CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Thursday, September 7, 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 CHATEILLY, 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 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. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister for Home Security (Items 1-6).
The Right Hon. OLIVER STANLEY, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (Item 12).
The Right Hon. LORD MACMILLAN, Minister of Information (Items 12-13).
Air Chief Marshal Sir CYRIL L. N. NEWALL, Chief of the Air Staff (Items 1-10).
General Sir W. EDMOND IRONSIDE, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Items 1-10).
The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.
The Right Hon. E. L. BURGIN, M.P., Minister of Supply (Item 11).
Mr. HORACE J. WILSON, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury.
Admiral of the Fleet, Sir DUDLEY POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (Items 1-10).

Mr. A. P. WATERFIELD, Deputy Director-General, Ministry of Information (Items 12-13).

Secretariat:
Sir EDWARD BRIDGES
Major-General H. L. ISMAI
Colonel L. C. HOLLIS, B.M.
Mr. P. HEMMING
Mr. W. B. WILKINSON
Lieutenant-Colonel W. FURZE, R.E.
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The Secretary of State for Air gave particulars of the recent operations.

Reference was made to the air-raid warning given in the early morning of the 6th September. As a result of a technical defect, coupled with bad visibility, some confusion had arisen.

Discussion took place as to the attitude to be adopted in giving information to the Press on such occasions. It was agreed that it was necessary to make a communication as soon as possible, in order to stop the circulation of false rumours. On the other hand, this must be balanced with the undesirability of making an announcement until the facts were clearly known. Agreement was reached as to the line which should be taken if there was a demand for further information as to what had happened on the morning of the 6th September.

A report was also made as to the Air situation in Poland.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

The First Lord of the Admiralty reported that one merchant ship had been sunk by a submarine the previous day. The fate of another ship was uncertain.

A number of German submarines had been attacked by our destroyers, but it was not possible to say how many had been destroyed.

The convoy situation was improving rapidly. The institution of air reconnaissance by the United States in the Western Atlantic would be a very helpful factor.

The strength of the Home Fleet was more than sufficient to deal with the German Fleet. The First Lord suggested that certain units of the Fleet might be moved to Gibraltar.

Discussion ensued as to the effect of such a move upon Italy.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he would like to have time to give this suggestion further consideration.

The War Cabinet were informed that the position in Poland was for the moment a little easier. This was probably due in part, at least, to the Germans having to reorganise and re-fuel their armoured fighting vehicles, after their first rapid advances. A big battle was in progress some 40 miles north of Warsaw.

Particulars were given of troop dispositions in other theatres.

The War Cabinet took note of these statements.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the War Cabinet that the Egyptian Ambassador in London had represented to him the concern felt by the Egyptian Government as to the large number of Egyptian troops locked up on internal security duties in Egypt. The Egyptian Prime Minister suggested that we should provide the equipment necessary for the organisation of an Egyptian Volunteer Force which could release Egyptian regular units for more active operations.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff thought that if we committed our sole Russian reinforcements to Egypt, it was really, instead of moving a further batch to Palestine - A Minute.
external defence purposes was standing by in India, and proposed that the Brigade should move to Egypt at once:

The War Cabinet agreed:

1. that no decision could be taken on the point raised by the Foreign Secretary until enquiries had been made by the War Office to show whether it would be possible for us to supply equipment to the proposed Egyptian Volunteer Force;

2. that as soon as the necessary information was available, the Secretary of State for War should submit recommendations to the War Cabinet;

3. that, subject to the views of the Secretary of State for India, a further Brigade should be sent from India to Egypt.

5. The Home Secretary referred to the discussion at the meeting of the War Cabinet noted in the margin that the National Registration day should be fixed for the 6th October, 1939, and that it would not be possible to postpone the introduction of Food Rationing to so late a date. The matter had been further considered between the Government Departments concerned, and it had been agreed that it would now be possible to advance National Registration day from the 6th October to the 29th September. This alteration would make it possible to issue the rationing documents later on the basis of the National Register Schedule.

The War Cabinet agreed:

That National Registration day should be advanced from the 6th October to the 29th September, and that rationing should be based on the National Register. (This decision does not affect the previous conclusion that the Minister of Food should obtain the authority of the War Cabinet before introducing food rationing.)

6. The Home Secretary stated that as arranged at the meeting of the War Cabinet, noted in the margin, discussion had taken place with the Air Ministry, the Police Authorities and the B.B.C. regarding the possibility of permitting the re-opening of places of entertainment in certain conditions. As a result a plan had been drawn up.

The War Cabinet agreed:

That the Home Secretary, acting in consultation with the Secretary of State for Air, should be authorised to take steps for the re-opening of places of entertainment in certain conditions.

7. The War Cabinet had before them a Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (War Cabinet Papers [W.P. (39)]), setting out the position which would arise as regards the use of the Straits if the Anglo-Turkish Treaty of Alliance were to enter into force in the form at present proposed.

The War Cabinet took note of the above document.
The War Cabinet had before them a report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (War Cabinet Paper W.P. (39) 3), on the position of Roumania.

In addition, certain information was given to the War Cabinet regarding a course of action in the Balkans, proposed by General Gamelin, from which it appeared that the French Military Authorities were still working on a plan which had been favoured both by themselves and also by the British Military Authorities at a time when it had been anticipated that Italy would take sides with Germany.

The War Cabinet agreed:

(a) to approve the views set out in W.P. (39) 3:

(b) that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should address a telegram to His Majesty's Ambassador, Paris, asking him to impress upon the French Government that, in the period until Italy made clear her intentions, His Majesty's Government hoped that the French Government would not authorise action in the Balkans by the French Military Authorities such as had been discussed between the British and French Military Authorities prior to the outbreak of the war, when it had been assumed that Italy would take sides with Germany:

(c) that the British Permanent Military Representatives should be instructed to inform their French colleagues that we were opposed to action on the lines apparently contemplated by the French military authorities, both on political and on military grounds:

(d) to take note that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, proposed at an early date to circulate to the War Cabinet a memorandum setting out his views in regard to the position in the Balkans generally.

Air Defence of Scapa.

The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff (Paper No. W.P. (39) 3), requesting approval of the following specific measures for the air defence of Scapa:

(a) The immediate provision of two flights of balloons, at the expense of localities for which these defences have already been provided or approved.

(b) The provision of a complete balloon barrage, when the production and administrative situation will permit.

(c) The addition to the already authorised Fighter Programme of 2 Squadrons, to be permanently located at Scapa.

(d) The immediate provision of a complete organisation which will enable the above two fighter squadrons to operate at full efficiency, and to be reinforced if necessary by five further squadrons.

After discussion, the War Cabinet approved these proposals.
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs agreed to obtain the views of His Majesty's Representative in Washington as to whether it would be desirable for Colonel Greenly to go to the United States initially in his private capacity as Chairman of Messrs. Babcock and Wilcox.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer raised no objection to the despatch of Colonel Greenly, but warned his colleagues that, even at the present time, our expenditure in the United States was substantially in excess of our dollar assets.

The War Cabinet:

(1) Authorised the Minister of Supply to take immediate steps to establish a Mission in New York with Colonel J. H. Greenly as Controller-General;

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to ascertain from His Majesty's Representative in Washington whether it would be desirable for Colonel Greenly to go to the United States initially in his private capacity as Chairman of Messrs. Babcock and Wilcox.

The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty (W.P. (39) 11).

After discussion, the War Cabinet accepted the recommendations set out in paragraphs 9, 15, 16, 17, 20 and 22 of the Memorandum, subject to the following observations:

(1) The statement as to release of information by the Admiralty, in paragraph 9, should be read as meaning release by the Admiralty of information to the Ministry of Information.

(2) Paragraph 11 should not be taken as implying that the Admiralty claimed to enjoy a more privileged position, vis-à-vis the Ministry of Information, than other Departments.

The Minister of Information informed the War Cabinet that the foreign Press Correspondents in London were very indignant as to the scarcity of information so far vouchsafed to them. In particular, they complained that the censorship had deprived them of the use of the international telephone. The German censorship was said to permit the use of the international telephone to foreign Press Correspondents. The result was that foreign newspapers were publishing information about this country obtained from Germany.

The Minister was inclined to make this concession to the foreign Press Correspondents provided that they first produced an approval of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He said that it would always be their duty to supervise the correspondents. There was an arrangement by which the messages in questions could be overheard by the authorities.
Reference was also made to a suggestion that representatives of the Defence Departments should hold Press Conferences, not so much for the purpose of conveying specific information, as of affording general guidance to British and foreign journalists.

The War Cabinet agreed:—

(i) that the Secretary of State for Air and the Minister of Information should consider the question of providing improved facilities for the Press;

(ii) that, subject to the Controller of the Postal and Telegraph Censorship being given an opportunity of making representations, arrangements should be made to allow foreign Press Correspondents to have the use of radio telephony, subject to proper safeguards, which would include the submission and approval of the script of the message to be transmitted;

(iii) to invite the three Service Ministers to give further consideration to the suggestion of proposed Press Conferences at the Defence Departments.

14. The War Cabinet had before them a Note by the Prime Minister (Paper No. W.P. (G) (39) 3), covering lists of Reports to be furnished periodically by Government Departments for the use of the War Cabinet.

The proposal in the Prime Minister's Note was agreed to with two amendments:

(a) Section I. Weekly Reports.

In addition to the joint Naval, Military and Air Force appreciations to be furnished by the Chiefs of Staff organisation, there should be separate reports by the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Secretary of State for War and the Secretary of State for Air.

(b) Section II. Fortnightly and Monthly Reports.

Under the heading "Supply and Production," Reports should be rendered by the War Office, in addition to Reports by the Ministry of Supply, the Admiralty and the Air Ministry.

15. The War Cabinet were informed that the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs had arranged to telegraph daily to the Dominion Governments factual appreciations of the military situation, based on information supplied by the Chiefs of Staff, who were in agreement with the procedure proposed.

The War Cabinet took note of the above arrangements.
16. Discussion took place on the arrangements to be made for Sunday meetings of the War Cabinet. It was generally agreed that the War Cabinet must meet daily, Sundays included. On the other hand, it was considered that, except in times of extreme crisis, it ought to prove possible to release a number of members of the War Cabinet from attendance on Sundays.

The suggestion was made that there should be three Sunday duty rosters for members of the War Cabinet, which would mean that normally only one-third of the members need be in attendance in London on any particular Sunday.

It followed that the Agenda for War Cabinet meetings on Sundays should not normally include memoranda or statements on matters of first importance.

General approval was given to the arrangements outlined above. The Prime Minister was invited to prepare the necessary rosters of Sunday duty for members of the War Cabinet.

**Richmond Terrace, S.W. 1,**
**September 7, 1939.**