

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989528By AI NARA Date 6/8/05**TOP SECRET**
SECURITY INFORMATIONThis document consists of 3 pagesCopy No. 1 of 3 Series ANATURE OF CONSULTATIONS*Copies 2 & 3
destroyed 8/13/52
jt*

Excerpt from Memorandum of Conversation re U.S.-U.K.
Political-Military Meeting, September 13, 1951

Mr. Matthews said that he would prefer to put our discussion of the problem on the context of the possibility of general war rather than the use of the atom bomb and that we should attempt to bring our viewpoints as close together as possible on what we would do in the event of situations which could be expected to lead to general war. We are just as loathe as the British to contemplate the contingency of general war. There would seem to be every advantage in exploring what is in each other's minds. Clearly there is a deep question of sovereignty involved. We cannot make any commitment not to go to war and know what it might mean to the future of civilization. The thing to do is to keep in close touch as to what each is contemplating. We should keep our thinking as close together as possible. Then the necessary ground work would be laid, and we would have had prior discussion as to what situations or principles were considered to be of a vital nature. Sir Oliver agreed that it might be wise to limit discussion to the subject of general war.

...

Mr. Nitze made three points. These were:

1. That it was not our intention to make any commitment limiting our sovereignty in any way with

TOP SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND 989528

By A/KARA Date 6/8/05

TOP SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

respect to either general war or the use of atomic weapons;

2. That the talks were to be without commitment-- that they would merely be an exchange of views;

3. That we would be under no commitment to talk-- that we would be merely indicating our present intent to talk.

Sir Oliver said that he understood that there should be no formal agreement or treaty, but that he felt that an expression of intent is in a certain sense a commitment. Mr. Nitze said no, and that we wanted to be absolutely clear about this. Expression of present intention should, of course, be an honest expression of such an intent, but that it could in no way be a commitment for the future. Mr. Matthews agreed on the importance of this. General Bradley said we were not prepared to obligate ourselves to consult and there should be no public announcement to the effect that we had. Mr. Nitze said that he thought the thing to do was to start the talks and try to bring our viewpoints as closely as possible together and to set up procedures which would facilitate further appropriate talks. He said that he was troubled by the same point that Sir Oliver had made earlier-- that language was sometimes interpreted differently. If, for instance, the Prime Minister were to say that the United States and United Kingdom had agreed to consult on these matters this

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND 989528By AN NARA Date 6/8/05**TOP SECRET**

-3- SECURITY INFORMATION

language might be subject to misinterpretation both in the United Kingdom and here, and that it was very important that we be clear on this point so that there be no opportunity for language being used which could confuse the situation.

TOP SECRET