CABINET

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. I, on Tuesday, 18th February, 1958, at 11 a.m.

Present:

The Right Hon. HAROLD MACMILLAN, M.P., Prime Minister.


The Right Hon. SELWYN LLOYD, Q.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Items 1-4).

The Right Hon. THE EARL OF HOME, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

The Right Hon. JOHN MACLAY, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Right Hon. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., Minister of Defence.

The Right Hon. IAIN MACLEOD, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.

The Right Hon. HAROLD WATKINSON, M.P., Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation.

The Right Hon. JOHN HARE, M.P., Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT KILMUIR, Lord Chancellor.

The Right Hon. D. HEATHCOAT AMORY, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon. ALAN LENNOX-BOYD, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (Items 1-4).

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HAILSHAM, Q.C., Lord President of the Council.

The Right Hon. SIR DAVID ECCLES, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon. LORD MILLS, Minister of Power.

The Right Hon. GEOFFREY LLOYD, M.P., Minister of Education.

Dr. The Right Hon. CHARLES HILL, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. THE EARL OF SELKIRK, First Lord of the Admiralty (Item 5).

The Right Hon. THE EARL OF PERTH, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs (Item 5).

The Right Hon. EDWARD HEATH, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury (Items 1-4).

The Right Hon. SIR REGINALD MANNINGHAM-BULLER, Q.C., M.P., Attorney-General (Item 5).

Secretariat:

The Right Hon. SIR NORMAN BROOK.

Mr. B. ST. J. TREND.

Mr. M. REED.
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1. The Prime Minister expressed his gratitude to the Home Secretary and other members of the Cabinet for their handling of the political and Parliamentary problems which had arisen during his Commonwealth tour. At the time of his departure it had been hard to know whether it was wise to undertake this journey, but the event had amply proved that it had been right to carry out the programme originally planned. The Government had overcome the immediate difficulties which had then confronted them at home; and his mission, which had everywhere been proclaimed a success, had helped to emphasise the strength and unity of the new Commonwealth. In the Asian countries of the Commonwealth, and especially in India, he had been impressed by the respect in which the British people were now held and by the balanced view which was taken by leaders of opinion on the value of their connection, past and present, with Britain. In Australia and New Zealand he had everywhere found evidence of strong loyalty to the United Kingdom, based on common origins and common allegiance to the Crown; and the keen desire that the economic development of those countries should be based on British manpower and British capital reflected the strong emotional urge that these countries should preserve their British character. It was natural therefore that people in Australia and New Zealand should at first have felt some misgivings about the admission of Asian and African members to the Commonwealth; and even now they showed less interest in them than they should. The United Kingdom had a duty to interpret the new members of the Commonwealth to the old; to emphasise the significance of a Commonwealth association whose members were united by their common belief in the principles of Parliamentary democracy and individual freedom; and to indicate the importance of the role which this unique association could play in the world struggle between the forces of tyranny and of freedom. This presented a challenge to Commonwealth statesmanship and might well prove to be an inspiration, not only to the new members of the Commonwealth, but to people in this country as well.

In the United Kingdom people were passing through a period of disillusionment which was comparable with that of the early 1930's. Political success would come to the Party which could offer some practical prospect of relief from the growing sense of frustration, in both foreign and domestic affairs. This was the task to which Ministers must address themselves in the months ahead.

The Home Secretary expressed to the Prime Minister, on the Cabinet's behalf, their sincere appreciation of the success of his mission. He had, by undertaking it, rendered great service to this country and to the Commonwealth as a whole.

The Commonwealth Secretary said that the success and significance of the Prime Minister's journey were amply confirmed by the reports which he had received from all the countries visited.

The Cabinet—

Took note of the Prime Minister's report on his Commonwealth tour and expressed their appreciation of the outstanding success which he had achieved.

2. The Foreign Secretary said that the situation in Tunisia had eased since the end of the previous week. It now seemed probable that, although the Tunisian Government would still insist on raising the matter in the Security Council, they would be content that the proceedings should be formal and should be adjourned without discussion. This should enable direct negotiations to be initiated between the French and Tunisian Governments, and he was working to this end in close consultation with the United States Government.
The Foreign Secretary said that the Egyptian claim that the frontier between Egypt and the Sudan should be adjusted in favour of Egypt might prove, on examination, to be well founded. We should be wise to avoid intervening in the dispute at this stage, particularly since it was liable to become an issue in the forthcoming elections in the Sudan. We had no specific obligation to defend the territory of the Sudan.

The Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

3. The Prime Minister said that, after considering the draft Agreement with the United States Government for the deployment of intermediate range ballistic missiles in this country, he had invited President Eisenhower to accept amendment of the draft text at three points in order to forestall political criticism in this country. As a result, the United States Government no longer wished to stipulate that, if the training of Royal Air Force personnel had not been completed by the date when the first squadron was operationally deployed, the site would be manned by the United States Air Force; and it was now envisaged that the Royal Air Force would man the first site from the outset, on the understanding that, if enough trained personnel were not available in time, the position would be reconsidered. It had also been agreed that the wording of paragraph 7 of the draft Memorandum of Agreement, which could be read as implying that the missiles would be launched automatically if any member of the North Atlantic Alliance was attacked, should be amended in order to emphasise that the decision to launch the missiles would be a matter for joint decision by the United Kingdom and United States Governments, although the two Governments, in reaching their decision, would have regard to the undertaking which they had assumed under Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty. Finally, it had been agreed that paragraph 10 of the draft Memorandum of Agreement, which prescribed that the Agreement should remain in force indefinitely subject to revision or termination at five-yearly intervals, should be redrafted to provide that the Agreement would remain in force for not less than five years from its initial date but might thereafter be terminated by either Government upon six months' notice.

The Cabinet—

(1) Approved the draft Agreement with the United States Government for the deployment of intermediate range ballistic units in this country, subject to the amendments indicated by the Prime Minister.

(2) Invited the Foreign Secretary to instruct H.M. Ambassador in Washington to arrange, if possible, for the documents comprising this Agreement to be signed on 24th February.

(3) Invited the Minister of Defence to announce the conclusion of the Agreement in Parliament on 24th February and to arrange for the simultaneous publication of a White Paper comprising such parts of it as need not remain secret.

*4. The Cabinet had before them memoranda by the Foreign Secretary (C.58) 43 and 44) about Cyprus.

The Foreign Secretary said that, as a result of his recent discussions with the Turkish and Greek Governments, he believed—although the Governor of Cyprus did not share his view—that the former would accept a solution of the problem of Cyprus which provided them with a strategic base in the Island and adequate
safeguards for the Turkish minority, while the latter might be induced to acquiesce in a compromise of this kind provided that the Island remained a unity and that any suggestion of its ultimate partition was henceforward abandoned. On this hypothesis, it would be premature to make any Parliamentary announcement of the Government's intentions in detail or to hold out any hope that the emergency might be terminated in the near future. But further discussions with the Turkish Government should be initiated forthwith, in order to explore the possibility of their accepting a settlement on the lines which he had indicated and to clarify their conception of the scope of a Turkish base in Cyprus. We should also put in hand urgently our own examination of the implications of granting military bases in the Island to Turkey, and possibly to Greece, and should prepare a plan for the constitutional development of that area of Cyprus which would not be comprised in the strategic bases which the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey would enjoy.

In discussion it was suggested that, if we conceded that Greek and Turkish military bases might be established in Cyprus at any time during the period in which we remained responsible for the government of the Island and for the maintenance of internal security, we should merely provide the Greek and Turkish Governments with additional facilities for introducing arms into the Island and so provoking communal strife on an unprecedented scale. It was for consideration, therefore, whether we should at least seek to confine our concession to the creation of a Turkish zone in the Island which the Turkish Government would not be entitled to transform into a military base until the date on which self-determination took effect. On the other hand it was unlikely that the Turkish Government would now be prepared to defer their acquisition of a strategic base in Cyprus for so long a period as the seven years which had hitherto been regarded as the necessary prelude to the exercise of self-determination. Nor was it, in fact, realistic to suppose that a final settlement could be postponed for as long as seven years. The latest discussions with the Greek and Turkish Governments had revealed that we must now achieve a solution of this problem in the near future. Only two courses of action were open to us. We could decide to continue to govern the Island under British sovereignty, provided that we were prepared to face the revival of terrorism and to retain large numbers of British troops in the Island for an indefinite period. Alternatively, we could take account of the new situation which had arisen as the result of Turkey's recent assertion of her interest in Cyprus and could seek to persuade the Turks to abandon their previous insistence on partition in return for a compromise settlement on the lines indicated by the Foreign Secretary. The latter course was clearly the wiser, particularly if it proved possible to attach such conditions to the establishment of a Turkish base in the Island as would enable us to prevent the base from being used as a centre for the distribution of arms and the incitement of communal strife. If these arrangements could be embodied in a formal treaty, which might be guaranteed by the United States or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, there was some hope that the Greek and Turkish Governments would accept them as providing a durable basis of co-existence in the Island. At the same time we should explore, as a matter of urgency, the best method of promoting constitutional development in the remainder of the Island, including the possibility of establishing a condominium of the three Powers on the lines which had been contemplated at an earlier stage.

The Cabinet—
(1) Approved, in principle, the proposals in C. (58) 44.
(2) Invited the Foreign Secretary to make a short statement in the House of Commons that afternoon, referring to our
intention to continue to discuss with the Greek and Turkish Governments the possibility of a solution of the Cyprus problem and reaffirming our resolve to maintain law and order in the Island.

(3) Invited the Foreign Secretary to initiate further discussions with the Turkish Government in order to ascertain whether they would accept a compromise solution on the lines indicated in the discussion and to clarify their conception of a Turkish base in Cyprus.

(4) Took note that the Prime Minister would instruct the Secretary of the Cabinet to arrange for officials to examine urgently the implications of granting military bases in Cyprus to the Greek and Turkish Governments and to prepare a plan for the constitutional development of those parts of the Island which would not be comprised in the strategic bases to be maintained under United Kingdom, Greek and Turkish sovereignty.

5. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (C. (58) 37) discussing the policy in respect of the breadth of territorial waters which the United Kingdom delegation should support at an International Conference on the Law of the Sea which was to begin at Geneva on 24th February. Although it remained in our interest to maintain our traditional support of a three-mile limit on territorial waters, the Soviet Government and their satellites were unlikely to accept any limit less than twelve miles. Two compromise proposals had been put forward, the first extending the three-mile limit to six miles, the second maintaining the limit of territorial waters at three miles but allowing coastal States to enjoy exclusive fishing rights up to twelve miles. The former was open to serious strategic objections, particularly in respect of access to such bases as Gibraltar, Singapore and Hong Kong. The latter would have a most damaging effect on the British fishing industry.

The Attorney-General said that our position had already been weakened by the declaration of the International Law Commission that international law did not permit the extension of the territorial sea beyond twelve miles. In the light of this implicit admission that territorial waters could properly extend to twelve miles from the shore, he had little hope that it would be possible to persuade the Conference to retain the three-mile limit. It would be necessary, therefore, to seek to ascertain, by discussion with other delegations at the Conference, which of the other possible courses of action was most likely to command support, bearing in mind that, although the majority view of the Conference would not in itself be binding on the nations represented, it would be liable to determine the ruling of the International Court of Justice in the first test case which arose.

In discussion the following points were made:—

(a) The proposal that coastal States should enjoy exclusive fishing rights up to twelve miles from the shore would deprive our own distant-water trawlers of at least 20 per cent. of their catch and would inevitably provoke them to demand substantial financial assistance from the Government. If this proposal was formally adopted by the Conference, there was little hope that we could make bilateral agreements with individual coastal States modifying the twelve-mile limit.

(b) A six-mile limit for all purposes might, therefore, be preferable. The Chiefs of Staff regarded this alternative as acceptable only if it was combined with a reservation of all air and sea passage rights as they existed at present. There could be no certainty, however, that we should succeed in securing such a reservation. Moreover, if we supported a six-mile limit for territorial waters proper, the Conference,
while endorsing this proposal, might also adopt a twelve-mile limit for exclusive fishing rights; and we should then have been out-maneouvred at every point.

(c) On the other hand, it could be argued that there was no legal validity in an assertion of exclusive fishing rights beyond the limits of territorial waters; and our right course, therefore, would be to seek to persuade the other major maritime nations to agree on the minimum extension of the breadth of territorial waters for all purposes.

The Prime Minister summing up the discussion, said that our aim must be to promote a majority decision by the Conference which would inflict the least damage on our own interests, both strategic and economic. Our delegation should be guided primarily by this consideration; and the Cabinet should be given an opportunity to consider the issues further in the light of developments at the Conference.

The Cabinet—

(1) Invited the Attorney-General to be guided, during the forthcoming International Conference on the Law of the Sea, by the points made in their discussion and to report further to the Cabinet before finally committing the Government to the support of any particular policy.

(2) Invited the Foreign Secretary and the Commonwealth Secretary to seek to enlist the support of the foreign and Commonwealth Governments concerned for the arguments which the United Kingdom delegation would advance at the Conference.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1.
18th February, 1958.