CABINET

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Tuesday, 15th January, 1957, at 11:30 a.m.

Present:
The Right Hon. HAROLD MACMILLAN, M.P., Prime Minister.
The Most Hon. The MARQUESS OF SALISBURY, Lord President of the Council.
The Right Hon. SELWYN LLOYD, Q.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. The EARL OF HOME, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.
The Right Hon. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., Minister of Defence.
The Right Hon. D. HEATHCOAT AMORY, M.P., Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.
The Right Hon. HENRY BROOKE, M.P., Minister of Housing and Local Government and Minister for Welsh Affairs.
The Right Hon. Sir PERCY MILLS, M.P., Minister of Power.
The Right Hon. PETER THORNEycROFT, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer (Items 1-4).
The Right Hon. JOHN MACLAY, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.
The Right Hon. Sir DAVID ECCLES, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (Items 1-4).
The Right Hon. IAIN MACLEOD, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HAILSHAM, Q.C., Minister of Education.
The Right Hon. HAROLD WATKINSON, M.P., Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation.
Dr. The Right Hon. CHARLES HILL, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The following were also present:
The LORD LLOYD, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (Item 5).

Secretariat:
The Right Hon. Sir NORMAN BROOK.
Mr. B. St. J. TREND.
Mr. H. O. HOOPER.
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The Prime Minister said that at this first meeting of the Cabinet under the new Administration he would like to express his gratitude for the long and loyal service of old colleagues who would no longer be sharing in their counsels. Above all he would like once more to voice his deep regret at the resignation of their former leader, Sir Anthony Eden. Few men had suffered more grievous political misfortune; but his fame and reputation would stand higher as time passed and events were seen in their true perspective.

The Cabinet endorsed these sentiments and asked the Prime Minister to send on their behalf a message of affection and gratitude to Sir Anthony Eden.

The Prime Minister extended a warm welcome to Ministers who were for the first time attending as members of the Cabinet.

2. The Foreign Secretary said discussions with a United States delegation on our future policy towards Libya were due to begin that day. Our treaty with Libya no longer had a military value commensurate with our present commitment to subsidise the Libyan Government at the rate of some £12 millions a year. Recent events had tended, however, to alienate Libya from Egypt; and there were political advantages in not withdrawing entirely our support of the Libyan Government. He hoped that we should still find it possible to retain in Libya forces sufficient to uphold the authority of the present pro-Western Government, to safeguard our continuing interest in air-staging facilities, and to demonstrate that we did not intend to allow a vacuum to develop in that country. For the rest it would be reasonable to look to the United States to assume the major responsibility for providing financial support for Libya, and for building up its armed forces to an appropriate level. We might be able to help by providing some equipment; but we could not accept any commitment in relation to the recurrent costs of the Libyan armed forces, nor could we offer the Libyan Government financial assistance towards creating a Libyan air force. Our commitment might be reduced to a sum of the order of £2 millions.

The Prime Minister said that it was important that in present circumstances we should not create the impression of withdrawing entirely from the Middle East. On the other hand, as it was evident that we could no longer expect to use Libya as a base for operations elsewhere in the Middle East, our commitment should be reduced to the minimum necessary to safeguard our essential needs in North Africa. The discussions with the United States delegation should be directed accordingly.

Discussion showed that the Cabinet were in general agreement with this view.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Foreign Secretary to be guided, in the negotiations with the United States delegation, by the views expressed in their discussion.

3. The Foreign Secretary said that it now seemed possible that Saudi Arabia might be willing to give some financial support to Jordan. In order to avoid the embarrassment to which we should be exposed if, as a result, Jordan unilaterally repudiated the Anglo-Jordan Treaty, he proposed to inform the Jordan Government that we had taken note of their desire to terminate the Treaty; that, recalling our past friendship with Jordan, we were anxious that our future relations with her should be such as to consolidate and to promote that friendship; and that we were ready to open
discussions on the future of our Treaty relationship with Jordan. H.M. Ambassador at Amman had advised that, in view of the trend of public opinion in Jordan, we might be more likely to gain than to forfeit goodwill by bringing to an end the existing arrangements governing the payment of subsidy and the disposition of troops and maintaining only our financial contribution to Jordan’s development programme.

In discussion there was general agreement that we should now approach the Government of Jordan on these lines, on the understanding that no further instalment of subsidy would be paid until the probable outcome of the discussions was clear.

The Cabinet—

Authorised the Foreign Secretary to send a communication to the Government of Jordan on the lines proposed.

4. The Foreign Secretary said that, in a recent discussion with the Foreign Minister of Belgium, he had emphasised that any closer political association between the United Kingdom and Europe must depend on the outcome of the current discussions about our membership of a free trade area in Europe. M. Spaak had, however, informed him that the French Government were now determined to develop as rapidly as possible a capacity to manufacture nuclear weapons, with the result that EURATOM would be liable to develop on military, as well as on civil, lines. The other members of the potential common market in Europe were alarmed by this possibility and by the risk that Western Germany would follow such a lead by France. M. Spaak proposed, therefore, to take an early opportunity of warning the United States Government of these developments.

In discussion it was suggested that the United States reaction to EURATOM, which had hitherto been favourable, would be liable to change for the worse if the organisation assumed a military character. On the other hand it might be possible to turn United States anxiety on this score to good account in the context of disarmament and of the reappraisal of defence policy which was currently being conducted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Foreign Secretary to consider the best means of approaching the United States Government about the implications of the developments in Europe reported by the Foreign Minister of Belgium.

5. The Foreign Secretary informed the Cabinet of repeated violations of the frontier of the Aden Protectorate by Yemeni troops and tribesmen. He had been considering whether it would be in our interest to take the initiative in referring this matter to the Security Council, and proposing that the United Nations should station observers on the frontier to assist in keeping the peace and should help in delineating the frontier itself. The Government of the Yemen had now, however, notified the Security Council that they reserved their right to ask for action towards a settlement of the dispute, and to this extent the initiative had passed out of our hands. It was for consideration whether we should now confine ourselves to stating our case in the Security Council and refrain from putting forward the suggestion that United Nations observers should be stationed on the frontier. The risk of making this suggestion was that, owing to the nature of the treaties on which we relied, our title as the Protecting Power might be called in question.
The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies said that the frontier between the Aden Protectorate and the Yemen was based on an agreement with the Turkish Government at the end of the First World War which had never been recognised by the Imam of the Yemen. Moreover, some of the treaties negotiated in the nineteenth century with the local sheikhs in the Protectorate were informal in character; and, while the majority of the present sheikhs could be expected to remain loyal if doubt was cast on the validity of these treaties, there were some who might seize the opportunity to attempt to renounce their connection with the United Kingdom. The possible precedent for similar action in the case of our other Protectorate Treaties, e.g., with Uganda and Somaliland, could be very damaging. Discussions with representatives of the Yemen were due to take place shortly on the delineation of the frontier; and, although it was unlikely that these would yield any useful result, the proposal to appoint United Nations observers should be deferred until they had been completed.

In discussion it was suggested that, while it was doubtful whether United Nations observers would be able to fulfil any satisfactory function in such difficult and mountainous country, public opinion was likely to press for their appointment. It might therefore be wise to inform the Security Council that, while we intended to discuss the delineation of the frontier with the Government of the Yemen, we should welcome the help of United Nations observers in preventing hostilities in the region of whatever frontier was finally agreed. An invitation to appoint observers for this limited purpose should preclude any attempt by the United Nations to take part in the definition of the frontier or to examine our title to the territory which we occupied, while at the same time enabling us to retain some initiative before the Security Council. The advice of our representative at the United Nations and of the Governor of Aden should be sought on this course.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Foreign Secretary, in consultation with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, to seek the advice of the United Kingdom Representative at the United Nations and of the Governor of Aden on the desirability of inviting the Security Council to appoint observers to visit the Aden Protectorate on the basis suggested in discussion.

6. The Foreign Secretary said that the Iraq Petroleum Company were arranging for six Members of Parliament, representing the Government and the Opposition Parties, to make a tour of the Middle East, which would start at Beirut and would include a number of places in the Persian Gulf. There was no means of preventing such a tour, but the Cabinet should be aware that it involved some risk of embarrassing incidents.

In discussion the point was made that a disproportionate number of Members of Parliament had recently visited Israel or were due to go there shortly. This proposed tour of Arab countries would do something to redress the balance, and the Iraq Petroleum Company would no doubt be amenable to representations that the itinerary should be arranged in such a way as to reduce the risk of incidents to a minimum.

The Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.
Kashmir.

(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 104th
Conclusions,
Minute 10)

7. The Commonwealth Secretary recalled that the agreement reached in the United Nations in 1948–49, whereby the future status of Kashmir would be determined by a plebiscite, had been frustrated by the disputes for which India was largely responsible about the timing of military withdrawals, and that all later attempts at mediation had ended in failure. The constituent assembly of Kashmir had now passed a resolution purporting to accept the inclusion of Kashmir in India. This resolution was inconsistent with the earlier affirmation of the Security Council that, pending the plebiscite, the constituent assembly was not authorised to reach any decision on the future status of Kashmir. Pakistan had therefore raised the issue afresh in the Security Council, and we had undertaken to support her in doing so. We could rely on the United States and other friendly Governments in the Security Council to associate themselves with us; but India would undoubtedly take offence at our attitude.

Thereafter a resolution might be introduced in the Security Council, proposing afresh that a plebiscite should be organised in Kashmir and that a United Nations force should be despatched to supervise it. It would be desirable that this force should be established in Kashmir, and that the Indian and Pakistani troops should be withdrawn well in advance of the plebiscite itself. Pakistan had already offered to withdraw her troops; but a plebiscite would be liable to provoke acute communal strife in India, and the Indian Government would probably oppose it by every possible means.

In discussion there was general agreement that this question should be handled in the Security Council in strict conformity with the established procedure of the United Nations and that, although we ourselves should not take the lead in the discussion, we should support an initiative, preferably sponsored by some other country, on the lines indicated by the Commonwealth Secretary.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Foreign Secretary, in consultation with the Commonwealth Secretary, to inform the United Kingdom Representative at the United Nations of the views expressed in the Cabinet's discussion.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1.
15th January, 1957.