CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Wednesday, 20th December, 1944, at 6 p.m.

Present:

The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).


The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

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

The Right Hon. LORD WOOLTON, Minister of Reconstruction.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

Colonel The Right Hon. OLIVER STANLEY, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (Items 4 and 5).

The Right Hon. Sir JAMES GRIGG, M.P., Secretary of State for War (Items 1 and 2).

The Right Hon. Sir STAFFORD Cripps, K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production.

The Right Hon. BRENDAN BRACKEN, M.P., Minister of Information.

The Hon. Sir ALEXANDER CADOGAN, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir CHARLES F. A. PORTAL, Chief of the Air Staff (Items 1 and 2).

The Right Hon. L. B. BEAVERBROOK, Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. A. V. ALEXANDER, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty (Items 1 and 2).

The Right Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.


The Right Hon. LORD CHERWELL, Paymaster-General.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir ANDREW CUNNINGHAM, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (Items 1 and 2).

Field-Marshall Sir ALAN BROOKE, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Items 1 and 2).

Secretariat.

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
General Sir HASTINGS L. ISMAY.
Sir GILBERT LAITHWAITE.
Mr. W. S. MURRIE.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Naval, Military and Air Operations...</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Man-power</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>World Organisation</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>International Aspects of Colonial Policy</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. At the request of the Prime Minister, the War Cabinet were given an account of the position on the Western Front, where the Germans had effected a penetration—at places to a considerable depth—over a length of the Front held by the United States Army. The Prime Minister and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff gave particulars of the counter-measures proposed to deal with the situation, which would be one of tension for some time.

The War Cabinet were also given the latest information about the position in Greece. We were firmly established in Piraeus, where a number of strong points had been cleared, and the roads from Piraeus and from Phaleron Bay to Athens had been cleared. On the other hand, the R.A.F. Rear Headquarters at Kifissia had been attacked, and it was feared that some administrative personnel there had been taken prisoner.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

2. The Prime Minister said that he thought the present battle on the Western Front might well lead to a situation in which this country should take action which would show its resolution. Thus, in a few days' time it might be desirable to announce that, by dint of further sacrifices, and in order to make our utmost contribution to victory, arrangements were being made which would result in adding 250,000 men to the fighting line in order to nourish existing units and to increase its strength. Of this number, about 120,000 would be found by the new intake in the next six months, 40,000 by transfers from other Services, and it was hoped that another 100,000 might be found by one means or another. Thus, there would have to be a drastic combing of men from existing units, of defensive and static troops and rearward formations. These men would, of course, require a period of training or retraining. There would also have to be some relaxation of medical standards, though it might be found convenient that the men of lower medical category should serve together in units which would not be employed in the more mobile roles.

The Prime Minister said that he had had some preliminary discussion with the Secretary of State for War, who had undertaken to do his utmost in this matter. He asked that, the necessary measures should be examined in detail as a matter of urgency by the Secretary of State for War, in consultation with the Minister of Labour and National Service as necessary, in order that an announcement could be made at a suitable opportunity in the near future.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of this statement.

3. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Health (W.P. (44) 734) submitting a draft White Paper on Local Government reform.

The Minister of Health recalled that in August 1944 he had announced that the Government did not consider that a case had been made out for any drastic change in the existing structure of local government, but that consultations would be undertaken with the Local Government Associations with a view to formulating proposals for improvements within the general framework of the existing county and county borough system. Since then consultation had taken place and the proposals set out in the White Paper had been generally accepted. Their main effect was to establish a Local Government Boundary Commission which would take over the powers to make alterations in county districts vested in county
councils and the Minister of Health under the Local Government Act, 1933, and would also, subject to Ministerial and Parliamentary safeguards, deal with the creation and extension of county boroughs and certain other changes in local authority areas. The promise to put forward proposals with regard to the adjustment of local government areas had been reaffirmed in the proceedings on the Town and Country Planning Bill and in The King's Speech, and it was known that local authorities were anxiously awaiting the publication of the White Paper.

In discussion, the view was expressed that the proposals in the White Paper were likely to be extremely controversial. Their effect, it was urged, would be to enlarge the field of the county borough government at the expense of the county districts. This would weaken the interest taken in local affairs by the residents in these districts and would tend to saddle them with the burden of services which were unnecessarily elaborate for rural areas. In this connection particular reference was made to the passages about linking town and country on page 13 of the draft White Paper. A further point was that local authorities would lose their freedom to submit proposals to Parliament and would be subjected to the arbitrary decisions of the Boundary Commission appointed by the Minister of Health. In general, the effect would be to favour the creation of large authorities and to strengthen the control of the central government over local authorities.

The following particular points were also criticised:

(a) It was suggested that the reference to the National Fire Service in the last paragraph but one on page 5 of the draft White Paper suggested a bias in favour of the continuance of the service as a function of the central government.

(b) It was urged that it was undesirable to encourage the setting up of joint authorities with executive powers.

(c) The effect of the proposals for the review of Orders by Parliament, set out in page 15 of the draft White Paper, was that any scheme for an adjustment of boundaries would have to be accepted or rejected in whole, whereas under the present procedure by Parliamentary Bill it was possible to make amendments in a scheme.

It was pointed out, on the other hand, that the proposals in the White Paper had been warmly welcomed by the county authorities as a safeguard against the haphazard and unregulated extension of county boroughs. In the past the most disturbing elements in local government had been the constant pressure from county boroughs to extend their boundaries, and from non-county boroughs to achieve county borough status. Normally, the extension of a county borough could be carried out only by depriving the county council of much of their rateable value. This had led to proposals for extension being fought out before Parliament at great expense and with results that tended to be fortuitous. The White Paper proposals were designed to substitute a system under which any changes necessary would be considered in a less controversial atmosphere, and from a broader point of view, that would take into account the interests of adjoining areas. The passage on page 13 of the draft White Paper on the subject of linking town and country did not relate to the extension of county boroughs, but to the enlargement of small country towns to include some part of the rural area surrounding them. The interests of these towns were closely bound up with those of the surrounding country, and the proposals would both enlarge the resources of the existing authorities and strengthen them by the addition of members from rural areas. Parliament would still retain full control of any proposals for extending the area of county boroughs.

In further discussion, it was suggested that, while a case had been made out for the publication of the White Paper, it might be
desirable to lessen the extent to which the Government were committed to the proposals in it. Thus they might be put forward rather as proposals for which the Government had found a wide measure of support in the course of the consultations which they had undertaken, and on which Parliament, as well as the country, would naturally desire an opportunity for full discussion before legislation was undertaken. For this purpose some amendment of the introduction to the White Paper would be required.

The War Cabinet—

Authorised the publication of the White Paper annexed to W.P. (44) 734, subject to the deletion of the reference to the National Fire Service on page 5 and to the amendment of the third paragraph of the introduction in the sense indicated at "X" above.

4. The War Cabinet had before them the following papers on the method of voting in the Security Council of the World Organisation:

(a) A Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (W.P. (44) 747).
(b) A Memorandum by the Minister of Aircraft Production (W.P. (44) 667).
(c) Connected papers circulated to the Armistice and Post-War Committee (A.P.W. (44) 117, 120 and 122).

A difference of view had manifested itself between the U.S.S.R., who had maintained that no decision should be taken without the unanimous consent of all the permanent members of the Security Council, and the United Kingdom and United States, who had felt that members of the Security Council who were parties to a dispute should not be entitled to vote at any stage of the consideration of that dispute.

A compromise proposal had now been put by President Roosevelt to Premier Stalin. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that, as stated in his Memorandum (W.P. (44) 747), there was much to be said for our supporting this compromise, provided the Dominions agreed. On the whole, he thought it would be better that we should not express any view ourselves to Premier Stalin, even if the Dominions agreed, until Premier Stalin had expressed his. All that was involved at this stage was, therefore, consultation with the Dominions.

The War Cabinet—

Approved the proposals of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs as set out in W.P. (44) 747, subject to "X" above.

5. At the Dumbarton Oaks Conference there had been informal discussions between the United States and the United Kingdom Delegations. This had led to a suggestion for an informal exchange of papers covering certain international aspects of colonial policy, e.g., the future of the present mandates, regional machinery and "trusteeship machinery."

The War Cabinet now had before them a Memorandum by the Chairman of the Armistice and Post-War Committee (W.P. (44) 738), to which was appended a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, prepared for eventual communication to the United States Government as a basis for discussion. This had been approved by the Armistice and Post-War Committee which suggested that, if generally approved by the War Cabinet, it should be referred in the first instance to the Dominion Governments for their comments.
The Secretary of State for the Colonies said that his Memorandum followed closely the proposals laid before the Dominion Prime Ministers in May 1944. It was important that we should take the initiative and should not wait for the Americans to make the first move, lest they should put forward schemes which were unsatisfactory from our point of view, but might attract support.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that paragraph 16 of the Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies gave definite support to a list of social subjects for which functional agencies might be usefully established where they did not already exist. He trusted that care would be taken to ensure that such bodies were not a means of putting pressure on us to spend money which we had not got.

The War Cabinet—
Agreed that the Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies should be referred for comment to the Dominion Governments, on the understanding that the matter would again be brought before the War Cabinet, when their comments had been received.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
20th December, 1944.