

**May 12, 1964**

**Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Dean Rusk, UK Foreign Secretary Butler, and French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville, 'Tripartite Discussion of Non-Dissemination'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

In this discussion between Rusk and the British and French Foreign Ministers, the three discuss a proposed British nonproliferation declaration. Rusk had no objection but Couve de Murville found the declaration "patronizing" because it said "in effect that we [nuclear weapons states] are sinners and don't want others to join us in sin."

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May 24, 1964

UNITED STATES DELEGATION  
TO THE  
THIRTY-THIRD MINISTERIAL MEETING  
OF THE  
NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL  
The Hague, Netherlands, May 12-14, 1964

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: May 12, 1964  
Time: 6:00 p.m.  
Place: British  
Embassy

Participants:

United States  
The Secretary of State  
William R. Tyler, Assistant  
Secretary, EUR  
Ronald I. Spiers, EUR/RPM

United Kingdom  
Foreign Secretary Butler  
Lord Hood, Deputy Under-Secretary  
Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh, U.K. PermRep to NATO  
Mr. E. J. W. Barnes, Foreign Office  
Mr. J. N. Henderson, Private Secretary

France  
Foreign Minister Couve de Murville  
Mr. Charles Lucet, Director of Political  
Affairs

Subject: Tripartite discussion of Non-Dissemination

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Before turning to the subject of non-dissemination, the Secretary gave a brief report on developments on Cyprus and said that Ambassador Stevenson was checking with the Turks and Greeks on the possibility of increasing the authority of the UN forces, pursuant to the Greek statement of yesterday.

Mr. Butler said that he would try to bring the Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers together. As the situation now stood, Erkin will probably

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make a violent speech and the Greeks will reply in kind. The Secretary agreed that it would be harmful if the Greeks and Turks' left The Hague without seeing each other. Erkin will probably talk in the restricted session tomorrow, where, since he will not be talking to so large an audience, he may be more moderate.

Mr. Tyler said that a further problem to be faced will be the quadripartite Ambassadorial group reports which Canadian External Affairs Minister Martin and Dutch Foreign Minister Luns asked for in today's session. Both Couve and the Secretary said that it would be better to have these reports made to the Permanent Council. Couve reiterated that something should be included in the communique on this subject. Lord Hood gave the Ministers a report on the afternoon's quadripartite working group session.

The Secretary said that our major concern in this entire matter was the need to look down the road and make sure that we are all together with respect to the consequences of our policies, as well as on the first steps. We were all agreed on the essential point of German reunification as the objective. With respect to the procedural situation, Sir Evelyn said that if the Canadians pressed for a report we should all say that there is nothing yet to report on. The Secretary said he would speak to Paul Martin in order to try to head him off.

Mr. Butler said that he had suggested the meeting for a short discussion about whether progress can be made on non-dissemination. He referred to the U.K. draft which had been given to the US and to France in Washington and Paris. He said it seemed a pity, since we were united on our policies on this question, not to be able to state our position publicly in this form.

The Secretary said the US sees some advantage in clarifying our policy and attitude on this matter, without necessarily getting ourselves in a contractual relationship with the Soviet Union. If the policies of our three countries are all aligned publicly this could be of some value in discussions with other countries (such as Israel) who might be tempted to go down the nuclear trail. Solidarity among the three would tend to discourage others.

Couve said that France had no problem in substance with the British document. If only for selfishness, none of us want to give anything away in this field. It is difficult to say formally however, in effect that we are sinners but we don't want others to join us in sin. He himself was a Puritan. He thought to issue a declaration such as this would be "patronizing." The Secretary noted that there was a difference between old sinners and new ones. The US does not feel the same sensitivity on this subject.

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Couve said that Israel and Egypt were manageable problems. They could be troublesome but did not involve real dangers. There were only two real problems: China and Germany. The Secretary said that China can start off a reaction in India and Japan. Couve agreed that the Indians have the required scientific and technical ability. Nevertheless, we were not going to be able to stop China, but China was not going to be able to go very fast. The Secretary observed that the USSR itself might try to stop China at some stage. Couve agreed that the Soviets must be anxious about this problem.

The Secretary repeated that we would be able to take part in the British declaration. While it does not provide any answers, it does indicate usefully a direction of policy.

Couve wondered whether there had been any recent development in the Soviet position on this question. The Secretary said that he had not talked with the Soviets further since he last saw Couve. Previously he had pressed Dobrynin on the MLF question to determine whether the Soviet objection to the MLF is principally on non-dissemination grounds or whether it is for other reasons. Dobrynin insisted it was solely non-dissemination. The Secretary said if he were Russian, he would take the same view of the MLF in the absence of knowing what the real arrangements would be. We knew that the MLF would not constitute dissemination in the sense of giving individual national governments control over the use of nuclear weapons. When the Russians see the arrangements they may realize that the MLF will be more secure than the present bilateral arrangements. He did not think the Soviets have slammed the door.

The Secretary asked Mr. Butler's views on timing of such a declaration. Mr. Butler said that he had not envisaged releasing it here. Couve said that France would not be able to join in this declaration for the reasons he had cited: It has no practical effect and does not in any way alter the present policies. The Secretary estimated that no one -- other than China -- could object to such a declaration. Couve said that most of the world would not pay any attention to it.

Mr. Butler asked if Couve's objections were principally "Puritan or political." Couve replied, "Everything is political." Mr. Butler asked if the French had ever thought of talking to the Russians on this subject. They would, perhaps, have more influence with the Soviets, since they were not an MLF participant. Couve replied in the negative, observing that the Soviets had the same policy we did on this question and he did not believe that they would give up control over any nuclear weapons. He did not argue in favor of the MLF with any conviction. He does not like the MLF from the standpoint of non-dissemination. The MLF will give people a taste of nuclear weapons. Of course, he would not say this outside this room.

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The Secretary suggested that the U.K. declaration might pin down the fact that there is a "ceiling" on the MLF and serve to reaffirm our policy that it will not involve transfer of control to individual countries.

Mr. Butler suggested that this matter had been carried as far as it could, and that it be discussed further through diplomatic channels. Couve nodded.

The Secretary said that he wished to speak to President Johnson on this question and would subsequently write directly to Butler and Couve regarding our own views on the pros and cons of this matter. He thought a purely bilateral declaration would be undesirable. The entire problem of non-dissemination still concerned us. We were worried about Israel's capabilities and intentions in this field. We were not concerned at this point about Egypt and our technical experts had discounted the recent reports of "fallout rockets." Couve reacted with surprise that we had any concern about Israel.

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