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SECRETARY'S EUROPEAN TRIP
(June 18-28, 1962)

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: June 25, 1962
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Place: American Embassy, London

Participants:

United States

The Secretary of State
Ambassador Bruce
Mr. Kohler
Mr. Bohlen
Mr. Mansing
Mr. Jones
Mr. Sillensbrand

Great Britain

Lord Howe
Mr. Crawford
Mr. Peck
Mr. Russell
The Hon. P.E. Hombrook
Mr. Samuel
Mr. Godber

Subject: Role of the UK Nuclear Deterrent.

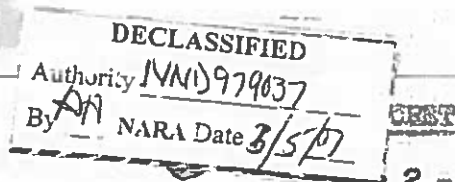
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During the discussion after lunch of guidance for the press briefings to be given in the afternoon by Messrs. Manning and Russell, the Secretary raised briefly certain of the fundamental considerations underlying the public position to be taken in connection with statements to the press and in response to parliamentary questions. The British had a draft statement to the effect that although the contingency of its use was highly unlikely, they did, in effect, have independence as to use of their nuclear capacity. The Secretary expressed some concern about this emphasis on independence and suggested that the order of the thought should be reversed. After some discussion of possible language, the following line emerged as a preferable sequence: In the last resort, the UK Government has freedom of political decision but it cannot be imagined that such a situation would ever arise.

The Secretary stated that employment of nuclear weapons is not a path to freedom but a path to slavery. The US has never had less independence than it has today in the areas affected by these weapons. We do not talk of the independent use of nuclear weapons because of our many Allies. The responsibility which the possession of these weapons brings inhibits our freedom of action. This is an aspect of the situation which the French tend to overlook. He thought of the US-UK relationship as something which goes back to World War II. The UK nuclear capability

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capability is one of its contributions to the Alliance. Russell said this seemed to show the aptness of Lord Home's reference to the fact that the position was not one of independence but of interdependence.

The Secretary said that what was involved was essentially an effort of the Allies in which nobody, including the US, would expect to act independently. He was quite sure that the US, carrying these very heavy responsibilities, does not look at its nuclear weapons as an independent weapon but as its contribution to the Alliance. The emphasis should be that the purpose of such weapons is Allied cooperation. The Secretary noted that, with the French, the purpose of such force is not to emphasize Allied cooperation but non-cooperation. This was not a problem with the UK.

The Secretary pointed out, the more the UK stressed its independence the more it tended to move in on our independence. He cited the theoretical problem with which Khrushchev and President Kennedy would be confronted if missiles should be fired from the UK at the Soviet Union.

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Subsequent to the discussion reported above, Mr. Ramsbotham of the Foreign Office gave Mr. Kohler the following proposed text:

"Question: Is not the United Kingdom free to use its deterrent independently?"

"Answer: Of course it is, constitutionally, but the object of policy is to see that such a situation never arises. In fact it would not make military sense to plan to act independently. This is now equally true for the Americans. Both we and the Americans gave assurances to NATO at the Athens meeting that we would consult our allies, time permitting, on the use of nuclear weapons anywhere in the world."

Mr. Kohler, after consulting the Secretary, informed Mr. Ramsbotham that the last sentence in the proposed answer raised difficulties for us and suggested the following be substituted:

"The heavy responsibilities that attach to these weapons make it unlikely that any nation having them can act or think in purely national terms. Both we and the Americans have made this clear in our consultations on such matters in NATO."

Mr. Ramsbotham said that he would present the proposed revision to the Foreign Secretary.

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