harlech suspected that ‘this may be partly due to the fact that we are no longer regarded as an equal and therefore as a possible rival’. The UK had ‘a closer and more intimate relationship with the United States government than any other country and our views are listened to with greater attention but we too will be judged increasingly by our performance’. In Harlech’s view, ‘the myriad of close personal friendships built up at all levels during the war and immediate postwar years are a diminishing asset and nationals of other countries, if they care to make the effort, can establish almost equally close contacts’. Thus the portents for a close Anglo-American relationship over the long term were not especially good, and nor were some of the more immediate developments over Vietnam. In the House of Commons in June 1966, Wilson was later to explain his attitude towards American involvement in the area: ‘There are three reasons … why this fighting should cease. The first is because of the tragedy which this war brings on the people of Vietnam, people who, after 20 years of almost continuous fighting, want to live in peace, to till their farms, and bring up their children.’ The second reason was that ‘as long as this fighting lasts there is the danger of escalation to the scale of a land war in Asia, or possibly something worse’. Finally, ‘because as long as the fighting in Vietnam casts a cloud over international relationships, the easing of tensions between east and west, progress in disarmament and progress towards a world agreement to stop the spread of nuclear weapons may be endangered by this poisoning of the atmosphere’. But Wilson did not support a precipitate withdrawal by American forces, because such a measure would have ‘incalculable results, first in Vietnam. It would have incalculable results, too, over a much wider area than Vietnam, not least because it might bring with it the danger that friend and potential foe throughout the world would begin to wonder whether the United States might be induced to abandon other allies when the going got rough’.

On 10 February 1965, Wilson learned of an ‘extremely vicious attack by the Vietcong in the Saigon area, involving the destruction of a club largely used by
US servicemen. Fearing an exaggerated American response, he discussed the matter with the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, at 11.30 p.m. that day. They decided that, in view of the controversy about Vietnam in the House of Commons, Wilson ‘should fly to Washington to discuss matters with the President’. After consulting the former British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Harold Caccia, Stewart suggested to Wilson that the Prime Minister ‘should first consult Lord Harlech’. Wilson spoke to Harlech ‘by telephone at 1.00 a.m. on Thursday February 11’. He ‘explained the parliamentary situation in this country and the fact that alone of the major powers Britain was appearing to keep silent over Vietnam and appearing simply to tag along in the wake of the Americans’. It was therefore ‘highly desirable that the Prime Minister should be seen to be consulting the Americans in what they had to do in South Vietnam’, by means of ‘discussions with the President of the United States’. Harlech took up the matter with the White House, and at 2.00 a.m. he told 10 Downing Street that he had ‘spoken to Mr. McGeorge Bundy’, the White House National Security Adviser, ‘and that the feeling at the White House was very strongly against a visit by the Prime Minister: it would smack too much of desperation’. The United States’s ‘intended action in South Vietnam would be moderate, measured and strictly relevant to the provocation’. It would look ‘very bad in the United States if the Prime Minister was thought to be running to give the President advice or to consult him when American soldiers were being murdered’. Harlech concluded by telling Wilson that he ‘should certainly not propose going to the United States unless he had beforehand made personal contact with the President: by personal contact Lord Harlech meant a telephone conversation’.

With great faith in his personal diplomacy, Wilson made that ‘personal contact’ in order to try to secure a visit. In his memoirs he justified the initiative by saying that ‘the pressures on the President to escalate the war, if need be by the use of nuclear weapons’, could mean that ‘his patience might falter and that he would give way to the hawks in the Administration and Congress, and above all, in the services’. Also aware of ‘the reaction that would follow in the House of Commons’, Wilson ‘felt that this was a time for a personal discussion with him to remind him of the attitude of his friends, and indeed the rest of the world’. He therefore arranged to telephone the President ‘on the “hot-line” and got through about 3.30 a.m. our time, 10.30 p.m. Washington time’. Wilson told the President of the ‘high-level of concern in London’ about events in Vietnam, and indicated ‘that he would like to come to Washington to put himself in a better position to deal with that concern’. Johnson refused: ‘it would be a very serious mistake for the Prime Minister to come over … there was nothing to get upset about, any more than it would be right for him to get upset about Malaysia’. Any ‘visit would be misunderstood here’. The American response in Vietnam ‘had been very measured and reasonable … it was not going to be any different whether the Prime Minister came here or not … it would be a great mistake for us to jump up and down and fly the Atlantic every time there was an
issue of this sort’. Wilson spoke of his ‘problems in the House of Commons’, but Johnson had ‘plenty of problems with his own Congress … it would be a mistake for the Prime Minister to try to use the President as an instrument in the House of Commons’. Johnson had ‘to deal with the Congress every day, but he did not pull the Prime Minister into it’. He did not ‘see what was to be gained by flapping around the Atlantic with our coattails out’. Johnson pressed upon Wilson, once again, the desirability of British troops entering the war in Vietnam: ‘the US’, said Johnson, ‘did not have the company of many allies’ there. The United States needed ‘British support’, and if the Prime Minister had ‘any men to spare, he would be glad to have them’. Wilson returned to the question of a visit to Washington, but Johnson retorted: ‘Why don’t you run Malaysia and let me run Vietnam?’ Would Wilson think it wise for the President ‘to announce to the American press tomorrow that he was going over to London to try to stop the British in Malaysia?’ The Prime Minister ‘gave way and reassured the President of his own basic support’ for US policy in Vietnam. The conversation over, Johnson told Bundy to ‘send off a message summarising the current situation to the Prime Minister’s office’.11

Five years later, in a speech about Anglo-American relations, Wilson returned to his telephone call: ‘Never in the whole history of Anglo-American relationship, to my knowledge, has either a President or a Prime Minister spoken to the other in language one-tenth as abusive as what concurrently many English were saying about their Prime Minister, and many Americans about their President’.12 Johnson’s tirade did not seem to strain Wilson’s basic loyalty to the White House, but he was stung nonetheless – until the news broke two days later he had wanted to keep the telephone call secret. On 29 March, Bundy recorded that Henry Brandon of the Sunday Times had given him ‘quite an account of Harold Wilson’s thinking’ on Vietnam. Although Wilson had told Brandon ‘about the telephone talk’ he ‘forbade him to print it’ in case it undermined his efforts to present himself as a confidant of the President. Anticipating that the message would reach Wilson, Bundy told Brandon that the White House was not impressed when British politicians used Washington ‘as a place for public criticism of the US in order to please their own political backbenchers’. Bundy thought that Brandon ‘got the point, and I daresay it will have been in his Sunday article … This should have some salutary effect’ on Wilson’s desire to advise President Johnson.13 The Prime Minister’s Foreign Office assistant, Oliver Wright, suggested on 12 February that Johnson was somewhat limited and heavy-handed in his dealings with other countries: the telephone ‘conversation … together with other indications, indicate that the nature of US foreign policy, as pursued by President Johnson, is likely to be very different (and less helpful to British interests) than that pursued by President Kennedy’. Wilson had to accept, said Wright, that ‘the man who is at present at the head of the United States is basically not interested in foreign affairs’. This meant that he had ‘no particular vision in his mind of the sort of world that Statesmen should be constructing’,
and was thus liable to misadventure and unstatesmanlike outbursts. Wright surmised correctly that Johnson was ill-disposed to the advice of foreign leaders: it was a case of ‘you get on with your problems and I’ll get on with mine’. Yet at this stage at least Wilson did not find the upshot of Wright’s argument palatable: it was suggested that given Johnson’s indifference to the British, the United Kingdom should seek closer ties with Europe. Wright also commented on 12 March that he had recently attended a CIA briefing, the object of which was ‘to demonstrate the degree of direct North Vietnamese involvement in South Vietnam’. For Wright the briefing simply demonstrated, though, that ‘the Americans are in a hopeless position in South Vietnam’. They ‘cannot win and cannot yet see any way of getting off the hook which will not damage their prestige internationally and the President’s position domestically’. This explained Johnson’s ‘bear with a sore head attitude on the telephone a couple of weeks ago and the current absence of any Presidential “determination” on American policy in Vietnam’. It appeared that ‘with his passion for “consensus”, the President is waiting for domestic opinion in the United States to crystallise’. Wright advised that it was best not to ‘badger’ the Administration. Wilson was in sympathy with these views, but that did not mean he would ever tell Johnson that the Americans were in a ‘hopeless position’ in Vietnam.

Initially, the Prime Minister tried to imply that his telephone call to Washington had gone well. He told his Cabinet the next day that he had talked for two hours ‘with the President of the United States and he had explained our attitude to him’. Wilson failed to mention the dismissive tone with which he had been received in Washington. He also tried to convey to MPs that he had real influence over President Johnson. On 11 February, the left-wing Labour MP William Warbey reiterated the increasingly frequent suggestion to Wilson that he should:

> do what Attlee had done when Macarthur was asking for a nuclear attack on the Chinese Yalu River power stations – ‘fly to Washington’. [Wilson’s] answer was that this was not necessary ... because there was now a ‘hot-line’ between London and Washington. He had talked to Johnson on the hot-line today. The impression which he had intended to convey by this information was that he had talked to Johnson as Attlee had talked to Truman in 1951 [sic].

Wilson tried to dismiss Warbey, telling him that Johnson was ‘having difficulty keeping dissentient Congressmen in Washington quiet’, and ‘the fuss which some of you are making here is not helping either’. Brandon noted in his memoirs that after ‘that incident’ of Wilson’s telephone call on 11 February, Bruce managed to convince the Prime Minister that ‘it was better to communicate with the President by teletype, because a man like Johnson to whom reaching for the telephone was second nature and principally an instrument to pressure people, did not like others using it to put him on the spot’. Indeed, Wilson made few if any more telephone calls to Johnson, relying on correspondence instead.
Wilson’s desire for consultation over Vietnam

Wilson was anxious that Washington should keep him informed, even to consult him, about developments in Vietnam. As well as fitting in with his own propensity for diplomacy, this would help him to deal with those who charged him with an undue commitment to the United States. The White House at least kept 10 Downing Street informed, though these efforts fell short of consultation. On 11 February, the President sent, via Bundy, an ‘account of the situation and our current plans’, namely that ‘US and Vietnamese air units will strike two targets in the Southern Part of North Vietnam’ – some army barracks ‘clearly associated with the infiltration programme of Hanoi’. The operation had been designed under Johnson’s ‘personal and careful supervision to be prompt, adequate and measured’. He was ‘determined to give all necessary replies while keeping it clear at all times that he desires no wider war and that root cause of entire situation is in the systematic campaign of aggression by force and fraud against South Vietnam under the direction of the North Vietnamese leadership’. Bundy told Wilson that Johnson would discuss the ‘whole situation fully with Ambassador Bruce … and asks me to repeat that he welcomes consultation by cable and telephone any time the Prime Minister thinks it useful’.20

Johnson felt a growing concern about the strength of support in Vietnam from the United States’s allies. He questioned Bundy, whose subsequent memorandum on 16 February indicated that Britain was ‘with us but wobbly on negotiations’. Officially, there was ‘strong public support to date, but privately’ there were ‘pressures to get a negotiating track started’. The ‘British have always put us on notice that substantial military action would create great public opinion pressures on them to take a negotiating initiative’. Bundy told Johnson that he thought they would ‘continue to stand firm in public, but we would need extremely close consultation at all stages to hold them in line with what we thought was a wise approach to any question of negotiation’. Despite ‘some backbench pressure’, Bundy did not believe that Wilson ‘would take any negotiating initiative that he had not fully discussed and cleared with us’. There were some suspicions, though: Bundy added that ‘the British are in constant touch with the Canadians and the Indians, and there is always a possibility that some ill-timed diplomatic initiative would arise from the other two’.21

Domestically, Wilson faced growing pressure over Vietnam. This was all the more critical in the light of Labour’s narrow majority in the Commons. On 24 February one Labour MP asked Wilson ‘what consultations he had had with President Johnson on the war in Vietnam, and for a statement on the prospects of securing a peaceful settlement’. Characteristically, the Prime Minister’s response implied real influence over the President, and it also left the MP with little scope for contention: ‘we have been actively engaged in diplomatic consultations of a confidential nature’. These ‘consultations are still going on, and I hope the House will understand that it would be unwise to prejudice the results
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of much patient and discreet diplomacy by any premature public announc-

ement’.22 In this guarded but sanguine statement Wilson was referring to Britain’s
tentative and unsuccessful contacts with Moscow on the prospect of reconven-
ing a latter-day version of the 1954 Geneva Conference, which had partitioned
Indochina. He was also referring to the equally unfruitful contact he had with
the Americans. The Labour MP Sidney Silverman tabled an anti-US motion
after the bombing of North Vietnam which had so alarmed Wilson. Addition-
ally, the MP Konni Zilliacus gathered signatures for a telegram of protest which
he proposed to send to President Johnson. On 22 March, it was reported that the
Americans were using napalm bombs and gas in Vietnam. This brought another
anti-US motion, now from the MPs John Mendelson and Tom Driberg.23 Warbey
pressed Wilson for an ‘outspoken dissociation of Britain from what the Ameri-
cans were doing in Vietnam’.24

Pressures of this type confirmed that the Prime Minister’s telephone call to
Johnson on 11 February derived less from a real concern about possible Ameri-
can rashness than domestic political considerations, given Labour’s thin major-
ity in the Commons and the corresponding need to maintain Party unity. Bruce
noted the intense ‘restiveness here, especially in the House of Commons, over
the British Government not seeming to play a more active part in trying to
induce negotiations over Vietnam’.25 Wilson, said Bruce, was ‘under intense
domestic pressure to intervene as mediator in the situation’,26 and was ‘accused
by many British, including a formidable number of moderate Labour parlia-
mentarians, of being a mere satellite of the US, and of subscribing blindly and
completely to policies about which he has not been consulted in advance’.27 On
12 March, Wilson explained to Bruce that when he had discussed Vietnam with
Johnson in December, ‘the British government had agreed to support any American
response that was measured and specifically related to the provocation’. This
situation ‘clearly no longer obtained, and the United States Government had
made the change without consulting their most loyal ally’. This would place the
British ‘in an intolerable position; if it were allowed to continue we should soon
be hearing stories about satellites and the 51st state’. Wilson said that his govern-
ment ‘could live with the originally planned posture of the United States: namely
that of a stick in one hand and an olive branch in the other’. The British ‘could
probably live with any degree of toughening up of United States responses, pro-
vided there was also a public recognition of a readiness to negotiate in parallel’.
But ‘if things went on as they were, they could well lead to the biggest difficulty
between Britain and the United States for many years, possibly since Suez’.28

Clearly, Wilson’s support for the Americans in Vietnam demanded a certain
amount of political ingenuity. On 14 April, George Ball, Undersecretary of
State, told Johnson that British support has been ‘skilfully conducted and sturdily
maintained by the Prime Minister’, even though there was criticism of the ‘close
identification with US policy’.29 Wilson charted a course between satisfying
both Washington on the one hand and the Labour left on the other, avoiding a
serious break with either. But Labour criticism of US policy in Vietnam antagonised Johnson. While speaking to the new British Ambassador, Patrick Dean, on 13 April, he ‘strongly criticised the attitude of the Labour backbench in Parliament and said that although he was at all times ready to listen to what his allies had to say, he would not be deterred by purely negative opinion’. Johnson had little interest in keeping Wilson fully informed about the situation in Vietnam, although Wilson told his Cabinet on 4 March that he was ‘in constant touch with the President’. Bruce noted on 16 February that his superiors had told him to ‘avoid seeing the Prime Minister, if this were possible, but if not, to confine my conversation with him to generalities’. This reticent approach was because ‘the timing and sequence of our action in Vietnam is still under discussion … they expect to give me material for a full presentation tomorrow’. Subsequently, Bruce explained to Wilson, in vague terms, ‘the general tendency of our present planning’. The Prime Minister affirmed that he ‘would continue to back the US position’, although he was not sure ‘what it was’. To elicit more information, Wilson then told Bruce of the President’s ‘telephone message’ on 11 February that the Ambassador ‘would give him a complete summary of proposed US action’, rather than the scant outline from Bundy. In the absence of a full summary, Wilson had asked Bruce whether he thought ‘it might be well for him to communicate directly with the President’ to find out exactly what was happening. But Bruce, conscious of Johnson’s preoccupation with Vietnam, tried ‘to advise that he not do so at the present time, but use as a channel his Embassy in Washington’. The Ambassador thought that it was ‘obvious that what is most desired here is a statement by the President’ to demonstrate that Wilson’s views were important to the United States.

Bruce told the White House of Wilson’s appeal for information about US policy in Vietnam. Bundy pursued this and on 16 February reminded Johnson of his obligation: ‘you promised Wilson a memo on our exact position’. The President then told Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, to send Bruce an update of American policy in Vietnam, to be presented to Wilson. The update was general and unrevealing. It said that the United States was committed to ‘continuing air and naval action against North Vietnam when and wherever possible … limited and fitting and adequate’. Washington would make a statement ‘after the next military action’ – details withheld – to reflect the intensification of the ‘programme of pacification within South Vietnam’ and the ‘execution of a joint programme of measured and limited air action against selected military targets’ in North Vietnam. On 5 March, Bruce sent another telegram to Washington trying to encourage some sympathy with Wilson’s position: ‘Recent private conversations with British government leaders, including PM and Foreign Secretary, reveal an increasing concern that US and UK should be able to show movement toward negotiation on the Vietnam problem’.

Johnson and his associates were little inclined to take the prospect of negotiation seriously until the United States had consolidated a real military advantage
From discord to cordiality in Vietnam, but by then it would be less a case of negotiation than of imposing a peace on American terms. Johnson agreed, for example, with the view of former President Eisenhower, whose counsel the White House had sought. In a meeting of 17 February, Eisenhower told Johnson and his colleagues that:

if we can show a fine record of success, or real and dramatic accomplishment, we would be in a good position to negotiate. He advised not to negotiate from a position of weakness. He commented that Prime Minister Wilson of the UK had not had experience with this kind of problem. We, however, have learned that Munichs win nothing; therefore, his answer to the British would be ‘not now boys’.36

The phrase ‘not now boys’ therefore summarised Johnson’s approach to the British on the question of negotiations in Vietnam. Practically the only action the Americans were prepared to take with respect to the British involved the language that Wilson should use in the Commons. On 9 March, the Prime Minister sought American advice, via the US Embassy, on what he should say about Vietnam in the House of Commons. Philip Kaiser, Bruce’s assistant, asked the State Department for guidance on the contents of the statement that the Prime Minister would make that afternoon.37 Later, Kaiser told Rusk that Wilson had fully accepted the American counsel, with his statement conforming ‘closely to text agreed with Washington, with Wilson calling for … an end to North Vietnamese aggression’.38 By demonstrating his solicitude like this towards American sensibilities, the Prime Minister sought to encourage reciprocity on the part of the White House. He recalled to Bruce on 12 March that ‘before he answered Questions on Vietnam in the House of Commons on the previous Tuesday, he had consulted the United States Government on what he should say; and, indeed, in response to last minute representations, had changed the text of his reply’. It would ‘therefore place him in a very difficult position if, without any consultation, the United States Government were to alter their position’.39 Wilson’s recital of the American line in the Commons on Vietnam may have satisfied Washington, but it did not enhance his standing with the Labour radicals: Warbey described Wilson’s performance as ‘the end’ and accused him of lying on behalf of the United States.40 After the Commons statement on 9 March, Bruce thought that Wilson deserved an acknowledgement of his loyalty and compliance. ‘Perhaps’, he asked Rusk, ‘if the President thought favourably of it, it might be well for him to send a personal communication to the PriMin, expressing thanks for his support, and stating he expected to keep him closely advised of his plans’.41 Rusk replied that he could ‘convey to PriMin President Johnson’s appreciation for the solidarity reflected in Wilson’s statement in Parliament and his answers to questions’.42 Bruce did speak to the Prime Minister of Johnson’s ‘appreciation’, though the ‘personal communication to the PriMin’ that the Ambassador had wanted was not forthcoming – casting some doubt on the authenticity of Johnson’s gratitude. But the Ambassador’s continued promptings did encourage some of Johnson’s advisers to realise that British support for the US in Vietnam should not be taken for granted. Bundy told Johnson on 6 March

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that Rusk and Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defence, both felt that ‘to hold some of our allies we may need to be a little less rigid about “talks” than we have in the last ten days’. In particular, Wilson had that day ‘been made nervous by one sub-Cabinet resignation and a lot of yammering’ by troublesome MPs. He wanted ‘to make some explorations toward the possibility of talks, and to say that they have been in consultation with us’. But this matter was not urgent, Bundy told the President, because Wilson was ‘safely in Bonn’ where he was less likely to cause trouble for the Americans than if he was at large in London.43

Economic diplomacy

During this period the White House continued to be concerned about the strength of sterling. On 11 March, Johnson told Robert Anderson of the State Department that Wilson should ‘quit’ telling him how to ‘concede and yield in Southeast Asia’ and should instead ‘look after his budget’.44 Some of the President’s advisers wanted him to use his influence to ensure that the forthcoming British budget was a cautious one. The Secretary of the Treasury, Douglas Dillon, told Johnson on 27 March that ‘Sterling has been weak over the past couple of weeks as the impression has grown that the United Kingdom budget, which is now due to be presented on April 6, will turn out to be inadequate’. If it appeared ‘that the British are seriously considering devaluation, it is important that we concert closely with them, and, if necessary, intercede at the highest levels including conversations between yourself and the Prime Minister, in order to hold any devaluation to the $2.50 level’.45 On 30 March, William Martin of the Federal Reserve suggested to Johnson that he should express to Wilson the concern ‘about the rumours of devaluation and trouble for sterling which are running around in the New York market’. The budget ‘should be a tight one, should be recognised as such’, and the British government should ‘advertise it to be one designed to achieve confidence in your currency’. Martin advised Johnson ‘that the important thing is to let the Prime Minister know of your interest and you might offer to send Kermit Gordon’, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, to London ‘to discuss the matter in greater detail with him’.46 The President favoured Martin’s advice that the US Government should investigate the British budget to ensure that it was a tight one, but he was not inclined to speak to Wilson personally in case, as he told Dillon on 31 March, it seemed ‘like I’m throwing my weight around’. The alternative approach of Gordon was a ‘sound’ idea.47

That day, Bundy, now in London, spoke to Derek Mitchell, Wilson’s principal private secretary, and Oliver Wright in the Prime Minister’s Office, to say that Johnson ‘would like to propose a visit … by Kermit Gordon so that there could be close understanding before the budget debate on Tuesday on the political as well as the financial level’. Bundy emphasised that ‘the President would be particularly glad to have an advance notice from the Prime Minister on any
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problem which might lead to a need for US action. Wilson responded that Gordon ‘would be most welcome’, and a meeting was set for Sunday lunch. Bundy noted Wilson’s desire to confer over the ‘hot-line’ directly with the President again – if they could not confer about Vietnam, then they might do so about the budget. After checking with Johnson, Bundy declined Wilson’s request, saying that ‘the President was not going to be where he could talk this evening and his own judgement was that it would be best to hold up a telephone conversation … until after Gordon’s visit’. Wilson’s ‘failure’, said Bundy, ‘to come back with more pressure for direct telephone conversations suggests that he is ready to play it coolly’ in his relations with the President, and to wait until they met face-to-face.

The American probing of the British budget could have aroused some controversy in the UK had it been publicised. The Foreign Office noted that there was strictly ‘no publicity’ about Gordon’s visit. There was a ‘cover plan’, however, that he had been ‘sent to look into questions affecting United States overseas expenditure and while here had made informal contact with his former Oxford tutor, the Prime Minister’. Derek Mitchell told Bundy on 4 April of the need for secrecy: ‘by tradition and by necessity and security one has to conserve complete silence before a budget’. However, none of the British seemed to express any opposition to the American investigations. Wilson certainly did not, remarking blandly to Johnson he was ‘very grateful to you for arranging for Kermit Gordon to be in London when we came back’ from talks in Paris.

On 6 April, Bruce urged in a telegram to be passed on to the President that it was ‘essential that the US exercise more than usual caution and restraint in whatever official statement or comment we make initially about the UK budget’. Washington should ‘take care to avoid responding too quickly and too enthusiastically to the British proposals’, otherwise there might be ‘suspicions that the US and Britain had jointly planned the budget’. More vigorously, Kaiser contends in his memoirs that Johnson’s action was an attempt to ‘take insensitive advantage of the disparity of power between Britain and the United States’, as well as Wilson’s loyalty to Washington. It was ‘a foolish act, an abuse of the special relationship’, Kaiser wrote, noting that the ‘preservation of the budget’s secrecy until it was presented to the House of Commons was a basic political principle’ in Britain. ‘The Embassy was determined’, he added, ‘to keep Kermit Gordon’s visit secret. Had it become public it might have created a political storm’. The Foreign Office noted that on 4 April Gordon duly ‘spent one and a half hours with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and they then joined the Prime Minister for lunch’. The ‘opportunity was taken to give Gordon a rundown on the Budgetary situation (in general terms)’. He ‘left reassured, and the reports he will be making when he returns to Washington … will go straight to the centre’.

The extent, if any, to which the Americans helped shape the budget can only be speculated. However, it is certain that the Prime Minister and his colleagues
had little room for manoeuvre, as Dillon made clear to Johnson on 27 March. If the budget was lax, then:

the European countries will join in forcing the British Government to choose between substantial further restrictive action, such as increased sales taxes on consumer items, or a devaluation of sterling. They have the capacity to do this simply by refusing to agree to renew the support which they gave sterling last November and which runs out in May. It had been expected that the United Kingdom would make another drawing from the Monetary Fund in May for the purpose of paying off the bilateral support remaining from last winter’s exercise. With an inadequate budget it is doubtful if the International Monetary Fund would, or could, agree to an additional drawing by the United Kingdom.56

A CIA Intelligence Memorandum noted that the British budget of 6 April 1965 was cautious and deflationary, ‘designed mainly to strengthen Britain’s external position’. It sought to ‘restrict consumer spending, to reform corporate taxation, and to reduce the outflow of capital’, thus easing the pressure on sterling.57 Certainly the budget did not cause any complaints in the White House. Johnson told Patrick Dean on 13 April that the British had scored a ‘home run’. He expressed his appreciation concerning ‘the visit of Mr. Kermit Gordon to London … and the very satisfactory report which had been rendered to him on that occasion’. Johnson had ensured that ‘word had been put round in Washington and New York that the steps which HMG were taking with regard to their financial and economic position, and particularly in respect to the budget, were satisfactory’. Johnson also ‘spoke in high terms of the Prime Minister and the other Ministers concerned and said that … great progress was undoubtedly being made by the British government in this field’.58 Some of Wilson’s colleagues were less impressed by the budget. George Brown complained to Wilson that it was ‘“a soak ’em” package, the only justification for which is that “experts” somewhere are alleged to have formed the view that there is some magical figure of additional taxation which will restore foreign confidence and make sterling strong’.59

The second summit

Despite the rebuff from Johnson on 11 February, Wilson still wanted to visit Washington, for what would be his second trip there since becoming Prime Minister. In his memoirs he indicates that the telegram from the Americans which arrived on 11 February suggested a visit. Yet it would have been incongruous for the White House to make this suggestion, as the President had just several times dismissed the Prime Minister’s request for a meeting. The telegram made no such reference.60 Wilson himself initiated the trip, circuitously to avoid a direct refusal, through the British Embassy and on the pretext of a planned speech in New York. Two weeks after the telephone call, White House aide Bromley Smith sent a memo to his colleague Jack Valenti, indicating that
the British Embassy had sent a message to say ‘that the British Prime Minister will be in New York on April 14 to address the Economics Club on the economic situation in Britain and, if possible, would like an hour with the President on the afternoon of the 14th or 15th’. Would ‘the President be in town then and able to see Wilson? … we believe the President should see him if it is at all possible’. Johnson was less than enthusiastic, wondering that since he had seen Wilson in December ‘it would be enough’ for Rusk to see him. Yet the President’s advisers felt that this would cause a crisis of protocol in Anglo-American relations ‘at the summit’. Valenti told the President firmly that ‘there is no escape from seeing Prime Minister Wilson when he is here in April’. As Wilson had himself ‘asked to see the President it would be an affront and an international flap if he didn’t have this request granted. The Secretary will meet him first and then bring him in to see you’. Johnson had to comply, not least because ‘an international flap’ would be more trouble than it was worth.

The President’s reluctance to see Wilson also stemmed from his concern early in 1965 that a visit might suggest to the world that the Prime Minister was telling him what to do in Vietnam. Though Johnson had agreed to a visit, he searched in private for a way of breaking free. On 6 March, he called Ball ‘to say that he has the feeling he is getting crowded into a corner’ over Wilson’s visit, in part because of the pressure from some other White House advisers. Johnson told Ball that as his ‘lawyer’ he ‘should handle it’, and find some means of escape from the commitment. The President claimed that ‘he had received the last Prime Minister he wanted to receive’. Johnson was ‘not ready to talk or for peace machinery or for conferences,’ and he was ‘decidedly not ready to be used as a floor mat by Wilson as he was used by the French Minister the other day – or like Lord Home had done on the Cuban trade early in 1964. Johnson fulminated that if he had ‘to get sick and leave town he would do it’ to avoid seeing Wilson. He mentioned the telephone discussion on 11 February when he (Wilson) had wanted to come over that night. Now the Prime Minister was ‘coming on the 15th [of April] but there would be no discussion of peace negotiations or a treaty for Vietnam’. Ball agreed that the President ‘could not be an instrument for helping Wilson with his domestic political problems’, but the Undersecretary could do little to ease Johnson’s difficulty. Johnson told McNamara that he did not know ‘how to stop this Wilson, but if he thinks I’m going to … let Wilson use my platform to talk about consulting with him about where to have a conference, he’s crazy as hell’. A few days later Johnson complained that Wilson was coming ‘to announce from the White House that we ought to have negotiations over Vietnam’. Johnson’s feelings about seeing Wilson soon became widely known. Bruce, for example, noted that in London ‘snide remarks are frequent to the effect that the President does not want to see’ Wilson in April, and these comments took Wilson’s ‘unvarying acquiescence for granted’. In the Sunday Times, Henry Brandon contended that Johnson’s lack of enthusiasm for foreign visitors derived
from the fact that while he had an ‘inspired intuition … in domestic affairs, he lacks the same flair in the foreign field’. While President Kennedy had taken a lively interest in international affairs and had enjoyed his contacts with foreign leaders, Johnson felt that little could be learned ‘even from informal personal contact, that cannot be learned from reading diplomatic cables or the newspapers, both of which he spends a lot of time studying’. Brandon wrote that although the President was thus well-informed about world affairs, he resented the tactic used by ‘foreign statesmen’ whereby they would visit the United States ‘without an invitation from the White House, under the pretext of honorary degrees, or speeches’ (as noted, Wilson had lodged his latest request to visit Johnson on the back of a speech in New York). Johnson regarded these visits to the United States as a cheap form of proselytising, ‘as an attempt to influence American public opinion by the back door’. To compound Johnson’s irritation, said Brandon, ‘it then becomes necessary for him to invite the speaker out of courtesy to the White House’. There was no escaping this situation without causing a crisis of protocol. Foreign visitors made great demands on Johnson’s time, too: if a ‘statesman comes to see him for only an hour or two, the President has to prepare himself for such a meeting for several hours in advance, because he does not want to appear uninformed or unresponsive’. The gist of Brandon’s article was that the President ‘tends to grumble about any unnecessary visitor, comparing his presence with a visit from his mother-in-law just as he was trying to get to the ball game’. Its humour aside, this was an apt – if understated – characterisation of Johnson’s reaction to the news of a visit from Wilson. However, Johnson’s response might have been still harsher had Wilson not tried ‘to discourage any belief that he is hurrying to see the President about Vietnam’, as the US Embassy noted on 12 March.

On 22 March, Bruce lamented that ‘The President has an antipathy for the Prime Minister’. In particular, Johnson thought that ‘attempts on the part of the British to insinuate themselves into Vietnamese affairs’ were ‘irrelevant and impertinent’. He believed that Wilson, ‘for his own domestic, political purposes, wishes to capitalise on a supposed close relationship that is non-existent’. Bruce and Bundy, who was himself not especially enamoured of Wilson, saw ‘eye-to-eye on this situation’, believing that Johnson should at least try to give the impression of good relations, because ‘The PM needs at least to be able to portray to his associates, and in the House of Commons, the appearance of an intimacy and a mutual confidence’. But the ‘intimacy and … confidence’ of which Bruce spoke was ‘in the President’s view … not a reality’. There was ‘no room … for lack of conventional courtesies between chiefs of allied states’. Bundy again responded to Bruce’s concerns that Wilson’s support for the United States might falter. He told Johnson on 22 March of the assertions in the United Kingdom that Wilson ‘has deserted his principles to curry favour with the President, who in return has let it be known that the Prime Minister will be an unwelcome visitor in April. The cooler men in the Labour Party’, said Bundy,
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‘as distinct from the left-wing wild men, are said to be losing their patience’. This was ‘of course a wild misstatement of the existing situation’, because, according to Bundy, Wilson’s troubles were partly self-inflicted: none of these concerns in Britain ‘took account of the very great damage which Wilson did to himself by his outrageous telephone call to you’. It might therefore be expedient to let the Labour Party ‘struggle with its own political problems on the ground that Wilson’s troubles are of his own making, not ours’, Bundy suggested. The difficulty ‘with this course is that since Wilson prefers his own survival to solidarity with us, he would be mortally tempted to begin to make critical noises about us, thus appealing both to his own party and to the natural nationalism of many independent Englishmen’. This would not, said Bundy, ‘be helpful to Wilson in the long run, but it would not be helpful to us either’. When the White House fell out with Prime Ministers, ‘it’s usually portrayed as our fault’. Bundy argued that the alternative to a public split ‘is to see what is the least we can offer the British in return for continued solidarity in support of the essentials of our policy in Vietnam’. David Bruce, noted Bundy, thought that ‘this necessary minimum is simply that we should join them publicly that there is a full and continuing exchange of views and of information at all levels between our two Governments on this important issue’. Then, said Bundy, ‘we can put some parsley out … about how much we look forward to the Prime Minister’s visit’. In return, Wilson should ‘undertake not to advocate negotiations and not to go back on the existing announced approval of our present course of action’. Bruce ‘thinks this position will not be easy for Wilson, but that he will find it distinctly preferable to a split with us at this time’. Despite its evident cynicism, Bundy’s memo was an honest attempt to ease Johnson’s aversion to Wilson.

To prepare the ground for his visit to Washington, Wilson sent Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart to speak to Johnson on 23 March. Stewart – like his predecessor Patrick Gordon Walker – supported the idea of a ‘close’ relationship with the United States. He was also a conventional figure who was never likely to steal much publicity from Wilson’s conduct of international affairs. But the Prime Minister had some worries about Stewart’s trip. He told him that the Americans:

should be left in no doubt about the strength of feeling here [on Vietnam] and about the difficulties which we are facing. There is a danger of widespread anti-Americanism and of America losing her moral position … Should the President try to link this question with support for the pound I would regard this as most unfortunate … If the financial weakness we inherited and are in the process of putting right is to be used as a means of forcing us to accept unpalatable policies or developments regardless of our thoughts this will raise very wide questions indeed about Anglo-American relationships.75

Though there is no record that anyone in the White House had by then suggested such a ‘deal’, Wilson feared that Johnson would demand unequivocal British support for US policy in Vietnam, even a commitment of troops, in
return for US support for the pound. Certainly, Johnson had emphasised that the United States needed firm allies in Vietnam, and Wilson had courted White House support for sterling the previous year. Yet despite his dedication to the United States, Wilson understood that given the political situation in Britain there were limits to how far he could support the Americans in Vietnam, and, furthermore, it was unlikely that if it came to the crunch Washington would ever deny support – within reason – for sterling. The United States had an interest in so doing, in order to avoid an international financial crisis. Thus Wilson’s concern that the United States would exploit Britain’s economic weakness in this way were exaggerated. Moreover, there is no record that sterling was even mentioned during Stewart’s visit to the White House.

However, Johnson and the Foreign Secretary did discuss Vietnam. The President complained later that Stewart had ‘not offered a single practical or helpful suggestion’ on the matter. He thought it ‘insulting for politicians to come chasing over to see him, to expound for home consumption their condemnatory statements from the White House steps, unless they had practicable solutions to offer for American problems’. On 23 March, Wilson had asked Stewart to raise the issue of the use of gas in Vietnam: ‘the American decision to use gas, even though it be non-lethal, coming on top of the use of napalm has greatly aggravated the concern felt here in Parliament and indeed more widely. I hope you will leave the Secretary of State and the President in no doubt at all about the difficulty into which we have been put.’ Wilson was feeling the pressure of continued jibes ‘that Her Majesty’s Government is the tail-end Charlie in an American bomber’. While in the United States Stewart did indeed raise the gas issue, but Bruce’s diary entry for 24 March indicated that by doing so he jeopardised Wilson’s seemingly low chances for a harmonious meeting with Johnson three weeks later. Bundy had telephoned Bruce, the Ambassador noted, ‘to tell me to prepare a draft of a possible letter to the Prime Minister, expressing the President’s indignation over Michael Stewart having answered a question at the National Press Club’ soon after his meeting with Johnson ‘by replying with a citation from the Declaration of Independence’. Stewart had ‘coupled British objections to the United States’s use of gas in Vietnam ‘with a quotation about the “decent observance of the opinions of mankind”’. But the American Ambassador finally persuaded Johnson not to ‘rebuke’ Wilson for Stewart’s ‘delinquency’; ‘a great relief to me, for I thought it would be undignified and unnecessary to do so’, he wrote. That day the President told Rusk that it would have been ‘good’ if Stewart had not visited the United States. He complained about foreign politicians ‘coming over here and using me as a forum … now we got Wilson and I don’t know what to do about it, but I just hate to see my allies destroy me – I’d rather my enemies do it … Everybody just wants to come and lecture us … giving us hell’. Dean reported of his conversation with the President on 13 April that he attacked ‘the complaints made about the American use of gas, which is not poisonous gas anyway and which the British had used just
From discord to cordiality. In any case, ‘the British were forced to kill quite a few Indonesian infiltrators every day and he made no complaint’. His ‘friends and allies should certainly state their views, but they should not stab him in the back or slap him on the face (at this point the President slapped his own face quite vigorously)’. Gradually, Johnson came to see the gas issue more lightly. He told a journalist on 29 April that ‘Stewart got off on the gas thing … he joined the Russians a little bit for propaganda … but after he found out they’d [the British] used it two or three hundred times themselves he was less critical.’

Prior to Wilson’s visit, Rusk tried to boost Johnson’s perceptions of the British. The Secretary told the President on 22 March that ‘we have an excellent degree of understanding and cooperation in crucial foreign policy matters from the new Labour government in Britain … Anything we can do to maintain this state of affairs is in our best interests’. On 14 April, George Ball praised Wilson’s political leadership, his loyalty on Vietnam, his efforts to ‘develop a stringent budget’ and his ‘evident determination … to defend the pound without devaluation’.

Fearful that relations between Wilson might deteriorate further, Bundy sent a barrage of messages to Wilson to emphasise the importance of avoiding … the Douglas-Home error, or the Michael Stewart error’ – in other words, to ensure that the Prime Minister did not try to score political points at Johnson’s expense. Wilson did not want anything substantial from the White House, only to ‘be on visibly close terms with you’, Bundy told the President on 15 April. Johnson was ‘in the driver’s seat, but my fingers are crossed because I know whose fault it will be if something goes wrong’.

On 10 April, Patrick Dean advised that to help strengthen the Anglo-American relationship, Britain should provide more support for the United States in Vietnam. Johnson and his advisers were ‘very anxious to see a greater participation on the ground from South Vietnam from America’s Allies, including ourselves’. Suggestions ‘ranged from provision of British military advisers or transport pilots … to a British medical team or an expert British team to help in the handling of the growing refugee problem, or again more police advisers’. Dean anticipated that Johnson or Rusk ‘will argue that the offer of unconditional talks and economic aid in the President’s speech’ at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore on 7 April ‘constitute an important contribution to the search for a peaceful solution for Vietnam’. They ‘may continue that now a practical demonstration of further help from us, however limited, would be valuable’. Dean believed that ‘a willingness to consider additional help might pay quite disproportionate dividends in terms of our ability to influence United States policies, and I hope that the Prime Minister would be willing to say that he is at least prepared to see what we can do’. The Ambassador concluded by saying that ‘help in dealing with the refugee problem might be the most useful and perhaps the easiest for us to handle’. On 13 April, Dean added that Johnson was ‘still very heavily pre-occupied with Vietnam and has the strongest personal feelings about it’. He expected that he would ‘take the matter up with the
Prime Minister’, and advised that Wilson should ‘make it plain, both privately and publicly how much we abhor and are opposed to incidents like the bomb attack on the US Embassy in Saigon and the general atrocities perpetrated by the Viet Cong and their friends in South Vietnam’. This would ensure that Johnson ‘would be a great deal more ready to listen to proposals’ for peace discussions.

Wilson’s itinerary comprised a visit to the Economic Club of New York on 14 April, to give a speech on the British economic situation, and a trip to see the President in Washington the next day. In New York, as a ‘Salesman for Sterling’, Wilson succeeded in ‘extolling’ the currency’s ‘positive merits to the American business community’. Bruce, now in Washington for the Wilson visit, noted that the White House was pleased with the speech. The Ambassador also noted that on the morning of 15 April he and Bill Tyler, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, ‘motored to Andrews Field to meet Prime Minister Wilson and his Party’. Bruce wrote that Johnson had been ‘fretting over the Wilson visit, thinking it unnecessary to see him except at lunch, after which he hopes to leave for Texas’, but, dissuaded from such curtailment, ‘he received the PM alone, chatting with him in the Oval Office’ for half an hour. ‘Meanwhile, Pat Dean, Burke Trend, William Armstrong, Derek Mitchell, Oliver Wright and other Britishers remained with our American group in the Cabinet room’.

Surprisingly in view of its antecedents, Wilson noted that the meeting was ‘very cordial and friendly … fast moving … largely an exchange of views without seeking any new agreements’. He recorded that the talk began with a ‘friendly reference from the President about the growing strength of our economic position and indeed he was very flattering about the success and standing of the Government generally’. Johnson felt that Wilson’s speech in New York had ‘done a great deal of good’ in bolstering the status of sterling. His own ‘earlier anxieties about sterling have now been set completely at rest and he referred particularly to the visit of Kermit Gordon in this context’. In the ‘course of the lunch’ Wilson ‘went further with the President into an outline of our domestic political situation on which he seemed to be very well briefed’. Johnson seemed ‘highly satisfied with the progress of the Government and the toughness of our decisions in a number of directions’. The President expressed his ‘very deep appreciation’ for ‘the line we had taken’ on Vietnam. To assure the Prime Minister that he was a man of moderation, Johnson said that he was ‘working along the lines of the bomb-plus-olive-branch approach which was the centre of his Baltimore speech’ which had suggested US aid for peaceful development in Vietnam. This was a ‘3D approach: determination, discussions, and development’. The President expressed gratitude, said Wilson, ‘for our immediate response’ to the speech, ‘and also earlier for our condemnation of the bombing of the Embassy in Saigon’. Johnson summarised ‘the agonising decisions’ he had been obliged to take, ‘the pressures he had been under and said that his line throughout had been a middle path between those who wanted to use Vietnam as a jumping-off ground for an all out attack on China, and those who felt that
the United States should quit Vietnam without conditions’. Wilson noted that unlike the December summit and the telephone conversation in February, Johnson did not make ‘any suggestion of our committing troops to Vietnam nor even any reference to police, medical teams, or teams to handle the flow of refugees’.89 In response to Johnson’s forbearance and candour, Wilson gave him an ‘account of the political difficulties we had faced’ with regards to Vietnam. To help ease some of those difficulties, Wilson then spoke of the prospect of peace negotiations, suggesting ‘a joint approach with the Russians as co-Chairmen’. Johnson consented to a low-key British investigation of possible peace negotiations in Vietnam, although that is not to say that the White House sought anything other than to perpetuate its ‘position of strength’ in Vietnam.90 After their talk in the Oval Office, the two leaders had lunch, along with various Cabinet members, Congressmen, Senators and members of Wilson’s party and the British Embassy. Bruce said of the meal: ‘Delicious food, California wines, speeches pledging eternal Anglo-American friendship by the two Chiefs’.91 That day the Prime Minister also spoke to Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, and a number of White House economists. Finally, Bruce and Tyler ‘saw the Wilsonites off’ that ‘evening at Andrews; they seemed pleased with their brief visit’.92

The Prime Minister’s indication that the talks were ‘very cordial and friendly’ was not entirely self-serving – on 16 April Patrick Dean told Oliver Wright that ‘An old friend of mine, who was not directly involved in the talks but who heard immediately afterwards the views of those who had been present, said last night to a member of my staff that the President was genuinely very happy about the way the visit had gone’. When Dean suggested that ‘the speaker might just be trying to say the right things he roundly affirmed that he meant just what he had said, and added that he personally was glad because he had earlier had some forebodings about how it would go’. These forebodings had arisen ‘because he knew how very sensitive the President was and how quickly he had been angered by the succession of people who … came offering gratuitous advice and passing moral judgments on his actions and on the American conduct of affairs generally’. The White House official who spoke to Dean ‘mentioned how opportune it had been that a telegram from the American Embassy in London had come in and been put before the President just before the talks’. This telegram, from Bruce, ‘reported how stoutly the Foreign Secretary had recently spoken in support of United States policy, and it doubtless helped to create a good atmosphere at the outset’.93 The durability of the ‘good atmosphere’ between Wilson and Johnson remained to be seen.

Notes

A ‘special relationship’?

5 PRO, FO 371/179558, AU 1015/18, Lord Harlech’s Valedictory Despatch, 15 March 1965.
8 The previous foreign secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, had resigned in January after losing his seat in Parliament.
13 LBJL, NSF: Memos to the President, Box 3, Bundy Vol. 4 (2/3) March 4/14/65, Bundy to Johnson, 29 March 1965.
18 Ibid.
25 VHS, Diary of David K. E. Bruce, MSS 5:1B8303:51, entry for 6 March 1965.
26 Ibid., entry for 6 March 1965.
29 LBJL, NSF: Country File, Box 212, UK XV 12.63–9.65, Ball to Johnson, 14 April 1965.
30 PRO, PREM 13/694, ‘Condensed Record of the Meeting with President Johnson at the White House on April 13 on Presentation of his Credentials by Sir Patrick Dean’, 13 April 1965.
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32 VHS, Diary of David K. E. Bruce, MSS 5:1B8303:51, entry for 6 March 1965.
34 State to Embassy, 16 February 1965, ibid., pp. 294–5.
35 VHS, Diary of David K. E. Bruce, MSS 5:1B8303:51, Embassy to State, 5 March 1965.
38 Ibid.
40 Short, Whip to Wilson, p. 119.
44 LBJL, tape WH6503.06, citation 7058, Johnson–Robert Anderson telephone conversation, 9.16 a.m., 11 March 1965.
46 LBJL, WHCF, Box 76, CO 305 UK 7.2.65–7.1.65, Martin to Johnson, 30 March 1965.
47 LBJL, tape WH6503.15, citation 7186, Johnson–Douglas Dillon telephone conversation, 10.15 a.m., 31 March 1965.
48 LBJL, NSF: McGeorge Bundy, Box 18, Memos for the Record 1964 (Meetings with the Press etc.), Bundy to Johnson, 31 March 1965.
49 The then Chancellor James Callaghan does not mention the matter in his memoirs, Time and Chance (London: Collins, 1987).
50 PRO, PREM 13/678, Foreign Office to Washington, 4 April 1965.
51 PRO, PREM 13/678, Mitchell–Bundy conversation, 4 April 1965.
55 PRO, PREM 13/678, Foreign Office to Washington, 4 April 1965.
58 PRO, PREM 13/694, ‘Condensed Record of the Meeting with President Johnson at the White House on April 13 on Presentation of his Credentials by Sir Patrick Dean’, 13 April 1965.
61 LBJL, WHCF, Box 76, CO 305 UK 7.2.65–7.1.65, ‘Memorandum for Mr. Valenti’, 25 February 1965.
62 NARA, Records of Secretary of State Dean Rusk (72 D 192), Telephone Calls 2.18.65–2.28.65, ‘Telephone Call from Mr. Valenti’, 26 February 1965.
63 LBJL, WHCF, Box 76, CO 305 UK 7.2.65–7.1.65, Valenti to Johnson, 26 February 1965.
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64 LBJL, George Ball Papers, Box 1, Britain III (11.24.64–12.31.65), ‘Telecon: President–Ball’, 6 March 1965.


66 LBJL, tape WH6503.06, citation 7058, Johnson–Robert Anderson telephone conversation, 9.16 a.m., 11 March 1965.


70 VHS, Diary of David K. E. Bruce, MSS 5:1B8303:51, entry for 22 March 1965.

71 Ibid.


74 The question of an Anglo-American strategic-economic ‘deal’ in 1965 is considered in Chapter 5.


78 VHS, Diary of David K. E. Bruce, MSS 5:1B8303:51, entry for 24 March 1965.

79 LBJL, tape WH6503.11, citation 7144, Johnson–Dean Rusk telephone conversation, 11.20 pm, 24 March 1965.

80 PRO, PREM 13/694, ‘Condensed Record of the Meeting with President Johnson at the White House on April 13 on Presentation of his Credentials by Sir Patrick Dean’, 13 April 1965.

81 LBJL, tape WH6504.06, citation 7378, Johnson–Robert Spivack telephone conversation, 12.43 p.m., 29 April 1965.


83 LBJL, NSF: Country File, Box 212, UK XV 12.63–9.65, Ball to Johnson, 14 April 1965.

84 LBJL, NSF: Memos to the President, Box 3, Bundy Vol. 4 (1/3) March 4/14/65, Bundy to Johnson, 14 April 1965.

85 PRO, PREM 13/694, Washington to Foreign Office, 10 April 1965.

86 PRO, PREM 13/694, ‘Condensed Record of the Meeting with President Johnson at the White House on April 13 on Presentation of his Credentials by Sir Patrick Dean’, 13 April 1965.


88 VHS, Diary of David K. E. Bruce, MSS 5:1B8303:52, entry for 15 April 1965.

89 PRO, PREM 13/532, ‘Record of Meeting between the Prime Minister and President of the United States at the White House on Thursday, April 15 1965’.

90 Ibid.

91 VHS, Diary of David K. E. Bruce, MSS 5:1B8303:52, entry for 15 April 1965.

92 Ibid.

93 PRO, PREM 13/684, Dean to Wright, 16 April 1965.