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W.M. (42)

111th Conclusions.

TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY

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WAR CABINET 111 (42).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Wednesday, August 12, 1942, at 5 P.M.

Present :

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Deputy Prime Minister (<i>in the Chair</i>).	
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 LYTTTELTON, M.P., Minister of Production.
The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.	The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HALIFAX, His Majesty's Ambassador to the United States of America.

The following were also present :

The Right Hon. S. M. BRUCE, Accredited Representative of the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia.	The Hon. W. NASH, Accredited Representative of the Government of the Dominion of New Zealand.
The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer (<i>Items 3-4</i>).	The Right Hon. L. S. AMERY, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma (<i>Items 3-4</i>).
The Right Hon. A. V. ALEXANDER, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty.	The Right Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.
Sir ORME SARGENT, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.	Admiral of the Fleet Sir DUDLEY POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (<i>Item 1</i>).
Air Chief Marshal Sir CHARLES F. A. PORTAL, Chief of the Air Staff (<i>Item 1</i>).	Lieutenant-General A. E. NYE, Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff (<i>Item 1</i>).

The Right Hon. Sir REGINALD DORMAN SMITH, Governor of Burma (*Item 3*).

Secretariat :

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Major-General Sir HASTINGS ISMAY.
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.
Brigadier L. C. HOLLIS.
Wing Commander JEFFERSON.

WAR CABINET 111 (42).

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Naval, Military
and Air
Operations.
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 109th
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)
Publication
of Naval
Casualties.

1. *The First Lord of the Admiralty* gave the War Cabinet the latest information in regard to the progress of the Malta convoy. H.M.S. *Eagle*, an aircraft-carrier, had been sunk by a U-boat on the previous afternoon. So far, over 900 out of perhaps 1,200 officers and ratings on board had been reported as saved.

One enemy U-boat had been sunk and another damaged.

The Admiralty's normal policy was to endeavour to inform the next-of-kin of a ship's company before announcing the loss of a ship. Accordingly, when, on the previous night, the German wireless had announced the sinking of H.M.S. *Eagle*, the Press had been asked not to publish the German claim in order to avoid causing unnecessary concern. One newspaper, however, had disregarded this request and had announced the loss that morning. The Admiralty had therefore issued a statement to the Press that afternoon explaining their general policy in this matter. There were indications that certain other newspapers might now join in criticising the Admiralty practice. The First Lord said that the Board of Admiralty saw no reason whatsoever to vary the general practice, as set out above, save where there were special circumstances. Examples were the H.M.S. *Ark Royal*, when it had been known that there had been only one casualty, and the loss of H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and H.M.S. *Repulse*, when it had been clear from the outset that a long time must elapse before the names of survivors reached this country.

The War Cabinet—

Strongly endorsed the policy enunciated by the First Lord.

Shipping
Situation.
Provision of
Aircraft for
the War at
Sea.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 81st
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)

2. The War Cabinet had before them a Report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (W.P. (42) 302) and a Paper by the Accredited Representative of the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia (W.P. (42) 326) on the Provision of Aircraft for the War at Sea.

The discussion, which was of a preliminary character, is recorded separately.

The War Cabinet—

Asked that a statement should be prepared showing—

- (a) The target figures and present strength of our air forces (together with those of our Allies) in the theatres covered by the Annex to W.P. (42) 302, both on a functional and geographical basis.
- (b) The present policy governing the allocation of resources as they became available.
- (c) To what extent the aircraft at present devoted to "the offensive, both direct and in support of land operations," were capable of being diverted to "the fighter defence of the United Kingdom," or to "securing our vital communications and interrupting those of the enemy."
- (d) What steps have been taken to ensure that aircraft now in production are being equipped with the necessary fittings to enable them to operate as effectively as possible over the sea or in tropical climates.

[Thus, to what types of aircraft, and to what proportion of our production, is this practice now applicable, and what has been done to ensure that this policy is made effective over as wide a field as possible, with the minimum delay.]

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Burma.

3. The War Cabinet had before them a Note by the Secretary of State for Burma (W.P. (42) 346) covering a Memorandum by the Governor of Burma outlining the urgent problems of reconstruction which would have to be dealt with after our reoccupation of Burma.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that the War Cabinet would welcome an opportunity of hearing from Sir Reginald Dorman Smith some account of the problems which would have to be faced in Burma after reoccupation, although it would be premature to reach any decisions that afternoon on the proposals set out in the Memorandum.

Sir Reginald Dorman Smith gave the War Cabinet a forecast of the main tasks of reconstruction, political, economic and social, which would have to be undertaken after the Japanese had been evicted from Burma. These tasks could not be undertaken by the Burmese, and it would be necessary for His Majesty's Government to resort to a system of direct rule during the period of reconstruction. This would be an interim arrangement, which would not prejudice the subsequent fulfilment of our pledge to grant full self-government to Burma; and provision should be made for the Governor to consult Burman opinion during this interval through advisory bodies appointed for that purpose.

The Governor recognised that the War Cabinet could not be expected at this stage to give firm decisions on the points raised in his Memorandum. He would, however, be glad to know whether the War Cabinet approved his general approach to this problem, and whether he had their authority to embark on a study of reconstruction questions immediately after his return to India.

In discussion, it was suggested that, while firm government would be required during the period of reconstruction, the resumption of direct rule might be thought to imply some intention to go back on our pledge to grant full self-government to Burma. It might be preferable that during this interim period the powers of government should be entrusted to a small Commission, which could include one or two Burmans.

The War Cabinet—

Invited Sir Reginald Dorman Smith to arrange for studies to be undertaken, under his direction, of the tasks of reconstruction which would have to be undertaken over the whole range of administration in Burma after the eviction of the Japanese. When these studies had been carried to a point at which specific proposals could be formulated, these should be submitted through the Secretary of State for Burma for consideration by the War Cabinet.

India.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (42) 109th Conclusions, Minute 7.)

4. Further reference was made to the sensational character of the news reports regarding the state of public order in India. Though the extent of the disorder was relatively small, it was being reported in such a way as to give the impression that there was widespread rioting throughout the whole of India.

Particular reference was made to the prominence given to a report suggesting that in Bombay whipping was to be widely used as a punishment for arson, rioting or personal violence.

The War Cabinet—

Invited the Secretary of State for India—

- (i) To ascertain to what extent it was proposed to resort to whipping as a punishment for offences against public order.

- (ii) To make further strong representations to the Government of India regarding the need for securing that Press representatives in India would exercise greater discretion in the messages sent abroad, and to ascertain what further action the Government of India proposed to take in this matter.
- (iii) To make arrangements, in consultation with the Lord Privy Seal and the Minister of Information, for a meeting to be held with the editors of newspapers in this country with a view to impressing on them the need for greater discretion in publishing reports of disorders in India.

*Great George Street, S.W. 1,
August 12, 1942.*



