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To: Director of Information
From: John Vernon

In talking to you about my trip with Dr. Patijn to Washington, Ottawa and New York, you asked me to put on record some of my impressions. As you know, I have sent a report to Dr. Patijn, including a summary of the principal conversations which we had. What follows is therefore strictly personal.

I.

The United States, in the words of Mr. Eugene Rostow, realizes that with regard to Vietnam it has failed to obtain the consensus to the NATO Allies. Mr. Rostow emphasised that in the light of this experience it would be rash to assume that in the future the United States will be able to continue to act alone. He illustrated this point by stating that with regard to the Arab-Israeli war it was out of the question for the United States to take unilateral action.

Mr. Rostow, Prof. Bowie and Mr. Owen, all gave the impression that the State Department would be, at this juncture, receptive to constructive suggestions emanating from Europe and very hopeful that some would be forthcoming from the Study now being undertaken by the Council.

Their own suggestions did not seem to be original. Everything that we heard can be found in Alastair Buchan's pamphlet on "Crisis Management". Buchan is no doubt extremely familiar with the minds of the policy makers in Washington, but the language that we heard suggested that the traffic may be two-way.

II.

Policy planning organs seem to carry considerable weight within the United States Administration. Since United States planning takes place only in Washington, NATO in practice is not in personal and constant contact with it. After the withdrawal of the Military Committee to Brussels, there will be a total absence of international NATO activities in Washington. Might it not be politic, despite expense, to hold some NATO Committee and Working Group meetings in Washington? Without exaggerating the possible effect of this presence upon the United States Administration, it might open up contacts and bit by bit break down the sense of isolation which the American planners seem to be experiencing.

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Mr. Rostow believed NATO to be full of unplumbed possibilities. He doubted however if new ideas would be forthcoming from Civil Servants and thought that people from the universities and elsewhere should be brought in "to break up", as he said, the "club of Permanent Representatives".

These remarks, since NATO is an inter-governmental organisation, struck me as being unrealistic. I mention them only to give an idea of the atmosphere.

III.

In Ottawa, the climate, both moral and meteorological, was less intoxicating. Mr. Peter Dobel and his colleagues agreed with Mr. Rostow that NATO was likely to fail to obtain from Governments the new ideas that it required. This seemed to be the limit of common ground between the two capitals. In the view of Ottawa, NATO's primary concern must be to protect the NATO area and in consequence, at this time, to promote détente in Europe with the Soviet bloc. Any attempt to study let alone harmonise policy towards the world outside the Treaty area was likely; in the Canadian view, to exacerbate friction among the Allies and could therefore lead to a direct threat to the continued existence of NATO. The Canadians exhorted Dr. Patijn to clarify in his report the limitations of NATO consultation with the aim of dissolving expectations.

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With regard to the mood in Washington, the Canadians were prodigal with examples of American invitations to consult which were, they said, in fact invitations to align along the American position.

All this seemed a long way from the 1956 Committee of Three Report, and especially from the Canadian attitude at that date. No doubt, the Canadians are concerned with their peace-keeping role and anxious to preserve an unblemished image at the United Nations.

IV.

In New York, the eight Ambassadors whom we saw all regretted the absence of a Western group in the United Nations. It would seem that any attempt to constitute such a group is bound to fail. The Italian and Netherlands Permanent Representatives, as well as the Observer of the German Federal Republic, went so far as to say that a greater harmonisation of decision in NATO regarding world issues would strengthen the West at the United Nations.

The Ambassadors also thought that NATO Expert Groups when drawing up reports on regions outside the Treaty area should be assisted by someone with a knowledge of the United Nations so that these reports could be phrased in a way useful to missions of member countries in New York.

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