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**SECRET.**

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W.M. (43)

115th Conclusions.

**WAR CABINET 115 (43).**

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, 16th August, 1943, at 5.30 P.M.*

**Present:**

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Deputy Prime Minister ( <i>in the Chair</i> ).	
The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Lord President of the Council.	The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.
The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTTELTON, M.P., Minister of Production.	The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HALIFAX, His Majesty's Ambassador to the United States of America.	

**The following were also present:**

The Right Hon. S. M. BRUCE, Representative of the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia.	The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Lord Privy Seal.	The Right Hon. L. S. AMERY, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma.
The Right Hon. A. V. ALEXANDER, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty.	The Right Hon. Sir JAMES GRIGG, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.	The Right Hon. Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS, K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production.
The Right Hon. LORD PORTAL, Minister of Works ( <i>Item 6</i> ).	Captain the Right Hon. H. F. C. CROOKSHANK, M.P., Postmaster-General ( <i>Item 5</i> ).
The Right Hon. LORD CHERWELL, Paymaster-General.	The Right Hon. RICHARD LAW, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
Mr. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Supply ( <i>Items 6 and 7</i> ).	The Right Hon. Sir ARTHUR SALTER, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of War Transport ( <i>Items 6 and 7</i> ).
Sir ORME SARGENT, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.	Air Marshal Sir DOUGLAS EVILL, Vice-Chief of the Air Staff ( <i>Items 1-6</i> ).
Vice-Admiral Sir NEVILLE SYFRET, Vice-Chief of Naval Staff ( <i>Items 1-6</i> ).	Lieutenant-General A. E. NYE, Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff ( <i>Items 1-6</i> ).

**Secretariat:**

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.  
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.  
Brigadier L. C. HOLLIS.  
Lieutenant-Colonel C. R. PRICE.

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**WAR CABINET 115 (43).**

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Naval, Military  
and Air  
Operations.

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (43) 118th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 1.)

Air Operations.  
Home Theatre.

1. Bomber Command had carried out more extensive operations during the previous week, the principal targets being Mannheim, Nuremberg, Milan on three nights and Turin. 5,890 tons of bombs had been dropped for a loss of 45 aircraft (1.9 per cent). Eight enemy fighters had been destroyed.

American heavy bombers had carried out a fairly successful raid on synthetic oil targets in the Ruhr. Twenty-five aircraft had been lost out of 325. Total American claims for the week were 39 enemy aircraft destroyed, 10 probable, 20 damaged.

Coastal Command had had a rather disappointing week, resulting in 5 sightings, 1 abortive attack and 9 aircraft lost, mainly as a result of increased enemy air activity over the Bay of Biscay.

Fighter Command claimed 21 enemy aircraft destroyed, 3 probable and 12 damaged for 10 fighters lost.

Mediterranean.

On the 13th August a strong force of Fortresses and medium bombers had again attacked railway yards and the Littorio airfield in Rome.

On the 13th August Liberators from North Africa had attacked the aircraft factory at Vienna/Neustadt, the total round trip being over 2,000 miles.

Allied air activity in support of the battle in Sicily had remained high and there had been an increased scale of enemy air activity, mainly against the Sicilian ports.

Naval  
Operations.

Shipping losses by enemy action during the previous week (including belated reports) amounted to 45,600 tons.

There had been few U-boat sightings in the North Atlantic, but the United States aircraft-carrier *Card* claimed 3 U-boats sunk during the week in the Azores area. A Liberator had sunk a U-boat off Freetown, but had been shot down by the submarine and the crew lost. U-boat activity continued in the Madagascar area.

Enemy aircraft had attacked a large convoy in the Bay of Biscay. One ship had been sunk and 2 damaged by near misses.

Other enemy aircraft had carried out a torpedo attack on a Mediterranean convoy near Gibraltar. Two ships had been torpedoed but had reached Gibraltar. The convoy claimed to have destroyed 7 enemy aircraft.

Mediterranean.

Our light craft had been active in the Messina Straits and were taking a toll of the enemy evacuation in difficult circumstances and in face of powerful coast defences.

Military  
Operations.  
Sicily.

The 8th and 7th Armies were closing in on Messina, and General Eisenhower expected to clear the tip within the next two or three days.

The German evacuation was in full swing. It was estimated that about 32,000 Germans and Italians had got across the Straits, which were covered by some 500 A.A. guns.

Estimates of casualties in the 8th Army up to the 10th August were nearly 2,000 killed, 8,000 wounded and 2,700 missing (excluding 1st Airborne Division, in which casualties were estimated to be about 1,000).

Russia.

The news from Russia continued satisfactory. There was as yet no confirmation of reported Russian attacks south of Lake Ladoga. A new offensive had been opened south-west of Viasma. There had been steady progress in the Bryansk sector. The Russians claimed to have repulsed strong German counter-attacks near Kharkov and were now 30 miles from Poltava.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

Italy.  
Treatment of  
Allied Prisoners  
of War in  
Italy.

2. The War Cabinet were informed of the latest position in regard to this matter. A record is contained in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.



**Italy.**

Declaration of  
Rome as an  
Open City.

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (43) 108th  
Conclusions.)

3. Reference was made to the declaration made by the Italian Government on the previous Saturday night declaring Rome an open city and stating that the Italian Government were taking the necessary steps according to International Law.

*The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* said that our present policy was, for the moment, to disregard this declaration and to await developments. This matter might well be discussed by the Prime Minister with President Roosevelt at the Quebec Conference.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of this statement.

**Air Raids.**

Casualties and  
Damage.

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (43) 97th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 4.)

4. *The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security* summarised the main events of the previous week. On the night of the 11th/12th August, when there had been a sharp attack in the Plymouth area, 20 persons had been killed and 79 had been seriously injured, while other incidents had taken place in the Bournemouth area.

On the previous night about 15 to 20 aircraft had operated against Portsmouth, where 23 persons had been killed and 70 injured. There had also been incidents at Brighton and at other places on the Sussex coast.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

**Expeditionary  
Force Messages.**

5. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum (W.P. (43) 356) by the Postmaster-General, as Deputy Chairman of the Imperial Communications Committee, reporting the measures now in hand to reduce the delays experienced in the transmission and delivery of Expeditionary Force messages. Given sufficient personnel to operate the service, it was hoped that messages would reach their destination in an average period of 4 days, except during the Christmas period. The Committee, however, could not ensure that the great volume of messages in the Christmas period was handled with reasonable speed.

The War Cabinet was accordingly asked—

- (a) to approve the principle of the suspension of the service during that period; and
- (b) to direct that the personnel required to operate a four-day service during the remainder of the year should be provided.

As regards (a), *the Postmaster-General* emphasised that the airgraph service—now greatly improved—would provide a service as speedy as the E.F.M., at considerably less cost.

On the other hand, the view was expressed that the complete suspension of the E.F.M. at Christmas was likely to be misunderstood and to give rise to discontent among the troops. *The Secretary of State for War* asked that the matter should be further examined. He suggested that the E.F.M. service should continue to be available for their original purpose of personal messages at Christmas time, but that means should be found to prevent the service being hopelessly overloaded by the sending of a very large number of greetings telegrams.

As regards (b), it was explained that the point at issue was the provision of adequate numbers of A.T.S. and W.A.A.F. to take over the work of coding and decoding addresses from the Censorship Department.



## The War Cabinet—

- (i) Asked that the question of suspending the E.F.M. service during the Christmas period should be further examined and a report made to them in a week's time.
- (ii) Agreed in principle that the necessary personnel should be made available to operate the service during the remainder of the year to a four-day standard.

**Blackout.**  
Relaxation in  
Industrial  
Establishments.

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (43) 96th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2.)

6. The War Cabinet had before them the Report (W.P. (43) 363) of the Committee appointed to consider what modifications could be made, in the light of present circumstances, in the lighting restrictions affecting industrial establishments.

*The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security* said that the Committee's general conclusion, in which all the Departments represented had concurred, was that it would not be practicable in existing circumstances to introduce any general relaxations, such as the shortening of the hours of the blackout, the removal of all blackout in industrial establishments, or the widespread substitution of removable for permanent blackout. At the same time, they considered that a number of steps could be taken which would, cumulatively, assist towards an increase in production. They recommended that the schemes put forward by the Supply Departments for the substitution of removable for permanent blackout in certain factories should be approved and the work put in hand as soon as possible; that other similar applications should be dealt with as quickly as the supply of labour and materials permitted; and that various detailed proposals (summarised in paragraph 4 of the Report) for raising the standard of exempted lighting should be pursued with the minimum of delay.

It was pointed out in the Report that the cost of substituting removable for permanent blackout would fall on the firms concerned; and it was suggested that, if this proved a serious obstacle, assistance might be provided under the Ministry of Supply Act. *The Chancellor of the Exchequer* undertook to consider this suggestion.

*The Minister of Production*, commenting on paragraph 2 of the Report, said that under the earlier arrangements schemes for substituting removable for permanent blackout in industrial establishments were considered by his Regional organisation only if the cost of the scheme exceeded £500. In view of the difficulty in obtaining materials, no such schemes had hitherto been handled by his Department; but since the commencement of the Committee's investigations, 59 such schemes had been brought forward by the Supply Departments and these would presumably now be submitted for consideration by the Regional organisation.

## The War Cabinet—

Endorsed the recommendations made in this Report.

**Man-Power.**

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (43) 102nd  
Conclusions,  
Minute 1.)

7. *The Minister of Production* recalled that the War Cabinet's Conclusions of the 22nd July required the Minister of Labour and National Service to ensure a net increase of 115,000 in the labour force working for the Ministry of Aircraft Production during the period 1st April to 31st December, 1943; and paragraph (14) of the conclusions specifically provided that the administrative arrangements made by the Minister of Labour and National Service to give effect to the War Cabinet's allocations of man-power should be such as to ensure that, if the supply up to the end of 1943 proved insufficient to meet all the approved requirements, the deficit should not fall on the Ministry of Aircraft Production.

In pursuance of these decisions, the Ministry of Labour and National Service had instructed their Regional Controllers that



in dealing with labour demands from the Supply Departments they should give an overriding preference to the Ministry of Aircraft Production. The Minister of Production said that he felt bound to raise two points in regard to these instructions: First, Ministry of Aircraft Production work was so defined as to exclude certain industries and processes which, though under the control of other Supply Departments, were vital to the production of aircraft. Secondly, the instructions contemplated that, unless all Ministry of Aircraft Production preference vacancies for a given month had been filled, no labour would be supplied for the preference vacancies of other Supply Departments.

The Minister said that this rigid interpretation of the War Cabinet's decisions would make it impossible for him to secure a proper balance between the various supply programmes, and its practical application was already producing results which would have a serious effect on the production programmes of the Admiralty and the Ministry of Supply.

*The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply* gave examples of the way in which these instructions would affect the work of his Department. For instance, they would have the result that wastage in factories on Ministry of Supply work was only made good in areas where the Ministry of Aircraft Production had no unsatisfied labour demands; and plans for transfer of capacity within the Ministry of Supply programme would be jeopardised by the possibility that the labour concerned would be transferred to Ministry of Aircraft Production work. The Ministry of Supply had been able to plan the previous reductions in their labour force in such a way as to cause the least disturbance to the programmes; and his Minister had been prepared to try to achieve the further reductions now demanded of him on a similarly planned basis. But dislocation of programmes would be inevitable if the reductions were determined wholly by the geographical distribution of the Ministry of Aircraft Production's labour needs.

*The Minister of Labour and National Service* said that throughout the discussions he had made it clear that the Directive proposed by the Prime Minister in W.P. (43) 319 and approved by the War Cabinet at their Meeting on the 22nd July, would involve an overriding preference for the labour demands of the Ministry of Aircraft Production. If in the instructions to his Regional Controllers the Ministry of Aircraft Production work had been defined too narrowly, there would be no difficulty in meeting that point by extending the definition. But this would not affect the question of principle which the Minister of Production had raised. If he was to ensure that no part of any deficit fell on the Ministry of Aircraft Production, he must give an overriding preference to the Ministry of Aircraft Production demands up to the limits of the War Cabinet's allocation, and he did not see how he could modify that part of his instructions unless he was relieved of his present obligation to ensure that no part of any deficit fell on the Ministry of Aircraft Production.

After further discussion the War Cabinet—

Invited the Lord President of the Council, in consultation with the Ministers of Production, Labour and National Service, and Aircraft Production, to consider and report to the War Cabinet on the points raised in discussion. In particular, they should consider whether (without reopening the man-power allocations made by the War Cabinet on the 22nd July) the instructions issued by the Minister of Labour and National Service to his Regional Controllers required amendment, and, if so, whether such amendment involved any modification of paragraph (14) of the War Cabinet's Conclusions of the 22nd July.



**Military  
Government of  
Occupied  
Territory.**

Appointment of  
Members of  
Parliament to  
"Amgot" staff.

8. *The Secretary of State for War* said that several Members of Parliament had asked whether they could be appointed to positions on the staff of "Amgot." If their applications were considered on their merits by the Selection Board, it was likely that the selection would not reflect the balance of political Parties in the House of Commons.

It was pointed out in discussion that a number of Members of Parliament might possess very suitable qualifications for these posts. The general view of the War Cabinet was, however, that it might be politically embarrassing if Members of Parliament were appointed to these posts. Furthermore, it was suggested that, although members of the "Amgot" staff were technically members of the Armed Forces, the appointments did not differ in substance from those to which the House of Commons Disqualification (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1941, applied; and that it would be inconsistent with the intention of that Act that a Member of Parliament who was not already in the Armed Forces should be commissioned for the specific purpose of working on the "Amgot" staff.

**The War Cabinet—**

Recorded no conclusion on the point, but invited the Secretary of State for War to consider the matter further in the light of the discussion, and in particular the suggestion that appointments of Members of Parliament to "Amgot" should be limited to the transfer of those already actively employed in the Armed Forces.

**Air Operations.  
Coastal  
Command.**

9. *The Minister of Aircraft Production* said that at the last Meeting of the Anti-U-Boat Warfare Committee he had been asked to draw the attention of the War Cabinet to the very fine way in which Coastal Command had carried out attacks on U-boats during the past month, and to the very satisfactory results which had been achieved.

**The War Cabinet—**

Asked the Secretary of State for Air to send a message on their behalf to the Commander-in-Chief, Coastal Command, conveying the congratulations of the War Cabinet on the achievements of the Command in the past month.

*Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,  
16th August, 1943.*











