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W.M. (42)

172nd Conclusions.

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WAR CABINET 172 (42).

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street,
S.W. 1, on Wednesday, December 23, 1942, 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., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.	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 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. R. G. CASEY, Minister of State.

The following were also present :

Colonel the Right Hon. OLIVER STANLEY, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (<i>Items 3-7</i>).	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.	Mr. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., Financial Secretary, War Office (<i>Items 4-7</i>).
Admiral of the Fleet Sir DUDLEY POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff.	Air Chief Marshal Sir CHARLES F. A. PORTAL, Chief of the Air Staff.
General Sir ALAN BROOKE, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.	

Secretariat.

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Lieutenant-General Sir HASTINGS ISMAY.
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.

WAR CABINET 172 (42).

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Home Defence.

Invasion in
1943.

(Previous

Reference:

W.M. (42) 167th

Conclusions,

Minute 3.)

1. The War Cabinet had before them a Report by the Chiefs of Staff (W.P. (42) 582) and a Note by the Minister of Defence (W.P. (42) 583) regarding the possibility of invasion of the United Kingdom during 1943.

In discussion, *the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security* asked whether the Chiefs of Staff would also assess the possibility of raids, either on targets near the coast or on key-points inland. It was explained that this question was already under review by a Committee of Vice-Chiefs of Staff.

The War Cabinet—

Endorsed the conclusions set out in these Papers.

**French North
and West
Africa.**

Civilian
Administration
and Security.

(Previous

References:

W.M. (42) 156th,

and 171st

Conclusions,

Minute 4.)

2. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Home Secretary (W.P. (42) 594) drawing attention to the continuing unsatisfactory situation in French North and West Africa from the point of view of the civil administration and security.

The Home Secretary, while welcoming the appointment of an American, and the proposed appointment of a British civilian of high authority, to relieve the Commander-in-Chief of civilian and political responsibilities, urged the speedy adoption of the following measures:—

- (a) The institution of adequate security arrangements. This might take the form of the establishment in these territories of a Security Executive, subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief and presided over by a British official of suitable experience.
- (b) The infiltration into the civil administration and the French Armed Forces of reliable and competent persons and the elimination of unreliable elements.
- (c) The organisation of a reasonably efficient civil administration, including the management of transport.

The following were the main points made in discussion:—

- (1) *The Foreign Secretary* said that the position was difficult. The Americans had, however, agreed to accept British help in censorship, and officers were now on their way out. A good deal of the political warfare activity was also carried out by British staff, under American direction. He was willing, however, to instruct Mr. Mack to tell General Eisenhower that, if he wished the help of further British officials, we should, of course, be ready to make some available.
- (2) So far as concerned security, several Ministers thought that the setting up of a body on the lines of the Security Executive would not be effective unless and until reliance could be placed on the security arrangements in the French Government Departments. This, of course, was linked up with doubts as to the reliability of some of the Frenchmen who were now occupying controlling positions.
- (3) *The Prime Minister*, while agreeing that the position was far from satisfactory, doubted the wisdom of making continued representations on this matter to the United States authorities, with whom the responsibility lay. He thought that the most important and the most helpful line was to proceed as quickly as possible with the appointment of a British political representative in North Africa.
- (4) The Prime Minister reminded the War Cabinet of the steps which had been taken since this issue had first been raised by the President in a telegram of the 20th November. Further consideration had been given

to the status of the proposed British political representative since the last Meeting of the War Cabinet, and, after consultation with some of his colleagues, he had sent a telegram to the President explaining that the differences between our systems of government made it impossible to achieve exact similarity, and adding that we proposed to send out a Junior Minister, with the title of "His Majesty's Government's Political Representative at General Eisenhower's Headquarters," reporting direct to him (the Prime Minister) and enjoying exact equality of rank with Mr. Murphy.

- (5) The Prime Minister said that he attached importance to our representative retaining his Ministerial status, and suggested that he might be seconded from his existing office. The essential point was that, while working in closest consultation with the United States authorities and relieving General Eisenhower of part of his political burdens, our political representative should be free to make reports to his own Government. No further action could be taken on this appointment pending President Roosevelt's reply. It was hoped, however, that the appointment might be made in the course of the next few days.

The War Cabinet—

Expressed general agreement with the Prime Minister's views, and agreed that the best means of following up the points raised in the Home Secretary's Memorandum was by the appointment of a British Political Representative at General Eisenhower's Headquarters.

West Africa.
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 156th
Conclusions.)

3. The War Cabinet considered a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (W.P. (42) 601) covering recent correspondence with the Resident Minister about American influence in West Africa.

Lord Swinton was concerned at the apparent subordination of British interests to American control in French West Africa, which we had hoped to make a British sphere of influence during the war. He was also anxious lest the African population of the British West African colonies should get the impression that Americans were in a position of dominance, not only in French West Africa, but also in our own territories.

It had been suggested that the position might be eased if an American representative were posted to Accra to co-ordinate all American interests and activities in West Africa. The Secretary of State for the Colonies supported this suggestion, and also proposed that His Majesty's Ambassador in Washington should be invited to consider whether he should take up through the State Department, or leave it to Lord Swinton to pursue with the proposed American representative when he had been appointed, the following suggestions:—

- (i) Any United States Office of War Information outposts maintained in British colonies should not engage in internal propaganda except at the request of the Colonial Governments; and on external propaganda should work in association with, and under the direction of, British propaganda authorities.
- (ii) To avoid misunderstanding and false rumours, United States officers should confine their enquiries to matters relevant to their military duties.
- (iii) American troops coming to West Africa should be given a pamphlet on behaviour in an Allied country, like that issued to United States troops in this country and to British airmen in the United States.

Points raised in discussion were :—

- (a) *The Minister of Production* said that, as regards the allocation of raw materials and supplies from these territories, we had received equitable treatment up to date. So long as the present arrangements stood, we should have no grounds for complaint on this score.
- (b) The United States authorities had now invited us to attach a naval and an air officer to Admiral Glassford's Mission to Dakar. Since British co-operation in this area had hitherto been discouraged, this was reassuring.
- (c) Reference was made to the anti-Darlan propaganda which was relayed by radio stations under the control of the Fighting French at Brazzaville and in Syria. If this continued, there was a risk that the United States authorities would complain of its disturbing influence in North Africa.
- (d) *The Minister of State* endorsed Lord Swinton's views regarding the impression created by the behaviour of irresponsible Americans in African territories. He thought that this was particularly noticeable in the case of employees of Pan-American Airways. Now that this firm had been militarised, the United States authorities might be pressed to exercise greater discipline over it.

The War Cabinet—

Invited the Foreign Secretary—

- (1) To instruct His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington to press for the early appointment of an American representative at Accra.
- (2) To communicate to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington the facts stated in Lord Swinton's telegram No. 574 of the 18th December, and to enquire whether the suggestions set out at (i)–(iii) above could more appropriately be put forward by him through the State Department or through the proposed American representative at Accra when he had been appointed.
- (3) To consider what representations he could make with a view to restraining the propagandist activities which were being carried on by the Fighting French through the radio stations at Brazzaville and in Syria.

North Africa.

4. *The Financial Secretary to the War Office*, who had spent two days in Algiers on his return from the Middle East, gave the War Cabinet an account of his impressions. A record of his statement is contained in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

The Jews.

Refugees from enemy and enemy-occupied territory.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (42) 168th Conclusions, Minute 9.)

5. *The Foreign Secretary* said he had received that day a deputation from the Board of Deputies of British Jews, who had urged that we should do our utmost to provide for the reception of such Jews as were able to escape from enemy-occupied territory, either through Bulgaria or through Portugal. He had referred to the grave practical difficulties of arranging for the reception of such refugees, and had entered into no commitment. At the same time, he thought we should consider very carefully whether there was anything we could do to assist these people.

The War Cabinet—

Appointed a Cabinet Committee consisting of the Foreign Secretary (Chairman), the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Colonies to consider and report what arrangements could be made for the reception and accommodation of such Jewish refugees as might be able to find their way out of enemy-occupied territory through Bulgaria or Portugal.

Air Policy.
Bombing of
France.

6. The War Cabinet discussed a proposal for the bombing of a specific target in France.

The discussion and the conclusions reached are recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

Russia.
Supplies and
Military
Assistance.
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (42) 169th
Conclusions,
Minute 3.)

7. The War Cabinet were informed that, in accordance with the decisions reached by the War Cabinet on the 15th December, a Report had now been prepared by the Allied Supplies Executive about future convoy arrangements to North Russia (W.P. (42) 602).

The War Cabinet deferred full discussion of this Report until after Christmas, subject to an interim decision on one matter which called for immediate action.

The discussion and conclusions are recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

*Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,
December 23, 1942.*



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