

**The Labour Government  
and the End of Empire  
1945-1951**

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BRITISH DOCUMENTS ON THE END OF EMPIRE

General Editors D J Murray and S R Ashton  
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Series A Volume 2

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# The Labour Government and the End of Empire 1945–1951

Editor  
RONALD HYAM

Part III  
STRATEGY, POLITICS AND  
CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

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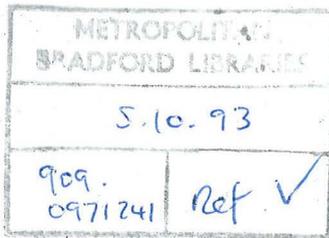
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the End of Empire 1945–1951

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## Abbreviations: part III

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AKEL	Reform Party of Working People (Communist Party of Cyprus)
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States [Pact]
BDEEP	British Documents on the End of Empire Project
BMEO	British Middle East Office
BSA	British South Africa
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CD(&W)	Colonial Development and Welfare (Act)
C-in-C	commander-in-chief
CM	Cabinet conclusions (minutes), Labour government, 1945–1951
CMG	Companion of St Michael and St George
CO	Colonial Office
COS	Chiefs of Staff
CP	Cabinet memoranda, Labour government, 1945–1951
CPP	Convention People's Party (Gold Coast)
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CSD	Colonial Service Division
DO	Dominions Office (also a reference for Defence Committee)
EAM	National Liberation Front (Greece)
ECA	Economic Co-operation Administration (United States)
FO	Foreign Office
gov	governor
gov-gen	governor-general
govt	government
GHQ	general headquarters
GOC	general officer commanding
GR	general reconnaissance
HMG	His Majesty's Government

<i>H of C Debs</i>	<i>House of Commons Debates</i> (Hansard)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
JPS	Joint Planning Staff (COS)
KBE	Knight Commander of the British Empire
KMT	Kuomintang
LAA	light anti-aircraft (battery)
L of C	line(s) of communication
LSE	London School of Economics
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
memo	memorandum
MP	member of parliament
MT	military transport
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NCO	non-commissioned officer
ODC	Oversea Defence Committee
PM	prime minister
PNP	People's National Party (Jamaica)
PRO	Public Record Office/Public Relations Office(r)
PWD	Public Works Department
RAF	Royal Air Force
SEAC	South-East Asia Command
S of S	secretary of state
tel	telegram
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
UNA	United Nations Assembly
UN(O)	United Nations (Organisation)
USA	United States of America
WANS	West African National Secretariat
WO	War Office
VCIGS	vice-chief of the imperial general staff

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## CHAPTER 5

**Political and Constitutional Policy**

Document numbers 195–272

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8 Jan 1946

[Nyasaland]: minutes by A B Cohen and Mr Creech Jones [nd] on progress with provincial councils

On the file above I have commented on the progress made with regard to Provincial African Councils in [Northern Rhodesia]. The progress has been more rapid in Nyasaland and, as the Secretary of State has already announced a central Council for the whole Protectorate is to be set up this year.

I feel sure that the Secretary of State would be justified in congratulating the Governor and the Nyasaland Administration on the progress made. But there is one point which has been troubling me for some time with regard to the Nyasaland Councils . . . . The number of educated Africans being included on the Councils is necessarily limited and an attempt which we made when the Councils were set up to secure increased representation for this element was successfully resisted by the Governor. We, however, got Sir E. Richards<sup>1</sup> to say at the time that he would gradually increase the number of educated Africans on the Provincial Councils. It is evident from the letter of the 23rd May, 1945 opposite that the educated Africans are not having much say and that the enlightened Councillors who accompany the Chiefs can only whisper their comments, which then have to be relayed by the Chiefs, who are often not sufficiently intelligent to convey them adequately.

We must not of course refer to this correspondence, but I think that it would be an appropriate moment to emphasise to the Governor in an official despatch the importance of providing adequately for the educated natives. We are in the early stages in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia of developing a system of democratic representation on lines fitted to the requirements of a primitive society. The degree to which educated men can be brought in will determine future progress. If educated men can be given a proper say, progress will be more rapid and more effective, provided of course that they keep close to the people and do not form a race of politicians apart. If on the other hand the educated element is excluded, a dissatisfied section of the community will grow up, as has happened in Buganda. We must stop this.

How far we shall succeed in carrying the Governor with us I do not know. But it has been my experience in the past that he usually accepts points put to him strongly

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edmund Richards, gov, 1942–1948.

and I suggest therefore that we should send a despatch as in the draft herewith.

A.B.C.  
8.1.46

I agree with Mr Cohen's view about the importance of bringing into responsible work the educated Africans as well as the Elders & Chiefs.

A.C.J.  
[nd]

**196** CO 525/205/44248/46, no 26

18 Apr 1946

[Nyasaland]: changes in Nyasaland constitution: minute by Mr Creech Jones on a draft despatch

[A despatch on the lines of the minutes above (195) was sent from the secretary of state on 26 Jan 1946. It urged the view that unless traditional chiefs and the more educated and progressive elements in Nyasaland could co-operate closely, 'development must inevitably be lopsided' (CO 525/205/44248/46, no 22). Another despatch was sent on 4 May 1946 (*ibid*, no 29) which took account of this further minute by Creech Jones. Cohen did not think they could go back on European bodies being left to select their own members, nor would there be any advantage: the present European members of the Legislative Council strongly regarded themselves as representing the whole population, including Africans, and in Cohen's view, this was 'undoubtedly justified – they do look at things from the broad point of view in so far as they are capable of doing so . . .'; on the other hand Africans very naturally wanted their own representation and should have it; but then so must Indians, and the result then inevitably would be that Europeans would tend to take a less broad view; this was an 'unavoidable disadvantage', he thought (minute, 18 Apr 1946, commenting on Creech Jones's minute printed here).]

[*Mr Cohen*]

This paper was delayed before coming to my Office, but before the draft letter is agreed, I would like consideration given to a point of view which deserves some consideration in the drafting of a despatch as important as this.

Nyasaland is an African Protectorate, and the giving to it of an unofficial majority should enable us, in these circumstances, to emphasize an aspect of constitutional development which is too frequently overlooked. The broadening of responsibility of the unofficial element in the Legislature should not mean an expansion by the Europeans residing or trading in Nyasaland of their sectional and racial interest, but the opportunity of affording the unofficial element a chance to play a larger part in legislation for the general good, its representatives being drawn (for the Council remains unelected and the Territory still a Protectorate) with regard to the effective contribution the various parts of the population can make to that general good.

This may be somewhat idealistic, but it is important that at this stage and until the people can assume representative and responsible government, its essential rightness should be recognised, the effective contribution being adjusted as the various parties become more politically conscious and politically competent. For these reasons I suggest reconsideration of paragraph 4.

While it may be necessary that the racial groups should have on the Council persons drawn from these groups, I think it is unfortunate that these groups should be regarded as interests and their representatives as representatives of interests because such corporation tends to crystallize and perpetuate communal representa-

tion, and for the representatives to promote sectional rather than Protectorate interests. This point is particularly important in an African Protectorate, and even more so when in the Legislature Europeans, a small minority of the population, receive a preponderance of seats as against the vast majority of the African population. The Europeans nominated should be selected to promote the best interests of all the inhabitants of the territory, and we should not give a small minority an "interest" right to settle the legislation of the Colony and its economic and financial arrangements (with an unofficial majority the Governor cannot too frequently invoke his reserve powers).

I would like also to refer to (a) the suggestion of separate representatives for the Anglo-African community, and (b) the proposal that interests other than race groups should be represented directly by nomination by the Governor. My objections are the same as set out in the above paragraphs. As to (b) we must avoid syndicalist representation altogether. As to (a) let the Governor draw someone from this Anglo-African group by all means to be a public representative. True, this person will see that his group are safeguarded by government, but his interest must be the general public good. In the case of (b), the syndicates, they must not be represented. The Governor should be able to nominate persons for these odd places whose experience and qualifications peculiarly fit them for service on the Legislative body in the interest of the whole Protectorate, and because such experience and qualification are not present on the body. But such odd places must not be filled necessarily from this or that Association, and none of these "interests" must have a prescriptive right to a seat. With changing circumstances the Governor may want other experience on the body and he must not be limited in his selection by being tied to concede representation to particular "interests".

The above paragraphs are not in conflict with the proposal for African representation from the Protectorate African Council. One of the purposes for such a Council is clearly to select representatives for the Legislative Council. Experience will confirm whether this is the right and best method, indirect as it is; though meantime we should try out this way. Nevertheless, I should like to be sure that the Protectorate African Council represents urban as well as rural Africans, and that the method employed is calculated to provide some Africans who are not Chiefs or some Africans who belong to the young and educated classes. Otherwise, there is a case for considering drawing on the African Congress for one or more of the African representatives.

In paragraph 4(d), a proposal is made as to the distribution of the races on the Legislative Council. Before endorsing this distribution, I should like to be made aware of the population of these various groups. Your analysis of the European electorate is illuminating.

I am in agreement that as yet the electoral system cannot be introduced & proper franchise rolls made. I am still uncertain whether some of the bodies named are sufficiently co-extensive & whether their choice should bind the Governor to appoint them.

**197** CO 525/205/44248/46, no 29

4 May 1946

[Nyasaland]: despatch no 61 from Mr Hall to Sir E Richards (Nyasaland) on constitutional changes

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your secret despatch of the 15th February regarding proposals for changes in the constitution of Nyasaland. I have studied with interest the communications on this subject from the Nyasaland Chamber of Commerce and the Convention of Associations of Nyasaland. I note with approval your proposal to appoint a small committee to draft recommendations for the reconstitution of the Legislative Council and I shall await these recommendations and your comments on them with much interest.

2. Meanwhile you state that it would help the Committee in its work if I could give you my views on certain points which you mention, so that they may be aware of the scope within which constitutional reform is regarded as practicable. I shall take the opportunity at the same time of commenting on certain other points arising from the observations of the Convention of Associations.

### 3. *Unofficial majority*

Subject to my being satisfied as to the composition of the new Legislative Council, I shall be quite prepared to agree to the establishment of an unofficial majority. I regard the creation of an unofficial majority as the logical development in Nyasaland, provided always that this is secured, as has been contemplated in previous correspondence, by the inclusion of African members of the Legislative Council. I appreciate also that it will be necessary to provide for the representation of the Indians, and the Indian Chamber of Commerce have already been informed, in accordance with my secret despatch No. 125 of the 10th September, that the claims of the Indian community in Nyasaland to have a representative on the Legislative Council will not be overlooked when the membership of the Council is increased. The creation of an unofficial majority would of course be accompanied by the granting to the Governor under the constitution of the usual reserve powers.

### 4. *Composition of a new Council*

I have no wish to pre-judge the recommendations of the Committee regarding the composition of the new Council, but the following comments on the views expressed by the Convention of Associations may be helpful:—

(a) In the first place I have a general comment to make to which I attach much importance. With the broadening of the unofficial representation on the Legislature and the grant of an unofficial majority I should regard it as essential that, to the maximum possible extent, the unofficial members should consider themselves not as the nominees of sectional interests, but as representatives of the Protectorate as a whole. I am aware that hitherto the unofficial members, all of whom are Europeans at present, have so regarded themselves and in their deliberations have addressed themselves to the general interests of the Protectorate rather than to the narrower interests of the European Community only. Now that it is proposed to include Africans and Indians on the Legislative Council, it may be more difficult for the Europeans to maintain this attitude, but it is none the less important that they, as well as the Africans and Indians, should take a broad rather than a

sectional view. While therefore, it will no doubt be necessary to lay down in the constitution the numbers of representatives of the three races, yet I consider that these representatives must be encouraged by every possible means to regard it as their duty to look at the problems which come before them from the point of view of the good of the whole community in Nyasaland. At the same time, and with the same object in view, while, as I have said, the numbers of representatives of each race must no doubt be laid down initially in the constitution, it should be recognised that this must be subject to review at regular, if not too frequent, intervals, so that the composition of the Council can periodically be reconsidered in the light of the effective contribution which each section of the population can make to the general good. Nyasaland has hitherto been conspicuous for the absence of inter-racial friction, and now that it is proposed to reform the Legislative Council with representatives of all three races, it is in my view, with which I am sure that you will agree, most important that every possible step should be taken to maintain this happy state of affairs.

(b) From this point of view there is much to be said for the proposal to include among the unofficial members of the Council members nominated by the Governor in addition to the members drawn from the three different races. If this arrangement is adopted, it is important that these additional members should not be nominees of particular interests specified in the constitution, but persons chosen by the Governor because their experience and qualifications peculiarly fit them for service on the Legislative Council in the interests of the whole Protectorate. Such an arrangement would moreover help to counteract any sectional tendencies which might appear from time to time among the members drawn from the three racial communities. In nominating these additional members the Governor should be left entirely free to select whomever he thinks desirable from time to time. This would make it possible for him to secure that interests not fully represented otherwise may receive representation in this way. I do not wish to express any view at this stage as to the number of such additional nominated members, should it be decided to include them, but, taking the suggestions made by the Convention of Associations, I consider that four nominated members, without specifying whom they would represent, should be substituted for the two members suggested to represent Agriculture and Commerce, the one member suggested to represent the Anglo-African community and the one European or African member suggested to represent African interests.

(c) I agree with your view that it would not be desirable to lay down specifically in the constitution that one member should be nominated to represent the Anglo-African community. I do not consider that it would be expedient, either from the Nyasaland point of view or from the point of view of creating precedents elsewhere, to give constitutional recognition to this community. At the same time I should myself see no objection to the nomination by the Governor of a member to represent this community, provided that this were not laid down in the constitution and that he was merely one of the nominated members referred to under (a) [?(b)] above.

(d) I should hope that the Council would include at any rate three African members to be nominated by the Protectorate African Council. I am doubtful about the suggestion that one of the African members should be nominated by the Nyasaland African Congress. The African Provincial Councils and the Protectorate

African Council are the bodies set up by the Government for the purpose of providing a chain of representation to the Legislative Council for the African population, and it seems appropriate that they should be responsible for the nomination of all the African members on the Legislative Council. Provision is made for the representation of educated Africans both on the Provincial Councils and on the Protectorate Council and I note from your confidential despatch of the 4th April that the Nyasaland African Congress is well represented on the Protectorate Council. I take the opportunity to thank you for the most interesting biographical notes contained in the enclosure to that despatch and to say that I regard the composition of the Protectorate Council as very satisfactory.

(e) Subject to the points made in (a), (b), (c) and (d) above, I regard the composition of the Council as recommended by the Convention of Associations as not unreasonable. With the amendments which I have suggested, this would be: the Governor as President; 10 official members; and 13 unofficial members, of whom 4 would represent the European community, 3 the Africans and 2 the Indians, with 4 additional members nominated by the Governor. I wish to make it clear that I am not in any way giving a final opinion on these numbers. I merely mention for the guidance of the Committee that this would seem to be a reasonable composition of a new Council. I would also point out that, as stated above, I should regard it as desirable to lay it down that any members decided upon for the composition of the unofficial membership of the Council should be subject to review at intervals.

(f) The Committee will no doubt consider the suggestion by the Convention of Associations that, in the case of the Indian and African members, the actual persons to be nominated to the Council should be selected by the Governor from a panel of three names submitted in each case by the representative Indian and African bodies. My own view is that it would probably be preferable, and would involve no real risk, to leave the selection of these members entirely to the bodies concerned and to dispense with the panel of three names. This is the arrangement at present in force with regard to the European members nominated by the Convention of Associations. By adopting this arrangement for the Indian and African members, fully representative nominees of the public would be secured, which would not be completely the case if selection by the Governor from a panel of three names in each case was insisted upon. It would be understood as a necessary part of this procedure that arrangements would be made to ensure that the selection of these members by the various bodies concerned in each case would be conducted in a proper manner, so that the persons selected should be fully representative of the communities concerned.

##### 5. *Introduction of an electoral system for European members*

I am not in favour of the introduction of the electoral system in Nyasaland under present conditions. I appreciate that, psychologically, the election of members naturally has attractions for the European residents, but I think that there are certain very definite objections to its introduction which may be appreciated on further consideration. In the first place the European community, consisting of under 2,000 persons and under 1,500 adults, is extremely small. If election were introduced, voting would be limited to British subjects in accordance with the existing arrangement in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, in which case the 400 odd

aliens would be excluded, so that only about 1,000 persons would have the vote. Of these 300 are, I understand, officials and their wives and over 200 missionaries. Officials and their wives would have the vote in accordance with the arrangement in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, and they and the missionaries could therefore dominate the voting. As officials cannot take part in political activities and missionaries generally do not do so, this hardly seems to be a satisfactory arrangement or to provide a suitable electorate.

6. In the second place, it would hardly be possible to justify confining the vote to white British subjects. Any coloured persons who were British subjects would presumably have to be included and, in the absence of a separate electoral roll for Indians, Indian British subjects would also probably claim the vote. It would not be a wholly satisfactory answer to such Indian claims to point to the Indian nominated members. It seems to me in fact that it would be inherently unsatisfactory in Nyasaland to introduce the electoral principle for one race only, and I should much prefer all the unofficial members to be nominated. This is the arrangement both in Uganda and Tanganyika, territories where the composition of the population is most comparable to Nyasaland. I therefore fully agree with the views previously expressed by yourself in your secret despatch of the 3rd August, 1944, and those expressed by my predecessor in his secret despatch No. 25 of the 3rd March, 1945. I consider that the European, African and Indian members should in each case be selected by the appropriate representative body, which, in the case of the Africans would, as suggested above, be the Protectorate African Council. In the case of the Indians one or more suitable bodies would be responsible for the selection of members. In the case of the Europeans the fact that the Chamber of Commerce and the Northern Province Association have severed their connection with the Convention of Associations does not seem to me to offer grounds for abandoning the principle of selection by representative bodies in favour of election. It would be a matter for discussion with the European community themselves which body or bodies was to be made responsible for the selection of their members and this could if necessary be varied from time to time. This selection would be on a democratic basis in that the selecting bodies themselves could adopt any method of selection which they thought fit, including an election conducted by the body concerned if that was the method which was preferred.

7. You will no doubt keep me informed of further developments and I should be glad to receive the report of the Committee when it is available, with your comments on its recommendations. I should be glad to know also whether it is your intention to seek my views on the recommendations before these are discussed with deputations from the Chamber of Commerce and the Convention of Associations.

**198** CO 795/156/45433/46, no 6

5 July 1946

[Northern Rhodesia]: CO note of discussion with Rhodesian representatives on constitutional developments (Legislative Council)

[Extract]

... *Mr. Cohen* said that the major issue remaining for decision was whether one or two Africans should be placed on the Council in 1948. *Mr. Creech Jones* said that, in

view of the increasing pressure of international and African opinion, it was in his opinion increasingly important to adopt a forthcoming attitude in constitutional matters, even if this involved taking certain risks. It was the wisest course to give the fullest possible opportunities to Africans, while the gift could still be made freely. He would therefore prefer to see two Africans appointed to the Council, especially as this step was not going to be taken for eighteen months.

*Mr. Welensky*<sup>1</sup> said that his personal opinion was that it would make no difference if two African members were appointed rather than one. There would however be greater difficulty in bringing unofficial opinion to accept this proposal, and he did not think that there were in fact two Africans in Northern Rhodesia yet ready for this task. If one African member only were introduced at this stage, he felt that there was less likelihood of serious opposition; and it was important that the African representative should not be faced at the outset with an unfavourable atmosphere.

*Mr. Creech Jones* said that he appreciated Mr. Welensky's arguments, but it was necessary to balance them against the increasing pressure on His Majesty's Government which he had mentioned. *Mr. Cohen* made the additional point that the appointment of one African only to the Council would make it even more difficult to secure a representative appointment, and also might place the single African appointed in a difficult position in the Council. *Mr. Creech Jones* said that he felt it would be wise on the whole to introduce two Africans from the start . . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Welensky, elected unofficial member of Legislative Council since 1938; member of Executive Council since 1940; leader of Northern Rhodesia Labour Party.

## 199 CO 822/114/12

10–25 Sept 1946

[East Africa]: minutes by A B Cohen, Mr Creech Jones and Mr Hall on discussions during Mr Creech Jones's visit of closer union

. . . I had better give something of the background as it emerged from Mr. Creech Jones' visit. I do so in the following paragraphs.

### *Necessity for early establishment of constitutional backing for East African inter-territorial machinery*

If there was any doubt in our minds about the necessity for early action to establish inter-territorial machinery on the proper juridical basis, this was entirely ruled out by the visit. It was apparent on all sides that the present wholly informal and ad hoc machinery could not be allowed to continue. Necessary action, particularly in the economic sphere, is being delayed almost daily by the absence of any properly constituted arrangements for discussion on an East African basis. There are large numbers of services (listed on pages 5 and 6 of the attached draft despatch)<sup>1</sup> which are at present in effect responsible to no check by public opinion and whose estimates do not require to be submitted in detail to any legislative council. Mr Sandford<sup>2</sup> made an exhaustive study of the machine as he found it and there is

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<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

<sup>2</sup> (Sir) George Sandford, chief secretary, East African Governors' Conference, 1946, and first administrator of East African High Commission.

certainly a vast job to put the complicated structure into proper order. This is no criticism of those who ran the machine during the war. Their job was to produce results quickly and services had to be built up as and when required. Now the whole position must be regularised if ordered progress on an inter-territorial basis – and it is the only basis for these services – is to be achieved.

I had a long private talk with Sir Alfred Vincent<sup>3</sup> shortly after we arrived, in which I stressed as strongly as I could the need for proper machinery and suggested that he should discuss the matter with Mr. Sandford. This he did afterwards and was undoubtedly greatly impressed by the picture of the existing machine which Mr. Sandford was able to give him. As a result Sir A. Vincent is entirely in favour of the early establishment of a High Commission and stated so quite clearly at Mr. Creech Jones' meeting with the European Elected Members of Kenya at the end of the visit. I think that the necessity for early action to establish a High Commission, or something like it, is generally recognised by all responsible opinion, even if those whose whole interest is centred on the composition of the proposed Assembly are not always ready to admit it. Mr. Creech Jones repeatedly stressed the importance of an early settlement of the inter-territorial machinery at meetings of all types and this was never seriously contested. I suggest that the one conclusion on this subject of which there can be no doubt is that we must proceed to action to put the machinery on a proper basis.

#### *Necessity for a Legislative Assembly*

As a result of the visit I feel strongly, and I believe that Mr. Creech Jones feels equally strongly, that an Assembly is a most important part of the proposed machinery. From the practical point of view it is the only really satisfactory way of establishing a common forum for discussion and for enacting common legislation. From the political point of view the dropping of an Assembly, even on a temporary basis, would be an undesirable giving way to sectional pressure. The association of public opinion with the working of the common services is one of the most important features of the scheme. If therefore an agreed basis for the composition of an Assembly can be achieved, and it is still unfortunately a very big if, I think that there can be no doubt that we must proceed to the creation of an Assembly. It cannot however, be said that the creation of an Assembly is an absolutely essential feature of the scheme, without which the scheme cannot be proceeded with. The first priority is undoubtedly the establishment of the High Commission and a central executive with advisory boards on particular subjects. It is to this that Sir Philip Mitchell himself attaches the first importance and he would be very much opposed to the indefinite deferment of the creation of a High Commission and central executive and advisory machinery if agreement on the composition of the Assembly cannot, as is possible, be reached. I think that Sir P. Mitchell is right in this and that our policy must therefore be to decide now on the establishment of a High Commission and its attendant machinery, to be accompanied by an Assembly if agreement can be reached on its composition. If unfortunately agreement cannot be so reached, then I consider that we must proceed straight away with the creation of the executive and advisory machinery, without which the business concerned will increasingly suffer.

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<sup>3</sup> Elected member, East African Central Legislative Assembly; member, Kenya Executive Council, 1944–1948.

*Public reactions to proposed composition of Assembly*

The next question is whether agreement can in fact be reached on the composition of an Assembly. I attach opposite at (165), a note<sup>4</sup> which I prepared in Nairobi at Mr. Sandford's request, summarising the public reactions to the proposal in Colonial 191 as expressed to Mr. Creech Jones during his visit. These are summarised more briefly at the beginning of the draft despatch. I need not repeat what is said in the other two documents at any length here. The position broadly is that African and Indian opinion accepts the proposals, centring their interest on the proposed equality of representation; that virtually all European opinion dislikes equality of representation between Europeans and Indians; that a limited section of European opinion, largely confined to the commercial community, would accept this equality of representation in order to get the scheme as a whole through; but that the settlers in Kenya and Tanganyika almost universally reject equality between Africans and Indians. I am sure myself, much as I regret this conclusion, that it would not be wise to force the composition of the Legislative Assembly proposed in Colonial 191 against the opposition mentioned. I feel little doubt that the Europeans in Kenya would not co-operate in such an Assembly and I feel that they would have the support of the Europeans in Tanganyika and of some of those in Uganda. Any forcing of the issue would, I feel sure, precipitate a major political crisis, which would do a great deal of harm and would not produce the desired result. Sir P. Mitchell, the propagator of equality of representation, takes the same view. Some of the commercial leaders in Kenya stated definitely to Mr. Creech Jones at the end of his visit that they would accept equality of representation if this was necessary to carry the scheme through, but politically it is not the commercial but the settler opinion which counts in Kenya. On the other side it is clear that the greatest importance is attached by African and Indian. The problem is to find a bridge between these opposing views.

This problem was discussed by Mr. Creech Jones with the three Governors at Dar-Es-Salaam early in August. The meeting had before them a suggestion by Mr. Charles Phillips of Tanganyika. The proposal is that the composition of the Assembly should be modified as follows. There should be 10 Officials, 7 central and 1 from each territory; 1 unofficial representative of each of the major races from each territory; 1 Arab; and 1 unofficial selected by the Unofficial Members of each of the 3 Legislative Councils voting as a body. Equality of representation in so far as the racial representation was concerned would be maintained, but the 3 extra members would, as a result of the composition of the territorial Legislative Councils, give an extra European in Kenya and Tanganyika, although quite likely not in Uganda. The 4 members to be nominated by the High Commission under the original proposals in 191 would be dropped. The proposals would be experimental for 4 years and some arrangement would have to be arrived at to give an assurance that the balance of Unofficial membership in the Territorial Councils would not be modified during this period in such a way as to affect the selection of the 3 Unofficial representatives on the Central Assembly to be chosen by the Unofficial Members of each Legislative Council. Mr. Creech Jones and the Governors agreed that this ingenious proposal offered the best chance of producing a solution and the conclusion was that this proposal should be given a trial.

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<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

*The relation of the Central Assembly to the Territorial Legislative Council*

Apart from the composition of the proposed Assembly, criticism of the proposals in Colonial 191 is centred on the derogation from the position of the Territorial Legislative Councils which the establishment of the Central Assembly would involve. It is generally agreed that it should be laid down that the list of subjects to be dealt with centrally should be agreed by the Territorial Legislative Councils and additions should not be made without their agreement as well as that of the Secretary of State. At Sir P. Mitchell's request Mr. Sandford has been examining how, during the initial experimental period, the position of the Territorial Councils can be further safeguarded. He has produced what to my mind is a most admirable scheme, based on an examination of the whole existing and proposed machinery from the bottom upwards. The modifications which he now suggests in the original proposals of Colonial 191 are set out clearly in detail in the attached draft despatch. I need only draw attention here to the main features. The principal feature is that during the experimental period the proposal to finance the Central services by interception of customs revenue would be abandoned. All central services would (like research in the original proposals) be financed by block votes in each case by each of the Legislative Councils. The central budget would be passed by the Central Assembly subject to the necessary provision being made subsequently by the Legislative Council. Customs revenue, instead of being raised by the Central Assembly, would be enacted by the High Commission itself subject to subsequent approval or modification in the Territorial Councils (this is the same procedure as is at present followed with regard to Tanganyika customs revenue and is necessary to avoid "fore-stalling"). Income tax rates and allowances would be prescribed by the Central Assembly subject to subsequent modification of the rates either upwards or downwards by each of the Legislative Councils in respect of each territory. Furthermore the powers of legislation on other subjects by the Central Assembly would be limited during the experimental period to existing or immediately projected common services. Under this scheme the integrity of the Territorial Councils would be largely reserved, procedure being at the same time devised for central discussion of centrally [sic] financial questions. The scheme would not be so simple to work as that proposed in Colonial 191, but Sir P. Mitchell and Mr. Sandford are convinced that this degree of restoration of the authority of the Territorial Legislative Councils is necessary in order to secure acceptance.

These arrangements are much more satisfactory from Sir J. Hall's point of view and I think also from Sir William Battershill's. They will somewhat weaken the centre, but that is necessary to secure the establishment of a proper central machinery at all. I think that this part of the new set of proposals will greatly strengthen the chance of securing acceptance for the composition of the Assembly and that all concerned are greatly indebted to Mr. Sandford for his analysis of the problem and his solutions for dealing with it.

*Probability of acceptance of proposals*

I cannot say how strong the chances of the local acceptance of proposals on these lines would be. It was agreed by the Governors at Dar-Es-Salaam that Mr. Creech Jones might try them out on the Unofficials in Kenya. He did so with the European Elected Members at a meeting which cannot be said to have been a wholly smooth one. When however the meeting grasped clearly what the suggestion was (and of

course it was put forward as a suggestion which had come to notice, rather than as the recommendation of Mr. Creech Jones himself), there was a considerable amount of discussion among the members themselves which indicated that they certainly did not reject the proposal out of hand. At the talk with Sir A. Vincent which I had before I left, I deliberately kept off this matter. He, however, mentioned it in passing in a way which showed that his fear with regard to this proposal was that changes in the composition of the Kenya Legislative Council on the Unofficial side might result in the extra member not being a European. European opinion would need to be satisfied on this point. The Indian reaction also cannot be foreseen with any certainty. They probably would not like the proposal, but they might well accept it, particularly in view of the feature in it that all the Unofficial Members would vote together for one member of the Executive Assembly. What is clear, I think, is that this proposal offers the best chance of a successful solution so far devised and that it certainly ought to be tried.

*Present position*

It is desirable that progress should be made with this matter, which is distracting attention from other problems in East Africa, as early as possible. If the Governors can agree on a draft despatch, it would be desirable, if the Secretary of State approves this, that the despatch should issue in time to reach the Governors before the next meeting of the Governors' Conference on October 9th. As soon as Sir P. Mitchell's and Sir W. Battershill's comments are received, and subject to discussion with Sir J. Hall, I can put up the draft in its final form for consideration by Mr. Creech Jones and the Secretary of State. I showed the present draft to Mr. Seel<sup>5</sup> before he went on leave and he agreed that it probably offered the best chance of a satisfactory solution. He made one or two comments of detail, certain of which may involve making minor changes to the despatch. But in view of the alterations which Sir P. Mitchell has made there is no point in polishing the despatch in detail at this stage. Pending the receipt of a communication from Mr. Sandford I submit papers for information.

A.B.C.  
10.9.46

Mr. Cohen expresses in his minute the problem as we both saw it in East Africa. I think the despatch admirably covers the requirements at the present time.

I feel that this opportunity of further consultation with the unofficial Members of the Legislative Councils regarding the new proposal should be given, though later I take the view, if agreement is not reached, [that] we must bring into being the machinery we think best calculated to meet the situation. I strongly emphasise that as little delay as possible should occur in bringing the necessary machinery into being, but I think after our discussions this further effort should be made.

I am not unduly alarmed at the danger of precipitating a major political crisis. It is the European settler method in Kenya of asserting their claim to a degree of political dominance and of showing resentment. Whatever privilege they may have had in the past cannot be perpetuated much longer.

I also accept the view that it would be satisfactory both to Europeans and Africans

<sup>5</sup> G F Seel, secretary, Rhodesia-Nyasaland Royal Commission, 1938-1939; CO assistant under-secretary of state, 1946.

if the authority of the territorial Legislative Councils in regard to the scope of the work of the Central Assembly were recognised as set out in the draft. That would remove many apprehensions and give the scheme a greater opportunity of succeeding.

A.C.J.  
20.9.46

I have now been able to read these papers and have discussed them with Mr. Cohen. I regret the attitude of the Kenya settlers and that of some of the Europeans in Tanganyika, but in all the circumstances I agree that there is no alternative but to proceed as is proposed.

I approve the action proposed in the minutes and in the draft.

G.H.H  
25.9.46

**200** CO 967/62

17 Oct 1946

[Kenya]: letter from Mr Creech Jones to Sir P Mitchell (Kenya) commenting on his views

It was kind of you to send me the substance of the speech you propose to make at the Caledonian Society's Dinner on 30th November. I see no reason why the atmosphere in Kenya should not be made more invigorating by a challenging speech of this kind. I think it is well from time to time that official spokesmen should emphasize some of the ideas you have put into the speech. I do not think it need cause any political embarrassment in London, though I am sure that some Africans will take exception to parts of it.

I myself would not endorse completely all your provocative views. I am more sceptical about the essential rightness of some aspects of our past policy, the basic rightness of our being in Kenya, the conditions and distribution of land in Africa, and the parallels you draw in history. Much grievance is felt by Africans regarding the present allocation of land, and in my judgment some of it is legitimate. Feeling this, I personally would hesitate to exasperate their feelings.

But that a corrective to their irresponsible nationalism should be applied from time to time I do not doubt. You appear, if I may say so, to press too hard the parallel with the United States, and while I personally accept the view that in a vast area such as East Africa the Africans cannot maintain exclusive rights, nevertheless I feel you are apt to overstate our virtues and perhaps give too little recognition to the fact that we have our shortcomings. The occasion of the speech is not perhaps one to look for the beam in our own eyes, and perhaps it is necessary to show more of our light and protest against the constant denigration which is so frequently indulged in at our expense. We ought to proclaim more freely our contribution to human progress and social development. There are unfortunately a few dim chapters in our own history, and I am always conscious that, however excellent and virtuous our behaviour really is, there are things due to our folly and our occasional perversity which bring us to-day intractable problems.

All this, of course, is my personal reaction, although I think Africans and ourselves are the better for the stimulating challenge such speeches as yours provide. I

therefore hope you will say with your customary vigour the things that are in your mind and heart regarding development, particularly as the difficulties and problems in Kenya are associated not only with European settlement, but are in no small part due to African suspicion and ignorance, and their own failures in social and political development.

The need for some such statement as yours was brought home to me when I read the leading article in a Nairobi paper called *Mwalimu*, "What is the Matter?", on August 13th. The second column of that article might well be your text. It shows how far educational work amongst Africans must go before they appreciate the contribution of Western civilisation which they have almost unwittingly enjoyed.

**201** CO 533/556/7, pp 2-4

18 Mar 1947

[Land policy in Kenya]: minute by A B Cohen on a Labour Party suggestion that reservation of the White Highlands be abandoned

[It was important for the government to be clear about the principles of land policy in Kenya, because decisions might have to be made about particular schemes of European settlement. Creech Jones was much involved in this from the beginning of his ministerial career. Early in October 1945 he minuted: 'I want to avoid any suggestion that the European Highlands are absolutely reserved when later it may be necessary to make room for some forms of African settlement and we may want to make some provision for the "squatter" element'. But at the same time as he hoped to lay the foundations of a dynamic development policy which would particularly promote African advancement, he also believed that Europeans could contribute substantially to prosperity and to African welfare. He was therefore not impressed by the suggestion of de-reservation of the White Highlands: 'The Kenya question cannot be solved at this stage by this dramatic gesture' (CO 533/534/11, no 39; CO 533/556/7, minute [nd]). Cohen then elaborated on this theme.]

At No. 1 is a memorandum on Land Settlement in Kenya by the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions of the Labour Party, which the Secretary of State is to discuss personally with the Executive Committee of the territory on Friday, March 21st. He has asked us to prepare a brief of the present position, although he is, of course, fully aware of the whole background . . . .

Perhaps I may add one or two observations on the general question:-

1. The main point of the paper is in paragraph 20. It is the writers' belief that a statement by H.M. Government declaring that the reservation of the highlands will be abandoned is something which, while it would lead to some protests, would not have any further disadvantages. This is a view which I have heard expressed before and it was expressed to me only the other day by Mr. Greenidge<sup>1</sup> in a long conversation which I had with him on the subject. I did my best to disabuse him. I fear that any statement on the lines suggested in paragraph 20 of the paper would have far more serious effects in Kenya and elsewhere in East Africa than the writers of the paper appreciate. It would play straight into the hands of the extremists among the settlers. It would unite the settlers and a vast majority of the white population of Kenya into the most violent antagonism against the government. It would be the end of all the efforts which are now being made by the Kenya Government and by many

<sup>1</sup> C W W Greenidge, secretary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society since 1941.

Europeans in Kenya to bring on the African politically, economically and socially. It would in my view meet with the most determined resistance on the part of the Europeans and I cannot see that it would lead to any useful result in the long run.

2. One of the difficulties about Kenya is the intense suspicion of interference from outside which persists among a large section of the settlers. The closer contacts which we have been able to establish recently and above all the speeches which the Secretary of State made while he was in Kenya have done a great deal to provide the foundation for ultimately breaking down this suspicion. Anything which tended to increase it would in the long run be disadvantageous to the inhabitants of Kenya of all races.

3. The land problems of Kenya are fraught with the gravest political difficulties which are rendered all the more serious because they have been inextricably mixed up with racial issues and racial suspicions. As Sessional Paper No. 8 of 1945 stated there are two practical lines of approach to the problems, which the Kenya Government are now following. In the first place the native lands must be rehabilitated and for this purpose additional land is required. Some of it may have to come from the fringes of the highlands and there has been considerable support among the settlers themselves for handing over certain areas, provided that they can be sure that the Government will see that they are properly used by the Africans settled on them. Sir P. Mitchell still has it in mind to secure the agreement of the Highlands Board for the lease of these areas for African settlement. We shall have to discuss with him when he is here what steps can be taken soon to achieve this object. One thing is quite certain. These steps can only be successful if taken from within, by agreement with the settlers. Any attempt to impose decisions from outside will merely ensure that their agreement will never be given. Any gesture such as that suggested in paragraph 20 of the paper would only defeat its own ends.

4. The work on the rehabilitation of the native areas, for which much provision has been made in the Kenya development programme with the agreement of everybody in Kenya, has been going forward far too slowly over the past eighteen months. The Secretary of State has written to Sir P. Mitchell to stress the extreme urgency of pushing this work forward. It is on this question of urgency that we must concentrate. Otherwise the Kenya Government will lose altogether the confidence of certain of the African tribes concerned.

5. The second point on which the Kenya Government's policy is concentrated is the working out of a satisfactory basis for resident labourers in the highlands . . . . Here again the Secretary of State in his letter to Sir P. Mitchell is stressing the urgency of settling a policy. We shall want to discuss all this with the Governor when he is here.

6. I hope that it will be possible to persuade the Executive Committee of the Labour Party that these problems cannot be handled successfully by trying to change by a single gesture something which, wrongly or rightly, has been agreed to by British Governments in the past. I hope also that they may be prepared to take no further action until they have been able to talk over fully the practical and political problems involved with Sir P. Mitchell himself when he is here.

**202** CO 795/139/45080/1/48

22 Mar 1949

**[Northern Rhodesia]: minute by C E Lambert<sup>1</sup> on status of Barotse-land**

[In the course of 1948 and 1949 the Barotse Council and paramount chief submitted representations and a formal petition in an attempt to get Barotse-land made a separate high commission protectorate like Bechuanaland. Although the territory had long had a special status within Northern Rhodesia, they were concerned to obtain more management of their own affairs, and they feared that their interests would suffer under a future self-governing Northern Rhodesia. The CO was not in favour of its hiving off from a country they regarded as comparatively rich and developing, and sought to assure the Barotse that their status would continue to be protected.]

It would clearly be against the interests of Barotse-land that it should become a completely separate entity. I am doubtful about the suggestion that Barotse-land should be styled "The Barotse-land Protectorate". It would still be part of the Northern Rhodesia Protectorate and I do not think that it would be advisable to do anything which would strengthen the feeling of the educated Barotse-landers that the development of their land is not inextricably bound up with the development of the rest of Northern Rhodesia. If a formal document guaranteeing the rights of the Barotse-landers under the treaty will help to allay present anxiety, I see no reason why this should not be given. I would not however go further than this on the question of status.

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<sup>1</sup> CO assistant secretary, head of the Central African and Aden Dept.

**203** CO 795/139/45080/1/49, no 3B

6 Apr 1949

**[Barotse-land]: CO note of discussion held at Mongu, Northern Rhodesia, between Mr Creech Jones and the paramount chief of Barotse-land and Council**

*The Secretary of State:* I am very happy to come to Barotse-land and to see you. I wish you to know that we in London are very interested in you. I bring you the greetings of the British Government in London. We in London know about you in Barotse-land and we know about your problems which we have studied for some years. We in London know that you have many problems which are difficult to solve. I would like to remind you that we too in England have many difficult problems. In the past two or three years following the war our difficulties have been tremendous. We are very anxious to help people in Africa in their efforts to improve their way of living and we want to see that everything possible is done to secure the well-being of the African people and their happiness. We want your confidence and understanding and we want you to believe that we sincerely wish to help. It is a great experience for me as Minister of the King to meet you this morning. Now I want you to tell me your problems and difficulties and I will try to understand and to help you.

*Paramount Chief:*<sup>1</sup> We are very glad to see you here today. We know that you are the Secretary of State, the person who carries all our grievances to His Majesty the King. We have already submitted our petition to the Governor. It is good for you to see how we are and to hear our words. Our big complaint is the one submitted in our petition. Lewanika made a similar petition. The Rev. Mr. Coillard<sup>2</sup> advised Lewanika saying "Although I am a Frenchman I advise you to seek British protection." Hence the B.S.A. Company came here as agents of the Queen. He asked for Protection and Peace – and these were granted in the concessions. But we complain about the changes which have come about since.

*Secretary of State:* We have given great consideration to your problems. We have received your Petition and both the Governor and I have considered it. H.M. Government remains now in the same relation to the Barotse as it was when the treaty was originally made. H.M. Government has a special responsibility in regard to your progress and well-being and will not surrender that responsibility to anyone else. The responsibility is binding and could not change except in full consultation with yourselves. For the past 20 years there has been great talk about the constitution of Northern Rhodesia and H.M. Government has resisted many changes which have been proposed by certain people because it is aware of its responsibility towards you.

The Provincial Commissioner, the Governor, and the Secretary of State have all given you solemn assurances that constitutional changes would only come in consultation with you, and with your consent.

H.M. Government refused amalgamation.<sup>3</sup> I understand that people are now discussing Federation, but so far no official representation has been made to H.M. Government with regard to all this talk which is going on. H.M. Government will not commit you to any constitutional changes which may be proposed as a result of the present discussions without full consultation with you and your agreement. But we do not yet know what the suggestions are. I therefore repeat to you my solemn assurance that H.M. Government will agree to no constitutional change without full consultation with you, and your consent.

As regards Barotseland in particular, H.M. Government has a special responsibility for the well-being of the African people. We cannot transfer this responsibility to anyone else. All the officials in Northern Rhodesia are responsible to the Governor who is responsible to the Secretary of State who is responsible to H.M. Government which is responsible to the British Parliament. Policy in regard to African Affairs is worked out and approved in London. In London we have a special responsibility with regard to Barotseland.

There must be a Central Government in Northern Rhodesia to direct the affairs of the country and to ensure economic progress in order that the wealth of the country is used properly to develop the well-being of all the people of the country. The Central Government must construct roads, bridges and railways, maintain health services and organise Agriculture and Forestry. Such activities of Central Government will bring prosperity to the various parts of the country. The rate of progress in

<sup>1</sup> Mwanawina III.

<sup>2</sup> François Coillard of the Paris Evangelical Mission who was invited into the Lozi kingdom by King Lewanika in 1886.

<sup>3</sup> ie, with Southern Rhodesia.

Africa has so far been slow owing to the War, but we wish to accelerate it and to bring the benefits provided by the Central Government to the people of Barotseland. Therefore we do not wish to create here a State separate from the rest of Northern Rhodesia. Small parts cannot be cut away without great damage to them. But we wish Barotseland to progress and to bear increasing responsibility over a period.

If you would like to call Barotseland the Barotse Protectorate, there would be no objection so far as I can see at present, but the matter would require to be examined. We want to see the local Government in Barotseland reflect the thoughts and feelings of *all* the people. We wish you to assume greater responsibility for social services so that over a period the Barotse Native Government can take on greater responsibilities in regard to Health, Education, Roads, Housing and other services which can improve the standard of living. We hope that the various councils will show an increasing interest in these things. We would like to see in Barotseland a form of African Government which will be a model giving a lead to other parts of the Territory.

But there are two important requirements:

(1) The full co-operation of the local peoples with Government Officials and Technical officers.

(2) Financial requirements. Some improvements must be paid for by the Barotse themselves, but you will not get far with your limited resources. Therefore the Central Government will assist you financially, otherwise you will see no progress here.

We wish Barotseland to remain part of Northern Rhodesia and gradually to become more closely associated with the Central Government.

Africans now have direct representation on Legislative Council.

The great majority of people in this country are Africans it is true, but European assistance is necessary for economic development.

We want to build up a close association between the Barotse Government and the Central Government of Northern Rhodesia through the development of the Legislative Council with African representation. The only purpose of H.M. Government is to serve so far as it is able the people of this country. Therefore you should listen to the advice of Government Officers on the spot. The Provincial Commissioner is here not to deceive you but to give sympathetic advice and to serve the best interests of the people. He is the mouthpiece of the Colonial Office and the Governor. You may call him a Resident Commissioner if you wish: but you must give him every opportunity for closest consultation.

Do not be anxious about these constitutional discussions which are going on. Under the 1900 Treaty we protect and help you, and far from conditions growing worse for you, we will try to improve them, and we will guarantee the people against any results which they fear may come from the political discussions now in progress in this Territory.

This is the first visit of a Secretary of State to Barotseland and it is my great privilege to be the first Secretary of State to come.

*The Ngambela:* We thank you for the words which you have spoken. We were glad to hear what you said about H.M. Government's responsibility for Barotseland. We were

very pleased with the reference you made to H.M. the King. We do consult fully with the Provincial Commissioner and will continue to do so.

*Paramount Chief:* We have been very glad to hear that H.M. Government in London assumes responsibility for Barotseland.

*Secretary of State:* Our sense of responsibility with regard to you is stronger now than ever and we want to show you this by doing things for you. We must have the fullest confidence in each other.

Would you like to have a copy of the substance of what I have said this morning?

*Paramount Chief:* Yes, we would very much.

*Secretary of State:* I thank you for coming here to visit me and for listening so patiently to what I have said. I wish you all prosperity for the future.

**204** CAB 134/56, CA(49)4

8 June 1949

**'Report by the Secretary of State for the Colonies on his visit to Central and East Africa—April 1949': memorandum by Mr Creech Jones for Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs Committee**

I circulate, for the information of my colleagues, the following record of my visit, which was the first paid to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland by any Colonial Secretary.

### I. *Northern Rhodesia*

2. The territory is a Protectorate, with special treaty commitments on the part of His Majesty's Government, particularly towards Barotseland. The population is 1,690,000 Africans, 28,800 Europeans and 2,000 Indians. There are three main centres of European life—the Copperbelt, Broken Hill and Livingstone. Native lands are safeguarded and the areas available for European occupation have been limited. It is essentially an African country, and to-day mainly supported by its mineral wealth.

#### *Political*

3. During my visit a number of important political matters emerged.

##### (a) *Constitutional change*

4. A demand for responsible government by the European Unofficial members of the Executive Council had been discussed with them in London last year, and had been withdrawn. It was now renewed in Lusaka, in the form of a desire by the unofficials to subordinate the Executive Council to the control of the Legislative Council. I had a series of discussions with both the Executive and Legislative Councils, and an acceptable formula was agreed which involved no further concession to the unofficials. I thus averted a crisis; but, on returning to Lusaka later, I discovered that the unofficial members were again disputing the agreed formula. I do

not doubt that their demands will become more insistent, in the hope of the small European minority securing a position in the Constitution similar to that in Southern Rhodesia. It would be wrong to hand over the care of African development to so small a group (many of whom are South Africans with no permanent roots in the country). In practice, under such a Constitution, a Governor could use his reserve powers very rarely.

(b) *Paramountcy and European settlement*

5. Since 1931 it has been made clear that the "doctrine of paramountcy" means no more than that the interests of the overwhelming majority of the indigenous population should not be subordinated to those of a minority belonging to another race, however important in itself. The policy of the Northern Rhodesia Government, restated in 1948, is that the interests of either community cannot be subordinated to those of the other, and that the development of the territory must be based on a genuine partnership between Europeans and Africans.

6. During my visit, the Leader of the Unofficial Members cast doubt on this policy, as restated with his agreement last year, saying that in his belief the United Kingdom would at a convenient time liquidate all European settlement and enterprise. I spoke strongly to Mr. Welensky for reviving this canard and starting an entirely inapposite campaign on the subject in the press. I made it clear that His Majesty's Government had no intention of altering the land law which, while protecting the African, assigned a considerable quantity of good land to the Europeans which so far had not been fully taken up. I resisted the idea that European settlement could be unlimited.

(c) *Colour bar*

7. On the Copperbelt I visited the mines and met the European Mine Workers' Union, the Salaried Staff and Officials' Association (European), the African Mine-workers' Union and the Chamber of Mines. The European workers have steadily resisted the claim that suitable and trained Africans should be permitted to do better work. The situation has if anything deteriorated since the Dalglish report (1947),<sup>1</sup> and the efforts made to implement its recommendations have been unsuccessful. Trade unionism has now taken root with the African, and the four mining unions which they formed have been amalgamated. I suggested that the African trade union should now bring their case for better jobs into review and discuss it with the Europeans. I urged the European trade union to meet the African trade union and no objection was raised. The Chamber of Mines saw difficulties but did not demur. No results have as yet accrued, but I hope the idea of a joint meeting will germinate and thus a new approach be found to this vexed question.

(d) *Barotse request to be proclaimed an independent protectorate*

8. I was received with great honour by the Barotse Paramount Chief and Council. The Chief feared federation or amalgamation with Southern Rhodesia, and asked that his Protectorate should be separated from Northern Rhodesia and given the independent status of a High Commission territory. I reassured him on the first

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<sup>1</sup> *Northern Rhodesia: Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the advancement of Africans in Industry* (chairman, A Dalglish), Lusaka, 1948.

point and renewed the earlier declarations that no change would be made in the status of his territory without prior consultation with, and the consent of, himself and his Council. I secured his agreement to the view that it would be unwise for his lands to be independent of Northern Rhodesia, as this would deprive him of many services to which he attached much importance. I promised that His Majesty's Government would build up strong local government which would give his people more responsibility for dealing with many of their own affairs. The meetings were most friendly and there were great expressions of loyalty.

(e) *Federation*

9. I met universal apprehension among the Africans about any proposal to federate Northern and Southern Rhodesia. The European Members of Legislative Council representing African interests had held many meetings, and everywhere the vaguely defined proposals of the Victoria Falls Conference had been rejected by the Africans.<sup>2</sup>

10. The Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia<sup>3</sup> came to Lusaka to discuss federation with me. I told him that no proposals had yet been put to His Majesty's Government, who were also unaware that the co-ordinating machinery of the Central African Council was proving inadequate: His Majesty's Government could not transfer its special responsibilities towards the Africans to any other authority nor abrogate the treaties and commitments they had entered into, for both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were Protectorates: and they could not allow a small European minority to dominate politically and economically a population of probably 6 million Africans. I added, however, that if the existing arrangements for joint consultation and common services between the three territories were in fact proving inadequate in present conditions, it was for the Southern Rhodesia Government to put an appreciation of the whole matter to His Majesty's Government, who would study any proposals submitted with an open mind and seek only the well-being and development of Central Africa: they would be prepared to look at any suitable alternative arrangement which might give a properly constituted central body control over a limited number of major common economic services.

11. I expressed the personal view that the Victoria Falls Conference could not possibly satisfy His Majesty's Government in so far as its proposals surrendered African interests, involved a retreat from African representation (a principle already operating in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland) in the proposed Assembly, gave a strong majority control to Southern Rhodesia and left only a few domestic services to the two Protectorates. Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland would contribute heavily in money and functions under the arrangements proposed and yet be gravely hampered in their development and in financing their social services. In discussion, it was clear that the men who had sponsored this unofficial and unrepresentative Conference were divided in their conception of federation. Sir Godfrey Huggins became convinced that the committees set up to work out the resolutions of the Conference should have new terms of reference.

12. Later, in Salisbury, I explained my views to the Governor of Southern Rhodesia and, after seeing the officials of the Central African Council, I met the

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<sup>2</sup> See part 4 of this volume, chapter 8, section 3.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Godfrey Huggins, prime minister since 1934.

Prime Minister and his Government. The Council has done much sound work, but the officials now find the co-operation of the Southern Rhodesia Government becoming more reluctant. The Southern Rhodesia Ministers told me that the Council was only of limited value. Its conclusions needed the endorsement of the separate Governments; and, if any recommendations involved finance, the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly were extremely reluctant to vote it. They felt that, in matters affecting Southern Rhodesia, they should retain the initiative and responsibility and control the finances: a second authority set alongside themselves and responsible for certain services was derogatory to their own position. Consequently they would not contemplate any transfer of major services to such an outside authority, and rejected the idea of anything modelled on the East African Inter-Territorial Organisation. Federation was only acceptable to them on the basis of a strong central authority with all the major services under its control and Southern Rhodesia exercising a strong influence on it. They agreed that minor functions and race relations might be left to the individual territories.

13. It became evident to me that Southern Rhodesia is determined to reduce the effectiveness of the Central African Council. For the present, they intend to regard it merely as a medium for exchange of knowledge and ideas; and, as regards common services required by the whole region, to work on the principle of the Southern Rhodesia Government controlling such services and selling them to the other Governments as they are wanted. That process is already taking place. Their approach is clearly political and not that of economic service.

14. We can only wait on events as regards federation. Europeans in Nyasaland are not enthusiastic, and those of Northern Rhodesia are sceptical of the value of the proposals that have so far emerged; Africans and Indians everywhere are opposed to any alteration of status. I should not be surprised if the present effort breaks down, for everybody is hopelessly confused over the objective. Members of the Southern Rhodesia Government talked of federation on the Canadian model, but so far, beyond high-sounding resolutions, there is nowhere any precise idea of what is wanted to replace the Central African Council.

### *Development*

15. There is heartening promise of development in Northern Rhodesia. A big cement works will come into operation this year (the Colonial Development Corporation has helped this project along). A new bridge across the Kafue is well on the way to completion. Schemes for encouraging tourism at Livingstone, for producing power from the Falls, for extending timber production and pre-fabricating houses, for manufacturing woollen goods and for expansion of tobacco cultivation are all under way.

16. Fundamental to development are roads and railways. I discussed new projects and possibilities of relieving the existing systems. New railway outlets and a new port are essential; dependence on Beira is too great a strain. The transportation of coal for the Copperbelt is another great difficulty; great quantities of wood are being consumed, which is uneconomic and destructive. Big extensions in the Copperbelt are waiting for steel and machinery. The improvement of cultivation methods by both Africans and Europeans was another matter I discussed.

*African provincial councils*

17. I attended a number of these Councils and was again impressed with the growing interest of the Africans in their own affairs and their desire to build up a sound system of local government—the beginnings of which are already there.

*South Africa Company's royalties*

18. I discussed this matter with the Northern Rhodesia Government, who agree that revenue should be raised by means of a tax on royalties, while acquisition might be considered at a later date. The procedure is not easy, and the necessary measures must be prepared carefully if evasion is to be prevented.

*General*

19. I need not describe all the institutions I visited, the development work I saw, the deputations I received, the municipal and local government meetings I attended, the numerous speeches I made and the many matters which came to my notice. At all official stations, I addressed the officers and staffs of the Colonial Service and met representative members of the three communities. I was impressed with the intense loyalty shown to Britain by the non-European communities.

*II. Nyasaland*

20. I visited the three provinces of this beautiful Protectorate. Until a few years ago it had been neglected and in the main regarded as a reservoir of labour for Southern Rhodesia and the South Africa mines. The Governor,<sup>4</sup> appointed last year, has applied himself with energy to improving his staff and preparing his programme of development over the next few years. His immediate work has been set back by a drought which has affected the Protectorate's finances, while the import of food has cluttered up the Railways. But the market for tea and tobacco is certain and the prices good, and cultivation is expanding alongside a great effort to increase the production of maize. An excellent start has been made with the cultivation of tung, and the Colonial Development Corporation is planning further development of this crop and other projects in the Northern Province. Some excellent social developments are in train, such as the community education schemes directed from the Jeanes School, the attack on illiteracy, the extension of Government schools and the excellent mission welfare work.

21. I spent eight intensive days looking at a variety of educational, welfare and health institutions, receiving deputations, visiting development projects and hearing remarkable expressions of loyalty to the Throne and the United Kingdom. I met representatives of the African, Indian, Euro-Asian and Euro-African and European communities in each of the provinces and discussed local affairs with the Executive Council as well as with representatives of the Legislative Council. I attended meetings of each of the three African Provincial Councils, and saw that an excellent beginning was being made in building up local interest in African affairs and local government.

22. The fundamental problems are the poverty of the native people, their poor cultivation, the pressure on the land with increasing population, the lack of

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<sup>4</sup> Sir Geoffrey Colby, formerly administrative secretary, Nigeria.

industries, poor transport and the exodus of the men to work in the mines. The establishment of the Native Tobacco Board, the expansion and security in tobacco, tea and tung, the plans for resettlement of Africans on lands not properly utilised by the Europeans who acquired freeholds or long leases many years ago, the projected improvement of rail, road and other transport facilities, are all matters calculated to improve the economic conditions and consequently the social services. It is unfortunate that there are no minerals: but in particular the work planned by the Colonial Development Corporation and the new possibility of a railway route via Lake Nyasa (linking up with Broken Hill in Northern Rhodesia and Songea in Tanganyika and thence to Mikindani) encourage new prospects in the north. Given these developments and new roads, there are magnificent lands which can be opened up for farming and ranching and the activities of the Corporation. The tragic drain of man-power from the country and the consequent social evils will, however, remain until they can be countered by better cultivation, better community life in the villages, more industries and better communications. The Government is working along these lines (an excellent start has been made, for example, with training schools for building and other trades and with co-operatives); but most of the projects are inevitably long-term and offer little immediate alleviation. More technical officers and assistants must be found. Under the new direction, however, and with the feeling of local initiative stimulated by the recent release from Treasury control, the country should soon be on the move. A new spirit was apparent in the municipalities of Blantyre and Limbe, which I met to discuss their schemes for water and power. The Nyasaland Africans are among the most intelligent in Southern Africa, and made a splendid contribution in the war: already two Africans sit on Legislative Council.

23. At my meetings, the Africans repeatedly urged that we should find a solution to the migration of men, and improve the conditions for them on the farms of Southern Rhodesia and South Africa; and they expressed the gravest fears about the rumours of federation. They do not want the status of their country changed, and pressed that British protection should continue. They want improved social services, under the direction of London, and especially crave for more educational facilities. The European community have no enthusiasm for federation, and are inclined to wait on events. Nyasaland has the good fortune to have a number of public-spirited Europeans on the Executive and Legislative Councils who, though big estate owners and producers of tea, tung and tobacco, seek to build up good racial feeling, to co-operate with the Governor, and to encourage welfare by their own example. The small communities of Indians are prosperous and loyal; they, too, have a representative on the Legislature.

24. The problems calling for immediate attention are relief from the financial effects of the drought, the need for technical and administrative staff, the system of taxation, the acquisition of land for resettlement, the difficulties of the tenant system on freehold land, the removal of the bottleneck in secondary and post-secondary education, the use of child-labour and the problem of supplies.

### III. *Southern Rhodesia*

25. The Prime Minister and Government of Southern Rhodesia have each year extended to me a warm invitation to visit their country (a) to discuss the relations of

Southern Rhodesia with the contiguous British protectorates; (b) to see how race relations are handled in the Colony; and (c) to examine common problems of economic development in Central Africa. My three days were spent in a most cordial atmosphere. The Governor gave a dinner in my honour and Sir Godfrey Huggins laid on a variety of interesting arrangements. I heard Mr. Whitehead's<sup>5</sup> budget statement, visited the new Government African Secondary School, visited one of the African Reserves, saw African land settlement and village community organisation and attended the tobacco auctions. I was impressed with what I saw, though I remain unconvinced of the soundness of the policy underlying race relations. It is a middle way between South African policy and our own. Fine work for African development is being done, but within a watertight compartment. Southern Rhodesia is showing great energy and anticipation in development.

26. I had discussions with the Government. They left me, as I have said, with doubts about the future of the Central African Council, and with great scepticism as to whether any scheme for a central authority in Central Africa is ever likely to be realised, except in a form completely unacceptable to His Majesty's Government. We discussed transport problems and the prospects of new railways in the Rhodesian system, and I undertook to keep Ministers in touch with these developments. They asked that His Majesty's Government should be more forthcoming about our development targets and projects, as these had an important bearing on their own economy.

#### *IV. Return to Northern Rhodesia*

27. After visiting Southern Rhodesia my plane journey involved a delay in Lusaka of twenty hours. I gave a broadcast talk to Europeans and had two interviews with the European Unofficial leaders on the Executive Council regarding European settlement. They had queried the agreement just made with them regarding the constitution, had challenged the statement of policy agreed with them in London in 1948 on paramountcy, and were again demanding full self-government and almost unlimited European settlement in the Protectorate. On all these points I made the position of His Majesty's Government plain, but when I left, these representatives were in a petulant and difficult mood.

28. I also had a conference on the federation proposals with the Governors of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the light of my discussions with the Southern Rhodesia Government. We were unanimous that the two Protectorate Governments could make no move in the present stage following the Victoria Falls Conference, and that the promoters of the Conference would have to find new terms of reference for the technical committees approved at the Conference. The two northern Governments were prepared, without prejudice to the issue of federation, to allow their legal officers to assist on technical points and constitutional problems: but we agreed that those officers must not be members of the committees or participate in their work. It was felt that it would be unfortunate if the question of federation was brought into the realm of official discussion at the next meeting of the Central African Council.

29. I also reported to the Governors the views of the Southern Rhodesia Government regarding development and railway projects and further co-operation.

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<sup>5</sup> E C F Whitehead, minister of finance.

*V. Kenya*

30. I was delayed three days in Nairobi and consequently fully used the time as follows:—

- (a) I discussed affairs with a series of deputations from the African Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council; the European Unofficial Members; the Arab Members; the Indian Unofficial Members, and the Aga Khan community.
- (b) I met the East African Central Assembly and discussed aspects of political and economic development and problems of internal security.
- (c) I met the East African Transport Commission and discussed railway and harbour developments, the surveys, groundnut requirements, Dar-es-Salaam extensions and Northern Rhodesia development.
- (d) I visited the new Technical and Trade Schools, the Jeanes Community Education Centre, the Museum (the base of the brilliant research into man's origin), and the National Park (to see policy being worked out for the preservation of wild fauna).
- (e) I spoke to the Nairobi Municipality (which has big projects in hand and is carrying through many progressive ideas in a good spirit of racial co-operation) and to the Kenya Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association (non-racial). I also discussed the future of British Council work in East Africa with their representative and the development of a Community Centre.
- (f) I met a deputation from the Uganda Legislative Council regarding the recent disturbances, saw the G.O.C., and discussed events and further action with the Governor of Uganda by telephone.

31. I was encouraged to observe improving racial relations in Kenya, the steady unfolding of African land settlement policy and the expanding services for African welfare. Apart from present excitement over the application of the national registration statute, the principal interest of the Europeans both in Kenya and Tanganyika is the permanence of what European settlement there is. I gave assurances again, but the representatives speaking for Tanganyika expressed concern about the recent report by the Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council. A request for very long leases for European settlement in Tanganyika was made. I pointed out that the land already allocated for European settlement had not been taken up and that I could not pledge the future.

32. It was an immense task to cover the principal areas, and both in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland it was done by much air travel and sometimes long car journeys over rough roads, and by intensive work from early morning every day throughout the tour.

**205** CAB 129/43, CP(50)270

14 Nov 1950

'East Africa': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Griffiths: text of draft statement to be made to House of Commons

*Draft Statement*

As the House will be aware from my speech in the Colonial Debate in July, I have been much exercised about the position in East Africa.

Recently it has appeared to me that there has been a growing uncertainty throughout the area. I have, during the last few months, been considering the matter in consultation with my advisers and with the Governors who have been over here on leave or on visits, and have had the advantage of the views of the Minister of State, who has recently visited East Africa. I have come to the conclusion that it will be best to pursue the matter, for the time being at any rate, separately in each territory rather than on a general East African basis.

In Uganda there have very recently been constitutional changes which have doubled the African membership of the Legislature from four to eight and which have provided for a measure of popular selection of those representatives. I feel that Uganda should develop in its own way, for its circumstances differ much from those both in Kenya and Tanganyika. In Tanganyika a local committee is consulting all shades of opinion before making proposals for constitutional advance. I am sure the House will agree that the process of local consultation should be carried through before constitutional changes are made. As regards Kenya, the Governor will, following on his discussions here, shortly be consulting with local opinion on the next steps. When he has carried out that consultation he will be in a position to put forward proposals and I hope then to be able to make a further statement to the House.

2. In the meantime it may be useful if I make clear certain basic principles of policy which must be observed—

- (i) As has been repeatedly stated by His Majesty's Government with the assent of all parties, our long-term aim is self-government within the Commonwealth.
- (ii) Self-government must include proper provision for all the main communities which have made their home in East Africa. In the long run their security and well-being must rest on their good relations with each other and not upon any undertaking by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. Good relations cannot flourish while there is fear and suspicion between the communities; it must therefore be our task to create conditions where that fear and suspicion disappear.
- (iii) By our presence in these territories we have set Africans on the path of political, social and economic development, and it is our task to help them to develop wisely and prosperously, so that they may take their full part, with the other sections of the community, in the administration and development of the territories.
- (iv) When Africans have reached the stage of taking their full part and the other communities are sure of a future in East Africa we can hope for a state of harmony and mutual confidence on which a Government in which all sections will participate can be soundly based. Until that stage is reached, and it will be some time before it is reached, it is essential that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom should continue to exercise its ultimate control in the East African territories, while allowing within that framework all reasonable freedom of action to the local Governments.
- (v) Future policy must be worked out in full consultation with those who belong to the territories. I appeal to all those who belong to East Africa, of whatever race and creed they may be, and to all in this country who are concerned for the future of those territories, to work together towards that goal of true partnership on which the future prosperity and happiness of all in East Africa must depend.

*The following additional statement to be made in answer to an arranged Supplementary Question*

This statement relates to East Africa, but it will be clear to Hon. Members that the basic principles of policy which I have just set out apply equally to Central Africa. I hope to be in a position to make a further statement on Northern Rhodesia in the fairly near future.

## 206 CAB 128/18, CM 76(50)1

20 Nov 1950

### 'East Africa: constitutional development': Cabinet conclusions on proposed draft statement

The Cabinet had before them a note by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.P. (50) 270) covering the draft of a statement<sup>1</sup> which he was proposing to make in the House of Commons on constitutional development in East Africa.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that for some time past there had been a growing feeling of anxiety and unrest throughout East Africa, which was due partly to the policies of the South African Government, partly to the fact that European settlers in East Africa were tending to turn for encouragement to that Government, and partly to the pace of recent constitutional change in West Africa. It had been suggested that a conference should be held to discuss the constitutional problems of East Africa; but he did not favour that course, which would tend to suggest that the problems of the various territories in East Africa could all be solved on similar lines. He preferred to continue to deal separately with the different problems of the various territories; but he thought there would be advantage in making a single statement of policy enunciating the general principles on which the Government were proceeding.

In discussion doubts were expressed about the expediency of making a general statement on these lines. The dependent territories in East Africa were in varying stages of constitutional development, and the problems arising from a mixture of races were more acute in some than in others. This fact was bound to be blurred if the Government made a single statement of policy applying to them all. Moreover, language applicable to all these territories was not likely to be specially apt to any. Secondly was it not undesirable to offer a statement of policy in respect of a selected number of areas in East Africa at a time when there was increasing need to consider the problems of Africa as a whole? Thirdly, in so far as the statement dealt with economic development, was it wise to appear to be treating these territories in isolation from the general problem of securing economic assistance for under-developed countries throughout the world?

The following points were also raised on the wording of the draft statement:—

(a) The language of paragraph 2 (iii) might be thought to place undue emphasis on the paternal aspect of Colonial responsibilities. It might be preferable to recast this in terms of assistance towards the economic development of these territories.

(b) The reference to "other sections of the community" in paragraph 2 (iii) would be more appropriate to Kenya than to other territories, such as Uganda. These words might perhaps be omitted.

<sup>1</sup> See 205.

(c) Was it necessary, in paragraph 2 (iv), to add the warning that some time would pass before self-government could be fully established in these territories? It was the general view of the Cabinet that in any such statement as this it would be expedient that such a warning should be included.

(d) In paragraph 2 (iv) it might be preferable to speak of “developing” rather than “allowing,” reasonable freedom of action by local governments.

(e) The appeal for co-operation, in paragraph 2 (v), was out of place in what purported to be a statement of principles. If included at all, it should be placed as a separate paragraph at the end of the statement. There was, however, much to be said for omitting this appeal altogether.

*The Prime Minister*, summing up the discussion, said that there seemed to be general agreement that before any such statement of policy was made the problem should be further considered—particularly in relation to Government policy in respect of other parts of Africa and to current discussions in the United Nations on racial problems in Africa.

The Cabinet:—

Invited the Commonwealth Affairs Committee to consider, in the light of the Cabinet’s discussion, the proposed statement of policy (set out in C.P. (50) 270) on constitutional development in East Africa.

## 207 PREM 8/1113, CA(50)2

28 Nov 1950

### ‘East Africa’: note by Mr Griffiths for Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs Committee: proposed draft statement

In accordance with the decision of the Cabinet at its meeting on the 20th November,<sup>1</sup> I circulate for consideration of my colleagues on this Committee, the draft of a statement on East Africa which I propose to make in the House of Commons.

2. During the past year there have been signs of increasing uncertainty in East Africa as to the future political evolution of these territories. This uncertainty has fostered an atmosphere in which inter-racial fears and suspicions thrive, so that a small pretext can serve to raise a political storm in the heat of which statements are made and published which endanger good relations and cooperation between the races.

3. The danger inherent in this situation has led to a general demand in East Africa and among those interested in this country for action to be taken to end the uncertainty. It is particularly important that such action should be taken as soon as possible in order to assist the Governors of Tanganyika and Kenya by creating a suitable atmosphere for discussion by the three major races of proposals for constitutional changes. In Kenya especially, it is desirable that my proposed statement should be made as soon as possible. The Governor is at present trying to secure general agreement locally to constitutional changes which involve an appreciable increase in the political representation of the African community. The statement is designed to create a more favourable state of opinion there and so facilitate his difficult task.

<sup>1</sup> See 206.

4. In my speech in the Colonial Debate, and in meetings with representatives of the Colonial Fabian Bureau, and the Joint East African Board (both of which included M.P.'s) I gave reason to expect a statement of policy in the course of 1950. My proposed statement combines the report of my recent discussions with the East African governors with a statement of policy designed on the one hand to reassure Africans that there will be no abandonment of His Majesty's Government's control until such time as they are able to take their full part in the Government of the territories, and on the other hand to reassure the immigrant races that His Majesty's Government recognise that they have a part to play in the future of the country and are therefore not now asking them to agree to constitutional changes with a view to securing their eventual eviction.

5. The second part of my proposed statement expounds general principles of policy, the detailed application of which must, as the first part makes clear, vary in accordance with the individual needs of each territory and, indeed, is the subject of current discussions in two of them. The statement is confined to political development and covers East African territories, which share common problems to a varying extent and are served by a variety of common services operated by the East African High Commission with a central legislature.

6. Some doubts were expressed in Cabinet on two counts:—

(a) that the different conditions in East African territories were such as to make it doubtful whether a single statement of policy applying to all of them should be made; and

(b) that it might be undesirable to make a statement of policy in respect of East Africa at a time when there was an increasing need to consider the problems of Africa as a whole.

As regards (a), it is of course true that conditions in the three East African territories vary, as is recognised in the first paragraph of the draft statement itself. There are however a number of common problems in all three territories notably in the field of race relations to which the draft statement particularly applies. The Governors of the territories concerned, whom I have consulted and who would naturally be much concerned from that point of view, all welcome the statement. Moreover, East Africa is commonly regarded by those concerned in most sections of opinion in this country as forming a political entity which would justify a common statement of policy.

As regards (b), there are of course occasions when general statements of policy in relation to Africa as a whole may be desirable. The present is I think an occasion when a statement of policy directed solely to East Africa is desirable for the reasons explained in the first part of this paper. I believe that if a statement is not made now, we shall be missing a great opportunity of contributing something to the improvement of race relations and to the political future of the area. I have taken into account possible repercussions in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the only two comparable Colonial Territories. I am satisfied that the present statement will have no ill effects there.

7. Certain textual points on the draft statement were also raised in Cabinet and the draft has been amended to take account of these. In particular I have omitted the appeal at the end of the statement. I would however note that the phrase "other sections of the community" has been retained in paragraph 2 (iii), since this is necessary to the statement as a whole. It is of course true that the proportions

between the different communities vary from territory to territory, but both Tanganyika and Uganda, as well as Kenya, have Indian and European communities, which must take their place with the Africans in political and economic life.

8. I attach a revised draft statement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See 209 for final revision.

## 208 PREM 8/1113, CA 1(50)

7 Dec 1950

### 'East Africa': minutes of Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs Committee on proposed draft statement

The Committee considered a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.A.(50)2) covering a draft of his proposed statement in Parliament on East Africa, which had been revised in accordance with the Conclusions of the Cabinet meeting held on Monday, 20th November (C.M.(50)76th Conclusions, Minute 1).<sup>1</sup>

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that for some time he had been concerned about the situation in East Africa and particularly in Kenya and Tanganyika, where there were substantial resident white communities. As a result of increasing uncertainty about the future throughout this area, inter-racial fears and suspicions were tending to grow. It was therefore most important to do something in order to end the uncertainty and to help in creating a suitable atmosphere for discussion by the three major races of the current proposals for constitutional changes in Kenya and Tanganyika.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies said that, in his opinion, the time had come for increased representation of the Africans in the Legislative Council of Kenya, but that up to the present the European community had tended to insist on "parity", i.e. that the number of European representatives should equal the representatives of all the other races combined. Also, there was at present no African on the Executive Council, but he thought it was time that there should be. These points would be among those which the Governor of Kenya would be discussing with the representatives of the different races. It would not be easy to obtain agreement, largely because of the fears on both sides—the fear of the Europeans that self-government would mean that they might be thrown out of the country by the overwhelming preponderance of the Africans, and the fear of the Africans that His Majesty's Government might be thinking of handing them over into the power of the immigrant communities, when their fate might resemble that of the natives in South Africa. His statement was designed to allay these fears as far as possible and to create a favourable atmosphere for the constitutional talks, and he understood that it would be welcomed by the Governors concerned. The possibility of a Royal Commission on the future of East Africa had been considered, but it had not been thought that such a Commission would be effective.

It was understood that there would be no objection to a statement on the lines proposed either from the point of view of relations with the Commonwealth Relations Office territories in Africa or with the other African colonial powers, and

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<sup>1</sup> See 206 and 207.

there was general agreement that such a statement was desirable. The Committee accordingly examined the revised draft statement in detail.

*The Lord Chancellor*<sup>2</sup> said that there were two main factors to be taken into account in considering the grant of self-government to East Africa. In the first place, it would clearly be necessary to wait until the Africans had matured sufficiently to take their full part in the government of the country. Secondly, there must be such a climate of opinion and harmonious relations between the races as would make it possible for self-government to work. The question therefore arose what would be the correct line to take if a situation was reached where the Africans had reached the necessary maturity, but racial relations were still unsatisfactory. At such a stage, it would be possible either to introduce constitutional advances in the hope that they would act as a solvent of racial relations, or to say that racial relations must be improved before constitutional reforms could be approved. He himself did not think that the former proposition would be tenable; but if in fact the second represented the intentions of His Majesty's Government, the point should be made somewhat clearer in the statement.

The following detailed suggestions were made for the further revision of the draft statement:—

*Paragraph 2(i)*: For "long-term aim" read "objective".

*Paragraph 2(ii)*: *The Lord Privy Seal*<sup>3</sup> suggested that this paragraph required some revision in order to bring out more clearly the fact that the proper rights and interests of all communities would be preserved in any constitutional changes. He felt that in this connection it was important to reassure the white communities, in order to avoid driving them into an undesirable alliance with the South Africans. He therefore suggested that this paragraph should be amended to read:—

"Self-government must include proper provision for all main communities which have made their home in East Africa, but in the long run their security and well-being must rest on their good relations with each other. Good relations cannot flourish while there is fear and suspicion between the communities; it must therefore be our task to create conditions where that fear and suspicion disappear. In any constitutional changes in the direction of self-government, care must be taken to safeguard the proper rights and interests of all the different communities."

*Paragraph 2(iv)*: It was felt that the idea contained in the second sentence of this paragraph (i.e. that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom must continue to exercise its control until all the necessary conditions for self-government were fulfilled) was one of the most important points in the statement and that it might therefore be expressed somewhat more forcibly.

*Paragraph 2(v)*: Although some short paragraph was desirable to round off the statement, it was felt that this paragraph as it stood was not very satisfactory. It was suggested that the paragraph should be further re-drafted on the lines of the corresponding paragraph in the draft statement as originally presented to the Cabinet (C.P.(50)270),<sup>4</sup> though with the omission of any form of "appeal".

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* undertook to prepare a further revised draft of his statement, taking into account the suggestions which had been made at the meeting, and to circulate this to his colleagues for their comments.

It was agreed that Ministers would convey their comments on this further re-draft

<sup>2</sup> Lord Jowitt.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Addison, in the chair.

<sup>4</sup> See 205.

direct to the Secretary of State as soon as possible, in order to enable him to make his statement in the House of Commons before the Recess. It should not be necessary to hold a further meeting of the Committee to discuss the re-draft unless any wide differences of opinion emerged.

The Committee:—

- (1) Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to circulate a further re-draft of his proposed statement, revised so as to take account of the views expressed at the meeting.
- (2) Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to make the statement, as finally agreed, in the House of Commons as soon as convenient.

## 209 PREM 8/1113, CA(50)3

8 Dec 1950

'East Africa': note by Mr Griffiths for Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs  
Committee on proposed draft statement. *Annex*: revised version

With reference to C.A.(50) 2 of the 28th November and the discussion of this paper by the Committee on the 7th December<sup>1</sup> I circulate the revised draft of my proposed statement on East Africa. This revised draft takes into account all the points made by the Committee yesterday. In view of the redraft on which we then agreed of paragraph 2(ii) of the proposed statement I feel that it would be appropriate to add to that paragraph, as has now been done, a statement about the need for full consultation on future policy. If this change is accepted paragraph 2(v) of the draft considered yesterday would not be necessary but to round off my statement of basic principles I should like, after I have made it, to conclude by expressing the hope of His Majesty's Government that all persons who are concerned with the future of these territories should work together towards that goal of true partnership on which the future prosperity and happiness of all in East Africa must depend.

In accordance with the Committee's decision I should be grateful if members could let me know not later than Monday afternoon, the 11th December, if they have any further comments to make. I am sorry to rush the matter, but it is important that I should be able to make the statement before the House rises, if the maximum effect from it is to be obtained in East Africa.

### Annex to 209

As the House will be aware from my speech in the Colonial Debate in July, I have been much exercised about the position in East Africa.

Recently it has appeared to me that there has been a growing uncertainty throughout the area. I have, during the last few months, been considering the matter in consultation with my advisers and with the Governors who have been over here on leave or on visits, and have had the advantage of the views of the Minister of State, who has recently visited East Africa. I have come to the conclusion that it will be best to pursue the matter, for the time being at any rate, separately in each territory rather than on a general East African basis.

<sup>1</sup> See 207 and 208.

In Uganda there have very recently been constitutional changes which have increased the African membership of the Legislature from four to eight and which have provided for a measure of popular selection of those representatives. I feel that Uganda should develop in its own way, for its circumstances differ much from those both in Kenya and Tanganyika. In Tanganyika a local committee is consulting all shades of opinion before making proposals for constitutional advance. I am sure the House will agree that the process of local consultation should be carried through before constitutional changes are made. As regards Kenya, the Governor will, following on his discussions here, shortly be consulting with local opinion on the next steps. When he has carried out that consultation he will be in a position to put forward proposals and I hope then to be able to make a further statement to the House.

In the meantime it may be useful if I make clear certain basic principles of policy which must be observed:—

- (i) As has been repeatedly stated by His Majesty's Government with the assent of all parties, our objective is self-government within the Commonwealth.
- (ii) Self-government must include proper provision for all the main communities which have made their home in East Africa, but in the long run their security and well-being must rest on their good relations with each other. Good relations cannot flourish while there is fear and suspicion between the communities; it must therefore be our task to create conditions where that fear and suspicion disappear. In any constitutional changes in the direction of self-government, care must be taken to safeguard the proper rights and interests of all the different communities. Future policy must be worked out in full consultation with those who belong to the territories.
- (iii) By our presence in these territories and by the assistance which we have given them in developing their resources we have set Africans on the path of political, social and economic progress and it is our task to help them forward in that development, so that they may take their full part, with the other sections of the community, in the political and economic life of the territories.
- (iv) When Africans have reached that stage and the other communities feel secure as regards their future in East Africa, we can hope for a state of mutual confidence and harmony; that will be a sound base for a Government in which all sections participate. It will be some time before that stage is reached and meanwhile it is essential that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom should continue to exercise their ultimate control in the East African territories. It is their firm intention to do so, while encouraging all reasonable freedom of action by local governments.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mr Attlee minuted on this revised draft: 'This is a great improvement' [12 Dec 1950]. The statement was made on 13 Dec 1950, see *H of C Debs*, vol 482, cols 1167–1171.

**210** CO 537/7196

4 May 1951

**[Tanganyika]: minute by A B Cohen on the governor's constitutional proposals**

Before the Secretary of State's meeting with Sir E. Twining this afternoon he will, I think, wish to see No. 7, which is a summary of the main recommendations in the Report of the Committee on Constitutional Development . . . .

Sir E. Twining does not wish to discuss the Committee's recommendations in any detail and in any case there are very few points of detail which need raising. He will, however, wish to raise two points in particular:—

(1) Timing of the announcement of the proposals. The Governor's idea is that the Committee's Report, together with his despatch and a reply from the Secretary of State, should be published about September, i.e. about the time when he returns from leave. The proposals would then be debated and, we hope, endorsed in principle by the Legislative Council in October. This arrangement, although of course it increases the risk of leakage meanwhile, would have three advantages. In the first place the Governor would be there when the report was published, which is, I think, important. In the second place publication would take place after the visit of the Trusteeship Council Mission—another very important point if the Mission is not going to cause embarrassment by intervening in, or at any rate influencing, the public discussions. Thirdly this timing would be much more convenient from the point of view of Kenya. We want to let the present political controversies die away in Kenya before the Tanganyika report comes out. Sir P. Mitchell has been informed by Sir E. Twining of the substance of the proposals and naturally has to consider, as we do, their effect on the political situation in Kenya. There is no doubt that the suggestion that the Europeans, Indians and Africans should have equal numbers of seats on the Legislature will be objected to by a large section of public opinion among the Europeans in Kenya and we may expect considerable pressure from Kenya against the proposals. We must, of course, stand firm against this, but Sir P. Mitchell feels that it would make things easier from his point of view if the proposals were not published until the early autumn.

(2) Sir E. Twining will wish to state his position with regard to the actual implementing of the proposals. The recommendation on this is contained in paragraph 99 of the report (page 20). The proposal there is that the recommendations of the report should be implemented by stages. First the new local government bodies should be set up; thereafter the Regional Administrations should be set up; and thirdly (not less than three years after the regional system has been brought into being) the new Legislative Council should be established. Sir E. Twining's views on this are given in paragraph 20 of his despatch at No. 8 (page 6). He agrees in general with the idea of the Committee that the introduction of the reforms should be gradual, but he does not wish to be tied to a rigid timetable. One of his reasons for this is that he is himself doubtful whether at this stage of Tanganyika's development the country can bear the establishment of Regional Administrations and Councils. There are considerable advantages in them, as explained by the Committee, but on the other hand they would introduce another level of government and they would, of course, increase the cost of government.

I have some sympathy with Sir E. Twining's doubts. The matter will be gone into

by a special Commission (see paragraph 13 of the despatch) and we are not called upon to reach any conclusion now. But clearly if there are not to be Regional Administrations, then the timetable for bringing the new Legislative Council into being will be affected. Sir E. Twining's own suggestion that there should be no rigid timetable is not moved necessarily by the thought that the establishment of the new Legislative Council should be at a later date than that contemplated by the Committee. He says that may be earlier. But he wants to be left free to bring the new Council into force at the right time. There is no strong pressure from Africans for the reform of the Council now and my own view is that Sir E. Twining is quite right to proceed gradually, building on the foundation of local government. I put it to him that, having announced H.M.G.'s approval in principle of these proposals, it would not, I thought, be practicable to postpone their introduction for more than five years. He quite agreed and said that it might be considerably less than that. I think that the important point is to establish the principle of equality of representation in Tanganyika between the three races. Once that has been done we can let the people in Tanganyika build on that principle in accordance with local needs.

I am discussing with Sir E. Twining the people we are to send to help conduct the three enquiries which he has in mind. He has asked for Mr. Hudson<sup>1</sup> for the local government enquiry and I am sure that he would be an ideal choice. We can make him available about the end of the year when Sir E. Twining is likely to want him. For the regional enquiry and the enquiry into elections Sir E. Twining was inclined to think that perhaps the same man could be used. Both Sir E. Twining and I are inclined to doubt whether Sir S. Phillipson<sup>2</sup> should be asked to undertake the regional enquiry. He has many other commitments in Nigeria and is now conducting an enquiry in the Gold Coast. I have suggested to Sir E. Twining that Professor K.C. Wheare<sup>3</sup> of Oxford would be a very suitable man to do both enquiries and I am going to arrange for them to meet fairly soon, without, of course, any commitments being involved.

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<sup>1</sup> R S Hudson, head of CO African Studies branch, 1949; formerly secretary for native affairs, Northern Rhodesia.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Sydney Phillipson, financial secretary, Nigeria; special inquiry into financial relations between government and native administration, 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Later Sir Kenneth Wheare, Gladstone professor of government and public administration, Oxford, 1944–1957; fellow of Nuffield College, 1944–1958.

**211** CO 537/7196, no 18

25 July 1951

[Tanganyika]: despatch from Mr Griffiths to the government of Tanganyika on constitutional development

I have the honour to refer to Sir Edward Twining's despatch No. 8 of the 22nd March enclosing a copy of the Report of the Tanganyika Constitutional Development Committee. I have postponed a reply to the despatch until I had had an opportunity of discussing the Committee's recommendations with the Governor during his present visit to this country.

2. I have now had the advantage of this discussion and I agree with the Governor that the Report is a valuable and constructive document. While I do not wish to

express final opinions until the Report has been considered by the public in Tanganyika and debated by the Legislative Council, I am in general agreement with the preliminary views expressed in the Governor's despatch. I consider that the Committee, including as it did representatives of the three main sections of the population, European, Asian and African, is to be congratulated on having reached unanimity in these recommendations, particularly on the difficult question of unofficial representation in the Central Legislature. I am impressed by the view of the Committee, summarised in paragraph 96 of the Report, that equal representation on the Legislative Council is in the circumstances of Tanganyika the best method of ensuring and promoting the friendly co-operation between the three main racial groups of the population which is essential to the territory's future progress and prosperity. I trust that, on mature consideration, this solution of a very difficult problem will commend itself to all communities in the territory and will be accepted by the Legislative Council. The Governor and I agree that the Report should be published in Tanganyika in August, so that time may be allowed to ascertain the trend of public opinion on the Committee's main recommendations before the Report is debated in the Legislative Council in November.

3. I am very glad to note that the Governor has been able to accept at once the Committee's proposal for African representation on the Executive Council and that, on his recommendation, an African has in fact already been appointed to the Council.

4. It is clear, as the Governor emphasises in his despatch, that many matters of major importance and of detail will have to be examined and settled before the Committee's recommendations, if they are accepted, can be implemented. I agree with the Governor's view that enquiry into these matters can best be entrusted to an expert and widely experienced Commissioner from outside the Territory assisted by Government officials and others with intimate knowledge of local conditions. I am at present considering the selection of a suitable person for this purpose; his actual appointment would, of course, await the outcome of the debate in the Legislative Council on the Committee's Report. In accordance with the Governor's request, I should be glad to make available to assist him, in the field of local government, Mr. R.S. Hudson, C.M.G., Head of the African Studies Branch of the Colonial Office.

5. As at present advised I share the doubts which the Governor expresses in his despatch as to the desirability of introducing regional administrations at this stage, as recommended by the Committee, in place of the present provincial system. As he suggests, that is a matter on which it is desirable, before a decision in principle is taken, to have the expert advice of the Commissioner whom it is proposed to appoint. I note that he will be assisted in this part of his enquiry by appropriate officers of the Tanganyika Government.

6. While I appreciate that for the reasons given in paragraph 18 of the Governor's despatch the introduction of the newly constituted Legislative Council should not be unduly hastened and that a rigid time-table would not be desirable, I welcome the suggestion made by the Governor in that paragraph that an objective of five years should be set for implementing the Committee's recommendations regarding the Legislative Council.

7. It now remains for the Report to be published and made available for public discussion, and subsequently debated in the Tanganyika Legislative Council. I shall await the Governor's definite recommendations for action in the light of that public discussion and debate.

**212** CO 537/3558, no 122

18 Mar 1948

[Gold Coast]: outward tel no 259 from Mr Creech Jones to Sir G Creasy  
(Gold Coast) about Accra disturbances

[With the introduction of the Burns Constitution in March 1946 (see 225, para 8), the Gold Coast became the first colony in British Africa to have a majority of African members in the Legislative Council. (Compare the Gambia, where from 1946 only one out of ten members of the Legislative Council was elected.) Eighteen African unofficial members were elected, together with twelve nominated or official members. In the light of this striking progress towards self-government, the news of the Accra Riots which broke out at the end of February 1948 came as a shock. Governor Sir G Creasy, telegraphing for instructions, said every effort was being made to secure further evidence of communist influence 'which I am sure is behind the present troubles' (CO 537/3558, no 121, tel to S of S, 16 Mar 1948). Creech Jones was sceptical about this interpretation, but recognizing that it was a delicate moment at which to question the governor's judgment, he made sure that the reply was carefully drafted. The basic drafting was by Cohen, L H Gorsuch (CO assistant secretary, 1947, head of West Africa Dept) and J K Thompson (CO principal), but the final telegram contained several portions which were entirely the work of Creech Jones himself.]

Your telegram No. 263.

I fully agree that the first essential is to restore law and order fully and securely and to make it clear to those who for whatever purposes have attempted to disrupt the ordered life of the territory that they will be given no opportunity of succeeding. I must necessarily leave to your discretion what active and specific measures you take to achieve this object.

2. At the same time I entirely agree with your insistence that the recent disturbances must be fully and impartially investigated, and that all legitimate causes of dissatisfaction must be brought to light and sympathetically dealt with to the utmost extent possible. I am sure you have given all possible publicity to the constructive efforts of the Government in the social and economic fields and that while there are severe economic difficulties in this post war era which bring hardship to all sections of the community the endeavour of the Government has been and remains to remove as far as lies in their power the cause of hardship or legitimate grievance.<sup>1</sup>

3. I appreciate that you have in mind the necessity that action on these two lines should proceed concurrently and in so acting you have my full support.

4. I agree with you that it is of paramount importance that you should carry responsible African opinion with you, and that it should wherever possible be consulted and associated with your actions.

5. We must clearly endeavour to establish the extent to which Communist instigation and influence have been responsible for the course of events. Investigations to that end may have to be carried forward secretly until a more precise estimate of true proportions of Communist activities can be made.

6. You ask for my views about policy and future lines to work on. With you I am alive to the danger of communist activities and the necessity of helping the public to a clear appreciation of the danger as well as method employed. Consequently this aspect of the matter must have its proper place in our pronouncements. At the same

<sup>1</sup> This sentence was drafted by Creech Jones.

time we must do this in such a way that we do not alienate from your Government the sympathy and goodwill of responsible and educated elements both here and in Africa who may fear that this factor in the disturbances may be used so as to obscure or belittle other reasons<sup>2</sup> for the outbreak which may have their foundation in sincerely felt causes of dissatisfaction quite unconnected with Communism, or in a desire to accelerate constitutional development at an ill-considered pace. I am sure you will not regard this as an implied criticism of anything you have said but purely as a personal reply to your enquiry as to how I see the matter of policy.<sup>3</sup>

7. In broadcast reported in your telegram No. 261 you mentioned that connection of group of detainees with Communist Party abroad was clearly demonstrated through the apprehension of a European emissary. Presume this refers to Burt (see your telegram No. 238). In order to decide what information can be given in reply to enquiries on this point, I should be glad if you would telegraph briefly substance of evidence obtained to prove this connection and nature of indications obtained regarding plan for Union of African Socialist Republics, etc. (see your telegram No. 261).

8. As regards links with this country, there is no doubt that direct connection exists between West African National Secretariat and Gold Coast Convention through Nkrumah, who was general secretary of former from its formation in December 1945 (see Robinson's letter to Scott dated 18th November, 1947 and my savingram to Nigeria No. 1396 of 19th November, 1946, copied to Gold Coast, No. 937 L.F.).

9. Chairman of W.A.N.S. is Bankole Awoonor-Renner (see your telegram No. 126 saving of 2nd November, 1947). He is believed to represent W.A.N.S. on Communist Party Africa Committee. General Secretary vice Nkrumah is Bankole Akpata, who is also known to be in contact with Africa Committee. This should not (repeat not) be taken to imply that activities of W.A.N.S. are Communist controlled. Communist support is, however, forthcoming in the form of advice, political education of individuals, publicity in the Daily Worker, attendance and speakers at meetings, and supplies of literature. It is believed that West Africa is not yet regarded as suitable (owing to its still largely tribal society) for direct Communist activity. But any movement such as W.A.N.S. which seeks to embarrass the "Imperialist" powers and to work for Colonial independence can be assured of the active support of the Communist Party . . . .

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<sup>2</sup> This sentence was redrafted to this point by Creech Jones. The previous draft was worded: 'Meanwhile, it may, I suggest, be best not to stress Communist activities, undue emphasis on which might obscure or belittle other reasons . . . '.

<sup>3</sup> This sentence was drafted by Creech Jones.

**213** CO 96/796/3, no 24C

20 Mar 1948

[Gold Coast]: appointment of a chairman for the committee of inquiry into Accra riots: letter from Mr Creech Jones to Prof Sir W Halliday (King's College, London)

[The first choice for a chairman of the committee of inquiry into the Accra Riots was Sir W Fitzgerald, chief justice of Palestine (1944–1949)—a man who had also had administrative and legal experience in Nigeria and Northern Rhodesia; he was willing to serve,

but there were local objections that he would (wrongly) be thought a relative of the general manager of the United Africa Company in the Gold Coast—and the unofficial members of the Executive Council accordingly advised against his appointment. The alternative was Sir Thomas Creed, Secretary of King's College, London, who had recently retired as legal secretary to the Sudan government. (He had been a member of the Sudan Political Service and became chief justice of the Sudan, having meanwhile also served in Iraq.) He too was willing to serve, but, as he had been in office at King's College for barely three months, the Governing Body of King's refused to release him. Terence Donovan, KC, a Labour MP, was then approached on 23 Mar 1949, and refused on 24 Mar. Aiken Watson, KC, recorder of Bury St Edmunds (1947) and deputy chairman of East Suffolk Quarter Sessions (who had been a commissioner of the High Court of Justice), was invited on the same day, 24 Mar, and accepted immediately. His appointment was announced in Parliament on the next day. He was regarded as 'a leading KC'. In 1935 he contested the election for Putney as a Labour candidate. Watson was briefed by G B Cartland.]

I am writing to enlist your help on what is an extremely important matter to us. You will have read in the paper of the recent serious disturbances and present extremely difficult situation in the Gold Coast. As has been announced I am sending a Commission to the Gold Coast at an early date to enquire into and report on the disturbances and their underlying causes and to make recommendations. This Commission will not only be concerned with the actual cause of the disturbances themselves and the events which immediately led up to them, but also with the underlying reasons for the present state of affairs. I believe that the Commission will find that these underlying reasons are partly economic and partly political and it is of paramount importance to secure a really first-class man as Chairman of the Commission.

As he has, I understand, informed you a tentative approach has already been made to Sir Thomas Creed on my instructions. He has of course informed the Colonial Office that he could only consider undertaking the task if the College were prepared to release him for the period involved. He has explained that he has only recently entered upon his present post and I fully appreciate the inconvenience which his absence from London for a considerable period would involve. I very much regret suggesting that the College should put itself to this inconvenience, but I do feel justified in view of the very important nature of the enquiry and of Sir Thomas Creed's ideal qualifications for it, in asking you and the College to consider very seriously the possibility of allowing him to undertake the Chairmanship. It is impossible to give a precise estimate of the period of absence which would be involved. When the matter was mentioned to Sir Thomas a period of 3 months was given; but my own opinion is that it ought to be possible to complete the work in 2 months.

You may wonder why there are not other men available to undertake the Chairmanship. I can assure you that before approaching Sir Thomas we had very carefully considered the available people. We want somebody who combines past judicial experience with broad political understanding and we are anxious also to have a man who knows Africa well. There is in fact nobody else available who combines all these qualifications and Sir Thomas's temperament and experience seemed to me, if I may say so, to fit him ideally for this particular task.

I regard the enquiry as being one of first-class political importance. In the Gold Coast very likely lies the key to our future success in relations between this country and West Africa and recent events have demonstrated a state of affairs there which

certainly requires urgent investigation. The work for which I am asking you and the College to release Sir Thomas is therefore likely to have a lasting effect on the future of the Gold Coast and, as I have said, on our relations with West Africa generally. For this reason I do venture again to express the hope that you and the College will feel able to see your way to release Sir Thomas for the period in spite of the great inconvenience which I fear this must cause.

If you should wish for any more information on the subject I should be glad to arrange for Cohen, the head of the African division in the Colonial Office, to call upon you. He would for example be in a position to talk about any financial or other arrangements which might be involved should you see your way to accede to my suggestion. I hope you will not mind my finishing up this letter by saying that from our point of view the matter is an exceedingly urgent one. The Governor is most anxious, and I think with reason, to announce the personnel of this Commission before Easter and he would like the Commission, if at all possible, to start work at the beginning of April. I am very sorry indeed to press you in this way, but the present position in the Gold Coast makes this unavoidable.

**214** CO 583/287/5, no 1

12 June 1948

[Nigeria]: letter from A B Cohen to Sir J Macpherson (Nigeria) on implications of Watson Commission's report on Gold Coast

I suggested to Lloyd, and he agreed, that we ought to send you immediately for your secret information a copy of the Gold Coast Commission's report, which was signed this week. The report is now to be printed here and will be published probably as a Command Paper and probably about the end of July. The present intention is to publish at the same time a brief statement of Government's intentions regarding the report and Creasy, as you probably know, is flying home at the beginning of July to discuss the recommendations and the terms of such a statement with the Secretary of State.

Obviously the report when published will arouse public interest in Nigeria and this applies particularly to the constitutional chapter with its rather radical recommendations. It is for that reason specially that we have thought that you would like to see the report straight away and it would be of considerable interest to us to have any comments which occur to you on the probable reactions in Nigeria. If we could get these before the talks with Creasy timed to start on the 4th July, it would be convenient; but I do not want to put you under any obligation in this respect.

It is pretty certain that Zik<sup>1</sup> will want to make capital out of the report and no doubt you will be considering this aspect of the matter.

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<sup>1</sup> B N Azikiwe, president of National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (1946), and editor of *West African Pilot* since 1937.

**215** CO 583/287/5, no 2

28 June 1948

[Nigeria]: letter from Sir J Macpherson (reply) to A B Cohen on Nigerian reaction to Gold Coast report

My dear Andrew,

Many thanks for your secret and personal letter of the 12th of June with which you sent me a copy of the Gold Coast Commission's report. I am extremely glad to have this so quickly. Gerald Creasy received his copy just as he was leaving the Gold Coast to visit us; he finished reading it while he was here and passed on to me the main findings and recommendations.

There will certainly be lively reactions in Nigeria to the report, and as you say, it is the proposals for constitutional advance that will arouse particular interest. My first thought is that it will be assumed here, as well as in the Gold Coast, that any constitutional advance that follows upon the proposals of the Commission has been achieved as a direct result of disorder; this assumption will do great harm in leading colonial peoples to believe that advance is more certainly and more speedily achieved by violence than by constitutional means. Apart from the encouragement given to political extremists throughout West Africa the proposals in the report will cause serious misgivings amongst those in Nigeria (particularly in the North and West) who wish to see advance along different lines.

The timing of the report is very unfortunate for us in Nigeria. *So far*<sup>1</sup> the new team has been given a very fair run by the extremist politicians and Zik told me the other day that, as far as the N.C.N.C. was concerned, this was the result of a considered decision, taken at the time of his Kaduna Convention, not to embarrass the new regime; hence their quiescence since my arrival. He added that he was being pressed by some of his more hot-headed supporters to take up the fight and admitted that his position was difficult. I expressed understanding of his dilemma! I think that there is some truth in what he said (although I discount the complimentary utterances that when [? went] with it) but principally I think he is puzzled and uncertain about his next course of action. The publication of the Gold Coast report may clarify his doubts and uncertainties.

On my month's tour of the country I moved too fast to get more than a superficial knowledge of how things were going, but even so I found much to be pleased about in the growing understanding and appreciation of the true purpose of the new Constitution. In some places the Native Authorities (up to Divisional level) said that they would not bother me with a lot of demands and problems, not merely because my visit was short and made for the purpose of getting to know folks, but because they already had their proper channel for the ventilation of these matters in the House of Assembly. And I met Provincial members of the Houses of Assembly (in the East and West) who had been having meetings with Provincial Committees at which matters of Regional or Provincial interest were discussed. Given time, and with flexibility on our part, the thing will work.

The press were gentle with me in regard to my "defence" (really explanation) of the Constitution in speeches I had to make on tour, and at a Press Conference which I held immediately after my return I had to make it quite clear that I was putting no

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis throughout in original. For the background, see 221, note.

new interpretation on the Constitution; nothing that I had said was other than uppermost in the mind of its framer.<sup>2</sup> I let it be understood that I wanted the Constitution to be given a fair and full trial, and that I had no intention of suggesting any major changes ahead of our timetable for review and modification. That was before I knew how high wide and handsome the Gold Coast Commission would be.

The recommendation of the Commission that will be most eagerly taken up is, of course, that relating to the Executive Council or Board of Ministers responsible to the Assembly. As you know, I am not satisfied with my Executive Council as now constituted; it is largely official and "rubber stamp", and deals principally with death sentences and with draft legislation at a late stage in its preparation. Apart from the lack of unofficials the Chief Commissioners can seldom attend and I can get little or no advice from the Provinces. If Nigeria were a territory of normal size with a fairly homogeneous population I should probably already have been considering the conversion of Executive Council into a body for the formulation of policy. But the distances make it very difficult to contemplate frequent meetings (once or twice a week) of a truly representative body, though Zik would probably urge—following the Gold Coast Commission's proposal—that the members should be salaried full-time Ministers. (This would lend force to the objections to Emirs and Chiefs playing a full part on representative bodies). And even if we could get over the geographical hurdle the important consideration remains that we are trying to build up in the Regions so that, without destroying the unity of the whole, they can develop according to their own traditions and social patterns. We are in fact moving towards a federal system, by a gradual devolution from the centre.

To encourage this process of building up confidence in the Regions Hoskyns-Abrahall<sup>3</sup> is beginning, with my full approval, to have informal committees—not statutory committees—in which the unofficial members of the Western House of Assembly are associated with Heads of Departments, or Regional Deputies, in considering various groups of activities. In the Eastern provinces Carr<sup>4</sup> is on very excellent terms with his unofficial members and freely discusses with them matters of policy which are not ripe for anything but confidential discussion. The members take great satisfaction in this and there has been no case of any breach of confidence. Thompstone<sup>5</sup> too has informal meetings from time to time with members of the Northern House of Assembly and House of Chiefs to discuss general questions of policy. Here in Lagos I have just started a new arrangement whereby I can, without reducing the build-up in the regions, have friendly talks with the members of Finance Committee. To ensure that the work is not all carried out by the Lagos nucleus Savage<sup>6</sup> brings in the up-country members on a roster, and we have now arranged that after the Committee has disposed of its formal business the members should meet with me in Government House for general discussion of matters affecting the country. We had our first of these meetings last week and I think the members appreciated the arrangement. These tender little shoots are likely to be shrivelled by the hot wind of clamour for spectacular constitutional advance.

It is not only the Executive Council proposals of the Commission that are

<sup>2</sup> ie, Sir A Richards.

<sup>3</sup> Sir T Hoskyns-Abrahall, chief commissioner, Western Provinces.

<sup>4</sup> Sir F B Carr, chief commissioner, Eastern Provinces.

<sup>5</sup> Sir E W Thompstone, chief commissioner, Northern Provinces.

<sup>6</sup> Sir A W L Savage, financial secretary, 1948–1949.

unsuitable for Nigeria. The Commission proposes that the Regional Councils in the Gold Coast should be *local government* bodies, equivalent to County Councils, whereas in Nigeria our Regional Houses are part of our legislative organization, providing the basis for a federal system. This essential difference is not likely, however, to affect the attitude of the N.C.N.C. which will no doubt use the Gold Coast proposals as an additional argument for a system of ministerial responsibility at the centre.

I have referred earlier in this letter to the N.C.N.C.'s attitude towards the Emirs and Chiefs. The Commission made no immediate recommendation regarding the future position of the Gold Coast Chiefs but they gave a lot of space to the criticisms made by Africans with a modern political outlook, and they did not contemplate the retention of the Gold Coast Chiefs otherwise than "in a form which is a pale reflection of the past". This will upset our traditional elements and encourage the extremists; and the result will not be conducive to sound progress.

At a first reading I do not think that, apart from the Constitutional proposals, there is much in the report that will cause strong reaction in Nigeria. (We are engaged in action on Nigerianisation of the Senior Service and on conditional sales [sic, ? salaries]. Our P.R.O. is good. And we have agreed to a swollen shoot rehabilitation subsidy which, though under criticism, is equal to the upper limit proposed by the Commission for the Gold Coast).

The real question is what action we should take as a result of the report. I shall not attempt in this letter to deal fully with that. The Chief Commissioners are coming to Lagos about the 9th of July and we shall consider the matter very carefully. Meantime I reject of course, any idea of adding new members to Executive Council in a hurry. We *may* have to alter our time-table for revision of the Constitution but even if that were decided I should be averse from making any statement of our intention in advance of publication of the Gold Coast report. Our next Legislative Council meeting will begin about the 17th of August and the question of appointing embryo ministers will in any case come up at that meeting (on a motion by Adedoyin<sup>7</sup>—see my recent letter to you about a proposal to add Phillipson<sup>8</sup> to Executive Council). We *might* avoid being put completely on the defensive by making a statement at the opening of the meeting. The N.C.N.C. will not have had much time to digest the report.

In any case I shall let you have my further thoughts after discussion with the Chief Commissioners, and you will no doubt keep me posted about the action proposed in the Gold Coast, following your discussions with Gerald Creasy, to whom I am sending a copy of this letter.

Best wishes,  
Yours ever,  
(Sgd) John Macpherson

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<sup>7</sup> Adeleke Adedoyin, elected member of Legislative Council for Lagos.

<sup>8</sup> Sir S Phillipson, financial secretary, 1945–1948. See also 210, n 2.

**216** CO 537/4625

23 Feb–1 Mar 1949

**[Nigeria]: minutes by A B Cohen and Mr Creech Jones on constitutional review**

[Sir J Macpherson, governor of Nigeria, wrote to Cohen, 29 Jan 1949, expressing his willingness to embark 'on the confused currents and dangerous waters of constitutional review', because he believed 'that success already achieved under the present constitution does in fact fully justify further substantial advance'. According to Cohen, they were putting together a 'political scheme', a 'prodedure for re-examining the Constitution'. The two points raised by Cohen in his minute were put into a letter from Cohen to Macpherson, 4 Mar 1949 (CO 537/4625, nos 1 and 5).]

*Sir T. Lloyd*

You have already seen Sir J. Macpherson's secret and personal letter of the 29th January about the constitution. I now submit some notes of my own on this subject which I have drawn up partly in the light of the memorandum enclosed with the Governor's letter, and partly as a result of what I saw and heard in Nigeria. Subject to your views and those of Mr. Gorsuch, to whom I have given a copy of my notes, and to the views of Ministers, I should like to send my memorandum to Sir J. Macpherson on a personal basis, not so much to draw their comments, but as one expression of view which can be taken into account by him and his senior advisers in connection with the Constitutional Committee.

You will see that the two points which I particularly want to emphasise are the necessity for including some review of local government in the process of constitutional reform and the necessity for further strengthening the administrative machinery at the regions and securing further decentralisation from Lagos. These points are only partially touched upon in the Nigerian memorandum itself—that does not, of course, mean that the Governor and his advisers have not got views on them.

As regards the main points of substance in the Nigerian memorandum, I agree broadly with them about the Governor's and Chief Commissioners' Councils, the unofficial members in the regions with executive responsibility, and the possibility of having unofficial members at the centre speaking in the Legislative Council for departments. I agree very much about further financial and legislative devolution.

The only point on which I do not entirely agree is the Cameroons. I think that the Southern Cameroons should be excised from the Eastern Provinces.

I do not wish to lengthen this minute, since I have said all that I want to say in the notes. The Secretary of State may wish to discuss, but we ought to get a letter off to Sir J. Macpherson at an early date.

A.B.C.  
23.2.49

I have read the letter & Enclosure of the Governor with considerable interest. I have also read Mr Cohen's Memorandum with no less interest. I agree substantially with most of what Mr. Cohen says. There is an omission I feel about the Pagans & another on the absorption of the Colony.<sup>1</sup> But most of the points in my own mind have been

<sup>1</sup> Pagans: inhabitants of Southern Nigeria as opposed to the Muslin north. 'The Colony' referred to the old ceded Colony of Lagos, a narrow coastal strip at the western end of Nigeria.

covered in Mr Cohen's paper. There is the problem of carrying vocal opinion in Nigeria (which itself is divided) along with the changes contemplated remembering that that vocal opinion is representative only in the limited way that it can exploit the ignorant and gullable [sic] majority. There is the feudal section which must die before there is much hope of change but its influence is great and is really representative of the quiescent masses. There is the problem of erecting a tradition in government, of permitting trial and error, of less spoon feeding & more reliance & virility. But the outstanding problems facing us are well set out & include (a) the form & structure for Nigeria—federal or unity—if federal what really do we understand by it—it is necessary to give it a much fuller definition than indicated by Mr Cohen (b) importance of local government & its relation to the regional structure, to the technical services & administration, (c) the financial relations & powers between the centre & the region & the region & the local authorities (d) how to bring to decorative & ceremonial status the native authorities & develop the native [?] councils on a representative & responsive basis. There is much else but enough has been submitted to indicate that the problems are appreciated & before long changes must be seriously considered in conjunction with representative opinion.

A.C.J.

1.3.49

## 217 CAB 129/36/2, CP(49)199

8 Oct 1949

### 'Gold Coast constitution': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Creech Jones

[On 4 Oct 1949 Creech Jones sent a minute to Attlee outlining the recommendations of the Coussey Committee. Attlee minuted: 'This must come to Cabinet' (5 Oct 1949, PREM 8/924, PM(49)46).]

The Committee which has been considering constitutional reform in the Gold Coast has now reported and decisions are required on its recommendations. The Committee was appointed in the following circumstances.

2. Under the present constitution of the Gold Coast there is a Legislative Council with an unofficial majority and an Executive Council, which is advisory to the Governor, with an official majority. There are three unofficial African members of the Executive Council, but these have no executive responsibility for departments of Government. The Watson Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances of February and March 1948 was impressed by the need to give Africans a greater share in the forming and execution of policy and made recommendations with this object in view. His Majesty's Government in August 1948 welcomed these recommendations in broad outline and suggested that a fully representative local committee should be set up in the Gold Coast to examine them. We stated that, if the recommendations were acceptable to local opinion, we would regard them as broadly acceptable, subject to certain reservations, and would be prepared to make arrangements for their early implementation.

3. The local Committee, which started work in January, consisted entirely of

Africans under the chairmanship of an African judge, Mr. Coussey,<sup>1</sup> and was representative of all parts of the Gold Coast and of all sections of opinion, including the nationalists, although not the extreme nationalists. Their report is unanimous except on three points, two of which are mentioned below. It is a balanced and reasonable document and the somewhat bold experiment of appointing an all-African committee has proved successful.

#### *Local government*

4. The Report makes comprehensive recommendations for the reform of “indirect rule,” the development of local government on modern lines, and the building up of regional administrations in the Colony, Ashanti and the Northern Territories. These are broadly in accordance with our general policy and can be accepted, although the details will need further working out locally. It is highly satisfactory that the Committee has devoted so much attention to local government and has recognised its importance to sound political development.

#### *The legislature*

5. The Committee propose a bicameral system, with a Senate consisting of Chiefs and “elder statemen” [sic] and a House of Assembly consisting almost entirely of members elected directly or indirectly by popular vote. The Committee only decided in favour of a bicameral system by one vote and therefore submitted alternative proposals for a single chamber. It would be difficult to make a bicameral system work in the Gold Coast at this stage of political development. I propose, therefore, to reject the idea of a bicameral Legislature and to accept the Committee’s alternative proposals for a single chamber, in which, however, a third of the seats would be reserved for Chiefs and “elder statemen” [sic].

#### *The executive*

6. The main questions for decision arise with regard to the Executive. On this subject the most important recommendations of the Watson Commission were:—

- (1) that there should be a majority of African members drawn from the Legislature on the Executive Council;
- (2) that African members of the Executive Council should have responsibility for the administration of departments;
- (3) that the Governor should retain his reserve powers;
- (4) that the Executive Council should cease to be advisory to the Governor and should become a board of Ministers with collective responsibility to the Legislature and should initiate policy.

7. In the Statement published with the Watson Commission’s report we accepted the first three of these recommendations. With regard to the fourth, we stated that, while agreeing that the Executive Council should be the body where all major questions of policy should be discussed, at this stage it would be preferable to retain

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<sup>1</sup> (Sir) James Henley Coussey, puisne judge, Gold Coast, since 1944; member of Executive Council since 1943 (educated Hampton Grammar School and Middle Temple).

the formal arrangement in the constitution under which the Council is advisory to the Governor.

8. The Coussey Committee have recommended that the Executive Council should consist of the Governor as Chairman; three *ex-officio* members (the Chief Secretary, the Legal Secretary and the Financial Secretary); a Leader of the House of Assembly elected by that House; and seven Ministers drawn from the Legislature (five with portfolio and two without portfolio). A minority report opposes the inclusion of *ex-officio* members. Under the Committee's recommendations the Ministers would be appointed by the Governor in consultation with the Leader of the House and would be required to resign collectively on a vote of no confidence in the Leader by two-thirds of all the members of the House of Assembly. The Executive Council would be the chief instrument of policy and would be collectively responsible to the House of Assembly and not responsible to the Governor. The Committee has recommended that the Governor should have the usual reserve powers, although a minority report has opposed the retention of the Governor's power of veto.

9. There are two points in these proposals which I feel are unacceptable. In the first place, I do not think that we can accept the proposition that the Executive Council should not be responsible to the Governor. By proposing that the Governor should have reserve powers, the Committee have themselves in effect accepted the view that he must retain ultimate responsibility, and they have therefore been inconsistent in recommending that the Executive Council should not be responsible to him. The Governor's ultimate responsibility for the administration of the Territory must be retained until the stage of internal self-government is reached. We can, however, safely concede that, provided the Governor's ultimate responsibility is secured, the Executive Council should no longer be a purely advisory body. I propose that it should be described in the constitution as the main instrument of policy (as it is in Jamaica and will be in Trinidad) and that decisions should be taken by a majority vote, subject to the safeguard that the Governor would be empowered to act against the majority decision, with the Secretary of State's prior approval, when the issue under discussion is one falling within the scope of his reserve powers. Equally, of course, the Governor would have the usual reserve powers in relation to the Legislature.

10. Secondly, there are difficulties about the Committee's proposal that a Leader of the House of Assembly should be elected by that House. In the absence of any group or party system in the Gold Coast such an elected Leader could not be sure of retaining the support of a majority of the House of Assembly and, without it, continuity in the conduct of public business could not be maintained. In practice, however, it will be necessary to have a Leader of the Government side in the House of Assembly, and I propose that the members of the Executive Council, *ex officio* and African, should select one of their number to perform this function.

11. As regards the composition of the Executive Council, I propose, in agreement with the spirit of the Watson and Coussey Committee's reports, that it should have an unofficial majority. A Ministerial system would be introduced, and at this stage the Ministers would be selected by the Governor and appointed by him subject to a favourable resolution by the House of Assembly.

12. The proposed arrangements are similar, in their main essentials, to those already in force in the Sudan and to those shortly to be brought into force in Trinidad, which were approved by the Commonwealth Affairs Committee on 29th

October, 1948 (C.A. (48) 8th Meeting, Minute 1).<sup>2</sup> They are also in accordance with the views of the Governor and his official advisers, three of whom flew to London to discuss the report in detail. The Governor is satisfied that the proposed scheme is workable and best calculated to provide political experience for Africans by pinning responsibility on to them and to promote the orderly progress of political development in the Gold Coast.

13. During the past eighteen months there has been considerable political agitation in the Gold Coast and the extremists have been conducting a campaign for immediate responsible government, which has attracted support among the less responsible elements. There is, however, a large body of moderate opinion which, while recognising that the country is not yet ready for full responsible government, is convinced, as the Governor and I myself are, that immediate constitutional advance is necessary. I think that it is important that the Governor should be placed in a position to rally behind him this moderate opinion. The Coussey Committee is recognised by the public in the Gold Coast as having been a widely representative body and its report is undoubtedly a victory for moderate opinion. If we accept the report broadly, subject to the reservations set out in paragraphs 9 and 10 above, as I feel sure we should, the Governor hopes to have moderate opinion behind him, although the extremists will not of course be satisfied. If we are not prepared to accept it broadly, moderate opinion will be alienated and the extremists given an opportunity of gaining further and weightier support and of making serious trouble. I am satisfied that at the present stage of political development in the Gold Coast no system would be workable which did not provide, as my proposals do, for a very considerable degree of African participation in the control of policy, while preserving the Governor's ultimate responsibility.

14. The Committee's report is known to have been submitted to the Governor on 29th August. We have handled it since its receipt with great expedition, as indeed was publicly promised by the Governor, with my authority. The public in the Gold Coast is anxiously awaiting its publication and, in the view of the Governor, which I share, it is important that it should be published without delay. It is important also that His Majesty's Government's views on the report should be published simultaneously with it, since otherwise there would be a period of uncertainty and speculation on the intentions of Government, of which the extremists would undoubtedly take advantage for their own ends.

15. Subject to the concurrence of my colleagues, I therefore propose to publish the report on 26th October, and at the same time to issue a statement of the views of His Majesty's Government in the form of a despatch to the Governor. I also propose to make an announcement in the House of Commons on that day in reply to an arranged question.

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<sup>2</sup> See 252.

**218** PREM 8/924

12 Oct 1949

**'Gold Coast constitution': minute by Sir N Brook (Cabinet secretary)  
to Mr Attlee, commenting on CP(49)199<sup>1</sup>**

[Extract]

...3. This project for a Constitution has obvious weaknesses, but these are inherent in any scheme for a substantial devolution of political responsibility falling short of full responsible government. It is impossible to devise any Constitution which will completely satisfy nationalist aspirations while retaining ultimate power in British hands. In the light of past events, we appear to be virtually committed to a *substantial measure of constitutional advance in the Gold Coast*. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the proposals put forward by the Coussey Committee will command sufficient support to offer a reasonable hope of success for the new Constitution, although there are extreme elements of political opinion which will continue to press for more.

4. It might be helpful to the Cabinet to have some information about the working of the Jamaica Constitution, which was framed on somewhat similar lines; and they may also want to know what are the probable repercussions on other African Colonies of this substantial step forward towards full responsible government in the Gold Coast.

5. The Gold Coast is strategically important to us, and the Ministry of Defence are anxious that the Colonial Office should keep in touch with them in the drafting of the constitutional documents. In general, the Ministry of Defence feel that the Colonial Office are apt to overlook their interest in the defence aspects of Colonial constitutional changes, and they hope that they can in future be brought in at an early stage in the consideration of such changes.

6. You may care to take this occasion to enquire what progress has been made by the Committee which, by the Cabinet's conclusion of 21st March, 1949 (C.M.(49) 21st Conclusions, Minute 5)<sup>2</sup>, was to be appointed to enquire into the constitutional problems of the smaller Colonies. I have been told that, although more than six months have passed, the Committee has not yet met.

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<sup>1</sup> See 217.

<sup>2</sup> See part 4 of this volume, 408.

**219** CAB 128/16, CM 58(49)3

13 Oct 1949

**'Gold Coast constitution': Cabinet conclusions on recommendations of  
Coussey Committee**

The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.P.(49) 199)<sup>1</sup> reporting the conclusions reached by a local Committee which had been appointed in January 1949 to consider constitutional reform in the Gold Coast.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that he was in favour of accepting the recommendations of this Committee subject to three points: (i) He thought it impracticable to adopt the proposal for a bi-cameral legislature: he preferred the

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<sup>1</sup> See 217.

alternative suggestion of a single Chamber in which a third of the seats would be reserved for Chiefs and elder statesmen. (ii) He considered that the Executive Council must continue to be advisory to the Governor, rather than responsible to the House of Assembly, for so long as the ultimate responsibility for the administration of the Colony rested with the Governor. (iii) In the absence of a Party system, he did not regard it as practicable for the Leader of the House of Assembly to be elected by that House and he proposed that the Leader should be selected by the Executive Council.

In discussion it was suggested that, as this constitution would not provide full self-government, some undertaking might be given that it would be reviewed after a specified period of years. This would be helpful in answering the sort of criticism which was frequently directed against our Colonial administration in international discussions at the United Nations and elsewhere. It was, however, the general view of the Cabinet that such undertakings were undesirable in principle: they were apt to have an unsettling effect on the local population, who were encouraged thereby to press for further constitutional reform instead of applying themselves to the task of getting the best out of the constitution currently in force.

The Cabinet:—

- (1) Approved the recommendations in C.P. (49) 199 regarding the reform of the constitution of the Gold Coast.
- (2) Authorised the Secretary of State for the Colonies to publish the report of the Committee, together with a statement of the extent to which the Government accepted its recommendations.

**220** CO 96/811/7

13 Oct–4 Nov 1949

**Gold Coast Africanisation: minutes by Sir C Jeffries, Mr Creech Jones and A B Cohen**

[A Gold Coast Legislative Council Select Committee on Africanisation of the Public Service was by the beginning of September 1949 proposing that all vacancies should be filled by suitably qualified Africans in preference to expatriates, but if no suitably qualified African was available for an immediately required appointment, an expatriate should be appointed on contract. (There was, however, a proviso that if it was impossible to secure an expatriate on contract a suitable expatriate should be appointed on pensionable terms.) The British authorities had no difficulty with a policy of trying to appoint suitably qualified Africans, but the novel suggestion of substituting contract for pensionable expatriate service seemed to threaten recruitment to the Colonial Service, just when the government was trying to stimulate it; and pressure was put on the Select Committee to modify its proposal.]

*S of S*

This is so important that I feel I must send it to you. It is clear that over a certain range of posts—more particularly the professional and technical services—we are reaching a stage at which short-term contracts may be the normal arrangement. But there is a wide range in which we shall get no recruits worth having if we are obliged to offer contracts in the first place. If the Gold Coast persist in their present attitude they will heavily damage recruitment not only for their own Colony but for the Colonial Service as a whole.

C.J.J.  
13.10.49

Yes I am afraid we are getting into a bad jam through African prejudice. They are cutting off their nose to spite their face. The difficulties for us will increase the repercussions on efficient administration will be damaging.

A.C.J.  
[nd]

I have no doubt that it would be difficult to spare anybody to go to the Gold Coast at such short notice. But an issue to which we attach very great importance is at stake and unless we can secure the right kind of recommendation from the Committee we shall be faced with a very tight restriction on expatriate appointments on a pensionable basis. This would be very detrimental to the future interests of the Gold Coast. For this reason, if it is at all feasible, I would like to urge strongly that a representative of the Personnel Division should visit the Gold Coast, as the Governor now again requests . . . .

A.B.C.  
3.11.49

I feel that this is a key point for the future of the Col. Service as well as for the Gold Coast and that it is essential for Mr Williams<sup>1</sup> to go out. He has agreed to do so, despite the short notice, and arrangements are in hand. He should take the opportunity also of discussing the very important question whether this constitutional change means that we must give European officers the opportunity to retire (as in Ceylon 1931) with compensation for loss of career. This is being considered in CSD and I hope that we can discuss it here and if possible obtain a direction [?directive] from the S. of S. before Mr Williams goes.

C.J.J.  
4.11.49

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<sup>1</sup> J B Williams, CO assistant under-secretary from 1949.

## 221 CAB 129/39, CP(50)94

3 May 1950

### 'Nigerian constitution': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Griffiths

[The 'Richards Constitution' (so-called after the governor, Sir Arthur Richards, 1943–1947, later Lord Milverton), was introduced in 1947 to promote the future unity of Nigeria, to express its diversity, and to increase the discussion and management by Nigerians of their own affairs; but its most important feature was its promotion of regionalisation, which was later developed in successive constitutions. A Legislative Council was set up for the whole of Nigeria, with forty-five members, of whom twenty-eight were Africans (four elected and twenty-four nominated); while the Executive Council remained composed mainly of official members. Regional Houses of Assembly were established in Eastern, Western and Northern Nigeria to provide two-way links between the central Legislative Council and the Native Authorities. There was provision for constitutional review after three- and six-year periods, and for revision after nine years. However, because it worked well (and there was also a new governor), and because of the quickening pace of political and constitutional change in the Gold Coast (see 214, 215), the process of review was begun in 1948. Macpherson's initiative also proceeded well. His plan was to appoint a select committee to make a drafting report, and then to hold consultations and a general conference, mostly of Nigerians ('à la Coussey': CO 537/4625, no 6, Macpherson to Cohen, 24 Mar 1949). Cohen thought these proposals sound, but reminded the governor that it was most important not to allow any currency

to the term 'constituent assembly'—their intention was to make improvements in the working of the existing constitution, not to rewrite it completely. Consultations got off to a good start, with provincial conferences at Lagos and Onitsha contributing their recommendations. By the end of 1949 it was obvious that clear and efficient relations between the centre and the regions were the main issue. Prof K Wheare was brought in as an adviser on federations, since they were clearly moving towards the creation of a federal system. By the time of the Ibadan conference in 1950 the governor and his colonial secretary (H Foot) were more than ever convinced they had been right to organise the constitutional review: 'We feel certain that if we had not started when we did, so that consultations were carried out in an atmosphere of reasonable calm, we should now, because of what is happening in the Gold Coast and elsewhere . . . have been improvising something in haste and under pressure and in a very different atmosphere'. Furthermore, they felt the political education of Nigerians had been most valuable: 'the irresponsible and voluble politicians are finding themselves up against real problems (not just a struggle between an Imperialist bureaucracy and the people) which cannot be solved by clap-trap and cheap slogans' (CO 537/5786, no 9, Foot to Cohen, Feb 1950). Cohen then prepared the Cabinet paper printed here, which recommended acceptance of the Nigerian proposals in a published despatch, for the government should 'show that we mean business about constitutional advance and that there is to be no stalling on this issue' (*ibid*, minute by Cohen, 18 Apr 1950). The Cabinet authorised a draft despatch (see 222), but there was uncertainty about the selection of ministers. Foot wanted ministers selected by the legislature. This, however, would differentiate Nigeria from the Gold Coast, where the governor was still to have a say in their appointment; and, on the merits, Cohen in any case argued that it was wrong for governors (or lieut-governors in the regions) to have no say since they remained ultimately responsible for administration. Sir C Arden-Clarke confirmed that the Nigerian proposal would embarrass the Gold Coast gravely (CO 537/5787, no 79, to L H Gorsuch, 25 Oct 1950). Mr Griffiths concluded this 'interesting argument' by overruling the Nigerian proposal (*ibid*, minute, 28 Nov 1950). Thereafter the details of the new constitution were fully worked out swiftly and with a remarkable measure of agreement within Nigeria (227). Cohen praised the skill of R J Vile (CO principal) and J C McPetrie (CO senior legal assistant) in getting the new constitution ready—'the political consequences of delay might have been very serious in Nigeria' (CO 537/7166, minute 20 June 1951). Although it seemed as if constitutional change in Nigeria was thus proceeding in desirably gradual stages, in fact the 1951 constitution quickly became subject to stresses and strains and lasted only twenty-seven months.]

The review of the Nigerian constitution which has been proceeding locally for the last year has now been completed. The procedure adopted for this review, although it involved full consultation with representatives of the people, was somewhat different from that adopted in the Gold Coast. In August 1948, just after His Majesty's Government had announced agreement in principle to constitutional advances in the Gold Coast, the Governor of Nigeria, with the approval of my predecessor, proposed to his Legislative Council that after a preliminary period for the expression of public opinion the constitution should be reviewed during 1949. This was accepted, and at the Budget Session in March 1949, the Council agreed to a procedure for popular consultation which was then put in hand. Conferences of representatives of the people were held in every province and subsequently in each of the three Regions of Nigeria and at Lagos. These were followed by a General Conference of representatives of the whole country in January 1950, before which a Drafting Committee had produced concrete recommendations on the basis of the reports of the Regional Conferences. The report of the General Conference was subsequently discussed by the three Regional Houses of Assembly (and the Northern House of Chiefs) and last month by a Select Committee of the Legislative Council itself.

2. The Provincial, Regional and General Conferences were attended by the unofficial members of the present Legislative Council and the Regional Houses of Assembly, together with a small number of officials. The process of consultation has

been most successful, both in the political education which it has provided and in the proposals which have emerged from it. The purpose of the consultation was to produce agreed Nigerian views, and the task of the officials was no more than to assist the discussions. Their presence, however, helped to keep the Nigerian Government closely in touch with the discussions. There was also close consultation between the Nigerian Government and the Colonial Office during the later stages and the Chief Secretary of Nigeria flew to London early in January specially for the purpose of detailed discussions with my predecessor. The proposals which have emerged are unanimous, except for minority reports by a few members on a strictly limited number of points and for one remaining major difference between the North and the rest of the country to which I will refer below. Subject to further discussion of a few relatively minor points and to the satisfactory solution of this one major difference, we now have a scheme of constitutional advance recommended by the representatives of the people of Nigeria which in my view is entirely acceptable.

3. The existing constitution provides for a Legislative Council for the whole of Nigeria, with an unofficial majority, but with substantial official representation, and for Houses of Assembly for the three Regions, also with unofficial majorities but with substantial official membership. In addition there is a House of Chiefs in the Northern Region. The Regional Houses so far have advisory powers only with regard to legislation and finance, but a policy has been followed by the Nigerian Government of devolving responsibility for purely regional subjects from the centre to the Regions. This policy has worked very successfully and some advance in the powers of the Regional Houses is now called for. The Governor's Executive Council is purely advisory, with a substantial official majority, and the three unofficial Nigerian members on it have no executive responsibility for Departments of Government. There is need for greater participation by Nigerians in the executive machinery both at the centre and in the Regions.

4. The Select Committee of the Nigerian Legislative Council, in endorsing generally the recommendations of the General Conference referred to above, has in particular welcomed the proposals:—

- (i) for greatly increased Regional autonomy within a united Nigeria;
- (ii) for giving Nigerians a full share in the shaping of Government policy and direction of executive Government action in a Central Council of Ministers and Regional Executive Councils; and
- (iii) for the creation of larger and more representative Regional legislatures with increased powers.

These general principles are, I am convinced, absolutely sound.

5. The main proposals are as follows:—

- (a) The existing Legislative Council should be enlarged and at the same time the number of officials on it should be reduced. The Nigerian members should be selected (as the majority of them are at present) by the Nigerian members of the Regional Houses from their own numbers.
- (b) The Regional Houses of Assembly should be enlarged and the official membership reduced. The Nigerian members should be selected through electoral colleges the members of which would themselves be directly elected by the people. The Northern House of Chiefs should be retained and a House of Chiefs should be

established in addition to the House of Assembly in the Western Region. No such institution is required in the Eastern Region, where there is no comparable system of traditional chieftainship.

(c) The Nigerian legislature would approve the Nigerian budget and would retain full powers of legislation on all subjects. The Regional Houses would have power to legislate over a substantial field, subject to the power of the Council of Ministers to refer back such legislation and, if necessary, ultimately to reject it if they considered it to be in conflict with an overall Nigerian interest. The legislative fields of the Nigerian legislature and of the Regional Houses would thus overlap considerably. It is recognised that eventually, as in most federal or partly federal constitutions, the centre and the Regions should have separate and distinct fields, possibly with concurrent powers over a third relatively limited field. But at the present stage, when the Regional Houses will still be finding their feet, it is felt that the central legislature must retain unrestricted powers, while at the same time the Regional legislatures must be given powers to legislate over a number of subjects. Experienced advice has been taken on the point in this country and as a result of this I am satisfied that the arrangement proposed is suitable.

(d) In place of the Executive Council there should be established a Council of Ministers with the Governor as President; six official members (the Chief Secretary, the Attorney-General, the Financial Secretary and the Chief Commissioners of the three Regions, who would become Lieutenant-Governors); and twelve Nigerian members drawn, four from each Region, from the Legislative Council. The Nigerian members would be Ministers, nine with portfolio and three without portfolio. The Council of Ministers would not be purely advisory to the Governor as is the existing Executive Council. It would formulate policy and direct executive action. The Governor would have reserve powers which would apply both to the Executive Council and to the legislature.

(e) Regional Executive Councils would be established under the Presidency of the Lieutenant-Governor and with official and Nigerian members, the latter in the majority. The Nigerian members would be Regional Ministers with or without portfolio. The Regional Executive Councils would formulate policy and direct executive action within the Region, subject to general directions on policy by the Council of Ministers where the overall interests of Nigeria were involved.

6. It has been no easy task to obtain substantial agreement between the representatives of the conservative and Moslem North and the more politically-minded Ibos and Yorubas of the Eastern and Western Provinces. Three major differences arose during the discussions; of these one has been settled, the second disposed of for the time being and only the third remains to be resolved. The three differences are:—

(a) The Northern representatives, while raising no objection to Ministers in the other Regions, were opposed to having Ministers either at the centre or in the North itself. It is most satisfactory that they have now agreed to Ministers both at the centre and in the North.

(b) The Northern representatives claim that finance should be divided between the Regions on a *per capita* basis. This was a natural claim for them to make, as they are at once the richest and most populous Region and that with the least developed social services. On the other hand, such an arrangement could not be

introduced immediately without disrupting the financial structure of Nigeria and involving the retrenchment of essential existing services in the Eastern Region, which is the poorest. It has been agreed that no formula covering the allocation of finance can be introduced into the constitution, but that an expert and independent committee should be set up to undertake an enquiry into the division of revenue over a period of five years between the three Regions and the central Nigerian services. The proposals of this committee would be considered by representatives of the three Regions sitting in equal numbers under the chairmanship of the Financial Secretary. The independent enquiry will be conducted by Sir Sydney Phillipson, a former Financial Secretary of Nigeria, Professor J.R. Hicks, of Nuffield College, Oxford, and an expert on federal-provincial relationships who is to be appointed from Canada.

(c) The third difference between the North and the other Regions which remains to be resolved relates to the composition of the Nigerian Legislature; this is discussed in paragraphs 8 and 9 below.

7. There has been some difference of opinion about the treatment of Lagos, the capital of the country, which, with the immediately surrounding country areas, has hitherto been administered separately from the Western Region, of which it forms a geographical part. On the basis of the proposals put forward by the Western and Lagos Regional Conferences it was first proposed that Lagos should be included in the Western Region; but the General Conference itself recommended by a majority that it should be administered as an independent municipality not under the Western Region. The Select Committee of the Legislative Council has proposed by a majority that Lagos should form part of the Western Region, but with special safeguards to allow for its position as the capital. The three members of the Legislative Council representing Lagos have submitted a minority report opposing this, in spite of the fact that the representatives of Lagos at the General Conference who were not members of the Legislative Council had taken the opposite view. I propose to accept the majority view that Lagos should be included in the Western Region.

8. The representatives of the Northern Region have throughout contended that the North, which has more than half the population of the country, should be given half the seats in the central legislature. This would be a most unusual provision in a single chamber legislature under a constitution which already has some federal elements in it and is likely to become more federal as the Regions develop. Moreover, it is hardly surprising that the Eastern and Western representatives should be opposed to this arrangement, under which the North might well succeed in dominating the legislature. In spite of all the efforts of the Nigerian Government, it has not so far been possible to resolve this difficulty. When the Northern representatives were out-voted on the point in the General Conference their spokesman stated that, if the point was not met, the North would press for separation from the rest of Nigeria as was the case before 1914. The Northern delegates thereupon prepared to leave the Conference, but were with difficulty persuaded by their colleagues to remain, on the understanding that their view would be recorded that, unless their point about representation was accepted, they would disassociate themselves from the other recommendations of the Conference. In the Select Committee of the Legislative Council the suggestion was made that, to meet the difficulty, a bicameral legislature should be adopted at the centre, the composition of the House of

Representatives being based on population and that of the Upper House on equality between the three Regions. This proposal is to be further considered by the existing Regional House and will come before the Legislative Council at its meeting in September.

9. It is of the first importance to solve the difficulty about the composition of the central legislature. The unity of Nigeria must be the first aim of policy for the country. Northern Nigeria is relatively rich in natural resources and its people have great potentialities. It is absolutely dependent on the Eastern and Western Regions for its communications with the coast, but at the same time it has much to contribute to the country as a whole, not only in money and material resources, but through its traditions and its political stability. The new constitution must in my view be so drawn up as to give the maximum encouragement to the building of a united Nigeria. For this reason I am anxious to do all I can to encourage the three Regions to reach agreement on the one outstanding point, and I am advised that the Governor would be much assisted in securing this result if I were to send him a despatch for publication in the near future informing him that, subject to a satisfactory settlement of this one outstanding issue and to further examination of certain points of detail, His Majesty's Government would be willing to accept the recommendations of the General Conference as amended by the Select Committee of the Legislative Council.

10. I am sure that these proposals can safely be accepted. The scheme which is put forward succeeds, in my view, in creating the relationship between the centre and the Regions which is best suited to the present stage of development. It provides for a more representative method of selecting members of the Regional Houses without importing a system of direct election which would not work under present Nigerian conditions. It gives Nigerians a large share of responsibility for the formation and execution of policy both at the centre and in the Regions, while leaving the ultimate responsibility for policy, and the means of exercising that responsibility if necessary, in the hands of the Governor through the reserve powers which, as explained in paragraph 5 (d), he would still possess in relation both to the Executive Council and the legislature. The scheme represents a logical development of the existing constitution, which was designed to promote regional development within a unified Nigeria. In the extent to which it would transfer power to Africans it is similar to the scheme recently approved for the Gold Coast, although it goes slightly less far than that scheme. Above all, it is a scheme recommended by the representatives of the people of Nigeria after long and detailed consultation. I am assured that the great majority of the people of Nigeria would accept the scheme, although the extremists would no doubt say that it does not go far enough.

11. Subject to the concurrence of my colleagues therefore I propose to send a despatch to the Governor in the terms indicated at the end of paragraph 9 above. I should propose that this despatch should be published at a date to be agreed with the Governor and I would then make an announcement in the House of Commons.

**222** CAB 128/17, CM 30(50)6

11 May 1950

**'Nigerian constitution': Cabinet conclusions**

The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.P. (50) 94)<sup>1</sup> outlining the progress made in reviewing the Nigerian constitution and proposing that he should send a despatch to the Governor of Nigeria indicating the Government's approval, subject to a satisfactory settlement of outstanding issues, of proposals which had been made in January 1950 by a General Conference of representatives of the whole country, and amended by a Select Committee of the Legislative Council of Nigeria.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that the new Constitution would give greatly increased regional autonomy, and would provide for the creation of larger and more representative regional legislatures, with increased powers. Nigerians would have a full share in shaping Government policy in a Central Council of Ministers and in Regional Executive Councils. Difficulties had arisen from the fact that the rich Northern Region, which contained a majority of the population and was predominantly Moslem in character, feared that under the new constitution its interests might be subordinated to those of the Eastern and Western Regions. Accordingly, the Northern Region had pressed for equal representation with the other two regions in the Central Legislative Council, and there had been some danger that the Colony would be disrupted on this issue. It had now been suggested that a bicameral constitution might be adopted, in which the regions would secure the necessary safeguards through the manner in which the two Houses were constituted; this was under further examination and could come before the Legislative Council at its meeting in September. The Northern Region had also claimed that finance should be divided between the regions on a *per capita* basis, and arrangements had now been made for a committee to examine the financial structure under the new constitution. The Governor of Nigeria was of opinion that, unless the United Kingdom Government indicated at this stage that they were prepared to adopt the proposals on which agreement had been reached in Nigeria, the situation might deteriorate and the measure of agreement so far achieved might be lost.

In subsequent discussion, attention was drawn to the importance of ensuring that the administrative and other senior grades of the African Civil Services contained a progressively increasing proportion of Africans, so that, as self-government was progressively achieved, the transfer of responsibility at the administrative, as well as the political, level could be effected smoothly. The success of the transition in India had been largely due to the policy of increasing year by year the proportion of Indians in the Indian Civil Service.

Rather similar difficulties arose in industry, and an effort was now being made to see whether more could not be done to influence Nigerian students who came to this country at their own expense to take up careers other than the professions of law and medicine, into which an undue proportion appeared to be entering. The Colonial Development Corporation had agreed to sponsor a number of apprenticeship schemes with a view to securing, in Africa and elsewhere, that the middle range of supervisor could be recruited from native-born sources.

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<sup>1</sup> See 221.

The Cabinet:—

(1) Approved the proposals in C.P. (50) 94, and authorised the Secretary of State for the Colonies to send for publication a despatch on the lines indicated in paragraph 9 of his memorandum.

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to submit to the Cabinet a memorandum indicating what steps were being taken to introduce an adequate proportion of native-born administrators into the higher grades of the Colonial Civil Service, particularly in African and other colonies which were progressing towards self-government. [See part 4 of this volume, 356].

## 223 CO 537/5787, no 52

15 July 1950

### [Nigeria]: despatch from Mr Griffiths to Sir J Macpherson on constitutional review

I have now been able to study the Reports of the General Conference at Ibadan and of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the review of the Nigerian constitution and to discuss these with you. I note that general agreement has been reached, subject to certain minority reports, on all questions except one and that this one major question, the composition of the Nigerian Legislature, is being referred back for further examination by the Regional Legislatures and the Legislative Council. I believe that it may be helpful if, without commenting on this one point of difference, I inform you of the views of His Majesty's Government on the remaining recommendations.

2. First of all I wish to pay tribute, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to the success of the constitutional review. Conferences of Nigerian representatives have been held in the Provinces, following in many cases discussions at the divisional level; there have been further Conferences in the three Regions and for Lagos and the Colony; finally a General Conference representative of all parts of the country met at Ibadan in January and its recommendations have been considered by the Regional Legislatures and the Nigerian Legislative Council. In the view of His Majesty's Government the recommendations which have emerged are of the utmost value. I have been particularly impressed by the wide measure of agreement reached. All who have taken part in the constitutional review are to be congratulated on their contributions and Nigeria is to be congratulated on the results; these have amply justified the initiative which you took in 1948 in proposing that such a review should be undertaken and the decision of the Legislative Council to accept your proposal.

3. The Select Committee of the Legislative Council has warmly welcomed the proposals of the General Conference

- (a) for greatly increased regional autonomy within a united Nigeria;
- (b) for giving Nigerians a full share in the shaping of Government policy and direction of executive Government action in a Central Council of Ministers and Regional Executive Councils; and
- (c) for the creation of larger and more representative Regional Legislatures with increased powers.

I am in full agreement with these proposals and the main purpose of this despatch is

to inform you that, provided that a satisfactory settlement can be arrived at on the composition of the Nigerian Legislature and subject to further examination of details when the constitutional review is completed in Nigeria, His Majesty's Government will be willing to accept the recommendations of the General Conference with the variations suggested by the Select Committee of the Legislative Council in its Report dated April 1st, 1950. In the following paragraphs I propose to comment on some of the main recommendations; I shall not comment on points of detail.

4. The proposal to give increased powers to the Regional Legislatures represents a logical development from the present constitution which established these Legislatures and in my view is fully justified by the successful working of the existing Regional Legislatures. I welcome the recommendation that the Regional Legislatures should be given power under the constitution to approve or reject the annual budgets of the Regions and to legislate over a substantial range of subjects of particular interest to the Regions, subject to the power of the Governor on the advice of the Nigerian Council of Ministers to refer back or if necessary to reject legislation which appears to that Council to conflict with a major overall Nigerian interest. I believe it to be right that this latter power should rest with the Central Executive rather than with the Central Legislature as was originally proposed; the procedure for exercising it will need to be carefully worked out. I hope that arrangements may be made for consultation between the Regions and the centre so as to avoid to the maximum possible extent the introduction of legislation into Regional Legislatures which would conflict with an overall Nigerian interest. If, however, on any occasion legislation is passed by a Regional Legislature which is considered by the Nigerian Council of Ministers to be in conflict with such an interest, then I would suggest that a joint committee representative of the Council of Ministers and the Regional Executive concerned should be established with a view to agreeing amendments to the legislation which would make it acceptable to both parties.

5. I note the recommendation that the Nigerian Legislature at the centre should continue to have full power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria, without any restriction. It follows that there will be a substantial overlap between the legislative functions of the Central and Regional Legislatures. I believe that at the present stage, while the Regional Legislatures are still gaining experience, this arrangement will be found the most appropriate; but at some stage in the future, as Nigeria develops further towards a federal state, it may well be necessary, as it has been in other countries, to establish separate and distinct fields of legislation for the centre and the Regions, with a reduction in the range of subjects over which they have concurrent powers.

6. One of the most important features of the proposals is the recommendation that Regional Executive Councils should be established under the Presidency of the Lieutenant-Governors of the Regions, and consisting of official members and Nigerian Ministers drawn from the Regional Legislatures, the latter being in a majority in each case. The proposal that the Chief Commissioners should in future be called Lieutenant-Governors appropriately symbolises the increased powers to be given to the Regions. I fully agree also that, with these increased regional powers, Nigerian members should take a full part, with their official colleagues and under the leadership of the Lieutenant-Governors, in the formulation of policy and the direction of executive action in the Regions, subject to the general direction of policy by the Nigerian Council of Ministers in matters affecting overall Nigerian interests.

7. I have made it clear how much importance I attach to the principle of greater regional autonomy. One of the great advantages of encouraging the Regions to develop each along its own characteristic lines will be that by that very process the unity of Nigeria will be strengthened. I wish to make it clear beyond all doubt that His Majesty's Government attaches the very greatest importance to building up a unified Nigeria on the basis of the three component Regions. The three Regions depend closely on each other and will continue to do so, and any tendency to break up Nigeria into separate parts would in the view of His Majesty's Government be contrary to the interests of the peoples of all three Regions and of Nigeria as a whole. I therefore warmly welcome the recommendations for a strong Central Legislature and Executive for Nigeria. Final recommendations for the composition of the Legislature remain to be made. As regards the Executive, the important proposal is made that a Nigerian Council of Ministers should be established under the Presidency of the Governor with six *ex officio* members and twelve Nigerian Ministers, four from each Region, drawn from the Central Legislature. It is proposed that the Council of Ministers should formulate policy and direct executive action for Nigeria. I fully accept this proposal, as I am convinced that it is essential at the centre as in the Regions that Nigerians drawn from the Legislature should take a full part, along with their official colleagues and under the leadership of the Governor, in the shaping of general Government policy and the directing of executive action.

8. The proposal is made by the General Conference that the Ministers at the centre and in the Regions should be elected by the respective Legislatures and that the arrangements for the distribution of portfolios among these Ministers should be settled at the centre by the Governor in Council (i.e. the Council of Ministers) and in the Regions by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council (i.e. the Regional Executive Council). I entirely agree with the principle that, at this stage of constitutional development, the Legislatures should have a voice in the appointment of Nigerian members to the Executive at the centre and in the Regions; but the method of appointing Ministers and of distributing portfolios is clearly a matter on which final decisions cannot be taken until the composition of the Nigerian Legislature has been settled. You will, however, be aware that in this country and in many other countries in the Commonwealth and elsewhere where there is an established party system, the Prime Minister appoints his own Ministerial colleagues and is himself solely responsible for the distribution of portfolios. I have no doubt that, when the stage of fully responsible government is reached, the same arrangement will be adopted in Nigeria. There would in my view be advantages in establishing, on the creation of a ministerial system in Nigeria, a procedure for appointment of Ministers which will lead on smoothly to the adoption of this arrangement when the time is ripe. As, at the stage now under discussion, the Governor will preside over the Council of Ministers and the Lieutenant-Governors over the Regional Executive Councils, I suggest that the aim should be to arrive at a procedure under which members of the Council of Ministers are selected in consultation between the Governor and the members of the Nigerian Legislature representing each region, and members of the Regional Executive Council are selected in consultation between the Lieutenant-Governor and the members of the Regional Legislature.

9. I agree with the recommendation of the General Conference that the appointment of a Minister, but not of course of an *ex officio* member, should be terminated in the event of a vote of no confidence in him being passed by a

two-thirds majority of the Legislature concerned. It will, I am sure, be agreed that this power should not be lightly exercised, and for that reason I suggest that the majority should not be two-thirds of the members present but two-thirds of all the members of the Legislature in question. I suggest also that individual members of the Council of Ministers or of the Regional Executive Councils should be under an obligation to carry out and support in the Legislature, the policy and decisions of the Council. A member of a Council who felt himself unable to carry out this obligation should resign and, in case he refused to do so, it should be provided in the constitution that the Governor or Lieutenant-Governor should be empowered in these circumstances to terminate his appointment, with the agreement of the majority of the Council of Ministers or the Regional Executive Council.

10. Great importance clearly attaches to the arrangements for the election of members of the Central and Regional Legislatures and I have noted with much interest the recommendations of the General Conference on this matter. I make no comment on the arrangements for the election of members of the Central Legislature, since a final recommendation on its composition remains to be made. As regards the Regional Houses of Assembly, it is proposed that the members should be elected by a system of indirect election through provincial electoral colleges in the Northern Region and divisional electoral colleges in the Eastern and Western Regions; that the primary elections in each Region should be direct; and that the detailed arrangements should be worked out in each Region and examined by the House of Assembly of that Region. I do not wish to prejudge this examination, but I would point out that the representative character of the Regional Houses of Assembly and, if they are to select the members of the Central Legislature, of that Legislature itself, will depend ultimately on the primary elections in the Provinces and Divisions. It is in my view most important that the arrangements for these primary elections should ensure that the members elected to the Provincial and Divisional electoral colleges should be genuinely representative of all the peoples of the areas concerned; that the elections should be free and fair; and that the form of election should be properly adapted to the circumstances of each area. For this last reason I welcome the proposal that the arrangements should in the first instance be worked out in the Regions themselves; I shall await the results with much interest.

11. During the course of the constitutional review different opinions have been expressed as to the future of Lagos. The joint Lagos and Colony Conferences and the Western Regional Conference proposed that both Lagos and the rural districts of the Colony should be included in the Western Region for legislative and administrative purposes. The General Conference at Ibadan by a majority agreed as far as the rural districts of the Colony were concerned, but recommended that the independent municipality of Lagos, as capital of Nigeria, should be kept outside the Western Region. A minority report signed by seven representatives of the Western Region, three representatives of Lagos and one of the Colony, but not by the representatives of Lagos and the Colony on the Legislative Council, contested this recommendation and argued that Lagos should be included in the Western Region. The majority of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council came to the conclusion that Lagos should be included in the Western Region, subject to certain important safeguards. The representatives of Lagos and the Colony on the Legislative Council, however, submitted a minority report supporting the majority of the General Conference.

12. I recognise that there is much to be said in support of both views; but I have

come to the conclusion that the view of the majority of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council, which clearly has the support of a substantial body of opinion but not of all opinion in Lagos itself, should be accepted. If it were not accepted, Lagos would have to [be] separated for legislative and administrative purposes from the rural districts of the Colony, which are unanimously recommended for inclusion in the Western Region; and I understand that there are felt by many to be strong ties between Lagos and the rest of the Colony, which have been administered together for so long. Although I believe that Lagos should be included in the Western Region, I am sure that its position as capital city must be safeguarded and I therefore welcome the proposals of the majority of the Select Committee that all central services in Lagos, including particularly the port and railway, should remain a central responsibility under the direction of the central Government; that all expenses arising from the special needs of Lagos as the capital should be met by the allocation of funds from the central Government; that the annual estimates of the Town Council should be submitted not only to the Regional Executive Council of the Western Region but also to the Nigerian Council of Ministers; and that at least two members representing Lagos in the Western House of Assembly should be selected by that House to sit in the Central Legislature.

13. The allocation of finance between the three Regions and central Nigerian services naturally assumed much importance during the constitutional review. I welcome the proposal of the General Conference that an expert and independent committee should be set up to undertake an enquiry into the division of revenue over a period of five years between the three Regions and the central Nigerian services; that the proposals of this committee should be considered by representatives of the three Regions sitting in equal numbers, with a representative of Lagos, under the chairmanship of the Financial Secretary; and that recommendations should be submitted to the Governor and by him to the Secretary of State to take effect at the same time as the introduction of the new constitution. The Committee has already been appointed and has started work.

14. There is one other matter directly arising from the proposed changes in the constitution to which I should like to refer. The grant of increased powers to the Regional Legislatures and the setting up of Regional Executive Councils will, I believe, if the new arrangements are to work satisfactorily, involve a further strengthening of the administrative machinery in the Regions and a re-examination of the relations between the central directorates of the technical departments at Lagos and elsewhere and the regional branches of those departments. With the appointment of Regional Ministers for certain subjects, further administrative devolution of responsibility to the Regions will, I think, be found necessary and it may well be found desirable also to raise the status of the Regional Deputy Directors of certain departments to that of Regional Directors. The Central Directors would then cease to be directly responsible for the purely regional activities of these departments; their function would be to advise the Governor and the Council of Ministers on general policy and to provide the regional directorates with technical advice and assistance not available to them in other ways. I have no doubt that these matters are receiving your careful attention.

15. I have already dealt with the minority reports on the position of Lagos. As regards the other minority reports, I have studied them closely, but I do not think that it would be justifiable to set aside the recommendations of the large majority of

the General Conference. On the proposal that Nigeria should be divided not into three Regions but into a considerably larger number of units based on ethnic grouping, I would point out that the three Regional Conferences, the Conference for Lagos and the Colony and the General Conference all either explicitly or implicitly recommended that Nigeria should consist of three Regions, although the Western Regional Conference would have preferred that they should be called States. If the alternative proposal for a larger number of smaller units were adopted, not only would the financial and administrative relations between the central and the component parts be made much more difficult, but those component parts would themselves be weakened, whereas it seems clear to me from studying the results of the constitutional review that it is the desire of the great majority to strengthen the Regions and to give them more legislative and executive power. On the minority reports regarding the system of election, I would point out that while the Eastern Regional Conference and the Lagos-Colony Conference suggested leaving the method of election to the decision of the regions themselves, both the Northern and the Western Regional Conferences, as well as the General Conference, recommended indirect election to the Regional Houses of Assembly through electoral colleges at the Provincial or Divisional level. I see no reason to depart from the recommendations of the General Conference and I do not wish to add to what I have said in paragraph 10 of this despatch, except to point out that from the point of view of those who are in favour of direct election, the proposal that the primary elections in each region should be direct represents an important advance.

16. I have one final point to make. When the existing constitution was introduced in 1947 it was stated that it would be subject to general review after a period of nine years and that certain features of it would be subject to review after three and six years. Its operation was so successful that you decided, with my predecessor's approval, to propose a general revision in the third year of its operation and this proposal, as I have already stated, was accepted by the Legislative Council. The reforms which have been recommended as a result of that review are, I believe, both sound and necessary and they certainly represent a logical development from the existing constitution. I do not myself think it wise to fix definite timetables for constitutional advance, whether these take the form of laying down that a particular change will be made after a given period of years or of stating that no review will take place until a given period has elapsed. Constitutional advance must in my opinion depend on the political development of the country concerned. At the same time too frequent constitutional changes are to be avoided; if changes are made too often they are bound to have an unsettling effect on the political and economic life of a country. For that reason, although I would not be in favour of fixing any stated period within which review will be ruled out, I would nevertheless urge that, when the new constitutional arrangements have been introduced, they should be allowed to operate for a reasonable period before further changes are considered.

17. I shall await with the greatest interest the final recommendations to be submitted on the subject of the composition of the Nigerian Legislature.

**224** CO 537/7181, no 3

5 Mar 1951

**[Gold Coast]: letter from Governor Sir C Arden-Clarke to A B Cohen about political situation**

[This personal letter to Cohen was read with close interest. Cohen's immediate reaction was that they must 'reserve judgment' upon Nkrumah's new ministry; he saw hopes of 'Nkrumah's doing good', while he thought the governor had shown political sense and made 'an excellent start' with the new constitution. Griffiths wrote on the first page of the letter: 'I have read with intense interest. Arden-Clarke is a shrewd politician as well as a good Governor. All this augurs well' (CO 537/7181, minutes, 10 and 18 Mar 1951).]

You will probably be interested to have some background information about the events of the last four weeks leading up to the formation of the new Government.

On Thursday, 8th February the first general election in the history of the country took place. There were 38 seats to be filled by popular ballot in the Colony and Ashanti, the Northern Territories having adopted a different system of election for their 19 seats. Most thorough and elaborate preparations had been made for preparing the people to cast their votes. The elections went off well and in a most orderly fashion, on the whole more orderly than an election in England. The results of the elections were startling. The Convention People's Party (the C.P.P.), the extreme nationalist party, which went to the polls on the slogan "Self Government Now", made practically a clean sweep, winning 35 out of the 38 seats available with one of the remaining three a "fellow traveller". Most of the opposition candidates, even those contesting constituencies regarded as safe by the moderates, forfeited their deposits.

A month before the election it had been expected that they would win anything up to 25 seats, but at that stage no-one, not even the C.P.P., expected such a wholesale victory. Indeed, when the C.P.P. list of candidates containing the names of a number of ne'er-do-wells was published, the party stock suffered a momentary slump and many moderates, who had themselves done nothing towards establishing a disciplined political party, began to hope that the country would react strongly against the C.P.P. list of candidates and send moderates to the Assembly. It was then that the C.P.P. played a decisive stroke. They put up their leader, Kwame Nkrumah, who was still in gaol, as one of their candidates for Accra. They promised that if he was elected he would be released from prison. A great wave of enthusiasm spread through the rank and file of the party and they then threw all their energies into the final stages of the election campaign. A few days before the election began, my intelligence sources forecast 34 seats for the C.P.P. and this coincided roughly with the last forecast made by the C.P.P. Executive before the elections.

Although there were 18 members still to be elected on the following Saturday by the Territorial Councils of the Colony and Ashanti and 19 members from the Northern Territories, a total of 37, it was clear that having regard to the ineffectiveness, lack of organisation and local jealousies of the Territories Councils, the C.P.P. had in fact obtained a working majority in the House of Assembly and would be entitled to form the new Government, or, if they decided to go into opposition, would be able to wreck the new constitution before it had had a chance of starting.

The C.P.P. moved quickly. On Friday, 9th, they sent me a letter asking me to meet

a deputation of their Executive Committee that afternoon to discuss the immediate release of Kwame Nkrumah, their leader, and other members of their party who were still serving prison sentences in connection with their campaign of "positive action" in January last year. I was not prepared to release anyone until after the Territorial Council elections were over on the Saturday. Also it was important that if Nkrumah and his colleagues were released it should be done as "an act of grace" rather than as the result of public pressure. Knowing that they would probably be attending the Territorial Council elections at Dodowah on Saturday morning, I replied that I would meet them on Saturday morning, in the hope that they would ask for a further postponement. This they obligingly did and asked me to see them on Monday. I agreed to see them on Monday afternoon and in the meantime made all arrangements for the release of Nkrumah and his colleagues at 1 p.m. on Monday. This took the wind out of their sails and enabled me to claim that the release of these men was in fact "an act of grace" and a gesture of goodwill. To my surprise it was accepted as such by the public and local press, "and even the ranks of C.P.P. could scarce forbear a cheer". The decision, however unpalatable, was in fact inevitable. To have refused to release them would have undoubtedly led to a head-on collision and would have received little or no support from the U.K. press or Parliament. There were about a dozen journalists representing U.K., S. African and American newspapers here at the time and I was kept informed of their views and the trend of their reports.

Moreover, by acting quickly I put myself in a better position to resist the demand, which I knew would be made, for the release not only of the so-called "political prisoners" but also of the ex-servicemen and other party members who had been imprisoned for participating in riots and acts of violence. Sure enough on Monday afternoon when the C.P.P. representatives came to see me, after thanking me for releasing their leader and others, they asked me to release the rioters. I said that I would examine each individual case to see if any grounds for remission existed, but that I could hold out little hope of anyone convicted of crimes of violence being released. Gbedemah, their leader, made the illuminating remark that, if they had only known in time what I was going to do, he would have advised Nkrumah and the others to stay in prison until I had agreed to release all, a remark that Nkrumah himself repeated to me in one of my later interviews with him.

The whole of the fortnight from Sunday, 11th to Sunday, 25th was taken up with a series of interviews with the leaders and representatives of the various parties and groups which had been elected to the new House of Assembly. My objective was to arrive at an agreed list of eight persons whose names I could present to the House for its approval for appointment to ministerial office. The Colony and Ashanti Territorial Councils had between them elected some half dozen or more C.P.P. members and sympathisers and had thus ensured to the C.P.P. an over-all working majority in the House, a fact admitted by all parties.

The C.P.P. line was that by virtue of their majority and in accordance with accepted parliamentary principles they were entitled to all eight ministerial posts, though they were prepared to give two or three of the eleven posts of Ministerial Secretary to the Northern Territories and possibly Ashanti. The view of the Territorial Council members was that the constitution did not provide for government by a single political party and that a system of checks and balances allowing for the representation of all sections of the community had been intended. While admitting that the C.P.P. had an over-all majority, they considered that only four

ministerial posts should go to the C.P.P. and the remaining four should be divided up between themselves. My own view was that, whatever may have been the intention of the framers of the constitution, party government had arrived, and that the responsibility for the Government should be placed fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the majority party, but that in the interests of national unity there should be a coalition and the party should accord representation in the Executive Council to the Northern Territories and to Ashanti, the Colony already being fully represented by party members. If my view prevailed, this meant that the C.P.P. should have six of the eight ministerial posts available, Ashanti one and the Northern Territories one.

The C.P.P. finding that I was ready to give them the substance of their demand, i.e. an over-all majority in an Executive Council composed of three ex-officio and eight representative members, were quite co-operative, but wanted themselves to choose the Northern Territories and Ashanti representatives. I pointed out that the Northern Territories and Ashanti would say "Thank you for nothing" and refuse to co-operate on such terms. Eventually, chiefly because of Nkrumah's helpful attitude, they agreed to leave the choice of these representatives to me in consultation with the Territorial groups concerned.

The Territorial groups were a very different proposition. At first they pressed hard for four ministerial posts, although they were prepared to admit that if I put their four suggested names forward the Assembly would reject them. When they found that I would not budge, they decided that they would not co-operate in the Government at all and would refuse any ministerial offices; instead, they would hold themselves in reserve to form an alternative Government if the C.P.P. majority failed. They informed me that they were not a party, had not got any special policy, did not regard themselves as an opposition and were not prepared to form a coalition. I pointed out that this was hardly a clarion call to the country and was unlikely to win the support of the voters and that if they came out publicly with this kind of statement in the House they would be committing political suicide.

For a long week talks and arguments went on until at last on Friday afternoon (23rd February) the Northern Territories and Ashanti representatives agreed each to take one ministerial post and accepted the list which in consultation with them and the C.P.P. I had prepared. On Saturday morning the Northern Territories representatives reappeared in my office and announced that they had changed their minds again and they would not take office. I allowed myself the indulgence of a brief but violent explosion which obviously shook them and then for an hour I wrought patiently with them. Finally they accepted my advice and agreed to take office. I told them that there could be no more changes of mind as I was now sending the list of names to the Speaker for presentation to the House of Assembly when it met on Monday, 26th, and that if they did have any more second thoughts they could declare them publicly to the House and to the world in general.

The House met on Monday morning. The motion for the adoption of the list of eight names was moved by Nkrumah and seconded by Sir Tsibu Darku, who had throughout been the chief opponent of that list and had in the background inspired most of the tergiversation of the Northern Territories representatives. The ballot on the names in the House was secret; all the names were accepted practically unanimously except one which was adopted by 48 votes to 29. Nkrumah, in selecting his list of five party members for ministerial office, he himself being the sixth, seems

to have been guided in part by a desire to collect a team that would be able to understand and deal with the tasks facing them e.g. himself, Botsio and Gbedemah, but partly also by his wish to convince the outside world that the representatives of his party were men of standing and education, e.g. Hutton-Mills, Casely-Hayford and Dr. Ansah-Koi. All those selected were university graduates. The two oldest members of the C.P.P. team—Tommy Hutton-Mills and Archie Casely-Hayford—both come from families widely respected in the Gold Coast for their parts in early political movements. They have hitherto been conspicuously unsuccessful in their own profession—the law. Hutton-Mills is a lazy man of considerably charm. Since his undergraduate days at Cambridge he has had a passionate interest in the turf and, on his return to the Gold Coast and until his family and the local Bar restrained him, tried his hand as a bookmaker on the Accra race course. His lack of success as a barrister has often driven him to apply for a post as District Magistrate but he has always been turned down on the grounds of his poor legal ability. Casely-Hayford was a District Magistrate for many years and was held in very poor esteem by his colleagues and those who had to wait in his court. He seems, however, to have gained a new lease of life since he got rid of his notorious first wife who was of Polish extraction. Dr. Ansah-Koi, who received only 48 votes in the Assembly, is a medical practitioner, who within three weeks sought the support of three different political groups—the C.P.P., the U.G.C.C. and the Joint Provincial Council. Nkrumah was insistent on his inclusion in the list and I do not yet understand why unless it was because he was a doctor. He is unlikely to prove a satisfactory Minister and I think that Nkrumah himself is already doubting his wisdom in having put his name forward. Doubtless it will be possible to liquidate him in due course and get someone more satisfactory. The two non-C.P.P. ministers, E. Asafu Adjaye (Ashanti), one of our best barristers, and Braimah, a sub-chief from the Northern Territories, are both sound men and well respected.

On Monday afternoon I held my first meeting of the new Executive Council and administered the official oaths to all the members. The first business was the election by the Council of the Leader of Government business in the House. Kwame Nkrumah was automatically and unanimously elected Leader.

After the meeting I went into a huddle with Nkrumah and with the Chief Secretary to decide on the distribution of portfolios. Most of Nkrumah's suggestions were sound but he had got Ansah-Koi for the Ministry of Health and Labour, probably because of his medical qualifications, and this had to be changed. Again I found Nkrumah very reasonable and co-operative. So we gave Gbedemah Health and Labour and Ansah-Koi the thankless task of answering for the shortcomings of the P.W.D. as Minister of Communications and Works.

On Tuesday the portfolios were duly distributed, Ansah-Koi registering strong objections but getting no change. The first thing the Ministers asked for was time to settle up their private affairs. I pointed out that many of my functions were now devolved by law on their shoulders, but they replied that they hoped I would go on governing for a little longer until they were ready.

I do not yet know what to make of Nkrumah. My first impressions, for what they are worth, are that he is an idealist, ready to live up to his ideals, but I have yet to learn what those ideals really are. Unlike most of his colleagues he seems quite genuinely to bear no ill-will for his imprisonment and is not venal. He has little sense of humour but has considerable personal charm. He is as slow to laugh as he is quick

to grasp the political implications of anything discussed. His approach to questions is more that of a psychologist than a realist. He has proved he can give inspiration and I find him susceptible of receiving it but I fear there is a streak of weakness that may be his undoing. A skilful politician, he has, I think, the makings of a real statesman and this he may become if he has the strength to resist the bad counsels of the scallywags by whom he is surrounded.

**225** CO 96/820/2, no 39

1 May 1951

'Gold Coast constitution': address by Mr Griffiths to Colonial Group of the Royal Empire Society

[Extract]

[The text of this address was prepared for Mr Griffiths by E G G Hanrott, a principal officer in the CO West African Dept. Cohen made some amendments and then pronounced it excellent. Griffiths also made a few changes, the most important of which was to add para 3, the 'tribute to British colonial policy'.]

### *Introduction*

I should like, if I may, to start by making one or two general remarks about constitutional development, which will, I hope, illumine the meaning of what has happened and is now happening in the Gold Coast. The British preoccupation with Constitutions in their colonial territories wants, I think, some explanation. It puzzles foreign governments who formulate their colonial relationships in a different way. And it puzzles even some of our own people who would have us forget Constitutions and concentrate on economic development. What these people forget is that, if constitutional issues are not live ones in the United Kingdom, it is because they are, for the present at least, settled and can be safely taken for granted and locked up in the hearts of constitutional lawyers and House of Commons officials. But in new, developing societies, constitutions are of great significance. In West Africa it is much more complicated than that. What has been happening in the Gold Coast during the past fifty years has been the gradual formation of a new and unified Gold Coast community which has been brought into being by the economic, social and political development caused through contact with the West. The modern Gold Coast is the product of many influences, and as it has come into being it has required more and more complex political institutions.

Among these influences nationalism has inevitably had its place. Nationalism, if harnessed to constructive tasks, can be the biggest dynamic force for progress; left unharnessed, it may become a destructive force that could ruin not only the partnership between Britain and the Colonial territories but also our hopes for the development in those territories of responsible democratic government.

It is a tribute to British Colonial policy—to the work of our administration and to voluntary organisations; notably the Missionary Societies—that this growing demand for constitutional advancement is one for the establishment of democratic representative institutions which we, by our teaching and example, have inspired.

Such institutions have of course to be introduced gradually, and the pace of change varies from territory to territory. But change there must be—if the Colonial relationship is to continue on a basis of content and goodwill and if effect is to be given to our solemn and repeated undertakings to help these peoples forward

towards self-government. The latest change which has taken place in the Gold Coast is not an isolated act of policy but a logical consequence of a century of development; it is a step forward towards full responsible government which is a particularly significant advance in the history of each dependent people.

Why have these changes occurred first in the Gold Coast of all the African territories? The answer lies partly in the social and economic development of the Colony to which I have already referred, and partly in the political experience which its people have had. Thanks to the contact with Europe that goes back to the 15th century, the coastal areas of the Gold Coast have a relatively long political history, and there have been important nationalist movements and nationalist figures, stimulated directly or indirectly by the British example, ever since the British signed the famous Bond of 1844 with the Fanti chiefs; one might almost say a tradition of, often successful, opposition to the Government. I do not propose to go into the rights and wrongs of these historical events now, but the important thing from our present point of view is that they are of great emotional significance to the political leaders of the people of the Gold Coast—as any reader of the Coussey Report will have seen.

#### *Early constitutional development*

With this background I will say a few words about the constitutional position in the Colony. Gold Coast political institutions had to be drawn from the West; this was not only because of the wealth of example in British constitutional practice, but because the democratic institutions of the African village, valuable in themselves, would not alone have adapted themselves to the complex needs of the modern state. It was therefore necessary for the Gold Coast to follow the path of Western constitutional development, which started early in the Colony's history—a Legislative Council with the power over public funds, with a gradually growing elected element; an Executive Council advising the Governor and in fact limiting his constitutional powers; and the gradual introduction of representative organs of local government.

But it was also necessary to harmonise these imported forms with existing Gold Coast institutions, and the respect of the British for the life of the African States of the Gold Coast is shown in the prominent part played by the Chiefs in the Guggisberg and Burns Constitutions of 1925 and 1946. This has been criticised by some Africans as a perversion of the institution of chieftancy, but those who do so in my view fail to recognise that, if political advance was to be healthy, the new political forms of the West had to be soundly based on deeply-rooted local institutions.

#### *The Burns constitution*

The Burns constitution of 1946 was an important landmark in this development. Its two main features were that it established an African majority in the Legislative Council—for the first time in Africa—and that Ashanti was for the first time represented. It was of course an unlucky constitution, because the riots occurred after it had been in operation for only a year, and from then until the end of 1950 it was under sentence of death. But when it was announced in 1946 it was acclaimed as an important advance, and until the riots exploded there was no real sign of discontent with it. As you know, the Watson Commission was critical of the adequacy of the Burns Constitution, and it is true that there are difficulties in working a constitution where you have an unofficial majority on the Legislature combined with

a purely official Executive responsible for the day to day administration of Government. These difficulties showed themselves during the lifetime of the Burns Constitution. On the other hand, this is a necessary stage, and it would not have been possible to dispense with it.

### *The riots*

In any discussion of the origin of the Coussey Constitution it is necessary to refer, however briefly, to the riots of February and March, 1948. Although the Commission of Enquiry under Mr. Aiken Watson, K.C., examined the question very carefully, the cause of this violent outbreak in a placid and harmonious Colony is still something of a mystery. It was not a revolt against European "tyranny", it was not the result of communist or nationalist activity. Economic grievances had certainly much to do with the riots, but rather because of an over-abundance of money than of want; and, although some ex-servicemen were involved, the Commission of Enquiry failed to elicit any very substantial ex-Servicemen's grievances. In any case, what was important about the riots were their consequences. Whatever their rights or wrongs, [they] generated political feeling, and led to a rapid growth of political consciousness.

### *The Watson Commission*

It is to the great credit of the Watson Commission that they recognised the need for change and that the time had come for a large measure of the responsibility for Government to be transferred to Africans. They did not attempt to draft a constitution, but the principles of constitutional change which they proposed are worth listing, since they are in fact the basic principles of the new Constitution and the first stage in its development:

- (1) the democratisation of local authorities
- (2) the establishment of regional councils
- (3) a greatly enlarged Assembly, representative of the whole country, including the Northern Territories, and consisting almost entirely of elected members
- (4) an Executive Council of eight Ministers, five of whom to be Africans from the Assembly, to be appointed by the Governor, but subject to a favourable resolution of the Assembly.

In their statement on the Watson Report, His Majesty's Government indicated that these constitutional recommendations were broadly in line with their policy and were acceptable as the next step of constitutional advance. Their statement emphasised, however, that local opinion, for whom the Watson Commission had spoken, must express itself upon the proposals. The result was the appointment, at the end of 1948, of the Coussey Committee—the second stage in the evolution of the Constitution.

### *The Coussey Committee*

A good deal has been said about this all-African Committee and its remarkable Report. Unlike the Watson Commission, the Coussey Committee, in fulfilment of its terms of reference, virtually produced the first draft of the new Constitution, which in essentials does not differ greatly from the Constitution in its final form. As I am going to describe that Constitution, I do not think I need say much about the

Coussey recommendations here. I will only call attention to the recurrence of the theme of Gold Coast political development to which I have already referred. On the one hand, the Coussey Report recommended a further step in the evolution of Western political institutions, drawing precedents for its picture of the relationship of executive and legislature from the main stream of constitutional advance—Ceylon, Jamaica [and] Trinidad—and emphasizing the benefits derived [from the] British connection. On the other hand, the Committee showed throughout its respect for Gold Coast institutions through, for example, its rebuttal of Watson's criticism of the Chiefs, and the place left for traditional interests, both in local government and in the Assembly.

The moderation and good sense of the Report was all the more remarkable because of the politically unsettled conditions in the Territory at the time when it was prepared, and the constant attacks which were made upon its members. In fact, the political situation was such that there was a grave risk of alienating all reasonable Gold Coast opinion had not the substance of the Coussey proposals been accepted. In the end His Majesty's Government found it necessary to differ with the Committee on only two important matters—the question of a bicameral versus a unicameral legislature, and the question of the collective responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature. On the question of a bicameral legislature, on which the Committee was itself almost equally divided, we took the view that it would be wrong to complicate the machinery of government in the Gold Coast by the establishment of a second Chamber, particularly in view of the relative shortage of people with political experience. On the question of collective responsibility to the legislature, there was no real divergence, since it was apparent from the Coussey Committee's own recommendations that what they were in fact proposing was a form of joint responsibility of the Executive Council on the one hand to the Governor, who must retain ultimate responsibility, and on the other hand to the legislature to whom Ministers must answer.

#### *Preparations for the constitution*

After the publication of the Coussey Report, there followed the third stage in the development of the Constitution—a year of intensive preparation when the details were worked out in the Gold Coast and in London by African members of the Legislative Council and by officials of the Gold Coast Government and the Colonial Office. You will understand that a great deal of work had to be done and a great number of practical problems had to be solved before the Coussey recommendations could become law and the new Constitution could be safely launched. In particular, the organisation of the elections was a tremendous task; you can readily imagine the work and difficulties involved in organising and explaining to the people throughout the country the novel processes of registration and the secret ballot. Very little time was available, but the relatively high registration figure (approximately 40% of those eligible as voters) and the admirable way the elections were conducted showed that the work was well and thoroughly carried out.

#### *Summary of the constitution*<sup>1</sup>

[Omitted]

#### *Present position*

The years 1948 and 1949 were a tense and anxious time for the Gold Coast; but this is

<sup>1</sup> See BDEEP series B, R Rathbone, ed, *Ghana*, part 1, chapters 3–5.

past history, and I do not want to go into it now. Recently the C.P.P. have sought to realise their political aims in a constitutional manner, building up a remarkable organisation and by fighting first the municipal elections and recently the first elections to the new Legislative Assembly, in which, as I have shown, they obtained a resounding victory. They had the courage to accept, and are carrying in a most responsible manner, the heavy burden of office in the new Government, in which they hold six out of eight African seats. They have stated openly that they regard the present Constitution as but a first step, but they have also declared that they are willing to work it and, although it is still early days, there is now clear evidence that they intend to do so. Let me say again, as I have said before to Mr. Nkrumah and all his people, that we in Britain are their friends; we wish them well and want, in partnership with them, so to carry on this great new chapter, that eventually they, too, will join the Commonwealth as partners.

## 226 CO 537/7181

11 June 1951

### [Gold Coast]: minute by A B Cohen on future policy towards political and constitutional evolution

[During May and early June 1951 the next stage of political development in the Gold Coast was intensively discussed. Arden-Clarke's view was that unexpectedly a party had emerged which could be treated as dominant. Nkrumah seemed anxious to force the pace of the further constitutional demands which could be launched on the tide of his success, perhaps fearing that he might soon have to deal with a less sympathetic Conservative government in Britain. The CO thought that his immediate priorities would be: (i) to secure the title of prime minister, which would be a significant step, and (ii) to get 'ministers' elected on the advice of the prime minister and not at the governor's discretion. Such constitutional advance could be seen as within the framework of the Coussey proposals, but involved a clear speeding up of the timetable. Arden-Clark's advice was that there was no alternative to a CPP government: it could only be replaced by a similar one or one of 'even more extreme nationalist tendencies'. 'We have only one dog in our kennel', he wrote to Cohen, 'All we can do is to build it up and feed it vitamins and cod-liver oil . . .' (CO 537/7181, no 5, 12 May 1951). Accordingly, the governor was prepared to accept Nkrumah's two principal requests, but he did not believe that in talking to Nkrumah they should be too forthcoming or give any impression that further concessions could be easily or readily granted. Also in preparation for the meetings between the secretary of state and Nkrumah, Cohen set forth his advice in this minute. Griffiths agreed to follow the advice of Arden-Clarke and Cohen. He had two long talks with Nkrumah in the CO on 13 June 1951. Arden-Clarke was present at both, and Cohen joined them for the second. Griffiths explained to Nkrumah that from the British point of view it was important not to move too fast, because he did not want their growing confidence in the Gold Coast to be impaired. Since the three main British policy-makers were present at these talks they have not left on record their personal impressions of Nkrumah, but Cohen certainly regarded Nkrumah's visit as a 'great success', and the outcome of the talks as 'satisfactory' (*ibid*, nos 10 and 15).]

. . . Perhaps I may make one or two general observations. The purpose of our policy in the Gold Coast ought in my view to be a smooth and gradual advance towards responsible government. It must be our aim on the one hand to keep on good terms with the Gold Coast political leaders so that when the time comes the Gold Coast will elect voluntarily to remain within the Commonwealth. But on the other hand we must have regard to the need for developing administrative and political efficiency so that the country continues to be well governed. It is clear from the letter at No. 5

that, as of course is perfectly natural with a quite new form of government, the Gold Coast Ministers, even the best of them, still have a very great deal to learn. Ideally, therefore, in my view the next step forward, i.e. the kind of step discussed in the minutes above, ought to be delayed for, say, three or four years. The quicker such a step is taken the shorter the transitional period before responsible government is attained will be and in my view it would not be in the interests of the Gold Coast or of the Commonwealth that the transitional period should be too short. Ideally, therefore, I myself feel that it would be better not to make this step forward, limited though it is, early in 1952 less than eighteen months after the introduction of the new constitution.

But it must, of course, be recognised that we may not be able to adhere to an ideal time-table. We may be forced, if we are to keep on good terms with the more responsible political leaders such as Mr. Nkrumah and his immediate colleagues and not to force the Gold Coast Government into the hands of extremists, to move more rapidly than ideally we should wish. It may well be that, as the Governor seems to contemplate, we shall have to take the step described in Mr. Gorsuch's minute above some time next year.<sup>1</sup> It would be fatal if this necessity arises to forfeit the goodwill of Mr. Nkrumah and his colleagues by holding back excessively.

If the subject does have to be taken I would take it on the lines described in Mr. Gorsuch's minute,<sup>2</sup> subject to its being understood that, although the Prime Minister would take precedence in the Executive Council after the Governor, the term "Governor" should be understood to include, as it must for the reasons given in Mr. Gorsuch's minute of the 25th May, the Officer Administering the Government in the Governor's absence. Equally I would attach importance to the Ministers being appointed and the portfolios allocated by the Governor *in consultation with* the Prime Minister rather than simply on the advice of the Prime Minister. This would give the Governor a full say, as in my view he must have at this stage.

As far as the tactics in dealing with Mr. Nkrumah are concerned, it is clearly desirable that the initiative should be left to him and that none of the above points should be raised unless he raises them. If he does, I take it that the Secretary of State will be completely sympathetic but not too forthcoming and will in fact say that he will have to consider any proposals which Mr. Nkrumah may make with the Governor himself.

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to the election of a prime minister or 'Leader of Government Business' in the House of the Assembly. A 'Leader of Government Business' was largely in accordance with the original Coussey recommendations, but Nkrumah wanted the title of prime minister.

<sup>2</sup> Suggesting that it should be left entirely to Nkrumah's initiative to raise these proposals with the S of S.

**227** PREM 8/1310

27 June 1951

**'Nigerian constitution': minute by Mr Griffiths to Mr Attlee**

You will recall that in May, 1950, I circulated to the Cabinet a memorandum on the Nigerian Constitution (C.P. (50) 94)<sup>1</sup>, in which I explained the main proposals for the reform of the Constitution which had emerged from the nation-wide discussion at all levels from the village upwards. The Cabinet approved those proposals, which can best be summarised as providing for:

- (i) greatly increased Regional autonomy within a United Nigeria;
- (ii) giving Nigerians a full share in the shaping of Government policy and in the direction of executive Government action in a Central Council of Ministers and Regional Executive Councils; and
- (iii) the creation of larger and more representative Regional Legislatures with increased powers.

Now that the draft constitutional instruments which give effect to these proposals are about to be laid before His Majesty in Council on the 29th June, I think that you may wish to have an account of subsequent developments.

2. When the Cabinet approved the proposals which I put forward in May, 1950, there still remained to be settled the question of Regional representation in the Central Legislature. Agreement on this point was reached in Nigeria in September, 1950, the Northern Region, which has more than half the population, securing half the seats in that Legislature, and I informed the House of Commons in November, 1950, that I had accepted this arrangement.

3. Suitable publicity will be given to the promulgation of the constitution instruments and there will be published an exchange of despatches between the Governor and myself to explain the more important aspects of the new Constitution. The Governor and his Officers have worked extremely hard to ensure that the new Constitution should be inaugurated without delay. You will recall that the review of the Constitution began in 1948 on the initiative of the Governor and its successful conclusion has owed much to his ability and to the soundness of the policy of ever-increasing participation by Nigerians in the affairs of Government.

4. The future timetable of events will now be as follows. Elections will begin in July. They will take the form of indirect elections through a system of electoral colleges in which the primary elections will be direct. In some parts of Nigeria it may take as long as five months to complete the elections. The new Regional Legislatures will meet for the first time in December and the new Central Legislature in January, 1952.

5. Finally, in order to complete the constitutional instruments, a further Order-in-Council will be required in October to make provision for the division of revenue between Central and Regional Governments, following the principles recommended in the report of an expert Commission which have been generally accepted in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See 221.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Attlee minuted: 'Thank you for this note of satisfactory progress. 28.6.51.'

**228** CO 537/7148, no 17

20 Nov 1951

[West Africa]: memorandum by A B Cohen on Anglo-French relations: survey of constitutional progress in British territories [Extract]<sup>1</sup>

. . . 4. British policy in West Africa, in accordance with the accepted traditions of the British Commonwealth, is to build up each of the West African territories as a country with its own political institutions, the aim being self-government within the British Commonwealth. It is clear that this means something different for Nigeria and the Gold Coast, which can look forward to full responsibility for their own affairs, and for Sierra Leone and the Gambia, which cannot expect to go beyond full responsibility for their internal affairs, leaving such matters as defence and foreign relations to the British Government. Recently there have been striking constitutional advances in all four West African territories. The Gold Coast has progressed very far towards self-government in internal affairs and is now governed by an Executive Council with a majority of African Ministers drawn from the Legislature, each of whom is responsible for the administration of a group of departments. The Executive Council is presided over by the Governor, who has reserve powers, but normally policy is settled by a majority decision of the Executive Council. There are three ex officio members of the Executive Council who are European officials; their portfolios cover external affairs, defence and security, the civil service, finance and justice. The Legislative Assembly consists almost entirely of African members directly or indirectly elected by popular vote. A similar constitution is about to come into force in Nigeria, although this will be slightly less far than in the Gold Coast in that ministers will not be responsible for the administration of departments but will work in consultation with the official heads of those departments; all decisions of the Council of Ministers will be collective and ministers will themselves have no power of overriding the heads of departments. The Nigerian constitution will be on a federal basis with the three regions of Nigeria having Legislatures and Executive Councils of their own with responsibility over a wide field of administration. New constitutions have just come into force in Sierra Leone and the Gambia generally similar to the Gold Coast and Nigerian constitutions. There will be no African Ministers but African members of the Executive Councils will in both cases have not only general policy-making functions but special functions in relation to particular departments of Government.

5. All these reforms place a large degree of power in the hands of primarily African Legislatures and Executive Councils in which African members drawn from the Legislatures play a substantial part (in Nigeria and the Gold Coast in the majority). All the constitutions, however, retain ex officio members (i.e. European officials) in key positions in both the Executive and Legislative Councils. The Governor remains the ultimate authority for the administration of each territory and is armed with the necessary reserve powers to secure this position. Although these reserve powers can only be used sparingly, their existence is an important factor in the Governor's dealings with his Ministers and with the Legislative Council. The constitutions are in fact designed to secure a system of administration by consent

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<sup>1</sup> For the complete document, see BDEEP series A, D Goldsworthy, ed, *The Conservative government, and the end of empire, 1951-1957*.

and consultation between the Governor, his Executive Council and the Legislative Council. Simultaneously with these constitutional developments the system of local government in West Africa is being reformed and modernised, increasing numbers of Africans are being appointed to senior positions in the Civil Service, while representative Africans are taking an increasing part on public boards and corporations concerned with economic development. The Nigerian Government are converting their public utilities, ports, railways, electricity service and coal production from Government departments to public corporations with substantial African representation on their boards. The same applies to the industrial and agricultural development corporations in the Gold Coast. The boards which are responsible for marketing the crops on which the economy of West Africa depends also have substantial African membership.

6. These reforms are based on the following principles; that a sense of responsibility can only be created by giving responsibility; that no constitution which did not provide for full participation by Africans would have any chance of success under present conditions in West Africa; and that such a constitution provides the best defence against Communism in West Africa, the only chance of friendly co-operation between this country and the West African territories and the best chance when the time comes of securing a favourable decision by the Gold Coast and Nigeria to stay within the British Commonwealth. Our policy has been criticised by the French as moving too fast. We cannot for the reasons just given accept this criticism if it means that we have gone too far in reform. If on the other hand what is meant is that reform started too late and has therefore had to move more quickly than we should have liked, then we can agree, since it would certainly have been better if the changes which have taken place during the last three years could have been preceded by more adequate preparations. We can moreover reassure the French generally about the results of our policy. The recent constitutional changes in Sierra Leone and the Gambia are likely to satisfy public opinion there for a considerable time to come. There is little nationalism in these two countries such as is known in the Gold Coast and Nigeria and they are likely to be quite content with a large say in the running of their own internal affairs. In Nigeria, which is less advanced politically than the Gold Coast, rapid advance beyond the new constitution is not likely to be demanded by a majority of opinion for some time to come. Although there is a vocal political party in Lagos and the south which demands early self-government, the balance of power at present lies heavily with the more backward rural areas, particularly in Northern Nigeria; here there is strong opposition to rapid change. It is in the Gold Coast that our policy is likely to meet its greatest challenge. Here all the political parties are pledged to Dominion status at the earliest possible moment; but the Convention People's Party, which won a resounding victory at the last election, is finding that the country is not ready for substantial advance in the immediate future. The leaders of this party will be pressed by their own extremists and by their opponents to demand further advances but if full confidence can be maintained between them and the Gold Coast Government, as well as H.M. Government, it may well be that they will be satisfied with a slower pace. It is significant that Moscow has written off Dr. Nkrumah as a bourgeois politician.

7. The key to future relations between this country and the Gold Coast (as well as the other West African territories) is the maintenance of confidence between the political leaders on the Coast and ourselves. The Gold Coast needs above all a period

of stability to consolidate its recent political gains; whether it will get it depends primarily on the extent to which there is general popular pressure for advance and the extent on the other hand to which we can satisfy the political leaders of our good intentions. If we can satisfy public opinion in the Gold Coast, and the rest of West Africa, that we are behind them in their ultimate objective of Dominion status and that we will assist them forward towards that objective, if we can make them sure in fact that there is no doubt about the ultimate goal to be reached, then they may be much less insistent on the pace of advance. We must therefore allow nothing to happen which would destroy their confidence in our good faith.

8. There have been in the past quite unjustifiable fears that we might allow our policy in West Africa to be deflected by pressure from South Africa. Our recent actions in West Africa provide the answer to these fears. South Africa is in any case far away from West Africa, whereas the French territories are on their borders. It would be fatal to our policy of building up confidence with the West African leaders if any impression were created that we were allowing our policy of political advancement to be slowed down by pressure from France. While, therefore, we must take the French into our confidence and make them understand our policy and the reasons for it, we must avoid any suggestion that the French could secure a position in which they could influence the substance of that policy or the pace of its execution. We are in fact committed to our present policy by statements from both political parties in this country and the facts of the situation in West Africa itself make it necessary that we should adhere to that policy . . . .

## 229 FO 371/67081, no 390

6 Jan 1947

### [Possible statement on retention of sovereignty in Cyprus]: letter from Mr Creech Jones to Mr Bevin

[By the time the Labour government came into power, CO officials were anxious to have a ministerial public statement which would end the uncertainty about Britain's intentions for the future of Cyprus (CO 67/327/15, minute by J M Martin, 22 Oct 1945). Creech Jones as early as 28 Aug 1945 urged on Hall that 'we must take the whole unhappy problem of Cyprus at an early date so that the people of Cyprus may know without any ambiguity what our policy is' (CO 67/323/5, to S of S). Uncertainty only gave encouragement to the protagonists of Enosis, union with Greece. The CO thought the Greek claim to Cyprus weak, and believed it would be in any case politically impossible to arrange a post-war cession of imperial territory. In mid-September 1945 the COS reported its possession by a hostile power would be a most disastrous threat to British interests in the Middle East; it was the only territorial possession in the area where British forces could be stationed as of right. The last statement of British policy on Enosis was during the Labour government of 1929, when Lord Passfield had described the issue of cession as 'closed'. Amid violent protests, the Legislative Assembly was then abolished in 1931. By 1945 the morale of the British administration in Cyprus was poor. In January 1946 Hall urged on Bevin the view that uncertainty was having a very deleterious effect. The CO wanted a statement of intent to remain in occupation of Cyprus, linked with proposals for a 'new deal' for economic and political progress, with a return to popular representation at the centre. They believed that without such a policy there was no chance of ending the confusion and rallying the moderates—the Cypriots would not discuss, let alone co-operate in, any constitutional advance unless British long-term intentions were clear; and without constitutional progress the Communist Party in Cyprus, AKEL (The Reform Party of Working People), would be strengthened (CO 67/327/16). Bevin, following FO advice, had a different perspective altogether. The Greek government—weak and distracted as it was by civil war—must not be upset by a snub on Enosis, while Russia would, he believed, make capital by arguing that Britain was holding onto Cyprus in order to develop bases

from which to attack her; accordingly, Bevin blocked all attempts to have a public statement of British long-term intentions (CO 537/1878). This is the background to the renewed approach of Creech Jones on the subject a year later, which again came to nothing (see 231). As Cyprus became more important to Britain, with the growing uncertainty about the continuation of British tenure in Egypt and Palestine, Bevin was eventually converted to the retention of Cyprus. He remained, however, a consistent opponent of constitutional advance.]

My dear Ernest

I am afraid that I must trouble you once again about Cyprus.

You will remember that I agreed, in deference to the considerations set out in your letter of the 17th September, not to press further at that time for your agreement to any announcement on the subject of sovereignty, and my statement in the House on the 23rd October accordingly dealt only with questions of constitutional and administrative reform. You agreed, however, that if I was pressed in the House on the question of sovereignty I could state simply that "no change is contemplated", and this was the answer I gave to Piratin's<sup>1</sup> question for written reply on the 11th December.

There have, however, been certain developments since then, which make it necessary for me to raise again with you the question whether a firm declaration on the question of sovereignty, on the lines originally suggested, can now be made. I have been very strongly pressed by Winster<sup>2</sup> to revert to the question; he is emphatically of the opinion that the prospects of the success of our new policy will be gravely prejudiced unless the question of sovereignty is effectively dealt with at the outset. He will, I know, be most reluctant to assume his new post without a favourable decision on this matter, since he feels that it is fundamental to the effective administration of the Island.

Winster's views are fully corroborated by the information that I have received from Sir Charles Woolley, the retiring Governor, who has recently arrived in England. Whatever may be the implications of my announcement of the 23rd October, the Governor's official and unofficial advisers are unanimous in their opinion that there is little prospect of securing the effective co-operation of the people of Cyprus in the carrying out of this policy in the absence of a firm and definite statement on the issue of sovereignty. This conclusion has emerged very clearly from the discussions on constitutional reform which the Governor has had with his Executive Council, which includes unofficial representatives, and, indeed, in the light of these preliminary discussions I can hope for little progress so long as the political leaders feel that there is still some uncertainty about our intentions.

Moreover, there is a further argument for a more precise attitude in this matter. A representative deputation from Cyprus has recently arrived in this country with the object of pressing the British Government to agree to the claim for union with Greece: they have asked for an interview with me, and I do not feel that this can be refused. It would seem necessary that in that event they should be given a definite reply; if they are allowed to return to Cyprus with any impression of hesitation on the part of the British Government, the position of the Administration will undoubtedly be rendered in the highest degree difficult.

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<sup>1</sup> P Piratin, MP (Communist) for Stepney Mile End.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Reginald ('Rex') Winster, gov of Cyprus 1946; formerly minister of civil aviation.

I know that your own difficulties have not decreased since last you wrote to me, and I am naturally most reluctant to embarrass you. But, as I see it, I have no alternative but to ask once again for your help in this matter. I shall, of course, be very ready to discuss it with you at any time should you so desire.

Yours sincerely  
A. Creech Jones<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mr Bevin minuted on this letter: 'I do not mind now but he must clear it with the PM' [nd].

**230** FO 371/67081, no 1089

3–4 Feb 1947

[Cyprus policy]: minutes by Sir O Sargent and Mr McNeil (FO)

... The fact is that the less said the better in the present circumstances, and I am sure we ought to maintain strongly that so long as the whole situation in the Middle East and Greece is so uncertain His Majesty's Government cannot afford to make a statement which may prove very embarrassing later on when the situation in the Middle East and Greece became clearer than it is at present.

I think, therefore, that our paper for the Cabinet ought to be definitely on the lines of opposing any statement in the present circumstances . . . .

I am afraid I do not agree with the Minister of State's reason (b) for not releasing Cyprus. The fact that the Greek Government are finding difficulty in maintaining the administration in Northern Greece does not prove that they would have any difficulty in maintaining themselves in Cyprus any more than they have in maintaining themselves in Crete. In any case, we must be careful not to limit a people's right of self-determination because we think it might choose unwisely. This is the line which the Egyptians are taking with regard to the Sudan.

There is perhaps a feeling that we ought not to make presents to the present Royalist Greek Government. But whatever we may feel about the present Government, they are friendly disposed; they have damped down agitation on the Cyprian question both in Cyprus and Greece, and if we did tackle the Cyprian problem with them we would be able to make a comprehensive agreement for securing our military rights and privileges in the island in the event of the administration being handed over to Greece. On the other hand, if we maintain our opposition to any alteration in the status of Cyprus, the day will come when a less friendly Government in Greece will stir up agitation, both in Cyprus and elsewhere, with a view to forcing us to allow the Cypriots to decide their future status—in other words, to vote themselves into Greece.

In these circumstances, after what has happened in India and Burma, not to mention Syria and the Lebanon, where we forced the French to grant independence, I do not see how we should be able to resist this demand, and eventually we would have to give way in the worst possible circumstances and without any prospect whatsoever of salvaging any military rights and privileges such as we could obtain in the present circumstances.

O.G.S.  
3.2.47.

... I am quite prepared to admit that my suggestion is no way out for us. It would,

therefore, seem to me that the safest way would be to follow Sir Orme Sargent's line, i.e. agree upon a date to cede Cyprus and coincidentally secure from the Greeks a treaty meeting our needs.

Yet, I assume (but I'm not certain of this) that because of the advice of the Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of State, if not the Cabinet, has decided against this course.

We, therefore, are driven back to asserting our sovereignty and the Colonial Secretary wants this done quickly. To this I don't think we can agree. If we secured delay, until say April we might soften the blow to the Greeks by a programme of aid. But since this aid will be mainly dollars we would have to secure American agreement to the two items—Cyprus and economic aid being tied together to the one statement. They would not like this. But I imagine they would give way.

This, however, would not secure us from Greece returning to the subject later, and it supplies us with no answer at all to our third worry, i.e. UNO.

As I understand it from my conversation with the Secretary of State he wants to talk with the Chiefs of Staff and the Colonial Secretary. It might, therefore, be better to draft a short office paper now for him, which he could put before the proposed meeting. The paper should set forth the various possible courses, and I suggest, should recommend delay until the Americans have come to this decision. Naturally the Secretary of State will make his own decision on which of the courses he will recommend to the meeting.

H.McN.  
4.2.47

## 231 CAB 128/9, CM 20(47)6

11 Feb 1947

### 'Cyprus': Cabinet conclusions on its future

The Cabinet had before them memoranda by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.P. (47) 55) and by the Foreign Secretary (C.P. (47) 56) on the future of Cyprus.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* informed the Cabinet that the campaign for union of the Colony with Greece continued unchecked, and a deputation which claimed to be widely representative was at the moment in this country urging the transfer of sovereignty to Greece. This question aroused strong emotions in Cyprus and, while things remained as at present, there was little hope of securing co-operation for our policy of constitutional reform and of economic and social development. The Colonial Secretary was advised that, if such co-operation was to be obtained, there should be a precise and definite announcement that the colony was to remain under British sovereignty. He recognised the difficulty of making such a statement at the present time, but he felt that the Cabinet should be aware of the situation.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that such a declaration would not be accepted as final and would bring the question to the forefront of international discussion. After many months of negotiation in the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Soviet Government had accepted our proposal that the Dodecanese should be ceded to Greece and demilitarised: if the question were raised, they were bound to urge that the same course should be taken in respect of Cyprus. We should also find it embarrassing to defend such a declaration in view of the line which we had recently taken in regard to

the relations between India and Burma and ourselves and in regard to relations between the Sudan and Egypt.

The Foreign Secretary said that, until our future position in Egypt and Palestine was clearer, the wiser course would be to damp down discussion of Cyprus. The Greek Government were in no position to add to their responsibilities at the moment and were under great obligations to us. It should therefore be possible to come to an arrangement with them by which neither Government would raise the matter for some years to come and the Greek Government would do nothing meanwhile to encourage agitation in Cyprus. It might be agreed that after ten years the people of Cyprus should be free to determine their own future.

*The Chief of the Air Staff* said that, in view of the uncertainty of our position in Egypt and Palestine, the Chiefs of Staff would view with the gravest misgiving any proposal to surrender our sovereignty over Cyprus. If all our bases in the Mediterranean and the Middle East were lost, the strategic foundations of our defence of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth would be undermined.

*The Minister of Defence* hoped that a firm decision might be taken that British sovereignty over Cyprus should be maintained. Recent events had changed fundamentally our position in Asia and the Middle East; for there was now no guarantee that India or Burma would remain within the Empire or that we should maintain our foothold in Palestine or Egypt. It was now much more important than it had been a few years ago that Cyprus should remain a secure base for our Forces.

In support of this view other Ministers urged that, instead of taking any action which would indicate a willingness to surrender sovereignty, we should press ahead with our plans for the economic and social development of the island.

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer* said that he would find difficulty in agreeing that we should incur any substantial expenditure for these purposes if it was likely that in a few years' time Cyprus would cease to be a part of the Commonwealth. It should be represented to Cypriot leaders that the amount of assistance they would receive from the United Kingdom was bound to be affected if agitation for the withdrawal of Cyprus from the Commonwealth continued.

The Cabinet:—

(1) Agreed that no public declaration should be made for the present about the future of Cyprus.

(2) Invited the Foreign Secretary to explore the possibility of reaching an understanding with the Greek Government by which neither they nor His Majesty's Government would raise the question of the status of Cyprus for some years to come and the Greek Government would seek in the meantime to discourage agitation in Cyprus.

**232** CAB 21/2278, M 80/47

12 Feb 1947

[Cyprus policy]: minute from Mr Attlee to Mr Bevin about the Cabinet conclusions

The Cabinet Minute of yesterday's discussion<sup>1</sup> on Cyprus records your suggestion

<sup>1</sup> See 231.

that the proposed agreement with the Greek Government might include a promise that after ten years the people of Cyprus should be free to determine their own future.

In the Cabinet's discussion several Ministers gave strong expression to the view that, even though no public declaration was to be made, the Cabinet should take a decision now that Cyprus should remain within the Commonwealth. Although no such decision was formally taken, I think it would inexpedient, in the light of the views expressed by some of our colleagues, for you to make in your approach to the Greek Government any mention of the possibility that the people of Cyprus might be allowed to determine their own future after a period of ten years.

I hope, therefore, that you will feel able to limit yourself, as contemplated in Conclusion 2 of the Minute, to suggesting an understanding between the two Governments that neither will raise the question of the status of Cyprus for some years to come and that the Greek Government will in the meantime seek to discourage agitation in Cyprus.

**233** FO 371/67082, no 3812 27–28 Mar 1947  
 [CO attitude to Enosis]: minutes by D J McCarthy and J R Colville  
 (FO)<sup>1</sup>

Colonial Office efforts to explain away the agitation over “enosis” take peculiar forms. On the one hand they usually argue that there is no support for the idea of union with Greece, yet on the other they argue even more forcibly that if we don't make it clear that Cyprus is to remain British there will be widespread riots. The two arguments do not seem really compatible, and I can only suggest that they are based on consciousness in the Colonial Office that their arbitrary means of government in Cyprus and their panic-stricken abolition of the Assembly in 1931 have caused genuine discontent . . . .

D.J. McC.  
27.3.47

The CO are supreme wishful thinkers.

J.R.C.  
28.3.47

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<sup>1</sup> D J McCarthy, second secretary, political division, 1951; J R Colville, counsellor, foreign service, 1951, then joint principal private secretary to the prime minister, 1951–1955.

**234** FO 371/67084, no 13462 26 Sept 1947  
 [Cyprus policy]: minute by Sir O Harvey (FO)<sup>1</sup>

We can now do little materially to help Greece although it is of the first importance to maintain her confidence in Great Britain and in herself. I suggest therefore that further consideration be given to the question of the cession of Cyprus.

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<sup>1</sup> Deputy under-secretary of state (political), 1946–1947; ambassador to France, 1948–1954.

2. The action of H.M. Government in India and Burma has enormously impressed opinion through out the world. Our proposed evacuation policy in Palestine and the possibility that we may propose independence for Cyrenaica, when coupled with what we have done in India and Burma, makes our continued presence in Cyprus indefensible.

3. I understand that Cyprus has been rejected by the Chiefs of Staff as unsuitable for any long-term strategic purpose. We have in fact never made use of the island for military purposes, and we have spent next to nothing on its material and social betterment. We have nothing to be proud of there.

4. It can hardly be questioned that Greece, who has long governed Crete effectively, and has now been given the Dodecanese, can equally well govern Cyprus. (There is a small Turkish minority whose rights would be secured).

5. British administration in the island is meeting difficulties owing to increasing Cypriot non-cooperation. Hitherto, serious violence has been avoided but with the examples of Palestine, Egypt and Greece itself, we cannot hope that this will last long.

6. It would be tragic if Anglo-Greek relations were now to be poisoned by an E.A.M. campaign of violence in Cyprus. Moreover, we are always exposed to the risk of a member of the Slav bloc raising Cyprus at the United Nations for our embarrassment. What convincing defence we could make there I do not know.

7. Our own position for holding the United States to the necessity of assuming new responsibilities in Greece would be greatly strengthened if we ourselves had contributed Cyprus.

8. I do not know whether Cyprus would prove an economic asset to Greece but it would be the greatest possible contribution to Greek morale and British influence. (We are still living in Greece on the credit of Mr. Gladstone's retrocession of the Ionian Isles).

9. For these different reasons I would strongly advocate that consideration be given to the very early cession of Cyprus to Greece, before the Cypriot campaign is embittered by violence and before cession can be represented as yielding to force . . .

**235** CO 537/2486, no 4

14 Nov 1947

'The future of Cyprus in relation to the withdrawal from Palestine': memorandum by J S Bennett. *Minutes* by Trafford Smith, J M Martin, Sir T Lloyd and Mr Creech Jones

[On the minute sheet which went with this memorandum, Bennett wrote (14 Nov 1947): 'I have composed this memo as much to clear my own mind as anything else, and it therefore represents a series of lines of thought which might be developed rather than a set of concrete proposals for action . . . in the hope that it may possibly assist in providing a framework for thinking about Cyprus'. When Trafford Smith criticised the exercise, Bennett commented: 'I realised that I was committing an awfully un-British thing in writing this memo.! But at least I sin in good company, with the Chiefs of Staff!' (17 Dec 1947.)]

The withdrawal from Palestine next year will leave Cyprus as the only remaining territory in the Near and Middle East under direct British administration. Cyrenaica, whatever temporary facilities H.M.G. may obtain there, could never be counted as

British territory; while the Sudan, the only other territory in the region at the moment under British administration, lies on the perimeter of the region and seems likely in any case to advance fairly rapidly towards self-government.

In its broad sense, the political and strategic picture in the Near and Middle East is, therefore, reverting to that of 1878 at the time when we first obtained Cyprus. The British Government of those days, seeking for a point from which they could establish influence in the Middle East and prop up the Ottoman Empire as a means of containing Russian expansion southwards, chose Cyprus rather than Egypt, which was the alternative suggestion, on the grounds that they did not wish to become involved in adventures on the mainland. The intervening chapter of British intervention and direct administration on the mainland of the Middle East, which began in 1881 shortly after the occupation of Cyprus, and was largely responsible for Cyprus remaining a backwater, will come to an end with the withdrawal from Palestine. But the external Russian problem is much as it was in 1878, and our strategic and other interests within the Middle East (e.g. oil) are greater than ever. The main difference is that whereas before we were attempting to prop up the decaying Ottoman Empire, the mainland is now occupied by a rejuvenated Turkey in the north and the group of new Arab League states to the east and south, with both of which H.M.G. have cultivated specially intimate relations.

The time seems appropriate to review the nature and purposes of our occupation of Cyprus and the future strategic and political situation of the Island, particularly in relation to the defence of the Near and Middle East and British relations with that area. The Governor of Cyprus has already asked to be kept in touch with developments about the withdrawal from Palestine, not only because of the immediate problem of the illegal immigrant Jews in camps in Cyprus, but also because of these wider geographical factors. These notes are a first attempt at thinking aloud on the subject. They are divided into two halves, Section A dealing with certain immediate and concrete questions, and Section B with longer term and more general factors.

#### *A. Direct and immediate consequences of the withdrawal from Palestine*

##### *(1) Disposition of U.K. armed forces*

It is understood that the operational plan of withdrawal from Palestine has yet to be worked out, within the framework of general decisions just reached by the Defence Committee. It seems reasonable to assume, however, (a) that a proportion of the British forces from Palestine (principally Army, though possibly R.A.F. as well) will be withdrawn in the first instance to Cyprus, and (b) that although Cyprus may be used only as a staging post for some of these forces, there will be a residual permanent increase in the strength of the British garrison in Cyprus, i.e. that the Chiefs of Staff may think in terms of locating in Cyprus a proportion of the Middle East strategical reserve hitherto located in Palestine. This decision will no doubt be affected by the rate of evacuation from Egypt and our future dispositions in Cyrenaica, but the fact that finality about Cyrenaica is unlikely to be reached until after the date of withdrawal from Palestine will presumably dispose the Chiefs of Staff to make at least temporarily considerable use of Cyprus as a reservoir for British forces in the Middle East region. The lack of deep water harbour facilities would prevent similar short-term use of Cyprus being made by the Navy except for small

craft, and the Naval aspect falls to be considered among the long-term questions in Section B.

(2) *Military works in Cyprus*

Parallel with (1), and partly as a direct consequence of it, there is likely to be an increased Services' works programme in Cyprus. The Department has recently been attempting to obtain from the Ministry of Defence an authoritative statement of future Services requirements of land and facilities in Cyprus (e.g. for training establishments and bombing ranges), and the programme of military works in contemplation. The Principal Administrative Officers Committee has just produced a programme of considerable dimensions which would apparently have been larger still but for the financial cuts imposed on the Services as a whole. The Committee made it clear, however, that this programme cannot be taken as exhaustive since administrative planning of the withdrawal from Palestine has not yet seriously begun.

(3) *Economic consequences of increased military use of Cyprus*

A temporary and/or permanent increase in the garrison, coupled with a large Services works programme, would mean increased military expenditure combined with increased Services' employment of local civilian labour, which is already in short supply. Both factors would intensify the inflation which already reigns in Cyprus. Military expenditure during the war, combined of course with other factors, has already left Cyprus with far more money in circulation than can be stabilised by the available supplies or mopped up by such taxation as the Government has so far been able to devise and operate. The bad effects of Services competition for civil labour have already been shown in the relatively minor operation of building the camps for the Jewish illegal immigrants, when a considerable body of labour was drawn away from productive agriculture. Economically, the results of increased use of Cyprus as a military base might well be serious.

(4) *Social and political consequences of increased military use of Cyprus*

These are more difficult to estimate and would probably take longer to make themselves noticed. To some extent a perceptible increase of Army strength in the Island might be a stabilising factor on the local political situation, just as the first and temporary effects of increased military expenditure might be an artificial boom. In the longer run, however, it seems wise to assume that the presence of a large garrison cumbering up the Island, constantly demanding the use of land and facilities, visibly consuming food, transport, and other services, and generally behaving as garrisons do, would have the customary effect of creating steadily growing hostility among the civil population. This would be intensified by the social consequences of inflation, i.e. the increased appeal of extreme left-wing political organisations. The situation would lend itself to exploitation by Communist propaganda in an anti-British direction.

(5) *Administrative consequences: dispersal of Palestine civil staff*

One factor on the credit side may be the availability from Palestine of British officers of the various branches of the civil administration whose special qualifications would make them very suitable to strengthen the rather weak Cyprus administration. This

is likely to apply particularly in the technical departments, but also perhaps on the political side. Preliminary action to stake a claim on dispersed Palestine staff has been taken by the Department.

(6) *The Jewish camps*

These are a special problem which appears to have been resolved by the Defence Committee's recent decision that all illegal immigrant Jews must be removed from British territory before the withdrawal from Palestine is completed. In the interests of Cyprus, it is essential that this decision should be adhered to and implemented as rapidly as possible. The question has already been taken up on Office files and need not be further considered here.

B. *Longer-term aspects: Cyprus in relation to the Middle East*

(1) *The political and strategic background*

The introductory paragraphs of this note refer to the return in some senses to the strategic picture of 1878 which will occur after the evacuation of Palestine. In another sense it might be compared with the withdrawal of the Crusaders to Cyprus after the last of the Latin kingdoms on the mainland had been liquidated; but the parallel contains a warning. Current thinking is likely to give new importance to the fact that Cyprus is "the last British territory" and to picture Cyprus as a British strongpoint on the edge of the Middle East. It seems desirable to request the Chiefs of Staff to make, in the light of the withdrawal from Palestine and Egypt, a new strategic appreciation of the position of Cyprus and of its role in peace as well as in war. It will also be important to distinguish two aspects, which could easily be confused from the point of H.M.G. but which are very different things from the point of view of the Near and Middle East region itself. One element is the presence of British forces in Cyprus in relation to the defence of the Near and Middle East region as a whole against the only conceivable aggressor from the north. As such, it could be regarded by the Near and Middle Eastern countries as an insurance. The other aspect is the consequences in peacetime of holding in Cyprus large British military establishments whose purpose might be misconstrued as that of standing by conveniently placed to intervene once more in the internal affairs of Middle Eastern countries; Cyprus is less than 100 miles from the Syrian coast. (The same, of course, applies to the location of British forces in Cyrenaica after the evacuation of Egypt.) From the defence aspect, we can consider the Near and Middle East as a whole, i.e. Greece and Turkey as well as the Arab League States. The second aspect is likely to concern the Arab countries only; Greece and Turkey, besides being more directly exposed to external threat and, therefore, more conscious of it, are in any case unlikely to consider British troops in Cyprus as a potential threat to their integrity. The two factors have got to be balanced against one another, and this suggests that the new appreciation to be called for from the Chiefs of Staff should be a joint one conducted with full civil participation on the political side.

(2) *Strategic role of Cyprus*

Since the political and strategic elements are so closely inter-related, it is perhaps permissible for a layman to speculate on the outlines of the strategic picture. From this point of view, one's first impression is that the strategic potentialities of Cyprus

*considered by itself* are small, and that it could only be of significant use in war if held and operated in conjunction with forces in territories on the adjacent mainland, either Turkey, Syria or Egypt, or preferably all of them. That was, of course, the assumption underlying our occupation of Cyprus in 1878. The experience of Malta during the late war should be significant. As an Island, it is hard to see what use troops or air forces in Cyprus would be without command of the sea and the ability to keep the Island supplied not only with war-like stores but with food and other necessities for the civil population. Command of the sea in turn depends on (a) the possession of major fleet bases and (b) air protection. A fleet base does not exist in Cyprus, though one could perhaps be constructed; in the meanwhile, Cyprus could not be used unless we also had the use of fleet bases at Alexandria or elsewhere on the Eastern Mediterranean mainland. It is even more difficult to see how the air protection essential to maintain Cyprus could be provided from Cyprus alone.

An amateur is, therefore, drawn to deduce that the role of Cyprus in war could not be that of a main focus of British operations (such as one might at first conclude from its position as the sole remaining British territory), but simply that of a useful advance post, giving (for example) air and radar cover to forces based on and operating from the Middle Eastern mainland. Cyprus does not seem to possess even the limited offensive/defensive potentialities of Malta in the late war, since it lies in a backwater and not across the sea supply routes of any potential enemy. Cyprus alone, with the mainland neutral or hostile, would surely be an unenviable position for any British forces located in it.

### (3) *Some deductions from the strategic picture*

If the above outline proves to be not too wide of the mark, then it seems that Cyprus cannot be regarded as in any way a replacement for "fallen bastions" on the mainland of the Middle East. This in turn should be applied to the size of forces which it is considered expedient to build up on Cyprus and the extent of military works and expenditure and other consequences which flow from them. The internal considerations mentioned in Section A support this conclusion. Our ability to operate from, and defend, the Middle East in war will (it is suggested) depend not on the possession of British territory in Cyprus, but on the degree of friendly relations which we succeed in maintaining with the independent states of the Middle East in peace. One may draw the further deduction that it would be unwise to build up forces in Cyprus to such a size or in such a way that they were considered a threat by the Arab States, especially if this were done as a direct follow-up of the evacuation of Palestine. Such a step would be self-defeating if it soured our relations with the Middle Eastern states and so predisposed them against allowing us freedom of access in war, thus neutralising the value of any forces that were built up in Cyprus. For all these reasons it seems at least on the cards that, in the new situation after we have moved out of Palestine, the strategic importance of Cyprus will be less rather than greater than before, and that our general Middle Eastern policy should increasingly determine our policy in relation to Cyprus rather than vice-versa.

One immediate consequence seems to be that, from the point of view of British administrative machinery, Cyprus should be more closely linked than in the past with the Middle East Defence Committee, backed by increased use of the local Defence Committee in Cyprus, in order to ensure closest co-ordination both among the three Services and between them and the civil authorities. For the same reason,

Cyprus should come more actively within the orbit of the British Middle East Office, since the Head of that Office is Chairman of the Middle East Defence Committee and its adviser on political questions. Steps have just been initiated in these directions, and it is suggested that they should be followed up.

A further deduction is that we might do well to explain confidentially to the Governments of the Near and Middle Eastern states the significance of any important new military moves we may decide to make in Cyprus, i.e. attempt to make it clear that these are part of a regional defence picture and that Cyprus is not being used as an outpost from which we might seek again to "dominate" the Middle East. Unless this is done we might well find in a year or two that the Arab League States, having now reached the sea at all points, will add their pressure to the international demand for the British to evacuate and "liberate" Cyprus. There is something to be learnt from the disastrous French attempt in 1943-45 to retain a military and political bridgehead next-door in the Lebanon. Now that the European powers are off the mainland, Cyprus must choose between drawing closer to the Middle East or drawing away from it.

For somewhat similar reasons, we might be well advised to take the United States much more into our confidence about our position in Cyprus and our policy there. The northern zone of the Near and Middle East region—Greece and Turkey—has become an increasingly American responsibility and from both the strategic and political points of view the affairs of Cyprus have many links with that area.

Another profitable line of development, if a relatively minor one, might be the encouragement of co-operation in the economic and technical spheres between Cyprus and its Middle Eastern neighbours. An example is the project now being considered in conjunction with B.M.E.O. for a forestry school in Cyprus, which would serve not only local requirements but also the Lebanon and Syria and possibly other Arab States. There is room for similar thinking in other spheres—for example, that of higher education. Such developments deserve encouragement as being a positive contribution which Cyprus can make to the economic advancement of the Middle East countries and the maintenance of friendly British influence there. They may also to some extent provide to the people of Cyprus an outlet to the outside world alternative to the exclusive concentration on Greece which has hitherto prevailed. The pursuit of such projects may entail expenditure in Cyprus over and above what would otherwise be required for purely local purposes. This should be regarded as an investment and not allowed to obstruct the execution of desirable plans.

#### (4) *The local political situation inside Cyprus*

The strongest force in Cyprus politics has always been the demand for union with Greece, and at first sight this may seem to look in an entirely opposite direction from the new orientation of Cyprus towards the Middle East suggested in parts of this note. However, the contradiction may be less important than appears since Greece itself, isolated from the rest of Europe by the "iron curtain" countries, is increasingly looking for her connection with the Western Powers as part of an Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern group, based on the Truman doctrine in Greece and Turkey and the British alliances with Arab States. In these circumstances, it should be possible, when the strategic position of Cyprus has been redefined as suggested above, to re-assess what would be involved in the union of Cyprus with

Greece and consequently the importance to be attached in future to the Enosis movement and the way it should be handled.

In the meanwhile, it must be recognised that, with the withdrawal from Palestine, Cyprus under Crown Colony government will be an anachronism without parallel for thousands of miles in any direction—even little Malta has now regained self-government. If our position in Cyprus is to be tenable, both internally and internationally, and if we are to be in a position to counteract the increasing appeal of Communism (or what passes for Communism), it is essential that there should be some hope of progressively remedying this situation. The Consultative Assembly in Cyprus has only just begun its sessions and its prospects cannot yet be assessed. It is suggested that everything possible should be done to prevent it breaking down and to give favourable consideration to whatever constitutional scheme it may produce. At bottom, it seems possible that the emotional appeal of Enosis is consciously or unconsciously a reaction against that stuffy provincialism which offsets the many admirable qualities of Crown Colony administration. If so, the real political problem of Cyprus is to provide a satisfactory escape from provincialism and to encourage Cyprus to take its part in a larger world. It would be doubly unfortunate if, as might easily happen in the new circumstances after the withdrawal from Palestine, Cyprus were to be more than ever shut in on itself. Increasing contacts between Cyprus and the Middle East as hinted at above could no doubt never be a substitute for the bonds created by the Greek language and Greek Church, but it is at least worth supplementing the contacts between Cyprus and the outside world. Moreover, in the long run, the only satisfactory political lines of development for Cyprus seem to be either union with Greece or—if that is ruled out—then development towards the status of an autonomous member of a Middle Eastern confederacy. The new strategic situation may even make it desirable to reconsider the objections to the first course; but if not, then the second course seems greatly preferable to ever-increasing isolation as a military base maintained against the hostility of the civil population and the ill-will of both its Greek and Arab neighbours. A self-governing Cyprus, on the lines of Malta, which was in close contact with the rest of the Middle East might make a useful contribution to the maintenance of British influence in that region.

#### Minutes on 235

I have read Mr Bennett's memorandum at 4 with the greatest interest. My knowledge of the early and more recent history of the Middle East, and of the general factors contributing to the formulation of strategic and political policy there as a whole, does not seem sufficient, in comparison with Mr Bennett's, to permit me to attempt to challenge any of his conclusions. (I don't intend this as sarcasm. It is literally true.)

But it does seem to me that the memorandum tends to speculate far beyond what is legitimate for us in the Colonial Office, and that its basic assumption as to the nature of British policy and the way this policy works, is open to some doubt. The memorandum is a "planning" memorandum. It assumes that it is possible to foresee many moves ahead and to base present policy on the deductions from such speculation. This, in my view, is wrong in principle, and it certainly does not work out in practice. The memorandum shows a curious parallel to the picture which exists in the mind of the Jewish Agency as to HMG's current policy on the Palestine

problem. The Agency think that we have thought and planned ahead in the strategic and world-political spheres for, say 10 years or so, and that everything we now do fits in logically with this fundamental basic plan, and “makes sense” in the light of it. I have spent many hours in the past two years trying to convince the Jewish Agency that the mind of HMG does not work in this manner, but that policy is like a tree which grows organically from year to year and adapts itself in the process to the changing circumstances which surround it. To view that policy from the outside as a whole with an analytical “Latin” point of view, and to attempt to shape it on a procrustean bed of logic and coherence, is to misconceive it entirely. (This is one of the fundamental differences between the mental make-up of the French and the Jews and that of the Anglo-Saxons, and the fundamental reason why the one will never understand the other).

There is no need for me to develop this theme further. In a nutshell, I feel that the most we can or should do at the present is to go for a re-assessment by the Chiefs of Staff of the position of Cyprus after we have withdrawn from Palestine, with special reference to the strategic and economic aspects. When we have got the re-assessment, it will be for the Foreign Office, whose business it is to see the picture as a whole, to advise HMG whether the future policy should be based on conception [sic] such as the achievement of Enosis and the like.

T.S.

17.11.47

. . . The strategic importance of Cyprus to the United Kingdom arises not only from the facts that (a) in war it is strategically so placed as to assist in the defence of our interests in the Middle East and for offensive operations, and (b) in peace it provides us with alternative air staging bases and naval and air facilities for security control of the Eastern Mediterranean (I am not sure that this control will matter once Palestine has gone), but also from the fact that we must deny control of the Island to any potentially hostile power, which might use it as a base for attack.

Although in present conditions of scarcity the existence of military forces, even on the comparatively small scale now envisaged, will increase embarrassing inflationary tendencies, we may surely look forward to more normal times when the presence of a garrison of this size should be a benefit economically rather than otherwise.

Mr. Bennett has produced an interesting and stimulating paper. There cannot be too much “thinking” of this kind, provided that it does not crystallise in too rigid conclusions, which would certainly be out of place at such a period of transition, when almost none of the principal factors is fixed or certain.

? Mr. Bennett might follow up the suggestion in paragraph B 3 of (4) that encouragement should be given to co-operation in the economic and technical spheres between Cyprus and its Middle Eastern neighbours.

J.M.M.

18.12.47

### *S of S*

. . . You are not likely to have time to read the whole of Mr. Bennett’s stimulating memorandum at No. 4 on this file, but I hope that you will be able to glance at Section (3) of that document and to give us your authority to follow up the suggestion at the passage I have there marked Y—i.e. the study of means of

encouraging co-operation between Cyprus and its Middle Eastern neighbours in the economic and technical spheres.

T.I.K.L.  
19.12.47

Yes. I agree though at this precise moment there must be considerable uncertainty in that part of the world & perhaps no more can be done than to ask Mr Bennett to think about some of the problems & possibilities he advances. The strategic considerations are of course in our minds in the changes in the E. Med: & Mid. East & some further consideration at high level will be given to the problem.

A.C.J.  
30.12.47

**236** CAB 134/54, CA(47)21 22 Dec 1947  
 'Constitutional reform in Cyprus': memorandum by Mr Attlee for  
 Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs Committee

[Before writing this memo Attlee had received a letter from Sir S Cripps expressing reservations about the draft statement proposed in Annex II of Creech Jones's memo for the Commonwealth Affairs Committee dated 17 Dec (CAB 134/54, CA (47) 19). The background to the statement, and its substance, are recorded in 237, para 2. The statement was, Cripps wrote, 'most exasperating'—full of vague phrases and safeguards which might mean something or nothing, but would enable any British government to do nothing at all. Cripps felt that if they were to take the 'very sensible' line in Creech Jones's memo they should say so frankly and definitely; if they wanted a safeguard the only one to be inserted should be that the Cypriots should co-operate. He urged Attlee not to approve the statement in Annex II (T 220/366, no 5, Cripps to Attlee, 19 Dec 1947).]

1. I am not easy about the proposals of the Secretary of State in his memorandum on Constitutional Reform in Cyprus (C.A. (47) 19).
2. The fact of the Communist influenced left wing putting forward these moderate proposals is suspicious. They probably hope that Greece is going to become a Soviet satellite and therefore want to get as much power as they can in anticipation. Since we last discussed this question, the position in Palestine and Egypt has deteriorated and it is now more than ever necessary from the strategic aspect to keep our foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean in Cyprus.
3. I am also not easy about the interim proposals put forward by the official to the consultative Assembly (Annex III to C.A. (47) 19). They have all the faults of dyarchy giving the opportunity for criticism without real responsibility. Such vague phrases as Councillors being associated with particular subjects tend to blur the reality of Government. I do not know on what authority these suggestions were made.
4. Experience in Indian affairs has shown how bad is the effect of giving an interim constitution for a fixed period of years with the hope that this will give valuable experience. On the contrary, those who seek self-government have their eyes fixed on the future, not on the present. (Vide analysis of this in the Simon Report.)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission* (chairman, Lord Simon), vol I *Survey* (Cmd 3568, 1930). Attlee had served on the Commission which examined the working of the dyarchy constitution in the provinces of British India established under the Government of India Act, 1919.

5. If we are to move in the matter, I would rather say firmly that we intend to retain control of Foreign Policy and Defence, but that in all other spheres we will concede fully responsible government with any safeguards necessary for minorities. Our aim should be to get the Cypriots to form Parties based on internal policies economic and social and thus wean them from the delusion of Greek nationalism.

**237** CAB 134/54, CA 5(47)3

22 Dec 1947

**'Constitutional reform in Cyprus': Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs  
Committee minutes**

The Committee considered memoranda by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.A. (47) 19) and by the Prime Minister (C.A. (47) 21)<sup>1</sup> on constitutional reform in Cyprus.

In his memorandum the Secretary of State for the Colonies recalled that he had informed the House of Commons on 23rd October, 1946, that His Majesty's Government wished to establish a more liberal and progressive regime in the internal affairs of Cyprus, and that a Consultative Assembly would therefore be summoned to consider the framing of proposals for constitutional reform, including the establishment of a central legislature. The Consultative Assembly had met for the first time on 1st November, 1947, and the Greek members had now put forward a formal request for immediate responsible government, subject to the reservation to His Majesty of control over the external affairs and defence of the Island. This proposal represented a notable change of attitude on the part of the Greek political leaders, who had in the past concerned themselves exclusively with agitation in favour of union with Greece. The strength of irredentist sentiment had hitherto proved an effective obstacle to constitutional progress but, if the left wing parties were now prepared to try to make a success of responsible government within the limits mentioned, there appeared to be a strong case for going a considerable way towards meeting their wishes. The Secretary of State therefore proposed to announce that, at the end of five years, His Majesty's Government would consider whether, after working an interim constitution, responsible government in internal affairs should be conceded, His Majesty's Government retaining for themselves control of external affairs and defence. This interim period would provide the Cypriots with an opportunity for gaining experience in administration. The Governor of Cyprus was in full agreement with these proposals.

The Prime Minister, in his memorandum (C.A. (47) 21), pointed out that the fact that moderate constitutional proposals had been put forward by the Communist-influenced left wing in Cyprus was in itself ground for proceeding with caution, particularly in view of the strategic importance of the Island. The proposals for an interim constitution were also open to criticism. Experience in India had shown the weaknesses of an interim constitution given for a fixed period of years in the hope of affording political experience. Under the dyarchical system proposed, there would be increased opportunity for criticism but no effective transfer of responsibility. If any move was to be made, it would be preferable to grant responsible government at

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<sup>1</sup> See 236.

once, subject to the retention of control over foreign affairs and defence, and to the provision of the necessary safeguards for minorities.

Ministers were in general agreement with the criticisms made in C.A. (47) 21 of the proposals for a transitional period prior to the grant of responsible government. It was argued that the constitution proposed for this period would afford very limited opportunities for gaining administrative experience, and that it would merely furnish scope for irresponsible opposition. Experience had shown that constitutional provisions of this type could not be imposed with any prospect of success. The local political leaders would have no incentive to make a success of such a constitution; their concern would inevitably be with the future. Their interest would be to reduce the interim period to a minimum, and the transitional regime would thus become merely a source of exasperation. The majority of Ministers were therefore disposed to support the Prime Minister's view, that, if any more were to be made at this stage, it would be preferable to grant responsible government at once, subject to the specific limits suggested. Other Ministers thought, however, that it was premature at this stage to contemplate the grant of responsible government to Cyprus, even subject to the restrictions proposed. The strategic importance of the Colony had greatly increased as the result of recent developments in the Middle East, and no step ought to be taken which might in any way weaken our control over it. It could not be supposed that the leaders responsible for the recent initiative had abandoned their aim of uniting the Island to Greece; in view of their Communist sympathies, there was indeed every reason to fear a tactical move designed ultimately to free the Colony completely from British control. It was not improbable that this move was in fact part of the wider Communist political offensive; precipitate concessions at this stage might fatally undermine our position in Cyprus.

In further discussion, the following points were made:—

(a) The Committee were informed that there was a reasonable prospect that the proposals made in C.A. (47) 19 for the transitional period would be accepted by the left wing parties in Cyprus. The representatives of the Greek right wing had declined to participate in the Consultative Assembly, on the ground that this would compromise their policy of Union with Greece. But their fear of the left wing was very strong, and it seemed likely that a constitution on the lines proposed for the transitional period would in fact be more acceptable to them than the immediate grant of responsible government. Against this, it was pointed out that experience elsewhere had shown the inadvisability of relying on the support of political moderates.

(b) In Greece, both left wing and right wing political parties favoured a policy of Union or nothing. Whatever the constitutional regime in Cyprus at the time, a situation of great difficulty would develop in the Island if the Communists should gain control in Greece. It was arguable that these difficulties would to some extent be mitigated if a liberal constitution had already been established.

(c) It was suggested that the extent of Communist influence over the left wing parties in Cyprus might have been exaggerated. In Greece comparatively few members of the left wing were Communist supporters, and it was possible that the present move for responsible government within the British Commonwealth might have found substantial non-Communist left wing support. In that case, timely concessions would strengthen the hands of the more moderate elements against Communist extremists.

(d) The Levantine peoples had shown no aptitude for democratic government. It was understood that little progress had been made in Cyprus even in the development of local government. Would it not be preferable in the first instance to concentrate on the building up of an effective system of municipal and local administration?

(e) A scheme might be devised under which responsibility would be transferred to Cypriot hands by stages at specified dates, and provision might be made in this way for devolution of power, first in local affairs, and ultimately at the centre. Against this, however, it was argued that transfer of power at the centre by specific stages would be open to criticisms similar to those advanced against the proposals in C.A.(47)19.

(f) The terms of the suggested statement, which formed Annex II to C.A. (47) 19, were too vague. Experience had shown that serious political embarrassment was likely to result from the use of imprecise phrases in important constitutional announcements.

The Committee:—

Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to ask the Governor of Cyprus for his views on the points raised in C.A. (47) 21, and in their discussion; and to circulate a further memorandum in the light of Lord Winster's comments.

**238** CO 537/4035, no 13, CA 1(48)

21 Jan 1948

**'Constitutional reform in Cyprus': minutes of Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs Committee. *Minutes* on proposed policy by J S Bennett and J M Martin**

On 22nd December the Committee had invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to consult the Governor of Cyprus on the points raised in their discussion of the proposals for constitutional reform in Cyprus contained in C.A. (47) 19. They now had before them a further memorandum by the Secretary of State (C.A. (48) 1) prepared in the light of Lord Winster's comments.

The Committee were informed that the Governor had confirmed that he was in broad agreement with the proposals made in C.A. (47) 19, but that he had suggested that the pledge to review an interim constitution after a specified time limit should be deleted. Lord Winster considered that it would be premature to grant fully responsible government in internal affairs at this stage; no section of the community expected such a concession to be made, and both the moderate Greeks and the Turks were extremely apprehensive of the possible consequences of meeting in full the demand sponsored by the extreme Left. The Church, on the other hand, had maintained an attitude of indifference to the current discussions on the ground that it was interested only in union with Greece. The Governor thought that the reply to the representations made by the Greek members of the Consultative Assembly suggested in Annex I to C.A. (48) 1, which contained no promise that the interim constitution would be reviewed after a specified time, would be accepted by the Assembly as a basis for their further deliberations. In his view, the suggestion made at the Committee's earlier discussion that constitutional reform should be restricted in the initial stages to the field of local government was impracticable, partly because

of the limited scope for decentralisation in so small an island and partly because the Cypriots were unlikely to be satisfied with such a slow and gradual approach to central government.

Ministers were in general agreement with the view that it would be inadvisable to give any pledge that an interim constitution would be reviewed after a specified time limit. They considered, however, that excessive emphasis was laid in the draft in Annex I to C.A. (48) 1 on the early prospect of the attainment of responsible government by Cyprus and on the transitional nature of any constitutional arrangements adopted in the meantime. The draft statement appeared to ignore the political and administrative inexperience of the Cypriots; and it contained no indication that they would be expected to show that they could successfully assume responsibilities within a limited field before further constitutional advance could be justified. On the contrary, the document laid such marked emphasis on the temporary nature of the proposed constitution that the Cypriot leaders would be bound to regard it as a makeshift and to devote their efforts to securing further concessions.

Attention was also drawn to the need for considering this question against the background of the general situation in the Middle East. Recent developments had greatly enhanced the strategic importance of Cyprus. No steps ought to be taken which might jeopardise our future strategic requirements in the Island. Moreover, it was in any event unfortunate that important constitutional changes should have to be initiated at a time when we were engaged in evacuating Palestine, and when no decision had been reached about the future of Cyrenaica. It was suggested that, from this point of view, it would be advantageous if further discussions could have been deferred for six months.

Ministers noted from Annex III to C.A. (47) 19 that the Consultative Assembly had been asked to frame detailed proposals for the new constitution of Cyprus. They considered that a better procedure would be for His Majesty's Government themselves to put forward concrete proposals, which would indicate clearly the limits to which responsibility could be devolved at this stage. Such proposals should avoid any promise of further constitutional concessions or any suggestions that the constitutional arrangements proposed were temporary or transitional. Ministers were still disposed to think that, having regard to the political and administrative inexperience of the Cypriot leaders, it would have been preferable to concentrate attention on the reform and development of local government, and they were not convinced that the limited area and population of the Island rendered it impossible to establish an effective system. In so far as it was necessary to make changes at the centre, the Committee felt that it would have been better for the present to establish a representative Advisory Council rather than a Legislative Council. They recognised, however, that His Majesty's Government were to some extent committed by the speech made by the Chairman of the Consultative Assembly (Annex III to C.A. (47) 19), and that for this reason it might be necessary to go further than would otherwise have been considered desirable or necessary. But any concrete proposals prepared for communication to the Consultative Assembly should deal with local government as well as with the reform of the central government.

The Committee:—

(1) Agreed that the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in reply to the representations of the Greek members of the Cyprus Consultative Assembly (Annex I to C.A.

(47) 19), should put forward detailed proposals for the reform of the Cyprus constitution.

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to circulate a memorandum containing his recommendations on the form of the proposals to be put forward in accordance with (1) above.

### Minutes to 238

... 3. The Cabinet Committee decision, apart from its bearing on the kind of constitution which Cyprus can have, is a complete reversal of the *procedure* hitherto laid down for approaching the setting up of such a constitution. The whole point of calling the Consultative Assembly, as announced in the Secretary of State's statement to Parliament in October, 1946, was that the Consultative Assembly itself should draw up proposals for a constitution which H.M.G. would then consider. On the strength of this, the Governor, in a message published in Cyprus on 9th July, 1947 (text below No. 33 on the 1947 file) said:—

“The Assembly, in its consideration of the future constitution, is given very wide discretion as to the machinery it may advocate. Here is no cut and dried plan awaiting only a rubber stamp.”

In spite of this, rumours persisted in Cyprus that H.M.G. did have a cut and dried plan up their sleeves. When the Consultative Assembly met in November, the Chairman, Sir Edward Jackson,<sup>1</sup> again attempted to make it clear that the initiative lay with the Assembly and that H.M.G. was not going to table a draft constitution before it. Sir Edward Jackson was particularly at pains to point out that the outline of a possible constitution which he himself circulated was a personal suggestion and in no sense a Government-inspired document (although it did, of course, conform to the general lines of policy previously agreed between the Governor and the Secretary of State). The new procedure decided on by the Cabinet Committee reverses the process and places the initiative with H.M.G. For reasons indicated in the draft telegram opposite, it is clear that we cannot avoid announcing this decision, and announcing it soon. The announcement may, however, make the Governor, and Sir Edward Jackson as Chairman of the Assembly, look rather foolish. Lord Winster has already warned us (in No. 107 on the 1947 file) that we are in danger of appearing not to know our own minds.

4. In my opinion, it is doubtful whether, in the new circumstances, the Consultative Assembly can stay alive. In the telegram quoted immediately above Lord Winster told us that further delay (which is now bound to be considerable, before H.M.G.'s proposals can be ready) could only damage the prospects of the Consultative Assembly, and in a later telegram (No. 4 on this file) he says the local press is referring to it as still-born and moribund.

5. The Left Wing Greek members have already said that, in the absence of a favourable response to their memorial to the Secretary of State, they see no purpose in continuing to sit in the Assembly. Lord Winster hoped to persuade them to continue to sit on the basis of the draft reply which has now been rejected by the Cabinet Committee, but I think it must be very doubtful whether they would think it

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<sup>1</sup> Sir E Jackson, chief justice of Cyprus, 1943; acting gov, Jul–Aug 1948.

worth their while to continue in face of the new situation. The Right Wing Greek members have hitherto boycotted the Assembly; Lord Winster hoped to get them in on the basis of the reply which has now been rejected, but it is very doubtful whether there is any chance of them coming in now. An Assembly composed only of the Turkish minority would be ludicrous. We must await Lord Winster's appreciation of the position, but I should frankly be surprised if he does not tell us that the Consultative Assembly must now be regarded as dead. That is to say, any constitutional proposals produced by H.M.G. in pursuance of the Cabinet Committee decision will have to be imposed on Cyprus, without even an appearance of public consultation and consent, since no Consultative Assembly can be got together to discuss them, much less to approve them.

6. We are now unable to make any response to the new approach which the Greek Left Wing made in their memorial of November, 1947, and I fear that the Cabinet Committee decision will have the result, among other things, of uniting both Left and Right Wing of the Greeks in opposition to us once more. The chance of obtaining backing for a moderate policy has been lost; I think the result will be to encourage extremism on both sides. In one sense the Cabinet Committee decision will be hailed in Cyprus as a victory for the Right Wing, who (in the press and in telegrams addressed to us) have consistently denounced the Left Wing request for self-government with the exclusion of external affairs and defence as being treason to the national demand for Enosis. The present rebuff to the Left Wing will no doubt be welcomed in Church circles in Cyprus. At the same time, the Left Wing seem bound to assume an attitude of more complete hostility as a result of this rebuff, and the Communists will no doubt make much play with the situation. In such circumstances, the Government of Cyprus, still lacking any basis of public representation or consent, will be forced as hitherto to rely more and more on the support of the Right Wing, if only because they are at least the anti-Communist party. The only Cypriot members on the Advisory Council at present are rich business men. Those who wish to say that the British Government relies on the support of "reactionary" circles, here as in Greece and elsewhere, will have plenty of ammunition.

7. It is also perhaps desirable to consider the international aspect. I fear that there may be some risk of H.M.G.'s very cautious response to this local demand for self-government being misunderstood. In this speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 13th October last year, the Secretary of State said:—

"No one dare suggest that the Government of the United Kingdom is pursuing in respect of the British territories overseas other than an enlightened liberal policy calculated to promote the happiness and wellbeing of the people concerned. It is a dynamic and imaginative policy and not based on the assumptions which critics allege is the foundation of what they call 'Imperialism'. It is a policy, still being worked out, of co-operation and partnership with the people for evolving the nationhood of those territories by expanding and developing as rapidly as circumstances permit free political institutions and the essence of social democracy . . . . Local and central organs of government based on representative and responsible principles are rapidly developing. I assert these things because when it is suggested that there should be some change in the principles of administration and some derogation of ultimate authority, we must enquire with a deep sense of responsibility what is the immediate gain from any change contemplated. Is our present policy wrong? Is there any demand from the people concerned?"

It may be asked, either in the United Nations or elsewhere (I think it will certainly be asked in *Pravda*), whether the denial of any appreciable measure of representative government to an educated European people like the Cypriots is entirely consistent with the principles of British colonial policy as enunciated by the Secretary of State on that important occasion. The argument of inexperience might be used to rebut such criticism, but it must be remembered that the Cypriots enjoyed an elective Legislative Council with an unofficial majority from the British occupation in 1878 until we withdrew the Constitution in 1931. The criticism would be the more difficult to rebut in so far as it became impossible to hide the strategic—i.e. “Imperialist”—motives behind H.M.G.’s policy, as admitted in the fourth paragraph of the Cabinet Committee conclusions. (I admit to being a little puzzled personally by the strength of the Ministerial reaction against any concessions, even mild ones, towards self-government in Cyprus, coming within a few days of the signature of an extremely liberal treaty with Iraq, which lies in the same strategic zone and is quite as important strategically.)

8. We shall no doubt get an appreciation of the local reactions from Lord Winster, but I should be surprised if it does not emerge that the encouragement given to Communist propaganda will not have the result of making Cyprus less quiet and less secure as a military base, whereas the major object of the Cabinet Committee appears to have been to secure our strategic requirements in Cyprus.

J.S.B.  
23.1.48

Please see above minute and dft. I feel bound to say that I fear that this decision will not only prove very embarrassing to the S of S, the Governor and Sir Edward Jackson, but also will have most serious political consequences in Cyprus.

J.M.M.  
23.1.48

As I mentioned to you today, Mr. Blackburne has asked me to meet the Lobby Correspondents on Monday afternoon and the rest of the interested press (including the London correspondents of the Cyprus newspapers) on Tuesday afternoon. There is one point on which I think I should seek instructions before I talk to them.

It is a safe assumption that I shall be asked questions about self-government, why the constitution H.M.G. propose does not go further, etc.—particularly by the left-wing Cyprus papers and their associates here. (The same sort of questions will be asked in Parliament shortly afterwards by Mr Pritt<sup>2</sup> etc, and it is therefore doubly important to settle our “line” in advance). The despatch itself simply says that the proposal by the eight Greek members for internal self-government is “unacceptable”. It gives no reasons; you will recall that Lord Winster deleted any reasons from the draft. I shall be asked what H.M.G.’s reasons for deciding that internal self-government is “unacceptable” are. I do not think I can stand pat like the despatch and refuse to give any; that would be intolerably lofty, and would in any case be the short cut to getting a bad press for our proposals! But if I am to give reasons, what line am I to take?

Bearing in mind that the oft-repeated aim of H.M.G. is the development of all

<sup>2</sup> D N Pritt, KC, MP (Socialist) for Hammersmith North, 1935–1950.

Colonies to self-government, I think there are broadly speaking only three reasons which could be quoted for saying that self-government is "unacceptable" to H.M.G. in Cyprus:—

(1) To say that the Cypriots are unfitted for self-government. But that sort of line, from the Colonial Office spokesman, would start the Consultative Assembly off in a very bad atmosphere. Anyway, it isn't true—at least without a good deal of qualification (see (3) below).

(2) To say that they are fit for self-government but that they can't have it because of our strategic interests. There is a good deal of truth in this (judging by the discussions in the Cabinet Committee); but it would be a gift to Communist propaganda if we said it.

(3) To say that there is no reason why they should not reach internal self-government but that an interim period of apprenticeship is needed first; i.e. that the constitution H.M.G. now propose will, it is hoped, be a stage on the road to self-government. This is nearest to the facts. But we are up against the view previously taken by Ministers that the new constitution should *not* be presented as an "interim" one and that nothing should be done to encourage the Cypriots to believe that further advances might be contemplated.

Of the above, I think (3) is the only reason we have any reasonable hope of getting away with. May I be authorised to take that line?

J.S.B.  
8.5.48

**239** CAB 129/26, CP(48)112

26 Apr 1948

'Constitutional reform in Cyprus': Cabinet memorandum by Lord Listowel. *Annex*: proposed outline constitution

I circulate as the Annex to this paper an outline of a proposed Constitution for Cyprus, which it is intended should be laid before the Consultative Assembly in Cyprus as the expression of His Majesty's Government's policy for constitutional reform. This outline was considered by the Commonwealth Affairs Committee on 23rd April (C.A. (48) 6th Meeting). The Committee recommended certain amendments (which have been incorporated, with the exception noted in paragraph 5 below), and invited me to bring the proposals before the Cabinet.

2. In framing constitutional proposals for Cyprus, it is necessary to remember that to offer less than a certain minimum degree of self-government is to court entire rejection. Cyprus had a Legislature with an elected majority between 1882 and 1931. The Cypriots do not regard themselves as politically inexperienced, and they are fully aware that relatively liberal Constitutions have been granted to Colonial territories (e.g. in the West Indies) with which they cannot but compare favourably their own historical background and standard of social and political development. If the move made by His Majesty's Government in October, 1946, to grant Cyprus a more liberal form of Government were now to end in total rejection of our proposals by the Consultative Assembly, the dissident element in the Island would be greatly strengthened, with adverse consequences within and possibly outside Cyprus. On the other hand there is no strong public demand in Cyprus for full self-government. The

Governor considers that the Constitution proposed in the Annex to this paper would be acceptable to the bulk of public opinion in the Island.

3. Our strategic requirements in Cyprus and the Middle East generally have been very much in mind in framing these constitutional proposals. I am satisfied, and I think the Commonwealth Affairs Committee agreed, that there is nothing in the Constitution now proposed which would prejudice our strategic requirements. While the minimum essential safeguards for these purposes must be and have been inserted, we must avoid being placed in the position where it could plausibly be said that we were denying political liberties to a developed people like the Cypriots simply for "Imperialist" reasons. Moreover, to delay the introduction of any constitutional reform might give rise to serious political difficulties. Internal stability is likely to be best served by giving the Cypriots effective central institutions which, though short of fully responsible government, they can take a genuine share in working, and in which their political energies can be absorbed.

4. The essential features of the Constitution now proposed are three. First, an elected Legislature with power to debate and legislate about the affairs of the Island within the limits set by our Imperial interests. Secondly, an executive responsible to the Governor and not to the Legislature. Thirdly, the provision of a two-way link between these two organs by means of (i) the appointment of a small number of key officials to seats in the Legislature, and (ii) the appointment of the leaders of the elected majority in the Legislature to membership of the Executive Council. The latter feature is in effect an embryonic "Ministerial" system. These unofficial Councillors would be associated with the work of certain Departments of Government and, with the aid of the information thereby obtained, would be able to share actively in the corporate responsibility of the Executive Council in formulating Government policy. The system is, however, short of fully responsible government in that the unofficial Councillors would not have final executive control over the Departments associated with them, and the Governor would not be bound to take the advice of his Executive Council. These Councillors would speak on the subjects allocated to them in the Legislature and would in general be expected to support Government policy there. The system is a flexible one, and it is intended that it should not be written into the Constitution itself but left to administrative arrangements. I believe that it affords a promising line of approach in the conditions of Cyprus and I am informed that it is likely to be accepted by the Cypriot people. I may add that a similar embryonic "Ministerial" system has been in existence for over three years in Jamaica, whose Governor reports that, considering the inexperience of "Ministers", the system shows signs of developing in the right direction.

5. There is one amendment recommended by the Commonwealth Affairs Committee at their meeting on 23rd April which I have not incorporated in the Annex to this paper. The Committee considered that the Legislature should not have power to discuss amendments to the Constitution and that a prohibition to this effect should be added to the prohibition of discussion of the status of the Colony in Section III (a) of the Annex. I am advised, however, that this would not be legally permissible. It is provided in Section 5 of the Colonial Laws Validity Act, 1865, that every representative Legislature shall have full power to make laws respecting the Constitution, powers and procedure of such Legislature, provided that such laws are passed in such manner and form as may be required by any Act of Parliament, Letters Patent, Order in Council or Colonial Law for the time being in force in the Colony. "Representative

Legislature” is defined as a Colonial Legislature which comprises a legislative body of which one half are elected by the inhabitants. The Legislature proposed for Cyprus will come within this definition, and it follows that they will have a statutory right to pass laws respecting their own Constitution. A prohibition against discussion of any amendments to the Constitution would therefore appear to be *ultra vires*. The Order in Council establishing the Constitution can, however, lay down a “manner and form” for the passing of laws for this purpose. I propose therefore that Bills amending the Constitution should be one of the classes of Bills for which the Governor’s prior consent to introduction should be required, and Section III (b) of the Annex has been amended accordingly. In addition such a Bill will require to be reserved in accordance with Section III (d).

6. Finally, the Commonwealth Affairs Committee in their discussions have also taken the view, which I share, that as well as reforming the Constitution we should press on with the development of local government in Cyprus. For reasons which have been explained to the Committee, I propose to ask the Governor to deal with this as a separate issue and not to include it in the constitutional proposals presented to the Consultative Assembly, since the Assembly is not competent to consider local government affairs and was not summoned for that purpose.

7. I therefore invite the Cabinet to agree that the proposals outlined in the Annex to this paper should be laid before the Consultative Assembly as an expression of His Majesty’s Government’s policy for constitutional reform in Cyprus. In the subsequent negotiations with the Assembly it will, I take it, be the wish of the Cabinet that the Secretary of State and the Governor should have a reasonable latitude within the broad limits here set out.

## Annex to 239

### I. *Composition of the legislature*

(a) There shall be a Legislature consisting of 22 elected members, i.e. approximately 1 per 20,000 of the population, and 4 official members (the Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General, Treasurer, and Senior Commissioner).

(b) Of the elected members, 18 shall be elected on a general electoral register and 4 on a Turkish communal<sup>1</sup> electoral register. The Consultative Assembly will be invited to express their views on the number of elected members proposed, and some latitude could be allowed.

(c) If there were strong pressure to that effect in the Consultative Assembly (but not otherwise), it could be conceded that the four official members should not vote, but they would of course otherwise enjoy all the rights and duties of full members of the Legislature.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This method of safeguarding Turkish interests is taken from the 1882–1931 Constitution. I am assured that the Turkish community would regard any other arrangement with deep suspicion as opening the way to non-Turkish influence over Turkish representation; and in the circumstances I recommend its retention, at least for the present. Arrangements for safeguarding European and Indian representation in Kenya and Fiji offer an analogy and a precedent. The remaining (non-Turkish) minorities are extremely small and can best be included in the general electoral register, as they were under the 1882–1931 Constitution.

<sup>2</sup> The small number of official members proposed would in any case not be there for their voting strength but in order to maintain an essential link between Executive and Legislature; while the provisions under Section III below would safeguard against unsatisfactory legislation.

## II. *Chairman of the legislature*

The Chairman shall in the first instance be appointed by the Governor from among persons who are not members of the Legislature.

## III. *Powers of the legislature and reserved powers*

(a) The Constitution will provide that the Legislature may not discuss the status of the Colony within the Commonwealth.

(b) No money Bill or resolution, no Bill which in the opinion of the Governor affects defence, external affairs or the special interests of minorities, and no Bill amending the Constitution, may be introduced or moved without the prior consent of the Governor through the Chairman.

(c) Power will be reserved to the Governor to declare a Bill to have effect as if it had been passed in any instance in which, in his opinion, its enactment is expedient in the interest of public order, good faith, or good government, and it has been rejected by the Legislature or passed in an unacceptable form. The Governor will also be empowered to return Bills to the Legislature with amendments recommended by him.

(d) The Governor will be empowered to reserve Bills for the signification of His Majesty's pleasure, and will be required to reserve certain classes of Bills including in particular any Bill which in the opinion of the Governor affects defence or external affairs or discriminates against minorities, or any Bill amending the Constitution.

(e) Subject to (d) above, Bills passed by the Legislature will, of course, need the assent of the Governor in the King's name. He may refuse assent and the usual provision will be made for the disallowance of laws by His Majesty.

(f) There will also be the usual reservation to His Majesty of power to revoke, add to or amend the Constitution and to make laws by Order in Council.

(g) Provision will be made for a small "reserved civil list" (i.e. a list not susceptible of amendment by the Legislature except by amendment of the Constitution) covering the salaries of the Governor and the Judiciary.

## IV. *Standing Orders*

Standing Orders for the Legislature will in the first instance be prepared on the instructions of the Governor and any subsequent amendment will require the Governor's approval.

## V. *Duration of legislature*

Elections to the Legislature shall take place at intervals of not less than four, or alternatively five, years. The Consultative Assembly will be free to choose which period they prefer.

## VI. *Franchise*

Every male British subject of 21 years or over who is resident in the Colony shall have one vote. Provision will be made to enfranchise Cypriots and others who are not<sup>3</sup> British subjects, but who have a residence qualification. It will be for the

<sup>3</sup> Cypriots born before 1914 who failed to exercise their right of option to acquire British nationality on the annexation of the Island are not British subjects. There are also a number of Cypriots returned to the Island from Egypt whose nationality is dubious. The proposed provision for enfranchising non-British Cypriots repeats that of the 1925 Order in Council.

Consultative Assembly to consider whether the franchise should be extended to women; if such extension is desired, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to accept it.

#### VII. *Executive Council*

(a) The Governor will remain the head of the Executive and will not be bound by the advice of his Executive Council but will be required to inform the Secretary of State in any case in which he acts contrary to its advice.

(b) The Council will consist of the four official members of the Legislature and of such other persons, being elected members of the Legislature or officials (but not unofficials who are not elected members of the Legislature), as His Majesty may from time to time direct through a Secretary of State.

(c) It would be the intention in the first instance to appoint three Greek members from the majority party in the Legislature and one Turkish member. These unofficial members of Executive Council would be associated with certain specified departments (a tentative distribution would be agriculture and lands, labour, health and education, and Turkish affairs), and would be termed "Councillors" for those subjects. The procedure governing the relation of these unofficial Councillors with the departments assigned to them would be prescribed by the Governor, with whom ultimate executive control of the departments would rest.

(d) In order to assure flexibility, the provisions of paragraph (c) above would not be written into the Constitution but would be made clear by other means, for example an open despatch from the Secretary of State accompanying the introduction of the Constitution.

**240** CAB 128/12, CM 30(48)9

29 Apr 1948

### 'Cyprus': Cabinet conclusions on proposed constitutional reform

The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs (C.P. (48) 112) submitting proposals for constitutional reform in Cyprus.<sup>1</sup>

The Cabinet were reminded that in October 1946 it had been announced that a Consultative Assembly would be set up in Cyprus to consider the question of constitutional reform. It was now proposed that the detailed scheme set out in the Annex to C.P. (48) 112 should be submitted to the Assembly. This scheme had been endorsed by the Commonwealth Affairs Committee; and, in the view of the Governor, it represented the minimum concession towards a more liberal form of Government that was likely to prove acceptable to the Assembly and to Cypriot opinion generally. The main features of the proposed constitution were an elected Legislature with powers to debate and legislate on the affairs of the Island within the limits set by our strategic interests; an Executive Council responsible to the Governor and not to the Legislature; and the provision of a two-way link between these two bodies by (i) the appointment of certain officials to seats in the Legislature, and (ii) the appointment of representatives of the elected majority of the Legislature to the Executive Council. It was also proposed that the unofficial members of the Executive Council should be associated with the work of certain Departments of Government. The question of

<sup>1</sup> See 239.

developing local Government was being separately examined by the Cyprus Government.

In discussion, it was explained that the Governor of Cyprus was hopeful that this scheme of constitutional reform would prove acceptable to the Consultative Assembly, and that the Cypriots would make a genuine effort to work it successfully. There was no real demand in the island for full self-government. Great care had been taken, in framing these proposals, to safeguard our strategic interests.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that, in view of the changing situation in the Middle East, he would have preferred that the question of constitutional reform in Cyprus should have been deferred. He recognised that this was not possible, but he considered that the proposals now under consideration went as far as it would be safe to go.

The Cabinet:—

Approved the proposals for constitutional reform in Cyprus submitted in C.P. (48) 112.

## 241 CO 537/4970

27 May–1 July 1949

[Possible re-examination of constitutional advance in Cyprus on appointment of a new governor]: minutes by J S Bennett, Sir T Lloyd, Lord Listowel and Mr Creech Jones

The constitutional position is certainly one of the matters that ought to be discussed with the new Governor<sup>1</sup> when he arrives in London . . . .

I think it is correct to say that, ever since the statement in Parliament in October, 1946, it has been the desire of Ministers to see the basis of government in Cyprus broadened and made more representative, if only ways could be found of achieving this . . . the appointment of a new Governor is I agree an occasion which should not be lost for re-examining the matter . . . .

Personally I believe that the fundamental weakness of our position in Cyprus, greater even than the universal sentiment for Enosis or the appreciable strength of Communism, is the fact that there is no real moral basis for our administration in the sense in which a moral basis for the State is understood in the democratic countries of the West. That weakness cannot be removed until the people of Cyprus have a share in making the laws and influencing the actions of the Executive. I hope therefore that a favourable lead can be given to Sir Andrew Wright on this question. The Secretary of State may wish to have a meeting with him to discuss it.

J.S.B.  
27.5.49

. . . Sir Andrew may, as a result of [documentary] study and on the strength of his experience in Cyprus from 1922–1940, have some definite views about constitutional development and he is clearly entitled to a sympathetic hearing from Ministers for any opinion that he may wish now to express. But, subject only to that, I agree with

<sup>1</sup> Sir Andrew Wright, formerly colonial secretary of Cyprus, 1937, and acting gov, 1938–1939; gov of Gambia, 1947–1949.

the departmental advice that Ministers should enter into talks with the new Governor with the intention of reverting to the policy outlined in the Secretary of State's despatch of the 5th of June, 1948 . . . .

T.I.K.L.  
30.5.49

I still believe that the policy in [that despatch] is the only way of breaking the constitutional deadlock in Cyprus, and the fact that the Cypriote [sic] leaders have not moved since the Constitution was shelved shows how futile it was to expect them to take the initiative. Whether this policy is practicable at the present time can only be decided after the new Governor has spent long enough in Cyprus to give us his appreciation of the political situation. But I agree that he should have our views on constitutional advance at this stage, and that we should ask him for his.

L.  
30.5.49

I agree with Lord Listowel.

A.C.J.  
1.7.49

**242** CO 537/4978, no 62

13 Dec 1949

[Assessment of the situation in Cyprus]: minute by J S Bennett

. . . I do not want to appear alarmist; and on previous "Enosis flaps" during the last 18 months the Department has perhaps stressed the opposite side of the case. But this time we are pretty sure that it is the real thing.

I think high and heavy pressure will be needed to move the F.O.

I agree that HMG should make an early statement . . . the best kind of statement would be one openly linking our determination to stay in Cyprus with the part the Island plays in the scheme of Western European defence (which includes Greece itself). Indeed, there is so far as I am aware no other reason for us holding this European community in Colonial status and denying them self-determination; certainly no other reason which can carry conviction with international public opinion . . . .

In many ways the situation reminds me of Palestine in about 1943/44. We did not show our teeth to the Jews and their foreign supporters until they were sufficiently strong for it not to be effective. The Cypriots are not, on past form, the fighters the Palestine Jews proved to be; but if that should ever change, the parallel would become even more gloomy!

**243** CO 67/370/3

21 Jan–28 Feb 1950

**[Reaction to the Ethnarchy's plebiscite in Cyprus]: minutes by J S Bennett and Lord Listowel**

[The constitutional impasse of 1948 left a political void which was filled by increasing agitation for Enosis, fuelled from the autumn of 1949 by a renewed Greek government campaign of encouragement from Athens. AKEL also launched into competition with the Ethnarchy (bishops of the autocephalic Cypriot Church) as 'the apostles of Enosis', and J S Bennett feared a united front might emerge (CO 537/4978, minute, 8 Dec 1949). Despite the fact that the one fixed point of British policy was that the issue of Enosis was 'closed', towards the end of 1949 the Ethnarchy announced its intention of holding a plebiscite on it. Creech Jones now wrote to Bevin: 'I am seriously disturbed about the situation' (FO 371/87715, no 10, 15 Dec 1949); the FO reconsidered its tactics at Athens. Although the CO thought that Governor Wright handled the situation well before and during the plebiscite, held in early Jan 1950, and although in general the Ethnarchy seemed an inferior antagonist to AKEL, the communists supported the plebiscite, and it was an anxious time for British policy-makers. The plebiscite was not a secret ballot, and 96.4 per cent declared in favour of Enosis.]

. . . Lofty complacency in the face of this plebiscite would be a mistake. I think that nothing but good would come of ridding ourselves of any remaining illusions that our rule in Cyprus rests on any moral foundation. It is only our (and our allies') military needs that cause the situation and only they can justify it. C.f. the Soviet Union and the Baltic States. One of the things we might hope to get from a reassessment by the Chiefs of Staff & F.O. would be an appreciation of how long a western democracy can expect to get away with such a case.

J.S.B.  
21.1.50

I am very glad to note that the F.O. & Chiefs of Staff may be asked to re-assess the strategic importance of Cyprus. This is the only argument we can use with the U.S., and it is a weighty argument where the fear of communism is stronger than anti-colonial feeling. If our strategic requirements have changed, we should re-consider our policy in the light of altered circumstances.

L.  
25.1.50

. . . Cyprus is an educated European country and the onus of proof is on us to show why it should remain a British colony, not on the Cypriots to show why they should have the right to determine our [sic] own future. We may deplore that situation, but it seems to me a political reality which cannot be escaped. After the Malta talks last year I was instructed to take a press conference, with its cut-and-thrust of questions, explaining and defending the U.K attitude to the Maltese Delegation. If faced with the same kind of situation during the projected visit by the Cyprus delegation, I am not clear that the C.O. spokesman would have enough material; and I doubt whether there is even enough material to enable a genuine discussion to take place with the Delegation itself. It was against this background that I suggested that the Governor should be invited to begin briefing us; and I submit with respect that it would still be worth asking him . . . .

J.S.B.  
28.2.50

**244** CO 537/6228

24 Jan–10 Oct 1950

[Sir A Wright's policy in Cyprus]: minutes by J S Bennett, J M Martin, Lord Listowel, Mr Creech Jones and Mr Griffiths (no 21B)

No. (1) is undoubtedly an able despatch by the Governor, and it is an interesting example of the way things are done in Cyprus, to observe from his personal letter to me now attached at No. (3) that Sir Andrew Wright wrote the whole thing himself without even showing it to his Colonial Secretary. One cannot altogether avoid the impression that Sir Andrew Wright is so set in his ideas about Cyprus, derived from his earlier time there, that he did not think it worth while to seek the comments of those who have knowledge and experience of handling the situation on the spot in the more recent years.<sup>1</sup>

2. As shown in Miss Fisher's minute above, the despatch, though taking the possibility of constitutional advance as its text, seeks authority for four specific pieces of repressive legislation. These have been given a preliminary examination on the four separate files attached (Miss Fisher has been very brisk in getting the whole dossier ready for submission). I agree with Miss Fisher, however, that a decision of policy on how to handle the Governor's proposals seems to be needed first and it will be more convenient if I confine remarks at this stage to a minute on this file.

3. I agree that serious issues are raised by the proposals to suspend newspapers and exclude foreign newspapers (amendment of the Press Law) and to deport British subjects who are natives of Cyprus (amendment of the Deportation of British Subjects Law). In my view the proposed amendment of the Prevention of Crime Law is almost, if not quite, in the same category. As it stands, that law seems intended to deal with ordinary civil crime. The amendment would transform it into a means of repressing the expression of political opinions. There would be nothing<sup>2</sup> to prevent a Commissioner, at his sole discretion, demanding a "bond" from a Bishop or a trade union leader for a sum which he knew the man could not pay and then imprisoning him for twelve months (section 10. of the existing law) for failure to pay, and repeating the process the day he comes out. Thus the only one of the four pieces of legislation which seems apparently uncontroversial is the proposed power to deport aliens who are natives of Cyprus (amendment of the Aliens and Immigration Law).

4. I think Miss Fisher is quite right to focus attention on the two assumptions stated in the first paragraph of her minute, which underlie the policy proposed by the Governor and are reflected in the particular measures for which he seeks authority. I think our judgement on whether or not to give him the authority he seeks must depend on whether we think that both those assumptions are tenable. The assumptions raise fundamental issues about our position in Cyprus and it is for that reason that the Department feels it would be wiser, if the Governor can accept a short delay, to postpone a decision until after the General Election, and to use the interval to seek an up-to-date appreciation from the Chiefs of Staff as proposed in paragraph 5 of Miss Fisher's minute. I therefore support the proposal to limit our immediate action to the draft telegram opposite.

<sup>1</sup> Martin commented in the margin here: 'His proposals for amending legislation are submitted with the unanimous advice of the Ex. Co. (para 1 of 1).'

<sup>2</sup> Martin commented: 'Except his own common sense and judgment.'

5. If that is accepted, it would perhaps be premature to comment in detail on the two assumptions on which, as we see it, the whole question turns, but I urge proceeding with caution all the more strongly because personally I have great doubts of the validity in present circumstances of either of those two assumptions, and I hope at a later stage to give my reasons more fully. The first assumption, that we can govern Cyprus without regard for reactions in Greece or Turkey, or in the international field generally, may have been true in the 1930's, but seems to me entirely unrealistic in 1950. But if we do have to think of our relations with Greece, of our position as a leading Western democratic power, and of our reputation in the United Nations, then it would be folly to embark on a policy of repression in Cyprus in the hope that no one would notice. As for the second assumption, that the Cypriots would really accept and like a "strong" policy, that—even the language which is now urged by Sir Andrew Wright—is the familiar talk of harassed Colonial Governors everywhere in the last half century. How many British pro-Consuls have urged on Whitehall that if only they are given power to lock up a few agitators everything will be well? To go no further, we have seen it in comparable Eastern Mediterranean surroundings in the last thirty years in Egypt and in Palestine. Passages in Sir Andrew Wright's despatch remind me forcibly of one received from Sir William Battershill, when acting High Commissioner of Palestine in 1937, urging that the deportation of the Arab Higher Committee would nip the Arab rebellion in the bud and that moderate men would then rally round the Government and see where their true interests lay. As the junior in the Middle East Department at the time, it was one of my duties to keep a chart of weekly statistics of disorders; and I cannot forget how my chart, which had hitherto kept low and steady, went off the top of the sheet the week after Sir William Battershill's policy was approved, and stayed there for two years, taking three divisions and a reversal of policy to bring it back to square 1. Egypt is perhaps an equally good parallel since it was occupied from Turkey for strategic reasons at practically the same time as Cyprus and similarly declared a Protectorate in 1914. It is a matter of history how Lord Allenby's policy, so similar to Sir Andrew Wright's, failed; and how in the end, for all that Egypt is vastly more important strategically than Cyprus, we had to admit that national self-determination, which we ourselves had fostered in Europe in the nineteenth century, was a reality in the Middle East in the twentieth. It is, of course, conceivable that Cyprus is the exception that proves the rule; but it seems more probable that the reason Cyprus has lagged behind—it is now the only Colony for a thousand miles or more in any direction—is that it has been too small either to rebel effectively or to become a major international issue. Its very isolation and uniqueness make it doubtful in my view whether that will continue to be true in the 1950's.

J.S.B.  
24.1.50

*Sir T. Lloyd*

The intense political energy of the Greek-speaking Cypriots (which so often provokes the reminder that it was a Greek who described man as a political animal), lacking sufficient constitutional outlet, expresses itself in the Enosis agitation. This, with fluctuating violence, has dominated the Island's politics for 70 years and confronts the Government with a constant dilemma. Repression closes the political safety valve, produces martyrs, widens the gulf between Church and State, brings the

“alien” administration into collision with the population on an issue that touches the most profound emotions and in itself leads nowhere. Complacency [sic], on the other hand, allows the agitation to work itself up to unmanageable proportions, discourages the “moderates” (of whom there are now many, though they dare not declare themselves, particularly among the official and mercantile sections), brings the administration into contempt and ultimately threatens the breakdown of law and order, without in the least conducing to constitutional advance under a British regime. Between the extremes of “strong” and “liberal” government there is, of course, room for many variations and it is perhaps an over-simplification to regard the Governor’s present proposals (as he seems to do himself) as the substitution of a “strong” for a “liberal” policy. Mr. Turnbull’s administration<sup>3</sup> during his long periods as Acting Governor before and after Lord Winster’s ultimate departure was, in effect, moderately “strong” and at the time seemed not unsuccessful. In effect, his policy was to avoid any appearance of taking the Enosis agitation too seriously and therefore to turn a blind eye to some of its manifestations, but at the same time to strengthen and enforce with increasing firmness the Government’s existing legal powers against sedition etc. Whatever the causes may be, I think we must agree that the situation has now deteriorated and, however reluctantly, accept Sir Andrew Wright’s view that stronger measures are necessary and that, till these have taken effect, no step towards constitutional advance is possible.

The Governor himself evidently regards acceptance of his proposals as meaning the start of a new chapter in Cyprus and the Secretary of State will probably agree with the suggestion of the Department that the decision might appropriately be postponed until after the General Election, so that it may be taken by whatever Government will also be responsible both for defending the policy in Parliament and internationally and for handling any repercussions in Cyprus itself. In any event some of the proposals require reference to the Foreign Office, which will take time. . . .

J.M.M.  
26.1.50

The immediate question is to decide our reply about the additional repressive powers sought by the Governor in his despatch at (1), which we have had in our hands since January. The Governor presented those suggested powers both as an end in themselves (i.e. to re-insure public order and tranquility) and as a means to eventual constitutional advance. As background to deciding about these powers we have the re-examination of the fundamentals of our position in Cyprus contained in the joint Colonial Office–Foreign Office reference to the Chiefs of Staff at (15) and its enclosed memorandum on 90580/50 and the Chiefs of Staff reply at (21) on the same file.

2. The Governor’s despatch was commented on fairly extensively at the time of its receipt, in minutes of January by the Department and Mr. Martin; I think that a good deal of what was said then is still relevant, and I do not want to go over the ground again or write a long minute, particularly as Ministers may feel that discussion is called for.

3. We went to Cyprus in 1878 as an occupying power for the purpose of bolstering up Turkey and the Middle East against Russia. Now, 70 years later, the Chiefs of

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<sup>3</sup> (Sir) Roland E Turnbull, colonial secretary of Cyprus, 1945; gov of North Borneo, 1954–1960.

Staff's paper shows that the wheel has come full circle. But to carry out that role in and from Cyprus we are still, as Miss Fisher says, an occupying power. We do not govern by consent; there are no representative institutions<sup>4</sup>; civil liberties are restricted and the Governor wishes to restrict them further. There is no suggestion that the Cypriots themselves are able or willing to rebel or attempt to shake our hold on the Island by force. But the external consequences of the policy desired by the Chiefs of Staff, carried out by the means the Governor wishes, are perhaps another matter. Whatever may have been possible in 1878, how far is a repressive regime in this European island practicable today in the light of the political ideals of the Commonwealth and of the Atlantic Powers? H.M.G.'s military advisers wish us to hold on to Cyprus because of its value in the eventuality of a hot war; but in the meanwhile, in the cold war stage, it has its embarrassments. At a private lecture at Chatham House a month or two ago which Miss Fisher and I attended, Dr. Dervis, the Nationalist Mayor of Nicosia, quoted Mr. Attlee's celebrated statement made two years ago in connection with Burma, that the Commonwealth does not wish to retain within its ranks unwilling members. There may be answers to that point in connection with Cyprus, but they are not easy to present convincingly, and we cannot indulge in hopes that our apparent inconsistency will not be noticed. As Miss Fisher points out, the point is one which is particularly vulnerable to criticism from the Communist side, and there are reasons to suppose that the Governor may not fully appreciate the force of this new factor in the situation.

4. Cyprus is, as I see it, a vulnerable salient in the present world ideological struggle, and the price we are prepared to pay to hold it, in return for its military value if it ever comes to shooting, is a matter which it may be felt should be considered further between Ministers. The Colonial Office is really no more than the agent of H.M.G. in regard to this Colony; the normal canons of colonial policy do not apply.

5. Subject to the above, I do not see what else we can do in the face of the advice of the Chiefs of Staff and the Governor than to approve the powers the latter asks for, as summarized in the Note at No. (11), subject to the limitations described in that Note and in paragraph 6 of Miss Fisher's minute. That is to say, the powers for controlling the press and preventing seditious utterances (Items I and III in the Note at 11) would be approved in an altered form, the power to deport Cypriots who are not British subjects (Item II) would be granted, and the power to deport or exclude Cypriots who *are* British subjects (Items IV and V) would be refused.

J.S.B.  
13.6.50

### *S of S*

You will find the Governor's despatch of Jan 13, and all the departmental minutes, extremely important and interesting. I feel doubtful about the Governor's view that the policy of coercion, for which he is asking, will create an atmosphere in which constitutional government can be restored. This would be contrary to our experience in Ireland, India, or Palestine. What we shall have to decide is whether to endorse a policy of coercion, with the prospect that it must be enforced for many years, or to make concessions to Cypriote [sic] nationalism which are likely to lead to the loss of

<sup>4</sup> Martin commented here: 'ie, none at the centre. There are elected municipal councils.'

Cyprus. I agree that the decision should be postponed until after the Election. It should be made by the Cabinet,—presumably after reference to the Cwlth Relations Cte—and you may wish to ask the Governor to come to London before consulting your colleagues . . . .

L.  
1.2.50

How far this policy will lead to a repressive regime or merely prevent the extravagances which blemish the life of Cyprus today is a difficult matter to decide as is the question whether the measures proposed are not likely to achieve what the Governor wants—the emergence of the responsible people & then taking their place in the Legislature. After the plebiscite we have somehow to capture the political initiative & I therefore agree that after the Election the whole problem should be brought into review. Meantime the draft telegram should go.

A.C.J.  
3.2.50

I had a very full & frank talk with Sir Arnold [sic] Wright. He put again his views that the reassertion of Authority was an essential prerequisite to any proposals for Constitutional advance. And I put to him equally frankly my own views that suppression of opinion would be indefensible in the UK & before world opinion. Action against Sedition is one thing—powers to deport people for expressing views and newspapers for the same reasons would not be defensible in this modern age.

I reiterated that I had already said that I wanted Cyprus kept off the front page. He still stands by his views & recommendations. Eventually it was agreed that things should stand as they were in Cyprus for six months . . . [with] a review of the position in the then circumstances in six months time . . . .

I assured him that the differences between us as to policy was not on my part in any way personal.

J.G.  
10.10.50

. . . And I put to him whether if the return of the [Enosis] Delegation is followed by calm—that would be an appropriate time to raise again the question of Constitutional advance. He did not think we should get any response & that we would have to impose a Constitution as the Cypriots would refuse to work with us. I did not press this further but this too will be subject to review in six months time.

J.G.  
10.10.50

**245** CO 537/6237, no 1

16 June 1950

'The aims of communism in Cyprus': note by Miss M L S Fisher.<sup>1</sup>

*Minutes* by J S Bennett, J M Martin and Sir T Lloyd

I think that there is some confusion about the aims of Communism in Cyprus. This Note is written in an attempt to reach a clearer estimate of the Party's probable line of action.

A. *The Communist Party inside Cyprus*

It is sometimes said that the Communists wish to gain control of Cyprus and that it must be the first aim of British policy in the Island to prevent this. What is meant by these statements?

1. The Communists cannot expect to gain control as they have in e.g. Czechoslovakia. Nor can they expect to gain control to the extent they have in e.g. Malaya. The Island is too small, too prosperous, and too easily policed and held. It is very difficult to think of circumstances in which it could not be easily reduced by a very small military force. Nor are there any openings for industrial warfare as in e.g. France and Italy. There are no important industries and no ports worth mentioning. The only targets of strategic value are the air field and wireless installations. It seems extremely doubtful whether these are worth professional attention as long as the war remains cold. It would be foolish to take "direct action" too soon if the result were likely to be crippling reprisals. It therefore seems likely that, in the field of physical control, the Party is unlikely to do more than prepare for the sort of action that would harass and extend the occupying power if war were imminent. In other words we may expect them to try to improve their intelligence, to continue their efforts (hitherto unsuccessful) to infiltrate into the Civil Service and Police, and to keep a reliable and well disciplined organisation in being for use when the occasion should arise. There does not seem any particular reason to expect e.g. dynamite at the moment.

2. In building up a reliable organisation, the Party has advantages in some fields and difficulties in others. Advantages are that there is no other political party of the Left nor any other organisation interested in political ideas. Thus both those who, for whatever reason, dislike the forces of the Right and those who demand more of politics than the Enosis clichés of the Ethnarchy should be easy to get into the fold. On the other hand many Cypriots are resistant to mental discipline (party officials have been had up before now for indulging in "egoistic theorising" instead of concentrating on the job in hand) and have not the inducement of extreme poverty to pursue a revolutionary policy to its extremes. The problem of the genuine Communist cadre will therefore be to keep the large tail of fellow travellers loyal. How will they do this? The following would seem to be their most promising lines.

(a) By discrediting other political movements in the Island and in particular suppressing as far as possible any independent Left wing movement.

(b) By associating themselves as far as possible with democratic or socially valuable causes (note their recent campaign against the threatened liquidation of the Vine Growers Co-operative).

<sup>1</sup> Principal officer, CO Mediterranean Dept.

(c) By encouraging minor conflicts with authority through which Government can be shown in an unfavourable light, fellow travellers committed to the Party's line, and bonds strengthened by Government victimisation.

3. If this analysis is correct particular attention should be directed to (c). Even in this country the Communists have developed a fairly efficient technique of getting themselves manhandled by the Police (c.f. the recent May Day procession). The Governor's view is known to be that repression in small doses will eliminate the need for larger doses later (in other words that the Communists, by engaging on a campaign of pin pricks against Government, may over-call their hand and lose followers as a result). It is extremely difficult to judge how far his analysis is correct; but if the Cyprus Communist Party is any good at all small doses of repression are likely to have a very tonic effect. If however the Governor is right and a little repression does in fact deter the fellow travellers from following their leaders, then we need not have much fear of Communism in Cyprus as an effective force.

### *Conclusions*

4. In the internal field therefore it appears likely that the Communists will:—

- (i) Concentrate on developing the internal organisation and discipline of the Party.
- (ii) Encourage the Government to embark on a series of minor repressive measures and engage in a number of unimportant brushes with authority.
- (iii) Avoid direct action of the more violent type.

### *B. Cyprus and international communism*

5. If Cyprus were in a vacuum no particular embarrassment would be caused by the programme outlined above. But it seems likely that in the cold war Cyprus can be used very effectively:—

- (i) To embarrass relations between the U.S.A., U.K., Greece and Turkey.
  - (ii) To discredit the U.K. as a colonial power.
- (i) Stability in the Eastern Mediterranean largely depends on an united front being maintained between Greece, Turkey and the Anglo-Saxon powers. All Greeks consider that Greece should have Cyprus. Turkey does not want Greece to have Cyprus. The Greek Government depends on Anglo-Saxon support and has to contend with a large anti Anglo-Saxon opposition. The U.K. wants to retain Cyprus. The U.S.A. is likely to be torn between the strategic advantages and the political difficulties of maintaining the present position. Consequently the more the Cyprus question can be kept in front the more embarrassment will be caused all round. The one thing that would not suit the Communists would be an agreed international solution. It is therefore to their interest both to take every opportunity of urging the question upon the attention of international bodies and to see that the case for cession is made on the one hand as plausible and on the other hand as difficult as possible. The more authoritarian and oppressive the local government is, and the stronger the local Communists, the easier it will be to do this.
- (ii) The necessity of the oppressed colonials rising against capitalist exploitation by the Imperialist powers is of course one of the Communist articles of faith (and planks in the programme). Nothing has been more inconvenient to this campaign than the

British policy of "no unwilling members of the Commonwealth" (c.f. India). But any territory which *can* be shown to be kept in the Commonwealth against its will is a substantial asset both in Left wing circles in Western Europe and America and in other Colonial territories. The existence of such a possession immediately throws doubt upon our good faith elsewhere. The Cyprus Communists are at present spending much energy in developing the themes that the Island is run in the economic interests of the Imperialists and that it is held on to against its will as an Anglo-American war base. There is very little truth in the first of these contentions but quite enough in the second. Consequently, as under (i) above, the more vociferously Cyprus demands union with Greece and the more repressive and illiberal the local government is, the more the Communists will expect to profit.

## 6. *Conclusions*

- (1) Cyprus is more important and useful to Communism as a pawn in the international game than for its own sake.
- (2) From the international point of view the more repressive and autocratic the rule of the Island the better in the long run for the Communists' purposes.
- (3) It still remains to be seen how far the local party will be able to go on carrying out the provocative policy demanded by external considerations; and to some extent also by internal.

I would myself incline to the two following views. These must however remain matters of opinion.

- (4) Bearing in mind that the cold war may well last in one form or another for the greater part of our lifetime we should not lose sight of the long term advantages of a settlement in Cyprus that would appease Hellenic feeling without alarming the Turks.
- (5) Meanwhile, provided that control is maintained over the Police and the appointment of judges, it would be worth taking considerable risks at a suitable opportunity for the sake of establishing internal self-government in the Island. Apart from international considerations I see no prospect of splitting the majority of Left wing Cypriots from the Stalinists as long as all political activity remains unrecognised, unaccompanied by responsibility, and to a large extent clandestine.

## Minutes on 245

Miss Fisher has recently composed the attached analysis of the aims of Communism in Cyprus. It is a subject we have often discussed in the Department and I find myself in complete agreement with her analysis and conclusions. I suggest that it is a document which might well be of interest to Ministers. It is not only admirably clear but its conclusions are I think both important and different from what is sometimes supposed.

2. If the analysis is correct, and the weight of evidence seems to me to support it, then I think it must be recognised that we are up against quite a tough long term proposition. The more we can be forced into having to repress the Cypriots, the happier the Cominform will be. Provided that Cominform strategy is prepared not to bother about trying actually to obtain local control in Cyprus itself, as being

unimportant and pretty hopeless anyway, they can go to considerably greater lengths in goading us; e.g., the recent Party orders to the Mayor and Council of Limassol to go to prison over the street names incident rather than apologise.

3. Two and a half years ago, when the Consultative Assembly was still sitting in Cyprus, Akel wished to negotiate on a basis of internal self-government within the Commonwealth on Malta lines. We rejected their approach; but from the Cominform point of view there was a danger that we might have accepted it. A few months later the high command of Akel was purged, on orders from outside the Island. Those who had demanded self-government were relegated to the outer darkness of self-criticism, and the slogan of "Enosis and only Enosis" was adopted instead. The Party therefore has the advantage of demanding something that there is very little hope of us granting.

4. We rejected a deal on the basis of internal self-government for fear of the risks which it might carry internally in Cyprus. But if Miss Fisher's analysis is right, that risk can perhaps be exaggerated, especially when weighed against the advantages which a tight authoritarian regime gives to the other side in the cold war.

J.S.B.  
22.6.50

This is an interesting analysis. The note contains no suggestions for action, but it raises a question (top of second page<sup>2</sup>) about what is understood to be the Governor's present policy and we ought to put this to him. A convenient occasion would be in the despatch replying to his request for additional powers which will no doubt result from the department's forthcoming discussion with the Secretary of State. It is unfortunate that Sir Andrew Wright keeps his own counsel and seems almost deliberately to avoid an informal exchange of views with us on such matters.

I think, however, that the difficulties of the Cyprus Government are greater than Miss Fisher's paper seems to suggest. In particular it is extremely difficult to draw the line between too much and too little "repression". If the authority of the Government is not maintained, it is very easy to slide into the sort of position we had at the end in Palestine where in many respects the writ of the Government does not run. In this connection paragraph 1 of the note seems to me to under-estimate the extent of the mischief which may be done by the Communists without actually attempting to gain control of the Island. It is fortunate for us that up to now there has been no shooting. The terrain in many parts would lend itself to bandit operations and, in spite of the division between Left and Right, there is the familiar difficulty of obtaining information from the local population.

While we must continually look for an opportunity to advance towards internal self-government, it would be a delusion to suppose that, at any rate in the early stages, the establishment of self-governing institutions would ease the situation. On the contrary, it is more than likely that elections would result in control of the legislature by politicians pledged to violent opposition to the Government and to acceptance of nothing short of Enosis. The opportunities for clashes between the local politicians and the Government will be enlarged and meanwhile the Government's authority may have been weakened by the transfer of executive responsibilities to local Ministers. From the point of view of cold war propaganda the situation

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<sup>2</sup> ie, para 3.

might well, in such circumstances, be even more unfavourable than the present.

?Take all this into account in the forthcoming discussion of Cyprus affairs.

J.M.M.  
24.6.50

In spite of the obvious disadvantages, and indeed dangers, of establishing any degree of self-government in Cyprus, that should continue to be the aim of policy. The Governor feels that there is no hope of the emergence of any substantial body of moderate and centre opinion until there has been a period of firm government. In that he may well be right, and there is some evidence in support of his view in the fact that the imprisonment of the recalcitrant Municipal Councillors of Limassol has, we are told, been accepted with relief by the majority of the people in the Municipal area. Even if Miss Fisher is right in her conclusion "that from the international point of view the more repressive and autocratic the rule of the island the better in the long run for the Communists' purposes", I am doubtful whether that holds good from a purely internal point of view. But all this is speculation and certainly Miss Fisher's interesting analysis ought to be seen by Ministers before the general discussion which there is to be with them about Cyprus affairs.

T.I.K.L.  
26.6.50

**246** FO 371/87224, no 1081

2 Oct 1950

[Strategic importance of Cyprus]: letter from Marshal of the RAF Lord Tedder<sup>1</sup> to Gen O N Bradley<sup>2</sup>

I hope to be able to give to you in the course of the next few days a review of Middle East Policy and Strategy which has been prepared by the U.K. Chiefs of Staff for discussion at the forthcoming U.S./U.K. C.O.S. meetings. This paper includes a summary of the views of the U.K. Chiefs of Staff on the military importance of the retention of U.K. sovereignty in Cyprus.

2. I understand, however, that the question of Cyprus may be raised during the current session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and that the State Department and Foreign Office are considering the line which the two Governments should take in this event. In these circumstances I feel it wise to give you, in advance of the meeting between the U.S. and the U.K. Chiefs of Staff, the views of the latter on the strategic importance from the allied point of view of the retention of U.K. sovereignty in Cyprus.

3. The strategic facilities required in Cyprus relate to (a) the stationing of troops in the island and (b) the use of the island as an air base. As regards (a) you will be aware that the United Kingdom is at present under pressure to reduce her garrison in Egypt. It is also probable that when Libyan unity is achieved in 1952, all British forces will have to be withdrawn from Tripolitania. Already, owing to lack of accommodation in other parts of the Middle East, it is planned to station one Brigade

<sup>1</sup> Chief of the Air Staff, 1946–1950.

<sup>2</sup> Chairman, US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Group and one Infantry battalion of the Middle East garrison in Cyprus. It is possible that at some future date the Middle East forces might have to be increased and that a larger garrison would then require to be stationed in Cyprus. Admittedly, in our view, the Canal Zone of Egypt constitutes the best place to station the bulk of the Middle East forces. However, in present circumstances, there is no guarantee that we will be able permanently to maintain forces in this area and Cyprus, as long as it remains a British possession, is the only place in the Eastern Mediterranean which affords the necessary security of tenure. The U.K. requirements in Cyprus are therefore to be able to station there in peace any part of the forces of all three Services which might at any time be considered necessary to meet the strategic situation in the Middle East.

As regards (b), although the project for constructing a heavy bomber base in Cyprus is in abeyance, the requirement that the island should be available for development as an allied air base still remains. From Cyprus aircraft could penetrate further into Russia than from any other base likely to be available in the Middle East. When circumstances are such that the allies could undertake a more forward strategy in support of Turkey, there would almost certainly be a requirement to base tactical aircraft in Cyprus. It is therefore evident that the strategic value of Cyprus as an allied air base is likely to increase in the future as the Western Allies become stronger.

4. It is the view of both the U.K. Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office that the facilities mentioned in para. 3 above can only be assured if Cyprus remains under British sovereignty. It is true that on various occasions the Greek authorities have offered, in return for the cession of Cyprus to Greece, to grant us such military rights as we might require on the island. Although under such an arrangement the U.K. might initially obtain all the facilities and the freedom of action she requires for strategic purposes in Cyprus, a Communist Greek Government might denounce or break any treaty by which these facilities were secured, or even offer similar facilities to Russia. Should circumstances arise whereby a Communist regime could prepare Naval and Air bases in Cyprus for immediate use by Russia on the outbreak of war, Turkey would be isolated and the threat to Allied sea communications in the Eastern Mediterranean would develop very much more rapidly than is at present envisaged. Such a situation might well make the defence of the Middle East impracticable. Admittedly, the danger of a Communist regime in Greece has receded during the past year. But the possibility, however remote, of a Communist controlled Cyprus is clearly unacceptable in our view. Furthermore, the loss of any military facilities in Cyprus, granted to us in return for the cession of the island, need not depend on the establishment of a Communist regime in Greece. Any regime with extreme nationalist tendencies might conceivably attempt to abrogate or whittle down the military rights and facilities accorded to us, as in the case of Egypt.

5. There are other cogent objections, with strategic implications, to the surrender of U.K. sovereignty over Cyprus. In the first place, transfer of sovereignty over the island to Greece would be strongly opposed by the Turkish-speaking Cypriots and would cause difficulties with Turkey. Moreover, the Turkish Government would be affected not merely by concern for this Turkish-speaking minority, but also by considerations of their own security. Even if the United Kingdom were to retain in Cyprus all the required military facilities, the transfer to sovereignty to Greece could not fail to be regarded in Turkey as evidence of a weakening of the United Kingdom's

ability and determination to maintain her position in the Middle East and thus to give Turkey effective support in war. This might well result in the loss of vital Turkish co-operation, and might ultimately be a factor in inducing Turkey to make an attempt to save herself by coming to some arrangement with Russia, which would be disastrous to the Allied cause in the Middle East.

6. Similar considerations apply to a greater or lesser extent throughout the Middle East. The cession to Greece of Sovereignty over the only British territory in the Eastern Mediterranean, even if accompanied by the retention of all necessary strategic facilities, would be regarded by the Arab world as a manifestation of weakness on the part of the United Kingdom. The implication that the United Kingdom was not able to control agitation in her own territory, or alternatively had had to give way to Greece, would strengthen the hand of those who are working to persuade the Arabs that their future lies with Russia and not with the Western Powers. These considerations apply particularly in the case of Egypt. The withdrawal of British administration from Cyprus would almost certainly increase the demand for the withdrawal of British troops from the Canal Zone. The continued presence of British forces in the Canal Zone, and the maintenance of a nucleus base there in peace time, is the best means of providing for the defence of the Middle East area as a whole. We should therefore avoid any action on Cyprus which would have adverse effects in Egypt.

7. For the reasons given above, the U.K. Chiefs of Staff consider that any surrender of British sovereignty over Cyprus would have a most serious effect on the allied strategic position in the Middle East. Moreover, they consider that any international discussion regarding Cyprus, which would inevitably lead to increased agitation in Cyprus and to advocacy of the surrender of British sovereignty, would seriously weaken Middle East confidence in the U.K. and indeed in the Western Powers as a whole. For this reason, they are most anxious that the U.S. delegation to the United Nations should join with the U.K. delegation in taking all possible action to avoid this item being placed on the Agenda.

8. Might I suggest that if the U.S. Chiefs of Staff are prepared to endorse the above views as to the strategic importance to our combined military effort of retaining U.K. sovereignty of Cyprus, it would be very helpful if they could so inform the State Department.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sir A Rumbold Bt (an FO foreign service officer) minuted: 'A very good letter which had the desired effect' (17 Oct 1950).

**247** CO 537/7453

31 Jan–1 Feb 1951

[Sir A Wright's policy in Cyprus]: minutes by Miss M L S Fisher and J S Bennett

The Governor's letter at (7) says in effect two things: first that any statement about a Constitution makes the chances of being able to introduce a Constitution worse, and second that the most promising line of constitutional advance is by the slow method of starting with local government at its lowest levels.

2. There can surely be no doubt about the rightness of the former argument. The most cursory glance at the Cyprus press summaries show that nothing would please

either the Right—or Left—wing leaders in Cyprus better than to be able to turn down such an offer with a fine display of indignation. It is of course conceivable that it may be more important to show the outer world that we are ready to give Cyprus a Constitution than in fact to do so. The point to be borne in mind however is that the two are incompatible; this being so, a series of rejected constitutional offers is surely likely in the long run to make our position more embarrassing than if no offer had ever been made.

3. The Governor's second point is one of much greater difficulty. Nothing in Cyprus is new; and the proposal that constitutional advance should begin at the local government level was accepted as the basis of the first constitutional programme accepted by H.M.G. in 1942. At this date the plan was to proceed through the restoration of Municipal Councils (which was done) to the creation of Rural District Councils. Only when the country had been covered with a net-work of this sort was the electoral machinery to be extended to the Central Government. This plan fell through for two main reasons: first that the Rural District Councils proposed would have been unreal and artificial bodies in which (it was thought) the Cypriots would be unlikely to feel much interest, and secondly (and far more important) because at that time it was still hoped that constitutional progress would divert attention from Enosis: a hope which was immediately shown to be groundless by the fact that the first act of the elected Municipal Councillors was to send telegrams to England urging immediate union with Greece. Thus in 1946 attention became concentrated on establishing a Central Legislature as the first (apart from the Municipal Councils) rather than the last step in the process.

4. It will be recalled, however, that when the plan for a Constitution was laid before the Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs Committee in 1947 and 1948 Ministers expressed the regret that attention had not rather been concentrated on building up local government. See in particular the minutes of the meeting on the 2nd Cabinet paper held on the 21st January, 1948.<sup>1</sup>

5. The line indicated by the Governor in his present letter varies in two important respects from that which was in the minds of those concerned between 1942 and 1946. In the first place the Governor does not for a moment suggest that advance from local government upwards will distract attention from Enosis. I think that he would say (though this is not explicit in any of his communications) that there are two quite distinct classes of person in Cyprus. There are the professional politicians who have no interest in any particular practical programme but only care for power on the one hand and an opportunity to make eloquent speeches about first principles on the other; and there are the rank and file who have a lively interest in practical reforms which benefit themselves. The first are those who, on the Right and on the Left, campaign for Enosis. The second, however, are those who would engage in the practical operations involved in local government. I think that the implicit hope is that this second class would, over a considerable period of years, be built up and given self-confidence to an extent which would enable the clamour of the first class to be largely brushed aside.

6. The second point in which the Governor's plan differs is that it is based on a smaller unit than that contemplated in 1942: i.e. the Village Council. The Village

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<sup>1</sup> See 238.

Improvement Law enacted in July last year makes it possible to establish in any village (or other suitable area) a Board consisting of the various officials concerned in the village's affairs (i.e. the Commissioner, the District Medical Officer, the Divisional Engineer and the Mukthar or Head man) and three elected unofficial members. This Law has in fact been applied in 36 places; and elections are at present in progress. The despatch at (1) on 90857/51 describes the opposition which the Law has encountered both from the Communists and from the Church who have rightly seen it as a threat to their (always pretty ineffective) policy of non-co-operation with Government.

7. I would only add that I am pretty sure that as long as Sir Andrew Wright is Governor there is no chance whatever of successfully establishing a Central Legislature in Cyprus. To do this would be extremely difficult at the best of times (it may soon have become impossible) and would need two qualities which Sir Andrew Wright lacks: a genuine belief that representative government is in all circumstances a good thing and a capacity for bouncing the Cypriots into accepting something which they have hitherto refused much as Lord Mountbatten bounced the Indians into agreement. If, therefore, we want a Central Legislature we must wait until Sir Andrew's term of office is up and his successor must be appointed with this object specifically in mind. On the other hand if we are to follow the Governor's policy of starting at the bottom it is important to realise that this means a very slow (though probably surer) advance likely to require patience and firmness of will over a period of perhaps 10 years during which the Central Government will be under uninterrupted attack from the local politicians, and will, by the very nature of the policy, be largely prevented from defending itself. Bouncing the Cypriots into a Constitution or slowly advancing from Village Councils are alternative policies: it is necessary to choose between them since they cannot both be followed at once.

8. I apologise for the length of this minute but Cyprus political questions are so intricate, and have so much history behind them, that it is difficult to be terse.

M.F.

31.1.51

I agree with Miss Fisher in believing that the Governor is quite right in saying that you can either talk about a Constitution in Cyprus or have one but that you cannot do both. Past experience seems fully to bear this out. For those reasons I would suggest that the Governor is not pressed further on the subject of making a statement.

2. Granted that it is still desired to achieve a Constitution, there are the two alternative roads of approach described at the end of para. 7 of Miss Fisher's minute—working up slowly through local government, or the policy of a "bounce".

3. I agree with Miss Fisher in thinking that the policy of "bounce" would be the best one and that it would only be achieved, if at all, by the means she suggests—which would involve replacing Sir Andrew Wright by a Governor with the Mountbatten touch. A favourable opportunity for such a "bounce" occurred at the end of 1947, when the Cyprus Communists—of all people—petitioned that the Consultative Assembly should be allowed to recommend a Constitution reserving defence, foreign affairs, and minorities to the Imperial Government as the price of granting responsible government on Malta lines in internal affairs. The moment was particularly favourable because the Civil War was still raging in Greece, the cold war

had not become so intense, and for the first time a representative body of Cypriots had publicly committed themselves to something which accepted the status of Cyprus within the British Commonwealth. We proposed to say “snap” to this offer by making a statement accepting what was asked for as the objective of policy and meanwhile offering an interim Constitution to be reviewed after five years. That proposed statement is at Annex II to the first paper circulated to the Commonwealth Affairs Committee by Mr. Creech Jones at (97) on 90015/47.<sup>2</sup> I still believe that if we had been able to issue it, and to do so quickly, Cyprus would by now have had representative government for three years, with all the easement which that would imply to our internal and international position. This did not come about for two reasons; first, other Ministers here saw objections mainly on defence grounds, and secondly the review of policy which was thereby forced on us consumed several months and lost us the political initiative in Cyprus. I think that episode holds a moral for the future; and it must be remembered that the favourable combination of circumstances which then offered themselves do not now exist and may not exist again for some time. Nevertheless I would still advise that if a quick Constitution is desired for overriding political reasons, the policy of “bounce” is the way to get it, and that it can only be carried out at the price of taking risks and by people on the spot who believe in it.

4. The alternative policy, of building up through local government, is at the best slow. I confess that I am sceptical that it would ever achieve the desired result. It may be possible to enlist active co-operation in self-government on the village level because the things dealt with are commonplace local matters which palpably affect the every-day interests of the people concerned. But Central Government raises a different kind of issue and calls for a different kind of person. There may be in Cyprus, as everywhere, a desire for “government of the village by the village for the village”; but the whole trouble is that there is no desire for “Government of Cyprus by Cyprus for Cyprus”. National politics, as a self-contained entity, do not exist even as a desired objective, because of the overriding desire for Enosis. Thus I cannot see Village Councils being a training ground for a Central Legislature. When one gets to the municipal level of local government, it may be a different matter. In many countries there is an inter-change between the personnel of Municipal and Parliamentary institutions. The 1942 policy in Cyprus described in Miss Fisher’s minute re-started municipal self-government, and it has now been going for a decent space of time. But the municipal politicians who have been thrown up have shown no tendency to forget Enosis in their absorption with municipal drainage; very much the contrary. Moreover, Sir Andrew Wright’s attitude to municipal self-government in Cyprus, as illustrated by the Limassol episode last year, hardly encourages a belief that he likes it, much less that he would regard it as a thing on which you could build up towards self-government at the centre.

5. That is not to say that the development of local government on the village level is not desirable as an end in itself. I think it is. But I would not regard it as a road towards a Constitution.

J.S.B.  
1.2.51

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<sup>2</sup> See reference to in 237, para 2.

**248** CO 318/466/2, no 9

[12 Feb 1946]

**'Federation of West Indies': memorandum by P Rogers (CO)**

[In 1946 Philip Rogers was private secretary to the S of S and then an assistant secretary; his knowledge of the West Indies came from accompanying Sir Cosmo Parkinson there in 1942–1943. Sir A Dawe described Rogers's memo as 'a very helpful basis on which to pursue this'. Creech Jones thought 'Jamaica is a complication', but was anxious to talk soon (minutes, 16 and 18 Apr 1946). (The time was inauspicious in Jamaica because Mr Bustamante was on bail in a manslaughter charge.) A departmental meeting to consider Rogers's memo was duly held (see 249), and the next formal step was the S of S's proposal of a conference to be held in the West Indies (see 250). This conference took place at Montego Bay, 11 to 19 Sept 1947, with Creech Jones in attendance. Federation was accepted in principle. This was followed by the appointment of the Standing Closer Association Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Hubert Rance, charged with implementing the intentions of the conference. The Rance report (see 254) was published in Mar 1950, and recommended federation as the shortest path to self-government in the Commonwealth for the West Indies. A commission chaired by J McLagan<sup>1</sup> then recommended the establishment of a customs union. The Rance and McLagan reports were put before the London conference in Apr 1953. The West Indies Federation was set up in 1958 and dissolved in 1962.]

*1. Colonel Stanley's despatch*

In a despatch of the 14th March 1945, Colonel Stanley, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, put forward certain proposals in respect of the federation of the West Indies. That despatch followed prior semi-official consultation with the Governors of the Colonies concerned.

Colonel Stanley's despatch began by reaffirming the basic aim of British policy as that of quickening the progress of all Colonial peoples towards the ultimate goal of self-government. It pointed out that under modern conditions, however, there were serious difficulties in the way of very small units maintaining full and complete independence in all aspects of government and suggested that the immediate purpose of developing self-governing institutions in the individual British Caribbean Colonies should keep in view the larger project of their political federation as the aim to which policy should be directed. The Secretary of State recognised that existing differences between the Colonies in the area would make it impracticable to set up immediately a federal organisation and that in any case movements towards political unity must come from within. The aim was, however, in the Secretary of State's view the development of federation in the Caribbean at such time as the balance of opinion in the various Colonies was in favour of a change and when the development of communications made it administratively practicable. The ultimate aim of any federation which might be established would be full internal self-government within the British Commonwealth. It would be important that such federation should have the requisite financial stability and be able to carry on its administration without recurrent financial assistance from outside.

The Secretary of State then went on to refer to the developments which had taken place in joint West Indian services, etc. and to the desirability of a lead being given by His Majesty's Government in favour of the aim of federation. He therefore asked that

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Commission on the Establishment of a Customs Union in the British Caribbean Area, 1948–1950* (Colonial No 268, 1951). John McLagan was a member of the Colonial Customs Service and formerly controller of customs and excise in Nigeria and inspector general of customs and excise in Iraq.

the despatch should be published and an early opportunity taken to debate the issue in Colonial Legislatures. If all the Legislatures were to declare themselves in favour of the aim of federation, the next step would be to consider means whereby proposals could be drawn up for such closer association between West Indian Colonies as might prove immediately feasible. One possibility would be a conference of West Indian delegates to consider the formulation of such proposals.

## 2. *West Indian feeling*

Replies to that despatch are not yet complete but it seems likely that they will present the following general picture.

The Bahamas is opposed to participation in any Caribbean federation. The debate on the issue in the House of Assembly was poorly attended and the vote against it was unanimous, while there was very little support for the proposal in any section of public opinion.

The Legislative Councils of British Guiana and British Honduras have passed resolutions declaring their readiness to enter into discussion with the other Caribbean Colonies in any conference which may be called. The course of the debates in both Colonies, however, and general opinion there, showed a general doubt as to the advantages of either Colony entering into any federation. In the case of British Honduras, the history of previous attachment to Jamaica in the nineteenth century has made opinion suspicious that any federal organisation would in practice merely mean a reversion to its old subordination to Jamaica. British Guiana, for its part, rightly considers that many of its problems are distinct from those of the West Indies and is anxious lest the setting up of a federal organisation should mean that its own peculiar problems would be ignored.

The West Indian Colonies proper, however, have all welcomed, or rather are all likely to welcome the aim of federation and several of them have proposed the setting up of local committees to further that end. They are all likely to declare themselves ready to enter upon discussions for the furtherance of closer association. Apart, however, from difficulties which will clearly arise when discussion of the aim gets down to discussion of means, there is (as has been revealed by the course of the debates and public discussion of the issue) likely to be opposition from two main quarters to federation, apart from the peculiar position of Jamaica where Bustamante<sup>2</sup> may well feel that his personal position is threatened by proposals for a federal organisation. On the one hand there is likely to be opposition from the older and more conservative groups, particularly among white commercial interests, on the ground that they are doubtful about the financial implications of federation and, in the case of the richer Colonies such as Trinidad, that this would mean that they would be bearing the burdens of the smaller and poorer Colonies. On the other hand there is likely to be opposition from certain of the left wing groups on the ground that the setting up of a federation might delay the advance of individual Colonies towards self-government.

Difficulties may also arise from the East Indian communities in Trinidad and British Guiana, especially in the latter where the East Indians are the largest single community and where some of their political leaders look to the future of the Colony

<sup>2</sup> W Alexander Bustamante, minister for communications (Executive Council), Labour member of House of Representatives. His name was frequently mis-spelt as Bustamante.

as belonging to be [sic] an independent India rather than to a future of closer association with the British West Indies.

It must moreover be emphasised that there are genuine political and social differences between the Colonies which may make it difficult to bring about any close association for some time. There are differences of history, e.g. the length of time that some of the Colonies have been British (Barbados has been British throughout its history since it became a British Colony in 1627 whereas Trinidad only formally became a British Colony in 1814 and has had no history of near self-government such as is possessed by Barbados, Jamaica and British Guiana). These historical differences have left their mark on the political and social make-up of the Colonies, even today. There are moreover astonishing differences in social conditions throughout the area, and even in so small a group as the Windward Islands where, for example, Grenada exhibits practically no colour feeling, whereas in St. Lucia, with its French tradition and semi-French white groups there is surprisingly enough, not only colour feeling but even a social colour bar in certain quarters.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of support, particularly among the younger and more left wing groups in favour of federation, as has been demonstrated by such meetings as the Labour Conference held at the end of last year in Barbados, and there are signs of a growth of common West Indian feeling. The acceptance of a single university for the whole area is only one sign among many that there is a growing appreciation that each individual Colony is not sufficient unto itself but must play a part in the context of the British West Indies as a whole. In my view, there is now a balance of opinion in favour of the aim of federation, at any rate in the West Indies proper.

3. *Administrative difficulties* in the way of federation must also be borne in mind. To make even a rapid tour of the whole area, travelling by plane between the Colonies, takes not less than four or five months. In many cases communications between individual Colonies are slower and more difficult than between those Colonies and the United Kingdom, owing to the direction of trade, and although air services are clearly vital in increasing and developing inter-communication they cannot entirely take the place of regular communication in the ordinary course of trade and at a cost within the means of, at any rate, the middle grades of society. The distances between the Colonies cannot be ignored. It is, for example, roughly a thousand miles between Jamaica and Trinidad or, to use the useful technique adopted by the Irvine Committee on Higher Education<sup>3</sup>, if a map of the West Indies were superimposed on one of Europe it would show British Honduras over Great Britain, British Guiana over Turkey and Barbados just north of the Crimea. The difficulties with which a federal staff would have to deal in such an area and the effect of distance on the nature of their work are sufficiently obvious.

#### 4. *The need for federation*

Nevertheless, it is clear that there is need for closer association and for the development of a federal organisation. Politically and socially it is essential that the Colonies should lose their present extreme parochialism, and administratively it is important that highly skilled staff should be available which are beyond the means of

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the West Indies Committee of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies* (Cmd 6654, 1945); chairman, Sir James Irvine.

any single Colony to provide from its own resources. This has already to some extent been achieved through such organisations as that of the Comptroller and more is envisaged in such forms as the Director General of Civil Aviation for the West Indies, a West Indian Telecommunications organisation and so forth, but more remains to be done. It is possible moreover that there might be certain financial and economic advantages in federation, though this is more doubtful.

Most important of all, however, is the fact that it is clearly impossible in the modern world for most of the present Colonies in the area to reach full self-government on their own, e.g. it is ludicrous to think of, say, Barbados or British Honduras, with their populations of 200,000 and 60,000 respectively, standing on their own feet in international discussions. The great pressure of Pan-Americanism against British Colonies within the area must also be reckoned with, though it is a factor to which West Indian opinion is astonishingly blind and even opinion in British Guiana takes practically no account of it.

##### 5. *Procedure*

In view of the general picture of West Indian conditions given in the first part of this memorandum it is a matter of no [sic] real difficulty to decide just how far it is politically and administratively possible to put forward practicable proposals for a federal organisation and also what is the best method of proceeding. It is, I think, clear that we shall have to count the Bahamas out for the time being since, apart from the fact that their problems are in many ways distinct from those of the Caribbean proper, it is at present politically impossible to dragoon them into any federation and their political problems must for the time being be dealt with separately. It is, however, important that as far as possible British Guiana and British Honduras should be brought into the discussions on federation and the proposals which follow relate to those two Colonies and to the West Indian Colonies proper.

Colonel Stanley's despatch of the 14th March, 1945, envisaged that if the Colonies concerned were to declare themselves in favour of the aim of federation, there should be called a conference of West Indian delegates to consider the formulation of the proposals for closer association. The next task (once Colonies' replies are complete), is therefore, to convene such a conference, to decide where it should be held and how it should be composed.

Although in many ways there would be considerable convenience in holding the conference in London, my own view is that if only on grounds of sentiment it would be best that it should be held in the West Indies, perhaps in one of the smaller Colonies or in Barbados, to avoid a feeling of domination by local sentiment in either Jamaica or Trinidad. It is also important in my view that the delegates should be West Indians (debates in many of the Legislative Councils showed strong opinion in favour of this) and also, I feel, desirable that they should be unofficials. Moreover it is essential that there should be a feeling that the delegates are in no way puppets of Government and my own suggestion is that there should be two delegates from each Colony (or in the case of the Windward Islands, group of Colonies), who should be elected by the elected members of the Legislature. It would, of course, be open to them to take advisers if they were desired in any Colony. The Chairmanship of the Conference would be a matter of no little difficulty. There is something to be said for allowing the conference to elect its own chairman but on balance I am inclined to the view that it might be more effective to have someone a little outside politics in the

area as a chairman, and I suggest that the Comptroller would be the best person for this very difficult job.

Clearly, however, the conference could not hope to meet with any success without anything before it as a basis of discussion and the following part of this memorandum attempts to consider both what forms of federal organisation might be practicable in the West Indies and how these might best be put to the conference as a basis for their consideration.

#### 6. *Proposals for a federal organisation*

Two extreme courses are possible. One is to attempt no form of central organisation but merely to continue for the present on existing lines and encourage the development of central institutions such as the Comptroller, the Director General of Civil Aviation, "unified" West Indian Services, a West Indian Council of Agriculture, etc. and participation in the Caribbean Conference system. That to my mind would be unacceptable both to us and to West Indian opinion on grounds which, I hope, are clear from the preceding part of this memorandum.

The other extreme course is to attempt to set up a single Colony for the whole area with a single Legislature and a single administrative machine. That too, seems to me at present politically and administratively impracticable for the reasons which have already been given.

We are, therefore, I suggest left with a choice between one of the two main courses proposed below, although these main lines of approach are, of course, susceptible of almost infinite variation.

The first and least ambitious course would be to set up a British West Indian Conference system with a permanent secretariat and a permanent chairman, something on the lines of the present Caribbean Conference system. This would at least have some value as a focus of British West Indian sentiment, would enable more attention to be devoted to common problems, particularly through the secretariat and permanent chairman, and would have the great advantage of providing a basis for further advance whenever this proved practicable. In my view, however, such a Conference would not provide a sufficient political focus for the area, nor would it sufficiently facilitate the participation of the West Indies as a unit in international matters. There would be some danger of the conference becoming merely a debating society and also of it tending to duplicate the work of the Caribbean Conference. In short, administratively its value would be small, and politically, its effect likely to be depressing rather than stimulating. We may be forced to accept this, nevertheless, in the last resort, and it might, I suggest, form one of the alternatives to be put before the conference of delegates as a basis for consideration. I suggest, however, that we should aim at the rather more ambitious proposal which follows. This is a proposal which in my view we should put before the conference of delegates as the course of action which His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom favour, while making it clear that the decision of the conference is for the delegates themselves and that the proposal is put forward to facilitate their discussion. The proposal would be the immediate setting up of a Federal Government with separate Colony Legislatures. The Federal Government might be on the Australian model, i.e. its functions and powers would be restricted to a certain number of definite subjects, leaving the remainder to Colonial Legislatures, though with provision for the addition of subjects to the Federal administration with the concurrence of the constituent

Colonial Governments. The Federal Government might be constituted on the following lines:—

- (i) An office of High Commissioner with a central Secretariat primarily devoted to planning duties, i.e. an expansion of the work already done to some extent by the Comptroller's organisation, which might be taken over, together with separate Departments for subjects which would come under the authority of the Federal Legislature.
- (ii) A Federal Legislature of two chambers, one of which would be a Senate elected on a territorial basis by existing Legislatures, including nominated and official members and the Upper Houses in existing two-chamber Legislatures, and the other a Lower House or House of Representatives directly elected on a basis of universal adult suffrage.
- (iii) An Executive Council on the present Jamaica model in which the High Commissioner would have the same reserve powers as are possessed at present by the Governor of Jamaica. On the one hand it is clear that West Indian opinion would not accept anything less liberal than the provisions of the present Jamaica constitution, and on the other hand it is suggested that in the initial stages of the federation it might be unwise to go further and set up a ministerial system proper, though this would have to be foreshadowed as a development within a set period of say five or ten years. The question of reserve powers is a difficult one which is dealt with in more detail below.
- (iv) There might also be advisory committees of the Legislature dealing with matters which are the concern of that Legislature, and embryo ministers on the Jamaica model.
- (v) The subjects to be dealt with would probably be primarily for the constituent conference to decide but should include, at any rate, defence, a common customs tariff, common income tax, common West Indian Services (i.e. Administrative, Medical, Legal, including Judicial, and Police) inter-Colony shipping and aviation, telecommunications and broadcasting, and planning functions including surveys, statistics and research (which perhaps, however, would hardly come within the scope of the Federal Legislature itself). As previously suggested, there might be provision for the addition of subjects at a later stage, with the concurrence of the constituent Colonies.
- (vi) Individual Colonial Legislatures could continue as at present and might be modified as thought desirable individually from time to time, though in Barbados there would have to be provision to enable effect to be given to the decisions of the Federal Legislature, including the use of reserve powers by the High Commissioner.
- (vii) *Finance*. It would clearly be desirable, as stated in the despatch of the 14th March, 1945, that the federation should be financially independent but this might raise difficulties in the initial stages owing to the number of present grant-in-aid Colonies which would be included. It is suggested that for the first ten years only there might be a Treasury grant-in-aid without Treasury control on the lines at present proposed for the closer union of the Leeward and Windward Islands, i.e. a grant-in-aid calculated according to that which would have been paid if the individual Colonies had continued as separate entities. (This would of course have to be put to the Treasury for their concurrence).

The question of the division of financial responsibility between the Federal Government and the constituent Colonial Governments will no doubt prove to be a matter of acute political difficulty. It is suggested that the proposal to be laid before the Conference should include a common customs tariff and a common income tax, receipts from both of which should in the first instance go to the Federal Government. Since these two sources of income are likely to amount to about half the total revenue of the entire area, there may be considerable objection to this on the part of Colonial Governments. Nevertheless it is suggested that we should put it forward in the first instance. The importance of common income tax rates (though there might be different rates of allowances to provide for varying costs of living), which would be administered by a central income tax department is obvious. In particular it is suggested that it offers a very real field for economy and efficiency of administration, in a matter where local interests sometimes influence local income-tax officers. It is also desirable that there should be a common customs tariff though in the last resort this is probably less important in some respects than a common income-tax.

The division of the receipts will be most controversial. It is suggested that these should be divided between Colonies in accordance with the actual revenue returned under income tax and customs from those Colonies, after the expenses of the Federal Government have been met in a manner agreed between Colonial Governments. The portion of the expense borne by Colonial Governments might be determined roughly in accordance with their respective revenues at the time of federation, subject to review at say five-yearly intervals.

### *7. Reserved Powers*

This question will undoubtedly be one of the more difficult ones politically. It seems to me inevitable that at the outset there should be provision for the use of reserved powers by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom under the Federal organisation, but West Indian opinion would not be likely to accept anything going further than the Jamaica provision by which the Governor (or in the case of the Federal Government, the High Commissioner) can ignore the advice of his Executive Council in matters affecting public order, public [good] faith and good government, etc., but can only overrule the views of the Legislature with the concurrence of his Executive Council, and then again only in matters affecting public order, public faith and good government, etc. . . .

There would, moreover, be a difficult issue in respect of the use of reserved powers in the constituent Colonies. The greatest difficulty would be in Barbados where there are at present no reserved powers. It seems to me essential, however, that there should be provision for these if the Colony joined the federation, since one constituent government could hardly possess greater powers than the federal government itself, while moreover it would obviously be essential that decisions of the Federal Government should be capable of implementation throughout the area. This would, no doubt, be bitterly opposed in Barbados but it seems to be inescapable. There is, moreover, the issue of what the method of procedure should be for the use of reserved powers in the other constituent Colonies in matters outside the scope of the Federal Government, i.e. should the decision be that of the Governor himself subject to the concurrence of the Secretary of State, as it is at present, or should the submission be through the Governor himself to the High Commissioner and be for

the latter's decision, subject to the Secretary of State's approval. This course seems cumbrous; there is however already provision for Governors to act on their own responsibility in cases of emergency and that power would presumably remain. That being so, it would in my view be most desirable that all matters affecting the use of the reserve powers on [in] individual Colonies should come through the High Commissioner, who should act again with the advice of his Executive Council, though he need not be bound by it except where votes of the Federal Legislature were in question. The alternative of having dealings direct in such matters between individual Governors and the Secretary of State would seem to me to falsify the whole aim of setting up a Federal Government, and militate against the closer union of the constituent Colonies.

#### 8. *Correspondence*

The issue would also arise of whether correspondence on matters which were the concern of a constituent Colony Government and not of the Federal Government should be direct between Governor and the Secretary of State or should be through the High Commissioner. In practice it seems to me inevitable that at the outset, until the federation possesses powers of full internal self-government, correspondence should be direct between individual Governors and the Secretary of State, since it would be far too cumbrous to have everything going through the federal machine. Copies of all correspondence should, however, I suggest go automatically to the High Commissioner's office and he should be entitled to express views on any matter as he wished. There could also, I suggest, be provision for certain functions and powers of the Secretary of State to be transferred gradually to the High Commissioner and the Federal Government until the ultimate stage of full internal self-government was reached.

9. It is suggested that a memorandum putting the above proposals should be drafted and sent to Governors semi-officially with a covering letter explaining our views and reasons for putting forward this line of approach, and asking for Governors' views on the substance and wording of the memorandum.

**249** CO 318/466/2, no 19

4 Sept 1946

[West Indian colonies]: record by A M MacKintosh<sup>1</sup> of a CO departmental meeting to discuss P Rogers's memorandum on federation<sup>2</sup>

*Mr. Seel* gave a general outline of the developments leading up to the memorandum on federation by Mr. Rogers which had been circulated as a basis for discussion. The question now was, supposing that the Conference of West Indian Delegates proposed in Colonel Stanley's despatch of March, 1945, were to take place, what exactly should we ask the Conference to do? *Mr. Creech Jones* said that the most important point was to ensure that the Conference had something substantial to discuss.

*Mr. Beckett* suggested sending a memorandum on the subject of federation for this purpose. This might take the form of a Colonial Office memorandum and not of a despatch from the Secretary of State.

*Mr. Caine* thought that it would be better not to give a definite lead but to set

<sup>1</sup> Principal officer, CO West Indian Dept.

<sup>2</sup> See 248. The meeting was held on 2 Sept.

before the Conference the principal questions to be answered in connection with federation, without suggesting one or more alternative sets of proposal. In any case, he doubted whether the lead given in Mr. Rogers' memorandum was the right one.

*Mr. Rogers* thought that not to give a definite lead to the Conference was to court failure. *Mr. Caine* replied that a lead could be given which did not involve committing ourselves to any one course rather than another, and that the questions which he had suggested could be framed so as to imply without stating what we wanted.

*Mr. Beckett* raised the question of a Chairman for the Conference and thought that it would be a great mistake to follow Mr. Rogers' suggestion of the Comptroller. As any federation would probably absorb the Comptroller's organisation, he might, therefore, be suspect if he took the chair at the Conference. *Mr. Seel* thought that we should do all we could to stress the importance and status of the Conference.

*Mr. Beckett* added that it would be worth while getting an independent Chairman of high standing from the United Kingdom.

*Sir Frank Stockdale* agreed and said further that the Colonies should definitely send teams of advisers, especially on financial matters, to the Conference, in addition to the delegates.

*Mr. Creech Jones* asked what the reaction of Jamaica had been to our proposals about federation and was told that they had expressed themselves in favour both of the general aim and of a local conference to discuss it.

*Sir Frank Stockdale* said that he believed that personally Mr. Bustamante was opposed to federation but the People's National Party [was] in favour of it.

*Mr. Creech Jones* asked what the reaction of the Bahamas had been and was told that both Houses had refused to consider joining a West Indian Federation.

*Mr. Rogers* added that Barbados was generally in favour of the idea. *Mr. Creech Jones* said that as all the West Indian Colonies, except the Bahamas, favoured the proposal for such a conference the questions immediately before us were, could we convene one and, if so, how should the delegates be selected?

*Mr. Seel* pointed out the importance of obtaining representation for minority opinion, especially in relation to Jamaica. *Mr. Rogers* suggested that each Colony should send three delegates, two elected and one nominated by the Governor.

*Sir Frank Stockdale* suggested that the Upper House of each Legislature should put up a panel of names for the Governor's nomination. *Mr. Rogers* and *Mr. Seel* suggested that two delegates should be elected by all the unofficial members of both Houses and that the Governor should nominate a third.

*Mr. Creech Jones* thought that when we next wrote to the Colonies we should indicate the steps taken hitherto to increase united action between them. He then asked if a Conference was to be held, how soon should it take place?

*Mr. Beckett* raised the question of fitting into the programme the negotiations towards closer union of the Leewards and Windwards and suggested that although this should not be allowed to hold up general federation, it would be wise to provide for a margin, especially as the closer union project should prove helpful in relation to general federation.

*Sir Frank Stockdale* thought that there should be a lapse of three or four months after we had dealt with the Windwards and Leewards closer union project before we put out a despatch on general federation, as the issue of such a despatch too early might retard closer union and if too late might suggest to the Leewards and

Windwards that we had gone behind their backs. It was finally agreed that the time-table should be roughly:—

- (1) The Leewards/Windwards Closer Union Conference in ? October, 1946.
- (2) Agreement on its results about the New Year.
- (3) Publication of the decisions regarding union in spring 1947.
- (4) Conference on general federation autumn 1947.

*Mr. Creech Jones* returned to the question of what to put before the latter Conference.

*Mr. Seel* suggested paragraph 6 and following of *Mr. Rogers'* memorandum, suitably modified, with a brief covering note emphasizing the authority of the Conference and then setting out alternative proposals, indicating Colonial Office preference.

*Mr. Williams* suggested that instead we should simply set out the alternatives without indicating any preference and should leave the steering to the Chairman. The Secretary of State would be committed by any lead which he gave but if the alternatives were set out objectively he would not be committed and the Conference would be left quite free.

*Mr. Seel* agreed but thought that we might still say that we thought one alternative more likely to work than another.

*Mr. Caine* said that this brought us to the basic merits of the whole project. He thought that *Mr. Rogers'* scheme might prove the worst possible—both expensive and inconvenient.

*Mr. Creech Jones* agreed with *Mr. J.B. Williams's* suggestions.

*Mr. Caine* said that he would suggest no definite scheme at all. *Mr. Rogers'* scheme might be politically the most acceptable but not otherwise. He thought that probably several Conferences would be required. He then suggested again that we should pose a series of questions without working them into a scheme. This would make the delegates think seriously about administrative details and definitions, which alone would enable them to work out a scheme. We might suggest some answers to these questions to the Chairman but we should go no further.

*Sir Frank Stockdale* favoured federation of the Eastern Caribbean omitting Jamaica. He thought that British Guiana would hang back if what it regarded as undue preponderance by Jamaica seemed probable but might be less likely to do so if federation were limited to the Eastern Group.

*Mr. Beckett* said that the whole project would be meaningless unless it were to lead along the road towards Dominion Status for the West Indies. If Jamaica were omitted that whole aim was defeated.

*Mr. Rogers* agreed and thought that it was just because we must keep Dominion Status in view that a clear lead was required. *Mr. Seel* agreed.

*Mr. Williams* thought that the problem was one simply of method and that any action which we took was proof of sympathy with West Indian aspirations. The real choice was between:—

- (1) The development of Common Services, Conferences, etc. but no more;
- (2) The Australian model, as *Mr. Rogers* had proposed, retaining at the centre only certain specified powers;
- (3) The Canadian model, surrendering to the centre all but certain specially excepted powers.

*Mr. Rogers* said that he agreed that (3) was preferable but did not think that the West Indies would accept it.

*Mr. Caine* argued that we should advocate what we thought best and not merely what we thought most expedient.

*Mr. Seel* said that it was no good advocating what we knew to be impracticable. *Mr. Creech Jones* said that the basic question was whether we assumed that the sub-units were the principal repositories of powers, some of which they would have to surrender to the central authority or that the central authority was the sole ultimate repository of powers, some of which it would delegate to the sub-units—as in Malaya.

*Mr. Caine* said that the real question was whether to surrender everything but certain specific powers or nothing but certain other specific powers.

*Mr. Rogers* suggested that we should ask the Governors if they thought that the West Indies would accept the Canadian model.

*Mr. Seel* suggested that we should suggest both the Canadian and Australian models indicating our preference for the former. *Mr. Caine* said that Jamaica and Barbados would think very hard before surrendering any of their major powers; if they did surrender the essential ones they might as well go the whole way.

*Mr. Beckett* doubted whether *Mr. Rogers*' scheme did not go too far in surrendering both Customs and Income Tax. He doubted also whether complete customs uniformity would really be good for the small Dependencies. *Mr. Caine* thought that no union would be any good unless it included a Customs union and that it was arguable that a Customs union was desirable only as part of a general federation.

*Sir Frank Stockdale* thought that Customs union was possible if there were an agreed standard tariff with a reservation permitting surcharge for revenue purposes in individual Colonies.

*Mr. Caine* believed that we might get general agreement on federation at first but that there might be subsequent reservations by individual Colonies which would result in no real change of substance but merely a new and expensive super-structure. It would be best of all to obtain complete unitary integration; failing that we should be content with the minimal course of developing common services and institutions. *Mr. J.B. Williams* pointed out that it would not be possible to achieve economies by concentration and pruning of the administrative system if much power were left to local legislatures.

*Mr. Rogers* suggested that we might ask the Governors if the West Indies would accept the Canadian model and whether if not, we should work on the Australian model or simply the development of common services.

*Mr. Beckett* thought that there would be strong opposition in the Windwards and Leewards to the surrender of powers to anything like a unitary government for those colonies, and that this would have its bearing on West Indian Federation generally.

*Mr. Seel* and others thought that even the half-way house would be a political advance and that it might be desirable even at the cost of additional expense. *Mr. Beckett* suggested that not to carry developments further might give the impression that the present Secretary of State was less progressive than his predecessor.

*Mr. Caine* suggested that as a bait the unofficial element in the Federal Government might be given powers even wider than in Jamaica.

*Mr. Beckett* said that it was not possible to go beyond Jamaica and yet stop short of Dominion Status.

*Mr. Caine* thought that Barbados would be unlikely to consent to join any federation, the Government of which had reserve powers, and this was generally agreed.

*Mr. Creech Jones* said that it was agreed that there should be a Conference in about a year's time, that unofficial delegates should be invited to attend it, and that some sort of memorandum should be provided as a basis for discussion. This memorandum should first state the position and then outline the possible alternatives. It should be sent to Governors first.

*Mr. Seel* suggested a full draft on these lines to be followed by a meeting to consider it in about a month's time.

*Mr. Creech Jones* asked whether we were sure that federation was really desirable for the West Indies. Its one great advantage seemed that only through federation could they advance to Dominion Status, and that raised the question whether Dominion Status would ever be possible. The West Indies might even prefer to transfer their loyalties to the United States.

*Mr. Beckett* said that we must in any case give the West Indies a chance to say what they thought.

*Mr. Caine* shared *Mr. Creech Jones*' doubts as to the possibility of Dominion Status. He thought 100% unitary federation might just be worth-while but that no form of federation short of that should be any use.

*Mr. Beckett* pointed out that in any case it was essential to explore the matter further. The present bitter attitude of West Indian intellectuals could not be ignored.

*Sir Frank Stockdale* said that we must make it clear what federation would cost. It was agreed that a full memorandum on the subject should be prepared for discussion in a month's time.

## 250 CO 318/466/2, nos 45–48

14 Feb 1947

### [Proposed conference on closer association of British West Indian colonies]: circular despatch from Mr Creech Jones to West Indian governors

[The basic drafting for this despatch (and accompanying memo) was done by Sir G Seel and A M MacKintosh, who first submitted separate drafts in Nov 1946. The final version reflected Seel's work more than MacKintosh's, though both derived from Rogers's memo (see 248). Sir K Roberts-Wray (CO legal adviser) had plenty of criticisms from the legal angle. Caine thought the draft overstated in places (rather smug and high-flown), and he wrote a number of long minutes which led to considerable redrafting. Caine feared that the original draft tended to steer the West Indians 'towards an ineffective half-and-half measure', and he favoured a more definite lead in favour of federation. This, however, ran up against the express policy of Creech Jones who did not want to appear to be giving a lead in any particular direction. After going carefully through the draft the secretary of state added the final paragraph (in this sense) himself.]

In Colonel Stanley's despatch of the 14th of March, 1945, on the subject of closer association between the British West Indian Colonies, it was suggested that the issue of political federation should be debated in the Legislatures of the Colonies concerned, and that, if all the Legislatures were to declare themselves in favour of the aim of federation, a conference of West Indian delegates might be convened in order to consider the formulation of concrete proposals for closer association.

2. This despatch was subsequently debated in the Legislatures of all the Colonies to which it had been addressed. In the Bahamas both Houses agreed in declining to consider participation in any form of closer association of the British West Indian Colonies. In the other Colonies concerned, however,—Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and the Windward Islands—the Legislatures have expressed their readiness to enter into a Conference of the kind proposed by Colonel Stanley, while indicating, however, that they are at present prepared to commit themselves no further than to discussion.

3. I have been greatly impressed by this general measure of agreement to consider the practical steps necessary to implement the aim of closer association, and I feel that it is now incumbent upon me as Secretary of State to facilitate the holding of a Conference at an early date. I enclose in this connection an extract from the Official Report of the House of Commons for the 30th October, 1946.<sup>1</sup> In pursuance of the reply which, as there recorded, I gave to a question on this subject, I now wish to propose that such a Conference should be convened, at some agreed place in the West Indies, in the latter part, say September, of the year 1947.

4. I suggest for the consideration of the Legislatures that, in order to avoid a Conference which would be unwieldy in numbers, each Colony (the Windward and Leeward Islands being regarded for this purpose as two Colonies) should send three delegates; and that these delegates should be nominated by the Legislature in each case. It also appears to me to be desirable that each delegation should be accompanied by the chief legal and financial advisers of the Colony, in order that the practical problems which will arise may be discussed in the light of expert information. It will be a matter for the Legislature in each case to decide whether the delegates should be selected from among its members, but in this connection the desirability will no doubt be borne in mind of including in the delegation, wherever possible, representation of any substantial shades of opinion in the Colony. In Colonies which have a two-chamber legislature, a joint session of both chambers to select the delegates may be desirable.

5. Should it be the general desire, I would endeavour to arrange either myself or for a Minister or other suitable person from the United Kingdom to preside over the Conference. In any case, an observer or observers on my behalf would attend. The secretarial arrangements for the Conference will need consideration, and I should welcome your proposals in this regard.

6. It is no doubt a matter of general knowledge in the West Indies that a conference of delegates from the Colonies of the Leeward Islands and the Windward Islands is to meet at St. Kitts in January, 1947, to discuss proposals for closer association between those Colonies which were set out in Mr. (now Viscount) Hall's despatch of the 14th March, 1946, to the Governors concerned. I have not thought it necessary to await the outcome of that Conference before writing this present despatch since, while it may affect the basis on which the Windward and Leeward Islands Colonies would enter any closer association of the West Indian territories as a whole, the relations between those Colonies do not affect the merits of the wider question.

7. As regards the terms of reference to the Conference, I do not think it necessary to suggest any elaboration of those originally indicated in Colonel Stanley's despatch,

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<sup>1</sup> The enclosures to this despatch have been omitted. See *H of C Debs*, vol 428, cols 606–607.

namely, "to consider the formulation of proposals for closer association". This will enable the Conference to debate without prejudice any form of closer association which may appear worthy of consideration. It has appeared to me, however, that it might usefully be provided, as a starting point for its discussions, with a short memorandum setting out the nature of the problem which will be before it. I enclose a memorandum which has been prepared with this object in view. This memorandum is not intended in any way to be exhaustive or to give any lead, but merely as a factual review, in the briefest compass, of the considerations which appear to arise. It is to be expected that other individuals or bodies in the respective Colonies will furnish their delegates with memoranda setting out their views. It is clearly to be desired that full opportunity should be afforded for the presentation of considered views on this important subject from the peoples concerned.

8. The procedure of the Conference can best be left to the delegates when assembled. The need for investigation is, however, a wide one, and as stated in paragraph 4 of the enclosed memorandum, it may be found desirable to arrange for a smaller body to prepare a detailed scheme, with expert assistance, which could be further considered by the Conference, or by a fresh conference convened for the purpose, at a later date.

9. I have to ask that the proposals in this despatch may now be communicated to the Legislatures in the Colonies concerned, in order that, in the event of their being generally accepted, the necessary detailed arrangements for the convening of the Conference may be put in hand. In communicating the response of the Legislature of the Colony, under your administration, I should be most grateful for your view as to the most suitable location for the conference.

10. I propose that this despatch and the enclosed memorandum should be published for general information, and I shall be glad to receive your concurrence by telegraph.

11. I am addressing this despatch to the Governors of Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, Leeward Islands, Trinidad and the Windward Islands. Copies are being sent for information to the Governor of the Bahamas, the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies, and the British Resident Member of the Caribbean Commission in Washington.

**251** CO 318/483/5, no 219

12 Sept 1947

[Montego Bay Conference]: inward telegram no 940 from Mr Creech Jones to CO, reporting his impressions

Following for Ivor Thomas and Lloyd from the Secretary of State. Begins.

Intense interest shown by delegates to (grp. omitted) today, and considerable expectancy attached to results. Clear that the Conference is of the utmost political significance from Britain's point of view. Number of American observers present.

2. Gist of today's speeches is about

(a) I gave strong lead to Federation as essential stage on the road to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth. I also emphasised that H.M. Government were not seeking Federation as a means of unloading their own responsibilities upon the West Indian territories, and that there was no suggestion that they

should withdraw aid given through central services and in other ways.

(b) Singh<sup>1</sup> of British Guiana. Feeling in British Guiana mixed. Certain anxiety about alienation of the Colony's resources if federated. Advocated the unification of currency and public services and the creation of Customs Union, and stressed the importance of communications.

(c) Cuke<sup>2</sup> of Barbados. Thought H.M. Government should start by broadening the Island's governments first, giving the people of the individual Colonies greater legislative and administrative scope. Meanwhile, advocated West Indian Council with date line to produce plan for the solution of common problems. Stressed the view that economic security was essential prerequisite of political federation, with particular emphasis on the need for safeguard against dumping.

(d) Judah<sup>3</sup> of Jamaica. Advocated the gradual approach to Federation by means of the improvement of communications, unification of currency and public services, uniformity of certain types of legislation and the creation of Customs Union.

(e) Bustamente of Jamaica. Extravagant and largely irrelevant speech wilfully misrepresenting my own speech and rejecting early Federation and demanding instead self-government for the individual territories. For Jamaica, advocated elected majority in the Executive Council and the abolition of the Legislation [sic] Council.

(f) Gomes<sup>4</sup> of Trinidad. Excellent and well-argued speech advocating immediate Federation with Dominion status. Emphasised the desire to remain part of the British Commonwealth of Nations. In addition to political aim in Federation he maintained that economically the only hope for the West Indies was industrialisation, which could not be attained without Federation, including Customs Union, unification of currency, etc.

(g) Apart from Bustamente, the general trend appears favourable to Federation.

3. Plenary session and general debate will continue tomorrow. Hope to get down to Committee work on Sunday or Monday. Ends.

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<sup>1</sup> J B Singh, member of Legislative Council.

<sup>2</sup> H A Cuke, member of Executive Council and Legislative Council.

<sup>3</sup> D J Judah, unofficial member, Legislative Council.

<sup>4</sup> A Gomes, elected unofficial member of Executive Council, minister for labour, industry and commerce.

**252** CAB 134/55, CA 8(48)1

29 Oct 1948

**'Constitutional reform in Trinidad and Tobago': minutes of Cabinet Commonwealth Affairs Committee**

[The heterogeneous racial composition of Trinidad, with its large Indian element, seemed to preclude a straightforward constitutional advance on the lines of the Jamaican or Barbados model. By 1945 the position was that the Legislative Council had nine out of eighteen elected members (ie, parity with the official and nominated unofficial members combined), and universal suffrage had been provided for. Following a resolution moved by one of the elected members of the Legislative Council, the acting-governor set up a committee to consider constitutional reform. This committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Lennox O'Reilly, KC (a senior barrister in Trinidad) completed its work by the end of Apr 1947, but its report was not published until 17 Feb 1948. O'Reilly was convinced that the electorate in Trinidad was not at all ready for the exercise of political responsibility, but he did not believe it would possible to maintain a purely negative attitude towards

constitutional progress. The proposals of the committee were accordingly designed to maintain certain safeguards against the possibility of complete power 'falling into the hands of mob leaders'. The Executive Council was to become the chief instrument of policy-making. Eighteen of the future 27 members of the Legislative Council would be elected (ie, the elected element was to be doubled, retaining the six nominated and three *ex-officio* members). In other words O'Reilly envisaged a transitional stage towards fully responsible self-government. Governor Sir John Shaw thought O'Reilly's proposals 'not bad', but doubted if they went far enough. Some members of Legislative Council wanted all members to be elected, and vaguely hoped for dominion status. Although he could not accept the minority report, which called for immediate responsible government, Governor Shaw believed it was important to give politicians some *executive* responsibility (ie, some sort of ministerial or quasi-ministerial arrangement enabling them to apply the policies which, as advisers, they advocated). He could not, on the face of it, see 'why if India, Burma and (perhaps) Ceylon can achieve this, Trinidad cannot. Are those places really more "ripe for self-government" than Trinidad? Of course there would be strenuous opposition in many quarters, but that is beside the point. Individual responsibility by some persons other than professional officials is the key to the situation, in my judgment' (CO 295/639/3, no 34, Sir J Shaw to Sir G Seel, 24 Nov 1947). These views found little support in Whitehall.

A CO meeting chaired by Lord Listowel on 2 July 1948 agreed to accept the majority report and appoint an independent commission of inquiry to report on the next stage towards responsible government. Lord Listowel agreed with the advice tendered by Sir G Seel that while they could work for responsible government 'as soon as possible' it was impracticable to introduce it immediately, because: (a) there was real doubt whether 'general elections in Trinidad would yet throw up men of the quality required to start responsible government unselfishly and successfully', (b) a probationary period was essential to give education in the running of departments, (c) relationships between political chiefs and civil servants had to be worked out. Caine pointed out that most senior posts were still held by expatriates while being brought nominally under local ministers—this was an acute difficulty, and it had been quite different in India (CO 295/639/5, no 61, and minutes by Seel, Caine and Listowel, 22–25 June 1948). Creech Jones helped to draft the paper put before the Commonwealth Affairs Committee. He minuted, 'I am anxious that we should do nothing which will throw moderate progressive opinion in the direction of the extremist elements', but he nevertheless hoped the committee would agree to a more gradual approach (no 99).]

The Committee considered a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.A. (48) 17) submitting proposals for constitutional reform in Trinidad and Tobago.

The memorandum described the present composition and functions of the Executive and Legislative Councils of Trinidad. Under this constitution, the people of Trinidad had representation without responsibility, and the task of administration had become increasingly difficult. In 1946, a Committee had been set up to consider the whole question of constitutional reform and their proposals had been set out in Majority and Minority Reports. After consideration of these Reports, and in consultation with the Governor, the Secretary of State recommended the adoption of alternative proposals based on the Majority Report.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that for some years there had been increasing public demand in Trinidad for a reform of the constitution. In his view, the time was ripe for a change, though not to the extent proposed in the Minority Report, which recommended the immediate grant of responsible government, with no element of nomination in either the Executive or the Legislative Council. This Report proposed that the Executive Council should be collectively responsible to the Legislative Council, and that its members should have full Ministerial responsibility for specific Departments of State. The proposals in the Majority Report were less extreme, and the recommendations contained in C.A. (48) 17, which were supported

by the Governor, were based on this Report. Under these proposals, the Executive Council would consist of one nominated, three *ex officio* and five elected members (the latter drawn from the Legislative Council), and the Legislative Council of three *ex officio*, five nominated and eighteen elected members. The Governor would retain reserve powers to be used only when a question of public order, public faith or good government was involved; and the elected members of the Executive Council would be actively associated with the work of Government Departments. In the present conditions of Trinidad, it would not, in his view, be safe to go further in the direction of responsible government. The people of the Colony were politically inexperienced and educationally backward; there was no proper system of political parties; and the financial position of the Colony gave cause for some anxiety.

*The Prime Minister* said that, in considering the question of constitutional reform in Trinidad, Ministers were faced with the consequences of past failure to provide the people of Trinidad with adequate opportunity to gain political and administrative experience. In Trinidad, as in other Colonial territories, there had been a regrettable failure to develop municipal institutions as a first school of political and administrative training, and the consequences of this failure were accentuated by the inadequacy of the local education system and the shocking housing conditions. In his view, the weaknesses of any transitional constitution were self-evident, but it was clear that it would not be possible to go further than had been suggested by the Secretary of State. It was a necessary corollary of the adoption of these proposals that the Government should take more active measures to develop the system of education and to improve housing conditions, and in other ways to provide the people of Trinidad with opportunities for developing an understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship.

Discussion showed that there was general agreement that it would not be prudent to go further in the direction of responsible government in Trinidad than would result from the measure of constitutional reform proposed in C.A. (48) 17.

In further discussion, the following points were made:—

- (a) Two-fifths of the population of Trinidad were East Indians, and the Prime Minister of India might be asked to exercise a restraining influence on them, if they continued to agitate for more far reaching constitutional concessions.
- (b) Some doubt was expressed whether a sufficient number of competent persons would be found to serve on the Governor's Executive Council. In reply, it was pointed out that the Governor had not regarded this as an objection to the proposals under discussion; there were a number of capable and experienced men among the elected members of the present Legislative Council.
- (c) Some progress had been made in recent years with the development of local government in Trinidad, but the powers of the municipalities and other local bodies were very limited.
- (d) Attention was drawn to the very grave situation created by the rapid increase in the population of the Colony. Every effort was being made to find a solution by way of economic development and the creation of outlets elsewhere, but this would remain a dominant problem in Trinidad.

The Committee:—

Approved the proposals contained in C.A. (48) 17.

**253** CO 28/342/6, no 1

[Dec 1949]

**'Constitutional reform': Lord Listowel's report on the West Indies, section IV**

I shall only deal with this matter in the three most politically advanced Colonies in the West Indies, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados.

**1. Jamaica**

The pace and degree of further constitutional change in Jamaica is directly affected by the result of this month's general election. When I was there informed opinion in Jamaica was backing another win for the Jamaican Labour Party under Bustamente's leadership. Bustamente is always unpredictable save where his own interests are concerned, but he told me he would not ask after the election for any more substantial change than an elected majority in the Executive Council. This advance has already been recommended by a Committee of the House of Representatives which was appointed by the Governor during the lifetime of the present administration. Bustamente will no doubt continue to put the brake on constitutional change so long as he requires the political support of the propertied interests in the Island. But he also asserted that Ministers should have authority in their departments, and he may put forward this demand if he thinks that he can do so without losing popularity in any important quarter. A request for ministerial status for the elected members of the Executive Council would be hard to resist, as we have already agreed to concede this position to Trinidad in 1950. In my view it is a desirable change to make if local opinion wants it, as the vice of the present constitution in Jamaica is its divorce between power and responsibility. When the Executive Council has had to take an unpopular decision Bustamente dissociates himself from his official colleagues. He has not hesitated to round on them publicly for actions he had previously agreed to support. Provided that the ultimate responsibility of the Governor is retained, it is most desirable for sound political leadership that the majority party in the House of Representatives should know that it will carry the blame if it fails to carry out its election promises, and that it should not be able to shuffle out of responsibility for unpopular measures the administration may have to take. The present system puts a premium on the crude demagoguery to which Jamaicans so easily succumb.

I discussed with Manley<sup>1</sup> the election programme of the People's National Party. It included complete ministerial responsibility, abolition of the Legislative Council (the Upper Chamber), and an extremely moderate dose of Socialism. He wanted the Governor to keep his present constitutional functions, which suggested that he might be willing to compromise about the degree of ministerial authority. In framing this programme I have no doubt that Manley was obliged to propitiate the Left Wing of his party. A cleavage over the W.F.T.U. has already taken place in the People's National Party, and if the rebels do badly in the election Manley's influence and leadership will be confirmed, and the party may be expected to take a more moderate and realistic line. It seems to be widely realised in Kingston that responsible government at this stage would be a fatal mistake, and the population of

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<sup>1</sup> N W Manley, KC, member of House of Representatives (see also, 255, note 2).

the Island is politically immature and its financial position is highly precarious and unstable.

## 2. *Trinidad*

There was general satisfaction in Trinidad over the new constitution, which will come into operation after the general election in 1950. It was encouraging to hear that Uriah Butler<sup>2</sup> was not expected to get any seats outside his own county of St. Patrick. But even if he fails in politics, his influence among the estate workers is considerable, and he will continue to be a menace to public order so long as there is any risk of depression in the sugar industry. Dr. Solomon, a moderate Socialist who leads what may be the largest group in the new Legislative Council, raised an important and difficult point about the future of the nominated members in this body. He was afraid that if one party obtained a narrow majority of the elected members it would be unable to give legislative effect to its programme against the combined vote of its opponents plus the official and nominated members of the Legislative Council. Whether his assumption that the nominated members will always vote together and the same way is correct, this matter deserves careful consideration, and the answer depends very much on the view we should now take about the practice of nomination to an elected legislature at the present stage in the constitutional development of the West Indies. To my mind this practice continues to be fully justified if, as in the case of Trinidad and British Guiana, there is no second chamber to which members are appointed by the Governor. Throughout the Caribbean there is a growing divergence between the sources of economic and political power. Economic power, represented by the ownership and management of land and industry and commercial enterprise, is still broadly European, and likely so to remain, whereas political power is passing by degrees into the hands of the coloured population. It is therefore specially important that the spokesmen of these economic and social interests, so long as they are unlikely to secure election in a constituency, should be nominated to positions in the Legislature which will enable them to state their case when the financial or economic affairs of the Colony are under discussion. Their function should be limited to preventing legislation from being enacted without a full consideration of the point of view of essential interests on which the welfare of a Colony depends. They should not be sufficiently numerous to determine issues by the way they cast their votes. The decisions of the Legislature should be taken by those of its members who are accountable to the electorate for its conduct.

## 3. *Barbados*

In Barbados, with its long tradition of parliamentary government, there is a better type of political leader and a healthier relationship between the parties and the two Houses of the Legislature than elsewhere in the West Indies. The political climate is favourable for most of the further constitutional changes which Grantley Adams,<sup>3</sup> who leads the majority party in the House of Assembly, would like to make. His proposals have been endorsed by a unanimous vote of the House. In the past year some bills have been blocked by the Legislative Council (the Upper Chamber) where

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<sup>2</sup> Tubal Uriah Buzz Butler, elected unofficial member of Legislative Council.

<sup>3</sup> Grantley H Adams, member of House of Assembly and Executive Council.

the planters and other propertied interests have a majority which supports the opposition to the Government in the Lower House. These proposals include a suggestion that the power of the Legislative Council should be limited in the way that we have limited the powers of the House of Lords in our Parliament Acts. This would mean that the Legislative Council should not be allowed to delay bills for more than one year and should be deprived of the right to alter or veto money bills. He also wants a system of limited ministerial responsibility on similar lines to Trinidad, which would be accompanied by the appointment of a Public Service Commission to take the Civil Service out of the ministerial field. This change would have the advantage of drawing together power and responsibility, though their separation has done less harm in Barbados than in Jamaica because of its all-round superiority in the technique of parliamentary democracy.

The whole success of the approaching stage, the stage of limited responsibility and executive authority, in the development of these territories towards internal self-government within the Commonwealth, will depend on the maintenance of a stable economy during the next few years. The steady progress of the more advanced Colonies is being watched by the rest of the British Caribbean as the criterion of our Colonial policy, and a breakdown in constitutional advance would be a most serious setback to British prestige throughout the region. The economy of all three territories is bound up to a greater or lesser degree with the export of their sugar crop, and if we are unable to continue to give the sugar industry a guaranteed market and a reasonably remunerative price level it will be most unlikely that responsible political leaders will weather the storm of public discontent. The political future of the British West Indies, and the long-term relationship of these territories to the rest of the Commonwealth, will be decided in the main by our own commercial policy.

**254** T 220/359/IF38/588/01, pp 5–15

2 Dec 1949

'Report of Standing Closer Association Committee: summary and comment': CO West Indian Dept paper

### 1. *Completion of report*

The Committee signed its Report for presentation to the territorial Governments on 21st October, and has thus accomplished the task given to it by the Montego Bay Conference. Its work was done during four meetings, each of about two weeks, beginning in October, 1948.

*Comment.* A leader in the *Daily Telegraph* of 8th November said that one sign of the great difficulties in the way of federation had been the Committee's slowness in producing the Report. In fact the Committee spent a remarkably short amount of time in session, and has dealt comprehensively with its problems.

Sir H. Rance, as Chairman<sup>1</sup>, and Mr. Carstairs<sup>2</sup> as Secretary of the Committee, deserve great credit for their contribution to the effectiveness of the Committee's work. The members came to acquire a sense of corporate responsibility, which enabled them to record agreement upon matters highly controversial, as discussions

<sup>1</sup> Sir Hubert ('Hugh') Rance, gov of Trinidad, 1950; formerly gov of Burma.

<sup>2</sup> C Y Carstairs, administrative secretary, Office of Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1947.

in Colonial Legislatures will no doubt show. Sir H. Rance throughout showed great tact and skill, in persuading members towards those compromises which had to be accepted if any progress was to take place at all, and to adopt various provisions which he knew were essential in His Majesty's Government's interests, however unwelcome in some quarters. Mr. Carstairs himself drafted the Report, and, with Mr. McPetrie<sup>3</sup>, the constitutional framework appended to it.

The most useful members of the Committee appear to have been Mr. Judah of Jamaica, whose hard work in the final stages of drafting the report was notable, and the Trinidad members, Mr. Hannays<sup>4</sup> and Mr. Gomes. Mr. Grantley Adams seems to have been too keen to refute local suspicions that his attachment to the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations Assembly in Paris last year had put him in the British Government's pocket. He criticised such features of the proposed federation as a nominated Senate and the retention of certain essential controls by His Majesty's Government, and when the Report is publicly discussed, may complain that it does not go far enough towards real independence for the peoples of the West Indies.

## 2. *Argument of the report*

The Committee start from their Montego Bay mandate. Strictly, as the Montego Bay Conference accepted the principle of federation, and instructed the Committee to make recommendations about the form of federal structure most likely to meet the aspirations of the West Indian Peoples, they were not concerned with arguing the case for federation again, but they explain their recommendations by emphasis upon this form of Government as best able to assist the progress of the region.

The fundamental assumption is that independence within the framework of the British Commonwealth is these peoples' legitimate political objective. The Committee describe the region's natural resources and its dependence on trade, insist that "political" independence without economic independence is unreal under modern conditions, and conclude that only through federation can the region hope to obtain the economic autonomy which will make a reality of political independence. They argue that the individual units in the Caribbean cannot hope to achieve real independence on their own. They are careful to point out that federation will not *guarantee* such economic and commercial development as can make the region viable but claim that only federation can make this development even possible.

*Comment.* Discussion in the Colonies may show widespread reluctance to accept the argument that self-government for the individual units is, as the reports says, "a mirage"; it may be argued that federation cannot in fact lead to economic viability as surely as the Committee hope. There will be apprehension lest relaxation of the present financial ties between the Colonial governments and His Majesty's Government, and transfer of some financial responsibility from His Majesty's Government to the Federation, prejudice the essential financial needs of most of the colonies. Such criticisms will not prevent some politicians from continuing to press their claims for advancement towards self-government, as they may not face up as boldly as have the Committee to the thesis that political independence without economic independence is unreal.

<sup>3</sup> J C McPetrie, senior legal assistant, CO, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> L C Hannays, nominated unofficial member of Executive Council.

### 3. *Scope of the federation*

The Committee have from the first been influenced by the Australian form of federation, and are at pains to emphasise that the Federal Government's powers will be limited to those specifically granted to it by territorial government[s]. The division of powers between the Federal and the territorial governments will be set out in the Constitution, in an "Exclusive" list of subjects upon which only the Federal Government may make laws, and a "Concurrent" list of subjects upon which both the Federal Government and the territorial governments may make laws, the Federal law to prevail in case of inconsistency.

*Comment.* The Committee point out with obvious care that in a federation such as they propose, the Federal Government is in no sense "over" the territorial governments, save in respect of the powers which the latter agree to surrender. The most important subjects on the "Exclusive" list are defence, external relations, and raising of external loans.

A valuable suggestion made in the Report is that at any time, the Federal Government may, by agreement with a territorial government, assume control of additional functions in respect of that latter government alone.

The functions which the Federal Government will carry out at the start will be few, and the Committee, wisely, are prepared to let them grow in number as the federal system gains strength and authority. The Committee suggest that the Federal Government might take over the advisory machinery of the Development and Welfare Organisation and make its services available to territorial governments, even although there would not be Federal departments administratively responsible for the subjects concerned. This is a useful idea.

### 4. *Structure of the federation*

(a) *Legislature:* there is to be a House of Assembly of 50 members elected by universal adult suffrage throughout the region (except for the first election when current local rules will apply in each unit), and a Senate of 23 members nominated by the Governor-General in his discretion.

*Comment.* The members of any territorial Legislature are ineligible for membership of the House of Assembly and the Senate. Territorial Legislatures may criticise this potential drain on the politically capable manpower of the region, at the same time as they criticise the size of both Federal Houses on grounds of expense. The figure of 50 for the House of Assembly is certainly large, but was agreed upon as the least offensive number after prolonged debates and negotiations. 50 is less the ideal number than the aggregate of the numbers to which each member thought his Colony was entitled. The Committee did not discuss the position of the Leewards, but feeling against "a federation within a federation", may come out in public discussion. If the numbers of the House of Assembly are to be reduced, one way seems to be to rearrange representation from the Windwards and Leewards so that they may be represented by "Windwards" and "Leewards" representatives instead of, as at present, each island being allocated two members. (Montserrat one member).

(b) *Head of the State:* A Governor-General appointed by His Majesty.

(c) *Executive:* A Council of State, of 14 Members appointed by the Governor-General and consisting of

- (i) a Prime Minister, elected by the House of Assembly;

(ii) not more than 7 nominees (being members of the House of Assembly or Senate) of the Prime Minister;

(iii) not more than 6 members appointed by the Governor-General, three of whom may be officials, and the remainder members of the House or Senate.

*Comment.* The Governor-General will preside over an executive body in which the effective influence will be the 8 persons whose membership depends upon the choice of the elected House of Assembly. There may be some criticism, possibly headed by Mr. Grantley Adams, of the principle of the nominated Senate and of nominated members of the Council of State, but the Report argues the case for a second Chamber with limited revisionary powers effectively. The provision for some nominated members in the Council of State will enable the Governor-General, in the earlier stages of federation at least, to make more continuous use of the advice of experienced people than changes in party strength in the House of Assembly might allow. All members of the Council will hold office during His Majesty's pleasure, a reassuring provision.

### 5. Procedure

(a) *Legislative:* Bills become law after passage through both chambers and assent by the Governor-General. The Senate should have a delaying power of 12 months. (The Senate's powers in relation to Money Bills are practically negligible.)

The Governor-General may assent or refuse assent to Bills in his discretion, and may reserve certain Bills for His Majesty's pleasure. (Chiefly those dealing with defence or external affairs). His Majesty may disallow any legislation dealing with Colonial Stocks.

His Majesty in Council may legislate for the federation on defence, external affairs and to secure its financial stability.

*Comment.* The procedure contemplated for normal legislative working, including Money Bills, seems suitable.

The provision for legislation by Order in Council appears to permit His Majesty's Government's ultimate responsibility in defence, foreign affairs and financial stability, to be effectively exercised and it is not considered that these powers can legitimately be criticised in territorial discussion. The Committee was most unwilling to grant any reserve legislative powers to the Governor-General but it is not considered that the absence of this feature, common to most Colonial Constitutions, is serious, because there would be no opportunity for the Governor-General to *introduce* legislation into a wholly elected House of Assembly.

(b) *Executive:* Normally the Governor-General will be required to act in accordance with the advice of the Council of State, which is conceived as "the policy-forming instrument in the Constitution".

The Governor-General may, however, act contrary to that advice in the following:—

(i) defence

(ii) external affairs

(iii) measures for securing the financial stability of the Federation. (i.e. the subjects on which His Majesty in Council may legislate.)

On a number of other subjects, notably the appointment of public officers and the

authority of the Public Service Commission, the Governor-General may act *entirely* in his own discretion.

*Comment.* It is satisfactory that the Committee were persuaded, in their final meeting, to concede these discretionary powers, which are similar to those provided in the 1946 Ceylon constitution. The Treasury have agreed, on the official level, that His Majesty's Government's ultimate financial responsibility for the Federation can be secured if His Majesty in Council can legislate to maintain the Federation's financial stability, if the Governor-General is given parallel discretionary powers, and if he is allowed to reserve legislation on this subject for His Majesty's pleasure. The Constitution does not include the last, and least [sic] important, provision, but it *should not be difficult, if the Treasury insist, to obtain agreement to its subsequent insertion in the Constitution.*

The Committee emphasise that the Prime Minister's first responsibility is to the House of Assembly, and the importance of assuring an effective majority in the Council of State for him and his nominees.

## 6. Finance

(a) *Federal Revenue.* The Committee regard a Customs Union as the foundation of the federal structure and Customs duties as the most appropriate single source of Federal Revenue; they propose that for an initial trial period of 5 years the Federal Government collect the duties, returning at least 75% automatically to the territorial governments. The remaining 25% will be at the Federal Government's disposal.

The Committee propose that all external loans be raised by the federal government, whether on its own behalf, or on behalf of territorial governments.

(b) *Relations between the federal and the territorial governments.* It is proposed that the Governor-General be empowered by the Constitution to conclude financial agreements between the Federation and the territorial governments. These will provide for, inter alia, exchange of information on financial matters, and for the federation to make grants to unit governments. The Committee admit that several of the unit governments will continue to require grants-in-aid from His Majesty's Government, but suggest that in order to develop the Federation's financial responsibility and to improve the system of administration of grants-in-aid, His Majesty's Government should make for an initial period of 10 years an annual grant to the Federal Treasury of a sum equal to the average annual current payment of grants-in-aid. The Federation would then be responsible for the allocation and the administration of money to territorial governments which are unable to meet the ordinary costs of administration. The examination of unit budgets will under this arrangement, be made in the first place by the Federal Government. If the demands for grants-in-aid by Colonial Governments exceed the sum made available by His Majesty's Government, the excess must in the first place be met from Federal Funds, and only if these latter are unable to meet demands will the Federal Government ask His Majesty's Government for extra assistance. These arrangements should be examined by an independent enquiry after five years.

(c) *Relations between the federal government and His Majesty's Government.* There is no constitutional provision for any financial link between the Federal Government and His Majesty's Government other than the legislative and discretionary powers to deal with the Federation's financial stability already described. The Report emphasises that the maximum practicable amount of financial autonomy

should be assumed by the Federation. The Committee admit that the Federation will continue to need financial help for some time to come, but contemplate that it should be obtained by loans which the Federal Government would negotiate in its own right. The Report assumes that the Federation will continue to be eligible for C.D. & W. assistance.

The Report refers tactfully to the possibility of His Majesty's Government's making some grant towards the capital costs of federation.

*Comment.* These financial arrangements are mainly the work of Professor Beasley<sup>5</sup>, who sought the advice of the Colonial Office (and Treasury) before putting the results to the Committee as his personal views. Criticism of "Treasury control" and of the methods of administration of grants-in-aid should be greatly reduced if the proposed new system is adopted. It is wise to avoid, as the Committee has avoided, making rigid and detailed financial arrangements in the constitution; it is much better that the financial relationships between the Federation and the territorial governments, should be worked out in practice within the framework of individual agreements.

Although there is no constitutional provision for any regular system of "control" by His Majesty's Government of federal finance, it is hoped that in practice there would be close consultation between the Colonial Office and the Federation's financial officers, to allow for the discussion of all major financial measures, including budgets, before their submission to the Legislature. This working arrangement, similar to present practice in East Africa, would ensure that when the Legislature came to discuss such measures, its members would know in advance that if their legislation was unacceptable the Governor-General would withhold his assent.

7. *"Pre-federal" matters.* The Report also deals with the following "pre-federal" matters included in the Committee's terms of reference:—

(a) *A regional economic committee.* The Committee express regret that this body has not yet been set up. A preliminary conference was held, and recommendations for the creation of the Committee, and for a Trade Commissioner Service, made to territorial governments but one or two of them have yet to indicate their assent.

*Comment.* While the Committee are justified in arguing, as they do, that every encouragement should be given to "unifying" influences, especially economic ones, it is doubtful whether, in fact the Regional Economic Committee could yet be actively effective. The Report argues that had the Committee been set up, it could have facilitated regional action in the sugar negotiations earlier this year, but while this argument looks well it will scarcely bear serious examination.

(b) *A customs union commission.* The Customs Union Commission has not yet made its report, but its Chairman told the Committee what work he had done and what his proposals are likely to be. In brief, there should be a common external tariff for the region, and the Administration of common customs services by a central authority, with the ultimate aim of a complete Customs Union. These arrangements could be begun in advance of political federation, although the Chairman considers that only political federation will allow them their most beneficial effect. The

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<sup>5</sup> C G Beasley, economic adviser, CD & W organisation in British West Indies, 1946; formerly professor of geography and geology, University of Rangoon.

Committee favour as much as possible being done towards uniformity in advance of federation.

*Comment.* There is little doubt that unification of the area for customs purposes, and the removal of fiscal barriers to free trade within the region, will have a powerful unifying influence. It will not be possible to take steps towards unification until the Commission has made its report, but both because of its value for the region's economic future, and because of the importance of an effective unified customs administration as the basis of federal revenue, it is hoped that territorial governments will favour implementation of the Commission's recommendations as soon as practicable. There would be little difficulty in the central Customs authority, which in the first instance might have to be set up by agreement between the Colonial Governments, being transferred subsequently to federal control.

(c) *Public services unification.* The Committee had before it the report of the Commission under the Chairmanship of Sir Maurice Holmes.<sup>6</sup> This Commission's terms of reference were concerned only with the *unification* of the public services of the region, although Sir M. Holmes himself did indicate to the Committee how he thought his recommendations might subsequently be adapted to deal with a Federal public service. The Holmes Commission confesses to defeat, in that it cannot make any recommendations for the uniformity of gradings and basic salaries throughout the region. Its more useful recommendations are for the establishment of a cadet grade in the administrative service to which university graduates would be appointed, and for the creation of a Public Services Commission for the region. The Committee commend both proposals.

*Comment.* The Holmes Commission's inability to find a solution to the difficult problems of uniformity of gradings and basis [?basic] salaries is disappointing, and seems to add to the arguments against trying to create unified services before political federation is ensured. The best policy might be to delay decisions on unification of the services until political federation is accepted, and then to begin work on unification, including the creation of a Public Services Commission which will eventually become a Federal body.

(d) *Currency unification.* The Committee make no recommendations on this matter, but merely record progress since the Currency Conference in Barbados in 1946.

*Comment.* The work of the Preparatory Committee has been slow, but real progress has been made recently under the Chairmanship of Mr. McDavid<sup>7</sup> of British Guiana, and it is hoped that final decisions for the unification of the currencies of British Guiana, Trinidad, Windwards, Leewards and Barbados will shortly be taken.

## 8. *Miscellaneous*

(a) *Dependencies.* The draft Constitution provides that no representatives from the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Cayman Islands and the Virgin Islands should have seats in the Senate or House of Assembly, but that in all other respects the Federal Constitution should accord the same treatment to these territories as is accorded to the Units composing the Federation.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Maurice Holmes, chairman, Caribbean Public Services Unification Commission, 1948; formerly permanent secretary, Board of Education (1937–1945).

<sup>7</sup> E F McDavid, financial secretary and treasurer, British Guiana.

*Comment.* The Committee in their Report say that these provisions must be regarded as providing for what they think would be the best future arrangement, namely, that these Dependencies become federal territories administered by the Governor-General, who would take over the present responsibilities of the Governors of Jamaica and the Leewards respectively.

However, the Committee admit that the representatives of the Turks and Caicos Islands and Cayman Islands, who gave evidence before the Committee, are not enthusiastic about this suggestion at the moment. It is probable that these Dependencies feel that a Federal Government could not guarantee to them the technical staff and preferential treatment in commercial matters which they have so far obtained. It would be unwise to try to rush the Dependencies into the new arrangement until the Federal Government has in fact established its authority, and is in a position to render to the Dependencies services at least as good as they get at the moment but as a long term aim the Committee's solution seems to be the best one.

(b) *Title.* It is proposed that the Federation be called "The British Caribbean Federation".

(c) *Seat of government.* It is proposed that the seat of the Federal Government shall be in Trinidad.

*Comment.* There was little discussion on this point during the Committee's meetings but there may be a good deal of argument about it when the matter is publicly discussed.

(d) *Cost of the federation.* It is estimated that the cost of the Federation will be, to begin with, £183,000 per annum. This covers the Governor-General's establishment, the Council of State, salaries and expenses of the Senate and House of Assembly, salaries and expenses of the Judiciary, and salaries and expenses of the Federal Secretariat.

*Comment.* These comparatively modest figures should do something to re-assure anxious politicians in the Territories that the Federation will involve a disproportionate amount of expense. Nevertheless the bill of nearly £100,000 for the expenses of the Legislature is high, and may well be exploited in criticising the size of the proposed Legislature. If a Trade Commissioner Service is set up and the Federal Government takes over responsibility for it, it is estimated that its additional cost would be some £30,000.

The Report does not assess the amount of capital expenditure required for federal headquarters, but the Committee (who have to some extent been encouraged by suggestions originating from the Colonial Office and the Treasury and put into their heads by Professor Beasley) suggest that His Majesty's Government might make some grant towards the initial capital expenses of the Federation. The Treasury, while agreeing in principle that such a grant will be possible, have said that in their view it should come from C.D. & W. funds. The Colonial Office has emphatically reserved its position in this argument. A grant from C.D. & W. funds would be a very empty form of magnanimity.

(e) *Constitutional amendment.* There are no provisions for special procedure in this matter. The Committee assume that the Constitution will be embodied in an Order-in-Council and that amendments will be made by His Majesty in Council. They do, however, recommend that any amendment diminishing the representation of any territorial government in either Chamber should be subject to the approval of a

majority of the electors concerned.

*Comment.* It is most satisfactory that the Committee have agreed that amendments can only be made by Order-in-Council. Experience of other federal systems has shown how difficult it is to amend Constitutions if they can only be conducted *ad referendum*. It would be best indeed if the proviso about representation referred to above could be cut out.

(f) *Judicature.* The Committee recommend as an indispensable part of the Federal Constitution a Federal Supreme Court consisting of a Chief Justice and not less than three other Judges. The Court would replace the existing West Indian Court of Appeal and should have jurisdiction to hear appeals—

- (i) from its own original side
- (ii) from any other court exercising federal jurisdiction and
- (iii) from Territorial Courts.

Otherwise the Committee do not go into details and leave the construction of the system of courts for further study by experts.

## 255 CO 137/894/68714/51, no 10 21 June 1951 [Jamaica]: letter from Governor Sir H Foot to S E V Luke<sup>1</sup> on proposals for constitutional change

[Under the bicameral constitution introduced in Jamaica in 1944, the lower house of the Legislative Council, now known as the House of Representatives, was composed of 32 members, all elected by universal adult suffrage. The Executive Council had five of its ten members elected by the House of Representatives (with two nominated members and three *ex-officio*). In order to provide an embryo ministerial system, a number of committees were set up in the House of Representatives; the elected members of the Executive Council were styled ministers and answered for certain subjects in the lower house, but had no executive responsibility. They were all provided by Mr Bustamante's Jamaican Labour Party (founded 1943, with trade union support). This experimental advance towards responsibility seemed to the CO to work probably as well as could reasonably be expected, but it was not so successful as to warrant shortening the period of trial envisaged in 1943. They hoped that the constitutional review would take place after the 1950 election and not before it. Rather surprisingly both parties agreed to this in June 1949. The next stage of constitutional advance would probably be the creation of a substantial majority of elected members in the Executive Council; but some politicians wanted more than this. Lord Listowel believed that 'We should move slowly about constitutional change in Jamaica, and reasons for delay are desirable. Local opinion will not be unfavourable, as Bustamante wants to move slowly, and Manley<sup>2</sup> will bless us for applying the brake so long as Bustamante is in power . . .' (CO 137/875/68714/49, minute, 90 Jan 1950). Bustamante was returned with a reduced minority. Future constitutional proposals would obviously be influenced by knowledge of the ministerial system proposed for Trinidad (see 252). A commission of inquiry was proposed (possibly with Sir Henry Moore, formerly gov of Ceylon, as chairman), but it seemed more sensible to proceed by local discussions. There was general agreement that the existing constitution was not entirely satisfactory. It gave the so-called ministers power without responsibility, and, from the CO viewpoint, Bustamante and his colleagues took advantage of this. A new governor, Sir Hugh Foot, discussed the position with the secretary of state on 1 Mar 1951,

<sup>1</sup> CO assistant under-secretary of state, responsible for Defence and General, and West Indian Depts.

<sup>2</sup> N W Manley, founder of the People's National Party (1938), affiliated to the National Workers' Union. The PNP held office 1955–1962, Manley becoming chief minister and later first premier. Meanwhile, Bustamante was chief minister 1953–1955.

and was authorised to explore the position and make proposals: the aim was defined as partially satisfying popular demand without diverting too much attention from the necessity of concentrating on the solution of economic problems. Governor Foot was thinking in terms of a majority of elected members in the Executive Council, but increasing the governor's reserve powers so he could legislate without the consent of the Executive Council; this, he believed, would simplify the constitutional arrangements and bring Jamaica into line with Trinidad. When Foot's considered proposals were received in the CO, Griffiths minuted: 'I agree with the course proposed by Foot' (10 July 1951). With general agreement, changes were introduced to take effect in June 1953.]

In my telegram No. 421 about Bustamante's visit to London I told you something of the discussions which I have had with him and with Manley about constitutional changes. I have now had a further talk with Manley and I wish to put to you my suggestions on how we should now proceed.

You well know the situation up to the time when you left Jamaica last. There had been some discussion in the House of Representatives and although the ideas in the minds of most of the members were still, I think, rather woolly it seemed that the two parties might agree on a number of proposals covering most of the main questions at issue. A deadlock was however reached when the question of a new general election was raised. The P.N.P. view was that any major change in the Constitution should be followed by a new general election but Bustamante will not consider this possibility. He went so far as to say that he would not proceed with the discussions on constitutional changes unless it were agreed by both parties that no general election should take place before 1954 (when the term of the present Legislature normally expires).

I understand that preliminary consideration of constitutional questions has also been undertaken by unofficial members of the Legislative Council and I gather that Kirkwood,<sup>3</sup> and probably a few other members of the Council with him, intended to put forward some far-reaching new proposals for a single Chamber in which there would be some official and nominated members. I believe that he also intended to suggest that the elected members of the new House should be elected from larger constituencies on some system of proportional representation or the alternative vote.

I do not think that anyone has given much thought to the question of what the next step should be when the proposals of the two Houses for constitutional changes were received, but, as you know, Sir John Huggins<sup>4</sup> had in mind the appointment of a Commission and I think that he intended that the Chairman of this Commission, and possibly the members too, should be appointed from outside Jamaica.

My own view, as I briefly explained in the Colonial Office before I left London, is that we should try to work out proposals for limited though vital changes which could be introduced without delay with a minimum of amendment of the existing constitutional instruments.

It seemed to me that there are three possible courses before us. The first would be to stall — and to carry on much as we are for another year or two. I never thought that this course had anything to commend it and certainly my experience since I have been back in Jamaica confirms my belief that some main changes should be undertaken as soon as possible. The second course would be to embark on a full constitutional review. For many reasons I am opposed to this but I shall not attempt

<sup>3</sup> R L M Kirkwood, unofficial member of Legislative Council.

<sup>4</sup> Sir J Huggins, gov, 1943–1950.

to explain all these reasons now. One principal factor in my mind is that a full constitutional review (as I discovered in Nigeria)<sup>5</sup> takes an enormous amount of time and effort. It would throw a new burden on the principal officials in Jamaica during the next year or two at a time when they should be able to devote most of their effort to the vast amount of constructive work which is waiting to be done. Another factor, even more important, is that I believe a full constitutional review would tend to split Jamaica between the two political parties on the one hand (each trying to outbid the other) and, on the other, the substantial numbers of sensible, steady-going people who are frightened that they may be left to suffer from the inexperience and corruption of the politicians. I might also say that since I have been back here I have been tremendously impressed with the desire on all sides to see practical, constructive work undertaken and I am sure that we should be doing the Island a disservice if we led people to expect that constitutional changes alone can solve our problems.

My hope therefore is that we can agree within a few months on a limited number of vital changes, put them into effect and get on with the job.

The kind of changes I have in mind are those which I mentioned in my telegram No. 421. They were as follows:—

- (a) to increase the number of elected members in Executive Council (to give them a clear majority);
- (b) to give the Governor full reserve powers (without having to obtain approval of a majority of the Council);
- (c) to give Ministers greater executive authority; and
- (d) to establish a Public Service Commission.

Following my talks with Bustamante and Manley (and with one or two others such as Barker and T.R. Williams)<sup>6</sup> I feel that there is a real possibility of reaching a fairly wide measure of agreement on limited changes of this kind. Moreover I believe that there would be general relief if limited constitutional advance of this kind could take place at once and if we could avoid holding everything up by a full constitutional review at this time.

I shall not now attempt to discuss in detail the merits (or disadvantages) of the four specific proposals which I have mentioned, for I believe that the next step should be to undertake discussions with representatives of the two political parties and with unofficial members of the Legislative Council.

My proposal is that I should announce fairly soon that I am aware of the discussions which have already taken place on the question of constitutional changes both in the House of Representatives and the Legislative Council and that I think that a stage has been reached when I might usefully have conversations with representatives of each of the political parties and with unofficial members of the Legislative Council. The purpose of these conversations would be to attempt to reach a measure of common agreement on constitutional changes which could be put into effect without delay. Manley has told me that he feels sure that the P.N.P. would accept an invitation to hold discussions with me on this basis and, although I can't be quite sure how Bustamante would react, I can see no reason why he should not also agree. I have no doubt that the unofficial members of the Legislative Council would

<sup>5</sup> Foot served as chief secretary in Nigeria in 1948.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Robert Barker and T R Williams were both nominated members of the Executive Council.

welcome discussions with me following such an announcement. My suggestion is that the discussions should be with each of the three groups separately.

I do not wish to minimise the difficulties of reaching even a measure of agreement but it seems to me that to invite discussions with the three groups holds out a good deal better prospect of sensible proposals emerging than any other course which I can conceive. It might be that the discussions would break down altogether, possibly on the issue of whether or not there should be a general election, but I should do my best to carry out the discussions on constitutional changes without reference to this question of the general election.

I do not know if you would wish me to set out these ideas more tidily in the form of a despatch. If you think it desirable to do so, will you please let me know and I shall try to get the despatch off within a week or two. It may be, however, that, since all I am asking is authority to invite representatives of the two parties and of the Legislative Council to discuss constitutional changes with me, you would be able to obtain approval for that course on what I have said in this letter.

I should in any event not make any announcement until Bustamante returns early next month and until I have seen him again but, if you think that there is no objection to my making an announcement that I intend to invite the three groups to discuss constitutional matters with me, it would be helpful if you could let me know fairly soon by telegram.

**256** CAB 129/1, CP(45)133

29 Aug 1945

**'Policy in regard to Malaya and Borneo': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Hall (including Sarawak)**

At their meeting on the 31st May 1944, the War Cabinet gave provisional approval to certain proposals regarding the future policy of His Majesty's Government in Malaya and Borneo. These proposals had been formulated by a Ministerial Committee appointed for the purpose, and the Committee's report was circulated to the War Cabinet on the 18th May, 1944, under the number W.P. (44) 258. A copy of the report forms the Annex to this paper.<sup>1</sup>

2. As regards Malaya, the Committee expressed the view that the restoration of the pre-war constitutional and administrative system would be undesirable in the interests of efficiency and security, and of our declared purpose of promoting self-government in Colonial territories. The Committee went on to point out that His Majesty has at present no jurisdiction in the Malay States, and that his relations with the States rest upon treaties with the individual Rulers, under which the Rulers remain nominally independent, though bound to accept British advice on all matters except Mohammedan religion and Malay custom. As a necessary preliminary to all further changes in Malaya, the Committee recommended that fresh Treaties should be made with each of the Rulers, under which such jurisdiction would be ceded to His Majesty as would enable him to legislate for the States under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act. Thereafter an Order-in-Council would be made which would

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<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

provide for the future central and local government of the country. There would be established a Malayan Union with a central legislature; a Malayan Union Citizenship would also be created, which would not be confined to the Malays, but would be open to persons of whatever race, who may have been born in the country or who have genuinely adopted Malaya as their home. Thus the existing racial and parochial barriers would be broken down.

3. The Committee went on to recommend that the British Settlements of Penang and Malacca (at present part of the Colony of the Straits Settlements) should be incorporated in the Malayan Union, but that Singapore should for the time being (and without prejudice to the possibility of later amalgamation with the Malayan Union) be administered as a separate Colony under a separate Governor. Finally, the Committee envisaged that there should be appointed a "Governor-General," who would reside at Singapore and who would have the power of control not only over the Governor of the Malayan Union and the Governor of Singapore, but also over British Representatives in Borneo.

4. War Cabinet approval for these proposals was only given provisionally and for planning purposes. Plans have now been proceeding on this basis for over a year, and Sir Harold MacMichael, until recently High Commissioner for Palestine, has been provisionally selected as the special Representative of His Majesty's Government who will go out to Malaya to conclude the new Treaties with the Malay Rulers. Sir Harold has already paid a preliminary visit to India and S.E.A.C., and has thoroughly acquainted himself with the whole subject.

5. It has been strongly represented to me by Admiral Mountbatten<sup>2</sup> that a proper reception of His Majesty's Government's policy in Malaya and elsewhere depends upon its timely publication in advance. I find much force in Admiral Mountbatten's arguments, but I am not in a position to make any recommendation as to publication or policy so long as the proposed policy has merely received the *provisional* approval of the Cabinet, and that only for the confidential guidance of planners.

6. I am aware that we cannot fully gauge the temper of the people in Malaya until our return has been actually effected, and that a final decision on all the details of our future policy is therefore not yet possible. I am convinced, however, that the initial step of negotiating new Treaties with the Malay Rulers must be taken as soon as possible, and that any delay on this cardinal point, particularly if it were to involve a return to the state of affairs existing before the Japanese occupation of Malaya, might result in the loss of a unique opportunity for setting the territory on the road to political progress.

7. Accordingly I now seek the definite confirmation by my colleagues of the policy outlined above, and approval for Sir Harold MacMichael's appointment. I consider it essential that he should depart for the Far East in the very near future. If the policy is now confirmed, I shall make a separate recommendation as soon as possible regarding the question of publicity.

8. As regards Borneo, the Ministerial Committee, as in the case of Malaya, reached the conclusion that the restoration of the pre-war constitutional and administrative system in the four territories involved would be undesirable in the interests of security, and of our declared purpose of promoting social, economic and political progress in Colonial territories. The territories in question are the State of

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<sup>2</sup> Supreme allied commander in South-East Asia, 1943-1946.

*North Borneo*, at present (as regards its internal affairs) under the independent administration of the British North Borneo (Chartered) Company, the small Island of *Labuan*, at present administered as one of the Straits Settlements, the State of *Brunei*, which is ruled by a Malay Sultan on the same lines as the nine States in the Malay Peninsula, and *Sarawak*, which (as regards its internal affairs) is under the control of an independent white Rajah of British nationality (Sir Vyner Brooke). The Committee recommended the direct assumption by His Majesty's Government of responsibility for administration in North Borneo, the integration of Labuan with North Borneo and the cession to His Majesty of full jurisdiction in Brunei and Sarawak. In the case of Sarawak, the Committee recommended that the new Treaty providing for this cession of jurisdiction should also secure the acceptance by the Rajah of a Resident British Adviser, whose advice must be sought and acted upon in all substantial matters of policy and administration. (The present Treaty with Brunei already provides for a Resident British Adviser).

9. In approving the above recommendations of the Committee, the War Cabinet authorised my predecessor to open confidential negotiations with the British North Borneo (Chartered) Company for the transfer of their sovereign and administrative rights over North Borneo to His Majesty's Government. No financial commitment, however, was to be entered into without further authorisation. The War Cabinet also authorised my predecessor to open confidential discussions with the Rajah of Sarawak.

10. Discussions with the North Borneo Company have in fact been proceeding since that date, but I am not at present asking for a Cabinet decision, since I am awaiting from the Company's Representatives an expression of their view on the terms upon which a settlement by arbitration might be based.

11. As regards Sarawak, the Rajah has shown considerable reluctance to enter into any discussions with His Majesty's Government with a view to concluding a fresh Agreement. After many delays, he represented that, owing to the impossibility of consulting his people, he was not in a position to enter into a new engagement. My predecessor agreed, therefore, that discussions should be for the purpose of coming to an understanding on the terms of a new Agreement which, when the time came, the Rajah would be prepared to recommend for acceptance and which would be implemented in accordance with the appropriate procedure of the Sarawak Government. The Rajah, however, was still hesitant and by October last progress had only reached the point of securing his consent to consider a note of His Majesty's Government's proposals.

12. In November, however, the Rajah decided to reinstate his nephew, Mr. Anthony Brooke, as Rajah Muda<sup>3</sup> (a step which can be taken to mean that he must be regarded as heir-presumptive), and suggested that he should take part in the proposed discussions, which eventually began in March.

13. The Rajah Muda and the two other members of the Sarawak Commission nominated by the Rajah to represent him have shown themselves opposed to the proposals which have been made to them on the basis of the decision of the War Cabinet and since the fourth meeting, which was held on the 10th May, a state of stalemate has existed, while the Sarawak Government consult their legal adviser on His Majesty's Government's definition of the international position of Sarawak. My

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<sup>3</sup> Rajah Muda: literally, young prince or ruler.

predecessor, therefore, wrote to the Rajah in July requesting that active consideration should be given to the measures which were necessary on the Sarawak side for the resumption of discussions. The Rajah replied that the Rajah Muda was now administering the Government and that in accordance with the terms of the Sarawak Constitution, Colonel Stanley's letter had been passed to him for action. Nothing further has been heard from the Sarawak side.

14. The Rajah Muda and members of the Sarawak Government have from time to time expressed the wish that Civil Government in Sarawak should be restored as soon as possible, and that the Rajah Muda, as a member of the Brooke family administering the Government, should be allowed to return to the country during the period of military administration.

15. I propose that I should now be authorised to tell the Rajah that the relations with His Majesty's Government are governed by the Agreements of 1888 and 1941, and that so long as he remains Rajah His Majesty's Government cannot recognise any claim on his part to devolve his powers and prerogatives as Rajah on to an "Officer Administering the Government" or any other person. In this connection it is to be observed that Section 18(ii) of the Order of 1941 (providing for the future government of Sarawak) which enacts that "In the event of the Rajah having occasion to leave the State or to be temporarily absent from the seat of Government the Rajah in Council may appoint an officer to administer the Government and such officer shall forthwith assume all the powers and prerogatives of the Rajah (subject to the provisions of this Order)"—has local application only, and does not apply to the present position where the Rajah is in this country and capable of negotiating with His Majesty's Government.

16. I should further propose to say that His Majesty's Government look to the Rajah to ensure that an agreement satisfactory to His Majesty's Government is reached within a period of two months and that, failing the conclusion of such an agreement within that time, it will be necessary for His Majesty's Government to consider what course they must take to ensure that they are in a position and have the necessary authority in the internal as well as the external policies of the Sarawak administration to carry out the responsibility for the territory which they bear to the British Parliament and in the international field. I should like to have authority to add that there can be no question of the Rajah or his Government being permitted to return to Sarawak until such arrangements as are satisfactory to His Majesty's Government have been made.

17. The proposed future changes in the status of Labuan and Brunei are of comparatively minor importance, and need, I think, present no difficulties. I should, nevertheless, be grateful if my colleagues could now give their final approval to the proposals as regards these territories which were considered by the War Cabinet on the 31st May last year.

18. To sum up, I request the approval of my colleagues for the following measures:—

(a) the definite confirmation of the policy as regards Malaya which is described in paragraphs 2 and 3 above; the first step towards the implementation of this policy being the definitive appointment of Sir Harold MacMichael and his visit to Malaya to conclude new treaties with the Rulers of the several States;

(b) a communication to the Rajah of Sarawak in the sense indicated in paragraphs

15 and 16 above;

(c) the proposed changes in the administration of Labuan and in the matter of His Majesty's jurisdiction in Brunei.

## 257 CAB 128/2, CM 48(45)5

1 Nov 1945

### 'Newfoundland': Cabinet conclusions on the future form of government

The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Secretary of state for Dominion Affairs (C.P. (45) 234) outlining his proposals for enabling the people of Newfoundland to decide their future form of government.

*The Secretary of State for Dominion [sic] Affairs* said that he had it in mind that in the spring of 1946 there should be elected a National Convention of Newfoundlanders, whose duty it would be to review the alternative courses open to the Island, and to make recommendations to His Majesty's Government as a basis for a national referendum. The first step would be to send out from this country an expert adviser, who could give adequate guidance on constitutional forms and procedure. It was desirable that he should be accompanied by a Treasury representative, so that there could be made available to the Convention a full and objective statement on the financial and economic situation. Newfoundland was at present in a favourable financial position, but this resulted largely from war-time circumstances and it was doubtful how well the Island would fare under normal conditions. There was little prospect of our being able to find the dollars required for reconstruction and development in Newfoundland, and in present circumstances Canada would not be willing to finance reconstruction in the Island. There were, however, indications that public opinion in Newfoundland was moving towards the idea of union with Canada; and, although the initiative must be left entirely with Newfoundland, the Secretary of State thought it important that nothing should be said to discourage this movement of opinion. In his view, union with Canada was the natural destiny of Newfoundland.

In discussion the following points were raised:—

(a) *The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* said that business and financial interests had in the past obtained undue influence in the management of the Island's affairs, and special care should be taken to ensure that the proposed National Convention was so constituted as to reflect the true interests of the Islanders. It might be advisable to provide that candidates for election to the Convention should be persons resident in the area which they were to represent.

*The Prime Minister* said that, even if such a requirement were imposed, he feared that the business and financial interests might secure an unduly large representation in the Convention. Having regard to the special conditions obtaining in Newfoundland, he wondered whether it would not be preferable to discard the geographical basis of election, and to devise an alternative method of election by various groups of workers and other interests in the Island. Alternatively, the two methods might be combined, some members of the Convention being elected on a geographical basis, and others as representing particular sections of the Island community. He believed that, unless some such measures were adopted, the interests of the Islanders themselves would not be properly represented in the Convention.

(b) *The Minister of Health*<sup>1</sup> raised the question whether it was appropriate that a change in the status of Newfoundland should be considered by the Parliament at Westminster alone. Would it not be more appropriate that the report of the proposed Convention should be considered in the first instance by some Imperial conference including representatives of the other Dominions?

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* undertook to consider this suggestion, though he thought it unlikely that Dominion Governments would wish to be associated with the discussion of a problem which was of special concern to one particular Dominion.

(c) The view was expressed that it ought not to be assumed at this stage, without further discussion, that Newfoundland's ultimate destiny lay in union with Canada. Canada was subject to strong economic influence from the United States, and her future development could not be predicted with certainty. Nor should it be assumed, without further enquiry, that there was no possibility of Newfoundland's being so developed as to become economically independent. For these reasons some Ministers wished to reserve judgment on the question whether Canada should be encouraged to absorb Newfoundland.

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* said that this question would not arise in the immediate future, and would not in any event arise in the form of a compulsory change of status. There was no question of Canada's assuming any responsibility for Newfoundland unless the initiative came from the Newfoundlanders themselves.

(d) In paragraph (7) of C.P. (45) 234, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs had stated that he wished to reserve for the present the question of remitting Newfoundland's guaranteed sterling debt of about £17 million, but suggested that it might be found desirable for the United Kingdom Government to remit this debt as their contribution to any settlement of the constitutional issue which might be achieved.

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer* reserved his opinion on this point. If Newfoundland sought union with Canada, it might be reasonable that Canada should take over this sterling debt as part of the settlement.

(e) In Appendix A of C.P. (45) 234, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs had submitted the draft of a statement which he would propose to make in Parliament about the procedure suggested for enabling Newfoundlanders to choose their future form of government.

In discussion, it was pointed out that a statement of this length was certain to provoke a demand for a debate; and it would be convenient if the draft statement could be substantially shortened.

The Cabinet:—

(1) Expressed general approval of the proposals outlined in C.P. (45) 234.

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to give further consideration to the points noted at (a) and (b) above, and to consider means of shortening the draft statement contained in Appendix A of C.P. (45) 234.

(3) Agreed to defer a final decision on this matter until the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs had submitted a further memorandum embodying the results of Conclusion (2) above.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Aneurin Bevan, MP for Ebbw Vale.

**258** CAB 128/2, CM 56(45)5

27 Nov 1945

**'Newfoundland': Cabinet conclusions on the future form of government**

The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (C.P. (45) 292) commenting on the points raised in their earlier discussion on the 1st November<sup>1</sup> of his proposals for enabling the people of Newfoundland to decide their future form of government.

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* recalled that in the earlier discussion it had been suggested that the proposed National Convention might be constituted on a vocational, instead of a geographical, basis of election in order to prevent an unduly high representation of business and financial interests. He had taken the advice of the Commission of Government<sup>2</sup> on this point and, after full consideration, he was satisfied that the suggestion would be impracticable, for the reasons summarised in paragraph 2 of his memorandum. He agreed, however, that it was important to ensure that the Convention adequately represented the interests of the Islanders themselves; and for this purpose he proposed that it should be made a requirement that every candidate should have resided in his constituency for the two years immediately preceding the election.

He had also considered the suggestion that the report of the proposed Convention should be considered by an Imperial Conference. He was, however, satisfied that a change in Newfoundland's status was a matter for settlement between Newfoundland and the Parliament of Westminster. Discussion of such a question at an Imperial Conference would be embarrassing, not only to Newfoundland, but also to the Dominions, particularly Canada.

The third suggestion made in the Cabinet's earlier discussion was that the proposed announcement in Parliament might be substantially shorter than he had previously contemplated. He thought it would be appropriate that he should make a full announcement in the House of Lords, on the lines of the draft annexed to his earlier memorandum (C.P. (45) 234); but he now submitted (in the Annex to C.P. (45) 292) a shorter draft for use in the House of Commons.

The Cabinet endorsed the conclusions reached by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs on the points which had been raised at their earlier meeting. Discussion turned on the terms of the proposed announcement in Parliament. Some doubt was expressed about the expediency of including in this announcement the reference (at the beginning of the penultimate paragraph of the draft annexed to C.P. (45) 292) to the difficulty of providing from the United Kingdom further financial assistance for Newfoundland. This passage seemed to be destined to encourage the view that Newfoundland's ultimate destiny lay in union with Canada. At the Cabinet's earlier discussion, however, some Ministers had doubted whether it should be assumed at this stage, without further discussion, that the ideal solution of Newfoundland's difficulties lay in union with Canada. On this point there had been some difference of view, but it had been agreed that there could be no question of Canada's assuming any responsibility for Newfoundland unless the initiative came from the Newfoundlanders themselves. In these circumstances it seemed preferable

<sup>1</sup> See 257.

<sup>2</sup> ie, the existing government of Newfoundland.

that the statement of policy to be made on behalf of His Majesty's Government should not contain any hint of union with Canada.

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* agreed to delete from the draft statement annexed to C.P. (45) 292 the first three sentences of the penultimate paragraph, and the words "on this account" at the end of that paragraph; and to make corresponding changes in the final paragraph of the longer statement to be made in the House of Lords (Appendix A of C.P. (45) 234).

The Cabinet:—

(1) Approved the proposals set out in C.P. (45) 234 and 292 for enabling the people of Newfoundland to choose their future form of government.

(2) Agreed that simultaneous announcements of these proposals should be made in the House of Lords and the House of Commons respectively, in the terms of the drafts annexed to C.P. (45) 234 and 292, subject to the textual amendments noted above.

**259** CO 83/239/4, no 1

10 May 1946

[Fiji]: despatch from Governor Sir A Grantham to Mr Hall on constitutional amendments proposed by the European Electors' Association. *Minutes* by J B Sidebotham<sup>1</sup> and Mr Creech Jones [Extract]

I have the honour to forward the enclosed Memorial from the European Electors' Association of Fiji, praying for a revision of the Letters Patent "which would enable the people of the Colony to enjoy a greater measure of control of their own political affairs".

2. It will be seen that the Memorial advocates the following alternatives [sic] in the constitution: the substitution of an unofficial for the present official majority in the Legislative Council; the choice of the Fijian unofficial members by popular ballot instead of by selection from a panel nominated by the Council of Chiefs; the extension of the franchise by the abolition of the present property and income qualifications and the granting of votes to women, and civil servants; the appointment of unofficial members of Executive Council to be restricted to elected members of Legislative Council; and the abandonment of the system of nominating European and Indian unofficial members of Legislative Council which was introduced in 1937.

3. The basic reform which the Memorialists hope to bring about is the creation of an unofficial majority in the Legislative Council. You will have gathered from the correspondence beginning with my predecessor's telegram No. 471 of the 21st of August, 1943, that Sir Philip Mitchell was disposed to regard such a development as perhaps not undesirable and that he felt that the Governor's veto, with increased powers for the Governor in Council, would provide adequate safeguards. While I am naturally mindful of, and anxious to see applied in Fiji as elsewhere, the "declared policy" to which the closing sentence of the Memorial refers, I cannot believe that it would be to the benefit of the people of this Colony, in the peculiar circumstances of racial separatism which still exist here, to entrust a large part of the management of public affairs to a group of individuals who would be unable to agree on more than a

<sup>1</sup> CO assistant secretary, 1941, head of Ceylon and Pacific Dept.

fraction of the matters that came before them, and the clash of whose interests would impede the transaction of the Council's business and excite competition rather than co-operation among the three races in the political field. The officials of the Association on whose behalf the Memorial is submitted have stated that their proposals have the support of the leaders of the Indian community and they profess, with more sincerity than foresight, to believe that an unofficial majority with equal representation will satisfy the Indians for half a century to come. You will have on your files enough material about the "common roll" agitation of 1929 and subsequent years to know that there is little likelihood of the Indians renouncing the political aspirations which were then so forcefully expressed. In the meantime, so long as the Europeans are moving in the general direction in which those aspirations point, the Indians will travel cheerfully with them but with their minds set on a much longer journey. It is certainly in this light that the Fijians would view the establishment of an unofficial majority. They would regard it as one more step in the Indian march to power and one more retreat from the obligations assumed by the Crown under the Deed of Cession . . . .

5. The second major reform which you are asked to consider is nothing less than the break-up of the present system of Fijian Administration and the substitution of the ballot box for the "bondage" of Chieftly rule. The arguments against that type of rule are, of course, unanswerable if one begins from the premise that the Chiefs are interested in nothing but the retention of their own privileges, and the Government in nothing but the retention of the Chiefs as a group of convenient "yesmen" who will enforce blind loyalty to the central power. That, however, is far from being the position in Fiji, as a perusal of Sir Philip Mitchell's despatch No. 47 of 16th July, 1943, and of the memorandum by Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna<sup>2</sup> which was published as Legislative Council Paper No. 22 of 1944, should be sufficient to indicate. What is being attempted here is not the preservation of an outmoded political system but the gradual modernization of a system which is still virile and adaptable and which, whatever its shortcomings, at any rate provides complete social security for all. In this age of community-consciousness it should not seem an unpromising foundation on which to build; although it is important to realize, as I believe the leaders of the Fijians do, that what matters is not the foundation but the completed house. No opportunity is lost of impressing on those leaders the need to move with the times. Addressing the last meeting of the Council of Chiefs, in November, 1944, on the newly enacted Fijian Affairs Ordinance Mr. Nicoll, then Acting Governor, said: "No organization can remain static; it must either progress or retrogress. It is the intention of this Government to see to it that the Native Government progresses. . . . You will require the best Fijian personnel available and I would invite your attention to the numbers of Fijians in the Military Forces who have shown real qualities of leadership and readiness to take responsibility . . . . The Fijian social system cannot remain static; it must develop as it developed in the past and any attempt to stop or retard that development . . . must result in disaster." That Mr. Nicoll's advice was taken to heart is evidenced by the fact that today 4 out of 13 Rokos<sup>3</sup> and 26 out of 28 Magistrates in the Fijian Administration are men not of chiefly rank. There are a number of young Fijians today who find communal ties

<sup>2</sup> Ratu Sir J L V Sukuna, member of Executive Council, secretary for Fijian affairs.

<sup>3</sup> Roko: the term for a Fijian chief who had an administrative role within the native administration.

irksome and who consider that they would be better off if they exchanged the "bondage of chiefly rule" for the spacious personal liberties of western democracy; but these are for the most part individualists of the type which chafes at restraint by any authority and which modern theory would condemn as anti-social. I am satisfied from the reports of the District Commissioners, and from my own observation, that the overwhelming majority of Fijians are content with their own system of government, that they believe it compares favourably with any rival system of which they have knowledge and that, even without the ballot box, they are well able to ensure that the wishes of the ordinary people are understood, and the interests of the ordinary people protected, by those in power. Nor can I accept the submission in paragraph 5 of the Memorial that "the conditions of the Fijian people relatively have deteriorated" and that they are "being relegated to a minor role in the economic and political fields". Much nearer the truth, in my opinion, is the picture painted by Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna in the enclosed memorandum<sup>4</sup> in which he replies in detail to those paragraphs in the Memorial which are concerned with the Fijian Administration.

6. Like Ratu Sir Lala, I am willing to give the Memorialists credit for having the cause of the Fijians genuinely at heart; but human motives are seldom entirely unmixed with self-interest and the activities and public pronouncements of leading members of the Electors' Association have left little doubt that they expect the emancipation of the Fijian to result in two substantial benefits for the European. In the first place, they believe the abolition of the unofficial majority in the Legislative Council and of "Chiefly rule" outside the Council will make it possible for the Fijian, and the land which is the Fijian's precious heritage, to be exploited far more vigorously than they have been under the existing regime. The exploitation would, of course, purport to be for the Fijian's own good, but it would also inevitably be pursued in a manner likely to confer the maximum benefit on European planters and traders. It is hard to see how one policy could serve both these ends. In the past the European community here has not been conspicuous for its zeal in seeking to improve the wages and living conditions of Fijian labour, nor has it reacted kindly to measures for the closer control of Fijian land which have been introduced in recent years. I do not mean to accuse the Europeans of consciously striving to preserve the privileged status which they have so far enjoyed, and to hinder reforms which, by raising the Fijian standard of living, would probably lower their own. I merely wish to underline the truism that in a territory where there is a large native population and a small settled white population, standing largely in the relation of employee to employer, or of workman to capitalist, it is rarely possible to place the well-being of the former entirely in the hands of the latter; and in Fiji I am convinced that the time has not yet come when the Government can renounce its role of arbiter between the conflicting interests of the native Fijians and the foreigners (both European and Indian) who have made their home among them.

7. In the second place, the Electors' Association plainly sees in the "emancipated" Fijian a powerful bulwark against the rising tide of Indian numerical strength and Indian political ambition. The Europeans, being too few in number to fight their own battles with certainty of victory, are to call the Fijians to their aid. The two races, co-operating to dominate the unofficial majority in the Legislative Council, will be able to keep the Indian colossus in check. Of all the futures that one could envisage

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<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

for the Fijian none could be more disastrous than that in which his function would be to provide a last line of defence against the growing power of his Indian neighbour. It is apparent that there can be only one solution of the Indian problem in Fiji, and that is the reconciliation of Indian aspirations and interests with those of other races in the Colony, and particularly those of the Fijian. Any effort to divide Indians and Fijians permanently into two hostile camps will do grave harm to both races, but the worst sufferer, in the long run, must be the race which is in the minority. If the Fijian, in his present state of development, were suddenly given a vote and pitchforked headlong into the political arena, he would inevitably become the plaything of mutually antagonistic forces, from whose collision it is far better that he should stand aside . . . .

15. From the foregoing I can come to only one conclusion and that is that any alteration in the constitution is not at present generally desired by the Europeans, is not pressed by the Indians and is opposed by the Fijians. I have already given reasons why I consider that any of the major changes put forward by the Association would be harmful.

16. I therefore recommend that the reply to the Memorialists should be that you are prepared to approve of the extension of the franchise to civil servants (which, I suggest you add, had been recommended by me some months previously), but that you regret that you are not prepared to agree to the other requests in the Memorial.

#### Minutes to 259

1. I am going on leave tomorrow and I much regret that as this file has only reached me yesterday I have not been able to give the petition in No. 1 the detailed study and consideration, which had time permitted, I should have wished to devote to it. I think it may be helpful if I put on record now certain preliminary, and indeed rather provisional conclusions which I have drawn on an admittedly hasty reading of the material before us. It is necessary to bear in mind the composition of the population of Fiji by communities. This is roughly as follows:—

Fijians	115,000
Indians	117,000
Europeans	5,300
Part Europeans	6,000

2. I agree with the Governor that this petition submitted by this European Political Association in Fiji, with its stated desire to advance the well being and development of the Fijian community, is not, in fact the straightforward document which it purports to be. The comments of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna are quite enough of themselves to establish that, I think. I feel that the Governor's estimate of the political reasons and objectives behind the petition, as set out, especially in para. 6 of this despatch come far nearer to the truth than the rather blatant efforts of the Association to gain Fijian support for their manoeuvres to secure an unofficial majority, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Fiji and the Fijians in particular.

3. I think it is almost axiomatic that a change in the constitution of a Colony should conform to the generally expressed wishes of its inhabitants as a whole, and so far as I am aware, there is nothing at present to show that such changes as are now proposed by the European Association would be acceptable to the Fijians or even in

some respects to the Indian community either. It is true that in the case of Mauritius the constitutional changes now proposed include the vote for women for all communities alike, but there such a change accords with the expressed desire as canvassed in a discussion between the Governor and political representatives of all the parties including the Indians in Mauritius. In Fiji the contrary seems likely and it is particularly interesting to note from para. 10 of the Governor's despatch that Indian opinion in Fiji as canvassed in connection with the local Government scheme which has not yet been submitted to us, is quite against the vote being given to Indian women. In any event I do not think that in Fiji where a substantial proportion of the population's original inhabitants of the country would not as yet wish to break away from the forms of society and principles of representations which have been theirs for many generations and which they understand and cherish, that a section of the community should be compelled at the dictates of a handful of Europeans and, perhaps too, of a body of immigrant labour numerically a little larger than the Fijians themselves, to be forced to accept a system of election or to have imposed upon them a constitution in which they admit they are neither sufficiently advanced to take full part and of which they are not convinced, would be to their benefit or advantage.

4. I should be in favour of granting an unofficial majority, were we satisfied that this step could be taken without serious *detriment* to Fijian interests. As matters stand in Fiji at present, it seems to me that the adoption of such a course would

(a) inevitably throw the Fijians into direct opposition with the Indian community at a time when the former are less well equipped with a knowledge of the "things of this world" than the latter; and in the course of the inevitable struggle that would ensue

(b) would tie the Fijians almost inevitably to the 'apron strings' of the European politicians in whom they would probably see their only allies in the fight against the Indians' attempt for political domination.

(In this connection it is interesting to note the conclusion which the Governor reached in connection with the forthcoming Suva municipal elections, that a communal roll system would have to be maintained, (see No. 1 on 185072/46 below) a view which we approved on No. 4 on that file.)

5. I do not feel that it would be fair to the Fijians in their present state of development to place them in such a position, nor do I think that it would be in accordance with the principle of real democracy or of the Atlantic Charter to encourage a situation to develop which would inevitably, in my view, accentuate communal differences and might well lead the Fijians to curse the day on which they trusted their future to the care of the British Crown.

6. I suggest, therefore, that the reply to the petition might be somewhat on the following lines:—

"That the Secretary of State has received and considered the petition, that he is anxious to see the members of all communities in Fiji in their several stages of political and social development, exercising an increasing measure of control through the legislature in local affairs, but that he is not prepared to consider constitutional changes unless they can be shown to have the support of all sections of the community and that he is not satisfied that any such general agreement has been expressed in the changes now advocated by the European Association or that

such changes are desirable or are likely to be of benefit to all the parties concerned and that in these circumstances he cannot see his way to agree to the adoption of the reforms advocated.”

7. I should go on to add a para. on the lines of para. 2 of the despatch at 7 on 85038/46 below (which has been held up) regarding the Governor’s power of veto and say also as suggested in para. 16 of No. 1 on this file regarding the extension of the franchise to Civil Servants. (That issue will be found to be discussed at length on 85038/44 below, when the general conclusion was, I think, that certain particular considerations in Fiji should not stand in the way of the enfranchisement of Civil Servants there (see Sir Edward Gent’s<sup>5</sup> minute on 16/4/44 on that file)). The Governor when he returned to the charge on this matter in para. 6 of No. 41 on 85229/46, on which action was proceeding, with a view to the drafting of revised Letters Patent, supported Sir C. [sic] Mitchell’s views. Action was also subsequently [held] up while a further point which would effect the amendment of the Letters Patent viz. the continuance of power of veto which the Secretary of State promised to consider in reply to the Parliamentary question on 85038/P.Q.2/46 below was under examination.

8. In conclusion I suggest the despatch should say that the Secretary of State would be willing to consider in due course recommendations for other measures of constitutional reform which the Governor is satisfied would receive general public support.<sup>6</sup>

J.B.S.  
10.9.46

The Governor’s letter is a persuasive & well argued dispatch of some importance. He differs from Sir Philip Mitchell and his views are not consistent with those of Prof. Ivor Jennings in his recent article on Ceylon in *International Affairs* (July 1946). Nevertheless, he has made a strong case in reply to the Petitioners & I agree with the proposed terms on [sic] the reply suggested in Mr Sidebotham’s minute 10/9/46 i.e. as in §6 down to line 6 “local affairs”. Then add

“He is, however, unable to consider constitutional changes unless he is satisfied that they are likely to be broadly supported by the various sections of the community. With regard to the changes now advocated by the European Association he is not satisfied that there is general agreement on the views expressed. He regrets that the changes advocated cannot be adopted because he is not persuaded that they are likely to be of benefit to all the parties concerned”.

I also agree that reply should be as proposed in §8 (as amended by Sir Chas. Jeffries).

The whole question raises a number of fundamental problems & I should like to discuss them in relation to Fiji when Mr Sidebotham returns from leave.

A.C.J.  
12.9.46

<sup>5</sup> CO assistant under-secretary of state, 1942–1946; gov of Malaya, 1946.

<sup>6</sup> Sir C Jeffries commented: ‘and add an endorsement of the view expressed by the Governor in para. 9 that experiment should begin in the field of local government’.

(1) The ball is now with Fiji & I think the Governor (who is very liberally minded) will watch that consideration is given to changes as circumstances require.

(2) There is reason for holding up further action until India has declared herself & all the complications involved in that are known, together with new decisions on nationality status.

(3) The problem of Indian & other groups of this kind in relation to constitutional change is difficult & calls for much more thinking out for guidance than we have yet given to it. We must keep this in mind in our own C.O. planning.

A.C.J.  
13.11.46

## 260 CO 537/1632, no 186

27 May 1946

### [Sarawak]: CO internal note on cession to the British Crown

[This background note was prepared by A N Galsworthy, with amendment by J S Bennett. It was described by Sir T Lloyd as 'very useful' and by Sir G Gater as 'a good piece of work by Mr Galsworthy. Paras 8 and 9 are particularly effective' (minutes 24 and 25 May 1946). It was sent to the Foreign Office, the India Office and the Dominions Office.]

1. The territory of Sarawak was ceded to Sir James Brooke by the Sultan of Brunei in 1841. Since the Agreement concluded with the Rajah of Sarawak in 1888 which placed the State under British protection H.M.G. have exercised control over Sarawak's foreign relations, and have had the right to determine any question respecting the right of succession to the rulers of Sarawak. The same Agreement required the consent of H.M.G. to the cession or alienation of any part of the territory of Sarawak. A supplementary agreement concluded in 1941 gave H.M.G. the right to appoint a resident British representative in Sarawak, whose advice had to be taken on all matters affecting Sarawak's external relations and defence, and the rights and status of foreign nationals in the territory. The British Representative was also entitled to offer his advice on matters touching the general administration of the State.

2. In 1944 and 1945 H.M.G. entered into discussions with representatives of the Sarawak Government with a view to clarifying the lines on which relations between H.M.G. and Sarawak should develop in the post-war period, so as to ensure that H.M.G. in the United Kingdom would be in a position to exercise effectively the responsibility for Sarawak which they were coming more and more to bear in the eyes of Parliament and world opinion. Discussions on these lines had been proceeding for some months with the "Provisional Government of Sarawak" (of which the Rajah's nephew was the head), without achieving any result, when in the autumn of 1945 the Rajah announced that, in consequence of the conclusion of hostilities in the Far East, he had decided to reassume his powers and prerogatives under the 1941 Constitution, thus terminating the functions of the "Provisional Government". Thereupon he conducted the discussions with H.M.G. himself. He represented to H.M.G. that their proposals did not in his opinion go far enough, and that he considered that the time had come when, in the interests of the native communities of Sarawak, the territory should cease to be a protected State and

should become an integral part of His Majesty's colonial possessions. (It should be noted here that in the Political Wills of the first two Rajahs, there was an ultimate gift, in certain circumstances, of the sovereignty of Sarawak to the reigning English monarch). H.M.G. accepted the proposal provided it proved acceptable to the native communities as a whole.

3. The reasons given by the Rajah for his conviction that the incorporation of Sarawak in the British colonial empire would be in the interests of the native inhabitants of the territory were: *first*, he trusted the British Government more than anyone to give the natives a fair deal, and feared that, unless this step were taken, the future of Sarawak would be uncertain and confused; *second*, if Sarawak had had to rely entirely on its own diminished resources, it would not have been in a position to meet its present needs and liabilities, and the task of reconstruction after the years of Japanese occupation; *third*, except with the assistance of the British Government and access to the resources of the colonial empire as a whole, there could be no expansion in Sarawak's educational, medical and other social services, nor development of the resources of the territory or improvement in the standard of living.

4. H.M.G., by agreement with the Rajah (who resumed his administration in mid-April) took steps to satisfy themselves by independent enquiry that the Rajah's proposal was in fact generally acceptable to the native communities. This enquiry was conducted by two members of Parliament, one from the Government and one from the Opposition, both of whom have experience of the Far East and speak the Malay language<sup>1</sup>. After a tour of Sarawak earlier this month, during which they discussed the Rajah's proposal with the representatives of the various communities in the State, they were able to confirm to H.M.G. that there was sufficient acquiescence in, or support for the Rajah's proposal for the matter to be submitted to the Sarawak State Councils for a final decision. The necessary legislation was submitted to and passed by the Councils, and the formal Instrument was signed by the Rajah and the Acting British Representative in Kuching on the 21st of May.

5. The Rajah's brother, who as Tuan Muda<sup>2</sup> of Sarawak was the heir apparent, was given facilities to fly to Sarawak with his advisers, in order that he might have full opportunity of stating to the people of the territory and to the Councils his reasons for opposing the Rajah's proposal.

6. There has been some criticism on the score that the small majority in the Council Negri (i.e. Legislative Council) of Sarawak in favour of the incorporation of the territory in the colonial empire was obtained by the European vote. Voting on the third reading was 19 for and 16 against: the non-European vote was 12 for and 13 against. H.M.G. did not however feel that this factor afforded any ground for not accepting the incorporation of Sarawak for the following reasons:—

- (a) The majority of 1 among the non-European members against the Bill cannot be construed as being a true reflection of non-European opinion throughout the territory. The members in question were nominated by the Rajah-in-Council, and not elected by the people. Moreover, the various native communities were disproportionately represented. The Dyaks, comprising about 50% of the population, had only 4 seats out of a total of 37. The Chinese, representing some 25% of the population, had 3 seats; whereas the Malays who represent the remaining 25%

<sup>1</sup> D R Rees-Williams and L D Gammans.

<sup>2</sup> Tuan Muda: literally, young lord.

of the population, had 17 seats. Of the non-European members who voted against the Bill, 10 were Malays.

(b) It was because the House of Commons had expressed concern that the Council was not sufficiently representative of the people that H.M.G. took steps to ascertain the feelings of the native communities through an independent enquiry conducted by the two Members of Parliament. In these circumstances, H.M.G. felt that the voting of the non-European members could not be held to invalidate the report of the two Members of Parliament on the extent of agreement or acquiescence in the Rajah's policy that they had encountered among the people.

(c) Furthermore, it would have been wrong to ignore the European votes in considering the extent to which the Council Negri represented the interests of the inhabitants of Sarawak. The Europeans voted freely as individuals possessing knowledge and experience of conditions in Sarawak, and not as an official bloc (in fact two of them voted against the Bill), and there are no grounds for assuming that in casting their votes they did not take into the fullest account the interests of the inhabitants of the territory.

7. As regards the financial settlement, the Rajah had originally contemplated that £1,000,000 should be set aside from Sarawak reserve funds as a Trust Fund, to provide for himself, certain members of his family, and certain of the Datus (i.e. local chiefs) for the remainder of their life-time, on a scale similar to that to which they had been accustomed hitherto, the residue thereafter being devoted to measures of social development in Sarawak. Subsequently, however, the Rajah elected not to proceed with this proposal. Furthermore he is understood to be making available for the furtherance of education amongst the inhabitants of Sarawak approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  (about £50,000) of the capital of a private Trust Fund which the second Rajah established in 1912 with the object of making provision for the last Rajah should the Brooke family cease to reign in Sarawak, and which thus now becomes payable to the present Rajah. (Under the earlier scheme, the whole of the capital of the 1912 Trust Fund was to have been contributed towards the £1,000,000 Trust Fund). The only charge on Sarawak revenues in favour of members of the Brooke family will henceforth be the annual provision which is to be made for the Rajah's brother (the Tuan Muda) and nephew. Final details of these financial arrangements have not yet been received in London.

8. Sarawak will henceforth benefit from our wide experience of colonial administration. It will participate more fully in the joint welfare and development schemes and the resources of the colonial empire as a whole. H.M.G. have stated that their policy will be the rehabilitation of Sarawak, now suffering from the effects of the Japanese occupation, the improvement of social services and communications, and the controlled development of trade and resources with a view of raising the standard of living of the inhabitants. In all legislative and administrative measures the fullest regard will be paid to the religion and existing rights and customs of the various communities. As soon as possible steps will be taken, in consultation with the representatives of the communities, to determine what constitutional changes are required to associate the people of the territory with its government and administration on a basis as broadly representative as conditions permit, with a view to securing the maximum progressive constitutional development. In short, with the incorporation of Sarawak in the British colonial empire, H.M.G. undertake in full the

obligations towards its inhabitants prescribed in Article 73 of the United Nations Charter. (It will be recalled that, by their acceptance of Article 73 of the Charter, H.M.G. undertook to develop self-government in the non-self-governing territories under their administration, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples of those territories, to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions, according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of advancement, and to promote constructive measures of development.)

9. The main points to be brought out are therefore:

(a) Sarawak was not an independent sovereign state before it acquired colonial status. From the point of view of international law Sarawak possessed no separate personality, but was already British territory. Its independence was purely a domestic matter within the British Empire.

(b) The proposal that Sarawak should become an integral part of His Majesty's colonial possessions came spontaneously from the Rajah, whose declared purpose in putting forward his suggestion was the furtherance of the interests of the native communities.

(c) H.M.G. took steps to satisfy themselves by independent enquiry that the Rajah's proposal was generally acceptable to the native communities as a whole. H.M.G. exercised no pressure or persuasion of any sort whatsoever, and the measures were freely adopted by the State Councils under the Sarawak Constitution, after the Tuan Muda had been given facilities for stating his case.

(d) There is no question of the Rajah having "sold" the territory to H.M.G.

(e) With the incorporation of Sarawak in the British colonial empire, H.M.G. are undertaking to discharge in full their obligations towards the inhabitants of the territory as prescribed in the United Nations Charter.

## 261 CAB 128/9, CM 5(47)5

13 Jan 1947

### 'Malta: constitution': Cabinet conclusions

The Cabinet had before them a memorandum (C.P. (47) 24) submitted by the Lord Privy Seal, as Chairman of the Colonial Affairs Committee, covering the draft of a White Paper setting out proposals for a new constitution for Malta. A promise had been given in 1943 that after the war responsible government would be restored in Malta within the same sphere as between 1921 and 1933. Sir Harold MacMichael<sup>1</sup> had therefore visited the Colony as Constitutional Commissioner to discuss the form of the new constitution with representatives of local opinion. His report, which was also attached to C.P. (47) 24, and was to be published simultaneously with the White Paper, contained detailed proposals which were substantially acceptable to Maltese opinion. The Secretary of State for the Colonies submitted that Sir Harold MacMichael's proposals should be accepted, save on certain points, not of major importance, on which he suggested some modification, as set out in the draft White Paper.

*The Lord Privy Seal* informed the Cabinet that the draft White Paper had been

<sup>1</sup> Formerly gov of the Sudan, 1934–1938, and high commissioner of Palestine, 1938–1944.

considered by the Colonial Affairs Committee. They had devoted particular attention to the powers which could be exercised by the United Kingdom Government in emergency. They were now satisfied on this point; and the draft White Paper had been amended to make it clear that full power could be taken by the British Government in emergency.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that he was anxious that the White Paper should be issued forthwith so that it might be available when the debate on the Malta (Reconstruction) Bill took place in the House of Commons on 24th January.

The Cabinet:—

Authorised the Secretary of State for the Colonies to present to Parliament a White Paper, in the terms of the draft attached to C.P. (47) 24, announcing a new constitution for Malta.

**262** CO 537/3375, pp 9–14 5 June–14 Aug 1947  
 [New Hebrides]: minutes by J S Bennett, Sir T Lloyd, Mr Thomas and Mr Creech Jones on future administration

Sir T. Lloyd discussed this question on 3rd June with Sir C. Jeffries, Mr. Poynton, Mr. Sidebotham and myself.

2. The question of raising the revision of the New Hebrides Protocol at the Paris conference had tacitly been dropped. The points under discussion were, therefore, limited to (a) and (b) of Mr. Poynton's minute of 12th May.

3. Discussion turned first on Sir C. Jeffries' proposal that we should explore seriously the possibility of taking over the whole of the New Hebrides in return for some concession to France elsewhere which would compensate her for the renunciation of the French share in the New Hebrides Condominium. Sir C. Jeffries explained that he did not have only territorial concessions in mind. No one was immediately aware of any other material concessions which the French were obviously after and which would attract them. It was also pointed out that at the present moment, and probably for several more years to come, no French Government would be willing to take the risk of facing French opinion internally with a renunciation of French territory abroad. As regards territorial concessions, the Gambia (which has cropped up in the past as a possible factor in an exchange of colonial territory with France) was mentioned, but it was pointed out that local reactions in the Gambia to a transfer to French control would certainly be unfavourable. Finally, it was thought that for political reasons, particularly internationally, H.M.G. would not wish to embark on any step which could be represented as an annexation of further colonial territory. It was, therefore, felt that the suggestion of liquidating the Condominium in favour of an all-British administration could not be pursued.

4. We then examined the alternative, namely, liquidating the Condominium in favour of an all-French administration in return for some concession by France to Great Britain elsewhere. The question of the Ewes in West Africa, which has been mentioned before on this file, was brought up. The essence of the Ewe problem is that the British and French Ewe tribes wish to be united under British administration. Mr. Poynton reported that in his last conversations in Paris on this question the

French had still shown themselves quite unwilling to envisage any settlement of the Ewe problem which involved altering frontiers. On the other hand, it was becoming clear that nothing less than an alteration of frontiers would really satisfy either the Ewes themselves or the merits of the case. It was, therefore, suggested that this solution of the Ewe question might be assisted if we were in a position to offer the French a renunciation of the British share in the New Hebrides Condominium in return.<sup>1</sup>

5. We then discussed the hurdles which would have to be surmounted before the U.K. Government could bring possible renunciation of the British share in the New Hebrides Condominium into play as a factor in negotiations with the French Government. These are:—

(a) Commonwealth interest. It is, of course, one of the important principles of British Commonwealth relations that no renunciation of territory can be made without all the independent members of the Commonwealth being consulted. In the case of the New Hebrides, Australia and New Zealand have a special local interest as well. This interest is partly their general political one in the South Pacific Commission area (in which the New Hebrides is included), and also a defence interest centred on the big naval base at Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides which was built by the Americans during the war. It was recognised that Australia and New Zealand would probably take a good deal of persuading before they agreed to renunciation of the British share in the New Hebrides with the consequent British rights in this Base.

(b) The defence aspect. The Chiefs of Staff themselves have not been consulted on this question for some years, but a low level approach was made to the Joint Planning Staff last Autumn. The result (at No. 13 on the 1946 file) was a recommendation that, while the New Hebrides was not of great strategic importance to the U.K. itself, we should be principally guided by the views of Australia and New Zealand and that if, as was anticipated, they opposed transfer to the French we should support them.

6. Consultation with the Australian and New Zealand Governments would, therefore, have to be the first step if this matter must be pursued. We could raise the question with them against the background of the Ewe problem, with which they are familiar as members of the Trusteeship Council. However, if this was done, both the Australian and New Zealand Governments would be likely to wish to be satisfied that a transfer of the New Hebrides to full French control would not be contrary to the wishes of the inhabitants, and this is a further point which would have to be taken care of somehow.

7. It was, therefore, agreed to submit for Ministerial approval a proposal that the Australian and New Zealand Governments should be asked for their views on a proposal that the renunciation of the British share in the New Hebrides Condominium should be taken up with the French Government on the following three assumptions:—

(a) That the Ewe question had reached a point at which it was clear that no satisfactory settlement could be reached without territorial compensation elsewhere for the French.

<sup>1</sup> See also part 2 of this volume, 173.

(b) That a satisfactory understanding could be reached with the French about mutual defence requirements in the New Hebrides.

(c) That the transfer of the New Hebrides to full French control would not be contrary to the wishes of the inhabitants.

8. It was further agreed that, as a separate matter, the New Hebrides Protocol should be examined in detail by the Pacific Department with the object of deciding in what respects, if any, it would be essential to seek modifications in the Protocol irrespective of any ultimate settlement by way of terminating the Condominium altogether.

J.S.B.

5.6.47

*Mr. Ivor Thomas*  
*Secretary of State*

Our starting point at the discussion recorded by Mr. Bennett was the present unsatisfactory situation in the New Hebrides. Quite apart from the fact that, as things now are, that Condominium cannot have the advantage of assistance from C.D. and W. Funds, it was felt that the New Hebrides is under such disadvantages from its present system of administration that we ought to explore every possible means of changing that system to one of sole responsibility vested in the French or some British authority. For the reasons given in the note of the discussion we concluded that, if the Condominium is to be liquidated, that must be in favour of a French administration.

If you approve generally the proposals summarised in paragraph 7 of Mr. Bennett's minute overleaf, the first step will be that of departmental discussion with the Foreign Office and Dominions Office. If those Departments agree, it might be well before the Dominions Office are asked to take the matter up with the Australian and New Zealand Governments to report to the Ministerial Committee on Colonial Affairs, who would no doubt advise whether they felt it necessary to seek covering authority from the Cabinet for the approach to the two Dominion Governments.

T.I.K.L.

17.6.47

*Secretary of State*

Two things stand out clearly:—

- (1) conditions in the New Hebrides are not creditable;
- (2) the Condominium cannot be made a success under the present Protocol, which provides in effect for three concurrent and conflicting systems of administration.

If we look at the question from the point of view of the New Hebrides alone, there seem to me to be the following lines of solution:—

- (a) *To retain the Condominium, but to amend the Protocol in such a manner that it may be made to work.* I do not despair of this being done, and if it could be done, it would be a good object lesson in international collaboration to the world. It is true that the French and British colonial philosophies do not mix, and I suppose the same can be said of the French and British systems of law; it

might be necessary to choose between them, but I believe that this can be done. If we cannot secure Anglo-French administrative co-operation in the New Hebrides, what hope have we of securing a united Europe. To achieve this result, it would, of course, be necessary both for the French and for ourselves to send out administrators who are personally convinced of the possibility of this aim and keen on achieving it. This is the course which I should personally prefer and the one which is likely to lead us into the least public controversy. It involves only negotiations with the French, and although I do not under-rate the difficulty, I think success is possible. I have not yet seen any evidence of a real attempt to make the Condominium work.

(b) *To maintain the Condominium but to entrust the administration either to Great Britain or to France.* This would be similar to the British Empire Mandate for Nauru which is in practice administered by Australia. In view of the French state of apprehension about their Empire it may be presumed that they would not be willing to withdraw from the administration, and under this solution the United Kingdom, while not renouncing her legal title to the Condominium, would in practice withdraw. This would need consultation with the Dominions. This is a relatively simple solution which would open up the possibilities of a more creditable administration.

(c) *To partition the Islands between the United Kingdom and France, each being given sovereignty over its own portion.* It would be necessary in this case not only to consult the Dominions but to secure the approval of Parliament – not as a legal requirement but as a practical necessity. This would not, I think, present any great difficulties. The real objection is that it is a confession of failure about the working of the Condominium which I should not like to make in public.

(d) *To renounce the Condominium in favour either of British or of French sovereignty.* The French, in view of their state of apprehension about their Empire mentioned above, would not be likely to concur, and in view of the widespread accusations of imperial “retreat” which have been thrown about, it must not be too readily assumed that our Government and Parliament would concur in a British relinquishment, even though the wisdom of the Labour Government’s imperial policy has lately been so convincingly demonstrated as to have made the attacks on “the great imperial retreat” fall rather flat.

(e) *For both Great Britain and France to renounce their rights in favour of a third party.* The third party with the strongest claim is Australia, but the French, apart from the difficulty of giving up any territory in any circumstances, would almost certainly regard Australia as being identical with the United Kingdom.

It is possible also to think on the lines of a solution in which the South Pacific Commission could be brought into the picture.

It is possible, however, to envisage solutions which look beyond the New Hebrides alone. If we seek to solve the problem by an exchange of territory, the one that leaps to the mind most clearly at the present time is certainly the exchange of the Ewe-speaking part of French Togoland for the British share in the New Hebrides Condominium. It could be represented in a manner which should satisfy French “*amour propre*” and the requirements of our own political situation and would

enable us to meet the claims both of the Ewes and of the people of the New Hebrides.

As I do not like making a confession of failure shortly after the signing of a Treaty of Alliance with France, and as I believe the Condominium has not worked because neither side has never really tried to make it work, the line of solution I would prefer is that we should make a thorough revision of the Protocol with a view to making the Condominium work. You will notice, however, that the meeting presided over by Sir Thomas Lloyd came to the conclusion that the Condominium should be liquidated, and inter-departmental discussion with the Foreign Office and the Dominions Office is recommended as a preliminary step to taking the matter to the Ministerial Committee on Colonial Affairs. As the matter raises fundamental issues, you may possibly prefer to have another discussion yourself.

I.T.  
19.6.47

Will speak to Sir A. Grantham first. (a) The case for alteration is not stated. (b) A study of the shortcomings of the Protocol is called for.

A.C.J.  
23.6.47

We should have an office conference on this. I have spoken to Sir A. Grantham.

A.C.J.  
8.7.47

The Secretary of State held a meeting on 8th August at which Mr. Ivor Thomas, Sir C. Jeffries, Mr. Poynton, Mr. Sidebotham and myself were present.

2. It was agreed that the question of an actual territorial exchange with France involving the New Hebrides on one side and the Ewe part of French Togoland on the other, raised serious difficulties, and Mr. Ivor Thomas reported that he had quite informally sounded M. Le Roy of the French Embassy on such an idea over lunch and had received an unfavourable reaction.

3. It was decided, however, that we must in any event pursue the revision of the New Hebrides Protocol for the two reasons that it has been demonstrated to be almost unworkable and that it is in any case quite out of date compared with modern ideas of colonial administration and with Chapter XI of the Charter.

4. Mr. Sidebotham said that his Department had already begun a detailed examination of the Protocol to decide exactly what amendments were required. It was suggested that the amendments were likely to be very extensive and that it would be better to draft a completely new document rather than to amend the old one clause by clause.

5. The Secretary of State decided that a paper should be prepared for circulation to the other Departments concerned (F.O., C.R.O. and Chiefs of Staff), setting out the origin of the New Hebrides Condominium, the defects of the existing Protocol and proposals for amending it, with a view to negotiations being opened with the French Govt.

6. After the meeting Mr. Sidebotham had a word with me and he explained that Mr. Gaminara<sup>2</sup> would continue his detailed study of the Protocol as time permitted,

<sup>2</sup> A W Gaminara, seconded colonial service officer.

but that it was likely to take some little while. We agreed that since the immediate idea of an exchange of territory linking up with the Ewe question was not being pursued for the moment, there was no particular date line to work to in connection with the revision of the New Hebrides Protocol. We agreed that Mr. Watt,<sup>3</sup> on his return from leave, and Mr. Gaminara when he has been able to get further with his study of the Protocol, should consult together and initiate the draft of a paper as directed by the Secretary of State. We discussed briefly the form of the paper and came to the conclusion that it should be in two parts, the first a brief historical note plus a statement in general terms of what we now proposed, supplemented by an annex giving the detail about the Protocol and its revision. The Chiefs of Staff, for example, would not need to go into the latter question in detail . . . .

J.S.B.  
14.8.47

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<sup>3</sup> I B Watt, CO principal, International Relations Dept.

## 263 CO 936/30/3, no 13

3 Jan 1948

### [Falkland Islands]: minute by J S Bennett on claims to the Falklands and the Falkland Island Dependencies

[Owing to the withholding of so much material relating to the Falkland Islands, it is hard to find general statements or reflections on their future, even in the 1940s. This is one rare available example. The Columbian representative to the United Nations, Sr Sourdis, made a speech to the General Assembly on 3 Nov 1947, in which he was reported as foreseeing a day when 'that which is a colony in the seas of the South [of Latin America], shall come to be incorporated in the countries which by virtue of their common language, history, customs and traditions, can convert the inhabitants of these regions into citizens . . .']

If Sr. Sourdis' argument is to be applied to "that which is a colony in the seas of the South", it (the Falklands) should be incorporated in Scotland, with particular reference to the counties of Ross and Cromarty and Inverness-shire, which "by virtue of their common language, history, customs and traditions . . . (etc)". For that reason I don't think we need ever take the Argentinian claim to the *Falklands* seriously or fear any international debate on it. The Falkland Is. *Dependencies* are different as they are uninhabited (or virtually so) and there our claim is founded on strategic requirements. Consequently I think we can only keep the Dependencies, in the long run, with United States' goodwill.

## 264 PREM 8/1043

3 Feb 1948

### [Newfoundland referendum]: minute by Lord Addison (DO) to Mr Attlee

[Attlee agreed with Lord Addison's views as set out in this paper, and a CRO telegram was issued on 14 Feb 1948 urging (i) that Confederation ought to be included on the ballot paper, and (ii) that a second referendum must be provided for, if there was no absolute majority. The results of the First Referendum in June 1948 were: 21,944 for the Commission, 63,110 for Confederation, 69,230 for Responsible Government (14%, 41%

and 45% respectively). There were 176,000 voters and over a 90% turn out. In the Second Referendum in July 1948, with a straight choice between Confederation and Responsible Government, the voting was 78,451 for Confederation, and 71,217 for Responsible Government, with an 85% turn out (52% in favour of Confederation). The British government was pleased with the result, especially as it had been achieved without undue pressure. A decision in favour of Responsible Government would have been viewed with misgiving, but absorption into Canada was expected to improve Newfoundland's economic stability and general welfare (DO 35/3453, despatches from Sir A Clutterback to S of S, 25 Aug and 23 Dec 1948). The final terms arranged by Canada included revised and more favourable financial terms, and were signed on 11 Dec 1949. Entry of Newfoundland into the Canadian Confederation took place on 31 Mar 1949. Attlee displayed a firm hand in drafting the terms of his official message to mark the occasion. He shortened it, removed the sentimentalities, but inserted two references to the Commonwealth relationship (DO 35/3477, no 5).]

In the absence of Mr Noel-Baker I have discussed with Sir Gordon Macdonald<sup>1</sup> and Sir Eric Machtig<sup>2</sup> the position resulting from the conclusions of the Newfoundland National Convention as reported in the annexed telegram.

It will be seen that the Convention have in effect recommended that the Referendum should be between Responsible Government and Commission of Government, and have outvoted the inclusion of Confederation with Canada in the ballot paper. It now remains for the Government here to decide what are the questions to be submitted at the Referendum in the light of the Convention's report.

The terms of reference of the Convention, as announced in Parliament on 11th December, 1945, were as follows.

"To consider and discuss amongst themselves, as elected representatives of the Newfoundland people, the changes that have taken place in the financial and economic situation of the island since 1934, and, bearing in mind the extent to which the high revenues of recent years have been due to wartime conditions, to examine the position of the country and to make recommendations to His Majesty's Government as to possible forms of future Government to be put before the people at a national referendum".

When it was decided to set up the Convention, it was hoped that this would consist of a body of responsible people who would look at the various possible forms of government dispassionately and clarify the issues to be put to the Newfoundland people for their decision. Actually this hope has not been realised. The Convention has consisted of political aspirants who have dealt with the matter on bitter party lines, and they have in fact tried to anticipate the decision which it was intended should be left to the people as a whole at the referendum. In spite of having received very generous terms, which the Canadian Government have indicated that they would be prepared to recommend to the Canadian Parliament as a basis for union between Canada and Newfoundland, the Convention so conducted their operations as to endeavour to prevent this issue being put before the people.

It is clearly open to the United Kingdom Government to decide that Confederation with Canada as well as the other two courses should be placed on the referendum paper, since it was not the intention that the Convention should in effect be able to decide the issue, and it would be intolerable if the opponents of Confederation in the Convention were successful in a manoeuvre which would prevent the matter being submitted to the people of Newfoundland. On the other hand, the tactics require

<sup>1</sup> Gov since 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Permanent under-secretary of state for dominion affairs since 1940.

some consideration. If it should be decided that confederation should be included in the ballot paper notwithstanding the recommendations of the Convention, it will no doubt be represented in Newfoundland that the United Kingdom Government are anxious to impose Confederation on Newfoundland, and if the result of a referendum is a vote adverse to Confederation, this might put back the possibility of confederation indefinitely. It must also be remembered that Mr Mackenzie King<sup>3</sup> has made it clear that the Canadian Government would only wish to effect Confederation if the people of Newfoundland indicate clearly and beyond all possibility of misunderstanding that it is their will that Newfoundland should become a Province of Canada. There is no doubt that Confederation with Canada at the right time presents the best hope for Newfoundland, and that the sooner it comes the better. But the question is one for Newfoundland people to determine. We ought so to handle the matter as not to risk Confederation being relegated to the background for many years to come. My feeling is, however, and Sir Gordon Macdonald and the officials of the Commonwealth Relations Office concur in this view, that the proper course would be to place Confederation with Canada on the referendum paper together with Responsible Government and the continuation of Commission of Government, unless the Canadian Government, after we have consulted them, should advise that in the circumstances they would prefer that Confederation should not be included.

There are two supplementary points. In defining continuation of Commission of Government as one of the alternatives on the ballot paper we should, in Sir Gordon Macdonald's view, with which I agree, limit this to continuation for a period of five years, at the same time making it clear that before the end of that period, in say three and a half years time, we would arrange for a further testing of Newfoundland public opinion as to the future form of government at the end of the five years. This is necessary since we could not commit ourselves to an indefinite continuation of Commission of Government. It may be that if the period is limited as suggested the people of Newfoundland will vote for this course as providing a further breathing space before they become committed to either responsible government or confederation with Canada.

The term "responsible government" should be defined as Responsible Government as it existed in 1933 before the institution of Commission of Government. There would be no question at present of the adoption by Newfoundland of the Statute of Westminster or of it assuming full Dominion status on the Canadian model.

I assume that Mr Noel-Baker should be brought into this matter before a decision is reached, and this might be done by sending him a copy of this minute if you are in agreement with it. I am not sure whether, if you and he agree with the course proposed, you would think it necessary to bring the matter before the Cabinet. Sir Gordon Macdonald will be available for discussion, but he feels that he should return to Newfoundland shortly and is planning to do so at the end of next week.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Prime minister of Canada, 1935–1948.

<sup>4</sup> Attlee minuted: '... I agree with Ld Addison's views. CRA 3.2.48'.

**265** CAB 128/13, CM 50(48)3

13 July 1948

**'Malaya': Cabinet conclusions on British response to disturbances**

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* gave the Cabinet a brief report on the disorders in Malaya. All the requests for military assistance which had been made by the authorities on the spot had been, or were being, met and there was close collaboration between the civil and military authorities under the supervision of the British Defence Co-ordination Committee. The local Governments had been authorised to introduce emergency powers; and there was reason to believe that the situation was now being brought under control.

In discussion it was suggested that a comprehensive review should be made of the organisation of the Colonial Police services, with a view particularly to improving their intelligence work. There was little doubt that the situation in Malaya had been exploited by Communists, and similar attempts to foment disorder must be expected in other parts of the Colonial Empire. While we should not be deterred by this threat from continuing to pursue a progressive Colonial policy, Colonial Governments must be prepared to deal effectively and promptly with any such outbreaks.

The Cabinet:—

- (1) Took note of the position;
- (2) Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to confer with the Minister of Defence regarding the need for a review of the organisation of the Colonial police services.

**266** CO 537/4002, no 6

23 Dec 1948

**[New Hebrides]: letter from J B Sidebotham to J W Russell (FO) on future administration of Condominium**

Please refer to your Confidential letters No. Z. 9741/1382/17 of the 5th October and 5th November about the New Hebrides. We must apologise for our share in the embarrassment caused to your colleagues in Paris over the difficulties and delays that have been experienced in reaching agreement with the French on various outstanding matters affecting the New Hebrides. I refer in particular to the following three matters:—

- (a) the Presidency of the Joint Court;
- (b) the revised salaries and conditions of service of the Joint Court personnel; and
- (c) the air survey.

2. Before I deal in detail with the above matters, there is one general point I wish to bring to your attention. Some time ago our Secretary of State directed that we should undertake a complete and detailed examination of the Protocol with a view to its general revision. The Protocol is, as you know, hopelessly out of line with modern concepts of Colonial administration and cannot be made to square with such things as the Declaration regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories embodied in Chapter XI of the Charter. It would undoubtedly be a serious embarrassment to both the French and ourselves if the United Nations were to direct its attention to the provisions of the Protocol; and it would also be embarrassing if, as is quite possible, the South

Pacific Commission, which is now functioning, were to interest itself in some of its provisions. In any case, the Protocol as it stands must be condemned as a thoroughly impracticable Instrument under which to administer a territory. The fact of the matter is, of course, that it is at least open to doubt whether a Condominium as such is really a workable arrangement. That is a separate point, but in any event we have come to the conclusion that the time has come when a thorough revision of the Protocol can no longer be postponed. For several years we have, as you know, been considering a number of amendments to it but what we now have in mind is a thoroughgoing revision designed:—

- (a) to make it a more workable instrument;
- (b) to bring it into line, so far as is possible, with various international obligations assumed by both the United Kingdom and French Governments (e.g. by virtue of their signature of the United Nations Charter, in labour matters, etc.);
- (c) to give effect to the numerous amendments which have been put forward over a period of years (including amendments to give effect to the Land Settlement Scheme mentioned in paragraph 3 of your letter to Sidebotham, No. Z. 8929/1382/17 of the 5th November).

The reasons for and the scope of the contemplated revision are set out in detail in a draft despatch to the High Commissioner, Western Pacific, which we have been working on here and which is now being put into its final form. Before sending the despatch to the High Commissioner, we are proposing to send copies of the draft to the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Ministry of Defence for any comments you or the other two Departments may wish to make. We hope to do this within the next week or two. The proposals in the despatch must, of course, be regarded as provisional until they have been agreed with the High Commissioner, Western Pacific.

3. Our original thought was that it would be better not to tell the French that we felt the time had come for a thorough revision of the Protocol until we were ready to present them with concrete proposals. It is, however, so much out of line with modern concepts, and requires revision in such a mass of details, that it has taken very much longer than we had anticipated to sort out our ideas on the subject into the form of the draft despatch referred to above. In these circumstances we have come to the conclusion that the best course would be to inform the French now that we feel the time has come for a general and thorough revision of the Protocol to bring it more into line with modern concepts of Colonial administration and with various international obligations accepted by the two governments, and to make it generally a more workable instrument; that we are therefore engaged on a detailed examination of the Protocol with a view to its revision in this sense and hope that it will not be too long before we are able to make specific and detailed proposals to the French; and that meanwhile we hope the French Government might also be examining the Protocol with a view to a conference to consider its general revision as soon as both sides are ready with their detailed proposals.

4. We should be glad to know whether the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Ministry of Defence would see any objection to an approach being made to the French on the above lines. We imagine that before any such approach were made to the French, the Commonwealth Relations Office would wish to explain our intention to the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, in view of

the interest of those Governments in the New Hebrides. In any event, once interdepartmental agreement for the suggested approach to the French Government has been secured at the official level we shall need to submit the matter for ministerial approval here before any approach is made to the Commonwealth Governments and, subsequently, to the French. One danger we see in telling the French that we are contemplating a revision of the Protocol before we are able to lay specific proposals before them is that they might be prompted to raise with us at once the whole future of the Condominium and perhaps seek our agreement to our abandoning our share in it. If, however, they are seriously thinking along these lines, they will probably make the suggestion to us sooner or later in any event, and it seems to us that it would do no harm to bring matters to a head.

5. Turning now, in the light of the above, to the three outstanding points mentioned in paragraph 1 of this letter, we would suggest that they might be handled on the following lines:—

(a) *The presidency of the Joint Court*

This is a matter which we should prefer to leave over for consideration in conjunction with our proposed revision of the Protocol. Until it has been agreed, however, that we should inform the French Government of the contemplated revision, we cannot very well refer to this matter in replying to the French note of the 6th February, 1948. As you are aware, the scheme for the more expeditious settlement of land cases, which was put forward in 1939 and to which you refer in your letter No. Z. 8929/1382/17 of the 5th November, envisages the abolition of the post of President of the Joint Court, and in our proposals for revising the Protocol we are intending to include amendments to give effect to that scheme. As an interim reply to the French, however, we suggest that reference might be made to paragraph 3 of Foreign Office letter No. W. 3582/619/50 of the 12th March, 1940, to the French Ambassador (a copy of which you sent us under cover of Foreign Office note W. 3582/619/50 of the 13th March, 1940) and that the French might, at the same time, be informed that the comprehensive proposals referred to in that paragraph are now being actively considered and that we hope to communicate them to the French Government in the near future. The amendments required for this purpose were, in fact, discussed with the Australian Government in 1940, and a certain measure of agreement on the subject was then reached with them (enclosures to Dominions Office note No. G. 100/50 of the 29th May, 1940, refer). If you think that this will not satisfy the French you might care to add that the further enquiries we have made since their letter of 6th February have confirmed our view that the appointment of a President is not a matter of urgency and indeed might serve to delay rather than expedite the settlement of cases, a view with which the French authorities on the spot appear to be in sympathy.

(b) *Revised salaries and conditions of service of the Joint Court staff*

There is now no reason why the French Government should not be informed forthwith that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom approve the proposals set out in paragraphs 1 and 2(1)–(9) of the Joint Memorandum dated the 18th December, 1947, signed by the British and French Resident Commissioners regarding revised salaries and conditions of service for the Joint Court personnel, and that His Majesty's Government are prepared to enter into an Exchange of Notes straight away to replace the previous Exchange of Notes which took place in 1931. The administrative recommendations in paragraph 2(10)–(14) of that Joint Memo-

random, however, involve an amendment to Article 10 of the Protocol, and we should again prefer that consideration of these particular items should form part of the contemplated revision of the Protocol. This is, in fact, the view expressed by the High Commissioner, Western Pacific, in his despatch forwarding the Joint Memorandum. In view of the vagueness of certain of the recommendations in question (e.g. those in paragraph 2(13) and (14) of the Joint Memorandum) we suggest that the French Government be informed that we should prefer to postpone approval of these particular recommendations until their terms have been more clearly defined.

(c) *The air survey*

On further consideration of this question, we are inclined to agree that it would be difficult to adhere to the attitude adopted in paragraph 2 of our letter No. 28153/2/90/48 of the 10th June. We are therefore telegraphing to the High Commissioner, Western Pacific, asking him if, in the circumstances, he would be prepared to withdraw his objection to the French carrying out the whole ground control work of the survey. We shall let you know as soon as we receive the High Commissioner's reply. In the meantime, the French might be told that we have no objection to the New Hebrides being included in their survey agreement with the Americans but that we would be grateful to have further details of what is proposed, particularly as the provision of staff and finance would be likely to present difficulties to us.

6. To sum up we should like to know:—

(a) whether the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Ministry of Defence agree to an approach being made as soon as possible to the French on the basis set out in paragraphs 2 to 4 above;

(b) whether the Commonwealth Relations Office will wish to acquaint the Governments of Australia and New Zealand with our intended approach to the French before it is actually made;

(c) whether in the meantime the Foreign Office agree to the proposals in paragraph 5 above for dealing with the three outstanding points referred to in your letter of 5th October.

(On a fourth point, the matter of mining legislation, Burt<sup>1</sup> has already written to you separately.)

7. I am sending copies of this letter to Wakely at the Commonwealth Relations Office and Donaldson at the Ministry of Defence.

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<sup>1</sup> R H Burt, CO principal, 1946.

**267** CO 83/253/2 1 Jan–29 Mar 1950  
 [Fiji]: minutes by J M Kisch<sup>1</sup> and Sir C Jeffries on lack of demand for effective constitutional reform

There has been a good deal of hot air talked in Fiji in the last three or four years about constitutional reform principally by the European Electors Association led by

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<sup>1</sup> CO principal, Hong Kong and Pacific Dept.

Mr Amie Ragg, an unofficial member of the Legislative Council and a windy and misguided Radical.

In September 1948 the Governor set up a Committee of unofficial members of Legislative Council to report on possible constitutional changes in the Legislative Council. After all this travail Fiji has given birth to a mouse. The only changes which the unofficial members of the Legislative Council have proposed (the official members did not vote) are that the income qualification of European voters should be reduced from £120 to £75 putting them on a par with the Indian electors and secondly that the property qualifications of Indian candidates for the Legislative Council should be made the same as those of the European candidates . . . .

It was notable in the debate, as Sir Brian Freeston<sup>2</sup> points out, that though the Indian members generally showed a greater anxiety for change than their European or Fijian colleagues the voting in no case followed a purely racial pattern. It appears . . . that the general public in Fiji have been notably indifferent to the proceedings . . . .

J.M.K.  
1.1.50

### *S of S*

You will be interested to see that this agitation for constitutional reform in Fiji has come to practically nothing, owing to the unofficials themselves having no clear minds on the subject.

No action is proposed, pending discussion with Sir B. Freeston. But I hardly think that we are called upon to take the initiative in provoking further local debate at present.

C.J.J.  
20.1.50

This and other matters were discussed by the Secretary of State with Sir Brian Freeston at a meeting on March 21st . . . . Sir Brian Freeston outlined the political factors operative in Fiji: although there was no communal bitterness there was little confidence in the relations between the Indian and the Fijian communities. It was in these circumstances that the unofficial members of the Legislative Council had declared their opposition to any major changes in the present constitution which provides equal representation for the three groups. The Secretary of State agreed that in these circumstances the matter could not be carried further at present. Sir Brian Freeston asked that he should be formally notified of this . . . .

J.M.K.  
29.3.50

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<sup>2</sup> Gov of Fiji and high commissioner, Western Pacific, in succession to Sir A Grantham, 1948; formerly gov of the Leeward Islands.

**268** CO 537/6185, no 2A, STC(50)7

23 Feb 1950

[Aden]: note for Committee of Inquiry into constitutional development in the smaller colonial territories by Sir B Reilly<sup>1</sup> on political future of the colony and protectorate

### I. Aden Colony

1. Aden first became a British possession in January 1839, when it was occupied by a force sent by the East India Company from Bombay to enforce a cession of what was then little more than a village by the local Sultan as a penalty for the pillage of a Bombay vessel on the adjacent coast. The occupation of Aden gave the East India Company a harbour and potential coaling station about midway between Egypt and India at a time when ships had begun the process of turning from sail to steam, and with the establishment of internal and external security under the British flag the place soon began to develop not only as a coaling post, but also as an entrepot for the trade of Southern Arabia and north-east Africa with India and with Europe. Progress in this latter respect was encouraged and accelerated by the decision of the Government of Bombay in 1853 to make Aden a free port, a measure that has contributed so effectively to the prosperity of the port that its maintenance is generally accepted as essential.

2. Aden was administered by the Government of Bombay from 1839 to 1932 and by the central Government of India from 1932 to 1937, when it became a Colony. During this period of approximately a century its population rose from about 600 to about 50,000 and it became a place of recognised commercial and strategic importance. Between the two World wars its closer proximity to the Persian oil fields at Abadan, as compared with that of other ports on the main sea route from Europe through Suez to the east, decided the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company to make it a principal fuelling centre on that route, a step which attracted more shipping to the port, and enhanced its prosperity still further.

3. These favourable factors have persisted under Colonial administration, and the last census, taken in 1946, showed that there had been a further and rapid increase in the population, which had risen to just over 80,000. Considerably more than half this number are Arabs, but there are also important non-Arab elements, of whom the Europeans and Indians in particular have an influence that is out of proportion to their numbers. The composition of the population according to the 1946 census is:—

Arabs	58,455
Jews	7,273
Somalis	4,322
Indians	9,456
Europeans	365
Others	645
Total	<u>80,516</u>

4. Many of these are not natives of Aden. A large proportion of the Arabs come from the Yemen and the Aden Protectorate to work in Aden, which they do not regard as their home and to which they come only to make a living, often leaving

<sup>1</sup> Formerly gov of Aden, 1937–1940, and Resident from 1925.

their families in their native countries (the Arab population includes 38,785 males but only 19,670 females). The same may be said to apply to all the Europeans and, to a lesser degree, to the Indians and Somalis. The Jews are indigenous to Aden, but their eyes are on Israel.

5. True Adenese are therefore only a section of the people, and it is doubtful where they would turn if British rule were to come to an end. Being mostly Arabs, they would not wish for a return to Indian administration, although Pakistan might attract some through a Moslem appeal to their religion. They are too few to form an independent state of their own. Having experienced the advantages of a government based on western practice they are not likely to desire absorption into the neighbouring Sultanate of Lahej, and being predominantly Sunni by faith they would not be attracted by a prospect of incorporation in the kingdom of the Zeidi Imam of the Yemen, who claims all south-west Arabia as his rightful inheritance.

6. It follows, I think, that while the non-indigenous elements in the population look upon their own countries as their real homes, the indigenous people are content to remain, within any foreseeable future, under a progressive British administration, which will give them security, material prosperity and welfare, education and an increasing share in the administration.

7. These desires are being met to a great extent by the present Colonial administration, which provides for public and personal security and welfare in a manner contrasting markedly with conditions prevailing in the neighbouring Yemen and Protectorate. Under it there are many opportunities for material prosperity, education is now being actively promoted, and the wish for participation in the work of administration is met as far as is yet possible through the Township organisations, and especially by the creation of a Legislative Council. The latter body came into existence as recently as January 1947, but it has quickly established itself as an essential part of the administration, especially through its Standing Finance Committee, to which all financial proposals of importance are submitted, and which plays an active and useful part in associating representatives of the public with the policy of the Government.

8. The Legislative Council consists of the Governor as President, 4 ex-officio members, not more than 4 official members and not more than 8 unofficial members. At present the unofficial members include three Arabs, two Europeans, two Indians and one Jew.

9. The local municipal government of the Colony is vested in two Township Authorities (one for the main town of Aden and one for the suburb of Sheikh Othman), which superintend various services of a municipal character, such as the control of markets, the maintenance of public health and sanitary services, the upkeep and improvement of roads, the provision of recreation facilities and the control of building operations.

10. The future of the Township Authorities is in some doubt. At present they are dependent upon financial provision by the Government of the Colony, and there is some desire that one or both of them should develop into municipalities with powers to raise their own revenues. It is a question whether there is room in a small Colony, with an area of only about 80 square miles, for an Executive Council, a Legislative Council and one or more municipalities. Within such narrow limits a municipal form of administration for the whole of the Colony territory might suffice, but the Legislative Council has taken root, and its abolition or the curtailment of its powers

and functions would almost certainly be regarded as a retrograde step by people who are conscious of the importance of Aden as a commercial centre with widely reaching tentacles not only in immediately neighbouring territories but in countries far afield. Moreover, the Legislative Council has to deal with legislation, sometimes of international import, which could not appropriately be handled by a simply municipal body.

11. It is probable that the Township Authorities will in due course be accorded wider powers, with a more extended franchise, and greater independence in purely municipal matters, perhaps as a combined body; but they are not likely to absorb or to supersede the Colony's Legislative Council, which is justifying its existence, and, by present indications, has come to stay.

## II. *Aden Protectorate*

The Aden Protectorate presents a contrast to the Colony of Aden inasmuch as there has never been any attempt to annex any part of it or to introduce direct British administration into it. The basis of our relations with it is a large number of treaties with the local Arab rulers and tribal chiefs, of whom the two most important are the Abdali Sultan of Lahej in the western part of the Protectorate and the Qu'aiti Sultan of Shihr and Mukalla in the eastern part. The original treaties provide for British protection in return for an undertaking on the part of the Treaty Chiefs not to have any dealings with any other foreign Power, but they do not give His Majesty's Government any right to interfere with the internal affairs of the Chiefs' territory. Several of the Protectorate rulers have, however, voluntarily agreed to "adviser treaties", by which they have bound themselves to accept and act on the advice of a British Political Officer in all matters except those concerning the Moslem religion. The first and most notable of the rulers to accept such a treaty was the present Sultan of Mukalla.

2. The nucleus of the Protectorate was the conclusion of treaties by the Bombay Government soon after the acquisition of Aden with a few local chiefs in what is now the Western Aden Protectorate. Their territories were in those days known as "the Nine Cantons", a term that still sometimes persists. The British purpose at that time was to create a buffer area round Aden, which was regarded as a military outpost of India, and a similar motive led to an extension of treaties to Chiefs on the coast to the east of Aden up to the borders of Muscat, a policy which brought the island of Socotra within the protected sphere, and resulted eventually in the establishment of direct British influence throughout the Hadhramaut.

3. The Protectorate is divided for convenience into Western and Eastern Protectorates, in each of which there is a British Agent assisted by a small number of British and Arab Political Officers. Relations between them and the local chiefs and people are usually excellent, but punitive measures have still sometimes to be taken against recalcitrant minor sheikhs and tribal sections who disturb the peace. Internal security is maintained in the Western Protectorate by the Lahej Trained Forces, the Government Guards and Tribal Guards, and in the Eastern Protectorate by the Mukalla Army, the Hadhrami Beduin Legion and local Tribal Guards. Behind these are the Aden Protectorate Levies stationed in Aden, and ultimately the Royal Air Force, for Aden and the Aden Protectorate form an Air Command, and the Air Officer Commanding at Aden is ultimately responsible for the external and internal safety of the territory.

4. Geographically the Western Aden Protectorate and Aden itself are in the part of south-west Arabia known from ancient times as the Yemen, and the Imams (now Kings) of the Yemen have an historic claim to them based on the fact that their predecessors once ruled the whole of the Yemen and their own dynasty did so during most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their claims in the Western Protectorate are temporarily in abeyance under the terms of the Anglo-Yemeni Treaty of Sana signed in 1934, but they are latent and the Imam resents the consolidation of British influence and control in the Protectorate. The boundary between the kingdom of the Yemen and the Western Protectorate is the "status quo" line agreed upon by the treaty of 1934, under which treaty "the question of the southern frontier of the Yemen was deferred pending the conclusion . . . of the negotiations which shall take place between the high contracting parties before the expiry of the period of the treaty", that is before 1974.

5. The Imam's claims are not recognised by the tribes of the Protectorate, and his rule would be repugnant to them. This repugnance is due partly to their dislike of any strict form of control, and of the despotic exactions that the Imam would impose upon them as he does on subject tribes within his present possessions. It is based also, and perhaps even more so, upon a religious division. The Arabs of the Aden Protectorate, like those of the Red Sea coastal districts of the Yemen, are Sunni Moslems of the Shafei sect. The Imam of the Yemen is the religious and secular head of the Zeidi sect, which is akin to the Shiahs, and whose followers inhabit the central Yemen highlands. Among the people of southern Arabia religion is still to-day as strong a political force as it was in Europe in the Middle Ages and in the times of the religious wars, and it is mainly antagonism to and fear of falling under Zeidi domination that leads the Arabs of the Aden Protectorate (and especially those of the Western Protectorate, which is contiguous to the Yemeni State) to accept willingly the protection and support of the British. Aden is, moreover, the natural economic capital of this part of the Protectorate, the people of which look to it, and not to Sana or Taiz, as the centre from which many of them draw their means of livelihood, to which they go to seek employment, and through which they obtain contact with the outside world.

6. The Aden Protectorate is thus not simply the artificial creation of an intruding foreign Power. Its existence and maintenance correspond with the present interests of its inhabitants, most of whom appreciate the steps that the British have taken to establish peace in their naturally turbulent country, without annexing it or depriving them of the liberty which they prize very highly. The British, moreover, show respect for the Moslem religion, and their officers have usually a fortunate capacity for understanding the Arabs and making friends with them.

7. Relations between British and Arabs in the Protectorates are good, but more must be done if happy and willing co-operation between them is to continue. The country is largely (though by no means wholly) barren, and it is poor. No mineral wealth has yet been discovered, and the maintenance of peace and the improvement of agriculture are the main benefits that the British can bring to it. The first has been accomplished to a great extent, for the second the development of water supplies and more efficient methods are needed. Here, too, a beginning has been made, especially in the Abyan Irrigation scheme towards which a loan of £250,000 has been made from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. Education and medical services are also being assisted, and the new Aden College which is to be built at Aden is

designed to serve the needs of the Protectorate as well as the Colony of Aden.

8. On the political side the authority of the Treaty Chiefs is supported and strengthened under the system of "adviser treaties"; and British policy aims at the evolution of self-governing and self-supporting Arab states in friendly association with each other and with His Majesty's Government. Whether the small tribal units that comprise most of the Protectorate can achieve this status remains to be seen. It is probable that there will have to be amalgamation or federation into larger organisms, and this process has already commenced in the absorption of the petty Subeihi tribes at the western end of Protectorate by the Sultanate of Lahej. Developments of this kind must, however, be gradual, and should come through persuasion rather than coercion.

9. The ultimate destiny of southern Arabia is hard to predict. The kingdom of the Yemen is an antiquated despotism which breeds much discontent, and which may not last much longer in its present form. For the present I think that British policy is clear. It must honour its obligations to the chiefs and people of the Protectorate, and promote their welfare, as far as this is possible under a system of indirect rule which precludes taxation by the Protecting Power. It must secure through its officers on the spot the confidence and friendship of the inhabitants, and it must preserve order, without which peaceful development is impossible, until this group of small Arab states is able to stand on its own feet.

**269** CO 537/6202, no 2

7 Mar 1950

**'Future administration of the Western Pacific': note of a CO departmental discussion<sup>1</sup>**

Sir Charles Jeffries said that from the point of view of more efficient administration as well as financial economy, the establishment of an independent command at Honiara embracing the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and if necessary the New Hebrides, as well as the Solomons appeared to be a better course than the simple separation of the Solomons from the High Commission.

Sir Brian Freeston reverted to his original proposal that the British responsibility for the Solomons should be handed over to Australia with whom all the communications lay. It was agreed that this was the logical solution but the objections were:—

- (1) our information on the calibre of Australian administration in Australian overseas territories;
- (2) the serious political objection to handing over pieces of the British Empire even to Commonwealth countries;
- (3) the intrinsic value of these islands, in particular as a possible source of gold.

However Sir Brian's proposals would be put to the Secretary of State.

The practical steps which the establishment of a separate command at Honiara would require were considered. Sir Brian said that the British Phosphate Commissioners must be asked to direct their vessels sailing between Australia and Ocean Island to put in at Honiara in order to provide communications. They might also be

<sup>1</sup> Present: Sir C Jeffries, Sir Brian Freeston, J J Paskin, J B Sidebotham, J M Kisch.

prepared to assist in subsidising the possible air link between Honiara and Tarawa.

It was agreed that the British responsibilities to Tonga could, if the proposed change took place, be discharged by the Governor of Fiji who would also look after Pitcairn Island. If and when the proposals were approved in principle, necessary amendments to the specific Order-in-Council and the Foreign Office consular arrangements would have to be looked into.

There should be a recurrent financial saving resulting from the cutting down of staff and telegrams between Suva and Honiara etc. but there might be an initial increase in capital expenditure to house the Honiara staff; the question of payment by Fiji for the houses which had been built for High Commission staff in Suva should be investigated.

*New Hebrides.* The Australian proposals at Colombo would also be put to the new Secretary of State.

## 270 CAB 128/17, CM 37(50)1

19 June 1950

### 'Malaya': Cabinet conclusions; discussion of the situation, and proposed draft statements

The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.P. (50) 125) summarising the points on which immediate action was required as a result of the visits which he and the Secretary of State for War had recently made to Malaya. The Cabinet also had before them drafts of statements which the two Secretaries of State proposed to make in the House of Commons on the subject of their visit (C.P. (50) 129 and 130).

After opening statements by *the Secretary of State for the Colonies* and *the Secretary of State for War*, the Cabinet had a general discussion under the following heads:—

#### *Reinforcement of police and administrative services*

The essence of the new plan for dealing with the emergency was that the military should clear areas successively and that the civil administration should then move in to hold the cleared areas and ensure that bandits did not return to them. For this purpose it was essential that both the police and the administrative services should be reinforced. The reinforcement of the administrative services was being handled by the Colonial Office, by accelerating the posting of administrative cadets to Malaya. For the police, the immediate requirements were: (i) 117 officers, preferably trained policemen from the United Kingdom, and (ii) about 175 British non-commissioned officers, who would be recruited through the Crown Agents in the ordinary way. In addition, it was proposed to increase the police "jungle squads" by recruiting for service under contract with the Malayan police national servicemen now serving in Malaya who were about to take their discharge.

Ministers asked why the Malayan authorities expressed this preference for men with police experience in the United Kingdom, when former members of the Indian police were likely to be available, some of whom had long experience in dealing with Asiatics. They were informed that this was due to the disturbance caused in the

Malayan police force some time ago by the introduction of men who had served in the Palestine police. Existing members of the Malayan police had found that their prospects of promotion had thereby been prejudiced; and it was thought that the morale of the force would suffer from a second experiment of this kind. On the other hand, the Cabinet were informed that it would be difficult to meet all the present requirements from police forces in this country, especially as it would not be possible for the Home Secretary to second a member of a provincial police force for a period of service in Malaya. The urgent need of the Malayan police and the conditions of service offered would, however, be brought to the attention of chief constables at a conference over which the Home Secretary would preside. It was unlikely that suitable recruits would be found from among those who were now being discharged from police duties in Germany; for many of these men were already labouring under a sense of grievance because their employment in Germany had been terminated earlier than they had been led to expect.

*The Secretary of State for War* strongly supported these proposals for the reinforcement of the police and the civil administration. The army in Malaya, though their morale was still good, had found it discouraging that areas which they had cleared of bandits had fallen back into disorder for lack of a strong civil administration; and, if the new plan for dealing with the emergency failed to prevent a repetition of this process, there was bound to be a serious deterioration in army morale.

It was the general view of the Cabinet that, while a determined effort should in the first instance be made to find the men required from the United Kingdom police, other sources should not be overlooked and former members of the Indian police service should, in particular, be considered. Too much attention should not be paid to the susceptibilities of the existing members of the Malayan police, since a recent investigation had shown that this force was in urgent need of reorganisation.

#### *Repatriation of Chinese*

There were now about 10,000 suspects detained in camps in Malaya and, because of the risk of mass escapes, it was important that large numbers of these detainees should be removed from Malaya as speedily as possible. Before September 1949 Chinese detainees were repatriated to China; but, now that China was under the control of a Communist Government, there were difficulties in continuing this policy and, if it proved impracticable, other alternatives would have to be considered. Deportation to Christmas Island had been suggested as one possibility, but this would have to be discussed with the Australian Government. The Secretary of State for the Colonies was proposing to discuss this problem with the Foreign Secretary.

*The Secretary of State for War* agreed that it was essential that some means should be found of removing from Malaya a substantial proportion of the suspects now under detention. Care should, however, be taken not to send to China any known members of the Malayan Communist Party, since they were likely to be picked out by the Communist authorities there and sent back after a time to Malaya. There seemed to be strong arguments in present circumstances for giving the authorities in Malaya even more drastic powers of detaining suspects and suspending for a time the operation of the appeal tribunal which had ordered the release of several suspects whom the police and civil authorities would have preferred to keep under continued detention.

### *Information and propaganda*

There was room for improvement in the Information Services in Malaya; and *the Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that he was proposing to investigate immediately the possibility of securing the services of an anti-Communist expert for Malaya. Other detailed proposals for strengthening the Information Services would be discussed with the Malaya Committee.

*The Secretary of State for War* emphasised the importance of securing someone with a well-trained political mind to take charge of these Information Services. While there was need for the greatest severity in dealing with the current emergency, this should be coupled with an understanding of the nationalist movement in Malaya and a real desire to come to terms with it. It was also important that the person in charge of these Services should have a sympathetic understanding of the contribution which trade unionism could make towards future stability in Malaya.

### *Financial assistance*

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that the various measures proposed in his memorandum would involve a heavy financial burden, and it was important that Malaya should bear part of the cost. The Colonial Government recognised that they must raise further revenue, and were thinking of doing so by means of an increase in the export duty on rubber and tin. They did not favour an increase in income tax, for they lacked the necessary administrative machinery for collection.

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer* said that there were grave economic objections to an increase in these export duties, since this would have an adverse effect on the sale of rubber and tin in dollar markets. He would much prefer to see an increase in the rate of income tax, which would be fully justified on merits; and it should be possible to ease the administrative difficulties of collection by bringing Malayan officers over to this country for training in methods of tax-collection. Malayan producers of tin and rubber had been receiving high prices for their products; but they had been required to spend substantial sums in repairing war damage and in meeting the needs of the present emergency. He was therefore prepared to agree in principle that some further Exchequer assistance should be given to Malaya, so long as it was made a condition that the local Government developed effective machinery for direct taxation and undertook to finance, at the appropriate time, measures of economic and social improvement. With this in view he would wish to suggest some amendment of the reference to financial assistance which the Secretary of State for the Colonies was proposing to include in his forthcoming Parliamentary statement on Malaya.

### *Social reform*

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that a good deal was being done to reorganise the native trade unions on a non-Communist basis, and it was clear that the mass of the workers were opposed to the Communists. The trade unions were not, however regarded with great favour by employers in Malaya, whether British or Chinese; and some further initiative on the part of the United Kingdom Government would be required if the development of the trade union movement in Malaya was to proceed with sufficient speed. He also believed that it would be necessary, as soon as the present emergency was over, to find means of accelerating the course of economic and social development in Malaya. Leading members of the European

community there had pressed him to make a public statement that British rule in Malaya would be maintained for another twenty-five years. This he had declined to do. In the light of recent political developments in South-East Asia he agreed with the view now held by the Commissioner-General that Malaya's progress towards self-government would have to be accelerated and that the United Kingdom Government would be well-advised to put themselves in a position to announce considered plans for social and constitutional reform very soon after the end of the present emergency. The standard of living in Malaya was very low; and in the plans for its economic and social development first priority should be given to the improvement of agricultural methods, housing and education in rural areas. Too many of the European population were inclined to hope for a return to the conditions which existed in Malaya before the war. The Government would have to make it clear that they had different aims. They must, in particular, be able to demonstrate to the workers in Malaya that a non-Communist régime offered them greater opportunities for economic and social betterment than any Communist régime.

#### *Amnesty*

While they had been in Malaya the two Secretaries of State had discussed a suggestion made to them that many of the bandits might now be prepared to lay down their arms if an amnesty were granted. They were, however, satisfied that the offer of an amnesty at this stage would be regarded as a sign of weakness on the part of the Government. In view of the overrunning of Malaya by the Japanese during the war, it was essential to British prestige that the power of the British Forces to quell insurrection should be clearly demonstrated. The question of an amnesty could not usefully be considered until Johore, Negri Sembilan and Pahang had been effectively cleared of bandits.

#### *Parliamentary statements*

Following discussions between the Lord President and the Secretaries of State for the Colonies and War, it had already been announced that a statement would be made in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for War as well as by the Colonial Secretary. Ministers agreed, however, that it would be preferable that the statement by the Secretary of State for War should be made by way of an addendum to the Colonial Secretary's statement. This would avoid having two separate statements on different days, and would make it possible for the Secretary of State for War to omit much of the material included in the draft circulated with C.P. (50) 130. Both statements should be made on Wednesday, 21st June.

The Cabinet:—

- (1) Took note, with approval, of C.P. (50) 125.
- (2) Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to make in the House of Commons on Wednesday, 21st June, a statement on the lines of the draft appended to C.P. (50) 129, to which the Secretary of State for War would add a shortened version of the statement appended to C.P. (50) 130.
- (3) Invited the Malaya Committee to follow up in detail the proposals made in C.P. (50) 125 and in the Cabinet's discussion.

**271** PREM 8/1406/2, DO(50)94 15 Nov 1950  
 'Political and economic background to the situation in Malaya':  
 memorandum by Mr Griffiths for Cabinet Defence Committee

I was invited by the Malaya Committee to submit to the Defence Committee a paper giving the political and economic background to the present situation, for consideration in conjunction with the memorandum by the Minister of Defence and the Secretary of State for War (D.O. (50) 92) and the appreciation of the current situation by the Acting High Commissioner and the British Defence Co-ordination Committee (Far East) which is to be circulated.

2. There has always been general acceptance of the thesis in paragraph 3 of D.O. (50) 92 that the emergency can only be brought effectively to an end when the Federation Government can bring about conditions in which the bandits can be prevented from returning to areas which have been cleared by the military and can produce a political and economic situation in the country in which the bandits find it impossible to maintain an armed rising on any appreciable scale.

3. The central problem facing the civil authorities is one of restoring full confidence among the general population. The confidence both of the Malay and Chinese communities was to some extent lost as a result of our military defeat in 1942. Post-war developments, notably the establishment of the Malayan Union and the subsequent abandonment of that policy, had a serious effect on the attitude of the two major communities to the British connection.

*The Malays and the relationship of the federal and state governments*

4. Malay political pressure forced us to abandon the plans for a strong central Government with wide executive powers which were embodied in the Malayan Union and a measure of legislative and an even greater measure of executive authority were restored to the Malay States by the 1948 Federation Agreement. The Malay States, in combination, are a powerful force, and the Federal machine can only work with their confidence and goodwill. There is no doubt that, although the Malays themselves are strongly anti-Communist, the suspicion and distrust of the Malays regarding British intentions was at one time such that the State Governments were most resentful of any attempt by the Federal Government to intervene in State matters, particularly where this intervention took the form of pressure to devote resources to the resettlement of the Chinese rural population, resources that in the Malay view should more properly have been devoted to the betterment of Malay conditions. The High Commissioner's policy has been, in my view quite rightly, to ensure that the desire for central control should come from the perimeter and not from the centre itself and results have justified his decision not to force the pace unduly in the early stages. It has now been possible, largely as a result of the High Commissioner's tact and patience in dealing with the State Governments, to set up State and District War Executive Councils and Committees with wide powers of executive decision and I am confident that the machinery of government has during recent months become much better adapted to "war" purposes and that much, though not all, of the former Malay suspicion has been overcome. There still remains, to a great extent, the difficulty of securing effective action by a State and District Administration which is in many respects inexperienced and is largely staffed by Malays; the administrative

machine has been strengthened already by the addition of more British administrative and police officers, and will improve still further as reinforcements arrive; but, as I explain in paragraph 18, political considerations make it essential that the influx of British officers should at least be matched by increased opportunities for the training and advancement of Asians.

*Government must secure the confidence of the Chinese*

5. The question of securing the confidence of the Chinese population has been and continues to be an intractable one. I deal in more detail with the Chinese problem in paragraphs 16–17, and I need only say here that until Government can demonstrate not only its willingness but its ability to protect those Chinese who are ready to take a stand against the Communists and to give information to the security forces, we shall be unable to obtain in sufficient volume the intelligence which is vital to the success of military and police operations.

*Nationalism and the communal problem*

6. A further aspect of the problem of confidence, with which I deal below, is that we must, while taking strong measures against the Communist bandits, at the same time do nothing to frustrate the healthy desire of all communities to take a greater part in the Government of their country. We must show that our intention is not only to restore law and order but also to ensure for the peoples of Malaya higher standards of living and the satisfaction of their legitimate nationalist aspirations.

7. In a country where, of a total population of just over 5 million, 2½ million are Malays, just under 2 million Chinese and the balance mainly Indians, the communal problem is of peculiar difficulty. Taking Singapore and the Federation together the Chinese population slightly predominates. During the last 18 months the Malay rate of natural increase has become slightly greater than that of the Chinese and this trend has had a fortunate effect on the communal situation.

8. The Chinese population of Malaya has assumed significant proportions only during the present century; immigrants were attracted from Southern China by the prospects of work and prosperity in the tin mines and in commerce and the Chinese claim, not without reason, that the economic development of the country would never have been brought to its present pitch but for their industry. The Malays, on the other hand, are in general easy-going and until before the last war were content to share in the prosperity which the Chinese and Europeans had brought to their country. Both Malay and Chinese nationalism were aroused during the Japanese occupation and the Malay is no longer content to see the economic life of his country in the virtual control of what he regards as an alien community; he is afraid of the country coming increasingly under the domination of the dynamic Chinese and is not unnaturally reluctant to accord the Chinese full political rights or to surrender the “special position” of the Malays which is guaranteed by the 1948 Federation Agreement. The Chinese, on the other hand, regard the present arrangements, under which no more than about one-third of their number qualify for Federal citizenship and they are not admitted to the higher ranks of the administration, as inequitable, particularly as the majority have been born in the Federation and have no intention of returning to China.

9. The major political problem confronting the administration is the fusion of these two nationalisms, which if they develop separately will almost certainly lead to

a conflict[,] into a Malayan nationalism which will have as its object the building of a Malayan nation of different races, to be ultimately a self-governing member of the British Commonwealth. It is noteworthy that the present emergency, which is almost exclusively directed by Chinese Communist bandits of alien origin, has so far not brought about any serious communal trouble. It is, indeed, most encouraging that the community leaders [—]Malay, Chinese, Indian, Ceylonese and European— have spontaneously created an unofficial body, known as the communities' liaison committee with Mr. Malcolm MacDonald as "liaison officer". The Committee have seized the vital fact that before real unity can be achieved the Malays must agree to give increased political and civil rights to the Chinese and Indians while the Chinese must be brought to renounce their political ties with their Chinese homeland and accept an undivided loyalty to Malaya. During the summer the Committee published agreed proposals for the admission of larger numbers of non-Malays to Federal Citizenship, at the same time making suggestions for assisting the Malays to greater participation in the economic life of the country.

### *Communism in the Federation*

10. The situation is further complicated by the attitude of the Malayan Communist Party. Captured documents prove that the M.C.P. is an orthodox Stalinist party. Overwhelmingly Chinese in composition, it is far from being, despite its pretensions, the expression of a genuine Malayan Nationalist movement. The permanent armed force of Communists consists only of 3–5,000 men, and relies very largely for food, money, information and propaganda on the Min Yuen ("People's Organisation") in the populated areas. It is the breaking up of the Min Yuen, which is Communist controlled, if not Communist, and which certainly musters many thousands of supporters, which is one of the primary responsibilities of the civil authorities. The size of the active bandit force is limited by supply considerations rather than by lack of recruits, and the indications are that casualties are quickly replaced, either by volunteers or pressed men from the Min Yuen. Not unnaturally the M.C.P. manifestos carefully mask the Chinese nature of the movement and its appeal is deliberately directed towards all the communities, the "British imperialists" being made the chief object of propaganda attack. Links with the Chinese Communist Party have been up to the present very tenuous and there is virtually no evidence of direct assistance from outside to the M.C.P. Indeed the indications were at one time of a certain tension between the two Communist Parties, the C.C.P. expecting loyal Chinese to return and prosecute the revolution in China, while the M.C.P. regarded as traitors any who have attempted so to return. However, these divergencies will no doubt be resolved. There has been a very limited response from the Malays and Indians to the M.C.P. appeal but there are no signs of any danger of a widespread extension of doctrinaire communism outside the Chinese community or that the M.C.P. will succeed in uniting Malaysians of all communities against us. To the vast majority of the Malays, indeed, Mohammedan in faith, communism is distasteful; while, to all but a small proportion of the Chinese, the M.C.P. stands only for brutality, banditry and ruthless suppression and intimidation of all those who refuse to support the terrorist movement. Of the 1,180 civilian victims of the disorders, 800 have been Chinese. This does not mean that some of the Utopian promises put forward by the M.C.P. do not have a general appeal, particularly to the under privileged. I think, however, that there is no danger that our present policy of

declared determination to stamp out the Communist bandits will be interpreted in Malaya as opposition to true nationalism, provided we continue to pursue with energy the political, economic and social policies described later in this paper. I am confident that the vast majority of the population of all communities, even though many of the Chinese are still unwilling to come out into the open against the M.C.P., are opposed to a way of life so closely associated in their minds with indiscriminate violence.

#### *Indonesia and Malay nationalism*

11. I should mention here a development that may become significant in future. Many of the Malays in the Federation are descendants of comparatively recent immigrants from Indonesia. They have not unnaturally been stimulated by recent events in that country and there is a section of Malay extremists in the Federation that regards Malaya's destiny as that of an independent component of a Greater Indonesia. This section is as yet comparatively small and uninfluential, and the more responsible Malay leaders are strongly opposed to it, though they are a little disturbed at the appeal that such a doctrine might have should the Malays fail to build up their economic position in the Federation. There is as yet no official Indonesian Government support for these Malay extremists, but I feel it right that my colleagues should know of this matter, and that there have also been indications recently of Indonesian interest (which have, of course, been officially disclaimed) in Sarawak and North Borneo. We may thus, in future, be faced with Malay nationalism fed from Indonesia, just as we may be faced with more active support from China for the Chinese Nationalist movement.

#### *Political and constitutional measures designed to satisfy nationalist aspirations*

12. As I indicated in paragraph 9 the responsible leaders of the communities have seen the imperative need for a closer integration of the communities and the Federation Government have been quick to guide this movement and to ensure that the initiative gained is not dissipated. Legislation will shortly be introduced to extend Federal citizenship to an increased number of non-Malays. It should not be thought that these proposals have been accepted by the Malays without some heartburning; at one stage Dato Onn, the President of the United Malays National Organisation, had to resign in order to secure the agreement of the Organisation to this relaxation of the present citizenship laws. But it now seems certain that Malay opinion will accept the proposed changes which, although they will not have any considerable immediate effect, will mean that in the course of time anyone born in the Federation and owing loyalty to the country will become a Federal Citizen.

13. Steps are now being taken towards greater Asian participation in the government of their own country. It is intended to introduce elections, first to Municipal Councils, then to State and Settlement Councils, and ultimately to the Federal Legislative Council itself. The whole process will occupy two or three years, but legislation for municipal elections has already been passed and the committee on State elections in Johore has reported. More rapid progress towards Federal elections is unlikely, partly because it is considered that a normal democratic structure should be built up by stages, partly because the Emergency makes the compilation of an electoral register a matter of some difficulty and partly because it is hoped that the franchise for Federal elections will be on the basis of the wider citizenship proposals

mentioned in paragraph 12 above.

14. Without waiting for the introduction of the electoral principle the High Commissioner, with my full agreement, has announced his intention of inviting a number of "unofficials" to accept office as "Members." Each Member will be responsible to the High Commissioner for the department or group of departments placed in his charge, and will answer for them in the Legislative Council and will in effect assume Ministerial responsibility. It is significant that the Malays, who are not yet prepared to admit members of the other communities as members of the Malayan Civil Service, have nevertheless agreed to the appointment of Chinese and Indian members. I attach importance also to the readiness of the Asian leaders to suggest that a European "unofficial" should be appointed a Member: the part that can be played in the Malaya of the future by a public-spirited European community should not be underrated, and the High Commissioner, with my encouragement, is devoting much of his influence in this country to impressing on the London commercial interests the importance of sending out to Malaya public-spirited men prepared to take a real interest in the country and its peoples and to welcome the new spirit abroad in Asia.

15. A further important development is that the High Commissioner is to cease to be the President of the Legislative Council and his place will be taken by an unofficial member appointed as Speaker.

#### *The Chinese problem*

16. I must here elaborate a little on the problem of the Chinese. The Chinese in Malaya have not in the past played an active part in local politics, but as I have said above, their sense of Chinese nationalism was developed during the Japanese occupation. Many of them, particularly the comparatively recent immigrants, still retain strong family links with their homes in South China. They are not unnaturally deeply influenced by events in China and in the rest of the Far East and one of the greatest dangers to Malaya lies in the fact that their political sensitivity is effected [sic] by external as much as by internal events. There is, particularly among the young people, a feeling that the new Chinese Government has restored to China a prestige and power that had been squandered by the corruption and inefficiency of the K.M.T. In this sense therefore the Communist success in China has undoubtedly been a stimulus to Chinese national pride. The only effective counter to this sentiment is to give the young people of Malaya a constructive and Malayan nationalism to inspire them and this is one of the declared objects of the Federation Government's educational, social and economic policy. But I must emphasise that there is no popular support for the M.C.P. There is intimidation, and this is deeply ingrained in the Chinese character. The Federation Government's policy is to be both imaginative and strong. It must demonstrate its strength not only by vigorous action at home, but by showing that it can make its will effective in external matters; it is in this context that it is so important that the Government must show that it can repatriate to China the thousands of detainees now held in camps in Malaya, a subject with which I deal in D.O. (50) 93.

17. Events in Korea have had little repercussion in the Federation, though there undoubtedly has been some improvement in the morale of the anti-Communists as a result of the United Nations victory there. A United Nations defeat in Korea would have had the most serious results and the consequences of the involvement of China

in the Korean war would of course be grave. At the moment the Chinese interest is concentrated more closely on Formosa and Indo-China. The Chinese know well that if there is a French collapse in Indo-China then Siam is unlikely to avoid going into the Communist camp and the enemy would be at the gates. It is not easy for any Chinese to come out openly against the Communists while the external situation is so uncertain and I cannot too strongly emphasise the importance to Malaya of the position in Indo-China being held. As regards Formosa, the improvement in the situation there and a failure of the Chinese Government to launch an attack, have undoubtedly encouraged the strong anti-Communist elements in Malaya and have in that sense been of direct benefit to us.

### *The future and self-government*

18. The fear of Communist China is not only short-term but long-term. It is known to be our policy that Malaya should, by gradual steps, progress towards self-government within the Commonwealth. The whole outlook of the Malayan Chinese is to some extent conditioned by the fear that self-government may involve the withdrawal of protection against Communist China. In order to allay these fears, statements were made by the Prime Minister on 13th April, 1949, and again on 28th March, 1950, making it clear that it was our firm intention to implement the policy of steady democratic progress towards self-government within the Commonwealth and that we shall not be deflected from that policy and have no intention of relinquishing our responsibility for the defence of Malaya and the protection of its law-abiding people by all means at our disposal. I cannot with any confidence hazard a guess at how long this progress of development towards self-government will take. At one stage the view was generally held that twenty-five years would not be too high an estimate and the Malay Sultans have made it quite clear that in their view (which is obviously not entirely disinterested) Britain cannot withdraw from Malaya within the foreseeable future. Post-war events have shown, however, that the danger lies in too slow rather than in too rapid progress, and I returned from my visit to Malaya convinced that it would be unrealistic to think in terms of such a long period. At the same time the political leaders of Malaya have been and are well placed to observe the experiences of other Asian countries. The tendency has undoubtedly been to create a sense of realism and to temper nationalist thought with a distrust of those who clamour for early independence at all costs. The High Commissioner considers that this will continue to be the trend so long as Government avoids coming into conflict with the nationalist or other progressive forces and shows itself ready to continue with a steady advance in this direction. It is true that even those leaders who are most seized of the necessity of progress by degrees are often unreasonably critical of certain aspects of British policy. For example Dato Onn<sup>1</sup> has recently made one or two statements criticising the reinforcement of the administrative and police services by large numbers of European officers; and these criticisms are voiced more irresponsibly by the student body in this country. I am satisfied that these criticisms are not widespread and that it is essential to send European officers to deal with the emergency. But they give added urgency to the measures that are being taken to ensure that Asians, and in particular the Malays, are given training to fit them to hold a greater proportion of the senior posts in the Administration.

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<sup>1</sup> Dato Onn bin Jaafar, president, United Malays National Organisation, 1946–1951.

19. The political progress that is being made and is planned shows that the Federation Government are fully seized of the importance of meeting nationalist aspirations. We shall have to go further in the next few years in staffing the administrative and technical services with Asians, but here we are at the moment checked by the communal difficulty. The Malays alone have at present the right to enter the higher branches of the administration and there are insufficient trained Malays for this work. One of the most difficult tasks facing the High Commissioner is to persuade the Malays that they must accept the other communities into the senior branches of the Government service, and this will be difficult until arrangements are made for the Malays to receive the education and training which will enable them to compete on equal terms with the Chinese and Indians.

#### *Economic and social problems*

20. The Federation Government submitted to the recent meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee their Development Plan for the next six years, a plan largely based on a programme which has already been published in Malaya and received the warm approval of the Legislative Council. The total plan envisages Government expenditure of some £45 million over the period 1951-57, of which 29 per cent. is to be devoted to the development of the social services, 24 per cent. to agriculture, 24 per cent. to transport, 22 per cent. to fuel and power, and 1 per cent. to industry and mining. The financial resources of the Federation Government have, of course, been strained to breaking point by the exigencies of the emergency, and until recently, despite direct grants totalling £8 million from His Majesty's Government towards the cost of the emergency, it proved impossible to undertake any substantial expansion of social services. In the summer the Federation Government put to me a further request for financial assistance and, after discussion with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I informed Parliament on 21st June that, "on the understanding that it is the firm intention of the Government of the Federation to implement a programme of social and economic development, and provided that Malaya herself would take appropriate measures, largely to that end, to increase her revenues to the limit of her own capacity, His Majesty's Government will certainly be prepared to give further assistance in this effort by the people of Malaya to destroy Communist banditry in their own country. The amount and form of that help are now under consideration." Since then the almost unprecedented boom in tin and rubber has put a different complexion on the financial situation, though it is still the view of the Federation Government that further assistance will be required during 1951. I am at present engaged in discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on this question. Already the Federation Government have shown their willingness to increase their revenues by announcing a substantial increase of the export duty on rubber. It is impossible to predict how much additional revenue will actually accrue during the next financial year, but, assuming an average price of \$1 (Malayan) a lb. during the period, the increase might be as much as £12 million. It is further the intention of the Federation Government to increase the company rate of income tax from 20 per cent. to 30 per cent.

21. Before the war Malaya was a prosperous country, indeed, by general oriental standards it was an extremely prosperous one and the national income per head is still greater than that of any other country in the region. During the war it suffered much physical destruction, the repair of which swallowed up the greater part of its

accumulated savings. An even more serious loss was that of the lives of some of its best citizens and with this may be coupled the loss by many thousands of children of their educational opportunities. The cost of rehabilitation and the emergency, even allowing for the grants and other assistance which have been given by His Majesty's Government, have been a grievous burden on the country's resources, to the temporary exclusion of almost all expenditure on development. The country is still precariously dependent on its two primary products, rubber and tin, and although there is at the moment an almost unexampled boom in these commodities, past experience has shown that this exceptional prosperity may not endure.

22. The emphasis of the Development Plan is on a diversification of the economy to minimise to some extent the country's dependence on tin and rubber; on increased food production; on the improvement of educational and social services so that the people may be fitted to take a fuller share in the development and prosperity of their land; and on the improvement of the economic status of the smallholders, who form the backbone of the rural population. This latter is of particular importance in present circumstances. There are in the Federation, for example, some 350,000 rubber small-holdings, averaging 3 acres each, on which the trees are old and yields are falling. Although it would result in a three-fold increase of yield in rubber per acre, the smallholders cannot replace the old trees with high-yielding types. Quite apart from the technical difficulties of replanting part of a small-holding, they cannot afford to lose half of their present income by destroying some of their existing trees, as the new ones would take seven years before beginning to yield. The Government proposes to assist the small-holders by clearing new land, planting it with high-yielding rubber and possibly other crops. In other cases, small-holdings can be grouped together and part of the area replanted. A Rural and Industrial Development Authority has already been set up, under the Chairmanship of Dato Onn, which will initiate schemes for helping small-holders and fishermen to market and process their products by co-operative methods without recourse to the middlemen, who, at the moment, take off an undue proportion of the profits. The Colonial Development Corporation are interested in schemes for assisting small-holders and there is a possibility that E.C.A. may also be induced to assist. These schemes are all of vital importance since it is only through them that the backward Malay peasantry can be placed on a really sound economic footing and the present Chinese, Indian and European domination of the economic field can be relaxed. At the same time both the Federal and State Governments are incurring heavy expenditure on the regrouping and resettlement of the Chinese rural population ("squatters"), who must be given an effective stake in the country if they are to be shown that we have a better alternative to offer than communism. As I indicated in paragraph 10 above, there are certain points in the Communist programme, such as the division of the large estates, social insurance, &c., which make a natural appeal to the under-privileged. I am convinced that if the Development programme goes ahead we have an effective answer to this appeal. There is, in fact, land for all in Malaya, since all land belongs to the State; but we must ensure that people are in a position to make use of the land and this the programme put forward by the Federation Government will do. Any failure to meet the time-table would be disastrous, particularly in view of the unavoidable delays which have already occurred due to the emergency. It is absolutely necessary that the finance necessary for meeting these plans should be readily available.

23. A further burning issue is that of debt among both town and country dwellers. Some 80 per cent. of the Malay small-holders and fishermen are in the hands of Chinese and Indian money lenders, and the town-dwellers are often in an even worse plight. Until this vicious circle can be broken there will be no firm basis for prosperity and contentment. The solution lies in progress in co-operative development and in more stringent legislation for the control of money-lending, and the High Commissioner assures me that this question is to be tackled energetically.

24. I circulated to the Malaya Committee on 14th July an account of the measures that had been taken and were contemplated for raising the social standards in Malaya (MAL (C) (50) 26), and I need only, in this memorandum, give a very broad indication of the policy of the Federation Government.

25. In the communal circumstances I have already described the supreme importance of educating the Chinese community to acquire a Malayan outlook and of giving the relatively backward Malays the knowledge and training necessary to bring them to terms of equality with the other communities needs no emphasis. The Chinese have already, with commendable statesmanship, agreed that State education should be in English and Malay, with Chinese as only an optional subject. The next step forward, which is being recommended by a Committee of Malays and European officials under the Chairmanship of Mr. Leonard Barnes,<sup>2</sup> will, it is hoped, be the establishment of non-communal primary schools in which the media of instruction will be English and Malay. Eventually these primary schools will cover the whole school population. But the process is bound to be slow, and the High Commissioner considers that the emphasis must be on quality rather than on quantity, since it is only by insisting on high standards that we shall offer the Chinese a reasonable alternative to the present undesirable vernacular private schools. At present less than a half of the children of school age receive any education whatsoever, and progress over the next few years will do little more than maintain the present position as regards numbers owing to the growth of the population.

26. The basis of the Federation's labour policy is to stimulate the formation of strong trade unions, and in the meantime, while trade unionism is in its infancy, to provide effective alternatives for collective bargaining. The number of trade unions in existence at the beginning of 1948 was 289, with a total membership of 200,000. Nearly half of these unions were under the direct control of the Communist Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions. With the onset of the emergency the Federation of Trade Unions disintegrated, and by the beginning of 1949 the number of registered trade unions had fallen to 161 with a total membership of 70,000. The rank and file of the workers were disillusioned and their condition still persists. By the end of 1949 the number of trade unions had risen to 169, but the total membership had fallen as low as 42,000. The situation is improving slowly but steadily and the Department of the Trade Union Adviser is available to give guidance and has achieved a great deal of useful work. A Malayan Trade Union Council has been established this year; it has applied for membership of the I.C.F.T.U. (which has now established a regional Office in Singapore) and maintains close links with the T.U.C. I hope that Mr. F. W. Dalley<sup>3</sup> will be able to visit the Federation early next year

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<sup>2</sup> Leonard J Barnes, Fabian Society writer on Africa and the empire.

<sup>3</sup> Dalley was the co-author with S S Auberry, MP, of a report on *Labour and trade union organisation in the Federation of Malaya and Singapore* (Colonial no 234, 1948).

to advise on the most effective methods of developing the council's activities and arrange for the local training of trade union leaders and officers. Some employers have up to the present shown a reluctance to conduct negotiations with representatives of the trade unions, preferring to deal direct with their employees; but the Government, through its Labour Department, is making steady progress in the "education" of employers in the advantages of trade union methods.

27. Among many items in the Government's labour policy I should like to draw special attention to the intention to establish an employment exchange system and to the decision taken recently to establish a provident fund for the lower paid employees to which compulsory contributions are made by both parties.

### *Summary*

28. I have not attempted in this paper to do more than indicate the major problems facing the Federation Government, problems which, for the main part, would exist, though not in such an acute form, quite apart from the emergency. The emergency itself has, of course, meant that to the constitutional, political, economic and social problems has been added a tremendous burden of administrative work. One of the major emergency tasks of the civil authorities is that of resettling or regrouping some 300,000 Chinese rural dwellers who previously have been under no proper administrative or police control and who have been, during the emergency, entirely at the mercy of intimidation and exploitation by the Communists. A full report on the progress made in this operation will shortly be available and will be circulated to the Malaya Committee.

29. The main conclusion that emerges from my paper is that the task of the civil authorities is complicated not only by internal political and constitutional stresses, but by external factors outside the control of the Federation Government. Internal constructive policies designed to give the Chinese a greater share in the political and administrative life of the country and to extend Government services to the rural Chinese population must be expedited, but we cannot do this in a manner that shows any disregard for the legitimate aspirations of the relatively backward Malays. Indeed, without the good-will of the Malays we cannot hope to make progress or to achieve a wholesome settlement in Malaya. The administration has to overcome apprehensions and mistrust engendered as a result of the events of 1942 and developments since the reoccupation, and in particular this sentiment is at the base of the present constitutional arrangements, which, giving as they do so much authority and power to the individual State Governments, make the task of administration, even in favourable circumstances, a difficult one. A further factor is that our policy towards the Chinese Communist bandits and their voluntary and involuntary supporters must have regard to the general feelings of the Chinese community; a policy of greater ruthlessness would alienate the sympathies of the vast majority of those Chinese who are inherently friendly to our cause and this would outweigh any immediate practical gain.

30. Externally, the Federation Government has to contend not only with the reactions of the population, and in particular the Chinese, to events in China, Korea and Indo-China, but their actions are to a large extent negated by their present inability to repatriate the 10,000 detainees, with perhaps twice as many dependants, to China. A solution of this particular problem is vital to any rapid and substantial progress in Malaya.

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11 Dec 1950

'The Malayan situation and the Far East': minute from Mr Strachey (War) to Mr Attlee

As a result of our two meetings with General Briggs<sup>1</sup> I have made a suggestion in regard to the higher direction of our affairs in Malaya in particular, and in the Far East generally, to the Minister of Defence, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Each of them desired to think the matter over. Since then I have again spoken to the Minister of Defence in the light of the repercussions on the whole of the Far East, including Malaya, which the grave turn of events in Korea must be expected to have. The Minister of Defence agreed that, in view of the new urgency of the situation, it would be best if I put the suggestion, which I have already made to him, to you in writing, which I am accordingly doing in this minute. I apologise for its length, but I feel that I must set out the conclusions which I have reached on the Malayan emergency.

Consideration of my suggestion inevitably involves matters outside the military side of affairs in Malaya. But that is because the military and civil aspects of the struggle are inextricably intertwined. I have put my view of the characteristics of our regime in Malaya to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. I do not think that he will think it wrong of me to put my view to you for what it is worth: for after all vital considerations for the Army are involved.

What disturbed me about our two recent meetings on Malaya was that the only concrete suggestion of importance which emerged was that of the mass deportation of detainees to China. I am all in favour of this move if the Foreign Office will agree to it and if, in general, it is found to be practicable. But I find it very difficult to share the optimism which some of our officials in Malaya feel as to its effect. I very much doubt whether this move, useful as it no doubt will be, provides anything like a solution to our growing difficulties in Malaya.

*Our objectives in Malaya*

Nevertheless, I am in full agreement with the general objectives as set out, for example, in the Colonial Secretary's admirable paper (DO (50) 94),<sup>2</sup> which we are pursuing in Malaya. I have no particular comments or criticisms in this respect and I feel that if only we can reach our declared objectives in time all will yet be well.

I do, however, feel acute concern lest we fail because of a certain lack of vigour with which our representatives in Malaya are attempting to move towards these declared objectives. As I see it, what is indispensable for our regime in Malaya is a combination of:—

- (a) great firmness and vigour on the part of the governing authorities on the military and police side; in fact, ruthlessness where ruthlessness [is] necessary; but
- (b) equal firmness and vigour in pressing on with the economic and political development of the country.

<sup>1</sup> Lt-Gen Sir Harold Briggs, director of operations, Federation of Malaya, 1950; formerly GOC-in-C, Burma Command.

<sup>2</sup> See 271.

The Colonial Secretary, in his paper, has set out the successive steps by which we seek to promote such economic and political developments, i.e. the introduction of a measure of democracy by way of local, then State, and finally Federal elections: the fostering of a healthy non-Communist trades unionism which can raise the standard of life of the now large wage-earning population: rural development, including, as an emergency measure, the resettlement of the Chinese squatters, while laying equal emphasis on assisting the Malayan peasant, etc., etc. This programme would amount in the end to the development of a Malaya, not only prosperous (indeed rich) as it is today, but one in which that prosperity was shared by the mass of the population, and which was steadily developing, through the co-operation of the Malays and the Chinese, into a self-governing community, we trust and believe within the Commonwealth.

### *Character of the British regime in Malaya*

Our governing authorities in the Malayan Peninsula (including Singapore) seem to me to fall short of what is indispensable in both the above respects. On the one hand, our authorities (I am speaking here of the Civil power—the Army can fundamentally do no more than act in its support) are not firm, vigorous, or even ruthless enough in their prosecution of the measures necessary to break the armed Communist rising. For example, I formed the view while in Malaya that they have been too squeamish in the use of their powers to detain suspects for the period of the emergency. I raised the matter repeatedly, but I do not know to what extent it has been remedied. In this respect our authorities are, in my view, almost too “liberal”, if one understands the word “liberal” in a very old-fashioned ‘laissez faire’ sort of way.

No doubt this tenderness for civil rights does our authorities credit, but I am reluctantly forced to the view that it is inappropriate in present circumstances. Moreover, it is, in my view, motivated not only by an honourable desire to preserve civil liberties, but also by a certain languor and inability to believe that the easy going Malayan world of 15 or 20 years ago has irrevocably disappeared.

Moreover, and this is my major criticism, this out of place, and out of date, form of liberalism is joined, in our Malayan regime, by a disastrously conservative bias in regard to the political, democratic and economic development of the country.

Lip service is, of course, paid to our declared objectives in Malaya, but there is intense reluctance on the part of, especially, the middle rank of officials and administrators to carry out the actual steps which it is necessary to take in order to begin the implementation of our plans.

For example, there is strong opposition, which I came across when I was in Malaya, to the growth of trades unionism. Mr. Brasier [sic],<sup>3</sup> the Government's Labour Adviser, is illuminating on this subject. Many officials, naturally perhaps, cannot help believing that their real function is to assist in the production of the maximum possible amount of tin and rubber at the lowest possible price. They find it impossible to feel that they ought to be supporting something, such as an increase in the rubber workers wages, which must increase costs of production. In general, I found a deep belief that the Government ought to do nothing contrary to the interests of the rubber growers and tin producers. In the same way the administrators are, at heart, very reluctant to see democratic development or, in the case of

<sup>3</sup> J A Brazier, CO trade union adviser (Civil Establishment).

some of them, a growing collaboration between the Malays and the Chinese. They cannot conceive that it can really be right for us to foster a Malayan Nationalist movement which, while anti-Communist, will undoubtedly wish, in the course of time, to take over effective power in Malaya (while, we hope and believe, remaining within the Commonwealth). I cannot really doubt that the proposal to defer all major political changes till the end of the emergency which was made in General Briggs' recent appreciation (COS (50) 468) was a reflection of this view, however cogent may have been the reasons, such as deflection of administrative effort, given for it. In a word, our authorities in Malaya still hanker for the old colonialism and do not really believe in anything else.

Thus we have a combination of relative inertia on the part of the Civil power in its effort to break the Communist rebellion, with a bias against those political, economic and democratic developments which can alone produce a Malayan community capable of itself resisting Communism. This most unfortunate combination of characteristics on the part of our regime is tending to make us lose the struggle in Malaya. I do not think I am going too far in saying that.

*Proposed appointment of a British high commissioner for the Far East*

I make the following suggestion to meet this situation. Clearly we cannot change the nature of the Malayan regime from London. The key seems to me to lie in the appointment of some man of the right type with supreme powers in Malaya in particular, and over our Far Eastern interests in general. By a man of the right type I mean a man who, on the one hand, is prepared and is capable of carrying on a most rigorous and even ruthless police and military action and yet, at the same time, is genuinely determined to press on with the political, economic and democratic development of Malaya. A man who is, at one and the same time, strong and yet is genuinely and at heart in sympathy with the new Nationalism of Asia. It is very hard to find a man who combines these two qualities. The only man I can think of who has this combination of qualities is Mountbatten. There are, no doubt, all sorts of objections and difficulties about putting Mountbatten in charge, but for my part, I see little to hope for unless we can appoint a man of his stature and background.

The alternative is to let matters go on as they are going, and at present they are going towards our defeat rather than our victory.

The question arises, of course, of the actual post and powers Mountbatten should be given if he were sent out. I suggest that he should be made British High Commissioner for the Far East taking over the present post of our High Commissioner for South East Asia. Further, the powers of this post, the title of which might be changed as above, would be enlarged both geographically and in regard to Malaya. In regard to Malaya the new High Commissioner should be given specific powers over the Governor of Singapore and the High Commissioner in Malaya, and at the same time, should be given the supreme operational command in the military sphere.

I suggest that there would be advantage in giving a man like Mountbatten the same type of commission throughout the Far East that the present High Commissioner enjoys in South East Asia. The Korean setback is only too likely to produce a prolonged crisis in the Far East during which the advice of a British representative of Mountbatten's standing, a man fully able to hold his own with General MacArthur for example, would surely be of use.

In making this suggestion I realise the danger of seeming to criticise Malcolm MacDonald. He is one of my friends since Oxford days and I should hate to do this. I formed the opinion while in Malaya that he had done an admirable job but he specifically told me that he did not wish for enlarged powers and he certainly (and rightly over the past few years) has not conceived of his job as that of a Supreme Commander. Indeed I do not think he would be willing to undertake such a task. In any case I understand that he is to be transferred to another post in a little over a year's time. Would it not be possible to give him a year's leave between the two jobs without any slur whatever on his capacities? I know how much he has felt the strain of Malaya.

The Minister of Defence has suggested that if you think there is anything in this proposal, you might wish to call a meeting of himself, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and myself to discuss it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Attlee discussed Strachey's minute with Griffiths, and saw Strachey at the beginning of Jan 1951, after which he minuted that there would be 'no further action at present' (3 Jan 1951).



## CHAPTER 6

**Strategic and Defence Policies**

Document numbers 273–343

**273** CAB 129/1, CP(45)144

1 Sept 1945

**'Future of the Italian colonies': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Attlee**[This document has been printed in *DBPO*, series I, vol II, no 18.]

I am not satisfied with the arguments and conclusions as to the future of the Italian Colonies put forward by the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries.

1. At the back of all the argument is the idea of the defence of the British Empire leading to conclusions as to the importance of our retaining control of strategic areas in the Middle East.

2. Quite apart from the advent of the atomic bomb which should affect all considerations of strategic area, the British Commonwealth and Empire is not a unit that can be defended by itself. It was the creation of sea power. With the advent of air warfare the conditions which made it possible to defend a string of possessions scattered over five continents by means of a Fleet based on island fortresses have gone. In the 19th century the passage of the Mediterranean could be secured by sea power with Gibraltar, Malta and Egypt as its bases. In the air age the neutrality, if not the support, of all countries contiguous to the route are needed. This is only one example.

3. The British Empire can only be defended by its membership of the United Nations Organisation. If we do not accept this, we had better say so. If we do accept this we should seek to make it effective and not at the same time act on outworn conceptions. If the new organisation is a reality, it does not matter who holds Cyrenaica or Somalia or controls the Suez Canal. If it is not a reality we had better be thinking of the defence of England, for unless we can protect the home country no strategic positions elsewhere will avail.

4. Apart from strategic considerations, I can see no possible advantage to us in assuming responsibility for these areas. They involve us in immediate loss. There is no prospect of their paying for themselves. The more we do for them the quicker shall we be faced with premature claims for self-government. We have quite enough of these awkward problems already.

5. After the last war, under the system of mandates, we acquired large territories. The world outside not unnaturally regarded this as a mere expansion of the British Empire. Trusteeship will appear to most people as only old mandates writ large.

6. Cyrenaica will saddle us with an expense that we can ill afford. Why should we have to bear it? Why should it be assumed that only a few great Powers can be entrusted with backward peoples? Why should not one or other of the Scandinavian

countries have a try? They are quite as fitted to bear rule as ourselves. Why not the United States?

7. British Somaliland has always been a dead loss and a nuisance to us. We only occupied it as part of the scramble for Africa. If we now add Ogaden and Italian Somaliland we shall have a troublesome ward with an unpleasant neighbour in Ethiopia. The French are on the spot in French Somaliland. Why not let them have it if they like? It will be a sop to their pride, and may help them to put up with the loss of their position in the Levant. There would, of course, be the sentimental objection to giving up a piece of the Empire, but otherwise it would be to our advantage to get rid of this incubus.

8. While condominium elsewhere have been failures because they were at points where there was rivalry between the Powers as at Tangier, I see no objection to trying the experiment of international administration in Somalia. It is out of the way of other countries except Ethiopia, where an example of disinterested rule would be good for the Negus who himself could do with some international tutelage.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was discussed by the Cabinet on 3 Sept 1945: see 283.

**274** CAB 129/2, CP(45)162

10 Sept 1945

**'Disposal of the Italian colonies and of the Italian Mediterranean islands': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Bevin**

[This document has been printed in *DBPO*, series I, vol II, no 33.]

When the paper by the Colonial Secretary and myself (O.R.C. (45) 21) was considered at the Overseas Reconstruction Committee on the 30th August, various points were remitted for further examination. Since that meeting the question has been discussed at the Cabinet as a result of the Prime Minister's paper C.P. (45) 144;<sup>1</sup> Field-Marshal Smuts has given us his views; and the Washington Embassy have reported that the United States Government are now disposed to leave Italy with all her colonies under trusteeship.

2. As this question will be discussed at the Council of Foreign Ministers, it is necessary to arrive at decisions as to the line I should take.

3. The United States Government's suggestion, perhaps prompted by the desire to keep Russia out of Africa, that Italy should be left with all her colonies under trusteeship seems to be altogether too cynical and would surely scandalise a large section of opinion in this and other countries. It would seriously damage our prestige in the Middle East.

4. Russian claims to be awarded the exclusive trusteeship of one of these territories or to share in the trusteeship of any or all of them should be resisted. The security of the route through the Mediterranean and Middle East is vital to the safety of the British Empire. This area is one for which we must, I submit, retain, under the World Organisation, primary responsibility, which we should firmly refuse to share with the U.S.S.R. Field-Marshal Smuts agrees that it would be very risky and

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<sup>1</sup> See 273.

undesirable to place the Soviet Union anywhere and in any way on this route.

5. In view of our strategic interest in this area, which remains as vital with the advent of air power as it ever was before, we cannot disinterest ourselves from the arrangements made in these ex-Italian territories, and, in order to reach arrangements which we can regard as satisfactory, it may in certain cases be necessary to accept direct responsibility and the consequential financial burden. The Chancellor points out that this may be considerable and in view of the serious financial position which this country now finds itself in, we should certainly explore any way of sharing this burden with others.

6. To take the Somalilands: our objects are the welfare of the inhabitants and the safety of Commonwealth lines of communication. The project for an United Somalia is very desirable: it would benefit the inhabitants, it would be administratively convenient and would end the present arbitrary frontiers which disregarded racial and economic factors. (I do not, however, recommend the inclusion of French Somaliland, which is not inhabited by Somalis).

It had been suggested that the right trustee from the point of view of both of our objects would be the United Kingdom in view of our long experience, the fact that one of the components of the proposed United Somalia is British and the geographical situation of the area at the mouth of the Red Sea and on the Indian Ocean. Rather than put forward our claims at once, we could suggest that the choice of trustee should be deferred until the time comes to draw up the trusteeship agreement as provided for in Articles 79 to 85 of the Charter of the United Nations. However, in discussion we ought, I suggest, to canvass the idea of the United States assuming the trusteeship. If they reject this, it will be by so much less easy for them to reject a British claim. Our ultimate policy might be a trusteeship to be exercised by the members of the British Commonwealth jointly, but administered by a single one of them, perhaps South Africa or the Government of India. In this way the financial responsibility and the man-power burden would be spread amongst the interested members of the Commonwealth.

7. The United Somalia project requires the cession by Ethiopia of the Ogaden. The Emperor will never agree to this unless he receives some return. This could be found by the cession of the major part of Eritrea which has racial and geographical affinities with Ethiopia. This cession would be in full sovereignty but would have certain conditions attached. The remainder, the North and Western Lowlands, could, for racial and administrative reasons, be joined to the Sudan. The strategic arguments for including Keren and the whole of the escarpment within the Sudan do not seem to me decisive.

8. The Chiefs of Staff consider it essential to obtain strategic facilities in Cyrenaica, and I submit that we should lay claim to the trusteeship of this territory as a "strategic area" under Articles 82 and 83 of the Charter. Failure to advance our claims would only leave the field open for other bidders, e.g., U.S.S.R.

9. In the case of Tripolitania, the choice of Trustee could again be left over, though I doubt whether in practice any alternative to Italy will be found.

10. I recommend that Pantellaria and the Pelagian islands should be left under Italian sovereignty but should be permanently demilitarised with rights of inspection.

11. I recommend that the Dodecanese should be ceded to Greece with the exception of Castel Rosso, which should go to Turkey; although the inhabitants of

this island, 1,000 in number, are mainly Greeks, its geographical situation which is immediately off the Turkish coast seems to me the decisive factor. Our principal aim must be to prevent the future of the Dodecanese from embittering Greco-Turkish relations, and if Turkey obtains this one island she may be reconciled to Greece acquiring the rest.

**275** CAB 129/2, CP(45)174

17 Sept 1945

'Middle East policy': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Bevin

My colleagues will remember that in Cabinet Paper (45) 130 of the 28th August, I suggested that I should call back from the Middle East His Majesty's Representatives to discuss with them British policy in that region. My suggestion was agreed, and a conference of British representatives in the Middle East met in London from Wednesday, the 5th September, to Monday, the 17th September, 1945, under my chairmanship.

2. The Conference was composed of:—

- (a) His Majesty's Ambassadors at Bagdad, Cairo and Tehran;
- (b) His Majesty's Ministers at Beirut and Jedda;
- (c) The High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan;
- (d) Representatives of the British Middle East Office; and
- (e) The Director-General of the Middle East Supply Centre.

Representatives of the Foreign Office and other interested London Departments also attended.

3. I charged the Conference with the duty of surveying the whole field of foreign policy in the Middle East on the basis that His Majesty's Government would continue to assert their political predominance in that area and their overriding responsibility for its defence.

4. I suggested that the matter ought to be viewed in the light of the following considerations:—

- (a) Influence that rested on military or political props could not be enduring; we should broaden the base on which British influence rests and to this end should develop an economic and social policy that would make for the prosperity and contentment of the area as a whole.
- (b) To reach the right solution of our Middle East problems it was necessary to consider the area as a single region.
- (c) We had the benefit of the war-time experience of the Middle East Supply Centre which had, in fact, pursued a policy of economic co-ordination throughout the region in co-operation with the Territorial Governments.
- (d) We should aim at an economic partnership between the United Kingdom and the Middle East countries and, by promoting developments in that field, move towards a partnership in the sphere of defence.
- (e) Measures for the promotion of British trade in the region should also be formulated.
- (f) Step by step with activities in the economic and commercial field we should do all that we could to promote the social betterment of the people of the region.

(g) The whole question would have to be studied in relation to the capacity of the United Kingdom to make a contribution to the development of the Middle East by way of capital (where it was needed), equipment or the services of technical experts.

(h) It would be necessary to take into account the political and economic factors arising out of:—

(i) the Palestine question, and

(ii) the activities of the United States, France and Soviet Russia in the Middle East.

5. The Conference took these various questions into their consideration and a full exchange of views took place as a result of which I make the following recommendations to the Cabinet:—

(a) *Palestine*—This question is dealt with in another Cabinet Paper.

(b) *United States' activities*

(i) The Americans are commercially on the offensive in the Middle East; but their export drive has now been held up by the stringency of the dollar situation in the Middle East countries. This state of affairs has produced a degree of exasperation in American minds which is not likely to be removed unless some relief in the dollar situation is forthcoming. This circumstance (for which we are blamed, but not responsible) dominates our relationships with the Americans in the Middle East, but we cannot afford to make any concessions in view of our difficult foreign exchange situation.

(ii) The experiment in Anglo-American co-operation that took shape in the Middle East Supply Centre has survived, but only just survived, the war and does not offer much encouragement for a continuance of co-operation, at least in that form, in fields that are essentially competitive.

(iii) With the lifting of war-time controls (for which in the Middle East the Americans have been vigorously and prematurely pressing for some time) we shall enter a period of commercial rivalry, and we should not make any concession that would assist American commercial penetration into a region which for generations has been an established British market.

(c) *Relations with France*

(i) In the Middle East, our relations with France centre in the situation in the Levant States to the almost complete exclusion of any other consideration.

(ii) His Majesty's Government have publicly announced their desire to see France maintain her privileged position in that area, if she is able to get it from the States themselves. Our intervention in Syria during the disturbances in the early summer of this year restored our prestige in the Arab world to a point as high as it had ever stood before; but any overt support we might give to the French to secure a position which the States themselves are not disposed to give them in free negotiation, would without doubt be viewed by the whole of the Arab world with hostility.

(iii) The French appear to have created an impossible position for themselves in Syria and all but done so in the Lebanon. Any participation by French nationals (at least as representatives of the French Government) in administrative or advisory capacities in the Levant States may be ruled out of account until the present animosities have subsided.

(iv) The Conference endorsed my recommendation that the most fruitful line of approach to a solution of the present difficult situation in the Levant States was by way of an early conference of representatives of His Majesty's Government, the French Government and the Governments of the Levant States.

(d) *Russian activities*

(i) Our short-term relations with Russia in the Middle East crystallise in the situation in Persia, where the Russians and ourselves are under a Treaty obligation to withdraw our troops within six months of the end of the Japanese War. This question is now before the Council of Foreign Ministers.

(ii) There are increasing signs of Russian political and economic penetration in almost all Middle East territories. These are viewed with extreme apprehension by the Governments and people in those countries. The most effective counter to Russian advances in the area is the economic and social betterment of the people whose lot under the existing social system makes them ready listeners to the propaganda of Communism.

(e) *Defence*—The Conference had the opportunity of hearing informal views from the Chiefs-of-Staff on the defence of the Middle East, against the background of my proposal that we should work towards a partnership between the United Kingdom and the Middle East Territories themselves in matters of defence. The question will be further studied by the Chiefs of Staff and formal recommendations made. It was, however, generally agreed by the Conference that the question of defence is susceptible of most effective treatment within the framework of our general policy towards the region.

(f) *British economic policy in the Middle East*

(i) The Conference made certain recommendations with regard to British economic policy in the Middle East which are contained in Part I of the Annex to this memorandum.<sup>1</sup>

(ii) Summarised, they are:—

(1) Economic development and the amelioration of social conditions must go forward hand in hand.

(2) As the Middle East Governments are among the largest of our creditors our policy should be to give them wise guidance in mobilising and spending their existing ample sterling resources by:—

(A) encouraging each of them to draw up *itself* its own plan of economic development;

(B) by offering to place at their disposal technical and specialist assistance to help them in formulating their schemes; and

(C) to steer their plans along lines in conformity with the limitations imposed on ourselves by our own financial and supply situation and with the needs of the region as a whole.

(3) Certain measures recommended by the Board of Trade for the stimulation of British commerce in the Middle East area should be adopted.

(4) A start can best be made by placing qualified technical experts at the disposal of the Middle East Governments who require them. These experts should be attached to and operate as part of a British organisation located in Cairo. This British organisation should develop a scheme of regional technical

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

conferences leading up to the eventual establishment of a Middle East Development Board or Council composed of representatives of His Majesty's Government and of the Governments of the various territories in the region. It would be the function of this Board or Council to direct economic and social development along the lines of a coherent, co-ordinated, regional plan.

(g) *Machinery for regional co-ordination of British policy*

(i) The Conference made recommendations on this subject which are contained in Part II of the Annex to this Memorandum.

(ii) Summarised, they are:—

(1) The Conference took note of the decision of His Majesty's Government to establish a Middle East Office in Cairo.

(2) The Conference recommended the establishment of a "British Middle East Conference," as a standing committee composed of His Majesty's Representatives in the region to co-ordinate and to formulate for consideration by His Majesty's Government British policy in the region. The Conference would meet in Cairo as often as necessary and its secretariat would be provided by the British Middle East Office.

(3) The co-ordination and development of British policy in its economic aspects in the Middle East region should be a function of the British Middle East Office.

(h) *Relations with the Arab League*—The Arab League has not yet developed sufficient cohesion to warrant, even if it were desirable, its recognition as a corporate body representative of the Arab States as a whole. It has, however, established an economic committee with the set purpose of achieving some co-ordination of economic policy among the constituent members of the League. It will be inevitable that there should be informal political contacts with the League from time to time, and for this purpose the Conference agreed that, in existing circumstances the focal point of such contacts should be His Majesty's Embassy in Cairo. The Conference also agreed that in economic matters it was desirable, in existing circumstances, that the focal point should be the British Middle East Office. The practical difficulty, however, of drawing a nice line of distinction between matters "political" and matters "economic" will make it essential that the closest possible liaison should be maintained between the Cairo Embassy and the British Middle East Office on all questions affecting the relationship of His Majesty's Government with the Arab League.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This paper was discussed by the Cabinet on 4 October 1945: see part 1 of this volume, 2.

**276** CAB 131/2, DO(46)27

2 Mar 1946

'Future of the Italian colonies': memorandum by Mr Attlee for Cabinet Defence Committee

In C.O.S. (46) 43 (0) it is laid down that strategy demands that there should be no potentially hostile Power flanking our sea or air communications through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. The assumption, which is in my view based on a strategy formulated in the past, is that this line of communications is vital to the

interests of the British Commonwealth and Empire and that it is possible under modern conditions of warfare to render it secure. In my opinion neither of these propositions is self-evident. The following points seem to me to be relevant:—

1. It is to be observed that the British Empire was built up in the era of sea power. The maintenance of such widely scattered territories was only possible because of the dominant position of the British Fleet. Our strength at sea and the position of Malta and Gibraltar gave us the command of the Mediterranean, while our control of Egypt through our political influence secured the Suez Canal. Thus from 1870 to the present war [sic, ? day] we had the convenience of this short route to the East.

2. It was in my view demonstrated during the late war that the naval and air arms are interdependent. Fleets in open waters have had to be provided with carrier-borne aircraft both for offence and defence. Fleets in narrow waters were only able to operate under the protection of shore-based aircraft. For a time when we were unable to provide this in the Mediterranean we had to revert to the use of the Cape route.

3. Accordingly to make sure of being able to use the Mediterranean route in wartime we must be able to deny either side of the Straits of Gibraltar to the enemy. We must be strong enough in North Africa to prevent a Power in control of Italy from closing the narrows south of Sardinia and Sicily. We must have strong enough Air Forces in North Africa to beat off attack from the European Peninsulas and adjacent islands. Therefore in the Western parts of the Mediterranean we must be sure of a strong and friendly France and Italy and a Neutral, if not a friendly, Spain. In the Eastern parts we require friendly Powers in Greece and in the Levant. We have also to continue by agreement with its Government to use Egypt as a base and have forces strong enough to prevent attack coming down through the Levant either by land or air against the Canal Zone. If the assumption is made, which I think is necessary, that we should be unable to put forces in Europe strong enough to defend from attack by the strongest Continental Power the countries bordering on the North of the Mediterranean, it would appear that our hold must be very precarious.

4. The advent of air power means that instead, as in the era of navalism, of being able to maintain the route by the possession of Malta and Gibraltar and by a friendly attitude on the part of Egypt, we must now provide very large air forces in North Africa, large military forces in Egypt and Palestine and also large sums of money for the deficit areas, such as Cyrenaica and Libya, if we wish to occupy them as air force bases.

5. In the Red Sea, where formerly we had only to maintain Aden, we have now to keep on good terms with Ibn Saud, and also apparently to occupy Eritrea and Somaliland, which are also deficit areas.

6. I consider that we cannot afford to provide the great sums of money for the large forces involved on the chance of being able to use the Mediterranean route in time of war. I think that it is, at best, only a chance. In the last war if Spain had given Hitler air facilities we could not, I think, have kept the Straits of Gibraltar open. Equally, if Hitler had put another four Divisions in North Africa at the time of El Alamein, it is doubtful if we could have held the Canal. To bank on the friendship and strength of Spain or Italy and on the ability of Turkey and the Levant States to form a basis of resistance from attack from the North, seems to me a gamble.

7. But, assuming that the odds are reasonably favourable, is it clear that the benefits which we should have to purchase at so great a cost are worth while? Presumably, the strategic communications which it is suggested we must preserve

are those with India, but the position of India is changing. It is not certain whether she will remain within the Commonwealth. She will increasingly have to depend upon her own Armies for her defence. It would appear doubtful if the time saved by the use of the Mediterranean route for the purpose presumably of reinforcing India is worth the cost. It may be suggested that we are specially interested in the oil of South Persia and Iraq, but I suggest that we are not in a position to defend this area from a determined land attack from the North. Our communications with the East Indies and Australasia could be maintained by the use of the Cape route, or, even in the latter case, through the Panama Canal if we have a close understanding with the United States.

8. The argument that we must have control of the Mediterranean route is a two-edged weapon. If Russia desires to be able to unite her Fleets, as she did in the Russo-Japanese war, she may claim that the Baltic and the Suez Canal are as important to her as the latter is to us. She may claim to occupy Bornholm, just as we hold Malta, and to dominate politically Denmark, just as we do Egypt. She may claim not only the control of the Dardanelles, but passage through the Suez Canal in order to keep sea connection between her Black Sea, Baltic ports and Vladivostock. In the changed conditions of the world and in the modern conditions of three dimensional warfare, it is, I think, necessary to review with an open mind strategic conceptions which we have held for many years. In the present era we must consider very carefully how to make the most of our limited resources. We must not, for sentimental reasons based on the past, give hostages to fortune. It may be we shall have to consider the British Isles as an easterly extension of a strategic era [sic, ? area] the centre of which is the American Continent rather than as a Power looking eastwards through the Mediterranean to India and the East. I have not taken into consideration here any results that may flow from the development of Atomic warfare.

I should like the Chiefs of Staff to consider the arguments put forward here and to let the Defence Committee have an appreciation of the strategic position of the British Commonwealth in the light of our resources and of modern conditions of warfare.

**277** CAB 131/2, DO(46)40

13 Mar 1946

[Defence in the Mediterranean, Middle East and Indian Ocean]:  
memorandum by Mr Bevin for Cabinet Defence Committee

I have been giving considerable attention to the whole problem of defence in the Mediterranean, Middle East and the Indian Ocean. The first comment I should like to make is on the Prime Minister's paper (D.O. (46) 27).<sup>1</sup> Looked at purely from the point of view of communications, it is quite true that if the Mediterranean in time of war is given up, then so far as our communications with the other parts of the Commonwealth and Empire are concerned, they could, as indeed they were in the last war, be maintained. On the other hand, a very great political issue is involved which affects us more from the peace-time point of view. Our presence in the Mediterranean serves a purpose other than a military purpose which is vital to our

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<sup>1</sup> See 276.

position as a Great Power. The Mediterranean is the area through which we bring influence to bear on Southern Europe, the soft underbelly of France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. Without our physical presence in the Mediterranean, we should cut little ice with those States which would fall, like Eastern Europe, under the totalitarian yoke. We should also lose our position in the Middle East (including Iraq oil, now one of our greatest economic assets), even if we could afford to let Egypt go.

2. If we move out of the Mediterranean, Russia will move in, and the Mediterranean countries, from the point of view of commerce and trade, economy and democracy, will be finished. We have a chance of holding Italy in the Western civilisation, and although Yugoslavia is really under Russian control at the moment, the position there is very uneasy and one wonders how long as a Mediterranean people Yugoslavia will put up with Russian control. There is also the question of Greece. It is essential from our point of view that Greece remains with us politically. Without forces and bases of defence in the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to the East it will be impossible to maintain a foreign policy in Southern Europe on a democratic basis.

3. There also arises the problem of Spain. Franco and his regime are a passing phase and I am not without hope that within the next year there will be a great change in Spain. But if we sacrificed the Mediterranean, then there is no doubt that the Iberian Peninsula would be completely lost to us. Therefore from a political point of view it is essential to maintain the Mediterranean as a trade route and as a trade area, to utilise both, and to maintain the principles of Western civilisation in that area.

4. The other problem which arises is our position in Egypt where we have vital interests. If we gave the impression to the Egyptians that we were unable or unwilling to maintain our position in the Mediterranean, they would have no inducement to meet the requirements for defence which I wish to put forward in the negotiations for the revision of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.

5. There is in addition the question of whether we shall be compelled to develop within the United Nations Organisation a "Western Zone". At present there are two realities in Europe, the "Eastern Bloc" created and dominated by Russia, and the "Mediterranean Zone" controlled by Great Britain. We talk a lot about a "Western Group", but shall we be able to bring it into existence or maintain it once we abandon our position as the Mediterranean Power? I doubt it. We are entitled to construct a "Western Zone" if we can. It would be in keeping with the Charter. It has been denounced by Russia as a "Western Bloc" directed against her, but we are entitled to build up good neighbours and a defensive area from Scandinavia to France and thus construct a "Western Zone". If this country showed signs of leaving the Mediterranean and of giving up any idea of maintaining a "Western Zone", the Russians, as I have said, would enter the Mediterranean and they would inevitably be challenged by the Americans who would have to come in and try to take the place which we had abandoned. This situation would produce a collision between the great conflicting powers, on whom we, having forfeited our position, should lack the power to bring conciliatory influence.

6. The other point which influences me in the European scene is that we are the last bastion of social democracy. It may be said that this now represents our way of life as against the red tooth and claw of American capitalism and the Communist

dictatorship of Soviet Russia. Any weakening of our position in the Mediterranean area will, in my view, lead to the end of social democracy there and submit us to a pressure which would make our position untenable. The alternative proposals I will now proceed to develop are therefore inspired not by any idea of weakening our position in the Mediterranean but rather of strengthening it.

7. Turning now to the general defence position, the outstanding point which gives me very great concern is that our centre of communication and command is in another country's territory (Egypt). What I am anxious to achieve, in order to prevent pressure being placed on His Majesty's Government from time to time, is that the whole heart and centre of command shall be on British territory. Therefore, I am strongly in favour of the Mombasa proposal and the more I study the map the more I am convinced that the right position for the central Imperial command-post lies in East Africa. In the first place I feel convinced that we can thereby defend our Middle East position. Secondly, it strengthens our position with South Africa, for East Africa is the one area which is troubling General Smuts the whole time.

8. But the third and equally important point is that the Cabinet Mission to India will have to consider how to defend the Indian Ocean. East Africa is important as a key position for the defence of that area as well.

9. The advantage from the Foreign Office point of view of such a scheme of defence is this. When we open negotiations with Egypt our policy should be that we want communications and the heart of things to be on our own territory. Egypt may well then beg us to stay. It is only because she thinks there is no alternative that she is taking her present attitude. It would be far easier for us were we able to withdraw our forces and to secure bases and facilities which in time of trouble would be kept on a care and maintenance basis and would be ready for use at any moment. The second point is that we have sooner or later to open negotiations with Egypt and France on the future of the Canal. It is a far better position to be asked to defend the Canal than to have to ask others for privileges.

10. I therefore feel that this move would strengthen us with India, South Africa and the African Continent and in addition put us in a better position with the Middle East.

11. Another very important point is that once we are on our own territory, I am convinced that the partnership policy which I have been trying to foster will have a better chance of development.

12. It has been suggested that the headquarters could be moved to Palestine. But Palestine is in an uncertain political position, and if we spend millions of pounds there we might in ten years have to move, or our presence there might become a source of international dispute. On the other hand, if the Jews discover that we are no longer so dependent on Palestine for our own strategic purposes, it will be easier for us to settle the Palestinian problem and thus consider establishing bases and obtaining facilities there on a larger basis. Then there is Transjordan. We are negotiating a treaty with that territory and although Transjordan is, I understand, not so well adapted as a military base, facilities could be obtained under the new treaty which would be of equal advantage.

13. There is also the question of Cyprus. Could we devise a plan of strategical defence which would mean that Cyprus would no longer be useful to us strategically? This matter will become acute. Russia is already demanding a base in the Dodecanese. If at the same time we were to develop Cyprus as a strategic base, that

would add strength to the Russian demand for a base in the Aegaeon [sic]. Unless, therefore, there was a paramount strategic reason to the contrary, I would like consideration to be given to the abandonment of Cyprus as a military base, and the demilitarisation of the island. I recognise that there would be difficulties from the Colonial aspect but I am discussing the question purely from the international aspect of difficulties with Russia and other countries. On the other hand, if Cyprus is to be maintained for strategic reasons, then our whole policy towards Cyprus will have to be reviewed, for we have starved the Cypriots, treated them very badly, and must mend our ways if it is necessary for the British Empire to develop the island as a strategic base.<sup>2</sup>

14. Turning to West Africa, I have always been in favour of strategic and economic communications for the development of a great port on the West African coast at Lagos, and it will be remembered that in the war I suggested that Italian prisoners and war labour should be used for purposes of developing a road right across Africa. This would open up a great expanse of territory for trade and commerce generally. In my view the opening of such a route would be of great strategic value, and if in war the Canal was closed, as it was in the last war, this communication line would be of great value to us. Further, such a project would be helpful in connexion with the uranium deposits in the Congo.<sup>3</sup>

15. I am anxious that an early decision on this particular proposal should be arrived at. I hope the Chancellor will see the importance of spending in the future British money on British soil, keeping it within the sterling group and prevent the building up of any further sterling balances for defence in Egypt. Although a great capital outlay may be needed to accomplish this now, I feel it ought to be begun at once. In my view it will modernise the whole character of our defence as well as our trade and bring into the British orbit economically and commercially a great area which is by no means fully developed yet.

<sup>2</sup> See 229.

<sup>3</sup> See 319.

**278** CAB 131/1, DO 8(46)1

18 Mar 1946

'Egypt—withdrawal of British troops from Cairo and Alexandria':

Cabinet Defence Committee minutes on future defence of Mediterranean and Middle East

[Extract]

... *The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* said that our object must be to clear right out of Cairo as soon as practicable. He realised that the move would take time to complete but it was important that we should as soon as possible remove all grounds for a charge that Egypt was "an occupied country". Once the principle of withdrawal was granted, the Egyptians would take the time factor into account and might even come to the point of asking us to remain.

Mr. Bevin then referred to his paper [see 277] on the problem of defence in the Mediterranean, Middle East and Indian Ocean, and said that he was very keen to see our defence centre in this area established in British territory with all the advantages that this would offer politically, economically and financially. He would like this

bigger proposal to be fully considered before any decision was taken on the move or ultimate location of H.Q. Middle East. His proposals did not necessarily entail the removal of our forces and installations from the Canal zone.

*Lord Alanbrooke* said that the Chiefs of Staff had been asked by the Defence Committee for a quick report on the possibility of withdrawing British forces from Cairo and Alexandria so as to improve the atmosphere for the forthcoming treaty negotiations. As explained in the report, the main obstacle to a complete withdrawal from Cairo was the provision of alternative accommodation for H.Q. Middle East and the time it would take to re-establish the signal communications on which this headquarters depended. It should also be noted that the area now required in the Canal zone, as shown by the green line on the map, included Port Said, a salient towards Tel el Kebir and Port Suez itself—none of these had been included in the previous treaty zone outlined in brown. Port Said had been included in the new area on account of its importance for handling reinforcements for Palestine.

As regards the Foreign Secretary's Mombasa proposal, Lord Alanbrooke said that from the point of view of climate, training facilities, etc., the area was eminently suitable for one division but was deficient in communications. The question of locating there the bulk of the depots and installations at present in Egypt required further examination. Further, their withdrawal from the Mediterranean would produce a dangerous vacuum.

Lord Alanbrooke added that in the course of their preparation of the report on withdrawal from Cairo, the Chiefs of Staff had received the Foreign Secretary's paper on the Mediterranean problem in general and had arranged for this to be examined in conjunction with the Prime Minister's paper<sup>1</sup> on the Italian colonies, the Mediterranean sea route and Commonwealth defence in general.

*The Prime Minister* said that his paper had dealt with the Mediterranean from the point of view of our sea communications. The Foreign Secretary in his paper had raised wider issues. It seemed to him that our present position in the Middle East was vulnerable on two accounts. First Egypt and Palestine (potentially) were independent countries and our status there was therefore uncertain. Secondly, the Middle East countries were fertile soil for ideological warfare.

*The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* said that he agreed with the Prime Minister as regards the vulnerability of the Mediterranean sea route but he regarded the stability of the Mediterranean area as being enormously important to prevent war. For this reason we had a great interest in Turkey, Egypt, Greece and Italy. Moreover from the trade point of view, this area was probably worth between one and one and a half million employed men to this country. If we lost our political influence in this area we should suffer a great economic setback. There were many schemes on foot to improve this area economically and to reduce its vulnerability to ideological propaganda.

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer* said that he was very favourably impressed with the financial advantages of the Foreign Secretary's proposals concerning East and West Africa.

*The First Lord of the Admiralty*<sup>2</sup> thought that the Foreign Secretary's Mombasa proposals would have a very detrimental effect on our political status throughout the Mediterranean. It appeared essential for us to retain our influence in this area and he

<sup>1</sup> DO(46)27: see 276.

<sup>2</sup> Mr A V Alexander.

was gravely concerned at the paragraphs in the Foreign Secretary's paper on Cyprus. The importance to us of the Mediterranean sea route seemed to be under-estimated as also was the possibility of defending it by the use of air bases, particularly in Cyrenaica.

*General Paget*<sup>3</sup> said that Cyrenaica could not be regarded as an alternative to Egypt for the location of the depots and installations required as a nucleus for our defence organisation. For these the Suez Canal zone was the ideal location.

*The Prime Minister* said that the establishment of air bases in Cyrenaica might well prove a costly commitment. The country had proved expensive to the Italians and might be difficult to handle politically. We already had too many awkward problems to compete [sic] with. As regards the defence of the Canal zone, it seemed doubtful whether we could provide enough forces to keep the enemy from developing a decisive scale of air attack on the Canal itself.

*Lord Tedder* said that overland communications in the area to the north were very limited and that this would restrict the line of supply to any airfields that might be established. Any enemy would therefore have only a limited ability to develop an attack on the Canal zone. The last war had shown that Cyrenaica afforded the air key to the Mediterranean sea route. Cyprus should be regarded as affording advanced air defence to the Canal zone.

*The Prime Minister* then suggested that consideration of this larger question should be deferred until his paper and that of the Foreign Secretary had been examined by the Chiefs of Staff. The immediate problem was the line to be taken in the treaty negotiations with the Egyptians which he understood were due to open shortly.

*The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* confirmed that exploratory discussions were due to open in a few days' time. He would like to have established the principle to complete withdrawal from Cairo on the understanding that the move of H.Q. Middle East would take time to arrange. Negotiations for the necessary facilities in the Canal area might be facilitated if we were prepared to exchange our 10 years right in this zone for a 99 years lease of the areas which we wanted. He would like this possibility examined as a matter of urgency.

As regards the broader issue, he would like the Chiefs of Staff to complete their report as soon as possible and in their examination of the problem to consider seriously whether Cyprus and Palestine were essential for defence purposes. He would also like them to bear in mind the advantages of his proposals for the economic, etc. development of East and West Africa with particular regard to the uranium wealth in the Belgian Congo.

*The Prime Minister* suggested that the Defence Committee should defer taking decisions both on the broader questions which had been discussed and on the ultimate location of H.Q. Middle East until the Chiefs of Staff had completed their report on his paper and that of the Foreign Secretary. In the meanwhile, treaty negotiations in Cairo should proceed and we should be prepared to concede the principle of complete withdrawal from Cairo to the Canal zone.

The Committee:—

(a) Agreed to give further consideration to the transfer of H.Q. Middle East from Cairo in the light of the report by the Chiefs of Staff on the two papers on

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<sup>3</sup> Sir Bernard Paget, C-in-C, Middle East Force, 1944–1946.

Mediterranean strategy; and invited the Chiefs of Staff to complete their report as a matter of urgency;

(b) Agreed that, in the meanwhile, the principle of complete withdrawal of British forces from Cairo and Alexandria could be conceded if desirable in the early stages of the new treaty negotiations with Egypt;

(c) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to examine and report, as a matter of urgency, on the Foreign Secretary's suggestion that our requirements in the Canal zone might be obtained through a 99 years lease of the areas concerned.

**279** FO 800/475, ff 57–60

1 Dec 1946

[Commitments in the Mediterranean]: letter from Mr Attlee to Mr Bevin

My dear Ernest

Thank you for your letter. I do not think that there is much in the complaint that there have not been full discussions of Foreign Policy in the Cabinet. Certainly both you and I have kept them full informed. There is, I think, a desire for a full dress debate in Cabinet on Foreign policy when you return mainly I think because some members would like to talk at greater length than on former occasions on the general subject. I do not think that this need cause you any anxiety. Shinwell<sup>1</sup> has been very much obsessed with the oil problem but I agree with you that his views are not practical. Similarly on Germany he has been a strong advocate of preventing any export of coal from Germany, but here again we were all agreed on what was practical. There has been no disagreement with your policy towards Germany. I do not think that you need feel the least disturbed on this issue.

I think that everyone recognises the great skill you are displaying in the discussions on the treaties and it looks as if you will pull them off.

We are, of course, all looking forward to your return as there are various matters on which we should like your advice.

I think that we have got to consider our commitments very carefully lest we try to do more than we can. In particular I am rather worried about Greece. The Chiefs of Staff are suggesting that we must keep our forces there for at least another year. I cannot contemplate the financial and military burden with equanimity. The political and economic situation in Greece shows no improvement. They seem to be unable to get a satisfactory government nor can they do anything but quarrel amongst themselves. Meanwhile we have to accept a good deal of criticism. I feel that we are backing a very lame horse.

While I recognise the desirability of supporting the democratic elements in South East Europe and while I am conscious of the strategic importance of oil, I have as you know, always considered that the strategic importance of communications through the Mediterranean in terms of modern warfare is very much overrated by our military advisers, a view that is shared by some Service authorities. I agree wholeheartedly with you that the real line of the British Commonwealth runs through Lagos and Kenya. The Middle East is only an outpost position. I am beginning to doubt whether the Greek game is worth the candle.

<sup>1</sup> Mr E Shinwell, minister of fuel and power.

I do not think that the countries bordering on Soviet Russia's zone viz Greece, Turkey, Iraq and Persia can be made strong enough to form an effective barrier. We do not command the resources to make them so. If it were possible to reach an agreement with Russia that we should both disinterest ourselves as far as possible in them so that they became a neutral zone, it would be much to our advantage. Of course it is difficult to tell how far Russian policy is dictated by expansionism and how far by fear of attack by the U.S. and ourselves. Fantastic as this is, it may very well be the real grounds of Russian policy. What we consider merely defence may seem to them to be preparations for an attack. The same kind of considerations apply to the proposals by the U.S.A. for Air bases in Canada which the Russians might regard as offensive in intention.

I think, therefore, that we have got to be very careful in taking on military obligations in Greece and Turkey when the U.S.A. only gives economic assistance. There is a tendency in America to regard us as an outpost of America, but an outpost that they will not have to defend. I am disturbed by the signs of America trying to make a safety zone around herself while leaving us and Europe in No Man's Land.

While, I think, we should try to find out what the Americans are prepared to do, we should be careful not to commit ourselves.

With all good wishes

yours ever  
Clem

**280** FO 800/475, ff 63–64

9 Dec 1946

'Some objections which seem to arise on the prime minister's thesis':  
note by P Dixon (FO)<sup>1</sup> for Mr Bevin

It is incontestable that the "points of friction" countries (i.e. Turkey and Persia, Greece (because from Greece the Straits can be outflanked) and, to a less degree, Iraq and Afghanistan) are the nub of Anglo-Soviet relations.

On paper, the obvious solution is to agree with the Soviet Union that this area should be regarded as a "neutral zone".

But it is doubtful whether such an idea is practical politics.

1. Nature abhors a vacuum, or, to change the simile, the protective pad would not be a dry pad: it would soak up. In other words, Russia would certainly infiltrate into a "neutral zone".

2. A neutral zone in the "points of friction" countries would mean the loss of the British position in Egypt and Arabia as well. It would, in fact, bring Russia to the Congo and the Victoria Falls.

3. The Mediterranean is no longer of use to us as a communications route in war. Our interest in retaining our position in it is to keep others out. With the Russians in the Mediterranean, we should lose our influence in Italy, France and North Africa.

4. It may be true that Russia thinks in exaggerated terms of her own security and is thus led to interpret defensive measures on our part as potential offensive measures. But her exaggerated sense of security, which is almost undistinguishable from an imperialist instinct, would lead her to fill a vacuum, if it was there to fill.

<sup>1</sup> Principal private secretary to S of S, 1943–1948; deputy under-secretary of state, 1950.

5. In an atomic age we cannot afford to dispense with a first line of defence. Even if a neutral zone was feasible, which is questionable, can we risk having no first line of defence between Central Africa and Russia?

6. In any case, our central African main defence exists only on paper. What happens if we get into trouble in the next ten or fifteen years, having lost our position in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean?

## 281 FO 800/476, ff 2-9

5 Jan 1947

### 'Near Eastern policy': minute (M 15/47) by Mr Attlee to Mr Bevin

1. The broad conclusions of the Chiefs of Staff and of the Imperial Defence College are—

(a) That the U.K. which is the heart of the Commonwealth is extremely vulnerable to modern attack by long range weapons and that our present knowledge does not provide any effective method of passive defence.

(b) Therefore the only way to prevent such an attack is by a threat of counter attack so formidable that a potential enemy will be deterred through fear of his own losses.

(c) The only possible enemy is Russia.

(d) The only bases from which Russia could be attacked are situated in the Near East.

(e) Therefore the maintenance of British influence and consequently British forces in the Near East are essential to our safety.

(f) As a corollary we must secure our oil supplies in the Near East and endeavour to secure our communications through the Mediterranean, if at all possible.

2. The consequence of this appreciation means heavy military commitments which must be considered in relation to our man power and our economic resources.

It also means that we have to support a number of states in the Near East. Turkey, Greece, Iraq, Persia, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Transjordan and also to maintain our position in Palestine.

This brings us into a sphere of competition for political and economic influence with the U.S.S.R.

This needs very careful consideration.

3. What is in our view a necessary measure of defence will inevitably seem to the U.S.S.R. the preparation for an offensive which according to their ideology is a natural course to be adopted by any State which does not accept the communist philosophy.

They may react by—

(a) Pressing forward with a westward penetration in order that they may be in a position to strike more effectively at the U.K. than we can at them.

(b) Pressing forward their penetration in the Near East in order to deny to us possible bases for an attack against their vulnerable points. This would be in consonance with their general policy of seeking to construct a glacis round their homeland.

(c) They may do both.

4. I understand that it is not considered now possible for us to put sufficient forces on the Continent in order to give support to a Western block of Powers. Therefore the prevention of a rapid penetration to the Atlantic Coast by the U.S.S.R. must depend on the extent of the resistance likely to be offered by the countries of Western Europe.

In my view such resistance will only be possible after a period of some years in which the economic revival of Europe has made good progress and has been accompanied by a falling off in the attraction which Communism offers to countries in a state of economic depression. I mean in effect that a period of peace will permit the strengthening of western conceptions of democracy to gain strength. I should expect that the more international tension relaxes the less possible will it be to maintain in the U.S.S.R. the war mentality and war economy that has persisted since the revolution. The best hope of enduring peace lies in a change in the character of the regime in the U.S.S.R.

5. The countries which we have to support in the Middle East if we are to use that area as a potential base against the U.S.S.R. are weak.

(a) Militarily. Only Turkey has a fighting record over any long period. They are industrially backward and lacking in scientific man power and resources.

(b) Industrially. They are backward and will require very large capital developments to be effective units.

(c) Strategically. They are ill placed to resist a strong power especially Turkey, Iraq and Persia which border on the U.S.S.R.

(d) In population. The whole group, exclusive of Egypt, has less than 50 millions.

(e) Very vulnerable owing to their social and political composition. Greece appears to be hopelessly divided. In the other countries there is a small class of wealthy and corrupt people at the top and a mass of poverty stricken landworkers at the bottom. Their Governments are essentially reactionary. They afford excellent soil for the sowing of communist seed.

6. Our position is, therefore, made very difficult before the world and our own people. We shall constantly appear to be supporting vested interests and reaction against reform and revolution in the interests of the poor. We have already that difficulty in Greece. The same position is likely to arise in all these other countries.

We can only gain the position we require by military agreements as in Egypt and Iraq. We have no base of our own except in Cyprus.

We have the difficult position in Palestine where we have either to offend the Arab States and probably Turkey and Persia as well or offend world Jewry with its powerful influence in the U.S.A.

7. We, therefore, endeavouring to keep our influence over this congeries of weak, backward and reactionary States have to face the U.S.S.R. organised under an iron discipline, equipped with the weapon of a revolutionary doctrine liable to attract the masses, strategically well placed for penetration or attack and with only a limited number of its key points open to our attack.

8. In order to gain this advantage we shall be committed—

(a) To the maintenance of considerable forces overseas. Two divisions in Palestine. Powerful Air Forces somewhere in the area for a striking force.

(b) The control of the Mediterranean with naval forces and with air forces

sufficient to keep the route open. We should have to try to keep the Dardanelles closed. We should have to watch for the development of naval forces in Jugo-Slavia [sic] and Albania. We should have only Malta and Cyprus of our own to depend on. We should have to be on good terms with Spain.

(c) In the event of failure which I consider possible if not indeed probable we should have to supply these forces from round the Cape. It is unlikely that we shall be able to use India as a base.

(d) We shall have to spend large sums of money in bolstering up these weak States. Even if we can provide the resources it will take a long time for them to fructify. Meanwhile the U.S.S.R. will not be idle.

9. For the reasons set out above I regard the strategy outlined above as a strategy of despair. I have the gravest doubts as to its efficacy. The deterrent does not seem to me to be sufficiently strong. I apprehend that the pursuit of this policy so far from preventing may precipitate hostilities.

10. Unless we are persuaded that the U.S.S.R. is irrevocably committed to a policy of world domination and that there is no possibility of her alteration, I think that before being committed to this strategy we should seek to come to an agreement with the U.S.S.R. after consideration with Stalin of all our points of conflict.

11. I recall that at the end of the nineteenth century we were in conflict with France all over the world. There were points of friction in Egypt and elsewhere in Africa, in the Newfoundland fisheries and in Asia yet in a short time we had the Entente Cordiale and were able to clear up all outstanding points. I remember similarly that at that time our relations with Russia were very bad following the Russo-Japanese War and the Dogger Bank episode. We were constantly alarmed at Russian designs on Afghanistan. Yet in a few years these were smoothed out and we fought alongside of her in the First World War.

It is, of course, true that a common fear of Germany was a powerful factor in bringing us together, but to-day there is a common fear of what another world war may bring to us all.

12. What are the chances of success in such a negotiation? The answer depends on a number of imponderables—

(a) How far is the ideology of the present rulers of Russia committed to the conception of the necessity of world revolution?

(b) It is possible to convince the U.S.S.R. that we have no offensive intentions against her?

(c) What prospects are there of changes in the Russian mentality? If it is agreed that the U.S.S.R. is not prepared for a major war for some years, what likelihood is there that an easing of her internal economic situation will cause her to be less ready to throw away what she has gained.

(d) Is she persuaded that war with the U.S.A. is inevitable and can she be persuaded to the contrary?

13. If satisfactory answers can be given to these questions, it does not seem to me to be too difficult to deal with points of friction.

(a) We had trouble in Persia before but overcame it. Could we not get an agreement as to oil rights in Persia?

(b) We ought to be able to settle the Dardanelles on principles applicable to all

major international waterways.

(c) Can we not deal with Germany on the basis of our mutual interest in seeing that the German nation does not again get into a position to threaten either of us?

(d) Can we co-operate in trying to get some degree of unity and economic co-operation in Europe?

(e) Could we not assist in dispelling the fear of the U.S.A. which seems to be the mainspring of Russia's policy in the Far East?

## 282 FO 800/476, ff 13–20

9 Jan 1947

### [Middle Eastern policy]: minute by Mr Bevin to Mr Attlee, comment- on the prime minister's memorandum<sup>1</sup>

The following are my comments on the memorandum about the Middle East enclosed in your Minute M 15/47.<sup>1</sup> You will note that I have not dealt with the strategic side of the question, though I am not convinced that you have really met the Chiefs of Staff's case. But even without the strategic arguments, the political arguments against your proposals seem to me overwhelming.

I. What you propose is a reversal of the whole policy I have been pursuing in the Middle East, with the assent of the Cabinet, since the Government took office. As you know, I called home our representatives in the Middle East and discussed with them a programme for the economic development of the area. This was to include in particular the development of irrigation and food production. My whole aim has been to develop the Middle East as a producing area to help our own economy and take the place of India, which henceforth will absorb her own produce. I therefore aimed, by means of the British Middle East Office, to build up the economic development on the basis of independent States.

2. This was all on the assumption that we should be playing the main part in co-ordinating the defence of the area and should take the lead in any U.N.O. regional defence scheme for the Middle East that might be set up. My view is that this could be done with the minimum manpower from this country; and when we have settled Egypt and Iraq and if we settle Palestine, there really will be very little British manpower involved. We should get local manpower properly trained, especially in the air, who grouped round us would be able to defend the Middle East.

3. Is this all now to be thrown over?

II. I will now try to answer the arguments in your paper.

1. Your main argument is that our position in the Middle East, even though it is defensive, will seem to the U.S.S.R. the preparation for an offensive.

(a) This is not necessarily the case. We have been in the Middle East for a long time, long before we could be supposed to be preparing for an offensive against Russia. Furthermore, as the Russians can see, we are withdrawing our troops from Egypt and reducing our strength throughout the area.

(b) Moreover, even if they do make this deduction, there is no reason for us to confirm by our withdrawal that we shall never be able to mount a counter-offensive against them if they do attack us.

<sup>1</sup> See 281.

(c) The argument that we must drop any policy that might seem to the Russians a preparation for an offensive is a dangerous one. Wherever Great Britain turned to make a friend, she would be subject to attack on the ground that it was aimed against Russia.

2. You say that the countries in the area are weak and a poor investment.

(a) This may be so, but if we evacuate the area, we should make a gift to Russia of the manpower of the region and of the oil. This would make a difference of 100 millions in the balance sheet and possibly a great difference in our future dollar earnings.

(b) Moreover, though the countries are poor now, it has been our policy, as I have said, to assist them in their economic and social development. This was once a rich region and could be made so again with good government and modern methods. If we help it to build itself up, it can become economically prosperous and a valuable market for us.

(c) Your criticisms of the internal régimes of these countries may be valid, but you will remember the same things were said about Abyssinia in 1935 and 1936 by those who opposed sanctions.

(d) You point out that the Middle Eastern countries are a fertile ground for communism. This is indeed the case, and this makes it all the more certain that if we leave the Middle East, the Russians will move in.

3. Your suggestion is that we should try to reach an agreement with Stalin. I understand that you have in mind an agreement by which the Middle East would become a neutral area in which we would neither of us exert a predominant influence. In paragraph 12 of your paper you put various questions, on the answers to which depend the chances of success in such a negotiation. I will answer these in order:

(a) I think we must accept the fact that the present rulers of Russia are committed to the belief that there is a natural conflict between the capitalist and communist world. They also believe that they have a mission to work for a communist world. But they would naturally prefer to achieve this end by infiltration without an armed conflict between the Soviet Union and the capitalist states if this were possible. If we disinterest ourselves in the Middle East, they will take it over by infiltration, which they would naturally prefer to having to conquer it by war. I believe that it would be as idle to place reliance on gaining our own security by large-scale one-sided concessions to Russia as it was with Hitler. For there is no suggestion of corresponding retreat by Russia from the countries she has seized since the war, such as the Balkans and Poland.

(b) Even if by reducing ourselves to impotence, we convinced the Russians of our pacific intentions, they would remain suspicious of American intentions to use these islands in a war against Russia.

(c) There are better prospects of changes with Russian mentality if it becomes clear to the Russians that her plans will not come to fruition of themselves. Improvements in her internal situation will make her more and not less aggressive, as is shown by the published intentions of her Five Year plans to strengthen her military and industrial potential. Russian propaganda at present is doing everything possible to keep alive the bogey of capitalist war. A surrender of

the type you suggest would only encourage the Russian leaders to believe that they could get their ends without war and would lead them into the same error that Hitler made of thinking that he could get away with anything by bluff and bullying.

(d) If the Russian leaders hold the belief that war with the United States of America is inevitable, as I think they do, it will not be possible for us to disillusion them. Only the Americans can do that, if it can be done at all.

Thus, I do not think there are successful prospects for a negotiation of a kind you suggest. But there are many further objections to a withdrawal from the Middle East.

(a) It would be Munich over again, only on a world scale, with Greece, Turkey and Persia as the first victims in place of Czechoslovakia. If I am right about Russian ideology, Russia would certainly fill the gap we leave empty, whatever her promises. Whatever we may think of the internal régimes of the Middle Eastern countries, they are all passionately attached to their national independence. If we speak to Stalin as you propose, he is as likely to respect their independence as Hitler was to respect Czechoslovakia's and we should get as much of Stalin's goodwill as we got of Hitler's after Munich.

(b) The effect on our relations with the United States of America would be disastrous. We are to a large extent dependent on them economically, and without their help we cannot maintain the standard of life of our people. We are hardly less dependent upon them militarily. With great labour, we have at last succeeded in persuading them that their strategic interests are involved in the maintenance of our position in the Middle East. If we now withdraw at this moment, I should expect them to write us off entirely.

(c) The United Nations Organisation would be imperilled if Russia created a further batch of satellite states in the Middle East. The Organisation would be discredited through its inability to preserve the independence of the countries concerned, and would be difficult to work owing to the addition to the Russian voting power.

(d) After our abandonment of India and Burma, a retreat from Middle East would appear to the world as the abdication of our position as a world power and encourage India to gravitate towards Russia.

(e) It would be useless to undertake in a treaty to protect Egypt against aggression, and if she were unprotected she would soon fall under Communist control, in which case our position in the Sudan would become untenable. The effect would be felt throughout Africa, and our project for a base in East Africa and any prospect of holding North Africa would be threatened.

(f) The effect on the Dominions would be incalculable. South Africa would thoroughly dislike the prospect of the Russians in Africa, and the Pacific Dominions would hardly welcome them on the Indian Ocean.

4. In your paragraph 13 you raise certain further points:—

(a) We can probably get an agreement about oil rights in Persia, but there is no need to abandon our whole Middle Eastern position to this end.

(b) We and the Americans have proposed amendments to the Dardanelles régime in the Russians' favour but the latter make it quite plain that this is not what they want. They want exclusive control.

(c) We are trying to deal with Germany as you suggest on the basis of our mutual interest in preventing a revival of German aggression. The object of the Moscow meeting will be to take it further.

(d) We have been trying hard to work out economic co-operation and unity in Europe, against stiff Russian resistance. There have been slight signs of easing in this respect recently.

(e) Surely only the Americans can undertake the task of trying to dispel Russian illusions about themselves.

5. Assuming that our present policy in the Middle East is maintained, you have asked whether we can in fact afford to carry it out.

(a) We are, of course, doing everything in our power to cut our commitments there. We are withdrawing from Egypt and shall soon be withdrawing from Greece, and then we shall only have troops in Palestine.

(b) In proportion as the Americans realise the importance to them of this area, we can expect them to bear a greater part of the burden.

6. To sum up, I feel that the effect of withdrawal from the Middle East would be disastrous to our position there, in the neighbouring countries in Europe and the world. It would lead the United States to write us off. It would weaken the United Nations Organisation. Even if we do not believe that the Russians have plans for world domination, I am certain that they will not be able to resist advancing into any vacuum we may leave.

Your proposal would involve leading from weakness. Our economic and military position is now as bad as it ever will be. When we have consolidated our economy, when the economic revival of Europe which you mention has made progress, when it has become finally clear to the Russians that they cannot drive a wedge between the Americans and ourselves, we shall be in a position to negotiate with Stalin from strength. There is no hurry. Everything suggests that the Russians are now drawing in their horns and have no immediate aggressive intentions. Let us wait until our strength is restored, and let us meanwhile, with American help as necessary, hold on to essential positions and concentrate on building up U.N.O.

**283** CAB 128/1, CM 27(45)1

3 Sept 1945

**'Future of Italian colonies': Cabinet conclusions, preliminary discussion of proposals**

The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Prime Minister (C.P. (45) 144)<sup>1</sup> setting out certain considerations with regard to the future of the Italian Colonies.

In a preliminary discussion the following were the main points raised.

Against the proposal that His Majesty's Government should assume trusteeship over Cyrenaica and a "Greater Somalia" the following arguments were advanced:—

(a) The arguments on which the Overseas Reconstruction Committee had reached their provisional conclusion that His Majesty's Government should claim the trusteeship of Cyrenaica and a Greater Somalia were very largely strategic. The

<sup>1</sup> See 273.

development of air warfare and the advent of the atomic bomb threw doubt on the validity of the strategic grounds for retaining control of these territories.

(b) In the post-war world it would be impossible for the British Empire to stand alone and it would have to be defended primarily by its membership of the United Nations Organisation. Our proper course was, therefore, to seek to make the Organisation effective rather than to try to strengthen our position by securing bases in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

(c) The mandates entrusted to us after the last war had been regarded as a mere expansion of the British Empire, and our assumption of trusteeship over Cyrenaica and the Greater Somalia would be looked on in the same light. In these circumstances, would it not be preferable to call on the United States or one of the Scandinavian countries to undertake the burden of trusteeship in these cases? Alternatively the experiment of an international administration in Somalia might be tried. Although condominium elsewhere had been failures, it did not follow that a condominium would not be successful in Somalia.

(d) The assumption of trusteeship over Cyrenaica and Greater Somalia would impose a heavy burden on the British taxpayer.

(e) His Majesty's Government would be involved in difficult questions arising out of claims for self-government from these territories.

On the other hand, the following arguments were advanced:—

(f) The changes due to the advent of the atomic bomb and the establishment of a United Nations Organisation would not be effective for some time and, so far as concerned the immediate future, the strategic arguments in favour of the retention of control over the territories were strong.

(g) The Chiefs of Staff considered that, from the military point of view, it was essential that Great Britain should be the trustee for Cyrenaica; and our bitter experience during the war, when we suffered heavy losses and great inconvenience owing to the closing of the Mediterranean route, showed how important it was to retain control of the Mediterranean.

(h) It was extremely doubtful whether it would be possible to persuade the United States Government to undertake responsibilities in the areas concerned and there would be enormous administrative difficulties in setting up any form of condominium. If we did not undertake the trusteeship ourselves the result might be that the territories would revert to Italy, which would create great dissatisfaction in the Arab world. There was also the danger that our failure to assume the trusteeship would open the way for Russian penetration into the Middle East area.

(i) The proposal for a greater Somalia had been put forward very largely on economic grounds, and if a single territory were formed out of the existing separate units there would be a far better chance of the emergence of a self-supporting entity.

(j) In discussion it was also suggested that Cyrenaica might be a suitable place for the Jewish settlement. It was pointed out, however, that this would be much resented by the Senussi, and might have serious repercussions throughout the Arab world.

*The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* said that, while he himself was generally in favour of the conclusions reached at the meeting of the Overseas Reconstruction Committee on the 30th August (O.R.C. (45) 4th Meeting), he desired to make it clear that it had not been intended that these should be regarded as final. In the first place, it had been intended to obtain the views of the Dominion Governments and the

Government of India, while, concurrently, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would give consideration to the financial aspects of the proposals. He had also proposed to discuss the proposals with the British representatives in the various Middle Eastern countries, who had been recalled for consultation during the following week. Thereafter he had intended to bring the matter before the Cabinet.

The Cabinet:—

Agreed that the issues raised in the discussion would be further considered on a later occasion and took note that the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary would consult as to the procedure to be adopted.

## 284 CAB 128/1, CM 30(45)5

11 Sept 1945

### 'Disposal of Italian colonies and of Italian Mediterranean islands': Cabinet conclusions

At their meeting on the 3rd September<sup>1</sup> the Cabinet had had preliminary discussion with regard to the future of the Italian Colonies.

The Cabinet now had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (C.P. (45) 162)<sup>2</sup> submitting revised proposals prepared in the light of this discussion and of subsequent developments.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that, in preparing his proposals, he had consulted the Dominions Office and the Colonial Office and had taken account of the views expressed by Field-Marshal Smuts. It was now clear that the United States Government were disposed to leave Italy with all her Colonies under trusteeship, while the Russian view was likely to be that the territories should remain under the supervision of the United Nations with a right to each of the Powers, including Russia, to establish bases in these territories. He was convinced that the proposal to leave the Colonies under Italian trusteeship would scandalise a large section of opinion in this and other countries and would seriously damage our prestige in the Middle East, while the Russian proposal would inevitably lead to conflicts between the Powers. It was necessary for the Cabinet to decide what line he should take in the discussions on the Council of Foreign Ministers, and he proposed that, so far as the Somalilands were concerned, while we should press for a United Somalia, we should suggest that the choice of trustee should be deferred until the time came to draw up the trusteeship agreement provided for in Articles 79–85 of the Charter of the United Nations. At the same time we might canvass the possibility of the acceptance of the trusteeship by the United States, since if they were unwilling to assume it, they would have more difficulty in rejecting a British claim. Our ultimate policy might be a trusteeship exercised jointly by members of the British Commonwealth but administered by a single one, possibly South Africa or the Government of India. With regard to Cyrenaica, strong arguments had been advanced in favour of our claiming the trusteeship of this territory as a strategic area under Articles 82 and 83 of the Charter. The Chiefs of Staff were giving further consideration to the strategic questions involved. In all the circumstances it seemed to him that the wisest course might be to aim at keeping both Cyrenaica and the Somalilands under British

<sup>1</sup> See 283.

<sup>2</sup> See 274.

military government until the World Organisation had been set up. It might be embarrassing to seek to establish the areas under trusteeship before the machinery of the Trusteeship Council had been worked out. With regard to Tripolitania, the choice of a trustee might be left over, but if in discussion the claims of Italy were pressed, he did not think that we should oppose them. Pantellaria and the Pelagian Islands should be left under Italian sovereignty but should be permanently demilitarised, while the Dodecanese should be ceded to Greece with the exception of Castel Rosso, which should go to Turkey.

Points in discussion were:—

(a) *The Chancellor of the Exchequer* said that while he was concerned at the burden which would be imposed on this country if we became permanently responsible for Cyrenaica and United Somalia, he would have less objection to our undertaking the short-term liability involved in the continuance of military control.

(b) *The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* pointed out that the selection of South Africa to administer the trusteeship of a United Somalia would be undesirable, while the *Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that there would also be objections to the administration of the trusteeship by the Government of India. It had to be borne in mind that part of the United Somalia would be British Somaliland and that we were under an obligation to consult the people of this Protectorate before handing them over to any other Power.

(c) *The First Lord of the Admiralty*<sup>3</sup> stressed the strategic importance of the territories in question from the point of view of the protection of the imperial lines of communication.

(d) *The Lord President of the Council*<sup>4</sup> said that the arguments in favour of our undertaking the trusteeship of both Cyrenaica and the Somalilands seemed to be strong. If we did so, we should be in a better position to arrange for the use of some part of the territories as a Jewish settlement.

(e) *The Minister of Fuel and Power*<sup>5</sup> suggested that before a final decision was reached on the future of the two territories, the Cabinet should be supplied with full information on the strategic and economic considerations involved. In this connection the *Minister of Health*<sup>6</sup> said that he was not convinced by the arguments on strategic grounds for our retaining control of the territories, since the whole strategic picture might be changed once the United Nations organisation was set up. Nor did he think that we should assume that we must retain control of these territories for economic reasons.

The Cabinet:—

Authorised the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to adopt in his discussions on the Council of Foreign Ministers the general line which he had indicated to the Cabinet.

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<sup>3</sup> Mr A V Alexander.

<sup>4</sup> Mr H Morrison.

<sup>5</sup> Mr E Shinwell.

<sup>6</sup> Mr A Bevan.

**285** CAB 128/3, CM 32(45)

15 Sept 1945

**'Tripolitania: colonial trusteeship': Cabinet conclusions (confidential annex) on disposal of ex-Italian colonies, including Eritrea and Somaliland**

At their meeting on 11th September<sup>1</sup> the Cabinet had approved proposals by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for the line to be taken by him in discussions in the Council of Foreign Ministers as regards the disposal of Italian colonies and of Italian Mediterranean Islands.

*The Foreign Secretary* now reported the progress of discussions in the Council of Foreign Ministers. He had found himself confronted with great difficulties in respect of the Italian colonies. There had been general agreement that they should be placed under international trusteeship. The question in issue was however whether that trusteeship should be that of an individual state or collective trusteeship.

There were indications that Russia might be anxious to establish herself on the African continent. She had been very successful in establishing her position, consequent on the end of the war, in the various territorial areas in which she was interested in Europe and in the Far East, and she was in a very strong negotiating position. There were however, from certain points of view, arguments of substance against encouraging, or allowing, her to establish herself in Africa.

So far as the Dominions were concerned, the *Union of South Africa*, which with its small population had since 1914 had to fight in two wars against Germany in both of which Africa had to a greater or less extent been directly in issue, felt strongly that no risk should be run of a situation arising at any future date in which, because of the establishment of any fresh Great Power in Africa, contingent arrangements would again have to be made to protect her interests; and she would be opposed accordingly to granting any special place to Russia on the African continent. *Australia and New Zealand* which though interested in the safety of the sea-routes were geographically more remote, were attracted in principle by the idea of collective trusteeship.

*The United States*, who, he thought, realised the possible trend of Russian interests, favoured a solution on the basis of collective trusteeship.

In these circumstances, Mr. Byrnes<sup>2</sup> had proposed in the Council of Foreign Ministers arrangements as regards Libya under which that area would receive a promise of independence after a 10-year period of trusteeship under an Administrator appointed by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. All States members of the Council of Foreign Ministers would have a voice in the selection of this Administrator. He would be assisted by an Advisory Committee including representatives of all States members of the Council of Foreign Ministers except China, and also representatives of Libya and Italy, who would be able to provide information relating to the territory which would be of value to the Committee. If the Administrator failed to discharge his responsibility to the satisfaction of any of the States represented on the Committee, any one of them would be entitled to bring the matter before the Trusteeship Council.

This arrangement would, it was suggested, give an assurance to all that the former Italian Colonies would not be developed to the military advantage of any one nation.

<sup>1</sup> See 284.

<sup>2</sup> J F Byrnes, US secretary of state, 1945–1947.

It would be left to the Security Council to determine where, if necessary, any strategic bases might be located.

Mr. Byrnes had urged that such a plan would give heart to the peoples of the world, since it would show that the Great Powers sincerely intended to give them at the earliest possible opportunity freedom to determine the type of government under which they wished to live.

Mr. Byrnes' proposal was of course an attractive one from the point of view of public opinion; and, realising the importance attached by the Chiefs of Staff, with their responsibility for defending Egypt, and for the position there, to securing our position in Cyrenaica, he, the Foreign Secretary, had thought it wiser to play for time and avoid taking too definite a line on it for the moment. He had accordingly pointed out that the United States memorandum referred to Libya; but that Libya in fact comprised two territories—Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, and had asked whether these territories could be named separately? To this Mr. Byrnes had agreed.

He (the Foreign Secretary) had then enquired whether, if this matter were remitted for examination to the Deputies, it could be understood that the Deputies were empowered to study not only the proposals in the United States memorandum, but also any such other proposals as might be put forward by other States members of the Council or by other United Nations at war with Italy? He had emphasised further that he would like the governments of the British Dominions to be given an opportunity of putting their views to the Deputies, and he had touched on the fact that it was not yet known what form collective administration would take, e.g. whether there would be an international administrative service for this purpose, and a system for sharing the costs of collective administration. He had added that this was a new experiment which, if adopted, we would try to make work, but that His Majesty's Government would be placed in a great difficulty if they were to be committed to this method of trusteeship without the possibility of altering it if it were found unworkable.

A long discussion had followed. M. Molotov,<sup>3</sup> while agreeing that the principle of international trusteeship might be applied to the Italian colonies, had expressed the view that the American scheme presented difficulties, and had pressed very strongly that this should be on the basis of individual trusteeship by a single Allied nation chosen by the United Nations and that the Soviet Government should be made responsible for the trusteeship of Tripolitania. He had justified this on the grounds, first, that Russia had suffered greatly at the hands of Italian troops fighting on the side of the Germans, and secondly, that the Soviet[s] had wide experience in establishing friendly relations between different nationalities which they could turn to advantage in one of the Italian colonies, in which they would undertake to use the authority given them by the United Nations in such a way as not merely to maintain but to enhance the prestige of the United Nations.

Mr. Byrnes had thereupon indicated that in his view it was important that the Council before referring this question to the Deputies should themselves discuss it, since there were questions of policy that must be determined before the Deputies could consider the details. He had urged that in particular the Council should themselves decide:—

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<sup>3</sup> V M Molotov, Soviet minister for foreign affairs.

- (i) whether the Colonies were to be taken from Italy;
- (ii) whether they agreed that the principle of trusteeship should be applied to these territories—on this the French had expressed some reservations, but the other Powers appeared to agree;
- (iii) whether, if there were to be a trusteeship arrangement, it could be limited to a ten-year period for Libya and Eritrea;
- (iv) whether the colonies were to be administered by particular States or by individuals selected by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations;
- (v) if the colonies were to be administered by individual States, which States should be responsible for which colonies.

Mr. Byrnes had pointed out further that there was no hope of securing reparations from these areas (in reply to which M. Molotov had said that he had no such intention), and that there were strong arguments against their being developed militarily (in reply to which M. Molotov said that nobody had suggested using them for military purposes).

The Foreign Secretary continued that the discussion had come back to the question whether we were going to have individual or collective trusteeship. It had been adjourned until this afternoon and, while he had emphasised the importance of our interests, he had refrained from committing himself in any way. But the point that now had to be settled, and on which he wished for the guidance of the Cabinet, was what was the position of the British Commonwealth if we decided to have collective trusteeship on the model proposed by Mr. Byrnes, excluding any individual trusteeship. If he was to take a definite line (as he felt he would have to) he must have a clear lead from the Cabinet.

In this connection he wished to add—

- (i) That the Conference of H.M. representatives in the Middle East which was at present sitting in the Foreign Office had made it clear to him that they were not a little concerned about the position of the Senussi. We had to deal with an extremely delicate position in Egypt, and the Senussi, though no more than a nomadic ruler, played, it now appeared, a larger part in the Egyptian mentality than we had in the past been inclined to accept. There was the risk of a storm in Egypt and the Middle East unless we handled this whole issue tactfully and we must remember that we had not only in the West the Senussi, but in the East the still more intractable problem of Palestine and the Jews.
- (ii) The reaction of our decision in this matter on the project for a Greater Somalia had also to be borne in mind.

The Cabinet first considered the *general arguments for and against collective trusteeship on the basis proposed by Mr. Byrnes* as against individual trusteeship, with particular reference to the case of Cyrenaica.

The following points were made:—

- (a) Was it not premature to take this issue at the present stage? Surely the question of collective trusteeship should come up in connection with the World Organisation? We ought to refuse to allow ourselves to be rushed, and should first see that the framework into which collective trusteeship was to be fitted was established. *The Foreign Secretary*, while accepting the force of this argument, suggested that in dealing with the question of timing we should bear in mind the

feeling which he thought he detected in the minds of Mr. Byrnes and the Americans that it was only if a conclusion could be reached at this moment that Congress were likely to accept obligations such as those now in view. He thought the American leaders were trying to reach a settlement while United States public opinion was in a mood for one. If there was delay, that opinion might very well cease to take active interest in, or be prepared to take a share in, the settlement of these problems. He had not therefore thought it wise to urge postponement until the World Organisation position was clearer.

(b) *Security*. The Chiefs of Staff had strongly pressed the importance on strategical grounds of our securing responsibility for Cyrenaica. Would it not be better to concentrate on securing this, even at the cost of giving Russia a free hand in a single neighbouring territory such as Tripolitania, rather than accept a system of collective security which would entitle Russia, while not in sole control of any single ex-Italian colony, to have a hand, as one of the United Nations, in the affairs of every one of them? The *Chiefs of Staff* explained that their object in pressing for Cyrenaica was rather to deny it to other Powers whose presence there might represent a potential liability for us than necessarily to acquire it for ourselves. That applied as a general principle to all the ex-Italian colonies. If that could be secured for us only at the cost of having Russia responsible for Tripolitania, a different situation would arise. Our policy was so far as possible to keep any potentially hostile Power away from the shores of the Mediterranean, and the entry of Russia, or a Russian base in the Mediterranean would be most undesirable from the strategic angle. *The Minister of Health* suggested in this connection that the application of a system of collective trusteeship, under which no individual nation would be free to establish bases, would be much the best safeguard against ambitions that might be strategically embarrassing to us.

(c) It was strongly urged that we had everything to gain by supporting a proposal such as that put forward by the U.S. Government, unless decisive objections could be established to it. If it were accepted it would mean that the United States were committed to playing their part in the affairs of this part of the world and to taking a share in responsibility for it. There might be a possibility of their providing an Administrator for certain of these territories. Not only would they be carrying a share of political responsibility; we might also reasonably hope that they would bear a part of the cost.

(d) We must consider also the probable attitude of public opinion generally. The American proposal was superficially a very attractive one from that point of view, while the arguments that could be urged against it were not such as could all of them very easily be stated in public. Had we not made it clear too at San Francisco that the Great Powers would not struggle for ascendancy in the application of systems of collective trusteeship? We must run no risk of our attitude being misunderstood.

(e) *The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* said that the Dominions, while not objecting to the principle of trusteeship, attached the utmost importance to a clear prior understanding as to what the form of such trusteeship was to be. They wished to see what exactly was involved. Who, for instance, would appoint the Administrators? What would their nationality, and their powers be? The Charter contemplated two or three different forms of trusteeship. The Dominions were anxious, therefore, that whatever was referred to the Deputies should be referred as an open and not a decided issue. *The Foreign Secretary* said that the form of

trusteeship which would, on the American basis, be remitted to the Deputies to examine, would be collective trusteeship, and that they would not be free to examine any other form of trusteeship.

(f) *The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Colonies*<sup>4</sup> said that the Secretary of State for the Colonies felt that a very complicated form of trusteeship was involved. International administration in territories under the supervision of an international body with no fund of experience to draw on and inexperienced in the technique of administration was likely to be very difficult.

### *Eritrea [and] Somalia*

The Cabinet next considered the reactions of the proposals now under discussion on the proposals for a Greater Somalia and the disposal of the Italian colonies in Eritrea and elsewhere in East Africa. Under the American scheme Eritrea would be accorded the same treatment as Libya, though there would be a territorial concession to Ethiopia which would give Ethiopia access to the sea through the port of Assab. In the case of Italian Somaliland there would be a similar trusteeship arrangement, but without any fixed date for independence.

*The Prime Minister* enquired whether it was necessary to deal with all the ex-Italian colonies on precisely the same basis? Need a decision in favour of collective trusteeship for all rule out e.g. consideration of a project for a Great[er] Somalia?

The following points were made in this connection:—

(a) A Greater Somalia could not easily be established without the inclusion of British Somaliland. While there were arguments for such inclusion, the policy to which the late Government, with the approval of the House of Commons, had been working, had been that subject possibly to minor rectifications we should neither acquire nor surrender any territory as part of the peace settlement. While that policy had not been formally reaffirmed by the present Government, it stood at the moment on record.

(b) British Somaliland was not an Italian colony and did not fall to be disposed of consequent on the terms of the peace treaty. The Somalis could make up their own minds whether to stay with us or (assuming that we could safeguard arrangements for feeding them) to become part of a larger territorial unit.

(c) *The Chiefs of Staff* said that Somaliland was of importance in terms of security. It was on the long sea route to the Middle East if the Mediterranean were out of our control, and it was also on the short sea route to India, Australia and the Far East via the Red Sea. An unfriendly administration installed in it might be very embarrassing to us. The point was made in this connection that the conception of trusteeship was trusteeship under the United Nations organisation; that that organisation was for collective security and that military bases etc. would fall to be settled on the advice of the Military Staff Committee of the United Nations and not in terms of the interest of a particular country.

(d) In the case of British Somaliland we were committed by repeated pledges given in the House of Commons that there should be no transfer of this territory save after consultation with its people.

*The Foreign Secretary* pointed out that no question of the transfer of British Somaliland arose. Would it be well that he should take the line that in respect of the

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<sup>4</sup> Mr A Creech Jones.

Somali areas the Cabinet had worked out a plan intended to give a better economic unit, in which the people could graze and live under conditions not at the moment possible; and that in consideration of this arrangement he would be prepared to allow the position of British Somaliland to be considered by the Deputies? He would commit himself to nothing beyond examination and it would of course be for the Chiefs of Staff to advise on the strategical aspect. He could, on the other hand, play for time over the whole question of Somalia and could in accepting, if that was the sense of the Cabinet, Mr. Byrnes's scheme for collective security, say that there might be territorial considerations which governments might like to put to the Deputies? If the matter went to the Deputies on this basis that would provide an opportunity for the Dominions and India to come in and have their views heard.

After further discussion, *The Prime Minister* said that the general sense of the Cabinet was clearly that on a balance of considerations the advantage rested with supporting the scheme put forward by Mr. Byrnes for collective trusteeship and was against the allocation of responsibility for trusteeship to individual separate States. Our assumption was of course that if we supported the United States plan, and it was accepted, the United States would play its part. That was vital. Equally we should have to take full account of the guarantees which we had given to the Senussi as regards associating him with the administration and the honouring of our pledges, the return of Italian administration, and most fully honour our pledges to him.

X Subject to this, and to the points raised in the discussion, he suggested that the Foreign Secretary should be authorised to support the proposal that Mr. Byrnes' plan for collective trusteeship should be remitted for examination to the Deputies.

The Cabinet:—

Agreed with the Prime Minister's suggestion at 'X' and invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to proceed accordingly.

**286** CO 537/1474, no 3

7 Mar 1946

[Future of Libya]: draft (unused) by J S Bennett for a Cabinet memorandum

Libya must be treated on a different footing from the ex-Italian territories in East Africa since its inhabitants, the vast majority of whom are Arabs, are politically much more advanced. Their desire is for independence and membership of the Arab League. There exists in Sheik Idris el Senussi a local figure who would be accepted without question as ruler of an independent State in Cyrenaica and, according to the latest indications, it is probable that he would be acceptable in Tripolitania too, if this appeared to be the most hopeful way of attaining the independence of Libya as a whole. Although there is a shortage of trained local personnel to staff an independent Libya (owing to the past policy of the Italians) this could be remedied and in the meanwhile assistance could be found by drawing expert staff from the other States of the Arab League. There is thus no insuperable practical bar to independence. It would in any case be most desirable to give the inhabitants an opportunity of expressing their own views on the future regime for this territory. If an unpopular solution were decided and imposed on them without consultation, this would react

most unfavourably on ourselves as the present occupying Power. The future of Libya is also one of the major current interests of the Arab League. The Egyptian Government have submitted a memorandum urging that Libya should become independent and that the inhabitants should be allowed to decide their own future form of government. From the British point of view it is essential that the future of Libya should be settled within the framework of Middle Eastern policy in view of the vital importance of maintaining our position in that region.

2. Sheik Idris el Senussi and many of his supporters would welcome a continuance of the British connection, and would probably accept British Trusteeship for Libya (on the lines of the old "A" Mandates in the Middle East). This solution, which would also meet our own strategic requirements best, is, however, ruled out if we adhere to the principle of rejecting Trusteeships administered by a single State. (A partition of Libya, involving placing Cyrenaica under British Trusteeship and Tripolitania under Russian or Italian Trusteeship, would be most unacceptable to local opinion, quite apart from its wider implications).

3. It would be possible to adapt the American proposal of collective Trusteeship to Libya in the form of something like an "A" Mandate, the United Nations being represented by a Resident with a small staff of experts to "advise and assist" the local autonomous administration. This course would go some way, though not the whole way, towards meeting local desires and the interests of the Arab League. Its main disadvantage, however, would be that it would make it impossible for us to obtain any strategic facilities in Libya. The possibility of establishing British bases in a territory, the remainder of which was administered under Trusteeship by the United Nations itself, is not necessarily ruled out by the Charter; but any such claim on our part would undoubtedly give rise to counter-claims by the Russians which we should be in no position to reject. The most that could be achieved under this plan from the strategic point of view would thus be a neutralisation of the territory. Moreover, under the American proposals Libya is to become independent in ten years and, if the period of "tutelage" is to be so brief, there seems no insuperable reasons why it should not be omitted altogether and a permanent settlement made at once.

4. It is therefore suggested that we should go a step beyond the American proposals and aim at establishing and recognising the independence of Libya under Sheik Idris el Senussi as soon as Italy has renounced her sovereignty. When this had been achieved, it would be open to the independent Libyan Government to conclude a Treaty with Great Britain, under which we could obtain such strategic facilities as we desired, on the lines of our present Treaty with Iraq and that which is now being negotiated with Trans-Jordan. So far as can be foreseen an independent Government in Libya would be willing to consider such a Treaty with us and would be most unlikely to conclude one with any other Power, particularly with Russia. Our position in this respect would obviously be very strong if we had taken the lead in establishing the independence of the country.

5. The manner of presenting this plan internationally would require working out. However, if we took the initiative in proposing it, it is difficult to see how any other State could openly oppose it. It could be presented very favourably to American opinion. The Russians have committed themselves to an "Anti-Imperialist" line and they could not effectively oppose a grant of independence to an Arab country without destroying the position they are attempting to build up in the Arab world and elsewhere. Considerable opposition could be expected from the French, who would

fear reactions in their own North African territories, but again it is difficult to see how such opposition could be effectively pressed.

6. Moreover, there is at present every sign of an international deadlock on the subject of Libya so long as it is discussed in terms of sharing out the territory among the victorious Powers. We should place ourselves in a commanding position if we propose, as a way of breaking this deadlock, that the inhabitants themselves should be consulted as to the form of Government to be set up. It would be quite practicable, with adequate preparation, to summon representative consultative assemblies in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania for this purpose. There is every likelihood that such consultation would lend support to the solution which we wish to see established. It is not to be overlooked that the British military administration would still be in the country while this process of consultation was taking place; though, if considered desirable, we might offer an opportunity for foreign observers to witness the proceedings. It is difficult to see how there could be any effective objection by other Powers to such an obviously "democratic" process.

7. It is therefore recommended that we should aim at establishing the independence of a unified Libya, to be accompanied and achieved by a form of consultation with the local inhabitants, and to be followed (after a reasonable interval) by negotiations for a Treaty between Great Britain and the new independent State.

**287** CO 537/1468, no 32

[Mar 1946]

'The future of Libya': brief by C L Silverwood-Cope (FO) for Mr Bevin

1. Our main objectives are:—

- (a) to maintain our position in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean, to which region Libya is strategically the western bastion and with which it is closely linked politically;
- (b) to exclude Russia;
- (c) to secure military facilities in Cyrenaica;
- (d) to honour our assurance that Cyrenaica will never again be subjected to Italian domination;
- (e) to provide a form of government acceptable to the indigenous inhabitants;
- (f) to make use of the United States proposals so far as possible, for tactical reasons.

2. The achievement of these objectives means that:

- (a) we cannot attempt to further friendly relations with Italy by putting any part of Libya under Italian Trusteeship and, at the same time,
  - (i) avoid prejudicing our position in the Middle East, and
  - (ii) provide a form of government acceptable to the inhabitants;
- (b) we cannot sponsor a settlement in Libya which runs contrary to the full tide of Arab nationalism without damaging our relations with the Arab States and, consequently, our strategic position in the Middle East;
- (c) we cannot expect to obtain individual Trusteeship of Cyrenaica and prevent Russia from advancing a similar claim for Tripolitania;

(d) we cannot place Cyrenaica under a Collective Trusteeship and at the same time obtain military facilities;

(e) we cannot expect United States support for an individual British Trusteeship for the whole of Libya.

3. Therefore, if the aims mentioned in paragraph 1 are to be achieved, Libya must be treated as a unity and not be divided into Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, and the whole should not be under any form of Trusteeship. This could be effectively translated into a positive proposal, under which we would go a step beyond the United States plan and aim at establishing and recognising the independence of Libya, under El Sayyid Idris el Senussi, as soon as Italy has renounced her sovereignty. When this had been achieved, it would be open to the independent Libyan Government to conclude a Treaty with Great Britain, under which we could obtain such strategic facilities as we desired, on the lines of our present Treaty with Iraq and that which is now being negotiated with Trans-Jordan. The way would also be open for Libya to join the Arab League.

4. This solution would meet the repeated demands of the people of Libya for the independence for which they fought the Italians intermittently from 1911 to 1931 at heavy cost. It would be equally popular with the Arab League, whose Secretary-General, Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha, has advocated such a settlement. It would meet the request which the Egyptian Government have already put forward formally in their memorandum to the Council of Foreign Ministers. Throughout the Middle East the resistance of the Libyans, and particularly the Senussi sect, has a significance comparable to that which many in Europe attach to the Republican resistance in Spain.

5. From the moral aspect the solution proposed is unassailable. Is its international acceptance possible? And is the establishment of a Libyan State practicable?

6. (a) If the inhabitants were consulted, under international supervision, they would vote in favour of this settlement, and this would offer a way of resolving the deadlock which appears likely to be reached in the current four-power negotiations. Thus a British initiative on these lines would place us in a strong position.

(b) The attention which the plan pays to the rights and wishes of the inhabitants could be presented with great force to world opinion, particularly in America.

(c) It can be presented as a development of the United States plan but cutting out the brief interval of ten years' of International Trusteeship;

(d) It would receive strong support from the Arab States.

(e) It is 'democratic' and as such it would be difficult for Russia to oppose it, particularly in view of the recent Russian attacks on "Colonial imperialism" at the U.N.O. discussions on trusteeship.

(f) The French attitude would be hostile, since they do not want an independent Arab State as the neighbour of Tunis and they wish to retain their hold on the Fezzan Oasis and Kufra. It would be necessary to overcome French opposition, but this should not be insuperable.

(g) The proposal is consonant with British policy in the Middle East, particularly the recent establishment of the independence of Trans-Jordan which was welcomed by the United Nations Assembly.

7. The establishment of a Libyan State is a practical proposal. However, financial assistance would be required, at least at the outset, and, assuming we obtained the

Treaty we desire, this would fall on H.M.G. in the form of the rental for military facilities. An accurate estimate of the amount required would need further examination and guesses based on our war-time expenditure in Libya are misleading. It is improbable that the cost would exceed £750,000 per annum at the beginning when the budget of the new State would be likely to show its maximum deficiency. As regards staff requirements it will be some time before Libya can produce the men to fill even the majority of government posts, particularly the technical posts. The technical posts, and some of the administrative, could be filled, to a large extent, by nationals of other Middle Eastern countries. There is little doubt that the new State would require and welcome British advisers with the necessary experience, character and patience: indeed the necessity for British guidance has been a feature of almost every petition regarding the future of the country, and the Libyans have confidence in our methods and, as a result of three years of occupation, very cordial relations with their leaders have been established.

8. Provided, therefore, that H.M.G. were prepared to press for the solution suggested and, subsequently, to meet the relatively small cost in money and man-power in return for the benefits gained, the proposal is practicable. But an early indication of British policy is necessary if misunderstandings with the local inhabitants and with the Arab League are to be avoided. It will be recalled that similar misunderstandings arose in Iraq after the 1914 War when, through a delay in settling the future of the country, Great Britain had to begin the Mandatory regime by suppressing a rebellion. In particular an early indication of our intentions in respect of Libya should be given to the Secretary-General of the Arab League, and the methods of the Military Administration, which are bound to [be] a policy of 'care and maintenance' in compliance with the Hague Rules, should be made more sympathetic to indigenous interests. The first step should be the creation of properly elected Consultative Assemblies.

9. The plan proposed in this memorandum is the only course of action which is fully consistent with the two major British interests in this region, namely

- (a) the acquisition of strategic facilities (and their denial to others), and
- (b) the maintenance and strengthening of our influence in the States of the Arab League.

Any other solution could not achieve the first of these objectives and would in all probability damage our relations with the Arab League. In any event, it would be essential from the British point of view that the inhabitants of Libya itself should be fully and formally consulted before any other solution was imposed on them by the major powers.

**288** CAB 129/8, CP(46)104

9 Mar 1946

'Policy towards Ethiopia: future of the Somali territories': joint  
Cabinet memorandum by Mr Bevin and Mr Hall

1. The Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs has arrived in London with instructions from the Emperor to discuss with His Majesty's Government the whole range of Anglo-Ethiopian relations. The discussions are intended to clear the way for a subsequent visit by the Emperor himself to England.

2. Among the subjects which the Ethiopians wish to raise are the future of the Italian colonies adjacent to Ethiopia (namely Eritrea and Italian Somaliland) and the "rectification" of the frontiers with neighbouring British territories. The frontiers concerned are those of Kenya, the Sudan and British Somaliland. In considering the line to be taken on the British side in these discussions, an important point of policy arises in connection with British Somaliland on which we think it desirable to consult our colleagues.

3. The question affects the future not only of British Somaliland but also of the other Somali-inhabited territories; namely, the Ogaden and the Reserved Area of Ethiopia, and Italian Somaliland. The view has long been held in many quarters that the right policy is to unify these territories under one administration, in order to remove arbitrary and troublesome frontiers and to give the inhabitants themselves a better chance of future development. The arguments in favour of a unified Somalia were set out in full in a memorandum which we circulated to the Overseas Reconstruction Committee before the Council of Foreign Ministers met in London last September (O.R.C. (45) 21), and they need not be repeated here. The proposal at that time was that the unified territory should be administered under a trusteeship with the United Kingdom as Administering Authority. Owing to developments at the Council of Foreign Ministers (namely, the Russian claim for Tripolitania and the United States counter-proposal for collective trusteeships administered by the United Nations Organisation itself), the proposal for a unified Somalia under British trusteeship was not put forward internationally at that time, nor did the matter ever come before the Cabinet.

4. Since then, the Departments concerned have been studying the American proposals for collective trusteeship, in accordance with the instructions remitted by the Council of Foreign Ministers to their Deputies. A report covering the whole field has been prepared and will be ready shortly. In the course of preparing this report it has become apparent that the substitution of collective trusteeship for British trusteeship would not affect the merits of the case for seeking to create a unified Somalia. Such unification would undoubtedly be far preferable to a return to the *status quo* which appears the only other alternative. The existing artificial division of the territory makes normal administration most difficult and any constructive development impossible. The local British military administration have warned us that the Somalis would resist, possibly by force, a return to Ethiopian (or to Italian) rule. From the British point of view, a return to the *status quo* would leave the British Somali tribes without the essential grazing grounds which lie on the other side of the old Ethiopian frontier. Since the linking of these grazing grounds with British Somaliland is vital to the welfare of our tribes, we should be bound, failing the creation of a unified Somalia, to seek to persuade Ethiopia to cede these areas direct to His Majesty's Government, a course which would present obvious international difficulties. Moreover, from the international point of view, the adoption of the American proposal for collective trusteeship appears to offer the best way of countering the Russian attempt to gain the sole trusteeship of certain parts of the former Italian Empire, thus for the first time gaining a foothold in Africa.

5. We do not wish to anticipate the comprehensive report on the Italian colonies referred to above, but for all these reasons it is certain that our interest, and that of the inhabitants, lies in sponsoring the creation of a unified Somalia under trusteeship. If, as seems probable, it is decided that the trusteeship should be

collective rather than purely British, it would be necessary, before offering to place the British Somaliland Protectorate under collective trusteeship, to consider the following two points at the appropriate stage:—

- (a) We should be bound to consult the inhabitants of British Somaliland before a final decision is taken. We are in any case committed to this on account of past pledges in Parliament.
- (b) It would be necessary for the Chiefs of Staff to confirm that no vital British strategic interest would be prejudiced.

The Dominion Governments (particularly South Africa) would in any case have to be consulted, at some stage before a final decision was taken to place British Somaliland under any form of trusteeship.

6. The question of a unified Somalia and the time and manner in which the project can be launched internationally, are necessarily bound up with the question of the disposal of the Italian colonies, the meetings of the Deputies of the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the projected Peace Conference at Paris in May. The two questions are linked not only through Italian Somaliland, [sic] but also through Eritrea. The Ethiopians are known to desire to obtain Eritrea, most of whose inhabitants are closely related to those of Ethiopia. Moreover, at San Francisco and again recently at the Trusteeship Committee of the General Assembly, the Ethiopian Delegation made a statement to the effect that it considered "that trusteeship agreements should in no case have the effect of confirming territorial situations which, as a result of past aggressions, had deprived any member of the United Nations of a portion of its territory." This was no doubt intended to refer to Eritrea and possibly also to the Ogaden. There is no doubt that the most hopeful way of persuading the Ethiopians to agree to the inclusion of the Ogaden and the Reserved Area in a unified Somalia will be to support their claim for the possession of Eritrea or the greater part of it. The circumstances of this part of Africa call, in fact, for a general rationalisation of frontiers to bring them more into conformity with the natural racial, cultural and economic groupings of the inhabitants.

7. Other States as well as the United Kingdom and Ethiopia will thus necessarily be involved in any final settlement. Nevertheless, we have a particular interest in seeing the question solved and a particular reason for favouring early action. The latter arises from the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1944, which is liable to expire on three months' notice as from December 1946. Our present occupation of the Ogaden and Reserved Area derives from this Agreement. Now that the war is over there are no grounds on which we could insist on a renewal, and it is most unlikely that the Ethiopian Government would agree to grant it. Once the Ogaden and Reserved Area had been returned to Ethiopian administration, it would be virtually impossible to detach them from Ethiopia to form part of a unified Somalia; yet without them, the unified Somalia project is unworkable.

8. It is therefore to our interest to open the necessary negotiations without delay. Apart from Italy herself, Ethiopia and the United Kingdom are the two States particularly concerned, and the presence of the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs in London gives us an opportunity (which is unlikely to recur) of broaching the subject with the Ethiopians before launching the unified Somalia project with the Deputies of the Council of Foreign Ministers. Moreover, if we made no mention of the subject during his visit, but raised it within a month or two of his departure

from London (either at the Council of Foreign Ministers or with the Ethiopian Government direct) the Ethiopians might justly complain that we had been keeping them in the dark, and this might very seriously prejudice their attitude to the whole project. The question of creating a unified Somalia can be discussed with the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs without committing ourselves at this stage to putting British Somaliland under trusteeship, or to the form which trusteeship for a unified Somaliland should take, and in advance of a final decision in regard to the disposal of the Italian colonies.

9. We therefore consider that the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs should be sounded on the following lines. We could open by saying that among the frontier questions which His Majesty's Government would wish to see settled is that of the grazing grounds of the British Somali tribes which lie in the Reserved Area and part of the Ogaden. We could go on to enlarge on the constant difficulties which have been caused by the existence of arbitrary international frontiers cutting across the Somali territory (for example, the Wal Wal incident of 1935, which was the starting-point of the Italian-Abyssinian war). Having stated our own essential requirement in this matter (the linking of the grazing grounds with British Somaliland), which it will in any case be essential to put on record, we should then inform the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs that we have been giving consideration to a possible comprehensive solution of the problem which we would like the Ethiopian Government to consider. This solution would be the unification of all the Somali inhabited countries—Italian, Ethiopian and British—under one administration. We could state that such a solution would, in our view, be in the best interests of all the inhabitants, and that it might be advantageous to seek the views of the inhabitants on it. If the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs asked what form of administration we envisaged for this unified Somalia, we would say that we had not yet reached a final view on this point; it might be, however, that this area was one for which "collective" trusteeship (*i.e.*, administration under trusteeship by the United Nations Organisation itself) would be suitable. We would point out that in any case the creation of a unified Somalia was bound up with the disposal of the Italian Colonies, in which other States as well as the United Kingdom and Ethiopia are concerned. It is, therefore, not in the power of either of us to take a final decision on the matter by ourselves. Nevertheless, His Majesty's Government for their part were considering putting this plan forward in connexion with the disposal of the Italian Colonies, and if we knew that the Ethiopian Government were willing to consider it favourably, that would make it much easier for His Majesty's Government in turn to support Ethiopian claims in respect of Eritrea.

10. If such an approach were being made to the Ethiopians it would be desirable for us at the same time to let the United States Government know (perhaps informally) that we were doing so, in order to forestall a possible Ethiopian appeal to Washington which would aim at misrepresenting our intentions in the light of an attempt to "annex" part of the sovereign territory of Ethiopia. We are, in any case, working closely with the Americans in the Italian Colonies discussions and this is an additional reason for keeping them informed. The success of the unified Somalia project will depend to a considerable extent on American support (which may not be easy to obtain), and it is important that it should be presented to United States opinion in its true light, namely, as securing the advantages of self-determination for the Somali people.

11. The position should also be explained to the Dominion Governments. (Later, of course, in connexion with the comprehensive report referred to in paragraph 4 above, the Dominion Governments would have to be consulted on the general question of the disposal of the Italian Colonies before final decisions are reached by the United Kingdom.)

12. To sum up, we therefore recommend:—

- (i) that an approach to the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs should be made on the lines of paragraph 9 above;
- (ii) that the Americans should be informed of our action and of the reasons for it;
- (iii) that at the same time the position should be explained to the Dominion Governments.

## 289 CAB 128/5, CM 24(46)2

14 Mar 1946

### 'Policy towards Ethiopia: future of the Somali territories': Cabinet conclusions

The Cabinet considered a joint memorandum by the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and for the Colonies (C.P. (46) 104) regarding the future of the Somali territories.<sup>1</sup>

*The Foreign Secretary* said that it was his view and that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies that a United Somalia was highly desirable in the interests both of the Somalis and of ourselves. The artificial division of the country made normal administration difficult and constructive development impossible. The Somalis in the Ogaden would resist return to Ethiopian rule, and essential grazing grounds for British Somalis lay across the old Ethiopian border. Some form of trusteeship arrangement would no doubt be necessary and should extend to the area as a whole.

The Foreign Secretary emphasised that he did not seek at the moment final decisions either for a United Somalia or on the exact form of the trusteeship arrangement, which must depend on a broader decision about the future of the Italian colonies generally. At present he only asked for the authority of the Cabinet to explore these ideas as to the future of the Somalis with the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, who was now visiting this country. The Ethiopian Government might require some inducement to forego their claim to the Ogaden area. In that event he proposed to hold out to them the prospect of British support for the transfer of part of Eritrea to Ethiopia. Most of the inhabitants of Eritrea were closely related to those of Ethiopia, and a rationalisation of frontiers there was as desirable as in Somalia.

It was proposed to keep the United States Government informed of our action and of the reasons for it, and to explain the position at the same time to the Dominion Governments.

*The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that he was in full agreement with the Foreign Secretary's views.

Points in discussion were:—

- (a) *The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* said that it would be wise to give Field-Marshal Smuts an opportunity for comment before final decisions were taken.

<sup>1</sup> See 288.

(b) It would also be necessary for the Cabinet to have before them the views of the Chiefs of Staff on the strategic issues involved.

(c) *The Minister of Fuel and Power* said that Shell Company were proposing to undertake a geological and geophysical survey for oil in British Somaliland. If oil were found there, this might affect the views of His Majesty's Government about the future of the area. *The Foreign Secretary* undertook to keep this point in mind.

The Cabinet:—

(1) Authorised the Foreign Secretary to broach the future of the Somali territories with the Ethiopian Foreign Minister on the lines proposed in C.P. (46) 104.

(2) Agreed that the United States Government should be informed of this approach.

(3) Agreed that the position should also be explained to the South African Government and to the Governments of the other Dominions.

## 290 CAB 129/9, CP(46)165

18 Apr 1946

'Disposal of the Italian colonies': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Bevin  
[Extract]. *Minute*: brief for Mr Hall by J S Bennett

...

### *Our objectives*

24. As I have stated above, the question of the Italian Colonies is closely related to that of Imperial Defence. In my view it is essential that we should maintain our position in the Mediterranean and Red Sea. It is not only a question of preserving this life-line in time of war, but also the vital importance of acting in peace-time on the soft under-belly of Europe from the Mediterranean. If we maintain our position along this life-line, the stability of the Middle East generally will be an essential factor. The attitude of the neighbouring Arab States is, therefore, important in its relation to the future of the Italian Colonies and the solution must not be one which will disturb our relations with those countries. If, as I believe, we should develop British East Africa as a strategic reserve without renouncing our position in the Middle East, our approach to the problem of the Italian Colonies must be based on:—

- (i) denial of these Colonies to any hostile influence, and perhaps even
- (ii) retention by us of certain strategic facilities at key points.

In my view, therefore, unless the decision is taken to renounce our position in the Mediterranean and the Middle East we must agree to no solution which does not fulfil (i) above and it may also be desirable to satisfy the requirements of (ii).

25. Therefore, as I see it, our main aims must, therefore, be:—

- (a) to arrive at a settlement which satisfies the interest of imperial defence;
- (b) to prevent the Russians gaining control of any one of the colonies, and to reduce to a minimum their share in any international arrangements and their opportunities for interference;
- (c) to sponsor a settlement which will meet, to the fullest extent practicable the needs and wishes of the inhabitants of the ex-Italian Colonies, *i.e.*—
  - (i) self-government for Libya;

- (ii) a united Somalia;
- (iii) the fusion of the major part of Eritrea (*i.e.*, excluding the Moslem area) with Ethiopia;
- (d) to secure United States support.

26. I believe that even if it were possible to dispose of the Italian Colonies in opposition to the United States, that it would be most undesirable from every point of view that we should attempt to do so. In order to secure United States support it is essential for me not to go back on my decision in September to accept the United States plan in principle, subject to certain modifications and further examination of its practical application. I am not, perhaps committed to support of this plan in its entirety since if it proves impracticable I will be justified in recommending its abandonment, but I am committed to giving it very serious consideration and I do not believe that we would obtain the support of the United States if we did not at least accept as starting-point the principles on which the American Collective Trusteeship proposals are based, namely:—

- (i) that there should be no imperialist exploitation of the ex-Italian Colonies;
- (ii) that the independence of the inhabitants should be recognised as soon as practicable. . . .

*Principal alternative solutions: Libya*

47. An alternative which has been under discussion for some time is that the inhabitants of Libya should be enabled to choose their own form of government. There is little doubt that the Cyrenaicans and the tribal elements in Fezzan and Tripolitania would opt for independence under Sayyid Idris and would also almost certainly request British financial and technical assistance. The attitude of the Arabs in the Tripolitanian coastal belt is less certain. If they considered that the choice was trusteeship or independence under Sayyid Idris it is probable that they would prefer the second course.

48. It is necessary to examine how far the Libyans are capable of self-government. There is a close analogy with the Iraq of a quarter of a century ago. Like Libya to-day, Iraq was a backward Arab country that had just been liberated from foreign rule by British arms and consequently found itself under British Military Administration. Iraq achieved full self-government in twelve years. During that period the Iraqi State contracted with the United Kingdom that there should be a measure of British control over Iraqi affairs in certain departments. Iraq, therefore, enjoyed virtual independence, subject to certain limitations laid down in the Treaty of Alliance. The position was recognised in 1924 by the League of Nations. This resulted in a certain duality in Iraq's status. On the one hand she was a non-self-governing State placed under British mandate by the League of Nations. On the other, she was a self-governing State which had unified limited sovereignty by a treaty with a mandatory Power. It is probable that Libya could reach the position of Iraq in 1932 in an even shorter period than twelve years. It is certainly doubtful whether Libya is ripe for complete independence at the moment, but in comparison with Iraq in 1920 Libya has comparatively few handicaps. There is no division, for instance, between the Sunnite and Shiite religious sects, nor is there a Kurdish problem. In Sheikh Idris al Senussi Libya has to-day one political asset of the utmost value which Iraq lacked in 1920. Whereas Iraq possessed no native dynasty, and King Faisal, who was

imported from outside had great difficulty in establishing himself, the Senussi Sayyids won their hold on the loyalty of Libyan tribesmen long ago. Moreover, Sheikh Idris is a man of ability and the Senussi succession is assured by certain near relatives who appear to be capable of following in his steps.

49. Arabs who have not assimilated European political ideas conceive the ideal State to be a monarchy in which the monarch consults the Council of Sheikhs, notables and religious dignatories. His representatives would govern the tribes and administrative districts with assistance from the Advisory Councils. It has also been a normal Arab practice for the monarch to have European advisers and technical officials. The Libyans are certainly not different from other Arabs in that they are capable of a form of self-government. Their religion and traditions convince them of this and Moslem law and their Arab customs provide the machinery. There is thus already the necessary tribal organisation to administer the areas outside the towns. They are also capable of administering smaller towns, but they would need assistance in the administration of the cities, of which there are, in fact, only three (Benghazi, Tripoli, Misurata). Since the beginning of the war the Libyans have been trained in administration by the British Military Authorities. In both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica the Arabs are taking an increasing share in the work of the administration and are occupying positions of authority. There are, for instance, approximately 350 native officials in the districts and 100 in the towns of Benghazi, Derna and Barce, holding responsible positions, while a number of officials in out-stations carry considerable responsibility with immediate British supervision. A capable police force has been recruited which, except in one riot in Tripoli in November of last year, has shown itself adequate to deal with any normal trouble that might arise. It seems, therefore, that Libya is ready for a more advanced form of administration than the United States plan envisages.

50. On the other hand, there is no one in Libya capable of dealing without foreign assistance with the more general affairs of State, particularly foreign affairs, drafting of legislation, the higher branches of the judicial system, general aspects of finance and economics, and medicine, agriculture, public works, posts and telegraphs &c. Libya, moreover, cannot raise sufficient revenue to support a reasonable administration for some years to come.

51. Libyan self-government is a possibility provided—

- (a) there is continuity of British guidance at the top throughout the period of transition from the present Military Administration to a future independent State;
- (b) the new State is given a subsidy sufficient to prevent its lapse into a discreditable primitive condition until such time as it can balance its budget.

52. If some form of independence is to be introduced, it would be desirable to consult the inhabitants on the choice of their titular head. If the matter were put to the vote, the method which is requested by the Libyans themselves, the majority of Tripolitans as well as Cyrenaicans, would vote for Sheikh Idris, because it is the only means they can see of avoiding a return to Italian rule or trusteeship, a Russian trusteeship, or the Collective Trusteeship proposed by the United States. To all three solutions they are strongly opposed. Moreover, if Libya were divided it would be difficult to establish a satisfactory frontier since it would have to pass through a nomadic area. There is, moreover, little prospect of establishing a satisfactory independent State in Tripolitania within a number of years. Division would also lead

to unhealthy rivalry between the two territories in attempts to obtain subsidies and assistance.

53. It would seem therefore advisable that, unless more important factors decree that either territory should be disposed of separately, Libya should be treated as a unit. This applies to whatever régime is introduced in Libya, for the desire of the inhabitants not to be divided is manifest, and they have strong common bonds. Moreover, the Arab League is strongly opposed to any division.

54. Although the position of Sheikh Idris as head of the State would probably be recognised without great difficulty, the Tripolitarians would resent any direct control by the Senussi and a degree of autonomy would be essential. Thus Sheikh Idris could exercise direct rule over the tribal elements of Cyrenaica and Fezzan through the existing tribal system. In the towns of Cyrenaica his powers would pass through the Arab councils instituted by the British Military Administration, while in the towns of Tripolitania there would have to be a remote control, and probably a special status for the Italian and Jewish colonies.

55. The degrees of independence which might be established are as follows:—

(a) Full independence as a sovereign State under Sheikh Idris—a country ready for membership of the United Nations. Since Libya is still less advanced than Iraq in 1932, it will be desirable that the United Kingdom should accept the offer of a treaty which would certainly be forthcoming from Sheikh Idris, by which in return for financial and technical assistance he would grant strategic facilities. Its status would be analogous with that of Iraq during the period 1920–22, except that Libya would not be placed under trusteeship (mandate).

(b) It might also be possible to consider Libya as a territory analogous to the class A mandates of the League of Nations, or, as the Covenant stated, “of a stage of development where its existence as an independent nation can be provisionally recognised, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a mandatory until such time as it is able to stand alone.” This form of independence comes closer to the American plan. It appears that the State Department envisage Libya being placed under some system similar to the class A mandates, with the mandatory powers being exercised by the Trusteeship Council and a certain degree of autonomy being granted to the Senussi.

56. This scheme (b), like that of collective trusteeship, is open to the objection that we might not be able to obtain any strategic facilities that we might require.

### *Italian Somaliland*

... 63. The possibility of making the Somali territories, or any one of them, independent must, for a number of years, be ruled out as impossible.

64. Another solution is presented by the claim which the Emperor of Ethiopia has made to Italian Somaliland. This is objectionable on a number of grounds. It would be most unpopular with the Moslem inhabitants and it would condemn them to indefinite backwardness and probably oppression and misrule. The only basis for this claim is Ethiopia's need for an outlet to the sea, and this can be met much more satisfactorily in Eritrea.

65. In any decision on the future of the Somali territories we must bear in mind our commitment to the British tribes, and it will be imperative, if a decision is taken to transfer them from British protection to any other form of administration, to

consult them on their future.

66. It may be desirable to maintain certain British strategic facilities in this area, and if Collective Trusteeship should be introduced in a unified Somalia we might be able to secure these by agreement with the United Nations in return for our magnanimous offer to part with British territory. If, on the other hand, it is not necessary to secure these facilities it may be sufficient merely to ensure that the whole area is demilitarised.

67. Another factor which may have to be taken into consideration in the future of the Somali territories, and particularly British Somaliland, is the prospect of striking oil. At the moment, however, it has no concrete significance. Prospecting in British Somaliland has established that the colony has oil reserves of some importance, but for about five years it will probably be impossible to determine their capacity. At the moment it appears that this capacity will be approximately equivalent to that of Egypt. It is doubtful whether it is of sufficient importance to modify the suggestion that the future of the Somali territories lies best in their unification. It is probable, moreover, that in return for our gesture of renouncing our protection over British Somaliland, we could safeguard any British oil concessions or prospecting rights in this area . . . .

### *Conclusion*

72. I have an open mind as to the best course. I am, however, satisfied that we can hammer out a Commonwealth policy which we can all advance without fear. Although the problem is very difficult, there are four encouraging factors of fundamental importance. In the first place, we are occupying the territories under discussion and no settlement can be arrived at, to which we object. Secondly, our administration is popular in all the territories, and the views and needs of the inhabitants coincide very closely with our own. Indeed, they would almost certainly accept any settlement which we proposed, provided it was based on the principles underlying this paper. Thirdly, we have the goodwill of the United States, although this would almost certainly not extend to any purely British settlement. Finally, the interests of the Arab League and our own are very close, and a solution acceptable to the League would immeasurably strengthen our position in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

### *Minute on 290*

This paper has been circulated to the Cabinet unexpectedly by Mr. Bevin. It was previously understood departmentally that all that was being prepared was a factual statement for distribution to the Dominion Prime Ministers as a basis of discussion. The present paper could be given to the Dominion Prime Ministers (with minor drafting amendments) after the Cabinet have considered it, and this may be proposed.

A brief summary of the paper is attached.

The paper examines various alternative policies and does not make explicit recommendations, which are no doubt intended by the Foreign Secretary to come out in discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> Commenting on a draft of this paper, Lord Addison wrote (27 Mar 1946) to Mr Bevin: 'The solution proposed seems to me entirely sound subject only to a doubt in my mind whether Libya is safely ripe for self-government' (DO 35/1926, no 7).

The main Colonial Office interest is in Italian Somaliland and the Somali territories generally. This is dealt with in paragraphs 57–67 of the main paper and paragraphs 7–12 of Annex A<sup>2</sup> (background information).

There is nothing in this part of the paper which is inconsistent with the memorandum on “unified Somalia” which the Secretary of State approved before Easter and which has been sent to Mr. Bevin. In fact, Mr. Bevin’s paper gives a lead very much in the same direction. There are really three fundamental points on this question:—

- (a) The principle of having a unified Somalia. Mr. Bevin’s paper describes this as “the only satisfactory solution” (para. 57);
- (b) The form of trusteeship. The Foreign Secretary thinks that *Collective Trusteeship* is “the most promising way of achieving a united Somalia” (para 60);
- (c) The importance of avoiding delay. The necessity of an early decision about the Ogaden and Reserved Area is brought out at the beginning of the paper (para 5).

It appears that the Secretary of State could stress his full agreement on these three points, and urge that the Dominion Prime Ministers (particularly General Smuts) should also be persuaded to agree.

*Note:* General Smuts is now arriving in London on Saturday 27th April. Mr. Bevin has to leave for Paris before then, but plans to fly back to discuss Italian Colonies with General Smuts on Monday 29th April. It is presumed that the S. of S. will be invited to join in this discussion; it would clearly be most desirable from the point of view of our Somali interests.

This paper has not yet appeared on the Cabinet agenda, but it will clearly have to be taken in the coming week. The S. of S. might like to discuss any further points orally with the Dept. before the paper comes up in Cabinet.

J.S.B.  
20.4.46

#### *Summary of the Foreign Secretary’s paper*

The object of the paper is to set out our objectives and to discuss the merits of the various alternative ways of disposing of the Italian Colonies. No specific choice as between alternatives is recommended.

*Section I* (Introduction) poses the question whether or not to delay an overall settlement. It points out that, even if delay is chosen, there are two urgent problems which must be settled:

- (a) The Ogaden and the Reserved Area.
- (b) How to continue our administration of the colonies indefinitely.

*Section II* (Retrospect) describes our past commitments, developments since last autumn and the views expressed by various other Governments.

*Section III* discusses the advisability of delaying tactics and comes down *against* them, for a number of reasons including the expiry of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement.

The next section (*Our Objectives*) recommends that the settlement we should aim at must:—

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<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

- (a) Satisfy defence requirements including the maintenance of our position in the Mediterranean and Middle East.
- (b) Prevent sole Russian control of any one of the colonies, and reduce to a minimum their share in any international arrangements.
- (c) Meet the needs and wishes of the inhabitants. †
- (d) Secure American support.

The next section describes in general four *Alternative Solutions*:

- (a) Collective trusteeship.
- (b) Individual trusteeship by anyone except Italy.
- (c) Restoration to Italy (under trusteeship or otherwise).
- (d) Recognition of local independence or amalgamation with the "natural motherland".

Strong arguments are advanced against (b) and (c). (a) (collective trusteeship), if suitably modified, is described as the form of trusteeship least open to the dangers of Great Power politics. (d) depends on local conditions which differ in each territory.

The following section discusses the application to *each Colony separately* of the four alternative solutions above:

- (1) *Libya*. Restoration to Italy is virtually ruled out. There are serious objections to individual trusteeship. Collective trusteeship would have advantages, but would prevent us obtaining strategic facilities. We could get these facilities by making Libya independent.
- (2) *Italian Somaliland*. It is essential to work on the basis of a unified Somalia. Collective trusteeship appears to be the most promising way of achieving this.
- (3) *Eritrea*. Any form of trusteeship is objectionable on the grounds that it would preserve Eritrea as an artificial political entity. The right solution would seem to be to dismember it along its natural lines of cleavage, the majority going to Ethiopia and the rest to the Sudan. Eritrea is important as a bait to persuade the Ethiopians to surrender the Ogaden and Reserved Area.

**291** CO 537/1474, no 56

15 June 1946

[Future of Tripolitania]: letter from J S Bennett to J A Marjoribanks<sup>1</sup>

Just before you left for Paris we discussed briefly the latest proposals for the coastal strip of Tripolitania (putting it under collective trusteeship with the object of ensuring the protection of the Italian settlers), and you suggested that I should send you a personal letter amplifying some of my ideas. Here it is. I should like to make it plain at the outset that:

- (a) I realise I am criticising instructions given by the Foreign Secretary, so this letter is intended to be read purely as a personal expression of opinion, for any use it may be to you. In any case, the Colonial Office as such is not, strictly speaking, concerned in this particular subject.
- (b) I do not know Tripolitania at first hand. My ideas are based mainly on

<sup>1</sup> UK delegation, Paris.

experience in other Arab countries, and such knowledge as I managed to pick up during my time on the staff of the Minister Resident in Cairo, including contacts with people much better qualified to speak on these subjects than me. I think that the Middle Eastern analogy is a fair one to apply (provided it is not pressed to too much detail) both because Libya is fundamentally an Arab country and because the Arab League States are specially interested in its future just at this moment.

The first and most important fact that stands out to my mind is that the separation of the coastal strip from an otherwise independent (or semi-independent) Libya would at once create a *terra irridenta*. I do not believe the Arabs of the rest of Libya would accept it, and they would concentrate straight away on trying to upset it. In this they would obviously have the support of the Arabs (the vast majority of the population) inside the Tripoli "enclave". The regime in the Tripoli strip (a shaky enough affair anyway, being an experiment in international administration with the spot-light of great power politics on it) would therefore start off with a first-class internal and frontier security problem on its hands. Whether the administration managed to preserve the peace or not at the outset, the sore would remain open and I fear it would be a perpetual source of friction in that part of the world.

I do not think the friction would stop at being a local problem (remember Danzig). The Arab League States would easily become involved; they have already staked their support for the independence of an undivided Libya. The scheme would artificially cut out Tripoli, the natural capital of the country, besides most of the best agricultural land in Libya. Tripoli was the seat of the short-lived independent Tripolitanian Republic at the end of the first World War, associated with a successful resistance to the Italians. It is worth remembering that Azzam, the influential Secretary-General of the Arab League, was personally involved in that piece of history. After Palestine, Libya is now regarded by the Arabs as the biggest outstanding problem between them and the western powers. Thus our share in the establishment and running of the Tripoli enclave could quickly lead us into complications not only with the Arabs in the remainder of Libya but also with the Arab countries in general; and it is easy to see how this in turn could go sour on the strategic advantages which we hope to obtain (as part of the bargain) in Cyrenaica, as well as on our strategic position in the Middle East as a whole.

It might be reasonable to face these difficulties if there was a really sound case on merits for treating the Tripolitanian coastal strip in a less favoured way than the rest of Libya. But by any normal standard, the people of the coastal strip (being a more settled and town-dwelling population) are if anything more (not less) qualified than those of Cyrenaica or the interior to run their own affairs. The Arabs would be certain to hit hard at this weak spot. It is no answer to say that the coastal strip too would be under trusteeship and that implies eventual independence. If the main object of the special Tripoli regime is to protect the Italian settlers, when will it ever be able to withdraw so long as the Italian settlers remain? The prospect of independence—even self-government by the ordinary democratic process (since the Italians are a minority)—will disappear into an indefinite and remote future. It would be only too apparent to the Tripoli Arabs that the political rights enjoyed by other Arabs (in the rest of Libya and further afield) were being withheld from them simply in the interests of the Italian minority. The U.N.O. trusteeship regime would, willy-nilly, become identified with the interests of the hated foreign colonists. And the more this rankled, the worse the situation would grow, and consequently the harder it would

be for the trusteeship ever to be withdrawn: a vicious circle.

Two Middle Eastern analogies may help. First, the post-last war settlement. There was an inherent logical and moral absurdity in the western powers appearing to maintain that the tribes of the Arabian peninsular were fit for immediate recognition of their independence, whereas the sophisticated townsmen of Beirut and the Mediterranean coast, with their centuries of contact with Europe, required an indefinite period of "tutelage" by a western power. It was obvious that the distinction was based on no principle but on French imperialistic ambitions backed by their claim to "protect" the Christian minorities in the Lebanon. It couldn't last and it didn't. But the process of liquidating it caused incessant friction and recurrent disturbances, and left behind lasting damage to the political reputation of the western powers responsible (particularly France, the chief party). From the narrower British point of view it has kept us in the dilemma of offending either a European ally or our important friends in the Arab world.

The Levant problem gives you the aspect of European "imperialism" (or rival "imperialisms") trying to peel off a strip of the eastern Mediterranean coast from its natural association with the rest of the Arab world. In Palestine you have the aspect of the actual European settler and colonist. Palestine agitates the whole Middle East today because it appears that the Arab majority of the inhabitants are deprived of self-government and self-determination in the interests of a European settler minority (admittedly a rapidly growing one—which makes it worse—whereas the Italians in Tripoli would presumably be more static). For whatever motives, the mandate was imposed with special obligations towards that minority; and fundamentally that it [?] why—in defiance of the whole *raison d'être* of mandates—every year that goes by makes it more and more difficult ever to wind up the mandate or even to create elementary self-governing institutions in the country.

For the European powers, I believe it is now a choice between treating the Arab world as a whole (in which case we can look for good relations with it), or having a series of "bridgeheads" along the Mediterranean coast into a hostile Arab interior. You can't play both policies at once. The French and the Zionists (and previously the Italians) frankly go for the "bridgehead" policy. I don't believe that, with our wide Middle Eastern interests, we can afford to.

Finally there are the consequences for the unfortunate people in the bridgehead itself. I have already suggested how this kind of policy is calculated to increase resentment by the Arab majority against the Italian minority and the foreign administration whose *raison d'être* appears to be to support them. The policy therefore intensifies the very problem it sets out to cure. Experience (especially in the Middle East) has shown that the "protection" of minorities by an external power is a vicious system which nearly always ends by prejudicing the position of the minority community itself. Both Arabs and Italians in an internationally-administered Tripoli enclave would grow increasingly truculent (the Arabs out of frustration, the Italians out of a mixture of funk and swagger at their "protected" status), and increasingly irresponsible (there would be no incentive for either to compromise, so long as both could grumble to the U.N.O. administration). The whole regime would emphasise the differences between them, instead of them learning by degrees how to live together. Unless the U.N.O. administration was prepared to go on for ever as a police state, it would have to start withdrawing one day; and then, if not sooner, the minority certainly *would* be in for it. The Christians

of the Lebanon—originally the most Francophile—have learnt by experience that the best course in the interests of the minority itself is to come to terms with the majority rather than rely on a foreign protector. Which is, in fact, no more than common sense. Give the Arabs of Libya the independence they want (and which we said six weeks ago they were entitled to), and it should not be too much to expect them in return to guarantee the existing Italian population a reasonable degree of internal autonomy to manage their own affairs. A new Libyan Government would have an incentive not to blot its copy-book by allowing flagrant persecution or pogroms. But if you really want to damn the Italian minority, give them foreign protection at the price of denying the majority of the population what they regard as their natural rights.

Please excuse this long and (I fear) rambling effusion, written in haste in the middle of various flaps which we have on here.

**292** CAB 129/10, CP(46)243

22 June 1946

'United Somalia': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Hall

1. The Foreign Secretary's telegram No. 233 of the 20th June from Paris, reporting his withdrawal of the proposal which he made at the last Council of Foreign Ministers for the creation of a United Somalia under British trusteeship, raises an important issue of policy from the Colonial Office point of view on which I should like to consult my colleagues.

2. I fully appreciate the immense difficulties which the Foreign Secretary has had to contend with at Paris in trying to get a peace settlement with Italy, and I realise that the Somali question is only one part of the colonial aspect of that major problem. Everything which has proved to be an obstacle to agreement between major Powers must clearly be removed so far as this can be done consistently with securing our essential interests. So far as I am in a position to judge, what has particularly aroused opposition among the other States concerned on this Somali issue has been our claim that United Somalia should be placed under sole British trusteeship. Though made in good faith, this claim has been represented as an attempt to annex further territory to the British Empire. In view of the statements which we have made in the past disclaiming any intention to seek territorial additions out of the war, the claim for British trusteeship over a United Somalia is evidently a very difficult one to sustain internationally, even though British administration would probably be preferred to any other administration by the inhabitants themselves. We should therefore offer no objection to the claim for a United Somalia under British trusteeship being withdrawn.

3. I feel, however, that we should consider carefully before finally abandoning the idea of a United Somalia as such. It has, I think, long been recognised that the case for unifying the Somali territories and wiping out the existing arbitrary international frontiers which cut across them is a very strong one on its own merits, irrespective of the regime to be installed once the area has been unified. There is an opportunity now, in the course of the post-war settlement, of rectifying the mistakes of the nineteenth century which have produced this situation. If this opportunity of a proper settlement is not taken, it may not recur for many years to come.

4. Over and above these considerations of general policy, there is the special question which concerns my Department of the future of British Somaliland. A return to the *status quo* in this part of Africa would leave us with a British Somaliland within frontiers which past experience has shown to be most unsatisfactory and indeed unworkable. A considerable part of the essential grazing areas of the British Somali tribes lie on the Ethiopian side of the old frontier, in the Ogaden and the Reserved Area. Without access to these grazing grounds, the present and future welfare of the British protected tribes cannot be secured. The most satisfactory way of remedying this situation would be by the creation of a United Somalia (which would include the grazing areas). If the United Somalia project were dropped entirely we should still be obliged, in the interests of British Somaliland, to negotiate bilaterally with Ethiopia for the cession of these vital areas.

5. It might be possible to make a further attempt at achieving a United Somalia if we were prepared to do so at the price of accepting some regime for the whole area other than British administration. The placing of a British protectorate under some other authority would be a far-reaching step calling for very serious consideration. Subject to the view of my colleagues, I would not be prepared to recommend putting British Somaliland into a United Somalia under the administration of any single foreign State. There remains, however, the alternative of an international administration, on the lines of the collective trusteeship originally proposed by the United States for the Italian colonies as a whole. I do not feel that the same objections would apply to merging British Somaliland into an internationally-administered United Somalia. In the paper which the Foreign Secretary and I submitted jointly to the Cabinet in March, we stated that:<sup>1</sup>

“It has become apparent that the substitution of collective trusteeship for British trusteeship would not affect the merits of the case for seeking to create a unified Somalia. Such unification would undoubtedly be far preferable to a return to the *status quo* which appears the only other alternative.”

6. Before his Majesty's Government finally agreed to the creation of a United Somalia under collective international trusteeship, it would be necessary to carry the Dominions with us, and also, in view of past pledges to Parliament, to consult the British protected Somali tribes. But the advantages to the Somali peoples as a whole of creating a United Somalia are so great that I consider the above solution is one which we should be justified in recommending strongly to the British Somalis and to which they could reasonably be expected to agree.

7. For these reasons I should be reluctant to see the door finally closed to the possibility of creating a United Somalia. I appreciate that the present is not a suitable moment for pressing this solution, in view of the turn of events over the Italian Peace Treaty. The question remains whether, without prejudicing the general peace settlement, the door can still be kept open.

8. The immediate problem is one of procedure. The Ethiopians have recently suggested that they might cede to British Somaliland an unspecified portion of the grazing areas, in return for our ceding to them a corridor to the sea at Zeila in British Somaliland. The details of this offer still require elucidation; but it is probable that what they are suggesting is a settlement of the problem on the lines of British

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<sup>1</sup> CP(46)104: see 288.

policy in the 1930s. (This policy was never brought to the stage of negotiation owing to the Italian-Ethiopian war). Such a settlement would not give us all we want, and would involve placing part of British Somaliland under Ethiopian rule. This would no doubt be much resented by the British Somali tribes concerned, and the whole project would require very careful examination. It may eventually prove to be the best we can get, and it is arguable that we are more likely to get it now, when the Ethiopians are evidently anxious to reach a general agreement with us, rather than by holding it over for a year in the hope of getting a United Somalia when the disposal of the Italian colonies finally comes up. By that time (unless the present Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement can be extended) we should have to have evacuated the Ogaden and Reserved Area, and our bargaining position would be to that extent weaker. As against this, by holding the matter over until it can be considered in conjunction with the disposal of the Italian colonies, we might be able to use the bargaining counter of Eritrea, which we should not possess if we embarked now on direct negotiations with Ethiopia.

9. It might be possible to get the United Somalia project more dispassionately considered on its real merits after the conclusion of the peace treaty. It would therefore seem very unfortunate if, in the process of securing our immediate objectives, we were to have deprived ourselves finally of any chance of raising the United Somalia project again at that later stage. We do in fact believe it to be the best long-term solution in the interests of all concerned. Moreover, we have now publicly advocated United Somalia on the grounds that we are seeking only to promote the interests of the inhabitants. Having taken up this position, it appears to me that (in the interests of our general policy towards dependent peoples) we ought not to withdraw without at least making it plain to the world that the responsibility for preventing such a settlement does not rest with ourselves.

10. The question of the course to be pursued at the present delicate stage of the Paris negotiations must be for the Foreign Secretary to judge; and it is also not yet quite clear how the question of the eventual disposal of the Italian colonies (as distinct from the immediate issue of what is to be said on the subject in the Italian Peace Treaty) is going to be left. The withdrawal of our position about United Somalia has already been made by the Foreign Secretary, and this must evidently been accepted as a fact [sic]. I would urge, however, that we should proceed on the basis of the recommendations set out below if we can do so without prejudice to the peace settlement. (Meanwhile we should examine with the Ethiopians the proposal in paragraph 8).

11. My recommendations are:—

- (i) That, if it is decided to make any provisional arrangements now at Paris about procedure for eventually disposing of the Italian colonies, the “terms of reference” (or equivalent) should if practicable be so drawn that the possibility of taking the other Somali territories into account as well as Italian Somaliland is not excluded.
- (ii) That, if no such arrangements are made now, nothing should be done on our part which would irrevocably close the door to our putting the United Somalia idea forward again if we desired to do so at a later stage.

**293** CAB 128/5, CM 61(46)5  
 'United Somalia': Cabinet conclusions on proposals<sup>1</sup>

24 June 1946

The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (C.P. (46) 243)<sup>2</sup> commenting on a telegram from the Foreign Secretary (No. 233 of the 20th June) in which he reported that, in the discussions in Paris on the disposal of the Italian Colonies, he had withdrawn his proposal for a United Somalia.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that, while he understood that it might be impossible to press the proposal that there should be a United Somalia under British administration, he was anxious that the idea of a United Somalia should not be dropped altogether at this stage. From the administrative point of view, it would provide the most satisfactory solution of the problems of the area and he hoped that nothing would be done now which would entirely rule out further discussion of the idea.

There was general agreement that it would not be profitable to pursue the proposal that the whole area should be placed under British administration. This should not mean, however, that a proposal for creating a United Somalia under, say, international trusteeship, might not be raised again later on.

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* urged that before we were committed to support international trusteeship we should know more clearly what this implied—who would appoint the administrator, to whom he would be responsible and what reports he would render.

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer* reminded the Cabinet that this was a deficit area and that, from the financial point of view, there would be advantages to us in a system under which other countries would share the cost of administration.

The Cabinet:—

Invited the Minister of State to inform the Foreign Secretary that, while they recognised that there would be disadvantage in pressing the suggestion of a United Somalia under British administration, the Cabinet assumed that international discussion of the possibility of creating a United Somalia under some other form of administration was postponed and not abandoned and did not desire the matter to be so left that they were precluded from putting this possibility forward at some later stage.

<sup>1</sup> Previous reference: see 289.

<sup>2</sup> See 292.

**294** CO 537/1474, no 69  
 'Policy in Libya': brief for Mr Hall by J S Bennett on proposals of CP(46)354 (British trusteeship in Cyrenaica, followed by independence)

25 Sept 1946

1. *Summary of the paper*

Approval of Article 17 of the draft Italian Peace Treaty is likely to result in visits to ex-Italian colonies by International Commissions of Investigation to advise on their final disposal. Commonwealth interests in the security of Mediterranean com-

munications, particularly in view of the present stage of the negotiations with Egypt, make it essential to retain strategic facilities in Cyrenaica. For that reason and also because there is a probability that Italy may be associated with the future of Tripolitania, Mr. Bevin proposes to treat Cyrenaica independently as an immediate problem, in order to secure for it British trusteeship (allowing for the necessary strategic facilities) and for independence after ten years. Support for this policy also derives from these factors:

- (a) British trusteeship for the whole of Libya would encounter Russian, Italian and French opposition.
- (b) There is fairly general acceptance by other powers of Britain's special interest in Cyrenaica.
- (c) The people of Cyrenaica would support a separate settlement (i.e. from Tripolitania) if they realise that their own prospects of independence would be reduced by linking their cause with Tripolitania's.

Since 1940 the people of Cyrenaica have favoured continued association with the U.K. but the prolonged British military occupation under the Hague Convention rules has led more enlightened Arabs to criticise our lack of progressive administration. In order to take advantage of their fundamental goodwill and to ensure that any investigating Commission will be fully aware of the Cyrenaican's desire to remain associated with us, Mr. Bevin proposes the following administrative action:

- (i) El Sayed Idris, the Senussi leader be made a K.B.E., and addressed by the Military Administration as "His Highness the Emir", the title used by the Cyrenaican Arabs.
- (ii) Promotion of Arabs to more responsible posts in the administration.
- (iii) The creation of a Cyrenaican Advisory Council under El Sayed Idris.
- (iv) Measures to repair war damage and improve economic conditions.
- (v) Improvement of staffing position in Military Administration.
- (vi) A War Office/Foreign Office Working Party to visit Cyrenaica and advise on (ii), (iii) and (iv) above after local enquiries.

## 2. *Colonial Office comment*

### A. *General policy*

It is fortunate that Cyrenaica which, of all the ex-Italian colonies is strategically the most important to us, is the one where British, as opposed to collective, trusteeship is most likely to gain acceptance from other powers. Britain is already committed (by Mr. Eden in January 1942) to ensuring that "at the end of the war the Senussi in Cyrenaica will in no circumstances again fall under Italian domination" and the mere suggestion of Italian participation in the government of Cyrenaica has immediately aroused the fiercest Arab opposition. Arab nationalism in Cyrenaica has the sympathy of the Arab League and British trusteeship with independence after a short period would be the most acceptable policy to the Arab states of the Middle East.

The temporal and spiritual leadership of El Sayed Idris in Cyrenaica is unquestioned. His honorary title is invariably used by the Arabs who would be fully sensible of the significance of its use by British Military Administration. Further his role, both as the leader of the Anti-Italian resistance movement from 1922-1931 and again

during the war makes the double honour proposed by Mr. Bevin justifiable. He would be the obvious, indeed the only choice, for chairmanship of a Cyrenaican Advisory Council and would present to any Commission a case likely to harmonise both the Arab nationalist and British points of view. Such a Council would be valuable in giving the Arabs a more responsible contact with administrative matters and laying the foundation for their ultimate independence, even though when it is obtained it is probable that European advisers would be necessary and welcome. Already some posts previously filled by Italians have been taken over by Arabs.

### B. *Staff*

Mr. Bevin asks that the Colonial Office together with the Sudan Government and possibly the India Office, can assist in meeting the shortage of experienced staff which the Military Administration in Libya finds an urgent problem. As a result of the War Office approach earlier this year the Colonial Office, though it was being pressed for recruits from all territories, agreed to recruit up to a dozen Administrative Officers to be attached to the Military Administration. These officers would be of Colonial Administrative Service standard, would be temporarily placed on British Somaliland Protectorate establishment, seconded to Military Administration for two years and subsequently given posts in the Colonial Administrative Service. (Despite this urgency Colonial Office have found it difficult to proceed quickly because of War Office delays in agreeing to details regarding terms of appointment, passages etc. War Office agreement to Colonial Office draft terms of engagement is still awaited and until it is obtained Colonial Office cannot begin recruitment.)

If it is suggested that the Colonial Office might give further assistance to staff beyond what is described above the Secretary of State might offer to investigate possibilities while not holding out substantial hopes that the general recruitment position would allow for increases.

### C. *Proposed Working Party to visit Cyrenaica*

It is for consideration whether the Colonial Office could not usefully be represented on this Working Party, firstly in view of our interest in a potential British trust territory and secondly in order to advise generally on administrative matters. The Secretary of State might suggest that the possibility of associating a representative of the Colonial Office with the Working Party should be examined between the Departments concerned.

## 295 CAB 128/6, CM 83(46)4 'Libya': Cabinet conclusions on policy for the future

26 Sept 1946

The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (C.P. (46) 354)<sup>1</sup> on the policy to be followed in regard to the future of Libya.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that it now seemed likely that under the Peace Treaty Italy would renounce her sovereignty over her colonial possessions, and their future would remain to be settled after a year's delay by the Four Powers. An important

<sup>1</sup> See summary in 294.

factor in this settlement would be the wishes of the local inhabitants. During the year the Council of Foreign Ministers were to receive recommendations from their Deputies, and commissions of investigation were to visit the colonies to collect facts and ascertain the views of the inhabitants.

The Foreign Secretary feared that it would be difficult to find a solution for Libya which reconciled our military requirements, the interests of Italy and France, Libyan nationalism and the regional claims of the Arab States. He thought that most progress was likely to be made by dealing separately with Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. He had reason to believe that the United States Government would support this view.

He now recommended that we should concentrate on securing a British trusteeship for Cyrenaica, so drafted as to give us the necessary strategic facilities and leading to independence after ten years, with an extension if necessary by agreement with the United Nations.

It was important that the commissions of investigation which were to visit the territories should be impressed by the desire of the people to remain under our administration. Hitherto, we had administered Cyrenaica with, perhaps, undue regard to the letter of The Hague Convention. To ensure the goodwill of the inhabitants we should now adopt a more progressive policy, even though this involved a somewhat greater expense. He, therefore, made the following proposals:—

- (i) El Sayed Idris el Senussi, who was the acknowledged leader of the people as well as of the Senussi religious sect, should be allowed to use the title of Emir and should be awarded an honorary K.B.E.
- (ii) Steps should be taken to increase the opportunities for local Arabs to hold responsible posts in the Administration.
- (iii) An Advisory Council for the whole country should be set up under the chairmanship of Sayed Idris.
- (iv) Increased efforts should be made to restore war damage and to remedy the economic disabilities of the country.

He proposed that a Working Party should visit the country to draw up a comprehensive plan covering the proposals at (ii), (iii) and (iv) above. He hoped that senior administrative staff could be made available from the Colonial Service, the Sudan and, perhaps, the Indian Civil Service to assist in these developments.

*The First Sea Lord*<sup>2</sup> said that the Chiefs of Staff thought it important that we should secure strategic facilities in Cyrenaica. They had no objection to the Foreign Secretary's proposals for a British trusteeship over the country, provided that the trusteeship agreement was so drafted as to give us those facilities.

As regards the Foreign Secretary's proposals for a more progressive policy in the administration of the country, *The Lord President* reminded the Cabinet of the importance which the Chancellor of the Exchequer attached to the reduction of our overseas expenditure. These proposals would involve considerably increased expenditure, and in the Treasury view we should not commit ourselves to more than a somewhat enlarged programme of public works.

As against this, it was argued that, as experience had shown, we could not hope to retain military bases in foreign countries if we remained disinterested in the economic and social conditions of the inhabitants. On the financial aspects of these

<sup>2</sup> Admiral Sir John H D Cunningham.

matters it was necessary to take a long-term view.

*The Secretary of State for India and The Secretary of State for the Colonies* undertook to give the Foreign Secretary all the assistance they could in providing experienced staff for the administration of Cyrenaica.

After further discussion, the Cabinet:—

(1) Agreed that we should attempt to secure a British trusteeship for Cyrenaica, so drafted as to give us the necessary strategic facilities and leading to independence after ten years, with an extension if necessary by agreement with the United Nations.

(2) Agreed that, meanwhile, a more progressive policy should be followed in the administration of Cyrenaica and approved in principle the proposals to this end made by the Foreign Secretary in C.P. (46) 354.

(3) Agreed that Dominion Governments should be informed of these conclusions and given an opportunity for comment.

**296** CO 537/2081, no 8

11 Feb 1947

'Note on the implications of restoring to Italy some or all of the ex-Italian colonies': memorandum by J S Bennett. *Minutes* by A B Cohen and Mr Thomas

[Extracts]

#### A. Introduction

Under Article 23 of the Treaty of Peace Italy renounces her colonies in Africa. Their future disposal is to be determined by the Council of Foreign Ministers within 12 months of the signature of the Peace Treaty. Failing agreement the question will go to the United Nations. The suggestion has been mooted in some quarters that one or more of her colonies should be restored to Italy, with the dual object of placating Italian sentiment and avoiding further international disputes over the disposal of the colonies. It has further been suggested that, if such a solution were acceptable to United Kingdom interests, the United Kingdom should take the initiative in proposing it at the Council of Foreign Ministers. No Ministerial decision on the matter has yet been sought.

2. At an inter-departmental meeting at the Colonial Office on 24th January it was agreed that the Colonial Office would prepare a paper examining whether, from the Colonial Office point of view, it would be desirable to restore one or more of her colonies to Italy, and if so, which of them it would be least objectionable to restore. This paper deals with the question under two headings, section B containing general observations common to all the Italian colonies, and section C comments particular to each of the individual territories.

3. The conclusion reached is that there are very serious objections to restoring any of the colonies to Italy. It is appreciated, however, that these objections will have to be weighed against

(a) arguments in favour of such a course from the point of view of future relations with Italy and foreign policy in Europe generally (though these considerations lie outside the scope of the present paper), and

(b) the practical alternatives.

*B. General objections to restoring any of the Italian colonies to Italy*

(i) *Objections to the principle of "territorial compensation"*

4. The basic assumption of the whole proposal is that the colonies should be restored for reasons connected with relations between European states and not based on any consideration of the interests of the inhabitants of the ex-Italian colonies themselves. Although technically it would be an act of 'restoration', the principle invoked is that of territorial compensation.

5. Whatever the merits of this principle as between sovereign states, who can at least speak for themselves, world opinion for several decades past has hardened against its application in the colonial field where the future of dependent peoples is at stake. President Wilson stated the position clearly in his celebrated "Four Principles" speech of 1918 (which followed the "Fourteen Points"), one of which ran as follows:—

"Peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as though they were chattels or pawns in a game, even the great game, now for ever discredited, of power politics."

Although this principle was not formally incorporated as such into the League of Nations Covenant, it was one of the underlying principles of the mandate system. It may fairly be claimed that it is now accepted by enlightened world opinion and is indeed implicit in the United Nations Charter—see paragraph 9 below.

6. The United Kingdom, as the principal colonial power, has long stood for the principle that the possession of colonies is not a benefice to be exploited but a responsibility which the metropolitan government must discharge in the interests of the inhabitants of those colonies. It follows that dependent peoples should not be transferred from one sovereignty to another without reference to their wishes and future interests. The United Kingdom itself is displaying extreme sensitivity on this point on at least two questions of current interest: the question of Egyptian sovereignty in the Sudan and the position of the frontier areas of Burma in relation to the new Burmese Constitution. For the United Kingdom to propose that one or all of the Italian colonies should be handed back to Italy without any regard to the wishes or interests of their inhabitants would demonstrate a cynical disregard of these principles. It would be only too apparent that we were invoking high-sounding principles when it suited our interests in one case and cheerfully abandoning them in another case when our interests pointed the other way.

7. The particular territorial circumstances of each ex-Italian colony are examined in section C of this note, but it is obvious that (with the possible exception of Italian Somaliland) there would be the strongest local resentment at the arbitrary restoration of Italian rule. For the United Kingdom to propose in these circumstances that the Italians should nevertheless be put back would seriously damage our reputation as a colonial power, both internationally and in the more politically advanced of our own dependent territories. Indeed, the only policy for the Italian colonies fully consistent with our international standing as a colonial power is that the wishes of the inhabitants about their future form of government must be consulted and should be followed as far as possible. It would not be inconsistent

(though it might savour of the ludicrous) for the United Kingdom to propose that the inhabitants of one or more of the Italian colonies should be asked if they would like the Italians back; but we simply cannot afford to “do a deal” without consulting them at all.

(ii) *Implications under the United Nations Charter*

8. In addition to the general principles dealt with briefly in (i) above, it is necessary to consider specifically the position under the United Nations Charter.

9. One of the “Purposes and Principles” in Article 1 of the Charter is “to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights *and self-determination of peoples*”. The United Nations Charter thus approaches very nearly to an international obligation to refrain from acts of territorial compensation irrespective of the wishes of the peoples concerned.

10. Furthermore, it can presumably be assumed that there would be no question of restoring the colonies to Italy under full sovereignty and that international opinion would only tolerate Italy’s restoration as administering authority under the International Trusteeship System. One of the “basic objectives” of the Trusteeship System, as laid down in Article 76(b) of the Charter is “to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of trust territories and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned”. If, as seems certain to be the case, the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned were against having Italy as “Trustee” at all, this in itself seems an almost insuperable moral objection to imposing Italian Trusteeship, even though there is nothing specific in the United Nations Charter corresponding to the provision in Article 22 paragraph 4 of the League of Nations Covenant which stated that “the wishes of the communities concerned must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory”.

11. Even supposing this initial difficulty could be overcome, there is another logical and political absurdity in restoring the colonies to Italy under Trusteeship. The main purpose of restoring them would be to please the Italians, i.e. to give them something which would benefit Italy and which they could keep. The essential principles of Trusteeship are, however, first that the administering authority is to assume obligations of service towards the trust territory and not to gain benefits out of it, and secondly that the Trusteeship regime is a temporary phase leading to self-government or independence.

12. The United Kingdom itself is deeply committed to these principles in respect of the Trusteeship System, and if we were to take the lead in proposing that Italy should be given a territory under Trusteeship for the sole and obvious purpose of giving Italy prestige and/or economic benefits, we should not only be undermining international confidence in the Trusteeship System but also seriously weakening our own prestige and position as an administering authority and a member of the Trusteeship Council. This is not merely a logical difficulty; it has serious practical implications which would certainly not escape our many critics on colonial questions.

(iii) *Position of Italy: questionable value of the colonies*

13. It is important to remember what the nature of the Italian Empire was. More

than any other colonial empire (except the Japanese) it was “imperialistic” in the bad sense and existed simply for the glory and advantage of the metropolitan country. The territories themselves are poor and were described on one memorable occasion as “Mussolini’s collection of deserts”. Their value to Italy, however, lay principally in the following three factors:—

- (a) Prestige:
- (b) Strategic value as bases for attack on neighbouring countries (Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan and Kenya):
- (c) A field for “demographic” colonisation (i.e. the settlement of surplus Italian population).

14. What value would remain if the colonies were restored to the new Italy? The military factor must disappear since the basic assumption is that the new Italy will be a friendly state, though it might well be difficult to convince those countries which border on the Italian colonies that Italian aggressive designs would not be renewed. As for colonisation, it is surely inconceivable that Italy, administering one or more of her old colonies under the Trusteeship System, should be allowed to appropriate still more of their scanty agricultural land and resources for the benefit of Italian nationals. Such a policy would be clearly in conflict with the basic objectives of trusteeship (Article 76 of the Charter).

15. It thus appears that, of the original *raison d’être* for the Italian Empire, nothing would remain except the empty prestige value. Though this might attract certain Italian political circles as an immediate diplomatic success, it is questionable what lasting advantage it would have for the Italian people; while the possession of tracts of territory only useful for strategic or colonisation purposes might well encourage a renewal of those designs.

16. There is one further important factor. If Italy is to administer the Colonies in accordance with modern ideas and with the principles of the Trusteeship system, it would be essential for her [to] spend a lot of money on them with very little hope of return. As is well known, none of the Italian Colonies is self-supporting, while much capital investment would be necessary to achieve any serious degree of economic and social advancement. In Fascist days Italy invest[ed] heavily in her colonies, but then they paid dividends in terms of strategic value and Italian colonisation. It seems at least questionable whether, lacking these dividends, the new Italy would be willing to spend heavily in the colonies without return except in terms of prestige. Yet without such expenditure Italian trusteeship would not be justified in the interests of the inhabitants. It is necessary to emphasise this factor; the United Kingdom itself, by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, has taken the lead in the doctrine that prestige is not enough and that the possession of colonies entails a responsibility to assist them financially.

17. The new Italy seems likely to be poor for many years to come. Suppose, for a moment, that the Italian Government did nevertheless persuade its taxpayers to contribute adequately to the maintenance of a purely “prestige” Empire. The result would be one more drain on Italy’s resources, which seems of very doubtful value in the best interests of the Italian people themselves. Moreover (while it is not for the Colonial Office to assess policy towards Italy) it seems likely that economic distress in Italy, more than any other factor, is likely to create conditions in which Communism would gain an increasing hold. Yet the presumed objective of returning the colonies

to Italy would be to encourage her association with the Western powers rather than with the Soviet Group. After the initial excitement had worn off, the economic responsibility of Empire would seem likely if anything to push Italy the other way.

18. It may be added here that, so far as emigration of surplus population may be a real problem in Italy in future, the possession of colonies is by no means essential as an outlet for it. If this were so, Switzerland and the Lebanon (to take two examples) would need colonial empires; both live to a considerable extent on remittances from their emigrant citizens in foreign countries.

### C. *The individual colonies*

#### (i) *Cyrenaica*

19. It is assumed that there would be no question of restoring Cyrenaica to Italy, in view both of His Majesty's Government's pledge to the Senussi in 1942 and of our own strategic requirements there. The general objections noted under Tripolitania below would, of course, hold good for the whole of Libya.

#### (ii) *Tripolitania*

20. The Arab inhabitants are known to desire independence, and it has been estimated in the past by G.H.Q. Middle East that Italian rule could only be restored by force, which would have to be British force. Such a course appears unthinkable. Tripolitania is part of the Arab world and is being increasingly drawn into its orbit. Apart from local implications, the restoration of Italian rule by British troops would seem likely to prejudice seriously our relations with the Arab League States, with probable repercussions *inter alia* on the Palestine problem. Adequate warning against any such policy seems to be provided by our recent unhappy experience in the Levant States. After their liberation in 1941, we pursued an ambiguous course, trying both to placate the French by putting them back and to fulfil our undertakings to the inhabitants about independence. In the result we pleased neither party and created incessant friction for which we were blamed by both sides and which, in the end, British troops had to resolve. It is only too easy to see how history could repeat itself if we restored the Italians in Tripolitania.

21. Now that the Arab League has come into existence it is no longer practicable for the United Kingdom (or any other European Power) to pursue successfully contradictory policies in different parts of the Arab world. We shall shortly have to go before the Security Council arguing for the right of the Sudanese to determine their own future and not to have Egyptian sovereignty imposed on them without their consent. We can hardly propose simultaneously in the Council of Foreign Ministers that these very rights should be denied to the Tripolitanians. Both countries have a common political centre of gravity in Cairo.

#### (iii) *Eritrea*

22. Eritrea is even less of a natural entity than any of the ex-Italian colonies. Its only *raison d'être* is to give a foothold on the Abyssinian plateau from which a power based on the Red Sea can attack Ethiopia. For this reason, and because more than half the inhabitants of Eritrea are akin to the Ethiopians by race and religion, Ethiopia has, of course, claimed the territory. It has previously been United Kingdom policy that Eritrea should be divided along its natural lines of cleavage between

Ethiopia and the Sudan. For the United Kingdom to propose its restoration to Italy would seem certain to provoke extreme hostility in Addis Ababa, and it seems doubtful whether world opinion (remembering the 1935 war) would find such a solution acceptable. In any event, the Colonial Office is particularly concerned at this moment in maintaining friendly relations with Ethiopia in order to bring to a successful conclusion the negotiations for frontier rectifications with British Somaliland and Kenya. Such negotiations could not hope to succeed if, after evicting the Italians and restoring the Emperor, we put the Italians back as his nextdoor-neighbours.

#### (iv) *Italian Somaliland*

23. The same general considerations vis à vis Ethiopia apply, though possibly not quite so strongly, as in the case of Eritrea. The restoration of Italian Somaliland would moreover be very badly received in British East Africa both among Europeans and Africans, who were invaded from this territory in 1940 and who provided much of the military force which removed the Italian threat (as they thought) for ever. It would be difficult to convince East African opinion that Italy would never again use Italian Somaliland as a base for aggression, since the territory could have no other value to Italy beyond empty prestige. A similar attitude seems likely in the Union of South Africa, though that lies outside the scope of this paper.

24. The attitude of the inhabitants of Italian Somaliland themselves is more difficult to assess, but it must be remembered that they are closely akin to the Somalis of British Somaliland and that less than a year ago His Majesty's Government publicly proposed the unification of the two territories in the interests of the inhabitants. It would certainly be most unwise to commit ourselves to restoring Italian rule unless it had first been ascertained, by careful local preparation, that it would not be resisted and would not require the assistance of British force.

#### D. *Conclusion*

25. The above general and specific territorial objections seem to constitute a conclusive argument against restoring any of the Italian Colonies, from the point of view of local reactions, British relations with neighbouring states, and the international standing of His Majesty's Government as a colonial power. As stated above, however, in paragraph 3 it is appreciated that these objections will have to be weighed against other arguments including the practical alternatives. If, notwithstanding the grave objections of principle described in this paper, it should be decided that any one of the Italian Colonies should be restored to Italy under trusteeship, the least objectionable appears to be Italian Somaliland partly because it is not yet clear that there would be such violent opposition and partly because in this case it is particularly difficult to think of any practical alternative which would not be equally unsatisfactory. The alternatives would seem to be as follows:—

- (a) *The original idea of a United Somalia under United Kingdom trusteeship.* This is clearly the most satisfactory solution but unfortunately it does not seem likely to be acceptable internationally.
- (b) *United Somalia under collective trusteeship.* This would avoid the Italian

difficulty but the prospects of an international administration being workable are not encouraging.

(c) *Italian Somaliland under collective trusteeship*. The comment under (b) is equally applicable.

(d) *Italian Somaliland under the trusteeship of some other single power*. The difficulty here would be to find any country acceptable to us who would be willing to take it on, though if one could be found this might be a good solution.

26. It may be desirable to give further inter-departmental consideration to some of these alternatives in the light of the latest phase of international opinion as manifested at the Council of Foreign Ministers.

### Minutes on 296

*Mr Poynton*

I think we ought to discuss early and am at your & Mr Bennett's disposal. Mr Bennett's paper is brilliant & damning; but there are certain points requiring further thought:—

- (1) If Italy doesn't get Italian Somaliland, what is to be done with it; would any alternative practicable solution be worse or better from our point of view?
- (2) Should we put in a paper which demolishes the other Territories—I do not think any Dept. favours the return of any other Territory, but It. Somaliland?
- (3) Ought we to pin such faith on consultation with the people? We might find this a little awkward in the Ogaden (not much in this point, I think).

A.B.C.  
1.3.47

... I trust we may not again be put in the position where the United Kingdom is vilified for desiring a punitive peace while the United States and the Soviet Union are given credit for generous intentions.

The direct interest of the Colonial Office in the disposal of the Italian Colonies does not appear to me to be so great as to outweigh general questions of foreign policy. Their disposal is mainly a question of foreign policy, and I should not like to see the Colonial Office taking a line which would militate against the interests of the United Kingdom in the field of Foreign Affairs unless it were built on irrefragable foundations. This does not appear to me to be the case in the papers now under consideration . . . .

I.T.  
19.3.47

... As regards Cyrenaica and Tripolitania the Colonial Office is only indirectly concerned. As background I would refer to Mr. Bevin's memorandum to the Cabinet of last autumn.<sup>1</sup> This is not of course up to date, but there is no subsequent authoritative statement either of the position or of our proposed policy.

The Colonial Office are directly concerned with Somalia and closely concerned with Eritrea because it forms part of the settlement which will have to be made with

<sup>1</sup> See summary in 294.

Ethiopia. As regards Somalia Mr. Poynton, Mr. Bennett and I attended a meeting under Mr. Jebb's<sup>2</sup> chairmanship in the Foreign Office on the 26th February to discuss a suggested policy. The discussion was inconclusive, but it was agreed that the Colonial Office should prepare the draft of a memorandum to be submitted to Ministers dealing with the three possible courses which appear open to us; United Somalia under British Trusteeship (which would have to include at any rate a large part of the Ogaden); United Somalia under Collective Trusteeship; and the return of Italian Somaliland to Italy under Trusteeship. Mr. Jebb said that there was no immediate urgency about the preparation of this memorandum.

. . . I think we can rule out straight away the possibility of persuading, for example, a Scandinavian state to take over the Trusteeship of Italian Somaliland. I know that the Foreign Office agree with the view that such a state would not be interested and I fear that any suggestion of giving the Trusteeship for Italian Somaliland to some entirely new state might lead to its being entrusted to a state not acceptable to ourselves on political or strategic grounds or both, e.g. India.

My own view is that of the possible courses . . . the real choice lies between United Somalia under British Trusteeship and the return of Italian Somaliland to Italy under Trusteeship. The former course has the advantages of being undoubtedly in the best interests of the inhabitants and being in accordance with our own strategic interests. It has the disadvantages of imposing a considerable additional financial burden on us (the Treasury would certainly oppose this course strongly) and of being difficult to put over internationally; although Mr. Jebb said at the meeting referred to above that the fact that Mr. Bevin's proposal to this effect had been withdrawn in the face of opposition at the Council of Foreign Ministers did not mean that we could not put the proposal forward again. The return of Italian Somaliland to Italy under Trusteeship is open to the objections that it would not be in the best interests of the inhabitants and that it would be most unpalatable to advanced African opinion and negro world opinion. I do not want to give too much weight to the latter consideration, but I suggest that it is one which we in the Colonial Office ought to take seriously. This course would have the advantages of being in accordance with the general policy of friendly co-operation with Italy. It would not be open to serious strategic objection. We could no doubt secure an arrangement with the Italian Government under which there would be close co-operation with the administration of British Somaliland as regards frontier raiding etc.

I think that the Colonial Office must look at this matter primarily from the point of view of the interests of the Somali inhabitants of these countries and of our general position in Africa. From this point of view there can be no doubt, I think, that we ought to adhere to the attitude which we have adopted all along, namely that the aim should be the establishment of a United Somalia, with the objective of not too distant independent status. It was the conviction that this was the only satisfactory future arrangement for the Horn of Africa which led us in 1945 and last year to propose a Collective Trusteeship for this area (including British Somaliland), although we were conscious of the practical difficulties of making a Collective Trusteeship work. In the event, largely as a result of General Smuts' objections to Collective Trusteeship and his fears of Russian infiltration into Africa, Mr. Bevin put

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<sup>2</sup> H M Gladwyn Jebb, FO assistant secretary of state, 1946–1947; permanent UK representative to UN, 1950.

forward internationally the proposal for British Trusteeship for a United Somalia rather than a Collective Trusteeship, with results referred to above. Although I was one of those at the time who pressed for a Collective Trusteeship, because I was so anxious to see a United Somalia, what I saw of the United Nations last year has now made me have very serious doubts, which I believe are shared by Mr. Poynton, whether we are any longer justified in regarding a Collective Trusteeship for United Somalia as practical politics. I fear that until the United Nations has made considerably more progress, such an arrangement would merely lead to friction and would be contrary to the interests of the inhabitants. It would also bring the Russians into the administration of this area, although admittedly on a limited basis. My own feeling now is that the return of Italian Somaliland to Italy under Trusteeship would be preferable to Collective Trusteeship for United Somalia. I should therefore recommend ruling out this possible course.

We are thus left with two alternatives, United Somalia under British Trusteeship and Italian Somaliland under Italian Trusteeship, with British Somaliland remaining as it is with the addition of the Southern grazing areas if we can secure these by negotiation with the Ethiopians. I have little doubt in my own mind that we ought not to abandon the conception of United Somalia. Although I do not agree with everything which is said in Mr. Bennett's memorandum on the Italian Colonies, I do agree with him most strongly that we ought, if we can, to avoid making the same mistakes which were made after the last war, when slices of territory were handed to European powers as part of the squaring up of accounts between these powers with little regard for the interests of the inhabitants. The first incident in the struggle between Italy and Ethiopia was the clash at Walwal in 1934, which arose directly out of the most unsatisfactory frontier arrangements settled by diplomats fifty years ago without regard for the realities of North East Africa. It would be a tragic conclusion of all the events since 1934 if we simply reverted to the status quo in this area, the Somalis being divided between ourselves, Ethiopia and Italy with no hope of being built up ultimately into a nation of their own. Such a conclusion would be utterly contrary to all the principles of Colonial progress to which we and other nations are committed to the hilt. I therefore feel strongly that we must somehow contrive to put forward a solution which will enable a United Somalia to be set up. Although I believe that British Trusteeship would be the most satisfactory arrangement for such a country, I am not sanguine about the chance of getting British Trusteeship for the whole area accepted either by the Cabinet, or, even if the Cabinet does agree, by the other members of the Council of Foreign Ministers or by the United Nations. I think that under present conditions the financial difficulty would be likely to rule it out as an acceptable policy. If therefore a Collective Trusteeship for United Somalia is also ruled out, as I suggest, I feel that, unless some further possible solution can be put forward, Italian Somaliland will go back to Italy, a course which I cannot regard with any equanimity.

In the circumstances I should like to put forward a new suggestion for consideration.

I think that it would be worth examining the possibility of a United Somalia, comprising British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland and the Ogaden, under joint British, Italian and Ethiopian Trusteeship. This would have the advantage of providing for the ultimate independence of the whole area. In the immediate future it would solve, without territorial adjustments, the vital problem of the grazing

areas. It would not involve us in appreciable additional financial commitments over and above what we must in any case spend on British Somaliland. It would be acceptable strategically. It would meet Italian aspirations and would indicate our willingness to co-operate with the Italian Government on a friendly basis.

It would be essential that the Ethiopians were brought into such an arrangement, since after the Italo-[Abyssinian] War, we could not possibly put forward a proposal for Trusteeship by ourselves and the Italians only over an area including the Ogaden.

I do not want to under-estimate the practical difficulties of such an arrangement, but I do not believe that these would necessarily be insuperable and I think that the very real practical problems which would have to be overcome would be no less than the problems of adjustment in the whole area if the pre-war boundaries are restored. I believe that an arrangement of this sort would be easy to justify internationally, especially as we should be putting British Somaliland into the new Trust Territory. I hope that the idea may be thought worth while taking further.

It would be an essential part of the arrangement that the major part of Eritrea should be given to Ethiopia. The position on this is that at the Paris Conference last year Mr. Jebb, on instructions, told the Ethiopian Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs that we should view such a suggestion with favour if it were acceptable to the other three governments concerned. It is believed that the other governments took the same general line . . . .

A.B.C.  
20.3.47

**297** CO 537/2087, no 19

31 Mar 1947

[Policy for Cyrenaica]: letter from J S Bennett to Brigadier J F Benoy  
(War)

[Extract]

. . . [I]t appears that Sir Bernard Reilly's<sup>1</sup> recommendation [for a public statement of policy about Libya] is to be turned down because a public statement on the lines he suggested would

- (a) involve some undesirable commitment for H.M.G., and
- (b) have unfortunate repercussions in other territories and on the international plane.

On the first point, my own feeling is that the commitment involved is perhaps not so serious as might appear, and is in any case one which follows logically from our policy about the future of Cyrenaica.

In the first place, it is public knowledge that at the Council of Foreign Ministers last May, Mr. Bevin proposed an independent Libya immediately. Admittedly, this proposal lapsed in the face of failure to get any agreement on the Italian colonial question in the Council of Foreign Ministers, but it stands as the Foreign Secretary's own statement of our first views about the future of that territory as a whole. What Sir Bernard Reilly proposed was a statement in Parliament confirming that British

<sup>1</sup> Sir Bernard Reilly, chairman of WO Working Party to report on ex-Italian colonies in East Africa, 1946–1947; formerly gov of Aden, 1937–1940.

policy towards Cyrenaica was ultimate full independence, without prejudice to any international decisions regarding the unity of Libya or to the question of placing Cyrenaica for a time under some form of trusteeship. So far as I can judge, there is nothing in this which is not a logical continuation of the commitment which (whether we like it or not) has resulted from public knowledge of Mr. Bevin's earlier statement; while the proposed statement is completely hedged round with the safeguards necessitated by the fact that four-power agreement on the future of the Italian colonies has not yet been reached.

It may be objected that the policy of May, 1946 is now dead, and that we have to back-pedal in view of the Cabinet decision about attempting to acquire U.K. trusteeship for Cyrenaica. Again, however, Sir Bernard Reilly's proposals seem to me quite consistent with that objective. The "basic objectives" of the trusteeship system, as defined in Article 76 of the United Nations Charter, are (inter alia) "to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of trust territories, and their progressive development towards self government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." If we were eventually successful in obtaining trusteeship for Cyrenaica, we should (as I see it) inevitably have to insert in the Trusteeship Agreement something pretty definite about independence within a measurable term of years. Consequently, if we wish to create conditions favourable to the U.K. obtaining the desired trusteeship, we surely have to act with these circumstances fully in view. From the international point of view it is an inescapable obligation of the trusteeship system. From the local point of view, if (as I understand it) the object of the exercise in sending out Sir Bernard Reilly was to initiate measures which would create maximum local support for the idea of U.K. trusteeship, then there seems everything to be said for laying stress on the implication of early independence which is implicit in the trusteeship system in the case of a relatively advanced territory such as Cyrenaica.

From the general international point of view, it is, of course, for the Foreign Office to say what the effects of the proposed statement would be in the diplomatic sphere; but from the point of view of general international interest in colonial questions, there is no doubt at all in my mind that what Sir Bernard Reilly proposes is entirely on the right lines. In the United Nations General Assembly and elsewhere, the U.K. (with the other colonial powers) has been subjected to growing pressure for rapid political advancement in dependent territories. This criticism has been particularly strong from the U.S.S.R. and from the nationalistic Asiatic states such as India. In the case of a good many colonial territories—I have those of tropical Africa particularly in mind—rapid political advancement towards independence is not yet in the realms of practical politics, and we are obliged to move more slowly at the price of increasing international criticism. In Cyrenaica we have a territory which is at present *de facto* under our administration, which we wish to bring properly within our sphere on the regularised basis of trusteeship, and which is, on the face of it, a territory where the prospect of early independence is not unreal. Thus, from the international point of view, as seen from the Colonial Office, there seems a great deal to be said for making the best of our opportunities and saying boldly that, whatever other countries' views may be, we are, for our part, in favour of "measures calculated to promote the political and economic evolution of the country . . . towards ultimate full independence" (the words used in Sir B. Reilly's report).

Finally—though this is strictly speaking outside my sphere—surely our experience in Egypt and Iraq at the approximately equivalent period after World War I should be sufficient warning of the demerits of excessive caution and of waiting to have statements about independence extracted from us by local revolt and/or outside pressure. The alternative—recognising the inevitable and cashing in on it in good time—is open to us in the case of Cyrenaica if we were willing for once to take the initiative while there is still time to do so.

I do not wish to seem to be crying down the more limited local statement about “liberal treatment” which the War Office draft letter does propose to authorise, but in circumstances when local interest seems bound to be focussed primarily on the political future of the territory and its aspirations for independence, it does seem to me that a statement which deliberately avoids mention of these things is scarcely likely to be as effective as it could be for the purpose of beating up local support for the policy which H.M.G. wish to get accepted by the Council of Foreign Ministers. I would have thought that an announcement on the lines recommended by Sir Bernard Reilly would considerably strengthen the hand of the British representative in the Deputies while not involving him in any improper commitment. The case for abandoning undue caution seems to be reinforced by the attitude which the United States Government have recently been taking in the Security Council (with Russian support incidentally) about trusteeship for the Japanese islands in the Pacific even in advance of any negotiations for a peace treaty with Japan . . . .

## 298 CO 537/2087

17 Apr–14 Aug 1947

[Policy for Libya]: minutes by J S Bennett, Mr Thomas and Mr Creech Jones

. . . 4. The proposal for a statement of policy (for the purposes of argument on principle, I think the two forms of statement can be treated as one) was the concluding recommendation in the Report of the Working Party led by Sir Bernard Reilly which toured Cyrenaica during the winter. The Report is in subfile 2-A annexed, and this recommendation comes in Chapter IX (page 52, flagged). It is only two pages and I will not attempt to summarise it. Mr. Bellenger’s<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Paper proposes to turn down this recommendation, on the basis of interdepartmental discussions in which it is recorded that the Colonial Office representative (myself) reserved his position.

5. In my view, Sir Bernard Reilly’s recommendation is a very important one and ought to be supported, on general grounds of policy about dependent territories as well as on the merits of the present political situation in and about Cyrenaica. I put my views and reasons at length in a semi-official letter to the War Office (copied to the Foreign Office) at (18)<sup>2</sup>, and rather than repeat them I invite reference to that letter. Since then, and subsequent to the circulation of the War Office Cabinet Paper, I have had a reply to my letter from the War Office (30), which shows that they have come round in *favour*<sup>3</sup> of Sir Bernard Reilly’s proposed statement, but that they feel they must defer to the views of the Foreign Office who were the principal objectors.

<sup>1</sup> S of S for war.

<sup>2</sup> See 297.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis throughout in original.

6. On the general merits of Sir Bernard Reilly's policy of taking the initiative by a political statement, I should be glad to amplify in discussion. It is not *directly* a Colonial Office responsibility, but to my mind there is a point of principle which affects us considerably, and on which the Foreign Office are being unnecessarily timid.

7. Pending discussion, there are one or two factors I would like to add by way of background:—

(a) The C.O. is particularly involved in this matter because Sir Bernard Reilly is our man and was our nominee for the leadership of this Working Party. I feel a special responsibility myself since I was largely instrumental in picking Sir B. Reilly, and I know from private channels that he attaches particular importance to this recommendation and hopes for our support.

(b) The Foreign Office view, reflected in these papers, is largely that of Mr. Scott-Fox, a member of the Egyptian Department who deals with the Italian Colonies. I know that opinion in the F.O. itself was divided on the question. I have had a good deal to do with Mr. Scott-Fox, and I do not have a high opinion of his judgment; in particular he makes no secret of his contempt for all "colonial" peoples, and is the kind of man who would always put the interests of diplomatic convenience first.

(c) The F.O. approach to policy in Libya has always suffered from negative opportunism, owing to the absence (since the abolition of the Minister Resident's organisation) of a fully effective machine for considering Middle Eastern problems as a whole. Again, I have felt a certain amount of responsibility to do some back-seat driving. (As an example, I would quote the words in para. 5 of this paper which imply that the right course is to make a local statement which would "avoid political issues and stress the material advantages which it is hoped will be conferred" on the local Arab inhabitants. I believe that this is a fundamental misconception of the Arab character and the present political temper of the Middle East. The Middle Eastern peoples are definitely *less* materialistic than most Europeans—contrary to the usually-accepted belief. People like Sir Bernard Reilly are better qualified to judge than those who have rejected this proposal in the F.O.).

8. I have been uncertain how much further I could press this matter myself, but I feel that if the S. of S. agrees it would be quite proper for him to support Sir Bernard Reilly's recommendation in Cabinet. Apart from anything else, if the U.K. succeeds in getting the trusteeship of Cyrenaica, it may well be thrown at the Colonial Office to administer, and it is we who would be the sufferers from political mistakes made during this vital interim period.

J.S.B.  
17.4.47

*Secretary of State*

1 . . . No. 51 is the Foreign Office minute as submitted by Mr Bevin. . . . [I]t shows an enthusiasm for admitting the Indian dominions to trusteeship over Cyrenaica which must embarrass us in the Colonial Office who have to think of the repercussions in East Africa . . . .

4. As I noted briefly in my minute of 12th July, 1947, this file gives no reasons for

believing that the inhabitants of Libya would have any strong feelings about separate solutions for Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. I have drawn attention already to the important letter enclosed with No. 48 from the President of the Cyrenaican National Front, who is a brother of Amir Idris, which is properly noted by H.M. Ambassador in Egypt as being "significant in that it claims independence for Cyrenaica without mentioning Tripolitania." I have also mentioned that Brigadier Stafford's<sup>4</sup> comments on Arabian questions have [an] unusual ring of objectivity, and I think it will be useful if I pick out here a few remarks from his minute of 19th May, 1947 at No. 42:—

"It is foolish to pretend that at present either of the two territories is fit for independence, culturally, socially, or on any count, either separately or as a united Libya. A visiting Commission would, in my view, inevitably reach this conclusion, and it would be an error for us to support the grant of immediate independence."

"In my opinion it is advisable to take the line that Libya should be treated as an economic, administrative entity. I consider that if it is so treated, there is a reasonable prospect of developing it eventually by wise, sympathetic and generous supervision into a self-supporting economic State . . . . I do not think that we should be unduly swayed by the inter-territorial jealousies which keep the Senussi and the Tripolitarians apart, nor put ourselves in the position of showing partiality for either."

It is clear that in Brigadier Stafford's views a united Libya is not something which the Arabs want, but something which is good for them even though they do not want it. I consider therefore that we are free to propose separate solutions for Tripolitania and Cyrenaica if on other grounds it seems desirable.

5. My second comment is that the conclusions we reach about the disposal of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica will depend on the premises from which we start. What do we mainly want? Is it strategic rights in Cyrenaica? Or the exclusion of Russian influence from Africa? Or the friendship of the Arabs of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica? Or the restoration of good Anglo-Italian relations? Or the maintenance of the *Entente Cordiale* with France? His Majesty's Government has never yet given an authoritative answer to the question, but until we get some order of priorities among these objectives our efforts to find a satisfying solution for the disposal of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica will be in vain.

I.T.  
24.7.47

This [FO] paper has not yet been submitted to the Cabinet by the F.S. but in the meantime we should tell F.O. what are our basic difficulties in regard to it. It will be more difficult to oppose the paper once it has the authority of the F.S. in the Cabinet. In our note to the F.O. we should bring out the point in Mr Thomas' last paragraph. But our objections to 51 should be tersely stated under heads.

A.C.J.  
4.8.47

Before action could be taken on the Secretary of State's minute of 4th August we

<sup>4</sup> Brig F E Stafford, seconded to FO, 1946; member of UK delegation, Italian Peace Conference and Council of Foreign Ministers; head of UK delegation, Four Power Commission, 1947.

received from the Foreign Office the new paper attached at No. 52, and I was requested to attend another inter-Departmental meeting at the Foreign Office which took place yesterday, as foreshadowed in the last paragraph of No. 52. Mr. Michael Wright, who is the new Assistant Under Secretary in charge of the Eastern and Egyptian Departments in the Foreign Office, was in the Chair. There was a very full Foreign Office team, comprising the Eastern, Egyptian, Western, North and South American, Northern and United Nations Departments, as well as General Anderson (Director of Civil Affairs War Office), General Cumming (Chief Civil Affairs Officer Middle East) and myself. Sir R. Campbell (Ambassador in Cairo) was also there.

2. Mr. Wright explained that the whole position in Libya was being re-considered by the Foreign Office as a matter of urgency as a result of the following facts:—

(a) The Egyptian appeal to the Security Council, combined with developments in Palestine, made it quite likely that Cyrenaica would now be the only possible base for U.K. forces and General Headquarters in the Middle East.

(b) The timetable on (a) was running out so fast that action might have to be taken before the future of the Italian colonies was finally settled.

(c) The ratification of the Italian Peace Treaty had been much delayed. The U.S. Congress had now authorised the U.S. Government to ratify, but the Soviet Government were holding up their ratification. The Foreign Office were beginning to think it possible that the Russians would delay indefinitely and might never ratify the Italian Peace Treaty. We could not wait indefinitely, and it might be necessary for the U.K., U.S.A. and France to start again on their own and arrive at a new settlement with Italy.

(d) In consequence of (c), the Deputies of the Council of Foreign Ministers could not yet begin on their work of deciding what to do with the Italian colonies, and the year which they were given to decide this matter—following which it goes to the United Nations Assembly under the Italian Peace Treaty—had not started to run.

3. Mr. Wright made it clear that (at long last) the Foreign Office were now dealing with the matter of Libya within the framework of our general strategic and political position in the Middle East and Mediterranean instead of as a rather tiresome appendage to the European peace treaties. It has taken nearly two years to bring about this new approach, but I am relieved that at last the perseverance of some of us has been rewarded. It was agreed first of all that the Chiefs of Staff would have to be asked for a new appreciation not only of exactly what our minimum strategic requirements in Cyrenaica were, but also of how big was the price they were prepared to pay for them in terms of political consequences elsewhere in the Middle East and Mediterranean. This essential piece of joint service and civil planning should be put on foot by a new Foreign Office paper drawn up in the light of the meeting. General Cumming was particularly insistent on the need for a study from this angle, and he has been pressing the point ever since he was with Mr. Bevin in Paris in April, 1946.

4. The meeting then discussed the alternative political approaches outlined in the Foreign Office note at No. 52. There was a marked swing away from the idea of trusteeship, at least for Cyrenaica, if not for Libya as a whole. The United Nations Department drew attention to the risk that an ordinary trusteeship agreement might not ensure the strategic facilities we desired, while a strategic area trusteeship

agreement could be vetoed by the Russians in the Security Council. I recounted the history of the military clauses in the existing African Trusteeship Agreements and expressed agreement with the Foreign Office United Nations Department that the Assembly might well tie us up in such knots over a trusteeship agreement for Cyrenaica that it was strategically almost valueless. We could not rely this time on having a virtual veto about the terms of trusteeship, since our bargaining position last December depended on the desire of the Assembly to get the Trusteeship Council set up at almost any cost, and that position had now evaporated. As for Article 84 of the Charter, the Assembly might argue, however illogically, that it could equally well be carried into effect by demilitarising Cyrenaica.

5. There was also considerable support for reviving the idea of independence which, as will be recalled, was the proposal for the whole of Libya originally put forward by Mr. Bevin at the Council of Foreign Ministers in April, 1946. It was felt that this would give us a better chance of getting what we wanted in Cyrenaica. General Cumming also put forward arguments in favour of applying it to the whole of Libya, but more doubt was expressed by sections of the Foreign Office about this. However, the Northern Department expressed the gravest doubts about Mr. Bevin's latest idea of a Four-Power trusteeship for Tripolitania including the Russians and expressed the view that in the light of experiences in Germany and elsewhere this would hardly be workable and might well be dangerous. If, as a result of Russian failure to ratify the Italian Peace Treaty, we had to proceed without the Russians, it might, however, be possible to envisage a Three-Power trusteeship for Tripolitania, i.e. U.K., U.S.A. and France.

6. The meeting also felt that in the last resort there would be quite a lot to be said for the policy of working for a *fait accompli* by encouraging the Emir Sayid Idris to proclaim the independence of Cyrenaica. I pointed out that to proceed by this means, or to approach the same goal by more constitutional means through the proposal for the independence of Cyrenaica, would be likely to command great[er] support in the United Nations Assembly if the matter had to be handled there through failure of the Council of Foreign Ministers to agree. In the light of past discussion of colonial problems in the Fourth Committee it appeared unlikely that the Assembly would apply a very searching test about the 100 per cent fitness of any territory for independence, and I thought that practically no delegation (with the exception of France and perhaps one or two others) would vote against the independence of a "colonial people," especially if it was obviously the desire of the people themselves or had indeed already been carried into effect *de facto* on the spot. After what had recently happened in the United Nations about Indonesia, one could hardly picture the General Assembly taking any action which in effect would mean that somebody had to go and suppress an independence movement in Libya. If the U.K. reverted to Mr. Bevin's original position at Paris in 1946 and stood out as the champion of independence, this should put us in a commanding position not only in the Assembly but with the local people. Gen. Cumming said he was sure that in these circumstances we could get a satisfactory treaty with Cyrenaica.

7. It was agreed that the Foreign Office would now produce a new paper which would be a revision of, or a substitute for, the minute to their Secretary of State enclosed with No. 51. The paper would summarise the results of the meeting and set out the merits of the various alternatives. I asked if the Colonial Office could have an opportunity of seeing it in draft, as our Ministers were considerably interested in the

question from a general point of view. Mr. Wright agreed to this, but asked if we would deal with it very quickly and I promised to do so.

8. In view of these new developments, which largely give effect to the concluding paragraph of Mr. Ivor Thomas's minute of 24th July, I submit that a letter to the Foreign Office commenting on the earlier paper at No. 51 would no longer be appropriate, and indeed the F.O. have asked me semi-officially not to send in any written comments on that paper since it is out of date.

9. ? await new F.O. draft paper.

J.S.B.  
14.8.47

**299** CO 537/2086

8–11 Sept 1947

[Future of Somalia]: minutes by A B Cohen and Sir T Lloyd

*Sir T. Lloyd*

Now that the Russians have ratified the Italian Treaty it may be expected that the meeting of Deputies to consider the future of the Italian Colonies and to appoint the visiting Commission will be held very shortly. We in the Colonial Office have not expressed a firm view on policy with regard to Italian Somaliland and I think that we ought to form such a view and let the Foreign Office have it. The official position is that we had a discussion on this subject with the Foreign Office in June (No. 74 on 25207/1/47 Part II). At this our paper on the subject (No. 52 in Part I of that file) was discussed. You will remember that we put forward tentatively the suggestion that a United Somalia including the Ogaden and British Somaliland might be established under a tripartite trusteeship of ourselves, the Italians and the Ethiopians. This suggestion was first made in my minute of the 20th March,<sup>1</sup> of which a copy is at No. 37 on Part I of the same file. At the meeting considerable doubt was expressed by some regarding our suggestion and we promised to elaborate it. This we have never done and I must claim responsibility for not doing so. I have had two talks with Mr. Stafford since. He is particularly sceptical of the workability of my suggestion and I felt that it would not be worth while elaborating it.

The only alternative way of safeguarding the interests of British Somali tribes as regards grazing and watering is by means of arrangements with the Ethiopians with regard to the Ogaden and Reserved Area. We have been discussing this separately with Brigadier Fisher,<sup>2</sup> the Foreign Office and the War Office, and some progress has been made. The purpose of this minute is to explain the position with regard to these discussions and to propose a definite line with regard to the future of Italian Somaliland.

The conclusion which we have reached, after recent discussions between the East African Department and the International Relations Department, is that the proposal for a tripartite trusteeship over a united Somalia should not be pursued, at any rate at present. Mr. Stafford's definite view is that the Ethiopians would not work with the Italians and there are other practical difficulties which seemed to us after further consideration to be so great as to outweigh any possible advantages the plan might have. You will remember that the conclusion previously reached and recorded in our

<sup>1</sup> See 296.

<sup>2</sup> Brig A F Fisher, ministry of supply, 1946–1952.

memorandum at No. 52 on Part I of 25207/1/47 was that the three alternative courses were a united Somalia under British trusteeship, a united Somalia under tripartite trusteeship as described above, and the placing of Italian Somaliland under Italian trusteeship. The paper referred to ruled out trusteeship for a united Somalia under the United Nations organisation as being an undesirable solution in the present state of organisation of the United Nations. The memorandum implied the view that Ministers would not accept British trusteeship for the whole of United Somalia and I feel sure that, in the light of most recent economic developments we must rule out this solution, at any rate for the present. We are thus driven back to the only remaining solution—Italian Somaliland under Italian trusteeship.

Mr. Bennett and I recommend that we should now indicate to the Foreign Office that we do not wish to oppose this solution. In putting forward this recommendation I should like to say that the abandonment of the United Somalia project which is involved is a matter of the greatest regret to all of us who have worked on this project in the Colonial Office for the last two years. We remain firmly convinced that the establishment of a United Somalia constitutes the only satisfactory solution for the Horn of Africa. Only in this way can the Somali territories be built up towards a self-governing state in the future. In no other way can the problems of the artificial boundaries be settled in a fully satisfactory manner. We have worked very hard on this plan and it is painful to have to give it up; but I think that it would be wrong to continue to press it when there seems no means of bringing it to fruition. If, moreover, Italian Somaliland is going to be given back to the Italians under trusteeship, we had better do this with a good grace and get the maximum benefit out of it in the shape not only of friendly feelings from Italy but also satisfactory arrangements over the British Somaliland-Italian Somaliland frontier. Moreover we must press ahead with our plans for safeguarding the interests of the British Somalis on the Ethiopian frontier.

Our view, in a word, is that if the British Government were in a position to take a very definite line internationally that there must be a United Somalia, then we might be able to carry this internationally; but in the present international situation and having regard to our financial position I do not believe that Ministers would agree to take this particular line. Therefore I feel that we must withdraw any objections we may have to Italy being granted the trusteeship for Italian Somaliland.

As regards the Ethiopian frontier of British Somaliland, the Ethiopian Government have now replied to our proposals (Nos 88 & 91 on this file). . . . They accept a more limited corridor at Zeila and broadly accept our proposals with regard to the Reserved Area excepting Jigjigga, as expected. This part of their reply is reasonably satisfactory. We cannot, however, accept the proposed boundary east of Jigjigga, which would give us very little indeed of the Ogaden grazing areas. One of the main reasons for the Ethiopian attitude is, of course, the concession they have granted to the American Sinclair Oil Company to prospect in the Ogaden. Apparently the Ethiopians had promised this company nearly two years ago that no part of the Ogaden would be ceded to us. They have no doubt found it a little difficult to reconcile this with the offer that was made last year to cede the major part of the Ogaden in return for a broad corridor at Zeila.<sup>3</sup> The implications of the Ethiopian reply were discussed at a meeting in my room on the 6th August with the War Office,

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<sup>3</sup> See p 282 for a sketch-map.

the Foreign Office and Brigadier Fisher. (A record is at No. 93). We are engaged in inter-departmental consultation following on this meeting and I need not lengthen this minute by repeating the general conclusion which is recorded clearly at the end of the record. Broadly speaking, we propose that we should still try to secure satisfactory readjustment of the southern frontier of British Somaliland but that we must be prepared to fall back on our final line of defence in the shape of a trans-frontier grazing agreement, which would not be completely satisfactory. A good deal of further research into a number of the points involved is required and the War Office and Brigadier Fisher are now engaged on this and are also going to advise us on the arrangements for regulating our relations on the British Somaliland-Italian Somaliland frontier should Italian Somaliland go back to Italy under trusteeship.

No decision is required at present with regard to the Ethiopian frontier of British Somaliland and I have merely recorded the above to complete the picture. We do, I think, however require a decision about our attitude with regard to Italian Somaliland, and to crystallise the above minute I have prepared a draft letter to Mr. Jebb which I should propose to send subject to approval. You will no doubt wish to submit the papers to Mr. Ivor Thomas. The above minute was written after discussion with Mr. Bennett, who has seen it and agreed to its terms. He has also seen the draft letter.

A.B.C.  
8.9.47

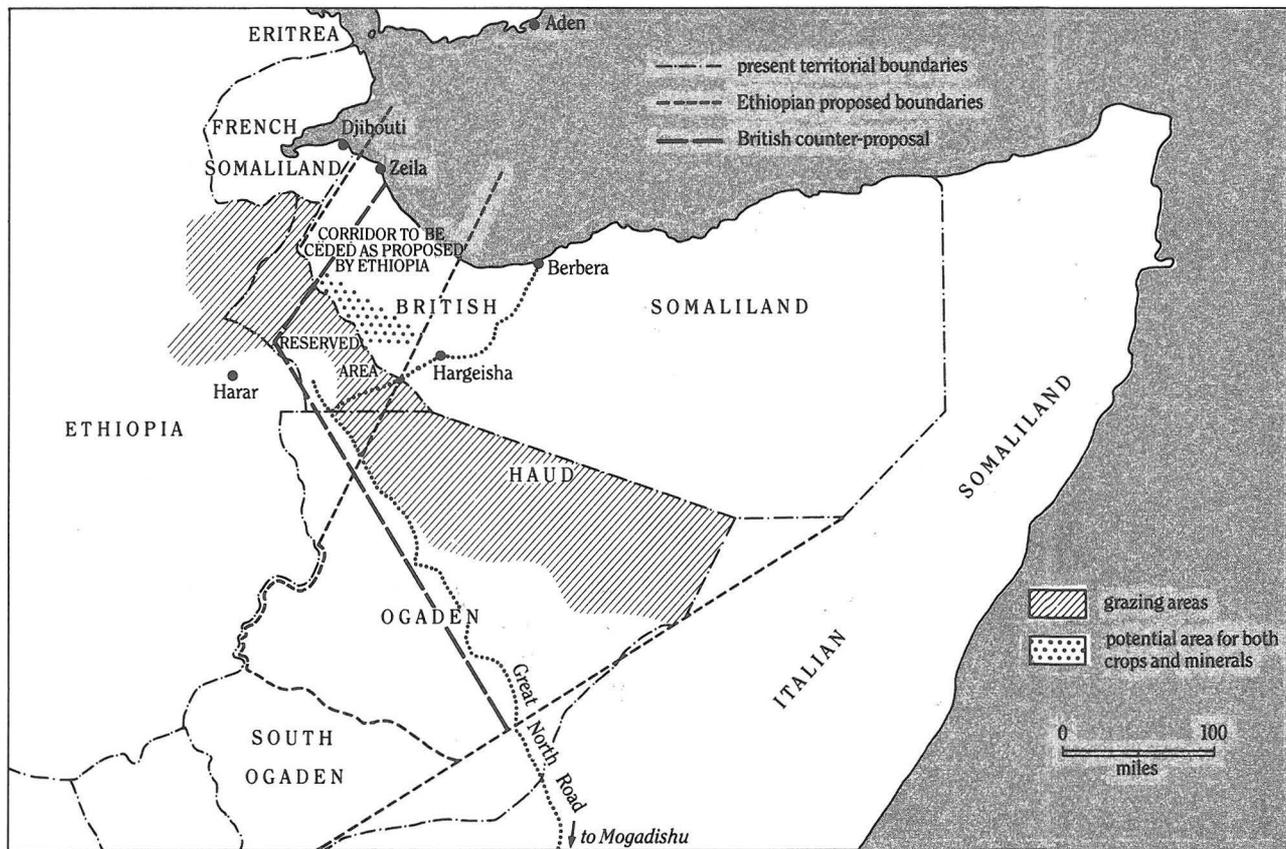
*Mr. Ivor Thomas*

This was last submitted to the Secretary of State at the end of March when you were in New York. As you will see from Mr. Creech Jones' minute of the 2nd of April (flagged A on Part I of 25207/1/47) he by no means committed himself to the idea of a tripartite trusteeship but agreed that this project should be further examined interdepartmentally.

The upshot of further discussion and examination is stated in Mr. Cohen's minute. It is in short that we are convinced, mainly by the views of Mr. Stafford (who served some time ago in Ethiopia and is now our "expert" on the Fact Finding Commission in this area), that a tripartite trusteeship would be unworkable in practice for reasons fully set out in the draft letter to Mr. Jebb. We are driven back upon the solution of returning Italian Somaliland to Italy under trusteeship unless the Fact Finding Commission, made up of representatives of the four Powers, reports that the inhabitants of that territory show marked hostility to any such change. Should that prove to be the case, we might again try for trusteeship over a United Somalia, but this would almost certainly have to be upon some other basis than the tripartite one previously suggested. The solution now put forward is obviously far from ideal, and is certainly likely to meet with a mixed reception in this country. I have however no effective counter-proposal to put forward, and I agree that we should proceed as in the draft. You will see that we there put our views forward merely as those of the Department and assume that the point of principle will be reserved for later ministerial decision.

T.I.K.L.  
11.9.47

SOMALILAND AND THE HORN OF AFRICA:  
 PROPOSALS FOR AN EXCHANGE WITH ETHIOPIA, 1946-1947



The 'red' line in the original has been rendered by short dashes. The line in 'blue crayon' (British counter-proposals) has been rendered in heavier longer dashes. (Source: PREM 8/185, CP(46)319).

**300** CO 537/2088

23–26 Sept 1947

[Policy in Cyrenaica, and British strategic interests]: minutes by I B Watt<sup>1</sup>, A N Galsworthy, Sir T Lloyd and Mr Thomas

In his minute of 14th August<sup>2</sup>, Mr. Bennett outlined the decisions taken at the meeting about the future of Cyrenaica in the Foreign Office on 13th August. He submitted it to Mr. Poynton who decided that his report should not be submitted higher at that stage as the conclusion of the meeting was that the Foreign Office should circulate in draft a minute to the Foreign Secretary putting forward the recommendations reached. At No. 63 on Part II of the file are the minutes, again in draft, of that meeting. On 19th September I rang Mr. Bell, Egyptian Department, Foreign Office, to ask how soon the final record of the meeting would be available together with the promised draft paper to the Foreign Secretary. He told me that between the meeting of 13th August and 19th September things had moved so rapidly that the paper which F.O. had by that time prepared for submission to Mr. Bevin was based on decisions made by the Chiefs of Staff which cut out the need for the original paper. Mr. Bell, at my request, then brought round the minute to Mr. Bevin which appears at No. 66 and explained it to Mr. Galsworthy and myself.

2. The final record of the meeting of 13th August is at No. 65. The purpose of this meeting was to examine how the strategic facilities required by the Chiefs of Staff in Cyrenaica could best be met in view of the serious political difficulties which would attend any attempts to obtain these facilities through employing any of the three possible tactical solutions:—

- (a) United Kingdom trusteeship.
- (b) Immediate independence under the Emir, together with an agreement to give us strategic facilities.
- (c) For U.K. to disregard the provisions of the Italian Peace Treaty and declare Cyrenaica independent.

An attempt to propose one of these solutions would involve bad relations with the Russians, French, Egypt and the Arab world, and it might be difficult to obtain American support. The conclusion of that meeting, therefore, was that a paper should be submitted to the Foreign Secretary asking that a recommendation be put to the Chiefs of Staff to reconsider their requirements in the light of the price we should have to pay in order to obtain them. In other words, would the serious political difficulties we should be bound to encounter make it worth while that we should go all out to insist upon obtaining strategic facilities in Cyrenaica?

3. However, when Mr. Bell explained the paper at No. 66 he said that the Chiefs of Staff had already decided that no matter how difficult it might be as a matter of tactics in the Council of Foreign Ministers or in the United Nations to obtain some form of Cyrenaican settlement which would give us our strategic facilities, and no matter how serious the political difficulties in relation to other countries might remain, our present insecurity of tenure in Egypt and Palestine made it quite essential for us to secure Cyrenaica in order to retain our hold on the Middle East in time of war. The need for a speedy decision by the Foreign Secretary and the Cabinet

<sup>1</sup> Principal in CO International Relations Dept.

<sup>2</sup> See 298.

on this policy in general and on the tactics to be used to implement it had been made clear by two developments:—

(a) It is planned to hold Anglo-American conversations on Middle East strategy early in October, and in this connection the State Department have informed our Minister in Washington that the United States are “all in favour of our receiving the trusteeship for Cyrenaica”, with a promise of support in the Council of Foreign Ministers.

(b) Russian ratification of the Italian Peace Treaty means that the Deputies will meet soon to draft the terms of reference for the four-power Commission, and our Cyrenaican ambitions will have to be taken into account when we take our share in drafting these terms of reference.

4. The paper submitted to Mr. Bevin posits that it is essential for us to have Cyrenaica, and is concerned with an examination of the best means of obtaining what we want there. The paper discusses the chances of success obtainable under the alternatives of trusteeship under the United Kingdom or British Commonwealth administration, or independence with a treaty to give us facilities. Although the difficulties in pressing for non-strategic trusteeship are admittedly very great, it is felt that we have a better chance of gaining our essential end by trying to obtain trusteeship than by pressing for the grant of independence. The latter might quite easily be approved by the General Assembly, but such approval might well be accompanied by a recommendation for the withdrawal of foreign troops. Again, the good faith of the Emir cannot be relied upon with sufficient assurance—he himself is probably keen enough to help us, but would be under strong pressure from Egypt and possibly Russia—and no amount of unwritten understanding between us would be sufficient for the Chiefs of Staff's purposes.

5. The minute to Mr. Bevin, therefore, argues that we should first of all submit in the Council of Foreign Ministers that Cyrenaica be put under United Kingdom trusteeship. It is assumed that this will be refused. In accordance with the terms of the Italian Peace Treaty, the disposal of Cyrenaica would then pass to the General Assembly. There we should again submit a proposal for United Kingdom trusteeship. Should the Assembly refuse to approve this in a form which would give us sufficient strategic facilities, we should try to ensure that we and “our friends” in the United Nations block any less acceptable decision. This stale-mate thus engineered, we should continue in occupation of Cyrenaica until we could conclude with the Emir a treaty which would give us a strategical grip on Cyrenaica in return for the territory's independence.

6. I asked Mr. Bell what type of detailed military clauses would be inserted in any draft trusteeship agreement for Cyrenaica. He said that if the Council of Foreign Ministers or the Assembly would accept provisions similar to those in our Tanganyika Agreement, the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office felt that we should be able to do what we want.

7. This series of proposals may appear to be much less satisfactory than a rigid plan, but any rigid plans for the Italian colonies have not so far had a very long life, and now that our ultimate objective has been finally decided upon, then it is probably much more sensible, and certainly more realistic, that our tactics for obtaining this objective should be flexible. The use of the trusteeship system as a bargaining counter in the game of high political strategy is not one that commends itself easily

to the Colonial Office, which is professionally interested in seeing the system used for more peaceful developments. However, it would be impossible to obtain a strategic area trusteeship for Cyrenaica so long as the veto can be exercised in the Security Council. In his minute of 24th July<sup>3</sup>, Mr. Thomas points out that up till then there was no authoritative order of priorities among the various objectives which might be sought in connection with the disposal of Cyrenaica. We now have one objective considered to be of overriding importance, and if this policy is approved by the Foreign Secretary it will presumably be submitted to the Cabinet very shortly.

8. The papers should therefore, be submitted to Ministers. I do not think we are in a position to oppose the Chiefs of Staff because of the intention to employ the trusteeship system as a political tactic. We shall, I take it, continue to be associated with Foreign Office and with War Office in planning the administration of Cyrenaica with a view to independence or trusteeship, and we shall be asked to assist with the drafting of a trusteeship agreement when the time comes.

9. The decision to concentrate exclusively on Cyrenaica and get what we want there at all costs, throws up the old question of what to do about Tripolitania. A united Libya is irreconcilable with a special regime for Cyrenaica, particularly as even if we do obtain a trusteeship for Cyrenaica it will only be for a short period prior to independence. It is suggested in the minute to Mr. Bevin that the best solution might be to try to get the United States to become an administering authority for Tripolitania under trusteeship. Arabs who were disappointed at the failure to grant immediate independence to Tripolitania might be mollified by the sight of large quantities of the invaluable dollar!

I.W.  
23.9.47

*Sir T. Lloyd*

Since you and Mr. Ivor Thomas last saw these papers on the future of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania at the end of July, there have been some substantial developments which have now culminated in the Foreign Office submitting to Mr. Bevin a paper of great importance (No. 66). The background to that paper is given in the first two paragraphs of Mr. Watt's minute of 23rd September; and paragraph 3 of that minute explains why a decision as to our future policy concerning Cyrenaica can no longer be postponed. In fact something will have to be more or less decided, I imagine, within the next fortnight.

2. The essentials of the paper at No. 66 are as follows:—

(a) The Chiefs of Staff have decided that we must retain strategic facilities in Cyrenaica, *whatever the cost*.<sup>4</sup>

(b) The Russians could and would prevent us from obtaining a strategic area trusteeship: consequently the methods by which our object could be obtained are (1) that we should secure a normal trusteeship, to be vested in either the U.K. alone or jointly in those members of the Commonwealth who actively contributed to the liberation of Cyrenaica; or (2) Cyrenaica should be established as an independent state in a treaty relationship with the U.K., providing us with the requisite strategic facilities.

<sup>3</sup> See 298.

<sup>4</sup> Emphasis throughout in original.

(c) The Americans have promised to support us if we claim U.K. trusteeship over Cyrenaica, but even so the prospects of our getting it from the United Nations are slender. At the same time, we could probably raise sufficient support in the Assembly to prevent that body from reaching any other solution. The result would be a stale-mate, during which time we should remain in military occupation until we had concluded a treaty with the Emir Sayid Idris granting us facilities in return for independence.

(d) We should be incurring serious risks if we were to propose the grant of independence to the General Assembly as an immediate solution (see paragraph 7 of No. 66).

(e) On balance, therefore, our policy should be to propose to the Assembly that Cyrenaica be placed under U.K. or Commonwealth trusteeship; on this being refused, as it almost certainly would be, to see to it that no other solution obtained the requisite two-thirds majority in the Assembly; and in the resultant stale-mate to proceed as in (c) above, i.e. come to satisfactory terms with the Emir for the establishment of an independent Cyrenaica in return for the grant of strategic facilities.

(f) We should try to get Tripolitania put under American trusteeship.

3. [In the second sentence of para 7] of his minute, Mr. Watt has mentioned the professional interest that we in the Colonial Office have in seeing that the trusteeship system is properly used. I do not myself think that the F.O. plan could be said to involve any actual misuse or misapplication of the system. But it seems quite obvious that, if the plan is adopted, we shall in fact be using the trusteeship system as a political expedient to achieve our strategic aims, and that the General Assembly as a whole are not likely to fail to see through the manoeuvre. To this extent, therefore, we should probably be contributing towards bringing the trusteeship into malrepute or something of a bad odour. In fact, my main criticism of the plan is that it is on the whole a pretty transparent one; and although there seems to be at least a very sporting chance that we should get away with it, it seems unlikely that our reputation as a colonial and trusteeship power would not suffer some damage in the process. Nevertheless, as we obviously cannot challenge the Chiefs of Staff view as to the overriding importance of retaining strategic facilities in Cyrenaica, and on the assumption that that view will be the governing factor in determining our policy concerning Cyrenaica, I agree with Mr. Watt that we cannot raise any really valid objections to the proposal to seek trusteeship over Cyrenaica in the first instance. Nor can I personally suggest any better approach to the problem.

4. I have ascertained from Mr. Bell of the Foreign Office today that Mr. Bevin's only comment on the paper so far is a brief minute to the effect that it all seems rather tortuous and that he wishes to think it over. If he does finally approve the plan, it will, of course, go to the Cabinet. Unless we have any strong objection to the plan in its present shape, or any constructive suggestions to make for improvements—and I confess that I have not—there is no action to be taken on the file at present, which is submitted for information. We will, however, remain in close touch with the Foreign Office on this important question, and will report further if there is any substantial modification to No. 66 as the result of Mr. Bevin's final reaction to it.

A.N.G.  
24.9.47

*Mr. Ivor Thomas*

Mr. Galsworthy's minute opposite is an admirable summary of developments since you minuted on Part I of the file in July, on this question of policy in Cyrenaica.

The line of approach which, in paragraph 10 of No. 66, the Foreign Office have now recommended to Mr. Bevin is so complicated that it may in the end defeat its own purpose. I agree, however, with the conclusion in preceding minutes that unless we have an alternative line of policy to put forward as definitely preferable from the *Colonial* standpoint, we cannot well object to the recommendations of the officials of the Foreign Office. In my judgment any proposal to return Cyrenaica to the Italians would be much more damaging to us in the Colonies than the Foreign Office plan is likely to be. And, like Mr. Galsworthy, I cannot suggest any better approach than the one recommended in No. 66 if (as they must be) the views of the Chiefs of Staff, as stated in the first paragraph of No. 66, are accepted.

The fact that we were using the trusteeship system as part of a policy of manoeuvre in order to attain strategic aims would not, I feel, do any serious damage to our reputation in the Colonies, even if it were *openly* criticised internationally.

I hope, however, that in the unlikely event of Cyrenaica being placed under United Kingdom trusteeship that would be made the responsibility of the Foreign Office. The decision of the French in 1920 to place their "A" mandates under the Quai d'Orsay always seemed to me more logical than our placing of Palestine and Iraq under the Colonial Office. There would, in fact, be few purely administrative problems in Cyrenaica. Most of the important matters calling for decisions from home would be questions of policy in which the Foreign Office would be inextricably involved. Both from that point of view, and as some public mark of the intention that the period of trusteeship should be short, it would be a definite advantage to leave responsibility for Cyrenaica from the beginning with the Foreign Office.

The suggestion in paragraph 11 of No. 66 that Tripolitania should be placed under United States trusteeship, seems to me to be quite unrealistic. It is difficult to imagine any circumstances in which United States opinion would agree to the acceptance of that responsibility by their Government.

This is submitted for information. As you will see from the last sentence of Mr. Galsworthy's minute, the Department are in close touch with the Foreign Office and will report any major developments.

T.I.K.L.

25.9.47

We now have at any rate the clear direction with regard to our aims in Cyrenaica the lack of which has stultified our thinking on this subject in the past. Our policy must aim primarily at preserving military rights in Cyrenaica. In view of what has been taking place in Egypt and Palestine, this was to be expected.

2. If we start from this assumption, the two practical courses to pursue are:—

- (a) treaty arrangements with an independent Cyrenaica;
- (b) United Kingdom trusteeship.

Of these courses, there are uncertainties about (a), as the paper points out, and (b) is probably the better course to pursue in order to get what we want. Whether we shall get it is another matter, and here I will merely add another difficulty to those mentioned in the paper and the minutes. The terms of trusteeship have to be agreed

upon by the "States directly concerned". At the First General Assembly we were able to avoid this difficulty, but mainly because we should not otherwise have been able to form the Trusteeship Council, and in future we shall not have this excuse. In that Assembly the Arab States gave notice that they would expect to be regarded as "States directly concerned" in any terms of trusteeship for Palestine or Libya; and I recollect a letter by our Prime Minister (not in this file, but I think I referred to it in a paper I wrote on this subject last spring) in which Mr. Attlee virtually conceded the claim.

3. I must also point out the military rights which can be conceded in a trusteeship agreement are not unlimited. I have noticed a tendency on other occasions for the Chiefs of Staff to think we are entitled to do as we please in a trust territory. It may very well be that we could do as we pleased in practice owing to the inability of anyone to bring us to book, but there would certainly be attempts to pin us down to the exact language of Article 84 of the Charter, i.e. local defence, the maintenance of law and order within the trust territory, and the fulfilment of obligations towards the Security Council.

4. The Foreign Office paper is, I think, more Machiavellian than it need be. Cyrenaica and Tripolitania are not ready for self-government in any real sense of the words, and I should feel no hesitation in defending trusteeship for them for a decade or so. It is conceded that if they become nominally independent they would have to be subsidized. They may, of course, be as fit for independence as some sovereign Arab States, but that is another matter.

5. As previous minutes of mine have made clear, I see no difficulty in a different treatment for Cyrenaica and Libya.

6. I will reserve further comments until the paper reappears.

I.T.  
26.9.47

**301** CAB 129/24, CP(48)43

4 Feb 1948

**'Future of the ex-Italian colonies in Africa: provisional policy of HMG':  
Cabinet memorandum by Mr Bevin**

*The Problem*

The Four-Power Commission charged by the Deputies of the Council of Foreign Ministers with investigating and reporting on conditions in the ex-Italian Colonies has not yet completed its work. Meanwhile, however, our need for a British trusteeship giving us strategic facilities in Cyrenaica is paramount, and our whole policy in regard to the disposal of these colonies must therefore be based on it. The conclusion has moreover been reached, in the course of full discussions between all the Departments concerned, that our best chance of obtaining the trusteeship of Cyrenaica is to ask for a trusteeship of Libya as a whole. This is because there is a strong movement, in North Africa itself and throughout the Arab world, for the preservation of the unity of Libya, and unless we try to satisfy that movement (within the framework of a British trusteeship for the whole area) we cannot hope to induce the local inhabitants to adopt a satisfactory attitude when the Four-Power Commission investigates their wishes on the spot. The Commission is due to arrive in Tripolitania at the beginning of March, and it is therefore urgently necessary to begin working on Libyan public opinion at the earliest possible moment.

(vi) As regards future Italian immigration, the Palestine experience shows that it would be most unwise to give any guarantee; but in practice we should certainly hope to be able to bring back the remainder of the Italians who were evacuated from Tripoli during the war. In addition, if friendly relations were established between the Arabs and the Italians locally, a certain amount of new immigration might be possible thereafter.

6. As regards (3) (Italian association in African development generally), schemes for the recruitment of Italians for work in certain of our East African territories (including the trust territory of Tanganyika) have already been started. The numbers of men involved are of course very small at present, but as development schemes progress they may increase within certain definite limits. Compared with France, South America, etc., Africa (even were the Italians able to send as many immigrants to their former colonies as they could before the war) could never offer much scope for Italian immigrants, and in any case the schemes for recruiting Italian workers have to be on the basis of repatriation because of the necessity of protecting long-term African interests, but the welcome we give to Italian immigrants is a factor which should not be left out of account.

7. In addition, if Italy receives a territory or territories in East Africa under trusteeship, arrangements could no doubt be made for her to take part:—

(a) in the series of technical conferences which have been set going on Anglo-French-Belgian initiative between all the administrations concerned in each question in Africa south of the Sahara (French and Belgian consent would be necessary): and

(b) in measures of economic co-operation on the lines of those which it is hoped will grow out of the talks with the French, the first of which is due to take place in February. It has been agreed with the French that the talks shall concentrate in the first place on West Africa; but it has always been intended that we should consider the possibility of similar talks with other colonial Powers, and there seems no reason why they should not be extended to cover East Africa also.

Development along these two lines should be of practical advantage to the Italian administration in the trusteeship territory or territories of East Africa, and should go some way towards convincing the Italian Government that we want to deal with them on a basis of equality.

### *Supporting arguments*

8. The claims officially put forward by Italy are of course for the return to her on a trusteeship basis of all her former African colonies. There is, however, reason to believe that few Italians have any hope of seeing these claims fully granted, and that consequently the Italian Government would be reconciled to getting considerably less. Moreover, as regards the question of the extent to which we can obtain a privileged position for the Italians in Tripolitania, the Italian Government are well aware that limitations are anyhow imposed by the principles governing United Nations trusteeships (whether granted to themselves or to others); and that, under any arrangement conceivable, the welfare and fate of their countrymen in North Africa would depend largely upon the good will of the overwhelming Arab majority—a good will which could not be guaranteed were the attempt made to secure for the

2. If, however, we are to ask for trusteeship of the whole of Libya, we must do everything possible to safeguard the interests of the Italians in Tripolitania and to satisfy Italian susceptibilities and aspirations elsewhere in Africa. The Italians have been encouraged by both the French and the Russians to hope that they may be given back Tripolitania in the form of a United Nations trusteeship; and if they are not compensated elsewhere, the resultant disappointment will militate against those elements in Italy who are working with us for the inclusion of their country in a Western Union.

### *Recommendations*

3. There are three main ways in which we can partially compensate Italy for not getting back Tripolitania:—

- (1) By supporting to a large extent her claims for the return to her, on a trusteeship basis, of her former colonies in East Africa;
- (2) By safeguarding the interests of Italians in Tripolitania under a British trusteeship of that territory;
- (3) By securing for Italy the maximum of general co-operation with ourselves and other Colonial Powers in Africa as a whole.

4. As regards (1), after careful consideration of all the factors involved I have reached the conclusion that we should be prepared eventually to support the Italian claims for trusteeship of the whole of Italian Somaliland and a considerable part of Eritrea, including Massowah and Asmara (but giving Ethiopia as much as possible of the Coptic highlands behind Asmara, and the Danakil Coast with the port of Assab as an outlet to the sea). We should, however, first sound the Americans and the French as to their ideas on Eritrea, and secure if possible that they rather than we should sponsor any proposal to divide up the territory on roughly these lines.

5. As regards (2), I recommend that the following provisions should be made for the safeguarding of Italian interests in Tripolitania:—

- (i) We should give a large measure of local self-government to the groups of Italian farms; these could be formed into communes with wide powers all of which could continue under unified Italian economic control.
- (ii) As regards internal affairs, we contemplate that Tripolitania would be under an indigenous government with a considerable degree of internal autonomy (but precluded from modifying by a mere majority certain provisions protecting minorities); the Italians should be represented in any higher assemblies, and special arrangements for communal representation should be made in order to guarantee Italian representation proportionate to the size of the Italian population.
- (iii) In matters of personal status, the Italians should have the benefit of the existing (Italian) law, administered by the ordinary judges, a number of whom would in fact be Italians.
- (iv) The Italians should have full guarantees of freedom of speech and religious worship. They should also, of course, be allowed to have their own newspapers.
- (v) We should guarantee to the Italian community that, as the largest minority in the country, they would have special and official representation at the headquarters of the Administration, thus giving them direct access to the highest authority.

Italian minority a too-highly privileged position at the outset.

9. Much will of course depend upon the extent to which the French and the Americans can be induced to support us in a scheme on the foregoing lines. I think, however, that there is a fair chance of our being able to persuade them to accept it; and that, with their help, the Italian Government also could be made to see that it was ultimately to their own advantage.

### 302 CAB 128/12, CM 12(48)2

5 Feb 1948

#### 'Future of Italian colonies': Cabinet conclusions

The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (C.P. (48) 43)<sup>1</sup> outlining certain proposals which it was intended to put forward in informal discussions with the United States and French Governments on the future of the former Italian Colonies in Africa.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that the Four-Power Commission charged by the Deputies of the Council of Foreign Ministers with investigating and reporting on conditions in the former Italian Colonies were due to arrive in Tripolitania at the beginning of March and it was urgently necessary to give His Majesty's Ambassador in Rome some guidance on the attitude which he should adopt in his discussions with the representatives of the United States and France. There were very strong arguments for claiming for the United Kingdom the trusteeship of Cyrenaica, and the Departments concerned were agreed that the right course would be to ask for the trusteeship of Libya as a whole. At the same time everything possible should be done to safeguard the interests of the Italians in Tripolitania on the lines proposed in paragraph 5 of C.P. (48) 43. It would also be desirable to compensate Italy by supporting her claim to the trusteeship of the whole of Italian Somaliland and a considerable part of Eritrea, on the understanding that Ethiopia should be given as much as possible of the Coptic highlands behind Asmara, and the Danakil Coast with the port of Assab. Italy should, in addition, be associated with schemes for African development and, if she received a territory or territories in East Africa under trusteeship, arrangements should be made for her participation in the technical conferences and the measures of economic co-operation which we were promoting in association with the French and Belgian Governments.

The following points were raised in discussion:—

(a) *The Secretary of State for the Colonies* supported the proposals made in C.P. (48)43. He pointed out, however, that, while Italian interests in Tripolitania should be safeguarded on the lines proposed, the Italian settlements must become an integral part of Libya and subject to the general law of that country.

(b) The Cabinet were informed that, though the South African Government were understood to favour a United Kingdom trusteeship for Cyrenaica, it was believed that they would support an Italian trusteeship for Tripolitania and would prefer a joint United States-Italian trusteeship for Eritrea. As regards Italian Somaliland, their view was that an outlet should be provided for Ethiopia at Mogadishu and that the remainder of the country should be amalgamated with British Somaliland. The Commonwealth Relations Office were anxious that His Majesty's Government should

<sup>1</sup> See 301.

not commit themselves to any policy until there had been an opportunity of ascertaining officially the views of the Governments of South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, all of whom were much concerned about the disposal of the former Italian Colonies. It was therefore suggested that any discussions with the United States or the French Governments should be postponed for at least a fortnight.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that it would be difficult to postpone the opening of discussions for so long a period, but that those conducting the discussions on behalf of His Majesty's Government could be instructed to avoid any final commitment pending consultations with Dominion Governments.

(c) The Cabinet were informed that the Chiefs of Staff would have preferred to see the original scheme for a Greater Somalia carried out, but they would not be opposed to our supporting the Italian claim to the trusteeship of Italian Somaliland and Eritrea, if this were the only way of securing agreement to a United Kingdom trusteeship for Libya.

The Cabinet:—

(1) Approved the policy outlined in C.P. (48) 43 as a basis for informal discussion with the United States and French Governments on the question of the future of the former Italian Colonies in Africa.

(2) Invited the Lord Privy Seal to arrange for the views of Dominion Governments on this matter to be ascertained as soon as possible; and took note that the Foreign Secretary would ensure that, pending the receipt of these views, those conducting the discussions on behalf of His Majesty's Government would avoid entering into any firm commitment.

### 303 CAB 131/5, DO 9(48)1

30 Apr 1948

#### 'Former Italian colonies': Cabinet Defence Committee minutes

The Committee had before them a note by the Foreign Secretary (D.O. (48) 31) covering a memorandum by an official committee on the former Italian Colonies. It was recalled that a United Nations fact-finding Commission was at present visiting the former Italian Colonies. The report of this Commission would come before the Deputies of the Foreign Ministers at the end of June, when it would be incumbent upon His Majesty's Government to propound their views on the disposal of these Colonies. After it had been discussed by the Deputies, the problem would come before the Council of Foreign Ministers in September and, if they failed to reach any agreement, it would be referred for decision to the General Assembly of the United Nations, in accordance with the terms of the Italian Treaty.

In February (C.M. (48) 12th Conclusions, Minute 2)<sup>1</sup> the Cabinet had decided provisionally that His Majesty's Government should work to secure the trusteeship of Libya (both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania) and should support the Italian claim to the trusteeship of part of Eritrea and the whole of Italian Somaliland. This decision had been based primarily on the need to secure on strategic grounds the trusteeship of Cyrenaica, and the main question raised in D.O. (48) 31 was whether there was now any cause to modify the provisional policy approved in February.

<sup>1</sup> See 302.

*The Foreign Secretary* recalled the various attempts he had made since the end of the war to find a solution to this intractable problem, and the difficulty he had found in reconciling widely conflicting views, not only among the other Governments concerned, but also in United Kingdom circles. If it was now desired to change the provisional policy approved in February, which at the time had received the support of the Chiefs of Staff and of all the United Kingdom Departments concerned, he ought to know at once.

In a preliminary discussion of the problem as a whole the following general points were made:—

(a) From the strategic point of view it was essential that we should secure for ourselves in Cyrenaica a position which would enable us to do exactly as we liked in that territory. Without this we should be unable to maintain a firm hold in the Middle East.

(b) The only pledge that we had given was to the Senussi, who had been assured that in no circumstances would they revert to Italian rule. Apart from this, we were completely free in our approach to the problem of the disposal of these Colonies, though we could not altogether ignore the wishes of the inhabitants.

(c) Italy was naturally anxious to secure some hold over her former Colonies as a matter of prestige. But there were strong arguments against supporting the Italian claim to the trusteeship of any of these territories. Not only was such a claim likely to be resisted very strongly by public opinion in the United Kingdom and the Dominions, but it was also questionable whether to concede it would be in the Italian interest. Opportunity might well be taken to bring home to the Italian Government the fact that the assumption of responsibility for their former Colonies would be a severe drain on Italian economic and military resources which could hardly be to their advantage. They would in practice stand to gain much more by co-operating with the other Western Powers in the general attempt to organise recovery in the Mediterranean and Middle East than in any attempt to re-establish their Colonial Empire with hopelessly inadequate resources.

(d) *The Chancellor of the Exchequer* suggested that, in the light of the latest developments in the European situation, it would be logical that a solution of the problem of the disposal of these Colonies should first be sought by discussions among the Western Powers. As he saw it, all these territories would be essential to the general scheme of defence which would, it was hoped, be evolved by the recently established Western Union, and if the matter were to be put to the United States Government on this basis it might well appeal to them. It might be possible, for instance, to arrange for the trusteeship of the Colonies to be vested in one or more of the Western Powers who would act on behalf of the others and would hold them at the disposal of the Western Union for defence purposes. Given American support, an approach on these lines stood a good chance of gaining the support of Western opinion (including opinion in Latin America) and so securing the necessary two-thirds majority when the vote on the disposal of these Colonies came to be taken in the General Assembly.

Against this background the Committee turned to consider *the problems of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania*. The following points were made in discussion:—

(e) *General Cumming* explained that a definite feeling of unity permeated

Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan and that this would remain even if the territories were split between the Great Powers. The inhabitants of Tripolitania would strongly resist the return of the Italians and in this would almost certainly have the support of the Arab world. If the plans for military development in Cyrenaica were to succeed, it seemed to him essential, therefore, that Tripolitania should also remain under United Kingdom control.

(f) The Chiefs of Staff had understood from the Foreign Office that, from the political point of view, our best chance of obtaining the trusteeship of Cyrenaica was to claim the trusteeship of the whole of Libya. Moreover, the recent deterioration in our relations with the Arabs made it all the more necessary to avoid a solution of the problem of Tripolitania which would be unacceptable to the Arab world. On the other hand, if it now proved that our best chance of securing for ourselves the trusteeship of Cyrenaica was to agree that the trusteeship of Tripolitania should be given to some other Power who would be friendly to us and acceptable to the Arab world, the Chiefs of Staff would not raise objections on strategic grounds.

(g) *The Foreign Secretary* said he was quite clear that Cyrenaica would have to remain under exclusive United Kingdom trusteeship. He would refuse to agree to any other arrangement and was in a strong position to do so since we were in occupation. He had made our attitude on this point quite clear to the United States and French Governments, and he thought that he could count on their support. As regards Tripolitania, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's suggestion in (d) above seemed worth pursuing and he would be prepared to discuss with the United States Government the possibility of finding some solution by which the trusteeship of Tripolitania and the Fezzan might perhaps be shared by two or more of the Western European powers.

The Committee then discussed *the ex-Italian Colonies in East Africa*. The following points were made:—

(h) From the strategic point of view it was essential to ensure that none of these territories fell under the domination or influence of a potentially hostile Power.

(i) The degree of resistance which the inhabitants of Italian Somaliland would be likely to make to the return of this territory to Italian rule would depend very largely on the attitude adopted by the Ethiopians. While there was no love lost between the Somalis and the Ethiopians, *General Cumming* thought that the latter would be bound to come into conflict with the Italians. The inhabitants would, however, be unlikely to resist a collective trusteeship shared by a number of the Great Powers.

(j) The Eritreans would oppose the return of the Italians but they were divided among themselves. The inhabitants of the Coptic part of the country, which included both Asmara and Massawa, would favour return to Ethiopia and the Emperor laid strong claim to this section. The Moslem part would, in *General Cumming's* view, best be incorporated in the Sudan.

(k) There would be widespread disturbances, not only in Italian Somaliland and Eritrea, but also in the neighbouring British colonies, as soon as it became known that His Majesty's Government supported the return of the Italians to either of these territories; and there would be the greatest difficulties in finding the necessary British troops to deal with these disturbances.

(l) In the light of these considerations the Committee felt that the decision to support the Italian claim to the trusteeship of part of Eritrea and the whole of Italian Somaliland should be reviewed. The problem should be looked at entirely afresh and it might well be found that the solution lay in a return to the original conception of a Greater Somalia.

(m) On the question of withdrawal from the Ogaden *The Foreign Secretary* said that he was anxious to remove this cause of friction with the Emperor of Ethiopia and to commence the withdrawal on 1st July. *The Chief of the Imperial General Staff*<sup>2</sup> said that, provided he could be given the right to draw on the Battalion in Aden to deal with any trouble that might arise in Somaliland in the course of this withdrawal, he was prepared to agree that it should commence on the date proposed by the Foreign Secretary.

*The Prime Minister* said that the whole problem of the future of the Italian Colonies should be looked at afresh in the light of the discussion. We should insist on securing for ourselves a position in Cyrenaica which would give us complete freedom of action in that territory. The question of Tripolitania and the Fezzan should be discussed first with the United States Government and then with the French Government. A possible solution might be to give a joint trusteeship over Tripolitania and the Fezzan to two or more Western European powers. The problem in East Africa should also be discussed with the United States Government and the Foreign Secretary should be free to approach it entirely afresh, taking account of all the new factors in the situation which had come to light since the Cabinet reached their provisional decision to support the return of the Italians to part of Eritrea and the whole of Italian Somaliland. In presenting the whole problem again to the United States Government, the Foreign Secretary might well suggest that the solution lay in mobilising Western opinion behind a solution which would contribute to the defensive system which it was hoped to develop from the newly established Western Union.

The Committee:—

- (1) Endorsed the views expressed by the Prime Minister and invited the Foreign Secretary to proceed accordingly.
- (2) Agreed that the withdrawal from the Ogaden should commence on 1st July and that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff should be free to draw on the Battalion in Aden to deal with any resulting disturbances in Somaliland.
- (3) Invited the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, in consultation with the Foreign Secretary, to inform the Dominion Governments of the fresh approach which it was proposed to make to the problem and to consult them as policy developed.

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<sup>2</sup> Lord Montgomery.

**304 CAB 131/6, DO(48)48**

27 July 1948

**'The former Italian colonies': memorandum by Mr Bevin for Cabinet Defence Committee**

At the meeting of the Defence Committee held on 30th April,<sup>1</sup> I was invited to review the whole problem of the future of the former Italian Colonies in Africa in the light of the views expressed at the meeting. In particular, I was asked to discuss it with the United States and French Governments. This review has now reached the stage where I can report to my colleagues. I have had talks with both the Americans and with the French and, in addition, the Four-Power Commission of Investigation for the former Italian Colonies have presented their report to the Deputies of the four Foreign Ministers.

*(a) American attitude*

An account of the views elicited from the United States Government will be found at Appendix I.<sup>2</sup> The following is a summary:—

- (1) *Cyrenaica*. Full support for British trusteeship.
- (2) *Tripolitania*. British trusteeship if His Majesty's Government so desire. The United States Government would not reject out of hand a suggestion for United States trusteeship.
- (3) *The Fezzan*. The United States Government consider that the Fezzan should remain an integral part of Tripolitania although they would not make an issue of this point.
- (4) *Eritrea*. The United States Government have not reached a decision.
- (5) *Italian Somaliland*. Trusteeship for Italy.

*(b) French attitude*

A full account of the French attitude will be found at Appendix II. The following is a summary:—

- (1) *Cyrenaica*. British trusteeship.
- (2) *Tripolitania*. Italian trusteeship.
- (3) *The Fezzan*. French trusteeship or incorporation in the French North African territories.
- (4) *Eritrea*. Return to Italy under Italian trusteeship although satisfaction should be given to Ethiopian aspirations by the cession of Assab and the Danakil coast.
- (5) *Italian Somaliland*. Italian trusteeship.

*(c) Report of the Four-Power Commission*

A summary of the Commission's latest report will be found at Appendix III. The following are the salient points which emerge from them (under its terms of reference the Commission was constituted as a fact-finding body and consequently offered no recommendations):—

- (i) None of the territories is yet fit for independence. The representatives of all four Powers are agreed on this.
- (ii) In varying degrees the representatives of all the Four Powers are of the

<sup>1</sup> See 303.

<sup>2</sup> Appendixes I-III not printed.

opinion that there is little or no wish on the part of the inhabitants of the territories for a return of the Italians. In some cases bitter hostility is reported. (iii) On the other hand, except in the case of the Coptic Highlands of Eritrea, where the bulk of the inhabitants appear to have advocated incorporation in Ethiopia, and in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, where the inhabitants expressed definite but incompletely considered aspirations for independence, the inhabitants do not appear to have given any very positive or precise expression of what they desire their future status to be.

In the course of my own review of the problem, the following considerations have been uppermost in my mind:—

(i) The essential British interest in the question of the disposal of the former Italian Colonies is to secure for ourselves the position we require in Cyrenaica. For this purpose the support of the French and, above all, the Americans is essential.

(ii) Independence for Cyrenaica, coupled with a treaty between His Majesty's Government and the Emir does not provide from our point of view a satisfactory solution for the territory. The grant of independence to Cyrenaica at this stage would cause us great difficulties in the Sudan, a much more advanced territory, and it is doubtful if we could in fact obtain by a treaty the wide strategic facilities we require. On the other hand we could hope under a Trusteeship agreement, on the lines of that for Tanganyika, to obtain all we require.

(iii) It is important that in the forthcoming negotiations at the meeting of the Deputies of the Foreign Ministers, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and later also the General Assembly, we should, as far possible, avoid giving our enemies opportunity to accuse us (more than is inevitable because of our claim to Cyrenaica) of pursuing a land-grabbing or imperialist policy.

(iv) In the interests of the Western Union it is most important that the Italian aspiration for the return of her former Colonies (however misguided this may be) should be given some satisfaction.

(v) Recent reports that I have received from Africa have been more reassuring than previously regarding the consequences of a decision to return Italy her former colonies and this applies in particular to Italian Somaliland.

(vi) It is most important that some satisfaction be given to Ethiopian claims to Eritrea, since otherwise we may, as a result of Ethiopian resentment, run up against difficulties in our plans for the development of Lake Tana and in our negotiations for a new Treaty of Friendship. The difficulty is that, unless Ethiopia is to be given the whole of Eritrea (which would disappoint the Italians) the only alternative is to give her Assab and the Danakil coast which are Moslem and anti-Ethiopian, while Italy would receive the Coptic areas around Asmara and Massawa, which are strongly anti-Italian.

I recommend, therefore, to my colleagues that in the forthcoming conversations at the meetings of the Deputies, which start on 9th August, the United Kingdom representative should be authorised to take the line described below. This line is, I emphasise, provisional, but it seems to me to provide the best means of securing unreserved United States and French support of our own claim to Cyrenaica, while taking into account other aspects of the problem, *e.g.*, Italian claims.

- (1) *Cyrenaica*. We insist on British trusteeship.
- (2) *Tripolitania*. Although we should prefer United States trusteeship, we would accept any solution acceptable to the Americans and the French on condition that this did not entail British troops to impose the settlement. We should not ask for British trusteeship.
- (3) *The Fezzan*. We would support the French claim.
- (4) *Eritrea*. We are open-minded on this question and would be prepared to agree to any solution acceptable to the Americans and the French provided that Ethiopia received some degree at least of satisfaction to her claims.
- (5) *Italian Somaliland*. We should agree to Italian trusteeship.

I should like authority to inform the Dominions Governments as soon as possible that the United Kingdom Deputy has been instructed in the above sense.

### **305** CAB 131/5, DO 14(48)2 30 July 1948 **'Former Italian colonies': Cabinet Defence Committee minutes on line to be taken at forthcoming international discussions**

The Committee had before them a Memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (D.O. (48) 48)<sup>1</sup> setting out his views on the line which the United Kingdom representative should take at the forthcoming discussions about the future of the former Italian Colonies.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that the matter was urgent since the Deputies of the Foreign Ministers were due to meet on 9th August, and it was essential that the views of other Commonwealth Governments should be obtained beforehand. The proposals submitted to the Committee were based on discussions with the United States and French Governments. They centred round the need to secure our defence interests in Cyrenaica.

In discussion the following general points were made:—

- (a) One of the main difficulties was to decide whether and to what extent it was necessary to meet the Italian claims for the return of some of these territories. Though these claims were put forward largely on prestige grounds, there were arguments from the general international point of view in favour of making some concession to them. On the other hand, there was a very real danger that we should be left to establish Italian rule with British bayonets, particularly since it would be we who would have to hand over to the Italians.
- (b) There was a danger in making a categorical statement that British Forces would not in any circumstances be used to re-establish Italian rule in that the Soviet Government might well seize the opportunity to assume this responsibility themselves.
- (c) The United States and French Governments, for their own reasons, were of the opinion that the Italians should not be precluded altogether from returning to their former colonies, and United States and French support was essential to our own claims in Cyrenaica if the necessary two-thirds majority was to be secured in the United Nations Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> See 304.

(d) One of the objections to an Italian trusteeship of any of these territories was the possibility that a Communist régime might emerge in Italy with the result that Communist influence would spread to Africa.

In the light of these general points the Committee then discussed each of the territories in turn.

### *Cyrenaica*

It was agreed that it was vital to insist on British trusteeship and that the support of the United States and French Governments must be secured.

### *Tripolitania*

It was suggested in D.O. (48) 48 that we should accept any solution acceptable to the United States and French Governments on condition that it did not entail the use of British troops to impose the settlement. The Foreign Secretary had been reluctant to accept an earlier suggestion by the United States Government that we should seek trusteeship over the whole of Libya, on the ground that this would be too great a potential commitment. On the other hand the French Government wished to restore this territory to the Italians which would provoke serious trouble in the Arab world. It might in the end be suggested that we should remain in occupation for another year. If so, the Foreign Secretary would consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer before agreeing.

### *The Fezzan*

The Committee saw no objection to the suggestion in D.O. (48) 48 that we should support the French claim to this territory.

### *Eritrea*

The Foreign Secretary was prepared to agree to any solution acceptable to the United States and French Governments, provided that Ethiopia received some degree at least of satisfaction of her claims to the whole territory. She would probably be satisfied if she were given the Danakil coast and the port of Assab, and if Ethiopian access to the port were completely free of French restrictions. Ethiopian good-will was essential to the success of the water schemes for the Sudan and Uganda. The French Government favoured an Italian trusteeship over the bulk of the territory, but this was objectionable on the grounds given in (a) and (d) above.

### *Italian Somaliland*

The suggestion made in D.O. (48) 48 was that we should agree to an Italian trusteeship, on the assumption that there was now less reason to suppose that the return of Italy to this territory would provoke undesirable consequences.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* and *The Chiefs of Staff* expressed doubts on whether there were any grounds for supposing that the return of the Italians to Somaliland would be any more unwelcome than had been previously thought. All their information pointed to the likelihood that it would be bitterly resisted by the inhabitants and would provoke serious trouble in the neighbouring British territories and in the Arab world in general. In these circumstances the Secretary of State for the Colonies suggested that we might seek to reserve our views on the future of Somaliland until the future of Cyrenaica had been firmly settled.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that he fully recognised the reality of the difficulties which had been raised. A decision on the line we should take was, however, urgent and he therefore proposed to reconsider the suggestions made in D.O. (48) 48 in the light of the discussion and thereafter to bring the matter before his colleagues again.

*The Minister of Defence* said that it was clear that, if the Italians were to return to any of these territories it would fall to us as [the] occupying Power to deal with any disturbances when they were being handed over to the Italians, or even to use British Forces to re-establish Italian rule. Accordingly when Ministers came to consider what our policy should be they should have before them a military appreciation of what would be involved, showing what kind of disturbances it might be necessary to deal with, both within and without the former Italian Colonies, where and to what extent it might be necessary to use British Forces to deal with them, and from what sources those troops could be drawn.

The Committee:—

(1) Took note that the Foreign Secretary would reconsider the proposals made in D.O. (48) 48 in the light of the discussion and circulate a memorandum on the future of the former Italian Colonies for consideration by the Committee in the following week.

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for War to arrange for an appreciation to be prepared by the War Office on the lines proposed by the Minister of Defence in time for consideration concurrently with the Foreign Secretary's memorandum.

### 306 CAB 131/5, DO 15(48)1

6 Aug 1948

#### 'Former Italian colonies': Cabinet Defence Committee minutes on UK line in forthcoming international discussions<sup>1</sup>

The Committee resumed discussion of the question of what line the United Kingdom representatives should take at the forthcoming discussions on the disposal of the former Italian Colonies. They had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (D.O. (48) 51) setting out the military implications that were likely to be involved if any of these Colonies were to be placed under Italian trusteeship.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that, since the Committee's last meeting, he had had further discussions with the Americans and French in which he had constantly borne in mind the overriding need to secure support for our own claims to the trusteeship of Cyrenaica.

#### *Eritrea*

The Americans had pressed strongly for the incorporation of the northern part of Eritrea in the Sudan. He had rejected this firmly first, because, as the Sudan was an Anglo/Egyptian condominium, the incorporation of Eritrea would entail *prima facie* admission of the Egyptian claim to part of that territory; secondly, because the introduction of the Sudan into these controversial negotiations in the United Nations would give the Egyptians the opportunity of exploiting the Sudan situation, which was already delicate enough; and thirdly, because the introduction of this new

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<sup>1</sup> Previous reference: see 305.

element into the discussions might prejudice the arrangements for the development of the Lake Tana water scheme which were making satisfactory progress. He had asked the Americans to consider an alternative solution to the Eritrean problem. This was to the effect that while Assab and the Danakil coast would be formally incorporated in Ethiopia, the northern part of the territory should be placed under Ethiopian trusteeship, the Ethiopian Administrator being provided with a Legislative Council on which there would be a majority representing the local inhabitants and four "neutrals," one each from Pakistan, Italy, Switzerland and one of the Scandinavian countries. The idea behind the inclusion of these neutrals was that the Pakistan and Italian representatives would look after the interests of the Moslem and Italian sections of the population, while the Swiss and Scandinavian could be relied upon to exercise a healthy influence on Western democratic lines. The Great Powers would be excluded altogether. Failing a solution on something like these lines, the Foreign Secretary saw no alternative to the return of the northern part of the territory to the Italians with all its attendant disadvantages. Mr. Utter, the United States Acting Deputy on the Council of Foreign Ministers, thought that the United States Government might support this compromise provided that the Negus could be prevailed upon to accept it.

In discussion of this compromise solution the following points were made:—

(a) *The Foreign Secretary* explained that he contemplated that there should be only one Legislative Council in the territory. The four neutrals would be members of this Council and not members of a separate Advisory Council. The Legislative Council would be headed by the Ethiopian Administrator who would have certain reserved powers.

(b) If the Committee accepted this compromise and the United States Government also agreed to it, the first stage in the proceedings would be to try to secure its acceptance in principle by the United Nations Assembly. For this a two-thirds majority would be needed. The next stage would be the drafting of the trusteeship agreement. This could be submitted by a simple majority of the Trusteeship Council to the Assembly where a two-thirds majority would be required and where there would be no question of the veto being used against it.

(c) *The Secretary of State for the Colonies* pointed out that the inhabitants of Assab and the Danakil coast would violently resist the incorporation of the southern part of the territory in Ethiopia. Under the compromise proposal such internal antagonisms might be reduced by dividing the territory into suitable zones each of which could look forward to a measure of autonomy.

(d) *The Chief of the Air Staff*<sup>2</sup> thought that the Foreign Secretary's solution would do much to reduce the risk of disturbances in the transitional period and that the inclusion of Pakistan on the proposed Legislative Council would help to allay Arab fears. Consideration would, however, have to be given to the question of who would provide the necessary military backing until the new administration was fully established.

(e) *The First Lord of the Admiralty* suggested that the process of securing acceptance of a trusteeship agreement would be much simplified and some of the difficulties in the southern parts of the territory might at the same time be

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<sup>2</sup> Lord Tedder.

overcome if the whole of the territory, and not merely the northern part of it, were placed under Ethiopian trusteeship.

(f) *The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations* said that, though the South African Government were in favour of Eritrea being placed under Italian trusteeship, he did not think that they would raise serious objection to the solution propounded by the Foreign Secretary. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand would probably support it and India and Pakistan might also be prepared to agree to it.

Summing up the discussion *The Minister of Defence*<sup>3</sup> suggested that the Committee should endorse the compromise solution proposed by the Foreign Secretary and invite him to consider the possibility of widening the scope of the proposed Ethiopian trusteeship to cover the whole of the territory. This latter suggestion had much to commend it.

### *Italian Somaliland*

*The Foreign Secretary* said that the United States and France were insistent that Italian Somaliland should be placed under Italian trusteeship, and that, if we were to secure the necessary support for our claim to Cyrenaica, he saw little chance of finding a solution on any other basis.

In the course of a full discussion on this territory the following were the main points made:—

(g) *The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that all the evidence at his disposal pointed to the likelihood of serious trouble in both Aden and Kenya if the Italians were allowed to return to Somaliland; and *The Secretary of State for War*<sup>4</sup> pointed out that, if trouble did arise either within or without the territory, it would be extremely difficult to provide the troops to deal with it.

(h) To re-establish themselves in Somaliland, the General Staff estimated that the Italians would require one Division with air support, particularly air transport. The Italians had not a force of this size available, nor did the terms of the Peace Treaty allow them to create it. If, therefore, they were to be given the trusteeship, the terms of the Treaty would have to be amended.

(i) If the United Nations were to decide that Italy should be given the trusteeship of Somaliland, it would be for them to decide how that decision should be enforced. There might be little difficulty in securing international agreement to the amendment of the Italian Peace Treaty, but the creation of the additional Italian forces would take time and meanwhile there was a very real risk that British troops might have to be used to maintain order.

(j) On the other hand, our claim to Cyrenaica was a vital requirement. If we were to secure support for it, it seemed clear that there was no alternative to allowing the Italians to return to one of their former Colonies, and their return to Italian Somaliland was likely to give rise to the least difficulties. The Foreign Secretary should, therefore, be free to agree that this territory should be placed under Italian trusteeship in accordance with United States and French wishes. The risk that British troops might have to be used to maintain order would have to be faced and all possible steps taken to reduce it to a minimum. In any case we should not agree

<sup>3</sup> Mr A V Alexander, in the chair.

<sup>4</sup> Mr E Shinwell.

to use British troops unless specifically invited by the United Nations.

### *Cyrenaica and Tripolitania*

*The Foreign Secretary* said that in the light of the discussions that he had had with United States representatives, he had come to the conclusion that there was much to be said for trying to secure postponement of a decision on the future of the whole of Libya for another year. The Americans had not yet made up their minds on the question of Tripolitania and there was great doubt whether we would secure the necessary two-thirds majority required to support our claim to Cyrenaica. He appreciated that a postponement of the decision on Cyrenaica would make things much more difficult for the Secretary of State for War and [he] would himself be very anxious to replace the present military administration by a civil administration which would be free from the restrictions of The Hague Convention. If the Committee were to agree, therefore, that an attempt should be made to postpone a decision on these two territories for a further year, he would hope to be able to arrange for the War Office to be relieved of their responsibility and for a civil administration to be set up in both territories.

*The Secretary of State for War* recalled the representations that he had made to the Cabinet earlier in the year (C.P. (48) 113) in favour of the transfer from the War Office of responsibility for the administration of the former Italian Colonies. The difficulties to which he had drawn attention remained and he would be very reluctant to accept any postponement of a decision on the future of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania if this meant that the War Office would continue to be responsible for their administration. A postponement which might delay the construction of accommodation for the garrison which it was proposed to place in Cyrenaica would also be exceedingly embarrassing to the War Office. It was, however, clearly essential that we should be sure of the necessary support for our claims in Cyrenaica and, as this would apparently only be forthcoming when the United States had decided on the attitude that they were going to adopt over Tripolitania, he would be prepared to agree to the proposed postponement, on the understanding that the Foreign Secretary would do all that he could to set up a civil administration in both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania at the earliest possible moment.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* pointed out that hitherto the problem of the future of the former Italian Colonies had been regarded as a whole, and the Committee had been disposed to balance our requirements in one part of the previous Italian Colonial Empire against the concessions that we might make in another. The proposal that we might now seek an immediate settlement in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland and work for a postponement of the decision on Cyrenaica and Tripolitania clearly involved the surrender of any bargaining powers that had previously existed.

In conclusion it was generally agreed that the right course would be to try to secure support for our claim to the trusteeship of Cyrenaica this year. If this support was unlikely to be forthcoming, the Foreign Secretary should be free to work for a postponement of a decision in respect of both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania for a further year.

The Committee:—

(1) Invited the Foreign Secretary to proceed on the lines agreed in the above discussion.

(2) Took note that the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, in consultation with the Foreign Secretary, would arrange to inform the Commonwealth Governments of the policy which it was proposed to pursue.

**307** CO 537/3514, no 91

12 Aug 1948

**[Ex-Italian colonies]: outward circular telegram from Sir T Lloyd to African governors, explaining the decision to support return of Italian Somaliland to Italy under trusteeship**

1. We realise that decision that U.K. Deputy should support return of Italian Somaliland to Italy under trusteeship will be a disappointment and may well cause keen resentment in some of our African territories. Throughout the discussions of this question the Secretary of State and the Colonial Office have drawn attention to the long-term dangers of a return of Italy to her former East African Colonies, and have also consistently pointed out that a United Somalia (under U.K. trusteeship) would provide the only really satisfactory long-term solution of the problems of the Horn of Africa. These considerations have been fully and sympathetically understood by all concerned in London, but in seeking a solution of this exceedingly difficult problem H.M.G. have, as you will realise, been confronted with a series of conflicting interests. We know that the Americans, French and Russians (for different motives) all desire a return of Italian Somaliland to Italy under trusteeship. Even if we opposed this solution in the Council of Deputies of the Foreign Ministers, it would still stand every chance of being adopted by the General Assembly, and the only likely effects of opposition from the United Kingdom alone would, therefore, have been

- (a) the encouragement of renewed opposition on the part of the Somalis themselves to a return to Italian rule, which might of course have the most serious consequences for the United Kingdom; and
- (b) a serious setback to Anglo-Italian relations at a time when we are doing all we can to build up a solid bulwark in Western Europe (including Italy) against Communism.

Moreover, even if it were possible for the U.K. to prevent the return of Italian Somaliland to Italy, there would undoubtedly be strong opposition internationally to placing it under United Kingdom trusteeship, and any other solution it is possible to envisage (e.g. four-power trusteeship or trusteeship by the United Nations as a whole) would, in our view, be probably more objectionable than Italian trusteeship.

2. In all the circumstances therefore, and after prolonged study of all aspects of this problem over many months, during most of which time we have been in close contact with the American, French and Dominion Governments, the Cabinet came to the conclusion that there was in fact no practical alternative to a return of Italian Somaliland to Italy, however unpleasant it was to have to take this decision.

3. The S. of S. sincerely trusts that if, as is likely, news of the Deputies' discussion leaks out, there will not be serious trouble in the territory under your administration. You will no doubt watch the situation closely and I am sure you will keep the S. of S. fully informed of any local reactions.

4. We will keep you informed of subsequent developments and will telegraph again as soon as possible about the security aspect. Ends.

**308** CO 537/3515, no 258

13 Sept 1948

**[Disposal of former Italian colonies]: outward FO circular telegram no 10317 to UK ambassadors, explaining British policy**

After setting out in general terms His Majesty's Government's proposals for the disposal of the former Italian Colonies, full details of which they have already received, His Majesty's Representatives would be asked to explain the various considerations which led His Majesty's Government to adopt them. They would also draw attention to the very great identity of view between His Majesty's Government and the United States Government. Both Governments have recommended that Italian Somaliland should be returned to Italy under trusteeship. As regards Eritrea His Majesty's Government have up till now recommended that the territory should be placed under provisional Ethiopian administration with an Advisory Council etc. to help in the administration. The United States Government has suggested incorporating in Ethiopia immediately Assab and the Danakil coast and half of the Coptic Highlands, leaving over for further consideration the disposal of the remainder of the territory. His Majesty's Government are in principle prepared to accept the American proposals as an interim solution since as regards the disposal of a large part of Eritrea they are in agreement and fate of the remainder is left over for further discussion. As regards Libya, the United States and British Governments are at one in advocating British trusteeship for Cyrenaica and the postponement of a decision regarding Tripolitania while the question is studied further.

2. In explaining the considerations which have influenced His Majesty's Government in reaching their conclusions, His Majesty's Representatives will make the following points:—

(i) The most remarkable feature of the Four Power Commission's report on the future of the colonies was the unanimity of *all* four Powers that none of the territories was ripe for independence. The only solution therefore in accordance with the ideals and aims of the United Nations is to place them under trusteeship, except in cases where, for ethnical or other over-riding reasons e.g. Eritrea, it is justifiable to incorporate them in existing States.

(ii) His Majesty's Government are in no way hostile to Italy sharing as the administering authority of a Trusteeship agreement in the administration of African territories and taking her share of the task of educating their backward peoples along the road to independence and self-government. On the other hand, in agreeing to the return of Italy to any of her former African territories, certain other considerations have had to be taken into account. In the case of Eritrea Ethiopia's justifiable claims to an outlet to the sea, the fact that Ethiopia was twice attacked by the Italians from bases in Eritrea, and that a large proportion of the population is akin to the Northern Ethiopians by race and religion, were weighty factors militating against Italian trusteeship. As regards Tripolitania, His Majesty's Government felt that in view of the hostility of the inhabitants towards the Italians, and Italy's comparative weakness both economically and militarily, the reimposition of Italian administration in the territory would—at any rate for the moment—involve such risk of disturbance and bloodshed that they would not be justified in taking the moral responsibility of recommending it. The fact, however, that His Majesty's Government were able to agree to an Italian return to Italian Somaliland is proof of their goodwill, and it should be remembered that to the

limited extent practicable they are most anxious that Italy should play a full part in the economic development of all dependent African territories, not merely the former Italian Colonies.

(iii) As regards other forms of trusteeship, His Majesty's Government have no objection in principle to the idea of multiple trusteeship or direct United Nations trusteeship. In practice however, and in the present international situation, they have come to the reluctant conclusion that such trusteeship for any of the territories concerned would fail to work and would be detrimental to the progress and prosperity of the territory concerned.

(iv) No one can accuse his Majesty's Government of pursuing, in the question of the former Italian Colonies, a policy of land-grabbing. It is only in the case of Cyrenaica that they have made any claims for themselves, and here there are special considerations. First of all any idea of Italian trusteeship is precluded by the fact that of all of the peoples of Italy's former African territories, the Senussi Arabs who inhabit Cyrenaica, are the most bitterly opposed to the Italians and suffered most from them in the past. Moreover, His Majesty's Government are under a solemn pledge to the Senussi that they shall not return to Italian rule. It should also be borne in mind that during the course of the war the Italians evacuated the Italian population from the territory and to-day hardly one Italian remains.

(v) The British claim to trusteeship of the territory has special weight. It was British and Commonwealth troops who liberated the country. The Senussi fought side by side with the British during the desert campaigns and Cyrenaica and Great Britain are joined together to-day by the closest bonds of friendship. As will be seen from the Commission's report, the Cyrenaicans, though asking for independence, frankly admitted that they would require outside aid in the initial period and many said they looked to Great Britain to give this aid. As Cyrenaica is not ripe for independence, trusteeship, namely British trusteeship, is the obvious solution for Senussi aspirations. The objective of all United Nations trusteeships is to lead the territory placed under trust along the road to self-government and independence and Great Britain's record as exemplified in India, Burma, and Ceylon adequately show how fit she is to be entrusted with the task.

(vi) There are also wider considerations to be borne in mind. Cyrenaica is a vital strategic area in the Middle East and a bastion against the Soviet and therefore Communist penetration of the area. The Middle East to-day is, as the result of the recent Palestinian troubles, peculiarly sensitive to such penetration. It is therefore essential that this key territory should have a stable government firmly supported by a Western Power. The loss to Great Britain of Cyrenaica and the facilities she enjoys and would continue to enjoy if the territory were placed under British trusteeship, would inevitably have its repercussions in the military position in the West of Europe and increase the necessity of building up nearer home the military potential of the Western Allies. This in its turn would increase the already disturbing tension in the West.

3. His Majesty's Representatives will have full discretion to choose or emphasise what points in the preceding paragraph they think will be most telling and to omit any which they think would have a contrary effect. For instance, point (vi) will probably carry most weight in strongly anti-Communist countries and with the neutral Scandinavian bloc.

**309** CO 537/3515, no 294

6 Oct 1948

**[Ex-Italian colonies]: outward circular CO telegram to all governors, about Russian proposals for UN trusteeship**

Following is text of Foreign Office No. 388 Intel of 25th September to Embassies and Legations.

Begins:

At Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris from September 13th–15th to discuss the disposal of the former Italian Colonies, the Soviet representative introduced a last moment “new” proposal to replace previous Soviet recommendations for Italian trusteeship of all the territories. This was that each territory should be placed under a United Nations trusteeship agreement which would provide for an Administrator to be appointed by and responsible to the Trusteeship Council. To each Administrator would be attached an Advisory Committee of seven members, composed of one representative of each of the Four Powers, plus one representative of Italy and two residents of the territory concerned. Libya and Eritrea would be granted independence after ten years, but no period would be fixed for Italian Somaliland. Strategic areas in the territories might be selected by the Security Council.

2. This revives the original United States proposal made in 1945, at a time when genuine international co-operation with Russia in post-war planning seemed to be practical politics, and we are on record as having supported it at that time. The Russians opposed it, however, as they then hoped to get Tripolitania for themselves, and Molotov quoted in the Council of Foreign Ministers a Russian saying that “if a child has seven nurses it won’t be looked after at all”. On further examination the proposal seemed to us impracticable and it was also abandoned by the Americans themselves.

3. We cannot assume that the Russians will not support Italian trusteeship at the Assembly, but they probably realise that this has little chance of getting the necessary two-thirds majority (except perhaps as regards Italian Somaliland) and calculate that their new proposal is more likely to gain the necessary support in the Assembly, or at least to prevent us from obtaining the necessary two-thirds majority for a United Kingdom trusteeship for Cyrenaica (see my telegram No. 10317 to Washington).<sup>1</sup> It is in fact, an opportunist tactical move unrelated to considerations of the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants of the territories.

4. The following are the three main objections to the Soviet proposal:—

- (i) It would give Russia a foothold in the administration of the territories.
- (ii) There are strong practical objections. It would be difficult to secure agreement on a suitable Administrator and the existence at his elbow of an Advisory Council representing each of the great Powers would introduce national rivalries and probably lead to administrative chaos from which the territories would suffer but from which the Russians would benefit. There is the further difficulty that the United Nations would have to finance these deficit areas. It is also not clear how the territories would be policed and defended.
- (iii) It would involve disappointing all the Italian claims.

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<sup>1</sup> See 308.

5. In the case of Cyrenaica, there is the even more important objection that the Russian proposal would be incompatible with our securing the all important strategic facilities which we require.

6. The new proposal may clearly have some appeal, and it is important to prevent the development of this potential threat to our obtaining the support which we need for a United Kingdom trusteeship of Cyrenaica.

7. As you are aware, we are proposing to make a formal approach to the great majority of the Governments concerned once we have agreed on our line with the Americans (my telegram No. 10316 to Washington) but you may, at your discretion, make use of the above arguments in the meantime if you consider in the light of the circumstances at your post such action desirable to prevent the Russian proposal taking hold.

**310** CO 537/3519

20–29 Dec 1948

[Cyrenaica]: minutes by A N Galsworthy, L H Gorsuch, J M Martin, Sir T Lloyd and Lord Listowel on the Amir's preference for a treaty relationship with UK

*Mr. Martin*

You should see savingsrams 1, 2 and 3 enclosed in No. 113 from the Political Adviser in Benghazi which show that the Amir of Cyrenaica is objecting to the idea of a Trusteeship even with the U.K. as Administering Authority and that he would prefer instead a treaty relationship between the U.K. and Cyrenaica on the lines of our treaty with Transjordan.

2. Mr. Watt suggests in his minute that the Amir's objection to trusteeship may lead the Foreign Office to revive the idea (which the Former Italian Colonies Committee considered at one time but eventually turned down) that the U.K. should by unilateral action grant independence to Cyrenaica and conclude a treaty with the Amir which would give us the necessary strategic facilities in the territory in return for assistance to the Amir (mainly in the form of a subsidy).

3. A decision in this sense would no doubt provoke something of an outcry from the United Nations, on the ground that the United Kingdom was deliberately flaunting [sic] its authority. It would also I think have less appeal to the Military Authorities than a trusteeship since the military feel that it would be most desirable for us to have the ultimate reserve of power in Cyrenaica which we would have as the Administering Authority of a Trust Territory. But if the Military Authorities realize that the prospects of obtaining a United Kingdom Trusteeship over the territory are small, then I think they would certainly support action on the lines of the preceding paragraph. The Arab states would also, I think, probably approve such action. The French, however, would probably strongly disapprove of it, largely because they do not wish to have an independent Arab state so near to their own French North African possessions. But the fact of the matter is that we are already no longer on speaking terms with the French on the question of the disposal of the former Italian Colonies. At the recent Assembly they not only did not support us but actually appear to have worked against us. I do not think that the likelihood of adverse French

reactions would deter the Foreign Office from unilateral action as regards Cyrenaica, if on other grounds it appeared desirable. A further objection mentioned in paragraph 6 of savingram No. 2 is that it might prove difficult to secure international recognition of Cyrenaica as an independent state if it acquired its independence by unilateral action on the part of the United Kingdom. I imagine, however, that it would be only a matter of time before international recognition followed, although Russia, by use of her veto, could keep Cyrenaica out of the United Nations more or less indefinitely. I hardly imagine, however, that the Amir is particularly anxious to be admitted.

4. The decision whether or not to recommend to Ministers unilateral action on our part to grant independence to Cyrenaica in return for a satisfactory treaty with the Amir is primarily the responsibility of the Foreign Office and the Service Departments, and the Colonial Office is not, I think, very closely affected at all. From our own Colonial Office point of view I do not think there need be any objection to H.M.G. proceeding in this way. I imagine that this somewhat cavalier behaviour towards the United Nations would not provoke criticism in Colonial territories. The granting of independence to Cyrenaica might, I suppose, have the effect of stimulating demands for self-government in some of our more advanced Colonies, for example, the Gold Coast. On the other hand, it would have the very definite advantage of relieving us of a considerable handicap in dealing with the Trusteeship Council at its next session. Throughout the recent session of the Fourth Committee and General Assembly we were very conscious of the difficulty of maintaining a firm attitude on points of principle without risking alienating much needed votes for a U.K. trusteeship over Cyrenaica, and it will be a great pity if we have to enter the battle area at the next session of the Trusteeship Council with one hand tied behind our back again.

5. All this is largely speculative at present, but if, as I personally think quite possible, the Foreign Office revive the idea of unilateral action by the U.K. to grant independence to Cyrenaica, I would like to take the line in the Former Italian Colonies Committee that, so far as the Colonial Office is concerned, such a course would not embarrass us and that if the Foreign Office and Service Departments wish to recommend this course to Ministers we would certainly concur in such a recommendation.

6. I am passing this minute through Mr. Gorsuch, who may wish to comment on possible repercussions in West Africa. I doubt whether it is necessary to trouble other Geographical Departments.

A.N.G.  
20.12.48

The question seems to me not so much whether the demand for self-government would be stimulated in, say, the Gold Coast, as whether our position vis-à-vis the demanders of self-government would be weakened if an arrangement of the kind envisaged is concluded with Cyrenaica. Personally I do not think it would; Cyrenaica is occupied enemy territory, not a country qualifying for emergence into self-government under our tutelage. Nor do I think that anyone in the Gold Coast, except the disciples of Nkrumah, would be quick to draw a parallel, or that if it were drawn it would attract many new adherents to his school of thought.

That is, however, my personal view. I assume that if such an arrangement over

Cyrenaica became likely, we should consult or at any rate warn the Governors?

L.H.G.  
22.12.48

I agree that in discussion with F.O. Mr Galsworthy may take the line proposed in para 5 of his minute and that we must keep the Governors *informed* (asking for their est. of local reactions) if this becomes more definite. As far as Trusteeship Council affairs are concerned it would be a great relief to us to avoid the added complication of a new trustee territory and also to feel that we need no longer mind our P's and Q's for fear of upsetting members whose votes will count in assigning the trusteeship. A treaty relationship may give us far more permanent advantages than a trusteeship, even if the latter is not (as e.g. the Americans have suggested) limited to a definite term of years.

J.M.M.  
22.12.48

*Minister of State*

The point at issue is clearly set out in Mr Galsworthy's minute of the 20th of December. If on grounds of foreign policy Mr Bevin should decide to revive the idea of unilateral U.K. action to grant independence to Cyrenaica, it would not be proper for us to oppose that, from the Colonial standpoint, unless we could argue that it would have serious disadvantages, and produce definitely unfavourable reactions, in Colonial territories generally. That clearly we cannot claim, and I agree therefore that Mr Galsworthy should be authorised, should the point arise, to take the line recommended in paragraph 5 of his minute.

T.I.K.L.  
23.12.48

I agree with Sir T. Lloyd's minute.

L.  
29.12.48.

**311** PREM 8/921

20 July 1949

[Future of ex-Italian colonies]: FO outward telegram no 7222 to Washington

We continue to be opposed to the idea of formal four-power talks about the former Italian Colonies, largely for the reasons given by Mr. Rusk<sup>1</sup> himself in paragraph 3 of your telegram No. 307 Saving, namely that they would have an unfortunate effect in United Nations circles and cause undue excitement in Italian Colonies and in Arab countries. They might also cause difficulties with Commonwealth governments.

2. This does not (repeat not) mean that we are not in favour of conversations among the four powers and also with other powers interested and concerned. We have already had an exchange of views with the French and expect to do so shortly

<sup>1</sup> Director of the Office of UN Affairs, US State Dept.

with the Italians. We are, of course, constantly exchanging views with the Americans themselves.

3. We should prefer to continue to discuss the matter in the same sort of way. We also feel that since we are the administering power and obliged to take decisions week by week in London the only sensible plan is for discussions to be centred here. We are opposed to talks in New York, and would like as soon as possible to exchange views with the United States Government through the United States Embassy or if the State Department prefer, through an official specially sent here for the purpose.

4. The following may be of help to you in giving a clearer picture to the Americans of the lines on which our ideas are now provisionally developing especially in the light of your telegram No. 3495.

5. *Eritrea*. We still adhere to the proposal which we and the Americans advocated at the last Assembly. Not merely are we heavily committed to the Ethiopian Government so that any modification in our policy would be difficult but the solution itself is in our considered opinion the only one that can ensure a lasting settlement in this part of Africa.

6. *Italian Somaliland*. We are still prepared to support Italian trusteeship of the territory though we are not over sanguine that the necessary majority can be found in the Assembly. Failing this, we would be prepared to accept almost any solution which did not involve Slav penetration of Africa (e.g. direct United Nations trusteeship). We are not in favour of any proposal involving the creation of a united Somalia under the international trusteeship system. We do not consider that there would be a two-thirds majority in favour of such a trusteeship with the United Kingdom as administering power and in our view native opinion in Africa and public opinion in this country would react adversely to the idea of an Anglo-Italian trusteeship. For your information, however, the basic reason [for] our dislike of this proposal is that it would involve placing British colonial territories under the trusteeship system. The fact that British territories had been placed under the trusteeship system as a result of a General Assembly resolution would create a dangerous precedent in support of possible further demands by the United Nations for placing under trusteeship of other territories.

7. *Libya*. We are coming to the conclusion that the solution for Libya must be independence. The question how soon complete independence could be or ought to be achieved is one on which we have not yet reached a firm opinion. There are various factors to be considered. In the first place a number of years would be required for setting up the necessary machinery. We should have to institute measures in Tripolitania similar to those which we have already begun in Cyrenaica with the object of creating local institutions capable of governing the country by the time independence is achieved, and it must be frankly recognised that unless there is to be complete chaos the native administration will have to include for many years to come a high proportion of foreign personnel. Moreover, there are other tasks which it would be our duty to carry out, if we are to take account of the interests of the French and the Italians and which would require a certain amount of time. In the first place we should wish to take special pains in Tripolitania during the continuing period of our administration to bring about practical co-operation between the indigenous population and the European inhabitants; secondly, we should wish to encourage agreements there in regard to economic relations between the local authorities whom we set up and the Italian Government and in regard to the supply

of technical assistance by Italy; and thirdly, we should want, if possible, to avoid confronting the French with the prospect of the early establishment of an independent Libya united under the Senussi, which they have stated would be gravely prejudicial to their interests. In general, therefore, while opinion at the next General Assembly may no longer be satisfied with so long a period as ten years, we should hope that it would accept a delay exceeding five years. On the other hand we are not prepared to be put in the position of opposing or appearing to wish unduly to postpone the achievement of independence and unity by the Libyans.

8. *Unity.* From our assessment of the feeling at the last General Assembly, we are convinced that there is no possibility of the next Assembly agreeing to a solution which excludes the eventual realisation of the unity of at least Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, and any proposal which we support must take account of this. Here there are two questions: first, the date by which Libyan unity can be attained, and second, the form which it should take, i.e. whether a unitary or a federated state. In principle the question of the form of unity to be established is one which should primarily be decided by the inhabitants of the territories when they are in a position to do so, and for this reason I feel that it would be wrong to prejudice the issue until the local administrations in both the territories have achieved a degree of authority and control which would enable them to take an independent decision on behalf of their peoples. A certain delay over this decision would also help us to assuage the fears of the French regarding the Fezzan and the Senussi mentioned above. Subject to this we feel in general that some form of union between the two territories will ultimately be inevitable and we think that federation will be the most likely form for the practical reason that the two territories are physically separated from each other by tracts of desert which make local autonomy almost essential.

9. Generally speaking the problem with which we shall be faced at the next Assembly will be to reconcile a general demand for Libyan independence and unity with the interests of the French and the Italians. Nothing short of independence is likely to acquire the support of the Arab-Moslem-Asiatic bloc or to obtain a two-thirds majority and if we were to oppose independence there is no saying that our opposition would necessarily be effective, and our interests in Cyrenaica and the Moslem world generally would not escape unharmed. The Italians have themselves come out with a declaration in favour of Tripolitanian self-government and, even though they might oppose immediate independence, such a proposal would split the ranks of their Latin American supporters who in any case are not expected at the next Assembly to be so fervent in support of Italy as they were last time. We must therefore seek to persuade the Italians (and we think it may not be difficult to do so) that the plan described in paragraph 7 above contains the best guarantee of their interests. In any case Italy has already renounced all idea of trusteeship and now wishes to establish some sort of special relationship by treaty with Tripolitania. I think it must be taken as certain that no Libyan or Tripolitanian state would ever agree to give Italy political control of any sort in the territory, but that there is a fair chance that a future Tripolitanian state would freely negotiate a treaty of an economic nature establishing a special economic relationship with Italy and providing for Italian technical assistance.

10. As regards the French, the French Government have almost certainly admitted to themselves that the ultimate independence of Libya is unavoidable. They have not accepted the idea of Libyan unity and will be strongly opposed to it because

of the Fezzan. They will also wish independence of Libya to be postponed as long as possible because of the reactions they fear it will have in their own North African territories. From the point of view of the vote in the Assembly French opposition is not likely to be important. But the establishment of a united and independent Libya, which is unavoidable in the long run, is likely to have a serious effect on the French position in North Africa. We want to ensure that the consequences are as little damaging as possible both to France's interests and to her relations with us and with the United States of America. We are therefore anxious to avoid taking the lead ourselves in proposing a resolution for the independence and unity of Libya. We should also like to see the delay made as long as is acceptable to the Assembly, at least in the case of Tripolitania. At the same time the French will have to realise that His Majesty's Government cannot adopt a policy of suppressing the awakened desire of the Arabs in Tripoli for independence and that it would be contrary to our whole policy in the Middle and Far East since the war to oppose this movement.

11. *British interests.* I no longer wish to advocate British trusteeship of Cyrenaica. The grant of local self-government to the Amir has now made the idea of trusteeship even less acceptable to the local population than it was before. Moreover, we now think that we should be unlikely to obtain a trusteeship agreement from the United Nations which would be satisfactory to us from the point of view of our strategic interests. These can now be much better assured by means of a treaty with an independent Cyrenaica inside or outside a united Libyan state. The task of negotiating such a treaty will be made all the easier if we show ourselves in the General Assembly sympathetic to the general demand for early independence and unity.

12. *The interim period.* It seems obvious that whatever the length of the intervening period before complete independence is achieved British administration of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica will have to continue since no other alternative would exist. It is possible, however, that the United Nations will insist on some form of supervision of the execution of their resolutions. We would of course be only too glad to send in periodical reports to the Secretary-General, but this may not be sufficient to satisfy Assembly opinion, which may ask for some supervisory body such as an Advisory Council. Such a council might in some respects be helpful in that our responsibility would be shared in the elaboration of constitutional relationships between the different territories, but it might also constitute a serious obstruction to our administration and provide a forum for the ventilation of existing divergencies of views. If the Advisory Council were to be a United Nations body it could not include Italy and from the point of view of Italian interests the British administration could probably do more for Italy by itself than with an Advisory Council constantly at its elbow.

13. The above considerations appear to me to form the basis for a policy to be followed at the Assembly which would carry at least the tacit support of the Italians and perhaps not be too violently opposed by the French, and which, if the United States Government could see their way to supporting it, would have a good chance of obtaining the necessary two-thirds majority. We must, however, be prepared for the possibility of yet another failure to reach a decision in the United Nations. In that event His Majesty's Government would be left in charge of the administration and the pressure on us to advance the speed of progress towards independence beyond what would seem to us practical and safe might be extremely great. We are naturally

most anxious not to be placed in a position where the odium for all decisions would fall entirely on us. Nevertheless, such a situation would be preferable from every point of view either to

- (a) any form of United Nations trusteeship, which would bring the Slavs into North Africa; or
- (b) an ill-considered vote for immediate (repeat immediate) independence and unity of Libya, which would at once create the most serious situation for the French and might lead quickly to a breakdown of order and security in North Africa generally.

Our object therefore is to find a sufficient degree of common ground between the interests of the parties mainly concerned to ensure that we should unite in opposing dangerous solutions of that kind.

14. I suggest that the best means of making progress would be [for] fuller interchange of views between ourselves and the State Department as suggested in paragraph 3 above. These talks could if need be proceed concurrently with talks with Alessandrini<sup>2</sup> and the Amir and would not rule out simultaneous contact through the normal channels with Commonwealth Governments and perhaps other Governments concerned. I propose to see M. Schuman<sup>3</sup> myself next week and shall discuss with him. We might then be able to judge by the end of July whether agreement between the Governments principally concerned is possible and on what basis.

<sup>2</sup> Adolfo Alessandrini, member of Italian delegation to UN.

<sup>3</sup> French foreign minister.

## 312 PREM 8/921

[July 1949]

[Libya: proposed treaty]: exchange of letters between the prime minister and the Amir of Cyrenaica, 31 July 1949 (FO confidential print)

[The Amir of Cyrenaica visited Britain in July 1949, and a formal exchange of letters with him took place before he left. This was thought to put him under a strong moral obligation to conclude the proposed treaty. The Amir had been repeatedly assured by the British government that they were steadfastly committed to doing all in their power to help the Cyrenaicans attain the fullest possible measure of self-government (eg CO 537/3510, no 168).]

*Mr. Attlee to Mahommed Idris el Mahdi el Senussi*

10, Downing Street, 31st July, 1949

Your Highness,

It has been a matter of deep satisfaction to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom that Your Highness should have expressed on more than one occasion your desire to conclude with His Majesty's Government a treaty in order to place on a formal basis the close relations which bind together in friendship and alliance the peoples of Great Britain and Cyrenaica. I wish to avail myself of the occasion of Your Highness's visit to the United Kingdom to assure you that, as soon as the

international status of Cyrenaica permits, His Majesty's Government will conclude with Your Highness such a treaty.

The exact provisions of this treaty must be determined by the nature of Cyrenaica's international status at the time of its conclusion. In conformity, however, with the needs of His Majesty's Government on the one hand and Your Highness on the other, this treaty will—

- (1) Contain a reaffirmation by His Majesty's Government of their recognition of Your Highness as Head of the Cyrenaican State and leader of your people.
- (2) Provide that His Majesty's Government will furnish, under terms and conditions to be negotiated, to Your Highness such financial and technical assistance as may be required by Your Highness's Government.
- (3) Provide that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will be permitted to station in Cyrenaica, under terms and conditions to be negotiated, such forces as they consider necessary in order to provide for the defence of Cyrenaica and to enable the territory to play its part in the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Charter of the United Nations.
- (4) Provide that this treaty shall remain in force for twenty-five years from the date of its ratification.

Your Highness's good Friend,  
C.R. ATTLEE

*Mahommed Idris el Mahdi el Senussi to Mr. Attlee*

Claridge's, Brook Street, W.1, 31st July, 1949

Your Excellency,

I have received with pleasure Your Excellency's letter of 31st July in which you were good enough to inform me of the desire of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to conclude a treaty with myself as soon as the international status of Cyrenaica permits.

I wish to inform Your Excellency that it is also my earnest desire and intention to conclude such a treaty with provisions in the sense of those set out in Your Excellency's letter as soon as the international status of Cyrenaica permits.

Your sincere friend,  
MAHOMMED IDRIS EL MAHDI EL SENUSSI

**313** DEFE 4/26, COS 162(49)6

2 Nov 1949

'Strategic implications of an independent and united Libya': COS  
Committee minutes. *Annex*: report of JPS, 31 Oct 1949 (JP(49)128)

*The Committee* had before them a report by the Joint Planning Staff on the strategic implications of a proposal, which seemed likely to come before the United Nations Assembly in New York, recommending the formation of a united and independent Libya.

*Lord Tedder* said that there had been certain further developments since the J.P. report had been called for and that, although the paper covered the subject fairly

fully, it did not sufficiently emphasise the overriding considerations that should now be brought to the notice of Ministers. He asked Mr. Michael Wright to explain the Foreign Office attitude to this problem.

*Mr Michael Wright*<sup>1</sup> explained the developments relating to Libya which were taking place in the United Nations Organisation. A proposal had been put forward, which was finding considerable support, to form a United and Independent Libya comprising Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan. The intention was that this territory should attain independence as soon as possible and in any case not later than January 1952. The British attitude towards this proposal was that while we agreed that the territories of Libya should attain independence within a short time, the question of Unity should be left to the inhabitants themselves to decide. The various possible alternative developments were first, that the present Resolution for the Unity of Libya might be submitted to the Assembly; alternatively an amended Resolution might be put forward for an independent Libya meeting our point of view on the Unity issue; the third possible development was that the future of the Italian Colonies might again be deferred for consideration at a later session of the General Assembly. This latter arrangement would mean the maintenance of the status quo, namely, that we would continue to be responsible for the administration of Tripoli and Cyrenaica and of the ex-Italian territories in the Horn of Africa. It was unlikely that a separate solution could be reached for the two areas. The Latin countries would not agree to a settlement excluding Italy from North Africa unless they were sure of Italian participation in East Africa. The Asiatic countries were unlikely to agree to an Italian trusteeship for Italian Somaliland unless they received satisfaction over the independence and unity of Libya.

In the event of a solution being deferred, it would be our policy to press on with immediate independence for Cyrenaica in the hopes of negotiating a satisfactory treaty, and to aim at independence for Tripolitania as soon as the country was fit for it. But the Foreign Secretary was concerned at the prospect of a continuing liability for the security of this latter territory.

*Sir Gerald Templer*<sup>2</sup> explained that it was cheaper to maintain a small garrison in Tripolitania for the time being, where ample barracks existed, than to build camps for them elsewhere in the Middle East.

In the course of further discussion, it was agreed that a paper was now required, for submission to Ministers, outlining the broad strategic implications of the Libyan problem and stressing the importance of finding a solution which would enable us to maintain in the Middle East in peacetime, the minimum forces required for the initial defence of that area in war.

The Committee:—

- (1) Took note of the report by the Joint Planning Staff.
- (2) Instructed the Secretary to draft, for consideration at their next meeting, a report bringing out the various points made in discussion.

### Annex to 313

Proposals are being made in the United Nations Assembly, which are finding considerable support, to form a united and independent Libya. The proposals suggest

<sup>1</sup> FO assistant under-secretary of state.

<sup>2</sup> Vice-chief of the imperial general staff.

that Libya, comprising Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan, should attain independence as soon as possible and in any case not later than the 1st January, 1952. In order to assist the people of Libya to form a constitution and to establish an independent Government, a United Nations Commissioner with a council to advise him would be appointed. The council would consist of one representative from each of Egypt, France, Italy, Pakistan, the United Kingdom and the United States; one representative of each of the three regions of Libya; and one representative of the minorities in Libya.

2. We understand from the Foreign Office that the proposals would probably result in the whole of Libya being united under the present Amir of Cyrenaica. Until Libya achieved full independence, however, the United Kingdom would continue to be the Administering Power in Cyrenaica and in Tripolitania, while France would continue to administer the Fezzan. The two Administering Powers would be assisted by the United Nations Commissioner (who almost certainly would not be British) advised by the Council detailed above.

3. In spite of the fact that it had been made clear to the Assembly that British troops would not be placed at the disposal of the United Nations, it appears that British troops would be expected to "police" this new state.

4. We examine below the effects of these proposals on United Kingdom strategic requirements.

#### *Strategic requirements in Libya*

##### *Cyrenaica*

5. We consider that our overriding strategic requirement is that Cyrenaica should not fall under the influence of an unfriendly power in peace or war.

Essential British military requirements in Cyrenaica, which are additional to any facilities we may obtain in Egypt, may be summarised as follows:—

- (a) Staging facilities for aircraft in both peace and war.
- (b) Ports and airfields from which ships and aircraft could operate in the defence of Mediterranean sea communications.
- (c) An area in which to locate forces of the Middle East strategic reserves which would be required to reinforce the Canal Zone on the outbreak of war, and which cannot be stationed in Egypt.

6. A draft treaty was prepared early in 1949 between the United Kingdom and the Amir Idris el Senussi, in anticipation of the grant to His Majesty's Government of the trusteeship of Cyrenaica. By this treaty, the United Kingdom would have obtained the facilities detailed above. This draft treaty has, however, had to be abandoned owing to the inability of the United Nations to reach a decision last Spring. The only arrangement we now possess, therefore, with Cyrenaica is an exchange of letters, between the Amir of Cyrenaica and the Prime Minister, to the effect that when Cyrenaica achieves her independence the United Kingdom and Cyrenaica will conclude a treaty, by which the United Kingdom would obtain certain facilities.<sup>3</sup>

##### *Tripolitania*

7. The Chiefs of Staff have recently stated that our overriding strategic require-

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<sup>3</sup> See 312.

ment is that Tripolitania should not fall under the influence of an unfriendly power in peace or war. We also require:—

- (a) That the port of Tripoli and airfields, with such communications and public facilities as are required to support them, are maintained and are made available to the Allies for the defence of Mediterranean communications when the need arises. All these facilities would be essential if the full use of Malta were denied to us.
- (b) To retain air staging facilities at an airfield in the Tripoli area in peace.
- (c) To be allowed to station in Tripolitania forces of the Middle East strategic reserve which cannot be stationed in Egypt or Cyrenaica.

#### *Peacetime garrison*

8. Details of the British Forces required to be stationed in Libya in peace, both for internal security purposes and as part of the Middle East Strategic Reserve, are shown at Appendix.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Military implications of the new proposals*

#### *Strategic aspects*

9. The effect of the new proposals would be that:—

- (a) The military freedom of action of the Administering Powers would be seriously restricted.
- (b) The conclusion of a satisfactory Defence Agreement with Libya would be more difficult than it would have been with Cyrenaica alone.
- (c) The United Kingdom would probably be responsible for the defence of the whole of Libya under the provisions of any treaty which could be arranged.

We examine these factors below.

10. *Freedom of action.* The military actions of the administering powers would be open to inspection and criticism by the United Nations Commissioner and Council. We consider that this loss of our freedom of action would be militarily unacceptable. It might moreover result in the United Kingdom being forced to forgo some of the essential facilities, especially in Cyrenaica, which she requires. There are also risks to military security if members of the United Nations have free access to the whole country.

11. *Treaty negotiations.* Had it been possible for Britain to sponsor the independence of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania and to remain the sole administrative authority in the two countries until this independence had been achieved, the United Kingdom might have been able to negotiate a satisfactory treaty with Cyrenaica alone on the lines of the draft. The new proposals, however, guarantee Libyan unity within two years and create an advisory organisation with which British interests may find themselves at variance. Furthermore, Tripolitania being far richer and more advanced than Cyrenaica might soon become the dominant partner, and the inhabitants are not so well disposed towards us as are the Senussi. The new proposals would not only, therefore, prevent us from obtaining a treaty with Cyrenaica, but are also likely to prevent us from arranging a satisfactory defence agreement with an

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<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

independent united Libya. There is thus a danger that our essential strategic requirements in both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania might be lost.

12. *Defence of Libya.* The new proposals would extend the defence responsibility, which we were prepared to undertake in the draft treaty with Cyrenaica, to the whole of Libya. We understand that the Foreign Office are not in favour of this additional commitment. We consider, however, that it would not involve any military disadvantages since the external threat to Libya is small and we would expect Libyan indigenous forces to be able to maintain internal security by the time full independence has been achieved. In any case some Defence Agreement with Tripolitania would have been necessary if we were to obtain the facilities we require there.

### *Internal security*

13. We understand from the Foreign Office that the administration of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania would be in British hands during the period prior to independence. There is no doubt, therefore, that British troops would have to be responsible for internal security until indigenous forces could undertake this commitment. This would not involve any additional deployment of British troops since the commitment could be undertaken by a part of the Middle East strategic reserve, which in any case we require to station in Libya. It has, however, the serious objection that if widespread trouble, e.g., anti-Italian riots in Tripolitania occurred, our strategic reserve would be tied down there and this we could not accept.

It has, moreover, been clearly pointed out that British troops would not be placed at the disposal of the United Nations. If, therefore, new proposals for the future administration of United Libya entail the participation of other States in the administration of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania during the period prior to independence, we consider that the use of British troops in an internal security role would be unacceptable.

### *Conclusions*

14. We conclude that the strategic implications of the new proposal are:—

- (a) We would be unable to conclude a separate treaty with Cyrenaica.
- (b) Our position for negotiating a satisfactory defence agreement with Libya would be weakened and that we might be forced to forgo some of our essential strategic requirements in both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania as a result of United Nations pressure during the period prior to independence.
- (c) Once local forces have been raised to undertake the internal security commitment no significant additional defence commitment would have to be undertaken by the United Kingdom.
- (d) During the period prior to independence there is a grave risk that a proportion of our Middle East strategic reserve might be tied down in Tripolitania to deal with the internal security problem.
- (e) Should the new proposals entail the participation of other States in the administration of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania during the period prior to independence, the use of British troops in an internal security role would be unacceptable.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Report signed by W S Cole, H I Cozens and A R Pedder.

**314** PREM 8/1478, DO(49)85

19 Dec 1949

**'Future developments in Libya': memorandum by Mr Bevin for Cabinet Defence Committee [Extract]. *Brief* for Mr Attlee [nd]***Part I Analysis**The Assembly resolution*

On 21st November, 1949, the General Assembly approved a resolution, of which a copy is annexed to this paper (Annex I),<sup>1</sup> and thereby settled the future of Libya. The principal features of this resolution are:—

- (1) That Libya, comprising Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan, shall be constituted an independent State not later than 1st January, 1952;
- (2) That the constitution and the form of government in a future State of Libya shall be decided by the inhabitants of the three territories;
- (3) That in the period before the achievement of independence, a United Nations Commissioner assisted by an Advisory Council shall be appointed to assist the people of Libya in the formulation of the constitution and the establishment of an independent Government.

Pending the achievement of independence in all three territories, the present administering powers, namely, the United Kingdom for Cyrenaica and Tripolitania and France for the Fezzan, are to continue in authority.

*Effect of the resolution on United Kingdom requirements*

2. The United Nations' resolution has, of course, a very direct bearing on our military plans in Cyrenaica. As the Committee knows, it is still regarded as essential to our defence plans for the Middle East that we should secure the right to station forces in Cyrenaica, and generally such other military facilities as we require, for a period of 20 or 25 years. During the visit of the Amir of Cyrenaica to London in July this year, the Prime Minister and the Amir agreed by an exchange of letters to conclude a Treaty as soon as the international status of Cyrenaica permitted. The main provisions of this Treaty would be that in exchange for financial and technical assistance on terms to be negotiated, the Amir would grant His Majesty's Government the right to station forces in Cyrenaica for 25 years. Copies of the letters are annexed as Annex II.<sup>2</sup>

3. I am, however, advised by the Attorney-General that the legal effect of the United Nations resolution on Libya is that our recognition of Cyrenaican independence (which is an essential prelude to the conclusion of a Treaty) and the conclusion of any agreement with the Amir must be qualified by the fact that Cyrenaica is to become part of a United Libya by 1st January, 1952. Therefore no agreement made now in respect of Cyrenaica alone can endure for more than two years unless it is endorsed by the Libyan as distinct from the Cyrenaican Government, or unless the United Nations resolution does not become effective.

4. It is possible that the movement in favour of Libyan unity, which is strong at present, will lose force before independence is achieved in the whole of Libya; and it may even happen that irrespective of the Assembly's resolution, Libyan unity will

<sup>1</sup> Annexes I–III not printed.

<sup>2</sup> See 312.

never materialise. Nevertheless, the intentions of the United Nations, and in so far as we can estimate, the wishes of the people themselves in the territory, are that Libya should become united within two years. I therefore consider that although it is in some ways inconvenient for our military aims we must proceed in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, both in our constitutional and military plans, on the assumption that some kind of united Libyan state will come into being by 1st January, 1952.

*United States strategic requirements in Tripolitania.*

5. His Majesty's Government have granted the United States Government the use of an airfield at Mellaha in Tripolitania. The United States Government have indicated to us that they wish to maintain certain "air base and supporting facilities" in Tripolitania, both until and after the independence of Libya. Among these are:—

- (1) The right to develop, operate and maintain the present base;
- (2) The right to develop, operate and maintain the present oil pipe-line (or other pipe-lines) from the port of Tripoli to Wheelus Field;
- (3) The right to develop, operate and maintain fuel and ammunition storage at Wheelus Field as well as in dispersed localities;
- (4) The right to develop, operate and maintain necessary communication facilities, including the present radio station;
- (5) Unrestricted access to and between the facilities enumerated, including the use of the Port of Tripoli or other ports; and
- (6) The right to station such personnel in Tripolitania as may be needed for the operation and protection of the facilities.

The State Department describe the above as indicative of United States needs, but not necessarily comprehensive.

6. The United States Government inform us that they recognise that the retention of these facilities after the independence of Libya will involve the conclusion of an agreement between the United States Government and the future Government of Libya.

*Future course of action*

7. In Cyrenaica our course of action, in the immediate future and after 1st January, 1952, is relatively straightforward, both from the point of view of our military interests and constitutional development. In Tripolitania, however, the problem is considerably complicated. From the point of view of defence it is evidently essential that the use of the territory should be denied to an enemy in war time and we must, therefore, do our best to ensure that the Government in Tripolitania, whether the territory is part of a United Libya or not, is favourably disposed towards us. Secondly, the Tripolitanians themselves are anxious, partly through fear of Italy and partly because they see the benefits which the British association will confer on Cyrenaica, to conclude some form of military agreement with the United Kingdom. It is not possible entirely to dissociate the defence of Tripolitania from that of Cyrenaica. Further, if the United Nations' resolution becomes effective, and a United Libyan State is formed it is virtually certain that we shall not be able to make a defence agreement with Cyrenaica which is entirely divorced from the defence of Tripolitania. But this need not involve our stationing troops in Tripolitania after 1952.

### *Subsidy to Tripolitania*

8. If it is decided that we do not wish to maintain any troops in Tripolitania after 1952, it will be open to us to intimate at the appropriate moment that, while we may be prepared to extend our commitment as an ally to the whole of Libya, our financial subvention would be a sum payable to the "provincial" Cyrenaican Government. It might perhaps be possible for the deficit in the budget of Tripolitania to be partly met either by a contribution by the United States Government in exchange for the continuation of the strategic facilities which they at present enjoy, or by Italian capital investment, or both. The majority of the Tripolitanians are at present strongly opposed to Italian capital investment because they fear that it will provide a means for the Italian Government to acquire political control in the territory. I believe, however, that in the course of time, particularly if there is some counterweight to Italian influence in the territory, either in the form of a military agreement with the United Kingdom or substantial financial contributions from the United States, the Tripolitanians may possibly come to recognise the desirability and necessity of coming to an economic agreement with Italy.

## *Part II Action*

### *Principles*

9. The retention of strategic facilities in Egypt must continue to be regarded as the key to our defence plans in the Middle East. But the right to station troops in Cyrenaica is a valuable adjunct, and the ability to keep a considerable part of our strategic reserve in Cyrenaica diminishes our peacetime requirements in the Canal Zone and may, therefore, render the retention of facilities in Egypt easier.

In the light of this I consider that the broad principles which should govern our policy in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania can be summarised as follows:—

10. *Cyrenaica*. We should act on the assumptions that:—

- (a) This territory for local and strategic reasons is suitable for the location of a considerable portion of our Middle East reserve.
- (b) It will be necessary to maintain forces there for many years to come.
- (c) In order to do so we must, in addition to our purely military expenditure, expect as the price of the treaty with the Amir to continue to contribute on a considerable scale to the revenues of the territory.

11. *Tripolitania*

- (a) We should assist the United States to retain strategic facilities in Tripolitania.
- (b) We should keep an open mind about the extension, in some form, if absolutely necessary, to Tripolitania of defence arrangements with Cyrenaica. This, however, ought not to involve the presence at least after 1952 of any large number of British troops, or any at all.
- (c) We should aim at avoiding any financial support for Tripolitania after 1952. We should encourage Tripolitania to seek this from other sources, *e.g.*, the United States or Italy.
- (d) Pending the construction of suitable barrack accommodation in Cyrenaica we should continue to house a proportion of our Middle East reserve in Tripolitania. But the number of these troops, which now stands at approximately 8,000, should

be reduced over the next two years. Concurrently, the police of the territory should be built up so that they can assume full responsibility for internal security when we withdraw.

12. *Libyan unity.* In both territories we should in our plans for strategic development take account of the United Nations Resolution and of the feelings of the inhabitants in favour of Libyan unity.

13. At the same time, we should take advantage of our position as the administering power to ensure that this unity takes the form most favourable to our interests, *i.e.*, as loose a union as possible. This might take the form of a confederation or a federation. By this means it should be possible more easily to accord a financial subvention to the budget of Cyrenaica alone.

14. In general, I consider that no immediate and direct steps should be taken by the British administration in either Cyrenaica or Tripolitania to constitute a united, sovereign, and independent Libyan State. These steps should wait until later when the inhabitants of both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica are in a better position to negotiate together and when political development in each territory has had time to take a shape likely to lead to the loose political structure which we desire. At the same time, both local and international opinion may make it desirable, in our own interests, to take certain measures that will in fact encourage unity, *e.g.*, the establishment of a common currency for Tripolitania and Cyrenaica (there is already a customs union). It will also be difficult, and indeed, possibly undesirable, to prevent discussions on future unity between the political leaders of the two territories.

#### *The Fezzan*

15. My colleagues are also aware that the United Nations resolution provides for the inclusion of the Fezzan, which is under French administration, in the eventual Libyan state. The administering powers of all three Libyan territories are also required to co-ordinate their activities for the purpose of assisting in the establishment of Libyan unity. It will, therefore, be necessary for His Majesty's Government to keep in the closest contact with the French Government regarding the constitutional measures we take in the territories for which they are responsible, and above all, matters affecting Libyan unity. The eventual incorporation of the Fezzan in Libya is, however, a comparatively small problem, for although the Fezzan is large on the map, its population is only some 40,000. I might add that while abstaining in the United Nations Assembly on the resolution for the disposal of the Italian Colonies, the French Delegate made it clear that the French Government accepted the decision of the Assembly regarding Libya.

#### *The United Nations commissioner and Council*

16. Under the United Nations resolution provision is made for the appointment of a United Nations Commissioner (a Dutchman, M. Pelt, who until now has been as Assistant Secretary-General in the United Nations Secretariat, has now been appointed) and a Council to aid and advise him. This Council is to consist of ten members, namely one representative of the Governments of Egypt, France, Italy, Pakistan, United Kingdom and United States, one representative of each of the three regions of Libya, and one representative of the minorities of Libya (*i.e.*, an Italian).

The functions of the Commissioner and his Council are, according to the wording of the resolution, to assist "the people of Libya in the formulation of the constitution and the establishment of an independent Government" and the administering powers are to take the necessary steps for the execution of the Assembly's resolution in co-operation with the Commissioner. This wording is extremely vague and it will probably be desirable to give it the loosest possible interpretation. The Commissioner is to be the "United Nations Commissioner in Libya," but no stipulation is made in the resolution as to whether he or his Council are to be resident in the territory. We should prefer that neither should be permanently resident in the territory, and while maintaining cordial relations with the Administering Powers, should confine their activities in general to those of a reporting and advisory agency. It is unlikely that either the Commissioner or the Council will start effective work for some three to six months and although it will be necessary to inform the Commissioner of any action that we take in the territories, I do not consider it necessary to seek his approval in any way. From a tactical point of view, it is preferable that any criticism levelled against us should be in respect of action we have taken rather than in respect of failure to take action towards independence.

...

### *Recommendations*

31. I now invite my colleagues to approve—

- (a) that we should transfer immediately to the Amir of Cyrenaica a number of the powers at present reserved to the British Resident;
- (b) that we should open discussions with the Amir on the basis that His Majesty's Government would recognise the independence of the country within six or eight months and conclude a treaty on the lines of the exchange of letters of 31st July, 1949, between the Prime Minister and the Amir;
- (c) that we should initiate in Tripolitania the constitutional reforms summarised in Annex III to this memorandum;
- (d) that we should inform the Italians, French and United States Governments of our intentions in Tripolitania and the United States Government of our intentions with regard to Cyrenaica;
- (e) that we should give the Commonwealth Governments notice of the action which we propose to take in both territories and invite their support;
- (f) that the question of the future currency of Libya and kindred economic questions should be further studied by Ministers when interdepartmental discussions, now proceeding, are complete.

### **Brief on 314: Future developments in Libya (DO(49)85**

The Foreign Secretary is trying to disentangle the mess which the United Nations General Assembly have made of Libya. The Resolution to make the whole territory into a single independent state not later than 1st January, 1952 has presented us with a difficult problem in that we have to try to secure all we want in Cyrenaica without assuming too many additional liabilities in respect of Tripolitania. Broadly the Foreign Secretary's idea is to seize the initiative, give Cyrenaica her independence fairly quickly and conclude a treaty with her; begin at once to build up a

Tripolitanian administration; and work for the loosest possible federation—in the hope that we shall then be free to consolidate our relationship with the province that is of the most importance to us. He proposes to keep several laps ahead of the United Nations Advisory Council and to present each phase of his programme to the world as a step toward the achievement of the United Nations Resolution.

2. The question of the strength of the garrison in Tripolitania may crop up. In discussing the size and shape of the Armed Forces the Defence Committee recently decided that the present garrison should be reduced to what is required for internal security purposes and that the remainder should be shipped back to the United Kingdom; and the Foreign Secretary makes a general reference to this reduction in paragraph 11(d) and refers in paragraph 11(b) to his hope that it will be possible to dispense with British troops altogether by 1952 when the territory becomes independent. Neither the present nor future strength of the Tripolitanian garrison however is really relevant to the political recommendations in D.O.(49) 85. Nevertheless you may wish to reassure the Defence Committee that the War Office are, in fact, acting on the decision that the present garrison in Tripolitania should be reduced by asking the Secretary of State for War what steps he is taking to implement that decision. (In this connexion you will remember that the Secretary of State for War is himself personally opposed to any reduction of our garrison in Tripolitania as a result of his recent tour of the Mediterranean).

### **315** PREM 8/1478, DO 25(49)1

20 Dec 1949

#### **'Future developments in Libya': Cabinet Defence Committee minutes**

The Committee had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (D.O.(49) 85)<sup>1</sup> seeking agreement to the policy he proposed to adopt in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, in the light of the fact that the General Assembly of the United Nations had on 21st November last resolved that these two territories, and the Fezzan, should be made into a single independent State not later than 1st January, 1952.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that the policy he was recommending might bring the United Kingdom into conflict with the United Nations and cause trouble with Italy. Nevertheless in all the circumstances he thought it was the right course for the United Kingdom to adopt and if the Committee agreed with it he hoped to explain the policy to the other members of the Commonwealth and secure their co-operation.

On the question of the maintenance of British troops in Tripolitania the following points were made:—

- (a) *The Foreign Secretary* said that the presence of British troops in this territory was a source of political embarrassment to him in his relations with France and Italy, both of whom had in the past been suspicious of our ultimate intentions in Tripolitania. These suspicions were tending to recede but, if he was to secure any kind of French or Italian support for the long-term solution he was now proposing to seek, it was very important that the cause for the suspicion should be removed.

<sup>1</sup> See 314.

In his opinion, therefore, it was essential that British troops in the territory should as soon as possible be reduced to the minimum required to preserve law and order and that he should be in a position to make it clear that we should be out of the territory altogether by the time it became independent in 1952. This would also serve to bring the United States, who had major military interests in the territory, to understand that they must carry some of the burden of assuring the security of those interests.

(b) Insofar as the present was concerned, *The Chief of the Imperial General Staff* said that, in pursuance of the decision reached by the Defence Committee on 25th November (D.O.(49) 22nd Meeting, Conclusion (3)) four major units – the 39th Medium Regiment, the 52nd Observation Regiment, the 12th Anti-Tank Regiment and the 4/7 Dragoon Guards – were being withdrawn from the territory and this would reduce the strength of the garrison from some 8,500 to about 6,000. The precise strength that was to be left in the territory to ensure the maintenance of law and order had yet to be finally agreed between the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Defence, as provided for by the Defence Committee at their meeting on 25th November.

(c) On the question of the size of the forces that might be required in the territory once it became independent in 1952, *The Chiefs of Staff* said that insofar as it was possible to assess a situation so far ahead, there would seem to be serious objections to the complete withdrawal of British troops from the territory. It was possible that internal disorders might break out on a serious scale, equally possible that someone else would step in to fill the vacuum which we had left, and in any case very difficult for us to find alternative accommodation for the garrison that would be displaced without running into heavy expenditure. *The Foreign Secretary* said that he would bear this view in mind, but the Committee agreed that if the Foreign Secretary judged it politically desirable to say that His Majesty's Government intended to withdraw its troops from Tripolitania when the territory became independent in 1952, he should be at liberty to do so.

The Committee:—

Approved the recommendations in D.O. (49) 85 . . . .

**316** CO 537/5725, no 37

14 Mar 1950

[Future of Eritrea]: despatch from F G Drew (chief administrator in Asmara), forwarding a memorandum to Mr Bevin. *Annex*

Reference my telegram No. 145 of 13th March (not repeated to other addressees) I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the appreciation on which my telegram was based, and to submit that it was not too early to consider the extremely embarrassing and dangerous situation which will confront H.M.G. and this Administration in the not unlikely event of the 1950 Assembly of the U.N. failing to arrive at a decision which is acceptable to the Ethiopian Government, or deciding on a further postponement.

In putting forward the suggestion that in the event of the Assembly again failing to come to a decision, H.M.G. should ask the United Nations to strike the matter off its agenda for a period of ten years, it must not be thought that I or any members of my

staff are not fully seized with and do not fully support H.M.G.'s policy of leaving this Territory at the earliest possible date on which we are permitted by the United Nations to do so. I am however fully persuaded that a further postponement is likely to bring about a state of affairs in this Territory in which it might be virtually impossible to carry on the Administration. I have therefore suggested for consideration a possible alternative which I have reason to think would be acceptable to the great majority of the population if the Government of Ethiopia could be persuaded to accept it, and which would enable a British Administration to continue—as we are required to do under the Italian Peace Treaty until such time as the United Nations arrive at a decision. This, emphatically, will not be possible on the basis of a year to year postponement without serious military commitments and loss of British lives, and with the gravest possible results to British prestige.

I am forwarding copies of this Despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Rome and in Addis Ababa and to the British Middle East Office in Cairo.

#### Annex to 316

1. It is, I think, already fairly clear that the U.N. Commission will not succeed in producing a unanimous report or, in fact, a report of any real value.

There is a good deal of friction between the various delegates and between the delegates and the Secretariat. It would appear that the Guatemalan certainly and the Pakistani probably are working under instructions from their governments in favour of Independence, whilst as already reported the Principal Secretary, Schmidt, seems obsessed with the idea that independence or Trusteeship leading to independence is the right answer and the only answer which the U.N. will be disposed to accept. The Commission does not possess within its ranks any outstanding personality who is capable of giving a lead. In any event, there would seem to be no chance whatever of a unanimous report supporting the British proposals, or even of a majority report in favour thereof.

2. If that brief analysis is correct, it would seem almost inevitable that the problem of the disposal of Eritrea will return to the Assembly in September 1950 in much the same state as it left it on 21st November 1949.

3. Psychologically it would seem that there will be a real effort in the Assembly to arrive at some solution that can command the necessary two to one majority. The U.N., if only to save its face, must endeavour to produce a solution of some sort. In addition, there is reason to hope that after a substantial lodgement was made in the intractable problem of the ex-Italian Colonies in the 1949 Assembly, the remaining defences will fall at the next assault.

At the same time, it would seem that the Latin American supporters of the Italian Government will still be in a position to block any solution which is not acceptable to the Italian Government, whilst it is probably true to say that the great majority of Member States are not greatly interested in the future of Eritrea, and that some of them may therefore be the more ready to support the Italians.

4. (a) In spite of the vote last May in favour of handing over the Eastern Provinces of Eritrea to Ethiopia, and in spite of the solidarity of the "wishes of the people" of the Plateau for this solution which the Commission is almost bound to report, there would not appear to be any great hope of this solution being adopted. The chances of the counterpart of the British proposals—the cession of the Western Province to the

Sudan—is even less likely to meet with favour.

(b) Independence for Eritrea within its existing boundaries,—with the possible cession of Assab and the Southern Danakil Coast to Ethiopia—appears to be the solution which is the most likely to find favour with the Assembly—subject to a period of Trusteeship, pending independence in X years—which with the previous example of Libya and Somalia before us is not likely to exceed five years. As, presumably, the Trustee could not be Italy and as presumably Great Britain would not be willing to accept it if offered, such a Trusteeship would have to be exercised by some other “non-interested” power, or by some form of direct U.N. Trusteeship.

(c) The U.S. proposals for a semi-autonomous or federated Eritrea under the sovereignty of Ethiopia is a further possibility to be considered. It did not, however, meet with any material support in any quarter and is hardly likely to do so, or to be pressed by the U.S.A.

(d) No other practical or possible solution commanding any support either in the local or the international field has so far been put forward. In default of one or other of the solutions in (a), (b) and (c) above, there is still the possibility of a further stalemate and a further postponement.

5. Any of the above possible outcomes of the 1950 U.N.A., other than the acceptance of the whole of the British proposals is fraught with the very gravest implication for H.M.G. and for this Administration.

(a) The cession of the Eastern Provinces to Ethiopia without the prior cession of the Western Province to the Sudan will, at best, produce a difficult handover problem. At worst it will entail the setting up of a separate British Administration for the Western Province. As virtually no revenue is derivable therefrom, such an Administration would unquestionably cost far more in Grants in Aid than the present Administration of Eritrea as a whole. This isolated territory would be entirely dependent for its land, sea and air communications with the outside world on either the Sudan or on Ethiopia. Our retaining it under a separate Administration would lead to more cogent charges of imperial acquisitiveness than if it were, in fact, handed over to the Sudan. Its defence against an Ethiopia which did not accept the partition would be a serious commitment.

Objectively, there can be little doubt that the British proposals for the disposal of Eritrea are by far the best and the most realistic. It is possibly unfortunate, in these circumstances, that H.M.G. has tied her hands by a declaration of impartiality until the Commission has reported.

(b) It is quite clear that a U.N. decision for independence or a Trusteeship pending Independence in X years would not be accepted by Ethiopia or by the bulk of the Coptic plateau population of Eritrea. It would inevitably lead to the gravest disorders, probably to an invasion of Eritrea by tribesmen from the South, almost certainly to widespread murders of Italians who would, with some reason, be regarded as the villains of the piece, and in all probability to clashes on a considerable scale between Copts and Moslems.

The British Administration and the British Garrison would have to cope with the situation thus created until it could hand over to some other authority which had the necessary backing of armed force at its disposal. In any event British Troops and British lives would be heavily involved in establishing such an authority, whether this was a locally formed Government, a Trustee Power, or a direct U.N. Trusteeship. British Troops would necessarily have to remain until other forces could be found to

impose an unwanted independence or Trusteeship regime on a population which would resist it by all the means at their disposal, with assistance from Ethiopia.

(c) If the constitutional difficulties could be overcome, Federation under the sovereignty of Ethiopia appears to present a solution which, if adopted, would not present insuperable difficulties in implementation.

Though unwelcome to the Muslim community, they are unlikely to resist, or cause any real trouble.

The existing British Administration would presumably be charged with assisting in establishing a governmental authority to which it could hand over—though this would take time. The garrisoning of the Territory would presumably have to be handed over to the Ethiopian Army—and ultimate authority would soon pass to the Emperor and the Government of Ethiopia: any autonomous government in Eritrea would probably be short lived.

(d) Stalemate and a further postponement. Such an outcome from the U.N. would undoubtedly produce a situation for the British Administration the gravity of which should be fully appreciated beforehand. The postponement on 21st November '49 has given us a foretaste of what we should have to expect on a very much more far reaching scale. The impatience of the Coptic population, already severely strained, would then undoubtedly reach breaking point. It is no exaggeration to say that the position of the Administration would become most difficult if not untenable. A semblance of law and order could only be maintained in and around the main centres by greatly increased British Forces. A general uprising against the Italians would be not unlikely.

6. From the above appreciation it would appear that either of the two most likely possible outcomes of the 1950 U.N. Assembly—Independence (with or without a preliminary Trusteeship) or a further postponement—will cause very grave embarrassment to H.M.G. and most serious difficulties for the Administration.

I submit that it is not too early for H.M.G. to give serious consideration as to how these possibilities can be obviated—and how they can best be met if they occur.

7. I make bold to make the following suggestions for consideration:—

(a) H.M.G. should make the greatest possible efforts to secure acceptance for her proposals in the U.N. Assembly—and should start lobbying support now.

(b) H.M.G. should take all possible steps to block a U.N. decision in favour of Independence, or of a Trusteeship leading to Independence.

(c) If this action should result in a stalemate or in a postponement, H.M.G. should be prepared to ask the Assembly to take the question off the Agenda for a minimum period of ten years. Failing the adoption of the British proposals, there is every reason to think that the continuance of a British Administration for ten years would be readily accepted by the great majority of all the local political parties if but only if it could be put across to, and was accepted beforehand by, the Ethiopian Government.

(d) In order to minimise the difficulties with which we shall, in any case, be confronted in the Territory, H.M.G. should not compromise by voting in favour of, or even abstaining on, any proposals other than the British proposals (or proposals which are acceptable to the Ethiopian Government). Any suggestion that we had failed to support Ethiopia, had thrown her over or betrayed her, would immensely increase our difficulties in implementing any decision which might ultimately be arrived at.

**317** CO 537/5725, no 16

25 Mar 1950

**[The problem of Eritrea]: FO outward telegram no 209 to British Embassy, Rome, reporting meeting with the Italian ambassador**

The Italian Ambassador saw Sir W. Strang and Mr. Wright on 24th March.

2. The Ambassador expressed his preoccupation with the problem of Eritrea. Sir W. Strang informed him of the present position. The United Nations Commission were expected to visit Addis Ababa shortly, and then to proceed to Cairo and Rome. Thereafter they would probably go to Geneva and, after hearing the views of interested governments, write their report. The report was to be submitted to the Interim Committee not later than June 15th, and the Interim Committee would in turn frame its recommendations to the General Assembly.

3. We had again been thinking about the situation which would arise if the Commission were to recommend, and the Assembly to endorse, either independence or trusteeship for Eritrea.

4. If the recommendation were for a Trusteeship (whether of a single power or of several powers, with another administering power as in the case of Italian Somaliland), it was hard to see what power could be chosen. His Majesty's Government did not wish to continue to administer Eritrea under any form of trusteeship. It was unlikely that the Assembly would agree to Italian administration, which would inevitably meet with bitter opposition from Ethiopia. The United States would almost certainly not agree, and France was also presumably out of the question. There would be a financial deficit to meet, and considerable armed forces to provide.

5. If, on the other hand, the Commission were to recommend, and the Assembly to endorse, independence, a dangerous situation was likely to arise. The British administration and forces would withdraw. Would the Coptic, the Moslem and the Italian elements of the population be able to set up a state and administer it in peace and amity? There would be a grave danger of conflict between the Coptic and Moslem elements, and between the Coptic and Italian elements, or among all three. There would be no extraneous forces present to maintain order, and the lives of the Italian community would be in jeopardy. There might be Ethiopian infiltration across the frontier, or secession of Coptic elements to Ethiopia. Moreover, disorders in Eritrea would be likely to have a disturbing effect in Italian Somaliland.

6. Meanwhile the Chief Administrator in Eritrea had warned us strongly that unless a solution which Ethiopia could accept were reached at the coming Assembly, in other words even if there were postponement, it would be difficult to avoid disorders and bloodshed.<sup>1</sup> All this would reflect not only upon the position of Italy in Africa, but on the relations between Africans and Europeans in general.

7. For these reasons, we were confirmed in our view that the proposals which His Majesty's Government and the United States Government advocated before the United Nations (namely the incorporation of the Eastern Provinces in Ethiopia, with safeguards for the Italian communities, and a separate solution of the Western Moslem Provinces) were the best, or at any rate the least disadvantageous, solution.

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<sup>1</sup> See 316.

No one pretended that Ethiopian administration was good, but the consequences of other alternatives would be worse.

8. The Ambassador said that he personally agreed with this analysis.

9. It was suggested to him that in the interest of Italy herself two points merited consideration. First, the possibility of a further attempt to reach agreement between Italy and Ethiopia at some stage before the Assembly, and indeed the earlier the better. Secondly, the desirability that when the United Nations Commission sought the views of the Italian Government in Rome, and perhaps at Geneva, the Italian Government should not adopt an attitude which would render more likely the adoption of a recommendation for either independence or trusteeship.

10. The Ambassador, who agreed, said he would represent to Rome the dangers involved. Speaking personally, he thought that the only hopeful line of approach was for His Majesty's Government, as the administering power, with firsthand knowledge possessed in the same degree by no one else, not even by the Commission, to try and work out more fully possible safeguards for the Italian community within some plan for incorporation in Ethiopia of the Eastern Provinces, perhaps under a federal system as the United States Government had at one point suggested. The influence of His Majesty's Government, both in Rome and in Addis Ababa, might perhaps still open the way to some acceptable compromise before it was too late.

11. The Ambassador was told that we could not give him any undertaking that we would be able to make any further suggestions ourselves, but it was agreed that we would think the matter over.

### **318** CAB 128/18, CM 56(50)9

6 Sept 1950

#### **'Eritrea': Cabinet conclusions on policy about future**

The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (C.P. (50) 202) on policy about Eritrea. The Foreign Secretary recommended that the United Kingdom delegation in New York should support, in the Interim Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations, a draft resolution providing for a federation between Eritrea and Ethiopia. It had become clear that there was no likelihood of the adoption by the United Nations of the solution which the United Kingdom Government had hitherto advocated (the incorporation of the Eastern Provinces in Ethiopia and separate provision for the Western Province). Provided that the draft resolution proved acceptable to the Italian and Ethiopian Governments, it was recommended that we should agree to it, and should continue our administration of the territory for a transitional period of two (or, if necessary, three) years.

In discussion it was agreed that, should the Interim Committee reject the draft resolution, the Government should remain free to return to advocating the former policy of partition.

The Cabinet:—

Approved the recommendations in C.P. (50) 202.

**319** CO 537/1233, no 1

29 Sept 1945

[East Africa]: letter from Mr Bevin to Mr Hall about possible development of Mombasa as a major port and base

[The project of a Great North Road in Africa had been discussed in wartime, but there was accumulating evidence of the risk of flooding across difficult terrain. However the fact that a Lagos-Cairo-Mombasa link had been thought impracticable in war, Mr Hall agreed, did not necessarily mean it would remain so in future. In the event, further investigation showed that administrative and maintenance costs of a Central African road would be prohibitive. Further discussion accordingly turned on a possible rail link (see 324 below). Bevin particularly favoured a west-east African link of some sort as tending to move away from points where British interests clashed with those of other major Powers (CO 537/1230, GEN 140/1). His primary concern was with strategy, but he was also impressed by the possible advantage of a road for developing the regions it would cross (FO 371/45909, no 3177), and by the possibilities of East African overseas trade.]

Dear George

In the course of the recent discussions with our Representatives in the Middle East countries, we had a meeting with the Chiefs of Staff to examine some of the problems of the future defence of the area. One of the points made by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was that, whereas East Africa was in many ways suitable as a station for part of our reserves, its drawback was the *comparative* lack of port facilities and communications generally (as opposed, for example, to Egypt).

In view of the rapidly developing political tendencies of the independent states of the Middle East, (and particularly Egypt) I feel that we should devote immediate attention to the possibilities of developing Mombasa as a major port and base, and with your concurrence I should like to invite the Chiefs of Staff to examine the question. I am also anxious to see examined the possibilities (as much for the long-term economic as for the strategic point of view) of major road construction in equatorial Africa to link up Lagos and Cairo, with a branch road to Mombasa, and should welcome your views on this question also.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Secretariat of the Chiefs of Staff.

Yours sincerely  
Ernest Bevin

**320** CO 537/1233, no 2

5 Oct 1945

[East Africa]: letter (reply) from Mr Hall to Mr Bevin about development of Mombasa and a trans-African road

[In this letter, Hall refers to his intention to consult the governor of Kenya. Sir P Mitchell took the view that although East African governments could be expected to provide facilities to construct a road and a base, there could be no question of their making any financial contribution to either. In view of East Africa's limited resources and large commitments, Hall did not think there was any arguing with this, as he reported to Bevin on 6 Dec 1945 (FO 371/45909, no 4176). Despite this discouraging response, Bevin laid the issue before the Chiefs of Staff in February 1946. Although they did not come to a final decision at this stage, Egypt still seemed to be the only possible main centre for British Middle East forces; meanwhile it was decided to proceed with building a store-holding and training area at Mackinnon Road, some sixty miles inland from Mombasa (CAB 80/99, COS(46)41(0); CAB 80/100, COS(46)96(0), 27 Mar 1946).]

Many thanks for your letter of the 29th of September (No. J/3177/3177/60). I entirely agree with you that the Chiefs of Staff should be invited to examine the possibilities for developing Mombasa as a major port and base, and I also think it will be helpful if they look into the question of the possibilities of a trans-African road to link up Lagos, Cairo and Mombasa. As you know, this latter question received a good deal of attention during the war, but although the construction of a trans-African road route was considered impracticable then, this would not necessarily be so I imagine, in the future. I have instructed my Department to study both questions, and we shall of course be at the disposal of the Chiefs of Staff to help in any way we possibly can. I shall also discuss your suggestions with Sir Philip Mitchell, the Governor of Kenya, who is coming home shortly, and I will write to you again more fully when I have seen him.

**321** CAB 131/2, DO(46)47

2 Apr 1946

**'Strategic position of the British Commonwealth': report by COS for Cabinet Defence Committee**

The Prime Minister has asked for an appreciation of the strategic position of the British Commonwealth in the light of our resources and of modern conditions of warfare.

We have accordingly reviewed our strategical requirements throughout the world, confining ourselves to the fundamental issues involved, so as to present a broad picture of what, from the defence point of view, our vital interests are.

We have related this examination primarily to a possible policy discussed by the Prime Minister. This policy we understand to be that we should concentrate our preparations in peace and our defence in war upon those areas and communications which are vital to us. The implication is that these are the United Kingdom, the American continent and the White Dominions. As a corollary to this we should cut our commitments in other parts of the world which are nearer to the areas of potential conflict.

2. A conflict with Russia is the only situation in which it at present seems that the British Commonwealth might again become involved in a major war. In such a conflict it would be vital to obtain the early and wholehearted participation of the United States on our side. We have, therefore, in the following review, considered our strategical position, having particular regard to the possibility of a war in which the British Commonwealth and the United States, with such allies as they could obtain, were confronted by Russia and her satellites.

3. If Russia be taken as the potential aggressor we must consider:—

(a) Main support areas on which our war effort must be based, and which it is therefore essential for us to hold, and the communications between them.

(b) Other areas of strategical importance in which we wish to retain our influence in order to protect our main support areas, and ensure that we do not start a future war in an unfavourable strategical position.

In considering the above, we must bear in mind the relative position of ourselves and Russia as regards man-power and war potential which will result from the maintenance or loss of our position in any particular area.

*Main support areas and communications between them*

4. By the term "main support areas" we mean those areas which contain concentrations of man-power, industrial potential or sources of food or raw material, such that they are essential to our war effort.

5. It is clear that the following will be our main support areas:—

- (a) The United Kingdom.
- (b) The American continent, including South America.
- (c) African south of the Sahara, including East Africa.
- (d) Australia and New Zealand.

The position of the United Kingdom is peculiar in that it contains 63 per cent. of the white man-power of the British Commonwealth and an ever greater proportion of its industrial potential, but is at the same time in a highly vulnerable position geographically. Eventually it may be possible to build up the war potential of the Dominions to such an extent that the relative importance of the United Kingdom will be diminished, but short of mass emigration and the wholesale transfer of industry, which at present appears impracticable, the contribution of the United Kingdom in war-making potential will remain so high that, in spite of its vulnerability, it must continue to be classified as a main support area.

6. The position of India also requires consideration. Uncertainty as to her political future makes it unwise, at the present time, to regard her as a main support area. The airfields in North-West India are of great importance, as the attached map shows, and have great offensive possibilities. India is, however with the exception of the United Kingdom, more exposed to air attack than the other main support areas.

On the other hand, her geographical position, together with the proportion of the man-power of the Commonwealth which India is in a position to provide is so high and her industrial and supply capacity, which is already increasing, is potentially so great that we consider that it will undoubtedly be of the greatest importance that India should remain in or closely allied to the Commonwealth and take her place as a main support area in the future.

We have not included India as a main support area in our present review, but we consider it essential that the country should be so developed and the political situation stabilised so as to allow her to take her place as a main support area at the earliest possible moment.

7. Communications between the main support areas will mainly be by sea through the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. These are of vital importance. In particular, if the war potential of the United Kingdom is to remain available it is essential that her Atlantic sea communications are kept open.

The use of the sea and air communications through the Mediterranean may be of very great importance owing to the saving both of shipping and of time thereby achieved. Although, from the point of view of our broad strategy, we cannot classify this route as vital in the same way as are our Atlantic communications, the extent to which our freedom of action is and must remain dependent upon limitations of shipping makes it of very great value.

We must also point out that the security of the alternative shipping route via the Cape, which serves either the Mediterranean or the Far East theatre, depends almost entirely on South African co-operation.

*Effect of withdrawal to main support areas*

8. It may be argued that we should concentrate our preparations in peace upon the preservation of our main support areas only and of the communications between them, and that outside these areas we should cut our commitments to the minimum. Such a policy might claim the double advantage, not only of reducing our commitments, but also of placing between ourselves and the potential aggressor very considerable areas, thereby lessening the chance of conflict.

9. We suggest, however, that it would be a fallacy to suppose that where territories of strategic importance are concerned, hiatus areas would exist for long between zones of Russian interest and those of our interest. If we cut our commitments and thereby lose our predominant position in such areas, these areas with the war-making potential they contain will, sooner or later, be dominated by Russia. If we move out in peacetime, Russia will move in, pursuing her policy of extending her influence by all means short of major war to further strategic areas.

10. A policy of concentrating upon the defence of our main support areas would result in adding to the Russian-controlled area and therefore to the war-making potential at her disposal, the following:—

- (a) All Europe less the United Kingdom.
- (b) North-West Africa.
- (c) The Middle East and North-East Africa.

11. These additions to Russian-controlled territories would have a far-reaching effect on the security of our sea communications. The communications between the main support areas of the American continent and Southern Africa and Australia could still be maintained, though those in the Atlantic would be threatened from bases in North-West Africa. Communications to the United Kingdom, however, would be gravely threatened through the possession by the enemy of the entire Atlantic coast line from the North Cape to French Morocco. Our Mediterranean communications would, of course, be cut.

Because of the great distances involved, our air communications would be severely restricted in war and we would lose the ability to reinforce by air with the shorter range types.

Under the circumstances, it is doubtful whether the industrial potential of the United Kingdom could be sustained. The threat to its sea communications, coupled with the direct threat by air and long-range bombardment from the mainland of Europe, would introduce a grave risk that the United Kingdom would be reduced to a Malta-type existence, contributing little to the main war potential.

12. Should the U.S.S.R. dominate all the areas given in paragraph 10, she would gain immense additional resources in man-power. As well, she would approximately double her steel-making capacity and acquire substantial additional oil production.

13. It is therefore clear that a policy of withdrawal into our main support areas would produce the following results:—

- (a) It would render the position of the United Kingdom, if not untenable, at least one of the utmost gravity in which the industrial potential of this country would, to all intents and purposes, be lost. Both India and Southern Africa would be threatened.
- (b) It would add considerably, perhaps even decisively, to the man-power and war potential at the disposal of Russia.

In addition, it would greatly reduce the possibility of carrying out offensive operations against areas of importance to the enemy, would add greatly to the depth of his defences and would correspondingly reduce the depth of our own, thereby depriving us of the time necessary to organise our defence.

14. If a war with Russia should occur, we are certainly likely to have to give ground in some of these areas, but we should on no account weaken ourselves in peacetime by surrendering our influence in areas of major strategic importance in advance of a war.

*Areas of strategic importance other than the main support areas*

15. From the preceding section it is clear that, if we concentrate our preparations in peace upon our main support areas only, we should be at a very grave disadvantage from the start of a conflict. We must, therefore, consider the extent to which we should maintain our influence in additional areas which will enable us to—

- (a) Ensure the security of our main support areas.
- (b) Ensure that at the start of a conflict we have sufficient depth in front of our vital areas to allow the necessary time both for us to mobilise our own forces and for the resources of the United States to be brought into play.
- (c) Deny to the probable enemy the opportunity of developing in peace important additional resources and war potential.
- (d) Attack areas of importance to the enemy at the outbreak of a war.

16. In considering our strategic requirements forward of our main support areas, the main factor to be taken into account is the very great numerical superiority in land forces which the Russians would be likely to enjoy in the event of war.

In the face of this we shall have to rely upon two main factors:—

- (a) The maintenance of our lead in the scientific and technical fields.
- (b) Our sea and air power.

These factors coupled with Russia's geographical position and economic self-sufficiency lead to the consideration that threat of attack by air or long-range weapons will be our one effective military deterrent to Russian aggression. It is therefore of the greatest importance that we should retain control of the necessary bases to render such attacks possible. Of the main support areas at present assured to us only the United Kingdom is so placed that it could constitute a base for this purpose, and the attached map shows that the United Kingdom alone is clearly insufficient.

17. In the light of the above, we consider that there are the following areas, the value of which must be examined:—

- (a) Western Europe, including Scandinavia.
- (b) The Iberian Peninsula and North-West Africa.
- (c) The Middle East and North-East Africa.
- (d) India.
- (e) South-East Asia.

We examine below the strategic importance of each of these areas.

*Western Europe*

18. In view of the direct threat to the United Kingdom which would result from the loss of France and the Low Countries, and of the threat to our sea communications which would result from the loss of Scandinavia, it is clearly of the greatest importance to us that Western Europe should not fall under Russian domination. Moreover, the man-power and industrial resources of this area would represent a major increase in the war potential at the disposal of Russia. Although in the event of war it may not be possible entirely to prevent this in view of the very great preponderance of Russian land forces, we should at least be prepared to give the countries of Western Europe the support necessary to ensure that in peace they do not fall under Russian influence.

*Iberian Peninsula and North-West Africa*

19. We have already indicated the importance of this area for the security of our Atlantic communications, both westwards and southwards, and therefore for the defence of the United Kingdom. If this area were under Russian control, we should, in addition, be denied access to the Western and Central Mediterranean immediately war broke out. In peace our position in Western Europe as a whole would be adversely affected.

*Middle East*

20. It may be argued that we can afford to abandon this area, that we should thereby place between ourselves and a potential enemy large tracts of difficult country, and thus compel him, in order to extend his influence further, to fight at the end of long and difficult lines of communication, and that we are unlikely in any case to be able to hold the area in war.

21. The strategic importance of the Middle East lies in the following facts:—

(a) It forms the land-bridge between the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa and controls the Eastern Mediterranean and one of the main gateways into the Indian Ocean. It offers therefore the easiest route for a European-Asiatic Power into the African continent.

(b) Control of the area Egypt-Palestine would provide the Russians with a ready-made base area which could be built up by short sea route from Russia itself and which then would enable them to extend their influence both westward and southward into Africa. Such an extension would prejudice our position both in North-West Africa, the importance of which we have already shown, and in the Indian Ocean. It would be the first step in a direct threat to our main support area of Southern Africa.

(c) Control of the Middle East will give us the essential depth in front of our main support area in Southern Africa and the highly important area of India to give us the time necessary to organise the defence of these areas.

(d) Of those areas in which we can reasonably expect to maintain our influence in peace, the Middle East is the nearest to the important Russian industrial and oil-producing areas of Southern Russia and the Caucasus. It is also an area from which many other important industrial centres of Russia could be subjected to long-range attack. Our Middle East air bases are therefore a valuable deterrent to Russian aggression.

(e) The immense importance to us of the oil supplies of this area has been stressed in a recent paper [DO (46)45] by the Minister of Fuel and Power. We should clearly do our utmost to maintain our position in the area as long as we can in war and should certainly do so in peace.

### *India*

22. The value of the war potential of India has already been stressed. If India were to fall under Russian domination, it is unlikely that we could maintain our position in South-East Asia and Russian influence would then extend up to the outer defences of Australia. Airfields in North-West India are, apart from those in Iraq, the nearest of those at present under control to certain important Russian industrial areas in the Urals and Western Siberia.

Provided that the Russians do not gain control of one of the main entrances to the Indian Ocean, India should be relatively easily defensible and should pay a good dividend in man-power and supply potential for the effort which we should have to expend. If, however, the Russians did gain such control, India would be all the more important as a striking base.

### *South-East Asia*

23. The strategic importance of this area is considerable in relation to the defence both of India and Australia. We should therefore do our utmost to preserve our position there.

### *Summary*

24. Our strategic requirements in addition to the security of our main support areas and the communications between them may therefore be summarised as the establishment and maintenance of our position in:—

Western Europe, including Scandinavia.

The Iberian Peninsula and North-West Africa.

The Middle East, particularly Egypt and Palestine.

India and South-East Asia.

25. We do not suggest that in all the above areas a display of military force in peacetime is essential in order to prevent the spread of Russian influence. Our influence can be established and maintained in varying ways, by political action, and by our economic policy as well as by the presence of armed forces. In some cases political action may be all that is possible or required, in others the actual presence of armed forces may be necessary.

It does not, therefore, follow that our strategical requirements as set out above result in the maintenance of large-scale forces which it is quite clear the country cannot afford to maintain in peacetime.

26. The requirements set out above are based solely upon strategical considerations. We note, however, that in his memorandum [DO(46)40: see 277] to the Defence Committee the Foreign Secretary sets out the political and economic considerations of our position, particularly in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. He points out that—

(a) From a political point of view our presence in the Mediterranean is vital to our

position as a great Power. On it depends our influence on Spain, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey, and with that goes all that we stand for as the last bastion of social democracy.

(b) We have strong interests in Egypt and in Iraq, where the oil is now one of our greatest economic assets.

(c) It is essential to maintain the Mediterranean as a trade route and as a trade area, to utilise both and to maintain the principles of Western civilisation in that area.

(d) We may require to develop within the United Nations Organisation a "Western Zone" including Scandinavia, the Low Countries and France. Our ability to bring such an organisation into existence will depend upon our retaining our position in the Mediterranean.

These arguments, with which we are in full agreement, show that as regards Western Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, our political, economic and strategic requirements coincide.

### *Conclusions*

27. We conclude that—

(a) The main support areas upon which our war effort must be based will be the United Kingdom, the American Continent, Southern Africa and Australia. The security of these areas is essential.

Every effort should be made to develop and stabilise India as an additional main support area.

(b) The sea and air communications between our main support areas in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans are of vital importance.

Communications through the Mediterranean, though not vital, are of great importance particularly in relation to economy of shipping.

(c) By concentrating in peace upon our main support areas only, we should place ourselves in an unfavourable strategic situation at the start of any future conflict. We must, therefore, establish and maintain our influence in other areas of strategic importance since we must assume that, if we do not, our influence will be supplanted by that of Russia, whom we must at present consider as our most probable potential enemy.

(d) These additional areas are Western Europe including Scandinavia; the Iberian Peninsula and North-West Africa; the Middle East, particularly Egypt and Palestine; India and South-East Asia.

If these areas were to fall under Russian domination—

(i) The security of the United Kingdom would be directly threatened.

(ii) Our vital sea communications, particularly those in the Atlantic would not be secure.

(iii) We should lack the essential depth in front of our vital areas to allow the necessary time both for us to mobilise our own forces and for the resources of the United States to be brought into play.

(iv) We should have relinquished to Russia important sources of man-power and war potential.

(v) We should be deprived of bases outside the United Kingdom from which the

threat of air action would be a deterrent to Russian aggression and from which we could, at the outset of a war, conduct offensive operations, which might indeed be the only effective means of defence open to us.

28. Our main strategic requirements are based principally upon facts of geography and the distribution of man-power and natural resources which do not change. We consider therefore that the basic principles of our strategy set out above will not be radically altered by new developments in methods or weapons of warfare.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The report was signed: Alanbrooke, Cunningham of Hyndhope, Tedder.

**322** CAB 131/1, DO 10(46)2, 3 and 4 5 Apr 1946  
 'Strategic position of the British Commonwealth; location of Middle East forces; organisation of zones of strategic responsibility': Cabinet Defence Committee minutes<sup>1</sup>

2. *Strategic position of the British Commonwealth*  
*The Committee* had before them—

- (i) a memorandum by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence (D.O. (46) 27);
- (ii) a memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (D.O. (46) 40);
- (iii) a report by the Chiefs of Staff (D.O. (46) 47).<sup>2</sup>

*Lord Alanbrooke* said that the Chiefs of Staff had based their report on the contingency of a war with Russia, the U.S.A. being our ally. From this premise they had reviewed the vital support areas and communications which we ought to maintain for the conduct of such a war. Between the support areas there existed zones in Western Europe, the Iberian Peninsula, North West Africa and the Middle East, from which if we withdrew our influence, it must be assumed that it would be supplanted by that of Russia. It was unsound to concentrate in peace upon our main support areas only, for by so doing, we should place ourselves in an unfavourable strategic situation at the start of any future conflict. If we withdrew our influence from the Mediterranean, we should lack the essential depth in front of our vital areas to allow the necessary time both for us to mobilise our own forces and for the resources of the United States to be brought into play. Moreover, we should be deprived of bases outside the United Kingdom, from which the threat of air action would be a deterrent to Russian aggression, and from which we could at the outset of a war conduct offensive operations.

*The Prime Minister* said the zones outside the main support areas could be termed "protective" zones, but they included in Europe the Western Mediterranean, and in the Middle East groups of comparatively weak nations. If the security of these groups was to be assured, they were in need of a strong defensive organisation to support their resources. Would the British Empire be able to provide sufficient forces to guarantee this support? He considered that Russian policy in the Middle East might take the form of gradual infiltration of political influence and ideologies. We might be faced with a gradual series of political intrigues, whereby in the event of war, the

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<sup>1</sup> Previous reference: see 278.

<sup>2</sup> See 276, 277 and 321.

Russians would have manoeuvred into a position to enable them to move at once, by previous agreement, into bases in that area. In his (the Prime Minister's) view it was very doubtful if we could provide the forces on such a scale as would be necessary to support a "forward" policy in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

*Lord Tedder* said it was essential that in any future war with Russia we should gain time at the outset to enable us to mobilise our resources. The necessary delays could best be imposed by air action, and for this, it was essential that we possessed bases in the protective zones from which we could operate. If a conflict broke out in the Middle East, where the terrain to a certain extent limited operations to definite seasons, the use of air action might well delay an enemy advance sufficiently for us and the Americans to mobilise our resources. The first reinforcement we should receive from the Americans would be their heavy bomber force, but their use would be severely curtailed if we lacked the bases from which they could make their power felt immediately.

*Lord Alanbrooke* agreed and said that although it was too early to estimate precisely the effect of the tactical use of atomic bombs, our attacks on the depots and bases from which any enemy advance was maintained, might well cripple such an advance for a long period. The small garrisoning force which the Chiefs of Staff had proposed should remain in the Middle East area, was militarily a small premium to pay for ensuring that we obtained the time necessary to mobilise our resources at the start of a major war. If there was no opposition to an enemy advance into the Middle East, we should be faced at the outset with an immediate threat to the security of our support areas and communications, and the prospect of losing the whole of the Middle East oil supply.

*The Foreign Secretary* said he agreed with the Chiefs of Staff that we must maintain our influence in the Mediterranean. It was impossible to retain the necessary diplomatic strength if military support was withdrawn, and in his view, Russia only respected nations which had the power to command respect. At the same time, our presence in the Mediterranean served a purpose other than military, which was very important to our position as a great Power. Through this area we brought influence on Southern Europe, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. Undoubtedly, if we left the Mediterranean, Russia would move in, and the Mediterranean countries together with their commerce and trade, and their importance to our economy would be lost to us. Thus without the necessary facilities and bases for defence in the Mediterranean, it would be impossible to maintain the influence of our foreign policy in Southern Europe. From the political point of view therefore, it was essential to maintain the Mediterranean as a trade route and trade area, and to utilise both to the best of our advantage. The plan put forward by the Chiefs of Staff whereby only a small garrison remained in the canal area as the nucleus of a Regional Defence Organisation designed to support the Middle East States, seemed sound. It could, he thought, be defended before the United Nations Organisation as being compatible with the Charter. It was important to remember that if we did sacrifice the Mediterranean and concentrated our forces elsewhere, it was still necessary for us to obtain supplies; abandoning this area would mean a great loss to both our peace and wartime economy, trade and manpower. In his opinion, a thorough development of the Middle East trade areas, particularly in the belt stretching from West Africa to East Africa could offset the cost of retaining the small defence commitment in the Mediterranean. Moreover, we must seriously endeavour to ensure that the regional

defence scheme would function efficiently and do all in our power to train the armed forces of countries such as Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia to a standard capable of meeting the needs of modern warfare.

*The Secretary of State for the Dominions* said he was agreeably surprised at the small force which the Chiefs of Staff thought necessary to retain in the Middle East. In view of the manifest military and political advantages both in the event of a war with Russia, and to our peace and war-time economy, he could see no reason for withdrawing our influence from the Mediterranean area.

*The Prime Minister* said that the issues involved were of such far reaching consequences that the problem would require further consideration before a definite decision could be taken. In particular he was very concerned at the vulnerability of the United Kingdom, and he considered that this should be the subject of a special examination. It would be necessary also to await the outcome of the special commission which was to study the potentialities of East Africa as a strategic base and as a trade development area.

The Committee:—

Gave general approval to the plan governing the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff as set out in DO (46) 47 as a provisional basis for discussion at the forthcoming Conference with Dominion Prime Ministers and

(a) subject to further consideration being given to the security of the United Kingdom: and

(b) pending the findings of the Commission which is to look into the Foreign Secretary's suggestion for opening up the route across Africa.

### 3. Location of Middle East forces

*The Committee* had before them a report [DO (46) 48] by the Chiefs of Staff on the practicability of stationing in East Africa the whole or part of the land and air forces now planned to be kept in the Middle East in peace-time.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that his main objection to our dependence on Egypt as the centre for our command and defence forces in the Middle East, was that we were relying on the use of territory which was not British. He felt that the report by the Chiefs of Staff had not fully explored the advantages of a plan which envisaged the use of East Africa as a base.

The development of such a plan would tend to bring us in closer touch with South Africa who could contribute to our manpower, financial and industrial requirements. He did not believe that, on balance, the development of East Africa would add to our financial costs, since training areas in this country which were already clashing with projected trade development areas could be released for other purposes.

There were strong grounds for a detailed survey by an expert Commission, covering the political, industrial, economical and strategic implications of developing East and West Africa, and the development of a Lagos–East Africa trunk road. These areas included raw materials and manpower of enormous potential trade development, and if we could shift our defence and trade areas into this belt, we should be tending to move away from points where our interests clashed with other major powers. Moreover, if we could show our independence of the Middle East countries, it would provide him with a bargaining counter in our relationships with these countries.

He agreed with the Chiefs of Staff that we should retain control of the Mediterranean and the Middle East by maintaining certain bases and forces there in peace-time. There were, however, advantages to be gained in establishing our main reserve areas in Kenya to protect ourselves against the contingency of Egypt being denied to us.

*Lord Alanbrooke* said that the proposals by the Chiefs of Staff were nearly in line with the Foreign Secretary's conception. Reserves could be stationed in East Africa, and if an examination of the industrial and strategic potentialities of the area showed the area worth development, military and base installations could be located there. But at the same time, it was necessary to establish a Headquarters in the Canal Zone because in the first place it was not practicable to locate the main Inter-Service Headquarters in East Africa. If the Army and Air Force Headquarters were not to sacrifice close co-operation with the Navy whose Headquarters must remain in the Mediterranean [sic]. Secondly, if defence of the Middle East on a regional basis was to become a reality, the Headquarters of this organisation must be based so far as possible in the centre of the area concerning these countries. Their proposals for the Canal Zone garrison and Headquarters was to form the nucleus of this organisation.

In reply to a question, *Sir Rhoderick McGrigor*<sup>3</sup> said the port of Mombassa [sic] was adequate for naval requirements, but the fact that it was outside the normal shipping routes imposed difficulties in the rapid assembly of shipping required for the movement of troops and was impossible as the naval control centre for operations in the Mediterranean.

*The Prime Minister* considered that the argument for developing our bases in British territory was a strong one. He agreed with the suggestion of establishing a Headquarters in the Canal Zone, provided it was made clear that this Headquarters was designed primarily as the central control for the regional defence system embracing the Middle East countries.

The Committee:—

(a) Approved the report by the Chiefs of Staff, providing it was understood that the forces in the Canal Zone area were intended as the nucleus and Headquarters of the Regional Defence Organisation for the Middle East Area.

(b) Gave their general approval to the concept that the main military reserve area should be located on British territory, subject to the detailed examination of such areas by a special commission.

(c) Invited the Foreign Office, in consultation with the Colonial Office, War Office, Admiralty, Air Ministry, the Board of Trade and the Treasury, to determine the composition and terms of reference for an expert commission to survey the industrial, political, economic and strategic potentials of the geographical belt between East and West Africa.

#### 4. *Organisation of zones of strategic responsibility*

*The Committee* had before them a memorandum [DO (46) 46] from the Chiefs of Staff on the proposed organisation of strategic responsibility in the Middle East, India, South East Asia and Australasian areas.

*Lord Alanbrooke* explained, with the aid of the map annexed to the memorandum, that certain parts of the world in which we were interested could be divided naturally

<sup>3</sup> Admiral of the fleet, vice-chief of naval staff, 1945–1947.

into zones, of identical strategic interests. The object of the memorandum had been to define these areas in which the interests of the three Services coincided so far as possible. Their proposals took the form of a Middle East Zone, with a Middle East Defence Committee, comprising the present Commanders-in-Chief Committee and His Majesty's political representatives. The India zone had presented some difficulty since it would be necessary for strategical reasons to include Burma and Ceylon, and for defence to be discussed centrally in Delhi, although these territories were not politically a part of India. In the South East Asia zone, the Defence Committee comprising the Governor-General, the Special Commissioner and the Military Inter-Service Headquarters, would be located in Singapore. Lastly, there was the zone comprising those areas for whose defence Australia and New Zealand would be primarily responsible.

If such an organisation could be officially recognised, it would simplify control, command and liaison within and between the zones. Moreover, he hoped these zones would provide a basis on which Dominion contribution and co-operation could be sought. In this connection, the system of military representation between the United Kingdom and the Dominions was yet to be decided, but their present thought was that a system of Joint Staff Missions in each Dominion on a reciprocal basis on the lines of the Combined Chiefs of Staff organisation during the war, should prove effective, and fit logically into the strategic zone system proposed.

Canada had not been included in this review, as she was in a special position. Canada tended to stand out of Commonwealth defence commitments for fear of prejudicing her position vis-à-vis the United States. Nevertheless, he felt that she should be asked to undertake certain duties in the Caribbean and West Indies. But apart from this question, the Chiefs of Staff were examining methods whereby Canada would form a convenient link in a possible scheme for standardising our weapon equipment with them and the United States.

*The Prime Minister* agreed that we should propose to Canada that certain Commonwealth defence commitments should be undertaken by her. A further point had occurred to him in that he thought the proposed Australian and New Zealand zone could conveniently be merged with the present South East Asia zone.

*The Secretary of State for the Dominions* supported the contention that Canada should be asked to undertake defence commitments in the West Indies area. She had large trade interests there, and he suggested that a reference to Canada's contribution should be included in the paper which the Chiefs of Staff were preparing for discussion with the Dominion Prime Ministers.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* asked if the Seychelles and Mauritius could be included in the Middle East zone, from which area their political problems were co-ordinated.

*Lord Alanbrooke* said the Chiefs of Staff had discussed a possible merging of the South East Asia and Australian zones, but had decided that whilst the present problems existed in S.E.A.C. looked like continuing for some while, the area should remain separated from Australia. Once these problems had been dealt with, it might well be possible to combine the two zones and to ask Australia to undertake the major responsibilities for this area.

*Sir Rhoderick McGrigor* referring to the problem of the Seychelles, said that these islands had been included in the Indian zone, as the defence of the sea communications and coast of East Africa was the responsibility of the C-in-C. East Indies Fleet.

There were several minor problems of this sort, which the Chiefs of Staff had thought could be dealt with by adequate liaison arrangements between the separate zones.

*Sir Edward Bridges* said that the political and civil problems of the areas concerned could not be divided to coincide precisely with the strategic zones of defence. The co-ordination of political and military liaison within those zones would therefore require further study and detailed consideration.

The Committee:—

(a) Approved the Chiefs of Staff's proposals on the future organisation for zones of strategic responsibility.

(b) Invited the Chiefs of Staff, when preparing a report on their proposals for Commonwealth defence commitments to include proposals for Canadian contributions in the West Indies area.

(c) Took note that the co-ordination of political and military liaison within the strategic zones would be the subject of further consideration.

### 323 DEFE 4/2, COS 35(47)

5 Mar 1947

#### 'Commonwealth strategy': COS Committee minutes (confidential annex) on the difficulty of meeting strategic needs

*The Committee* considered a minute by the Secretary covering a memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff<sup>1</sup> on Commonwealth Strategy.

*Lord Montgomery* said during the last few months certain events had occurred which, in themselves, had a far reaching effect on our strategic position, and when taken together, seriously undermined our ability to fulfil our strategic needs. The Chiefs of Staff had commented to the Government adversely as each of these steps had occurred, except in the case of the statement that we should transfer power in India in June, 1948, when the decision to make the statement had been taken without consulting the Chiefs of Staff.

In his opinion, it was essential to place the whole picture before His Majesty's Government, as by remaining silent at this stage, it might be taken to mean that the Chiefs of Staff acquiesced in the matter. He recommended that the memorandum be submitted to the Minister of Defence.

*Sir John Cunningham*<sup>2</sup> said he wondered whether the recommendation contained in paragraph 9(h), that we must do everything we could to improve our relations with Russia, did not negative the other conclusions, as the effect of close relations with Russia might mean that our strategic needs had been met. Apart from this comment, he was in complete agreement with the memorandum.

With regard to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff's recommendation that it be submitted to the Minister of Defence, he suggested that it might be desirable to delay its submission until the examination now being carried out by the Joint Planning Staff on our future long term strategy, had been completed. Submission of the memorandum at the present time, might tend to prejudice the examination being made by the Joint Planning Staff.

In discussion, a number of amendments were proposed and agreed to the

<sup>1</sup> Lord Montgomery, 1946–1948.

<sup>2</sup> Admiral of the fleet, first sea lord and chief of naval staff, 1946–1948.

memorandum. It was also agreed that the memorandum should be submitted to the Minister of Defence as soon as the concurrence of the Chief of the Air Staff had been obtained to it, since it was of greater importance to place the views of the Chiefs of Staff on record than to delay submission until the main strategic report had been presented and considered.

The Committee:—

Instructed the Secretary to incorporate in the Memorandum the amendments agreed in discussion and to re-circulate it for their further consideration.

## 324 CAB 131/5, DO 9(47)4

26 Mar 1947

### 'African development': Cabinet Defence Committee minutes on possible East African base, and trans-African communications<sup>1</sup>

[Since the war, the prospects for improving African transport looked more feasible as a result of pressures created by colonial development, European viability and the increased strategic importance of Africa and the Middle East. In the paper before the Committee, the following routes were discussed: (i) A1, Lagos to Soroti, the 'northern route', (ii) A2 Duala to Soroti, (iii) A3 Matadi to Soroti, the 'North Congo' route, (iv) A4 Matadi to Kisumu, the 'South Congo' route, (v) A5, Benguela to Dodoma, (vi) A6 the Cape route to Dodoma. The routes A1–A5 were 'west to east' routes; A6 was 'south to north'. Investigation pointed to the fact that it might be better to supply a Kenya base from the south rather than the west—this route had better strategic prospects and not much trade-flow was expected to be generated on west-to-east links. The COS favoured the southernmost route (A5) or developing the Cape route. The Colonial Office naturally favoured the north-south route (A6), because of the 'great advantage of having an all-British link from the Cape to Kenya', connecting the Mackinnon Rd base with the industrial areas of South Africa (CO 537/1230, minute by Cohen, 30 Sept 1946). Future discussion therefore centred on the South African link. (See part 2 of this volume, 130, and map on p 251.)]

The Committee had before them a memorandum by the Minister of Defence (D.O. (47) 27) reporting the results of the examination of the possibility of establishing a base in East Africa and of developing a line of communication across Africa.

*The Minister of Defence* said that any decision to begin the construction of a base in East Africa would depend on decisions on other questions, such as that of our long-term defence policy in the Middle East, which were as yet unresolved. There was, however, one step which could be taken in the near future, namely, the building up in East Africa of the stores and installations which would have to be moved from Egypt, and detailed recommendations on this would shortly be submitted to the Committee.

As regards the development of trans-African routes, it appeared from the preliminary examination which had been made that the strategic advantages likely to accrue from the development of any land line of communication across Africa were insufficient in themselves to justify the heavy cost of such development, but that if the construction of a through rail route of 3'6" gauge became economically desirable in the future, such a project should be supported on strategic grounds. He suggested that the Committee should agree that at present there was no need to appoint an expert Commission to examine the possible routes in more detail. The Colonial

<sup>1</sup> Previous reference: see 322.

Office should, however, in consultation with the Treasury, the Dominions Office, the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Food, consider whether on economic and commercial grounds a certain degree of development of the rail communications in the territories of Northern Rhodesia and Tanganyika might be warranted in view of—

- (i) the strategic advantages to be obtained from any improvement of communications in these territories;
- (ii) the proposed construction of a rail link between the Rosebery ground-nut area in Tanganyika and the port of Lindi;

and the Dominions Office might inform the Government of South Africa of the examination that had been made of the possibility of developing African land communications between Kenya and the Cape, and of the conclusions that had been reached; and might ask the Union Government for their comments.

*The Secretary of State for Air*<sup>2</sup> said he had always been in favour of the development of a land route across Africa and that if such a route had existed during the war there would have been a great saving in shipping. He agreed, however, that the cost involved in constructing and maintaining a land route made it impossible to contemplate such a project at the present time.

*The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said he was in general agreement with the conclusions reached in D.O. (47) 27. No economic benefit would be derived from the development of routes A1, A2, A3 or A4 and they were open to the objection that they passed through territories belonging to foreign countries. Though the construction of routes A5 and A6 would not be profitable at the present time, there might be some advantage in developing them at a later date. Moreover, it might be possible to link the development of these routes. The Colonial Office and the Ministry of Food were anxious that a rail link between the Rosebery ground-nut area in Tanganyika and the port of Lindi should be constructed as soon as possible and he hoped that there would be no objection to the use of a metre gauge for this line. There would be no serious difficulty in converting the railway at a later date to the 3'6" standard.

There was general agreement that the possibility of a trans-continental rail route with a 3'6" gauge should not deter the construction meanwhile of a metre gauge railway for the transportation of ground-nuts to Lindi.

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* said that the Southern Rhodesian Government were considering the question of acquiring the Rhodesia Railways and in connection with this were examining a project for a rail route from Livingstone to the coast at a point on the border between Angola and South-West Africa. He suggested that this might be kept in mind.

*The First Lord of the Admiralty*<sup>3</sup> proposed that an attempt should be made to find out how far Portugal and Belgium might be willing to contribute to the construction of land routes passing through their territories. This might be done informally through the joint technical committees which were dealing with matters of common interest to the Governments of these countries and His Majesty's Government.

*The Minister of Defence* said that at the present time it would not be advisable to make any approach to other Governments on the question of trans-African routes.

*The Minister of State*<sup>4</sup> suggested that a final decision should be postponed until the return of the Foreign Secretary from Moscow. He also asked that the Foreign

<sup>2</sup> Mr P J Noel-Baker.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Hall.

<sup>4</sup> At the FO, Mr H McNeil.

Office should be associated with the examination proposed in paragraph 28(b) of D.O. (47) 27.

The Committee:—

(1) Agreed to resume consideration of the recommendation in paragraph 28(a) of D.O. (47) 27 when the Foreign Secretary had returned.

(2) Agreed that the Colonial Office, in consultation with the Treasury, the Dominions Office, the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Food and the Foreign Office, should consider whether on economic and commercial grounds a certain degree of development of the rail communications in the territories of Southern Rhodesia and Tanganyika might be warranted bearing in mind—

(i) the strategic advantages to be obtained from any improvement of communications in these territories;

(ii) the proposed construction of the rail link between the Rosebery ground-nut area in Tanganyika and the port of Lindi; and

(iii) the project for a rail route to the West coast of Africa from Livingstone.

(3) Invited the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to inform the Government of South Africa of the examination that had been made of the possibility of developing land communications between Kenya and the Cape and to ask the Union Government for their comments.

### 325 CAB 131/4, DO(47)37

11 Apr 1947

'The role of the colonies in war': memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee by the Overseas Defence Committee (ODC(47)10).<sup>1</sup>

*Annex: Colonial defence schemes, (1) East Africa; (2) West Africa*

[Extract]

The time has arrived when it is necessary to give guidance to Colonial Governments on the subject of future defence. Before the war, each Colony maintained a defence scheme drawn up to a standard prescribed by His Majesty's Government, and containing full details of the local defence plan, and of all the measures, both military and civil, which would have to be put into execution during the transitional stage, and on the outbreak of war. The value of these defence schemes, which were in many ways analogous to the War Book of the United Kingdom, was amply demonstrated in 1939, when the transition of the Colonies from a peace to a war footing was effected smoothly and rapidly. Steps are about to be taken to draw up a revised and up-to-date *pro forma* for Colonial defence schemes, and to instruct Colonial Governments to begin the work of compilation. Before this can be done, much preliminary study will be necessary in London, but first of all it is necessary to consider afresh the rôle of each Colony in the future war in the light of the lessons we have so recently learned. Once the rôle has been fixed, the Colonial Government will have a definite objective towards which peace-time plans and preparations can be directed. In particular, each Colonial Government will be able to frame its plans for the maintenance of local forces in peacetime with an eye to wartime requirements.

<sup>1</sup> Chairman, Sir T Lloyd, who signed the report.

2. The existing problem of fixing the rôle of each Colony in war can perhaps be illustrated by reference to the past. The conception of Imperial defence as it affected the Colonies was founded upon command of the sea, and of the air over the sea, the exercise of which required a chain of firmly held bases, and implied the ability to move reserves at will, and to deny to potential enemies the opportunity for launching and sustaining oversea expeditions. The geographical situation of the various British territories overseas was such that they were not open to serious danger except from across the seas. Nearly every Colony possessed a seaboard, but few of them had land frontiers across which large-scale invasion could take place. They could accordingly be regarded as secure so long as command of the sea remained in British hands, and provided that sufficient force was available in each Colony to withstand an initial assault pending the arrival of reinforcements. In these circumstances, the primary task assigned to each Colony as its share in the general scheme of Imperial defence was not only to maintain internal security, but to make itself strong enough to resist the first shock of external assault in the knowledge that reinforcements would arrive in due course, and the aggressors' communications would be destroyed. Certain Colonies, owing to their potential value to the enemy, or to the location of a British Imperial base within their borders, required a standard of local defence that could not be provided from the Colony's own resources. In these territories Imperial garrisons were maintained. It was the duty of the local authorities to support and supplement these garrisons to the best of their ability.

3. The maintenance of locally raised forces was not the only defensive requirement that Colonial Governments had to meet. Measures for passive air defence, for the control of food and other commodities, for censorship, for internal security, and for the development of economic resources, had all to be taken in hand. Nevertheless, it was laid down as a principle that every Colony, however small, should maintain a locally raised force. It was felt in the first place that self-defence was a national duty, and secondly, that even quite small forces, resolutely handled, might cause the enemy disproportionate effort and loss. The existence of a small force would deny to the enemy a walk-over, and would force him to send a properly mounted expedition if he wished to effect a capture.

4. It is considered that the underlying conception of Imperial defence sketched out above remains sound in principle. Thus it is the application of the principle for the future which requires study. In particular, it is necessary to consider whether the provision in each Colony of a local force on the lines previously prescribed should still be insisted upon. In many Colonies there is no doubt in the matter. In Malta, for example, it is clearly right that the local inhabitants should be encouraged to undertake service in units which played so notable a part in the defence of the fortress during the recent war. In certain other Colonies, however, the matter is not so simple. In some there is a direct conflict between service in military forces and the maintenance in wartime of the production of commodities of great economic value. In others, where the man-power resources are very small, its correct employment requires thought. It is largely a question of how best to make use of the European population. In some of the larger colonies, e.g., Malaya, will they be better employed in wartime in producing rubber and tin, or in the ranks of a military force? In the smaller Colonies, e.g., Borneo, is the embodiment of Europeans in a platoon or company the right policy, or would they be better employed in a reporting organisation of the kind that played so notable a part in the Solomon Islands? If the

removal in wartime of Europeans from their key jobs for military service is thought undesirable, would something on the lines of a Home Guard be appropriate?

5. These matters have been examined by the Colonial Office in consultation with representatives of the Service Departments, and with the Joint Planning Staff as regards the strategic importance of the Colonies; and attached at Annex is a Paper<sup>2</sup> which sets out for each Colony a short summary of the part it played in the recent war, its probable strategic importance in the future, and recommendations for the rôle it should play in the event of another war. It is, of course, recognised that defence measures in the Colonies will have to be woven into plans made in conjunction with the Dominions for Imperial defence in its larger aspects, and perhaps ultimately under arrangements for the support of the United Nations. Nevertheless, the British Empire, which has no aggressive intentions, always finds itself in a position of uncertainty; and if we wait until all doubts have been resolved, action may be indefinitely suspended. Provisional guidance upon which planning can start is of great value, and it now seems most desirable that we should settle a basis upon which the local security of the Colonies can be built up.

6. It will be observed that the attached paper does not attempt to define the man-power which it will be necessary to allocate to the Civil Defence services in the Colonies. Indeed, before this can be done it will be necessary to estimate the type and scale of air attack which may be expected to develop against each Colony. Nevertheless, the wartime strengths of Civil Defence services must be taken into consideration at an early planning stage, and although it is not possible to give details in this paper, the allocation of man-power for these services must be taken into account during the preparation of colonial defence schemes.

7. The Paper is directed to the rôle of the Colonies in a future war, as the basis to which the scale and organisation of defence preparations in peace should be related. But the demobilisation of forces raised during the last war has already in most Colonies reached a point at which early decisions regarding the maintenance and size of peacetime forces are needed. Moreover, the Defence Committee at its meeting of 7th August, 1946, invited the Colonial Office, in consultation with Service Departments to examine the question of the use of Colonial man-power for military and industrial purposes, and guidance as to the extent of the demand which is likely to be made on the Colonies for man-power for military and civil defence purposes is material to the survey of this problem.

8. It is not suggested that the proposals in this Paper should be regarded as final. They will naturally be subject to modification or reconsideration as circumstances develop in consultation with regional Service commanders and Defence Committees abroad. But provisional guidance upon which planning can start is of great value, and it is to supply this need that the Paper has been prepared.

9. On this basis the Defence Committee is invited to approve the recommendations made for each Colony in the Paper, as a first step towards the planning of Colonial defence policy.

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<sup>2</sup> Sections 1–2 on East and West Africa are printed here; sections 3–21, on other colonies, are omitted.

## Annex [I] to 325: East Africa

I. *Part played by East Africa in the war*1. *Its strategic importance during the war*

British East Africa became an area of strategic importance in the war as soon as Italy entered the struggle and our communications in the Mediterranean were endangered. It was used as a military base for General Cunningham's campaign in Somaliland and Abyssinia; its harbours, in particular, Kilindini, and its airfields were needed for the protection of our sea communications between the Cape and Suez; its airfields were also essential for the main South Africa air route and for anti-submarine operations, as were also its flying boat bases.

2. *Part played by local forces*

(a) *Naval*. Small local Naval forces were maintained by the Kenya, Tanganyika and Zanzibar Governments. Some members of the Kenya Force served outside East African waters in the Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf.

(b) *Army*. The East African military forces expanded during the war from 11,000 to over 223,000 strong. East African troops, like the West Africans, fought most successfully in the Italian East Africa campaign; an East African brigade took part in the invasion of Madagascar in 1942. 30,000 East African Pioneers and other troops who did most valuable work were sent to the Middle East and one East African Division, together with two independent infantry brigades, served in the Far East, where the main East African success in Burma was the advance down the Kabaw Valley in the 1944 monsoon. In the campaign in Burma, however, reports from Force Commanders show that the East Africans did not reach the standard of other troops engaged, and in fact were somewhat disappointing. When outside the fighting zone, their discipline also caused difficulty at times.

(c) *Air*. There was no East African native Air Corps, but the Kenya Auxiliary Air Unit composed of Europeans only had been established shortly before the war and was embodied for reconnaissance and transport duties. It was disbanded in 1940/41 and its personnel enlisted into the R.A.F.

3. *Economic*

The East African Colonies contributed by their export trade during the war to the United Nations resources in many important directions. Particularly valuable were the exports of sisal, which replaced Manila rope from the Philippines, and Northern Rhodesia copper. In 1945 His Majesty's Government were also buying East African total exportable surpluses of pyrethrum and other products.

His Majesty's Government in addition bought East African coffee and directed supplies of maize, sugar, and copra to the Indian Ocean area in order to relieve shortages.

II. *Future defence rôle in war*4. *The importance of East Africa in the future*

(a) *Strategic*. The strategic importance of East Africa lies in the function which it fulfils in providing facilities for the following:—

- (i) The main South Africa Air Route;
- (ii) The protection of our communications around the Cape and the defence of the western Indian Ocean;
- (iii) An operational Naval Base in a war involving British interests in South Persia.

It must be remembered that the reduction of facilities for our Forces in the Middle East has undoubtedly increased the strategic importance of East Africa.

(b) *Economic*. East Africa would probably be of great economic importance in view of its capacity to produce a wide variety of commodities, especially copper, sisal fibre and pyrethrum. There are also indications that there may be an appreciable quantity of uranium. East Africa could also make a very appreciable contribution to the world supply of fat by the cultivation of ground nuts. A project with this end in view has been under consideration and steps have actually been taken to initiate it.

### 5. *Allocation of man-power*

Although some of the commodities exported by East Africa during the war were only needed to replace losses of supplies from the Far East and might not be required to the same extent in future, a large proportion of the available East African man-power will, in any future war, be required for production, the needs of which will have to take precedence over the man-power requirements of the Armed Forces.

There should not, however, be any conflict between Service and civilian man-power requirements unless and until the East African military forces are expanded in a future war to a figure comparable to that reached in 1945 (225,000).

The military requirements will be as follows:—

- (a) *Naval*. Naval Forces to undertake such duties as harbour defence, mine-sweeping and coastal patrols; these Forces to be available for service outside the East African area, if necessary.
- (b) *Army*. East African troops:—
  - (i) To meet the internal security requirements.
  - (ii) To provide the Army share of defences of Imperial naval and air bases in East Africa.
  - (iii) To provide a force for use outside East Africa. The target for initial expansion for this purpose will be one division.
  - (iv) To provide Pioneer and Labour units. The target for initial provision of these will be 30 Pioneer companies and 30 Labour companies.
  - (v) Local personnel to assist in the manning of anti-aircraft and coast defences on the approved scale.
  - (vi) If an administrative base is developed in East Africa there will be an additional call on labour and material for military purposes.

The primary tasks in view for the force mentioned in (iii) above will be the defence of a possible line of communications running to West Africa or Egypt, and use in North Africa. Until further experience indicates whether the defects noted in paragraph 2(b) can be overcome, it appears wiser not to plan for its use outside Africa.

A unified command in East Africa will be necessary in time of war.

- (c) *Air*. An auxiliary Tactical Fighter Squadron would be a useful contribution and

if this is feasible a supporting non-regular regiment and other units would also be of value.

(d) *Civil defence*. It is not yet possible to forecast the strength of the Civil Defence Services which will be required in a future war, but allowances will have to be made for the manning of these services when considering the man-power available for allocation to the Armed Services and to economic production.

(e) *Civilian labour*. Civilian labour for construction and support, as necessary, of naval, military and air bases. The main naval base will certainly be Kilindini, and the main air bases are likely to include Mombasa, Nairobi (Eastleigh), Nakuru and Kisumu, all in Kenya.

## 6. *Recommendations*

It is recommended that the future rôle of East Africa in war should be:—

(a) To produce the maximum quantities of such vital commodities as copper, sisal fibre, pyrethrum.

(b) Subject to the needs of (a) to provide the military forces and civilian labour set out in paragraph II 5 above.

## Annex [III] to 325: West Africa

### I. *Part played by West Africa in the war*

#### 1. *Its strategic importance during the war*

The retention of British West Africa was vital to us during the war for the protection of our South Atlantic sea communications and for sending air reinforcements to the Middle East and Far East. Its importance was greatly increased by the development of the Cape sea route owing to the Mediterranean route being closed to our shipping. The stationing of large military forces in the area was necessary as long as there was a threat of invasion from Vichy-controlled French territory. Freetown became a great convoy port.

The use of West African air bases was essential for the development of the Trans-African Air Reinforcement Route and for the deployment of G.R. Squadrons employed on shipping protection duties.

#### 2. *Part played by local forces*

(a) *Naval*. Very small local Naval forces were maintained in all the four West African Colonies by the respective local Governments. They were employed on port and harbour duties. A few thousand West Africans were also employed by the Royal Navy locally, mainly for shore duties.

(b) *Army*. During the war the West African military forces expanded from 8,000 strong to over 150,000. They were employed not only for the local defence of British West Africa against attacks from Vichy-held territory, but also overseas. Two West African Brigades fought with great success in the Italian East African Campaign of 1940–41; 16,000 West Africans served as pioneers in the Middle East and two West African Divisions took part in the Burma Campaign of 1943–45, where they were mostly employed in the Arakan, though one Brigade served in the

Chindits. In this campaign, however, reports from Commanders show that they did not reach the standard of the other troops engaged, and in fact were somewhat disappointing. When outside the fighting zone, their discipline also caused difficulty at times.

(c) *Air*. The West African Air Corps, a few thousand strong, was formed during the war under Air Ministry control. It was intended only for ground duties and although it did not serve outside West Africa, it released a number of R.A.F. men for duties in other parts of the world.

### 3. *Economic*

The West African Colonies, especially Nigeria, were throughout the war a most valuable source of vegetable oils for the United Kingdom and the Allies. Other valuable exports included bauxite, cocoa, diamonds and manganese from the Gold Coast; diamonds, hardwoods and iron ore from Sierra Leone; cocoa, and (after the fall of Malaya) rubber and tin from Nigeria.

## II. *Future defence rôle in war*

### 4. *The importance of West Africa in the future*

(a) *Strategic*. The strategic importance of West Africa lies in the function which it fulfils in providing facilities for:—

- (i) The Trans-African Air, and possibly land, Reinforcement Route.
- (ii) The protection of our sea communications in the Atlantic Ocean.
- (iii) The support of Naval forces operating in the Mediterranean.

(b) *Economic*. West Africa is of great economic importance in view of its capacity to produce a wide variety of mineral and vegetable products.

### 5. *Allocation of man-power*

West Africa will always be our primary source of vegetable oils (palm and ground nuts) and cocoa. Production of these commodities in time of war should have first call on the local man-power. The requirements of the Armed Forces come next. At the end of the war the number of West Africans serving in the Forces was approximately 150,000. Further considerable expansions would have been very difficult in view of the civil claims on man-power for production although the total population of British West Africa is estimated to be between 26 and 27 million.

The military requirements will be as follows:—

(a) *Naval*. Naval Forces to undertake such duties as harbour defence, mine-sweeping and coastal patrols; these Forces to be available for service outside the West African area, if necessary.

(b) *Army*. West African troops:—

- (i) To meet the internal security requirements.
- (ii) To provide the Army share of defences for Imperial Naval and Air Bases in West Africa.
- (iii) To provide a force for use outside West Africa. The target for initial expansion for this purpose will be one brigade group.
- (iv) To provide Pioneer and Labour units. The target for initial provision of these will be 25 Pioneer companies and 20 Labour companies.

The primary tasks in view for the force mentioned in (iii) above will be the defence of a possible Line of Communication running from West Africa to East Africa or Egypt, and use in North Africa. Until further experience indicates whether the defects noted in paragraph 2(b) can be overcome, it appears wiser not to plan for its use outside Africa.

A unified Command in West Africa will be necessary in time of war.

(c) *Air*

(i) The R.A.F. will require the continuance or re-formation of the West African Air Corps for general ground duties in support of the R.A.F. as in the last war, and it is probable that it will be necessary to raise locally in addition, two or more auxiliary Rifle Squadrons of the R.A.F. Regiment. It is not considered that there is any scope for a West African Air Corps undertaking flying duties, though flying training may be given to West Africans enlisted in the R.A.F. for air crew duties.

(ii) Local personnel to assist in the manning of anti-aircraft and coast defences on the approved scale.

(d) *Civil defence.* It is not yet possible to forecast the strength of the Civil Defence Services which will be required in a future war, but allowances will have to be made for the manning of these services when considering the man-power available for allocation to the Armed Services and to economic production.

(e) *Civilian labour.* Civilian labour for construction and support, as necessary, of naval, military and air bases in West Africa. The main naval base will be Freetown.

The air bases required for Maritime Air Forces in West Africa and for staging on the Trans-African route may include all, or some, of the following:—

*Gambia.* Bathurst (Half Die), Yun Dum.

*Gold Coast.* Takoradi, Accra.

*Sierra Leone.* Freetown (Jui), Lungi, Waterloo.

*Nigeria.* Ikeja (Lagos) Ikoyi, Kano and Maidugari.

## 6. *Recommendations*

It is recommended that the future rôle of West Africa in war should be:—

(a) To produce such vital commodities as vegetable oils, cocoa, diamonds, manganese, bauxite, iron ore.

(b) To provide facilities on the approved scale for the defence and operation of:—

(i) Freetown.

(ii) Air bases on the Trans-African Air Route.

(iii) Bases for the operation of air forces required for the protection of our shipping in the South Atlantic.

(c) Subject to the need of (a) and (b), to provide the military forces and civilian labour set out in paragraph II 5 above.

**326** DEFE 4/16, COS 128(48)1

11 Sept 1948

'World strategic review': draft report by COS for Cabinet Defence Committee, on Commonwealth defence co-operation (JP(48)70)

[Extract]

[The COS prepared a paper entitled 'World strategic review' for the Dominion representatives attending the Royal Wedding in 1947. This was then updated in September 1948 for discussion by the conference of Commonwealth prime ministers. It was assumed that India, Pakistan and Ceylon would take part in defence discussions. The report was in two main parts: (i) a summary of the principal external factors affecting Commonwealth security, and (ii) a summary of proposed future Commonwealth defence policy. Part (i) is omitted here; it was discussed by the COS on 14 Sept 1948, and amendments suggested. This revised section was then incorporated in JP(48)117: see 329.]

...

*The importance of Commonwealth and allied defence co-operation*

19. None of the non-communist countries of the world except possibly the United States are in a position to fight alone against Russia. If we are to fight successfully we must, therefore, have a common policy and co-ordinated plans.

20. The integrity of each member of the Commonwealth is essential and is the concern of all. Close co-operation on defence matters will greatly increase the strength of the Commonwealth as a whole. It is essential, therefore, that consonant with the sovereign independence of individual members, the machinery for co-operation should be used to the full.

*Defensive action*

21. Because of Russia's great strength on land the only means of making immediate offensive action, on a scale sufficient to deter Russian forces from going to war, is by a strategic air offensive. This means that high quality strategic air forces with adequate backing must always be ready, together with the forces necessary to secure bases from which the air offensive could be mounted.

We must also be prepared to use weapons of mass destruction, as this is a most potent threat.

The most effective bases for a Commonwealth strategic air offensive are:—

- (a) The United Kingdom.
- (b) The Middle East.

We can also assume that America would be allied with the Commonwealth and would use bases in the Pacific.

Future developments might well increase the potentialities of the Arctic region of Canada as a base for offensive air action.

*Control of sea communications*

22. The security of the sea communications between members of the Commonwealth and their allies, and to sources of raw materials and essential supplies throughout the world, will be essential. Secure sea communications are also necessary to ensure flexibility and mobility in deployment of all the armed forces wherever they may be required, and to deny these advantages to the enemy.

[23.] In addition, the sea communications through the Mediterranean will be essential for the initial deployment and maintenance of our forces in the Middle East.

24. To gain control of sea communications adequate sea and air forces and suitable bases will be required. At present it appears that the chief threat will be from fast submarines, air attack and minelaying, but the threat of surface attacks on our shipping cannot be ruled out.

#### *Western Europe*

25. The overrunning of Western Europe by the Soviet Union would gravely prejudice the defence of the United Kingdom and the effectiveness of the strategic air offensive and thus would prolong the war. For the purposes of safeguarding Western Europe and the United Kingdom we are concerting plans, under the Brussels Pact, with France, Belgium, Holland and Luxemburg aimed at using our combined resources to hold the Russians in Europe as far to the east as possible.

#### *Middle East*

26. The importance of the Middle East lies in its value as:—

- (a) An offensive air base.
- (b) A centre of communications.
- (c) A source of oil.
- (d) Depth to the defence of Africa.

We must, therefore, retain a firm hold on the Middle East in peace and war. This can only be achieved by the retention of strong Commonwealth influence and by tangible evidence of our ability to move forces into the area in an emergency.

A necessary contribution to the security of our position in the Middle East will be the continued independence of, and friendly relations with Greece, Turkey and the Arab world.

#### *The Far East*

27. We consider the possibility of a major military threat to Commonwealth interests in the Far East to be remote. We must, however, maintain sufficient forces in that area in peace to secure our strategic and economic interests. In the event of war it is likely that the United States will deploy large forces in the Pacific thus largely covering the Commonwealth interests in South East Asia.

#### *The United States*

28. We cannot expect to win a war against the Soviet Union without the manpower and the industrial resources of the United States. Moreover in peace the Western European countries could only become militarily effective as a result of American assistance. We must, therefore, have her active support in peace and war.

#### *Scientific and technical resources*

29. At the moment we lead the Soviet in scientific and technical developments. It is essential that we should exploit this lead to offset the Russian preponderance in manpower.

### *Summary*

30. The fundamentals of Commonwealth defence policy can be summed up as follows:—

(a) Essential steps towards preventing war are:—

(i) Tangible evidence that the Commonwealth and its Allies possess adequate forces and resources, which we are fully prepared to use; and that we are capable of taking immediate offensive action on a large scale.

(ii) Taking all possible means short of war not only to resist the further spread of communism but also to weaken the Russian hold over countries she now dominates.

(b) Essential measures required in peace to allow us to fight successfully in the event of war are:—

(i) Maintaining co-operation with the other members of the Commonwealth in all aspects of defence.

(ii) Preparation of a common Defence Policy and co-ordinated plans.

(iii) Possessing balanced armed forces ready for immediate use on the outbreak of war with the necessary resources to support them.

(iv) Ensuring the active and early support of the United States.

(v) Co-ordinating our defence plans with the Western Union.

(vi) Exploiting our scientific and technical lead.

(c) In war we should aim to:—

(i) Secure the integrity of the Commonwealth countries.

(ii) Mount a strategic air offensive from:—

The United Kingdom.

The Middle East.

(iii) Hold the enemy as far east as possible in Western Europe.

(iv) Maintain a firm hold on the Middle East.

(v) Control essential sea communications.

### APPENDIX

#### *Suggestions for Commonwealth contributions of forces towards our defence policy*

##### 1. *The United Kingdom and colonial empire*

(a) Forces for the defence of the United Kingdom and Colonial Empire.

(b) Major Commonwealth contribution to the strategic air effort.

(c) Major Commonwealth contribution to the control of sea communications.

(d) Contributions to the defence of the Middle East.

(e) Small contribution to the defence of Western Europe.

##### 2. *Canada*

(a) Their contribution to the Joint U.S./Canadian defence of North America.

(b) Contributions by sea and air forces to the control of sea communications in the North Atlantic.

(c) A contribution to the defence of the United Kingdom and Western Europe.

### 3. *Australia and New Zealand*

- (a) Forces for the defence of the Australasian strategic area.
- (b) A contribution by land and air forces, to the defence of the Middle East.
- (c) A contribution to the control of the Indian Ocean sea communications to the Middle East.

### 4. *South Africa*

- (a) The defence of the Union of South Africa.
- (b) A contribution to the defence of Africa by land and air forces.

5. *India and Pakistan*. The defence of the Indian sub-Continent.

6. *Ceylon*. The local defence of Ceylon.

7. *General*. Each Commonwealth country should provide in her territory the bases required by the common Commonwealth strategy; and make them available for the Commonwealth forces deployed in the area.

**327** DEFE 4/17, COS 162(48)2

12 Nov 1948

'Australian defence co-operation': COS Committee minutes. *Appendix*: report by JPS to COS (JP(48)114), 3 Nov

[Extract]

*The Committee* considered a report by the Joint Planning Staff examining the question of the allotment of an area of Defence Planning to Australia.

*Lord Tedder* explained that the proposal was confined to the allotment to Australia of an area of Defence Planning in peacetime. This would not involve any executive control in peace and there was no question of removing the present United Kingdom command in the Far East either in peace or war. He did not think that such an arrangement should, in any way, affect British influence or prestige in the area and felt that the Foreign Office and Colonial Office were possibly unduly apprehensive about the possible political repercussions.

*The Minister of Defence* asked whether the Chiefs of Staff were satisfied that the report made it sufficiently clear that there was no question of handing over to Australia military control or influence in any territory for which we were responsible. He said that he had raised the question of the contribution which New Zealand should make to Commonwealth Defence with Mr. Fraser<sup>1</sup> and it was important that the draft reply to Mr. Chifley<sup>2</sup> should cover the role which it was proposed that Australia should play in assisting in the defence of the Middle East.

In discussion, the following points were made:—

- (a) It was agreed that the report made it adequately clear that the allotment of the area to Australia was for Defence Planning only. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Mr P Fraser, prime minister of New Zealand, 1940–1949.

<sup>2</sup> Mr J B Chifley, prime minister of Australia, 1945–1949.

(b) Paragraph 8 of the draft reply to Mr. Chifley stated that any contribution which Australia was prepared to make over and above the forces required for the defence of the area vital to her home defence, would be most usefully employed in assisting in the defence of the Middle East. This paragraph thus covered the point made by the Minister of Defence about Australia's contribution to Commonwealth defence. It was agreed that this paragraph also should be sidelined.

(c) It was explained that although Australia would take the initiative in Defence Planning within the proposed zone, other interested nations such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand would also take part in Planning. In the same way, it was hoped that the Australians would participate in Middle East planning where the initiative rested with the United Kingdom.

(d) It was agreed that, on the map "Zone of Strategic Responsibility" should be amended to read "Area of Defence Planning in peacetime".

The Committee:—

Agreed that the report, amended as above, should be circulated to the Defence Committee.

#### Appendix to 327

We have recently had under examination the following Australian documents on Defence Co-operation which were forwarded by the Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister [COS(48)126(0)]:—

(a) An appreciation by the Australian Chiefs of Staff on the strategic position of Australia.

(b) The Conclusions of the Australian Council of Defence on this appreciation.

These papers are summarised at Annex III<sup>1</sup> and the Australian views on their area of Defence Planning are given below.

#### *Australian views on their area of strategic planning*

2. The Australian Chiefs of Staff recommend in their appreciation that Australia should accept responsibility for a strategic zone; and they give their views on the minimum area which such a zone should cover (see map at Annex I). It will be seen that this zone includes Malaya and Borneo.

3. The Australian Council of Defence, in their Conclusions, accept that Australia's security is closely related to the defence of the zone recommended by their Chiefs of Staff. They stress that acceptance of responsibility for strategic policy must be dependent on Australia possessing the necessary resources but consider that, within the limits of the zone, strategic planning on the Service level with the United Kingdom and New Zealand should take place.

We have recently been informed that the Australian Council of Defence now refer to this zone as "a zone of strategic planning for which Australia accepts responsibility". This indicates what the Australians have in mind in proposing this zone.

#### *Comments on the Australian proposal*

4. The comments on the proposal which we would wish, on military grounds, to

<sup>1</sup> Annexes I and III not printed.

see included in the reply to Mr. Chifley are set out at Annex II. The map at Annex I shows the boundaries of an area within which we consider it desirable that strategic planning in peacetime should be initiated from Australia.

We have consulted the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Colonial Office. Their views on the political implications of the Australian proposal are given below.

#### *Foreign Office views*

5. The Foreign Office have pointed out that the Australian proposal has far reaching political implications, the chief of which is its effect on the political position of the United Kingdom in Asia generally, and in South-East Asia in particular. This position was greatly weakened as a result of events there during the last war and, though considerable progress has been made in restoring British prestige in the area, much remains to be done if our influence is to be maintained and if we are to consolidate our position politically and economically against Soviet attempts to undermine it. It is virtually certain that if it is decided to allot an area of strategic responsibility to Australia in peacetime, this would become widely known. There is a danger that, even if it was not intended that such an arrangement would give Australia any measure of control over countries such as Malaya and Borneo, the inhabitants of these territories might gain the impression that we were contemplating the abandonment of our interests in the area. From the Foreign Office point of view, therefore, it must be made abundantly clear to all concerned that there is no intention whatever of withdrawing the present United Kingdom command in the Far East, either in peace or in war, or of relinquishing our interests in the area.

6. The Foreign Office have also represented to us that there is likely to be considerable difficulty in getting an agreed political basis for planning in this particular area. For example, there is a wide divergence between the British, Australian and Dutch attitude to Indonesia. If planning is to proceed it would have to be based on a series of alternative assumptions regarding the political situation.

#### *Commonwealth Relations Office views*

7. The Commonwealth Relations Office have pointed out that the United Kingdom authorities have, over the last two years, emphasised the importance of strategic planning in peacetime; now that Australia has put forward concrete proposals to this end it would be unfortunate if the United Kingdom were to question the principle of these proposals. It would, however, be open to us to suggest amendment to the area proposed by the Australians.

The Commonwealth Relations Office are also concerned that the interests of New Zealand would not be overlooked, observing that, as an independent nation, she is vitally interested in the defence of this area equally with Australia. They invited reference to correspondence between Mr. Chifley and Mr. Fraser of August/September, 1947, to paragraph 94 of the Australian Chiefs of Staff paper and to Mr. Fraser's recent request [JP(48)115 refers] for a statement of the New Zealand position in Commonwealth defence.

#### *Colonial Office views*

8. The Colonial Office emphasises that our treaty commitments with the Malay rulers entail for the United Kingdom very special responsibilities with that area. In

addition, they point out that in Malay [sic] a small but resolute force of communist terrorists is exploiting every means of weakening, with the hope of finally destroying, the authority of the Governors. They consider it likely that subversive activities of this kind would be intensified in a future war and might, indeed, be a main feature of the Russian effort in South East Asia. In combatting this menace a favourable local political atmosphere would be essential for effective military action. The U.K. Government have been engaged, since the defeat of Japan, in the difficult task of restoring the shaken confidence of the local population in "Western" guidance and political processes. This is not yet complete and the Colonial Office consider there is a great danger that if, at this juncture, the local population were to get the impression that, in the event of war, their destinies would be in other hands than those in which they were already beginning to regain confidence, there would be such loss of confidence as seriously to jeopardise internal security.

The Colonial Office regard it as essential, therefore, that the U.K. government shall be at liberty to make clear to the local population, if necessary, that there is no intention whatever of transferring to other authorities, either in peace or war, the responsibilities for and in Malaya which now rest with them.

#### *Our views on the proposal*

9. We appreciate that the allotment to Australia of an area for defence planning in peace may well give rise to political difficulties, but we consider that there would be great military advantages in such an arrangement.

10. Owing to our limited resources it is necessary both in peace and war to develop and use to the best advantage the whole military potential of the Commonwealth. Before other members of the Commonwealth will be prepared to develop and commit their maximum military resources, they will, we consider, wish to assume some responsibility for the security of the region which is agreed to be vital to their defence.

11. Our proposals in this paper are confined to the consideration of the area vital to Australia's defence so that she can, in consultation with other Commonwealth and Allied countries, prepare plans in advance. The area which we consider fulfils these conditions is delineated in Annex I.

This area may be defined as the region in which, together with New Zealand, she assumes the initiative for defence planning in peacetime. This does not involve any executive control in peace, neither should it in any way affect British influence or prestige in the area. Nor does it mean, necessarily, control in war. Command organisation in war must be decided in the light of circumstances at the time and would depend on which country held the predominant interest in the area.

12. It is particularly emphasised that there is no intention of removing the present United Kingdom command in the Far East either in peace or war. This command would retain its responsibility for internal security and the local defence of the territories within its theatre.

13. There is no question of handing over to Australia military control or influence in any territory for which we are responsible. As regards foreign countries in the region the position is that they may be considered to be in Australia's sphere of interest from the point of view of defence planning. This will involve no more than her taking an interest in them from the intelligence aspect.

14. We believe that refusal to allow Australia to assume responsibility for

planning in the area she has herself proposed would have a very bad effect on Commonwealth defence co-operation, particularly in view of the Resolution which emerged from the recent Prime Ministers Conference [PMM (48) 13th Meeting].

#### *The position of New Zealand*

15. We appreciate that the area defined by the Australian Chiefs of Staff is vital to New Zealand as well as to Australian defence. We suggest that the division of responsibility, as between the two countries, should be a matter for decision by their respective Governments. It would, therefore, seem appropriate that a copy of the report at Annex II should be sent to the Prime Minister of New Zealand. Accordingly it may be considered desirable, when replying to Mr. Chifley, to request that copies of the relevant documents should be sent to Mr. Fraser.

#### *Recommendation*

16. We recommend that the report at Annex II should be approved as a basis for a reply to Mr. Chifley's letter.

### ANNEX II

#### *Comments by the British Chiefs of Staff on the military aspects of Mr Chifley's letter*

We have studied with interest the memorandum by the Australian Chiefs of Staff together with the comments by the Australian Council of Defence, and find ourselves in general agreement with their views. Our comments on the military aspects of the Australian documents are set out below.

#### *Soviet aims*

2. We agree with the Australian view (para. 25 of memorandum by Australian Chiefs of Staff), that in estimating the military contingencies that can arise in the near future, special consideration must be given to the factor of the U.S.S.R. We believe, however, that the aim of Soviet policy is to establish communism directed from Moscow throughout the world. The Soviet leaders are trying to achieve this by methods short of open war, but if they appreciate that they cannot achieve the aim except by war they will provoke one as soon as they consider themselves ready.

3. The Soviet regime is firmly committed to the Marxist belief that ultimately communism will triumph throughout the world and that meanwhile communist and capitalist powers cannot live together except in a state of constant friction and unrest.

#### *Likelihood of war*

4. We doubt whether Russia would deliberately take action which was likely to involve her in a war in which she has to fight the United States and the British Commonwealth, until she has made considerable progress with her plans for economic and military rehabilitation. We estimate that this is likely to be when she has completed her second post-war five year plan—i.e. by 1957.

5. There is, however, the risk that war might start before this owing to a miscalculation on Russia's part of the extent to which she can pursue a policy of

ideological and territorial expansion without becoming involved in war with the Western Powers.

*Defence policy*

6. We agree with the Australian Chiefs of Staff that Australia's security is unlikely to be directly threatened in the early stages of a war. Should the war develop in such a manner that the security of Australia is directly threatened it is appreciated that Australia will require considerable assistance from her allies. The amount of such assistance and by whom it would be provided could only be decided by the Allied Higher Direction in the light of the situation at the time.

Australia's security, however, depends ultimately on an Allied victory. Russia's strength is such that victory can only be achieved if all the allies make the maximum possible contribution to implement the Allied plan, and to meet the threat as soon as, and wherever, it develops.

7. Our concept of allied strategy is that our general offensive will be in the air. Thus our strategy will be to hold securely the air bases essential for this purpose. In our opinion these must be located in:—

The United Kingdom  
The Middle East  
The Japanese Islands.

We consider that it will be necessary:—

(a) To defend those territories which are essential to the Allies. These are:—

- (i) The above air base areas.
- (ii) The main support areas.
- (iii) Such other areas as are essential for the defence of our air bases, support areas and communications.

(b) To control the essential sea communications between operational and support areas.

If these aims are to be achieved it will be necessary for all the Allies to pool their resources so that the maximum possible forces can be concentrated in the fulfilment of this strategy.

The problem is to decide whether, after providing for the local defence of the area for which she may accept responsibility, any contribution which Australia is prepared to make should be made in the Middle East or the Far East.

8. We appreciate that the most immediate and dangerous Russian threats will be in Western Europe and the Middle East. We consider that the threat in the Pacific can be adequately matched by American naval and air strength. Plans to meet the threat in Western Europe are based on building up the strength of the Western Union and on American support. The successful defence of the Middle East depends on the rapid build up of Commonwealth and American forces. We estimate that we shall be hard put to it to deploy adequate forces in time. The British Chiefs of Staff suggest, therefore, that any contribution which Australia is prepared to make over and above those forces which she requires for the defence of areas vital to her home defence, would be most usefully employed in assisting in the defence of the Middle East. . . .

**328** DEFE 7/413

10 Jan 1949

**[Financing of colonial defence]: letter from Mr Creech Jones to Sir S Cripps (Exchequer)**

I should be grateful if you would glance at the minutes (reference GEN.264/First Meeting) of the meeting held under the Prime Minister's Chairmanship on the 10th December, to discuss the financing of Colonial defence.

2. You will see that four conclusions are recorded in the minutes, and that the second of these reads as follows:—

“The Meeting agreed that Colonial Governments should be expected to bear the cost of maintaining internal security: and that, in so far as assistance from United Kingdom funds might be required in individual cases, the necessary provision should be made in the Colonial and Middle Eastern Service Estimates”.

Since the meeting officials of the Departments concerned have begun to tackle the practical problems arising out of the conclusions, but before we go further I feel I must emphasise a point of principle to which I attach great importance, and which is not, in my view, sufficiently brought out in the passage I have just quoted.

3. During the discussion, I referred to the fact that the “cold war” against Soviet Russia is now being fought on Colonial soil, and that in some areas, such as Malaya, actual physical disturbance and bloodshed are involved. My remarks on this subject are briefly recorded in the minutes, but nothing is said about the clear distinction in principle, which according to my recollection was recognised by my colleagues at the meeting, between the normal internal security measures required in any Colonial territory at any time, and the special internal security measures which may be demanded by the development of the cold war in particular circumstances. I do not see how the validity of this distinction can be denied. Normal internal security may legitimately be regarded as the affair of the Colonial territory concerned, which that territory must in all cases maintain from its own resources unless manifestly incapable of doing so. But the cold war is essentially a struggle between world forces—a struggle in which the United Kingdom is the real object of attack although it may be the Colonial Empire which is in the front line. I am recorded in the minutes as having said that under the conditions of the cold war as it has now developed, the cost of creating and maintaining effective internal security forces has increased enormously, and is likely in many cases to prove beyond the limited resources of Colonial Governments. This is quite true, but I was attempting to establish much more than that the cold war involves an increased financial commitment for Colonial Governments. I was attempting to demonstrate that it involves a totally new *kind* of commitment, in which His Majesty's Government themselves are intimately and inextricably engaged. As I have already said, it is my recollection that my colleagues appreciated and accepted the point I was endeavouring to make.

4. I do not, of course, deny that Colonial Governments must be pressed in any event to make the maximum defence contribution compatible with their financial and economic resources and their social responsibilities. The minutes of the meeting rightly record me as having said that this has been my consistent policy in the past. In these circumstances it may perhaps be argued that the distinction to which I am

attaching so much importance has no practical significance, since it will not materially affect the amount of money which Colonial Governments are to be asked to expend on defence purposes. In a limited sense this is true, but I am convinced that our whole approach to Colonial Governments in the defence field will be vitiated unless the distinction is acknowledged from the outset. As I have said, the present struggle against the spread of totalitarianism is a world conflict in which the United Kingdom is playing a leading part. Many of the battles in this conflict may be fought on Colonial soil, as one is being fought now in the Federation of Malaya. It is right that the Colonial territories, according to their means, should be asked to share in the common burden which the conflict entails, just as it is right that we should not exclude the possibility of Colonial Governments, again according to their means, being asked or offering to make contributions towards the cost of Commonwealth defence generally. I am sure, however, that it is not intended that Colonial Governments should be left with the impression that they must automatically assume the whole burden of the "cold war" in their territories unless they are incapable of doing so without breaking down altogether, in which event the United Kingdom will come to their assistance as an act of grace. In the long run such an attitude would of course prove inexpedient even in the financial sense for it would weaken the solidarity which at present exists between the colonial territories and ourselves and it would introduce resentment and a degree of mistrust into the discussions with Colonial Governments on the particular issue of the financing of Colonial defence. We all recognise that the defence of the colonies against external aggression is an important responsibility falling upon His Majesty's Government in consequence of the dependent status of these territories and the cold war, though it presents itself at the moment as an internal security problem, contains a large element of external aggression [sic].

5. To sum up, I accept that Colonial Governments should be asked in connection with the "cold war" as in other connections, to share in our common burden to the greatest extent consonant with their resources and their other responsibilities. I also accept, incidentally, that assistance by His Majesty's Government towards the "cold war" in Colonial Territories should normally be borne on the Colonial and Middle Eastern Services Vote if this is considered most convenient. I have difficulty, however, in working on any assumption that Colonial Governments should be left to face the "cold war" alone, merely being given the small comfort that if they break down in the process His Majesty's Government will rescue them from their failure. I am sure you do not endorse such an assumption, but in the light of what I have said, it would help if you can assure me that the principle which I have described will be recognised in discussions on this matter. You may count upon me to do my best to ensure that Colonial Governments shoulder their just responsibilities in the common cause. My hand will be greatly strengthened if I can adopt from the outset a position which I know I shall always be able to defend—if, that is to say, I can tell Colonial Governments that His Majesty's Government recognises that the struggle against Soviet imperialist influence is one in which we are all jointly committed, though I naturally expect that Colonial Governments will contribute towards this struggle in as full a measure as possible.

6. I do hope you will understand that this letter is not intended as the thin end of a wedge. I fully realise that decisions will be taken on individual cases, and that in these individual cases, whatever definition we adopt, Colonies will be asked to do the

most they reasonably can. I also realise that we must be sensible about the definition of "cold war", which could be stretched to cover almost anything if one were sufficiently unscrupulous. I doubt whether any useful purpose would be served by discussing in the abstract just what is cold war and what is not. As I have said, I am anxious to establish a principle for purposes of approach to Colonial Governments, and I regard this as a pre-requisite to future action.

7. My Department is now in contact with the Ministry of Defence as a preliminary to the consultation between the Minister of Defence and myself required by the fourth conclusion of the meeting. The Colonial Office is also in touch with the Treasury, and as usual we are establishing a solid basis of understanding which bodes well for future consideration of this problem. But in the end, progress on the whole question will be largely conditioned by the attitude which His Majesty's Government adopts on this fundamental point. I am writing to you about it since it seems that the direct implications of the matter are mainly for you and me to consider.

**329** DEFE 4/19, COS 14(49)1, annex 19 Jan 1949  
 'Defence appreciation as a basis for military planning between Commonwealth staffs': report to COS by JPS on defence policy and strategy (JP(48)117) [Extract]

1. The object of this paper is to state the views of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on the policy and strategy which must necessarily form the basis for any detailed planning between military staffs of the United Kingdom and any of the other Commonwealth countries. The paper sets out the views of the Chiefs of Staff; firstly, on the threat to world security; secondly, on Allied defence policy; and thirdly, on Allied strategy in war.

*The threat to world security*

2. We appreciate that the only two Powers who are singly capable at the present time of menacing our strategic security are the United States and the U.S.S.R. It is unthinkable, in view of the close political and other ties and the considerable community of interest between ourselves and the Americans, that we should ever engage in hostilities against the United States or against a combination of Powers which includes the United States.

3. On the other hand, the Soviet policy and aims, which we discuss below, make it abundantly clear that the U.S.S.R. must be regarded as a potentially hostile power.

*Fundamental aim of the Soviet Union*

4. The fundamental aim of the Soviet leaders is to impose Soviet Communism in all parts of the world. They foresee this happening in the course of a revolutionary struggle carried out primarily by every method short of war and lasting possibly for many years; but, on the other hand, they may consider it desirable to assist this process by war should favourable conditions arise.

5. The Soviet leaders are convinced that our system of political democracy contains the seeds of its own decay. Therefore, although they may fear that the Allies may ultimately have to resort to war to avert the collapse of their political system, the Soviet are unlikely themselves to precipitate a war until they are ready.

*Capabilities of the Soviet Union*

6. It is not considered likely that before the end of the second post-war 5 year Plan the Soviet Union will be capable of supporting her armed forces in a major war entirely from the natural resources and industrial potential now under her control. Nevertheless, if Russia wished to go to war, economic considerations alone would not be enough to prevent her from doing so if she felt confident of attaining her primary aims rapidly.

7. The Soviet armed forces, despite certain deficiencies, could embark on a land war at any time and would, at least in the early stages, have the advantage of numbers against any likely combination of opposing forces. In any major war, however, that started before 1956/60 at any rate, this initial advantage would be increasingly counter-balanced, as hostilities continued, by the incompleteness of Russia's industrial plan. Moreover the strategic air situation is, at least at present, unfavourable to the Soviet Union; her air striking force and air defences, are still comparatively backward despite the efforts she is making. She can thus not yet adequately protect those centres of population and industry which are within range of air attack. Her future readiness to embark upon a major war is likely, therefore, to be conditioned by the relative efficacy of her air strength.

8. We consider it improbable that the Soviet Union will have sufficient atomic bombs for some years to offset the allied preponderance in that weapon, though as time passes, she may have a stock capable of neutralising small areas such as the United Kingdom. It is a reasonable deduction that a realisation of her relative backwardness in atomic development may cause, or has already caused, the Soviet Union to hasten her preparedness to wage biological warfare. Although there are no raw material difficulties comparable to those for atomic development, biological warfare presents many technical problems.

9. Failing the early development of biological or other weapons of mass destruction to a point which she believed would ensure her rapid victory, the Soviet Union's economic situation is likely to militate strongly against her provoking a major war until, at any rate, the aims of the second post-war 5 year Plan have been achieved.

*Resultant policy*

10. We believe that the present Soviet policy has the following aims:—

(a) First the consolidation of her strategic security by the establishment of a belt of subservient states around her frontiers.

(b) Second, the restoration of Russian economy and its development to a point where it will rival and eventually outstrip that of the United States.

(c) Third, the avoidance of a major war unless she considers a Soviet vital interest is menaced or conditions are judged to be sufficiently favourable to the Soviet Union.

(d) Fourth, the continued aggressive promotion of communism by all means short of war throughout the non-communist world.

(e) Fifth, an endeavour to weaken and disintegrate the non-communist world both by political infiltration, leading to unrest and economic distress, and by the fostering of nationalist movements and thus unrest in colonial territories or those under Trusteeship.

11. The communist doctrine regards a state of constant friction and struggle as only natural in the relations between communist and non-communist states and prescribes a ruthless and completely callous attitude in the promotion of chaos in the non-communist world. It also teaches that, while the basis of Russian policy should remain unchanged, its tactics should be opportunist and flexible.

12. The Soviet Union will make full use of all available means for the implementation of her policy, notably the Communist Parties in foreign countries, and any other forces, such as disappointed nationalism, the interests of which may happen to fit in with her own.

13. The Soviet Union's willingness to co-operate in international affairs is strictly limited to the direct furtherance of her own national and ideological interests, and she is only concerned in keeping the United Nations or other international organisations in being so far as they serve these ends.

14. The emergence of the United States as the Soviet Union's main rival in world affairs, and the recognition of United States superiority in war potential, particularly as regards the atom bomb, are factors of decisive importance to the Soviet Union.

15. The close co-operation between the British Commonwealth and the U.S.A. together with the development of the Western Union and the European Recovery Programme are most disquieting to the Soviet leaders. Given the present balance of strength, the Soviet Union will pursue a policy of communist penetration aided by economic distress rather than of open war.

It is clear, however, that there is a risk that the aggressive policy of the U.S.S.R. might cause an accidental war owing to a miscalculation on the part of the Soviet of the extent to which she could pursue a policy of ideological and territorial expansion without becoming involved in war with the non-communist Powers.

### *Allied defence policy*

#### *The prevention of war*

16. It should, therefore, be the aim of all the non-communist countries of the world to adopt a common policy to meet the communist threat. The primary aim of this policy must be to prevent war, always provided that our vital interests are not prejudiced. The United Nations Organisation has shown itself unable to give us the necessary security and we must, therefore, plan accordingly.

17. We should plan to prevent war in two ways:—

(a) by showing that the Commonwealth and its Allies possess forces and resources on a scale adequate to convince the Soviet Union that war is unprofitable and further that the Allies are fully prepared to act offensively from the outset.

(b) By taking all possible means, short of war, not only to resist the further spread of communism, but also to weaken the Russian hold over countries she now dominates.

#### *Policy*

18. We consider the policy of each Commonwealth country should therefore be:—

(a) To join with the other Commonwealth countries, the U.S. and the countries of Western Europe in organising essential deterrent forces, in building up effective

defences and in working out the necessary plans, preferably on a regional basis, in accordance with Article 52 of the United Nations Charter.

(b) To resist the spread of communism by all means short of war.

19. None of the non-communist countries of the world, except possibly the US, have the resources to fight alone against Russia. If we are to fight successfully we must, therefore, have a common policy and co-ordinated plans.

20. Towards this end the United Kingdom, apart from defence arrangements within the Commonwealth, is participating in the following measures:—

(a) Collaborating with the US on defence matters.

(b) Working to create an effective defence organisation for the Western Union, comprising the UK, France and the Benelux countries.

(c) Working for the promotion of an Atlantic Pact, comprising the US, Canada, the Western Union countries, the Scandinavian countries, Iceland, Eire and Portugal.

(d) Giving assistance in individual defence arrangements to countries subject to communist pressure, e.g., Greece, Turkey, Burma and Persia; and to those countries which occupy an important strategic position, e.g., Egypt and the Arab States.

21. Similarly, within the Commonwealth it is considered that in order to make these measures fully effective it is desirable that plans should be drawn up on a regional basis, founded on an agreed strategic concept. Countries outside the Commonwealth would be drawn into these plans as and when possible.

We therefore state the views of the UK Chiefs of Staff on what this strategic concept should be.

### *Allied strategy in war*

#### *War aims*

22. We consider that it is not possible to limit the Allied war aim to the narrow one of restoring the situation to that immediately preceding the outbreak of war, or even to that of driving the Russians out of territories over which they have acquired control. We therefore define the Allied war aims as:—

(a) To ensure the abandonment by Russia of further military and ideological aggression.

(b) To create conditions conducive to world peace.

23. Because of Russia's great strength on land our only means of taking immediate offensive action is by a strategic air offensive.

In addition, we must defeat the Russian land sea and air onslaught against areas and communications vital to the Allies.

#### *Military measures to achieve this aim*

24. We therefore consider that the military measures to implement our strategic aims should be:—

(a) To launch an air offensive against Russia and the satellites.

- (b) To hold securely the air bases and sea areas essential for launching this air offensive.
- (c) To defend the Allied main support areas, and in addition, certain other areas whose retention is essential to our strategy.
- (d) To control the sea communications essential for the security and development of the above bases and areas.

*Bases and sea areas essential for the strategic air offensive*

25. We must select our air bases so that all the important targets in Russia are within range. In order to achieve the maximum intensity of attack, the bases should obviously be as near as possible to the targets. At the same time, they must be secure from any enemy ground threat and capable of adequate defence against air attack.

In addition to the main bases, advanced air bases and probably aircraft carriers may be used.

26. With a radius of action of 1,500 to 2,000 nautical miles nearly all the major targets in Soviet territory could be reached from bases in Western Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan and the Japanese Islands. No other shore bases, from which aircraft with the above radius of action could adequately cover the same area, are likely to be available to the Allies.

27. At present we cannot plan on using Pakistan bases, at least from the outset, as we have no defence arrangements with that country.

28. In this case, a considerable area of territory in Siberia, including the Karaganda and Kuzbas areas and part of the Lake Baikal area, all of which the Russians have already developed and are continuing to develop, would be out of range from Western Europe, the Middle East and the Japanese Islands.

It may be, however, that the situation on the Indian Continent will change.

29. We consider that bases in the following areas will be essential for launching the Allied air offensive:—

- (a) The United Kingdom.
- (b) The Middle East.
- (c) The Japanese Islands.

Inability to operate from Pakistan would only prevent us from reaching a small proportion of the major Russian targets.

...

*Conclusions on allied strategy*

40. We conclude that the following military measures are vital to implement our strategy:—

- (a) To deliver the strategic air offensive from the outbreak of war.
- (b) To hold the air bases and sea areas essential for our air offensive. These are:—
  - (i) The UK
  - (ii) The Middle East
  - (iii) Japan
  - (iv) And possibly sea areas for the carrier offensive
  - (v) Pakistan, if political conditions allow.

(c) To defend the main support areas:—

- (i) USA and Canada
- (ii) Australia and New Zealand
- (iii) South Africa and certain other parts of the African continent
- (iv) The Argentine and certain other parts of South America.

(d) To ensure the internal security and local defence of support areas of less importance.

(e) To hold those areas necessary to give defence in depth to our air bases and support areas (paragraph 36).

(f) To retain firm control of the essential sea communications (paragraph 38), and of the land areas necessary to ensure this control (paragraph 39).

### *Conclusions*

The fundamentals of Commonwealth defence policy can be summed up as follows:—

(a) We should plan to prevent war in two ways:—

(i) by showing that the Commonwealth and its Allies possess forces and resources on a scale adequate to convince the Soviet Union that war is unprofitable and further that the Allies are fully prepared to act offensively from the outset;

(ii) by taking all possible means, short of war, not only to resist a further spread of communism, but also to weaken the Russian hold over the countries she now dominates.

(b) The policy of each Commonwealth country should therefore be:—

(i) to join with the other Commonwealth countries, the United States, and the countries of Western Europe in organising essential deterrent forces, in building up effective defences and in working out the necessary plans, preferably on a regional basis, in accordance with Article 52 of the United Nations Charter;

(ii) to resist the spread of communism by all means short of war.

(c) In order to make these measures fully effective it is desirable that the plans drawn up on a regional basis should be founded on an agreed concept of the Allied strategy in war.

(d) Our strategic concept should be as given in paragraph 40, above.

**330** DEFE 7/413, COS(49)85

9 Mar 1949

**'Colonial forces': note by Lt-Gen G W R Templar (vice-chief of the imperial general staff) for COS Committee, on financing and structure**

Most important ministerial decisions have recently been taken regarding the financing of Colonial Defence. I am anxious lest their implementation may deal a severe blow to the whole structure of our Colonial forces.

2. At a Ministerial meeting on 10 December 1948, the following decisions were reached:—

(a) that it would not be advisable to adopt the proposal for a Colonial Defence Vote.

(b) that Colonial Governments should be expected to bear the cost of maintaining internal security; and that, in so far as assistance from United Kingdom funds might be required in individual cases, the necessary provision should be made in the Colonial and Middle Eastern Services Vote.

(c) that, in so far as it might be necessary, in the interests of Commonwealth defence generally, to maintain Colonial Forces beyond the scale required for internal security purposes, the additional cost involved would normally have to be met from United Kingdom Defence Votes; but that this should not preclude those Colonial Governments which were able to meet their own internal security costs from being asked, offering to make contributions towards the cost of Commonwealth defence generally.

(d) that the Minister of Defence should be invited, in consultation with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to consider the suggestions made in discussion regarding the form of the Forces required to maintain internal security in the Colonies.

3. These decisions may contain the following dangers:—

(a) There may be serious delay in developing Colonial manpower in war, due to lack of financial provision and to loss of War Office control in peace.

(b) Financial stringency may result in a whittling away of Colonial forces until they are no longer capable of ensuring local internal security.

(c) If the situation in (b) above does develop it would become essential to increase our peacetime strategic reserve in order to deal with Colonial troubles. This would involve the re-organisation of the British Army and a possible increase in its strength.

4. There is no net provision for Colonial forces in Army Estimates 1949/50. We are faced with a possible reduction of the Defence Budget in future years, which would make provision for Colonial forces still more difficult.

5. A potentially serious internal security situation exists to a greater or lesser extent in all our Colonies to-day. To the unrest inevitable [sic] created by the rapid development of backward peoples is added the pressure of Communist inspired agitation and violence and attempts to interfere with the Administering Authority in Trusteeship Territories. In *Malaya* the trouble has broken out in an acute form. Elsewhere it is more or less dormant. An end to this state of affairs is not yet in sight. It is essential to maintain in the Colonies forces adequate to stamp out the sparks of trouble before they become a conflagration.

6. In addition to these potential internal troubles the world is faced with the ever present danger of a major war. The whole Commonwealth should be organised to meet this danger, and I am sure that the Colonies would wish to play their part to the full extent of their powers.

7. The Prime Minister has suggested that the Internal Security problem could be met at a considerable saving in cost by the substitution of our present Colonial forces by a type of gendarmerie. Experience has however shown the need of properly organised military forces which can be called in, in case of need, in support of the police; and that these forces must be quite separate from the police and freed from

the normal day to day police contact with the population. It is clear also that if colonial forces were limited to gendarmerie there would be a very serious delay indeed before they could be converted and expanded to play their part overseas in a major war. I also believe that it will be in the best interests of economy and of individual colonies if control of their forces is exercised in peace, as far as land forces are concerned, by the War Office through the normal channels of Commanders-in-Chief.

8. I consider it essential that we should be able to use Colonial manpower from the very beginning of a war. As I have indicated above, I believe that the colonies will wish to provide military forces, in the interests of the British Commonwealth and Empire as a whole, which, while serving the colonies' interests in peace, should be so constituted that they could be placed rapidly and smoothly on to a war basis. East and West Africa are our main potential sources of Colonial manpower in a major war. Their importance, now that the resources of *India* can not be relied on with certainty, is obvious. Existing forces are so organised that they could expand on the outbreak of war to provide some eight battalions for L of C duties in the Middle East theatre within the first six months. These battalions are essential to our plans, but could not be removed from their home countries until replacement units, adequate for internal security duties had been raised in their place. Subsequently we could hope to develop in these areas much larger forces for use in operations.

9. A statement of the Colonial forces, present and planned, is given at Appendix "A".<sup>1</sup> These forces are those which have been recommended by Commanders-in-Chief as being the minimum necessary to meet the demands of internal security and local defence.

10. The cost is clearly more than can be met by the Colonies themselves. The composition of the East and West African forces is being examined and I believe that some reduction of cost might be possible, while still leaving them capable of fulfilling the role required of them. But it is obvious that there is a considerable gap to be filled. If a decision is not made now that this gap shall be filled many of our colonial forces will disintegrate.

11. I believe that we should put this problem before the Defence Committee. There is no money available in Defence estimates for colonial forces, nor can we give up anything in future years in order to make such provision. We should request Ministers to state clearly that either:—

(a) The cost of Colonial forces at roughly their present strength and organisation will be met, and that this cost will not be in diminution of the Defence Vote for this or future years, or

(b) They accept the disintegration of the Colonial forces into a form of gendarmerie and the consequent long delay in their use in any future war.

12. The War Office has sufficient information at its disposal for Ministers to be provided, without reference to Commanders in Chief overseas, with a clear statement of what is at stake regarding land forces. I expect that other Ministries are in the same situation. I recommend that the Joint Planning Staff should be instructed to co-ordinate this statement urgently and to produce it in a form suitable for tabling before the Defence Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendixes A and B not printed.

13. There are however, three urgent cases on which a decision is required immediately: The expansion of the *Malay* Regiment, the provision of a third battalion of the Gold Coast Regiment, and the provision of a Cypriot Anti-Aircraft Regiment. Details of these cases are given at Appendix 'B' (attached) and I hope that my colleagues will feel able to agree that action on these cases can proceed immediately without waiting for the over-all report by the Joint Planning Staff.

#### *Recommendations*

I recommend that the Chiefs of Staff should:—

- (a) Agree that it is most desirable to maintain Colonial Forces adequate to ensure internal security in peace and so designed as to be able to expand rapidly and smoothly in war.
- (b) Instruct the Joint Planning Staff to prepare urgently a statement on the lines set out in this paper, and in a form suitable for presentation to the Defence Committee, of the problem which now faces the Commonwealth in relation to the Colonial Forces of all three Services.
- (c) Invite Services Ministries to provide the Joint Planning Staff as soon as possible with the necessary information.
- (d) Agree to request the Minister of Defence to advise the Colonial Secretary that he would most strongly support:—
  - (i) The formation of the 4th Battalion The Malay Regt. in 1949 as already recommended.
  - (ii) The formation at once of the 3rd Battalion of the Gold Coast Regiment.
  - (iii) The formation at once of one LAA Regiment from the cadre still remaining of the Cyprus Regiment.

### **331** DEFE 4/20, COS 43(49)4

18 Mar 1949

'Regional defence of Africa': COS Committee minutes on discussions with South Africa. *Annex*: report of JPS to COS (JP(49)18), 10 Mar

*The Committee* considered an appreciation by the Joint Planning Staff on the Regional Defence of Africa which had been prepared as a basis for discussion with the South African Military staffs. The Committee were informed that the Report had already been examined by the Joint Intelligence Committee in accordance with recommendation 6(c) and the Joint Intelligence Committee had reported that it was impracticable to draw any distinction between the security of Service staffs and Ministers in South Africa. The security risk of giving the paper to them would be slight and—subject to the views of the Commonwealth Relations Office—was outweighed by the desirability of using the report to promote defence discussions with South Africa.

There was general agreement with the Annex to the Report subject to the following minor amendments:—

Second sentence of paragraph 26, delete words "also" and "probably".

Paragraph 27, add new sentence after ". . . . in the early months of war." "It is hoped that South Africa will be able to indicate that assistance might be given in

North Africa with fighter, tactical and transport aircraft.”  
 Paragraph 33(c), delete the word “naval”.

*The Committee:—*

- (1) Approved the Annex to the report by the Joint Planning Staff, subject to the amendments above.
- (2) Instructed the Secretary to send it to the Commonwealth Relations Office with the request that Sir Evelyn Baring might be asked whether the paper was in a form suitable for its purpose.
- (3) Subject to (2) above, approved the paper as a basis for future planning discussions with the South African Military staff.

Annex to 331

The object of this paper is to provide a basis for discussion between the party of United Kingdom officers visiting South Africa and Service representatives of the Union. It is proposed that after these discussions each party should independently put forward their views to their own Service authorities for submission to Ministers for approval.

2. In preparing our appreciation we have taken into account the reply made by the Government of the Union of South Africa to the Recommendations drawn up at the Prime Ministers' Conference in November, 1948, in which it is stated:—

*“Recommendation 6. . . . The Union Government have accepted the principle of collaboration in regional defence and have endorsed the defence policy underlying Western Union and the Atlantic Pact . . .”.*

3. Before discussing the United Kingdom concept for the regional defence of Africa we recapitulate the salient points of the defence policy underlying the Western Union and the Atlantic Pact, with particular reference to the impact of the proposed Allied strategy in war upon the defence of Africa.

*The threat to world security*

4. The threat from Soviet Russia was described in the paper on “The World Situation and its Defence Aspects”<sup>1</sup> tabled by the United Kingdom Government at the recent Prime Ministers' Conference.

As stated in that paper Russia is the only country which might threaten our interests to such an extent that it would be necessary to go to war. The fundamental aim of the Soviet leaders is to impose Soviet communism on all parts of the world. They would prefer to bring this about by means short of war. Russia will, however, resort to war if she considers her vital interests threatened, or when she is ready if she fails to achieve her aims by other methods.

5. We consider that though Russia does not intend to get embroiled deliberately in a major war for some years to come, there is always a chance that war might result from a miscalculation on her part as to the reactions of the Western Powers to her policy. The warning period under these circumstances would be short.

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<sup>1</sup> See 326.

6. It should clearly be the aim of all non-communist countries throughout the world to concert measures to counter the communist threat both in peace and in war.

*Allied defence policy*

7. Provided our vital interests are not prejudiced, the primary aim of Allied defence policy must be to prevent war.

Essential steps to prevent war are:—

(a) To convince the Soviet Union that war is unprofitable by showing that the Allies possess powerful forces and resources and are fully prepared not only to fight but also to act offensively from the outset. To this end all interested countries should collaborate in organising the necessary forces, in building up effective defences and in working out the necessary plans.

(b) To take all possible action short of war, not only to arrest the further spread of Communism, but also to weaken the hold of Russia on countries she now dominates.

8. Allied defence policy must, however, allow for war being forced upon us. The Allies must therefore agree in peace to plans both to meet a sudden emergency and for war in the long term. The defences of a particular region can often best be ensured if more detailed plans are agreed by those countries most directly concerned with the security of that region.

*Allied strategic concept for war against Russia*

9. Should war be forced upon us the Allied war aims will be:—

(a) To ensure the abandonment by Russia of further military and ideological aggression.

(b) To create conditions conducive to world peace.

10. If we are to achieve these aims we must first destroy the will and ability of the Soviet to fight. The resources of Russia and her satellites are, however, so vast that the Allies can never hope to do this unless they all make the maximum possible effort to fulfil one agreed strategy.

11. There are three ways of achieving this aim:—

(a) By destroying the enemy on land. To do this would mean fighting the Russians under conditions most favourable to her, where she has great numerical superiority and where she will fight best.

(b) By blockade. Russia will, however, shortly be self-sufficient in all essentials.

(c) By direct air attack on Russia. This is the only feasible means of achieving our aim.

It will, at the same time, be essential to defeat the enemy's onslaught against areas vital to us.

12. We therefore consider the military measures to achieve our war aim to be:—

(a) to launch an air offensive against Russia and her satellites;

(b) to hold securely the air bases and sea areas essential for launching this air offensive;

- (c) to defend the Allied main support areas, and certain other areas the retention of which is vital to our strategy:
- (d) to control the sea communications essential for the security and development of the above bases and areas.

### *Africa's place in allied strategy*

13. *Egypt.* One of the three main air bases for mounting the strategic air offensive will be Egypt. In addition Egypt is the only country so situated geographically and with the necessary manpower, communications and facilities that it can provide a base for forces defending the strategic airfields and the land approach to the African continent.

For these reasons the security of Egypt is essential both to the Allied strategic concept and to the land defence of the African continent.

14. *Main support area.* One of the main support areas needed for the Allied war economy will be southern Africa, of which the keystone will be the Union of South Africa.

15. The most important sources of raw materials in southern Africa, outside the Union itself, are in the Belgian Congo and the Rhodesias. Raw materials from these latter countries of particular importance to the Allied war effort include uranium, copper and cobalt.

Industrial development and the reserves of white manpower are centred mainly in the Union and to a lesser extent in Southern Rhodesia.

The Portuguese territories of Angola and Mozambique are of importance because the Belgian Congo and the Rhodesias are dependent upon their ports and rail communications for economical access to the sea. At present there are no satisfactory communications between the Rhodesias and the East African territories.

As the principal factors to be considered when deciding the extent of the support area are economic resources and communications, we consider that the main support area of southern Africa should be defined as that part of Africa which includes the Belgian Congo, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Mozambique and all territories to the southward.

16. *Sea communications.* The control of sea communications in the Mediterranean, particularly in the early stages of the war, and in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans will be of the greatest importance to the Allied strategy. The Cape sea route will be used by all shipping between the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans which is not needed to support the defence of Egypt and the Middle East. We hope to secure the Mediterranean sea route, but should it be cut at any time the Middle East campaign would also have to rely on the Cape sea route.

### *Threat to Africa*

#### *Land threat*

17. *Egypt.* The only way in which Russia, primarily a land power, could hope to establish herself in Africa would be through Egypt. The retention of that country in Allied hands is therefore essential in order to block the only practicable land approach by large forces into the African continent.

18. We believe that at the outbreak of war, the Russians will undertake a major

land campaign in the Middle East directed against Egypt with the following objects:—

- (a) to give depth to the defence of Southern Russia;
- (b) to deny the Allies the use of strategic air bases;
- (c) to capture the Middle East oil;
- (d) to cut the Allied sea and air communications through Egypt and to establish a bridgehead for communist penetration into Africa.

19. Simultaneously the Russians will attack Italy and Greece with the object of occupying bases from which to cut our Mediterranean sea route and threaten North Africa.

20. Once established in Egypt, the Russians would be well placed to complete the domination of the whole of North Africa. The rest of Africa would then be largely isolated and its chances of resisting eventual communisation would be small.

#### *Air threat*

21. The only part of Africa which will initially be exposed to an air threat will be Egypt and the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

#### *Sea threat*

22. The threat to the sea routes in African waters outside the Mediterranean from submarines or from surface raiders employed either in minelaying or in direct attacks on shipping will be negligible whilst the Russians are held in the Middle East. Should the Russians overrun the Middle East or Western Europe, however, a small threat may develop.

#### *Internal security threat*

23. Provided North Africa is successfully defended the only threat to the rest of Africa will be internal. Both before and after the outbreak of war, the Communists will continue subversive activities, primarily amongst the non-European population, throughout Africa. Should the enemy gain possession of Egypt, the communist prestige and influence in the rest of Africa would be greatly increased.

#### *Conclusion*

24. We therefore consider that the security of Africa depends upon:—

- (a) the successful defence of Egypt;
- (b) the successful defence of sea communications, especially the Mediterranean;
- (c) the maintenance of internal security.

### *The defence of Africa*

#### *Egypt and Mediterranean sea communications: defence plans*

25. *Short term.* The United Kingdom is planning to make a major effort to ensure the defence of the Middle East and sea communications in the short term.

Our examination of forces likely to be available in the next few years has shown that the best we can hope to achieve is the defence of Egypt itself. In order to build up our forces for this we consider it will be essential to keep the Mediterranean sea route

open for at least the first six months of the war. The security of the Mediterranean sea route and the defence of North Africa may of necessity have to be undertaken by forces deployed only along the North African shore and in Malta.

A critical stage in the land battle for the Middle East is likely to be reached after two or three months. Shortly thereafter the enemy threat in the Central Mediterranean may become acute. The issue of both campaigns, and with it the security of Africa, will depend therefore upon the scale and speed of build-up of the land and air forces which all nations interested in the defence of Africa can contribute in the early months of the war.

26. *Long term.* Our examination of the long term problem is still in its initial stages. Our aim, however, is to give considerably greater depth to the defence of Egypt, and also to secure the Middle East oil resources which by then will probably be essential. The ability of the Allies to do this will depend entirely upon the speed at which they can build up their forces, and the extent to which they can delay the enemy advance by air action.

27. *Assistance from the Union.* It is suggested that without in any way committing the Government of the Union of South Africa to the despatch of forces, it would be most valuable to know if the Union might be able to make any contribution towards the defence of the Middle East and Mediterranean sea communications, particularly in the early months of war. The great advantage of this would be that detailed examinations could be made of the logistic problems involved in moving forces to the Middle East area, and in deploying and maintaining them there.

#### *Defence of sea communications outside the Mediterranean*

28. As stated above the threat to sea communications in African waters outside the Mediterranean will be small, at any rate initially. At this stage it should only be necessary for shipping to sail in escorted convoys in the Red Sea and off the West coast of Africa as far south as Freetown. Cruisers and patrol groups, including air reconnaissance, might be required to cover the remainder of the route.

We consider that ports will prove to be the most vulnerable link in sea communications since their efficient operation can be jeopardised both by external attack (mine-laying) and by internal subversive action and sabotage. The maintenance of internal security has already been discussed above.

The organisation of mine countermeasures at all ports, including provision of minesweepers, will be essential whilst any threat exists. The Powers in whose territories or colonies the ports lie will be expected to undertake this commitment.

29. *Assistance by forces of the Union.* Owing to the Allied shortage of escort vessels and minesweepers, possibly resulting in inability to meet all commitments in African waters, the Union could make an important contribution to regional defence by developing a navy comprising mainly these types of ship.

Similarly, assistance by South African maritime aircraft in controlling sea communications in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans would be most valuable.

#### *Maintenance of internal security*

30. We assume that local defence and internal security will be the responsibility of the Sovereign Power concerned.

*Role of the Union in war*

31. In the light of the above it is suggested that the most effective role that the Union might play in war is as shown below.

*Defence of Egypt, North Africa and the Mediterranean*

32. Africa's place in Allied strategy has already been stated. From this it is clear that so long as the security of Egypt and North Africa can be maintained, the only threat to the rest of the continent will be from communist subversive elements.

It follows therefore that, having provided the necessary forces for internal security duties, it is in the interests of all nations concerned to concert plans now for the defence of Egypt, North Africa and the Mediterranean.

*Support area*

33. The strategic requirements which the Allies, and in particular the United Kingdom, would hope to obtain from southern Africa as a main support area in war as as follows:—

- (a) Co-operation in the development of resources by the Union and territories of South Africa.
- (b) Co-operation by the southern African industries with the Allied war economy.
- (c) Storage facilities for Naval strategic reserves for the Middle East in peacetime.
- (d) Refitting and docking facilities.

Normal facilities will be needed at all major ports in Africa for warships and merchant ships. As in the past the Allies, and in particular the United Kingdom, would wish to rely extensively on the docking and refitting facilities at Simons-town, Durban and Cape Town. When aircraft carriers are taken in hand, there will be a requirement for airfields in the vicinity of the Cape and Durban, for the accommodation and training of disembarked carrier air groups.

- (e) Training and transit facilities for personnel.

In any future war it is likely to be even less practicable than in the past to train reserves of manpower in the United Kingdom. This applies particularly to the training of aircrews.

The R.A.F. already possesses training facilities in Southern Rhodesia in peace. Similar facilities in South Africa might be of great value in war.

Hospitals and transit centres in South Africa for Allied personnel will also be especially valuable, particularly should the Mediterranean sea route be closed to us.

- (f) Base facilities for maritime aircraft.

*War production*

34. If material progress is to be made in peace in improving the state of preparedness of the forces, a co-ordinated plan of armament and supply is essential.

We understand that a separate approach on the subject of armament productions and supply is being made through the United Kingdom High Commissioner in South Africa with a view to establishing the necessary machinery for consultation. In general we hope that the Union will be able to provide much of its own requirements for armaments and supply and that in certain items it will be able to make a contribution to the support of the campaigns in North Africa.

*Summary*

35. The retention in Allied hands of Egypt and the North African shore will be vital to the security of the African continent in time of war.

36. So long as these areas are held the only threat to the rest of Africa will come from communist-inspired subversive activities.

37. The United Kingdom is already engaged in co-ordinating both short and long term plans for the defence of Egypt and the North African shore and Mediterranean sea communications. These plans cannot be completed without the co-operation of all nations which have a major interest in the defence of Africa.

38. We hope that the Union of South Africa will assist in the regional defence of the African continent in the following ways:—

- (a) play her part as the keystone of the main support area of southern Africa;
- (b) contribute so far as her other commitments allow to the forces required to defend the Middle East, North Africa and the Mediterranean;
- (c) assist in controlling sea communications in African waters.

**332** CAB 129/37/1, CP(49)209

19 Oct 1949

'The Middle East': Cabinet memorandum by Mr Bevin: some general reflections on policy

[Extract]

In this paper I set out, for the information of my colleagues, some general reflections on foreign policy in the Middle East, which for the present purpose is regarded as including Greece, Turkey, the Arab countries, Persia, the Persian Gulf, Israel, Egypt and Cyrenaica.

*Economic importance*

1. The Middle East, and particularly the oil-producing countries and Egypt (cotton), is an area of cardinal importance to the economic recovery of the United Kingdom and Western Europe. It is hoped that by 1951 82 per cent. of our oil supplies will be drawn from the Middle East (as compared with 23 per cent. in 1938), and this will present the largest single factor in balancing our overseas payments. If we failed to maintain our position in the Middle East the plans for our economic recovery and future prosperity would fail.

2. Increased agricultural production in the Middle East, for which major enterprises, including the Nile Waters Scheme and the Irrigation and Flood Control Schemes in Iraq, are now being concerted, is also an essential factor in the problem of world food supply. This is already inadequate and is in danger of being outstripped by the increase in population, especially in the Middle East and Asiatic countries. (As examples, the population of Egypt is increasing by about 300,000 a year and the population of India and Pakistan by about 5 million a year.)

*Strategic importance*

3. The Middle East is important strategically because it shields Africa; is a key centre of land and sea communications; and contains large supplies of oil, particularly in Persia, the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Above all, in the event

of attack on the British Isles, it is one of the principal areas from which offensive air action can be taken against the aggressor. The strategic key to this area is Egypt, to which there is no practical alternative as a main base.

4. If the Middle East is to be denied to an enemy in war-time, at least two conditions are necessary:—

- (a) Certain peace-time facilities which include the maintenance of airfields and stores.
- (b) Goodwill of the inhabitants.

5. It is also extremely desirable that we should possess the right of entry or reinforcement in case of apprehended emergency. Otherwise we might be obliged to enter or reinforce certain countries either without right or too late.

#### *General conclusion from the above*

6. The desire of His Majesty's Government is accordingly that the Middle East should be stable, prosperous and friendly, and to have defence arrangements with some or all Middle East countries which will afford the best prospect of being able to deny as much as possible of the Middle East to an enemy in time of war. This is the established policy of His Majesty's Government, who have accepted the thesis that the security of the Middle East is vital to the security of the United Kingdom.

#### *The United States*

7. It must be recognised that it would be impossible for His Majesty's Government to hold the Middle East in a major war without the assistance of the United States. It is therefore necessary not merely that the United Kingdom and the United States should not be rivals in the Middle East, working one against the other, but that the two countries should as far as possible have a common policy.

8. Apart from the problem of Palestine, American policy towards the Middle East has for some time past been crystallising on lines similar to our own. In particular there is a common approach to the problems of Greece, Turkey and Persia, to defence, and to the promotion of social and economic advancement. The United States Government has undertaken to help His Majesty's Government to maintain their position in the Middle East. On Palestine alignment of policy is now much nearer.

#### *Danger of communism*

9. Communist influence has recently been extended over a large part of China. There is a grave risk of its further extension into South-East Asia. If the Middle East were also to fall under Communist control the cause of the democratic countries would suffer a crippling blow. The economic recovery of the United Kingdom and Western Europe would be gravely affected. The way would be opened for the spread of Communism into Africa. The position of Turkey, Greece and Italy would be largely undermined. The ability of Russia to wage a successful war against the West would be greatly increased. The defence of the United Kingdom in the event of war would be compromised.

10. But we must face the fact that many of the conditions which favoured the extension of Communism in China exist in the Middle East. Communism has thriven best on ignorance, misery and poverty. His Majesty's Government were largely

responsible for the emergence of most of the Middle East countries as independent and self-governing peoples. But the transition from centuries of Turkish misrule to self-government under modern world conditions is a difficult one. Corruption, inefficiency and poverty are still endemic. The standard of living of the mass of the people is appallingly low, and the contrast with the wealth of the small and selfish ruling classes is glaring. In spite of the contradiction between the principles of the Moslem Religion and of Communism, there are almost classic opportunities for Communist agitation by the exploitation of hardship, chaos and discontent.

11. To prevent the Middle East falling behind the iron curtain must be a major objective of our policy and, therefore, merits a high priority in effort and contribution.

#### *Economic effort*

12. A review is at present being undertaken of social and economic development in the Arab countries and Persia.

#### *Strategic policy*

##### *Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan*

13. His Majesty's Government have Treaties of Alliance with Egypt (expiring in 1956), Iraq (expiring in 1957 with right of review in 1952) and Transjordan (expiring in 1968). These Treaties provide for the stationing of certain minimum forces in peace-time, the right of entry in an apprehended emergency and the provision of facilities in war-time. It must be noted that these Treaties are not permanent, and that the Treaties with Egypt and Iraq expire at dates which are particularly awkward in terms of Russian preparedness.

14. Discussions with Egypt for defence arrangements on a different basis are now being held. But it must not be assumed that they will be successful.

##### *Saudi Arabia*

15. King Ibn Saud has suggested a tripartite Treaty with Britain and the United States. Neither the Americans nor we ourselves have taken any final decision.

##### *Syria and the Lebanon*

16. Syria and the Lebanon have recently thrown out feelers to the United States and to ourselves about defence arrangements.

##### *Turkey*

17. The Anglo-French-Turkish Treaty of 19th October, 1939, remains in force until October 1954. Although it is not strictly applicable in present circumstances, all three signatories regard it as being still valid, and it is the keystone of Turkish foreign policy. Article 2 of the Treaty imposes obligations on the United Kingdom and France on the one hand, and on Turkey on the other, to lend "all aid and assistance in their power" to the other party should it become involved in a war in the Mediterranean area arising from an act of aggression by a European Power. Under an attached protocol Turkey is expressly released from her obligations under the Treaty should the action she is called upon to take be liable to involve her in armed conflict with the Soviet Union, but this protocol in no way affects the

obligation of the United Kingdom to come to the assistance of Turkey if attacked by the Soviet Union.

18. In accordance with President Truman's Declaration of 12th March, 1947, the United States grant military and economic aid to Turkey. There are 163 British and 321 American naval, military and air force instructors (officers and other ranks) in Turkey.

#### *Greece*

19. Greece is also receiving military and economic assistance from the United States Government in accordance with the Declaration made by President Truman of March 1947.

20. American and British naval, military and air force missions assist in the training of the Greek armed forces; in addition a brigade of British troops is stationed in Athens and Salonica to stabilise Greek morale. For the past three years a British police mission has organised the Greek police and security forces.

21. Neither the Greek nor the Turkish Government is completely satisfied with the declaration in paragraphs 22 and 23 below : they are anxious to have something more binding by way of defence agreements with the United Kingdom and the United States.

#### *Turkey, Greece and Persia*

22. On 18th March, 1949, I included the following in my statement in the House of Commons, at the time of the publication of the draft terms of the Atlantic Pact:—  
 “. . . Finally, although a North Atlantic Pact obviously cannot be extended to cover all parts of the world, nevertheless the area from Greece to Persia includes many countries with whom we have had special and long-standing relationships. The maintenance of their independence and integrity remains our vital concern, and we believe that the signature of the North Atlantic Pact will reinforce their general security. Here I should like to make a special reference to our relations with our ally Turkey and with our old and faithful friend, Greece, both of whom with our active assistance, are making the most strenuous efforts to defend their independence and integrity. Our actions in supporting that independence and integrity are clear expressions of our interests in the security of those countries, and represent a policy we shall continue to pursue . . .”.

23. In March 1947 Truman declared:—

“The national integrity of Turkey is essential to the preservation of order in the Middle East.”

An Agreement on Aid to Turkey was signed in July 1947 between the Turkish and United States Governments. On 18th March, 1949, Mr. Acheson, introducing the text of the Atlantic Pact, said:—

“. . . It is our policy to help free peoples to maintain their integrity and independence, not only in Western Europe or in the Americas, but wherever the aid we are able to provide can be effective. Our actions in supporting the integrity and independence of Greece, Turkey and Iran are expressions of that determination. Our interest in the security of these countries has been made clear, and we shall continue to pursue that policy.”

#### *General strategic approach*

24. In the event of war there is no alternative to the use of Egypt as the main

base. Cyrenaica and Transjordan can afford adjuncts but not a substitute. Airfields are important in Iraq and desirable elsewhere, particularly in Saudi Arabia, in Dhahran (where there is a United States airfield), and in Cyprus. Air warning facilities and possibly airfield and port facilities are desirable in Syria and the Lebanon. The United States wish for a fighter base in Tripolitania or Cyrenaica.

#### *Problems of defence*

25. It is for consideration whether the objective of preventing the Middle East from falling under Communist domination would be promoted by the conclusion either of a Middle East Pact somewhat on the lines of the Atlantic Pact, or alternatively by some other and new form of treaty or agreements.

...

#### *Conclusions*

56. The desirability of a Middle East Pact must be judged in the light of our objective of a strong, prosperous and friendly Middle East bound to us by adequate defence arrangements. This objective can be pursued, and, we may hope, obtained by a number of alternative means such as the promotion of economic co-operation, and defence or other negotiations with individual countries or groups of countries. It is by no means clear whether the conclusion of a Middle East Pact would be the best means of promoting our objective, although in spite of the difficulties it might prove to be so. We ought to be able to judge of this better if and when the Atlantic Pact is passed by the United States Senate, and when, as we hope may happen in the near future, some general agreement is reached between Israel and her neighbours. Meanwhile, we should continue to pursue our objective by whatever individual negotiations we may find possible, maintaining an open mind about a Middle East Pact. We should, however, keep clearly in view the point that a Middle East Pact modelled on the Atlantic Pact would, to meet our requirements, have to be supplemented by additional bilateral or multilateral defence arrangements. We should also bear in mind the possibility either of an African Pact or of a Middle East Pact extended to include African countries.

**333** CAB 131/7, DO(49)89

30 Dec 1949

'Defence burdens and the Commonwealth': memorandum by Mr

Noel-Baker (CRO) for Cabinet Defence Committee

[Extract]

Recent discussions in the Defence Committee regarding the size and shape of the United Kingdom's Armed Forces have raised the question of the contributions which are being or could be made by the other members of the Commonwealth to the common purpose of defence. There have also been suggestions in the press that some Commonwealth countries are not bearing an adequate share of this burden. It is perhaps not fully realised what other Commonwealth countries are actually doing in regard to Defence, and, in the public mind, there may be some misunderstanding of the nature of the Commonwealth. It may therefore be useful to review the present position and to consider if there are any ways in which more can be done, and, if so, how we should go about it.

2. The Minister of Defence has made some comments on this subject (see paragraph 4 (h) of his paper D.O. (49) 66). I should like to quote them here as they seem to me to go to the root of the matter: "It is often tempting to think, when an effort is called for, that 'the other fellow' is not pulling his weight. So it is with the Dominions. We have given them, and shall continue to give them, every encouragement to develop their forces . . . . But while we can encourage the free countries of the Commonwealth to develop their defence forces, we cannot command them." . . .

### *Commonwealth strategy*

. . .

6. For obvious historical and geographical reasons, public opinion in the overseas Commonwealth countries does not accept the same degree of responsibility for overseas defence commitments as the people of the United Kingdom have long been accustomed to bear. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa all came into the 1939–45 war spontaneously within a week of the United Kingdom, and gave us massive support both in this and the 1914–18 war. The tradition of giving active support to the United Kingdom in real emergency is a psychological asset of enormous value. Nevertheless, it is clear that (with the shining exception of New Zealand) the old Commonwealth countries have not yet come to think that it is their duty to develop adequate forces for their own local defence in peacetime, and to make their full contribution towards wider Commonwealth defence against external aggression. In other words, they still subconsciously rely in large measure on the Royal Navy and on the United Kingdom taxpayer.

7. The causes of this attitude are complex. In Canada and South Africa it is certainly due in part to the presence of substantial non-British elements. The latest figures show that in Canada people of French and other non-British stock make up just over half the whole population. In South Africa, the Afrikaans-speaking element out-number British and other European elements by 56 per cent. to 44 per cent. The French Canadians and the Afrikaners do not in a crisis share the instinctive feeling of loyalty to Great Britain which is shown by their fellow-citizens of British stock; if they are to be persuaded to incur sacrifices for defence, it must be shown that these sacrifices are necessary in their own interests.

8. To bring the Governments and peoples of the other Commonwealth countries to a realisation of the importance of making greater contributions to the common defence is a difficult and delicate process, requiring tact and patience. Moreover, owing to the development of modern weapons, the United Kingdom is potentially more vulnerable than in the past; its dependence on oversea supplies—and therefore on the sale of its exports—is greater than ever; it is plain that, in a world war, the members of the Commonwealth cannot now be confident that the Commonwealth shield will *by itself*<sup>1</sup> be adequate for their protection. In other words, outside assistance will all too probably be necessary both to offset the disadvantages of geographical dispersion, and to augment the industrial capacity, resources and man-power of the Commonwealth countries. But, conversely, if they have the assurance of such outside assistance, the members of the Commonwealth can, and in all probability will, make an effective and adequate contribution to defence against

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<sup>1</sup> Emphasis throughout in original.

aggression, whether by the U.S.S.R. or by some other foe. A contribution by India or Pakistan cannot be expected until the Kashmir dispute has been settled.

9. Thus it was precisely because the United States and other foreign countries were prepared to join in the North Atlantic Treaty that Canada felt able to give us the guarantee she now has under that document. Much the same is true of Australia and South Africa. The former Australian Government publicly indicated that they would welcome the conclusion of a Pacific Pact, but recognised that such a pact would be incomplete without the United States. As for the Union of South Africa, Dr. Malan, when he was here in April, similarly emphasised his conviction that South Africa was essential to the successful working of the Atlantic Pact, and expressed his hope that *in some way South Africa might soon be brought into the collective system*. It is natural for small countries to seek reassurance as to their own defence, if they are asked to send forces outside their borders; and in present circumstances this reassurance, both in Africa and in the Pacific, can only be given effectively if the United States come in.

10. For this reason, the other Commonwealth countries may not be willing to commit themselves in advance to the defence contributions of which they are capable, except as signatories of an international treaty or treaties against aggression. The North Atlantic Treaty, which has enabled us to establish such a promising basis of co-operation with Canada, is an example of this general truth; it provides a pattern for the sort of structure within which the defence efforts of the other Commonwealth countries also can most effectively be applied. But at present there are serious difficulties in the making of other similar pacts. The United States Government are not yet prepared to ask Congress for further military commitments, whether in the Middle East, the Indian Ocean or the Pacific. The Government of India has not yet freed itself from Pandit Nehru's repeated pledges that he will keep clear of "*blocs*". As for South Africa, we have hitherto thought that it would be unwise to ask the United States to let her come in, until the present North Atlantic group is more firmly organised and established. But we should not let these difficulties obscure our long-term objective, which must be to get the other members of the Commonwealth to join in new regional international pacts, with United States support, as and when such pacts become practical politics.

11. This is a long-term task, and progress may be delayed. While we should take every appropriate opportunity of persuading the United States to associate herself more closely with defence planning in every area which is of Commonwealth concern, we should also seize any chance that offers of getting the Commonwealth Governments concerned to undertake defence commitments.

12. In fact, we are faced by this dilemma : we shall not secure United States assistance unless the United States Government can be satisfied that Commonwealth countries are themselves prepared to make a genuine contribution: but it will be difficult to obtain Commonwealth commitments until the Commonwealth Governments feel that they have some reinsurance for their own defence, by the promise of American help in case of need.

13. The only way out of this dilemma is to take every opportunity to convince, say, Australia, that in any future war her defence will depend on battles to be fought far from her shores, and that, therefore, it is in her interest to pledge herself to send her forces wherever they may be required. We must persuade her that, while we are waiting for the United States to agree to become a party to Regional Pacts, it is

dangerous to do nothing; whether the United States agrees or not, Australia needs larger forces, and her defence position will be stronger, the more closely she works with us. Every step towards collective defence against aggression, whether within the Commonwealth, or in wider international treaties, will, *pro tanto*, increase the chances of *preventing* war, and of emerging victorious, if war should come.

*Action with other Commonwealth governments*

14. I doubt whether any simultaneous and uniform appeal to *all* other Commonwealth countries to do more, for example at a specially summoned Defence Conference, would be the best method of achieving our aim. Commonwealth Governments do not relish being lumped together. While there may be scope for regional discussions between two or more Commonwealth Governments, the attitude of India and Pakistan alone rules out any collective approach to *all* Commonwealth Governments.

15. There are obvious difficulties in placing the question of defence formally on the agenda for the Colombo meeting. No Defence Ministers will be present and the Commonwealth representatives will not have been briefed on the subject. The Indian press have already noted with approval that there is no Defence representative in the Indian Delegation and the Indian Delegation would resist any attempt to persuade them to accept commitments when they have already made it clear that they will not do so. In any case security is defective in Ceylon, and if there were such a discussion and a leakage occurred, Pandit Nehru would be forced to make a public disclaimer. Nevertheless, opportunities may well arise at Colombo for discussions with selected Commonwealth representatives outside the Conference itself. The Foreign Secretary has it in mind to discuss in a purely informal way, with appropriate Commonwealth representatives the vital importance of the defence of the Middle East and the need for us to be able to rely on the necessary forces being available for the defence and security of the area; I am in full agreement with this suggestion. The purpose of these talks would simply be to focus the views of Commonwealth Ministers on the importance of the problem and on the part that Commonwealth Governments themselves can play; with the hope of inducing them to report suitably to their Prime Ministers when they return home. They would facilitate any detailed follow up action which could be taken later with the countries concerned.

16. But both the form and the substance of any subsequent action must be carefully worked out; in each case the timing, emphasis and method may well be different. For example, we have been strongly advised by our High Commissioner in South Africa that, because of the nationalist ferment generated by the Voortrekker Celebrations, it is undesirable to raise any major questions with South Africa for the next few months. And with India and Pakistan, it would be fruitless to pursue the matter until the general atmosphere has cleared. A promising start has, in fact, been made this year with Australia, New Zealand and South Africa; Joint Planning Teams have been to these three countries, and have had useful discussions on a strictly individual basis. There are various ways in which any talks at Colombo might be followed up: perhaps, at the right moment, visits by a senior officer from the United Kingdom might be arranged; the authority and experience of such an emissary might help to persuade the Governments to widen the scope of the defence planning which, at a lower level, the Joint Planning Teams have already begun.

*Summary of recommendations*

17. To sum up, I recommend:—

(a) that we should adopt as our long-term objective the conclusion of further regional international treaties against aggression, since it is within the framework of such treaties that the defence efforts of the other Commonwealth countries can be developed most effectively. These treaties should ultimately, if possible, include the United States;

(b) that, in the meantime, we should do all we can to persuade the other Commonwealth countries to make larger contributions to the common task of defence, and not to rest on the excuse that United States guarantees are not yet available. In particular, we should emphasise that, in face of the existing Communist menace, further delay in co-ordination of defence plans is dangerous to us all;

(c) that no uniform and simultaneous approach to *all* Commonwealth Governments should be adopted, since this is unlikely to succeed;

(d) that, if suitable opportunities arise, the question of an increased contribution to defence by Commonwealth countries should be raised informally with selected Commonwealth Ministers at the Colombo Conference and that, in the light of any progress made at Colombo, we should consider how best these talks should be followed up.

**334** DEFE 4/27, COS 190(49)1

30 Dec 1949

'Defence burdens and the Commonwealth': COS Committee minutes  
(confidential annex)

*The Committee* had before them:—

(a) A minute by the Secretary covering a draft memorandum<sup>1</sup> by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations on the question of contributions by the Commonwealth countries to Defence, together with a minute by the Secretary circulating certain amendments to this paper.

(b) A minute by the Secretary stating that the Foreign Secretary required the views of the Chiefs of Staff on certain defence matters which he might raise during the Commonwealth Conference at Colombo.

*Mr Wright*<sup>2</sup> said that the Foreign Secretary was considering whether it would be advantageous to hold informal discussions, during the forthcoming Colombo Conference, with certain of the Commonwealth countries with the object of trying to get them to shoulder a larger burden of Commonwealth defence. His intention was to talk informally to the representatives of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and Ceylon, and to put forward certain broad proposals. It would clearly be embarrassing to Mr. Nehru to be associated in any way with defence discussions at the present stage, and for this reason it was considered inadvisable to ask India and

<sup>1</sup> See 333.

<sup>2</sup> M R Wright, FO assistant under-secretary of state.

Pakistan to be present at the informal talks. The Foreign Secretary was considering three possible lines of approach. The first was whether he should try to give an impetus to the planning which had been proceeding on the Service level with Australia, New Zealand and South Africa by endeavouring to get the Governments of these countries to give it their general blessing. The second idea, which the Foreign Secretary was turning over in his mind, was whether it would be desirable to suggest to the Commonwealth countries that they should make some financial contribution to the cost of Commonwealth defence. Thirdly, the Foreign Secretary was considering whether it would be in our interests to propose some form of Regional Pact covering the centre of the world—the Middle East and the Indian Ocean—which would include as members the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and certain Middle East countries, notably Egypt.

*The Committee* next considered in turn each of the three proposals mentioned by Mr. Wright.

### *Planning*

In discussion there was general agreement that it would be greatly to our interest if the Commonwealth countries could be persuaded to give their general approval to the plans which had been agreed on the Service level.

*Mr. Garner*<sup>3</sup> pointed out that it was essential that we should not put the Australian Service authorities in an awkward position with their Government over this matter. The Australian Government were extremely sensitive over this question of planning with the United Kingdom and had stressed that the knowledge that such planning had been taking place should be restricted to the greatest possible extent.

### *Financial contribution*

*Mr. Wright* said that a possible line to take with the Commonwealth countries would be to point out to them that the defence of the Middle East and the control of sea communications through the Canal and the Indian Ocean was of strategic interest to a number of different countries in the Commonwealth, and not only of the United Kingdom. Australia, South Africa and New Zealand might accordingly be asked to make some financial contribution to Commonwealth defence in this area. It might be possible to ask the various countries to subscribe a sum of £60m and this would be devoted to defence expenditure in peacetime in the Middle East or on providing facilities for the control of the sea communications in the area. Assistance from the Commonwealth countries might take the form of contributing towards the maintenance of airfields or to developing telecommunications or other essential services.

In the discussion that followed it was pointed out that whatever form such an arrangement took it would in fact amount to asking the Commonwealth countries to make a direct financial contribution to the United Kingdom Defence Budget. The political repercussions of such a policy would be very considerable, not only in this country, but also throughout the Commonwealth. Furthermore, the proposal would mean that the forces of the United Kingdom would tend to become the hired mercenaries of the Commonwealth, which would be placing us in a most invidious position. It was most unlikely that the Commonwealth countries would agree to make a financial contribution unless they were given a considerable say in shaping

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<sup>3</sup> J S Garner, assistant under-secretary of state, CRO.

our defence policy. This would entail not only a complete re-organisation of the machinery for Commonwealth defence but also a serious restriction on our freedom of action. The Committee were thus strongly opposed to the suggestion that the Commonwealth countries should be asked to contribute financially to our defence.

#### *Regional pact*

*Mr. Garner* said that the Commonwealth Relations Office were of the opinion that it would be difficult to get the Commonwealth countries to enter into any Regional Agreement for the Defence of the Middle East unless they had some reassurance of their own home defence by the promise of American help in case of need.

In discussion it was pointed out that the approach of the Americans to the problems of Europe had been that they were prepared to help those who helped themselves. It was unlikely that the U.S. Authorities would have been willing to join the Atlantic Pact unless the nations of Western Europe had first proclaimed to the world their intention to defend themselves by setting up the Brussels Treaty Organisation. It was considered that the American approach to Regional undertakings in other parts of the world would be on similar lines. The United States were more likely to enter into commitments in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean if there was already in existence some form of Regional organisation. The Committee were therefore of the opinion that our policy should now be to work for the establishment of such a Regional organisation; and that we should not wait until the United States were ready to join it. It was considered that the first step should be to work for some form of Agreement between the Commonwealth countries interested in the security of the Middle East and the sea communications in the surrounding area. This Agreement would entail getting the Commonwealth Governments to endorse the plans which were being made on the Service level for joint action in the event of war. Such an Agreement might be broadened later on by the inclusion of Egypt and certain other Middle East countries. The ultimate aim should be to work for a Regional Pact similar to the Atlantic Pact and Brussels Treaties which would include the United States and all the other interested countries.

#### *Procedure*

In discussion there was general agreement that it would be advantageous for the Foreign Secretary to make an informal approach to certain Commonwealth countries during the course of the Colombo Conference. It was suggested that the approach might be on the following lines. It should be pointed out that the United Kingdom had had to restrict her defence expenditure to the barest minimum, but that we were still bearing a very great share of the burden of Commonwealth Defence. The defence of the Middle East was not only a United Kingdom interest but was also essential to the security of South Africa, Ceylon, Australia and New Zealand. It should therefore be suggested to the Commonwealth Ministers that the countries concerned should enter into a Working Agreement to make certain definite contributions to the defence of the Middle East and the sea communications in the Indian Ocean in the event of war. The Foreign Secretary might explain that planning discussions for the defence of the Middle East had already taken place on the Service level, but that the plans agreed had not yet been formally endorsed by the Commonwealth Governments concerned. It would, of course, be necessary to obtain the permission of the interested countries to disclose this fact. The Working

Agreement would entail a formal endorsement by the Commonwealth Governments of the plans that had been agreed on the Service level. These plans had so far been proceeding on a bilateral basis and it would be an advantage if in future combined planning for the Middle East could take place. The Working Agreement would serve as a framework for a broader arrangement to which other Middle East countries—notably Egypt—would later be asked to subscribe. The eventual aim might well be to conclude a Regional Pact on the lines of the Atlantic Pact of which the United States would be a member. The various Agreements need not be confined to purely strategic matters but should cover the broader aspects of defence, such as war production.

*The Committee* next discussed what the procedure should be to follow up any action taken during the Colombo Conference. It would only be possible for the Foreign Secretary to put forward a proposal of this nature on very broad lines. Thereafter, the Commonwealth Ministers would wish to consult their colleagues before committing themselves. It was unlikely that it would have been possible at the present stage to hold a meeting of Commonwealth Defence Ministers. The High Commissioners of the various countries might meet together in London to discuss the matter, but it was unlikely that they would be in possession of the necessary detailed knowledge of the subject. Alternatively, it might be possible to arrange for a meeting to be held centrally, on the official level, which would be attended by representatives from the various countries who were fully conversant with the issues involved. The Committee considered that the proposal by the Commonwealth Relations Office namely that the general approach at Colombo should be followed by bilateral discussions would probably yield the best dividend. It was considered that the Commonwealth representatives might be asked at Colombo for their views on what would be the best procedure.

*Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations*

It was pointed out that the Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations differed in certain important respects from the views expressed by the Chiefs of Staff as indicated above. For example, there was the question of whether we should proceed now with a Regional Agreement or wait for the United States to join. There was also the point that the Commonwealth Relations Office were opposed to a collective approach to the Commonwealth countries, whereas the Chiefs of Staff were in favour of joint consideration of certain problems.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office to submit a joint Memorandum for consideration by the Far East Ministerial Committee at the same time that they considered the paper by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

*In discussion* the Chiefs of Staff suggested a number of amendments to the draft paper by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations which Mr. Garner undertook to take into account when this paper was being revised.

The Committee:—

Instructed the Secretary to prepare, and circulate for their consideration and for the approval of the Foreign Office, a draft memorandum giving their views on the lines on which Commonwealth defence might be raised at the Commonwealth Conference at Colombo.

**335** DEFE 4/31, COS 70(50)4

2 May 1950

'Strategy and current defence policy in South-East Asia and the Far East': JPS Report (JP(50)47) to COS, 6 Apr 1950

[Extract]

This paper is set out as follows:—

- Part I The strategic importance of South-East Asia and the Far East to the Allies in war
- Part II The Russian threat in Peace
- Part III The present situation and the United Kingdom Policy
- Part IV The action required to arrest the spread of Communism.

*Part I The strategic importance of South-East Asia and the Far East to the Allies in war*

1. The Far East and South-East Asia are interdependent strategically, since a successful defence of sea and air bases in the *Ryukyus* (Okinawa) and Japan should prevent both Russia and Communist China from launching large scale seaborne forces against South-East Asia. This would reduce the principal threat against this area to one of Chinese Communist land forces operating over very long and difficult land lines of communication.

2. *Practicability of defending South-East Asia and the Far East.* The holding of the Philippines, Ryukyus, Japan (less Hokkaido), Malaya and the Aleutians is essential to Allied Strategy. Their defence in war should be within Allied capabilities.

3. Indonesia and Borneo cannot be considered essential to Allied Strategy. Their defence will be ensured by the control of sea and air communications in the theatre as a whole. Adequate internal security forces will, however, be required to ensure the availability of their economic potential to the Allies.

4. The defence of Burma, Siam and Indo-China in a major war will largely depend on the internal security position in these countries. At present they are so unstable as to prejudice any successful defence even if outside assistance is provided. It is therefore of great importance to build up strong and friendly governments in these countries in peace, particularly in Indo-China.

5. Hong Kong would be indefensible in the face of a major power in possession of the mainland. It is, however, our present policy in peace to defend *Hong Kong* against Chinese Communist attack.

6. In the unlikely event of *Formosa* remaining in Chinese Nationalist hands, it would be advantageous to the Allies to occupy it on the outbreak of war as a base for naval and air operations, and to ensure that it is denied to the Communists, provided that such operations did not interfere with our other strategic commitments. If it is already in Communist hands, its recapture would not be worth the major effort required.

*Part II The Russian threat in peace*

7. The Soviet Union is now engaged in spreading Moscow-controlled Communism throughout the world by all means short of a major war. These means include:

- (a) A world-wide campaign of propaganda and subversion aimed at weakening political and economic stability in all countries outside the Russian orbit.
- (b) Covert support for communist minorities, whose object is to seize power.
- (c) The threat of direct intervention by Russian armed forces in support of Russian policy.

#### *Soviet aims in the Far East and South-East Asia*

8. The Soviet aim in peace in the Far East and South-East Asia is to extend Communist domination throughout the area. The strategic effect of this policy is to induce the Allies to deploy forces in the Far East and on the North American continent, and, if fully successful, would eventually deprive the Allies of the resources of South-East Asia and the East Indies.

#### *Policy of Communist China*

9. It is too early to estimate what the policy of Communist China will be, but she may aim at acquiring a dominating influence over territories which have at any time been under Chinese suzerainty, and where there are large Chinese communities.

Such a policy, while it would produce serious defence problems, would not necessarily entail a major war. Inevitably however, these problems will be related to those which would rise in such a war, and Chinese policy must, for the present, be regarded in this light until it appears that there is a change in the outlook of the existing Chinese Government.

10. The establishment of a Communist Government in China has greatly increased the likelihood of Communism spreading into South-East Asia. Unless the Western Powers take preventative action and give effective material support to the indigenous Governments, the countries of South-East Asia will fall under Communist control. Most of such material support can only come from the United States of America.

### *Part III The present situation and United Kingdom policy*

#### *British territories*

11. We discuss below the strategic importance of each British territory, the current internal or external threats and the policy to be adopted in combatting them.

#### *Borneo*

12. British Borneo comprising Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo has considerable potential economic value. However, apart from oil, timber and rubber its resources are so far largely untouched. There is considerable waterpower potential which, in conjunction with bauxite from Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, may allow large scale production of aluminium. A project to establish a large hydro-electric plant is now under consideration. An air survey of parts of the territory has recently been completed. Kuching has an airfield and Labuan (now incorporated in North Borneo) has an airfield, a small deep water harbour and a protected anchorage. There is also a deep water harbour and landing ground at Jesselton and at Sandakan in British North Borneo. These would be of use in establishing control in the China Seas in war.

13. Indigenous labour is scarce and of poor quality, and any large scale

development would have to depend upon imported labour, the most easily available being Chinese. When approval was given for the recruitment of Chinese on short term contracts, it was laid down that immigration must be restricted to screened Chinese from Malaya and Singapore.

14. The population of North Borneo is already over one fifth Chinese and the addition of any substantial number would increase the internal security problem. There is evidence of contact between local Chinese and Chinese Communists in Singapore and Hong Kong and there is some Communist influence in the oil-fields, but there is no evidence that this is growing. The stability of the population of Sarawak may be affected by Dutch Borneo coming under Indonesian control.

15. To meet the needs of internal security, it is important that there should be close liaison between the police forces of the three territories comprising British Borneo and that they should be organised, trained and equipped on a common basis. There is also a need for the constant exchange of information between the local Defence Committees and the police forces. Steps have been taken to ensure this.

### *Hong Kong*

16. Hong Kong has great economic and commercial value in peacetime as a centre of British trade and influence in China. It is an important base for the British Far East Fleet in carrying out its peacetime duties for protecting and furthering British interests in China and the China Seas. To retain these great advantages it is necessary to make it clear that we intend to defend the Colony. So long as it is possible to hold it, Hong Kong should:—

- (a) Provide a focus of political influence and an Intelligence Centre especially in relation to South China.
- (b) Provide an advanced naval and air base.

17. With the occupation of South China by the Communist armies the threat to Hong Kong is greatly increased and the influence of the Chinese Communist Party is steadily increasing in the Colony. It is vital to our plans for halting the spread of Communism in South-East Asia that this threat be firmly resisted, since the loss of Hong Kong would strike a fatal blow at our prestige in the area. For this reason forces have been provided to show that we intend to hold the Colony against internal and external attack by the Chinese Communists.

18. It must not be forgotten that the return of Hong Kong will be an aim of any Government of China, whatever its political leaning, and that Russia is likely to exploit this. The Chinese Communists, possibly with some Russian air and naval assistance and technical advice, might well be able to mount an overwhelming attack on the Colony, but this is by no means certain. Events in the next few years should enable the threat to Hong Kong to be more accurately gauged.

Retention of Hong Kong is not essential in a world war. In a war with Russia it would not be sound strategy to retain in the Colony forces capable of defending it against external attack on more than a small scale. Nevertheless, although its military importance is small, the loss of Hong Kong would have grave political and morale implications in Asia. Our policy is therefore to remain in the Colony as long as possible, but the degree of defence which can be achieved will depend on our strategic requirements in other theatres.

*Malaya*

19. Malaya is the only territory in South-East Asia which has been developed as a base for the British forces on which we rely to defend our interests in the area. It gives depth to the defence of Australia and New Zealand. Singapore is a focal point in sea and air communications in South-East Asia. It is a very good naval base and will have excellent air base facilities if present plans are fulfilled.

20. Our strategic requirements in Malaya are:—

(a) To retain Singapore as:—

(i) A base from which to operate forces to control the sea routes between South-East Asia and Australia and between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

(ii) A link in Commonwealth sea and air communications.

(b) To station in the area the necessary forces to:—

(i) Ensure the security of Malaya with its raw materials, and the base in Singapore.

(ii) Uphold British interests throughout the Far East.

21. Malaya is the greatest producer of natural rubber and tin ore in the world and a valuable source of vegetable oils; production of all these commodities has been largely restored to the pre-war scale. It is also a potential source of bauxite.

22. Conditions in Malaya and Singapore favour the promotion of civil strife and unrest. The population is composed of a mixture of nationalities, of which both the Chinese and Indian elements are influenced by events in their own home countries. During the war a proportion of the population gained experience of guerilla operations, and the most energetic were Communists.

There have been reports of the infiltration of very small numbers of Communists from South China via Siam into Malaya, and it is probable that this movement will be intensified. The arrival of even a small number of trained guerilla leaders could have a most serious effect on the Malayan campaign.

23. Armed rebellion which has broken out in the Federation of Malaya has not affected Singapore. The success of the Chinese Communist Army, together with the recognition of Mao Tse Tung's Government by Great Britain, and of Viet Minh by Moscow and Peking, has had a stimulating effect upon the bandits and their supporters and discourages waverers from choosing to side with the Government. If Consuls representing the Chinese Communist Government are installed in the country, this tendency will increase.

Chinese morale in Malaya has been higher in recent months, despite the recognition of the Peking Government, but there is great danger that unless the Chinese are given some tangible and early evidence that the Government has gained the upper hand, there will be an increasing lack of co-operation between the Chinese and the Government forces and an accentuated tendency for them to make their peace with the other side.

The importance of speed in dealing with the emergency cannot be over-emphasised. The appointment of the Director of Anti-Bandit operations, in a civil capacity, to ensure the most efficient employment of the police and military forces is a welcome move, but this in itself cannot be expected to produce spectacular results. The extension of civil administration over the Chinese rural areas, and parallel

operations by the Security Forces to protect these "liberated areas" must be pressed on as rapidly as possible.

24. Whatever the course of the operations against the bandits, there will be a continuing need for the presence of military forces in the Federation and Singapore supported by good intelligence services, in order to provide a firm backing to the civil power and to give tangible proof of our ability and intention to maintain order and to defend the country in war.

25. It is, however, most important to economise in the employment of United Kingdom troops on internal security duties in Malaya, so that we can maintain an adequate strategic reserve to meet emergencies. A valuable contribution to this end is provided by the Malay Regiment, a regular whole-time force composed of Malays with British and Malay Officers. Three battalions have been raised and are now participating against the bandits. A fourth battalion is now being raised and trained. The expansion of the Regiment to a total force of two brigades has been recommended and this recommendation should be implemented as early as possible, but financial considerations and the difficulty of providing trained Malay NCO's render it unlikely that the fifth and sixth battalions will be raised and trained before March 1951 and October 1951 respectively. A Royal Air Force Regiment (Malaya), is in existence and there are proposals to form a corps of air force ground personnel, to be known as Royal Air Force (Malaya), four auxiliary Air Force squadrons and associated auxiliary Air Force defence units. A small Malayan Naval Force is also in process of formation.

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#### *Commonwealth countries*

57. We discuss below the policy towards South East Asia and the Far East which we would wish other Commonwealth Countries to pursue.

#### *Australia and New Zealand*

58. It is expected that Australia and New Zealand will play an increasing part in defence planning in the South East Asia and Pacific theatres. They must be encouraged, therefore, to take an active part in the maintenance of political, economic and military stability in the area, without prejudice to our sovereignty in our own Colonies and our treaty responsibilities and suzerainty in the protected States of Malaya and Brunei, nor to any contribution which they could make to the defence of the Middle East.

#### *India and Pakistan*

59. India is the only country in South Asia or in South-East Asia whose resources are in any way adequate to support a major military effort. For this reason there are great advantages in persuading her to take the lead in this area in combatting Communism. She will be unwilling, however, to do this until she has composed her differences with Pakistan. Moreover, should she fail to settle these differences and war results between the two countries, it is possible, that with Russia's indirect assistance the Indian Communist Party might well be able to seize and control large areas of the country. It should accordingly be our aim to persuade India and Pakistan

<sup>1</sup> Paras 26-56, on foreign countries, not printed.

to resolve their outstanding disagreements, and, provided that Indo/Pakistan relations do not worsen, to continue to afford India such military assistance as is necessary to sustain her in taking the lead in South East Asia in combatting Communism.

India still exercises considerable influence on the political thoughts of her nationals in other countries; favourable attitude towards our policy can thus be a stabilising influence, particularly in Malaya where Indians comprise an important element of the labour force.

India is not at present prepared to take an active part in arresting the spread of Communism in South-East Asia. However, should Burma and Tibet come under Communist control India might adopt a different attitude. Communist control over Tibet would not only closely concern India but would also affect Nepal. Pakistan likewise would be closely affected, in so far as East Bengal would be threatened by any spread of Communist control to Tibet and Burma. Moreover, should Afghanistan come under communist control, the Russian threat to the Indian sub-continent by the traditional route via the North West Frontier would arise again, to the detriment of both India and Pakistan.

60. Defence of the Indian sub-Continent can be effectively undertaken only by the joint efforts of India and Pakistan. In view of the considerable responsibilities of Pakistan in assisting to defend the sub-Continent against aggression and of her lack of productive capacity, it is important that we should afford her all possible military aid. At the same time Pakistan support of our policy would have beneficial influence on the opinion of the Muslim sections of the population of South East Asia and the Middle East.

#### *Part IV Action required to arrest the spread of communism*

##### *Urgent need for action*

61. From our study of the present situation we are firmly of the opinion that the battle for the defence of South East Asia in a war with Russia has already begun. Success for the enemy in this 'cold' battle may well make the whole Allied position in South-East Asia untenable within a short time of the outbreak of open war, as well as having a very serious effect on our peacetime economy. If this is to be avoided and our strategic aims realised, the strongest possible political and associated military and economic measures must be taken immediately to halt the spread of Communism and re-establish stable governments in the area.

##### *Form of action to be taken*

62. Both the United Kingdom and France are stretched to the limit and it is now necessary for the Commonwealth and the United States to take their full share of the burden.

The first step is to agree a clear allied policy in this area, the second to ensure that available allied resources are allocated in accordance with this policy.

63. The economic and political action which is now being taken or which has already been proposed is set out below.

##### *Economic action*

64. At the recent Commonwealth conference in Colombo discussions took place

with a view to initiating a plan for regional economic co-operation, which would be directed towards raising the standards of living in South and South East Asia. Recommendations on economic policy to co-ordinate future action were approved, and a Consultative Committee is meeting in Canberra in May 1950.

65. Economic action on the lines envisaged at Colombo should have a stabilising effect throughout the area and ultimately should make the people less receptive of Communism. To be effective it must have the support of the United States. It should tend to draw the countries of South-East Asia together but will take time to become effective. In the meantime further spread of Communism must be checked by political and military action.

#### *Political action*

66. The British Defence Co-ordination Committee Far East have recommended that political action along the following lines, with which we agree, should be taken as part of a coherent and positive Anglo/American policy for stopping the further spread of Communism in South East Asia.

(a) The United Kingdom should at once follow the United States Government in declaring that any aggression across the northern frontiers of Burma, Siam or Indo-China or the infiltration of leaders or arms into those countries would constitute a threat to the peace of the world; that any such aggression or intervention constitutes the support of an organisation in active rebellion against a friendly and internationally recognised power; and that if His Majesty's or the United States Governments have reason to think that such action is taking place they reserve to themselves the right to take whatever action they consider to be required either by immediate reference to the United Nations or by taking any other steps they consider necessary.

(b) Every effort should be made to persuade the Government of India and other friendly Asian Governments to support the measures that are now being taken in the three territories concerned to resist Communist infiltration.

(c) A closer association between His Majesty's Government and the United States Government over measures to be taken in the area, and in particular the establishment of military contacts with the United States in order to prepare plans for common United States and British Commonwealth action needed under the charter of the United Nations.

#### *Military action*

67. The United Kingdom should take immediate military steps as shown below.

68. *Provision of aid and equipment.* At present the amount of military equipment available for countries in the Far East and South East Asia is severely restricted by the small output from the United Kingdom factories and the prior claims of the Commonwealth and North Atlantic Treaty countries. Nevertheless, as political and economic co-operation with the Governments of the countries of South-East Asia is unlikely to progress unless their security can be assured, it is most important that the United Kingdom should be in a position to meet, in reasonable quantities, their demands for suitable arms and equipment. Immediate steps should, therefore be taken to increase the output in the United Kingdom of arms available for export, so that such demands can be met and so that security in the area can be attained.

69. *Military advice and collaboration.* It is important to maintain and strengthen military collaboration by whatever channels are most appropriate to the various countries, that is to say through the military mission in Burma, the attachés in Siam, and the United States and French authorities in Japan and Indo-China. No opportunity should be lost of emphasising to the defence authorities in these countries that there is a need for a united policy to combat the Communist threat.

The military authorities of friendly countries in this area should also be encouraged to seek vacancies at training schools in Great Britain and other Western countries; and to agree to the mutual exchange of officers for periods of attachment, since such exchanges in themselves lead to friendly relations being established.

70. *Exchange of intelligence.* Exchange of information between the countries concerned about Communist activities would lead to co-operation in dealing with Communist leaders and their armed bands. Some collaboration is already taking place; this should be further encouraged and be limited only by the needs of security. Similarly the exchange of information between police forces of South-East Asian countries should be encouraged.

**336** CO 537/5324

1–15 Aug 1950

[Colonial manpower in the cold war]: minutes by S E V Luke, J M Martin, A B Cohen, J J Paskin, Sir T Lloyd and Mr Cook<sup>1</sup>

*Mr Martin, Mr Cohen, Mr Paskin*

In December last, the Prime Minister asked the Minister of Defence to arrange for the Chiefs of Staff to examine “whether we could not now plan to place increasing reliance on Colonial manpower in our cold war efforts”.<sup>2</sup>

2. After some months’ delay, the War Office produced the rather perfunctory memorandum at (3); and the Chiefs of Staff (see (4)) directed that a more detailed examination of the problem should be carried out and a fuller statement prepared.

3. Mr. Morgan feels, with some justice, that the War Office amendments to C.O.S. (50) 140 set out in the annex to (7) do not adequately meet the Chiefs of Staff request, and he has therefore gone into the matter with considerable care and set out his conclusions in the annexed draft memorandum.<sup>3</sup> I do not think that it is necessary for you, at this stage, to consider the form and manner of presentation by a detailed scrutiny of the draft, but, before this question is carried further, I should be grateful for your views generally on the main issues involved.

4. As you know, the O.D.C. memorandum (O.D.C. (49) 47) on “The Role of the Colonies in War”<sup>4</sup> sets out, with some precision, the part which Colonial Forces may be expected to fulfil in a major war. Mr. Morgan has taken this paper as the basis for his proposals, on the assumption that the cold war situation demands the adoption of measures on the lines of, though perhaps falling short of, the programme set out in O.D.C. (49) 47. It seems clear from (3) that, until recently, there was little prospect that the War Office would contemplate the increased use of Colonial troops on this basis; the rigid financial ceiling imposed on United Kingdom defence expenditure

<sup>1</sup> Luke, Martin, Cohen and Paskin were CO assistant under-secretaries of state; Mr T F Cook was the parliamentary-under secretary of state.

<sup>2</sup> CAB 21/2280, M 292/49, 23 Dec 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. J C Morgan was a CO principal from 1947.

<sup>4</sup> See 325 for the earlier version of this.

would have made this, in their view, a wasteful use of their available financial resources. In the new situation resulting from the Korean war, however, it seems likely that in future manpower may be an even more serious limiting factor than finance, and Defence Department feel that it is incumbent on the Colonial Office, not so much to press for greater use of Colonial manpower, as to ensure that the Chiefs of Staff give proper consideration to the arguments for and against such extended use on the basis of adequate information.

5. The argument in the attached draft memorandum (which is not, I think, brought out as clearly as it could be) is that there are three directions in which Colonial troops might be used in the present cold war situation—

- (a) In substitution for United Kingdom troops at present engaged on garrison duties in Colonial territories.
- (b) As part of the Commonwealth strategic reserve.
- (c) In active operations, e.g. in Malaya or Korea.

As regards (a), the present disposition of United Kingdom troops employed on garrison duties is set out in paragraph 4 of the draft memorandum; I should be grateful for the views of Assistant Under-Secretaries concerned on the specific suggestions made in the second part of that paragraph. I feel some doubt, for instance, whether it would be appropriate to station coloured West Indian troops in Gibraltar.

As regards (b), the suggestion here, which is not very clearly explained, is that existing Colonial Forces, particularly of course the African Forces, should be substantially expanded so that it would no longer be necessary to earmark United Kingdom troops as an ultimate reserve for the maintenance of internal security in the Colonial territories. Under this proposal the Forces in East and West Africa would be substantially increased, and the threat to internal security would thereby be diminished in the sense that the larger forces thus made available could be used either within their own area or for service outside their own area. The United Kingdom reserve, relieved in this way of their residuary responsibility for internal security in the Colonies, would thus become wholly available for other cold war postings.

As regards (c), the argument is that, in view of the increasing strain on United Kingdom manpower involved in the present attempt to increase our defence preparations with a minimum of interference with the process of economic recovery, the time has come to consider seriously whether Colonial troops might be used in actual operations.

6. It is obvious that the Colonial Office is not in a position to weigh up all the relevant factors in this question. But we can make constructive proposals for the Chiefs of Staff to consider against the wider background. But the first step is to consider the broad political implications of proposals on the lines summarised in the preceding paragraph, since we obviously do not want to turn down ultimately, on political grounds, proposals which we ourselves had originally put forward. Broadly, this means that the problem must be considered under two main heads—

- (1) Whether, in conditions falling short of a major war, there is political objection to sending Colonial troops from their own territory for service elsewhere for any one of the three purposes set out under (a), (b) and (c) above.

(2) Whether political difficulties are likely to arise from the use of Colonial troops drawn from another Colonial territory as part of operations under (a), (b) or (c) above.

7. Mr. Morgan will be available to provide, in discussion, any further information that may be needed.

S.E.V.L.

1.8.50

Reference (1) in paragraph 6 of Mr. Luke's minute, I do not think there would be any objection to taking local troops from Malta or Cyprus for use elsewhere, provided of course that the liability to service overseas is clearly stated as a condition of enlistment and that, as regards existing Maltese Units, no compulsion is applied to men who did not volunteer on this understanding. Delicate questions of the scale of overseas allowances appropriate would have to be satisfactorily settled first: Maltese are touchy about differentiation between themselves and people from the United Kingdom in this respect. It would be undesirable to put forward any very firm proposals without first consulting the Governors. (Sir Gerald Creasy<sup>5</sup> will be here from the 8th–29th August and it is probable that Sir A. Wright<sup>6</sup> will be paying a short visit in the second half of September.)

As regards (2) in the same paragraph of Mr. Luke's minute—

*Gibraltar.* There would be considerable objection to the employment of coloured troops from the West Indies; but I do not think that a similar difficulty would arise in connection with the employment of Maltese or Cypriots provided that the fullest opportunities had first been given to Gibraltarians. (Sir K. Anderson,<sup>7</sup> who is coming on a short visit to the United Kingdom, will be available for consultation on the 14th August if desired.)

*Malta.* I agree with Mr. Morgan's statement in his paragraph 4. No question of bringing Colonial troops from elsewhere need arise and there would certainly be objections to stationing coloured troops in the Island as a part of the strategic reserve.

*Cyprus.* I do not know the authority for Mr. Morgan's statement "that not more than one battalion" is necessary for internal security and local defence; but certainly this is the minimum and the minimum could be supplemented by resurrecting the Cyprus Regiment. There would be considerable political objections to bringing coloured troops from elsewhere either for garrison duties or as part of the strategic reserve; but this would not necessarily apply in the event of active operations. I agree with Mr. Morgan's remark that "there are good political grounds for considering the raising of a Cypriot force to be desirable": we have of course only just disbanded the one we had.

J.M.M.

2.8.50

I have considerable doubts about a good deal of the memorandum opposite. As far as the African Territories are concerned I do not think that there is much to be done either under (a) or (c) of paragraph 5 of Mr. Luke's minute. I am pretty sure that

<sup>5</sup> Gov of Malta, 1949–1954.

<sup>6</sup> Gov of Cyprus, 1949–1954.

<sup>7</sup> Gov of Gibraltar, 1947–1952.

African troops could not without political and many other difficulties be used to garrison any other Colonial Territories. Equally I think that there would be political and other difficulties in using troops from other Colonies to help maintain internal security in the African Territories. It would certainly be most undesirable for East African troops to be used for internal security purposes in West Africa or West Africans in East Africa. It must also be remembered that both in East and West Africa if there were serious and continuing trouble U.K. troops might have to be brought in; this applies particularly in East Africa with plural communities. Increased numbers of African troops might not have the same effect.

I do not believe that it would be found profitable to use African troops either in Malaya or Korea.

Increased numbers of African troops could admittedly be raised as a strategic reserve, although, as the paper points out, they are not suitable for service in all parts of the world. I am, however, doubtful whether we should be justified in confidently stating that so far as numbers are concerned as many African troops could be raised for duties elsewhere as were raised during the war. In the first place it would be far more difficult to raise troops in peace time (even under a cold war) than it was in wartime. In the second place demands of economic development, etc. might well interfere. Any statement on this point should, I think, be very much more guarded than the draft.

A.B.C.  
2.8.50

So far as Malaya and Hong Kong are concerned it is a little difficult to think in terms of the future in the midst of such pressing preoccupations in the present and the very immediate future. For example, it would be the merest possible guesswork to suggest that in "Malaya and the Far East" it might be possible to raise one Infantry Brigade for general Colonial service. It is quite certain that, for so far into the future as we can possibly see, all the local forces which it will be possible to raise in this territory will be required for service there.

It is equally impossible even to guess at what would be a "normal" garrison for Hong Kong if and when the present emergency should come to an end.

As regards the employment in Malaya and Hong Kong (even in active operations) of Colonial forces elsewhere (even if and when there are any to be spared from elsewhere) I should say quite positively that black troops would be [u]nacceptable in both these territories.

It is perhaps conceivable that forces from the Western Pacific might be acceptable in Malaya or Hong Kong and we are about to consult the High Commissioner in Malaya on this point. But quite apart from the ethnological aspects of the matter the obvious answer for the High Commissioner to give in present circumstances is that, if H.M.G. can find the money to raise a Fiji battalion for service in Malaya, a much better use of that money would be to expedite the raising of a further battalion of the Malay regiment.

J.P.P.  
9.8.50

*Sir Thomas Lloyd*

My minute of 1st August explains the circumstances under which Defence Depart-

ment have been examining the possibilities of making greater use of Colonial manpower for Commonwealth defence purposes at the present time.

As you will see, this problem was first considered by the War Office in pursuance of an instruction by the Prime Minister. You will be aware that the suggestion has been put forward on several occasions by members of the Opposition in the House of Commons; and the same point was made in an article by Lord Trenchard in yesterday's "Observer".

The War Office clearly have no particular wish to make greater use of Colonial troops for cold war defence purposes, and I do not think this attitude is surprising, in view of the rigid ceiling hitherto imposed on defence expenditure. In the new situation resulting from the war in Korea, it is possible, I feel, that manpower may become a more serious limiting factor than finance, and that the time may therefore come, even in a situation falling short of world war, when the War Office may wish to make greater calls on Colonial manpower. For the present, however, the views of Assistant Under-Secretaries on this question, as set out in the three minutes above, are so discouraging that I do not think that there would be any advantage in pursuing the question further on the lines suggested in Mr. Morgan's draft memorandum. I suggest, therefore, that Mr. Marnham<sup>8</sup> should reply to the letter at (7) to the effect that we are sorry that there has been so long a delay; that we felt it desirable, in view of the Prime Minister's directive, to review the question very carefully; but that we have come to the conclusion that we cannot dissent from the views set out in the annex to (7). (I feel that the War Office paper, as amended, still creates the impression that the War Office have given only rather perfunctory consideration to this question, but the problem of presentation of their views, in response to the Prime Minister's request, is not our responsibility.)

In general, the conclusion that I draw from this discussion is that, under present conditions, the major contribution that Colonial Governments can make in the field of Commonwealth defence is to maintain security forces adequate to cope with any foreseeable internal disorder; and that we should therefore concentrate our attention on maintaining a steady pressure on Governors and Colonial Governments to do everything possible to bring up their Police Forces in particular to an adequate state of efficiency. This policy can best be pursued in the form of the follow-up to the Inspector-General's reports, and I shall be putting forward separately proposals under this head in a few days.

S.E.V.L.  
14.8.50

*Mr. Cook*

In order to make this minute self-contained I start by repeating some of the "background" given by Mr. Luke when he circulated the file to the other geographical Assistant Secretaries on the 1st of August.

In December last the Prime Minister (see Appendix I to No. 2) suggested to the Minister of Defence that the Chiefs of Staff should be asked to consider whether H.M.G. could not plan to place more reliance on Colonial manpower in the "cold war" effort. The War Office went into that issue and the note (No. 3) which they submitted at the end of April was thought by the Chiefs of Staff (see Y in No. 4) to be

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<sup>8</sup> J E Marnham, CO assistant secretary.

inadequate in that it did not state in detail the arguments, which Ministers would no doubt wish to see and to consider, against the increasing use of Colonial manpower in the "cold war" effort. The War Office then produced, some two months ago, the fuller version at No. 7 and it is on that that our comments are required. The long delay is due in part to the fact that the file has been circulating with the Foreign Office memorandum dealing with British overseas obligations, and in part to the time taken in preparing the voluminous paper (draft A) in which Mr. Morgan examined the possibilities of a greater use of Colonial manpower. The Assistant Under Secretaries responsible for geographical departments are, as you will see from the minutes of the 2nd to the 9th of August, doubtful of the wisdom of pursuing the matter along the lines Mr. Morgan took in his memorandum.

My own views are set out in the draft (marked C) now submitted for your approval. It will be seen that we there face the War Office with the issue whether, from their point of view, finance or manpower is today the limiting consideration. If finance is still the governing factor, then we accept their view; if, on the other hand, manpower matters more, then we feel that the Colonies could help. The ways in which they could do that would have to be worked out in consultation with Governors but, first of all, we must have from the Chiefs of Staff—and possibly from other Ministers as well—some indication of future policy that makes detailed enquiries from Colonial Governors worth while.

T.I.K.L.  
15.8.50

I agree. Sir Thomas Lloyd's minute set [sic] it out quite clearly.

T.F.C.  
[nd]

**337** DEFE 4/39, COS 1(51)1, annex 2 Jan 1951  
 'Use of colonial manpower in the cold war': report by JPS to COS  
 (JP(50)170), 29 Dec 1950

The Prime Minister has asked whether we could not plan to place increasing reliance on colonial manpower in the Cold War, and the Minister of Defence has recently stated that if we were presented with a major manpower problem, considerations of economy might become of less importance.

The Colonial Office have indicated that they are willing to give full co-operation in consultation with Colonial Governments in investigating the extent to which further colonial forces could be raised.

2. In this report we examine:—

(a) the possibility of further dilution or reinforcement of the present United Kingdom forces by the inhabitants of the areas in which there are Cold War commitments, and

(b) the feasibility of raising appreciable colonial forces for use in countries other than their own.

3. A general factor which we have borne in mind is that the more colonial forces

that are raised in peace time for Cold War purposes, the quicker will be the expansion of our colonial forces in war. Furthermore, colonial forces trained in peacetime for specific tasks in war will release for use elsewhere, United Kingdom personnel who would otherwise be earmarked for these tasks.

*Possibility of dilution or reinforcement of British forces by local colonial manpower*

4. At Appendices A, B and C<sup>1</sup> we have shown by Services, how local colonial manpower is at present being used, and have examined the possibility of making further use in peace time of this type of manpower to assist in meeting our peace time commitments and in preparation for war. The Conclusions we have reached are given in paragraphs 16, 17 and 18 below.

*Use of colonial forces outside their own territories*

5. We examine below the feasibility of raising appreciable colonial forces for employment in countries other than their own.

The R.A.F. and the Navy, being highly technical services cannot make use of Colonial forces to the same extent as the Army in the Cold War. If therefore Colonial forces are to be raised for use outside their own countries it would be better to concentrate on the Army.

*Factors affecting the use of colonial manpower outside their own countries*

6. We consider the most important factors affecting the use of colonial forces for Cold War tasks outside their own countries can be grouped as follows:—

- (a) Availability of manpower
- (b) Racial and political considerations
- (c) Climatic considerations
- (d) Operational efficiency
- (e) Training and leadership
- (f) Logistic considerations
- (g) Finance.

7. *Availability of manpower.* Based on forces raised during the last war, and taking into account the increased population today, the total available manpower for military purposes in East, Central and West African would be in the neighbourhood of 400,000. This represents the major portion of the Colonial manpower which might be used outside their own countries. The West Indies would provide an additional though more limited source of manpower.

8. *Racial and political considerations.* Experience of the last war has shown that African troops serving away from their own homes are generally amenable to discipline provided they receive regular periods of leave, and are able to return to their families.

If the disadvantages of providing transport for this purpose can be accepted, racial and political considerations need not necessarily bar the use of African troops in parts of the Middle and Far East. There may be political difficulties from the point of view of the receiving country, but the Colonial Office have indicated that they would

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<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

be willing to investigate, in consultation with Colonial Governments, the extent to which such difficulties could be overcome.

Racial and political factors would probably preclude the use of African troops in Europe, and great discretion would have to be exercised in their employment in any theatre in which South African troops were operating.

9. *Climatic considerations.* There is a limit to the extent which African troops can be employed away from their own climatic conditions. This factor would include differences of diet and social custom, as well as heat and cold.

10. *Operational efficiency.* Experience has shown that colonial troops do not reach the same degree of operational efficiency as British troops, and, generally speaking, take considerably longer to train. In the short term (i.e. 1951) only small forces could be made available for overseas service; Colonial forces could, therefore, at best be only a partial solution to the immediate problem and the full benefit of such forces would only be felt in the long term.

In the last war, African troops in Burma did not reach the standard of the other troops engaged. Their standard of efficiency would however at least be adequate for their use on guard and administrative duties.

11. *Training and leadership.* In order to raise, train and command appreciable colonial forces, the necessary hard core of British officers, senior NCO's and technicians would be required. These could only be provided at the expense of the regular United Kingdom forces in which, there already exists, and is likely to remain for some time, a shortage of senior N.C.O.'s and technicians and of officers of the age group and quality most suitable for employment with colonial troops. Language difficulties make it desirable that the Officers and NCO's seconded to colonial forces should remain there for some years. It would probably, therefore, be necessary to second these officers and NCO's on a voluntary basis, which would mean that substantial financial inducements would have to be offered.

12. *Logistic considerations.* Special arrangements for movement and supply would be required to meet the need for frequent leave and the special diet of African troops. This would result in additional expense and strain on already scarce shipping resources.

Arms and equipment for African troops can only come from European and American resources, and would therefore in the short term be at the expense of ourselves and our Allies.

13. *Finance.* The recent deterioration in the international situation has confronted the United Kingdom with an urgent manpower problem, before which considerations of economy, hitherto paramount, may have to take second place.

Having regard to the logistic factors stated above, the cost of employing colonial forces outside their own areas is not likely to be materially less than that of the equivalent British forces. Since British forces are certainly more efficient in any role in which colonial forces would be employed, it would only be reasonable to incur expenditure on colonial forces if the shortage of British manpower allows no other alternative.

### *Conclusions*

14. From the above factors we conclude that:—

(a) The major portion of available colonial manpower is in East, Central and West Africa.

(b) From the point of view of efficiency colonial forces give less value for expenditure of money and material than equivalent numbers of British troops.

(c) To raise, train and command colonial forces would place a further strain on the already insufficient numbers of United Kingdom officers, senior NCO's, and technicians, and would adversely affect the efficiency of the existing United Kingdom forces.

(d) The difficulties of raising and maintaining substantial colonial forces for use outside their own areas are formidable, and would normally prevent any such project if it were not for the manpower factor.

(e) If, however, shortage of British manpower becomes an overriding consideration, the problems could be overcome and there would be a case for raising limited numbers of colonial land forces in East and West Africa for service in the Middle East.

15. The dilution of British forces by local Colonial manpower is discussed service by service in Appendices A, B and C. Our conclusions are contained in the following paragraphs.

16. *Navy*

(a) Full use of colonial manpower is being made by the Royal Navy in the administrative services.

(b) There is little further use for colonial manpower in the Active Fleet in the Short Term since colonial personnel are not sufficiently mobile and lack technical ability, and the integration of coloured personnel in the complements of ships would give rise to administrative difficulties.

(c) Dilution of the limited personnel of the Active Fleet would not be acceptable since it would seriously prejudice the expansion of the fleet in war.

(d) In war considerable use could be made of colonial manpower in minesweepers and harbour defence; such manpower if available in peace would release British forces earmarked for those duties on the outbreak of war for service in the active fleet.

On the other hand to have colonial forces readily available on the outbreak of war would mean raising regular full time Naval and Volunteer Reserve colonial units for training in peacetime. To raise sufficient forces would require considerable financial outlay.

17. *Army*

(a) The Army is at present making considerable use of local colonial manpower, and the desirability of making any further savings in British military administrative personnel could only be judged by the authorities on the spot in the light of security considerations.

(b) A further expansion of the Malay Regiment to the greatest possible extent would be:—

- (i) preferable to the introduction of other colonial forces into Malaya, and
- (ii) the most profitable field for the expansion of colonial forces generally though there are considerable difficulties to be faced principally in the provision of the necessary British Cadres.

(c) A small source of manpower exists in Cyprus, but the use to which this can be

put is extremely limited.

(d) The measures for raising the second Caribbean battalion should be pressed forward.

18. *Air Force.* The Royal Air Force is already making considerable use of colonial manpower and only very minor, if any, savings in the administrative services could be made by further recruitment. Any further possibilities for the formation of local forces are being examined, e.g. in Cyprus, Gibraltar and Malaya.

### 338 CO 537/5324, no 27

[Jan 1951]

#### 'Use of colonial manpower in the cold war': CO brief explaining the position

In December, 1949, the Prime Minister (see appendix 1 to No. 2) suggested to the Minister of Defence that the Chiefs of Staff should be asked to consider whether H.M.G. could not plan to place more reliance on Colonial manpower in the "cold war" effort. The War Office went into the matter and produced three successive papers (3, 7 and 16) the first and last of which were both rejected by the Chiefs of Staff as being unconvincing (the second version, No 7, never reached the C.O.S.). Following the rejection to 16 the question was remitted to the Joint Planning Staff who have produced the successive versions (23 and 25) of a very much fuller paper covering all three services and dealing with the matter in much more detail. 25<sup>1</sup> was considered by the Vice Chiefs of Staff on 2nd January and approved with certain amendments. The final paper is I<sup>2</sup> understand to be submitted to the Minister of Defence by 5th January.

The War Office have throughout clung grimly to the thesis that there is no appreciable scope for relieving the strain on British manpower by an increased use of Colonial troops, but they have found this statement a good deal easier to assert than to justify, and we have never found their arguments very impressive. When the Joint Planning Staff tackled the question they were forced by facts and logic into concluding that there was a good enough *prima facie* case for making more use of Colonial troops at any rate to warrant further investigation, and indeed the main conclusion as it emerged from the Directors of Plans (para 14(e) of 25) said clearly "there would be a case for raising limited numbers of Colonial land forces in East and West Africa for service in the Middle East." At the Vice Chiefs meeting on the 2nd January however Major General Redman<sup>3</sup> expressed himself as not happy about this conclusion, though one [?once] again his arguments were, to an outsider, not very convincing. Briefly it was agreed to redraft the conclusion laying more stress on the argument that even if more Colonial Forces were raised there would be no consequent saving on British manpower.

The Colonial Office line throughout has been that laid down by Sir Thomas Lloyd<sup>4</sup> and embodied in the letter to the War Office at 10. Briefly, it is that we accept the War Office view that Colonial troops do not give the same "value for money" as an equivalent sum spent on British troops; that if the size of the army is limited by

<sup>1</sup> See 337.

<sup>2</sup> The author of this brief is not recorded on the file.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Harold Redman, director of military operations, WO, 1948–1951.

<sup>4</sup> See 336.

finance rather than by British manpower we must therefore also agree that there is nothing to be gained by employing Colonial troops rather than British ones; but that if it is desired, and finance can be found, to increase the army beyond the size for which British manpower can readily be made available, then we think there is a case for a limited expansion of Colonial troops if the practical difficulties can be overcome.

We have concluded on this basis that so far as manpower is concerned, a number of different Colonial areas could furnish significant numbers of troops, although climatic, political, logistic and other factors limit the areas and circumstances in which they could be used. We have offered, if so desired, to go into these possibilities with the Governments concerned, though we have made it clear that we should naturally prefer not to raise the matter with any of them unless there was a definite prospect that something could come of the idea if they favoured it.

### 339 DEFE 4/39, COS 14(51)2

18 Jan 1951

#### 'Use of colonial manpower in the cold war': COS Committee minutes

*The Committee* had before them a Minute by the Secretary reporting that the Minister of Defence was not prepared to accept the conclusions of the Report by the Joint Planning Staff on the above subject which had recently been approved by the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>1</sup>

*Lieut.-General Brownjohn*<sup>2</sup> said that he was under the impression that there was some confusion of thought as to whether Colonial manpower was being considered for use in the Cold War or in a shooting war. The problem had been studied so far in relation to Cold War needs only; but the minister seemed now to be thinking more in terms of the help which Colonial units might give in a shooting war. The two problems were separate, although admittedly they tended to merge in circumstances such as those now obtaining in Korea. The basic problem was how to obtain value from forces composed of the type of Colonial manpower now available. The comparison with the Indian Army was not entirely valid. The Indian Army—and such foreign Colonial troops as the French Senegalese—had been trained and developed over a very long period; and the manpower available to these units was in a quite different category to the African manpower, which was all that was now available. Experience in World War II showed that East and West African units were useful for duties on lines of communication; but they had very little value as front line troops against a well-equipped European enemy.

Continuing, *Lieut.-General Brownjohn* said that the figures in the Report by the Joint Planning Staff showed that the Army was already making extensive use of Colonial troops in Cold War duties. In addition, some 25,000 locally enlisted personnel were employed in various parts of the world on administrative duties, thereby economising in the use of British manpower. He thought that a further study should be made of increasing the numbers of locally enlisted personnel employed in this way, but he was not hopeful that a large increase would prove

<sup>1</sup> See 337, approved by COS on 2 Jan 1951.

<sup>2</sup> N C D Brownjohn, vice-chief of the imperial general staff since 1950.

practicable. As regards combatant units, there was no doubt that African battalions were not suitable for internal security duties outside their own country in peace.

Turning to the question of plans for a shooting war, Lieut.-General Brownjohn said that it was intended to double the number of battalions now serving in East Africa. The eight existing battalions would be made available for duties on the L. of C. in the Middle East, and a similar plan existed for West African units. He agreed, however, that it would be possible to examine more closely the practicability of making a wider use of Colonial manpower for administrative units in war. It might prove practicable, for example, to use M.T. units from native manpower on the lines of the United States Negro Truck Companies. Another possibility which might be considered was the wider use of Maltese for garrison and anti-aircraft duties. The Maltese were also good mechanics and a workshop might be raised from among them. It would also be worth considering a greater use of manpower from the Sudan, where there was a well established tradition of disciplined service.

As regards procedure, Lieut.-General Brownjohn said that in his opinion no useful purpose would be served by referring the question back to the Joint Planning Staff without a clear direction from the Chiefs of Staff on the line to be taken. He suggested that the Committee should not discuss their views finally until there had been an opportunity to discuss the matter with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who had had considerable experience in command of African troops during World War II.

*Sir Arthur Sanders*<sup>3</sup> thought that the Minister of Defence principally had in mind the formation of additional Colonial Army units to replace similar British units. He did not think that it was being seriously suggested that highly technical services such as the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force could adopt a largely increased dilution with native manpower. He also saw a danger in an excessive use of local manpower severely restricting the strategic mobility of the Services, an aspect with which the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff fully agreed.

*Lord Fraser*<sup>4</sup> said that he was not fully satisfied that the conclusions of the Joint Planning Staff's Report adequately represented the limits of what might be done. It might well be true that reliable African native units could not be produced at short notice; but that did not necessarily mean that it was not worth making a start with the development of such units to a pitch of reasonable efficiency. He also questioned the validity of the argument that there were no British officers available to train and lead Colonial units. Large numbers of officers had been available in the past for service with the Indian Army.

In discussion there was general agreement that the final view of the Committee should not be formulated until there had been an opportunity to discuss the matter further with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Meanwhile, the War Office should examine the various possibilities which had been suggested by the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

The Committee:—

(1) Agreed to give further consideration to the subject at an early meeting at which the Chief of the Imperial General Staff would be present.

(2) Invited the War Office to examine the various possibilities suggested in discussion by the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

<sup>3</sup> Air Marshal Sir A Sanders, vice-chief of air staff.

<sup>4</sup> Admiral Lord Fraser, first sea lord.

**340** DEFE 4/40, COS 26(51)3

7 Feb 1951

## 'Use of colonial manpower in the cold war': COS Committee Minutes

*Sir William Elliot*<sup>1</sup> said that the Minister of Defence had not felt able to accept the conclusions of the report by the Joint Planning Staff which had recently been approved by the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>2</sup> The Minister wished the Chiefs of Staff to examine the question again with a view to achieving some economy in the use of British troops.

*Sir William Slim*<sup>3</sup> said that it was impossible to produce quickly African formations capable of holding their own in battle against a well-equipped enemy; but it should be possible as a long term project to create from African manpower formations which would be able to give a good account of themselves. The first step would be to establish schools for N.C.Os. and Platoon Commanders. If that were done immediately, there should be in three years' time a cadre of N.C.Os. and Platoon Commanders roughly comparable to the Viceroy's Commissioned officer in the former Indian Army. It would then be possible to build up units and formations. The candidates for training as potential N.C.Os. would require very careful selection. It was useless to base the selection on educational standards, because in general the educated African lacked the necessary qualities for leadership in war.

If the matter was approached as a long term project in this way, *Sir William Slim* thought that there was a considerable potential use for African manpower. It should be possible as an ultimate aim to form one division in East Africa and one in West Africa. These divisions could probably be used satisfactorily in Malaya, thereby affording direct relief to British troops in their cold war tasks. It should also be possible to make use of African divisions in the Middle East, provided that a system was devised for frequent rotation of "home" and "foreign" service. It was important to remember, however, that African divisions would not be much cheaper than British divisions. The equipment would cost the same initially, and would probably deteriorate more quickly; and the British element of manpower in the African divisions would have to be paid at suitably higher rates than normal. It would also always be true that an African division would be inferior in quality to a British division; and there could be no question of abolishing British divisions in the strategic reserve, for example, as the African divisions were built up.

*Sir John Slessor*<sup>4</sup> said that the cost of building up African divisions in the way suggested by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff would have to be carefully weighed. It might well be that better results for the defence effort as a whole could be achieved by spending the money in other ways. There was also the point that the use of African troops outside their own territories, particularly in the Middle East, might cause serious political difficulties. As regards the general question of the use of Colonial manpower, it might be of interest to the Committee to know that the R.A.F. Regiment would shortly be forming an additional four Wing Headquarters and eight light anti-aircraft squadrons for duty in the Middle East. Consideration was being given to the extent to which Colonial manpower could be used in these units.

<sup>1</sup> Air Marshal Sir W Elliot, chief staff officer to minister of defence and deputy secretary (military) to Cabinet since 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See 337, approved by COS on 2 Jan 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Chief of the imperial general staff.

<sup>4</sup> Marshal of the RAF, chief of air staff since 1950.

*Mr. Trafford Smith* said that the Colonial Office would wish to consult the Governors of East and West Africa on the proposals for the use of African manpower which the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had outlined. He did not anticipate, however, that there would be any serious political difficulty.

In discussion it was agreed that the War Office should now examine in detail the practicability of the proposals which the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had outlined.

A note by the War Office containing the results of this examination should then be circulated for the consideration of the Committee and subsequently for the information of the Minister of Defence.

*The Committee:—*

Invited the War Office to proceed accordingly.

### 341 CAB 128/19, CM 13(51)2

12 Feb 1951

#### 'Pacific defence': Cabinet conclusions on proposed Pacific Defence Council

The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Minister of State (C.P. (51) 47) regarding a proposal for a Pacific Defence Council which was being canvassed by Mr. John Foster Dulles<sup>1</sup> in the course of the mission which he had undertaken on President Truman's behalf in preparation for a Japanese Peace Treaty.

*The Minister of State*<sup>2</sup> said that the Pacific Defence Council proposed by Mr. Dulles would comprise the United States, Japan, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand; but it would exclude the countries of South-East Asia, and the United Kingdom would be associated with it only on a consultative basis. This proposal would give Australia and New Zealand the assurance which they sought that United States assistance would be forthcoming if any attack were made on their territories; but it was open to strong objection from the United Kingdom point of view. World opinion would interpret it as a renunciation of our responsibilities in the Pacific; it would cause serious alarm in South-East Asia, particularly in Hong Kong and Malaya; and it might have the effect of diverting Australian and New Zealand forces from the Middle East in a major war. Later telegrams from Washington indicated that the United States Government might now be inclined to favour, instead of this proposal, the conclusion of a tripartite pact by which the United States, Australia and New Zealand would each undertake to go to the aid of the others in the event of hostilities affecting the interests of any one of them in the Pacific. It was, however, recommended that the Governments of the United States, Australia and New Zealand should at once be informed of the objections which the United Kingdom Government saw to the proposal outlined by Mr. Dulles.

In discussion there was general agreement with the views expressed by the Minister of State. Mr. Dulles's conception of the defence of an island chain in the Pacific was unsound, both politically and militarily. If this emphasis were laid on the island chain, the Americans might at a later stage insist that Formosa formed part of it; and Australia and New Zealand might find themselves expected to support on that

<sup>1</sup> Consultant to US secretary of state since 1950.

<sup>2</sup> At the FO, Mr K Younger.

account a United States claim to Formosa. The exclusion of the mainland countries of South-East Asia would be a source of special embarrassment to the United Kingdom Government.

*The First Sea Lord* said that in the global strategy which the Chiefs of Staff had discussed with the United States Chiefs of Staff, the Far East was a United States commitment and the Middle East a Commonwealth commitment. Australia and New Zealand had been reluctant to commit themselves fully to co-operation in the Middle East until they had more definite information about United States intentions in the Pacific. But the best way of allaying their anxieties would be for the United States to guarantee their security in a major war, possibly through a tripartite pact on the lines mentioned by the Minister of State.

The Cabinet:—

(1) Endorsed the objections, outlined in C.P. (51) 47, to a Pacific Defence Council excluding the United Kingdom and the mainland countries of South-East Asia; and agreed that every effort should be made to find alternative means of allaying the anxieties of Australia and New Zealand, *e.g.*, by a United States guarantee of their security in war.

(2) Invited the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to arrange for these views to be conveyed to the Australian and New Zealand Governments.

(3) Invited the Minister of State to arrange for these views to be conveyed to the United States Government and to Mr. Dulles.

### 342 CAB 128/19, CM 16(51)3

1 Mar 1951

#### 'Pacific defence': Cabinet conclusions on proposed tripartite treaty (ANZUS).<sup>1</sup>

The Cabinet considered a note by the Prime Minister (C.P. (51) 64) covering a memorandum on a draft tripartite treaty for mutual defence between the United States, Australia and New Zealand, which had been prepared for consideration by the three Governments during Mr. Dulles' talks with Australian and New Zealand Ministers at Canberra on 15th–17th February.

*The Prime Minister* said that the treaty now suggested was a great improvement on the "island chain" proposal previously put forward by Mr. Dulles. It would meet the desire of Australia and New Zealand for guarantees in the Pacific, and would be to our advantage as making them more willing to meet their commitments for the defence of the Middle East. The Prime Minister of Australia had explained the great importance which his Government attached to conclusion of such a treaty, and had invited the United Kingdom Government to help the Australian and New Zealand Governments to secure its completion. The United States Government were anxious that the Philippines should be included as an additional party to the treaty, but they should be urged not to press for this extension, which would at once raise the question of extending the treaty to other territories, including our own Colonial territories, in South-East Asia. The exclusion of the United Kingdom from the treaty

<sup>1</sup> Previous reference: see 341.

would have political disadvantages, which were mentioned in the paper; but the counter-balancing advantages seemed greater, and it was proposed that we should now inform the Governments of Australia and New Zealand that a treaty on these lines would be acceptable to us, making it clear that we should much prefer it to be confined to the three original signatories.

*The Chief of the Imperial General Staff* said that the Chiefs of Staff supported the views which had been expressed by the Prime Minister.

Discussion showed that opinion in the Cabinet was divided on the expediency of acquiescing in the conclusion of a treaty on these lines, to which the United Kingdom Government would not be a party. The following points were made in favour of the treaty:—

(a) The Australian Government were pressing us strongly to support it. They had already misjudged our attitude to the “island chain” proposal, and had assumed that we were opposed to any attempt by them to obtain United States guarantees of their security in the Pacific. It was important that we should give no further opportunity for misunderstanding of our attitude. The conclusion of such a treaty would be fully in accord with modern conceptions of the nature of the Commonwealth: Australia and New Zealand would be undertaking responsibilities for the protection of Commonwealth interests in the Pacific, as the United Kingdom and Canada were undertaking such responsibilities in the Atlantic area through their membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. In addition, this guarantee of United States assistance in the Far East would make it easier for Australia and New Zealand to accept defence commitments in the Middle East.

(b) A treaty on these lines would avoid the difficult problems raised by any proposal for joint participation by Australia and Japan in arrangements for Pacific defence. The treaty, by safeguarding Australia against Japanese aggression, would make the Australian Government more willing to accept some measure of Japanese rearmament.

(c) The treaty could not be enlarged to include the United Kingdom without opening the way to the inclusion of other countries, including our Colonial territories, in the Far East and South-East Asia. There was no likelihood that the United States Government would be willing to assume any responsibility for the defence of these countries.

(d) The United Kingdom Government ought not to enter into further commitments in the Far East without very carefully examining their extent and implications. It seemed unlikely that we should be able to carry out obligations for the defence of the Pacific area of the nature envisaged in the treaty.

The following arguments were advanced against the conclusion of a treaty on these lines from which the United Kingdom was excluded:—

(e) There was a clear need for the conclusion of a comprehensive Pacific pact similar to the North Atlantic Treaty; but it would be premature, and would obstruct the later conclusion of comprehensive arrangements for mutual defence in the Pacific, to agree now to a limited treaty which excluded not only the United Kingdom but many other countries vitally concerned with defence in the Far East.

(f) Our exclusion from the treaty would be regarded at home and abroad as evidence that we were abandoning our interests in the Far East, and would have a most adverse influence on our position in Malaya and Hong Kong. It would also be regarded as a further example of undue dependence on the United States.

(g) It should be possible to devise some means of associating the United Kingdom with the treaty without altering its purpose or destroying its advantages. Rather than acquiesce in our exclusion, we should explain to the Australian and New Zealand Governments the difficulties which it would raise, and invite further consideration of the problems involved. It should not be taken for granted that the association of the United Kingdom with the treaty must necessarily involve its extension to Malaya and Hong Kong.

The Cabinet:—

Agreed to defer further consideration of their attitude towards the proposed tripartite treaty between the Governments of the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

### 343 CAB 128/19, CM 19(51)8

12 Mar 1951

#### 'Pacific defence': Cabinet conclusions on proposed tripartite treaty between the United States, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

The Cabinet had before them a further memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations (C.P. (51) 76) on the proposed tripartite treaty between the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

*The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations* said that the Prime Minister had discussed this question further with some of the Ministers who had expressed doubts about it in the Cabinet's earlier discussion on 1st March, and he had been asked to prepare a letter to the Prime Minister of Australia explaining the anxieties which Ministers felt about this proposal. A draft letter on the lines suggested was reproduced in Annex A of C.P. (51) 76; but the Secretary of State said that, for the reasons given in his memorandum, it was his view that the despatch of a letter in those terms would seriously damage the relations between this country and Australia. He strongly recommended that no attempt should be made at this stage to dissuade the Governments of Australia and New Zealand from concluding this tripartite treaty with the United States. He believed that, if such an attempt were made, it would fail: the Government of Australia would go forward with the treaty, despite our protestations, and would persuade the Government of New Zealand to take the same course. He therefore recommended that a communication should be sent to the Prime Minister of Australia in the terms of the draft in Annex B to C.P. (51) 76. This, while offering no opposition to the treaty itself, made two important points of principle. First, it raised strong objection to the inclusion of the Philippines in the treaty. And, secondly, it stressed the importance of dispelling any misapprehension that, as a result of this treaty, the United Kingdom Government were repudiating their interest in the Pacific area.

In discussion the following points were made:—

(a) The view was strongly expressed that, if such a treaty were concluded, it must be made abundantly clear that the United Kingdom still retained a vital interest in the Pacific area. Some Ministers felt that this should be made clear in the preamble to the treaty itself. *The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations* urged,

<sup>1</sup> Previous reference: see 342.

however, that insistence at this stage on such an amendment of the preamble would certainly delay the conclusion of the treaty and might well jeopardise the prospects of its being concluded at all. He therefore recommended that this reference to the United Kingdom's continuing interest in the Pacific should be made, not in the treaty itself, but in public statements to be made at the appropriate moment in the Parliaments of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Other Ministers, while agreeing to this course with reluctance, insisted that firm assurances should be obtained from the Governments of Australia and New Zealand that satisfactory statements would be made on this point at the appropriate stage.

(b) In favour of the treaty it had been argued that, if their security were guaranteed by the United States, Australia and New Zealand would be more willing in war to make their defence contribution in the Middle East. In fact, however, the Governments of Australia and New Zealand had not entered into any definite commitments to contribute towards the defence of the Middle East in war. And some Ministers felt that the Australian Government, at any rate, were seeking to limit their defence liabilities to the Pacific area.

In this connection it was pointed out that, if the safeguards provided by the United Nations Charter proved in the event to be ineffective, and if the United Kingdom were not associated in any way with this treaty, we should be left without any contractual right to assistance in safeguarding our own interests in the Pacific area in time of war.

(c) This treaty was likely to be a cause of anxiety in India, Pakistan and Ceylon. The Governments of those countries should certainly be informed of what was proposed. The Governments of Australia and New Zealand should be urged, if they had not done so already, to keep all other Commonwealth Governments informed of their negotiations with the United States.

(d) Particular objection was raised to the proposed inclusion of the Philippines in the treaty. Determined efforts should be made to secure that the Philippines were excluded from it, and, if these failed, the Cabinet should be given an opportunity of considering the matter again.

The general conclusion of the Cabinet was that, subject to the points noted in paragraphs (a) and (d) above, it was not practicable for the United Kingdom Government to offer opposition to the conclusion of this treaty or to claim to be associated with it. *The Minister of Defence* and *The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*<sup>2</sup> said, however, that they felt grave anxiety about the treaty and, in particular, about the interpretation which might be placed upon it by public opinion in this country. There seemed every likelihood that it would be represented as implying that the United Kingdom Government had repudiated their interests in the Pacific area.

The Cabinet:—

(1) Agreed that, if the proposed treaty were to be concluded, statements should be made at the appropriate moment in the Parliaments of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand making it clear that the treaty would not affect the existing relations between the independent members of the Commonwealth nor diminish the vital interests of the United Kingdom in the Pacific area; and invited the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, in consultation with the

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<sup>2</sup> Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough, formerly minister of defence, 1947–1950.

Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, to strengthen in this sense the final paragraph of the draft in Annex B to C.P. (51) 76.

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to send a personal message to the Prime Minister of Australia on the lines of the draft in Annex B to C.P. (51) 76, suitably amended in the light of the Cabinet's discussion.

(3) Took note that, if the United States Government were unwilling to agree that the Philippines should be excluded from the scope of the treaty, the Cabinet would be given a further opportunity to review the whole position afresh.

(4) Invited the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to ensure that the Governments of Australia and New Zealand would take appropriate steps to inform other Commonwealth Governments (including the Governments of India, Pakistan and Ceylon) of the proposal to conclude this treaty.

