WAR CABINET.

CONCLUSIONS.

W.M. (40) 1 - W.M. (40) 55.

Jan.-Feb.: 1940.

CONFIDENTIAL ANNEXES.

VOL. III.
W.M. (40) 1st Conclusions, Minute 1. Scandinavia.

" 2nd Conclusions, Minute 1. Scandinavia.

" 3rd Conclusions, Minute 9. Scandinavia.

" Minute 12. Germany: Possible development of policy.


" 5th Conclusions, Minute 8. Scandinavia.

" 6th Conclusions, Minute 7. United States of America.

" 7th Conclusions, Minute 8. Scandinavia.

" 8th Conclusions, Minute 1. Scandinavia.

" 9th Conclusions, Minute 5. Scandinavia.

" 10th Conclusions, Minute 1. Scandinavia.

" 11th Conclusions, Minute 6. Western Front: Possibility of German Attack on Holland and Belgium.

" 12th Conclusions, Minute 1. Western Front: Possible German Attack on Holland and Belgium.

" 13th Conclusions, Minute 1. Western Front: Possible German Attack on Holland and Belgium.

" 14th Conclusions, Minute 1. Air Strengths of Great Britain, France and Germany.

" Minute 7. Western Front: Possible German Attack on Holland and Belgium.

" 15th Conclusions, Minute 7. Western Front: Possible German Attack on Netherlands and Belgium.

" 16th Conclusions, Minute 8. The Vatican.

" 17th Conclusions, Minute 9. Scandinavia.

" 18th Conclusions, Minute 10. Scandinavia.

" Minute 11. Finland: Operations by the Polish Navy.
3

Scandinavia: General Policy.

Scandinavia: German imports of iron ore via Narvik.

Finland: Allied Assistance; Operations by the Polish Navy.

Germany: Possible Intentions.

Eire: Internal Political Situation.

Propaganda in Germany: Nazi views on relative potentialities of Allied leaflet and broadcast propaganda.

Scandinavia.

Scandinavia.

Supreme War Council: 5th Meeting: Assistance to Finland.

Italy: Probable Intentions.

U.S.S.R: Visit of Sir Stafford Cripps to Moscow.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.

Scandinavia: Stoppage of traffic in Norwegian Territorial Waters.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.

Assistance to Finland.
W.M. (40) 49th Conclusions, Minute 5. Scandinavia: Stoppage of traffic in Norwegian Territorial Waters.

" Minute 6. Assistance to Finland.

" 50th Conclusions, Minute 2. U.S.S.R.

" Minute 8. Assistance to Finland.

" 52nd Conclusions, Minute 7. Assistance to Finland: Communication from the French Government.


" 53rd Conclusions, Minute 10. Assistance to Finland.

" 54th Conclusions, Minute 4. Assistance to Finland.

" 55th Conclusions, Minute 6. Assistance to Finland. Interview between M. Corbin and Sir A. Cadogan.
W.M. (40) 1ST CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 1.

Confidential Annex.

SCANDINAVIA.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF, introducing the Report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee on the military implications of a policy aimed at stopping the export of Swedish iron ore to Germany (W.P. (39) 179), emphasised the following points:

(a) The Chiefs of Staff recommended that the project for the complete stoppage of the export of Swedish iron ore to Germany should be carried out, in spite of the risks involved, on the assumption that its success would be decisive on the duration of the war.

(b) If this recommendation were accepted, Scandinavia would have to be regarded, for the time being, as the decisive theatre of war. Subject to being secure at home and in France, all else would have to be relegated to second place.
(c) Operations undertaken in Scandinavia might make it hard for us to fulfil our commitments to Turkey, if Germany decided to march into the Balkans.
(d) A result of our action, might be to rouse Russian hostility. In this event we might experience difficulty in finding the air forces required in India.
(c) The crucial factor in the whole problem was time. Germany might decide to attempt desperate measures, in order to bring about our defeat before she succumbed as a result of being deprived of iron ore. The crucial question, therefore, was whether the cutting off of Swedish iron ore would bring about a German collapse in a sufficiently short time.
(f) The operations which we might have to undertake in Southern Sweden, would not be militarily desirable but would be the price we should have to pay for Swedish co-operation in the Northern project.
(g) Finally, Norwegian and Swedish assent was vital for the execution of the major project.

Turning to the second Report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, on the balance of advantage between the major and minor projects (W.P.(39) 180), THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that the Chiefs of Staff had reached the conclusion that, if it were desired to undertake the major operation, it would be unsound to attempt the minor operation of
stopping the trade from Narvik in the meanwhile. If we did so, two unfortunate results might ensue. We might antagonise the Norwegians, and possibly the Swedes, and thus make it most unlikely that they would co-operate with us in the larger project. Secondly, we might give the Germans a pretext for immediate demands on Norway and/or Sweden. The Germans might require the Norwegians to give them bases from which to operate against this country (which would be violating Norwegian territorial waters), under threat of bombardment from the air, or invasion.

If this happened, the Norwegians would probably ask us for help, and we should have to inform them that we could do nothing effective until March. In these circumstances, the Norwegians and the Swedes might accept the German demands, in the hopes that they would, at any rate, be protected from Russia.

The discussion then turned on the effect on Germany of cutting off supplies of Swedish iron ore.

THE PRIME MINISTER pointed out that the Chiefs of Staff repeatedly emphasised that the conclusions they had reached depended entirely on the accuracy of the premise that, by depriving Germany of Swedish iron ore, the duration of the war would be profoundly affected. He enquired whether the Minister of Economic Warfare was satisfied on this point.
SIR FREDERICK LEITH-ROSS said that while it was impossible to be dogmatic on the point, the experts were agreed that a complete stoppage of Swedish iron ore would prove decisive in the long run, though it was not possible to specify precisely the length of the period for which Germany could last out. It was thought that the period might be in the neighbourhood of a year. The length of this period depended on what alternative sources of supply were available to Germany. For example, there was a large quantity of scrap iron in Poland which could be utilised in the production of steel. There was a production of 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 tons from the south Swedish orefields, which might still be available to the Germans, and there was a possibility of the supply of some ore from Russia.

An estimate based on the best available information indicated that the German stocks of iron ore might be about two or possibly three million tons. It was not possible to estimate their stocks of steel.

THE PRIME MINISTER enquired on what hypothesis the estimate that Germany might last a year without Swedish iron ore was based. He suggested that much would depend upon whether the German armed forces were fully engaged on major operations or not.

SIR FREDERICK LEITH-ROSS said that the estimate had not been based on continuous offensive operations by Germany. On the other hand, if no serious operations were undertaken, there was no doubt Germany would be
able to last longer. Normally at least 75 per cent. of
their steel production was used for civil purposes.
Much of this production had probably already been
diverted to munitions, but no doubt a still larger
degree of diversion would enable the supply of munitions
to be maintained for a longer period.

In further discussion the view was generally
taken that, although the effect of cutting off
Swedish ore would be gradual, and the time taken to
bring about a collapse might be long, nevertheless in
the end it would be decisive.

THE PRIME MINISTER referred to the paper by
the Minister of Economic Warfare on the stoppage of
iron ore from Narvik prepared on 18th December, 1939,
(W.P.(G)(39) 153). In paragraph 4 of Part I of the
first enclosure to that paper, it was stated that:

"the representatives of the Swedish
Government have privately undertaken by
various means to reduce iron ore shipments
to Germany to the lowest point possible
without provoking German reprisals upon
Sweden. This secret undertaking, however,
was only given on the understanding and
in the expectation that shipments of ore
via Narvik would be prevented by us."

It looked from this statement as if the
Swedes were depending on our stopping the Narvik trade.
As this appeared to be at variance with the reports
recently received from our Minister in Stockholm,
he asked for further details.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

said that he had just received a Memorandum from
Mr. Pollock, First Secretary at our Legation in Stockholm,
from which he read the following extracts:

"Before I left for London the Secretary General
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked me to
come and see him and in the course of our
conversation he asked me to visit him again on my
return. This I did this morning.

I reminded Monsieur Boheman that he had
previously told me that the Germans were claiming
that they could run ships down from Narvik within
territorial waters and that this would make it
very difficult for the Swedish Government to keep
down the total of exports of iron ore to Germany
unless we could "do something about it". I now
asked him what he meant by the suggestion that
we should "do something about it", particularly as
he was doubtless aware that it was not necessary
for merchant ships to leave territorial waters.
He said that he had not meant anything definite
except that the Anglo-Swedish Trade Agreement had
been negotiated on the assumption that the Germans
would not be able to use Narvik. I said that we
had just received definite information that a number
of British vessels had been sunk within Norwegian
territorial waters, and I wondered what the Swedish
reaction would be to some drastic action on our part
to stop the German trade from Narvik and Murmansk.
He said: "None at all, as it was a purely
Norwegian affair". At the same time he admitted
that it was always a nuisance to neutral States
when belligerents began operating within neutral
territorial waters and the Swedish Government
hoped that any action on our part would not result
in Germany retaliating by taking similar action
within Swedish waters.

I then asked him about Lulea. He said that
the port had frozen up entirely about ten days ago
and that the Germans had asked the Swedes to use
an icebreaker to release the German ships which were
frozen up in the port. The Swedes had refused to
do this on the grounds that the icebreaker was
required elsewhere for keeping Swedish territorial
waters open. Nevertheless the German ships had
been able to get away. The Germans had always
assumed that Lulea would be closed completely after
December 15th and Monsieur Boheman did not think
that any attempt would be made to re-open it until
the Spring. I said that I had heard rumours that
there was a Russian icebreaker available but
Monsieur Boheman said he thought this unlikely and that it would in any case be difficult for the icebreaker to get past the minefields near the Aland Islands.

Monsieur Boheman mentioned that eight hundred employees of the Grangesburg Company had been mobilised and that this was likely further to slow down the Company's activities.

---

I then said that, speaking entirely personally, it seemed to me that the important thing was that neither His Majesty's Government nor the Swedish Government should be taken by surprise by some sudden action on the part of Germany or Russia or the two combined in Scandinavia. Neither His Majesty's Government nor the Swedish Government wanted Scandinavia to be involved in the war and the only point on which they might possibly disagree, namely, that of trade with Germany, was for the time being settled by the signature of the War Trade Agreement. But there was a danger that they might both be taken by surprise by some sudden action and owing to the lack of time fail to deal with it as they would have done had they been fully prepared for eventualities. In these circumstances, I felt sure that His Majesty's Government were constantly turning over in their mind what action, if any, they would take in the event of some drastic step by Russia or Germany. We at this Legation could help them in two ways: one, by reporting how the Swedish mind was working on the same problem and, two, by reporting any information in possession of the Swedish Government as to how the minds of other Governments were working. It seemed to me that if the Swedes could give us any information on these points it could not be otherwise than to our mutual advantage as it would enable His Majesty's Government to be more fully prepared without committing either Government to any definite action. Monsieur Boheman said that he entirely agreed and he promised to take us into his confidence and let us know directly he had anything to say. At present he was honestly completely in the dark as regards both Russian and German intentions. .........
THE PRIME MINISTER said that this letter answered his question and confirmed his view that, in considering action to stop the trade from Narvik it was necessary to draw a distinction between the re-actions of Sweden and Norway. Sweden could hardly be implicated as, once the ore had reached Narvik it was no longer her concern; and there seemed no reason to suppose that Germany could find justification for invading Sweden on account of action by our Naval Forces in Norwegian territorial waters. A much more likely form of retaliation by Germany would be to seize bases in Norway as suggested in paragraphs 77 and 78 of the Chiefs of Staff's Report (W.P. (39) 179). From those paragraphs it appeared that there was little we could do to prevent Germany seizing these bases, from which they could develop a most serious air threat. The Chiefs of Staff further gave their opinion in paragraph 81, that it would be difficult to dislodge the Germans once they were established, and that it was therefore essential to forestall them by sending small forces to occupy these places. Finally in paragraph 85 it was stated:

(a) Our intervention in Northern Scandinavia is very likely to provoke a German attack on Southern Norway. The object of that attack would be to obtain air and naval bases from which to dispute our position in the North Sea and Northern waters.

* * * * *
(c) In our own interests we consider it essential that the Germans should, if possible, be denied bases on the Norwegian Coast. The establishment of such German bases would not only gravely compromise our naval control, but also the security of any bases we established at Trondheim.

This was strong language, and showed that this was the most important factor governing the Narvik operation. The First Lord of the Admiralty in his comments (W.F.(40) 5) had suggested stopping the Narvik ore as a means of provoking retaliation by Germany, and so getting Norway to ask for our assistance. The crux of the matter appeared to be whether Norway would act in that fashion. She might adopt quite a different attitude. She might place herself under German protection, especially when she found we could give her no effective aid. If the Norwegians acted on those lines there would be an end to any hope of our carrying out the major project.

Discussion then turned upon the probable Norwegian attitude, and the German re-action.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR argued that the stoppage of the Narvik trade was a perfectly legitimate operation in retaliation for the sinking of British ships in Norwegian waters, and would be unlikely to antagonize Norway or to provoke Germany into invading her. He had received information before the war pointing to the existence of a German plan for the invasion of Southern Norway. He thought that if Germany decided...
that it would be profitable to put this plan into operation she would do so irrespective of whether we stopped the Narvik trade.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the sequence of events would probably be as follows. Norway would make a protest at our action. A German re-action might then follow, possibly in the form of an invasion. The effect of this would be vexatious but would in no way be decisive. On the other hand it would open the way to our next action, which would be the occupation of the Northern Ores Fields. The Norwegians would undoubtedly resist a German invasion, which would be a violation incomparably greater than the violation of territorial waters of which we should be guilty. Thus, by interrupting the trade from Narvik we should be paving the way to the major project if it appeared later, to be in our interests to carry it out. He attached little importance to the suggestion that the railway from Narvik might be cut. The Norwegians were hardly likely to destroy their own livelihood. The Germans were not in a position to carry out sabotage in Northern Scandinavia, and it was well-known that the effects of air attack on a railway line were negligible.
that it would be profitable to put this plan into operation she would do so irrespective of whether we stopped the Narvik trade.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the sequence of events would probably be as follows. Norway would make a protest at our action. A German re-action might then follow, possibly in the form of an invasion. The effect of this would be vexatious but would in no way be decisive. On the other hand it would open the way to our next action, which would be the occupation of the Northern Ore Fields. The Norwegians would undoubtedly resist a German invasion, which would be a violation incomparably greater than the violation of territorial waters of which we should be guilty. Thus, by interrupting the trade from Narvik we should be paving the way to the major project if it appeared later, to be in our interests to carry it out. He attached little importance to the suggestion that the railway from Narvik might be cut. The Norwegians were hardly likely to destroy their own livelihood. The Germans were not in a position to carry out sabotage in Northern Scandinavia, and it was well-known that the effects of air attack on a railway line were negligible.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that he was very anxious to undertake the limited project of stopping the Narvik traffic. He saw no serious difficulty from the point of view of international law or from the reactions of Sweden. He was, however, seriously concerned by the emphasis which the Chiefs of Staff laid upon the possible action by Germany in Southern Norway. In paragraphs 77 to 85 of their Report (W.P. (39) 179) they dealt with operations in Southern Norway, but only as part of the major project. Their conclusion was that it was essential that the Germans should, if possible, be denied bases on the Norwegian coast, and that the establishment of German bases in Southern Norway would gravely compromise our naval control. Assuming for a moment that Germany, as a result of our stopping the Narvik traffic, either had invaded, or showed themselves immediately about to invade, Norway, was there anything which we could do to forestall them or to offset the consequences of their seizing bases in this area?

Some discussion then took place on the vulnerability of the German overseas communications to Southern Norway. It was pointed out that a voyage of some 200 miles would be involved in the shipment of forces from Germany to Southern Norway. Something could undoubtedly be done to interfere with the German sea communications by submarines, but it would not be possible to cut their communications altogether. During the process of establishing air bases in Southern Norway, the Germans would undoubtedly be vulnerable to air attack, but there were very few air bases further north from
which our own air forces could operate against them. A German invasion of Southern Norway would vitally affect Sweden, since German transports would probably have to move through their territorial waters. It was possible, of course, that Sweden would be so alarmed by the imminence of the threat that she might be induced to come over into the German camp. On the other hand, it was argued that Sweden would surely be unlikely to lend any active assistance to Germany.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY urged that if Sweden gave way to German threats, it would then be open to us to go in and seize the Northern Swedish orefields at once. He thought that we should be able to develop sufficient force to make sure of achieving this object, whatever attitude Sweden or Norway adopted.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF pointed out that an expedition to Scandinavia in face of opposition by the inhabitants of the country would be a very hazardous affair. We had no ski-troops immediately available, and the Swedes might adopt the same tactics against us as the Finns had so successfully pursued against the Russians.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS referred to paragraph 27 of the Chiefs of Staff Report (W.P. (39) 179), in which it was stated that a force of from 5,000 to 7,000 Canadians could be organised for operations in Northern Scandinavia in March. He understood from General McNaughton, commanding the Canadian Division now in England, that the Canadians had no troops at present trained to work on skis.
THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF agreed that the Canadians were not trained to work on skis, but a very large number of their troops were used to working on snowshoes. Such troops could operate in deep snow just as well as ski troops. He had discussed the question with Brigadier Crerar in London, and there seemed no reason why the numbers mentioned in the Chiefs of Staff Report should not be made available in the Spring. A very considerable number of British personnel already trained in the use of skis could also be made available.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, referring to the limited project of stopping the Narvik traffic only, agreed that a good case could be made out for our action on the pretext of counter-measures for the German action in sinking vessels in Norwegian waters. No doubt there would be an outcry from Norway, but the consequences of this, particularly in view of the probable complacence of Sweden, were not likely to be formidable. We had, however, to face the possibility that such action would lead to the occupation by Germany of bases in southern Norway. There were, therefore, two questions to be decided. First, would such action on our part be likely to prejudice our chances of achieving our objective of carrying out the bigger project? This was important, since he understood from the Chiefs of Staff that the co-operation of Norway and Sweden was essential if this project was to be carried through. From the political point of view, he thought that the attitude of Norway was likely to depend primarily on the prospects of the Russians succeeding in their invasion of Finland, rather than on any action which
we took in the immediate future to deal with the Narvik traffic. The Scandinavian countries were dominated by their fear of Russia, and, if Finland seemed likely to collapse in the Spring, Norway would in all probability welcome our assistance in saving the ore fields from the Russians.

The second question for decision was whether the advantage of stopping the Narvik traffic now would counterbalance the potential disadvantages to us of the German occupation of bases in southern Norway. In his view, it would be unsound to undertake the Narvik project, with no certainty that we could ultimately carry through the bigger project, unless the former project would on balance be to our general advantage.

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO pointed out that control of the coastwise shipping would be of great advantage to us in tightening up our northern Contraband Control as a whole. Not only would the iron ore traffic be stopped, but also ships carrying oil and other commodities which now succeeded in reaching Germany through Norwegian territorial waters.

THE PRIME MINISTER observed that if the attitude of Norway and Sweden was more likely to be determined by the Russian situation than by any action on Germany's part, the objections to undertaking the Narvik project for fear of prejudicing the chances of Scandinavian co-operation in the bigger project (to which the Chiefs of Staff referred in Paper W.P. (39) 180, paragraph 9) fell to the ground. There remained, however, the consequences to us of the possible German occupation of bases in southern Norway. If the Chiefs of Staff could re-assure the War Cabinet on this point, he would be prepared to support the proposal to take immediate steps to stop the Narvik traffic.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that all preparations had been made to stop the Narvik traffic immediately. The naval forces were standing by and prize crews were ready to take over the captured ships. He urged that it was impossible in any operation of war to see a way clear through all the objections that could be raised to any particular course of action. It was right that all the difficulties should be fully examined, but we should not be deterred from action simply because there were certain objections. The war was costing us six millions a day, and it would be disastrous to reach a negative decision on this proposal, which seemed to offer the best chance of ending the war quickly. He suggested that the Chiefs of Staff should immediately reconsider the possible effect on us of the German occupation of bases in Southern Norway, and should also report on what could be done to mitigate or prevent these disadvantages to us, on the assumption that action to stop the Narvik traffic was taken immediately.
read the terms of the proposed communication to the Norwegian Government.

It was generally agreed that our communication should take the line of saying that, in view of the action taken by Germany in sinking ships in Norwegian territorial waters, we were compelled to take steps to prevent German vessels using Norwegian territorial waters, and that we proposed to take action accordingly. This would probably lead the Norwegian Government to ask when we proposed to take action, to which the reply would be that action would be taken on the ensuing day. It was also generally agreed that it would be desirable that Ministers should have an opportunity of considering the matter again after the reaction of the Norwegian Government to our communication was known and before a final decision was taken. The communication to the Norwegian Government would, however, be to the effect that a certain decision had been taken, and would not ask them any questions as to their attitude.

Discussion ensued as to whether we should communicate our intentions to the French and to the Dominions. It was recalled that M. Daladier
had communicated to us the Memorandum by Herr Thyssen emphasizing the importance of Swedish ore to Germany, and that we had, at one stage, informed the French that we proposed to make a communication to the Norwegian Government as to the Narvik traffic, at the same time as we had given them an assurance in regard to the possible consequences to them of giving help to Finland. It could be anticipated, therefore, that the French would welcome the proposal. It was agreed, however, that no further communication should be made to the French or to the Dominions on the matter until the War Cabinet had reached a definite decision.

SIR FREDERICK LEITH-ROSS referred to the point that had been made in earlier Papers, that if we stopped the Narvik traffic, Germany would almost certainly retaliate immediately by stopping all shipments of food to this country from Denmark. This would cause a shortage of bacon. Food supplies from Denmark would, no doubt, be diverted to Germany, and would temporarily relieve Germany's food situation. There was also the question of Norwegian tankers chartered to us, and of supplies of ferro-alloys from Scandinavia; but it seemed, that we had nothing to fear under these heads, unless Norway was definitely antagonistic to us.

The War Cabinet -

(1) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to give further consideration to paragraphs 77-85 of Paper No. W.P. (59) 179, in the light of the discussion which had taken place, with a view to defining more precisely:
(a) The military consequences of a German occupation of Southern Norway:

(b) The steps which might be taken to obviate these consequences (e.g. by forestalling the Germans) or at least to mitigate them:

(ii) Agreed to resume consideration of the issues dealt with in the papers before them, on the following day.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
2nd January, 1940.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that at a recent interview Mr. Attlee had informed him that the previous week he had seen Dr. Benes, who had given him certain information regarding alleged developments in Germany. According to Dr. Benes's information, which was dated about the 21st December last, the German Generals had submitted to Herr Hitler a memorandum which he compared with the famous Ludendorf-Hindenburg Memorandum, in which they had said that in their opinion no offensive in the West was practicable except at a prohibitive cost, and that no decisive result could, in their opinion, be secured by air or by sea. They concluded, therefore, that Herr Hitler should consider the possibility of making peace, and they suggested that for this purpose it might be well for him to strengthen his hands by obtaining additional bargaining counters in the Balkans. The report received by Dr. Benes corresponded fairly closely with one from British secret sources, except that, according to the latter, the German Generals had said, as regards sea and air, that they were not in a position to estimate the chances of obtaining a military decision.

In reply to a question by THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that, as reported in the week-end Press, it was the case that Mr. Dahlerus had paid a visit to London. He had done so, however, entirely on his own initiative.
and had received no kind of invitation. He had been to see Sir Alexander Cadogan at the Foreign Office, and had appeared entirely obsessed by the problem of the danger to Sweden. He seemed to have abandoned all hope of peace efforts by Field Marshal Goering.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said that the Director of Military Intelligence, whom he had met recently, was convinced that Field Marshal Goering was one of the most bitter enemies of this country.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
2nd January, 1940.
SCANDINAVIA.

Paragraph 3. (Importance of Bergen to the Northern Barrage.)

The War Cabinet again had before them the following Papers:

Reports by the Chiefs of Staff (W.P.(39) 169, 179 and 180):

A Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty (W.P. (40) 3):

together with

a further Report on the military consequences of a German occupation of southern Norway, and the steps which might be taken to obviate or at least mitigate these consequences (W.P. (40) 5). In the discussion of the latter paper, which was introduced by the Chief of the Air Staff and examined paragraph by paragraph, the following were the principal points which emerged.

(i) If the Norwegian coast at the eastern end of the Northern Barrage was held by the Germans, they could sweep a channel for their shipping close to the coast.

If, on the other hand, Bergen, immediately to the south of which the barrage would end, was in our hands, we should be able to make the barrage even more effective than if Norway was a neutral country. It was, of course, possible that when the Germans learnt of our intention to lay the Northern Barrage, they would not hesitate to invade Norway in order to seize Bergen and thus prevent the barrage being fully effective. A German invasion might, therefore, be precipitated irrespective of any action we might take in connection with the iron ore
traffic. This was a new aspect of the problem of the mine barrage which had not been considered at the time when the decision was taken to lay the barrage.

(ii) It would be technically possible to mine the approaches to Oslo, but there were obvious objections to doing so before the Germans made any move to invade Norway. It was open to question, however, whether the Germans would go so far as to land an expedition at Oslo if they intended to seize bases in southern Norway. An attack on the capital would be the most serious affront to Norway, and would be likely to rouse the whole population against Germany. Germany would, therefore, be more likely, if she decided to invade Norway as a result of our stopping the Narvik traffic, to seize some less important places on the coast. It was recognised, however, that if the Germans did move on Oslo, we could do little or nothing to prevent it. In paragraph 82 of their previous Report (W.P. (39) 179) the Chiefs of Staff had expressed the opinion that Oslo, being the capital, would be adequately defended by the Norwegians, but on more mature consideration, and taking into account the precedent of the Italian invasion of Albania, they now thought that serious resistance by the Norwegians was unlikely.

(iii) While the Germans were establishing themselves at Christiansand, they would be most vulnerable to air attack, since they would not have had time to move in anti-aircraft artillery on any scale. If, however, they invaded Denmark at the same time, they would be able to operate fighters from Danish aerodromes to protect Christiansand. On the other hand, it was doubtful whether it would be to the general advantage of Germany to violate the neutrality of Denmark.
Paragraph 11. (iv) If we had previously occupied Bergen and Trondheim, it would be a difficult operation for the Germans to turn us out, since they could only advance on a very narrow front along the railways to those ports.

Paragraph 13. (v) If the Germans were to establish themselves in Oslo and Christiansand, although their maintenance traffic would not be large, they would be in a very uncomfortable position, since we should be able to mine the approaches to these ports. Maintenance by sea in face of this menace and of our surface vessels and submarines would be precarious.

Paragraph 14. THE PRIME MINISTER pointed out that if we succeeded in confining the Germans to bases on the south coast at Christiansand and Oslo, it seemed that there must be some diminution of the unfavourable military consequences which would ensue to us from a German occupation of Southern Norway. They would not be able to operate their aircraft from aerodromes on the west coast, nor would they be able to use harbours on this coast for submarine bases. Moreover, it appeared that the operation of aircraft from the Oslo aerodromes would present considerable difficulty owing to the intervening mountains.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that Oslo had two good aerodromes from which modern types of bombers could be operated. There was one similar aerodrome at Christiansand. Although the use of the Oslo aerodromes might be difficult at times during the winter, in summer there would be a very serious threat to our shipping from bombers operating from these aerodromes in addition to the aerodrome at Christiansand. By keeping the Germans out of the west coast the only aerodrome which we could deny to them would be the one at Stavanger. There was no aerodrome at Bergen. He agreed that the denial of the western coast to the enemy would correspondingly reduce the menace of enemy submarines.
Likelihood of Germany invading Norway.

Discussion ensued as to whether if the seizure of ports in Southern Norway presented so great advantages to Germany, the latter was likely to invade the country irrespective of our action as to the Narvik traffic. THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF observed that the Germans might well have a project for invading Norway later in the year. At the present time the weather would make operations in the country very difficult indeed.

It was agreed that the assessment of the likelihood of Germany invading Norway as a counter measure to our stopping the Narvik traffic was a political matter, which was for the War Cabinet to deal with, and which did not lie within the province of the Chiefs of Staff.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL thought that if Germany invaded either Sweden or Norway, the most intense feeling would be aroused in the peoples of these two countries, and their Governments would be compelled to resist the invader, particularly in view of the gallant resistance of Finland to the Russian invasion. In his opinion it was in every way to our advantage to widen the front of the war and to reduce the number of neutrals, particularly those adjacent to Germany.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that any Norwegian invitation to us to come to her assistance involved a piece of very delicate timing. If we stopped the Narvik traffic, Norway would be bound to protest. He did not think that the Germans had at the present moment a plan immediately ready for the invasion of Norway and that they were merely
waiting action by us against the Narvik traffic to give them a pretext for putting this into operation. They would no doubt threaten Norway, but Norway would be taking a big risk in inviting our assistance, since this would almost inevitably lead to a German invasion of the country. Norway would probably therefore wait as long as she possibly could before calling for our assistance, and would only do so when she realised that she had to make the choice between two evils. Once the Germans had definitely invaded Norway, however, we should, of course, have the right to send in our own forces without any invitation, since the neutrality of Norway would already have been compromised.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL doubted whether our action to stop the Narvik ore would precipitate a German invasion. It would be very hard for Germany to make a sudden swoop on Norway when she was vigorously protesting against our action in infringing Norwegian territorial waters. On the other hand the possibility could not be ruled out that Germany would take such action under the guise of "giving protection" to Norway.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY agreed that, for Germany, it would not be at all an opportune moment, from the point of view of world opinion, to invade Norway at a time when she was protesting against our action. There would probably be a considerable period of protest and explanation after we took action. He thought opinion in the United States would be in our favour, but Germany would put herself completely in the wrong in the eyes of the world if she chose such a moment to invade Norway.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR drew attention to a Press report of a strong German note to Sweden warning that country of the danger of lending aid to Finland against the Russians. This might conceivably be Germany's opening move against the Scandinavian countries.

The view was generally expressed that this action on the part of Germany, if it were true, was dictated primarily by the need for her to keep in with Russia. It was quite possible that she was making a verbal protest to save face with Stalin, but was all the time secretly allowing war material to pass through to Finland. In any case, it was probable on general grounds that Germany did not wish the war to spread to Scandinavia.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he did not attach very much importance to the probable reactions of the Scandinavian countries to the stoppage of the Narvik traffic, nor did he consider that the possibility of the Germans seizing bases in southern Norway would be a vital factor. The consideration which weighed most with him was how the stopping of the Narvik traffic would affect our chances of carrying through the bigger project of stopping all the ore supplies to Germany. The Narvik project by itself would not, in his opinion, be worth the risk. Whether or not it might prove a card of entry to the bigger project it was impossible to say. From the political point of view he did not think it would prejudice the chances of the bigger project, but, on the other hand, he doubted whether it would improve them. There could be no doubt that, as the Chiefs of Staff pointed out in the last paragraph of their latest Report, action against the Narvik traffic would attract German attention to the whole question of the Swedish ore. On the other hand, the Germans would not improve their position in regard to the ore by going to war with Sweden, nor by occupying bases in southern Norway. All that they could do apparently would be to try and wreck the railway from Narvik to the Galivare mines, in order to prevent our forces using it. The prospect of their taking any effective action to this end seemed at least doubtful. They could not apparently forestall us in the northern minefields. It therefore remained only to consider the possible reactions of Norway. Norway would no doubt show considerable annoyance, but she would probably get over this. As he had said at the previous Meeting, his view was that her attitude would be governed primarily by the Russian situation.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY expressed his conviction that the Germans would not invade southern Norway in retaliation for the stoppage of the iron ore from Narvik. On the other hand, if they did invade Norway, he would be glad. They would become involved in a serious commitment, and, if they tried to secure control of the Swedish iron ore by conquest, they would certainly ruin their chances of obtaining a large quantity in 1940. In the meanwhile, the immediate stoppage of the Narvik ore would prove embarrassing for them up till the melting of the ice, when a second chapter in the story would open.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Foreign Secretary had drawn attention to the uncertainty of the results of our proposed action. The important point was not the immediate results, but the question of whether we might be left with permanent adverse consequences. It was for this reason that he had asked the Chiefs of Staff to examine further the possible consequences of our action, and what could be done to mitigate them. They had carried out this investigation, and the conclusion which he had drawn from their Report was that we should be able to forestall Germany in the occupation of the Western Ports of Norway, and that in this event the results would not be seriously disadvantageous to us.

He agreed with the First Lord that it was to the German interest to keep the war out of Scandinavia, and in consequence he did not regard a German invasion of Southern Norway as likely. Furthermore, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had told them that the weather at this time of year was all against an invasion of Norway by the Germans. He was inclined, therefore, to view the project for the stoppage
of the Narvik ore with more favour than he had done after reading the earlier reports by the Chiefs of Staff.

He agreed with the Foreign Secretary as to the probable extent of the Norwegian reaction, and he thought we should go ahead and inform them of what we proposed to do. We should, however, postpone a final decision to stop the Narvik traffic until we heard the Norwegian reaction. When a decision had been taken to stop the Narvik traffic, we should make preparations for the forces which would be necessary if we had to occupy Stavanger and Bergen.

He did not think the War Cabinet were in a position to consider the separate project for stopping ore from Oxelosund, about which they had not yet received much information.

**Economic effects of an Invasion of Norway.**

**THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR** enquired as to the economic effect of the war spreading to southern Norway.

**THE MINISTER OF ECONOMIC WARFARE** said that the negotiations between ourselves and the Norwegian Government which were now in progress for a War Trade Agreement would undoubtedly be completely upset for the time being. We required from Norway the use of her tankers and the supplies of ferro-alloys and aluminium which we drew from that country. He felt reasonably confident that after some delay the negotiations for a War Trade Agreement would be resumed and that we should get what we wanted in the end, since Norwegian trade was very dependent on this country. Nevertheless if we were to lose vital supplies of ferro-alloys and aluminium...
merely for the sake of the temporary advantage of stopping the supplies of ore from Narvik alone, the balance would not be in our favour. The game would only be worth the candle if we succeeded in stopping the whole of the ore supplies from the North Swedish mines. Germany would gain nothing of vital importance to her economy from an occupation of South Norway. The Norwegian output of ferro-alloys and other commodities was dependent on sea-borne imports. On the other hand the occupation of Norway would undoubtedly place some strain on German economy. The Secretary of State for War observed that Norway had to import considerable supplies of wheat, which we could cut off. These might have to be made good from Germany.

THE PRIME MINISTER suggested that the Germans might allow the Norwegians to starve.

THE MINISTER OF ECONOMIC WARFARE explained that there was only one mine in the southern Swedish fields which supplied iron ore with a high phosphoric content, whereas the whole output of the minefields was of high iron and phosphoric content. If the supplies from the North Swedish fields were cut off, it would cause a disproportionately large reduction of German steel output, because German steel manufacture was dependent on an admixture of ores of that type. It was difficult to estimate the precise degree of embarrassment to Germany which would result from the stoppage of the Narvik supplies, since we had no precise information of the size of her stocks of ore. If she had two month's reserves in hand the embarrassment would be of brief duration, though he agreed that Germany would be very uncomfortable at having to use up her reserves if there was no certainty of being able to replenish them as soon as Lulea was ice-free.
Discussion then turned on the time-table for future action, and the period which must elapse before the forces could be made ready to occupy Stavanger, Bergen, and Trondheim should this prove necessary.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that the chief delay would be in obtaining the warm clothing for the troops. A force of only about 1,000 men would be required for each port, initially at any rate, and these could soon be told off.

He drew attention to the fact that the force at Bergen would have to be increased before the snow melted, as it would then be necessary to occupy the surrounding mountains. Bergen was a town with a population of 100,000, and was likely to assume great importance later on from a naval point of view. We should have to be prepared, therefore, to hold it indefinitely.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR expressed his opposition to the proposal to send military forces to any of these three Norwegian ports. History provided many examples of campaigns which had begun by the despatch of minor detachments, and which had ended by swallowing up large armies. He thought that a much more careful examination of the possible developments in Norway, and the eventual size of the forces which might be required, should be undertaken before we launched these expeditions.

Economically the Narvik project was most attractive. The Ministry of Economic Warfare had stated that the stoppage of the ore from that port would cause the Germans acute embarrassment,
and Herr Thyssen's Memorandum supported this view. The Norwegians and the Swedes both fully expected us to control the trade from Narvik. This was clear from the statements made in the enclosures to the Memorandum by the Minister of Economic Warfare (Paper No. W.P.(G)(39) 168, Part I, page 8, paragraph 4, and Part II, page 6, paragraph 20). He therefore favoured naval action to stop the trade, but if the Germans reacted by invading Norway, he would prefer to risk the consequences, rather than to attempt to mitigate them by military expeditions.

If the Army were to be used at all, he would rather see it operating in Finland, where it would be much better placed to intervene at a later stage to take control of the Northern orefields. The bigger operation for the control of the Northern ore might well decide the war, and we should keep our armies available to take part in it.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that if Germany invaded Southern Norway we should be ready to send battalions at any rate to Stavanger and Bergen. There was no reason why this small diversion should develop into a large commitment, unless we wished it to. It should be remembered, however, that the Chiefs of Staff, in their earlier Report, had carefully examined the possibility of having to support the Norwegians and the Swedes against the Germans in the Spring, and were prepared to send strong forces to do so if necessary.

Such operations would be quite independent of the small detachments holding the Norwegian ports, and would form part of the big project for controlling the Northern
ironfields, which might subsequently develop. If the War Office were unable to find the troops for these detachments, he would be prepared to use marines.

Some discussion then took place as to whether it would be sufficient to occupy Stavanger, and to leave Bergen and Trondheim till later. Stavanger was the most important of the places which the Germans might wish to seize in order to facilitate their air operations over the North Sea, whereas Bergen and Trondheim were probably too far afield to be occupied by them at this time of year. Furthermore, Stavanger was an easy place for a small force to hold, and, if found desirable, such a force could be withdrawn at any time after causing severe damage to the aerodrome.

On the other hand, the importance of Bergen to the Admiralty's long term plans was emphasised, and THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that, if we did not occupy Bergen at the outset, no reliance could be placed upon the Norwegians preventing the Germans reaching it by the railway from Oslo in due course. It would be extremely difficult to approach Bergen, either by land or sea, if it were held by a hostile force, and very great advantages would accrue to the side which got there first.

It was generally agreed that while the Foreign Secretary was making the necessary communications to the Governments concerned, work should proceed on the preparation of detailed plans for the forces required for the occupation of the three ports concerned (Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim), and that a study of the operations involved should also be carried out.
THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said that it would be necessary for him to communicate with the French Government and obtain their assent to the proposed communication to the Norwegian Government. He also proposed at the same time to address a communication to the United States Government. He then read out a draft of the proposed communication to the Norwegian Government, in which the facts were given regarding the sinking of three ships in territorial waters.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS said that he did not propose, for the present, to make any approach to the Canadian Government in regard to the suggested provision of Canadian troops for operations in Scandinavia. He would, however, keep the Dominion Prime Ministers informed of the communications to be made by the Foreign Secretary.

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO suggested that the Admiralty might examine whether any steps could be taken to prevent German ships sinking themselves at the quays in Narvik, with the object of preventing iron ore reaching the British Isles.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that the Naval Staff had made thorough investigations of the general problem of sabotaging the iron ore ports, and would certainly bear this suggestion in mind.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF drew the attention of the War Cabinet to the absolute necessity for secrecy in regard to this project approaching the stage for action. There had been considerable ventilation in the Press, and elsewhere, of the whole subject of Swedish iron ore, and the Chiefs of Staff were concerned lest the enemy should get wind of our intentions.
In the course of discussion the War Cabinet were informed that a Minister had been approached by a representative of a Chicago newspaper, who said he had received certain information on this matter and had mentioned a particular Department as the source. The War Cabinet were informed that enquiries were being made to trace the leakage. The discussions which were taking place in public, however, all emphasised the desirability of speed in the execution of our plans.

The War Cabinet:­

(i) Authorised the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:­
(a) to inform the French Government that we proposed to make a communication to the Norwegian Government on the lines indicated in (ii) below, and to obtain their concurrence to this action, 
(b) to inform the United States Government of the action proposed:­

(ii) Authorised the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, subject to the concurrence of the French Government, to inform the Norwegian Government that, having regard to the violation by German Naval forces of Norwegian territorial waters, we were taking appropriate dispositions to prevent the shipment of goods down the Norwegian coast to Germany, and that for this purpose it would be necessary for H.M. Naval Forces at times to enter and operate in Norwegian territorial waters:

(iii) Authorised the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to keep the Dominion Prime Ministers informed of the steps taken under (i) and (ii), but not for the present to make any approach in regard to the suggested provision of Canadian troops for operations in Scandinavia.
I have not yet attempted to explore the extent of the

interest in the subject. However, preliminary

experiments have indicated promising results.

I will continue to investigate further.

- Signed, [Name]
(iv) Agreed that orders should not be issued to enter Norwegian territorial waters until the reactions of the Norwegian Government to the communication referred to in (ii) had been reported to the War Cabinet:

(v) Invited the Secretary of State for War, in consultation with his Service colleagues and the Minister of Shipping, to arrange for the preparation of detailed plans for the occupation of Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim and to submit a Report to the War Cabinet as soon as possible, showing:

(a) What would be immediately involved; and

(b) What might be involved at a subsequent date, in the above operations.

In particular an early Report should be made as to the earliest date on which the forces could be ready to sail:

(vi) Authorised the War Office to make purchases of the special clothing, etc., required for the small forces which it was contemplated would be necessary for the initial occupation of the ports referred to in (v):

(vii) Emphasised the importance of maintaining the strictest secrecy in regard to this project.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
3rd January, 1940.
said that the previous day he had handed to M. Corbin, the French Ambassador, for transmission to the French Government, the draft of the communication which, as agreed at the meeting of the War Cabinet noted in the margin, we proposed to address to the Norwegian Government on the subject of the prevention of the shipment to Germany of goods down the Norwegian coast.

M. Corbin had said that he anticipated that the French Government would concur in the action which we proposed to take and had inquired whether we wished them to take corresponding action. To this he (the Secretary of State) had replied in the negative. He expected to receive the French Government's reply that day.

He (the Secretary of State) had also had a long talk with M. Prytz, the Swedish Minister, who had given him the reply of the Swedish Government to the approach which we had made to them on the subject of the grant of assistance to Finland and other Scandinavian problems. This might be summarised as follows:

The Swedish Government had examined the communication received from the British and French Governments, whose views they fully shared as to the need for giving aid to Finland, for the fate of that country could not be a matter of indifference to Sweden. For that reason Sweden was herself doing everything possible to assist Finland, short of taking military action. In addition she had granted financial aid to Finland, on a scale considerably more extensive than had been reported in the Press. She regarded as even
more important the help which she had given by the delivery to Finland of a quantity of raw materials which she had reason to know had proved of the greatest value. She had also provided equipment for foreign volunteers to proceed to Finland. The help which she had rendered was so extensive that it was necessary for her now to replace her own reserves from abroad. In addition she was doing everything possible to strengthen her power to defend herself. It was only natural therefore that the Swedish Government should welcome assistance being given to Finland by other countries also. She would therefore facilitate the transit to Finland of material sent by Great Britain and France.

There were, however, certain special considerations to which she wished to draw the attention of this Government.

There was a danger that either Germany or the U.S.S.R. might intervene if it could be shown that help were being given directly by Sweden to Finland against the Soviet Union, or if Sweden placed herself in the position of taking part in Allied action against the U.S.S.R. Such intervention by either Germany or the U.S.S.R. would certainly lead to the speedy downfall of Finland. Accordingly the Swedish Government felt that it was important that nothing should be done which would suggest that Sweden was cooperating officially with other countries against the Soviet Union. For example, people proceeding to Finland to fight should go as foreign volunteers. Sweden, however, would do everything necessary in the way of organising transit facilities.

It was particularly important in all these matters that nothing should be published regarding the nature of the assistance given. The Swedish Government concluded their Note by stating their view that the best way Sweden could assist Finland would be to maintain the strict neutrality which she had declared at the outbreak of war. The Swedish Government greatly appreciated the understanding of her position shown by the British and French Governments.

In the discussion with M. Prytz which had ensued, the following points had emerged:

No direct pressure other than newspaper attacks had as yet been exerted on Sweden either by Germany or the U.S.S.R. In these circumstances, the Swedish Government had felt that it would be premature to enter into discussions on the lines which we had suggested. It was for this reason that this matter had not been touched upon in the Swedish Government's reply. Sweden would, however, facilitate in every way the giving of help to Finland on Spanish Non-Intervention lines. For the present at least the best course would be for Sweden
to maintain her attitude of strict neutrality. This would not be possible if she entered upon discussions of the kind we had proposed. M. Prytz had added that Sweden was somewhat alarmed at the plan believed to be entertained by France for the despatch to Finland of aid in an official form (e.g. Alpine regiments). Direct assistance to Finland by the Allies of this kind against the U.S.S.R. would not be helpful at the present stage.

In reply to an observation that, if at some later stage we were to wish to give definite aid, the cooperation of Sweden was essential, M. Prytz had said that it would not be wise to pursue this subject at the present time. In reply to a further question he had agreed that if Germany were to invade Southern Sweden, she would be cutting off all her supplies of iron ore. He did not believe that Germany would act in this way since to do so, she would have to invade Denmark also and this would upset her food supplies and he felt sure that steps must have already been taken to prepare if necessary for the destruction of the railway between Narvik and the ore mines.

In the Swedish Press suggestions were appearing that the Allies thought that it would be to their advantage if the war were extended to Sweden, and it would be helpful if this could be contradicted in "The Times".

He (The Secretary of State) had then observed that if Finland were defeated there was a danger that Germany might offer to "protect" Sweden against the U.S.S.R. To this, M. Prytz had replied that Sweden in that case would fight. He did not however think that Germany was likely to act in this way or that this situation was likely to arise, since the U.S.S.R. would be exhausted by the time they had defeated Finland.

The conversation had then reverted to the question of iron ore, and he (The Secretary of State) had said that he regarded this as one of the most tender spots in the whole of German economic life. M. Prytz had agreed and had said that the Swedish mobilisation had led to a 20 per cent reduction in the supply of ore to Narvik for export. He went on to say that there was a good deal of ore going to Germany through Narvik and that surely there was a point along the Norwegian coast where the ships carrying ore had to pass out of territorial waters. Would it not be possible for us to do something at such a point? He (The Secretary of State) had replied that naturally we were giving close consideration to this question which, however, presented certain technical difficulties. His Majesty's Government, however, were continuing to give careful consideration to the whole question, and it might be that he should wish on a future occasion to speak to him again upon it.
THE CHIEF OF N.V.A.L. STAFF said that in fact there was no point at which it was necessary for the ore ships to leave territorial waters.

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO said that he feared that the Germans might not only sink ships alongside the quays at Narvik to prevent us from using the port, but might also arrange for the sabotage of the railway between Narvik and the ore mines. He wondered, therefore, if it would be possible for the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, when making the contemplated communication to the Norwegian Government, to drop a hint that they would be well advised to take such steps to ensure the safety of the railway.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he would adopt this suggestion. As regards the method to be adopted in making the communication to the Norwegian Government, he proposed to do this by sending for M. Colban, the Norwegian Minister.

The War Cabinet took note of the above discussion.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

4th January, 1939.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that some time previously he had met, by accident, a Swede who was a friend of Field-Marshal Goering’s brother-in-law, and who had on that occasion developed the familiar theme that Field-Marshal Goering would, in certain circumstances, be prepared to treat with the Allies. On this occasion, he had stated that the Field-Marshal was perfectly loyal to Herr Hitler, but would be ready to look him up immediately the right moment arrived. He had now been furnished with a personal letter to a friend in England, written by the same Swede, who was now back in Sweden. At the end of this letter, the remainder of which dealt entirely with personal questions, the writer had said that a German, who was in contact with both Herr Hitler and Herr von Papen, and had been touring Scandinavia doing German propaganda, had recently been to see his (the writer’s) publisher, to whom he had given the following picture of conditions in Germany:

Germany was tired of the war, and had never expected that we should go to war with her if Poland were invaded. Herr Hitler, on going to Warsaw, had been deeply shocked at the effect of air bombardment, and had given orders that any German pilot who bombed an open town should be put to death. In fact, no open towns had been bombed by Germany, and none would be bombed. Herr Hitler was now prepared to give guarantees in the form of demilitarised territory along the Rhine and also perhaps in Hanover. On the Swedish publisher asking what Herr Hitler expected in return, the German replied “only peace”.

This was certainly a strange tale; and it was perhaps significant that such stories should be spread about by Germans in neutral countries.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1,
4th January, 1940.
W.M. (40) 4th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 6.

Confidential Annex.

SCANDINAVIA.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the French Ambassador had asked to see him that afternoon, and he thought it likely that it might be to give him the reply of the French Government to the Note which we had sent them on the subject of Scandinavia.

The Foreign Secretary also referred to the telegram (No.19) which he had despatched on the previous day to Lord Lothian, informing him of the terms of the communication which it was proposed to make to the Norwegian and Swedish Ministers. In the draft of this communication which he had read to the War Cabinet on Wednesday, 3rd January, he had referred to "taking dispositions to prevent the shipment of goods down the Norwegian coast to Germany". He had now amended this by substituting a wider phrase of "preventing the use of Norwegian territorial waters by German trade"; i.e., a phrase which covered traffic in both directions.

The Narvik traffic.

THE FIRST SEA LORD explained to the War Cabinet, by means of a chart, the method by which German ships from Narvik were able to creep down the Norwegian coast in territorial waters. A British ship laden with iron ore had recently proceeded down the coast, without leaving territorial waters, and had made a careful study of the route followed. The First Sea Lord indicated the spot at

-1-
which, if it were decided to interrupt the traffic, the British destroyers would operate; and he described the technique which they would employ.

The object of their action would be to examine all traffic, whichever way it was proceeding, in a manner similar to that carried out by the Northern Patrol, and to send in as prizes all German ships and neutral ships carrying contraband. Depth charges would be employed in preference to guns, to divert the ships out of territorial waters. This method was thought to be less likely to provoke counter action by any Norwegian war vessels that might be on the scene, and would minimise the danger to the crews of the merchantmen.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER enquired whether any difficulty might arise from the fact that British ships from Narvik were apparently in the habit of pursuing the same course as the German ships through territorial waters.

THE FIRST SEA LORD said that British ships sailing from Narvik either went in convoy, or, if they sailed independently, they could be sent by a route well out to sea. The reason why ships had recently been sailing through territorial waters was probably due to the fact that two ships had recently been torpedoed just outside territorial waters.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
5th January, 1940.
W.M. (40) 5th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 5.

Confidential Annex.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the previous evening M. Corbin, the French Ambassador, had informed him that the French Government were in complete agreement with the general lines of the Note which we proposed to address to the Norwegian Government on the subject of the abuse of Norwegian territorial waters by German naval vessels. They thought, however, that it would be preferable to base our argument in support of the action we proposed to take on general grounds, rather than to justify it as a specific reprisal. In this connexion, they drew attention to the fact that the French Prize Court on the 29th November, 1917, had delivered a judgment in the case of enemy ships captured in Greek waters declaring that "a series of hostile acts committed by the enemy had transformed these into a theatre of war, and has in practice deprived them of the enjoyment of neutrality which enemy vessels would thus not be justified in claiming today". Both the Legal Adviser of the Foreign Office and the Procurator General (who, in the absence of the Attorney General, had been consulted) favoured a modification of the terms of our Note on the lines suggested by the French Government. He (the Secretary of State) had accordingly re-drafted the Note. The first two paragraphs, in which the various enormities...
committed by the German naval force were restated, were the same as in the earlier draft, but the third and following paragraphs had now been re-drafted as follows:

3. By these hostile acts German naval forces have turned Norwegian waters into a theatre of war and have in practice deprived them of the enjoyment of neutrality.

4. His Majesty's Government find themselves obliged to take account of this actual situation and to extend the scope of their naval operations into waters which have become a theatre of operations for the enemy's naval forces.

5. His Majesty's Government are therefore taking appropriate dispositions to prevent the use of Norwegian territorial waters by German trade. To achieve this purpose it would be necessary for His Majesty's naval forces at times to enter and operate in those waters.

6. His Majesty's Government are most reluctant to take this action, but they see no alternative in view of the action of the enemy's naval forces in disregard of the recognised rules of maritime warfare to which they have referred.

THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE NAVAL STAFF said that the modification suggested by the French was a considerable improvement, in view especially of the fact that the Norwegian Government had themselves suggested convoying vessels through Norwegian waters to protect them against German action, and that we had informally rejected this solution of the difficulty.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT suggested that in view of the more general character of the reasons which we now proposed to give for our action the terms of the concluding paragraph of the Note were perhaps unduly apologetic in tone.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he would like to consider this point, and would prefer therefore that the actual draft which he had read out should not be treated as final. He had wished to avoid making the text too categorical, since in the earlier discussions it had been thought advisable to leave ourselves room for manoeuvre in case the Norwegian Government re-acted very violently against our proposal. He had arranged to see the Norwegian Minister at 6.30 p.m. that afternoon. If M. Colban were to claim that the Norwegian Government were themselves taking adequate steps to prevent further outrages in their waters by German Naval vessels, he (the Secretary of State) proposed to take the line that it was impossible for us to attach any value to assurances given by Germany, and that we could not therefore continue to regard ourselves as bound by rules which the Germans, for their part, constantly disregarded.

The War Cabinet:—

(a) Agreed that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should hand to the Norwegian Minister that day a Note, stating that His Majesty's Government were taking appropriate dispositions to prevent the use of Norwegian territorial waters by German trade, the Note to follow the lines indicated by the Secretary of State in the discussion recorded above, subject to any minor drafting amendments which he might consider necessary;

(b) Took note that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would report the result of his conversation with the Norwegian Minister to the War Cabinet at their meeting to be held on Monday, 8th January, 1940.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
6th January, 1940.
said that that morning he had received from a secret source a copy of a telegram from the Japanese Ambassador in London to the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs in Tokyo. In this telegram the Ambassador expressed the view that Mr Kennedy, the United States Ambassador in London, was behind the recent American peace move. Mr Kennedy was a Catholic, and a keen advocate of peace, and he (the Ambassador) conjectured that his advice in this matter had carried weight with President Roosevelt. The Ambassador reported also that he had learned that arrangements had been made for the United States Ambassadors in the principal European countries to meet shortly in Paris for the purpose, he assumed, of discussing the possibility of a further peace move.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

...
SCANDINAVIA.  

Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 5th Conclusions, Minute 5.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that according to a secret report dated 29th December, 1939, the German Staff were fully prepared to carry out the necessary measures in the event of Germany deciding on action against the Scandinavian countries, and the preparations to this end had been made in the German Baltic ports. According to another report, dated 22nd December, 1939, received from a source in Germany which had always proved reliable, Germany was not only making the necessary preparations in the German Baltic ports, but was taking no pains to keep secret the action so being prepared. It might be their intention in this way to intimidate the Scandinavian States. It might, on the other hand, be merely that the German Staff had received orders to be ready at short notice to carry out any action which Herr Hitler might decide upon. It was worth noting that according to this report steamers were being loaded in the Baltic ports with various kinds of war supplies, that parachute troops had been prepared, that four divisions of a special kind had been assembled, and that 400 transport aircraft had been assembled in north-east Germany.

Hitherto the action which we had contemplated Germany might take against Scandinavia was an invasion of southern Sweden, or perhaps of southern Norway, and it was on this problem that we had formed certain judgments. Was it possible that the Germans were contemplating a parachute descent on the Swedish ore mines further to the north? There might well be technical reasons which would show that such
a project was impracticable, but it would, he thought, be worth while for it to be examined from this point of view.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF thought that any such attempt would be unlikely, since the supply problem alone would raise very great difficulties.

It was agreed that this matter should be investigated.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that subsequent to the meeting of the War Cabinet on Saturday, 6th January, he had had an interview with M. Colban, the Norwegian Minister, at which he had handed him the aide-mémoire setting out the action which in consequence of the recent flagrant violation of Norwegian territorial waters by German naval forces we were preparing to take to prevent the use of those waters by German ships and trade. What had passed at that interview might be summarised as follows:

After M. Colban had read the text of the aide-mémoire, he had remained silent for a time, and, then speaking with some emotion and evidently choosing his words with care, had said that this communication had come as a complete surprise to him, and that, being without detailed information on the subject, he could not say whether the facts of the German action were as stated in the aide-mémoire. Even if they were, however, his first personal reaction was that there was no logical ground for maintaining that three unfortunate occurrences had deprived Norwegian waters of their neutral character. For example, he had had occasion, as he (the Secretary of State) was aware, to protest against violations of Norwegian territory by British aircraft; but neither the Norwegian Government nor His Majesty's Government nor even the German Government had regarded these acts as having turned Norwegian territory into a "theatre of war". To this the Secretary of State had pointed out that there was surely all the difference in the world between the accidental crossing of the territorial limit in flights near the coast of Norway and the deliberate acts of piracy of which the Germans had been guilty. While admitting the difference, M. Colban had maintained that, so far as it affected the neutral character of Norwegian waters, it was one of degree only, and that, in any event, three cases of sinking in three months did not prove that the German Government were deliberately treating Norwegian waters as a war zone. In such circumstances, His Majesty's Government might, he claimed, have been expected to draw the attention of the Norwegian Government to these cases; but it was quite another matter, and in his (M. Colban's) view unjustified, to claim that Norwegian neutrality was now a thing of the past.
The Secretary of State had replied that this was not our contention; on the contrary we saw no reason why Norwegian neutrality in general should not continue to be maintained, and we certainly had no desire to see it disappear. The Germans, however, could not be allowed to benefit by rules of neutrality which they themselves disregarded. In the last war, for example, the Allies had held that similar German actions in Greek waters had entitled them to deny the use of those waters to German shipping; and he (the Secretary of State) could see no difference of principle in the present case. M. Colban had retorted that Norway could not be compared with Greece in such matters. In the last war, for example, he himself had been personally concerned with the arrangements for Norwegian coal supplies from this country, and the Ministry of Shipping had admitted to him that the ships bringing this coal had all been adequately protected in Norwegian waters. The Norwegians were a people who never failed to defend their territory against anyone; and he (M. Colban) felt that Norway's conduct as a neutral during both this war and the last merited greater consideration for her position, and greater confidence in her will to defend her neutrality. The Secretary of State had replied that he fully appreciated Norway's conduct in the last war and her will to defend her neutrality now; but it was not, unfortunately, a question of will but one of capacity, and the facts of geography, if nothing else, made it almost impossible to believe that the neutrality of the waters along the whole Norwegian coast could be adequately protected against a Power determined to violate it.

M. Colban had then asked why His Majesty's Government, who had already allowed some three weeks to elapse since the last of the cases cited in the aide-memoire, could not wait a little longer to see what action the Norwegian Government could take to ensure respect for their neutrality instead of threatening to violate it themselves without further ado. In the absence of instructions from his Government, he could only give his personal views; but he had assured him (the Secretary of State) that it was his sincere conviction that such a threat was not justified by the premises of our argument, based as it was on three cases only. He (the Secretary of State) had explained that, although the aide-memoire referred to these three particular cases, since they were well authenticated, our contention was that there was a general use of Norwegian waters by German submarines which made such cases possible. He asked M. Colban to believe that we in this country fully realised the difficulties of Norway's position; but we had a right to expect that our position also should be appreciated. Fighting as we were for our lives, we could not be expected to overlook the determination of the enemy to stick at nothing to destroy us, regardless of the rights of neutrals, and to allow him to benefit by our respect for those rights, regardless of his conduct.
M. Colban had admitted that German ruthlessness must be taken into account but—that did not in his view prove that Norwegian waters were a theatre of war. In consequence he found it necessary at once to enter a strong and formal protest against the idea of any foreign naval forces operating in Norwegian waters—a protest based not, of course, on any instructions but on his general knowledge of the policy of the Norwegian Government. If the words "appropriate dispositions" in the aide-memoire meant, as he supposed they did, that British warships would now regularly search and divert ships in Norwegian territorial waters, the Germans would not remain passive and a train of consequences would be started, the result of which he feared would be to put an end to Norwegian neutrality. He noted that His Majesty's Government expressed their reluctance to proceed with such measures; and he could well understand that they should be reluctant to take a step fraught with such dangerous possibilities. He still hoped that on reflection it would be decided not to act in this way. He (the Secretary of State) had replied that he would take note of the views expressed by M. Colban and would report them to his colleagues; but he had held out no hope that the decision would be altered. He had asked M. Colban to convey the information in the aide-memoire to the Norwegian Government as soon as possible, and to make plain to them the strong feeling in this country that one-sided respect for neutral rights could no longer be expected of us, and that a war could not be conducted on the principle of one side keeping all the rules and the other breaking them. M. Colban had replied that he would certainly do this; but he maintained that what we now proposed to do went far beyond merely equalising the position of the two belligerents in this respect. The aide-memoire, he said, would make a tremendous and painful impression on the Norwegian Government; and though he understood our point of view as well as any Norwegian, he could not honestly think that it was in our interests to take such action. We would do well, he urged, to place more confidence in Norway and in her determination to maintain her independence. She still hoped to maintain it, but this step would make it more difficult to do so. As he had explained during the War Trade negotiations, German aggression should not be fought by attacking Norwegian interests; and the present was a much graver case of the same procedure. Our action indeed might ultimately involve Norway in the war.
He (the Secretary of State) had said that he could not see why this should be so, the Norwegian Government he presumed, were protesting to the German Government against the actions of German submarines in Norwegian waters, and he supposed they might feel it necessary to protest to His Majesty's Government against the action which we now contemplated; but this would not bring Norway into the War. M. Colban admitted this, but said that very little would then be needed to bring the war to Norway. He could not contemplate such a possibility, without horror, and that was why he had spoken so frankly. He (the Secretary of State) had replied that he was grateful to M. Colban for his frankness and regretted to have been obliged to make such an unpleasant communication to him. He realised as well as M. Colban did that this was a grave matter, and, as he could tell from the length of time which had elapsed since the last sinking mentioned in the aide-memoire, His Majesty's Government had not taken this decision without grave deliberation. In taking his leave M. Colban had said that this was indeed a grave matter. Was it wise to risk an extension of the conflict? He sincerely hoped that His Majesty's Government would yet reflect in time on the consequences of such an extension, both to the Norwegian Government and to themselves.

THE PRIME MINISTER asked whether M. Colban had stated whether in fact the Norwegian Government had made a protest to Germany, against their use of Norwegian territorial waters.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that M. Colban had not answered this point; and he (the Secretary of State) had not asked him. Throughout, M. Colban showed great emotion and it had been an extremely painful interview. On the day following the interview (i.e. on 7th January, 1940) M. Colban had called at the Foreign Office to say that he had just received a telegram from the Norwegian Foreign Office stating that while the Norwegian Admiralty admitted that one of the ships mentioned in the aide-memoire had been
sunk inside Norwegian territorial waters, they challenged our version regarding the place at which the two other ships had been sunk. It was quite clear therefore that a dispute would arise between the Norwegians and ourselves regarding the facts cited in the aide-memoire.

Immediately after the interview with M. Colban, he (the Secretary of State) had seen M. Prytz, the Swedish Minister, to whom he had handed a copy of the aide-memoire which he had given to the Norwegian Minister, at the same time explaining that as a matter of courtesy we wished to inform the Swedish Government of the action which we intended to take in Norwegian territorial waters, since considerable quantities of Swedish goods were shipped to Germany from Norwegian ports. The course of this interview might be summarised as follows:

When M. Prytz had read through the aide-memoire, he (the Secretary of State) had explained the situation with which we were now faced. German submarines had first ignored the order of the Norwegian Government prohibiting submarines from entering Norwegian territorial waters and had then committed in those waters what could only be described as acts of piracy. His Majesty's Government could not be expected to allow this state of affairs to continue in which British trade and shipping were exposed to attack, while they continued to accord a one-sided respect to waters used by the attackers. Nevertheless even now His Majesty's Government, although faced with the most inhuman acts of piracy were only preparing to take an action which was in fact no more than a tightening of their blockade. Nevertheless, the Norwegian Minister had been much disturbed at the communication which he (the Secretary of State) had just made to him, and had been very apprehensive of the possible consequences to Norway of our action. He had even suggested that Norway might thereby become involved in the War. He (the Secretary of State) had told M. Colban that he did not see why this should follow. He would, however, be glad of M. Prytz's view on that point, and on the probable effect of our action on Sweden.
M. Prytz had replied that speaking unofficially he could say that he had expected His Majesty's Government to take this step, and had so informed the Swedish Government as soon as he had heard of the sinking of ships by Germany in Norwegian territorial waters. He did not think that it would produce much reaction in Sweden, since Swedish interests did not seem directly involved, except in the case of shipments of iron ore; and, though the Swedish Government would no doubt deplore our action and might even be moved to protest against it, if appealed to by the Norwegian Government on grounds of Scandinavian solidarity, he did not believe that any strong anti-Allied sentiment would be created in Swedish public opinion. The main point of interest to the Swedish as well as to the Norwegian public would be the prospect of German reprisals; but he did not see how Germany could bring Sweden into the matter, though German reprisals against trade with the United Kingdom might ultimately affect the trade of the port of Gothenburg.

He (the Secretary of State) had said that he was interested to hear these views; and he had asked M. Prytz whether, if he were to put himself into the position of the Norwegian Government, he would take so serious a view of the matter as M. Colban had seemed to do. M. Prytz had replied that it was all a question of possible reprisals from the German side. The latter of course might try to protect their commerce and so risk a naval engagement in Norwegian territorial waters; but so far as he (M. Prytz) could see, nothing short of an actual German invasion of Norway need really compromise Norwegian neutrality; on the whole he was inclined to think that nothing short of such action would fundamentally alter the position or would cause Norwegian public opinion to turn against the Allied cause. He (the Secretary of State) had rejoined that this was the impression which he himself had gathered from what M. Colban had said. The latter had seemed chiefly concerned to emphasise the danger to Norway from German reprisals against our action rather than to contest the rough justice of the action we proposed to take. M. Colban's chief sentiment had seemed to be one of alarm rather than of indignation.

M. Prytz then remarked that, while he could not say of course what attitude the Norwegian Government would adopt, he did feel that there was no great danger of hostile reaction in Sweden, and probably not even as much danger of such a reaction in Norway as M. Colban had tried to suggest, provided always
that the object of our action was to defend ourselves against German illegalities, and to tighten the blockade of Germany but not to bring Scandinavia into the war. This would be the test both in Sweden and in Norway, and he felt that it was in our own interests to emphasise what he called the "blockade" aspect of the question. He (the Secretary of State) had replied that our intentions were indeed to protect ourselves and to harm Germany, but not to bring the Scandinavian countries into the war against their will; he would see that everything possible was done to make this plain to the Scandinavian public, and he would be grateful if M. Prytz would make this plain to his Government. This M. Prytz promised to do.

Since the interview recorded above he had however received Telegram No. 7 dated 7th January, 1940, from His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires, Stockholm, which threw a very different light on the attitude of the Swedish Government. This Telegram might be summarised as follows:-

The Secretary-General of the Swedish Foreign Office had sent for Mr. Pollock late the previous evening (7th January, 1940) and had read aloud the text of the Note communicated by the Secretary of State to the Norwegian Minister, the text of which had been telegraphed to Stockholm by the Swedish Minister. The Secretary-General, who, clearly angry, had said that in the view of the Norwegian Government none of the instances of the torpedoing of British vessels within Norwegian territorial waters cited in the aide-memoire had been clearly established, and that, even if they had been, they formed an inadequate pretext for the deliberate and publicly admitted violation by His Majesty's Government of Norwegian neutrality. The consequence of this step would probably be the German occupation of Denmark, and possibly the end of the independent existence of all the Scandinavian countries. He had added "I should have thought that the British Government had the fate of a sufficient number of smaller States on their consciences as it was".

Mr. Pollock had replied that he had not himself been informed of the action contemplated, but he knew that the Admiralty, as the result of the most careful investigation, had established beyond any doubt whatever that more than one of the vessels in question had been torpedoed inside Norwegian territorial waters; he therefore suspected that the Norwegian Government were trying to conceal the fact. He had gone on to say that he guessed that the decision of His Majesty's Government to take this action immediately...
was based upon disturbing reports received regarding increased exports of iron ore both from Narvik and Oxeloesund. He had told the Secretary-General of his conversations with M. Wallenberg based upon the information received from the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and had added that in his opinion the only chance of persuading His Majesty's Government to postpone action was to provide immediate and far-reaching assurances that the spirit of the secret understanding between the Swedish and the British Government regarding Swedish exports of iron ore to Germany would be loyally observed. He then said that His Majesty's Government, in negotiating the War Trade Agreement, had apparently been influenced by the consideration that it was worth their while to sacrifice a trump card, namely the power to control supplies of iron ore to Germany, in order to ensure for the time being at any rate that Scandinavia would not be involved in the war. His impression was, however, that considerable doubt existed as to the question whether from the British point of view this sacrifice was worth making; and there seemed to him no object in trying to hide this fact. He feared, therefore, that if His Majesty's Government were given any cause to believe that the Swedish Government were playing Germany's game, they might decide to take such steps as they thought necessary to protect their own interests.

The Secretary-General had replied that this was his impression also, but that any method of preventing Germany from receiving iron ore was better than the one now proposed which was a deliberate violation of Norwegian neutrality. "It would be better", he had said "for you to slip in and sink the ships on the quiet than for you to declare that you were justified in so doing". He then added "thinking out loud we might even consider telling the German Government that in view of certain threats received we could not supply them any longer from Narvik". Finally, the Secretary-General had begged him (Mr. Pollock) to do all that he could to urge postponement of action for a few days, pending further consideration of the position. He added that he would look into the question of the iron ore companies' present activities and would communicate with him (Mr. Pollock) again on the following day (8th January, 1940).

In submitting this telegraphic report, Mr. Pollock stated that his impression was that the Swedish Government were genuinely frightened, and that they might go a long way in order to induce His Majesty's Government not to take the action proposed.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that the attitude of the Swedish Government as reported in the foregoing Telegram suggested that something had happened very recently to alter the situation in Sweden.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that it was necessary now to wait for the official notification of the reaction of the Norwegian and Swedish Governments to the action we proposed to take. It was possible that the Swedish Government might offer to take steps greatly to reduce supplies to Germany.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that in that event the Swedish Government would have no reply to offer when the Germans protested against such action.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS said that during the week end he had received an inquiry from General Smuts as to the grounds we proposed to defend our policy of reprisals if it involved the sinking of ships. After consultation with the Admiralty he had informed General Smuts by telegram that it was not our intention to sink any ships in Norwegian territorial waters, but merely to arrest and divert ships in such waters for examination for purposes of Contraband Control.

The War Cabinet:—

(i) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to consider the possibility of Germany attempting to seize the mines in Northern Sweden and/or the port of LuLea by parachute troops.

(ii) Agreed to await the official reply of the Swedish and Norwegian Governments before deciding what further action to take.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
6th January, 1940.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that
his conversations during the last few days and the documents
received on the subject of the action which we proposed to
take to prevent the use of Norwegian territorial waters by
German ships and trade might be summarised as follows:—

(i) The reaction to our proposal by M. Colban, the
Norwegian Minister, had been more severe than
he (the Secretary of State) had anticipated. M. Colban had been deeply moved at the danger
which would be caused to Norwegian interests and
to the unpredictable consequences of our action. The same point of view had been reflected in the
official note which he (the Secretary of State)
had since received from the Norwegian Government,
the terms of which were extremely sharp. In
addition to this communication, the King of Norway
had addressed a personal communication to His
Majesty the King, which M. Colban was to present
that afternoon at 4.30 p.m. In this communication
King Haakon spoke of having learnt with great
surprise and consternation of the steps which we
were contemplating;

(ii) In the case of Sweden no very severe reaction had
been anticipated in view of the conversation
between Mr. Pollock and the Secretary-General of
the Swedish Foreign Office about a week previously.
When he (the Secretary of State) had communicated
our decision to M. Prytz, the Swedish Minister, the
previous Saturday (6th January, 1940) M. Prytz
had said that he was not surprised at the action
we proposed to take. He was, therefore, all the
more surprised when the Note from the Swedish
Government, which had now been received, contained
an emphatic protest at the action we proposed to
take and offered no suggestion whatever as to
action which might be taken by Sweden to meet our
chief requirement namely, the reduction of supplies
of iron ore to Germany. He (the Secretary of State)
was still at a loss to account for the differences
in attitude between the Swedish Ministry and the
Swedish Government. It might be accounted for
in part by the fact (regarding which however no
official information was available) that Sweden
had been exposed to sharp pressure by Germany
during the last few days, and in part by the fact
that apparently the Sweden had thought that it
would be possible for us to attain our ends in
this matter without sending our warships into Norwegian territorial waters. M. Prytz had expressed himself as greatly surprised that this was not possible;

(iii) Since the interview recorded above he (the Secretary of State) had read an account of an interview between Mr. Hambro of the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Swedish Minister. Mr. Hambro's interpretation of the Swedish position threw the matter into a somewhat different light, since his general view was that the sharp reactions on the part of both the Swedish and Norwegian Governments should not be taken "au pied de la lettre".

The whole question would no doubt need to be reviewed by the War Cabinet in the light of the replies received from the Norwegian and Swedish Governments and of the effect which our action might be expected to have on neutral opinion. It was relevant also to recall that hitherto we had regarded it as unlikely that the Germans were actually planning to take hostile action against Scandinavia, since we had thought that it would not be in their interest to do so. If, however, the Germans were now to take such action, it would be the best thing which could happen from our point of view, since we should avoid incurring the odium of being the first to take drastic steps in Scandinavia, and we should avoid also the risk of losing Norwegian good-will.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Note received from the Swedish Government was all the more surprising in view of the fact that at the interview on the 6th January, 1940, M. Prytz had not only himself expressed no surprise at our contemplated action, but had made it clear that he thought that his Government also would not react very unfavourably. It was clear that M. Prytz had been taken by surprise by the line adopted by his Government, and this implied that the Swedish Government had altered their policy within the last few days, and had had no opportunity to acquaint M. Prytz of their latest attitude. It seemed to him (the Prime Minister) that the Swedish Note expressed a sincere feeling of alarm and that this was most
likely due to threats made by Germany. No doubt the Swedish Government were fully aware of the German preparations, including the training of parachute troops, the accumulation, and loading of military stores in German Baltic ports and similar measures.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence referred to Telegram (No. 10 dated 8th January, 1940) from His Majesty's Charge d'Affaires, Oslo, suggesting that if we continued to apply pressure, the Norwegian Government might be brought to the point of forcing the ore ships from Narvik to pass out of territorial waters. Was this line worth pursuing? It should be remembered also that the Germans were quite likely to seize Lulea in the spring when the ice melted, in order to prevent the ore fields from falling into Soviet hands. The Swedes would then want our help, and it would be too late for us to do anything, unless we had made the necessary preparations, which the Chiefs of Staff had already said would take at least two months to mature. For these reasons he was in favour of pressing on with such preparations.

The Lord Privy Seal said that both from our own point of view and from the Swedish he thought it advisable that we should broaden the basis of our conversations with the Swedes, with a view to making them realise the dangers with which we should both be faced during the next six months and to bringing them over more to our side.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs agreed generally, but thought it necessary to be careful to avoid giving ground to those in Sweden who already claimed that we were trying to bring Sweden into the War. M. Prytz had been most emphatic that Scandinavian opinion would be against us, if any such idea were now allowed to take hold. As regards the telegram which had been referred to by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, he (the Secretary of State) did not think that Dormer's suggestion was practicable, since it would involve urging the Norwegians to take definitely unneutral action against Germany.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that no doubt what Mr. Dormer had in mind was that if we had definitely made up our minds to stop the ore traffic from Narvik, it would be worth putting his suggestion to the Norwegian Government; that they would certainly reject it, but the fact that we had put it would assist us in the face of neutral opinion when we actually took action.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER enquired whether any further information had been received regarding the suggestion thrown out to Mr. Pollock by the Secretary-General of the Swedish Foreign Office (as reported in Telegram No. 7 dated 7th January, 1940) that Sweden might be willing to consider telling the German Government that in view of certain threats received they could not supply Germany any longer with iron ore from Narvik.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that no further information had been received on this point. The latest document throwing light on the Swedish attitude was the report to which he had already referred by Mr. Hambro of his interview with M. Prytz the previous evening, which was to the following effect:

M. Prytz had started the conversation by asking whether we realised that our present proposal for stopping ore ships from Narvik would result in Scandinavia being brought into the war. Mr. Hambro had replied that he could not see why this should follow since if it did Germany would not only lose her Swedish ore supplies, but also her Danish food products. M. Prytz then said was it not possible for us to secure our object by some method which did not involve the use of territorial waters. Mr. Hambro had replied that in our trade discussions it had always been understood between the Swedes and ourselves that the "Gentlemen's Agreement" on the subject of limiting ore supplies to Germany was not practicable unless "we looked after Narvik". He was, therefore, extremely surprised at the outburst by the Secretary-General of the Swedish Foreign Office unless this was done solely for the benefit of Germany. M. Prytz had then asked whether we had any other reasons for the action we proposed to take and to this Mr. Hambro had said that German submarines were already operating in Norwegian territorial waters, that Norway had not protested to Germany against this violation of her neutrality, and that we should not tolerate a one-sided neutrality of this kind. In reply to a question by M. Prytz, Mr. Hambro had said that he did not know
whether we should pursue our proposal to intercept shipping in Norwegian territorial waters if all shipments of ore were stopped. M. Prytz had then said that the Secretary-General's outburst was a piece of diplomatic play-acting; he (M. Prytz) was not surprised at the action we proposed to take and thought that we should go on with it. The Norwegians no doubt would make loud complaint and would try to pass the responsibility on to Sweden. In answer to the question whether he had any suggestion to offer, M. Prytz had said that according to his information there was a point just south of Narvik where, if ships were to remain in territorial waters, they had to pass through a dangerous channel, the alternative being to steam for two hours outside territorial waters. Ships would not be prepared to attempt this channel without Norwegian pilots. Would it not be possible for us to buy off these pilots, and so force ships using this route to leave territorial waters?

As regards the shipping which the Norwegians had undertaken to charter to us, the view expressed by Mr. Hambro was as follows:

The Norwegians could not afford to lay up their ships and in war time they could only find employment by chartering them to us. The Norwegian Government regarded the Shipping Agreement which we had made with the Norwegian ship owners as being highly favourable to Norway and as likely through taxation to provide the sum required to pay for the limited measure of rearmament now being undertaken by Norway. For these reasons it was thought that Norway relied upon the Shipping Agreement and would carry out its provisions even though for the moment owing to fear of Germany this was not the case.

It was pointed out in discussion that if we were to act, we should do best to act quickly and decisively. The quicker we acted the less would be the opposition in Norway and also in Sweden. It was the fact that we appeared to be hesitating which stimulated fresh fears in Scandinavia and consequently fresh opposition.

The Foreign Secretary said that prior to reading these reports by Mr. Hambro, he had been considerably impressed in the first place by the extent to which the Norwegian reaction coupled with the appeal of Norway might have a damaging effect on us in
the judgment of the world, and in the second place by the feeling that, if later we were to pursue the large project which the War Cabinet had discussed at previous Meetings, it was essential to avoid creating a feeling of embitterment in Norway and Sweden, which would almost certainly happen if, through our action, they became involved in war with Germany.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it had always been agreed that it would be impossible for us to contemplate sending an expedition to the mines at Galivare unless we succeeded in securing at least the acquiescence both of Norway and Sweden. He agreed that it was not possible for the War Cabinet to reach a final decision at that Meeting as to the action now to be taken, and he proposed, therefore, that the matter should be further discussed at the Meeting to be held the following day. In the meanwhile it would be useful if the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would circulate the Memorandum by Mr Hambro to which he had referred. There was also the subsidiary problem of the ore from Oxeloesund. It would, he thought, be of convenience to the War Cabinet if he were to examine this question in consultation with the Ministers primarily interested.

The War Cabinet agreed —

(a) To consider further the proposal to prevent the use of Norwegian territorial waters by German ships and trade at their Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 10th January, 1940:

(b) To take note that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs proposed to circulate the Memorandum prepared by Mr Hambro:

(c) To take note that the Prime Minister proposed to examine the special problem of the export of ore from Oxeloesund in conjunction with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, the Minister without Portfolio and the First Lord of the Admiralty.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1, 9th January, 1940.
Confidential Annex.

The War Cabinet had before them the following Papers:

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, giving an account of a conversation on the 8th January between Mr. Charles Hambro, of the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and the Swedish Minister in London (W.P. (40) 10).

Memorandum by the Minister of Economic Warfare, on the stoppage of all supplies of iron ore to Germany from the Northern Swedish fields (W.P. (40) 11).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS gave the War Cabinet a summary of the communications which had passed between the British and Scandinavian Governments, of the Scandinavian reactions to our proposal to stop the Narvik traffic, and of certain conversations which had been held.

The main points to which he drew attention were as follows:

(a) The Norwegian reaction to our proposal had been bad, and had been expressed with considerable and real emotion by M. Colban. Their attitude appeared to be inspired by fear of Germany. Their protest had been backed up by a message from the King of Norway to His Majesty, imploring us to reconsider our intention.

(b) The Norwegian Minister had informed the Foreign Office, the day before, of a telegram he had
received from the Norwegian Foreign Minister, to the effect that, when the sinkings took place early in December, the Norwegians had immediately set up a system of naval escorts, since when there had been no further attacks on shipping in territorial waters.

(c) The Swedish reaction had been surprisingly unfavourable, in view of what was believed to be the Swedish attitude, and of the general tenor of the earlier discussions which had taken place and of the way in which M. Prytz had received our communication.

In view of the significance of the conversation which Mr. Hambro had had with M. Prytz (recorded in W.P. (40) 10), he (the Foreign Secretary) had arranged a meeting at the Foreign Office, at which a full discussion had taken place between Mr. Hambro and others at the Foreign Office concerned with the problem.

The following were the main conclusions which had emerged from this discussion:

(a) There was general support for the view which had on several occasions been put forward to the War Cabinet, that the prospects of being able to undertake the major operation against the Northern orefields depended not so much on our present action against the Narvik traffic as upon the imminence of the threat from Russia. In consequence, the Narvik project could be considered on its own merits, as a separate enterprise.
(b) It was thought unlikely that Germany would react by invading Norway. Mr. Hambro had been most emphatic that Germany would be reluctant to take drastic action against Norway, for fear that Sweden would join in and that her supplies of iron from Sweden would then be jeopardised.

(c) A further investigation of what would be gained by naval action in Norwegian territorial waters showed that 1,200,000 tons of ore might be stopped between 15th January and 15th May, and that, in addition, evasion of our Northern Patrol by surface ships and submarines would be made much more difficult.

(d) On the other hand, there were certain disadvantages which we should incur if we took the step proposed. First of all, the Norwegians might contest the evidence on which our case rested, with sufficient success to make our action appear very high-handed: secondly, other neutrals might be led to join in the strong protests which Norway and Sweden would be bound to make; and, thirdly, our action in interfering with a small nation would be valuable for German propaganda, especially at a time when we were publishing a Blue Book on the Russian negotiations, in which we emphasised the care with which we had respected those same interests last year.

(e) It was thought that there were three courses open to the Government:—

(1) To withdraw, and do nothing.

(ii) To carry on and fulfil our intention.
To use the threat of naval intervention as a lever to press the Scandinavian Countries to concede what we wanted, Norway and Sweden were much alarmed by the prospect of our action, and might go a long way to meet our views, if, by so doing, they could prevail upon us not to violate Norwegian Territorial Waters.

This course of action was strongly advocated by Mr. Hembro.

As to the demands which we might make on Norway and Sweden, if we adopted the third course of action, it was suggested that we might request Norway to stop providing pilots for ore ships. We might also ask her to prohibit the export of ore to all belligerents. Finally we should only agree to adopt course (iii) if Norway undertook to make a war trade agreement on lines acceptable to us and would carry out our demands in connection with economic warfare. Our demands to Sweden would be that she should acquiesce in the stoppage of exports of ore from Narvik, make good her secret undertaking to lessen, by all means in her power, exports of ore to Germany, and ensure that Germany did not make good from Lulea the amount of ore which she had failed to get from Narvik.

It was thought that all these demands could be fulfilled by Norway and Sweden without prejudicing their neutrality.

Continuing, the Foreign Secretary said he thought that the course of action suggested above would be worth trying. If a balance sheet were drawn up, its advantages could be set out as:

(i) We would lose our imports of ore from Narvik, but could make them good from elsewhere.

(ii) We would achieve our object without having to incur the disadvantages of violating territorial waters.

-4-
(iii) We should avoid damaging our relations with Norway.
(iv) We should not throw ourselves open to the charge of oppressing small nations.
(v) We should not risk losing our shipping agreement with Norway.
(vi) If our demands were not accepted, our case for taking naval action would rest on firmer ground than at present.

He felt it was essential to keep our minds fixed on the larger problem on which we might have to embark later, for which Scandinavian co-operation was essential; and although their attitude would largely be governed by Russia, it would be a great mistake to forfeit the goodwill of Norway and Sweden without good cause.

The suggestion had been made that a Minister, for example the Lord Privy Seal, should be sent over to impress on the Scandinavian Governments our view of the present situation, and to give a stronger exposition of our case than could be given by our diplomatic representatives. He was inclined to think that, although at a later stage there might be great value in such action, it would be dangerous at the present time, in view of the very wide attention it would attract. News had just been received that M. Wallenberg, who had led the Swedish Delegation in our war trade negotiations, was about to arrive in this country by air. No doubt he was bringing further news of the Swedish Government's attitude. It would be advisable to hear what M. Wallenberg had to say before coming to an irrevocable decision.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL agreed that it would be a mistake for him, or any other Minister, to go to Scandinavia now. Such a visit would involve both publicity and delay. He was much impressed with the
urgency of taking action to stop the Narvik trade. Every week that passed allowed a further quantity of ore to sail for Germany.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the compromise scheme now proposed had much to commend it if there were any chance that Norway and Sweden would accept our demands. He agreed, however, with the Lord Privy Seal that the need for action was urgent. Every week the prize was melting. Time would be consumed in the proposed negotiations, and, if we failed, we should be back again just where we started.

It should be remembered that our ultimate objective must be the stoppage of all ore from Sweden, and we could never rest content with an undertaking from the Swedish Government to go slow on their supplies to Germany. The new Paper produced by the Minister of Economic Warfare showed the great effect on German industry of stopping the ore, not only on account of its iron content, but on account of its high phosphorus content. Germany would be forced to redouble her pressure on Sweden if the full quantities of supplies were not forthcoming, and we should find that neither Sweden nor Norway would be able to withstand this pressure and carry out their undertakings to us. We should not delude ourselves with the idea that we could stop the ore by mere threats. However, it was to our advantage that the Scandinavian countries should be embroiled with Germany, and that the war should extend to Scandinavia. During his recent visit to France, he had found that the French High Command were in full agreement with this view, and were prepared, if necessary, to assist with Alpine troops.
THE PRIME MINISTER enquired what would be the effect on our steel industry of cutting off supplies of ore from Narvik.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said that, since the war, we had not been obtaining supplies of Swedish iron ore, with the result that our stocks of that kind of ore were almost entirely depleted. A sudden stoppage of exports from Narvik, therefore, would, for the time being seriously hamper our steel industry. Some furnaces would have to close down. Given time, we could replace the Swedish ore by supplies from Brazil, Spain, and North Africa. It should not be forgotten, however, that, whereas Germany only relied upon getting a comparatively small quantity of ore through Narvik, and - over a year - could draw almost her full requirements from Lulea, the whole of our requirements of Swedish ore would have to come through Narvik.

Thus, if Narvik were completely closed, the Germans would only lose their winter supply, whereas, we should lose our whole year's supply, which would amount to some 2,000,000 tons.

There was plenty of ore elsewhere to take the place of the Swedish ore, provided shipping was available to bring it; but some time must elapse before the alternative supply could be organised.

A further important consideration was the extent of the German stocks of Swedish iron ore at the present time. He thought that, as German production had recently been on a comparatively small scale, their stocks might quite well have increased.
The Prime Minister said that he was less concerned with the reactions of Norway than of Sweden, whose goodwill it was essential to retain. Sweden had protested vigorously against our demarche to Norway, and had taken the line that action against her neighbour was of vital interest to her. In consequence, we were not in a position to bring severe pressure on her in the same way as we could on Norway. The latest Report by the Minister of Economic Warfare (W.P.(40) 11) emphasised the importance of stopping the whole of the supplies of Swedish ore to Germany.

The attitude of other neutrals would probably be largely governed by that of Sweden, and therefore we had to ensure that we did not drive Sweden into making too violent a protest, which might put us badly in the wrong in the eyes of the world. It was difficult to see why the Swedish reactions to our communication to Norway had differed so greatly from what we had been led to expect. He was not yet satisfied as to the question whether we could carry out the Narvik project without forfeiting the goodwill of Sweden. He suggested that before taking a final decision, we should await the result of the forthcoming conversations with M. Wallenberg and explore the Swedish attitude thoroughly. It might be after all that the Swedes were prepared to co-operate with us in stopping the export of ore to Germany, as seemed to be indicated from the report of the conversation between Mr. Pollock and M. Boheman. At the same time we could not postpone a decision indefinitely in this matter.
THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE

suggested that we should use the threat of action against the Narvik traffic as a lever to put further pressure on the Scandinavian countries, in particular Sweden. We were in need of Swedish co-operation in order to give assistance to Finland as well as to stop the ore going to Germany. He urged that we should demand from Norway and Sweden, as a quid pro quo for giving up action against the Narvik traffic, their active help, first to form a front against Russia, based on the condemnation by the League of Nations of the Russian aggression in Finland, and secondly in stopping the export of ore. We could point out that, if they would consent to these proposals, we should be able to put in an Allied force which would protect the northern fields against the possibility of the Russians overwhelming the Finns in the spring and advancing into Sweden. We could in the same way protect the mines against the possibility of a German landing at Lulea when the ice melted. We ought to make all preparations now, so that we might be in a position to send the necessary forces for these purposes in the spring. We might indeed have to make it clear that we should send forces whether they liked it or not.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said there would be no difficulty in opening such conversations with Norway and Sweden, but they would almost certainly beg us not to send any official assistance to Finland through their countries for
fear of the action which Germany might take against them. He doubted whether assistance to Finland would prove of any value towards obtaining Scandinavian co-operation in stopping the ore. There were however advantages in talking to them very frankly about the ore traffic and asking them what they could suggest to assist us.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY observed that we had now been considering the proposal to stop the Narvik traffic for some six weeks, and so far we had taken no action. He did not think that there was the least likelihood of the Scandinavian countries agreeing to take steps themselves to stop the ore, as the Foreign Secretary had suggested. They were far too terrified of Germany. He proposed, therefore, that we should immediately send a flotilla to stop the Narvik traffic in Norwegian waters and await the results of this action. We could make a very powerful case before the world for taking this step. It now seemed very questionable whether Germany would, in fact, invade southern Norway if we did this, and even if she did it would be to our general advantage. The neutral countries could not be permitted to tie our hands when we were, in fact, fighting to maintain their liberties.

We ought, at the same time as we took action against the Narvik traffic, to make it perfectly clear to Sweden that whatever happened we were irrevocably determined that the Germans should not get the ore from the Galivare fields. This stoppage of German ore supplies might result in shortening the war and
saving an enormous number of casualties on the Western Front. We had the necessary force, and we could give an assurance to Sweden that we would support her if Germany took action against her. It was just possible that if we showed our determination in this way Sweden might agree to cut off the ore supplies to Germany by destroying the minefields herself, or taking some other action on her own account. The programme which he therefore proposed was first to listen to what M. Wallenberg had to suggest, but very little was likely to come out of this. The next step, which should follow at the earliest possible moment, would be to take naval action to stop the Narvik traffic. Subsequently when Norway and Sweden made their protests, as they undoubtedly would, the Lord Privy Seal or whatever other emissary might be decided upon, might be sent over to Scandinavia, partly to explore ways and means of meeting the protests of the two countries, but also to make it clear that we were determined to stop the ore going to Germany ourselves unless Sweden did it for us. It might be true that we required the co-operation of Norway and Sweden if we were to send in our own forces to stop the ore going out from Lulea. But in his view, the only way of obtaining this co-operation would be to face these countries with a choice of two evils. We should have to make them more frightened of us than they were of Germany.

THE PRIME MINISTER pointed out that one possible result of taking action against the Narvik
traffic might be that Norway would stop supplies of ore coming over to us. In view of what had been said by the President of the Board of Trade this might place us in a very awkward position. We had to bear this possibility in mind.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL thought that we were more likely to be successful if we faced Norway and Sweden with a fait accompli than if we entered into prolonged negotiations. He was afraid that if we tried to get the Scandinavian countries to take action to stop the ore on their own account, without doing anything definite ourselves, there would be a very long delay, during which Germany would be getting her supplies from Narvik without interruption. If the stoppage of the ore was likely to be the decisive factor in the war, we ought to make up our minds to take drastic action without further delay.

The discussion then turned on the steps which should be taken to prepare ourselves for the action we might have to take in the spring. It was recalled that authority had already been given for the purchase of clothing for the forces necessary to seize certain ports on the west coast of Norway against the contingency of a German invasion of that country, and that detailed plans for these operations were now being worked out. If we were to be ready to send the larger forces required for the bigger project of seizing the northern minefield, however, preparations would have to be made on a much larger scale and should start immediately. The force required to seize the...
Galivere fields should be in position before the ice broke in the Baltic, since after that date the Germans could send a sea-borne expedition to Lulea.

The Chiefs of Staff had already forshadowed the possibility that forces would have to be sent to cooperate with Sweden in the defence of the Southern part of the country against German invasion, and plans for this also should now be worked out in detail. Any Minister who went to Sweden would have to be able to give assurances of armed support on a sufficient scale.

The War Cabinet -

(i) Agreed to defer a decision on the Narvik project pending the arrival in this country of M. Wallenberg:

(ii) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to advise the War Cabinet as to what instructions and authority the Service Departments required to enable detailed plans and preparations to be made for the operations described in the Chiefs of Staff Report of the 31st December, (W.P. (39) 179, Paragraph 102 (iii) and (vi), viz.:

(a) The despatch of a force via Narvik to the Northern Swedish orefields:

(b) The despatch of a force to cooperate in the defence of Southern Sweden:

(iii) Agreed that, pending the settlement of the instructions and authority referred to in (ii), the Service Department should have provisional authority, in consultation with the Treasury, to make purchases of the special equipment that would be necessary for the forces proposed.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
10th January, 1940.
W.M.(40) 9TH CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 5.

Confidential Annex.

SCANDINAVIA.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that M. Wallenberg, who had led the Swedish Delegation during the War Trade negotiations had arrived in England the previous night, and he had arranged to see him at 3 o'clock that afternoon. He proposed to ask him whether he brought any message with him from Stockholm, and generally to discuss the whole situation.

During the discussion at the meeting of the War Cabinet noted in the margin, he had been concerned at the statement of the President of the Board of Trade, regarding the position of our own steel industry in the event of the Norwegian Government deciding to stop all exports of ore from Narvik, thereby cutting off our supplies of Swedish ores. He had accordingly consulted the steel control at the Ministry of Supply. The latter had reported that we had at the present time six weeks stock in the country but that within the next four weeks stocks were expected to rise owing to the opening up of the export of Spanish ore to this country, and also to increased supplies expected from Narvik. If ores from the latter source were cut off it was anticipated that alternative sources of supply could be arranged in a period of about six weeks.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that, owing to their chemical content, ores from different fields were not interchangeable. It might well happen that some blast furnaces in this country which were specially equipped for dealing with Swedish ores might have to close down, for a time at least, if supplies from that source were cut off. The information now available regarding stocks in this country introduced a new and disturbing factor, but not one which in his (the Prime Minister's) opinion was sufficiently serious as to place an absolute bar upon the action we had contemplated, since it was unlikely that the Norwegians would actually go to the length of stopping all ore supplies without more ado.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had always contemplated that the Norwegians might cut off all supplies; but hitherto it had seemed that this would hurt the Germans more than us.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY did not believe that the Norwegian Government would act in this way. They had done nothing when Germany had sunk three ships in their territorial waters.

THE PRIME MINISTER agreed that it was likely that in any case we should have some breathing space during which we could bring up new arguments and perhaps new threats. In any case, at the worst, we should not be faced with more than a temporary stoppage of those blast furnaces in this country which depended upon Swedish ore. If Norway were convinced that she could extract herself from her present difficulties by denying Swedish ore both to the Germany and ourselves, no doubt she would adopt that course. In fact, however, this would not bring an end to her troubles and she would almost certainly realise this.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that the discussion showed the importance of our pressing on with the obtaining of ore from alternative sources of supply.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS thought it would be useful to consider whether it was worth pursuing the idea thrown out by M. Prytz, the Swedish Minister, during his interview with Mr. Hambro, namely, that we might secure our ends by an arrangement with the Norwegian Government under which Norwegian pilots would be refused for ore ships passing down Norwegian territorial waters. If, in fact, it would be necessary for ore ships to leave territorial waters if Norwegian pilots were not available, we should be justified in saying to the Norwegian Government that we realised that they had not the power to prevent the violation of their neutrality by Germany; but that in our opinion the least which they could and should do would be to refrain from assisting Germany by providing pilots for their ships.

Considerable discussion ensued on this suggestion. It was pointed out that, owing to the difficulties of navigation, ore ships would find great difficulty in navigating wholly within territorial waters, and they might well be compelled to leave territorial waters at a point not far south of Narvik. It was suggested that it was worth considering whether we should not tell the Norwegian Government that they could preserve at least a semblance of neutrality by saying that no ore ship from Narvik would be given a Norwegian pilot.
It was pointed out, however, that the Germans would immediately see through a device of this kind, and would continue to exert pressure on Norway. Further, difficulties might arise owing to local port regulations containing a provision insisting on the employment of a pilot by ships leaving port. Generally, it was thought that the pilot scheme would not prove water-tight: for example, if only ore ships were prohibited from using pilots, and other ships were allowed to use them, it would be possible for an ore ship to use territorial waters by following close upon a ship, not carrying ore, which had a Norwegian pilot on board.

The Minister without Portfolio thought that the pilot plan offered no advantage over that suggested by Mr. Dormer, namely, that the Norwegian Government should prohibit the use of territorial waters by ore ships of all kinds.

The First Lord of the Admiralty thought that it would be far better for the Government to allow the Admiralty to send destroyers to round up some of the ore ships in Norwegian territorial waters and then see what happened. Personally, he did not think that anything would happen, apart from protests. Alternatively, the Admiralty might be allowed to lay a minefield in Norwegian territorial waters. This had been his original proposal, and had only been abandoned in favour of the later plan in deference to Foreign Office wishes. Whatever course was decided upon, it was essential that we should now act decisively.

The Prime Minister said that he was not greatly concerned with the effect on Norway of any action we might take; he did, however, attach great importance to our not alienating Sweden, since their acquiescence at least was essential if later we were to proceed with the larger project. If he could be satisfied as to Sweden's probable reaction, he would be prepared to go on with the Narvik plan.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that it was not without significance that the Swedes themselves were evacuating towns and taking other precautions against attack. They knew who was their real enemy.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS said that he had discussed the question with the Dominion High Commissioners. The conclusions which they had reached personally, but which did not necessarily represent the views of their Governments, might be summarised as follows:-

The first question was whether there is any strategic ground for wishing Scandinavia to become a theatre of war other than the importance of the iron ore fields there. If the answer was in the negative, the question then resolved itself into one of the best methods of preventing Germany from obtaining supplies of iron ore from Sweden. It seemed clear that it was absolutely vital for Germany to obtain this ore.

As regards the methods of stopping the ore, the first question was whether we could do this by our own action. It was understood that Sweden would not agree to sell us all the ore since Germany would regard this as inconsistent with Sweden's neutrality. We could not urge the stoppage of all ore from Sweden to belligerents, since it was essential to us to obtain our share of the supply available. We could not stop the supply of ore to Germany by force without Swedish help. The only practicable method, therefore, of stopping the iron ore was to get Sweden into the war on our side. Before deciding to work for this, we must be satisfied that we were in a position to afford sufficient assistance to Sweden to prevent Germany from over-running Sweden and securing possession of the whole of the minefields for herself, thereby depriving us of the important supplies we at present drew from that source.

The proposed interference with German sea-borne supplies from Narvik must be considered in the light of the above. Interference would appear unwise if it involved any grave risk of arousing deep resentment in Sweden which would be prejudicial to the major object of securing Swedish belligerency on our side. The stoppage of the Narvik supplies alone would appear to be a doubtful gain, of limited magnitude and short duration, unless it helped towards the stoppage of supplies from Lulea later in the year.

The most hopeful approach towards the possibility of securing Swedish belligerency on our side appeared to be by giving every encouragement to Sweden to assist Finland in her defence against the U.S.S.R. - a path which she appeared to be not unwilling to take.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that on this line of reasoning nothing in fact would be done.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the best we could hope for was that the Narvik project would not affect the Lulea plan.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that it was possible that the putting into effect of the Narvik plan might actually assist the Lulea plan. It would create a new situation in Scandinavia which might lead Sweden in the right direction.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said that in the present circumstances neutrals were impressed chiefly by a show of strength.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that at their meeting on the following day the War Cabinet would learn the upshot of the discussion that afternoon between the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and M. Wallenberg. It should then, he hoped, be possible for the War Cabinet to reach a final decision.

The War Cabinet agreed:

To continue their discussion of the question of Scandinavia at their meeting to be held on Friday, 12th January, 1940.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
11th January, 1940.
W.M. (40) 10th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 1.

CONFIDENTIAL ANNEX.

The War Cabinet had before them the following papers:

(a) A Memorandum prepared in the War Office relating to the arrangements for the despatch of forces to Norwegian ports (W.P. (40) 13).

(b) A Report by the Chiefs of Staff expressing the opinion that the chances of a successful seizure of the mines in northern Sweden and/or the port of Lulea by German parachute troops were so slight as to be negligible (W.P. (40) 15).

THE PRIME MINISTER referred briefly to the two Papers before the War Cabinet, and invited the Foreign Secretary to give an account of the talk which he had had with M. Wallenberg the previous day.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS gave an account of the discussion, at which Mr. Cross had been present. He (the Foreign Secretary) had started by outlining our case for action. He had asked M. Wallenberg if he could explain the reasons for the rather surprising attitude adopted by the Swedish Government. It was clear from M. Wallenberg's reply that his Government were concerned with the following points:

First, the Swedes thought that the prospects of German reaction against Sweden were likely to cause them extreme difficulty. They thought that the Germans would proceed further with the campaign against Swedish trade, and would take action within Swedish territorial waters, and that this would lead to very dangerous consequences.
The Foreign Secretary had replied that he did not see how it would be in Germany's interest to pick a quarrel with Sweden and risk losing all the Swedish ore. This reply, however, had only partially reassured M. Wallenberg.

Secondly, M. Wallenberg thought that if these disturbing results followed British action in Norwegian territorial waters, the effect on Swedish opinion would be profound. At the present moment Swedish opinion was overwhelmingly pro-Ally; say 80 or 90 per cent. Swedish public opinion was, however, quite ignorant as to the German violation of Norwegian territorial waters, and he did not think that the three cases which we had cited (two of which were challenged by Norway), would be regarded as adequate justification for our proposed action. Swedish public opinion would be more influenced by the Norwegian view than by our view of the case, and would blame us for all the consequences that ensued. Such a result would be seriously damaging to the Allied cause - a consequence which he, who was strongly pro-British, would greatly deplore.

The third point made by M. Wallenberg was that Sweden had given, and was giving, a great deal of material help to Finland - in some cases up to 20 or 30 per cent. of her own equipment. From the point of view both of Sweden herself and of Finland, it was vital that Sweden's re-armament should not be interrupted. At the present time Germany was replacing in Sweden the arms which Sweden was supplying to Finland. He doubted whether this country would be in a position to do much in the immediate future in the way of supplying arms to Sweden.

If the re-armament of Sweden by Germany was made impossible by outside action, Sweden's ability to help Finland might be gravely affected, if not destroyed, and public opinion in Sweden would feel that Sweden had been stabbed in the back in their struggle against Russia.
M. Wallenberg had emphasised that the effort now being made by Finland (and Sweden) against Russia was in the interests of the Allies. If Russia could be held back, there was always a possibility that serious internal trouble would start, which would be helpful to both countries.

All that we should gain by the action was likely to result in all these unfortunate consequences was the stoppage of the import to Germany of ½ million or a million tons of ore. The Swedish Government felt that the disadvantages altogether outweighed the advantages likely to be secured.

M. Wallenberg had added that one element which would help to swing public opinion against us would be the feeling that we were searching for a pretext for stopping the ore. To this the Foreign Secretary said that he had replied that we certainly did want to stop the ore, but that in our view the pretext was a substantial one.

Incidentally M. Wallenberg had explained what the Swedish Trade Delegates had meant when they said they assumed that we should "look after Narvik". They had thought it impossible for ships to move the whole way along the coast without leaving territorial waters and thus giving us a chance to intercept them. Unfortunately this was not the case.

The Foreign Secretary had then asked M. Wallenberg whether he had any suggestion to make to deal with the situation. He had told M. Wallenberg that we had two objects: first, to damage Germany as much as possible; and, secondly, to help Sweden and Finland against Russia.

M. Wallenberg had argued that these two objects conflicted. The Foreign Secretary had asked whether this could be assumed to be so. In this connection he
had emphasised the significance of the Germany Military Mission to Moscow, and he had reminded M. Wallenberg of our diplomatic démarche, when we had offered help to Sweden if she was involved in trouble as the result of giving help to Finland. In the Spring the Russians might again be threatening to advance through Finland. For that reason, or for some other reason, the Germans might feel that they must take action to make certain of obtaining control over the northern ironfield. This might happen irrespective of any action which we took at the present time in regard to the Narvik traffic. Would it not be wise that Sweden should examine these ultimate issues in consultation with this country?

M. Wallenberg had not expressed much surprise at this statement, but had asked whether in fact we could do much to help Sweden in this event. To this the Foreign Secretary had replied that he thought we should be prepared to help, but that obviously help, to be fully effective, must be concerted in advance.

M. Wallenberg had then said that he had no authority to speak on this subject, and he did not know whether his Government had considered it. But his general reaction to the suggestion was by no means bad.

M. Wallenberg had then pressed for favourable consideration of various Swedish requests for the supply of military equipment for the Swedish forces on which he had been referred to the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence and the Service Ministers. He had made no offer in regard to the reduction of supplies of ore through the Baltic.

Later in the evening, M. Wallenberg had returned to the Foreign Office and had said that he doubted whether any record of his conversation with the Foreign Secretary could show how depressed he and the Swedish Government felt at this turn of events. Some time ago they had expected some such action on our part; but the whole situation was now changed by the Finnish war, and he looked upon it with a very different eye.
Continuing, the Foreign Secretary expressed the hope that the War Cabinet would now be able to take a definite decision on the whole question. Up till now he had felt that it was possible to deal with the Narvik project in isolation. But the real question was the possibility of carrying through the larger project. For this the co-operation of the Scandinavian countries, and in particular of Sweden, was essential. The pros and cons of taking action against the Narvik traffic were very finely balanced, and although he himself had felt grave doubts as to the wisdom of such action he had not felt the objections were sufficiently strong to set against the general opinion of the War Cabinet. His conversation with M. Wallenberg, however, had definitely weighted the balance of his judgment against the Narvik project. The new factors were, first, the probability of an adverse effect on Swedish public opinion, second, the possible effect on Sweden's capacity to give support to Finland, and third, the apparent probability that we might be able to open negotiations with Sweden and bring her round to our side without taking forcible measures. Bearing these factors in mind he felt that the Narvik project by itself was not worth the risk involved to the success of the larger project. The decision with which we were faced was a very difficult one, but the penalties for a mistake would be very much heavier if we had stopped the Narvik traffic than if we refrained, since in the latter case we at least should not have prejudiced the chance of success in the larger project.
An alternative course which he would wish to re-examine
The course which we now favoured was to send the Lord Privy Seal, or some other Minister, to Sweden to explore the possibilities of bringing the Swedes round to our side. We could keep the threat of action against the Narvik traffic in reserve to strengthen our hands against the Swedes, but our main objective of stopping all the ore going to Germany was so important that in his opinion we should be extremely careful before we took a hasty step which might prove a false one.

At the request of the Prime Minister the Chief of the Air Staff gave the views of the Chiefs of Staff. He said that they wished to emphasise four points, and they fully realised that to a large extent political considerations rather than military were at issue. These four points were:

(i) If there was any chance that action against the Narvik traffic would prejudice the success of the bigger project, they doubted the value of the Narvik project from the military point of view. They were disposed to think that the action proposed might militate against the chances of the big project, though this was, of course, primarily a political question.

(ii) The active co-operation of Norway and Sweden was essential for the success of the larger project.

(iii) There was a possibility that action against the Narvik traffic would so alarm the Germans that they would sabotage the Narvik-Galivare railway. Sabotage of this railway would be possible for the Germans if they were really determined to carry it out. The line ran through lonely country, and it was impossible to guard it everywhere. Once the railway was cut we could not send a force to the Galivare fields.

(iv) Action in Scandinavia might develop into a very large commitment, and would in any event involve the diversion of forces from France, which for us was the decisive front.

Generally speaking, the Chiefs of Staff felt some apprehension at the prospect of forcible action against the Narvik traffic.
THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that he had discussed the matter with General Gamelin during his recent visit. General Gamelin had agreed that the invasion of Scandinavia would represent a big project for Germany and would constitute a big commitment for them. He had also agreed that on general grounds a campaign in Scandinavia would be a better diversion from our point of view than in the Balkans. On the other hand General Gamelin had insisted that the Western Front must be secure, and had urged that we should not in any way reduce the number of the forces which we sent to France. He had, however, accepted the argument that if we despatched forces to Scandinavia this could only be done at the cost of delaying the despatch of additional forces to France.

General Gamelin had been in favour of putting a force into the northern ironfield, and was preparing Alpine troops for the purpose. He also thought that, if we sent forces to Northern Sweden we should be called upon to send help to meet the contingency of a German invasion of the southern part of the country.

Continuing, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that his own personal opinion was that a diversion in Scandinavia would be sound strategically, and would probably rule out the possibility of offensives elsewhere on any scale by either the Germans or the Russians.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that discussion of this subject had now been proceeding for six weeks and every argument had been brought forward in favour of doing nothing toward the stoppage of
Also, it is important to note that...

Please provide the full text for a more accurate transcription.
the Narvik traffic. He saw no reason at all why the Swedes should ever willingly allow us to go through with the big project. If we held our hand now, they would realise that they had only to protest and we should draw back once again. It was not right that we should bear the whole burden of fighting the Germans on behalf of the small neutral countries while they did nothing to help us. We should brace ourselves to accept the hazards of action, otherwise Germany would go on getting her ore indefinitely without interruption.

He was not impatient for action merely for action's sake, but ever since the beginning of the war we had let the initiative rest with Germany. We waited for her to develop each form of attack against us, and contented ourselves merely with devising means of meeting these attacks as they arose. If, however, we opened up a new theatre of operations in Scandinavia, we had a fine chance of forcing Germany into situations which she had not foreseen, and of seizing the initiative for ourselves.

THE PRIME MINISTER read to the War Cabinet a telegram which he had just received from the Prime Minister of Australia.

Mr. Menzies earnestly requested, in view of the possible repercussions of any decision to take action in Norwegian territorial waters, that such a decision should not be taken until the Dominions had had an opportunity to express their views. He asked that he should be fully informed of the arguments in favour of and against the proposed action, and that he should be given a summary of the Chiefs of Staff's appreciation of the assistance that
could be rendered to the Scandinavian countries in the event of the proposed action leading to an attack on them by Germany. He concluded by expressing the opinion that the suggested action would have a bad effect in neutral countries and would present arguments to Germany which she would not otherwise have.

Continuing, the Prime Minister said that he had from the beginning been very attracted by the prospect of action against the Narvik traffic, and he had not been unduly disturbed by the probable reactions of Norway except in respect of two points:—

(i) It had been suggested that one of the results might be that the Norwegians would cut off the export of ore to us. This might well involve the shutting down of some of our own blast furnaces and a consequent reduction in our munitions production. This was a new factor which had only recently come to light.

(ii) There was a possibility that the Germans might seize bases in southern Norway, and thereby be able to intensify their naval and air attacks on our shipping in the North Sea. This had seemed a rather alarming prospect, but he had been reassured by the Chiefs of Staff's examination of the question from which it appeared that we should be able to take action to forestall the Germans.

The real test of the desirability of action against the Narvik traffic, however, must be its probable effect on the success of the bigger project. On this point he based his views on the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff that at least the passive goodwill of Norway and Sweden was essential, and in particular that of Sweden. It must be recognised that the case on which we should base any action against the Narvik traffic was rather thin. It rested on the sinking of three ships in Norwegian
territorial waters, and two of these cases were contested by Norway. It would be hard, therefore, to show that we were not using this action by Germany as a mere pretext for our own action. But even this consideration was not overwhelming, since it was highly probable that the opinion of the neutral countries as a whole would be determined primarily by the attitude of Sweden. The Swedish attitude was therefore the key to the problem.

He had hoped that M. Wallenberg would bring with him suggestions for action of some sort to restrict the export of ore to Germany, but unfortunately this hope had not been fulfilled. M. Wallenberg had, on the other hand, made it perfectly clear that our proposed action at Narvik would be most distasteful to Sweden for fear of the possible reactions of Germany. So far we had always thought that in the worst case Germany would invade Sweden, but was it not perhaps more likely that she would make an immediate approach to Sweden somewhat on the following lines:

"You are faced with the prospect of military action by a powerful nation with no regard for neutral countries. Great Britain intends to use a very flimsy pretext to seize the orefields, which are of vital importance to us, and we shall have to take steps to prevent this. We would far rather do this with your permission and consent. Let us therefore send a German force to the minefields. This protection of your resources would be effective against Great Britain, but it would be equally effective against Russia, who must remain a danger to your security."

Suppose the Swedes accepted such an offer. They might say, with some justification, that we had forced them to do so. We should then have lost our whole chance of carrying through the big project.
successfully. He was much alarmed at this possibility of our throwing Sweden into the arms of Germany by taking precipitate action now.

It was certainly very trying to wait in apparent inaction, but we had to be sure that any risk that we took would bring us a corresponding return. With these considerations in mind he was not in favour of doing anything now about the Narvik traffic, but on the other hand he was equally not in favour of doing nothing at all. In view of what M. Wallenberg had said, it seemed that the present would be a very good moment to open negotiations with Sweden on a high level, say, through the Lord Privy Seal. His conversations with the Swedish Government might well open the way to securing their active co-operation. With a friendly country on the shores of the Baltic, wide possibilities of offensive action against the enemy would be opened up. In offering to send a Mission to Sweden we should not give the impression that we had abandoned all idea of stopping the Narvik traffic, but we should merely point out that in view of the vital importance of the iron ore question, we were proposing to send a member of the War Cabinet to discuss the whole matter with them. We could not, of course, be sure that this move would be successful, but it seemed to offer a very good prospect of success. On the other hand one false step now would wreck our whole chance of success in the bigger project. In any case, in view of the telegram from Mr. Menzies it would be out of the question to take any immediate action against the Narvik traffic.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR suggested that whoever went to Sweden would have to be in a position to take a very stiff line with the Swedish Government. The matter was one of the greatest urgency to us since the big project seemed to be our only chance of ending the war quickly.

THE PRIME MINISTER observed that it would be much easier to take a strong line in personal conversations than in any exchange of diplomatic documents.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS warned the War Cabinet that M. Wallenberg was not a member of the Swedish Government, and it could not therefore be guaranteed that his rather favourable reaction to the suggestion of possible collaboration between the Allies and Sweden would be echoed by the Swedish Government. It might, however, be an indication of the way their minds were working. We must expect that when we proposed the despatch of a Mission to Sweden they would express considerable alarm at the suggestion, and we might have to use the threat of action against the Narvik traffic as a lever to secure their consent. Assistance to Finland could perhaps be used as a cover for the despatch of the Mission. Nevertheless, he would not be at all surprised if von Ribbentrop arrived in Stockholm on the heels of the Minister sent from this country.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY urged that it would be quite apparent to the Germans that the Mission from this country was being sent to discuss the possibility of stopping the export of ore. It would surely be better to take naval action first and then to send our Mission, nominally on the pretext dealing with the protests which would certainly follow. To send a Mission before we did anything at all would be merely to advertise our interest in the iron ore and to direct German attention to it. The Swedes would be thereby emboldened to continue their protests.
said that he had kept the Dominion High Commissioners in touch with the progress of the War Cabinet's deliberations on the whole question. They had not yet received definite instructions from their Governments, but their personal reactions might be summarised as follows:

There is every justification for taking effective measures to deny ore to Germany if it is clear that this can be effectively carried out and that the stoppage will achieve an early termination of the war. Germany would naturally do her best to safeguard her ore supplies. If she thought that our action would stop at the Narvik traffic, she might not react strongly, but if she thought that this was only a preliminary to action against the Northern ore fields she might invade Southern Sweden with a view to their protection. Before therefore, we took any action against the Narvik traffic, we should be quite certain that if Germany did invade Sweden, we could take adequate counter-measures to prevent Sweden from being overrun. Apparently, however, we can do nothing till the Spring, whereas Germany can at least obtain the foothold in Southern Sweden immediately, which would give her a base for further operations later in the year.

It was clear that the co-operation of Sweden was essential for our success and this could best be obtained by playing upon the natural desire of Sweden to help Finland. It was of paramount importance to maintain Finnish resistance to Russia and the only base through which assistance could be provided was Sweden. If we forced Sweden prematurely into hostilities with Germany, we should lose this base.

A further consideration was the possibility of Norway defending the neutrality of her Territorial Waters against us by force. Should we give way before Norwegian opposition or should we take extreme measures against her warships? If we did the latter we should have to face great resentment in all neutral countries throughout the world, and in particular in Sweden.
In short there was a grave risk of action against the Narvik traffic alienating Sweden, which would be a major misfortune. The result on Germany of stopping the Narvik traffic alone would not justify taking this risk.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that before deciding to give up the idea of stopping the Narvik traffic he would like to be assured by the Chiefs of Staff that we could in fact carry out successfully the task of seizing the Northern mine fields.

The co-operation of Norway and Sweden was essential to us if we were to lend support to Finland. If there was a continuous flow of assistance to Finland through these countries they would be brought into the war atmosphere and there seemed every prospect that public opinion of Scandinavia would be won over to co-operating with the Allies. The threat of a German invasion of Sweden would also help to turn opinion in Sweden in our favour. The Swedes knew perfectly well that the Germans were in fact making preparations for an overseas expedition.

THE PRIME MINISTER agreed that assistance to Finland would be one of the best ways of bringing Sweden's opinion over to our side. He did not greatly fear the result of the Germans sending Ribbentrop to Stockholm to bid against us. It was clear that the weight of public opinion in Sweden was already in favour of the Allies.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY pointed out that we should be asking the Swedes to fight for us, whereas the Germans would only be pressing them to remain neutral. The Swedish Government was therefore more likely to listen to Germany than to us. Moreover, it was significant that Germany was supplying Sweden with
munitions to replace those which were being sent to Finland. Sweden would be very loth to have this supply cut off.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said that he had always hoped that it would be possible to stop the Narvik traffic, and he felt that the Scandinavian people would be tremendously impressed by the effect of strong action. He had been surprised to find that M. Wallenberg had made no proposals for co-operating with us in reducing supplies to Germany. Before any Minister was sent to Sweden he thought we ought to make up our minds:

(a) not to withdraw the threat of action against the Narvik traffic,

(b) to be prepared, if necessary, to put this threat into effect, and

(c) how far we were prepared to go if Sweden refused to co-operate at all. For example, were we prepared in the last resort to go into Sweden and seize the Northern mine fields by force?

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER expressed his disappointment that a project, which at first sight had seemed to provide such a promising opportunity for breaking the chain of inaction, had been shown on examination to be fraught with such grave disadvantages. He had always felt sure that the Swedes would react most unfavourably when we told them that we proposed to carry out the Narvik project. The real point, of course, was to estimate the Swedish reactions after we had carried out the project. He asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he felt able to put forward any views on this point.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS thought that Swedish action would ultimately depend upon Russia's progress against Finland. If the threat from Russia became intensified, no doubt Sweden would be very ready to ask for our aid. Public opinion would be behind any such call. But it would be a very different matter if we took action when public opinion was running strongly against us. In his view on the larger project success would be with Swedish co-operation.

"THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO thought that the War Cabinet had always anticipated a severe reaction from Norway and Sweden when we informed them of our intentions. He himself had discounted this beforehand. He had thought, however, that such reactions would be short-lived as, even after carrying out the Narvik project, we should be co-operating with both countries in the defence of Sweden, which would bring us together. The Swedish Memorandum was no stronger than he had anticipated. He did not see the smallest prospect of Sweden being willing to discuss the larger project at present. They were much too apprehensive of Germany. As long as the Finnish front held, the Swedes would make no move in our direction. If the Lord Privy Seal went to Sweden, he would have an extremely difficult task. He would have to be in a position to reassure the Swedes that the Allies could give them sufficient help, in the event of a collapse of the Finnish front, to resist attack both by Russia and Germany."

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL felt that a very great strain would be placed upon Finnish resistance in May.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY had no doubt in his mind how Sweden would react to the suggestion of our sending a member of the War Cabinet to discuss matters. The Scandinavian countries were dominated by fear, and when they saw that we had dropped our project as a result of their protests, they would resist the suggested visit with redoubled vigour.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR thought that we should still hold out the threat of the Narvik operation and should continue by all means in our power to urge the Swedes towards a more accommodating attitude.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that he had seen a great deal of M. Wallenberg in the course of recent trade discussions. M. Wallenberg was strongly pro-British and in favour of Sweden's eventual active intervention on the side of the Allies, but he was conscious of her great military weakness. In his (the Secretary of State for War's) opinion, the best course would be to wait on the development of the Russo-Finnish war and meanwhile to impress Sweden with the help which the Allies could give her. He doubted the advisability of sending a Mission to Sweden at the present moment, and suggested that a less obvious line of communication should be used.

THE PRIME MINISTER felt that our point of view could be put to the Swedes with much more force by a Mission than through the diplomatic representation, and he thought that the possibility of a Minister going to Sweden should be fully explored.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY pointed out that a flotilla could be sent in the teeth of a protest, but not a Mission. He was, however, prepared to accept the views which had been expressed by his colleagues. He had, himself, been strongly in favour of carrying out the Narvik project, but in view of the opinions which had been expressed by his colleagues and of the evident necessity to carry the Dominions with us in any decision, he did not propose to pursue the matter further. He wished, however, to emphasise one point. Up to the present he had felt that time was on our side, but he was not sure that this would continue to be so. We had hoped that our Air Force would gradually overhaul that of Germany; but was it certain that after six months of war we should, in fact, have improved our position in this respect?

THE PRIME MINISTER pointed out that the French air strength must be taken into account with our own.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that so many factors were involved that he would like time to consider his reply.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY emphasised that Germany's central position enabled her to deliver threats in several directions. We might well have a much graver situation ahead of us and we must redouble our efforts to guard against it.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that he agreed with the warning tone of the First Lord’s remarks. He suggested that the Chiefs of Staff should examine the possibility of capturing the ore fields in the face of Norwegian and Swedish opposition.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS observed that whatever the Chiefs of Staff might say as to the practicability of such operations, on military grounds, he personally was unable to contemplate war with Norway to capture Narvik.

Continuing, he suggested that he and the Lord Privy Seal should discuss the question of sending a Mission to Sweden and report to the War Cabinet.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY suggested that if we could impress on the Swedes our ability to capture the fields, they might be prepared to sabotage the mines themselves, or to let us sabotage them. This would have the desired effect as far as we were concerned.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL suggested that as the first step we might suggest buying the mines.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR thought that the Swedes would be too much afraid of Germany’s reactions to agree to sell the mines.

The War Cabinet –

(1) Decided that no action should be taken for the time being to stop the traffic between Germany and Narvik by sending a Flotilla into Norwegian territorial waters:

In reaching this decision the War Cabinet were impressed by the risk that action at the present juncture in stopping the Narvik traffic in Norwegian territorial waters might imperil the success of the larger project, i.e., the complete stoppage of supplies to Germany from the Northern orefields:

- 19 -
(ii) Agreed that no indication should be given to the Norwegian and Swedish Governments of the decision reached under (i) above, and that these Governments should be left under the impression that we still contemplated action to stop this traffic.

(iii) Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Lord Privy Seal to consider the question of sending to Scandinavia a Mission headed by a member of the War Cabinet, and to report orally to the War Cabinet.

(iv) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to consider the possibility of capturing the Galivare orefields in the face of Norwegian and Swedish opposition. If it was thought a practicable operation, what forces would it involve?

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
12th January, 1940.
WESTERN FRONT.

Possibility of German Attack on Holland and Belgium.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 7th Conclusions, Minute 4.)

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that a telegram had been received from the Military Attache, Brussels, on the 11th January, stating that he had received information from a most reliable source as to a German plan, with details of a projected attack against Holland Belgium in which the German Army was to launch an offensive against the British and French Armies from the North Sea to the Moselle, whilst a detachment would occupy Holland. The land offensive was to be combined with an air attack, of which the plan gave circumstantial details.

The War Office had had no confirmatory information of this German plan. They considered, however, that sufficient German Divisions were present in the Aachen area to carry out an initial attack without further troop movements and with little warning. At the same time certain features of the report raised doubts as to its authenticity. The War Office had accordingly asked the Military Attache, Brussels, whether his informant was in possession of original documentary evidence, and, in particular, what were the grounds for believing that the attack would be put into execution within the next few days.
The reply from the Military Attache stated that the information was derived from an aircraft which had crashed at Hasselt in Belgium with two German Staff Officers on board. These officers were believed to have been carrying out a reconnaissance over Belgium. Papers found in the aircraft contained the alleged plan for attack on Belgium - papers which the German Staff Officers had endeavoured, but had failed to destroy, and which were now in the possession of the Belgian Staff. The Belgians asked that the strictest secrecy should be observed. Meanwhile, it was stated that the German Embassy in Brussels was in a state of panic.

The Secretary of State for War explained that he was conveying this report to the Cabinet because it was of a much more definite character than many of the reports which had lately been received of German intentions against the Low Countries.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that the plan described was feasible but was not an operation which he himself would favour. Colour was lent to it by the fact that if Hitler had been feeling the psychological need for taking action, the present frozen state of the Low Countries provided him with the opportunity which the mud had hitherto denied him. Whilst, therefore, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff considered than an
attack across the flat country might be possible, he was convinced that the frozen state of the mountain roads in the Ardennes precluded the possibility of a successful attack being launched through Luxemburg. The necessary warning had been sent to Lord Gort, and General Gamelin had also been informed. Our plans for meeting such an attack, in co-operation with the French, had all been worked out and were ready to be put into operation immediately the need arose. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff gave the War Cabinet a brief outline of these plans, and said that he had discussed them very carefully on many occasions with the British and French Commander-in-Chief; and that he had done so again during the visit to France from which he had just returned.

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO confirmed that the demolition plans, for which he had been responsible for drawing up, were likewise ready to be put into immediate operation.

Reference was made to the fact that the King of the Belgians had sent a message of an urgent character to Sir Roger Keyes, asking to see him, and that it had been arranged that Sir Roger should arrive in Brussels that afternoon.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
13th January, 1940.
SECRET

W.M. (40) 12th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 1.

Confidential Annex.

WESTERN FRONT.

Possible German attack on Holland and Belgium.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 11th Conclusions, Minute 5.)

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE explained that the Cabinet had been called to discuss later reports from Belgium (Telegrams Nos. 7 and 9 from Brussels). According to these telegrams, the Belgian Government anticipated an attack by the German Army in the near future, and in that contingency looked to us and the French for support.

The Minister said that he had had some talk on the telephone with the Prime Minister, who had agreed that a telegram should be sent to our Ambassador in Brussels emphasising the importance of starting Staff Conversations at the first opportunity. This had been done.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that Sir Roger Keyes, after seeing the King of the Belgians in Brussels, had motored to G.H.Q., from where he had telephoned to the First Lord a message from the King of the Belgians. This message asked whether the British Government would agree to the following conditions:

1. No opening of negotiations for peace without participation by Belgium.
2. Guarantees for the complete restoration of Belgium's political and territorial status and also of her colonies.
3. Help for the economic and financial restoration of Belgium.
If these conditions were agreed to, Sir Roger thought that the King of the Belgians would be able to persuade his Minister to invite French and British troops into Belgium at once.

The First Lord of the Admiralty added that he had discussed the foregoing message on the telephone with the Prime Minister who had strongly disliked the suggestion that the Belgians should, at this late hour, attach conditions to receiving help from us. In the Prime Minister's view, this was not the time for giving guarantees other than those implicit in a military alliance. He (the First Lord) had instructed Sir Roger Keyes to take this line with King Leopold, while at the same time expressing to him our very great sympathy with Belgium in this time of great anxiety, and saying that the most useful step would be to establish immediate Staff conversations. He had also told Sir Roger to emphasise that any idea that the French would wish to retain any part of Belgian soil at the end of the war - an idea which appeared to be current in certain Belgian circles - was fantastic.

Sir Roger Keyes had asked what advice should be given to King Leopold as regards publishing documentary evidence of the impending German attack.

The First Lord had pointed out that the question of publication was a matter for the Belgians, but that the timing of the publication might be a matter of very great importance. According to King Leopold, the Germans did not know how much information of their plans was in the possession of the Belgians.
The War Cabinet were informed that Sir Roger Keyes was now on his way back to Brussels where he was due to arrive shortly before 3.0 p.m.

Information had also been received that the Belgians were engaged in removing the barriers between Belgium and France.

The Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the War Cabinet of the despatch of a telegram to Brussels, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

The Secretary of State for War said that the point which struck him most forcibly in the Belgian approach was that in return for certain guarantees, which appeared to him more or less implicit in an alliance, the Belgians might be prepared to invite the Allied Armies to enter their country, before an invasion had taken place. He thought that this would be to our very great military advantage. If the Germans attacked and we were successful in reaching the Warve-Namur Line, we should surely consider this an immense victory.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff most strongly agreed. No doubt the Germans would attack as soon as they knew that we had gone into Belgium, but with even a few hours's start, we ought to be able to reach the Warve-Namur Line first.

Discussion then took place whether the instructions given to Sir Roger Keyes ought to be such as to give the Belgians every encouragement to issue an invitation which would be so very much to our military advantage. This was clearly a matter on which the Prime Minister should be consulted.
The discussion then turned on whether the French Government should be consulted at this stage. It was suggested that they might have strong views on the question of advancing into Belgium before a German invasion, and thus precipitating great battles on the Western front.

It was generally felt that two parallel communications should be made to the French:

(a) By the Foreign Office, to inform M. Daladier of the questions asked by the King of the Belgians through Sir Roger Keyes, and to discover his attitude towards this proposal.

(b) By the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to General Gamelin, to enquire at what notice the Allied Army could start its forward move in the event of a request from the Belgians to enter their country.

At the request of the War Cabinet the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence telephoned to the Prime Minister, and obtained his permission for the making of these communications to the French forthwith.

A further discussion then took place on the military implications of acceding to a request by the Belgian Government to enter Belgium in advance of a German invasion.

On the one hand, it was pointed out that, if the line Namur–Antwerp could be made good, we should secure the following military advantages:

(a) The allied line would be shortened very considerably.
(b) On account of this shortening of the line, and as a result of a junction with the Belgian Army, our effective strength on the Western front would be increased by anything up to 40 Divisions.

(c) The resistance of the Belgian Army would be greatly strengthened by our presence.

(d) We should secure the aerodromes required for the operation of the Royal Air Force, and deny them to the Germans.

On the other hand, an advance into Belgium would only be advisable provided it could be started sufficiently early to ensure that the Allied Army could establish itself on a prepared line, before being subjected to overwhelming air attack. The Germans would probably start their advance in the morning, and the Allied Army should therefore, if possible, move during the previous night. It was for this reason that it was most important to discover from General Gamelin the degree of readiness maintained by the Armies for their advance, and how soon after the order was given the troops could be in motion.

The effect of the prevailing fog was referred to, and it was argued that the Germans would not begin their invasion until the weather was clear, as otherwise they would lose the advantage of their air superiority. Moreover, the Allied Armies would be able to utilise the day as well as the night for their advance.
Enquiry was made as to whether any communication had been held with the Dutch Government, and the War Cabinet were informed that, so far, no messages had been received, and no Staff contacts had been made.

Consideration was given to the question of whether an approach should now be made to the Belgian Government, as a first stage towards setting in motion the plans, prepared under the direction of the Minister without Portfolio, for preventing valuable assets in Belgium falling into the hands of the Germans.

It was decided to defer this question until the next meeting.

The War Cabinet:-

(1) Invited the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to arrange for a message to be sent to Brussels, instructing Sir Roger Keyes to inform the King of the Belgians that he (Sir Roger) was not yet in a position to answer the questions which the King had asked, which were still under consideration. Sir Roger should be informed that there was the possibility that the instructions conveyed to him by the First Lord of the Admiralty on the telephone earlier that morning would be modified.

(2) To invite the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform the French Government immediately of the questions put by the King of the Belgians to Sir Roger Keyes, and of the possibility that the Belgian Government might invite the French and British Armies to advance into Belgium before it was invaded by Germany; and to discover the attitude of the French Government towards this proposal.

(3) To invite the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to enquire of General Gamelin at what notice the French and British Armies would be ready to start their forward move through Belgium in the event of a request from the Belgians to enter their country.

(4) Decided to meet again that afternoon when the reactions of the French Government had been ascertained.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1,
14th January, 1940.
Sir L. Oliphant,
BRUSSELS.

Your telegram No. 9.

With regard to para. 3, you should at once inform Belgian Government that H.M.G. are determined to fulfil the undertakings of assistance given to the Belgian Government.

2. In view of situation now disclosed, it is vitally necessary that tripartite Staff conversations should immediately take place.

3. You should try to secure that your French colleague acts with you, provided that does not entail delay. I am communicating with French Government.

4. We presume Belgian Government are in touch with Netherlands Government whom we have not yet approached.
WESTERN FRONT.

Possible German attack on Holland and Belgium.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 12th Conclusions, Minute 1).

THE PRIME MINISTER informed the War Cabinet of the events which had taken place since their meeting that morning.

(a) Sir Alexander Cadogan had visited the French Embassy, and had communicated to the French Ambassador the message received from King Leopold through Sir Roger Keyes. He had told him that a temporizing reply had been sent through the same channel, and invited him to inform M. Daladier immediately of what had occurred, and to ask for his reactions as early as possible. A reply from the French Government had been received, which was as follows:

(i) they agreed that we could give the assurances asked for, and

(ii) that if King Leopold would invite our armies to enter Belgium, that would be of great military advantage. But in order to have the full benefit of that advantage, we must be ready to move immediately the King issued his invitation.

Pending a decision by His Majesty's Government, the French Government, who had received no suggestion from Brussels about these assurances, or the invitation to enter Belgium, would make no move.
(b) As mentioned above, a message had been sent to Sir Roger Keyes asking him to tell King Leopold that the matter was under consideration, and that a reply would be sent as soon as possible.

(c) A telegram had been received from The Hague (No. 8 of 14th January, 1940), the gist of which was as follows:

The Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, in an interview with Sir N. Bland, said that, although he thought something might be brewing, he had nothing to show what it was. Such indications as were available pointed rather to next Wednesday than to to-day. Certain extra defensive precautions were being taken in Holland.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs was outwardly completely calm, and thought that the invasion of Holland would be an act of such folly that even the Germans would hesitate to embark upon it. From the military point of view, he thought that the present moment was particularly unfavourable, as the break-up of thick ice on the rivers made pontoon building impossible.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that he had been unable to speak to General Gamelin on the telephone, but had spoken to Lord Gort and General Howard Vyse.

The Allied troops were at four hours' notice, i.e. their advance could start four hours after the receipt of the order.

The French agreed as to the advantages to be gained from getting a start over the Germans. They proposed to move by night, or in fog, to avoid the danger of heavy air attack on marching columns.

In reply to the Prime Minister, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that he had asked General Gamelin by telegram whether he thought that the advantage
to be gained by reaching the forward line in Belgium at the invitation of the Belgians outweighed the disadvantages of precipitating a great battle, which might otherwise be altogether avoided. No answer had yet been received to this question. There was no doubt, however, in the minds of either the French or ourselves as to the great advantages to be gained by fighting on the line Namur-Antwerp.

Some discussion ensued as to the method by which the advance would be carried out, and the relative advantages of securing the forward line, or of remaining in the present position, and thus avoiding the risk of an encounter battle.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that the forward motorised troops of the Allied Armies could reach the line Namur-Antwerp in about six hours. The occupation of this line should be complete in forty-eight hours. Twelve hours start over the Germans should allow us to be in sufficient strength on the line to be certain of holding it.

The Germans would of course find out immediately that a move had started, but they might have difficulty in arranging for their own attack to start earlier than it had been planned.

Discussion then turned on whether the Belgian Government would be induced to invite Allied troops into Belgium by guarantees of the kind asked for by the King.

THE PRIME MINISTER expressed the view, with which there was general agreement, that nothing short of dire peril would convince the Belgian Government of the wisdom of inviting us into their country; and even then they would only do so if they were quite certain that a German attack was about to take place.
The Prime Minister then read to the War Cabinet the draft of the reply which he proposed to send to the King of the Belgians through Sir Roger Keyes.

In discussion of the terms of the draft, the following points were made:

(a) It should be made clear in the reply that the French shared in any guarantees or assurances given.

(b) It should be emphasised that the stipulations made by the King of the Belgians could only be accepted provided the invitation came at once.

A number of alterations to the draft to meet these points were agreed upon. A copy of the reply in its final form is annexed to these Minutes.

It was agreed that a copy of the telegram should be sent to the French with a message to the effect that it was assumed that they would give similar assurances to the Belgians.

Discussion also took place as to the accident to the German aeroplane containing the two Staff Officers, who had had possession of the papers describing the German plan of invasion of Belgium. There was general agreement with the view that there were a number of suspicious circumstances attending the whole affair, for which a variety of explanations could be advanced.
THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO suggested that it would be undesirable to make any mention to the Belgians, at the present moment, of the demolition plans. We had been informed on the previous day by a Belgian who had come over by aeroplane, of an indirect channel of communication with the Belgian Minister of Transport through the British Military Attaché in Brussels. This might prove a suitable channel for communication on the demolition scheme at a later stage.

THE PRIME MINISTER agreed that the demolition scheme should not be mentioned for the present.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF emphasised the importance of ensuring that no action was taken to put the Belgian demolition scheme into effect once the Allies had advanced to the Wavre-Namur Line, although it might still be desirable to carry out the Dutch demolition scheme and the occupation of Walcheren.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY informed the War Cabinet that the naval arrangements in connection with the Walcheren scheme could be started at two hours' notice.

The position of Holland was referred to. It was pointed out that we had given a guarantee to Belgium, but not to Holland, and that there was almost certainly some arrangement between Holland and Belgium as the result of the meeting between Queen Wilhelmina and King Leopold. Further, in the telegram sent to Brussels that morning we had stated that we presumed that the Belgian Government were in touch with the Netherlands Government, whom we had not yet approached. It was decided to take no action in regard to Holland.
The War Cabinet:

(1) Authorised the despatch to Brussels, for communication by Sir Roger Keyes to King Leopold, of a reply to the King's questions, in the form annexed to these Minutes; and agreed that a copy should be given to the French Government.

(2) Agreed that no action should be taken for the present in regard to the scheme for preventing valuable assets in Belgium falling into the hands of the Germans.

6 Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,

14th January, 1940.
APPENDIX.

REPLY TO BE GIVEN BY SIR ROGER KEYES
TO THE KING OF THE BELGIANS.

We are ready to accept invitation to British troops to enter Belgium and understand French attitude is the same.

We are asked to give guarantees to Belgium which go further than anything we have promised to France and which we might not be in a position to carry out at the end of the war.

Subject to the above we are ready to promise as follows if such an invitation were given at once—

(1) If Belgium thereupon becomes involved with the Allies in hostilities against Germany we will not open peace negotiations without informing Belgium and we should expect them to do the same with us.

(2) We will do our utmost to maintain the political and territorial integrity of Belgium and her colonies.

(3) If after the war Belgium is in need of financial and economic assistance, we will include her in any assistance we may be able in conjunction with our Allies to render in these respects.

The King will realise that the value of the invitation will be seriously discounted from the point of view of Belgium as well as ourselves unless the invitation is given in sufficient time to enable the British and French troops to secure a strategical advantage of position before any German attack begins.
W.M. (40) 14th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 1.

Confidential Annex.

The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air on the Air Strengths of Great Britain, France and Germany (W.P.(40)7).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR dealt with the main points in his Memorandum paragraph by paragraph.

Labour problems would be the subject of a special discussion in the War Cabinet in a few days' time, and he would therefore deal with this aspect very briefly. The aircraft industry already had more people in employment than at the peak of 1916, and ten times as many as in 1936. At the same time, the War Cabinet should realise that if we were to achieve our air programme, we must very greatly increase our man-hours. The French were making proportionately greater use of women than we were in the aircraft industry. The achievement of the air programme would depend very largely on the extent to which women could be introduced into the industry. At present women could only be employed on one shift, and it was not practicable that a shift of women should be succeeded by a shift of men. It was also of great importance that key-men should be exempt from being called up for military service.
The tables in paragraph 4 of his Memorandum had been calculated on a numerical basis only, but numbers alone were not an adequate guide, since the increase in aircraft produced over the next six months would be effected at a time when many factories would be turning over to new types. Moreover, the figures did not show the gain which would result from the changeover to new types of aircraft of higher performance. Nor did they include the aircraft which we would be receiving from the United States.

The following types were all in full production at the present moment, and would continue in production over the period under review:-

Fighters - Hurricane and Spitfire.
Bombers - Wellington, Hampden, Hereford and Blenheim.
Army co-operation aircraft - Lysander.

He hoped that by March, and certainly by June, deliveries would begin of the Stirling, Manchester and Halifax Bombers, and of the Beaufighter (two-seater fighter).

Most of the Trainer aircraft for the Empire Training Scheme were being produced in this country - the remainder being made up from the U.S.A. and by local manufacture.

The Secretary of State for Air drew attention to the satisfactory figures of the monthly production of Fighters, which were 122 (actual) in December, 1939, 152 (estimated) for March 1940, and 237 (estimated) for June, 1940.
THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF explained that the estimated output of 296 Bombers in March 1940 (see paragraph 4 of W.P.(40) 7) would be made up as follows:

- Battle: 90
- Blenheim: 99
- Hampden: 45
- Hereford: 22
- Whitley: 37
- Wellington: 1
- Manchester: 1
- Stirling: 2

The estimated output of Battles in June 1940 was 37, and of Blenheims 126.

In reply to criticisms of the high output of the obsolescent Battle, he pointed out that there were still 8 squadrons of Battles in the front line in France, for which replacements would continue to be required until this type was superseded. Furthermore, the Battle would continue to be used for some time to come as the basis for the operational training of Bomber pilots.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR gave an indication of the output of aircraft in France for October–December 1939. These particulars had been given to him in the strictest confidence. French estimates of monthly output for the present quarter were:

- January: 500 all types.
- February: 500 " "
- March: 761 " "

but he was not sanguine that these figures would be achieved. At the same time the War Cabinet would be encouraged to know that the French were introducing three new types of Bombers - two Heavy and one Medium - and also a new type of Fighter.
The particulars of estimated German production given in paragraphs 7 and 8 of his Memorandum represented what was believed to be the upper limit of what Germany would be capable, and so, from our point of view, painted the worst picture. There was, as yet, no satisfactory evidence on which to assess the effect on future German production of such difficulties as they might encounter from labour, or shortage of raw materials; nor was it known whether the Germans would be changing over to the production of more modern types of higher performance. If so, the estimated output of 2,050 aircraft per month would certainly not be attained. The fact that this was an estimate on the high side was exemplified by the following figures of estimated German production during last summer:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1939</td>
<td>1,000 all types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Production dropped owing to holidays and the diversion of labour to agriculture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>700 all types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1939</td>
<td>1,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE pointed out that the deduction to be drawn from these figures was that whilst last May we had approached within 70 per cent. of German production, our production by next April (estimated at 869) would only be about 45 per cent. of German production (estimated at 2,050).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR repeated that the estimate of 2,050 aircraft a month was based on the prudent, if pessimistic, assumption that none of
the restrictions which applied to our own case would hinder German production, although obviously this would not be the case. Germany had, of course, developed a highly organised and very extensive aircraft industry. It was of interest to note that the floorspace devoted to German airframe production in September 1939 was approximately 13½ million square feet, as compared with 11½ million in this country.

Paragraph 10 showed that, provided casualties remained at the present rate until the 1st March, 1940, the personnel position — both as regards flying personnel and skilled tradesmen — would be satisfactory. No difficulty was being experienced in obtaining recruits. An integral feature of our personnel plans was the Empire Training Scheme.

Paragraph 11 showed the percentage of aircraft production — calculated on the basis of airframe man-hours — which would be devoted to the construction of Heavy Bombers of the Halifax and Manchester classes. The statement had been made previously that 70 per cent. of aircraft production had been devoted to the production of Heavy Bombers. It would be seen that the percentage to be devoted to the Halifax and Manchester classes (which included the Stirling) would not be more than some 25 per cent. All three of these types were now about to go into production, and all three had flown. The reasons for the Air Ministry policy in regard to Heavy Bombers had been set out in a paper which had been circulated some time ago. The Air Staff had reviewed all the factors which would go towards producing the most economical striking force within a given time, and had come to the conclusion that this could best be achieved by adopting the high performance type of Heavy Bomber represented by the Halifax-Manchester-Stirling class. Although this would admittedly result in reducing the actual numbers of aircraft,
this reduction would be more than compensated for by the increase of striking power which this type of Bomber would provide, by virtue of its high bomb load, long range, great speed and powerful defence. The true criterion lay not in the number of bombers which we could put in the air, but in the performance of the aircraft which went to make up our striking force. The policy was based on building up a balanced Air Force comprising, on the one hand, an adequate defensive screen of fighters and, on the other hand, a formidable Bomber Force which would be capable of inflicting damage and death in retaliation for similar attempts on this country by Germany.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said that he had no criticisms with regard to the complementary roles of Bombers and Fighters in a balanced Air Force. His doubts related to whether we were right in "plumping" for the heavy Bomber. Did we require these large aircraft for bombing the cities of Eastern Germany? Did not the experience of the War suggest that we would be better advised to develop a smaller type of Bomber, such as the Blenheim, which could be produced in greater numbers?

THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that, under modern conditions, the speed, bomb load, range and defensive armament required of a Bomber necessitated a larger machine. The heavy Bomber stood the best chance of fulfilling the true function of the Bomber, namely to reach its objective, discharge its bomb load in the face of opposition, and fight its way back under its own protection. Citing the example of the Wellington, he said that this aircraft, as originally designed, was
intended to have a speed of 250 m.p.h. but the addition of wireless equipment, improved navigational aids, and power operated gun turrets, which had been necessitated by the actual experience of war, had resulted in a material reduction of its speed. By contrast, the Manchester and Halifax classes had been designed, with full defensive armament, to fly at a speed of 320 m.p.h., with a bomb load of 8,000 pounds and a crew of six. The Blenheim with less speed would carry only 1,000 pounds of bombs, with a crew of three.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that he had been much impressed by the arguments which had been advanced in favour of the Heavy Bomber, as set out in the Air Ministry Paper on "The Ideal Bomber". Though the analogy of the battleship was not, in his opinion, in all respects a fair one, the fact remained that the battleship was still the controlling factor on the sea. The true function of the bomber should be viewed in relation to its power to reach and discharge a maximum weight of bombs on its target and to return. In this respect the Manchester and Halifax classes promised to be incomparably more economical than the medium type of bomber such as the Blenheim. Moreover, the former conception that bombing would be carried out by large numbers of small types of bombers had not been realised by our actual experience of the war so far. The question would seem to turn, therefore, less on the technical efficiency of the Heavy Bomber to fulfil its rôle than on the numbers of this type which it would be possible to produce.
THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that whilst it was quite impossible, at this stage, to give a firm forecast of what the output of Heavy Bombers might be, a tentative estimate, given under all reserve, placed the number of Manchesters, Halifaxes and Stirlings which might be produced by the end of 1940 at 250.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER suggested that one of the strongest arguments in favour of the Heavy Bomber was the probability of its being able to return after reaching its objective and so be available for further raids.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE pointed out that its ability to do this was based primarily on the assumption of its ability to overcome the Fighter. But would these larger aircraft present a more vulnerable and a more valuable target to anti-aircraft fire, and would they not lead to the development of larger Fighters to deal with them?

THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF was of the opinion that their increased speed and ceiling over those of the medium Bomber would give them relatively more protection. The possibility that the enemy would endeavour to meet them with a bigger type of Fighter could not be denied, but there was no evidence for believing that the Germans would have these ready in time.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL asked whether the size of the aerodromes would not prove a limiting factor in the development of the Heavy Bomber.
THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF agreed that this was the case. Existing aerodromes, however, would permit the operation of the Halifax and Manchester types; and calculations pointed to the fact that this was the optimum size of Heavy Bomber, beyond which performance of bigger types would begin to fall off.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that all the necessary machinery of manufacture, including jigs and tools, was ready for the production of the Halifaxes, Manchesters, and Stirlings, and that it would be a disaster to cancel orders at this stage. It was, however, proposed, after a time, to concentrate production on two types.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR amplified the figures for "Reserves and Wastage" at home for the period April to October, 1939, shown in the table in paragraph 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bombers</th>
<th>Fighters</th>
<th>G.R. Army</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Reserve&quot;</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Wastage&quot;</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Reserve and Wastage</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY asked why, if 764 bombers had been produced between April and October 1939, 480 only had been allocated to the fighting formations. At a time when our bombers were only being sent occasionally on raids, he questioned the wisdom of a policy which apparently placed two new

\[ "Rearming squadrons at home" 388, and "Formation of new squadrons and rearming of squadrons overseas" 92. \]
and modern Bombers into reserve for every one which went into the First Line. In the face of the Bomber inferiority in which we stood vis-à-vis Germany, it seemed to him imperative that we should take all the steps we could to meet the immediate situation by augmenting our First Line strength. He suggested that this could be done by devoting the aircraft which we were at present putting into reserve to the formation of the new First Line Squadrons and also Reserve Squadrons. The effect of the present policy was to produce a force which had an enormous tail and only a very small fighting head, whereas our immediate and present need was for a larger fighting force.

In the discussion which ensued, the First Lord elaborated, with further examples, his criticism that the increase in the figures of our first-line strength aircraft, as given in the Secretary of State for Air's Memorandum, did not adequately reflect the corresponding figures of aircraft production. For instance, against a declared total Metropolitan Air Force strength of 1,700 odd aircraft in April, 1939, the comparable figures on 30th September, after mobilisation, was shown to have actually strunk to 1,456, despite a total production of 2,711 aircraft during the interval. Similarly the estimated increase of 562 from 1,456 to 2,038 between the 1st October, 1939, and the 31st March, 1940, seemed a poor return for a total of 2,886 aircraft produced during that period.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that the explanation was that our Reserves had been extremely slender, and that we had been hard put to it to remedy the position and, at the same time, to rearm. The number of new squadrons already formed since the outbreak of war, or to be formed by the 1st April, 1940, was shown in
paragraph 15. The increase in first-line strength was, however, a better indication of the increase in the size of the Air Force since increases were being made in the establishment of certain existing Squadrons, and other Squadrons which were not included in the operational total at the beginning of the war would be regarded as fully operational by the end of the current Quarter.

The Deputy Chief of the Air Staff explained that it was the aim of the Air Staff to put as many new aircraft as could be made available into First-line, and, where possible, to form additional Squadrons. An explanation of the high number of aircraft in Reserve was to be found in the fact that the experience of the war had shown that it was necessary to train flying personnel to a much higher pitch of efficiency before they joined their Squadrons, than could be achieved at the Flying Training Schools. For the purposes of this higher training, Reserve aircraft had been taken and formed into what were known as "Group Pool Squadrons". Although equipped with operational types, these were training and not operational Units. The Group Pool organisation had thus been responsible for absorbing a very large proportion of the Reserve aircraft of operational types. A further use to which Reserve aircraft had been devoted was the equipping of 7 Reserve Bomber Squadrons, which had been placed behind the 33 Operational Squadrons.
The Deputy Chief of the Air Staff gave the relative Metropolitan First-Line strengths of the British, French and German (estimated) Air Forces on the 1st January, 1940, as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>British</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,745</td>
<td>1,685</td>
<td>4,330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The estimated German First-Line strength on the 1st April, 1940, was 4,972, against our own of 2,126.

The Secretary of State for Air said that his impression was that Germany had concentrated on numbers, and in doing so had sacrificed something in quality. Our policy had been to aim at producing a somewhat higher quality, and this had reacted on the numbers produced. He felt confident, however, that our policy had been right.

If a comparison were made of the Metropolitan First-Line strengths of Great Britain and Germany in October last and next April, it would be found that the proportion between the two forces had altered in our favour from 1:3 to 1:2.4. If the Fleet Air Arm were included, the figures were 1:2.6 in October last and 1:2.2 next April.

Some discussion ensued on the question of the proportion of the Aircraft industry devoted to Fleet Air Arm needs, and it was agreed that this was a matter which should be considered in the light of our present position.

The Secretary of State for Air gave the following further particulars of the figures of reserves and wastage in the Table on page 9 of his Paper:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bombers</th>
<th>Fighters</th>
<th>G.R.</th>
<th>Army Co-op</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wastage</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was proposed that certain fighter squadrons at present armed with Gladiators, Blenheims and Battles should be re-armed with Hurricanes, Spitfires and Defiants. In the bomber squadrons early Marks of Whitley and Wellington aircraft would be in process of replacement by later Marks, and a number of Herefords would be introduced into the line. Some Battle Squadrons would be replaced by Blenheims. As regards General Reconnaissance, certain Anson Squadrons would be re-armed with Hudsons, and a number of Vildebeests would be replaced by Beauforts.

After some further discussion, the War Cabinet—

(1) Took note of the Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air (W.P. (40) 7);

(2) Invited the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Lord Privy Seal to communicate to the Secretary of State for Air any further points arising out of the Paper on which they desired further information;

(3) Agreed that discussion of the points so raised should take place in the Military Co-ordination Committee, in consultation with the Lord Privy Seal.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
15th January, 1940.
WESTERN FRONT.

Possible German Attack on Holland and Belgium.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 13th Conclusions, Minute 1.)

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR informed the War Cabinet that the British Expeditionary Force was at four hours’ notice, and that the 7 mechanised regiments were ready to start at a moment’s notice if an invitation were received to enter Belgium.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that there was no fresh news of German troop movements on the Western Front. There were 44 German Divisions opposite Belgium and Luxembourg. He thought that the German Army was ready to advance at any moment from their present positions, and that we should receive little or no warning before an attack commenced. He said that he had received a telegram from General Gamelin to the effect that he had represented to M. Daladier that the concentrated dispositions taken up the previous night on the frontier would soon become known to the enemy, and could not be maintained indefinitely owing to the weather. He was evidently extremely disappointed.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS drew the attention of the War Cabinet to Telegrams Nos. 11 and 12 from Paris. According to these telegrams...
M. Daladier had sent for the Belgian Ambassador and had told him that the French forces could not be left for more than another 24 hours immediately on the French side of the frontier; they must then either enter Belgium or be withdrawn. An answer was required by 8 o’clock that evening.

The Foreign Secretary added that the French Ambassador had informed the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that, although the French had agreed with our communication to the King of the Belgians on the previous day, they had thought that we might have taken up a somewhat less reserved attitude in connection with the discussion of possible peace terms. Sir Alexander Cadogan had replied that the question whether or not the Belgians invited us to enter their country was unlikely to depend on the precise form of words used in this connection.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that he had had no further news from Sir Roger Keyes.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1,
15th January, 1940.
SECRET

W.M. (40) 15th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 7.

Confidential Annex.

WESTERN FRONT.

Possible German Attack on Netherlands and Belgium.

There was no news to report from France. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff had informed him that it would take between twenty-four to forty-eight hours for the troops to get back into the positions occupied before the emergency move, i.e. the positions occupied on Sunday, 14th January, 1940. The troops had no doubt been put to considerable hardship, more especially the mechanised units which alone had been on immediate notice.

One additional German Division had been identified opposite the German-Netherland frontier during the preceding twenty-four hours.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS read to his colleagues a telegram which had been received late the previous night from Sir Roger Keyes (No. 15 from Brussels). Sir Roger Keyes stated that the King of the Belgians understood the message sent to him to be a limited guarantee, provided only the Belgian Government agreed to the British and French Armies taking up certain strategic points at once. King Leopold had said that the guarantees for which he had asked would help him in his relations with his Government, but that the answer he had received would have a bad effect if communicated to them. The
advantage which the Allies would gain by taking up strategic positions would, in King Leopold's view, be out of all proportion to the sufferings inflicted on the Belgian people if they became involved in a war fought on Belgian soil. The Belgian Government could not be induced to enter a war while there was any hope of averting it. King Leopold had expressed his belief in the genuine character of the documents which had been captured. No doubt the documents, if published, would be repudiated, but nevertheless Germany would make tremendous capital of the fact if Belgian neutrality were violated by Great Britain and France. He thought that it was in the paramount interest of the Allies, as well as of Belgium, to leave the onus for breaking Belgian neutrality on Germany, and that the guarantees asked for were no more than those given to Belgium before the last war.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the telegram made a deplorable impression on him, since it appeared that the Belgians had never intended to invite us to cross their frontier before the Germans invaded Belgium.

It was agreed, however, that the King of the Belgians occupied a very difficult and unenviable position.

Reference was also made to Telegram No. 14, dated 15th January, from Brussels. In this telegram it was stated that, while the Belgians would not agree to official tripartite Staff talks, the King had pledged himself to ensure that all questions put to his authorities by the British and French military authorities, to secure complete military co-operation, would be fully answered. It was understood that
various particulars were ready in sealed envelopes to be handed to our Service Attaches on the outbreak of war.

The War Cabinet —

(1) Took note of the above statements:

(2) Agreed that advantage should be taken of the present occasion to press strongly for co-operation between the Belgian, British and French military authorities (even though such co-operation fell short of official Staff Conversations and invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to send a despatch to Brussels in this sense.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

16th January, 1940.

Note: For certain subsequent development in this matter, see "Confidential Notes".
THE VATICAN.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS read to his colleagues a Secret letter from Mr Osborne, our Minister to the Vatican, dated 12th January. On the previous day Mr Osborne had had an audience of His Holiness the Pope, who had said that he had received a visit from a German representative, or representatives, who claimed to be speaking for certain German Army Chiefs. Their names were said to be known, but the Pope did not give them.

The gist of this message was that a great German offensive had been prepared for the middle of February, or even earlier. This offensive would be very bitter and quite unscrupulous, but it need never be delivered. If the German Generals could be assured of a peace with Great Britain (France was not mentioned) they were prepared to replace the present German Government by a "Verhandlungsfähige Regierung" – a Government with which it was possible to negotiate – and then to reach a settlement in Eastern Europe with the British Government. This settlement would include a restoration in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and would also deal with Russia. No details, however, were given. There could, however, be no concession over the Anschluss with Austria. The Pope had said that he had not been asked to put forward the communication, but felt his conscience would not be easy unless he had sent for Mr Osborne. The latter's comment had been that the whole thing was hopelessly vague and dangerously reminiscent of the
Venice affair. While His Holiness said that he could answer for the good faith of the intermediary (who was not Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria), he could not guarantee the good faith of the principals. Still less could he guarantee that, if they effected the change of Government they spoke of, they would be any more reliable than Hitler. As to the guarantees they wanted, they had only to read the Prime Minister's or Lord Halifax's speeches. Their first step should be to effect the change of Government and then to talk of peace. With the best will in the world, His Majesty's Government could not take up such a nebulous proposition.

The Pope had not in any way demurred, or made any attempt to justify or support the communication made to Mr Osborne. On the contrary, he had been at pains to disavow any responsibility for it except for his conscience sake. He begged that the matter, on which he had not spoken to anyone else, should be regarded as absolutely secret.

Mr Osborne had promised that he would not speak of the matter to anyone in Rome, but he would report it, as a matter of great secrecy, to the Foreign Secretary. It was clear, however, that the French Government would have to be informed of the matter. The Pope said that he understood this.

The War Cabinet agreed —

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should take suitable steps to inform the French Government of the communication which had been made by His Holiness the Pope to Mr Osborne.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1,

17th January, 1940.
Discussion took place on a proposal that a Mission, headed by a Member of the War Cabinet, should proceed to Scandinavia. In this connexion the War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, covering the draft of a telegram from His Majesty The King to the King of Norway (W.P.(40) 25).

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the proposal to send a Mission to Norway and Sweden at this stage required careful examination. No decision to send a Mission should be taken until agreement had been reached on the instructions to be given to it. How far was the Mission to go in bringing pressure to bear on the Scandinavian Governments? What weapons did we intend to place in its hands? Was its armoury to include the threat of British Naval interference with the iron ore vessels passing down the Norwegian coast?

His Majesty's Minister in Oslo had reported in telegram No. 27 of 15th January that a Hamburg tanker named the WEST WALL had been allowed to operate inside Norwegian territorial waters. She was, in fact, an auxiliary cruiser of a type suitable for providing submarines with oil, ammunition and fresh crews. If these were substantiated, we had a serious grievance and we ought to bring it home to the Norwegian Government.
A Mission, if sent, should be instructed to hold very plain language with the Scandinavian Governments. Did those Governments realise that if the Allies were beaten, Germany and Russia would be in a position to divide the world between them. Were they willing to be parties to bringing about such a state of affairs? They were, in fact, contributing to such an end if they permitted their ore products to be used to keep Germany going. These supplies would become the means of sending hundreds of thousands of British and French soldiers to their death.

If it was to be an instruction to the Lord Privy Seal to inform the Scandinavian Governments that we would not for an indefinite period tolerate their supplying Germany with the means of continuing the war, The First Lord said he would gladly assent to the despatch of the Mission.

It might be pointed out to the Swedish Government that the destruction of Finland, with which their country had a close relationship, was being consummated before their eyes. Finland, however, would not be the last small neutral country to go down before the war was terminated. It was practically certain that the Scandinavian countries would, sooner or later, become involved in the struggle.

To sum up, the Mission ought to be instructed to bring the maximum amount of pressure to bear upon the two Scandinavian Governments.

THE PRIME MINISTER said he was in agreement with much, though not with all, that had been said by the First Lord of the Admiralty. In particular, he
could not bring himself to contemplate, as he thought the First Lord contemplated, the capture of the Galivare ore fields in the face of Norwegian and Swedish opposition. His reasons were as follows:—

(i) the Chiefs of Staff had reported very strongly against undertaking this military operation (W.P. (40) 24);

(ii) action of this kind on our part would have disastrous results in the Dominions;

(iii) those results would extend to the United States.

It was essential to us, for financial and other reasons, to retain the support of public opinion in the United States.

He greatly wished to obtain possession of the Galivare ore fields. Should we attain this object through the despatch of the proposed Mission? It would be difficult to think of a better head for such a Mission that the Lord Privy Seal, but he (the Prime Minister) must admit that he saw small prospect of immediate success attending the Mission's efforts.

The country we were really out to convince was Sweden. If Sweden moved in the direction which we desired, Norway would probably follow in her wake. What policy should the Lord Privy Seal pursue with the Swedish Government? In his (the Prime Minister's) view the policy should be that enunciated by the First Lord of the Admiralty, minus the threat of Naval action on our part. The Swedes must be brought to see that they had a vital interest - their future security - to preserve by adhering to our side, and that they had everything to lose by a German victory.
The Lord Privy Seal might point out to the Swedes that victory was in the balance. The central decision of the war might well be that which the Scandinavian Governments were called upon to take. If they denied their iron ore to Germany, the balance would in all probability turn in our favour. If they refused to fall in with our wishes, the balance might quite possibly turn against us.

The next point to be considered was the very vulnerable position of Sweden, and especially of Stockholm. Very careful consideration would have to be given to what the Lord Privy Seal was, in fact, to say in this connection. The best solution might probably be to give the Swedes an assurance that, if things came to the worst, we should, by such and such a date, be in a position to give them military help to such and such an extent.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that we might offer the Swedes Staff Conversations. There was no reason why these should not take place immediately. The French military authorities would probably be willing to participate.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he entirely agreed.

He thought that it was fair to say that behind the policy which Norway and Sweden, like Belgium, were now pursuing lay the question "Can this war run its course without our country being overrun?" Our answer to that question must be "Even if you are overrun, we are in a position to make it certain that you will not be finally overwhelmed".
The Mission might point out to the Swedish Government that Germany was unlikely to attack their country until she was desperate, since by doing so she would make certain that her essential supplies of iron ore would be cut off for a considerable period.

The draft telegram to the King of Norway, attached to W.P.(40) 25, proposed that the Lord Privy Seal should visit Oslo first and Stockholm afterwards. If this itinerary was to be adhered to, it would probably be necessary for the Lord Privy Seal to avoid going very deeply into the central problem during his visit to Oslo. He would no doubt say to the Norwegians that the German use of Norway's territorial waters had created a situation which was intolerable for us. A good part of the conversations, however, might be devoted to matters connected with the Anglo-Norwegian War Trade Agreement and the chartering of tankers.

He would have to spend a longer time in Stockholm in order to establish confidential relations for his task with the Swedish Government and the Swedish military authorities. The Swedes could see very little beyond the fact of a powerful Germany standing at close quarters to them. It would take time to alter this point of view. We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that the Swedes would willingly stop their iron ore trade with Germany in the next few months. They might, however, be
induced gradually to work up to that conclusion. For a start, they might cease all overtime working and might connive at certain forms of sabotage. It would be some time, however, before they took courage and came into the open.

It remained to be considered what line was to be taken with the press regarding the Mission to Scandinavia. This was a difficult question.

To sum up, the prospects of success were somewhat uncertain, but the objects at stake were so valuable that he was disposed to think we should be justified in taking the risk of despatching the Mission.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he agreed as to the aims of the proposed Mission. They would be:

(a) to lead the two Scandinavian Governments to view the problems of the war in their true perspective.

(b) to persuade them to slow down their deliveries of iron ore to Germany — this without prejudice to our long-term object of getting these deliveries completely closed down.

In proposing the Mission, we should expose ourselves to a rebuff at the hands of the Scandinavian Governments. We need not trouble about that, however, provided that we were able to set in action the educational processes of which the Prime Minister had spoken.
The arguments for and against the despatch of the Mission were, in the Foreign Secretary’s view, very nicely balanced, and he had not found it easy to arrive at a judgment. Perhaps the two considerations which had weighed with him most were the following:

(a) The Swedes would probably take their main decision in the light of facts, not of arguments. The main facts which would be present to their minds would be —

(i) the fear of Russia; and

(ii) the amount of military assistance to be expected from the United Kingdom.

(b) the probable German reactions to a slowing down of Swedish deliveries of iron ore.

However much the Swedes attempted to cover up what they were doing, the Germans would at once perceive that they were coquetting with us. The German Government might be expected to present strong demands to Sweden, with the threat of strong action in the background.

The Foreign Secretary confessed that, in the light of these considerations, he doubted whether we should be wise to send the Mission to Scandinavia at this juncture. He would not, however, resist the project if his colleagues were in favour of it.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL agreed with the Foreign Secretary that the arguments for and against the despatch of the Mission were very finely balanced. He would very gladly undertake the task if his colleagues were unanimous in wishing him to do so. Unless, however, his colleagues expressed a clear view in favour of the Mission, he would feel considerable hesitation in going to Scandinavia. Balancing all the considerations, his personal view was on the whole against the Mission at this stage.
THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER agreed that the arguments for and against the project were evenly balanced. The War Cabinet had rejected one solution. If they made no move, they must face the fact that from now until the end of the war the Germans would be free to import ore from the Galivare ore fields. He therefore favoured action to break up the present unsatisfactory situation, and a Mission to Scandinavia appeared to offer the best means of doing so.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that he was apprehensive of the publicity which must attend a Mission of this kind. Would it not be possible to exercise our pressure in some less public way?

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO had grave doubts whether any Mission could achieve the desired result without being able to give a more encouraging answer to the question "What help we should be able to give Sweden in the event of an attack by Germany and/or Russia in May?" Southern Sweden and Stockholm were within easy reach of Northern Germany, and the Russian air bases in Estonia were even nearer to the Swedish capital. He concluded that, if we were unable to offer more substantial forces than were indicated in W.P. (40) 23, a discussion would only reveal our weakness. He recalled that during the last war we had succeeded by economic pressure, in particular by restricting Sweden's supplies of coal and wheat, in reducing her exports of iron ore to Germany to 3½ million tons, while securing 2 million tons for ourselves.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR pointed out that the economic weapons at our disposal now were likely to be far less effective. What would really count, would be the help that we could give. If Finland were overrun, public opinion in Sweden would demand some active measures for her assistance, and her decision would depend on the assistance we could give them. This might seem small, but it might be more than the Swedes expected, and he thought it would be very advantageous to open up channels for informing them what was in our minds; but the discussions should at the early stages be carried on as far as possible in a private atmosphere.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that it was impossible to guarantee Sweden against the effects of air attacks, but he thought it very important to let them know what help we could give them and that we should be prepared to offer as substantial help as possible by May, when they would have to make their decision. He agreed that it would be objectionable that any publicity should be attached to our discussions on this matter.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was clear that the general feeling was against the proposed Mission under the Lord Privy Seal, but that it was not enough to take this negative decision. He feared that in May, if it seemed likely that the Russian invasion of Finland would not stop at the Swedish border, the Germans would offer the Swedes their help against Russia, and would force help on them. It might then be too late for us to intervene. If difficulties of publicity made it undesirable to send the Lord Privy Seal, someone else should explain the situation to the Scandinavians and in particular bring home to them where
their real interests lay.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL pointed out that recent telegrams suggested that our influence with the Scandinavian Government was growing weaker rather than stronger, and he could not resist the conclusion that our case was not perhaps being presented as well as possible. He referred to the great influence exercised by our Ministers in Scandinavia in the last war.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had thought at one time of suggesting that, if the Lord Privy Seal did not go, a junior Minister might be sent, but he had reached the conclusion that this alternative would represent the worst of both worlds. He agreed that we could not leave matters as they were, and he proposed that as a first step he should have a full and strong talk with the Swedish Minister in London, and then with the Norwegian Minister. The latter was of less importance, but as the two Governments were in daily consultation it was inevitable that an approach should be made to him too. He would try to get them to recognise the situation as it was, and to open up channels for consultation with their Governments as to what could be done to remedy it. He would hope incidentally to be able to put to them the suggestion mentioned by Sir Cecil Dormer that the Norwegian Government might establish military zones at selected points in their territorial waters, so as to force traffic into the open sea. But the main purpose of his conversations would be to try to lead the Swedish Government on to face the big issue, that they must choose between one side or the other.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY suggested that it might be preferable to send a short but strongly worded despatch based on the suggestions for the Lord Privy Seal outlined by the Prime Minister in the course of the discussion. He only regretted that it was not possible for us to use the threat of taking the ore fields by force, but the despatch should be worded as strongly as possible and should be reinforced by conversations with the two Ministers.

The War Cabinet agreed:

(1) Not to invite the Lord Privy Seal to go on a Mission to the Governments of Norway and Sweden; in reaching this conclusion, they had in mind particularly that the publicity inevitably attending such a Mission would be most undesirable at this juncture, and would tend to defeat the objects in view.

(2) Not to recommend to His Majesty The King to reply to the King of Norway in the terms of the draft telegram annexed to W.F. (C). 25, but to invite the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to consider whether any further message was necessary or whether the interim reply already sent would suffice.

(3) To invite the Foreign Secretary to see the Swedish and Norwegian Ministers in London, and to put the position to them as outlined in the above discussion, and then to report again to the War Cabinet.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
17th January, 1940.
SCANDINAVIA.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 16th Conclusions, Minute 9).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had seen the Swedish and Norwegian Ministers on the previous day in accordance with the Conclusions of the War Cabinet at the meeting referred to in the margin. The former had expressed himself as personally in complete agreement with the arguments put to him, and would telegraph for permission to pay a visit to Stockholm in order to put his views before his Government. The Norwegian Minister had not reacted too badly to the suggestion that the Norwegian Government should themselves lay a minefield in their territorial waters. But he did not delude himself into believing that the Norwegian Government were likely to accept this suggestion.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL observed that, according to a report in the "Manchester Guardian" of the 18th January, the Swedes had recently concluded an agreement with Germany to ship more iron ore to them in the future than they had ever done in the past. If this were true, it disclosed a very different situation from that which had been represented by M. Wallenberg.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had had an interview with the French Ambassador the previous day, from which it appeared that the French were much concerned that we had done nothing to stop the Narvik traffic. It would probably be necessary to hold a meeting.

---

French views on Policy in Scandinavia and Finland.
of the Supreme War Council in the near future to
discuss the whole question of our policy in Scandinavia
and Finland.

The War Cabinet then turned to consideration of
a Report by the Chiefs of Staff on the practicability
of the capture of the northern ore fields in the face
of Scandinavian opposition (W.P.(40) 24).

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF said that the Chiefs of
Staff were of opinion that it would be possible, though
probably difficult, to land a force at Narvik in the
face of opposition, and ultimately even to break
through Norwegian and Swedish opposition on the route
to Galivare. But this could not be done in time to
forestall the Germans in the ore fields during the
coming Spring. As a practical proposition, therefore,
the whole operation must be ruled out.

The War Cabinet next considered a Report by the
Chiefs of Staff on the instructions and authority
which the Service Departments required to enable
detailed plans and preparations to be made for various
operations in Scandinavia which were under considera-
tion (W.P.(40) 23).

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF explained that the three
operations in northern Scandinavia, southern Norway
and southern Sweden were all closely inter-connected,
and that the Chiefs of Staff had therefore dealt with
them in one comprehensive paper. He emphasised the
large commitment which would be involved in the
provision of the necessary shipping. At the present
time we had no personnel ships immediately available
to convey the forces required for any of the operations.
Those used for the British Expeditionary Force in
France were not suitable, owing to the length of the
voyage and the adverse weather conditions which must
be expected.
The shipping required for the initial Narvik force of two brigades would not be very large, but it would increase as the size of the force grew from two brigades to two divisions. The shipping required for despatch of a force to the ports in Southern Norway was also not very much; only five battalions and ancillary troops would require to be transported. The force for south Sweden, however, would be a very much larger commitment. Some 80,000 men and 10,000 M.T. vehicles would have to be shipped. If a single base at Trondheim only were used, 12 liners for personnel, 38 M.T. ships, 6 store ships, 3 petrol ships and 3 ammunition ships would be needed, and it would take 60 days to put the force ashore. By using Namsos, a port about 100 miles north of Trondheim, as a subsidiary base, it would be possible to reduce the time to 30 days, but the amount of shipping required would be almost double. The net loss of carrying capacity involved in taking up this amount of shipping would be about 60,000 dead weight tons.

The Chiefs of Staff had worked on the assumption that the forces would be sent in April, and if this was to be done a decision would be required very soon. Liners at present earmarked for the transport of the Australian Expeditionary Force would have to be used, their places being taken by larger ships such as the QUEEN MARY and the MAURETANIA.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff explained that the initial force proposed for southern
Sweden amounted to 2 divisions, i.e. some 24,000 fighting men. The remainder of the 80,000 were required for the base and lines of communication.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY observed that it was of some comfort to see from these figures the very large commitment which the Germans would assume if they undertook the invasion of southern Sweden.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER pointed out that the Chiefs of Staff had only been asked to state what instructions and authority the Service Departments would require to enable detailed plans and preparations to be made. The last paragraph of their Report, however, asked for immediate authority for taking certain steps. This seemed to be somewhat premature, since the whole conception of operations in Scandinavia was based on the assumption that we should have the co-operation of the Scandinavian countries, which in fact we had not yet obtained.

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF agreed that the wording of the last paragraph was misleading, but pointed out that if the forces were to be ready to act in April, certain decisions would be required in the immediate future. For example, a decision to retain the 44th and 42nd Divisions from the III Corps would have to be taken by the 2nd February. The taking up of shipping, however, might be deferred until a little later.

THE PRIME MINISTER enquired whether it would make any difference to our preparations if the three
operations were undertaken simultaneously or at different times. For example, assuming that we had the full co-operation of Sweden, would the Galivare force be needed at all?

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF said that if we put in a force at Narvik to hold the Galivare fields it was at least possible that the Germans would invade southern Scandinavia. We should have to be ready, simultaneously with, or even a little before, the despatch of the Narvik force to obtain control of the ports in southern Norway. We should also have to be in a position to offer immediate assistance to Sweden in the south. Even if we had the full co-operation of Sweden, we should have to send a force to the Galivare area to protect it against the possibility of a Russian attack or a German landing at Lulea. We could not depend on the Swedes doing this for themselves without our assistance.

It was generally agreed that all three forces must be ready to move simultaneously, and that preparations should be made accordingly.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR emphasised that the greatest danger from Germany in south Sweden was probably that of air attack. The assistance which we could give, however, against this form of attack was very limited.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was necessary to make full preparations for sending forces to Scandinavia, but that their chief value might well be as a bargaining counter with the Swedes. He was anxious not to divert too much effort and money to the preparation of forces which might not be used after all. Subject to this consideration, however, we should advance our plans and preparations as far as possible.
THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF pointed out that the Narvik force to seize the Galivare fields would have to operate under winter conditions, since it must arrive in the area before the ice broke in the Baltic. Otherwise the Germans might forestall it by a sea-borne expedition to Lulea. A good deal of special equipment

"THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO asked whether the Army and Air Forces proposed were considered by the Chiefs of Staff to be adequate, in conjunction with the available Swedish forces, to defend Sweden against an attack by Germany and Russia.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF replied that an Appreciation of the numbers for that purpose could not be given without conversations with the Swedish General Staff." It seemed very doubtful whether we should ever get staff conversations with Sweden.

There was some discussion about the arrangements before the holding of the meeting of the Supreme War Council at which plans for action in Scandinavia would be discussed. The following were the principal points which emerged:

1. It was open to question whether the French realised fully that operations on a large scale in Scandinavia next May would involve a considerable diversion of our effort from France. If the 44th and 42nd Divisions, which were now earmarked for France, were not retained in England, it would be difficult to find the necessary troops for Scandinavia.

2. General Gamelin had himself informed the Chief of the Imperial General Staff that he was prepared to provide one brigade of Chasseurs Alpins for the Narvik expedition.

3. It would be preferable that operations in Scandinavia should be primarily a British responsibility. Administrative difficulties would be increased if large numbers of French troops were sent as well as British.

4. It might be possible to obtain some of the shipping required from the French, who might also be asked to make some contribution towards the cost.

5. It would be necessary to work out our plans in greater detail, and to be clear as to the full implications of a Scandinavian campaign before discussing with the French the question of the division of responsibility between the Allies."
[Handwritten text not legible]
The taking up of shipping should be deferred until the whole question had been discussed with the French.

The War Cabinet —

(i) Approved the Report by the Chiefs of Staff on the possibility of capturing the northern ore fields in the face of Scandinavian opposition (W.P.(40) 24):

(ii) Approved the Report by the Chiefs of Staff on "Scandinavia, plans and preparations" (W.P.(40) 23), as a statement of the instructions and authority which the Service Departments require to enable detailed plans and preparations to be made —

(a) for the despatch of a force via Narvik to the northern Swedish ore fields:

(b) for the occupation of the three ports in Southern Norway:

(c) for the despatch of a force to co-operate in the defence of southern Sweden:

subject to such additions as might prove to be necessary in regard to the last-named force (See (iii) below):

(iii) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to complete as early as possible the Report on the further instructions and authority (additional to those set out in para. 8 of W.P.(40) 23) which the Service Departments would require to enable detailed plans and preparations to be made for (c) above (See para. 10 of W.P.(40) 23):

(iv) Authorised the Departments concerned to purchase the specialised stores and clothing required for arctic conditions (See para. 5 (c) of W.P.(40) 23). For the time being no shipping was to be taken up without reference to the War Cabinet:

(v) Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to initiate the arrangements necessary for a Meeting of the Supreme War Council to discuss Scandinavian policy with the French. In arranging the date for this Meeting the Foreign Secretary would no doubt bear in mind (a) that it was desirable that the Chiefs of Staff Report, referred to in (iii) above, should have been received before the date of this Meeting; and (b) that a decision is required by the 2nd February if the 44th and 42nd Divisions are to be retained in this country.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1,

19th January, 1940.
In the course of the discussion on Item 10

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the French Ambassador had referred to the possibility of naval operations in support of Finland in the neighbourhood of Petsamo. The French were not prepared to go to war with Russia at present, but M. Corbin had suggested that Polish naval forces might be used, perhaps assisted by French warships, suitably disguised and acting at night. The three destroyers and two submarines, which constituted the whole of the Polish Navy at present, were attached to the British Navy, but there was no reason, from the political point of view, why they should not operate as an independent Navy in support of Finland.

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF said that one of our submarines which had recently returned from the area in question had reported considerable activity at Murmansk and Petsamo. The Russians had no naval forces of any size there, and there would be no technical reasons why the Polish forces should not effect considerable damage to Russian shipping. The difficulty, however, would be that they would be working from British bases.
The War Cabinet agreed —

That the possibility of operations by the Polish Navy against the Russians in the Petsamo and Murmansk area should be examined by the Admiralty, in consultation as necessary with the Foreign Office, with a view to further discussion with the French.

...
The War Cabinet agreed —

That the possibility of operations by the Polish Navy against the Russians in the Petsamo and Murmansk area should be examined by the Admiralty, in consultation as necessary with the Foreign Office, with a view to further discussion with the French.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1,
19th January, 1940.
W.M. (40) 20th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 10.

Confidential Annex.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that M. Prytz, the Swedish Minister, was leaving London for Stockholm that day, and that he himself either that day or the following day proposed to have a general discussion with M. Wallenberg, who had arranged to return to Sweden on Wednesday, the 24th January, 1940. In the meanwhile, the War Cabinet would no doubt have noted that, according to a report contained in Telegram No. 34 (R), dated 20th January, 1940, from His Majesty's Minister, Oslo, M. Koht, the Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs, during a debate in the Storting, had spoken of Norwegian losses at sea, in the course of which he had admitted that the s.s. DEPTFORD might have been sunk by a German submarine. He (M. Koht) had gone on to say that a whole month after this had happened, British and French newspapers had declared that Norway was unable to keep the war out of her territory and that consequently the Allies should encroach upon it with their warships. The Norwegian Foreign Minister had argued that there was no justification for such an attitude, and had gone on so far as to say that even if it were true that one of the belligerent powers was violating Norwegian neutrality, that fact did not give the other side any right whatever to act in a similar manner. The whole speech had been most unhelpful from our point of view.
THE LORD PRIVY SEAL expressed anxiety regarding the scale of ore deliveries by Sweden to Germany. On the basis of the 1938 figures, Germany would receive 9,700,000 tons out of a total of 12,700,000 tons as compared with 1,600,000 tons due to us. Moreover, it appeared from the latest report by the Minister of Economic Warfare (W.P.(R.) (40) 22), that deliveries of ore to Germany from Narvik were on the increase, since out of the total 325,000 tons for the month of January, it was believed that no less than 100,000 tons had been shipped to Germany since the beginning of the present year.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the French Government had informed him also that our estimates of deliveries of ore from Narvik to Germany were lower than those which they had formed. He proposed to discuss the whole matter during his interview with M. Wallenberg. On the general question of the Swedish Government's Trade Agreement, there was, it should be remembered a "gentlemen's agreement" between the Swedes and ourselves, that the former should do everything possible, in the way of raising technical difficulties, to slow down the rate of deliveries to Germany. The figures cited by the Lord Privy Seal certainly suggested, however, that deliveries from Narvik were on the increase; and he would look into the matter.
The text on this page is not legible. It seems to be a paragraph of text, possibly scientific or technical in nature, but the handwriting is too unclear to transcribe accurately.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was clear that the Germans were making desperate efforts to increase the shipments of ore from Narvik. He inquired whether it had yet been possible to follow up the suggestion which he had made at the meeting of the War Cabinet noted in the margin, regarding giving of publicity to the deliberate and repeated attacks by German submarines on Swedish and Norwegian vessels. The latest instance was that of the Swedish s.s. PAJALA, the sinking of which was reported in that day's press; this ship had been engaged not in trade with this country, but in carrying grain from the Argentine to Sweden. It was not sufficient for the neutrals to say they did not wish to be drawn into the war, since in fact they had already been so drawn by Germany. The only question was whether they intended to maintain a one-sided attitude of neutrality against ourselves. By assisting the Germans, through increasing the export of ore, they were piling up the case for us to take countervailing action. In this connexion it was worth while considering whether the laying of mines by us in Norwegian territorial waters was open to such strong objection as ordering our destroyers to operate inside territorial waters. The Swedes and the Norwegians also should be made to understand that there were limits to our patience.

In reply to a question by the First Lord of the Admiralty, THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that it was doubtful whether, even if Germany had been declared the aggressor
against Poland by the League of Nations, it would be possible to argue that the Swedes and the Norwegians were bound under Article 16 of the Covenant to withhold supplies of ore from Narvik, in view of the fact that some two or three years previously, the Assembly of the League had passed an interpretative resolution under which each country was given the right to judge what action, if any, it should take under that Article of the Covenant.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that the speech by M. Koht in the Norwegian Storting had been most unfair since the particulars of the losses of Norwegian ships had been given in such a way as to suggest that we were as much to blame as the Germans.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was obvious that M. Koht had gone out of his way to make excuses for the Germans. He regarded it as of great importance that the Dominions should be brought to realise the true position in this matter and he suggested that the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs should take appropriate steps to this end.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS said that the Dominion High Commissioners in London were no doubt aware of the position. He would, however, despatch a reasoned telegram on the whole subject to each of the Dominion Governments.
In reply to a question by the Lord Privy Seal, the SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said, on the general question of the Narvik ore supplies, he had made it clear to M. Colban, the Norwegian Minister, that we had made certain suggestions for remedying the situation which we regarded as intolerable, and that we expected to receive from him very shortly a communication either commenting on our suggestions or making counter suggestions. He realised the need for not letting matters slide, but he proposed to give M. Colban a day or two more before returning to the subject.

The War Cabinet agreed:—

That the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs should address to the Dominion Governments a telegram setting out for their information full particulars regarding the treatment by Germany of Scandinavian shipping, not only when trading to this country, but also when engaged in trade with other parts of the world.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
22nd January, 1940.
German imports of iron ore via Narvik.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Imports into Germany and Czechoslovakia</th>
<th>Preceding Reference</th>
<th>Previous Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938-9</td>
<td>Dec. 349 Thousand tons.</td>
<td>W.M. (40) 20th Conclusions, Minute 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan. 480</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 457</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March. 574</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>Dec. 110</td>
<td>W.M. (40) 21st Conclusions, Minute 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|       | Jan. 140 | | (1st to 15th only).

He proposed to ask for the figures to be checked, as they were different from those previously furnished to the War Cabinet.
It was recalled that the War Cabinet had agreed on the previous day that the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs should address a telegram to the Dominions Governments setting out for their information full particulars regarding the treatment by Germany of Scandinavian shipping, not only when trading with this country, but also when engaged in trade with other parts of the world.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS said he had found that it would be more convenient that he should read a carefully prepared statement to the Dominion High Commissioners, the substance of which they would then telegraph to their Governments. He had taken action accordingly.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
FINLAND.

Allied Assistance.

Operations by the Polish Navy. Finns. Such an operation could, he assumed, only be undertaken by forces now engaged on other work and he would therefore, like, to form an idea of the value to be attached to the proposal.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that the Soviet troops in the Petsamo area were not strong in numbers and relied entirely for their supplies on their sea communications with Murmansk. Successful naval action against these communications would make it impossible for these troops to hold out for long and if they could be destroyed, a useful means of access to Finland would be opened up. There was no railway from Petsamo but there was a road along which traffic was possible on sleighs and quite heavy loads could be transported. The railhead was 200 miles to the South.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the Polish Naval units (three destroyers and two submarines) now working with the British Navy, might operate off Petsamo and Murmansk with considerable effect. They would have to be supported by us and based on our ports, but as Poland was at war with Russia they could legitimately sink Russian ships without involving us in the charge of committing hostile acts against the Soviet.

The War Cabinet were informed that the Chiefs of Staff were engaged on an examination of possible Allied intervention in Scandinavia, and in particular of General Gamelin's views on the subject, and their report would very shortly be available. In it they would include an examination of all aspects of Naval operations against Petsamo and Murmansk.

The War Cabinet took note of the above discussion.
W.M. (40) 22nd CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 7.

Confidential Annex.

(24th January, 1940).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS drew attention to two telegrams received from His Majesty's Ambassador, Rome, containing information regarding possible German intentions:

Telegram No. 15 Saving, dated 20th January, 1940, in which Sir Percy Loraine reported that His Majesty's Consul, Turin No. 1, had learnt that a German engineer who had recently been in Turin had been heard to boast (when perhaps somewhat inebriated) that work was now proceeding in Germany on a new type of aircraft capable of carrying much heavier bombs than existing types. The German engineer had also said that the Germans had a method of dealing with the Maginot Line which would surprise the world. The German was stated to hold an important position in a German aircraft factory.

Telegram No. 16 Saving, dated 20th January, 1940 in which Sir Percy Loraine stated that before having received the report summarised in the proceeding telegram he had received confirmation of both the points mentioned from Marshal Balbo with whom he had had a long talk the previous evening in an Italian private house. Marshal Balbo seemed convinced that the Germans would attack the Maginot Line in April or May; he said that they would bring some unpleasant new weapons into action. The only one which he mentioned was a new type of gun. He also said that he had seen a new and formidable German bomber. At the time when he had seen this bomber only twelve prototype machines were in existence, but he imagined that this type was now in production. He expressed the view also that for the purpose of the present war the development of German air power was three years in arrears, and he presumed that every nerve was now being strained to speed it up; there might, he thought, be some surprises in store for us. The Marshal had said also that General Brauschitsch, whom he considered to be a fine soldier, had expressed to him his complete confidence in the ability of Germany to smash through the Maginot Line.
Marshal Balbo admitted that the Siegfried Line was hastily constructed and, in reply to a question by Sir Percy Loraine, he had admitted also that the Maginot Line was now very much stronger in depth than it had been last year.

In submitting this report Sir Percy Loraine said that he did not think that his meeting with Marshal Balbo would become known in Rome; and he hoped that the fact that it had taken place would be treated with the strictest confidence.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
EIRE.

Internal Political Situation.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 4th Conclusions, Minute 8).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS said that secret reports obtained from various sources made it clear that a serious internal situation was developing in Eire. It was difficult to assess the value to be attached to such reports, some of which in the past had been found to be inaccurate on points of detail, but the general trend of the information was unmistakable. It was confirmed also by a secret report furnished to the Home Secretary by Scotland Yard. From all this information it seemed clear that the Irish Republican Army were planning an attack on Northern Ireland at a convenient moment. Sir John Maffey had reported that he did not think that such an attempt was practicable in the immediate future. He was of the opinion also that the regular army of Eire could be regarded as reasonably loyal to Mr. de Valera's Government. On the whole, therefore, Sir John Maffey was not unduly apprehensive at the moment.

The question which was causing him (The Secretary of State) the most anxiety was the risk disclosed from the reports received that the Irish Republican Army might try to kidnap Sir John Maffey.

-1-
Sir John himself was personally satisfied with the measures being taken for his protection by the Government of Eire; but he (The Secretary of State) had thought it wise to communicate the contents of the latest reports to Mr. Dulanty, the High Commissioner for Eire, in London, for transmission to Mr. de Valera. He was keeping a close watch on the situation and would report to the War Cabinet when necessary.

THE SECRETARY FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT agreed that there was a great mass of subversive activity in Eire and that trouble was certainly brewing. The funds for financing the subversive movement were probably provided by sympathisers in the United States where Mr. Sean Russell, who had just returned to Eire, had spent a long time in collecting money.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
PROPAGANDA IN GERMANY.

W.M. (40) 26th CONCLUSIONS MINUTE 9.

Confidential Annex.

(29th January, 1940).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS read the following report which he had
received from a secret source.

(1) The gestapo, the Ministry of Propaganda
and others immediately interested in the
subject have discussed at length relative
potentialities of enemy leaflets and
broadcasts.

(2) The gestapo hates leaflets. If a German
deliberately turns on a foreign station
on his wireless set he knows that he is
running a risk. If he is caught listen­
ing he can be easily convicted. But if a
man finds a piece of printed paper on the
ground he may think it is an advertisement
for liver pills, and if he is found reading
it he cannot easily be convicted of a
deliberate act; besides, it can be
read without even being removed from the
ground.

(3) At the beginning of the war there were
some particularly sinister cases which
greatly worried the gestapo. Leaflets
which had only been dropped in Northern
or Western Germany were discovered in
sheltered spots in the mountains of the
Tyrol and Bavaria. In one case in
Southern Bavaria a leaflet was found
pinned to a tree. A well-trodden path
off a main road proved that a large
number of people had made a special
journey to read it and led to its
discovery. The culprits were never
discovered.
The Ministry of Propaganda considers that leaflets are a dangerous addition to broadcast propaganda because Germans are now somewhat tired of the spoken word. In workshops, offices, restaurants, etc., they are forced to listen to an endless stream of their own propaganda. When the average German comes home he is inclined to listen to music rather than to politics, and when listening-in to foreign broadcasts is a decidedly risky business, only the politically active anti-Nazi German is likely to take the risk.

On the other hand, any kind of printed matter has an attraction for the average German. The German is a born bookworm and has a natural penchant for reading. The fact that the Germans themselves are using leaflets in enemy and neutral countries demonstrates their belief in the effectiveness of this form of propaganda.

The above does not of course mean that the Gestapo or the Ministry of Propaganda underrate the importance of enemy broadcasts. They can undoubtedly be effective and are taken very seriously by the authorities, as is proved by the severe sentences passed on people caught in the act of listening to foreign stations.

The War Cabinet took note of the above report.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
SCANDINAVIA.

(Previous Reference: W.M.(40) 28th Conclusions, Minute 8).

The War Cabinet had before them:

(a) A Report by the Chiefs of Staff on Intervention in Scandinavia - Plans and Implications (W.P.(40) 35).

(b) A Report by the Chiefs of Staff on French Proposals for Allied Assistance to Finland (W.P.(40) 41).

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF introduced the Report on Intervention in Scandinavia (W.P.(40) 35), and said that the contents of this Report had not been discussed in detail with the French during the Chiefs of Staff's recent visit to Paris, though the question of the time factor referred to in paragraphs 20-23 had entered into the discussion on the French project for a landing at Petsamo. The vital importance of obtaining control of the northern Swedish ore fields had also been recognised by the French.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that General Gamelin had informed him that he would offer no objection to the diversion to Scandinavia of British troops now in England, nor to the withdrawal of a British Regular Division from France, if there seemed any possibility of carrying out the big project of stopping Germany's iron ore supplies.
The Chief of the Imperial General Staff added that General Gamelin was now no longer convinced that the Germans would attack in the west this year, and agreed that if we could force the Germans to undertake operations in Scandinavia, these would involve a large diversion of German effort. His own personal view was that once the Germans were committed in Sweden, an attack in the west was impossible. In any event the diversion of effort would be greater for Germany than for ourselves.

The Chief of Naval Staff then introduced the Chiefs of Staff Report on the French Proposals for Allied Assistance to Finland (W. P. (40) 41). The French plan for an operation in the Petsamo area was in two parts, (a) a landing by Allied forces in cooperation with the Finns, (b) the sending of 30,000 or 40,000 volunteers into Central Finland. The first part of the plan could not be carried out without the second, since unless the Finns were heavily reinforced in the centre, they would be unable to spare anyone to clear the way for our landing. After a landing had successfully been achieved, the proposal was that the Allied force should aim for Kandalaksha and cut the railway to Murmansk.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he had just received a telegram from Paris giving an account of an interview between our Ambassador and M. Leger. The latter had enquired whether the French plan was properly understood in London. It was not, he said, to make Petsamo the base for a major operation, but merely to effect a small landing there sufficient to make the Germans believe our objective was to lay hands on the Swedish Iron Ore Fields. That would compel the Germans to invade Southern Sweden in an attempt to frustrate us. The Swedes would then appeal to us for help, and we could at once establish our base at Narvik.
THE CHIEF OF THE EMPIRE GENERAL STAFF said that the idea expressed by M. Leger had not been mentioned at the discussion in Paris.

In the ensuing discussion the following points emerged:

(a) The French plan for action at Petsamo did not appear to have been well thought out. It depended on the sending of a large force into Finland, through Norway and Sweden. If this were possible, it would be unnecessary to go to Petsamo at all.

(b) Naval action at Petsamo would be a waste of effort, in view of the small amount of traffic to be intercepted, and the number of ships which would have to be taken from important tasks elsewhere.

(c) The occupation of Northern Finland by the Allies, though it might achieve a local success, could have no effect on the outcome of the Russian invasion. In the Spring, when the ice melted, the Russians and Germans could land in the Gulf of Bothnia and turn the Finnish defences.

(d) Whereas the French thought that by undertaking an operation at Petsamo we should stimulate the Scandinavian countries into co-operation, this was by no means certain.

(e) By operating against the Russians at Petsamo, we should accept all the disadvantages of war with Russia without the advantages of securing a valuable prize, such as we should get if we occupied Gaivare.

In view of the above considerations, it was generally agreed that nothing would be gained by an operation of the type suggested by the French.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL pointed out that we had never yet made it clear to the Scandinavian countries that we might be prepared to send a substantial force to aid the Finns. He suggested that we should make Norway and
Sweden face the realities of the situation and urge on them that Finland, if unaider, was almost certain to collapse in May. We should tell Norway and Sweden that we were ready to intervene effectively to save her, provided that we had the co-operation of Norway and Sweden. If these countries then refused their co-operation, the onus of Finland's betrayal would rest upon them. It would be essential, of course, to let the Finnish Government know that we had made such an approach to the Scandinavian countries. Pressure from Finland would then be added to our own, and would certainly be a powerful factor.

This proposal met with the general approval of the War Cabinet. In the discussion which ensued the following were the principal points that were made:

(i) Finland had at present the sympathy of the whole world, and if she collapsed, the blame would be laid at the doors of ourselves and the French. It was, therefore, essential to show to the world that we were ready to do our part, and to shift the onus on to Norway and Sweden.

(ii) It should be made clear to the Finnish Government that the prospects of their receiving substantial assistance depended on the co-operation of Norway and Sweden, and they should be informed immediately if the Scandinavian countries refused to co-operate.

(iii) It was probable that Norway and Sweden would become alarmed immediately we made any proposal to send forces through Narvik, since they would realise that the Germans might react violently to any threat to the security of their ore supplies. No reference should, therefore, be made to the question of the ore fields in our approach to the Scandinavian countries.
We should, however, make it clear that if, as a result of their co-operation, Germany attacked them, we should be prepared to come to their immediate assistance with substantial forces.

(iv) At the same time if we were able to send in troops through Narvik to assist Finland, this would put us in a position to control the Galivare fields.

(v) If Allied troops were sent in through Norway and Sweden to assist Finland, the neutrality of these countries would not be compromised vis-à-vis Germany but only vis-à-vis Russia.

(vi) We should not be able to base our action on the provisions of Article XVI of the Covenant, since the Scandinavian countries had for long past made clear their refusal to be bound by this Article. They had, however, subscribed to the recent resolution of the League of Nations condemning the Russian aggression, and calling upon States Members to assist Finland, and this should provide us with sufficient justification.

(vii) It would be necessary to send units of the Armed Forces of the Crown to assist Finland, but these should be sent as "volunteers" on the model of Italian "non-intervention" in Spain. The French proposal for the formation of a volunteer force of "stateless" men in France was impracticable.

(viii) If we were to intervene effectively in Scandinavia, and to assist Finland, it was essential to push ahead with our preparations immediately. The despatch of forces to assist Finland would involve preparations on a rather larger scale than those envisaged in W.P.(40) 35.

(ix) The action proposed would go a long way to meet the obvious desire of the French Government, for political reasons, to send assistance to Finland.
The War Cabinet:

(i) Approved the views expressed by the Chiefs of Staff in W.P.(40) 41 in regard to the French proposals for Allied assistance in Finland; and, in particular, that the Petsamo project, as propounded by the French, was a very hazardous operation which, while it would be likely to involve us in hostilities with Russia, could not by itself afford any decisive measure of assistance to Finland;

(ii) Agreed that it was of the utmost importance to prevent Finland being overrun by Russia, in the Spring; and that this could only be done by considerable forces of trained men entering Finland from or via Norway and Sweden;

(iii) Agreed that action on these lines afforded the most likely opportunity of enabling the Allies to obtain control of the Northern Swedish orefields;

(iv) Agreed that any forces sent to Finland by this Country would have to be units of the armed forces of the Crown who would volunteer for this Service, on the model of Italian "non-intervention" in Spain.

(v) Approved W.P.(40) 35 as the basis for preparations for operations in Scandinavia in the Spring, subject to such modifications and additions as may be necessitated for direct intervention in Finland.

(vi) Agreed that the co-operation of Norway and Sweden, which was essential to this plan, could best be secured by an approach on the following lines:

(a) Unless a substantial force is sent to Finland she will be crushed by May at latest:

(b) We are prepared to join with Norway and Sweden in providing the force required to prevent this.

(c) If Norway and Sweden represent that action on these lines is
likely to result in their being attacked by Germany, we would, in that event, give them substantial help. We should be ready to tell them the scale of our preparations and to have Staff conversations.

(a) We should make it clear to Norway and Sweden that if they refused to play their part in this plan, the onus for the over-running of Finland by Russia would, in the eyes of the world, rest upon them.

(vii) Agreed that the Finnish Government should be informed at the same time of our approach to Norway and Sweden, in order that they should likewise press Norway and Sweden to co-operate in this plan.

(viii) Agreed that it is of importance that the Finnish Government should be promptly informed if Norway and Sweden are not prepared to co-operate in this plan.

(ix) Agreed that the above Conclusions, in draft, should be circulated to War Cabinet Ministers, and that, subject to any points which they might wish to raise, these Conclusions should form the basis for the line to be taken by the British Ministers at the forthcoming meeting of the Supreme War Council.
THE PRIME MINISTER read to the War Cabinet an account given by the Military Attaché in Stockholm of an interview which he had had with the Roumanian Military Attaché, who had just relinquished the post of Roumanian Military Attaché in Berlin, in which the latter expounded that he believed to be the future plans of the German High Command. A copy of the Military Attaché's Report is attached as an Appendix.

The Prime Minister said that this estimate of German intentions was of particular interest in the light of recent discussions at the War Cabinet. The suggestion that German help to the Russians would be given in the form of specialist personnel was borne out by information which he had received from another source, to the effect that among the prisoners captured by the Finns were a number of German pilots.

Referring to the discussion which had taken place on Scandinavia at the previous meeting of the War Cabinet, the Prime Minister said that he had had a letter from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, who said that he had seen the Dominion High Commissioners after the meeting, and had informed them of the approach to Norway and Sweden which was to be made if the French agreed. The High Commissioners had been greatly attracted by the new proposal, and the Secretary of State thought that they would be likely to recommend its
SCANDINAVIA.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 31st Conclusions, Minute 1).

THE PRIME MINISTER read to the War Cabinet an account given by the Military Attaché in Stockholm of an interview which he had had with the Roumanian Military Attaché, who had just relinquished the post of Roumanian Military Attaché in Berlin, in which the latter expounded that he believed to be the future plans of the German High Command. A copy of the Military Attaché's Report is attached as an Appendix.

The Prime Minister said that this estimate of German intentions was of particular interest in the light of recent discussions at the War Cabinet. The suggestion that German help to the Russians would be given in the form of specialist personnel was borne out by information which he had received from another source, to the effect that among the prisoners captured by the Finns were a number of German pilots.

Referring to the discussion which had taken place on Scandinavia at the previous meeting of the War Cabinet, the Prime Minister said that he had had a letter from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, who said that he had seen the Dominion High Commissioners after the meeting, and had informed them of the approach to Norway and Sweden which was to be made if the French agreed. The High Commissioners had been greatly attracted by the new proposal, and the Secretary of State thought that they would be likely to recommend its
W.M. (40) 32nd CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 4.

Confidential Annex.
(5th February, 1940.)

THE PRIME MINISTER read to the War Cabinet an account given by the Military Attache in Stockholm of an interview which he had had with the Roumanian Military Attache, who had just relinquished the post of Roumanian Military Attache in Berlin, in which the latter expounded that he believed to be the future plans of the German High Command. A copy of the Military Attache's Report is attached as an Appendix.

The Prime Minister said that this estimate of German intentions was of particular interest in the light of recent discussions at the War Cabinet. The suggestion that German help to the Russians would be given in the form of specialist personnel was borne out by information which he had received from another source, to the effect that among the prisoners captured by the Finns were a number of German pilots.

Referring to the discussion which had taken place on Scandinavia at the previous meeting of the War Cabinet, the Prime Minister said that he had had a letter from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, who said that he had seen the Dominion High Commissioners after the meeting, and had informed them of the approach to Norway and Sweden which was to be made if the French agreed. The High Commissioners had been greatly attracted by the new proposal, and the Secretary of State thought that they would be likely to recommend its
THE PRIME MINISTER read to the War Cabinet an account given by the Military Attaché in Stockholm of an interview which he had had with the Roumanian Military Attaché, who had just relinquished the post of Roumanian Military Attaché in Berlin, in which the latter expounded that he believed to be the future plans of the German High Command. A copy of the Military Attaché's Report is attached as an Appendix.

The Prime Minister said that this estimate of German intentions was of particular interest in the light of recent discussions at the War Cabinet. The suggestion that German help to the Russians would be given in the form of specialist personnel was borne out by information which he had received from another source, to the effect that among the prisoners captured by the Finns were a number of German pilots.

Referring to the discussion which had taken place on Scandinavia at the previous meeting of the War Cabinet, the Prime Minister said that he had had a letter from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, who said that he had seen the Dominion High Commissioners after the meeting, and had informed them of the approach to Norway and Sweden which was to be made if the French agreed. The High Commissioners had been greatly attracted by the new proposal, and the Secretary of State thought that they would be likely to recommend its
acceptance by their Governments if the British and French Governments decided to proceed with it. The High Commissioners were perhaps unduly optimistic as to the probable reactions of the Norwegian and Swedish Governments.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER suggested that consideration should be given to the question whether Sweden should be informed diplomatically that if Germany marched into Sweden, either by invasion or by invitation, we should have to regard that country "as a battlefield". This would make it clear that Sweden must not treat German help as a "soft option". This suggestion met with general approval.

At a later stage in the meeting, the FOREIGN SECRETARY said that he proposed to see M. Prytz, the Swedish Ambassador, later in the morning. He did not propose to embark on the matters discussed at the Meeting of the War Cabinet held the previous evening, but merely to ascertain what M. Prytz himself had in mind.

Certain amendments were agreed to in Conclusion (i) to Minute 1 of the Meeting held the previous evening, which, as modified, now reads as follows:-

"(i) Approved the views expressed by the Chiefs of Staff in W.P, (40) 41 in regard to the French proposals for Allied assistance in Finland; and, in particular, that the Petsamo project, as propounded by the French, was a difficult operation which, while it would be likely to involve us in hostilities with Russia, could not by itself afford any decisive measure of assistance to Finland, or secure the Swedish ore mines."

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
null
Sir,

I have the honour to bring to your notice that on 18th January I received a visit from Colonel Garbee, who has served for the last few years as Roumanian Military Attache in Berlin, and left Berlin a few days ago to take up the appointment of Military Attache to Sweden, Norway and Finland. He appeared friendly and anxious to talk, and was very full of what he confidently believes are the future plans of the German High Command, which I feel I must pass on, even though at first sight certain aspects appear fantastic. They are as follows:-

1. Germany's number one war-aim is the overthrow of the British Empire, and they hope to achieve this by actually defeating Great Britain, whilst remaining upon the defensive against France.

2. Scandinavia is to be used as the stalking horse, and Germany aims thereby:-
   (a) to safeguard her iron supplies,
   (b) to obtain submarine bases flanking our trade routes,
   (c) to obtain air bases for air attacks on England.

3. The method by which this is to be done is as follows. The Russian conquest of Finland is to be accelerated by German help, primarily officers, organisers and tacticians, to coordinate the Russian military effort.

APPENDIX.

British Legation, Stockholm.

Despatch No. 2.

20th January, 1940.
4. As soon as the Russian threat against Sweden really develops, i.e., as soon as the Finns commence to crack, certain communities, i.e., the German community, (of which there are some 8,000 in Sweden), and the still larger Swedish community whose predominant fear has always been Russia, will appeal vociferously for German help, in much the same way that the Sudeten Germans and the Danzig Germans appealed for help. Whether this help is accepted by Sweden as a whole, or not, German help will, however, come. The first step Germany will take will be to secure the Narvik - Lulea railway and thereby safeguard her own iron supplies, and the second will be that South Sweden and South Norway will be occupied by German troops, under the pretext of protection against Russia.

5. From South Norway and possibly from Holland, which will by then probably have fallen into German hands, Germany will carry out intensive air attacks on Britain, and Colonel Garthwaite thinks possibly also a land attack, using enormous air concentrations to ensure the safety of convoys on their two day passage across the North Sea.

6. Germany now regards her battle front as extending from Basle to the Orkneys, and the turning movement of the Maginot line is to be carried out, not via Holland and Belgium into France, but via Sweden and Norway into Great Britain.
7. I asked Colonel Garbea on what he based this somewhat surprising assertion, and he said he based it on:—

(a) the presence in the Baltic of a large quantity of shipping, and a large number of troops who were gradually collecting in the KIEL - WARNEMUND area;

(b) the interest which is being taken by German agents in South Sweden and South Norway, and the fact that the German General Staff recently carried out a very comprehensive Staff Exercise on the particular operation;

(c) the fact that German pilots have been acquainting themselves with the passages through the Sound to the South Norwegian coast;

(d) the large number of reconnaissance flights, to no apparent purpose, that the German air force have been carrying out over North Scotland and England recently;

(e) the fact that a large number of military and organizing experts have recently left Berlin for Russia;

(f) a boast was made to him by a German officer which fits in with the operation he had indicated.

I have, etc.,

(Signed) A. SUTTON PRATT.

Lieut. Colonel.

Military Attache.

W. A. L. Mallet, Esq., C.M.G.,
H.M. Minister,
Stockholm,
THE PRIME MINISTER said that M. Daladier had expounded the French project for a landing at Petsamo, but he had hinted that the idea had originated with the Finns and was clearly not in any way anxious to press the scheme. M. Daladier, however, had emphasised that if we turned down the Petsamo project, we must do something to help the Finns. It was obvious that considerations of internal politics had a good deal to do with M. Daladier's attitude. He had been Prime Minister in France for much longer than the usual term of office of French Premiers, and this factor, combined with the general lack of active operations, had given rise to political intrigues in France on the part of persons who would like to see a change of Prime Minister. M. Daladier was therefore very ready to welcome our proposals for active intervention in Scandinavia.

The Prime Minister said that he had explained the British proposals for the despatch of 3 divisions to Scandinavia in order to give assistance to the Finns in the Spring, before the break-up of the ice in the Baltic opened the way for a possible German expedition. He had emphasised that the administrative difficulties of such an enterprise would be considerable. Special clothing had to be provided for winter conditions, but later on different clothing and equipment would be needed, after the thaw came. Shipping and maintenance would present considerable problems, and there was much work to be done by the Staffs if the expedition was to be ready in time. We had to prepare not
Counted 961.7 cub. cm.

Average 32 lbs. per 1000 lbs. of wheat.

A. C. W. 20,500 lbs. of wheat.

Average 31.8 lbs. per 1000 lbs. of wheat.

A. C. W. 20,500 lbs. of wheat.

Average 31.8 lbs. per 1000 lbs. of wheat.

A. C. W. 20,500 lbs. of wheat.

Average 31.8 lbs. per 1000 lbs. of wheat.

A. C. W. 20,500 lbs. of wheat.

Average 31.8 lbs. per 1000 lbs. of wheat.

A. C. W. 20,500 lbs. of wheat.

Average 31.8 lbs. per 1000 lbs. of wheat.
only to assist Finland, but also to support Sweden in case of a German attack resulting from our action. The general sequence which we proposed was:

(i) We should make full preparations for the despatch of the expedition.

(ii) It would be arranged that Finland should issue an appeal to the world for assistance against Russia, addressing herself in particular to Norway and Sweden, who were her nearest neighbours and would be the next to be overrun by Russia.

(iii) We should then immediately approach the Scandinavian countries and say that we were ready to answer Finland's appeal, but we required free passage for our troops through their countries. In these circumstances, it would be very hard for Norway and Sweden to refuse. The world would cry shame upon them if, owing to their intransigence, Finland were overrun.

(iv) Our forces would land at Narvik and Trondheim and move up to Finland through Boden. In doing so, they would automatically secure possession of the Galivare ore fields.

M. Daladier had expressed his entire agreement with these proposals, but had pointed out that if Norway and Sweden refused to give us free passage, it would be ridiculous for us to be held up at the very last moment after making all these preparations. In these circumstances, we might have to do something at Petsamo. The Prime Minister said he had expressed the view that a refusal by Norway and Sweden would be most unlikely in the circumstances, though he had agreed that if they went so far as to use force against us, they could stop our getting through by cutting the railways. M. Daladier had seemed satisfied on this point, but had asked that the Chiefs of Staff should nevertheless examine fully the Petsamo project, lest in the worst case we might have to fall back upon it.
The importance of the time factor had been emphasised in the discussions. The 20th March was the critical date by which our first echelon would have to be ready to arrive in Scandinavia if we were to be sure of forestalling the Germans. All preparations would therefore have to be pressed on with the utmost despatch. The French were prepared to contribute a brigade of Chasseurs Alpins, a brigade of the Foreign Legion and possibly 4 battalions of Poles.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY pointed out that, although the expedition should be under British control, it was essential, for political reasons, that the French should be represented in some strength in the forces. The first echelon should certainly include a French contingent.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that it was most important that nothing should prejudice the success of our approach to Norway and Sweden. The Germans, suspecting our intentions, might possibly offer mediation to the Finnish Government, and if this were accepted we should be placed in a serious difficulty. He suggested therefore that we should give the Finns immediately an indication that we were prepared to come to their assistance with substantial forces, and thereby give them a chance of beating the Russians rather than of having to accept unfavourable terms of peace.

In the discussion which ensued the following points were made:

(i) Secrecy in our preparations was essential, if the Finnish appeal was to have its full effect.

(ii) The Finnish Government had been toying with the idea of negotiating peace terms with Russia, and it would be better to make any approach on the lines suggested by the Foreign Secretary to Field-Marshal Mannerheim himself. Brigadier Ling was returning to Finland very shortly, and could be used as an emissary for this purpose.
(iii) The issue of the Finnish appeal would require careful timing. Our first echelon must be ready to move immediately the call came. There might be some slight delay while the Scandinavian countries argued with us, but when we demanded the right of passage we must be in a position to say to them that our troops were ready to sail at once not only to assist Finland, but also to support them against Germany if necessary.

Some discussion then took place on the details of the preparations to be made.

The Secretary of State for War said that the War Office had already received most of the authorities they required, but consultations would have to take place with the Treasury on various questions, and with the Dominions Office in regard to Newfoundland loggers. He urged that no time should be wasted in these inter-departmental discussions.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer undertook that there would be no delay whatsoever on the part of the Treasury.

The Prime Minister, in reply to a question, said that no decision had been reached as to whether troops sent to Scandinavia would go in the guise of "volunteers" on the Spanish "non-intervention" model. Russia was not yet officially at war with Finland, and we naturally desired to avoid open hostilities with Russia if it were in any way possible. He fully realised, however, that there were great practical difficulties in despatching British forces in formed bodies which were not legally part of the Armed Forces of the Crown.
The War Cabinet:—

(i) Took note:—

(a) That their Conclusions as set out in W.M. (40) 31st Conclusions, Minute 1 (i) to (viii), regarding assistance to Finland and intervention in Scandinavia, had been accepted by the French, subject to the proviso that the project for a landing at Petsamo should be further examined by the Allied Staffs in case the Scandinavian countries refused to give passage to our forces and we were thus compelled to adopt other methods of assisting Finland.

(b) That the French had agreed to the control of operations in Scandinavia being in British hands, but would provide a contingent of French troops.

(ii) Authorised the Service Departments, and other Departments concerned, to carry out immediately the measures detailed in paragraph 24 of W.P. (40) 35, with a view to being ready for military intervention in Scandinavia by the 20th March, 1940, subject to such modifications and additions as might be necessitated by direct intervention in Finland.

(iii) Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for War, in consultation, to arrange for an indication of our intentions to be conveyed to Field Marshal Mannerheim by Brigadier Ling, who was shortly leaving for Finland.

(iv) Authorised the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to inform Dominion Prime Ministers of the above Conclusions.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs gave the War Cabinet the following particulars which must be regarded as highly secret, which Sir Percy Loraine had obtained from a reliable and well informed source in Rome (Sir Percy Loraine’s Telegram No. 25 Saving):—

The Italian Government had decided to move two Army Corps to the Brenner, and in addition the whole of the Italian Cavalry was standing by for employment in Hungary if required.

Signor Mussolini was infuriated with the behaviour of the German Government in regard to the Alto Adige and was accusing them of flagrant disloyalty. He was however still unfriendly to us.

Marshal Badoglio had advised Signor Mussolini against relying too much upon the invincibility of the German Army and had expressed the view that the French General Staff was the best in Europe. When Signor Mussolini had said that he would like to have another opinion on this question, Marshal Badoglio had suggested that he should consult Marshal Caviglia. This was a noteworthy suggestion, for ever since the Italian defeat at Caporetto there had been no love lost between the two Marshals. Signor Mussolini had subsequently consulted Marshal Caviglia, who had confirmed the views expressed by Marshal Badoglio.

In submitting this report Sir Percy Loraine had asked that it might be treated as exceptionally secret, since, if it became known in Rome, it was so circumstantial in character, that the Italians would have little difficulty in tracing its source.

The War Cabinet took note of the statement by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

said that the previous evening Sir Alexander Cadogan had received a most secret telegram from His Majesty’s Ambassador, Chungking, which might be summarised as follows:—

After a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador to China, Sir Stafford Cripps had decided to go to Moscow by air. Sir Stafford Cripps had gathered that the Government of the U.S.S.R. were now feeling apprehensive regarding their connection with Germany, and were looking for a way out. He (Sir Stafford Cripps) thought therefore that a visit by himself to Moscow might be useful. The Soviet Government were sending an aircraft to Urumtschi on the Mongolian frontier on the 9th February, 1940, to fly him to Moscow, and he expected to be back at Urumtschi by the 11th February. Between the 14th and 20th February he would be in the province of Sinkiang and would return to Chungking on the 23rd February when he expected to be in a position to submit a report for transmission to him (the Secretary of State). Sir Archibald Clerk Kerr had asked him while in Sinkiang to do his best to find out the true position in that province.

It was clearly not possible for us to stop Sir Stafford Cripps from going to Moscow, although his visit might give rise to misunderstanding.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.
W.M. (40) 37th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 5.
Confidential Annex.
(9th February, 1940.)

THE PRIME MINISTER referred to the conclusion reached by the War Cabinet at their meeting on 7th February, that Brigadier Ling should convey to Marshal Mannerheim an indication of our intentions in regard to assistance to Finland. He enquired when Brigadier Ling would be starting.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that Brigadier Ling would not be leaving until Sunday.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that, if our intentions and plans were disclosed to Marshal Mannerheim, there was a grave risk that they might be communicated, first to the Finnish Government, and then possibly to Norway and Sweden. The Germans were evidently suspicious of our intentions, and were closely watching events. They were putting out threats as to the action which they would take if we sent troops or established air bases in Sweden. If they got to know of our plans, they might forestall us in Sweden. It might be worth while reconsidering the proposal to send Brigadier Ling to Finland.

In discussion the following arguments were advanced:

(a) If no communication were made to the Finns to indicate that we would be helping them before the critical moment arrived, there was a danger that they...
might lose heart, and suffer defeat before we were ready. Marshal Mannerheim would be greatly encouraged if he knew that he had only to hold out for a certain length of time before considerable assistance would arrive.

(b) It was possible that even if the Finns did not crack, if they did not know our intentions, they might consent to negotiations, or to mediation by Germany. Against this, however, the Foreign Secretary drew attention to Telegram No. 75 from Finland, in which the Prime Minister of Finland was reported as having said that no suggestion of mediation had been received, and that, if it were, it would not willingly be listened to, since peace offered by Germany would put the Finns under an obligation to Germany. The Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs had undertaken to keep the French and ourselves informed if any proposals were made.

On the other hand,

(a) Present information tended to show that the Finnish military resistance would not crack, especially as there were reports that the Swedes might send further assistance in the shape of volunteers.

-2-
(b) A communication to Marshal Mannerheim of our intentions might prejudice secrecy. In this connection, it was pointed out that secrecy would in any case be very hard to maintain, as could be judged from a report received by the Secretary of State for War that M. Reynaud and M. Léger had told the whole Allied plan to a British Member of Parliament (not a member of the Government) who had passed through Paris.

(c) If Marshal Mannerheim knew of our intentions, there was a risk that, if the Finns were hard pressed, he might make a premature appeal. The Germans had their troops ready, and might well attack Sweden before we could intervene.

It was suggested as an alternative that Brigadier Ling might go to Finland, and afford moral support to Marshal Mannerheim as a friend, and talk to him in terms of volunteers. He could explain to the Marshal how difficult it was to get the Swedes to allow substantial numbers to pass through their territory, and might urge him to bring all possible pressure to bear on the Swedes. At the same time, he could act as a link with Finland, and furnish accurate reports of the happenings there.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that he would like to give the matter further consideration, and hear the views of Brigadier Ling himself before a decision was taken.
THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO thought there was one important aspect of our plans for intervention which had not been fully examined. This was the programme for subsequent reinforcement after the first three divisions had been landed in Scandinavia. When we informed Norway and Sweden of our proposed plan, it was almost certain that they would ask what further forces we were prepared to send.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY assumed that we would move any reinforcements as necessary to counter the strength of the forces employed by Germany.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that General Gamelin had remarked to him, in conversation, that if there was no attack on the Western Front by April, the Allies must look for other theatres of operation. General Gamelin clearly envisaged the possibility of taking divisions away from France in certain circumstances.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the moral to be drawn was the urgency of pressing on with our preparations as fast as possible, and he asked whether the War Cabinet could be provided with a timetable. It would be of special interest to see how soon the leading elements of our forces would be ready to move.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF emphasised the dangers of a gap between the movement of the first units and the next supporting body.

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF informed the War Cabinet that the Chiefs of Staff had arranged to meet on Thursday each week, to review the progress of the detailed plans and preparations. He suggested that a
report should be made each week to the War Cabinet.

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO thought that the Norwegians would be very anxious about the safety of Oslo, as a result of German threats to bomb their capital the moment the Allies attempted to set foot in Norway. He suggested that the possibility of our taking steps to increase the security of Oslo might be examined.

THE PRIME MINISTER agreed.

The War Cabinet:—

(i) Agreed that it was undesirable that Brigadier Ling should be authorised to convey an indication of His Majesty's Government's intentions to Field-Marshal Mannerheim; and in these circumstances invited the Secretary of State for War to reconsider whether Brigadier Ling should return to Finland forthwith as arranged. (This supersedes Conclusion (iii) to W.N. (40) 35th Conclusions, Minute 1, Confidential Annex.)

(ii) Requested the Chiefs of Staff—

(a) To report each week, on Friday, the progress made in the preparations for the Scandinavian expedition.

(b) To examine whether there were any steps which could be taken to provide protection to Oslo against air attack.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
W.M. (40) 39th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 6.

Confidential Annex.

(18th February, 1940)

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that he still held the opinion that Brigadier Ling should now be sent to Finland to give moral support to Field Marshal Mannerheim, and to provide us with full and accurate information. He could go with full knowledge of our plans, but should be told not to impart them to anyone until he received the order.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS saw no objection to Brigadier Ling going in the manner described by the First Lord. He had recently seen the Finnish Minister, from whom he had gained the impression that the Finns had a fairly accurate idea of the matters discussed between ourselves and the French at the recent meeting of the Supreme War Council. The line he himself had taken at his interview with M. Gripenberg had been that we had been giving anxious thought to the difficulties with which the Finns were faced, and fully realised how important it was not to miss any opportunities for helping them.

The Foreign Secretary then drew attention to Telegram No.12 (Saving) from Sweden, in paragraph 4 of which Mr. Mallet said that he saw no present prospect of Sweden (and still less Norway) permitting an influx of
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that he still held the opinion that Brigadier Ling should now be sent to Finland to give moral support to Field Marshal Mannerheim, and to provide us with full and accurate information. He could go with full knowledge of our plans, but should be told not to impart them to anyone until he received the order.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS saw no objection to Brigadier Ling going in the manner described by the First Lord. He had recently seen the Finnish Minister, from whom he had gained the impression that the Finns had a fairly accurate idea of the matters discussed between ourselves and the French at the recent meeting of the Supreme War Council. The line he himself had taken at his interview with M. Gripenberg had been that we had been giving anxious thought to the difficulties with which the Finns were faced, and fully realised how important it was not to miss any opportunities for helping them.

The Foreign Secretary then drew attention to Telegram No. 12 (Savings) from Sweden, in paragraph 4 of which Mr. Mallet said that he saw no present prospect of Sweden (and still less Norway) permitting an influx of
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that he still held the opinion that Brigadier Ling should now be sent to Finland to give moral support to Field Marshal Mannerheim, and to provide us with full and accurate information. He could go with full knowledge of our plans, but should be told not to impart them to anyone until he received the order.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS saw no objection to Brigadier Ling going in the manner described by the First Lord. He had recently seen the Finnish Minister, from whom he had gained the impression that the Finns had a fairly accurate idea of the matters discussed between ourselves and the French at the recent meeting of the Supreme War Council. The line he himself had taken at his interview with M. Gripenberg had been that we had been giving anxious thought to the difficulties with which the Finns were faced, and fully realised how important it was not to miss any opportunities for helping them.

The Foreign Secretary then drew attention to Telegram No.12 (Saving) from Sweden, in paragraph 4 of which Mr. Mallet said that he saw no present prospect of Sweden (and still less Norway) permitting an influx of
armed forces through Narvik, but that the Finnish Minister was busy trying to persuade the two Governments to allow several thousand volunteers to filter through by that route in bodies of about 150 at a time.

It seemed that Norway and Sweden might be got to the point of permitting quite large numbers of volunteers to pass through, and this idea led him to put forward the suggestion that we might consider once more whether we could not do something in this way. What he feared, and in this he was supported by M. Corbin, was that when we had prepared our expedition, we might be met by a refusal from Norway and Sweden to allow it to pass. As an alternative, the Petsamo project, even if on military grounds it were found to be possible to undertake it, held out no hopes of decisive results. We should thus, in March, still find ourselves unable to help the Finns.

Since the best way of securing the good will of Sweden would be to save the Finns, he thought that we ought to consider pushing through larger numbers of official volunteers, even though there might be military objections to such a course. These volunteers could not achieve as much as an organised expedition, but, if the latter proved impossible, we might have to fall back upon the former: and, from the political point of view, it would pay us to start now.

The Secretary of State for War said that the Finns required 30 or 40 thousand men to save the situation in the Spring. It would be impracticable
to pass anything like this number of volunteers through Sweden. As to the immediate problem, the only volunteers which would be of real use to the Finns would be men who could work in the snow, and of these we had so far only collected 360.

The First Lord of the Admiralty thought that it would be worth investigating further the possibility of working fairly small bodies of men through as soon as possible. The great thing, from the strategical point of view, was to get our foot into the doorway into Scandinavia. Advanced parties on the Golivare railway would be very valuable.

The First Lord then informed the War Cabinet of the proposals which the Chiefs of Staff recommended to safeguard the secrecy of plans and preparations now in progress for action in Scandinavia. They considered that it would not be sufficient to rely on information not leaking out. Deceptive action would have to be taken to make the enemy believe that our preparations were designed for some different operation.

The only plausible alternative to Scandinavia was the Middle East, and they proposed to take a number of steps designed to spread the idea that the forces were being prepared for that theatre. The danger that the Germans might attempt to forestall us by going into Roumania forthwith was not great, mainly on account of climatic conditions.
The method by which the false scent would be laid would be co-ordinated by an Inter-Service Security Board. Units would be ordered to submit size rolls for drill clothing, sun helmets, etc., and lectures on hygiene in Eastern countries would be given to the troops. Headquarters, Middle East, would be asked to continue preparations for advanced parties, reconnaissance for aerodromes, collection of small craft, etc. On the other hand, special equipment for Scandinavia would be ordered under cover of assistance to Finland, and would only be issued to troops after they had embarked. Our policy in this matter would be co-ordinated with the French by direct approach to their High Command.

If the Government approved this method of deception, the Chiefs of Staff thought that, at some stage, it might be desirable to inform the Italian Government that we were contemplating moving additional troops to the Middle East, in view of the danger from Russia. Whereas the Italians might thus welcome our proposal, the Germans would be led by our preparations in the Middle East to think that we had offensive designs in South East Europe, and that our disclosure to the Italians that we were strengthening our reserves in the Middle East was a blind.

The War Cabinet expressed their agreement with these proposals.
The War Cabinet:—

(a) Agreed that Brigadier Ling should be sent on a mission to Finland with the object of affording moral support to Field Marshal Mannerheim, and of providing us with accurate information of the situation. Brigadier Ling should be in possession of full information about the projected Allied moves in Finland and Scandinavia, but should not disclose them to anyone until he received orders to do so.

(b) Requested the Chiefs of Staff to examine and report on the possibility of passing "volunteers" through Norway and Sweden into Finland, in the manner suggested by the Foreign Secretary, on the assumption that the concurrence of Norway and Sweden to the Allied plan for intervention in Finland would not be forthcoming.

(c) Approved the proposals outlined by the First Sea Lord for safeguarding the plans and preparations now on foot for operations in Scandinavia and Finland.
W.M. (40) 40th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 6.

Confidential Annex.

(15th February, 1940.)

ASSISTANCE TO FINLAND.

The Secretary of State for War informed the War Cabinet that knowledge regarding the skiing unit destined for Finland was now becoming public property. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff had therefore suggested that this unit should be sent to France to train with the Chasseurs Alpins, who would also be going to Finland; so that the two detachments would eventually go together to Finland direct from France.

The War Cabinet approved the above proposal.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS referred to a report which he had received of some observations made in a private conversation by an Italian Senator in Rome at the end of January. The Senator, whose identity was known to us, was a moderate and a realist, and would not have spoken as he did if he had known that his remarks would be reported.

The main points made by the Senator were as follows:

The Fighting Services and the majority of the civil population in Italy were now opposed to entering the war on the side of Germany; and a considerable proportion were actually anti-German. No reference was ever made in conversation now to the Axis, which was commonly regarded as dead. In so far as it still possessed any value, it was as a smoke screen only.

Recently a number of anti-German demonstrations by students had taken place in various Italian towns, one notable example being the demonstration in front of the German Consulate in Milan, where a pair of cart wheels had been wheeled up and the exile tree sawn in two.

Count Ciano had lost his former pro-German bias and, in consequence, had recovered some of his popularity both with the Palace and with the Army. The Duce on the other hand had lost his former prestige, the people generally being critical both of the Duce and the Fascist party.

His (the Secretary of State's) general feeling was that our proper course now was to go rather slowly in our relations with Italy and not to do anything having the appearance of running after the Duce with further offers.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.
THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF reported to the War Cabinet the progress which had been made up to date in the preparations for the proposed expedition to Scandinavia. As soon as the War Cabinet had authorised the Service Departments to go ahead with full preparations, an Inter-Service Planning Staff had been set up. A daily meeting was held in the War Office to discuss with executive authorities in the various Ministries the details of plans and preparations, thus ensuring close and continuous co-ordination. This Staff worked on the basis of a directive which had been drawn up by the Chiefs of Staff (C.O.S. (40) 238 (S)).

Working in close collaboration with this Inter-Service Staff there was an Inter-Service Security Board co-ordinating all arrangements for ensuring secrecy. This was composed of officers from the intelligence staffs of the three Services, and a representative of M.I.5. It kept in close touch with the Foreign Office and the S.I.S. The Middle East was being used as cover for the expedition.

An Inter-Service Signal Board had also been set up, which co-ordinated all signal arrangements.
The basis of planning was to disembark the forces in Scandinavia at the maximum possible rate at which they could be absorbed by the transportation facilities in the country. Three separate groups had to be catered for, namely:

(i) The force for Gallivars and Finland.

(ii) The force to secure the ports in Southern Norway.

(iii) The force to co-operate with the Swedes in Southern Sweden.

The principal factor which limited the rate of disembarkation was the capacity of the transportation facilities in Scandinavia. It was calculated that the greatest daily intake which these facilities permitted was about 1500 troops with the ammunition, stores, supplies and petrol which had to accompany them. The principal base port would be Trondheim, but from this port there was only one single line railway running to the eastward, which at the present only took about six trains a day each way. It might be possible to increase this number to twelve trains a day each way, but this could only be determined after detailed discussions with the Swedes. If the Baltic ports were blockaded by the Germans, Sweden would have to depend to a very large extent on this line of communication for the imports required for her own population. These requirements would probably use three trains a day each way. It must also be remembered that a heavy scale of air attack might be launched against Trondheim. The Chief of the Air Staff thought that such attacks would almost certainly materialise.
 Movements.

A movement plan had been drawn up based on the fullest use of the port facilities in Norway and the employment of 15 liners, 24 M.T ships and 18 store ships. The port of embarkation would be the Clyde, but the warships which would carry the troops to secure the southern Norwegian ports would sail from Rosyth. The earliest date on which the first troops could disembark in Norway was the 20th March and, to achieve this, the process of loading store ships would have to begin on the 1st March. Stores took considerably longer to load than personnel. The store ships would sail in advance of the personnel ships, which would leave about three days after them. It would thus be possible for the troops to remain in their peace stations until the actual decision to despatch troops had been given.

If the troops were to arrive in Norway on the 20th March, the decision to despatch them would have to be given by the War Cabinet on the 11th March. There was, however, a later limiting date for this decision. If we were to give any useful assistance to the Finns when the thaw came about 20th April, our troops would have to be landed by about the 3rd April. Nine days had to be allowed between the Cabinet decision to dispatch troops and the arrival of the troops. If, therefore, they were to arrive by the 3rd April the decision would have to be reached by the 25th March. It was true that the present was an
exceptionally hard winter, but this did not necessarily mean that the thaw in Finland would be much delayed beyond the normal date. The date of the thaw was determined mainly by the depth of snow. The break-up of the ice in the Baltic, on the other hand, was likely to be later this year, even if the warmer weather set in quite early, since the depth of ice would be greater than usual, owing to the hardness of the winter.

From these considerations it would be seen that there was only about fourteen days latitude in the date on which the decision of the War Cabinet to despatch the expedition would have to be made.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF, in answer to a question by the Prime Minister, said that the thaw would not impede movement to any serious extent under peace conditions, but would prevent any active operations. Our troops could therefore move up into position during the thaw, provided that their movement was not opposed.

Considerable discussion followed as to the implications of the time factor. The following were the principal points which emerged:

(1) It might take some time to induce the Finns to accept direct intervention on the part of the Allies. They would realise that such an acceptance would probably involve adding Germany to their enemies.
(i.i) If the Russian attacks on the Mannerheim Line seemed likely to succeed, the Finns might be driven to make a broadcast appeal for assistance quite soon — even within the next few days. On the other hand, they might well be able to hold up the Russian attacks. The Russians would have to penetrate a very considerable distance beyond their present line before they could obtain room to manoeuvre between Lake Ladoga and the sea. It would not be practicable for the Germans to take the Finns in the rear by a sea-borne expedition till the ice broke in the Gulf of Bothnia. They could not move any considerable force over the ice, which was very rough.

(i.i.i) If the Finns succeeded in holding up the Russians on the Mannerheim Line, the Swedes would probably be reassured, and there would be little chance of their acceding to our demands for passage. At best there would probably be a considerable time spent in argument with them on this point, after the Finns made a broadcast appeal for help.

(iv) It would be necessary for us, if we were to have any chance of inducing the Swedes to allow our troops to enter Scandinavia, to be able to reassure them as to the extent of the support which we could give them. This could only be done if we were able to hold staff conversations with them.

(v) It was suggested that on this account it would be desirable to try to induce the Swedes to open staff conversations immediately. On the other hand, it was argued that if we did this, the Swedes would immediately put pressure on Finland not to appeal to the World for assistance. They might offer to send considerable forces of their own instead. They would back up this argument by pointing out to the Finns that the extent of the assistance which we were sending was very small. The Swedes would also say that our help to Finland was only being sent as a cover for our real intention of gaining control of the Swedish ore fields. The probable Swedish attitude was well set out in the record of the conversation between the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Swedish Minister in London (See Despatch of 10th February, 1940, No.66 to Stockholm).

(vi) In view of these difficulties, it was suggested that it would be better to make our demand for passage almost immediately after the Finns issued their appeal for help, and to have the expedition ready to jump in to Scandinavia immediately after this demand. It was pointed out, on the other hand, that such action would be represented to the World by our enemies in a most unfavourable light.
In any event, in order that we should be in a position to say to the Swedes that we were immediately ready to come to their assistance, all preparations should go forward on the programme which had been worked out and loading operations should begin on the 1st March.

The political and military factors were so closely inter-dependent, that it would be desirable for the whole question of the time factor to be closely examined by the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office in consultation.

It was clearly necessary that we should concert our diplomatic action very carefully with the French and should agree beforehand with them as to the steps to be taken under the various conditions which might arise, such as a premature issue of a broadcast appeal by the Finns.

THE FIRST SEA LORD then explained that a time table had been drawn up to cover the whole movement. Taking the day on which the War Cabinet gave the order to despatch troops as D1, the leading troops would arrive in Norway on D9. These would consist of:

- 2,000 troops and 2 store-ships for Narvik.
- 1,400 troops embarked on 2 cruisers for each of Bergen and Stavanger; and
- 1 Battalion with advanced parties for the Southern Sweden expedition, in 2 liners for Trondheim.

The remainder of the troops would arrive in a series of echelons - the whole movement being complete by D76. One fast and one slow convoy would sail every five days. The total move involved 100,000 troops and 11,000 vehicles.

Discussion took place upon the number of vehicles which would accompany the expedition.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the number of vehicles proposed was very high, and was not consistent with the proposal to send an
expedition equipped on a light scale. It appeared that, for every two trains filled with men there would be four trains filled with stores; and that the vehicles would choke the roads. If the Germans landed a force in Southern Sweden equipped with vehicles on this scale, it would make very little progress.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that the scale of vehicles to accompany the Army had been cut down to a minimum. Included in the total of the vehicles, was every gun, every ammunition limber, every trailer, and every motor-bicycle. The French brigade of Chasseurs Alpins, which would be the spearhead of the troops entering Finland, and which would number about 7,500, had 1,100 mules, 40 carts, and 300 mechanical vehicles, and even then would be relying on us entirely for all transport for maintenance. There was no justification for the suggestion that the British Army was equipped with vehicles on too high a scale. As regards maintenance, Divisions now in France required 700 tons a day. If active operations were in progress, they would require 1,000 tons a day. Maintenance for the Scandinavian expedition had been calculated at 500 tons per day, and the third-line transport, which normally carried supplies and ammunition from railhead to Divisional areas, had been almost entirely cut out.
A German expedition into Sweden would not be equipped on a smaller scale than ours; nor was its progress likely to be as fast as ours. They would have to be prepared for action against the Swedes immediately after landing, and they were unaccustomed to operations of this kind.

The Prime Minister suggested that, in any case, the Germans might not invade Sweden, as, provided there was no interference with their iron ore supplies, it would be greatly to their advantage to keep Sweden out of the war. They would be much more likely, he thought, to attempt to seize the Southern Norwegian ports, including Oslo, so that they would be a position to develop attack, both on any bases we might have established further north, and also to extend operations over the North Sea.

The First Sea Lord then gave the War Cabinet the details of the plans for moving the 5th Division and the Chasseurs Alpins from France. The personnel of the former would be brought by train across England, and embarked at the Clyde. It might be possible for their equipment to be found from resources in Great Britain, so as to avoid having to bring it by sea from France, and this was being further examined.

The French troops with the British Ski Troops, which were to train with them, would move direct from French ports, and rendezvous with British convoys leaving the United Kingdom.
Thirty-six Destroyers would be required for escort duty, and arrangements were being made for anti-submarine defences at Norwegian base ports. An aircraft carrier would also be used to enable the Gladiators and Lysanders of the air component to be flown off to aerodromes in Scandinavia at the earliest possible moment. The Blenheims would fly direct from this country, and it was hoped to provide balloons for Trondheim.

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO expressed anxiety at the small size of the air component, and at the fact that the aircraft of which it would be composed were not all of the most modern types. The scale of air attack on Sweden would probably be very heavy, not only from Germany, but also from Finland, if Russia succeeded in overrunning that country. He felt that, unless we were in a position to reinforce our air forces in Scandinavia very rapidly, the Swedes would not consider that our assistance was worth having, and would do all they could to keep us out.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that the Chiefs of Staff were concerned with the air aspect of the Southern expedition. The Germans had 1,300 heavy bombers, with sufficient range to engage Trondheim. The Forces we could send to oppose them were limited by the aerodromes available in Scandinavia. For example, at Trondheim there was only one small aerodrome, and at other places modern fighters could not be operated.
From our own point of view, provided we got in on the Northern line, and seized the ore fields, we were prepared to pay the heavy price which might be exacted in Southern Sweden; and it was for this reason that the Chiefs of Staff had been prepared to recommend the sending of the maximum possible force to help the Swedes, even in the face of the air attack which would probably develop.

Reference was made to the suggestion which had been made by the Chiefs of Staff in their original appreciation, that, with the object of providing a deterrent against attack on Scandinavian cities, we might make a public declaration that any such attack would be regarded by us in the same light as an attack on our own cities.

This was a matter which would have to be fully discussed by the War Cabinet, and with the French.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said that the method of retaliation against river transport which he was evolving would be ready for application by the middle of March, and would not be open to the same objections as an attack on a thickly populated district like the Ruhr. This also was a matter on which a decision would have to be taken, but he knew that the French were in favour of the project.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said he would like to hear more fully what the First Lord's project involved, and suggested that the First Lord might put his proposals before the War Cabinet.
The War Cabinet:­

(1) Took note of­

(a) The oral report by the First
Sea Lord on the progress of
preparation for intervention in
Scandinavia and Finland:

(b) The Reports by the Chiefs of
Staff on the employment of Allied
land forces in Scandinavia and
Finland (W.P.(40) 51) and the
protection of Oslo against air
attack (W.P.(40) 56):

(2) Invited the Foreign Office and the
Chiefs of Staff to examine, in
consultation, the inter-relation of
diplomatic and military action, and
to report thereon to the War Cabinet
as early as possible;

(5) Agreed that it would be necessary to
obtain the prior concurrence of the
French to any diplomatic action that
it might be decided to take vis-a-vis
Norway, Sweden or Finland, after
consideration of the Report referred
to in (2);

(4) In view of the fact that the situation
might develop rapidly, invited the
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
to take preliminary soundings of the
French Ambassador as to the French
views of the steps to be taken in
the various situations which might
arise as the position developed;

(5) Agreed that any decisions which the
War Cabinet might reach as to an
announcement that we should regard
air attacks on Scandinavia in the
same light as an attack on our own
cities would need to be agreed with
the French Government;

(6) Took note, with reference to the
preceding Conclusion, that the First
Lord of the Admiralty would take an
early opportunity to describe to the
War Cabinet his proposals for action
against German river traffic.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

-11-
W.M. (40) 44th Conclusions, Minute 5.

Confidential Annex.
(17th February, 1940.)

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the declaration of the Swedish Government published in that morning's Press, to the effect that they would not in any circumstances permit the passage of foreign troops across Swedish soil to aid Finland, might not be surprising, but was certainly embarrassing, more particularly in view of the following development.

The previous evening the Censorship had brought him the text of an article on Aid to Finland, by Mr Hore-Belisha, which was due for publication in the following Sunday's issue of the "News of the World". This article had been syndicated for publication not only in this country, but also in France and the United States. Without the knowledge of Mr Hore-Belisha, the issue of this syndicated version had temporarily been stopped by the Censor. The article was of the most objectionable character possible, and dealt expressly with our Narvik project, with the problem of the Galivare ore fields and similar problems. Nothing could be more unfortunate than the publication of such an article at the present juncture, especially having regard to the fact that its author had, until quite recently, been a member of the War Cabinet. He (the Secretary of State) had tried the previous evening, without

Page 1 of 2
ASSISTANCE TO FINLAND

Newspaper Article.

(Previous Reference: W.M.(40) 43rd Conclusions, Minute 1.)

W.M. (40) 44th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 6.

Confidential Annex.

(17th February, 1940.)

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the declaration of the Swedish Government published in that morning's Press, to the effect that they would not in any circumstances permit the passage of foreign troops across Swedish soil to aid Finland, might not be surprising, but was certainly embarrassing, more particularly in view of the following development.

The previous evening the Censorship had brought him the text of an article on Aid to Finland, by Mr Hore-Belisha, which was due for publication in the following Sunday's issue of the "News of the World". This article had been syndicated for publication not only in this country, but also in France and the United States. Without the knowledge of Mr Hore-Belisha, the issue of this syndicated version had temporarily been stopped by the Censor. The article was of the most objectionable character possible, and dealt expressly with our Narvik project, with the problem of the Gaiaure ore fields and similar problems. Nothing could be more unfortunate than the publication of such an article at the present juncture, especially having regard to the fact that its author had, until quite recently, been a member of the War Cabinet. He (the Secretary of State) had tried the previous evening, without
success, to get in touch with Mr Hore-Belisha. At the same time he had asked the Editor of the "News of the World" to return to the Foreign Office at 9.30 that morning, and had undertaken in the meanwhile that the most objectionable passages should be re-written by the Foreign Office, in Mr Hore-Belisha's style, in a manner calculated to do the least amount of harm possible. In the course of the night, Mr Hore-Belisha had told the Editor that he would make the strongest possible public protest in the House of Commons if his article did not appear in the form in which he had written it. That morning he (the Secretary of State) had had a conversation with Mr Hore-Belisha on the telephone, as a result of which he hoped that the latter would be prepared to accept the revised text prepared in the Foreign Office, which was now being sent down to him in the country by motor despatch rider.

In discussion the War Cabinet agreed strongly with the view that it would have been most unfortunate if the article had been published in its original form. It was also agreed that, having regard to the wide advance publicity given to this article in the Press, its complete suppression was out of the question.

The War Cabinet accordingly endorsed the action taken by the Foreign Secretary.

...
W.M.(40) 45TH CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 1.

Confidential Annex.
(18th February, 1940).

The War Cabinet had before them a Joint Report by the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff on the Time Factor (W.P.(40) 59).

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF explained that if our hand was forced, it would not be possible to accelerate the departure of the main expedition to Narvik and Southern Sweden. In the case of the northern force, the special equipments required were the limiting factor. The expedition to Southern Sweden had, of course, always been looked upon as the price we should have to pay for Swedish co-operation, and the two forces were therefore timed to move simultaneously. There was, however, a possibility of accelerating the sailing of the small forces to occupy the southern Norwegian ports. This question was being examined by the Chiefs of Staff. As regards General Gamelin's proposals for the immediate despatch of a token force by air to assist the Finns, (referred to in the Telegram attached as Annex I to W.P.(40) 59), we had no details yet of what the French High Command had in mind. It was possible that the proposal was being put forward mainly on political grounds. Further details were being ascertained from the French High Command.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR enquired whether the Chiefs of Staff were satisfied that the possible scale of German air attack on Trondheim would not endanger the security of the forces which it was contemplated would go to the assistance of the Swedes in Southern Sweden. He was informed that Trondheim was within range of 1,400 German aircraft which might drop up to 100 tons of bombs a day on the port. This weight of attack might be increased if the Germans seized additional aerodromes in Southern Sweden.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF agreed that a considerable risk was involved. The Chiefs of Staff, however, felt that the risk was worth accepting for the sake of the great advantage which we should obtain if we secured possession of the Swedish ore fields. The danger of air attack on Trondheim would certainly be increased if the Germans anticipated us and secured the aerodrome at Stavanger. For this reason, it was most important to forestall the Germans at Stavanger with a small force. If this small force were heavily attacked, it could destroy the aerodrome and be withdrawn by sea.

The view was expressed that it would probably be found possible to make arrangements whereby the small infantry forces for the occupation of the three southern Norwegian ports, could be made ready to sail at a very early date, and that the shipping problem ought not to present special difficulties.

It was agreed, however, that the point should be investigated as a matter of urgency.
Some discussion ensued on the possibility of the Germans making a sudden move to obtain possession of ports and aerodromes in Southern Norway and Sweden. It was thought that they might well be stung into making such a move in the near future and it was therefore clearly desirable that we should be in a position to take counter-action at short notice. The most important place from our point of view was the Stavanger aerodrome which the Germans might possibly seize by parachute troops. The possession of aerodromes in Southern Scandinavia would admittedly facilitate German air action against our shipping in the North Sea. So far as their U-boats were concerned, however, it would give them comparatively little advantage.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that if the Germans violated Scandinavian territory, it would on balance be to our advantage. Our main object was the ore fields in Northern Sweden, and we had to find some pretext for getting a footing in Scandinavia in order to secure these fields. If the Germans violated Scandinavian territory, we should at once have full justification for going in and, indeed, the Swedes and Norwegians would be likely to invite us to come to their assistance. He entirely agreed with the Secretary of State for Air that the risk of German air attack on Trondheim was serious if we had to undertake operations in Southern Sweden. Nevertheless, it seemed essential that we should at least make the Swedes a fair offer to make common cause with them if
they were attacked by Germany. If the Swedes did not resist German aggression, and refused to invite us in to their assistance, it might still be possible to carry out the limited operation of seizing the Northern ore field. The line of communication from Narvik to Galivare was not liable to heavy air attack as were the communications from the Norwegian ports to Southern Sweden. He was not convinced that we could not reach Galivare from Narvik, even in the teeth of Scandinavian opposition. The railway from Narvik might be sabotaged, but a small force under a determined leader might overcome these difficulties.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF pointed out that if we had not the use of the Narvik railway in working order, it was very doubtful whether our forces could reach Galivare in time to instal themselves there before the ice broke in the Baltic and the Germans could send an expedition to the ore field via Lulea. Moreover, there was the possibility that, in the circumstances envisaged, we should have to meet opposition from Swedish forces.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR agreed that the main objective was to secure the orefields at Galivare. He doubted, however, whether the War Cabinet realised all the implications of the proposed expedition. It was now contemplated that we should send a force amounting to about 4½ Divisions to Scandinavia. One of these was to be a regular Division but the remainder were not at present in a very advanced state of training. The 48th Division,
which had recently arrived in France and was in the same category, was not thought by the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force to be yet in a condition to undertake mobile operations. The danger of air attack to which the Secretary of State for Air had referred was a serious limiting factor; and when we made our offer of assistance to Sweden, the Swedish General Staff would no doubt realise the grave difficulties of the operation which we proposed. They might well doubt whether we could make good our offer. The original conception had been to send two divisions only to Southern Sweden, but now that the force was to be increased to 3½ Divisions, the whole affair was in danger of becoming an unmanageable commitment. If we undertook a new commitment on this scale, we should not be able to send any more troops to France until well on into the summer.

THE PRIME MINISTER observed that these doubts as to the quality of the troops which it was proposed to send to Scandinavia were a new and somewhat disturbing feature, which had not before been brought to the notice of the War Cabinet.

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO thought that it would be very difficult to persuade the Swedes to throw in their lot with the Allies and to invite us to come in, when we could only offer them such a limited amount of support.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS thought that our only chance was to work upon Scandinavian public opinion and to make all the capital we could out of assistance to the Finns in order to support our proposed demand for entry through Narvik. We should, of course, have to say at the same time that we were very ready to discuss with Sweden what should be done to support her in case of German aggression against her.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY emphasised the importance of our having some troops in Finland as early as possible. Even if the Finns were driven back and our troops with them, there would be a reasonable chance that, in the course of their retirement, they might after all secure possession of the Galivare ore fields and thus deny them to Germany.

The discussion then turned on the desirability of making an immediate communication of our proposals to the Finns, as was recommended in the Joint Report under consideration (W.P. (40) 59, paragraph 5). The text of the instructions given to Brigadier Ling, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes, was read out. It was generally agreed that, in the first instance, it would be better for the proposed communication to be made by Brigadier Ling direct to Field Marshal Mannerheim, and that the Finnish Government should not be informed officially.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER questioned whether it would be wise for our intentions to be disclosed to Field Marshal Mannerheim at the present stage. He might take the view that the assistance which we could send was of little value, and that on balance he would be better off without it, owing to the danger of its
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS thought that our only chance was to work upon Scandinavian public opinion and to make all the capital we could out of assistance to the Finns in order to support our proposed demand for entry through Narvik. We should, of course, have to say at the same time that we were very ready to discuss with Sweden what should be done to support her in case of German aggression against her.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY emphasised the importance of our having some troops in Finland as early as possible. Even if the Finns were driven back and our troops with them, there would be a reasonable chance that, in the course of their retirement, they might after all secure possession of the Galivare ore fields and thus deny them to Germany.

The discussion then turned on the desirability of making an immediate communication of our proposals to the Finns, as was recommended in the Joint Report under consideration (W.P. (40) 59, paragraph 5). The text of the instructions given to Brigadier Ling, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes, was read out. It was generally agreed that, in the first instance, it would be better for the proposed communication to be made by Brigadier Ling direct to Field Marshal Mannerheim, and that the Finnish Government should not be informed officially.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER questioned whether it would be wise for our intentions to be disclosed to Field Marshal Mannerheim at the present stage. He might take the view that the assistance which we could send was of little value, and that on balance he would be better off without it, owing to the danger of its
acceptance involving Finland in hostilities with
Germany as well as Russia.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
pointed out, however, that this difficulty would
arise even if the communication was delayed. If it
was made at once, we should at least know where we
stood with regard to the Finns.

It was thought that the instructions to
Brigadier Ling, as drafted, laid undue emphasis on the
possibility of operations at Petsamo.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR undertook
to arrange that Brigadier Ling, who had memorised
these instructions and not taken a copy with him,
should be informed that the possibility of operations
in the Petsamo area was considered remote.

Some discussion followed on the probable
reactions of the Finns and the Swedes to the various
diplomatic moves which were proposed. The following
were the principal points which emerged:

(i) The Allied force sent to Finland would be
about 2 brigades initially, rising later
to 3 brigades. This force, owing to
maintenance difficulties, would not be
able to operate South of the "waist-line";
but it was on the Mannerheim Line that
the Finns were most in need of assistance
at the present time.

(ii) The Swedes might well take the view that
we could give them no adequate support,
and might therefore press the Finns not to
accept our offer of assistance but to come
to terms with Russia. Reference was made
in this connection to telegram No. 51 from
Stockholm.

(iii) Field Marshal Mannerheim might think that
the acceptance of the forces referred to
in (i) would prejudice his chance of
obtaining any direct assistance from the
Swedes - assistance which would be far
less likely to involve him in difficulties
with Germany.
(iv) On the other hand he might be able to use our offer of assistance as a lever to extract more assistance out of the Swedes than they would otherwise provide. It was quite possible that the Germans would raise no serious objections to the Swedes sending assistance to Finland, provided that they did not interfere with Germany's supply of iron ore. They might give Sweden some form of assurance that, on these terms, they would undertake to see that Sweden did not suffer at the hands of Russia.

(v) It might well be, however, that Field Marshal Mannerheim might see more in our offer of assistance, limited though it might be, than appeared at first sight. He might realise that it meant that the whole strength of the Allies was to be engaged on his side. The moral effect of our intervention might, therefore, be very great. We should have to point out to him that the extent of our assistance was in any event limited by the inadequacy of the communications to Finland. He knew perfectly well that the railways in the North of Sweden were already choked.

The War Cabinet:

(a) Took note of the joint report of the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff Committee (W.P.(40) 59).

(b) Agreed that on his arrival in Finland on Monday, 19th February, Brigadier Ling should be directed to speak to Field-Marshal Mannerheim, in accordance with his instructions, but that in making reference to the Petsamo project, he should emphasise that the possibility of our undertaking this enterprise was remote.

(c) Agreed that for the time being no parallel communication in the same sense as (b) should be made through Foreign Office channels to the Finnish Government.
(d) Agreed that the French Government should be informed of the action taken under (b) above.

(e) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to report to the War Cabinet as a matter of urgency, the earliest date by which force "Stratford" (i.e. the force for Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger) could be made ready to sail.

(f) Took note that the Chiefs of Staff would ascertain from the French High Command further details of General Gamelin's proposal to send immediately a small detachment to Finland by air and to accelerate the despatch of a larger force (Annex I to W.P.(40) 69).

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
Instructions to Brigadier Ling.

1. The War Cabinet at their 39th Meeting on 12th February, 1940 -

"Agreed that Brigadier Ling should be sent on a mission to Finland with the object of affording moral support to Field-Marshal Mannerheim, and of providing us with accurate information of the situation. Brigadier Ling should be in possession of full information about the projected Allied moves in Finland and Scandinavia, but should not disclose them to anyone until he received orders to do so."

2. You will carry no communication in writing, but will be prepared to deliver a verbal message personally to Field-Marshal Mannerheim on the lines indicated below. Mr. Vereker, the newly appointed British Minister, is being fully informed by the Foreign Office before he departs for Finland in the course of the next few days.

3. When authorised, you are to inform Field-Marshal Mannerheim that the British and French Governments are preparing a military force which we will be ready to despatch to Finland after the middle of March, provided the Norwegian and Swedish Governments would allow this force to cross their territory. We should hope to obtain this permission as a result of an appeal by the Finnish Government to the world for assistance against Russia. This appeal would be addressed particularly to Norway and Sweden who are Finland's nearest neighbours and who would be the next to be overrun by Russia.

In making this communication to Field-Marshal Mannerheim you are to impress on him the importance to Finland that this project should not be prejudiced by either acceptance of invitations from any neutral powers to accept mediation for an early peace or by a premature appeal to the world. The timing of the appeal must be closely co-ordinated with the date on which the Allies
will be ready to intervene. The Allied intervention would give the Finns a chance of beating the Russians rather than having to accept unfavourable terms of peace.

4. The forces which the Allies would be in a position to move into Finland arriving in April would be in the order of two infantry brigades. This force might subsequently be increased to a division.

These forces would not be prepared to operate on any point South of an East and West line drawn through HELMI, operations in the more southern area being precluded both by administrative difficulties and strategical considerations.

5. Secrecy is all important and you will not communicate the information contained in these instructions to anyone until you are authorised to do so. You will inform Mr. Vereker as soon as you have imparted the Allied plans to Field-Marshal Mannerheim.

6. You should know that the Allied Governments are examining the possibilities of

(a) a landing in the same area, or

(b) despatching through Norway and Sweden the force (in paragraph 4) disguised as "volunteers".

Preliminary investigations on these lines have so far not proved favourable. We do not propose to attempt to put these alternative plans into operation unless Norway and Sweden refuse to permit the passage of Allied troops through their countries after the Finnish appeal has been made.

When you communicate the Allied plan to Field-Marshal Mannerheim he may well raise this aspect of Allied intervention. You may use your discretion
in informing him that the Allied Governments have
the above possibilities in mind but you should
impress on him that such intervention is, in the
opinion of the Allied Governments, a very indifferent
alternative to the despatch of recognised military
formations through Norway and Sweden.

The War Office.
16th February, 1940.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that M. Corbin had informed him that General Gamelin was reducing as much as possible the time required for the embarkation of the French contingent destined for the assistance of Finland. It would begin its movement to the ports of embarkation on the 26th February and would embark on the 1st March. He (the Prime Minister) had informed M. Corbin that the earliest date for the despatch of the first ships of our expedition was about the 5th March.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF interposed that the 12th March was the date for the sailing of the store ships, the personnel ships leaving on the 15th March.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had apparently misinformed M. Corbin, but at any rate he had made it clear that we could not accelerate the despatch of our expedition and would have to keep to the dates at present fixed.

The General who was to command the French contingent was due to arrive in London that day.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
SCANDINAVIA.

Stoppage of traffic in Norwegian Territorial Waters.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 45th Conclusions, Minute 3.)

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY referred to the question of the stoppage of traffic in Norwegian territorial waters by the laying of a minefield, which had been under consideration by the War Cabinet at their previous meeting (W.P. (40) 60). He realised that the War Cabinet had wished to defer a decision on this point for a few days, but he was anxious that they should meantime give him authority to make all preparations. It would be five days before the ships could be assembled, the stores prepared, and everything made ready to sail. No opportunity so good as the present one might recur.

Norway, by her action over the ALTMARK, had given us good grounds for pointing out that we were not prepared to run the risk of similar events in the future. Norwegian territorial waters were being used by the Germans to obtain supplies, to forward munitions to Russia, and for the passage of warships. The whole responsibility for stopping this action rested upon a small Power, which had shown itself unable to resist threats. By laying a minefield, we should force traffic into the open sea, and thus relieve the Norwegians of their heavy responsibility. Our action would no doubt lead to a protest by Norway, but they
could plead that they had not the resources to sweep up the mines, and might even suggest to the Germans that they should come and sweep them themselves - which, of course, they would be unable to do.

The First Lord thought that, by laying a minefield, we should not prejudice the larger operation which was being planned. On the contrary, we might succeed in provoking Germany into an imprudent action which would open the door for us. It was essential to link our action with the ALTMARK incident, and not to allow time to elapse in hesitation and argument. If preparations were begun now, the War Cabinet would have, at the least, five days before a decision need be made, and no great inconvenience would be caused if the operation were put off from day to day thereafter. It would be necessary to give notice of our intention to lay a minefield, but he would not favour a diplomatic argument with the Norwegians on the subject.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had not had time to study the question, and, although there was much to be said for the proposed step, it was most important that the right method should be adopted in carrying it out. He was only prepared to agree to preparations being started if it were fully understood that, in doing so, he was not giving any measure of consent to the proposal.

In the discussion which ensued, it was urged that we should not lose the opportunity which the ALTMARK incident afforded, and that, in consequence, we should be ready to act.
It was pointed out that the Foreign Office were awaiting a reply to their protest to the Norwegian Government at their action towards the ALTMARK, and that this reply might give the opening we desired. For example, we might say that as Norway was unable to perform her duties as a neutral, it was necessary for us to take this action.

It was generally felt that, although the effect of laying a minefield, as suggested, might be unfavourable for our chances of getting in to help Finland and seizing the orefields, those chances were likely in any case to depend upon Germany taking some action which afforded us an opening. Everything pointed to a quickening of the tempo of events in Finland and Scandinavia, and this opening might come through an immediate German reaction to the laying of the minefield. It would therefore be desirable for the small forces designed for the occupation of Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim, to be ready to move when the minefield was laid. It would be important to know on what date these forces could be ready.

It was suggested that these forces might suffer severely from air attack. The CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF, however, said that they would be quite capable of looking after themselves after they were landed, and could not be dislodged by German air action.

It was also pointed out that if Germany bombed Norwegian towns, this would stiffen the Scandinavian attitude, and might open the way for us in the North.
The War Cabinet:—

Authorised the First Lord of the Admiralty to make all preparations, so that, if it were subsequently decided to lay a minefield in Norwegian territorial waters, there would be no delay in carrying out the operation.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he had sent a telegram the previous day to the French Government informing them that Brigadier Ling had been instructed to tell Field-Marshal Mannerheim of the projected Allied moves in Finland and Scandinavia. He had also communicated to the French the time-table of these moves, and had indicated that the dates could not be accelerated.

The Foreign Secretary drew attention to the recent speech by the King of Sweden. He thought it was significant that the Swedish Government should have induced the King to make this speech, and that the motive might have been that it would be more difficult for public opinion in Sweden to go against the line publicly adopted by the King than it would be to oppose the same line when taken by the Swedish Government.

The Foreign Secretary said that he had also seen the Swedish Minister, who had informed him that the Swedish Prime Minister's statement on the 16th February had been made necessary by a sensational article in the Swedish Press, and that it betokened no real change in the Swedish Government's attitude. The Government were not prepared to depart from the attitude that they would not do more than provide voluntary help to Finland, though they intended to intensify that effort.
In discussion, attention was drawn to Despatch No. 36 from our Minister at Stockholm dated 8th February, which had just been circulated.

It was significant that Mr. Gunther had talked so freely of the possibility of Allied assistance to Norway and Sweden; and that he had stated that it would take a week for Norway to be involved in war if Sweden were first involved.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that the Director of Military Intelligence at the War Office had been informed by the Swedish Military Attaché that the French officials in Stockholm were talking openly of an expedition to Narvik.

The War Cabinet took note of these statements.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF,

introducing the Report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee on the Time Factor for Force "Stratford" (W.P.(40) 63), explained that it was desirable for the troops to arrive in the Norwegian ports before 11.0 in the morning in order that they might be disembarked the same day. They would have to sail from the United Kingdom early in the morning on the previous day.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF referred to a statement by the Prime Minister recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting of the War Cabinet on the 3rd January (W.M.(40) 2nd Conclusions, Minute 1, Confidential Annex, page 8), in which the Prime Minister had said that he concluded that we should be able to forestall the Germans in the occupation of the Western Ports of Norway. In point of fact, it was by no means certain that the Germans could not forestall us at Stavanger. It would be necessary for us to obtain the prior agreement of the Norwegians to enter this port, and if negotiations to this end were set in motion, knowledge of them might come to the Germans. In this event the Germans could land an air-borne force in Stavanger before we could reach it. They had considerable numbers of parachute troops in North
Germany, and many civil aircraft which could be used for the transport of troops. A German force landed in this way would have to be maintained by air unless they had the use of the port of Christiansand and the railway running thence to Stavanger.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff expressed the view that this would be a very hazardous operation for the Germans to undertake. Stavanger was a town of some 40,000 inhabitants, many of whom were trained as volunteers. Even very small forces could successfully resist an air-borne invasion of this nature.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the Finnish Minister, when referring to supplies of war material which were being sent from Germany, through Norwegian waters, to Russian forces in the North, had suggested that mines might be laid outside Petsamo, and had said that there was a Finnish Naval Officer at present in London who knew all about the local conditions.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said that a telegram had just been received by the Admiralty in regard to further munition ships passing up the Norwegian coast on the way to Petsamo or Murmansk. He would gladly arrange for an examination of the possibility of laying a minefield outside Petsamo.

The War Cabinet —

(1) Took note of the Report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (W.P.(40) 65):

(2) Took note that the First Lord of the Admiralty would examine the possibility of laying a minefield outside Petsamo.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1. —2—
Germany, and many civil aircraft which could be used for the transport of troops. A German force landed in this way would have to be maintained by air unless they had the use of the port of Christiansand and the railway running thence to Stavanger.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF expressed the view that this would be a very hazardous operation for the Germans to undertake. Stavanger was a town of some 40,000 inhabitants, many of whom were trained as volunteers. Even very small forces could successfully resist an air-borne invasion of this nature.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the Finnish Minister, when referring to supplies of war material which were being sent from Germany, through Norwegian waters, to Russian forces in the North, had suggested that mines might be laid outside Petsamo, and had said that there was a Finnish Naval Officer at present in London who knew all about the local conditions.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that a telegram had just been received by the Admiralty in regard to further munition ships passing up the Norwegian coast on the way to Petsamo or Murmansk. He would gladly arrange for an examination of the possibility of laying a minefield outside Petsamo.

The War Cabinet —

(1) Took note of the Report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (W.P.(40) 63):

(2) Took note that the First Lord of the Admiralty would examine the possibility of laying a minefield outside Petsamo.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.  
--8--
Scandinavia.

Stoppage of Traffic in Norwegian Territorial Waters.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 49th Conclusions, Minute 5.)

Communication received from the French Government.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he had just received an important communication from the French Ambassador, which he had not yet had time to study fully. It contained, however, a proposal that His Majesty's Government should at once take steps, on the strength of the Altmark incident, to seize Stavanger and the other Norwegian ports. He had contented himself with saying to M. Corbin that a coup de main of this kind formed no part of our plans.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said that it would be a grave error to authorise a landing in Norway, in the face of opposition, as a mark of our displeasure at the line Norway had taken in the case of the Altmark. Even the firing of a few shots between British and Norwegian forces would be a most unfortunate affair. On the other hand, the laying of a minefield in Norwegian waters could almost certainly be accomplished without any kind of collision with Norwegian forces. There were several places at which a minefield could conveniently be laid. If Norwegian ships of war were present at one of these places, it would be an easy matter for our mine-laying vessels to remove their operations elsewhere.
THE PRIME MINISTER remarked that the proposal which M. Corbin had transmitted seemed to show that the French Government had taken no notice whatever of the suggested time-table for the operations in aid of Finland, which we had communicated to them. The action which the French proposed would, in fact, probably make those operations impossible.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS assumed that the French considered that the prospects for those operations had now become unfavourable.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the chances of the larger plan materialising must now be admitted to be slight. The facts of the situation were all against them. On the other hand, the stoppage of German traffic in Norwegian territorial waters, by provoking Germany to reprisals, might provide the Allies with a favourable opening.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

...
W.M. (40) 49th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 6.

Confidential Annex.

(22nd February, 1940)

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
drew attention to Helsinki telegram No.112, dated 17th
February. This telegram contained Mr. Snow's account of
his farewell audience with the President of the Finnish
Republic. The Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs had
been present.

The Foreign Minister had confirmed the Swedish
refusal to sanction the despatch of troops
en masse to Finland; the Finnish Government
had informed the Swedish Government in
consequence that they now had no alternative
but to appeal to the Allies for help. The
President of the Republic had then said that
he wished to request that His Majesty's
Government and the French Government would
at once inform the Soviet Government that,
if the latter would not respond to the
Finnish Government's known desire to bring
hostilities to an end, it would have an
unfavourable effect on the future course of
relations between the Allied Governments and
the Soviet Union.

The President of the Republic had stated that
he put this forward as the only step which
could be taken by the Western Powers which
offered any prospect of any immediate relief
for Finland. The despatch of munitions would
take time, of men even longer. Accordingly,
the step in question represented the greatest
service that could now be offered. He
considered that, in view of possible developments
elsewhere, e.g. in the Caucasus, the step suggested
would give the Soviet Government serious grounds
for preoccupation and would, as the Minister
for Foreign Affairs put it, in any case "clear
the ground diplomatically for any action
which the Western Governments might later
decide to take". If the step could be
accompanied by any kind of naval or military
moves, he considered that the effect would
naturally be all the greater, but he did not
wish to insist on this aspect.
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he would prefer to defer his comments on this important telegram. The message contained in it might be the Finnish Government's supreme appeal to the United Kingdom and France. If so, the message did not follow the lines which we had expected and desired.

The following points were made in the course of a preliminary discussion:

(a) The prospects of an Anglo-French military operation in aid of Finland, in the form originally contemplated, must now be considered as extremely dubious.

(b) The Finnish Government might have second thoughts as a result of the communication which Brigadier Ling was making to Field Marshal Mannerheim. Brigadier Ling was now in Helsinki.

(c) The language which it was suggested the British and French Governments should hold to Russia amounted almost to a declaration of war. There were very serious objections to that course. Our war aim was the defeat of Germany, and the entry of Russia into the war might make it harder, rather than easier, for us to attain it.

(d) On the assumption that we were successful in applying pressure to Russia, the result would be a patched-up peace between Russia and Finland. This, again, would not help us to secure our war aim; it would set Russia free to give a more extended measure of economic assistance to Germany.

(e) The Finnish appeal might well have been concerted with the Swedish Government. In this connection, attention was drawn to telegram No.70, dated 20th February, from the British Ambassador at Stockholm, in which the latter had argued that, if we were ever to obtain the consent of the Swedish Government to military intervention by us in Scandinavia, we should have to find some means of convincing them of our ability to protect them against combined aggression from Russia and Germany.
(f) If we were going to consider seriously a policy which would involve us in war with Russia, it was very important for us to ascertain in the first instance what would be the reactions of the Turkish and Italian Governments.

(g) The SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR reminded the War Cabinet that our present plans for assistance to Finland were having the effect of delaying very considerably the stage at which the British Expeditionary Force could play any considerable part on the Western Front. Troops were to be brought back from France to take part in the proposed Northern operations, and it might even be necessary for a time to suspend entirely the flow of equipment and ammunition to the British Expeditionary Force.

The War Cabinet took note of the above discussion.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
In the course of discussion on the preceding item, the SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that there was one element in the situation which, although not strictly relevant, the War Cabinet should have in mind. If the fear of invasion by Russia was lifted from Norway and Sweden, this would leave them menaced only by Germany. A conversation which the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had had on the previous evening with the Soviet Ambassador was therefore very relevant, and he proceeded to read a note of this conversation to the War Cabinet. Briefly, M. Maisky, who said that he was speaking on instructions, had indicated that Russia wanted to maintain her neutrality, and that she had no idea of invading Norway or Sweden after the Finnish situation had been liquidated. He had given Mr. Butler the terms on which Russia would be prepared to make peace with the Finns. These were even more severe than the offer which had led to the Finnish war in the first place, but he had said that if these terms were not accepted, the war would go on until Finland was defeated. We should then have lost for ever the goodwill of Russia, but should not have saved Finland, which would be another Abyssinia in our diplomatic history.
The view was generally expressed that it would be most unwise to have anything to do with the Russian proposals. If we communicated them to the Finns, one of two things might happen. Either we should give an impression that we thought the terms should be accepted, or we should give the impression that we wished to encourage the Finns to resist, in which event they would feel that they had a strong moral case for pressing us to give them sufficient help to enable them to put up an effective resistance. The best way of dealing with the matter would be to inform M. Maisky that, if his Government wished to get their proposals considered, they should make them direct to the Finns; but that, if the war continued, Anglo-Soviet relations would undoubtedly become progressively worse.

The War Cabinet:—

Agreed that the Foreign Secretary should deal with M. Maisky's proposals on the above lines.
Viscount Halifax to Mr. Le Rougetel (Moscow).

(No. 73.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, February 22, 1940.

THE Soviet Ambassador called to see Mr. Butler this evening at his own request. He said, on entering, that he had not come to talk about the s.s. Selenga. He had more important matters to speak about. Since their last talk he had been in communication with his Government and he was now speaking on instructions from them.

2. M. Maisky recalled that in their last talk they had run over the various questions which interested the two Governments. In the first place he had authority to speak about the Soviet-German Trade Agreement. This certainly was an agreement of considerable scope, but it was of a purely economic character. From the Soviet point of view it was hoped to obtain considerable quantities of machinery, machine tools and military equipment. But there was no intention of entering into a military alliance with Germany. He said that he thought that Mr. Butler might have observed, in studying Soviet statesmen over the past few months, that they were not simpletons. To make a military alliance with a nation like Germany already at war was a far bigger commitment than the Soviet Union would care to undertake. Soviet policy was, in fact, one of neutrality in the world war, as he had told me in September last. The Soviet Union would not move from this neutrality vis-a-vis the main belligerents, Great Britain and France, unless they were attacked by either.

3. Mr. Butler asked the Ambassador whether this definition of Soviet policy applied to the Middle and Near East. He said that it certainly did. He did not anticipate that after their experience in Finland his Government would indulge in further foreign adventure. They were, however, fortifying the Caucasus, since they, on their side, had apprehensions. The arrival of the Anzac troops and the presence in the Near East of a large French army caused them apprehension. Moreover, His Majesty's Government had recently given a credit to Iran which caused them to be nervous in that quarter of the world. Mr. Butler replied that no doubt we had both of us reason to be nervous of the other.

4. Reverting to the north, the Ambassador said that the Russian objectives in Finland had been of a strategic character in order to safeguard the western approaches to Leningrad and the northern portion of the Union. He did not consider that similar arguments would apply to protecting the southern approaches to the Union through the Bosphorus. Nor did the Soviet intend to invade Northern Norway or North Sweden. There was no question of their aiming at occupying Narvik. Mr. Butler asked him whether assurances of this character had been given to Norway and Sweden, and he said that he thought they had.

5. M. Maisky said that he now came to the most important thing which he wished to tell Mr. Butler. During their previous conversation he had noticed an interest on Mr. Butler's part as to how the Finnish war would be likely to end. He himself had said on that occasion that the Russian troops would have to proceed to the bitter end. He would now, however, alter his answer as a result of an exchange of views with his Government. His Government would be ready to make peace with the Finns on similar terms to those offered before the war broke out. The "military people," as he described them, insisted, however, on making a more extended provision for the defence of Leningrad than had previously been suggested to the Finnish Government. Mr. Butler asked M. Maisky at this stage whether the Soviet Government would negotiate with the Government at Helsinki and not with the puppet Government. His Excellency said that he considered
that a peace settlement could be arrived at with the Government at Helsinki on
the following terms:

(a) Retention by the Soviet of the islands in the Gulf of Finland which they
already occupied.
(b) The lease of Hangö and a few islands round.
(c) The retention by the Soviet of the western half of the Rybachii Peninsula.
(d) The cession of the whole of the Karelian Isthmus to the Soviet. The
southern frontier of Finland would then run on a line: Vipuri,
Sortavala and then curving round the north of Lake Ladoga in the
neighbourhood of Kitela to the present frontier of the Soviet Union.
This would mean that the whole of Lake Ladoga would be on the
side of Russian territory.
(e) Soviet troops would retire from Petsamo as some *quid pro quo* for the
extra territory to be ceded in the Karelian Isthmus.
(f) No compensation for the cession of these districts would be offered to
the Finns, and in this respect the terms would be different from those
offered before the war. Compensation was out of the question after
the great expense and trouble of the war.

6. The Ambassador said that in the view of the Soviet military experts,
although the Mannerheim Line was not yet destroyed or passed, it was broken.
If terms of the type that he had put to Mr. Butler were not accepted now, the
war would have to go on. He was most anxious himself for Great Britain and
the Soviet Union to improve their relations. If terms such as these were accepted,
there would be a turning-point. If not, he anticipated that Finland would rank
in our diplomatic history with Abyssinia, since, owing to its geographical position
and the difficulty of adequate help being sent there, and the obvious reluctance
of Sweden and Norway to send armed forces apart from volunteers, the Russians
would eventually overrun the country. Then we should have done just enough
to excite Russian animosity for many years without doing enough to save Finland.

7. Mr. Butler told the Ambassador that when they had talked together
previously they had neither of them been acting on the instructions of their
Governments, nor had they been giving official messages to each other on major
policy. On this occasion he thought that Maisky's message was too important
for him to make any observations without consulting me. The Ambassador said
that he fully accepted that position and he also accepted the present official
position of His Majesty's Government, which was that we should offer help to
Finland under cover of the League of Nations resolution. He agreed with
Mr. Butler as to the strength of feeling in this country against the Soviet action
and also that it was impossible to say whether the Finns would accept such terms
as he had suggested. He would, however, be interested to hear, if possible
tomorrow, what impression his messages had made upon the mind of His
Majesty's Government.

8. Mr. Butler told the Ambassador that he would see that he received some
message when His Majesty's Government had had time to consider what the
Ambassador had told him. It should be added that M. Maisky told Mr. Butler
that he thought that these suggestions had not been put to any other Government.

I am, &c.
HALIFAX.
ASSISTANCE TO FINLAND.

[Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 49th Conclusions, Minute 6].

ASSISTANCE TO FINLAND.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF gave the War Cabinet an oral report of the progress which had been made during the week ending Thursday, 22nd February, in the steps which were being taken to afford assistance to Finland. The full details of these steps are set out in the Appendix to this Annex.

The War Cabinet took note of the statement by the Chief of the Air Staff and agreed as follows:

(a) To accept the recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff, endorsed at the meeting by the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, that the transportation of the personnel for the projected expedition should be carried out in small liners only, to the exclusion of the two 42,000 ton liners which had been earmarked under the original plans (see Paragraph 1 of Appendix); and that the necessary adjustments to the original plans should be made accordingly, particularly with a view to minimising the risks which would be entailed by the consequent overloading of the small liners.

(b) To take note of Telegram No. 8, dated the 21st February from Sir H. Kennard (His Majesty's Ambassador to the Polish Government at Angers) objecting to the inclusion of Polish troops in the proposed expedition (see Paragraph 5 of Appendix); and to invite the Foreign Secretary to inform the French that in our view both on political and on military grounds this part of the project should not be proceeded with.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
PROGRESS REPORT.
WEEK ENDING THURSDAY, 22nd FEBRUARY, 1940.

MOVEMENT PROGRAMME.

1. The provisional time-table given to the War Cabinet last week holds good.

Further investigation of the embarkation facilities in the Clyde has disclosed that it will not be possible to load the store ships at this port. The Clyde will therefore be used for the embarkation of personnel and M/T only. Stores, ammunition and petrol will be embarked in Bristol Channel ports. This will involve an increase of two days in the time of passage for these ships, but no increase in the amount of merchant shipping taken up will be necessary. There will, however, be some addition to the naval escorting forces.

The above arrangements apply only to the transportation of the main expedition. The store ships for the first echelon will load at the Clyde, and no change in the programme for the sailing of these convoys will therefore be necessary.

Use of Large Liners for Personnel Ships.

Under the original plans two 42,000-ton liners, the "Empress of Britain" and the "Aquitania", were earmarked for personnel in addition to 11 smaller liners. The Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that the use of these large ships would be unsound owing to their great vulnerability and the need of spreading the risk of sinkings as much as possible.

The personnel could be transported in the 11 smaller liners which are being taken up if the carrying capacity of these smaller ships was increased by about one-third. The objections to this are:-

(i) There would not be sufficient boats and rafts to carry the complement in these ships if they were sunk by enemy action.

(ii) It is desirable for the troops to arrive as fresh as possible, since they may be subjected to heavy air attack at the port of disembarkation. Overcrowding of ships is therefore to be avoided if possible.

(iii) If ships are loaded to their maximum capacity there is no safety factor for last-minute additions which may be necessary.

-1-
The Chiefs of Staff feel that these objections are insufficient to outweigh the risks of the use of the two large liners, but they understand that the Ministry of Shipping consider that the deficiency of lifeboats and rafts rules out the proposal to use the smaller liners only. The Minister of Shipping will no doubt state his objections to the War Cabinet.

It should be added that no additional small liners of the necessary speed are available for the expedition. Only slower ships could be found, which would reduce the speed of the convoy by 3-4 knots. This would not be acceptable.

ADVANCEMENT OF THE STATE OF READINESS OF "STRATFORD" FORCE.

2. As already reported to the War Cabinet the state of readiness of force "Stratford" (Trondhjem, Bergen and Stavanger) has been advanced. Troops will be ready to move as from the early hours of the 26th February. From the date of the Cabinet decision it will take 3-4 days for this force to reach the Norwegian ports any time after the early hours of the 26th February.

3. CO-ORDINATION OF ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE FRENCH.

General Audet, who is to be the senior officer with the French contingent, has been in London during the last week, and has been engaged in detailed discussions with the Service Planning Staff. As a result of these discussions we have now definite information of the composition of the French contingent. It transpires that the brigade of Chasseurs Alpins is now almost entirely mechanised.

It is proposed to ship the French contingent in three echelons, as follows:-

1st Echelon.
4,000 personnel.
141 vehicles
150 animals
3,000 tons of stores.

2nd Echelon.
4,600 personnel
450 vehicles (including some tanks).
200 animals
5,000 tons of stores.

3rd Echelon.
4,500 personnel (mainly Poles).
128 vehicles.
3,500 tons of stores.

The idea of using the Foreign Legion in the first contingent has apparently been dropped by the French. The Poles are being sent mainly on political grounds, and will not be fully trained troops. They will however be of great use as labour.
4. **Movement of the 5th Division from France.**

The War Cabinet may be interested to know that the movement of the 5th Division from France is not due to begin until some days after the first convoys of the expedition have set sail. There is therefore no question of these troops being withdrawn from the B.E.F. unnecessarily.

5. **General Gamelin's Proposals for Immediate Assistance to Finland.**

Information has been received from General Audet regarding General Gamelin's proposals to send a small token force immediately by air for the assistance of Finland. The project has not been worked out in any detail by the French, but their proposal is to send 100-115 men by air to Bergen via England and Scotland. By impressed civil aircraft a further 100 men could be sent. How it is proposed that these men should travel on from Bergen the French do not say, but they realise that the project could not be carried through without Norwegian and Swedish co-operation, which at present appears hardly likely. General Gamelin is not keen on the proposal, because such action might disclose our whole plan prematurely.

The Air Ministry calculate that by commandeering every available large civil aircraft in the country, it would only be possible to transport about 40 men, complete with personal arms equipment and winter clothing, direct to Turku, the nearest Finnish aerodrome. If the aircraft could refuel in Norway and Sweden about 440 men could be carried.

The Chiefs of Staff do not consider that any useful purpose would be served by the despatch of a small force of this nature, even if it were possible.

6. **Possible Scale of Air Attack on Trondhjem.**

The Chiefs of Staff have given further consideration to the question of enemy air attack on Trondhjem. In the event of a German blockade of the Baltic ports, and of a German occupation of southern Sweden, Sweden will have to depend for the majority of their import requirements on Trondhjem and the railways used by the Allied forces in south Sweden.

These requirements have been the subject of a detailed examination by the Ministry of Economic Warfare. If the Germans succeeded in reaching the line of the lakes in south Sweden, the greater part of the industry and population of Sweden would lie behind their lines. The responsibility for feeding this part of Sweden would therefore be theirs. There is insufficient statistical information available to enable an exact calculation of the import requirements of the civil population of the remainder of Sweden to be made, but in the opinion of the Ministry of Economic Warfare the civil population might be
maintained on imports amounting to 1½-2 million tons a year through the port of Trondheim. A lower rate of import might be found adequate in the first few months, during which available stocks could be drawn upon. The maintenance tonnage of the Allied forces, when all have arrived, will be at the rate of about 1 million tons a year.

The Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion, after taking all the relevant factors into account, that the risks to Trondheim and its communications may be reasonably accepted as part of the price we may have to pay for seizing the ore fields and thus hastening the end of the war.

7. **AIR DEFENCES OF THE BASE PORTS.**

19 first-line balloons are the most that can be made available in the first instance for the air defence of the bases. It has therefore been decided to concentrate those at Trondheim, which will then have an adequate balloon defence. To spread them between Trondheim and Narvik would mean that neither base had adequate protection.

9 of the balloons will be moored to trawlers, which will move over with the first convoy. There will be sufficient time to set up the balloon barrage between the arrival of this convoy and that of the first echelon of the main body. The light anti-aircraft guns will be disembarked at the same time as the balloons.

8. **AERODROMES IN NORTHERN SCANDINAVIA.**

Investigation has shown that the aerodromes in northern Scandinavia are likely to be unusable, owing to the thaw, for about one month, somewhere between the middle of May and the end of June. The Swedes are reported to be trying to arrange for seaplane squadrons to co-operate with their land forces in the event of their being involved in hostilities during this period. It is probable that Komi aerodrome (in Finland) will be usable even during the thaw, since it has firm gravel runways.

We require the use of Boden aerodrome and to overcome this difficulty, it is proposed to purchase portable runways consisting of coconut matting with an overlay of chain link fencing, such as has been successfully used recently at Wick. The possibility of using Fleet Air Arm seaplanes for Army co-operation work is also being examined by the Admiralty and Air Ministry.
9. SECURITY MEASURES.

The Inter-Service Security Board are acting on the policy already approved by the War Cabinet. Arrangements are being made for calculated leakages abroad and indiscretions in the provincial Press in this country referring to the movement of troops to the Middle East. Similar arrangements are being made by the Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East. Wireless traffic between the United Kingdom and the Middle East is to be increased for purposes of deception. Other deceptive measures such as preparations for the reception of shipping in the Middle East, are under active consideration.

10. PLANNING FOR OPERATIONS IN THE PETSAMO AREA.

In accordance with the agreement reached with the French at the 5th meeting of the Supreme War Council, the possibility of a landing at Petsamo has been further examined. A full appreciation was drawn up by the British Military Representatives on the Allied Military Committee, which has been approved by the Chiefs of Staff, who instructed that it should now be discussed with the French Representatives on the Allied Military Committee.

A landing in the Petsamo area presupposes that the cooperation of Sweden has not been obtained. In these circumstances operations to seize the Galivare area would not be practicable. The project must therefore be judged on its merits as a means of supporting the Finns against Russia. The object of the operation would be to cut the Murmansk railway and subsequently capture Murmansk as a base for further operations.

The broad conclusions which emerge from the appreciation are as follows:

(i) A landing on Russian or Finnish territory is impracticable.

(ii) A landing at Kirkenes (an adjacent Norwegian fjord) would be the only practicable means of getting ashore, but would involve the violation of Norwegian territory.

(iii) Even if a landing was effected, it would not be possible to capture Murmansk itself in the time available before the Russians at Murmansk could be heavily reinforced by sea from Archangel.

(iv) The most that could be done would be to clear the Russians out of the Petsamo area and possibly the Ribashi Peninsula, but this in itself would not materially reduce the pressure on the Finns.

The Chiefs of Staff are therefore of the opinion that an operation at Petsamo would fulfil no useful object. If the French High Command agree with this, no further action on the proposal will be required. It is understood that General Gamelin is not at all in favour of the project. In the meanwhile the possibility of a landing at Petsamo is not being taken into account in our preparations for the major project.
The War Cabinet had before them Memoranda by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs covering a communication received from the French Government containing a proposal that His Majesty's Government should at once take steps, on the strength of the ALTMARK incident, to seize Stavanger and the other Norwegian ports, together with a draft reply thereto (W.P.(40) 65 and 71).

The War Cabinet considered the draft reply, and agreed that material on the following two points, should be included in the reply:—

(a) There were military objections to the French proposal. The forces now being prepared for the Norwegian ports would be organised and loaded for an unopposed landing. Considerable changes in this arrangement would be required if an opposed landing were to be carried out, and these changes would take time to execute. (The War Office were invited to submit a draft paragraph dealing with this point.)

(b) In order to soften our blunt refusal of the French project, it would be desirable to continue the
reply by putting forward the alternative which we were considering, namely, the laying of the minefield.

The War Cabinet:

Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to revise the draft reply to the French Government, so as to include the two points given above.

Fractions of the Finnish Government to the Scheme for Allied Assistance.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 45th Conclusions, Minute 1.)

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs read to the War Cabinet Telegrams Nos. 141 and 142 from Helsingfors. (Copies of these telegrams are attached).

Telegram No. 141. The Foreign Secretary proposed to reply to the two questions put by the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs, in paragraph 6, on similar lines to the reply which had been given to the King of the Belgians on 14th January, 1940. He would say that, whereas it was impossible to guarantee anything, the Finnish Government could be sure that, if our two countries were both in the war as Allies, we should do everything in our power to maintain the integrity of Finland, and that the whole resources of the British Empire would be exerted in the common struggle.

The War Cabinet approved this proposal.

Telegram No. 142. The War Cabinet considered this telegram paragraph by paragraph.

It was generally thought that the suggestion, in paragraph 3, that assistance to Finland under the Allied plan should be by "armed volunteer formations" rather than by Regular armed forces would be the kind

\[ W.M. (40) 13th Conclusions, Minute 1. \]
of subterfuge which would raise great difficulties for the French and ourselves, but would not affect Germany's attitude. The presence of large British and French forces passing across Sweden would be equally distasteful to the Germans whether or not they were called "volunteers". On the other hand, it was suggested that, by using the fiction of "volunteers", we might avoid war with Russia; though this was doubtful as the Russians were not officially at war with Finland at all.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs drew attention to the fact, mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Telegram, that the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs had gone straight to Stockholm to tell the Swedish Government of the impending appeal. This meant that the whole plan would be disclosed to Sweden forthwith, which was contrary to the recommendations made by the Chiefs of Staff that nothing should be disclosed until 5th March.

He had thought of telephoning to Stockholm to stop the communication which the Finns were proposing to make. He had not done so, however, first, because he had always thought that a longer time would be necessary for negotiations with Norway and Sweden than had been allowed for, and, secondly, he thought that the Swedes would be likely to keep quiet about the whole matter, as it would not be in their interests to let it leak out.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF pointed out that the Swedes would immediately have to consult their
military advisers, who were in very close touch with the German Army, and it was in this way that the leakage would be likely to occur.

It was generally felt that the balance of argument was in favour of letting things take their course; and, furthermore, that the Finns and Swedes should be told that the Allies were not only willing to give Sweden extensive military assistance, but were actively making preparations to do so. The actual scale of this assistance would not, of course, be disclosed, unless we reached the stage of Staff Conversations with the Swedes, as it would to a large extent be affected by the Swedish capacity to receive the forces we planned to send. The Swedes should, however, be assured that we were taking the matter seriously, and that the assistance would be on a large scale.

The War Cabinet agreed:

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should reply to Telegrams Nos. 141 and 142 from Helsingfors in the sense of the above discussion.

The War Cabinet had before them a Report by the Chiefs of Staff on the subject of "Scandinavia - Staff Conversations" (W.P.(40) 70).

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that when considering the question of the Staff Conversations which it would be necessary to hold with the Swedes and Norwegians, it had become apparent to the Chiefs of Staff that these would have to be on a very much
broad basis than such conversations usually were; and would have to cover not only military but also financial and economic matters. For these reasons the Chiefs of Staff recommended that a special Delegation, headed by a Minister, should be ready to proceed to Scandinavia as soon as might be necessary; and furthermore, in view of the shortage of time, that this Delegation should be constituted forthwith to study the various problems involved.

THE PRIME MINISTER considered that the arguments in the Report were very convincing. He asked whether the situation envisaged by the Chiefs of Staff would not have disturbing repercussions on our shipping.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL considered that it would add to our shipping difficulties.

In further discussion the view was expressed that it was unlikely that the Norwegians and Swedes would accept our offer of help; and that the best hope was that they might gradually be brought round to accept our help.

In the circumstances, it was felt that, as the Chiefs of Staff proposal would involve the Departments concerned in much work which might eventually prove to be wasted, it would be better to wait for a few days, until the reactions of the Swedes and the Norwegians to our proposals became known.
The War Cabinet:

(1) Expressed general approval of the views in the Chiefs of Staff Memorandum (W.P.(40) 70) as to the scope of the Delegation required;

(2) Deferred a decision for a few days as to the appointment of the proposed Delegation.

(3) Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform the War Cabinet as soon as, in the light of developments in Scandinavia, he considered that the time was ripe for the appointment of a Delegation on the lines proposed.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION.

FROM: FINLAND.

Decypher. Mr. Vereker, (Helsingfors).

February 25th, 1940.

D. 11.03 p.m. February 25th, 1940.

R. 12.15 a.m. February 26th, 1940.

No. 141.

MOST SECRET.

Deputy Chief of the General Staff’s telegram to Ling of February 20th.

2. On my arrival by air yesterday I was informed that Minister for Foreign Affairs desired to see me and Brigadier Ling as soon as possible. I accordingly arranged that (gr. undec.) see Monsieur Tanner in the evening. This enabled me to discuss telegram with Brigadier Ling who had already explained proposals to Prime Minister and Field Marshal Mannerheim.

3. Mr. Gurney introduced me to Minister for Foreign Affairs after which I had some minutes private conversation which consisted chiefly of an extremely cordial welcome to Finland.

4. Brigadier then joined us and I read out to Monsieur Tanner the proposal in regard to the Finnish appeal for assistance contained in above-mentioned telegram.

5. Monsieur Tanner replied that Finnish Government had in fact already begun preliminary enquiries at Stockholm as to attitude of Swedish Government. The results had not so far been encouraging but he would try and let us know more tomorrow.

- 1 -
6. Minister for Foreign Affairs then put some questions to me concerning which he said Finnish Government would like to have more precise information. He said that as intervention of Allied troops on behalf of Finland would automatically place Finland on side of Allies; first, would Allied Governments be prepared to guarantee territorial integrity of Finland and would Finland's present frontiers be embodied in final peace treaty? Secondly, would financial assistance be granted to Finland for duration of the war? I said that I would of course have to refer these questions to Your Lordship.

Repeated to Stockholm No. 16.
SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION.

From: FINLAND.

Decypher. Mr. Vereker (Helsingfors).
25th February, 1940.

D. Midnight 25th February, 1940.
R. 1.00 a.m., 26th February, 1940.

No. 142.

MOST SECRET.

Further discussion took place this afternoon, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs being present.

2. Prime Minister began by asking for strength of proposed Allied contingents and time it would take (? for them to arrive). He was informed that according to Allied programme the appeal to Norway and Sweden was fixed for March 5th on the assumption that contingents would be ready to move about March 15th and should be in concentration area in Finland mid-April: their strength would amount to over 80,000 men but very heavily armed: they would only (? be, omtd.) in northern sector.

3. Discussion then centred on question as to how troops were to be conveyed across Norway and Sweden. Prime Minister read out note just received from Swedish Government to the effect that latter would continue to permit passage of munitions and "volunteers in small groups" but were not prepared to allow passage of regular armed forces which would in their opinion inevitably enlarge area of conflict and turn Sweden into a battleground. Prime Minister then asked me very earnestly whether it would not be possible so to frame the proposed appeal to Allied Powers, Norway and Sweden for assistance as to make
mention of "armed volunteer formations", rather than of regular armed forces, on precedent of Spanish (?civil war). Brigadier and I, speaking personally, consider this to be merely a quibble but, if any (? such) camouflage should enable the Norwegian and Swedish Governments to swallow pill in the eyes of their own people and of the world, we feel it is worth trying.

4. As time is very short, it was decided that Minister for Foreign Affairs should proceed tonight to Stockholm to inform Swedish Government that Finnish Government intend to make their appeal on date mentioned, and on these lines.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs then asked if any assurance could be given that extensive military assistance would immediately be forthcoming for Sweden in case Swedish Government agreed to passage of Allied troops and so incurred attack by Germany (grp. undec.) both Brigadier and I felt ourselves not empowered to give any assurance as to definite scale of assistance without reference to Your Lordship. As, however, (? pledge of) such assurance would definitely strengthen Finnish approach to Sweden in the course of next few days I beg that His Majesty's Minister at Stockholm and I may be informed urgently of views of His Majesty's Government in this matter.

Addressed to Foreign Office No. 142 of 25th February; repeated to Stockholm No. 17.
W.M. (40) 58th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 8.

Confidential Annex.

(26th February, 1940.)

The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (W.P. (40) 72), containing the record of a further interview which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had had, on the morning of the 24th February, with the Soviet Ambassador, about the terms put forward by Russia for ending the Finnish war. The Memorandum also contained suggestions for the lines of a telegram to the Finnish Government, which should tell them of the approach by the Soviet Government.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY thought that the proposed telegram might have to be somewhat modified in the light of more recent information. Some doubt had been expressed as to whether telegram No. 112 from Helsingfors had been correctly interpreted, but the proposed reply would not be sent until he had made sure on this point. (See telegram 76 to Helsingfors.) The Foreign Secretary said that he thought the Finns should be made aware that the Russians had made this démarche. Otherwise, if Russia overran Finland, there would be a danger that the Russians would say that such an event need not have happened if the British had made the Finns aware of the Russian offer. He did not think it fair to the Finns or prudent to ourselves to say nothing.
General agreement was expressed with the view that we should tell the Finns that we had had this demarche and that we should not communicate the proposed terms to them unless they asked to be informed of them.

The War Cabinet:­

(a) Authorised the Foreign Secretary to despatch a telegram to the Finnish Government on the lines of the draft contained in W.P. (40) 72, subject to such modifications as he thought appropriate.

(b) Agreed that our Minister at Helsingfors should be furnished with the peace terms proposed by the Russians, and authorised to communicate them to the Finnish Government if the latter enquired what they were.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the French Ambassador had also reported that the Finnish Government had told the French Minister at Helsingfors that they could not give any answer to our suggestion that they should appeal for help from the Allies, until they knew what attitude would be adopted by the Scandinavian countries. He had also reported that the Soviet Government had approached the Finnish Government privately, offering conditions of peace, including the cession of Viborg, Sortavalla and positions in the Hango peninsula, and requiring Finland to make a pact of mutual assistance. The Ambassador's only comment on these terms had been that, if we were not able to help the Finns quickly, it might be too late.

The Ambassador, on being told our answer to the French proposal for the occupation of the Norwegian ports, had said that the French Government hoped that, if we did not accept this proposal, we should, at any rate, use the ALTMARK incident as an opportunity for going on with the scheme for stopping the Narvik ore traffic. They would be very much perturbed if we took no action at all. He (the Foreign Secretary) had told him that we were giving very serious consideration to this matter and that a decision would be reached in a day or two.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
said that the French Ambassador had also reported that the Finnish Government had told the French Minister at Helsingfors that they could not give any answer to our suggestion that they should appeal for help from the Allies, until they knew what attitude would be adopted by the Scandinavian countries. He had also reported that the Soviet Government had approached the Finnish Government privately, offering conditions of peace, including the cession of Viborg, Sortavalla and positions in the Hango peninsula, and requiring Finland to make a pact of mutual assistance. The Ambassador's only comment on these terms had been that, if we were not able to help the Finns quickly, it might be too late.

The Ambassador, on being told our answer to the French proposal for the occupation of the Norwegian ports, had said that the French Government hoped that if we did not accept this proposal, we should, at any rate, use the ALTMARK incident as an opportunity for going on with the scheme for stopping the Narvik ore traffic. They would be very much perturbed if we took no action at all. He (the Foreign Secretary) had told him that we were giving very serious consideration to this matter and that a decision would be reached in a day or two.
W.M.(40) 54th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 4.

Confidential Annex.

(28th February, 1940).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had that morning seen the Finnish Minister, who had said that he had been instructed by his Government to enquire whether it would be possible "to shorten the time mentioned by Brigadier Ling", and to send a reply as soon as possible.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that the Chiefs of Staff were satisfied that this time could not be shortened.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that the limiting factor was the time which it would take to prepare the base; and it would be very unwise, as History showed, to resort to hurried improvisations in this matter. Once the preparation of the base had been completed and the force had been landed at Narvik, it was possible that the subsequent operation might be accelerated if we obtained satisfactory co-operation from the Norwegians and Swedes; and more particularly if arrangements could be made to ensure a quick passage through Haparanda. The importunity of the Finns might be due to the ill-judged and irresponsible pressure of French circles in Helsinki, who, without a knowledge of the facts, were always suggesting that matters might be hurried.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that the urgency of the Finnish enquiry would be more understandable if they had in mind that our troops should be used for the reinforcement of the critical situation which had arisen in Southern Finland. But it had been made clear that our troops were not to be used south of a certain line which excluded this area.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that it was clear that the most truthful and least discouraging reply to the Finns would be a telegram stating that no acceleration of the landing of the expedition could be effected, but that with satisfactory co-operation on the part of the Norwegians and Swedes it might be possible to shorten the programme after the landing. He asked that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff might help in the drafting of a telegram to this effect.

The War Cabinet:—

Invited the Foreign Secretary, in consultation with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, to send a reply to the Finnish enquiry on the lines proposed.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

It is requested that special care may be taken to ensure the secrecy of this document.

W.M. (40) 55th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 6.

Confidential Annex.

(29th February, 1940.)

* * *

ASSISTANCE TO FINLAND.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS drew attention to a telegram (now somewhat out of date), in which he had instructed His Majesty's Minister at Helsinki, on the suggestion of the French Government, to urge the Finnish Government not to make their appeal to us dependent upon the agreement of the Swedish and Norwegian Governments.

In the meanwhile, he had just received a Note giving the substance of a conversation that morning between M. Corbin, the French Ambassador, and Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, which may be summarised as follows:

The Ambassador had said that the position in Finland appeared obscure to the French Government in view of the two following contradictory reports which they had received:

(i) The Finnish Minister in Paris had called on M. Daladier at 8 p.m. the previous evening, and had said that he had received instructions by telephone from the Finnish Prime Minister to express the gratification of the Finnish Government at learning that the British and French Governments were prepared to send troops to Finland, and their hope that it might be possible for this aid to be accelerated. M. Daladier had said that the French Government would certainly be prepared to accelerate their part of the plan, and he did not doubt that His Majesty's Government for their part would do the same as regards theirs. The Finnish Minister had explained that for the last two days Helsinki had been out of touch with London, but that instructions were being sent to M. Gripenberg, to make a similar communication to the British Foreign Office:

(ii) On the other hand, the French Minister in Helsinki had telegraphed the previous day...
reporting an interview which he had with M. Tanner, the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the latter’s return from Stockholm. M. Corbin did not know at what hour this telegram had been despatched, nor did he know precisely what it contained, since he had not seen its text. It was, however, clearly of a discouraging character. M. Tanner had said that in the circumstances there was nothing for it but for Finland to negotiate terms with the U.S.S.R. The French Minister had replied that the French Government would find it difficult to understand such an attitude on the part of Finland. To this M. Tanner had replied by pointing out that Finland could hope for very little assistance, having only been promised 1,200 men some time in April (Sir Alexander Cadogan had pointed out to M. Corbin that there must clearly be some misunderstanding somewhere since this figure was hopelessly wrong.)

M. Corbin had said that it was, therefore, impossible to form any very good estimate of what was the situation in Helsinki. After reflection, M. Daladier had reached the conclusion that we should take the Finnish Prime Minister’s message, through the Finnish Minister in Paris, as a kind of appeal, if not the actual appeal which figured in our plan. Consequently it was, in M. Daladier’s opinion, now for the British and French Governments to initiate the diplomatic action which had been contemplated. M. Daladier thought that there were very strong reasons for taking this action. If the Finnish Government had really reached the conclusion that they could hold out no longer, and must embark on negotiations, they would have to explain their attitude. They might, of course, say that they found that they could not count on the degree of assistance they had hoped for, but the main thing was that the responsibility for this failure should fall not upon us, but on those who were really responsible, namely, the Scandinavian Governments. It was therefore important that we should now make the contemplated diplomatic démarche in Stockholm and Oslo. M. Corbin had added that at his interview with M. Daladier, the Finnish Minister in Paris - rather inconsistently, as it seemed to him (the Secretary of State) - had urged the need for the immediate despatch to Finland of all material that could possibly be spared.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR thought that it would be most unwise to treat that communication as the appeal for which we were waiting, since it might well be that M. Tanner had agreed in Stockholm not to make any appeal to us at all.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he thought we should at once instruct our Minister at Helsinki to see M. Tanner immediately, and to ascertain from him what had transpired during his visit to Stockholm, and what was the likelihood of the Finnish Government making an appeal to us for assistance.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS agreed that this was desirable, but said that he wished also to clear up the position with the French Government. Fortunately, our Minister in Helsinki was fully aware of the nature of our plan, having been given particulars of it by Brigadier Ling. Our Minister in Stockholm, however, was not in the same position, and he (the Secretary of State) had accordingly arranged to send a special messenger the following day to explain the position to him.

THE PRIME MINISTER recalled that our idea had been that the first approach should be made secretly, through the diplomatic channel. The Finnish Government would call upon the French and British Governments to send armed forces to their aid, and would at the same time appeal to the Swedish and Norwegian Governments to allow these forces to cross their territory, as well as to furnish contingents of their own. This would give the Allied Governments an opportunity for asking the Swedish and Norwegian Governments to allow their forces to pass through. While however, the first approach to Norway and Sweden would not be made public, it would be made quite clear to the Swedish and Norwegian Governments that, if they did not co-operate, the appeal would be made public later.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS agreed and added that, so far as he knew the Finnish Government had as yet made no approach of any kind to
the Norwegian Government. As regards our future action he also agreed that it would be right for us to exert pressure on the Finnish Government to make the proposed public appeal. It would be necessary to consider very carefully what should be our next step if the Finnish Government, acting under Swedish pressure, refused to make the appeal. There would then be force in the French argument that the Allies should make it plain that they would have been prepared to go to the aid of Finland.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL thought that our Minister in Helsinki should be instructed to make it clear to the Finnish Government that, if they did not make the appeal, we might have to make public the fact that in certain circumstances we should have been willing to go to their aid.

The War Cabinet -

Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to telegraph to His Majesty's Minister at Helsinki, instructing him to see the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs at once and to put to him the following points:

(i) Did the appeal which the Finnish Government had made to the French Government constitute the appeal which had figured in our plan, as to be made on the 5th March?

(ii) Did the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs wish us to make an approach forthwith to the Swedish and Norwegian Governments?

(iii) Had the Finnish Government made an appeal to the Swedish and Norwegian Governments to allow troops to pass through their territories, or did they intend to do so?
(iv) Mr. Vereker should also make it clear to the Finnish Government that, if they did not make an appeal to us, we might have to make public the fact that in certain circumstances we should have been willing to go to their aid.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF gave the War Cabinet an oral report of the progress which had been made during the six days ending Wednesday, 28th February, in the steps which were being taken to afford assistance to Finland, the details of which are set out in the Aide-memoire attached to this Annex.

The War Cabinet took note of the statement by the Chief of the Air Staff.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF then introduced a Report by the Chiefs of Staff (W.P.(40) 78), which related to their previous Report on the Employment of Allied Land Forces in Scandinavia and Finland (W.P.(40) 51). He explained that the Chiefs of Staff felt that paragraph 10 of this earlier report was open to some misunderstanding, since it stated that 3 divisions and 1 brigade were proposed for employment in southern Sweden. It would be wrong to assume that a force of this size could be maintained in southern Sweden, before we had held detailed Staff Conversations with the Swedes, though it was true that this force was being prepared for the operation.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS observed that if the matter was ever put to the Swedes in exactly these terms, the whole project would appear even less attractive to them than in the form in which it had been set out in W.P.(40) 51. It would be unfortunate to give the impression that we could only send 2 divisions to their assistance.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF suggested that we should tell the Swedes what we were preparing, but should make it quite clear that we could only send the full number if they would give us the facilities which we required.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR thought we should be unwise to pledge ourselves at the outset to any definite figure. A safer line to take with the Swedes would be that we would give all possible help but that we must have full knowledge of their plans and what they could do to co-operate with us.

The War Cabinet took note of the Report by the Chiefs of Staff (W.P.(40) 78).

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
PROGRESS REPORT - WEEK ENDING WEDNESDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY, 1940.

AIDE MEMOIRE.

Movement Programme.

All arrangements are progressing according to plan. The movement of stores to ports has begun, and loading of store ships will start on the 1st March.

The two 42,000-ton liners have been withdrawn from the list of personnel ships, and the capacity of the remaining eleven liners is being increased accordingly. The Ministry of Shipping is investigating the possibility of making an additional small liner available as an emergency reserve.

Force "Stratford".

Force "Stratford" (for Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger) has been fully mobilised and ready to move since midnight, 25th/26th February.

Commanders and Staffs.

The Commanders of the forces for Narvik and Finland and for the south Norwegian ports, with their principal Staff officers, and the principal Staff officers of the southern Swedish force, have visited the War Office, where they have received detailed information regarding their respective plans.
Movement of Aircraft to Scandinavia.

All arrangements have been made for the transport of the Gladiator squadron in an aircraft carrier. The carrier would not sail until the aerodrome at Trondhjem was reported serviceable.

Arrangements are being made to fit auxiliary tanks to the Lysanders, and it will probably be possible by this means for them to fly direct to Trondhjem.

Army Co-operation Aircraft.

If the aerodrome at Boden is found unserviceable during the thaw it would be possible to provide 9 F.A.A. Swordfish for Army co-operation purposes. 12 Focs would be required for their protection. This provision could, however, only be made at the expense of the first-line strength of the Fleet Air Arm, and a decision would have to be taken in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time. A portable runway, such as has been used at Wick, has been ordered for use at Boden during this period to enable some land aircraft to be operated from the aerodrome. These aircraft would therefore be either an addition to the Fleet Air Arm aircraft, or an alternative should it not be found possible to operate Fleet Air Arm aircraft.

Balloon Barrage at Trondhjem.

A mobile hydrogen plant has been bought from the French with a view to possible use for the Trondhjem balloon barrage. It would, however, be uneconomical to manufacture hydrogen there unless silicol and caustic soda are available in sufficient quantities locally. This question is being investigated.
Local Naval Defences of Bases.

Indicator nets and anti-torpedo baffles are being provided for Narvik. At Trondhjem and Namsos the water is too deep, and anti-submarine trawlers will be used, 24 of which are being fitted out for this purpose.

Delegation to Scandinavian Countries.

On the 26th February the War Cabinet considered a Report by the Chiefs of Staff recommending the preparation of a delegation to Scandinavia. The proposal was generally approved, but no decision was taken to prepare the delegation just yet. The Service members, however, have been appointed and are already working in close co-operation.

Security Arrangements.

Action is being taken to develop the Middle East "cover". The French are co-operating very well. As a measure of deception, a telegram has been despatched to the British authorities in the Middle East warning them of the possibility of the arrival of reinforcements from the United Kingdom early in April and asking them for information regarding the adequacy of local shipping for subsequent troop movements in this area.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
February, 1940.