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52

W.M. (44)

43rd Conclusions.

WAR CABINET 43 (44).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, 3rd April, 1944, 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., Lord President of the Council.	The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.	The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.
The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTTELTON, 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 Right Hon. LORD WOOLTON, Minister of Reconstruction.

The following were also present :

The Right Hon. S. M. BRUCE, Represent- ative of the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia.	The Hon. W. NASH, Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of New Zealand.
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.	The Right Hon. L. S. AMERY, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma.
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 ANDREW DUNCAN, M.P., Minister of Supply (<i>Items</i> 7-8).
The Right Hon. LORD LEATHERS, Minister of War Transport (<i>Items</i> 6-8).	Colonel the Right Hon. J. J. LLEWELLIN, M.P., Minister of Food (<i>Items</i> 6-8).
Major the Right Hon. G. LLOYD GEORGE, M.P., Minister of Fuel and Power (<i>Items</i> 7-8).	The Right Hon. BRENDAN BRACKEN, M.P., Minister of Information.
The Right Hon. the EARL OF SELBORNE, Minister of Economic Warfare (<i>Items</i> 6-8).	The Right Hon. LORD CHERWELL, Paymaster-General.
Mr. A. T. LENNOX-LLOYD, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Aircraft Production (<i>Items</i> 7-8).	The Hon. Sir ALEXANDER CADOGAN, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (<i>Items</i> 1-6).
Admiral of the Fleet Sir ANDREW CUNNINGHAM, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (<i>Items</i> 1-5).	Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir CHARLES F. A. PORTAL, Chief of the Air Staff (<i>Items</i> 1-5).
Field-Marshal Sir ALAN BROOKE, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (<i>Items</i> 1-5).	

Secretariat :

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Lieutenant-General Sir HASTINGS L. ISMAY.
Sir GILBERT LAITHWAITE.
Mr. W. S. MURRIE.
Mr. L. F. BURGIS.

WAR CABINET 43 (44).

CONTENTS.

<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Subject.</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	Parliament Suggested Debate on Atlantic Charter.	193
2	Naval, Military and Air Operations Air Operations: Home Theatre. Mediterranean. Pacific. Naval Operations: The <i>Tirpitz</i> . Military Operations: Russia. Burma.	193
3	Bombing Policy Targets in Occupied Territories.	194
4	Foreign Affairs United States. Italy. Finland.	194
5	Italy Proposed visit of Trade Union Congress Representatives.	194
6	Blockade Relief for Occupied Europe.	194
7	Industrial Unrest General. Apprentices' strike. Miners' strike.	195
8	Mr. Nash	196

Parliament.
Suggested
Debate on
Atlantic
Charter.

1. The War Cabinet were informed that Lord Noel-Buxton had put down a Motion for debate in the House of Lords on the following day in the following terms:—

“ To ask His Majesty’s Government whether, in view of the importance attached throughout the world to the Atlantic Charter, and in view of the statement made by the Prime Minister, that there will be no question of the Atlantic Charter applying to Germany as a matter of right and barring territorial transferences or adjustments in enemy countries, His Majesty’s Government will make clearer the bearing of the Charter on the future of Germany; and to move for Papers.”

After discussion, the War Cabinet agreed that the Leader of the House of Lords should deal with the matter on the following lines: He should say that, while the Government recognised that a statement on this matter would have to be made at some time in the future, a debate on this issue at the present time would be premature. It was clear that, before any authoritative pronouncement could be made, there would have to be consultations with the Dominions Prime Ministers and with the principal Allied Powers. His Majesty’s Government were satisfied that it would not be in the public interest for this matter to be debated at this juncture. If, nevertheless, a debate ensued, His Majesty’s Government would not take part in it.

**Naval, Military
and Air
Operations.**

(Previous
Reference:
W.M.(44)41st
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)

Air Operations.
Home Theatre.

2. The Chiefs of Staff reported the principal events of the previous week.

Owing to bad weather Bomber Command had been limited to an attack on Nuremberg, on which 2,500 tons had been dropped. Bomber casualties for March, in spite of heavy losses in the Nuremberg attack, amounted to 4·5 per cent. as compared to 5·4 per cent. for the two preceding months. During March the R.A.F. had dropped in all 27,000 tons of bombs, of which 19,000 had been dropped on Germany. The corresponding figures for the United States Air Force were 18,000 and 13,000 tons. United States bombers had attacked airfields in France. Coastal Command had made one promising attack on a U-boat. Enemy losses for the week amounted to 111 aircraft destroyed and 22 probably destroyed. In addition, the United States Air Force claimed to have destroyed 100 on the ground. Allied losses were 128 bombers, 32 fighters and 7 Coastal Command aircraft.

Mediterranean.

Communications, ports and battle targets, also Sofia, had been attacked. Sixty-seven enemy aircraft had been destroyed as compared to 48 Allied.

Pacific.

In the Pacific 154 enemy aircraft were claimed as destroyed (half this number being on the ground) as compared to 11 Allied.

Naval
Operations.

Confirmed shipping losses by enemy action during March amounted to 123,238 tons. April losses to date amounted to 5,222 tons. During March 14 U-boats had been destroyed and 5 probably destroyed. One U-boat had been destroyed so far this month.

The *Tirpitz*.

Although complete details had not yet been received, it was known that naval aircraft from carriers had successfully attacked the *Tirpitz* in Alten Fjord. Several hits had been obtained, and three aircraft only had been lost.

Military
Operations.
Russia.

To the extreme north of the Russian Front at Narva the Germans claimed to have surrounded several Russian divisions. There had been German reports of Russian attacks at Pskov and Vitebsk. Further south the Russians had cut the Kovel-Brest-Litovsk Railway. The Germans in Tarnopol were practically surrounded. The Russian thrust to the Carpathians had reached and passed the River Pruth. Between the Pruth and the Dniester the Russians were attacking in a southerly direction in an endeavour to cut off the Germans in the Odessa salient. The Germans had already lost Ribnitsa and the railway thence to Jassy.

Burma.

The Japanese forces that had cut the road between Tuitum and Imphal had been dealt with. To the north, other Japanese forces that had cut the road between Imphal and Kohima had been driven back. Japanese forces in this area had been drawn off in order to deal with our penetration groups further to the east. These forces were operating partly on the railway line in the neighbourhood of Katha and partly on the northern Irrawaddy.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

**Bombing
Policy.**

Targets in
Occupied
Territory.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (43) 120th
Conclusions,
Minute 2.)

3. The War Cabinet had a discussion on the policy of bombing targets in Occupied Territory, a record of which is contained in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

Foreign Affairs.
United States.

Italy.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (44) 85th
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)

Finland.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (44) 86th
Conclusions,
Minute 2.)

4. *The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* informed the War Cabinet that Mr. Berle had arrived to-day for the proposed discussions on civil aviation. Mr. Stettinius was expected on the morning of Good Friday.

A brief discussion took place on the latest developments in the Italian situation. A record is contained in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reported that M. Paasikivi had now returned from Moscow to Finland with an explanation of the Russian terms.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

Italy.

Proposed visit
of Trades Union
Congress Repre-
sentatives.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (43) 134th
Conclusions,
Minute 5.)

5. *The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* reminded the War Cabinet that some months ago he had received a request from Sir Walter Citrine that one or two representatives of the Trades Union Congress should be granted facilities to visit Italy. This request had not at the time been agreed to. Since then the United States labour representatives had visited Italy, and on the whole he was disposed to accede to the T.U.C. request, which had been renewed.

The War Cabinet—

Endorsed this view.

Blockade.

Relief for
Occupied
Europe.

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (43) 63rd
Conclusions,
Minute 5.)

6. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Economic Warfare (W.P. (44) 177) reporting that the American Embassy had been instructed to seek our concurrence in a proposal to inform the Swedish Government immediately that the British and United States Governments were disposed to permit limited shipments of special relief food-stuffs to Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Norway if the Swedish Government would undertake to distribute the food-stuffs and could get the German Government to accept certain control stipulations.

The Memorandum by the Minister of Economic Warfare suggested that the objections, whether from the psychological or the military point of view, to action on the lines proposed were in present circumstances decisive. It was probable that the American proposals were mainly promoted by considerations of internal politics, and that the supply and other considerations involved had not been thoroughly examined.

After discussion, the War Cabinet—

Agreed that the objections, set out in the Minister's Memorandum, to the United States proposals were decisive, particularly in view of impending military operations, and invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Minister of Economic Warfare, the Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty, to settle the terms of a reply to this effect, emphasising the objections on military grounds.

Industrial
Unrest.
General.

7. *The Minister of Labour and National Service* said that the industrial situation gave some ground for uneasiness. It was true that, apart from the miners, the number of workers involved in trade disputes in March was only 30,000, which in all the circumstances was not a very high figure. Nevertheless, a number of elements were working to create unrest, and he regarded the situation with considerable anxiety.

Apprentices'
Strike.

It was clear that the apprentices' strike on Tyneside, the Clyde and in Yorkshire was a political one and had been instigated by a group which had broken away from the Communist Party when Russia became our ally.

The trades unions were doing what they could to get the strikers to return. A deputation from the strikers had sought an interview with him, but he had refused to see it. Notices calling up the strikers for medical examination were being issued and the Director of Public Prosecutions was considering whether the ring-leaders could be prosecuted under the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927. The existing emergency powers did not enable him to take effective action, and he intended to put before the Lord President's Committee proposals for extending these powers.

The War Cabinet—

Endorsed the action taken by the Minister of Labour and National Service.

Miners' Strike.
(Previous
References:
W.M. (44) 32nd
Conclusions,
and
W.M. (44) 33rd
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)

The Minister of Fuel and Power said that, of the 130,000 miners in the Yorkshire coalfield, 40,000 were now back at work and that he hoped that the drift back would continue. There had been a serious loss of production and it had been found necessary to cut industrial supplies of electricity by 10 per cent. and of gas by 25 per cent. These cuts affected the whole country and had come into force that day. If the strike had cleared up by the end of this week the effect on war production would not be serious, but if it dragged on longer a very awkward situation would arise.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Aircraft Production, suggested that firms engaged on war production would accept the cuts on electricity and gas supplies more readily if some action were taken to reduce domestic consumption, either by rationing or by an appeal to householders.

The Minister of Production pointed out that, apart from the cuts in gas and electricity, the strike had led to a shortage of hard coal, with the result that a number of plants engaged on war production had had to close down. He endorsed the view of the Minister of Fuel and Power that if the strike had not cleared up by Easter the position would be very serious. With regard to the suggestion that domestic consumption should be reduced, he pointed out that severe cuts had already been imposed on domestic consumers, and suggested that it would be unwise to take further action at the present moment.

The Prime Minister said that the Minister of Labour and National Service and the Minister of Fuel and Power would, of course, continue to do everything in their power to restore the position by Easter. If, despite their efforts, the strike continued

beyond that time a situation of the utmost gravity would have arisen, and in that event it would be necessary to have recourse to exceptional measures to deal with it.

The War Cabinet—

- (1) Endorsed the action of the Minister of Production and the Minister of Fuel and Power in imposing cuts on industrial supplies of gas and electricity.
 - (2) Agreed that for the present no action should be taken to reduce domestic consumption of fuel.
 - (3) Agreed that, if the situation had not cleared up by Easter, a very grave situation would have arisen, which would call for the use of exceptional measures; and invited the Minister of Labour and National Service and the Minister of Fuel and Power to consider what measures would have to be taken in that event.
-

Mr. Nash.

8. *The Prime Minister* said that Mr. Nash was leaving this country on the following day, and the present would be the last time on which he would attend a meeting of the War Cabinet on his present visit. He was sure his colleagues would wish him to say how glad they had been to have had Mr. Nash among them at this juncture, and how grateful they were to him for his counsel.

*Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
3rd April, 1944.*
