CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, 8th September, 1958, at 11 a.m.

Present:

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


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.

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

The Right Hon. HENRY BROOKE, M.P., Minister of Housing and Local Government and Minister for Welsh Affairs.

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. IAIN MACLEOD, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.

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

The Right Hon. LORD MILLS, Minister of Power.

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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 Right Hon. REGINALD MAUDLING, M.P., Paymaster-General.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. ALLAN NOBLE, M.P., Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

Sir HUGH FOOT, Governor of Cyprus (Item 2).

Secretariat:

Mr. B. ST. J. TREND.
Mr. J. S. ORME.
Mr. G. H. BAKER.
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Sir Winston Churchill.

1. The Prime Minister said that on Friday, 12th September, Sir Winston and Lady Churchill would celebrate the 50th anniversary of their marriage. The Cabinet would no doubt think it appropriate that he should send to Sir Winston, on their behalf, a message of congratulation and good wishes on this occasion.

The Cabinet—

Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's proposal.

Cyprus.

(Previous Reference: C.C. (58) 68th Conclusions, Minute 1.)

2. The Prime Minister said that it had now become clear that the Greek Government would not accept any plan for the future administration of Cyprus which involved their sharing the government of the Island with Turkey or acquiescing in the physical presence in Cyprus of any symbol of Turkish authority. In these circumstances the Cabinet faced two major decisions—first, whether we should nevertheless pursue the plan which we had published; second, whether, if we sought to put it into effect, we should allow Archbishop Makarios and the other political exiles to return to the Island.

On the first issue the balance of advantage appeared to lie in continuing to promote our plan. We were committed to the Turkish Government to bring it into force; and, in view of our success in persuading them to abandon their more extreme demands for a partition of Cyprus or for the creation of a major Turkish base in the Island, it would be unwise, by abandoning our plan at this late stage, to compel them to revert to their former intransigence. Moreover, it was impossible to devise any effective alternative to the plan which we had published. It was no longer feasible to seek to introduce the Radcliffe Constitution; the Greek Government were powerless to suggest on their own initiative any constitutional scheme which would be likely to be accepted by the Turkish Government; and the indefinite continuance of British rule in an atmosphere of increasing communal strife could not be contemplated. The only realistic hope of achieving a solution lay in adhering to our plan but in implementing it as unobtrusively as possible. We should therefore abstain from any further declaration of policy and should allow the new arrangements to be seen to come gradually into operation, in the hope that the Greek-Cypriot community and the Greek Government would eventually appreciate the folly of refusing to accept the opportunity to play the major part in the government of Cyprus and of deliberately thwarting a plan which offered them their only safeguard against a partition of the Island.

On this hypothesis the desirability of allowing Archbishop Makarios and the other exiles to return to Cyprus would need to be reassessed. It would no longer be possible to argue, as in our published plan, that, if violence ceased, we should be prepared gradually to bring the state of emergency to an end and to allow the exiles to return, since we could not maintain that violence had ceased or that we were putting the plan into effect on the basis of the partnership between the Greek and Turkish communities which we had originally envisaged. The return of the Archbishop, if it was permitted, would therefore have to be justified by reference to our belief that, in the circumstances in which the plan would now come into operation, he would be less dangerous in Cyprus than he was at present in Athens, even though he would not be required to abjure violence or to co-operate in restoring peace and order in the Island. The Cabinet would need to consider whether this was in fact likely to be the case.
The Governor of Cyprus said that, in his opinion, a fresh outbreak of violence and terrorism was likely to occur in the period immediately ahead, in which the initial stages of our plan would be put into operation. The establishment of the Municipal Commission, the arrival of the representative of the Turkish Government, and the holding of the first elections would represent critical points during this period. Nevertheless, there was some hope that the Greek-Cypriot community and the Greek Government, when faced with the new situation which would thereafter exist, would hesitate finally to forgo the opportunity to play their part in the government of the Island. We must be ready to take advantage of any change of attitude on their part. We could not indefinitely govern the Island in collaboration with a minority amounting to no more than one-fifth of its population and in the face of complete absence of co-operation from the remaining four-fifths. Some means must be found of resuming contact with this majority element; and, as Archbishop Makarios was the only spokesman whom the Greek-Cypriot community would accept, it would be to our advantage to offer him the opportunity to return to the Island. He might well reject this offer; and in that case his prestige, which had grown, rather than diminished, during his exile, should suffer a serious reverse. But if he agreed to return he would forfeit the position of power without responsibility which he at present enjoyed in Athens and would become subject to the growing pressure of the Greek community in Cyprus who were anxious, for both political and economic reasons, that the state of emergency should be brought to an end as rapidly as possible. On balance, it was to our advantage that the Archbishop should be compelled in this way to face his responsibilities rather than be allowed to continue to exert his dangerous influence over the Greek Government in Athens.

In discussion some doubt was expressed about the wisdom of allowing the Archbishop to return to Cyprus. In present circumstances it would not be possible to release the detainees or to terminate the state of emergency as rapidly as we had originally hoped. These measures would now have to be deferred until peaceful conditions had been restored. But there was little chance that the Archbishop would co-operate in establishing such conditions; he was more likely to launch a campaign for the immediate release of the detainees and to provoke bitter resistance to the introduction of our plan. It would be necessary, therefore, to make it clear that, if he returned to Cyprus, he would not be entitled to regard himself as above the ordinary law of Cyprus and beyond the scope of the Emergency Regulations and that, if he reverted to behaviour which was liable to disturb the peace and to subvert public order, he would be arrested or deported for a second time. On the other hand, it would not necessarily be easy to secure evidence which would justify his arrest; nor would it be politically possible to detain him within a short period after his return to Cyprus without provoking the suspicion that our consent to his return had been merely a device to enable us to imprison him again.

The timing of the Archbishop's re-entry into Cyprus would also need to be considered. If we were to gain the maximum of advantage from such a concession, it would be desirable that he should return to the Island in the near future, soon after the representative of the Turkish Government had arrived on 1st October. On the other hand it was doubtful whether public opinion was yet prepared for such a change in our attitude towards the Archbishop. Moreover, there was risk of confusion among the Cypriots about his status and functions if he was allowed to re-enter the Island shortly after the arrival of the representative of the Turkish Government. For these reasons it might be wiser to defer his return until the safeguards for the Turkish-Cypriot community which our plan incorporated had been fully established, i.e., until a date early in 1959.
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The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that it would be premature to seek to reach a decision on these issues without consulting the Turkish Government. It was unlikely that they would formally consent to the return of the Archbishop to Cyprus; but it might be possible to persuade them reluctantly to acquiesce in a concession which appeared to offer the only chance of enabling us to re-establish contact with the Greek-Cypriot community and to overcome Greek resistance to our plan. He had asked H.M. Chargé d’Affaires in Ankara for his personal assessment of the probable Turkish reaction to a proposal on our part to allow the Archbishop to return to Cyprus; and in the light of the reply to this enquiry he would consider what further action should be taken.

The Cabinet—

Took note that the Prime Minister would give further consideration to the desirability of consulting the Government of Turkey about the proposal that Archbishop Makarios and the other political exiles should be allowed to return to Cyprus.

3. The Home Secretary said that the police were confident that they could control the racial disturbances which had recently occurred in Nottingham and in the Notting Hill area of London. It would be necessary, however, to give further consideration to the circumstances which provoked these outbreaks of violence between white and coloured people. They appeared to originate largely in competition for housing and casual employment; and they were aggravated in some cases by disputes about women. It would be desirable to seek to establish some form of control over the emigration of coloured people from their countries of origin, similar to the measures which we had recently persuaded the Governments of India and Pakistan to introduce, and it might be appropriate, as an initial step, to discuss this possibility with the Federal Government of the West Indies. In addition it would be desirable to reconsider the possibility of taking statutory powers to deport undesirable immigrants from other countries of the Commonwealth and of implementing certain of the recommendations of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution.

In discussion the following points were made:—

(a) Unemployment was tending to rise; and, as coloured workers were usually among the first to be discharged, the incidence of unemployment among coloured immigrants, which was already 8 per cent. compared with the national average of about 2 per cent., would become increasingly heavy. This fact should reinforce our approach to the Federal Government.

(b) On the other hand the remittances which the immigrants despatched from this country were of substantial benefit to their relatives and friends in their countries of origin. Any drastic curtailment of these remittances would be liable to provoke demands from the West Indian Governments for further financial assistance for social relief.

(c) It would be desirable to make it clear that, in the view of the Government, law and order must be maintained irrespective of the racial characteristics of individuals. It would also be important to avoid, if possible, any major pronouncement of policy about the principle of Commonwealth immigration. We should continue to deal with this problem empirically and should base our action on the practical considerations of the availability of housing and the capacity of the labour market.
The Cabinet—

(1) Invited the Home Secretary, in consultation with the Colonial Secretary, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Housing and Local Government, to consider an approach to the Federal Government of the West Indies on the control of emigration from West Indian territories on the lines which he had proposed.

(2) Invited the Home Secretary, in consultation with the Lord Chancellor, to give further consideration to the desirability of taking statutory powers to deport undesirable immigrants from other countries of the Commonwealth and of introducing legislation to implement certain of the recommendations of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,
8th September, 1958.