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**344. Memorandum of Conference With President Kennedy**

Washington, July 23, 1963, 5:15–5:50 p.m.

**Instructions to Ambassador Harriman****OTHERS PRESENT**

Secretary Rusk  
 Mr. McCone  
 Secretary Ball  
 Ambassador Thompson  
 Mr. Foster  
 Mr. McCloy  
 Mr. Sorensen  
 Mr. Bundy  
 Mr. Smith

The first item concerned the wording of that part of the communiqué to be released at the conclusion of the Moscow discussions which dealt with the Soviet proposal for a non-aggression pact between the Warsaw Treaty powers and the NATO powers. The President approved a telegram<sup>1</sup> which told Harriman that he must insist on acceptable wording lest it appear that we had committed ourselves to achieve a non-aggression pact when all we had done in Moscow was to discuss the suggestion and agree to discuss it further with our allies. Harriman was reminded that the Washington assessment of the situation in Moscow prompted us to insist on our wording in view of our belief that the Russians wanted the test ban treaty and would not break off the negotiations if we refused to accept their wording of the communiqué. Harriman's reports reveal that he felt we had to meet the Russians on their wording of the non-aggression pact communiqué paragraph because they had agreed to drop their insistence on linking a test ban treaty to a non-aggression pact.

There followed discussion of the composition of the Senatorial delegation which would accompany Secretary Rusk to Moscow to sign the test ban treaty. The President's view was that if Senators Fulbright and Hickenlooper did not go, the entire plan should be abandoned.

Secretary Rusk, accompanied by Mr. Foster, joined the group after having testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Secretary Rusk said there was a good chance that all of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee members except Senator Lausche would vote to approve the test ban treaty as now drafted.

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Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda Series, Meetings with the President, Harriman Mission, 7/63. Secret. Drafted by Bromley Smith. The ending time of the meeting is from the President's Appointment Book. (Ibid.)

<sup>1</sup> Document 346.

A telegram to Ambassador Bohlen was discussed. The President shared the view of those present that the wording in the President's letter to de Gaulle referring to possible U.S. nuclear assistance to France should not be made more precise as Bohlen had suggested.<sup>2</sup> The draft de Gaulle letter was modified slightly.<sup>3</sup> Ambassador Bohlen is to deliver it shortly before the announcement of the initialing of the test ban treaty.

Another telegram to Harriman instructed him to urge the Russians not to comment if de Gaulle, in his Monday press conference, announced his refusal to sign the test ban agreement.<sup>4</sup> The President suggested that Harriman urge the Russians not to comment on any French statement about testing which was not related to an actual French nuclear weapons test. We will not withdraw from the treaty on the basis of a Chinese announcement that they will not sign the treaty. However, if it appears that the Chinese are actually about to test a weapon, we will reconsider the situation at that time.

There was a long discussion of a phrase in Article I: "or any other nuclear explosion" which might be misinterpreted to mean that in a war situation we could not use nuclear weapons without violating the test ban treaty. Even though the treaty title refers to a ban on nuclear weapons tests, Mr. Ball felt that some Americans, possibly even some Germans, would conclude that we had limited our use of nuclear weapons in self-defense. Several ways of proceeding were discussed. One was to ask the Russians to revise the treaty to clarify this point even though the wording of the treaty is now agreed. We could add a protocol to the treaty, making clear that the clause in no way affected our right to use nuclear weapons

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<sup>2</sup> In telegram 373 from Paris, July 23, Bohlen had stated his concern at the "fuzziness," which he was aware might be intentional, in the existing text "of willingness to discuss providing France with nuclear information which may arise to plague us in the future." He was "somewhat concerned lest French use this statement against us" at some point "in event these limitations turn out to be somewhat narrow." (Department of State, Central Files, DEF 18-4) Regarding the existing text, see footnote 3 below.

<sup>3</sup> Text of the draft letter is in telegram 433 to Paris, July 22. (Department of State, Central Files, DEF 18-4) It was sent after the July 22 meeting; see Document 340. The change removed one sentence from a passage urging de Gaulle to keep the French position on a possible test ban agreement open: "We must not take any course that would dismay our Allies, since it is the strength and unity of the Alliance as a whole that matters most." (Telegram 550 to London, July 23; Department of State, Central Files, DEF 18-3 USSR (MO)) Bundy stated in a message to de Zulueta that Kennedy believed "mention of our allies in the initial communication will only be a red rag to the General." (Unnumbered telegram, July 23; Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Departments and Agencies Series, ACDA, Test Ban Correspondence, JFK-MacM, 7/63) Both Bundy's message and telegram 550 were sent before the 5:15 p.m. meeting.

<sup>4</sup> Telegram 301 to Moscow, July 23 (drafted by Thompson, cleared by Rusk and Bundy, and approved by Ball), instructed Harriman as described and added that he "should inform Soviets that if they do make such a statement re France, we would be obliged to make similar statement concerning Communist China which is known to be endeavoring to acquire an atomic capability and which has already indicated that it would not become party to a test ban." (Department of State, Central Files, DEF 18-4)

for self-defense in accordance with the UN Charter. We could instruct Harriman to discuss this question with the Russians and make clear to them that at an appropriate time we would state publicly that the test ban treaty in no way affected our use of nuclear weapons to oppose aggression and that we assumed this was also their view.

Secretary Rusk and Mr. Sorensen felt the point was so far-fetched that we should not raise this question with the Russians. Mr. Ball and the others felt that this point should be dealt with in one way or another. A telegram was drafted to Harriman asking him to raise this with the Russians and tell them that we would state our views on this matter in public at a later time. (When the telegram was shown to the President following the meeting, he asked that an additional sentence be added giving Harriman the authority not to raise the subject if he felt that the result of his doing so would complicate seriously his task.)<sup>5</sup>

Following a presentation by Mr. Foster, the President agreed we should inform the Russians that we thought the disarmament committee of eighteen should resume its sessions in Geneva this summer as scheduled. The Russians had indicated a desire to postpone this session. However, many of the eighteen States, especially Canada, have told us they wish to resume the disarmament talks to discuss developments since their last meeting and to prepare a report for the UN General Assembly. In view of the strong desires of the others, except the Russians, the President accepted the recommendation favoring resumption of the Geneva talks.

**Bromley Smith<sup>6</sup>**

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<sup>5</sup> Telegram 304 on this subject, July 23, was drafted by Rusk and cleared with Ball, Foster, Thompson, and Bundy, and approved by Read. It asked Harriman, with the qualification noted, to tell Gromyko that while the United States regarded the test ban treaty as an important step toward the prevention of war, it was "obviously not intended to apply, and, in fact, does not apply to the situation of self-defense, which continues to be governed by commitments under UN Charter." (Ibid.)

<sup>6</sup> Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.