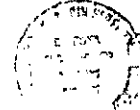


20 August 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES OF LEWIS L. STRAUSS



On Saturday, 16 August, Mr. McCone called me in Virginia to say that the report from the Scientific Panel negotiating in Geneva looked as though they had reached an agreement with the Russians on terms which he (McCone) regarded as unsatisfactory to the United States, as did the members of the Commission; that he was fearful that this would result in a U.S. agreement to discontinue testing and that the pressure to this effect was coming from the Secretary of State. He asked me if I would talk to Mr. Herter about it. I called Chris who said that he had agreed with me, but that the Secretary was being influenced from quarters which he could not surmise. He asked me not to make a point of the difference of opinion between himself and his Chief, and I promised him not to. He said that there would be a meeting with the President on Monday, August 18th, at which Mr. McCone would be present.

Mr. McCone called me on Tuesday afternoon, August 19th, to say that the meeting with the President had taken place and that the President had agreed with Secretary Dulles' proposal for a one-year suspension of all tests but that he (McCone) had seen the President again on Tuesday and had gotten the President to send a changed directive to the State Department to incorporate into the proposed statement language to the effect that we would continue to test underground which would result in no fall-out and to make tests for peaceful uses of atomic explosions above ground with the consent and under the supervision of the United Nations. I said I thought he had saved some brands from burning but that I thought that the Russians had won the first set. (I have mixed my metaphors but I might as well leave them.)

I came into town this morning (Wednesday, August 20) to act as pallbearer at the funeral of Gordon Dean, my predecessor as Chairman of the AEC. When I reached the office about noon, Mr. McCone called me to say that the signals had been reversed; that underground and peaceful uses testing were out unless the Russians agreed to it. He said further that members of the staff of the Commission were so disgruntled and disheartened that they were threatening to resign. He concluded by asking me to "put on my bullet-proof vest" and go to see the President. I said that I would first like to discuss the subject with General Goodpaster who I understood from Mr. McCone had been present at the conversation which he had had with the President.

I had lunch with Dr. Libby at his invitation and he told me of these happenings from the point of view of a Commissioner, expressed his deep chagrin and disheartenment, but did not go so far as to indicate that he had any intentions of resigning.

When I returned to my office, I went to see General Goodpaster and as I began to talk with him, Mrs. Whitman came in to say that the President knew I was there and wanted to see me.

When I entered the President's room, he was reading a letter which he passed across the table to me. It was from the Acting British Ambassador, Lord Hood, forwarding two letters from Prime Minister Macmillan that were undated.

The first of these acknowledged the President's letter of August 19th in which the Prime Minister thanked the President for his assurance that it was his intention to be generous with the U.K. in the matter of passing on information -- as generous as the law would permit. The President then inquired of me whether the law would fully countenance the passing on of atomic energy weapons information to the British.

The Prime Minister went on to say that the British had made great efforts to develop nuclear weapons which would make it possible for them to take their proper station in the defense of the free world, that they were contemplating some more or less immediate tests looking toward the solution of two problems, one of which he described as "invulnerability" and the other as "reduction in weight". He then went on to say that if the President could give him assurances that the weapons information we now have and would have in the future could be transmitted to him under the present law that he (the Prime Minister) could then agree to suspension of tests, but that he could only be justified in doing so if his assumption was correct.

The President asked me whether the present law permitted the transfer of such information, and I told him that I thought it did but that in every case where weapons information was to be transferred, there would have to be a finding to the effect that the information was needed by the British and that it would promote and not constitute an unreasonable hazard to the common defense and security. I said that I thought by invulnerability, Mr. Macmillan meant pre-initiation. I later wrote the President a short note to confirm what I had told him.

Upon completion of this matter, I told the President of Mr. McCone's calls, and I expressed my great concern with the course of events. The President said that he thought it had gone too far to reverse, indicating the Macmillan correspondence, that the Secretary of State had a fixation on the subject. I reminded the President of the incident in his office in the spring in which the Secretary had taken such a position and later had informed me that he had changed his mind after hearing my statement of the case. The President obviously was greatly disturbed by the issue. He feels that it is possible to keep laboratories operating and enthused, although I gathered

that this was an expression of hope rather than belief. I told him that I thought the laboratories would be just as busy and with just as many people on board but that the really key intellects would have left and that they would be pedestrian enterprises. I pointed to the fact that the peaceful uses of nuclear explosions would be impossible. The President said that under the proposed arrangement, this would be negotiated with the Russians. I said that I thought that this was an illusion. He then rang for Mr. Hagerty and had him show me the statement. While it was not as bad as had been described to me or as I had imagined from Mr. McCone's description, it was a surrender to the views of Stassen and Stevenson. I pointed this out to the President, observing that he was, of course, great enough not to be influenced by that, but that I thought I owed it to him to call it to his attention. He said that he felt that the flaw in my position was that it offered no prospect except an arms race into the indefinite future and that at least this proposal of Mr. Dulles' might be a step in the direction of general disarmament. I said that if he felt there was any prospect of living in a world at peace with Communism without Communist aggression, his course was undoubtedly correct -- that I felt about Communism as I did about sin -- that there was no compromise with it, and that the arms race between good and evil had been going on for centuries and that there would never be an end to it. When I took my leave, I felt that I had come as near a permanent fundamental disagreement with him as in the entire five years of my association with him.



Lewis L. Strauss

LLS/vhw