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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: November 9, 1959

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SUBJECT: Meeting of the Secretary's Disarmament Advisers

PARTICIPANTS:

Department of State
Secretary Herter
Mr. Philip Farley - S/AE
Mr. Ronald Spiers - S/AE

Joint Disarmament Study
Mr. Charles Coolidge

Panel of Advisers
Mr. Robert Lovett
Mr. John McCloy
Mr. Alfred Gruenther
Mr. William Foster
Dr. James Killian

D.O.D.
Mr. Irwin

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US Delegation, Geneva - Ambassador Wadsworth

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Secretary Herter expressed his appreciation that the Panel was willing to continue to give him the benefit of the advice which Secretary Dulles had found useful. He stated that there were several recent developments in the disarmament field which made it particularly appropriate to hold a further meeting of the group at this point.

Secretary Herter said that we would soon be engaged in substantive disarmament negotiations, and explained the origins of the ten-nation disarmament committee which had been agreed with the Russians at Geneva and which was scheduled to meet early in 1960. The fact that the U.N. yesterday referred the proposals which it had before it to this group for consideration assured that these negotiations would be the center of attention. Another early problem in disarmament would be the Summit meeting. As the Panel was aware, Adenauer held that disarmament was the most important subject for consideration at such a meeting and that all agreed disarmament would have to be discussed. The Secretary himself felt that it would be best not to have the ten-nation committee meet before the Summit, but rather that its commencement should be scheduled so it would receive its directives from the Summit. In preparation for these meetings Mr. Coolidge had been asked by the President and the Secretary to coordinate a joint Department of Defense-Department of State study and come up with policy recommendations. Finally there was the matter of the nuclear test negotiations which had been going on for a year. There was the problem of the U.K. moving ahead of us in our position in these negotiations, as well as newly discovered technical difficulties in detecting underground tests. Generally, we are faced with the

feeling on the part of most nations that we are moving into an era when progress in disarmament is essential. Although there are varying degrees of skepticism about the possibilities of such progress, there is a very real fear of the continuation of the present arms race. The Soviet proposal on complete and general disarmament makes it more important that we have positive proposals of our own to present.

The Secretary suggested that the group first be briefed by Mr. Farley on the nuclear test negotiations, after which Mr. Coolidge could present his own thinking on the broader disarmament problem.

Mr. Farley stated that we faced an unpleasant dilemma in the test negotiations, which began their second year yesterday. There has been a general rapprochement of the public positions of both sides. Although numerous differences remain to be worked out, these differences are no longer sharply defined in the public mind. The Macmillan proposal for a quota of inspections has let the Soviet Union obscure the differences between us in this key area.

A central problem relates to monitoring of underground tests. This problem assumed new dimensions with the difficulties disclosed by the new data we obtained during our last test series. Thus we face a situation where as many as 200 annual inspections might be required to obtain adequate deterrence, even if the effectiveness of concealment methods does not prove out. The U.K. agrees with us that the problem of policing underground tests is a difficult one. They also agree that the most desirable outcome for the negotiations at this stage would be a phased agreement beginning with a prohibition of the contaminating tests which are easiest to police, e.g., atmospheric and under water. However, the U.K. believes that the only way to get the USSR to agree to a limited approach is to couple it with a three-year voluntary suspension of underground tests while we do further research on the control problem. This difference of view between us and the U.K. is now reaching a crucial stage. In the meantime it has become apparent to the Soviets that we are setting the stage for a shift in position by unilaterally setting forth our own technical analysis of the problem. The Secretary explained that the 1958 Experts' report conclusions were based on one underground nuclear test. Unhappily, our own further tests put us in the very difficult position of having to back away from the agreed report. The USSR, on the other hand, insists on sticking with the 1958 technical conclusions. We made this mistake in perfectly good faith. Our fear is that if we agreed to what we now believe amounts to inadequate control the Senate would reject the agreement. Mr. Farley said that we believed that it was important to finish presenting our technical conclusions. Then we will be face to face with the question of whether we are going ahead with a proposal for a limited treaty and either resume tests or declare our freedom of action with respect to further testing. If this is the route we take, our problem will be to bring the U.K. along with us and to accept the adverse impact of world opinion, which has been taking a more optimistic view of these negotiations and the prospects of disarmament in general. The dilemma we face is a difficult one. We either accept what is perhaps less than adequate policing or incur the political liabilities consequent upon a change in position.

In response to a query by Mr. Coolidge on how Communist China would fit into an agreement, Mr. Farley explained that the treaty would last so long as the system it provided for was being installed on schedule and that the schedule called for installation of control positions in China in the second phase. Accordingly, if it proved impossible to extend the treaty to China there would be a basis for U.S. withdrawal.

General Gruenther referred to the strength of feeling he had encountered in his own experience on the subject of nuclear testing. He felt that we had not succeeded in explaining our position on this issue both at home and abroad. He referred to the public position taken by Senators Humphrey and Kennedy in favor of a comprehensive test ban. The opposition to testing has become increasingly more apparent in the Red Cross for a long time. We are losing the battle of public opinion abroad, and particularly in Oriental countries where the problem of strontium 90 is felt more acutely because of the predominance of cereal foods. Whereas we scored a technical victory in the vote on this issue at the New Delhi Conference, it was clearly apparent that the mass of opinion was against us. The world premiere of the motion picture "On the Beach", scheduled for December 17, would increase our problems even more; it is an effective and well-done anti-nuclear war plea that would have a great impact on public opinion. He has spoken to many people at home who feel that our emphasis on the difficulties of underground detection is nothing more than a device to get out of the negotiations (e.g., George McGee and Senator Anderson). If our own people do not believe in the honesty of our intentions, we cannot blame the British. We have not been able even remotely to convince the Washington Post that our position is an honest one. Our present difficulties are compounded by our own previous inability to get through to the public. Our opinion at home is not united and world opinion is fast moving against us on this issue.

The Secretary asked Dr. Killian to explain the technical situation with respect to underground tests. Dr. Killian described the Latter hole, indicating that whereas it was at present only a theoretical possibility it represented a real uncertainty in our ability to cope with underground tests. Although it is enormously expensive and complicated and no one will know whether it will be feasible from an engineering standpoint until appropriate tests have been performed, it could undermine the whole control system if it works. The U.K. feels that this is the major factor which has changed since the 1958 Experts' report. Furthermore, the new data from Hardtack II may not be conclusive and further experimentation is needed. The Berkner Panel felt that it was possible to restore the effectiveness of the Geneva system to compensate for the new data, but not for the Latter hole. Mr. Gruenther agreed that the large hole was a new element, adding that we in effect knew about the other uncertainties before we decided to negotiate at Geneva, even though there may have been some shift in the efficiency of detection since then. Mr. Lovett agreed with the strength of public feeling on this issue, stating that after Gov. Rockefeller made his recent radio statement on underground tests the broadcasting company's switchboards "lit up like a Christmas tree" with callers protesting the Governor's position.

Mr. McCloy said that it appeared to him from Dr. Killian's descriptions that the difficulties of constructing the big hole were almost insurmountable and asked whether we really believed that this was a feasible evasion method for the Soviets to use. Mr. Farley noted that the unit of measurement for the Latter hole was football fields.

The Secretary described the instructions under which the U.S. delegation was currently operating and said that the delegation was charged with laying out the scientific material as part of the record preparatory to tabling a limited treaty. It is difficult to foresee whether we will be able to resolve our problems with the U.K., and he personally thought it might be better to have a poor inspection system for underground tests than a de facto suspension by moratorium with nothing in return. Mr. McCloy asked for the assessment of U.K. motivations. The Secretary said that the British attached a great deal of importance to achieving inspection in the USSR and felt that this would represent a break-through on the whole disarmament problem. In addition to this, Macmillan keenly feels the strength of British public opinion on this issue and is, above all, aware of U.K. vulnerability to nuclear weapons. Mr. Farley said that, in sum, the British felt that the technical uncertainties of the situation did not outweigh the political advantages to be obtained. The Secretary said that it would be difficult for us to proceed on our present course of action if the British would not go along with us. In addition, Khrushchev has said that he does not care anything about developing small nuclear weapons. The USSR is interested in stopping further refinement of U.S. stockpiles and there is every indication that they would refuse a partial treaty. He observed that on the basis of the McRae report it was hard for a layman to see any urgency in the resumption of testing, although he recognized that Defense and AEC did not share this view. Dr. Killian stated that it was important to get the large-hole theory to the public as quickly as possible.

Turning to the problems of broader disarmament, the Secretary explained the possibility of the U.S. having to withdraw some of its troops from Europe because of the balance of payments deficit, and that he had asked Mr. Coolidge to determine how this possible need might be turned into a disarmament quid pro quo.

Mr. Coolidge said that he had several general points he wished to make first. We are now faced with a broad and dramatic Soviet proposal and he felt that if our only answer consisted of proposals for small steps we would look bad in world opinion. In addition to such small-step proposals, therefore, he felt that it was sound for the U.S. to develop a long-range goal with which we could associate ourselves. He suggested the following formulation:

"1. No nuclear weapons should remain in the control of any nation.

"2. An adequate international peace force should be established to operate under effective international law with increased jurisdiction in the World Court.

"3. National military establishments should be reduced to the point where no single nation can effectively oppose the international peace force."

Mr. Lovett stated that he felt it would be a fatal error to go forward with a program such as this on the basis only of mutual trust. Mr. Coolidge said that he was not proposing this and that these three points should simply be regarded as a statement of an ultimate goal. Mr. McCloy agreed that we should have such a goal and that it was a necessity if we were to get public opinion moving in our direction. The only alternative to complete disarmament may be total destruction. Dr. Killian said that he believed this was a persuasive statement, although he questioned making nuclear weapons elimination the first point. Mr. Foster agreed and suggested that point No. 2 be stressed. The Secretary recalled that our problem with point No. 1 was that no one had been able to find a means of detecting hidden nuclear weapons. He said that our general problem in this field is to find a starting point where we can test out Soviet bona fides. In this connection he mentioned the Norstad plan as a possibility. The French and Germans have always objected to the idea of small inspection zones in Europe, but the Secretary felt that this was the simplest test he could conceive. Such a zone might be combined with reductions on the part of both sides. Mr. Foster agreed with the idea of trading troop redeployments for a lifting of the Iron Curtain. The Secretary said that the President was disturbed that we have not been able to do anything to liquidate our "temporary" forces in Europe and that there was a general impatience with the rigidity of the Germans particularly, who wished to maintain the status quo. Mr. Lovett said that something along the lines that Mr. Coolidge proposed would serve a very useful purpose.

Mr. Coolidge said that another problem with which his group was concerned was the situation we might face after a few years when both the U.S. and USSR will have ICBMs in quantity. Our key problem is what we can do to insure stability in the missile age. He had seen no alternative to mutual deterrence, but effort must be made to insure stability of this deterrence. In such a situation he felt that we would have to have stronger conventional forces or we could be nibbled away by the USSR while each side was paralyzed by the thought of counter-destruction if missiles were used. Mr. Foster agreed with this statement of the problem and said that our trading position was growing progressively weaker. The foundation for a stable deterrent was a more intensive defense effort on our own part. It is necessary to have a secure deterrent at all levels and this would require a build-up in our ability to fight conventional wars. Dr. Killian said that he was coming to the conclusion that the initial step toward arms reduction was creation of a better balanced and more adequate U.S. defense establishment. Mr. Gruenther agreed, saying that in order to proceed with disarmament we will have to increase our defense expenditures.

Mr. McCloy said that withdrawal of any U.S. troops from European forces before a Summit meeting would be the worst possible move we could make. Mr. Gruenther agreed, adding that because of the possibility of press leaks, which

would be inevitable after such a decision, it would be almost impossible to secure a quid for the quo of troop reductions. The Secretary said he understood that the pressure to do this before the Western Summit was now off. Mr. Irwin emphasized that there had been no decision on this matter and that it had been raised merely as a warning signal.

The Secretary suggested that the advisers meet again early in December prior to the President's trip to Europe and stated that Mr. Farley would make arrangements for a specific date.