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W.M. (42)

61st Conclusions.

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WAR CABINET 61 (42).

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, May 11, 1942, at 5.30 P.M.*

Present :

The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister ( <i>in the Chair</i> ).	
The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.	The Right Hon. Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS, K.C., M.P., Lord Privy Seal.
The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Lord President of the Council.	The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTELTON, M.P., Minister of Production.	The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.

The following were also present :

Dr. H. V. EVATT, K.C., Special Envoy from the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, 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. L. S. AMERY, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma.	The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Secretary of State for the Colonies.
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. BRENDAN BRACKEN, M.P., Minister of Information.
Admiral of the Fleet Sir DUDLEY POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff.	Air Chief Marshal Sir CHARLES F. A. PORTAL, Chief of the Air Staff.

General Sir ALAN BROOKE, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Secretariat :

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.  
Major-General Sir HASTINGS ISMAY.  
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.

WAR CABINET 61 (42).

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**Naval, Military  
and Air  
Operations.**

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (42) 56th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2.)  
Air Operations.  
Home Theatre.

1. The Chiefs of Staff reported the principal events of the past week.

Bomber Command had flown 760 sorties, their principal targets by night being Hamburg, Stuttgart and Warnemunde. Results had been less good than in recent weeks, mainly owing to poor visibility; and in the attack on Warnemunde our losses had been substantial because of an unexpectedly heavy concentration of defences. We must now be prepared for a heavier scale of defence at aircraft factories.

Experience of Fighter Command suggested that the enemy was less inclined to put up a strong defence against daylight attacks by light bombers.

Of 117 enemy raiders which had crossed the coast during the week, we had destroyed 12, night fighters accounting for 7.

**Malta.**

Of 64 Spitfires flown off carriers, 59 had landed safely in Malta. Enemy losses over Malta during the week had been 30 aircraft destroyed, 25 probably destroyed and 40 damaged, for the loss of 10 destroyed and 14 damaged.

Naval  
Operations.  
Shipping Losses.

Allied shipping losses for the week were 40 ships totalling 210,000 tons, of which about a quarter were under British control. Twenty-three ships had been lost off the American coast.

*The Prime Minister* undertook to make representations to Mr. Hopkins regarding the heavy losses of American shipping in this area.

Supplies to  
Russia.  
(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (42) 58th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 3.)

The War Cabinet were informed that there were indications that our difficulties in protecting convoys to Russia were likely to increase. *The Prime Minister* said that he had telegraphed to Premier Stalin emphasising the heavy risks involved in maintaining these supplies.

**Pacific.**

The War Cabinet were given the latest information regarding the action in the Coral Sea. A Japanese expedition, comprising naval forces and transports believed to be carrying about one division, had been intercepted by American and Australian forces—the attack on both sides being carried out by aircraft. Of the Japanese force, one (light) aircraft-carrier and one heavy cruiser had been sunk and one (heavy) aircraft-carrier and one cruiser damaged. Apart from those sunk with the carriers, 37 Japanese aircraft had been destroyed, 8 probably destroyed and 18 damaged, for the loss of 13 destroyed and 4 damaged. The expedition was believed to have turned northwards.

Full particulars of Allied naval losses were not yet available, but it seemed clear that the results of the action had been greatly in our favour.

Military  
Operations.  
Russia.

There had been no major developments on the Russian front, but a German attack launched in the Crimea on the 8th May might be the prelude to an offensive in the south. It had been thought that the main drive would be in that sector, and there were some indications of troop movements to the south.

The War Cabinet took note of these statements.

**Malta.**  
(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (42) 58th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 4.)

2. Reference was made to telegram No. 184 from the Governor, dated the 10th May, as to his powers *vis-à-vis* the Service Commanders in Malta.

In discussion, the view was expressed that it might be necessary that the Governor should have somewhat wider powers in regard to the Service Commanders than those set out in the telegram sent

to him on the 7th May (No. 230) from the Colonial Office. The War Cabinet agreed, however, that further consideration of this matter should be deferred pending the reply to a telegram which had been sent to Lord Gort by the Chiefs of Staff.

**Madagascar.**

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (42) 57th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 3.)

3. The War Cabinet were given an account of the operations for the capture of Diego Suarez. The importance of propaganda, in order to win over the inhabitants of the island, was emphasised.

*The Foreign Secretary* said that he had had a discussion with Free French representatives that morning. He had not held out any hopes that it would be possible to give them any share in the administration, but he adhered to the view (which had already been accepted by the War Cabinet) that this would be necessary at some appropriate stage, subject to the usual safeguards. It was important to do what we could to build up the Free French movement. The Free French representatives in London were much distressed at the attitude which the United States authorities were adopting in regard to Martinique, where they were negotiating with the Vichy authorities.

The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

**Foreign Affairs.**

Peace Rumours.

4. *The Foreign Secretary* referred to rumours, which were current in two or three capitals, about the possibility of starting peace negotiations. So far as Ankara was concerned, it was fairly clear that these rumours indicated fear of Russia. He had repeated the instructions already given to our Missions abroad that all these rumours should be completely ignored. Otherwise there was a risk that suspicion might be sown in the minds of our Russian Allies.

The War Cabinet approved this attitude.

**Vichy France.**

*The Foreign Secretary* said that the Germans were not being helpful to Laval, who was having a difficult time. The Italian Government were again pressing their claims against France. Laval's difficulties might be responsible, in part, for the relatively slight reaction in Vichy France against our action in Madagascar.

The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

*Great George Street, S.W. 1,  
May 11, 1942.*



