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**SECRET**

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**C.M. (48)**

**61st Conclusions**

**CABINET 61 (48)**

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Wednesday, 22nd September, 1948, at 11.30 a.m.*

**Present :**

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Prime Minister (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Lord President of the Council.

The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. A. V. ALEXANDER, M.P., Minister of Defence.

The Right Hon. HUGH DALTON, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT ADDISON, Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT JOWITT, Lord Chancellor.

The Right Hon. J. CHUTER EDE, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The Right Hon. A. CREECH JONES, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon. P. J. NOEL-BAKER, M.P., Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

The Right Hon. A. WOODBURN, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Right Hon. G. A. ISAACS, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.

The Right Hon. ANEURIN BEVAN, M.P., Minister of Health.

The Right Hon. GEORGE TOMLINSON, M.P., Minister of Education.

*Secretariat :*

Mr. W. S. MURRIE.

Brigadier A. T. CORNWALL-JONES.

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**Palestine.**  
(Previous  
Reference:  
C.M. (48) 57th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 4.)

1. The Cabinet had before them a note by the Foreign Secretary (C.P. (48) 225) covering the text of the conclusions of Part I of Count Bernadotte's report to the United Nations.

*The Foreign Secretary* recalled that the Cabinet had agreed that the United Nations Mediator should be encouraged to make proposals for a settlement in Palestine. His report accepted the fact that a Jewish State would continue to exist and made proposals for partitioning Palestine broadly on the lines of stabilising the existing situation. The area of the Jewish State would be less than under the proposals approved by the United Nations Assembly in November 1947; but it would contain the most fertile land and form a more compact entity. It would no doubt be possible to improve on the Mediator's proposals in certain respects, but Mr. Marshall had already announced that the United States Government supported them and the right course seemed to be to declare forthwith that His Majesty's Government accepted the report in its entirety. He therefore proposed to make a statement to this effect in the House of Commons debate later in the day and to instruct the United Kingdom delegation to the United Nations Assembly to support the report and to press for its early consideration by a special committee of the Assembly. He believed that if a prompt declaration in favour of the Mediator's recommendations were made by His Majesty's Government, the Arab States would be less likely to oppose them. These States were naturally apprehensive that the new Jewish State would later seek to expand at their expense; but it should be possible to allay this anxiety by making the United Nations responsible for guaranteeing the new frontiers. It was to be hoped that the Mediator's proposal for merging the Arab territory of Palestine with Transjordan would be accepted, since it had always been clear that a separate Arab State would not be viable.

In discussion there was general agreement that His Majesty's Government should declare their support of the proposals in Part I of the Mediator's report.

The following points were made:—

(a) Though the Jews would probably claim Jerusalem, it was essential that the city should be placed under international control, and a satisfactory scheme for this had been worked out.

(b) Most of the coast-line of Palestine would fall within the Jewish State, but Haifa would be a free port and there was scope for the development of the Arab port of Aqaba. It might also be possible to reopen with the United States Government the question of making Gaza the terminal of the proposed new Middle East oil pipe-line.

(c) It would be desirable to reopen production at the Haifa refinery as soon as possible, even if the crude oil had to be brought to Haifa by tanker. Proposals for this should not, however, be allowed to prejudice the chances of reaching agreement on the Mediator's recommendations.

(d) The Departments concerned would have to consider how the assets and liabilities of the former Palestine Government should be allocated once partition had been effected.

The Cabinet—

Authorised the Foreign Secretary to state that His Majesty's Government fully supported the proposals made in Part I of Count Bernadotte's report to the United Nations, and agreed that the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations Assembly should be instructed to press for early consideration of the report by a special committee of the Assembly.

War Crimes.

Disposal of  
German  
Generals in  
British  
custody.  
Previous  
reference:  
C.M. (48) 47th  
conclusions,  
Minute 3.)

2. *The Foreign Secretary* recalled that on 5th July the Cabinet had agreed that Field-Marshal von Brauchitsch, von Rundstedt and von Manstein and Colonel-General Strauss should be tried if they were fit to stand trial. Since then there had been much criticism of the decision to try these officers and it had been decided that he should deal with this criticism in his speech in the foreign affairs debate. There had admittedly been serious delay and he would have to express regret for this. He would, however, resist any suggestion that the trials should be abandoned.

In discussion it was pointed out that, while there was a *prima facie* case against these officers, it might in the event prove impossible to obtain conclusive evidence against them, particularly since much of the evidence related to incidents in Russia and Poland. On the other hand, if the trials were abandoned, we should have no good ground for refusing to hand over the officers to the Soviet Government.

The Cabinet—

Agreed that the Foreign Secretary should resist any suggestion that the trials of the four German officers concerned should be abandoned.

Foreign  
Affairs.

Germany.  
(Previous  
reference:  
C.M. (48) 59th  
conclusions,  
Minute 3.)

3. *The Foreign Secretary* reminded the Cabinet of the developments in the Berlin situation up to 7th September, when the Western Military Governors in Berlin had reported to their Governments the three main points of disagreement which had brought their discussions with the Soviet Military Governor to a standstill. The representatives of the Western Powers in Moscow had been instructed to approach the Soviet Government with a view to resolving these difficulties, and on 14th September had handed M. Molotov an aide-mémoire on the points at issue. The Soviet reply of 18th September had been unsatisfactory and had suggested that the Soviet Government were seeking to prolong discussions until the meeting of the United Nations Assembly was over and the position of the Western Powers had been weakened through increasing difficulties of supplying Berlin during the winter. He had reviewed the situation with Mr. Marshall and M. Schuman in Paris and had been much encouraged to learn that a realistic assessment of the resources available for supplying Berlin by air showed that supplies could be maintained at a reasonable level throughout the winter. It had also been clear that, while Mr. Marshall did not underrate the difficulties of the Berlin situation, he was determined not to yield to Russian pressure and believed that the Western Powers must maintain their foothold in Berlin while their position in Western Germany was being consolidated. It had eventually been agreed that a joint note should be addressed to the Soviet Government setting out the final views of the Governments of the three Western Powers on the points at issue and asking the Soviet Government to state by 29th September whether they were prepared to remove the blockade measures and to free communications by rail, water and road. This note would make no mention of a possible reference to the United Nations, but it had been agreed that, if the reply should prove unsatisfactory, the matter should be brought before the Security Council, not in any expectation that this body would be able to reach a settlement but with a view to focusing world opinion on the Soviet action. The text of the draft note had requested the Soviet Government to state whether they were unconditionally prepared to remove the blockade measures, but, after discussion with the Prime Minister, he had suggested that the word "unconditionally" should be omitted and he now understood that this amendment was likely to be accepted. In his statement in the foreign affairs debate later in the day he would describe the measures taken to supply Berlin by air and, without going into details, indicate that steps were being taken to ensure the continuance of supplies throughout the winter. He would

also make it clear that, on the main issues, the Western Powers had maintained their original position, but would decline to give detailed information about the present state of the negotiations on the ground that this would be a breach of the obligations of His Majesty's Government to the other Governments involved.

In discussion it was pointed out that, once the outcome of the present negotiations was clear, it would be necessary for the Cabinet to consider what policy should be adopted in face of the increasing tension between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers, of which the difficulties in Berlin were a symptom. If the threat of war in the near future was real, more resources ought to be devoted to defence, including civil defence, and this would play into the hands of the Soviet Union by retarding our economic recovery. On the other hand, it would be fatal to give the Soviet Government the impression that the United Kingdom would not in any circumstances oppose them by force.

The Foreign Secretary expressed the hope that these difficulties would not lead to any weakening of the Government's attitude. Since 1945 it had repeatedly been shown that any concessions to the Soviet Union would be exploited to the detriment of the Western Powers and, unless a firm stand were made now, our position in Europe would be hopeless. He also reminded the Cabinet that the economic recovery of Western Germany, which had been promoted by the recent currency reform, should to a considerable extent relieve the strain on the United Kingdom economy.

The Cabinet—

Endorsed the policy pursued by the Foreign Secretary and approved the line which he proposed to take in the foreign affairs debate.

*Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,  
22nd September, 1948.*



