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C.C. (59)
13th Conclusions

Copy No. 32

CABINET

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, S.W.1, on Friday, 27th February, 1959, at 11.15 a.m.

Present :

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| The Right Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Lord Privy Seal (<i>in the Chair</i>). | |
| The Right Hon. VISCOUNT KILMUIR, Lord Chancellor (<i>Item 2</i>). | The Right Hon. D. HEATHCOAT AMORY, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer. |
| 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. VISCOUNT HAILSHAM, Q.C., Lord President of the Council. | The Right Hon. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., Minister of Defence. |
| The Right Hon. Sir DAVID ECCLES, M.P., President of the Board of Trade. | The Right Hon. IAIN MACLEOD, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service. |
| The Right Hon. HENRY BROOKE, M.P., Minister of Housing and Local Government and Minister for Welsh Affairs. | The Right Hon. LORD MILLS, Minister of Power. |
| The Right Hon. JOHN HARE, M.P., Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. | Dr. The Right Hon. CHARLES HILL, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. |

The following were also present :

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| The Right Hon. D. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P., Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. | The Right Hon. EDWARD HEATH, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury. |
| Mr. JULIAN AMERY, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (<i>Item 1</i>). | |

Secretariat :

- Mr. B. ST. J. TREND.
Mr. M. REED.
Mr. J. S. ORME.

SECRET

88

CONTENTS

<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland	3
2	Prime Minister's Visit to Moscow	3

C.C. 13 (59)

Federation of
Rhodesia and
Nyasaland.
(Previous
Reference:
C.C. (59) 12th
Conclusions,
Minute 7.)

1. The Cabinet were informed that the latest evidence suggested that the disturbances in Nyasaland were part of an organised threat to the European community. The Governor intended to declare a state of emergency on the night of the 2nd-3rd March; and additional security forces would be despatched from Southern Rhodesia as rapidly as possible. Meanwhile, action was to be taken that day to recover control of the Fort Hill airfield.

In discussion it was suggested that the state of emergency should preferably be declared at an earlier date than the Governor proposed. It was unlikely, however, that the reinforcements from Southern Rhodesia could be made available before 2nd March; and in the interval premature action against the leaders of the African National Congress might merely aggravate the danger to the white population. Nevertheless the Governor might be invited to consider whether it would be possible to advance to some extent the date of the declaration of a state of emergency.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies to invite the Governor of Nyasaland to reconsider, in the light of their discussion, the timing of the proposed declaration of a state of emergency in Nyasaland.

Prime
Minister's Visit
to Moscow.
(Previous
Reference:
C.C. (59) 12th
Conclusions,
Minute 2.)

*2. The Cabinet had before them telegrams Nos. 373, 374, 377 and 378 from the Prime Minister's delegation in Moscow. These telegrams indicated that the resumed discussions between the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Soviet leaders on 25th and 26th February had taken place in an atmosphere of coolness. The Prime Minister had re-emphasised that the Western Governments were united in their determination to maintain their rights in Berlin; but he had also stressed their desire to promote a peaceful settlement of this and other problems by means of practical negotiations in the near future. In reply Mr. Khrushchev had maintained his intransigent attitude on the subject of Berlin and the future of Germany; he had expressed the suspicion that the policy of the Western Powers was dictated by their determination to attack the Soviet Union at the moment which they judged most favourable; and he had declared that the Soviet Government would resist with all the means at their command any attempt by the Allied Governments to impose their will on the Soviet Union by threats of war. He had added, however, that the Soviet Government were prepared to enter into negotiations with the Western Governments at any time. If the date of 27th May, which the Soviet Union had suggested, was unacceptable, a later date could be arranged. The Soviet Government would also be prepared to modify to some extent their proposals in connexion with Berlin. In particular, they would be prepared to guarantee its status as a free city and to send Soviet troops as a symbolic force to join Western troops in ensuring access by the Western Powers to West Berlin.

In discussion there was general agreement that a further message should be sent to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary expressing the Cabinet's support for the firm attitude which they were adopting towards the Soviet leaders. It was not impossible that Mr. Khrushchev's offer to adjust the date of the projected negotiations and to despatch Soviet troops to guarantee the status of the Western sectors of Berlin foreshadowed a more accommodating attitude on the part of the Soviet Government, which might become more apparent in

* Previously recorded in a Confidential Annex.

the final stages of the discussions. But there could be no certainty of this; and on the assumption that the Soviet Government might adhere to their apparent intention to force the issue on Berlin, the Cabinet would need to give further consideration to their policy on the German problem after the return of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. In the meantime, the other members of the Commonwealth should be informed of the substance of the further discussions in Moscow, and appropriate guidance should be given to the United Kingdom Press. It should be emphasised that it had never been the purpose of the Prime Minister's visit to enter into formal negotiations with the Soviet Government.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Home Secretary to arrange for a further message to be sent to the Prime Minister in Moscow on the lines indicated in their discussion.

*Cabinet Office, S.W.1,
27th February, 1959.*

E.R.