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6. REMARKS

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DEFENSE OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND OFFICE OF SECURITY REVIEW

Interview with NO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION FOUND

Earl Attlee

Jun 21, 2017

by Alfred Goldberg

March 19, 1963

- Q. Was there any serious opposition to development of atomic weapons either within the Labor Government or outside of it?
- A. None that I know of. Our right to share in the knowledge of the development and manufacture of the bomb was given away by Winston Churchill at Quebec.
- Q. Did the news of the Russian explosion of an atomic device in 1949 cause an acceleration of the British program?
- A. I don't suppose so. Not as far as I know.
- Q. Was it your view that the atomic bomb served as the major deterrent to Russian expansion after the Czech coup of 1948?
- A. Yes. You may recall that at that time I wanted the whole business of atomic weapons to be handed over to the United Nations.
- Q. Have the original motivations for the creation of nuclear arms and a deterrent bomber force in the United Kingdom disappeared?
- A. Immediately after the war we could not tell what U.S. policy would be. The Administration was very cagey on cooperation with us and at any time U.S.A. might have lapsed into isolationism. So we had to take measures on our own. I don't think that there is any reason now for the maintenance of a deterrent force by this country. The change in this regard has come within the past several years.
- Q. Did the Government decide to undertake the development of atomic energy only after the passage of the McMahon Bill in the United States?
- A. That was one of the factors that made us go ahead on our own. We had not made a definite decision before that.

- Q. Did you take the position in 1945-46 that the U.S. Government should make atomic weapons available to the United Kingdom?
- A. I don't remember discussing that. We wanted a continuation of the war-time cooperation. It was not the Administration that prevented this. It was primarily the Senate.
- Q. Do you feel that the development of the British nuclear deterrent was accomplished at the expense of the British contribution to NATO?
- A. No, it wasn't. We made a full contribution to NATO all of the time.
- Q. What was the British role in conceiving NATO?
- A. At that time there was a threat of all Europe being overrun by the Russians. The original idea of NATO was to hold them in check. Collective security was always the policy of the Labor Government and NATO is a collective security organization. My Foreign Minister, Mr. Bevin, played an important part in getting it started.
- Q. Why was NATO so much more acceptable to the United Kingdom than was a European Defence Community?
- A. They are two entirely different things. NATO exists for just one purpose-- the military defence of the Atlantic Community. The European Defence Community is tied up with the Common Market idea and political ideas too. It would reduce us to being an island off the coast of Europe. It would interfere with our relationship with the Commonwealth and with our whole economic organization and our position in the world.
- Q. What are the basic reasons for NATO's failure to develop conventional forces to meet Soviet aggression?

- A. Who says the forces have been inadequate? One of the troubles in building them up was the failure of the French who were concerned with the North African mess. In practice NATO proved effective against some forms of aggression. The forces were not necessarily inadequate.
- Q. Is it desirable and feasible for NATO to develop and maintain a nuclear deterrent force?
- A. I think the right thing is to have only one integrated nuclear deterrent force under the control of the United Nations. Once we multiply nuclear armaments, we get it more and more in the hands of trigger-happy countries. You can hold a nuclear force as a nuclear deterrent, but you must have forces to deal with smaller things also. It is like a strike weapon. You don't use it every day or it loses its value. We can't use the nuclear deterrent the way we can other forces. There is no reason for the creation of a third nuclear force. I am willing to leave the nuclear deterrent to the United States on behalf of Europe.
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