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W.M. (40)

235th Conclusions.

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WAR CABINET 235 (40).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Tuesday, August 27, 1940, at 12.30 P.M.

Present :

The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P.,
Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HALIFAX,
Secretary of State for Foreign
Affairs.

The Right Hon. A. GREENWOOD, M.P.,
Minister without Portfolio.

The following were also present :

The Right Hon. LORD LLOYD, Secretary
of State for the Colonies (*Items 6
and 7*).

The Right Hon. ERNEST BROWN, M.P.,
Secretary of State for Scotland
(*Item 1*).

The Right Hon. R. S. HUDSON, M.P.,
Minister of Agriculture and
Fisheries (*Item 1*).

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

Secretariat.

Major-General Sir HASTINGS ISMAY.

Mr. W. D. WILKINSON.

Mr. L. F. BURGIS.

WAR CABINET 235 (40).

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Agricultural Policy.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (39) 37th Conclusions, Minute 5.)
1941 Food Production Campaign.

1. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries (W.P. (G.) (40) ~~233~~ 233.

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries said that at a meeting of Ministers held on the 8th August, presided over by the Lord Privy Seal, he had been invited to submit for the approval of the War Cabinet a programme for ploughing up between one and two million additional acres, it being understood that no precise figure should be specified in any public announcement made on the subject. He was now in a position to estimate the amount of grassland that could be ploughed up in each county. As a result he proposed a programme of ploughing up $1\frac{1}{2}$ million acres. Scotland and Northern Ireland contemplated programmes which would bring the total for the United Kingdom to something over $1\frac{3}{4}$ million acres.

The War Cabinet—

Gave general approval to the proposals in W.P. (G.) (40) 233 and authorised the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries to issue the necessary instructions.

Naval Operations.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 234th Conclusions, Minute 1.)

2. *The First Sea Lord* reported that two Italian merchant ships had been sunk by our submarines in the Mediterranean.

German Hospital Ships.

The First Sea Lord said that Germany had sent a request to His Majesty's Government through the Swiss Government for 64 hospital ships to be recognised. The actual communication had not yet been received, although two of these vessels had already been sighted in the English Channel. A reply had been sent to the effect that the request could not be granted, and that after midnight on the 30th August we should take action against such vessels. There was no doubt that these ships were used for reconnaissance purposes.

Shipping Losses.

The Prime Minister drew attention to the continuance of heavy losses of merchant shipping. A refrigerated cargo vessel of 11,445 tons had been sunk on the previous day.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statements.

The United States.

Supply of destroyers and other munitions of war.

Proposed grant of base facilities in certain British Territories.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 234th Conclusions, Minute 2.)

3. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to three further telegrams which had been received from Lord Lothian (Washington telegrams Nos. 1821, 1822 and 1823).

The Prime Minister read to the War Cabinet a private and personal telegram which he had sent that morning to President Roosevelt on the subject of the grant to the United States of America of facilities in certain British Territories.

He also read out the draft of a telegram which it was proposed to despatch to Lord Lothian, in which a positive offer of definite facilities was made to the Government of the United States.

The War Cabinet—

(a) Took note with approval of the private and personal telegram which the Prime Minister had sent to President Roosevelt.

(b) Approved, subject to certain amendments, the draft telegram to Lord Lothian containing our formal offer to the United States Government.

Belgium.
Arrival of
Belgian
Ministers in the
United
Kingdom.
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (40) 221st
Conclusions,
Minute 8.)

4. The War Cabinet were informed that M. Pierlot and M. Spaak were expected to arrive shortly in this country from Spain.

The War Cabinet took note of the above statement.

Air Raids.
Repair of
damage.

5. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to reports to the effect that considerable numbers of people had become homeless as a result of air raids over various towns.

In discussion, the following points were made:—

- (i) It would not be necessary in most cases for such persons to remain homeless for long. There were large numbers of empty houses in most of the areas concerned.
- (ii) Measures were being taken by the local authorities and the Unemployment Assistance Board, under their existing powers, for the repair of damage or the payment of compensation for loss of effects. It was for consideration whether these measures were adequate.
- (iii) There was a great shortage of glass, and many of the windows which had been broken either could not be replaced or would have to be made much smaller. Substitutes for glass would also have to be used.
- (iv) It was suggested that Government assistance might be provided towards making good the floors of Anderson shelters, either in brick or some other material.

The War Cabinet—

Invited the Lord Privy Seal to enquire, in consultation with the Ministers concerned, into the adequacy of the measures now being taken for the relief of distress, the accommodation of persons rendered homeless, and the repair of damage caused by air raids, and to report to the War Cabinet.

**French Colonies
in West Africa.**
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (40) 219th
Conclusions,
Minute 8.)
Adherence of
the Chad
Territory to
General de
Gaulle.

6. The War Cabinet were informed that a telegram had been received from the Governor of Nigeria (No. 1050, dated the 26th August) transmitting a message to General de Gaulle from the French Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Chad Territory. The Governor of the Chad announced his intention of throwing in his lot with the Free French Forces, on the condition that General de Gaulle would undertake, with the assistance of His Majesty's Government, to send him two flights of aircraft (*i.e.*, six aircraft in all) with the necessary French personnel, together with lorries and certain other articles of which a list would be furnished.

The First Sea Lord said that General de Gaulle had been in consultation with the Chiefs of Staff that morning and had been promised that he would be given all possible help.

The Prime Minister said that General de Gaulle had asked him for a letter undertaking that His Majesty's Government would extend economic assistance to French Territories overseas which stood by the Alliance. He read out the draft of a letter which had been prepared in compliance with the above request. (See Appendix to the present Conclusions.)

The War Cabinet—

- (i) Approved the guarantee of support to the Authorities of the Chad Territory which had been given by the Chiefs of Staff to General de Gaulle.
- (ii) Approved the Prime Minister's proposed letter to General de Gaulle.

Operation
"Menace."

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (40) 219th
Conclusions,
Minute 5.)

7. A discussion took place on Operation "Menace," a record of which is contained in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

*Richmond Terrace, S.W. 1,
August 27, 1940.*

 APPENDIX.

Letter from the Prime Minister to General de Gaulle.

IN pursuance of the various statements made on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on the subject of economic assistance to French Colonial Territories, and upon the occasion of the declaration of the Chad Territory to adhere to the cause of the Allies, I wish to assure you on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom—

- (a) that, until such time as an independent and constitutional authority has been re-established on free French soil, we shall do everything in our power to maintain the economic stability of all French overseas territories, provided they stand by the Alliance:
- (b) that, so long as our pathway to Victory is not impeded, we are ready to foster trade and help the administration of those parts of the great French Empire which are now cut off from captive France.

These assurances apply with even greater force to those territories which rally to you as leader of all Free Frenchmen in support of the Allied cause. Therefore, subject to the needs of our own war effort, we are prepared to extend economic assistance on a scale similar to that which we should apply in comparable circumstances to the colonies of the British Empire. Plans are now being worked out for making such assistance rapidly effective.

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