CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W.1, on Monday, 2nd August, 1943, at 6 P.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.
The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTELTON, M.P., Minister of Production.
The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Lord Privy Seal.
The Right Hon. SIR JAMES GRIGG, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS, K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production.
The Hon. SIR ALEXANDER CADOGAN, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
Air Chief Marshal SIR CHARLES F. A. PORTAL, Chief of the Air Staff.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT SIMON, Lord Chancellor (Items 6-8).
The Right Hon. L. S. AMERY, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma.
The Right Hon. SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.
The Right Hon. BRENDAN BRACKEN, M.P., Minister of Information.
The Right Hon. JAMES STUART, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury (Item 2).
Admiral of the Fleet SIR DUDLEY POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff.
General SIR ALAN BROOKES, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Secretariat:
SIR EDWARD BRIDGES.
Lieutenant-General SIR HASTINGS ISMAY.
MR. L. F. BURGIS.
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1. The Chiefs of Staff reported the principal events of the previous week.

Bomber Command had made two heavy attacks on Hamburg (on which 7,400 tons had been dropped during the previous nine days) and had also devastated Remscheid. United States Air Forces had attacked Hamburg, Cassel, Kiel and Magdeburg. During July the R.A.F. had dropped 16,700 tons and United States Air Forces 3,200 tons on Germany.

During the previous week the Air-Sea Rescue Service had rescued some 158 bomber personnel (121 belonging to the United States Army Air Force).

The War Cabinet—

Invited the Secretary of State for Air to convey to the Officer Commanding this Service the congratulations of the War Cabinet on this achievement.

Coastal Command had made 7 promising attacks against U-boats, 3 of which had almost certainly been sunk.

Enemy losses (including those claimed by the United States Air Force) had been 287 destroyed and 80 probably destroyed. British losses had been 87 aircraft (including 60 bombers). The United States had lost 77 aircraft.

Comparison with Battle of Britain.

The Chief of the Air Staff said that a comparison of R.A.F. and United States Army Air Force activities in the home theatre for the week ending the 1st August this year with the heaviest week of the Battle of Britain (i.e., week ending the 31st August, 1940) was as follows:

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<td>Offensive Sorties</td>
<td>8,128</td>
<td>5,520</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bombs dropped</td>
<td>6,830 tons</td>
<td>5,060 tons</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.A.F. and United States losses</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>G.A.F. fighters lost in the week ending the 31st Aug, 1940</td>
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<td>Destroyed</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>318</td>
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<td>Probably destroyed</td>
<td>107</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>122</td>
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In short (approximately) last week the R.A.F. and United States Air Forces had—

carried out: 60 per cent. more sorties;
dropped: 35 per cent. more bombs;
lost: half as many aircraft;
destroyed: 90 per cent. of the number of aircraft that the Germans had lost in the week ending the 31st August, 1940.

Mediterranean.

Enemy losses in the Mediterranean had been 88 destroyed, 14 probably destroyed and 22 damaged. We had lost 16 aircraft. Nine large and 10 small vessels had been hit, including an Italian cruiser and destroyer.

A powerful force of United States Liberators had made a successful attack on the oil refineries at Ploesti. The operation was considered one of the finest that had been carried out during the war.

The Prime Minister said that, when further details had been received, he proposed to send a message of congratulation to the American Air Command responsible for planning the
operation. He asked the Chief of the Air Staff to furnish him with the necessary particulars.

Shipping losses by enemy action for the previous week amounted to 39,000 tons. Losses by enemy action for the month of July amounted to 13,000 tons, of which 54,000 had been lost in the Sicilian operations. Marine losses for the month had been 21,000. The number of U-boats sunk during July equaled the record sinkings for the month of May.

The battle for Catania had begun the previous night. No reports of its progress had yet been received. In the fighting before the battle the Germans had suffered heavy casualties. Prisoners now amounted to 100,000, mostly Italians.

The Russians had been attacking on all sides of the Salient. They had also been carrying out attacks in the North in front of Leningrad and in the South in the regions of Isium, Kuibyshevo and Krinskaya.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

2. The Prime Minister said that Mr. Aneurin Bevan, M.P., and others proposed to raise in the House of Commons on the following day the question of the directive which he (the Prime Minister) had given to the press some eight weeks ago regarding British policy towards General de Gaulle. Some portions of this directive (which had been confidential) had been published in the United States Press. In reply to a Question in Parliament on the 21st July, he had stated that, while he took full responsibility for the directive, he was not prepared to discuss it in the House otherwise than in Secret Session. If the matter was raised on the following day, the House should at once be moved into Secret Session. Any public discussion of the incident would have deplorable results.

The War Cabinet—

Agreed that if the matter was raised in the House of Commons on the following day it should be handled in the way proposed by the Prime Minister.

The Minister of Information mentioned that there was some reason to believe that Mr. Aneurin Bevan might publish the directive in the Tribune. It was difficult to see what could be done to prevent this, although action could be taken after the event.

3. The War Cabinet had before them a Note by the Prime Minister (W.P. (43) 348) suggesting that a statement should be made that a record would be kept of the total number of man-days on which British and Canadian prisoners were chained, and that the Officer Corps of the German Army would be required to serve double this number of man-days in chains after the defeat of Germany.

The following points were made in discussion:

(a) The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs suggested that we should await the upshot of an enquiry which had been made through our Minister in Berne as to whether the shackling had not now become symbolical, before consultation took place with the Dominion and United States Governments on this proposal.
The Secretary of State for War said that his information led him to believe that this was now the case.

(b) The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs suggested that it should also be for consideration whether the proposed statement should be made privately rather than publicly.

(c) Mr. Bruce said that he thought that both the Canadian and Australian Governments would be strongly opposed to the adoption of this suggestion.

The Prime Minister said that, in view of the doubts which had been expressed, he would not press his suggestion at the present time.

4. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Prime Minister (W.P. (43) 353) covering a redraft of his Note entitled "Thoughts on the Fall of Mussolini" (previously circulated as W.P. (43) 339) incorporating certain amendments suggested by President Roosevelt.

In discussion, it was pointed out that paragraph 11, as now drafted, might seem to imply that we had not kept in touch with the Russian Government on our policy in regard to Italy. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he had informed the Russian Government of our general intentions in regard to draft Armistice Terms, and that they had expressed themselves as satisfied.

It was suggested that, if the words "affecting the Balkans" in paragraph 11 were omitted, this point would be met. This was agreed to.

The Prime Minister said that he had sent a further telegram to the President suggesting the following altered wording in paragraph 2: "... namely, the destruction of Hitler and the total defeat of Germany."

The War Cabinet—

(1) Took note, with approval, of the revised Memorandum (subject to these two further amendments) as now constituting a Joint Directive to the United Kingdom and United States Governments on the broad policy to be pursued.

(2) Agreed that the Dominion Prime Ministers should be acquainted with the final text of the Memorandum and informed when this final text had been accepted by the United States Government.

5. The Prime Minister read to the War Cabinet a message which he proposed to send to President Roosevelt about the need for co-ordinating high propaganda policy between the United States and ourselves in regard to our attitude towards Italy. In particular, he proposed that no propaganda announcements should be issued in the name of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief unless they had the prior agreement of the President and himself.

The War Cabinet—

Took note, with approval, of this message.

6. At their Meeting on the 27th July the War Cabinet had asked the Lord Chancellor, in consultation with the Home Secretary and Parliamentary Counsel, to prepare a draft Bill amending the Regency Act, 1937, so as to provide that the Heir-presumptive to the Throne shall be qualified to be a Counsellor of State on attaining the age of 18.
The War Cabinet now had before them a Memorandum by the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor (W.P. (43) 347) covering a draft Bill dealing with this point, and also providing that the Counsellors of State need not include any who are absent from the United Kingdom.

After a short discussion, the War Cabinet—

Expressed their approval of the draft Bill, which should be submitted to The King for an expression of His Majesty’s pleasure; and agreed that, subject to His Majesty’s approval, the Bill should be introduced in the House of Lords at the first convenient opportunity after the Recess.

7. The Minister of Aircraft Production reported that a strike had occurred at Avro’s Woodford works over the determination of fixed piece prices. The Shop Stewards’ Chairman, on the 24th July, had informed the Works Manager that, unless the price which had been paid when the firm had been making aircraft of a different type was restored, the men would cease work on the 26th July. This was an illegal procedure, contrary to the agreement for avoiding disputes.

The strike was still continuing. On the 30th July a meeting of the shop stewards representing the engineering trade generally in the Stockport area had decided that, unless Avro’s posted a notice on the 3rd August withdrawing from their position, the whole of the workers in the Stockport engineering trade would come out on strike. The position would perhaps be a little clearer when the results were known of a meeting of the shop stewards in the Stockport district which was being held that evening.

The Minister of Aircraft Production felt bound to warn the War Cabinet that he took a grave view of the position, and feared that these labour difficulties, unless firmly handled, might spread. He thought that this strike arose from the struggle between the shop stewards Movement and the Trade Union organisation.

The Prime Minister suggested that the measures for dealing with this situation should include full Press publicity, laying stress on the fact that this strike was an illegal procedure and contrary to the existing arrangements for the avoidance of disputes; and, moreover, that it had already resulted in serious losses of production. Thereafter it would be for the War Cabinet to consider what remedial action should be taken.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

8. The Prime Minister said that he had come to the conclusion that an effort must be made to reduce the staffs of the Public Relations Branches of Government Departments. He thought that this task should be entrusted to a Cabinet Committee under the Chairmanship of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, comprising three or four other Ministers. The Terms of Reference should be as follows:

“To report what reduction can be effected in the staffing of Public Relations Branches of Government Departments; and whether the scope of the functions performed in these Branches is appropriate.”

After a short discussion, the War Cabinet—

Approved this proposal and invited the Prime Minister to nominate the Committee to carry out this Enquiry.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
2nd August, 1943.
LONG-RANGE ROCKET.

W.M.(43) 109th CONCLUSIONS.
Monday, 2nd August, 1943, 6-0 p.m.

THE PRIME MINISTER told the War Cabinet, in confidence, the information which had been gathered about the German development of the long-range rocket. While it seemed clear that some rocket development was in hand, the balance of opinion among experts doubted whether the Germans had in fact achieved so remarkable a technical advance as would be implied in the firing of a heavy rocket of a range sufficient to attack London from Northern France. At the same time, it seemed clear that some form of rocket development was being carried out, and appropriate precautionary measures were being taken.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W.1,
6th August, 1943.