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W.M. (41)

132nd Conclusions.

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WAR CABINET 132 (41).

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Saturday, December 20, 1941, at 11 A.M.*

## Present :

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Lord Privy Seal ( <i>in the Chair</i> ).	
The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Lord President of the Council.	The Right Hon. A. GREENWOOD, M.P., Minister without Portfolio.
The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.	The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.

## The following were also present :

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

The Right Hon. A. V. ALEXANDER, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty.	Captain the Right Hon. H. D. MARGESSON, 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 ANDREW DUNCAN, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.
The Right Hon. J. T. C. MOORE-BRABAZON, M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production.	The Right Hon. LORD LEATHERS, Minister of War Transport.
The Right Hon. LORD WOOLTON, Minister of Food.	Sir ORME SARGENT, Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office.

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES, *Secretary.*

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**Allied  
Co-ordination.**  
(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (41) 128th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 6.)

1. The War Cabinet had before them—

- (1) A factual Memorandum as to the stage reached in Inter-Allied Co-ordination at the time of the outbreak of war with Japan (W.P. (41) 302).
- (2) A draft telegram to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington, prepared at an Inter-Departmental Meeting (W.P. (41) 303).

The War Cabinet approved the factual statement and gave directions that copies of it should be forwarded to Washington.

The War Cabinet went through the draft telegram to Washington paragraph by paragraph, and made the following comments:—

*Paragraph 2: Higher Direction in Allied War Effort.*

The substance was approved, but this paragraph should be put more shortly.

*Position of the Dominions.*

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* said that the Dominions would almost certainly claim to be brought into the picture rather more fully in the future than in the past. He thought that what they really required was some prior inner knowledge of the discussions which led to important decisions being taken. He thought that the position might be met if the Dominions were to be represented in London by military officers on a higher level than at present, who could, on occasion, be brought into direct consultation with the Chiefs of Staff.

*The Lord Privy Seal*, summing up the discussion, said that he thought a separate paragraph should be added to the draft dealing with the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Dominions. This paragraph should indicate that, so far as possible, co-ordination with the different countries of the Empire should be effected here, and that this might involve some form of representation at a higher level than at the present time. There might also be occasions on which it would be appropriate that one or more of the Dominions should have representation on bodies set up to deal with regional or specific questions.

It was agreed that a new paragraph should be added on these lines.

Reference was also made to the position of India.

*The Minister of Labour and National Service* enquired whether representatives of India could not be brought more fully into consultation.

In this connection it was suggested that consideration should be given to the question of a representative of India being added to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's War Council in Singapore.

It was agreed that the Secretary of State for India should be consulted in regard to this point.

*Paragraph 3.*

The War Cabinet were informed that the Chiefs of Staff considered that the system of areas of strategic responsibility, arbitrarily laid down on a geographical basis, was dangerous and wrong. Thus, for example, the areas worked out in A.B.C. 1 would preclude a United States offensive against Japan. The strategy of the war must be looked at as a whole, and the predominant rôle in a series of operations allocated in accordance with the general strategic situation and the resources of the Allies.

*Paragraph 4.*

The need was emphasised for all the American Missions in London and all the British Missions in Washington to be under the direction of a single head who could speak with authority on behalf of his Government. The exact status of this individual would require careful examination, more particularly in his relationship to the Embassy. What was required was someone corresponding to an Agent-General, of Ministerial standing if not status, and responsible to his Government as a whole.

It was agreed that a new paragraph on these lines should be inserted after paragraph 4.

*Paragraph 5.*

*The Minister of War Transport* said that the United States had recently set up a strategic Shipping Board, with representatives on a high level. This country could usefully be associated with this Board. But we also required to have a United States representative accredited to this country on a far higher level than at the present time.

*Paragraph 6.*

*The Minister of Food* referred to the supply of food to Russia. Hitherto he had not taken steps to make any arrangement to co-ordinate purchases and supplies of food between this country and the U.S.S.R. He thought that, if we were to do so, we might find that we had assumed responsibility not only for the supply of food to Russia, but for payment for the purchases made. He thought that, on the whole, the best plan was to leave matters as they stood for the present, without making any arrangements for co-ordinating Russian food requirements from the British Empire.

Agreement was expressed with this view.

*Paragraph 7.*

There was general agreement that the tendency would be for the co-ordination of production programmes to be centred, in due course, in Washington. Some better phrase should be found for "co-ordination of production programmes," the essential meaning being to settle what munitions should be made in which countries.

The allocation of production was, however, a matter which must be determined on broad strategic grounds, and we should not commit ourselves to the view that this should take place in Washington. The paragraph should be redrafted accordingly.

*U.S.S.R.*

A new paragraph should be added dealing with the position of the U.S.S.R. in regard to inter-Allied co-operation.

*The War Cabinet—*

Agreed that the telegram should be redrafted in the light of the discussion and submitted to the Lord Privy Seal, who was authorised to despatch it without further reference to the War Cabinet.

2. The War Cabinet were given the latest information about the military situation.

The pursuit of the enemy in Libya was proceeding satisfactorily.

We had received no report from Hong Kong since early on the preceding morning, and the Japanese claim to have captured the island might well be true.

Any public statements made, if and when the fall of Hong Kong was confirmed, would require careful handling, particularly in the light of what had been said at the time when Canada's offer to send Canadian Battalions to the fortress had been accepted.

Attention was drawn to the various rumours which were circulating as to lack of equipment or defensive preparations at Singapore.

The War Cabinet agreed that steps should be taken to enquire into these allegations as quickly as possible.

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**Timor.**

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (41) 131st  
Conclusions,  
Minute 5.)

3. *The Lord President of the Council* said that the full text of Dr. Salazar's speech had not yet been received, but it seemed that he had made a vigorous protest, which he had followed up with a demand that we should withdraw our forces. This, of course, we should be ready to do if the Portuguese were able to provide adequate defence themselves, which, unfortunately, was not the case. Altogether, the position did not appear to be too unfavourable.

The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

*Great George Street, S.W. 1,  
December 20, 1941.*

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