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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Bermuda Meeting

RESTRICTED SESSION of Heads  
of Government and Foreign  
Ministers, December 4, 1953  
5 p.m.

Participants: The President of the United States  
The Prime Minister of Great Britain  
The Prime Minister of France  
Secretary of State Dulles  
Mr. Anthony Eden  
M. Georges Bidault  
M. Bougenot  
Lieut. Colonel Vernon A. Walters



Sir Winston Churchill opened the meeting by bidding the other participants a hearty welcome. He rejoiced to think that they had met together and expressed his pleasure at being present at this long-projected meeting. He had long hoped to be able to open the proceedings and as a first action he would like to ask the President of the United States, as the Chief of State, to take the chair to preside at the future meetings. He felt this would be agreeable to all, and he did not propose to add to the labors of the conferees by making a speech before so distinguished an audience. He felt he would have an opportunity to do this later on and was anxious to get down to business at once. There were still a few points as to procedures, times of meetings, etc., to be settled. The sooner this could be done, the better. He then asked President Eisenhower to take over the chair.

Prime Minister Laniel then said he wished to express his gratitude to Sir Winston in his own name and M. Bidault's name for the splendid hospitality that had been shown them since their arrival and to express his warm agreement with the Prime Minister's suggestion that President Eisenhower preside.

The President

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The President then expressed his gratitude to his confreres of both countries for their designation of him as chairman. As he understood it, these meetings would be most informal, and consequently his duties would not be onerous nor was he likely to have to make decisions that would arouse objections. He would like to have the privilege of joining the French in thanking Sir Winston for his hospitality. The President then suggested that the conferees should get down to business. He said one of the points taken up at the meeting of the Secretaries of State and Foreign Ministers earlier was the question of the hours of the meetings. The Foreign Ministers had suggested that they (the Foreign Ministers) meet in the morning at an hour of their own choosing, and the heads of government might meet in the later afternoon after the Foreign Ministers had had a chance to prepare some of the work.

As he understood it, the heads of government would meet at 5 p.m. and the Foreign Ministers would meet earlier at an hour of their own choosing. Mr. Eden said he thought there would be certain advantages if the work could be prepared. The President said that so far as he was concerned, he was available all day and he was rather inclined to agree with what Mr. Eden had said. He felt the Foreign Ministers had certain subjects they had allocated between themselves and the chiefs of delegation. They would handle the more detailed subjects and the chiefs of delegation would handle the more general subjects such as the Soviet position. The day should, therefore, be largely the Foreign Ministers'. Sir Winston nodded agreement.

Sir Winston said he would like to ask, not as a sign of personal indulgence but rather as an indication of the informal nature of the talks, if he might have permission to smoke. The President replied that in his first ruling as chairman he granted this permission.

The President then said there was a subject he would like to bring up. He had been invited to make a speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations before it adjourned (approximately on December 8). When he had received this invitation he had been unwilling to make a firm decision in the matter until he had had the opportunity to see the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and France. Because there were certain pitfalls in tackling something like this, he felt he would rather confer with them with the honest purpose of obtaining their opinions and advice. When a Chief of State appears at a meeting such as that of the United Nations General Assembly, the presumption is

that he



that he has something serious to say. He would not be there just for the sound and fury but would have a serious proposal to make. The world was in a rather hysterical condition about the atomic bomb. He felt something might be said which, while admitting the terrible destructive quality of atomic energy, might express the point of view of the free world on the constructive capabilities of atomic energy. We might make an offer through some United Nations organization emphasizing constructive work rather than the destructive value of this force.

The talk he would make was still only a draft, but what he would like to do would be to say something that would not terrify further but rather bring forth a threat of hope that might be expanded and developed. Such an offer would presuppose a readiness on the part of the Russians to meet us half way. Such a presumption might be false -- in fact, was probably false -- but nevertheless, we would be making a concrete proposal rather than just expressing a pious hope.

We had announced that if we were again attacked in Korea we would not merely attempt to hold by using ground troops and shedding blood, but we would exert reprisals by attacking military objectives in the region. We stood on that kind of attitude on the one hand. On the other, we wished to appear before the world as we really were -- struggling for peace, not showing belligerence and truculence, but rather our will for peace.

We would give if others would likewise donate. This was not something that could be done unilaterally -- certainly not for long. One of the purposes of it was to diminish the Soviet stockpile as well as our own. We would make an initial donation much greater than theirs. We might possibly ask Britain to make a contribution (this was something that had not been discussed with the British as yet). We would be giving to the United Nations through some UN authority. We might put in a thousand kilos, the USSR 200, the UK 40. Thereafter details could be worked out between the interested parties as to how much could be made available to the scientists of the world to use for practical purposes. We knew that atomic energy could be used to generate power, to run tractors -- in fact, we had a ship ready to run -- its engine was built. This was very expensive, but scientists might find a way to make it cheaper. It had great capabilities in the medical field, in the field of agriculture, and tremendous possibilities if used peacefully instead of for destruction. The general thought he was trying to convey

was that

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was that all would contribute. One purpose was the diminishing of the USSR stockpile, and we would also pick up a recent UN Resolution urging private conversations on disarmament between the countries "principally concerned". The President was not sure who these were. His thought would be, if the speech were delivered, and Secretary Dulles agreed, to suggest that we were ready to start private conversations. He hoped that if this offer were made in the atomic energy field, it would bring disarmament a little closer.

The President said he would have to reply to the United Nations before Sunday night and he wanted to find out not merely if his fellow conferees had objections, but if on the general scene they saw any reasons for or against such an effort. As he had to make the reply by Sunday, he would be grateful if they would tell him their thoughts on the following today or perhaps right then if they had any immediate reaction.

Prime Minister Laniel said he approved entirely what the President had proposed. He felt that the effect of such action could only be excellent and it would show the good will of the United States, and the United Nations if the latter were to accept, and this, he felt, was highly probable.

Sir Winston Churchill said he would like to think this over before making an answer because he would like his answer to be as helpful and suggestive as possible. He felt there would be great difficulty in drawing a line between atomic energy commercial information and atomic energy military information. Such a line had been drawn in general terms.

President Eisenhower interrupted to say he felt Sir Winston was right on this score and then said he would like to digress for a moment and speak to his French friends. Turning to M. Laniel, he said that because two of the Delegations spoke English, they were apt sometimes to react immediately without allowing time for translation. He hoped that if he did this without giving the French the courtesy of a translation, they would interrupt him and insist that the translation be made. M. Laniel and M. Bidault smiled agreement.

The resident then went on to say that it was a fact that while this material could be stored in the hands of a common body, there were technical means of rendering it safe. A little bit could be diluted so that there would be no point in carrying it away. Insofar as methods had been developed where this

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substance

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substance could be used commercially for peacetime purposes, a certain amount could be taken back and used militarily. To our minds, this would not be too important an objection. If the plant were in the Andes or in Saudi Arabia or in some other area where other fuels would be expensive, the amounts involved would not be significant as compared with what we know to be in the hands of the USSR.

The President said there was one other point he wished to make regarding this talk. If it were made, it would be on the night of the 8th upon returning from Bermuda. While he would make it clear that he was not authorized to speak on behalf of Prime Minister Churchill and Prime Minister Laniel, he felt that this was an additional reason for his desire for their approval, as he would not want to involve them even by implication.

Prime Minister Churchill then said it would be very nice if mankind could share the blessings from this subject without suffering from the disadvantages of its curses. That was as he understood the general line or tendency by which the President would be governed in making his statement. Thus, he would view it with favor.

The President then said that one point in this great world struggle had been broadly described as a conflict between the USSR and China on one hand the the United Kingdom, France, and United States on the other. Certain things might make other nations feel they had a stake if tension lessened, if we could give power where it had not been previously available. Men needed power everywhere. If we could give hope, it would give these nations a stronger feeling of participation in the struggle of East and West, and such a feeling of participation would be on our side, and hope might be engendered from a fairly insignificant start.

In 1946 we had made a proposal known as the Baruch Plan. Today it might not be wholly acceptable to us, but this was something that could be done without inspections, control commissions, or endless red tape. We could bring in this material and use it with, of course, the necessary technical supervision. We would have to word this carefully so as not to raise hopes that if you gave a man a ball of plutonium he might be able to plow his field for the next hundred years, but we had here an area where we could do something that would bring a large number of people to our side.

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The President

The President concluded by saying he would like to ask those present to consider this as very secret. He had not yet even made a definite decision as to whether the talk would be given.

He then suggested that they take up the question of the Soviet position and that for this purpose the remaining members of the Delegations might be invited to join them. There was agreement on this and the remaining members of the various Delegations then joined the Chiefs of Delegation.



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