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C.C. (59)
35th Conclusions

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CABINET

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1,
on Monday, 15th June, 1959, at 10 a.m.*

Present:

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

The Right Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P.,
Secretary of State for the Home
Department and Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT KILMUIR,
Lord Chancellor.

The Right Hon. SELWYN LLOYD, Q.C.,
M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign
Affairs.

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

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. R. G. MENZIES,
Prime Minister of Australia.

The Right Hon. EDWARD HEATH, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury.

Secretariat:

The Right Hon. Sir NORMAN BROOK.
Mr. F. A. BISHOP.

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(C.C. 35 (59))

Mr. Menzies.

1. *The Prime Minister* said that he was glad to welcome the Prime Minister of Australia. The Cabinet would greatly value the benefit of his counsel on the international problems which confronted them at this time.

Germany.
Foreign
Ministers'
Meeting.

(Previous
Reference:
C.C. (59) 34th
Conclusions,
Minute 2.)

2. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (C. (59) 102) reporting on the situation reached at the meeting of Foreign Ministers at Geneva.

The Foreign Secretary said that the discussions had made it clear that there was no prospect of agreement on the German problem as a whole, unless the immediate question of Berlin could first be resolved. He had therefore been working for an agreement which, while recognising that the Western Powers and the Soviet Union held opposing views on the juridical aspects of the Berlin question, would provide for improved practical arrangements covering the position of Western troops in Berlin, the control of espionage and propaganda activities there, and the right of free access for military and civilian traffic. Under such an agreement these practical arrangements (which might include East German operation of the control system for access provided that the Soviet Union accepted the ultimate responsibility) might continue until the reunification of Germany.

Some progress had been made towards an agreement of this sort. But on 9th June the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Gromyko, had put forward a plan which, while accepting all the concessions which the Western Powers were prepared to make, included a time-limit of twelve months after which, if Germany were not reunified in the manner prescribed by the Soviet Government, the latter would sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany. This reintroduction of the threat of an ultimatum had made the French Government, and also to some extent the United States Government, less ready to make the concessions necessary to reach an agreement. Although Mr. Gromyko had since denied that the Soviet proposals were intended to constitute an ultimatum, our Allies were inclined to the view that unless real progress could be made in the next few days the Geneva meeting should be adjourned.

The United States delegation were, however, working on a possible new approach, under which a Four-Power Commission would be established to discuss measures for the phased reunification of Germany, with free elections at an appropriate stage, and to examine questions connected with the preparation and conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. This Commission would report to the four Foreign Ministers in a year's time, and during that period the existing arrangements for the level of forces in Berlin, and for access, would be maintained and the juridical positions of the Western Powers and the Soviet Union would remain unchanged. In these circumstances the question arose whether any further progress could be made by the Foreign Ministers, and how these discussions should be handled in relation to a possible Summit meeting.

In discussion the following points were made:—

(a) Public opinion would regard a long adjournment of the Geneva meeting as equivalent to a failure. Moreover, a long adjournment would weaken the negotiating position of the Western Powers. On the other hand, the discussions at Geneva could not usefully be continued for much longer.

(b) There would be no advantage in taking up other substantial issues such as disarmament or European security, at this meeting of Foreign Ministers. This would only widen the area of disagreement.

(c) Although the latest proposals of the United States delegation were less rigid than their original position, they would need modification if they were to have any chance of being accepted by the Soviet Union.

(d) Agreement on practical arrangements for Berlin, either on the basis of a continuation of the present arrangements pending the report of a Commission as suggested in the latest American proposals, or on the lines indicated by the Foreign Secretary, could be presented as sufficient progress to justify a Summit meeting. For this purpose it would not be necessary for the Foreign Ministers to reach agreement on all details. Alternative proposals could be submitted for consideration by the Heads of Governments.

(e) Apart from dealing with the question of Berlin, the main purpose of a Summit meeting would be to reach agreement on procedures for handling other international issues.

Mr. Menzies said that it would be a mistake to underestimate the value of the Geneva meeting as a means of demonstrating the fairness and objectivity of the Western case to international public opinion, especially in the uncommitted countries. There seemed to be little prospect of reaching agreement on the juridical aspects of the Berlin question, and it would therefore be best for the Foreign Ministers to content themselves with stating the two views without further effort to reconcile them. On that basis it might still be possible to reach agreement on some practical arrangements for Berlin which might last for several years. Such an outcome would at any rate make it possible to discuss the larger issues subsequently, without the overhanging threat of a crisis in Berlin. If there were to be a Summit meeting, it was important that it should be held at the initiative of the West.

The Prime Minister said that it was the general view of the Cabinet that we should continue to work for an agreement at Geneva on practical arrangements for Berlin, either on the lines indicated by the Foreign Secretary or in accordance with some modification of the latest American proposals. It was important that any plan the West put forward should be demonstrably practical and sensible. For this purpose we should be ready to continue the discussions at Geneva for a week or ten days. If a tentative agreement could then be reached, it would lead naturally to a Summit meeting. But if no basis for an agreement could be found and the discussions reached a deadlock, Ministers would need to consider carefully what the next steps should be. We had made it clear to the United States and French Governments that, in our view, if the meeting of Foreign Ministers ended without any agreement, this would not preclude a Summit meeting.

The Cabinet—

Took note of the Foreign Secretary's statement and invited him to be guided, in the further stages of the Foreign Ministers' meeting at Geneva, by the points which had been made in the Cabinet's discussion.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,

15th June, 1959.

E.R.

