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CABINET

FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCEMemorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

I will try to set out on paper for my colleagues my impressions of the present situation in the Geneva Conference.

2. We spent the first fourteen days solemnly expounding our positions on German reunification. It could not be called a debate; it was a series of prepared speeches delivered in a large chamber containing about 120 people. 800 copies of each statement were delivered promptly to the attendant journalists. There were two or three dinner parties during this period at which there was some private discussion, but without much profit.

3. Then came the intermission caused by Mr. Dulles' death.

4. Since then, we have spent fourteen days meeting privately at one another's villas about a dozen people in all being present, without any Germans. There has been an occasional formal session at Soviet request to remind us that the East Germans are in Geneva. The private meetings have been conducted in a friendly atmosphere. There have been real discussions and remarkable secrecy about their substance.

5. These private discussions were concerned with Berlin, and were concentrated on four points:-

- (a) the juridical position, or Western rights as it has come to be called;
- (b) the number and status of Western troops in Berlin;
- (c) espionage and propaganda activities in Berlin; and
- (d) the problem of access.

6. My purpose has been to get agreement upon these matters along the following lines:-

(a) As to the juridical position, there could be a statement that the Western Powers maintain their rights both basic and contractual, which cannot be extinguished by unilateral action by the Soviet Union: however this might be, both sides agree upon certain improved arrangements for West Berlin and access thereto, which by agreement should continue until the reunification of Germany. At the beginning of our talks the other delegations were very far from accepting such a formulation. My impression now is that they have come some way towards it.

(b) As to the position of Western troops in Berlin, I have sought agreement on the basis of our troops remaining there with a ceiling fixed as to their numbers and perhaps some limitations on their equipment (for example nuclear weapons). As to the numbers of troops, I think that the Western Ministers would accept an overall ceiling of 7,500, provided that agreement to this reduction would be part of an agreement which would strengthen rather than weaken West Berlin morale. Although the idea of a reduction has been vaguely mentioned, no figures have been put to Mr. Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister. Mr. Gromyko still presses for the admission of Soviet troops into West Berlin. I feel, however, that provided the question of status can be satisfactorily presented from the Soviet point of view, the Soviet will agree to a limited number of Western troops remaining, without a Soviet contingent.

(c) With regard to espionage and propaganda activities, my purpose has been to get some reciprocal declaration on this matter, together perhaps with the acceptance of some quadripartite body possibly with "advisers" from East and West Berlin to hear complaints. We must insist on a measure of reciprocity; we have to be careful about the extent to which we permit interference by the Soviet Government in the affairs of West Berlin. There is really already agreement in principle about this: the difficulties will arise if and when the attempt is made to work the details out in practice. The United States delegation have not made as much objection to all this as I had expected, but they regard the retention of R.I.A.S. (the United States radar station) in West Berlin as vital for the morale of the West Berliners.

(d) With regard to access, I have been seeking an agreement reaffirming the rights of free access for military and civilian traffic of all sorts, expressed in clear terms including a provision that they will continue until reunification. For such an agreement, I would be prepared to accept East German operation of the control system provided the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics guarantee the rights and accept the ultimate responsibility. I have not been at all moved by questions as to who stamps what documents, and I have told my United States and French colleagues that no-one is going to fight or even risk a war on that sort of question.

7. The United States and French thinking in Geneva has developed considerably towards our position. Provided the West does not have to make these agreements with the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (D.D.R.) as a co-signatory, and provided complaints are not to be dealt with directly with the D.D.R. Government, I do not expect difficulty with the United States or France. The West Germans have kept fairly quiet, but I infer that they also have come some way towards our view. With regard to the Soviet position, I believe that if they are satisfied on other points, they will guarantee the freedom of access: they will accept the association of the D.D.R. by some separate declaration and will help to save the Western face over the way in which the inevitable direct dealings with the East Germans are presented.

8. The crux is whether the Soviet Government can present any agreement made as a change in the status of West Berlin, and the West can present it as a maintenance of their rights. I have tried to persuade Mr. Gromyko that it is what actually happens that matters, and that what we have been talking about would in fact amount to a change. Therefore, he need not make all this fuss about status.

9. Up to the end of a private conversation with Mr. Gromyko on Tuesday, 9th June I was not without hope of achieving a composite agreement on the above lines.

10. Then at the private meeting of the four Ministers on Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Gromyko produced his latest plan. It pocketed all the Western concessions about Berlin, but said that the modified arrangements could only last for twelve months. During that twelve months the Federal German Republic and the D.D.R. must negotiate, in the manner prescribed by the Soviet, the reunification of Germany. If they fail, the Soviet Government will sign a separate peace treaty with the D.D.R. That will lead to mounting pressure on the Allies to leave West Berlin and no doubt greater difficulties for the West Berliners.

11. This plan was repeated at a formal session on 10th June and rejected by the four Western Powers.

12. Mr. Herter, the United States Secretary of State, went with our approval to see Mr. Gromyko on Thursday to say that we could not continue to negotiate under the threat of a time limit. Mr. Gromyko speedily climbed down in private and rather less graciously in public. He made a tough speech about ending the occupation status.

13. All this has brought corresponding rigidity from the French and to a considerable extent the United States. It will now be much more difficult to get them to make any concessions over form or substance. Their view is that if Mr. Gromyko does not show willingness to make real progress on Monday or Tuesday, these talks should be proclaimed a failure and be adjourned for at least one month. M. Couve de Murville, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, says it should be two months.

14. The following questions therefore present themselves:-

What further effort should we make to salvage something from these present talks and for how long?

Is there any new approach to be made?

Is there any point in trying to get the Conference back to broader issues than Berlin, e.g. disarmament, security zones, non-aggression pact, etc.?

If these talks cannot be salvaged in what form should they end?

Should the West play for a break-down on the ground that the Soviet proposals of 9th June have spoilt the prospect of agreement?

Should we seek an adjournment on the ground that the dust must be allowed to settle after the Soviet threat?

If so, for how long should the adjournment be?

What about the summit?

What do we expect to happen there in the light of what has taken place at Geneva?

When do we want it to take place?

S.L.

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E.R.