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W.M. (42)

83rd Conclusions.

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WAR CABINET 83 (42).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, June 29, 1942, at 5.30 P.M.

Present :

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister (*in the Chair*).

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 LYTTETON, M.P., Minister of Production.

The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.

The following were also present :

The Right Hon. S. M. BRUCE, Accredited Representative of 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. HUGH DALTON, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (*Item 8*).

The Right Hon. LORD LEATHERS, Minister of War Transport (*Item 8*).

The Right Hon. LORD WOOLTON, Minister of Food (*Item 8*).

The Right Hon. BRENDAN BRACKEN, M.P., Minister of Information.

The Right Hon. Sir WILLIAM JOWITT, K.C., M.P., Paymaster-General (*Item 8*).

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.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir DUDLEY
POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of
Naval Staff.

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

Secretariat:

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

WAR CABINET 83 (42).

CONTENTS.

| <i>Minute No.</i> | <i>Subject.</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|-----------------------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Naval, Military and Air Operations.... Air operations: Home Theatre. Malta. Libya. Naval operations. Military operations: Russia. Libya. | 105 |
| 2 | France Relations with Vichy Government. French Fleet at Alexandria. | 105 |
| 3 | Air Raids Casualties and damage. | 106 |
| 4 | Foreign Affairs Interviews with distinguished foreigners. Proposed visit to this country by our Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. Imperial Policy Group. | 106 |
| 5 | The Baltic States Status of Representatives in this country. | 106 |
| 6 | Middle East Evacuation of Civilian Personnel. | 106 |
| 7 | Malta Evacuation of families of Service Personnel. | 107 |
| 8 | Post-war Relief | 107 |
| 9 | United States Forces Proposed Club in London for Officers. | 109 |

**Naval, Military
and Air
Operations.**

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 79th
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)

Air Operations.
Home Theatre.

Malta.

Libya.

Naval
Operations.

Military
Operations.
Russia.

Libya.

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

The principal air operations of the week had been raids on Emden on the 22nd June, and on Bremen on the 25th and 29th June (the first by over 1,000 bombers). The Emden raid had been very effective. The operations against Bremen had been hindered by thick cloud, but the Focke Wulf Works had been hit.

Total enemy losses for the week had amounted to 26 machines for certain and 1 probable, with 15 damaged. We had lost 14 fighters, 61 bombers, 9 Coastal Command aircraft and 2 Army Co-operation aircraft.

The enemy had lost 20 machines for certain and 2 probable, with 12 damaged. Our total losses had been 3 destroyed and 9 damaged in the air, with 5 destroyed and 4 damaged on the ground. Aircraft from Malta had scored hits on three or four enemy merchant vessels.

Attacks had been carried out on Benghazi and Tobruk. There had been intense activity over the Western Desert. Total enemy losses for the week were reported as 16 machines for certain against 25 British machines, but these figures were probably incomplete.

Assuming that two overdue vessels were lost, Allied shipping losses in the previous seven days would amount to 107,000 tons. In addition, there were belated reports of 37,000 tons sunk in the Far East.

Particulars were given of the arrangements for additional convoys made by the United States Navy.

On the Russian front there were indications that the operations southwards from Kursk were the opening stages of a major German offensive, though we still had no information pointing to a concentration of German strength in that sector on a scale comparable with that of last year's offensive.

Information was given regarding the fighting which had been taking place on the Mersa Matruh front since the 27th June. A German report claimed that they had captured Mersa Matruh, taking 6,000 prisoners and knocking out 36 tanks.

Particulars were given of the armoured forces engaged on both sides and the reinforcements now arriving in Egypt and expected to arrive in the near future.

The War Cabinet were informed that reports were beginning to circulate overseas that General Auchinleck had himself assumed control of the Eighth Army, and that, in the circumstances, the Prime Minister thought that this fact should now be made public, and that he therefore proposed to make an announcement to this effect in the House of Commons on the following morning.

The War Cabinet—

Approved this suggestion, and asked that a telegram should be sent to General Auchinleck informing him of the proposed announcement.

France.

Relations with
Vichy
Government.
French Fleet at
Alexandria.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 63rd
Conclusions,
Minute 2.)

2. A discussion took place, which is recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

Air Raids.
Casualties and
Damage.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 79th
Conclusions,
Minute 3.)

3. *The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security* gave a summary of the damage inflicted by enemy air attack during the past week.

There had been a sharp attack on Norwich on Friday night; and on Saturday and Sunday nights Weston-super-Mare had been the main objective. There were various military targets in Weston, but the main damage had been to public and residential buildings.

The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

Foreign Affairs.
Interviews with
distinguished
foreigners.

4. *The Foreign Secretary* said that, when Ministers were asked to receive distinguished foreigners visiting this country, it would be a convenience if, where practicable, the Foreign Office could be consulted in advance. They were often in a position to give advice or information which would assist the Minister concerned. He asked that, in any event, Ministers should let him have a brief account of what took place at such interviews.

The War Cabinet approved this suggestion and invited the Foreign Secretary to bring the matter to the notice of Ministers generally.

Proposed visit to
this country by
our Ambassador
to the U.S.S.R.

The Foreign Secretary said that our Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. had expressed a desire to come to this country on a short visit. He thought it desirable that the Ambassador should do so, as he had not been home since he had been appointed Ambassador to China in 1938.

The War Cabinet agreed that, subject to the Prime Minister's approval, it would be convenient if arrangements could be made for Sir Archibald Clark Kerr to come to London at an early date.

Imperial Policy
Group.

The Foreign Secretary drew attention to recent publications of the Imperial Policy Group, which were not calculated to improve our relations with the U.S.S.R. The activities of the Group would have to be watched.

The War Cabinet took note of this statement.

**The Baltic
States.**
Status of
Representatives
in this country.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 56th
Conclusions,
Minute 9.)

5. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (W.P. (42) 269), in which he proposed that, in order to satisfy the Soviet Government, the names of the Baltic Ministers and their Staffs should be removed from the Diplomatic List, but should be shown in an Annex as still possessing a diplomatic character.

The War Cabinet approved this suggestion.

Middle East.
Evacuation of
Civilian
Personnel.

6. *The Foreign Secretary* said that our Ambassador in Cairo had made enquiries as to whether arrangements should be made for evacuating civilian personnel from Egypt if the military situation deteriorated. He thought that the Ambassador should discuss with the Minister of State what policy should be followed in this matter and what detailed arrangements should be made, and that the latter should be authorised to determine these issues on behalf of the War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet invited the Foreign Secretary to instruct the Ambassador accordingly.

The Foreign Secretary said that our Ambassador at Bagdad had raised questions about the evacuation of civilian personnel from Iraq.

The War Cabinet agreed that no action should be taken to evacuate civilians from Iraq.

Malta.

Evacuation of families of Service personnel.

7. *The Secretary of State for the Colonies* said that the Service Departments favoured the compulsory evacuation of the families of British Service personnel in Malta, and it was understood that the Governor was now proceeding to put such a scheme into operation as and when transport facilities became available. The view of the Colonial Office was that, if no corresponding facilities were offered for the families of Maltese personnel, the effect on morale in the Island would be unfortunate both now and after the war. For this reason he would prefer that all these evacuation arrangements should be on a voluntary basis, or, failing this, that some facilities should be offered for the voluntary evacuation of families of Maltese personnel.

In discussion, it appeared that there was no means of evacuating civilians except by air, and that only very small numbers could be evacuated by this means without making increased demands on the Island's stocks of aviation spirit.

In these circumstances, and taking into account the difficulty of allotting passages, the right course was to discontinue the process of evacuation, save for any very special cases which could be justified on grounds of benefit to the war effort. The Governor should also be informed that, if at a later stage evacuation was resumed, in the opinion of the War Cabinet it could not be restricted to the dependants of British personnel.

"X"

The War Cabinet—

Authorised the Secretary of State for the Colonies to arrange for the despatch of a telegram to the Governor of Malta on the lines of "X."

Post-War Relief.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (42) 65th Conclusions, Minute 2.)

8. The War Cabinet had before them—

- (i) A Joint Memorandum (W.P. (42) 267) by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the President of the Board of Trade and the Paymaster-General suggesting terms of reference for the guidance of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross in his forthcoming discussions in Washington on Post-War Relief.
- (ii) A Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (W.P. (42) 273) commenting on these proposed terms of reference.

(a) The first point dealt with in discussion was whether we should agree to the proposal that the Executive Committee should be confined to representatives of the four Governments—Great Britain, America, the U.S.S.R. and China.

Mr. Bruce said that the Commonwealth Government, after full discussion, had been prepared to acquiesce in the proposal that the Dominions should not be represented on the Executive Committee, on two grounds: First, that, if the Dominions were invited, all other Governments would insist on their right to be represented. In particular, the claim of the Argentine would be difficult to resist, as the Argentine was a producing country which would be expected to contribute. Secondly, that the body representative of the four Governments would probably only act as a directing

authority, and that the actual work would be undertaken by other bodies, upon which the Dominions would be represented.

The War Cabinet were informed that the Canadian Government had asked to be represented at the discussions in Washington.

The general view of the War Cabinet was that the balance of advantage lay in the Executive Committee which was to be set up, according to the American proposals, after a Conference of all the United Nations, being confined to representatives of the four Governments referred to; but that the point would have to be put to the Canadian Government before we could say that we agreed to the representation on the Committee being so confined.

(b) In reply to the Secretary of State for War, it was agreed that the problem of handling post-war relief, to be dealt with at the Washington Conference, did not include the problem of victualling, during the war, territories which might be reoccupied by the Allies as a result of military operations.

(c) Discussion followed on the terms of the draft instructions to be sent to Sir Frederick Leith-Ross.

The Foreign Secretary indicated various passages in the draft instructions which, in his view, adequately safeguarded the interests of this country.

The Foreign Secretary added that his intention was that Sir Frederick Leith-Ross should not enter into any definite commitments in Washington, but should bring back a project for consideration by His Majesty's Government.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer gave his reasons for wishing various modifications to be made in the instructions, in order to avoid heavy financial commitments. He also thought that we ought not to pledge ourselves at this stage to the maintenance of rationing and other controls after the war.

The general view of the War Cabinet was in favour of the despatch of instructions to Sir Frederick Leith-Ross on the basis of the draft instructions contained in the Foreign Secretary's Memorandum, subject to the amendments set out below.

The War Cabinet's Conclusions were as follows :—

(1) *Procedure*.—The Secretaries of State for Dominion Affairs and Foreign Affairs undertook to see the High Commissioner for Canada on the following day, and to explain to him the reasons in favour of limiting the discussions at Washington to representatives of the four Governments. Subject to the Canadian Government acquiescing in the proposal, Sir Frederick Leith-Ross should be informed that he could say that we agreed that the discussions should be so limited.

(2) *Amendments to the draft instructions*.

(i) Paragraph 3 should be amended (on the lines of part of the revision proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Memorandum) in order to make clear the distinction between the physical or supply aspect of the problem and the financial aspect.

(The Ministers concerned undertook to settle the necessary amendments.)

(ii) The passage about Shipping starting on page 2, line 9, should read as follows :—

“ He should say that His Majesty's Government are ready to help to the fullest extent of their ability as regards supplies and shipping. It will, however, be necessary to continue the pool

of shipping of all the United Nations if the life of their peoples is to be maintained. He should therefore point out"

(iii) It was decided not to make any amendment to distinguish between contributions in food and raw materials.

(3) The last paragraph of the draft formula should read as follows :—

“ As part of the common plan, they will be prepared to continue in this country, after the end of hostilities, a system of rationing of food and clothing and other suitable measures of control over essential commodities so long as the available supplies are not sufficient to meet the urgent needs of Allied countries which have regained their freedom.”

(4) It was contemplated that the formula would be announced, in the first instance, by Ministers in the United Kingdom.

(5) The Foreign Secretary was authorised to despatch to Sir Frederick Leith-Ross the instructions set out in paragraphs 1-4 of W.P. (42) 267, embodying the amendments set out in Conclusion (2) above.

**United States
Forces.**

Proposed Club
in London for
Officers.

9. *The Deputy Prime Minister* informed the War Cabinet that it was proposed that His Majesty's Government should provide accommodation in London to enable a Club to be run for American Officers. The Government would provide the building, but the Club would be run and administered by the American Red Cross.

The War Cabinet indicated their general approval of this scheme.

*Great George Street, S.W. 1,
June 29, 1942.*



