

# Nuclear Weapons Conference, Geneva 1958-61 ; SECCO after Summit Conference ...

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Nuclear Weapons Conference, Geneva

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D. H.'s memorandum transmitted  
to the Secretary of State, U.K., S. Lloyd.

MEMORANDUM

17 April 1958

1. In the discussions during the Spring, it has rightly been taken for granted that the Disarmament Commission must meet in order to honour the decision by the General Assembly. However, Governments have felt free to judge about the date in the light of political developments. Considerations have been heavily influenced by the development of discussions about preparations for the Summit Meeting. However, it has been recognised that the Disarmament Commission must meet before the General Assembly, that it should meet as early as it might be possible without serious political inconvenience, and that, unless weighty political arguments were raised against it, it would be appropriate that it meet before the end of April when, according to the resolution, the Sub-committee had been supposed to report.

2. In Moscow I maintained firmly that, from the point of view of the United Nations, the Sub-committee should meet before the end of April. While recognising that Governments might wish to broaden the field of consideration, I stressed that the Secretary-General, under his terms of reference, in this sense must insist personally on "compliance" with the General Assembly resolution.

3. My impression of the Russian stand is as follows. They are likely to have dropped their suspicions against the motives for a meeting of the Disarmament Commission before the end of April. However, whatever the motives, they fear the consequences in two respects.

a) They would consider some kind of branding of the USSR as responsible for the disarmament deadlock as historically unjustified and harmful for the progress of other efforts;

b) They fear that a substantive discussion in the Disarmament Commission cannot be avoided and that it would interfere with or, at least, complicate other diplomatic efforts to lay a basis for a new approach to the disarmament question.

At the final last, I believe that they would not care much either way if they feel reasonably sure about the progress towards a Summit Meeting.

4. On my return from Moscow and London I took in New York the stand that no initiative should be taken regarding the Disarmament Commission while a reply to the tripartite note was pending. I had the impression that the thinking back of this stand was accepted and understood.

The question has now been raised whether this would not be the proper time for the Disarmament Commission "to live up to" its obligations under the General Assembly resolution. The main argument seems to be that if the Disarmament Commission were not to do that, it would mean that the United Nations accepts the Soviet "veto" on the decision to set up the Disarmament Commission in its new form.

5. My reaction to the question newly raised follows these main lines.

a) The date April 30 - although a time limit set out in the resolution for the work of the Sub-committee which, if possible, should be observed by convening the Disarmament Commission so that it may take stock of the situation - is not of such a character that it has to be observed even if that were to be considered politically unwise; the character of the date is in other words not such that a failure to meet it would lay the United Nations open to the accusation that it bows to a "veto".

b) Although I am fully agreed that at an appropriate date the Disarmament Commission must meet, I consider that the way used for the convening, the time of the convening and the substance of whatever paper the Commission produces are questions requiring the most serious thought in the light of the most recent diplomatic developments. In all these respects priority should be given to the consideration of the relation between a meeting of the Disarmament Commission and the projected meeting of ambassadors in Moscow.

c) With the meeting of ambassadors, an initiative of the Secretary-General intended to provoke a meeting of the Disarmament Commission, would seem quite inappropriate as it would be interpreted in most quarters, both in the East and the West, as a manoeuvre cutting into a procedure started by the four Governments, understandable in the light of the interest to achieve as good results as possible in Moscow and as an effort to draw the question back to the United Nations. A convening of a meeting in the regular form - that is by the Chairman after appropriate consultations - may reduce the strength of these objections.

d) To convene a meeting just now would seem inappropriate. Such an initiative taken before the diplomatic talks had even got started could not but be highly risky, as it would probably force the Western negotiators to devote the first part of their talks to an explanation of why this step had been taken at this particular stage. Were the discussions to get off to a good start, I feel that after some days a meeting might be convened, but that it should then be prepared by the Western negotiators mentioning to the Russians that a meeting would be called, and giving them again the reasons why, while assuring them that there would be no crossing of wires or conflicts of approach. If the diplomatic talks were to get off to a poor start so as to indicate that nothing could come out of this particular effort, it would seem natural to go ahead with a Disarmament Commission meeting as a formality. Under all circumstances it seems obvious that no decision on a Disarmament Commission meeting should be taken until the talks have started and some first experiences had been gathered.

e) As to the substance, two main lines seem to be open. Either the Commission could decide on a progress report, stating that they could not continue because of the absence of the USSR and other Members, or else the Commission could take note of the other activities under way, stating that, in view of those activities, the Commission feels that it should not for the present start a substantial discussion. I am against the

first type of report, as it would be harmful not only at the present stage, but also for later efforts. On the other hand, I have no objection against the latter line which, however, obviously cannot be followed unless and until the diplomatic talks have got going.

5. My immediate practical conclusion in light of the circumstances is, that consideration of the matter should be postponed until some time next week. This is, of course, on the assumption that the diplomatic talks get started at least in the beginning of next week. It also follows from what I have said that I do no longer see any useful purpose in a formal initiative by the Secretary-General provoking a meeting, as it would not facilitate matters to the same extent as it might complicate them at the present juncture. Also in this case the final decision, however, has to stand open until some time next week.