CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Tuesday, 16th May, 1944, at 5.30 p.m.

Present:

The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair). The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.


Lord President of the Council. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTELTON, M.P., Minister of Production. The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.

The Right Hon. JOHN ANDERSON, The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Minister of Production.

Lord President of the Council. Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.

The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.

The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTELTON, M.P., Minister of Production.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. JOHN CURTIN, M.P., Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Field-Marshal the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa.

The Hon. Sir FIROZ KHAN NOON, Representative of the Government of India.

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THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
## WAR CABINET 64 (44).

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1. The Chiefs of Staff reported the events of the previous fourteen days.

Bomber Command had flown 4,700 sorties and dropped 14,300 tons of bombs, almost all of them on targets in Occupied Territory. Mosquitoes had attacked targets in Germany, including Berlin.

United States bombers had flown 6,500 sorties and dropped 12,000 tons of bombs, two-thirds on targets in Germany and the rest on railway centres and "Crossbow" targets. 2,000 tons of bombs had been dropped on Berlin in two raids. United States bombers had also attacked synthetic oil targets in Germany, inflicting severe damage on five plants. 2,600 tons of bombs had been dropped on "Crossbow" targets.

The Allied Expeditionary Air Force and the Tactical Air Force had made 33,000 sorties and had dropped 7,740 tons of bombs.

Enemy losses claimed for the fourteen days were 504 aircraft destroyed, 62 probably destroyed and 189 damaged. Allied losses included 135 British and 126 United States bombers.

By night 190 enemy aircraft had been over this country, of which 19 had been destroyed. In addition, 10 enemy aircraft had been destroyed by Intruder patrols. Night attacks by enemy aircraft had failed to achieve any concentration.

The War Cabinet—

Invited the Chief of the Air Staff to render a return of the estimated output of German fighter and bomber aircraft at a current date and, say, six months ago. The return should also give an estimate of the total number of completed, fighter and bomber aircraft in reserve, including those in transit, on each date.

Shipping losses by enemy action in the past fortnight amounted to 10,000 tons.

On the 7th May the Canadian frigate Valleyfield had been torpedoed and sunk by a U-boat off Cape Race.

Fleet Air Arm aircraft had attacked enemy shipping off the Norwegian coast. Two enemy ships had been sunk and a number of others damaged. Seven enemy aircraft had been destroyed and 6 of our aircraft lost.

In the Mediterranean 2 United States destroyers and a French destroyer had been torpedoed. Our ships had bombarded Rhodes and supply dumps and roads in Italy near the Anzio bridgehead; and our submarines had sunk a number of enemy caïques and shelled the South coast of France. The crews of 2 Greek warships had been removed for disaffection.

In the Indian Ocean an enemy U-boat had been driven ashore and the crew captured.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff gave an account of the attack which had started on the 11th May on the Italian front. The Poles, on the right, had made an advance behind Cassino, but had
later been driven back. Elsewhere, along the whole front from Cassino to the sea, good progress had been made, particularly by the French troops in the centre. Generally, the situation was encouraging.

There was no material change in the situation.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

2. Reference was made to a minute which the Chiefs of Staff had sent to the Prime Minister, suggesting that the demands of shipping for military operations might make it necessary that there should be a temporary cut in the monthly United Kingdom import programme. This would probably result in some reduction in our reserves. The Prime Minister directed that this minute should be circulated to the Ministers concerned, with a view to its early consideration.

This led to the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand saying that they would be glad to examine what measures they could take with a view to increasing the exports of foodstuffs from their countries to the United Kingdom.

The War Cabinet—

Directed the Secretary to arrange that the Dominion Prime Ministers should be furnished with a selection of significant figures of our production and import programmes.

3. The Secretary of State for Air referred to a recent telegram from His Majesty's Minister at Berne. It appeared that on or about the 25th March 76 officers had escaped from the camp. Fourteen of these were still at large, 15 had been recaptured and 47, according to the account given to the Swiss Camp Inspector by the Camp Commandant, had been killed, some while offering resistance on recapture, others on a new attempt to escape after capture.

It seemed improbable that so large a number of officers should have resisted arrest. Further, some of the recaptured prisoners had stated that about 50 of their fellows had been seen leaving Gorlitz prison on a lorry, handcuffed, under police escort. The officers killed included not only British officers, but also officers of Dominion and Allied forces. The War Cabinet would no doubt desire to consider what action should be taken and what announcement should be made. The next-of-kin had been informed and some statement would have to be made at a very early date.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs proposed that a telegram should immediately be sent to His Majesty's Minister at Berne, instructing him to ask the Swiss Government to take up the matter at once with the German Authorities, at the highest level, and to demand a full and immediate report on the circumstances in which the officers had lost their lives. He suggested that, if possible, no statement should be made until a reply had been received. Full information would be given to the Dominion Governments.

The Secretary of State for War agreed that it would be preferable to await a reply before making any public statement, but doubted whether a statement could be deferred for more than forty-eight hours.

Mr. Curtin referred to reports about the treatment of prisoners in the hands of Japanese, and said that everything pointed to the fact that they were being badly treated. The representations so far...
made to the Japanese Government appeared to have had no result. He did not believe that a policy of reprisals would have any effect on the Japanese. He asked whether the Soviet Government might be willing to intervene with the Japanese Government.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs explained that the Soviet Government had already approached the Japanese Government on this subject, though it was not yet known with what result.

The War Cabinet—

Approved the draft telegram which the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs proposed to send to His Majesty's Minister at Berne, and agreed that, if possible, any Government statement should be deferred until a reply had been received.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
16th May, 1944.