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C.M.(47) 4TH CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 1

Confidential Annex

(8th January, 1947 - 10 a.m.)

The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Prime Minister (C.P.(47) 1) covering a revised draft of a statement of policy regarding the transfer of power in India.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that this revised draft had been prepared by the India and Burma Committee in the light of the Cabinet's discussion on 31st December. Since then there had been developments in the political position in India. Congress had decided to accept the interpretation placed by His Majesty's Government on the Cabinet Mission's statement of 16th May; and the Muslim League were now to consider whether, in view of this decision, they would collaborate in the work of the Constituent Assembly. There was therefore no occasion for the immediate issue of the statement for the purpose of overcoming a definite refusal by the Muslim League to co-operate in the framing of a constitution. But, while the Cabinet had felt that the primary object of such a statement would be to force the two Indian Parties to face the realities of the situation, the Viceroy had attached primary importance to the announcement of a definite plan for a phased withdrawal of British authority from India and it was likely that for this purpose he would still wish an early statement to be made. On the method of transferring power in India, however, there was a divergence of view between the Viceroy and the members of the India and Burma Committee. The Viceroy conceived this as a withdrawal, planned on the lines of a military evacuation from hostile territory; and it was on this account that he had attached such great importance to his original plan of withdrawing Province by Province. The India and Burma Committee, on the other hand, considered that our aim should be to secure a friendly transfer of power from British to Indian authorities, with an increasing acquiescence by the Viceroy and British officials in the wishes of the Indian Governments. It was even probable that, if discussions could be opened on a friendly basis about the means of transferring power, we should be asked to give continuing assistance in various forms to the Indian Governments. If, however, the whole process was viewed as a military operation of withdrawal, it was possible that these questions would never be
discussed in a friendly spirit with the Indian Governments and that an atmosphere of hostility would be created from the outset. The difference between Ministers and the Viceroy was, fundamentally, one of approach; and it seemed unlikely that the Viceroy's attitude could be changed by means of instructions conveyed by telegram. It would be preferable that he should be asked to return to London for further personal talks with Ministers.

In discussion there was general agreement with the views expressed by the Prime Minister. It was important that the senior European officers in the Indian Service should also understand the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the forthcoming transfer of power in India; and efforts must be made, through the Viceroy, to ensure that they approached this difficult task in the proper spirit. Similar considerations applied to European officers of the Indian Army; and the earliest possible opportunity should be taken of discussing with Indian leaders who would in future be responsible for the control of the Indian Army the basis on which the Commander-in-Chief and some senior European officers might be expected to continue to serve after the transfer of power. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said that, from his point of view, it was most important that all possible efforts should be made to hold the Indian Army together and to make adequate provision for the future defence of India.

In further discussion the following points were also made:

(a) THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS recalled that at their discussion on 31st December the Cabinet had agreed that Dominion Governments should be informed of our intentions in this matter at the earliest possible stage. As it was not now intended to make the proposed statement of policy at an early date, he doubted whether it would be wise to communicate the text to Dominion Governments at the present time. He would, however, wish to give them some general information about our intentions.

(b) It was agreed that the final sentence of paragraph 14 of the draft statement annexed to C.P.(h-7) 1 should be deleted. It was further agreed that in the preceding sentence of this paragraph the emphasis on British interests in the development of Indian industry was open to misrepresentation, and that the sentence should be redrafted so as to lay greater emphasis on the fact that the commercial connection between the United Kingdom and India had been, and would continue to be, of mutual advantage to both countries.

The Cabinet—

(1) Agreed that the issue of the statement of policy annexed to C.P.(h-7) 1 should be deferred for the time being;

(2) Approved the amendments of the draft statement noted in paragraph (b) above; and asked that Ministers wishing to suggest any further amendments of drafting should communicate their suggestions to the Prime Minister;
(3) Took note that the Prime Minister, in consultation with the Secretary of State for India, would arrange for the Viceroy to return to London for further discussions with Ministers;

(4) Took note that the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs would consult the Prime Minister about the nature of the general information to be communicated to Dominion Governments at the present stage about our intentions regarding the transfer of power in India.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.
PALESTINE

(Previous Reference:
C.M.(45) 101st Conclusions, Minute 2)

Military Implications of Future Policy

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it might become necessary to impose in Palestine a solution which would be actively resisted by one or both of the two communities there. He asked for the views of the Chiefs of Staff on the question whether law and order could be preserved in Palestine in such circumstances.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that, if there were active opposition from either Jews or Arabs alone, the situation could be handled with the military forces now available in Palestine. If there were active opposition from both communities, the situation could not be handled without military reinforcements. He would propose that these should be provided at the expense of our forces of occupation in Germany; and he considered that this could in the last resort be done without retarding the demobilisation scheme.

THE PRIME MINISTER then asked for the views of the Chiefs of Staff on the strategic importance of Palestine as a factor in the defence of the British Commonwealth.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that it was the considered view of the Chiefs of Staff that there were three cardinal requirements for the future defence of the British Commonwealth - (i) the defence of the United Kingdom and its development as a base for an offensive; (ii) the maintenance of our sea communications; and (iii) the retention of our existing position and influence in the Middle East. These were the three vital props of our defensive position: they were all inter-dependent and if any one were lost the whole structure would be imperilled. Further, these were the fundamental principles of our defensive strategy. They would be unaffected by any technical changes in the nature and use of weapons. Equally, they remained unaffected whatever assumption was made about the potential enemy.
It was essential to our defence that we should be able to fight from the Middle East in war. It followed that we must maintain our foothold there in peace, for without that we should be unable to develop with sufficient speed a strong military position there in war. This did not mean that large forces must be stationed there in peace: we must, however, retain there bases and other facilities which, though lightly manned in peace, could be used for the rapid deployment of greater forces against a threat of war. The importance of our ability to move forces rapidly to check a threat of aggression had been strikingly demonstrated by the recent despatch of a force to Basra. In future we should not be able to use India as a base for such deployment of force: it was the more essential, therefore, that we should retain other bases in the Middle East for this purpose.

Palestine was of special importance in this general scheme of defence. In war, Egypt would be our key position in the Middle East; and it was necessary that we should hold Palestine as a screen for the defence of Egypt. In peace, since we had undertaken to withdraw from Egypt, we must be able to use Palestine as a base for the mobile reserve of troops which must be kept ready to meet any emergency throughout the Middle East.

In reply to specific questions put to him by Ministers, THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF made the following further statements:

(a) The facilities afforded by our Treaty of Alliance with Transjordan would not alone suffice to meet our military requirements in this area. It would be necessary to retain those facilities even though we secured full military facilities throughout Palestine.

(b) If Palestine were divided into an Arab State, a Jewish State and a Jerusalem Enclave under British administration, the military facilities required by the Chiefs of Staff could not be secured within the Jerusalem Enclave alone. Nor would it be sufficient to secure military facilities from either the Arab or the Jewish State: it would be necessary, in order to secure full use of the ports, airfields and communications, to obtain military facilities by treaty arrangements with both States.

(c) So long as the necessary military facilities were obtained throughout Palestine, it was immaterial from the military angle whether Palestine was divided into two independent States or became a single independent State.
(d) The military situation would, of course, be greatly eased if a political solution could be found which was acceptable to both communities and brought to an end the existing state of tension in Palestine. If, however, one of the two communities had to be antagonised, it was preferable, from the purely military angle, that a solution should be found which did not involve the continuing hostility of the Arabs; for in that event our difficulties would not be confined to Palestine but would extend throughout the whole of the Middle East.

(e) The strategic policy for the Middle East outlined on behalf of the Chiefs of Staff was not wholly dependent on preserving the friendship of Spain, Italy, Greece and other countries bordering the northern seaboard of the Mediterranean. Our line of communication through the Mediterranean would still be of substantial value to us, even though some of these countries were hostile, provided that the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean were not also hostile.

THE PRIME MINISTER thanked the Chiefs of Staff for this expression of their views on the strategic importance of Palestine and of our position in the Middle East.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

PALESTINE

The Cabinet had before them two memoranda by the Foreign Secretary:

C.P.(47) 28: on the question whether it would be legally possible for His Majesty's Government to impose a solution of the Palestine problem, either by way of Partition or by the introduction of a system of Provincial Autonomy, without first obtaining the sanction of the United Nations.

C.P.(47) 30: reviewing three alternative policies for Palestine and discussing the line to be taken on the resumption of the Palestine Conference.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY explained that the first of these memoranda had been prepared by the legal advisers of the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office and that both the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney-General were in agreement with the conclusions reached. These were that, before putting into effect a Partition solution, we should be legally obliged to obtain the approval of the United Nations; that we should not, from the strictly legal point of view, be obliged to obtain such previous approval for the introduction of the Provincial Autonomy plan; but that it would be politically inexpedient to attempt to introduce either solution without first bringing the matter before the United Nations.

The Colonial Office had not been consulted in the preparation of the second memorandum. The Foreign Secretary said that he was sorry that he had not been able to find time for such consultation; and he also apologised to his colleagues for circulating this paper on the morning of the Cabinet's meeting. He had thought, however, that it might assist the Cabinet in their discussion to have before them a paper which focussed, as this was designed to do, the main issues for discussion.
The Foreign Secretary recalled the various stages in the consideration of the Palestine problem since the latter part of the late war. The Coalition Government had then favoured Partition as a solution; and it was possible that this might have been carried into effect without great difficulty if it had been imposed shortly before the end of the war. This opportunity had, however, been lost. When the present Government assumed office, their first endeavour had been to break away from the terms of the White Paper of 1939. They had sought Arab acquiescence in the continuance of Jewish immigration at the rate of 1,500 a month; and they had aimed to get the Palestine problem reviewed afresh against the background of Jewish sufferings in Europe. At that time there was reason to believe that the Jews would have been content with immigration at the rate of 4,000 a month. This policy was making some progress when President Truman intervened with his demand for the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews to Palestine. This encouraged Jewish ambitions and led to the appointment of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry. When that Committee reported, His Majesty's Government had been ready to give sympathetic consideration to its recommendations, if they were taken as a whole; but they had found it necessary to stand firm against President Truman's desire that immediate effect should be given to the recommendation in favour of the admission of 100,000 Jews to Palestine in advance of full consideration of the remaining recommendations of the report. Thus, the approaches which His Majesty's Government had originally made towards a solution of this problem had been deflected by President Truman's intervention. The position had also been made more difficult by the decision of the Labour Party, at their Annual Conference, to endorse the Zionist demand for the creation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine. We had now to contend with the further complication that we must find a solution which was likely to be endorsed by the United Nations. Even if we did not ourselves think it necessary to seek the approval of the United Nations, he had no doubt that the matter would be referred to the United Nations by some Government which disliked the solution which we adopted. It was his opinion that a solution by way of Partition would not command the support of a two-thirds majority in the United Nations. If we advocated Partition, we were likely to find ourselves with no effective support except from the United States. As against such a solution, the Arab States would advocate their plan for an independent unitary State, which they would defend as being in accordance with established democratic principles; and it was his view, based on his practical experience of discussions in the Assembly, that there would be a wide measure of support for the fundamental principles to which the Arabs would
appeal in support of their plan. On the other hand, he believed that there was a reasonable prospect of securing majority support in the United Nations for a solution on the general lines of the Provincial Autonomy plan, especially if it could be adjusted to meet some of the objections which had been raised against it by both Arabs and Jews.

If we attempted to impose a solution, in pursuance of our powers as Mandatory, without reference to the United Nations, there would be widespread disorder in Palestine. One or other of the interested Governments would regard this as constituting a "situation" endangering world peace and would bring the matter before the Security Council. This would create for us difficulties even greater than those which we should have to meet if we ourselves brought the problem before the General Assembly.

He had at one stage hoped that a solution might be found on the basis of a "transitional period" during which Palestine would remain, under Mandate, as a bi-national unitary State but provision would be made that either of two provinces (Arab and Jewish) would have a right of secession after a fixed period of years. He had believed that, if such a system could be established, the two communities might during the transition period come to see the advantages of collaboration and that pressure for the creation of a separate Jewish State would subside. He was told, however, that the lack of finality in this solution would result in continuing disorder, to an extent which might cause a breakdown of our administration in Palestine. Nevertheless, he would still like to explore the possibilities of such a solution when the Palestine Conference was resumed.

There was no doubt that the situation would be eased if other countries could be persuaded to admit a number of Jewish immigrants from Europe. He had for some time been pressing the United States Administration to make such a gesture; and he was glad to see that President Truman had now included in his Message to Congress a proposal for a special immigration quota for displaced persons, including Jews. H.M. Ambassador in Washington had been asked to enquire how soon Congress might be expected to pass the necessary legislation. It would be most helpful if this lead could be followed by other countries, including the British Dominions. Hitherto we had had no success in the efforts which we had made to persuade Dominion Governments to accept a proportion of these refugees.

In conclusion, the Foreign Secretary said that he did not expect the Cabinet at their present meeting to reach final conclusions on this difficult issue. He would, however, be glad to have the advantage of hearing the views of his colleagues.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that he would like more time to consider the proposals in the Foreign Secretary's latest memorandum (C.P. (47) 20).

He informed the Cabinet of negotiations which had taken place with the Jewish Agency since the Zionist Congress at Basle. The Congress had decided that the Executive of the Jewish Agency should not take part in the London Conference unless "a change should take place in the situation". Mr. Ben Gurion, when he had subsequently visited London, had pressed that His Majesty's Government should take some action, for instance as to the rate of immigration to Palestine, which would constitute a change in the situation. He had told Mr. Ben Gurion that no fresh policy could be announced before the Conference, but he had succeeded in arranging with him that the responsible members of the Executive would in fact assemble privately in London at the time of the Conference, so that they would be available for informal discussions while it was going on.

The Colonial Secretary said that representatives sent by the Palestine Arab Higher Committee would attend the Conference. This was satisfactory, though the persons chosen were not as widely representative or as suitable personally as might have been hoped.

The High Commissioner for Palestine was anxious that the Government should realise the urgency of finding a solution; the administration and the military forces in Palestine were working under great strain and early action to relieve this was, in his view, essential. The High Commissioner's own opinion was that, despite the difficulties involved by the need for obtaining the approval of the United Nations, some form of partition provided the only practicable solution.

The Secretary of State said that he himself was more and more inclined to share this view, which he felt sure would also command more general acceptance in this country than any other solution. He appreciated that there would be difficulties in the United Nations, but these would also arise over any other possible solution. If the scheme were not accepted by the Assembly, the responsibility would then be on the Assembly to find a better solution.

He himself could see no solution on the lines of the Arab plan for a unitary State, for illegal immigration of Jews would continue and the present state of tension would be perpetuated; and we should still remain responsible for law and order.
Nor did he favour the plan for Provincial Autonomy. The Jews would not accept as satisfactory any scheme which did not provide for a Jewish national State, whose nationals would have a Jewish nationality. He would circulate to the Cabinet a memorandum setting out other difficulties which the High Commissioner saw in this scheme.

As regards Partition much would depend on the boundaries drawn and on the size of the areas given to the two communities.

The Cabinet first considered whether a solution on the lines of Partition was likely to command the support of a two-thirds majority of the United Nations.

It was explained that the Charter itself did not provide that a two-thirds majority should be required for an issue of this kind. It was, however, open to any member State to propose that an important issue should be determined by a two-thirds majority, and this proposal was certain to be made in respect of the Palestine issue. While it was true that for this point of procedure only a simple majority was required, it would always be difficult to secure even a simple majority against a proposal that an important issue should be decided by a two-thirds majority.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said that the Arab States would certainly oppose Partition; and he believed that the Soviet Government and the Slav group would also oppose it, partly because of a desire to support the Arabs against us, and partly because they would expect us, in the event of Partition, to secure military facilities by Treaty with the two independent States. It was unlikely that the United States would be able to secure the support of China for a Partition solution; and India was also likely to vote against it. In these circumstances he saw no prospect of obtaining a two-thirds majority in favour of Partition.

In discussion the view was expressed that, if the Soviet Government must be expected to vote against Partition for the second reason given by the Foreign Secretary, there could be no assurance that they would support the alternative of Provincial Autonomy. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY thought, however, that in certain circumstances the Arab States might support such a solution and that some of the Slav States might also be persuaded to support it.
The view was also expressed, in discussion, that if all the arguments in favour of Partition were set forth in the discussions at the Assembly, and the disadvantages of the alternative courses were fully explained, the possibility could not be wholly excluded that, by a combination of skilful debating and tactical manoeuvring of the interested States, the necessary majority in support of this solution could be obtained.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer stressed the urgency of finding some early solution which would terminate the existing conditions of disorder in Palestine. He suggested that the Cabinet should first consider what was the best solution on the merits and should then discuss separately the practical prospects of carrying that solution into effect. His own view was that, on the merits, the best solution was Partition. Events had shown that Jews and Arabs could not, and would not, work together in Palestine. It was also clear that the Zionists were determined to insist on the right of Jews to enter as immigrants, subject only to the control of a purely Jewish authority, some purely Jewish area in Palestine, however small it might be. That determination in effect ruled out all solutions other than Partition. If the Cabinet were agreed that Partition was the right solution, he could not believe it impossible to find ways and means of carrying that solution into effect.

The Minister of Health endorsed the views expressed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was essential that an early solution should be found. If it were not, the consequences would be continuing disorder in Palestine, which we should be called upon to repress by force, and a general outbreak of anti-Semitism. This was a situation which this Government could not contemplate. He considered that Partition was the right solution; and he could not believe that it would be rejected by the United Nations if it were supported by the United Kingdom and the British Dominions, by the United States, and, as seemed probable, by some at least of the Governments of Western Europe. At the moment responsible Jews were ready to accept Partition as a solution. This, therefore, was the moment at which to put it forward. For it must be remembered that, for the Jews, Partition was a compromised solution; and that, because of the delays which had occurred in dealing with this problem, Jewish leadership was already passing into less moderate hands. If we failed to seize this opportunity, it was likely that the leadership of the Jews would pass to men who would advocate more extreme solutions and more violent courses.
The Minister also challenged the view that, from the angle of our strategic interest, it must be our objective to avoid estranging the Arab States. In his view, a friendly Jewish State in Palestine would give us a safer military base than any we should find in an Arab State. The Jews were under the continuing influence of countries friendly to ourselves. If, however, India and other Muslim countries passed under Russian influence, for how long could we expect to retain a secure military base in Arab Palestine?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE said that he too would favour Partition as a solution if it were possible to get both Arabs and Jews to accept it. He differed, however, from the Minister of Health on the strategic issues involved. If it came to a choice between antagonising Arabs or Jews, he thought there could be no doubt that from the point of view of our own strategic interest it would be more disadvantageous to us to incur the continuing hostility of the Arab States. For in that event the Soviet Government would undoubtedly support them, with the intention of undermining the position of the British Commonwealth and the United States in the Persian Gulf area. He thought it most important that, throughout their discussions, the Cabinet should keep in mind that it was to the strategic advantage of Russia to win the Arabs over to their side. Our first task must be to try to find a solution which would do justice to both Arabs and Jews. If, however, that proved impossible we should look to our own strategic interests; and from that angle there could be no doubt that it was vital to us to retain the goodwill of the Arab world.

THE MINISTER OF FUEL AND POWER said that it was also important that we should not follow a course of action which would alienate the United States. They too had important interests at stake in the Middle East; and it had been our policy to try to induce them to shoulder increased responsibilities, together with us, in that area. Their support would, however, be given to a solution by way of Partition.

For his part, he had always hoped in the past that the Jews in Palestine would follow a policy of assimilation. No progress had been made, however, in that direction; and it was now quite clear that the Jews were determined to secure a political State, however small, of their own. To attempt to establish, against that determination, a unitary State in Palestine which provided no outlet for the aspirations of Zionism could only result in continued and increasing disorders in Palestine which would bring great
discredit on the Mandatory Power. His conclusion was, therefore, that His Majesty's Government should advocate Partition and should strive to get that solution endorsed by the United Nations.

The Cabinet —

Agreed to resume their discussion at a later meeting.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.
The Cabinet resumed their discussion of the line to be taken on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the Palestine Conference and in the informal conversations which were to be held at the same time with Jewish representatives.

They had before them two memoranda by the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

- C.P.(47) 31: giving the comments of the High Commissioner for Palestine on the plan for Provincial Autonomy;
- C.P.(47) 32: giving the views of the Secretary of State on the relative merits of the four main solutions which had been put forward, and suggesting that the aim of our Delegates, in the forthcoming discussions, should be to explore with both parties the various possibilities, explain the difficulties which each presented, and try to lead them in the direction of a reasonable scheme of Partition as being the best and most equitable solution.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said that he had considered very carefully, in the light of the Cabinet's discussion on 15th January, how he should handle the forthcoming discussions with representatives of the Arabs and the Jews. He himself was not opposed in principle to a solution by way of Partition; but he was impressed by the difficulty of imposing any solution against the active opposition of either community in Palestine. If it came to the point of using force against the Arabs, he was not sure how this would be accepted by public opinion in this country. And he was certain that such action would create a "situation" in Palestine which would be brought to the notice of the Security Council as likely to endanger world peace. He considered, therefore, that a further effort should be made by negotiation to bring the two parties somewhat nearer together. If this attempt failed the question would have to be brought in some form
before the United Nations. He hoped, however, that the Cabinet would not attempt to decide, before the negotiations began, what recommendation they would make to the United Nations if they failed in this last attempt to secure an agreed settlement. And he thought it would be a mistake for the Cabinet to commit themselves to support of any particular solution before Ministers entered upon the negotiations.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY agreed that the Cabinet should not now be asked to decide what policy should be followed if the conversations broke down. He hoped that the Cabinet would leave the negotiators as much latitude as possible. Their object should be to move both the Jews and the Arabs from their present irreconcilable positions, in the hope that as a result there would emerge some conclusion which we could put forward with some hope that it would not be wholly unacceptable to either of the two parties.

He himself felt that such a solution must be along the lines of Partition. He could not see any prospect of agreement on any other line. It had been argued that Partition could not give a viable State to both Jew and Arab, but he was not convinced of this. There should be no great difficulty in making the Jewish share reasonably viable, while the Arab share might become viable if it were linked with Trans-Jordan. It had also been argued that Partition would alienate the Arab world. He was not convinced that this would necessarily follow. The Arab States were bound to us by economic and strategic interests; and, while some Arab countries would no doubt oppose Partition, he was by no means certain that they would all be united in that policy for long. Trans-Jordan, for instance, might favour Partition, since she stood herself to gain from it, while there were some indications that Ibn Saud might not be wholly opposed to it.

THE MINISTER OF FUEL AND POWER said that he was in favour of Partition. This policy would, among other things, have the advantage that it would be acceptable to the United States. If it was necessary to choose between the friendship of the Jews and of the Arab world, he felt that on a long view the friendship of the Jews was more valuable to us than that of the Arabs. Recent experiences in Egypt and India should warn us that, if a unitary State with an Arab majority were established in Palestine, it would not necessarily remain friendly towards us or willing to allow us to maintain a strategic base in Palestine.

In subsequent discussion Ministers agreed that, failing an agreed settlement, any solution of this problem would have to come before the United Nations. The General Assembly was not due to meet until September; and, although a special meeting could no doubt be called earlier, the atmosphere would probably be more favourable at the September meeting. On the other hand, if the forthcoming discussions produced no agreement, it was doubtful whether the internal situation in Palestine could be held until September.
Discussion in the United Nations, whether at the General Assembly or in the Trusteeship Council, was bound to be embarrassing. There would be much discussion of the various promises that had been made on behalf of His Majesty's Government, not all of which were easy to reconcile with one another, and critics would dwell on the long history of our failure to find a solution of the problem by ourselves. Some Ministers felt that, if we were unable to secure an agreed settlement, there would be much to be said for leaving it to the United Nations to find a solution. On the other hand, we could not lightly take such a course, which might mean that we should be unable to secure the military facilities in Palestine which were necessary to our strategic position in the Middle East.

As regards oil supplies, the two ports at which the pipe-lines terminated or would terminate were Haifa and Gaza. According to the Jewish idea of Partition, both would be in the Jewish area, though it might be arranged that Gaza should be in the Arab area. For the use of Middle East oil, however, we depended, not only on the security of the ports where the pipe-lines terminated, but on the friendship of the countries in which oil was produced and through which the pipe-lines passed. Apart from Persia, all these countries were Arab countries.

The Cabinet's conclusion was that it would be a mistake to decide at this stage what policy should be followed if the forthcoming conversations broke down. During the conversations, Ministers should try their utmost to move the two parties from their present irreconcilable positions. The Cabinet should be kept informed of the progress of the discussions; and they should, in particular, be consulted further before any indication was given to either Arabs or Jews that His Majesty's Government would be prepared to support any particular solution of the problem.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.
INDIA

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Constitutional Position

(Previous Reference: C.M.(47) 4th Conclusions, Minute 1)

THE PRIME MINISTER recalled that at their meeting on 8th January the Cabinet had agreed to defer for the time being the issue of the proposed statement of policy declaring the Government's intention to transfer power in India in the course of 1948. He had been keeping a close watch on the development of the constitutional position in India, in consultation with members of the India and Burma Committee; and they were satisfied that the time had now come to make a final effort, by the issue of this statement, to compel the two political parties in India to face the realities of the situation and collaborate in framing a new constitution. They therefore recommended that the statement should be issued in the course of the following week.

Various changes of wording had been made in the draft statement which had previously been considered by the Cabinet (C.P.(47) 1). These were of minor importance only. There was, however, one change of substance which required the approval of the Cabinet, viz. that the date to be given for the transfer of power in India should be "June 1948" rather than "the middle of 1948". He was satisfied that the statement would not be fully effective unless a definite date were given.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA said that, while he concurred in this recommendation, he thought it right to warn the Cabinet that it might not be possible for the transfer of power to be effected smoothly by June, 1948. Even though the work of the Constituent Assembly proceeded without further delay, it might well be that by June, 1948 there would be no Central Government to which power could be transferred.

It was the view of the Cabinet that this consideration did not outweigh the advantages, for the purposes of the present statement, of
specifying a definite date. It would do no harm if in the event the date had to be postponed because the Indians themselves were not ready to accept the transfer of power.

The Cabinet —

(1) Agreed that the proposed statement of policy should indicate the Government's intention to transfer power in India in June, 1948.

(2) Authorised the Prime Minister to arrange for the statement to be made in both Houses of Parliament in the course of the following week.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.
THE PRIME MINISTER recalled that at the Cabinet's meeting on 7th November he had undertaken to make further enquiries about the arrangements for celebrating the twenty-first birthday of Princess Elizabeth.

When this matter had been mentioned previously, the Cabinet had been under the impression that Princess Elizabeth could be regarded as having come of age on her eighteenth birthday, by virtue of the Regency Act, 1943, and that on this account it would be inappropriate to take formal cognisance of her twenty-first birthday. He was now advised, however, that the Act of 1943 merely enabled the heir apparent or presumptive to act as a Counsellor of State from age 18 and did not alter the fact that the heir to the Throne, like any other subject, did not become of full age until 21.

The Prime Minister added that he had been unable to find any precedent for any formal recognition, either by Parliament or by the Government, of the coming of age of the heir to the Throne. He raised the matter again, however, because he understood that the South African Government were proposing to make a present to Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her twenty-first birthday.
A short discussion followed, from which it appeared that it was the view of the Cabinet that the Government should not establish a new precedent by taking any formal act in recognition of Princess Elizabeth's coming of age. It followed that there should be no resolution by Parliament nor any present from His Majesty's Government. This need not, however, preclude the Prime Minister from sending a telegram conveying the Government's congratulations to Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her twenty-first birthday.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1.
C.M. (47) 23RD CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 1

Confidential Annex

(18th February, 1947 - 11 a.m.)

THE PRIME MINISTER recalled that at their meeting on 13th February the Cabinet had agreed that he should make at an early date the proposed statement of policy declaring the Government's intention to transfer power in India by June, 1948; and he had arranged that this statement should be made to Parliament on Thursday, 20th February. During the last two days, however, representations had been received from the Viceroy urging that the Government should not at this stage make any declaration of their intention to transfer power by a specified date. The Viceroy suggested instead an alternative plan under which British authority would be progressively withdrawn in India, the Secretary of State Services being first withdrawn and the British troops thereafter, and the Governors of the Provinces would be placed in a position comparable to that of Governors-General in Dominions. This plan contemplated that an announcement should be made in June, 1947, that power would be finally transferred to Indian hands at the end of 1948.

The Viceroy's representations had been considered by the India and Burma Committee, who were satisfied that his alternative plan was impracticable. It would necessitate a new interim constitution for India during the period in which British power was being withdrawn, and it took no account of the Parliamentary and legislative difficulties which such a proposal would involve in this country. Moreover, it assumed that the Interim Government could be informed in confidence of the date proposed for the ultimate transfer of power; and the Committee were satisfied that, once this partial disclosure had been made, rumours of the impending British withdrawal were likely to spread throughout India.

Quite apart, however, from the impracticability of the Viceroy's alternative plan, the most disturbing element in the situation was the complete change in his attitude towards the announcement of a definite date for the transfer of power. This had been the essential feature of the proposals which he had originally submitted to Ministers in December, 1946; and, although Ministers had felt unable to accept his plan in the form in which it was then put forward, the whole of the policy evolved in their discussions had been built round this central proposal for the early announcement of a definite date for the transfer of power. Throughout these conversations the Viceroy
had been insistent on the need for such an announcement, and he had assured Ministers that this view was supported by the Commander-in-Chief, the Governors of the Provinces and his official advisers. He had then given it as his considered opinion that we should not in any event be able to carry on our administration in India after 31st March, 1948, because of the extent to which the European element in the Indian Services and Armed Forces had decreased and the natural tendency of the Indian members to look increasingly towards the Indian political leaders rather than the British Administration for their future advancement. In his latest representations, however, the Viceroy had stressed the risk that an early announcement of our intention to transfer power by a specified date might create a serious situation in India: that, instead of forcing the two political parties to face the realities of the situation and collaborate together in framing a new constitution, it might encourage in each a tendency to seize what power it could and thus inflame communal feeling to an extent which might lead to widespread disorder. He had reported that the Commander-in-Chief and the Governors of Bengal, Punjab and the United Provinces all now took a pessimistic view of the situation; and he recommended that we should not at this stage make any declaration of our intention to transfer power by a specified date.

Ministers were thus faced with a very difficult decision. If they decided to proceed with the policy on which they had previously agreed, they would have to do so in the face of the latest advice of the Viceroy and others holding responsible office in India - though, in weighing the views now expressed by the Provincial Governors, it must be remembered that they had not been informed of the precise terms of the declaration which His Majesty's Government proposed to make and it was not altogether clear to what proposition of the Viceroy their latest views were related. On the other hand, the main object of making the proposed declaration had always been to force the two political parties in India to come together and act with a due sense of their responsibility for India's future; and it was still the view of the India and Burma Committee that for this purpose it was essential to specify a definite date for the transfer of power. A declaration without a date would not convince Indian politicians that we were sincere in our intention to transfer power in the near future; and we should be suspected, as earlier Governments had been, of making communal differences an excuse for continuing British rule in India. Finally, the Prime Minister informed the Cabinet that the proposed declaration was to be accompanied by an announcement that a new Viceroy had been appointed who would proceed forthwith to India for the specific purpose of arranging for the transfer of power. This change of Viceroy was an essential element in this final attempt to induce a spirit of co-operation between the two political parties in India. The new Viceroy had accepted this mission on the understanding that a definite date for the
transfer of power would be determined and announced before he went out to India; and it was very doubtful whether he would still be willing to undertake this exceptionally difficult duty if it were now decided that no definite term should be set to his mission.

In all the circumstances the Prime Minister recommended that the Cabinet should reaffirm their decision in favour of announcing the Government's intention to transfer power in India by June, 1948, and that the statement of policy should be made, as previously proposed, on 20th February.

In the discussion which followed a number of Ministers spoke in support of the Prime Minister's recommendation. Other points made in the discussion were as follows:-

(a) THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS said that he had serious misgivings about the form of paragraph 7 of the proposed statement. This contemplated the possibility that by June, 1948, no responsible authority would have emerged in India to which power could be transferred; and he was gravely concerned at the implication that, whatever happened, we should leave India by the prescribed date even if this meant that the country would be plunged into chaos. He would therefore prefer to substitute, for the last sentence of this paragraph, words to the effect that His Majesty's Government, in view of their definite intention to transfer power in India, had appointed a new Viceroy "with an instruction that arrangements must be made for the constitution of a responsible alternative Government and for the transfer of power within a period not exceeding two years from the date of his appointment".

In reply to this suggestion, it was pointed out that the succeeding paragraphs of the proposed statement made clear the Government's desire to transfer power to a responsible Indian Government; and paragraph 10 referred to the alternative possibilities which would be open if no central Government for the whole of British India had been established by the prescribed date. The statement did not envisage the possibility of our leaving India without any government at all. On the other hand, the formula proposed by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs would be thought to imply that, if the new Viceroy failed to secure the establishment of a central Government, we should continue to maintain British rule in India.

After further discussion, it was agreed that paragraph 7 of the draft statement should be amended so as to read:-

"His Majesty's Government desire to hand over their responsibility to authorities established by a constitution approved by all parties in India, in accordance with the plan of the Cabinet Mission, but unfortunately there is at present no clear prospect that such a constitution and such authorities will emerge. The present state of uncertainty is fraught with danger and cannot be indefinitely prolonged. His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to effect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948."
It was the view of the Cabinet that the insertion of the words underlined should remove any risk of the misunderstanding feared by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

(b) THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE said that he was sorry that the Government had felt compelled to depart from the policy which they had laid down, in the telegram (CABIN 22) sent to the Cabinet Mission in India on 6th June, 1946, that we should retain British control in India until there was a responsible Indian Government to which powers in respect of British India could be transferred. The course of the discussions since December had, however, compelled him to the conclusion that the Government had no alternative but to prescribe a definite date for the transfer of power in India. Like other Ministers, he had been specially influenced by the Viceroy's warning that we should not in any event be able to carry on our administration efficiently after March, 1948, by reason of the progressive weakening of the European element in the Indian Services.

If the proposed declaration were in fact likely to produce a state of disorder in India, it was difficult to understand the Viceroy's latest suggestion of postponing that situation until a date by which, on his own evidence, we should be less able to deal with it. The Minister therefore considered that the Cabinet had now no alternative but to proceed with the policy on which they had previously agreed. This was, however, a grave decision to take. He hoped that the Secretary of State for India would arrange for an immediate study to be made of the consequences which might follow if we were compelled to transfer power otherwise than to a central Government.

(c) The question was raised whether it would be practicable to defer for a time the announcement of a definite date for the transfer of power. As it had been decided to appoint a new Viceroy, it would be natural to allow him to proceed to India and make his own assessment of the situation before a final decision was taken.

As against this, it was pointed out that the new Viceroy was unwilling to accept appointment on that basis. Moreover, Congress were still awaiting a reply to their request that, as the Muslim League would not join in the work of the Constituent Assembly, the Muslim Ministers should be asked to resign from the Interim Government. If the proposed declaration of policy were made at once, a decision on this request could be deferred until it was known whether the declaration had the effect of bringing the parties together. This was a strong argument against postponing the issue of the declaration.

(d) THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA said that, if the proposed declaration were made, the Cabinet should decide, particularly in view of the latest warnings of possible disorders in India, whether additional shipping should be provided over the next few months to enable Europeans to leave India and what guidance should be given to the President of the European Association on the question whether Europeans should be encouraged to leave, and discouraged from proceeding to India.
It was the view of the Cabinet that no encouragement should be given at this stage to the idea that there would be a mass evacuation of Europeans from India as soon as the declaration of policy was made. The Secretary of State for India might ask the Minister of Transport to take unobtrusive steps to increase the shipping facilities available for persons wishing to leave India over the next few months. It would, however, be undesirable that any statement should be made at this stage about the desirability of Europeans leaving, or proceeding to, India.

The Cabinet —

(1) Reaffirmed their decision that the proposed statement of policy on India should indicate the Government’s intention to transfer power in India by June, 1948.

(2) Agreed that the statement of policy (incorporating the amendment noted in paragraph (a) above) should be made in both Houses of Parliament on 20th February; and took note that the Prime Minister would arrange for the appointment of the new Viceroy to be announced in the same statement.

(3) Took note that the Prime Minister would communicate the text of the proposed statement, before it was made, to the Leaders of the Opposition Parties.

(4) Authorised the Secretary of State for India to take unobtrusive steps to ensure that increased shipping facilities were available for Europeans wishing to leave India over the next few months.
THE LORD CHANCELLOR said that it had been suggested to him by the Marquess of Salisbury that it would be fitting if arrangements could be made for the House of Lords as a whole to give a present to H.R.H. The Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her marriage to Lieutenant Phillip Mountbatten, R.N. He would be glad to have the views of his colleagues on this suggestion.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that on no previous occasion had either House of Parliament given a wedding present to a Member of the Royal Family. It would certainly create embarrassment in the House of Commons if a wedding present were given to The Princess from the House of Lords. He would much prefer that no such presentation should be made, and he thought that the Marquess of Salisbury should be discouraged from pursuing his suggestion. He could be told that the Government had considered the possibility of presents from the two Houses of Parliament but had found that there were no precedents for such a course.

The Cabinet endorsed the views expressed by the Prime Minister.
THE LORD CHANCELLOR undertook to speak to the Marquess of Salisbury in the sense desired by the Cabinet.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.
14TH OCTOBER, 1947.
THE LORD CHANCELLOR said that he had been asked to advise on the precedence of H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh. He had come to the conclusion (in which the Master of the Rolls concurred) that the Duke of Edinburgh was not entitled to sit on the Cloth of Estate and in the order of precedence would rank after the Duke last created. If it was desired that His Royal Highness should have, by legal right, the precedence of a Royal Duke, legislation would be required; and a provision on this point might perhaps be included in the Princess Elizabeth's and the Duke of Edinburgh's Annuities Bill. On the other hand, His Majesty might think it unnecessary to have this point dealt with by legislation. Queen Victoria had accorded the appropriate precedence to Prince Albert by her own decision, without legislation.

The Lord Chancellor undertook to send to the Prime Minister the opinions which he had given on the point of law involved.

The general view of the Cabinet was that it would be inexpedient to include any provision on this point in the Annuities Bill; and it would be preferable if His Majesty felt able to deal with the matter without legislation.