WAR CABINET

MOST SECRET

W.M.(45) 135TH CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 4

Confidential Annex

(5th October, 1943 – 5:30 p.m.) [[1]](#footnote-1)

[…]

THE PRIME MINSTER said that he thought the importance of the Conference lay primarily of the opportunity which it could afford of ascertaining the views of the Russians. He though it would be a mistake to try and define too clearly, at this stage, our own attitudes towards the difficult questions raised in the Foreign Secretary’s memorandum[[2]](#footnote-2); and he deprecated, in particular, any attempts to roach binding conclusions of these questions.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said that while he recognised that no cut and dried decisions could be given, it would be helpful for him to know the mind of his colleagues on the specific points set out in paragraph 15 of his memorandum.

The War Cabinet proceeded to discuss seriatim the points set out in the paragraph 15 of the memorandum.

“As regards the political future of Germany, (U.K.?) Government still have an open mind as between (i) a unitary Germany with a Central Government, (ii) a decentralised administration on a federal or a confederal basis or (iii) the splitting up of Germany into a number of separate states. We should, however, do all in our power to encourage and particularist movements in Germany.”

The general view of the War Cabinet was that, while we should like to see a united Germany give place to a number of separate states and should certainly encourage any separatist movements which might develop, it was impossible to foresee at this stage whether it would in the event be practicable to bring about the such a solution: and many Ministers doubted the feasibility of forcing a solution on these lines on an unwilling Germany.

One view advanced in discussion was that increasing power of Russia might make it inexpedient to carry too far a policy of breaking up the unity of Germany[[3]](#footnote-3). Another view put forward was that, even though it proved impracticable to secure that the whole of Germany was divided into separate States, there was in any event much to be said for isolating and possibly even dismembering Prussia, whose evil influence had twice been responsible for a European war, and at the same time encouraging the formation of a Danubian Federation based on Vienna[[4]](#footnote-4).

[…]

The War Cabinet took the view that it would be inexpedient for the United Nations to assume the heavy and invidious tasks involved in assuming direct responsibility for the administration of Germany after the war. On the other hand, the view was expressed that there were certain matters in which control by inter-Allied bodies would be inevitable. For example, United Nations must be in a position to insist on the reform of the Law Courts so as to ensure the impartial administration of justice, and the control of the Press and broadcasting.

[…]

The War Cabinet then discussed the Memorandum by the Foreign Secretary on the proposed Anglo-Soviet Agreement about the conclusion of treaties with the lesser European Allies and its bearing upon the relations between the U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia and Poland (W.P. (43) 423[[5]](#footnote-5)).

The War Cabinet expressed general approval of the main purport of the Foreign Secretary’s Memorandum namely, that we should deprecate the conclusion of bilateral arrangements between Russia and Czechoslovakia or between Russia and other European countries, which would prejudice the prospect of concluding at a later date a satisfactory settlement of the Soviet-Polish difficulties. On these grounds the Cabinet were in general disposed to favour the adoption of a “self-denying ordinance” as set out in Annex I of the Memorandum, if the Russians could be persuaded to conclude such an agreement

[…]

[TNA, Cabinet Office (hereafter – CAB) 65/40]

Keywords: Post-war Germany, inter-allied relations

1. This part of the meeting of the War Cabinet was specifically devoted to the discussion about the upcoming Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers of the USSR, the US and the UK. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Memorandum "Germany", signed off by Eden, was sent to the members of the War Cabinet on 27 September. In it, the British Foreign Secretary, not excluding the dismemberment of Germany after the war as “the most drastic action”, expressed his opinion that decentralization - i.e. “reorganization on a federal or confederal basis” – “might offer the best prospect of developing a stable democratic régime in Germany” (WP (43) 421, Memo by Eden, 27/09/1943 // TNA, CAB 66/41). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The negative outlook on plans for Germany’s dismemberment was also characteristic of the position of the Foreign Office, as stated in March 1943: "... difficult to escape the conclusion that a policy involving the dismemberment or even the severe truncation of Germany ... would be little conductive to the establishment of a permanent system of world security] (WP (43) 96, Memo by Eden, 08/03/1943 // TNA, CAB 66/34). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This view is consistent with the position voiced by Churchill on 1 December 1943 at the Tehran Conference. The Prime Minister stressed the need for the ‘isolation of Prussia’ and the formation of the Danubian confederation detached from Germany and including Bavaria, Württemberg, the Palatinate, Saxony and Baden, See: Sovetskiy Soyuz na mezhdunarodnykh konferentsiyakh perioda Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny, 1941–1945 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov. T. 2. Tegeranskaya konferentsiya rukovoditeley trekh soyuznykh derzhav – SSSR, SSHА i Velikobritanii (28 noyabrya – 1 dekabrya 1943 g.). M., 1978. S. 166. Britanskaya zapis’ besedy v: W.P. (44) 8, 07/01/1944 // TNA, CAB 66/45. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, A. Eden, “Proposed Anglo-Soviet Agreement regarding the Conclusion of Treaties with the Lesser European Allies and Its Bearing upon Relations between the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Poland”, dated 28 September (TNA, PREM, 3/355/6). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)