WAR CABINET.
Confidential Annexes.

1945.

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W.M.(45) 39TH CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 1

Confidential Annex

(3rd April, 1945 - 5.30 p.m.)

THE PRIME MINISTER welcomed to the War Cabinet Field Marshal Smuts, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Forde, Dr. Evatt, Field Marshal Lord Wavell and Sir Firoz Khan Noon.

The Prime Minister said that it was very fitting that representatives of the Dominions and India should meet together at this stage of the war. Recent developments in the world situation had caused him to reflect upon the future role of the British Commonwealth in world affairs, and he was glad to have this opportunity of discussing these critical issues with Ministers of Dominion Governments and representatives of India. Relations with Russia, which had offered such fair promise at the Crimea Conference, had grown less cordial during the ensuing weeks. There had been grave difficulties over the Polish question; and it now seemed possible that Russia would not be willing to give full co-operation at the San Francisco Conference on the proposed new World Organisation. It was by no means clear that we could count on Russia as a beneficent influence in Europe, or as a willing partner in maintaining the peace of the world. Yet, at the end of the war, Russia would be left in a position of preponderant power and influence throughout the whole of Europe. In the western hemisphere, the United States had made enormous strides during the last two years, and had built up a military machine and supporting war production which was maintaining a vast military effort, not only in Europe but in the Pacific theatre. The resources in men and material commanded by the United States were vastly superior to our own; and they had acquired during this war a new capacity and experience in marshalling these resources in war.

These were the dominating facts in the world situation. How could the British Commonwealth, as the third of the three Great Powers, match the power and influence which would be wielded after the war by Russia and the United States? In material resources we could not hope to equal either of these Powers. We could hold our own only by our superior statecraft and experience and, above all, by the unity of the British Commonwealth of Nations. He rejoiced that in spite of the independence rightly enjoyed by the self-governing members of the Commonwealth, there still remained that strong sense of unity and common purpose through which alone we could maintain the influence of the British Commonwealth as a world power.
FIELD MARSHAL SMUTS agreed that in future the main influence in world affairs would be exercised by three great groups - Russia, a great continental block now extending its influence into Western Europe, a new world phenomenon, without political background, whose future influence was incalculable; the North American continent, whose potentialities in world affairs were almost as difficult to predict; and the British Commonwealth, strung out along extended and vulnerable lines of communication, but having behind it the authority and prestige of its great record in world affairs. For generations to come the future of the world would depend on the balance between these three Great Powers. The world would need our maturity and experience in world affairs. There were grave dangers in power suddenly acquired, without experience and a mature sense of responsibility, as had been exemplified by the recent history of Germany and Japan.

The Prime Minister had rightly stressed the unity and single purpose of the British Commonwealth. He feared, however, that spiritual unity would not be enough: our unity must also be based on a material foundation. And one of the main problems in the immediate future would be to safeguard our imperial communications. The position had changed radically since the last war: we were no longer the predominant naval power, and communications no longer rested solely on sea power. The future of the world would depend on our being able to pull our weight in partnership with the two other Great Powers; but we should not be able to do that unless we took early and effective action to strengthen our imperial communications.

MR. FRACER said that he was glad to be in this country again at this crisis of the European war. He had been fortunate to be here at several critical periods in the war - in 1939, 1941 and again in 1944 on the eve of the Anglo-American landings on the Continent of Europe.

As soon as the war in Europe was over we must turn to finish the war against Japan; and he was glad that the British Fleet had now been given a chance to participate in active operations against Japan. Vessels of the New Zealand Navy were accompanying the British Fleet in those operations. He agreed with what had been said by the Prime Minister and Field Marshal Smuts about the future part of the British Commonwealth in world affairs. He thought that our guiding aim should be to adhere to the principles for which we had declared war; and, in the Pacific, to maintain friendly relations and co-operation with the United States.

MR. FORDE said that he was glad to have the privilege of joining in a meeting of the War Cabinet at No. 10 Downing Street. It was from this room that the Prime Minister and H.M. Government in the United Kingdom had given inspiration and leadership, not only to the British Commonwealth but to the whole world, when in 1940 the Commonwealth had stood alone against the threat of world domination by the Nazis. The people of Australia had a high regard for the bravery and endurance shown by the people of the United Kingdom at that critical stage in the world’s history.
The arrival of the British Fleet in the Pacific, under the command of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, had brought widespread rejoicing and inspiration to the Australian people.

Australia felt a close concern in the future ordering of Commonwealth and world affairs. The tendency towards isolationism which had at one time shown itself in Australia had now passed. The success of international co-operation for war had demonstrated to the Australian people the possibilities of using the same methods, both within the British Commonwealth and among all members of the United Nations, for solving the problems of the future which were common to all democracies.

DR. EVATT referred to the changes in the war situation which had occurred since his last visit to this country in 1943. At that time he had been concerned to obtain from this country a number of fighter aircraft for Australia. Since then over 900 of the most up-to-date Spitfires had been delivered to Australia; and he wished to take this opportunity of expressing his personal gratitude to the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet for fulfilling so generously the promises which had then been made to him. The war situation, both in the West and the Pacific theatres, now warranted a feeling of restrained optimism. As regards post-war problems, he was convinced that, in the Pacific at any rate, no solutions would be found without the closest co-operation between the British Commonwealth and the United States of America.

THE PRIME MINISTER, in inviting the Viceroy of India to make a statement to the War Cabinet, recalled the nation's debt to Lord Wavell as a military commander. His successful campaigns in North Africa in 1940 and 1941, conducted with such "bits and pieces" as could be made available to him, had demonstrated at a critical stage in the war that we had the power to strike, as well as to defy, the enemy.

FIELD MARSHAL LORD WAVELL said that it was appropriate to remind this meeting of the War Cabinet that the "bits and pieces" to which the Prime Minister had referred had been drawn from almost all parts of the British Commonwealth.

In his view, India was one of the most urgent of our post-war problems - for two reasons. First, the prestige and power of the British Commonwealth in world affairs after the war would depend very largely on our having found a solution of the Indian problem. Secondly, India was in a position to play an important part in world affairs in the East. The magnificent war record of Indian troops, and India's outstanding contribution to the war effort of the Commonwealth, were evidence of the important share which India could take in shouldering the burden of responsibility which should be carried by the British Commonwealth in the post-war years.
SIR FIROZ KHAN NOON said that for the second time India was fighting side by side with this country and the Dominions in a world war; and this bond of common sacrifice would bind India still more closely to the United Kingdom and the Dominions. The constitutional problem in India was fraught with grave difficulties; but he believed that with clarity of vision and firmness of mind, and above all with patience, a solution of those problems could be found. Whatever solution might prove generally acceptable, he had no doubt that there was no substantial body of political opinion in India which did not favour remaining within a united British Commonwealth. When he reflected upon the magnitude of India's war effort, he was sometimes surprised that China should be generally regarded as the fifth of the Great Powers; and he wondered whether it might not prove wiser to look to India rather than China to play a leading role in world affairs in the East after the war.

In the course of the discussion, reference was made to the possibility that, in view of the difficulties which had arisen over the reconstitution of the Polish Government, Russia might decide not to be represented at the forthcoming Conference at San Francisco on the proposed World Organisation.

The general view was that, even though Russia were not represented, the Conference ought still to be held. A very large number of other countries had accepted invitations to the Conference; and to cancel the Conference at the last moment, merely because Russia was unwilling to be represented, would suggest that an undue importance was attached to Russian participation in these discussions. Different considerations would of course apply if it became inadvisable to hold the Conference because of rapid developments in the war situation in Europe.

The representatives of H.M. Government in Australia referred to the contribution which Mr. W.M. Hughes was still making, though now in his 81st year, to the war effort of Australia as a member of the War Committee of the Australian Government. Mr. Hughes had been a member of the Imperial War Cabinet during the last war; and it was felt that it would be fitting that a message should be sent to him on behalf of this meeting of the War Cabinet, at which so many representatives of Commonwealth Governments were represented.

The War Cabinet -

Invited the Secretary of the War Cabinet to arrange for a message of greeting and congratulation to be sent to Mr. Hughes on their behalf.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W.1.
THE PRIME MINISTER read to the War Cabinet a telegram from President Roosevelt (No. 734 of 5th April) embodying an exchange of telegrams between Marshal Stalin and the President regarding the meetings which had taken place in Switzerland following the approach made to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean, about the possibility of a surrender of German forces in Italy.

In his telegram of 3rd April Marshal Stalin had stated that his military colleagues had no doubt, on the basis of information available to them, that negotiations had taken place in Switzerland which had ended in an agreement by which General Kesselring had undertaken to open the Western Front to the Anglo-American forces, in return for a promise that the British and U.S. Governments would make the peace terms easier for Germany. In his reply, President Roosevelt had repudiated this suggestion in strong terms, and had expressed his bitter resentment towards the informers who had so vilely misrepresented to Marshal Stalin his actions and those of his trusted subordinates.

THE PRIME MINISTER summarised the course of the meetings which had taken place in Switzerland. On the 8th March Field Marshal Alexander had been informed by the Office of Strategic Services (a U.S. agency) that a German General, Karl Wolff, who was then proceeding to Switzerland, was willing to discuss arrangements for the surrender of the German forces in Northern Italy. Field Marshal Alexander had been authorised to send representatives to Berne, for the purpose of testing the credentials of this emissary and arranging a meeting in Italy at which the terms of a military surrender could be negotiated. The Soviet Government had at once been informed of this approach. We had been willing that Soviet representatives should be present at the preliminary meeting in Switzerland; but the U.S. authorities had not favoured this, and in any event there would have been difficulties in arranging for Russian officers to enter Switzerland, as the Soviet Government were not in diplomatic relations with the Swiss Government. The Soviet Government had therefore been told that they would be kept informed of the course of these meetings; and had been assured that their representatives would be enabled to attend any meeting which might subsequently take place in Italy to discuss the terms of a military surrender. The
suspicions of the Russians had been aroused by this
decision not to invite their representative to the
Berne meetings; and on 16th March M. Molotov had
sent a letter to H.M. Ambassador in Moscow insisting
that those discussions in Switzerland should be broken
off. In a further letter of 23rd March he had
maintained this attitude, even after it had been
explained to him that the sole purpose of these
contacts in Switzerland was to arrange a meeting in
Italy at which Russian representatives would be
present.

It now appeared that President Roosevelt
had held some communication with Marshal Stalin on
this subject, earlier than those contained in the
telegram of 5th April. We had not previously been
aware of this fact. It was, however, clear that we
should support President Roosevelt in his
repudiation of the suggestion made in Marshal
Stalin's telegram of 3rd April.

The Prime Minister read to the War Cabinet a
draft of a telegram which he proposed, subject to
their views, to send to Marshal Stalin.

In discussion the following amendments of this
draft were suggested.

(a) The telegram summarised the course of events
as known to the competent authorities in this country.
It was, however, possible that the Office of Strategic
Services had taken other action which had not been
reported to us, and that information about that action
had reached the Russians. On this account it would
be preferable to make it clear, early in the telegram,
that what followed was a statement of the action taken
by H.M. Government in this matter.

(b) There was now some reason to suspect that this
approach by General Wolff might have been a ruse,
having as its sole purpose the sowing of dissension
between the Allied Governments, and that the Germans
had conveyed to the Soviet Government their version
of what was taking place. In this connection it
might be significant that in his first telegram on
this subject Field Marshal Alexander had stated:
"two of the leading figures on the German side are
S.S. and Himmler men, which makes me very suspicious:
nevertheless it is as well to be prepared." It
would be expedient to refer to this possibility in
the telegram to Marshal Stalin, pointing out that if
this had been the German object it had achieved some
success, and referring to this first telegram from
Field Marshal Alexander, which had been communicated
to the Soviet Government.

(c) In making the point that Field Marshal
Alexander had full right to accept the surrender of
the German forces in Italy, the draft telegram noted
that the Russian Commander in Courland or N.E.
Prussia would similarly have power to arrange for
the local surrender of German forces in these areas.
It was thought preferable that this comparison should
be omitted.
(d) It was also agreed to omit from the telegram any detailed explanation of the reasons why it had been thought inexpedient to arrange for Russian representatives to be present at the meetings in Switzerland.

The War Cabinet -

(1) Took note that the Prime Minister would revise his draft telegram to Marshal Stalin so as to take account of the points noted above and other drafting suggestions made in the course of the discussion.

(2) Invited the Prime Minister to despatch the telegram, as so revised, to Marshal Stalin and to send a copy to President Roosevelt.

(3) Agreed that a full selection of the telegrams which had passed on this subject, through both military and political channels, should be printed and circulated to the War Cabinet.

Offices of the War Cabinet,
S.W.1.
The War Cabinet considered a telegram from His Majesty’s Minister at Berne reporting a message from the Swiss Legation in Berlin about Allied prisoners of war in Germany. This stated that the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs had indicated that the German Government were prepared to agree not to remove into the interior Allied prisoners of war now in camps close to the present Western Front on condition that the Allied Governments gave an official assurance that such prisoners will not participate further in the war.

The view of the War Cabinet was that this proposal should be accepted and the required assurance given. It was likely that the United States Government would take the same view; and they should be invited to join us at once in accepting the proposal.

Points in further discussion were -

(a) The communication referred to "Allied Governments". It was not clear whether the Germans would require the Soviet Government’s acceptance, as well as that of His Majesty’s Government and the United States Government, before putting their proposal into effect. It might be that the Soviet Government would not view the proposal favourably. While, however, they should be informed at once of the reply which was being returned by His Majesty's Government and the United States Government, there seemed no reason why their consent should be obtained to action by the two other Allied Governments in respect of this arrangement in the western theatre of war.

(b) The desired assurance that these prisoners would not participate further "in the war" presumably referred only to the war against Germany. It might, however, be dangerous to raise this point in our reply to the German Government, as it might appear to qualify our acceptance of the proposal. We need not regard ourselves as bound to ensure that none of these prisoners subsequently took an active part in the war against Japan.

(c) As regards the French Government, it would be sufficient to inform them of this approach as soon as our reply had been sent to the Swiss Government and suggest that they might wish to be associated with these arrangements.

The War Cabinet -

Invited the Foreign Secretary to communicate at once with the United States Government on the lines agreed in the discussion, as recorded above.
LAND

Previous reference: W.M.(45) 41st

(13th April, 1945 - 11.20 a.m.)

W.M.(45) 44TH CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 3

Confidential Annex

THE PRIME MINISTER recalled that the main reply to
the representations which he and President Roosevelt had
made to Marshal Stalin about the arrangements for the
reconstitution of the Polish Government had been
addressed to President Roosevelt. He thought that, in
view of President Roosevelt's death, he must now take the
lead in continuing this exchange with Marshal Stalin, but
it was most important that the United Kingdom and United
States Governments should continue to march in close
accord in their handling of these representations to the
Soviet Government in respect of Poland. He, therefore,
proposed to prepare a draft reply to Marshal Stalin,
which he would send to the Foreign Secretary in
Washington, so that the latter might take the opportunity
doing discussing its terms personally with President Truman
and Mr. Stettinius.

It was encouraging that Marshal Stalin should have
indicated readiness to use his influence with the Lublin
Government to persuade them to withdraw their objections
to M. Mikolajczyk's participation in the consultations
about the reconstitution of the Polish Government, if the
latter were willing to make a public statement accepting
the decisions of the Crimea Conference on the Polish
question and declaring that he favoured the establishment
of friendly relations between Poland and the Soviet
Union. The Prime Minister said that he hoped that
M. Mikolajczyk could be induced at least to declare
himself in favour of friendly relations between Poland and
the Soviet Union. If he were unwilling to go even so
far as that, it would be impossible for us to continue
to press the suggestion that he should participate in the
consultations about the reconstitution of the Polish
Government.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said that he had arranged to
see M. Mikolajczyk that day. He might not now be able to
conduct this interview himself, but he would certainly
see that strong pressure was put on M. Mikolajczyk to
make a public statement in the sense suggested by the
Prime Minister.

The War Cabinet -

Invited the Prime Minister to arrange for a
reply to be sent to Marshal Stalin's
telegram after consultation, as suggested,
with the United States authorities.
The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum (W.P. (45) 242) by the Lord President of the Council embodying the views of the Armistice and Post-War Committee on the continuance after the war of some form of compulsory service.

The conclusion of the Committee was that, though it should be our ultimate aim to reduce the burden of our responsibilities, and of the armaments required for their fulfilment, by the strongest possible support for international arrangements which would contribute to this end, this should not deter us from deciding to maintain compulsory military service until the future could be seen more clearly. The Committee suggested that, if their conclusions were endorsed by the War Cabinet, an early announcement might be made of the decision of principle and the Committee could then proceed to examine the details of the problem and work out a concrete scheme in consultation with the various interests concerned.

The Prime Minister said that it was gratifying that the Committee should have been able to reach agreed conclusions on this important issue; and it would be of enormous benefit to the country if a decision accepting in principle the need for continuing a system of compulsory military service for a period after the war could be reached and announced by a Coalition Government in which all the principal political Parties were represented. It would be a very great advantage if this difficult issue could be removed from the area of political controversy between the Parties at the next General Election.

Discussion then turned on the procedure to be followed in preparation for such a public announcement.

The Minister of Labour and National Service said that he and his Labour colleagues in the War Cabinet were anxious to have an opportunity of consulting with responsible members of their Party before any public announcement was made. They feared that if this conclusion were announced as a decision of the Government, without any such consultation, there was likely to be controversy in Labour circles. If, however, they were able to put the issues plainly to responsible members of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, in confidence, and to discuss with them their political and economic implications, they were confident that they would be able to secure the support of the Labour Movement. It was true that this procedure would involve some risk of premature disclosure; but, on balance, that risk seemed to be outweighed by the advantage of being able to secure a solid measure of support for a decision favouring the principle of retaining compulsory military service for a period after the war.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR felt doubtful about the expediency of the course recommended by the Minister of Labour and National Service. He himself fully supported the conclusion reached by the Armistice and Post-War Committee. He would, however, find difficulty in persuading the Liberal Party to give wholehearted support to this conclusion. These difficulties would be increased if it were necessary for him to consult with members of his Party before a Government decision was finally taken. His best prospect of securing the agreement of his Party was to be able to tell them that this conclusion was endorsed by all the members of the Government, of whatever political persuasion, and represented a firm decision of the War Cabinet.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he also would have been disposed to favour an announcement of a Government decision on the point of principle, without prior consultation with any interests outside the Government. He was not influenced by the risk of premature disclosure; but he would have expected greater difficulty in getting this conclusion generally accepted if consultations took place on the basis that the Government had not reached a final conclusion.

The War Cabinet -

(1) Endorsed the conclusion set out in paragraph 9 of W.P. (45) 242.

(2) Took note that the Minister of Labour and National Service would consider his suggestions on future procedure, in the light of the discussion; and agreed to resume at an early meeting their discussion of the next steps to be taken in this matter.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W.1.
W.M. (45) 49th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 5

Confidential Annex

(23rd April, 1945 - 6.0 p.m.)

The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum (W.P. (45) 219) on policy towards Siam, reviewing the recent course of the discussions with the Siamese Government, and expressing the view that it was of urgent importance that we should now reach a conclusion as to the terms on which we should be prepared to recognise and work for an effective Siamese Liberation movement. It was suggested that the Far Eastern Committee should investigate this matter and submit their recommendations to the A.P.W. Committee, and that the Dominion Prime Ministers should be informed of the position for their most secret and personal information.

The Minister of State said that the proposals in the Foreign Secretary's paper arose from the discussions which had recently taken place at Lord Louis Mountbatten's Headquarters with a Mission from Siam. In those discussions the part which Siam might be able to play in getting rid of the Japanese had been examined, and there had been some investigation of the intentions of the Siamese as regards the return of the United Nations' territories which they had occupied. The Siamese had shown every sign of wanting to co-operate and had urged that they had been led into siding with the Axis by a Quisling minority. They were willing to return the areas which they had occupied; and had suggested that, until we actually invaded Siam, the present Siamese Government would do all it could to thwart Japanese intentions. Once the invasion had taken place the present Siamese Government would resign, and be replaced by a previously constituted Siamese Resistance Government, which would set up a new administration in a place safe from Japanese interference where they could work to assist the Allies.

Simultaneously there had been discussions between the Siamese minister in Washington and the United States Government on much the same lines, save that the Minister had suggested that there should at once be established a Provisional Government outside Siam which should be recognised by the Allies, and that the question of Indo-China should be submitted to an International Commission. The United States had informed us of these conversations and, while not supporting the proposal for a Free Siamese Provisional Government, had suggested that there would be advantage in the establishment of a Free Siamese Liberation Committee in Washington.
THE MINISTER OF STATE said that the Foreign Secretary felt it would be a mistake at the present time to recognise the Siamese Committee of National Liberation, since no positive advantage would accrue from our doing so and the Japanese would realise that something was happening behind the scenes. At the same time he felt that it was now urgent to consider our own attitude towards an effective Siamese Liberation Movement and that the Far Eastern Committee should be instructed to formulate proposals for consideration by the Armistice and Post-War Committee.

THE MINISTER OF ECONOMIC WARFARE said that the attitude of the United States was more pro-Siamese than ours. He was in entire agreement with the course of action proposed by the Foreign Secretary. S.O.E., which had a number of missions in Siam, were anxious that the Siamese should be encouraged to harbour them and co-operate with us behind the scenes. The Supreme Commander thought that these missions could make an important contribution to the progress of the campaign in this theatre.

The War Cabinet —

(1) Approved the proposals in the Foreign Secretary’s Memorandum (W.P.(45) 249) and invited the Minister of State to arrange for the Directive set out in Annex I of the Memorandum to be communicated to the Far Eastern Committee.

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to explain the position to the Dominion Prime Ministers for their most secret and personal information.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W.1.
W.M. (45) 50TH CONCLUSIONS
Confidential Annex

(24th April, 1945 - 7.0 p.m.)

The War Cabinet considered a series of telegrams from Washington recording discussions between M. Molotov and the Foreign Secretary and the United States Secretary of State, and between President Truman and M. Molotov, about the arrangements for the reconstitution of the Polish Government.

The Foreign Secretary and Mr. Stettinius had had long discussions with M. Molotov on the evening of 22nd April and the morning of 23rd April but had made no progress towards reaching agreement. M. Molotov had based himself, throughout these discussions, on Marshal Stalin's telegram to President Roosevelt of 7th April and had shown himself unwilling to take account of the joint message which the Prime Minister and President Truman had sent to Marshal Stalin on 15th April. Later on 23rd April President Truman had seen M. Molotov and had handed him a statement for transmission to Marshal Stalin (reproduced in F.O. telegram from Washington No. 2842 of 23rd April). In this message it was made clear that, in the opinion of the United States Government, the decisions of the Crimea Conference would not be carried out unless a group of genuinely representative democratic Polish leaders were invited to Moscow for consultation. The United States Government could not be a party to any method of consultation with Polish leaders which would not result in the establishment of a new Provisional Government of National Unity genuinely representative of the democratic elements of the Polish people. The United States Government and the United Kingdom Government had gone as far as they could to meet the situation in the joint message from the Prime Minister and President Truman dated 15th April. The United States Government urged the Soviet Government to accept the proposals set out in that message and asked that M. Molotov should continue the conversations with the Foreign Secretary and Mr. Stettinius in San Francisco on that basis. The Soviet Government must realise that failure to go forward at this time to implement the Crimea decisions on Poland would seriously shake confidence in the unity of the three Governments and their determination to continue to collaborate in the future as they had in the past.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he fully approved the line taken by President Truman in his interview with M. Molotov and his message to Marshal Stalin. In his view, it was out of the question that the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States should acquiesce in any attempt by the Soviet Government to avoid
implementing the decisions reached at Yalta on
Poland; and the proper course at this stage was to
stand firm on the line taken in the joint message
to Marshal Stalin of 15th April. Though we had
thought it expedient that the United States
Government should take the lead in the representations
made to the Soviet Government on the Polish question,
it was important that our policy should be kept
closely in line with that of the United States
Government and that we should continue to support
their representations. He therefore proposed
that he should send a personal telegram to Marshal
Stalin informing him that the War Cabinet had
considered, and fully supported, the message sent
to him by President Truman through M. Molotov.

Copies of a draft telegram to Marshal
Stalin were handed round for consideration by
the War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet -

Endorsed the proposals made by the
Prime Minister and invited him to
despatch a telegram to Marshal Stalin
in the terms of the draft discussed
and to inform President Truman that
this had been done.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W.1.
W.H.(45) 52ND CONCLUSIONS

Confidential Annex

(25th April, 1945 - 4.30 p.m.)

The War Cabinet met to consider a telegram from H.M. Minister at Stockholm (No. 711 of 25th April) reporting a conversation which he and his United States colleague had had the previous evening with the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs accompanied by M. Boheman and Count Bernadotte.

Bernadotte had just returned from an interview with Himmler, which took place at Lubeck on the morning of 24th April, at the latter's request. Himmler had told him that Hitler was mortally ill, as a result of haemorrhage of the brain, and could not live for more than two days. Himmler was, therefore, in a position of full authority; and asked Bernadotte to communicate to the Swedish Government his desire to meet General Eisenhower in order to arrange a capitulation of the German forces on the whole of the Western front. When Bernadotte said that he was unwilling to transmit this request unless Norway and Denmark were included in the capitulation, Himmler had replied that he was prepared to order the Germans in Denmark and Norway to surrender to either British, American or Swedish troops. Himmler had said that he had hoped to continue resistance on the Eastern front, and in particular hoped that the Anglo-American forces rather than the Russians would be the first to enter Mecklenburg in order to save the civilian population. Bernadotte had said that a surrender on the Western front only would be scarcely possible in practice and would not be acceptable to the Allied Powers.

On receiving this message H.M. Minister and his United States colleague had said that the Nazis would have to surrender to all the Allies simultaneously. Himmler's reluctance to order surrender on the Eastern front looked like a last attempt to sow discord between the Western Allies and Russia. The Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, while admitting that this motive could not be excluded, had pointed out that the capitulation of all the German forces on the Western front and in Norway and Denmark would be a great advantage to the Allies as a whole and would, in fact, lead at an early date to the total capitulation of Germany. He added that, so far as concerned the Swedish Government, the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States would be completely at liberty to transmit this information to the Soviet Government - the Swedish Government could not themselves inform the Soviet Government directly as Himmler had stipulated that this information was exclusively for the Western Allies.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that this important development must clearly be communicated to Marshal Stalin without delay. He thought that we should at the same time make it clear that, so far as His Majesty's Government were concerned, there could be no question of anything less than unconditional surrender simultaneously to the three major Powers. Himmler should be told that German soldiers should everywhere surrender themselves, either as individuals or in units, to the Allied troops or representatives on the spot; and that until this happened the Allies' attack upon them in all theatres would be prosecuted with the utmost vigour.

The Prime Minister suggested that we could safely communicate on these lines with Marshal Stalin without first consulting the United States Government; but he proposed that, without delaying the despatch of this message to Stalin, he should inform President Truman by telephone of the message which he had sent and invite him to telegraph on similar lines to Marshal Stalin.

It was clear that Himmler was purporting to act on behalf of the German Government. The surrender which he offered was therefore a matter for discussion between Governments. There was no occasion for him to meet General Eisenhower, as he had suggested: indeed, it would be inappropriate that such a proposal for a general surrender should be discussed with the military Commander in the field. It would, however, be appropriate that General Eisenhower should be made aware of this approach and informed that the matter was being dealt with between Governments.

The War Cabinet endorsed the Prime Minister's proposal; and later in the meeting the Prime Minister spoke to General Eisenhower on the telephone and informed him accordingly.

Discussion ensued about the means of accepting the surrender of German forces in territories where there were no Allied troops. It was the view of the War Cabinet that representatives of the Norwegian Government and British military officers should be flown to Norway to accept the surrender of German forces there. Danish representatives and British officers should similarly be flown to Denmark at the appropriate time. Detailed arrangements for accepting the German surrender in the Channel Islands and the French ports should be worked out.

The War Cabinet —

(1) Agreed that the Prime Minister should communicate to Marshal Stalin the text of the Stockholm telegram No. 7/1 of 25th April, with a message in the following terms —

"There can be no question, as far as His Majesty's Government are concerned, of anything less than unconditional surrender simultaneously to the three major Powers. We consider that Himmler should be told that German forces, either as individuals or in units, should everywhere
surrender themselves to the Allied troops or representatives on the spot. Until this happens the attack of the Allies upon them on all sides and in all theatres where resistance continues will be prosecuted with the utmost vigour. Nothing in this telegram should affect the release of our orations on the link-up".

(2) Took note that the Prime Minister would inform President Truman, by telephone, that he was telegraphing in these terms to Marshal Stalin and would invite him to send a message in similar terms.

Offices of the War Cabinet,
S.W.1.
W.M. (45) 56TH CONCLUSIONS

Confidential Annex

(30th April, 1945 - 10 p.m.)

INDIA

The War Cabinet had before them a report (W.P. (45) 274) by the India Committee on the Constitutional Position in India.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR (acting Chairman of the India Committee) said that the Committee's report was based on full discussion with the Viceroy. The War Cabinet would remember that, in deference to the insistent demand of the Viceroy, they had agreed that he should visit this country to discuss the constitutional position. Lord Wavell's proposals had essentially been that he should be given a free hand to replace his present Executive Council by persons selected as a result of discussion with the leaders of the organised political parties. This would incidentally involve the removal, which would require legislation, of the existing statutory requirement that not less than three members of the Governor-General's Council should have ten years' service under the Crown in India.

The Committee were unanimous in opposing this proposal, and were not prepared to recommend that the Viceroy should return to India with a free hand. They doubted whether he understood the enormous constitutional implications of his scheme. On the other hand, there were powerful arguments against allowing the Viceroy to return empty-handed, now that he was known to have been in consultation with His Majesty's Government on these questions. The Committee had, however, been unable to reach a unanimous conclusion as to whether the case for a new step was established, and their report (in paragraph 5) therefore set out the arguments on both sides with a view to a decision being taken by the War Cabinet. If the War Cabinet, in the light of the report, decided on a new step, the Committee was, however, in a position to make specific recommendations as to what it should be, and those recommendations were set out in paragraph 11 of their report and in the appendix to it.

So far as he personally was concerned, he was impressed by the arguments against action, but he recognised at the same time the force of the considerations in favour of not allowing the Viceroy to return empty-handed. The best single argument was the world-wide feeling that we were called on to do something for India. He was bound at the same time to say that he was very sceptical as to the prospects of India accepting the scheme now under consideration.
THE PRIME MINISTER expressed the indebtedness of the War Cabinet to the India Committee for their report. He was far from convinced on the case for any action at this stage. Legislation was involved: could we be sure that it would be passed into law without difficulty? The problem of parliamentary time was also particularly acute. There was also the question whether it was proper for a Government to take a step so important as this towards the very end of its life? All these matters had to be weighed.

But apart from this the scheme now proposed was neither one thing nor the other. The removal of the official element in the Executive Council was a matter of great importance. But the impression it would produce would be that of a minor legislative change. Secondly, as paragraph 15 of the draft statement showed, all power would still be held by the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief under the scheme proposed. No Indian would accept a scheme of this nature. Nor were any of the accompaniments of the constitutional change, such as the transfer of external affairs, of real significance. The only result, he feared, would be to produce a less efficient Executive Council.

He was bound to stand by the Cripps proposals, and he did so. But it was not our fault if Indians found it impossible to agree among themselves. If the Hindus, Muslims and other communities were prepared to accept the Cripps offer, he would be quite ready to see the Army withdrawn and India given full Dominion status. It would indeed, from the military point of view, be a help to be relieved of our share in her defence.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA said that Lord Wavell's original proposal was open to criticism, but had been turned into a workable scheme by the Committee. It was common ground that India could not be given Dominion status now because the essential pre-condition, of agreement among Indians, could not be fulfilled. He thought that the Committee's proposals would secure ready parliamentary approval from both sides of the House; and while they might appear to be limited in scope, we should not underestimate their importance. Timing was very material. The trouble about the Cripps offer had been that it had been from weakness. The present proposal would, however, be made from strength.

Moreover, these proposals were within the framework of our previous offer, which we had already reaffirmed. If accepted, they would remedy the weakness of the Indian Executive, which was the absence of outside support from the press or the public. Admittedly, the Indians might reject them. But if they did we should ourselves be no worse off, and we should have greatly improved our position vis-à-vis of the outside world. He himself hoped that the widespread feeling in India that a mistake had been made in boycotting the Cripps offer would help to secure an acceptance of the present scheme. He felt strongly that the case for a move at this stage was a good one, and that there could be no objection to its being made at this point in the Government's life. It would not provoke controversy in Parliament. Nor would there be any immediate demand for Parliamentary time for legislation. All that was needed was a declaration on the lines of the statement and an undertaking that, if the Viceroy was successful, we should legislate. If we declined to make any move there would certainly be sharp criticism, and real pressure for a debate which could not be resisted.
THE HOME SECRETARY AND MINISTER OF HOME SECURITY was sympathetic to the making of a move. He felt that the issue was not likely to be of great electoral importance either way.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR looked on this small step as merely a further move in the right direction which created a sense of progress towards Dominion status, which he still thought would save India. He did not agree that we should do nothing unless we could do something really substantial. There was value in every step slowly taken in the case of the Central Government. He would prefer himself to settle the Indian problem on unwritten constitutional lines, and not to make too big a step at a time.

The Indians had made a mistake in rejecting the Cripps offer and probably realised that now. We should be no worse off if these proposals were rejected. With the example of Russia over the border, the problem of India must be faced either politically or economically in a few years, and he thought that as we had missed our chance in that country in many ways in the past, we must watch our policy carefully in respect of the future. He would be happier, at the same time, if he felt more confident that this proposal would not be rejected.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR feared that the scheme would be rejected. If, however, it was nominally accepted, there were long odds that the result would be a Bania Government, and that the scheme would be worked essentially under Hindu domination to the advantage of the moneylending class.

THE MINISTER OF AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION said that the Committee had agreed that if there was to be a step forward, it should be on the lines of the draft statement appended to their report. Ordinary majority government was impracticable in India. It was equally not practical for us to "quit India". In favour of a step forward at this stage there was first, the view of the Viceroy, of every Governor and of the European members of the Executive Council that something should be done to break the deadlock now. Secondly, if we were going to get a peaceful solution of the Indian problem, we must assuage the growing sense of frustration among Indians. A step of the sort suggested by the Committee would ease the tension and improve the chance of bringing India in as a Dominion in the Commonwealth. He himself would be very strongly opposed to missing the opportunity arising from the Viceroy's visit. If the offer was made and rejected, the matter dropped, but our position would be improved by our initiative. It was critical that something should be done now to prevent deterioration. No parliamentary time would be needed except for the making of the statement.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that the present position was that we had in the Provinces responsible and representative governments, based in many cases on a legislature, with powers over a wide field, working under a written constitution. At the Centre there was a Government, technically composed of officials, with powers of supervision and control. That was a fundamentally unsound position. When the Act of 1935 was passed, it had never been contemplated that there should be an indefinite continuance of responsible governments in the provinces coupled with an official government at the Centre.
The essence of the Viceroy's proposal was that pending the reconstitution of the Centre on representative lines, we should endeavour to bring into the Executive Council persons deriving authority from some representative capacity. His own misgiving about Lord Wavell's proposal had been that he felt, as he still to some extent did, that the Viceroy did not see its implications. The Committee had therefore sought to find a way of making clear, both in India and in this country, what was involved. The Viceroy urged that if nothing was done, there would be great danger of serious political unrest once the pressure of the war was removed. We must give weight to his opinion, since he had been in office for eighteen months, and had been in contact with governors and officials with long experience of India.

As the Committee's proposal was framed, we should, if it failed, be in a better and not a worse position as a result of having made it since we should have gone as far as was humanly possible. The parliamentary statement (however limited in its content) which would be necessary, would give an opportunity of making our position clear. In all these circumstances, though not without misgiving, he favoured giving the Viceroy the chance of making a move on the basis of the draft statement prepared by the Committee.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION felt that it was politically inexpedient to make any move at present. There was no proof that the Muslims would accept a move of this type. Nothing had been said about the States and both the Muslims and the Princes were very upset at the moment. He was all for an alteration in our relations with India but could not believe that this was the moment for it. If, on the other hand, the War Cabinet decided that something had to be done, then he would accept the statement prepared by the Committee as the best method. But he felt himself that the matter should first be further tested on the spot and that the War Cabinet should have before them fuller reports as to the attitude of the Princes and the Muslims. Our friends would say that the effect of this scheme would be to revivify the Congress which by its totalitarianism had wrecked first the Act of 1935 and then the Cripps offer.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR thought that there would certainly be a demand for a debate if the Viceroy was sent back empty-handed or resigned.

After further discussion THE PRIME MINISTER said that while still very doubtful as to the case for a move, particularly at this late stage in the life of the administration, he recognised the force of the argument that any action taken now would be taken by an all-party government. Difficult questions of parliamentary time were, however, involved in any legislation or debate, and would have to be investigated. He did not feel that an immediate decision could be reached, and suggested that the discussion should be adjourned until a later date. In the meantime he would consider the matter from the point of view of the state of public business.
MILITARY SITUATION IN VENEZIA GIULIA

The War Cabinet had before them a Note by the Secretary (W.P.(45) 299) covering an exchange of telegrams between President Truman and the Prime Minister about the situation in Venezia Giulia.

THE PRIME MINISTER recalled that Venezia Giulia was acquired by Italy after the last war; the population was largely Yugoslav and only partly Italian; and it had long been recognised that the future of the province would have to be determined in the peace settlement. Pending discussion in the peace settlement, it had been assumed that the province would be placed under the military government of Field Marshal Alexander, who would occupy and administer it on behalf of all the United Nations. Field Marshal Alexander had discussed the position with Marshal Tito at their meeting in Belgrade in February, 1945, and had reached an understanding with him that, as the port of Trieste and the communications from there into Austria via Gorizia and Tarvisio would be essential for maintaining the advance of our armies from Italy into Austria, he would have full control in these areas. In the event, however, regular forces of the Yugoslav Army had overrun a large part of Venezia Giulia and had not only occupied the country districts where Yugoslav guerrillas had previously been active, but had also entered the towns of Pola, Trieste, Gorizia and Monfalcone where the bulk of the population was Italian. Formations of the 15th Army Group advancing from the west had reached Trieste at about the same time and had taken the surrender of the German garrisons in Trieste and elsewhere. Field Marshal Alexander had thereupon proposed to Marshal Tito that the Yugoslav troops and administration should be withdrawn from the western part of Venezia Giulia, so as to enable him to control the lines of communication by road and rail from Trieste into Austria; and he had proposed to establish an Allied Military Government in this western part of the province, on the understanding that this arrangement was made purely in the interests of military convenience and would in no way prejudice the ultimate disposal of the territory in the peace settlement.

Field Marshal Alexander had sent his Chief of Staff, General Morgan, to discuss the situation with Marshal Tito in Belgrade. At this meeting, which took place on 9th and 10th May, Marshal Tito had claimed that the collapse of German resistance had produced a new situation in which Anglo-American control in these areas was no longer required for the purpose of supporting difficult military operations into Austria. He had, therefore, declined to accept Field Marshal Alexander's proposals; and had taken the line that the Yugoslav Government should be free to occupy the whole of the province east of the Isonzo river, on the ground that they had conquered this...
territory and intended to claim it in the peace settlement. He was, however, prepared to discuss a scheme for establishing arrangements for joint military command in the area, and for maintaining communications into Austria from Trieste. Field Marshal Alexander had informed Marshal Tito that he was unable to discuss arrangements on those lines; that further military conversations would be unavailing, and that the whole question of control over Venezia Giulia must now be pursued between Governments.

In reporting on these unsatisfactory developments, Field Marshal Alexander had naturally been concerned to know what formations he would have at his disposal if it became necessary in the last resort to use force in support of Government policy in Venezia Giulia and Austria. He had been specially anxious to know whether he would continue to have at his disposal for this purpose the seven United States Divisions now under his command.

There had been grounds for special anxiety on this point, in view of the tone of earlier messages from President Truman on the subject and, in particular, in his telegram in his telegram to the Prime Minister (No. 18) of 30th April, in which he had stated that he wished to avoid having American forces used to fight Yugoslav forces or being used in combat in the Balkan political arena.

All these anxieties had, however, been removed by President Truman's telegram to the Prime Minister (Po. 34) of 12th May. In this he had indicated that, since sending his telegram of 30th April, he had become increasingly concerned over the implications of Marshal Tito's actions in Venezia Giulia and southern Austria; and had reached the conclusion that we must decide now whether we should uphold the fundamental principles of territorial settlement by orderly process as against force, intimidation or blackmail. The present issue, as he now saw it, was not one of taking sides in a dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia or becoming involved in internal Balkan politics; it was a question of deciding whether the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom would permit their Allies to engage in uncontrolled annexations of territory by tactics resembling those of Nazi Germany and Japan. He therefore suggested that the minimum on which we should insist was that Field Marshal Alexander should obtain complete and exclusive control of Trieste and Pola, the line of communication through Gorizia and Monfalcone, and an area sufficiently to the east of this line to permit proper administrative control. He proposed, as a first step, that the British and American Ministers in Belgrade should be instructed to explain the attitude of their Governments, in the terms set out in his telegram, an. to ask that the Yugoslav Government should immediately agree to the establishment in this area of an Allied Military Government under the authority of Field Marshal Alexander, and should issue instructions to the Yugoslav forces in this region to cooperate accordingly. President Truman further suggested that Marshal Stalin should be informed, in accordance with the agreement reached at Yalta for consultation on such matters; and in conclusion, expressed the view that if we stood firm on this issue, as on Poland, we could hope to avoid a host of other similar encroachments.

The Prime Minister said that he had been much encouraged by the firmness of this message. He understood that it had been sent after consultation with the United States Chiefs of Staff; and from Washington telegram No. 3296 of 12th May it appeared that, in the view of the State Department, the President was resolved that, if Marshal Tito declined to accept the arrangements proposed, British and
American troops should move in and occupy the area, if necessary by force. The Prime Minister said that he had thought it right to send an immediate telegram to President Truman (No. 45 of 12th May) concurring in the view that the situation must be handled firmly, and agreeing with the course of action proposed in the President's telegram. He had suggested one small amendment in the text of the communication to be made to the Yugoslav Government, so as to make it clear that the area to be placed under the control of Field Marshal Alexander would include the line of communication through Gorizia and Monfalcone to Austria. He had suggested that President Truman should now proceed, without further reference to him, to instruct the United States Minister in Belgrade to make this communication to the Yugoslav Government; and he had authorised His Majesty's Minister in Belgrade to make a similar communication on behalf of the United Kingdom Government concerning, as regards the final text and method of delivery, with the instructions received from Washington by the United States Minister.

The War Cabinet endorsed the action taken by the Prime Minister, and took note, with approval, of the terms of his telegram to President Truman No. 45 of 12th May. In the discussion which ensued, the following points were raised:

(a) The Prime Minister stressed the need for reaffirming at this stage the principle that all territorial claims should be left to be determined by the peace settlement and not pre-judged by the unilateral establishment of sovereignty through military occupation. He thought it especially important that the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States should take a firm stand on this issue of principle before the Anglo-American forces in Europe had been substantially reduced. He had referred to this point in some general reflections on the European situation which he had communicated to President Truman in his telegram No. 44 of 12th May, in the course of which he had referred to the prominence given by the Press to reports of substantial movements of American military forces from Europe. For this reason he had suggested to Marshal Stalin that a standstill order might be given to delay the movement of American armies and air forces from Europe, at any rate for a few weeks; and had undertaken that, if such a standstill order were given, we would conform to it in our demobilisation plans.

The Prime Minister recognised that this proposal might delay our own redeployment to the Far East, with the result that some delay might be imposed on projected operations in South East Asia. Further, it might possibly have some effect on the present plans for commencing demobilisation six weeks after the end of hostilities in Europe. He believed however that, if the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States took a firm line over the situation in Venezia Giulia and southern Austria, it would not in the event prove necessary to use force against the Yugoslav troops in these areas; and the position might be clarified in time to prevent a standstill order from having any substantial effect on our demobilisation plans or even, perhaps, on our arrangements for redeployment to the Far East.

(b) President Truman had suggested that Marshal Stalin should be informed of the communication which we were proposing to make to the Yugoslav Government. The War Cabinet thought it important that Marshal Stalin should hear of this from us before he heard from Marshal Tito. The Foreign Office should therefore prepare a draft of a communication to Marshal Stalin containing a short summary of the course of the negotiations between Field Marshal Alexander and Marshal Tito, a brief statement of policy based
on the first part of President Truman's telegram No. 34 of 12th May, and the text of the communication which was to be made to Marshal Tito on behalf of the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. The Prime Minister said that he would telegraph this draft at once to President Truman and would suggest that, subject to his comments, a communication in these terms should be made to Marshal Stalin by the representatives in Moscow of the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States.

(c) It would be necessary to explain the position to the Governments of South Africa and New Zealand and to invite them to agree that their troops now under Field Marshal Alexander's command should remain at his disposal for the purpose of any military operations against Yugoslav troops if in the last resort it became necessary to use force to compel them to withdraw from southern Austria and the western part of Venezia Giulia.

(d) The Prime Minister said that he had already informed Field Marshal Alexander privately of the text of President Truman's telegram No. 34 of 12th May.

(e) The State Department were about to issue to the Press in Washington a statement on the situation in Venezia Giulia and southern Austria. It was desirable that the Press in London should also have suitable guidance on the policy which was to be followed by the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. The Minister of State undertook to explain the position to the diplomatic correspondents of the Press in London.

The War Cabinet

(1) Endorsed the action taken by the Prime Minister in despatching forthwith his reply (No. 45 of 12th May) to President Truman's telegram No. 34 of 12th May.

(2) Took note that His Majesty's Minister in Belgrade had been instructed to concert with his United States colleague the delivery to Marshal Tito of representations on the lines set out in President Truman's telegram No. 34 of 12th May; and that, as regards the exact text and method of delivery of these representations, His Majesty's Minister would conform to instructions received from Washington by the United States Minister.

(3) Took note that the Prime Minister would telegraph to President Truman the text of a message to Marshal Stalin informing him of the communication which was being made to the Yugoslav Government, and would suggest that this message should be delivered to Marshal Stalin by the representatives in Moscow of the United Kingdom and United States Governments.

(4) Invited the Minister of State to arrange for Dominion Governments to be informed of the course of policy which the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States had agreed to follow; and for the Governments of New Zealand and South Africa to be asked to agree that their troops now under Field Marshal Alexander's command should remain at his disposal for the purpose of any military operations that might become necessary in furtherance of this policy.
(5) Invited the Minister of State to arrange for appropriate guidance to be given to the diplomatic correspondents of the Press in London regarding the policy which was being followed by the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States in respect of the situation in Venezia Giulia and southern Austria.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W.1.