WAR CABINET PAPERS (227–308 inclusive).

September 3rd, 1917, to December 31st, 1917, with Subject Index.
WAR CABINET PAPERS (227–303 inclusive).

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War Cabinet Papers (227 to 308, inclusive).

(September 3 to December 31, 1917.)

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE WAR CABINET HELD AT 10, DOWNING STREET, S.W., ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1917, AT 11:30 A.M.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON. A. BONAR LAW, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner,

The Right Hon. Sir E. CARSON, K.C., M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon.

J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The following were also present:-


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 12).

Major-General F. B. MAURICE, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 and 2).

Major-General Sir G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 1 to 3).

Mr. H. C. LAMBERT, C.B., Colonial Office (for Minute 15).

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL SIR M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Captain L. S. AMERY, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Major L. STORR, Assistant Secretary.

1. WITH reference to the formation of a regiment from the foreign—mainly Russian—Jews in this country, the Secretary of State for War informed the War Cabinet that he had received a very influential deputation of Jews, who had objected to the title "The Jewish Regiment" which had been sanctioned by the War Office. The deputation had urged that some 40,000 Jews had served with distinction in the British forces, and that it was not fair to them to stake the whole reputation of English Jews as fighters on the performance of this regiment. In view of this, the Secretary of State for War proposed to abandon the title of "The Jewish Regiment"
Regiment," and to give the regiment a number, leaving open the
question of adding any further designation which might express
the particular character or aspiration of the regiment, but which
would not involve the fighting reputation of Jews in the army
generally. He also insisted that he could not guarantee to keep the
regiment, or even a particular battalion of it, filled up with recruits
who all shared the Zionist aspirations.

He hoped eventually to form four battalions, composed in the
main of Foreign Jews. These would be compulsorily enlisted in this
regiment. A certain number of English Jews would be attached for
the purpose of instruction, and some had already volunteered for
that purpose, but there would be no compulsion in that connection.

In the discussion that followed it was pointed out that even
with Irish and Scotch regiments it has not always proved possible
to maintain the original character of the units in the drafts sent out
afterwards. It was generally agreed that there was a close
connection between this subject and the question of the attitude to
be taken up towards the Zionist movement as a whole.

The War Cabinet decided—

That for the present the battalions to be formed from Jewish
recruits should receive numbers in the ordinary way, and
without any distinctive title, without prejudice to the
reconsideration of the question of the distinctive title if
a definite demand in favour of the change were substan-
tially established and circumstances favoured such a policy.

2. The War Cabinet had under consideration correspondence
which had passed between the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
and Lord Rothschild on the question of the policy to be adopted
towards the Zionist movement (G.T.-1803). In addition to the
draft declaration of policy included in the above correspondence,
they had before them an alternative draft prepared by Lord Milner
(G.T.-1803 a). They had also before them a Memorandum by
Mr. Montagu entitled "The Anti-Semitism of the present Govern-
ment."

It was suggested that a question raising such important issues
as to the future of Palestine ought, in the first instance, to be
discussed with our Allies, and more particularly with the United
States.

On the question of submitting Lord Milner's draft for the
consideration of the United States Government, Mr. Montagu urged
that the use of the phrase "the home of the Jewish people" would
vitally prejudice the position of every Jew elsewhere and expand
the argument contained in his Memorandum. Against this it was
urged that the existence of a Jewish State or autonomous community
in Palestine would strengthen rather than weaken the situation of
Jews in countries where they were not yet in possession of equal
rights, and that in countries like England, where they possessed
such rights and were identified with the nation of which they were
citizens, their position would be unaffected by the existence of a
national Jewish community elsewhere. The view was expressed
that, while a small influential section of English Jews were opposed
to the idea, large numbers were sympathetic to it, but in the
interests of Jews who wished to go from countries where they were
less favourably situated, rather than from any idea of wishing to go
to Palestine themselves.

With reference to a suggestion that the matter might be
postponed, the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed
out that this was a question on which the Foreign Office had been
very strongly pressed for a long time past. There was a very strong
and enthusiastic organisation, more particularly in the United States,
who were zealous in this matter, and his belief was that it would be
of most substantial assistance to the Allies to have the earnestness and enthusiasm of these people enlisted on our side. To do nothing was to risk a direct breach with them, and it was necessary to face this situation.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The views of President Wilson should be obtained before any declaration was made, and requested the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform the Government of the United States that His Majesty's Government were being pressed to make a declaration in sympathy with the Zionist movement, and to ascertain their views as to the advisability of such a declaration being made.

The Position of Northern Neutal Countries.

3. The War Cabinet approved the report of Sir Edward Carson's Committee on the position of northern neutral countries (War Cabinet 191, Minute 9). In doing so they took note of Lord Robert Cecil's dissent from the views of the Committee as to the undesirability of the intervention of the northern countries. Lord Robert Cecil developed his views on this subject and suggested that it was not desirable to convey to the United States the impression that we, under all circumstances, regarded the intervention of those countries as undesirable. He also urged more particularly the desirability of giving our diplomatic representatives a definite lead on the matter, so that they should not be at a disadvantage if a critical situation arose suddenly.

The First Sea Lord intimated that the time might come, but had not yet arrived, when the establishment of a naval base in Norway might be of great advantage from the point of view of an active offensive against enemy submarines.

The War Cabinet decided—

That the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should entrust a copy of the report to Sir W. Wiseman, who should pass it on to Lord Reading with permission to show it to President Wilson, with the proviso that no copy of the report should be taken.

The War Cabinet further decided—

That a copy of the portion of the report of the Committee which dealt with Holland should be communicated in the utmost secrecy to the British Minister at The Hague.

Lord Robert Cecil was instructed that, if any further development of the Norwegian situation took place, he should again bring the matter before the War Cabinet.

Lord Reading's Mission.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 223, Minute 16, the Secretary was given full authority to permit Lord Reading to take any secret War Cabinet documents he might require on his forthcoming visit to America. The Secretary stated that he had satisfied himself that arrangements had been made by Colonel Swinton (who is accompanying Lord Reading) for the safety of the documents, both on the voyage and in the United States of America.

The Secretary was particularly instructed to include among the documents to be taken by Colonel Swinton for Lord Reading's use a copy of a Memorandum on Naval Policy prepared by the Admiralty for the Imperial War Cabinet.

Air Raids.

5. The Director of Military Operations gave particulars of the air raid on Dover which had taken place on the previous night in brilliant moonlight.

The First Sea Lord reported that Dunkirk had also been heavily bombed on the same night.
Arrival of U.S.A. Troops in Europe.

6. With reference to paragraph 45 of the Report of the Cabinet Committee on War Policy (W.P.-4C), the Director of Military Operations informed the War Cabinet that there was now one complete division of United States troops in France. It was expected that there would be further arrivals of two divisions in October, three in November, four in January, three in February, and so on, amounting to a total of twenty divisions by the middle of June next. These, with the auxiliary services, would number roughly about half a million men. It must be remembered that they would arrive untrained, but arrangements were being made for the training to take place in France. It was not proposed by the United States authorities to put any troops in the line this winter, because they did not wish their men to enter the line until they had a complete army ready. It was understood, however, that the French proposed to make representations in favour of an earlier participation by the United States troops.

Eastern Front.

7. The Director of Military Operations stated that the Germans have crossed the Dvina and are reported to be advancing northward on Riga, which no doubt they want for winter headquarters. Unfortunately there was no indication of any serious resistance on the part of the Russians.

Rumoured German Activity in the Baltic.

8. With regard to the rumours of German naval activity in the Eastern Baltic, the First Sea Lord reported that our Naval Attaché at Petrograd had made inquiries, but found no confirmation of the stories.

Escaped German Prisoners.

9. The First Sea Lord reported that the six German prisoners who had escaped from Alnmouth on the 30th August in an open boat, after first being spoken by a fishing trawler, had been captured by a destroyer 150 miles east of the Tyne.

As regards escaped prisoners generally, the Director of Military Operations gave the following particulars showing that the supervision in England was far more effective than in other countries.

There were about 200 German prisoners from French prisoners of war camps loose in France; 492 Russians who had escaped from Germany through Holland were now in England, and many more were in Holland waiting to come; but in this country there were only 18 German prisoners at large.

Naval Engagement Off Jutland.

10. The First Sea Lord gave particulars of the engagement of which the news had already appeared in the press. The German minesweepers were escorting submarines, one of which was reported hit. There was no evidence as yet that territorial waters had been infringed by us.

Convoys.

11. The First Sea Lord reported that the armed boarding steamer “Dundee,” escorting a Gibraltar convoy, had been torpedoed 180 miles from Scilly. So far as was known the rest of the convoy were proceeding safely.

Air Organisation Committee.

12. The War Cabinet agreed to the request of the Minister of Munitions that his department should be represented on General Smuts’ Committee. (War Cabinet 223, Minute 12.)
13. With reference to War Cabinet 226, Minute 5, the War Cabinet had before them a Note by the Secretary (G.T.-1895). The arguments therein set forth were discussed.

The First Lord said that the Americans and French wanted to discuss the amount of shipping required for the transport of United States troops and supplies. He suggested that this discussion should take the form of a private consultation between ourselves and the United States representatives, and should not form part of an Allied Conference. As the main advantage to be obtained from the Conference is to reduce the amount of material to be transported from America, this course commended itself to the War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet decided—

That the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Shipping Controller should discuss the matter with a view to separate consultation with the United States representatives alone, and that it should be explained to the other Allies, if they make inquiries, that this course was being pursued, having regard to the delicate situation that had arisen over the ownership of merchant ships under construction in American yards for British account.

14. With reference to a telegram from the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia asking for fuller information on the submarine campaign and the progress of the war generally, the War Cabinet considered the question of the communication of information on these matters to the Dominions. It was agreed that as full information as was practicable should be sent.

Mr. Lambert, on behalf of the Colonial Office, suggested that, in addition to the information on current events regularly furnished to the Dominions, it was desirable to communicate from time to time general memoranda reviewing the situation as a whole, or dealing with some particular feature of the war, such as have recently been communicated to the United States Government.

The War Cabinet decided—

That the Secretariat should, in consultation with the Departments concerned, amplify the information conveyed in the fortnightly telegrams, and should also select from among the War Cabinet papers, or arrange for the preparation of, such memoranda as would enable the Prime Ministers of the Dominions to be fully apprised of the general situation. The first step should be, so far as practicable, to answer the specific questions put by Mr. Hughes, the answer to which should also be communicated to the Prime Ministers of the other Dominions.

(Initialled) A. B. L.
WAR CABINET, 228.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, September 5, 1917, at 11:15 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair for Minutes 1 to 10).

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:—


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.

General Sir W. Robertson, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1 to 20).


Lieutenant-General Sir D. Henderson, K.C.B., D.S.C., Director-General of Military Aeronautics (for Minute 1 to 10).


Vice-Admiral Sir H. F. Oliver, K.C.B., M.V.O., Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 18).

Commodore G. M. Paine, C.B., M.V.O., Fifth Sea Lord of the Admiralty (for Minutes 1 to 10).

The Right Hon. the Viscount Cowdray, President, Air Board (for Minutes 5 to 9).

Sir W. Weir, Controller of Aeronautical Supplies, Air Board (for Minutes 5 to 9).

The Right Hon. Sir J. Maclay, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minutes 22 and 23).

Mr. A. L. Dixon, Home Office (for Minutes 1 and 7).

SECRET.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.
Captain L. S. Amery, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
1. THE War Cabinet were informed that during the air raid on the South-Eastern Counties and London on the previous night 40 bombs had been dropped in the Metropolitan area, and 12 persons killed, of whom 3 were soldiers, and 60 persons injured, of whom 8 were soldiers, and 1 was a seaman belonging to the United States Navy.

Three bombs were dropped at Orford and two at Kelvedon in Essex, but no casualties took place. Twelve bombs were dropped on Dover, 2 people being killed and 7 wounded. Five bombs were dropped on Margate, 8 people being wounded.

The War Cabinet were informed by the Military Authorities that our aircraft went up, but were not able to discover the enemy's machines, such being at night almost a matter of impossibility.

2. It was stated that information had been received that a special squadron of from 30 to 40 Gotha machines had been provided for the express purpose of bombing English towns, and that up to the present it had not been possible to bring this squadron up to its full strength.

Their aerodrome had only just been definitely located, and instructions had been sent to Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig that it was to be attacked as soon as possible.

3. Military experts present stated that the only real defence against night raids by enemy aeroplanes was the destruction of their bases, and that no local means of keeping off such attacks had yet been discovered. Many examples were given of night raids both by our own aircraft and by the enemy in France and Flanders on positions where a large amount of aerial protection was available.

Lord French stated that, provided the range was not over 6,000 feet, which might perhaps be extended to 9,000 feet, a possible local means of defence appeared to be numerous searchlights of a more powerful type than those at present in use, experiment having shown that within that range they had a very bewildering effect on the pilots. Only one such powerful searchlight was at present available for the defence of London, but six more had been ordered in France, and it was hoped would be supplied in the near future.

4. The War Cabinet discussed the question of issuing orders so as to enforce people to take cover when an air raid was imminent or probable, but the views held were that, though it was highly desirable to issue a strong warning that people should not remain in the streets, it was impossible, owing to night shifts and for other reasons, to prohibit movement in the streets during fixed hours. It was felt, however, that as these air raids might become very frequent in the future, it was highly desirable to organise shelters and to issue instructions as to their occupation prior to the attack taking place, and even to consider the question of dug-outs.

5. The War Cabinet further felt that we must carry the aerial war into Germany, not merely on the ground of reprisal; and that enquiries must be made as to how soon and in what manner this offensive aerial warfare could be adopted. In this connection Sir William Weir stated that machines capable of carrying out bombing expeditions were now being delivered, and that as regards any further development of aeroplanes (in addition to the
programme of 3,000 a month from the United Kingdom and 1,000 a month from our Allies and United States of America), it was a question of increasing the supply of engines, which were the determining factor as regards output. He stated that every source of production had been considered, and that the matter was entirely one of priority as regards skilled labour and supply of materials. As regards the provision of pilots for any increased programme, Sir David Henderson stated that the training of pilots was only limited by the number of training machines supplied.

6. The War Cabinet requested General Smuts to hold an investigation into the last two nights' raids and favour the War Cabinet with his views as to the provision of protection for the civil population in the future, and his proposals as to carrying the air war into Germany at the earliest possible moment.

7. The War Cabinet decided—

That the Home Office should carefully examine all the available evidence in regard to the casualties that had arisen under cover and out of doors. It was stated that the investigations already made by the Home Office in conjunction with the Military Authorities proved conclusively the advantage of taking cover in buildings and preferably in the lower floors. It was decided to issue in the evening papers a notice drawing attention to the comparative safety which is ensured by taking cover, and impressing the same on the general public.

Sir Edward Carson undertook to approve the draft on behalf of the War Cabinet.

8. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff reported that the casualties at Chatham Depot amounted to 110 killed, 115 wounded, and 8 slightly wounded.

9. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff pointed out that the publication of casualties in navy and military personnel was a great assistance and encouragement to the enemy. Lord French concurred with this view. Sir David Henderson drew attention to the assistance rendered to the enemy by the publication of any casualties, particularly when the district was specified as in the case of the recent raid on Chatham.

The War Cabinet decided—

That in future announcements as to casualties, those from the Navy and Army should not be included, but should be looked upon as the ordinary casualties of warlike operations.

As regards the question of not publishing any further numerical lists of casualties caused by air raids, the War Cabinet felt that no decision could be taken in such a matter until they had the benefit of the views of the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, but that as regards the locality in which the casualties arose no communication should in future be made.

10. Lord French informed the War Cabinet that a submarine had yesterday fired thirty rounds, of which half had fallen into the sea, at Scarborough. Little material damage had been done, and the vessel had been driven off by the fire of some minesweepers.
11. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated with reference to War Cabinet 227, Minute 7, that the retreating Russian force was of 21 divisions, whereas the advancing German force consisted of only 6 divisions. Four brigades of Russian cavalry and 4 more divisions were being sent with a view to stopping the retreat.

12. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that information had been received to the effect that Djemal Pasha had been recalled to Constantinople, where an autograph letter from the Kaiser had been delivered to him asking him to visit Berlin for a few months.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 224, Minute 7, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that both General Foch and General Cadorna were agreed that no useful purpose would be served in holding a Conference at the present stage. The War Cabinet also took note of G.T.-1929, which indicated that M. Boselli could not attend a Conference on the 15th September and suggested that it should now be postponed till the second week in October.

14. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff informed the War Cabinet that one of our aircraft had dropped bombs on a submarine in the North Sea on the 3rd September, and had probably sunk her. Search was being made for the wreck.

On the 4th September two “America” seaplanes had attacked a submarine on the surface east of Harwich and obtained direct hits with 250-lb. bombs. The submarine sank stern first.

15. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff reported that two bombardments of Ostend had been made by the Dover Force on the 4th September, fourteen rounds being fired on each occasion. The fire from the enemy batteries had been heavy, but our vessels sustained no damage.

16. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff reported that two air raids had been carried out on Bruges Docks and that 7½ tons of bombs had been dropped. Sheds had been set on fire, and apparently a considerable amount of damage had been effected.

17. It was brought to the notice of the War Cabinet that the present system of convoys resulted in difficulties in working the cargoes at the ports concerned. The War Cabinet realized that this was inevitable, but that doubtless steps could be taken to obviate the same. Sir Eric Geddes stated that with regard to losses in convoys of late, it was due to such convoys being separated by bad weather, and that on the whole the convoy system had up to the present proved satisfactory.

18. The War Cabinet had under consideration the Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (G.T.-1839), the Corrigendum from the First Lord of the Admiralty (G.T.-1839a), and the Memorandum of the Secretary of State for India (G.T.-1927) on the subject of the award of medals.
The War Cabinet decided—

That the matter should be dealt with by the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Treasury working in co-operation, and that they should consult the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Secretary of State for India as may be requisite.

The War Cabinet further decided—

That owing to the present state of the market and the effect the purchase of silver would have on Indian finance, &c., that if the Departments decided the medal should be made of silver no purchases of that metal should be made under present market conditions. They suggested that enquiries should be made as to the possibility of using some alloy.

19. The Secretary of State for War drew the attention of the War Cabinet to his Memorandum G.T.-1934 re a decoration for the troops that were serving abroad in 1914.

The War Cabinet fully endorsed the resolution passed by the Army Council on this subject at their meeting on 3rd September.

20. The War Cabinet discussed a memorandum by Lord Robert Cecil on the desirability of sending a Military Mission to the Serbian Army (G.T.-1913). There was general agreement that it was desirable to take steps to encourage the Serbian Government and Army and to make them realise that we take an interest in them, and that it was no objection to such steps being taken that they might not meet with General Sarrai's approval, or might even contribute to bringing about his withdrawal.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to appoint to Serbian Headquarters an officer of suitable seniority as liaison officer, this officer to report direct to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

21. With reference to War Cabinet 226, Minute 8, Lord Milner stated that he had received a letter from the Russian Naval Representative in this country asking that the 14-inch guns which were awaiting shipment and had been paid for by the Russian Government should be forthwith sent to that country.

In view of the decision arrived at as recorded in the above-quoted Minute, the War Cabinet requested Lord Milner to reply that the matter would be brought before the War Cabinet next Friday, and requested the Departments concerned to be prepared to report on the subject on that date.

22. The Shipping Controller stated that arrangements had been made for a considerable quantity of supplies for Russia to be shipped during the next fortnight, and asked for instructions as to whether the orders should stand in view of the situation in Russia as reported in the Press and the possibility of the Germans advancing on Petrograd.

The War Cabinet, having been informed by their military advisers that a German advance to Petrograd this year was highly improbable, decided—

That no change should be made in the existing arrangements as to the shipment of supplies, &c., to Russia.
The Shipping Controller drew the War Cabinet's attention to the good services rendered in connection with shipping matters by Sir Thomas Royden, who is at present acting as the representative of the Ministry of Shipping in the United States of America.

Sir Thomas Royden has telegraphed asking to be relieved in October.

The War Cabinet decided—

That the Shipping Controller should send a telegram to Sir T. Royden, on behalf of the War Cabinet, expressing their appreciation of his valuable services, and asking him to postpone his departure until the shipping situation in the United States of America is settled in such a way that he feels he can leave without detriment to our interests.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
5th September, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 229.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, September 7, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

MR. BONAR LAW, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, The Right Hon. SIR EDWARD CARSON, M.P., K.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The following were also present:—


Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.


Lieutenant-Colonel W. DALLY JONES, Acting Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. ROW, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. G. M. YOUNG, Assistant Secretary.

Captain L. S. AMERY, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Advance beyond Riga.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 228, Minute 22, the War Cabinet were informed that it was not the present view of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff that the Germans might not reach Petrograd during this winter.

The War Cabinet approved the deletion of the following words from Minute 22 of War Cabinet 228: "having been informed by their Military Advisers that a German advance to Petrograd this year was highly improbable."

Supplies for Russia.

2. The War Cabinet had before them the following documents relating to assistance to Russia:—

Telegram from Mr. Young, Archangel, No. 31, dated September 3, 1917 (G.T.-1946).
Telegram from Senior Naval Officer, Archangel, dated September 5, 1917 (G.T.-1953).

Despatch from Brigadier-General Knox, dated August 10, 1917 (G.T.-1917).

These documents raised the question whether any available tonnage assigned to Russia should be allocated to munitions of war or to food. It was pointed out that the allocation of tonnage to certain specific purposes was in the nature of a bargain between the respective Governments, and should not be changed without reference to the Russian Government.

The War Cabinet decided to ask Lord Milner to examine the question that afternoon in consultation with General Knox and representatives of the Ministries of Shipping and Munitions, and to report to the War Cabinet on Monday next, the 10th September.

Naval Guns for Russia.

3. In continuation of War Cabinet 228, Minute 21, Major-General Furse informed the War Cabinet that he had conferred with the Ministry of Munitions and the Admiralty, and the conclusion had been reached that though use could be made of these 14-inch guns, and that consequently it was desirable to retain them—their value was not of an immediate nature, and it was not recommended that we should bargain for their retention by the offer of heavy guns or howitzers of our own approved patterns.

The six Russian guns were of a different design to the other 14-inch guns in this country. Their chambers would have to be altered, and they had a short life. Moreover, owing to the method of their manufacture, they would have to be rebuilt entirely over a new "A" tube after firing the allotted number of rounds, instead of only being re-lined.

As regards mountings for the Russian guns, queries were being made, but it was probable that it would take long to alter an existing mounting as to make new ones.

Major-General Furse remarked that he hoped the Cabinet would approve the Army taking over ten 14-inch guns that were being made by Armstrong for Chili, which the Admiralty had stated they would not require. Two mountings were already under construction for two 14-inch guns obtained from the Japanese, and he hoped they would be ready by next December. If the Chilian guns were allocated to the Army, two more mountings could be ordered and should be ready for delivery by next spring. These four mountings would be sufficient for the 12 guns (including two 14-inch guns obtained from the Japanese), and would admit of the four units thus provided being maintained in action with the requisite allowance of spare guns.

The Director of Military Intelligence reminded the War Cabinet that they had decided that eight 6-inch howitzers were to be sent to Russia. He stated that the howitzers were now being packed, and enquired whether, in view of the altered conditions, it was still desired that they should be sent.

The War Cabinet were of opinion that—

The supply of these guns was part of the general question as to whether we were to continue to support Russia in view of the lack of discipline that prevailed in the Army of that country and the serious economic situation there (see Minute 13), and decided to defer further consideration of the supply until they had received Lord Milner's report on Monday next, the 10th September, when a decision would be given both as to the Russian and Chilian 14-inch guns. In the meantime no fresh shipments of munitions to Russia should be made.
4. With reference to War Cabinet 228, Minute 13, the War Cabinet, in view of the opinions expressed therein, authorised the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform the Governments concerned that the British Government concurred in the postponement of the Conference.

5. The D.M.I. informed the War Cabinet that the Italian offensive was proceeding with success, and that they had reached the summit and western and south-western part of Monte San Gabriele and had taken 600 prisoners.

On the Carso front the Austrians had carried out two heavy counter-attacks, and it was possible that the Italians, who were exposed to a very heavy bombardment, might have to effect a retirement on a portion of the western slopes of the Hermada.

6. The D.M.I. stated that the Russian retreat on the Riga front continued and that the Germans were now 50 miles east of Riga. The latter had been reinforced by three, and probably five, divisions withdrawn from other sections of the Eastern German front, which indicated that they intended to continue the advance.

7. The D.M.I. reported that he had received information, which originated from the French Military Attache at Petrograd, that there had been of late heavy explosions in several of the Russian ammunition depots in the rear, and that Kazan Depot, one of the most important in Russia, had been blown up, with heavy loss of material.

The War Cabinet requested the Director of Military Intelligence to ascertain from the British Military Attache in Russia full particulars of the losses and, if possible, the circumstances under which they took place.

8. The Director of Military Intelligence reported two successes in East Africa. It was stated that operations would be restricted next November, when the rainy season commenced.

9. The First Sea Lord reported that a convoy of twenty-seven ships had been attacked in the western part of the English Channel and that two ships had been torpedoed, but that one (an oiler) had been towed into port, the other sunk. It appeared probable that the submarine had "browned" the convoy, as the ships hit were in the middle of the same.

The First Sea Lord added that there were at present 224 ships at sea under convoy, excluding two convoys as to which the numbers comprised in the same were not yet known, but probably consisted of about eighteen ships in each.

10. In regard to the position of Norway (War Cabinet 227, Minute 3), the War Cabinet considered telegrams Nos. 3529 to Sir C. Spring-Rice and 506 from Sir M. Findlay (see Appendix), more particularly with reference to Sir M. Findlay’s enquiry whether he was to alter the policy which he had previously been instructed to pursue. In this connection the First Sea Lord explained that
the apparent discrepancy in the two opinions of the Naval Staff quoted in Sir M. Findlay's telegram was caused by the altered conditions due to the lapse of time, the progress of enemy submarine warfare, and the increased demands on our naval resources due to the necessity for starting the system of convoy through the submarine zone. For instance, at the time that it was considered that some advantage might be derived from the entry of Norway into the war it was anticipated that a destroyer flotilla which it was intended to base on the Humber would be available for Norway. This flotilla had now, however, been taken for convoy work.

The entry of Norway into the war on the side of the Allies would necessitate the appropriation of tonnage to maintain British forces at overseas bases in Norway, and the diversion of numbers of small craft now engaged in convoy work or in protecting the western trade routes against submarine attack to Norwegian waters to protect the occupied bases.

Should United States battleships or cruisers be stationed at Norwegian bases, a number of United States destroyers now engaged in protecting British trade on the western trade routes would have to be withdrawn to co-operate with the larger vessels in Norwegian waters; this would result in less protection and heavier losses of tonnage on the western trade routes. The United States naval forces in Norwegian bases would require food, stores, &c., from the United States and coal from Great Britain, necessitating further withdrawal of tonnage and more Allied lines of communication requiring protection from us. These causes would seriously affect the import of munitions and other supplies to the United Kingdom and France and the transport of troops from the United States to France. The First Sea Lord admitted, however, that we should be in a better position to help Norway in the spring, and that there might then be an advantage in her joining us.

It was strongly urged that it would be most unfortunate if Sir M. Findlay were now to be obliged to give replies to enquiries from the Norwegian Government which would practically amount to informing them that we could not help them and that they should make the best terms they could with Germany. It was worth while running a risk, which was not very great, in view of Germany's evident reluctance to force the issue, and only temporary, inasmuch as Norway's intention might be distinctly advantageous at a later stage, rather than compel Norway to throw herself entirely into Germany's arms.

The War Cabinet requested the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to explain to Sir M. Findlay the change in circumstances which, for the time being, made Norway's entry in the war undesirable from the naval point of view, but to instruct him, without actively encouraging the Norwegian Government to go to war, not to discourage them if any question arose of their standing firm against German pressure.

11. With reference to War Cabinet 228, Minute 20, the attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to the importance which the Serbian Government would attach to the status of the officers appointed at Serbian Headquarters as being, not merely a liaison officer with the British Force at Salonica, but a direct representative of the British Army with the Serbian Army as the army of an independent Allied country.
The Director of Military Intelligence explained that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had the point in mind, and was contemplating the appointment of an officer of suitable seniority who should occupy the position indicated, and who would be distinct from the officer responsible for the ordinary liaison work between the Serbian and British Armies at Salonica.

Transfer of Serbians from Russia.

12. With reference to the proposed transfer of the Serbian Volunteer Corps in Russia to the Salonica front, the Director of Military Intelligence explained that of a total of some 16,000 men, 3,100 were to have reached Archangel on the 5th September in readiness for embarkation on the 9th for Cherbourg, and thence by rail to Taranto. The remaining 13,000 were apparently being diverted to the Roumanian front, though General Barter reported they might reach Archangel by the 1st November.

The Admiralty were in a position to take the men between the 29th September and the close of navigation, but the 1st November would be too late.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to urge upon the Russian Government the desirability of letting the whole of the Serbian Volunteer Corps get away before the close of navigation.

The Situation in Russia.

13. The War Cabinet invited General Knox, who was present, to give his impressions of the Russian situation.

General Knox referred to his despatch on Supply and Transport, dated the 10th August (G.T. 1917), and said that there were three powerful forces tending to drive the Russians to make a separate peace.

The great mass of the soldiers did not want to fight. They had not wanted to fight before the Revolution, but had been forced on by their officers. There had been frequent cases of indiscipline before the Revolution; now they were quite general.

In the second place, workmen were making huge economic demands on their employers, and British manufacturers were closing factories and moving away. It was expected that there would shortly be a general lock-out. The workmen had probably enough money to last them for a month; after that time, there would be a state of anarchy. The Government had repeatedly promised to organise a militia or police force in Petrograd and Moscow, but nothing had been done.

The third force was the confusion on the railways. There was an enormous surplus of grain in the Caucasus, but the level at which the price of bread had been fixed was not such as to tempt the peasants to part with their grain. Nor would cash purchases at high prices attract them. They preferred to barter grain for goods which they actually wanted, such as agricultural implements and calico.

Force would have to be applied if the grain was to be forthcoming. The harvest in the Volga governments had been a failure, and to bring the grain from the Northern Caucasus and Western Siberia was very difficult owing to the condition of rolling stock. In June 1916, 18 per cent. of the engines were under repair; in June 1917, 24 per cent.; and the number was increasing at the rate of 2 per cent. per week. The average number of days per month worked in some of the repairing shops was only 13. Thousands of the workmen were constantly attending meetings. The American Railway Mission had not been successful, chiefly because it failed to realise the necessity of
taking the initiative in dealing with Orientals. The Russians
must be ordered what to do. Just as the scarcity of bread follow­
ing on the railway crisis had produced the Revolution, so the same
forces might lead the people to clamour for a separate peace.
In reply to questions as to the likelihood of a coup d'etat
headed by General Korniloff, General Knox said that he did not
know what preparations were being made. When he left Russia,
on the 18th August, Korniloff and Savinkoff were in agreement.
Korniloff was a strong character, an honest patriot, and the best
man in sight. He had the support of the Cossacks. They
numbered 1,000 squadrons of 150 each. He (General Knox) had
no faith in Kerenski, and had heard rumours that Kerenski's
party had accepted money from Germany. Kerenski was afraid
of shedding blood and was allowing matters to drift towards
anarchy. A force of 10,000 loyalists would be enough to subdue
Petrograd—the main source of disorder—for the Russians were
cowards. If Kerenski were to suggest a separate peace he would
certainly have the great majority of the country with him. As to
some of the prominent generals in Russia, Alexeieff was a student
of war and not suited to a crisis; Brusiloff was a politician;
Kalevin, the commander of the 8th Army, was one of the best
generals and had been chosen by the Cossacks of the Don as their
chief. The 12th Army, which was now retreating from Riga, was
the worst army.
In concluding his statement, General Knox strongly urged on
the War Cabinet the importance of the Allied Governments
making a joint representation to the Russian Government recom­
mending that in view of Russia's desperate situation and the peril
of putting back democracy, General Korniloff should be fully
supported in the measures which he wished to take to restore
discipline at the front, on the railways, and in Petrograd.
General Macdonogh called the attention of the War Cabinet
to the Identitc Note, dated the 31st August, which had been received
through Sir G. Barclay, urging that efforts should be made to
save the Roumanian Army in Moldavia, and to the importance
from this standpoint of restoring discipline in Russia. The
Committees in Odessa and Jassy were having a very bad effect on
the moral of the troops.
The War Cabinet gave careful and prolonged consideration
to the above representations and discussed the following
proposals:—

1. To invite the Allied Governments to send a Joint Note to
the Russian Government.

2. To invite President Wilson to urge the Russian Govern­
ment to support General Korniloff's programme—a
draft of the message to President Wilson to be sent to
the Prime Minister forthwith.

3. To send a draft of the proposed Note to Sir George
Buchanan, in order to obtain his view of the advisa­
bility of presenting it to the Russian Government.

At the request of the War Cabinet, Lord R. Cecil submitted
a draft of a Note which might be sent to President Wilson. The
War Cabinet recognised that the sending of a Note in the terms
contemplated was a matter of grave importance, and might be
strongly resented by Kerenski and the Government. Interference
might be construed as helping Korniloff to a coup d'etat. On the
other hand, the serious menace of the situation had to be faced
and some risk taken. In some ways the position of the Army was
less menacing than that of the civilian population, which would be
possibly faced with starvation a month or two hence.
General Knox emphasised the desirability of a joint repre­
sentation by the Western Allies as likely to carry much greater
weight in Russia than one from the United States alone.
Lord Robert Cecil considered that it was unlikely that the President of a Republican Government would be willing to suggest to the Russian Government what would, in effect, be the establishment of a Military Dictatorship. In any case, it was probable that the United States would prefer that any Note they sent should go independently.

The War Cabinet decided to adjourn the discussion in order to have an opportunity of reading the Prime Minister's speech which he was delivering at Birkenhead today, and which it was understood dealt with Russia.

Publication of Air Raid Casualties.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 228, Minute 9, the War Cabinet was informed that the Home Secretary had expressed his opinion that, in reporting casualties due to air raids, the totals of casualties should be reported, inclusive of, but without specific reference to, those from the Navy and Army.

The War Cabinet concurred in this opinion, and requested that instructions should be given to the Press Bureau to prohibit publication of reports of coroners' inquests on naval and military casualties.

2. Whitehall Gardens, S.W.
7th September, 1917.
APPENDIX.

Paraphrase of Extract from Telegram from Foreign Office to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice. September 3, 1917.

RECENT discussions by a War Cabinet Committee have taken place as to steps to be taken should Norway be brought into the war. In case the American Government take a strong line on the question of exports to Germany from Norway, or if the German demands on Norway were such as Norway could not meet, Norway might be forced to join the Allies. The Staff at the Admiralty recognise disadvantages which may follow from such a situation, but plans have been made to meet such an eventuality, and the Naval Staff are anxious to know what co-operation naval authorities of United States would be prepared to give.

Paraphrase of Telegram from Sir M. Findlay (Christiania), September 4, 1917.

WITH reference to your telegram No. 3529 to Sir C. Spring-Rice, assuming that it has been correctly transmitted, I am much puzzled by the statement that the British Naval Staff recognise disadvantage of Norway entering the war. This seems to be in conflict with Admiralty opinion in your telegram No. 2751 which stated that they "no longer view with anxiety or indeed with disfavour" the entrance of Norway into the war on the Allies' side. I was then told to keep this in mind as His Majesty's Government would shape their policy according to the Admiralty view. Compare also telegram No. 3889, where I am warned that it was necessary to treat Norway leniently because of the possibility that she might be involved in the war. These instructions I have acted upon and my views as to alleged danger of German attack have been reported to you in, amongst others, my telegrams Nos. 4599 and 5092 of to-day. Latter telegram was read to my American colleague and he expressed his entire concurrence. My colleague had just seen Minister of Foreign Affairs, who, when pressed as to whether he really believed in alleged danger of attack, could only say that he was not sure. The American Minister is sending a telegram to his Government on the lines of mine to you. He also agreed that if Norwegians were attacked the strategical advantage would be with us. The point is a very important one and I would beg for instructions as, though I foresee some disadvantage, it is not easy to see how an event which would give us bases on the coast of Norway, and would facilitate measures against German trade and submarines can, all things considered, be an advantage to Germany and a disadvantage to us. Germany's present attitude to Norway suggests she is afraid of Norway joining the Allies and this impression is shared by the Norwegian naval authorities.
SECRET.

WAR CABINET, 230.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, September 10, 1917, at noon.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.
Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Acting First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff.
Brigadier-General A. W. F. Knox, Military Attaché to the Russian Embassy.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, Acting Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Captain L. S. Amery, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Southern Front. 1. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that the Italians were still hanging on to the north side of Monte San Gabriele. They had never been in possession of anything like the whole of it. Further south they had retired from the slopes of Monte Hermada and were back in their trenches. The Italians claimed to have taken rather more than 30,000 prisoners, but, on the other hand, the Austrians claimed to have taken 18,000 Italians.

Eastern Front. 2. The Germans had brought up seven fresh divisions to the Riga front, which had been considerably extended thereby. The Russians were still 20 miles in front of their prepared position.

Roumanian Front. 3. The performance of the Roumanian Army during the last fortnight had been most satisfactory, the Germans having received a considerable set-back. It was thought that the German casualties had been heavy.
4. Attention was drawn to the telegram received from the consul at Rotterdam, dated the 6th September, alleging that four divisions of German infantry, with aerial squadrons and artillery, had left Dresden for Constantinople on the 24th August, in support of the German advance towards Bagdad.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he attached no particular value to this report, but that at the same time many reports were being received of the enemy's intention to attempt to retake Bagdad. He was continuing to do everything possible to meet General Maude's demands. The means of communication from Basra to Bagdad could take more than could be disembarked at the port, but that steps were being taken to increase the port facilities at Basra. The Turks had improved the Taurus and Amanus tunnels and were pushing on their railway towards Mosul, which was distant about 150 miles from Samarra.

5. The Acting First Sea Lord reported that so far the convoy system was working satisfactorily. Considerable submarine activity was taking place, indicating a concentration at the South-Western entrance to the English Channel, resulting in losses to merchant shipping, both armed and unarmed, the most serious loss being the "Minnehaha," a steamship of about 12,000 tons.

6. The German submarine which sank the "Olive Branch" seems herself to have been destroyed as a result of an explosion upon the sinking ship, which had been engaged by the submarine at very short range. The "Olive Branch" contained a large quantity of explosives and, in blowing up, the chassis of a motor-car had been hurled on to the German submarine with great force, and this resulted in the buckling of the back of the submarine and its subsequent sinking.

7. The Royal Naval Air Service carried out bombing raids upon the Bruges aerodromes on the 8th instant, but owing to the low visibility it was not possible to estimate the damage done.

8. With reference to War Cabinet No. 229, Minute M, the Chancellor of the Exchequer reported that the Prime Minister had despatched a draft of the proposed note to Sir George Buchanan (Foreign Office telegram No. 1913) asking him to obtain the views in Petrograd as to the advisability of its presentation to the Russian Government. It was further represented that in view of the terms of Lord Bertie's telegram No. 893 dated the 9th September, that an impression prevailed in Paris that the Japanese Government would now be willing to send troops to assist the Allies; it might be desirable to urge that any available Japanese troops should be used in Russia as a nucleus that could serve to stiffen the resistance of these Russian troops who were prepared to stand firm.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to ascertain, through General Barter, General Korniloff's view regarding the military aspect of such possible assistance by the Japanese troops, and also instructed the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to ascertain from Lord Bertie on what the information contained in his telegram No. 893 was based.

They decided that—

The existing programme of shipment to Archangel ending the 30th September should not be interfered with, and that the allocated material, including the two batteries of 6-inch howitzers authorised to be sent by War Cabinet No. 215 should go forward; but that on the conclusion of this programme no further shipments should be undertaken pending further consideration.

10. This decision as to the despatch of existing orders was not to apply to the 14-inch naval guns, against the shipment of which there were very serious practical difficulties at this season of the year; nor did it apply to the fifty aeroplanes with Fiat engines referred to in G.T.-1995.

11. With regard to the latter, General Smuts was requested to confer with the Air Board in order that a telegram might be drafted by them, for despatch by the Foreign Office, suggesting that as these fifty aeroplanes could not reach Russia until too late in the season to be of any use in military operations, they should be retained with their Russian pilots for use against the Germans on the Western front until next spring. The British Government would guarantee to deliver them to Russia about that time, making good any losses sustained meanwhile.

12. With reference to Foreign Office telegram No. 520, dated the 2nd September, from Sir G. Barclay (G.T.-1985), the War Cabinet were of opinion that—

No action should be taken in the matter, it being one for settlement between the Russian and Roumanian Governments.

13. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that he had not yet selected an Officer for attachment on special duty at Serbian Headquarters, but that he hoped to submit a name to the War Cabinet in a few days’ time. Meanwhile he feared that no material improvement could be effected on the lines suggested in M. Pashitch’s Memorandum, so long as General Sarrail remained in command of the Allied Forces in the Balkan theatre. He suggested that this subject could not be raised until the political situation in France, caused by the fall of M. Ribot’s Government, had been cleared up. It was pointed out that Admiral Troubridge had recently returned to Salonica, and Sir Rosslyn Wemyss undertook to ascertain the opinion of the Admiralty as to his being recalled in the event of the special Military Officer being appointed to Serbian Headquarters.

14. With reference to telegram No. 5178 from Sir M. Findlay, the War Cabinet decided—

To instruct the Foreign Office and the Admiralty that no coal or provisions should be given for the Swedish guardship “Skagerrack.”
15. With reference to War Cabinet 221, Minute 13, it was decided that—

Sir Edward Carson should extend his sphere of supervision and act as Minister in charge of all propaganda, whether at home or abroad, so that in future Colonel Buchan would be placed directly under Sir Edward Carson.

16. The War Cabinet considered a Memorandum by Mr. Joseph Davies (G.T.-1975) on the proposed purchase by the Army of Irish oats, and decided—

(1.) That the Irish Department forthwith issue the following notice:—

"The Government have informed the Department that the War Office will buy oats in Ireland for Army purposes on and after the 15th November, when this year's crop will be fit for Army purposes, and that they will be prepared to pay 38s. 6d. per quarter of 312 lb. on rail or in store for clean, sound oats in good condition."

(2.) That the Army Council be instructed to take such action as may be necessary to carry out this notice.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 10, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 231.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, September 12, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. SIR E. CARSON, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:—

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 10).


The Right Hon. SIR J. MACLAY, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minutes 10 and 11).

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOUGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 1 to 12).

Major-General R. HUTCHISON, D.S.O., Director of Organisation (for Minute 12).

Brigadier-General B. E. W. CHILDS, C.M.G., Director of Personal Services (for Minute 12).

Major-General SIR W. H. BIRKBECK, C.M.G., Director of Remounts (for Minute 11).

SIR E. WYLDBORE SMITH, Chairman, Commission internationale de Ravitaillement (for Minute 10).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. DALLY JONES, Acting Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. ROW, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

The Western Front.

1. THE Director of Military Intelligence informed the War Cabinet that an advance of 400 yards had been made at Villeret, south-west of Le Catelet, and that, while it was not a part of any extensive operation, it was an improvement of the position.

2. The Director of Military Intelligence stated that the German advance had stopped for the moment, but whether it was for the purpose of getting up guns or for any other reason no information was at present available.
3. The Director of Military Intelligence stated that it was doubtful as to what was happening in Petrograd, where there were approximately 100,000 troops, of whom about 20,000 had been sent into the surrounding districts on defensive lines against any advance by General Korniloff. He added that these were reformed regiments, and that their fighting value was not of a high order. General Macdonogh stated that all the superior military officers in the Russian Army were apparently against M. Kerensky.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that no telegrams had lately been received from Russia; it was therefore doubtful if we were in possession of the facts of the matter in all its aspects, and that the last telegram that had been received from Sir George Buchanan was dated the 10th instant.

The view was expressed that General Korniloff represented all that was sound and hopeful with regard to an improvement in the situation in Russia, and that he should not be condemned on telegrams received from Russian sources, as the case as now presented was one-sided, prejudiced, and possibly untrue. It was really a duel between M. Kerensky and General Korniloff, and it was possible that the latter had jeopardised the success of his movement by premature action, after failing to obtain the support, which he deemed essential to the welfare of Russia, from M. Kerensky. To talk of General Korniloff as a "traitor to his country" was monstrous, and it should not be forgotten that in the past we have been in general sympathy with his endeavours to aid the cause not only of Russia but of the Allies. It was felt that, difficult though it was for the British Government to interfere in the present situation without appearing to take sides with General Korniloff, it was impossible, in the interests of the Allies and of democracy generally, to make no effort to improve the situation, though it was realised that any steps in that direction would have to be taken through M. Kerensky, as he was the representative of the existing Government. It was suggested that he should be informed that the British Government viewed with the greatest alarm the probabilities of civil war, and urged to come to terms with General Korniloff, not only in the interest of Russia herself, but in that of the Allies.

It was pointed out, with reference to War Cabinet 229, Minute 13, that Sir George Buchanan was aware of the desire of the Government to support the previous programme of General Korniloff, and the War Cabinet decided that—

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should instruct Sir George Buchanan to use his discretion in addressing an appeal to M. Kerensky, being guided by the situation on the spot and the circumstances within his knowledge as to the form of the appeal and the occasion at which it should be presented.

The War Cabinet further requested—

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform the French Government of our action in this matter, and to urge them to issue similar instructions to their Ambassador in Petrograd.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 230, Minute 8, the Director of Military Intelligence informed the War Cabinet that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff wished the War Cabinet to know that he had not taken steps to ascertain, through General Barter, General Korniloff's views as to assistance by Japanese troops, as
the existing trouble in Russia arose before such action could well be taken.  
The War Cabinet approved this course.

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East Africa.

5. The Director of Military Intelligence informed the War Cabinet that both the Belgian column and our troops were advancing on Mahenge, from which place both forces were distant about thirty miles. He added that apparently the situation in East Africa was progressing satisfactorily, and that a smaller zone was in occupation by the enemy than had been the case three months ago.

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Naval Prizes.

6. The Deputy First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that two Dutch prizes had been brought into Harwich with contraband on board.

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Air Offensive.

7. The Deputy First Sea Lord stated that the Royal Naval Air Service had carried out bombing raids upon Bruges Docks and St. Denis Westrem, and that all our machines had returned safely. Sir Rosslyn Wemyss added that in an enemy raid on Dunkirk on the night of September 10-11 no material damage had been effected.

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Serbia.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 230, Minute 13, the Deputy First Sea Lord stated that Rear-Admiral Troubridge had been appointed to the Personal Staff of the Prince Regent, and in no way represented the Admiralty. It was mentioned that General Corkran had been selected by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff for special duty at Serbian Headquarters, and that Sir William Robertson was very anxious that General Corkran should be in no way under Rear-Admiral Troubridge.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The question of recalling Rear-Admiral Troubridge should not be brought up until General Corkran had taken over his duties and was able to report if any difficulty arose in the conduct of the same owing to the presence of Admiral Troubridge.

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Man-Power and Recruiting.

9. The War Cabinet confirmed the decisions of Lord Milner's Committee on Man-Power and Recruiting, as set out in Appendix I, and sanctioned an additional paragraph 8 to that section laying down the functions of the Ministry of National Service, the said paragraph to read as follows:

The above statement of functions is not intended to over-ride in any way any agreement that has been or may be made between the Ministry of National Service and any other Government Department.

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Coal for Italy.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 198, Minute 13, Lord Robert Cecil drew the attention of the War Cabinet to recent telegrams and despatches from our Ambassador at Rome, which set out that, in the opinion of Baron Sonnino, the coal difficulties were of an acute nature, that the deficit in July was 47 per cent., and for the first four weeks of August 52 per cent., and that, so far from improving, the state of affairs was worse than it was. He fully realised that the Shipping Controller had great difficulties, and it was really a question for the Cabinet to decide
whether a reduction should not be made in our imports, or ship­ping obtained by other means, so that by making such sacrifices the coal situation, and consequently the munition supply, in Italy might be improved. He added that Baron Sonnino was of opinion that if he could tide over the next two months he would be able to get through the winter. He stated that the demands for coal had been closely examined, and were locked upon as the minimum requirements, and that we must assume the figures given to us by the Italian Government to be accurate until the contrary was proved.

Sir E. Wyldbore Smith pointed out that the question of sending coal from S.E. France by rail to Italy was now being discussed by the railway experts of the two countries.

The Shipping Controller stated that under existing conditions we were doing better than he had expected, but that considerable delays had taken place in the turning round of ships; that ships had been held up at Gibraltar owing to lack of convoys for their protection; and that the Admiralty had stated that, as far as they were concerned, they were unable to provide further protection. Sir Joseph Maclay reported that at the close of the Archangel season a certain amount of Russian tonnage would be available for Italy. He stated that more tonnage could be allocated for Italian coal if the War Cabinet were prepared to take the risk of using liners for this purpose and sending them unescorted.

Sir Rosslyn Wemyss stated that the Italians had shown no desire to supply the necessary ships for convoy purposes, and that it was very difficult to obtain from the Italian Government any data as to their patrol and convoy organisation, or assistance in such matters.

The War Cabinet asked—

Lord Milner to re-assemble his Committee, to go into and report to the War Cabinet upon the question of increasing the supply of coal to Italy, and to enquire closely into (a.) the accuracy of the figures in support of the demands for coal; (b.) the question of convoys for the ships to convey the same; (c.) our own shortage of supplies and the question as to whether in any respects they should be temporarily further reduced, so as to relieve the situation in Italy.

11. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, forwarding a Minute by the Quartermaster-General (Paper G.T.-1950), as to the supply of horses and mules for Greece (Appendix II).

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for War and the Shipping Controller should confer as to the possibility of providing the requisite tonnage, and such purchase in America of horses and mules as could be carried in the ships that were found to be available.

12. Attention was called to a letter received by Lord Curzon from the Bishop of Oxford (Paper G.T.-1979), relative to the grave discontent which existed amongst the troops stationed at the Command Depot at Shoreham, the grounds of objection being stated to be insufficiency of food and refusal of leave owing to the absence of sufficient railway accommodation.

Major-General Hutchison stated that similar reports had been received before the letter from the Bishop of Oxford had been brought to his notice. The grievance as to leave (a) was primarily due to the restrictions in the use of trains running to Brighton,
an Order having been issued by the Army Council, as the result
of a War Committee decision on the 29th November, 1916, that
train travelling was prohibited and that men going on leave from
Shoreham must travel by motor-buses. These, owing to the petrol
shortage, had since ceased to run. Another grievance was the
question of pay (b), the low rate of which caused irritation to our
men owing to the fact that Canadian troops, with their high rates
of pay, were quartered in their vicinity. A further grievance
was the food question (c), for which he thought there was no
foundation, as the men had practically the same food ration as if
they were camped in France. He stated that the men stationed
at Shoreham were sent there to harden up for further service,
after being wounded or sick, and that their daily work was pro­
gressive until they had been rendered fit for service once more.

As regards (a) the War Cabinet requested—

The Army Council to make the necessary arrangements to
provide accommodation for the troops going on leave in
the trains running between Shoreham and Brighton, and
vice-versed.

With regard to (b) the War Cabinet requested—

The Military Authorities to go into the matter of re-grouping
the Convalescent Camps so that Dominion soldiers were
not quartered in the same Command Depôts with British soldiers.

As regards the actual rate of pay of the latter, the
War Cabinet directed the Secretary to put on the Agenda
at an early date the Report of Sir Edward Carson's
Committee on Increased Rates of Pay for Soldiers.

As regards (c), complaints with regard to food, the War
Cabinet were unable to concur with the view expressed by the
Military Authorities, that the food ration was adequate, having
in view that the men were convalescent, and the suggestion that
the dietary was not equal to that consumed by the average working
man in England. They therefore directed—

The War Office to enquire into the food supply not only at
Shoreham, but at all Command Depôts, and to furnish a
report on the subject as soon as possible.

Brigadier-General Childs was of opinion that though there
was a certain amount of discontent in certain units it was not
in any way general. That the conditions which had been dis­
cussed contributed towards discontent, but that the real great
cause amongst men at Command Depôts was that they were being
hardened up for service again at the front having perhaps been
wounded two or three times, whilst there were thousands of fit
men in the United Kingdom in protected industries earning very
high wages who had never been called up for military service. He
knew that Lord Derby and the Adjutant-General had been lately
giving serious consideration to the problem of the wounded
soldier, and he thought that he heard the word "discharge"
mentioned. He added that absence was a somewhat common
offence at Command Depôts, but that as regards desertion there
had been no increase in the percentage. He mentioned that the
efforts to create a Workman's and Soldiers' Council in this
country had been a complete failure so far as the Army was con­
cerned.

13 The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum
on Admiralty Organisation (Paper G.T.-2005), and approved
the proposals contained therein.
The First Lord explained that with reference to the last four paragraphs of Section 17 of his Memorandum, and with reference to Section 18, he had been asked by the Board to give the Operations and Maintenance Committees of the Board the power to place matters on the Board Agenda, thereby forgoing the historic custom under which the First Lord only decided whether a matter was to go on the Board Agenda or not. The First Lord explained that, in his view, having regard to the collective responsibility of the Board in matters of importance, it was not unreasonable that a group of members of the Board, such as those forming one or other of the two Committees of the Board, should have the right to secure for the Board as a whole the opportunity of recording their opinion on matters of importance, and he proposed by internal regulation to provide for this. As this involved a matter of principle, however, he wished to obtain the authority of the Cabinet before doing so.

The War Cabinet further approved this proposal.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 12, 1917.
APPENDIX I.


COMMITTEE ON MAN-POWER AND RECRUITING.

Report to the War Cabinet.

(Previous Papers see G.T.-1647, G.T.-1508, and G.T.-1527).

WITH reference to War Cabinet 201, Minute 1, the following decisions of Lord Milner's Committee on Man-Power and Recruiting are circulated to the War Cabinet.

(Initialled) W. D. J.,
Acting Secretary.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 11, 1917.

(A).—Agreement between the Ministry of National Service and the Ministry of Labour.

The Committee decided that the following Agreement should be approved and reported to the War Cabinet:

Agreement.

Scheme for the Distribution of Functions between the National Service Department and the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour.

I. General Distribution of Functions.

1. The Minister of National Service to be responsible for the general policy to be followed during the war in making labour available and in utilising it to the best advantage.

2. The Employment Department and the Employment Exchanges to remain under the control of the Minister of Labour, but to work in close co-operation with the Ministry of National Service in giving effect to the general policy laid down by that Department in accordance with paragraph 1.

3. Subject to the exceptions specifically mentioned in this memorandum, the executive functions of registering or enrolling, allocating and transferring labour, male or female, to be performed only by the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour through the Employment Exchanges.

4. In order to secure the closest co-operation between the two Ministries, the services of Mr. C. F. Rey, Assistant Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, to be temporarily placed at the disposal of the Ministry of National Service, which will appoint Mr. Rey to act as Director-General of National Labour Supply.

   Mr. Phillips, Acting Assistant-Director of the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour, to be in charge of the Employment Exchanges, the administration of which will remain under the control of the Ministry of Labour.

II. Department of National Labour Supply.

The Director-General of National Labour Supply to be responsible direct to the Minister of National Service, and to have charge of all work performed by the National Service Department in connection with the regulation of the demand for and supply of labour (including Substitution, Priority, Trade Committees, Release from Colours, Payment of National Service Out-of-work Benefit, Disputed Claims to Benefit, Protests against Transfer of Volunteers, and other cognate matters, which may be dealt with by the National Service Department).

Determination of Priority of Demands for Labour to be the function of the National Service Department (subject to the necessary arrangements with the other Departments concerned.) The responsibility of the Employment Department is not to determine priority, but only to give executive effect to priority as determined by the proper authority. The Employment Department should, of course, be represented on any Priority Committee.

7. Schemes of Enrolment.

(i.) The War Munitions Volunteers’ and the Army Reserve Munition Workers’ Scheme to continue as at present, so far as enrolment, allocation, and transfer by the Employment Department are concerned.

(ii.) The National Service Volunteer Scheme to be allowed to lapse, as soon as may be practicable.

(iii.) The “Substitution Volunteer” Scheme to be modified as follows:

(a.) For purposes of record and in order to avoid duplication, particulars of names and addresses, ages, and industrial qualification of Volunteers to be furnished to and kept by the Local Employment Exchange.

(b.) Volunteers obtained by Trade Committees to be allocated by such Committees to vacancies selected by them from lists, graded according to priority furnished by Local Labour Exchanges.

(c.) Details of transfer to be performed by Employment Exchanges, by which all necessary records will be kept.

(Note.—The question of the possibility of assimilating the conditions of service and enrolment of all kinds of Volunteers is reserved for further consideration.)

8. Demand for Labour.

(i.) Prospective demands for labour in bulk required by Government Departments to be notified by the Department concerned to the National Service Department, which will at once communicate them to the Employment Department, and will, jointly with the Employment Department, prepare schemes for obtaining the necessary supply of labour, the detail working of such schemes to be entrusted to the Employment Department, subject to the provisions of Clause 7.

(ii.) All current demands by employers for labour to be notified direct by the employer to the Employment Department; if notified to the National Service Department, that Department will not attempt to supply labour, but will pass the demands on at once to the Employment Department.


Subject to paragraph 7 (iii), allocation and transfer to be performed by the Employment Department (in accordance with the rules of priority) with the assistance and advice of the Local Advisory Committees now being set up by the Ministry of Labour, and no allocation or transfer to be performed by the National Service Department.

10. Substitution.

Subject to the special arrangement indicated in paragraph 7 (iii) as regards the registration and allocation of Substitution Volunteers obtained by Trade Committees formed by the National Service Department, all substitution vacancies to be notified to, and dealt with by the Employment Department, and all persons available for substitution to be registered at Employment Exchanges and allocated and transferred by them with the assistance and advice of the Local Advisory Committees now being set up by the Ministry of Labour.

Provided that arrangements for immediate substitution for one another of applicants before Tribunals may be made by officers of the National Service Department, such arrangements to be immediately reported to the local Employment Exchange for record.

These Committees, so far as already established, to remain under the control of the National Service Department, but to work in close co-operation with the Employment Department and in accordance with the modification set out in paragraph 7 (iii).


Such benefit due from the National Service Department to be paid by that Department, and disputed claims to such benefit and protests against transfer in the case of such volunteers to be determined by the National Service Department.


The work in connection with such volunteers to remain under the Professional and Business Register of the Employment Department as at present.

14. Labour from Dominions or Abroad.

Recruiting, allocation, and transfer of labour from the Dominions or abroad to be a matter for the Employment Department (subject to the rules of priority), but any new scheme of recruiting to be agreed with the National Service Department before adoption.

15. Information as to Labour Supply and Demand.

The Employment Department to be responsible for the supply to the National Service Department, at such intervals and in such form as may be arranged, of details showing the current position of labour demand and supply, the progress made in meeting particular requisitions and cognate matters.

August 31, 1917.

(B)—MEDICAL BOARDS.

The Committee decided—

That Primary Medical Boards throughout Great Britain should be under the control of the Ministry of National Service and that the Appeal Tribunals, which are to remain under the Local Government Board and the Secretary for Scotland respectively, should have Medical Assessors added to them, and that in any case where an Appeal Tribunal, on the advice of its Medical Assessor, alters the classification of any man, its decision shall be final.

(Initialed) M.

September 7, 1917.

Mr. Munro desired that his disagreement with the decision as regards the control of the Primary Medical Boards should be recorded.

(C).—FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SERVICE.

The Committee decided that in future the functions of the Ministry of National Service shall be:

1. To review the whole field of British man-power and to be in a position at all times to lay before the War Cabinet information as to the meaning, in terms of man-power and consequential results, of all Departmental proposals put forward to the War Cabinet and referred to the Ministry for its consideration and for an expression of its opinion.

2. To make arrangements for the transfer from civil work not declared by the War Cabinet to be of primary importance, or, if ordered by the War Cabinet, from the Navy, Army, or Air Service to urgent national work, of such numbers of men as may be declared by the War Cabinet to be necessary to reinforce the labour already engaged on that work.
3. Subject to the approval of the War Cabinet, to determine, in consultation with the Departments concerned, the relative importance of the various forms of civil work, and to prepare from time to time lists of reserved occupations with such age and other limitations as may be necessary to secure the preservation of a nucleus of civil occupations and industries.

4. Within numerical limits imposed by the War Cabinet to obtain for the Army, Navy, and Air Service, such men as can be withdrawn from civil life without detriment to the due performance of the civil work necessary to maintain the forces at sea, in the field, and in the air, and any nucleus of civil occupations and industries declared by the War Cabinet to be necessary.

5. In connection with Function 4, to determine the physical fitness of men available, or possibly becoming available, for withdrawal from civil life.

(Note.—Functions 4 and 5 are limited by the action of the Tribunals acting in conformity with regulations and instructions issued to them under authority derived from the War Cabinet, in England and Wales by the Local Government Board, in Scotland by the Scottish Office.)

6. To make arrangements for the provision, where necessary, of labour (male and female) in substitution for that withdrawn from civil life in accordance with Function 4.

7. Any other duty which may from time to time be allocated to the Ministry by the War Cabinet.

8. The above statement of functions is not intended to override in any way any agreement that has been or may be made between the Ministry of National Service and any other Government Department.

September 10, 1917.

APPENDIX II.

G.T.-1950.

HORSES AND MULES FOR GREECE.

0145/600

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War.

BY a decision of the War Cabinet W.C.-225 (14) of the 28th August, 1917, I was authorised to give such assistance in the way of equipment to Greece as was possible, bearing in mind that we might be required to find similar articles for another of our Allies.

A Conference is sitting in Paris at the present moment to deal with these matters, and I am sure it will be found that the demands of Greece, especially in the way of guns, are far in excess of anything we can possibly find.

M. Thomas, when he was over here the other day, spoke to me on the subject of horses for Greece. I have been into the question with the Quartermaster-General, and for the information of the War Cabinet I circulate a memorandum which he has given me which shows our position as regards horses.

It will be noticed that the French in their allotment have laid down that we should supply the heavy draught horses to the extent of 5,450. This is the class of horse which, at the present moment, it is almost impossible to obtain in this country without interfering with essential work, such as dock work, &c. It therefore at once becomes a question of shipment, but even then, as will be noticed from the Quartermaster-General's report, it will take us some months to purchase. As, however, the guns will not be forthcoming for some time, probably we could get the horses by the time they have got the guns available.

I should like the Cabinet's instructions as to whether we should give the 450 suggested by the Quartermaster-General and start the purchase of the remaining 5,000, the necessary shipping being found by the Shipping Controller.

September 5, 1917.
With regard to the French demands for horses, &c., for Greece, i.e.:

1,500 Riding Horses to be found by the French.
3,500 Light Draught Horses to be found by the French.
1,950 Mules to be found by the French.
5,450 Heavy Draught Horses to be found by the British.
1,950 Mules to be found by the British.

All with the necessary harness.

In England we have only barely sufficient to keep the units in France in the field. It is one of our greatest difficulties procuring the right stamp of heavy draught horse, as the purchase is increasingly difficult in Great Britain. We have also Egypt and Salonika to supply, and have only about 4,500 in England to keep up 72,000 in France, whilst the Salonika wastage is about 100 a month, and Egypt about 200 a month.

In Salonika the establishment of heavy draught horses is 1,502, and there are actually there, 1,427; if the heavy batteries now due for Egypt go from Salonika without horses there are no horses for them in Egypt, and they would be useless.

In Egypt we are below establishment owing to shipping difficulties, but can just keep going, and will now draw on France and America as arranged with General Smuts, for which we have shipping.

I do not quite understand whether they mean really heavy draught horses, as 5,450 is a very heavy demand for this class. We might give now 450, but our 4,500 here means only about two months' reserve in hand, and it is the chief demand at the moment from France. All I can suggest is that the 5,000 balance should be imported from North America (if we can, now the Americans are coming into the field). This means shipping (5 or 6 ships), plus upkeep, say 300 a month.
WAR CABINET, 232.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, September 13, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The Right Hon. S. E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The following were also present:


General Sir W. Robertson, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1 to 14).

Brigadier-General B. E. W. Childs, C.M.G., Director of Personal Service (for Minute 14).

Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., G.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1 to 14).

Mr. E. G. Pretyman, M.P., Admiralty (for Minute 15).

The Right Hon. W. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minutes 12 to 16).

French Ministry.

1. THE Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reported that M. Painlevé had formed a Ministry which included no Socialists, and consequently excluded M. Albert Thomas.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated, however, that he had received information to the effect that there might be another hitch in the proceedings before the Ministry was definitely formed.

Guns for Italy.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported a message from General Cadorna expressing his thanks for the artillery reinforcements which the Allies had jointly agreed to send to Italy. The guns might have left France in a week's time.
3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the available information indicated that the Germans were not advancing in the Riga region, but that a concentration was taking place at Jacobstadt, further south. The fact of their not advancing might be attributed either to their intention of saving men or to their inability to pursue their advantage owing to the impossibility of moving off the roads and to other transport difficulties.

4. On the Roumanian Front the moral of the Russian Army was very low. The soldiers of the 6th Army were threatening to go home if peace was not signed by the 15th of this month.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that, according to his latest information, the Workmen's and Soldiers' Committees had taken charge of the telegraph office at Russian Headquarters in the Caucasus. The British Military Representative there reported that his communications were liable to interruption.

6. With reference to the Press reports that Russian generals had been arrested, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that only one general, namely, General Denski, commanding the South-West Army, had been actually arrested; the other generals, although nominally arrested, remained in command.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 231, Minute 3, the War Cabinet noted that the action taken by them to urge M. Kerensky and General Korniloff to come together had anticipated the recommendations of the British Ambassador at Petrograd and General Barter.

8. The War Cabinet had their attention called to an article in the "Daily Chronicle" in regard to the alleged meanness of the War Office in dealing, for instance, with soldiers' wives, who, when they have to go into the workhouse hospitals, have their separation allowances and allotments stopped.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to ascertain the opinion of the Finance Department of the War Office on the subject, and to bring their views to the War Cabinet on the following day.

9. The Deputy First Sea Lord gave an account of the submarine situation. He reported that one of our aeroplanes had dropped bombs on an enemy submarine in the North Sea, and it was hoped that the submarine had been sunk, though it was not definitely proved.

10. Admiral Wemyss reported the bombing of Bruges and Zeebrugge, including one direct hit on a large destroyer alongside the Zeebrugge Mole.
11. Admiral Wemyss reported that an enemy cruiser and destroyers had attempted to enter the Gulf of Riga, but had been driven off by the Russian batteries. With regard to the Russian Fleet, there was no change in the situation. The Russian Fleet was still in the Gulf of Finland, behind minefields.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 221, Minute 2, attention was drawn to the publication in the "Daily Telegraph" and other newspapers of an article giving details of the proposals which had been set forth in the Secret Paper G.T.-1650.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to write to Sir Alfred Mond, stating that the attention of the Cabinet had been drawn to the fact that the proposals, which were sub judice, had been widely divulged to the newspapers, evidently with an attempt to capture public opinion, and inviting him to endeavour to ascertain how the leakage occurred, and to report the results of his enquiries to the War Cabinet.

13. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the War Office and Department of Information in regard to the prevention of export of printed matter (Paper G.T.-1332).

The War Cabinet decided—

To refer this question to a Committee, composed of the following:—

Sir Edward Carson (in the chair).
Sir George Cave.
Lord Derby (or his representative).
Lord Robert Cecil (or his representative).

14. The War Cabinet had under consideration a memorandum by the Secretary of State for War in regard to leave for New Zealand troops after three years' service (Paper G.T.-1973). In this paper the views of the Adjutant-General were set forth, to the effect that if leave after three years' service, on the scale of six months from the departure from the Front until return, or two months' leave of absence in the United Kingdom or France for those who did not wish to take it in New Zealand, were to be given to New Zealanders, irrespective of the military situation at the Front, the same measure must be meted out to all troops, Dominions or British, with the result that the force at the Front would be completely depleted. If the privilege was confined to the Dominion troops a spirit of strong antagonism would, in the opinion of the Adjutant-General, spring up between the British and Dominion troops, and might result in bloodshed.

Admiral Wemyss reported that the Admiralty were also opposed to the scheme of leave for New Zealanders as proposed.

The War Cabinet decided—

That the Secretary of State for the Colonies should send a telegram to New Zealand presenting the views of the Admiralty and War Office: the two latter Departments to forward the material for the telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

15. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum (Paper G.T.-2000) in regard to preventing the sale by Messrs. S. Pearson and Sons of their Mexican oil properties to purchasers in America or elsewhere.
A suggestion was made that the Prime Minister should be asked to see Lord Cowdray on the subject.

It was strongly urged that there should be legislation to give the Government power to deal with these and other cases of sales of property to foreigners.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that he had a similar question to bring forward with regard to the sale of copper mines. He undertook to bring the Law Officers' opinion on the general question to the War Cabinet on the following day.

16. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by Mr. Barnes (Paper G.T.-1758) drawing attention to the inadequacy of housing accommodation in Barrow and certain parts of Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Barnes reported that at Barrow the Ministry of Munitions were putting up 250 houses, but these were only intended for munition workers, and did not by any means provide for the needs of the district. A shocking report had been received as to the conditions at Barrow, where the population during the war had risen from 60,000 to 86,000, and where even before the war the housing conditions had been serious. The War Cabinet decided—

That Mr. Barnes should consult with the Ministry of Munitions and the Local Government Board on the subject, and bring the question again to the War Cabinet.

(Initialled) A. B. L.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 13, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 233.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, September 14, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.
Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.
The following were also present:
The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 3, 7, 9, 11, and 14).
Major-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 1 to 4).
Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Acting First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 5 and 6).
The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minute 7).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, Acting Secretary.
Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, Bart., M.P., Assistant Secretary.

The Western Front.

1. THE Director of Military Intelligence reported that there had been strong enemy attacks north of Langemarck, which had been repulsed with serious losses to the enemy. An enemy raid near Bullecourt had been driven off.

The Eastern Front.

2. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that the Russians had turned on the Riga front and had advanced 5 or 6 miles on the Riga-Pskov road, probably against weak cavalry outposts, as no report had been received of any attempted advance by German infantry, and the force of German cavalry was small.
3. The Director of Military Intelligence called attention to telegrams No. 124, dated the 11th September, 1917, received from General Barter, and No. 1428, dated the 12th September, 1917, from Colonel Blair, which had been delayed in transmission. From General Barter's telegram it appeared that General Alexeief and General Kornilof were working together in complete accord. Colonel Blair called attention to the delay which had taken place in the Commander-in-Chief's advance on Petrograd, which had given time for the Petrograd garrison to organise itself and for the Cronstadt garrison to arrive at Petrograd. He also reported that Putilof's works were on fire and that it was not unlikely that other Russian munition factories would meet the same fate. General Macdonogh stated that he had discouraged a suggestion made by Colonel Blair that this country should organise a secret service in Russia to counter that of the Germans and help to put down sabotage. Reports had been received from the agents of the Russian General Staff that though a German concentration at Libau had taken place, the proposed descent on the coast of Finland had been postponed owing to the failure of German propaganda in Finland.

Lord Robert Cecil stated his information to the effect that the serious problems connected with demobilisation which would confront Russia until discipline had been restored would make it difficult to face the prospect of a separate peace.

4. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that the main Italian position on San Gabriele had been held against Austrian counter attacks, and that there had been no material change in the position. It was also stated that there was not likely to be a crisis in Italy, and that from the naval point of view, owing to improved organisation, there might be some relief of tonnage.

5. The Deputy First Sea Lord made his report on the losses by enemy submarines, showing a diminution in this respect for the last few days. He also reported that the submarine which was thought to have been sunk on the 4th August had now been found by divers, on her side with her nose in the mud.

6. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that there had been some enemy aircraft activity at Dunkirk, and that we had had to abandon bombing raids on Bruges the previous night owing to the weather. He undertook to consider whether full reports of the results of our raids on Bruges and elsewhere could be furnished periodically to the Cabinet.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 232, Minute 15, dealing with Mexican oil properties, the War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum dealing with the analogous question of base metals and the necessity of taking power to prohibit the alienation of mining properties abroad (Paper G.T.-967), and also Paper G.T.-967A, containing the opinion of the Law Officers and Mr. G. H. Branson, on the problems raised (Appendix).

Lord Robert Cecil stated that the matter was one of great urgency, and that there had been already much regrettable delay in dealing with it. There were two main difficulties:

(a.) How to make the prohibition operative throughout the Empire.

(b.) How to prevent alienation not only to enemy interests, but to interests which were ostensibly Allied but were really German.
The German metal-buying combination controlled vast quantities of metals through American Companies. It was probable that any action taken by this country would meet with support in the Dominions.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Counsel to the Board of Trade should be asked to prepare the draft of a General Regulation, under the Defence of the Realm Act, to prohibit British subjects in the United Kingdom from parting with mining and oil interests without a licence.

8. The War Cabinet decided that—

Instructions should be given to Departments that documents intended for consideration by the War Cabinet should bear the names of the writers and not merely their initials, as was often the case at present.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 223, Minute 2, Lord Robert Cecil stated that there had been a meeting of some kind between financiers at Berne, at which possibly M. Caillaux and an Englishman, Mr. Kingham, an Egyptian banker, met Swiss and French bankers, but from the evidence it did not seem probable that any Englishman had had interviews with Germans. Endeavours were being made to see Mr. Kingham with a view to finding out exactly what had taken place before making any public statement on the matter. If evidence was forthcoming that Englishmen had conferred with enemy subjects proceedings would be taken.

10. A letter was read from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty with reference to a difference which had arisen between their Lordships and the Military Recruiting Authorities as to the interpretation of War Cabinet 209, Minute 2 (g), (1), and (2).

The War Cabinet decided—

To refer the matter for decision to Lord Milner's Man-Power Committee.

11. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum submitted by the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, which had been drawn up by Lord Edward Cecil, the Financial Adviser to the Egyptian Government, and minutes thereon by Lord Hardinge of Penshurst and Sir Ronald Graham.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that when he first went to the Foreign Office he found considerable difficulty in getting papers dealing with Egypt, there being no proper organisation in the Foreign Office for obtaining any knowledge of, or dealing with, the many internal matters of Egyptian government. The main channels of communication with Egypt were private letters between Sir Reginald Wingate and Lord Hardinge. Lord Robert Cecil had considered the desirability of handing over the control of Egypt to some other office, such as the Colonial Office, but there appeared to be no existing office suitable. His brother, Lord Edward Cecil, came home in the spring to take up military duty, and informed him that from the Egyptian side he thought that there must be a lack of organisation at the British end, not so much in matters diplomatic as in matters administrative. Lord Robert Cecil stated that he felt considerable anxiety regarding this situation from the Parliamentary point of view. Supposing there were trouble in Egypt, we should have
to take responsibility before the House of Commons, and to defend actions concerning the circumstances of which we had no knowledge. The whole position was irregular, and was the result of a system which had worked well in the days of Lord Cromer, when Egypt was nominally a Turkish province and we were merely advisers, but which could not possibly survive under the altered conditions of a British Protectorate and the growth of the demand for democratic control.

Sir Ronald Graham in his minute admitted that there must be large changes in the Egyptian Government as soon as martial law came to an end. Lord Robert Cecil pointed out that complicated legal matters were at this moment under consideration. In view of the fact that Egypt was becoming more and more the centre through which not merely Egypt, but the whole of Arabia and possibly Palestine and Mesopotamia would be managed, he regarded the matter as important and urgent, and suggested that a Committee should be established forthwith to investigate the whole question. He had thought that the question might be referred to the existing Middle-Eastern Committee, but was of opinion now that this Committee was far too big to deal satisfactorily with the matter.

Lord Curzon pointed out that the development of affairs in the Near and Middle East pointed to the possibility that an entirely new Department of State might become necessary. This Department could not be entirely separate from the Foreign Office, as many diplomatic questions gravitated round Egypt; for instance, the new independent Kingdom of Hedjaz. Lord Edward Cecil's paper raised the whole question of what we were accustomed to call the Middle East question, and how it was to be dealt with. A new grouping of countries was involved, with the attendant alteration of conditions, and the resulting problem could not be regarded as merely administrative.

Lord Milner stated that, from his own personal knowledge of Egypt, it was impossible to continue the existing system. He understood that great changes were going on in the Egyptian Government to-day of which he had no knowledge, and the establishment of our Protectorate made the reconsideration of the whole problem urgent. What was required was that what was going on inside Egypt should be known here, and to some extent controlled.

Mr. Barnes added that, from the Labour point of view, it was most desirable that he should be in a position to communicate to the more responsible Labour Leaders the British policy in the Near and Middle East, as up to the present the manifesto of the Independent Labour Party, which was demonstrably unsound, held the field.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A Committee, composed as follows:—

Mr. Balfour (Chairman),
Lord Curzon,
Lord Milner,

should be set up forthwith to examine all the points raised in Lord Edward Cecil's Memorandum, and report to the War Cabinet.

Lord Curzon, the Chairman of the Middle-Eastern Committee, undertook to provide a statement of the work of the Committee, including a general statement of British and Entente policy in the Middle East for the information of Mr. Barnes.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 201, Minute 3, the War Cabinet took note of Lord Curzon's Memorandum on Mr. Illing-
worth's Committee on the Quicker Turn Round of Ships (Paper G.T.-2019), and of Lord Curzon's decision that the Committee be discontinued.

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13. The War Cabinet concurred in the issue of the following notice by the Press Bureau, subject to the approval of the Home Secretary—

> "The attention of the Press is invited to Serial D. 352 of the 2nd February, 1916, and it is requested that, in publishing reports of inquests on, or funerals of sailors or soldiers killed in air raids, the fact that the victim was a sailor or soldier should not be stated or implied. All the other provisions of the instruction of the 2nd February, 1916, remain in force. Photographs of military funerals of victims of air raids cannot be published."

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14. With reference to War Cabinet 223, Minute 12, Lord Robert Cecil called the attention of the War Cabinet to telegram No. 2848 from Sir W. Townley, dated the 13th September, 1917, which indicated that Austria's reply to the Pope's Peace Proposals will not reveal her real views, because it will afford no opening for peace negotiations by the Allies. It was suggested that, before making peace, Germany is anxious to conclude a binding economic treaty with Austria, Bulgaria, and Turkey. The opinion of the Austrian Minister was given that Italy might be detached from the Allies by an offer of the Austrian territory she covets, and that if Italy went out of the war France would follow suit, and, as Russia could be neglected, only England and America would remain to be dealt with.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that it might be part of the diplomatic campaign to entice this country into secret negotiations with Austria, so that Austria might then go to Italy and use the negotiations that were going on to persuade Italy to make peace.

2. Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 14, 1917.
THERE is a danger of valuable mining properties at present in British ownership in neutral countries passing under the control of American groups whose interests are in reality centred in Germany through the affiliation to the great German Metal Combine.

At present no powers exist to prevent British companies from selling their interests in such properties to any neutral.

In view of the importance of conserving as far as possible such interests as we do at present possess in the world's resources of base metals, and of the avowed intention of the Germans to make good by the purchase of mining properties in neutral countries the loss of the raw materials for which they were formerly dependent on the British Empire, it is desirable that some control over the sale by the British companies of their mining properties abroad should, if possible, be established.

An account of the present situation with concrete instances of transactions which it is desirable to check will be found in the accompanying memorandum.

The sanction of the War Cabinet is asked for the preparation of a measure giving His Majesty's Government power to prohibit the alienation to foreigners of mining properties abroad owned by British subjects unless the consent of His Majesty's Government has first been obtained.

June 5, 1917.

(Initialled) G. M. P.

The war has made public property a fact which, prior to 1914, was only perhaps realised by those directly connected with mining and smelting businesses, i.e., that German mining and smelting combines, chiefly with their seat at Frankfurt, have gradually secured such a chain of organisations in various countries that they practically dominate the base metal industry of the world. The war appears to have scarcely affected this control, with the exception, perhaps of Australia, where stringent legislation has freed the metal industries of the Commonwealth from German domination. It appears incredible that, under present-day conditions, German companies are still in a position to acquire and control British-owned properties, but they are still attempting to do so (and in some cases no doubt have succeeded) through the German-American companies in the United States, with which they are closely affiliated, in which they hold capital, and are represented in many cases through interlocking directorates.

The accompanying chart, which has been extracted from the "Report on Co-operation in American Export Trade," published in 1916 by the United States Government, shows very graphically the close connection existing between the Frankfurt companies and the German-metal organisations of the United States.

The American Metal Company, with a capital of 700,000$, is closely affiliated, as the chart shows, with the Metall-Gesellschaft of Frankfurt, with a capital of 900,000$, and also with the Metallbank und Metallurgische Gesellschaft, also of Frankfurt, capital 2,000,000$.

It is said that a large part of the stock of the American Metal Company is held by the two German companies, and these latter are therefore understood to have a direct voice, if not a control, in its management.

There are other large German metal combines, such as Beer, Sontheimer, Aron Hirsch und Sohn, which have extensive ramifications in the United States, and it may be said, therefore, that the German metal companies, in spite of the state of war existing to-day, are free to pursue their endeavours, under the shelter of their affiliated American groups, to capture important British and other mining properties throughout the world.

The American Metal Company has been, and is, very actively engaged in buying up mining companies in the American continent, and two cases have recently come to the notice of His Majesty's Government in which British owners have asked the Foreign Trade Department if there was any objection to their accepting favourable offers which they have received for their properties from the American Company. One of these properties was in Chile, of relatively small importance, but the other,
situated in Mexico, was of greater value. It belongs to the Mazapil Copper Company (Limited), an English company with a capital of 500,000£, and the offer received from the American company amounted to some 1,300,000£. Both the properties in question consist of copper mines, which it is of great importance to keep under British control owing to the comparatively poor resources of the British Empire as regards this metal. With regard to the offer received by the Mazapil Copper Company, His Majesty’s Ambassador at Washington reported that the sale should be prevented by every available means, as by its acquisition the American Metal Company would practically complete their hold on the production of base metals in the northern districts of Mexico.

A letter lately intercepted by the censor states that recent German activities in Mexican mines have as an object “to replace into German hands those metals which they were getting before the war from the British and their colonies.”

In order effectively to counter the schemes of the German organisations to dominate the world’s base metal supply, it would appear to be necessary to oppose it by a similar combination of the large base metal interests throughout the Empire, and it is understood that the Board of Trade is at present considering the steps to be taken to secure such a fusion of interests. With such a combination it would not only be possible to check the German activities, but a British combine of the magnitude contemplated would have sufficient power in capital and output to compete successfully with the American organisations, and would be in a position to offer at least equal prices for the acquisition of important new properties, and be able to keep a staff of engineers in different parts of the world reporting on opportunities for the investment of the capital resources of the combine. It is only by such an organisation that Great Britain and her colonies will be able to check and defeat what threatens to become a German domination, and the consequent fixing of prices of the world’s base metal supply.

In the meantime it is obviously of the greatest importance to prevent British-owned properties passing out of British control into that of the German-American and other groups. His Majesty’s Government, however, do not at present possess powers under which such sales can be prevented, and, in the two cases cited above, all the action it was possible to take was necessarily confined to an urgent request to the directors not to accept, on patriotic grounds, what to them were undoubtedly very favourable offers.

It is certainly a matter of extreme urgency that this unsatisfactory situation should be remedied with a view to creating a powerful British organisation for the future, and therefore that steps may be taken with the least possible delay to give His Majesty’s Government the necessary power to secure by law that the approval of His Majesty’s Government must be obtained for the sale or alienation to foreigners of any British-owned mining property or of the controlling interest in such property, wherever situated.

June 5, 1916.

(Initialled) G. M. P.

DEFENCE OF THE REALM REGULATIONS.

Transfer of British Interests in Mines to Foreigners.

Opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown and Mr. G. A. H. Branson.

We perfectly understand the object which the Board of Trade desires to attain, but we are of opinion that it cannot be attained by making a Regulation. The main difficulty in our opinion is that the rule making power conferred upon His Majesty in Council by the Defence of the Realm Acts is limited to legislating for the defence of the Realm. Regulations therefore are only valid if and so far as they are directed to this end. Regulation 30 BB as it stands would, in our opinion, be difficult, if not impossible, to bring within the powers of the Act, for it prevents the transfer of an
interest even to an alien who is an ally. A Regulation designed not for assisting in the prosecution of the present war, but to prevent the acquisition by Germans of control of mines which they could exercise to our detriment only after the conclusion of peace would in our opinion be clearly ultra vires. If, however, it can be quite clearly shown that there is a present and substantial danger of mining interests getting into enemy control through sales to alien (allies or neutrals), and of their being used during the war to stop or hamper our supplies of metal for war purposes, then, in our opinion, a regulation to prevent such sales may be justified, and if so, Regulation 30 BB should be amended by making the last paragraph read "mines wherever situated," instead of "mines situated in the United Kingdom."

It should be borne in mind that the power to make Regulations is for exercise in the United Kingdom only (except in reference to navigation), and the Regulation would not make it an offence for anyone in any other part of the Empire to sell his interest to an alien.

(Signed) FREDERICK SMITH.
GORDON HEWART.
G. A. H. BRANSON.

Law Officers' Department,
August 8, 1917.
Situation in Russia:

1. ATTENTION was called to telegram No. 1442 from Sir George Buchanan. In this connection it was pointed out that the suggested Allied Conference was to be debarred from considering War Aims, and was merely to discuss the political and military situations. Owing to the uncertainty at present prevailing in Russia it was thought to be undesirable that any definite communication should be made in writing, especially one which might be construed by one or other party in Russia as interference in Russia's internal affairs.

German Peace Moves:

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he was considerably puzzled by German inaction on the Eastern front, and could not help thinking that Germany was in a worse way than we thought. All the items of information received by him pointed in this direction, and there were constant, though vague, allusions to peace. The Germans appeared to be relying on their U-boats and nothing else. So long as anarchy prevails in Russia a separate peace was not possible, but it was quite clear that the Russian soldier does not want to fight any more.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that he had no definite information regarding any intended reply from Germany to the Pope's Peace Proposals, but a number of _ballons d'essai_ were being set up in the German press, which looked as if Peace Proposals might ensue later.
Roumania.

3. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that he was apprehensive regarding Roumania's position now that the military failure of Russia seemed inevitable.

Relations with America.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that great difficulties had arisen in regard to the training and transport of American troops. A number of instructors had been ordered to return from France for the purpose of going to America, but intimation had now been received from Washington that they were no longer wanted. He was in correspondence with General Pershing regarding the transport of the troops, and it appeared that nobody on this side of the Atlantic had any authority to decide anything, while great delay was being experienced in obtaining decisions from Washington.

The First Sea Lord confirmed this view, and stated that he was experiencing similar difficulties in all naval matters. He had offered the "Aquitania" for the transport of American troops more than a month ago, but had received no answer whatever. The proposed Transport Conference was making no headway, and Admiral Mayo's attitude was mainly one of apology owing to his not having the power to make any decisions.

In this connection attention was drawn to the treatment accorded to Sir S. H. Lever in America, and to the great difficulty of having, as it were, three Ambassadors, viz., Lord Northcliffe, Lord Reading, and Sir C. Spring-Rice, in America at the same time.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the First Sea Lord should furnish the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs with material points for a private and personal telegram to be sent by him to Colonel House;

(b.) The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should consider the desirability of recalling Sir C. Spring-Rice on leave and extending the duration of Lord Reading's stay in America.

The War Cabinet were invited to indicate the part to be played by the Inter-Allied Council. Lord Curzon informed the War Cabinet that his Committee had met on several occasions, and M. Clémental had attended as the French representative. The suggestion had been that the Council should be called with representatives of the different Allies, under the Chairmanship of a Frenchman, the general idea being that the Council would meet seldom after its first meeting, and that the current work would be delegated to Sub-Committees. A scheme, drawn up by Mr. C. J. Phillips, acting on behalf of Lord Northcliffe, had been submitted by Lord Robert Cecil. This scheme had been since withdrawn for clerical amendment, but it was clear that this aspect should be considered. The War Cabinet decided that—

Lord Curzon should be asked to summon his Committee on the Inter-Allied Council scheme, with a view to a settlement of outstanding questions of machinery connected therewith.

The Greek Army.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that M. Venezelos's hopes, expressed early in July last, viz., that ten Greek divisions would be available by October, were not materialising. Three, or at the most five, divisions were probably all that could now be hoped for; and little had been done to get
even this reduced number ready. Two Greek divisions had been withdrawn from Macedonia and sent to Southern Greece.

6. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that a telegram (No. 1350, dated the 14th September, 1917) had been received from the British Military Attaché at Petrograd, addressed to the Director of Military Intelligence, stating that a considerable quantity of ammunition had been destroyed at Kazan. Enquiry was being made into the cause of the fire, and, although definite evidence that these explosions had been caused by German agents had not yet been obtained, the authorities were satisfied that such was the case. The reported fire at the Putiloff works at Petrograd turned out to be a very small affair, some workmen's cottages having been destroyed, but the factory and stores remained uninjured.

7. The views of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff were invited as to the possibility of clearing up the situation at Láhej in the near future, and whether it would be desirable to employ Chinese troops at all, and, if so, whether they could be used for this purpose [vide telegram No. 971 from Sir Reginald Wingate].

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff replied that, owing to the uncertainty of the position in Mesopotamia, he did not recommend the employment of additional British or Indian reinforcements in the Aden theatre at the present time, though such a possibility might arise later. He was desirous of Chinese troops being got ready for use in one or other theatre, and, though he quite understood the undesirability of employing such troops in Egypt, he thought that their employment at Aden might eventually become practicable. He undertook to furnish the Cabinet with a memorandum upon the Aden situation.

8. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he feared that negotiations regarding Russian co-operation in Mesopotamia would have to be commenced all over again with the new Commander-in-Chief, but he was trying to get hold of General Beratoff, who was the Russian commander nearest to General Maude. We were supplying General Beratoff with many of his needs, and he hoped that some assistance might be forthcoming. He was holding a conference with the shipping authorities regarding preparations for reinforcements being sent to Mesopotamia in case they were needed, and was closely watching the position.

9. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff drew attention to an article that had appeared in the "Times" of Saturday, the 15th September, 1917, in which demands had been put forward for the publication of further military despatches. He pointed out that we were the only country that published despatches, and that these were a survival of pre-telegraph days. The only despatch which had been received from a Commander-in-Chief of an Expeditionary Force, and which had not yet been published, was that from Sir Archibald Murray on relinquishing the command in Egypt. He was strongly opposed to the publication of this despatch until General Allenby's operations had made further progress. There had been no despatch from East Africa since General Smuts had relinquished command. With regard to a despatch from the Western Front, he read a telegram from Sir Douglas Haig (No. 621, dated the 16th September, 1917) pointing out the great difficulty of submitting despatches in addition to the very full communiqués already given to the press. Any despatch which would not give
useful information to the enemy could be little more than a réchauffé of the information already given.

The War Cabinet supported the view put forward by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and considered that Sir Douglas Haig should not be asked for a further despatch while the present operations lasted.

Submarines.

10. The First Sea Lord reported that—

(a.) On the 10th instant H.M.S. “Viola” dropped two depth charges on an enemy submarine; the second charge was followed by a large explosion, and the usual signs were exhibited showing that the submarine was probably destroyed.

(b.) H.M.S. “Orwell” dropped depth charges on an enemy submarine near the Shetlands; it is possible that the submarine was sunk.

Submarine “G 9” Rammed

11. The First Sea Lord reported that the destroyer “Pasley” had rammed one of our own submarines, viz., the “G 9,” in mistake for an enemy submarine; there was only one survivor.

Air Offensive.

12. The First Sea Lord reported that on the 13th instant eight seaplanes bombarded munition factories and sheds near Smyrna Railway Station, inflicting considerable damage. He added that probably Smyrna is being used as a submarine base.

13. One of our air patrols had engaged a formation of enemy aircraft near Ostend at 10 A.M. on Sunday, the 16th instant, and succeeded in driving down one enemy aeroplane.

14. Seaplanes from Dover carried out an attack upon a flotilla of German trawlers, which was accompanied by a destroyer, between Ostend and Blankenburg. The destroyer was hit amidships, and at least one of the trawlers was sunk.

The Submarine Situation

15. The First Sea Lord gave a satisfactory report, that since the 1st July twelve enemy submarines had been sunk and two interned. These figures represented certainties. In this connection the First Sea Lord undertook to furnish the Cabinet with some records recently compiled as to the destruction of enemy submarines, showing the percentage sunk to date.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 17, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 235.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, September 18, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

THE RIGHT HON. A. BONAR LAW, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The Right Hon. SIR EDWARD CARSON, K.C., M.P. (for Minute 13).

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India (for Minute 13).

The Right Hon. JOHN HODGE, M.P., Minister of Pensions (for Minute 12).

Admiral SIR J. R. JELLINEK, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 11).

The Right Hon. T. J. MACNAMARA, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Admiralty (for Minute 13).

The Right Hon. G. H. ROBERTS, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minute 13).

SIR CHARLES HARRIS, K.C.B., Assistant Financial Secretary, War Office (for Minutes 12 and 13).

Colonel W. DALLY JONES, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.

The Russian Front.

1. THE Director of Military Intelligence reported that there was no fresh news in regard to the fighting on the Russian front. A serious aspect of the general situation was that a large number of Austrian prisoners had been escaping: no fewer than 9,000 Austrians had returned to their own lines on the sector of the Third Austrian Army alone.

With regard to Riga operations, very few Russian prisoners had been taken, but there had been 10,000 deserters.

Protection of British Embassy at Petrograd.

2. The Director of Military Intelligence read a telegram, dated the 15th September, 1917, from the British Military Attaché at Petrograd stating that the Minister for Foreign Affairs at Petrograd had asked what steps had been taken for the safety of the Embassy,
having regard to the fact that war had been declared by the new Government on the Soviet, and that trouble was expected in the immediate future. It was not considered desirable to have a Russian guard posted outside the Embassy, for fear of exciting attention. Since last Tuesday, however, there had been a guard of British airmen and gunners, who, when General Korniloff's force had marched on Petrograd, had been withdrawn from Tsarskoe Selo and district.

3. The Director of Military Intelligence reported the receipt of a message from General Wingate announcing that a force of Turks had been defeated by the Sherif Shakir, a relative of the King of the Hejaz, on the railway line north of Medina.

4. The Director of Military Intelligence pointed out that our information in regard to operations in Roumania was faulty, because all communication had been cut off during the last week, and the only information obtainable was that derived from the Russian communiqués. As far as was known, however, there was no indication of an enemy offensive on that front. It appeared that the greatest risk for Roumania lay in the event of the failure of the Russian troops to support the Roumanian flanks.

5. The Director of Military Intelligence stated that one and a half divisions were definitely known to have come from Galicia to the Isonzo front, and perhaps one more division. The Italians had not attacked lately, but they had repelled a strong Austrian attack on the 16th September on the Bainsizza Plateau.

6. The First Sea Lord reported that a successful bombing raid on Ghistelles Aerodrome had taken place. All our machines had returned safely.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that the total number of merchant-ships at present under convoy amounted to 353. The steamship "Arabis," which had been lagging behind her convoy, had been torpedoed and lost, although the convoy was only proceeding at a speed of 6 knots. The failure of the "Arabis" to keep up with the convoy was probably due to a foul bottom.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that the Germans had now got more submarines operating than ever before, but it seemed improbable that they would be able to keep up this effort. It was possible that this increased concentration might have some connection with recent German "peace-kites." It was satisfactory that up to date the success of the enemy submarines had not been commensurate with their increased numbers.

9. The First Sea Lord reported that the new pattern of our mines was satisfactory, but that he had nothing like enough of them. There were 100,000 mines on order, but of these only 400 were at present delivered; it was hoped that 2,000 a month would be obtained during the next two or three months, working up to a maximum of 9,000 a month. Should the latter figure be realised, however, there would not be enough mine-layers to lay such a quantity. The United States Government had been appealed to for assistance in the matter of mine-layers, but they had only got two of these vessels.
10. The First Sea Lord said that the battle-cruiser situation was likely to become most serious. From information received it was expected that in 1919 the Germans, who were laying down battle-cruisers only, would have ten battle-cruisers, of which all except one would be superior to our nine, and four or five of our vessels would be of no great comparative value. He was proposing to ask the War Cabinet in the near future whether the work which had been stopped on battle-cruisers could not be recommenced.

In this connection the possibility of purchasing battle-cruisers from the Japanese was discussed. While the general opinion was that it seemed unlikely that the Japanese would be willing to sell battle-cruisers, it was suggested that they might be willing to exchange battle-cruisers for battleships.

11. The Chancellor of the Exchequer reported a telegram from Lord Reading asking for some Tanks to be sent over to America for purposes of exhibit, to assist in the raising of the Liberty Loan.

The Director of Military Intelligence undertook to look into this question.

In this connection the First Sea Lord reported that the Americans were also asking for a submarine captured from the enemy.

The War Cabinet decided that—

If a German submarine was sent, it was of importance that it should be one captured by the British and not by the French.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 232, Minute 8, Sir Charles Harris explained the present arrangements for dealing with soldiers' wives and dependants who have to enter workhouse infirmaries for medical treatment. It was true that the separation allowances were stopped, but, on the other hand, when a woman enters the infirmary the allowance to her children is raised to the rate for motherless children. The military authorities had taken over so many of the civil hospitals that there often was no alternative for women requiring medical attendance other than to enter a workhouse infirmary. The Local Pension Committees were authorised to contribute to the maintenance of the home when the mother was in the infirmary. The Guardians, who raised the question, desired the continuation of the allowances in order to charge the women for maintenance.

The War Cabinet decided—

To refer the matter for report to a committee, to be convened by the Minister of Pensions, consisting of representatives of:

- The Admiralty.
- The War Office.
- The Treasury.
- The Local Government Board.
- The Pensions Ministry.

13. The War Cabinet had before them the First Interim Report of the Committee appointed to consider the question of increasing the pay of soldiers and sailors (War Cabinet 200, Minute 4), together with a summary of the Report in a form arranged for publication (Paper G.T.-2046).

The chief criticism offered on the Report was that it failed to differentiate between the men serving abroad and at home, and between the men abroad who were in the firing line and those serving at the base.

Sir Edward Carson, the Chairman of the Committee, said that this problem had been gone into fully by the Committee, who had
decided that it was impossible to make the differentiation suggested. The administrative difficulties involved were enormous.

Mr. Montagu said that a similar attempt had been made by the Demobilisation Committee in dealing with the question of gratuities, and had been abandoned for the same reason.

Sir Charles Harris said such a proposal would necessitate that the pay offices should keep in constant touch with the individual movements of very large numbers of men, and this at a time when the pay offices were staffed in a great measure by thousands of inexperienced and untrained girls. The proposals, even as they stood, would place a tremendous strain on the machinery.

General Macdonogh said that men were better off pecuniarily when in France than when in this country, and that it was important to help the men when home on leave.

Dr. Macnamara explained that the demand for increased pay had arisen at home and not at the Front. It was impossible to contemplate scales of pay comparable with those enjoyed by the Dominion troops, or to go the length of the demand for 140,000,000L put forward by the General Federation of Trade Unions. He was certain that the proposals of the Committee would be widely welcomed, and would go a long way to check the present agitation.

Mr. Montagu said he had forwarded a copy of the proposals to the Viceroy of India, and had stated that it was, in his view, hardly possible to oppose them on the ground that they involved a fresh burden of about 1,000,000L. per annum on the finances of India. The Government of India may reply that when they undertook to bear a share in the expense of the war they had not foreseen this new expenditure. Mr. Montagu added that he would communicate to the Cabinet the reply of the Viceroy, and, in the meantime, would leave the question of the incidence of the burden for subsequent departmental arrangement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer emphasised the heavy strain on the country's finances involved in the proposals, following, as they did, upon a guarantee of perhaps 50,000,000L. on account of the provision of the ninepenny loaf. Apart from this consideration, the general principle was one which certainly appealed to him.

The War Cabinet decided—

To approve the recommendations of the Report, subject to the concurrence of the Prime Minister, and the Secretary was requested to prepare a revised draft of a notice to the press announcing the Cabinet's decision.

The War Cabinet further decided that—

The proposals should come into operation for the Army as from the 29th September, 1917, and for the Navy as from the 1st October, 1917.

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W., September 18, 1917.

(Initialled) A. B. L.
EGYPT:
Illness of the Sultan

1. THE Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs brought to the notice of the War Cabinet a telegram (No. 979) which had been received yesterday as to the serious condition of health of the Sultan of Egypt, and stated that the question arose as to the succession in the event of his death. Two problems presented themselves: one was to retain the present system of a Protectorate; the other was annexation. Mr. Balfour thought that Sir Reginald Wingate inclined towards annexation, but personally he thought that a Protectorate was highly desirable, in view of international politics and the bad effect that annexation would have on the new
Kingdom of Hejaz, and the opportunities it would offer for propaganda on the part of our enemies. Mr. Balfour stated that if the present system was continued there were two relatives of the present Sultan who might be nominated to the Sultanship, namely, the brother and the son of the present Sultan. The son, whom the Sultan would wish to succeed him, was reported to be a desirable personality, but pro-German and pro-Turk, and had on these grounds refused the succession when it was previously offered. The brother, though not a great personality, was pro-British. Mr. Balfour stated that this was a matter that ought to be settled before the death of the present Sultan, and that he had already discussed the matter with Lord Hardinge and Sir Ronald Graham, but that he had not had the advantage of obtaining the views of Lord Milner and Lord Curzon.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to obtain, if possible, the views of Lord Curzon and Lord Milner, but to communicate again with the War Cabinet before taking any other action.

**Education Bill.**

2. The War Cabinet accepted the following formula put forward by Mr. H. A. L. Fisher (Paper G.T.-2060), as regards Higher Education finance, and authorised the President of the Board of Education to state the same—

"The Government feels that if these developments are to be secured within a reasonable time a large part of the burden must be borne by the Exchequer. I am not in position to give you a figure, but I am authorised to state that, in the view of the Cabinet, the development of Higher Education contemplated under the Bill should be as liberally subsidised by the Treasury as is compatible with giving to the Local Education Authorities, upon whom it will devolve to administer the Act, an interest in its prudent and economic administration."

**Co-operation of Allied Universities.**

3. Mr. Fisher raised the question of the co-operation of the Universities of the Allied countries, and Mr. Balfour stated that whilst in the United States of America he had been approached on this subject, both by Americans and by members of the French Mission.

It was pointed out that, in the past, students from the United States had to a large extent gone to Germany for their education, where they had been welcomed and encouraged. It was now felt in the Allied countries that such procedure should in the future be discouraged, and that reciprocal arrangements should be made between the Universities of the Allied countries for the exchange of students and professors.

Mr. Fisher pointed out that as President of the Board of Education he had no jurisdiction over Ireland and Scotland, and accordingly suggested that if an invitation to a Conference was to be sent to the Universities of Great Britain and Ireland it should be issued by the Foreign Secretary.

The War Cabinet requested—

Mr. Fisher to draft some definite proposal on the subject, and to forward the same to Mr. Balfour for his consideration, and for such action as he thought fit in connection with the Allied Governments.
4. The First Sea Lord reported that the destroyer "Contest," while screening a torpedoed ship which belonged to an outward­bound convoy, had herself been torpedoed and sunk. There were apparently few casualties, but no detailed report had yet been received.

5. With reference to War Cabinet 236, Minute 7, the First Sea Lord stated that the steamship "Arabis" had fallen out of the convoy owing to machinery troubles, and not by reason of a foul bottom.

6. The War Cabinet took into consideration a Memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Paper G.T.-2008), relative to the supply of aircraft for Home Defence, in which it was pointed out that the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief Home Forces considered that five day-flying fighting squadrons were necessary, and that only three were at present complete.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that the two additional squadrons could not yet be supplied, but it was hoped one would be forthcoming in October, and the other in November, but this would obviously depend upon output and the demands of the Western front.

Lord French stated that, though it was desirable to get the five squadrons complete as soon as possible, defence by day was not now considered to be of the same degree of urgency as night defence, and that experiments were being carried out, with a view to improving the latter.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In view of the serious situation arising in France consequent upon the improvement in the German Air Service, it was undesirable further to consider this question until they had had the advantage of reading the Report by General Smuts on the Air Situation generally (War Cabinet 228, Minute 6).

7. The War Cabinet, in view of the frequent demands which come before them for settlement, considered the question as to whether some organisation should not be instituted to co-ordinate the various demands which were made by the several Departments. It was felt that the proposed Inter-Allied Council would not meet this want, as it dealt primarily with material to be obtained from the United States. What was required was that certain members of the Cabinet should be requested to act as a Committee, being assisted by technical experts, in order to adjudicate upon all questions of priority in home production after due consideration of what was being obtained from America and elsewhere.

Sir L. Worthington Evans pointed out that a Priority Board already existed in the Ministry of Munitions, which exercised an elaborate control over the output of that Department.

General Smuts undertook to place his views on this subject before the War Cabinet, and consequently the matter was deferred for later consideration.

8. The War Cabinet had under consideration certain correspondence which had taken place between the Italian Ambassador and the Ministry of Munitions, as set out in Paper G.T.-1957, with regard to the supply of steel plates to Italy.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs drew the attention of the War Cabinet to letters which had been received from our Ambassador in Rome, pointing out the serious conditions that prevailed and the action which would probably be taken by the
Germans in exploiting the economic condition of Italy with regard to their efforts for peace.

The War Cabinet felt that we must adhere to our promise to supply, during the course of the year, the 40,000 tons of steel, but that if there were further requests for other commodities, such as wheat, &c, the opportunity should be taken to set the supply of such commodities against the agreed supply of steel, with a view to releasing as much of the latter for our own shipbuilding, where it could be more economically and expeditiously used; and that in the meantime the supply of steel plates to Italy should be continued at a slower rate than had been originally intended.

In connection with this decision the War Cabinet requested—

The Shipping Controller to satisfy himself that any ships built in Italy with steel supplied from the United Kingdom should, on completion, be put into Allied trade.

9. Sir Eric Geddes stated that the Admiralty felt anxious with regard to the shortage of airships, that it was not so much an air matter as a fleet matter, and that the scouting powers of the Navy in a year's time would be very seriously handicapped if some such policy as had been put forward by the Admiralty in Paper G.T.–1912 was not carried out. An alternative, though not so effective, would be a new programme for light cruisers, which would necessitate far more steel than was contemplated in the provision of the airships and their sheds now asked for, which had been reduced from 20,000 tons to 14,000 tons, spread over a period of eighteen months.

The War Cabinet considered that the airship policy should be dealt with in conjunction with our future aeroplane policy (see Minute 6), and requested—

General Smuts to confer with the representatives of the Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions, and to put forward his recommendations, so that the matter could be further considered by the War Cabinet at an early date.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 19, 1917.
SECRET.

WAR CABINET, 237.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, September 21, 1917.

Present

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Lieutenant-General Sir D. Henderson, K.C.B., D.S.O., Director-General of Military Aeronautics (for Minutes 6, 7, 8, and 9).

Major-General Sir F. C. Shaw, K.C.B., Chief of the General Staff, Home Forces (for Minutes 6, 7, 8, and 9).


Sir Alan G. Anderson, K.C.B., Controller, Admiralty (for Minutes 6, 7, 8, and 9).

Commodore G. M. Paine, C.B., M.V.O., Fifth Sea Lord (for Minutes 6, 7, 8, and 9).

Sir Leo G. Chiozza Money, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Shipping (for Minutes 5 and 10).

Mr. Graeme Thomson, C.B., Director of Transports (for Minutes 5 and 10).

The Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minutes 6, 7, 8, and 9).

Sir L. Worthington Evans, Bt., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minutes 6, 7, 8, and 9).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.
1. THE Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that excellent progress had been made on the previous day in the fighting near Ypres. He explained, by means of a map, what the objectives had been, and how all had been won. We had succeeded in gaining a ridge which included the Inverness Copse, a point of great importance. A particularly satisfactory feature of this success was that the Germans knew the attack was coming; they had made great efforts to keep this ridge, which they had previously held for a long time, and they really had meant to keep it now.

The Secretary of State for War reported that, although the figures were not yet complete, the casualties, as at present advised, amounted to about 5,000.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 232, Minute 2, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the guns which the Allies had sent from France had now arrived in Italy. He stated, however, that he had received information of a serious nature, to the effect that General Cadorna had modified his plans and did not now propose to take the offensive again during the rest of the year; he was going to wait for the Austrians to attack, and then he would make a counter-attack.

The Secretary of State for War pointed out that it had been laid down by General Pétain, at the time when it had been decided to send the guns to Italy, that if there was no further offensive on the part of the Italian army the 106 guns were to be returned to the French front.

Lord Derby stated that the whole change in the Italian plan of campaign had been made since he left Italy. When he was there, during last week, everything was in readiness for another attack. He said that great difficulties had been made by the civil authorities in calling up more men, especially in places like Turin, where there had been serious labour trouble. At the same time, there were large numbers of Italian soldiers in every valley near the Front, and it did not seem that shortage of troops could be the reason for not taking the offensive. Possibly the fear of heavy casualties had influenced the Italian Government.

In view of this change of plan on the part of the Italians, and its possible far-reaching consequences, the War Cabinet were anxious to obtain the opinion of Sir Renell Rodd, who had just arrived in England, and they therefore adjourned consideration of the matter until they could discuss it with him.

At a later stage, when Sir Renell Rodd was able to be present, the War Cabinet heard his views on the telegram which had been received by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff from General Delme-Radcliffe (Appendix I).

Sir Renell Rodd stated that he could not explain this sudden change of policy. When he left Italy on Monday night (17th September), he did not know such a change was in contemplation, nor of anything in the state of the country to justify it. When he spoke to Baron Sonnino, before leaving for England, Baron Sonnino was under the impression that an early offensive was to take place before winter weather set in and made it impossible. He did not think the fear of large casualties was the explanation. The number of casualties was not published in Italy, and it would take some time for the numbers to leak out so as to be used by the pacifists. He suggested that it would be desirable to send a telegram to Baron Sonnino, pointing out that the policy now announced was in contradiction of what we had been given to understand, and asking for an explanation.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, should send a
telegram to Baron Sonnino saying that we had heard of the abandonment of the Italian offensive with extreme surprise; that it was inexplicable to us, having in view the recent despatch of 100 guns, in compliance with General Cadorna's earnest request; and that the decision was very embarrassing to our military operations on other fronts.

3. Lord Derby reported that, on his way to Italy and also on his return, he had seen M. Painlevé, who had raised once more the question of lengthening our lines. Lord Derby had told him that the matter would receive attention, but that no decision could be reached until after this year's operations were over. This had given Lord Derby the opportunity of referring to the subject of change of command in Salonica. M. Painlevé had spoken in praise of General Sarrail, adding the argument that the only decisive victory which had been won during the war had been General Sarrail's victory at Monastir. M. Painlevé had said that, if we definitely demanded the recall of General Sarrail, it would cause great trouble; if, on the other hand, we hinted that we were going to demand his recall, means would probably be found whereby General Sarrail would resign.

M. Painlevé had not realised that the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet were really antagonistic to General Sarrail's tenure of the Salonica Command. The impression derived by Lord Derby on his recent visit to Italy was that if the Prime Minister would put pressure on M. Painlevé to recall General Sarrail, we should be supported by Italy, Serbia, and Greece.

4. The First Sea Lord reported that the decoy ship "Stonecrop" claimed to have sunk an enemy submarine on the 17th instant off the Fastnet, but up to the present it had not been possible to obtain confirmation of the sinking, as the "Stonecrop" herself was torpedoed on the 18th, and sunk 65 miles off the Fastnet. It was feared that the loss of life was considerable.

5. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Paper G.T.-2055), and a Memorandum by the First Sea Lord (Paper G.T.-2085), pointing out the shortage of tonnage available in the Mediterranean for the movement of troops from Mediterranean ports in case of emergency arising in Mesopotamia or India.

It was pointed out that, during the first two years of the war, we had always kept in the Mediterranean a reserve of troopships for two divisions. Owing to the general scarcity of shipping, this reserve has been withdrawn little by little, and we have not sufficient ships to meet the normal demands in the Mediterranean.

The First Sea Lord pointed out what would be the effect of providing troopships for this work; first of all there would be the direct loss of the carrying capacity of the vessels, and the consequent decrease in importations of food into this country; then, by taking the class of steamer required for troopship purposes, it would be impossible to use them to complete the convoy system, and, therefore, there would be risk of increased losses; there would also be a diminution in the amount of coal to be sent to Italy, since the escort required for the increased number of transports in the Mediterranean would make it necessary to cancel for a time the arrangements for sending increased traffic for the East through the Mediterranean instead of round the Cape.
The Director of Transports said that Sir Joseph Maclay, who was unable to be present, had agreed that if the Cabinet decided that it was of vital importance to keep a reserve of shipping in the Mediterranean for the purpose indicated, he could find the ships.

Of the three alternatives put forward in the First Sea Lord's Memorandum, the War Cabinet considered that the third should be adopted. This would necessitate the finding of about seventeen ships to bring the number up to the requirements for carrying a division and a half. The First Lord emphasised the fact that the Admiralty could only supply the escort by withdrawal from other escort services at present considered essential, and that the locking up of shipping thus contemplated would interfere with the allocation of further merchant ships as armed auxiliary cruisers—a measure most necessary for the extension of the convoy system.

The War Cabinet recognised that their decision involved these drawbacks, but were of opinion that the ships must be found, and found immediately, in order to be prepared for sudden need in Mesopotamia.

After some discussion it was decided—

That the Shipping Controller should provide the necessary ships, which would be able to carry approximately a division and a half, which could arrive in Basra in twenty-nine days from the first sailing from Marseilles, if Marseilles were selected as the port of embarkation; and that the Admiralty should supply the necessary escort.

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Aerial Operations.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 236, Minute 6, the War Cabinet had under further consideration a Memorandum by General Smuts (Paper G.T.-2062), and certain correspondence between the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig (Paper G.T.-2058), as to aerial operations, &c.

General Smuts pointed out that the real question which he wished to raise was that at the present moment there were two air programmes: One, a limited programme, which, inter alia, provided for 86 squadrons being maintained on the Western front; the other, the Air Board programme, which made provision for a Royal Flying Corps with 200 squadrons attached. He stated that, on enquiry into the matter, he found that even the limited programme was thought to be in jeopardy, and he was of opinion that, unless priority was given to everything appertaining to the provision of the requisite material for the Air Forces, the forces asked for by Sir Douglas Haig would not be forthcoming. He advocated that, in addition to giving priority to the limited programme, reasonable additional priority should be given, where possible, with the object of attaining the Air Board programme as far as might be practicable. He drew the attention of the War Cabinet to Sir William Weir's Memorandum, which appears as an Appendix to Paper G.T.-2062, and stated that the situation as set forth therein referred to the smaller programme.

The Minister of Munitions stated that it was news to him that there was any doubt as to the limited programme being carried out. The forecast published had, so far, broadly speaking, been maintained, and no reports had reached him that there was likely to be any failure in the production of the necessary number of engines. He added that he had given instructions that in the Ministry of Munitions every priority was to be given to Sir William Weir as regarded aeronautical supply, and he thought that the latter's paper covered the whole air policy as formulated by the Air Board.

Sir David Henderson stated that the limited programme was likely to be late, for, although the number of squadrons (namely, 86) might be in existence by the date contemplated, some of the
squadrons would not have machines of the latest type. Acceleration was required rather than an increased programme.

The Minister of Munitions stated that it was not an easy matter to accelerate the supply of engines, and that changes of design must necessarily affect the output; in addition to this, he had had considerable difficulties in getting the necessary labour, as well as in persuading the Carpenters' Union to accept the principle of payment by results. Mr. Churchill stated that he had a Committee sitting at the Ministry of Munitions with a view to improve the allocation of such skilled labour as was available.

Sir David Henderson mentioned that he thought the delay was partly due to inefficient labour, as there was, he understood, a lack of skilled labour in the engine works, with the result that a very large number of cylinders had to be scrapped after inspection and before use, owing to faulty construction.

Sir Eric Geddes pointed out that the Memorandum of Sir William Weir dealt very largely with affairs which intimately concerned the War Office and the Admiralty, and that, before accepting the same as an agreed document on the part of the Admiralty, he would like to be selected as a member of a Committee to enquire into the whole situation in so far as it affected the Navy.

The War Cabinet decided that—

As there was a considerable difference of opinion as to facts, it was essential that the matter should be further considered, and requested—

General Smuts (Chairman),
Lord Derby,
Sir Eric Geddes,
Mr. Churchill, and
Lord Cowdray

Major L. Storr (Secretary).

to form a Committee and enquire at the earliest date into the conditions that prevail, and to report to them as soon as possible on the whole situation, giving their recommendations as to priority and the effect that any priority, if granted, would have on the output for the Army and Navy, and in what direction.

7. The War Cabinet took note of the recommendation by General Smuts that sanction should be given for the immediate occupation of a limited acreage (at most 4,000 acres) of arable land required for aerodromes.

Sir David Henderson stated that his Department had consulted the Food Production Department in this matter, and that he had endeavoured, in putting forward his proposals, to select land with the lightest soil and the least valuable for food production.

The War Cabinet gave general sanction to the taking over of land to the extent of 4,000 acres for the purpose stated, but directed Sir David Henderson to exercise every consideration in order to avoid, as far as possible, taking over any ground that was likely to be of a highly productive nature for the growth of cereals.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 236, Minute 9, General Smuts stated that he had consulted with the Admiralty and that they were prepared to abate their programme for the construction of airships by reconsidering the question of the design of the shed at Flookburgh, with a view to using considerably less steel in its erection. Further, they were prepared to drop the Alexandra...
Factory (near Glasgow) scheme as regards new airship building-sheds. This meant that the output of rigid airships would be reduced from 24 per annum, as set out in Paper G.T.-1912, to 15. This was the least that the First Sea Lord felt himself able to agree to, although he was of opinion that the need existed for at least 18 instead of 15.

Mr. Churchill stated that, in view of the length of time that it took to build these sheds, and the claim on plates and labour, which vitally affected the supply for other purposes, he would like to discuss this matter with General Smuts and the Admiralty.

The War Cabinet therefore decided—

That the subject should be considered by the Committee under General Smuts, appointed under Minute 6, who would report thereon.

Air Effort of the United States of America.

9. The Minister of Munitions related briefly to the War Cabinet the efforts which were being made by Major Boiling, of the United States Army, to place the air organisation of the United States on a sound footing, so that they might take part in the offensive next summer. Mr. Churchill added that they were rendering considerable assistance in the development of the French Air Services.

The War Cabinet requested—

Mr. Churchill to call upon Sir William Weir to prepare a paper on the American effort in this direction, and to submit it for the information of the War Cabinet.

Coal for Italy.

10. The Director of Transports stated that the Secretary of State for War had conveyed to the Shipping Controller a message from General Cadorna emphasising the supreme necessity of increasing the supply of coal to Italy, even at the expense of munitions and other necessaries. The Shipping Controller had therefore issued instructions that an effort should be made to bring up the supply to 700,000 tons a-month.

Lord Derby confirmed the importance of coal to Italy, and thought that pressure ought to be put on the Italians to supply escorts for coal shipments. There were a number of destroyers in Venice which it ought to be possible to spare for this purpose.

It was pointed out that Lord Milner's Committee had laid stress on the necessity of Italian protection being furnished for through traffic in the Mediterranean (Appendix II).

The War Cabinet decided that—

The negotiations with the Italian Government for an increased supply of coal should proceed on the basis that they would furnish an escort of destroyers.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 21, 1917.
APPENDIX I

ITALIAN OFFENSIVE.

Paraphrase portion of telegram from General Delmé-Radcliffe to the Chief of the Imperial War Staff, dated September 20, 1917.

CADORNA told me to-day that in view of the situation in Russia, of indications that Austrians were intending to take offensive north of Gorizia, of the arrival on Julian front of four fresh Austrian divisions, and reports that further strong reinforcements were approaching, he has deemed it prudent not to undertake another offensive on a great scale, but to wait for Austrian offensive and to follow it up with a counter-attack. For this decision, he said, there were many reasons. He mentioned, for example, the civil Government's reluctance to proceed energetically with recruiting and the resulting difficulty of obtaining enough drafts. Between 25,000 and 30,000 were killed in the last offensive, and there were in all about 120,000 casualties, a large proportion of which, however, were slightly wounded. A large-scale offensive with casualties which might run to 300,000, if not entirely successful, would have bad effect on the country's moral, and he (Cadorna) would find himself, if the enemy brought further reinforcements from the Russian front, in a difficult position. His wisest course, he therefore considers, is, for the present, to act on the defensive and according to circumstances, preparing in any case for an energetic spring campaign with a largely increased reserve of ammunition. He proposes to withdraw from the front line and send to training camps as many troops as can be spared and to give as much leave as possible.

APPENDIX II.

COAL FOR ITALY.

(See War Cabinet 231, Minute 10, G.T.-2059.)

Paraphrase of telegram sent to Foreign Office for transmission to the Italian Government.

WITH reference to coal shipments, it is hoped to raise September exports so as to make average for August and September about 600,000 tons, exclusive of quantity sent by America. Future supplies must depend on what protecting forces Italy can furnish. In order to protect through traffic from Gibraltar to Port Said, Italian co-operation necessary. Need eleven Italian destroyers as part of the anti-submarine forces to be worked under the Commander-in-Chief's control. Can only save tonnage for Italian coal supplies by putting traffic through the Mediterranean. As stated in recent negotiations, it is essential that the neutral vessels chartered by Italy and the few Italian vessels now taking coal to Blaye should be sent for ore to North Spain. As the next few weeks are the best for loading ore before bad weather sets in, it is important that orders to this effect should be given immediately.

If Italy takes action set out above, we will do utmost to ship up to the highest possible figure from United Kingdom, but to attempt exact statement is undesirable, as shipments depend largely on tonnage controlled by Italy. A precise estimate is also impracticable because of the many uncertain factors in the tonnage position.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, September 24, 1917, at 12 noon.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Russia.

1. THE Chief of the Imperial General Staff read a telegram from General Barter, to the effect that the chief Allied military representatives had paid their respects to M. Kerensky, who had promised to endeavour to restore the discipline of officers in the Russian Army, and had given an undertaking that representatives of the Soviet would not be allowed to interfere at the front.

Explosion of Guns en route to Italy.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that a serious explosion had taken place in Italy, three batteries being destroyed and a number of lives lost. The guns destroyed were believed to be those in transit from France to the Italian front.

[1365—238]
Italy.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 237, Minute 2, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that a telegram had been sent pressing General Cadorna to take the offensive, but that General Cadorna had replied that the decision not to undertake any further offensive this autumn had been come to on the 19th September, and that this decision had been endorsed by the Italian Government, the reasons given being that a new Austrian division had appeared on the front, and that the Austrians had received considerable reinforcements in artillery. General Cadorna was awaiting developments by the Austrians, and would counter-attack if they undertook an offensive. He expressed the opinion that a more passive attitude on the part of the Italian troops would not prejudice Allied operations elsewhere.

Mesopotamia:

Cabinet Committee on War Policy.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that information had been received from two different sources to the effect that the Germans were collecting two divisions of troops for immediate despatch to Mesopotamia, and that a telegram had been received from General Maude to the effect that the prospects of any Russian assistance in his theatre of operations seemed hopeless. General Maude had asked for reinforcements, but the Chief of the Imperial General Staff considered that the situation was safe for the present, although it was probable that further reinforcements would be needed later.

In this connection attention was drawn to a telegram from the Viceroy of India (Paper G.T.-2097) regarding a possible attack by the Turks through Persia.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A meeting of the War Policy Committee should be held that afternoon to go into the whole question of shipments, reinforcements, and military operations in the Turkish theatres.

Submarines.

5. The First Sea Lord reported that—

(a.) On the 21st instant an airship had bombed an enemy submarine off the Lizard with apparently successful results.

(b.) The Senior Naval Officer, Salonica, had telegraphed that an enemy submarine had been located off the island of Cythera, and that a systematic hunt had ended in the explosion of two big charges in the immediate neighbourhood of the submarine, with, it was believed, successful results.

(c.) Another submarine had probably been destroyed by seaplanes in the vicinity of the North Hinder Lightship.

(d.) With reference to War Cabinet 234, Minute 15, the number of certainties of enemy submarines destroyed since the 1st July had now risen to eight (including two interned), and eight probables.

(e.) A usually well-informed source had reported that Admiral von Capelle had stated, in the last secret session of the Reichstag, that Germany had lost forty submarines since the beginning of the period of unlimited submarine warfare; e.g., the losses had been at the rate of seven per month.

(f.) According to his information, Germany was turning out approximately eight new submarines per month.

(g.) With reference to War Cabinet 237, Minute 4, two officers and eight men had been rescued from a raft; these men were the sole survivors of the decoy ship "Stonecrop."
Bombardment of Ostend.

6. The First Sea Lord reported that in connection with the recent bombardment of Ostend, a communiqué regarding which had been published in the press, only one monitor had taken part, firing thirty-six rounds. As far as could be ascertained, the damage included one shop entirely demolished, seven shops damaged, and one floating dock (containing a submarine) badly damaged. He added that our aircraft, who were doing the "spotting" for the monitor, had succeeded in destroying three enemy seaplanes; one German pilot from these had been rescued.

Naval Losses.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that one of our torpedo-boat destroyers had got into our own minefield off Texel. The destroyer, though badly damaged, was not sunk, and had been towed back into port.

Prisoners of War in Turkey.

8. Attention was drawn to Foreign Office telegram No. 861, regarding the terrible conditions now being suffered by our prisoners in Turkey, and stating that in all probability none of the rank and file would survive.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A joint report should be prepared for the War Cabinet, and proposals made, by General Belfield and Lord Newton.

Internal Financial Arrangements.

9. The Chancellor of the Exchequer communicated to the War Cabinet particulars of the financial arrangements he proposed to make to meet the situation which has arisen in regard to the large number of Treasury Bills extant, amounting to no less than 800 millions sterling. He pointed out that there might probably be a good deal of public criticism.

The War Cabinet approved the Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposals, namely, to issue—

National War Bonds (subject to Income Tax).

Five year 5 per cent. bonds issued at par, repayable at 102.
Seven year 5 per cent. bonds issued at par, repayable at 103.
Ten year 5 per cent. bonds issued at par, repayable at 105.

Holders of these bonds will have the option of conversion at any time during their currency into the 5 per cent. War Loan, and also the option of converting into any new loan issued during the war at the time of issue of any such loan.

National War Bonds (Income Tax Compounded).

Ten year 4 per cent. bonds issued and redeemable at par.

Holders of these bonds will have the option of conversion at any time during their currency into the 4 per cent. War Loan and into any new loan issued during the war at the time of issue of any such loan.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 24, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 239.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, September 26, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:


The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. GEORGE N. BARNES, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. SIR E. CARSON, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 7 to 12).

The Right Hon. W. LONG, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minute 13).

The Right Hon. SIR A. STANLEY, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minutes 12 to 14).

The Right Hon. C. ADDISON, M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minutes 12 to 14).

The Right Hon. SIR GEORGE CAVE, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minutes 13 and 14).

SIR L. WORTHINGTON EVANS, Bt., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minutes 12 and 13).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. DALLY JONES, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. ROW, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.
The Western Front.

1. THE Director of Military Operations stated that the northern portion of the Second Army and the southern portion of the Fifth Army attacked on a front of 9,000 yards chiefly north of the Menin Road this morning, and that, with the exception of a portion of the front south of the Polygon Wood, had gained all their objectives by 8 A.M. The greatest depth of the advance was 2,000 yards. This gave us the southern portion of the Ridge.

Air Raid.

2. The Director of Military Operations stated that during an air raid the previous night, only one or two of the enemy aereoplane penetrated the London defences, and it seemed probable that about ten enemy machines took part in the attack. Eight incendiary bombs were dropped in Deptford, and five explosive bombs in Bermondsey, four people being killed and fourteen injured at the latter place. The machines that were driven away visited Folkestone, where six bombs were dropped, but no casualties or damage resulted.

East Africa.

3. The Director of Military Operations stated that the reports from East Africa were good, and that the 25th Cavalry, which had recently arrived from India, had cut the communications of one of the enemy forces, and captured a supply depot and its garrison. There were indications that recent actions had resulted in heavy casualties to the enemy, and the prospects as regards further operations were promising.

Arabia.

4. The Director of Military Operations reported that a party of Arabs, under the command of Captain Lawrence, had carried out a raid near Maan and had derailed a train and two carriages and blown up a bridge. They had killed 70 Turks and 2 German officers and captured 80 more Turks.

Escape of German Prisoners.

5. The War Cabinet drew the attention of the Director of Military Operations to reports in the press as to the escape of German prisoners from Sutton Bonnington, near Nottingham, it being alleged that they were in possession of bundles of food and clothing and a detailed map showing the roads to the coast, and that the means of escape had been by way of a tunnel which they had dug 40 yards in length.

The War Cabinet requested—

Major-General Maurice to obtain and forward to them a report on the circumstances of the escape, with any remarks the Army Council might wish to offer on the same.

Submarines.

6. The First Sea Lord reported the following attacks on enemy submarines:

(a.) On the 25th instant, in the vicinity of Portland, a seaplane dropped four 100-lb. bombs on a submarine as she submerged, three of which exploded. A large quantity of oil was afterwards seen in the vicinity.

(b.) An enemy submarine, after sinking a French ship, broke surface in the vicinity of another French and a British ship, both of which hit the submarine by gun-fire and claimed to have sunk her. She went down, leaving a dense volume of black smoke over the spot.

(c.) Two seaplanes, when cruising in the vicinity of the North Hinder Light vessel, dropped four 230-lb. bombs in the
Fire at Dunkirk: Loss of Aero Engines.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that on the 25th instant a fire was caused at the Aircraft Depot, Dunkirk, by enemy bombs, and that the engine repair-shop was totally destroyed, involving the loss of all spare engines and engines under repair, to the number of between 120 and 180; the actual number had not yet been ascertained. The machines in the shop were also damaged. The fire gained a hold because a shell from one of the French anti-aircraft guns put the fire-engine out of action. The First Sea Lord stated that this loss would have a serious effect on the work of the Fighting Squadrons based in that vicinity. In reply to a question by the War Cabinet, the First Sea Lord stated that the anti-aircraft defence of Dunkirk was in the hands of the French, and the War Cabinet requested him to go into the matter with Admiral Bacon, with a view to augmenting the French defences with British anti-aircraft guns, and report in due course.

Bombing Raid on Varssenaere Aerodrome.

8. The First Sea Lord stated that we carried out a bombing raid on the Varssenaere Aerodrome on the morning of the 24th instant. Most of the bombs fell amongst the sheds and hangars, and amongst aeroplanes lined up at the Aerodrome.

Naval Activity in the Mediterranean.

9. The First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that the Naval Attache at Rome reported that—

(a.) On the night of the 19th instant an Italian naval airship dropped bombs on the shipyard and shipping at Prevlaka, in the Gulf of Cattaro.

(b.) On the 22nd instant four enemy aeroplanes attacked Otranto, dropping sixteen bombs, but causing no casualties and little damage.

(c.) On the 24th instant two Handley-Page hydroplanes scouting from Grado were attacked by three Austrian machines, and one of the former shot down. Enemy torpedo-boats attacked the motor-launch which was accompanying our hydroplanes, but aerial reinforcements and motor-launches arrived at Grado and beat off the enemy.

Flotilla Leader "Faulknor" and Destroyer "Nugent" mined.

10. The First Sea Lord reported that the flotilla leader "Faulknor" and the destroyer "Nugent" were mined in the vicinity of the West Hinder Lightship on the 25th instant, one man being killed and four injured on board the "Faulknor," but there were no casualties on the "Nugent." Both vessels had arrived at Dover. The First Sea Lord stated that he had seen the damage, and was of opinion that it had been caused by the two vessels coming in contact with our own mine-nets, which had probably been dragged out of position, and that the injuries were not caused by German mines.

Bombardment of Ostend.

11. The First Sea Lord stated that one of our monitors had fired thirty rounds on Ostend harbour during the afternoon of the 25th instant at a range of 27,500 yards, using a smoke-screen. From observations carried out after the bombardment, it appeared that several direct hits were made on the Atelier de la Marine.
Fighting patrols were carried out over the fleet during the day and six hostile seaplanes were encountered, two of which were driven down.

12. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by Lord Curzon dealing with the Inter-Ally Council (Paper G.T.-2065).

Lord Curzon described the steps which had been taken towards the formation of the Council. He said that it was the Americans who had pressed for the creation of the Inter-Ally Council. They were anxious that the three British representatives on the Council should be men of the highest position and prestige, whose names would carry weight with the American public. With regard to the chairman of the Council, we had pressed that an American should come and take the chair of the Council in London, but our request has been twice refused.

Mr. C. J. Phillips stated that as the matter was of great importance a further representation had been made by telegram to the American Government. In the event of the Americans definitely refusing to provide a chairman, it was understood that a Frenchman would be nominated, in accordance with arrangements made with M. Clementel, as a quid pro quo for the concession made by the French with regard to the place of meeting. The Italians had, however, protested against this nomination.

Lord Curzon suggested that the three British representatives should be:

- General Smuts,
- Lord Buckmaster,
- Mr. Austen Chamberlain,

the last of whom should be Chairman of the British Priority Committee, which would deal with the British departmental claims.

The War Cabinet agreed to this suggestion, provided that the services of Mr. Chamberlain were not required by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for some other work. Lord Curzon undertook to consult Mr. Bonar Law on the subject.

General Smuts accepted the office.

Sir Albert Stanley said that the Board of Trade concurred in principle in the scheme of an Inter-Ally Council, as set forth in Lord Curzon's memorandum, though he thought that the title of the British Committee would be improved by omitting the word "Priority."

Sir Leo Chiozza Money agreed with Sir Albert Stanley, having regard to the fact that there was already a Tonnage Priority Committee, of which he was chairman, dealing with the tonnage of the whole world, whereas the Inter-Ally Council was concerned only with American affairs. All the departments and committees mentioned at the foot of Lord Curzon's memorandum were represented on his Tonnage Priority Committee, except the Oil Pool Board. The plan he suggested would be for the Inter-Ally Council or its Priority Committee to be represented upon the Tonnage Priority Committee so that the tonnage allocated to American supplies by the latter could be reviewed by the Inter-Ally Council.

Sir L. Worthington Evans had two points to bring forward, which he understood represented the views of Mr. Churchill. He undertook to ask Mr. Churchill to inform Lord Curzon of any further comments that he might wish to make. In the first place, Sir L. Worthington Evans agreed that the word "Priority" was a misnomer, in view of there being a Priority Committee in the Ministry of Munitions, another dealing with Tonnage, and possibly yet another permanent Priority Committee, referred to in War Cabinet 237, Minute 6. He said that as this British Committee dealing with our Departmental claims would have practically the same functions as were held by what was previously known as the American Board
(War Cabinet 210, Minute 16 and Appendix), the latter name should be adopted. In the second place, he pointed out that there was no existing machinery for carrying out the policy whereby the United States Government buy commodities in our markets, e.g., tin, at our prices, in the same way as we buy in American markets at American prices. He suggested that it should be the duty of the American Board to take cognisance of this work.

Mr. Balfour suggested that each Government should treat the other on the most favourable terms as regards purchases of every kind.

Sir E. Wyldbore-Smith raised the question of the representation on the Inter-Ally Council of the smaller Allies, namely, Belgium, Portugal, Roumania, Serbia, and Greece. In the case of the last three there were two alternatives: their demands should be made either through the French representative Council, or through their own representatives on the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement. He further added that purchases on behalf of the U.S.A. Government were already carried out through this Commission.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that the former alternative was open to criticism, inasmuch as it would give the French a certain measure of control over the smaller Powers, to which they have no claim.

The War Cabinet decided—

That all the smaller Allies should put their requests forward through the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement.

To sum up, the decisions of the War Cabinet were—

(a.) The general scheme contained in Lord Curzon's Memorandum should be adopted.
(b.) The reply from the American Government in regard to the Chairman of the Inter-Ally Council should be awaited before any further step was taken.
(c.) Lord Curzon should be asked to see Mr. Bonar Law in regard to the services of Mr. Austen Chamberlain.
(d.) That the Committee to deal with the British Departmental demands should be known as the “American Board.”
(e.) That if any difficulty as to price arises in the negotiations of the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement that Commission should refer the matter to the “American Board” for settlement.
(f.) That all the smaller Allies should put forward their requests to the Inter-Ally Council through the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement.

Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau.

13. The War Cabinet considered a Memorandum from the Ministry of Munitions on the proposal to set up an Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau, together with a Report by the Committee appointed by Dr. Addison (under direction of the War Cabinet), which had prepared a scheme for the establishment of the necessary organisation (Paper G.T.-1901). The Committee had comprised representatives of the Dominions and of the Colonial Office, India Office, Board of Trade, Ministry of Munitions, Central Reconstruction Committee, Geological Survey and Imperial Institute.

Dr. Addison explained the main features of the Report, and said he would like authority to proceed with the working out of the scheme in detail for submission to the War Cabinet at a later date. There were one or two matters of importance which might need consideration. There was also Mr. Churchill's suggestion that the Minister of Reconstruction should account for the money voted by the Imperial Parliament for the maintenance of the Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau. Dr. Addison suggested that it might be thought preferable that this function should be discharged by
the Head of a Department with executive functions, but he would report on this point later to the War Cabinet.

Sir George Cave stated that his Department had not had an opportunity of considering the Memorandum and Report of the Committee, and as the Home Office was especially concerned with mines he hoped no immediate and final decision would be taken by the War Cabinet on the proposal.

Mr. Long said that if any important change in the Report was contemplated it would be necessary for him to inform the Dominions.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Minister of Reconstruction to proceed with the scheme for the establishment of an Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau, subject to agreement with the Home Secretary, communicating as necessary to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Secretary of State for India any departures from the Report of the Committee. In case of failure to agree, the matter should be again brought before the War Cabinet.

Sir Albert Stanley asked the attention of the War Cabinet to a matter of great urgency arising out of the demand of the coal-miners for an advance of wages. The Government might be faced with a crisis in the coal trade within twenty-four hours. Since the outbreak of war the wages of the miners had been advanced, either directly or by means of bonus, to about 40 per cent. above the pre-war basis. Conditions vary in different areas, but it might be taken that the average rise was about 40 per cent. In some areas there had been no increase for perhaps a year; in the South Wales area an increase had been granted in December last. Some weeks ago a demand had been put forward for an increase of 25 per cent. on the wages actually earned. As a result of negotiations this had been modified to a demand for an advance of 10s. per week per man, which would be equivalent to an average total increase during the war of 70 per cent. The demand for an increase had not been unexpected, and the Coal Controller, in reply, had made an offer of 7s. 6d., which might be regarded as a fair settlement, as it nearly approximated to the increased cost of living to the miners, and would not seriously upset other wage awards. As the Miners' Executive was not authorised to accept less than 10s., a Conference of the Delegates had been summoned and was meeting that morning. Their reply would be communicated to the Coal Controller that afternoon. From a private and reliable source he (Sir Albert Stanley) had been given to understand that the Government offer would be refused. During the last few weeks there had been several incipient strikes, unrest was widespread, and the men were impatient and in no mood to brook delay. A decision by the Government would have to be taken to-day, or at latest to-morrow morning. In reply to questions, Sir Albert Stanley said that there was now no sliding-scale operation which related the course of wages closely to that of prices. The Government controlled the price of coal, and in a sense the price was now artificial. If Parliament ratified the agreement with the mine-owners, which the Cabinet had approved, it would be necessary—if a deficit was to be avoided—to increase the price of coal, but it might be possible to restrict the increase to industrial consumers. It was estimated that the addition of 7s. 6d. per week to wages would increase the cost of coal by about 19,000,000L. per annum.

The Minister of Labour said it was important that the Cabinet should consider the particular case of the miners in relation to actual and possible demands from other workers. The Committee on Production had called his attention to the Coal Controller's offer
of 7s. 6d. and to the undesirable effects it would have on the general wages situation. Many of the agreements now in force will have to be reviewed in October. Several agitations were already on foot, and they would be stimulated if the miners succeeded in their demand. The concession of 10s. per week would be equivalent to an addition of 30s. or 31s. to the wages of the miners during the War. The Committee on Production, on the other hand, had tried to keep within a limit of 15s. increase on pre-war wages. If the miners succeed similar demands will most certainly come from other sections of industry, and these it would be difficult for the Government to resist. The policy of the Ministry of Labour recently had been to harden against further advances because of the financial situation of the country. He (Mr. Roberts) and Mr. Clynes had urged on a deputation a few days ago the duty of taking into consideration the reduction in the cost of living which was being brought about by the Food Controller, and had suggested to the trade-union leaders present the desirability of restraining their men from making fresh demands for higher wages, inasmuch as in the past they had based their claims to an advance on the rising cost of living. Mr. Roberts felt strongly that an effort should be made to resist a demand exceeding 7s. 6d. It was for the Cabinet, however, to decide whether the war situation was such as to warrant the risk of a strike by a refusal of the demand for 10s.

Sir Albert Stanley stated that Mr. Robert Smillie, during the negotiations with the Coal Controller, had said that, speaking for himself, he thought it only fair that if the increase of wages were now granted there should be a reduction of wages when the cost of living fell. Should a strike take place, some industrial establishments which were without stocks of coal would have to close down at once. London was better off at the moment for coal than a year ago. The Navy would very quickly be calling for fresh supplies. The Board of Trade had for some time been urging the Gas Companies to increase their stocks.

The War Cabinet felt that the particular issue raised by the dispute with the miners was one of far-reaching significance and of the gravest importance to the State.

The War Cabinet decided to adjourn the discussion until the Prime Minister and Mr. Barnes could be present. In the meantime the President of the Board of Trade was requested to communicate to the War Cabinet at the earliest moment the result of to-day's negotiations.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 26, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 240.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, September 27, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 8 and 11).

Admiral Sir J. R. JELLINEK, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 5, 6, 7, and 11).

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 4, and 11).

The Right Hon. G. H. ROBERTS, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minute 10).


The Right Hon. Sir A. STANLEY, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minute 10).

Mr. Guy Calthrop, Coal Controller (for Minute 10).

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Major L. STORR, Assistant Secretary.

Air Raids.

1. THE War Cabinet had a short discussion on the question of Air Raids, in the course of which it was pointed out that there is a tendency on the part of the public to crowd underground railway-stations in anticipation of an Air Raid, even when no warning has been issued. It was suggested that the authorities concerned should make better arrangements for regulating the use of the passages and platforms of the underground railways during a Raid. It was further suggested that the Press should be asked to emphasise the fact that the noise made by the anti-aircraft defensive
artillery was often mistaken for the bursting of bombs, which gave the impression that the number of bombs dropped was far larger than the reality.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff was authorised to thank the Press for the attitude that they had taken up towards recent attacks, and should invite them to call attention to the confusion between the bursting of bombs and fire of artillery.

The Western Front.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that since the last battle the Germans had put in nine divisions, which indicated that they were using up their divisions very rapidly. On the previous day four strong counter-attacks had been made by the enemy between 4 and 7 p.m., the most severe of which was south of the Polygon Wood. All attacks had been repulsed and the German losses had been extremely heavy. Our troops had retained all the ground that they had captured.

The Prime Minister remarked on the poor condition of the German prisoners whom he had seen on the 26th instant, during his recent visit to the British front in Flanders, and upon the very good spirit which prevailed among all ranks of our own army that he had seen and conversed with. The enemy system of concrete block-houses, commonly known as "pill-boxes," appeared to have been mastered by our troops.

The Eastern Front.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff read extracts from a telegram he had received from General Barter, giving General Alexeief's reasons for declining to take office, among which was his insistence that the Commissaries should not be permitted to interfere in any way at the front. General Barter said that the opinion was held in certain quarters that the Bolsheviks might get into power, in which case there was a possibility of a separate peace. General Barter believed, however, that the Bolshevik Committees outside the Petrograd area would be opposed to this. It was further stated that M. Kerensky's power was on the wane.

The Italian Front:

Withdrawal of Guns.

The Disposal.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff read a communication from General Cadorna to the effect that he had given orders for the release of the British heavy guns which had been lent to him for the recent offensive. General Robertson said that he had suggested to General Cadorna that these guns might now be released, as they had been lent for the offensive; and, as it appeared that the Italian armies would now act on the defensive, he assumed they would no longer be required. General Cadorna, in his reply, had laid stress upon the fact that he alone was in a position to decide whether the offensive or the defensive should be adopted on his front.

As regards the disposal of the above guns, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that plans had been considered for reinforcing the Italians with heavy artillery next year, and, in view of our own deficiency in personnel, the alternative had been considered of sending guns to Italy without the personnel. This proposal was open to the objection that it would be difficult in such circumstances to secure the return of the guns. It had also been suggested that the personnel of these batteries might be made up partly of Italian and partly of British gunners. No final decision, however, had been reached. General Robertson said that, should the War Cabinet decide to send guns to Italy without their personnel, it would be necessary now to leave some of the guns recently lent with the Italians for instructional purposes, and General Delmé-Radcliffe had made a proposal to this effect.
As regards the proposal to divert British guns withdrawn from the Italian front to Palestine, General Robertson expressed himself as doubtful whether they could all be made use of in that theatre. Each battery required two trains for its transportation, and it was only possible to run seven or eight trains a day between Egypt and the Gaza front. On the other hand, the Prime Minister attached great importance to the necessity for giving heavy artillery support to General Allenby, in view of the formidable nature of the Turkish defences.

General Robertson stated that General Allenby had been given everything that he had asked for. With a view to a decision, however, he undertook to ascertain from General Allenby how many guns he could make use of.

5. The First Sea Lord reported that two of three aircraft flown from the "Vindex" to attack the Zeppelins in the recent raid failed to return. A later report stated that one seaplane with two men had been towed to Holland; the other had probably been lost.

6. The First Sea Lord reported that the oiler "San Zaferino" was torpedoed 30 miles from the Smalls early that morning. The enemy submarine appeared on the surface about 1,000 yards away. Our "P 61" opened fire and obtained a hit. She then rammed the enemy at full speed, and the submarine sank stern first; a loud explosion followed. Two men subsequently came to the surface, one of whom, the commanding officer, was rescued. The oiler had been towed in.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that bombing raids were made on the night of the 25th/26th instant at Thourout, Lichtervelde, and Cortemarck Junctions. Several direct hits had been observed in each case. All machines had returned safely.

8. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs referred to Sir Horace Rumbold's telegram No. 866, dated the 24th September, 1917, in which it was stated that among the delegates said to be expected at a forthcoming International Peace Congress at Berne were three or more Englishmen, including Mr. Charles Buxton, Mr. J. A. Hobson, and Mr. W. H. Dickinson, M.P. Mr. Balfour asked for the instructions of the War Cabinet in the event of the British representatives applying to the Foreign Office for passports.

It was pointed out that it would be hardly consistent to grant passports to these delegates seeing that they had been refused to Labour representatives who had desired to attend the Stockholm Conference.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was authorised by the War Cabinet, in the above event, to refuse to issue passports, on the broad grounds that His Majesty's Government could not countenance unauthorised negotiations with the enemy.

9. Mr. Barnes stated that at a meeting of the Labour Party, held yesterday, the future of the Electoral Reform Bill was discussed. A suggestion was made at the meeting that there was a plot on foot to delay the progress of the Bill in the House of Lords.

Lord Curzon stated that he knew of no such plot, but it was impossible to foretell what attitude the House of Lords might assume towards the Bill when it reached their Lordships. Some
Coal Miners' Demand for Increase of Wages.

10. The War Cabinet resumed their consideration of the negotiations which were proceeding between the Coal Controller and the Miners' Federation (War Cabinet 39, Minute 14).

Sir Albert Stanley reported that the Miners' delegates had decided to adhere to their demand for an advance of 10s. per week per man. The original demand for an advance of 25 per cent, would have cost from 25,000,000L. to 30,000,000L. per annum. The addition of 10s. would bring the average wage increase during the war up to about 65 per cent.

The Coal Controller stated that the men were out of hand, and the leaders were not leading, but were being pushed forward. There had been evidence of this in connection with recruiting arrangements, to which the leaders had agreed, but which the men had afterwards rejected. The men based their claims for the present increase on the fact that the cost of living had risen during the war by 53 per cent. They also alleged that 50 per cent. of the miners have to pay for tools and explosives, the cost of which had gone up during the war. In the view of the owners whom he had consulted, any stoppage would last for at least a fortnight. There was undoubtedly a fair proportion of loyal men among the miners, but once a strike began it would be difficult to stop the loyal men from joining their comrades from a sense of solidarity. With regard to stocks of coal in the country, the munition works might carry on, rather badly, for ten days. There was little space for much storage in the new factories. In recent strikes in the Midlands great pressure had been brought on the Department to secure the return of the men to work owing to the shortage of coal.

The Minister of Labour said that the aspect of the problem which he wished to emphasise was the effect any concession to the miners would have on other industries. The railwaymen were already passing resolutions in favour of an advance of 11. per week. The engineers have been making demands on the Ministry of Munitions. Demands for advances would, in fact, be general in October, and the cost of meeting these on the scale put forward by the miners would involve the country in tens of millions of pounds. In fact, it might become a question for consideration whether the cumulative effect of these universal demands might not even prevent us from carrying on the war.

The Cabinet were impressed with the gravity of the situation presented to them by the Board of Trade and the Minister of Labour. On the one hand, to concede the full demand of the miners would be a precedent for other workers who up to the present had been granted increases on a far less generous scale than the miners. Further, the miners were deliberately ignoring the important and costly efforts which were being made by the Government to reduce the price of commodities to the consumer. On the other hand, the Government could not embark on a conflict with the miners unless they were certain to bring it to a victorious issue. This, it was generally agreed, was more than doubtful, as the Government were bound to recognise the insistent demands by the war Departments, to whom even a fortnight's interruption of coal supplies would be perilous, and a strike running, as it probably would, to perhaps six weeks, disastrous to the conduct of the war. We had to bear in mind not only our own need of aeroplanes and ships, which were absolutely vital to us, but also the undesirable results which would follow if the supplies of coal to France and Italy were brought to a standstill. A great strike would therefore be equivalent to a military defeat. Nor would it perhaps be easy to convince the general public that the Government were justified in permitting
a colossal dislocation of the nation’s industries in the midst of war for the sake of a difference of half-a-crown—for so it would be popularly represented.

The War Cabinet, while recognising that the demand by the miners was unreasonable and deeply to be deplored, decided that—

Owing to the exigencies of the war they had no option but to authorise the Coal Controller to negotiate up to a maximum of 1s. 8d. per day for men and 10d. per day for boys.*

The War Cabinet requested—

The President of the Board of Trade to report later on the question how far the extra cost of the coal, following on the present increase of wages, should be charged to industrial and domestic consumers respectively.

The question of securing in the agreement with the miners a condition that wages should in future be reduced pari passu with reductions in the cost of living was left open.

II. The Prime Minister drew the attention of the War Cabinet to the short summary of Conclusions reached at the Anglo-French Conference at Boulogne on the 25th September, 1917, which had already been circulated to the War Cabinet (Appendix). He also gave the War Cabinet particulars of his private conversations with M. Painlevé, the French President of the Council.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
September 27, 1917.

* Lord Curzon and Lord Milner asked that their dissent from this Conclusion might be recorded.
The Italian Front.

1. THE British and French Governments, while greatly regretting the decision of General Cadorna not to pursue the offensive operations, for which 100 French guns were recently sent to the Italian front, are agreed that no action can usefully be taken in order to obtain a reversal of this decision. The whole of the British and French heavy artillery will in consequence be withdrawn from the Italian front.

Extension of the British Line on the Western Front.

2. The British Government having accepted in principle the extension of the line held by the British army on the Western front, the two Governments are agreed that the question of the amount of the extension and the time at which it should take place should be left for arrangement between the two Commanders-in-chief.

Military Operations in Turkey.

3. General Foch expressed the view that an operation on the Turkish littoral, directed against the Turkish communications, can only succeed in conjunction with a successful advance by the British army in Palestine, combined with a successful holding operation in Mesopotamia. He undertook to study the question of such an operation designed to exploit any success which might be achieved by the Allied armies in Palestine and Mesopotamia, on the understanding that the British Government will render substantial assistance in the matter of shipping transport and naval escorts.

General Foch undertook to transmit his observations to the British Government by Monday next.

The Equipment of the Greek Army.

4. General Foch laid great stress on the importance to the Allies of equipping and preparing the Greek army, which, he pointed out, afforded an opportunity to the Allies for increasing their force at Salonica by three existing and three new divisions without the necessity of transporting them. In particular, he asked the British Government to undertake the supply of forty heavy guns.

The British Government undertook to consider this request in conjunction with other requests for heavy guns received from Russia, Roumania, and Italy.

Boulogne, September 25, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 241.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, September 28, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G. (for Minutes 1 to 15).

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 15).

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 11).


The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India (for Minutes 1 and 2).

The Right Hon. Sir G. CAVE, M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minutes 2 and 16).

The Right Hon. C. ADDISON, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minute 16).

Mr. J. LAMB, C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary for Scotland (for Minute 16).

Major the Hon. W. ASTOE, M.P. (for Minute 16).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir E. CARSON, K.C., M.P.


Admiral Sir J. R. JELLINEK, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 4 to 14).

The Right Hon. W. LONG, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minutes 1 to 11).

The Right Hon. H. E. DUDLEY, K.C., M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland (for Minute 16).

The Right Hon. Sir A. STANLEY, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minutes 1 and 2).

The Right Hon. LORD RHONDA, Food Controller (for Minute 16).

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 118, Minute 5, the War Cabinet considered the Report of a Sub-Committee on the Policy of the "Clean Slate" (Paper P.-21). They directed the Secretary to place on record their thanks to Sir II. Babington Smith and his Committee for their Report, which they noted would prove of the utmost value when considering the ultimate Terms of Peace.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies stated that the matter was discussed at the Imperial Conference, that the Dominions felt very strongly on the matter, and that he had undertaken to communicate the Report of the Committee to them for their consideration and remarks before transmitting the Report to the Allies.

The War Cabinet decided—

In the first instance, to await the views of the Governments of the several Dominions in regard to the report, which the Secretary of State for the Colonies undertook to communicate to the War Cabinet when received.

Secondly, that the communication of the report to our Allies should be postponed until the remarks of the Dominions were available and had been considered.

2. The War Cabinet had under consideration a note by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Paper G.T.-2129) on the subject of the Order of the British Empire, in which he suggested that the Chancellery of the Order should be located in the Home Office.

The Prime Minister urged the importance of vesting in the hands of the Prime Minister the final decision in regard to the recommendations for such honours, as it would be impracticable to detail the head of one Government Department to adjudicate on the claims put forward by the other Departments, and that a Prime Minister was independent in such a matter, quite apart from being the head of the Government. He mentioned that it was quite possible that a Prime Minister would appoint a Committee to consider the recommendations; and the existing organisation of the War Cabinet, some of the members being without portfolios, fortunately lent itself to their serving on such a Committee.

Lord Curzon stated that when the question had been considered by a Committee composed of Mr. Barnes and Dr. Addison, over which he himself had presided, they had suggested the Chancellery of the Order should be located in the Home Office, for the purpose of keeping records and papers, but not for the decision as to the honours to be conferred.

Lord Derby said that the War Office point of view was the appointment of someone with whom they could discuss the merits of the persons recommended.

The War Cabinet was informed that a Departmental Committee was already considering a number of questions relating to the Order of the British Empire, including the following:

(a.) The total numbers of each Class to be given in the United Kingdom.
(b.) The total number to be allotted to India.
(c.) The total number to be allotted to the Dominions.
(d.) The total number to be allotted to the Crown Colonies.
(e.) Should Civil Servants be eligible for the Order; if so, should they have a special Gazette to themselves, or should they be included in the ordinary Gazette.
(f.) On what principle should the Order be distributed to the Allied countries, and should the numbers be limited.
(g.) Should members of the Diplomatic and Consular Services be eligible for the Order?
(h.) Should officers of the Army and Navy be eligible for the Order? If so, what should be the distinction between
those who get existing military decorations and those who get the O.B.E.?

(i.) Re similar distinction between officers in Allied countries.

(ii.) Should the Order be given to neutrals or be confined to Allies?

(iii.) Should a certain number be placed at the disposal of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for instant award to foreigners?

(iv.) How and by whom should the Medal of the Order be given?

The Prime Minister decided to ascertain the views of ex-Prime Ministers—Lord Rosebery, Mr. Balfour, and Mr. Asquith—before a final decision was reached. In the meantime the Committee referred to above should complete their labours and render their report for the consideration of the War Cabinet.

3. The War Cabinet decided that—

The British Parliamentary Committee should be authorised to invite the Committees of the French and Italian Parliaments to visit this country during the autumn, and sanctioned their entertainment at Government expense, the cost being estimated at between 500L and 1,000L.

The Secretary was directed to communicate this decision to Mr. H. J. Mackinder, the Secretary to the British Parliamentary Committee.

The Western Front.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that in the recent attack our casualties had been light. Eight divisions took part, as to two of which no information as to casualties had yet been received, but as regards the remaining six divisions the casualties were only a little over 1,000 on the first day.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that German orders of June last had been captured setting out the arrangements for the retirement of a Bavarian Division near St. Mihiel. These orders, he said, had some significance, as an indication that the Germans were preparing for emergencies.

6. In connection with the French proposal that during the winter we should take over more of the Western Front, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff drew the attention of the War Cabinet to the fact that the French were retaining their 1918 class, i.e., those who would be 20 years of age next year, in the dépôts, and that they were not to be sent to the front before next spring. Further, that they had not yet absorbed in the divisions at the front all their 1917 class. He remarked that we were sending to the front all our men who were over 19.

Bulgaria.

7. The War Cabinet took note of a statement in the press of an interview given by the Bulgarian Minister at Washington to a United States press representative, which indicated that Bulgaria was satisfied now that she had attained her territorial desires, and was now ready to make peace, and that she had no quarrel with the main body of the Allies.
Submarines.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that one of our destroyers had dropped a depth charge on a submarine in the vicinity of Dover, but no information had been received as to whether the attack had been successful. The destroyer had entered our mine-field in pursuit of the submarine, and as a result had been damaged. He further stated that he had just received information that an enemy submarine had been sunk by our aircraft off Zeebrugge, but no details had yet been received.

Bombing Raids:
St. Denis-Westrem.

9. In connection with the report of the bombing of fifteen “Gotha’s” at the St. Denis-Westrem Aerodrome, the First Sea Lord stated that thirteen 65-lb. bombs and sixty-eight 16-lb. bombs had been dropped on the “Gotha’s” and the aerodromes in the vicinity.

Zeebrugge.

10. The First Sea Lord reported that the first attack by aircraft on the Zeebrugge Locks was carried out last night, and that a report had been received that the North Lock had been destroyed, but that reliance should not be placed on the same until photographs had been obtained.

Raider
“Seeadler.”

11. The First Sea Lord stated that a report had been received that the German raider “Seeadler” (a sailing-ship with auxiliary engines) had gone ashore in the Pacific. A statement had been received from some of the crew, who had been picked up in a motor-boat, as to the island on which she had stranded, and orders had been given for a ship to search the vicinity.

Acceleration of
Merchant Shipbuilding in the
United States of America.

12. Mr. Balfour said that he had received a proposal from Sir L. Chiozza Money suggesting that a statement should be sent to President Wilson from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, making an urgent appeal to the President for the acceleration of merchant shipbuilding in the United States of America.

The War Cabinet asked—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to forward Sir L. Chiozza Money’s statement to the Secretary, who should have it copied and circulated to members of the War Cabinet, for discussion at a subsequent Meeting.

Merchantile
Shipping Construction.

13. The First Lord of the Admiralty informed the War Cabinet that the shipbuilding programme was falling behind, owing to lack of steel plates, and that he estimated that the shipping output during the next twelve months would not exceed 2,000,000 tons. He stated that, owing to lack of material, the men in the shipyards were not at present fully employed.

Shipping Losses.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 128, Minute 8, the War Cabinet had under consideration an Admiralty Memorandum relative to the Weekly Returns of Shipping Losses (Paper G.T.-2125), in which it was stated that figures of arrivals and sailings as now published are misleading in some respects, as they included foreign-owned vessels, whereas the losses excluded foreign sinkings. Further, the whole of the coasting services are included, each intermediate port of call being counted twice, as an entry and a sailing; and in addition to this anomaly, there are other cases of duplication. For example, the First Lord mentioned that a ship bound for Goole which called at Hull would be counted twice, and the same was true of ships calling
at Lerwick, although in this latter case the ship would run a risk in leaving as well as in entering the harbour. Another anomaly mentioned was that, although losses in the Mediterranean were included, Mediterranean entrances and clearances were not. Thus there was no true comparison between the losses and the ships entering and clearing British ports. The First Lord recommended that future returns should only show—

(a) The number of British ships sunk.  
(b) The number of British ships unsuccessfully attacked.

Further, that a monthly statement should be issued on the first of every month, giving the tonnage of British ships sunk, the statement to be published one month in arrear. The First Lord proposed that, in order to prevent the enemy from checking his own returns of our losses from British figures, the statement should be given for a period of four weeks without stating the dates which were referred to. As regards the monthly statement the War Cabinet did not lose sight of the motive which had influenced them when the question was considered on the 1st May, 1917 (War Cabinet 128, Minute 8), “that the losses might eventually become so serious that it would be impossible to make them known.” Note was taken of the recent decrease in losses, and the possibility of their not increasing during the rough weather that may be expected during the winter months and the longer nights that then prevail. On the other hand, if the losses increased it could be used as an argument to encourage a reduced consumption of food.

As regards the entries and sailings, it was pointed out that, though they were misleading in some respects, they nevertheless represented the number of targets that were presented to the enemy, and, further, that in the case of every entry and sailing, the ship ran the chance of being mined. Further, as a reason against omitting the entries and sailings, it was pointed out that it would be very awkward for the Government to explain why they had allowed the publication of these figures for so long.

The War Cabinet decided—

To adhere to the present form showing the entries and sailings and the number of vessels lost, but to ask the First Lord to consider the exact form in which the tonnage figures of sinkings should be issued, with a view to preventing, if possible, the enemy from being able to check his own returns from the Admiralty figures.

It was suggested that a bi-monthly or possibly even a quarterly return of sinkings might meet the requirements of the case.

The First Lord undertook to submit his proposals on the subject to the War Cabinet.

15. The War Cabinet had under consideration a telegram from Sir W. Wiseman, New York, to Sir Eric Drummond, of the Foreign Office, containing a statement that it might be possible to persuade President Wilson to send over Colonel House or Mr. Baker, the War Minister, on an official visit to London and Paris (Paper G.T.-2126).

Mr. Balfour gave his personal opinion that Colonel House was so valuable in the United States that, notwithstanding the importance of a visit by him to this country, it was doubtful whether he ought to be pressed to come. Mr. Baker would also be very valuable, but it was very unlikely that his services could be spared from the United States.

The War Cabinet felt that, in view of forthcoming International Conferences, it was of great importance that men in the complete
confidence of President Wilson should visit Western Europe in order to obtain first-hand information in regard to the position of the Allies, and Colonel House appeared to be the only suitable person.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs undertook to put pressure on Colonel House to visit Europe, unless, on further consideration, he discovered strong objections to this course. In the latter case he would again bring the question before the War Cabinet.


16. The War Cabinet considered a memorandum on the future supply of beer by the Food Controller (Paper G.T.-2199) and the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (Paper G.T.-2141).

Lord Rhondda explained that, as arranged at War Cabinet 176, Minute 19, and War Cabinet 216, Minute 6, on the 1st October the permitted barrelage reverts to the rate of 10,700,000 barrels per annum, plus navy and army requirements, unless the Cabinet came to some fresh decision immediately. Whilst most anxious to conserve all cereals available for human food, he recognised that some of the prevailing industrial unrest was due to the restricted quantity of beer available, to its quality, and to its price. He recommended, with reluctance, that the War Cabinet should sanction for another quarter brewing on the scale at present in force. He should like also to impose the conditions that no beer should be designated “Government Ale” that was not of fair quality, and that a maximum price should be fixed for a considerable proportion of the beer retailed.

Dr. Addison pointed out that, if the present high prices were reduced, consumption would be stimulated. This was an undesirable result, unless the Government were prepared to find more beer. Further, if it be assumed that the present high prices implied profiteering, it was better to allow the charge to lie against the brewers than against the Government.

Sir George Cave said he was very doubtful of the wisdom of interfering with prices.

Lord Rhondda said that the demand might quite probably increase with the fall of prices, but there was no doubt that the publicans were selling a poor quality of beer at a high price, and that the Government were being blamed for this. He knew that, whatever policy they followed, they would have some opposition from the Temperance Party.

The War Cabinet—

(a.) Sanctioned for another quarter the 33½ increase in the standard barrelage already permitted for the current quarter.

(b.) Authorised the Food Controller to prevent beer being designated as “Government Ale” which is of a gravity below 1036.

(c.) Requested the Food Controller to confer with the brewers and make the best bargain he could with them in regard to retail prices.

2, Whitehall Gardens, London, S.W.,
September 28, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 242.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, October 1, 1917, at 12:30 P.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Mesopotamia.

1. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the only item of the communiqué received yesterday from General Maude that had not yet been communicated to the Press was the statement estimating our casualties at 1,000. Since this communiqué a further telegram had been received from General Maude stating that the preliminary estimate of enemy casualties amounted to the following:

3,200 unwounded prisoners.
600 wounded prisoners.
12 guns and numerous stores captured.

In addition to these, 200 Turkish dead had been counted. Our casualties would probably turn out to be less than the number at first reported. Ramadieh, the place captured, was very important from the Turkish point of view, as it formed the advance depot for any possible Turkish offensive down the Euphrates. No other Turkish force was believed to exist on the Euphrates line.
until the neighbourhood of Aleppo was reached, and the action at Ramadieh would be a great hindrance to any Turkish offensive down the Euphrates.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff should send a telegram to General Maude, conveying the congratulations of the War Cabinet upon his brilliant exploit.

The War Cabinet further decided that—

A telegram should be sent asking General Maude to do everything possible to obtain from the prisoners captured at Ramadieh any political or economic information regarding conditions in Turkey generally, and particularly regarding an announcement that had appeared in Austrian newspapers to the effect that great quantities of war material had been lost owing to an explosion at Haidar Pasha.

2. The attention of the War Cabinet was called to a telegram received from the Commander-in-Chief, India, stating that, in his opinion, the position in Mesopotamia was secure at present, but that reinforcements would probably be required in 1918. Nine battalions of troops from India would be available for this purpose.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that information had been received to the effect that two German divisions had recently arrived on the Western Front from Russia, one of them in the neighbourhood of Ypres.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 240, Minute 4, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that General Allenby had telegraphed that he was able to take seven batteries of howitzers, and that these seven batteries, as well as four batteries for Mesopotamia, had already started by rail from the Italian Front.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The remaining five batteries should remain on the Italian Front for the present.

5. Mr. Barnes reported that he had received a letter from Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Secretary of the Labour party, enclosing a telegram from Mr. John Dillon, M.P., to the following effect:

"Can you represent Cabinet critical nature Dublin situation? Deaths of any more prisoners would arouse desperate feeling. All prisoners for political offences should be immediately put under special rules."

The War Cabinet directed—

The Secretary to send a telegram to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, who was in Dublin, asking him to communicate the facts and his recommendations in time for the following meeting if possible.

6. The First Sea Lord reported the following engagements with enemy submarines:

(a.) A seaplane on the 28th ultimo had dropped two bombs on a submarine in the vicinity of the North Hinder Lightship. The submarine sank by the stern.
Russian Naval Losses.

(b.) An enemy submarine had been caught in indicator nets in the vicinity of Havre on the 28th ultimo, and a number of depth charges had been dropped in the vicinity by our drifters.

c.) The destroyers "Sylvia" and "Tirade" had sunk submarine "U.C. 55" in the vicinity of Lerwick. There were twenty survivors, who were taken prisoners.

d.) Seaplanes on the 29th ultimo had dropped two 230-lb. bombs on the swell caused by one of the enemy submarines submerging; bubbles and oil afterwards appeared.

e.) One of our transports on the 11th September, to the westward of Cape Finisterre, had engaged a submarine for a period of 5½ hours when another submarine appeared ahead. The latter had been rammed and sunk.

Air Raid at Beirut.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that seaplanes dropped bombs on some sheds at Beirut on the 27th ultimo, after which H.M.S. "Grafton" had shelled some warehouses, causing a small fire.

Zeebrugge.

9. In continuation of War Cabinet 241, Minute 10, the First Sea Lord reported that attacks on the Zeebrugge lock gates had been continued.

Fire at Dunkirk.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 239, Minute 7, the First Sea Lord reported that he had communicated with Vice-Admiral Bacon relative to the anti-aircraft defences at Dunkirk, and, in view of the undesirability of another nation co-operating in such defences, he advocated pressure being put on the French to improve the existing defences. He added that the Royal Naval Air Service aerodromes and workshops were now being split up, so that, in the event of further raids, such heavy damage as occurred on the 25th ultimo would be improbable.

The War Cabinet requested—

The First Sea Lord to take steps to press the French authorities to improve the anti-aircraft defences as may be thought necessary.

 Provision of Additional Sea Transport for Troops in the Mediterranean.

11. With reference to War Cabinet 237, Minute 5, regarding the provision of ships for the transport of one and a half divisions from Mediterranean ports to the East, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had been informed that the necessary shipping would not be accumulated before the 15th October.

The First Sea Lord stated that he would go into the matter with the Shipping Controller and use every possible expedition.

Submarine Bases on the North-East Coast.

12. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Paper by the First Lord (Paper G.T.-2183) relative to the development of submarine bases on the North-East Coast, at Blyth and on the Tees.

The First Sea Lord stated that at present it had only been possible to provide temporary accommodation for these submarines, and what was required was permanent housing accommodation for the crews and jetties for the submarines.
The War Cabinet decided that—

The Admiralty proposal could be proceeded with, in concert with the Government Departments concerned.

13. Attention was called to the possibility of urging the Japanese Government to send a contingent of Japanese troops to assist the British in Mesopotamia. The Prime Minister reported, in this connection, that he understood that M. Painlevé would welcome such a proposal. A letter had, however, been received by Lord Curzon from the Secretary of State for India, submitting sundry objections upon political grounds, notably the probability of the Japanese requiring some *quid pro quo* in respect of either territorial or commercial concessions, which might be embarrassing.

Lord Curzon undertook to submit to the Cabinet a Memorandum giving the pros and cons of the proposal before any action should be taken.

14. Lord Milner reported that he had had a personal visit from the Dutch Minister in London, who conveyed to him a personal message, transmitted through the Dutch Minister at Constantinople, from the Grand Vizier of Turkey (Talaat Pasha), to the effect that the latter would regard the release of Eyoub Sabri (the former Secretary-General of the Committee of Union and Progress) as of special importance in any negotiations regarding the treatment of British prisoners in Turkey. The Dutch Minister in the same message stated that he had been able to secure the postponement of the proposed internment of all British subjects remaining in Turkey till the end of the month (September).

The War Cabinet decided that—

This question should be considered as soon as the joint Report of Lord Newton and General Belfield was before them.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W., October 1, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 243.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, October 2, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 15).


Major-General E. B. ASHMORE, C.M.G., M.V.O., Home Forces (for Minutes 11 to 15).

Lieutenant-General Sir D. HENDERSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Director-General of Military Aeronautics (for Minutes 11 to 15).

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT COWDRAY, President, Air Board (for Minutes 11 to 15).

Sir W. WEIR, Controller of Aeronautical Supplies, Air Board (for Minutes 11 to 15).

Mr. F. G. KELLAWAY, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minutes 11 to 15).

Mr. J. A. SALTER, Ministry of Shipping (for Minutes 11 to 15).

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. ROW, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Major L. STORR, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.
1. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that there had been hard fighting on the Western Front. The enemy had made six attacks, which had all been repelled.

2. In connection with a French offensive on the Western Front, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that he had received a personal letter from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to the effect that the latter had been unable to see General Pétain, who had been in attendance on the King of Italy. General Anthoine had, however, seen General Pétain on the matter, and Sir D. Haig reported that he was satisfied that active preparations were now being pressed forward by General Pétain.

The Prime Minister reminded the War Cabinet that at the Paris Conference on the 26th/27th May he had been convinced that the French did not intend to attack.

The War Cabinet felt that the coincidence of the delays on the part both of the French and the Italians to attack was unsatisfactory and difficult to explain.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had been receiving telegrams from the Military Attaché in Russia relative to money not being forthcoming for Persia.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer undertook to enquire into the matter, and to inform the War Office.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 242, Minute 4, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the despatch of the British batteries had been delayed. They should have gone on the 29th ultimo, but were starting to-day. He added that the whole of the French batteries were being withdrawn.

General Robertson stated that he had received a report from General Delmé-Radcliffe, which would be circulated to the Cabinet, but it contained no new military factor which could satisfactorily explain the failure of the Italians to carry out their original intention to attack.

5. The War Cabinet approved the action of the Secretary of State for War in refusing an application from General Dessino on behalf of the Russian Government for anti-aircraft guns for the protection of Petrograd.

6. The Secretary of State for War stated that the French were pressing for shipping to take the Russian troops now in France back to Russia. He pointed out that it was more desirable that the Russian population in Great Britain who have refused service in the British Army should have priority if any sea transport was available.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Secretary of State for War to refuse the request put forward by the French Government.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that three enemy seaplanes reconnoitred Mudros on the 30th September. Two were shot down into the sea by our machines, and the third was damaged. One wounded enemy pilot was taken prisoner.
8. The First Sea Lord reported that a Handley-Page aeroplane left Mudros on the 30th September to attack Haidar Pasha (about 1 mile south of Scutari), and had not since been heard of.

9. The First Sea Lord stated that reports had been received from Dunkirk as follows:

(a.) One enemy two-seater shot down by R.N.A.S. patrols and observed to crash into the sea, and two others driven down out of control.

(b.) During night of 30th-lst bombs were dropped on St. Denis Westrem aerodrome, falling among the hangars and setting fire to one on the south side, which blazed well and fire was spreading. This fire was visible 30 miles away. In addition, bombs were dropped on Zeebrugge lock-gates.

(c.) A bombing raid on St. Denis Westrem was carried out on the 1st instant, several direct hits being observed, and two sheds seen on fire in south-east corner of aerodrome. An observer states that the large shed on the south side of the aerodrome referred to in (b) appears to be completely gutted. All machines returned safely. Total weight of bombs dropped was 4½ tons.

10. The First Sea Lord reported that a telegram had just been received that H.M.S. "Drake" had been torpedoed by an enemy submarine in the vicinity of Rathlin Island whilst in charge of a convoy.

11. The War Cabinet had before them a summary of information in regard to the air raid on the previous night, received up to 11 A.M., issued by the General Staff, Home Forces (Air Raid Circular No. 147).

It was pointed out that the public, and in particular the poorest classes, whose tenements are often of the flimsiest description, were tending to give way to panic. This was to a considerable extent due to the publication in the press of detailed descriptions and photographs of casualties caused and damage done.

The War Cabinet agreed that the Prime Minister should see the editors of the principal newspapers, in order to restrain them from publishing detailed descriptive accounts and pictures of the effects of the raids, and to explain the reasons for this restriction. It was generally agreed that it was very important to lay stress on the insignificant number of casualties from air raids compared with those caused by street and other accidents.

12. It was brought to the notice of the War Cabinet that defence by barrage fire could not be continued indefinitely, owing to the great wear and tear of guns and the heavy expenditure of ammunition.

It had been necessary last night to reduce the volume of barrage fire, and it was reasonable to infer that this was the reason why more enemy aeroplanes had been able to penetrate the defences than had hitherto been the case.

It was further pointed out that already some guns were worn out and had had to be replaced, and that if the raids continued on the scale of the last week it was only a matter of a few months before the gun defences of the metropolis ceased to exist.

The Minister of Munitions reported that he had undertaken, on behalf of his Department, at the Meeting of General Smuts's Air
The Offensive.

The United States of America:

Aircraft Output.

Output of Aircraft the Governing Factor.

Raids Committee, held the previous afternoon, to repair 20—3-inch 20-cwt. guns a month.

Attention was also drawn to the large number of unexploded shells falling in different parts of the metropolis, which, it was suggested, not only caused great damage but was an important factor in alarming the populace. On the other hand, the experts present were agreed that considerable numbers of hostile aeroplanes had been turned back by the barrage, or compelled to operate at a very high altitude, and it was generally admitted that to withdraw the barrage would cause great despondency.

In view of the fact that the situation in regard to submarines was improving and the aerial situation deteriorating, the War Cabinet decided that—

Four guns immediately available for mounting in merchant ships should be diverted to the London defences, and that the output of 3-inch guns for the next month should be placed at the disposal of the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, Home Defences.

13. General Smuts reported that the Air Raids Committee (War Cabinet 242 A, Minutes 1 and 2) had met the previous afternoon and that the details of offensive air operations in contemplation were being worked out with the least possible delay. He stated that General Trenchard was now on his way to London and would be available for consultation in the course of the next few hours. Arrangements had been made for one squadron of long-range bombing machines to proceed to Luxeuil.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to report to the War Cabinet with regard to the question of detaching suitable machines from the Western Front for long-range bombing operations as soon as he had seen General Trenchard.

The First Sea Lord reported that similarly arrangements had been made to send eight naval Handley-Page machines to the same place.

It was pointed out that the withdrawal of more long-range machines from the Western Front, where they are employed on the systematic bombing of enemy aerodromes, would tend to increase the risk to London.

14. The Secretary of State for War informed the War Cabinet that he had received a telegram from Lord Northcliffe stating that for the present the United States were not in a position to send many aeroplanes to the Western Front, but they were training large numbers of pilots. Lord Northcliffe further said that the production of the "Liberty" aeroplane was a wonderful feat of engineering.

15. In reply to a question, Sir William Weir stated that skilled labour was the main need for the increased output of aeroplanes. This labour could only be obtained at the expense of other services, e.g., the output of anti-aircraft guns and various naval services. He stated that a paper had been circulated in which he had analysed the uses made by this country of the skilled labour available.

The Minister of Munitions said that the order of priority, as he understood it, was—

(a.) Shipbuilding to the utmost capacity of the plate-rolling mills.
(b.) Aeroplanes.

His Ministry had at once to find an extra 1,800 highly skilled men, and a similar number would be required a few months later if the
inadequacy of housing accommodation. he reminded the war cabinet that any increases in other services, for instance, airships or balloons, would be at the expense of aeroplanes; nevertheless, a very large aeroplane programme had been arranged for, and he was inclined to think that the machines would be supplied in advance of the concomitant services, such as aerodromes, sheds, storerooms, &c, and he urged that the responsible departments should press on the provision of these services.

attention was drawn to a paper (g.t.-2079) which had been recently circulated, indicating that the germans contemplated a vast increase in the number of their aircraft. lord cowdray pointed out that we had at present 6,000 aeroplanes "in being," and 1,500 naval planes. to make 1,000 planes a month complete with their spares required 120,000 hands, skilled and unskilled. the life of a fighting aeroplane at the front was six weeks, which meant that there was a wastage of 66 per cent. per month.

general straun said that the whole question was being exhaustively examined by his committee, which would report to the war cabinet in due course.

16. the war cabinet had before them a memorandum by mr. barnes (paper g.t.-2130) on the housing position in barrow (war cabinet 232, minute 15). it was stated that the ministry of munitions were proceeding with the erection of 1,000 houses, 500 of them of a semi-permanent character. it was hoped that 500 of the 1,000 houses would be completed by march next. in view of the shortage of material and of labour this was considered the maximum number of houses possible at present. in addition, steps were being taken to billet 2,000 single munition workers in barrow and the neighbourhood. there was no power under the defence of the realm regulations to billet the families of munition workers.

mr. barnes was requested to arrange to communicate the above to the press.

coal for italy.

17. with reference to war cabinet 237, minute 10 and appendix ii, the war cabinet had before them a memorandum by the ministry of shipping on the supply of coal to italy from the united kingdom (paper g.t.-2160), suggesting that the italians should make an appeal to america for tonnage to help the former out of their difficulties. to save tonnage, the proposal should be on the basis of america sending what ships she could on a triangular voyage, america-united kingdom, united kingdom-italy, great britain putting in an extra collier to italy for every cargo delivered in the united kingdom under the arrangement.

the first sea lord pointed out that the italian government had refused to let us have the destroyers for which we had asked (war cabinet 237, minute 10). the italian admiralty insisted on having twice as many destroyers in the adriatic as the austrians had there. this, in admiral jellicoe's view, was quite unreasonable, but he thought there were possibly political reasons for it. since the dispatch of our telegram to italy on the question of destroyers, the military situation had changed. any destroyers taken for the conveying of troops would necessarily interfere with other convoy arrangements through the mediterranean. this would seriously affect the proposal to divert shipping from the cape route to the mediterranean route. further, we had been trying to persuade the italians to follow the direct route from gibraltar to genoa, instead of the coast route, which was unnecessarily long and involved a great waste of tonnage. the admiralty had informed
the Italians that we proposed to send British ships, Allied ships under our control, and Allied ships chartered to the Italians by the direct route.

Sir L. Chiozza Money pointed out, with reference to the proposal to appeal to America for tonnage, that the U.S.A. Shipping Board were diverting five commandeered new ships for the purpose of opening up new trade between North and South America—a trade from which we had withdrawn ships. In view of the great shortage of tonnage it would be impossible to make up 700,000 tons to Italy, except at the expense of other urgent demands on our ships.

Mr. Salter said that no direct and mathematical relation could be established between the provision of 11 destroyers and the extra quantity of coal supplied to Italy. The provision of the destroyers would only indirectly affect the situation by strengthening the Mediterranean escort forces. If the Admiralty (with or without the destroyers) could convoy regularly through the Mediterranean, Indian liners, which now go round the Cape, could go by the Mediterranean route. They could take coal to Port Said, and so enable tramp steamers now destined for Port Said to go to Italy with coal instead.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the position in Italy was undoubtedly serious. Sir Rennell Rodd had repeatedly mentioned the matter, and had pointed out that while a part of Italy could no doubt draw on the forests, it was impossible to pool the forest supply, owing to inadequate means of communication. It was feared that unless there was an increased supply of coal during the forthcoming winter there would be serious public disorder, especially in Lombardy.

The War Cabinet decided—

To defer the consideration of the proposals contained in the Memorandum by the Ministry of Shipping until later in the week, when it was hoped that the Shipping Controller might be present, and to ask the Shipping Controller, in consultation with the Admiralty, to report on the whole situation.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 2, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, October 2, 1917, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. George N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. Sir George Cave, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 3).


Commodore G. M. Paine, C.B., M.V.O., Fifth Sea Lord (for Minute 2).


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

I. THE War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by Lord Rhondda (Paper G.T.-2133) calling attention to the serious position resulting from a recent decision of the High Court as to the effect of the Orders under which beans had been requisitioned and dealt with by the Wheat Commission.

Briefly the alternatives were:

(a.) To act upon the High Court's decision, which means that the Wheat Commission will have to pay over to each of the persons who speculated in the beans the profit of such speculation.

(b.) To introduce a Bill in Parliament validating the Orders as made.
Lord Rhondda in his Memorandum pressed for the adoption of the second course.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to write a letter to the Law Officers intimating to them that the War Cabinet understood that a number of acts of doubtful legality were being done under the Defence of the Realm Regulations. In particular, the Food Controller had asked for a decision in regard to the case of requisitioning beans, peas, and pulse, and the War Cabinet would like to be advised regarding the scope and nature of any legislation that should be introduced into Parliament for the purpose not only of giving effect to the Food Controller's proposals, but also of legalising other action of doubtful legality taken in the past or to be taken in the future.

Air Offensive.

2. The War Cabinet discussed with General Trenchard the various points raised in connection with our Air Offensive during the meeting held the same morning (War Cabinet 243, Minute 13).

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff gave particulars as to the objectives to be bombed, and the different types of machines which it was proposed to use. Arrangements would be made with the French, as soon as possible, for the detachment of two British squadrons, one for night and one for day flying, to a point behind the French Front convenient for attacking suitable objectives, such as the Lorraine iron-works, and, when conditions were favourable, Mannheim and Stuttgart. To assist in these operations, eight Handley-Page aeroplanes, with pilots, for night work, would be supplied by the Admiralty. Four of these should be ready on the 10th instant, and the remaining four about the 20th instant. Twenty machines, previously destined for Russia, would be ready in the next 20 days, and 20 more machines from the same source of supply in five or six weeks.

General Trenchard said that the machines would go to an aerodrome already prepared at Ouchy, near Nancy. It was expected that our machines would be ready to take the offensive six days after arrival at the aerodrome, provided that the weather was suitable. Colonel Newall would be in command. It was uncertain whether the French would co-operate in the offensive or not.

In connection with this forthcoming offensive, reference was made to the great and growing demand on the part of the British public for retaliation.

The War Cabinet approved the arrangements outlined above in regard to machines and objectives, and the Prime Minister impressed on General Trenchard the importance of making a success of the forthcoming air offensive, having regard to the effect that such a success would have on the moral of the people at home.

Treatment of Sinn Fein Prisoners.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 242, Minute 5, the War Cabinet had before them the Secretary's telegram to the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and Mr. Duke's reply (Paper G.T.-2179), together with a second telegram from Mr. Duke, dated the 2nd October, 1917, pointing out that a further hunger-strike would probably take place, perhaps that day, on the prisoners putting forward a demand to fix their own conditions as to treatment, on the basis that they are political prisoners. Mr. Duke considered their continued detention important, and stated that forcible feeding was strongly condemned by medical witnesses of great credit at the
inquest on Thomas Ashe, and suggested possible alternatives with regard to their future treatment, namely:

- (a) To allow hunger-strike and possible self-starvation releasing men one by one whose state becomes dangerous.
- (b) To feed forcibly and incur medical risks.
- (c) To remove certain ringleaders to some prison elsewhere, perhaps in England, so as to deal more easily with remainder.
- (d) To use no restraint beyond detention, and no penal treatment, merely detaining in prison for safe custody.
- (e) To discharge from prison and remove out of Ireland under those Defence of the Realm Regulations which permit restriction on place of residence, or to make new Defence Regulations to provide for the internment of persons promoting armed rebellion.

The Home Secretary reported that he had ascertained from the Irish Office that the prisoners were all committed for offences against the Defence of the Realm Regulations, such as wearing uniform and drilling. The number of prisoners was ascertained to be forty. Sir George Cave added that there was no such thing as a "political prisoner" known to English Law, and that, apart from persons convicted of offences such as contempt of court, &c., only two recent cases, viz., those of Mr. Stead and the Jameson raiders, had been treated as first-class misdemeanants. He read paragraph 243 (a) of the Prison Regulations, which laid down the most lenient form of treatment possible, consistent with discipline, in our prison system.

A circular was read that had been published in Limerick, inciting the populace to avenge the so-called murder of Thomas Ashe, and generally incensing the populace against the Government.

Sir Edward Carson read a letter which he had received from Ireland, setting forth at some length the present feeling in Ireland and the attitude of the people towards the Government. This letter laid emphasis on the fact that the true condition of the country was largely veiled for fear of giving an impression of disunion to foreign readers, and that the only information which the British public received through the newspapers was either censored accounts of Sinn Fein meetings or else articles by Mr. Austin Harrison. The latter appeared to be doing a good deal of harm. No attempt was made to explain Government action, or to support their action, in the Irish press.

It was pointed out that the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was very much under-staffed at present, particularly in London.

Attention was also drawn to the position of the Chief Secretary in regard to expenditure upon works of repair and development, and in this connection the Chancellor of the Exchequer intimated that he was having enquiries made at the Treasury in regard to this matter.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Certain ringleaders among the Sinn Fein prisoners should be removed to prisons in England, and that all Sinn Fein prisoners, both in Ireland and England, should be treated in accordance with Rule 243 (a) of the Prison Regulations.

The Secretary was instructed to telegraph this decision to the Chief Secretary for Ireland forthwith.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 3, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 245.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. on Thursday, October 4, 1917.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 11).

The Right Hon. E. S. Montagu, M.P., Secretary of State for India (for Minute 18).

The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minutes 19 and 20).

Mr. Philip Kerr (for Minute 20)

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations, War Office (for Minutes 1 to 11).

Mr. Stanley Baldwin, M.P., Treasury (for Minute 15).

Mr. C. B. Harmsworth, M.P. (for Minute 15).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Major Storr, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
1. THE Director of Military Operations stated that we had attacked this morning on a wide front East of Ypres. All our objectives had been attained, and 1,500 prisoners had already been accounted for.

2. The Director of Military Operations produced a map showing the area still occupied by the Germans in East Africa, and pointed out that the only two settlements still occupied by them were Mahenge and Livada. In spite of the great physical difficulties, it was hoped that Mahenge would soon be occupied. The recent operations had been carried out in a country of rough bush, with no roads, which had presented the very greatest difficulties; in spite of these, however, the conduct of the campaign had been most praiseworthy.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 239, Minute 5, the Secretary of State for War reported that all the 22 prisoners who had recently escaped from confinement at Donington had been recaptured, and that since the war only one officer and two men had succeeded in getting back to Germany. On the other hand, no less than 480 French prisoners had escaped from Germany back into France, having traversed both the German and the French lines, while it was credibly reported that no less than 2,200 Russian prisoners had escaped from Germany in the course of one month during this year. Full investigation was being made into the circumstances attending the escape from Donington, and a report would be made to the Cabinet in due course.

4. The Director of Military Operations reported that the captures on the Western front this year up to the 30th September amounted to 51,435 German prisoners and 232 guns, while our losses during the same period amounted to 15,065 prisoners lost and no guns. He also submitted similar figures for other theatres of war.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Similar figures should be drawn up by the War Office for the half-year period April 9—October 9, 1917, and should be published.

5. The First Sea Lord reported as follows:

(a) On the 1st October, 1917, a large “America” seaplane dropped two 230 lb. bombs on an enemy submarine. A quantity of oil and air-bubbles came to the surface for five minutes. It is probable that the submarine was destroyed.

(b) An airship reported a direct hit on a submarine with a 100 lb. bomb, 8 miles west of Prawle Point, on the 3rd instant. The trawlers following had dropped six depth charges in the neighbourhood of the submarine, and quantities of oil were seen.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 243, Minute 10, the First Sea Lord reported that the cruiser “Drake” had got into Church Bay, near Rathlin Island, and had capsized in 7 fathoms of water. One officer and eighteen other ranks had been killed by an explosion in the stoke-hold. The First Sea Lord hoped that it might be
possible to save the guns from H.M.S. “Drake,” and publication of
the loss would take place as soon as the relatives of casualties had
been informed.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that the destroyer “Brisk” had
been mined in Rathlin Sound, the forecastle being blown off. One
officer and nine men had been wounded, and thirty-one other ranks
missing. The Captain had been saved. The destroyer had been
towed into Lough Foyle in a severely damaged condition.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that——

(a.) During the night of the 1st-2nd October, over 2 tons of
bombs were dropped on the Lock Gates at Zeebrugge,
and nearly 15 cwt. of bombs dropped on sheds and
machines at St. Denis Westrem Aerodrome. All our
machines returned safely.

(b.) During the night of the 2nd-3rd October, further bombing
raids were made on St. Denis Westrem, Zeebrugge
Locks, Bruges Dock, and Thourout Railway Junction.
A total weight of over 5 tons of bombs had been
dropped on these objectives. All our machines returned
safely.

Attention was drawn, in this connection, to a newspaper report
from Amsterdam, stating that the Lock Gates at Zeebrugge had
been very severely damaged by recent air raids.

9. The First Sea Lord reported that three ships carrying
general cargo had been lost on the 3rd October outside Gibraltar.
The shortage of cruisers for convoy purposes, prevented ships
bound for Gibraltar from the United Kingdom being taken out as a
convoy. A big British ship making Brest, with material for the United
States troops in France, had been torpedoed on the 2nd October,
but had been beached, though in a bad place. A nitrate ship
entering the Bristol Channel had also been torpedoed off the Smalls.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 243, Minute 17, the First
Sea Lord reported that he had received a letter from the Naval
Attache at Rome, stating that Admiral di Revel remained quite
stubborn in his determination to retain at Venice all the Italian
destroyers now there. The Naval Attache stated that the ships
were at present continually at sea and were doing useful work, co­
operating with the Italian Army. Turin and Genoa had been
declared war zones, owing to the prevalence of German money
and German spies. Evidence was forthcoming that the latter had
organised schemes for destroying munition works and other essential
war services which had led to this step now being taken.

11. Attention was drawn to an article in the “Times” of
the 4th October, written by Lord Northcliffe, in which it was stated
that no substantial progress had been made in combating the
submarine menace. It was pointed out that this statement was
directly contradicted by the facts, and figures were submitted
showing that the losses in tonnage by submarine action had steadily
decreased since April last, while the destruction of enemy submarines
had steadily increased, and had reached a most satisfactory figure
during the last quarter.
Aerial Operations Committee.

12. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by General Smuts, Chairman of the Aerial Operations Committee (Paper G.T.-2178), asking for their sanction to certain recommendations of the Committee.

It was suggested that if these recommendations were accepted by the War Cabinet it was desirable that the Shipping Controller should become a member of the Committee.

The discussion was adjourned until General Smuts could be present.

Air-raids: Provision of Cover in London.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 242 A, Minute 3 (b), the attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to the desirability, especially in view of the fact that the Germans might be preparing air raids on a large scale, of taking measures to provide adequate cover for the population of London. Experience during the recent air raids demonstrated the tendency on the part of certain classes, notably poorer aliens, to become panic-stricken while a raid was in progress. There had already been a considerable evacuation of these classes to the country, and businesses in the city and elsewhere had in consequence become to a certain extent dislocated. It was suggested that excellent cover might be arranged by the construction of dug-outs in the Parks. It was also pointed out that cinder-bags were an efficient substitute for sand-bags, and might be placed under the roofs or in the garrets of less substantially built houses. It was suggested that this form of protection would be of more value against lateral explosions.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A Committee, consisting of representatives of:—

The War Office,
The Home Office,
The Local Government Board,
A Secretary (to be appointed by the Chairman),

should assemble at once to go into the whole question, reporting in due course their recommendations to the War Cabinet, and that Sir George Cave should be invited to be Chairman of the Committee.

Assistance of Volunteers.

14. The Secretary of State for War reported that he had arranged to call out the Volunteers to assist the Special Constables in dealing with the population in the East End of London, but was uncertain with regard to their compensation in the case of injury being received from Air Raider while rendering this assistance.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In the event of any Volunteers wearing Volunteer uniform being killed or injured while assisting the Police or military during an air raid, the same compensation should be given to them or their relatives as had been laid down in regard to Volunteers being called out to repel an invasion.

Insurance against Damage.

15. The War Cabinet were informed that an influential deputation, headed by the Lord Mayor of London, had been received by the Prime Minister. The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the deputation, had asked that the Government should consider the question of granting a universal indemnity for damage caused by air raids, the indemnity to have retrospective effect. The Lord Mayor further proposed that the present system of insurance should be abolished, and that a Government indemnity should be substituted for it.

The War Cabinet were informed of the existing Government
rate of insurance against damage caused by enemy aircraft. It was also pointed out that it was necessary, in the event of the War Cabinet deciding to sanction an indemnity, that critical and expert estimates of the damage caused in each instance should be available.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A complete indemnity for the destruction of property caused directly by an enemy air raid, up to a maximum of 500, should be payable by the Government without insurance, but that anything over that figure must be covered by insurance.

The Treasury were instructed to produce a scheme in detail to give effect to this decision, and to publish the same as soon as possible.

The War Cabinet decided that—

16. With reference to War Cabinet 244, Minute 3, a telegram was read from the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to the Secretary of the War Cabinet, requesting instructions from the War Cabinet as to the issue of tobacco to Sinn Fein prisoners.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary should send a telegram to Mr. Duke, informing him that the War Cabinet considered that this was a matter which must be left to his discretion, and that the War Cabinet would support his action.

17. Attention was drawn to an article which had appeared in the "Daily Mail" of the 4th October, giving an account of the Sinn Fein army alleged to exist in County Clare. The article stated that 20,000 well-drilled men were marching about the County in procession, saying, "Up, Rebels, up with the Kaiser."

The Secretary was instructed to call the attention of the Chief Secretary for Ireland to this article, and to ask him for a report thereon.

18. With reference to War Cabinet 227, Minute 2, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that the German Government were making great efforts to capture the sympathy of the Zionist Movement. This Movement, though opposed by a number of wealthy Jews in this country, had behind it the support of a majority of Jews, at all events in Russia and America, and possibly in other countries. He saw nothing inconsistent between the establishment of a Jewish national focus in Palestine and the complete assimilation and absorption of Jews into the nationality of other countries. Just as English emigrants to the United States became, either in the first or subsequent generations, American nationals, so, in future, should a Jewish citizenship be established in Palestine, would Jews become either Englishmen, Americans, Germans, or Palestinians. What was at the back of the Zionist Movement was the intense national consciousness held by certain members of the Jewish race. They regarded themselves as one of the great historic races of the world, whose original home was Palestine, and these Jews had a passionate longing to regain once more this ancient national home. Other Jews had become absorbed into the nations among whom they and their forefathers had dwelt for many generations. Mr. Balfour then read a very sympathetic declaration by the French Government which had been conveyed to the Zionists, and he stated that he knew that President Wilson was extremely favourable to the Movement.

Attention was drawn to the contradictory telegrams received from Colonel House and Justice Brandeis (Papers G.T.—2015 and G.T.—2158).
Mr. Montagu urged strong objections to any declaration in which it was stated that Palestine was the “national home” of the Jewish people. He regarded the Jews as a religious community and himself as a Jewish Englishman. He based his argument on the prejudicial effect on the status of Jewish Britons of a statement that His Majesty’s Government regarded Palestine as the national home of Jewish people. Whatever safeguarding words might be used in the formula, the civil rights of Jews as nationals in the country in which they were born might be endangered. How would he negotiate with the peoples of India on behalf of His Majesty’s Government if the world had just been told that His Majesty’s Government regarded his national home as being in Turkish territory? He specially urged that the only trial of strength between Zionists and anti-Zionists in England had resulted in a very narrow majority for the Zionists, namely, 56 to 51 of the representatives of Anglo-Jewry on the Conjunto Committee. He also pointed out that most English-born Jews were opposed to Zionism, while it was supported by foreign-born Jews, such as Dr. Gaster and Dr. Herz, the two Grand Rabbis, who had been born in Roumania and Austria respectively, and Dr. Weizmann, President of the English Zionist Federation, who was born in Russia.

He submitted that the Cabinet’s first duty was to English Jews, and that Colonel House had declared that President Wilson is opposed to a declaration now.

Lord Curzon urged strong objections upon practical grounds. He stated, from his recollection of Palestine, that the country was, for the most part, barren and desolate; there being but sparse cultivation on the terraced slopes, the valleys and streams being few, and large centres of population scarce, a less propitious seat for the future Jewish race could not be imagined. How was it proposed to get rid of the existing majority of Mussulman inhabitants and to introduce the Jews in their place? How many would be willing to return and on what pursuits would they engage?

To secure for the Jews already in Palestine equal civil and religious rights seemed to him a better policy than to aim at repatriation on a large scale. He regarded the latter as sentimental idealism, which would never be realised, and that His Majesty’s Government should have nothing to do with it.

It was pointed out that during recent years before the War, Jewish immigration into Palestine had been considerably on the increase, and that several flourishing Zionist colonies were already in existence.

Lord Milner submitted an alternative draft declaration, as follows:

“His Majesty’s Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish Race, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object; it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed in any other country by such Jews who are fully contented with their existing nationality and citizenship.”

The War Cabinet decided that—

Before coming to a decision they should hear the views of some of the representative Zionists, as well as of those who hold the opposite opinion, and that meanwhile the declaration, as read by Lord Milner, should be submitted confidentially to—

(a.) President Wilson.
(b.) Leaders of the Zionist Movement.
(c.) Representative persons in Anglo-Jewry opposed to Zionism.
The Secretary was instructed to take the necessary action. The War Cabinet further decided that the opinions received upon this draft declaration should be collated and submitted to them for decision.

War Aims Committee Finance.

19. Sir Edward Carson, as Chairman of the War Aims Committee, informed the War Cabinet that funds at the disposal of the Committee, amounting to £17,000, which had been raised by private subscription, were now exhausted. If the activities of the Committee were to continue, further money must be placed at its disposal. There was a danger that, if the Committee had to rely upon private subscriptions only, the Pacifists would attribute this support to the capitalist class. The Committee was composite in character, and consisted of representatives of all political parties. There were three alternatives to be considered—

(a.) That the Committee should continue to rely upon private subscriptions, which was open to the objection given above.

(b.) That Party Organisation funds, which, since the advent of Coalition Governments, were not being utilised, should be placed at the disposal of the War Aims Committee.

(c.) That the Committee should be financed by the Treasury.

Sir Edward Carson stated that at a meeting of his Committee, held the previous day, it had been unanimously decided to recommend that the third alternative should be adopted.

After some discussion the War Cabinet decided—

To accept in principle the proposal that the War Aims Committee should be financed by the Treasury.

Propaganda.

20. The War Cabinet had under consideration the question of Propaganda. It was pointed out—

(a.) That there was necessarily a considerable overlapping in regard to the propaganda carried out by the War Office and the Department of Information respectively.

(b.) That as it was not practicable to draw a clear line of demarcation between home and foreign propaganda, the two should be combined as far as possible.

(c.) That the only really efficient system of propaganda at present existing in this country was that organised by the pacifists, who had large sums of money at their disposal and who were conducting their campaign with great vigour.

It was suggested that the machinery put in motion the previous year in order to give publicity to the Government War Loan had proved most efficient, and that it might conveniently be resuscitated for the purpose of War Aims propaganda.

It was further pointed out that the most effective propaganda could best be conducted, not in public halls, but in the open air, outside factories, &c., by speakers who were associated with no political organisation.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 5, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 246.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, October 8, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff.

The Right Hon. SIR J. MACLAY, Bart., Secretary of State for War.

SIR LEO G. CHIOZZA MONEY, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Shipping (for Minutes 18 and 19).

SIR ALAN G. ANDERSON, K.C.B., Controller, Admiralty (for Minutes 18 and 19).

C. ADDISON, M.D., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 17).


The Right Hon. the LORD NEWTON (for Minute 17).

The Right Hon. SIR G. CAVE, K.G., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 1).

SIR A. C. GEDDES, K.C.B., Minister of National Service (for Minutes 16 and 19).


The Right Hon. SIR J. MACLAY, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minutes 18 and 19).

SIR LEO G. CHIOZZA MONEY, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Shipping (for Minutes 18 and 19).

SIR ALAN G. ANDERSON, K.C.B., Controller, Admiralty (for Minutes 18 and 19).

The Right Hon. C. ADDISON, M.D., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 17).

Lieutenant-Colonel SIR M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.
1. THE War Cabinet had before them the following memoranda on the subject of Conscientious Objectors:

(a.) By the Secretary of State for War (Papers G.T.–1799 and 2167).
(b.) By Lord Milner (Papers G.T.–677 and 1833).
(c.) By Sir George Cave (Paper G.T.–1799 A).
(d.) By Mr. Hayes Fisher (Paper G.T.–1974).
(e.) By Mr. Long (Paper G.T.–2190).

The War Cabinet decided that—

The whole question of the treatment of Conscientious Objectors, and of possible legislation that might be required in dealing with them, should be referred for examination and report at the earliest possible moment to a Committee composed as follows:

Sir George Cave, K.C., M.P. (in the Chair).
Mr. Barnes, M.P.
The Marquess of Salisbury, K.G.
Dr. H. A. L. Fisher, M.P.
Mr. Hayes Fisher, M.P.
Mr. Ian Macpherson, M.P.

The following to be in attendance:

Brigadier-General Childs.

2. The Secretary raised the question of the report from Sir C. Marling, Teheran, upon recent representations submitted by the Viceroy of India.

Lord Curzon intimated that this matter was under the consideration of a special Persian Committee, composed as follows:

Mr. Balfour (Chairman).
Lord Curzon.
Mr. Montagu.

3. The War Cabinet had under consideration a memorandum submitted by Mr. Montagu (Paper G.T.–2012), and decided that—

The arrangements suggested by Mr. Montagu should be approved, but that, before any announcement be made in public, the question of the representation of the India Office in the House of Commons should be settled and approved by the Prime Minister.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported, with reference to War Cabinet 243, Minute 13, that the aeroplanes detailed to assemble behind the French front for the purpose of air raids upon German towns had not yet reached Ouchy owing to bad weather. He added that very little flying was taking place in Flanders owing to the same cause.

5. With reference to War Cabinet 243, Minute 4, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that considerable delay had been experienced in getting under way the batteries sent to the Italian front, but he anticipated that the last batteries to leave the Italian front would do so in about four days' time. He had received a telegram from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig informing him that he could make valuable use of these batteries, and wished to have them.
The War Cabinet decided that—

No alteration should be made in their previous decision with regard to the allocation of the batteries to other theatres of war.

6. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff consulted the War Cabinet with regard to a proposal received from General van Deventer that, in the event of a few more successes, he should demand formally the unconditional surrender of von Lettow. The question arose as to whether any approach from our side would not be regarded as an indication of weakness on our part.

The War Cabinet decided that—

General van Deventer should, if possible, consult the Chief of the Imperial General Staff before sending any such message to the German commander.

7. The question was raised as to why the native Askaris stuck so firmly to the Germans. In this connection the Chief of the Imperial General Staff read an extract from General van Deventer’s telegram indicating that very strict discipline was maintained among them by the Germans.

General Smuts stated that one of the main reasons was that the Germans kept hold of the wives and families of native soldiers serving with them, thus doing much to prevent any desertion. The Germans also asserted that, whatever the issue of the present operations in German East Africa, they will be able to reobtain possession of this colony at the Peace Conference at the end of the war, and that any natives who had deserted during the war would be hanged by order of the German Government when the war was over.

8. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that there had been trouble between the French and Italian troops based on Salonica, the Italians desiring that their troops should be concentrated on the left of the line, while General Sarrail insisted that the Italian troops should be placed between those of other nationalities, as at present.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 242, Minute 1, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that reliable information had been received to the effect that a serious explosion at Haidar Pasha had in fact taken place causing very great destruction of ammunition and military stores.

10. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that there were signs of enemy concentration on the Roumanian front, Austrian troops being replaced by Germans. On the other hand, the Russians reported a recent local success on the northern portion of this front.

General Robertson stated that a serious telegram had been received from General Barter No. 1292, dated the 5th October, 1917, stating that the Russians had failed to replace the foodstuffs taken from the Roumanians for their troops, and had also failed to deliver clothing and other stores promised by them to the Roumanians.

In this connection the Prime Minister stated that he had received a personal appeal from M. Take Jonescu.
The War Cabinet decided that—

This question should be referred for decision to Lord Milner, with a view to his taking whatever action was possible to urge the Russian Government to assist Roumania, and to ascertain from the Roumanian representatives in this country any means by which we could give assistance to the Roumanians.

11. The First Sea Lord reported that the interned German submarine had left Cadiz for the open sea unescorted, but apparently piloted. She could only have left with the connivance of the authorities. The Admiralty had already consulted with the Foreign Office with a view to making the strongest possible protest to the Spanish Government. The French Government had already taken action, asking for the dismissal of the Port Authorities, and stating that they would hold the Spanish Government responsible for any further depredations effected by the German submarine.

12. The First Sea Lord reported that H.M.S. "Mantua" had sunk an armed French sailing-ship by gunfire in the Bay of Biscay, mistaking her for a German raider. One Frenchman had been killed on the sailing-ship, and six of the crew of H.M.S. "Mantua" had been wounded. Suitable apologies had been tendered to the French Government, and the Admiral at Sierra Leone had been ordered to Dakar to confer with the French Naval Commander, with a view to investigating matters with the French.

13. The First Sea Lord stated that he had received the following reports from the Naval Attache at Rome:—

(a.) An Austrian torpedo-boat had run ashore on the Adriatic coast near Ancona on 5th October, and had surrendered.

(b.) A fight had taken place between Italian and Austrian destroyers off Maestra. Two enemy vessels were hit, one being set on fire, and an explosion caused on another.

(c.) Eight Italian seaplanes had dropped 2½ tons of bombs on the Austrian arsenal at Pola, and further bombs had been dropped upon Prosecco, about four miles N.N.W. of Trieste.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 242, Minute 10, the First Sea Lord reported that the situation with regard to the anti-aircraft defences of Dunkirk was serious. Communications were being made to General Pétain by the French Ministry of Marine with a view to securing their improvement.

15. The First Sea Lord reported that sixteen guns, destined for the arming of merchant ships, had already been handed over by the Admiralty to assist in completing the anti-aircraft defences of London, and he anticipated the further release of twenty-two guns for this purpose from the Grand Fleet.

In this connection the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reported that the Italian aeronaut Laureati, who had recently flown to England from Turin, had reported to him that the night defences of Venice had been most successful against raids by Austrian aircraft.
Committee on Man-Power and Recruiting

16. The War Cabinet had before them a Report (Paper G.T.-2147) of the Cabinet Committee on Man-Power and Recruiting, together with a memorandum by Mr. Churchill (Paper G.T.-2134).

Sir Auckland Geddes pointed out that the decision with regard to the exemption of men employed in shipyards had been come to by the Committee on the representations made by the Admiralty. He had concurred in this decision, and did not anticipate that the numbers of unskilled men who would be granted "A" certificates by the decision come to would be large. He recommended that the War Cabinet should confirm the decision.

The War Cabinet confirmed the decisions contained in the Report (Paper G.T.-2147), directing that the Appendix to War Cabinet 231, Minute 9, should be reprinted (Appendix I) so as to include the amendments recommended by the Committee, and with regard to labour employed in shipyards decided that—

All recruitment or withdrawal of labour from shipyards for the Army should cease so far as concerns all men employed in shipyards on or before the 15th July, 1917, provided each man is still being employed in shipyards on the date on which the exemption certificate is granted to them, and provided that they have not engaged in any other employment between the 15th July, 1917, and the date of the certificate. Men complying with the conditions in these provisos shall be entitled to the same certificate as those granted to men employed in such yards on the 29th March, 1917.

Prisoners of War in Turkey.

17. With reference to War Cabinet 238, Minute 8, the War Cabinet had before them a summary by the Secretary of State for War of the steps taken regarding British prisoners of war in Turkey (Paper G.T.-2171).

Lord Newton stated that the only method of making progress was to secure an interview with the Turks. There were some indications that the Turks intend to accept our offer, but the matter was hanging fire. The Turks are reported, though not officially, to have selected Mahmoud Moulkhar Pasha and Bosani Effendi as their representatives. Negotiations are being pursued through the Swiss Government, but, in view of the slow progress and the approach of winter, and the receipt of serious information that the Turks have only accounted for 4,000 to 5,000 out of a total of 10,000 British prisoners, the remainder having probably died as a result of the treatment they had received at the hands of the Turk, the War Cabinet were of opinion that further action ought to be taken. Our last communication on this subject was made to the Swiss Government on the 22nd September, and, as no reply had yet been received, the War Cabinet decided—

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should send a further telegram to Sir Horace Rumbold again pressing for a meeting, and stating that Lord Newton and General Belfield are ready to start.

Acceleration of Merchant Shipbuilding in the United States of America.

18. With reference to War Cabinet 241, Minute 12, the War Cabinet had before them a draft of a proposed telegram to President Wilson, prepared by the Ministry of Shipping (Paper G.T.-2179), strongly urging the importance of increasing and accelerating the merchant shipbuilding in the United States of America.

The Shipping Controller read a telegram which had been sent by Lord Northcliffe to the Minister of Munitions, pointing out the
lack of co-ordination of statements by British Ministers in regard to the submarine campaign.

The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to a previous telegram which had been sent to Lord Northcliffe (War Cabinet 203, Minute 9, and War Cabinet 210, Minute 11), in which the question of shipbuilding in America was dealt with.

The Shipping Controller pointed out that about two months had elapsed since the despatch of that message, and in the meantime comparatively little had been done. He strongly urged that the proposed telegram to President Wilson should be sent.

After some discussion as to the particular channel through which the message should be conveyed to President Wilson, the War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should send a telegram to Colonel House for the information of the President, and that the Prime Minister should send a copy of it to Lord Northcliffe, asking him to show it to Sir Thomas Royden.

19. The War Cabinet had before them a copy of a letter from the Secretary of the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation to the Prime Minister (Paper G.T.-2186) in regard to the extension and fuller development of the shipbuilding facilities of the country, and the proposal to construct a number of national shipyards.

In this letter it was requested that the Prime Minister should arrange to meet a deputation from the Federation at an early date so that the matter might be discussed from every point of view.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The deputation should be received by the Prime Minister, who should be accompanied by—

- The First Lord of the Admiralty.
- The Minister of Munitions.
- The Shipping Controller.
- The Minister of National Service.
- The Controller of the Admiralty.

The Controller of the Admiralty undertook to make all the arrangements for the meeting.

20. With reference to War Cabinet 215, Minute 12, the War Cabinet resumed their discussion in regard to the recommendation of General Smuts' Committee (Appendix II) that they should be empowered to settle all questions of priority not only of the present air programme, but of all other munitions programmes.

It was pointed out that if the Committee were given these extended powers they would be in a position of very great control and would perform functions hitherto carried out only by the War Cabinet themselves in deciding the competing claims of the different Departments. On the other hand, the position was safeguarded by the facts that all the Departments concerned were represented on the Committee, that there would be full liaison between the Committee and the War Cabinet, both as regards the Chairman and the Secretary of the Committee, and that, in cases of dispute, appeal could be made to the War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet decided—

(a.) That the title of General Smuts' Committee should be altered from "Aerial Operations Committee" to "War Priorities Committee."

(b.) That they should be given the extended powers as recommended by the Committee.
(c.) That their proceedings should be notified to the War Cabinet.

(d.) That the decisions of the Committee should be notified regularly to the Ministry of National Service.

Air Reorganisation.

21. With reference to War Cabinet 223, Minute 12, the War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by General Smuts (Paper G.T.-2222), proposing the issue of the following notice to the press:

"The War Cabinet decided during the summer in favour of the principle of establishing a real Air Ministry and a unified Air Service into which both the Royal Naval Air Service and Royal Flying Corps would be incorporated. A Committee presided over by General Smuts and a number of Sub-Committees have been working out the detailed arrangements required to give effect to that decision. A Bill embodying the Government's proposals will be laid before Parliament at its forthcoming session."

The Prime Minister stated that he had had a conversation with Mr. Holt Thomas, who had interested himself for many years in this question, and who had urged that the moment was not now favourable for the establishment of an Air Ministry, and that the present situation would best be met by placing a member of the War Cabinet in charge of all aerial matters.

It was pointed out that, while there had been no official communiqué, there had been widespread discussion of the subject in the press, and the public were undoubtedly expecting the Government to set up an Air Ministry. Moreover, the War Cabinet had themselves approved in principle the establishment of an Air Ministry (War Cabinet 223, Minute 12).

It was suggested that the best plan would be for General Smuts to continue to take charge of this question on behalf of the Cabinet, with such staff as he considered necessary, a course which would avoid a Bill in Parliament and the consequent loss of time. There were, however, objections to a member of the Cabinet being directly and deeply involved in anything like departmental executive action. Another possible course was for the Government to announce that they favoured the establishment of an Air Ministry and the unification of the Services concerned; that to carry out this policy now would involve much dislocation and delay, which, in view of the urgent war situation, it was desirable to avoid; that for the present the War Cabinet had therefore asked General Smuts to take general control of aerial policy.

The War Cabinet decided—

To adjourn the discussion so as to allow General Smuts to examine the subject further.

Base Metals:

Alienation of Mining Properties Abroad.

22. With reference to War Cabinet 233, Minute 7, the War Cabinet authorised the President of the Board of Trade to arrange for the issue of an amendment to Regulation 30 B B of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, with a view to prohibiting British subjects in the United Kingdom from parting with mining and oil interests without a licence (Paper G.T.-2128).

The President of the Board of Trade undertook to see that Lord Cowdray was notified of the Government's decision before any announcement was made.
23. The War Cabinet had before them the following documents:

- A draft of a Bill to amend the Patents and Designs Act, 1907, with an explanatory memorandum by the Board of Trade (Paper G.T.-1734).
- A draft of a Bill to amend the Trade Marks Act, 1905, with an explanatory memorandum by the Board of Trade (Paper G.T.-1735).

Sir Albert Stanley briefly explained the objects of the Bills, and said they were meant to deal with difficulties experienced in working existing Acts of Parliament. He hardly expected the Bills to pass through during the forthcoming Session, but would be glad to have them introduced for the purpose of discussion.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The President of the Board of Trade to introduce the Bills, after consultation with the Leader of the House of Commons.

24. With reference to War Cabinet 240, Minute 10, the War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade on the Cost of the Miners' War Wage in Relation to the Price of Coal (Paper G.T.-2213). It was estimated that the cost of the recent advance of 1s. 6d. a day to adults and 9d. a day to boys would be approximately 22,000,000l. per annum, and the question arose whether the whole or any part of this amount should be borne by the consumer or by the State. Of the present annual output (250,000,000 tons), about one-tenth was supplied to our Allies, and the rate now charged to them was in excess of that charged to consumers at home. It was therefore, perhaps, undesirable to advance the price to the Allies, but there seemed to be no good reason why the home consumer should escape the cost of the new advance in wages.

The War Cabinet decided—

To authorise the Coal Controller to increase the price of coal (except to Allies) generally by 2s. per ton.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 8, 1917.
APPENDIX I.

(C).—FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SERVICE.

The Committee decided that, conditioned by powers conferred by Parliament, the functions of the Ministry of National Service shall be:

1. To review the whole field of British man-power and to be in a position at all times to lay before the War Cabinet information as to the meaning, in terms of man-power and consequential results, of all Departmental proposals put forward to the War Cabinet and referred to the Ministry for its consideration and for an expression of its opinion.

2. To make arrangements for the transfer from civil work not declared by the War Cabinet to be of primary importance, or, if ordered by the War Cabinet, from the Navy, Army, or Air Service to urgent national work, of such numbers of men as may be declared by the War Cabinet to be necessary to reinforce the labour already engaged on that work.

3. Subject to the approval of the War Cabinet, to determine, in consultation with the Departments concerned, the relative importance of the various forms of civil work, and to prepare from time to time lists of reserved occupations with such age and other limitations as may be necessary to secure the maintenance of essential public services and the preservation of a nucleus of civil occupations and industries.

4. Within numerical limits imposed by the War Cabinet to obtain for the Army, Navy, and Air Service, such men as can be withdrawn from civil life without detriment to the maintenance of essential public services and the due performance of the civil work necessary to maintain the forces at sea, in the field, and in the air, and any nucleus of civil occupations and industries declared by the War Cabinet to be necessary.

5. In connection with Function 4, to determine the physical fitness of men available, or possibly becoming available, for withdrawal from civil life.

(Note.—Functions 4 and 5 are limited by the action of the Tribunals acting in conformity with regulations and instructions issued to them under authority derived from the War Cabinet, in England and Wales by the Local Government Board, in Scotland by the Scottish Office.)

6. To make arrangements for the provision, where necessary, of labour (male and female) in substitution for that withdrawn from civil life in accordance with Function 4.

7. Any other duty which may from time to time be allocated to the Ministry by the War Cabinet.

8. The above statement of functions is not intended to override in any way any agreement that has been or may be made between the Ministry of National Service and any other Government Department.
APPENDIX II.

AERIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

(Memorandum by the Chairman.)

THE War Cabinet at their meeting on the 21st September, 1917 (War Cabinet 237, Minute 6), decided that a Committee, composed as under:—

General Smuts (Chairman),
Sir Eric Geddes,
Lord Derby,
Mr. Churchill,
Lord Cowdray,

Major L. Storr (Secretary),

should be assembled at once in order to enquire at the earliest date into the conditions that prevail in regard to the output of aircraft in this country, and to report to the War Cabinet as soon as possible on the whole situation, giving their recommendations as to priority, and the effect that any priority, if granted, would have on the output of the Army and Navy, and in what direction.

I append below an extract from the minutes of the first meeting of the Committee held on 26th September, 1917, which gives the Committee's recommendations:

The Committee took note of Mr. Churchill's statement, that, so far as he could judge at present, his Department would be able to complete the air programme without prejudice to the munitions programmes of the Admiralty and War Office for the coming year, provided that sufficient raw material of all kinds and the necessary labour were forthcoming.

The Committee were of opinion, as the result of their discussion, that they could most usefully perform the functions allotted to them if they were not constituted as an ad hoc body, but became a standing Committee, which would, as occasion might necessitate, have preliminary discussions on any controversial points that might arise between the Departments concerned, and settle all questions of priority in regard to the completion of the present air and other programmes, and the extent to which the requirements of the other Departments might be affected thereby, all questions not susceptible of solution by the Committee being referred to the War Cabinet for final decision.

The Committee decided—

To report to the War Cabinet in the above sense.

I would invite the particular attention of my colleagues to the fact that the Committee recommend that they should be empowered to settle all questions of priority, not only of the present air programme but of all other munitions programmes. If the War Cabinet decide to sanction this recommendation, I would suggest that the title of the Committee be altered from "Aerial Operations Committee" to "War Priorities Committee."

(Initialled) J. C. S.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 1, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 247.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, October 9, 1917.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 5 to 9).


Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations, War Office (for Minutes 1 to 4).

The Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minute 9).

Mr. F. G. Kellaway, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 5).

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.


Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 4).

Commodore G. M. Paine, C.B., M.V.O., Fifth Sea Lord (for Minute 9).

The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minutes 5 to 9).

The Right Hon. the Viscount Cowdray, President, Air Board (for Minute 9).

Sir D. J. Shackleton, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary Ministry of Labour (for Minute 5).

Mr. H. B. Butler, Ministry of Labour (for Minute 5).


Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain L. S. Amery, Assistant Secretary.
The Western Front.

1. THE Director of Military Operations reported that a joint Anglo-French attack had begun that morning. No detail had been received beyond an intimation that all was going well.

War Office
Statistical Return.

2. The Director of Military Operations handed in a Paper for circulation to the War Cabinet, giving a comparison of the number of days fighting, prisoners, guns, area of ground captured, British and estimated German casualties.

Mercantile
Shipping Losses.

3. The First Sea Lord reported heavy losses in the outward trade to Gibraltar, which he attributed to lack of convoy cruisers. He had asked the Shipping controller for fifteen merchant ships with a view to fitting them out as cruisers.

Dunkirk.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 246, Minute 14, the First Sea Lord read a telegram from the Naval Liaison Officer to the effect that General Pétain was arranging for considerable additional provision to the air defences of Dunkirk.

The Whitley
Report on
Industrial Councils.

5. With reference to War Cabinet 157, Minute 12, the War Cabinet had before them a Report by the Ministry of Labour on the “Attitude of Employers and Employed to the Whitley Report” (Paper G.T.—2176).

Dr. Addison explained that the Whitley Report recommended that the Government should ask the existing associations in each industry to organise themselves in such a way that they can adjust their difficulties and prepare for the period of reconstruction, and at the same time increase the share of the workers in shaping the conditions under which they work. It was very desirable to establish, if possible, councils which would be representative of a trade as a whole, in place of the diverse organisations now often to be found within a single trade. Once the War Cabinet approved the recommendations set forth by the Ministry of Labour, it would be possible for the Ministry of Reconstruction to put forward a number of suggestions indicating some functions which the Industrial Councils might discharge. There were important questions connected with the allocation of raw materials, increased production, commercial development, demobilisation, and so forth, in dealing with which the proposed councils could possibly render most valuable assistance. He would formulate a number of suggestions on these lines, in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour, and if any new principle were raised it would, of course, be submitted to the War Cabinet.

Sir David Shackleton said that, on the whole, the Whitley Report had been very favourably received by the Trade Unions. Such criticism as had been expressed came either from the advocates of national guilds, who feared the adoption of the Whitley Report would tend to improve industrial relations, or from highly organised industries like the cotton trade, where satisfactory machinery had been evolved and where Government interference was not welcomed. There would be practical difficulties in setting up the councils, e.g., the precise definition of the limits of a trade, but he thought they could be surmounted. A report on the unorganised trades would follow.

Mr. Kellaway stated that the Whitley Report had already stimulated the formation of Shop Committees, and there were now a number of them in the National Factories.
The War Cabinet decided—

To endorse the principle of the Whitley Report, and approved the steps proposed to be taken by the Ministry of Labour for setting up Industrial Councils, as set forth in Paper G.T.-2176.

6. The War Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Secretary of State for War on the acquisition of land for purposes connected with the war, together with a draft of a Bill to amend the Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of Land) Act, 1915 (Paper G.T.-2153), and a note by the Chief Secretary for Ireland (Paper G.T.-2195).

Lord Derby explained that the present practice, when land was required, was to proceed under the Defence of the Realm Regulations and to refer applicants for compensation to the Defence of the Realm Losses Commission, but no legal right to compensation was admitted. Doubts, however, had recently been cast on the legal position when the Shoreham Aerodrome case was before the House of Lords, and the object of the present Bill was to remove these doubts by enabling the Defence of the Realm Losses Commission to assess damages.

Sir Edward Carson said the Bill was a very mild one, and aimed at putting a stop to petitions of right claiming compensation for damage on a peace basis. It was desirable to put an end to the extravagant claims for direct and consequential losses which were being advanced. This the Bill did. The Bill was comprehensive, so far as the acquisition of land went, but there were analogous problems connected with other forms of property.

The War Cabinet, while approving the principle of the Bill, were of opinion that it would be preferable, if possible, to introduce one Bill dealing with the various kinds of property disturbed by the war, rather than a series of Bills, and requested—

Sir Edward Carson to examine the subject from this standpoint and to report.

7. On the suggestion of the Secretary of State for War the War Cabinet appointed the following Committee:—

Lord Curzon, Chairman,
Mr. Balfour,
Lord Derby,
Mr. Churchill,
Captain Amery, Secretary,

to consider the allocation of guns in relation to the demands put forward by our own armies and by those of the Allied Governments.

8. The War Cabinet discussed the whole question of the trade war against Germany raised by Sir Edward Carson’s memorandum on the Economic Offensive (Paper G.-156) (Appendix I), and further dealt with in memoranda by the Board of Trade (Paper G.-158), Lord R. Cecil (Paper G.-159), Dr. Addison (Paper G.T.-2170), and and Mr. Montagu (Paper G.T.-2239). The importance of making the fullest use of the economic lever in possession of the Allies to counteract the territorial lever which the Germans possess in their occupation of Allied territory was emphasised, and it was suggested that a strong Committee should be appointed to study the question from the British point of view as a preliminary to a comprehensive agreement with France and the United States as to a policy of common action.

It was pointed out that the questions under consideration affected not only the United Kingdom, but the British Empire as a...
whole, and that any policy agreed upon would require the co-operation of the Dominion and Indian Governments. The desirability of keeping labour in touch with the question was also urged, more particularly with reference to the recent pronouncement of the Trades Union Congress at Blackpool in favour of Free Trade. It was pointed out, however, that the question of the Economic Offensive is not directly connected with that of our future fiscal policy, and, indeed, that, in so far as we use our powers of economic control for the purposes of co-operation with our Allies or bargaining with the enemy, we to that extent limit our absolute freedom in the matter of a restrictive economic policy.

Lord R. Cecil expressed the hope that the deliberations of the Committee should not preclude the active continuance of the Economic Offensive on existing lines. He drew attention to such specific proposals as that put forward by M. Clémentel, Mr. Montagu, and others, for threatening to increase the severity of our post-war measures in proportion to the further continuance of the War by Germany; the Statutory Black List; the Board of Trade proposal for something in the nature of a Metal Bank to counteract the great German combinations for dealing in metals; and the financial blockade.

The War Cabinet decided—

To appoint a Committee which, without prejudice to the effective continuance of the existing Economic Offensive, should consider the whole question, with a view to their recommendations being utilised as the basis of further consultations with the French and United States Governments. The Committee to consist of—

Sir Edward Carson, Chairman.
Mr. Barnes.
The Secretary of State for the Colonies.
The President of the Board of Trade.
The Minister of Blockade.
The Minister of Reconstruction.
Mr. Stanley Baldwin, Joint Financial Secretary to the Treasury.
Captain Amery, Secretary.

The War Cabinet decided that—

An announcement with regard to the appointment of this Committee, and to our consultation with our Allies, should be postponed until the Board of Trade had dealt with M. Clémentel’s proposal.

The War Cabinet further decided, with reference to the proposals contained in the Board of Trade memorandum (Paper G.T.-158), that—

The dye industry is to be regarded as a war industry for all purposes.

9. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on the subject of Air Raids and Bombing of Germany (Paper G.T.-2231). Attention was drawn to the following passage in paragraph 4:—

"Though we have been enabled to give Sir Douglas Haig sufficient machines to maintain a certain superiority in the air, he has not yet, by any means, received what he has asked for and what he ought to have. In June 1916 he asked for 53 squadrons to be completed by the spring of 1917. He is still
In November 1916 he asked for 20 more fighting squadrons and 10 more bombing squadrons. None of those he had yet received. The necessity for pressing forward the output of aircraft, so as to meet these requirements, was several times brought to the notice of the War Cabinet some months ago—e.g., see proceedings of the 15th December, 5th March, 18th April, 8th May, and 14th June. As to the other theatres of war—Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Salonica—are each one squadron, and Lord French two squadrons, short of present requirements."

The Prime Minister pointed out that this seemed to imply some reflection either on the War Cabinet, the Air Board, the Ministry of Munitions or some other Department. He produced figures to show that the Air Board, since it had come into existence, had produced twice as many aeroplanes in nine months as the War Office had produced in the previous year, and that by the end of the present year the Air Board would have supplied three times the number that the War Office had produced in 1915.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that his memorandum was not intended to reflect on the Air Board or any other Government Department, but to set forth certain admitted facts and to assist in stimulating the output of aircraft, at the expense of some other service if necessary. Aircraft were, in his opinion, probably in the same position as other war material—for instance, we had not as many guns as we should like.

General Robertson said that he felt it to be his duty, when the War Cabinet were considering the policy of raids on German towns, to draw their attention to the fact—of which they did not appear to be aware—that our Field Marshal in France was short of machines.

With reference to the statement that Sir Douglas Haig is 1½ squadrons short of the 53 he had asked for 18 months ago, Lord Cowdray pointed out that, although the fact was correct, this did not represent the whole case. Obsolescent types had been discarded and more up-to-date machines substituted, and this fact, together with the absorption of a large proportion of new machines for training purposes, had prevented Field Marshal Haig's demands being fully met.

General Henderson explained that the demands for home defence, Egypt, and Mesopotamia had also retarded the completion of the 53 squadrons. In regard to the statement that none of the 20 additional fighting squadrons and 10 bombing squadrons had been supplied, General Henderson explained that it was impossible to provide large quantities of additional material in less than a year. All Sir Douglas Haig's demands could have been met had it not been for the additional requirements both for the Expeditionary Force in France and for the other theatres mentioned above. Moreover, these additional requirements had been notified just at the time when the Air Board had the difficult task of deciding on the merits of three alternative powerful engines. Large quantities, however, of new aircraft of the latest type would be forthcoming during the winter.

In reply to an enquiry as to why, having regard to the largely increased output of machines this year, it had not been possible to meet the additional demands, Sir William Weir explained that a considerable part of the present year's output had been devoted to the replacement of obsolete material.

On the general question of the desirability of conducting raids on German towns, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff recapitulated the main objections to carrying out such a policy, at any rate at the present time, viz., the fact that our air forces at the front were engaged in a daily and desperate struggle to obtain air supremacy on the Western front; that any withdrawal of machines for the purpose of raids must endanger that supremacy; and that a
very strong justification was necessary for a policy of raids, so long as the season was favourable for Sir Douglas Haig's operations in Flanders. In this connection Lord Cowdray pointed out that, on the intervention of the War Cabinet, the Air Board had recently had an unexpected windfall owing to the retention in this country of fifty machines which had been promised to Russia; these machines, he suggested, could be utilised for long-distance raids without robbing the Expeditionary Force.

The Minister of Munitions stated that, so far as the future was concerned, he did not think the difficulty would be machines. It was, of course, possible that his Ministry might not be able to realise the full programme, but he anticipated that the output of aircraft, over and above the number required to replace wastage, would, by the middle of next year, give an aggregate of a considerable number of squadrons which could be allotted for long-distance offensives.

General Henderson pointed out that in winter the rate of wastage of machines was less than in summer months, but that the training of pilots in the winter season could not be completed as quickly as at other times of the year. In regard to the latter problem, however, efforts were being made to solve it by the establishment of aerodromes for training purposes in countries where the winter climate was more suitable.

Propaganda in Aerial Matters.

10. The Secretary of State for War informed the War Cabinet that he had received three communications from Lord Northcliffe stating that the extent to which the French and Italians were advertising the exploits of their airmen, and their respective aerial activities generally, was seriously impairing our own prestige in this respect in the United States, and was creating a false and unfortunate impression. Lord Derby stated that he proposed to take suitable steps to remedy this.

Inter-Ally Council.

11. Lord Curzon referred to the decisions of the War Cabinet at their meeting held on the 25th September, 1917 (War Cabinet 239, Minute 12), when it was agreed, *inter alia*, that the general scheme contained in his memorandum (Paper G.T.-2065) should be adopted, that the reply from the American Government in regard to the Chairman of the Inter-Ally Council should be awaited before any further action was taken, and that he should see Mr. Bonar Law in regard to the services of Mr. Austen Chamberlain. Lord Curzon reminded the War Cabinet that he had recommended that the three British representatives on the Council should be General Smuts (whose consent to serve had already been obtained), Lord Buckmaster, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the last named to act as Chairman of the British Priority Committee on the Council, and to be our chief representative.

Lord Curzon stated that the United States Government had now intimated their willingness to appoint a Chairman, and it only remained for the War Cabinet to select the other two British representatives.

After some discussion, in the course of which the names of various prominent members of the Liberal party were mentioned as possible alternatives to Lord Buckmaster, the War Cabinet decided that—

Lord Curzon's recommendations in regard to the British personnel on the Inter-Ally Council should be approved, Lord Curzon undertaking to draft for the Prime Minister letters to Lord Buckmaster and Mr. Austen Chamberlain respectively, inviting them to serve on the Council.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W., October 9, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 243.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, October 12, 1917, at 11.30 a.m.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minute 1).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


The Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minute 12).

Mr. F. G. Kellaway, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 12).

The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minute 12).

Sir D. J. Shackleton, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour (for Minute 12).

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.


Admiral Sir J. E. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff.

Sir Alan G. Anderson, K.B.E., Controller, Admiralty (for Minute 12).

The Right Hon. Sir J. Maclay, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minute 10).

Sir Lynden Macassey, K.C., K.B.E., Admiralty Shipyard Labour Department (for Minute 12).

Sir A. C. Geddes, K.C.B., Minister of National Service (for Minute 12).

Mr. E. A. Sandford Fawcett, Secretary, Ministry of National Service (for Minute 12).

Mr. H. B. Butler, Ministry of Labour (for Minute 12).


Major J. W. Hills, M.P. (for Minute 12).


Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Proposed Purchase of Italian Oranges.

1. The Minister of Blockade said that last year it had been ascertained that large quantities of oranges had gone from Italy to Germany, through Switzerland. The result of this had been bad from the blockade point of view, not only directly but also indirectly, inasmuch as it had been difficult to prevent oranges going to Germany from Spain and apples from America. In order to prevent this traffic with the enemy, last year we purchased half the Italian orange crop at a loss of about 500,000L. This year the same question had arisen, and the Treasury had said that it would be impossible to make a similar purchase. The Treasury had, however, agreed to pay 1,000,000L provided that the ordinary credits to Italy were diminished by the same amount, in order to prevent injury to exchange. Lord Robert Cecil pointed out that, if we refused to purchase the oranges, the orange trade with Germany would be resumed, and the effect on the Italian people would be serious. Moreover, it was feared that the Italian Minister of Finance would jump at the excuse to resume not only the orange trade but also the silk trade with Germany. Lord Robert Cecil urged that, though it might have been arguable whether it was wise to stop the trade in the first instance, it would create the worst possible impression if we allowed that trade to be resumed. The French Blockade Minister was lukewarm in the matter, but Lord Robert Cecil had pointed out the seriousness of the position to M. Painlevé on the previous day, and M. Painlevé had agreed that it would be fatal to allow the orange trade with Germany to be reopened.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that, unless the French would pay half the cost of the undertaking, he could not sanction the expenditure on the part of our Treasury. His objection was that, in advancing the money for the oranges, we were not making a loan but a present to Italy of about 1,200,000L. It must be remembered that we were being asked to subsidise an Italian industry while numerous industries in our country are being ruined. His main ground for refusal, in the event of the French not joining us, was on account of the injury to exchange.

Lord Robert Cecil said that he understood that the French would pay half, but he undertook to see the French Ministers again on the subject.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) Provided the French would pay half the cost of the undertaking, the Treasury should advance the sums required for the purpose of purchasing the oranges, in order to prevent the orange trade between Italy and Germany being resumed.

(b.) The Minister of Blockade should see the French Ministers in London on the subject.

(c.) If the Minister of Blockade was unable to obtain a satisfactory reply from the French Ministers he should again bring the matter to the War Cabinet.

The Western Front.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that our troops were attacking on a front of 5 or 6 miles, with Passchendaele as objective, and that satisfactory progress was reported.

Question of extending British Lines.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that he had received two visits from General Foch in regard to our taking over more of the line from the French. At the first interview, General Foch had said that he did not wish to press the matter until the present offensive was over, but at the second interview he had said that he wished us to extend our line to Cerny—a length of about 60 miles—as the French had to send some 100,000 men to agriculture. On this part of the French line there were some
300,000 men, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had not been able to get a satisfactory explanation as to the disposal of the remaining 200,000. At present, the French have 43 Divisions in reserve, and yet General Pétain, who is not fighting, refuses to release men for agriculture unless we take over more line. At present we are holding more German Divisions in proportion than the French are. 62 British Divisions are holding 57 German Divisions, of which 3 are Landwehr or Landsturm, while 108 French Divisions are holding 91 German Divisions, of which 16 are Landwehr or Landsturm. Therefore, omitting Landwehr or Landsturm, the hold British 1 to 87, and the French 1 to 69. The French Government give every man ten days' leave every four months.

Russia:
Reduction of Divisions.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that he had received information that the Russians were going to disband 59 third line divisions, which would reduce their total number of divisions from 229 to 170.

Greek Mobilisation.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that a message had been received from the French Mission at Athens to the effect that the Greek mobilisation cannot be expected before next April unless immediate steps are taken to get the military railways going again.

German Naval Mutiny.

6. The First Lord said that there had been reports for some time that the state of affairs in German ships had been bad. The Admiralty's view was that the trouble had been serious. The attention of the War Cabinet was also drawn to a telegram from Christiania of the 10th October, in which it was reported from a reliable source that certain German sailors had been shot for refusing to sail in submarines. Sir Edward Carson asked what steps should be taken in the matter with a view to propaganda work. The War Cabinet decided that—

The reports should be published in our newspapers, but without any official authority as far as the Government were concerned. Sir Edward Carson to be responsible for initiating action.

Publication of Gaza Despatch.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 217, Minute 18, the attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to the fact that the "Times" had again criticised the holding up of Sir A. Murray's despatch. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that he hoped the despatch would not be published until after General Allenby's offensive. He felt inclined to write to Mr. Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of the "Times," telling him that the despatch had been held up for this reason. The War Cabinet authorised—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to write privately to Mr. Dawson in this sense.

Submarine Losses.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that the armed merchant cruiser "Champagne" had been torpedoed and sunk on the 9th October off the east coast of Ireland. The casualties amounted to about four officers and fifty men.
The "Bostonian," another armed merchant cruiser, had been torpedoed and sunk in the Channel while escorting a convoy. In view of these two losses, and also the case of H.M.S. "Drake," the First Sea Lord said that it appeared likely that the enemy submarines were making a dead set at the escort of convoys.

The sloop "Begonia," reported missing four days ago, had not been heard of since, and it was probable that she had been torpedoed with a loss of about 100 lives.

Transport of Portuguese Troops.

With reference to War Cabinet 162, Minute 6, the War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty in regard to the continued failure of the Portuguese to make use of the transports placed at their disposal (Paper G.T.-2069). In this memorandum the First Lord pointed out that two transports, the "Bellerophon" and "Inventor," had been allocated to the service in question. Both vessels were valuable cargo carriers, but neither of them was being adequately employed.

The First Lord pointed out that some time had elapsed since the date of his memorandum, namely, the 18th September, and in the meantime he had withdrawn the two vessels from the Portuguese service.

The War Cabinet approved of this action on the part of the First Lord.

Coal for Italy.

With reference to War Cabinet 243, Minute 17, the War Cabinet resumed their discussion on the memorandum by the Ministry of Shipping respecting the supply of coal for Italy (Paper G.T.-2160). With regard to the allocation of eleven Italian destroyers for the purpose of escort in the Mediterranean, the First Sea Lord pointed out that it would be unwise to press the Italian Government further for these destroyers at the moment, in view of the fact that they are now required in the Adriatic for screening monitors.

In the memorandum by the Ministry of Shipping it was proposed to suggest to the Italians that they should make an appeal to America, endorsed by us. To save tonnage, the proposal should be on the basis of America sending what ships she can on a triangular voyage, America–United Kingdom, United Kingdom–Italy, and then out with pyrites to the United States of America, Great Britain putting in an extra collier to Italy for every cargo delivered in the United Kingdom under the arrangement, so that each round voyage by an American ship would mean two cargoes to Italy and one to the United States of America.

The War Cabinet decided that—

It should be suggested to the Italians that they should make an appeal to America for tonnage, as indicated above.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Shipping Controller to confer with the representatives of the Italian Government with a view to agreeing the form of the communications to America.

Inventions.

Attention was drawn to the lack of co-ordination between the various Departments and Committees dealing with inventions, and to criticisms that had been received regarding one or other of these Committees. The latter seemed to work in watertight compartments, and it was thought that more use might be made of Allied experience.

Lord Curzon reported that, when at the Air Board, he had had
the assistance of Lord Sydenham, with a view to producing a
scheme of co-ordination, but that this came to nothing.

The Secretary reported that he had a number of papers dealing
with this subject, compiled by Colonel Swinton.

The War Cabinet requested—

Lord Curzon to look into the question again and to report the
result of his investigations and any recommendations he
desired to make to the Cabinet.

12. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by

Mr. Barnes (Paper G.T.-2245) and a Report to the Controller of the
Admiralty by Sir Lynden Macassey on the effect of the proposed
Order by the Minister of Munitions, under Section 1 of the Munitions
of War Act, 1917, for wages advances to certain time-paid skilled
men (Paper G.T.-2255).

Mr. Churchill said that one of the great industrial anomalies of
the war was that higher wages were being earned by semi-skilled
men on repetition work as compared with the wages earned by
skilled time-workers, some of whom had been the teachers of the
semi-skilled. On the 15th August, just before Parliament rose, he
had indicated that an attempt would be made to remedy this
anomaly. The subject is immediately important, because the abolition
of leaving certificates from Monday next may lead to the degradation
of labour through the movement downwards of skilled men into the
ranks of the semi-skilled. On the 21st August he had appointed a
Committee, under the Chairmanship of Major J. W. Hills, M.P., to
draw up a scheme of remuneration which would help to remedy the
inequality which had arisen. His hope had been that the Committee
would be able to recommend a lump sum grant in relation to output.
The majority of the Committee, however, including the chairman
and all the official members, had come to the conclusion that this
was not possible, on the grounds that additional pay to the skilled
time-worker was overdue, and that the Trade Unions would resent
such overdue payment being used as a lever to introduce a wider
adoption of payment by result. The extension of payment by result
was highly controversial, and the Trade Unions would certainly be
offended if an attempt were made to spread it by indirect means.
He (Mr. Churchill) accepted the recommendation of the majority of
the Committee. The employers' representatives on the Committee
wished to restrict the grant of bonuses to a very limited class of
special skilled men, and to exclude any man who had been given
and had refused an opportunity of working on a system of payment
by result. Such a decision would certainly have caused offence.
He had therefore decided to accept in principle the proposal to grant
a bonus of 15 per cent. on earnings of certain scheduled workers,
and the Treasury had assented to the expenditure involved, namely,
about £8,000,000 per annum. He had discarded an alternative
suggestion to embrace a larger class of workers and make the
advance 12½ per cent. instead of 15 per cent.

Sir Lynden Macassey said that in January last the War Cabinet
had decided that the system of payment by result should be extended
through the engineering and shipbuilding yards, and a great deal
had been done in this direction by the Admiralty. There had,
however, been all along a counter-movement in favour of abandoning
payment by results, and introducing in its place a time-rate, e.g.,
time and a half, or time and three-quarters, which would bring
up earnings roughly to the level of piece-work earnings. There
was a strong movement of this kind among the boilermakers, for
example. To grant the bonus to skilled men, as recommended by
the Ministry of Munitions, would make it almost impossible to carry
on the agitation in favour of payment by result. The present piece­
work rates are fixed on the basis of the time-rates. To grant an
empirical bonus of 15 per cent. would most certainly lead the
semi-skilled men to ask for a revision of their rates. It was true
that in certain shops the men who made tools were earning less
than the men who used them, and that trainers were earning less
than the persons taught; therefore he would favour giving a bonus
on output to the instructors and providers of tools. His views were
shared by the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation and by trade
unionists on the staff of the Shipyard Labour Department. The
proposal of the Ministry of Munitions for the first time introduced
two new principles:—

(a.) It provided for a percentage increase on a purely arbitrary
basis which could not be tested on any economic
ground.

(b.) It virtually admitted that the day-rates of men not working
at piece-work speed should approximately be the same
as those now working at piece-work.

Sir David Shackleton said that any percentage increase, such
as was now proposed, interfered with the relative position of time­
workers and piece-workers, and raised pre-War controversies.
Acting upon the Treasury agreement of 1915, the practice had
been not to allow these questions to go before the Committee on
Production. If the War Cabinet approved the publication
of the proposed Order, it would henceforward be impossible
for the Ministry of Labour to resist appeals involving pre-War
controversies. The advance of 15 per cent, will disturb the
difference of roughly 33 per cent, which usually separated the
earnings of the piece-workers and the time-workers. Disturb the
relative positions, and the piece-worker will immediately ask that it
be restored, and the Government will no longer be able to reply
that these discrepancies have always existed. Further, there are
cases where both skilled and semi-skilled are working on piece­
work and where the latter are earning more than the former, owing
to the nature of the work. If it be admitted that the time-worker
is entitled to 15 per cent it will not be possible to resist the demand
to abolish or reduce the differences between the low-paid and
high-paid piece-workers. He admitted that, a pledge having been
given and the men informed, the Government had no alternative
but to proceed with the recommendations of Mr. Churchill, but he
wished to point out the far-reaching wage consequences of the
decision, and the serious inroads on the country's finances which
would inevitably follow.

Sir Auckland Geddes said that there was observable a tendency
among the skilled class of instructors and others to regard them­selves as the aristocracy of the engineering trade, and to split off
after the manner of a profession. From the recruiting standpoint
this tendency to keep separate from the rank and file was to be
welcomed, and if it were encouraged would be helpful.

Major Hills supported the conclusions of the Committee over
which he had presided. He was certain that grave discontent would
follow any attempt to enforce payment by results from above. The
piece-worker had moved far ahead of the time-worker, and the latter
had a real grievance calling for remedy. A serious effort had been
made by the Committee to make the proposed advance conditional,
but such strong historical and sentimental forces were encountered
that the attempt had been given up.

Sir George Askwith endorsed the views set forth by Sir David
Shackleton. All piece-workers would wish to retain the normal
relative distance between themselves and the time-workers. The
danger of a migration of men from one workshop to another had
been considerably discounted during the last two years by the
arrangements which employers had already been forced to make.
The total ultimate cost to the State of the abandonment of the
principles now observed by the Committee on Production might
run into hundreds of millions of pounds.
Mr. Churchill said that those who objected to his policy had no alternative to offer which could be shown to be administratively practicable. There are great practical difficulties to the general introduction of a premium bonus system, or a system of bonus on output. A good system cannot be laid down by a central proclamation applicable to all shops, owing to the great variety of their arrangements. He wished to point out, with reference to the discussion generally, that he was not bound to appoint a Committee to consider the subject. It was within his statutory powers to grant or withhold the increase. He appointed the Committee because he wished the ground to be fully explored. The Departments which that day had objected to the recommendations of the Committee had been represented on the Committee, and he was surprised to find opposition at this stage.

Sir David Shackleton said that the representative of the Ministry of Labour had withdrawn after attending one meeting. The Ministry of Labour thought the Terms of Reference of the Committee had not been adhered to by the Committee, for the terms laid down that due regard was to be had to the public interest both in the matter of expense and the increased output of munitions of war.

Sir Alan Anderson said he would ascertain the circumstances in which the representative of the Admiralty had signed the Committee's report.

Mr. Barnes thought that the objections which had been advanced were not so much against Mr. Churchill's actual proposal as against wider proposals which had been discussed by the Committee. It was not proposed to help a single man who was likely to be put on piece-work. The rank and file of the engineers were not concerned, but makers of gauges, tool-setters, and makers of plant. The objections put forward did not really lie against the workers embraced in Schedule (C). He agreed that a collective overhead bonus was the right principle, but we had forced the shops up to their maximum production, and, indeed, some to a point which could not be maintained because of the inroads which had been made on the health of women workers. The Government was bound, in his opinion, to give the advance to the men who were intimately connected with the high-wage-earning semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

The War Cabinet were impressed with the difficulty of the situation which had arisen in view of the Parliamentary pledge on the one hand and the constant demands for increases of wages on the other. Strong resentment would be felt in labour circles if the War Cabinet rejected the recommendations of the Committee in favour of those of the employers who had withdrawn from the Committee. Further, the War Cabinet was confronted with considerable diversity of opinion on the part of the Departments concerned, in spite of the prolonged consideration which had been given to the subject by the Committee appointed by the Minister of Munitions.

The War Cabinet referred the question for decision to Lord Milner and Mr. Barnes, sitting with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Munitions, and requested them to meet that afternoon.

The War Cabinet considered a request from the Federation of British Industries that the Prime Minister should receive a deputation which would urge on the Government the importance of denouncing existing commercial treaties.
The War Cabinet decided that—

The deputation should be received after the Economic Offensive Committee had had an opportunity of considering the subject, unless, in the meantime, Sir Edward Carson found it desirable to invite the Federation to make representations direct to the Economic Offensive Committee.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,

October 12, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 249.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, October 15, 1917, at noon.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

Lieutenant-General J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. A. Balfour, C.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., O.B., Secretary of State for War.


Brigadier-General G. S. Clive, D.S.O., Liaison Officer to the French General Headquarters (for Minute 10).


Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.

The Russian Front.

1. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that one brigade of Germans had landed on the island of Oesel, and appeared to be moving east and south. Their object, apparently, was to clear the Gulf of Riga and possibly to prevent the Russians re-laying the mine-fields next spring.

The Italian Front.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that a German Alpine Corps was reported to have arrived in the Tyrol, and a few German artillery and technical troops on the Isonzo Front. These had perhaps been intended to assist the Austrians in repelling General Cadorna's October offensive, which had been expected by the enemy.
Mesopotamia. 3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that a party of Assyrians working with the Russian forces had carried out a successful exploit against the Turks on the Persian frontier to the south of Lake Urmia. Thirty Turks had been killed, and a number of Arab prisoners released.

Saloniea. 4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that General Milne had reported a successful raid by Scottish troops on the Doiran Front, resulting in the capture of 143 enemy prisoners and three machine guns.

Submarines. 5. The First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that H.M.S. “Parthian” reported having successfully engaged a German submarine 100 miles south of Cape St. Vincent. Portions of the submarine, including a wooden hatch, were found mixed up in the “Parthian’s” propellers, and the “Parthian” had been considerably damaged by contact with the submarine. There seemed to be considerable prospect that the submarine had been accounted for.

Seaplanes. 6. The First Sea Lord reported that on the 9th instant two seaplanes had attacked the Chikaldare Bridge, five miles east of Missis, on the Baghdad Railway. Owing to the open construction of the bridge, however, it was feared that little damage had been effected. Both machines were damaged by enemy fire, but had returned. On the following day a seaplane started for Adana, but did not return.

Punitive Expedition against Dubab. 7. The First Sea Lord reported that a punitive expedition had been carried out against Dubab, on the Yemen coast, on the 10th instant. H.M.S. “Clio” and her boats had been recently fired at in this place.

Aerial Activity in the Adriatic. 8. The First Sea Lord stated that the naval attaché at Rome reports that in an attack on Cattaro by fourteen Italian Caproni machines, on the 4th instant, the benzine store was set on fire, and bombs had been dropped on submarines, torpedo-boats, and seaplanes, with good effect.

Air Offensive. 9. The First Sea Lord reported that on the 11th instant a squadron of our naval aircraft from Dunkirk carried out bombing raids upon the Sparappelhoek aerodrome. All our machines returned safely.

The French Army and American Co-operation. 10. Brigadier-General Clive stated that the moral of the French Army had improved, and that discipline was now good, though the men did not possess the same keen offensive spirit as the British troops. General Pétain appeared to rely upon the co-operation of American troops for any offensive next year, but shared the doubt held as to whether a sufficiently large number of fully-trained and equipped American troops would be ready.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said that, as far as he could gather, American preparations were being effected very slowly, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he was unaware whether the Americans had yet decided upon the pattern of their guns.
The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should send a telegram to Colonel House asking him, before his forthcoming visit, to obtain full information on certain questions relating to Military, Naval, and other preparations.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and First Sea Lord undertook to send to Mr. Balfour a list of points on which military and naval information was required.

Question of dropping Reprisal Notices when bombing German Towns.

11. The War Cabinet decided that—

For the present, at any rate, no notices should be dropped by aeroplanes undertaking bombing raids upon German towns stating that such raids were being carried out as reprisals for bombing raids upon London.

Man-Power and Military Resources.

12. The War Cabinet decided—

To appoint the following Committee:

Mr. Balfour (Chairman),
General Smuts,
Lord Derby, and
Sir Eric Geddes on questions of material,
to draw up for the War Cabinet a balance-sheet dealing with man-power, including recruiting prospects and wastage, as well as material, such as guns and aircraft, in each Allied and enemy country, such report to embrace statistics available for the year 1917, together with estimated forecasts for 1918. The Committee should consult the Director of National Service on questions affecting his Department.

Ireland: General Conditions.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 245, Minute 16, the Chief Secretary for Ireland reported that the death, in Mountjoy prison, of Thomas Ashe had been a very great misfortune, having created the greatest possible stir throughout the country. The Nationalist Party had seized it, as an opportunity to enable them to get back on to the platform, and had exploited to the utmost what was undoubtedly a tragic occurrence. When the Chief Secretary arrived in Dublin, he found that the body of Thomas Ashe was lying in state in the City Hall, where thousands of the populace were visiting the remains. He was at once confronted with a problem as to what attitude the Government should adopt towards Ashe’s funeral. He consulted the General Officer Commanding and the Commissioner of Police, and all agreed that it would have been quite impossible for the Executive to have interfered with any popular demonstration connected with the funeral without provoking the bitterest antagonism and serious disorder. About 15,000 persons followed the funeral, which was carried out in an impressive and orderly manner. Two events in connection with the funeral had given rise to criticism, such criticism being directed against the Chief Secretary, notably by Dr. Mahaffy and Lord Midleton. These two events were (1) the wearing of Sinn Fein uniform by some of the persons attending the procession, and (2) the use of arms for the purpose of firing a military salute over the grave. These arms had been smuggled into the cemetery, probably in the hearse, and in spite of the vigilance of the police, had escaped capture. The number of arms utilised was extremely small. It was clear that the Nationalist Party were going to make the death of Thomas Ashe an...
Facilities for Allotments in Ireland.

11. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Chief Secretary for Ireland (Paper G.T.-2251). Mr. Duke explained that, as a result of powers taken under the Defence of the Realm Act, a great increase in the number of allotments in the neighbourhood of Irish towns had been effected. The holders of these allotments represented the most industrious class of the urban population. They had paid for small allotments, mostly about one-eighth of an acre, rents up to £1 or £1. per acre, and, by breaking up pasture or unfilled land, had achieved very remarkable results which were proving of great benefit to the inhabitants. Representations had been made to him that these allotment-holders were liable to be turned out at the end of the war, and they desired greater security of tenure.

Mr. Barnes stated that the allotment-holders in Great Britain were in a somewhat similar position, and that the whole question deserved serious consideration.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Chief Secretary for Ireland should draft, for the consideration of the War Cabinet, a Bill giving effect to his proposals.

The War Cabinet further decided that—

The Home Secretary should consider the question from the point of view of the United Kingdom, and the Secretary for Scotland in regard to Scotland.

15. In view of the public interest evinced in the possible formation of an Air Ministry and aerial questions generally, and in view also of the fact that the Prime Minister had been given notice of a question to be raised in Parliament on its reassembling the following day asking for information regarding the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to these questions, the War Cabinet invited General Smuts to make a statement reviewing the progress which had been made by his Committee (War Cabinet 246, Minute 21). The War Cabinet were reminded, in this connection, that at their meeting held on the 24th August, 1917, they had decided—

(a.) To accept in principle the recommendations made in the second Report of the Prime Minister's Committee on Air Organisation as summarised in paragraph 10 of the Report.
(b.) To appoint a Committee, to act at once, to investigate and report on the arrangements necessary for the amalgamation of the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps and the relationship between it and the Admiralty and the War Office, and the legal constitution and discipline of the new unified Air Service, and prepare the necessary draft legislation and regulations for submission to Parliament at the earliest possible date.

General Smuts reported that his Committee had already covered a good deal of ground. A draft Bill had been prepared, in consultation with the Law Officers of the Crown, giving powers to constitute a new Air Service. The Committee had also in preparation a new Discipline Act, Pay Warrant and other Regulations for the new service. The Committee had also drawn up a draft Order in Council prescribing the organisation of an Air Council whose functions in the new Ministry corresponded to those performed by the Board of Admiralty and Army Council respectively. General Smuts said that he thought that the Order in Council would be sufficient for the present for the purpose in hand, and he did not consider that it would be possible or desirable to promulgate a statutory declaration defining the exact powers of the new Ministry. A great number of details remained to be worked out, and this would take a considerable time. In his view it was advisable at the present juncture merely to inform Parliament that a Bill was in preparation which would give wider powers to the Ministry, although those powers might not be exercised to the full until a considerable period of time had elapsed.

The Secretary of State for War said that he had not yet seen the draft Bill, and he submitted that such a Bill could not be introduced until its provisions had been carefully examined by the Board of Admiralty and Army Council, and until it had been definitely considered whether the new Air Force could offer life-service to those who joined it.

Lord Cowdray stated that the Bill was ready for a preliminary circulation, and that he thought that in a short time a draft of the new Air Regulations, corresponding to the Regulations for the Army and the Navy, would be ready for consideration by the War Departments. The draft of the new Pay and Training, &c., Regulations had already been circulated to those Departments for their comments and suggestions.

Lord Curzon, speaking as former President of the Air Board, said that he was in general agreement with General Smuts. He thought that a statement should be made in Parliament to the effect that a Bill was in course of preparation which would—

(a.) Constitute an Air Ministry.
(b.) Give power to that Ministry from time to time to amalgamate the two existing Air Services.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs thought that there were two questions before the War Cabinet:—

(1.) The institution of an Air Ministry, which apparently General Smuts did not think could be introduced during the present War;
(2.) The immediate question of how best to co-ordinate the Air Services during the War.

General Smuts said that if the War Cabinet agreed with him that it might not be possible to introduce the Air Ministry in the course of the War, he thought that some interim arrangement was necessary for the co-ordination of the air policy. He suggested that a small Cabinet Committee should be set up which should be
responsible for the general direction of our air policy. The Air Board, so far, had never dealt with the wider questions of policy, but had remained a supply department.

Lord Cowdray stated that the Air Board had no policy at present beyond the supply of the needs of the Army and Navy. Some months back his Board had foreseen that there might be a surplus of aircraft, which would involve the Board being granted more extended powers, and they had therefore asked for a General Staff to advise as to the use to be made of the surplus material. He suggested that it was for the War Cabinet to consider whether the material now being supplied was being used to the best advantage. To-day Sir Douglas Haig had 1,500 machines, besides the reserve of machines on the Western Front. The Admiralty also had 1,500 naval machines, with 500 seaplanes.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said he agreed with Lord Derby that a Bill could not be introduced until it had been carefully examined in its draft form by his Department, as well as by the War Office. With regard to the surplus machines referred to by Lord Cowdray, Sir William Weir had placed it on record that if the present Air Programme was to be fully completed, aircraft would have to be granted absolute priority as regards labour and material.

The War Cabinet agreed that only the War Cabinet, or a member of the Cabinet acting on their behalf, were competent to decide as regards air policy as between the Admiralty and the War Office.

After some discussion the War Cabinet—

(a.) Decided that a reply should be given to Mr. Kennedy Jones’ question to the Prime Minister (Paper G.T.-2283) to the effect that a Bill was in preparation, and would, if it was hoped, be shortly introduced, designed to co-ordinate the two air services and provide for the eventual setting up of an Air Ministry, and that in the meantime General Smuts will continue, on behalf of the Cabinet, to supervise the Air Services.

(b.) Approved General Smuts’ suggestion that a Committee should be appointed, to assemble at once, composed as under, to advise the War Cabinet on all questions relating to air policy—

General Smuts (in the Chair),
The First Lord of the Admiralty,
The Secretary of State for War,
The President of the Air Board.

The Secretary to be appointed by the chairman.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 15, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 250.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, October 16, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair) (for Minutes 1 to 11).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair for Minutes 12 to 14).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Sir E. Wyndham Smith, Chairman, Commission internationale de Ravitaillement (for Minute 12).


The Right Hon. W. H. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. E. S. Montague, M.P., Secretary of State for India (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. Sir G. Cave, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 3).

The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minutes 10 to 14).


Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.

Captain C. Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain L. S. Amery, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. T. Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Mesopotamia:

1. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported the receipt of a satisfactory message from General Maude to the effect that he had been closely watching the formation of enemy supply depots, but had not found any of importance. Two captured Turkish officers had stated that the main depots were at Jerablus.
At Hit there was only a small reserve for the late Turkish force at Ramadi. In general there appeared to be no large supply arrangements yet made. General Maudie further reported that desertion was still rife in the Turkish ranks, and many deserters gave shortage of rations as a pretext for desertion, especially on the Tigris Front.

The 1917 harvest was distinctly bare in the Mosul area, and local supplies on the Euphrates above Hit and Mosul were scanty.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 246, Minute 15, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that there was a shortage of 40 anti-aircraft guns for the defence of London. The Navy were supplying 16 guns, which would shortly be in position, and a further 22 were going to be supplied from the Fleet. These 22, however, were being used to replace worn-out guns, and therefore there would remain a deficit of 24.

Attention was called to telegram No. 14 from Mr. Vicars, at Lyons, to the effect that aerial enterprise on a large scale against England was contemplated by the enemy at an early date.

The First Lord of the Admiralty pointed out that the Navy, who had been asked to supply 40 guns, had already supplied the 38 referred to above, as well as 4 for Chatham. It therefore appeared that what was required from the Admiralty was not 40, but 60.

The War Cabinet asked—

The First Lord of the Admiralty to go into the question again and see if any more guns could be spared by the Navy for the defence of London.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 245, Minute 13, the War Cabinet had before them the Report of the Committee on Provision of Cover in London, of which Sir George Cave was Chairman (Appendix).

The War Cabinet agreed with the view of the Committee that the shelter already provided, as shown by the statement annexed to the Report, did not provide sufficiently for the protection of the working classes in the London area. The provision of shelter in the West End, on the other hand, appeared to be ample. It was most essential to avoid any suggestion that the West End was amply protected while the working-class districts, such as Leyton and Leytonstone, were not. It was generally agreed that existing arrangements for protection should be developed to the utmost extent, such as the utilisation of unoccupied houses, which could be taken over, strengthened, if necessary, and marked with a sign "Air-Raid Shelter."

Sir George Cave said that an Advisory Board of six surveyors was about to be appointed, who would advise the Commissioner as to the sufficiency of the shelter provided in the London District and as to the measures to be taken for improving the present arrangements. It was suggested that the Board should include some officers of the Royal Engineers with experience of bomb-proof shelters at the front, and of the depth required for adequate subterranean cover.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) Recommendations (1) and (2) of the Report of Sir George Cave's Committee should be adopted, viz.:

(1.) That the Commissioner of Police do proceed with his arrangements for providing shelter.

(2.) That a Regulation be made under the Defence of the Realm Acts empowering the competent Authority to require any premises to be made available as shelter in case of raids, and suitable notices to be exhibited.
4. A suggestion was made that a message of congratulation should be sent, on behalf of the War Cabinet, to Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig on his continuous, persistent, and dogged advance of 4½ miles in conditions of great difficulty.

Some discussion took place as to the date on which the message should be sent—whether immediately or after Sir Douglas Haig's next successful advance.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A message of congratulation should be sent immediately, and the Secretary of State for War was asked to draft a telegram on the subject, the draft to be shown to the Prime Minister.

5. The War Cabinet decided in principle to ask both Houses of Parliament to pass a Vote of Thanks to the men of the Navy, the Army, and the Mercantile Marine.

Some discussion took place as to the date on which the Vote of Thanks should be moved—e.g., on the anniversary of the first battle of Ypres; simultaneously with a similar vote in the French Chamber on the 1st November; on the date on which the decoration for those who landed in France in the early part of the war will be issued, viz., the 23rd November; or on the same day as the Vote of Credit.

No decision was taken as to the date, but the Prime Minister undertook to draft the terms of the motion after enquiry into the precedents.

6. The First Sea Lord reported that the armed boarding steamer "City of Belfast" had been in action with an enemy submarine while on patrol off Cape de Sata, at 5 A.M. on the 15th October. The "City of Belfast" had three killed and two wounded by gunfire, and the ship was holed near the water line. Oil and wreckage was observed in the vicinity of the action, and it was considered that the submarine was probably sunk or badly damaged. The First Sea Lord reported that on the 14th October a seaplane passed over a submarine, with periscope awash, in the act of submerging, about 15 miles south-west of the Longships. The seaplane dropped four 100-lb. bombs; one fell 20 yards on the starboard side of the periscope, one 5 yards to port and forward, and one 15 yards off the port bow.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that a bombing raid was carried out on the night of the 14th-15th October on Bruges Docks. Four machines dropped 40—112 and 8—250 lb. bombs in the vicinity of the East and West Bassins and Bassin du Commerce. All bombs were seen to explode. Results could not be seen owing to intense searchlights and anti-aircraft activity.

During the afternoon of the 15th October a bombing raid was carried out on Varssenaere Aerodrome. 14—65, 2—50, 60—16, and
1-10 lb. bombs were dropped. Some of the sheds on the east side of aerodrome are reported to have been hit. 7—16 lb. bombs were also dropped on Honitave Aerodrome.

Japanese Military Co-operation.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 242, Minute 13, Mr. Balfour said that, as arranged on the 11th October, he and Lord Curzon and General Smuts had discussed the question of Japanese co-operation with M. Painlevé and M. Franklin-Bouillon. This committee had come to the following main conclusions:

1. That Japanese co-operation on the French front would be invaluable, but this was practically precluded by the difficulty of finding the necessary shipping.

2. The same difficulties existed to a very slightly less extent in the case of the Salonica front, which was, moreover, unlikely to offer an opportunity for such striking or far-reaching action as would make it likely that the Japanese would care to send their troops there.

3. The shipping difficulty was much less serious with regard to the Palestine front, but it was generally felt that the effect of the reconquest of Palestine, and more particularly of Jerusalem, would be marred by its being carried out by Japanese troops.

4. Mesopotamia.—This was the most convenient front for the employment of a Japanese force, if it should become evident that the Turks and Germans meant to concentrate a very large army. For the present, however, it appeared that our forces were sufficient for the defensive, while an offensive from Baghdad, e.g., towards Aleppo, would be very difficult.

5. From the shipping point of view, the Russian front was the easiest, but in the present confusion in Russia it was not easy to see how a Japanese force could be got through to the front, or supplied there; while on so large a front a relatively small body, say 200,000 men at the most, might very well fail to get placed on the decisive sector. The Japanese were known to be reluctant to go to Russia, and the Committee had in fact not gone into the question.

Beyond these conclusions, the Committee had agreed that a telegram should be sent to the United States asking if they would approve of Japanese military co-operation being invited, and this had been acted on. The question of the effect that Japanese co-operation might have upon the position in India or the Dominions had not been discussed by the Committee, in view of the presence of the French representatives.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies pointed out that, as far as the Dominions were concerned, there could be no difficulty as regards the actual co-operation of the Japanese, but only as regards the quid pro quo they might ask for at the end of the War. He reminded the War Cabinet that the matter had been discussed more than once at the Imperial War Conference, and that, while the Dominion representatives had shown themselves willing to accept the Japanese demands with regard to Shantung and the islands in the Northern Pacific, there was a very general feeling—expressed even more strongly by Sir R. Borden than the other representatives—against any arrangement which would involve Japanese aggrandisement.

The Secretary of State for India explained that, in the view of the India Office, the tendency in Japan to regard herself as the future protector of Asia against Europe was one which was growing, and might be stimulated by Japanese military intervention. He
agreed, however, that if there were urgent military reasons for such intervention, political arguments should not count against them.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff considered that it was most desirable to get military assistance from Japan in so far as shipping conditions made it possible. From that point of view it would be desirable to send them by the Trans-Siberian Railway, if the Americans were able to get it into order by the spring, though it was not absolutely necessary, in that case, for them to be sent to the Russian Western front, as they might co-operate with us on the Caucasian front. As regards Mesopotamia, he at present thought it improbable that we should require their assistance before the autumn of next year. In any case the arrangements for sending an expeditionary force would take some time to make, and he considered that we should at once take up the matter with Japan, and that the question whether the troops should then be used on one of the Russian fronts or in Mesopotamia could be decided later.

It was generally agreed that the shipping question was the chief limiting factor, and that it was necessary to ascertain how much shipping the Japanese could themselves divert from their existing commercial services for the transport of their troops. As regards the claims for compensation they might raise afterwards, they would make these in any case, and would, as far as that went, be in a stronger position to press them, if they kept all their troops in reserve, than if they had made a real effort in the war.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should, on ascertaining from the United States that they had no objection to Japanese assistance, raise the question with the Japanese Ambassador.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 235, Minute 10, the First Lord of the Admiralty, referring to the refusal of the Japanese to sell two battle cruisers to this country, suggested that it might be possible to induce them to send two fully-equipped cruisers to join the Grand Fleet in British waters.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should raise this question with the Japanese Ambassador.

10. The Secretary of State for the Colonies informed the War Cabinet that he had been that morning shown a telegram by the Canadian High Commissioner, Sir G. Perley, in which Sir R. Borden said that, in view of the difficulty of getting Canadian business questions attended to in Washington owing to the number of representatives of His Majesty's Government, he had appointed Mr. Hazen as Canadian High Commissioner in Washington. The Secretary of State for the Colonies pointed out that when Sir R. Borden was over here at the Imperial War Cabinet he more than once insisted that, unless a Canadian representative of some standing were appointed to the British Embassy in Washington, he would be obliged to take some such step as he had now in fact taken.

Mr. Balfour explained that no action had been taken upon Sir R. Borden's suggestion because he was informed, when he was over in Washington, by His Majesty's representatives that the Canadian work was better done by visits from Canadian Ministers, such as Sir G. Foster or Sir T. White, than by the appointment of a special Canadian agent.

It was generally felt by the War Cabinet that it was
unfortunate that a Canadian High Commissioner, even if his functions were purely concerned with commercial and financial matters, should be appointed in Washington without being attached in any way to His Majesty’s Embassy.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies undertook to send a telegram to Sir R. Borden, suggesting, in reference to their previous conversations, that it would avoid possible confusion and strengthen the position of the new Canadian High Commissioner in Washington if he were attached to the British Embassy, it being clearly understood that, with regard to his Canadian business, he should receive his instructions purely from Ottawa.

11. The Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet that he had received a telegram from Lord Northcliffe saying that he wished to come back on a visit, and suggesting that his brother, Lord Rothermere, or Sir F. Black, might take his place during his absence. The War Cabinet generally felt that Sir F. Black was hardly of sufficient calibre to take Lord Northcliffe’s place, and that, although Lord Rothermere might be very well qualified in every respect, the appointment of a brother of Lord Northcliffe might provoke criticism. The matter was left over for further discussion.

12. The War Cabinet had before them a note by M. Painlevé and M. Clémentel handed to the Prime Minister by M. Franklin-Bouillon (Paper G.T.-2294), dealing with the critical position of food supplies in France for the civil and military population, and the necessity of setting up a Committee immediately to give effect to the following principles:

(a.) A programme must be made allotting to each Allied country the quantities of food absolutely necessary to subsistence. These food supplies will have absolute priority of import.
(b.) The organisation entrusted with these imports will have at its disposal the necessary tonnage. France and Great Britain will, according to their means, each participate in the creation of the necessary fleet.
(c.) An equal restriction in consumption.

It was explained that the project was one which had been put forward on various occasions by the French, with the view of pooling British shipping with that of the Allies, or at least securing some control over the distribution of our shipping. The scheme which was now being urged confined representation on the Committee to the British and French and omitted the Italians. M. Clémentel, who had discussed the matter with the Prime Minister, and also with Lord Milner, said that he found it difficult to find any British officer with whom representatives of the French Government could discuss the question of supplies as a whole. The War Cabinet were of opinion that the scheme as proposed in M. Franklin-Bouillon’s note was unacceptable, but that some steps were necessary to deal with the difficulties which had arisen. It was suggested that a conference of the Departments concerned might be arranged to meet M. Clémentel.

Inasmuch as the project was associated with other economic proposals which are being discussed with M. Clémentel, the War Cabinet decided that—

Sir Albert Stanley should raise the matter again after he had had an opportunity of further discussion with M. Clémentel,
13. Mr. Barnes stated that he had been approached with a view to the granting of passports to Mr. C. Hobson, President of the International Metal Workers' Federation, and Mr. J. T. Brownlie, of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, who wished to visit Scandinavia and other neutral countries with a view to eliciting the goodwill of workmen in those countries on behalf of the cause of the Allies.

Mr. Balfour thought the matter too important to decide without some enquiry at the Foreign Office.

The War Cabinet decided to adjourn the matter until tomorrow.

Coal Miners' Wage and Price of Coal.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 246, Minute 24, Sir Albert Stanley pointed out that, owing to the variations in the conditions of different localities, it had been found desirable to depart somewhat from the decision of the Cabinet and to increase the price of coal by 2s. 6d. per ton, instead of 2s.

The War Cabinet confirmed the action taken by the President of the Board of Trade.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 16, 1917.
APPENDIX

AIR RAIDS : PROVISION OF COVER IN LONDON.

Report of the Committee appointed by the War Cabinet (War Cabinet, No. 245, Minute 13) to consider the question of Providing Cover in London against Air Raids, such Committee consisting of—

The Right Hon. Sir George Cave, M.P. (Chairman),
The Right Hon. W. Hayes-Fisher, M.P., and
Major-General Sir F. C. Shaw, K.C.B.

THE first question which the Committee had to consider was whether an endeavour should be made to provide cover for all those inhabitants of London who might not feel safe in their own houses, or only for those who would be likely to be in the streets in the case of a raid. The Committee were all of opinion that it is undesirable to encourage people to leave their houses in order to take shelter elsewhere. A house, however lightly built, forms a good protection against splinters, and the risk of lives being lost by enemy bombs is less if the population are scattered in their own homes than if they are collected together in shelters which cannot be made bomb-proof. Further, if families leave their houses during the raid in order to seek better shelter elsewhere they run a serious risk of being hit in the streets by bombs or splinters from our own guns. The Committee therefore came to the conclusion that shelter should be provided for persons who may be in the open in the case of a raid, and that the inhabitants should be discouraged (but not prohibited) from leaving their houses for these shelters.

The Commissioner of Police has for some time past been making arrangements for utilising all available shelters, and for regulating admission to them. These include railway stations, tunnels and arches, town halls, schools, public libraries and other public buildings, crypts and basement of churches, and many hundreds of private buildings such as factories with suitable basements. The annexed return shows that shelter is already available for about 900,000 people, and additional buildings are being made available for the purpose. But there are still many districts, notably in the poorer parts of London, where the available shelter is not yet sufficient; and although it is probable that few people would resist an appeal to provide shelter, it is advisable that a regulation should be made under the Defence of the Realm Acts empowering the competent authority to require the occupier of any suitable place to throw it open as a shelter in the case of raids.

It has been arranged that persons who are willing to give shelter should, on warning of a raid being received, exhibit a placard with the words "Air-raid shelter"; and the use of the shelters will be regulated by the police authority. In the case of the Tube stations, where there was some overcrowding on the occasion of the late raids to the great inconvenience of bond fide passengers, the railway companies have been recommended to take steps to avoid any such misuse of their stations in the future.

With regard to the suggestion that cover might be arranged by the construction of dug-outs in the parks, it appears that bomb-proof dug-outs must be 20 feet below the ground and require heavy timber and effective drainage. Assuming that 6 square feet per man of floor space is required, about 170 yards of gallery 12 feet broad would be required for every 1,000 people, and about ten entrances would be needed for such a gallery. This is special work which would have to be performed by tunnelling or field companies of the Royal Engineers, or skilled labour of a similar character, and it is doubtful whether either the materials or the labour for carrying out work of this kind on a large scale would be available. On the other hand, splinter-proof dug-outs or shelters would only require 9 inches of earth carried on corrugated iron or planking with suitable support, and if built above ground the walls must be of the same thickness and the entrances and exits must be protected. But this kind of dug-out, though proof against splinters, is not proof against bombs or unexploded shell; and it does not afford more protection than an ordinary house. Upon the whole the Committee doubt whether it is desirable to give effect to this suggestion at the present time.

With regard to the use of sand-bags or cinder-bags, some of these are in use
already and others are being provided for use in the police stations and elsewhere. The supply of sacking material for these bags is necessarily limited at the present time, and it is impossible to provide sand or cinder-bags for any large number of houses; but if bags can be procured or improvised they will of course afford additional protection.

No doubt the local authorities will give all the assistance in their power in finding shelter, bags, &c.

The Committee therefore recommend—

1. That the Commissioner of Police do proceed with his arrangements for providing shelter;
2. That a regulation be made under the Defence of the Realm Acts empowering the competent authority to require any premises to be made available as shelter in case of raids, and suitable notices to be exhibited;
3. That, for the present, dug-outs be not provided in the parks;
4. That all practicable steps be taken to increase the protection afforded by existing shelters.

It will be necessary to give publicity to the arrangements for shelter when completed.

Signed on behalf of the Committee:
(Signed) GEO. CAVE, Chairman.

October 11, 1917.

ANNEXURE.

New Scotland Yard,
October 11, 1917.

Particulars with Respect to Shelter Accommodation for the Public during Air Raids.

N.B.—Adequacy of shelter estimated on basis of residential population. Where this is said to be inadequate it may be quite adequate for population actually in the streets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Available Shelter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Whitehall and parts of Victoria neighbourhood</td>
<td>Resident population, 60,000; Day floating population considerable.</td>
<td>Ample air-raid shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Pimlico, Chelsea, Fulham</td>
<td>Resident population, 323,000; Some increase owing to floating population during day.</td>
<td>Shelter in Gerald Road, Fulham, and Walham Green areas inadequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Piccadilly neighbourhood</td>
<td>Resident population, 85,000; During day floating population very considerable.</td>
<td>Ample air-raid shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Marylebone and Tottenham Court Road neighbourhoods</td>
<td>Resident population, 110,000; Much increase by floating population during the day.</td>
<td>Sufficient air-raid shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Bow Street, Hunter Street, Gray's Inn Road neighbourhoods</td>
<td>Resident population 97,930; Increased by day by floating population.</td>
<td>Sufficient air-raid shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Paddington, Notting Hill, Kensington neighbourhoods</td>
<td>Resident population, 168,200; Some increase by floating population by day.</td>
<td>Sufficient air-raid shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>King's Cross, Hoxton, City Road neighbourhoods</td>
<td>Resident population, 205,600; Some increase by floating population by day.</td>
<td>Sufficient air-raid shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Whitechapel, Shadwell, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 216,400;</td>
<td>Sufficient air-raid shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Available Shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Hackney, Dalston, Bethnal Green, Wanstead, Leyton, Leytonstone, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 545,000</td>
<td>Air-raid shelter for about 1 in 12 of resident population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Limehouse, Poplar, Bow, East and West Ham, Canning Town, Ilford, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 786,685</td>
<td>Air-raid shelter inadequate at Plaistow, Canning Town, Ilford, Forest Gate; more needed at East and West Ham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Kennington, Carter Street, Rodney Road</td>
<td>Resident population, 270,000</td>
<td>In one portion very complete; elsewhere for about 1 in 10 of population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Southwark, Bermondsey, Rotherhithe</td>
<td>Resident population, 221,000</td>
<td>Quite adequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Stoke Newington, Islington, Edmonton, Tottenham, Wanstead, Lee Bridge Road, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 617,716</td>
<td>Inadequate except Islington; most inadequate in some rural areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Peckham, Camberwell, Dulwich, Sydenham, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 558,150</td>
<td>Inadequate everywhere. Camberwell and Peckham industrial areas, others semi-rural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Blackheath, Deptford, Greenwich, Woolwich, Plumstead, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 517,093</td>
<td>Inadequate. At Blackheath, Deptford, Plumstead, shelter for about 1 in 8 of population, elsewhere much less.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Albany Street, Hampstead, Golders' Green, Barnet, Edgware, Hendon, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 320,190</td>
<td>Inadequate, except at Albany Street, Hampstead, Hendon, but most of area semi-rural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Hammersmith, Shepherd's Bush, Chiswick, Brentford, and semi-rural parts extending to Twickenham, Staines, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 812,650</td>
<td>Shelter for about 1 in 10 Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush, very inadequate at Brentford, rest of area semi-rural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Wandsworth, Putney, Battersea, Earlsfield, and semi-rural tracts extending to Kingston, Epsom, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 524,609</td>
<td>Inadequate everywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Brixton, Clapham, Balham, Tooting, Mitcham, and semi-rural tracts extending beyond Croydon</td>
<td>Resident population, 972,700</td>
<td>Shelter for about 1 in 11 of population at Brixton, Clapham, Balham, below this elsewhere mostly semi-rural tracts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Harrow Road, Kilburn, Harlesden, Willesden Green, Ealing, Acton, and semi-rural tracts extending to Uxbridge, Pensor, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 523,800</td>
<td>Shelter inadequate, except Harrow Road neighbourhood. Dense population Willesden Green, Kilburn, Harlesden, Ealing, Acton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Kentish Town, Caledonian Road, Somers Town, Holloway, Highgate, Wood Green, and semi-rural parts extending to Potter's Bar, Barnet, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Resident population, 555,880</td>
<td>Adequate shelter Kentish Town, Somers Town, Caledonian Road, Holloway; elsewhere mostly semi-rural parts inadequate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total population over 7½ millions.
Existing air-raid shelter accommodation for over 900,000, and this can be added to with compulsory powers.

(Initialled) E. R. H.

October 11, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 251.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, October 17, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 11 and 16).

The Right Hon. W. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minutes 1 to 11 and 16).

The Right Hon. E. S. Montagu, M.P., Secretary of State for India (for Minutes 1 to 11 and 16).

Sir E. Wyldsooe Smith, Chairman, Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement (for Minutes 14 and 15).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 11).


Sir Alan Anderson, K.B.E., Controller, Admiralty (for Minute 15).

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 11).

Mr. C. J. Phillips, Foreign Office (for Minutes 14 and 15).

Professor Cadman, C.M.G., Director of Petroleum Executive (for Minute 15).


Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.
1. The Director of Military Operations read a letter from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, dated the 16th October, 1917, in regard to his future plans of operations. (O.A.D., No. 670.)

2. The Director of Military Operations made a statement showing the comparative British and German wastage, by divisions, in the Flanders battle since the 31st July. There were 43 British divisions engaged for the first time, as compared with 57 German divisions; of these, 23 British divisions had been engaged a second or third time, as compared with 15 German divisions. Twenty-three British divisions had been withdrawn exhausted, as compared with 48 German divisions.

3. The Director of Military Operations, in reply to an enquiry, referred to the estimate of the comparative British and German losses since the commencement of the recent offensive, up to the 5th October, which had been circulated to the War Cabinet. The figures were:

   British, 148,470; German, 255,000.

   The Secretary of State for War stated that the British losses since the 1st October were about 41,000.

   Attention was called to a telegram, No. 2993, from Stockholm, dated the 13th October, 1917, containing a newspaper announcement, on German authority, to the effect that during August the average officer casualties as published in the British casualty lists were 511 a day, the highest total recorded during the War.

   The Secretary of State for War undertook to ascertain the facts and to arrange for a denial both in Stockholm and in this country.

4. Attention was called to the exaggerated reports circulated from time to time in this country in regard to our casualties. It was suggested that these rumours, which were often made in the most definite manner, would never be checked till publicity was given to the true facts.

   Attention was also drawn to the false rumours that had been circulated to the effect that the bulk of the fighting was being done by the Colonials—rumours which also would be effectively disposed of by the publication of Casualty Lists. Mention was made of the statement recently communicated to a French newspaper by the Director of Military Operations, in denial of certain false rumours in this respect.

   The War Cabinet decided that——

   It was not in the public interest to publish the whole of the casualties, but that opportunity should be taken from time to time to disperse the various rumours in circulation by an occasional statement by the Prime Minister.

5. With reference to War Cabinet. 250, Minute 5, the War Cabinet considered the terms of a draft Vote of Thanks which Parliament should be asked to pass, and decided as follows:

   (a.) That the date of the Vote should be postponed until the week after next;

   (b.) That the Navy, as the Senior Service, should be referred to at the outset;

   (c.) That in their speeches the Prime Minister and Lord Curzon should make special reference to the Expeditionary Force;

   Parliamentary
   Vote of Thanks to
   Sailors, Soldiers,
   and the Men of
   the Mercantile
   Marine.
That the Departments concerned, namely:

- The Admiralty,
- The War Office,
- The Colonial Office,
- The India Office,
- The Board of Trade, and
- The Ministry of Shipping,

should prepare material for the Prime Minister and Lord Curzon to use in their speeches following the proposed motion.

Mesopotamia: Turkish Desertions

6. The Director of Military Operations reported that three officers and twenty-nine men of the Turkish army had recently deserted and given themselves up to General Maude.

Air Raid on Kifri.

7. The Director of Military Operations reported a very successful air raid on Kifri, in which three enemy machines had been destroyed. One of our machines had had to descend, but the crew had been brought in by another aeroplane.

Air Raid by Arabs.

8. The Director of Military Operations reported a successful Arab raid on the Hedjaz Railway north of Medina, resulting in the destruction of 230 rails and two bridges.

Tanks for Palestine.

9. The Secretary of State for War undertook to investigate the desirability of sending to Palestine certain Tanks which were unsuitable for employment in France owing to the mud. Lord Derby stated that General Allenby at present had about twelve Tanks under his orders.

Damage to a U.S.A. Destroyer.

10. The First Sea Lord reported that the U.S.A. destroyer "Cassin," which had been torpedoed, had arrived in port with her stern blown off.

Air Raid on Bruges Docks.

11. The First Sea Lord reported an air raid by the Royal Naval Air Service on Bruges Docks on the night of the 15th-16th October, in which 4½ tons of bombs had been dropped.

Passports to Scandinavia.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 13, the War Cabinet decided that—

In view of the fact that their visit would be in no way detrimental and might be beneficial to the public interest, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should authorise the issue of passports to Mr. C. Holson, President of the International Metal Workers' Federation, and Mr. J. T. Brownlie, of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

Mr. Barnes intimated that he would communicate with Mr. Balfour as requisite.

British Representation in the United States of America: Acting Benea during absence of Lord Northcliffe.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 11, the War Cabinet had under consideration a telegram from Lord Northcliffe (Paper G.T.-2305), and decided that—

Sir Frederick Black should be appointed to take Lord Northcliffe's place during the latter's absence;

The Prime Minister undertook to send a telegram to Lord Northcliffe, authorising him to appoint Sir Frederick Black to act for him, making it clear, however, that the appointment was only of a temporary nature.
14. With reference to War Cabinet 239, Minute 12, the War Cabinet had before them a note by the Secretary (Paper G.T.-9209) on the subject of the Inter-Ally Council and the American Board.

Lord Curzon said that, now that the three British representatives had agreed to serve on the Inter-Ally Council, three steps should be taken: first, to find out who would be the French representatives; secondly, to telegraph the names of our representatives to America; thirdly, to ask the United States Government for the name of the chairman whom they were sending to London.

Lord Curzon undertook to provide a conference room in the Privy Council offices for the meetings of the Inter-Ally Council.

After some discussion as to the Government Department under which the American Board should be placed, it was decided that—

The American Board should be attached to the Treasury.

15. The Fourth Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that, as regards the purchase of oil fuel, we had been supplying the Italian and French Governments both from purchases made in the United States of America and also from Egypt, and that the sum of such supplies only amounted to 2 per cent of our total requirements. He added that the arrangements for purchase in the United States were working very smoothly.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Their provisional decision, recorded in War Cabinet 190, Minute 4, should stand as regards exclusion from the scope of the Inter-Ally Council of the question of the provision of oil fuel and ships from the United States, control of which should remain under the Admiralty.

Mr. Phillips undertook to notify this decision to Mr. Austen Chamberlain.

16. In continuation of War Cabinet 241, Minute 2, the War Cabinet had under consideration a Report of a Departmental Committee on certain questions relating to the Order of the British Empire (Paper G.T.-9290).

As regards the India Office and the Colonial Office, the view was held that the numbers allotted to them should be as proposed by the Committee, and that the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for the Colonies should deal with the recommendations to their Departments, forwarding them to His Majesty the King.

In connection with the other Departments of State which more particularly represent the workers in Great Britain, it was considered desirable that the Departments should send their recommendations to the Prime Minister for his scrutiny, and amendment if necessary.

It was pointed out that this would entail an enormous amount of labour to the Prime Minister and his staff, though probably in a far less degree when the war was over, and it became largely a question of filling vacancies that arose in the Order.

The War Cabinet felt that, with the existing pressure on their time involved in the consideration of many important questions of high policy, they could not give the requisite attention to the many
points raised in the Report of the Committee. They decided, therefore, that—

In the first instance, the Report should be examined on their behalf by some Minister of Cabinet rank, who should consider the Report of the Committee and advise them as to the action to be taken, and should, in addition, assemble and preside over the Sub-Committee suggested in paragraph 12 of the Report.

The Secretary was instructed to invite the Right Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres to carry out the above decision.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 17, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 252.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, October 18, 1917, at 11 30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair) (for Minutes 1 to 9).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:—

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.B.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 7 to 9).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 4 to 10).


The Right Hon. G. II. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minutes 4 to 5 and 10).

Sir D. J. Shackleton, K.C.B., Secretary, Ministry of Labour (for Minutes 4 to 5 and 10).

Sir W. Collins, Chairman, Conciliation and Arbitration Board (for Minute 9).

Mr. F. G. Kellaway, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minutes 4 to 6).

Sir A. C. Geddes, K.C.B., Minister of National Service (for Minutes 2, 4 to 6 and 10).


Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 7 and 8).

The Right Hon. T. J. Macnamara, LL.D., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Admiralty (for Minute 6).


The Right Hon. A. H. Illingworth, M.P., Postmaster-General (for Minute 6).

Sir Lynden Macassey, K.B.E., K.C., Admiralty Shipyard Labour Department (for Minute 4).

Sir Norman Hill, Port and Transit Executive Committee (for Minute 10).

Mr. John Anderson, Secretary, Ministry of Shipping (for Minute 10).

Mr. Joseph Davies (for Minute 10).


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.
1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 248, Minute 12, the War Cabinet took note of the following decision by Lord Milner and Mr. Barnes in regard to the wages of skilled workers in the engineering and foundry trades (Paper G.T.-2282):—

"That fully qualified skilled time-workers in the engineering and foundry trades should be granted an increase of 12½ per cent. upon their weekly earnings, provided that their wages equalled or exceeded the district time-rate payable to fitters and turners. Such increase to commence in the first full week after the 14th October, 1917. This increase shall not apply to men with upstanding wage or salary covering overtime."

2. Sir Edward Carson stated that he had received a message from Sir George Riddell to the effect that the situation in the South Wales coalfield was very serious, owing to the organised resistance of anti-war elements against any combing-out for military service of men engaged in the industry. A ballot was shortly to be held as to whether a strike should be called as a protest against the combing-out of fit men of military age who had entered the coal-mining industry for the first time since the outbreak of war.

Sir Auckland Geddes enforced the above statement, and stated that the situation required the most delicate handling. The mines represented the last remaining big pool upon which he could draw both for recruiting for the Army and for transferable labour.

It was pointed out that, in view of the paramount importance of this issue and the strength of the Government's case in regard to it, the desirability of facing a strike, if it could be confined to one locality, such as South Wales, should be considered, the example of the defeat of the Glasgow strikers in 1915 being instanced as in some ways a parallel case.

The War Cabinet understood that a request was being put forward by patriotic leaders in South Wales that General Smuts should address a war aims meeting somewhere in the coalfield, with a view to his encouraging those miners who remained patriotic and were doing their best to resist syndicalist and pacifist influence.

General Smuts expressed his willingness to address a meeting at Mountain Ash at an early date.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Minister of National Service should make enquiries of the Admiralty with regard to their present reserve of Welsh coal, in order that an estimate might be formed as to how long it would be possible for the country to stand a strike in South Wales without incurring danger.

3. The War Cabinet had under consideration a letter addressed to the Prime Minister by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Paper G.T.-2272).

The War Cabinet decided that—

While it would be unwise for the Government to appoint a day of "humiliation and prayer," as had been suggested at an earlier stage, the Archbishop's new proposal, for the setting aside of a day for invoking the Divine blessing upon the deliberations and arms of the Allied Forces, was preferable, and suggested that the first Sunday in 1918 should be selected for this purpose.

It was agreed that it would be unnecessary for the Prime Minister to receive the suggested deputation upon the subject, and the Prime Minister undertook to discuss the question with
Labour Disputes.

4. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by Lord Milner and Mr. Barnes (Paper G.T.-2194 A) on the subject of the settlement of labour disputes involving increases of wages.

Lord Milner pointed out that cases had arisen whereby labour disputes had been settled by one Department in such a manner that other Government Departments were affected. He thought that it was absolutely necessary that in every case there should be one ultimate authority, such as the Committee on Production, who should deal with disputes the result of which was likely to affect a wider sphere of work than that which was under the immediate control of an individual Government Department. There was, for instance, the demand of the coal-mining industry that they should be treated in a water-tight compartment, thus making the miners a State within a State. If this principle were acknowledged, a decision in favour of one set of workmen prejudiced the issue in many other cases. Some form of centralisation was absolutely necessary.

Sir David Shackleton pointed out that unless some central authority were recognised it might be possible for employers and employees in a particular trade to come to some arrangement, involving a high cost to the State, which disregarded the national interest. The Ministry of Labour had no desire to interfere in the many small disputes of a local and subsidiary character, in the settlement of which any delay was most undesirable; but in all those questions of a wider character which involved increases of wage to large classes of labour it had now become essential, where State control of industries had been established, that the State, acting through some central authority, should be a party to any settlement.

Mr. Kellaway pointed out that the Ministry of Munitions had statutory powers under the Munitions Act to deal, inter alia, with the question of the wages of skilled workers.

Sir Lynden Macassey pointed out that very special and peculiar conditions related to work in His Majesty's Dockyards, which must be decided by the Admiralty.

Both the Ministry of Munitions and the Admiralty were most anxious that all questions of this kind should be discussed with the Ministry of Labour, and that the Ministry of Labour should have the fullest opportunity of submitting their views to the Departments immediately concerned in the settlement of a dispute. Similarly, Departments concerned should have the right of entry to the Committee on Production, to be heard in connection with disputes referred to that body.

The War Cabinet approved the statement (Paper G.T.-2194 A) in principle, and left it to the Departments to arrange its application in detail with the Minister of Labour.

5. Sir Auckland Geddes stated that the Coal Controller and he had had a conversation about the recruiting of men engaged in coal mines. They were agreed that recruiting was purely a function for the Minister of National Service. In view of the possible dispute in South Wales, referred to in Minute 2, he asked for a Cabinet decision ratifying this agreement.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The recruiting of men from coal mines should be one of the functions of the Ministry of National Service.
Recognition of Organisations other than the Civil Service.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 221, Minute 14, the War Cabinet had before them the following documents:—
(a.) Memorandum by the Postmaster-General (Paper G.T.-2016).
(b.) Note by the Minister of Munitions (Paper G.T.-2118).
(c.) Memorandum by the Conciliation and Arbitration Board (Paper G.T.-1731).
(d.) Memorandum by the Ministry of Labour (Paper G.T.-1732).

The Postmaster-General pointed out that in 1906 internal Post Office unions had been recognised, and that a great danger existed if outside organisations, such as the Transport Workers' Federation, were recognised as in any way party to disputes affecting Postal servants. Should the Transport Workers' Federation be placed in a position to call out the Postal transport workers, the whole business of the country might be held up. The Postmaster-General read an extract from the Minority Report of a Royal Commission signed, among others, by Sir Henry Primrose and Sir Guy Granet, pointing out the danger of outside unions being admitted to disputes or agreements with Civil Servants. He added that the London County Council had recently decided not to recognise outside unions in dealing with their employees.

Dr. Macnamara pointed out that the Admiralty had admitted representatives of outside organisations as spokesmen only, and not as parties to any concessions made by the Admiralty to their employees. The Admiralty did not make arrangements or contracts with their employees, but only concessions.

Sir William Collins, M.P., Chairman of the Conciliation and Arbitration Board for Government Employees, thought that the method adopted by the Admiralty suggested a compromise which the Government could undertake with safety.

The Postmaster-General and the Ministry of Labour concurred in the view expressed by Sir William Collins, but the latter thought that the whole matter should receive further careful enquiry.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The terms of reference to the Conciliation and Arbitration Board for Government Employees should be amended to read as follows:

"Method of Procedure.—Any claim which may fall within the terms of reference shall be heard before the Board acting as a triplicate chairman, together with not more than three official representatives and not more than three representatives of the class of employees concerned or their associations, where such association exists. Provided that in all cases the employees concerned shall be at liberty to nominate as one of their representatives a person who is not a member of the class in question. Such a person shall not, however, be a signatory to any agreement arrived at by conciliation. The official representatives shall be appointed in cases where employees of only one Government Department are concerned—two by that Department and one by the Treasury. In other cases they shall all be appointed by the Treasury. In the first instance the official representatives and the employees' representatives shall endeavour to arrange the difference by mutual agreement, but should they fail to settle the matter by conciliation the case will be at once referred to the Board acting as Arbitrators, who may call for further evidence if they desire and give such other directions as they may think necessary for the proper decision of the matters in dispute."
7. The First Sea Lord reported that on the previous day two destroyers, the "Strongbow" and the "Mary Rose," while escorting the Scandinavian Convoy, had been attacked and sunk by two German light cruisers about sixty miles east of the Shetlands. After disposing of the escort, the enemy proceeded to attack the merchantmen in the convoy. Out of 8 of these merchantmen 3 had arrived undamaged at Lerwick, of which two were British; and of the remaining 5, from reports at present received it appeared that 4 were on fire and 1 was in a sinking condition. The other escorting craft of trawlers and a whaler were reported to have escaped. With regard to the loss of life, there were no survivors from the "Mary Rose"; 4 officers and 33 men had been saved from the "Strongbow," and 39 men from the merchantmen. At the time when it happened five British light cruiser squadrons were in the North Sea, and the First Lord pointed out that even if we had had notice of the enemy's coming, and had put out our maximum forces, we could not have been more ready to intercept the enemy.

The First Sea Lord showed on a chart illustrating the area of visibility of our cruisers, the difficulty of ensuring the interception of fast light cruisers on a dark night. It was probable that the enemy vessels were of a new type of light cruisers, with a speed of 34 knots; that is to say, 4 to 5 knots faster than any of our light cruisers. He reminded the War Cabinet that the Admiralty had always expected that sooner or later an attack would be made upon our convoys. It had also been recognised that the Scandinavian Convoy was the one most liable to be attacked. He drew attention to the fact that the Germans must have been very well informed of our route, and a telegram had been sent to Norway in regard to leakage of information. The Admiralty were considering the problem of the best method of securing the safety of the Scandinavian Convoy against further attacks of this kind, and he indicated the general lines on which this would be tackled.

The First Lord stated that this was the first occasion on which neutral ships had been sunk by surface craft without taking off the crews, which was a most serious breach of International Law.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that the moral effect in Scandinavia would be very bad.

The War Cabinet discussed the question of publication, and deferred a decision until the German communiqué was to hand.

It was decided—

In any case to publish the loss of our two destroyers, but that, in accordance with the usual practice, no publication should be made until the next-of-kin had been advised.

8. In the course of the discussion recorded in the previous Minute, attention was called to the comparison of American destroyers with British destroyers, and also to the comparison of the latest type of German light cruisers with British light cruisers. In both cases the British vessels compared unfavourably in some particulars, though not necessarily in all respects, with the latest foreign types.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 4, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported the receipt of a telegram from Sir Douglas Haig expressing the thanks of the British Armies in France and himself for the message of congratulation.
which had been sent him by the Prime Minister on behalf of the War Cabinet.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to arrange for the publication of Sir Douglas Haig's reply.

10. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by Mr. Joseph Davies in regard to the proposed readjustment of the Port and Transit Executive Committee (Paper G.T.-2281).

Sir Norman Hill outlined the history and work of this Committee, of which he was now Chairman. Appointed two years ago, the Committee had worked smoothly until July of this year, when, at the request of the Executive Council of the National Transport Workers' Federation, the Labour representatives, including Mr. Harry Gosling, withdrew from the Central Committee and from all the local Port and Transit Committees, for reasons given in the Memorandum. A scheme had now been agreed by the Departments concerned and the Labour representatives whereby the Dock Labour representatives will rejoin the Central and Local Port and Transit Committees, and the National Union of Railwaymen will also co-operate. The new Committee will thus be fully representative.

Sir Auckland Geddes raised a cognate question in his Memorandum (Paper G.T.-2307) deprecating any extension of the system of military compelled labour, particularly in connection with the Transport Workers' Battalions. He pointed out the unfortunate effect which such a form of labour has on labour generally by arousing suspicions of indirect industrial compulsion. Resistance to recruiting was spreading throughout the country; the case of South Wales had already been referred to (vide Minute 2 above), and there were other centres where the movement was developing. There was a widespread resentment caused by seeing a man who one day was in civilian clothes and a few days later reappeared in khaki at a lower rate of wages. The same principle applied to soldiers engaged in agriculture.

Lord Derby said he entirely agreed with what Sir A. Geddes had stated.

Sir Auckland Geddes requested that his Department might be represented on Sir Norman Hill's Central Committee, in view of the fact that it was to a great extent a Man-Power Committee.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The scheme for the readjustment of the Port and Transit Executive Committee (Paper G.T.-2281), which had been agreed to by all the Departments concerned, and Labour, should be adopted.

(b.) The National Service Department should be represented on the Central Committee and the Local Committees, provided that the other Departments expressed no objection.

(c.) The question of the principle of military compelled labour, in such forms as the Transport Workers' Battalions and Agricultural Companies, should be raised again by the Minister of National Service at an early date.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 18, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 253.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.,
on Friday, October 19, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Major-General Sir G. M. W. MacDonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 1 to 4).

Brigadier-General G. K. Cockerill, C.B., Sub-Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 1 to 4).

The Right Hon. Sir G. Cave, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 4).


Rear-Admiral W. R. Hall, C.B., R.N., Director of Intelligence Division, Admiralty (for Minutes 1, 2, 4).

The Right Hon. Sir J. Maclay, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minutes 15, 16).

Sir Alan G. Anderson, K.B.E., Controller, Admiralty (for Minutes 15, 16).

The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minutes 1, 2, 4).

Mr. Joseph Davies (for Minutes 15, 16).


Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Pacifist Activities in Great Britain.

1. THE War Cabinet had before them the following documents on the subject of pacifist activities in Great Britain:

(a.) Notes of a Conference (Paper G.T.-733).
(b.) Memorandum by Sir Edward Carson (Paper G.-157).
(c.) Memorandum by the Ministry of Labour (Paper G.T.-9274).

While credit was given to the great value of the weekly reports of the Ministry of Labour, it was pointed out that these reports by no means covered the whole field of pacifist activities in this country. It was particularly desirable to investigate the sources from which the funds for purposes of anti-war propaganda were being obtained. For example, a case had recently been brought to light in which the pacifists had been refused the use of a hall in Bradford for the purpose of holding meetings, and, on receipt of the refusal, had bought the hall for the sum of £18,000. It was suspected that anti-war propaganda was being financed by wealthy men, who were looking forward to making money by opening up trade with Germany after the war, and it was rumoured that certain financiers were already entering into post-war contracts with a view to making profits out of German trade.

The Home Secretary stated that he had received a report from Scotland Yard on the whole subject, but that he was not wholly satisfied with it.

A great deal of information was being obtained by different Government Departments, notably by the War Office, and, though there was full co-operation between the Home Office, the War Office, and the Ministry of Labour, the information was not collated in such a form as to be readily available for members of the War Cabinet. It was suggested that international organisations required special attention, and that particular care should be taken to investigate the books of suspected institutions and of closed German banks.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Home Office should undertake the co-ordination and control of the investigation of all pacifist propaganda and of the wider subjects connected therewith, referred to above, and should submit a full report to the War Cabinet, who would then decide as to whether periodical reports should be submitted on the subject.

The Stockholm Conference.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 217, Minute 16, the Prime Minister stated that he had learned from French Ministers that documentary evidence had been obtained by them to the effect that the International Socialistic Conference at Stockholm had been engineered by the German Government.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Foreign Office should endeavour to obtain copies of these documents.

Prohibition of the Export of “The Nation.”

3. With reference to War Cabinet 119, Minute 24, Lord Derby suggested that, in view of the recent improved tone and conduct of the “Nation,” the embargo upon its export might now be removed.

The War Cabinet concurred in this proposal.
4. The War Cabinet had before them the following papers on
the subject of visits of workers, farmers, and others to the theatres
of war:

(b.) Memorandum by Mr. Munro (Paper G.T.-2265).
(c.) Memorandum by Mr. Prothero (Paper G.T.-2300).

The Secretary of State for War, while wholly favourable to the
principle of affording facilities for persons to visit the British front
and the devastated areas in France, stated that the main difficulty
was one of accommodation. He had decided to send a special
Commissioner to France to investigate this question and to report
what could be done.

It was pointed out that visits to the front formed the very best
education for propagandists in this country. Reports had been
received showing that the meetings held by the War Aims
Committee had already done good work, especially in Yorkshire.

The War Cabinet approved in principle that there should be
greater facilities for war-workers, farmers, and especially
for Members of Parliament, to visit the front; the details
to be arranged between Sir Edward Carson and the
Secretary of State for War.

5. The War Cabinet had before them a report, prepared at their
request, by Sir Edward Carson (War Cabinet 247, Minute 6), on the
subject of Bills dealing with property disturbed by the war, in which
Sir Edward Carson advised that both the Bill to amend the Defence
of the Realm (Acquisition of Land) Act, 1916, and the Bill to make
further provision with respect to the requisition of ships in connection
with the present war, are necessary, and, in his opinion, should be
introduced separately. Sir Edward Carson also advised that the
Order, under the Defence of the Realm Act, relating to the
requisition of beans, &c. (War Cabinet 244, Minute 1), should be
validated by Act of Parliament and not included in either of the
Bills referred to above.

The War Cabinet approved Sir Edward Carson's report.

6. With reference to the figures for officers' casualties in
August and September, published by the War Office by direction of
the War Cabinet (War Cabinet 251, Minute 4), the Chief of the
Imperial General Staff consulted the War Cabinet as to a
Parliamentary question on the subject by Mr. Richard Lambert,
quoting the figures published by the War Office, and suggesting
that the list of casualties to officers should now be published for
each of the other months of the current year.

The War Cabinet decided that—

It was not in the public interest to publish this information; if
given, it would inevitably lead to a demand for the figures
of casualties to other ranks. The answer should be in the
sense that all casualties were published.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 2, the Chief of
the Imperial General Staff stated that he was given to understand
that the Admiralty would not be able to supply more than the 16
anti-aircraft guns previously promised, which would leave a shortage
of 24.

The First Sea Lord stated that the matter was still under
consideration by the Board of Admiralty, who would, he thought, place the facts before the War Cabinet for decision.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that an air raid was carried out on Varssonaere Aerodrome on the morning of the 18th October, many bombs being dropped and sheds straddled. All our machines returned safely.

H.M.S. "Terror."

9. The First Sea Lord stated that the monitor "Terror" was hit by one or two torpedoes and two or three shells from destroyers on the night of the 18th-19th October while at anchor off Dunkirk. She had several compartments flooded, but the bulges with which she was fitted probably prevented her from foundering. The vessel would shortly be docked. The crew sustained no casualties.

Air Raid on Chanak.

10. The First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that the Rear-Admiral, Ægean Sea, reports that, the arrival of the Kaiser at Chanak being expected, four bombing aeroplanes were sent to make an attack at midnight on the 17th-18th October. A bombing raid was made at dawn with all available force. A full report of operations had not yet been received, but one of our machines had not returned.

Submarines.

11. The First Sea Lord reported that—

(a.) On the 18th instant a seaplane had dropped four 100lb. bombs on a submarine while her periscope was showing in the vicinity of the Scillies. A large quantity of oil was afterwards observed.

(b.) A seaplane attacked a submarine in the vicinity of Portland on the 18th instant, two bombs exploding on the top of the wash while the submarine was submerging. The pilot believes the submarine was sunk. Oil was observed to rise.

(c.) H.M.S. "Afridi" reports having attacked a submarine in the vicinity of the North Varne Buoy. Four depth charges were dropped, after which dense oil appeared on the surface.

Losses by Submarines or Mines.

12. The First Sea Lord gave the following comparative figures of losses by submarines or mines, and arrivals and sailings for the two periods the 1st to 17th September inclusive and the 1st to 17th October inclusive:

In September the total arrivals and sailings amounted to 13,191. 50 British ships were sunk, of a total tonnage of 113,963 tons, and 36 Allied and neutral vessels, of 70,808 tons, making a grand total, including fishing vessels, of 184,770 tons.

For the period the 1st to 17th October inclusive the arrivals and sailings amounted to 11,376. 34 British ships were sunk, of a gross tonnage of 120,166 tons, and 32 Allied and neutral ships of a gross tonnage of 87,654 tons, making a grand total, including fishing vessels, of 70 ships of a tonnage of 207,337.

Attack on Convoy by German Light Cruisers.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 252, Minute 7, the First Sea Lord read to the War Cabinet the intercepted wireless message giving the German report on the convoy incident. He stated that he had received no further report from the Senior Naval Officer
in the Shetlands, and had telegraphed asking for any further particulars. In any case, the German report was incorrect in two matters, namely:

(a.) Their statement that the action took place in territorial waters, whereas it happened about sixty miles from land.

(b.) That all the convoy was sunk—as we had certain knowledge that three of the convoy had reached harbour.

It was mentioned that this information would be known in the Scandinavian countries, and therefore it was desirable that we should publish our account of the incident.

The War Cabinet requested—

The First Lord of the Admiralty to issue a notice in the press as soon as the next-of-kin of those lost had been informed and all relevant facts had been ascertained from the Shetlands.

Russia:

14. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs read telegram No. 1649, dated the 18th October, from the British Ambassador, Petrograd, which, after describing the deplorable naval situation, ended with the suggestion that the man in the street is utterly ignorant of naval warfare, and that, if the Russian Fleet was destroyed without any attempt being made by the British Fleet to come to its assistance, the impression would gain ground that Russia had been abandoned by her Ally and that the only course left was to make peace with Germany.

The First Sea Lord explained the impossibility of the entry of the British Fleet into the Baltic. There was not a sufficient depth of water to allow the Fleet to pass through the Sound; the Little Belt was close to German territory, and to pass in safety through the Great Belt would necessitate infringing Danish neutrality by occupying Danish Islands. Further, there would be the difficulty of maintaining the communications of any force which succeeded in entering the Baltic.

The question was raised as to whether, if no direct assistance could be given, some diversion could be made in the North Sea to draw off the German Fleet. In this connection the First Sea Lord pointed out that the German Fleet had only detached a relatively small force against the Russians, including half-a-dozen Dreadnoughts; the Russians were putting up but a very feeble defence with their own forces, and there seems to be very little intelligence shown in the command; the four newest and best Russian Dreadnoughts had not yet moved. All our submarines in the Baltic were operating except one under repair. Apparently only two Russian submarines were moving. British forces had been operating for some time in the North Sea and Heligoland Bight with a view to attracting the Germans, but without result; short of attacking coast defences we were actually doing everything possible to tempt the German Fleet to engage us, and attacks on German coast defences, even if they could be undertaken, would take many months to prepare.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A telegram explaining these points should be sent to Russia, the material being supplied to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs by the First Lord of the Admiralty.

The question was discussed whether some “sting” should be put into this telegram, indicating that if they want assistance from us the Russians must at least make a determined effort on their own behalf.

Mr. Balfour undertook to consider this point, and to show the draft of the telegram to the Prime Minister.
Requisition of Vessels Building in the United States of America.

15. The War Cabinet had under consideration a letter from the Shipping Controller enclosing a telegram from his representative in the United States of America, as well as the draft of a reply on the subject of the requisition of vessels building in the United States of America for the British Government (Paper G.T.—2913).

The suggestion of the Shipping Controller was to accept the President's decision without question, to explain our position on the subject, and to point out that their action prevented us from helping our Allies to the same extent as hitherto. Sir J. Maclay said that information had just come to hand showing that the United States were actually opening new commercial lines with South America. There was evidence, indeed, that the United States were out for post-bellum development, of which they always suspected us.

The Controller of the Admiralty, while approving a full statement of the effect on supply of the action of the United States of America, favoured the maintenance of our contracts in order that opportunities might be obtained of representing, from time to time, to the Shipping Board the uses to which we had intended to devote the ships, as each of them was completed. It was important to press on the Americans the difficulties which would arise by the diversion of these ships from supply to transport.

The Shipping Controller expressed the view that it may become more important to bring wheat than troops from the United States. M. Clémentel had shown that the wheat situation in France was most critical, this year's harvest being 4,000,000 tons as against 9,000,000 in a normal year. The French were making a heavy demand upon us for assistance. The situation was equally grave in Italy, and during the last two days twenty Italian ships had been sent to America for wheat, thus depriving us of 100,000 tons of ore this month, and breaking the agreement into which they had entered.

The First Lord suggested that the message should also deal with the oil situation. The difficulties of supplying oil for our own needs and those of the Allies would be most seriously increased if oil-tankers were requisitioned.

The War Cabinet approved—

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should see the United States Ambassador, and should hand to him a statement incorporating into the Shipping Controller's draft message the additions suggested by the Controller of the Admiralty and the First Lord.

16. The Shipping Controller called attention to the inadvisability of proceeding with the building of oil-burning ships, owing to the difficulty of securing an adequate oil supply. We were bringing oil to the extent of from 80,000 to 100,000 tons a month in double bottoms, and but for the good-will of the United States we should have been in a very perilous position. Some time ago enemy submarines had sought out oil-tankers for special attack. He thought the whole position should be reviewed by the Admiralty.

The First Lord said, that the comparative advantages of oil- and coal-burning craft had been repeatedly discussed, and a few months ago the Admiralty had ascertained that no change of the present programme could take effect before the end of 1918. The question was being considered whether it might not be desirable to build some coal-burning destroyers for delivery after the end of 1918.

17. The War Cabinet had before them a letter from Viscount Bryce to the Prime Minister, covering a memorial from a number of representative public men, suggesting the establishment of a small Committee of British and American experts to examine the estab-
lishment of some machinery for the preservation of a permanent peace by a combination of free, peace-loving nations (Paper G.T.-2263).

The War Cabinet decided—

To adjourn the matter until there had been an opportunity of discussing it with the representative of President Wilson, who was shortly expected in this country.

Forth-Clyde Canal.

18. The War Cabinet had under consideration a note by the Secretary (Paper G.T.-2299) relative to the Forth-Clyde Canal, and decided that—

The question of the desirability of the construction of the Forth-Clyde Canal should be examined in all its aspects by the Minister of Reconstruction, in conjunction with the Government Departments concerned.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 19, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, October 22, 1917, at 12:30 P.M.

Present:
The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 5).
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 5).
Major-General J. M. Salmond, C.M.G., D.S.O., Director-General of Military Aeronautics (for Minute 1).
Major-General E. B. Ashmore, C.M.G., M.V.O., Home Forces (for Minute 1).

Commodore G. M. Paine, C.B., M.V.O., Fifth Sea Lord (for Minute 1).
The Right Hon. the Viscount Cowdray, President, Air Board (for Minute 1).
The Right Hon. Sir G. Cave, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 1).

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.
1. MAJOR-GENERAL ASHMORE gave full particulars of the Zeppelin raid on London on the night of 19th October, 1917. He stated that on that occasion visibility was not at all good, there being considerable ground mist; as a result, the range of the searchlights was severely curtailed. In consequence, however, of faint sounds being heard, the north barrage searchlights were turned on, but were unable to find the airships. To have turned on the remainder would have been a fatal course, as there were at the time in the vicinity of London several airships which had lost their bearings. As illustrative of the effect of mist, it was stated that a balloon was sent up in the vicinity of Croydon on the night in question, and when at a height of 8,000 feet London was invisible. Forty-four of our machines were sent up, but, owing to the great altitude at which the Zeppelins were flying, approximately from 15,000 to 16,000 feet, though three aeroplanes saw the enemy, they were unable to attain that height, their maximum being about 14,000 feet. It appeared that only one Zeppelin actually passed across London, and did so with engines stopped.

The military authorities were of opinion that, in connection with the Zeppelins being brought down in France, they wrongly estimated the direction of the wind, and, instead of finding a west wind, and consequently being blown to the eastward, they found a strong north wind, which took them south, over France.

General Henderson pointed out that it must be remembered that in France these Zeppelins were attacked during daylight, and mentioned that if airships attained a height of, say, 17,000 feet when over enemy country, the result would be that that height could not be maintained or again reached, and that it must gradually decrease. The recent raid was an instance of this, inasmuch as the highest report from the French side was that they were at 10,000 feet, and in some cases they were referred to as being up 1,500 feet only. All the airships that crossed over Holland were flying very low. General Henderson explained that we had as yet no aeroplanes in use capable of reaching 17,000 feet when over enemy country.

Lord Cowdray explained that the first lot of the B.E. 12 machines which were being constructed for home defence night flying had been delivered within the last three or four days and were being fitted with 200 h.p. engines. The forecast of the Air Board’s Technical Department was that these machines would reach a height of 19,000 feet to 20,000 feet, but the actual test had not yet been made.

The question was raised as to the answer to be given to the following parliamentary question, put by Mr. Joynson Hicks to the Prime Minister:

Whether he has any further statement to make regarding the apparent lack of defence against the Zeppelin raid on Friday, and whether he is in a position to make a definite statement as to counter-invasion of Germany by air.

As regards the first part of the question, it was generally agreed that, in the public interest, any announcement in regard to the effects of the mist and the shortage of machines suitable for night flying would have to be couched in very guarded language.

It was considered that the second part of the question would be adequately answered by reference to the two attacks which had
already been made in the Saarbrücken district, and that, if debate arose, information should be given to the House as to the recent activity of the Royal Naval Air Service from Dunkirk. It should also be pointed out that up to the present the weather had been very unfavourable for reprisals from French bases; and, furthermore, that, after the English pilots there had gained a better knowledge of the surrounding country, the range of the attacks would be extended. If the reprisal aspect of the case was pressed by the House of Commons, it was considered that Parliament should be informed that it was the intention of the Government to carry out the pledges they had given, not only in the letter but in the spirit, until the enemy ceased his present air attacks.

The War Cabinet directed—

General Henderson and General Ashmore to assist the Home Secretary in drafting a reply to the question raised by Mr. Joynson Hicks.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that General Maude had been clearing up the situation on his right flank, which, moreover, interfered with the enemy’s supplies in that area, and tended to prevent small parties of Turks getting through into Persia.

The Italian Front.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had received information from the Italians that German troops were being diverted to the Italian Isonzo front, but that they had not been located there up to the present. The Italians were somewhat anxious and considered an enemy offensive imminent. General Robertson stated that as regards troops the Italians were two or three times as strong as the enemy forces likely to confront them, and that they were very well off for guns and ammunition. The number of trench mortars in their possession had recently been increased. The moral of the Italian troops was said to be excellent and the men were confident.

Attention was called to General Cadorna’s statement that no attacks by the Italians would be possible after the middle of October.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff confirmed the rumours that British ammunition captured on the Russian front was being used by the Germans on the Western front against our own troops.

5. Mr. Balfour drew attention to telegram No. 1116, dated the 21st October, 1917, from the British Ambassador at Paris, asking for a Conference early next week at Boulogne.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should ascertain what were the subjects the French wished to discuss.

Submarines.

6. The First Sea Lord reported the following actions against enemy submarines:

(a) An aeroplane, on the 18th October, in the vicinity of St. Catherine’s Point, dropped two 100-lb. bombs on an enemy submarine, which disappeared with a heavy list to port.

(b) Our submarine “E 45” sighted, on the 19th October, 45 miles east of Orford Ness, an enemy submarine of the “U 53” type, shelling a Dutch steamer, which sank. “E 45” fired three torpedoes at the enemy, an explosion being heard, and the submarine disappearing.
7. The First Sea Lord stated that a German submarine-cruiser had appeared in the vicinity of Dakar, evidently with a view to attacking the convoys between that place and the United Kingdom.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that the armed mercantile auxiliary “Orama” had been torpedoed and sunk, but that United States destroyers had rescued all the crew.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 253, Minute 10, the First Sea Lord reported that in the night raid on Chanak one aeroplane dropped three bombs on the town and two others dropped bombs in enemy territory. The only casualty was one pilot injured in landing. The day raid was entirely successful, sixteen heavy bombs being dropped on the town.

10. The First Sea Lord reported the following action by the Royal Naval Air Service working from Dunkirk:

(a) At about 10 P.M. on the night of the 19th October over 1 ton of bombs were dropped on Bruges Docks.

(b) At 11:40 A.M. on the 20th October about three-quarters of a ton of bombs were dropped on Engel Aerodrome, a fire being reported. All our machines returned safely.

(c) During the night of the 20th-21st October a bombing raid was attempted on Bruges Docks, but owing to thick weather only about one-third of a ton of bombs was dropped on the objective.

(d) At noon on the 21st October nearly half a ton of bombs was dropped on Vlissingham Aerodrome, and half a ton of bombs was dropped on Houttave Aerodrome. The bombing machines were attacked both during the raid and on the return journey by enemy aircraft, two of which were driven down completely out of control.

(e) On the 21st October a photographic reconnaissance and offensive patrols were carried out; five of our scouts engaged about twenty hostile scouts, two of the latter being destroyed and two driven down completely out of control. One of our pilots is missing.

11. In reply to a question as to the heavy shipping losses during the last few days, the First Sea Lord stated that he proposed to forward a report to the War Cabinet, setting out the supposed reasons for such losses. One of the contributory causes was the withdrawal of the Handley-Page machines for bombing operations in France, no other suitable machines being available to take their place.

12. The First Sea Lord reported that a collision had taken place between the destroyers “Tirade” and “Marmion,” and that the latter had sunk, only two officers and seventeen men being picked up. Both these vessels were at the time employed on convoy work.

13. The First Sea Lord read to the War Cabinet telegrams he had received from the naval attaché at Petrograd relative to the situation in the vicinity of the Gulf of Riga. He stated that the “Grauzhdanin” and the “Bayan” were trapped, as the exit to the north of Dago Island was too shallow to allow them to pass, and that all other exits were in the possession of the Germans. He added
that the main body of the Russian Fleet were at Helsingfors, but that the discipline in those ships was extremely bad. As regards the danger of this main body falling into the hands of the enemy, the First Sea Lord had prepared a statement on the subject, which would shortly be forwarded for the information of the War Cabinet.

Admiral Jellicoe explained on a map the general situation in the Gulf of Finland, indicating the probable German action. He further informed the War Cabinet of the dispositions of our submarines in the Baltic.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had no recent news as to the situation from the British Military Representatives in Russia, but he undertook to obtain their views as soon as possible.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 22, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 255.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, October 23, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.

The Right Hon. C. ADDISON, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minute 1).

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.
Major L. STORR, Assistant Secretary.
Captain C. JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Reconstruction:

1. At the request of the Minister of Reconstruction, the War Cabinet considered the following Parliamentary Question put by Mr. Faber:

   "To ask the Minister of Reconstruction if he will state on what Committee or Sub-Committees, besides the Committee on Coal Conservation, Viscount Haldane is sitting."

The War Cabinet approved—

(a.) That a reply should be given in the following sense:

   "Lord Haldane was appointed early in July, by the then Committee for Reconstruction, as Chairman of a small Sub-Committee to which questions relating to overlapping amongst certain Government Departments were referred."
2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that in the local attacks on the previous day only five Brigades had been engaged.

The Secretary of State for War reported that the casualties up to date were only 2,100.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 254, Minute 3, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that he had reason to believe that three German Divisions were now on the Italian Front.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that it had not been possible to carry out any raids on German towns on the previous day, owing to low clouds and fog.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported the receipt of a message from Petrograd to the effect that the French Military Mission was being closely watched by the Soviet.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that in one of the Zeppelins which had been captured complete in France, two maps had been found, one of the North Sea and the other of the Russian frontier. On the latter, places for communication with Russian agents were marked.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 229, Minute 12, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the Serbians were badly in need of the troops, hitherto employed with the Russian armies, which were being transported to Salonica via Archangel. The Russian Government wished these troops to be retained in Russia, but the Chief of the Imperial General Staff recommended that the movement of these troops from Archangel should be continued.

The War Cabinet approved the recommendation of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff that the Serbians should continue their homeward journey.

7. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff drew attention to his Memorandum (Paper G.T.-2347), covering a telegram in which General Barter had reported that there were some 150,000 Armenian soldiers in the Russian army, of whom 120,000 were on the Eastern Front. It was desired that the Russian authorities should be asked to send these troops to the Caucasus, and General Barter had urged that diplomatic pressure should be applied. General Barter had also reported that the Armenians were anxious to form themselves into battalions for service in the Caucasus, and had suggested that pressure should be put on the Russian Government to facilitate this development.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to concert with the United States Government in bringing diplomatic pressure to bear on the Russian Government—

(a.) To get the Armenian troops now serving on the Eastern Front sent to the Caucasus.

(b.) To allow of the recruitment and formation of Armenian units for service on the Caucasus Front.
The Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to draft the necessary telegrams on the subject, to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Russian Volunteer Army.

8. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, covering a Memorandum on the project for a Russian Volunteer Army explained by Professor Pares (Paper G.T.-2337).

In his Memorandum Professor Pares gave particulars of a movement in Russia for the formation of a Volunteer Army. The movement arose out of the need for a more conscious discipline in the Army, as produced by the Revolution, and out of the disruption of discipline in the existing Army and the consequent disasters. The object of the movement was twofold—

(a.) To send up new and thoroughly disciplined units to the front.
(b.) To persuade existing units to take the very strict volunteer oaths.

A strong semi-official All-Russian Central Volunteer Committee had been formed to conduct work under the supervision of the Russian Commander-in-chief at his Headquarters. The attitude of this Committee towards England was of the most cordial character, and Professor Pares had been asked to act on it as connecting it with England. Professor Pares submitted that we have every political and military reason for giving the strongest moral and, where possible, material support to this movement. He proposed, inter alia:

(a.) That permission should be given to the Assistant Military Attachés to act as consultants on volunteer discipline and organisation to the Russian Committee.
(b.) The services, if desired and found practicable, of carefully selected British military instructors.
(c.) The services of a British expert of volunteer organisation, such, for instance, as Major Harold Baker, M.P.

The War Cabinet approved Lord Derby's action in telling Professor Pares that it would be quite impossible for us to volunteer to the Russian Government to do what was suggested by him, but that if asked for such assistance officially we would do our best to give it.

The War Cabinet also had before them a Memorandum by Mr. Walter Long (Paper G.T.-2365) on the same subject, suggesting that we should telegraph to His Majesty's Ambassador at Petrograd, giving all the story contained in the Memorandum by Professor Pares, and saying that we could not, of course, put the suggestion forward officially, but that if he could bring the matter informally before the Russian Government and secure their support we would most gladly give our assistance in every way possible.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should discuss the matter with the Russian representatives who are coming to this country en route to the Inter-Ally Conference.

Inter-Ally Conference.

9. The attention of the War Cabinet was called to telegram No. 2156 from Mr. Balfour to Sir George Buchanan, dated the 21st October, 1917, to the effect that it was desirable to explain discreetly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs that, if he brought to the forthcoming Paris Conference a representative of the Democratic
Congress, the latter would scarcely be able to participate in the proceedings.

Mr. Balfour pointed out that he himself had constantly insisted on the importance of substituting informal conversations for formal conferences, and if only his proposals were accepted the difficulty involved in the attendance of a representative of the Democratic Congress would be met.

The War Cabinet generally agreed with Mr. Balfour that no one but a representative of a Government could be present at any formal Conference. They recognised, however, that it would be extremely difficult to refuse to allow the representatives of the Russian Government to be accompanied, if they desired it, by a representative of the Democratic Congress. Even this course, moreover, was open to strong objection, as any representative of the Congress, if not himself a German agent, would very likely be in touch with persons in collusion with the enemy.

In view of the near approach of the forthcoming Paris Conference—

The Prime Minister undertook to confer with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in regard to this matter and other details in connection with the Conference.

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Bombardment of Ostend.

10. The Deputy First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that the Vice-Admiral, Dover, reports that the monitor “Marshal Soult” fired nineteen rounds at Ostend on the 21st October. The photographs show that the result was satisfactory.

Submarines.

11. The Deputy First Sea Lord stated that the Commander-in-chief, Mediterranean, reports that on the 21st October the sloop “Clematis” sighted an enemy submarine at 10 A.M. on the surface, about 100 miles north-west of Alexandria. A depth charge was dropped, and the submarine is reported as probably damaged.

Riga.

12. The Deputy First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that the naval attache, Petrograd, reports that the enemy has recommenced disembarkation of troops in Dago. Kulvast (Moon Island) is in the possession of the enemy, and the evacuation of Moon Island is being hindered by enemy destroyers. On the 18th October a German destroyer struck a mine in Kassar Bay and sank.

Bombing Raids.

13. The Deputy First Sea Lord stated that reports had been received from Dunkirk as follows:

(a.) A bombing raid was made on Mole railway sidings, near Ghent, on the night of the 21st/22nd October. Two 250-lb., twelve 112-lb., and six 65-lb. bombs were dropped, and burst on and near the railway.

(b.) During the afternoon of the 22nd October a bomb raid was attempted on St. Denis Westrem aerodrome, but owing to very thick clouds inland the attempt was given up. Six 65-lb., four 50-lb., and forty-eight 16-lb. bombs were dropped on Zeebrugge mole. Two small vessels or barges alongside were reported to be hit, and bombs burst close to seaplane base and other buildings on mole. All our machines returned safely.

Parliamentary Vote of Thanks to Sailors, Soldiers, and Men of the Mercantile Marine.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 5, the War Cabinet approved the terms of the Vote of Thanks which had been drafted by the Prime Minister (Appendix).

Some discussion took place as to whether notice of the motion should be given by the Prime Minister and Lord Curzon in the
House of Commons and House of Lords respectively, or whether the notice should be put on paper.

The War Cabinet decided—

To follow precedent in the matter, and the Prime Minister undertook to ascertain what the precedent was.

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British Submarines in the Baltic.

15. The War Cabinet requested—

The Deputy First Sea Lord to obtain from Admiral Stanley a report on the work of the British submarines in the Baltic during the recent German operations in the Gulf of Riga.

2. Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 23, 1917.

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APPENDIX.

That the thanks of this House be given to the officers, petty officers, and men of the Navy for their faithful watch upon the seas during more than three years of ceaseless danger and stress, while guarding our shores and protecting the commerce, upon which the victory of the Allied cause depends, from the attacks of a barbarous foe.

That the thanks of this House be given to the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the British Armies in the field, and also to the women in the medical and other services auxiliary thereto, for their unfailing courage and endurance in defending the right, amid sufferings and hardships unparalleled in the history of war, and for their loyal readiness to continue the work to which they have set their hands until the liberty of the world is secure.

That the thanks of this House be accorded to the gallant troops from the Dominions Overseas, from India, and from the Crown Colonies, who have travelled many thousands of miles to share with their comrades from the British Isles in the sacrifices and triumphs of the battlefield, and to take their full part in the struggle for human freedom.

That the thanks of this House be accorded to the officers and men of the Mercantile Marine for the devotion to duty with which they have continued to carry the vital supplies of the Allies through seas infested with deadly peril.

That this House doth acknowledge with grateful admiration the valour and devotion of those who have offered their lives in the service of their country, and tenders its sympathy to their relations and friends in the sorrows they have sustained.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, October 24, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 9).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.

General Sir W. R. Robertson, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1 to 9).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 9).

The Right Hon. Lord Rhondda, Food Controller (for Minute 13).


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 255, Minute 14, the Prime Minister stated that the precedents for votes of thanks to the forces of the Crown pointed to the practice of such motions being placed upon the paper; thus notice of the form of motion would have to be given beforehand.

In regard to the date, it was suggested that the 31st October, being the anniversary of the first battle of Ypres, would be a most suitable date for the vote of thanks. On the other hand, it was pointed out that Monday, the 29th, had been already fixed for the purpose, and an announcement to this effect had been made in Parliament by the Leader of the House. It was also pointed out that if the vote of thanks were taken on the 31st, the time allotted
The Western Front.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the French attack, reported in that morning’s newspapers, had been a brilliant success. They had attacked on a front of 8 kilometres and had achieved a depth of 3 kilometres. They had been opposed by eight German divisions, including two Guards divisions, one of which had come from the Riga front. The quality of the German troops opposed to the French had been good, and the Germans had been aware that an attack was imminent.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should send a congratulatory telegram, on behalf of the War Cabinet, to the French President of the Council.

The Italian Front.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 255, Minute 3, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that the Italians reported a German army of nine divisions on the Isonzo front, but as far as he could at present ascertain only three German divisions had been identified. An attack by Austro-German troops upon Monte Piana had taken place, a battalion of German shock troops being utilised. These latter were almost annihilated, and this initial success was reported as likely to prove beneficial to Italian moral.

Loss of Zeppelins.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 254, Minute 1, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that a telegram had been received from Colonel Spiers reporting that the wrecks of two further Zeppelins had been found in the Mediterranean, near Villefranche.

Submarines.

5. The First Sea Lord reported that at 9 A.M. on the 23rd October one of our airships had succeeded in dropping four bombs on the swell of an enemy submarine.

British Submarines in the Baltic.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 255, Minute 15, the First Sea Lord reported the receipt of a telegram from Petrograd stating that the British submarine “C. 32” had been missing for eight days on the 16th instant, and it was feared she was lost in the Gulf of Riga; the “C. 26” is laid up at Pernau in a damaged condition; the “C. 27” reports having fired two torpedoes at a German Dreadnought, but missed with both. She then hit a German transport with a torpedo, but failed to sink her.

Russia: Escape of Fleet from Gulf of Riga.

7. The First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that the naval attache at Petrograd had reported that the Russian fleet had escaped from the Gulf of Riga and joined the main Baltic fleet at Helsingfors.

Shipping Losses.

8. The First Sea Lord stated that enemy submarines had again succeeded in sinking two ships off Flamborough Head, whence the
Handley-Page machines had been recently withdrawn for bombing operations on German towns. Steps, however, had been taken to adopt other methods for dealing with enemy submarines in this area.

9. The Secretary was authorised to inform the Secretary of the Dardanelles Commission that the War Cabinet approved his proposal that the following documents should be placed in the custody of the Secretary of the War Cabinet:

   (a.) A complete copy of everything which was laid before the Commission.
   (b.) Ten copies of the revised Summary of Evidence.

In regard to the publication of this Report, the Secretary of the Commission had mentioned that the Report would probably be delivered to the Home Secretary within three weeks.

The view was generally expressed that it would not be in the public interest to repeat the experiences following the publication of the First Report of the Dardanelles Commission and the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission.

On the other hand, it was pointed out that Irish troops were engaged in Suvla Bay, and that Irish Members of Parliament seemed anxious for the publication of the circumstances attending this operation, while the part played by Australian and New Zealand troops in Gallipoli made it necessary that careful consideration should be given before any decision was taken as to the suspension of the publication of the Report. It was thought that Parliament might be willing to agree to the postponement of publication until after the war.

The Secretary of State for War strongly urged that no publication of the Report should take place at present.

At this point the matter was adjourned for further consideration.

10. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by Lord Curzon in regard to a compilation of a record of the war activities and accomplishments of the period since the present Government assumed office in December 1916 (Paper G.T.-2339).

Lord Curzon said that the issue of this Summary of War Work at a moment when the session will have run two-thirds of its course and the Government may conceivably be in troubled waters would be more likely to be effective than would be a premature appearance now.

It was generally agreed that the work of compilation should be proceeded with as quickly as possible, in order that the document might be ready, if required, before the 9th December.

The War Cabinet decided that—

   (a.) Lord Curzon's Memorandum should be adopted as a tentative framework for the report.
   (b.) The task of compilation should be proceeded with immediately by the Prime Minister's secretariat at 10, Downing Street, in concert with the various Government Departments.

11. With reference to War Cabinet 249, Minute 15, the War Cabinet had before them a copy of the minutes of the first meeting of the Air Policy Committee (Paper G.T.-2340), (Appendix), with a covering note by General Smuts, the chairman of the Committee.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The report should be adopted.
12. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by Mr. Barnes (Paper G.T.-2346) in regard to the treatment of wives and dependants of soldiers, during the period in which such wives and dependants were being institutionally treated, by stoppage of allowance by the War Office and Admiralty (War Cabinet 232, Minute 8).

By War Cabinet 235, Minute 12, the Minister of Pensions was directed to convene a Committee, to consist of the representatives of the Departments concerned, with a view to the presentation of a report. The Committee have come to the conclusion that there was no serious deficiency of accommodation for the institutional treatment of dependants of soldiers or sailors or pensioners. The Committee recommend that the existing system of the stoppage of the separation allowance during treatment in a rate-aided institution should be modified so as to provide—

(a.) For the continuance at the usual rate of the separation allowance, notwithstanding the admission to such an institution of a dependant other than a soldier or sailor's wife.

(b.) For the payment by the Local War Pensions Committee, subject to conditions, of an allowance in lieu of, but at the same rate as separation allowance during, the institutional treatment of soldiers' or sailors' wives.

(c.) The existing system of administration of pensions during treatment in a rate-aided institution should be modified so far as to provide for the suspension of payment of pension to a soldier's widow, subject to the condition that an allowance of equal amount should be administered by the Local War Pensions Committee for her benefit.

The War Cabinet decided—

To adopt the above recommendations.

13. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by Lord Rhondda (Paper G.T.-2314) and a Note by Sir Albert Stanley (Paper G.T.-2364) in regard to the proposed transfer of the organisation for the purchase of meat and cheese from the Board of Trade to the Ministry of Food.

Lord Rhondda said that the Board of Trade offered no objections to the transfer of their functions in connection with the purchase of meat and cheese to the Food Controller. The President of the Board of Trade, however, stated in his Memorandum that he could not agree to transfer to the Ministry of Food certain members of the permanent Board of Trade staff who have been engaged in supervising the operations of the meat purchasing organisation.

In the course of the discussion it became apparent that there was a considerable difference of opinion between the Departments in regard to the responsibility for the personnel. In these circumstances, and pending fuller investigation, no immediate decision could be reached, and the War Cabinet therefore asked—

Lord Milner and Mr. Barnes to examine the facts with the Food Controller and the Secretary of State for War, and report to the War Cabinet.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,

October 24, 1917.
APPENDIX.

G.T.-2340

AIR POLICY COMMITTEE.
(War Cabinet 249, Minute 15.)

THE Air Policy Committee held their first meeting on Tuesday, the 16th October, 1917, and I append, for the information of my colleagues and for the approval of the War Cabinet, a copy of the Minutes of the Meeting.

The Committee further recommend that Major Storr, Assistant Secretary to the War Cabinet, be appointed Secretary to the Committee.

All decisions reached, and recommendations made, by the Committee will be circulated to the Cabinet.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 18, 1917.

(Initialled) J. C. S.

The Chairman briefly outlined what he conceived to be the functions of the Committee. He said that, at the meeting of the War Cabinet held the previous day, it had been decided that a Committee composed as under should be appointed, to assemble at once, to advise the War Cabinet on all questions relating to Air Policy:—

General Smuts (Chairman).
First Lord of the Admiralty.
The Secretary of State for War.
The President of the Air Board.

A Secretary to be appointed by the Chairman. In his view, the Committee should be attended and advised by the First Sea Lord and members of the Board of Admiralty concerned with air questions, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Director-General of Military Aeronautics, and Sir David Henderson. The Committee had to consider the claims of the Navy and Army respectively in regard to the output of aircraft and the question of an independent air offensive or long-range bombing operations conducted under the direction, in the first instance, of the Committee. The War Cabinet had accepted the principle of an Air Ministry, but in the interval before this Ministry came into being, a Committee to the War Cabinet, composed of the Heads of the chief Departments concerned, together with their Chiefs of Staff and principal air experts, was necessary in order to decide questions of policy. The Committee would deal with all questions of air policy, that is to say, the distribution of aircraft as well as independent air operations. Their first duty at present was to decide what the offensive air policy was to be in the immediate future. The War Cabinet desired that immediate arrangements should be made for the conduct of long-range offensive operations against German towns where factories existed for the production of munitions of war of all kinds. Consequently, what was required was not only a Naval Air Force and an Army Air Force, but also a force for an independent air offensive. This independent offensive might be conducted on land from the Western front, and an offensive might also be conducted by the Navy from the North Sea.

In view of the War Cabinet decision that long-range aerial operations should be at once carried out against German towns in which munition factories were situated, the immediate duty of the Committee was to determine the objective, the composition of the force to be employed, and the commander to take charge of the expedition.

Sir Eric Geddes said that he understood that the appointment of the Committee was, in fact, an interim arrangement to formulate an air policy until the Air Ministry came into being. The immediate operations which the Committee was called upon to direct were all of a purely military character. In order to get the best results and the fullest co-operation, he submitted that the Navy should have its full say in regard to the activities of any joint independent force from whatever base it might operate. He informed the Committee that the Navy hoped, very shortly, to be able to undertake operations of considerable magnitude by the Fleet.

It was pointed out that the Navy was fully represented on the Committee, and that, consequently, naval interests were properly safeguarded.
Admiral Jellicoe said that he understood that the function of the independent air force was to bomb munition factories and war industrial centres far behind the hostile lines on the Western front; he hoped submarine factories would not be neglected. With regard to the immediate operations in view, he suggested that the force conducting them should be called a "joint force" composed of Army and Navy aircraft.

Lord Cowdray was of opinion that the Committee would have to be a permanent Committee even after an Air Ministry had been established, as they would have to determine how aircraft, when completed, should be allotted either to the Army or the Navy. So far as the present war was concerned they would have to determine the objectives of the independent air force.

Lord Derby thought that it would be necessary to distinguish between purely military and naval objectives and objectives which were mainly political. He would prefer to have operations of a purely military or naval character carried out under the direction of the Commander of the Grand Fleet or Sir Douglas Haig, while independent operations under a separate Commander might be controlled by the Committee.

Sir William Robertson concurred in the view that the Committee was a body which should act until the Air Ministry was formed, and deal with all questions of air policy. The Committee was, in fact, the Air Ministry in its chrysalis stage.

It was suggested that it was desirable to allocate one afternoon a week, which should be kept free by members of the Committee for their meetings even if the Committee might not find it necessary to meet regularly every week.

The Chairman stated that, as the Committee was an important Committee of the War Cabinet dealing with questions of policy, he thought that their decisions should be regularly communicated to members of the War Cabinet.

The Committee arrived at the following decisions:

1. That their functions were to deal with air policy generally as affecting both the Navy and the Army and as concerned with the conduct of independent aerial operations.
2. That, as regards aerial operations on our Western front, these should be under a separate air commander under the command of the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief in France, and that where possible naval machines should be detached to co-operate with the military aircraft.
3. That the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Sir David Henderson should consult together and submit names to the Committee at their next meeting to enable the Committee to select an air commander for the independent offensive on the Western front.
4. That Sir David Henderson should prepare and lay before the Committee at their next meeting a general review of the situation in regard to the proposed aerial offensive, indicating the scope of our programme of construction and the progress that has been made towards the completion of that programme.
5. That the question of a policy of long-range offensive to be carried out by a naval force from the North Sea and of the command of that force should be left for future discussion.
WAR CABINET, 257

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, October 25, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minute 10).
Vice-Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 7 to 9).
The Right Hon. Sir G. Cave, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 3).
The Right Hon. W. Hayes Fisher, M.P., President of the Local Government Board (for Minute 3).
Mr. I. G. Gibbon, Local Government Board (for Minute 3).
The Right Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B. (for Minute 3).

Mr. J. J. Macpherson, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War (for Minute 3).
Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations War Office (for Minutes 4 to 6).
Brigadier-General B. E. W. Childs, C.M.G., Director of Personal Services (for Minute 3).
The Right Hon. the Viscount Goschen, Food Production Department (for Minute 11).
The Right Hon. Lord Rhondda, Food Controller (for Minute 11).
Mr. U. F. Wintour, C.B., C.M.G., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Food (for Minute 11).
Mr. J. F. Bale, Secretary, Wheat Commission (for Minute 11).
Mr. R. H. Carr, Ministry of Food (for Minute 11).
Professor W. G. Adams (for Minute 11).

Captain the Hon. W. Omsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
1. LORD MILNER stated that M. Clémental, the French Minister of Commerce, was still in London and was pressing for the recognition of an agreed minimum of food requirements for the United Kingdom, France, and Italy respectively, and asked that His Majesty's Government should assent to the principle that such agreed indispensable requirements should have absolute priority.

It was pointed out that it was quite impossible to consider this question piecemeal, the whole question of shipping priorities for ore, oil, coal, and munitions, being raised as well as the question of food priorities. At this moment we were 100,000 tons short of our monthly requirement of iron-ore, and had scarcely reached a position of safety in regard to oil.

Beyond these questions of shipping priorities, there was the question of military policy, which also affected shipping, and it was urged that we should not commit ourselves to any pledge to pool resources until we were absolutely sure of the facts and until the Governments of the countries involved had examined the question as a whole.

The Prime Minister stated that the Italian Ambassador had called on him that morning and had handed him an urgent request for assistance to Italy in respect of food. The Italian Ambassador had given him a very bad account, from his personal experience during a recent visit to Italy, regarding the food situation in that country.

It was pointed out that, even if the French harvest was considerably below the normal, there must still be plenty of food in that country. The French demands amounted to a request that we should supply their deficiencies because the French Government was too weak to compel their own peasants to stop hoarding. On the other hand, it was pointed out that, sooner or later, real and not apparent deficiencies would make themselves felt in France, and that it would be necessary to give assistance in this matter. It was mentioned that the French Government had not established any satisfactory system of control or limitation of consumption which would result in effective economies even to the same extent as economies being effected voluntarily in this country. Reports were current showing that in the country districts in France consumption was normal, if not excessive.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a) Lord Milner should reply to M. Clémental to the effect that the first step was to establish the facts by a method satisfactory to all concerned, but that while that examination was in progress it was impossible for the British Government to pledge themselves to pool resources;

(b) The Prime Minister should make a similar reply to Signor Arlotti;

(c) Sir Albert Stanley, in concert with the Food Controller and the Shipping Controller, should report to the War Cabinet on the whole question, after investigating it with M. Clémental and Signor Arlotti.

2. The Secretary of State for War reported to the Cabinet that he had received a letter from Paris stating that a strike on the French railways was threatened during the early days of November. This letter also stated that a delegate, or delegates, were expected in France from the British railway unions with regard to the possible attitude of the English railwaymen employed in France in the event of a French strike.

The War Cabinet asked the Secretary of State for War to send the Papers to the President of the Board of Trade and ask him to see
Mr. J. H. Thomas, M.P., Organising Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and decided that—

Under no circumstances should the delegates going to France be searched at Southampton or Havre.

3. The War Cabinet had before them the report of the Cabinet Committee established by War Cabinet 246, Minute 1 (Paper G.T.-2321), and also a Memorandum by Lord Milner (Paper G.T.-2354).

Sir George Cave stated that, with the exception of Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, every member of the Committee was in substantial agreement with the report. On one point, however, there was a division of opinion, namely, the period of time during which hard labour should be served before any mitigation of treatment should be meted out by the prison authorities to those men who were undergoing sentence of imprisonment with hard labour for continued refusal to obey military orders, alleging conscientious objection to so doing. He himself thought that this period should be twelve months, and not less, while several members of the Committee were of opinion that four or six months was a sufficiently long sentence of hard labour; and that thereafter this class of Conscientious Objector, usually called "Absolutists," might receive the benefit of the application of Prison Regulation 243 A.

Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, who was unavoidably prevented from attending, had written a letter to the effect that he favoured the release of these Absolutists after a certain period of sentence had run, subject, of course, to their reincarceration, under the Defence of the Realm Act, in the event of their indulging in propaganda or otherwise attempting to subvert the working of the Military Service Acts.

General Childs stated that the latest figures regarding the number of persons now undergoing sentence alleging conscientious objection to military service were as follows:

- Men who refused to plead ........................................... 562
- Men rejected by the Central Tribunal as not being true Conscientious Objectors ........................................... 289
- Men who had been before the Central Tribunal, but who refused to accept work of national importance in lieu of imprisonment ........................................... 306
- Men who had been released from prison and employed upon work of national importance, but who had been returned to prison for misconduct ........................................... 252
- Total number of persons alleging conscientious objection now in prison ........................................... 1,409

Lord Milner expressed the view that, if a man was willing to undergo several terms of the severest sentence known to the criminal law, and his past record showed that he was a man of religious scruple, that man should be exempted from further military service, on condition that he did not abuse his liberty. In his opinion, the intention of the Military Service Act was to grant exemption to such persons. He pointed out that about 400 Conscientious Objectors had been granted absolute exemption by Local or Appeal Tribunals, notably at York, where a number of Quakers had been exempted. It seemed to be a matter of luck as to whether a Conscientious Objector ran up against a Tribunal that was willing to exempt Conscientious Objectors, or against one which was not. Some Conscientious Objectors had thus received absolute exemption, while similar characters were doing two years hard labour. Mr. I. G. Gibbon pointed out that a large proportion of those who had obtained tribunal exemption were already doing hospital or other war work.

Mr. Long recalled the fact that he was in charge of the
Military Service Act when it was passed, and that all the military authorities at that time had said that if once the door was opened to exemption from all service on conscientious grounds there would be no end to it, and the whole purpose and structure of the Military Service Act would crumple. If men were to be let out of prison now and exempted from the duty of further service, others, who had enlisted and were actually serving at the Front, would put forward conscientious objection to further service. He pointed out that public opinion had hardened against the Conscientious Objector since the time that the Military Service Act was passed. The public felt very strongly that intolerable injustice would be done if the Government allowed Conscientious Objectors to go scot-free from all duty to the State, while men in single charge of businesses, men with large families, and men who were the sole support of a widowed mother, were being compelled to join the army under extremely hard personal circumstances. He did not believe that there would be any substantial outcry even if one of these Conscientious Objectors died in prison, and if any attempt were made by the Government to alter the law or to release Conscientious Objectors, there would be violent attacks upon the Government both inside and outside Parliament. He pointed out that, since our Military Service Act was passed, similar Acts had been passed by three of our Dominions and by the United States of America; and in no case did these Governments allow absolute exemption on conscientious grounds.

Mr. Hayes Fisher associated himself with Mr. Long's view. Lord Salisbury, formerly the Chairman of the Central Tribunal, stated that he was opposed to letting these men out of prison, but thought that twelve months' hard labour was too long a period before mitigating prison treatment. He quite agreed that Tribunals, who on the whole had done very well, had made considerable mistakes in dealing with this matter, and that there had been inequality of treatment. With regard to the men who refused to plead, he thought that the majority of them were conscientious, and would get the benefit of being offered the alternative of the Home Office scheme for employment on Dartmoor or elsewhere, if they would consent to plead.

Lord Derby urged the War Cabinet not to reduce the period before which mitigation commenced below twelve months, because he feared some growth in the number of Conscientious Objectors if any mitigation were granted.

The War Cabinet decided, with Lord Milner's dissent, that—

Under no circumstances should absolute exemption from service be granted to men alleging conscientious objection, now undergoing sentences in prison, but that men who have served a period, to be determined by the Home Secretary, but not exceeding 12 months, with hard labour, should receive mitigation of prison treatment.

The Western Front.

4. The Director of Military Operations stated that information had been received from Sir Douglas Haig that a heavy counterattack which had been made on the Allied lines in the vicinity of Houthulst Forest had been repulsed.

Captures.

5. The Director of Military Operations stated that the captures on the Western front between the 1st January and the 24th October, 1917, were:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British</th>
<th>French</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,80 guns.</td>
<td>298 guns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59,550 prisoners.</td>
<td>52,600 prisoners (including those in the latest French offensive).</td>
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</table>
The Italian Front.

6. General Maurice stated that information had been received from General Delmé-Radcliffe to the effect that a heavy bombardment by the enemy commenced at 2 A.M. on the 21st instant. Shortly afterwards the weather broke; after which only desultory firing took place. No infantry attack is reported by the Italians, but one is mentioned in the German Wireless message.

British Submarines in the Baltic.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 256, Minute 6, the Deputy First Sea Lord stated that the “C. 32” was aground in Kanu Sound (Gulf of Riga), and the crew had failed to get her off. The latter had now disembarked and had been landed at Pernau.

Convoys.

8. The Deputy First Sea Lord stated that the convoys and escorts were at present held up on account of bad weather.

Submarines.

9. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that a destroyer had dropped a depth charge on a submarine in the vicinity of the Skerries; the result was unknown.

Holland:

Transport of Sand and Metals.

10. Lord Robert Cecil brought to the notice of the War Cabinet the situation in Holland as regards the question of the transport of sand and metals from Holland into Belgium, and stated that at present a deadlock had been arrived at, but that, though the state of affairs was somewhat acute, he did not see how we could give way; moreover, we had every international right to stop the Dutch from having the use of our cables, which action was having a very serious effect on the commercial business of their country. He anticipated that trouble was bound to occur with the Scandinavian countries from the efforts which we were making, in conjunction with the United States, to stop the trade of such countries with Germany. He proposed to endeavour to separate the metal controversy from that relating to sand. As regards the latter, it had a direct bearing on the military situation, inasmuch as the present method of supply saved the German railways, thus releasing them for war operations.

As regards metals, there were two aspects in the case. One was that the Dutch Government were ready to stop the transit of all metals via the Dutch canals, provided such metals were requisitioned by the German Government. The other aspect was, the Dutch contended that when the Germans have sent ore into Holland to be smelted it was not right for us to insist that it should not be re-exported for German use.

The War Cabinet took note of Lord Robert Cecil’s statement.

Potatoes.

11. The Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that the question of the retail price of potatoes had been raised in the House of Commons in connection with the guaranteed price, namely, 6£ per ton.

Lord Rhondda stated that a guarantee had been made to that effect early in the year, with the result that about 200,000 more acres of potatoes had been cultivated this year than last, involving a present surplus of about 2,000,000 tons of potatoes. It would not be possible to export this surplus, as France and Italy also had a surplus of potatoes. If any growers were allowed to sell under the guaranteed price others would look upon it as a breach of faith on the part of the Government, their market being spoiled. The Government had not contracted to buy from the growers. Certain suggestions had been put forward to him, namely, that we should
get the United States and Belgian troops to take some of the surplus; and, furthermore, that 5 per cent. of the ingredients used in the making of bread might be potatoes. This only dealt with the fringe of the question. Another proposal was to substitute for the original guarantee per ton a subsidy to the farmers for the acreage grown, paying such subsidy direct to the farmer. This would result in a cost to the Crown, if the bonus was at the rate of 6½. an acre, of 9,000,000. Such procedure would enable the market price of potatoes to find its own level. Lord Rhondda thought that no further encouragement was needed to induce growers to produce potatoes in 1918.

Mr. Wintour stated that he did not consider that consumption would be increased even if the retail price were reduced, but that it was a question of how to keep the market price up. He recommended buying forward to absorb the surplus, or perhaps a little more, and also giving a rebate to the bakers as an encouragement to them to use more potatoes in bread. He strongly advocated, with regard to the remaining surplus, that food-preserving plant should be developed as rapidly as possible, with a view to drying the potatoes and working them off at a later date, either as vegetables or in lieu of flour or alcohol made from grain. As it would not be necessary or desirable to take delivery of the whole surplus at the present moment, he would suggest that a slightly higher price should be offered for the delivery of surplus potatoes in the early part of next year, so as to cover the cost of storage and deterioration. He added that at the present moment, in Liverpool and London, for instance, there was an actual shortage of potatoes, and that farmers were using their labour for other purposes, while there was a large glut of potatoes in the rural districts.

During the course of the discussion it appeared that the 6½ guarantee came into operation from the 15th September last, and that a price of 6½ per ton to the grower enabled potatoes to be retailed at about 1½. a lb. Any grower who sold under 6½ was liable to be prosecuted, though sales were taking place in Ireland as low as 3½. 15s. per ton. The Chief Secretary for Ireland was anxious that prosecutions should not be taken up in these cases.

In view of the necessity to encourage the people to eat potatoes in order to save flour, and the necessity for conserving all possible forms of food for next spring, the War Cabinet requested—

The Food Controller to prepare for them, at an early date, statements showing what would be the charge to the Exchequer if potatoes were retailed at ½d. per lb., taking into consideration the fact that three or four months had elapsed since this season's potatoes began to be available, and setting out the alternative proposals for the entry of the Government as a buyer into the potato market, or for legislation on the lines of the Corn Production Act for compensating potato growers according to acreage.

The War Cabinet also sanctioned the use of part of the bread subsidy for the purpose of encouraging the increase of the use of potatoes in bread.
WAR CABINET, 253.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, October 26, 1917, at 12 noon.

Present:

THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade.

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., M.P., Secretary of State for War.

Mr. U. F. WINTOUR, C.B., C.M.G., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Food.

Mr. R. H. CARR, Ministry of Food.

The Right Hon. R. E. PROTHERO, M.V.O., M.P., President, Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. F. L. C. FLOOD, Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Sir A. LEE, K.C.B., M.P., Food Production Department.

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT GOSCHEN, Food Production Department.

The Right Hon. Sir A. MOND, Bart., M.P., First Commissioner of Works.


Professor W. G. ADAMS.

The Right Hon. C. ADDISON, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction.

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. SIR E. CARSON, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.


The Right Hon. W. LONG, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon. SIR A. STANLEY, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon. W. S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Minister of Munitions.

The Right Hon. R. MUNRO, K.C., M.P., Secretary for Scotland.

The Right Hon. H. E. DUKE, K.C., M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland.

The Right Hon. G. H. ROBERTS, M.P., Minister of Labour.

The Right Hon. W. HAYES FISHER, M.P., President, Local Government Board.


Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. ORMSBY GORE, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. ORMSBY GORE, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

* For Minutes 1 and 2.

† For Minute 3.
1. The War Cabinet had a preliminary discussion on the question of food production, as proposed in Lord Milner's Memorandum dated the 19th October, 1917 (Paper G.T.-2352). They also had before them a Memorandum by Mr. Long (Paper G.T.-2374).

The President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries stated that there was an urgent need for 10,000 skilled ploughmen, who were required in batches of 2,000 at a time. Notwithstanding the decision of the War Cabinet on the 13th July (War Cabinet, 184, Minute 12), the Army had not been able to release the skilled agriculturists required. It was understood that the men were not available in the Army at home.

It was further pointed out that horses and ploughs were at this moment standing idle for lack of skilled ploughmen, and that the season during which they could best be used was rapidly passing.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The larger question could not be discussed in the absence of the Secretary of State for War, but that the War Office should make every possible effort immediately to release 2,000 skilled ploughmen for agriculture, even if this involves taking them from Divisions at the Front which are not required again to take part in the present offensive, or even if they could only be spared for a short furlough of two or three months.

2. The President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries stated that further supplies of oil and paraffin were required for agricultural purposes, many of the machines being at present idle for lack of these supplies. He asked that agriculture might be made a war service for these purposes.

Mr. Long said that agriculture had already received relatively large supplies of oil. As this question had arisen, he felt bound to warn the War Cabinet that the paraffin situation was serious. At present there were only five weeks' supplies in the country, and there was no prospect of increasing these supplies. In London, Birmingham, and other great cities, kerosene was used by the poor for heating, cooking, and lighting. Consequently, as the winter came on the consumption would increase. To permit a shortage of kerosene at a time when food supplies were short and prices high, would be to inflict great hardships on the poor, and to create a very serious situation.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 214, Minute 8, the War Cabinet consulted with their Ministerial colleagues in regard to the political situation created by the defeat of the Government on the previous evening in the House of Commons by a majority of 44 votes to 35.

Notwithstanding that the majority was a small one, in an almost empty House, it was pointed out that the incident was not devoid of political significance, as it had been known beforehand that the Government would be challenged on this question, and the urgency of the matter had been mentioned in the "Whip." Moreover, the majority included not only a number of members known to hold pacifist views, but some consistent supporters of the Government.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer explained that the speeches of those who voted with the majority clearly showed that the objection to the Government proposal was based upon the idea that a new form of property was being created, by the exigencies of the State, from which private landlords would permanently gain profit. In his view there were two alternative courses of action possible to the Government; the first was, to accept the decision of the House of Commons, not merely in the form of the amendment, which had
little or no influence on the Bill, but in the spirit, namely, to drop any idea of compensating landlords, and refuse to recognise any proprietary right to the oil; or, secondly, to alter the form of the Bill and provide compensation in some form other than that of royalty—e.g., refer the question of compensation to the Civil Losses Commission, or some other tribunal. The first alternative would call out the strong opposition of all property owners; the second would involve the State in much larger payments than those contemplated in the Bill. He quite saw that it was difficult for their Labour colleagues to support any compensation on a royalty basis. He added that, if the second course were adopted, the detailed arrangements for compensation could be settled when the Committee stage was reached, provided that it was clearly understood that the principle of recognising the landlord's right to compensation was admitted.

Mr. Long stated that some Members who voted with the minority, though personally disinclined to favour royalties, had expressed the hope to him that the Government would take a firm stand now that the matter had been brought to a division. What had determined him, among other members of the Committee who had examined the subject, to decide in favour of the royalty basis of compensation had been:

(a.) What was the most profitable basis for the State;
(b.) The fact that during the last 18 months negotiations with several large landowners had been commenced by Messrs. Pearson, and they had negotiated on the basis of a royalty of 2s. per ton.

He instanced the case of the Duke of Devonshire, who was probably the largest landowner concerned. It was thought that a considerable amount of oil might be proved to be recoverable from his property in Buxton, a place upon which the late Duke had spent very large sums of money in development as a health resort, the whole amenities and character of which were threatened by the projected oil operations. In his opinion, it was impracticable to limit the Bill to the duration of the war. The initial expenditure on plant was so great, and the boring was of so speculative a character, that contractors could not be induced to undertake the enterprise without some guarantee of permanence in the arrangements entered into. He did not think the House of Commons would agree to refer the matter to the Civil Losses Commission.

General Smuts described the operation of the South African Mining Law, according to which the State becomes the owner of all underground minerals and pays a certain percentage to the landowner on all mineral recovered. In this way the ownership of the minerals was really vested in the State.

Sir Frederick Liddell explained that the effect of the amendment carried in the House, namely, to omit the words “into the Petroleum Royalties Fund constituted,” was to leave the resolution sufficiently wide to cover all the clauses of the Bill, and that no words need be inserted in their place to enable the resolution to read.

Dr. Addison said that the paramount consideration was to obtain the oil, and that, while he agreed with the Lord Advocate (Mr. Clyde) that subterranean liquid oil belonged to the State in the same way as gold and silver, yet, in order to secure the oil rapidly, he was prepared to support the payment of a royalty of 3d.

In reply to the assertion that the Bill was introducing a new form of private property, the Solicitor-General said that the exact opposite was the case; the Bill in fact refrained from unsettling a principle which was now established, because in law the oil was the property of the landlord.

Mr. Churchill reminded the Cabinet that six years ago the Board of Admiralty had mapped out the potential oil-fields of the country,
that their existence was widely known, and that in the interval landlords had been definitely approached with a view to the sale of their right.

Lord Robert Cecil urged that, if possible, the settlement of the principle should stand over until the end of the war, and that meanwhile an interim arrangement should be concluded which did not prejudice the issue either way.

It was pointed out that the right of entry to work the oil was acquired under the Defence of the Realm Act, and that, after the war, wayleave would have to be acquired by a further Bill.

The Home Secretary agreed that the right of the landlord must be recognised, and favoured the reference of the question of compensation to a tribunal, *e.g.* the referees under the Finance Act.

The Secretary for Scotland suggested that the question of what, if any, sum should be paid to the landlord, should be referred to the Losses Commission. House of Commons criticism would be disarmed if a judicial tribunal decided the matter, for in such event compensation would only be awarded if the existing law sanctioned it, and no new right on the part of the landlord would be created.

Mr. G. H. Roberts said that strong objection was felt to the measure because of its permanent character, and its passing would confirm a principle which many of the Labour party stoutly contested. It would provide the party with a powerful political cry, and therefore he thought the best thing would be to drop the Bill.

Mr. Barnes stated that the working classes had a deep-seated objection to royalties. He personally would not object to continue for the period of the war on a basis of 9d., but he would object to a permanent arrangement which would alienate from the State a new form of property and create a new vested interest.

Sir Eric Geddes thought that a way out of the difficulty might be found by passing the Bill as a war measure for the duration of the war only, guaranteeing the approved licensees against any risk they might run by reason of their finding themselves in the hands of the landowner after the war, after they had sunk large sums of money in developing the industry.

Sir Albert Stanley intimated that he understood that without a Government Bill it was unlikely that Messrs. Pearson would proceed with any exploration of the oil deposits of the country.

Mr. Illingworth strongly objected to any property or goods being requisitioned without compensation.

After hearing the discussion, the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that he thought the wise course would be for the Government to stand by the Bill and to challenge the House of Commons as a whole upon it.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The whole question should be referred to the following Committee:

Sir George Cave (in the Chair),
Mr. Barnes,
Mr. Walter Long,
Mr. G. H. Roberts,
Mr. Munro,
Lord Robert Cecil, and
One of the Law Officers of the Crown.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 26, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 259.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. on Monday, October 29, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair) (for Minutes 1 to 6).


The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. George N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations.


Major-General E. B. Ashmore, C.M.G., M.V.O., Home Forces (for Minutes 11, 12, and 13).

The Right Hon. A. B. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair) (for Minutes 7 to 13).

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.


Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
I. THE Prime Minister drew the attention of the War Cabinet to a document he had handed in at the Rome Conference held on the 5th-7th January, 1917, in which he had urged the importance of the preparation of Allied defensive schemes of co-operation on the Italian front to meet such an attack as had recently occurred (Paper G.-106, paragraphs 23 and 26) (Appendix I).

Lord Derby stated that he had seen the Italian Ambassador, who admitted that the Italian troops on the Bainsizza Plateau had been of inferior quality.

The Director of Military Operations explained the situation from the point of view of the War Office, and stated that the Italians had had the warning of the attack, and had known a week ago that a probable objective would be in the vicinity of Tolmino. Further, they had had information as to the German force, namely, five divisions, which had been transferred to Italy. General Maurice added that General Cadorna had informed us in his telegram of the 21st October that the attack was coming; he had communicated the imminent of it to his troops, and had said, further, that he was confident of being able to meet it. This telegram had been communicated to the War Cabinet. Owing to the very difficult country on the Tolmino front, General Cadorna was of opinion that an attack there would be checked without difficulty, and was holding that front, in consequence, lightly. General Cadorna had fifteen divisions in reserve, which was double the number that were used by the Germans and Austrians in their Tolmino offensive. These divisions, however, were on the southern part of the front, and, owing to the fact that most of the roads in that district run east and west, it had been very difficult to get troops to reinforce the Tolmino section. General Maurice said that the attack in some respects resembled that carried out on the Asiago front on the 16th May, namely, the attack was made down the valleys, with a view to isolating the troops in the intervening hills; that the attack had been facilitated and preceded by heavy discharges of gas down the valleys, which were effective inasmuch as the Italian gas masks were inefficient. He added that we had informed the Italians of this and offered to supply them with others, but they had declined. As the result of the gas attack and the isolation of troops on the mountains, a panic had started in the 4th Corps, which spread to the Second Army, with the result that the Italians had not fought. General Maurice stated that a communique had been received from General Cadorna accusing some of the Italian troops of cowardice, but that these words had been deleted by the Italian Embassy before the communique was issued to the press. The Director of Military Operations informed the War Cabinet that our own arrangements to assist the Italians in an emergency, which had been drawn up many months ago, had been completed in detail within four hours of the receipt of orders to send assistance. He stated that the Italians had good defensive positions behind their present front, on to which they could retire, but that whether such would be held must necessarily depend upon whether the Italians would put up a fight. General Cadorna indicated that his intention was to hold the line of the Tagliamento. General Maurice added that the Third Army were not being heavily pressed, and were retiring in good order. As regards a cessation of the Austro-German offensive, he was of opinion that its progress might soon be delayed in view of the fact that the Germans were now getting far from their only railhead, which ended at Tolmino. General Maurice stated that the Italian army could roughly be divided into two parts, namely, the Northern Italians, who fought well, and the Southern Italians, who were useless. It was the Southern Italians who showed cowardice in the valleys on either side of Monte Nero.

Lord Derby stated that he had asked the Italian Ambassador,
what, in his opinion, would be the effect on the Italian nation of the serious reverse, and had been informed that his view was that it would create a tremendous wave of patriotic feeling; that Signor Orlando would become Prime Minister, and that Signor Giolitti would take a patriotic line now that Italian territory was invaded. It was clear that the Italian defeat had been largely due to insidious enemy propaganda in the army, on the lines of the Russian Revolutionists. As to the results at the front, it was a question how far this enemy propaganda had been allowed to spread. General Maurice informed the War Cabinet that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, before leaving for Italy, had asked him to convey a message to the War Cabinet that it would facilitate his work if the Italian Government was informed of the early visit of General Robertson, who was going to consult with General Cadorna on the situation.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to communicate forthwith with the British Embassy at Rome as to General Robertson’s visit.

Lord Derby informed the War Cabinet that Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig had appointed Lord Cavan to command the force that was being despatched to Italy, and stated that further troops will be held in readiness for despatch if such was found to be necessary.

The War Cabinet expressed their appreciation of the action of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig in making this selection and in releasing first-rate divisions for service in Italy. The Prime Minister thought it desirable that the Italians should be informed as to the actual troops that were being sent, so that, with their knowledge of their reputations, they might be encouraged in their efforts. He indicated the point of concentration of the British force.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was requested to telegraph at once to the British Ambassador at Paris, asking him to give the British Government immediate notice if the French intended to publish the fact that they also were sending reinforcements to Italy, in which case the War Cabinet decided that the question of a similar announcement in this country should be considered.

Lord Derby stated that General Dessino, the Russian Military Attaché, had written a letter for publication, the point of which was to the effect that the Italian disaster could not be attributed to military causes arising out of the Russian revolution. General Dessino was very upset at his letter not being passed for publication.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to circulate a copy of General Dessino’s letter, so that it might be considered before any steps were taken to publish the same.

The members of the War Cabinet expressed their appreciation and approval of the prompt decisions taken by the Prime Minister on their behalf during the previous forty-eight hours.

2. The First Sea Lord reported that a seaplane had attacked an enemy submarine off the Algerian coast, and that there was a probability of the attack having been successful.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 254, Minute 8, in connection with the sinking of H.M.S. “Orama,” the First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that the United States destroyer “Conyngham”...
had attacked the submarine that torpedoed the "Orana," and had dropped depth charges on her. As wreckage had appeared, the destruction of the submarine appeared probable.

Naval Air Activity.

4. With reference to the communiqués which have appeared of late in the newspapers as to the bombing raids which have been carried out on enemy railway junctions and aerodromes, the War Cabinet requested—

The First Sea Lord to supply them with a summary of the naval air activity during the past month.

Air Offensive.

5. In connection with the bombing of enemy towns, Lord Derby stated that such operations had been severely handicapped by dense fog and other unfavourable weather conditions. He had arranged to obtain daily reports of operations of this nature, and would forward such reports to the War Cabinet as soon as received.

Proposed Anglo-French Conference at Boulogne.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 251, Minute 5, the Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet that he had received a request from M. Painlevé intimating that the French authorities wished to discuss with us an extension of the British front in Flanders, and also the situation on the Italian front.

The War Cabinet decided—

To consider this request at an early date.

Food Supply in France and Italy.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 257, Minute 1, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that he had been interviewed by both the French and Italian Ambassadors, who had pointed out the very serious state of affairs in their respective countries with regard to the food question.

Lord Milner stated that he had been dealing with this matter, and that a preliminary statement was now being prepared, and as soon as he had received the final statement he would communicate with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Shipping Losses.

8. With reference to the War Cabinet 241, Minute 14, the First Lord stated that he considered it undesirable at present that the form in which the shipping losses are communicated to the public should be changed.

The War Cabinet decided that—

No change should be made until the matter had been further considered by the War Cabinet.

Shipping Situation.

9. Mr. Balfour brought to the notice of the War Cabinet the seriousness of the shipping situation, as set out in a report by the Ministry of Shipping (Paper G.T.-2386) and his covering note (Paper G.T.-2412). He pressed upon the War Cabinet the fact that the most optimistic estimate stated that in 1918 there would have to be a reduction of no less than 8,000,000 tons in our imports as compared with 1917, which meant that if our imports of munitions (15,000,000 tons) and foodstuffs (14,000,000 tons) were maintained at the same level next year as this, we should not be able to import in 1918 a single ton of anything else whatever, either in the nature of raw material or manufactured articles. Quite apart from the bearing this situation had on the enquiry he was making, in accordance with the Prime Minister's wishes, into our resources for
next year, he urged that the position as set out by the Ministry of Shipping should be investigated further, so that the necessary cutting down in imports should begin as soon as possible, and the necessary data arrived at to enable us to prepare a forecast as to what will be our resources in munitions for next year.

It was stated that there were indications that in 1918 the Americans would require to use the whole of their munition resources so as to supply their own forces on the Western Front.

In regard to Mr. Balfour's suggestion for the preparation of a programme for a further curtailment of imports, it was pointed out that it had not been found possible to adhere to the previous programme. In a single period of three months, for example, the actual imports had exceeded the estimate by no less than 2,000,000 tons. The Tonnage Priority Committee reviewed the situation every month, and endeavoured to regulate the imports according to the shipping available for two months in advance. Even their estimates, however, were widely departed from in practice, owing to the exigencies of the shipping situation, and it was necessary to leave a very wide discretion to the Shipping Controller. In these circumstances, doubt was expressed as to the value of a further programme of restrictions.

No decision was reached.

10. Sir Edward Carson stated that, in the course of his examination into the question of Propaganda, the desirability of a British Mission to Roumania had been strongly urged upon him. The difficulty was to select a suitable person to act as Head of the Mission. He thought that the Roumanians should be more clearly informed of the efforts we are making to assist them.

The War Cabinet approved the suggestion in principle, and requested—

Sir Edward Carson to consult further with Lord Milner and Mr. Balfour with a view to deciding the desirability of such a Mission, and the selection of personnel.

11. The War Cabinet had under consideration an Admiralty Memorandum (Appendix II, Paper G.T.—2380), which the First Lord had undertaken to have prepared in his Department for their information (War Cabinet, 250, Minute 2; War Cabinet, 253, Minute 7), regarding the further supply of guns by the Admiralty for the London defences. They were reminded that the Navy had already released forty-eight anti-aircraft guns, not including the four mounted at Chatham, for the defence of London.

The First Lord said that the view had been expressed at previous meetings that it was highly doubtful whether any more anti-aircraft guns could be handed over without grave risk. The Navy had already released both guns and aeroplanes which were practically indispensable. The Germans were reported to be constructing submersible craft of a much larger type with long-range guns, while our recent returns of shipping losses showed a recrudescence of successful activities by hostile submarines.

It was pointed out that the question really was of the relative importance to completing (a) London barrage, and (b) the defensive arming of our merchant shipping.

General Ashmore said that Lord French's wish was to fill in the four existing gaps in the barrage and to thicken the barrage at certain points. In reply to a question he stated that, as the expression of his personal opinion, that the additional twenty-four guns were not absolutely vital at the present moment to the security of the London area. It was suggested that, rather than interfere
with the defensive arming of merchant ships, anti-aircraft guns might be withdrawn from other fronts, e.g., France.

The Master-General of the Ordnance said that, as regards the additional twenty-four guns now required for the London defences, the principal difficulty was in regard to their mountings, and the necessary mountings to replace those removed from merchant shipping, if the Cabinet so decided, could not be ready until the end of next March.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In the circumstances the Admiralty should not be required to supply the additional twenty-four anti-aircraft guns for the London defences.

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12. The Minister of Munitions pointed out that the wear and tear of anti-aircraft guns was at present very unevenly distributed. These guns were used both for home defence against air raids and anti-aircraft defences on the various fronts, and for the defensive arming of shipping. During the previous month and the period of the harvesters' moon, the guns of the London barrage had been subjected to a very severe test. Raids conducted on five or six successive nights might place the guns of the barrage completely out of action. While not himself a great believer in the efficacy of the barrage system of defence against air raids, he thought the above was a possibility which required the most serious consideration. He strongly advocated, as a measure to meet this emergency, that there should be a free and constant interchange of anti-aircraft guns so that there might be no undue strain upon any particular set of guns, and for purposes of repair, so that the life of each gun might be equally prolonged so far as is feasible. His Ministry had made all arrangements to deal with the relining of such guns, within practical limits.

The War Cabinet concurred in this view, and decided that—

The Minister of Munitions should take the necessary action to give effect to his proposal, in concert with the Admiralty and the War Office.

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13. The War Cabinet had before them a Note by the Home Secretary, submitting a Memorandum by the Commissioner of Police (Paper G.T.-2407) (Appendix III), asking for a decision as to whether—

(a.) The present system of night warning should be maintained;
(b.) It should be maintained, but be supplemented by allowing the local authorities to sound sirens; or
(c.) The system in use by day of firing high explosive sound bombs should be extended to the night.

The Commissioner said the present system was described in his Memorandum of the 25th October, 1917. The Police received information of an impending air raid from the Military Authorities; on this he first communicated with the necessary personnel of constables, regular and special, who then took air raid action, i.e., disseminating the warning by means of constables on foot, on cycles, or in motor-cars, carrying “Take Cover” placards, going through the streets sounding whistles, bells, or horns. He next assembled relief parties at some 200 stations, and afterwards acted to the best of his judgment as circumstances demanded.

Sir George Cave stated that the use of bombs by day was necessary, as ordinary signals were drowned by the noise of the traffic. Sound bombs by night, however, would be mistaken for enemy bombs or gunfire, and cause unnecessary alarm. The
difficulty was to devise means of giving warning which would enable people to find the best shelter available, and at the same time not drive people out of their houses. During the present moon, when no raids had so far been carried out, people were already taking cover in the evenings in Tube Stations, and this was bound to cause illness if the cold weather continued. This probability, moreover, would be much accentuated if loud warnings were given. If, on the contrary, no warnings were issued by night other than by the "Take Cover" system of constables with placards, whistles, &c., the public would complain that, whereas they had provided for the removal of their families from the upper floors to the basement, these precautions were useless unless the inhabitants were properly aroused.

It was pointed out that syrens were used at Dunkirk and elsewhere, where raids were almost of nightly occurrence, and that this system had also obtained in Hull, to the considerable dislocation of industry.

It was also pointed out that syrens were constantly used at all hours of the day and night for calling up the various "shifts" in Munition Factories.

The War Cabinet agreed that what they had to determine was, which was the more likely to entail a greater risk —

(a.) Losses to people who had no opportunity of taking shelter, if no warnings by bomb or syren were given;

(b.) Losses due to exposure and to accidents caused by the congestion of a frightened populace crowding into Tube Stations and other cover, if such warnings were issued.

After due consideration the War Cabinet decided that—

The present system should be maintained.

2, Whitehall Gardens, London, S.W.,
October 29, 1917.
APPENDIX I.

Extracts from (G.-106) Memorandum handed by the Prime Minister to the Delegates at the Conference at Rome on 5th, 6th, and 7th January, 1917.

23. LEAVING the Balkans, let us look at the Italian front. Here there are two possible contingencies: one defensive, the other offensive. If the enemy should, as suggested above, concentrate his manoeuvre armies against the Italian front, it would afford a great opportunity for the Allies. Should the enemy adopt this course, the presumption is that he will gamble upon the stupidity and lack of mobility of the Allies. Unquestionably, he regards us as stupid and lacking in initiative—we British most of all. Let us take advantage of this amiable belief. The enemy will base the plan of attack on the assumption that he has to meet a force of so many Italian heavy guns, some of which he knows to be of old type, and lacking in mobility. If he elects to attack on this front, we propose that the Allies should concert their own plans so that instead of meeting the artillery armament that he calculates for, he shall find himself confronted with a vastly superior armament of Italian guns reinforced by British, and, we should hope, French, heavy artillery with their own personnel. The object of the Allies is to kill Germans. We can put them out of action just as well on the Italian as on the Western front. By adopting this plan we might well convert a repulse into a rout just as the Germans, by massing artillery on the Roumanian front, converted the Roumanian invasion of Transylvania into an utter defeat. We ask our Allies to examine this proposal in a sympathetic spirit, and, subject to the approval of the Conference, we propose that orders should be given to our respective General Staffs to work it out in all its technical details, including the elaboration of railway timetables, and the arrangements for the necessary gun emplacements and communications.

26. Such, then, are the problems which we think the Governments and the General Staffs should consider, namely:

(3.) The development of defensive and offensive scheme of co-operation on the Italian front.

APPENDIX II

G.T.-2380.

S U P P L Y  O F  G U N S  B Y  A D M I R A L T Y  F O R  D E F E N S E  O F  L O N D O N.

Admiralty Memorandum for the War Cabinet.

IN connection with the request which has been received by the Admiralty from the War Office for the supply of an additional twenty-four guns for use in the defence of London against enemy aircraft, the Board desire that the War Cabinet should be aware of the serious effect which compliance with the War Office request would have upon the programme of defensively arming merchant-ships.

The Admiralty have already provided, for the defence of London, 16—3-inch H.A. guns, which would otherwise have been used for defensively arming merchant-ships, and twenty-two guns which were taken from the number allocated to new construction and reserves. There are no more available from the latter source, and if any further guns are to be supplied they must be guns which are allocated to the defensive arming of merchant-ships.

It will be remembered (Admiralty memorandum 2.10.17) that, in view of the shortage of steel, it was decided that a programme of one gun only per merchant-ship should be adopted, and at the present time there are—

2,179 merchant-ships of over 1,500 tons gross register, which require arming or re-arming with 4-inch or larger guns.
381 merchant-ships of 1,500 tons gross register and under, which require re-arming with 3-inch or smaller guns.
1,028 merchant-ships which are entirely unarmed.
The rate at which the arming and re-arming of merchant-ships is being carried out has averaged sixty-two ships per week during the last four weeks, but it is anticipated that an increased delivery of guns will enable seventy-five ships per week to be armed and rearmed in the near future. It will, therefore, take at least twelve months to complete the programme so far as regards existing ships without taking into account the requirements for new construction.

The attached table gives particulars of British merchant-ships which have had to capitulate after action with enemy submarines during the last four months owing to their gun having been outranged, and does not include ships with inadequate armament which have been sunk otherwise than after a gun action.

Events have proved that the defensive armament of merchant-ships is a very important means of defence against enemy submarines, and it is anticipated that difficulties of convoy in the winter owing to bad weather, and the prospect of larger submarines which are now building, operating at greater distances, will more than ever necessitate a merchant-ship relying on her own resources, that is, mainly on her gun power.

The submarine is at present the enemy’s most effective weapon against us, and the Board desire to point out that in their view there is considerable danger of too great optimism prevailing in regard to the submarine campaign situation, and that any further reduction in, or postponement of, the programme for defensively arming merchant-ships is to be very strongly deprecated, as it must almost certainly result in an aggravation of the injury which the enemy’s submarines are inflicting upon the Allied cause.

October 24, 1917.

(Signed) E. GEDDES.

APPENDIX III.

Air-Raid Warnings in London by Night.

I submit a memorandum by the Commissioner of Police on the above subject and ask the War Cabinet to decide—

(a.) Whether the present system of night warnings should be maintained, or
(b.) Whether it should be maintained but should be supplemented by allowing local authorities to sound sirens, or
(c.) Whether the system in use by day of firing high explosive sound bombs should be extended to the night.

[1915—269]
I agree with the Commissioner as to the inadvisability of using the sound-bombs at night. These form an excellent warning by day, when the streets are congested and the roar of the London traffic drowns all other sounds, including the most powerful siren. But to use them at night, when there is comparative quiet and the use of these bombs would give the impression that a bombardment of London is proceeding, would cause unnecessary alarm and might lead to serious consequences. When these bombs were first used by day, two persons of weak physique are said to have died of heart failure.

The use of sirens would not be open to the above objections. They would, as the Commissioner says, reach the inmates of all houses and would not improbably cause some persons to leave their houses and incur danger in the streets. But there is a widely diffused feeling among the public that when a raid is impending they are entitled to be told the truth, and that those foolish persons who upon being warned rush into danger have only themselves to blame. The prudent householder says: "I have made careful arrangements for getting my family into the basement of my house (or some other safe place) when a raid is threatened, and when the authorities know the raiders are coming I ought to have the information so that I may take the measures required for the protection of my household." And he is not satisfied by the answer that, if the information is given, other people will act foolishly.

I believe that a siren is actually sounded at Woolwich Arsenal, which is heard over a considerable area of London; and the local authorities at Leytonstone and some other places have set up a system of warnings by siren, and refuse to discontinue it. To forbid these local warnings without setting up some other form of public warning would lead to great dissatisfaction.

If it is decided to allow and encourage the local authorities to give warning by siren—

(a.) They should be prevented from using the siren before the "take cover" notice issues.

(b.) A regulation should be made forbidding the use of sirens for other purposes during the hours when they are intended to be used as air-raid warnings (these hours should be fixed, e.g., in winter from 8 P.M. until 6 A.M., the sound bombs being used at all other times).

(c.) The public should be strongly cautioned against leaving their houses on hearing the warning.

October 26, 1917.

G. CAVE.

AIR-RAID WARNINGS IN LONDON.

Memorandum by the Commissioner of Police.

After each raid the controversy as to the form in which warnings should be given is invariably revived, and it would be satisfactory if a decision upon the point were given by the War Cabinet, as this would be deemed authoritative and accepted by everybody.

At present from half an hour before sunrise until half an hour after sunset, warning is given by the discharge from selected centres of two sound signals. At other times the warning is disseminated by the Constabulary, regular and special, on foot and on cycles or in motor cars, carrying the "Take Cover" placards, who circulate through the streets sounding their whistles, bells, or horns, and calling out "Take Cover." The placards carried by the cars and cycles are illuminated so as to be visible from a distance. Experience justifies the statement that so far as clearing the streets is concerned this method has proved quite satisfactory. It may be added that it is very effectively supplemented by other indications to people actually in the streets. Tramcars turn down their lights; pedestrians in the vicinity of the river bank see the Tower Bridge carriage-way lifted up; elsewhere they see fire engines proceeding to allotted stations, the Constabulary and members of the Air Raid Relief parties, and ambulances and other motor transport assembling. In brief, the indications are so numerous that some of them cannot fail to reach even the most unobservant.

Though this warning may be deemed to be quite sufficient for the purpose of informing persons in the streets, it is urged that it does not reach the occupants of all houses, and some of them may be anxious to leave their homes for shelter in the neighbourhood or to proceed from upper to lower rooms for greater security.
They demand therefore that the warning shall be given by sound-signals, the sound of which will necessarily reach everybody, indoors as well as out of doors; and it may be admitted that, if the method of giving the warning by day were adopted for the dark hours, this object would be achieved.

The objections to this course are very weighty. Firing sound-signals at night when most people are in their homes would, more especially in districts occupied by the working classes, create great alarm, in places amounting to panic. A number, far in excess of the accommodation available, would rush for shelter; children, half clad, would be dragged out of their beds and taken out into the streets, and possibly be still there when the gais begin to fire, not having found room in the shelters. The weather is becoming colder, and if many raids take place under such conditions there will be a heavy toll taken of child-life, as the result of the exposure to which children will be subjected.

Besides the children, there are the inmates of hospitals to be considered, also women in delicate health, old persons, persons with weak hearts or in bad health, or recovering from sickness and so forth, all of whom might be very seriously affected by the alarming sound—for it is an alarming sound—of the signals that are fired by day. The justification for firing them by day is that the streets then are greatly congested with people, and that an instantaneous and emphatic warning is required to enable them to be quickly emptied. At night-time conditions are different, and the streets being less congested, can be cleared in time by the means now adopted, which cause no special alarm to the category of persons above referred to.

An alternative proposal that finds favour with many is that the warning at night should be given by sirens to be set up by the various local authorities, of whom there are 121 in the Metropolitan Police district. There can be no doubt that if this system is set up there will be many instances of premature signals, some of which will be taken up by adjoining districts, with the result that the public will be unnecessarily disturbed.

The siren would certainly be less alarming, but, as its sound would reach the inmates of all houses, the effect would be to impel great numbers of persons, more especially in the poorer districts, to rush for shelters which do not exist. It is, I venture to urge, most desirable that the people should remain in their houses. What has to be combated is the conviction of so many of them that any public building, such as a Town Hall, library, or police station is so infinitely more secure than their homes that, at any risk, they must get there.

Tube stations, goods depots, warehouses, and the basements of well-built factories are certainly quite secure; but where working class residential districts are not centres of industry, these secure shelters do not exist, and such shelters as are available are insufficient in accommodation, and at best only makeshifts which, in many instances, are splinter proof only, and in this respect very little better than private houses. At the present time there is a marked insufficiency of even this imperfect air-raid shelter in a great number of densely populated areas, and in such circumstances no measure should, I venture to submit, be taken which will have the effect of bringing into the street people for whom there is no shelter accommodation.

We are gradually increasing this accommodation, and we have it now for about 14 millions; but it is very badly distributed, some areas having much more than they really need, others much less.

Weighing all these considerations, and having regard to what I know of the state of mind of the people in the East End, who in the past have suffered much from raids, and whose nerves in consequence have been greatly strained, I am not desirous to see any change made which might have the effect of aggravating their existing restlessness without adding to their security.

It will be necessary when this decision is taken to have power to compel local authorities to come into line and to refrain from taking independent action not formally authorised. At present two or three local authorities contemplate action which, if carried out, may create great confusion and possibly result in alarm. An order under Regulation 12 (6) Defence of the Realm Regulation would meet this.

E. R. H.

October 25, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 260.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, October 30, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Major-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.


Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.

Captain C. Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Invasion of Italy.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 259, Minute 1, the Director of Military Operations said that, according to the most recent information, the Italian situation appeared to be improving slightly. The retirement of the Italian troops to Tagliamento was proceeding in a more orderly manner, with less interruption from the enemy, as the latter got further from the railhead.

With reference to the statement which appeared in General Delmé-Radcliffe's telegram No. 510 of the 29th instant, to the effect that the Second Army must have lost the greater part of its artillery, probably not less than 1,500 guns, General Maurice said that he thought it very probable that the losses had been appreciably overestimated.

General Maurice then read an extract from telegram No. 505 of the 28th instant from General Delmé-Radcliffe, which showed that...
the present disaster was not due to any revolutionary or mutinous tendencies, but had been brought about by the deliberate and premeditated action of the troops in dropping their equipment and abandoning their positions under the instigation of, and due to the insidious propaganda conducted by, pacifists, socialists, and enemy agents.

General Maurice further indicated the place where the French troops, which were being sent to the support of the Italians, would be concentrated under the present arrangements.

With regard to the British reinforcements which were being sent from France to Italy, General Maurice stated that the Headquarters and advanced party were to leave Paris to-day. General Cavan had been selected to command these reinforcements, and was due in London this afternoon. In the event of it being decided considerably to augment the reinforcements now being sent, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig had suggested, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had concurred, that the Chief Command should be given to Sir Henry Rawlinson. The Prince of Wales was to be attached to General Cavan’s Staff, but would not leave England until this week.

With regard to the movements of the British main body, Sir Douglas Haig, who had gone into the question very thoroughly with the French authorities, reported that it would not be feasible for them to leave before the 6th November without serious dislocation of the arrangements made for transporting the French reinforcements. The French were prepared to hand over to the British the whole of the Southern routes, by which through trains a day and 8 trains to the frontier with a march across would be available. Certain French units would proceed by road across the passes, and the French stated that the whole of our force would be concentrated before the last of the French troops reached their destination. The whole of our fighting troops should reach their place of concentration by about the 15th November. General Maurice reminded the War Cabinet that the whole of the French railway system to the South was under the sole control of the French.

The War Cabinet, while regretting that under these arrangements substantial French reinforcements would reach the frontier before any body of British troops could arrive, authorised—

The Director of Military Operations to inform Sir Douglas Haig that the above programme was approved.

The Secretary of State for War undertook, in consultation with his Staff, to examine the possibility of despatching a certain number of British troops at an earlier date.

General Maurice further informed the War Cabinet that the British units which were being sent to Italy were taking with them considerably more than their usual complement of artillery.

2. The Director of Military Operations said that Sir Douglas Haig wished to send with the British reinforcements two complete squadrons of the Royal Flying Corps from France (one artillery squadron and one reconnaissance squadron). In this connection he had to point out that General Allenby recently reported that in the Palestine theatre the enemy would very shortly have as many aeroplanes as ourselves on that front, and he accordingly pressed for the despatch of two additional Flying Squadrons. As these squadrons would have to be sent by sea, they could not reach General Allenby for another five or six weeks.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The British force proceeding to Italy should be accompanied by two complete Flying Squadrons, and that they should examine later the possibility of meeting General Allenby’s requirements.
3. With reference to the decision reached on the previous day (War Cabinet 259, Minute 1), that a copy of General Dessino's letter (Appendix) should be circulated so that it might be considered before any steps were taken for its publication, the War Cabinet had before them the text of the letter.

The Secretary of State for War said that General Dessino was very much disturbed at the delay in publishing the letter, and his own view was that it was desirable to publish some statement which should include General Cadorna's address to the troops, in its unexpurgated form. The Italian Ambassador, however, had personally protested to him against publication of General Dessino's letter and of General Cadorna's address in its complete form. On the other hand, General Dessino had threatened, if his letter were not published, to communicate it to the Press abroad.

The Director of Military Intelligence said that public opinion in Italy and this country was much influenced by the exaggerated reports of the enormous numbers of German and Austrian troops being launched against the Italian Front. If the Italians really believed that they were being invaded by an army of 100 Divisions, it was highly probable that they would feel themselves compelled to make a separate peace. If, on the contrary, they were told the truth, which was that not more than 5 or 6 German and 45 Austrian Divisions were opposed to them, they would recover their moral, and the publication of the facts would have an excellent effect in Italy, Russia, and in this country. In his opinion it was a mistake to permit the peoples of those countries to imagine that the Germans have inexhaustible supplies of troops and can move them from one Front to another with inconceivable rapidity.

It was pointed out that it was highly undesirable to publish anything which might cause friction between the Russians and the Italians.

The War Cabinet were of opinion that, for obvious reasons, it was not advisable to publish detailed and accurate information in our possession in regard to enemy dispositions and movements. They agreed, however, that, in order to reassure the public generally, some reference should be made, in Parliament or in the Press, to the gross exaggeration of the numbers of German and Austrian troops on the Italian Front.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) General Dessino's letter should not be published.

(b.) Suitable steps should be taken to represent confidentially to the responsible Press of this country the desirability of correcting, by other means than an official communiqué, the existing false impressions which obtained as to the strength of the enemy concentration in the Italian theatre.

Sir Edward Carson undertook to take the necessary action.

4. The Director of Military Operations informed the War Cabinet that General Foch had written to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff asking for the support of the latter to a proposal to transport and employ Chinese up to the number of about forty battalions for pioneer work on the Western Front, the men to be drawn from the Chinese regular army. General Foch had pointed out that this arrangement, if carried into effect, would not interfere with the recruiting of Chinese by the British authorities for labour purposes. It was expected that Chinese and Japanese tonnage would be used for the transport of these men, and that possibly enemy ships seized by the Chinese Government in their waters would also be employed. The Director of Military Operations said that he saw no military objection to General Foch's proposal.
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that, in his opinion, in view of the present serious tonnage situation, the Shipping Controller should be asked for his views, because it might be that any ships taken for the purpose of transporting the Chinese would be taken from some other and important trade.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Director of Military Operations should send to the Secretary of the War Cabinet a copy of General Foch’s proposals.

(b.) The Secretary should refer the matter to the Shipping Controller for his remarks.

(c.) The Secretary should raise the question at the forthcoming Inter-Ally Conference.

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5. With reference to War Cabinet 257, Minute 7, the First Sea Lord reported that the Liaison Officer at Petrograd had forwarded the following additional information concerning operations of British submarines in the Baltic—

On the 9th and 10th October “E 1” endeavoured to attack ships of Libau harbour, but was prevented by the large number of torpedo boats spread across the channel.

On the 15th October “E 9” attacked a convoy of five small ships and two destroyers, but the two torpedoes fired missed.

At 5:30 A.M. on the 16th October “C 27” sighted main German fleet in the Gulf of Riga in three lines, with transports and destroyer screen. She attacked first “Dreadnought” with two torpedoes at 300 yards; torpedoes passed underneath; one was heard to explode shortly afterwards, but it is not known what was hit. “C 27” then fired at last transport, hitting her amidships. Fire was opened on “C 27,” and she was attacked with depth charges.

On the 17th instant “C 27” dived through Irben Straits by daylight and saw the torpedoed transport with four trawlers alongside. “C 27” gave chase, but could not get her.

6. The First Sea Lord stated that reports had been received from Dunkirk as follows:

(a.) Two 250-lb. and eight 65-lb. bombs were dropped on railway junctions south-west of Ghent, on three trains.

(b.) Two 250-lb. and eight 65-lb. bombs were dropped on Bruges Docks.

(c.) One of our machines landed at the Royal Flying Corps aerodrome, Droglands, and has now returned safely. This machine left with the intention of reaching Cologne, but, having encountered thick weather and heavy rain, was forced to fly at 1,500 feet. At Duren (about 20 miles W.S.W. of Cologne), further progress became impossible, and a very brightly illuminated factory 3 miles east of Duren was attacked with twelve 112-lb. bombs, one of which fell through the roof, and the remainder fell within the factory enclosure. The flight occupied 7½ hours. The total weight of bombs dropped was 4½ tons.
7. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reminded the War Cabinet that, if the present military situation in Italy was grave, the question of the position of that country in respect of food was no less serious. Apart from the general shortage of foodstuffs all over the world, the problem of distributing such foodstuffs as were available to the Allies had to be faced, and that was essentially one of shipping. The War Cabinet had the previous day considered a Memorandum by himself on the shipping situation (War Cabinet 259, Minute 9), but no decision had been reached. Mr. Balfour said that, in his opinion, it was impossible to exaggerate the gravity of the situation in regard to the shrinkage of tonnage, and he felt very strongly that the whole question must be tackled without the slightest delay. The problem, as he viewed it, was threefold:

(a.) How to keep France and Italy going through the winter and after.
(b.) How much shipping could the Allies count on obtaining from the United States of America.
(c.) How best to take immediate steps to cut down imports and to restrict consumption.

He suggested that a committee should be appointed at once to investigate the whole position, consisting of the President of the Board of Trade, the Shipping Controller, the Food Controller, Lord Milner, General Smuts, and himself.

It was pointed out that the problem of food supplies to France and Italy had been examined by the War Cabinet at their meeting on the 25th instant (War Cabinet 257, Minute 1), when it had been decided, inter alia, that Sir Albert Stanley, in concert with the Food Controller and the Shipping Controller, should report to the War Cabinet on the whole question, after investigating it with M. Clémentel and Signor Arlotti. It was further stated that every day the question was receiving the most anxious and careful consideration of the President of the Board of Trade, in consultation with the Government Departments concerned.

Mr. Balfour then read a letter he had received from Sir Albert Stanley, stating that M. Clémentel had announced his intention, if nothing was settled by the end of the current week, of returning to France and placing his resignation in the hands of his Government.

It was suggested that the measures we were now taking to assist in retrieving the military situation on the Italian front might eventually be rendered abortive if Italy were compelled to withdraw from the war owing to the inability of her Allies to help her to feed her population.

The War Cabinet agreed that the whole question called for an early and definite decision, but that, as pointed out on the 25th October (War Cabinet 257, Minute 1), it was impossible to consider the question piecemeal, as the food situation was only a part of the general shipping situation. A decision in regard to it could only be taken when the general military policy, on which the munitions programme would hinge, was decided.

(The discussion was adjourned.)

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 30, 1917.
APPENDIX.


Dear Sir,

THE Austro-German offensive on the Eastern part of the Italian front has caused a great deal of comment from the British press, owing to the articles which correspondents in Italy have sent here. The articles differ, but almost all speak of Russia’s inactivity as the cause of a large number of troops having been transferred to Italy, and some articles are written ironically at Russia’s expense. For example, the following phrases appear in the papers: “Indeed it might be said that the Germans have transferred their Russian front here,” and “Good-bye Russia, &c.” The figures which appear in the papers referring to the transfer of men from the Russian front are enormous. They amount to as many as 300,000 men. I do not know where such information comes from, but actually the following troops have been transferred to Italy:

Two German divisions from France, 4 German divisions (1 doubtful) from Roumanian and Galicia, and 3 Austrian divisions from Galicia. As seen, these troops have not only come from the Russian, but also from the Roumanian and French fronts. The total number of troops transferred does not exceed 80,000 men.

Eighty-six German Infantry and 10 German Cavalry divisions, 33 Austrian Infantry, and 11 Austrian Cavalry divisions, and 7 Infantry and 2 Cavalry divisions of Turks and Bulgarians continue to remain on the Russian front.

On the Italian front, including the German and Austrian divisions transferred there recently, there are altogether 50 hostile divisions opposed to the whole Italian front. I doubt whether such articles in the press are useful in furthering relations between Russia and England, towards which end different Anglo-Russian institutions are already at work.

All this tends to create ill-feeling in Great Britain towards Russia, and when the news reaches Russia will certainly provoke the Russian nation.

All this is exactly what Germany wants, and she is spreading her propaganda with this intention.

During the war, every time divisions have been transferred from the Russian front the British press mentioned the fact, omitting to state that other divisions were transferred to replace them from other fronts.

This inter-movement of troops between and along fronts happens constantly, but the press only seem to pick out the movements which give the impression that additional troops are being transferred to the British front.

The opinion that the Russian front is inactive is not correct; local fighting is constantly taking place in Europe as well as in Asia, and the hostile troops are being held on each front.

Unfortunately nothing appears in the press about all this. It is not my work to write about this, nor have I the time to do so.

I cannot, however, refrain from comparing the foregoing with the fact that when General Brusilof advanced last summer in Galicia and eighteen divisions were transferred from other fronts and from the interior of Germany, the Russian press did not complain or write ironical articles.

I should like to point out that my name is not Dessino, as printed in my last article, but Dessino.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, October 31, 1917, at noon.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:


Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 8).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 10).

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 9).


Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

The Invasion of Italy.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 260, Minute 1, the Director of Military Operations stated that he had received a report from General Delmé-Radcliffe, giving General Cadorna's appreciation of the situation on the 21st October, and that such appreciation was confirmed by the telegrams that had since been received. He added that he was circulating this report for the information of members of the War Cabinet.

2. The Director of Military Operations stated that Lord Cavan had arrived in England, and the question arose as to the Command of the Expeditionary Force to Italy in case of its strength being considerably increased.

The War Cabinet decided that—

This question was one for the Prime Minister, in consultation with the Secretary of State for War.
The Western Front.

3. The Director of Military Operations stated that the recent offensive in Flanders had been quite successful, and that the Canadians had gained more than the objectives which they set out to take, and that Passchendaele was now enveloped from the north-west and west. General Maurice indicated on a plan the present situation on the Western Front, as well as the line it was desirable that we should reach before the termination of the 1917 offensive.

Air Offensive.

4. The Director of Military Operations stated that an attempt to bomb an area further to the eastward of Saarbriicken had not been very successful, as only a few machines were able to find their objective on account of the weather. They had bombed iron factories and gasworks at Pirmasens. The remainder of the machines returned with their bombs.

Palestine.

5. The Director of Military Operations informed the War Cabinet that the preliminary marches of General Allenby’s troops, in connection with the forthcoming offensive, had been very satisfactorily carried out. He further indicated on a map the line that the offensive would take.

Transfer of Serbians from Russia via Archangel.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 255, Minute 6, the Director of Military Operations stated that the transport of Serbians from Russia to the Salonica front was now proceeding satisfactorily.

Air raids.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that air raids were carried out on the 29th instant on Sparappelhoek and Varsennaere aerodromes. Visibility was excellent and accurate shooting appeared to have been made. All our machines returned safely.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that an enemy aeroplane dropped three bombs in Dover Harbour this morning. No damage resulted.

The Director of Military Operations added that bombs had also been dropped at West Cliff, but that no casualties or damage had been sustained.

Command of Australian Troops.

9. The Prime Minister brought to the notice of the War Cabinet a copy of a telegram that had been received on the 25th September from the Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth to the effect that it was highly desirable that General Birdwood should be placed in the command of the whole of the Australian troops, such being the desire of the troops themselves, and in consequence the Australian Government urged it for the consideration of the War Cabinet.

Lord Derby stated that a telegram to this effect had been received through the Colonial Office, and that he had sent the same to Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig for an expression of his opinion. The latter’s views had recently been received and had been communicated to the Colonial Office.

In view of this being a request from the Prime Minister of one of our Dominions, it was felt that the matter must be considered by the War Cabinet, and the War Cabinet therefore decided that—

The matter should be brought up for their consideration at an early date by the Secretary of State for War, the correspondence which has taken place relating thereto being circulated for their information.
Air Reorganisation.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 249, Minute 15, Mr. Bonar Law raised the question as to when it would be possible to introduce the Bill relative to the creation of an Air Ministry.

General Smuts stated that the Bill had been drafted and was apparently in order, and that the Admiralty had concurred in its provisions.

Lord Derby said that the War Office was considering the matter and he hoped to discuss it at a meeting of the Army Council next Friday. It was a matter that more particularly concerned the Army than the Navy, and particularly the General Staff of the Army, and he did not like recommending that the Bill should go forward without first having the advantage of General Sir William Robertson's opinions.

General Smuts fully concurred in this view, as the Army was more particularly affected than the Navy.

As Mr. Bonar Law anticipated that he might be asked questions in the House regarding this Bill, either to-day or to-morrow, the War Cabinet decided that—

In such a case the House should be informed that the Bill was deferred owing to the absence of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on the Continent, and that as soon as his views had been obtained the Bill would be laid before the House.

The War Cabinet further requested—

The Air Ministry to circulate the Bill forthwith for their information.

Food Situation in France and Italy.

11. With reference to War Cabinet 260, Minute 7, Mr. Balfour informed the War Cabinet that, in conjunction with Lord Milner, General Smuts, the President of the Board of Trade, and the Shipping Controller, a meeting had been held to consider the tonnage situation, which was very serious, indicating a reduction in next year's imports of a matter of 8,000,000 tons. This shortage was aggravated by the failure of the French and Italian harvests, and it was a question of how to meet the demands of the Governments of those two countries. M. Clémentel's view was that Great Britain should commit herself to guaranteeing the food supply of France and Italy, and that such food as may be required for this purpose should have a first lien on tonnage, after which M. Clémentel proposed that we should inform the United States Government of the arrangements we have made, and ask them to come to the assistance of Great Britain in the matter of shipping.

Mr. Balfour stated that the Committee had decided to divert as much shipping as possible, during the next two months, to provide the French and Italians with food, and that in the interim the Committee advocated that we should carry on negotiations with the United States Government with a view to their feeding France in the future, and for us to make the necessary arrangements to maintain the requisite supplies for Italy, which country was largely fed from India. He added that though the French harvest had only recently been gathered, and that therefore there should be no shortage at present, the Committee had been informed that the French are unable, for technical reasons, to thresh their wheat at the present moment.

Mr. Balfour was of opinion that we must let the United States Government thoroughly understand that the tonnage question must be settled as a matter of policy; that it must be on the basis of a compromise between troops, munitions, foodstuffs and other essential supplies; and that it was no use their devoting themselves to troops if the European supplies were such that the Allies were unable to carry on the war; and that it must be further impressed upon them that the feeding of the European Allies is the task of all the Allies, including the United States.
Mr. Bonar Law stated that he had seen M. Clémentel, who had expressed his views in a somewhat different sense. M. Clémentel had said that he did not suggest that we should feed France, but that, as we were now endeavouring to arrive at a common military policy, the first charge on the resources of the Allies should be the provision of sufficient food supplies to the several countries, with a view to keeping alive the population, and that we should share equally in proportion to our needs. Under the existing arrangements Great Britain will, in M. Clémentel’s opinion, be far better supplied than France, and if we do not adopt some common action, we can hardly expect the United States to pay as much attention to our demands as we should wish. M. Clémentel had added that, whereas the normal French harvest was 9,400,000 tons, the 1917 harvest amounted to only 3,900,000 tons, and stated that this was due to the fact that France, in sending so many men into her army, had sacrificed the food supply of the country for the general good of the Allied cause, and that if such an effort was not recognised there would be a food revolution in France, and she would go out of the war. M. Clémentel had stated that the French Government were prepared to put on their population any food restrictions that we might introduce in Great Britain. M. Clémentel had urged upon Mr. Bonar Law that the two Governments should recognise their joint responsibility in this matter, and that they should sign the resolution as set out in the Appendix.

Lord Milner stated that undoubtedly the French were in more severe straits than we were as regards food supplies, and that the reason for their action in this matter at the present moment was that, after, in the past, being practically self-supporting as to food supplies, they had just realised that they would have to become an importing country, and that they had not the shipping to meet their carrying requirements. Moreover, the peasants were hoarding wheat, and the question of collecting it and redistributing the same at a future date was one of enormous difficulty. There was a good deal, therefore, to be said for the view that it was sound policy to allow the peasants to hoard, as it would be bad economy to collect the wheat now with the necessity of redistributing part of it for the maintenance of the peasants later on. Lord Milner added that, after making allowance for the diversion of wheat ships to France and Italy during the next two months, we should have in the United Kingdom on the 1st February, 1918, fifteen weeks’ supply.

General Smuts stated that the French were anxious to bind us to a definite arrangement, confirmed in writing, and that if we were so committed and the United States afterwards refused to assist us with shipping, the situation would be most disastrous, and our military effort would be paralysed through the necessity of devoting to essential food supplies shipping which otherwise would carry munitions and raw material.

The Prime Minister remarked that if a crisis had arisen in France in this respect it was the duty of that Government to apply, in the first instance, the remedies that could be provided at home before asking for our assistance, and if we signed the proposed agreement there was a danger that such action would not be taken by the French. He was convinced that we must impress on the Americans the grave situation as regards shipping, and the fact that, to enable the Allied countries to be fed, we should have to restrict to a certain extent our military effort in 1918, and that such effort could not be increased until the shipping situation had been restored, and that, in the meantime, they must be prepared, if requisite, to curtail their military effort to meet the material needs of the Allies as a whole.

The War Cabinet approved the recommendations of the Committee that—

(a.) For the next two months certain wheat ships, as may be arranged between the Wheat Commission, the Food Controller, and the Shipping Controller, should be
The Zionist Movement.

diverted from the United Kingdom to France and Italy, those Governments being informed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of our action in the matter.

(b.) The President of the Board of Trade and the Shipping Controller should prepare a statement as to the shipping situation generally, and its inadequacy to meet the demands of the Allies.

(c.) Sir Albert Stanley should be requested to proceed to the United States of America at an early date to urge upon the United States Government the seriousness of the position, and ask for their help and co-operation.

The view was expressed that it was desirable that M. Clémentel should accompany Sir Albert Stanley.

(d.) The Prime Minister should ask Sir Gordon Hewart, the Solicitor-General, to take over the duties of the President of the Board of Trade during the absence of the latter.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 245, Minute 18, the War Cabinet had before them a note by the Secretary (Paper G.-164) and also a memorandum by Lord Curzon (Paper G.T.-2403) on the subject of the Zionist movement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that he gathered that everyone was now agreed that, from a purely diplomatic and political point of view, it was desirable that some declaration favourable to the aspirations of the Jewish nationalists should now be made. The vast majority of Jews in Russia and America, as, indeed, all over the world, now appeared to be favourable to Zionism. If we could make a declaration favourable to such an ideal, we should be able to carry on extremely useful propaganda both in Russia and America. He gathered that the main arguments still put forward against Zionism were twofold:

(a.) That Palestine was inadequate to form a home for either the Jewish or any other people.

(b.) The difficulty felt with regard to the future position of Jews in Western countries.

With regard to the first, he understood that there were considerable differences of opinion among experts regarding the possibility of the settlement of any large population in Palestine, but he was informed that, if Palestine were scientifically developed, a very much larger population could be sustained than had existed during the period of Turkish misrule. As to the meaning of the words "national home," to which the Zionists attach so much importance, he understood it to mean some form of British, American, or other protectorate, under which full facilities would be given to the Jews to work out their own salvation and to build up, by means of education, agriculture, and industry, a real centre of national culture and focus of national life. It did not necessarily involve the early establishment of an independent Jewish State, which was a matter for gradual development in accordance with the ordinary laws of political evolution.

With regard to the second point, he felt that, so far from Zionism hindering the process of assimilation in Western countries, the truer parallel was to be found in the position of an Englishman who leaves his country to establish a permanent home in the United States. In the latter case there was no difficulty in the Englishman or his children becoming full nationals of the United States, whereas, in the present position of Jewry, the assimilation was often felt to be incomplete, and any danger of a double allegiance or non-national outlook would be eliminated.

Lord Curzon stated that he admitted the force of the diplomatic arguments in favour of expressing sympathy, and agreed that the
bulk of the Jews held Zionist rather than anti-Zionist opinions. He added that he did not agree with the attitude taken up by Mr. Montagu. On the other hand, he could not share the optimistic views held regarding the future of Palestine. These views were not merely the result of his own personal experiences of travel in that country, but of careful investigations from persons who had lived for many years in the country. He feared that by the suggested declaration we should be raising false expectations which could never be realised. He attached great importance to the necessity of retaining the Christian and Moslem Holy Places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and, if this were to be affectively done, he did not see how the Jewish people could have a political capital in Palestine. However, he recognised that some expression of sympathy with Jewish aspirations would be a valuable adjunct to our propaganda, though he thought that we should be guarded in the language used in giving expression to such sympathy.

The War Cabinet authorised—-

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to take a suitable opportunity of making the following declaration of sympathy with the Zionist aspirations:—

"His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
October 31, 1917.
APPENDIX.

Proposed Agreement by M. Clémentel between the British and French Governments.

1. LES deux Gouvernements sont d'accord, tout en réservant leurs droits de souveraineté sur les navires battant leurs pavillons respectifs, pour que les moyens de transports maritimes à leur disposition soient utilisés en commun, en vue de satisfaire aux besoins reconnus entre eux comme étant les plus urgents au cours des ajustements périodiques qui devront intervenir. À cet effet, ils poursuivent en ce moment l'établissement de leurs programmes communs d'importations en vue de les réduire au minimum indispensable.

2. Étant donnée l'urgence actuelle du problème de ravitaillement pour la Grande-Bretagne, la France et l'Italie, les deux Gouvernements ont décidé de considérer jusqu'à nouvel ordre leurs programmes communs d'importations pour la consommation humaine établis de janvier à août 1918, comme devant avoir la priorité sur toutes les autres importations et prendront les mesures nécessaires pour réajuster leur tonnage en conséquence.

Entre-temps, la Grande-Bretagne, afin de faire face à la crise immédiate, déroulera sur la France et l'Italie des navires actuellement alloués aux importations du Royaume-Uni.

3. Les Gouvernements Britannique et Français décident de faire connaître au plus tôt au Gouvernement des États-Unis d'Amérique l'arrangement ci-dessus, de lui demander de concert de participer à cet accord au même titre qu'eux-mêmes et de joindre son effort à celui de la Grande-Bretagne et de la France, en vue d'accroître le tonnage au service des Alliés.

(Signé) CLÉMENTEL.
WAR CABINET, 262.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, November 1, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 2 to 19).


Major-General E. B. Ashmore, O.M.G., M.V.O., Home Forces (for Minute 17).

The Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minutes 3 to 19).

The Right Hon. Sir G. Cave, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 4 and 17).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 5 to 19).


Sir W. Webb, Controller of Aeronautical Supplies, Air Board (for Minute 17).

The Right Hon. W. H. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for Colonies (for Minutes 1 to 4).


The Right Hon. Lord Islington, G.C.M.G., D.S.O., Parliamentary Under-Secretary, India Office (for Minute 1).


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.
Order of the British Empire.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 251, Minute 16, referring the matter to Lord Crawford and Balcarres, the War Cabinet approved the recommendations contained in Lord Crawford's report as regards the Colonial Office and India Office (Paper G.T.-2392) (Appendix I).

The Prime Minister requested Lord Crawford to see him at an early date with a view to discussing the allocation to be made between the Home Departments.

Command of Australian Troops.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 261, Minute 9, the Prime Minister drew attention to the importance of this matter from the point of view of the Australian Government.

It was pointed out that the Australians wished to be treated like the Canadians and desired to have separate Australian divisions without any admixture of troops from other parts of the Empire.

Mr. Long stated that the Australian Government were now finding considerable difficulty in getting men, and that they believed they would be assisted in obtaining men if it were known in Australia that their troops would not be spread in different commands, but concentrated under a general officer in whom the Australians had unbounded confidence.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to circulate to members of the War Cabinet a full copy of all the telegrams and correspondence relating to the matter.

Air Raids:

Insurance against Damage.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 245, Minute 15, the War Cabinet approved the report of Mr. Stanley Baldwin (Paper G.T.-2429) (Appendix II), and authorised—

The Chancellor of the Exchequer to give effect to the proposals contained therein.

Ireland: General Conditions.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 249, Minute 13, the Secretary of State for War read a letter he had received from the Commander-in-chief in Ireland (Sir Bryan Mahon), which intimated that the defiance of the law against drilling was increasing, and that courts-martial were proving quite insufficient to deal with its suppression. If troops were used to put down the drilling, bloodshed would undoubtedly ensue; but the situation was serious, and the authority of the Government was being openly defied.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs thought that the introduction of some of the most recent developments of scientific war, such as tanks, would have a beneficial effect in bringing home to the Sinn Feiners the perilous nature of their behaviour. In Ireland it was very difficult to draw a line between a game designed to bring the British Government into ridicule and a rebellion. The former frequently developed, almost unconsciously, into the latter.

The Chief Secretary stated that there was considerable difference of opinion among the authorities in Ireland as to the seriousness of the situation. He admitted that in Clare, Kerry, parts of Limerick and West Cork there was more or less determined drilling and defiance of the regulations. The difficulty was to catch the responsible organisers of this drilling red-handed and to secure convictions before courts-martial. The moment the police appeared the Sinn Fein bands dispersed. The Chief Secretary thought that the most important thing was to enable the Police authorities to keep their heads up and to prevent anything in the nature of their 'being overawed by superior force. It had been stated that Mr. de Valera had recently passed round word to the Sinn Feiners to be quiet for
the present and to avoid giving opportunity for any decisive intervention of the Military Authorities.

Mr. Long stated that he had learned from Lord Decies, who was acting as censor in Ireland, that in the latter's opinion the situation was serious and could not be ignored.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Secretary of State for War to give a reply to Sir Bryan Mahon to the effect that no military action should be undertaken on his own initiative, but that he should give effect to any request for military force put forward by the Civil Authorities.

The War Cabinet decided—

To hold a Special Meeting on Tuesday, the 6th November, 1917, to consider the Irish question, at which Meeting—

- The Lord Lieutenant,
- The General Officer Commanding in Ireland,
- The Head of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and
- The principal Heads of the Irish Office (Political and Official)

should be present.

The Chief Secretary undertook to give effect to this decision.

5. With reference to War Cabinet, 261, Minute 1, the Director of Military Operations reported the receipt of three telegrams from Sir William Robertson from Italian Headquarters. In the first telegram, dated the 31st October, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the situation was bad; that General Cadorna had told him that the breach which had been made by the enemy was due to treason on the part of his troops, who had made no effort to oppose the attack. Large numbers of the Second Army had laid down their arms and gone to the rear. Much material and large supplies of all kinds had been lost.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff further stated in his telegram that General Cadorna was trying to restore order, but that there was no real command anywhere; communication between units had been lost, and General Cadorna could not say where the Second Army and some of the Third Army were. Everything was in disorder; roads were blocked and bridges cut, and General Cadorna would be lucky if he reached the Piave with 25 more or less intact divisions.

6. In his second telegram, dated the 31st October, Sir William Robertson reported that he had seen General Hamilton, commanding our artillery, who had said that he had lost 20,000 rounds of ammunition and most of his stores. He thinks about thirty men are missing. He has got all his guns across the Tagliamento, and therefore hopes that he will save them.

7. In his third telegram, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that General Cadorna wished to see Lord Cavan on his arrival in Italy. Sir William Robertson had discussed the place of concentration, and could not agree to General Cadorna's proposal of Treviso locality. He had said that he could not agree to anything east of Adige at present; he thought it would be very dangerous to concentrate east of Adige, for fear lest our troops might get mixed up in a débâcle.
The Director of Military Operations reported that General Foch had telegraphed that the Germans were moving troops from Alsace to the Trentino. Our information is that one German division has moved from Alsace to the Trentino, and another division is going from Germany.

With regard to the question of concentration, the Director of Military Operations said that he considered it to be a first principle that the place selected should be secure. The men arrived in trains and must be concentrated before they can fight. The place of concentration should never be within striking distance of the enemy. It was easy enough to move forward from the place of concentration, but very difficult to move back.

The War Cabinet were of opinion that, as the French troops were due to arrive first, the risks in this connection were greater for the French than for ourselves, and therefore the first step must be to find out what the French were doing.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Director of Military Operations to ascertain what the French were doing in regard to the place of concentration.

8. The Director of Military Operations reported that Sir Douglas Haig had been instructed to be prepared to send four more divisions to Italy, if necessary. These troops, however, could not be there before the first week in December, if it was decided to send them at all, and if the French placed all routes at our disposal.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 261, Minute 5, the Director of Military Operations reported that General Allenby had carried out his attack in accordance with the plans explained on the previous day, had captured Beersheba and was continuing his advance. The progress had been satisfactory, and water could now be obtained in the neighbourhood in which our troops were operating.

10. The Director of Military Operations reported that four Handley-Page machines had started on the night of the 30th/31st October for Mannheim; bad weather had been encountered, three of the machines had returned with their bombs; one machine was missing.

In this connection the question was raised as to whether the price which we are paying for these raids is not too high. The prevalent impression at the front appears to be that the War Cabinet want raids at any price, regardless of weather.

The Secretary of State for War said that he had told General Trenchard that raids were not to be carried out unless the weather was suitable.

11. The Director of Military Operations reported the receipt of two telegrams from General Barter, giving more encouraging accounts of the state of the Russian army. He said that there were 400,000 good troops who would be ready by January, and that the volunteer movement, of which Professor Pares had given the first intimation, was more promising.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs read a telegram from Lord Reading saying that Count Horodysky reported that the situation in Russia was worse than hitherto, and that peace would probably be made within two months, unless Japanese and American divisions were sent to pull the nation together. In the Russian army there appeared to be about 2,000,000 reliable troops, composed of 500,000 Poles and 500,000 Cossacks and 1,000,000 Russians. Lord Reading concluded his telegram by saying that the Russian Ambassador in Washington was talking peace.
With regard to outside assistance for Russia, attention was called to telegram No. 618 from Tokyo, dated the 20th October, reporting that the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs had categorically informed the Russian Ambassador that the question of the despatch of troops to Europe had been decided once and for all, and that the Government would not change its mind.

With regard to the other alternative, namely, the employment of American troops, it was pointed out that the Americans would have more troops than they can transport across the Atlantic, and therefore any troops sent across the Pacific to Russia will be a net gain to the Allied forces.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A message should be sent by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Lord Reading in the sense that, while it was not for this country to indicate to the United States what they should do in the matter of strengthening the moral of the Russian army, at the same time, if the United States Government saw their way to send a force to Russia, His Majesty's Government felt that the effect would be very good. Lord Reading should also be informed of General Barter's telegram, and told that this telegram confirmed information already received from other quarters in regard to the good prospect of the Volunteer movement in Russia.

Mr. Balfour undertook to draft a message to Lord Reading in this sense, and to submit it to the Prime Minister.

East Africa.

12. The Director of Military Operations reported that General Northey's troops had occupied Liwale, Von Lettow's headquarters in East Africa. In view of the nature of the country it was still possible for the enemy to hold out.

Proposed Inter-Allied Supreme Council and Allied General Staff.

13. The Prime Minister read to the War Cabinet a preliminary draft of a project prepared by the Director of Military Operations, at the request of the Prime Minister, setting forth the formation of a proposed Inter-Allied General Staff and its relation to the Inter-Allied Supreme Council and the Allied General Staff (Appendix III). The Prime Minister stated that he had communicated this scheme to M. Painlevé.

Lord Derby said that the document had been drawn up at very short notice, and that in the circumstances it would not represent considered military opinion. It was a basis for discussion only.

It was suggested that the draft should indicate more clearly that the Inter-Allied General Staff should remain in permanent service, in contradistinction to the Inter-Allied Supreme Council, which would only meet occasionally.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Secretary should circulate the scheme for their consideration.
(b.) They would consider it as soon as M. Painlevé's remarks are available.

Submarines.

14. The First Sea Lord reported that the Vice-Admiral, East Coast, states that the Special Service brigantine "Dargle" has arrived at Immingham and reports that she engaged an enemy submarine about 8 A.M. on the 31st October about 9 miles east of Withernsea. The engagement lasted about ten minutes, at 1,500 yards' range. The submarine was on the surface. The following hits were seen on the submarine: 3 with 12-pr. and 3 with 4-inch guns. The submarine sank by the stern, evidently vitally injured, and it is believed was destroyed with all hands. The "Dargle"
was hit three times, both masts being damaged. One man was killed and two seriously injured.

Loss of an Austrian Destroyer. 15. The First Sea Lord reported that the Naval Attaché states that the Italian Ministry of Marine has reliable information that the Austrian destroyer “Wildfang” has been sunk by striking an Italian mine.

Bombing Raids. 13. The First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that the following reports had been received from Dunkirk:—
(a.) During an offensive patrol on the 31st October one hostile machine was shot down out of control.
(b.) A bombing raid was carried out on the 31st October on Sparappelhoek Aerodrome, 7—65, 4—50, and 33—16-lb. bombs being dropped on the objective at 1:11 P.M. Visibility was fairly good, but targets partially obscured by clouds, making results difficult to observe. In addition, 8—16-lb. bombs were dropped on a large shed south of main road, and about 3 miles east of Beorst. All machines returned safely.

Air Raids. 17. General Ashmore reported that a very determined attack had been made upon London the previous night, by a large number of hostile aircraft, which approached in relays. About 30 hostile aeroplanes in all appeared to have crossed the coast-line. The first four groups, which had arrived up to midnight, had been turned back by our defences. Two or three machines, it was believed, had reached London, one of which was for some time manouevring over the metropolis above the clouds, and dropped bombs on Wandsworth and elsewhere. Eighteen of our own aeroplanes had been in the air the whole time that the raid was in progress, and our tracking machines had got into touch with the enemy craft. So far as he knew, no hostile craft had been brought down. The enemy aeroplanes had operated generally at an altitude of about 11,000 feet. The Chief Commissioner of Police said that, according to reports to hand, 35 explosive bombs and 10 incendiary bombs had been dropped on London, and the casualties were 7 killed and 17 injured. Considerably more bombs had been dropped in the country, viz., at Dover, Ramsgate, Ashford, &c.

The First Sea Lord reported that a seaplane base had been hit the previous night at Dover, but he understood that no appreciable damage had been caused.

Questions in Parliament. 18. Lord Curzon asked for the instructions of the War Cabinet as to the reply he should give to a question which Lord Montagu of Beaulieu had given notice of his intention to ask in the House of Lords regarding the adequacy of the measures taken by the Government to ensure the security of the London area against hostile air raids. Lord Curzon said that the courses which, in his opinion, appeared to be open to him, were—
(a.) To ask Lord Montagu privately to withdraw his question, in the public interest.
(b.) To reply to the question in such terms as the War Cabinet might consider suitable.

The objection to the first alternative, it was suggested, was that this might generate the belief that the Government was anxious to conceal deficiencies or to shelve the question, and that it would crop up again shortly in a more acute form.
In regard to the second alternative, it was pointed out that this procedure might give rise to a prolonged debate which could have no satisfactory issue, in view of the fact that a complete answer was not advisable in the public interest. It was obviously highly undesirable that detailed information should be publicly given as to the measures which had been adopted for the security of the London area against hostile air raids.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Lord Curzon should ask Lord Montagu to withdraw his question, since, even if it was put, he would be unable to answer it without revealing valuable information to the enemy.

Air Raids: Provision of Cover in London.

19. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 3, the Secretary of State for Home affairs represented that Tube stations entered largely into the arrangements made for the provision of cover for the inhabitants of the Metropolis. These shelters are ordinarily closed at about 1 A.M., when traffic on the tube railways is suspended for the night. He proposed to interview the heads of the Tube railways in order to see if arrangements could not be made to have the Tube stations open after 1 A.M. when raids are in progress. This would entail no extra demands upon the Tube railways' staffs, as the necessary provision would be made by the Chief Commissioner of Police by means of constables, both regular and special.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Home Secretary to take such action as might be necessary to ensure that Tube stations should be open for the accommodation of the general public, after the ordinary traffic had been suspended, when hostile air raids were in progress.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 1, 1917.
APPENDIX I.

THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

Report by the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres.

In accordance with the War Cabinet 251, Minute 16, I beg leave to state that I have examined the documents relating to the Order of the British Empire, and I have conferred with the Committee, which reported on the 28th September (see G.T.-2290).

Many complex and delicate problems arise on which I shall send a subsequent report, but I desire to invite an early decision on one or two matters of urgency.

In order to have names ready for the coming New Year’s Honours’ list, it is necessary to establish in a general manner the total number of decorations to be conferred, the percentages to be allotted to various services, and the number of gazettes into which this total will be divided.

Until these decisions are taken it is impossible for Departments to make their proposals. It is specially important for the Foreign Office, India Office, War Office, and Colonial Office to receive their instructions forthwith in order to allow adequate time to communicate with their Departments abroad. Even for public Departments at home the time available is short.

I find there is general agreement among those who have given close and protracted attention to this subject, that there should be five classes, and that the following broad subdivision should be made:

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These figures exclude a sixth section of medallists. The number therefore is large—upwards of 22,000—but modest in comparison with the numbers conferred by Continental countries.

These figures can, of course, be reduced, or they can be spread over a long series of gazettes. For the moment, however, I submit to the Cabinet—

1. That Departments should be authorised to proceed on the assumption that the total should be divided among four half-yearly gazettes, beginning 1st January, 1918. One-fourth, therefore, of the total would be available for the coming list.

2. That Departments which cannot recommend their quota should be entitled to carry forward the balance of their allotment.

3. That the War Office and Admiralty be authorised to make such distribution of their respective allotments between civilians and combatants as they may think advisable.

The allocation of numbers between the various Departments at home is now being examined. As regards sanction to those Departments which have to communicate abroad, the matter is so urgent that, should the Cabinet agree to the foregoing proposals, I suggest that authority to act should be conveyed direct to the four Departments concerned.

7, Audley Square,
October 25, 1917.

(Signed) CRAWFORD AND BALCARRES.
APPENDIX II.

COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGE DONE BY AIR RAIDS.

Memorandum by Mr. Stanley Baldwin, M.P.

THE War Cabinet decided on the 4th October (War Cabinet 245) that a complete indemnity for the destruction of property caused directly by an enemy air raid up to a maximum of £500 should be payable by the Government without insurance, but anything over that figure must be covered by insurance. The Treasury were instructed to produce a scheme in detail to give effect to this decision, and to publish the same as soon as possible.

The attached scheme,* which has been prepared by the Treasury and the Board of Trade with their advisers, gives effect to this decision. Owners of property not exceeding £500 get full cover against all the risks covered by the Government policy. Owners of property exceeding £500 are given in effect the benefit of a free policy for £500 if they require it, provided that all value in excess of £500 is insured under the Government Insurance Scheme.

As the free policy is a free gift, it is not unreasonable to require that the remainder of the property be insured with the Government, and it would in practice be extremely difficult to work the scheme if policies issued outside the Government scheme had to be taken into account.

The scheme is ready to put into operation at once, and the question for the War Cabinet to decide is from what date it should take effect. The Prime Minister's speech to the deputation at which something of this kind was promised was made on the 13th July. The objections to going back as far as that are that it would be difficult now to get at the facts, and the damage has probably to a large extent been made good. From the point of view of mere administration, 1st October would be a good date, for the new office would be able to start fairly clear. But if 1st September is chosen, it would include the moonlight raids.

It is suggested that the scheme might be announced by means of a friendly question in the House of Commons.

(Signed) STANLEY BALDWIN.

Treasurj, S.W.,
October 29, 1917.

HOUSE OF Commons.

Mr..........................—To ask the Prime Minister whether he is in a position to make any statement as to the compensation to be given for damage to property caused by air raids.

Mr. Bonar Law.—A scheme has been prepared for giving owners of property not exceeding £500 in value compensation for damage done by air raids and bombardment without payment of any premium. Owners of property exceeding £500 in value would be compensated up to £500 without payment of premium, provided that all value in excess of £500 is insured under the Government Insurance Scheme.

The new scheme will take place as from................... It will be administered by a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Elliott, and will be worked in close connection with the Government Insurance Scheme, which is under the superintendence of the Board of Trade.

I am circulating a copy of the scheme with the votes.

* Draft attached.
Scheme of Compensation for Damage by Aircraft and Bombardment.

1. (a.) Owners of property in the United Kingdom of an aggregate value not exceeding 500L. will be compensated by the Government in respect of damage or destruction of any of such property by the perils coverable by the Government Aircraft and Bombardment Insurance Policy, whether the property be insured under the Government Insurance Scheme or not so insured at the time of its damage or destruction.

(b.) Owners of insurable property in the United Kingdom of an aggregate value exceeding 500L. will be compensated up to that amount without payment of premium, provided that all value in excess of 500L. is insured under the Government Insurance Scheme.

2. If the property of an owner is not fully insured under the Government Insurance Scheme, any claim under this Compensation Scheme, as well as under any Government Policy, will be subject to average in conformity with the terms and conditions of the Government Aircraft Insurance Policy and the Note thereto.

3. The total amount payable by the Government in respect of a claim will be discharged under any Government Policy of Insurance in force at the time of the damage up to the amount payable under such policy, and the balance, if any, will be discharged under this Compensation Scheme.

4. Owners of property may at their option insure the whole value of their property under the Government Aircraft Insurance Scheme, but not by means of Post Office Certificates, which will not be issued in future.

5. Compensation will be limited to the actual damage done, having regard to the condition and value of the property at the time of the damage, and will be devoted to making good the damage, subject to any conditions and exceptions which the Air Raid Compensation Committee may prescribe.

6. (a.) In the case of uninsured property, immediate notice must, when damage occurs, be given to the Air Raid Compensation Committee at Palmerston House, Old Broad Street, London, E.C. 2, or to their agents.

(b.) In the case of damage to property insured under the Government Aircraft Insurance Scheme, immediate notice must be given to the office through which the insurance was effected.

7. No compensation will be paid—

(a.) In respect of any loss recoverable under any insurance.
(b.) For money, securities, stamps, documents, manuscripts, or books of account.
(c.) For consequential loss or theft.
(d.) For any expenses incurred in preparing or supporting a claim on the Government.
(e.) For fees in connection with reinstatement of damaged property.
(f.) In the event of a claim being fraudulent in any respect.

8. In no circumstance will a refund of premium be made in respect of any insurance that may have been effected with the Government.

9. This scheme will take effect as from.......... 1917.

APPENDIX III.

SUPREME INTER-ALLIED COUNCIL.

Suggestions as to the Functions of the Military Staff of the proposed Supreme Inter-Allied Council, and as to their Relations with the Allied General Staff.

Preliminary Draft by the Director of Military Operations.

1. The formation of the Supreme Inter-Allied Council will not affect the responsibility of each Chief of the General Staff to his own Government for the conduct of the operations of the armies of his own nation.
2. Each of the Allies will appoint a permanent military representative to assist at the Allied Supreme Council. This representative will not be a member of the Council, and his function will be advisory only.

3. The military representative of each nation will obtain from the Chief of the General Staff of his country all information as to its military resources, and, in conjunction with the other Allied military representatives, will co-ordinate that information for the use of the Supreme Inter-Allied Council.

4. The military representative of each nation will similarly receive from the Chief of the General Staff of his country proposals for future plans of operations, and the military representatives in consultation will then be charged with presenting to the Supreme Council a co-ordinate statement of those plans, together with proposals for the combined action of the Allies. Should the plans received from the Chiefs of General Staffs not be, in the opinion of the military representatives, the best for ensuring such combined action it will be within their functions to suggest other proposals.

5. The proposals for combined military action when approved by the Supreme Council will be sent by each military representative to the Chief of the General Staff of his country, who will advise his Government upon them and will be responsible for their execution, as far as concerns the Armies of his country, when they have been approved by his Government.

6. Each military representative will be supplied with a Staff to enable him to carry out his duties as defined above, but the General Staff of each country will remain responsible for the preparation and execution of plans in detail, and, in addition to their present duties, will be charged with supplying to the military representative of their country such information as he may require.

The above proposals deal only with the military side of the Supreme Allied Council. Similar machinery will probably be required to enable the Supreme Council to deal with naval questions, and perhaps also with diplomatic, economic, and shipping questions.

November 1, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 263.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, November 2, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.
The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minute 11).
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 12 to 15).

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 10).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff for Minutes 1 to 10).

Mr. Stanley Baldwin, M.P., Treasury (for Minute 11).

Mr. J. M. Keynes, C.B., Treasury (for Minute 11).


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.
Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.

The Invasion of Italy.

1. THE Director of Military Operations stated that the only fresh news of a definite character from the Italian front was contained in the German official communique. From this it appeared that some 60,000 Italian troops and great quantities of guns had been captured by the enemy, who had succeeded in cutting them off before they crossed the Tagliamento. It appeared probable that a certain proportion of the 60,000 prisoners belonged to the Third Italian Army.

2. The Director of Military Operations quoted from telegrams which had been received from Sir William Robertson, the contents of which confirmed the information he had communicated in his
British Troops for Italy.

Previous telegrams (War Cabinet 262, Minute 5). In a telegram, dated from Rome, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that he had seen Baron Sonnino, who had assured him that firm and energetic measures would be taken at once to restore the situation. Both Baron Sonnino and the Italian Minister of War reported that the general feeling in the country was calm and restrained, and that there was every reason to hope that the nation would pull itself together.

It was pointed out that the attitude of the Italian nation, however admirable and reassuring it might be, would be of little value if the army fell to pieces.

Sir William Robertson stated that both the above Ministers had adverted to the unpopularity of the British and French in Italy, regarding which he had sent a separate telegram.

Further British Assistance to Italy.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 262, Minute 7, the Director of Military Operations indicated the place of concentration of the French troops proceeding to Italy, and stated that General Foch had refused General Cadorna’s request to have the French at Treviso.

As regards the point of concentration for the British reinforcements for Italy, General Maurice indicated certain areas which had been considered by our Military Authorities as suitable points of assembly in the event of such an eventuality arising. Having regard to the fact that it was almost certain that the Italian troops would be unable to make a stand on the Tagliamento, and might be equally unable to hold the line of the Piave, General Maurice indicated the area nearest to the front which he considered safe for our troops.

After some discussion the War Cabinet decided that—

The place of concentration for the British reinforcements should be left to our Military Authorities.

Air Offensive.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 262, Minute 8, and War Cabinet 260, Minute 1, the War Cabinet further considered the question of the officer to whom the Chief Command of the British troops in Italy should be entrusted, in connection with which the name of Sir Henry Rawlinson had been mentioned, should it be decided to despatch additional divisions to the Italian front. These divisions, General Maurice stated, could not begin to leave the French front until the 10th November.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to submit at once to the War Cabinet the names of other suitable Commanders.

The Western Front: Return of Casualties.

5. The Director of Military Operations reported that in a projected raid upon Kaiserlauten, which contained 90,000 inhabitants, one of our air formations had failed to reach the objective. It had, however, managed to destroy one enemy aircraft, and had returned without any losses.

6. The Director of Military Operations handed to the War Cabinet the return of the British casualties on the Western front during October, 1917, which amounted to 4,956 officers and 106,419 other ranks. The return stated that the normal average monthly casualties, when there was no severe fighting, was 35,000; the actual casualties, therefore, for the month of October, due to the Third Battle of Ypres, were about 76,000.
Palestine. 7. With reference to War Cabinet 235, Minute 8, the Director of Military Operations reported that General Allenby's troops had established themselves to the north of Beersheba. General Allenby was completing his preparations before resuming the offensive.

Submarines. 8. The First Sea Lord reported the receipt of a message from Dover to the effect that "E. 52" had sunk "U.C. 63" on the morning of the 1st November, about 20 miles east of the North Foreland. One wounded survivor had been rescued.

Russia. 9. The First Sea Lord stated that the Naval Attaché at Petrograd reported that on the 27th October the enemy had evacuated Werder Island (Moon Sound, Gulf of Riga).

German Warships in the North Sea. 10. The First Sea Lord reported that a message had been received from Copenhagen to the effect that four German light cruisers and four destroyers had gone north. This information must not be regarded as reliable, but if it were true there was the possibility of a fight to-day, as we had forces operating in the Kattegat supported by heavy ships.

Commercial Agreement with Spain. 11. The Minister of Blockade informed the War Cabinet that, at the urgent request of the Minister of Munitions, he had been negotiating with the Spanish Government with a view to establishing a regular flow of iron ore from Spain in return for coal from this country. The arrangement would include the employment of Spanish shipping. This agreement had been on the point of completion when it had broken down owing to the change in the Spanish Government. After the new Government had been formed, negotiations had been recommenced, and again had reached the point of agreement when the Spanish Government had insisted that a certain proportion of their sweet oranges and wine should be bought by us, as well as their iron ore. The British Treasury had raised objections to this arrangement on grounds of exchange, and had said that they could not pay for the wine or fruit. Negotiations had again been resumed with the Spanish Ambassador, and finally an agreement had been obtained from him that if we would take the wine and fruit the Spanish Government would remove their legislative difficulty against the sale of foreign securities.

It was pointed out that the Ministry of Munitions viewed with the greatest alarm the possible failure of the agreement, which would mean the cessation of all shipments from Spain which were vitally necessary for munitions. Although no definite figures were submitted to the War Cabinet showing the sums of money required for the purchase of the wine and fruit, it was mentioned that the amount of the risk would be roughly a few hundred thousand pounds.

Lord Robert Cecil asked for the authority of the Government to allow him to make the best terms he could with the Spanish Government.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In view of the importance of maintaining the flow of ore shipments from Spain to this country, the Minister of Blockade should be allowed to sign the agreement with the Spanish Government, provided that the Spanish Government would remove their embargo on foreign loans.
12. The Prime Minister stated that on the previous evening information had been received from the Head of the Irish Constabulary, through the General Officer Commanding Ireland, that a serious seditious movement was threatened for Sunday next. With his authority, the Chief Secretary had proceeded forthwith to Ireland.

The War Cabinet approved the action, and authorised—

The Secretary of State for War to support the Field-Marshal Commanding Home Defences and the General Officer Commanding in Ireland in making all necessary military dispositions and movements, some of which were discussed by the War Cabinet with the Secretary of State for War and the Field-Marshal Lord French.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 262, Minute 13, the Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet that he had seen M. Painlevé, and that the French Government accepted the scheme for the establishment of a Supreme Inter-Allied Council and Permanent Advisory General Staff. General Pétain, whom he had also seen, cordially approved the scheme, and had expressed the opinion that, in view of the very serious position on the Italian front, the new organisation should set to work as soon as possible.

After some discussion, the War Cabinet decided—

(a.) To accept in principle the proposal for the establishment of a Supreme Inter-Allied Council, consisting of the Prime Minister and one other Minister, who would meet at frequent intervals, together with a Permanent Inter-Allied Advisory General Staff composed of one General Officer from each of the principal Allies.

(b.) That Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Wilson should be appointed the British General on the Inter-Allied Advisory General Staff, and that it should be a recommendation to the Secretary of State for War that the appointment should carry with it the temporary rank of General. The Secretary of State for War expressed his approval of General Wilson's appointment.

(c.) That the Secretary should formally communicate the two above decisions to the Secretary of State for War, who would notify his appointment to Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Wilson and arrange details as to his pay and staff.

(d.) That no announcement in regard to the Supreme Inter-Allied Council and General Staff, or in regard to General Wilson's appointment, should be made until the attitude of the Italian Government towards the scheme had been ascertained.

(e.) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should telegraph to the Italian Government the general lines of the scheme.

14. The Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet that General Pétain considered the Italian position to be extremely serious, and had expressed doubts as to whether the Italian army really existed any longer. If it did exist, it was probably only in the shape of individual units, and not as an army. The only prospect of re-establishing it as an army was for the Allies to obtain some position in regard to it, such as had been assumed by the Germans towards the Austrians. With this object in view, General Pétain had suggested a scheme for a redistribution of the Western front, according to which the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force would assume Command of all the British and French forces from the Channel to some point considerably further to the
south than the line at present occupied by the British troops, while the French Commander-in-Chief would command all the Allied forces from that point southwards to the Adriatic, including the Italian front and the Franco-Swiss frontier, in the event of a German attack through Switzerland.

Originally the French Government had proposed to send M. Franklin-Bouillon to Italy to try and induce the Italian Government to accept this scheme, but in the conversations in the morning it had been proposed that the Prime Minister and M. Painlevé should proceed to a town in North Italy to meet representatives of the Italian Government, and the Prime Minister commended this proposal to his colleagues, insisting, however, that he should be accompanied by one of them.

In the course of the discussion it was pointed out that great difficulty might be found in inducing the Italian Government to accept this scheme. It was also suggested that if the Italians objected to any form of French or British control it might be necessary to indicate that our assistance would be dependent on their assent. It was further suggested that the proposal might be made more palatable to the Italian Government if General Cadorna became the Allied representative on the Inter-Allied Advisory General Staff.

It was pointed out that the Italians would almost certainly prefer to be placed under a British rather than a French general, since the Italians and French were temperamentally uncongenial to one another, and it was suggested that, in the last resort, the Prime Minister should have authority to assent to such an arrangement, although General Pétain’s plan was preferred.

Considerable stress was laid on the seriousness of the present situation in Italy and Russia. It was pointed out that the guns captured from Italy not only increased very materially the artillery at the disposal of the enemy, particularly as a large amount of Italian ammunition had been captured in addition, but to the same extent reduced the artillery of the Allies; also that if the Russians were unable to exert any pressure on the enemy, or made a separate peace, some 8,000 additional guns would be set free for service on the Western front. There was, therefore, no prospect of an Allied superiority in artillery on the Western front in 1918.

The War Cabinet approved the Prime Minister’s proposal to visit Italy with one colleague, and decided on the following action:

1. That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should telegraph the proposal for a visit by the Prime Minister and M. Painlevé to the British Ambassador at Rome for the information of the Italian Government.
2. That the Prime Minister should be accompanied by one colleague, as well as by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Secretary of the War Cabinet.
3. That the Director of Military Operations should telegraph to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff asking him to await the arrival of the Prime Minister in Paris.
4. That Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig should meet the Prime Minister in Paris.

15. The Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet that the French Minister of Munitions had telegraphed to the effect that the Italian Minister of Munitions had made application to him for assistance in replacing the artillery and ammunition recently lost by the Italian army, and that M. Loucheur had suggested that a Conference between the British, French, and Italian Ministers of Munitions should take place within the next ten days in North Italy.
The War Cabinet decided that—

It would be premature to hold a Munitions Conference until after the large questions of policy referred to in the two previous Minutes had been settled with the Italian Government.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 2, 1917.
Ireland.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 262, Minute 4, the Prime Minister read a telegram from the Chief Secretary for Ireland, stating that he regarded the situation as less serious than had been reported, and that he had decided not to carry out the proposal, made on the previous day, to arrest a large number of Sinn Feiners. The War Cabinet considered that, in view of their decision taken that morning, to authorise the Military authorities to take such measures as they might consider necessary to meet eventualities in Ireland, the Chief Secretary, who had not been present at the Meeting, should be informed of this decision and also of such action as the Military authorities proposed to take.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to arrange with the Secretary of State for War that the Field-Marshal Commanding Home Forces should direct the General Officer Commanding in Ireland to communicate with the Chief Secretary.

Proposed Conference in Italy.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 263, Minute 14, the Prime Minister said that he had called the Meeting in order to discuss further with his colleagues the attitude to be taken up by himself at the forthcoming Conference in Italy in regard to the various questions which would come up for consideration. He said that he proposed, subject to the approval of his colleagues, that he should be accompanied by General Smuts.

In the course of the discussion the Prime Minister read a telegram from General Delmé-Padlacki reporting that General Cadorna thought that the situation was mending. He was convinced
that the enemy intended to drive home the attack, and, in General Cadorna’s view, unless largely augmented reinforcements were despatched by the French and British Governments, a military débâcle was possible, in which case his country might be compelled to make a separate peace. The Third Italian army had so far saved its guns, for which ammunition was available. General Cadorna further reported a universal determination on the part of his nation to see the war through. The present reinforcements proposed by the French and British Governments were, in General Cadorna’s opinion, quite inadequate.

The Prime Minister said that the Italian Ambassador, who had been apprised of his forthcoming visit to Italy, had interviewed him that day, and had urged very strongly that further reinforcements should be sent. The Prime Minister also stated that General Pétain had informed him that arrangements had been made by Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and himself that the British should not only take the front occupied by General Anthoine’s army on the British left, but should also take over a front at present occupied by five French divisions on the British right.

It was pointed out that Sir Douglas Haig was still conducting important offensive operations, which, in view of the coming winter, it was desirable should be carried to a successful issue. The point was, which was the more important: that our operations on the Flanders front should be pressed forward, or for adequate support to be given to Italy to prevent her going out of the war? It was clear that very great demands were being made on the British forces not only for the Italian front, but also for the prosecution of the present offensive. It was suggested that in all probability the result would be that the main assistance to the Italian army would have to be supplied by the French. It was conceivable that the present débâcle might yet be turned into a victory; everything depended on the recovery of the Italian army, and the situation might yet be turned to our advantage.

Attention was drawn to the present disposition to magnify the number of German divisions operating on the Italian front. In regard to a suggestion that the Germans, acting on interior lines, might be conducting their vigorous offensive against Italy with a view to withdrawing French and British troops in order to attack our Western front, it was pointed out that even if ten British divisions were taken from that front we should still be numerically equal, if not superior, to the opposing German forces.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Prime Minister, with his advisers, should have full discretion to make such arrangements as they might consider necessary to meet the situation.

3. The Prime Minister read out a telegram from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stating that he had seen stragglers in trains 25 miles behind the Italian General Headquarters, which, again, were 30 miles behind the front. General Robertson thought that the paralysis of the Second Army was extending to the Third Army, which had, so far, hardly been attacked at all. General Robertson further commented on the effectiveness of German propaganda, and the fact that, while a considerable part of the Italian nation had always been opposed to the war, the Italian Government had failed to take adequate steps to suppress the propaganda and to deal with those who were responsible for it.

In regard to the shortage of foodstuffs, &c., in Italy, General Robertson thought this was due rather to the bad arrangements made for distribution than to the actual present lack of supplies.

It was pointed out that if Italy went out of the war she would either starve or freeze, as she would be dependent in the coming
months upon the Allies for both coal and food. In this connection it was suggested that the Italian nation probably were under the impression that if they made a separate peace the war would automatically come to an end.

The Prime Minister read out a telegram which had just been received from General Delme-Radccliffe, stating that the Italian army had safely crossed the Tagliamento; the Third Army was now proceeding to occupy the Tagliamento line, and had evacuated their wounded and brought back all their guns except sixty. The Italian rear guards were holding back the German advance guards, and there was some hope of the Second Army recovering its moral. The collection of stragglers of the Second Army was proceeding, and the Italian authorities reported that they had sufficient spare rifles to rearm that army. The weather was improving. All the British guns had been saved, but their stores and ammunition had been lost.

Air Reorganisation and Air Offensive.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 261, Minute 10, the War Cabinet considered what progress could be made with the formation of an Air Ministry. They were aware that public opinion was becoming very restless in consequence of the delay in forming the Ministry. It appeared desirable that steps should be taken to institute the Ministry at once, with wide, if loosely-defined, powers, leaving the details to be settled later.

General Smuts, speaking as Chairman of the Air Organisation Committee, reported that he saw no reason why the Air Ministry Bill, the draft of which was now in process of completion, should not be before Parliament in the course of the next week or so. The draft Bill had been circulated to the Admiralty and the War Office. The latter Department had promised to submit their comments and suggestions early in the following week.

In regard to the question of a separate Air General Staff, General Smuts stated that the Air Policy Committee, of which he was also chairman, had, at present, to work through the Naval War Staff and the Imperial General Staff, and he indicated the difficulties that lay in the way of the immediate formation of a separate Air Staff.

General Smuts further said, in regard to the output of aircraft, that he was confident that the present enlarged programme of aeroplane construction could be fully carried out. The danger was that it might not be possible to build the necessary aerodromes and to train a sufficient number of pilots to keep pace with the output of aircraft.

As regards independent aerial offensive operations in France, all the necessary preparations were being made. Aerodromes were being constructed, and depôts for the Air Service were being established in France, to be ready for the large independent operations it was intended should be carried out during the following summer. There was, however, a slight difficulty to be overcome in regard to the Command and Second-in-Command of these independent offensive operations. Sir Douglas Haig desired that they should be under General Trenchard, commanding the Royal Flying Corps in France. The idea of the Air Policy Committee was that they should be under the direct orders of the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief in France, for the present, as, if they were placed under General Trenchard, there was a possibility that they might be subordinated to the ordinary operations of the Royal Flying Corps in Flanders. The question was one of many which was being carefully examined by the Air Policy Committee, pending the institution of the Air Ministry.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The draft Bill should be circulated to the War Cabinet at the very earliest opportunity, and the Secretary was instructed to give effect to this decision.
(b.) General Smuts should discuss the question of the command of independent aerial operations in France with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Sir Douglas Haig in Paris the following day.

5. The War Cabinet further considered the general question of so-called reprisals, i.e., long-range bombing operations on German open towns, in retaliation for air raids on such towns in this country.

It was suggested that if the German Government were convinced that we intended to carry out a systematic series of long-range bombing operations against open German towns as soon as we were in possession of a sufficient number of aircraft of a suitable type of our own, supplemented by the large numbers of aeroplanes which would be available from the United States of America in the course of the next spring and summer, they might consider it advisable to discontinue their present raids over this country.

In this connection attention was drawn to a telegram, dated 31st October, from Lord Northcliffe to the War Cabinet (Paper G.T.—2451), which raised the question as to what was most required by the Allied General Staff from the United States:—

(a.) Aircraft,
(b.) Infantry,
(c.) Artillery,

and stating that, when a decision had been arrived at on this point, the only two remaining factors to be considered were:—

(d.) Time,
(e.) Tonnage.

In regard to the question of announcing to the enemy our intention of conducting retaliatory bombing raids as a matter of policy, the War Cabinet agreed that it was undesirable to commit themselves in any way at the present juncture.

(The discussion was adjourned.)

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,

November 3, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 265.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, November 5, 1917, at noon.

Present:

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. S. E. Carson, M.P.
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 14, 18, and 19).
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 7 and 12).
Major-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 1 to 7).
The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minutes 15 to 19).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 8 to 11).
The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minutes 15 to 19).
Sir H. Llewellyn Smith, K.C.B., Board of Trade (for Minutes 15 to 19).
The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minutes 15 to 19).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.
Captain L. S. Amery, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
1. THE Director of Military Intelligence reported that the Germans had relieved themselves from French pressure by retiring to a strong position. This retirement might, perhaps, enable the Germans to release four divisions for service elsewhere.

2. The Director of Military Intelligence read a telegram received from General Delmé-Radcliffe, No. 558, dated the 3rd November, 1917, in which it was reported that the enemy had attacked the line of the Tagliamento near Osoppo, opposite the Georgio detachment, and had crossed the Tagliamento in some strength above that detachment, driving the latter back. It was probable, therefore, that more enemy troops were crossing the Tagliamento and were following up the retirement of the Second Army, which has probably little power of resistance. A general retirement of the Second and Third Armies towards the Piave had been ordered. The Italian General Staff hoped that it would be possible to make the retirement in good order, place the Piave between the Italian Army and the enemy, and so gain time for re-forming and resting the Italian Army to some extent. General Delmé-Radcliffe added that the Army showed signs of recovering its moral, but it remains to be seen whether the enemy will give it time to recover sufficiently to remain a useful factor in the war.

In a later message General Delmé-Radcliffe reported that the Third Army was still holding a line on the Tagliamento and was recovering its moral. A counter-attack had been made by the Italians, showing that they were regaining their offensive spirit. The whole of the Second Army was to be reorganised, and order was being restored, as far as possible, behind the present front. It was expected that there would be in all some 220 battalions that could be used for the defence of the Piave line.

With regard to the probability of attack on the Trentino front, the Director of Military Intelligence said that he had communicated with the head of the French Second Bureau in Paris, who had reported that there were no definite indications of an enemy concentration in the Trentino.

3. The Director of Military Intelligence reported the receipt of a message from General Allenby to the effect that the enemy were offering resistance in the broken country north of Beersheba on the enemy's left.

The bombardment of Gaza was still going on. A report, at present unconfirmed, had been received that the enemy were bringing up two or three divisions by the Hebron road, and that General Falkenhayn himself had assumed charge of the operations in Palestine.

General Allenby reported that during the operations up to the night of the 3rd/4th November he had captured 207 officers and 2,429 other ranks, together with 15 guns.

4. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that General Maude had telegraphed that he had pushed up the right bank of the Tigris, with a flank guard on the left bank, and had attacked the enemy 20 miles north of Samara. The enemy had evacuated his position. We had captured 89 prisoners and 4 ammunition dumps. Our casualties had amounted to 180. A reconnaissance of Tekrit had also been made.
Russia.

5. The Military Attache at Petrograd reported that there was great difficulty in feeding the Army. Supplies at Petrograd are very short, and there was said to be only one day's reserve of forage.

Saloniea.

6. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that information had been received to the effect that the Bulgarians had been reinforced by 18 battalions from Roumania. He said that he wished to let the Cabinet know that there were rumours that an attack by the enemy on the Salonica front was possible, though there were no signs yet of any concentration of enemy troops beyond that already mentioned. The French think the Germans will not press their offensive in Italy, but are more likely to attack at Salonica. The rumour of such an attack appears to be based on possibilities rather than upon any exact information. For instance, the enemy knows that the Taranto route is blocked, and that the Serbians, Russians, and Italians are considerably shaken in spirit.

In this connection Lord Milner pointed out that the recent policy of the Germans had been, like that of Frederick the Great, when not sufficiently strong to follow up a blow, to strike now here, now there, first at one country, then at another, not with the object of giving a knock-out blow, but always with that of great political effect. If now, after their present attack, the Germans were to leave Italy and turn to Salonica, they would only be continuing the policy which they had already followed in their attacks on Roumania and Russia.

The War Cabinet were reminded that, as a precaution in case of emergency, it had been decided (War Cabinet 237, Minute 5) to keep a reserve of transports in readiness to remove one and a half divisions from Marseilles if required.

The First Sea Lord said that there were already six transports waiting at Marseilles, and there would be more in the near future.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In view of the fact that the whole military situation was now being discussed at the Conference in Italy, the Director of Military Intelligence should telegraph to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff giving him information in regard to the rumour of a possible enemy attack on the Salonica front.

Egypt.

7. The Director of Military Intelligence reported the receipt of a telegram from Sir Reginald Wingate to the effect that General Clayton recommended that the Arab Legion, numbering about 1,000 men, now in Egypt, should be sent to Akaba to assist Faisal's action. The Director of Military Intelligence said that it would be necessary to consult the French, and he had therefore wired to Paris, and also to General Allenby, to ask what they recommended in regard to the proposal.

Submarines.

8. The First Sea Lord said that—

(a.) Queenstown reported that the armed trawler "Sarba" dropped a depth charge on a thick patch of oil, 2½ miles from Down Rock Lightship, on the 31st October. The position had now been examined by divers and a large submarine found lying on its side.

(b.) A report had been received from St. Vincent that a submarine had entered the port at 8.30 A.M. on the 2nd November, and torpedoed at close range two Brazilian steamships at anchor, and then went out. She was fired at by the forts and a gunboat, but apparently without effect.
British Submarines in the Baltic.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 200, Minute 5, the Naval Liaison Officer at Petrograd telegraphed that the “C 26” reported an attempted attack on two “Königs” on the 17th October, but grounded in 20 feet of water. She had been pumped out to get off, but she broke surface and had to submerge again immediately. She grounded again and proceeded to Pernau. She then proceeded out on the 24th October, but had to return after six hours owing to fuel tanks leaking as the result of grounding.

Bombing Raids.

10. The First Sea Lord stated that reports had been received from Dunkirk that a bombing raid had been carried out on the afternoon of the 4th November on Engel Aerodrome. Bombs fell among sheds and hangars on the Aerodrome.

A large number of patrols were also carried out. During one, a 2-seater Albatross was brought down into the sea, and another 2-seater driven down damaged; in addition, one scout had been probably destroyed.

German Electrically Controlled Motor Boat.

11. The First Sea Lord said that the Vice-Admiral at Dover reported that an electrically-controlled motor-boat, accompanied by 19 aeroplanes, had attacked the Monitor “Prince Eugene” on the morning of the 3rd November, off the Belgian coast. The electrically-controlled motor-boat was sunk by gunfire from a destroyer, and the “Prince Eugene” was not hit.

It was suggested that, in view of statements made in the press regarding this boat, it would be desirable to communicate some more detailed information on the subject.

The First Sea Lord undertook to ascertain if there would be any objection to such publication.

Ireland.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 264, Minute 1, the Chief Secretary for Ireland stated that, as the result of a confidential communication received on Thursday last, he had, after consultation with the Prime Minister and Lord Milner, crossed to Dublin that night. In Dublin he had conferred with the civil and military authorities concerned, and had agreed with them upon a certain course of action. The fears which had been entertained had come to nothing, and both in Dublin and elsewhere no untoward occurrences had taken place on Sunday. The meeting to be addressed by Mr. de Valera on Sunday afternoon at Newbridge had been proclaimed, and although Mr. de Valera had proceeded to the district on Saturday night the meeting did not take place. He wished to emphasise the fact that there had been leakage of information, both in England and Ireland, which had had somewhat unfortunate results. He was investigating the means whereby this leakage had taken place, and would report to the Cabinet at an early date. On the whole he was of the opinion that Sinn Fein had received a considerable shock, and that there was a growing realisation in Ireland, both among the Sinn Feiners and others, that the Government were resolved to stand firm, and, if necessary, use the requisite force to carry out the decisions of the executive. He reported that on Saturday the “Irish Independent” had issued a striking warning to the Sinn Feiners, and that the “Freeman’s Journal,” which had
been behaving atrociously in the past few weeks, showed signs of returning to its senses.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the stoppage of leave to officers and men in the United Kingdom during the movement of troops to and from Ireland had given rise to a good deal of rumour. In this connection Field-Marshal Lord French and Lord Derby pointed out that such a stoppage of leave was absolutely essential on military grounds, and that, the period of movement now being over, the leave was being allowed as heretofore.

Lord French reported that, in regard to the unit most concerned with the recent loss of rifles, this unit had paraded for embarkation with only two absentees, which pointed to the fact that the loyalty and discipline of the unit were not seriously affected, and the loss of arms could not be attributed to treacherous or seditious action.

13. The War Cabinet decided that—

In the absence of General Smuts, Lord Milner be requested to act as Chairman of the Air Organisation Committee.

14. Lord Milner drew attention to the request that had been received, through Sir Reginald Wingate, from the King of the Hejaz for an increase in the money advanced to him in view of the operations in Palestine and the need of doing everything possible at the moment to encourage the Arab movement and Arab co-operation against the Turk, the War Cabinet authorised the grant of the increased amount.

15. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Minister of Reconstruction (Paper G.T.-2410), and decided that—

The question of publication should be left to the discretion of Dr. Addison.

16. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade (Paper G.T.-2329), and decided that—

The question of the publication of these reports or of extracts or summaries should be left for decision to the President of the Board of Trade, acting in consultation with the Minister of Reconstruction.

17. The War Cabinet considered a Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade (Paper G.-133), together with a Memorandum thereon by Dr. Addison (Paper G.-169).

Sir Albert Stanley pointed out that the matter was almost entirely one which could be dealt with internally by the Board of Trade under the powers already conferred upon it, but that, in view of the recent appointment of Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland to an office which was partly under the Board of Trade and partly under the Foreign Office, it was desirable that the Cabinet should take note of the proposed reorganisation. Briefly, it was intended to divide the Board of Trade into two Departments, under one Minister, namely:

1. Commerce and industry and the encouragement of trade.
2. The regulation of industry, public services, and control.

The War Cabinet approved the proposed form of organisation, subject to the concurrence of the Foreign Office and the Treasury.*

* This decision is not to be taken as prejudicing any future reallocation of functions which may be found to be necessary in the public interest.
18. With reference to War Cabinet 247, Minute 8, the War Cabinet considered the First Interim Report of Sir Edward Carson's Committee on the Economic Offensive, dealing with the question of establishing a financial blockade.

It was pointed out that the forthcoming presence of the American representative, Mr. Crosby, in this country would afford a good opportunity for pressing the United States Government on this subject.

The War Cabinet approved the Interim Report, and authorised every possible step being taken to secure the prompt co-operation of the other Allies, and more particularly of the United States.

19. The War Cabinet further considered Interim Reports Nos. 2 and 3 of Sir Edward Carson's Committee on the Economic Offensive, recommending the introduction and passage into law of the Imports and Exports Restrictions Bill and of the Non-ferrous Metals Bill.

Sir Edward Carson, as Chairman of the Committee, explained that the Committee considered these measures of the first importance and urgency, and suggested that their introduction in the House of Commons might afford a convenient opportunity for a general statement of our policy in the matter of an Economic Offensive.

It was also suggested that a similar statement on the part of the United States would immensely strengthen the effect of our own declaration.

The War Cabinet approved of the proposal to introduce the Bills in question as soon as possible, the actual date of their introduction to be settled in consultation with the leader of the House of Commons.

(Initialled) A. B. L.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,

November 5, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 266.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, November 6, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. Lord Robert Cecil, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minutes 10 to 12).
Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations, War Office (for Minutes 1 to 8).
The Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minutes 10 to 12).
The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minutes 11 and 12).
The Right Hon. R. E. Prothero, M.V.O., M.P., President, Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (for Minutes 11 and 12).
The Right Hon. Sir J. Maclay, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minutes 11 and 12).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 8).
The Right Hon. the Viscount Cowdray, President, Air Board (for Minute 10).
Major J. L. Baird, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Air Board (for Minute 10).
The Right Hon. Lord Rhondda, Food Controller (for Minutes 11 and 12).
Mr. U. F. Wintour, C.B., C.M.G., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Food (for Minutes 11 and 12).
Mr. J. F. Beale, Secretary, Wheat Commission (for Minutes 11 and 12).
Sir George Saltmarsh, Wheat Commission (for Minutes 11 and 12).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.
Major L. Store, Assistant Secretary.
Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 258, Minutes 1 and 2, Lord Milner informed the War Cabinet that he wished placed on record the situation as regards the agricultural programme. About a fortnight ago he had requested that this matter might be considered, and it was placed on the agenda of last Friday week, the 26th October, but, owing to other important business, no decision was arrived at. The position now is that, with great difficulty, we have stimulated the farmers, who are doing all that is possible with their own resources, but labour and a further supply of petrol are required so as to enable them to work to the programme authorised by the War Cabinet. As regards the labour question, the army had supplied rather more than the numbers laid down by the War Cabinet, but only a small proportion of the "skilled" workers were really skilled. Lord Milner did not attach any blame to the army authorities, who, on the whole, had been very helpful, and he believed that the army at home had furnished very nearly as many skilled men as could be found. He had written to Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig personally urging that, if possible, during the coming months agricultural furlough might be granted to men in France behind the line who were skilled ploughmen. If even a couple of thousand such men could be lent, it would make a great difference. Skilled ploughmen were the great need. At the present moment they had, thanks to Lord Goschen, between 2,000 and 3,000 ploughs and teams of horses ready, which were asked for by farmers, but no one to work them. In connection with the tractor situation, the attention of the War Cabinet had already been drawn to the fact that there was a serious shortage of petrol, and consequently full use could not be made of the tractors at the disposal of the Government.

The War Cabinet requested—

Lord Milner to consult Sir Auckland Geddes as regards the question of labour.

The Secretary was instructed to arrange that the Agricultural Programme should be placed on the Agenda during the present week.

2. The Director of Military operations reported that no news had been received from Italy since the previous day.

3. The Director of Military Operations stated that we had attacked Passchendaele this morning and that good progress had been reported; no rain had fallen during the night.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 259, Minute 5, the Director of Military Operations stated that he had received a full report from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig as to the results of the long-range bombing of German territory, and would circulate the same for the information of the War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet requested—

Sir Edward Carson to exercise his discretion as to the publication or otherwise of the particulars furnished in the report.

5. In connection with the recent bombing of Antwerp, the Director of Military Operations reported that in August 1916 a scheme was drawn up for the bombing of the Hoboken Naval Works at Antwerp, and that the bombing was carried out at that date. As regards the recent bombing of that town, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig reported that the machines had started for
Cologne, but, owing to bad weather, had had to turn back; one portion of the squadron bombed the Hoboken works, as that had been an objective in the past, and the remaining machines bombed St. Denis Westrem. Instructions had now been given that no further bombing was to be carried out on Antwerp.

Mesopotamia.

6. The Director of Military Operations stated that the Russians have re-occupied Kasri Shirin.

Palestine.

7. The Director of Military Operations reported that General Allenby's preparations for his next attack are proceeding satisfactorily.

British Submarines in the Baltic.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 265, Minute 9, the First Sea Lord reported that he was circulating extracts from a report that he had received from the Commander in charge of the British submarines in the Baltic, giving an account of the operations carried out by that flotilla during the recent German offensive, and was adding some remarks which that officer had made on the discipline and moral of the Russian naval forces. He stated that, with reference to M. Kerensky's appeal for naval assistance in the Baltic, our Ambassador had been informed that the latest information in the possession of the Admiralty indicated the fact that the Russian fleet in the Baltic was superior in power to the German fleet operating in those waters.

Irish Expenditure.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 244, Minute 3, the Chief Secretary for Ireland submitted a request to the War Cabinet that up to a certain limit he should be allowed control of expenditure in Ireland upon development and other objects which he was personally satisfied would contribute to the prosperity and content of the country.

Mr. Long pointed out that the only esteem which the Chief Secretary got in Ireland from a certain class of the Irish people was that which was obtained by the expenditure of public money, and that too rigid Treasury control made it appear to the Irish people that the Chief Secretary was powerless, and that the Treasury was omnipotent. He strongly advocated that within certain limits the control of public expenditure in Ireland should be centred in the Chief Secretary. He expressed the opinion that such a reform would do much to restore the prestige and personal position of the Chief Secretary.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Any recommendation of expenditure in Ireland put forward by the Chief Secretary, up to the limit of 50,000L in each case, should be agreed to by the Treasury unless the Chancellor of the Exchequer was of opinion that the proposal ought not to be accepted, in which case the matter should be submitted to the Cabinet for decision.

Air Re-organisation: Air Force Bill.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 261, Minute 10, and War Cabinet 214, Minute 4, the War Cabinet had before them the draft of the Air Force Bill (Paper G.T.—2491.)

Lord Milner said that, in accordance with the decision of the War Cabinet the previous day (War Cabinet 265, Minute 13), he had, in the absence of General Smuts, presided at a meeting of the Air Organisation Committee held the same afternoon. The Meeting had been attended by representatives of the Admiralty, the War Office, the Air Board, the Treasury, and the Ministry of Munitions,
and Mr. Long, the Minister in charge of the Bill, and one of the Law Officers of the Crown had also been present. The Bill had been carefully examined clause by clause, and certain minor amendments had been suggested and accepted, which would be incorporated in the Bill in the form in which it would be placed before Parliament. Lord Milner said that he was satisfied that the wishes and suggestions of the two great War Departments chiefly concerned had been fully considered, and that the Bill in its final form would have their approval. In his opinion, the Bill was ripe for presentation to Parliament. Many administrative and other details would, of course, still remain to be worked out. One or two points had engaged the special attention of the Committee. The first referred to Clause 8, Sub-section 2, but this difficulty had been got over. The second point was connected with the question of the transfer of officers and men from the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps to the new Air Force, and the fear, that they might be arbitrarily transferred, to their own detriment. The Bill, however, clearly laid down that no transfer could be carried out without the individual's own consent.

In reply to a question, Sir David Henderson pointed out that an officer or man might voluntarily elect to be transferred to the Air Force or to be temporarily attached, in which latter case he would be able to return to the Army or Navy after serving with the Air Force for a certain period. He would, in fact, be seconded for the time being.

Lord Milner, continuing, said that certain further difficulties in regard to the question of transfer and attachment might arise—e.g., the question of “sea time,” as counting towards promotion to active commands at sea, and the extent to which a period of service with the Air Force might involve loss of sea time. Unless such difficulties could be satisfactorily solved, they might conceivably be prejudicial to the future career of men joining the Air Force, but they need not be regarded as formidable or insurmountable, as the two War Departments had only to meet them in a spirit of equity and, if necessary, to effect some minor alterations in the existing regulations of the two services.

Mr. Long said that at the meeting of the Committee the previous afternoon he had raised the question of pay and allowances, which, he was sure, should be examined in greater detail, with a view to a definite and just decision, before the Bill was read a second time. Public opinion was much exercised over the matter of sailors' and soldiers' pay, and Parliament would certainly insist upon being satisfied in this respect. No man should be allowed to suffer in regard to pay and allowances by joining the Air Force. From what the Treasury representative had said at the Committee Meeting the day before, he gathered that, while the Exchequer was prepared to make certain concessions for the period of the War, it would not commit itself to maintaining the same standard of pay and allowances when the War was over and the Air Service would be less dangerous. Mr. Long thought that this point of view would not commend itself to Parliament. In regard to the point which had just been raised in the Cabinet on the subject, Mr. Long said that, although the Bill provided that no man could be compelled to transfer, anyone who was given the option of transferring would be placed in a difficult position; even if his transfer involved pecuniary loss he could hardly refuse, as it was common knowledge that thousands of men had thrown up everything in order to join the Forces.

The War Cabinet agreed that no individual should be permitted to suffer by reason of his joining the Air Force, and decided that—

(a.) The Bill, with the minor alterations agreed upon by the Air Organisation Committee the previous day, should be approved and laid before Parliament;

(b.) Mr. Long should consult with the Government Whips as to the procedure concerning its introduction;
The Chancellor of the Exchequer should consult with Mr. Long in respect of the question of pay and allowances of individuals joining the Air Force, the general principle being accepted that no person joining the said force during the war should be permitted to suffer in respect of his pay and allowances.

11. The War Cabinet had before them a Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Paper G.T.-2412) and a Memorandum by the Ministry of Shipping (Paper G.T.-2493) dealing with the tonnage situation.

Mr. Balfour said that, in his opinion, the tonnage situation was the most important thing in the war. The war was one of exhaustion, and there did not seem to be a likelihood of any great military success. The belligerents were trying to strangle each other, and our opponents' method of strangulation was to cut off our food supplies by isolating the Allies from their sources of supply. Only recently Hindenburg was reported to have said that the hope of Germany lay not in their Army but in their submarines. Mr. Balfour said that, this being so, the question of tonnage is the military question, compared with which other questions had diminished in importance.

Sir Edward Carson agreed with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that the tonnage question was all-important. The shipping situation might improve slightly from time to time, but the amount of tonnage was steadily going down and must disappear if the war went on long enough. In his opinion the tonnage problem should not be decided piecemeal, but ought to be considered in connection with Mr. Churchill's Paper (Paper G.T.-2436), in which a definite decision as to military policy was requested.

Lord Robert Cecil referred to the recent agreement which had been come to with M. Clermontal, whereby we had agreed that the responsibility for the food supplies of France and Italy should be a common charge on all the Allies, including the United States of America. He considered this agreement was absolutely necessary in order to keep the Allies in the war. He even thought that the recent failure of the Italians was partly due to their apprehension in regard to their supplies of food and coal, which had provided the Germans with a very fertile soil for their propaganda.

It was pointed out that, under this agreement, we had decided that the carriage of the food of the Allies, as well as the purchase, should be for joint account.

Sir Joseph Maclay said that if no extra assistance had to be given to the Allies, British imports next year would be less than the imports this year by some 6,000,000 tons, and if the extra demand of the Allies for cereals, amounting to over 2,000,000 tons, had to fall upon British tonnage, the decrease in British imports must then exceed 8,000,000 tons. He asked that a small Committee, with a member of the War Cabinet as Chairman, should be appointed at once, with instructions to go into the whole matter with a view to seeing how far the requirements of British imports could be cut down so as to meet the deficit indicated above.

In approving this proposal, the War Cabinet were of opinion that this Committee should be formed of Ministers, and not of representatives of the Departments. The Committee would make recommendations to the War Cabinet, who, in turn, would decide what cuts were to be made.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A Committee, composed of:—

Lord Milner (in the Chair),
The Minister of Munitions,
The Secretary of State for the Colonies,
The President of the Board of Trade,
The Food Controller, and
The Shipping Controller,
Acceleration of Merchant Shipbuilding.

12. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the Prime Minister, before he left for Italy, had referred in conversation to the disappointing results in regard to the output of new tonnage as compared with the expectations which had been raised, and stated in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister had been of opinion that a Committee should be formed, consisting of—

The Controller of the Admiralty,
The Minister of Munitions,
The Shipping Controller, and
The Minister of National Service,

who should examine the whole situation of merchant shipbuilding.

Mr. Churchill said that the Ministry of Munitions had recently increased the output of the rolling-mills to a very great extent. The results had been striking. Whereas a short time ago men were standing idle for want of materials, the output of steel-plates to-day was greater than could be put together, and was even being stacked. In fact, what had been the limiting factor, namely, capacity of the rolling-mills, had now disappeared.

In view of this statement of the Minister of Munitions the War Cabinet felt that, before appointing a Committee, it would be well to ask the Controller of the Admiralty to report fully on the present position of merchant shipbuilding, both as regards labour and material, giving an estimate of the amount of shipbuilding during the next year.

The Secretary was instructed to ask the Controller of the Admiralty for this information.

In this connection Lord Robert Cecil said he thought it would be valuable to have a survey showing the available shipping of both Allies and neutrals.

The Shipping Controller undertook to circulate to the Cabinet a statement on the lines of Lord Robert Cecil's request.

Parliamentary Vote of Thanks to Sailors, Soldiers, and Men of the Mercantile Marine.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 10, and War Cabinet 251, Minute 5, Sir Edward Carson, as Minister in charge of Propaganda, asked for a decision of the War Cabinet in regard to the extent to which the Parliamentary Vote of Thanks to sailors, soldiers, and men of the mercantile marine should be reproduced and circulated. He represented that 300,000 copies had already been printed, and that further reproduction would involve great expense and a heavy consumption of paper. He further informed the War Cabinet that the press were already protesting in respect of the amount of paper which was being used for this purpose.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The number of copies must be limited to that already printed, the question of distribution to be left to the discretion of Sir Edward Carson.

(Initialled) A. B. L.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W., November 6, 1917.
SECRET.

WAR CABINET, 267.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, November 7, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.
The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:—
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 14).
Major-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 1 to 14).
Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1 to 14).
The Right Hon. the Lord Abercorn, G.C.M.G., Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) (for Minute 16).

The Right Hon. R. Munro, K.C., M.P., Secretary for Scotland (for Minute 15).
Mr. R. B. Greig, LL.D., Commissioner of the Scottish Board of Agriculture (for Minute 15).
The Right Hon. R. E. Prothero, M.V.O., M.P., President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (for Minute 15).
The Right Hon. Lord Rhondda, Food Controller (for Minutes 15 and 16).
Mr. U. F. Wintour, O.B., C.M.G., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Food (for Minute 15).
Mr. R. H. Carr, Ministry of Food (for Minute 15).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.
Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
Major L. Store, Assistant Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
1. THE Director of Military Intelligence reported that the only information he had to give, supplementary to Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's communiqué, was that during the latest operations on the Passchendaele Ridge we had captured up to date 43 prisoners, 1 gun, and 12 machine-guns. Our own casualties amounted only to 11 officers and 383 other ranks. The capture of Passchendaele and the adjoining villages was important, and constituted a good step forward. One small piece of higher ground in this locality still remained to be captured.

2. The Director of Military Intelligence stated that a telegram had been received that morning from Lord Cavan, who reported that it was difficult at present accurately to appreciate the situation. The position was undoubtedly anxious, but by no means desperate. The Italian Second Army was in a very bad state, but the others were recovering. In spite of the serious shortage of guns, Lord Cavan thought that, if the Italians really put up a fight, the line of the Piave could be held. Our own concentration could not be completed until the 20th instant, and the anxious time would be between the 15th and 22nd. If the Piave line fell the situation would be critical.

3. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that a telegram had been received from Lord Cavan regarding the point of concentration for the British reinforcements in Italy. Our own military representatives and General Cadorna had agreed on a certain locality, which the War Cabinet were asked to approve.

The War Cabinet decided—

To record their approval of the locality, so far as they were in a position to judge, but that it must be left to the Prime Minister to confirm that approval, and to communicate it to the Italian Government.

The Director of Military Intelligence was instructed to communicate this decision to the Prime Minister through the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

4. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that the Italians had failed to hold the line of the Tagliamento, and that they had already retired a distance of some 20 miles from the river. The Third Army had placed rear-guards on the River Livenza, who, so far, were not being pressed by the enemy. The Second Army were on the left of the Third Army, and continued the Hue of the Livenza northwards. The Fourth Army was falling back from the Carnic Alps.

5. With reference to War Cabinet 264, Minute 2, the Director of Military Intelligence made the following report regarding the main decisions reached at the recent Conference in Italy:—

(a.) That the Prime Minister had approved the despatch of two additional British Divisions to Italy, to be accompanied by 60-prs. and 6-inch howitzers, the whole British Force to be commanded by General Sir Herbert Plumer, whom the Prime Minister was to meet in Paris on his return journey;

(b.) That the situation was unquestionably grave, and that French and English assistance was certainly sorely needed, but to what extent it is impossible to say at present;
(c.) That General Foch and General Sir Henry Wilson should remain for the present at the Italian Headquarters in an advisory capacity;

(d.) That General Cadorna should relinquish the Supreme Command of the Italian Armies, and should come on to the Inter-Allied Advisory General Staff.

Russia.

6. The Director of Military Intelligence stated that General Knox had reported that it was probable that General Sherbacheff would succeed to the Chief Command of the Russian Army. General Sherbacheff had lately been commanding on the Roumanian Front. He was not a man of strong character, and was said to be entirely in the hands of the Committees.

Palestine.

7. Mr. Bonar Law informed the War Cabinet that a telegram had just been received from General Allenby to the effect that the second Turkish position at Tel-el-Sheria had been captured by our troops.

Publication of
Salonica Despatch.

8. Lord Derby asked the approval of the War Cabinet to the publication of General Milne's last despatch from Salonica. He said that it had been examined very carefully at the War Office, who were satisfied that there was no objection to publication after two unimportant excisions had been made.

The War Cabinet sanctioned publication of the despatch in the amended form.

Submarines.

9. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that the Special Service vessel "Puma" had been sunk, presumably by torpedo, in the Mediterranean.

Our Naval Attache at Petrograd reported that the Russian submarine "Gepard" was now twelve days overdue, and it was feared that she had been lost.

A message from Stockton stated that a torpedo had been fired at the last vessel of a convoy, but had missed. The armed trawler "John Gillman" had fired one shot, and exploded mine-sweeps and two depth charges. A large quantity of oil had come to the surface.

German Warships
in the North Sea.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 263, Minute 10, the Deputy First Sea Lord said that the Admiralty was still awaiting a further report regarding the attack on German warships in the Cattegat, which would be submitted as soon as the interrogation of the enemy prisoners had been completed.

The War Cabinet agreed that, if the later report confirmed the first estimate of enemy losses, it was desirable that a communiqué should be made to the Press demonstrating the inaccuracy of the German official report, which so far admitted the loss of the armed cruiser only.

Shipping Losses.

11. The First Lord of the Admiralty drew the attention of the War Cabinet to the fact that, while our losses from enemy submarines in September had been the lowest during the summer months, those incurred in October had been somewhat heavier. It was evident that the Germans, for political purposes, had made an exceptional effort in October. They had now fewer submarines operating than at any time during the last six months.
12. The First Lord said that he hoped that better results might shortly be achieved in the Mediterranean as regards anti-submarine defence, as the result of the new Allied organisation that had been set up at Malta under Admiral Calthrop.

13. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum (Paper G.T.-2419) by the First Lord of the Admiralty, as to the responsibility for the cost of establishing United States seaplane stations in Ireland.

The First Lord stated that he had raised this point with a view to a ruling being obtained as to the principle to be adopted in future cases of this nature, so that uniformity might prevail in the action taken by the Army and the Navy as regards the acquisition of land in the United Kingdom for the use of the forces of the United States, and the payment for the construction of buildings, &c., that might be put up by ourselves for the use of the Americans. He added that the United States representatives in this country appeared to be quite willing to pay for any works, as well as compensation for disturbance in the case of land that it may be necessary to acquire for that purpose.

The Secretary of State for War proposed that, as regards the acquisition of land, the existing procedure should be continued, namely, that the same should be obtained through the Land Department.

The First Lord concurred in continuing the present practice in this matter.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Any expenses that might be incurred as regards works and land should, in the first instance, be met from British Votes, the necessary recovery being afterwards made from the United States Government; further, that as regards the acquisition of sites, they should, so far as possible, be selected on untenanted land.

14. Mr. Barnes stated that there was a good deal of feeling in the Labour world regarding the claims and position of M. Skobeleff, the representative of the Russian Soviet about to visit the Western Allies, and that the British Labour Party were closely watching the situation. He had learned from M. Mantoux that it was conceivable that if the admission of a representative of the Soviet to an Inter-Ally Council was permitted, certain elements among the French Socialists would put forward a similar claim for representation. On the other hand, the Soviet was at the present moment most unpopular with the bulk of the French Socialists.

It was pointed out that the difficulty lay in the fact that the Foreign Office gathered that the Soviet representative might be put forward as a representative of the Russian Government.

The War Cabinet expressed a desire to learn the views of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs upon the matter at an early date.

15. With reference to War Cabinet 257, Minute 11, the War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by Lord Rhondda (Paper G.T.-2517) and a Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland (Paper G.T.-2416).

Lord Rhondda stated that very careful consideration had been given to what had proved to be a most difficult problem concerning both the method of carrying out the Prime Minister's promise to the growers of a guaranteed price of 6s. per ton free on rail or on board, and the disposal of the surplus potato crop, which amounted
Release of Wines and Spirits from Bond.

approximately to 2,000,000 tons over and above the anticipated ordinary requirements for human consumption. He recommended that alternative (D) (referred to in G.T.-551)—which provided for the abolition of a minimum price and the payment to the grower of the difference between what he received and £1 per ton—should be adopted, although he recognised that this would involve the Exchequer in considerable loss. Lord Rhondda much regretted that, in his opinion, it was impracticable for the Government to purchase the entire potato crop, or even the entire surplus, without the establishment of a new and very large organisation, which could not be formed in time to deal with the matter this autumn. Scheme (D) allowed for purchases by the Government, and he hoped that prices might be obtained next spring, for the Government purchases to be made now, which would diminish the loss on the Exchequer. Lord Rhondda stated that the amount, which he estimated at about 5,000,000£., would largely be expended in the form of subsidies to the growers in Ireland and Scotland; very little would go to England.

Mr. Wintour pointed out that, altogether apart from the question of price and purchase, there was the question of the disposal of the surplus. The manufacture of flour or alcohol from potatoes was a costly process, and with potatoes at £1 per ton was not a commercial proposition; it would therefore be impossible to dispose of the surplus without loss to the Exchequer.

Mr. Duke stated that Scheme (D) would be difficult to justify on purely economic grounds, and undoubtedly Ireland would receive the principal benefit under the scheme. He feared that with potatoes at £1 per ton, Irish pig breeders and pig feeders would use grain rather than potatoes for their purposes. He drew attention to the existence of a big potato-buying association in the North of Ireland, and understood that the Ministry of Food were already in communication with them with a view to effecting purchases. He thought this association might be able to deal with nearly the whole of the Irish surplus.

Mr. Prothero agreed that, under the existing circumstances, Scheme (D) probably afforded the best way of dealing with the matter, although he had been in favour of purchasing the crop, and, in a general way, with the recommendations put forward in the Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland.

The Secretary for Scotland, while, from the point of view of simplicity and cost, preferring his own scheme, concurred generally with Mr. Prothero.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed the hope that if Scheme (D) were approved, Lord Rhondda, subject to there being no wastage in our food supply, would do all in his power to lessen the loss to the Treasury.

Lord Rhondda stated that this was his intention.

The War Cabinet decided—

To accept Scheme (D), on the understanding that the Food Controller would do his utmost, by purchases and re-sale at a suitable time, to reduce the demand on the Treasury.

16. The War Cabinet had under consideration the reports of the Food Controller (Paper G.T.-2402) and the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) (Paper G.T.-2441), as to an increase in the withdrawal of wines and spirits from bond.

Lord Rhondda pointed out that there was a shortage of wine and spirits, though there was a large stock of the former in bond, and that he had received strong representations from the trade urging the desirability of a freer issue from bond of wines and spirits.
Lord D'Abernon was opposed to the issue from bond of further spirit or any of the heavier wines, but not to the release of certain light wines, based on the principle of alcoholic strength.

The War Cabinet decided that—

There should not be any increase as regards the amount of spirit to be released, but that, as regards wines, the Food Controller and the Chairman of the Central Control Board should, after consultation with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, submit proposals as to a further release from bond of such wines as they might think desirable.

17. With reference to the Memorandum (Paper G.T. 2490) by the Foreign Office, relative to the purchase of Dutch produce, &c., the War Cabinet decided that—

The following Committee, consisting of—

Lord Milner (in the Chair),
Lord Rhondda,
Lord Robert Cecil,
Mr. Stanley Baldwin,

should enquire into the matter and forward their recommendations to the War Cabinet.

18. The War Cabinet had a brief discussion on the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown (G. 165) on the legality of certain acts done under the Defence of the Realm Regulations, and decided to defer taking any action until the Law Officers of the Crown could be present.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 7, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 268.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, November 8, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The following were also present:—


The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 7).

Major-General F. B. MAURICE, C.B., Joint Permanent Secretary to the Director of Military Operations (for Treasury (for Minute 9).

Mr. H. W. T. BOWYEAR, C.B., Chief Charity Commissioner (for Minute 9).

Mr. J. LAMB, C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (for Minutes 9 and 10).

The Right Hon. W. HAYES FISHER, M.P., President of the Local Government Board (for Minutes 9 and 10).

The Right Hon. H. A. L. FISHER, LL.D., M.P., President of the Board of Education (for Minutes 9 and 10).

SIR THOMAS L. HEATH, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., Joint Permanent Secretary to the Treasury (for Minute 9).

Mr. A. V. SYMONDS, C.B., Local Government Board (for Minute 9).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. DALLY JONES, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.
1. THE Director of Military Operations explained on the map the great success that had been won by General Allenby in capturing Gaza. On the 5th November his cavalry had made a successful advance to the north of Beersheba, outflanking the Turkish left. At midnight on the 6th the 21st Corps had attacked Gaza, captured it, and pushed through to its northern and eastern outskirts. General Allenby had reported considerable captures of prisoners, ammunition, stores, and guns, but no exact details were yet available. Our aeroplanes reported that the main bodies of Turks were in retreat, and had gone back 25 miles. Provided that a sufficient water-supply was forthcoming, our cavalry would be able to pursue the enemy, but our infantry could not be expected to go more than 10 miles north of Gaza until the railway extension was constructed. It was, therefore, doubtful how far the pursuit could be continued. The new defensive line to be taken up by the Turks would be that of Jaffa to Jerusalem. The enemy were reported to have made no counter-attacks. Our casualties were reported as 1,400, of whom 112 were killed.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A telegram should be sent to General Allenby, in the name of the War Cabinet, congratulating him upon his success, when the captures of the enemy had been reported: the Director of Military Operations to draft such a message, which would be submitted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and despatched on receipt of details of captures.

2. The Director of Military Operations reported that General Maude had telegraphed that on the 2nd November the Turks had advanced southward from Tekrit. Reconnaissance disclosed the fact that two Turkish Divisions (the 51st and 52nd) were isolated and unsupported, and therefore at midnight on the 6th November General Maude attacked them with complete success, carrying all the Turkish trenches, and took Tekrit. General Maude reported that the co-operation of the artillery, cavalry, and flying corps had been excellent. Tekrit is about 90 miles from Bagdad, and General Maude does not intend to stay there, on account of the exposure to his flank which would result. What he had done was to push the two Turkish Divisions back, and now he would return to Samarrah.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The substance of this satisfactory information should be given to the press, making it clear that General Maude’s return to Samarrah was in no way a forced retirement, but part of his deliberate pre-arranged plan.

3. The Director of Military Operations reported that the Italian retirement was being carried out in rather more satisfactory order and the rearguards were fighting. The War Cabinet discussed the importance of our seizing the present opportunity to get control of the naval forces in the Adriatic. It was suggested that a telegram should be sent to the Prime Minister from the War Cabinet urging him to take advantage of the opportunity to press for the full control.

The Director of Military Operations suggested that the terms of reference should be made wider than the Adriatic alone, in order that we might control the route from Marseilles to Genoa, which is at present particularly dangerous and not under our control.
Lord Derby said now that the Taranto route was blocked by movement of troops to Italy, and therefore was unable to be used for Salonica movements, it was imperative that we should get full control of all the sea routes in the Mediterranean.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Deputy First Sea Lord, after consultation with the First Lord, should draft a telegram, to be sent to the Prime Minister,

(a.) Requesting him to press for our full control of the naval forces in Italian waters and sea routes for troops;

(b.) Suggesting that Admiral Wemyss, who is familiar with the details of the Mediterranean Command, should proceed to Paris to put the views of the Cabinet before the Prime Minister.

Submarines. 4. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that no British ships had been sunk on the previous day, and only one foreign ship.

Bombing Raids. 5. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that he had received information from Dunkirk to the effect that our airmen had dropped bombs on Thourout Railway Station and on a moving train near Lichtervelde. Several direct hits on track and junctions had been reported. All our machines had returned safely.

Air Offensive. 6. With reference to War Cabinet 262, Minute 10, the question was again raised as to whether the price that we were paying for our raids was not too high. It was pointed out that four Handley-Page machines out of ten had been lost, and it was feared that the impression still prevails at the Front that the War Cabinet want raids at any price, regardless of weather.

The War Cabinet asked—

Lord Derby to communicate with General Trenchard, expressing the hope that it was understood that the War Cabinet did not wish raids to be made in unsuitable weather.

Proposed Supreme Inter-Allied Council and Allied General Staff. 7. With reference to War Cabinet 263, Minute 13—

The Secretary of State for War undertook to circulate the terms for the new Supreme Inter-Allied Council, showing all the alterations and amendments that had been made since the first proposal, and giving them in the final complete form.

American Mission to England. 8. Mr. Balfour informed the War Cabinet that Colonel House, Mr. Crosby, and experts of all the American Departments had arrived in this country, and that he would be having an interview with Colonel House the same day.

Welfare of the Blind. 9. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum on the welfare of the blind, by the President of the Local Government Board (Paper G.T.-2348), and a memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland (Paper G.T.-2483), based on the report of the Departmental Committee appointed in May, 1914.

Mr. Hayes Fisher said that the problem of reducing the proportion of the blind to the population was extremely hopeful, if
suitable measures were taken. Something could be done by improved administrative action on the part of the Local Government Board itself, and it might be possible to persuade Industrial Councils to induce workmen more often to adopt the wearing of glasses. The elementary education of the blind was very good, but more might be done in secondary schools, especially in those for girls. The crux of the question, however, was the adequate provision of workshops, where the blind who have been trained would be suitably employed. At present there are only some 3,000 places, and 3,000 more were required. It was true that these workshops could not be built during the war, but it was desirable to lay down a policy now. Additional funds were also needed to provide pensions for the blind who were incapable of earning their living. Thousands of pensions were being administered by a large number of independent Societies, with a consequent waste of effort. It was necessary that the activities of these Societies should be supervised and co-ordinated by the Government, and grants-in-aid made to them. For this purpose, and for carrying out the other recommendations, Mr. Hayes Fisher recommended the setting up of a special department in the Local Government Board, with an Advisory Committee of persons associated with the care of the blind.

Sir Thomas Heath said it would be in accord with recent as well as older precedents that the whole of the proposed expenditure (500,000\$ capital expenditure and 250,000\$ annual expenditure) should not fall on the Treasury, but should be met in part by contributions from the Local Authorities concerned. The scheme as outlined was rather far-reaching, and would probably require legislation to give effect to it.

Mr. Hayes Fisher thought that it was not unreasonable to look for local contributions towards maintenance and training. He confidently believed that there would be a substantial credit side to the training account, as many of the blind could become, in a great measure, self-supporting. Capital expenditure would, he thought, have to fall on the Treasury, as the workshops would serve areas which would not necessarily coincide with administrative and rating areas.

Mr. Munro said he supported generally the recommendations as set forth by Mr. Hayes Fisher, and they both agreed that there should be a separate Advisory Committee for Scotland.

The War Cabinet decided to authorise—

(a.) The setting up of a special department in the Local Government Board and the Local Government Board for Scotland to deal with the question, and to sanction the expenditure required for immediate administrative purposes;

(b.) The establishment of an Advisory Committee for England and Wales, and one for Scotland, on the lines proposed, whose first duty would be to advise the Departments on the preparation of schemes for the consideration of the War Cabinet.

Education Bill. 10. The War Cabinet had before them the following documents:—

Memoranda by Mr. H. A. L. Fisher (Papers G.T.-2459 and 2370).

A Memorandum by Mr. Barnes (Paper G.T.-2394).

A Memorandum by Mr. Munro (Paper G.T.-2448).

Mr. Herbert Fisher said the Bill had secured an amount of agreement far greater than he had anticipated. There was now no opposition from religious bodies. He had gone through the clauses of the Bill with Cardinal Bourne, and no insuperable difficulties had arisen. The Local Education authorities disliked one or two of the
administrative clauses, but he thought their apprehensions could be allayed. The friends of half-time were ashamed to come out into the open to defend the system, and there was thus an opportune moment for emancipating some 30,000 children. He felt very strongly that such widespread unanimity was not likely to recur, and the Government should seize it to push the Bill through at the earliest possible moment.

The War Cabinet recognised that the increasing unanimity which was now apparent was due in a special manner to the series of striking meetings which the Minister of Education had held throughout the country.

Mr. Barnes said that organised labour was strongly in favour of pushing on with the Bill, and that a deputation would probably want to wait on the Prime Minister to say so.

Mr. Munro said he desired the authority of the War Cabinet to introduce an Education Bill for Scotland this session under the Ten Minutes Rule. Subject to the approval of the Bill, which Mr. Munro said would be circulated shortly, the War Cabinet gave the necessary authority.

The War Cabinet were in full sympathy with the considerations urged by Mr. Fisher, and decided to ask the Prime Minister to make an early announcement that, subject to the exigencies of the war, it was proposed to give precedence to the Education Bill next session.

(Initialled) A. B. L.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 8, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 269.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, November 9, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.F., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 5, 9).

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 5).

Major-General Sir R. D. Whigham, K.C.B., D.S.O., Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minute 9).

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 6 and 7).

Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 6 and 7).

Mr. Thomas Jones, Acting Secretary

Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.

Captain L. S. Amery, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Daley Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.

Captain L. S. Amery, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

The Invasion of Italy.

The Director of Military Operations stated that the latest news from Italy was of a less satisfactory nature. Two Divisions, which had been retiring through the mountains on the Italian left, had apparently been cut off by the enemy, as the Germans claimed 17,000 prisoners and 80 guns. The amount of resistance offered by the Italians on the River Livenza was disappointing. A considerable proportion of the Italian forces had reached the River Piave. The actual defensive line on the river itself was weak and improvised. Defensive lines, however, had been constructed some time previously behind the Piave, covering Treviso. The Piave itself was generally fordable throughout its course, but a marsh on the right front might afford some protection, and the Italians were endeavouring to flood it. There would seem to be a reasonable
chance of the enemy being checked at Piave, and if the Italians could hold out for another ten days the situation might be relieved, as the French reinforcements would then have arrived. If the Piave line were carried, there was nothing to prevent Venice from falling into the hands of the enemy, and the next line of defence was the Brenta. A retirement from Piave might, however, lead to a débâcle. A line of defence, running into lagoons on the east, had been prepared along the River Brenta, covering Padua.

General Maurice, from his own observations during his recent visit to Italy, described the system of defences, which were well dug, well sited and concreted, but they were too linear and had no depth. What was necessary under modern conditions was an elaborate network of powerfully constructed trenches extending to a considerable depth. General Maurice said he had pointed this out to General Cadorna, who had replied that he did not think it possible that the enemy could bring up heavy artillery of the calibre and such quantities as were employed on the front in France and Flanders.

General Maurice said that the Italians had captured a document giving the Austrian Order of Battle, which showed that only 6 German Divisions, under General von Below, had been employed in the present offensive, thus confirming the information given by our own Intelligence Department. On the whole Italian front there were 44 Austrian Divisions, which, with the 6 German Divisions, gave a total of about 477,000 rifles. Before the present battle the Italians had had the disposal of 1,000,000 rifles, including available reserves of trained infantry. General Maurice thought that the rapidity of the enemy advance would have prevented him, so far, from bringing up his heaviest artillery.

The Western Front

2. The Director of Military Operations stated that the French reported that one enemy Division had been withdrawn from Alsace, and its destination might be the Trentino. There were now 140 German Divisions on the Western front, 83 on the Eastern, and 6 on the Italian. One German Division had also been withdrawn from the Eastern front to the West, and its place had been taken by another Division from the latter front.

Salonica

3. The Director of Military Operations reported that the enemy forces on the Salonica front had been reinforced by 21 Bulgarian Battalions. The reinforcement had probably taken place in response to the present Greek mobilisation. General Milne had reported that he saw at present no signs of the enemy attacking on his front, and he thought it unlikely that they would attempt this unless they had considerable German support.

Palestine

4. The Director of Military Operations described, with the aid of a map, the present operations in Palestine. The right of the next position north of that just captured by our troops had already been turned by a detachment advancing along the coast. General Allenby had taken the necessary precautions to protect his right flank by means of strong detachments towards Hebron. He had so far captured over forty guns. Owing to his troops being scattered over a wide front, it was difficult for him to get accurate information as to the number of prisoners taken.

With reference to War Cabinet 268, Minute 1, General Maurice read out a draft congratulatory telegram from the War Cabinet to General Allenby, which was approved by the Cabinet.
Mesopotamia.

The Director of Military Operations said that, in his recent operations, General Maude had captured 17 officers and 302 rank and file. His intention was to withdraw to-day to Samarra.

German Warships in the North Sea.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 267, Minute 10, the First Sea Lord stated that a preliminary examination of some of the prisoners showed that the German vessels were unarmed fishing craft. Our men mistook them for minesweepers. The prisoners, of whom there were sixty-six in all, were surprised at treatment they were receiving, as they had been led to expect that they would be shot.

The Invasion of Italy and the Control of Naval Forces in the Adriatic.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 268, Minute 3, the First Lord of the Admiralty said that he was doubtful whether the present was the psychological moment to press for the naval control of the Adriatic. Our chief concern had been to persuade the Italian Government to detach some of their surplus destroyers for submarine hunting and convoy work. A message, however, had just been received from our naval attaché at Rome stating that the Italian Ministry of Marine were expecting an attack by Austrian fast craft on the east coast of Italy, with the object of cutting off railway communication, and implying that they were about to ask for naval assistance from us. This was a new feature in the situation which was not before the War Cabinet at the discussion on the previous day.

Mr. Balfour said it was important to bear in mind the strong pacifist feeling in Italy. First Lords of the Admiralty had frequently protested against the failure of the Italians to make the best use of their ships, but the answer given was that the coastal deputies would not allow the Government to remove the destroyers on account of the danger of “tip and run” raids.

The First Sea Lord said there were two questions involved: the question of a naval offensive against Austria, and the better use of the forces in the Adriatic—assuming the present naval policy to be continued. The Italian forces, in the shape of small craft, were undoubtedly more than were needful to carry on the present policy. On the other hand, if an offensive against the Austrian islands were proposed, it would be necessary to increase the forces by drawing on the French Navy—the only possible source. It was not possible for us to spare more ships. We had at present in the Adriatic four light cruisers, two monitors, and some drifters. The French have nominally ten destroyers in the Adriatic.

With regard to control, Admiral Jellicoe felt certain that the Italians would not surrender to us the naval control of the Adriatic, and to attempt to obtain the control of the Mediterranean from the French would be very unpopular in France and would strain our cordial relations with the French navy. The position in the Mediterranean at present was that our Admiral at Malta had charge of patrols and convoys under the French Commander-in-Chief, who could withdraw any craft at any time. For the same purpose some Italian ships were similarly under our Admiral, but not the number for which we had asked. Further, in considering the inactivity of the French and Italian battle fleets, it must be remembered that their position was somewhat analogous to that of our fleet in the North Sea. It was not possible to reach the Austrian fleet except by attacking land fortifications. Such attacks would hardly affect the present military situation. On the whole, Admiral Jellicoe thought that what the Italians now feared were “tip and run” raids on their east coast.

The War Cabinet were of opinion that, as the Prime Minister had already left Italy, the subject would be more advantageously discussed on his return, and that in the meantime the First Sea
Lord should endeavour to obtain more precise information as to Italian intentions. Should a definite request for naval assistance be received, the question of conditions as to control would then be considered.

8. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs read to the War Cabinet telegrams dealing with the Russian situation which had just been received from Petrograd and Stockholm (No. 1771 from Sir George Buchanan; Nos. 3142 and 3150 from Sir E. Howard).

9. With reference to a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (Paper G.T.-2535), the War Cabinet further discussed the question of the command of the Australian troops (War Cabinet 261, Minute 9, and War Cabinet 262, Minute 2).

Attention was drawn to the fact that Mr. Hughes's telegram of 25th September had not been referred to the War Cabinet, as requested by him.

Sir George Fiddes explained that the Colonial Office had been in communication with the War Office on the subject.

The Secretary of State for War informed the War Cabinet that, as far as the question of unity of command was concerned, that was now settled in the sense desired by Mr. Hughes. All five Australian Divisions were now under General Birdwood's command, though one of them, owing to shortage of men, was being treated as a depot division. If, as a result of the referendum now contemplated by the Commonwealth Government, compulsory service were introduced in Australia, and the number of Divisions restored to five or even increased to six, there would probably be no difficulty in still retaining them under a single command, though it might be necessary to organize them in two corps. As regards the Australian request for a special representative attached to the War Office, there was no objection, but he believed that the request was based on a misunderstanding. The Australian forces already had their own headquarters in London, and were in exactly the same position in that respect as the Canadian forces. In the telegram from the Governor-General, dated the 26th September, no mention was made of this representative.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The War Office and the Colonial Office should draw up, in consultation, a telegram to be sent to Australia, stating that the question of the command had been settled in the manner desired by the Australian Government, and explaining the reasons for the delay in replying to Mr. Hughes's telegram of the 20th September—the telegram to be submitted to the War Cabinet on Monday, the 12th November.

10. The War Cabinet decided to appoint a Committee, consisting of—

Mr. Barnes (Chairman),
Mr. Long,
Lord Rhondda,
Sir A. Mond,

to decide as to an application made by the Ministry of Food for further staff accommodation urgently required in connection with the scheme for distributing sugar.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 9, 1917.
THE War Cabinet had before them two telegrams from General Sir Henry Wilson, setting out his appreciation of the situation on the Italian front.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff thought that the Italians should be in a position to hold the line of the Piave, provided their flank was not turned from the north and north-west. He explained upon a map the importance of the Asiago plateau and of the Montello hill, which positions, if occupied by the enemy, would threaten the Piave line. He stated that General Foch had agreed that the French troops should go to Vicenza, and, in the event of their doing so, our troops, who were detraining at Mantua, would be available to take the place of the French at Brescia if need be. He gathered that the Italian Staff still estimated the number of German divisions being employed as twenty-one; he had asked for the numbers of these divisions, but these had not yet been forthcoming. General Foch was of opinion that not more than nine
German divisions were being used, and the Intelligence Department at the War Office could not find more than six.

General Robertson then read to the Cabinet the orders which he had given to General Sir H. Plumer, directing him to take over command from Lieutenant-General Lord Cavan. These orders had received the approval of the Prime Minister, and the necessary extract had been communicated to the Italian Government. He stated that Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig had been warned to hold two other Divisions in readiness to proceed to Italy at short notice, and he had called for a report from Sir Douglas Haig upon the effect such withdrawals would have upon his operations.

Attention was called to a statement that had appeared in the London press to the effect that General Fayolle had been appointed to command both the French and British troops serving in Italy, and the War Cabinet requested the Secretary to arrange for the contradiction of the report as soon as confirmation of its inaccuracy had been obtained from Paris.

Attention was also called to the statement by the King of Italy that the loss of Venice would involve the retreat of the Italian Fleet to ports in Southern Italy. The First Sea Lord stated that this matter was receiving consideration.

Supreme Inter-Allied Council and Allied General Staff.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 263 (Minute 13) and War Cabinet 268 (Minute 7), the War Cabinet discussed a draft reply to a question to be put that afternoon in the House of Commons by Mr. Joseph King, M.P. There seemed to be considerable doubt as to whether the officers nominated by the three Governments were to be members of the Council or merely advisers.

In this connection the War Cabinet attached importance to the principle that the functions of the Inter-Allied Council should not in any way abrogate or over ride the functions of the General Staffs of each country, or the paramount authority of the respective Governments with regard to the disposition of their troops, or military policy.

Tonnage Conference.

3. Lord Robert Cecil reported that he had requested the French and Italian Governments to send representatives to London at the earliest possible moment, to discuss with ourselves and the Americans the tonnage situation as a whole.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The selection of the British representatives, and the Terms of Reference, should be left for decision to Lord Milner, Sir Edward Carson, and Lord Robert Cecil.

Palestine.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had received no official estimate of the number of Turkish prisoners taken up to date by General Allenby. He considered General Allenby's operations had been a very fine performance, and it was clear that General Allenby was making the most of a valuable opportunity. The question of the future operations in that theatre would require consideration.

Attention was called to the fact that the press had been indulging in somewhat precipitate expressions regarding the possible capture of Jerusalem, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to issue a caution in this respect.

Submarines.

5. The First Sea Lord reported that the Special Service ship "Rule," escorting a convoy, had rammed an enemy submarine on the 9th instant about 140 miles from Cape Spartel. The upper
structure of the submarine was seen as the ship passed over her, and grating was heard and felt. Two depth charges were dropped, one of which exploded, and a further small explosion was heard, followed by the appearance of oil. The submarine was probably sunk, and certainly badly damaged.

The First Sea Lord reported a submarine attack on vessels anchored off Belah (south of Gaza). The British destroyer "Staunch" and monitor "M 15" had been sunk.

The First Sea Lord reported that seaplane 9850 bombed a submarine 2-50 p.m. 11th, S. by E., 20 miles from the Start Lighthouse. First 100 lb. bomb dropped on periscope, which was still above water, and second about 30 feet in front of first. Third and fourth were dropped in middle of disturbance. Large disturbance under water after last bomb. Submarine considered damaged and possibly sunk.

6. The First Sea Lord reported that a successful bombing raid from Dunkirk had been carried out during the night of the 9-10th November on the St. Denis Westrem Aerodrome, 14-112-lb. bombs being dropped with apparently good results. A large number of bombs had also been dropped on Bruges Docks. Good shooting was made and a large fire caused. All our machines returned safely.

7. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to a story, circulated in the German press and reproduced in the "Times," to the effect that a secret meeting of the Privy Council took place in July 1913 at Mr. Asquith's house, attended by the King and addressed by Lord Kitchener, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. Churchill, at which war with Germany was advocated. While the story was obviously absurd, the War Cabinet agreed that it was advisable that a definite contradiction should be issued.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs agreed to get into touch with the principal persons alleged to have been present at this meeting of the Privy Council, and to arrange for the publication, in answer to a Parliamentary question or otherwise, of a definite and detailed contradiction.

8. The Chief Secretary for Ireland drew the attention of the War Cabinet to the imminence of a strike on the part of the employees in the electric and gas undertakings of the Corporation of Belfast. The dispute had arisen out of the refusal of the Corporation to grant to the outdoor workers the War Bonus which, as the result of an arbitration, they had given to the indoor workers. The outdoor workers had demanded an arbitration, failing which they intended to 'cease work that night. The Lord Mayor had applied to the Military Authorities to supply him with soldiers, both to carry on the running of the electric and gas supply and to protect the works against possible sabotage on the part of the strikers. He had only heard of the matter indirectly, and had conveyed a suggestion to the Lord Mayor that the Corporation ought to arbitrate, but he had not received any reply to this. His opinion, which was shared by Mr. Kellaway, who was present on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions, was that the attitude of the Corporation had been very difficult. He did not think himself that it was at all desirable to use soldiers for the purpose suggested. It would be quite a different matter if there were disturbances, and the intervention of the Military were requested for the maintenance of order.

The Representatives of the Minister of Munitions and the
Minister of Labour concurred in the undesirability of employing soldier labour.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to send a strongly-worded telegram to the Lord Mayor of Belfast, pointing out that it was the duty of the Corporation, in the present critical shipping situation, to submit the matter to arbitration and not to run the risk of a strike which would paralyse the shipbuilding activities of Belfast.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 12, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, November 13, 1917, at noon.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. George N. Barnes, M.P.
The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 8).
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.
General Sir W. R. Robertson, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1 to 8).
Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1 to 8).
The Right Hon. the Viscount Cowdray, President, Air Board (for Minute 12).
Sir George V. Fiddes, K.C.M.G., C.B., Permanent Under-Secretary, Colonial Office (for Minutes 9 and 10).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.
Major L. Storr, Assistant Secretary.
Captain L. S. Amery, Assistant Secretary.
Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Invasion of Italy.

1. THE Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet of the substance of a telegram received from General Wilson stating that the situation was somewhat better, the small local success at Asiago having had a good effect. There would still be another nine or ten days before anxiety was removed. Meanwhile General Diaz was getting the situation in rear of his line into a less congested condition, and was also making the necessary arrangements in case of a retreat. The telegram also referred to certain changes made in the relative positions assigned to the French and British divisions. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff mentioned that the Germans had picked up the remains of two more divisions in the mountains, and were now in front of Feltre. Eight German divisions on other fronts had not been located for some
days, and it was possible that some, at any rate, of these were on their way to the Italian front, in addition to the original six divisions of which we had knowledge.

Palestine.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that he had telegraphed to General Allenby to let him have an appreciation of the position and his views and proposals with regard to it, as soon as he was able to send them. Judging by the fact that General Allenby had taken the enemy's advanced posts on his new line yesterday, it looked as if he meant to get, at any rate, as far as the Jaffa-Jerusalem line. Complete details had not yet arrived about the captures, but they amounted to about 80 guns and just under 6,000 officers and men.

Mesopotamia.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, referring to the recent arrival of a Russian detachment of 2,000 to 3,000 men at Kasr-i-Shirin (War Cabinet 266, Minute 6), reported that another substantial detachment had reached Mendeleh. These would afford a most useful protection to General Maude's right flank. In his opinion, Von Falkenhayn had probably discovered that the Baghdad campaign was a more difficult task than he had imagined.

East Africa.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the German forces were now collected together in two main bunches, the bulk of which he hoped would be disposed of shortly. Over 300 Germans, as well as a considerable number of Askaris, had been picked up in the last few days, and there was a real hope of finishing the campaign before the beginning of the rains.

Lake Garda.

5. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that a naval officer had been sent up to Lake Garda to study the defence of the lake in the event of any possible naval operations by the Austrians. He did not consider it would be possible to do anything effective in the way of mining the lake.

Aerial Actions and BombingRaids.

6. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported —
(a.) Aeroplane encounters off Dunkirk, in which a hostile scout had been brought down in flames.
(b.) Raids on Belgian aerodromes and on the Lule Burgas Bridge, in Thrace.

The latter raid was unsuccessful in its objective, but succeeded in setting fire to a large forage depot.

Naval Losses off Gaza.

7. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that it was not clear, from a later telegram, whether a French destroyer had actually been sunk. The casualties were not yet fully known, but were very few on H.M.S. "Staunch," and possibly rather more on the monitor "M. 15."

Japanese Military Co-operation.

8. The War Cabinet again discussed the question of possible military assistance from Japan (War Cabinet 250, Minute 8). It was pointed out that, although the United States had expressed itself somewhat doubtfully, the situation as between America and Japan had been improved since the recent exchange of notes. Sir C. Greene had also suggested that Japanese public opinion was beginning to move in the direction of more active intervention in the War.
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that, so far, indications had not been very favourable, and that a direct official request by him for the assistance of two armoured cruisers had as yet met with no reply.

After some discussion it was decided—

To consider the question further at a subsequent meeting, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs undertaking meanwhile to press the question of the ships.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 299, Minute 9, the War Cabinet considered the telegram drafted by the War Office and concurred in by the Colonial Office.

The War Cabinet approved the telegram, subject to the addition of a passage expressing the regret of the Cabinet for the delay in answering Mr. Hughes' original message.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The telegram as amended (Appendix I), should be sent to the Governor-General of the Australian Commonwealth.

10. With reference to the fact that the telegram from the Prime Minister of Australia had been passed on to the War Office because it dealt with a military question, and had not been referred directly to the War Cabinet as requested in the telegram, the Secretary of State for War raised the general question as to which Department, in such cases, was responsible for bringing a question before the War Cabinet, and suggested that the most convenient procedure would be if the Department which first received the request to bring a matter before the War Cabinet should bring it up directly, even if the subject-matter concerned other Departments.

The War Cabinet agreed with this suggestion, and gave a general ruling that any explicit request for reference to the War Cabinet, coming from a responsible source, should be brought to the notice of the War Cabinet by the Department receiving the request.

11. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to a motion in the House of Lords on the subject of Conscientious Objectors, standing in the name of Lord Charnwood. There was nothing in the substance of the motion which the War Cabinet disagreed with, and it was in fact intended as a reply to the scheme put forward by Lord Parmoor, which the Secretary of State for War stated that he would oppose.

The War Cabinet considered, however, that—

It was not desirable that it should be committed to the terms of a definite motion on this subject.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to see Lord Charnwood, and to persuade him to content himself with expressing his views in a speech, and not moving a resolution.

12. The War Cabinet had before them a note by Lord Milner (Paper G.T.-2549) (Appendix II), covering a Minute from the Secretary of the Air Board regarding a proposal to establish a Government Postal Service by Aeroplane between London and Paris. The note stated that a similar project had been put forward by Messrs. Reuters (Limited) and had been considered by the Air Board, who had agreed to reject it, on the ground that it was...
inadvisable, in the present circumstances, to divert any part of the aerial resources of the country from the pressing needs of the Air Services.

The President of the Air Board said that he had nothing to add to the arguments against the proposal which had been brought forward in the Air Board note. As, however, the scheme had been endorsed by the French Prime Minister, he thought it necessary that the matter should come up for the decision of the War Cabinet. Lord Cowdray said he understood from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Air Board that he had seen M. Flandin, a Member of the French Chamber of Deputies and Secretary of the French Inter-Departmental Committee upon Civil Aeronautics, who had come to this country to press the adoption of the scheme, just before he returned to France, and he thought that M. Flandin fully appreciated the objections which had been explained to him.

The Postmaster-General said that he also had interviewed M. Flandin, and had represented to him that, apart from the fact that the beginning of winter was hardly a favourable season for the introduction of the scheme, this was not an opportune time to adopt it. He had, however, explained to M. Flandin that he had no doubt that His Majesty's Government would be prepared to give it their sympathetic consideration when the times were more favourable for its acceptance.

The War Cabinet agreed as to the cogency of the arguments advanced by the Air Board against the proposal, and decided that—

Having regard to the fact that the whole of our output of aircraft was required for war purposes, the scheme must be rejected, and requested the President of the Air Board, in consultation with the Postmaster-General, to take the necessary steps to give effect to this decision.

(Initialled) A. B. L.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 13, 1917.
APPENDIX I.

TELEGRAM, NOVEMBER 13, 1917.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

MY telegram of 8th October.

With further reference to your telegram of 26th September, I am sure that the Prime Minister will understand how difficult it was to come to a decision in this matter, and the War Cabinet regret the unavoidable delay in dealing with it.

While Australian divisions were employed on the offensive front in Flanders it was not possible to consider how best to give effect to the request of Commonwealth Government that all Australian divisions should be grouped together in one command. It has now been arranged that four divisions shall be included in an Australian Corps, and the remaining division affiliated to that corps, acting temporarily as a depot division until sufficient reinforcements are available to bring it up to strength. All five divisions will thus be under General Birdwood's command. Whole matter has been carefully considered by War Cabinet, who regard above as best practical solution of the problem at the moment. Cabinet further hope that Commonwealth Government will find it possible to send sufficient reinforcements to maintain all five divisions at full strength.

As regards question of staff, Army Council strongly urge that the principle of interchange of Australian and British officers should be adhered to, but without in any way binding the Commonwealth Government to receive a fixed proportion of British officers in Australian formations. This principle is one to which Commonwealth Government, in common with Governments of other overseas dominions, agreed when Imperial General Staff was formed, and if Commonwealth Government will continue to accept it, War Cabinet are satisfied that the details of its application will be satisfactorily arranged between Sir D. Haig and General Birdwood. Main difficulty hitherto, however, has been to get Australian officers for British staffs, and Army Council would welcome for this purpose a largely increased number of Australian officers, who would, of course, be returned to Australian Corps when required to fill staff vacancies there.—LONG.

APPENDIX II.

PROPOSED GOVERNMENT POSTAL SERVICE BY AEROPLANE BETWEEN LONDON AND PARIS.

(Note by Lord Milner.)

THE attached Minute has been sent to me in the absence of General Smuts, by the Secretary of the Air Board. I think a decision should be given by the Cabinet on the proposal as soon as possible.

Personally I feel that, the disadvantages which are pointed out in the letter are so great that it would be impossible to start the suggested service at present.

(Initialled) M.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 9, 1917.
Lord Milner,

M. FLANDIN, a Member of the French Chamber of Deputies, and Secretary of
the French Interdepartmental Committee on Civil Aeronautics, has come to London
to propose a Government postal service by aeroplane between London and Paris.

A similar project put forward by Messrs. Reuters (Limited) was recently under
the consideration of the Air Board, and was rejected on the ground that, it was
inadvisable in the present circumstances to divert any part of the aerial resources of
the country from the pressing needs of the Air Services.

M. Flandin was informed of this attitude before he came to London, but the
French authorities, nevertheless, persist in their project, which has received the
approval of the French Prime Minister. They say that, if the English Government
is unable to provide pilots and machines, these will be furnished entirely from French
sources. They only ask in effect permission to land at an aerodrome near London, the
provision of the necessary sheds, and the motor service for transporting the mail from
the aerodrome to the post office.

The Air Board have given the matter further consideration and are of opinion that
it should be submitted through you to the Cabinet. They see the following objections
to the proposal:

There might be considerable criticism of the employment of pilots at the present
time on a purely peace service. If, as the French suggest, the pilots in question would
be men who had become unfit for service at the front, it would still be objected
that they might be employed in training pilots or in testing aeroplanes.

Even if the machines which the French propose to assign to the service are unfit
for use on the front, they might still be used for training, if not by the French, at
least by the Americans.

The French machines engaged on the service would have to cross over our coast
defences, and, owing to the possibility of their being mistaken for raiders, this is likely
to give rise to difficulty.

The enemy would probably soon discover that this service had been established,
they would endeavour to attack the aeroplanes conveying the mails, and a demand
for a protective escort would arise which it might be difficult to refuse. In the
absence of protective measures, only unimportant matter could be conveyed by the
aerial mail, which would run considerable risk of destruction.

Our own contribution to the service would certainly not in practice be limited
to the provision of facilities for landing, &c.—we should be called upon to provide
petrol, to recover machines which had met with an accident and had fallen in
British territory, and so forth.

Our own experience shows the extreme difficulty of maintaining a regular service
to France. British machines urgently required at the front are constantly held up for
many days at Lympne owing to weather conditions.

The most serious objection, however, is no doubt that it would be highly
undesirable to allow a service of this kind to fall into the hands of the French
exclusively. Our own manufacturers show a certain restiveness at having their
activities confined strictly to war work; they constantly seek facilities for advertising
themselves at home and abroad, with a view to civil work after the war, and draw
unfavourable comparisons between the facilities for advertising which have been
granted to them and, e.g., to the Italians and French by their respective Governments
in this connection. There would certainly be an irresistible demand for the
participation of British machines in this service if it is once allowed to be established;
such participation could only be at the cost of the output required to meet our own war
requirements, and if British machines participated in the postal service, British pilots
would also have to be furnished.

For these reasons it is thought that assent should not be given to the French
proposal.

But it may be that an Aerial Postal Service between London and Paris would
prove a very popular measure, and it is for the Cabinet to decide whether there are
grounds for accepting it sufficient to outweigh the disadvantages indicated above.

(Signed) H. F. HARVEY,
Secretary to the Air Board.

Air Board, November 7, 1917.
SECREf.

WAR CABINET, 272.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's room, House of Commons, on Tuesday, November 13, 1917, at 4.30 P.M.

Present:

THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. SIR EDWARD CARSON, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:—


Lieutenant-Colonel Sir M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Major L. STORR, Assistant Secretary.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 263, Minute 13, the Chancellor of the Exchequer informed the War Cabinet that Mr. Asquith had put a question to him that afternoon in the House of Commons, asking whether the Prime Minister would be prepared to make a full statement in Parliament in regard to 'the very serious matters touched on in his recent speech in Paris.'

The War Cabinet agreed that it was desirable that the Prime Minister should make a statement on the subject of the Supreme War Council, offering an opportunity for a full discussion, if Parliament so desired, at an early date.

The War Cabinet inclined to the view that it was probably advisable that any such discussion should take place in Secret Session, in view of the secrecy of the considerations involved. No decision, however, on this point was reached. It was agreed that no discussion in Parliament should take place on the following day.

2. The Prime Minister made the following statement in regard to the Italian situation, which he characterised as being a very anxious one. He said that the views of the generals he consulted on the spot had already been telegraphed to the War Cabinet.

Perhaps the most serious factor was the immense quantity of artillery and ammunition which had been lost. It was doubtful to
what extent the guns which the Italian retreating forces had had to relinquish had been destroyed. The transport was in such an exhausted state that unless it were given time to rest and recover it would also have to be sacrificed. The Italians had lost already about 2,500 guns, many of large calibre, and considerably over 200,000 prisoners. Should the Piave line be lost nearly all the remaining guns would go too. If the Germans brought up any considerable quantity of heavy artillery the Italians could not dispose of enough heavy ordnance to hold successfully any line of defence. The chief contributory cause to the present disaster was the inefficiency which had been revealed of the Italian Higher Command and General Staff, and we had accordingly made the first condition of our assistance the replacement of General Cadorna and his Staff. The Headquarters Staff had been quite unable to grip hold of the situation and to keep in touch with and control the movements of the Italian forces. The dispositions were bad, the Staffs generally inefficient, and no communication had been maintained. Both our own and the French Military Advisers had represented that General Cadorna was quite unfit to retain the supreme command of the Italian forces. The difficulty was to find a suitable successor. His Chief of the Staff, General Porro, did not inspire confidence, to say the least of it. The Due d'Aosta had great soldierly qualities, but he was rather a gallant leader of troops than a profound student of military science. In any case, it would be difficult to replace him at the head of the Third Army. The King of Italy, who was setting a fine example of invincible courage and unshaken confidence, attributed the rout of the Second Army to the fact that they were taken unprepared, under cover of mist, and he placed little credence in the stories of pacifist propaganda having undermined the soldierly spirit of the officers and men.

As regards reinforcements, the first French divisions had arrived well up to time, and had advanced towards the Piave, but had then been sent back behind Lake Garda at General Cadorna's request. King Victor had expressed to Mr. Lloyd George the wish that British troops, rather than the French, should extend the Italian front line on the left. It was reported that French artillerists, who had gone with 100 guns a month or two before to the Italian front, had unwittingly done a good deal of harm by spreading exaggerated stories of German frightfulness.

As regards the Italian representative on the Supreme Allied Council, the Prime Minister said that the nominee of the Italian Government was General Porro, who had been General Cadorna's Chief of Staff. As already stated, however, neither the French Military Authorities nor our own had any confidence in General Porro. Feeling, consequently, that it would be quite impossible to confide the vital secrets of three Allied nations to a man who was not trusted by the British and French Military Authorities, Mr. Lloyd George said that, whether that lack of confidence was justified or not, the French President of the Council and he had agreed each to make a strong protest to the Italian Government on the subject. These protests were made, the one by telegraph through the British Ambassador at Rome, and the other personally to Signor Berenini, the Italian Minister who attended the announcements in Paris on Monday, the 12th November.
The Chief Command of British and French troops in Italy would be given on behalf of the Army Council, and that he would be subject to the authority of, and receive his instructions from, the Army Council.

The War Cabinet decided—

To defer the question for their further discussion later.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 271, Minute 1, the War Cabinet were informed that the French Government had not put forward any suggestion to the Prime Minister that General Fayolle should command both the British and French reinforcements.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W., November 14, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 273.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, November 14, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. GEORGE N. BARNES, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 15 and 21).

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Lieutenant-General Sir J. S. COWANS, K.C.B., M.V.O., Quartermaster-General to the Forces (for Minutes 17 and 18).

The Right Hon. SIR JOSEPH MACLAY, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minutes 17 and 18).

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minutes 17 to 19).

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. SIR E. CAULSON, K.C., M.P.


Admiral Sir J. R. JELLICOE, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 12 and 17).

The Right Hon. the EARL OF CRAWFORD AND BALCAERES (for Minute 20).

The Right Hon. SIR GEORGE CAVE, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 20).

Sir E. WYLDBORE SMITH, Chairman, Commission internationale de Ravitaillement (for Minute 18).


Fleet Paymaster P. H. ROW, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Acting Secretary.

Captain L. S. AMERY, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
French Shipping, &c.

1. The Secretary brought to the notice of the War Cabinet certain information he had received whilst in France as to the action of the French in not requisitioning all their ships, and using some of them for private profit. He further stated that, according to the same informant, the French had not informed us that they had raised 800,000 tons of coal from their own collieries this year, in addition to the 2,000,000 tons which was the normal war quantity.

The War Cabinet requested—

Lord Milner and Lord Robert Cecil, in conjunction with the Departments concerned, to enquire into the situation generally as regards France and Italy, and to furnish the War Cabinet in due course with a report.

The Equipment of the Greek Army.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 240, Minute 11 and Appendix, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that 2,000 tons of equipment and raw material for the Greek Army was awaiting shipment to Greece under the provisions of the agreement arrived at between the British, French, and Greek Governments.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to communicate with the Shipping Controller, with a view to the requisite shipping being provided at an early date, if practicable.

The Invasion of Italy.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff read to the War Cabinet telegrams that had been received from General Wilson to the effect that the Italians had been driven back slightly on the Lower Piave, but that a more serious threat was being made in the direction of the Asiago Plateau, with the result that General Diaz and the King of Italy were somewhat anxious as to the situation. As regards the threat on Asiago, General Wilson stated that it was really a race as to whether the enemy could force the present line, either through the mountains in the north or by the river on the east, before the French and ourselves could get up to save the situation. General Wilson added that we were doing all we possibly could, but there was certainly no time to spare. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that the French intended to send two more Divisions to Italy. As regards the German force, he added that he had no intelligence that there were any more Germans on the Italian front, but that the whereabouts of eight Divisions were not at present known. Two more Austrian Divisions had arrived on that front.

The Chief Command of British and French Troops in Italy.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 272, Minute 4, the Secretary of State for War stated that a telegram had been received from Lord Bertie to the effect that General Fayolle is not in supreme command of the French and British troops in Italy, the present situation being that General Foch has supreme command of the French troops in that area, and that it is intended to raise the question of the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief of both Armies at the first meeting of the Inter-Allied Staff, which is to take place on the 20th November at Versailles.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to take the necessary steps to contradict the previous report that General Fayolle was in supreme command of the British and French troops in Italy.

Supreme War Council.

5. In connection with the Italian Command, the War Cabinet discussed the desirability of the retention of General Sir H. Wilson in Italy, and noted his opinion that he should return to England.
The War Cabinet decided that—

Such procedure was desirable, and requested the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to communicate with the French Government, pointing out that, in their opinion, it was desirable that both General Wilson and General Foch should now return to take over their duties in connection with the Inter-Allied Supreme War Council, and that we proposed to instruct General Wilson in this sense as soon as we hear that the French Government agree.

General Cadorna

6. The War Cabinet took note of telegram No. 929, of the 13th November, 1917, from the British Ambassador at Rome, to the effect that General Cadorna had accepted the appointment as the Italian member of the Military Advisory Council.

The Western Front

7. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the Germans were carrying out a heavy bombardment in the vicinity of Passchendaele, and that two German Divisions had arrived there from Russia.

Palestine

8. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had received information from General Allenby that he had carried out a further attack in Palestine, with good results. General Robertson explained on a map to the War Cabinet the situation, and indicated the advance which had taken place.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to prepare a summary of the telegram from General Allenby, and to forward it to the Leader of the House of Commons for communication to Parliament.

Bombing Raids

10. The First Sea Lord reported that a bombing raid was carried out on the 13th instant on Houttave Aerodrome, bombs being dropped with good effect, one direct hit on the sheds being reported. All our machines returned safely.

11. The First Sea Lord reported that railway trains between Kulich Burgas and Muradi were attacked on the 12th instant with bombs and machine-gun fire from a D.H. 4 aeroplane from Imbros.

Zeebrugge

12. The First Sea Lord reported that coastal motor-boats had laid mines off Zeebrugge. One, "M.B. 7," had not yet returned, but she may have been delayed by fog.

The Relations between the Army Council and British Military Representative with the Supreme War Council.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 272, Minute 3, the War Cabinet had under further consideration the question of a reply to the Army Council on the points they had raised as to the relations between themselves and the military representative with the Supreme War Council.

The War Cabinet requested—

General Smuts and Sir Edward Carson to go into the legal position, with the assistance of the Law Officers of the
Crown, and give a decision as to the points raised by the Army Council, communicating such decision to the War Cabinet and the Army Council.

Ministry of Food:
Office Accommodation.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 269, Minute 10, the War Cabinet had under consideration a Report by a Committee of which Mr. Barnes was Chairman, as to further accommodation being provided for the Ministry of Food in connection with the scheme for distributing sugar.

Mr. Barnes pointed out that the Secretary of State for the Colonies had been unable to be present, but that he had written saying that he was a trustee for His Majesty's Government and the Dominions and Crown Colonies in regard to the Imperial Institute, and could not share this responsibility, adding that if the Cabinet gave a decision in favour of the Imperial Institute being so used, he would, of course, be free to state the facts to the Dominions. Mr. Barnes stated that Lord Rhondda had pointed out the urgency of the matter, and that the Committee over which Mr. Barnes had presided had concurred as to the allocation of the Imperial Institute for the purpose named.

The War Cabinet requested—

Mr. Barnes, before taking the action he recommended, to confer with Mr. W. A. S. Hewins, so as to ascertain in detail the views of the Colonial Office on the subject.

War Priorities Committee.

15. The War Cabinet had under consideration the Minutes of the Second Meeting (Paper G.T.-2468), the Third Meeting (Paper G.T.-2510), and the Fourth Meeting (G.T.-2495), of the War Priorities Committee, together with a note by the Minister of Munitions and the Admiralty reply thereto (Paper G.T.-2584), their particular attention being drawn to the following recommendations of the Committee:

(a.) The Reduced Airship Programme and the Aeroplane Programme, viz., 200 squadrons to be completed by the end of 1918, to have priority after the Shipbuilding Programme.

(b.) A completion of the two aircraft programmes is sufficiently important to justify a reduction in the output of other munitions, e.g., shell and rails.

(c.) That the Minister of National Service should become a Member of the War Priorities Committee.

They also took note of the desire of the Committee to know whether it was the intention of the War Cabinet that a supreme effort to bring the war to an end was to be made in 1918, or whether provision should be made for the prolongation of the war into 1919, and after.

The War Cabinet, while taking particular note of Mr. Churchill's objection to the Reduced Airship Programme, confirmed the various recommendations of the War Priorities Committee, as set forth in the above papers.

Economic Offensive:
Control of Shipping after the War.

16. Sir Edward Carson brought before the War Cabinet the Fourth Interim Report of the Economic Offensive Committee, dealing with the control of shipbuilding after the war (Paper G.-170). He pointed out that the necessity for control was urged by all the Government Departments concerned, and by the various Committees which were dealing with various aspects of the question. The draft outline of a Bill recommended by the Committee had also been agreed upon between the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Shipping, and approved by the Minister of Reconstruction.
It was mentioned that Colonel House had expressed the view that the United States Government would look with favour on an Economic Offensive.

The War Cabinet approved the Report of the Economic Offensive Committee, the recommendation that a statement should be made at an early date, that Regulations should be published under the Defence of the Realm Act, and a Bill introduced on the lines of the draft outline presented by the Committee.

17. With reference to War Cabinet 260, Minute 4, the War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty (Paper G.T.—2560), and a letter from the Shipping Controller (Paper G.T.—2596), dealing with the question of transport of Chinese Pioneer Battalions to France.

The Shipping Controller pointed out that he had no objection to the use of Chinese or Japanese tonnage for the purpose indicated, but he made it clear that British tonnage could not be allocated.

The First Lord stated that whichever of the three routes were used, namely, the Port Said route, the Trans-American route, or the Cape route, it would not be possible to provide a special British escort, though it might be possible to fit the vessels bringing the Chinese Pioneer Battalions into one of our own convoys. Since no special escort could be provided by British craft, he was of opinion that it should be made clear to the French Government that they should co-operate in providing the escorting vessels.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff should reply to General Foch that His Majesty's Government would support the proposal to employ Chinese Pioneer Battalions up to the number of forty battalions on the Western Front, provided that the French Government employed either French, Chinese, or Japanese tonnage. His Majesty's Government would be unable to provide special escorts. Therefore, unless the transports bringing the Chinese could be fitted into British convoys, it would be necessary for the French Government to provide the escort.

18. The War Cabinet had before them a letter from Sir E. Wyldbore Smith (Paper G.T.—2543), in which it was suggested, in view of the serious situation in Italy, that as many cargoes as practicable, now on their way from the United States of America to this country with oats for the British Army, should be diverted to Italy, the oats thus transferred to Italy to be replaced from stocks in this country.

The Quartermaster-General pointed out that, owing to shortage of shipping, our reserves in France had been greatly reduced, and that as regards our supplies were down about 12,000 tons. It would not therefore be possible to divert to Italy cargoes now on their way from the United States of America unless our stocks in France could be replenished from supplies in this country.

The Minister of Blockade said that he felt obliged to repeat again what he had stated to the War Cabinet previously (War Cabinet 266, Minute 11). He considered that, in order to keep Italy in the War, it was absolutely necessary to supply her needs, and he attributed the Italian debacle in some measure to their failure to obtain sufficient tonnage. He pointed out that unless oats were sent to Italy the Italian Cavalry would be immobilised.

The Prime Minister pointed out that, in the existing strategical position of the Italian Army, the maintenance of their transport was of great importance to the whole Alliance.
Lord Derby stated, on the other hand, that if we send oats to Italy instead of to France, our horses in France would starve. It was stated that there are large stocks of oats both in this country and in Ireland which could be sent to France if tonnage were forthcoming. The War Cabinet decided that—

If the Shipping Controller could supply tonnage to convey British oats across the Channel, then a corresponding amount of oats should be diverted to Italy that would otherwise have come from the United States of America for the British Army.

Dutch Shipping in United States Waters.

19. The Minister of Blockade informed the War Cabinet that he had been notified that the United States Mission were proposing to urge their Government to requisition all the Dutch ships at present in United States harbours. He asked whether this requisitioning had the support of the War Cabinet. The War Cabinet approved the proposal.

The Order of the British Empire.

20. With reference to War Cabinet 262, Minute 1, the War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres (Paper G.T.-2577) as to the control and organisation of the Order of the British Empire. Lord Crawford explained to the War Cabinet the views as set out in his Memorandum. The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Prime Minister should be free and unfettered in adding to the list the names of persons who would not be covered by the recommendations of the Departments, and as he is ultimately responsible to His Majesty for the complete list of names submitted he retains the absolute right to make whatever changes he thinks proper in the list as a whole.

(b.) The Home Office should act as the central office for all work in connection with the Order up till the actual gazetting of the names.

(c.) The chancery work should be entrusted to the Central Registry of Orders at St. James's Palace.

(d.) Lord Crawford, in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, should draw up such provisional rules as may prove necessary for the Order, to be laid before His Majesty.

(e.) In due course the Prime Minister should submit final statutes for His Majesty's approval.

Inter-Allied Supreme Council.

21. The War Cabinet had under consideration a question that was to be asked by Mr. Asquith as to the functions of the Inter-Allied Supreme Council. The Prime Minister explained that there was no intention that the Military Advisory Council should have the right to override the Military Staff of the several Governments or the Commanders-in-Chief in the field; neither should it have a separate Intelligence and Operations Division; and that, as regards Intelligence, provision had been made for all information to be furnished by the several War Offices to the military representatives, and that all the Military Council would require would be a co-ordinating Staff. As regards Government control, this remained in the hands of the several Governments; in fact, the proposed Council would not have been agreed to by the French and Italian Governments if they
had been deprived of the right of making final decisions. Colonel House had stated that the United States Government would hold a similar view. The Prime Minister explained that the procedure would be somewhat as follows:

(a.) The Advisory Military Council would prepare a combined plan of operations, based on the plans of the several General Staffs.

(b.) This would be referred to the General Staff of the several Allies for their remarks.

(c.) The proposals referred to in (a) and (b) would then be considered by the several Governments, and two members of each would then be given a brief on which to work at the meeting of the Supreme Council.

As regards the attendance of the Military Advisers of the respective Governments at the meetings, the War Cabinet were of opinion that the circumstances of the moment and the subjects under discussion by the Council must be the guide as to what military officials should attend in an advisory capacity, and that as much elasticity should prevail in this respect as is possible.

The text of Mr. Asquith's question, and the reply as approved by the War Cabinet, are printed in the Appendix.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 14, 1917.
APPENDIX.

Mr. Asquith: I beg to ask the Prime Minister a question of which I have given him Private Notice—

Whether he will now state to the House what are the precise functions of the proposed Inter-Allied Council, and in particular of its Military Staff;

Whether it is proposed that the Council is, if so advised by its Staff, to have power to interfere with or override the opinion on matters of strategy of the General Staff at home, and of the Commanders-in-Chief in the field;

Whether the Military Staff of the Inter-Allied Council is to have Intelligence and Operations Departments, or either of them, of its own;

Whether the ultimate decision as to the distribution and movements of the various Armies in the field is to rest with the Council, or with the Governments represented upon it;

And whether an early opportunity will be given to the House for discussing the proposed arrangements and the statements made in connection therewith in the Prime Minister's Paris speech?

The Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George): The best way for me to answer this question is to read to the House the actual terms of the agreement between the French, Italian, and British Governments for the creation of a Supreme War Council for the Allies.

1. With a view to the better co-ordination of military action on the Western Front, a Supreme War Council is created, composed of the Prime Minister and a Member of the Government of each of the Great Powers whose Armies are fighting on that front. The extension of the scope of the Council to other fronts is reserved for discussion with the other Great Powers.

2. The Supreme War Council has for its mission to watch over the general conduct of the War. It prepares recommendations for the decision of the Governments, and keeps itself informed of their execution, and reports thereon to the respective Governments.

3. The General Staffs and Military Commands of the Armies of each Power charged with the conduct of military operations remain responsible to their respective Governments.

4. The general War plans drawn up by the competent military authorities are submitted to the Supreme War Council, which, under the high authority of the Governments, ensures their concordance, and submits, if need be, any necessary changes.

5. Each Power delegates to the Supreme War Council one permanent Military Representative, whose exclusive function is to act as technical adviser to the Council.

6. The Military Representatives receive from the Government and the competent military authorities of their country all the proposals, information and documents relating to the conduct of the War.

7. The Military Representatives watch day by day the situation of the Forces, and the means of all kinds of which the Allied Armies and the Enemy Armies dispose.

8. The Supreme War Council meets normally at Versailles, where the permanent Military Representatives and their Staffs are established. They may meet at other places as may be agreed upon, according to the circumstances. The meetings of the Supreme War Council will take place at least once a month.

From the foregoing it will be clear that the Council will have no executive power, and that the final decisions in matters of strategy and as to the distribution and movements of the various Armies in the field will rest with the several Governments of the Allies. There will be, therefore, no Operations Department attached to the Council. The permanent Military Representatives will derive from the existing Intelligence Departments of the Allies all the information necessary in order to enable them to submit advice to the Supreme Allied Council. The object of the Allies has been to set up a central body charged with the duty of continuously surveying the field of operations as a whole and, by the light of information derived from all fronts and from all Governments and Staffs, of co-ordinating the plans prepared by the different General Staffs, and, if necessary, of making proposals of their own for the better conduct of the War. Should the House desire an opportunity of discussing this important subject and my Paris speech, the Government would propose to set aside Monday next for the purpose.
WARR CABINET, 274.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, November 15, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 13).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, KG, G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 13).

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 13).


Brigadier-General G. K. Cockerell, C.B., Sub-Director of Military Intelligence (for Minute 17).

Sir R. H. Brade, K.C.B., Secretary, War Office (for Minutes 14 and 17).


Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 16).

Rear-Admiral Sir W. H. Hall, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Intelligence Division, Admiralty (for Minute 17).

The Right Hon. Sir G. Cave, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minutes 14, 15, and 17).

The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minutes 14, 15, and 17).


The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minutes 14 to 18).

Mr. Basil Thomson, Assistant Commissioner of Police, New Scotland Yard (for Minute 17).


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.
1. With reference to War Cabinet 273, Minute 7, the Director of Military Operations informed the War Cabinet that one more German division had arrived in the vicinity of Passchendaele from the Russian front, making a total of three since the 28th October. More counter-attacks were probable, but the recent German counter-attack had been a complete failure, and the Director of Military Operations saw no reason why we should not hold the line with the troops at present available, although a continuation of our attack might be checked. He added that we were still superior on that front as regards men, guns, and ammunition, and also have the advantage of position, but that any further heavy guns sent to Italy would probably have to come from the battle front, where the enemy was very strong in artillery.

The view was expressed that nothing could be worse for this country than that we should be driven back from the Passchendaele Ridge.

2. The Director of Military Operations stated that a report had been received from General Plumer to the effect that tactically there was no cause for anticipating more than local loss of ground, but the question had to be considered as to whether one or two local reverses would mean a general abandonment of the line now held. General Plumer had asked that two more divisions and one cavalry brigade might be held in readiness to augment the existing British forces in Italy, and arrangements had been made for them to stand by. A telegram had been sent to General Plumer, asking if he wished these divisions, &c, despatched immediately after those now under orders. General Maurice added that two Austrian divisions had been moved from the Piave to the mountainous district in the north, with a view to turning the Italian left flank, and that there was general activity on the whole front. Generally speaking, the situation depended mainly on whether the mountain flank could be held.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 273, Minute 5, attention was drawn to telegram No. 1260 from Paris, dated 14th November, 1917, stating that General Foch is to stay on the Italian front for the present, and it was suggested that if General Foch stays in Italy, where General Cadorna already is, General Wilson should remain to maintain the integrity of the Permanent Military Representatives to the Supreme War Council. On the other hand, it was pointed out that now that General Plumer has arrived, General Wilson's services are not so needed, and that it was unfair to both General Wilson and General Plumer that the former should remain; further, that General Wilson and General Foch were sent to the Italian front not so much as Permanent Military Representatives on the Council, but for the reason that the advice of senior generals was required at short notice, and that they were immediately available.

The War Cabinet decided that:

The Secretary of State for War should, on behalf of the War Cabinet, inform General Sir Henry Wilson that, as General Plumer has arrived, he should now return for the purpose of organising his Staff with a view to the assumption of his new functions at Versailles at a very early date.

4. The Director of Military Operations reported that General Allenby was continuing to make satisfactory progress in Palestine, that he had now captured the railway junction between Jaffa and Jerusalem, and had advanced beyond that point. In front of him were the remnants of five Turkish divisions, while a similar
number of enemy divisions, including one that had recently arrived from Aleppo, were opposed to his forces on his right. In reply to the Prime Minister, General Maurice agreed that General Allenby had probably destroyed the equivalent of about four Turkish divisions, as well as capturing about one half the artillery of five divisions.

The point was raised as to whether recent telegrams that had been sent to General Allenby might not be construed by him as indicating that the War Cabinet did not wish to press the successes he had achieved, but General Maurice and Lord Derby thought that that would not be the result, and that there would be an opportunity of clearing up any misconception on that point as soon as General Allenby’s appreciation of the situation, which had been telegraphed for (War Cabinet 271, Minute 2), had been received and considered.

5. In connection with the absence of news from Russia, the First Sea Lord reported that he had telegraphed to the Senior Naval Officer, Archangel, directing him to use every endeavour to obtain from Moscow, Petrograd and Hango an appreciation of the situation.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 273, Minute 12, the First Sea Lord reported that the coastal motor-boat “M.B. 7” had now returned, having been delayed by fog.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that the destroyer “Firedrake” had attacked an enemy submarine, and that a paravane had exploded in contact with the vessel, which indicated the probable loss of the submarine.

8. The First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that information had been received that a steamer had attacked a submarine by gunfire, and claimed to have hit her with the fourth shot.

9. In reply to a question as to why German submarine activity had become quiescent of late, the First Sea Lord expressed the view that the Germans had made a great effort during the past month, and that consequently reaction had taken place, but that the enemy submarines were now coming out again on the trade routes, &c.

10. The First Sea Lord reported that he had received information from the Italian Naval Attaché that Admiral de Revel is about to submit an application for the assistance of twenty British destroyers, and that he (Admiral Jellicoe) had asked for information as to how it was proposed to employ them.

It was urged that advantage should be taken of any such request for assistance, to obtain greater control over the Allied naval forces in the Mediterranean, and this raised the question of naval co-operation in the new Supreme War Council. The view was expressed that centralization of naval control was equally desirable to that of military control, but that it should be a separate organisation and should have its headquarters in London.
11. In view of the arrival in London of the representatives of the United States of America, and the consequent desirability of proceeding with the duties allocated to the Inter-Allied Council (War Cabinet 251, Minute 14), the War Cabinet felt that Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who is at present on a visit to the British front in Flanders, should be present in this country.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to send a telegram to Mr. Austen Chamberlain in this sense.

It was mentioned that the French had, up to the present, not nominated their representatives to the Inter-Allied Council, and that Mr. Crosby had been delegated by the United States Government as the Chairman of the Council.

12. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to the fact that no machinery exists at the moment for co-ordinating discussions with Colonel House and the American Mission, who had been in this country for some days. It was pointed out that the questions which it had originally been proposed to discuss with Colonel House had, owing to the Italian disaster, been completely changed since they had been drawn up, such disaster having precipitated the establishment of the Supreme War Council, and brought in elements of uncertainty and consequent delay in the discussion of plans for 1918 or 1919. Also that, although the Departments generally had rendered every assistance in their power to the Mission, it was beyond and outside their power to give information which depended on the decisions which might be arrived at as to our future war policy, as well as to the disposition of the United States troops, either on the Western front or in Russia, or whether they were to be asked, owing to the shortage of tonnage, to curtail their expeditionary forces and augment their supply to the Allies of food, munitions, &c.

The War Cabinet held the view that, as a preliminary to arriving at a decision as to our plans for 1918, &c., it was necessary that the several General Staffs should circulate their ideas as to the policy to be adopted in those years and to communicate them to the Permanent Military Representatives on the Supreme War Council, in order that the latter body might prepare their recommendations for the consideration of the several Governments concerned.

13. Lord Milner stated that Lord Reading had suggested that it was most undesirable that Colonel House should proceed to Paris before his discussion with the British Government was completed, particularly as, owing to the fall of the French Government, he would probably find matters there in a state of chaos. Lord Reading therefore thought that a special effort should be made by the Prime Minister to induce Colonel House to prolong his stay in Europe for a week.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Prime Minister and Mr. Balfour should, in the first instance, see Colonel House as soon as possible, and discuss further procedure, and should endeavour to induce him to prolong his stay accordingly.

(b.) If Colonel House is prepared to remain, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should point out to the French Government the desirability under existing circumstances, of postponing the Conference till about the 29th November.

Dr. Addison summarised the main recommendations of the Report, and suggested certain modifications. It was estimated that it would be possible to transport up to 20,000 men per day from France, and an equivalent number might be discharged from the forces at home, making 40,000 per day in all. Only about 80 per cent., however, of the forces could be demobilised at this maximum rate; the remainder would be required to handle stores, &c., and to help in the work of demobilisation. It was proposed that the Foreign Office should be authorised to negotiate with France and Belgium for port and rail facilities, and with Holland as regards interned prisoners. Subject to military exigencies and to priority being given in certain special cases, the order of discharge should be governed by the needs of trade and industry, the alternative—to bring home the armies in France by military formation—being open to decisive objections. The Committee recommended that legislation should be proceeded with providing a free unemployment insurance policy valid for one year, the rate of benefit to be a minimum of 10s. per week, with power to increase the amount to 20s. or 25s. in special circumstances. Dr. Addison suggested that the minimum rate should be 15s.

In the case of officers and men in like circumstances whose reasonable claims for assistance during unemployment would not be met by unemployment insurance, financial assistance should be granted through the Civil Liabilities Commission. The Committee further recommended that a statutory right should be given to the soldier to priority of employment with his old employer, subject to certain limitations. Dr. Addison wished this to be referred back for further consideration, as he understood some of the larger trade unions were opposed to it. The report made proposals to assist officers and men of like standing to re-settle in civil life by the creation of a special organisation under the Minister of Labour, to be called the Appointments Board for officers, and to co-operate with University Appointments Boards and other approved organisations, and to be represented by local Committees throughout the country.

General Macready stated that Sir Douglas Haig wished to call attention to a great difficulty of demobilising in terms of industry. The maintenance of discipline among the troops left in France, especially among the Dominion troops, after the close of hostilities, would be a matter of great anxiety, and the “War Period” should be continued until the troops from the Dominions had left France. With regard to the suggestion of a statutory right to employment, such a provision would be a hardship on the old regular soldier.

Sir Reginald Brade said that the figure of 20,000 to be brought daily from France must be regarded as a maximum and not an average. In reply to questions, Sir Reginald Brade said that the scheme drawn up by the Committee would admit of part of the army being kept in being, and a part demobilised. The question of re-mobilisation was not dealt with in the present report, but it was being carefully considered.

The War Cabinet decided—

(a.) To approve the general principles laid down in the report.

(b.) To refer back for further consideration by representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the War Office, and the Ministry of Reconstruction, the scale of unemployment benefit and the recognition of a statutory right to employment.

(c.) To express their appreciation of the valuable services rendered by the Demobilisation Committee.
15. With reference to a Memorandum by the Home Secretary dealing with clause 5 of the Representation of the People Bill (Paper G.T.-2599), the War Cabinet decided—

(a.) To agree to the proposal to give a vote to soldiers and sailors who have served in this war at the age of 19.
(b.) Not to extend a similar concession to army nurses and other women coming within the clause, unless there appeared to be a widespread movement in the House of Commons in its favour.

16. With reference to War Cabinet 265, Minute 10, the Prime Minister stated that he would take an early opportunity to announce that, subject to the exigencies of the war, the Government proposed to give precedence to the Education Bill next Session.

17. With reference to War Cabinet 253, Minute 1, the War Cabinet had before them the following documents:

(a.) Memorandum by Sir Edward Carson (Paper G.-157).
(b.) Memorandum by the Minister of Labour (Paper G.T.-2274).
(c.) Note by Sir George Cave (Paper G.-173).

It was pointed out that the Home Secretary submitted recommendations for the issue of two new Regulations under the Defence of the Realm Act. First, a Regulation following No. 27AA, to the effect that it shall not be lawful for any person to print or publish any leaflet dealing with the continuance of the war or the conclusion of peace, unless—

(a.) The name and address of the author and printer be published on each copy;
(b.) The contents have been approved by the Directors of the Press Bureau.

Second, a Regulation following No. 51A, to the effect that the Home Secretary be empowered to suspend the publication of any paper which has contravened Regulation 27 or 27A.

Considerable doubt was expressed with regard to both the efficacy and desirability of the second of the above proposed Regulations. It was thought that the existing powers, whereby the authorities can seize the printing press of any publisher who contravenes the Regulations, were sufficient to deal with dangerous publications. On the other hand, it was pointed out that while this power had been used effectively in the past in the case of the "Forward" and the "Globe," it was very difficult to put this power into action in connection with leading daily papers such as the "Morning Post" and the "Daily News." The solidarity of the press was so strong that it was practically impossible to prevent an almost unanimous outcry by all the newspapers in the event of any further interference, while, at the same time, suppression gave a great advertisement to the suppressed newspaper and raised a storm of controversy.

Sir Edward Carson suggested that possibly the best and most useful method of dealing with the ordinary press would be to take power to appoint a censor in the office of an offending newspaper, who should have the power of prohibiting the publication of any matter which, in his opinion, contravened the Regulations. These censors would be useful for other purposes, such as providing information regarding the export of printed matter.

Another suggestion was that the Government should control more closely, either through the Paper Commissioner or through
the paper trade, the supply of paper. Here, however, there were many subterfuges and evasions possible, and it would be fatal to establish machinery that failed to be effective.

General Cockerill stated that in his opinion the blacking out of articles in newspapers was a most unsatisfactory expedient, the nature of the article so blacked out being almost invariably obvious and attention being drawn to it. Early in the war the press had agreed to refrain from this practice which prevails whenever censorship is effected after the type has been set up.

The War Cabinet took note of the Report upon Pacifist and Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, prepared by Mr. Basil Thomson on behalf of Scotland Yard, and decided that—

(a.) The proposed Regulation following No. 27AA, regarding the name and address of the author and printer of leaflets and the submission of leaflets to the Press Bureau, should be authorised, subject to some verbal alterations proposed by the Home Secretary.

(b.) Reports regarding pacifist and revolutionary organisations in the United Kingdom should be submitted by the Home Secretary to the War Cabinet periodically, and should, if possible, include greater detail.

(c.) The Home Secretary and Sir Reginald Brade should sound the press with regard to the suggestion to appoint censors in offending newspaper offices, through the medium of the Admiralty and War Office Press Committee.

18. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by Mr. Duke on the subject of the needs of the Irish Executive (Paper G.T.-2533), and authorised—

(a.) The appointment of a Commission to investigate the present position of public education in Ireland.

(b.) The circulation to the War Cabinet of a draft Bill, whose object should be the placing of Ireland on the same footing as England in respect of powers for the feeding of necessitous school children by combined funds, drawn half from the local rates and half from the Treasury grant.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 15, 1917.
SECRET.

WAR CABINET, 275.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, November 16, 1917, at 1130 A.M.

Present:

THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. GEORGE N. BARNES, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


The Right Hon. Sir A. STANLEY, M.P., President, Board of Trade (for Minute 16).

Admiral Sir J. R. JELLICOE, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 8 to 10).

The Right Hon. W. S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minutes 11 to 12).


Major-General J. M. SAIMOND, C.M.G., D.S.O., Director-General of Military Aeronautics (for Minute 11).

Rear-Admiral MARK E. F. KERR, C.B., M.V.O., Air Board (for Minute 11).

The Right Hon. Sir E. CHALMEES, G.C.B., Treasury (for Minute 4).

LORD HUGH CECIL, M.P. (for Minute 11).

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Major L. STORE, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Captain L. S. AMERY, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
The Invasion of Italy.

1. THE Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had received a telegram from General Plumer asking for two more divisions, to be held in readiness only, and one cavalry brigade, which should be sent with the sixth division to go, should the latter be required. For some days to come the railways would be taking all the troops that could be moved to Italy, and before any further troops could be moved he expected to receive a full report upon the situation from General Plumer.

With regard to the difference of opinion concerning the number of German divisions that had appeared upon the Italian front in the early days of the offensive, a telegram had been received from General Delme-Radcliffe stating that the Italian Commando Supremo now admitted the correctness of the British contention, to the effect that no more than six German divisions could be identified. The incorrect statement that twenty-one German divisions had appeared on the Italian front had been received from Rome, and was now proved to be quite unauthenticated.

In this connection it was reported that the Italian Ambassador had been endeavouring to secure the publication in this country of magnified reports regarding the strength of the Germans. The reason for this was, no doubt, the pressure that was being put by the Italian colony in London upon their Ambassador to cover the accusations of preventable failure which were being levelled against Italians in this country.

The Western Front.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the Germans were still heavily bombarding Passchendaele, and had brought up more artillery. More infantry attacks were expected, and it appeared likely that a determined German effort would be made to retake the position.

Palestine.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that a telegram had been received from General Allenby, reporting a further advance in Palestine, amounting to nearly 10 miles. His troops were now within 5,000 yards of the town of Jaffa; Lydda and Ramleh were now in British hands. Aeroplanes reported that the Turkish troops were retiring northwards through Jerusalem towards Nablus (the ancient Shechem). These troops probably came from the vicinity of Hebron. The total number of Turkish prisoners definitely counted since 31st October now exceeds 9,000.

Arab Co-operation.

4. With reference to Sir Reginald Wingate’s telegram No. 1212, dated the 15th November, and in view of the great importance of Arab co-operation at this moment, the War Cabinet decided—

To authorise the proposed increase in the subsidy advanced to the Arabs, from 200,000l. to 500,000l.

Mesopotamia.

5. In view of the British advance in Palestine, and the possible reinforcement of the Turks by divisions from Aleppo, the opinion was submitted that it was very desirable that General Maude should exhibit the maximum possible activity consistent with safety, so as to harass and threaten the Turks in the Mesopotamian theatre. The War Cabinet decided that—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff should send a telegram to General Maude, drawing his attention to the necessity of being as active as possible, in order to assist indirectly General Allenby’s operations; it being clearly understood that the nature of the operations to be undertaken should be left to the discretion of General Maude.
6. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that General Bliss now informed him that the Americans hoped to have 12 divisions in France by May next. More might be forthcoming if shipping were available.

The Prime Minister stated that he had seen Colonel House, who was willing to remain in Europe another week in order to attend the postponed Inter-Allied Conference (War Cabinet 274, Minute 13). Colonel House and his chief Heads of Departments desired to come to a meeting of the War Cabinet at which the Ministers concerned should be present on Tuesday morning next. Lord Reading had seen Colonel House with a view to arranging the specific points that should be brought up for discussion, and was in communication with most of the Departments concerned, with a view to the preparation of the material required by the Prime Minister for a statement of the British views regarding the co-operation of the United States of America. The Prime Minister requested—

The First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to furnish him with a statement of the questions which they wished him to raise at this important meeting.

Salonica.

Sir Edward Carson asked that the Memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dated the 14th November (Paper G.T.-2615), on the position at Salonica should be discussed at an early date.

The Prime Minister reported that he gathered that M. Venizelos shared the general view that little or nothing could be done unless General Sarrail were removed from the command in that theatre.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that, in his opinion, we should do all we could to utilise the Greeks.

M. Venizelos quite understood that it was impossible for us to send more troops, but earnestly requested that the provision of guns and equipment for the Greek Army should be hastened.

The Secretary of State for War informed the Cabinet that the French were responsible for providing rifles, and that of the 36 heavy guns promised by us 12 were now ready, and only awaited shipping to be conveyed to Greece.

The Minister of Munitions stated that he hoped to be able to announce shortly a slight increase in the output of heavy guns in this country, more especially of 6-inch howitzers. It would, of course, be a question for decision as to whether this increased supply should be allotted to Italy or to Greece.

Hope was expressed that, in the event of M. Clemenceau succeeding in forming a Government, it might be possible again to approach the French Government with a view to the removal of General Sarrail.

Submarines.

8. The First Sea Lord reported that information had been received from Penzance to the effect that three motor-launches dropped depth charges, and an airship dropped a bomb, on the wake of a submarine about 4 miles south of Falmouth on the 15th instant. Considerable patches of oil appeared, and the submarine was hunted by the motor-launches for four hours, the wake being sighted two or three times.

Bombing Raids.

9. The First Sea Lord stated that Dunkirk reports that, in the course of patrols on the 15th instant, two enemy machines were destroyed and two driven down completely out of control. Two and a half tons of bombs had been dropped on the sheds north of
Handzaeme. All our machines returned safely, but one crashed owing to a forced landing; the pilot and passenger were uninjured.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 274, Minute 5, the First Sea Lord reported that he had received an answer to his message to the Senior Naval Officer, Archangel, to the effect that telegraphic communication between Archangel and both Petrograd and Moscow had been interrupted for three days. The latest news from Petrograd received at Archangel was dated 12th November, and this was to the effect that anarchy prevailed in Petrograd, there being a general strike of all Government employees. Severe fighting was taking place in Moscow.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs read several telegrams received this morning from Russia, the latest of which was dated 11th November, and a telegram from Sir C. Marling at Tehran, giving news received from Odessa under date 14th November. The latter was to the effect that in Odessa the Maximalists had the upper hand, the town being overawed by the Fleet, who were in the hands of the Bolsheviks; civil war was raging in Kieff, and agrarian disorders were general in South Russia. The latest telegram from the Military Attache at Petrograd, dated the 10th instant, reported that M. Kerensky was endeavouring himself to command three weak divisions of Cossacks in the vicinity of Tsarskoie Selo, which place had been reoccupied by the Bolsheviks. The behaviour of M. Kerensky appeared to be lamentable, and to give little hope of any success on his part. Food was very scarce in the capital, and famine threatened.

11. The War Cabinet had under consideration certain correspondence and memoranda relating to the Air Force Bill and sundry amendments which the Army Council desired should be introduced into the Bill before it became law (Paper G.T.-2621) (Appendix). It was pointed out that an immediate decision was required, as the Bill was to pass through the final stages in the House of Commons at 12 noon the same day.

The particular points upon which a decision was required were:

(a.) Whether or not provision should be made in the Bill for the Air Council to place air forces serving with the army under military law.
(b.) Whether or not provision should be made in the Bill for the creation of new units in the Air Force for the purpose of anti-aircraft defence by guns.

The War Cabinet, having regard to the fact that the Papers before them had been received too late to be read before the meeting, and, further, that questions of law as well as of policy were involved, decided that—

No amendments in regard to the above points should be inserted in the Bill during its passage through the House of Commons.

The Secretary was instructed to inform the member in charge of the Bill accordingly.

The War Cabinet agreed that amendments in respect of any points raised in the papers before them should be dealt with when the Bill came before the House of Lords, and requested—

Sir Edward Carson in the meantime to study the contents of the papers, and to favour them at the earliest opportunity.
with his opinion on the points raised, and as to the
desirability or otherwise of amending the Bill so as to
meet the views of the Army Council.

Air Council:
Exclusion of
Business Men.

12. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, speaking as the Leader
of the House of Commons, said that certain Members of Parliament
were anxious to have inserted in the Bill a clause excluding any
individual who might have any financial interest in aircraft factories,
or any business connected therewith, from sitting on the new Air
Council.

It was pointed out that the new Council would require the best
brains and experience available, and that such exclusion would
depreserve the State of the service of men of great experience and
business capacity when such would be invaluable.

The Minister of Munitions informed the Cabinet that, if such
restrictions were placed on himself and his predecessors, his Depart­
ment would have to forgo the services of many men of known
integrity who were indispensable and irreplaceable. In this connec­
tion Mr. Churchill stated that a condition of employment in his
Department was that any men who had business interests of any
kind should disclose them fully to the Secretary to the Ministry.

The War Cabinet agreed that—

A clause in the above sense was unreasonable, and authorised
the Leader of the House to oppose any amendment
excluding business men from a seat on the Air Council.

The Fifth
Canadian
Divisions.

13. The War Cabinet discussed the advisability of asking the
new Canadian Minister of Oversea Forces, Sir E. Kemp, to attend
the War Cabinet soon after his arrival here, in order to consider
the possibility of the Fifth Canadian Division being sent on active
service. This matter had been raised at the Imperial War Cabinet,
but the Canadian General had not then seen his way to sending
the division ahead, in view of the shortage of recruiting to supply
drafts. The introduction of compulsory service had modified the
situation.

The Secretary undertook to confer further with the Prime
Minister on the subject.

Relations between
the Army Council
and British
Military
Representative
with the Supreme
War Council.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 272, Minute 3, and War
Cabinet 273, Minute 21, the War Cabinet briefly considered their
reply to the Army Council, and had before them alternative drafts
by Sir Edward Carson.

The discussion was postponed until that evening.

Purchase of
Merchant Ships at
Home and Abroad.

15. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the
Shipping Controller on the purchase of merchant ships at home and

The War Cabinet decided—

To extend the authority already given to the Shipping
Controller to exploit all possible sources of merchant
tonnage for delivery up to the end of 1918 (War Cabinet 3,
Minute 2; War Cabinet 40, Minute 17; War Cabinet 83,
Minute 9) so as to include vessels due for delivery in 1919.
16. With reference to War Cabinet 226, Minute 19, Sir Albert Stanley stated that the result of the appeal of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen to the Committee on Production for an increased wage would be shortly announced, and that the National Union of Railwaymen had recently submitted to the Railway Executive Committee a demand for a further increased war wage of 10s. per week. Sir Albert Stanley recommended that the Railway Executive Committee be authorised to negotiate with the National Union of Railwaymen with a view to coming to a settlement. He said that he hoped that they would be able to settle with the National Union of Railwaymen by agreeing to a further increase of 5s. per week. It is unlikely that the Committee on Production would concede more than this to the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. The total cost will be between 8,000,000L and 9,000,000L. Sir Albert Stanley promised to circulate a memorandum showing the financial position under the agreement with the railway companies.

The War Cabinet decided to authorise—

The Railway Executive to settle with the National Union of Railwaymen on the basis of an increase of 5s. per week.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 16, 1917.
G.T.-2621.

APPENDIX.

THE AIR FORCE BILL—SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS.

I.—Copies of letters from Secretary, War Office, to Secretary, War Cabinet.

II.—Memorandum from the Air Organisation Committee relating to the Air Force Bill.

III.—Memorandum by the War Office.

I

1/Bills/1494 (C.2).

Sir,

November 9, 1917.

1. IN reply to your letter of the 5th instant relating to the draft Air Force Bill, I am commanded by the Army Council to acquaint you, for the information of the chairman of the Air Organisation Committee, that they note that provision will be made in the Bill in accordance with sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) of their letter of the 6th instant, number as above.

2. With regard to paragraph 3 of your letter under reply, the Council in the time at their disposal have not been able to fully consider whether the suggested provision empowering the military Commander-in-Chief in a theatre of war to convene and confirm general courts martial will meet the case from their point of view, and they therefore reserve to themselves the right to press for an amendment to the Bill during its passage through the House should this be found necessary to secure the object which they have in view.

3. With regard to paragraph 4, the Council do not desire to press for the retention of their powers under section 115 of the Army Act to requisition aircraft.

4. With regard to paragraph 5, the Council note that under clause 3 (1) (a) of the Bill it is not possible and is not intended to transfer existing units (or individuals belonging thereto) engaged in defence against aircraft to the air force without their consent. The Council, however, desire to reaffirm their opinion that anti-aircraft defence by guns mounted on the land or in ships is a branch of Army or Navy gunnery, and should remain part and parcel of land or sea artillery, and they wish it to be made clear that there is no intention to make provision in the Bill for the creation of new units of the Air Force for such purposes.

5. Paragraphs 6 and 7 of your letter are noted.

6. With regard to paragraph 8, the Council note that property rights and liabilities are dealt with in clause 8 (4) of the Bill, but what they had chiefly in mind in sub-paragraph (2) of their previous letter was the transfer of important building contracts and works (the construction of aerodromes, &c.) now in course of execution, which stand in the name of the Army Council, and which it may be found advisable to transfer to the new Air Council.

7. Paragraphs 9 and 10 of your letter are noted.

I am, &c.

(Signed) R. H. BRADE.

The Secretary,

Offices of the War Cabinet.

Air Organisation Committee: Continuation of Correspondence with the War Office concerning the Air Force Bill.

5/Bills/1494 (C.2).

Sir,

November 14, 1917.

IN continuation of War Office letter of the above number, dated the 9th instant, relating to the draft Air Force Bill, I am commanded by the Army Council to acquaint you, for the information of the Chairman of the Air Organisation Committee, that they have further considered the provision in the Bill empowering the military Commander-in-Chief in a theatre of war to convene and confirm general courts martial for the trial of persons subject to Air Force Law, and they are not satisfied
that this provision would operate satisfactorily. The effect of the Bill as it stands at present is that, in the case of a body of the Air Force acting with a body of the Army, the members of each remain under their respective systems of law. The Council adhere to their opinion that there should be mutual powers in the Army and Air Councils to place their forces under Air Force and Military Law respectively by some provision analogous to the Naval Forces (Service on Shore) Act, under which, e.g., the Royal Naval Division is at present serving in France. The Council understand that this point has been conceded in the case of the Navy, and that Air Force on a ship will be subject to naval discipline. They desire therefore to press for an amendment to be made to the Bill during its passage through the House to meet their views, and they would be glad if steps could be taken to introduce a Government amendment to provide for this point.

I am, &c.

(Signed) R. H. BRADE.

The Secretary,
Office of the War Cabinet,
Whitehall Gardens, S.W. (1.)

II.

The Air Organisation Committee on the 15th November considered the letter of the Army Council, dated the 14th November, in which the Council proposed that provision should be made in the Air Force Bill for the Air Council to place Air Forces serving with the Army under Military Law.

The Committee considered that it would be undesirable to place contingents of the Air Force allotted to the Army in a theatre of war under Military Law for the following reasons:

1. The Air Force Act has been specially varied from the Army Act for the purpose of enabling the Air Force authorities to maintain discipline effectively under the special conditions of air work. To this end certain new clauses have been added to the Act, constituting new offences which are peculiar to the Air Force, and there is no provision under Military Law for dealing with such offences.

2. Air warfare differs materially from land warfare, and there may be circumstances connected with a charge against an air officer or man which would make it undesirable that he should be tried except before a court composed of Air Force officers with experience of air conditions. Military officers who have not served in the Royal Flying Corps would be unable even to understand the technical matters which in such a case might very well arise.

3. The Committee, considering the general similarity of the Air Act and the Army Act, have not been able to understand exactly what advantage the Army Council expect from this proposal, no specific reasons having been put before them.

The two comparisons made in the letter of the Army Council do not appear to the Committee to have any real bearing on the case. The Naval Division which has been placed under Military Law has never been really a naval force, but has actually been separated almost entirely from Admiralty administration. This division has always been used as a formation for Military purposes, and there appears to be no reason, except a sentimental one, for continuing to call it a Naval Division. And although this division has been placed under military Law, other naval forces serving with the Army in the field have not been so placed. The conditions under which a contingent of the Air Force will be attached to an Army in the field are in no way analogous to those of the Naval Division. The other comparison drawn in the letter is to units of the Air Force serving in a ship of war at sea. The Committee regard the conditions of service in a ship of war as entirely different from those of service with a land force. The enforcement of a special code of discipline on board His Majesty's ships has always been considered a necessity, and there are certain offences which, although trivial on shore, are considered as very grave in a ship. This view is recognised in the provision of a Regulation that officers and men of the Army, when serving on board one of His Majesty's ships, become subject to the Naval Discipline Act, without
any reciprocal measure by which officers and men of the Navy, when serving with the Army, are automatically rendered subject to Military Law.

The Committee have also had under consideration the letter of the Army Council, dated the 9th November, in which "the Council desire to reaffirm their opinion that anti-aircraft defence by guns mounted on the land or in ships is a branch of Army or Navy gunnery, and should remain part and parcel of land or sea artillery, and they wish it to be made clear that there is no intention to make provision in the Bill for the creation of new units of the Air Force for such purpose."

In the Bill the Air Council is not limited as to the exact nature of the forces which may be raised under the general term of the Air Force. It would seem undesirable to make special provision in the Bill to forbid the Air Council to raise anti-aircraft units, and a provision of this kind might hamper future decisions of the War Cabinet.

The Director of Military Aeronautics and Mr. Corcoran, the other representative of the War Office on the Committee, do not assent to these views of the Committee.

III.

1. The present position is that the whole Army, including the Royal Flying Corps, is subject to Military Law, and the view of the Army Council is that it would be inadvisable to disturb in the middle of the war a system whose working is familiar to all.

2. If the new Air Force, whilst serving, for instance, in France, is subjected to Military Law, no extra burden is imposed on any single person. So far as the Army is concerned, its relation to the Air Force in matters of discipline will remain precisely what at present is the relation of other arms to the Royal Flying Corps. So far as the Air Force is concerned, it will in any case have to familiarise itself with Air Force Law; it is already familiar with Military Law. On the other hand, if the Air Force is subject to Air Force Law only, every military authority ought to familiarise himself with Air Force Law. It is no sufficient answer to this to say that Air Force Law closely resembles Military Law. The point is that a military officer convening or confirming an Air Force court-martial under Section 122 (6), a military officer lent to sit on an Air Force court-martial under Section 48 (10), any officer or non-commissioned officer giving an order to an airman under Section 184 A, and any military policeman called in to arrest an airman, ought to know in what respects Air Force Law differs from Military Law.

3. It has been objected that the Air Force Bill creates certain offences which are not known to Military Law, and that if the Air Force were placed under Military Law this valuable part of the Bill would be in practice sacrificed. This, however, need not be so. At present, when Air Force personnel are subject to Military Law, Section 179 (c) of the Air Force Act provides that they may be tried and punished under that Act for an offence for which they are not amenable to a naval court-martial, and for which they can be punished under the Air Force Act. A similar proviso could, and certainly should, be inserted in the proposed section subjecting the Force to Military Law.

4. It has further been objected that it would be undesirable for Air Force personnel to be tried normally by military officers. This is recognised; but it is not considered that this would be the effect of placing the Air Force under Military Law. Air Force personnel would normally be tried by Air Force officers, just as the personnel of the Royal Naval Division is at present normally tried by officers of the Royal Naval Division, or Australian soldiers by Australian officers. In fact, however, at present it is not usual for members of the Royal Flying Corps to be tried by Royal Flying Corps officers, on account of the exacting nature of these officers' other duties; and power has even been expressly taken in Section 48 (10) of the Air Force Bill to perpetuate this system. From the military point of view, there is no desire or intention to impose military officers on airmen's court-martial.

5. The joint order under Section 184 A, Army Act, and Section 90 A, N.D. Act, has not been found sufficient as between the Army and Navy; and where these two forces are conducting continuous joint operations, the powers of the Naval Discipline (Service on Shore) Act have been found necessary. The Army and Air Force will be in close and continuous co-operation every day of the war, and there is no reason to believe that a scheme which was found inadequate as between the Army and Navy will be adequate as between the Army and Air Force.
6. So far as can be seen, the Air Force sacrifices nothing of its individuality as a Service by being subjected at times to Military Law, provided the proviso suggested in paragraph 3 above is adopted. In effect the force would remain completely subject to Air Force Law, because Air Force Law is Military Law plus a new element, and this new element would be preserved by the proviso. On the other hand, the advantage of subjecting them to Military Law plus the new element in Air Force Law, instead of to Air Force Law as a whole as such, lies in the simplification for all concerned of the administration of discipline, and in the avoidance of doubts and uncertainties in the minds of all who have to administer it.

7. The Air Organisation Committee, in their letter of the 8th November, have expressed their intention “that there shall be that unity of command over military and air forces serving in the same theatre of war, which will obviously be desirable.” The difference, therefore, is one of means, not of end. The Army Council have examined the means proposed by the Committee, and they do not regard them as adequate. In any case, it must surely be admitted that they are complicated; and even if the Council could agree with the Committee as to their adequacy, they would still be of opinion that it is inadvisable in the present emergency to disturb the existing system, which works well, and whose working is known to all who have to administer it, and substitute for it a system whose exact working it is difficult to foresee in every detail.

War Office, November 16, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 276.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, November 16, 1917, at 6 P.M.

Present:

THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).


The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Captain L. S. AMERY, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Air Ministry:

Lord Northcliffe's Letter.

1. THE Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet that, in consequence of the appearance in "The Times" of Lord Northcliffe's letter refusing the position of Air Minister, Lord Cowdray had sent in his resignation as President of the Air Board. He explained that, though it was quite true that he had sounded Lord Northcliffe with a view to his accepting the post in question, there was absolutely no justification for such a letter, which had naturally put Lord Cowdray in a very difficult position. He read to the War Cabinet the draft of a letter which he proposed to send to Lord Cowdray, explaining the circumstances.

The War Cabinet agreed that some such step was necessary, and were unanimous in expressing the view that Lord Northcliffe's letter was not only unjustifiable in its treatment of the question of the appointment to the Air Ministry, but was most mischievous in the entirely false impression it conveyed of the relative effort and organisation of the United States and this country.

Enemy Agents in Italy.

2. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to a telegram from Sir Rennell Rodd, No. 237, (Appendix I), suggesting that a very strong telegram should be sent by the Prime Minister to the Italian Prime Minister, asking him to take drastic measures to put a stop to the licence accorded to enemy agents in Italy, and pointing out that we could not afford to send our troops to a country honeycombed with spies.

It was pointed out that both the British and French Intelligence Departments confirmed Sir Rennell Rodd's view as to the extent of the evil.

The War Cabinet agreed that it was desirable that representations should be made to the Italian Government on the subject.
Supreme War Council:
Relations between Army Council and British Permanent Military Representative.

*2. With reference to War Cabinet 275, Minute 14, the War Cabinet had under consideration the Proceedings of the 237th Meeting of the Army Council, held on the 12th November, 1917, in which is raised the question of the relations between the Army Council and the British Military Representative with the Supreme War Council (Appendix II).

Inasmuch as the Army Council is the supreme Military Authority in regard to the military forces and the defence of the Empire, and, further, inasmuch as General Sir Henry Wilson is an Officer in the British Army, the War Cabinet do not question that he is subject to the authority of the Army Council.

The War Cabinet attach the utmost importance to the proper development of the new organisation which has been drawn up to meet the requirements of an exceptionally grave situation. They realise that the success of the new scheme will depend largely upon the cordial co-operation and goodwill of the Army Council, on which they count.

The War Cabinet desire to express their wish that, in developing the work of the Supreme War Council, it should be understood that the British Permanent Military Representative will have unfettered discretion as to the advice he offers.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 17, 1917.

* This Minute has been formally communicated to the Army Council.—M.P.A.H.
APPENDIX I.

Sir R. Rodd to Mr. Balfour.—(Received November 16.)

Rome, November 15, 1917.

DESPATCH which goes by messenger to-day explains to you the difficulties which I have encountered in urging the Government to activity in measures against enemy agents and propaganda.

Under-Secretary of State of the Interior of late Government has just been here and confirmed from his personal experience views held by Milanese and all earnest supporters of the cause that position is serious, owing to the weakness of the Administration in dealing with the evil. He spoke very strongly, affirming that the people were good, and only needed leading, but that if the Government would not lead and crush the poisonous influences which were responsible for the recent disaster, the country was lost.

I have done my best, and secured insertion of a passage on the subject in the Ministerial declarations, but much more is wanted.

Under-Secretary of State in question insisted that His Majesty’s Government must act regardless of the feelings of Ministers, and only their action would have effect.

I should suggest a direct, courteous, but strong message from the Prime Minister to President of Council stating that, from information we had received, it was evident that enemy agents, both German and Italian, were still at large in Italy, and that their presence constituted a danger to the whole Allied cause. Now that our troops were on the Italian front we could not afford to ignore conditions so dangerous, which were of a nature to frustrate valid assistance we can render to Italy in the hour of danger. We had therefore a right to insist, and must insist, on immediate expulsion or internment of all enemy subjects and drastic action against anti-Allied propaganda.

APPENDIX II.

W.P.-65.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ARMY COUNCIL, 12TH NOVEMBER, 1917

237th Meeting.

Present:

The Secretary of State.
The Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
The Adjutant-General.
The Quartermaster-General.
The Master-General of the Ordnance.
The Civil Member.
The Finance Member.
The Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
The Director-General of Military Aeronautics.
The Director-General of Movements and Railways.
The Surveyor-General of Supply.

The Secretary.

Agenda.

1. Relations between the Army Council and the British Military Representative with the Supreme War Council. (121/9134.)

Decisions.

1. The Council had before them copies of the decisions of a Conference of Representatives of the British, French and Italian Governments, assembled at Rapallo
on 7th November, 1917, which were communicated to them by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. They are as follows:

1. The representatives of the British, French, and Italian Governments assembled at Rapallo on 7th November, 1917, have agreed on the scheme for the organisation of a Supreme War Council with a Permanent Military Representative from each Power, contained in the following paragraph:

2. Scheme of Organisation of a Supreme War Council—

(i.) With a view to the better co-ordination of military action on the Western Front a Supreme War Council is created, composed of the Prime Minister and a member of the Government of each of the Great Powers whose armies are fighting on that front. The extension of the scope of the Council to other fronts is reserved for discussion with the other Great Powers.

(ii.) The Supreme War Council has for its mission to watch over the general conduct of the war. It prepares recommendations for the decision of the Governments and keeps itself informed of their execution and reports thereon to the respective Governments.

(iii.) The General Staffs and Military Commands of the Armies of each Power charged with the conduct of military operations remain responsible to their respective Governments.

(iv.) The general war plans drawn up by the competent Military Authorities are submitted to the Supreme War Council, which, under the high authority of the Governments, ensures their concordance, and submits, if need be, any necessary changes.

(v.) Each Power delegates to the Supreme War Council one Permanent Military Representative, whose exclusive function is to act as technical adviser to the Council.

(vi.) The Military Representatives receive from the Government and the competent Military Authorities of their country all the proposals, information, and documents relating to the conduct of the war.

(vii.) The Military Representatives watch day by day the situation of the forces and of the means of all kinds of which the Allied armies and the enemy armies dispose.

(viii.) The Supreme War Council meets normally at Versailles, where the Permanent Military Representatives and their Staffs are established. They may meet at other places as may be agreed upon, according to circumstances. The meetings of the Supreme War Council will take place at least once a month.

2. The Permanent Military Representatives will be as follows:

For France ... ... General Foch.
For Great Britain ... ... General Wilson.
For Italy ... ... General Cadorna.

Rapallo, November 7, 1917.

The Council decided after discussion to submit the following to the War Cabinet:

1. In Decision (2) (v) it is stated that the Permanent Military Representative of each Power is to act as technical adviser to the Supreme War Council.

2. Under the terms of the Letters Patent of the 6th February, 1904, the powers and authority formerly exercised by the Commander-in-Chief devolved on the Army Council, which is, therefore, the Supreme Military Authority in regard to the Military Forces and the defence of the Empire.

3. The Council, therefore, presume that the technical advice given by the British Military Representative to the Supreme War Council will be given on behalf of the Army Council, and that he will be subject to the authority of, and receive his instructions from, the Army Council.

4. The Council desire that they may be informed whether this interpretation of the status and functions of the British Military Representative attached to the Supreme War Council is correct.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, November 19, 1917, at 12 noon.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 7).

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 7).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 9 to 13).


Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

"The National News."

1. Attention was drawn to an article on the Rapallo agreement which had appeared in "The National News" of the 18th November, 1917, containing, inter alia, particulars of the staff applied for by General Sir Henry Wilson.

Sir Edward Carson undertook to see the Director of Public Prosecutions, with a view to a full investigation into this newspaper.

The War Cabinet requested Lord Derby to make what enquiries he could with a view to ascertaining, if possible, the source of the leakage of information.

Death of Sir Stanley Maude.

2. The Secretary of State for War informed the War Cabinet that General Sir Stanley Maude, Commanding-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, had died from cholera on the 18th November.
The Director of Military Operations reported that only one or
two sporadic cases of cholera had been reported in Mesopotamia,
and that, as far as the War Office was informed, there was no
general epidemic.

Lord Derby stated that he was making enquiries as to this.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to convey to Lady Maud an expression of their
profound regret, and the deep feeling with which they had
received the news.

The War Cabinet further decided that—

The Prime Minister should make an announcement on the
subject in the House of Commons that afternoon.

3. The Director of Military Operations read a telegram from
General Plumer stating that he and General Foch had each offered
to take over as soon as practicable a sector of the north portion of
the front in the Asiago region provided the Italian divisions
remaining in the sectors are placed under the orders of the British
and French commanders respectively. General Diaz seemed
favourable to the proposal, and would give a definite answer
shortly. Troops of the 1st and 4th Italian Armies were holding
their own well, and had not been pressed seriously. The general
situation seemed more favourable.

General Maurice stated that there were now 52 British and
36 French battalions in Italy or on their way there. Further,
26 British and 18 French battalions were in readiness to proceed,
but, as far as the British force was concerned, these additional
troops had not yet been definitely ordered to go. The railways would
be completely occupied until the 25th instant at the earliest with
conveyance of the troops actually under orders.

It was suggested that it was undesirable that an incorrect
impression should get abroad that the French effort to help Italy
was greater than the British.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Prime Minister's speech in the afternoon did not provide a
favourable opportunity for publishing this fact.

4. Attention was drawn to a Memorandum by the Chief of the
Imperial General Staff, and to two Memoranda by Field-Marshal
Sir Douglas Haig, in regard to the reinforcements to be sent to
Italy.

The War Cabinet felt no doubt that the Chief of the Imperial
General Staff had carefully considered Sir Douglas Haig's Memoranda
in making his various recommendations and the Director of Military
Operations gave them to understand that the whole question would
be brought up by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff for
decision at an early date.

5. The Director of Military Operations stated that a telegram
had been received from Colonel Spiers, stating that no new
appointment had been made to the post of Chief of the French
Staff. General Foch was remaining in Italy for the present.

6. The Director of Military Operations reported that there had
been no developments on this front beyond the occupation of Jaffa.
The Turkish forces in the Judean highlands are reported to be
retiring through Jerusalem. The Director of Military Operations
thought it quite possible that Jerusalem might fall into our hands within a week.

In this connection attention was called to Foreign Office telegrams Nos. 1078 and 1090, and Lord Curzon read a letter from Sir Adam Block containing, *inter alia*, suggestions that, on the occupation of Jerusalem, a proclamation should be issued throughout the Moslem world, announcing that we are the protectors of the Moslem religion and would pay every respect to the Moslem Holy Places. Lord Curzon pointed out that the so-called Mosque of Omar (Haram-es-Sherif) was regarded by all Moslems as the most holy spot on earth after the Kaaba of Mecca and the Home of the Prophet at Medina.

The War Cabinet approved the preparation of such a proclamation, and requested Lord Curzon to prepare it after discussion with Colonel Sir Mark Sykes.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 275, Minute 7, attention was once more drawn to the importance of the question of Salonica, particularly in view of the many rumours that an attack was shortly to be made in that region.

In regard to the equipment of the Greek Army, the Director of Military Operations said that most of the equipment asked for from the British was now ready for delivery; the only difficulty was that of transport, and this was being discussed by the Secretary of State for War and the Shipping Controller.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Director of Military Operations should make enquiries into the extent to which the French Government had fulfilled their share of equipping the Greek Army, and that, in the event of the results of the enquiries not being satisfactory, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should make representations to Paris with a view to securing the more effective assistance of the Greek Army at the earliest possible moment.

Secondly, that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should send to the French Government a copy of the letter sent by the Prime Minister to M. Ribot on 6th June (War Cabinet 156, Minute 2, and Appendix), and should intimate that the general views of the British Government in regard to General Sarrail had not been modified in the meanwhile.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 273, Minute 14, Mr. Barnes reported that he had seen Mr. Ewins and Sir George Fiddes with reference to accommodation at the Imperial Institute.

Mr. Barnes stated that he had received a letter from the Secretary of State for the Colonies agreeing that certain portions of the Institute should be allocated to the Ministry of Food, and asking for a pledge that no further demands for space should be put forward.

The War Cabinet authorised Mr. Barnes to settle the matter.

9. The First Sea Lord reported that in the past forty-eight hours the number of German submarines accounted for amounted to three "certainties," two "probables," and two "possibles." The certainties were—

(1) The United States destroyer "Fanning" had entered Queenstown with forty prisoners from a German submarine.
(2.) One of our patrol boats had rammed and sunk an enemy submarine 17½ miles from Flamborough Head.

(3.) A German submarine exploded herself about 4 miles S.W. of Prawle Point. A quantity of wreckage and human remains had been collected.

The "probables" were:

(1.) Four depth charges had been dropped on a submarine 2 miles S.S.E. of Start Point, two bombs had also been dropped on this submarine from an airship. When the report was received oil was still rising to the surface.

(2.) Depth charges had been dropped on a submarine 2½ miles S.E. of the Daunt Rock Lightship (South of Ireland). Four distinct explosions were heard, and large quantities of oil came to the surface.

The "possibles" were:

(1.) The "Lord Reading" reported that a periscope had been sighted, and four depth charges dropped on a German submarine. One is believed to have had a good effect, oil coming to the surface.

(2.) On the 15th instant a German submarine had been sighted 7 miles S.E. of the Lizard. An airship had dropped bombs, which resulted in air bubbles. A trawler then dropped a depth charge on the spot. Bubbles and oil were observed rising for some hours.

10. The First Sea Lord reported that he had received a telegram from Petrograd, dated the 9th instant, to the effect that the discipline of the Baltic Fleet was very bad, all the officers being under open arrest, and the men's Unions in control.

11. The First Sea Lord reported that an engagement had taken place between enemy destroyers and a British monitor off the Belgian coast. Little or nothing arose out of the engagement.

12. The First Sea Lord explained by means of a chart the nature of the light cruiser action in the Heligoland Bight on Saturday, 17th November, 1917. Seven or eight of our light cruisers had been engaged, and there had been between fifty and sixty casualties on board them. Eighteen prisoners had been taken from the German mine-sweeper which was sunk. One of the enemy cruisers was soon to be on fire and one dropped astern damaged. Only one of the light cruisers required to be docked, although in the pursuit they came under the fire of a German battle-cruiser squadron.

13. The First Sea Lord reported the loss of the British submarine "K.1," which had been sunk as the result of a collision with the "K.3." There were no casualties.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 19, 1916.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, November 20, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. Lord Robert Cecil, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade.


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon. Sir J. Maclay, Bart., Shipping Controller.

The Right Hon. Lord Rhondda, Food Controller.

Sir L. Worthington Evans, Bart., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions.

Major J. L. Baird, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Air Board.

The Right Hon. Austen Chamberlain, M.P.


General Tasker Howard Bliss, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army.

Brigadier-General W. Lassiter, U.S. Army.

Mr. Oscar Terry Crosby, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

Mr. Vance C. McCormick, Chairman of the War Trade Board.

Mr. Bainbridge Colby, Representative of the United States Shipping Board.

Dr. Alonzo E. Taylor, Representing United States Food Controller.

Mr. Thomas Nelson Perkins, Representative of the United States War Industries and Priority Board.

Mr. Paul D. Cravath, Legal Adviser to United States Treasury.

Mr. Gordon Auchincloss, Assistant Counsellor of the State Department and Secretary to the American Mission.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Reading, G.C.B., K.C.V.O.

The Lord Northcliffe.

Sir Charles Gordon, Vice-Chairman to Lord Northcliffe's Mission.

Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell Stuart, Military Secretary to Lord Northcliffe's Mission.

Mr. Philip Kerr.


Major L. Store, Assistant Secretary.

Colonel E. D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.
American Mission: 

WITH reference to War Cabinet 275, Minute 6, the War Cabinet and the heads of the Government Departments concerned conferred with certain members of the Mission from the U.S.A. now in this country.

The proceedings of the Meeting are printed in a separate War Cabinet Paper (I.C.-33)

Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 20, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, November 21, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. George N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 15).


Fleet Paymaster P. H. Bow, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Western Front.

1. THE Chief of the Imperial General Staff described in detail the extremely successful action on the Arras-Cambrai front. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff pointed out that these operations on the Western Front might call for an early revision of the decision with regard to the despatch of further Divisions to Italy.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig should be informed that he might use the two Divisions now under orders, but that he was to get together two others, not necessarily in full
strength, for despatch, if required; and that, meanwhile, the French should be allowed to use the railway facilities to Italy now allotted to us, for the despatch of French Divisions, and of heavy artillery, or anything else useful and needed, pending a definite decision whether more British Divisions are to be sent under the circumstances.

Palestine.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that General Allenby was now within 6 or 7 miles of Jerusalem, to the North-West.

East Africa.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, after referring to the published communiqué announcing the surrender of a good many Germans and natives in East Africa, stated that not more than about 250 Germans, with some 3,000 natives, remained in the field. He drew attention to a telegram from General Van Deventer suggesting that he should now make some offer to General von Lettow for surrender; and he also suggested that very good results would follow if we could make an announcement that German East Africa would not be surrendered to Germany at the end of the war.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies pointed out that, by making such a Proclamation as was proposed, the natives would be safeguarded against subsequent reprisals by the Germans, and that many lives might be spared in the exhausting operations in this difficult country if the natives now with the Germans could be induced to desert.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that the question of the German African colonies was extremely difficult. There were three lines of argument which had to be taken into account:—

(a.) Could we, under any circumstances, afford to allow Germany the possession of good submarine bases, such as Dar-es-Salaam, after the war?
(b.) Could we allow the native population to be retransferred against their will to German domination?
(c.) Could the civilised world as a whole regard with equanimity the avowed and expressed intentions of Germany to create a large and well-disciplined black army in the heart of Africa, which would be in a position to threaten not merely the whole of that continent, but white civilisation also?

The one difficulty we had to face was the suggestion, so freely put about by the enemy both abroad and in our midst, that the Allies, and more particularly Great Britain, were out for plunder and further territorial acquisitions. He thought that the Cabinet should consider very carefully the proposal for the internationalisation of the former German colonies in Africa, which would have the effect of preventing the creation of a naval and military menace, while at the same time the most valuable raw materials would be available for the factories of the world, and not merely of Germany.

This question was adjourned until the following day, pending a conversation which the Prime Minister and Mr. Balfour were to hold with Colonel House at Downing Street that afternoon.

War Aims.

4. Sir Edward Carson said that his survey of our propaganda led him to believe that the pacifists were greatly assisted by the lack of definiteness in regard to our territorial war aims.
Mr. Barnes supported this view, and the Cabinet felt that this again was a matter which could be better discussed after the aforementioned interview with Colonel House.

3. On the recommendation of the Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the War Cabinet approved the appointment of Lieutenant-General Sir W. R. Marshall, K.C.B., to fill the vacancy caused by the death of General Sir Stanley Maude.

The War Cabinet further authorised the Secretary of State for War to make enquires in regard to the pecuniary circumstances of Lady Maude, and took the view that in this case it was most desirable that the State should act generously in this respect.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 277, Minute 7, attention was drawn to a further report from Lieutenant-Colonel Plunkett confirming previous accounts in regard to the grave state of affairs at Salonica, largely due to the command of General Sarrail.

It was pointed out that, in addition to the other causes of weakness, the British troops were saturated with malaria.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that his liaison officer at Paris had seen M. Clemenceau, who had expressed misgivings with regard to the situation, and had asked whether the British Government were satisfied with the existing state of affairs. What disturbed him most was the difficulty of obtaining any information. General Sarrail had not yet sent the report promised by the French Government at Rapallo (I.C.-31).

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Prime Minister should send a strongly-worded personal letter to M. Clemenceau, drawing his attention to the previous letters that had passed regarding General Sarrail and the seriousness of the situation.

With reference to the report by Lieutenant-Colonel E. A. Plunkett, dated the 17th November, 1917 (Paper G.T.-2987), Lord Curzon drew attention to the fact that certain of our troops were stationed in unhealthy areas, whereas other battalions were more favourably placed, the result being that the moral of the former was not likely to be maintained at such a high level.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to enquire into the practicability of periodical exchanges between the troops in the two areas.

7. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, with reference to War Cabinet 248, Minute 7, drew attention to the mischievous attitude adopted by the Northcliffe press in regard to the publication of Sir Archibald Murray’s last despatch. He explained that it had been quite impossible, on military grounds, to publish this despatch, in view of the fact that General Allenby’s position before the capture of Gaza was identically that which was described in such detail by Sir Archibald Murray.

The War Cabinet decided that—

No notice should be taken of the articles in question.

8. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that General Plumer’s last telegrams were most satisfactory; the Italians had been counter-attacking, and the situation was better from every point of view.
9. Sir Edward Carson drew attention to the procedure of the War Office in cases of the next-of-kin of soldiers shot for cowardice or other crimes in the field, whereby a notification of the fact is made and all pensions withdrawn.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to arrange that in future the communications made to the dependants should not convey that the man had been shot, but that he had died on service;

and decided that—

Subject to the agreement of the Minister of Pensions, the pensions should be paid in the same manner as to soldiers who had died on active service, and that the same should apply as regards officers.

The War Cabinet further decided that—

This decision should be made retrospective.

Mr. Barnes undertook to discuss this matter with the Minister of Pensions, and was given full powers to make all arrangements.

10. The First Sea Lord reported two engagements with enemy submarines, during which seaplanes had dropped bombs in their vicinity, with the possibility that one of the submarines was seriously damaged.

11. The First Sea Lord reported that the sloop “Candytuff” was torpedoed in the Mediterranean on the 18th instant, 4 officers and 11 men being killed. The commanding officer states that he is of opinion that the enemy submarine was sunk by gunfire.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 277, Minute 12, the First Sea Lord stated that 22 German prisoners, of whom 1 officer and 5 men were naval ratings, had been taken during the recent engagement in the Heligoland Bight. They were part of the crew of an outpost vessel.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 266, Minute 8, the First Sea Lord stated that the Admiralty had under careful consideration the question of the British submarines in the Baltic. The minefields in Danish waters would probably prevent the submarines leaving, but it was possible to cause the submarines to be interned in a neutral country, and thus release their crews. Admiral Stanley had been asked for his views on the subject.

14. The First Sea Lord stated that British monitors based on Venice had bombarded and destroyed a bridge over the Piave River.

15. The First Sea Lord stated that the U.S.A. destroyer “Chauncey” had been in collision with a transport, and had been sunk, 3 officers and 18 men being lost.

16. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs drew the attention of the War Cabinet to a very important telegram that had been received from Roumania (No. 690, dated the 17th November, 1917).
He attached the greatest importance to our refusal to accept any idea of countenancing a separate peace with Germany, and he thought that the only practical way out of the difficulty was to get into touch with General Kaledin and M. Savinkoff, who was now with the former, through Roumania, with a view to obtaining their support for the Roumanians.

In this connection Sir Edward Carson reported that he had had an important meeting on the previous day with Count Horodyński, a Polish leader, at which the Director of Military Intelligence (General Macdonogh) had been present. As a result of this meeting, he believed that the formation of a nucleus of Poles, Cossacks, Roumanians, and Armenians was a practical proposition, which might be realised, should we be able to get at General Kaledin through the Roumanians and through America. It was quite clear that the British were most unpopular in Russia at the present moment, and that it was questionable policy for Great Britain to approach General Kaledin, who was still only the leader of a faction, officially or directly.

The importance was urged of our doing nothing which appeared to take sides in the internal dispute now raging in Russia.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Chief of the Imperial Staff should confer with his Intelligence Department, with a view to selecting an individual to be sent, either from this country or from Roumania, to get into touch with General Kaledin.

17. With regard to Sir Edward Carson’s intimation referred to in the previous Minute, concerning the Poles, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs entered a caveat regarding Count Horodyński. The latter was urging us to make a further announcement in favour of an independent Poland and an independent Bohemia. Mr. Balfour thought that we should not go further than the very strong declaration made recently by us on the anniversary of the death of the Polish patriot Kosciusko. As far as his personal sympathies were concerned, although he did not in any way wish to minimise the efforts of many of the Poles, he thought the Bohemians were deserving of the greatest consideration from the Allies. They had made great sacrifices for the Allies, but he feared that, owing to their geographical position, the ideal of independence appeared chimerical; the utmost that they could hope for being home rule within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Supply of Guns to Italy.

18. The War Cabinet had under consideration a telegram from Mr. Churchill in Paris (Paper G.T.-8638) relative to the supply of rifles, guns, and ammunition to Italy, as well as a request by the Minister of Munitions to Lord Derby that, if the War Cabinet decided on the principle of affording aid, General Furse might be authorised to settle the main details direct with Mr. Churchill.

Lord Derby stated that he had sent General Furse across to France to confer with Mr. Churchill on the subject, and that he was prepared to endorse any arrangement that may be agreed to by General Furse. If such arrangement did not cover the whole of the Italian demands, Lord Derby considered that the question of such further supply should be considered by the Committee on the Allocation of Guns in relation to the demands put forward by our own armies and by those of the other Allied Governments (War Cabinet 247, Minute 7).

The War Cabinet decided that—

Sir L. Worthington Evans should telegraph to Mr. Churchill that the War Cabinet would support any arrangement he might make with the Italians, if agreed to by General
Furse, who had received instructions on the subject from Lord Derby; also that the War Cabinet approve of preliminary studies for a Conference at the end of this month as regards the Italian output of munitions, but that they could not agree to Mr. Churchill's proposals to bargain for a reduction in the shipping tonnage allotted to France, as this was a matter within the province of Lord Milner's Committee.

19. With reference to War Cabinet 277, Minute 6, Lord Curzon stated that a Proclamation had been prepared and that it was most important that, if and when Jerusalem were captured, the news should be made known in a way calculated favourably to impress India and the Mohammedan world, and to satisfy them that the Moslem Holy Places would be protected.

The War Cabinet decided that—

No statement as to the capture or imminent capture of Jerusalem should be issued to the press before the Prime Minister had publicly had an opportunity of giving assurances as to the protection to be afforded to the Holy Places of the Moslems and Christians.

20. With reference to War Cabinet 252, Minute 1, the War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Minister of Munitions on the question of extending to semi-skilled and unskilled time-workers the bonus of 12½ per cent. recently granted to skilled time-workers in the engineering and foundry trades.

It was explained that a decision was urgently required, as the men in some areas were being kept at work with difficulty. The present demand arose directly out of the recent concession of 12½ per cent. to skilled workers. Subsequent to this decision, the Committee on Production had granted a further general advance of 5s. The result was that those grades which had only received the advance of 5s. were asking for the bonus of 12½ per cent. If this were granted, the relative positions of the skilled and semi-skilled would be once again what it was before the bonus was given. Further, the sums involved in the present demand were very large. The whole position was unsatisfactory and showed that some co-ordination of the Departments dealing with Labour was very much needed.

The War Cabinet authorised—

Lord Milner and Mr. Barnes to decide whether or not the advance now asked for should be granted.

21. With reference to War Cabinet 274, Minute 11, Mr. Austen Chamberlain stated that he had been asked by Mr. Crosby, the chairman of the Inter-Allied Council, whether he could make it convenient to attend meetings of the Council in Paris, as it was desired by the French authorities to hold the same there. Mr. Chamberlain added that the matter was not a question of his convenience, but that he understood it was the wish of the British Government that the meetings of the Council should be held in London, as it was, on the whole, the most suitable place for the purpose.

It was pointed out that it was quite impossible for General Smuts, who was a member of the Council, to attend meetings in Paris, in view of his manifold duties elsewhere.
The War Cabinet decided—

To adhere to the original arrangement, namely, that the headquarters of the Council should be in London, and requested Mr. Austen Chamberlain so to inform Mr. Crosby.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 21, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, November 22, 1917, at 11.30 a.m.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 5 to 10).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 9).

General Sir W. R. Robertson, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1 to 9).

The Right Hon. H. W. Forster, M.P., Financial Secretary, War Office (for Minutes 11 and 12).

The Right Hon. W. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minutes 1 to 10 and 13).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 8).

The Right Hon. T. J. Macnamara, LL.D., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Admiralty (for Minutes 11 and 12).


Professor W. G. Adams (for Minute 13).


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain L. S. Amery, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
1. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that there had been stiff fighting on the north of the Italian front, but that the Germans had made no progress. Information had been received from a captured German aeroplane to the effect that an attack had been planned for the 14th November, which was to have resulted in the crossing of the Piave. An attack had been made about that date, but the Piave had not been crossed in the manner planned.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that two more German divisions had been transferred from Russia to the Western front, bringing the total to five divisions in the last three weeks, and that possibly one German division was being transferred from Galicia to the Salonica front. He added that, owing to the present state of affairs in Russia, we were being very badly served in the matter of information as regards German units on that front.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that Sir Douglas Haig had followed up his success by pushing on to the village of Fontaine-Notre-Dame. There was no further news beyond this, but this brought our troops within 2 miles of the main road leading north-west from Cambrai, upon which the troops in the German salient immediately north of our break-through largely depended for their supplies. He added that in addition to the two British cavalry divisions which had gone into the gap, a French division and a cavalry division were being detrained at Péronne to help. The success, in his opinion, was due not only to the special employment of a large force of Tanks, but also to the fact that the German line on this sector had been considerably thinned to enable troops to be transferred to Flanders, where there was a large concentration of enemy reserves.

4. In connection with this success, the notice of the War Cabinet was drawn to a press suggestion that "Joy Bells" should be rung. The War Cabinet were of opinion that, while people could not be forbidden to demonstrate their satisfaction, no official encouragement should be given to the ringing of "Joy Bells."

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that, according to the latest telegrams, the position had not changed, adding that progress was, no doubt, slow in the difficult ground over which General Allenby's advanced troops were now operating. Reports showed that probably some 12,000 German troops especially selected for service in Mesopotamia or Palestine were now at or south of Aleppo.

With regard to the decision taken on the previous day (War Cabinet 279, Minute 19) as to withholding an announcement of the capture of Jerusalem until the Prime Minister could make such an announcement in the House of Commons, and combine it with a statement as to the steps taken for the protection of the Holy Places, the War Cabinet decided that—

This decision should only apply if the House were actually in session; but that, if the news of the fall of Jerusalem arrived after 5 p.m. on Friday, and before the following Monday, it should be issued to the press in the usual way.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 279, Minute 16, the War Cabinet discussed how far it was possible for the Allies to take any effective action in Russia against the Bolsheviks, who had now issued...
a wireless message to the world announcing that they were
determined on an immediate armistice. It was pointed out that the
Allied Governments had not so far recognised Lenin and his
associates as a Russian Government, and could not recognise as an
Allied Government in Russia any Government which officially put
forward to the enemy proposals for peace. The difficulty was that
any overt official step taken against the Bolsheviks might only
strengthen their determination to make peace, and might be used to
influence anti-Allied feeling in Russia, and so defeat the very object
we were aiming at. Nor was anything known of the actual position
which would justify us, at this juncture, in backing either Kaledin
or any other leader of the party of law and order. It was suggested
that steps should be taken to build up in Russia some sort of
unofficial organisation which could counter the work of the German
organisation. Meanwhile, the best immediate step might be to let
the Roumanians get into touch with General Kaledin, on purely
military grounds, assuming, of course, that he was in a sufficiently
strong position to help them.

7. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reported that the
Prime Minister and himself had had a discussion with Colonel
House on the previous afternoon and had drafted a telegram,
subsequently communicated to M. Cambon, stating that a separate
peace was not to be thought of, and suggesting that the Roumanians
should get into touch with General Kaledin (telegram No. 461 to
Bucharest).

It was urged that for the Roumanians to appeal to General
Kaledin on purely military grounds, as the Commander of the
nearest effective Russian Army, would not constitute an intervention
in Russian internal affairs to the same extent as an appeal to
General Kaledin from the Western Allies direct, while it might at
the same time afford an opportunity for ascertaining what General
Kaledin’s real strength and intentions were.

The War Cabinet were of opinion that this would be a
preferable course to the sending of envoys to General Kaledin,
either in the shape of a military representative, such as General
Ballard, or any civilian. In the latter case it was urged, moreover,
that the difficulties of getting to Southern Russia from this country
were at this moment very serious.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to send a telegram to
General Ballard, putting frankly before him the whole
difficulty of the internal situation in Russia, and asking
him, after consultation with the Head of the French
Military Mission, General Bertholot, to advise as to the
best procedure for approaching General Kaledin, or other­
wise securing Russian help for Roumania.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the same time
undertook to discuss the matter fully with M. Cambon.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 279, Minute 3, the Prime
Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reported to
the War Cabinet that Colonel House was resolutely opposed to the
issuing of any Proclamation announcing that German East Africa
would not be returned to the Germans at the end of the war. All
the arguments bearing on the shortening of the duration of the
campaign in East Africa, with all its hardships involved for the
white troops and suffering for the population, as well as the locking
up of shipping, had not been able to weigh with him as against the
inconvenience such a declaration would cause to President Wilson.
This applied no less, in Colonel House’s opinion to a merely
negative Proclamation saying that the country was not to be given back to the Germans than to a positive one stating that we meant to retain it. Colonel House was not opposed to our keeping the country eventually, and thought it was in our interest not to tie our hands publicly at this moment.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies referred to the menace to the peace of the world which would result from the creation of a great black conscripted Army in Africa—a menace in which the United States could not but be interested.

It was suggested that, as far as the fears of the native population were concerned, it might be possible to reassure them without making any public statement which would tie the hands of the Government or embarrass our Allies, and that this was a matter which might be left within the discretion of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The War Cabinet, while recognising that their decision might prolong this difficult and exhausting campaign, felt there was no alternative, in view of Colonel House’s attitude, but to decide that—

(a.) No announcement as to our war aims regarding East Africa should be made at present;
(b.) No peace conditions short of absolute surrender could be granted to the German forces in East Africa;
(c.) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff should send a reply to General van Deventer in the sense of the above decisions.

Paris Conference.

9. With reference to the British representation at the Paris Conference, the War Cabinet decided that—

The British Government should be represented by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. A member of the Cabinet should, in addition, accompany the Prime Minister to Paris for the meeting of the Supreme War Council.

Canada.

10. The Secretary of State for the Colonies drew the attention of the War Cabinet to a telegram dated 7th November, 1917, from the Canadian Government asking whether Canada was to be represented at this Conference. He reminded the War Cabinet that at the beginning of the war a definite promise had been made to the Dominion Government that they were to be consulted on questions bearing on the conduct of the war and terms of peace, and that this matter had been raised more than once at the time of the meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet were unanimous in considering that a well-considered reply would have to be given, as the matter was one of great importance and raised issues of principle affecting the whole relations of the dominions to the British Government. It was generally felt that the actual attendance of Dominion representatives at such a Conference was undesirable unless they came as British representatives, as had been the case with Mr. Hughes at the time of the Paris Economic Conference. On the other hand, it was realised that non-attendance at these Conferences made previous consultation with the Dominions all the more necessary, and it was suggested that in addition to the telegraphic consultation it might be possible on such occasions to summon any Dominion representatives who might be in this country. In this connection it was pointed out that the Prime Minister of Newfoundland was actually here, and that the new Canadian Minister of Overseas Military Forces, Sir E. Kemp, would be arriving in a few days’ time; while Mr. Blondin, the Canadian Postmaster-General, was also due in a few days from a visit to France. On the other hand, it was pointed
out by the Secretary of State for the Colonies that, while there was no objection to securing the attendance of Dominion Cabinet Ministers, so long as they are duly authorised to represent their Governments, there were serious objections to bringing the High Commissioners into such consultations, both because this would involve a departure from constitutional precedent and invest them with a position in the relations between the British and Dominion Governments which they had not hitherto held, and because personally some of them did not enjoy the confidence of their Governments, at any rate on matters of such political importance.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies reminded the War Cabinet that the question of fixing the date for the next meeting of the Imperial Cabinet and Imperial Conference was imminent, and suggested that it would considerably facilitate his reply if, in addition to suggesting the attendance at the War Cabinet of representative Ministers who might be in England, he could make it clear to the Dominions that we were contemplating an early meeting of the Imperial Cabinet and Conference.

It was pointed out that the actual Conference with regard to which the question had been raised was not really one of great consequence, more particularly since the creation of the Supreme War Council, and that to that extent the Canadian request was due to a misunderstanding. In making this clear to the Canadian Government it would be necessary, however, to put this in such a way that the Canadian Government might not let this be known publicly for election purposes, as this might prejudice our relations with the Allies.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies undertook, at the request of the War Cabinet, to draft a reply, pointing out the actual situation with regard to the forthcoming Paris Conference, making it clear that the British War Cabinet would welcome consultation with any representative Dominion Ministers who might be in this country, and at the same time asking their views as to the date of the meeting of the next Imperial Cabinet and Conference.

11. The War Cabinet had before them the Second Interim Report of the Committee on Soldiers' and Sailors' Pay (Paper G.-172).

Sir Edward Carson, the Chairman of the Committee, explained that two criticisms had been passed on the First Interim Report (Paper G.-154) by a deputation which waited on the Prime Minister. It was urged that the minimum rate for the private soldier should be 1s. 6d. instead of 1s., and proficiency pay should be granted automatically and only withheld in cases where a man was definitely certified as inefficient. In consequence of these representations the Prime Minister had referred the First Report back for further consideration. The Committee had endeavoured to meet the criticisms put forward, and now recommended the scheme marked "E" in the report, or, if the War Cabinet thought the financial commitments of the country would permit it, the more expensive scheme marked "B." The former would cost nearly 15,000,000l., the latter just over 30,000,000l. for the army and navy. Scheme "E" had the advantage of doing something to reduce the present adverse balance against the fighting man. On the other hand, it withdrew the concession already announced of 3d. a clay (Class II) proficiency pay after six months, which would be an unpopular step. Scheme "B" gave a clear advance of 6d.

Mr. Forster pointed out that it was only comparatively few soldiers, having the necessary service, who did not now receive Class II proficiency pay. The higher proficiency pay would continue to be granted, after a test, as at present.
Dr. Macnamara urged, as an objection to Scheme "E," that the Government was frequently condemned for giving with one hand and taking away with the other, and that this would be interpreted as a fresh example of that practice. Dr. Macnamara added that the decisions of the War Cabinet, based on the First Report, and announced by the Prime Minister, had been put into force by the Admiralty, and that they would have to be merged in those taken to-day. It would be important to make clear that the decisions were to be operative for this War only. The Committee thought Scheme "B" the best, if the country could afford it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that, while, like his colleagues, he was most anxious to do all possible for the soldiers and sailors, especially for the men in the posts of greatest danger and discomfort, he was bound to call attention to the country's financial situation, and to the considerable sums already voted as separation allowances and pensions. There would also be a further Report from the present Committee recommending increase to officers.

The War Cabinet decided—

To adopt Scheme "E" of the Report, and requested Mr. Bonar Law to announce the decision in the House of Commons early next week.

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Position of Non-Combatant Units

12. Mr. Forster called attention to the position of non-combatant units, and asked whether the increase decided on above was to be extended to them. Under the Regulations they were not qualified for proficiency pay, and if the scheme were strictly interpreted they would not receive the increase. They are special units composed of conscientious objectors. If they were granted the increase they would be receiving a relatively greater benefit than the fighting men.

It was explained that the numbers involved were a few thousand, and that the question was mainly a political one. To grant it would tend to increase the trouble about proficiency pay referred to in Minute 11. To refuse it was difficult to justify, because in effect a new basic rate of 1s. 6d. was now being set up.

The War Cabinet decided by a majority that—

The increase be not granted to the non-combatant units.

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The Irish Convention

13. Mr. Duke stated that he regretted that he was compelled to inform the War Cabinet that a breakdown in the Irish Convention appeared imminent. The situation might be summarised as follows: A Sub-Committee of nine, containing representatives of Nationalists, the Southern Unionists, and of North-East Ulster, had been appointed by the Convention for the purpose of endeavouring to find a common ground both as regards the constitution of the proposed Irish Chambers and a fiscal settlement. He gathered that, as far as the constitution of the Chambers was concerned, there were signs of a possible agreement on lines securing to the minority an equilibrium of votes in a Joint Session of the two Houses. On the other hand, with regard to finance, an impasse had been reached. An agreement between the Unionists in the south and west and the Nationalists on this point seemed possible, but the representatives of North-East Ulster found themselves unable to accept any of the proposals hitherto put forward. He gathered that the main proposal upon which the disagreement became evident was a proposal to secure fiscal autonomy to the Irish Parliament on colonial lines, subject to an arrangement with regard to customs, against which any Irish contribution to Imperial funds should be charged. The difficulty lay in deciding upon whom would rest the onus of refusing to
continue negotiations, and, as far as he could gather, the onus seemed likely to fall upon the representatives of North-East Ulster. Quite apart from the questions at issue, he would like to have some idea of the Government policy in the event of a breakdown of the Convention, but, before that, he suggested that pressure from outside might be brought to bear upon members of the Convention by a communication to the effect that it was the earnest wish of the Government that all possible means of accommodation should be discussed before a breakdown were announced, and that, in the event of a breakdown, the Government should declare its determination to take the matter up anew at the earliest possible moment, and to carry on the discussion of the questions at issue from the point already reached by the Convention. He felt very strongly that, if the Convention broke down, the Irish question could not be allowed to drift, and that there would be serious trouble in the coming winter unless it became clear that the Government were in earnest in settling this matter.

Sir Edward Carson stated that he could not agree with Mr. Duke's presentation of the facts, and he thought that he had not correctly represented the point of view of the members for North-East Ulster. Several of these latter had asked to see him, and he explained that he found himself in a most difficult position. He listened to what the North-East Ulster representatives had to say, but expressed no view himself. He gathered that their view was that it was useless to attempt an agreement on the subject of the constitution of the Irish Chambers until the specific powers of the Irish Parliament had been first agreed. On the financial question the representatives of North-East Ulster thought that the proposals so far adumbrated would mean ruin to their industries and would create an absolutely impossible position for them. He understood that Mr. Redmond's financial proposals included not only absolute fiscal autonomy for the Irish Parliament, including the power of setting up different tariffs from those obtaining for Great Britain, but also the power of making separate commercial treaties with other nations. Under these circumstances the onus of a breakdown could not be placed upon the representatives of North-East Ulster.

Lord Milner asked whether the question of Preference had been considered in relation to the proposed scheme of fiscal autonomy, and the Prime Minister read a letter from Mr. Redmond, dated the 19th November, 1917, which seemed to give a different account of the proposed fiscal arrangement from that given either by the Chief Secretary or Sir Edward Carson.

Mr. Long stated that no one in Great Britain would now tolerate a fiscal system which enabled the Irish Parliament to make different commercial arrangements with Germany after the war from those made by Great Britain.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In view of the uncertainty regarding the facts now at issue, the leading representatives of the Irish Convention should be asked to come over to see the Prime Minister as soon as he returned from France, in order that, as far as possible, the Cabinet might be informed of the actual situation; and that, meanwhile, individual members of the Government should use their influence to urge their friends on the Convention to keep the Convention going, and to avoid a premature breakdown.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 22, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 281.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, November 23, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.
Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.
The Right Hon. SIR E. CARSON, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. SIR G. CAVE, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 1).
The Right Hon. H. E. DUKE, K.C., M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland (for Minute 1).
Rear-Admiral SIR W. B. HALL, K.C.M.G., C.B., R.N., Director of Intelligence Division, Admiralty.
The Right Hon. LORD RHONDDA, Food Controller (for Minute 2).
Mr. G. W. ROFFLEY, Ministry of Food (for Minute 2).
The Right Hon. R. MUNRO, K.C., M.P., Secretary for Scotland (for Minute 1).

Lieutenant-Colonel SIR M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.
Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
The Liquor Trade: Publication of Finance Committee's Report.

WITH reference to War Cabinet 157, Minute 15, the War Cabinet had before them the report of the Liquor Trade Finance Committee for England and Wales, together with a covering note by the Home Secretary dealing with the question of the publication of the report (G.T.-2300).

The War Cabinet decided that—

Inasmuch as the reports of the Committees which were dealing with Scotland and Ireland had not been received, it was inadvisable to publish the report for England and Wales at present.

Release of Wines from Bond.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 267, Minute 16, the War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Food Controller on the release of wines from bond.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The release of wines from bond should be without distinction of quality, and should be on the basis of the figures for the year 1916.

Dardanelles Commission: Second Report

3. With reference to War Cabinet 256, Minute 9, the War Cabinet were informed that, on the 16th December, Sir Ian Hamilton will have been unemployed for two years and will, in consequence, be automatically placed on the retired list. After this it would be difficult for him to be employed again on military duty. Further, Lord Justice Pickford was prepared to put in writing that there was nothing in the Report of the Commission to warrant the exclusion of Sir Ian Hamilton from military employment—

The Prime Minister agreed to discuss the matter further with the Secretary of State for War.

Russia.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 230, Minutes 6 and 7, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff read a telegram from Colonel E. L. Spiers, M.C., based on a message received from the French Minister at Stockholm, which stated that Kharkov had been captured by General Kaledin, and that General Alexeieff and M. Mihiukov were with him. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he was being pressed by influential Poles in this country to urge His Majesty's Government to send a message of encouragement to the Poles in Russia, and to co-operate with the Polish National Council.

The War Cabinet requested—

Sir Edward Carson, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to obtain from Dr. Harold Williams information as to the present situation in Russia.

The Western Front.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that in the region of Cambrai the Germans had brought up two divisions and a few battalions. No news had yet been received of the number of guns captured in the recent action.

The Invasion of Italy.

6. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that there was no fresh news of importance from the Italian front. The Italians were holding their own. The Germans had sent a specially assembled division of Jagers to the North. Otherwise there had been no increase on that front. Information had been received that three divisions out of eight, which had been lost sight of, and which it was thought might have been transferred to Italy, were still on the Russian front.
A telegram had been received from General Plumer raising no objection to the delay of the two British divisions, but adding that he had already informed the French and Italians that we were sending six divisions in all.

7. The Prime Minister called attention to the supply of heavy guns for the British Divisions serving in Italy. A report had reached him that the French had as many heavy guns as we had guns altogether. The French were said to have 600 guns as compared with 250 guns with our troops. It was most important that our men should be adequately supported, in order to keep our losses down.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff did not believe the disparity was as great as reported, and undertook to furnish the War Cabinet with the exact figures.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 279, Minute 3, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that General Von Lettow had contrived to elude General Van Deventer, but some 52 Germans had been captured, and there could hardly be more than 150 Germans left at large.

9. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that a Yeomanry division and two divisions were advancing towards Jerusalem, and had taken a hill 5,000 yards north-west of Jerusalem.

10. The First Sea Lord reported that the “Merops” had engaged and claimed to have destroyed a submarine thirty miles from Belle Isle, in the Bay of Biscay. A report had also been received that, after the completion of one of our new minefields, an explosion had lately taken place, which was thought might be due to a submarine coming into contact with mines.

11. The First Sea Lord reported that an electrically-controlled motor-boat had been encountered making for the Belgian coast patrol vessels. Our ships had “jammed their wireless,” and she had not been seen again.

12. The War Cabinet had a preliminary discussion on future military policy, with a view to the discussion arranged for Monday next, the 26th November.

In the course of the discussion the Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that there was some evidence to show that the position of the Germans was worse than we were sometimes inclined to think. For a long time past they had tried no serious offensive in the West, but this might be due to the U-boat plan of winning the war; they had not pushed their advantage on the Russian front, but this might be in order to leave the Russians to fall to pieces themselves; still, their offensive against Roumania had not been persisted in, and they had sent only some six or seven divisions to the Italian front, and these had possibly been called for by the Austrians, owing to the weakness of their own divisions. The failure to exploit the Italian débâcle was significant. A month had elapsed since they had sent troops to Italy.
On the whole, it was difficult to explain the cessation of the offensive against Roumania and the failure to exploit the Italian débâcle except on the ground of inactivity, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff thought that Germany's military power was probably a good deal less and the condition of the Austrian armies a good deal worse than we had thought to be the case.

It was pointed out, over against this view, that Hindenburg had definitely announced the adoption of a defensive policy, Germany having all the territory she required.

2, Whitshill Gardens, S W.,
November 23, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, November 26, 1917, at 12:30 P.M.

Present:
The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Colonel E. D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

The War Cabinet discussed the procedure to be adopted at the forthcoming meeting of the Inter-Allied Conference and of the Supreme War Council at Paris and Versailles respectively. It was agreed that the question of military policy depended to a very great extent upon the shipping situation, as set forth in a memorandum by the Shipping Controller entitled “The Shipping Situation and American Assistance” (Paper G.T.-2728).

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Shipping Controller should be asked to attend the Conferences.

(b.) The Prime Minister, in his preliminary interview with M. Clemenceau, should lay the utmost stress upon the supreme importance of the shipping situation, and should, if possible, arrange for this subject to be discussed by the experts at an early stage of the proceedings.
2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported to the Cabinet that he had received a request from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig asking for Italian labour to assist the British troops in France.

The War Cabinet agreed that pressure should be applied at the forthcoming Conference to obtain Italian labour, as requested by Sir Douglas Haig.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 279, Minute 6, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that the only report received from General Sarrail, in response to requests, was a meagre statement regarding the disposition of certain units. He desired to draw the attention of the War Cabinet to the continued inadequacy of our information regarding the Allied situation on the Salonica front.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported to the War Cabinet a telegram from General Allenby asking what flags, if any, should be hoisted in the event of an Allied occupation of the city of Jerusalem.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In view of the unique character of the city and of the many difficult political and diplomatic questions that were raised in connection with it, General Allenby should be informed that no flags should be hoisted in the event of the occupation of the city by Allied troops.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that he had received a telegram from General Plumer stating that the Italians were very much pleased with the way in which their troops had withstood enemy attacks during the last few days. A telegram from General Delme-Radcliffe stated that both the 27th Corps and the 6th Corps of the Italian Army, who had been among the worst behaved during the débâcle, were now re-formed and were re-entering the line. General Robertson stated that the railways were now available for the transport of the two further British Divisions that had been ordered to join General Plumer's force. In view of the improved situation in Italy, he personally regretted their departure to the Italian front, where they now might not be required so urgently. However, in view of the fact that General Plumer had informed both the French and the Italians that these two Divisions were coming, he did not feel justified in counter-ordering them without definite Cabinet instructions.

The War Cabinet decided that—

It was impracticable to stop the two further Divisions from proceeding to Italy as ordered.

6. The First Sea Lord reported that—

(a.) The German submarine "U 48" had been driven ashore on the Goodwin Sands by our patrol boats on Saturday. After a lively engagement, lasting twenty minutes, the German submarine was destroyed, 1 officer and 21 men being rescued prisoners, the remainder being either killed or drowned.

(b.) The trawler "Delphinus" reported having dropped depth charges in the immediate neighbourhood of an enemy submarine. Oil appeared upon the surface, and there was a probability that the submarine was severely damaged.
(a.) One of our trawlers off Flamborough Head claimed to have sunk a German submarine.

(b.) The French naval authorities reported the destruction of an enemy submarine in the Mediterranean.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 281, Minute 4, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff read a telegram, dated Petrograd, the 22nd November, from General Knox, stating that, quite apart from the action of the Government authorities, the Russian troops at the front were insisting upon an armistice. It appeared quite clear that, whatever happened politically in Russia, the bulk of the Russian army refused to continue the war. He also read a telegram from General Barter (No. 1378), despatched from Roumania on the 23rd November, stating that he had handed to the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies, General Dukhonen, a formal and strongly-worded protest, signed by the military representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy, Roumania, and Japan, against any infraction of the Treaty of London, dated the 5th September, 1914.

The War Cabinet approved the action taken by General Barter.

The Prime Minister then read to the Cabinet telegram No. 1862, dated the 24th November, from Sir George Buchanan, and No. 700, of the same date, from Sir G. Barclay (Jassy).

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff also read a telegram from General Ballard, to the effect that the Ukranians were anxious to make peace at the earliest possible moment.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that the Italian Ambassador, Count Imperiali, had been to see him, at the request of Baron Sonnino, regarding the situation in Roumania. There appeared to be a considerable discrepancy between the telegram received by the Italians and the telegram above alluded to, viz., No. 700 from Sir G. Barclay.

The War Cabinet took the view that His Majesty’s Government could not in any way countenance any suggestion that the Roumanians should make a separate peace with the enemy, and agreed that it was desirable that the Roumanians should get into touch as soon as possible with those Russian leaders who were still prepared to continue the war.

The War Cabinet decided—

To leave the form and method of communication to Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Balfour, who were meeting certain experts at the Foreign Office the same afternoon to discuss this particular situation.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,

November 26, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 283.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, November 27, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).


The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:—

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 8).


Sir E. Wyldbore Smith, Chairman, Commission internationale de Ravitaillement (for Minute 15).

Sir David Shackleton, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour (for Minutes 15 to 19).

Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1 to 8).

Mr. Graeme Thomson, C.B., Director of Transports (for Minute 15).

The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minute 17).

The Right Hon. W. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minutes 16 to 18).

The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President, Board of Trade (for Minutes 13 to 17).


Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
1. LORD CURZON drew the attention of the War Cabinet to a Foreign Office telegram No. 5074, dated the 26th November, 1917, in which it was stated that the recommendations contained therein are still under the consideration of the Cabinet and cannot yet be taken as agreed upon by His Majesty's Government. He pointed out that, by the Terms of Reference to his Committee (Paper I.C.-33), such Committee was authorised to settle the question as to the best use to be made of the neutral shipping available to the Allies, and they had done so (Paper I.C.-34).

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to instruct the British Ambassador at Washington accordingly.

The Western Front.

2. The Director of Military Operations informed the War Cabinet that the enemy had made a counter-attack on Bourlon Wood, but had been beaten off.

The War Cabinet requested—

General Maurice to furnish to the War Cabinet as soon as possible—

(a.) A report as to the casualties that have been sustained up to date in the recent offensive.

(b.) An appreciation from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig as to the actual work carried out by the cavalry.

The Invasion of Italy.

3. The Director of Military Operations stated that no change had taken place regarding the situation in Italy. All local attacks had been beaten off. He added that our troops, and the French, were now astride the Brenta, and that, in all, five British and French Divisions were close behind the battle-front. He mentioned that the Second Italian Army was being rapidly re-organised.

Guns for Italy.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 281, Minute 7, and Paper G.T.-2754, General Maurice informed the War Cabinet that information had been received from General Plumer which indicated that the number of French guns on the Italian front was less than that indicated in the report of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. The French figures were as follows:

- 72 mountain guns,
- 324—75 mm.,
- 24—105 " 
- 16—120 "
- 16—145 "
- 84—155 " lowitzers,
- 48—155 " guns,

making a total of 396 field guns, and

188 heavy guns,

as against our

288 field guns, and

201 heavy guns.

Palestine.

5. The Director of Military Operations stated that no change had taken place in the situation in Palestine, and that none was likely until fresh troops, which were now being brought up, had arrived to relieve those belonging to the two Divisions who had carried out the pursuit. Our nearest point to Jerusalem was 3 miles
Submarines.

6. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported an engagement in the Mediterranean between one of our destroyers and an enemy submarine. An attempt was made by the destroyer to ram the submarine, which was not successful. A depth charge was dropped in her vicinity.

Loss of an Airship

7. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that the airship "S.S.P. 2" had been lost in the vicinity of Longhope, owing to engine failure. One officer and two men were missing.

The Deputy First Sea Lord undertook to provide, for the information of the War Cabinet, a statement as to the situation with regard to British Zeppelins built and building.

The Adriatic.

8. The Deputy First Sea Lord gave a résumé of the results of his visit to Rome, and indicated that, although the Italians had at first asked for battle cruisers, destroyers, and mines, they had not referred to battle cruisers at the Conference which was held at a later date, and had accepted the fact that the Allies were unable to send them any more destroyers for the Adriatic. We had supplied them with mines for the defence of the Northern Adriatic, which they had gratefully accepted. Admiral Wemyss added that he had also discussed with the Italian authorities, in conjunction with Admiral de Bon, the transfer of the Italian Fleet to another base, and that the suggestions had been accepted by the Italians in a sympathetic manner.

Co-ordination Committee for Labour Disputes.

9. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by Mr. Barnes on the question of the co-ordination of Government Departments dealing with wages and trade disputes (Paper G.T.—2772).

The War Cabinet decided—

To refer the matter to the Departments concerned, and, in view of its urgency, to bring it up for consideration at to-morrow's (Wednesday's) meeting.

Trade Policy.


Mr. Long explained that the Report had, in the first instance, been drafted by Mr. Hewins, but as it was thought by the Foreign Office to go too far, not in principle but in expression, an alternative draft was submitted by the Foreign Office, and this was the document now before the Cabinet. The Foreign Office proposed to write separately to each of the Allies, showing how they would be affected by the proposed policy.

The War Cabinet agreed—

That a declaration should be issued on the lines set forth in the Interim Report.

Tonnage Situation: Restriction of Imports.

11. With reference to War Cabinet 286, Minute 11, Lord Curzon undertook the Chairmanship of the Committee on Restriction of Imports in the temporary absence of Lord Milner.
12. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 13, General Smuts undertook to take Lord Milner's place in examining the proposed transfer of the organisation for the purchase of meat and cheese.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 208, Minute 1, the War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade on the cotton situation (Paper G.T.-2692).

Sir Albert Stanley said it was difficult to deal with the subject in the absence of the Shipping Controller. It was clear, however, that enough raw material would not be forthcoming to keep the mills fully employed, and, unless work could be found for the cotton operatives near their own homes, the Government would be faced with unemployment on a large scale. There were at present some 30,000 operatives out of work, who were for the moment being dealt with under the scheme of the Cotton Control Board, but that scheme would shortly terminate, and the operatives would have to fall back on their Trade Union out-of-work benefit only, without the assistance from the levies now imposed. This would be quite inadequate to meet their necessities.

Owing to lack of shipping, a serious restriction of imports was probable in 1918, and if the mills, which were now confined to running 60 per cent. of their machinery, were reduced to a 50 per cent. level, the number of the unemployed would become considerably more than 100,000. Two courses seemed possible: either to come to an understanding with the Shipping Controller to maintain the imports of cotton during the next few months, or to recognise the increase of unemployment as inevitable, and make preparations to deal with it.

Sir David Shackleton said that the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Munitions, and the Department of National Service, were investigating the possibility of using some of the cotton mills as aeroplane factories. The mills were all top-lighted and north-lighted. Between 60 and 70 per cent. of the operatives were women. Many of the overlookers were semi-engineers; there was in each shed a nucleus of skilled men. In reply to a suggestion that some mills might be used as shell factories, Sir David Shackleton pointed out that at the moment women were being discharged from shell factories.

Mr. Long said that there was an unwillingness on the part of the operatives to turn to rough employment, because the delicacy of touch necessary for their work might thereby be impaired. He added that the whole question of import restriction was of vital importance to the Dominions. Messages were being received from Australia and New Zealand, pointing out that their cold storage room was exhausted, and their inability to export their staple produce adversely affected their revenue.

The War Cabinet decided—

To adjourn the discussion until the Report on the Restriction of Imports has been received, it being understood that, in the meantime, every effort would be made by the Ministries of Labour, Munitions, and National Service to absorb any unemployed cotton operatives in other industries.

14. Mr. Long called attention to the fact that Australia possessed about 400,000 tons of shipping which was now engaged in coastal trade, and that a quite inadequate offer of at first 25,000 and afterwards of some 70,000 or 80,000 tons had been made to this country. Australia had been pressing us to buy her next year's harvest; we should be glad to have the grain and the ships, and Australia would be glad to have the money. He would like to see
250,000 tons sent to this country with grain, the ships then to remain here to be pooled with ours.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Secretary of State for the Colonies to endeavour to make this arrangement with the Government of Australia.

Coal for Italy.

15. The War Cabinet had before them a letter from Sir E. Wyldbore-Smith (Paper G.T.-2705) and a letter from Sir Rennell Rodd (Paper G.T.-2732) dealing with the subject of the dearth of coal in Italy.

In his letter Sir E. Wyldbore-Smith suggested that the situation should be laid before the French Government, with an intimation that His Majesty's Government consider that it is necessary, in order partially to remedy the situation in Italy, to withdraw—at any rate, temporarily—a certain number of British vessels at present in the French coal service and devote them to the transport of coal to Italy.

Mr. Graeme Thomson said that the Ministry of Shipping were not in favour of this suggestion, because they feared that the French would resent it. The Ministry of Shipping had, however, allocated to Italy four vessels, which were ready to load during the present week. This was being done at the expense of our own depots in the Mediterranean. In addition, 42,000 tons were being allocated this week, and this represented all the tonnage at our disposal after the absolute minimum requirements of the other services in the Mediterranean had been met. The above steps should raise the shipments to over 400,000 tons, which is about the average for the first seven months of this year.

It was pointed out that the whole Allied tonnage situation was to be reviewed at the Paris Conference, when, no doubt, the particular case of tonnage for Italy would receive attention.

The War Cabinet therefore decided that—

Pending the return of the Shipping Controller from the Paris Conference, no further step should be taken in the matter.

Railway Labour Unrest.

16. With reference to War Cabinet 275, Minute 16, the President of the Board of Trade said that the National Union of Railwaymen were meeting the Railway Executive that day. The Union had refused the Government’s offer of 5s., and were adhering to their demand for an advance of 10s. per week. The Railway Executive were not authorised to offer 10s., consequently there was every prospect of a deadlock.

Sir Albert Stanley undertook to report the result of that day’s proceedings to Mr. Bonar Law, who would call the Cabinet together the same evening should it appear to be necessary.

Control of Raw Materials.

17. The War Cabinet had before them Interim Report No. 5, dealing with the control of raw materials, presented by the Economic Offensive Committee (Paper G.-175).

Sir Edward Carson, the Chairman of the Committee, called special attention to paragraph 12 of the Report, which urged the necessity of legislation of a similar character being introduced in this country, in the Dominions, and among the Allies, and especially in the United States, with the object of controlling the volume, direction, and priority of their exports and imports by licence.

Sir Edward Carson laid stress on the importance of securing the active co-operation of the United States, as the United States and
the British Empire between them control the world's supply of a large number of the most important raw materials of industry, notably cotton and wool.

Dr. Addison said that the policy laid down in the Memorandum was both offensive and defensive in its nature, and was concerned with the situation after the War. We did, of course, control imports and exports at the present time.

The War Cabinet were agreed that it was desirable to take advantage of the visit of Colonel House to obtain not only his approval of the principle set forth in the Memorandum, but also, if possible, of definite proposals. Further, that Sir Albert Stanley should be requested, on his visit to the United States (War Cabinet 261, Minute 11), to discuss the application of the policy in detail. It was understood that Colonel House had informally expressed himself in favour of an economic offensive.

The War Cabinet decided—

To approve the Interim Report, and to request the Foreign Office to forward it to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, with a view to Mr. Balfour bringing it to the notice of Colonel House in Paris.

The War Cabinet also requested—

Dr. Addison and Sir Albert Stanley to prepare a Memorandum for Mr. Balfour, setting forth definite suggestions for giving effect to the policy of the Report.

Administration of the Defence of the Realm Regulations in Ireland.

18. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (Paper G.T.-2664) dealing with the representations of the military authorities regarding the use of Courts-martial for punishment of certain offences against the Defence of the Realm Act in Ireland.

The Chief Secretary for Ireland stated that the military authorities feared that their prestige was being hurt by the use of Courts-martial to deal with offences such as unlawful drilling. Under the Defence of the Realm Act, offences could only be referred to one of two tribunals:—

(a.) A Court-martial;
(b.) A Court of Summary Jurisdiction.

The latter, owing to its character, was quite unsuitable for dealing with the cases now arising in Ireland, and he agreed that it was desirable, if possible, that the military authorities should be relieved from dealing by Court-martial with all except the more important cases. The scheme he suggested, and in which he understood the military authorities concurred, was the setting up, under the Crimes Act, of Statutory Courts composed of two resident magistrates. These Courts could not try cases under the Defence of the Realm Act, but they could deal with drilling as being an “unlawful assembly,” which latter came within the jurisdiction of the Crimes Act.

Mr. Duke added that the method adopted by such Statutory Courts ought, and probably would be, to require offenders to give bail and find sureties for good behaviour. This they almost invariably fail to do, and they thereupon are committed to prison. They almost invariably went on hunger-strike, and, after a period which reduced their physical stamina, they were released, being liable to re-commitment in the event of their creating a further disturbance. In his opinion, the military forces in Ireland were on the alert and would be capable of dealing with any serious trouble. He was in communication with the Secretary of State for War regarding this matter.
Mr. Long pointed out that the Irish Magistracy had been debauched for the last fifteen years, and that it was quite impossible to allow these cases to go before them. He gathered that the Sinn Fein leaders had been rather more guarded in their statements during the last week or so, and that Cardinal Logue had made a most satisfactory contribution towards warning the Sinn Feiners of the dangers of their threatened conduct.

Field-Marshal Lord French urged the desirability of setting up a Civil tribunal to deal with the Sinn Fein offenders, and stated that he did not believe the rumours that arms or material were being landed for use by the Sinn Feiners from German submarines.

The War Cabinet approved the course of action proposed by the Chief Secretary.

19. The War Cabinet approved the Draft Bill submitted by the Chief Secretary of Ireland for dealing with the feeding of necessitous school-children in Ireland (Paper G.T.-2718).

(Initialled) A. B. L.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 27, 1917.
Railway Labour Unrest.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 283, Minute 16, Mr. Bonar Law informed the War Cabinet that he had discussed the railway labour situation that evening with Mr. J. H. Thomas, M.P., the General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen. Mr. Thomas had at first pressed for an advance of 7s. 6d. per week instead of the 5s. already offered, but had subsequently suggested a compromise on the following lines:

(a) The Government should insist on the men who had gone on short work in Liverpool resuming full work as a condition precedent to negotiations;
(b) The Government should agree to grant an advance of 6s. instead of 5s. per week;
(c) The advance should date from 1st November.

Mr. Thomas undertook, if these terms were granted, to do his utmost to persuade his Union to accept them. It was explained that the insistence on a further advance even of 1s. was, no doubt, due to the natural desire to secure better terms for the members of the National Union of Railwaymen than had been obtained by the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. On the other hand, if the 1s. were granted, it would have to be given also
to the smaller Society. Mr. Bonar Law said that, while he believed it would be necessary for the Government to make a stand against the repeated demands for increases of wages, he did not think it would be possible to carry public opinion in resisting a demand for a further Is. a week. He had discussed the matter with the Prime Minister on the previous evening, and he also expressed the hope that it would be possible to offer resistance in this case.

Sir Albert Stanley said that if all that was involved was the paying of 1s. a week, or £2,000,000 a year, to avoid a strike, all would willingly agree to the advance. The real difficulty was to secure that the concession did not bring fresh evil results in its train by its reflex action on other unions and other wage settlements. There were two motives at work among the men of this union: a desire to score off the smaller union, and a feeling that other trade unions were obtaining much better terms than the railwaymen. If a strike ensued, they would undoubtedly base their case on the latter ground. The recent grant of 12½ per cent. to the engineers, and the advance some months ago to the colliers, had produced in the railwaymen a determination not to be left behind in the matter of advances. Illustrations of other sources of irritation were given. The Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions were quoted as paying 2s. 6d. per hour for overtime, and such competitive action on the part of Government Departments was a very disturbing factor. It had been dealt with in a Memorandum by Mr. Barnes, which was before the War Cabinet at the present time.

Sir H. Walker, in reply to a suggestion that the whole case should go before the Committee on Production, said there were difficulties in such a procedure. The offer of 5s. per week had been made as from the 26th November, whereas the Committee on Production would, in all probability, grant it only as from the 6th December. The men would thus obtain a worse award from the Committee on Production than the offer now made. Another phase of the problem of giving more than 5s. to the railwaymen which had to be borne in mind was the effect of any award on the position of the shopmen, of whom there were over 100,000. Of these the National Union of Railwaymen claimed to represent about 70,000. A large proportion of the men in the shops were on plain piecework.

Sir W. F. Marwood dealt with the contention put forward by the railwaymen that they were 'among the lowest paid workmen before the war, and therefore deserving of larger increases of pay now, and said it was almost impossible to translate the wage increases in different industries into percentages. In the coal industry, for example, the increases on pre-war wages have varied from 50 per cent. to 70 per cent. in different fields, but the recent 1s. 6d. per day was a flat rate all round. In the case of the men actually getting coal, a man might earn, say, 8s. 4d. a day pre-war; he now would get, in the two extreme cases, from 10s. 10d. to 12s. 6d., plus in each case 1s. 6d.—i.e., 12s. 4d. or 14s.—an increase of 48 per cent. in one case and 68 per cent. in the other. In the case of all grades on the coalfields the increase might vary from 45 per cent. to 75 per cent., according to the grade and district. Similarly, in the case of engineering works: a labourer at 20s. a week pre-war has had bonuses of 20s., and now gets 12½ per cent. on all earnings—i.e., 4½s. in all—an increase of 125 per cent.; but a skilled man at 60s. pre-war gets the same bonus of 20s., plus 12½ per cent. on all earnings—i.e., 90s.—an increase of 50 per cent. On railways a shunter or platelayer at 23s. would, under the present proposal of 20s. bonus, get an increase of 37 per cent. A driver at 42s. would get an increase of 42 per cent. Taking the average railway wage at 28s. 6d., the increase all round would be 70 per cent.

Sir David Shackleton pointed out that in comparing railwaymen and miners it had to be remembered that some of the latter worked short time. On the general question he thought it important to
endeavour to co-ordinate any award now made with the other awards in respect of date of operation and date of renewal of application for any further advance, e.g., that no further application from the railwaymen should be considered earlier than four months after the 1st December. The Associated Society had, in effect, accepted these conditions, and the National Union should be asked for similar guarantees. It was true that the National Union offered not to reopen the wage question unless there was a substantial increase in the cost of living. The truth was that, with the present increases, wages were brought up very near to the increased cost of living during the war.

In reply to a suggestion that any advance now granted should be recovered from the public by advancing fares, Sir Albert Stanley said that traffic was expanding at a great rate, and that, though the longer journeys were being discontinued because of their discomfort, there was more travelling. He thought any further increase of passenger fares beyond the recent addition of 50 per cent. would be very unpopular.

In this connection Sir Auckland Geddes informed the War Cabinet that an enormous proportion of the workers had changed their place of occupation during the war, and that perhaps a million and a half more people travelled to and from their work than was the case before the war.

Mr. G. H. Roberts did not think it would be possible to risk a strike on the narrow issue now before the War Cabinet, but it might be possible to adhere to the 1st December as the operative date and to refuse to reopen negotiations under four months, and then only if it could be shown that the cost of living had gone up.

Sir H. Walker said the question of the operative date was one on which there was some strong feeling, but it was not worth while fighting about it. He would like to be free to do his best for the 26th November.

The War Cabinet were impressed with the importance of setting in motion immediately machinery for co-ordinating the work of the Departments dealing with labour and with the desirability of enunciating some guiding principles, such as the relation of wages to cost of living, for the determination of disputes in future.

The War Cabinet authorised—

Sir H. Walker to write to Mr. J. H. Thomas saying that further negotiations with the National Union of Railwaymen for increased wages will be suspended until the return of the Liverpool men to full work, but that on return to work of these men negotiations will be resumed. Sir Herbert Walker was authorised in that event to make a final offer of 6s. per week instead of 5s., and, if necessary, to date the increase back to the 1st November upon the understanding that no further demand for increased wages is to be made unless the cost of living substantially increases, and, in any event, not before March next.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 28, 1917.
SECRET.

WAR CABINET, 285.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, November 28, 1917, at 11 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minute 14).

Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 12).

The Right Hon. Lord Robert Cecil, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minutes 11 and 12).

Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1 to 12).


The Right Hon. R. E. Prothero, M.V.O., M.P., President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (for Minute 15).

The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minutes 14 and 15).

The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minute 13).

Sir David Shackleton, K.C.B., Ministry of Labour (for Minute 13).

Sir Auckland Geddes, K.C.B., Minister of National Service (for Minute 13).

Mr. E. H. Coles, Controller of Lands, War Office (for Minute 14).

The Right Hon. Lord Rhondda, Food Controller (for Minutes 14 and 15).

Mr. U. F. Wintour, C.B., C.M.G., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Food (for Minutes 14 and 15).

Sir Alan Anderson, K.B.E., Controller, Admiralty (for Minute 13).

Sir Lynden Macassey, K.B.E., K.C., Admiralty Shipyard Labour Department (for Minute 13).


Mr. F. G. Kellaway, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 13).

Mr. U. Wolff, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 13).


Mr. G. E. P. Murray, C.B., Secretary, General Post Office (for Minute 15).

Mr. J. F. Beale, Secretary, Wheat Commission (for Minute 15).

Mr. Andrew Uthwatt, Ministry of Food (for Minute 15).

Mr. I. F. Vivian, Ministry of Food (for Minute 15).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, O.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Colonel E. D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.
1. IN reference to War Cabinet 283, Minute 2, the Director of Military Operations reported that between the 20th and 27th November our infantry casualties had amounted to 15,953. The cavalry casualties so far reported were very light, but the exact totals had not been returned to the War Office. The wastage of horses from all causes was under 500. General Maurice estimated that the total casualties of all arms for the above period were probably about 18,000.

2. The Director of Military Operations stated that General Plumer had reported that, in conference with Generals Diaz and Fayolle, they had come to the conclusion that it would be impracticable for the British troops to operate in the mountains, owing to the fact that they were untrained in, and not equipped for, mountain warfare. It had been decided that the British should take over the Montello section, which was the key to the Piave position, whilst the French would take up their position on the Asolo section; one result of this would be that the British would be in the line before the French.

3. The Director of Military Operations explained that the situation in East Africa was now such as to allow a reduction in the British forces engaged in that theatre. As a result, certain troops would be withdrawn as soon as possible.

4. In reply to a question as to the situation of our forces in the neighbourhood of Passchendaele, to the effect that our position had been rendered very unfavourable owing to the fact that the Germans had withdrawn their long-range heavy guns to such a distance that they were placed to shell our front line trenches, the Director of Military Operations stated that the Germans had collected a mass of artillery against this section of our line. He did not consider that we were inferior in artillery, except possibly in these long-range guns, which were employed usually to shell the area behind the front line. In his opinion, the position of our front line troops was uncomfortable, for that line had not yet been fully established, but he considered that matters were worse for the Germans, since we held the high ground. It was possible that our troops might have to withdraw from one or two of the more exposed posts, but he was not afraid of an enemy attack on a large scale, owing to the boggy nature of the ground, which in this region never dried up in winter-time. In regard to long-range guns, it was the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief in France that these weapons were not nearly so efficacious against entrenched troops as howitzers, and it was for that reason that he had shown a preference for howitzers in his demands for artillery.

5. In reply to a question, the Director of Military Operations stated that by the 24th November the total of German prisoners captured in the Cambrai fighting had amounted to 8,574, but 700 or 800 had since been captured, bringing the total up to about 10,500.

6. The Director of Military Operations stated that there was no change in the situation in Palestine, and that General Allenby was facing the enemy while the relief of his divisions was being carried out and additional artillery was being brought up.
7. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that a seaplane from Portland had been lost, but that the pilot and passenger had been saved.

8. The Deputy First Sea Lord stated that it had been reported from Dunkirk that the transport "Boma" claimed to have sunk a German submarine, but that the report was unconfirmed.

9. In reference to War Cabinet 283, Minute 7, the Deputy First Sea Lord reported the position as to British Zeppelins to be as follows:

Completed, four, of which one was fit for training only and three fit for training and coastal work.

The first Zeppelin which may be fit for fleet work would not be ready until March 1918.

10. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that the Senior Naval Officer, Archangel, had telegraphed requesting that 4,000 tons of staple supplies might be sent to that port. Lord Milner, with the concurrence of the Admiralty, had telegraphed for further particulars on this point, and the Senior Naval Officer had explained that the stores were required for distribution amongst the Russians. He asked for the decision of the War Cabinet on the two following points:

(a.) Whether this relief ship should be despatched.
(b.) Whether the Admiralty were to purchase the stores in the open market through the Admiralty Contract Department.

The War Cabinet decided that:

The relief ship and stores should not be sent.

11. Lord Robert Cecil reported that he had recently been visited by the American Ambassador, who had stated that the American Government desired to give a guarantee to the Swiss Government that the neutrality of the latter would be respected by the Americans. Lord Robert Cecil did not understand the value of a guarantee on the part of the Americans alone, but thought that a guarantee on the part of the Allies, more particularly the French, might be reassuring to the Swiss. His opinion was that, so far as the War Cabinet was concerned, there would be no objection to the proposed guarantee being given by the Americans, but thought that the matter should be discussed at the Conference in Paris.

The War Cabinet decided that:

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should refer this matter to Mr. Balfour, with a view to its being brought forward for discussion at the Inter-Allied Conference in Paris.

12. The Director of Military Operations reported that General Barter, the head of the British Mission at Russian headquarters, had enquired what action he should take in the event of Lieutenant Krilenko succeeding in arranging an armistice or peace terms with the enemy.

It was pointed out that if the British Mission were to join the British Ambassador in Petrograd it would be going further away...
from General Kaledin, whom it was desired to encourage, while if it proceeded to Rumania it might be out of Russia at the moment when a sudden change might render its presence very desirable. It was also pointed out that if the British Mission joined General Kaledin, it would amount to a recognition of his party as the existing Government of the country.

The Director of Military Operations expressed the opinion that there should be uniformity of action by the Allied nations, and that the British Mission should carry out the same course as the other missions in Russia.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Director of Military Operations should refer the point for decision to the Inter-Allied Conference in Paris, explaining that the War Cabinet had not at its disposal sufficient information to enable them to come to a decision.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 283, Minute 9, the War Cabinet further considered the Memorandum by Mr. Barnes on the question of the co-ordination of Government Departments dealing with wages and trade disputes (Paper G.T.-2772).

Sir Auckland Geddes gave some illustrations of the evil effects of competition for labour among various Government Departments engaged on war work, and suggested that a two-tier organisation was necessary to deal with the confusion now prevailing, namely, a Committee of each trade, composed of representatives of employers and employed, for interior co-ordination, and, above it, a co-ordinating Committee, which might be formed by the Chairman of such trade committees, of which Mr. Barnes should be Chairman, to deal with the wages question as a whole. The Ministry of National Service had at present a Building Trade Committee, composed of men thoroughly familiar with the trade.

Mr. Kellaway said that there was a similar Committee attached to the Ministry of Munitions, but little notice was taken of such Committees by the Government Departments. He would view with alarm a Co-ordinating Committee composed of representatives of employers and employed. There was a probability they would combine to increase wages.

Sir Alan Anderson said it was important to encourage direct negotiation between employers and unions, and gave as an example a recent effort in this direction in the shipbuilding trade; he considered that then direct negotiations could be combined with the proposed co-ordinating Committee, but agreed that a safeguard was necessary to guard against the danger of an alliance between masters and workmen to put up wages. This danger might be averted either by bringing representatives of employers and employed to the central body or by providing from the central body a chairman for the trade conference.

Mr. Wolff pointed out that, since Section 7 of the Munitions Act had been abolished, the inducement to employers to resist advance of wages had disappeared, and the Ministry of Munitions was being overwhelmed with applications for advances, with a view to the retention of the labour now in their employ.

The War Cabinet requested—

Mr. Barnes, Mr. Roberts, and Sir Auckland Geddes, in consultation with the Departments concerned, to prepare a scheme in the light of that day's discussion, for submission to the Cabinet.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 244, Minute 1, and War Cabinet 247, Minute 6, the War Cabinet had before them the following documents:
It was explained that the Defence of the Realm Losses Commission was a body which assessed direct and actual loss for an *ex gratia* payment. Owing to some doubts expressed in the Courts, especially in the Shoreham Aerodrome case, petitions of right had been presented claiming compensation under the Lands Clauses Act for property commandeered under the Defence of the Realm Regulations. The object of the Bill prepared by the Secretary of State for War was to overcome the difficulty which had thus arisen, and, roughly speaking, give statutory recognition to the principle of assessment adopted by the Losses Commission, where the claimant undertakes to accept an *ex gratia* payment, and to pursue no other remedy.

The Solicitor-General said he saw no objection to the adoption of the principle on which the Losses Commission acted, but the Acquisition of Land Bill required some drafting amendments.

The War Cabinet approved the principle of the Bill, and requested the Law Officers to examine the draft in consultation with the Lord Chancellor, after which the Secretary of State for War was authorised to proceed with the Bill.

With reference to the Defence of the Realm (Beans, Peas and Pulse Orders) Bill, the Solicitor-General pointed out that there was nothing in the Bill as drafted to prevent the original consignee going to the Losses Commission and asking for compensation. If it was desired to take away the right to such an appeal, provision should be made in the Bill.

Lord Rhondda agreed that the Bill needed re-drafting in that respect and in some others. He explained that some 2,500,000£ was at stake.

Dr. Addison thought the main object of the Bill, viz., to penalise speculative dealing in necessities during war-time, was one which would meet with wide-spread support in the country and in the House of Commons.

The War Cabinet approved the principle of the Bill, and requested Lord Rhondda to have it re-drafted, in the light of the discussion which had taken place, for submission to the Law Officers.

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Compulsory Rationing.

15. The War Cabinet had under consideration a report (Paper G.-171) by the Food Controller on Compulsory Rationing and the Distribution of Essential Foods.

Lord Rhondda explained that he did not, at this stage, wish the War Cabinet to commit themselves to the policy of compulsory rationing, but only asked their permission to proceed with the organisation of the system that would be necessary to carry it out. A comprehensive system would require four months to develop and get ready for working, as officials would need to be trained and premises acquired for the establishment of approximately 10,000 local offices. The cost of the organisation would be several hundred thousand pounds, and the food situation might conceivably be such by next April that it might be possible to avoid rationing, in which case the organisation would be scrapped, unless it could be utilised for some other purpose. He was strongly opposed to rationing if it could possibly be avoided. Lord Rhondda added that he had
carefully studied the French system of rationing, and did not consider it at all satisfactory.

Mr. Illingworth stated that he had conferred with Lord Rhondda, and regretted that the organisation of the Post Office would not admit of any duties in connection with a rationing scheme being added to the already heavily pressed Post Office arrangements. Moreover, only a small proportion of the post offices were under his direct control. The payment of pensions, separation allowances, &c., had so greatly increased the work of the Post Office staffs that any additional duties might easily lead to a breakdown in the postal organisation.

The opinion was expressed that, if the scheme for compulsory rationing was prepared, it was possible that the rationing of essential foodstuffs would have to be brought into operation.

The War Cabinet held the view that, before acceding to the general proposal of the Food Controller, it was desirable that they should be furnished with more details as to the manner in which the scheme would be carried out, it being admitted that it could not be worked through the post offices.

The War Cabinet therefore requested—

The Food Controller to render a report setting out more fully the framework of his proposed system of rationing.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,

November 28, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 286.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, November 29, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.M.G., M.P.
The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.
Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations.
Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Sir A. C. Geddes, K.C.B., Minister of National Service (for Minute 10).
The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minute 10).
Sir David Shackleton, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour (for Minute 10).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Western Front.

1. THE Director of Military Operations reported that in the Cambrai theatre the Germans had, at the commencement of our offensive, 3 divisions. Since the commencement of the offensive they had brought up 10 further divisions. Of these 13 divisions 6 had been withdrawn, leaving 7 in the line. Sir Douglas Haig had engaged 10 of his divisions, and had withdrawn 2, leaving 8 in the line. Our divisions were stronger than the German divisions.

The Invasion of Italy.

2. The Director of Military Operations intimated that there were indications of an enemy attack on the River Piave at the point immediately south of the sector occupied by our troops. The enemy had thrown eleven bridges across different arms of the river, which in that neighbourhood form a number of islands. All enemy troops in the threatened area were Austrians.
Palestine.

3. The Director of Military Operations reported the receipt of a full summary of the situation to date from General Allenby. The latter estimated the Turkish forces opposed to him on the 31st October at 41,000 rifles and 300 guns. He estimated his subsequent captures at 10,000 prisoners and 80 guns, the number of enemy killed and wounded being probably about 15,000. In addition to these he had captured 20 aeroplanes and a great quantity of ammunition and stores. No enemy aircraft had been seen in the air for many days. His own position he estimated as follows: On 31st October he had 96,000 effectives, and he still had 78,000. The brunt of the work had fallen upon two mounted divisions and upon two infantry divisions, viz., the 52nd and the 75th. The latter two required a rest, and were now being relieved by other divisions. These were in excellent order, with the exception of a division which had recently arrived from Salonica, in which malaria was somewhat prevalent. The railway communication with Egypt now extended to a point 10 miles north of Gaza, and was being pushed on. Supplies were being landed at the mouth of the Wadi Sukeir. Among the captures from the enemy were six locomotives and a number of waggons. The main remaining enemy force was concentrated in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and, owing to his great superiority in numbers, material, and aeroplanes, General Allenby would shortly be in a position to deal with them. Should he prove successful in capturing Jerusalem he would be able to take up a strong line somewhat to the north of it, between the Jordan and the sea, which would have the advantage of having a lateral railway in its rear, viz., the Jaffa–Jerusalem Railway, which could be easily and quickly repaired.

Questioned regarding enemy reinforcements, General Maurice stated that it was estimated that there were in the vicinity of Aleppo one weak German division and two weak Turkish divisions. One other weak German division was believed to be now moving to Nablus. The General Staff calculated that it would take from fourteen to sixteen days to move a Turkish division from Aleppo to Nablus, from which point they would have to march south. It was stated that the Turkish forces lately at Hebron had retired on Jerusalem. Arrangements had been made for Arab co-operation in blowing up portions of the Hedjaz Railway east of the Jordan, and also between Aleppo and Damascus. Nearly all the tribes were co-operating, but there appeared little prospect of the Druses coming to our assistance until the British advance had reached a more northerly point.

It was pointed out that, judging by experience in other theatres of the war, General Allenby's superiority in the air should prove a valuable adjunct in embarrassing a retiring Turkish army by engaging them from a low elevation whilst they were on the move on their coastal line.

General Maurice stated that he gathered that General Allenby had been making full use of this arm, but that the highlands of Judea and Samaria were of such a nature that it was extremely difficult to find landing grounds. General Allenby had all the aeroplanes he had asked for, and no further demands had been made.

East Africa.

4. The Director of Military Operations drew the attention of the War Cabinet to the published communiqué in that morning's press; since then a further success had been reported, and the only enemy forces now in the field in this theatre were 2,000 men under von Lettow, now on the Portuguese frontier.

Shipping Losses.

5. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that there had been heavy losses at sea by the action of enemy submarines between noon 27th and noon 28th instant. 20,932 British and 12,055 Allied tons of shipping had been sunk; and 10,682 tons of British shipping damaged by torpedo, but it was hoped the latter could be repaired.
Naval Co-operation in Palestine.

6. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that H.M.S. “Lizard” had fired at a party of Turks from the shore to the north of Jaffa.

Russia.

7. The War Cabinet had before them a number of telegrams from Petrograd and Jassy, including the following:

No. 1874 from Sir G. Buchanan, dated 26th November.

7878

" 1878 "  " 27th "

" 1881 "  " 27th "

" 706 "  " 27th "

" 710 "  " 27th "

" 711 " the military attaché at Jassy, dated 27th November.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that, apart from the large issues of policy raised in these telegrams, there were two minor questions which could be separately dealt with. The first was the demand put forward by M. Trotsky for the release of Chichirin and Petroff, who are interned in this country, and the virtual threat of reprisals against British subjects in Russia should the two agitators not be released. To release them at Trotsky’s bidding would greatly add to his prestige, and would be tantamount to a recognition of his Government. The second question was the complaint made by Sir G. Buchanan that General Barter had put the Ambassador in a very embarrassing position by the threat of “serious consequences,” which accompanied the note to the Commander-in-Chief protesting against Russia’s infraction of the 1914 Agreement.

The Director of Military Operations said that probably General Barter was influenced by the fact that M. Clemenceau had wired to the Head of the French Mission telling him to take energetic action, and adding that the Commander-in-Chief would be supported in any action he took against Petrograd.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) No notice should be taken of M. Trotsky’s request to release Chichirin and Petroff.

(b.) The Secretary of State for War should enquire into the complaint against General Barter, and that a suitable telegram should be sent to Sir G. Buchanan.

The War Cabinet next considered the general Russian situation, especially as set forth in telegrams Nos. 1878 and 1881 from Petrograd and No. 711 from Jassy. M. Trotsky had issued to the Military Attachés of Allied Powers, on 27th November, a note stating that he and his supporters were endeavouring to bring about a general and not a separate armistice, but that they might be driven to a separate armistice by the Allies if they refused to negotiate. If the Allied Governments would not recognise the Bolshevists the latter would appeal to the peoples as against their Governments. Sir G. Buchanan urged that a reply should be issued immediately to this “insolent communication,” pointing out that Trotsky’s proposal for a general armistice reached the British Embassy nineteen hours after the Commander-in-Chief had opened pourparlers with the enemy, and that the Allies were determined to continue the war until a permanent peace had been obtained. Sir G. Buchanan further urged the Government that, as the situation was now desperate, it was advisable to ask Russia free from her agreement with the Allies, so that she could act as she chose, and decide to purchase peace on Germany’s terms or fight on with the Allies. The policy of the Bolshevists was to divide Russia and Britain, and so pave the way for what would virtually be a German protectorate over the former. The course he recommended, if adopted, would make it impossible for the Bolshevists to reproach the Allies with
The War Cabinet were informed that a message had been stopped by the Press Bureau from Trotsky, addressed to the Ambassadors of Norway, Holland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Denmark, asking that pressure should be brought to bear by the Socialist and working-class organisations in those countries in favour of peace.

Lord Robert Cecil said it was important that the Cabinet should arrive at a decision at the earliest possible moment on the questions raised in the above telegrams. Kaledin was in command of the resources of Russia, and if he and his Cossacks could be united against the Germans, supplies would thereby be prevented from reaching the enemy. There was no evidence to show that the Bolsheviks had anything like general support throughout Russia. There was reason for thinking that the peasants were against the Bolsheviks. Kaledin had with him Alexieff, and possibly Savinkoff and Rodzianko. The one man with an organised force was Kaledin, and, as Chief of the Cossacks, he had great prestige. He (Lord Robert Cecil) would send General Ballard to Kaledin, and, if he found Kaledin genuinely in favour of the Allies, General Ballard should be authorised to take what steps he deemed wise, and to incur expenditure up to 10,000,000.

Some members of the War Cabinet were impressed with the objections to the policy of entering into active co-operation with Kaledin without further information. Steps had been taken to obtain such information, but it had not yet been received. Little was definitely known of Kaledin's personality, and there were signs that the Cossacks were not prepared to fight. The scheme, on General Ballard's admission, was not one which could be regarded as hopeful, and its only result might be to drive the Russian Government definitely into the arms of Germany. If we waited for a short time we should learn the terms offered by Germany, and these might open the eyes of the Russian people to what a German peace really meant.

Alternative courses open were to follow Sir G. Buchanan's advice or to wait a little longer in the hope that the situation would subsequently become clearer. In any case, the subject was one which should be referred to the conference now meeting in Paris.

Attention was called to the position of the Roumanian army, and some members thought there was less objection to securing the support of Kaledin for the Roumanian Army than for an open expedition against the Bolsheviks. Against the policy of drift, it was urged that for the past eight months we had sedulously refrained from intervening in the policy of the Russian Government, and we were now confronted with the fact that the Russians were negotiating with the German Government. It had also to be remembered that Kaledin had no information as to what were our views on the Russian situation.

It was generally agreed that, if Kaledin were approached, two Missions would not be required. General Ballard and a French representative should suffice.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should send a message to Paris calling the attention of the Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, and Lord Milner to the telegrams referred to above, and should add that the members of the War Cabinet in London were divided in opinion as
to the immediate steps to be taken, some being in favour of authorising General Ballard to proceed on the lines indicated by him, others being in favour of waiting until further information was received.

8. Sir Edward Carson called attention to a number of wireless messages from Russia—chiefly Bolshevik propaganda—which had been received by the Press Bureau, the publication of which he had temporarily stopped. He read examples of the messages, and also the following extract from a letter which had been received from Sir Frank Swettenham:

"The whole question of censoring or stopping such press messages as are now coming to this office in regard to Russian affairs is so full of difficulty that there appears to be only one way to deal with it, and that is to authorise us to pass, stop, or censor all such messages at our discretion, without regard to existing instructions that cablegrams dealing with foreign affairs are to be passed to the addressees uncensored. If this is done, we think it would be necessary to make some public announcement on the subject, though what constitutes 'foreign affairs' in this connection is almost impossible to determine. The alternative to this course is to pass everything of the kind which comes from a press correspondent and cannot be dealt with on grounds other than those of foreign affairs."

Sir Edward Carson explained that some of the messages were appeals to the people as against their Governments, and were in many respects of a violent character. He had discussed the question with Mr. Balfour and Lord Milner before their departure for Paris, and they were against publication.

Lord Robert Cecil said that in the autumn of 1915 he had obtained authority to remove the censorship on Foreign Office matters, with certain exceptions, such as, e.g., a telegram going through this country for a foreign country. In his view the policy had justified itself, and it was better to throw the onus on to the press and let them risk prosecution under the Defence of the Realm Act. He would allow the publication of these propagandist messages, for, if withheld now, they would leak out later and the Government would be blamed for suppressing them.

Against this view it was urged that the messages were propaganda from a Government which was not recognised by us or the Allies. A further reason for stopping publication was the Conference now meeting at Paris.

It was reported that complaints had been received from some of the newspapers that they were only allowed to see mutilated copies of some of their telegrams.

The War Cabinet decided that—

For the present the messages above referred to should not be published, and that the Press Bureau should be allowed to show the messages to the newspapers to which they were addressed, at their discretion.
9. With reference to War Cabinet 276, Minute 3, and Paper W.P. 67, the latter being a record of the proceedings of a Meeting of the Army Council held on the 19th November, 1917, relative to the relations between the Army Council and the British Permanent Military Representative, the War Cabinet directed—

The Secretary to inform the Army Council that the War Cabinet had taken note of the Minute in question of the Army Council and of their desire to co-operate cordially in the development of the work of the Supreme War Council with a view to better co-ordination of effort in the conduct of the war, and that the War Cabinet feels assured that, with this co-operation, the new machinery can be made to work successfully in spite of the difficulties referred to by the Army Council.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 285, Minute 13, Mr. Barnes informed the War Cabinet that a meeting had been held on the previous evening in accordance with the War Cabinet decision, at which Sir Auckland Geddes' proposal had been thoroughly discussed, and that, although it was admitted that theoretically it might be a better scheme, the Committee did not consider that it would be practical in its working. He added that many of the trades were not organised sufficiently to carry out the scheme on the lines proposed by the Minister of National Service, and that the Committee felt that for all practical purposes the scheme as set out in Paper G.T.-2772 was the only one that they could recommend for adoption. Certain minor amendments had been made in the scheme as considered by the War Cabinet on the 28th November, and the Committee wished Sir Auckland Geddes to be added to the Co-ordinating Committee, and that Mr. Guy Calthrop should take the place of Sir Richard Redmayne. The Committee further proposed to arm themselves with power to appoint an adviser from each trade to advise the Co-ordinating Committee as might be requisite during the preliminaries of any dispute. Mr. Barnes pointed out that certain Departments had been added, with a view to representatives being appointed from them to sit on the Consultative Committee, and that the point for the Co-ordinating Committee to aim at was to obtain representatives who should not act strictly as representatives of the Departments to which they belonged, but that they should give the Committee the benefit of their knowledge of the conditions under discussion, acting in a judicial capacity rather than as members representative of Departments advocating their own case.

Sir Auckland Geddes expressed the view that to have an official so acting would put the latter in an impossible position, as he would be sitting in judgment on the Head of his own Department, from whom he must naturally receive his instructions.

As against this, Mr. Barnes strongly pointed out that it was highly desirable for the efficient working of the Co-ordinating Committee that the actual views of the experts should be obtained, and not the views of the Departments as indicating departmental policy.

Sir David Shackleton pointed out that the proposals set out in Paper G.T.-2772 were agreed to by the whole of the Departments concerned.

Sir Auckland Geddes stated that, as it was now the duty of the Ministry of National Service to adjudicate in all cases of labour supply, he thought it desirable, in order that he might also be in an independent position, that he should not sit as a member of the Co-ordinating Committee, and suggested that someone else might be appointed instead. He further suggested that the representa-
tives of the big spending Departments might be appointed not as members of the Committee proper, but as assessors.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The scheme for co-ordination, as set out in Paper G.T.-2772, should be adopted as amended, and expressed the hope that Sir Auckland Geddes would find time to sit as Vice-Chairman of the Co-ordinating Committee.

Further, that the War Cabinet wished it to be understood that representatives of Departments on the Co-ordinating Committee would act in a judicial capacity and not merely as representatives of their administrative Departments.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 29, 1917.
9. With reference to War Cabinet 276, Minute 3, and Paper W.P. 67, the latter being a record of the proceedings of a Meeting of the Army Council held on the 10th November, 1917, relative to the relations between the Army Council and the British Permanent Military Representative, the War Cabinet directed—

The Secretary to inform the Army Council that the War Cabinet had taken note of the Minute in question of the Army Council and of their desire to co-operate cordially in the development of the work of the Supreme War Council with a view to better co-ordination of effort in the conduct of the war, and that the War Cabinet feels assured that, with this co-operation, the new machinery can be made to work successfully in spite of the difficulties referred to by the Army Council.

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2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
November 29, 1917.
WARS MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WAR CABINET HELD IN THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER'S ROOM AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1917, AT 6.15 P.M.

PRESENT:


The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Major-General A. S. Collard, C.B., Admiralty Controller's Department.

Sir Alan G. Anderson, K.B.E., Controller, Admiralty.

Sir Lynden MacAssey, K.C., K.B.E., Admiralty Shipyard Labour Department.

Sir E. Wyldborne Smith, Chairman, Commission internationale de Ravitaillement.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.


Philip Lloyd Graeme, Esq., Ministry of National Service.

The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour.

Sir A. Norman Hill, Port and Transit Executive Committee, Ministry of Shipping.


U. Wolff, Esq., Ministry of Munitions.

F. G. Kellaway, Esq., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.
Recruitment and Organisation of Women Enrolled for Work of National Importance.

1. SIR AUCKLAND GEDDES drew the attention of the War Cabinet to his Memorandum (Paper G.T.-2583), dated the 12th November, 1917, regarding the want of co-ordination which existed in regard to the recruitment and organisation of women enrolled for work of national importance, and of the lack of uniformity in rates of pay and other conditions which are offered to such women. He suggested that the Ministry of National Service should be empowered by the Cabinet to include in its functions the recruitment and organisation of women for all such corps and organisations as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Voluntary Aid Detachments, the Women's Volunteer Reserve, the Women's Emergency Corps, the Women's Reserve Ambulance, the Women's Organisation in the Air Force, the Army and Navy Canteen Board, the Women's Legion, and the Munitions Canteen. He pointed out that at present all these organisations were competing, and that it was essential that some sort of priority should be established.

The Adjutant-General agreed with the proposal made by the Minister of National Service, and added that, from his experience, he thought that the wage question was a most difficult one, and would require co-ordination as well as the functions of recruitment and organisation.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Minister of National Service should be responsible for controlling the recruiting of all women for work of national importance, and that the co-ordination required in connection with wages to be paid to such women should be referred to the Co-ordinating Committee established by War Cabinet 286, Minute 10.

2. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to a Memorandum by Sir Lynden Macassey (Paper G.T.-2627) regarding the position of War Munition Volunteers in Admiralty establishments.

Sir Auckland Geddes urged the importance of maintaining the principle that there should be only one Government Department responsible for labour supply. He had accordingly communicated with the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Minister of Munitions, with a view to arranging a *modus vivendi* in regard to War Munition Volunteers. He had no desire to take over in detail the whole administration of War Munition Volunteers, but it was essential that he should be in a position to know where labour was being used to its fullest degree of effectiveness, where there was wastage, and where there were possibilities of dilution or transfer. He read to the Cabinet a Joint Memorandum drawn up by Mr. Churchill and himself, giving effect to these principles (Paper G.T.-2804) (Appendix).

Sir Lynden Macasssey objected to the proposals contained in this Joint Memorandum by the Minister of Munitions and the Minister of National Service, on the ground that it really left the control of all War Munition Volunteers, including those engaged on Admiralty work, in the hands of the Ministry of Munitions, which was a Department competing for labour with the Admiralty. He desired that the Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions should be placed upon a footing of equality, and that the Minister of National Service should control all the War Munition Volunteers. He was apprehensive lest an agreement between the Minister of Munitions and the Minister of National Service would be interpreted in practice to the detriment of the Admiralty.

Sir Alan Anderson explained that, so far as shipbuilding was concerned, his Department were newcomers into the field as regards labour requirements, the great mass of available labour being already at the disposal of other Government Departments.
He looked to the Minister of National Service to provide his urgent requirements for shipbuilding.

Mr. Kellaway stated that the Ministry of Munitions were quite prepared to submit to equality of treatment with the Admiralty.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Admiralty were to have sole power of assignment of, and control over, War Munition Volunteers in Admiralty firms, and the Ministry of Munitions the same power over War Munition Volunteers in firms other than Admiralty firms.

In cases where War Munition Volunteers are engaged on work for the Ministry of Munitions in Admiralty firms, the Admiralty will not transfer such men from that work without the consent of the Ministry of Munitions; and in the same way, where War Munition Volunteers are engaged upon work for the Admiralty in firms other than Admiralty firms, the Ministry of Munitions will not transfer such men from that work without the consent of the Admiralty.

(b.) Notwithstanding the provisions of any agreement to the contrary, the Minister of National Service shall have the power of ordering the transfer of any War Munition Volunteer from any firm or any work to any other firm or any other work, through the machinery of the National Labour Priority Committee.

(c.) For the purpose of securing the necessary supervision and control, a small expert staff drawn from the existing staffs of the Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions will be attached to the Ministry of National Service; and duplicates of all dilution reports will be supplied to the Ministry of National Service.

(d.) The Minister of National Service should be asked to submit a draft embodying the above decisions, in reply to a joint letter from the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation and Shipyard Trades Union Standing Committee and Boilermakers' Society, dated the 14th November, 1917, and addressed to the Prime Minister (Paper G.T.—2697).

3. The War Cabinet had before them two Memoranda by the Minister of National Service (Paper G.T.—2307 and Paper G.T.—2444), and Memoranda by Sir Norman Hill (Paper G.T.—2507), by the Minister of Munitions (Paper G.T.—2625), and by the Admiralty (Paper G.T.—2637).

Sir Auckland Geddes stated that at the present time there were a large number of men technically in the Army, and wearing uniform, who were of no military value, and were not part of the Home Defence Force or of draft-finding units. He thought that it should be a recognised principle that men should henceforth only be taken for the Army for strictly military work. Recruiting for the Army was being prejudiced by the freedom with which military labour was being used for civil and industrial purposes, such as agriculture and dock work. He did not suggest any immediate disbandment of the Agricultural Companies or the Transport Workers' Battalions, but he suggested that recruiting for such should cease, and that a gradual disbandment should take place.

Lord Derby agreed with Sir Auckland Geddes that nothing was more detrimental to the Army than the keeping on the books of the Army of men of no military value. The present system could be but thinly-disguised industrial compulsion. It made the Army unpopular in certain quarters, and it was conducive to industrial unrest, as well as opposed to the spirit of all the pledges given by
Ministers in the past. However, he recognised the great importance of maintaining agricultural work, and he feared that if the men now in the Agricultural Companies were set free they would leave agriculture and enter munition works, where wages were so much higher and conditions so much easier.

Sir Norman Hill stated that, as far as the Transport Workers' Battalions were concerned, he thought that the fears and anxieties expressed by Sir Auckland Geddes and Lord Derby were somewhat exaggerated. As far as such battalions were concerned, he did not think it was true to say that they had no military value; 70 per cent. of the men had gone through their full training as soldiers before transfer to the Transport Workers' Battalions. A proportion of the men were engaged upon transport work, while a further proportion were engaged in training as Infantry. If there were a larger number of men in the Transport Workers' Battalions, a greater proportion could be retained at headquarters and thus their efficiency as soldiers could be fully maintained. They could then do a month in training and a month on transport work alternately. They were engaged on very heavy work, such as the handling of iron ore cargoes, and whenever they worked in a port they were paid the full civilian rate of pay, and out of this they paid for their own billets, so that there was no question of unfair competition between military and civilian labour as far as these battalions were concerned. In his experience there had been no trouble with these battalions from an industrial point of view, and the Inspecting Officers had reported favourably upon their military usefulness.

Sir Alan Anderson stated that it was very difficult to draw a line between the kind of work upon which military labour could be employed and that upon which it could not be properly employed. He instanced the fact that the construction of aerodromes, both in this country and in France, was considered suitable for military labour. If this was suitable, he thought that the construction of new slips in shipyards, especially those upon which German prisoners of war were being employed, was equally suitable. These new yards were in remote places, most of them distant from industrial centres where labour troubles might ensue.

Mr. Kellaway stated that officials in the Ministry of Munitions were most apprehensive regarding the delivery of steel if anything were done to interfere with the Transport Workers' Battalions. It was urged that it was most desirable that soldiers retained in this country for purposes of home defence should be employed part of their time on work of urgent national importance. Sir Nevil Macready said that this was a point upon which Field-Marshal Lord French would have to be consulted. He very much feared that, if men of the Home Defence Force were scattered all over the country upon civil work, their mobilisation in case of a raid upon the East Coast would take so long as to render them useless from Lord French's point of view.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to consult with Field-Marshal Lord French and the Minister of National Service, with a view to producing a scheme for the employment on civilian work of men in the Army at home,

and further requested

Lord Derby to consider the suggested increase in the number of men in Transport Workers' Battalions, with a view to a larger proportion being kept in training as soldiers, and to report.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1,
November 30, 1917.
APPENDIX.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SERVICE AND CONTROL OF LABOUR.

Joint Memorandum by the Minister of Munition and the Minister of National Service.

WE have carefully considered the Memoranda G.T.-2627 and G.T.-2697, the first submitted by Sir Lyden Macassey, and the second by the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation, the Shipyard Trades Unions Standing Joint Committee, and the Boilermakers' Society.

The latter propose that on all matters connected with the demand and supply of labour in shipyards the Ministry of National Service should have full and sole control. It is justly pointed out later in this memorandum that such a proposal cannot be confined to the shipyard industry, but would necessarily have to be extended to other industries under the control of Government Departments.

The general principles underlying this memorandum are the same as those upon which the War Cabinet based the functions of the Ministry of National Service. It is the function of that Ministry to review the man-power of the country; to advise the War Cabinet on questions of man-power; and, subject to the directions of the War Cabinet, to allocate man-power to meet the needs of the armed forces and the industrial demands of Government Departments; to ensure that such Departments are using their labour to the best advantage; and to secure the economical apportionment of labour, both such as can be made available by internal adjustments within the Departments themselves and such as can be obtained from external sources, in such a way as to maintain the output of the most essential industries and the efficiency of essential public services.

There is no difference as to the object which all parties are seeking to attain; the question is how this object can be attained most expeditiously, without unnecessary duplication of machinery, and in such a way as to secure the most cordial co-operation of employers and workmen.

It is suggested in the shipbuilders' memorandum that, in order to vest in the Ministry of National Service the necessary power of review and general supervision and co-ordination, it will be necessary to transfer to the Ministry of National Service complete control of labour supply and demand. Such a transfer would, we think, necessarily involve the transfer of responsibility for dilution from the Government Departments concerned to the Ministry of National Service, i.e., the actual arrangement of dilution in each particular case. We do not think that it is possible to separate dilution from supply. The most effective way of securing dilution is to say to a firm: "Unless you dilute you shall not have contracts." Only the supply branches can do that. Only the supply branches can estimate the effect of dilution upon output. Further, such a transfer would lead to duplication of machinery because it would be necessary to attach something in the nature of a Labour Branch to the supply branches of Government Departments.

We are satisfied that the general purpose can be attained without so drastic and hazardous a change by strengthening the Labour Supply Department of the Ministry of National Service and the National Labour Priority Committee in the following manner:

(a) Duplicates of all Dilution Reports should be sent direct to the Ministry of National Service.

(b) A small skilled staff should be attached to the Ministry of National Service, selected from the existing dilution staffs of other Government Departments. Such a staff would be in a position, by reason of their expert knowledge and previous experience, to review the Dilution Reports and, in special cases where necessary, to make independent investigations and inspections.

This proposal would, we think, give the Ministry of National Service the necessary power of review and control without loading it with a mass of detailed administration, which would necessitate a very large increase of staff, and a duplication of staff in the Supply Branches of other Departments.

Whenever a demand was put forward in respect of a particular firm, the expert staff would review the Dilution Report, if one existed; or, if the firm had not been diluted, would immediately make investigations as to why dilution had not been
undertaken, and how far dilution was possible. The Ministry of National Service would thus be able to satisfy itself that Government Departments are carrying out all possible internal adjustments, and the fullest extent of dilution practically possible; and the Ministry would be able to review the activities of Government Departments not only when they are applicants for further reinforcements of labour, but also generally, so as to see whether a Department is failing to bring into the common pool labour which should be made available if the necessary internal adjustments and dilution were carried out.

The Ministry of Munitions are prepared to assist the Ministry of National Service by supplying part of the expert staff; and we have no doubt that the Admiralty will be willing in the general interest to adopt a similar course.

We think that the foregoing considerations dispose of the proposal that the administration of War Munitions Volunteers should be transferred to the Ministry of National Service. So far as such Volunteers are employed on Ministry of Munitions work, no useful purpose would be served by a transfer. The Ministry of Munitions are able to arrange a large amount of internal adjustment by shifting War Munitions Volunteers from firms with less urgent contracts to firms with more urgent contracts, and they alone have sufficient detailed knowledge of each particular firm to do this effectively. The Minister of National Service is satisfied that the Ministry of Munitions are carrying out these adjustments in a satisfactory manner, as is proved by the large number of transfers which have been made internally to aircraft construction.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to transfer the administration of the minority of War Munitions Volunteers employed on Admiralty work, and even if it were possible, we do not think that it would be expedient. The internal adjustments can best be performed by the Admiralty, and so far as War Munitions Volunteers become available for the common pool of labour they are disposed of under the instructions issued by the National Labour Priority Committee, upon which all the Departments interested in labour are represented, whether they come from the Ministry of Munitions or the Admiralty.

Further, when the Ministry of National Service has been strengthened by the addition of an expert staff to review the Dilution Reports, and to make independent investigations, that Ministry will be in a position to decide whether larger numbers of War Munitions Volunteers now employed on Ministry of Munitions or Admiralty work can be brought into the common pool, and will thus be able effectively to exercise that measure of control which Sir Lynden Macassey and the other writers desire. Disputed cases will be referred to the National Labour Priority Committee as provided for in the agreements between the Ministry of National Service and other Government Departments.

The fact that War Work Volunteers are enrolled and administered by the Minister of National Service does not afford either a logical or a direct reason for transferring the administration of War Munition Volunteers. War Work Volunteers are enrolled for work of national importance for any Government Department; they are a new creation enrolled to meet specific demands as and when the need arises, and it is obviously convenient that their administration should be under the control of a single Department, and that that Department should be the Ministry of National Service, which has enrolled and allocated them to specific demands, and which will, on the conclusion of such work, again endeavour to secure the allocation of their services.

A. C. GEDDES.

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

November 29, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 288.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, November 30, 1917, at 3:30 P.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.
The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 8).
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 16).
Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 6).
The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minutes 14 to 17).
Mr. T. W. Phillips, Assistant Director, Employment Department (for Minutes 14 to 17).

Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1 to 6).
Mr. F. G. Kellaway, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minutes 16 and 17).
Colonel F. J. Byrne, C.M.G., Secretary, Committee on Russian Supplies (for Minutes 9 to 13).

The Western Front. 1. The Director of Military Operations reported that there was no change in France and Flanders.

Transfer of German Divisions 2. The Director of Military Operations stated that the Germans had moved one more division to the Italian front, making a total altogether of eight divisions in that quarter. This division had come from the Carpathians, and was taking up its position opposite the British sector. Since October, three
German divisions had been sent to the Eastern front, which had just arrived. There was, therefore, no change on balance between the Eastern and Western fronts, the figures being as follows:

- 150 divisions on the Western front.
- 79 divisions on the Eastern front.
- 8 divisions on the Italian front.
- 3 divisions in the Balkans.
- 2 special divisions in Asia Minor.

3. The Director of Military Operations stated that General Allenby had reported some demonstrations on the part of the enemy, and one serious attack which was easily repulsed by one of the British divisions which had just reached the front. The British had carried out a successful raid on a Turkish post, killing 50 out of a garrison of 100. A squadron of five hostile aeroplanes had now appeared on this front, one of which had already been driven down by us. The Director of Military Operations stated also the date by which the relief of troops on this front would be complete.

4. The Deputy First Sea Lord stated that, according to a report from Dunkirk, two enemy aeroplanes had been shot down by us on the coast.

5. The Deputy First Sea Lord stated that the "Linhope" had reported engaging a hostile submarine, which was believed to have been sunk.

6. In reference to War Cabinet 286, Minute 7 (a), Lord Robert Cecil stated that he had telegraphed to Petrograd in the sense of the War Cabinet decision as to the release of Tchitchirine and Petroff. The Director of Military Operations read a telegram which the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had despatched to General Barter in compliance with the decision of the War Cabinet conveyed in War Cabinet 286, Minute 7 (b). It was pointed out that, if the British Government were to give way to the demands of M. Trotzki, it would not by any means ensure that the British residents would be allowed to leave Russia in return, and that to give way to these demands, which were in reality due to a German plan to force Russia to do something irrevocable, would form but a precedent for further demands of the same nature.

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs undertook to obtain the latest particulars of the situation in Russia and the reasons for the detention of these men by Monday, December 3rd.

7. It was brought to the notice of the War Cabinet that there were certain delays and some inconvenience attending the existing system of circulation of telegrams to the members of the War Cabinet. In regard to those from the Foreign Office, this applied to the telegrams on what was known as the "Special Distribution List." The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs undertook that "Special Distribution" telegrams circulated by the Foreign Office should be placed in envelopes inside a Cabinet box, and sent to individual members of the War Cabinet for retention.
In regard to the War Office telegrams containing important military information circulated to the War Cabinet—

The Secretary of State for War undertook to expedite the circulation, so that all the members of the War Cabinet should receive their copies at the same time as the Prime Minister received his copy.

Censorship.

8. Referring to a report in the "Times," of the 30th November, 1917, of a speech by the German Chancellor, in which allusion was made to a wireless telegram sent out by M. Trotzki from Tsarskoe Selo, Sir Edward Carson explained that the Director of the Press Bureau had stopped a large number of telegrams in this strain. One of these (Message Y 5192/29 670 W 18 23 40, addressed to Reuter, London), contained the full text of the manifesto to all the belligerents, signed by Trotzki and Lenin, and the Director of the Press Bureau wished for instructions as to whether this message should be held up or allowed to be published.

The War Cabinet decided that—

This message from Petrograd should not be published until further instructions on the subject were issued by the War Cabinet.

Russia:

9. Sir Edward Carson, acting for Lord Milner, brought before the War Cabinet for decision the following points in regard to supplies for Russia and Roumania. The first point was the course which, in the circumstances, was to be pursued in regard to the current manufacture of munitions of war of every nature (including the machinery for the manufacture) now being, carried out in this country. Sir Edward Carson pointed out the large amount of labour which was being monopolised by this work, which would probably be entirely wasted.

It was generally agreed that, while to send any munitions of war to Russia in the present state of affairs would be inadvisable, good results in the direction of propaganda showing the friendly feeling in this country, might follow if other stores, such as clothing, boots, &c., of which the Russians were sorely in need, were allowed to proceed to that country.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The manufacture of all munitions for Russia, and the machinery for making munitions, should be suspended until further orders.

In applying this ruling, the Ministers concerned should exercise their discretion so as to avoid causing undue dislocation in the trades concerned.

(b.) All warlike stores for Russia at present under manufacture in this country, or manufactured in the United States on British credits, might be converted to the use of British and Allied Governments.

(c.) In regard to clothing, boots and other equipment of a non-warlike nature for Russia, the War Cabinet decided that—

The despatch of such articles should be continued.

10. Sir Edward Carson also referred to the point as to whether two Russian ships, now in a British port, laden with munitions and other stores which had been handed over to the Russian Authorities in England and were therefore the property
of the Russian Government, should be allowed to proceed to Russia.

The War Cabinet decided that—

These ships should be unloaded and their cargoes of munitions treated as detailed in decision 9. (b) above.

11. Sir Edward Carson further reported that there were three ships, two American and one Russian, laden with warlike stores, the property of the Russian Government, manufactured in America, now on their way from the United States to Russia, and asked for a decision on the subject of their treatment.

The War Cabinet decided that—

These ships should be intercepted, if possible, and their cargoes of warlike stores treated in the manner described in decision 9. (b) above.

12. The War Cabinet decided that—

The despatch of munitions of war to Roumania through Russia, including the 36 6-inch howitzers recently allotted, should be suspended, and that any such stores as could be made use of by the British or Allied Governments might be diverted for that purpose.

The despatch of non-warlike stores to continue in the same manner as for Russia.

13. The War Cabinet decided that—

It was desirable that the Head of the Russian Government Committee now in England should be informed of these decisions by Lord Milner’s Committee on Russian Supplies.

14. The War Cabinet had under consideration the question of the strike in the aeroplane industry at Coventry, which was seriously affecting the output of aeroplanes, and, if continued, would mean a possible decrease in the output, which was already backward, of 500 machines in April, 1918. The gravity of the threatened situation was emphasized, and it was suggested that the best way to deal with the situation was by a personal appeal on patriotic grounds by the right man, who in this case appeared to be General Smuts.

General Smuts undertook to keep in touch with Mr. Barnes, who was to interview some members of the Unions concerned on the following morning, and, if advisable, to go to Coventry as soon as necessary to address a meeting of the strikers on patriotic lines.

15. In reference to War Cabinet 286, Minute 10, the War Cabinet had before them a letter from Sir George Askwith, who requested to be relieved from his duties on the Co-ordination Committee for Labour Disputes, on the ground that he had first been appointed as Vice-Chairman and had since been superseded in that position.

Mr. G. H. Roberts explained that he had seen Sir George Askwith on this matter, but had been quite unable to move him from his determination to resign his post.

The War Cabinet decided that—

As Sir George Askwith was a Civil Servant, a definite order to continue to serve on the Labour Disputes Co-ordina-
16. With reference to War Cabinet No. 191, Minute 4, the War Cabinet had before them a draft of the National Insurance (Part II) (Amendment) Bill, together with a Memorandum thereon (G.T.-2766).

The Minister of Labour explained the provisions of the Bill. In view of protests which had been received from certain trades against their inclusion in the National Insurance (Part II) (Munition Works) Act, 1916, power had been taken in the present Bill to exclude certain specified trades. Experience had shown that certain trades had already made satisfactory provision against unemployment, and wished to contract out. Under the National Insurance Act, 1911, the amount of benefit that may be paid is limited to one week for every five contributions. Clause 2 of the present Bill empowers the Minister of Labour to vary this proportion.

Mr. Roberts thought that there was hardly likely to be any opposition to the Bill in the House of Commons. The Treasury had offered no objection to it.

The War Cabinet decided—

To approve the Bill and authorise the Minister of Labour to proceed with it.

17. With reference to War Cabinet No. 193, Minute 1, the War Cabinet had before them the following documents:—

Memorandum by the Minister of Munitions on "the question of making the Munitions of War Acts binding upon the Crown." (G.T.-1449.)


Memorandum by Dr. Addison. (G.T.-2691.)

Report of Conference held 24th November. (G.T.-2797.)

It was explained that the present position of the Royal Arsenals and Dockyards stood in the way of the co-ordination of the Government Departments dealing with Labour. When the last Munitions of War Bill was in Committee in the Commons, an Amendment was moved by Mr. Hohler in favour of extending the provisions of the Munitions of War Acts to the Royal Dockyards and all Government Departments where munitions of war are manufactured. The Amendment was withdrawn on the Government promising to consider the proposal before introducing the next Munitions of War Bill. The War Cabinet had, therefore, to decide whether they would anticipate the Amendment, which would certainly be put forward in the House of Commons. The Admiralty did not wish to anticipate the amendment, as they found already that the present arrangements worked satisfactorily. On the other hand it was stated that the Labour Party would undoubtedly strongly press for the change to be made. The War Cabinet decided to accept the report made by Lord Milner and Mr. Barnes, and authorised the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Munitions to insert in the next Munitions of War Amendment Bill a clause to the effect that the Munitions of War Acts should be binding on the Crown.
18. With reference to War Cabinet 250, Minute 3, the War Cabinet had before them a Note by Sir George Cave covering a Memorandum by the Commissioner of Police on the progress made in providing Air Raid Shelters (Paper G.T.-2784).

Sir George Cave pointed out that the cost of providing further bomb-proof shelter was estimated at not less than £1 per head. Apart from the cost it was impossible at the present moment to provide such shelter for the population of London, and it was not considered desirable to proceed further in that direction. The Committee over which he had presided recommended:

(1.) That the local authorities in the Metropolitan Police District be asked to undertake the duty of selecting the air-raid shelters and strengthening them where necessary, subject to the directions of the London Air-raids Shelter Committee.

(2.) That for the above purpose the local authorities be authorised to requisition sand-bags up to an average of 20,000 bags per authority or 2½ million bags in all; the requisitions to be countersigned by the President of the Advisory Committee. The total cost of these bags is estimated at £25,000.

(3.) That in consideration of the local authorities providing the necessary labour and supervision no charge to be made for the bags.

The War Cabinet approved these recommendations.

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.
November 30, 1917.

(Initialled) A. B. L.
WAR CABINET, 289.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, December 3, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.
The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:—
The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 11).
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 12).
Major-General F. B. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 5, 9 and 10).
Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M. G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 6 to 8 and 11).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Western Front:

The Director of Military Operations stated that General Ludendorff had visited the Western front on the 23rd November, and that as a result the enemy had planned a determined effort to recapture the positions we had gained on the 20th November. The German offensive began by attacks on the salient which we had formed in their defensive system. That on the north had failed, but to the south they gained 6,000 yards, of which we had since, by counter-attacks, recovered 4,000. At one point to the south of the line they had gained to a depth of 1,500 yards inside our original line, i.e., as it existed prior to the 20th November. Estimates at present gave our losses as 40 guns and 3,000 officers and men taken prisoner. General Maurice stated that there were indications that the enemy intended to continue their attacks, that more troops were being brought up to the southern portion of the line, and that the enemy had 12 fresh divisions on the Western front which they could throw into the line at Cambrai or such other
places as they might select. Five divisions had been transferred from Flanders since the battle began, and 9 divisions from other portions of the Western front. The position on the 2nd December was that there were, in the Cambrai sector, 15 British divisions, 3 of which had had heavy losses, whereas the enemy had 17 divisions, 5 of which had probably had very heavy losses. Our casualties in the Cambrai sector between the 20th November and 2nd December were 27,000. The cavalry casualties in our attacks of the first stage of the battle consisted of only 27 officers and 320 men. As regards “Tank” casualties, no figures had yet been received, though a good number had been damaged. General Maurice added that we had carried out a small attack on the northern portion of the Cambrai front yesterday, and had captured 12 machine guns and 40 prisoners.

General Smuts stated that, in his opinion, it was a serious mistake to send further reinforcements to Italy. As he understood, the position at present was that four divisions were in Italy, a brigade and some of the artillery of the 5th Division had already been despatched, and the 6th Division, though under orders, had not yet left. He was strongly of opinion that the Germans had lost their chance of breaking through on the line of the Piave, and it was improbable that they would endeavour to make two efforts, such as on that position and at Cambrai, at one and the same time, and that consequently it would be a great mistake on our part to concentrate our troops in a position where they would not be urgently needed. He advocated cancelling the despatch of the 5th and 6th Divisions, and recalling that portion of the 5th Division that had already left for Italy.

The Director of Military Operations stated that he had wired to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff suggesting delay, and it had been agreed that the departure of the 6th Division should be postponed. As regards the 5th Division, the remainder would continue their departure for the Italian front on the 5th December. General Maurice stated that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff held the same view as General Smuts, and Lord Derby indicated that he was also in agreement.

The War Cabinet decided, subject to the approval of the Prime Minister, that—

2. The departure of the remainder of the 5th Division should be postponed, and that that portion which had left for Italy should be recalled, and that the 6th Division should be retained for the present on the Western front.

3. The Director of Military Operations stated that no alteration had taken place in the situation in Italy. Our troops were now taking over that portion of the line which had been allotted to them, and General Plumer had offered to take over a further section in a few days' time, which proposal had been gratefully accepted by General Diaz.
East Africa.

4. The Secretary of State for War reported that South-East Africa was now clear of the enemy, the remaining troops under Von Lettow having fled into Portuguese territory.

The Cabinet authorised—

The Director of Military Operations to send a congratulatory telegram to General Van Deventer and the troops under his Command, expressing their appreciation of the great endurance and resolution they had shown in clearing the enemy out of such difficult country.

Disloyalty of Canadian troops.

5. Sir Edward Carson informed the War Cabinet that he had heard that the Canadian troops quartered at Shorncliffe had shown disloyalty and had been guilty of revolutionary proceedings.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to make enquiries into the matter through Sir George Perley, and in due course to make a further communication to the War Cabinet.

Submarines.

6. The First Sea Lord reported that the German submarine “UB 81” had hit one of our mines yesterday and had been destroyed; 2 officers and 4 men had been taken prisoner.

Loss of a Russian Destroyer.

7. The First Sea Lord reported that a Russian destroyer had hit a mine in the Gulf of Finland and had sunk, 16 of the crew being saved.

Palestine.

8. The First Sea Lord reported an attack by enemy seaplanes on Sukeir, a port to the north of Gaza, which was being used for landing stores, &c. The raid had caused no damage.

Russia: Caucasus Army.

9. Mr. Bonar Law informed the War Cabinet that he had received a communication from M. Nabokoff pointing out that the Russian army in the Caucasus was remaining loyal to the Provisional Government in Russia, and that a national army was being raised by the Georgians, Armenians, and Tartars with a view to continuing the war against the Central Powers. M. Nabokoff had pointed out that, to enable this loyal movement to progress, funds were necessary, and the Russian Commander-in-chief asked for a loan of 300,000,000 roubles, 70,000,000 of which were required forthwith.

It was further pointed out that the British Minister at Tehran, in his telegram No. 413 of the 30th November, 1917, considered it was worth our while to entertain a proposal of the nature referred to above; and, further, in his telegram No. 414 of the same date, advocated that it would be politic to finance the Persian Cossacks Division, who were cut off from supplies of money.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Any reasonable demands for money from the Russian Caucasus Army and the Persian Cossacks Division should be met by the Treasury;

and requested—

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs so to inform Sir C. Marling, and also acquaint M. Nabokoff as necessary.
10. The War Cabinet proceeded to discuss the need of making a tremendous effort to maintain South Russia on the Allied side, and the steps that had best be taken to retain their help. It was pointed out that financial assistance would also be needed for any movement on the part of both the Cossacks and Ukrainians, and the War Cabinet decided that—

Such assistance should be forthcoming, and requested—

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to telegraph to the British Minister at Jassy and to General Ballard to that effect.

The War Cabinet further desired—

The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform the British Ambassador at Petrograd of the action taken, and acquaint him, with reference to his telegram No. 1886, of the 28th November, 1917, that the policy of the British Government was to support any responsible body in Russia that would actively oppose the Maximalist movement, and at the same time give money freely, within reason, to such bodies as were prepared to help the Allied cause; and that the detailed arrangements as to the establishment of Ukraine, Cossack, Armenian, and Polish banks were left to the discretion of Sir George Buchanan.

11. The War Cabinet had under consideration a telegram (No. 50 of the 28th November, 1917) from the British consul at Archangel, endorsing in part a communication from Captain Proctor as to the establishment of a British base at Archangel, with a view to present or future emergencies.

It was pointed out that if some old battleships with some marines were sent there a place of refuge would be formed for British residents in Russia; that it would provide a door for communications with that country in the future, and that it would have a good effect from a propaganda point of view.

The War Cabinet requested—

The First Sea Lord, after consultation with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, to go into the matter of naval assistance being rendered, and to inform the War Cabinet on the following day as to any naval action that the Admiralty were prepared to recommend.

12. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by Sir Auckland Geddes (Paper G.-174) concerning the man-power reserves of the country.

Sir Auckland Geddes pointed out that, without some such legislation as was proposed in his memorandum, it would be quite impossible to obtain for the army anything like the number of men demanded for it. If it was decided that the proposed legislation was impracticable, namely, the raising and lowering of the military age and the application of conscription to Ireland, he feared that the available reserve was extremely small. Further than this, the number of men obtainable by administrative means was restricted by the pledges given, in the first place by Mr. Asquith and subsequently by Mr. Arthur Henderson, regarding the protection to be given to skilled workers. To get even a proportion of the men required for the army it would be necessary to cut down shipbuilding, food-producing, or munitions programme, or all three. It was not likely that any considerable further number of coal miners could be obtained without a serious strike, and it was really a question whether the Government were prepared to run the almost
certain risk of a breach with labour in this country or incur the responsibility of applying conscription to Ireland if any substantial numbers were to be got. In regard to Ireland, it would be impossible to apply the tribunal method, and the men would have to be seized. As far as he was in a position to ascertain, he thought that a good deal could be done to economise man-power in the home army, and instances certain cases that had been brought to his notice regarding the short hours of military employment allotted to certain details of the Royal Defence Corps. He wished to impress upon the Cabinet the fact that the gravity of the situation was real, and that it must be taken into account in determining our future strategy. This country was straining all its resources to the utmost, and was nearing the breaking-point.

Lord Derby stated that the position in France was serious, and that the Army Council should know at an early date exactly what help could be expected.

It was urged that, before we entered into any further commitments as regards the help to be given to other countries, such as to Italy or Greece, any proposals for such action should be submitted to the War Priorities Committee for consideration.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In view of the practical impossibility of carrying through any of the legislative proposals suggested by Sir Auckland Geddes in the present House of Commons, Sir Auckland Geddes should prepare a further memorandum for the War Cabinet, setting forth as briefly as possible the situation as regards man-power and the administrative action that might be required to render any remaining surplus available for military service;

and requested—

Lord Derby to submit a detailed analysis of the Home Army, showing the exact nature of the duties performed by it.

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**Strike at Coventry.**

13. With reference to War Cabinet 288, Minute 15, Mr. Barnes informed the War Cabinet that, as a result of negotiations which he and General Smuts had conducted with representatives of the Engineering Employers' Federation, the Coventry and District Engineering Employers' Association, the Executives of the Trade Unions of the Coventry Engineering Trades Joint Committee and of the men concerned, the following agreement had been arrived at:

"Provided that the men resume work on Tuesday, the 4th December, immediately after breakfast, in accordance with recommendations of their representatives, which will be made, a further local conference will be arranged to meet on the same day to open negotiations upon all the points in dispute.

"The employers and the workmen will approach the subject with a desire to secure satisfactory conclusions.

"The Government on their part will urge upon the Employers' Federation and the Trade Union Executives the necessity for an immediate settlement, among other general questions affecting the relationship between employers and trade unions, of that of the position of shop stewards in relation to both.

"Both parties undertake that there shall be no victimisation as a result of the dispute on either side."
The War Cabinet decided to request—

The Minister of Labour to draw the attention of the representatives of the masters and men to the obligation resting on the Government to secure an immediate settlement, and suggesting that, in addition to the local conference summoned for to-morrow, a conference to deal with outstanding general questions should meet this week.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 3, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, December 4, 1917, at 11 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

The Right Hon. SIR EDWARD CARSON, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Admiral SIR J. R. JELLICOE, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 5).

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERRY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Lieutenant-Colonel Sir M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Colonel E. D. SWINTON, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

The Western Front.

1. THE Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that on the 22nd November he had sent a telegram to Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, warning him that, in exploiting his splendid success at Cambrai, he should take into account the Italian situation and the unfavourable position regarding man-power. The Field-Marshal had since replied that, while he could hold the line just won, he had decided, in the existing circumstances, to take up a defensive position, which would involve a withdrawal from certain advanced points, which he indicated.

The Cabinet authorised—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to support Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig in his proposed action, which met with their entire approval.

The Invasion of Italy:

Reinforcements Cancelled.

2. In reference to War Cabinet 289, Minute 1, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that, as the result of further enquiries, he had ascertained that a considerable proportion of the division en route to Italy, including battalions from different brigades, brigade headquarters, signal sections, &c., had already reached Italy.
In these circumstances he felt that these must be recalled or the whole division despatched.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The division now en route to Italy should complete its concentration in Italy;

(b.) In view of the military situation in the Cambrai region, the additional division under orders to proceed to Italy should remain in France.

3. Attention was drawn to the fact that the German forces in the Cambrai region, although they had not achieved their entire object, had gained a success which was inconsistent with the advice in regard to the strength and condition of the German Army which had been given to the War Cabinet by the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, and it was suggested that the Commander-in-Chief in France was not well-advised on the Intelligence side of his Staff.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to consider the matter.

4. In view of the greatly improved military situation in Mesopotamia, where the offensive plans of the Turks had broken down and their forces were at a considerable distance from the British, and of the fact that the number of British rifles in this theatre was more than treble that of the enemy, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff advised the War Cabinet that the very large British force which had been concentrated in that region in entirely different circumstances, might with advantage be reduced.

The War Cabinet approved the transfer of one Anglo-Indian Division from Mesopotamia to Egypt.

5. In reference to War Cabinet 289, Minute 11, the First Sea Lord stated that he had received a telegram from the Senior Naval Officer at Archangel to the effect that the efforts of the pro-Germans in Russia were obviously directed to causing a rupture between Russia and her Allies. He generally supported the suggestion to withdraw the British officials from the interior to Archangel or Murmansk, and pointed out that for this purpose it would be necessary to send some Naval reinforcements to either port. The First Sea Lord explained that the White Sea was closed, and that it was impossible to send any vessel from England to Archangel. At Murmansk there was already the battleship "Glory," at present only half-manned. Half the crew were under orders to go out, and he had issued orders for it to take complete equipment of rifles, machine-guns, and field guns. At the same time, he wished to explain that as the Russian naval force at Murmansk consisted of one battleship, two cruisers, and four destroyers, and since the port was surrounded by high hills, it would be impossible for a British vessel to maintain its position there in the event of opposition by the Russians. If a point of refuge were required it would be necessary to supply floating accommodation; it would also be necessary to send there transport from some other place.

The War Cabinet decided that—

No action in this matter could be taken.

6. In reference to War Cabinet 288, Minute 6, the War Cabinet further discussed the demand of M.M. Trotzki and Lenin that Tchitchirine and Petroff should be released from internment, more
particularly in the light of telegram No. 1927 from the British Ambassador at Petrograd, which indicated the probability, in the event of this demand not being complied with, of reprisals being taken in the form of the internment of British subjects at present conducting war propaganda work in Russia in sympathy with the counter-revolutionary movement.

It was stated that, according to the "Daily News," Tchitchirine had been appointed Russian Ambassador to Great Britain, and it was felt that this might be made a pretext, if he were not released, for the arrest of Sir George Buchanan, and for picking a quarrel with the British Government.

It was pointed out that the War Cabinet were in a dilemma. If attention was paid to the threats of MM. Lenin and Trotzki, and negotiations were consequently entered into with them, it would be tantamount to the recognition of the Bolshevik Government by the British Government. On the other hand, if no action were taken, there was real danger that the British Ambassador and British subjects in Russia would run the risk of being interned and possibly starved. An alternative was to deport both these men without any specific communication to the Bolshevik Government, and the Secretary of State for Home Affairs had already explained that, so far as his Department was concerned, there was no objection to this course. The objection to it was felt to be that such action would be taken by M. Trotzki to be a submission to threats, and would lead to renewed and more offensive demands.

It was also suggested that a message should be sent to M. Trotzki to inform him that the British Government would deport the two Russians in question if he would undertake not to oppress any of the British in Russia, or to inform him that the British Government had caused the arrest of MM. Tchitchirine and Petroff for carrying out propaganda work against it, and realised the right of the Russian Government to intern such British subjects as were working against it in a similar way in Russia.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The best course for the present was to take no action.

7. It was brought to the attention of the War Cabinet that Mr. King, M.P., had taken an active interest in the affairs of the two interned Russians, and that for a long time the questions put in Parliament by this gentleman, as also those put by Mr. Outhwaite, M.P., were such as to be of value to the enemy, whether they were answered or not. At one time an attempt had been made to collect all these questions, with a view to bringing the matter before the Speaker.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The attention of the House should be called to this matter.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 4, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 291.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Room, House of Commons, on Tuesday, December 4, 1917, at 5.30 P.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Supreme War Council.

1. SUBJECT to the following Minutes, the War Cabinet approved the resolutions taken by the Supreme War Council at Versailles on Saturday, the 1st December, 1917 (I.C.-36) (Appendix.) They affirmed their desire that all Departments should co-operate in furnishing the information required for the work of the Supreme War Council, and should make suitable arrangements to this end.

The Secretary stated that he understood that the War Office had already made arrangements for the transmission of the military information required.

Mr. Balfour stated that the Foreign Office were considering the best method of their cooperation, in view of the great secrecy of many of the subjects. Sir George Clerk had been temporarily attached to Versailles to assist Lord Milner for a few days, and on his return a scheme would be drawn up providing, possibly, for a regular liaison officer between the British Section at Versailles and the Foreign Office.

The War Cabinet approved the arrangement made by the Secretary that, without prejudice to the special arrangements made by the War Office or Foreign Office, the War Cabinet Secretariat should act as an agent in London for the collection and transmission of information on behalf of the Supreme War Council.

The Transport Problem.

2. The War Cabinet discussed at some length the proposal of the Supreme War Council that the whole question of inter-Allied transport by land and sea should be examined by a single expert.
There is no difference of opinion in principle as to the great desirability of an examination of this problem. Difficulties, however, were recognised to exist on the personal side, and the question was adjourned.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 5, 1917.

APPENDIX.

The following resolutions were passed by the Supreme War Council:

1. They instruct their Permanent Military Advisers to examine the military situation and to report their recommendations as to the future plan of operations.

2. In order to provide the Supreme War Council with the material for their examination the Governments represented undertake:

(a.) To supply the Supreme War Council with all such information of a general political and departmental character as is available for the war discussions of their own Cabinets or War Committees. This will include decisions of the Cabinets and War Committees relating to matters connected with the conduct of the war.

(b.) To instruct their Ministries of War and General Staffs to furnish the Permanent Military Advisers with their views and policy, with frequent regular statements of the order of battle and dislocation of their own and Allied forces, and immediate notification of transfers of larger units from one theatre of operations to another; with frequent regular statements of the order of battle and dislocation of enemy forces, with the reports embodying their conclusions as to enemy manpower, material and enemy conditions generally, and with immediate notification of important transfers and concentrations; with regular reports as to the strength of their own forces and memoranda on manpower, situation and prospects; with regular reports of the existing and prospective position in regard to war material and military transportation. Commanders of the forces on the various fronts will, in order to save time, repeat their daily communiqué direct to the Supreme War Council. Their more important reports, as well as those of Heads of Military Missions and Military Attachés, will be forwarded to the Supreme War Council through the respective General Staffs. The whole of the above information to be furnished with the least possible delay, in order that the Military Representatives shall be able to discuss the questions that will be raised at the Supreme War Council with a precise and up-to-date knowledge of the general military situation, and in complete touch with the views of their own military authorities.

(c.) To instruct their Ministries of Marine (Admiralty) and Shipping to furnish the Supreme War Council with reports, memoranda, and appreciations bearing on the general condition of the war, and more particularly on problems affecting the transportation of troops and supplies.

(d.) To instruct their Foreign Offices to supply the Supreme War Council with a general appreciation of the diplo-
The Italian Front.

The Transport Problem: (a) General; (b) As affecting the Italian Front.

The Belgian Army.

The Military Situation in the Balkans.

The Supply of Greece.

The diplomatic situation at the present time, and henceforward to furnish regularly, and in the most expeditious manner possible, full information, whether received by despatch or telegram, on all diplomatic matters in any way connected with the war.

(a.) To instruct the Departments dealing with munitions, aviation, manpower, shipbuilding, food (stocks, production, and distribution), and finance, to furnish all the information necessary to enable the Supreme War Council to appreciate the situation from these respective points of view.

3. In order to facilitate the reception and distribution of the information referred to above, each Section of the Supreme War Council will comprise a Permanent Secretarial Staff.

4. The Permanent Secretarial Staffs of the respective countries will, in concert, organise a Joint Secretarial Bureau for the production and distribution of the notices, agenda, protocols, and procès-verbaux of the meetings of the Supreme War Council, and for such other collective business as it may be found desirable to entrust to it.

5. The Supreme War Council instruct its Permanent Military Advisers to study the immediate situation on the Italian front from the offensive as well as the defensive point of view, and to report to it as soon as possible—at any rate, within the next fortnight. The Permanent Military Advisers are directed to make their requests to the Governments concerned for all the information they require, and the representatives of the respective Governments undertake to arrange that the information shall be furnished at once.

6. The Supreme War Council decide that it is desirable that the whole question of inter-Allied transport by sea and land shall be examined by a single expert, who shall report to it on the subject at the earliest possible date. It agreed that, if the British Government can spare his services, Sir Eric Geddes should be designated to carry out this investigation, and that, in the first instance, he shall examine the transportation problem as affecting the Italian and Salonika situations.

The representatives of the respective Governments undertake to give instructions to their technical experts and administrators to collaborate with Sir Eric Geddes, or, if his services cannot be made available, with such other expert as may be mutually agreed upon.

7. The Supreme War Council instruct their Permanent Military Advisers to examine and report on the utilisation of the Belgian army, and authorise them to apply to the Belgian Government, on their behalf, to furnish a report on the state of Belgian manpower.

8. The Supreme War Council decide—

(a.) To recommend to their respective Governments that the immediate food and other essential requirements of Greece, the promised military equipment, and the necessary means for transporting the same shall be supplied as a matter of military urgency.
(b.) That its Permanent Military Advisers shall follow up the question of the supply and equipment of the Greek army.

c.) That its Permanent Military Advisers shall study and report on the military situation in the Balkans, on the basis of information to be furnished by the Governments concerned.

(d.) That the Governments concerned shall make the necessary financial advances to enable Greece to mobilise not less than nine divisions, and the Supreme War Council further requests the financial delegates of France, Great Britain, and the United States of America to make, at once, the necessary arrangements for supplying Greece with the sum of 700,000,000 francs, in the course of the year 1918, so as to clear off arrears amounting to 175,000,000 francs, and to enable Greece to mobilise immediately not less than nine divisions.
WAR CABINET, 292.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, December 5, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON of KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The Right Hon. SIR E. CARSON, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 10.)

The Right Hon. the Earl of DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 13.)

General SIR W. R. ROBERTSON, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1 to 11.)

The Right Hon. SIR ERIC GEDDES, G.B.E., K.C.B., M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty (for Minutes 7 to 13.)

Admiral SIR J. R. JELLIQUE, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 13.)

Lieutenant-Colonel SIR M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. ROW, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Colonel E. D. SWINTON, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.
1. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that General Allenby had reported that one of his corps in the front line had been relieved, and that good progress was being made in other preparations.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff gave a statement of the units which were being released from East Africa and transferred to other theatres of war.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the question of placing units of the United States infantry into battalions or brigades of British infantry had been cordially received by Colonel House, to whom it had been referred by the Prime Minister.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that Jebel-Hamrin, on the right bank of the Diallah, had been taken by the successful action of British troops on the 3rd December. Our captures amounted to 150 prisoners, including 4 officers, 2 field guns, and 1 machine gun. Our operations were assisted by the vigorous co-operation of a Russian detachment on our right flank.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff gave details of the explosion which had recently taken place at a munitions and explosives factory near Frankfurt-am-Main, and explained that the destruction of this factory implied a most serious loss to the Germans, since it was a most important centre for the manufacture of asphyxiating gas, and had been producing a very large output of saltpetre, high explosive, and hydrogen.

The War Cabinet decided that—

All details possible of this occurrence should be made public, and requested—

The Secretary of State for War to communicate with Sir Edward Carson in regard to publication.

6. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff quoted a telegram from General Plumer to the effect that the enemy had made strong attacks on the Asiago Plateau on the 3rd December, and that all these attacks had been repulsed except at one advanced point. General Plumer had visited the army and corps commanders holding the line of the Piave, who had all expressed confidence in their ability to hold their own.

7. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that, in accordance with the decision of the War Cabinet the previous day (War Cabinet 290, Minute 1), he had telegraphed to the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief in France approving his proposed action in taking up a somewhat withdrawn defensive position. He had since received a telegram from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig (No. O.A.D. 723, dated the 5th December, 1917), in which the latter had reported that the enemy attacks had not been seriously renewed that day, and that his impression was that the enemy were, for the time being, exhausted. The attacks had been made by heavy masses, preceded by “Storm Troops,” amongst which our guns, machine guns, and rifles did great execution. He had comparatively fresh divisions in the front line, and the artillery defence had been
organised. These measures, coupled with the proposed withdrawal, should stabilise the situation on the Cambrai front. Regarding the front as a whole, the forces available were none too strong if attacks were pressed on any sector. There were some symptoms of preparation for attack on the Lens and Portuguese fronts. Sir Douglas Haig pointed out that he could not take over any of the French front until the situation was cleared up. He considered that no more troops should be sent to Italy, and that as many trained drafts as possible should be sent to him, since his divisions were very weak and would have to do heavy work on the construction of roads and railways as well as to fight. He gave details as to the French forces on our right.

8. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to the account given by some newspaper correspondents at the front to the effect that the recent German counter-attack in the Cambrai region came as a complete surprise to our troops, and extracts were read from a despatch by the Special Correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph" which had appeared in that paper on the 3rd December, 1917.

It was pointed out that the article specifically mentioned that the air was full of British aircraft at the time. Dissatisfaction was expressed on two points—

(a.) That the fact of so complete a surprise having occurred, if this were correct, had not been reported to the War Cabinet, which body was responsible to Parliament and the public.

In this connection it was urged that, if we had inflicted a corresponding reverse on the enemy, the news of our success would have been communicated within a few hours.

(b.) That such a surprise should have been inflicted on our forces if our aerial superiority was as complete as it had been alleged to be, and if our defensive arrangements were properly organised.

In regard to these points, it was suggested that full enquiry ought to be made.

The Secretary of State for War pointed out that it was evident that one of our divisions had been completely overwhelmed, and that the incidents reported in such detail in the press had occurred behind the line and after the German surprise attack had been effected. It was probable that the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief was himself ignorant of the causes of this reverse, since the division affected had been broken up.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff explained the confusion and disorganisation which were inevitable when a reverse of this kind occurred, and how great the difficulty must be of obtaining any exact information. In reply to a reminder that a similar objection to the paucity of news sent to the Cabinet had been made during the retreat from Mons, when the Cabinet had insisted on sending out Lord Kitchener to visit the front and ascertain the facts, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff pointed out that he himself, although present as Quartermaster-General of the British Expeditionary Force at that time, had been quite unable to obtain information.

The First Lord of the Admiralty stated that he had been at Sir Douglas Haig's General Headquarters on the day after the reverse, and that the Field-Marshal himself had stated that he could not expect to obtain details of what had happened for some days.

Attention was also called to the account given to the War Cabinet on Monday, 3rd December, 1917, by the Director of Military Operations, which, though an estimate, did not at all conceal the extent of the set-back experienced (War Cabinet 289, Minute 1).
Both the Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff were confident that there had been no intention to minimise the extent of the reverse suffered.

The War Cabinet, though prepared to leave the question of enquiry into the question of responsibility to the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, felt, nevertheless, that the official telegrams on the subject had not given sufficient indication of the extent of the reverse suffered.

Attention was also called to the discrepancy between the nature of the German success and the reports which had been consistently received from official sources in regard to their weakness and the deterioration of their moral.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to obtain further reports on the subject from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig which would give the fullest detail possible.

9. Sir Edward Carson informed the War Cabinet that a very regrettable sensation, amounting almost to panic, had been caused in the House of Commons on the previous evening by certain statements made by Brigadier-General Lowther, Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, to the effect that the situation in France was worse than it had been at the end of 1914, and that the Germans had broken through the British line with masses of artillery.

The War Cabinet were fully impressed with the undesirability, if not the actual danger, of such action on the part of a Service Member.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to see General Lowther on this subject.

10. It was brought to the attention of the War Cabinet that the incident referred to in the preceding Minute raised the question of the rights of Members of Parliament. The Speaker, who had been approached on the subject of holding a conference to discuss this matter, had given his opinion that no useful result would be reached by such a conference. It appeared that no half-measures would be of any service, and that the only solution of the problem of controlling the statements of Service Members in the House was that they should either give up Parliament or give up the army.

The Secretary of State for War stated that the case of General Lowther was not an isolated one, and mentioned other examples of similar conduct. This gave rise to a short discussion on the whole question of secrecy.

11. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff asked for a decision as to what action should be taken in regard to the British Mission at Russian Headquarters. He said that a telegram had been received that morning to the effect that General Barter and the military members of the Mission had left Russian Headquarters for an unknown destination.

The First Sea Lord, in this connection, pointed out that there was some difficulty in communicating with Russia, since, though it was possible to communicate with the British Ambassador at Petrograd, he could not transmit any messages further on.

The War Cabinet were fully alive to the possible danger of the situation to all the members of the British Mission in Russia, but it did not seem that their position would be improved if they were ordered to go to Petrograd, and, moreover, the possibility of communicating with them was somewhat doubtful.
The Secretary stated that he had endeavoured on several occasions to have this question of the instructions to be sent to the British Mission in Russia raised at the Inter-Allied Conference at Paris, without success.

It was pointed out that there was a Russian Committee in London, under the chairmanship of M. Nabokoff, and it might be possible to get some communication through that Committee.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In the circumstances, no useful instructions could be sent to General Barter in regard to his Mission, and that he must be left to make what arrangements he could for its safety.

Submarines.

12. The First Sea Lord reported that—

(a.) Two destroyers had attacked an enemy submarine, in the vicinity of the North Hinder Lightship, with depth charges, &c, and that an explosion had occurred with probably successful results;

(b.) The steamship “Leithfield” had attempted to ram an enemy submarine, but when the steamer was 50 yards off two explosions occurred on board the submarine, with unknown result.

British Submarines in the Baltic.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 279, Minute 13, the First Lord pointed out that the Board of Admiralty were of opinion that the moment had now arrived when it was necessary to destroy the British submarines in the Baltic. He indicated certain measures which it was proposed to take for securing the safety of the crews and to prevent the vessels being taken over by the Russians.

The War Cabinet approved the proposed measures.

Tonnage Situation:

14. With reference to War Cabinet 266, Minute 11, the War Cabinet had before them the Report of the Committee on Restriction of Imports (Paper G—178) (Appendix).

Lord Curzon outlined the steps that had been taken by this Committee, of which latterly he had been Chairman, and drew the attention of the War Cabinet particularly to paragraph 17 of the Report, in which the recommendations of the Committee were summarised.

Lord Rhondda said that he wished to emphasise what was stated in paragraph 4, that the saving of 2,500,000 tons anticipated by the Ministry of Food could only be carried into effect, provided that absolute priority of finance and tonnage were given.

After some discussion as to the various commodities to be restricted, and the probable results as regards the different trades, the War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The report of the Committee should be adopted as a working basis, subject to the following amendments:

(b.) Paper and pulp should be reduced by 150,000 tons, instead of 100,000 tons recommended by the Committee (vide paragraphs 6 and 17 of the Report)

(c.) Tobacco should not be restricted below the 1917 level (paragraph 13).

(d.) The question of releasing men from the timber trade for the Army (paragraph 7), as well as the related questions discussed in the memorandum by the Timber Controller...
(Paper G.T.–2846) should be examined and decided (before the 8th December, the date of calling up), by Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Barnes, after consultation with the Minister of National Service and the President of the Board of Trade. 

(e.) Cotton imports during 1918 should not be increased (paragraphs 14 and 17) until the question of using cotton operatives and weaving sheds for aeroplane work had first been examined by the President of the Board of Trade, who undertook, after consultation with the Minister of National Service and other Government Departments concerned, to report to the War Cabinet in due course the result of his enquiry.

(f.) The Departments concerned should be informed as to the above decisions.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 5, 1917.
APPENDIX.

RESTRICTION OF IMPORTS.

Terms of Reference.

1. BY Minute 11 of Meeting 266 of the 6th November, 1917, the War Cabinet appointed a Committee "to consider to what extent and in what directions British imports should be further restricted, and to report their recommendations to the War Cabinet as soon as possible."

The Committee was composed as follows:—

Lord Milner (Chairman),
Lord Rhondda
Mr. Long,
Mr. Churchill,
Sir Albert Stanley,
Sir Joseph Maclay,

Captain Clement Jones (Secretary).

On the 27th November (War Cabinet 283, Minute 11) Lord Curzon undertook the Chairmanship of the Committee in the absence of Lord Milner.

Tonnage Situation.

2. At their first meeting the Committee had before them a Memorandum by the Ministry of Shipping (Paper G.T. 2493) on the tonnage position in 1918.

This Memorandum showed that if no extra assistance had to be given to the Allies, British imports in 1918 would be less than the imports in 1917 by some 6,000,000 tons, and that if the extra demand of the Allies for cereals amounting to over 2,000,000 tons has to fall upon British shipping, the decrease in British imports must exceed 8,000,000 tons.

Before definitely accepting this deficit of 8,000,000 tons as a basis upon which to work, the Committee felt that it would be well to obtain the latest opinion and information of the Admiralty in regard to the anti-submarine campaign.

Accordingly the second meeting was attended by Admiral Duff, who stated the views of the Admiralty. He said that while any statement in regard to prospective submarine losses must be purely speculative, nevertheless, in the light of their most recent information and experience, the Admiralty were of opinion that the mean of the British losses by submarine during September and October might be taken as a guide for the next six months, in other words, an average of roughly 225,000 tons a month, excluding Allied and neutral vessels and ordinary marine losses and cases of damage.

After that date it was reasonable to take a more optimistic view. The conditions would probably be better rather than worse, partly on account of the assistance which would be rendered by the United States and partly on account of the results of our own extensive programme for countering submarine attack.

The result of this improved estimate of the submarine situation, submitted by Admiral Duff, as compared with the first estimate with which the Committee were confronted, may be translated in terms of tonnage as roughly 2,000,000 tons. This leaves 6,000,000 tons to be cut off British imports during 1918.
Analysis of Imports.

3. In order to arrive at our recommendations we examined seriatim a list of the various commodities imported in 1916 and 1917 with a view to seeing where any further saving could be effected. We also asked the Departments concerned to submit statements showing where reductions could be made and in each case the effect of the restrictions.

Ministry of Food.

4. The Ministry of Food provided us with a statement showing their minimum requirements for foodstuffs in 1918. They anticipate a net saving of 2,500,000 tons, but they point out that in order to effect this reduction they must be given absolute priority of finance and tonnage. This reduction does not involve any further restriction in the output of beer below the present level.

Ministry of Munitions.

5. The Ministry of Munitions anticipated a possible reduction of 1,550,000 tons in 1918. They state, however, that this cut, involving as it does a reduction of 500,000 tons of shell steel from America, will seriously affect the munition programme.


6. We have been in communication with the Paper Commission in regard to the results of further reductions of different dimensions. They have replied in the following sense:—

   "All users are now very short. A reduction of 100,000 tons, in addition to causing considerable scarcity for trade purposes, would necessitate cutting down newspapers, magazines, &c., by one quarter.
   "A reduction of 150,000 tons would seriously inconvenience commercial users and require the cutting down of newspapers, magazines, &c., by one-third.
   "A reduction of 200,000 tons would cause grave dislocation of trade and entail the suppression of many newspapers and periodicals."

In the light of this information, and having regard to the drastic restrictions of other commodities which we are suggesting, we recommend that the importation of paper and paper-making materials be reduced by 100,000 tons below the 1917 level, and we hope that the War Cabinet will consider a still further reduction.

Timber.

7. The Board of Trade have informed us that the importation of timber, already considerably cut down, could be further reduced in 1918 by 1,000,000 tons. They say, however, that this additional reduction can only be realised provided that the Minister of National Service maintains the necessary supply of labour required by the Timber Controller, and that no further demands are made to release men for the Army. We therefore recommend the War Cabinet to instruct the Minister of National Service to this effect.

Wool.

8. We recommend that wool imports in 1918 be reduced by 50,000 tons. We understand that there are now in the country six months' stock, or 170,000 tons, including the British clip. We suggest in this connection—

   (a.) That attention should be paid by the Departments concerned to the collection and utilisation of old clothing.
   (b.) That shipments of wool should be made as far as possible from the Argentine rather than Australia.

Oil-seed Cake.

9. We recommend that imports of oil-seed cake be reduced in 1918 by 200,000 tons.
The Ministry of Food state that in the past oil-seed cake has been shipped in empty space which would otherwise have been wasted, but they raise no objection to the reduction proposed provided that the space is used to better advantage.

Stone and Slates.

10. We recommend that the importation of stones and slates be reduced in 1918 by 100,000 tons.

Iron Ore (through reduction of iron and steel exports).

11. A further reduction of 200,000 tons is recommended.

Miscellaneous.

12. The Board of Trade anticipate a reduction under this heading of 100,000 tons.

Tobacco.

13. We are advised that the tobacco position is serious. We recommend that next year 30,000 tons representing the amount required for the troops should be imported, and that tonnage should be allocated for this purpose; but that the civilian consumption which should be met out of stocks in the country should be reduced by a cut of 25 per cent.

If this plan is carried out, there will, we are informed, still be remaining, on the 1st January, 1919, six months' stock.

Cotton.

14. We had hoped that it might have been possible to recommend some reduction in cotton imports. An investigation of the situation has, however, led us to the opposite conclusion, and we are forced to recommend an increase of the import of cotton by 50,000 tons in 1918.

This will be necessary in order to maintain the cotton industry on the present 60 per cent. basis.

Phosphates.

15. In view of the War Cabinet's decision that 50,000 tons per month are to be imported for the agricultural programme, the Committee find that instead of a reduction in 1918 there will be an increase of at least 200,000 tons.

Finance.

16. In the course of our work we were informed that, serious as is the shipping situation at the present time, the financial difficulties are no less great.

The view was expressed that in the United States of America finance is the limiting factor, and that before long, owing to financial difficulties, there will be ships waiting in American harbours for their cargoes. It was also pointed out that one of the few tonnage economies that is still possible is the diversion of tonnage from distant routes into the Atlantic.

The Treasury was not represented on our Committee, and therefore we have been unable to find out how far, and where, the financial difficulties exist and may be overcome, but we are of opinion that the matter should be thoroughly investigated.

Summary of Recommendations.

17. To summarise:—
The Committee were confronted at their first meeting by an estimate showing a reduction in imports in 1918 of ... 8,000,000 Tons.

This reduction may be effected in the following way:—

By estimated improvement in the submarine situation ... 2,000,000 Tons.

- reduction of imports of Ministry of Munitions ... 1,550,000
- Ministry of Food ... 2,500,000
- paper and pulp ... 100,000
- timber (including pit-props) ... 1,000,000
- wool ... 50,000
- oil-seed cake ... 200,000
- stones and slates ... 100,000
- iron ore (through reduction of iron and steel exports) ... 200,000
- miscellaneous ... 100,000

Total ... 7,800,000 Tons.

- increased imports of cotton ... 50,000
- " " phosphates ... 200,000

Balance ... 450,000

A deficit of 450,000 tons, therefore, still remains to be wiped off before the estimated supply of, and demands upon, tonnage for our imports in 1918 can be exactly balanced.

Remaining Deficit.

18. We understand that the whole Allied tonnage situation is now under review at the Paris Conference, and it may well be that the conclusions of that Conference will affect still further the problem of restricting imports.

We therefore do not propose at the moment to finish our investigations as to the possibility of removing the remaining deficit. We shall, however, be glad to resume our meetings, if it is considered desirable, and examine the subject again after the Paris Conference is over.

The Imports of the Allies.

19. We are well aware that the recommendations which we are now submitting will, if carried into effect, not only cause grave dislocation to certain trades, but also involve great hardships and drastic changes in the life of the people. We believe that these burdens will be cheerfully borne, provided that some assurance can be given that our Allies are making equal sacrifices. At present we have only too much evidence that this is not always the case.

We therefore recommend that His Majesty's Government should take such steps as may be necessary to ensure equality of treatment for this country and our Allies in these matters of economy and restriction of imports.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON, Chairman.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 1, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, December 6, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.
The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 16).
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Sir E. Wyldbeore Smith, Chairman, Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement (for Minute 18).

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 19).

Sir Alan Anderson, K.B.E., Controller, Admiralty (for Minute 17).

Sir Lynden Macassey, K.C., K.B.E., Director of Shipyard Labour (for Minute 17).


The Right Hon. Sir G. Cave, K.C., M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minutes 17 and 18).

The Right Hon. R. E. Protethero, M.V.O., M.P., President, Board of Agriculture (for Minute 17).

Sir H. C. Monro, K.C.B., Secretary, Local Government Board (for Minute 17).

Mr. I. C. Gibbon, Local Government Board (for Minute 17).

Major J. W. Hills, M.P. (for Minute 17).

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Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captains the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
1. General Shaw, Chief of the General Staff, Home Forces, gave such details as were available in regard to an air raid which had only terminated at seven o'clock that morning.

After certain preliminary attacks, probably made by light aeroplanes with the object of drawing the fire of the defences, several groups had endeavoured to reach London, the majority of which had been turned back. It was estimated, as a rough conjecture, that some 25 aeroplanes had been employed, of which 5 or 6 only reached the heart of London. Two aeroplanes, one of which was a “Gotha,” had crashed down—one at Canterbury and one on the aerodrome at Rochford—and three men had been taken prisoners from each.

A number of bombs were dropped, the great majority being of an incendiary character. Four large fires were caused in Shoreditch, Whitechapel, and South Lambeth Road. Outside London bombs were dropped at Ramsgate, Margate, Deal, Chatham, and Sheerness. No considerable damage had as yet been reported. Up to the present only two persons were reported killed in the Metropolitan district, and four at Sheerness. Nine persons had also been wounded at Sheerness.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) In view of the small amount of damage inflicted, no mention should be made in the published communique of the fact that incendiary bombs were dropped.

(b.) An announcement should be made in both Houses of Parliament by Lord Curzon and Mr. Bonar Law respectively.

General Smuts undertook to prepare a suitable statement, in consultation with the Departments concerned.

2. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported the identification, near Cambrai, of another German division withdrawn from the Eastern front.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 290, Minute 1, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the first stage of the re-adjustment of the line in the Cambrai district had been successfully arrived at. No public announcement had been made, as the enemy had not as yet discovered our withdrawal. Certain movements still remained to be carried out.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 289, Minute 4, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff conveyed the thanks of General Van Deventer, and the forces with him, for the War Cabinet’s congratulatory message.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the Germans who had escaped to Portuguese territory had met with very feeble resistance, the Portuguese surrendering as soon as the enemy got to close quarters. The enemy captured considerable ammunition, and had apparently re-armed about 300 men with Portuguese rifles.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 292, Minute 6, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff quoted a telegram from General Plumer, which stated that the attacks on the 3rd December on the 20th Corps front were more serious than was at first apparent.
The Italians, owing to heavy artillery fire and superior numbers, had had to withdraw from a number of positions, but even if a further retirement had to be carried out it should be only local, and should not materially affect other sectors of the line. The losses were heavy on both sides.

7. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff called attention to the prevailing rumours regarding projected attacks by the enemy on many fronts. It was not possible that they could all be true, and some were demonstrably false. For example, it was said that the 24th and 32nd Turkish Divisions were on the Italian front, whereas the 24th was fighting in Palestine and the 32nd had been disbanded.

Salonica: General Sarrail.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 282, Minute 3, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff again called attention to the inadequacy of our information regarding the Allied situation on the Salonica front. No action appeared to have been taken by M. Clemenceau to relieve General Sarrail of his command.

The Secretary stated that the general position at Salonica had been referred by the Supreme War Council at Paris to the Permanent Military Advisers for consideration.

The War Cabinet felt that, whether the rumours of concentration were true or not, the position was very unsatisfactory, and that the War Cabinet could not divest itself of responsibility for what might occur.

The War Cabinet decided to request—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to draft a strongly-worded telegram, to be sent in the name of the Prime Minister to M. Clemenceau by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Archangel.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 290, Minute 5, the First Sea Lord reported that a message had been received from Admiral Kemp, the Senior Naval Officer at Archangel, stating that an ice-breaker, manned by pro-Germans, was being fitted with 6-inch guns, and it was intended to send her to Archangel, possibly with the object of damaging H.M.S. "Iphigenia."

Admiral Jellicoe urged that a definite policy should be adopted in regard to Archangel. There appeared to be advantages to be gained by concentrating all our forces at Murmansk, and there was still time for the remaining ice-breakers to extricate the "Iphigenia." The British force at Archangel was not sufficient either to protect or destroy the stores, and it was impossible to strengthen them owing to the ice.

The War Cabinet decided that—

A statement of the position as it appeared to the War Cabinet should be sent to the Senior Naval Officer and the Consul at Archangel, who should be called upon immediately to make a joint report. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the First Sea Lord to concert the necessary action.

Vladivostock.

10. Sir Edward Carson stated that Commander Locker-Lampson had brought to him a project for the occupation of Vladivostock and the control of the Siberian Railway.

The War Cabinet asked that—

Sir Edward Carson should arrange for this report to be sent, in the first instance, to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
11. With reference to War Cabinet 292, Minute 13, the First Sea Lord called attention to a telegram received from Sir George Buchanan, dated the 3rd December, 1917 (No. 1942), dealing with the position of the Russian Fleet, and forwarding a suggestion, with which Admiral Stanley concurred, that an agreement should be come to with the Russian Government not to enter into any negotiations with the enemy with regard to the fleet, and, if necessary, to render their ships useless by disablement of machinery, &c, for the period of the war, so that they could not be used against the Allies.

The War Cabinet decided that—

In the present confused situation it was not possible to enter into negotiations on the subject, but that the matter should be reopened when a suitable occasion arose.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 292, Minute 13, the First Sea Lord stated that he had delayed sending instructions to Admiral Stanley owing to the receipt of a telegram conveying the suggestion that the British submarines should be left in charge of the Russian Government, with guarantees, and that the crews should be given passes to Murmansk.

The War Cabinet agreed to this suggestion and to the measures which the First Sea Lord proposed to take to deal with the submarines.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 288, Minutes 9 and 10, attention was drawn to a slight conflict in the decisions taken by the War Cabinet and the decisions come to at the Paris Conference. In the former case it had been decided that, while no munitions should be sent, clothing, &c, should be allowed to go to Russia. According to the Paris decisions, no further supplies were to be sent.

The discussion of this matter was adjourned until the following day, in order that the Shipping Controller might be present.

14. The Secretary reported the receipt of the Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission, which would be circulated immediately to the members of the War Cabinet.

15. The First Sea Lord reported that half a ton of bombs had been dropped on Sparappelhoé aerodrome, and also on a train leaving Engel dump. No direct hits were observed.

16. The First Sea Lord reported that, in a fight of patrols, three enemy machines had been destroyed and one driven down out of control.

17. The War Cabinet continued the discussion of Sir Auckland Geddes' Paper (G.-174), begun at War Cabinet 289, Minute 12.

Lord Derby drew attention to a letter from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, dated the 24th November, 1917, pointing out that, if matters were allowed to go on as at present, without a great legislative or administrative effort to obtain men, the British infantry divisions in France would be 40 per cent, below their present establishment by the 31st March, 1918. Since this letter
very grave reports regarding the situation in France had been received from the front. There was no longer any question of our deciding what our military policy would be next year, as that will be decided by the Germans. Sir Douglas Haig was, at this moment, 100,000 men below his proper strength. So far from there being any question of our breaking through the Germans, it was a question whether we could prevent the Germans breaking through us. The Army Council looked to Sir Auckland Geddes to make suggestions as to how the very large number of men essential for the army could be met.

Mr. Churchill stated that he agreed with Lord Derby that the position was one of great danger. He gathered that the deficit which required making up during the next six months amounted to approximately 500,000 men. He quite realised that, as far as the Ministry of Munitions were concerned, they had to find men for release for the army, only he hoped that if the Ministry of Munitions made the great effort which they were called upon to make, other Departments, such as the Admiralty, would, by means of combing out fit men and by the utmost economy in the use of man-power, produce a substantial quota; he also thought that the demand for 60,000 men put forward by the Admiralty should be most carefully examined. He thought that use might be made upon small craft for the 90,000 trained American sailors now available. He was examining the question of the number of men available for release from munition work in its relation to output, and he pointed out that 53,000 men had been released from such work since April 1917. He estimated that by slowing down the output of certain munitions and by methods of economy and dilution it might be possible to obtain as many as 120,000 further men from munitions during the course of the next twelve months. These figures assumed, of course, that the Trades Unions would be consulted in accordance with the pledge given by Mr. Arthur Henderson before skilled men were taken in addition to all dilutees. In his opinion the Government would be well advised to face the question of man-power in Parliament by presenting simultaneously all their proposals for raising men. It would be fatal to deal with the matter piecemeal by raising successive storms over such questions as the taking of skilled men, the application of conscription to Ireland, and the raising of the military age. It appeared to him that the number of men retained for purposes of Home Defence was large, and that something might be done in the direction of giving the fighting troops a rest during the coming three months by the use in the trenches of garrison battalions composed of older and lower category men.

Sir Auckland Geddes pointed out that the basic pledge giving protection to skilled men was that made by Mr. Asquith in 1916. If the Government continued on the present lines, without introducing new proposals and without facing a bigger legislative issue outlined in his memorandum, only 25,000 more men could be obtained from munition works, and a further 35,000 if the pledge given by Mr. Arthur Henderson regarding the taking of dilutees only was got rid of.

Sir Alan Anderson stated that the First Lord was making careful enquiries into the man-power employed by the Navy, but added that the utilisation of the largest reserve of man-power now available for the Allies, viz., that of the United States of America, depended entirely upon the output of ships, and that it was essential that we should concentrate upon this work. 20,000 more men were wanted at once for shipbuilding. In this connection he thought that military labour could be employed in the new National Shipyards, where such labour would not be mixed up with civil labour. 17,000 men could thus be employed, and could receive a certain amount of military training at the same time.

It was pointed out that the War Office view of the military
situation in France, as submitted to the War Cabinet, had undergone a complete change during the last three weeks. Three weeks ago, so far from there being any question of the Germans breaking through our lines, there had been most optimistic reports regarding the deterioration in the German moral and the superiority of the British over their opponents, in numbers as in everything else. From the most recent Paper submitted it would appear that we still had a superiority of 25 per cent. in rifles on the Western front as a whole.

Sir Nevil Macready stated that he had prepared a Paper showing exactly how all the Home Army was being employed, and he did not see how the number so retained could be substantially reduced. With regard to the troops in Ireland, there were about 50,000, composed of one complete division and twenty-eight reserve draft-finding battalions and coast defence troops. He estimated the number of available "A" category men in this 50,000 at not more than 5,000, exclusive of ordinary drafts.

Lord Curzon stated that two years ago the Government were faced with a somewhat similar and equally grave decision. Many abortive discussions had taken place in the Cabinet on the subject of raising the necessary number of men for the Army, and the only practical method of dealing with the matter was found to be in the establishment of a small Cabinet Committee whose duty it was to see all Heads of Departments concerned in order that a definite scheme might be laid before the Cabinet for acceptance or rejection. This Committee carried out the foundation work upon which the Government military service proposals were subsequently built.

The Secretary pointed out that another precedent for such a Committee was furnished by the Cabinet Committees on the Co-ordination of Military and Financial Effort, which reported in February and April, 1916.

Lord Curzon suggested that a similar Committee should be appointed at this critical juncture, whose duty it should be to produce a scheme which the Government should present to Parliament as a whole, and upon which the Government should stake its existence.

Subject to the Prime Minister's concurrence, the War Cabinet decided that—

The Prime Minister should appoint a Committee, as suggested by Lord Curzon, which should report to the Cabinet at the earliest possible date; and that, meanwhile the Minister of Munitions, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the Secretary of State for War should at once prepare full detailed statements for submission to the Committee.

18. The War Cabinet had before them the following documents regarding the Acceptance of Foreign Contracts in Relation to Man-power:—

(a.) Memoranda by the Minister of National Service (Papers G.T.-2533 and G.T.-2636).
(b.) Note by Sir E. Wyldhore Smith (Paper G.T.-2576).
(c.) Memorandum by the Minister of Munitions (Paper G.T.-2578).

and decided that—

The points raised in this correspondence should be referred to the War Priorities Committee for their decision.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 6, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, December 7, 1917, at 5:30 P.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair)
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.
Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.
Major-General Sir G. M. W. MacDonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Pacifist Activities:

1. With reference to War Cabinet 274, Minute 17, the War Cabinet had before them a letter written by Mr. Herbert Samuel on behalf of members of the late Cabinet, objecting to the Defence of the Realm Regulation which specified that leaflets must be "submitted to and passed by" the Press Bureau (Paper G.T.-2520), together with remarks by the Home Secretary (Paper G.T.-2569).

Sir George Cave explained that widespread objection had been taken in the newspapers to this provision, and a deputation
of the Labour Party had protested to him against empowering an official to forbid the issue of a leaflet although not offending against the Regulations. It had in fact been found inconvenient to exercise the power, as there were pamphlets which could not well be stopped, but to which it was undesirable to give official sanction. He did not object to the omission of the words, subject to provision being made for the submission of every leaflet to the Press Bureau seventy-two hours before its printing, publication, or distribution, but he would like Regulation 27 strengthened by inserting words which would make it an offence to spread reports or make statements intended "directly or indirectly to impede or interfere with the successful prosecution of the war."

The War Cabinet decided—

(a.) To approve the proposal of the Home Secretary that the words objected to should be omitted, and that words should be inserted requiring a leaflet to be submitted to the Press Bureau seventy-two hours at least before it was printed, published, or distributed.

(b.) To postpone the proposal that Regulation 27 should be strengthened as suggested above. Reliance should be placed for the present on existing Regulations, but Sir George Cave was authorised to indicate to the House of Commons that the Government might find it necessary to apply the new proposal.

Aircraft Warfare and Public Museums.

2. The War Cabinet approved proposals by Sir Alfred Mond and Mr H A L. Fisher for the removal to some place of safety of the most precious treasures contained in the Record Office, the British Museum, and the principal public museums and galleries of London and its neighbourhood (Paper G.T.-2873).

The War Cabinet authorised—

The First Commissioner of Works to instruct the Press Bureau to avoid publicity in this matter.

Portugal.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff called attention to telegram No. 477, dated the 6th December, 1917, from the British Minister at Lisbon, reporting a movement by the Portuguese Army against the Government. The movement was alleged to be monarchist and pro-German.

Extension of British Line on Western Front.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 292, Minute 7, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had circulated correspondence between Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and General Petain, with a covering Minute by himself, on the question of the extension of the British front (Paper G.T.-2884), which he asked might be discussed on Monday next, the 10th December, 1917.

5. With reference to War Cabinet 292, Minute 8, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had circulated a telegram from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, dated the 6th December, 1917, dealing with the recent German counter-attack in the Cambrai region. The enemy's main attack was on Bourlon Wood, with seven divisions. This failed completely, with heavy loss. Three enemy divisions attacked the Marcone area and also failed, with heavy loss. The attack on Connelle area was made with two-and-a-half divisions, plus one regiment, against two British divisions. The possibility of an attack on this front had
been foreseen, and ample preparations had been made to deal with it, but our outposts apparently failed to give warning to other troops in rear, with the result that these were surprised. The cause of the failure of the outposts to give warning was being investigated. The estimated number of missing to date, including casualties unreCORd, was between 9,000 and 10,000, and there were 150 guns missing and unrecovered.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 288, Minute 4, the War Cabinet authorised—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to inform Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig that they sanctioned his retention of two batteries of 60-pounders due to go to Italy, in view of the recent loss of guns in the Cambrai region.

7. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that General Fayolle had asked General Foch for two more French divisions for the Italian front, and that General Foch, in turn, was pressing for the despatch of the British divisions which had been countermanded. The Italians had, on the previous day, sustained a reverse at the hands of the Austrians, who had driven the Italians back three or four miles on a four-mile front. The fighting had been severe and the losses heavy, but General Plumer thought the retirement should be local. He said there were ample troops ready in reserve. These consisted of eight Italian divisions, and four French divisions.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to reply to General Foch that the situation had changed, and, owing to the threat to our positions at Cambrai, the War Cabinet had decided not to send the sixth division at present, the fifth to continue its movement.

8. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that General Fayolle had suggested to General Foch that British troops should be put under his command. It appeared, however, that General Fayolle's army had now been placed, "for establishment purposes," under General Petain.

It was pointed out that General Plumer was a very senior officer, who had for a long time had command of an army, and that the British force, when the five divisions arrive, will contain 65 battalions as against 54 French battalions.

The War Cabinet decided against any alteration of the present arrangement.

9. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to a telegram addressed by the Foreign Office to Sir Rennell Rodd, urging him to make representations to the Italian Government, with a view to the latter giving facilities for the release of Jugo-Slav prisoners in their hands, for the purpose of providing volunteer reinforcements for the Serbian Army.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 293, Minute 10, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had examined Commander Locker-Lampson's project, which was similar to the proposals discussed at the recent Inter-Ally conversations at the Paris Conference, for the occupation of Vladivostock with a view...
to the control of the Siberian Railway by American or Japanese forces. He proposed that—

(a.) The Japanese, and perhaps the Americans, should be asked to send a force to Vladivostock, for police purposes, for the protection of military stores there, and, later, if necessary, to obtain control of the Trans-Siberian Railway and open up communication with South Russia.

(b.) If possible, a small British Naval force should be sent to Murmansk to protect our stores there and to provide refuge for Entente nationals.

(c.) Definite encouragement should be given to the Government of Tiflis, and an endeavour should be made to constitute an Armenian Army, which should be given financial support. Armenians in Russia to be got down to the Caucasus.

In this connection, attention was drawn to a telegram from the British Minister at Peking (No. 591, dated the 6th December, 1917), recounting a meeting of Allied Ministers at which it had been decided to ask the Chinese Government to send a military force to protect foreigners at Harbin, where the Russian General was co-operating with the local Leninist Government, and where a situation was developing which, unless checked, might issue in placing North Manchuria under enemy control. This telegram had been repeated to Tokio.

The War Cabinet considered whether the seizure of Vladivostock by Japanese or American forces, in order to protect the stores there, might not do more harm than good, by strengthening Russian opposition to the Allies even among the most friendly sections of the population, and might even jeopardise the lives of the British Ambassador and other British subjects in Russia. Similar apprehensions had been expressed in Russia lest the recent démarche of the Military Mission should imply an intention to let loose the Japanese against Russia. There was a real danger that Russia might not only make peace with Germany, but also might be provoked by us into fighting with the Germans against us. On the other hand, an ambiguous and uncertain policy towards the Bolshevist Government was also fraught with serious disadvantages.

The Secretary reminded the War Cabinet of the decision taken at Paris, with the approval of Colonel House, to enquire at Washington and Tokio as to suitable measures which might be taken to protect the Trans-Siberian Railway and to supply food to Russia.*

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should send telegrams to Washington and Tokio, calling attention to the Paris decision and to the further information received as to the position in Russia and China, and asking if the conditions were thought favourable by either Government for the despatch of a police force to Vladivostock.

11. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs read telegram No. 1965 from Petrograd, referring to the fact that Lenin, in his

* Extract from Note of Paris Conference, December 3, 1917.—"General Foch subsequently put forward the following resolution as embodying the decision of the Conference:—

"Les représentants de la Grande-Bretagne, de l'Italie et de la France, réunis à Paris le 3 décembre, 1917, avec les représentants des États-Unis et du Japon, arrêtent, après examen de la situation actuelle en Russie, que les représentants de ces deux dernières Puissances demandent sans retard à leurs Gouvernements des directives en vue d'assurer le ravitaillement de la Russie par la Transsibérienne, et de prendre dès à présent les moyens de nature à faire arriver ces ravitaillements, même en cas de troubles." (I.C. 35 (c) p. 4.)
appeal to Moslems, was openly inciting our Indian subjects to revolt. Sir George Buchanan proposed laying the British case before the Russian public by means of a press interview. This might lead to a rupture with the Bolshevik Government.

The question was raised whether it would not be desirable to anticipate the crisis which was evidently approaching by withdrawing the Embassy and leaving the protection of British interests in the hands of the Consuls.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to send a telegram to Sir George Buchanan inviting his opinion, after consultation with his colleagues of the Allied Diplomatic Corps, as to whether the Embassy should be withdrawn; corresponding telegrams to be sent to the Allied Governments.

12. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the War Cabinet that His Majesty’s Government was being urged to recognise the independence of Finland.

It was pointed out that the Finns had a grievance against the Bolsheviks, that they were a separate nationality, that Finland might afford a country of refuge for the British in Russia, and that Germany would probably give the desired recognition. Sir George Buchanan had replied that His Majesty’s Government would recognise the independence of Finland if the Russian Constitutional Assembly approved.

The War Cabinet endorsed the Ambassador’s view.

13. It was suggested that the many questions arising out of the state of affairs in Russia would be easier of settlement if the policy of the Allies was more clearly defined. It was open to the Allies—

(a.) To recognise the Bolsheviks and make the best arrangements possible with them; or

(b.) To refuse to recognise them, and take open and energetic steps against them.

It was also suggested that a decision should be taken as to the release of the two interned Russian agitators, who, it was explained, had been interned for spreading Bolshevist propaganda among Clyde workmen.

It was pointed out that His Majesty’s Government had already undertaken risks in getting in touch with General Kaledin and with the Ukraine, and offering financial help.

14. The War Cabinet authorised—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to render suitable financial help, through channels to be chosen by himself in consultation with General Macdonough, to the Armenians.

15. The War Cabinet authorised—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the First Sea Lord to arrange with Commander Locker-Lampson for the despatch to Armenia of the armoured and other cars, officers, and men now in South Russia.
16. Attention was called to a Foreign Office telegram announcing that the King of Roumania had handed over the command of his army to a general, in order that the King might not be personally involved in any arrangements for the conclusion of an armistice.

17. With reference to War Cabinet 293, Minute 12, the Deputy First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that a telegram had been sent to Admiral Stanley telling him to destroy the submarines in certain manners indicated, and that when this was done he could either go to Murmansk or return to this country.

18. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported to the Cabinet that a serious explosion had taken place at Halifax, Nova Scotia, owing to a French munition vessel being blown up in the narrows, the result of a collision; in consequence of which the port would be closed for some time. St. John's, New Brunswick, could be used as an alternative, but much inferior, port.

19. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported the arrival at a northern port in this country of an American battle squadron.

20. With reference to War Cabinet 290, Minute 7, it was pointed out that the decision as entered in the printed Minutes had not been taken, and had been inserted in error.

21. Owing to the absence of Lord Milner, and to the desire of the Food Controller to circulate a further Memorandum on Rationing, the War Cabinet decided—

To discuss food production and rationing on Wednesday morning next, the 12th December, 1917, instead of on Monday, as previously agreed.

22. With reference to War Cabinet 293, Minute 17, the War Cabinet briefly discussed the composition and functions of the proposed Committee on Man-power and Recruiting, but in the absence of the Prime Minister and Lord Curzon the discussion was adjourned until Monday next, the 10th December, 1917.

23. The War Cabinet had before them Admiralty Memoranda on the position of Holland and the position of Norway (Papers G.T.-2847 and G.T.-2885).

The War Cabinet decided—

To refer the questions raised in these Memoranda to the Northern Neutral Countries Committee for consideration and report.

2. Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 8, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 295.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, December 10, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., M.P.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present: —


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 18).

The Right Hon. Sir J. Maclay, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minute 19).

Sir L. Worthington Evans, Bart., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 19).

Colonel F. J. Byrne, C.M.G. (for Minute 19).


Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Colonel E. D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Western Front:

Extension of British Line.

1. IN reference to War Cabinet 294, Minute 4, the War Cabinet had before them a note prepared by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff regarding the extension of the front held by the British forces in France, covering certain correspondence from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig on the subject (Paper G.T.—2884).

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff explained that he had raised the question because no definite reply had been given on this subject to M. Clemenceau, who referred to it at the recent Paris Conference.

Lord Milner explained that when in Paris he had seen M. Clemenceau, who, while agreeing that the present was not the
moment for pressing for an extension of the front held by the British in view of what had happened at Cambrai, had stated definitely that the question was one which would have to be settled in the near future, and that he would again bring it forward for settlement.

The War Cabinet decided that—

No action should be taken in regard to this matter for the moment.

2. In regard to the Western front as a whole, the Prime Minister said that the situation as regards man-power was most pressing. He had recently been furnished with figures by the Director of Military Intelligence which showed that on the Western front the French and British together had 1,200,000 more men in the field than the Germans, and 400,000 more rifles than the Germans. This applied to the situation after five British and six French divisions had been despatched to Italy. Even if the Germans were to transfer all their serviceable divisions from the Eastern front to the West, which amounted to some thirty-two divisions out of seventy-nine, or an approximate total of 300,000 rifles, they would still be in a minority on the Western front. In these circumstances the Prime Minister was unable to understand the rather alarmist tone as to the situation which had recently been exhibited. He pointed out that the public were considerably disturbed over this matter, quite unnecessarily, as he thought, having regard to the actual facts, and it was highly desirable that they should receive some official reassurance.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the Germans had transferred from the Eastern to the Western front two more divisions, which had been sent to Cambrai and Rheims respectively. This brought the total transfer of strength from East to West in six weeks to eight divisions, or four on balance. Two more German divisions had been moved from Flanders to Cambrai, making a total of eight transferred from Flanders. In all, the Germans had, since the 20th November, 1917, the date of the commencement of the British attack near Cambrai, transferred to that area nineteen divisions.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that two divisions of French troops were now in the front line.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff read extracts from a telegram received from Mesopotamia, which showed that the Turkish forces in that quarter were extremely short of food, their weekly death-roll amounting to ½ per cent. (Telegram X, 5189.)

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff read extracts from a telegram (T.W. 67) received from Mesopotamia to the effect that the Russian commander on the Caucasus front had put forward proposals for an armistice with the enemy.

6. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that Jerusalem had been isolated and the town surrendered by its Mayor to the British Commander-in-chief, who had stated that the formal entry would not take place until the 11th December.
The War Cabinet, after consideration of the question of the publication of this information, in the light of previous discussions (War Cabinet 280, Minute 5), decided that—

The news should be given out as briefly as possible in the House of Commons that afternoon.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to produce a communiqué before the afternoon's meeting for the purpose of publication.

Greece: 7. The Secretary of State for War reported that a large stock of supplies, which it had been decided should be sent to Greece, had been collected and were ready for shipment. He explained that the procedure was that the Commission internationale de Ravitaillement gave orders for supplies to the War Office, and that that body was responsible for obtaining sanction from the Treasury and making the necessary arrangements with the Shipping Controller. In this case, though, the goods were all ready for despatch, the Commission internationale de Ravitaillement had not got the necessary Treasury sanction.

It was pointed out that the representative of the Treasury at the Conference in Paris had agreed to this course.

Lord Derby further explained that the question of priority was involved, since the supplies necessary for Salonica and for Egypt were in arrears to the extent of some 30,000 tons. He requested a decision of the War Cabinet as to whether supplies for Salonica and Egypt or for Greece should have priority.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to take the matter up through the Commission internationale de Ravitaillement with a view to their approaching the Treasury as regards finance, and also the Shipping Controller.

Submarines. 8. The First Sea Lord reported, that—

(a.) On the 7th instant a British airship bombed an enemy submarine in the Irish Channel, but the latter was probably only damaged;
(b.) On the 8th instant, near Hartland Point, an airship had bombed another submarine, with a similar result;
(c.) On the 8th instant the airship “C. 5” had dropped bombs on a submarine some 70 miles from the Smalls, with unknown result;
(d.) On the 8th instant the airship “C. 9” had dropped a bomb near a submarine, some 60 miles south-west of the Scilly Isles, with unknown result;
(e.) On the 9th instant a seaplane had dropped bombs on a submarine some 20 miles south of the Start, with results that were promising;
(f.) On the 9th instant the trawler “Benlawers” reported having rammed and sunk a submarine 41 miles from the Lizard.

Activity in the English Channel.

9. The First Sea Lord reported great enemy submarine activity in the English Channel, and estimated that nearly all the German submarines were passing out to the open sea that way. He considered that there were at least six large and several small submarines at present operating in the Channel.

Explosion at Halifax, Nova Scotia. 10. In reference to War Cabinet 294, Minute 18, the First Sea Lord reported that the casualties caused by the explosion at Halifax were estimated at over 1,000 killed and 5,000 injured.
merchant ships had been severely damaged and several others more or less damaged, one tug being completely wrecked. In the Dockyard the destruction has been very great. The situation was in hand, and convoy work could be continued.

Bombing Raid.

11. The First Sea Lord reported a bombing raid on the Aertrycke Aerodrome on the 8th instant, a total of twenty-eight bombs having been dropped with apparent success. The bombers were attacked by enemy scouts, two of which were driven down and appeared to be damaged. All our pilots and machines returned safely.

Archangel.

12. In reference to War Cabinet 293, Minute 9, the First Sea Lord drew attention to the fact that no decision had yet been reached in regard to our action at Archangel.

Man-Power.

13. It was suggested that one way of solving the man-power problem would be for the drafts of American troops, as they reached France, to be incorporated as drafts in our forces, since, though the transport of completely equipped divisions from the United States presented great difficulties, owing to lack of tonnage, the transport of men could probably be effected. By this means the shortage in the Allies' man-power could be made good.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff explained, in reference to War Cabinet 292, Minute 3, that, although the matter of incorporating American troops with British units had been put forward to Colonel House in Paris, the idea had been to incorporate either entire companies in British battalions, or entire battalions in British brigades, and it could hardly be expected that the United States Government would agree to their men being used as drafts. Colonel House had stated that he would refer the matter to General Pershing, and then to the President of the United States on his return.

American Shipping.

14. The Prime Minister drew attention to the serious report in regard to the American shipping construction situation, which had been received from Sir Thomas Royden, to the effect that, instead of constructing 6,000,000 tons, as had been promised, the United States Government were only undertaking the construction of 2,000,000 tons.

In this connection Mr. Balfour stated that, when in Paris, he had, at Lord Reading's request, asked the United States representatives that their Government might undertake the construction of 9,000,000 tons instead of the 6,000,000 tons promised.

Russia: General Policy.

15. The War Cabinet considered their general policy in regard to Russia, and in this connection had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Paper G.T.–2932), dated 9th December, 1917 (Appendix).

It was suggested that His Majesty's Government was not primarily or specially concerned with the composition of the Russian Government, or with the local aspirations of the Bolsheviks or other political parties, except in so far as they bore on their attitude to our conflict with the Central Powers. This was the line we had taken during the Czar's reign, and there was no reason to depart from it. Our dominant purpose throughout the revolution should be—

(a.) If possible, to keep Russia in the war until our joint war aims were realised; or
If this could not be secured, then to ensure that Russia was as helpful to us and as harmful to the enemy as possible. For this purpose we should seek to influence Russia to give to any terms of peace that might be concluded with the enemy a bias in our favour.

It was difficult to foretell how strong the Bolsheviks might become, or how long their power might endure; but if, as seemed likely, they maintained an ascendancy for the next few months only, these months were critical, and to antagonise them needlessly would be to throw them into the arms of Germany. There were at the moment signs that within a few days, when the elections for the Constituent Assembly had been completed, the Bolsheviks would be installed in power not only in a de facto, but also in a constitutional sense.

In this connection reference was made to recent messages which had been received from the British Embassy at Petrograd. In a telegram dated the 8th December, 1917 (Foreign Office No. 1984), the terms were given of a six months' armistice proposed by the Bolsheviks, and it was stated that there was a remarkable change in the official press, the Allies not being attacked, for the first time for several weeks.

In the "Times" of that day there appeared a report that the Germans were making the following conditions:

(a.) Germany to obtain, for fifteen years, a control of the Russian wheat market.
(b.) Importation into Russia of all German goods duty free.
(c.) No territory now occupied by German troops to be surrendered.

Attention was also drawn to a telegram to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dated the 5th December, 1917 (No. 1404), recounting a private and unofficial interview with Krikenko, the Bolshevik Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, during which he said that he had issued an order that all armistice agreements should contain a clause forbidding transfer of troops from one front to another. He appeared most anxious to make a favourable impression on Allied officers, and had carried out all suggestions made to him for safeguarding the lives of officers and their families. In a telegram dated the 6th December, 1917 (Foreign Office No. 1971), Sir George Buchanan reported an interview between Captain Smith and Trotzki, at which the prohibition of British subjects leaving Russia was discussed in connection with the detention in this country of Messrs. Tritschirine and Petroff. Trotzki denied that the prohibition was intended as a threat. His object had been to emphasise the difference between the treatment accorded to Russian subjects in the United Kingdom and British subjects in Russia. On publication in the local press of a communique to the effect that the British Government would reconsider the cases of all Russian subjects interned in Great Britain and would give facilities for return to their country of all Russians innocent of any offence punishable by the laws of Great Britain, he (Trotzki) would the same day restore full liberty of movement to all British subjects in Russia. Sir George Buchanan urged His Majesty's Government to agree to accept the compromise proposed by Trotzki, otherwise he feared that British subjects would be held up indefinitely.

The War Cabinet were impressed with the fact that, by continuing to intern Tritschirine and Petroff the lives of thousands of British subjects were being endangered, and that the case for their internment was not a very strong one. On the other hand, the dangers of any traffic with the Bolsheviks were very real. The strength of the Bolshevik Government lay in the fact that it supported peace, and that if it abandoned its efforts for peace it
would probably be overthrown. Further, to take any action on the
lines suggested above—action for which the Bolshevik Government
had pressed—could hardly be regarded as consistent with the support
which was being proffered to General Kaledin in the South. Was it
desirable to treat with both Trotzki and Kaledin at one and the
same time? Our policy towards Kaledin had been decided upon.
Would it not be wise to wait and see whether the Bolshevik Gov­
ernment was going to last?

To this it was replied that our assistance to Kaledin was
directed against the Germans and not against the Bolsheviks, and
was specially intended to help the Roumanians.

The War Cabinet, without making any change in their recent
policy towards Russia, authorised—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform Sir George
Buchanan that the policy proposed in his telegram No. 1971
was accepted.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs also undertook to
deal with Tritschirine and Petroff in the best way he could,
in consultation with Sir George Buchanan and the Home
Secretary, and to deal with three other Russians who were
reported as having been interned here.

Press Interview

16. With reference to War Cabinet 294, Minute 11, the War
Cabinet took note of an interview granted by Sir George Buchanan
to representatives of the Russian press, in which he protested
against the attacks now being made on this country, and declared
that there was no truth in reports that we were contemplating any
coercive or punitive measures in the event of the Russians making
a separate peace.

Roumania. 17. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs raised the
question of our policy towards Roumania, and in this connection
the War Cabinet had before them Foreign Office telegrams
Nos. 1344 and 1347 from Paris, Nos. 737 and 741 from Jassy, and
a telegram dated the 7th December, 1917, from the Russian
Minister in Teheran to the Russian Embassy in London. Mr. Balfour
pointed out that we had so far been trying to keep the Roumanian
army in active hostility to the enemy, but they had been forced to
join the armistice with the Russians. They had as yet made no
 treaty, but they may have to follow if and when the Bolsheviks
conclude a treaty. The War Cabinet had to decide what guidance
they should offer Roumania.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff explained that the
Roumanian army was helpless. It could not be withdrawn any
considerable distance into Russia because of defective transport and
supply arrangements. So far no answer has been received from
General Kaledin. There had appeared that day in the press a
Bolshevik proclamation declaring war against Kaledin and the
Cossacks.

A letter from Captain Noel, dated the 25th November, 1917
(Foreign Office telegram No. 1970), was quoted, in which the Don
Cossacks were said to be weary of the war and unlikely to embark
on a new campaign. The Don party might be useful in preventing
supplies from the Caucasus falling into the hands of the Germans if
the Germans get control in Western Russia.

It was further shown that, according to the message from
Teheran, and from other sources, there was a strong tendency for
Southern Russia in particular to dissolve into more or less independent
political entities pending the establishment of a Central Government
universally recognised. This was the case in Transcaucasia, the
regions of Don, Tersk, and Kouban, the Ukrainian Rada, and possibly
the Black Sea littoral. It was also the case with Finland.
The War Cabinet recognised that, in certain eventualities, it might be the greatest kindness to Roumania, and least embarrassing to us, to release Roumania entirely from her agreement with the Allies.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff should supply information as to the population and general condition of those portions of Russia which showed a disposition not to accept Bolshevik rule;

(b.) The General Staff, the Admiralty, and the Ministry of Blockade should record their views as to the conditions which the British Ambassador at Petrograd should be instructed to press for, if circumstances enabled him to do so, in any terms of peace made between the Bolsheviks and Germany.

18. The War Cabinet decided that—

The Foreign Office should prepare, for the use of the Department of Information, a statement of the reasons for which Russia was drawn into the war, which might be used as propaganda.

19. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum (Paper G.T.—2905), submitted by Lord Milner's Committee on Russian Supplies, regarding the interpretation to be given to the decisions of War Cabinet 288, Minutes 9 to 13.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) Reference Minute 9 (c). No further orders involving a fresh credit being sanctioned by the Treasury for equipment of a non-warlike nature should be put forward by the Commission internationale de Ravitaillement for the present, but that this stoppage of further orders should be carried out as quietly as possible, and without publication.

(b.) The single ship now being loaded for Murmansk containing supplies for Roumania should go forward, and that every effort should be used to get these supplies through to Roumania (subject to (f) below).

(c.) A decision regarding the possible liquidation of the contract in America for Russian rifles, for which the British Treasury is responsible, should be postponed for ten days, and should then again be brought up for consideration.

(d.) None of the locomotives and waggons now en route from Vancouver to Vladivostock should be delivered in Russia, and that the disposal of this material should be left to the Milner Committee, acting in consultation with the various Departments concerned.

(e.) The principle to be observed in dealing with the ships now at or due to arrive at Murmansk was that every effort should be made to prevent the services of the ships being lost. With this object in view, it might even be necessary to discharge the ships of all their cargoes, including warlike stores, or to order the ships to return to England without discharging anything. If possible, however, the ships should discharge their non-warlike stores and return to England with their cargoes of warlike stores. The Admiralty authorities should communicate this decision to their representatives at Murmansk with a
view to their co-operating in giving effect to this decision.

(f.) The boots, clothing, &c., which had been ordered for Roumania at the instance of the American Government should not now be despatched, and the portion which had been loaded into the ship referred to at (b) above should be unloaded.

Subject to the above rulings, Lord Milner, or, in his absence, Sir L. Worthington Evans, was empowered to decide questions of detail which might arise within the terms of War Cabinet 238, Minutes 9-12.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 10, 1917.
APPENDIX.

G.T.-2932.

NOTES ON THE PRESENT RUSSIAN SITUATION.

As I may not be able to be present at Cabinet to-morrow, I desire to make these notes.

The following points have to be specially kept in view:

1. The safety of our Embassy in Petrograd and of British subjects in Russia.
2. The interests of Roumania and her army.
3. The best course to adopt in order to diminish as much as possible the advantage which Germany will be able to extract from the dissolution of the Russian army as a fighting force.

These subjects are all interconnected, though so far as possible I will deal with them separately.

1. The greatest danger to Sir George Buchanan and the British colony arises probably out of the possibility of mob-violence, excited by the anti-British propaganda fomented by German money in Petrograd and elsewhere. The only real security against this is to be found either by the establishment of a strong and order-loving Government in Russia, or by the removal of the British, official and unofficial, to some safer country. The first we can do nothing to secure. The second cannot be obtained unless we are able (a) to provide the necessary transport either through Sweden or through some northern port of Russia, and (b) to win the goodwill (in however qualified a form) of the present rulers of Petrograd.

The question of transport is hardly a Foreign Office matter, but the policy of avoiding the active malevolence of the Bolshevik party raises most important diplomatic issues.

It was suggested at Cabinet on Friday that, after their recent proclamations, the Bolsheviks could only be regarded as avowed enemies, and to treat them as anything else showed a lamentable incapacity to see facts as they are, and to handle them with decision.

I entirely dissent from this view and believe it to be founded on a misconception. If, for the moment, the Bolsheviks show peculiar virulence in dealing with the British Empire, it is probably because they think that the British Empire is the great obstacle to immediate peace; but they are fanatics to whom the constitution of every State, whether monarchical or republican, is equally odious. Their appeal is to every revolutionary force, economic, social, racial, or religious, which can be used to upset the existing political organisations of mankind. If they summon the Mohammedans of India to revolt, they are still more desirous of engineering a revolution in Germany. They are dangerous dreamers, whose power, be it great or small, transitory or permanent, depends partly on German gold, partly on the determination of the Russian army to fight no more; but who would genuinely like to put into practice the wild theories which have so long been germinating in the shadow of the Russian autocracy.

Now, contrary to the opinion of some of my colleagues, I am clearly of opinion that it is to our advantage to avoid, as long as possible, an open breach with this crazy system. If this be drifting, then I am a drifter by deliberate policy. On the broader reasons for my view, I will say a word directly, but its bearing on the narrower issue of the safety of Sir George Buchanan and the British colony is evident. I am personally of opinion that the Cabinet should reverse the decision it came to some little time ago, and should deport to Russia the two interned Russian subjects in whose fate the Russian rulers appear to be so greatly interested. I was not in England when the decision to retain them was come to, and I am imperfectly acquainted with the reasons for it. Doubtless they were sufficient. But I certainly think that we may now with advantage send these two Russians back to their own country, where, judged by local standards, their opinions will probably appear sane and moderate.

I have already instructed Sir George Buchanan to abstain completely from any action which can be interpreted as an undue interference with the internal affairs of
the country to which he is accredited, and I am unable to think of any other step which would help to secure his safety.

2. As regards the Roumanian army, events have marched rapidly. Everything that could be done, even as a forlorn hope, has been done to enable the army to join with other forces in Russia prepared to continue the struggle, but for the moment no such forces appear to exist, and the Roumanian army is under the strictest military necessity of acquiescing in the armistice, or rather the cessation of hostilities, on its part of the line.

Very difficult and important questions, such as those raised by General Berthelot in a memorandum I have ordered to be circulated, still remain to be decided, but these call for no immediate action. I hope that General Berthelot’s memorandum will be carefully considered by the Headquarters Staff.

3. I have already indicated my view that we ought if possible not to come to an open breach with the Bolsheviks or drive them into the enemy’s camp. But there are wider reasons for this policy than the safety of the British colony in Russia. These wider reasons are as follows:—

It is certain, I take it, that, for the remainder of this war, the Bolsheviks are going to fight neither Germany nor anyone else. But, if we can prevent their aiding Germany we do a great deal, and to this we should devote our efforts.

There are two possible advantages which Germany may extract from Russia’s going out of the war: (i) She may increase her man-power in other theatres of operation by moving troops from Russian front, or by getting back German prisoners. There is little hope of stopping this, and I say no more about it. (ii) She may obtain the power of using the large potential resources of Russia to break the Allied Blockade. I am not sure that this is not the more important of the two advantages, and it has so far been very imperfectly examined. As regards oil, we want to know what means of transport there is in the Black Sea available to the Germans, and how far the anti-Bolshevik elements in the Caucasian regions can be utilised to interfere with the supply on land. As regards cereals, the difficulties the Germans are likely to have arises mainly I suppose, from the chaotic condition of the country, the disorganisation of all means of transport, and the determination of the Russians to use their own produce for their own purposes.

If we drive Russia into the hands of Germany, we shall hasten the organisation of the country by German officials on German lines. Nothing could be more fatal, it seems to me, both to the immediate conduct of the war and to our post-war relations.

Russia, however incapable of fighting, is not easily overrun. Except with the active goodwill of the Russians themselves, German troops (even if there were German troops to spare) are not going to penetrate many hundreds of miles into that vast country. A mere armistice between Russia and Germany may not for very many months promote in any important fashion the supply of German needs from Russian sources. It must be our business to make that period as long as possible by every means in our power, and no policy would be more fatal than to give the Russians a motive for welcoming into their midst German officials and German soldiers as friends and deliverers.

A. J. BALFOUR.

Foreign Office, December 9, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, December 12, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1 to 14).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 14).

Major-General F. R. Maurice, C.B., Director of Military Operations (for Minutes 1 to 14).


Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 14).

The Right Hon. W. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minutes 15 to 17).

The Right Hon. Lord Rhondda, Food Controller (for Minutes 15 and 16).

Mr. U. F. Winwood, C.B., C.M.G., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Food (for Minutes 15 and 16).

Professor W. G. Adams (for Minutes 15 to 17).

The Right Hon. R. E. Prothero, M.V.O., M.P., President, Board of Agriculture (for Minutes 15 and 16).


The Right Hon. the Viscount Goschen, Food Production Department (for Minutes 15 and 16).

Major the Hon. Waldorf Astor, M.P. (for Minutes 15 and 16).


Mr. J. F. Beale, Secretary, Wheat Commission (for Minutes 15 and 16).

Mr. R. B. Greig, Commissioner of the Scottish Board of Agriculture (for Minutes 15 and 16).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.
1. THE War Cabinet had before them a report by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in regard to the situation in Macedonia (Paper G.T.-261.5), dated the 14th November, 1917.

The Director of Military Operations said that since the date of the report by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff the only material changes which had taken place had already been reported to the War Cabinet. One additional German division had appeared on the Salonica front, where, since the 14th November, there had arrived altogether nine German battalions and thirteen Bulgarian battalions. With regard to the strength of the Allied forces, the report showed that on the 14th November the strength of the British was down by 7,000 men. Since then we had sent drafts, and the position now was that, while we were 3,000 down as regards infantry, we were 3,000 up in other arms. For all practical purposes it might be said that the British force was up to strength. General Milne's force was being strengthened by the sending of a few more heavy guns from Egypt, and some aeroplanes of the best type. So far as the French force was concerned, the greatest change had been the change in command. General Guillaumat, who was described as a plain, blunt soldier, had commanded at Verdun after General Nivelle had become Commander-in-Chief, and was regarded by M. Clemenceau as a first-class man, had been appointed to succeed General Sarrail. The strength of the French force had not improved, whereas the English divisions, with an establishment of 12,000 rifles, to-day mustered 10,500 rifles. The French, on the other hand, with an establishment of 9,000 rifles, only mustered 5,000. There was no sign of improvement, and General Sarrail had lately said he would have to send home on leave 4,000 men, for no better reason than that they had been out there for eighteen months. With regard to the Greeks and Serbians, their strength had been increased, the latter by about 4,000—some from Russia and some from Bizerta. Altogether it appeared that there were 160,000 rifles on the Allies' side, as compared with 203,000 rifles on the enemy's. General Maurice said that, in his opinion, this superiority of about 40,000 rifles would not be sufficient to make an enemy attack on a large scale dangerous, provided that the Allies were well dug-in and well commanded.

The questions were asked—

(a.) Supposing that the enemy did attack, what notice we should be likely to receive?
(b.) What steps we should take?

To these the Director of Military Operations replied, with regard to the first question, that it was impossible to guarantee any notice. The nature of the country behind the enemy's front made it difficult to obtain early information, and the only indication of a probable attack that we could get would be the failure to trace enemy divisions on other points. He added that the present season was not favourable for operations on a large scale, and that the most favourable time of the year would be from March onwards. As regards the second question, the only action that we could take might possibly be to send heavy artillery from Egypt; this was the only reserve available. There was no army of manoeuvre that could be used.

The next question put to General Maurice was, In the event of a sudden attack by the enemy, what arrangements had been made to fall back? General Maurice replied that our own line of retreat had been carefully prepared, but in this as in other matters it had been impossible to find out from General Sarrail what preparations had been made for the Allied forces as a whole. He understood that the question had been referred to the Supreme War Council at Versailles.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Director of Military Operations to telegraph to General
Wilson to ask what progress he had made in ascertaining the facts of the Salonica situation, as the Cabinet considered the matter pressing.

2. The Director of Military Operations was asked whether he thought the Germans, in advertising a forthcoming attack on the Western front, were really planning operations elsewhere. General Maurice said that, in his opinion, based on present information, the enemy really did mean to attack on the Western front. Another enemy division had arrived in Alsace from Russia, and two more were on the way. During the last two months fifteen divisions, on balance, had been transferred from the Eastern to the Western front (including Italy), and these had not been replaced. In addition, 100,000 men had been combed out of the Eastern front and sent to the West. The Director of Military Operations did not think that the enemy would press their attack in Italy, seeing that they had already had opportunities of doing so, but had not availed themselves of them, and the season for operations in the mountains was getting late. The balance of evidence appeared to be in favour of the enemy attacking in France and Flanders rather than in Italy, where there may be a very heavy fall of snow at any time. It must be remembered, however, that the Italian army might give up their ground.

3. The Director of Military Operations submitted the following statement in regard to guns taken and lost by the British at Cambrai between the 20th November and the 10th December, 1917:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Hevy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guns lost</td>
<td>18-pr. 45-in. howitzer</td>
<td>60-pr. 6-in. howitzer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guns taken</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daily Messenger and Telephone to Versailles.

4. After some discussion as to improving the means of communication between Versailles and London, the War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Secretary should make the necessary preparations for sending a messenger daily to Versailles, in order that the Supreme War Council should be supplied with the latest information at the earliest possible moment.

(b.) The Secretary should ascertain from the Postmaster-General whether it would be possible to have a private British telephone service established between London and Versailles.

Palestine.

5. The War Cabinet discussed the question whether General Allenby should remain where he now is, or exploit the defeat which he has inflicted on the Turks.

It was pointed out that our Intelligence Service with regard to Turkey was very defective and compared unfavourably with our Intelligence arrangements on the Western front. For instance, when General Allenby had been asked how many men would be required, in his opinion, to capture Jerusalem and hold it he had replied that the Turks could bring against him 18 divisions in addition to 2 German divisions that were available. General Allenby had estimated that 20 British divisions (500,000 men) would be required to take Jerusalem. What had finally happened was that only 20,000 Turkish rifles had opposed our 100,000 rifles. In addition, the
Turkish transport had completely broken down; there was no coal for the railways, and there were no horses and no mules to enable the Turks to get their guns away. If, therefore, it were true that the Turks were in no position to fight, it would be criminal on our part not to take full advantage of the conditions existing in the Turkish forces.

The Director of Military Operations reported that the division which was being moved from Mesopotamia to Egypt might be ready within six weeks or two months. He said that information now being received from prisoners was to the effect that the establishment of the Turkish divisions was much lower than we originally thought. In Syria there was no system of Secret Service possible, comparable with that on the Western front, because, owing to the nature of the country, we could not get information before it was too stale to be of use.

The War Cabinet were strongly of opinion that it would be well to get General Allenby's views as to the question of exploiting his recent victory.

After some discussion the War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to telegraph to General Allenby in the following sense:—

"In view of the change in position created by your recent victory over Turks, and by revised information as to enemy strength and breakdown in his transport, War Cabinet would like to have your opinion by telegram as soon as possible as to manner in which, and extent to which, it is possible to exploit your success in Palestine with forces now under your command, plus the division under orders for Mesopotamia."

The War Cabinet asked—

The Secretary of State for War to send a message of congratulation to General Allenby on his fine achievement in capturing Jerusalem.

With reference to War Cabinet 277, Minute 6, the War Cabinet had before them the text of the proclamation prepared by Lord Curzon, in conjunction with Sir Mark Sykes (Appendix)—

The Prime Minister undertook to go to the House of Commons that afternoon, and to read the proclamation there.

The Director of Military Operations said that he had investigated the report about our guns being out-ranged by the Germans at Passchendaele, and had found that there was no truth in the report.

The Director of Military Operations said that General Plumer reported increased artillery activity opposite our lines. Two attempts had been made to cross the Piave, but these had failed. Slight progress had been made by the enemy on the Asiago Plateau.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to ask General Plumer to send an appreciation of the Italian position.

The First Sea Lord reported that two old Austrian battleships had been attacked by motor-boats in Trieste Harbour. One had been sunk, and the other damaged.
Archangel.

11. With reference to War Cabinet 293, Minute 9, the First Sea Lord asked for instructions in regard to withdrawing H.M.S. "Iphigenia" from Archangel. Having regard to the fact that it was impossible to reinforce the "Iphigenia" the Admiralty were anxious to withdraw the vessel, and also the Staff, as soon as possible from Archangel to Murmansk.

The War Cabinet decided that——

H.M.S. "Iphigenia" should be withdrawn.

Naval Allied Council.

12. The First Lord raised the question of issuing to the press an abridged communication in regard to the Naval Allied Council. All the Governments of the Allies had accepted the statement which it was proposed to publish simultaneously on the 13th December.

The War Cabinet decided that——

This question should be raised again on the following day.

Explosion at Halifax, N.S.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 295, Minute 10, the War Cabinet decided that——

The Chancellor of the Exchequer should be asked to make a statement in the House that afternoon, saying that a telegram of sympathy was being sent to Ottawa, and stating the amount of the contribution which this country was proposing to give.

Greece: Supplies for.

14. With reference to War Cabinet 295, Minute 7, Lord Milner asked what progress had been made in regard to the shipment of supplies to the Greeks.

Lord Derby undertook to keep Lord Milner informed as to despatch.

The Food Situation.

15. With reference to War Cabinet 266, Minute 1, and War Cabinet 285, Minute 15, the War Cabinet reviewed the present and prospective food situation in the light of the following documents:——


Lord Rhondda summarised the most important features of the situation set forth in the above memorandum. A few months ago it was hoped to have in this country on the 31st December a six months' reserve of wheat. That reserve had now been reduced to one of about twenty weeks, owing to the diversion of cargo to France and Italy. The supplies arriving from abroad at present were only about one-half of what were being received during the same period last year. The consumption of home-grown meat, on the other hand, was from 15 to 20 per cent. higher than last year. The cereal programme was threatened with disaster in two vital points:——

(a.) It assumed an exportable surplus from North America of 7,000,000 tons, which Mr. Hoover now put at 3,000,000 tons;

(b.) There was grave danger that the Argentine surplus of wheat and maize might be diverted elsewhere owing to lack of money to make the necessary purchases.
There had been instances, as in the case of bacon and lard, when supplies were available in the States, but owing to want of money they were diverted from this country. A joint organisation had been set up in the United States, with Mr. Hoover as chairman, for the consideration of the demands of the Allies and the claims of the United States. Every claim for the following month's supply had to be put forward by the 15th of each month, with an assurance that both dollars and tonnage would be forthcoming. If these claims were not ready and properly supported by the 15th, the supplies for the following month would be lost. We required credits at the rate of 57,000,000 dollars a month, apart from 8,000,000 dollars required for Army supplies. The Treasury had granted only 20,000,000 dollars for December, and held out prospects of not more than from 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 dollars for January. It was essential that we should be enabled to make purchases before the 15th of this month. That day was the 12th, and the matter was thus one of extreme urgency. The long queues outside the distributing shops, to which Mr. Austen Chamberlain had drawn attention, were due to the shortage of supplies, and were directly accountable for not a little of the industrial discontent which prevailed.

Sir Robert Chalmers said that the position was one in which the sympathies of the Treasury were entirely with the Food Controller, but all the dollars available were already pooled and were being distributed by the American Board. Mr. Austen Chamberlain presided over the American Board in this country which determined the allocation to the Ministry of Food, the Ministry of Munitions, and to other claimants. They could not add to the dollars in the pool, and, indeed, the Americans were anxious to reduce rather than increase our allowance. Lord Reading had done his utmost in the United States and in Canada to obtain every dollar possible for this country.

Mr. Wintour said that he understood that the food credits had been arranged by Lord Reading, but when the Ministry of Food put forward their claims they found the credits already assigned to forward purchases for the Ministry of Munitions and to the maintenance of the exchange for other articles. In other words, priority over food had been given not only to munitions and other Government purchases, but to unessential imports.

Sir Robert Chalmers said the whole matter was one of high and grave policy, on which he thought the Cabinet would wish to have the views of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was at that moment engaged upon the consideration of the problem with representatives of the United States and Lord Reading.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Prime Minister and Lord Rhondda should at once see the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the American representatives.

At a later stage the Prime Minister and Lord Rhondda returned to the War Cabinet and announced that a satisfactory arrangement had been made.

The Agricultural Programme and Food Production —

16. The War Cabinet had before them the following documents dealing with Food Production—

Memorandum by Lord Milner (Paper G.T.-2353).
Memorandum by Mr. Long (Paper G.T.-2374).
Memorandum by Mr. Munro (Paper G.T.-2450).
Memorandum by Mr. Prothero (Paper G.T.-2767).
Memorandum by Professor Leonard Hill (Paper G.T.-2827).
Memorandum by Lord Derby (Paper G.T.-2854).
Mr. Prothero said that the original programme, which contemplated the ploughing up of 3,000,000 acres of grass land, had been revised in the light of experience. The aim now was to increase the area under the plough, as compared with the 1916 area, by (a) the breaking up of 2,050,000 acres of permanent pasture, and (b) the ploughing of 645,000 acres of temporary grass, in addition to the area of temporary grass which would have been ploughed in the normal way, making a total of 2,695,000 acres to be added to the area already under crops in 1916. This figure was for England and Wales. There was still a chance of realising this programme, particularly if the labour asked for were forthcoming. In his memorandum (Paper G.T.-2767) he had asked for a total of 48,500 labourers, of whom a proportion might be women. The most important element in the labour supply was skilled ploughmen. It was no use having an increase of unskilled labour without a due proportion of skilled. Recently nearly a thousand skilled ploughmen had been supplied by the War Office on a two months’ agricultural furlough from France. About 500 German prisoners had also recently been assigned for use on the land, but although the conditions laid down by the War Office for the use of these prisoners had been in some degree relaxed, they were still too stringent to allow of the farmers making the fullest use of the prisoners. Of the 8,500 skilled ploughmen required, 4,500 were needed at once, and the remaining 4,000 by the end of February. The ploughing season for this winter was nearly over.

In this connection attention was drawn to the memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (Paper G.T.-2854), dated the 4th December, in which it was stated that 2,000 expert ploughmen from France were then being distributed, and that a trade-card index for the forces at home was being compiled, with the help of which it might be possible to discover a further source of supply.

Sir Auckland Geddes said that his Department was on the lookout in various directions for skilled ploughmen. Some might be found in the home army, and a few working on munitions and on aerodomes; but he was certain that the only large pool of British skilled agricultural labour left was the army overseas. Negotiations were proceeding with a view to importing up to 20,000 Danes. Most of these would be drawn from the towns and the distributing trades, but some of them might prove to be from the land; also he thought the better use of prisoners of war should be immediately considered.

Mr. Prothero said that wherever experiments had been tried with the Danes they had been found to be good workers. A scheme had been put forward with a view to bringing over farmers from Schleswig-Holstein, but it had fallen through, partly because of shipping difficulties and partly because there were objections on account of espionage. As to the suggestion that Irishmen might be brought across, it was found that our labourers at home objected to them. The only other source was to appeal to Sir Douglas Haig for more German prisoners from behind the lines. It was found that prisoners had not shown any desire to escape from this country, particularly those who were Poles and Saxons.

Mr. Munro said that the situation in Scotland was very much the same as in England and Wales. There was a serious shortage in the supply of soldier labour, and when obtained it was often found to be of poor quality. Unless more and better soldier labour was forthcoming the programme for 1918 would be jeopardised.

The War Cabinet decided—

(a.) To resume the discussion on the following morning, when representatives of the War Office and of the Prisoners of War Committee could be present.

(b.) That Sir Auckland Geddes should expedite the arrangements for importing Danes, and should examine the question of bringing over farmers from Schleswig-Holstein.
17. Mr. Barnes and Sir Auckland Geddes were empowered by the War Cabinet to make the best terms possible in dealing with the application to piece-workers of the 12½ per cent. increase under the order issued by the Ministry of Munitions.

They were further empowered to make the best terms possible in respect of the award of Sir William Robinson regarding payment of wages and conditions of labour granted to men employed on the production of aircraft woodwork.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 12, 1917.
APPENDIX.

General Sir E. H. H. Allenby, K.C.B., reports:—

Jerusalem, 2 p.m., December 11, 1917.

I ENTERED this city officially at noon to-day with a few of my staff, the commanders of the French and Italian detachments, the heads of the Picot Mission, and the Military Attachés of France, Italy, and the United States of America. The procession was all on foot. At the Jaffa gate I was received by guards representing England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, India, France, and Italy.

The population received me well.

Guards have been placed over the Holy Places.

My Military Governor is in touch with the acting Custos of the Latins, and the Greek representative has been detailed to supervise Christian Holy Places.

The Mosque of Omar and the area round it has been placed under Moslem control, and a military cordon composed of Indian Mahommedan officers and soldiers has been established round the mosque. Orders have been issued that no non-Moslem is to pass this cordon without permission of the Military Governor and the Moslem in charge of the mosque.

The following proclamation was read in my presence to the population in Arabic, Hebrew, English, French, Italian, Greek, and Russian from the steps of the Citadel, and has been posted on the walls:—

"Proclamation of Martial Law in Jerusalem.

"To the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Blessed and the people dwelling in its vicinity.

"The defeat inflicted upon the Turks by the troops under my command has resulted in the occupation of your city by my forces. I therefore here and now proclaim it to be under martial law, under which form of administration it will remain so long as military considerations make it necessary.

"However, lest any of you should be alarmed by reason of your experience at the hands of the enemy who has retired, I hereby inform you that it is my desire that every person should pursue his lawful business without fear of interruption. Furthermore, since your city is regarded with affection by the adherents of three of the great religions of mankind, and its soil has been consecrated by the prayers and pilgrimages of multitudes of devout people of these three religions for many centuries, therefore do I make known to you that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest, or customary place of prayer, of whatsoever form of the three religions, will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faiths they are sacred.

"Guardians have been established at Bethlehem and on Rachel's tomb. The tomb at Hebron has been placed under exclusive Moslem control.

"The hereditary custodians of the Wakf at the gates of the Holy Sepulchre have been requested to take up their accustomed duties in remembrance of the magnanimous act of the Caliph Omar, who protected that church."
WAR CABINET, 297.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, December 13, 1917, at 11 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


The Right Hon. W. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minutes 1 to 18).

The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minutes 1 to 18).

The Right Hon. R. Munro, K.C., M.P., Secretary for Scotland (for Minutes 1 to 18).

The Right Hon. H. E. Duke, K.C., M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland (for Minute 1 to 16).

Sir A. C. Geddes, K.C.B., M.P., Minister of National Service (for Minutes 1 to 18).

Professor W. G. Adams (for Minutes 1 to 18).

Mr. J. F. Hope, M.P. (for Minutes 1 to 17).


Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 19 to 29).

The Right Hon. W. Hayes Fisher, M.P., President, Local Government Board (for Minutes 1 to 18).


The Right Hon. Lord Rhondda, Food Controller (for Minutes 1 to 18).

Mr. U. F. Wintour, C.B., C.M.G., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Food (for Minutes 1 to 18).

Major the Hon. Waldorf Astor, M.P. (for Minutes 1 to 18).

Sir A. Lee, K.C.B., M.P., Director-General, Food Production Department (for Minutes 1 to 18).

The Right Hon. Viscount Goschen, Food Production Department (for Minutes 1 to 18).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dally Jones, C.M.G., Acting Secretary.

Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
The Food Situation:

1. THE War Cabinet resumed the discussion of the Food Situation adjourned from yesterday's Meeting (War Cabinet 296, Minute 13), with special reference to Lord Rhondda's Memorandum (Paper G.-180).

The Prime Minister announced that the details of the financial arrangement come to with the American representatives yesterday morning would be settled at a Conference that afternoon.

The War Cabinet decided to request—

The Shipping Controller to give absolute priority to the Food Controller's requirements for tonnage necessary to carry out the programme of food imports.

Meat and Cheese.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 283, Minute 12, dealing with the proposed transfer of the organisation for the purchase of meat and cheese from the Board of Trade to the Ministry of Food, the War Cabinet were informed that the attempts to settle the matter had so far been unsuccessful.

Mr. Long said it was important to bear in mind the Dominions' point of view, and suggested that Sir Thomas McKenzie should be consulted.

The War Cabinet decided to ask—

Lord Milner and Mr. Barnes to go into the matter that afternoon, and, if they failed to come to a final decision, to bring up the matter before the Cabinet to-morrow.

Imports of Tea.

3. Lord Rhondda stated that the shortage of tea was an acute cause of popular discontent, which could be remedied by a relatively small expenditure of tonnage, and he would like the Shipping Controller to be authorised to provide tonnage sufficient to raise at once the stock in bond to 60,000,000 lb. after the grocers' stocks had been replenished. Further, the restriction on the importation of Java and China tea should be removed.

Mr. Long said that he understood that twelve liners were being diverted from the East to the Atlantic in order to bring corn to this country.

Lord Derby stated that, under pressure from the Shipping Controller, he had undertaken not to recruit the full number of Chinese coolies. In that way about 100,000 tops of shipping would be saved between Vancouver and China, provided that France also stopped recruiting in China.

The War Cabinet referred the question to Lord Milner and Mr. Barnes for decision that afternoon, in consultation with the Shipping Controller and Food Controller.

Protection of Labour.

4. Lord Rhondda urged that, in the interests of the food supply, it was essential that labour in flour mills and other food factories should be protected from military service. At present only temporary exemptions were granted.

Sir Auckland Geddes said it was difficult to grant absolute protection, but his Department had already negotiated a large measure of protection, and would continue to do everything possible to meet the wishes of the Food Controller. No serious withdrawal of labour was taking place.

Accommodation and Staff for the Ministry of Food.

5. The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to communicate to all the Departments concerned that in respect of accommodation, printing, and staff the War Cabinet considered that the claims of the Ministry of Food should be treated as being of great urgency.
6. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to the inequality in the distribution of food as between one centre and another. A deputation which had waited on the Prime Minister on the previous day had alleged that in some districts there was an entire lack of butter, lard, margarine, and bacon. It was suggested that greater use ought to be made of the local authorities in the work of distribution, and the administrative experience of Town Clerks and Councillors drawn upon. Further, the Ministry of Food might consider the desirability of making the Co-operative Wholesale Societies and the large private distributing agencies into "controlled establishments" on the analogy of engineering works.

Lord Rhondda stated that at Birmingham and other centres local experiments were being tried with a view to improving distribution and getting rid of queues. He had set up nearly 2,000 local Food Committees, the personnel of which was largely drawn from the local authorities. With regard to local shortages, supplementary allowances had been made to a large number of towns, and steps were being taken to organise distribution schemes for bacon, butter, tea, &c, but they would necessarily take some time to put in motion.

The War Cabinet decided to ask—

The Food Controller to prepare a report on the problem of distribution, with special reference to the points raised in the discussion.

7. The War Cabinet resumed the discussion of the agricultural programme begun at the previous day's meeting (War Cabinet 293, Minute 16), with special reference to Mr. Prothero's Memorandum (Paper G.T.-2767).

Sir Arthur Lee, in the unavoidable absence of the President of the Board of Agriculture, informed the Cabinet that, at a meeting of Agricultural Commissioners, held the previous day, encouraging reports had been received as to the progress made with the agricultural programme. He hoped that at least 80 per cent. of the 2,695,000 acres assigned to breadstuffs would be got ready. This would, roughly, be 2,000,000 acres above the 1916 area. No very reliable estimate could be given of the increased production by small growers, but it was conjectured that there had been an addition of 300,000 tons of potatoes and 300,000 tons of other vegetables from that source in 1917, and it was hoped to increase this total to 1,000,000 tons in 1918.

Mr. Munro dealt with the position in Scotland, where the aim was to plough by 1918, 350,000 acres above the 1916 area. Of this amount, 50,000 acres had been obtained in 1917. The realisation of the complete programme was contingent on the supply of soldier labour of good quality, of superphosphates, and of an adequate staff at the Board of Agriculture.

Mr. Duke said that in Ireland the output in 1917 above that of 1916 had been 1,750,000 tons of potatoes and 536,000 tons of cereals. The increase in acreage for these crops had been 600,000. In 1918 it was hoped that the increase would be, at least, 1,200,000 acres. There were signs that the Sinn Feiners were turning from active rebellion to a policy of holding up crops, but, so far, this movement had not been serious except in two counties.

8. Sir Arthur Lee said the agricultural programme could only be carried out if the urgent minimum requirements specified in the Memorandum (G.T.-2767) were fully and promptly met. The most urgent need at the moment was for skilled ploughmen, of whom 8,500 in all were required. There were 1,000 in sight from the Army in France, and it was hoped to draw 1,000 from German prisoners now in this country. The Department could place 1,000 skilled ploughmen a week, as the horses and harness required were
now in sight. He understood a second 1,000, withdrawn from the army in France would soon be available.

Mr. Munro said it would not be possible in Scotland to return to the army any of the men lent to the farmers. As to additional labour, 1,000 men next spring would suffice. These should be, if possible, skilled agriculturists, and in any case they should be able-bodied.

Mr. Duke said that there was a constant flow from Ireland of from 500 to 1,000 labourers weekly, attracted by high wages on this side. They were, therefore, very near bedrock in Ireland, and had had no skilled ploughmen to spare.

Sir Auckland Geddes said there were perhaps 1,000 skilled ploughmen in the New Zealand Reserves, who could, he understood, be loaned for two and a half months. The New Zealand military authorities were willing to lend them on furlough. In Denmark there were from 3,000 to 5,000 deserters from the German Army now out of work. They were natives of Schleswig-Holstein, and among them were some of the best farmers in Europe. The War Office was raising no objection to their removal, nor was the Foreign Office, subject to the approval of the Danish Government, but it was necessary to arrange tonnage with the Shipping Controller, and to obtain particulars from the Food Production Department as to the farms to which these men could be sent. They would be under the Alien Restriction Act and Orders, and there would be no necessity to provide guards. In Denmark there were between 20,000 and 22,000 unemployed Danes. Probably many of these had had some experience of the land as small-holders; others were butter and margarine makers. He gathered from the Ministry of Labour that there would not be any Trade Union difficulties in connection with their employment in agriculture.

3. Sir Arthur Lee pointed out that it was essential that the War Office and the Prisoners of War Committee should agree to relax the regulations for guarding and accommodating German prisoners, if the maximum advantage was to be obtained from their employment.

General Macready said the War Office was quite prepared to make the necessary relaxations, provided the War Cabinet was prepared to meet the criticism which always arose from the House of Commons and in the press when a prisoner escaped. Up to the present only one officer and two men had got away from the country.

Lord Derby said he was quite willing that the prisoners should go out in twos and threes to farmers, but it was impossible to have tiny camps all over the country. Surveillance could be left to the local police, and weekly reports could be obtained as to the conduct of the prisoners.

Sir Auckland Geddes urged that there should be an industrial census taken of the German prisoners in France and this country similar to that which has been taken in the Home forces, and that, as the ploughmen were discovered, they should be sent in batches to be employed on the land.

Mr. Hope said that as far as the prisoners in the United Kingdom were concerned, instructions to this effect had been given months ago by the Prisoners of War Employment Committee, but they apparently had not been carried out.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The restrictions affecting German prisoners loaned to farmers could be relaxed as far as safely thought possible, the details to be arranged by the Departments concerned.

(b.) A trade index of the German prisoners should be made, and skilled ploughmen released in batches as discovered.
10. Sir Arthur Lee stated that the consumption of sulphate of ammonia for munition purposes was now expected to be greater than previously contemplated, and that there was a prospective deficiency of 40,000 tons in the supplies available for food production. As regards superphosphates, the Cabinet had decided that 50,000 tons per month of phosphate rock should be imported into this country for the five months 1st June to 31st October. Only 149,000 tons have so far been imported instead of 250,000 tons. Sir Arthur Lee pointed out the serious effect of these deficiencies on the future food supplies of the country.

11. Sir Arthur Lee called attention to the prolonged delays which have occurred in the delivery of tractors and other machinery ordered by the Department last spring, and to the importance of providing adequate supplies of fuel and spare parts for all agricultural machinery, whether privately owned or in the hands of the Department. Facilities for the provision of steam tackle and additional equipment were also urgently required.

Mr. Long said that the oil situation had improved within the last week and was now somewhat more secure. He hoped it would be possible to supply all the oil required for agricultural purposes.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to call the attention of the Minister of Munitions and the Shipping Controller to the position as described by the Director-General of Food Production, and to the importance of expediting the shipment of machinery from America and of granting the other facilities to manufacturers of steam tackle and equipment now asked for.

12. Sir Arthur Lee stated that his Department was in urgent need of further staff accommodation of about thirty to forty rooms. He did not press for a building in Whitehall, as he knew that the Office of Works had well-nigh exhausted the possibilities in that district.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The First Commissioner of Works should be requested to provide the accommodation referred to as soon as possible, but in his efforts to meet the demands for new accommodation now being made, should inform Departments that they must be prepared, if necessary, to take offices at some distance from Whitehall.

13. The War Cabinet requested—

The Food Controller to make an announcement at the earliest possible moment of the official prices for next year's grain, potatoes, and milk.

14. In response to a request from Sir Arthur Lee to be allowed by the Treasury a reasonable latitude in incurring minor expenditure on the Agricultural Programme, the Chancellor of the Exchequer undertook to consider any representations made to him on the subject.

15. The Chancellor of the Exchequer took note of representations made by Mr. Munro on behalf of the Scottish Board of Agriculture for an increase of staff.
Allotments.

16. Dr. Addison called attention to the insecurity felt over the country by the men who, in order to increase the food supply, had undertaken the cultivation of small patches of ground under the Cultivation of Land Act. It was not necessary to raise at this juncture questions of ownership or saleable interests, but only to safeguard the liberty to cultivate and provide security of tenure during the war.

It was suggested that a public official statement might meet the case.

(No decision was come to.)

Supply of Milk for Young Children and Mothers.

17. The War Cabinet had before them the following documents:

- Memorandum by the Food Controller (Paper G.T.-2861).
- Notes on Lord Rhondda's Memorandum by the Chairman of the Committee on the Production and Distribution of Milk (Paper G.T.-2898).
- Note by the Medical Department of the Board of Education (Paper G.T.-2955).

It was pointed out that there were serious objections to the principle of subsidising recommended by the Food Controller, and doubts were thrown on the extent and urgency of the need for cheap milk, in view of the high wages now so widely prevailing.

Mr. Hayes Fisher said he would not object if the scheme were confined to necessitous children, and if suitable machinery was used to discover them.

Major Waldorf Astor said that there was no milk famine at present, but there undoubtedly was bad distribution. His Committee were in favour of any proposal to supply cheap or, if need be, free milk to necessitous children. They believed that this could be done by—

(a.) Empowering the Sanitary Authorities to give, or sell at reduced prices, milk to necessitous children under school age, the necessary grants being made partly out of Exchequer grants and partly out of local rates;

(b.) By the more general feeding of children of school age under the Provision of Meals Act, if and where this was necessary.

Mr. Herbert Fisher said that his Department agreed with Major Astor's report.

The War Cabinet decided—

To accept the recommendations of the Committee on the Production and Distribution of Milk, as set forth above by the Chairman.

Oats for Horses Engaged in Winter Racing.

18. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by Lord Rhondda (G.T.-2929) in which he expressed his view that not a single pound of oats should be allowed to racing horses, having regard to the very grave shortage of cereals with which the country is threatened.
Lord Rhondda drew attention to the serious effect that allowing a ration of oats to horses engaged in steeplechasing would have upon public opinion in the United States of America.

On the other hand, it was pointed out that it was impossible entirely to prevent racing in England if it were allowed to continue in Ireland, where it could not be stopped. It was also stated that horse-racing is still carried on in Germany.

The War Cabinet authorised—

The Food Controller to issue licences to allow horses engaged in fixtures, agreed by the Board of Trade, to receive a ration of oats; the ration to be 15 lb. a day each for a number of horses not exceeding 500, and the period of the ration not to extend beyond the middle of April.

Shelling of Funchal.

19. The First Sea Lord reported that 2 enemy submarines had shelled Funchal, Madeira, at daybreak on the 12th instant, 3 persons being killed and 17 wounded. Slight damage was done to the town.

Bombing Raid.

20. The First Sea Lord stated that a bombing raid had been carried out on the night of the 11-12th on Bruges Dock, 2½ tons of bombs being dropped. One of our machines is missing.

Submarines

21. The First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that—

(a) A motor-launch ran over an enemy submarine, submerged in the vicinity of the Lizard, on the 12th instant. The submarine rose to the surface and the motor-launch attacked her with gunfire, but was unable to use depth charges owing to having carried away her propeller-shaft and rudder.

(b) Explosions had occurred in the deep mine field in the vicinity of the Folkestone Gate, which indicated the possible loss of an enemy submarine.

Enemy Naval Activity in the North Sea.

22. The First Sea Lord reported that information had been received that, on the 12th instant, enemy destroyers had attacked a Danish steamer off Longstone and a fishing vessel off the Tyne, the destroyers being accompanied by an airship. A report has since been received which indicated that it was possible that the enemy vessels were submarines and not destroyers. The presence of an airship was doubtful.

Attack on a Convoy.

23. The First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that a convoy of 6 ships, of which 1 was British, 2 Norwegian, 2 Swedish, and 1 Danish, under the escort of the destroyers “Partridge” and “Pellew” and 4 trawlers, had been attacked by 4 enemy destroyers about 34 miles off the coast of Norway at about 1 P.M. on the 12th instant. Full particulars of the action had not yet been received, but it was understood that the “Partridge” had been sunk and that the “Pellew” had reached Norwegian waters, being towed in by a Norwegian torpedo-boat, her engines being out of action. The convoy was stated by the commanding officer of the “Pellew” to have scattered when the attack took place, but no news had yet been received as to whether the convoy had arrived in Norwegian ports, although enquiries were being made to that end. The Admiral at Longhope had reported, however, that the convoy had been destroyed.
The First Sea Lord indicated that there was a British force of two light cruisers and four destroyers 40 miles off when the action took place, also a light cruiser squadron to the southward, but they had been unable to intercept the enemy, who had presumably slipped through during the night.

As regards the protection of convoys in future, Admiral Jellicoe stated that there were two courses open to us: one was to send the convoys on a far northerly course, so that the enemy would not be able to take advantage of the dark hours to evade our patrols, but this would double the length of the voyage; the other was, to run the risk of having battle cruisers, cruisers or light cruisers in close touch with the convoy. If this latter course were adopted the enemy would obtain information of our movements and would undoubtedly concentrate submarines to attack them, and we had not a sufficient number of destroyers available to provide the requisite screen. The question was under consideration. The First Sea Lord indicated the very slight amount of help in the provision of destroyers which we might expect to receive from the United States in the near future.

The War Cabinet discussed the question of mentioning the engagement and possible loss, by the First Lord in the statement on shipping matters which he was to make to the House in the afternoon, and decided that—

As the information at present received was so uncertain, no particulars should be announced pending fuller data being forthcoming.

The Western Front.

24. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that two more German divisions had been transferred from Flanders to the Cambrai region. He added that the fighting at Bullecourt had been severe. Two attacks had been made by the enemy at dawn, after heavy artillery preparation, but both attacks had been beaten off with heavy losses to the enemy, only a small portion of trench being lost by us.

The Invasion of Italy:

25. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had received information from General Plumer to the effect that the Italian commander was satisfied with the results of the recent fighting on the Italian front.

The Italian Command.

26. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had received a telegram from General Foch informing him that the Italians were raising the question of exercising more control over the French force in Italy, and asking whether he was prepared to adopt the principle of complete Italian command over the French and British contingents. General Robertson read to the War Cabinet the original instructions given to General Plumer.

The War Cabinet held the view that, at this stage, it was unnecessary to consider the question, more particularly as General Diaz, who was in command of the Italian troops, was an untried man; but that if the Italians raised the question at a later date, after the abilities of General Diaz had been proved, the matter would be fully considered. They therefore authorised—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff to inform General Foch that the War Cabinet did not at present propose to make any alteration in the existing instructions.
Palestine.  

27. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff asked to be informed of the wishes of the War Cabinet in connection with the preparation of a report which he had been asked to make, relative to an advance in Palestine, based generally on the telegram that was sent to General Allenby in accordance with the Cabinet's directions (War Cabinet 296, Minute 5).

The War Cabinet decided that—

The General Staff should submit for consideration a project for carrying out the following alternative policies:—

(a.) Complete the conquest of the whole of Palestine, and hold the country for the remainder of the war.

(b.) Continue the advance through Palestine and Syria to the vicinity of Aleppo, so as permanently to interrupt railway communication with Mesopotamia.

For the purposes of (a) Palestine to be considered as embracing the whole country between Beersheba and Dan.

Guns for Italy.  

28. With reference to War Cabinet 294, Minute 6, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that it had been his intention to send from Egypt to General Plumer two batteries of 6-inch howitzers out of those now in reserve at Alexandria, as he was of opinion that General Allenby had at his disposal at present more howitzers than he had occasion to use.

As the weather on the Western front may be expected in the near future to prevent any large offensive operations in that quarter, and also bearing in mind the difficulty of providing the requisite shipping for the transfer of these batteries from Egypt, and the possible need of sending them back in the event of an extended advance in Palestine, the War Cabinet decided that—

Before the military authorities took any action for the removal of these guns, General Allenby should be asked if he will require the same in the event of his carrying out further operations.

Naval Allied Council.  

29. In continuation of War Cabinet 290, Minute 12, the War Cabinet had under further consideration the question of the publication of an abridged communication in regard to the Naval Allied Council.

The War Cabinet held the opinion that it was essential that the Inter-Allied Military Council should have for their assistance and guidance to their deliberations the services of an experienced naval officer, not necessarily of high rank, with the "sea sense," who was fully acquainted with naval policy and the means by which it was best possible to carry out the same.

The War Cabinet were averse to the creation of a new and independent body to deal with naval matters only, and desired some organisation that would in any case act as a connecting link between the Military and Naval Councils, in view of the need for co-operation that frequently arises between the two services in the many operations of war.

It was mentioned that the Prime Minister had stated in the House of Commons that a British naval representative would be attached to General Wilson, and it was suggested that if we had a representative the French and Italians would also wish to appoint one of their naval officers.

The First Lord stated that the Admiralty had proposed to detail the British Naval Liaison Officer in Paris as Liaison Officer between
the Admiralty and the Inter-Allied Military Council, and that General Wilson had been asked if such a course would be agreeable to him. Sir Eric Geddes added that the Military Council, through the Liaison Officer, would be able to acquire any further information or opinion that they might desire. The First Lord pointed out that, from a naval point of view, the efforts, &c., of the Allies were not comparable to those which prevailed from the military aspect. In the main theatre of naval warfare the Americans and ourselves provided the whole of the Allied force which was working under the British Admiralty, whilst in the Mediterranean the whole of the Allied naval force was under the command of the French Commander-in-Chief. The Allies had arranged that, as a general rule, the meetings of the Allied Naval Council would be held in London—not in France—under the presidency of the First Lord of the Admiralty, the permanent staff being located in London under Admiralty control.

The First Sea Lord stated that he had frequent conversations with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, but that they nearly all related to the provision of escort, and he thought it possible that the Inter-Allied Military Council needed a shipping expert even more than a naval expert, except for certain special operations.

The War Cabinet requested—

The First Lord to confer with the First Sea Lord, and to report as to the practicability of appointing a suitable naval officer to the staff of the Inter-Allied Military Council, such officer being also associated with the Allied Naval Council.

The issue of the abridged statement to the press simultaneously with the other parties to the agreement was approved.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 13, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 298.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, December 14, 1917, at 11 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P. (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The following were also present:—

Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., C.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 10 to 15).


Mr. P. Lloyd George, Ministry of National Service (for Minute 19).

Mr. F. G. Kellaway, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 19).

The Right Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, LL.D., M.P., President, Board of Education (for Minute 1).


The Right Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B. (for Minute 3).

Major-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 6 to 12).


The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction (for Minute 19).

The Right Hon. R. Munro, K.C., M.P., Secretary for Scotland (for Minute 1).

Sir J. Struthers, K.C.B., LL.D., Scots Education Department (for Minute 1).

The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minute 19).

Sir D. J. Shackleton, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour (for Minute 19).

Mr. H. C. M. Lambert, C.B., Colonial Office (for Minute 19).

Mr. I. C. Gibbon, Local Government Board (for Minute 18).


Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Colonel E. D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Sir Mark Sykes, Assistant Secretary.
1. THE Secretary for Scotland brought up for the approval of the War Cabinet the Education (Scotland) Bill, 1917, as explained by his Memorandum (Paper G.T.-2318), and pointed out the importance and urgency of the question.

The President of the Board of Education explained that the passing of this Bill would much help educational reform in England.

The War Cabinet approved the Bill.

2. The Secretary submitted for approval a request from Mr. Austen Chamberlain that Lord Buckmaster, who had been appointed a member of the Inter-Allied Council (War Cabinet Minute 4) should also be appointed a member of the American Board.

This proposal was approved by the War Cabinet.

3. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Reconstruction (Paper G.T.-2888) regarding the publication of a letter from him to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on the post-war disposal of Government property.

The War Cabinet agreed to the subject matter contained in the letter, but it was pointed out that its publication might be undesirable, owing to the wrong impression that might be given as to the views of the Government on a speedy ending to the war.

It was also pointed out that the Dominions were anxious to be permitted to acquire, if they wished so to do, property accumulated by the Government during the war.

The War Cabinet approved the letter, subject to the addition of a sentence which would ensure that the information it contained should be made available to the Dominions.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The letter should not be made public.

(b.) The authorities should be notified when Lord Salisbury’s Committee found it advisable.

For Minute 3 (c) substitute:-

Questions arising from time to time which affect Treasury considerations should be referred to and determined by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Minister of Reconstruction and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

In reply to a question of Lord Salisbury’s he was informed that the property concerned included that owned by the British Government in France as well as in the British Isles, and property which may become surplus during, as well as on the termination of, the war.

4. The War Cabinet received a deputation, under the leadership of Lord Rothschild, conveying the thanks of the representatives of the Zionist movement for the message of goodwill sent by the Government to the Jewish people, and congratulating the Government on the fall of Jerusalem.

5. The War Cabinet received a deputation, under the leadership of Count Zoghed, on behalf of the Palestinian and Syrian Arabs in England (Moslem and Christian). Count Zoghed read out a message of congratulation to His Majesty, the British
The "Western Front"

6. The Director of Military Intelligence stated that no news had come in from the Western front, but that the Military Attaché in Petrograd reported that the Germans were moving the greater part of their heavy artillery from the Eastern front to the West.

7. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that the enemy had made a heavy attack on the Brenta-Piave section of the Italian front; that the Italians had been forced to evacuate certain advanced portions of their line, but had retaken them. On the section of the line held by the French, and near Colberetta, the enemy had forced the Italians to withdraw from certain advanced posts, but they were holding their own well on the whole.

Salonica.

8. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that there was a movement of Bulgarian troops towards the lakes, six battalions having appeared as reinforcements to the west of Lake Ochrida. This might be done for two purposes—

(a.) To release Austrian troops to attack Valona.
(b.) In order to establish claims on territory in Albania.

Palestine.

9. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that a slight advance had been made by one of the British divisions.

Russia

10. The Director of Military Intelligence read a telegram from General Knox, at Petrograd, giving a summary of the conditions proposed by the Germans for an armistice with the Russians. These conditions, which amounted to eleven in number, had been refused by the Russian delegation, but General Knox was of opinion that something of the sort would eventually be accepted by the Russians.

The Director of Military Intelligence reported that he had heard from Tiflis that it was proposed to form a Federation of Cossacks willing to continue the struggle against the Central Powers, if money and equipment were furnished, and referred the matter for the decision of the War Cabinet. He explained that there had been a tendency in one quarter to lay the blame on the War Office for the lack of financial assistance furnished by General Shore.

It was pointed out that Sir Charles Marling had accepted responsibility for any financial outlay that might be incurred in that quarter (telegram No. 438, dated the 13th December, 1917); that the subject of financial support for this Federation was really separate from that for the Caucasus; and that there was some danger, if care were not taken, of support being given to different separate organisations which had varying, if not actually hostile, views. The Director of Military Intelligence explained that the War Cabinet had already approved of advances of ten millions to the Ukraine, and to General Kaledin, and of financial assistance being given to the Armenians.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Any sum of money, required for the purpose of maintaining alive in South-East Russia the resistance to the Central
1. The Secretary for Scotland brought up for the approval of the War Cabinet the Education (Scotland) Bill, 1917, as explained by his Memorandum (Paper G.T.-2818), and pointed out the importance and urgency of the question.

The President of the Board of Education explained that the passing of this Bill would much help educational reform in England.

The War Cabinet approved the Bill.

2. The Secretary submitted for approval a request from Mr. Austen Chamberlain that Lord Buckmaster, who had been appointed a member of the Inter-Allied Council (War Cabinet Minute 239) should also be appointed a member of the American Board.

This proposal was approved by the War Cabinet.

3. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Reconstruction (Paper G.T.-2888) regarding the publication of a letter from him to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on the post-war disposal of Government property.

The War Cabinet agreed to the subject matter contained in the letter, but it was pointed out that its publication might be undesirable, owing to the wrong impression that might be given as to the views of the Government on a speedy ending to the war.

It was also pointed out that the Dominions were anxious to be permitted to acquire, if they wished so to do, property accumulated by the Government during the war.

The War Cabinet approved the letter, subject to the addition of a sentence which would ensure that the information it contained should be made available to the Dominions.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The letter should not be made public.

(b.) The authorities should be notified when Lord Salisbury's Committee found it advisable.

(c.) The exact form of the letter should be settled between the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Minister of Munitions, and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, so that the Treasury should be instructed on the necessary lines of control.

(d.) Government factories and shipping should be treated as a separate subject, after consideration by experts, and proposals be submitted later by the Minister of Reconstruction.

In reply to a question of Lord Salisbury's he was informed that the property concerned included that owned by the British Government in France as well as in the British Isles, and property which may become surplus during, as well as on the termination of, the war.

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The Invasion of Italy

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It was pointed out that Sir Charles Marling had accepted responsibility for any financial outlay that might be incurred in that quarter (telegram No. 453, dated the 13th December, 1917); that the subject of financial support for this Federation was really separate from that for the Caucasus; and that there was some danger, if care were not taken, of support being given to different separate organisations which had varying, if not actually hostile, views. The Director of Military Intelligence explained that the War Cabinet had already approved of advances of ten millions to the Ukraine, and to General Kaledin, and of financial assistance being given to the Armenians.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Any sum of money, required for the purpose of maintaining alive in South-East Russia the resistance to the Central
Powers, considered necessary by the War Office, in consultation with the Foreign Office, should be furnished; the money to be paid in instalments so long as the recipients continued the struggle.

Roumania.

11. The attention of the War Cabinet was called to telegram No. 759 from Sir G. Barkey, reporting the prevalence of a more hopeful feeling in Roumania, and suggesting that financial support should be promised.

Armenia.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 294, Minute 14, the Director of Military Intelligence stated that he had communicated the decision of the War Cabinet promising assistance to the Armenians, and had received from General Shore a telegram to the effect that the Armenian fraternity had collected a sum of between 5 and 10 million roubles, and giving figures for the cost of mobilising 20,000 men and maintaining 40,000 men for three months. The Director of Military Intelligence stated that the most valuable help in this part of the world might be expected from the Armenians, who had every reason to fight to the bitter end.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Sir C. Marling should be authorised to open a credit at once to help the Armenians

The Director of Military Intelligence undertook to make the necessary arrangements.

Losses of Airships.

13. The First Sea Lord reported the following losses of British airships—

(a.) One destroyed by an enemy seaplane or aeroplane off the Swart Bank.

(b.) One wrecked off St. Abbs.

(c.) One landed at Rotterdam, owing to engine failure.

Bombing of Berlin—Constantinople Railway.

14. The First Sea Lord reported that on the 12th December the Berlin-Constantinople Railway was attacked by aircraft, trains being bombed and fired into by machine-guns.

Scandinavian Convoy.

15. With reference to War Cabinet 297, Minute 22, the First Sea Lord reported that no definite information had yet been received as to the fate of the merchant-ships that composed the Scandinavian convoy referred to therein, but it was stated in a telegram from Christiania that they had been sunk, as well as two of the German destroyers. The Germans had as yet not issued any communiqué on the subject, and we should not get definite information from British sources until our cruisers returned to harbour, which would probably be on the following morning. Information had just been received to the effect that the Norwegian Government had authorised the departure of H.M.S. “Pellew.”

The First Sea Lord undertook to issue as full a communiqué as possible not later than Saturday, the 15th December.

Palestine.

16. The Secretary read to the War Cabinet a telegram from General Allenby, thanking the Government, on behalf of himself and the forces under his command, for the telegram of appreciation that had been sent to him, in accordance with the provisions of War Cabinet 296, Minute 6.

The War Cabinet authorised its publication in the press.
17. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum (Paper G.T.-2782) by General Smuts, as to the rank and titles of officers of the Air Force.

General Smuts explained that the Air Board had suggested a mixture of naval and military titles. The Admiralty, however, were averse to this, and suggested military titles only, or fabricated titles suggestive of the air. The War Office thought that the titles should be distinct from those which appertain either to the navy or the army, and further objected to the Air Board's proposal, on the ground that it gave the naval titles to senior officers, and military titles to junior officers, which would be liable to cause resentment.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The officers of the Air Force should receive military titles.

18. The War Cabinet had before them the following Papers:—

Memorandum by Mr. Illingworth (Paper G.T.-2708).

Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Paper G.T.-2790).

Memorandum by Mr. Hayes Fisher (Paper G.T.-2938).

The Postmaster-General said that according to the Treasury circular of the 10th February, 1917, conscientious objectors exempted by Tribunals and allowed to remain on their civil duties, should receive only their former actual rate of remuneration, without increment, or the rate which would be paid to a temporary substitute performing the duty, whichever was less, and their service should not count for pension or increment. About 100 persons retained by the Post Office were affected. These men had taken advantage of their statutory rights, and were legally exempted from military service; they were retained in the Post Office as doing work of national importance only on the recommendation of the Tribunal concerned. If their wages were reduced the Trades Unions would claim that they were being sweated. The difficulty of enforcing penalties now was aggravated by the lapse of time, as some of the men concerned had been receiving full pay for nearly 18 months. All the men were skilled, and it would be very difficult to replace them. He did not think a strike would break out on this issue, but an adverse decision would certainly tend to increase labour difficulties throughout the Service.

The War Cabinet considered two courses which were open to them if the question were raised in the House of Commons. On the one hand, if the policy of the Postmaster-General were adopted it could be admitted that these men had been overlooked, that they had been for eighteen months in receipt of ordinary pay, and that to reduce their pay or dismiss them now would savour of petty persecution. On the other hand, if the Treasury circular were enforced it could be pointed out that it was unfair to give these men preferential treatment when similar conscientious objectors in other departments were suffering disabilities.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Postmaster-General should give notice to terminate the present arrangement at the end of the year, when the terms of the Treasury Circular of the 10th February, 1917, should be put into force.

19. With reference to War Cabinet 168, Minute 2, the War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum on the recruiting of labour from the Dominions and Colonies by the Ministry of Labour (Paper G.T.-2880).
Sir David Shackleton stated that the decision given by the Cabinet on the 22nd June, 1917, did not cover the recruiting and importation of workmen of British nationality from the Dominions, Colonies, or elsewhere abroad. At the present time labour was being imported from the Dominions by several Departments, and it was desirable that, as in the case of alien labour, there should be no possibility of competition or duplication as between Government Departments.

Mr. Lambert said that the only caveat Mr. Long wished to put in was that if any fresh field was to be opened up it was most important that application should be made to the Dominion or Colonial Government affected, through the Colonial Office.

Sir Auckland Geddes said it would be necessary that the agreement between the Ministry of National Service and the other Departments should be extended so as to cover labour brought in from the Dominions and Colonies. Under these agreements all prospective bulk demands for labour by Government Departments are to be notified by the Department concerned to the Ministry of National Service, which, jointly with the Ministry of Labour, prepares schemes to meet them; and any new scheme for recruiting labour from the Dominions or abroad is to be agreed between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of National Service, the actual recruiting and transfer of such labour being carried out by the Ministry of Labour.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) The Ministry of Labour should become definitely responsible for dealing with the recruiting and importation of workmen of British nationality from the Dominions and Colonies or elsewhere abroad, and a Minute should be circulated to Government Departments instructing them to consult the Ministry of Labour, at an early stage, in connection with any proposals to recruit any such labour, and informing them that the actual work of obtaining it should be entrusted to the Minister of Labour.

(b.) The agreement between the Ministry of National Service, the Ministry of Labour, and other Departments should be extended so as to embrace consultation on the importation of the labour referred to above.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 14, 1917.
Your Excellency,

The delegates of the Arab members of the Syrian and Palestinian colonies in London and Manchester have begged to call on you to-day to express to your Excellency their congratulations on the victory and capture of Jerusalem.

They moreover express the desire that you should transmit to His Majesty and to His Majesty's forces their heartfelt congratulation, and the hope and the assurance that His Majesty's armies and the detachments of French and Italian contingents should continue their victorious march for the deliverance of the populations they are freeing from the despotism of Turkish rule.

And the delegates of the Arab members of the Syrian and Palestinian colonies in London request your Excellency to convey to General Allenby and to the valorous troops under his command the sincere expression of their gratitude for the sacrifices they are making to further the aims and aspirations of these populations for a lasting and hopeful establishment under the guidance and tutelage of their deliverers.
SECRET.

WAR CABINET, 299.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, December 17, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:


The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Major-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.


Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 9, 10, and 11).


The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minette 15 and 16).

The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minutes 15 and 16).

Mr. P. Lloyd George, Ministry of National Service (for Minutes 15 and 16).

Captain L. S. Amery, M.P.


Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.
1. THE Director of Military Intelligence reported that a leave train, containing French troops on leave from Italy, had been derailed at St. Michel de Maurienne at midnight on the 12th instant. Traffic had been suspended for forty-eight hours. The question was asked whether this railway accident might be a case of sabotage. The Director of Military Intelligence replied that this was not known, but the French and Italians were taking all necessary precautions to protect the Mont Cenis tunnel by installing electric light and mounting guards, &c. It was not unlikely that the enemy were trying to cut the communications between France and Italy.

2. The Director of Military Intelligence reported the receipt of a telegram from General Plumer, dated the 15th December, 1917, to the effect that the enemy's artillery had been very active against the Northern sector. The Italians had been forced to draw back from Col Beretta, which was an important point. The Italian counter-attack had failed, but they proposed making another. The enemy's attacks had been very persistent, but the Italian command were not discouraged. There were now indications of snow.

3. The Director of Military Intelligence said that a telegram had been received from General Plumer, reporting considerable local fighting, with varying success. General Diaz was generally satisfied with the situation, and greatly pleased with the reports as to the state of the moral of the troops which he had had from his army commanders.

4. With reference to M.P.C. 4 (3), the Director of Military Intelligence read the proposed message to be sent by the Prime Minister to the Italian Ambassador for Signor Orlando, in which it was indicated that German reinforcements were going to France rather than to Italy, and that since the 23rd October only one German division had been actually sent from Russia to the Italian front. The message also added that there were now 65 British battalions in Italy and 54 French.

   After some discussion, the War Cabinet—
   (a.) Approved the proposed message, but requested the Director of Military Intelligence to insert an additional paragraph on the subject of the artillery position on the Italian front. A copy of the message, as sent, is reproduced in Appendix I.
   (b.) In this connection, they also instructed the Secretary to telegraph to General Wilson to find out what the artillery position was on the Italian front.

5. The Director of Military Intelligence said that General Allenby had reported that he had advanced his left centre one and a half miles north-east of Ramleh. Another Turkish division was reported on the 20th November passing south from Damascus en route from the Caucasus. It was therefore possible that General Allenby might meet near Nablus two more divisions, of which one might be German. The number of rifles in a Turkish division amounted to from 4,500 to 5,000. The reason why the Germans had not arrived on the scene earlier, in order to prevent General Allenby capturing Jerusalem, was probably that these particular German divisions had only been formed in Germany during September, and their advanced units did not leave Germany until the 20th October, arriving in Constantinople on the 7th November.
Exploiting recent Success.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 296, Minute 5, the Secretary of State for War reported that he had heard from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who was in France, that General Allenby's reply does not assist very much.

After some discussion as to whether another telegram should be sent to General Allenby on the subject, the War Cabinet decided that—

The matter should wait until the following day, when the Chief of the Imperial General Staff would be back in London.

The Western Front: Extension of British Line.

7. The Secretary of State for War reported the receipt of a telegram from Sir William Robertson, who requested that the Cabinet might give some time on the following day for the discussion of the question of an immediate extension of the British line on the Western front.

The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to arrange accordingly, when drawing up the Agenda for the following day.

Battle of Cambrai: Inquiry.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 292, Minute 8, the Secretary of State for War reported that everything possible was being done by Sir Douglas Haig to expedite the Inquiry in regard to the Battle of Cambrai.

In view, however, of the importance of knowing the result of the Inquiry in time for the House of Commons Debate on Thursday, the 20th inst, the War Cabinet requested—

The Secretary of State for War to telegraph to Sir Douglas Haig asking him for a report on the matter by next Thursday.

Shipping Losses.

9. The Deputy First Sea Lord made the usual statement of Shipping Losses.

Scandinavian Convoy.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 298, Minute 15, the Deputy First Sea Lord reported that a telegram had now been received from the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet in regard to this disaster. It appeared that our two destroyers, the "Partridge" and the "Pellew," were attacked by three enemy destroyers. The "Partridge" was sunk with all hands; the "Pellew" was damaged, but got into Norwegian waters safely. The remaining enemy destroyer proceeded to the rear of the convoy and sunk it. The British ships which were ordered to cover this convoy, although they received an emergency signal from the "Partridge," had arrived too late, and an inquiry was being held in this connection. The German ships appeared to have got back safely. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that a full account of the disaster to the Scandinavian convoy would be included in the First Lord's statement in the House of Commons that afternoon.

China.

11. The Deputy First Sea Lord said that the Commander-in-Chief, China, reported that, owing to long absence of foreign gunboats, the Chinese were less careful of foreigners' lives. At Shasze a British steamer had been fired on and then boarded by troops, who threatened to shoot the master unless the money carried on board was handed over. The master refused, and the ship was finally allowed to proceed. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that it had been decided, in consequence, to send two of the bigger gunboats.
at present up-river in Mesopotamia, to China, having regard to the fact that the force of gunboats in Mesopotamia was considered to be larger than was necessary.

12. The Director of Military Intelligence read to the War Cabinet the information which had been supplied to the press describing the recent operations in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

The War Cabinet were informed that there had been considerable publicity given to the fall of Jerusalem, and that the event had produced a marked effect throughout the world.

13. With reference to Foreign Office telegram No. 765, dated the 11th December, 1917, from Sir G. Barclay, confirming an identical telegram sent to Paris, London, Rome, and Washington, Lord Hardinge read a draft reply prepared by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Appendix II). Lord Hardinge stated that the Italian reply had gone further than the reply suggested by Mr. Balfour.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The telegram as prepared by Mr. Balfour should be sent to Sir G. Barclay;

and instructed—

Lord Hardinge to communicate its contents to the French Government that afternoon.

14. The War Cabinet were informed that no confirmation of the alleged capture of Kaledin by the Bolsheviks had been received.

15. The War Cabinet had before them a draft Report prepared by the Secretary for the Cabinet Committee on Man-power (Paper M.P.C.-14).

Lord Derby undertook to supply revised and additional estimates required by the War Cabinet.

The consideration of the Report was adjourned until that afternoon.

16. The War Cabinet considered whether a full statement on man-power policy should be made in the House of Commons on Wednesday or Thursday next, or adjourned until after the Recess. It was generally agreed to be undesirable to make such a statement this week, more especially as there would not be time for negotiations with the trade unions, to whom certain conditional pledges had been given by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Arthur Henderson.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W., December 17, 1917.
APPENDIX I.

__Note for the Italian Ambassador.__

PLEASE inform the President of the Council that the British War Cabinet is watching the situation in Italy closely. So far they have been unable to obtain any definite information of a further enemy concentration on the Italian front, though such a concentration is not improbable. On the other hand, reports from a variety of sources have been received to the effect that the enemy intends to transfer large bodies of troops to the Franco-British front, and definite and precise information has been obtained that since the 28th October nine German divisions have been moved from the Russian to the Franco-British front, while during the same period definite information has been obtained of the move of only one German division from the Russian to the Italian front. At the present time there are four French and two British divisions in reserve on the Italian front which have not yet been engaged since their arrival in Italy, and the fifth British division is completing its arrival. This brings the number of British battalions in Italy up to sixty-five as against fifty-four French battalions, and the fifth British division is being followed by additional heavy artillery, arrangements for the despatch of which have been completed. In view of the lateness of the season, which makes operations in the mountains increasingly difficult and dangerous to the enemy, and of the fact that, in addition to the large Franco-British reserves, the Italian reserves are being rapidly reconstituted, the War Cabinet trust that the forces now in Italy will suffice to meet any effort which the enemy may make, but as to this they are in constant communication with the Commander of the British Forces in Italy, who has been instructed to report if he considers further reinforcements necessary.

December 16, 1917.

APPENDIX II.

__Telegram to Sir G. Barclay (Jassy).__

AS stated in my telegram of the 15th, His Majesty's Government are deeply impressed with the courage and loyalty of the Roumanian Government and army, and fully recognise the extreme gravity of their position should a united Russia conclude a separate peace with Germany and Austria. Meanwhile, however, this has not occurred; and though there is apparently little or nothing to be expected of the Russian army for purposes even of organised defence, it does not appear certain that every province is prepared tamely to acquiesce in German domination, if and when the Government at Petrograd should advocate surrender at discretion. His Majesty's Government feel that, deplorable as is the course pursued by the Bolshevik party, it will be worse than useless to attempt to modify it by an appeal to tactics. If the Russians are resolved to fight no more, the pledges of the late Czar will not modify their determination. But this does not relieve us of the duty of supporting the Roumanian army by all the means in our power.

Geographical reasons preclude us from sending men, but we are supplying money not merely to Roumania but to all the regions in Southern and Eastern Russia where there is the least hope that the people are prepared either to aid the Roumanian army or to fight for their liberties against the common enemy, whether German or Turkish.

We know of no other or better way of aiding the gallant Roumanian army, nor has any other way been suggested to us. If it fails, and if that army is plainly in immediate peril of complete isolation, we cannot require it to carry on a hopeless struggle. This would complete the ruin of Roumania, and would not help the Allies. In such circumstances there would be nothing left but to destroy the military stores and equipment, and make the best terms possible for the army, the country, and the dynasty. But this tragic consummation can only be contemplated in the last extremity, which even at the worst should not occur until the armistice comes to an end.

In the meanwhile every effort should be made to establish relations with any forces which for local or other reasons are unwilling to acquiesce in a policy of general surrender.

December 16, 1917.

A. J. B.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, December 17, 1917, at 3.30 p.m.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P., G.C.B., O.C.M.G.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:


Major P. Lloyd Greame, Ministry of National Service.

The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour.

The Right Hon. Sir A. Stanley, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

Captain L. C. M. S. Amery, M.P.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Major-General Sir G. M. W. Maudonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.


The Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions.


Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Man-Power.

IN reference to War Cabinet 299, Minute 15, the War Cabinet continued their discussion of the draft report of the Man-Power Committee.*

* The process-oral of the morning and afternoon discussions will be found among the Man-Power Committee Records under M.P.O.-18 and M.P.O.-19 respectively.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W., December 18, 1917.
Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, December 18, 1917, at 11 a.m.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G. (for Minutes 1 to 9).

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1 to 3).

Captain L. S. Amery, M.P. (for Minutes 1 to 8).

Professor W. G. Adams (for Minute 3).

General Vicomte de la Panoise (for Minute 10).

Colonel Duffieux (for Minute 10).

Major Serot (for Minute 10).

Major Fagalde (for Minute 10).

M. Mantoux (for Minute 10).


Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Statement in Parliament

1. THE Prime Minister requested—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Deputy First Sea Lord to furnish him, if possible to-day, with statements summing up the Military and Naval situation, giving particulars of developments that have arisen during the year 1917 and their bearings on one another.

Archangel.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 296, Minute 11, the Deputy First Lord stated that official orders had been issued for the sailing of the "Iphigenia" from Archangel to Murmansk.

Summary of War Work.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 256, Minute 10, Professor Adams informed the War Cabinet that reports had been received from the Departments as to the work carried out up to November 1917, and that action was now being taken with a view to having these reports brought up to date.

In view of the desirability of the report being laid before Parliament early in January, and the necessity for the report being scrutinised by the War Cabinet before being issued—

Professor Adams was requested to furnish, as soon as possible, a rough draft giving the general situation as indicated by the reports.

Salonica.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 296, Minute 1, and War Cabinet 298, Minute 8, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had received a telegram from General Wilson to the effect that he hoped to receive to-night the orders issued by the French Government to General Guillaumat. He further indicated that General Wilson proposed to send in, as soon as possible, a separate paper as to the suggestions of the Permanent Military Advisers to the Supreme War Council, giving their recommendations as regards the defence of the Salonica front or retiring from the same.

The War Cabinet indicated that what they wanted was, what would be the position if the Bulgarians attacked—whether it was proposed to fall back into Greece, or on the defensive positions outside Salonica?

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to inform General Wilson as requisite.

Guns for Italy.

5. With reference to War Cabinet 297, Minute 28, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he had received a telegram from General Allenby to the effect that he could spare two batteries of 6-inch howitzers, but was anxious to keep the personnel of the same.

In view of possible developments in the Palestine theatre of war, the War Cabinet were of opinion that these batteries should not be removed from Egypt.

Palestine.

6. With reference to War Cabinet 297, Minute 27, and War Cabinet 299, Minute 6, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff drew the attention of the War Cabinet to a telegram from General Allenby relative to an advance in Palestine, and proposed to the War Cabinet that he should send a telegram indicating to General Allenby that the War Cabinet desired to eliminate Turkey from the war, and that
they wished General Allenby's views as to the execution of the following alternative policies:

(a) Complete the conquest of the whole of Palestine and hold the country for the remainder of the war.

(b) Continue the advance through Palestine and Syria to the vicinity of Aleppo, so as permanently to interrupt railway communication with Mesopotamia.

(For the purposes of (a) Palestine to be considered as embracing the whole country between Beersheba and Dan.)

General Allenby to be further asked to give an estimate of the time that the execution of each of these policies would take.

The War Cabinet approved this proposal.

The War Cabinet further decided that—

The First Lord should be requested to direct the Naval War Staff to look into this matter as regards co-operation with the army, and to report accordingly.

The Western Front:

Extent of the British Line.

7. With reference to M.P.C., Fourth Minutes (2), the Chief of the Imperial General Staff read to the War Cabinet the Order of the Day issued by General Byng relative to the recent Cambrai offensive, as well as the detailed orders for carrying out the programme. The orders as read to the Cabinet did not bear out the statements that had been privately made to the Prime Minister, and the latter undertook to acquaint his informant that careful enquiries had been made, that nothing could be discovered that in any way substantiated the statements which his informant had put forward, and that the Prime Minister would be glad to know full particulars as to the authority for the statements made.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 299, Minute 7, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that he had conferred with Sir Douglas Haig on the question of taking over more of the French line, and that Sir Douglas Haig had put forward very strong observations on the subject, which he had sent to General Wilson. General Robertson informed the War Cabinet that he was circulating to the War Cabinet during the course of that afternoon these observations, together with some of his own.

The Prime Minister stated that he had received a telegram from M. Clemenceau indicating that Sir Douglas Haig and General Pétain had been unable to agree on the matter of the taking over of more of the French line; that he (M. Clemenceau) proposed that the question should be submitted to Versailles, and that he would agree to abide by the decision arrived at there if the Prime Minister was also prepared to accept it.

The War Cabinet decided—

To send a telegram to M. Clemenceau saying that they agreed to the examination of the question by the Military Experts at Versailles, with a view to the final decision by the Supreme War Council, in accordance with the Rapallo Agreement; at the same time informing M. Clemenceau that they had already referred the case to the Military Advisers in question.
9. With reference to War Cabinet 290, Minute 3, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, British Expeditionary Force, had decided to make certain changes in his Staff, including the Quartermaster-General and Head of his Intelligence Department. The War Cabinet discussed the desirability of certain other changes in the Commands in France.

It was agreed that the question should be discussed between the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for War, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief.

10. The War Cabinet discussed with Colonel Duffieux and other French representatives the question of limiting casualties by limiting offensive operations. They had under special consideration a Note by General Pétain's Staff, showing the results of the three French battles of 1917, namely:

(a.) The April battle on the Aisne and on the Moronvillers Front.
(b.) The battle of Verdun, in August.
(c.) The battle of Malmaison, in October.

The proces-verbal and a translation of the French Note will be included among the documents of the Man-Power Committee.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 18, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 302.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, December 19, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:
The Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The following were also present:—
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. Lord Robert Cecil, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minutes 6 and 11 to 13).

Fleet-Paymaster P. H. Row, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
Colonel E. D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.
Captain C. Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Western Front: Threatened Attack.

1. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported the receipt of information from various quarters, including Spanish sources, to the effect that heavy attacks on the Western front were threatened by the enemy within the next few weeks, and that great concentrations were being made.

In this connection the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that, during his recent visit to France, he had made enquiries regarding the situation on the Western front, and had found that it was not so secure as could be desired. The defences on our front were not as good as they should be in order to withstand a heavy and determined attack, and they were not as good as the German defences we have captured. But it had to be remembered that our troops have been engaged on the offensive for the greater part of the year, and therefore have not had much time
to devote to the construction of defences; and, further, we have been continually pushing our line forward during the year and thus have had new defences to make. This had been especially difficult to do in the devastated area, where, in addition to making new defences, we have had to make roads and railways, and build accommodation for the troops. While we have had to make new defences as we have advanced, the German trenches we have captured were the work of years, and they are able to make new defences beforehand ready for them when they fall back, and they have much civil and prisoner labour to assist them. The French defences also were not in good order, as the Cabinet had heard on the previous day. He had been informed that General Pétain had asked the French War Cabinet last week to give him 200,000 men for work on the defences. The Portuguese, instead of being a help to us, were practically a danger, and we had to keep a division on each of their flanks, as it was felt that they could not be relied upon. It was also doubtful whether the Belgians would stand a heavy attack. Further, the enemy was continually bringing over more artillery, and we may expect that he will bring over a great deal more. Our troops were new, and it remained to be seen to what extent they would stand the bombardment to which they may be subjected. It must also be remembered that our troops could not be expected to fight as well on the defence as on the offence. They are new, and so are most of the officers, and it had been found necessary, as in the case of all new armies, to give specific instructions beforehand for the action they were to take when fighting. This could be done in offensive operations, and had been done. In the defence, however, it was impossible to give these specific instructions in the same detail, as the enemy set the tune, and it required officers well versed in tactics to know how to meet quickly and properly any new situation which might arise. We had not got such officers at the present time. They were quite different from the officers we had when we were fighting on the defensive in 1914, and General Robertson learned from divisional commanders that they were anxious as to how far our officers would show themselves able to meet a great attack. He had heard the best accounts of the men, but of course they required competent subordinate leaders. Another reason for anxiety in regard to our being on the defensive was that strategically we were in a bad position, as there was very little depth behind our defences, and therefore we had little room to manoeuvre. When Hindenburg got into difficulties as a result of the Somme fighting, he retired part of his line some 20 to 30 miles. We could not do this. Dunkirk was already within range of the enemy's guns, and a short advance by the enemy would bring him within range of Calais and Boulogne. A retirement for even a few miles westward might therefore be disastrous. Retirement in any other direction was impossible. Further, in the area occupied by us there were certain places near to the front line which were of great importance to the French, while the security of the coast bordering on the Straits of Dover was vital to our sea power, upon which the possibility of continuing the war depended. General Robertson stated that it was fully realised by Sir Douglas Haig that we must act on the defence for some time to come, and he had no offensive plans in mind at present. He had therefore given orders for the Armies to go definitely on the defensive, and to take at once all additional defensive measures possible. He would not necessarily fight a decisive battle on his present front line, as there were certain salients and other portions of the line which were tactically quite unsuitable for this. Where this was so he would fight on his front line just sufficient to wear out and break up the enemy's attack as much as possible before the enemy could reach the main defensive position. All the men that could be taken from the roads and other work in the rear were being sent to the front to work on the defences. At the present time there were 22 divisions
in reserve; and it was hoped that, of this number, 8 would be placed in General Reserve directly under the Field-Marshal. This would be a strategic reserve, and available to reinforce either our own front or the French front, if that were attacked. Similarly, it was expected that the French would have a reserve of the same nature to assist us if necessary. The Field-Marshal saw General Pétain the previous day, with a view of completing a definite and combined defensive plan. If our troops could get two or three months’ rest, and meanwhile we could find additional labour for work on the defences, the situation should be considerably improved. There would, however, still be the question of the great amount of artillery and other reinforcements that the enemy could bring over. General Robertson thought that the enemy was equal to us now, and if he could find ammunition for all the artillery he was likely to send to the Western front, our troops might be subjected to a very formidable attack.

The Prime Minister drew attention to information received through the Russian Embassy, to the effect that the naval attache at Stockholm had been talking of the German intention to attack on the Western front in the immediate future. The fact that the Germans are talking so freely suggested doubt whether they really intend to attack, or whether they are making preparations for attack elsewhere.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 299, Minute 1, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the latest information showed that this accident was more serious than was originally reported. Of 985 men, only 359 were uninjured. It was probable that the accident was a case of sabotage.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported the receipt of a telegram from General Delfé-Radcliffe, received on the 19th December, 1917, to the effect that the enemy had attacked, after heavy bombardment, on the front Ca’ d’Anna-Monte Asolone, and succeeded in capturing both objectives. An Italian division had been ordered to make a counter-attack, but the result was not yet known. The serious result was that the only road for wheeled traffic up the Grappa was threatened by the capture of Monte Asolone.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 299, Minute 8, the Secretary of State for War reported that, owing to a fall of snow in France, it had not been possible to obtain all the reports required. A summary, however, had been telegraphed, and Lord Derby undertook to provide the Prime Minister with the necessary material for his statement on the subject in the House of Commons on the following day.

5. The First Sea Lord reported that the Admiralty had requisitioned a Russian icebreaker built in this country. It was proposed to send this icebreaker to the White Sea, to be used there in case the Russians fail to give us the necessary assistance.

6. The War Cabinet had under consideration the position of Norway, as set out in paper G.-184, and adopted the recommendations contained therein, and requested—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to take the necessary diplomatic action as regards the United States Government and the British Ministers in Stockholm and Christiania.
The Supreme War Council.

7. The War Cabinet had before them a joint note to the Supreme War Council, submitted by its Permanent Military Advisers (Paper W.P. 69) (Appendix I).

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff expressed general concurrence in the Report, which was assented to by the War Cabinet.

The Transport Problem.

8. With reference to War Cabinet 291, Minute 2, and to paragraph 1 (c) of the joint note referred to in the previous Minute, there was some discussion as to the question of the appointment of an officer to examine and report upon the whole of the transport arrangements of the Allies as approved at the Meeting of the Supreme War Council held at Versailles, on Saturday, the 1st December, 1917.

It was generally agreed that, as Sir Eric Geddes could not be spared, General Nash would be the best possible selection for the post.

The War Cabinet decided that—

This should be pressed by the Prime Minister at the next meeting of the Supreme War Council.

The Western Front:

Extension of the British Line.

9. With reference to War Cabinet 301, Minute 8, the War Cabinet decided that—

During the discussions by the Permanent Military Adviser to the Supreme War Council on the subject of the extension of the British line, it was desirable that a representative of the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-chief, British Expeditionary Force, should be in attendance at Versailles to answer any points raised by the French General Staff.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff undertook to initiate the necessary action.

Air Raid.

10. The Secretary informed the War Cabinet that the Field-Marshal Commanding the Home Forces had nothing to add to the communiqué which had been circulated to the members of the War Cabinet. The Secretary added that he had received information from the Secretary of State for Home Affairs that the whole of the police reports had not yet been received, but that it appeared that the casualties in London were approximately 8 killed and between 60 and 70 injured, and that two large fires had broken out as well as several smaller conflagrations. In addition to bombs being dropped in London, bombs had been dropped at Margate, and also in other parts of Kent, and in Essex.

The First Sea Lord reported that one of the Gothis that took part in the raid had been towed into Folkestone, but had sunk as the result of an explosion. Two of the crew were captured.

Russia.

11. The Prime Minister reported a conversation he had had with a Mr. Thompson—an American traveller and a man of considerable means—who had just returned from Russia, and who had given a somewhat different impression of affairs in that country from what was generally believed. The gist of his remarks was to the effect that the Revolution had come to stay; that the Allies had not shown themselves sufficiently sympathetic with the Revolution; and that MM. Trotzki and Lenin were not in German pay, the latter being a fairly distinguished Professor. Mr. Thompson had added that he considered the Allies should conduct in Russia an active propaganda, carried out by some form of Allied Council composed of men especially
Stockholm Conference.

selected for the purpose; further, that, on the whole, he considered, having regard to the character of the de facto Russian Government, the several Allied Governments were not suitably represented in Petrograd. In Mr. Thompson's opinion, it was necessary for the Allies to realize that the Russian army and people were out of the war, and that the Allies would have to choose between Russia as a friendly or a hostile neutral.

The question was discussed as to whether the Allies ought not to change their policy in regard to the de facto Russian Government, the Bolsheviks being stated by Mr. Thompson to be anti-German.

In this connection Lord Robert Cecil drew attention to the conditions of the armistice between the German and Russian armies, which provided, inter alia, for trading between the two countries, and for the establishment of a Purchasing Commission in Odessa, the whole arrangement being obviously dictated by the Germans. Lord Robert Cecil expressed the view that the Germans would endeavour to continue the armistice until the Russian army had melted away.

Sir Edward Carson read a communication, signed by M. Trotzki, which had been sent to him by a British subject, the manager of the Russian branch of the Vauxhall Motor Company, who had just returned from Russia (Paper G.T.-3040) (Appendix II). This report indicated that M. Trotzki's policy was, ostensibly at any rate, one of hostility to the organisation of civilized society rather than pro-German. On the other hand, it was suggested that an assumed attitude of this kind was by no means inconsistent with Trotzki's being a German agent, whose object was to ruin Russia in order that Germany might do what she desired in that country.

Lord Robert Cecil suggested that the best plan was to continue the present policy of rallying to the Allies, and assisting all those elements in South Russia that were resisting the Bolsheviks, and stated that he had received information from Jewish sources that the Ukrainians were prepared to oppose the existing Russian Government.

It was stated that M. Huysmans had confirmed this statement, and had urged the sending of, say, 100 Socialists to South Russia to act on our behalf.

Lord Robert Cecil suggested that, in order to render our policy more effective, we should place funds at the disposal of Sir Charles Marling, our Minister in Teheran, and give him a free hand to do the best he can by agents, propaganda, and any other means, to keep the people of South Russia on our side. Lord Robert Cecil mentioned that the Jews were very powerful in the Ukraine, and it might be possible to obtain their support.

Against this was urged the impossibility of influencing Southern Russia from such a distant place as Teheran, and also the difficulty of obtaining suitable persons who were conversant with the Russian language. It was further suggested that if the Bolsheviks should gain the upper hand and eventually achieve complete success, the evidence of the support we had given to their opponents would intensify their irritation and throw them even more into the hands of the Germans than they are now.

12. Mr. Barnes informed the War Cabinet that Mr. Henderson had called on him yesterday, and had stated that he had received a telegram from M. Huysmans asking Mr. Henderson to press for an International Conference at Stockholm, to counteract malign influences. The latter had asked Mr. Barnes whether it was probable that the Government would grant the necessary passports for such a conference at Stockholm, and, on Mr. Barnes replying in the negative, Mr. Henderson had stated that he would not press the matter for Stockholm, but would suggest some alternative place for the meeting.
13. The Prime Minister read to the War Cabinet a letter he had received from Mr. Henderson, forwarding a resolution from the Parliamentary Committee of the Labour Party, desiring that the Government should make a declaration as to the war aims of the Allies for the consideration of the Labour Party Conference that will meet on 25th December next.

Mr. Balfour stated that Mr. Henderson was anxious to consult with the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the subject.

The Prime Minister indicated his willingness that Mr. Henderson should see Mr. Balfour in this connection.

The War Cabinet proceeded to have a short discussion as to any announcement of the war aims of the Allies, and it was pointed out that the question of the Balkans was probably the most difficult to set out.

It was stated that it might be assumed that Russia no longer made any claim to Constantinople, but that it was imperative—if any statement was made that dealt with Turkey—that it must be made quite clear that that Power would not be allowed to exercise any control of the waterway between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

2. Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 19, 1917.
APPENDIX I.

Joint Note

1. JOINT NOTE TO THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL SUBMITTED BY ITS PERMANENT MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES.

Military Policy.

To the Supreme War Council.

THE Permanent Military Representatives having, in accordance with the instructions contained in M. Clemenceau's address to the Supreme War Council on the 1st December and in the resolutions subsequently passed by the Supreme War Council, reviewed the general military situation by the light of the information furnished by the General Staffs of their respective Governments, and, taking into consideration the possible consequences of the armistice on the Russian front, the present position with regard to man-power in the Allied countries and the necessity imposed of finding men for the production of munitions, the replacement of tonnage, and the increase of domestic food production, &c., are of opinion that the policy outlined below should be adopted by the Allied Governments and put into execution by their General Staffs without delay:

1. A definite and co-ordinated system of defence from the North Sea to the Adriatic must be adopted by the Allies. This will include:

   (a.) The reconsideration of existing lines of defence and the construction of further and successive defensive lines to check an advance by the enemy.

   (b.) The use to the utmost of all possible mechanical means in order—

   (i.) To provide the maximum mobile reserve.

   (ii.) To afford rest and opportunities of training for reserves.

   (c.) The greatest possible development of rail and sea communications between the different sections of the front and the preparations to be made for the movement of troops between these different sections, especially in respect of the Italian front, and of the measures to be taken in case of a German attack through Switzerland.

The defensive policy thus advocated need not preclude such minor forms of active defence as any Commander-in-Chief may think necessary for maintaining the offensive spirit of his troops.

Furthermore, the policy of a strong defensive not only does not preclude, but actually prepares for, any offensive measures in any theatre of war as may be decided upon for 1918, when the present political situation in Russia and the military situation in Italy are more clearly defined.

2. A similar policy of definite defence must be adopted in the Balkans. In the event of serious attack by the enemy in this theatre of war, in which it might be impossible adequately to reinforce the troops now available, it is necessary to envisage the possibility of a systematic and pre-arranged retirement from part, at any rate, of the existing front. The character and direction of such a retirement is so intimately connected with considerations arising out of Balkan politics and the submarine warfare that it will form the subject of a separate paper.

3. With regard to the Turkish theatre of war (Palestine, Mesopotamia, Armenia), the Permanent Military Representatives are not yet in a position to make any recommendations as to the possibility of further developing and exploiting the successes recently gained by the Allied forces.

4. The co-ordinated development to the utmost of the manufacture of all war material is of paramount importance, as is also the use of this war material so as to obtain the best results from existing formations. This proposal may involve changes in the organisation of certain existing armies.
5. In view of the prospect of a greatly increased supply of aeroplanes of constantly increasing power and range in the course of 1918, the Permanent Military Representatives wish to draw attention to the necessity for a careful study of the possibilities of a co-ordinated air offensive on the largest possible scale.

6. The above are the principles which should be adopted forthwith, and the Permanent Military Representatives will submit reports in detail on these subjects at a later date.

(Signed) WEYGAND, (Signed) HENRY WILSON, (Signed) L. CADORNA,
French Section, Supreme War Council. British Section, Supreme War Council.

Versailles, December 13, 1917.

APPENDIX II.

THE power of the Soviet is the power of the workers and peasants and soldiers; and remember that the soldiers are simply the self-same workers and peasants. This is the first really large scale trial of Government by the labouring masses. Till now the Government of a country was simply an instrument of power wielded by a small section which possessed everything over a large part which possessed nothing. Our plan is to form a Government based on the power of the larger mass of the people, which larger mass is now freeing itself from the oppression of the small mass. Government by the small mass has so far generally caused poverty and misery to the larger mass. The Soviet is the main organ of this new power in the centre and provinces of Russia.

Our programme is dictated by the interests of workers and peasants. Peace is essential to them. The power of our Soviet is an instrument for fighting for peace. In this fight for peace we are not reckoning on the good-will of the bourgeoisie and its diplomacy, but on the pressure of the people. No official or semi-official patriotic lie can screen the fact that the labouring masses in all the warring countries are revolutionised to the very depths by this disgraceful slaughter, which does no more than show up the criminal character of capitalistic rule. The masses in all the countries hate the war and who caused the war.

Revolution broke out first in Russia only for the reason that the machinery of government was weaker in Russia than in other countries. But the war has in all countries caused an accumulation of revolutionary yearnings in the very depths of mankind, and revolution will break out earlier than is expected by the ruling parties of Europe. The plan of our universal policy is to give a push to the revolution in the centre and on the west of Europe. This is the real road to a democratic peace.

What about Belgium? Alsace-Lorraine? We did not at the commencement of the war believe, and do not believe now, that the war is carried on by the ruling class for the sake of guarding the rights of weak nations. No! the bourgeoisie of all countries are fighting for property. If it could be imagined that the war will pass without punishment to the ruling classes, and that imperialism will remain the guiding hand in politics of so-called civilised people, it would be naive to think of the defending of weak and backward nations. Imperialism took everything and made slaves of everybody. Only the undefeated revolution of the working classes against imperialism can free Belgium, Alsace-Lorraine, and all weaker countries.

We are convinced that the German peoples, who are now shedding their own blood, will not allow the German ruling-class officers to attack revolutionary Russia. We are sure there will be a temporary peace on all fronts. But if (though we find it impossible to imagine this) against our straight and open proposition of immediate democratic peace, the German people remain passive and the German Kaiser moves his armies against us, our army will defend itself to the last drop of blood, because it is not now a question of an imperialistic war, but it is the question of guarding the revolution, which offers peace to everybody.

We have given over the land of Russia from the landowner to the peasant, and the peasant will not pay anything for it.
We are placing a workers' control over production, with the object of gradually changing over the basis of production from capitalistic on to socialistic lines.

We are nationalising all banks, with the object of making one national bank. In these matters we shall act fearlessly and without pity, overcoming the resistance of landowners and capitalists who do not wish to give up their privileges without a fight.

Our plans are colossal, difficult, grandiose, but the strength of the people, opened up by the revolution, will overcome all difficulties and fulfil its ideals.

(Signed) L. TROTSKY.

Smolny Institute, November 3 (o.s.), 1917.
5. In view of the prospect of a greatly increased supply of aeroplanes of constantly increasing power and range in the course of 1918, the Permanent Military Representatives wish to draw attention to the necessity for a careful study of the possibilities of a co-ordinated air offensive on the largest possible scale.

6. The above are the principles which should be adopted forthwith, and the Permanent Military Representatives will submit reports in detail on these subjects at a later date.


Versailles, December 13, 1917.

APPENDIX II.

THE power of the Soviet is the power of the workers and peasants and soldiers; and remember that the soldiers are simply the self-same workers and peasants. This is the first really large scale trial of Government by the labouring masses. Till now the Government of a country was simply an instrument of power wielded by a small section which possessed everything over a large part which possessed nothing. Our plan is to form a Government based on the power of the larger mass of the people, which larger mass is now freeing itself from the oppression of the small mass. Government by the small mass has so far generally caused poverty and misery to the larger mass. The Soviet is the main organ of this new power in the centre and provinces of Russia.

Our programme is dictated by the interests of workers and peasants. Peace is essential to them. The power of our Soviet is an instrument for fighting for peace. In this fight for peace we are not reckoning on the good-will of the bourgeois and its diplomacy, but on the pressure of the people. No official or semi-official patriotic lie can screen the fact that the labouring masses in all the warring countries are revolutionised to the very depths by this disgraceful slaughter, which does no more than show up the criminal character of capitalistic rule. The masses in all the countries hate the war and who caused the war.

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Our plans are colossal, difficult, grandiose, but the strength of the people, opened up by the revolution, will overcome all difficulties and fulfil its ideals.

(Signed)  L. TROTSKY.
Smolny Institute, November 3 (o.s.), 1917.
WAR CABINET, 303.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, December 20, 1917, at 11 a.m.

Present:

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P. (in the Chair) (for Minutes 1 to 13).


The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.O.M.G. (for Minutes 14 to 20).

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

The Right Hon. SIR E. CARSON, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minutes 1 to 12).

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1 to 14).

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOCH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 1 to 12).

Vice-Admiral SIR R. E. WEMYSS, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1 to 7).

The Right Hon. W. LONG, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minutes 18 and 19).

The Right Hon. the EARL OF CRAWFORD AND BALCARRES (for Minutes 15 and 16).

The Right Hon. SIR ALFRED MOND, Bart., M.P., First Commissioner of Works (for Minutes 15, 16 to 17).

SIR FREDERIC KENYON, K.C.B. (for Minute 13).

The Right Hon. SIR GEORGE CAVE, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 18).


The Right Hon. SIR JOSEPH MACLAY, Bart., Shipping Controller (for Minute 20).

LORD ROTHERMERE, President of the Air Board (for Minute 13).

The Right Hon. H. A. L. FISHER, LL.D., M.P., President, Board of Education (for Minute 13).

The Right Hon. R. E. PROTHERO, M.V.O., M.P., President, Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (for Minute 17).

Mr. G. G. LEVESON GOWER, Office of Woods and Forests (for Minute 17).

Lieutenant-Colonel SIR M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Colonel E. D. SWINTON, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.

Fleet Paymaster P. H. ROW, R.N., Assistant Secretary.
1. The Director of Military Intelligence informed the War Cabinet that no operations of any importance had taken place on the Western front, but that a movement of German troops from the Russian front to the Western front had occurred, and that information had been received that infantry were moving from Russia on the day that the armistice was signed, which indicated that the Germans were taking advantage of the clause authorising the continuance of movements already ordered. General Macdonogh stated that the Staff of the 21st German Corps had arrived in Alsace, which indicated the possibility of enemy troops concentrating in that area. Further, that the 292nd Division had been transferred from Riga to the Western front. There was further indications of Austrian troops being in the vicinity of the Western front, and also that Austrian heavy batteries were being concentrated in the Laon area.

2. The War Cabinet considered the question of sending further British reinforcements from the United Kingdom to France, and were informed that the Board of Admiralty were considering this question, in connection with any danger of invasion, during the course of the afternoon.

The War Cabinet requested—

The Deputy First Sea Lord to arrange that the conclusion arrived at by the Board of Admiralty should be communicated as soon as possible to the Army Council, with a view to the latter body being prepared, in conjunction with the Naval Authorities, to bring the matter before the War Cabinet for their consideration on the following day.

3. The Director of Military Intelligence informed the War Cabinet that a heavy attack had been made on the Brenta-Piave line, and that Monte Asolone had been lost. General Plumer had stated that the Italians proposed to make a counter-attack with a view to retaking it, and, in the meantime, were bringing up one division and one brigade for the purpose. He stated that the Austrians had also made an attack on the Lower Piave and had taken some ground in the vicinity of the lagoons in that area.

The War Cabinet felt some misgivings about the tenor of some of the recent telegrams from General Plumer, which seemed to suggest a gradual weakening of the Italians.

General Macdonogh stated that the Italians were gradually being forced back between the Brenta and the Piave, but that the General Staff felt there was no special cause for anxiety.

4. The Director of Military Intelligence informed the War Cabinet that there were indications that one Turkish division was being withdrawn from Roumania, having been replaced by a German division. It was probable that this Turkish division was en route to Asia Minor.

5. The Deputy First Sea Lord informed the War Cabinet that a bombing raid had been carried out on the night of the 18th/19th instant on the Bruggeois Works at Bruges, bombs being dropped with good results, and direct hits observed on buildings, one of which started a fire. He added that a bombing raid was carried out about noon on the 19th instant on the Vlisseghem Aerodrome, several direct hits being reported. One of the enemy's aircraft was destroyed off Ostend, and another was driven down, probably out of control. One of our machines is missing.
6. The Deputy First Sea Lord stated that information had been received from Dover that a heavy explosion had taken place in a minefield in the vicinity, which indicated that an enemy submarine had been destroyed. One of the crew had been picked up, but had since died.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 301, Minute 2, the Deputy First Sea Lord stated that the "Iphigenia" had left Archangel, with the Naval Staff, and had proceeded to Murmansk.

8. With reference to an estimate which had been furnished by General Macdonogh to the Man-Power Committee, indicating that he put the gross German losses on the Western front at 2,000,000 men during 1917, the Director of Military Intelligence stated that he had received from the French authorities their estimate, which gave the gross enemy losses at 2,250,000 for the same period, out of which it was assumed that the figure of 900,000 represented the net loss.

9. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to a notice in the press stating that an explosion had occurred in a munition factory in the north of London. The War Cabinet requested—

   The Secretary to ascertain from the Minister of Munitions the accuracy of the statement, together with any particulars that might be forthcoming.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 302, Minute 11, as regards the formation of a Committee to carry on an active propaganda in connection with Russia, Sir Edward Carson undertook, after consultation with Lord Milner, to enquire into the matter forthwith, with a view to collecting suitable persons for the purpose, the same to be present at a meeting on the following day at which the Prime Minister will address them.

11. Lord Robert Cecil brought before the War Cabinet the vague nature of the attitude of the British Government towards the developments in Russia, and pressed for some definite policy to be laid down. It was pointed out that there were in reality four different problems in the situation, which, though they formed part of one question, were being treated more or less separately, viz—

   The question of Roumania;
   The question of the Ukraine;
   The question of the Don Cossacks;
   The question of the Caucasian Cossacks;

and that the necessity for a clear analysis of the situation, and of what was being done in regard to each, was daily growing more urgent, since the information coming in from the different British local representatives was sometimes mutually contradictory, while it varied from day to day.

It appeared that one of the chief difficulties in carrying out the policy already outlined (War Cabinet 298, Minute 10), of giving financial assistance to those races and organisations likely to keep
alive the struggle against the Central Powers, was that of finding roubles.

It was not found possible to formulate a decision upon this subject in the absence of the Prime Minister, but it was thought that further information which would help towards a decision might be collected.

The Director of Military Intelligence undertook to prepare, for the information of the War Cabinet at its next meeting, a short Note upon the actual situation in Russia, showing what had been done and was being done.

12. It was also brought to the attention of the War Cabinet that the British attitude towards the situation in Persia required elucidation, and that Sir Charles Marling, our Minister at Teheran, was urgently in need of definite instructions as to what course he should pursue.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Lord Curzon and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should go into the matter and frame the necessary instructions to the British representative at Teheran.

13. The War Cabinet had before them a proposal, by the First Commissioner of Works, that the British Museum should be acquired for the accommodation of the Air Ministry (Papers G.T.-2950, 2873, and 2901). In favour of the proposal it was stated that the existing accommodation of the Hotel Cecil was not sufficient for the Ministry, whereas the British Museum would provide ample room of a suitable nature under one roof, and that such accommodation could not be obtained elsewhere. The Hotel Cecil would, on vacation, by the Air Ministry, be taken over by the Aeronautical Supplies Department of the Ministry of Munitions.

On the other hand, against the proposal were the difficulty of moving many of the priceless art treasures contained in the Museum, and the increased danger to which these would be exposed from aerial bombardment when the Germans realised that the Museum was being used for War purposes. The trustees of the Museum were against the proposed appropriation, as was Mr. Fisher. The director of the British Museum was against the proposal, and stated that no large proportion of the contents of the Museum could be moved unless a great amount of timber and transport could be provided.

In consideration of the fact that there was no feasible alternative to the proposal, the War Cabinet decided that—

The British Museum should be taken over for occupation by the Air Ministry.

(Lord Curzon wished his dissent from the above decision to be placed on record.)

14. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (Paper G.T.-2987), requesting their sanction for the use of the "R.T.S." bullet against aircraft in France. The proposed use, and the nature of this bullet, are fully explained in the Memorandum.

The War Cabinet decided—

To sanction the use of the "R.T.S." bullet against aircraft in France.
15. In reference to War Cabinet 221, Minute 2, and War Cabinet 225, Minute 8, the War Cabinet had before them the Interim Report of Lord Crawford's Committee on the War Museum (Paper G.T.-3016). Lord Crawford gave certain details as to the proposal to take over Edinburgh Castle as a Scottish National War Museum, and the conditions suggested by the Committee.

It was pointed out that, since the War Office would not require the Castle as a barracks after the war, it might be possible to remove certain recently erected barrack buildings, which were very inartistic.

The Secretary for Scotland explained that the inception of the scheme was due to the Duke of Atholl, and that H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught had been pleased to express his strong approval of it.

The War Cabinet approved the recommendations of Lord Crawford's Committee, and decided that—

The Secretary for Scotland should take such steps as he considered advisable to announce the decision of the Cabinet, which should also be communicated to the Duke of Atholl, and to take the further steps suggested in the Interim Report.

16. The War Cabinet approved the recommendation of Lord Crawford's Committee that the Central War Museum in London should be the Imperial War Museum, and not the "National War Museum" as had been previously intended.

17. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the First Commissioner of Works, on the question of removing from Whitehall departments not directly concerned in connection with the prosecution of the war, in order to provide additional accommodation urgently required by the War departments (Paper G.T.-2951).

Sir Alfred Mond explained the necessity for the proposal, which was, to provide additional accommodation required by the Military Intelligence Directorate of the War Office at 69-71, Haymarket, which demand could only be met by the removal of an Admiralty Staff from adjoining premises, "Greener House." To enable this to be done, it was proposed to transfer the Office of Woods from Whitehall to a portion of the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, and to move the Admiralty Staff from Greener House to the Office of Woods building.

The President of the Board of Agriculture and Mr. G. Leveson-Gower said that the proposed move would cause some inconvenience to the Board of Agriculture and the Office of Woods, since these Departments shared the services of certain members of their staffs. Mr. Prothero suggested an alternative, that the Office of Woods should retain the accommodation on the first floor of the building occupied by them, whilst the Admiralty should take over the rest of the block.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The First Commissioner of Works and the President of the Board of Agriculture should go into the matter and, if possible, arrange a compromise on the above lines.

18. The War Cabinet had before them the Report of the Committee on the Petroleum Production Bill (War Cabinet 258,
Minute 3), recommending that the Bill should be dropped and that a Defence of the Realm Regulation, in the form specified, should be inserted.

The War Cabinet approved of the action recommended in the Report of the Committee.

British Honduras.

19. The War Cabinet took note of the Memorandum on the Defence of British Honduras, brought before them by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Paper G.T. 2862), and, as regards the suggestion about General Alvarada, in the last paragraph of the Memorandum, decided—

To take no action until the matter was again raised by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Coal for Italy.

20. With reference to War Cabinet 283, Minute 15, the Shipping Controller brought before the War Cabinet the critical situation caused by the fact that the French Government seemed disinclined to do its part in helping to supply Italy with coal. He explained that the French had now increased their coal output by about one million tons per month as compared with last year, and were now themselves producing over two million tons per month, while they were receiving from us one and a half million tons per month. Of the total produced by France, 700,000 tons was obtained in Southern France. It had been proposed that of this amount, France should supply Italy at once with 150,000 tons a month, and it is suggested that this amount might in due course be increased to 300,000 tons. The British Government would then take this into consideration in the amount supplied to France by them, adding it to whatever, on a general review of the situation, appear to be France's real requirements, though not the quantity actually now being supplied. The Shipping Controller had recently handed M. Clémentel a document containing the proposal that France should give Italy 150,000 tons of coal a month. As there had been no immediate response from the French Government to this proposal, the Shipping Controller was of opinion that the matter was sufficiently serious to bring before the War Cabinet, with a request that a telegram on the subject should be sent by the Prime Minister to the French Prime Minister.

The War Cabinet, in view of the critical situation likely to be produced in Italy owing to lack of coal, decided that—

The Shipping Controller should prepare a message to be sent by the Prime Minister to M. Clemenceau, asking him to give immediate attention to this subject; this draft telegram to be submitted for the concurrence of Lord Milner.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

December 20, 1917.

(Initialled) A. B. L.
WAR CABINET, 304.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, December 21, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Kildleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:—

The Right Hon. Lord R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1, 10, 11, 12).

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War (for Minutes 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12).

General Sir W. R. Robertson, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1, 3, 4, 7, 10).

General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (for Minutes 10, 11, 12).


Mr. Thomas Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.

The Transport Problem.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 302, Minute 8, the War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War on the co-ordination of railway transport requirements (Paper G.T. 3054).

Sir Eric Geddes drew attention to the vital question of transportation, the importance of which, as a factor in the present military situation, had, he suggested, been partially lost sight of among the great problems with which the War Cabinet are confronted. The importance of this question had been very considerably increased by recent events. Not only was transportation a most important factor in countering the anticipated enemy attacks on the Western front,
but maritime and land transportation were the vital factors in the arrival of reinforcements from the United States of America. The French, Sir Eric Geddes pointed out, were not specially good at transportation in ordinary times, and now, when their resources were largely exhausted, they were less competent than formerly to undertake the vast transportation problem involved in the present military situation. On the personal aspects of the question, he pointed out that his own profession was that of an executive transportation officer, and, although he liked and appreciated his present position, he felt that he could serve his country better in the role suggested for him by the Prime Minister at Versailles.

The Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff dwelt on the great importance of the question of transportation as a factor in the military situation. Lord Derby considered that there was no other person who had the same grasp of the situation as Sir Eric Geddes.

The War Cabinet were entirely unanimous in the view that Sir Eric Geddes was the most suitable person, if, indeed, he was not the only person with all the right qualities and qualifications for the transportation post. On the other hand, they felt that the post of First Lord of the Admiralty was second to none in importance, in view of the gravity of the shipping situation, and that it would be extremely difficult to spare Sir Eric Geddes from this work. It was also pointed out that the Admiralty and the control of shipbuilding had been subjected to constant changes, and that a repetition of this was undesirable. The choice depended upon where his services would be of greater value to the nation, since he was recognised as possessing unique qualifications for both posts. The decision therefore depended upon which post was the more important at the present moment.

The War Cabinet decided—

To adhere to their previous decision, and that the Prime Minister, before a communication was made to the Italian Government, should send a personal telegram to M. Clemenceau asking if the French Government would be willing to accept General Nash to conduct the enquiry agreed to at Versailles.

The Labour Situation:

Piece-workers’ Wages.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 248, Minute 12, Mr. Barnes reported that the Labour world was “on edge” in regard to the question of wages. Since time-workers had received the increase of 12⅓ per cent. from the Ministry of Munitions, the attitude of the piece-workers had become menacing all over the country. Matters had come to a head that day. A strike had started in Belfast to-day, and another was timed to take place to-night at Sheffield. A meeting of the War Cabinet Labour Committee was to be held later in the day.

Sir Edward Carson said that he had gone into the case of Belfast with Mr. Barnes. The men’s case appeared to be unanswerable. At the request of the Government 90 per cent. of the men had gone on piece-work earlier in the year. As a result, partly owing to shortage of material, the men were actually losing by the change. They saw the time-workers getting an increase of 12⅓ per cent., while they themselves got nothing.

Mr. Barnes said that the Minister of Munitions was prepared to promise an advance to all piece-workers who were not making time rates plus 12⅓ per cent. in addition, and to set up tribunals, composed of one-third employers, one-third workmen, and one-third representatives of the Ministry of Munitions, to see that the advance was carried into effect.
The War Cabinet decided that—

The question should be referred for decision by a committee to be convened by Mr. Barnes, and composed of—

Mr. Barnes,
Lord Milner,
Mr. Churchill,
Mr. Roberts,
Sir Auckland Geddes,

in addition to the War Cabinet Labour Committee, who should settle the matter on the lines indicated above.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported the receipt of a telegram from General Plumer, despatched on the 20th December, 1917, to the effect that on the same day the Italian 4th Army had made a very good counter-attack with fresh troops, and had re-taken Monte Asolone and other points. One of our Staff Officers, who had just returned from there, had brought a very satisfactory report on the operations.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported the receipt of a telegram from Sir Reginald Wingate, despatched on 20th December, 1917, to the effect that an Arabian force of the Sherif of Faisal's army had mined and destroyed a troop train on the 12th instant on the Hejaz Railway, south of Tebuk. The whole of the Turkish detachment on the train was accounted for, including amongst the killed Suleiman Pasha Rifada. Considerable booty had been captured, including 300 rifles, a large quantity of ammunition, and 24,000 Turkish in gold.

5. The First Sea Lord gave his daily report in regard to submarines.

6. The First Sea Lord reported that the monitor "Erebus" had bombarded Ostend on the 19th instant. The enemy had put up a smoke screen, and had further tried to mislead us by making explosions in places other than those in which our shells dropped.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 303, Minute 2, the First Sea Lord stated that the Board of Admiralty had provisionally decided that the landing of any enemy force larger than 70,000 which might attempt an invasion of this country could be effectively interfered with by Naval forces. The figure adopted until recently had been 160,000. The question was, however, still under examination, and the door was not definitely closed to a further reduction.

8. The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to request the Government Departments to furnish Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the Chairman of the American Board, with the fullest information regarding the demands of the various Departments of His Majesty's Government.
9. With reference to War Cabinet 241, Minute 16, the War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Food Controller (Paper G.T.-3028), and a memorandum by Lord D'Abernon (Paper G.T.-3050) on the output of beer for the quarter commencing the 1st January, 1918.

The War Cabinet decided—

To sanction, for the quarter beginning the 1st January, 1918, the 33⅓ per cent. increase in the standard barrelage already permitted for the last quarter of 1917.

10. Lord Robert Cecil drew attention to Foreign Office telegram No. 2054 from Sir George Buchanan, and No. 1502 from Sir George Barclay at Jassy. He added that the French Ambassador in London had been to see him, in regard to the subjects dealt with in both telegrams, on the previous day, and reported to him that the French Government had suggested a delimitation of South Russia into British and French spheres of activity. As the French had a large Military Mission in Roumania, and had facilities both military and financial in this quarter, the Ukraine and adjacent districts would naturally fall into the French sphere, whereas the Caucasus and Don Cossack regions, being nearer to Persia, might form the British sphere. General Berthelot had been placed in charge of relations with the Ukrainian Government by the French Government, and the French Government suggested that instructions should be given to General Bartet not to interfere with General Berthelot. He gathered from the reports in the morning newspapers that the Cossacks had succeeded in capturing Rostov, killing 800 of the Red Guards, and that the Bolsheviks admitted their defeat. The policy advocated by Sir George Buchanan and by the Allied representatives at Jassy raised an important and deep question of principle. It would be impossible any longer to go on running two horses; we must decide definitely whether we are to support the Bolsheviks in their claim to be the supreme Government throughout Russia, or whether we are to recognise and assist the other de facto Governments in Russia. We must either support the Ukranians, Cossacks, Georgians, and Armenians, or the Bolsheviks; we could not do both. In his opinion, the forces in Southern Russia had a fair fighting chance of success in the event of our supporting them. If we did not support them, the blockade of Germany would be at an end and the terms of the armistice involved the despatch of grain and other raw materials of Southern Russia to Germany via the Danube. Nearly all the supplies in Russia that were of value to the enemy were in Southern Russia, and now in the hands of the people who were opposing the Bolshevik Government. The Separatist sentiment in the Ukraine was an old story, and it appeared that the Bolshevik Government were prepared to recognise the principle of self-determination in regard to the Ukranian peoples, and to recognise the Rada. The Ukranians had been fighting with the Bolsheviks in Odessa, and here they appeared to have the support of the Jews against the Bolsheviks. We could hope for nothing from Trotziki, who was a Jew of the international type and was solely out to smash Russia and to revenge himself, not only on the governing classes, but upon the peasants of Russia. Money was now being spent by the French and ourselves in the Ukraine, and it was a question for the Cabinet to decide whether this should continue.

General Macdonogh stated that the Roumanian army of fifteen good fighting divisions, with 300 French officers attached to it, would form a valuable support to the Ukranians, provided Ukranian supplies were made available for the Roumanian army. Between
Roumania and Ukrania lay Bessarabia, which was mainly Roumanian in population. Bessarabia had appointed a local Government of its own. With regard to the Cossacks, he estimated their strength at approximately 250,000, and read a telegram received through General Berthelot, from a French officer who had seen General Alexieff on the 17th December, which gave a very hopeful account of the Cossack situation. He then read a telegram from General Marshall, stating that the Russian General Bicharakhoff, who had 3,000 men with him at Khanikin, on the Dia, had burnt his boats and was prepared to continue the war in co-operation with the Allies, irrespective of any orders from the Bolsheviks.

It was pointed out that the information available regarding the situation was somewhat scanty and insufficient to justify the Cabinet in coming to so momentous a decision as that raised by Lord Robert Cecil. There was a danger that, by backing a losing horse in Southern Russia, we were destroying any hope of preventing the Germans appearing in Petrograd as the friends and helpers of an all-powerful Bolshevik Government. In this matter it was necessary to take a long view, as that Power which assisted the future Russian Government in the reconstruction of the country would have the whole of Russia's resources at her command. It was further pointed out that much turned upon the military resources and military value of the Southern Russian nationalities, and that it appeared, on the face of it, that the French Government had more information than we had regarding their prospects.

Sir Edward Carson stated that he and Lord Milner had held an important and interesting conference on the previous day with certain officers and others familiar with Russia, and that among the evidence submitted to them was a statement to the effect that the present German policy in Russia was designed to produce as much anarchy and chaos as possible, with a view to Russia being compelled to make a separate peace that would include the repudiation of Russia's financial debts to her Allies, and that, after this had happened, they would use the German prisoners and officers now in Russia to restore the autocracy under the Germanophil Grand Duke Paul Michaelovitch.

Lord Curzon pointed out that if we continued to back the Ukranians, a sharp rupture with the Bolsheviks would follow inevitably. He was prepared to take the risk of backing the Ukranians, but was definitely of the opinion that whatever decision was come to as a result of further conferences with the French, the decision should be taken by the whole War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a.) A Special Mission, consisting of—

Lord Milner,
Lord Robert Cecil,
General Maedough,

should proceed at once to Paris to confer with M. Clemenceau, with a view to the submission of recommendations to the War Cabinet.

(b.) The Secretary to the War Cabinet should inform the British Military Adviser of the Supreme War Council at Versailles that the War Cabinet wished the Military Adviser forthwith to examine and report on the military question as to whether reliance could be placed on the Provisional Governments of South Russia to resist a Bolshevik Army under German control.

(c.) Meanwhile, the Director of Military Intelligence should provide the British Military Adviser at Versailles with all possible information bearing upon this subject.

(d.) The question of the recognition of General Bicharakhoff at Khanikin should be left to the unfettered discretion of General Marshall.
11. Lord Robert Cecil drew attention to telegram No. 732 from Sir George Barclay, which stated that the Roumanians were largely in sympathy with M. Trotzki's proposals regarding the Conference on War Aims based upon the right of self-determinations. He thought that it would be necessary for us to accept Sir George Barclay's proposal in principle, but any reply would have to be very carefully worded.

The War Cabinet decided that a telegram based on the Prime Minister's speech on the previous day should be sent in answer.

12. The Prime Minister read a decipher of a telegram just received from Sir C. Spring-Rice, Washington, dated the 20th December, containing a paraphrase of the telegram sent by the American Secretary for War to General Pershing, giving General Pershing a free hand regarding the decision to be come to concerning the amalgamation of American forces in French and British Divisions.

The War Cabinet requested—

Lord Milner to see General Pershing in Paris, and to urge him to accede to the representations made in regard to this matter by the British Government and by the General Staff.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 21, 1917.
-secret.

**WAR CABINET, 305.**

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Monday, December 24, 1917, at noon.

Present:
- THE PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).
- The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.
- The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.
- Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The following were also present:
- Admiral Sir J. R. Jellicoe, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff (for Minutes 1 to 13).
- The Right Hon. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minute 14).
- Mr. G. Calthrop, Coal Controller (for Minute 14).
- Mr. C. S. Hurst, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 14).
- General Sir W. R. Robertson, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1 to 13).
- The Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minute 14).
- Sir Lynden Macassey, K.C., K.B.E., Admiralty Shipyard Labour Department (for Minute 14).
- Mr. I. H. Mitchell, Ministry of Labour (for Minute 14).
- Mr. U. Wolff, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 14).
- Mr. T. Munro, Ministry of Munitions (for Minute 14).
- Mr. G. M. Hodgson (for Minute 14).

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL SIR M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Transport Problem.

1. With reference to War Cabinet 304, Minute 1, the Prime Minister informed the War Cabinet that the French Government had accepted General Nash to conduct the Transport Inquiry agreed to by the Supreme War Council at Versailles on the 1st December, 1917 (Paper W.P.-69).

In this connection General Smuts asked for a reconsideration of the matter, and strongly urged that Sir Eric Geddes should undertake the work in question.
The Western Front.

2. The Chief of the Imperial Staff reported that, on the afternoon of the 23rd December, under cover of a barrage, the enemy had established himself at Turenne Crossing, on the Ypres-Staden Railway, and in posts immediately south of this point.

Transfer of German Troops.

3. The Chief of the Imperial Staff reported that information had been received to the effect that one more division had been moved from Russia to the Western front, through Belgium, making an increase of seventeen on balance, including an increase on our front of seven divisions. One German division had gone from the Western front to the Italian front.

Extension of the British Line.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 302, Minute 6, the Chief of the Imperial Staff reported that a misunderstanding with M. Clemenceau regarding the question of the extension of the British line in France had been satisfactorily cleared up.

Palestine.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that General Allenby had pushed forward his left and had advanced to Nahr-el-Auja.

The Invasion of Italy.

6. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the Italians had lost a little ground at Asiago.

Battle of Cambrai: Inquiry.

7. With reference to War Cabinet 302, Minute 4, the Prime Minister again drew attention to the lack of an adequate report to the Cabinet on the Cambrai incident.

The Secretary of State for War stated that he had sent certain definite questions to the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, and though he had as yet received no answer, he expected one shortly.

The Western Front: Improvement of Defences.

8. The War Cabinet asked the Secretary of State for War to obtain a report as to what was being done to improve the defences on the Western front. They also asked him to ascertain whether there was any truth in the report that the German guns were placed in concrete emplacements.

With regard to the digging of proper trenches, the Secretary of State for War pointed out how difficult it was to get many of the troops to dig their trenches properly. The German preparations in this respect were very much better than ours. Special appeals had been made, and Sir William Robertson had spoken to Sir Douglas Haig seriously about the matter, but with the exception of certain divisions our troops were not good at digging trenches.

The Secretary of State for War undertook to ask Sir Douglas Haig to make a further and more detailed report on the subject of defences.

Submarines.

9. The First Sea Lord reported that when a convoy was entering the Firth of Forth on the 15th December, a submarine was heard very loudly just astern of the convoy. Four depth charges were dropped, and the vicinity patrolled for thirty-six hours. A chain sweep located a submerged object, and the conclusion arrived at was that a submarine was lying there sunk.
10. The First Sea Lord reported several losses of British airships. One had been wrecked near the Orkneys, apparently through engine trouble; another had been lost off St. Abb's Head.

11. The First Sea Lord reported the receipt of information from Dunkirk that a raid was carried out, during the night of the 22nd-23rd instant, on St. Denis Westrem, Mariakerke, and Oostacker aerodromes. Six tons of bombs in all were dropped. All our machines returned safely.

12. The First Sea Lord reported that an east-bound Dutch convoy of four ships had crossed, under escort, to the Hook of Holland during the night of the 22nd December. The escort were to bring back the west-bound convoy of twelve ships, carrying margarine, on the 23rd December. Owing to dense fog, the convoy could not start. Reports had been received that the flotilla leader "Valkyrie" had been mined five and half miles west of the Maas Light Buoy. Her crew had been taken off, and when she had drifted clear of the mines she was taken in tow by the destroyer "Sylph." Reports were also received that the destroyers "Torrent," "Surprise," and "Tornado," had been mined in the same vicinity, and that all three ships had sunk. Ninety of the "Valkyrie's" crew were accounted for, twenty being injured, ten very seriously. Information as to the survivors from the other three vessels was incomplete. In this connection the First Sea Lord reported that since the convoy arrangements for the Dutch trade had been started in July 1918, to date six of our destroyers had been sunk, seven destroyers had been damaged, and one light cruiser had been damaged.

13. With reference to War Cabinet 301, Minute 5, the Secretary of State for War drew attention to a telegram from General Allenby, in which the latter agreed to release the personnel as well as the 6-inch howitzers now attached to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The War Cabinet decided that—
The two batteries of howitzers in question should proceed from Egypt to Italy.

14. The War Cabinet had before them a report to the War Cabinet by the War Cabinet Labour Committee on the 12½ per cent bonus dilemma (Paper G.T.-3096), and a report of the Special Sub-Committee of the Committee appointed by the War Cabinet 304, Minute 2 (Paper G.T.-3097).

Mr. Barnes, in presenting these two reports, stated that the War Cabinet Labour Committee had been engaged upon a series of questions arising out of the grant of an increase of 12½ per cent to skilled time-workers, and more particularly with certain classes of labour that were on the borderline of the industries affected by the grant. Matters were brought to a head last Friday by the stoppage of work in the Belfast shipyards and in the electric supply department. Conferences had taken place with representatives of the employers and employed, and the results of these conferences were outlined in Paper G.T.-3096. This document presented four alternatives to the Government for decision, and of these four alternatives he recommended the second, namely, to extend the grant to piece-workers in certain specified trades in
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4. With reference to War Cabinet 302, Minute 9, the Chief of the Imperial Staff reported that a misunderstanding with M. Clemencean regarding the question of the extension of the British line in France had been satisfactorily cleared up.

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The two batteries of howitzers in question should proceed from Egypt to Italy.

14. The War Cabinet had before them a report to the War Cabinet by the War Cabinet Labour Committee on the 12½ per cent. bonus dilemma (Paper G.T.-3006), and a report of the Special Sub-Committee of the Committee appointed by the War Cabinet 304, Minute 2 (Paper G.T.-3097).

Mr. Barnes, in presenting these two reports, stated that the War Cabinet Labour Committee had been engaged upon a series of questions arising out of the grant of an increase of 12½ per cent. to skilled time-workers, and more particularly with certain classes of labour that were on the borderline of the industries affected by the grant. Matters were brought to a head last Friday by the stoppage of work in the Belfast shipyards and in the electric supply department. Conferences had taken place with representatives of the employers and employed, and the results of these conferences were outlined in Paper G.T.-3006. This document presented four alternatives to the Government for decision, and of these four alternatives he recommended the second, namely, to extend the grant to piece-workers in certain specified trades in
the form of a guarantee to piece-workers that 12½ per cent. shall be added to their guaranteed time rates; this, however, to be minus earnings over such time rate; and to advise the revision of rates so as to encourage working by systems of payment by results. Mr. Barnes pointed out that the third alternative, namely, a wide extension of the 12½ per cent. bonus, or an equivalent, to all classes of labour would involve a cost to the country of anything from 100 to 150 millions per annum, while the fourth alternative, namely, to withdraw the 12½ per cent. increase, would result in serious labour troubles and possibly in a general election.

Mr. Churchill stated that the perpetual agitation for further increases in wages was due very largely to the fact that the wage-earners were convinced that enormous profits were being made both by the employers and by profiteers engaged in trade and exchange. He was convinced that one of the only means of stopping these demands would be for the Government to take the whole of the excess profits instead of only 80 per cent. The only way to face the present situation was for the Government to make a proclamation stating that they meant to deal drastically with the question of profits, and to place the whole question of profits and wages upon a broad basis of justice and security, which would appeal to both capital and labour alike. Whatever increases were approved by the Cabinet should be announced by the Government, and not by one Department. It was being generally said that the war was being kept going by persons who were interested in making profits out of the war, and he felt that the very existence of excess profits being received by individuals was wrong both in principle and in morals.

Mr. Roberts stated that he adhered to the recommendation made by Mr. Barnes, and that, although the recommendation provided no logical halting-place, it would give the Government a sound position upon which they could take a fight with labour if such a fight were to arise. He added that he had for some time past advocated the taking by the State of the whole of the excess profits.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that he could not now pledge himself regarding the terms of his next Budget, but from his experience in raising the Excess Profits Tax from 50 to 80 per cent. he feared that the proposal to take the whole of the excess profits would meet with tremendous opposition from all classes of employers, and, speaking for himself, he feared that the adoption of Mr. Churchill's proposal would destroy all incentive to increased output, and would destroy the initiative in British industry. Any proclamation regarding the taking of the whole of the excess profits was out of the question at present.

The War Cabinet approved the recommendation of Mr. Barnes, as set out above, and requested—

Mr. Churchill to draft a statement, to be issued on behalf of the Government on the 1st January, 1918, for the consideration of the War Cabinet.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.
December 24, 1917.
WAR CABINET, 306.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, December 26, 1917, at 3.30 P.M.

Present:

The PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P. Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. LORD R. Cecil, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.


Lieutenant-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh, M.C.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.


Vice-Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

The Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minutes 13 to 19).

Air Raids:

1. The War Cabinet discussed the desirability of preventing the publication of results of inquests. It was generally agreed that much harm was being done by the detailed accounts of inquests and the unpleasant pictures that had been published.

   The War Cabinet requested—

   The Chancellor of the Exchequer to ask the Home Secretary to take what steps he could with a view to suppressing the publication of the accounts and pictures referred to.

Gas-masks for Population of London:

2. The War Cabinet considered the question of supplying gas-masks to the population of London.

   Lord Derby said that to provide gas-masks for London would involve a heavy drain on the supply for the Army, and that in any case it would be almost impossible to train the London population to put on their masks, even if they had them.
General Smuts said that the question had been raised previously at his Committee, when it had been decided not to issue the masks.

The War Cabinet concurred in this decision.

3. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that there was no change in the situation. One German division had arrived in Flanders from Russia, making in all a total of 154 enemy divisions on the Western front. There was no abnormal concentration of enemy troops on any particular part of the front, though there were small concentrations and a pretty continuous flow of German troops from Russia to the Franco-British front.

4. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that there had been a heavy attack by the Austrians to the east of the Asiago Plateau. The enemy reported the capture of 9,000 Italian prisoners. The Italians had counter-attacked and recovered a portion of the ground lost by them, but there was considerable ground lost which had not been regained.

5. With reference to War Cabinet 296, Minute 9, the Director of Military Intelligence said that, as far as he was aware, General Plumer's appreciation had not yet been received, but that it was expected shortly.

6. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that General Guillaumat had arrived at Salonica on the evening of the 22nd December, and had taken over command of the Allied forces. General Sarrail had departed on the night of the 22nd.

7. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that the enemy had retired their right flank to a position on the sea, 17 miles north of Jaffa.

8. The War Cabinet requested—

The Director of Military Intelligence to furnish an appreciation by the General Staff of the whole Military Situation, for the information of the War Cabinet only.

9. The Deputy First Sea Lord gave the daily returns in regard to shipping losses.

10. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported the receipt of information from the Aegean to the effect that the armed drifter "Annie" had grounded off Enos when landing agents at midnight on the 18th December. The crew had been unable to float her, so her books, &c., were burnt, arms, and ammunition destroyed, and the ship scuttled and abandoned.

11. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that the special service vessel "Penshurst" had sunk on the 24th December after being torpedoed 9 miles S.S.W. of the Smalls.
Bombing Raid.

12. The Deputy First Sea Lord reported that a successful bombing raid had been carried out on Bruges Docks, St. Denis Westrem Aerodrome, and Ghistelles Aerodrome. All our machines had returned safely.


13. With reference to War Cabinet 304, Minute 10 (a), Lord Robert Cecil submitted a memorandum, prepared by Lord Milner and himself, on “Suggested Policy in Russia,” which had been accepted by M. Clemenceau on the 23rd December (Appendix). He stated that Lord Milner, General Macdonogh, and he had been received at the Quai d’Orsay on Sunday morning last by MM. Clemenceau and Pichon and General Foch. The British representatives explained the difficulty in which the Cabinet found themselves, and M. Clemenceau stated that he had no further information to go upon, but that he was quite decided that we must continue to give support to the Ukraine and other Governments in the South of Russia, while at the same time we should maintain unofficial agents at Petrograd. M. Clemenceau accepted the proposals set forth in the memorandum on behalf of the French Government, and further agreed that a French officer should direct the Allied activities in the Ukraine; the Armenian, Cossack, and Caucasian countries being similarly allotted as the British sphere of activity. But as the French had already agreed to advance 100,000,000 fr. to General Alexeieff through General Berthelot, this was to be allowed to go on. It was thought that the French might be able to raise money through the branches of the Crédit Lyonnais at Kieff and Odessa.

The War Cabinet approved the policy laid down in the memorandum prepared by Lord Milner and Lord Robert Cecil, and accepted by M. Clemenceau, with the addition of a paragraph regarding the obligation of honour which Russia had towards Serbia, the in paragraph regarding representations to be made to the Bolsheviki.

Small States.

14. General Macdonogh stated that M. Strepankonski, a representative of the Ukrainian Bureau in Switzerland, was now in this country and had seen him that morning, informing him that great progress was taking place in Russia in regard to the formation of new small nations; for instance, the White Russians, who inhabited the country to the north of the Ukraine, round Minsk, were forming a separate Government and looked forward to the formation of a separate army. General Macdonogh gathered that the Ukrainians were most anxious to avoid exploitation by the Germans, and that, although they had been friendly with Austria in the past, they had now quarrelled, owing to the proposed amalgamation of Eastern Galicia, which was largely a Ukrainian country, with Poland. General Macdonogh also reported that the French were advancing money to the Poles, with a view to assisting the formation of Polish corps. The Poles were not altogether friendly towards the Ukrainians, but there appeared to be a definite breach between the Poles and the Bolsheviks.

Recall of British Missions.

15. The War Cabinet then considered what action, if any, should be taken with regard to the withdrawal of British personnel now in Russia, and discussed the selection of someone to act as Chargé d’Affaires in Petrograd. They decided that—

(a.) General Knox should accompany Sir George Buchanan on his return to this country, if the latter concurred.

(b.) Every effort should be made to utilise in South Russia the personnel of the British missions now in Russia, and that for the present they should not be withdrawn altogether from the country.
16. Mr. Churchill stated that the Ministry of Munitions were doing all they could to damp down the production of Russian war material, but that they did not at present propose to regard Russia as an entirely "gone" concern, so that it seemed desirable to keep a nucleus going in order that the production of material for Russia might be restored in the event of a change taking place in the situation.

17. Lord Robert Cecil stated that a further meeting took place on Sunday afternoon, at which certain other matters besides Russia were touched upon by M. Clemenceau, who requested that they should be communicated as early as possible to the British War Cabinet:

(a.) M. Clemenceau repeated his anxiety regarding the condition of the trenches on the Western front, and stated that he had recalled 270,000 men to the colours for the purpose, not of fighting, but of digging trenches. He hoped that the British Government would use their best endeavours to secure an improvement in the defensive system behind their present front.

(b.) M. Clemenceau urged the creation of a joint reserve, composed of both French and British elements, for use at any point where the Germans made a big attack. M. Clemenceau did not think that such an attack would take place for another three or four months, but considered it essential that a mobile reserve, under complete unity of direction, should be created meanwhile. He suggested that the attainment of this unity of direction should be considered jointly by Sir Douglas Haig and General Pétain.

(c.) M. Clemenceau requested the British Government to consider a document submitted by Major Sevigny regarding the Italian front. This document proposed to create an Italian Generalissimo, who should be a figure-head, and who should be in supreme command of all the Allied forces in Italy, and who would have an Allied General Staff with a French officer at the head of it. M. Clemenceau did not wish to pin himself to the proposals of the document, but hoped the British Government would give them their careful consideration.

(d.) M. Clemenceau expressed continued anxiety regarding the question of transportation, and hoped that it would be possible to achieve real co-ordination on this question.

Lord Robert Cecil added that he gathered that M. Clemenceau now regarded as impracticable the question of a Generalissimo for the whole of the Allied forces on the Western front.

18. The Prime Minister asked whether the prosecution of M. Caillaux had produced any serious effect in France.

Lord Robert Cecil replied that he understood from a British officer who had heard M. Caillaux's speech in the Chamber on Saturday last that the latter, though a fine rhetorical effort, was not a real success, and that it would not stand cross-examination.

Sir Eric Geddes observed that the German press had been ordered to make no reference to the Caillaux trial.
19. Mr. Churchill said he understood that a number of Russian officers were most anxious to be kept together, either in France or England, as a Russian unit to form a rallying-point for those Russians who remained loyal to the Entente. In his opinion such a nucleus would be a valuable political asset.

Lord Derby stated, in this connection, that General Yermiloff had made certain definite proposals of this character to the War Office, but that his proposals were not practical, as they included a request that Russian officers should be allowed to serve as Russian officers in or with the British Army. This was statutorily inadmissible, as the War Office were prevented by the Act of Settlement from taking any foreigners into the British Army.

General Macdonogh stated that he feared the Russian troops in France were of little or no fighting value. About 3,000 of them had been transferred to North Africa, while the rest were being employed in labour battalions for the purpose of digging trenches. He understood that the French Ambassador in Petrograd had wired to his Government stating that a number of Russian officers now in Russia desired to volunteer for the purpose of assisting the French army.

Sir Eric Geddes stated that Admiral Rostock, who had until recently commanded the Black Sea Fleet, had offered his services to this country, and that he had been informed by the Admiralty that if he and his officers could bring crews with them to this country we would place vessels at their disposal which they could man.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 27, 1917.

APPENDIX.

Memorandum prepared by Lord Milner and Lord R. Cecil on Suggested Policy in Russia, and accepted by M. Clemenceau and M. Pichon on December 23, 1917.

At Petrograd we should at once get into relations with the Bolsheviki through unofficial agents, each country as seems best to it.

We propose to send Sir George Buchanan on leave for reasons of health, but we shall keep a Chargé d'Affaires there. We do not suggest that our Allies should follow our example. Sir George Buchanan's long residence in Petrograd has indelibly associated him, in the minds of the Bolsheviki, with the policy of the Cadets, and he stands to them for much the same as, say, M. Miliukoff.

We should represent to the Bolsheviki that we have no desire to take part in any way in the internal politics of Russia, and that any idea that we favour a counter-revolution is a profound mistake. Such a policy might be attractive to the autocratic Governments of Germany and Austria, but not to the Western democracies or America. But we feel it necessary to keep in touch as far as we can with the Ukraine, the Cossacks, Finland, Siberia, the Caucasus, &c., because these various semi-autonomous provinces represent a very large proportion of the strength of Russia. In particular, we feel bound to befriend the Ukraine, since upon the Ukraine depends the feeding of the Roumanians, to whom we are bound by every obligation of honour.

As for the war, we should carefully refrain from any word or act condoning the treachery of the Russians in opening peace negotiations with our enemies. But we should continually repeat our readiness to accept the principles of self-determination, and, subject to that, of no annexation or indemnities. We should press on the Bolsheviki the importance of not being satisfied with empty phrases from the Germans, and point out that unless they get specific undertakings from them as to such questions as Poland, Bohemia, the Roumanian parts of Transylvania, not to speak of Alsace-Lorraine and the Trentino, they will get nothing. Meanwhile their powers of resistance are melting away, and they will soon be, if they are not now, at the mercy of the German Kaiser, who will then snap his fingers at all their fine phrases and impose on
them any terms he pleases. They should be told that it is now probably too late to do any­thing to save the personnel of the army. But the material of the artillery can still be preserved, and at the very least it should not be transferred to our enemies to be used against the Western democracies. Most important of all, the Bolsheviki should prevent, if they can, the wheat districts of Russia, such as the Ukraine, falling into the control of or being made available for the Central Powers. This makes another reason why we are anxious to support and strengthen the Ukraine, and why we urge on the Bolsheviki that, so far from trying to coerce the Ukrainians, they should enter into close co-operation with them.

In Southern Russia our principal object must be, if we can, to save Roumania. Next we must aim at preventing Russian supplies from reaching Germany.

Finally, we are bound to protect, if possible, the remnant of the Armenians, not only in order to safeguard the flank of our Mesopotamian forces in Persia and the Caucasus, but also because unless an Armenian, united, if possible, with a Georgian, autonomous, or independent State, is the only barrier against the development of a Turanian movement that will extend from Constantinople to China, and will provide Germany with a weapon of even greater danger to the peace of the world than the control of the Bagdad Railway.

If we could induce the Southern Russian armies to resume the fight, that would be very desirable, but it is probably impossible. To secure these objects the first thing is money to reorganise the Ukraine, to pay the Cossacks and Caucasian forces, and to bribe the Persians. The sums required are not, as things go, very enormous, but the exchange presents great difficulties. If the French could undertake the finance of the Ukraine, we might find the money for the others. It is understood that the United States will assist.

Besides finance it is important to have agents and officers to advise and support the provincial Governments and their armies. It is essential that this should be done as quietly as possible so as to avoid the imputation—as far as we can—that we are preparing to make war on the Bolsheviki.

We would suggest that the Ukraine should be again, in this matter, dealt with by the French, while we would take the other south-east provinces. A general officer from each country would be appointed to take charge of our respective activities, but they would of course keep in the closest touch with one another through carefully selected liaison officers in order to ensure the utmost unity of action.

It is for consideration whether we should facilitate the return to Southern Russia of the numerous Russian officers at present in France and England.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, December 27, 1917, at 3.30 p.m.

Present:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.
Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. Smuts, K.C.

The Right Hon. George N. Barnes, M.P.
The Right Hon. Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.

Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Colonel E. D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.
Captain Clement Jones, Assistant Secretary.

The Invasion of Italy: General Plumer's Appreciation.

1. In reference to War Cabinet 296, Minute 9, and War Cabinet 303, Minute 5, the Secretary pointed out that General Plumer's Appreciation had been received and had been circulated on the 21st December as Paper G.T. 3655.

Shipping Losses.

2. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff made the usual statement as regards Shipping Losses.

Submarines.

3. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff stated that a report had been received from Dakar that the collier "Teebridge" had reported engaging a large submarine off Madeira, upon which a direct hit was registered.

The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff stated that it had been reported from Milford Haven that the vessel "P. 56" had dropped two depth charges over a submarine of a large type, which had forced
the latter vessel to come to the surface. "P. 56" then rammed the
submarine, cutting off her stern and exposing her interior, and
obtained a certain number of hits with shell before she finally sank.

American Military
Assistance.

4. In reference to War Cabinet 304, Minute 12, the Chief of
the Imperial General Staff stated that the question of the amalgama-
tion of American forces with French and British divisions had become
rather confused, owing to the intervention of the French.
The War Cabinet decided that—

The discussion of this matter should be deferred until the
return from Paris of Lord Milner, who had been requested
to interview General Pershing on the subject.

The Invasion of
Italy.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that a recent
attack on the Italians had been carried out by the Austrians; that
the Italians had given ground for a distance of 1 mile over a front of
3 or 4 miles. General Plumer had reported that a better system
was being introduced for bringing up reinforcements and reliefs.

In reference to an article which had appeared in the
"Manchester Guardian," to the effect that during the winter the
chief effort of the enemy would be against Italy, to which attention
was drawn by the Prime Minister, the Chief of the Imperial General
Staff referred to the bad strategic nature of the Italian position
owing to the fact that the Italians had from the first wrongly
endeavoured to press on to Trieste instead of clearing their northern
flank. There must therefore always be anxiety in regard to the
situation, but he did not think that, owing to the season of the year
and the mountainous nature of the country across which the Central
Powers would have to operate, a great effort would be made there
this winter. The strength of the two sides was about equal, and
the result would depend on the staying power of either side. If the
Italians fought, he did not see why they should not hold their own.

Roumania.

6. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that General
Ballard, in telegram No. 861 of the 25th December, 1917, had
reported that the Roumanian Government had been compelled to
step in and take forcible measures to prevent disorder amongst the
Russian troops.

The Military
Situation.

7. In reference to War Cabinet 306, Minute 8, the Prime
Minister gave further details as to the exact points upon which the
War Cabinet wished for guidance from the Appreciation being
prepared by the General Staff.

Russia.

8. The Prime Minister read extracts from an article in the
"Evening Standard" of the 27th December, 1917, in which it was
stated that an official statement had been issued in Vienna giving
the reply of the Central Powers to the Russian report. This was to
the effect that—

"The delegates of the Central Powers declare that their
Government are of opinion that the principles of the Russian
proposal can form a basis for peace. The Central Powers agree
immediate peace on the principles of no annexation and no
indemnities, and the Governments join the Russians in their
condemnation of a continuation of the war with the sole object
of conquest. The delegates solemnly declare that they are
willing immediately to sign peace ending the war on the
conditions mentioned, which shall concern all the belligerents.
The Central Powers, however, demand that all the nations
participating in the war shall accept the principles of no
annexation and no indemnities, and they also demand a
guarantee that all the Allies of Russia will adopt these principles
in regard to Germany and her Allies."

The War Cabinet decided that—
The matter should be discussed on the following day, when
fuller news might be available.

9. The War Cabinet had before them Joint Note No. 3,
submitted by the Military Advisers of the Supreme War Council,
Versailles.
The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that orders
had been given to General Plumer directing him to use the British
heavy artillery to support the Italian Army as far as he deemed
possible, which practically gave effect to the only constructive
recommendations of the Permanent Military Advisers.
The War Cabinet approved the joint note.

10. With reference to Joint Note No. 4, by the military advisers
of the Supreme War Council, Versailles, the Chief of the Imperial
General Staff read to the Cabinet the instructions issued to General
Guillaumat, which practically carried out the recommendations of
the Permanent Military Advisers.
The War Cabinet approved the joint note.

11. The War Cabinet had before them Paper G.T.-3104, and
referred the matter to Mr. Bonar Law and Lord Robert Cecil for
decision.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 27, 1917.
Incendiary Bullets for use against Aircraft.

1. WITH reference to War Cabinet 308, Minute 14, Lord Rothermere said that his Department considered it desirable to withhold the use of the R.T.S. Bullet until there was a sufficient supply. It would be inadvisable to use the bullets in a piecemeal way, because the Germans might, by capturing the bullets from our airmen, themselves use the invention.

General Trenchard said that he considered 1,000,000 bullets would be required; when that supply was available they could be used continuously.

A letter from Major-General Bingham was read, from which it appeared that the latest trials with the R.T.S. Bullet against big balloons had not been quite satisfactory, and it was therefore hoped that the War Cabinet would not ask for the R.T.S. Bullet to be sent to France.
The War Cabinet decided that—

Subject to the bullet proving satisfactory, permission should be given to the Air Minister for its use as soon as he was satisfied as to sufficiency of supply.

2. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by Sir David Henderson (Paper G.T.-2965). Sir David Henderson pointed out that the Air Force had at present no permanent establishment such as was in existence for the Navy and Army, and the present circumstances were such that no data were available on which to base an accurate estimate of permanent requirements. It was considered necessary for the Air Force to have some personnel on a permanent basis, to form a nucleus for the organisation of the service. The Air Organisation Committee recommended that the Air Council should be authorised to appoint officers and to recruit other ranks up to the number of 2,000 officers and 25,000 men, under the conditions approved for service other than temporary.

Lord Derby said that the proposals of Sir David Henderson were approved by the War Office.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Subject to the approval of the Admiralty, the scheme outlined above should be adopted.

3. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the enemy had made an attack near Cambrai, a communiqué with regard to which had appeared in the press. From information received from prisoners, it appeared that the German objectives had been our front and support trenches. These they had taken, but later we had regained the support trenches.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that General Allenby had made successful advances on the 28th and 29th December, and had driven the enemy North and East. The result, therefore, of the Turkish attempt to re-capture Jerusalem had ended in the defeat of the Turks, who had suffered heavily in killed and wounded. We had taken 600 prisoners and 20 machine-guns.

5. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff gave the daily returns in regard to Shipping Losses.

6. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff stated that information had been received from Alexandria to the effect that the transport "Aragon" and the destroyer "Attack" had been sunk near the entrance to the swept channel. It was uncertain whether they had been sunk by mine or torpedo. The "Aragon" had on board approximately 2,100 troops and also a number of first class passengers, amongst whom were several officers and 150 nurses.

7. The War Cabinet discussed what action, if any, should be taken with regard to the protection of the large accumulation of stores at Vladivostock.

With regard to the possibility of naval assistance, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff said that we had one ship now at Hong Kong, namely, the "Suffolk," a "County" class cruiser, which could be sent to Vladivostock.
As regards military assistance, it was stated that there was half a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment which might also be sent.

The War Cabinet were of opinion, however, that it would be taking an extreme step to send soldiers to Vladivostock, and useless to do so at all, unless they were sent in sufficient numbers.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff should obtain the views of the Admiralty in regard to sending the “Suffolk”;

and that—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff should obtain the views of the General Staff in regard to sending military assistance.

Palestine's Political Future.

8. Attention was called to the recrudescence of French demands for political rights in Palestine, referred to by M. Pichon in his speech on Friday last. It was understood that M. Clemenceau did not entirely share the views of the French Foreign Minister, who, in this respect, was voicing the wishes of the Clerical elements of French public opinion.

It was further pointed out that the French military contribution in Palestine had been extremely small, and that, for the present, at any rate, it was absolutely essential to continue the military government of the occupied territory. It would seem that the French entertained the immediate hope of an International or Inter-Allied Commission, with a Frenchman at the head of it, to take over political interests in Palestine, and more particularly of the Holy Places.

War Aims of the British Labour Party.

9. The Prime Minister reported that he had had an interesting and successful interview with a deputation from the British Labour Party regarding war aims. With the exception of a certain Mr. Bramley, the view of the Labour Party seemed to coincide with that of the Government. They evinced no desire to throw over the demand of the French democracy with regard to Alsace-Lorraine, or to raise a quarrel with the Dominion Government regarding the non-tropical colonies. With regard to the German colonies north of the Zambesi, they all agreed that they should not be handed back to the Germans, and advocated some super-national authority being established to administer them.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff asked whether the Colonial Office could do something to gather the chiefs in the former German colonies together, with a view to some statement of their wishes.

Lord Robert Cecil added that he understood that the Masai tribe in German East Africa was keenly pro-British.

The Transport Problem.

10. With reference to War Cabinet 305, Minute 1, Lord Derby asked what instructions should be given to General Nash, and read a telegram reporting an interview that had taken place between Captain Amery and M. Clemenceau.

The Prime Minister stated that M. Clemenceau had wired to him, accepting General Nash in the place suggested for Sir Eric Geddes. In this case, the same instructions should be given to General Nash as would have been given to Sir Eric Geddes. General Nash was clearly designated as chairman of the Inter Allied Advisory Committee.
The War Cabinet instructed—

The Secretary to draft a personal telegram from the Prime Minister to the Italian President of the Council, for the Foreign Office to communicate, with a view to obtaining the concurrence of the Italian Government in the appointment of General Nash.

11. The War Cabinet took note of the fact that all executive action with regard to South Russia was concerted by a committee sitting daily at the Foreign Office under the presidency of the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and on which the War Office and the Treasury were represented.

The War Cabinet directed that—

The Permanent Military Advisers of the Supreme War Council should be invited to report on the military and strategical position in the Turkish theatre and South Russia as a whole.

12. Attention was drawn to a letter received by the Prime Minister from Signor Nitti, the Italian Minister of Finance, regarding the coal and food crisis obtaining in Italy.

Lord Curzon stated that he had seen a letter from Mr. Trevelyan, who was acting with the Red Cross in Italy, regarding the same subject. It appeared that there was considerable danger that the Italian moral would weaken owing to the fact that the British troops in Italy were both better fed and better paid than the Italians.

Lord Derby stated that he had had a number of letters from British officers in Italy, who all stated that the supply of coal to Italy was the principal problem exercising the attention of the Italians.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that he had preached the desirability of sending larger supplies of coal to Italy for months. The French had undertaken to supply 150,000 tons a month by rail, and this appeared to be all that could be expected from them. In his opinion, it was absolutely essential that we should divert more shipping to the sending of coal to Italy, and, if necessary, we must use shipping earmarked for other purposes upon this object. He added that we had not sent anything like the minimum demands of Italy for many months past.

It was pointed out that the British vessels engaged in taking coal to France were too small to be utilised in taking coal to Italy.

The War Cabinet decided that—

The matter should again be brought by the Secretary to the attention of the Shipping Controller, who should furnish them with a statement showing what could be done in the way of increasing the supply of coal to Italy.

13. The War Cabinet took note of, and approved, Joint Note No. 6, by the Military Advisers of the Supreme War Council.

In this connection it was pointed out that the French were starting schools for their own officers in Italy, with a view to attracting Italian officers to attend them.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that General Plumer had done the same, and that General Diaz had been invited to send a certain number of Italian officers to our schools of instruction. Several competent British officers had reported that, since they had been in Italy, they had completely changed their
opinion regarding the quality of the Italian troops, and that, with further instruction, great improvements might be hoped for. The War Cabinet decided that—

Sir Rennell Rodd should be urged by the Foreign Office to suggest to Signor Nitti that the latter should pay a visit to this country at an early date, to discuss the various matters concerning the Italian military and internal situations.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 31, 1917.