

April 26, 1967

Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Foreign Minister Willie Brandt, 'Non-Proliferation Treaty'

Citation:

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Summary:

During this meeting, Brandt and Rusk discussed the French attitude toward a West German signature on the NPT, the problem of "duration", and suggestions for mitigating the West German concerns. Brandt said that De Gaulle "expected" Bonn to sign but if that de Gaulle was asked for advice, he would recommend that Germany not sign.

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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Approved in S 5/2/67

DATE: April 26, 1967

Time: 10:45 a.m. to
12:30 p.m.

Place: Villa Hammerschmidt,
Bonn, Germany

Part I
Subject: Non-Proliferation Treaty **

File

Participants:

US

Secretary of State Dean Rusk
Ambassador George C. McGhee
Walt Rostow, Special Assistant to the President
William D. Krimer, Interpreter

FRG

Foreign Minister Willie Brandt
Ambassador Knappstein
Theodor v. Gutenberg, Parliamentary State
Secretary, Foreign Office
Conrad Ahlers, Deputy Press Spokesman
Guenther Harkort, Assistant Secretary, Foreign Office
Heinz Weber, Interpreter, Foreign Office

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Following exchange of pleasantries regarding excellent arrangements made by the Germans for the funeral, the Secretary informed Foreign Minister Brandt that Ambassador Foster and Ambassador Roshchin (USSR) had met in Geneva yesterday and that the Soviets apparently were not at this point ready to accept Article III

** In addition to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the following subjects (reported in Bonn's 12850, NODIS, attached) were discussed: monetary reform, the IMF, international liquidity, the Kennedy Round and the world food problem.

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By jc NARA, Date 11-6-13

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of the NPT. Also there were some substantial differences on the interpretation of Articles I and II, with reference to possible European unity arrangements.

To Ambassador Foster's remark that in view of these difficulties perhaps there would be no treaty, Roshchin replied that that might very well be the case. On the other hand, the Secretary personally believed that, given agreement on the central question, all other questions should be capable of solution. In his view, the main problem concerned not so much the NATO powers as other parts of the world; for example, if Israel were to develop nuclear arms, the Arab states would probably do likewise.

Also, if India developed its own nuclear capability Pakistan would feel forced to follow suit. The Secretary thought that in our discussion with Ambassador Knappstein in Washington we had been able to meet most of the points raised by the Federal Republic so that if, in fact, a miracle occurred and the Russians accepted Article III, further progress ought to be possible.

Foreign Minister Brandt replied that British Prime Minister Wilson had jokingly spoken to him yesterday of 52 amendments made by the Americans as a result of German objections. In fact, however, there were only 25. As he had indicated to the Secretary earlier, his government was going to present the NPT case to the German Bundestag tomorrow and would ask the House to understand that there were a number of questions which should not be discussed. His government would once again emphasize the great importance it attached to the idea of non-proliferation and to the further steps toward nuclear disarmament that would be required of the nuclear powers by the Preamble to the NPT. There was a strong feeling in Germany that it would be easier to put the NPT into a broader framework if it were limited to a period of, say, 5 years. This would mean that all participants would be under the obligation to use this time period for the purpose of developing disarmament measures further. He hoped the Secretary knew that when the Federal Republic raised these various questions it was not doing so for the purpose of acquiring national control over nuclear weapons but rather because it was concerned over the effect of the NPT upon the development of the Alliance and upon East-West relations.

The Secretary made one point about the difficulty of attaining real steps toward nuclear disarmament on the part of the nuclear

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powers, arising out of the fact that Communist China and France had not signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and would not sign the NPT. He was sure Foreign Minister Brandt was aware of the efforts we were making to try and engage the Soviet Union in ABM negotiations. This represented a major effort on our part to prevent the nuclear arms race from rising to a higher plateau. How difficult a job it was to achieve nuclear disarmament was clearly indicated as far back as 1946 by the Baruch Plan, when we indicated that we thought even one nuclear power in the world was one too many. Difficulties are encountered in the inspection problem and there was another consideration: effective nuclear disarmament might indeed mean that the defense budgets for conventional arms of various European countries would have to be increased. We did not know if nuclear disarmament was possible, but the Secretary thought that limited steps could be worked out. On the question of the duration of the Treaty he could see the point that a Treaty indefinite as to duration would be affected by any future developments in NATO. From a constitutional point of view, beginning in 1969, NATO members would be permitted to withdraw from the Alliance. There was no reason why a change in the status of the NATO Alliance, which affected its ability to provide for the security of the remaining members, could not be considered to be an Extraordinary Event under the terms of the NPT, making it possible to invoke the withdrawal clause. In his view there was no question that the NPT would bring about certain tensions in NATO, but this situation would be far worse if indeed nuclear proliferation were permitted to occur.

Foreign Minister Brandt said that the President had the other day mentioned the problem he faced at home in maintaining U.S. engagement in Europe. In that connection, Chancellor Kiesinger also had many problems. It was clear that in the Bundestag there was no negative majority against the NPT but there were doubts as to the political framework in which the Treaty was to be incorporated. He appreciated the cooperation of the Department of State and ACDA in trying to resolve German reservations about the NPT, but thought that the question of the duration of the Treaty and also a strengthening or possible revision of the provisions for withdrawal would make it easier for Chancellor Kiesinger to get broader support.

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-4-

Ambassador Knappstein said that many of the reservations about the NPT in Germany had to do with the fact that the German government was being asked to tie its hands on matters which were unknown at this time. For example, suppose eight years from now technological development had reached a stage in which it would become possible to excavate the foundation for a house by means of a small nuclear charge, the feeling was that Germany because of the NPT would be unable to take advantage of such a new technological development. The argument that once the Treaty had expired in, say, five years, everyone would immediately start producing atom bombs was not convincing. In view of the technological uncertainties of the future, people thought that from a certain day on the parties to the Treaty should have a chance to terminate their membership in it just as participants in NATO would be able to leave the Alliance.

The Secretary remarked that it was interesting to note how after 4 years of talking about the NPT, with everyone in the UN and elsewhere heartily in favor of the idea of preventing non-proliferation by a Treaty, suddenly, when prospects for its conclusion had become more immediate, many countries were taking the position that they now needed time for reflection and consideration, that this was serious business, indeed.

Foreign Minister Brandt said somewhat the same feeling prevailed about the question of German unity. Some of his Norwegian friends had asked him if German unity had come any closer to realization; if so, they would have to give it some serious consideration before agreeing to the idea offhand. Supposing the US did manage to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on the NPT; quite apart from the question of duration, he believed that in Geneva we would be confronted by a number of those at the negotiating table with other questions, as well. He understood from the Belgian Foreign Minister yesterday that Belgium would probably reserve the right to issue a declaration to the effect that nuclear powers be required to provide assurances that they too would make efforts toward nuclear disarmament, at the very least, that they not add to their nuclear arsenals.

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-5-

The Secretary said that he did not underestimate the seriousness of the problems faced by other countries with respect to the NPT. For example, he was quite aware of the concern in India and Japan who were faced with Communist China as a nuclear power. On the other hand, if we looked down the other trail, that is, no agreement at all, and five or ten more nuclear countries appeared on the scene, that was a very unpleasant prospect indeed. He asked Mr. Brandt what he thought France's position would be.

Foreign Minister Brandt said that he had talked about this with some people who were very close to General de Gaulle and that it was his impression that although France did not want to sign the Treaty, de Gaulle did expect Germany to do so. If, however, the General were asked for his advice directly, he would undoubtedly advise the Federal Government not to sign. As Foreign Minister Brandt saw the situation, apart from the political problem involved, it was most important that Germany not lose its links with France in EURATOM.

The Secretary asked him to make it quite clear in the Bundestag that as yet there was no agreement in Geneva with the Soviet Union and also to make the point that the present talks represented a major effort on the part of President Johnson to carry through extensive consultations with our allies prior to finalizing a text for the NPT. The Secretary did not think that the Soviet Union's turning down Article III represented its final position and he thought indeed that the difficulties in Articles I and II would perhaps present more of a hurdle to overcome. The Secretary pointed out that we could not avoid public statements on our interpretation of Articles I and II because the NPT would have to be presented at an open Senate hearing and it would be difficult to move ahead if the Soviets disagreed with our interpretation as stated to the Senate.

Foreign Minister Brandt thought that perhaps the problem could be generalized and be discussed not only as a European but as a regional problem. If a United States of Europe did come about then such a grouping would have to organize its nuclear relations with other countries and could make use of the withdrawal clause. This was not his argument but rather Ambassador McGhee's as he understood it from previous conversations with him.

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The Secretary pointed out that any such combination would in any case be nuclear since France and Great Britain would be parties to it. It could be non-nuclear only in the event of nuclear disarmament.

Foreign Minister Brandt thought that this could possibly also become a problem for the U.S. if a United States of North and South America ever came into being.

The Secretary expressed his belief that this was an extremely remote possibility.

Ambassador McGhee remarked that on our side of the Atlantic a possible eventual combination with Canada was much more likely.

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