

TOP SECRET


MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENTJune 6, 1945

1. I opened by telling him that I had asked for this conference yesterday morning for a number of important but not immediate subjects but in the afternoon they had been blotted out by the explosion of the matter about which I had spoken to him last night, and I would take that up first and might have to have more time for the others.

I told him of how I came to hear about this clash with the French at the regular State-War-Navy meeting which I was in the habit of holding every week; that Grew had shown me the papers of this incident for the first time including the proposed press release; that I was so much in sympathy with it that when it was first read to me I was tempted to send him, the President, a telegram of "Go to it", but that further reflection and the views of others had brought me to an appreciation of the dangers of going ahead with it before other steps had been taken. He laughed and said that was the same way with himself; that he thought it was fine but was coming to the conclusion that he must go slow.

I then outlined my position to the effect that I was fully in sympathy with the necessity of curbing deGaulle whom I was coming to regard as a psychopathic. He interrupted to say that was his opinion too. I said I had spent most of last night in a good deal of thought on it and I was afraid now that the reaction of making public a press release would be to inflame the American people and solidify the French people behind deGaulle - in fact to do just what was the mistake in the British handling of the Syrian matter when there was accidentally made public in the House of Commons Churchill's message to deGaulle before deGaulle had even received it. I said that I had ascertained that this had inflamed French government men who were on our side in trying to hold back deGaulle. Therefore I very much feared that doing the same thing over again would solidify his position.

I told him that we in the War Department were the "innocent bystanders" who were most likely to be hit because deGaulle and his forces lay right across the line of communications for the deployment of our troops in the Asiatic war. I said that the trouble lay in the publicity of the press release; that he, the President, could send a message directly to deGaulle of a perfectly devastating character without this damage and in the same letter could show all the good we had done to deGaulle and France and the real friendship of the American government to France.



He said he fully agreed. I then, to cut the matter short and seal the whole thing up, asked if he would have any objection if I with the aid of Marshall and McCloy tried to write out a draft of what I thought might be done by him and that would be the quickest way of putting it to him. He at once broke in and said he wished I would do just that thing; that he had great confidence in us and that he himself had reached a position where he saw the dangers and wanted to have it done that way. He reiterated his earlier statement that he had been himself taken off his guard by the proposed press release and had not thought it out until afterwards. Accordingly I let the matter stop there and said I would at once get such a message drafted and send it over to him.

2. I then took up the matters on my agenda, telling him first of the work of the Interim Committee meetings last week. He said that Byrnes had reported to him already about it and that Byrnes seemed to be highly pleased with what had been done. I then said that the points of agreement and views arrived at were substantially as follows:

a. That there should be no revelation to Russia or anyone else of our work in S-1 until the first bomb had been successfully laid on Japan.

b. That the greatest complication was what might happen at the meeting of the Big Three. He told me he had postponed that until the 15th of July on purpose to give us more time. I pointed out that there might still be delay and if there was and the Russians should bring up the subject and ask us to take them in as partners, I thought that our attitude was to do just what the Russians had done to us, namely to make the simple statement that as yet we were not quite ready to do it.

c. I told him that the only suggestion which our Committee had been able to give as to future control of the situation was that each country should promise to make public all work that was being done on this subject and that an international committee of control should be constituted with full power of inspection of all countries to see whether this promise was being carried out. I said I recognized that this was imperfect and might not be assented to by Russia, but that in that case we were far enough ahead of the game to be able to accumulate enough material to serve as insurance against being caught helpless.

d. I said that of course no disclosure of the work should be made to anyone until all such promises of control were made and established. We then also discussed further quid pro quos which should be established in consideration for our taking them into partnership. He said he had been thinking of that and mentioned the same things that I was thinking of, namely the settlement of the Polish, Rumanian, Yugoslavian, and Manchurian problems.



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3. He then asked me if I had heard of the accomplishment which Harry Hopkins had made in Moscow and when I said I had not he told me there was a promise in writing by Stalin that Manchuria should remain fully Chinese except for a 99 year lease of Port Arthur and the settlement of Dairen which we had hold of. I warned him that with the 50-50 control of the railways running across Manchuria, Russia would still be likely to outweigh the Chinese in actual power in that country. He said he realized that but the promise was perfectly clear and distinct.

4. I told him that I was busy considering our conduct of the war against Japan and I told him how I was trying to hold the Air Force down to precision bombing but that with the Japanese method of scattering its manufacture it was rather difficult to prevent area bombing. I told him I was anxious about this feature of the war for two reasons: first, because I did not want to have the United States get the reputation of outdoing Hitler in atrocities; and second, I was a little fearful that before we could get ready the Air Force might have Japan so thoroughly bombed out that the new weapon would not have a fair background to show its strength. He laughed and said he understood.

Owing to the shortness of time I did not get through any further matters on my agenda.

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