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C.O.S.(39) 62nd Meeting. COPY NO. 31

WAR CABINET.

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE.

MINUTES of Meeting, held on 29th October, 1939, at 11.15 a.m.

PRESENT:-

Air Vice-Marshal R.E.C. Peirse, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, (representing the Chief of the Air Staff). (In the Chair).

Major-General H.R. Massy, Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff, (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Rear-Admiral T.S.V. Phillips, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, (representing the First Sea Lord and the Chief of Naval Staff).

SECRETARIAT.

Colonel Hollis.
Major Cornwall-Jones.
Captain Barnard.

1. SUMMARY OF INFORMATION.

THE COMMITTEE took note of the Summary of Information received between 0700 hours, 28th October, and 0700 hours, 29th October.

2. MILITARY MISSION TO TURKEY.

(Previous reference: C.O.S. (39) 61st Conclusions Minute 4)

THE COMMITTEE had before them Angora Telegrams Nos. 673 and 681, in which the Turkish Government's wishes that no formal Military Mission should be sent to Turkey were expressed. The point was made that the arrival of a Senior Officer such as General Butler would be impossible to conceal. Reference was made to War Office Cypher Telegram No. 6011 of 27th October, to the G.O.C.-in-C., Middle East, from which it was clear that General Butler and one Staff Officer would leave Egypt for Turkey on 30th October unless otherwise instructed.

It was agreed:-

That in view of Angora Telegrams Nos. 673 and 681 the departure of General Butler for Turkey should be postponed, pending further consideration and discussion between the War Office and the Foreign Office of the desirability of despatching so senior an Officer.

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3. ALLIED POLICY IN ITALIAN EAST AFRICA.

(Previous reference: C.O.S. (39) 62nd Meeting, Minute 6)

THE COMMITTEE had before them a Note by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee, submitting a draft Paper to be handed to the French, on this subject. (Paper No. C.O.S.(39)100(J.P.)).

Some discussion took place on the advantages and disadvantages of establishing now a Red Sea zone headquarters. On balance it was agreed that there was little advantage and the fact that its establishment must sooner or later become known in Italy was a disadvantage which outweighed all other considerations.

GENERAL MASSY pointed out that the views expressed in the memorandum for transmission to the French were in direct contradiction to the views expressed by General Gamelin. He suggested that an addition should be made to the reply, stating that any contribution we might make to forces for operations against Italian East Africa could but detract from the effort we were making on the Western Front. This would have the effect of making our reply less uncompromising.

It was agreed:-

To approve the draft reply* to the French General Staff (Paper No. C.O.S.(39)100(J.P.)) subject to the inclusion of the amendment suggested by the Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

4. CONTRABAND CONTROL IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

(Paper No. C.O.S.(39)103(J.P.)).

THE COMMITTEE had before them a Note by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee submitting a draft Report on this subject (Paper No. C.O.S.(39)103(J.P.)).

The following points emerged in the course of discussion:-

(a) There was insufficient evidence in the Foreign Office memorandum to support the conclusion "That the present system of control of maritime traffic entering the Mediterranean from the Black Sea is dangerously unsatisfactory". (Annex I, Paper No. C.O.S.(39)103(J.P.)).

(b) The view was expressed that it might still be possible at least until German submarines appeared in the Mediterranean, to make Contraband Control of the Dardanelles reasonably effective by placing a patrol at the entrance to the Dardanelles and by diverting traffic thence for examination at either Haifa or Malta. As far as could be seen it was only Adriatic traffic which would suffer. This question required further detailed examination, by the Admiralty in collaboration with the Ministry of Economic Warfare.

* Subsequently circulated as Paper No. C.O.S. (39) 104.

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(c) The Report by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee did not deal in sufficient detail with the military implications of an infringement of Greek neutrality. In the last war there had been some justification for the use of Mudros in that the legal position of the island was at the time in dispute. The present day position was fundamentally different in that the harbour of Mudros was an undisputed Greek possession. If we were to use it as a base for Contraband Control, either with or without Greek connivance, Germany would be provided with a first-class excuse for counter action in Swedish and Danish waters.

It was agreed:-

To refer the draft Report on Contraband Control in the Mediterranean (Paper No. C.O.S.(39)103(J.P.)) to the Joint Planning Sub-Committee with a view to a re-examination of the subject in the light of the discussion recorded above, in conjunction with the Ministry of Economic Warfare.

Central War Room.

29th October, 1939.

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