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W.M. (45)

58th Conclusions.

**WAR CABINET 58 (45).***CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Friday, 4th May, 1945, at 11.30 a.m.***Present :**

The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister ( <i>in the Chair</i> ).	
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 LYTTETON, 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. LORD SIMON, Lord Chancellor ( <i>Items 5-6</i> ).	The Right Hon. L. S. AMERY, M.P., Secretary of State for India and Secretary of State for Burma.
The Right Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.	The Right Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P., Minister of Education ( <i>Items 5-9</i> ).
The Right Hon. ERNEST BROWN, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster ( <i>Items 6-9</i> ).	The Right Hon. RICHARD LAW, M.P., Minister of State ( <i>Items 1-3</i> ).
The Right Hon. JAMES STUART, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury ( <i>Items 6-9</i> ).	The Right Hon. W. WHITELEY, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury ( <i>Items 6-9</i> ).
Sir ORME SARGENT, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs ( <i>Items 1-3</i> ).	

**Secretariat :**

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.  
 Mr. NORMAN BROOK.  
 Sir GILBERT LAITHWAITE.  
 Mr. W. S. MURRIE.

# WAR CABINET 58 (45).

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**Building.  
Registration  
of Building  
Workers.**

1. The War Cabinet considered a Memorandum by the Minister of Labour and National Service (W.P. (45) 276) proposing a special registration of building trade workers.

*The Minister of Labour and National Service* explained that the plans for expanding the labour force of the building industry assumed that more than 200,000 building workers would return to building from munitions and other industries within twelve months after the end of hostilities in Europe. The Minister was anxious to reach this figure and, if possible, to improve on it; but would not be able to do so unless a special registration was made of all craftsmen and labourers with previous experience in the building and civil engineering industries. If his proposals were approved, the registration would probably, and the subsequent transfer of ex-building workers would certainly, take place after the end of hostilities in Europe. This would involve making substantial use, after that time, of the powers of labour direction. The Government were pledged, by the White Paper on Re-Allocation of Civilian Manpower (Cmd. 6568), to use these powers after the end of the European war only for directing persons to essential work of the highest urgency. The Minister felt, however, that the urgency of essential housing would justify the use of these powers for returning to the building industry men who had previously worked in it and could be made available for building work.

Points in discussion were :—

(a) Would these proposals limit the freedom of men released from the Armed Forces in Class A to retain whatever employment they had found for themselves during the period of their paid furlough?

*The Minister of Labour and National Service* explained that these men would not be affected by the proposed registration, which would take place before releases in Class A had begun.

(b) *The Minister of Production* asked whether machinery would be established for ensuring that Supply Departments were consulted before building workers were withdrawn from key positions in munitions industries.

*The Minister of Labour and National Service* said that this point would not arise at the stage of registration, but agreed that some such machinery for consultation would be required at a later stage.

(c) The War Cabinet were informed that the Minister of Works supported the proposals put forward in W.P. (45) 276.

The War Cabinet—

Authorised the Minister of Labour and National Service to make a special registration of craftsmen and labourers with previous experience in the building and civil engineering industries, on the lines proposed in W.P. (45) 276.

**Syria and  
the Lebanon.**

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (45) 57th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 1.)

2. *The Prime Minister* read out the draft of a telegram which he proposed to send to General de Gaulle, on the lines agreed by the War Cabinet at their meeting on the previous day, indicating his willingness to order the withdrawal of all British troops from Syria and the Lebanon as soon as a Treaty had been concluded and was in operation between the French Government and the Syrian and Lebanese Governments.

This draft had been considered by the Chiefs of Staff earlier that morning. They had suggested that it would be preferable to omit the statement that British troops had been retained in Syria and the Lebanon because it offered a convenient training ground for the Italian theatre of war. As German resistance in Italy had now collapsed, General de Gaulle might use this statement as a basis for demanding that our troops should be removed forthwith. Subject to amendment on this point, the Chiefs of Staff favoured

the despatch of a telegram to General de Gaulle in the terms proposed.

The further suggestion had been made by the Foreign Office that a sentence should be included in the draft to the effect that, so long as relations between the French and the Levant States remained undefined, we had to be on our guard against disturbances which might affect the whole of the Middle East.

#### The War Cabinet—

Took note that the Prime Minister would amend the draft to take account of the suggestions made by the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office; and agreed that the telegram, as so amended, should be despatched to General de Gaulle.

#### Denmark.

3. *The Prime Minister* drew attention to a telegram from Stockholm (No. 799 of the 3rd May) stating that, according to information received from the Swedish Minister at Copenhagen, small reconnaissance groups of Russians had landed by parachute in South-East Zealand. Political circles in Denmark were disturbed at this development, as German troops in Denmark were likely to offer resistance, and disorder might also be provoked by Danish Communists.

The War Cabinet had some discussion of the situation in Denmark; and the Prime Minister undertook to communicate with the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force.

#### Economic Controls in the Transition Period.

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (45) 51st  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2.)

4. The War Cabinet resumed their consideration of the Memorandum by the Home Secretary (W.P. (45) 222) on the legal basis of economic control in the transition period.

In discussion, it was claimed that the course proposed by the Home Secretary in his Memorandum would have the following advantages. It would enable existing emergency powers to be used for the economic purposes of the transition period. It would put that use of these powers beyond challenge in the courts, and would preclude the criticism that these powers were being used for purposes which Parliament had not contemplated when they were conferred. It would also concede to Parliament a further measure of control over the exercise of those powers after the end of the war in Europe. The Act, if passed, would not remain in operation for more than two years unless Parliament saw fit to extend it for a further period. And the Government of the day would be free to determine the extent to which use should be made of the powers of economic control so conferred.

*The Prime Minister* said that he was impressed by the advantages which the discussion had shown to lie in the course proposed in the Home Secretary's Memorandum. He would support legislation on the lines proposed; and he would be agreeable that his name should appear on the back of the proposed Bill.

In further discussion, it was suggested that the preamble included in the draft Bill annexed to W.P. (45) 222 might provoke unnecessary controversy in Parliament, and it was the general view of the War Cabinet that this preamble should be omitted from the Bill.

#### The War Cabinet—

- (1) Approved the proposals in W.P. (45) 222 for fresh legislation authorising the use of existing emergency powers for the economic purposes of the transition period;
- (2) Approved in principle the draft Bill annexed to W.P. (45) 222, subject to the omission of the preamble; and invited the Home Secretary to submit the Bill for detailed examination by the Legislation Committee, and thereafter to arrange for its early introduction in the House of Commons.



**Burma.**

(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (44) 161st  
Conclusions,  
Minute 9.)

**5. The War Cabinet had before them—**

- (i) a report by the India Committee on policy in Burma (W.P. (45) 275); and
- (ii) a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Burma (W.P. (45) 280) covering the draft of a statement to be made in Parliament.

*The Secretary of State for Burma* said that the Committee's recommendations were summarised in paragraph 25 of their report, which was unanimous. At the end of the period of direct military rule, which the War Cabinet had already agreed should follow on the liberation of Burma, there would have to be a continuation of direct control by the Governor which would necessitate the extension for a further period of the Emergency Provisions (section 139) of the Government of Burma Act, 1935. Parliament's approval to the continuance of the existing Proclamation under that section would have to be obtained before the 10th June, and it was proposed to take the opportunity to continue the section in operation up to December 1948. Power would at the same time be taken to liberalise its operation so as to enable the Governor, if he desired, to establish, for example, an Executive Council or an Advisory Council of a wider character. At the end of the period of direct rule under Section 139, the normal operation of the Government of Burma Act, 1935, would be resumed until such period as it was replaced by a constitution of a different character. That would be the stage at which Burma would be in a position to discuss what her final constitution should be; and when, in due course, agreement had been reached on that matter, and the other necessary preliminary conditions had been satisfied (in particular, the conclusion of whatever treaty or other arrangement was required to safeguard the continuing obligations of His Majesty's Government in Burma and the repayment of sums advanced to her by the Imperial Exchequer) Burma would attain full self-government within the British Commonwealth.

The Secretary of State did not expect the proposed legislation to be controversial. He would propose, if the War Cabinet approved, to publish the statement circulated with W.P. (45) 280 as part of a White Paper on Burma which would be circulated at the same time as the draft Bill and preferably before Whitsuntide. It was important, both for the Supreme Commander and in view of public opinion in the United States, that our proposals should be made known as soon as possible.

*The Lord Chancellor* suggested that the opening sentence of the draft statement circulated with W.P. (45) 280 should be amended to avoid any suggestion that we regarded ourselves as responsible for "establishing" full self-government in Burma. This would provoke a demand that we should discharge a similar responsibility for "establishing" self-government in India, in default of agreement among the main sections of political opinion in India. He suggested, as an alternative phrase, "the considered policy of His Majesty's Government to use their best endeavours to promote full self-government in Burma." *The Secretary of State for Burma* accepted this amendment and suggested that any members of the India Committee who might have other comments to make on the draft statement should send them to him direct.

**The War Cabinet—**

- (1) Approved the recommendations of the India Committee as set out in W.P. (45) 275.
- (2) Approved the general lines of the draft statement circulated with W.P. (45) 280, subject to any comments which Ministers might send direct to the Secretary of State for Burma.
- (3) Invited the Secretary of State for Burma to submit a proof of the proposed White Paper to the War Cabinet.

**Parliament.**

Electoral  
Reform.  
(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (45) 47th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 3.)

6. At their meeting on the 20th April the War Cabinet had invited the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland to hold informal consultations with the Members of Parliament who had served on the Speaker's Conference and with the Chief Party Agents, on the proposals made in Section I (a) and (b) of W.P. (45) 215 regarding the maximum scale of candidates' expenses and, pending this, had agreed to postpone further consideration of the remaining proposals in W.P. (45) 215.

The War Cabinet now had before them, in addition to W.P. (45) 215—

- (i) Memorandum by the Home Secretary (W.P. (45) 279) reporting the result of these informal consultations; and
- (ii) Memorandum by the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Scotland (W.P. (45) 278) on defects in the May electoral register.

The War Cabinet considered first the maximum scale of candidates' expenses.

*The Home Secretary* explained that, in the consultations which he had held at the War Cabinet's request, no Member had advocated an increase of more than 25 per cent. in the maximum scale of expenses recommended by the Speaker's Conference. A minority in each Party had favoured a 25 per cent. increase, and the general feeling had been definitely against departing from the recommendations of the Speaker's Conference. He was himself still inclined to think that a 25 per cent. increase would be justified; but the scale of candidates' expenses was essentially a matter for the House of Commons, and he accordingly recommended that the Bill as introduced should prescribe the scale recommended by the Speaker's Conference. It could then be left to the House to decide, if the point were raised, whether the scale should be temporarily increased and, if so, by what amount.

The War Cabinet then turned to a preliminary discussion of the proposals in Section I (c) (i) to (iv) of W.P. (45) 215 and in W.P. (45) 278. No decisions were reached, but it was agreed that the Departments might proceed with the preparation of a Bill on the basis of the proposals in W.P. (45) 215 and W.P. (45) 279. It would not, of course, be possible to secure the passage of this Bill in time for an election held earlier than October 1945.

The War Cabinet—

- (1) Invited the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland, in the light of the discussion, to prepare and submit to them the draft of an Electoral (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.
- (2) Agreed to give further consideration to the issues raised in W.P. (45) 215, W.P. (45) 279 and W.P. (45) 278 when they had the draft Bill before them.

**General  
Election.**

Paper.  
(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (45) 47th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 6.)

7. At their meeting on the 20th April the War Cabinet had invited the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider, in conjunction with the Ministers concerned, the practical arrangements required to give effect to the scheme which they had approved in principle for the allocation of paper for the General Election.

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer* reported that he had held a meeting on the 30th April with the Home Secretary, the Minister of Education, the Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Air (Lord Sherwood) and the Chief Party Agents, at which it had been agreed that paper should be allocated to Party Headquarters for central purposes on the basis of one ton per candidate with a bonus of five tons (or such lesser amount as would bring their total allocation up to forty tons) for Parties with less than forty candidates. The Paper Controller would license the appropriate quantity of paper for each Party Headquarters on being



notified by them of the number of candidates which they expected to run and on receiving an undertaking that they would not use a greater amount of paper than that to which they would eventually be entitled on the basis proposed. Party Headquarters would be called on to notify to the Paper Controller in due course the number of actual candidates and the tonnage of paper used. Where the number of actual candidates exceeded the estimate the necessary additional paper would be made available. As stated in paragraph 5 of the Annex to W.P. (45) 241, it was understood that quotas allocated to individual candidates would not be transferable and that both Party Headquarters and individual candidates would restrict their acquisitions of paper to the quotas made available to them in accordance with the approved allocations.

#### The War Cabinet—

Approved the arrangements outlined by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the allocation of paper for the General Election.

#### Parliament.

Electoral  
Reform:  
Voting  
Arrangements  
for Members  
of the Forces.  
(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (45) 2nd  
Conclusions,  
Minute 7.)

8. *The Home Secretary* informed the War Cabinet that the War Office had not found it possible to distribute until the 1st May the appropriate application forms under the scheme of postal voting for the Forces. A considerable number of these forms would no doubt be returned during May, but those from more distant areas, notably Burma, might not be returned before the end of June. If, therefore, a General Election were held before July there was a danger that some members of the Forces who would still be fighting in the front line would not be able to vote by post.

#### The War Cabinet—

Took note of this statement.

#### Arrangements for Celebrating the End of Hostilities in Europe.

Parliament.  
(Previous  
Reference:  
W.M. (45) 53rd  
Conclusions.)

9. *The Prime Minister* informed the War Cabinet that he had received a letter from Mr. Speaker on the questions (i) whether Parliament should be specially summoned if an announcement that hostilities had ceased in Europe were to be made on a day when Parliament would not be sitting; and (ii) whether it would not be preferable that the proposed service at St. Margaret's, Westminster, should be held on the day following that announcement.

He had reviewed, in the light of Mr. Speaker's letter, the arrangements approved by the War Cabinet on the 27th April. He was disposed to think that it would not be desirable to call Parliament together if the announcement fell to be made during a week-end adjournment. He proposed to inform Mr. Speaker accordingly; and he would add, on the second question, that if the announcement were made on a day when Parliament was not sitting, the service in St. Margaret's, Westminster, should be held on the first sitting day thereafter. If, on the other hand, the House of Commons was in session when the time came to make the announcement, he would, after his broadcast announcement, come to the House and ask leave to interrupt business in order to make an announcement in the House; and in that event it would seem appropriate that the House should adjourn that same day for a short service of thanksgiving in St. Margaret's, Westminster.

It was pointed out in discussion that, if the service in St. Margaret's were held at short notice, the more elaborate arrangements proposed by Mr. Speaker could not be put into effect; and there would be special difficulty in carrying out the full programme if the service had to be held after 6 p.m. The general view of the War Cabinet was, however, that if the announcement of the end of hostilities were made on a day when Parliament was sitting, the service in St. Margaret's should be held on the same day.



The War Cabinet—

Invited the Prime Minister to reply to Mr. Speaker's letter in the sense indicated above; and to arrange for Members of Parliament to be informed that it was not proposed to summon a special meeting of Parliament if the announcement of the end of hostilities were made while Parliament stood adjourned for the week-end.

*Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,  
4th May, 1945.*

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