

SECRET

JAPANESE PEACE SETTLEMENT

MILITARY ASPECTS

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(Memorandum dated July 12 addressed to
the Chiefs of Staff Committee)

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At the Moscow conference in March Mr. Bevin expressed some apprehension lest the United States should suddenly announce plans for a Japanese peace settlement. The suggestion was made that as a measure of preparedness against this possibility a meeting of Commonwealth representatives might be held to discuss various aspects of the peace settlement in the Far East. From this point the Australian Government took the initiative and has now succeeded in persuading other Commonwealth Governments to agree to send delegates to a conference in Canberra, representation to be at a ministerial level; the meeting will begin August 26 and last about ten days.

2. Throughout the negotiations for the holding of this conference Canada has emphasized that the meeting should be an informal one for the purpose of exchanging views only, and should not be expected to lead to the formulation of a single Commonwealth policy to which all members of the Commonwealth would be committed in later stages of the Japanese settlement.

3. The attitude we have taken towards the forthcoming conference may differ considerably from that of the Australian Government. In a draft agenda which they have circulated for the conference the Australians have indicated that the meeting might provide "an approach to broad agreement on main policies". They have a number of fairly specific proposals to discuss and will no doubt press hard for as much support for their ideas as they can obtain.

4. A few remarks on Australian views concerning Pacific affairs generally may serve to explain their attitude towards the projected conference. During the war the Australians became acutely aware of their vulnerability in the face of expanding Japanese aggression. The defeat of Japan has not removed their uneasiness, and they evidently continue to suffer from a feeling of insecurity in their lonely corner of the South-West Pacific. In addition, they nurse a certain grievance against the United Kingdom, dating back to the fall of Singapore; they feel that the British Government has paid insufficient attention to problems of security in the South-West Pacific area. Consequently they attach great importance to the forthcoming conference, evidently hoping that by focussing attention on problems of regional security they may be able to gain some sympathy for the Australian point of view among the other Commonwealth countries.

5. Furthermore, the Australians have a growing sense of their importance as a leading nation in their part of the world. They tend to place more importance on their part