CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, May 18, 1942, at 5:30 P.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.
The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Lord President of the Council.
The Right Hon. OLIVER Lyttelton, M.P., Minister of Production.

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. L. S. AMERY, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma.
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.

The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Secretary of State for the Colonies.
The Right Hon. Sir JAMES GRIGG, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. LORD LEATHERS, Minister of War Transport (Items 2 and 3).
The Hon. Sir ALEXANDER CADOGAN, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
Air Chief Marshal Sir CHARLES F. A. PORTAL, Chief of the Air Staff.

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

Secretariat.
Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Major-General Sir HASTINGS ISMAY.
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.
**WAR CABINET 64 (42).**

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

In the home theatre air operations had been limited by bad weather. Coastal Command had borne the brunt of the week's work, their main operation having been an attack on the Prinz Eugen on the 17th May. Preliminary reports indicated that probably 2, and possibly 4, hits had been scored.

At Malta the enemy had changed his tactics and was now attacking mainly with fighters, with a view to wearing down our resistance. In the week's fighting we had destroyed 46 enemy aircraft, probably destroyed 22 and damaged 46, for a total loss of 10 destroyed and 17 damaged (including losses on the ground).

In Egypt we had intercepted a convoy of between 14 and 20 troop-carrying aircraft. More than half had been destroyed, and most of the remainder had been damaged.

Allied shipping losses for the week totalled 202,000 tons. Most of these ships had been lost in the West Atlantic.

The Americans had now begun to operate their convoy system off the centre section of their eastern seaboard. The position in the Caribbean continued to be unsatisfactory, but there was some prospect that the convoy system might now come into operation there earlier than anticipated.

In Burma our forces were now withdrawing over the border into Assam. It was estimated that General Alexander still had under his command from 6,000 to 8,000 British troops and from 25,000 to 30,000 Indian troops.

Preliminary reports indicated that there might be some lack of discipline among the remnants of two Chinese divisions which were moving back into Assam with our troops.

The Prime Minister asked that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be consulted before authority was given for these Chinese troops to be disarmed on arrival in India.

The War Cabinet were given the latest information regarding the progress of the German offensive in the Kerch Peninsula and the Russian drive on Kharkov.

The German move in the Crimea was not the opening stage of a major offensive. There were still no signs of any troop movements pointing to a large-scale German offensive, and it was thought that such an offensive was unlikely to begin before mid-June.

The War Cabinet took note of these statements.

2. The War Cabinet had a discussion on this subject, which is recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

3. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (W.P. (42) 201) suggesting the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief to ensure co-ordinated control over the whole field of defence services, military and civil, in West Africa. The appointment would be analogous to that of
Admiral Layton in Ceylon. It was suggested that the Commander-in-Chief, though he might be a high officer of one of the Fighting Services, should not exercise operational control over the Services.

The need for greater co-ordination in this area was accepted. Discussion followed as to whether the situation called for the appointment of a civilian or a serving officer. The conclusion reached was that general co-ordinating functions should be exercised by a single authority, whose position would be somewhat analogous to that of the Minister of State in Cairo; and that arrangements should also be made for unified command of all the Fighting Services in this area.

The War Cabinet’s conclusions were as follows:

1. An appointment should be made in West Africa somewhat on the lines of the Minister of State in the Middle East. Broadly, the functions of the holder of this post would be to ensure the effective co-operation of all Services, Civil and Military, in West Africa.

2. A draft Directive for this appointment should be prepared and submitted to the Prime Minister.

3. In connection with the preparation of this draft, further consideration should be given to the question whether any alteration was called for in the powers of the Naval, Military and Air Commanders in West Africa.

4. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Information (W.P. (42) 206) emphasising the importance, from the point of view of public opinion amongst the United Nations and in friendly neutral countries, of the Minister of Information being fully informed in regard to Military operations, as provided for in W.P. (41) 149. In particular, the Minister urged, in the light of recent experience in regard to Madagascar, that the Service Departments should be directed to impart to senior officials in the Ministry of Information, at the appropriate stage, information in regard to impending operations.

After a short discussion, the War Cabinet agreed as follows:

1. It should be laid down as the recognised procedure and brought to the notice of all concerned that, when bodies of troops left this country to engage in operations, they should include a small unit properly equipped for obtaining a record of those operations.

2. The personnel of this unit would normally be composed of persons under military discipline and trained for these duties. Specially nominated officials of the Ministry of Information should, however, be consulted on such occasions in order to ensure that the unit despatched was appropriate for the purpose.

3. It should also be laid down that the accounts recorded and the photographs taken on these occasions were to be made available to all organs of the Press. (In this connection the procedure adopted in the expedition to Madagascar, when a representative of a single newspaper had been taken on board at Durban and accorded special facilities, was open to strong objection. It should be made clear to all concerned that this procedure must on no account be repeated.)
5. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Information (W.P. (42) 208) covering a paper by Mr. H. B. Butler, the new Director-General of the British Information Service in the United States, stating that British prestige in the United States had declined, largely owing to our failure to put the facts of our war effort before the American public. He suggested that the interests of security had overridden those of propaganda and good Anglo-American relations, and mentioned various branches of the war effort about which more information could be made publicly available without giving aid to the enemy.

In discussion, the Minister of Labour and National Service said that in a forthcoming debate in the House of Commons on the Essential Work Order he would like to mention the fact that there were nearly 22 million people between the ages of 14 and 64 now occupied in the Armed Forces, Civil Defence, Industry and Services.

There was general agreement with the views put forward in the paper, but there would have to be some scrutiny to determine exactly how much could safely be published.

The War Cabinet—

Invited the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to examine the Memorandum in consultation with the Minister of Production, the Minister of Information and other Ministers concerned, in order to determine what information could be made public, on the lines proposed in this Memorandum (W.P. (42) 208), and to report to the War Cabinet.

6. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (W.P. (42) 209) about illegal immigration into Palestine.

The Memorandum stated that since the matter had last been discussed by the War Cabinet there had been constant pressure by Zionists in this country and the United States and by their sympathisers in Parliament for a declaration by His Majesty's Government of their intentions not only in regard to the treatment of future refugees, but also as regards the fate of the passengers of the Darien, who had been in a detention camp for over a year. There were signs of a revival of the traffic, and within recent weeks three small vessels with parties of refugees had reached Istanbul.

The situation which had arisen called for new decisions.

The following points were made in discussion:

(i) The Foreign Secretary said that he was prepared to acquiesce in the line of action proposed by the Colonial Secretary in his Memorandum provided that the situation would be reviewed if and when the total number of immigrants (legal and illegal) admitted to Palestine reached the quotas set out in the White Paper. This was agreed to.

(ii) What was to be done to the 20 or 30 illegal immigrants who had now reached Turkey? The view was expressed that, on the whole, the least objectionable course would be to give them visas to Cyprus, on the understanding that, if and when a decision was reached to remove all refugees from Cyprus, these 20 or 30 people would have to be removed at the same time.

The War Cabinet's Conclusions were as follows:

(1) In pursuance of the existing policy of taking all practicable steps to discourage illegal immigration into Palestine, no steps whatever should be taken to facilitate the arrival of Jewish 'refugees' in Palestine.
Major-General
Sir A.
Cunningham.

Question of
further
Employment.
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 31st
Conclusions,
Minute 3.)

7. The War-Cabinet were informed that Major-General Cunningham had asked whether he might be definitely informed whether there was any prospect of his being further employed.

It was urged that this Officer was entitled to be informed whether he was likely to secure further employment.

A final decision on this matter was deferred.

Great George Street, S.W. 1,
May 18, 1942.