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*Br. Bases in ME
+ decision
US pressure on Br.*

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

The White House
April 28, 1962
3:30 to 5:15 p.m.

Subject: 1. Britain and Western Defense as a Whole
2. Effect of Colonial Problems on Western Unity

Participants:

U. S.

The President
Under Secretary Ball
Ambassador Bruce
Mr. McGeorge Bundy, White House
Mr. Pierre Salinger, White House
Mr. William R. Tyler, Acting Assistant Secretary of State
Mr. William C. Burdett, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
Mr. Joseph Sweeney, BNA

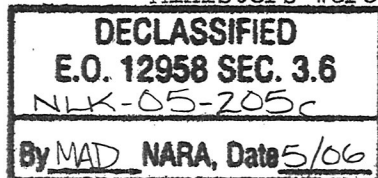
British

Prime Minister Macmillan
Sir Norman Brook, Secretary of the Cabinet
Ambassador Ormsby Gore
Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh, Deputy Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office
Mr. Harold Evans, Public Relations Adviser
Mr. M. A. M. Robb, Information Minister, British Embassy
Mr. John Thompson, First Secretary, British Embassy
Mr. Philip de Zulueta, Private Secretary to Prime Minister

The President said that we were reasonably well-informed on each others position on the question of Britain and Western defense as a whole. The problem was related to the buildup of conventional forces. Mr. Ball said that we had two concerns. First, NATO should be built up but second, there should be no weakening of British forces elsewhere in the world in order to strengthen NATO.

The Prime Minister rejoined with considerable feeling that we could be assured that Britain would not weaken its forces elsewhere in the world for the purpose of strengthening the British army of the Rhine. If they had to go from Singapore it would be because of the anti-colonial drive. If they left from Hong Kong it would be because of the anti-colonial drive. Britain was under great pressure. For example, there were the activities of the Committee of 17. The United States and United States Ministers were attacking Britain for being colonialistic on the one side

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while urging it not to reduce its forces on the other.

The Prime Minister said that if the British could get the Malaysia thing floated this would take care of the Singapore base under a larger concept.

The President stated that he was not aware that we were critical of the pace of British colonial policy. Who was being critical and where?

The Prime Minister said that a vote would be coming soon in the U.N. on the subject of Rhodesia. There was the question of the report of the Committee of 17. Mr. Ball commented that we were in full agreement with British decolonization policy. We thought that it was wise and carried out with much understanding. The Rhodesia problem was most complex. He had seen no evidence critical of British policy.

The Prime Minister referred to the Middle East situation. He said that the base in East Africa supports the base in Aden. If Britain gives up these bases it would have no position in the Middle East. The operation in Kuwait was conducted by using Aden and East Africa. Britain is confronted by a double suggestion. On the one hand it was asked to stay and on the other to leave. The Kenya and Aden base problems were really tricky. It might be possible to cover them by a wider political arrangement.

The President said there was no disposition on the American side to be critical. We thought the British solutions offered hope. He said he wanted to make it very clear that it is not American policy to increase the difficulties decolonization brings. Any statements of that sort are not the voice of the Government.

The Prime Minister said he would like our advice on how to handle the Committee of 17. The demands of the committee were clearly ultra vires. However, the British thought it was wise to try to explain their position. Mr. Ball said we agreed.

The Prime Minister pointed out that Britain had deployed 60 thousand men and was spending 250 million pounds annually east of Suez. These men and expenditures could be put in the BAOR but ^{he} thought this would not be wise. The President asked if all these expenditures were in Sterling. The Prime Minister said it made no difference since Sterling was convertible. One reason he was so anxious to go to all regular forces was the deployment east of Suez. He said it was British policy to keep comparatively small forces in these different locations and to hope that all would not go up at once. Then they could reinforce rapidly. Britain was facing up to the fact that bases are harder to hold and was moving toward mobile forces by the construction of carriers and so forth. He gave the President a chart showing British military dispositions. Ambassador Ormsby-Gore commented that added together the British force in the Middle East was quite formidable.

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