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1st Conclusions

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CABINET

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at Admiralty House, S.W. 1, on
Wednesday, 3rd January, 1962, at 11.30 a.m.*

Present :

The Right Hon. HAROLD MACMILLAN, M.P., Prime Minister	
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT KILMUIR, Lord Chancellor	The Right Hon. THE EARL OF HOME, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HAILSHAM, Q.C., Lord President of the Council and Minister for Science	The Right Hon. HENRY BROOKE, M.P., Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General
The Right Hon. JOHN MACLAY, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland	The Right Hon. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations
The Right Hon. IAIN MACLEOD, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	The Right Hon. Sir DAVID ECCLES, M.P., Minister of Education
The Right Hon. PETER THORNEYCROFT, M.P., Minister of Aviation	The Right Hon. LORD MILLS, Minister without Portfolio
The Right Hon. REGINALD MAUDLING, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies	The Right Hon. JOHN HARE, M.P., Minister of Labour
Dr. The Right Hon. CHARLES HILL, M.P., Minister of Housing and Local Government and Minister for Welsh Affairs	The Right Hon. ERNEST MARPLES, M.P., Minister of Transport

The Right Hon. CHRISTOPHER SOAMES,
M.P., Minister of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food

Also present :

The Right Hon. MARTIN REDMAYNE,
M.P., Parliamentary Secretary,
Treasury

Secretariat :

The Right Hon. Sir NORMAN BROOK
Mr. A. L. M. CARY
Mr. W. GERAGHTY

SECRET

SECRET

CONTENTS

<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	Prospect of 1962	3
2	Bermuda Meeting, 1961	3
3	Germany Berlin	3
4	Nuclear Tests	4

SECRET

SECRET

3

C.C. 1 (62)

Prospect of
1962

1. Welcoming his colleagues to their first meeting in 1962 the *Prime Minister* said that in the coming year they would have to face a formidable number of difficult problems. The size of the questions for solution—whether in foreign affairs, in Commonwealth relations or in economic policy—was a measure of the opportunities for social and political improvement which their solution would open up. Large views were needed, and he hoped that his colleagues would look at their Departmental problems in the context of these broader issues. He looked forward to 1962 as a challenging year, which might turn out better in the event than seemed probable at the moment.

The Lord Chancellor expressed, on behalf of the Cabinet, their gratitude to the *Prime Minister* for his leadership in the past and their loyalty and support in the tasks which lay ahead.

Bermuda
Meeting, 1961

2. *The Prime Minister* informed the Cabinet of his impressions of the discussions which he had held with President Kennedy during their meeting in Bermuda on 21st and 22nd December. This was his fourth meeting with President Kennedy, and on each occasion he had been increasingly impressed by the President's ability and candour. It was encouraging to find that, on so many questions of common concern, he and the President were so largely in agreement. It was equally satisfactory that, where their views diverged, they could discuss their differences without embarrassment or risk of misunderstanding. This meeting had confirmed his impression that we had succeeded in establishing with the new Administration in the United States a sound basis of understanding and co-operation.

The *Prime Minister* said that the particular questions discussed at the Bermuda meeting would be brought forward separately for consideration by the Cabinet, as might be necessary.

Germany
Berlin
(Previous
Reference:
C.C. (61) 75th
Conclusions,
Minute 4)

3. *The Prime Minister* said that he had been encouraged to find, in the discussions in Bermuda, that President Kennedy was determined to enter into negotiation with the Soviet Government about Berlin. He would not be deflected by the intransigence of General de Gaulle: he believed that if the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany agreed that there was a basis for negotiation, France would eventually come into line. American thinking on Berlin was now much closer to ours than it had been six months ago.

The Foreign Secretary said that agreement had been reached at Bermuda on the instructions to be sent to Mr. Thompson, the United States Ambassador in Moscow, for his opening talks with Mr. Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister. These should give Mr. Thompson enough scope for three or four meetings, extending over some weeks, and should enable him to judge whether the Soviet Union really wanted to reach a settlement. If these conversations were successful, it was envisaged that a meeting of Foreign Ministers would follow. If they failed, it was President Kennedy's view that we should still work for negotiations, possibly culminating in a meeting of Heads of Governments, at which we should try to find at least some *modus vivendi*.

In Berlin itself, the situation in the United States sector remained somewhat dangerous. The political adviser to the United States Commandant had recently been prevented from entering East Berlin because, although wearing civilian clothes, he had refused to produce his identity documents. The Commandant, wearing uniform, had

SECRET

SECRET

then unsuccessfully attempted to escort him across the boundary. As a reprisal the Russian Commandant had been refused access to the United States sector of Berlin, although the United States authorities had raised no objection to his being allowed access to the British sector. Nevertheless these were indications that both President Kennedy and the United States Secretary of State had come to appreciate the risks of provocative action in Berlin and were prepared to exercise firmer control over the United States authorities in the city.

The Cabinet—

Took note of these statements by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

Nuclear
Tests

(Previous
Reference:
C.C. (61) 63rd
Conclusions,
Minute 4)

*4. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Prime Minister (C. (62) 1) on nuclear tests.

The Prime Minister said that during their meeting in Bermuda on 21st and 22nd December he and the Foreign Secretary had held a full discussion with President Kennedy and the United States Secretary of State on the question whether the United States should conduct a further programme of nuclear tests in the atmosphere. Sir William Penney, Deputy Chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, and Dr. Seaborg, Chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission, had submitted a considered assessment of the recent series of Russian tests. This suggested that there was a strong military case for a resumption of testing by the United States if they were to avoid the risk of falling behind the Soviet Union, especially in the anti-missile field. If a further programme of tests were to be undertaken by the United States, it would be convenient if part of it could be mounted at Christmas Island, though certain high altitude tests would be made elsewhere. President Kennedy shared his own reluctance to authorise further tests in the atmosphere, but he was likely to sanction them in the spring of 1962 unless by then there had been some substantial improvement in East-West relations. The President was therefore anxious that the preliminary preparations should be made so that, when a decision was taken, the tests could be undertaken without delay. He hoped that the United Kingdom Government would be ready to support a United States decision to resume testing and that they would be willing to make Christmas Island available for this purpose.

The Prime Minister said that he had expressed to the President his strong view that testing should not be resumed until a further attempt had been made to halt the nuclear arms race. He had therefore suggested that the President and he should jointly consider the possibility of taking some fresh initiative in the field of disarmament. He had promised to let the President have his detailed thoughts on this as soon as possible. Meanwhile, he could not agree to the use of Christmas Island for nuclear tests until he had consulted his Cabinet colleagues, but officials might begin to consider the terms of a formal agreement for financial and administrative matters without prejudice to a final decision. He had also informed the President that he recognised that if the Cabinet agreed to the use of Christmas Island, it would be unreasonable for the United Kingdom Government to claim more than a right to be consulted about the final decision.

Since his return from Bermuda, he had given further thought to these questions. Although it was difficult to resist the conclusion that a resumption of tests was justified within the terms of the declaration which he and the President had made on 31st October and

* Previously recorded in a Confidential Annex.

SECRET

5

C.C. 1 (62)

1st November, he feared that if these tests were held they would open a new phase in the nuclear arms race. It was by no means certain that a system of defence against missiles would be practicable; the difficulties were immense and the cost enormous, certainly beyond the means of this country and probably crippling for either the United States or the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the advantage which either country would gain from being the first to perfect a missile defence system was such that neither could afford to risk letting the other get ahead. It would, however, be far better for both, and for the world at large, if they were to agree to direct their energies and resources to more productive purposes. Our close collaboration with the United States in nuclear defence, our important contribution to the strategic deterrent and our control of Christmas Island gave us a unique opportunity, though a fleeting one, for taking the initiative in suggesting that a fresh attempt should be made to secure an effective international agreement on disarmament. It was possible that Mr. Khrushchev might find such an approach attractive; for he did not himself accept the Marxist doctrine that war between capitalism and Communism was ultimately inevitable and it seemed likely that his primary concern was to improve the standard of living of the Russian people.

The Prime Minister said that in these circumstances he had prepared a letter to President Kennedy suggesting that, before the Western Powers resumed nuclear testing, a further attempt should be made to improve East-West relations, to make progress towards disarmament and to break out of the vicious circle of the nuclear arms race. To this end he and President Kennedy might invite Mr. Khrushchev to concert with them (and perhaps also the French) methods of ensuring that the 18-Power Conference on Disarmament, which was due to begin in the middle of March, would make practical progress. It might be desirable to make it clear that the decision whether or not to resume nuclear testing would be taken in the light of the Soviet response to this initiative. The decision about Christmas Island might be announced at the same time as the broad lines of such a disarmament proposal; but, in addition to the public statement, a more detailed private communication should be sent to Mr. Khrushchev urging him to co-operate in giving impetus to the work of the Disarmament Conference. It would be necessary to inform General de Gaulle and Dr. Adenauer of what we had in mind. The public statement could be on the following lines:

(i) That the present technical situation justified and even required a further series of nuclear tests by the West for purely military reasons. On this basis the United Kingdom Government had agreed that Christmas Island should be made ready for a further series of tests to be undertaken by the United States authorities, though the final decision to hold this series would not be taken without further Anglo-American consultation in the light of international developments.

(ii) That we nevertheless deplored the necessity for tests and were profoundly concerned for the future if a halt could not be called in the nuclear arms race.

(iii) That we were determined to make a further effort to break out of this vicious circle and were making proposals to the Soviet Government on disarmament (of which a short outline could be given) and that the final decision to make the tests would be dependent on the reception given to this initiative.

The Cabinet then considered the draft letter, copies of which were handed round at the meeting. In discussion the following points were made:

(a) There was general agreement that a determined effort should be made to prevent the opening of a new phase in the nuclear arms race, and that the United States request for the use of Christmas Island

SECRET

gave us a special opportunity of intervening to this end. There might, however, be difficulties of timing. The President wished the preparations at Christmas Island to be started as soon as possible, and as soon as it was known that this work was in progress it would be assumed that we had agreed in principle that tests should be resumed. It would not therefore be easy for the suggested approach to Mr. Khrushchev to be made in time for him to give it reasonable consideration, before we had in fact committed ourselves to a resumption of testing. On the other hand, it seemed certain that if the Americans decided that they must resume testing, they would do so even if we refused them the use of Christmas Island; and in that event we should have lost our special status for proposing negotiations with the Soviet Union.

(b) The inclusion of the French in the discussions to concert measures for ensuring the success of the 18-Power Conference on Disarmament, especially if it led to a request that the Chinese should also take part, would add to the difficulties of reaching agreement. It could not be expected that these difficulties could be overcome by using the resumption of tests by the West as a threat, and it would be advisable to word our proposals so to avoid giving the impression that this was our intention.

(c) It might prove difficult to reconcile the suggestion that the final decision to resume tests should remain with the President and the statement made by the Prime Minister on 31st October that he must be personally satisfied that tests were necessary. Any announcement might therefore have to take the form that there had been joint agreement that tests should take place, but that a further attempt would be made to reach an international agreement on disarmament before they were finally authorised.

(d) It seemed clear that the Russians had made a substantial move towards changing the balance of nuclear power. It was not equally clear that the tests which the Americans had in mind were those best designed to close the gap; it might well be that they were simply those which could be mounted most quickly.

The Prime Minister said that if at this stage we were to refuse to make Christmas Island available, we should not thereby prevent the Americans from holding tests and we should have lost the opportunity to take a political initiative. It would not, however, be possible for us to dissociate ourselves from American tests held elsewhere than at Christmas Island without grave damage to the Anglo-American relationship and in particular to our arrangements for co-operation in nuclear defence.

The Prime Minister then suggested that the Cabinet should resume their discussion of this question at a further meeting that afternoon, when he would arrange for Sir William Penney to be available to assist them in their consideration of the technical case for resuming nuclear testing.

The Cabinet—

Agreed to resume their discussion of this question at a further meeting later in the day.

*Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,
3rd January, 1962.*