CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on Monday, 14th May, 1945, at 6 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. Lord Woolton, Minister of Reconstruction.
The following were also present:
The Right Hon. Lord Beaverbrook, Lord Privy Seal.
Colonel the Right Hon. Oliver Stanley, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (Items 1-5).
The Right Hon. Sir James Grigg, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps, K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production (Items 1-5).
The Right Hon. Lord Leathers, Minister of War Transport (Items 4-5).
The Right Hon. Brendan Bracken, M.P., Minister of Information (Items 1-3).
The Right Hon. Lord Cherwell, Paymaster-General.
Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (Items 1-3).
Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Items 1-3).

Secretariat:
Sir Edward Bridges.
General Sir Hastings L. Ismay.
Mr. Norman Brook.
Sir Gilbert Lathwaite.
Mr. L. F. Burgis.
WAR CABINET 61 (45).

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|            | Production Agreements, Bulk Orders and Erection of Housing the Ministry of Works.
The Chief of the Air Staff gave the following statistics of bombing activities in the European theatre from September 1939 to May 1945. The total tonnage of bombs dropped was 2,170,000 tons, of which the Royal Air Force had dropped 1,048,000 tons and the United States Army Air Force 1,122,000 tons. On Germany a total of 1,363,200 tons of bombs had been dropped; 678,500 tons by the Royal Air Force and 684,700 tons by the United States Army Air Force. In addition, the Royal Air Force had laid 47,611 mines. In these operations the Royal Air Force Bomber Command had lost 45,000 men and 10,801 aircraft; the United States Bomber Command had lost about the same number of men and 8,274 aircraft.

During the last two weeks Bomber Command had dropped 6,073 tons of food in Holland, and had brought back to this country 45,000 released prisoners of war. United States bombers had carried 3,700 tons of supplies to Holland and had brought back 8,700 prisoners of war. Air transport units under S.H.A.E.F. Command had carried 13,000 tons of supplies and brought back 31,000 casualties and 10,000 prisoners of war.

Up to date a total of 96,000 released prisoners of war and 343,000 casualties had been brought to this country by air.

Norway.

4,000 troops and 300 vehicles had been flown to Norway. Two aircraft had been lost in the operation, one containing Air Vice-Marshall Streatfield, the Commander in charge of the operation. Troops and equipment had also been flown to Denmark.

Coastal Command.

In the period before the surrender of the German forces, Coastal Command had sighted 64 U-boats. 23 had been attacked and 8 were claimed to have been sunk. Since the surrender, Coastal Command had sighted 30 U-boats flying the surrender flag and 6 others, 3 of which had been attacked.

Mediterranean.

There had been a Royal Air Force detachment of about 2,000 at Zara maintaining the fighter force co-operating with the partisans. Orders had been given to accelerate the withdrawal of this detachment.

During the last two weeks 21,200 sorties had been flown in South-East Asia for the loss of 11 aircraft. 7 enemy aircraft had been destroyed.

In the Pacific, shore-based aircraft had flown over 10,000 sorties for the loss of 2 aircraft. Enemy losses had been 22. Operations had been mainly against the naval dockyard and oil storage plant at Saigon, airfields in Formosa and gun positions and airfields in Borneo. 3,600 tons of bombs had been dropped on targets in Japan and 1,400 mines laid by night off Tokyo. 18 aircraft had been lost.

Naval Operations.

Two ships totalling 4,669 tons had been lost by enemy action on the 7th May. Total losses in May had been 19,204 tons. 12 U-boats had probably been sunk in May up to the time of the surrender. 35 U-boats at sea had so far indicated their positions. Of these, 19 had now arrived in our harbours. 91 U-boats had been reported in Norwegian ports and 75 in Danish, French and North German ports.

Naval Port Parties had been established in the main ports in north-west Germany, Denmark, and Norway. A channel had been swept across the North Sea to Hamburg, which was now open to shipping.

Aircraft of the United States Fleet and the British Pacific Fleet had continued neutralising operations against the airfields in the islands of the Nansei Shoto Group. Our battleships and cruisers had also carried out bombardments against these airfields. In heavy counter-attacks by Japanese aircraft considerable losses had been inflicted on the attacking aircraft.

The War Cabinet were given the latest information regarding the position of the Russian and Anglo-American Armies in Europe.

In Holland it now appeared that the damage by flooding was not likely to be so great as had been feared. It was estimated that if sufficient coal could be provided, de-flooding measures could be completed (except at Walcheren) by the end of the year, and the land might be restored to its normal condition by 1947. The food
situation also was less acute than had been expected; and the despatch of food supplies was proceeding satisfactorily.

Of the estimated total of 180,000 British Commonwealth prisoners of war in Europe, it was estimated that some 183,000 had been recovered and 97,471 brought to this country.

In the Rangoon area our advance east of the Sittang River had met with stiffer opposition. On the Irrawaddy our forces had reached Minhla.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

Third Session of the Council of U.N.R.R.A.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (45) 28th Conclusions, Minute 6.)

Of the estimated total of 180,000 British Commonwealth prisoners of war in Europe, it was estimated that some 163,000 had been recovered and 97,471 brought to this country.

Third Session of the Council of U.N.R.R.A.

2. At their meeting on the 12th March the War Cabinet had approved the proposal that the next meeting of the Council of U.N.R.R.A. should be held in London in June 1945.

The Minister of State reported that, in accordance with the Council's rules of procedure, the invitations for this meeting should be issued on the 15th May; and Governor Lehman had sought the advice of the State Department in Washington on the representation of Poland at this meeting. He had asked whether he should invite the Polish Government in London, or the Provisional Government in Lublin, or not issue any invitation to the Poles at all. The view of the State Department (as reported in Washington Telegram No. 3286 of the 11th May) was that no invitation should be issued to Poland; and the State Department were prepared to advise Governor Lehman accordingly if they were assured of the support of the United Kingdom Government.

The Prime Minister said that, while it was clear that an invitation should not be issued to the Lublin Government, it was difficult to decide between the two other possible courses without having the advice of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs based on his latest discussions in the United States on the Polish question as a whole. He therefore suggested that a decision on this point should be deferred for two weeks, even though this meant postponing by a corresponding period the meeting of the U.N.R.R.A. Council.

The War Cabinet—

Endorsed the Prime Minister's suggestion, and invited the Minister of State to arrange for the State Department in Washington to be informed that the United Kingdom Government desired to defer for two weeks tendering any advice on the question of the representation of Poland at the Third Session of the U.N.R.R.A. Council.

International Aspects of Colonial Policy.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (45) 492d Conclusions, Minute 7.)

3. At their meeting on the 12th April the War Cabinet had approved the line to be taken by the representatives of His Majesty's Government at the San Francisco Conference on the question of Colonial Trusteeship. They now had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (W.P. (45) 300) reporting the progress of the discussions on this question at San Francisco. On the 4th May the United Kingdom and the United States delegations had published drafts of a chapter on this subject for inclusion in the Charter of the World Organisation. The United Kingdom draft was based on the policy approved by the War Cabinet. The United States draft differed from this draft in certain important respects, particularly in providing for a special category of "strategic" areas in respect of which all functions of supervision would be exercised by the Security Council. After discussion between the United States and the United Kingdom delegations, a new draft had been produced as a working text, on which the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs asked for an immediate indication of the views of the War Cabinet.
The Secretary of State for the Colonies said that a decision was necessary for the guidance of the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, first on the question whether we should continue to oppose on political grounds a division of trusteeship territories into the two categories—strategic areas and other areas—proposed by the United States. This feature of the United States proposals had been accepted by Russia, France and China, and we could probably look for little support in contesting it. It was, however, open to certain military objections; and, as it would enable the United States to secure the territories in which they were interested free from any obligations of "trusteeship," it would remove the incentive they would otherwise have to take a realistic view of the "trusteeship" system. Apart from this general point, there were four other major matters for decision which were discussed in paragraph 5 of W.P. (45) 300.

The Colonial Secretary said that he was especially concerned with the position of the existing mandated territories. He felt strongly that we should not admit that our position in those areas was open to any question or could be varied without our full consent; and that the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs should be instructed that, if our essential objectives were not accepted in the present discussions at San Francisco, His Majesty's Government, though willing to adapt themselves to the new machinery that would replace that of the League of Nations, could not agree to any modifications in their present mandated territories.

The Prime Minister said that in his view the proper course was to refuse to accept any compromise in respect of our present mandated territories; but, subject to that, to allow the United States to have their way over the special category of "strategic" areas in which they would wish to place all the Pacific islands which they might capture from the Japanese. He thought it would be better tactics to postpone pressing even for improvements which we were justifiably anxious to see in the conditions of the present mandates.

The Minister of Aircraft Production suggested that the position could be largely protected by substituting, for paragraph 5 of the "new working text" set out in column C of Annex I to W.P. (45) 300, an amended text on the following lines: "Except as may be agreed upon in individual trusteeship arrangements placing each territory under the trusteeship system, nothing in this chapter should be construed in such a manner as to involve any alteration of the existing mandate which would continue in the same terms as guaranteed under the League of Nations unless and until altered in agreement with the mandatory Power."

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff agreed that, if the status of our existing mandated territories remained unchanged under the new arrangements, the position would be satisfactory from the point of view of the Chiefs of Staff.

The War Cabinet—
(1) Invited the Colonial Secretary, in consultation with the Minister of Aircraft Production and the Paymaster-General to draft a telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in the light of the discussion and to submit it to the Prime Minister for approval before despatch.
(2) Agreed that the Colonial Secretary, with the Minister of Aircraft Production and the Paymaster-General, should examine on behalf of the War Cabinet further requests from the United Kingdom delegation at San Francisco for guidance on Colonial Trusteeship; and should settle the instructions to be given, subject as might be necessary to the approval of the Prime Minister and on the understanding that any matter involving any substantial fresh concession would be referred to the War Cabinet.
4. The War Cabinet had before them a report by the Minister of Production and the Minister of Food (W.P. (45) 291) on their Mission in the United States on world food supplies.

The Minister of Production briefly reviewed the work of the Mission. While the results were less extensive than he could have hoped, both he and the Minister of Food were convinced that they represented the maximum that could have been secured in present circumstances. It was satisfactory to have established the principle of equal per capita consumption in the three countries in respect of oils and fats and sugar. It had been impossible to reach a more satisfactory agreement in respect of meat owing to the incomplete arrangements for meat rationing in the United States.

He invited the War Cabinet to confirm the agreements that had been made and to authorise the Minister of Food and himself to take action on the lines recommended in their joint report.

The Minister of Food said that he was anxious, if the War Cabinet approved, to announce at once the effect of these agreements on rations in this country, as set out in paragraph 7 of W.P. (45) 291. It was desirable that the public should realise at once what our intentions were, and we should not overlook the possible propaganda value in the United States of the fact that we were about to make cuts in our civilian consumption.

The Minister drew particular attention to the danger that countries outside the Combined Food Board would use their foreign balances to buy meat in the Argentine. The Argentine Government, with whom (for reasons with which the War Cabinet were familiar) we had had to postpone the conclusion of a meat contract last year, were now showing little willingness to conclude a long-term meat contract, and were likely to ask for a 16 per cent. increase in price. The President and the State Department had both promised to give support to our remaining the sole buyers of meat in the Argentine; but a French Mission was shortly proceeding to the Argentine, and he suggested that the Foreign Office should exert pressure on the French Government to refrain from seeking separate meat contracts there.

After discussion, the War Cabinet—

(1) Approved the recommendations of the Minister of Production and the Minister of Food, as set out in the report appended to W.P. (45) 291, and invited the Minister of Food to confirm to the United States Government our acceptance of the Memorandum of Understanding attached as Annex I to W.P. (45) 291.

(2) Approved, subject to the decision on ration scales for prisoners of war (see Conclusion (5) below), an announcement by the Minister of Food of the decisions proposed in paragraph 7 of W.P. (45) 291.

(3) Decided to defer until after the Foreign Secretary’s return from the United States a decision as regards pressure on the French Government in the matter of French purchases of meat in the Argentine.

The War Cabinet next discussed the proposals put forward by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in W.P. (45) 298 for the publication of statistics of the prospective deficiencies in food supplies during 1945.

The War Cabinet—

(4) Authorised the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries to arrange for the publication of the statistics set out in the Appendices to W.P. (45) 298.

The Minister of Food pointed out that, according to his information, the ration scales for prisoners of war in British custody represented 2,986 calories per day as against a figure of 2,300 for non-working and 2,900 for working prisoners of war in
British Restaurants.

The Secretary of State for War said that these figures differed from the last which he had received from S.H.A.E.F.; but he was aware that the United States scales had recently been subject to frequent changes. He was anxious to keep in line with the United States in this matter and, if the Minister of Food was going to announce even a small reduction in civilian rations, it was important that we should first ensure that the scales for prisoners in British custody were at least as low as those for prisoners in United States custody.

The Prime Minister invited the Secretary of State for War to provide him with a draft telegram to General Eisenhower, with a view to his discussing this matter with General Eisenhower at their meeting later in the week. The publication of the decisions which had now been taken on the report of the Minister of Food and the Minister of Production could be postponed for a few days, in order that arrangements might first be made to assimilate the British and American ration scales for prisoners of war.

The War Cabinet—
(5) Endorsed the Prime Minister's suggestion as summarised above.

British Restaurants

The War Cabinet—
(6) Took note that the Minister of Food would submit to the Prime Minister a note on the future of British Restaurants.

Fishing Industry.

Release of Trawlers by the Admiralty.

5. The Prime Minister said that, now that hostilities in Europe were over, he looked for a substantial increase in the rate at which the Admiralty had planned to release fishing trawlers which were now being used by the Royal Navy. He also considered that the Admiralty should arrange that special facilities should be afforded for the repair and reconversion of these trawlers, even at the expense of new construction and repair of warships.

In discussion, it was suggested that the larger trawlers should be released first, as these gave a bigger return for the man-power employed. It was also suggested that special steps should be taken to release from the Royal Navy fishermen to operate these trawlers. The Minister of War Transport said that some assistance in manning might be obtained from the pool of merchant seamen.

The War Cabinet—
Invited the First Lord of the Admiralty to submit proposals for expediting the release of requisitioned fishing trawlers, and for providing for their repair and reconversion.
6. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Burma (W.P. (45) 290) covering the proof of a White Paper embodying a statement of future policy in Burma.

In discussion the following drafting amendments were proposed—

(a) Page 8, section 31, line 5. Before “recruited” insert “largely.”

(b) Page 11. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he could not agree to the suggestion in the last sentence of the White Paper that the administration of the scheduled areas “would remain for the time being a responsibility of His Majesty’s Government.” There must be some sharing of responsibility and of finance with the Government of Burma. He suggested that this passage should be amended so as to state that the scheduled areas “would for the time being be subject to a special régime.”

(c) The Minister of State said that he had certain verbal amendments to suggest which he would communicate to the Secretary of State for Burma.

The War Cabinet—

Approved the draft White Paper annexed to W.P. (45) 290, subject to the amendments noted above, and authorised the Secretary of State for Burma to arrange for its presentation to Parliament.

7. At their meeting on the 23rd April the War Cabinet had agreed that the Minister of Works should be authorised as proposed in W.P. (45) 266, to make agreements for the production of house materials, component parts and complete houses, to buy and sell such items, and to erect houses on behalf of local authorities.

The War Cabinet now had before them a Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (W.P. (45) 294) reporting that, while the Law Officers were satisfied that no legislation was necessary to empower the Minister of Works to carry out these operations, legislation would be needed to enable the operations to be financed from the Consolidated Fund. It had been suggested at a meeting of the Legislation Committee on the 8th May (H.P.C. (45) 15th Meeting, Minute 3) that the necessary finance might be provided from the Vote of Credit, but the Chancellor could not accept this view for the reasons given in paragraph 2 of W.P. (45) 294. In his view, the alternatives were to provide the finance by a Supplementary Estimate or, as he preferred, to introduce a short Bill authorising the necessary advances to be made from the Consolidated Fund.

The War Cabinet—

(1) Agreed that a Bill to authorise advances from the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of the operations proposed in W.P. (45) 266 should be drafted with a view to its being introduced and passed as a matter of urgency;

(2) Agreed that in view of the urgency and of the decision to obtain legislation no objection need be raised to the Minister of Works proceeding at once with the operations proposed, including the placing of urgent contracts.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1.
14th May, 1945.