

3/20/59

S/S for limited
Distr
3/23/59

cc sent to Reinhardt
3/21/59
& ret'd 3/23/59

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Walter Reed Hospital
March 20, 1959
11:20 a.m. (1 hour)

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION



Participants: Prime Minister Macmillan President Eisenhower
Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd Secretary Dulles

At the President's invitation to me to comment on some of the subjects that he would be discussing with the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, I said that I would first like to speak of the broad aspects of the situation now confronting us, as I saw them. I said that I thought the free world allies should not give the people of the world the impression that we are frightened of the Soviets or that the Soviets are in the driver's seat. In some parts of the world, notably in Asia, Africa and parts of Latin America, people are watching closely to see whether they think the Soviet Union or the Western Allies are the more powerful. We cannot, of course, prevent Khrushchev from strutting across the stage and making his grandiloquent speeches. But we can avoid the impression that whenever he sounds conciliatory we rejoice and whenever he sounds threatening we are fearful as though he were the Lord of Creation.

As to Berlin, I said that I thought that we should make no concessions nor agree to any changes in the present arrangements except as part of a larger agreement out of which we would get something. I said that I thought our position in Berlin legally and morally impeccable and our sovereignty there sound; the Soviets cannot by their own act deprive us of sovereignty in Berlin nor put the GDR in a position to control our exercise of it. I noted that in such matters we can, as we did in the contractual agreements with the Federal Republic, voluntarily renounce some or all of our sovereign rights when it is expedient to do so; but I thought the assumption that, simply because the Soviets challenge our rights and position, we have to seek a compromise, is all wrong.

As to the possibility of an early Summit meeting, I said that I had not found persuasive the arguments favoring such a meeting, and that I did not think we should now agree to go to one unless we can exact a reasonable

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Authority MR 90-318-1
By JKS 12/11/92
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WHIT HOUSE MEMORANDA SERIES
DULLES, JOHN FOSTER: PAPERS 1951-59
Box 7, Meetings with the President - 1959 (1)

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price in Soviet "deeds not words". I recalled that in 1955, the Soviets had paid such a price by agreeing to the Austrian Treaty. Also they accepted the composition we proposed. I said that I had seen no evidence that Khrushchev now seems prepared to pay a price, but rather to drive us to the Summit by threats. Nor had I been able to think of any acceptable agreement that Khrushchev might now be willing dependably to make with us. I said that I was opposed to the idea of a Summit meeting premised simply on the hope that it might produce something positive, without having any evidence that there is a real prospect of this. I said that at such a meeting there would be almost irresistible pressure upon the leaders of the democracies to reach an agreement. The Soviet leaders would be under no such pressure and we would be at a distinct disadvantage. I asked the Prime Minister whether in his visit to Moscow he had discovered any element in the Soviet thinking which might give hopes of useful negotiation at the Summit.

The Prime Minister did not indicate that he had any basis for believing that a worthwhile, acceptable agreement could be reached with Khrushchev. He did, however, go on to discuss generally the question of German reunification.

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The Prime Minister said that he had the general impression that zeal for German reunification has somewhat abated. He had discussed this with Chancellor Adenauer, and also had tried to elicit the Chancellor's views on dealing with the GDR. The Prime Minister said that somewhat to his surprise Adenauer had indicated that he is prepared to accept the status quo. Mr. Macmillan said that he had commented to the Chancellor that this seemed to be close to what Khrushchev says he wants and Adenauer had replied that the ultimate goal of German reunification could not, of course, be explicitly abandoned and indeed it should be held out as a light at the end of what might be a very long tunnel. In the time that would elapse before this light were reached, ways could, as Mr. Macmillan understood Adenauer's view, be found to lighten some of the human burdens borne by the people of East Germany.

I recalled that I had discussed with Adenauer the possibility of arranging for a long-term negotiation by Foreign Ministers and their Deputies, similar to the negotiations that had eventually led to the Austrian Treaty. I said that I thought this a possibility which ought not to be wholly discarded in the present situation and I cited too the talks that we have been

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having with the Chinese Communists. Such talks can provide a context for avoiding hostilities, even if the substantive content of the talks is relatively inconsequential.

I repeated that to agree now to go to a Summit meeting at a fixed date in the future would be a grave error and would suggest to the world that, we had completely given in to the Soviets, in reversing the attitude we have taken for the past two years, namely that there must be some prospect of fruitful results at a Summit meeting before we could agree to go to one. I thought that it would be most dangerous to ourselves to give such an impression.

I said that if we shall have to face the issue of whether to make prospect of a positive outcome a condition of going to the Summit, I felt that we might as well face it now, while there is still time to find out, free of public pressures. Through a meeting of Foreign Ministers, or privately through diplomatic channels -- or, I said, not necessarily through private channels; after all Mr. Macmillan had talked directly with Mr. Khrushchev -- we could try to ascertain whether Khrushchev is prepared to make an acceptable deal. I said in this connection I agree with the thought that there will probably not be agreement with the Soviets except with Khrushchev; and that in many respects the prospect of talking with Gromyko was a bleak and barren one. But I did believe that ways existed for finding out whether or not there was anything that Khrushchev wanted that we could give and get a quid pro quo; and that the possibility of Deputy talks should not be discouraged.

Mr. Macmillan said that as the British people see the present situation, the Soviets, far from adopting an aggressive posture of advancing on the West, have simply said that all they want to do is go away from where they are. The Prime Minister said that if the Soviets carry out their threat to hand over to the GDR control of our access to Berlin, we shall be faced with very difficult practical problems, not the least of these avoiding appearing to blockade ourselves out of Berlin. Mr. Macmillan said that he saw four possibilities:

1) That the Soviets give in; 2) that we give in; 3) that there be negotiations leading to an agreed solution for Berlin and the broader problems of central Europe, and 4) that there be war. The Prime Minister said that his Government would be quite prepared to mobilize more armed forces if necessary. (Also Macmillan would feel under a duty to try to remove

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all of the young children from the United Kingdom to Canada so as to keep their stock alive as against the total devastation of nuclear war. J

Mr. Macmillan said his Government would not have the necessary public support unless they had a publicly comprehensible issue. He thought that negotiations would have to be attempted and would have to fail, before the British public could be convinced of the need for preparations of force. J

The President, on Mr. Macmillan's point that the Soviets are not "advancing", observed that they are in fact trying to get us out of Berlin and he wondered whether that were not a sufficiently aggressive issue to be persuasive. I said that I quite disagreed with the Prime Minister's theory that if we are threatened, we must negotiate, lest the public not support our being firm. I said that our present considerable strength is conceived as a deterrent to Communist imperialist aggression. It is a deterrent, and there is not going to be the war of which the Prime Minister spoke. In being firm we have sometimes to take added risks, such as our sending troops to Lebanon and Jordan and holding Quemoy. But in that instance, I felt sure, our show of firmness and determination, coupled with our deterrent power, had avoided war. On Mr. Macmillan's point that the issues now posed in Berlin are so difficult that we should negotiate a new arrangement for the city, I said that I could not agree that there is anything wrong in our present position there. It is the Soviets who are trying to make it wrong, but that does not mean that we have to negotiate with them about it. I asked what is the use of our spending \$40 billion a year or more to create deterrent power if whenever the Soviets threaten us and want to take something from our present positions we feel that we have to buy peace by compromise. If that is going to be our attitude, we had better save our money. J

The Prime Minister argued that the premises of our position in Berlin, and particularly the premise of our presence by right of conquest, are fast fading away, and that with their control of the GDR, the Soviets have the upper hand. Hence, he said, we should try to salvage something by negotiation. J

The President intervened to suggest that time was growing short and that this discussion could be continued at Camp David. He asked whether I had any thoughts to express on other matters.

I referred to the Geneva negotiations on nuclear test suspension and said that it now seems evident that there would not emerge from that conference

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