CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Thursday, 4th December, 1947, at 11 a.m.

Present:
The Right Hon. C. R. Attlee, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps, K.C., M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.
The Right Hon. Viscount Addison, Lord Privy Seal.
The Right Hon. J. Chuter Ede, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department.
The Right Hon. The Earl of Listowel, Secretary of State for Burma.
The Right Hon. A. Woodburn, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.
The Right Hon. T. Williams, M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. G. R. Strauss, M.P., Minister of Supply (Item 6).
The Right Hon. W. J. Edwards, M.P., Civil Lord, Admiralty (Item 6).

The Right Hon. Ernest Bevin, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Items 1-3).
The Right Hon. A. V. Alexander, M.P., Minister of Defence.
The Right Hon. Viscount Jowitt, Lord Chancellor.
The Right Hon. A. Creech Jones, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.
The Right Hon. George Tomlinson, M.P., Minister of Education.

Secretariat:
Sir Norman Brook.
Mr. W. S. Murrie.
Mr. S. E. V. Luke.
## CABINET 93 (47)

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The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.P. (47) 320) on the withdrawal of British authority from Palestine.

The memorandum recommended that, while His Majesty's Government should do nothing to obstruct the carrying out of the United Nations decision in favour of the partition of Palestine, British troops and the British administration should in no circumstances become involved in enforcing that decision or in maintaining law and order while the United Nations Commission enforced it. It was suggested that the withdrawal of the British forces and administration should be carried out in accordance with the plan summarised in Annex B of C.P. (47) 320. This would mean that the civil administration would be terminated by 15th May, 1948, and the withdrawal completed by 1st August, 1948. No feasible arrangement could be made for the division of authority between the Palestine Government and the United Nations Commission: indeed, even the arrival of the Commission would probably provoke Arab disturbances on a scale which would seriously affect the withdrawal plan and endanger the whole British position in the Middle East. Everything possible should therefore be done to ensure that the arrival of the Commission was delayed at least until the beginning of May, by which time authority could be transferred without prejudice to the withdrawal plan; and the United Kingdom representative at the United Nations should be instructed to negotiate with the Commission accordingly. He would also have to negotiate with the Commission on financial, economic and other matters connected with the transfer of authority. Although it would not be possible to maintain preventive measures in Palestine against illegal immigration after 1st February, every effort should be made, so long as His Majesty's Government remained responsible for the administration of the territory, to check this traffic by measures taken outside Palestine. If it proved impracticable to maintain the present immigration quota, the first step should be to remove the immigrants now in Cyprus, who should in any event be transferred to Palestine before our withdrawal was completed. Parliamentary Counsel should be instructed to prepare the legislation which would be necessary on the relinquishment of the Mandate.

In discussion the following points were made:

(a) The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that negotiations would have to take place with the United Nations Commission on some complex financial and economic questions, such as the exclusion of Palestine from the sterling area on the termination of the British administration. The United Kingdom representative at the United Nations should be informed that instructions on these questions would be sent to him as soon as possible, and that expert assistance for the negotiations would, if necessary, be provided for him. In the first instance, the Overseas Negotiations Committee should prepare a comprehensive paper for consideration by Ministers.

(b) The Minister of Defence said that paragraph 1 (4) of C.P. (47) 320 should be expanded to indicate the importance attached by His Majesty's Government to the negotiation with the United Nations Commission of suitable arrangements for the custody or disposal of Service stores left in Palestine after our withdrawal. It was agreed that this matter should also be dealt with in the paper to be prepared by the Overseas Negotiations Committee.

(c) The Cabinet were informed that every effort would be made by the Navy to maintain preventive measures against illegal immigrants after 1st February, and that it was hoped that the transhipment of illegal immigrants, for transfer to Cyprus, could be managed without military assistance. These arrangements would not, however, be effective if the traffic became heavy.

(d) Some doubt was felt whether the local military authorities in Palestine would be competent to make a correct selection of stores for evacuation in the light of the general supply position and of needs elsewhere. It was agreed that, in view of the magnitude of the task, it would be advisable to make a special appointment for
the specific purpose of supervising the collection and evacuation of military stores from Palestine.

(e) Would the United Nations Commission have legal power to assume responsibility for matters, such as the maintenance of contracts, which His Majesty’s Government would wish to transfer to them in due course? It was pointed out that this question had been raised during the discussions in New York, and that the General Assembly had considered that the Commission would possess the necessary powers. The Commission would have the right to invoke the assistance of the Security Council.

The Cabinet—

(1) Endorsed the recommendations made in C.P. (47) 320 on future policy in Palestine, and approved those recommendations as a basis for the negotiations with the United Nations Commission to be undertaken by the United Kingdom representative at the United Nations;

(2) Invited the Minister of Defence to arrange for a special appointment to be made for supervision of the collection and evacuation of military stores from Palestine.

2. The Cabinet were informed that the Governor of Aden had reported that anti-Jewish riots had broken out in the Colony on the previous day, and that a state of emergency had been proclaimed.

It was agreed that immediate steps should be taken to reinforce the local security forces, if the latter proved unable to control the situation. It was suggested that troops might be sent by air from Egypt, and that the possibility of despatching one of H.M. ships to Aden should also be considered.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Minister of Defence, in consultation with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to consider urgently what steps should be taken to reinforce the security forces in Aden.

3. The Cabinet were informed of the business to be taken in the House of Commons in the following week.

It was expected that the House of Commons would complete their consideration of the Parliament Bill during the following week. The Cabinet agreed that proceedings on this Bill in the House of Lords could be deferred until after the Christmas Recess.

Attention was drawn to the danger that proceedings in the House of Lords on the Emergency Laws (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill might be delayed by discussions on the Control of Engagement and Registration for Employment Orders. Some Opposition Members might even seek to carry amendments to that Bill limiting the Government’s power to direct labour. Every effort would be made to persuade the House of Lords that these matters lay outside the scope of that Bill, which should be passed into law before 31st December, 1947, and that other opportunities should be found to debate these matters.

The Cabinet were informed that the London Society of Compositors had, in furtherance of an industrial dispute, ordered their members to suspend at once all working of overtime. The Speaker had pointed out that, if this order were carried out, it would seriously dislocate the work of the House of Commons. The Minister of Labour informed the Cabinet of the history of this dispute and said that he was already in touch with the Unions concerned. He undertook to draw their particular attention to the printing needs of the House of Commons and to see whether arrangements could not be made to ensure that those needs would continue to be met.
4. The Lord President said that at their meeting in the following week the Parliamentary Labour Party would be discussing the Government’s publicity services, and the suggestion would be made that a Minister of Information should be appointed. Subject to the Cabinet’s views, he proposed to take the line that it was impracticable for a single Minister to assume responsibility for the handling of all Government publicity, and to stress the difficulties which would arise if a separate Minister dealt with the publicity aspects of policies for which other Ministers were accountable to Parliament.

The Cabinet—

Endorsed the line which the Lord President proposed to take in opposing, at the forthcoming meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party, suggestions for the appointment of a Minister for Information.

5. The Prime Minister recalled that on 2nd December the Cabinet had approved the suggestion that the annual sum of £15,000 hitherto paid to Her Royal Highness The Princess Elizabeth should now be raised to £30,000 and that a further £10,000 should be provided for His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh. In the light of the evidence given to the Select Committee on the previous day regarding the probable cost of maintaining a separate household, he and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were now inclined to the view that it would be more reasonable to suggest that the annual sum paid to Princess Elizabeth should be raised to £35,000, making a total provision of £45,000 a year.

The Cabinet endorsed this view.

The Cabinet—

Agreed that the proposals to be laid before the Select Committee regarding the financial provision to be made for Her Royal Highness The Princess Elizabeth and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, which they had approved on 2nd December, should be so modified as to provide a further £5,000 a year for Princess Elizabeth.

6. On 1st July the Cabinet had approved in principle the proposals submitted to them in C.P. (47) 184 for the use of land for training and other purposes by the Service Departments and the Ministry of Supply, but had asked that the draft White Paper explaining these proposals should be revised.

The Cabinet now had before them a memorandum by the Minister of Defence (C.P. (47) 318) covering a revised draft, which had been prepared in consultation with all the Departments concerned and took account of a reduction of 103,000 acres in the War Office requirement. It was proposed that the White Paper should be presented by the Prime Minister on 10th December; and that the Minister of Town and Country Planning, with the Secretary of State for War, should explain its contents to a Conference of Lobby Correspondents on that day. These Ministers would also speak on the Government’s behalf in any Parliamentary debate on the White Paper.

In discussion the following points were made:—

(a) Paragraph 20 of the draft White Paper, which set out the reasons why the remoter areas of Scotland were unsuitable for training purposes, should be so recast as to give more emphasis to the remoteness of these areas and less to their disadvantages of terrain and climate.

(b) The figure of 32,000 acres given as the approximate requirement of land for Ministry of Supply purposes in paragraph 33 need not be altered because of a project for acquiring an additional 1,000 acres for these purposes.
(c) The words "and forestry" should be deleted from the
heading of paragraph 31.

(d) The Minister of Town and Country Planning hoped shortly
to be able to communicate with the Home Secretary on the question
whether any amendment of the Military Lands Act, 1892, or the
Requisitioned Land and War Works Act, 1945, was necessary in
order to preserve the right of access to common land acquired under
these Acts and subsequently released.

The Cabinet—

(1) Approved the draft White Paper annexed to C.P. (47) 318,
subject to the amendments noted in paragraphs (a) and
(c) above, and to such other minor or drafting amend­
ments as might be found necessary; and agreed that it
should be presented by the Prime Minister on
10th December;

(2) Agreed that the Minister of Town and Country Planning,
with the Secretary of State for War, should hold a Con­
ference with Lobby correspondents on the day on which
the White Paper was presented, and that these Ministers
should be the Government spokesmen in any Parliamen­
tary debate on the White Paper.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1.
4th December, 1947.