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Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: March 22, 1960

SUBJECT: Geneva Nuclear Test Negotiations: Meeting of Principals

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PARTICIPANTS:	Department of State	Department of Defense	Atomic Energy
	Secretary Herter	Under Secretary Douglas	Commission
(End of meet- ing only)	Under Secretary Dillon	Mr. Irwin	Mr. McCone
	Under Secretary Merchant	General Loper	General Starbird
	EUR - Mr. Kohler	General Dabney	
	SOV - Mr. Dubs		Central Intelligence
XXXXXXXXXX	S/S-RO - Mr. Borg	White House	Agency
	S/AE - Mr. Farley	Mr. Gordon Gray	Mr. Dulles
	Mr. Spiers	Dr. Kistiakowsky	Dr. Scoville
	Mr. Baker	Mr. Keeny	
	Mr. Gotzlinger		

COPIES TO: 21-23

C - 4	EUR - 10	L - 13	CIA - Mr. Dulles - 16
S/S - 2	S/P - 5	IO - 11	Defense - Mr. Douglas - 17
G - 3	S/AE - 4	H - 12	White House - Dr. Kistiakowsky
	6 - 9	AEC - 15	Mr. Gray - 19
			USDEL, Geneva - Amb. Wadsworth - 20

Secretary Herter explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the nature of our reply to the Soviet counterproposal of March 19 in which they offer to conclude a treaty on the cessation of all tests except underground tests below a magnitude of 4.75, on condition that all parties agree at the same time not to test below that magnitude during a period of joint research. It is necessary to take legal and political factors into consideration. The Secretary has been informed by the legal adviser that the President cannot bind this country to a moratorium on testing going beyond his term of office, unless such a moratorium is approved by the Congress. Another legal point is that the Immigration Law waiver which would allow Soviet scientists to come to the United States as participants in a joint research project also would not extend beyond the term of this Administration. A further legal consideration: Since there appears to be no chance for agreement on a treaty in time to allow ratification by the Senate at this session, the treaty, if submitted late in this session, will probably just be held over for consideration during the term of the next Administration or, perhaps, to the period next January when the new Congress will be in session, but the new President will not yet have been inaugurated. These are legal limitations to keep in mind. The political factor consists of the strong feeling of the U.K. that the Soviet counterproposal represents an important breakthrough in the negotiations; the U.K. wants favorable action on it -- and soon. This is a political reality. The Secretary then discussed the counterproposal, in light of information presently available, which is not complete. It appears that the Soviets envision a moratorium of 4 to 5 years duration. It is not clear what is to happen after that time, if joint research

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- 2 -

work has not produced a detection system satisfactory for discovery of all tests. Only chemical explosives would be used in research work. There is nothing new as to inspection quotas; they are still to be politically determined, and to have no relation to the number of events discovered. The only change in the Soviet position seems to be the provision for joint research. Nevertheless, some consideration must be given to this tricky counterproposal. So much propaganda has been made with it already that even the U.S. public thinks it involved a big concession. The burden is on us to prove that it is a bad proposal and how it could be made better. So the possibilities as to future action on which we must decide are: 1) Rejection of a moratorium and a resumption of testing; 2) continuing negotiation; and 3) Establishing direct connection with the Ten Nation general disarmament talks. The Secretary referred to the Bell Laboratory report on unmanned seismic stations, due in three weeks, as an additional factor. Another factor, and a great worry, is that we are now in a de facto moratorium, but there is no benefit for the U.S. in such a moratorium since we can conduct no on-site inspections at all.

Mr. McCone strongly urged that the Soviet counterproposal be rejected. He advocated remaining firmly attached to the principle, enunciated at the meeting with the President on July 23, 1959, that we should not commit ourselves to end tests which cannot be controlled. This principle was reiterated at the December meeting in Augusta. The Bell Laboratory studies are important, but they will not make the detection problem appreciably easier. Also, joint research using chemical explosives does not have the same value as research using nuclear explosives. Mr. McCone emphasized the dangers of continuing the moratorium: If we remain exposed to a long period of nuclear test suspension, while the Soviets are not, we shall become a second class nuclear power. At present, and if we accept the Soviet counterproposal, the possibility exists that the Soviets will continue testing. Meanwhile, our own weapons development possibilities, which would be greatly increased by a modest testing program, are not being taken advantage of. Mr. McCone expressed great disappointment with the British attitude. He disagreed with the idea expressed by Ambassador Wadsworth that progress could be made in Geneva on organizational issues; there is only one issue at Geneva and that is: Controls. If we accept suspension without controls, the security of the United States is threatened.

Mr. Douglas said that Mr. McCone had well expressed the inclinations of the Department of Defense. A period of two to three years during which the Soviets may test, and we will not, involves a real risk. He suggested that a program of joint research be initiated, but without a commitment not to test.

Mr. Dulles answering a question by Secretary Herter, stated that there is a chance of obtaining some additional information about Soviet testing, by means other than scientific detection and subsequent inspection.

Dr. Kistiakowsky, answering a question by Secretary Herter, stated he is unable to estimate the likelihood of the Soviets being able to conduct so many clandestine tests during a period of moratorium of 4 to 5 years as to be dangerous to U.S. security.

SECRET

Secretary Herter announced that he must leave to greet the Foreign Minister of Spain, but wished to reiterate that there are political questions of the first magnitude involved here. The international state of mind is one of opposition to nuclear tests. Those advocating a special General Assembly session to consider the French tests are only five votes short. The votes needed to summon such a session will possibly be forthcoming after another French test.

Dr. Kistiakowsky praised the value of the Bell Laboratory test studies on unmanned seismic stations. Stationed at 200 to 300 mile intervals, these stations could undoubtedly detect and identify events of a strength far below the threshold. But the cost and complexity of the operation would be enormous. Thousands of stations would be required. This is a serious limiting factor. Perhaps it would be a useful compromise to install such unmanned stations near known salt domes. Perhaps also the treaty could provide that the stations would be movable at the discretion of the organization.

Mr. McCone reiterated opposition to a moratorium, pointing to the fact that the President had announced from the beginning that a moratorium was dependent on significant progress on the disarmament issue. Perhaps it is time to transfer the nuclear test suspension negotiations to the Ten Nation general disarmament conference.

Mr. Merchant pointed out that such a move would result in the test suspension issue being fitted in with some 20 others on which the ten nations are just beginning deliberations. Alternatively, a special subcommittee would deal with test suspension. Both alternatives seem undesirable. In the meantime, the political and scientific problems of the moratorium would remain with us. It is quite likely that a General Assembly session will be devoted to the "evils" of testing, a factor to be considered when we consider resumption. On the other hand, if negotiations continue for two more years with a de facto moratorium, we would be better off with a treaty, containing a moratorium, which would allow us to inspect in the Soviet Union.

Mr. McCone expressed regret that it was not made sufficiently clear at the outset of these negotiations that we would not consider a treaty without complete controls, under any circumstances. What has happened should serve as a lesson to Ambassador Eaton. Even a General Assembly condemnation by a vote of 80 to 10 is preferable to abandonment of the key principle of controls. Answering a question by Mr. Douglas, he stated that AEC preparations for eventual resumption of underground testing will be completed by midsummer. We can then test within 45 to 60 days thereafter. Any delay in testing after that time involves a delay in improving the efficiency of our weapons.

Mr. Douglas said that a delay of eight to ten months would perhaps not make much difference.

Dr. Kistiakowsky, answering a question by Mr. Merchant, stated that a vigorous three year program, employing largely technical talent available in the United States, would result in major progress on the detection and

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Authority NND 949646

By KJB NARA Date 3/8

- 4 -

identification program. But there is no guarantee that the whole problem will be solved by then.

Mr. McCone quoted Dr. Romney and Mr. Northrup as saying that 3 to 5 years would be required, barring a crash program. However, no one can be sure that the program will yield practical results. Though the "Cowboy" series has not been fully evaluated, results already show that decoupling through underground testing in salt is practical and that a considerable reduction in signal can be obtained even by a system of decoupling which is partially, not completely, successful.

Mr. Dulles, answering a question of Mr. Gordon Gray, said there is no evidence to show that the Soviets are conducting tests.

Mr. Gray commented that the present situation will subject the Government to criticism by the press and the American people. In effect, there has been a moratorium for 17 months. If these negotiations are combined with the Ten Nation talks there is likely to be an additional de facto moratorium period. If the Government continues the moratorium while there is a feeling that testing is important, criticism is sure to follow. Another angle to consider is that of the effect which a relaxation of the principle that adequate controls must safeguard a suspension of testing agreement will have on the general disarmament negotiations. Mr. Gray felt the group should prepare an agreed position, or alternate recommendations clearly stated, for submission to the President. He recommended that the group be consistent in its statements to the press.

Mr. Merchant, after answering a question of Mr. Dulles by stating that the Soviets appear to want all test suspension treaty issues, except the inspection quota, settled before the Summit, suggested that all press inquiries be referred to Secretary Herter. He expressed belief that the President's chief advisers should talk in definitive terms about our reply to the counterproposal only after the President has decided on it. Even though the proposal may be patently unacceptable and our answer may be clear, there should be no out-of-hand rejection.

Mr. McCone said that he would be unable to refuse to answer all questions of the press, since he has always been on record as opposing an agreement containing inadequate control provision, so his position on this proposal must be clear. As a basic matter of principle, we should reject it. He quoted Senator Anderson, in a speech of today, as favoring rejection. Mr. Irwin supported Mr. McCone.

Dr. Kistiakowsky commented that the Soviet proposal is unacceptable for technical reasons. Assuming there will be only 20 stations in the Soviet Union, there is no hope of detecting all events, including decoupled explosion. For political considerations, however, a counterproposal should perhaps be evolved.

(who entered the meeting at this point)

Mr. Dillon and Mr. Merchant said that the strong feelings of the U.K. on this proposal must be taken into consideration in the opinion of Secretary

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Herter. However, we could not let the U.K. determine our own course of action.

Mr. Dillon pointed out the advisability of arriving at a decision as soon as possible, so that a program may be submitted to the President. The U.K. is exerting pressure for favorable consideration of the Soviet proposal. We all believe that it is not a good proposal, but the decision we must make is as to desirability of a counterproposal. He suggested another meeting of the Principals for the next day, March 23.