CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Friday, September 8, 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. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. WALTER ELLIOT, M.P., Minister of Health (Item 5).

Sir HORACE J. WILSON, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir DUDLEY POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (Items 1-4).

Mr. W. S. DOUGLAS, Under-Secretary, Treasury (Item 5).

Secretariat:

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Major-General H. L. ISMAY.
Mr. E. HAMMING.
Mr. W. D. WELLS.
Wing Commander W. ELKING.
Lieutenant-Colonel E. L. J. JACOB, R.E.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Air Operations</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Naval Situation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Army Situation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Assistance from India</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Evacuation of Government Departments</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Italy: Internal Political Situation</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Naval Operations Question of despatch to Gibraltar of certain units from the Home Fleet</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Italy: Commercial Contacts</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Balkans</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>United States Naval Patrol in the Western Atlantic</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Far Eastern Situation</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Poland: the Military Situation</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Obscuration of Lighting</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Action taken by the Dominions</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Eire: Representation of the United Kingdom in</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Meetings of the War Cabinet on Sundays</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A discussion took place as to whether the dropping of leaflets should be continued. It was pointed out that there was a strong feeling in some quarters that it was not right that, while Poland was being severely bombed by Germany, our operations should be confined to the dropping of propaganda. On the other hand, there was good reason to believe that the German authorities feared the effect of our propaganda, and the fact that our aircraft were able to fly with impunity all over the North-West of Germany would have a depressing effect on the morale of the German people.

It was generally agreed that the material which should be incorporated in the leaflets was a matter which could best be left to the discretion of the Ministry of Information, but that the suggestion that the Prime Minister's Broadcast to the German people would form a suitable leaflet should be brought to the notice of the Ministry.

The War Cabinet agreed:

That the distribution of propaganda leaflets by the Royal Air Force was a valuable operation which should be repeated from time to time as and when opportunity offered.

2. The First Lord of the Admiralty reported that, in the previous twenty-four hours, four British merchant ships had been sunk out of a total of eight attacked. There had been no loss of life, as the ships had been sunk by gunfire after the crews had been removed. He proposed to prepare a calculation which would enable a comparison to be made between the present losses and those sustained at the height of the German submarine campaign in 1917, in relation to the total tonnage involved in each case. This, he thought, would show that the present campaign, though intense, was not comparable in its results to the previous one.

All possible steps were being taken to introduce the convoy system, and the Admiralty were proposing to restrict the sailings of valuable fast ships until they had been armed. There were numerous reports of attacks on enemy submarines by our Destroyers, though the results could not be assessed with certainty.

It was proposed, subject to the concurrence of the Air Ministry, that two Squadrons of long-range flying-boats, now in the Mediterranean, should be moved to stations where they could assist in the protection of trade on the South-Western approaches and off the coast of Spain.

The Chief of the Air Staff signified his concurrence with this suggestion.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet of the situation on the Polish front. The sorties of the Polish Army were being extended, and the troops were facing the enemy with confidence.
CONTENTS.

No. - Subject.

1. Air Operations.
2. The Naval Situation.
3. The Army Situation.
4. Assistance from India.
5. Evacuation of Government Departments.
6. Turkey.
7. Italy: Internal Political Situation.
   Question of despatch to Gibraltar of certain units from the Home Fleet.
9. Italy: Commercial Contacts.
10. The Balkans.
11. Egypt.
12. United States Naval Patrol in the Western Atlantic.
15. Obscuration of Lighting.
17. Eire: Representation of the United Kingdom in.
18. Meetings of the War Cabinet on Sundays.

Page

53
53
53
54
54
55
56
56
56
56
57
57
58
58
58
59
50
50
A discussion took place as to whether the dropping of leaflets should be continued. It was pointed out that there was a strong feeling in some quarters that it was not right that, while Poland was being severely bombed by Germany, our operations should be confined to the dropping of propaganda. On the other hand, there was good reason to believe that the German authorities feared the effect of our propaganda, and the fact that our aircraft were able to fly with impunity all over the North-West of Germany would have a depressing effect on the morale of the German people.

It was generally agreed that the material which should be incorporated in the leaflets was a matter which could best be left to the discretion of the Ministry of Information, but that the suggestion that the Prime Minister's Broadcast to the German people would form a suitable leaflet should be brought to the notice of the Ministry.

The War Cabinet agreed:

That the distribution of propaganda leaflets by the Royal Air Force was a valuable operation which should be repeated from time to time as and when opportunity offered.

2. The First Lord of the Admiralty reported that, in the previous twenty-four hours, four British merchant ships had been sunk out of a total of eight attacked. There had been no loss of life, as the ships had been sunk by gun-fire after the crews had been removed. He proposed to prepare a calculation which would enable a comparison to be made between the present losses and those sustained at the height of the German submarine campaign in 1917, in relation to the total tonnage involved in each case. This, he thought, would show that the present campaign, though intense, was not comparable in its results to the previous one.

All possible steps were being taken to introduce the convoy system, and the Admiralty were proposing to restrict the sailings of valuable fast ships until they had been armed. There were numerous reports of attacks on enemy submarines by our Destroyers, though the results could not be assessed with certainty.

It was proposed, subject to the concurrence of the Air Ministry, that two Squadrons of long-range flying-boats, now in the Mediterranean, should be moved to stations where they could assist in the protection of trade on the South-Western approaches and off the coast of Spain.

The Chief of the Air Staff signified his concurrence with this suggestion.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.
On the French front it seemed that the French Armies had everywhere reached the Franco-German frontier and perhaps in a few places had crossed it.

In reply to an enquiry by the Prime Minister, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that the French were fully prepared against a possible turning movement through Holland and Belgium.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff read to the War Cabinet a telegram which had been received by the Secretary of State for India from the Indian Government, a copy of which is annexed to these Minutes (Annex).

The War Cabinet agreed:

That an expression of their appreciation of this generous offer of assistance should be conveyed to the Government of India.

5. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Note by the Minister of Home Security on the Evacuation of Government Departments (W.P. (39) 10).

The Minister of Home Security said that the Inter-Departmental Committee, which had been set up by the desire of the War Cabinet to consider the moves of certain special staffs in advance of the general move, had now reported. Their recommendations were given in his Note, and he drew particular attention to their views:

(a) that first priority should be given to the moves of the supply organisations of the Air Ministry and Admiralty to Harrogate and Bath respectively,

(b) that none of the moves should be ordered before the Office of Works reported that arrangements were reasonably ready.

The First Commissioner of Works reported that instructions had been issued on Wednesday night to carry out the requisitioning of the premises required for the whole move. As regards the move of the Air Ministry to Harrogate, accommodation would be available on Monday, the 11th September, but under conditions which might be somewhat chaotic, and he would prefer that the move should be postponed, at least until Wednesday, the 15th September.

The accommodation for the Admiralty at Bath could also be got ready by Monday, but here again he would prefer to postpone it until later next week. In that event, however, owing to railway difficulties, the move could not take place before Thursday, and would then have to be carried out in two scholions extending over Friday. The 1,500 Ministry of Supply staff from Woolwich, which was second on the list of priority, was an entirely new demand, which had not been included in the original scheme, and he asked to be given a few days grace to find the necessary accommodation.

The Minister of Health reported that bhillenting notices were now being served, and that he was satisfied that the necessary room was everywhere available, though in certain cases it might at first be cramped and involve sleeping on floors.

A discussion ensued as to the time when these initial moves should take place. It was generally agreed that there was no imminent danger of an attack on General France, and that it was therefore probable that the moves should be delayed until inspectors concerned could move into quarters which were in preparation to
6. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that, in accordance with the decisions of the War Cabinet noted in the margin, he had telegraphed to His Majesty's Ambassador, Ankara, impressing upon him the urgency of securing the definite conclusion of the Treaty of Peace between Turkey and Greece. The Secretary of State, in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of W.P. (99)-10, the Minister of Home Security being responsible for the necessary action with the Ministry of Information:

(c) that it was undesirable that publicity should be given to this matter by questions in Parliament, and that this aspect of the matter should be carefully watched. (The Prime Minister undertook to bear this point in mind.)

(d) that the question of the main move should be a matter for decision later by the War Cabinet.

Turkey.

(Previous References:
W.M. (90), 6th
Conclusions, Minute 2, and
6th Conclusions, Minute 8.)
6. In the course of the discussion on the internal political situation in Italy (see Minute 7), the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs referred to the discussion on the previous day and said that in the circumstances he would prefer to postpone for the moment consideration of the suggestion that certain units not required by the Home Fleet should be dispatched to Gibraltar.

The War Cabinet agreed:

that no further action should for the moment be taken in regard to the proposal to station at Gibraltar certain units not required by the Home Fleet.

9. The Chancellor of the Exchequer informed the War Cabinet that the inter-departmental discussions as to the practicability of establishing commercial contacts with Italy, showed:

(i) That as regards possible purchases, the Defence Departments felt that in the absence of precise information as to what was available in Italy and when delivery could be made, it was difficult for them to say what they were prepared to order;

(ii) That as regards the financing of such purchases, it would be difficult to expand exports of coal to Italy, but that the possibility of employing the balance in the Italian Clearing for financing these purchases was being examined.

The Secretary of State for Air said that he thought the object of the War Cabinet could best be attained by the despatch to Italy of a small exploratory Mission.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said that if the Admiralty desired to make any purchases (of, for example, that coastal motor boats), they would wish to be represented also on the proposed Mission.

The War Cabinet agreed:

We gave further consideration to this question, and in particular to the suggestion to send a small exploratory Mission, but in view of the undoubted desirability of the Mission, and the despatch of the Mission as soon as possible, the Chairman of the War Cabinet said he would not again raise this question until the Mission had completed its work.
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the War Cabinet that a telegram had been received from His Majesty's Ambassador, Cairo, reporting that he had received an intimation from the Egyptian Government that, if he was to inform them in writing that the measures so far taken, including the declaration of martial law, were not sufficient, they would declare a state of war between Egypt and Germany. Action was accordingly being taken on these lines.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the War Cabinet that a telegram had been received from His Majesty's Ambassador, Washington, giving particulars regarding the naval patrol in the Western Atlantic which the United States Government had decided to establish. The Admiralty had been asked to consider the information supplied, and to inform the Foreign Office whether they were satisfied with the action proposed to be taken by the United States in this matter.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the War Cabinet that two or three days previously the Japanese Government had addressed a note to the British, French and United States Governments, suggesting that to prevent incidents in China during the present conflict in Europe each of those Governments should withdraw their military forces and their warships, and offering, if this suggestion were adopted, to look after the interests in China of the Governments concerned. Previous to the outbreak of war, consideration had been given to the practicability of withdrawing these forces, but with the exception of the General Officer Commanding, Hong Kong, the local authorities had all been opposed to such a course. The garrisons in Tientsin and Peking had been in existence since 1901, and that of the International Settlement in Shanghai since 1927. In each case the size of the garrison had been progressively reduced, and in his (the Secretary of State's) opinion these garrisons would have to be withdrawn whenever the time came to secure a general settlement of the position in China.

As regards the present situation, the Secretary of State favoured the despatch of the following communications:

(1) An acknowledgment to the Japanese Government stating that the British Government had noted the intention of the Japanese Government to maintain a neutral attitude towards the European conflict, and that they were unable to interfere in the affairs of China between
(ii) A Note to the Japanese Government asking for their views, and stating that unless they (and the United States Government) were prepared to take a vigorous line, there would be no alternative but to comply with the suggestion of the Japanese Government:

(iii) At a later stage a Note to the United States Government asking what reply they proposed to make to the Japanese Government.

In discussion it was pointed out that at the end of the War our position might be much stronger; and that, even if we were to decide on withdrawal of any of our forces in the Far East, we should not concede our legal rights in any respect.

The War Cabinet agreed:

(a) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should address communications on the subject of British garrisons in the Far East to the Japanese and French Governments on the lines of his statement to the War Cabinet as summarized above;

(b) That no final decision regarding the withdrawal or otherwise of the British naval and military forces in the Far East should be taken without further reference to the War Cabinet.

14. The Secretary of State for War informed the War Cabinet that an emissary had just flown back from Poland with a message from General Carton de Wiart, reporting on the Polish military situation, which was now extremely serious, and suggesting that Great Britain and France would have to find some means of conveying military supplies to Poland; the greatest need were aeroplanes, machine guns and ammunition. Reference was also made to public opinion in Poland over the delay which had taken place between the German invasion of their country and the presentation of the British ultimatum.

Members of the War Cabinet pointed out that, without in the least minimizing the effect which Poland was using, there was only one way in which we could give her substantial help, namely, by waging war on Germany until Poland was vindicated. The Chiefs of Staff were invited to report immediately to the War Cabinet on the course to be sent in General Carton de Wiart's message.

15. Discussion took place as to whether the neutral policy in regard to the evacuation of Polish forces had been wise. A suggestion was made that this had been caused by being turned off at the start. It was thought by some that these British forces on land were more likely to be of use to France in the future than to the Polish causes in the present.
The Secretary of State for Air said that, while it was the Air Staff who were anxious to ensure the most effective black-out obtainable, the production side of the Air Ministry was disposed to agree with the views expressed as to the effect of the present policy on munition production. He hoped shortly to bring before the Cabinet an agreed recommendation from his Department as a whole.

16. The War Cabinet took note of a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (W.P. (G.) (39) 5) covering a statement showing the principal action which had been taken by the Dominions, Newfoundland and Southern Rhodesia, in regard to defence measures immediately preceding and since the outbreak of war up to the 4th September, 1939.

The Secretary of State thought that, until our representative had been appointed to Ireland, it would be undesirable that the Defence Departments should raise with the Eire Government, the grant of any major defence facilities (e.g., the use of Berehaven).

17. The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs reported that Mr. de Valera had now expressed himself as willing to receive a representative of the United Kingdom Government in Dublin. He had proposed that this representative should have the title of Ambassador, but it had been intimated that this was impossible from our point of view and the title "Representative" had been agreed.

The Secretary of State thought that, until our representative had been appointed to Dublin, it would be unwise that the Defence Departments should raise with the Eire Government, the grant of any major defence facilities (e.g., the use of Berehaven).

18. Some further discussion took place on this matter. It was pointed out that although only three Ministers would normally be on duty each Sunday under the arrangement proposed, the remaining Ministers would not be far away and would be available at short notice. There was every advantage in an arrangement which would enable members of the War Cabinet, while available at short notice, to spend two Sundays in three out of London.

The Prime Minister said that the three groups of Ministers which he proposed were as follows:

**Group I**
- The Prime Minister
- The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
- The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence

**Group II**
- The Chancellor of the Duchy
- The First Lord of the Admiralty
- The Secretary of State for Air

**Group III**
- The Lord Privy Seal
- The Secretary of State for War
- The Minister without Portfolio

It was decided that Group III should be on duty on Sunday, the 10th September.

Richard Perseus, R.W.I.
September 3, 1939.
NOW that we are at war, we are anxious to take timely steps to render further aid to His Majesty's Government to meet certain eventualities which, in our judgment, may well have to be met by India from time to time during the course of the war. As a first step in this direction, we have already arranged to increase output of our munitions factories to maximum extent possible in order not only to meet our own probable needs but, if possible, all outside demands which, judging from our recent experiences, are likely to be considered considerable. We now propose to take immediate action, with such material resources as we have at our disposal, to carry out the following:

(a) to form two additional Brigade groups for external defence purposes. The first suitable for reinforcing Burma, and second for employment for protection of Anglo-Iran oilfields or elsewhere where conditions of role are similar.

(b) to simultaneously replace such troops as are required for (a) above by forming equivalent number of new units for our own needs.