CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W.1, on Monday, 30th April, 1945, at 6 p.m.

Present:
The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. John ANDERSON, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.
The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Minister of Labour and National Service.
The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.
The Right Hon. LORD WOOLTON, Minister of Reconstruction.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. L. S. AMERY, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma.
The Right Hon. Sir JAMES GRIGG, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. Sir STAFFORD Cripps, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. Duncan Sandys, M.P., Minister of Works (Items 4–5).
The Right Hon. RICHARD LAW, M.P., Minister of State.
The Right Hon. JAMES STUART, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Items 4–5).
His Grace the DUKE OF NORFOLK, Earl Marshal of England (Items 4–5).
Admiral of the Fleet Sir ANDREW CUNNINGHAM, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (Items 1–2).
Field-Marshal Sir ALAN BROOKE, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Items 1–2).

Secretariat:
Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
General Sir HASTINGS L. ISMAY.
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.
Mr. W. S. MURRIE.
Mr. L. F. BURGIS.

[29978—5]
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Naval, Military and Air Operations.

1. The Chiefs of Staff reported the principal events of the previous week.

Bomber Command had dropped some 5,000 tons of bombs for the loss of 10 aircraft. Their targets had included an attack on Berchtesgaden, the gun emplacements on Wangerooge, and the Vallo oil depot 40 miles south-west of Oslo. Bomber Command had also begun dropping food supplies for the civilian population in occupied Holland: 500 tons had been dropped on the 26th April, and arrangements had been made to drop 1,000 tons on the 30th April. During the week 2,400 released prisoners of war had been transported to this country by air, bringing the total so transported to date up to 32,735.

United States bombers had dropped 12,000 tons of bombs, for the loss of 6 aircraft, mainly on enemy communications. They had also made an attack on the Skoda munitions works.

The Tactical Air Force had flown 16,000 sorties for the loss of 101 aircraft, and had destroyed some 5,000 enemy motor vehicles. Losses of enemy aircraft were 686 destroyed, 16 probably destroyed, and 961 damaged.

Coastal Command had flown 1,400 sorties for the loss of 8 aircraft. 15 attacks had been made on U-boats; 3 of which were promising.

In the Mediterranean 18,500 sorties had been flown and 10,000 tons of bombs dropped for the loss of 114 aircraft. The main strategic targets had been communications in the Brenner Pass and in Austria. The Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief in Italy had reported that the effectiveness of our air offensive in Italy was demonstrated by the conditions of the roads in captured territory, which had been packed with destroyed enemy transport. The results of our air attack on enemy communications and oil stocks were shown by the enemy's use of oxen for transport. Our air offensive had also enabled the ground forces to gain their objectives with much lighter casualties than they would otherwise have suffered.

In South-East Asia 10,000 sorties had been flown for the loss of 11 aircraft. 25 bridges had been destroyed on the Burma-Siam railway.

In the Pacific 5,800 sorties had been flown for the loss of 8 aircraft. 39 enemy aircraft had been destroyed.

Super-Portresses had dropped 2,700 tons of bombs, for the loss of 5 aircraft, on airfields in the Southern Island of Japan.

One ship of 187 tons had been lost by enemy action during the week. Losses for April now amounted to 96,652 tons. During the month 7 U-boats had been sunk and 13 probably sunk.

The British Pacific Fleet had returned to harbour after being at sea for about one month carrying out operations off the Loochoo Islands.

British forces were advancing towards Leer and Oldenburg and Lubeck. South-east of Hamburg the crossing east of the Elbe was progressing well. A further crossing had been made that morning directed on Schwerin. The United States Third Army was advancing in the direction of Linz. Fighting was also reported on the outskirts of Munich. The French had advanced along Lake Constance towards the Austrian frontier.

The Allied forces in Italy had made great progress and by their advance beyond Verona had cut the German armies in two. In the extreme west the advance from Genoa had reached Alessandria. On the centre American forces were on the Swiss frontier near Lake Como. In the east, where the main resistance had been met, British forces had advanced to the Piave.

The Prime Minister said that, in spite of the diversion of a number of divisions from Italy to other fronts, the armies under the command of Field-Marshal Alexander had won a magnificent victory. They had, in difficult country, crushed and broken enemy armies which were at least equally strong in actual numbers and
were superior in number of divisions. The Prime Minister stressed the political importance of exploiting this victory to the full by rapid advances to Trieste and into Western Austria.

The Russians were advancing west of Stettin. Berlin was still holding out. In the south Russian advances had been made towards the Ostrava Gap and north-east of Vienna.

Our forces in Burma had advanced from Toungoo to Pegu and were now about 40 miles north of Rangoon. In the north-west we had advanced down the Irrawaddy to Allanmyo.

The War Cabinet—
Took note of these statements.

Civil Defence.
Disbandment of Civil Defence Services and Royal Observer Corps.
(Previous Reference: W.M.(45)51st Conclusions, Minute 1.)

2. At their meeting on the 25th April the War Cabinet had agreed that, subject to the views of the Chiefs of Staff on the question whether further air attack on this country was to be expected, immediate steps should be taken to begin the disbandment of the Civil Defence Services and the Royal Observer Corps.

The Chiefs of Staff had advised that the disbandment of the Civil Defence Services would now constitute no military risk. The possibility of further attack by enemy aircraft could not, however, be entirely excluded; and there might be political difficulties if such attacks took place after the Civil Defence organisation had been wound up. If this risk were accepted, there appeared to be no objection to the disbandment of the Civil Defence Services.

The Prime Minister said that, in the light of this report by the Chiefs of Staff, he had informed the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security that effect might now be given to the conclusion reached by the War Cabinet on the 25th April. He understood that local authorities were being instructed to begin on the 2nd May the disbandment of the Civil Defence Services.

The War Cabinet—
Took note of this statement.

Pay of Service Nurses.
War Service Increments.

3. The War Cabinet had before them Memoranda by the Secretary of State for War and Secretary of State for Air (W.P. (45) 221), by the First Lord of the Admiralty (W.P. (45) 259), and by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (W.P. (45) 251), on the question whether nurses in the Services should receive the war service increment granted last September to the Armed Forces in general.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that on this question there was a difference of opinion between himself and the Service Ministers which it had not been found possible to resolve without reference to the War Cabinet. The Service Ministers felt that the Government were committed by the terms of the White Paper (Cmd. 8558 of 1944) to grant the war service increments to Service nurses as to other women members of the Armed Forces. He, on the other hand, took the view that the pay of Service nurses was related to that of civilian nurses; that they had benefited by the increases recommended in 1943 by Lord Rushcliffe's Committee on Nurses' Salaries (Cmd. 6424); and that by electing to be aligned with civilian nurses for the purposes of remuneration they had surrendered any claim to receive benefits which were designed for members of the Armed Forces who were remunerated on the normal Service basis. The immediate cost of extending war service increments to Service nurses would be comparatively small; but such a concession would give rise to counter-claims from civilian nurses.

The Prime Minister suggested that this was a matter which need not engage the attention of the War Cabinet as a whole; and that the Ministers concerned might be willing to submit their
differences to adjudication by a single Minister who was not concerned in the dispute. The Minister of Aircraft Production might undertake this duty.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he would be glad to accept this suggestion, on the understanding that it would not be regarded as a precedent for any further case of this kind which he might think it necessary to bring to the War Cabinet.

On this understanding, the War Cabinet—

Authorised the Minister of Aircraft Production to determine, on their behalf, in the light of the considerations set out in W.P. (45) 221, 251 and 259, whether Service nurses should be regarded as eligible for war service increments.

4. The War Cabinet had before them—

(i) a Note by the Secretary (W.P. (45) 265) covering a copy of a Minute addressed to the Prime Minister by the Earl Marshal on the arrangements for the State Opening of Parliament during the period before the House of Commons Chamber was rebuilt;

(ii) a Memorandum by the Postmaster-General (W.P. (45) 277) about the use of St. Stephen’s Hall for the provision of postal facilities for Members of Parliament during the same period.

The Prime Minister explained that the only Chamber suitable for the Ceremonial customary on the State Opening of Parliament was that formerly used by the House of Lords and now used by the House of Commons. It would accordingly be necessary for the House of Commons to meet in some other place, from which they could be summoned to hear the Gracious Speech, and it was proposed that they should meet in St. Stephen’s Hall, which would accommodate about 300 Members. During the few days which would intervene between the taking of the oath by the Members of the new House of Commons and the State Opening, the Ministry of Works would restore the Chamber at present used by the House of Commons to its former state and would simultaneously prepare St. Stephen’s Hall for use by the House of Commons. As soon as the Opening of Parliament had taken place, the Chamber would be rearranged for the House of Commons and it was estimated that if Parliament were opened at 11 a.m. the House of Commons could return to the premises which they now occupied by 5 p.m. for the Debate on the Address. If the War Cabinet approved these arrangements an announcement would be made in Parliament at some suitable opportunity. It did not seem to be necessary to appoint a Select Committee to consider the matter. It would, however, be necessary to obtain the formal approval of His Majesty The King.

The Postmaster-General said that, as soon as the demolition of the old House of Commons Chamber and its surroundings began, the existing Members’ Post Office would have to be closed and it would be necessary to provide alternative premises which might have to be used for four or five years. From the point of view of the convenience of Members and easy working by the Post Office staff, by far the best arrangement would be to use the temporary accommodation which had been erected in St. Stephen’s Hall. If, however, it was decided to use St. Stephen’s Hall for the House of Commons at the time of the State Opening of Parliament, it would be necessary to remove this temporary accommodation, and it was difficult to see how satisfactory accommodation could be obtained elsewhere.

In discussion there was general approval of the arrangement proposed in the minute by the Earl Marshal annexed to W.P. (45) 265. With regard to the question of accommodation for
the Members' Post Office, it was suggested that the Minister of Works and the Postmaster-General should consider further the possibility of obtaining accommodation elsewhere than in St. Stephen's Hall. If no satisfactory alternative could be found, arrangements could in the last resort be made to remove the temporary accommodation in St. Stephen's Hall a short time before the Hall was required for the use of the House of Commons and to restore the accommodation immediately after the State Opening.

The War Cabinet—

(1) Approved the arrangements for the State Opening of Parliament set out in the minute by the Earl Marshal annexed to W.P. (45) 265, and authorised the Earl Marshal to arrange for them to be communicated to the appropriate authorities in both Houses of Parliament;

(2) Invited the Minister of Works and the Postmaster-General to give further consideration to the problem of finding alternative accommodation for the Members' Post Office.

5. At their meeting on the 8th January, 1945, the War Cabinet had approved a scheme for travel to France by Members of Parliament.

The Committee now had before them a Memorandum by the Home Secretary (W.P. (45) 271) proposing that the scheme should be extended to cover travel by Members of Parliament to Belgium.

The Home Secretary explained that under the existing arrangements up to six Members of each House weekly, selected by ballot, were entitled to travel to France. It was not proposed to increase the number eligible to travel under the ballot scheme but merely to extend its scope so that those successful in the ballot would have the choice of going either to France or to Belgium or to both. If the proposal was approved, the necessary arrangements would be made with the appropriate officers of the House of Commons and House of Lords for the extension of the scheme, and an announcement would be made simultaneously in both Houses. The announcement might include a warning that hotel accommodation was virtually unobtainable in Belgium and that the Embassy in Brussels was unable to assist Members to obtain accommodation.

The War Cabinet—

Approved the proposals made in W.P. (45) 271 for the provision of facilities for travel by Members of Parliament to Belgium.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
30th April, 1945.