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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation
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DATE: November 18, 1958

SUBJECT: Geneva Nuclear Tests Negotiations

PARTICIPANTS: The Under Secretary
Mr. Philip J. Farley - S/AE
Mr. Ronald I. Spiers - S/AE

APPROVED **JOHN A. CALHOUN**

sent mail
in S/S

Dr. James Killian - Special Assistant to the President
Dr. Hans Bethe - President's Science Advisory Committee

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INR
Embassy London
Consul General Geneva - For
Ambassador Wadsworth (to be
transmitted by S/AE)

Dr. Killian explained that he had asked Dr. Bethe to report to the Under Secretary about developments in Geneva and his views on possible next steps. Dr. Bethe said he thought it would be particularly useful for Mr. Herter to have a first-hand account of the atmosphere in the negotiations. He said that the meetings were substantially different from the summer technical sessions and that things were moving quite slowly. He said that until the U.S. had put in its "excellent" treaty outline, there had been no movement on the part of the USSR. At this point the USSR was forced to discuss the control problem to some degree, since they could not let our statements go unchallenged. Consequently, we have received some clarification as to what the USSR does want and does not want. He remarked that the most hopeful point is that both the Russians and the U.S. have emphasized their commitment to the Technical Experts Report, which has now become a "sacred" document. It has become clear that the USSR strongly objects to our concept of organization of a control system and that they want the system organized on a basis of parity. They are particularly opposed to the idea of an administrator "who would be able to tell the U.S. and USSR what to do." Dr. Bethe thought that our best tactic was to continue to put in papers dealing with substantive points and to proceed to talk about them, thus by-passing insofar as possible the agenda issue. The Delegation felt strongly that we should not accept the Russian agenda. The Delegation was unanimous in its opinion that the USSR did not want to break the meetings off, although they might do this ultimately if the breaking issue is favorable to them. He emphasized that we should be willing to give the Delegation flexibility in determining tactics and in dealing with details of the control system, such as the division of the authority

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S/AE R. I. Spiers

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between the Commission and the Administrator. A particularly important point for us to insist upon, in his view, is the automaticity of the mobile inspection in response to carefully defined geophysical signals.

Dr. Bethe said that the Delegation had been encouraged at the fact that the Soviet Union had not made a big point out of the peaceful uses testing problem and that their reference throughout the meeting has been to banning "weapons" tests.

The main Soviet fire is focused on our one-year position and our insistence on the link to disarmament, according to Dr. Bethe. The Delegation feels that the Soviet Union is in a strong position on this point and that their opposition would be sustained by public opinion. The Delegation had been happy to see the evidences of Washington flexibility on this point. Dr. Bethe recounted a conversation that he had had with Dr. Feodorov who had agreed, in a private conversation, that governments should be free to withdraw from the treaty if the control system was not installed and operating, although this was not the officially-stated Soviet position. However, the USSR would never agree to a loose provision leaving it to U.S. judgment whether satisfactory progress was being made in disarmament as a basis for treaty termination. He felt that the USSR was firm on this point and that he, himself, felt that it would be "monstrous" to have a treaty dependent upon other treaties not in existence.

Mr. Herter inquired whether it would be in our interest to have an open-ended commitment for cessation of nuclear tests and whether or not, in ten years, we would find that the Soviets had been able to improve their weapons position, even without testing, to such a degree that our security would be jeopardized. Dr. Bethe said that in the absence of testing, the U.S. would be in a far better position to continue nuclear weapons development than the Soviet Union. Our past tests have gone a lot further into diagnostics than we have any evidence that the Soviet Union has and, consequently, we understand the interior workings of the nuclear weapons much better than they do. Therefore, we are in a better position to make further progress without testing than the Soviet Union. Dr. Killian said that a consideration on the other side is that the Soviet system might be better able to maintain good weapons laboratories in the absence of testing than the U.S. would. Dr. Bethe said that he was not convinced of this point, but that an important factor would be the ability of the USSR to cheat in the face of any system of control.

In this connection, Mr. Herter asked about the validity of the point which is often made about our need to improve our small weapons position, and what the Soviet small weapons capability was. Dr. Bethe said that we have little firm knowledge about Soviet very low-yield tests, but that what we know about their capabilities in the 10 to 20 kiloton range indicates that they have not highly developed abilities in this area. With respect to our requirements in the small weapons field, Dr. Bethe admitted that there was much that would still be done

to improve

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to improve our position, but that we did have something of "every type in every yield." For us it is not a question of having or not having, but rather a problem of further refinements. Dr. Killian pointed out that you could go on endlessly making weapons refinements and that the Soviet Union could also. In view of our relative position in this field, the Soviet Union would have more to gain by continued testing.

Dr. Bethe said he wished to make two final points. The first was to emphasize that since the Soviet Union has not kept the privacy agreement in the meeting, it would be to the advantage of our Delegation if the "right things" could be said in Washington, particularly in clarification of our position on controls. If we could abandon disarmament link, we would be in a strong position from the propaganda stand-point. Secondly, he wished to say that whereas the UK had been at pains to maintain a united front with the U.S. in the open meetings, their position essentially was quite different and, sooner or later this would come out. The British believe that cessation of nuclear tests is inevitable under any circumstances and that any controls we could get from the Soviet Union would be "gravy". Consequently, the UK will, in the last analysis, be willing to settle for substantially less than we will.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

November 20, 1958

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S/S - Mr. Calhoun

Memorandum of Conversation Between
Acting Secretary, Dr. Killian and
Dr. Bethe Concerning Geneva
Negotiations

For approval prior to distribu-
tion.

This memorandum of conversation
is not considered suitable for distribu-
tion to CIA.

I understand that Mr. Farley feels
that due to the private, delicate nature
of the conversation, he does not believe
it should receive very broad distribu-
tion. He desires, however, to send a
copy separately to Ambassador Wadsworth
himself.

C. A. Borg
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