

UNCLASSIFIED

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December 12, 1962

Dear Maurice:

You will recall our brief conversation, during your last Washington visit, about the non-transfer of nuclear weapons. I got the impression from you that, if our German friends saw no great difficulty, you felt that France might be able to participate in some arrangement on that subject. A recent talk with our colleague Gerhard Schroeder encourages me to take this matter up with you in more precise terms.

From our point of view, there are three main objectives in our mind. The first and dominant element is our desire to throw some obstacles across the path of a Chinese nuclear development if possible. Frankly, I believe the chance that Peiping would agree not to obtain nuclear weapons is a remote one. Nevertheless if the three Western powers and the Soviet Union could propose a general agreement, the Soviets might be able to use the proposal as pressure in Peiping, disagreement between them on the subject could benefit the West, and, as a minimum, Peiping would have to bear the responsibility for no progress. I cannot overemphasize the dismay with which we face the prospect of a Red China armed with nuclear weapons, in light of the impact on the rest of Asia and of our own security responsibilities in the Pacific and Far East. I am quite sure that the Soviets take little comfort from the same prospect.

Our second purpose is to devise a means for diverting the Soviets away from special arrangements with regard to Germany. If we have an offer which is open to them, provided they can obtain Peiping's adherence, we are in a strong position to shrug off any effort to connect

His Excellency
Maurice Couve de Murville,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the French Republic,
Paris.

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non-transfer of nuclear weapons with Berlin or German issues on a discriminatory basis.

Third, we are concerned about the likelihood that more and more nations will develop nuclear weapons during the next decade unless some action is taken to prevent it. I am quite certain that it is in the interest of those possessing nuclear weapons not to have the number expanded if it is possible to prevent it.

I am attaching for your consideration a proposed draft declaration on this subject. Obviously, much turns upon precise understanding of what is meant by the language referring to direct or indirect transfer. I am also enclosing a draft minute of interpretation indicating what would not be prohibited under our language; it seems to me that we must be completely clear on such matters when or if we talk with the Soviets about precise proposals.

Schroeder told me that he thought that if it were quite clear that the adherence of Peiping was a sine qua non to an agreement, he thought the Federal Republic would be able to sign. I do not wish to speak for him, however, because he did not have a specific text in front of him and I am not certain that the matter had been discussed in their Cabinet.

It would be my suggestion that you, Home and I consider the matter since the three of us would be involved in paragraph one of the proposed declaration. If we can agree, we can consult the Germans and then proceed with the Soviet and other governments. Paragraph two would need the adherence of many governments if the declaration is to achieve its purpose. Certainly we would not be interested in a formal agreement which did not include Peiping.

Cordially yours,

Dean Rusk

Attachments