

~~SECRET~~Memo of meeting with Messrs. Stettinius,
Atkinson and Forrestal, December 19, 1944
in the Secretary of War's office

We had our first meeting of the revived committee of three -- State, War and Navy -- this morning. Stettinius insisted on having it in my office. I had prepared a little agenda to be ready for it and began by asking him what the general policy of the State Department was in regard to the issues which are taking place in regard to Greece, Poland, and Italy. He was full of the subject and took it right out of my hands. He said that it stemmed out of the Moscow Conference and statement where the three Powers agreed not to do anything contrary to the broad principles of the Atlantic Charter and the Moscow Conference without prior mutual conference. He criticized vigorously Churchill's action in regard to Greece, the Polish boundary, and Sforza in Italy, as being instances of such action without prior consultation. He and Forrestal also referred to the action in regard to the LST's in the Mediterranean asked for by Wilson as such a breach and told me that American transports were being used to carry troops to Greece, which was a similar violation. We all agreed that this was an example of a situation in which the three Secretaries should mutually confer through this Committee.

We discussed the visit of Richard Law. ES told us that Law was coming here for the purpose of presenting the British view on these subjects which he, ES, regarded as involving the possibility of breaches of our American policy. He said he was coming to talk about ships and food which would bear on these things. I told him that I was going to have Law at dinner tonight with McCloy and Feis and that my purpose was to find out what

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Law was coming for and how it affected our Department and for this reason I was very glad to know clearly of the State Department policy beforehand. I asked him whether such a meeting would be objectionable to the State Department and he said "not at all".

We discussed at some length the present chaotic situation which affected the three Departments in their relations together and with the Chiefs of Staff. I called attention particularly to my letter to the President of November 24th in respect to the military mission to Indo China as an instance of that confusion and how that letter had made the President recognize the situation.

We then discussed the committee which had just been set up consisting of Dunn, chairman, McCloy (War) and Bard (Navy) for the purpose of regulating relations with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and all agreed that it was a most useful and necessary step.

We then discussed steps by which we on a higher level could make our own Committee more orderly and useful in dealing with the same and similar problems when they came to us. Both ES and JF suggested that McCloy come in as recorder to keep us in connection with the lower committee and also to act in helping us to formulate and regulate our own agenda. I told them that I would be very glad to have him do so. ES stated that he realized that we were not getting adequate information from the State Department cables and that many cables that he thought we should have were being kept back from us. He proposed to institute a system by which he would brief all the news that came in in such cables and send it over to us for our information. We fully approved of this.

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We also discussed the meagerness of information which we received from the White House relating to military and political matters which were necessary for our proper understanding of the situation. ES was inclined to lay the responsibility upon Admiral Wilson Brown for holding back such news. JF said that Brown was going to be relieved from that position. ES said that the State Department representative at the White House had been inadequate and insufficient and he was now sending Bohlen who he thought would be a very good man to take that place.

The whole meeting was full of pep and energy. My only fear was that they might in some respects be going a little too far and run up against some of the usual snags that I found my course blocked by in the past. But I am very glad that they should be so forward-minded and energetic about it.

After the meeting was over I called in McCloy, told him about it, and I afterwards called in Marshall and told him about it. Marshall was greatly pleased by the possible reorganization of this Committee and thought that it would be a very important counterpart on the higher level for carrying out the new Dunn-McCloy-Bard Committee on the lower level. Marshall emphasized the importance of formalization of the agenda and methods as shown by his own experience in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He thought that the two new committees above mentioned would be a great source of assistance and regularization of the work of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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