CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, S.W. 1, on Wednesday, November 20, 1940, at 11-30 A.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HALIFAX, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. LORD BEAVERBROOK, Minister of Aircraft Production.
The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and Minister of National Service.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.
The Right Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.
The Right Hon. HUGH DALTON, M.P., Minister of Economic Warfare (Item 8).

General Sir JOHN DILL, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Secretariat:
SIR EDWARD BRIDGES.
Major-General SIR HASTINGS ISMAY.
Mr. W. D. WILKINSON.
Mr. L. F. BURGIS.
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1. A further discussion took place on the Memorandum (W.P. (G.) (40) 296) by the Chairman of the Production Council and the Economic Policy Committee on the Man Power requirements of the Services and of Industry.

The Minister of Aircraft Production said that he remained apprehensive as to the powers which appeared to be vested in the Ministry of Labour for the carrying out of the scheme recommended in the Memorandum. He referred in particular to paragraph 4 (e), (g) and (k).

The Prime Minister thought that the best plan would be for the Memorandum to be examined by the Committee of Ministers appointed on the previous day.

2. The Chief of the Air Staff reported that on the previous day about 150 enemy aircraft had been over this country, but little damage had been done. During the night about 400 German aircraft had been over, of which some 20/30 had attacked London, 60 had attacked Birmingham, where considerable damage had been done; and the rest had attacked various areas in the Midlands and East Anglia. One interception had been made, a four-engine Condor having been hit but not brought down.

The enemy had lost 5 aircraft, one by balloon barrage, 4 from causes unknown.

63 British bombers had been despatched to attack targets in Germany and the occupied countries, including Berlin, Lorient and the Skoda Works at Pilsen. 3 of our aircraft were missing.

The Prime Minister stressed the importance of conserving our bomber resources in present circumstances. The right course was, he thought, to combine heavy blows at particular objectives with attacks on a number of targets, thus interfering with production over wide-spread areas of Germany.

10 Gladiators had arrived in Greece on the 18th November. They had already been in action and had destroyed 10 Italian aircraft for certain and 2 probably. We had lost no machines, but one pilot had been hit.

The First Sea Lord gave the following information:

- H.M.S. Campbell had sunk an E-boat off Southwold on the 20th November.
- 3 destroyers of the Home Fleet had left to attack German fishing vessels north of Aalesund.
- Alexandria had been attacked three times from the air on the 13th, 16th and 17th November. Slight damage had been caused, and the floating dock would be out of commission for a short time for repair.
- The French Motor Vessel Ville de Tamatave had been sighted by coastal aircraft 187 miles South of Cape Point. Two of H.M. Ships had proceeded to intercept her.
- During the last few days U-boat attacks on trade had taken place off the west coast of Africa, south of Freetown, and 4 vessels of 20,000 tons in all had been sunk. U-boat activity had thus extended to a new and important area, through which many of our military convoys had to pass. It was believed that only one U-boat was operating in this area.
- The First Sea Lord described the measures which were being taken to deal with this new menace.

The Prime Minister said that he had it in mind to make a further appeal to President Roosevelt in which he would point out the additional strain involved on our resources, and would ask whether the United States could spare us some more destroyers.
Military Operations. Middle East. Italy-Greece.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that Siwa had been bombed. The South Aerodrome had been put temporarily out of action.

Koritsa Sector.—Operations had slowed down and the position was unchanged.

Pindus Sector.—The Greeks had attacked Borova and Ersek and withdrawn after setting fire to the towns.

Epirus Sector.—The Greeks had established a bridgehead near Vrysoula (near the junction of the Kalamas and Mpania rivers).

General.—The Greek Command was much concerned by Italian air attacks on forward troops, who, however, were holding their positions and making night attacks. An advance into Albania was hardly practicable until the enemy air attacks had been countered.

The Prime Minister said that we were not in a position to increase our air reinforcements.

A report had been received that the German 22nd Division was now in Roumania. This Division, during the operations in Holland, had consisted of air-landing troops.

Reports had been received that German Air Force personnel had been seen in Bulgaria.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

3. The First Sea Lord reported that orders had now been given to His Majesty's Ships to undertake contraband control operations against French-escorted convoys in the Straits during the next two days, if suitable opportunities presented themselves. After the 22nd November our vessels would be otherwise engaged.

The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

Blockade Policy.

France.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 201st Conclusions, Minute 4.)

Air Raids.

Casualties and damage.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 201st Conclusions, Minute 6.)

4. The Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security said that during the previous day very little damage had been done. On the previous night, however, there had been heavy attacks on the Midlands. Birmingham had been the principal objective and considerable damage had been done to communications. Regional Headquarters had had to be evacuated owing to an unexploded bomb. The information available was thus rather scanty, but it seemed that the raid, although a bad one, had not been so serious as that on Coventry. Some 200 houses had been damaged, 30 small factories and a number of shops. About 370 people had been injured. The number of killed was not yet known. Leicester had also been attacked and a number of fires started.

The Minister of Aircraft Production gave some details of the damage done to factories in the Birmingham area.

The casualties for the past 24 hours had been as follows:—

London: 11 killed, 50 injured.

Elsewhere (excluding Birmingham): 25 killed, 197 injured.

The Minister of Labour said that he was proposing in the near future to visit Coventry in order to address the workers in certain factories. If these visits which he made were announced beforehand, it created a certain nervousness in the factories, and he would be grateful to the Minister of Information if he could take steps to ensure that such visits did not receive any publicity in the Press until some days after they had taken place.

The Minister of Information undertook to take steps to meet the Minister of Labour's request.
The Minister of Labour added that, if the Secretary of State for Air could arrange for a few fighter aircraft to patrol over towns which had been bombed, he thought that it would do something to restore confidence.

The Secretary of State for Air undertook to examine this suggestion.

5. The Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet of the progress made in regard to the development of new methods of defence against night attack by aircraft.

6. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs gave the War Cabinet the following information:—

Sir Miles Lampson had had a very satisfactory first interview with Hussein Sirri, the new Prime Minister of Egypt. (Telegram No. 1548 from Cairo.)

A telegram had been received from Brazzaville (No. 41) giving the text of a long proclamation by General de Gaulle, which had been broadcast on the 17th November. It was perhaps all to the good that the General was now returning to this country.

The Foreign Secretary said that he had raised with the Prime Minister the question whether General Catroux should also be asked to come to this country.

The Foreign Secretary said that on the previous day he had seen the Belgian Minister for the Colonies, who had informed him that, as the result of the operation of Italian aircraft from Belgian territory, the Belgian Government had decided to regard the Italian Government as having committed an act of hostility against them. There would be no formal declaration of war, but there would, in fact, be a state of war between the two countries. Steps would be taken to round up Italians in the Belgian Congo.

The War Cabinet took note of these statements.

7. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that a consignment of German munitions, mainly artillery, to Brazil had been awaiting shipment in Lisbon. The Brazil Government attached great importance to obtaining these munitions; but it would, of course, be a breach in the blockade to allow them to pass. Further, to make a concession in this case would involve us in great difficulties with Japan.

The Brazil Government had now ordered the ship with these goods on board to leave Lisbon (Telegram No. 325 from Rio). Although the seizure of the ship would undoubtedly lead to embarrassments for us in South America, and perhaps also in the United States, he had decided that it was impossible to make a concession in this case. Instructions had therefore been given to the Admiralty that the ship should be intercepted.

The War Cabinet approved the action taken.
8. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum on Propaganda Policy to which were prefixed covering notes by—

(a) The Minister of Information and the Minister of Economic Warfare.
(b) The Chiefs of Staff (W.P. (40) 444).

Discussion turned mainly on sub-paragraphs (f) to (j) of paragraph 5.

Formulation of War Aims (Paragraph 5 (j)).—It was suggested that in any attempt to formulate war aims at this juncture it would be difficult to steer a middle course between a statement which was so general as to be platitudinous and one which, by making too specific undertakings, led to embarrassment. Further, our military position did not at present justify us in launching ambitious schemes for a post-war settlement.

On the other hand, it was urgent that we should sketch out some alternative to Hitler's scheme for Europe under German rule. Reference was made to reports from Berne that European business circles were coming to accept as almost inevitable the idea that Europe would be dominated economically and financially by Germany. It was suggested that Mr. Maynard Keynes might be invited to provide material to rebut Germany's economic and financial propaganda.

Again, if no statement was made on behalf of this country before the end of 1940, President Roosevelt might take the initiative in his Inaugural Speech in January 1941, and it would then be difficult for us to differ openly from that statement. The general feeling was that there was much to be said for some general statement of the essential fundamentals of our thought, which could be so expressed as to have a wide appeal in this country and elsewhere.

Social and Economic Reconstruction (Paragraph 5 (g) and (h)).—The general view was that, in present circumstances, too much emphasis should not be put on the point.

Discussion followed as to the reference in paragraph 5 (j) to a "fair deal" for our enemies in a British peace. While, when the time came, we should aim at a "fair deal," any emphasis on this at the present moment was likely to be resented by public opinion in this country.

It was explained that the reference in the same sub-paragraph to the setting aside of food stocks for future European relief followed on a statement made by the Prime Minister in August, after discussion in the War Cabinet. Clearly, however, in present circumstances no specific commitment was involved in the general statement made in this sub-paragraph.

Propaganda in the Middle East.—The Secretary of State for War drew attention to the great differences between the Middle East and this country for propaganda purposes, and the need to adapt our propaganda accordingly. He doubted whether this was done sufficiently at the present time. The authorities in the Middle East strongly deprecated reproducing German and Italian messages in our broadcast statements. A recent example was the quotation of a statement that German troops were in Libya. This statement, which was untrue, had been put out deliberately by the enemy with a view to creating alarm. The Secretary of State undertook to communicate to the Minister of Information certain suggestions which he had gathered in the course of his visit to the Middle East.

Machinery for co-ordinating propaganda policy.—Doubt was expressed whether the present machinery for co-ordinating propaganda policy was adequate. The general view of the War Cabinet was that the present machinery should be continued for the time being.
The War Cabinet:—

(1) Gave general approval to the Memorandum on Propaganda Policy, in the light of the discussion in the War Cabinet recorded above.

(2) Invited the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister of Information, in consultation, to consider the suggestion that Mr. Maynard Keynes should be invited to provide material to rebut Germany's economic and financial propaganda.

(3) Took note that the Secretary of State for War would communicate to the Minister of Information certain suggestions bearing on our propaganda in the Middle East.

9. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War about the use of the internment camp in Newfoundland (W.P. (40) 449). The Canada–United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence had expressed grave concern that 1,000 German airmen prisoners should be located in a camp only 5 miles inland from Conception Bay. The Secretary of State for War accordingly asked:—

(1) That the Newfoundland Government should be asked to complete the camp at a cost of £10,000, in addition to the two sums of £20,000 already spent on it; and

(2) That, when completed, the camp should be used for interned enemy merchant seamen transferred from Canada, provided the Permanent Joint Defence Board raised no objection, but not for other civil internees.

The War Cabinet approved these proposals.

Richmond Terrace, S.W. 1,
November 20, 1940.