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OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

NOTES FOR THE FILES OF JOHN A. McCONE:

This morning Secretary Dillon and I discussed with the President the release of the public announcement on GNOME project construction. The release was authorized by the President subject to the changes which I am to discuss with General Starbird. Also, the President requested that some of our Allies, most particularly the British, be informed and State is undertaking this immediately and expects to finally clear the announcement later today.

The President then reviewed his philosophy concerning the trend of armaments with their enormous destructive capability. He said that we must find a way to arrest the development of weapons of mass destruction and to ultimately do away with them. This objective seemed paramount in his mind and he related it to a real fear of an ultimate catastrophe to civilization. At no time did he mention the United States or Western security as against the Soviet or Communistic aggression.

The President seemed entirely pre-occupied by the horror of nuclear war and the fact that men in this country and in other countries had created this situation with their own hands and had been unable to cope with the problem of adjusting differences between themselves in such a way that building up and maintaining an enormous power of destruction was thought a necessity.

As he discussed his philosophy he mentioned time and again the necessity of bringing this situation under control and urged that everything possible be done to reach agreement in areas of test suspension, material on weapon production, determination of weapons, etc. as a means of freeing the people of the world from the dreadful fear that now hangs over them.

I then said the practice of people creating armaments for the destruction of one another in war was an old business; in fact, the practice had been carried on throughout civilization. The only difference now was that we had discovered new and more terrible means and, therefore, the ability to destroy was more complete now than it had been in the past. The President recognized this, but then said that in his opinion there is a distinct difference now between the present and the past insofar as in past wars there had always been a victor -- now there would be none as all parties engaged in the war and a large segment of humanity not engaged would be destroyed.

John A. McCone

