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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

EXCISE  
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12 E

Memorandum of Conversation

DEPARTMENT OF STATE: A/CDC/MR.

DATE: December 1, 1960

REVIEWED by EG Kovach DATE 3/13/91

( ) RELEASE (X) DECLASSIFY  
SUBJECT: (X) EXCISE ( ) DECLASSIFY IN PART  
( ) ISNY ( ) Non-responsive info.  
FOI, EG or PA exemptions (b)(6)

PARTICIPANTS: ( ) DOWNGRADE TO ( ) S of ( ) C, OADR  
James Meem, ICA  
Philip J. Farley, S/AE

December 7 1960

COPIES TO: S/S-2<sup>1-2</sup>  
G-3  
RA - Mr. Fessenden - 7  
Embassy Paris - Mr. Isenberg - 1  
Embassy Tel Aviv - 1  
S/AE - (cc 1) 3 - 19 - 20

[ ] came in at Mr. Farley's request to discuss his recent visit to Israel. Mr. Farley said that the Department had received messages indicating that [ ] had made observations concerning sensitive information which he wished to communicate concerning the Israeli project.

[ ] said that the Israeli had been constructing a large installation in the Negeb south of Beersheba and referred to it as a large agricultural experimental station. He was convinced that this was actually a Marcoule-type reactor being constructed with French technical assistance. He gave a number of reasons for this conviction:

1. He was shown a photograph of the installation in our Embassy at Tel Aviv which apparently included a steel containment sphere which would be usable only for a nuclear power reactor. The general characteristics of the installation were those of the Marcoule reactor.
2. In his visit to the Technion at Haifa he had found that it was not practical for him to discuss Israeli personnel

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training plans on the basis of any consistent explanation of Israeli personnel requirements for their program in the next few years. The Israeli had a clear requirement for personnel of specific types which could not be used in any program they would identify. Furthermore, their familiarization program was much more detailed and operational in its nature than was called for by their research activities. A number of trained people had recently been put to work but were not apparent in any known installation.

3. At Rahoboth he visited both the Weizmann institute and a facility called Plant or Laboratory No. 4. It was apparent that the people he talked to had been thoroughly briefed to restrict their discussion within security bounds. Nevertheless, it was apparent that work was under way under way which he was not shown or advised of. One man distressed his guide by mentioning that Plant No. 4 expected to be working with gram quantities of plutonium and curie quantities of polonium in a short time; such material would not come from any existing Israeli facility and presumably would come from either France or the new large reactor. One professor at the Institute told [ ] that he had been shown detailed specifications without explanation as to the facility to which they related and asked to translate and explain the French legends; the specifications were clearly for a nuclear power reactor. (b)(6)
4. There is an existing French-Israeli atomic energy cooperation agreement and many of the key figures in the Israeli program have been trained at Saclay or other French establishments.
5. In his final meeting with Dr. Bergman, Chairman of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission, [ ] taxed him with conducting activities which were not freely discussed. Bergman acknowledged that this was so, particularly with regard to the Beersheba installation, and said that it had originally been intended to make a public statement about a year from now but as a result of the amount of rumors which was now going around it was planned that Ben Gurion would make a statement about three weeks hence (i.e., about two weeks from the date of this memorandum). (b)(6)