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January 16, 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Truman-Attlee Conversations of December 1950: Use of Atomic Weapons

1. The position which Secretary Acheson discussed with the President, in anticipation of the British raising the question of the use of atomic weapons, is attached as Tab A.

2. In the course of the Fifth Meeting of the Truman-Attlee conversations in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Thursday, December 7, 1950, the President spoke to the subject along the lines reflected in Tab B.

3. As the Sixth Meeting began on December 8, 1950, Secretary Acheson called for Mr. Arneson to join him at the White House to advise him as to what should be said in the Joint Communique concerning atomic weapons.

4. Shortly after 12 o'clock noon the President withdrew briefly from the meeting and went to his office to discuss with Secretary Acheson, Secretary Lovett, Secretary Snyder, Mr. Harriman, and Mr. Arneson the language to be incorporated in the Joint Communique. During the discussion, Secretary Lovett recalled that the Quebec Agreement had provided that the United States had to obtain United Kingdom consent before using the atomic weapon. Members of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, particularly Senator Vandenberg and Senator Hickenlooper, had been very disturbed at this provision and

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S/AE: R G Arneson

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had urged most strongly that steps be taken to abrogate it. Negotiations were undertaken at the end of 1947 (Mr. Lovett was then Under Secretary of State) to supplant the Quebec Agreement with other arrangements. A salient objective of these negotiations was to terminate the provision concerning United Kingdom consent. The resultant Modus Vivendi of January 7, 1948, provided, among other things, that the commitment concerning use of atomic weapons was to have no further force or effect. As the discussion proceeded, Mr. Arneson drafted the language which was subsequently incorporated in the final Joint Communique of December 8, 1950. The President approved the suggested language and asked Secretary Acheson to secure British acceptance thereof.

5. Secretary Acheson discussed the matter with Sir Oliver Franks and, with British concurrence, these two sentences were inserted as the penultimate paragraph of the Communique. (Tab C). The United States Minutes of the Sixth Meeting state:

"The President then said there were a couple more sentences on which he and the Prime Minister had agreed and which were to be included in the communique. He then read the sentences dealing with the atomic bomb as they appear in the final communique. The President said we should find the proper place to insert them."

6. In the course of subsequent comparison of minutes of the meetings, Mr. Wayne Jackson learned that the British Minutes of the Fifth Meeting included a passage along the lines of the first statement which the President made on the subject. (Tab A). The point was made at that time that this statement should be deleted since the President had corrected it and his correction constituted a change in the record of

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the conference itself. It was pointed out that the United States position on this matter was as reflected in the text of the Joint Communique. (For Ambassador Jessup's note on this point, see Tab D).

7. In subsequent conversations with Mr. F. W. Marten of the British Embassy, Mr. Arneson had occasion to make the same point, namely that the official United States position as agreed by the President and as accepted by Prime Minister Attlee, was set forth in the penultimate paragraph of the Joint Communique--no more and no less.

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USE OF ATOMIC BOMBPresent Position:

The President has made clear (a) that by law only he can authorize its use, and (b) that he has not authorized its use.

The sensational action by the press in dealing with the questions and answers at the President's press conference has given the impression that the President is actively considering use of the bomb in China.

British Position:

That the bomb should not be used without consultation - and probably without agreement - with them and perhaps others. Probably, also, they are strongly opposed to its use in China.

Other Factors:

These are known to the President.

Recommendations for Atlas Discussions:

- (a) That no commitment be made restricting the action of the U.S.
- (b) That our desire not to use the bomb be stressed.
- (c) That our realization of the dire consequences for all of its use be stressed and our great sense of responsibility. We are, indeed, trustees for the future of the world in this respect.
- (d) That our desire and expectation to move in step with the British be stressed. (Their role in this matter requires this.)
- (e) That, if necessary after the preliminary discussions, further consideration of our position be undertaken.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

Excerpt from meeting between the President and Prime Minister in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Thursday, December 7, 1950
(This information not incorporated in official account of meetings.)

The President said he had just talked with the Prime Minister and that they had discussed the atomic bomb and its use. The President reminded Mr. Attlee that the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States had always been partners in this matter and that he would not consider the use of the bomb without consulting with the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister asked whether this agreement should be put in writing, and the President replied no that it would not be in writing, that if a man's word wasn't any good it wasn't made any better by writing it down. The Prime Minister expressed his thanks.


Philip C. Jessup
Ambassador at Large

(This is single copy to be retained by Mr. Battle in the Secretary's office.)

S/A PGJ:eva

December 7, 1950

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By AT NARA Date 6/30/05file tripartiteC O M M U N I Q U E

December 8, 1950

Since Prime Minister Attlee arrived in Washington on December 4, six meetings between the President and Mr. Attlee have been held. Among those who participated as advisors to the President were the Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the Secretary of the Treasury John W. Snyder, the Secretary of Defense General George C. Marshall, the Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman, the Secretary of Commerce Charles Sawyer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Mr. W. Averell Harriman, the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board W. Stuart Symington, and Ambassador-designate Walter S. Gifford. Mr. Attlee's advisors included the British Ambassador, Sir Oliver S. Franks, Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder, Sir Roger Makins and Mr. R. H. Scott of the Foreign Office and Sir Edwin Plowden, Chief of the Economic Planning Staff.

At the conclusion of their conferences, the President and the Prime Minister issued the following joint statement:

We have reviewed together the outstanding problems facing our two countries in international affairs. The objectives of our two nations in foreign policy are the same: to maintain world peace and respect for the rights and interests of all peoples, to promote strength and confidence among the freedom-loving countries of the world, to eliminate the causes of fear, want and discontent, and to advance the democratic way of life.

We first reviewed the changed aspect of world affairs arising from the massive intervention of Chinese communists in Korea. We have discussed the problems of the Far East and the situation as it now presents itself in Europe. We have surveyed the economic problems and the defense programs of our respective countries, and particularly the existing and threatened shortages of raw materials. We have considered the arrangements for the defense of the Atlantic community, and our future course in the United Nations.

The unity of objectives of our two countries underlay all the discussions. There is no difference between us as to the nature of the threat which our countries face or the basic policies which must be pursued to overcome it. We recognize, that many of the problems which we have discussed can only be decided through the procedures of the United Nations or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The peoples of the United States and the United Kingdom will act together with resolution and unity to meet the challenge to peace which recent weeks have made clear to all.

The situation in Korea is one of great gravity and far-reaching consequences. By the end of October, the forces of the United Nations had all but completed the mission set for them by the United Nations "to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area." A free and unified Korea -- the objective which the United Nations has long sought -- was well on the way to being realized. At that point Chinese communist forces entered Korea in large numbers, and on November 27 launched a large-scale attack on the United Nations troops. The United Nations forces have the advantage of superior air power and naval support; but on the ground they are confronted by a heavy numerical superiority.

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The United Nations forces were sent into Korea on the authority and at the recommendation of the United Nations. The United Nations has not changed the mission which it has entrusted to them and the forces of our two countries will continue to discharge their responsibilities.

We were in complete agreement that there can be no thought of appeasement or of rewarding aggression, whether in the Far East or elsewhere. Lasting peace and the future of the United Nations as an instrument for world peace depend upon strong support for resistance against aggression.

For our part we are ready, as we have always been, to seek an end to the hostilities by means of negotiation. The same principles of international conduct should be applied to this situation as are applied, in accordance with our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, to any threat to world peace. Every effort must be made to achieve the purposes of the United Nations in Korea by peaceful means and to find a solution of the Korean problem on the basis of a free and independent Korea. We are confident that the great majority of the United Nations takes the same view. If the Chinese on their side display any evidence of a similar attitude, we are hopeful that the cause of peace can be upheld. If they do not, then it will be for the peoples of the world, acting through the United Nations, to decide how the principles of the Charter can best be maintained. For our part, we declare in advance our firm resolve to uphold them.

We considered two questions regarding China which are already before the United Nations. On the question of the Chinese seat in the United Nations, the two governments differ. The United Kingdom has recognized the Central People's Government and considers that its representatives should occupy China's seat in the United Nations. The United States has opposed and continues to oppose the seating of the Chinese communist representatives in the United Nations. We have discussed our difference of view on this point and are determined to prevent it from interfering with our united effort in support of our common objectives.

On the question of Formosa, we have noted that both Chinese claimants have insisted upon the validity of the Cairo Declaration and have expressed reluctance to have the matter considered by the United Nations. We agreed that the issues should be settled by peaceful means and in such a way as to safeguard the interests of the people of Formosa and the maintenance of peace and security in the Pacific, and that consideration of this question by the United Nations will contribute to these ends.

The free nations of Asia have given strong support to the United Nations and have worked for world peace. Communist aggression in Korea increases the danger to the security and independence of these nations. We reaffirm our intention to continue to help them.

The pressure of communist expansion existed in Europe and elsewhere long before the aggression against Korea, and measures were taken to meet it. The need to strengthen the forces of collective security had already been recognized and action for this purpose is under way. Clearly, decisions regarding the Far East have their repercussions and effects elsewhere. In considering the necessities of the Far Eastern situation, we have kept in mind the urgency of building up the strength of the whole free world. We are in complete agreement on the need for immediate action by all the North Atlantic Treaty countries to intensify their efforts to build up their defenses and to strengthen the Atlantic Community.

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We recognize that adequate defense forces are essential if war is to be prevented.

Accordingly, we have reached the following conclusions:

1. The military capabilities of the United States and the United Kingdom should be increased as rapidly as possible.
2. The two countries should expand the production of arms which can be used by the forces of all the free nations that are joined together in common defense. Together with those other nations the United States and the United Kingdom should continue to work out mutual arrangements by which all will contribute appropriately to the common defense.

We agreed that as soon as the plan now nearing completion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for an effective integrated force for the defense of Europe is approved, a Supreme Commander should be appointed. It is our joint desire that this appointment shall be made soon.

In addition to these decisions on increasing our military strength, we have agreed that the maintenance of healthy civilian economies is of vital importance to the success of our defense efforts. We agreed that, while defense production must be given the highest practicable priority in the case of raw materials whose supply is inadequate, the essential civilian requirements of the free countries must be met so far as practicable. In order to obtain the necessary materials and to devote them as rapidly as possible to these priority purposes, we have agreed to work closely together for the purpose of increasing supplies of raw materials. We have recognized the necessity of international action to assure that basic raw materials are distributed equitably in accordance with defense and essential civilian needs. We discussed certain immediate problems of raw materials shortages and consideration of these specific matters will continue. We are fully conscious of the increasing necessity of preventing materials and items of strategic importance from flowing into the hands of those who might use them against the free world.

In the circumstances which confront us throughout the world our nations have no other choice but, to devote themselves with all vigor to the building up of our defense forces. We shall do this purely as a defensive measure. We believe that the communist leaders of the Soviet Union and China could, if they chose, modify their conduct in such a way as to make these defense preparations unnecessary. We shall do everything that we can, through whatever channels are open to us, to impress this view upon them and to seek a peaceful solution of existing issues.

The President stated that it was his hope that world conditions would never call for the use of the atomic bomb. The President told the Prime Minister that it was also his desire to keep the Prime Minister at all times informed of developments which might bring about a change in the situation.

In this critical period, it is a source of satisfaction to us that the views of our governments on basic problems are so similar. We believe that this identity of aims will enable our governments to carry out their determination to work together to strengthen the unity which has already been achieved among the free nations and to defend those values which are of fundamental importance to the people we represent.

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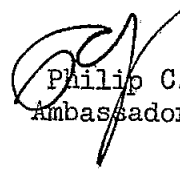
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

January 9, 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

In discussions with the British about the minutes of the Truman-Attlee talks, Mr. Wayne Jackson was informed that in the minutes of the fifth meeting which they have in their own files they have included the first statement made by the President on the subject of the atomic bomb. We argued that the statement should be deleted since the President had corrected it and that his correction constituted a change in the record of the conference itself. They did not accept this argument so far as their file copies were concerned, but in the copy of their minutes which they are exchanging with us this paragraph is deleted.


Philip C. Jessup
Ambassador at Large

S/A PCJ:eva