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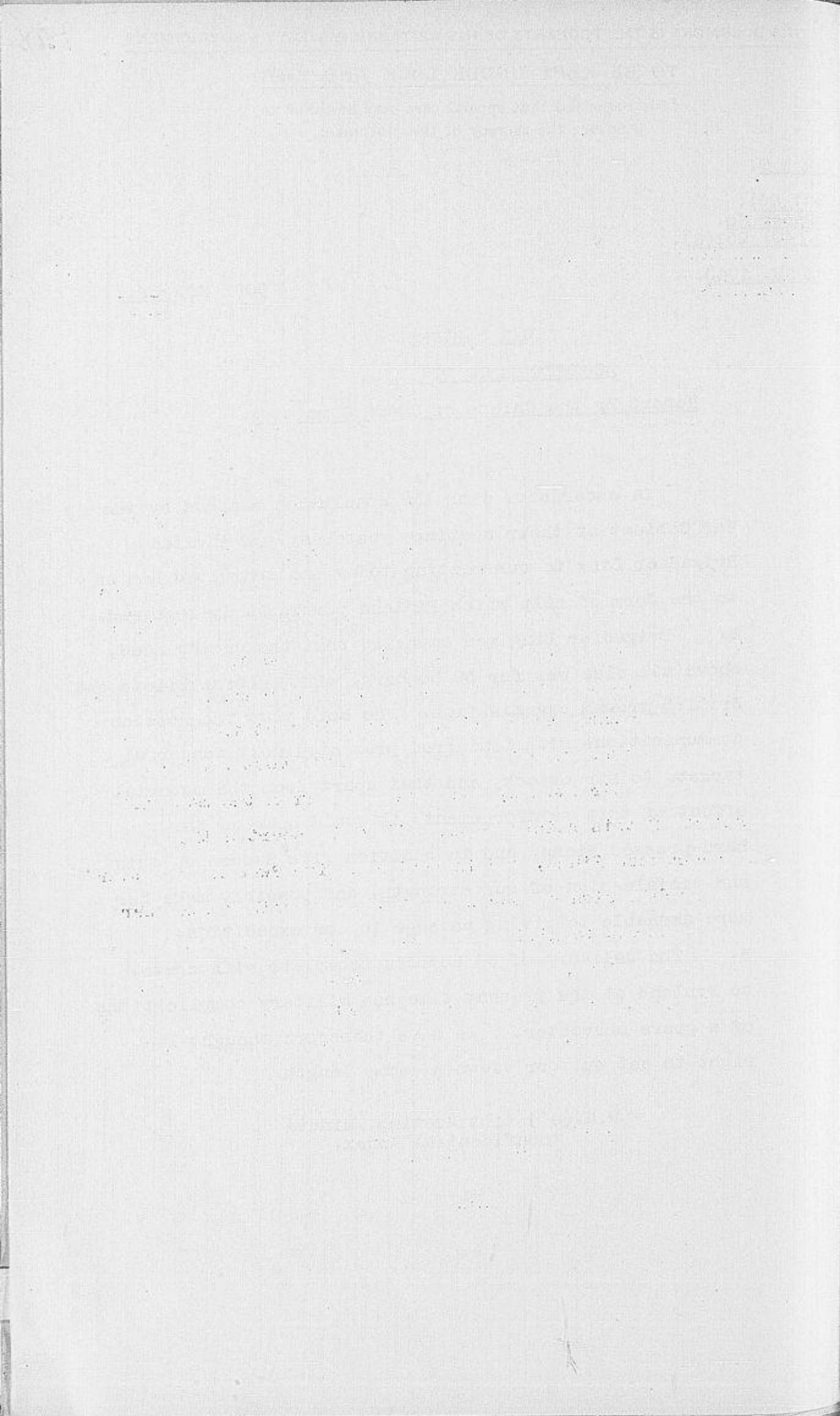
WAR CABINET.ASSISTANCE TO FINLAND.Report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

In accordance with the conclusion reached by the War Cabinet at their meeting* yesterday, we invited Brigadier Ling to our meeting today and consulted him as to the form of help which Finland particularly required.

2. Brigadier Ling was emphatic that the crying need, above all else was for 50 bombers, with British pilots and British ground organisation. He said that the Russian communications with Leningrad presented most wonderful targets to air attack, and that apart from the material effect of this reinforcement, it would hearten the hard-pressed Finns, and in addition give Sweden an outward and visible sign of our strength, and possibly make her more amenable to giving passage to our expedition.

3. The delivery of 50 bombers, complete with crews, to Finland at the present time has military complications of a grave character. We have therefore thought it right to set out our views at some length.

* W.M.(40) 61st Meeting, Minute 5,
Confidential Annex.



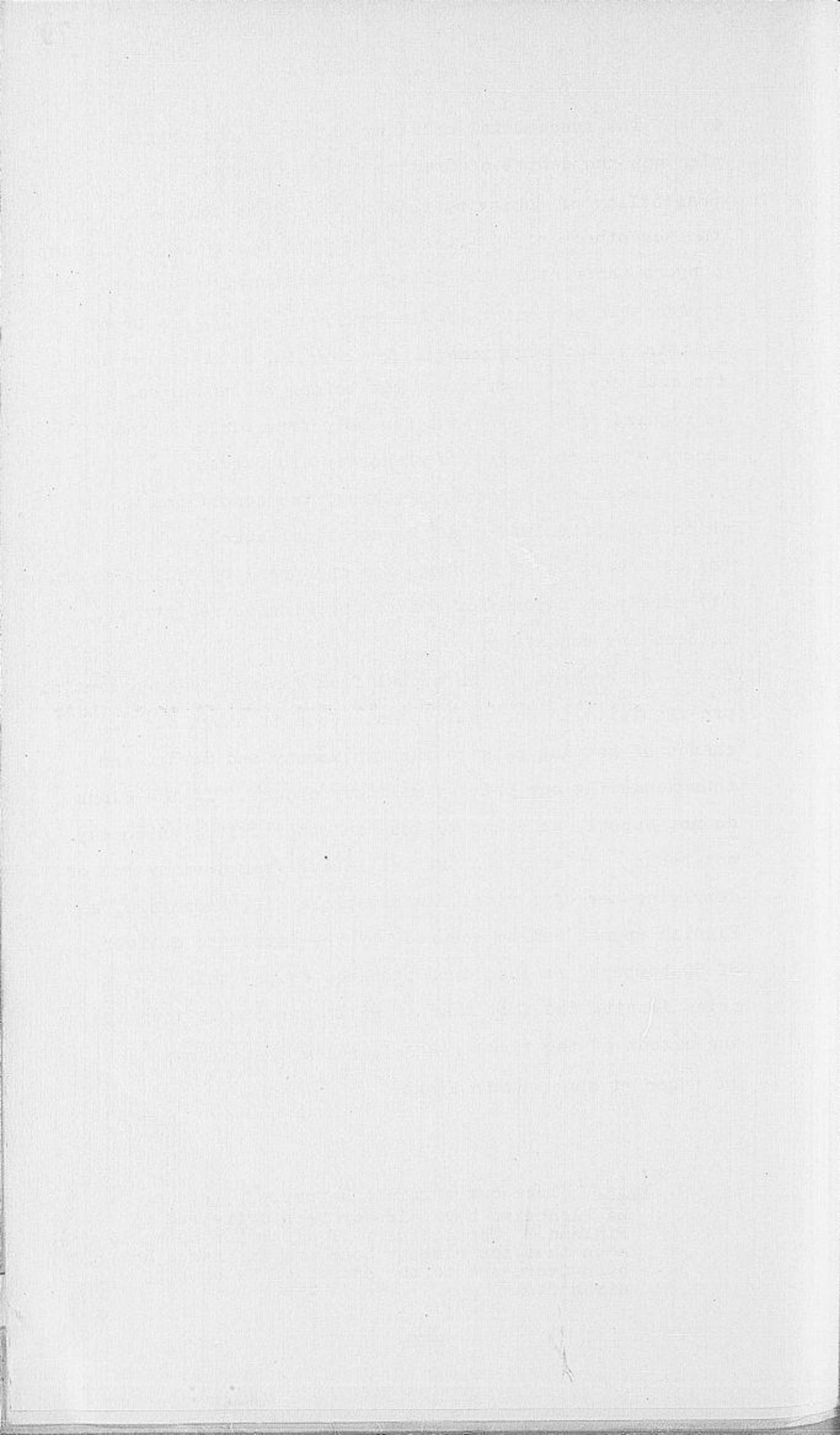
4. The fundamental military object of our original plan was the denial of Swedish ore to Germany. The possibility of achieving this object alone led us to advise the acceptance of the risk of war with Russia, the military dangers inherent in the plan for assistance to Sweden, and an appreciable weakening of our forces in France and Great Britain. Our arrangements for carrying out the plan in its entirety are complete; but before we can do so, we require first an appeal for help from Finland, and secondly the co-operation of Norway and Sweden.

5. There are, broadly speaking, two conditions under which the 50 bombers might be supplied, namely

- (a) as a bargain in exchange for an appeal by Finland; or,
- (b) merely as a means of sustaining Finnish resistance, without any conditions.

6. As regards (a) an appeal from Finland is an essential pre-requisite to our whole plan. Upon it hangs our only chance of getting passage through Norway and Sweden and thus achieving our primary military object. If the Finns do not appeal, we stand to lose an opportunity, which may not recur, of wresting the initiative from Germany and of depriving her of a vital raw material. If, therefore, a Finnish appeal can be secured, by the immediate delivery of 50 bombers, we should be prepared to pay this price, despite the fact that it will appreciably increase the extent of the risks (as originally contemplated^{*}) to be taken at home and in France.

^{*} Note. Since our original Report. W.P. (39) 179 24 Blenheims have already been delivered to Finland. The delivery of a further 50 would mean that the risk at home and in France had been increased to the extent of 74 bombing aircraft.



7. It is of course possible that in spite of the Finnish appeal, Norway and Sweden might fail to co-operate. In this case, though a landing at Narvik could probably be made, even, if necessary, in the face of opposition, we are of the opinion that Swedish and Norwegian co-operation is essential if we are to have any chance of forestalling the Germans in the Galivare-Lulea area.

8. As regards paragraph 5(b), if we should supply 50 bombers merely in order to sustain the Finnish resistance, we should derive, not only a certain ^{political} advantage from our generosity, but also the military advantage that Russian resources would not be available to Germany for so long as Finnish resistance lasted. Moreover, the longer the Finns resist, the weaker Russia will become, and the less damage will she be able to do to British interests in other parts of the world. It is to be noted, however, that these military advantages may be short-lived, since once the Gulf of Bothnia is ice-free, the Germans will have it in their power "to stab the Finns in the back" and thus bring the war in Finland to an end. They will certainly do this if they think it is to their advantage; and Field Marshal Mannerheim definitely fears it.

9. On a consideration of the above arguments, we reach the following conclusions:-

- (1) If the delivery of the 50 bombers is conditional on a formal appeal by Finland to the Allies, and if in the judgment of the War Cabinet, there is a reasonable chance that this appeal will lead to the co-operation of Norway and Sweden - either before the expedition

starts, or at least when it lands - and so to the attainment of the primary object of the expedition, then the delivery of the bombers would be justified from the military point of view.

- (ii) If, however, the bombers are to be handed over unconditionally, purely with the object of sustaining the Finnish resistance for what may well be a strictly limited period (see paragraph 8 above) we consider that the military risks of denuding the Home Front and lessening the support which we are able to provide for the British Expeditionary Force in France, outweigh the military advantages that are likely to accrue.

(Signed) C.L.N. NEWALL.

DUDLEY POUND.

EDMUND IRONSIDE.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

The Chiefs of Staff have not yet had an opportunity of seeing this Report in its final form and therefore reserve the right to make any minor amendments.

