CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Tuesday, October 10, 1939, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).

Admiral of the Fleet the Right Hon. LORD CHATFIELD, Minister for Coordination of Defence.
The Right Hon. L. HORE-BELISHA, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. SIR SAMUEL HOARE, Bt., M.P., Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. Viscount HALIFAX, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty.
The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, M.P., Secretary of State for Air.
The Right Hon. LORD HANKEY, Minister without Portfolio.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. ERNEST BROWN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service (Item 7).

Air Chief Marshal Sir CYRIL L. N. NEWALL, Chief of the Air Staff (Items 1-12).

General Sir W. EDMUND LEONARD, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Items 1-12).

Secretariat:

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Major-General H. T. IRRAY.
Mr. P. HEIDING.
Mr. W. D. WILKINSON.
Lieutenant-Colonel V. DIVIES, R.E.
Wine Commander W. ELLIOT.
Lieutenant-Colonel E. T. C. JACOB, R.E.
Mr. C. N. ENNIS.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Air Situation</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Canada’s Contribution to the War</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dropping of Leaflets on Germany</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Naval Situation</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Military Situation</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Situation created by the German-Soviet Agreement</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Opportunities for joining the Armed Forces of the Crown</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turco-Soviet Conversations and the Anglo-Franco-Turkish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treaty. Attitude of the French Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Anglo-Soviet Trade</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Staff Conversations with Belgium</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Herr Hitler’s Speech to the Reichstag</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revised draft Statement on behalf of His Majesty’s Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Secretary of State for Air informed the War Cabinet that he had nothing special to report beyond the fact that the main routine work had been carried out.

The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

The Secretary of State for Air said that, in his statement at House of Commons, he intended to refer to the contributions which the Dominions were making to our Air effort. The main contribution would come from Canada, where, in addition to the output of industry, training schools were being set up which involved the employment of a large number of Canadian personnel. These schools would train recruits from Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The relevant part of his statement had been agreed with the Dominion High Commissioners. But that morning he had received from Mr. Mackenzie King the following suggested addition to his statement:

"It will be seen that this scheme involves the concentration of advanced air training largely in Canada. With the facilities which Canada possesses, this would, in the opinion of the United Kingdom Government, constitute the most essential and decisive effort that Canada could put forth in the field of military co-operation."

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs said he thought the Cabinet ought to be made aware that there was in Canada a considerable feeling in favour of an Expeditionary Force, to which Mr. Mackenzie King was opposed. His amendment, whilst it did not exclude other contributions, must nevertheless be interpreted as a manœuvre to extract an acknowledgment from us that the air contribution was the most effective one which Canada could make to the war effort of the Empire.

A number of arguments were urged against agreeing to the incorporation of this statement. Thus, the First Lord of the Admiralty confirmed that there was undoubtedly a very strong desire in some quarters in Canada to send an Expeditionary Force. Meanwhile, our own military contribution on land to France was far below what we would desire, and the French would maintain that it was out of all proportion to their own land effort. Both he and the Secretary of State for War strongly deprecated that we should lend ourselves to a statement which might encourage the Canadians to believe that we should be content with little more than a contribution of Air forces.

Again, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs pointed out that, as a rule, the Dominions objected to an expression of opinion from us as to what action they should take.

On the other hand, the view was expressed that the Canadian Air contribution was very likely the most important which that Dominion could make. Moreover, it would probably make a great impression on Germany.

The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that this was clearly a matter in which the economic politics of Canada came into play, and it was therefore undesirable that we should be drawn into taking action. He recommended that the second sentence of Mr. Mackenzie King's paragraph should be reworded as follows:

"The Secretary of State for Air informed the War Cabinet that he had nothing special to report beyond the fact that the main routine work had been carried out. The War Cabinet took note of this statement."

The Secretary of State for Air said that in his statement in the House of Commons, he intended to refer to the contributions which the Dominions were making to our Air effort. The main contribution would come from Canada, where, in addition to the output of industry, training schools were being set up which involved the employment of a large number of Canadian personnel. These schools would train recruits from Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. The relevant part of his statement had been agreed with the Dominion High Commissioners. But that morning he had received from Mr. Mackenzie King the following suggested addition to his statement:

"It will be seen that this scheme involves the concentration of advanced air training largely in Canada. With the facilities which Canada possesses, this would, in the opinion of the United Kingdom Government, constitute the most essential and decisive effort that Canada could put forth in the field of military co-operation."

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs said he thought the Cabinet ought to be made aware that there was in Canada a considerable feeling in favour of an Expeditionary Force, to which Mr. Mackenzie King was opposed. His amendment, whilst it did not exclude other contributions, must nevertheless be interpreted as a manoeuvre to extract an acknowledgment from us that the air contribution was the most effective one which Canada could make to the war effort of the Empire.

A number of arguments were urged against agreeing to the incorporation of this statement. Thus, the First Lord of the Admiralty confirmed that there was undoubtedly a very strong desire in some quarters in Canada to send an Expeditionary Force. Meanwhile, our own military contribution on land to France was far below what we would desire, and the French would maintain that it was out of all proportion to their own land effort. Both he and the Secretary of State for War strongly deprecated that we should lend ourselves to a statement which might encourage the Canadians to believe that we should be content with little more than a contribution of Air forces.

Again, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs pointed out that, as a rule, the Dominions objected to an expression of opinion from us as to what action they should take.

On the other hand, the view was expressed that the Canadian Air contribution was very likely the most important which that Dominion could make. Moreover, it would probably make a great impression on Germany.
3. The Secretary of State for Air stated that he had been approached by Sir Campbell Stuart with a view to the dropping of leaflets over Germany containing a summary of the Prime Minister's reply to Hitler's speech, as soon as possible after the reply had been delivered.

It was suggested that the summary at the end of the draft Statement (Paper No. W.P. (39) 70) would be suitable for the purpose, and there was general agreement with the action proposed.

Some further discussion took place on the efficacy of the pamphlets. The opinion was expressed that the pamphlets were not pithy enough. On the other hand, it was pointed out that they were drafted by Germans in their own language and were designed to appeal to the German mentality, which was not the same as our own. It was too early yet to judge their value, though the Germans were taking active steps to counteract their effect.

In this connection, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs drew attention to Oslo telegram No. 56, in which His Majesty's Minister in Norway reported an announcement in the German Press that the Germans would not consider themselves bound to respect a country's neutrality if it permitted belligerent aircraft to pass over its territory either willingly or through the insufficiency of its air defences. The implications of this announcement were only too obvious.

The Chief of the Air Staff said that the Royal Air Force fully realised the vital importance of not infringing neutrality in any way during leaflet-dropping operations.

The War Cabinet—

Approved the suggestion that arrangements should be made for leaflets, containing a summary of the Prime Minister's Statement on Hitler's Peace Offer, to be dropped over Germany as soon as possible after the statement had been made.

4. The First Lord of the Admiralty informed the War Cabinet that the Second Cruiser Squadron had been attacked in the North Sea the previous day by German aircraft operating some 550 miles from German bases. The attack had lasted some considerable time, but no hits had been registered on any of our ships. Two Destroyer Flotillas had been similarly attacked, also without damage.

The first of a series of weekly conferences had taken place the previous night between the Admiralty and the Air Ministry with a view to improving the cooperation between the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in future operations.
The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

The Secretary of State for War informed the War Cabinet that the number of German Divisions estimated to be in Poland was between 37 and 40, the number on the Western Front being approximately 04.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to a statement reported to the French Ambassador in Rome (telegram No. 306 from Paris) to the effect that the Germans intended to make a very powerful attack on the Maginot Line and to break through there without infringing the neutrality of any adjacent country. According to the report, there were 150 German Divisions against 85 of the Allies.

It was pointed out that the total number of German Divisions amounted to 198 in all, of which probably 40 were of low category only. On the other hand, according to the information at our disposal, there were only 2 Divisions opposite Holland, the main concentration being opposite Luxemburg and in the Saar. This tended to confirm the hypothesis of an attack against the Maginot Line.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

The War Cabinet had under consideration an Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff on the situation created by the German-Soviet Agreement (Paper No. W.P. (39) 74). In the discussion which took place it was generally agreed that the paper in its present form was not suitable for despatch to Dominion Premiers in that it did not take into account the political factors which were likely to operate in our favour. These were, of course, outside the province of the Chiefs of Staff, who had confined themselves to the purely military implications of possible Russo-German co-operation, and were therefore bound to take into account every possible danger that might arise. The improbability of close co-operation between Germany and Russia—and, indeed, the likelihood of dissension between them—made the picture very much less gloomy. The antagonism between the two countries, particularly over the Baltic question, was well known. In these circumstances, it was thought desirable that Dominion Premiers should receive a shorter paper which kept the balance between the political and military factors, and brought out the main conclusions to be drawn therefrom.

The War Cabinet—
The Lord Privy Seal said that, in his judgment, there was a good deal of discontent in the country at the present time as a result of the lack of opportunities for joining the Armed Forces of the Crown. This was a matter which had been mentioned at a recent meeting of the Home Policy Committee. From the unemployment point of view, it seemed essential that there should be a change in recruiting policy before the onset of winter.

The Secretary of State for War said that he intended to clear up the position as regards voluntary recruitment in a statement which he was to make in the House of Commons on Thursday, the 12th October. In the meantime, he was glad of the opportunity of explaining the situation to the War Cabinet.

The following were among the points brought out in the Secretary of State's explanatory statement:

(i) We were now following the continental practice of calling up recruits on an ordered plan, but there had, in fact, been every opportunity before the outbreak of war for voluntary recruitment for both the Regular Army and the Territorials from much wider age groups. It was by voluntary recruitment that the Territorial Army had reached its pre-war strength of approximately 430,000 men.

(ii) We must avoid the mistake made in the last war of enlisting simultaneously hundreds of thousands of men of all age groups, for whom we had neither equipment nor training facilities.

(iii) As regards the voluntary recruitment of the rank and file, the current belief that men were being refused in large numbers was very wide of the mark. The War Office were even accepting alien refugees, provided that they could pass certain Home Office tests. Any man therefore, who fell within the specified age limits, could present himself for registration. All who had done so, and had passed the medical and other tests, to the number of about 50,000, were, in fact, being rapidly absorbed.

(iv) It was the intention of the War Office to form Defence Battalions of older men for Home service.

(v) As regards the provision of officers, we had now adopted the democratic procedure of selection from the ranks. The men selected were passed through Officer Cadet Training Units.

(vi) The existence of Warrant Officers Class III had resulted in a smaller number of subalterns being required. In addition, this new grade of Warrant Officer was in itself a recruiting ground for the commissioned ranks.

(vii) The fact must be faced that men over 40 were not suitable to proceed on active service as subalterns.

(viii) The statistical position as regards officers was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers of the Regular Army, Territorial Army, and Supplementary Reserve serving at the outbreak of war</td>
<td>33,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers of the Regular Army Reserve already called up</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers of the Regular Army Reserve waiting to be called up</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve Officers of the Territorial Army waiting to be called up</td>
<td>9,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As a result of the conclusion on Minute 16, the date of the first state's speech was changed to Wednesday, 11th October.*
The Minister of Labour informed the War Cabinet that the age limits were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For volunteers for the duration of the war</td>
<td>22-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For volunteers for the Regular Army</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was still a very large reserve of men on whom the Army could draw as soon as it was ready to train them. As regards unemployment, the three weekly returns received since the 5th September showed the following approximate increases:

- 100,000
- 50,000
- 20,000

The suggestion was made that the whole position might be considered by the Land Forces Committee. It was pointed out that the recruiting position was already under consideration by the Man-Power Committee, but it was felt that it was desirable that the War Cabinet should be kept informed of the developments of the position, which involved certain broad issues of policy.

After further discussion, the War Cabinet agreed:

1. That no further action was called for until after the forthcoming statement by the Secretary of State for War;
2. That if, thereafter, further examination of the points regarding voluntary recruitment seemed desirable, this should be undertaken by the Land Forces Committee.

8. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the previous day, the 9th October, 1939, he had been informed by M. Corbin, the French Ambassador, that the French Government took a diametrically opposite view to that which we had reached on the question of ascertaining to the modifications to the Anglo-Turkish Treaty proposed by M. Stalin in his conversations with Moscow with M. Sarajeoglu, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs. Later in the day the French Government had modified their attitude and had suggested a compromise, which consisted of the carrying of the Protocol relating to the position of Turkey in the event of France and Great Britain finding themselves in opposition to the U.S.S.R. Particulars of the suggested compromise had been communicated to His Majesty’s Ambassador, Ankara, in telegram No. 642. He (the Secretary of State) did not consider it very clear that the French proposals would be acceptable to M. Stalin. At a further meeting the next day, he had stated that the French Charge d’Affaires at Moscow should be informed that, in the event of the French proposals proving unacceptable to the U.S.S.R., he was at a loss what course to adopt, but that he did not desire, to accept the amendments to the Treaty with Turkey proposed by M. Stalin. A very full account of the exchanges of correspondence which had been taking place between London and Ankara was being drafted and would be sent to the War Cabinet shortly.
The Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet that he had been informed by the Minister of Supply that he was that morning signing an agreement with the Soviet Trade Delegation for the acquisition of Soviet timber in return for rubber and tin.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs gave the War Cabinet particulars of an informal oral reply which he had received from the Belgian Ambassador regarding the attitude of the Belgian Government on the question of their neutrality. Details of the information so furnished are recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

The War Cabinet took note of the statement made by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he had prepared a telegram for despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador, Rome, dealing with the questions relating to the Balkans and the Mediterranean respectively, raised at the meeting of the War Cabinet noted in the margin. After certain further consultations he proposed to despatch the telegram to Sir Percy Loraine.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs gave the War Cabinet certain additional information regarding the possible development of German policy received from the source referred to at the meeting of the War Cabinet noted in the margin. Details of the information in question are recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

The War Cabinet took note of the statement by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The War Cabinet had before them a revised draft of the Statement to be made on behalf of His Majesty's Government in reply to Herr Hitler's speech in the Reichstag (W.P. 39) 79).

The Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs said that he had held two discussions with the Dominion High Commissioners in regard to the proposed Statement. The chief points which had emerged were, first, that the Dominion Governments had not had enough time to consider the Statement; and, secondly, that the draft went too far in the direction of “slamming the door” on further discussion, instead of putting questions that Herr Hitler would have to answer.

On the first point it was pointed out that the French Government and a large section of opinion in the country expected an immediate Statement to be made concerning a summary refusal to
discuss Herr Hitler's speech, and that it would be undesirable to postpone the statement beyond the date, the 11th October, already announced. On the other hand, it was very important not to let the Dominion Prime Ministers feel that they had been rushed into approval of a Statement which had in effect been decided without them.

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs stated that, given time, he did not anticipate that there would be any difficulty in obtaining the agreement of the Dominions, except perhaps in the case of Canada.

The conclusion reached was that the importance of carrying the Dominions with us outweighed other considerations, and that a further day's delay was desirable.

On the second point, several Ministers shared the view that paragraph 14 of the draft was a little too definite. The Foreign Secretary pointed out the great difficulty of adopting any form of Statement which did not "slam the door" without at the same time implying that Herr Hitler's speech did, in fact, offer a genuine basis for discussion. It was generally agreed, however, that paragraph 14 of the draft, setting out the conclusions of His Majesty's Government, might be put in a more questioning form. In this connection an alternative draft of paragraph 14, submitted by the High Commissioner for Canada, was handed round. It was agreed that parts of this draft could be combined with the draft under discussion.

The Lord Privy Seal, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence suggested that, in order to appeal to the more idealistic elements both in this country and abroad, it was very desirable to re-incorporate in the draft Statement portions of paragraph 16 of the earlier draft (W.P. (39) 77), which dealt in general terms with the kind of post-war settlement which the Government contemplated. The reference in that paragraph to agreement with Herr Hitler and the specific suggestion for associating neutral countries in drawing up the peace settlement should, however, be omitted.

It was agreed that the phrase "German Government" should be used throughout instead of "Germany" or "German people," and that an alternative should be found for the word "reparation" wherever it was used.

The War Cabinet agreed—

(a) to remit the further revision of the draft Statement, in the light of the discussion and of the representations of the Dominion Governments, to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the First Lord of the Admiralty;

(b) that the Prime Minister's Statement should be deferred until Thursday, the 12th October, the reason given being the need for time to consult the Dominion Governments.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
October 10, 1939.