

Briefing Paper for President's Press Conference

March 16, 1960

TEN NATION DISARMAMENT TALKSQUESTION

Mr. President, the five Allied powers submitted to the Ten Nation Disarmament Conference an Allied disarmament program which would, in time, lead to general disarmament. Can you tell us, in the light of this plan, what prospects you see for agreement between East and West?

ANSWER

The program set forth by the Allied powers is a comprehensive and practical two-step program. The first step calls for agreement of measures which would stabilize the existing military environment. The second step sets forth far-reaching measures which would lead to the goal of general disarmament.

It is, of course, too early to determine what progress might be made in these negotiations, but I would say this: The willingness of the Soviet bloc to join in such first-step measures as are set forth in the Allied Plan would be a real indication of its seriousness about arms control. I say this, for the Allied Plan is based on the belief that initially, we must place a cap on the ever-accelerating arms race, stop the further production of nuclear weapons, put a ceiling on armed forces, and stop outer space from becoming a new battlefield. With this accomplished, we believe that our full attention can then be placed on the essential and complex matter of controlling and reducing the vast array of arms in the national arsenals.

In this connection, I would add, that as far as the United States is concerned, we shall leave no stone unturned in our efforts to reach meaningful and safeguarded agreements in these negotiations.

GENEVA TEST TALKSQUESTION

Mr. President, the other day the Democratic Advisory Council released a statement by 17 scientists which said that an enforceable ban on nuclear tests is possible. This seems to run counter to the Administrations present position on this matter. Would you care to comment on this?

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ANSWER

We have never stated that it is impossible to establish an enforceable ban over all nuclear weapons tests. What we have maintained is that within the terms of the Geneva system recommended by the 1958 Conference of Experts, it appears that at this particular time, it is not possible to establish adequate controls over all possible testing environments.

With significant changes in this system--and that is what the statement you referred to suggests--an enforceable total ban is certainly possible. However, the Soviet Union has, throughout the negotiations, insisted that the control system be based on the 1958 findings of the experts.

It is this fact that indicates we should seek a phased approach, and limit the prohibition to the areas in which the Geneva system with such improvements as can be agreed is effective.

