CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Tuesday, 7th August, 1945, at 5.0 p.m.

Present:

The Right Hon. C. R. Attlee, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).


The Right Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps, K.C., M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon. Lord Jowitt, Lord Chancellor.

The Right Hon. Viscount Addison, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

The Right Hon. G. H. Hall, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon. Viscount Stansgate, Secretary of State for Air.


The Right Hon. Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., Minister of Education.

The Right Hon. T. Williams, M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. W. Whiteley, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury (Items 5–9).

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Charles P. A. Portal, Chief of the Air Staff (Items 1–2).

Vice-Admiral Sir Neville Sykes, Vice-Chief of Naval Staff (Items 1–2).

Secretariat:

Sir Edward Bridges.

General Sir Hastings L. Ismay.

Mr. Norman Brook.

Sir Gilbert Laithwaite.

Mr. W. S. Murrie.
## Cabinet 18 (35)

### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Review of Military Situation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupied Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tangier</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>King's Speech on the Opening of Parliament</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hours of Sitting and Debate on the Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cotton Industry</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Standing Committees of the Cabinet</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Procedure: Future Meetings</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The Prime Minister said that it had been the practice in the past for the Chiefs of Staff to give a weekly review of military, naval and air operations. As the scale of operations had so greatly diminished, he proposed that these reports to the Cabinet should now be made at longer intervals. There would, however, be a Defence Committee of the Cabinet, which would meet with the Chiefs of Staff and keep in close touch with the progress of operations.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the Cabinet of the present strength and disposition of land forces in the various theatres and of the present position of operations against Japan. The principal tasks of our armies of occupation in Germany and Austria were:

(a) The handling of prisoners of war. In Germany we had held 1,894,000 prisoners on VE-day; and we had now disposed of 684,000 of these. We had still to handle about 1.2 million; and in addition there were about 175,000 to be brought into Germany from Norway.

(b) The disposal of displaced persons. Of 2,233,694 on VE-day, mainly Russians and Poles, about 1,000,000 had now been repatriated.

(c) The restoration of communications and the provision of accommodation for use in the coming winter. On both these tasks German labour was being used under Allied supervision.

When these initial tasks had been completed, our eventual commitments would be the guarding of the frontiers and the provision of mobile reserves to deal with any outbreak of disorder.

All possible steps were being taken to reduce effective strengths as quickly as the situation permitted. Our land forces in 21 Army Group on VE-day had been 1,041,000; they had been reduced already to 737,800, and we were aiming at reaching a Stage II level of 251,000 by May 1946. In areas where the situation was still uncertain, e.g., in Istria, substantial forces must be retained for the time being on an operational, not an occupational, basis.

In South-East Asia formations had been reduced in strength as a result of the reduction of the period of service. This would be compensated in due course by the return of Indian divisions from Italy, and eventually from Greece.

In Greece we had two British divisions and we hoped to have equipped and trained a Greek Army of three divisions by February 1946. Apart from the need to maintain internal law and order, there was the threat of frontier disturbances; and it was to be noted that there were very substantial forces to the west and north of the Greek frontiers—in Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

In discussion, questions were raised about the methods by which the Greek Army was being recruited. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that, while this was a matter for the Greek Government, he understood that men were being called up in age-groups and that there was no discrimination apart from the exclusion of certain individuals who were considered to be undesirable. It was suggested that the men who were being called up in the new age-groups were not regarded as eligible for commissions.

Questions were also raised about the provision of equipment for the Police Mission to Greece. It had been stated that there was difficulty in obtaining adequate motor transport for this Mission. The Home Secretary undertook to provide the Prime Minister with a report on this point.

The Chief of the Air Staff said that the R.A.F. had to fulfil commitments all over the world and at the same time to reduce its strength to the approved Stage II level. One of its major difficulties was the transfer of resources from operations to transportation, in the face of an acute shortage of transport aircraft, of which it had not been possible to obtain from the United States the full demand which we had made.
In the Far East, which was now the only theatre of active operations, the monsoon was still restricting air operations. Air transport of stores in this theatre, which at its peak had reached 2,000 tons a day, was now averaging only about 20,000 tons a month. In addition, about 10,000 men per month were being carried. Operations in tactical support of the Army had been specially successful. Strategic bombing had been concentrated mainly on railways, ports and the Japanese base at Singora.

In the Pacific our strength in first-line aircraft would be only about 8 per cent. of the total Anglo-American strength, and we should not therefore be in a position to claim effectively to influence decisions as regards operations. The Australian and New Zealand air forces had not so far had the opportunity they deserved of showing what they could do, but proposals had now been made which would give them a better opportunity and, if these were accepted, the Air Ministry would do its best to secure proper credit and publicity for their work.

United States operations in the Pacific were on a very considerable scale. In the last month 17,000 sorties had been flown for the loss of only 80 aircraft. Super-Fortresses operating against Japan had lost, in the last month but one, only 19 in 4,000 sorties, and in the last month only 9 out of 5,000 sorties. The Japanese nominal strength of first-line aircraft of all types was 4,500, but it seemed clear from these figures that they were not trying to dispute the United States attack in the air. Super-Fortresses had dropped 34,000 tons of bombs on Japan in the last month, which was an increase of 8,000 on the previous month, and compared with 67,000 tons dropped on Germany in March 1945 by Bomber Command.

Naval.

The Vice Chief of Naval Staff explained the dispositions of His Majesty's ships in the various naval commands. On present plans 62 per cent. of the Royal Navy would be employed in the war in the Far East. This did not include Dominion naval forces. During the last six months the Japanese Fleet had been almost wholly destroyed, and the naval war in the East was now very largely a struggle between Allied sea-borne air power and Japanese shore-based air power. The most difficult problem was logistic, the Fleet having to be maintained for long periods in an operational area some 4,000 miles from its main base, necessitating the employment of a large Fleet Train. Since the 10th July the combined Fleets had sunk 8 Japanese warships, including 1 battleship, and damaged 28, including 3 battleships and 7 carriers; sunk 165,000 tons and damaged 195,000 tons of merchant shipping; destroyed 519 aircraft and damaged 684; and inflicted severe damage on port installations, armament works, &c. Our losses were 1 United States destroyer and 191 aircraft, of which 64 were British.

The present total of the Japanese mercantile marine was estimated at about 1,000,000 tons, which was practically all lying in Japanese waters. About 500,000 tons had been lost in the last three months.

Much progress had been made with minesweeping operations in all theatres. In home waters, there were employed on minesweeping about 15 Fleet minesweepers, over 200 smaller vessels, 450 German minesweepers, 63 Allied vessels and 100 vessels at Continental ports. 5,100 mines had been swept since VE-Day, particular attention being given to the fishing areas.

As regards U-boats the following figures had become available from German sources:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under Allied control</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scuttled or dismantled</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunk during the war</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet accounted for</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Japanese hands</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,174</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
These figures tallied fairly closely with the estimates previously made by the Admiralty of the total U-boat strength and the numbers sunk during the war.

*The Minister of Health* asked whether it was proposed that the Cabinet should review the man-power demands of the three Services in the light of the latest appreciation of the probable duration of the Japanese war.

*The Prime Minister* said that in the first instance the Defence Committee must, with the Chiefs of Staff, review the strategic position as a whole. If, as a result of their review, changes were made in the strategic assumptions on which the man-power requirements of the Services had been calculated, a fresh survey of the man-power position would be undertaken.

The Cabinet—

Took note of the statements by the Chiefs of Staff.

Germany.

2. In connection with the discussion recorded in the preceding Minute, the suggestion was made that there would be advantage in areas arranging for Members of Parliament to visit the British zone of occupation in Germany, so that they might see the conditions with which our armies of occupation had to contend. This might lead to a wider realisation of the need for maintaining large numbers of troops in Germany.

*The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* said that, in his view, it was even more important that Ministers in charge of Departments such as the Ministries of Education, Health and Labour should visit Germany and discuss on the spot with British members of the Control Council what assistance could be given to our forces in carrying out their tasks. The great need at the moment was for a relatively small number of technical experts and administrators. Experienced Borough Engineers and Medical Officers of Health, and persons experienced in the administrative side of education, would be able to give invaluable help.

*The Prime Minister* endorsed the view expressed by the Foreign Secretary and undertook to refer it to the Standing Committee of the Cabinet which he was proposing to set up to consider the problems of occupied Europe.

Foreign Affairs.

3. The Cabinet had before them a Note by the Secretary (C.P. (45) 95) covering the agreed English text of the Protocol of the proceedings of the Berlin Conference.

*The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* summarised the main conclusions reached by the Conference, and explained the attitude which the United States and Soviet Delegations had taken up towards some of the principal problems which had been discussed.

In discussion the following points were raised:—

(a) As regards the transfer of populations there was some ground for thinking that the Czechoslovak Government had behaved with great inhumanity. It was pointed out on the other hand that, according to the Russians, this was not the result of a settled Government policy but of the bitterness of feeling among the Czechoslovak people. Given the history of the last seven years, it was very difficult to keep such feeling within bounds.

(b) We should be at great pains to ensure that reparation shipping was not brought here to the detriment of our shipbuilding industry and of our mercantile marine.

*The Prime Minister* said that this point had been fully considered at an earlier stage and steps would be taken to safeguard it.
(c) The Lord Chancellor said that he was uneasy about the arrangements for the trial of war criminals. The procedure proposed was liable to involve great delay. It was most important that we should dispose of these trials as expeditiously as possible. The Prime Minister agreed. We must impress on those concerned the importance of avoiding long-drawn-out trials.

(d) The Minister of Fuel and Power said that he understood that, in connection with the discussions on the Reparations Commission at Moscow, a proposal had been made that over a period of eight years 50 million tons of German coal should be made available for export. He was disturbed at the implications of this proposal; and would take an early opportunity of bringing the matter to the notice of the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister said that he had been present throughout the discussions at the Berlin Conference. Very little had been brought to a conclusion before he and the Foreign Secretary had returned to Berlin after Mr. Churchill’s resignation. The Foreign Secretary’s success in picking up the threads, and handling so skilfully the discussion of this wide range of complicated problems was a remarkable achievement, for which the Cabinet owed him a great debt of gratitude. He thought that on the whole we could be very well satisfied with the results that had been secured.

The Lord President of the Council said that he would like to express to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary the gratitude and admiration of the Cabinet for the skill with which they had handled the discussions at the Berlin Conference and for the results which they had secured.

The Cabinet—

Warmly endorsed the views expressed by the Lord President of the Council.

Tangier.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (45) 49th Conclusions, Minute 6 and C.M. (45) 186th Conclusions, Minute 4.)

4. At their meeting on the 23rd April, the War Cabinet had agreed that discussions should be opened with the United States Government, and thereafter with the French Government, with a view to arranging for an international conference to determine the future administration of Tangier as an international zone. Arrangements had then been made for informal discussions between representatives of the three Governments to be held in Paris in July; but the Soviet Government, on being informed of these arrangements, had asked that the discussions should be postponed in order that Soviet representatives might take part in them. At the Berlin Conference it had been agreed that representatives of the Soviet Government should participate in these discussions; and arrangements had now been made for representatives of the four Governments to hold preliminary discussions in Paris in the near future.

The Cabinet now had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (C.P. (45) 93) to which were annexed draft instructions for the British Delegation. The memorandum drew special attention to two points—(a) the importance of ensuring that the Spanish administration and armed forces would be withdrawn peacefully from Tangier, so that no resort to force would be necessary; and (b) the importance of securing that the Spanish Government were invited to take part in the full-scale international conference on the future administration of the Tangier Zone, which would follow the preliminary discussions now to be held in Paris.

In discussion, there was general agreement about the importance of avoiding a situation in which the existing Spanish administration of Tangier would have to be terminated by resort to force.
In this connection, the Secretary of State for Air said that in present circumstances we should find it difficult to provide air forces to support military operations in this area.

On the second point, the Foreign Secretary said that there were important Spanish interests in the Tangier Zone, and the Spanish community was by far the largest white community there. Spain's interest in the future of the Zone could not, therefore, be ignored; and the Spanish Government had a right to be invited to participate in the formal conference about the future administration of the Zone. He thought, therefore, that, whatever the attitude of the Soviet Delegation on this point, the British Delegation should maintain at the outset that the Spanish Government should be invited to take part in the formal conference.

It was pointed out that if, as was likely, the Soviet Delegation took the line that the Spanish Government should not take part in the formal conference, there was a risk that we should appear to be supporting the Franco Government as against the Soviet Government. If, as a result, the Soviet Government dissociated themselves from the further discussions about Tangier, this would have an unfortunate effect on public opinion both in this country and abroad.

The Foreign Secretary said that, if on this point our Delegation took the line recommended in his memorandum, they were likely to have the support of both the French and the United States Delegations. All he was asking for at this stage was authority for the British Delegation to take this line at the outset. He would, of course, keep in touch with the progress of the conversations, and would refer again to the Cabinet if it seemed likely that adherence to this line would lead the Russians to dissociate themselves from the preliminary discussions or to decline to participate in the formal international conference. On this understanding—

The Cabinet—

Approved the draft annexed to C.P. (45) 93 of the instructions to be given to the British Delegation to the forthcoming discussions in Paris about the future administration of Tangier as an international zone.

5. The Cabinet had before them a Note by the Lord President of the Council (C.P. (45) 94) covering a draft of The King's Speech on the Opening of Parliament prepared by a Committee of Ministers under his chairmanship.

The Lord President of the Council said that in preparing the draft the Committee had taken into account the suggestions made by Departments for legislation during the 1945-46 Session and had sought to restrict the amount of legislation promised in the Speech to what could be achieved within the Session. It should be realised, however, that the Bills mentioned in paragraph 2 of C.P. (45) 94, together with other essential business, would make very heavy demands on the available Parliamentary time. For this reason as much use as possible should be made of delegated legislation, within proper limitations, and early steps should also be taken to consider what might be done to expedite Parliamentary procedure. A report on this last question had been drawn up by the War Cabinet Committee appointed by the Coalition Government to review the Machinery of Government; and he hoped to bring before the Cabinet shortly proposals based on that Report.

With regard to the Bills specifically mentioned in paragraph 2 of C.P. (45) 94, he drew attention to the importance of proceeding as rapidly as possible with the legislation for the nationalisation of the coalmining industry and the Bank of England. The scope of the Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers) Bill might have
to be widened, and it was for consideration whether it should not provide for a duration of five years. (The Bill presented to Parliament in the previous Session had proposed a duration of two years with a power to extend for further periods by Order subject to an affirmative resolution.) It had been ascertained that the Trade Union Congress favoured the complete repeal of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927.

In discussion the following suggestions were made with regard to the draft Speech:

(a) Paragraph 1 should state in a more vigorous fashion the intention of the Government to promote peace and social justice in concert with all other peace-loving Governments.

(b) The Speech should include a reference to the Government's intention to work in close consultation with the Governments of the Dominions.

(c) Paragraph 5 should be redrafted to take account of the decision that a British land force should take part in the invasion of Japan, and also of the part played by the East Indies Fleet in the Burma campaign.

(d) In paragraph 11 the reference to the proposal to bring the coalmining industry under public ownership should be so worded as to indicate that it was part of a plan for the general co-ordination of the fuel and power industries.

(e) There should be substituted for the reference in paragraph 11 to a National Investment Board a reference to machinery for more effective planning of investment in the interests of employment policy and national development.

(f) In paragraph 13 there should be an indication that the Government intended to deal with the housing shortage in country areas as well as in towns.

(g) The last sentence of paragraph 13 should be examined in order to ensure that it did not rule out legislation to facilitate the acquisition of land for public purposes and to enable land to be requisitioned, if necessary, for housing.

(h) Paragraph 17 should be amended so as to avoid committing the Government to carrying out the plans announced in the White Paper on British Air Transport (Cmd. 6605).

(i) Paragraph 19 should be amended so as to bring it out that India must make her contribution towards the task of achieving self-government. The reference to the Colonies should also be separate from the reference to India.

The following points arose in discussion on the Legislative Programme for the 1945-46 Session:

(j) The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that, since it would be possible to deal with exchange control in the proposed legislation for the more effective planning of investment, it would be unnecessary to widen the scope of the Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers) Bill to cover this matter.

(k) There was general agreement that it would be desirable to repeal the whole of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927, and that the necessary Bill should be limited to this purpose. If the repeal of the Act of 1927 left the position unsatisfactory, a further Bill could be introduced.

(l) It was desirable that a Local Elections (Service Abroad) Bill, an Electoral Registration Bill and an Indian Franchise Bill should be passed at a very early date in the Session. There was reason to think that the Opposition would raise no objection to the rapid passage of these Bills.
Parliament.

Hours of Sitting and Debate on the Address.

6. The Chief Whip said that he had had discussions with the Opposition with regard to the hours of sitting and the arrangements for the Debate on the Address.

Since there was no likelihood of any improvement in London’s transport services before the Christmas Recess, it was proposed to continue the arrangements in force at the end of the past Session, under which the House met at 2·15 p.m.

There would be a general Debate on the Address on the 16th and 17th August, and it had been suggested that the 20th August should be set aside for a Debate on the Berlin Conference. The Debate on the Address would be brought to a close on the 21st August, and it was suggested that there should be a separate Debate on the United Nations Charter on the 22nd and 23rd August. The House would rise on the 24th August and would reassemble on the 9th October.

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs said that the House of Lords would desire to debate the United Nations Charter on the same day as the House of Commons. It had also been suggested that there should be a Debate in the House of Lords on the Berlin Conference, separate from the Debate on the Address.

It was pointed out in discussion that, if the Prime Minister took part in the general Debate on the Address on the 16th or 17th August, it would be impossible for him to speak on the 20th August, except with the leave of the House. In these circumstances it might be preferable to arrange the business in such a way as to finish the Debate on the Address on the 20th August and to have a separate Debate on the Berlin Conference on the 21st August.

The Cabinet—

(1) Took note of the statements made by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and the Chief Whip.

(2) Invited the Chief Whip to explore the possibility of bringing the Debate on the Address in the House of Commons to a close on the 20th August and having a separate Debate on the Berlin Conference on the 21st August.

7. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade (CP. (45) 92) to which was annexed a proposed statement of Government policy with regard to the cotton industry.

The President of the Board of Trade said that immediate steps must be taken to re-establish the cotton industry on sound lines. With this in view discussions with representatives of the industry on proposals designed to improve the spinning section of the industry had been initiated by the present Chancellor of the Exchequer when President of the Board of Trade and continued by his successor under the late Government, and there seemed good
reason to hope that both sides of the industry would within the next few days agree (i) that a statement should be made by the employers about their willingness to improve wages and conditions in the industry; (ii) that a joint commission should be set up to work out a simplified and modernised wage structure; and (iii) that certain promising experiments which were being tried out at Wye Mill and elsewhere should be encouraged. To these short-term proposals it would be necessary to add certain others of a more long-term character which were set out in paragraph 10 of C.P. (45) 92. This programme ought to be put to the industry at once and to be coupled with a clear statement of the Government's general attitude to the industry. He accordingly proposed that he should visit Manchester on the 11th and 12th August in order to reach a settlement with the spinning section of the industry and thereafter to put his general programme to a delegate conference of both sides of the whole industry, including the merchants, and to the operatives in one or two of the principal Lancashire towns.

Discussion centred on paragraph 3 of the annex to C.P. (45) 92, in which it was stated that it was not part of the Labour Government's programme to nationalise the cotton industry during the present Parliament. In favour of retaining this statement, it was urged that it would be prejudicial to the industry to allow the threat of nationalisation to hang over it for a long period and that the operatives themselves had indicated that they would welcome a clear statement of the Government's intention in this matter. On the other hand, it was pointed out that, in view of the grave state into which the spinning section of the industry had fallen and the extent to which inefficiency in this section affected not only other sections of the cotton industry but also other industries, it would be unwise to give any pledge which would prevent the Government from intervening should the spinning section fail to set its own house in order. In these circumstances it might be preferable to redraft the proposed statement of Government policy in such a way as to indicate that, in view of the large number of workers both in the cotton industry itself and in other industries who were dependent on the spinning section, the Government must reserve the right to take any steps necessary to ensure that this section of the industry adequately met the needs of the cotton industry itself and of those other industries which were dependent on it. The Government did not, however, propose to make any change in the ownership of this section of the industry unless, after having been given a reasonable opportunity to reorganise itself, it still failed to reach the necessary standard of efficiency.

Other points in discussion were:

(a) The President of the Board of Trade undertook to confirm that his programme would not rule out the proposals put before the Reconstruction Committee by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when President of the Board of Trade, for the establishment of a statutory Spinning Board and the centralisation of the purchase of raw cotton and the sale of yarn (R. (44) 61st Meeting).

(b) The Foreign Secretary urged that the Chairman of the proposed commission to work out a revised wage structure for the industry should be appointed by the Minister of Labour and National Service rather than by the President of the Board of Trade. The President of the Board of Trade said that he was prepared to accept this change.

The Cabinet—

(1) Invited the President of the Board of Trade, in consultation with the Foreign Secretary, to revise the proposed statement of Government policy annexed to C.P. (45) 92 on the lines indicated at "X" above.

(2) Subject to (1), gave general approval to the proposals in C.P. (45) 92.
8. The Prime Minister outlined the arrangements which he had in mind for the constitution of the principal Standing Committees of the Cabinet. He said that he would discuss these arrangements with some of his colleagues, and would then circulate a memorandum to the Cabinet setting out his proposals in detail.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he intended to hold regular meetings with the Secretaries of State for Dominion Affairs, the Colonies, and India and Burma, so as to secure full co-ordination of foreign and imperial policy. He also proposed to hold regular meetings with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade to secure full co-ordination of overseas economic policy and foreign policy. He did not think, however, that for either of these purposes a formal Cabinet Committee need be constituted; these consultations could best be held through informal, though regular, meetings with his colleagues. The Prime Minister agreed.

The Cabinet—

Took note that the Prime Minister would circulate a memorandum setting out the composition and terms of reference of the principal Standing Committees of the Cabinet.

9. The Prime Minister said that it was desirable that regular times should be fixed for meetings of the Cabinet. It would be convenient if the regular meetings could be held in the morning. For the present, it would probably be necessary to arrange for two regular meetings each week. He would consider which would be the most convenient days. When these times had been fixed, regular times could be determined for meetings of the main Standing Committees of the Cabinet.

The next meeting of the Cabinet would be held on Thursday, the 9th August, at 11 a.m.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,
7th August, 1945.