CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Thursday, 21st December, 1944, at 5.30 p.m.

Present:

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. Oliver Lyttelton, M.P., Minister of Production.
The Right Hon. Anthony Eden, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Items 1 and 2).
The Right Hon. Ernest Bevin, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.
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 (Item 8).
The Right Hon. Sir James Grigg, M.P., Secretary of State for War (Items 3-8).
The Right Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps, K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production.
The Right Hon. Hugh Dalton, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (Items 3-8).
The Right Hon. Lord Cherwell, Paymaster-General (Items 3-8).
The Right Hon. Lord Beaverbrook, Lord Privy Seal.
The Right Hon. A. V. Alexander, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty (Items 3-8).
The Right Hon. Sir Archibald Sinclair, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.
The Right Hon. Viscount Swinton, Minister for Civil Aviation (Items 3-8).
The Right Hon. Brendan Bracken, M.P., Minister of Information.
The Hon. Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Items 1 and 2).

Secretariat:

Sir Edward Bridges.
Sir Gilbert Laythwaite.
Mr. W. S. Murrie.
## WAR CABINET 173 (44).

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1. The Prime Minister gave the War Cabinet the latest news of the battle on the Western Front. While the position was still one of tension it was not without encouraging features.

The War Cabinet—
Took note of the Prime Minister's statement.

2. The War Cabinet discussed the latest developments in the Greek situation. A record of the discussion and of the conclusions reached is contained in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

3. The War Cabinet had before them the following memoranda on the subject of man-power in the first half of 1945:

(i) a memorandum by the Minister of Labour and National Service (W.P. (44) 718) dealing with the general position;
(ii) a memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (W.P. (44) 705) on the Army man-power requirements;
(iii) a memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty (W.P. (44) 724) on man-power allocations for the Navy;
(iv) a memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty (W.P. (44) 729) on the Naval contribution to Army man-power needs;
(v) a memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (W.P. (44) 728) on Royal Air Force man-power requirements;
(vi) a memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (W.P. (44) 751) reporting the conclusions of the Ministerial Committee on Man-power on the requirements for the Armed Forces;
(vii) a memorandum by the Minister of Aircraft Production (W.P. (44) 748) on man-power for the aircraft industry;
(viii) a memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (W.P. (44) 755) reporting the conclusions of the Ministerial Committee on Man-power on the requirements of the munitions industries.

The War Cabinet considered first the requirements of the Armed Forces.

The claims for new intakes of men put forward by the Service Ministers amounted to 208,500, subject to some slight adjustment on account of any excess intakes which might have been received by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in 1944. Against these claims it was hoped that there would be available from the call-up 140,000 men, including 20,000 fit young men who would be released from the munitions industries as a result of cuts in their programmes. It might be, however, that the numbers available from the munitions industries would be only 15,000.

The Committee on Man-power had reached the conclusion that 120,000 of the men available from the call-up should be allocated to the Army and that the remaining 20,000 should be allocated to the Royal Navy.

The Secretary of State for War had also put forward a claim for the transfer to the Army from the Navy and the Royal Air Force of 70,000 basically trained men. The Committee recommended the transfer of 20,000 men from the Navy (11,868 of whom would be in trained units of the Royal Marines) and 20,000 men from the Royal Air Force, a large proportion of whom should be of high medical category.
With regard to intakes of women, there was a claim for 3,000 women for the W.R.N.S., and a claim for 13,800 women for the A.T.S. If the existing age limits for volunteers for the Women's Auxiliary Services were maintained, only 10,000 women could be supplied in the first half of 1945. But by raising the age limit for volunteering, about 5,000 additional women might be made available. The Committee proposed that of the 15,000, 3,000 should be allocated to the W.R.N.S. and 12,000 to the A.T.S.

The Secretary of State for Air said that the proposed transfer of 20,000 basically trained men of high medical category from the Royal Air Force to the Army would present great difficulties. The demands which the Royal Air Force would have to meet in Stage II meant not only the conversion of bomber and coastal command squadrons to transport work, but also the conversion of existing operational squadrons for use in new operational roles. Although the Royal Air Force had received intakes of the highest medical category for the air crews, they had in return accepted large numbers of low grade men as ground staff, with the result that they were having great difficulties in finding fit men to send overseas. Moreover they were faced with the withdrawal of substantial numbers of men from the Dominion Air Forces and would have to train men to replace them. Everything possible was done to replace men by women in posts for which women were suitable. Would the Secretary of State for War not agree to the transfer of 20,000 men of low medical category from the Army to the Royal Air Force in return for the 20,000 men of high medical category whom the Army would receive from the Air Force?

The Secretary of State for War said that he would be prepared to consider this suggestion, but that in view of the effort which was being made to get a very large number of men into the fighting line it might be difficult to meet it.

The First Lord of the Admiralty pointed out that in preparing for Stage II the Navy were faced with very similar problems to those facing the Royal Air Force. It seemed probable that the Navy would only be able to release about 20 per cent. of their strength in Stage II as compared with much bigger percentages for the other Services. Nevertheless he had accepted the Man-power Committee's proposals.

The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security said that it had been estimated that during the first half of 1945 the number of whole-time workers employed in Civil Defence would be reduced by 94,000 to a total of 152,000. Every effort would be made to secure this reduction, but it might not prove possible to achieve the target. Moreover, in 1945 there would probably be a wastage of some 500 to 600 police per month, and at a later date he might have to put forward proposals for the replacement of this wastage.

The War Cabinet—

(1) Approved the proposals in W.P. (44) 751 for intakes into the Armed Forces and for transfers to the Army from the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in the first six months of 1945.

The War Cabinet then discussed the question of man-power for the munitions industries.

It was explained that the original estimates made by the Joint War Production Staff had provided for an increase in the man-power required for the Admiralty of 19,000 and for reductions in the Ministry of Supply and Ministry of Aircraft Production man-power requirements of 99,000 and 523,000 respectively. It was now estimated that the Admiralty would require no increase. The Ministry of Supply would, however, be able to release only 49,000 as against 99,000, and the Ministry of Aircraft Production, if they continued to work on the present aircraft programme, could release only 400,000 instead of 523,000. Thus on the new basis the net
release from the munitions industries in the first half of 1945 would be 449,000 instead of 612,000. This meant that there would be a reduction of 5,000 in the man-power available for intakes for the armed forces. The effect on civilian industry would be much more marked, and before further consideration could be given to the man-power requirements of industries in Groups II and III, firm estimates must be made of the man-power requirements of the munitions industries. It was, therefore, a matter of great urgency that the aircraft programme should be reviewed, and it was suggested that the Secretary of State for Air and the Minister of Aircraft Production should submit revised proposals which would take into account the aircraft which were being made available by Lend-Lease.

The Secretary of State for Air said that every effort was being made to work out a revised programme and that his proposals should be available not later than the end of the first week in January.

The War Cabinet—

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for Air and the Minister of Aircraft Production to submit revised proposals relating to the aircraft programme as soon as possible.

4. The Prime Minister recalled that at their meeting on the 20th December it had been proposed that, at an appropriate time, we should announce that arrangements were being made which would result in adding 250,000 fighting men to the fighting line. A draft announcement had been prepared. If the War Cabinet approved, he would make the announcement on some suitable occasion after Christmas.

There was general agreement that it was most desirable that an announcement on the lines proposed should be made, both as a gesture to our Allies and for its effect in this country, particularly in the factories. Recently there had been a tendency to assume that serious fighting was over and the pressure on the Services to release men had increased very markedly.

The Secretary of State for Air said that it would help in carrying out the transfers of trained men from the Royal Air Force to the Army if the Prime Minister could make it clear in the announcement that those involved in the transfers were being moved in order that they might be able to serve where they were most needed at this time.

The War Cabinet—

Agreed that at a suitable opportunity the Prime Minister should make a statement on the lines proposed.

5. At their meeting on the 1st September the War Cabinet had recorded the view that great importance attached to steps being taken to accelerate the design, development and production of aircraft for civil use. The Minister of Production, the Minister of Labour and National Service, the Secretary of State for Air, and the Minister of Aircraft Production had undertaken to examine, as a matter of urgency, the steps necessary to achieve this end, and to report to the War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet now had before them a report from the Ministers concerned (W.P. (44) 649).

The report showed that quicker progress depended mainly on early supply of draughtsmen. The War Cabinet were invited to agree to the following measures to meet the requirements of the
Ministry of Aircraft Production for draughtsmen to the fullest practical extent—

(i) The Ministry of Labour and National Service should, without publicity, endeavour to obtain volunteers from other branches of the engineering industry, with due regard to the claims of reconversion and other important work.

(ii) The Minister of Labour and National Service should examine with the Service Ministers the possibility of releasing further draughtsmen from the Forces.

(iii) The Ministry of Aircraft Production should continue to press forward with internal transfers, upgrading and training in the aircraft industry, and should examine with the Ministry of Labour and National Service the possibility of expanding that Department's schemes for training draughtsmen.

(iv) The Ministry of Supply should examine as a matter of urgency the possibility of transferring draughtsmen from their establishments.

Points in discussion were:

(a) The Minister of Production said that action on the lines proposed was already in hand.

(b) The Secretary of State for Air said that he had had great success in finding draughtsmen in the Royal Air Force. He invited the other two Service Ministers to do all they could to release further draughtsmen from the Army and the Royal Navy.

(c) The Minister for Civil Aviation stressed the importance from the point of view of the development of British civil aviation, of proceeding as rapidly as possible with the design stage, and thus saving time in the introduction of new British types.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of the discussion and approved the action recommended in W.P. (44) 649 as summarised above.

Civil Industry.

Supply of draughtsmen.

6. Arising out of discussion on the previous item, the President of the Board of Trade said that he had pressing demands from civil industry for 600 draughtsmen for work which would be of the utmost importance for the export trade.

The Minister of Labour and National Service said that in 1940 there had been only 14,000 draughtsmen in the whole country. This number had been brought up to about 28,000, but there was still need for the number to be increased, by training of further draughtsmen and by dilution. If the Board of Trade would consult his Department, he would consider what steps could be taken to increase the supply of draughtsmen for civil industry.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of this statement.

Civil Air Transport.

Comparison of British and American Transport Aircraft.

7. The War Cabinet took note of a memorandum submitted by the Minister of Aircraft Production (W.P. (44) 090) comparing six British and six American transport aircraft likely to be available in numbers for commercial airlines between January 1945 and January 1947.
8. On the 21st November the War Cabinet had considered a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies on this subject (W.P. (44) 643), and had invited the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State to arrange for further discussion in the light of the views expressed.

The War Cabinet now had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (W.P. (44) 753). The memorandum explained that he had now agreed with the Chancellor of the Exchequer that, subject to confirmation by the War Cabinet, the proposed Act amending the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, 1940, would authorise total expenditure not exceeding £120 million over the ten-year period, starting on the 1st April, 1946, subject to the actual expenditure under the Act in any one financial year not exceeding £17½ million. This figure of £120 million would include expenditure on research, at present separately provided for, and expenditure on higher education which was in contemplation. There would be no limit of time on research expenditure, but, after the expiry of the ten-year period, research expenditure would be limited to £1 million a year.

The War Cabinet—

Approved this proposal.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
21st December, 1944.