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320. Memorandum for the Record

Washington, July 10, 1963, 9:30 a.m.

The President met with W. Averell Harriman in his office at 9:30 A.M. on July 10 for a final discussion of Governor Harriman's mission to the Soviet Union. Messrs. Bundy and Kaysen were also present.

The President opened the discussion by remarking on the relation of the Harriman exploration to U.S.-German ties. He felt that as a result of his visit the Germans and we had come to a better understanding, and they were less anxious about us. Further, this was reflected strongly in popular feeling, as well as on a governmental level. He was willing to draw on this feeling as much as seemed useful if there was something to be achieved by it. On the other hand, he thought it was futile to repeat the experience of the '61 discussions on Berlin. These lengthy talks with the Soviet Union had achieved nothing tangible, and aroused great suspicion in Germany.

The President then raised the question of whether or not he wished to meet at the summit with Khrushchev. He recognized that Macmillan would push strongly in this direction. He quoted Lord Hailsham's remarks to him, observed that Hailsham wanted to play the role of mediator between Khrushchev and Kennedy as F.D. Roosevelt had between Stalin and Churchill. For his part, the President thought a summit, especially a summit involving Macmillan as well as himself, would create difficulties in the U.S., in Germany and France. A bilateral meeting between himself and Khrushchev, such as the one in Vienna, would be less troublesome in this respect. However, in spite of the troubles, the President would be willing to pay the price if it proved necessary. In response to Governor Harriman's question, he said, if necessary, he would go to a summit meeting just to sign the test ban treaty covering three environments, although he was concerned about the effect such an action would have on our relations with France.

Governor Harriman mentioned China¹ and Cuba as problems he might explore. In response, the President indicated that it remained his desire to see all the Russian troops out of Cuba by the end of the year; the advantages of having a restraining Soviet hand on the SAMs seemed to him outweighed by the advantages of liquidating the problem.

Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Departments and Agencies Series, ACDA, Disarmament, Harriman Trip to Moscow. Secret; Sensitive. Drafted by Kaysen. A copy was sent to Bundy and Harriman.

¹ In a July 9 paper prepared for Harriman entitled "Points to be Explored with the Russians," William H. Sullivan, Harriman's Special Assistant, listed as the first two points "an indication of the degree of Soviet concern over the Chinese Communist nuclear weapons program" and "an exchange of estimates concerning the problem of the Chinese Communist ability to detonate a nuclear device." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Test Ban Background III) See the Supplement.

Governor Harriman observed that there was an important question as to how could we give Khrushchev something that got him off the hook in Germany. He mentioned Khrushchev's approving quotation of Walter Lippmann's view that the Berlin wall gave the Soviets what they would have gotten from a peace treaty. Harriman went on to quote Khrushchev's phrase, "the acceptance of the two Germanies as they now exist."² The President said that one of his impressions from his German trip was that the strength of feeling in Germany on reunification was great, while the immediate concern about the security of Berlin has lessened. It is clear that a recognition of the permanent division of Germany was not now acceptable to the Germans. The President observed the desirability of getting something along the lines of Brandt's suggestion which would help ease the human situation.

Governor Harriman raised the question of our trade with the Soviet Union, and pointed out that Khrushchev would like to increase it further. The European nations supply much of what they want anyway, but it was a matter of pride with Khrushchev. The President agreed that we should be forthcoming on this issue if it came up.

Our position on the MLF then came up. The President said that our first response to this issue should be to repeat our argument that it was consistent with the purposes of non-dissemination, in accordance with the agreed instruction. If, however, there seemed to be some purpose in going beyond this in terms of the China problem or otherwise, Harriman should be guided by his judgment of how useful it was to indicate to the Soviets that in certain circumstances we might not need to go forward with this proposition. But in no event should Governor Harriman give any specific assurances on the MLF.

Governor Harriman reported Secretary McNamara's views on how far McNamara thought it would be wise to go on a first stage disarmament proposal. The President thought it was rather unlikely that there would be any serious discussion on this point.

The President raised the question of Laos and indicated the importance of repeating our dissatisfaction with the present situation and our desire for the Soviets to live up to their commitments there. Governor Harriman responded that this of course brought up all the questions of Soviet-Chinese relations, and whether or not the Soviets were able to influence the situation in Laos. Again the President said that Governor Harriman's judgment should govern his action.

Carl Kaysen³

² This formula had been used by Khrushchev on a number of occasions since 1958.

³ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.