CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, 29th May, 1946, at 11 a.m.

Present:

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).

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. G. H. HALL, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon. G. A. ISAACS, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service (Items 1-2).

The Right Hon. ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P., Minister of Education.

The Right Hon. T. WILLIAMS, M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. JOHN WILMOT, M.P., Minister of Supply (Item 2).

Mr. J. W. BELCHER, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Board of Trade (Item 2).

Mr. JOHN STRACHEY, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Air (Items 2-3).

Admiral of the Fleet VISCOUNT CUNNINGHAM OF HYNDHOPE, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (Item 2).

The Right Hon. P. J. NOEL-BAKER, M.P., Minister of State (Item 1).

Mr. JOHN DUCDALE, M.P., Parliamentary and Financial Secretary, Admiralty (Items 2-3).

Sir ORME SARGENT, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Item 1).

Marshal of the Royal Air Force LORD TEDDER, Chief of the Air Staff (Item 2).

Lieutenant-General F. E. W. SIMPSON, Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Item 2).

Secretariat:

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.

Sir NORMAN BROOK.

Mr. W. S. MURRIE.

Mr. C. G. EASTWOOD.
## Cabinet 50 (46).

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The Foreign Secretary said that at a later meeting of the Cabinet he would make a special report on the proceedings at the Paris meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. Meanwhile, there were various other matters of, or affecting, foreign policy which he would like to take this opportunity to mention to his colleagues on his return from Paris.

The Foreign Secretary recalled that, at his suggestion, the Prime Minister had arranged for the Chiefs of Staff to send out a special mission of investigation to report on the extent to which the demilitarisation clauses of the armistice were being carried out in the British Zone of Germany. When he suggested the despatch of this British mission, he had not been aware that the United States authorities intended to bring forward at once to the Allied Control Council in Berlin their proposal for the appointment of an Inter-Allied Commission to carry out a similar enquiry in all the occupied zones of Germany. This proposal had now been adopted by the Allied Control Council, who had appointed a special committee to supervise the investigation. It might give rise to misunderstanding if we now proceeded with an independent investigation in the British Zone, and he therefore proposed that the staff of the British mission should be drawn upon to provide the British element in the Inter-Allied Commission.

The Prime Minister said that he had already asked the Chiefs of Staff to arrange for this to be done.

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs said that in the House of Lords on the 15th May attention had been drawn to an order issued with the authority of the Allied Control Council in Berlin authorising the destruction of German war memorials including those of the 1914-18 war. Lord Saltoun, who had raised this matter, was dissatisfied with the answer given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War and had given notice of his intention to raise the matter again on the 23rd May. The Secretary of State suggested that the Foreign Secretary might, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, reconsider the policy underlying this order before the matter was raised again in the House of Lords.

The Foreign Secretary undertook to look into this point and to make a report to the Prime Minister before the 23rd May; a copy of his report would be sent to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, for the purpose of the resumed discussion in the House of Lords.

The Foreign Secretary said that he thought it important to avoid further delay in the holding of the plebiscite in Greece. At the next meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in June one of the main issues was likely to be the withdrawal of occupying troops from all countries in South-East Europe. It would be greatly to our advantage if agreement could be reached on the simultaneous withdrawal of all these troops; and for this reason it was most important that we should be in a position by then to agree to the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Greece. The French Government had, unfortunately, declined to share in the supervision of the arrangements for the plebiscite; but from conversations which he had had with the United States Secretary of State in Paris, he hoped that the United States Government would lend their assistance.

In discussion the view was expressed that there might be some uneasiness among Government supporters at the holding of an early plebiscite in Greece, and at the failure to secure the co-operation of the French in supervising the arrangements. A dangerous situation would arise if the plebiscite resulted in a narrow majority in favour of the King's return. Not only would such a result be represented as the consequence of British diplomacy; it was also likely to lead to a fresh outburst of violence in Greece. Would it not be possible, even at this late stage, to prevail upon the King to renounce his claim to return to Greece?
The Foreign Secretary said that, while the King would be unwilling to make such a renunciation in advance, it was not to be assumed that he would consent to return if the plebiscite resulted in no more than a narrow majority in his favour. Nor need it be assumed that there would be even a small majority in favour of the King's return. The evidence of the recent elections, and of competent observers in Greece, suggested that a plebiscite held under fair conditions might result in a clear majority against the King's return.

The Foreign Secretary said that, while he would continue to watch the position closely, he was satisfied that the balance of advantage lay on the side of holding the plebiscite at an early date.

The Prime Minister said that the Opposition leaders had continued to press that facilities should be given for an early debate on Egypt in the House of Commons, and it had now been agreed that such a debate might take place, in Committee of Supply, on the 24th May. The Foreign Secretary would reply to the debate. He would bring out the positive arguments in favour of withdrawing British troops from Egypt, and would make it clear that this was not a policy of weakness but part of a constructive plan for preserving peace in the Middle East.

The Chief Whip should take special steps to keep a House on the 24th May, in case the Opposition should call for a division.

The Cabinet were informed of a further exchange of messages between the Prime Minister and President Truman (Telegrams T. 264/46 and 272/46) regarding the steps to be taken by the two Governments on the report of the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine. It had now been agreed that the two Governments would, independently but simultaneously, invite the Jews and Arabs to submit within one month their views on all the recommendations in the report. These invitations were to be issued that day. Thereafter, a joint study of the implications of the report would be carried out by experts nominated by the two Governments. President Truman was selecting a group of experts for this purpose, and we had undertaken to indicate the subjects which we wished to be covered in this joint study. President Truman had also undertaken to consider our suggestion that at a later stage there should be a conference convened by the two Governments but attended by representatives of the Jews and Arabs.

The Foreign Secretary said that in this exchange of messages there was evidence that the United States Government were ready to contemplate assuming some practical share in the responsibility for Palestine. They now seemed to be willing to remove this question from the realm of propaganda and to study its practical implications on a business-like footing. He believed that our declaration of policy in respect of Egypt had had a salutary effect on the attitude of the United States Government towards cooperation in the Middle East.

The Prime Minister asked whether it was intended to make any announcement in Parliament that day about the invitations which were being extended to the Jews and Arabs to express their views on the report. It was pointed out that it was now too late to concert any agreed announcement with the United States Government. It was decided that in these circumstances it would be preferable not to volunteer any Parliamentary announcement that day, but to answer any questions which might be put in Parliament on the following day as a result of the announcement which would have been made meanwhile in Palestine.

The Foreign Secretary said that it was a continuing source of embarrassment to him, in discussions on the Peace Treaty with Italy, that substantial numbers of Polish troops should still be retained under British command on Italian soil. If, as he believed, the withdrawal of occupying troops from ex-enemy satellite states became a major issue at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in June, he would be placed in a very difficult position if this mercenary army were still retained in Italy. He had therefore been relieved to hear that arrangements for bringing these Polish
troops to the United Kingdom, were now virtually completed; and in order to expedite their movement, he had persuaded the United States authorities to make a special loan of shipping for this purpose. He had arranged to inform General Anders of these arrangements on the following day, and had intended to make an announcement in Parliament on the 22nd May. It was therefore unfortunate that these arrangements should have been prematurely disclosed on the previous day by the Press and the B.B.C.

It was agreed that special enquiries should be made with a view to tracing the source from which information about these arrangements had reached the Press and the B.B.C.

2. The Cabinet had before them—

(i) a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (C.P. (46) 194) covering a revised report by the Man-Power Committee on the call-up to the Forces in the transition period; and

(ii) a memorandum by the Minister of Supply (C.P. (46) 126) and a note by the Lord President (C.P. (46) 138) on the call-up of apprentices.

The Prime Minister said that after considering the proposals in C.P. (46) 194, in conjunction with a memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff showing the estimated requirements of the Forces in 1946 and 1947 and a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary on the importance of maintaining adequate Forces to support our foreign policy, the Defence Committee had recommended (D.O. (46) 16th Meeting, Minute 1) that the Cabinet should accept the scheme proposed by the Foreign Secretary. The possibilities of securing further reductions in the static formations of the Army, of recruiting larger numbers of women in the Women's Auxiliary Services and of pooling common services, were being pursued; and as a result of these steps some relaxation of the call-up of apprentices in 1947 might be possible. It was also intended to bring to the attention of Dominion Prime Ministers the heavy burden now imposed on the man-power of the United Kingdom by the defence obligations of the British Commonwealth.

The Foreign Secretary said that the scheme which he had recommended (Scheme D) had been arrived at after an exhaustive study of possible alternatives. Under this scheme men called up during 1947 and the early part of 1948 would serve for a fixed period of two years, which would be reduced to 1½ years for those called up later in 1948. Deferment would continue to be granted on the existing bases to men in coalmining, agriculture and the building and building materials industries. This would include apprentices in those industries, but the deferment of apprentices in other industries would be discontinued for the whole of 1947, and most students would also continue to be called up until September 1948. Men already in the Services at the 1st January, 1947, would be released according to age and length of service, and the aim would be to release before the end of 1947 all men called up before the 1st January, 1944, and before the end of 1948 all men called up before the 1st January, 1947. It was true that this meant keeping in the Forces until 1948 some men who had already served two years on the 1st January, 1947, so that men with up to 4½ years' service would be serving side by side with men called up for only two years. It was, however, inevitable that there should be a discrepancy of this kind in the transition period, and adequate Forces were essential if we were to meet our commitments overseas. Indeed, in any announcement about the call-up, the Government must reserve the right to lengthen the period of service if the international situation deteriorated. The man-power available for the Forces under Scheme D did not wholly meet the estimated demands submitted by the Chiefs of Staff to the Defence Committee, but it should be possible for the Services to reduce their demands for men by
recruiting larger numbers of women. Moreover, the position of the Army might be eased if the other two Services assumed some of the purely administrative duties which at present fell wholly on the Army. The scheme before the Cabinet was designed for the transition only and the working out of a permanent peacetime scheme, in which full use should be made of Auxiliary Forces, should proceed without delay.

Discussion turned first on the question whether the United Kingdom could afford to maintain Forces of the size proposed during the transition period.

It was pointed out that under Scheme D over one million men would still be in the Forces at the end of 1947. This represented a very heavy burden on the productive capacity of the nation and should be regarded as a maximum figure which ought to be reduced if there was a marked improvement in the international situation. It was also urged that the demands of the Services were not based on any proper technical examination of the potentialities of new weapons, with the result that full value in striking power was not being obtained. Again, many economies could be made if services now performed by uniformed personnel were undertaken by civilians. Was it necessary that the number of men retained in the Royal Navy at the 31st December, 1947, should be almost twice the pre-war number, and would it not be possible to reduce the man-power demands of the Royal Air Force by providing for a larger number of regulars?

In reply, it was pointed out that the size of the Forces was kept under constant review by the Defence Committee. It was, however, impossible to make sudden readjustments to take account of new developments in weapons. It had also to be borne in mind that very large numbers of troops were required for policing duties on the Continent. Any precipitate reduction in the size of the Forces would be damaging to our position at the present critical stage of international affairs. Experience after the 1914-18 war had shown the disastrous effect on our foreign policy of the failure to back it up with adequate Armed Forces.

Discussion then turned to the question how far it would be possible to defer the call-up of apprentices in 1947.

It was pointed out, on behalf of the Production Departments, that 1947 would be a critical year in the process of industrial reconversion and that from the point of view both of economic recovery and of building up an adequate war potential it was most desirable that there should be at least some deferment of apprentices, particularly of those who were within a year of completing their apprenticeship. While it was recognised that to some extent training could continue during service in the Forces, e.g., in the case of men who entered R.E.M.E., for the vast majority of apprentices call-up meant a serious interruption of training.

On the other hand, it was pointed out that any scheme for deferment inevitably led to the submission of unjustifiable claims and that if any measure of deferment were to be granted to apprentices in 1947 it was essential that there should be a strict scrutiny of all applications. Moreover, unless the total man-power demands of the Services were reduced, the deferment of apprentices in 1947 could be carried out only at the expense of retaining other men in the Forces for longer periods.

Other points in discussion were:

(a) The Minister of Labour should pursue with employers' and workers' organisations the question of shortening the period of apprenticeship. With proper training much of the time spent by apprentices could be saved.

(b) The Minister of Education said that paragraph 9 (c) of the report annexed to C.P. (46) 104 appeared to discriminate against Arts students. In any public announcement this discrimination should be avoided. No change in the number of students deferred would be involved.
The Minister of Fuel and Power suggested that it might be desirable to make specific provision in the scheme for men who opted to enter the colliery industry.

The Foreign Secretary said that if any such provision was specifically made in the scheme as announced, there would be claims for similar treatment from other industries. He accordingly suggested that, as had been done in the past, this matter should be left to arrangement between the Departments concerned after the scheme had been brought into operation.

There was general agreement that the Government should publish their proposals during the following week in the form of a White Paper.

The Cabinet—

(1) Invited the Man-Power Committee to consider what relaxation of the call-up of apprentices in 1947 might be made, having regard to the reduction in the demands for men for the Forces likely to result from increased recruitment to the women's auxiliary services and the assumption by the Navy and the R.A.F. of some of the common service tasks which now fell wholly on the Army.

(2) Subject to (1), approved the revised scheme for call-up in the transition period proposed in C.P. (46) 194, on the understanding that it might have to be amended in the light of developments in the international situation.

(3) Invited the Man-Power Committee to prepare for consideration by the Cabinet early in the following week a draft White Paper setting out the scheme.

The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Lord President (C.P. (46) 185) covering the report of a committee appointed by him to consider the policies which should govern the use and development of our scientific man-power and resources during the next ten years.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the Committee's main conclusion was that, unless urgent steps were taken to double the output of science graduates from the universities, there would be a very grave shortage of qualified scientists in this country. They accordingly recommended that the Government should sponsor an ambitious programme of university expansion at the earliest possible moment. Both the Lord President and he agreed that this should be done and they sought the authority of the Cabinet to publish the report, which had been prepared with a view to publication, and to announce in the House of Commons that the Government were in general agreement with its conclusions, which would involve a substantial liability on the Exchequer, and commended them to the immediate and serious consideration of the universities with a view to the formulation of detailed proposals for expanding the facilities for the training of scientists, in consultation with the University Grants Committees. Most of the additional facilities would have to be provided in the provincial universities and it would be for the universities themselves to work out details with the guidance of the University Grants Committee, the membership of which had recently been strengthened.

The following points were made in discussion:

(a) The Minister of Education hoped that in working out the proposals in the report, as well as in other matters concerning the universities, the Ministry of Education would be brought more fully into consultation than had been customary in the past.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he accepted the view that there should be a greater measure of consultation with the Minister of Education on university affairs and proposed to discuss with the Minister of Education how this could best be secured.
(b) The Parliamentary and Financial Secretary, Admiralty, suggested, with reference to recommendation (25) on page 25 of the Report, that defence science should rank equally with civil science. It was pointed out, however, that this recommendation related only to the reconstruction period during which the priority proposed for civil science appeared to be justified.

(c) The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs stressed the importance of post-graduate work in science.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that this point was recognised in paragraph 55 of the Report.

The Cabinet—

Agreed that the report of the Committee on Scientific Man-Power should be published and that a statement should be made on behalf of the Government on the lines proposed in C.P. (46) 185.

4. The Secretary of State for the Colonies called attention to his memorandum (C.P. (46) 196) reporting the latest developments in connection with the proposed cession of Sarawak to His Majesty. The Cession Bill had come before the Legislative Council of Sarawak on the 16th May, when its second reading was carried by 16 votes to 16, and the third reading was carried on the 17th May by 19 votes to 16. Although the Bill had been carried by the votes of the European members of the Council, the two Members of Parliament who had been sent out to ascertain by independent enquiry whether the proposed cession would be in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants had telegraphed that the voting fairly represented the view of the Council as constituted. It thus appeared that the Members of Parliament, having sounded public opinion throughout the territory, were content to leave the decision to the Council as constituted and did not now question the Council's decision. They did not suggest any suspension of the next stage, in which Rajah Brooke would seek the authority of his Supreme Council to sign the Instrument of Cession.

After consulting the Prime Minister and the Lord Privy Seal, the Secretary of State for the Colonies had therefore given instructions that the proceedings for the cession of the territory should take their course if the Supreme Council, at their meeting that day, authorised the Rajah to cede the territory to His Majesty.

In discussion it was pointed out that criticism in this country was likely to be directed to the fact that a majority of the non-European members of the Legislative Council had voted against the proposal for cession. The Secretary of State for the Colonies said that this criticism might be met partly by explaining that the Legislative Council was so constituted that 50 per cent. of its voting power was in the hands of members representing only 25 per cent. of the native population, and partly by the independent testimony of the two Members of Parliament now visiting the territory to the effect that the voting fairly represented the view of the Legislative Council as constituted.

The Cabinet—

Took note with approval that the acting British Representative in Sarawak had been authorised to sign the Instrument of Cession on behalf of His Majesty's Government if the Supreme Council at their meeting that day authorised Rajah Brooke to cede the territory to His Majesty.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,
20th May, 1946.