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Untitled Read-Out for State Department of Johnson-Wilson Conversation

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Summary:

Account of the first day of the Johnson-Wilson discussions prepared by State Department Executive Secretary Benjamin Read probably on the basis of an account by Secretary of State Rusk.

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Mr. Read wishes to insure that appropriate members of the delegation are aware of the flavor of the private conversation between the President and Prime Minister Wilson. Salient points which emerged from the conversation are:

1. The President is psychologically where former President Kennedy was in the summer of 1963, except for the fact that he now has a European initiative which was previously lacking. In the 7-hour session with his advisers before meeting Wilson, the President's attitude toward the MLF was at times favorable and at times unfavorable; but he has ended up somewhere in between.

2. The President feels he has made no commitment on the MLF. He told Wilson he would be delighted if he were the author of the next major European initiative in this field.

3. The President feels he has made no commitment to present anything to Congress. He is very sensitive about the timing of Congressional consultations and wishes to keep the pace vis-a-vis Congress entirely in his hands.

4. The President does not favor an arrangement which we would have to ram down the throats of our Allies. He is for keeping the door open to the French. On the other hand, he favors deterring Germany from acquiring nuclear weapons and he favors the existence of one less independent nuclear power.

5. The President stressed that it was now up to the British and the Germans to consult and, after consulting with the Germans, the British were at liberty to come back to us for further discussions: i.e., the ball is in the other man's court. He told Wilson that the Germans had to be tied in to an international nuclear arrangement and warned him about German desires for eventually acquiring nuclear weapons. But the President disagreed with the British assessment that the Germans want a finger on the nuclear trigger.

6. The President thought he had succeeded in impressing upon the British the realization that they must accept complete equality with the Germans.

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7. Wilson conceded that contributions to the MLF would not have to be symmetrical. The British have accepted our statement regarding Minutemen--i.e., that they cannot be part of our contribution to the MLF.

8. If the UK and Germany agree that there is no need for a surface fleet, we might be willing to be argued out of it.

9. The President made it very clear that if the Europeans at some point wish to have their own nuclear force without the U. S., the U. S. would withdraw its forces, including SAC, from Europe.

Wilson said he planned to see Erhard after the turn of the year.