



NOTE FOR RECORD

I discussed this question with Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick and Mr. Ward on 21st February. We agreed that such difficulties as existed could not be solved by the appointment of a Ministerial Committee. A Committee which did not include the Foreign Secretary in person would be of no value: but, if the Foreign Secretary was to be a member, the Prime Minister would have to preside - and there was no prospect of his doing so. We further agreed that, if differences persisted, the best way of resolving them in the last resort was by discussion between the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Defence. But, before that stage was reached, other methods of resolving the differences should first be tried - in particular, it would be useful if Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick had a general talk with the Chiefs of Staff. At the end of our meeting I undertook to find out how strongly feeling on this was running in military circles - and, in particular, whether it was shared by the Minister of Defence himself - and to consider, in the light of my enquiries, whether it would be useful if Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick offered at this stage to talk to the Chiefs of Staff.

2. I saw Sir Harold Parker on the following day. He agreed that there was no case for a Ministerial Committee and ^{that} the differences which could not be resolved otherwise could best be handled by personal discussion between the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Defence. He did not think, however, that such a discussion was needed at the present time. In his talk with me he made three particular points:-

(a) The frustration on the military side had been increased by the fact that, for some time after Mr. Ward became Chairman, no meetings of the A.C.(O) Committee had been held. The Committee had been designed as a forum in which the military could air their views on anti-Communist propaganda overseas, and it failed in its purpose if meetings were only held at very long intervals. Mr. Ward had now agreed that the Committee should meet regularly - at least once every six weeks.

(b) On certain procedural proposals he was already in correspondence with Mr. Ward. He would like to see whether agreement could be reached in that correspondence before any other action was taken.

(c) On policy in South-East Asia, over which the underlying differences had come to a head, the Foreign Secretary might take a different view after his return from the Bangkok Conference. This trip would provide opportunities for the Foreign Secretary and C.I.G.S. to discuss these questions. In those discussions either might influence the other ~~one~~ and, at the end, they should at least understand one another better. From all points of view therefore it would be wiser to take no definite step before the Foreign Secretary and C. I. G. S. returned to London.

3. On 23rd February I saw Mr. Ward again and gave him the upshot of my conversation with Sir Harold Parker. We agreed that in these circumstances Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick should be advised to defer any suggestion of talking to the Chiefs of Staff on this subject - and Mr. Ward undertook to convey this advice to him. We left it that we should first see (i) whether any change of attitude had emerged, on Indo-China, as a result of any talks which the Foreign Secretary and the C.I.G.S. might have had on their journey to and from Bangkok; and (ii) how far agreement could be reached, on procedural matters, in the correspondence now proceeding between Mr. Ward and Sir Harold Parker.

4. I asked Mr. Ward to keep me informed of developments. Meanwhile, I doubt whether I need take any action, vis-à-vis the A.C.(O) Committee, on the specific question referred to me, viz., "How, in the absence of a parent Committee, the Committee's recommendations should be implemented". As stated above, my view on this is that it is not practicable to appoint a Ministerial Committee on Communism, comparable to that which existed under the Labour Government; and that, if need arises for Ministerial decisions, we should suggest a meeting between the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Defence. I will, however, postpone expressing this view to the Committee until I hear what developments have taken place on the other aspects of this question.

28TH FEBRUARY, 1955.