Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at No. 10 Downing Street, S.W.1., on Wednesday, 29th March, 1939, at 11.0 a.m.

AGENDA.

1. FOREIGN AFFAIRS

2. PALESTINE - (If required)
   (Reference Cabinet 14 (39) Conclusion 5)

3. WIRE BROADCASTING.
   (Reference Cabinet 35 (38) Conclusion 11)
   Memorandum by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence covering Report of a Sub-Committee, C.P. 70 (39) - circulated herewith.

4. ARMY AND AIR FORCE COURTS MARTIAL COMMITTEE 1938: PUBLICATION OF REPORT OF.
   (Reference Cabinet 11 (39) Conclusion 9)
   Joint Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War and the Secretary of State for Air, C.P. 66 (39) - already circulated.

   Joint Memorandum by the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, C.P. 71 (39) - to be circulated.

5. CONCLUSIONS OF HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.
   8th Conclusions (39) of Committee of Home Affairs - to be circulated.
   India and Burma (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill.
   (Reference Cabinet 2 (39) Conclusion 6)
   Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, covering draft Bill, H.A. 16 (39) - circulated herewith.

(Signed) E.E. BRIDGES
Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
24th March, 1939.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on Wednesday, 29th March, 1939, at 11.0 a.m.

PRESENT:—

The Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., Prime Minister. (In the Chair).

The Right Hon. Lord Maugham, Lord Chancellor.


The Right Hon. Lord Maugham, Lord Chancellor.


The Right Hon. The Right Hon. Sir Thomas Inskip, C.B.E., K.C., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.


The Right Hon. The Right Hon. Sir Kingsley Wood, M.P., Secretary of State for Air.


The Right Hon. The Right Hon. Oliver Stanley, M.C., M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon. The Right Hon. The Earl De La Warr, President of the Board of Education.

The Right Hon. The Right Hon. Walter Elliot, M.C., M.P., Minister of Health.

The Right Hon. The Right Hon. Ernest Brown, M.C., M.P., Minister of Labour.

The Right Hon. The Right Hon. E.L. Burgin, M.P., Minister of Transport.

The Right Hon. The Right Hon. Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:—

Major the Right Hon. G.C. Tryon, M.P., Postmaster-General. (For Item 6).

Mr. Edward E. Bridges, K.C.B., M.C., Secretary.
CABINET 15 (39).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held on WEDNESDAY, 29th MARCH, 1939, at 11.0 a.m.

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1. THE PRIME MINISTER said that the normal procedure would be for him to announce in the House of Commons on Thursday the arrangements for the Easter Recess. The proposal was that both Houses should adjourn on Thursday, 6th April, and should meet again on Tuesday, 18th April. It was not usual for either House, when adjourning for a short recess, to pass a resolution giving power to the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker to call both Houses together at an earlier date if the public interest should so require.

The Prime Minister asked the Cabinet to consider the following alternatives:

(1) That Parliament should adjourn for the usual recess, but that power should be given to the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker to call both Houses together if an earlier meeting was required.

(2) That the adjournment of Parliament should be for a shorter period, namely, from Thursday, 6th April, to Tuesday, 11th April.

After some discussion the Cabinet agreed —

To approve the first course proposed, namely, that Parliament should adjourn for the Easter Recess on the 6th April and should meet again on Tuesday, 18th April, but that power should be given to the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker to call both Houses together if an earlier meeting was required.
2. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that at the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 20th March it had been decided to work in favour of a joint declaration, to be signed by Great Britain, France, Russia and Poland. The essential point in the declaration had been an agreement "to consult together as to what steps should be taken to offer joint resistance". France had replied in the affirmative. Russia had said that she would sign the declaration provided that Poland agreed to do so. Poland, however, had made a very hesitant answer. It had become clear that it would be extremely difficult to make progress with the declaration on exactly the lines proposed. It was also clear that too close an association of Russia with the proposed declaration made difficulties for a number of countries; as, for example, Portugal, Spain, Japan, Italy, the South American countries, Canada and, according to the French, Roumania.

Although, therefore, it seemed impossible to make progress with the declaration on precisely the lines proposed, it was none the less necessary to take effective steps to organise action against further German aggression.

Continuing, the Foreign Secretary said that it was clear that if action was to be undertaken in circumstances at all favourable to us, or if the threat of action was to be an effective deterrent, Germany must be faced with war on two fronts simultaneously. Poland was therefore the key to the situation. In his discussions with M. Bonnet it had been common ground that Poland and Roumania were in the line of likely attack, and that steps should be
taken to encourage those two countries. A draft telegram had been prepared with a view to making an alternative approach to the problem. The Prime Minister had agreed that this matter should be considered by the Foreign Policy Committee, a Meeting of which had been held on Monday last, March 27th. The draft conclusions of this Meeting had been circulated to the Cabinet as Paper C.P. 74 (59).

(At this point copies of the telegrams, No. 56 to Warsaw, No. 65 to Bucharest and No. 105 to Paris, were circulated to the Cabinet. Copies of these telegrams are not annexed to these conclusions, but a copy is on record in the Secretary's standard file of Cabinet Conclusions.)

The Foreign Secretary then went through the telegrams and commented on the salient points. He explained that action would not be taken on the telegrams to Warsaw and Bucharest until the French Government had signified their agreement. He referred to paragraph 4(d) and said that he realised that this paragraph was asking a good deal of Poland, which was thereby invited to enter into a reciprocal arrangement by which (in consideration of Great Britain and France undertaking to come to Poland's help) if Great Britain or France were attacked by Germany, or, if they went to war with Germany to resist German aggression elsewhere in Western Europe or Yugo-Slavia, Poland would come to their aid. The Secretary of State said that he had felt some doubt whether this was not asking too much of Poland. He thought, however, that there would be no harm in
including the proposal in the telegram to Warsaw as he had reached the conclusion that Colonel Beck was unlikely to reach any definite decision upon it before he visited this country at the beginning of the ensuing week.

The position of Yugo-Slavia was one of great difficulty, and he felt that it would be embarrassing to Yugo-Slavia if we were to put any very formal or difficult proposals to her representatives. The latest information appeared to indicate that matters were somewhat steadier in regard to that country. The Prince Regent had received reassuring messages from both Italy and Germany.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs then referred to the position of Turkey and Greece. He did not propose to ask the Cabinet to authorise the taking of any specific action in regard to those countries that morning. Nevertheless, he thought it right to warn his colleagues that an occasion might arise at very short notice in which it might become necessary for us to tell Turkey and Greece that if they were engaged in war in the Mediterranean we would come to their assistance, and that we should expect them to come to our help if we were engaged in war in the Mediterranean. If the situation showed signs of deteriorating it might be necessary as a matter of special urgency for him to obtain the Prime Minister's authority to give such an undertaking to the Turkish and Greek Governments.
Some discussion ensued in regard to the position of Russia.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said that he had endeavoured in drafting paragraph 6 of the telegram to meet the views put forward by the Home Secretary at the meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee.

THE PRIME MINISTER reported that he had discussed this matter with Mr. Greenwood (in the absence of Mr. Attlee who was indisposed) on the previous day. He thought he had brought home to Mr. Greenwood that it was of the utmost importance to obtain the support of Poland and that it was impossible to secure this if Russia was brought into the declaration. Certain other members of the Opposition were, however, less amenable to this argument and it was likely that opposition would be raised to the Government's action from this point of view.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY emphasised that Poland was anxious that any arrangement to be made between this country and Poland should be of a secret nature.

THE HOME SECRETARY said that he was puzzled why France had not taken more definite action with Russia. The French had an alliance with Russia and it was for them to see whether they could not make something more out of it.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH also emphasised the importance of Russia from the point of view of the home front. He also referred to the suggestion that
had been made by the President of the Board of Trade on the Foreign Policy Committee that there might be a separate agreement between Russia and Great Britain to the effect that if either was attacked in Europe, each would come to the other's aid. As Russia could not be attacked by Germany except through Poland and Roumania, this would not involve us in any new commitment.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH thought, moreover, that if Roumania signed away her independence and Germany then attacked the Ukraine this country would not be able to stand aside. It would be much less provocative if this country were to associate herself with Russia at the present stage rather than to wait until such a contingency as he had suggested took place.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he and the Prime Minister had had in mind the point of view expressed by the Home Secretary and the Minister of Health. He thought it was clear that M. Bonnet had no great confidence in Russia. Nevertheless, he would consider whether it was possible to urge the French to take some further action with Russia. He agreed that it was desirable that we should try to get as much assistance from Russia as was practicable. The essential point was to manage matters so as to secure the support of Poland. At the same time he would take what steps were possible to keep in with Russia.
There was also some discussion whether Russia would be able to supply munitions to Poland and Roumania. On the one hand, it was pointed out that the Polish munition areas were liable to be over-run and that there was no other possible supplier except Russia. On the other hand, it was suggested that Russian munitions were not likely to be of up-to-date types.

Some discussion took place on an enquiry whether paragraph 4(a) of the telegram covered the contingency in which either Poland or Roumania actively resisted a threat to their independence but the other country gave help to the aggressor.

To this the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary answered that it was essential to proceed on the hypothesis that the countries concerned desired to preserve their independence, but that they might be afraid to do so unless we promised them support.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer pointed out that the drafting of the telegram would perhaps have been improved if paragraph 4(d) had read as follows:

"The undertaking given by Great Britain and France under (b) to Poland, . . ."  

It was agreed, however, that the meaning of this paragraph was not open to doubt.

The President of the Board of Education asked whether the Foreign Secretary was satisfied that the position would be held pending Colonel Beck's arrival.

The Foreign Secretary said that he was conscious that these negotiations took a long time, but he thought that the authorities in Germany realised that
this country was paying serious attention to what had happened. He also believed that Germany would think twice before she involved herself in a major war. He had been informed by M. Corbin that conversations were being carried on between representatives of Germany and Poland in Berlin, and it was suggested that these conversations were not confined to Danzig. It was perhaps significant that Colonel Beck had not altered the arrangements for his visit to London next week. These facts did not point to any sudden disturbance, but it was, of course, impossible to predict the future.

The Cabinet took note of the telegrams which had been despatched to Warsaw, Bucharest and Paris, and authorised the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to proceed with negotiations on the general basis indicated.
said that the War Office had asked the consent of the Foreign Office to the immediate mounting for the defence of the Suez Canal of certain guns near Port Said and Suez. It would take four days to mount these guns and hitherto this step had only been contemplated as part of the plan for the immediate preparation for war as it was thought that the mounting of the guns was contrary to the Suez Canal Convention of 1851. The effect of the last sentence of Article 8 and the last sentence of Article 11 of the Convention was to provide that "the erection of permanent fortifications on either bank of the Canal, the object or effect of which might be to interfere with the liberty and entire security of navigation, is prohibited".

The Chiefs of Staff now represented that in the period before the guns could be mounted we should be running a very serious risk. It was, therefore, proposed that the Egyptian Government should be invited to take immediate steps to mount the guns. If this step was taken it was possible that Italy would lodge a complaint. To such a complaint we could answer (a) that the guns were not mounted on the banks of the Canal and (b) that the object and effect would not be to interfere with navigation. Neither answer however was thought to be wholly convincing. Italy, however, was not in a position to compel the Egyptian Government to go to The Hague Tribunal and the worst that could
happen would therefore be a certain heating up of Italy's claims in regard to the Suez Canal.

A short discussion ensued in the course of which the SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR explained that vital oil supplies were exposed to unnecessary danger so long as the guns were not mounted.

THE PRIME MINISTER suggested that attempts might be made to camouflage the guns.

The Cabinet agreed—

To authorise the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to invite the Egyptian Government to take the necessary steps for the immediate mounting of certain guns near Port Said and Suez for the defence of the Suez Canal.
4. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS referred to the conclusion noted in the margin inviting Ministers if they proposed to include, in their speeches, statements on Foreign Affairs, to submit the text of what they desired to say to the Foreign Office in advance. At the present time he was receiving draft speeches to be made not only by Cabinet Ministers but by junior Ministers and it was impossible for him to find time to read all these speeches. He asked whether Cabinet Ministers (while continuing to submit to him their own speeches on foreign affairs) would be good enough to make themselves responsible for the reading and approving of speeches to be made by their Parliamentary Secretaries.

In this connection he suggested that the following points should be borne in mind; first, that this country should do all it could to strengthen the will to resist aggression and to give support to those who are prepared to resist aggression. Second, (not of course for publication) that it is desirable that we should gain time (a) for the progress of our Rearmament Programme, (b) for Germany's difficulties to develop. Third, it followed that it was undesirable that language should be used which suggested that we were anxious to attack Germany, since this might perhaps encourage Germany to make an immediate attack on us.
THE PRIME MINISTER suggested a further point namely that it was desirable that Ministers should abstain from personal attacks on Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini.

The Cabinet took note with approval of these suggestions.
5. THE PRIME MINISTER said that he wished at this point in the proceedings to deal with a matter of great urgency and importance which was not on the agenda.

There had been considerable discussion in the country on the question of National Service, whether compulsory or voluntary, and feeling on this matter had developed considerably and had affected opinion in Parliament. There was no wide measure of agreement on any particular course of action, but there was general agreement that some action should be taken in the near future.

The Prime Minister said that he had given this matter his close personal attention, and after discussing it with certain of his colleagues, had reached the following conclusion:

He had a great deal of sympathy with those who said that there was nothing which would so much impress foreign opinion as the adoption by this country of compulsory military service. If such a step was carried through successfully, he was sure that it would have a good effect. His own personal view was favourable to this course, and he mentioned that many years ago, before the War and before he had entered Parliament, he had made public speeches in favour of the national service movement of those days, sponsored by Lord Roberts.

The Prime Minister next referred to the fact that he had repeated the pledge given by his predecessor to the effect that
he would not introduce compulsory military service in peacetime during the life of the present Parliament. As regards this, he thought that, although we were not actually at war, the state of affairs in which we now lived could not be described as peace-time in the ordinary meaning of the word. The point which really influenced him was the probable attitude of the Labour Party and the Trade Union movement. At the present time, Labour was acting very helpfully and was turning a blind eye to a number of practices to which they would ordinarily raise objection. All this facilitated the rapid increase in the output of munitions.

If the Government were now to propose compulsory military service, this would result in the open opposition of organised labour and might result in strikes and a "ca' canny" attitude. This would decrease output and would have a deplorable psychological effect. It would be said abroad that we had failed to secure unity or to show any real national determination. He therefore felt that it would be wrong to accept the views of those who urged the adoption of compulsory military service, unless it was certain that the results which were feared would not materialise. From preliminary soundings which he had made, he was satisfied that it would be very dangerous to adopt this course. At the same time, it was not possible to contemplate any delay.
It had also been represented to him in various quarters that it was deplorable that young men who wished to enlist in territorial units should be turned away because the units in which they wished to enlist were up to establishment. The Prime Minister added that some days ago he had asked the Secretary of State for War to submit alternative proposals for (i) compulsory military service, (ii) a scheme designed to secure a large increase in the territorial force. Since he had asked the Secretary of State for War to prepare these Memoranda, he had come to the conclusion that the first course was impracticable, and he had therefore asked him to develop the second suggestion. The Secretary of State for War had prepared a Memorandum the previous evening, which had been discussed with a number of his colleagues. The Prime Minister then asked the Secretary of State for War to explain his proposals.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that the peace strength of the Field Divisions of the Territorial Army was 130,000. He now proposed to raise these Divisions to the war strength, which was 170,000, and then to double the Territorial Field Army, the strength of which would then be 340,000. The method followed would be to over-recruit in every unit, so as to form a cadre from which a duplicate unit could be built.
This course would involve a number of difficulties, which might result in criticism of the War Office. Thus, the capacity of the existing drill halls would be greatly overstretched until new ones could be provided. It would be necessary to authorise the Territorial Force Association to make temporary arrangements. He hoped that it might be possible to make arrangements for utilising schools for this purpose.

There would also be difficulties in regard to instructors. The Regular Army was in course of being re-organised, and had already been asked to supply an increased number of instructors for the Territorial Army. He thought it would be necessary to re-employ retired officers and N.C.O’s as instructors. There would also be difficulties in regard to equipment, but he thought the equipment available could be eked out for training.

At a later stage it would be necessary to raise Corps and Divisional troops. The capital cost was provisionally estimated at from £80 to £100 millions. The annual cost had not yet been calculated, and it was impossible to say how long it would take to give effect to the whole scheme.

The Secretary of State for War added that he had also obtained the approval of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to regard 18 per cent of the temporary over-recruitment approved for the Territorial Anti-aircraft units as a permanent increase in strength.
The Secretary of State for War then asked if it would be possible to supplement the announcement which would be made as to the doubling of the Territorial Army by a statement relating to the Regular Army. An increase of 16,000 in the personnel of the Army had already been approved for that year, but a further 50,000 was required. He thought that it would be tactically wise to include a reference to the Regular Army in the proposed announcement, and he felt no doubt that the figure of 50,000 which had been submitted to the Treasury would, after examination, be approved in due course.

The Secretary of State for War also referred to the National Service campaign which was now in progress, and suggested that the emphasis of that campaign should be altered so as to give much greater assistance to recruitment for the Regular and Auxiliary Forces. He also suggested that the schedule of the reserved occupations should not apply to recruitment for the Territorial Army.

The Prime Minister said that he thought that the questions as to the schedule of reserved occupations or the method of carrying out the proposed recruiting campaign could be deferred for later consideration. He said that he had mentioned this proposal to
Mr. Greenwood on the previous day in order to ascertain whether the Labour Opposition would associate themselves with the proposed increase in the Territorial Army. Mr. Greenwood had said that it would be necessary to discuss this matter with his colleagues, but he had now sent a message to say that he was willing to ask a Private Notice Question, which, he thought, indicated the Labour Party's concurrence. He proposed to discuss the matter also with Sir Archibald Sinclair.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that the present proposal represented, of course, an immense addition to the already extremely heavy financial burden. Nevertheless, he thought that it was right that he should not look at this matter primarily from the financial point of view. It was clear that what was needed, from the standpoint of public opinion both at home and abroad, was some impressive evidence of the prompt determination of our people, expressed in some very definite form. He understood that the Foreign Secretary regarded this matter as of the utmost importance from the point of view of public opinion in foreign countries, and that the step proposed would operate as a severe, but unprovocative, warning to Germany of our fixed determination to resist aggression. He assumed that the Foreign Secretary would consider that this measure would result in a demonstration of unity and determination that would be of the utmost value to him.
It was clear that the proposal would be attended by considerable difficulties. Nevertheless it was a very big decision, and it could not possibly result in a division of opinion in the country.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer added that he did not feel able to agree to an announcement being made as regards an addition of 50,000 men to the strength of the Regular Army. He doubted whether an announcement of this fact would have the same value, from a spectacular point of view, as the proposed announcement in regard to the Territorial Army.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the Prime Minister had referred to the importance in the foreign field of some practical evidence of our determination. There was indeed abundant evidence of this. It was true that he would greatly have preferred a measure on somewhat wider lines, but he agreed that it would be most unwise to embark on a measure which would involve serious opposition in Labour circles. In reply to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's question he would say that if the scheme was properly presented, it would be of very great value indeed, and he was most grateful to the Secretary of State for War and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for their parts in working out and in accepting these proposals. In order to ensure that these proposals would have the greatest effect, he suggested that the announcement should be made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, and by the Leader of the House in the House of Lords.
The Foreign Secretary concluded by saying that he was certain that the course proposed was the right one and should be taken quickly. At the same time he thought that we should not close our minds to the possibility that at some later date it might be found necessary to go even further.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE referred to the Committee which had been set up by the Cabinet at their Meeting on the 18th March to consider the Defence Programmes and their acceleration. The Committee had considered a number of proposals, many of which had already been sanctioned. The most important of all, however, was the question of war potential. At the present time we were aiming at sending 4 Territorial Divisions overseas after six months, and the remaining 9 after a year; but it was quite clear that a long time must elapse before even this could be accomplished. Now that the Territorial Army was to be doubled, immediate steps should be taken to double the war capacity. Without this the whole scheme would prove a failure.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence said that he had also given consideration to the steps which should be taken to ensure priority over normal trade for munitions production, especially in regard to machine tools. A number of appeals had already been made to particular industries, but the view had been expressed that, in order to ensure the maximum acceleration, the Prime Minister should be asked to make a public appeal to all industry to give priority to all authorised orders for the re-armament programme over normal trade.
Some discussion ensued on this point. On the one hand the view was expressed that it was far better to deal with priority questions by specific enquiry into individual cases or by appeals to particular industries; and apprehension was expressed as to the possible ill effect of any general appeal. On the other hand it was pointed out that certain of the Supply Authorities and the Prime Minister's Industrial Panel had expressed the view that the course proposed would have considerable advantages and that the Industrial Panel were now engaged in preparing a draft of the appeal.

It was agreed that no final decisions should be taken on this matter until all the Ministers concerned had had a further opportunity of considering it.

The President of the Board of Trade said that if an appeal was made for an additional 200,000 recruits to the Territorial Army and only say 20,000 were obtained, it would be clear that voluntary national service had failed and that it would be necessary to have recourse to some other method. He suggested that the appeal for recruits should be conducted somewhat more ostentatiously than the campaign started at the beginning of the year.

The Lord Privy Seal said that the fact that certain Territorial units had had to refuse recruits, had of necessity reduced the possibilities of advertising.
In reply to the Secretary of State for Air, THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that he was not very hopeful of obtaining the full number of recruits now asked for within a short time.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS suggested that the statement should make it clear that the obligations of the Territorial Army included service abroad.

After further discussion, the Cabinet agreed —

(1) To approve the proposal outlined by the Secretary of State for War, that the strength of the Territorial Field Army should be doubled;

(2) To authorise the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for War to settle the terms of the announcements to be made that afternoon in the House of Lords and the House of Commons.
6. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence (C.R. 70 (39)) covering the Report of a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on Wire Broadcasting. The recommendations of the Sub-Committee which had been endorsed by the Committee of Imperial Defence at their 351st Meeting are attached as an Appendix to these Conclusions. At the end of his Memorandum the Minister invited the Cabinet -

(a) to approve the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Wire Broadcasting set out in paragraph 32 of their Report (C.I.D. Paper No. 314-A), including the proposal to make an announcement in Parliament on the lines submitted in recommendation (viii), the terms of which should be drafted by the Postmaster-General in consultation with the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence.

(b) to authorise the Postmaster-General to explain the Cabinet decisions to the Governing Body of the British Broadcasting Corporation at the same time as the public statement is made.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that the Committee under the chairmanship of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury had pointed out that the cost of providing wire broadcasting on a scale which would enable wireless broadcasting to be closed down altogether in war was fabulous. Nevertheless, the Committee thought that efforts should be made to encourage wire broadcasting.
This could be done in three ways: First, by the extension of the licences of the existing Relay Companies for the period of ten years. Secondly, by the Post Office instituting a service over the telephone network on a self-supporting basis. Thirdly, by assisting the Electricity Industry to obtain permission to grant powers to the Relay Companies to use their lines on rental terms.

The Report of the Committee had been approved by the Committee of Imperial Defence. As regards the British Broadcasting Corporation, it was thought that the right course was that the Corporation should be informed of the decision reached by the Government.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that the Relay Companies were not authorised to originate messages, but they might be required to do so in an emergency. The question had now arisen whether they might not be required to send messages for A.R.P. purposes before an emergency had arisen. If it was decided that this should be done, a reference to the fact should be included in the proposed public announcement.

It was agreed that this point should be taken up Departmentally.

The Postmaster-General also emphasised the importance of making a very early announcement on the decision reached, since, until such an announcement was made, the Relay Companies would take no action. He proposed, therefore, to make an announcement, in the terms which had been agreed with the Minister.
for Co-ordination of Defence, on the following afternoon and to communicate with the Governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation immediately thereafter.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the recommendations made in the Memorandum submitted by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence (C.P.70 (39)) summarised above.

(At this point the Postmaster-General left the Meeting).
7. The Cabinet had before them the following documents on the subject of the publication of the Report of the Army and Air Force Courts-Martial Committee, 1938, on which a decision had been postponed at the Meeting mentioned in the margin:—

(1) A Joint Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War and the Secretary of State for Air (C.P. 66 (39)), in which they sought authority for the immediate publication of the Report as a White Paper;

(2) A Joint Memorandum by the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (C.P. 71 (39)), in which they made recommendations regarding the position of the Judge Advocate General and the Judge Advocate of the Fleet, on which a difference of opinion had arisen between the Defence Ministers. The broad intention underlying their recommendations, which they believed were acceptable to the Defence Departments, was that the Judge Advocates should be made to appear what in practice they had been for many years, namely, independent advisers of the Departments to which they were appointed, and that they should be relieved of any duties in connection with the conduct of the prosecution of accused persons.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that he had certain observations to make on the Memorandum submitted by the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. He did not, however, wish to deal with these matters in detail at the Cabinet, but he suggested that the Report should now be published and departmental discussion should take place to settle any outstanding points.
THE LORD CHANCELLOR said that the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and he had been asked to advise on matters which affected the Judge Advocate of the Fleet, and they had been averse from expressing views about other matters in the Report. At the same time, they felt that certain points in the Report were not perhaps altogether logical or wise. If the Report were now to be published, without any Government statement, he thought that the Government might run a risk of finding themselves committed to putting the Judge Advocate General in a position which in his (the Lord Chancellor's) view he ought not to occupy.

After further discussion, it was agreed:

(1) To defer publication of the Report of the Courts-Martial Committee.

(2) That a Cabinet Committee comprising -

The Lord Chancellor (in the Chair).
The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.
The First Lord of the Admiralty.
The Secretary of State for War.
The Secretary of State for Air.
and The Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

should be set up to consider the Report of the Army and Air Force Courts-Martial Committee, and recommend what action should be taken thereon and in regard to the position of the Judge Advocate of the Fleet.
8. The Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India (H.A. 16(39)), covering the draft India and Burma (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, the purpose of which was to make some twenty disconnected amendments in the Government of India and Government of Burma Acts, 1935: together with the following recommendation thereon to the Cabinet by the Committee of Home Affairs (H.A.C. 8th Conclusions (39)):

"To authorise the introduction forthwith in the House of Lords of the India and Burma (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill in the form of the draft annexed to H.A. 16(39), subject to any drafting or other minor alterations that may be found necessary or desirable."

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.
The Secretary of State for Air said that, following on the talks which the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary had had with M. Bonnet, the French Minister for Air had now sent a message to say that he would like to visit this country in the immediate future in order to see if there was any help which we could give him.

The Secretary of State thought that this visit would be worth while and it was proposed that it should take place early in the ensuing week.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he concurred in this proposal.

The Cabinet took note of the above.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,
29th March, 1939.
Recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Wire Broadcasting.

The following are our recommendations:

(i) The development of a wire broadcasting service on a nation-wide scale within two or three years could only be achieved by the provision of the service free and the assumption by the Post Office of responsibility for the development. This course, which would involve a capital expenditure of some £100,000,000 and annual charges of some millions of pounds, cannot be regarded as a practical proposition (paragraphs 3-5).

(ii) The present short-term arrangements for wireless broadcasting in time of war must also be regarded as the intermediate-term arrangements, subject to such modifications as may result from further investigation or technical development (paragraph 5).

(iii) In view of the great advantages of a wire over a wireless system in the event of war, every method of encouraging its development in peace without subsidy from the Exchequer should be adopted (paragraphs 7-10).

(iv) Development should be effected (paragraph 11)—
   (a) through the expansion of the services at present provided by Relay Exchange Companies;
   (b) through a Post Office Service over the telephone network.

(v) Relay Exchange Companies.
   (a) Licences for existing Companies should be extended for 10 years to the 31st December, 1949 (paragraph 12), subject to conditions regarding programmes, connection by wire to stations of the British Broadcasting Corporation, purchase by the Government and control in an emergency, set out in paragraphs 13-16, 17, 18 and 19 respectively.
   (b) Licences for new Companies should be terminable at the same date and be subject to the same conditions as in the case of existing Companies (paragraph 12).

(vi) Post Office Service over the Telephone Network.
   (a) The service should be introduced first in districts most favourable to success, and should be restricted, in the first place, to telephone subscribers; but a reference to its possible extension eventually to non-telephone subscribers should be included in the initial announcement (paragraphs 20-22).
   (b) The service should be operated on an economic basis without subsidy, probably at a cost to the subscriber of 25s. to 30s. per annum (paragraph 23).

(vii) Electric Light Network. The Government should be prepared to assist the electricity supply industry to obtain powers to grant permission to any licensed Relay Company to use their lines on rental terms for the transmission of broadcast programmes (paragraphs 24-26).

(viii) An announcement of the scheme for the development of wire broadcasting should be made in Parliament as soon as possible and should contain an indication that, whilst it is the intention of the Government to maintain wireless broadcasting in time of war, the service would be liable to some deterioration or occasional interruption as a result of enemy jamming or other interference (paragraph 27).
Cypher telegram to Sir E. Phipps (Paris),
Foreign Office, 27th March, 1939. 11.00 p.m.
No. 105.

SECRET.

As you will see from the record of the conversation which
the Prime Minister and I had with the French Minister for Foreign
Affairs on March 25th, the two Governments reached general
agreement on the best course of action to adopt in view of the
reluctance of the Polish Government to accept the proposed Four-
Power declaration of consultation.

2. The draft instructions contained in my telegrams to
Warsaw No. 56 and to Bucharest No. 65 have been prepared in the
light of our discussions with Monsieur Bonnet. You should give
him a copy of those instructions and enquire whether he would be
disposed to send similar instructions to the French Ambassadors
at Warsaw and Bucharest. It is important that the British and
French representatives at each capital should consult each other
before taking action, and that they should act at about the
same time.

3. You will see from my telegram under reference that it is
contemplated that the Soviet Government, while not associated
directly with the proposed arrangements, should be kept in touch
with developments and invited to undertake to lend their assistance
in certain circumstances in the most convenient form. I hope that
the French Government would cooperate with us in endeavouring to
secure this from the Soviet Government.

4. It is of the first importance that the character of the
approach which His Majesty’s Government and the French Government
are making in Warsaw and Bucharest, and the communications which
may follow it, should be kept secret, since any premature dis­
closure would jeopardise their success.

Repeated to Warsaw No. 57, Bucharest No. 66 and Moscow No. 54.
Cypher telegram to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw), No. 56, Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest), No. 65,
Foreign Office, 27th March, 1939. 11.30 p.m.

IMMEDIATE.  
SECRET.

(No action should be taken on the present telegram pending further instructions).

1. My enquiries in the various capitals concerned have shown that it will not be possible to proceed without modification with the proposed Four-Power declaration. While the French Government have accepted the proposal, and while the Soviet Government have accepted, subject to acceptance by France and Poland, the Polish Government are reluctant, for reasons which I appreciate, to associate themselves with the Soviet Union in a public declaration of this kind.

2. His Majesty's Government have been in close and confidential consultation with the Polish Government on this subject, and although possible variants of the original scheme have been discussed, it is becoming clear that our attempts to consolidate the situation will be frustrated if the Soviet Union is openly associated with the initiation of the scheme. Recent telegrams from a number of His Majesty's missions abroad have warned us that the inclusion of Russia would not only jeopardise the success of our constructive effort, but also tend to consolidate the relations of the parties to the anti-Comintern Pact, as well as excite anxiety among a number of friendly Government.
3. It is evident, therefore, that some alternative method of approach must be sought. In any scheme, the inclusion of Poland is vital as the one strong Power bordering on Germany in the East, and the inclusion of Roumania is also of the first importance, since Roumania may be the State primarily menaced by Germany's plans for Eastern expansion.

4. His Majesty's Government have, therefore, decided to make an approach to the Polish and Roumanian Governments in the following sense. The French Government have agreed to make a corresponding approach.

(a) Germany may either directly attack Poland or Roumania, or may undermine either country's independence, whether by processes of economic penetration or national disintegration, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, or by indirect military pressure, which, in the case of Roumania, might take the form of Hungarian troop concentrations. Are Poland and Roumania respectively prepared actively to resist if their own independence is threatened in any of these ways?

(b) If so, Great Britain and France would be prepared to come to the help of the threatened State. It would be understood that, as a counterpart for the undertaking by Great Britain and France to support Poland and Roumania, Poland and Roumania would keep Great Britain and France fully and promptly informed of any developments threatening their independence;

(c) The assurance offered in (b) is dependent upon Poland coming to the help of Roumania, if the latter is the State threatened. We should wish to know whether Roumania would be prepared to come to the help of Poland if the latter were the State
State threatened.

(d) The present section (d) of the communication is to be made to the Polish Government only, since Poland, unlike Roumania, has a treaty of Mutual Assistance with France, and is a stronger military power than Roumania. The undertaking given by Great Britain and France under (b) would be given as part of a reciprocal arrangement by which if Great Britain or France were attacked by Germany, or if they went to war with Germany to resist German aggression anywhere in Western Europe or Yugoslavia, Poland would come to their help.

5. If the position of Poland and Roumania can be consolidated, Turkey and Greece could more easily be rallied to the common cause and would be more likely to be able to make an effective contribution.

6. It is important that the Polish and Roumanian Governments should be made aware of the manner in which we would propose to deal with the Soviet difficulty. It is desirable to preserve the interest of the Soviet Union in this scheme. The intention would be, at some convenient moment in the discussions, to explain to the Soviet Government that it was proposed in the first place to proceed with the Governments of the two countries nearer to Germany and most likely to be affected by the potential danger of the situation. In the event of an attack on Poland or Roumania there would be good reasons on the merits of the case for trying to secure some measure of Soviet participation. I believe that even the benevolent neutrality of the Soviet Union would be to the advantage of these two countries in case of war, and that they might indeed be grateful in an emergency to have at their disposal such war material as Soviet industry would be
in a position to furnish. I am disposed in the first place to ascerta
in the view of the Soviet Government as to their likely
titude to this proposal. It is important not to reinforce
their tendency towards isolation and I propose to consider in
due course how best to retain their close interest which is,
after all, to their own general advantage.

7. It is essential of course that the present approach to
the Polish and Roumanian Governments should be kept secret, as
well as any negotiations that may follow it. Once however
agreement had been secured, it would be necessary, for consti-
tutional reasons, that some statement should be made in Parliament.
His Majesty's Government would at any rate have to state in
public the assurances which they had given to the Polish and
Roumanian Governments. It is possible that the Polish Government
might be reluctant to agree to make public such counter-assurances
as they would have given to us, but His Majesty's Government
would certainly be pressed to say whether any such counter
assurances had been given and they would very much hope to be
in a position to announce the fact.

8. Your French colleague will receive similar instructions
and you should, after consulting him, speak to the Minister for
Foreign Affairs in the sense of the present telegram. You should
not leave with him any statement in writing.

Repeated to Paris No. 164 and Moscow No. 35.