CABINET 22 (45).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Tuesday, 14th August, 1945, at 10.45 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. F. W. PETHICK-LAWRENCE, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT STANSCATE, Secretary of State for Air.
The Right Hon. G. A. ISAACS, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.
The Right Hon. ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P., Minister of Education.
The Right Hon. T. WILLIAMS, M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. HUGH DALTON, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.
The Right Hon. J. CHUTER EDE, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department.
The Right Hon. J. J. LAWSON, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. J. WESTWOOD, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.
The Right Hon. E. SHINWELL, M.P., Minister of Fuel and Power.
The Right Hon. ANDREIN BEVAN, M.P., Minister of Health.

Secretariat.

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
General Sir HASTINGS L. ISMAY.
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.

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Surrender.

[30692-2]
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that earlier in the evening he had heard, by telephone from Mr. Byrnes, the United States Secretary of State, that the United States Government had received a reply to the communication sent to the Japanese Government on the 11th August on behalf of the four Allied Governments. Mr. Byrnes had given him the substance of this reply and had said that the United States Government considered that it constituted a satisfactory acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. They therefore proposed that the Japanese surrender should be accepted by the Allied Governments, and that an announcement to this effect should be made forthwith. It was proposed that the announcement should be released at 7 p.m. in Washington, which would be the equivalent of midnight British Summer Time. A further message had since been received from Mr. Byrnes to the effect that the Soviet and Chinese Governments had accepted his proposal for an announcement at 7 p.m. Washington time.

The Foreign Secretary said that he had taken steps to obtain through the United States Embassy the text of the reply from the Japanese Government; and he suggested that the Cabinet should reserve their final decision until they had had an opportunity of examining the text. Meanwhile, it would be advisable to ask the B.B.C. to warn the public to stand by for an important announcement which might be made at midnight.

This suggestion was agreed to, and the B.B.C. were asked at 11 p.m. to issue a warning notice in the terms suggested.

Later in the meeting, the Foreign Secretary received from the United States Embassy the following text of the reply from the Japanese Government:

"With reference to the announcement of the 10th August regarding the acceptance of the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration and the reply of the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and China sent by Secretary of State Byrnes on the date of the 11th August, the Japanese Government has the honour to communicate to the Governments of the four Powers as follows:

(1) His Majesty the Emperor has issued an Imperial rescript regarding Japan's acceptance of the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration.

(2) His Majesty the Emperor is prepared to authorise and ensure the signature by his Government and the Imperial General Headquarters of the necessary terms for carrying out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration.

(3) His Majesty is also prepared to issue his commands to all the Military, Naval and Air Authorities of Japan, and all the Forces under their control, wherever located, to cease active operations, to surrender arms and to issue such other orders as may be required by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces for the execution of the above-mentioned terms.

(Signed) TOGO."

Some discussion ensued on the interpretation of the third paragraph of this reply. It was suggested that the demand of the Allied Governments had been that the Emperor should comply with directions given to him by the Allied Commander; and that the proper construction of the reply was that the Emperor would command his Military, Naval and Air Authorities to comply with directions given to them by the Allied Commander. The language of the reply might have been deliberately chosen to avoid putting the Emperor in the position of having to accept the directions of the Allied Commander. After discussion, it was agreed that the terms of the reply could be regarded as satisfactory on this point, since they would ensure that the Military, Naval and Air Authorities of Japan would
be commanded by the Emperor to comply with such directions as might be given to them by the Allied Commander for the purpose of securing compliance with the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration.

The Cabinet—

(1) Agreed that the reply from the Japanese Government could be regarded as a satisfactory acceptance of the conditions set out in the communication sent on behalf of the Allied Governments on the 11th August; and agreed that the Prime Minister should announce at midnight the news of Japan's surrender.

The Prime Minister read to the Cabinet the text of the announcement which he proposed to make, and outlined the arrangements for celebrating the end of the war. Wednesday and Thursday, the 15th and 16th August, would be celebrated as holidays: His Majesty The King would broadcast at 9 p.m. on the 15th August; the two Houses of Parliament would hold their Services of Thanksgiving at 4 p.m. on the 15th August; and thereafter both Houses would move Addresses of Congratulation to His Majesty. The Debate on the Address would be opened on Thursday, the 16th August.

The Cabinet—

(2) Took note with approval of the arrangements proposed by the Prime Minister.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1.
14th August, 1945.