

~~TOP SECRET~~

BERMUDA. (Dictated 12/6/53).

517

The British dinner (December 5, 1953) was attended only by Sir Winston, Eden, Dulles and myself. The conversation revolved around several subjects:

(a) use of atomic bomb in Korea in the event hostilities are initiated by the Reds;

(b) the advisability of my delivering the proposed talk before the UN on the afternoon of December eighth;

(c) opportunity of the British to manufacture planes with proper specifications to transport atom bombs of the type built by Americas. As a second part of this same question was the expressed hope that pending the time that the United Kingdom would have a satisfactory stockpile of its own, the United States government would maintain at appropriate bases of its own, an additional reserve in atom bomb equipment so that in the event of war, the British could draw upon us to participate in the action. (This subject was primarily discussed during a morning conversation with Lord Cherwell and Admiral Strauss. It was mentioned only briefly at the dinner meeting.);

(d) possible visit by the Queen Mother to the United States in the fall of 1954. This was mentioned privately to me by Anthony Eden, and did not come up while the four of us were talking together.

With respect to the possible use of the atom bomb, the British thinking -- apparently both governmental and personal thinking -- still

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.0(b)
MR 95-60-1
BY BBM DATE 1/5/96

~~TOP SECRET~~

BERMUDA (dictation 12/6/53) - 2.

looks upon the possible use of the atom bomb as the initiation of a completely new era in war. Even more than this, it looks upon any decision of this kind as a policy question of the gravest import. This feeling unquestionably arises out of the fact that up until this time the British have had no atom bombs and because of their experience in World War II, they see themselves as the initial, and possibly principal, target of a Soviet bomb offensive. They apparently cling to the hope (to us fatuous) that if we avoid the first use of the atom bomb in any war, that the Soviets might likewise abstain.

Our thinking, on the other hand, has come a long ways past this kind of conjecture and hope. Specifically we have come to the conclusion that the atom bomb has to be treated just as another weapon in the arsenal. More important than this, we are certain in our own minds that the Soviets will do whatever they calculate their own best interests dictate. If they refrain from using the atom bomb, it will be for one reason only -- because they believe that their position would be relatively worse in atom warfare than if this type of warfare were not employed.

This is one point in which there seems to be no divergence of opinion whatsoever between Eden and Sir Winston. I told them that quite naturally in the event of war, we would always hold up enough to establish the fact before the world that the other was clearly the aggressor, but I also gave my conviction that anyone who held up too long in the use of his assets in atomic weapons might suddenly find himself subjected to such wide-spread and devastating attack that retaliation would be next to impossible.

~~TOP SECRET~~

BERMUDA (dictation 12/6/53) - 3.

The devastating effect to be expected from an all-out surprise offensive featuring the atom bomb, is something that must be regarded with the gravest concern by countries such as ours -- which themselves will never initiate the war.

Both the British stated time and again that they had no thought of recoiling from necessary decisions in this regard; their idea seems to be that there should be, probably will be, a sufficient time immediately after the outbreak of war to make necessary decisions. I carefully explained to Anthony (it has gotten to be almost impossible to explain anything to Mr. Churchill, who seems deliberately to use his deafness to avoid hearing anything he does not want to hear) that we must not ever forget for an instant that while a dictatorship has the power of instantaneous decision, the democracies normally have to act more slowly for two reasons: (a) within each country we have established processes that normally require some time to give validity to any serious decision, and (b) our coalition is bound together on the principle of equal partnership, which means that the formulation of any fixed decision usually takes quite a bit of time. Our feeling is that in view of these circumstances, such decisions as can be taken prior to the beginning of a war, should be taken, and that only minimum dependence should be placed upon opportunity for discussion and consultation after the initial attack against us takes place.

The talks on this point were long and my feeling is the British believe now that we should work out some agreed-upon code and understanding that would so operate as to place us in an embarrassing position of inaction in the event of emergency.

BERMUDA dictation 12/6/53. - 4.

This is a subject that must be followed up because there must be no misunderstanding about it.

* * * * *

Mr. Churchill had still not read the text of the draft we furnished to him the day we got here, but he has promised that by eleven o'clock today we would get from word as to his idea about the talk. So far as I am concerned this is not particularly annoying, because I am of two minds on the thing myself. Of course one difficulty about asking Winston about these things is that he cannot help thinking he himself is the world's only statesman today; it is almost impossible for him to see anyone else proposing an idea of any general importance to the world.

* * * * *

Admiral Strauss and Lord Cherwell are going to follow-up to discover whether it is not possible in the course of the legitimate exchange of information to give the British the data they need in manufacturing their new bombing types. They will follow up in all directions necessary so as to assure in the event of war we get the best possible use of British forces in the carrying on of atomic warfare, as well as conventional warfare.

BERMUDA dictation 12/6/53. - 5.

* * * * *

I told Anthony that we would at the White House be prepared to entertain the Queen Mother overnight or longer if she wanted to stay, and would do anything necessary to make her visit to Washington as comfortable as possible.

D. D. E.