CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, 18th September, 1944, at 5.30 p.m.

Present:

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

The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.

The Right Hon. JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.

The Right Hon. LORD WOOLTON, Minister of Reconstruction.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.


The Right Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.

The Rt. Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P., Minister of Education.

Sir ORME SARGENT, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Lieut.-General Sir ARCHIBALD E. NYE, Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Items 1-11).

Secretariat:

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Mr. W. S. MURRIE.
Major-General E. I. C. JACOB.
Mr. L. F. BURGIS.

Vice-Admiral Sir E. NEVILLE SYFRET, Vice-Chief of Naval Staff (Items 1-11).

Air Marshal Sir DOUGLAS C. S. EVILL, Vice-Chief of the Air Staff (Items 1-11).
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1. The Vice-Chiefs of Staff reported the principal events of the previous week.

Bomber Command had dropped 9,400 tons of bombs by day and 6,100 by night. The targets by day had included six synthetic oil plants in the Ruhr, the rail centres of Osnabruck and Munster, suspected rocket supply dumps and the Tirpitz, which had been attacked (it was thought unsuccessfully) from Russian bases. In connection with the land battle attacks had also been made on Bonn and on airfields and defences in Holland.

United States heavy bombers had dropped 8,700 tons of bombs, mainly on oil targets in the Leipzig area.

The Allied Expeditionary Air Force, whose losses amounted to 132 aircraft, had flown 11,600 sorties, mostly in tactical support of land operations. Fortresses had attacked Brest and Boulogne. 5,494 tons of supplies had been delivered by air.

In the airborne operation of the previous day 1,452 troop-carriers and tug aircraft had been employed.

Allied losses for the week included 22 British and 122 United States bombers.

Allied aircraft had flown 11,000 sorties. 3,100 tons of bombs had been dropped on industrial targets in Germany, Austria and Poland and on enemy communications, and 3,800 tons in support of the land battle.

Confirmed shipping losses from enemy action for the month of September to date amounted to 29,000 tons. On the night of the 10th/11th September an attack by "X" craft had successfully sunk the dock at Bergen.

On the previous Saturday a German ship—the Rostock—which claimed to be a hospital ship but was not so recognised by us, had been intercepted and brought into Plymouth. The German wounded had been disembarked and were being treated as prisoners of war.

Except for certain types of mines, Havre and Ostend were clear for navigation.

In operations north of Crete a small enemy convoy had been destroyed.

Operations during the previous week had been governed by the maintenance problem. In the Belfort area Allied forces from the south had joined up with forces from the west. Epinal and Luneville were in our possession, but Metz was still in the hands of the enemy. The First United States Army had penetrated Germany at a number of points between Trier and Aix. The most important thrust was just south of the latter town.

On the British sector Havre had been taken, with 10,000 prisoners, and Canadian forces were now attacking Boulogne, which was expected to fall at any moment. There had been considerable activity south of Eindhoven, where strong German counter-attacks had been repulsed with heavy casualties.

On the previous day airborne troops had landed in Holland. The object of the operation was to capture the bridges at Arnheim, Nijmegen, Grave and Heumen. It was as yet too early to get a clear view of the situation, but one report stated that the Guards Division had already made contact with the airborne troops at Eindhoven.

On the Adriatic sector some advance had been made and bridgeheads established over the Marano River. In the neighbourhood of Florence the Gothic line had been penetrated at two places. The Germans were showing no signs of withdrawal; and prisoners had stated that they had received orders to fight to the last.

In North Finland the Germans were disengaging and their force of some 9 Divisions, which was endeavouring to withdraw into Norway, was being followed up by the Russians. In Russia the Germans had reported Russian attacks between Valka and Riga. North of Warsaw the Russians had captured Lomza. In Warsaw itself, where there had been fighting in the suburbs, the Russians had not yet succeeded in crossing the Vistula. Further south the Russians had reached the Czechoslovak frontier and controlled the greater part of Transylvania. Sofia had been occupied but no Russian advance had yet been made into Yugoslavia.
Greece.

Broadly speaking, the enemy was withdrawing from certain islands but retaining troops in others. On the Greek mainland the greater part of the Peloponnesse had been evacuated, although the enemy were keeping a bridgehead at Corinth. It was estimated that there were some 7 German Divisions in Greece together with ancillary troops.

Pacific.

American forces had been landed successfully on Palau and Morotai.

China.

The recent Japanese advances endangered the American airfields at Kweilin.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

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Attacks by Rockets, Flying-Bombs and Long-Range Artillery.

Casualties and Damage.

2. **The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security** said that during the week 26 long-range rockets had been launched. These had resulted in 20 incidents in this country—14 in the London region, 4 in Essex and 2 in Sussex.

There had also been two phases of flying bomb activity. The first had been on Friday, when 13 flying bombs had operated, of which 6 had crossed the coast and 2 had reached London, 3 being destroyed by fighters. The second phase had been on Sunday evening, when 4 had operated, of which 3 had crossed the coast and 1 had reached London, 1 being destroyed by a fighter.

From the morning of the 12th up to the night of the 15th/16th September there had been repeated shelling of Dover, Folkestone, Deal and neighbouring districts. 143 shells had exploded on land.

The total number of civilian casualties sustained during the week were as follows:

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Total number of Civilian casualties ... 91 222 385

The most important incidents from long-range rockets had been one on Southgate which had resulted in 17 persons being killed, one in Bickley and one which had damaged Chrysler's Works at Richmond. The only serious incident from flying bombs had occurred at Barking, where extensive damage had been caused and the L.N.E.R. line temporarily blocked. There had also been considerable damage to property in Dover from shell fire.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of this statement.

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Attacks by Rockets.

Question of Publicity.

(Previous Reference: W.M.(44)122nd Conclusions, Minute 3.)

3. **The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security** reminded the War Cabinet that a week ago it had been decided that for the present the ban on publicity about attacks by long-range rockets should be maintained. He thought that the general view of the public, as ascertained by the Ministry of Information, was now in favour of continuance of the ban.

In discussion it was urged that a statement that a small number of long-range rockets had landed in this country would not convey any useful information to the enemy, and that it was a serious matter for the Government to suppress the publication of news. The War Cabinet were also informed that in other parts of the country exaggerated rumours were current as to the damage done by the rockets.
On the other hand, it was pointed out that the enemy had not yet stated that rocket attacks had been made against this country, and that any statement published in this country would no doubt be used to bring to the German people the encouragement they so much required. Again, if an announcement were made at the present time, it would not be possible to inform the public that warning could be given of impending attacks. Finally, if a public statement could be delayed for a further week, the position might well be changed by developments in the military situation.

The War Cabinet—

(1) Decided that the question of a public announcement about long-range rocket attack should be deferred for consideration at the meeting of the War Cabinet to be held on Monday, the 25th September;

(2) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to submit an appreciation of the prospects of the continuance of this form of attack, for consideration at that meeting.

4. The War Cabinet decided that the attacks by long-range rockets did not justify any change in the arrangement, already approved, that, when Parliament reassembled, the House of Commons should meet in the House of Lords Chamber in the Palace of Westminster.

5. The War Cabinet decided that there was now no objection to publication of the hours of sitting of Parliament. In this connection the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, as Leader of the House of Commons, undertook to bear in mind a suggestion that, so far as possible, the sittings of the House should not for the present be prolonged after dark.

6. The War Cabinet had a short discussion as to the business of the House, having regard to the desire for a debate on the war and international situation in the first week after the adjournment. The War Cabinet agreed that, subject to the usual consultation, the main business of the House in the first week should be as follows:

**Tuesday, 25th September**
- Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Bill : Conclusion of Second Reading, and Committee Stage of the Money Resolution.

**Wednesday, 27th September**
- Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Bill : Committee and Remaining Stages.
- Town and Country Planning (Money Resolution Committee Stage).

**Thursday, 28th September, and Friday, 29th September**
- Statement on the War and International Situation followed by a debate.

Note was taken of the importance of ensuring that the Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Bill was sent to the House of Lords as early as possible, bearing in mind that the House would also be called upon to deal with the Town and Country Planning Bill before the end of the session.
7. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs gave the War Cabinet a brief account of the main matters dealt with at the Quebec Conference.

At the conclusion of this account, The Deputy Prime Minister said that the outcome of this Conference was a matter of great satisfaction and the War Cabinet invited the Deputy Prime Minister to convey their warmest congratulations to the Prime Minister.

8. The Chancellor of the Exchequer informed the War Cabinet that it had been decided at the Quebec Conference to set up a Joint Anglo-American Committee to work out the principles agreed on by the Prime Minister and the President on the scope and scale of mutual lend-lease aid between the United States and the British Empire after the defeat of Germany and during the war with Japan.

The United States members of the Committee would be Mr. Morgenthau, Mr. Stettinius and Mr. Leo Crowley. After consulting the Minister of Production, he had proposed that the United Kingdom members should be himself, normally represented by Lord Keynes, with Mr. Brand as his alternate, the Minister Resident for Supply (with Sir Henry Self as his alternate) and Sir Ronald Campbell.

Lord Keynes would be willing to serve, but could not reach the United States before the first meeting of the Joint Committee, which had been fixed for the 20th September. In these circumstances it was proposed that the meeting on the 20th September should be on an informal basis, at which we should be represented by the Paymaster-General, the Minister Resident for Supply, Sir Ronald Campbell and Mr. Robert Brand. Thereafter the Committee should adjourn to a date at which Lord Keynes could attend.

These proposals had been embodied in a telegram which the Prime Minister had directed should be considered by Lord Halifax and the Paymaster-General. Subject to this, he hoped that the War Cabinet would approve the proposed membership.

The following points arose in discussion:

(a) The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs asked whether a visit by Lord Keynes might give undesirable publicity in the United States to the establishment of the Committee.

It was suggested that, if any objection could be raised on these grounds, Lord Halifax would take the point.

(b) The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs pointed out that some difficulties might arise with Dominion Governments in that, although the text of the agreement between the Prime Minister and the President referred to ‘lend-lease aid between the United States and the British Empire,’ they had not been consulted. He suggested that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should agree with him the terms of the telegrams which he proposed to send to the Dominion Governments informing them of the agreement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed to this suggestion, but explained the limited extent to which the Dominions which receive lend-lease are involved.

The War Cabinet—

(1) Expressed their agreement with the proposals of the Chancellor of the Exchequer with regard to the United Kingdom membership of the Joint Committee.

(2) Invited the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to settle the terms in which the Dominions receive lend-lease should be informed of the agreement.
9. The War Cabinet were given the latest information about the Polish situation. The discussion and conclusions reached are recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

10. The Secretary of State for War read to the War Cabinet a draft Press announcement about the Jewish Fighting Force which he had agreed with the Jewish Agency and which it was proposed to publish on the 20th September. A sentence in the original draft stating that all Jews, wherever they were resident, would be eligible to serve in the Force had been deleted. The statement would make it clear that the formation of the Jewish Fighting Force had been carried out at the instance of the Jewish Agency; that it was intended to despatch the Jewish Battalions of the Palestine Regiment, which would form the basis of the Infantry Brigade, to Italy at an early date; and to provide the necessary supporting and ancillary troops to complete the Brigade Group as soon thereafter as practicable.

The War Cabinet—

Approved the issue of a Press announcement in the terms agreed with the Jewish Agency.

11. The War Cabinet had before them a Joint Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Information (W.P. (44) 519) on the subject of the re-education of German prisoners of war.

It was proposed that the Political Warfare Executive, basing themselves on the experience gained in dealing with Italian prisoners in India and the United Kingdom, should undertake the task of re-educating the German prisoners of war who were now being retained in the United Kingdom, as well as the German prisoners now in the Middle East. If the Political Warfare Executive were to accept this responsibility, however, it was essential that the necessary facilities in the way of segregation of prisoners and the co-operation of the military authorities concerned should be secured.

The Secretary of State for War said that, although he was in full agreement with the policy proposed, he must warn the War Cabinet that, in view of large numbers of prisoners who now had to be dealt with, and the extent to which it had been necessary to send experienced staff abroad, the results achieved might be disappointing.

The Minister of Information pointed out that little or nothing had been done in the way of re-education among the German prisoners in Canada and the United States, although Canada was now taking some steps to improve conditions, and it was intended to inform the United States Government of our proposals in the hope that they might take similar steps.

The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security said that he would like to consider, in consultation with the Political Warfare Executive, whether anything could be done to re-educate Germans detained in the Isle of Man.

The War Cabinet—

(1) Agreed that the Political Warfare Executive should undertake the re-education of German prisoners of war and that all possible steps should be taken to facilitate their work.
(2) Took note that the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security would consult with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Information about the re-education of Germans detained in the Isle of Man.

12. The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs informed the War Cabinet that, without any prior consultation with His Majesty's Government, the United States Government had invited the Government of Eire to the Civil Aviation Conference which was to be held in the United States on the 1st November. It was proposed to hold inter-Imperial talks in Canada towards the end of October, in preparation for the Conference, and the question arose whether the Government of Eire should be invited to attend these talks. If the Government of Eire were not invited, they might be driven into the arms of the United States Government, and it had to be borne in mind that they held a key position in civil aviation. It could also be argued that the question of civil aviation was not directly connected with the war, and that sooner or later it would be necessary to bring the Government of Eire into Imperial consultations on post-war questions. For these reasons he felt that, despite the attitude which the Government of Eire had adopted during the war, it would, on balance, be desirable to invite them. If the War Cabinet agreed to this course, as a first step he proposed to consult the other Dominion Governments. This was all the more necessary seeing that the invitation would have to be issued by the Canadian Government.

The Secretary of State for Air supported the proposals to invite the Government of Eire to the preliminary talks. The support of the Eire Government would be valuable, both in connection with the reopening of air lines to the Continent and in connection with the general question of post-war air routes. In particular, it would be of great importance for our trans-Atlantic air routes to obtain the use of airfields in Eire. Another argument for the inclusion of the Eire Government was that before the outbreak of war proposals had been agreed between the Governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Newfoundland and Eire for a trans-Atlantic service, and these proposals would inevitably come up for discussion at the preliminary talks.

The Lord Privy Seal also supported the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. It was, however, equally important that Newfoundland should be represented both in the preliminary talks and at the International Conference.

The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security suggested that, if the Government of Eire were represented, it would be desirable that some representation should be given to the Government of Northern Ireland, who were particularly interested in obtaining a share in any post-war civil aviation developments.

There was general agreement that, as Eire had been invited to the main Conference, nothing would be gained by excluding her from the preliminary talks. The United States Government ought not, however, to have invited the Eire Government to attend the International Conference without prior consultation with His Majesty's Government, and it was felt that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should take up with the State Department the whole question of representation at the Conference, including the omission of Argentina. With regard to Newfoundland and Northern Ireland, there might be difficulties about giving them independent representation, but the matter should be examined. Thus it might be possible to arrange for advisers from Newfoundland and Northern Ireland to be attached to the United Kingdom delegation.
The War Cabinet—

(1) Invited the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to consult the Dominion Governments on the question whether the Government of Eire should be invited to the preliminary inter-Imperial talks. In doing so he should set out the arguments for and against this course as the matter presented itself to the War Cabinet.

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for Air to consult with the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security as to the representation of Newfoundland and Northern Ireland at the preliminary talks and at the Conference.

(3) Agreed that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should take up with the United States Government the general question of the issue of invitations to the International Conference.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
18th September, 1944.