Extract from Cabinet conclusions regarding the situation in Berlin, 22 July 1948

[…]

 *The Foreign Secretary* said that he hoped it would be possible to despatch a note to the Soviet Government that day. In drafting the note he had consulted the Government of the United States’ suggestion that the Berlin situation should be referred to the Security Council. The note would ask for the removal of the difficulties which had interrupted the movement of persons and goods between the Western Zones and Berlin, and would suggest technical discussions with a view to overcoming these and any other difficulties, such as the currency problem, which were connected with or had a direct effect on the situation in Berlin. At the same time it would make it clear that His Majesty’s Government were willing to enter into wider discussions covering, not only the German problem as a whole, but also the problem of establishing firm conditions of peace in Europe. The measures taken to supply Berlin by air, in which the part played by the Royal Air Force was most creditable, had greatly encouraged our Allies in Western Europe, and had effectively shown to Eastern European countries that we were determined to stand firm. It was impossible to forecast the results of this further note and it had therefore been thought right to explore with the United States Government what practical steps they would be prepared to take in the event of an emergency. Meanwhile, he was making every effort to avoid any incident that might lead to a crisis. He proposed to make a short statement about the situation in Parliament later that day and would, in general, follow the line taken in the statement made on the previous day by the United States Secretary of State.

The following points were made in discussions: -

 (a) The Treasury and the Foreign Office were making a joint enquiry into the currency situation in the western sectors of Berlin.

 (b) The Soviet Government had offered to supply food to the whole of Berlin from 1st August, but there was no guarantee that they would give effect to this offer, and it seemed likely that any food which they sent to Berlin would be at the expense of Poland and Czechoslovakia.

 (c) After consultation with the Foreign Secretary, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries had refused to guarantee compensation for trawlers which might be seized by the Soviet Government in the event of war. Trawler owners might therefore be unwilling to send their vessels to the Murmansk grounds and there might be some reduction in fish supplies. Ministers agreed that any claims of this kind should be firmly resisted.

 (d) Though the achievements of the Royal Air Force in carrying supplies to Berlin had exceeded all expectations, it would henceforth be necessary to look mainly to the United States Air Force for any substantial increase in these supplies.

 (e) The fall of the French Government[[1]](#footnote-1) had aggravated the difficulty of handling the Berlin situation and it was not yet clear whether a new Government would be formed in time to enable the proposed note to the Soviet Government to be delivered with the backing of France.

The Cabinet –

 Endorsed the line which the Foreign Secretary was pursuing in dealing with the situation in Berlin.

[…]

[TNA, CAB 128/13/53]

Keywords: post-war Germany, great power relations

1. The government led by Robert Schuman from the previous January collapsed at the end of July following a conflict between the Socialists and the Popular Republic Movement (MRP). See Frank Giles, *The Locust Years: the story of the Fourth French Republic 1946-1958* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991), pp. 101-103. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)