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- MOST SECRET -

W.M. (41) 133rd CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 3.

Confidential Annex.

(22nd December, 1941, 5.0 p.m.)

THE FAR EAST.

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Military  
Situation.

The War Cabinet were given information as to the action now in train, after consideration by the Chiefs of Staff and the Defence Committee (Operations), as to the despatch of reinforcements to the Far East. The main points were as follows:-

(D.O.(41) 73rd  
Meeting. Also  
C.O.S.(41)  
280 (0) Revise.)

One brigade group was leaving India for Malaya immediately, and a second, with a squadron of light tanks, was leaving very early in January.

In addition, A.A. and anti-tank reinforcements, in a convoy now at Durban, were being diverted to Malaya. The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, had been instructed to send 50 light tanks to India.

12 Blenheims from the Middle East were already en route to Singapore.

50 Hudsons would leave this country as soon as they had been modified and fitted with long-range tanks. The first should arrive within three weeks.

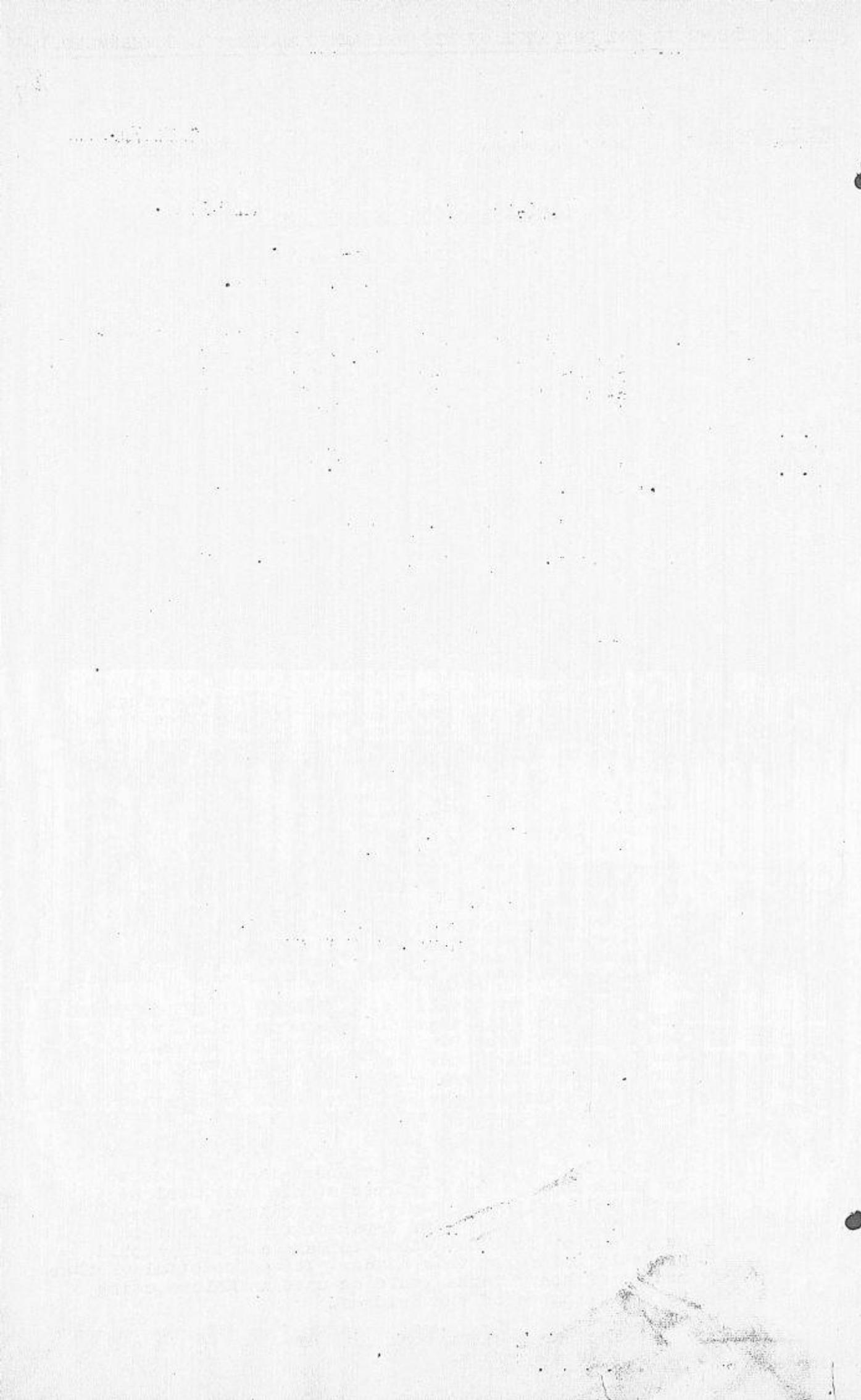
One medium bomber squadron was being sent from the Middle East to the Far East at once; the Chiefs of Staff had recommended that the question of sending five additional medium bomber squadrons from the Middle East to the Far East should be reviewed in a fortnight's time, in the light of developments in the Mediterranean theatre.

Instructions had been sent to the Middle East to fit with additional equipment and to pack up 32 Kittihawk aircraft at Port Sudan, for shipment to India or Singapore, as soon as it was known that this type was free from technical troubles.

"In reply to questions, THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF said that our forces in Malaya were the equivalent of four Divisions. The Commander-in-Chief was in a difficult tactical situation, owing to the length of the Malayan coastline. So long as fine weather continued, the Japanese could constantly out-flank him by new landings in his rear. Heavy seas were to be expected in January, as a result of which this particular difficulty ought to be largely removed. The Commander-in-Chief planned to delay the Japanese advance, not giving ground unless forced, subject to the condition that his fighting formations must not be broken up. He intended gradually to concentrate the 3rd Indian Corps, bringing back detachments from the North-East and East to a position half-way up the Malayan Peninsula, where they could still deny the approaches from those directions. The Japanese were thought to have four or five Divisions in Malaya, but they could probably reinforce this number. It was doubtful whether medium or heavy tanks could be used in Malaya, owing to the weakness of the bridges. The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

at George Street, S.W.1.

f Blenheim.



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END

W.M. (41) 133rd CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 8.

Confidential Annex.

(22nd December, 1941, 5.0 p.m.)

U.S.S.R.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL said that a

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M.(41) 131st  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2.)

telegram had been received that morning from the Foreign Secretary, saying that at a further meeting with M. Stalin on Friday evening it had been agreed to postpone the negotiation of actual Agreements (No. 33 HECTIC). M. Stalin had proposed the issue, in their place, of a full Communiqué, to which the Foreign Secretary had agreed. The meeting had been cordial, and was followed by a banquet which had lasted until 5 a.m. It seemed, therefore, that no ill effects had followed from the firm line which the War Cabinet, at their Meeting on Friday morning, had asked the Foreign Secretary to take.

The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

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Great George Street, S.W.1.