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CABINET.

INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF ATOMIC ENERGY.

MEMORANDUM BY THE PRIME MINISTER.

IN the following aide-mémoire I summarise some of the issues raised by a study of the international control of atomic energy, and set forth, for the approval of my colleagues, the line which I propose to take on this subject in discussion with President Truman and Mr. Mackenzie King.

2. I start with the following general thesis. The advent of the atomic bomb presents us with a new situation, in that there is now a weapon of transcendent power against which there can be no real defence. Its use in war can only lead to mutual destruction and the collapse of civilisation. It is therefore imperative that the powerful nations of the world should plainly recognise this fact, and abandon all out-of-date ideas of power politics which, though they may for a time produce an uneasy equilibrium, are bound in the end to lead to a violent clash of interests, and to war. The only hope for the world is that we should all lay aside our nationalistic ideas, and strive without reservation to bring about an international relationship in which war is entirely ruled out.

3. How are we to deal with the atomic bomb in the light of this general thesis? Is there any special international arrangement which should be made to reinforce our general aim?

4. After much study only one concrete scheme has been put forward. This is as follows :—

“ All Governments should be invited to become parties to a convention pledging them—

- (a) not to use atomic bombs except in accordance with (b) below;
- (b) to join in immediate and complete sanctions against any country making use of the atomic bomb in violation of (a) above. These sanctions to include the use of the atomic bomb by those countries which possess it. The agreement should remain in force indefinitely and sanctions should be taken against any country attempting to denounce it;
- (c) to enter into a full exchange of the basic scientific information relating to the use of atomic energy;
- (d) to institute effective control of the use of atomic energy in their own territory.”

5. This scheme is based on the hypothesis that there is no practicable way of enforcing the prohibition of the manufacture of atomic weapons, or of ensuring their complete control by an international body. A system of inspection, even if it were accepted in principle by the United States and the U.S.S.R., could not be relied upon. All experience suggests that such a system would be a highly dangerous sham, productive of endless suspicion and friction. The argument then runs that in this situation one can only depend on trust reinforced by the certainty of swift retribution if the trust is broken. The trust is expressed in Clause (a) which renounces the use of the bomb. The retribution is expressed in Clause (b).

6. In my opinion this scheme is open to a number of objections—

- (a) The proposal for sanctions against a country using the atomic bomb must be seen in the light of the United Nations plan for sanctions against an aggressor. A general renunciation of the use of this weapon seems to imply war with other weapons, presumably against an aggressor. If, however, the aggressor proved too strong for the Power or Powers enforcing sanctions and one of them *in extremis* resorted to the use of the atomic weapon, the aggressor, however heinous his aggression, becomes entitled to the help of all other nations possessing the weapon. They, thereupon, turn upon the victim.
- (b) Renunciation of the weapon now puts any computation of strengths of rival nations back into the pre-atomic bomb age. The United States is unlikely to accept this in present conditions when power politics seem to be in full vigour.
- (c) Britain is peculiarly vulnerable to attack by atomic bomb owing to her geographical position and her concentration of population. To accept this obligation would be to expose London to annihilation. Could any Government accept such a risk?

(d) At present there is no means of knowing whence has come an atomic bomb or who is the culprit. Thus the effect of certainty of immediate counter-attack is lessened. In atomic warfare, the maxim "thrice is he armed who gets his blow in first" would seem to apply.

7. In my opinion, therefore, the scheme cannot be accepted as it stands. I agree that we must base our arrangements primarily upon mutual trust, and that there must be a deterrent against aggression of all kinds. This can best be achieved by unqualified support for the twelfth point in President Truman's recent statement of American foreign policy, in which he states:—

"We are convinced that the preservation of peace between the nations requires a United Nations Organisation composed of all the peace-loving nations of the world, who are willing jointly to use force if necessary to ensure peace."

8. If the principle thus enunciated by President Truman is universally endorsed, and if the Charter of the United Nations can be made a living thing, then we shall have attained the end which I have stated in my general thesis, and we shall have created the conditions of trust which we all desire. At the same time, there will be the power behind the Charter reinforced with the new weapon, to act as a powerful deterrent against aggression.

9. The suggestion may be made that authority to order the use of the atomic bomb should be specifically vested in the Security Council. There are two grave objections to this. In the first place, there is the veto, which might be brought into play to protect a small aggressor. In the second place, if one of the permanent Members of the Security Council was the aggressor, and applied the veto to prevent action against itself, the Security Council would in effect be broken up, and there would be no power remaining which could constitutionally authorise the use of the bomb against the aggressor. It would therefore be better to make no specific provision about who can authorise the use of the bomb.

10. To sum up, the line which I would propose to take in Washington is as follows:—

- (a) I should state my general thesis, and endeavour to secure whole-hearted support for it from the President.
- (b) I should endorse President Truman's twelfth point, and say that we stand whole-heartedly by the United Nations Organisation.
- (c) I should suggest that no attempt should be made to restrict the development of atomic energy by any country, in view of the impossibility of effective control.
- (d) I should point out that it is essential that atomic weapons should be available to restrain aggression, and I should suggest that the best way of achieving this is not by any special convention, but rather by the determination of all those who develop atomic energy to live up to the principles and purposes of the Charter, and to back up its authority by using their atomic weapons against an aggressor if the occasion arises.

- (e) I should endorse the proposal made by President Truman that there should be a free exchange of fundamental scientific information on atomic energy.
- (f) The question of sharing not only the fundamental scientific knowledge with Russia, but also the practical "know how," has been ventilated. It would appear that the United States is opposed to this. In my view an offer to do this now would not be likely to effect a change of attitude to world problems by the U.S.S.R. It would be regarded rather as a confession of weakness. The establishment of better relations should precede the exchange of technical information. It is, I think, agreed that in a few years U.S.S.R. will be able to produce the bomb. It is during these few years that a real attempt must be made to build a world organisation upon the abandonment of power politics.
- (g) I should suggest that all nations should be pressed to institute effective control of the use of atomic energy in their own territories.

11. There are some supplementary points which I would propose to deal with in Washington, namely:—

(1) I should suggest that the peace treaties to be concluded with Germany and Japan should include a provision prohibiting them from making use of atomic energy in any form. The terms upon which Italy and the other enemy satellites might be allowed to make use of it should be considered.

(2) I should express the hope that the United States Government will be willing to continue in the future the general system of co-operation now existing, and in particular—

- (a) The machinery for the settlement of policy, and for the exchanging of information, set up by the Quebec Agreement.
- (b) The combined control of raw materials in third countries established by the Declaration Trust.

In regard to the latter point, I should take the line that owing to the relative scarcity of uranium and thorium, no arrangements for the pooling of these materials with Russia should be entered into, except in return for some substantial advantage.

(3) I should tell the President that we are naturally interested in the development of atomic energy, both as a means of self-defence, and as a source of industrial power. I should endeavour to regain our freedom by securing a reasonable interpretation if not the abolition of Clause 4 of the Quebec Agreement, which laid it down that the President should specify the terms upon which any post-war commercial advantages were to be dealt with.

C. R. A.

10 Downing Street, S.W. 1,  
5th November, 1945.

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