

“Some sort of an agreed line” The negotiations for the ceasefire demarcation line in Cyprus, 30 July – 9 August 1974

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Using recently declassified British documents, this paper looks at the negotiations for the demarcation of an agreed ceasefire line between the invading Turkish forces and the defending Greek-Cypriot National Guard. These negotiations took place in Cyprus between the end of July and 9 August 1974 and were successful only in part, as the attempt to draw a mutually agreed line eventually proved futile.

Through the examination of the available documents, this paper highlights a number of areas: it draws a vivid picture of the negotiations themselves and the difficulties they faced; it sheds light on some of the aims and objectives of Britain; it gives some information of the conditions on the ground in Cyprus during the tragic and confused period between the first and second invasion; last but not least, it draws out the aims and ultimate policy of Turkey, the invading power, which were to become amply evident only a few days later.

The aim of this paper is to examine one of the lesser known aspects of the events of the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, in particular the negotiations for the demarcation of a ceasefire line. The paper uses the official record kept by the British representatives at the negotiations that took place between the two rounds of the Turkish invasion of July and August 1974, in order to reach “some sort of an agreed line”¹ as Stephen Olver, the British High Commissioner in Nicosia called it.

Any military conflict may be seen as the loss of stability in a particular area and the beginning of the quest for a new power distribution. Thus, after any military conflict

¹ The phrase comes from Olver’s final report on the work of the committee, sent to A. C. Goodison of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), at the time in Geneva for the second round of talks. See TNA, FCO 9/1926, letter, Olver to Goodison, Demarcation of the Cease Fire [sic] line, 9 August 1974:2.

is over, the beginning of the stabilisation process is a sort of stocktaking, where the two sides register their positions and agree to the lines of confrontation at a given date. Very often the result of this stocktaking is a no-man's land. This zone, situated between the belligerents, aims to separate the two opposing sides and attempts to prevent an accidental flare-up of the conflict. In the post-1945 world, this zone further accords a measure of security to the two sides: often neither side is allowed to enter this zone, and peacekeeping troops are invited to patrol and control it. While such zones are meant to be temporary, on occasion they acquire notable permanence.²

The legal basis as well as the general framework on which the process was based, was the Geneva Declaration of 30 July 1974. Among others, this text established 30 July 1974 (2000 hrs) as the effective point in time for the cessation of hostilities, following which the line of the opposing forces would "freeze". Furthermore, it stipulated that "representatives of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom in consultation with the United Nations Peace-keeping Force on Cyprus (UNFICYP)" should establish "the limit of the areas occupied by the Turkish armed forces", at 2200 hrs on 30 July.³ Thus from the beginning, the UN was given an ancillary, consultative role, with the opposing sides (Greece and Turkey) and Britain assuming the main responsibility for the process, in their capacity as Guarantor Powers of the Republic of Cyprus. Beyond consulting, the UN would assume responsibility for the security of the Turkish enclaves in the (at the time) unoccupied part of Cyprus and patrol the security zone, whose size and character was also not established. The exchange of prisoners (military and civilian) was entrusted to the International Red Cross.

Following the declaration in Geneva, the lead as regards demarcation of the security zone was taken by the British. The reason is obvious: with Greece and Turkey *de facto* belligerents in Cyprus, the only guarantor power left to preside was Britain. In Cyprus the main burden fell on the shoulders of the British High Commissioner, Stephen J. Olver and Col. J. J. G. [Jerry] Hunter his Defence Advisor.⁴ An invitation to begin talks was issued immediately, with the expectation that the talks could be completed in a few days.⁵ ... However, despite the urgency that the British High

² The most famous such zone is in the middle of the Korean peninsula and dates from 1953, so has lasted even longer than the Cyprus conflict.

³ For the full text of the declaration see Geneva Declaration, 1974. The Declaration itself resulted from the failure of the Turkish armed forces to respect the ceasefire arranged under US auspices that came into force on 22 July 1974 at 1400 hrs GMT. For the ceasefire agreement see, among others, Kissinger, 2000:1192; Arapakis, 2000:241–272. On the Turkish part in the violations of the ceasefire between 22 and 29 July, see Henn, 2004:378–399.

⁴ Stephen John Linley Olver (b. 1917), C.M.G., M.B.E., British High Commissioner, Nicosia, had presented his credentials to President Makarios on 7 March 1973; see *Cyprus Mail*, Sunday 8 March 1973. He had originally been in the Indian Political Service and had transferred to the Foreign Office in 1948. In December 1974 he was awarded a K.B.E. He retired in 1975. See Burkes Peerage (internet); *The Times*, 28 August 1975.

⁵ FCO 9/1926, tel. no. 367, FCO to Nicosia, 011350Z, 1 August 1974. According to the text of the telegram, signed by Callaghan, the three foreign ministers had agreed in Geneva that the demarcation

Commissioner tried to breathe into the proceedings, with communications to the two sides as early as 30 July, the meetings only began in the afternoon of 2 August. The British records place the responsibility for the delay squarely on the shoulders of the Turkish side: while a meeting at 0830 on 2 August was proposed, the Turkish representative was unavailable until the afternoon. As Olver wrote, in a telegram sent to London the same day:

I expressed our serious disappointment at this further delay. [...] A delay until late this afternoon will rule out any helicopter survey until tomorrow. A further 24 hours will thus have been lost. There seems to be absolutely no sense of urgency here on the Turkish side about getting this operation under way. If we are to make any substantial progress today pressure will have to be exerted in Ankara.⁶

Securing agreement to begin talks proved to be no easy task. An exchange of seventeen telegrams was required during 1 and 2 August (three of them from Callaghan, the British Foreign Secretary himself) until the Turkish side declared it was ready to send a representative to the talks.⁷

The committee formed for the talks comprised three members. The Chairman of the Demarcation Committee was Col. J. J. G. [Jerry] Hunter, the British Defence Attaché in Nicosia. The Greek Representative was Major (Eng) Evangelos G. Tsolakis, who was also the (Cyprus) National Guard Liaison Officer with UNFICYP. The Turkish Representative was Colonel Nezih Cakar, Deputy Chief of Staff to General Ersin, Commander of the Turkish Force, and, since 23 July, Turkish Liaison Officer with UNFICYP. In addition to the above, UNFICYP was represented by its Deputy Chief of Staff, the Canadian Colonel C. Beattie.⁸ The committee was supported by an expert cartographer, Lieut. Col. T. A. Linley, Royal Engineers, from HQ Near East Land Forces, Major R. K. Collins, HQ British Forces Near East, who acted as its Secretary and assorted other British personnel (draughtsman, stenographers etc.).⁹

“should be completed by 31 July and immediate reports of the coordinates established should be sent to them”. On 2 August, Olver estimated they would need “at least two days to complete this process, possibly more”. See FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO tel. no. 559, 2 August 1974.

⁶ FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO tel. no. 549, 2 August 1974. Another telegram next day confirmed that “it seemed clear that the Turks were still playing for time”; see FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO tel. no. 566, 3 August 1974.

⁷ FCO 9/1926, folios 1–17. Callaghan sent a personal message to Gunes, the Turkish Foreign Minister on 1 August (FCO to Ankara, tel. no. 902) and returned to this again on 2 August (FCO to Ankara, tel. no. 908) and sent instructions to Nicosia on 1 August (FCO to Nicosia, tel. no. 367); he had also asked for US pressure on the Turkish side: see tel. no. 908, FCO to Ankara, 2 August 1974: “Washington should immediately contact Eagleburger or Sisco and ask the Americans to intervene on Ankara on this subject [demarcation] as forcefully as they can”.

⁸ See Henn, 2004:395–396. Cakar retired from the Turkish Armed Forces with the rank of General; in the late 1990s he served as Senior Advisor to the President of Turkey. Tsolakis also retired from the Hellenic Armed Forces with the rank of General. See Porisma, 1989:278. Beattie was also the Commander of the Canadian Contingent. See Henn, 2004:308.

⁹ Perhaps because it was superseded by later events, the general image of the work of this committee

Beginning on 2 August, there were in all eight meetings of the demarcation committee. They took place in the UNFICYP's Headquarters, in Blue Beret Camp, at the Eastern Perimeter of Nicosia Airport (Henn, 2004:50).

What was required of the committee was to establish the limit of the Turkish advance, by means of reconnaissance (by car and helicopter) and to transfer this on to a map that would be sent to Geneva, for the second round of talks, that were to begin (according to Article 5 of the Geneva Declaration) on 8 August 1974. The list of meetings and their main preoccupations are set out in Table 1:

Table 1: Meetings of the Ceasefire Demarcation Committee

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| 2 Aug. | 1430–1830 | Discussion on the Terms of Reference. |
| 3 Aug. | 0700–1830 | Ratification of Minutes; Greek and Turkish representatives trace respective lines on the map; discussion of the ceasefire line. |
| 4 Aug. | 1000–1710 (meeting adjourns 1145 to 1445) | Discussion of Turkish eastern and western line, excluding Nicosia; unable to agree. Eventual agreement to establish the line currently occupied by Turkish troops (without prejudice to position on 30 July). Helicopter reconnaissance: confirmed Lapithos was still in Greek hands, no Turkish troops between Vassileia and the Kornos pass; Greek request for further reconnaissance refused by Turkish representative. |
| 5 Aug. | 0820–2030 (or 2145) | Helicopter reconnaissance of area NE of Nicosia to coast. |
| 6 Aug. | 0830–2145 | Discussion of the Nicosia area. |
| 7 Aug. | 0900–1945 | Includes ground reconnaissance, Western Nicosia area. |
| 8 Aug. | 0800–? | Further reconnaissance of Nicosia area. |
| 9 Aug. | | Drafting the final report; signature ceremony in front of the Press. |

Source: The National Archives (UK), FCO 9/1926

Delaying tactics and crisis points

Following the delayed start, there were further delays once the meetings began. The British view appears to have been that the Turkish side's policy was to delay the talks,

has been rather confused. Both the work of the committee and the British role in convening the committee and in its work has generally been understated. In one case the British involvement is entirely omitted while elsewhere inaccuracies on the dates are recorded. The most precise account is to be found in Henn, 2004:415–416; however, even in this case the author devotes less than a page to this episode, in over 470 pages of text.

At the first meeting UN stenographers were used, but, according to the British High Commissioner, they proved to be “completely incompetent”. See FCO 9/1926, letter, Olver to Goodison, 5 August 1974. Other experts were also used on occasion: Major Tsolakakis was accompanied on one of the reconnaissance flights by another Greek officer, Major Zervas. Other experts were also called in by all sides. See FCO 9/1926, D.M. Day (Nicosia) to R. H. Baker (FCO), enclosing a copy of the final report of “The Geneva Declaration of 30 July 1974, Report on the Demarcation Talks”, p. 1.

in order to achieve the maximum territorial gains and expand the area they occupied.¹⁰ Thus the records lay the blame squarely at the feet of the Turkish side.

On 4 August in a telegram to the FCO Olver noted “a tendency by the Turkish representative to filibuster (he took 1½ hours yesterday morning to approve the admittedly rather chaotic minutes of the first meeting and in general proceeds at the most leisurely possible pace).¹¹ The next day it was observed that Cakar, the Turkish representative, was “also much given to time wasting with rather pedantic corrections”.¹² Even after the process was over, in his final report the British High Commissioner commented on the “unfortunate 48 hours delay in getting the demarcation exercise under way: here the Turkish Colonel has frankly admitted that they were not prepared to start, even if the rest of us had been”.¹³ The British High Commissioner seems to have thought that the general behaviour of the Turkish representative tied in well with Turkish policy: Olver judged Cakar to be “suave, highly intelligent and absolutely tied to the apron strings of his high command, whom he consults at frequent intervals, always with depressing results”.¹⁴

As regards the Greek side, the British seemed largely convinced that it was trying to reach some agreement. Tsolakakis, the Greek representative, did try to put forward well-founded arguments in support of the positions of the Greek side. Indeed, the overall record and the British praise for him point to this. According to Olver, Tsolakakis “a bright young National Guard Staff Officer [...] began these proceedings very much worse briefed than the Turk, but has now caught up and is giving a good account of himself. He is more relaxed and less rigid than Cakar, but also naturally under fairly tight control from National Guard Headquarters”.¹⁵ However, no allegations of delays or obstructionism are levelled at him.

The meetings took place during a difficult period: the fragile ceasefire was largely observed by the Greek side and largely flouted by the Turkish side, as observed by both the British and UNFICYP.¹⁶ The local conditions continuously threatened to at least delay the proceedings or even entirely derail the conditions. As late as 8 August, when the second Geneva Conference was starting, the demarcation was supposed to have been completed, and the last stumbling block (the line in the area of Nicosia)

¹⁰ This was confirmed by the events, but also at the time by a set of Turkish operational orders found on a Turkish major captured on 31 July. See Sergis, 1996:542–546. The orders gave details for the attack on the Karavas-Lapithos area.

¹¹ FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO tel. no. 598, 4 August 1974.

¹² FCO 9/1926, letter Olver (Nicosia) to Goodison (FCO), 5 August 1974.

¹³ FCO 9/1926, letter Olver (Nicosia) to Goodison (FCO), 9 August 1974.

¹⁴ FCO 9/1926, letter Olver (Nicosia) to Goodison (FCO), 5 August 1974.

¹⁵ FCO 9/1926, letter Olver (Nicosia) to Goodison (FCO), 5 August 1974. On another occasion the Greek representative is described as “a reasonable man”, while the Turkish representative “sounds an impossible character and who, furthermore, always had his apron strings tightly grasped by the Turkish High Command”: see letter Olver (Nicosia) to Goodison (FCO), 9 August 1974.

¹⁶ See e.g. FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO tel. no. 597, 4 August 1974. Cf. Henn, 2004:406–418.

was mostly agreed, firing along the Green line was reported — as well as Turkish advances, which threatened to delay the completion of the task.¹⁷

A further crisis was caused by the BBC World News report of 1700 on 4 August, a few days after the start of the process. On that day the BBC claimed that the talks were close to stalling, due to Greek intransigence. The result was an immediate request by Stephen Olver for “immediate steps [...] to induce the BBC to adopt a more responsible attitude to their reporting of the demarcation talks. If we are not careful they will so sour the atmosphere that no progress will be possible. We are tackling the BBC correspondent here”.¹⁸ A further crisis was caused by the Turkish claim (lodged through the Turkish representative at the talks), that the UN had “no mandate to operate in the area under Turkish control” and “no authority to enter into Turkish rear areas”¹⁹ and thus verify the positions that the Turkish Armed Forces had reached.²⁰ However, by far the greatest problem the talks faced was the Turkish claim to have occupied particular areas, claims that were proven to be unfounded.

Indeed, throughout the talks the Turkish side maintained that the line they were agreeing to was what they had already occupied on 30 July (the date set by the Geneva Declaration). However, there were several instances where, as the British High Commissioner reported, this was not true. One such case was the Nicosia Golf Course (which both the British High Commissioner himself and the French Ambassador could observe from their respective embassy buildings) which, despite Turkish claims to the contrary, had only been occupied on 31 July.²¹ On another occasion, on 3 August, the Greek side raised objections to Turkish claims they had already occupied (among other points) the Kornos saddle (on the western side of the Pentadaktylos range); in fact, a relatively well-known incident on the saddle on 2 August had again proven that Turkish claims were false.²²

The town of Lapithos was another instance of false Turkish claims. The helicopter reconnaissance of the area by the committee members showed that Lapithos was still in Greek hands (Greek flags were flying in the town), while no Turkish troops were present between Vassileia and the Kornos pass. The Greek request for a reconnaissance was flatly refused by the Turkish representative. The British High Commissioner noted in his report that attempts to persuade him continued “for three hours after the helicopter returned to base at dark, but the Turkish representative refused to budge. His argument was that Turkish artillery [...] dominated the entire coastal

¹⁷ FCO 9/1926, tel. Nicosia to FCO, 081555Z, which reports conditions at 1500 hrs.

¹⁸ FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO tel. no. 607, 4 August 1974.

¹⁹ FCO 9/1926, The Geneva Declaration of 30 July 1974-Report on the demarcation talks, p. 3, point 10.

²⁰ Indeed, this culminated later, during the second round of the Geneva talks, when the Turks requested Kurt Waldheim to withdraw UN forces from occupied areas. See Callaghan, 1987:350.

²¹ FCO 9/1926, letter Olver (Nicosia) to Goodison (FCO), 9 August 1974.

²² This was probably linked to the well-known incident of the Turkish tank convoy partly destroyed and partly captured on 2 August. See Stamatis, 2007:148.

area which was thus in Turkish hands; he even at one point claimed that a Turkish destroyer off this part of the coast signified Turkish occupation of the area". This instance caused the strongest condemnation on the part of the British:

The Turkish position over this coastal strip is wholly specious [...] unless we are quickly enabled to fly the helicopter reconnaissance justifiably requested by the Greek representative, the whole future of this demarcation attempt may be in jeopardy, with foreseeable consequences for the Greek attitude towards Geneva. Time is vital in view of the reports of renewed Turkish movement towards Lapithos.²³

In this case, the Turkish intransigence gave rise to a Greek refusal to discuss Nicosia demarcation unless the Turks agreed to a helicopter reconnaissance of the area. On 4 August the Greek representative refused to discuss the demarcation of Nicosia unless a reconnaissance of the disputed NW corner (as it came to be called) was agreed to by the Turkish side. Olver, the British High Commissioner, was alarmed and asked the FCO to put pressure on the Turkish to agree; Callaghan himself replied that he had put some pressure (but at the same time pressure was applied to Greece also); the matter (on which the British were clearly in agreement with the Greek side) was temporarily resolved when Tsolakis informed Hunter on the afternoon of 6 August 1974 that he would now discuss Nicosia. This appears to have been the result of developments on the field of battle, when Lapithos came under attack and was subsequently occupied by the Turkish Army.²⁴

In other instances, the evidence given by UNFICYP was also against the Turkish position(s), but the latter refused to accept any UN competence in the areas they occupied.

Further problems were caused by the Turkish request to have parallel action on other aspects of the Geneva Declaration, notably their refusal to discuss the security zone that would separate the opponents. The British High Commissioner in Nicosia had expressed, early in the talks, concern that "the Turks will use demarcation, where of course continued delay works in their favour, as a lever to obtain concessions over other aspects of the Geneva agreement".²⁵ However, though there were some initial Turkish attempts to apply pressure on the demarcation committee to take action on the evacuation of Turkish enclaves in the parts of Cyprus not occupied by the Turkish army, they appear to have dropped the matter at this level, seeing the firm stance of all others involved. Nonetheless, the Turkish refusal to discuss the size of the security zone restricted the talks simply to demarcation; this is something the British were not happy with, but they eventually accepted that it was a political matter, to be decided in Geneva.

²³ FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO tel. no. 613, 5 August 1974.

²⁴ See FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO, tel. no. 634, 6 August 1974; tel. no. 688, 8 August 1974.

²⁵ See FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO, tel. no. 550, 2 August 1974.

By 9 August 1974, the committee had managed to draw a ceasefire line, but had failed to agree on a single line. In fact, far from establishing the extent of land occupied by the Turkish Forces on 30 July (as the Geneva Declaration stipulated) it was found difficult to come to an agreement even for the present positions on the confrontation line; hence the compromise was a map marking the ceasefire line as it stood at the dates when reconnaissance was made. In some cases the British, UNFICYP and Greek representatives had all agreed on a line, with the Turkish representative putting forward a different version. This map marking differing versions for each side was printed and sent to Geneva, noting the disagreements of the two sides in many sections of the line.²⁶

What caused the failure?

From the start it became evident that coming to any sort of agreement would be a difficult task. The British, beyond the chaotic aspects of battle, found a clear cause of difficulties in the Turkish delaying tactics, the hardline approach of the Turkish side and some uncertainty as to what the aims and objectives of the invasion were. This uncertainty went all the way to the top: in his memoirs James Callaghan claims that all along he suspected the Turks were planning further operations:

I must also place on record that during these talks Gunes reassured me on two occasions that Turkey had no intention of her troops advancing nor of them remaining on the island. But my doubts increased, especially in the light of a talk I had with Dr Waldheim, the Secretary General of the United Nations, who called on me in Geneva (Callaghan, 1987:350).

The British representatives in Cyprus were also unclear about Turkish intentions. On 6 August, the British High Commissioner wrote to London that the Turks should agree to a demarcation line, because otherwise “it may be difficult to restrain the National Guard”.²⁷ The UN, which could help clear the possible obstacles, was obviously in a difficult position. Inadequate in men and arms (there was a particular lack of armoured vehicles), and with a restrictive mandate, it saw its role shrink in this process. This is obvious in the role assumed by Col. Beattie, the Canadian UNFICYP officer who participated in the talks. The British record seems to show he took a very

²⁶ See FCO 9/1926, “The Geneva Declaration of 30 July 1974, Report on the Demarcation Talks”, enclosure in D.M. Day (Nicosia) to R. H. Baker (FCO), 11 August 1974.

²⁷ FCO 9/1926, Nicosia to FCO tel. no. 634, 6 August 1974. This statement seems to show a lack of knowledge of the disorganisation and demoralisation of the National Guard after the ceasefire. It also confirms the initial British Government assessment of the first round of the invasion, where it is noted that “The Turks must be disappointed at the meagre success of their armed intervention”. See TNA (UK), CAB/128/55, “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street on Monday 22 July 1974”, p. 1. See also TNA, CAB 129/178/2, “CYPRUS, Note by the Secretary of the Cabinet”, C(74) 77, 22 July 1974, esp. paragraph 5.

low-key line: there are few references to him except in the final report where he usually agrees with the British and Greek positions.²⁸

Aims and objectives: a British view

It is obvious from the above that the British side was seriously interested in the process. The top level diplomat in Nicosia was directly involved; the telegrams and reports on the workings of the committee exchanged between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Nicosia High Commission were invariably copied to 10, Downing Street. As well as following the progress of the talks, when needed James Callaghan himself intervened (mainly with the Turkish government) in order to put pressure on the Turkish military to speed up the beginning of the process;²⁹ throughout the demarcation talks Callaghan continued to apply further pressure at strategic intervals.³⁰

The aims that were foremost in British minds can be seen in their praise of their own representative; in a report to the FCO, Olver praises Colonel Hunter who

has faced an almost impossible task and against all odds has produced at least some sort of an agreed line. Working 14, 16 or more hours a day, he has managed to keep his cool and prevent the talks from breaking up. He has managed to retain a good working relationship not only with Tsolakis, the Greek repr who is a reasonable man, but also with Cakar, the Turkish rep who sounds an impossible character and who, furthermore, always had his apron strings tightly grasped by the Turkish High Command. Hunter even emerged with a tribute from Cakar that he had been an admirably impartial chairman.³¹

In fact, as far as the Greeks and the British were concerned, all this was happening with an eye to Geneva, where the second round of the talks began on 8 August (a day before the demarcation talks concluded). However the signs in Cyprus were not auspicious and perhaps these signs should have been interpreted more clearly. With hindsight we can say that Turkish refusal to discuss parts of the demarcation line (particularly where, as the later events showed, they were planning to expand the area they controlled) was bad enough; this, combined with Turkish expansion of the areas they held and their continued reinforcing of their army in Cyprus, probably pointed the way to what was to follow. Yet at the time this seems to have gone largely unnoticed.

Perhaps the most apt postscript to this episode is a hand-written note on the cover letter accompanying the final report. Commenting on 20 August 1974, when the second round of the invasion had largely been completed, an FCO official commented:

²⁸ FCO 9/1926, "The Geneva Declaration of 30 July 1974, Report on the Demarcation Talks" enclosure in D.M. Day (Nicosia) to R. H. Baker (FCO), 11 August 1974.

²⁹ See note 7 above.

³⁰ See e.g. FCO 9/1926, FCO tel. no. 924 to Ankara and UK Mission in New York and FCO tel. no. 407 to Nicosia, both dated 5 August 1974.

³¹ FCO 9/1926, letter Olver (Nicosia) to Goodison (FCO), 9 August 1974.

“A week is a long time in SEED [South Eastern Europe Department]. I Think these pps [pages] can be safely p.a. [put to archive]”.³²

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³² FCO 9/1926, D.M. Day (Nicosia) to R. H. Baker (FCO), enclosing a copy of the final report of “The Geneva Declaration of 30 July 1974, Report on the Demarcation Talks”, p. 1. The note is signed by J. Jones.