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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

PART I of II

DATE: December 15, 1971

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SUBJECT: Venting of Soviet Underground TestPARTICIPANTS: Mr. Christopher Makins, First Secretary, British Embassy
Mr. H. G. Handyside, Director, PM/AECOPIES TO: EUR/SOV - Mr. Perry
EUR/BMI - Mr. Burns
SCI/AE - Dr. Loftness
L/PM - Mr. Fields
ACDA - Col. P.J. Long
NSC - LTC Merritt
AEC - Mr. Bengelsdorf
Amembassy LONDON - Mr. Oplinger

In accordance with the practice which has grown up over the years I requested Mr. Makins to visit the Department so that I could inform the British Government that the US Government was planning the following day to file a quiet protest with the Soviets over the very serious venting of the Soviet September 27, 1971 nuclear test. I explained that we planned to tell the Soviet Embassy that we had found radioactivity released by the September 27 test outside the borders of the Soviet Union and to call upon the Soviets to exercise greater care to insure that their future tests do not vent. After observing that the US and UK experts had already compared notes on the extent and type of radioactivity collected, I told Mr. Makins that I proposed to focus on the diplomatic side of the problem. I informed him that the USG had decided to confront the Soviets with the venting charge because (a) it was the sixth Soviet venting in the past 12 months, and (b) the September 27 venting had been the worst instance since October 1966.

3 Mr. Makins expressed appreciation for the advance notification and then asked what the USG hoped to achieve by calling the Soviets to account. I replied: The USG considered it important to establish a firm record on Soviet venting both to build a foundation for possible action at some future

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time and to enable us to respond to inquiries from members of the Congress who are interested in the general subject of testing and in the Limited Test Ban Treaty. Second, the USG hoped that by reminding the Soviets periodically that we are looking over their shoulders, we might cause the Soviet testers to redouble their containment efforts, thereby both reducing the amounts of radioactivity in the atmosphere and minimizing the opposition of non weapons states to all nuclear testing. Third, the US hoped to check mate any charges of Test Ban Treaty violations and to fend off any propaganda attacks on US testing or on the infrequent US venting accident by making it clear to the Soviets that we had the evidence to counter such attacks with at least equally sharp charges against the Soviet test program. Stated in another way, the US wished to remind the Soviets that the continuation of the existing gentlemen's agreement against publicizing venting incidents was to the advantage of both the US and the USSR.

A. Drafted: PM/AE:HGHandyside:bpw
12/15/71

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