CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Tuesday, 3rd April, 1945, at 5.30 p.m.

Present:
The Right Hon. Winson S. Churchill, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. Ernest Bevin, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.
The Right Hon. Lord Woolton, Minister of Reconstruction.
The Right Hon. Peter Fraser, M.P., Prime Minister of New Zealand.
The Right Hon. H. V. Evatt, K.C., Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, Australia.
The Hon. Sir Firoz Khan Noon, Representative of the Government of India.
The Right Hon. Lord Beaverbrook, Lord Privy Seal.
The Right Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps, K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production.
The Right Hon. Lord Cherwell, Paymaster-General.
Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Charles F. A. Portal, Chief of the Air Staff.
Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Secretariat:
Sir Edward Bridges.
General Sir Hastings L. Ismay.
Mr. Norman Brook.
Mr. I. F. Burgess.
## WAR CABINET 39 (45).

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Review of World Situation.

1. The Prime Minister welcomed to the War Cabinet Field-Marshal Smuts, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Forde, Dr. Evatt, Field-Marshal Lord Wavell and Sir Firoz Khan Noon.

The War Cabinet reviewed the general world situation. A full record of the statements made is contained in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

Naval, Military and Air Operations.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (50) 36th Conclusions, Minute 1.)

2. The Chiefs of Staff reported the principal events of the previous week:

Bomber Command had flown 1,800 sorties and dropped 5,900 tons of bombs. Their targets had included communications, oil centres and U-boat yards. Mosquitoes had attacked Berlin on five nights.

United States bombers had flown 4,300 sorties and dropped 9,500 tons of bombs. Their targets had included oil plants, tank factories and railway centres.

During the month of March the R.A.F. and the United States Air Force had dropped 206,000 tons of bombs on Germany—roughly three times the total tonnage of explosives of all kinds dropped on this country during the whole of the war.

An estimate has been made by experts of the results of continued air attacks on enemy oil plants during the past ten months. From this it appeared that on the 27th March German production of oil was only 11.4 per cent. (and of petrol only 5 per cent.) of what it had been in April 1944. Since December 1944, production had never been sufficient to meet the absolute minimum needs for prosecuting the war: stocks were now exhausted: and the estimated petrol production at the 27th March was less than one-fifth of the minimum needs.

The Tactical Air Force had flown 23,000 sorties. Attacks had concentrated on enemy transport, of which very large numbers were claimed to have been destroyed.

Total Allied losses for the week had been 34 bombers, 148 fighters and 7 Coastal Command aircraft. Enemy losses amounted to 215 aircraft.

Mediterranean.

In the Mediterranean, 3,000 sorties had been flown and 5,000 tons of bombs dropped. Targets included railways behind the enemy lines facing the Russian front in Austria.

Shore-based aircraft had supported Allied operations in the Philippines. American aircraft had attacked a convoy north-east of Quinhon, sinking 38,000 tons of merchant shipping and some 6,000 tons of escort vessels. Super Fortresses had again attacked aircraft factories at Nagoya.

Naval Operations.

Confirmed shipping losses for the week, due to enemy action, had been 2,761 tons. The confirmed shipping losses for March now amounted to 87,367 tons.

The total U-boat losses for March had been 4 sunk, 6 probably sunk and 7 promising attacks. 4 midget submarines had been sunk and 2 possibly sunk. A convoy of 28 ships had arrived at United Kingdom ports from North Russia without loss.

Throughout the week operations on a large scale had been in progress against the Loochoo Islands. The United States Fleet had operated against the northern groups of these islands while the British Pacific Fleet had attacked the southern group. On the 31st March the British Fleet, in resumed operations, had received some damage from attacks by enemy aircraft. The United States Fleet, in addition to carrying out heavy attacks on the northern Loochoo Islands, had operated against airfields in Japan. Landings had been made on a group of small islands to the west of Okinawa, and on the 1st April an assault on Okinawa Island itself had commenced. During these operations considerable damage to enemy shipping and aircraft was claimed.
Military Operations. East of the Rhine United States and British forces had made an average penetration of some 90 to 100 miles on a 200 mile front. The enemy forces in the Ruhr were now encircled, and attempts by the 17 weak German divisions in this area to break out had been held. Prisoners had been taken at the rate of 15,000 to 20,000 a day. Allied casualties had been light. Excluding the airborne divisions (for which final figures were not yet available), British and Canadian casualties amounted to 3,191 and American casualties to 6,900.

Russia. The main Russian advance had been in the direction of Vienna. Russian forces had now cleared the whole of Hungary and had crossed the Austrian frontier. Glogau had been captured: and in this area Breslau was now the only stronghold holding out behind the Russian lines. In the Danzig and Gdynia area the Russians claimed some 120,000 Germans killed and 90,000 taken prisoner.

In Burma considerable progress had been made during the previous week. Taungup was likely to be captured shortly. South of Mandalay our forces had consolidated their positions down to Meiktila. North east of Mandalay they had advanced towards the road to Lashio.

The landing on Okinawa was making very good progress.

The War Cabinet—

3. The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security informed the War Cabinet that during the previous week there had been only 11 incidents due to long-range rockets—7 in London and 4 in Essex. Casualties had been 137 killed, 111 seriously injured, 87 slightly injured and 2 missing. Almost all of these casualties had resulted from a single serious incident in London.

Of 45 flying-bombs launched during the period, 17 had crossed the coast and 4 had reached the London area. 32 had been destroyed by gunfire and 1 by fighters.

There had been no enemy attack on this country since the 29th March; but the attack might be renewed in one form or another, and it was important that no suggestion should be made publicly that this danger was now over.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of this statement.

4. The War Cabinet had before them—

(i) a Memorandum by the Minister of Education (W.P. (45) 14) outlining a scheme for preliminary official histories of the war;

(ii) a Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council (W.P. (45) 15) submitting proposals for a popular account of British scientific war work.

The Minister of Education explained that the object in publishing these preliminary histories was to meet the demand for a record of Britain's war effort as soon as possible after the end of the war in Europe. The scheme outlined in W.P. (45) 14 was designed to give a general preliminary conspectus of naval, military and air operations, and also of the civil war effort. In the "campaign volumes" attention would be paid to the part played by all three Services, and inter-Service co-operation would be duly stressed.

The Lord President of the Council said that the main object of the proposed popular account of British scientific war work was to make available to the public accurate information about the contribution made by British scientists to the war effort. Otherwise British scientists might fail to get the credit to which they
were entitled. This popular account would be without prejudice to the work in hand in preparing authoritative records of scientific work done during the war. Arrangements had been made for co-ordination with Dominion Governments, through the proposed British Commonwealth Committee on the publication of scientific war work. It was proposed that Professor Whiddington and Dr. Crowther should collaborate in preparing this popular account.

Points in discussion were:

(a) Co-operation with the Dominions.—The War Cabinet were informed that the Dominion Governments had been informed in some detail of our plans for compiling official histories of the war, but the details of the proposed preliminary histories had not yet been formally communicated to them. Particulars were given of the preparations which were being made for histories of the Dominion war effort. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of close co-operation in this matter.

(b) Publication of despatches of Commanders-in-Chief.—The Prime Minister said that he thought that a start could be made with publishing these despatches as soon as the war with Germany was over.

(c) Popular account of British Scientific War Work.—The Paymaster-General said that he was in favour of proceeding with the proposed volume. But care must be taken to ensure that it was so written as not to arouse controversies as to priority of our British inventions, as compared with those of our Allies.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that arrangements had been made with the United States for certain information on Radar to be published in advance of the proposed popular account of British scientific war work. The Minister of Production had asked him to say that the Radio Board would like to be consulted about the section of the proposed volume dealing with Radar.

The War Cabinet—

Gave approval in principle to the schemes set out in W.P. (45) 14 and 15, points of detail being left for discussion between the Ministers concerned.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
3rd April, 1945.