CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Friday, 10th August, 1945, at 3-0 p.m.

Present:

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Lord President of the Council.
The Right Hon. ARTHUR GREENWOOD, M.P., Lord Privy Seal.
The Right Hon. Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS, K.C., M.P., President of the Board of Trade.
The Right Hon. LORD JOWITT, Lord Chancellor.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT ADDISON, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.
The Right Hon. G. H. HALL, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT STANSGATE, Secretary of State for Air.
The Right Hon. E. SHINWELL, M.P., Minister of Fuel and Power.
The Right Hon. ANEURIN BEVAN, M.P., Minister of Health.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. W. WHITELEY, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury.
Admiral of the Fleet Sir ANDREW CUNNINGHAM, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (Items 1-4).
Field-Marshal Sir ALAN BROOKE, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Items 1-4).

SECRETARIAT:

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
General Sir HASTINGS L. ISMAY.
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.
Sir GILBERT LAITHWAITE.
Mr. W. S. Murrie.
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1. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that, according to an announcement broadcast from Japan by the Domei Agency, the Japanese Government had that day addressed the following communication to the Governments of Switzerland and Sweden for transmission to the Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States and the U.S.S.R.:

"In obedience to the gracious command of His Majesty the Emperor who, ever anxious to enhance the cause of world peace, desires earnestly to bring about an early termination of hostilities with a view to saving mankind from the calamities to be imposed upon them by further continuation of the war, the Japanese Government asked several weeks ago the Soviet Government, with which neutral relations then prevailed, to render its good offices in restoring peace vis-a-vis the enemy Powers.

These efforts in the interest of peace unfortunately having failed, the Japanese Government in conformity with the august wish of His Majesty to restore the general peace, and desiring to put an end to the untold sufferings entailed by war as quickly as possible, have decided upon the following.

"The Japanese Government are ready to accept the terms enumerated in the joint declaration which was issued at Potsdam on the 26th July, 1945, by the Heads of the Governments of the United States, Great Britain and China, and later subscribed to by the Soviet Government, with the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a sovereign ruler. The Japanese Government hope sincerely that this understanding is warranted, and desire keenly that an explicit indication to that effect will be speedily forthcoming."

No official communication to this effect had yet been received from the Governments of Switzerland or Sweden; and no official information had yet reached the Foreign Office apart from the statement issued by the Domei Agency. There was, however, every indication that this was, in fact, an official communication from the Japanese Government.

The Foreign Secretary said that difficulty might arise over the stipulation which the Japanese Government were seeking to make regarding the position of the Emperor. The wording of the communication on this point was somewhat ambiguous and would probably need clarification. It was possible, however, that, in view of this stipulation, the United States Government might regard the communication as falling short of unconditional surrender. He was taking steps to ascertain the views of the United States Government on this point. Meanwhile, he would be glad to hear the views of his colleagues. For himself, he doubted whether it would be expedient for the Allied Governments to insist on terms of surrender which would result in the Emperor's losing authority over the Japanese people. In the first place, we ought not to increase unnecessarily our difficulties in occupying Japan after her surrender; and there would be obvious advantages in being able to deal with the Emperor as a central authority through whom the directions of the Occupying Powers could be transmitted to the Japanese people. Secondly, the religious influence of the Emperor was such that, if the terms of surrender involved his abdication, there was a serious risk that the Japanese Forces would choose destruction rather than surrender—in which event hostilities throughout the Far East would be prolonged for many months. Provided, therefore, that the Emperor undertook to comply with the directions of the Allied Powers, the Foreign Secretary was disposed to think that it would be expedient to impose terms of surrender which left unimpaired his sovereignty over the Japanese people.
The Prime Minister recalled that the proclamation issued by the Allied Governments from Potsdam on the 26th July, while it did not refer in terms to the position of the Emperor, called for the elimination "for all time of the authority and influence of those who had deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking upon a campaign of world conquest." Those words might be construed as requiring the abdication of the Emperor. He was doubtful, however, whether the United States Government would insist on the abdication of the Emperor if that involved a prolongation of hostilities and further sacrifice of American troops.

In further discussion the following points were made:

(a) It would be necessary to ascertain more precisely what was meant by the phrase "the prerogatives of His Majesty as a sovereign ruler." It would be argued that the Allied occupation of the Japanese ports would prejudice the Emperor's prerogatives; and, if this was meant, such a stipulation could not be accepted. On the other hand, the phrase might be intended to mean merely that the terms of surrender should not require the Emperor's abdication; and in that event the stipulation would not be inconsistent with the spirit of the Potsdam declaration.

(b) Public opinion in this country was sensitive to the sufferings of prisoners of war and civilians now in Japanese hands; and the people of this country would be reluctant to see hostilities prolonged on what might be regarded as a technicality, once the substance of "unconditional surrender" had been obtained.

(c) It would not be justifiable to insist on our right to treat the Emperor of Japan as a war criminal, if the result of such insistence was substantially to prolong hostilities in the Far East.

(d) It was, of course, essential that we should not take any action on this communication save in concert with the Governments of the United States, the U.S.S.R. and China.

The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that it was the view of the Cabinet that it would be inexpedient to insist on terms of surrender involving the abdication of the Emperor of Japan if it seemed likely that this would have the result of delaying substantially the end of hostilities in the Far East. The first step was, however, to exchange views on this point with the Governments of the United States, the U.S.S.R. and China, and to seek a common agreement on this matter between the Four Powers. The Foreign Secretary should arrange for this to be done at once through the diplomatic channel. Meanwhile, as the statement issued by the Domei Agency had already been published by the Press and the B.B.C. in this country, it was advisable that an official statement should be issued at once urging people to carry on as usual until it was officially stated that Japan's surrender had been accepted.

The Cabinet's conclusions were as follows:

(1) In anticipation of the receipt of an official communication from the Government of Switzerland or Sweden, the Foreign Secretary should make arrangements to ascertain through the diplomatic channel the attitude of the Governments of the United States, the U.S.S.R. and China towards the statement put out by the Domei Agency. His Majesty's Ambassadors in Washington, Moscow and Chungking should be informed that the provisional views of His Majesty's Government were as stated at "X" above.

(2) The Minister of Information should arrange for the immediate issue to the press of a statement in the following terms: "His Majesty's Government have not yet received any official communication from the Japanese Government, but they are in communication with the Governments of the United States, the Soviet
Union and China about the radio broadcast from Tokyo as to surrender terms. A further statement will be made by His Majesty’s Government as soon as the situation is clarified. In the meantime, everyone should continue at work as usual.”

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that the Chiefs of Staff already had in preparation a plan for the disposition of our military forces in the event of a sudden surrender by Japan. These plans would not be ready for two or three days, but he explained in very general terms the arrangements which would have to be made to accept the surrender of the Japanese forces in the various areas and to provide for the occupation of liberated and conquered territories.

Special arrangements would have to be made for British troops to be sent in to Hong Kong. This was not in the British zone for military operations; but we had already contemplated that a detachment of British troops should accompany the United States Forces when the course of their operations brought them near Hong Kong. Emergency arrangements would now have to be made; and the most convenient course would probably be to send a naval force to Hong Kong with a detachment of Marines. This force would probably be drawn from the British Pacific Fleet. The Prime Minister thought that it might be advisable for him to send a personal telegram to President Truman on this point in view of the important political considerations involved.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that, as regards the main islands of Japan, the United States plan provided for the inclusion of a British contingent in the occupying forces. This would have to be found, in the first instance, from the South-East Asia Command. Arrangements would be made to include in this contingent troops from Australia and New Zealand, and also troops from Canada and India.

The Cabinet—

Took note of this statement.

3. The Prime Minister recalled that at the meeting of the Cabinet on the 9th August he had suggested that a Committee of officials should be appointed to study various problems which would arise in connection with the treatment of Japan after her defeat. This work would now have to be pressed forward as a matter of the greatest urgency; and, in view of the important questions of policy which would be involved, he thought it would be convenient if a Ministerial Committee were now appointed in addition to the Committee of officials which he had previously proposed.

The Cabinet—

(1) Agreed that a Committee composed as follows:—

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Chairman),
Secretary of State for the Colonies (Deputy Chairman),
Chancellor of the Exchequer,
Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs,
Secretary of State for India and for Burma,
First Lord of the Admiralty,
Secretary of State for War,
Secretary of State for Air,

should be appointed to review the situation arising out of the surrender of Japan in its political and administrative aspects.
(2) Agreed that for the discussion of some of the subjects submitted to this Committee the members of the Committee might be represented by their Parliamentary Secretaries.

(3) Invited the Secretary of State for the Colonies to preside over a Committee of officials representing the Departments concerned, which would prepare detailed proposals for consideration by the Ministerial Committee mentioned at (1) above.

4. **The Prime Minister** said that an immediate review of munitions production should be undertaken, in the light of the situation which would be created by the surrender of Japan. Every effort must be made to taper off the production of munitions as rapidly as possible. Arrangements should also be made to ensure that raw materials now earmarked for munitions production should be made available as rapidly as possible for civil production.

A review should be undertaken of the plans for demobilisation and call-up to the Armed Forces; and the present allocations of man-power for the second half of 1945 should be urgently reviewed.

The Cabinet—

(1) Invited the President of the Board of Trade to arrange for the Joint War Production Staff to undertake an immediate review of munitions production.

(2) Asked the Man-power Committee to make an immediate review of the man-power position.

5. **The Prime Minister** said that, if the news of Japan’s surrender had been confirmed before the opening of Parliament on the 15th August, it would be necessary to make certain changes in the draft of the King’s Speech which had been considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on the 9th August.

For the first paragraph of the present draft, a new passage should be inserted expressing thankfulness for victory and deliverance and referring to all those through whose efforts and sacrifices the war had been won.

Paragraphs 5, 6 and 8 of the draft should be omitted, and some reference should be added to the tasks which our Forces would have to discharge in the liberation and rehabilitation of the territories occupied by Japan.

In paragraphs 11 and 13 of the draft the references to "the European War" and the "war against Germany" should be amended.

The Cabinet—

Approved in principle the amendments suggested by the Prime Minister, and invited him to settle on their behalf the final wording of the draft Speech.

**Arrangements for celebrating the end of the War.**

6. The Cabinet held a preliminary discussion about the arrangements to be made for celebrating the end of the war.

The following were the main points made in discussion:

(a) Broadcasts.

The arrangements should follow those adopted for VE-Day, viz., there should first be a brief official announcement by the Prime Minister, and thereafter a broadcast by The King. A broadcast speech by the Prime Minister should follow after an interval of several days.
(b) **Messages to Dominion Governments.**

The King should be invited to send special messages to the Government of India and the Governments of those Dominions whose troops had taken part in the war in the Far East. The Secretary of State for the Colonies would consider whether similar messages should be sent to any of the Colonies.

(c) **Holidays.**

There should be two days' holiday with pay. In general the arrangements should follow those adopted for VE-Day. If the news of Japan's surrender was confirmed in time, it would be convenient that these holidays should be fixed for Monday and Tuesday, the 13th and 14th August.

The Home Office should give guidance to local authorities with regard to public celebrations generally, and to licensing authorities about the extension of licensing hours in restaurants, public houses, &c., during the two days' holiday on the same lines as had been done for VE-Day.

It would be desirable that arrangements should be made, if possible, for bands to play and music to be broadcast in streets and open places during the evenings of the two days' holiday.

(d) **Day of Thanksgiving.**

There should be a National Day of Thanksgiving, possibly on Sunday the 16th August; and special services of thanksgiving should be held on that day at St. Paul's and in Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff.

(e) **Parliament.**

The State Opening of Parliament would take place on Wednesday, the 15th August. Services of thanksgiving for Members of the two Houses of Parliament might be held on that day, in St. Margaret's, Westminster, and in Westminster Abbey, during the interval between the State Opening and the beginning of the Debate on the Address—possibly at 2.30 p.m.

Arrangements should be made for Addresses of Congratulation to be presented to His Majesty by both Houses of Parliament.

It was also desirable that the two Houses of Parliament should have an opportunity of expressing their gratitude to His Majesty's Forces. After discussion, it was agreed that it would be preferable that the Motion for this purpose should not be taken until after the conclusion of the Debate on the Address.

The Cabinet—

(1) Took note that the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury had already arranged for a meeting of senior representatives of the Departments mainly concerned to co-ordinate departmental action on the conclusion of hostilities in the Far East; and invited him to arrange for this meeting also to consider the detailed arrangements for celebrating the end of the war.

(2) Invited the Chief Whip to discuss with the authorities of both Houses of Parliament the arrangements to be made for services of thanksgiving in St. Margaret's and in Westminster Abbey, and for the presentation of Addresses of Congratulation to His Majesty.

*Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,*

*16th August, 1945.*