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Copy No. 1 of 4 Series A
TRUMAN-CHURCHILL TALKS

Meeting on Agenda Items: A. The Strategic Air Plans
And The Use Of The Atomic Weapon (TCT D-2/7), And
B. Technical Cooperation in Atomic Energy (TCT D-2/8)

January 7, 1952

5 - 5:45 p.m.

Cabinet Room, The White House

Present were:

UNITED STATES

President Harry S. Truman
Secretary of State Dean Acheson
Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett
Secretary of the Treasury John W. Snyder
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Omar Bradley
Ambassador Walter S. Gifford
Mutual Security Administrator W. Averell Harriman
U.S. Air Forces Chief of Staff General Hoyt Vandenberg
Deputy Under Secretary of State H. Freeman Matthews
White House Press Secretary Joseph Short
Mr. David Lloyd, White House Staff
Mr. Charles Murphy, White House Staff
Mr. George Willis, Treasury Department
Mr. R. Gordon Arneson, Department of State

UNITED KINGDOM

Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill
Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden
Lord Cherwell
Ambassador Sir Oliver Franks
Field Marshal Sir William Slim
Air Chief Marshal Sir William Elliot
Sir Christopher Steel
Sir Roger Makins

In opening the discussion, The President stated that under the law he was charged with responsibility for deciding on the use of atomic weapons. He fervently hoped that the time would never come when such a decision had to be made. Nevertheless, he was prepared to authorize the

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use of atomic weapons if and when the necessity arose. It had always been his own personal feeling that allies should be consulted on this matter.

Secretary Lovett stated that politico-military discussions had already taken place concerning situations that might or might not lead to general war and the consequent use of atomic weapons. He pointed out that under existing law there were strict limits on the extent to which military discussions could go forward. The Department of Defense was planning to recommend to the President that legislation be sought which would permit strictly military cooperation to be carried on to a greater degree. Reverting to the talks that had been held, he stressed that such talks had been, and would have to continue to be, without commitment. Discussions had proceeded on the assumption that in the event of general war atomic weapons would be used sooner or later, and in all probability sooner. The discussants had considered various contingencies which might or might not lead to general war and other contingencies where the issue had not been clear. Throughout the discussions it had been fully understood that United Kingdom bases could not be used by the United States for military operations without United Kingdom consent.

Secretary Lovett said that arrangements were being made for the Prime Minister, upon his return from Canada to Washington, to receive an extensive briefing on SAC operations.

Prime Minister Churchill said that the problems of United States-United Kingdom relations in the atomic energy field was a long story. He recalled that at the outset the United Kingdom could have started up in Canada. He recalled, too, that the decision to go in with the

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United States had helped to put great moral pressure on President Roosevelt to undertake this great gamble. Everyone recognized at the time that it was a gamble on a gigantic scale. Until Almagordo no one could tell whether the bomb might not be a flash in the pan. The President interjected that a number of his advisers at the time had assured him that the bomb would not work. He said, however, that these advisers had not been heard from lately. The Prime Minister said he would not mind having the history of the wartime relationship made public, not as a matter of reproach but as a matter of record. He said he did not wish to dwell on the past, however, but preferred to look at the situation as it existed today. The United States had legislation which was restrictive. As for the United Kingdom, the previous Government had, with considerable expenditure of money, succeeded in making the bomb. He stated he had not been aware of this prior to his return to power. This bomb was now going to be tested in Australia. In the field of technical cooperation, the United Kingdom was not asking for anything outside the limits of United States legislation. What it was asking for and hoping for was fuller cooperation within the limits of the law. He hoped that Lord Cherwell, who knew about these things, could talk with the appropriate representatives in the United States Government to see what could be done.

The President said that his greatest wish was that atomic energy could be put to the service of peace rather than of war. He was quite agreeable to having talks proceed on technical cooperation.

The Prime Minister went on that the United Kingdom hoped for the maximum possible cooperation within the limits of the law and he hoped

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it would be agreeable to have Lord Cherwell discuss this problem with the Atomic Energy Commission and others. There was also a problem of cooperation in the field of atomic energy intelligence which was directed toward finding out what the Russians were doing. He felt that surely this should be an area of the closest collaboration, although he recognized that even here there might be some legislative difficulties. He hoped the President would agree that Lord Cherwell and Sir Roger Makins might discuss this problem with his old friend, General Smith, to find out what could be done.

The President stated that what the Prime Minister had said made good sense to him. He thought it was particularly important to cooperate in trying to find out what the Russians were doing.

The Prime Minister then reverted to the question of the use of atomic weapons. He said he hoped to be told more about plans for use. He was glad that Secretary Lovett and General Bradley had told him that arrangements were being made to give him a briefing about this matter. In terms of political strategy vis-a-vis the Russians, he envisaged one day that a conference might be held with the Soviet Union which might break down. One possible result of such a failure to come to terms might be immediate atomic war. He would not want this result and felt that rather a warning should be given to the Soviet Union that short of atomic warfare every effort would be made to intensify the cold war. Such a procedure, he thought, would leave a kind of intermediate period in which both sides could take time for "breath and thought." As to consultations, he thought there were two aspects: (1) In the event of a surprise attack by the

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Soviet Union, it was perfectly clear that the United States would have to act immediately without consulting with anyone. (2) There was the question of taking the initiative of bringing things to a point. Here he felt consultation was necessary. In this connection he alluded to United States atomic bases in East Anglia.

The President said that it was not the intention of the United States Government to use United Kingdom bases in any circumstances without United Kingdom consent.

The Prime Minister asked whether there would be any objection to making this undertaking public.

The President said he saw no reason why this could not be done. Secretary Lovett suggested that the matter should be studied.

The Prime Minister said he was glad to see the extension of United States bases into French Morocco and Cyrenaica. He said he was personally glad to see the Spanish situation developing in such a way as to open up the possibility of securing bases in Spain also. He felt it was good that these developments were taking place so as to reduce the pressures on the United Kingdom and so that "the horrors could be divided should peace fail."

Secretary Acheson said there was one other problem which he would like to raise, namely the problem of security. The Prime Minister said that his Government was taking certain steps on the security matter. He said he realized that a tightening of United Kingdom security would help the United States in considering problems of closer cooperation. He felt, however, that this was a step which the United Kingdom would have

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to take on its own and should not be pressed from the outside to do so. He said that on shipboard on the way over, he had learned that the Cabinet was going ahead on its own to put before Parliament a scheme for strengthening security. He envisaged the adoption of a system whereby any applicant for a position involving access to classified information would be required to state, under oath, whether he was or was not a member of Communist or Communist front organizations and to give other information concerning his background. By this method an individual who had falsified could be prosecuted under the common law for perjury. This he thought was the sensible way of dealing with the matter. He said that these arrangements had not yet been put through, but the main Cabinet decision had been taken.

The President stated that this development would be very helpful.

The Secretary of Defense explained that the reason the United States attached so much importance to the security problem was that the recent amendment to our legislation specifically required that the Atomic Energy Commission must judge that the security standards of a recipient nation, as applied to the data to be communicated, are adequate. Mr. Matthews inquired whether the new personnel clearance procedures were intended to apply only to new personnel being taken on in sensitive work or whether it would also apply to those who were already in such jobs. The Prime Minister responded that the new procedures were to apply to all personnel who had, or would in the future have, access to classified information. He explained further that such procedures would apply to

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all persons having access to classified information in general and not only to classified atomic energy information.

The President said he thought the Prime Minister and he understood each other on these matters and suggested that the additional talks that had been suggested in the course of the meeting should proceed. The conference then passed to other items on the agenda.

R. Gordon Arneson

R. Gordon Arneson
Special Assistant to the Secretary of State

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