The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill, M.P.,
Prime Minister and Minister of Defence (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. Viscount Halifax.
Mr. R.H.V. Close, Union of South Africa.
The Right Hon. Major R.C. Casey, Australia.
Mr. Beighton McCarther, Canada.
The Right Hon. F. Langstone, New Zealand.

Brigadier L.C. Hollis.

MR. CHURCHILL said that he was glad to make it his
first official duty, after paying his respects to the
President, to have a talk with the Dominion representatives
in Washington.

The Prime Minister then gave a general survey of the
war situation.

The Far East

The situation in the Far East presented grave
problems, and for a time we should have to be prepared
to take punishment. At the best we had hoped that the
United States would enter the war on our side without
Japan becoming involved, although this was always an
unlikely contingency. The next best was that Japan
by some act of aggression would be involved in the war
as well as the United States. Thirdly, the situation
might have remained as before - namely both Japan and
the United States neutral. The worst possible
situation would have been Japan in the war and America
cut out. On balance we could not be dissatisfied with the
turn of events. Nevertheless, both we and the United
States had suffered initially grave losses in the Far East.
We had then to go to meet the situation.
The key to the situation was the security of the fortress at Singapore. Every effort was being made to send reinforcements to Malaya, but it would be the height of folly to withdraw our troops and aircraft from the Middle East just at the moment when our operations in Cyrenaica were progressing so successfully with every prospect of our gaining a major military victory over the German-Italian forces in that area. As soon as General Auchinleck had achieved complete victory it might be possible to free our forces and some tanks for despatch to the Far East. In the meanwhile we were considering inviting the Australian Government to agree to send one or more Australian divisions from the Middle East to the Far East.

For the present there was no danger of a serious attack developing on Australia or New Zealand.

It would have to be remembered that the Japanese Air Force was a wasting asset. Our estimate was that their production was only about 200-300 aircraft a month, although we had some evidence that Japan had been supplied with about 1500 German aircraft possibly with some German Air Force personnel.

The Russian situation was unexpectedly favourable, amounting to almost a miracle. As long as the Soviet continued to contain and destroy a large part of the hitherto victorious German Army it would be unreasonable to press Stalin to declare war on Japan. Mr. Eden, who was now on his way back from a mission to Moscow, had reported that Stalin as saying that he might be in a position to make war on Japan in the Spring, although it was quite possible that his hand would be forced by Japan making war on Russia before that date.

In the meanwhile, it was important that we should keep up our quota of equipment to Russia, which was paying a splendid dividend.

The Prime Minister outlined the present position regarding the enemy attacks on our trade. In spite of a large increase in the number of U-boats operating, our shipping losses had decreased in a most satisfactory manner during recent months. This was due to the increasing effectiveness of our countermeasures.

The Prime Minister then outlined his ideas as to the general conduct of the conference which would take place in Washington during the period of his visit. There would, of course, be several conferences on the highest level under the Chairmanship of the President during the following two or three days. The Chiefs of Staff would be in constant consultation with their American colleagues, and the Staffs would get together on the details of our joint action.

An early opportunity would be taken to keep the Dominion representatives informed of the progress of the conference. Ultimately, at the concluding stage of the conference he and the President had in mind to call a meeting of representatives of all the countries now ranged in opposition to the Axis forces. This meeting would of course be of a formal nature with a view to demonstrating the solidarity of the Allied front against opposing the Axis.
In reply to a question, the Prime Minister said that opportunity could be taken during the present conferences for the British Staff to consult with the Staffs of the Dominion representatives now in Washington.

Summing up, the Prime Minister said he regarded the present situation as being full of hope and encouragement. The Russians were fighting back significantly and we had the powerful assistance of the United States of America. We could therefore look to the future with hope and confidence.

THE DOMINION REPRESENTATIVES thanked the Prime Minister for the opportunity he had offered them for obtaining up to date and first-hand knowledge of the situation. They hoped it would be possible to have a further meeting of a similar nature and the opportunity for discussions between their respective Staffs and the Chiefs of Staff organisation in Washington.

The meeting adjourned and a communiqué was issued to the Press.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

23rd December, 1941. 8 Annex.
Communicate to Press.

Mr. Churchill's first official engagement, after being received by the President, was to hold a meeting at 12 noon with the British Dominion Representatives in Washington. The following were present:-

The Rt. Hon. The Viscount Halifax, K.G.

Mr. R. W. Close, K.C. (Union of South Africa).


Mr. Leighton McCarthy, K.C. (Canada).

The Rt. Hon. F. Langstone (New Zealand).

Mr. Churchill gave a general survey and discussed with the Dominion Representatives the general war situation and outlined the aims of his visit to Washington.

24th December, 1941.