

SECRET

MEMORANDUM

*Circulated with Agenda  
Oct 6.  
W-41  
(Supplementary Note - filed with  
Document W-41)*

*C-10-3-2*  
**SECRET**  
CABINET WAR COMMITTEE  
Document No. 302.....

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CABINET WAR COMMITTEE

WAR CRIMINALS

There have been discussions between the United States and the United Kingdom in recent weeks regarding the desirability of establishing a United Nations Commission on Atrocities, and regarding the announcement of some policy with respect to the punishment of war criminals at the conclusion of hostilities. It is felt that a fact-finding Commission composed of persons of world wide reputation for integrity could help keep the people of the United Nations informed and could deter those committing atrocities by naming them and letting them know they will be punished. The Commission would investigate atrocities against United Nations nationals, reporting to the governments from time to time, directing their attention to organized atrocities and, if possible naming persons responsible. Membership would be confined to the United Nations. The Commission itself might be divided into panels.

As regards punishment of war criminals, the United Kingdom is of the opinion that provision should be included in armistice terms for immediate capture or surrender of wanted criminals. This might prove impossible if left over until after the conclusion of a peace treaty. Lists included in armistice terms, however, should not be regarded as exclusive. Each peace treaty should subsequently contain provisions required to supplement action envisioned in the armistice.

The United Kingdom proposes to utilize a motion in the House of Lords on October 7th to announce its adoption of the above mentioned policy regarding war criminals. They propose also to announce their desire to see established a fact-finding Atrocities Commission composed of nationals of the United Nations.

The United Kingdom would like to announce at the same time that Dominion and Allied governments also favour these proposals. The United States, Soviet and Chinese governments, Dominion governments, Allied governments in London and the French National Committee are all being consulted.

October 6, 1942.

A. D. P. Heeney,  
Secretary

Minutes and Documents of the Cabinet War Committee,  
Volume XI, October - December 1942, (R.G. 2, 7c, Volume 11)

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