



(c) crown copyright

*Printed for the War Cabinet. March 1943.***SECRET.**

Copy No. 50

W.M. (43)

36th Conclusions.

**TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY**

It is requested that special care may be taken to ensure the secrecy of this document

**WAR CABINET 36 (43).**

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, March 8, 1943, at 5.30 P.M.*

**Present :**

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Deputy Prime Minister (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P.,  
Secretary of State for Foreign  
Affairs.

The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON,  
M.P., Lord President of the Council.

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

The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTELTON,  
M.P., Minister of Production.

The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON,  
M.P., Secretary of State for the  
Home Department and Minister of  
Home Security.

**The following were also present :**

The Right Hon. S. M. BRUCE, Represent-  
ative of the Government of the  
Commonwealth of Australia (*Items*  
1-6).

Sir RAMASWAMI MUDALIAR, Represent-  
ative of India (*Items 1-6*).

The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD,  
M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE,  
Lord Privy Seal.

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

Colonel the Right Hon. OLIVER  
STANLEY, M.P., Secretary of State for  
the Colonies (*Items 5-7*).

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. Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS,  
K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft  
Production.

The Right Hon. Sir WILLIAM JOWITT,  
K.C., M.P., Minister without Port-  
folio (*Items 5-7*).

The Right Hon. JAMES STUART, M.P.,  
Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the  
Treasury (*Items 5-7*).

**The Greeks.**

Reference was made to the revolt which had taken place among Greek troops in Syria.

*The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* said that these troubles, which were political in origin, were probably due in part to the fact that the Greek King and Government were not in the Middle East. He would shortly be seeing the King of Greece, and he proposed to urge the King strongly to go out to the Middle East and to establish the Greek Government there. He thought that our policy should be one of out-and-out support for the Greek King and Government, although this might involve our having rather fewer contacts with some of the patriotic elements inside Greece, which were apt to be of a rather different political complexion from the present Greek Government.

**The War Cabinet—**

Took note of these statements.

**Air Raids.**

Casualties and  
Damage.

(Previous  
Reference:

W.M. (43) 30th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 3.)

3. *The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security* gave a report of recent enemy air activity against this country. The chief incident had been the attack against Eastbourne on the previous day by a small number of aircraft flying at a very low altitude.

On the night of Wednesday/Thursday, the 3rd/4th March, enemy aircraft had made 60 sorties over the home country, of which, however, only 10 had reached the London area.

**The War Cabinet—**

Took note of this statement.

**Civil Defence.**

Bethnal Green  
Incident.

4. *The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security* referred to the incident in Bethnal Green on the night of Wednesday/Thursday, the 3rd/4th March, when 180 people had been crushed to death in the entrance to a shelter. It would seem that this disaster had not been started by panic, but simply by one or two people having fallen down the steps and others having fallen on them in the dark.

*The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security* said that a meeting had been held at Oxford House, and that there was some pressure for a public enquiry. He favoured an enquiry, but thought that it should not be held in public.

**After a short discussion, the War Cabinet—**

Endorsed the proposal made by the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security that Mr. Laurence Dunne, the Metropolitan Magistrate, should be asked to carry out this enquiry; that the enquiry should be held in private, but that it should be announced that, subject to security considerations, the conclusions would be published.

The War Cabinet also agreed that, provided the state of public business permitted, an announcement to this effect should be made by the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security in the House of Commons on Wednesday, the 10th March.

**Parliament.**

Air Transport.

(Previous  
Reference:

W.M. (43) 36th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 8.)

5. The War Cabinet considered a Note by the Secretary of State for Air and the Minister without Portfolio (W.P. (43) 91) covering the draft of a statement on Air Transport to be made by the Government spokesman in the forthcoming debate on the Air Estimates.

In discussion, the following suggestions were made for amendment of the draft statement:—

(a) References to the conversion of military aircraft for civil use might provoke embarrassing reactions from persons in the United States who were critical of the Lease-Lend arrangements.

Paragraph 8 of the draft should therefore be amended by omitting the word "new" in line 2, and by omitting all words after "war effort."

Any interjections about the conversion of existing types could be answered on the following lines: "As the House is aware, the transport needs of the Services have already obliged us to convert some of our best British bombers for transport purposes."

(b) The second and third sentences in paragraph 12 of the draft should read as follows: "Our exploratory work is, in fact, in hand, and we are now in preliminary consultation with the Dominions and India. Consultation with other members of the United Nations will follow."

(c) In paragraph 13, for "the principles which seem likely to govern . . . ." there should be substituted "the principles which should govern . . . ."

The War Cabinet—

- (1) Approved the draft statement appended to W.P. (43) 91, subject to amendment on the points noted above.
- (2) Invited the Secretary of State for Air to make this statement on behalf of the War Cabinet during the course of the forthcoming debate on Air Estimates in the House of Commons.
- (3) Invited the Lord Privy Seal to make a statement in identical terms in the debate in the House of Lords on the 11th March.

Royal Air Force,  
Transport  
Command.

6. The War Cabinet took note of a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air (W.P. (43) 92) reporting the decision of the Air Council to establish a Royal Air Force Transport Command, which would be responsible for the control of R.A.F. transport squadrons at home, for the organisation and control of strategic air routes, for all overseas ferrying, and for the reinforcement moves of squadrons to and between overseas theatres.

Parliament.  
Mr. Speaker.  
(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (43) 37th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 1.)

7. The War Cabinet were informed that the House of Commons would meet on the following day for the purpose of electing a new Speaker. It was hoped that it would be possible to obtain the Royal Assent during the course of the same day, so that the House might be in a position to resume normal business on the 10th March. The first duty of the House would then be to pass a Motion recording their appreciation of the manner in which the late Speaker had discharged his duties, and expressing their sympathy with Mrs. FitzRoy and her family. The War Cabinet discussed and approved the terms of a Motion to be moved on behalf of the Government by the Leader of the House.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these arrangements.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,  
March 8, 1943.

Faint, illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is too light to transcribe accurately.

Royal Air Force  
[Illegible text]

[Illegible text]



