Cabinet minutes of the update by the British Deputy Military Governor in Germany*[[1]](#footnote-1)*’s on the latest developments in Berlin, dated 25 June 1948

SECRET

[…]

3. *The British Deputy Military Governor in Germany* informed the Cabinet of the latest developments in the situation in Berlin. The British garrison could be supplied by air, and arrangements for this purpose would be brought into operation in the following week. Food stocks were sufficient to supply the civil population in the British sector for twenty-seven days. The electricity generating stations controlled by the Western Powers could meet about 50 per cent of the electricity requirements in the Western sectors of the city. The German people in those sectors were calm, and the majority of them were ready to resist Russian orders if they were confident that they would continue to receive the support of Western Powers. It would be useful if the British Military Governors could be authorised to make it clear that the Russian authorities were to blame for any inconvenience or suffering arising from the suspension of land communications between the Western Zones of Germany and the Western sectors of Berlin.

In reply to questions, *The Deputy Military Governor* said that it would not be practicable to bring freight trains from the Western Zones to Berlin by force. Nor would it be feasible to convoy lorries by road to Berlin, save as a major military operation. He doubted whether it would be practicable to bring in sufficient food for the civil population by air, even if the magnitude of the commitment were reduced by removing, on the return journeys of the freight aircraft, such members of the civil population as were willing to leave the Western sectors of the city. It might be advisable at a later stage to remove by this means some of the more prominent Germans who had opposed Soviet policies in Berlin. We were not in a position to put any effective pressure on the Soviet authorities by withholding supplies normally sent from the Western Zones to the Soviet Zone. No such supplies were being sent at the present time but none of the commodities concerned was essential to the economy of the Soviet Zone, and the lack of them would not be more than an inconvenience to the Soviet authorities. No steps had yet been taken to close down the Soviet broadcasting station in the British sector, for it was thought that, if this were done, the Soviet authorities would cut our cable communications between Berlin and London. The numbers of British troops in Berlin were sufficient for the purpose of dealing with any civil disturbances; and there could be no question of undertaking military operations in Berlin.

Ministers were concerned at the position which would arise if land communications between the Western Zones and Berlin were not reopened before the food supplies of the civil population were exhausted. The Soviet authorities could supply, without great difficulty, food for the whole of the civil population of Berlin; but it could not be assumed that they would undertake responsibility for supplying the Western sectors while the Western Powers retained their garrisons in the city. Immediate consideration should therefore be given, in consultation with the United States and French authorities, to the possibilities of maintaining supplies to the civil population in the Western sectors of the city, and in particular to the extent to which supplies for the civil population could be maintained by air.

[TNA, CAB 128/13/43]

Keywords: post-war Germany, great power relations

1. Brownjohn, Major General Nevil (1897 - 1973) - British General. British Deputy Military Governor in Germany (1947 - 1949), Vice Quartermaster General, War Office (1949), Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff (1950 - 1952), Chief Staff Officer at the Ministry of Defence (1952 - 1955), Quartermaster-General to the Forces (1955 - 1958). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)