The Arab Revolt, Rabegh.

Attended for Subjects 1, 2, & 3:
Mr. A. Chamberlain,
S. of S. for India.

Attended for Subject 1:
Mr. G. R. Clerk,
Foreign Office.

1. With reference to the decision of the War Cabinet in Minute 3 of the 19th December, in the sense that the Foreign Office should telegraph to the Sirdar that the terms of their telegram No. 45 of the 5th instant covered the various points raised in his telegrams Nos. 77 and 86, Lord Robert Cecil, acting for the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, called attention to the suggestion made by the Sirdar in the latter telegram, and asked that the War Cabinet should decide what should be done.

In the telegram referred to, dated 16th December, the Sirdar proposed to inform the Sherif that troops and their transports could not be detained immobile; that therefore the Sherif must decide, in the absence of Moslem troops, whether or not he required a European force to be landed at Rabegh in the course of the next fortnight; that if his reply was in the negative, he must understand that his refusal would be regarded as final, and that the present offer would not be repeated.
The War Cabinet decided—

That the Foreign Office should send a telegram to the Sirdar to the effect that His Majesty's Government approved his suggestion, and that he should inform the Sherif as proposed.

2. The Secretary of State for India drew the attention of the War Cabinet to the omission of India from the approval given for the despatch of a telegram in the Prime Minister's name to the Governors of the self-governing Dominions, in Minute 2 of the previous day's meeting:

The War Cabinet decided that Mr. Chamberlain should draft a telegram to the Viceroy in corresponding terms to that approved by the Cabinet and printed in the minute quoted.

3. With reference to the statement made by the Prime Minister in his speech at the House of Commons on the 19th December that His Majesty's Government propose to summon an Imperial Conference to place the whole position before the Dominions and to take counsel with them as to further action, the Prime Minister informed the Cabinet that he proposed to ask the Dominions to send representatives as soon as possible.

Mr. Chamberlain raised the question of India being represented on the Conference, and asked that His Majesty's Government would give the most favourable consideration to the question when the Conference was held. He pointed out the immediate and continued contributions of troops and war material made by India from the very beginning of the war, and the consequent claim for representation.

The War Cabinet approved in principle that India should be represented on the Conference by the Secretary of State, accompanied by such adjoints as each different matter might demand, but considered that the whole question was one of such importance that it required further discussion, and that the Secretary of State for the Colonies should be present.

The Secretary was instructed to ask Mr. W. H. Long and Mr. A. Chamberlain to draft the notification to be sent on the subject, for discussion on Saturday, the 23rd December.

4. The Chief, of the Imperial General Staff reported that he had received satisfactory information from the Military Attaché at Bucharest of the destruction of the oil wells and refineries at all oil centres except two, which the dispositions of the troops had now made safe. He asked that the question of compensation should stand over until the receipt of Colonel Norton Griffiths's report. He informed the Cabinet that General Sarrail had reported that he had organised his defences in the neighbourhood of Monastir, and expected to hold his line where he was. The whole of the British Sixtieth Division had now arrived at Salonica except one brigade which had been detached to Ekaterini.

5. The Prime Minister called attention to the necessity of the members of the War Cabinet being furnished with all possible information by the responsible Departments. Among other suggestions as to the best means of complying with this requirement, having in view the danger of circulating several copies of secret documents, as well as the disadvantage of loss of time and sometimes bulkiness of reports, was the institution of an "information room" in the premises presently to be occupied, where all reports and communications could be read.

The War Cabinet decided that the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff should carefully consider the
character of the information to be furnished by the Admiralty and War Office respectively, and should report upon the best way in which it could be imparted.

6. The War Cabinet had before them a telegram emanating from the King of Greece (Appendix I). After some discussion as to the terms of the acknowledgment it was decided:

That the Foreign Office should send a reply to Sir Francis Elliot in the sense that, in regard to keeping Venizelist forces from attacking royalist forces, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to consider the question if the King of Greece asks for it; in order to assist the War Cabinet in considering such a request, Sir Francis Elliot should be asked for his views as to the prospect of a Venizelist revolution taking place in Greece.

In the meantime it was considered desirable that the Foreign Office should consult with M. Stavridis and ascertain the views held by him as prospective diplomatic agent for M. Venizelos.

7. The War Cabinet had before them the following documents on the subject of the defensive arming of merchant ships against submarine attack (Appendix II).

The War Cabinet accepted as a basis Scheme (B), which is agreed to by the Admiralty and War Office, the effect of which on the gun production of the Navy and Army respectively is as follows:

As regards the Army, by the sacrifice of 724 guns and howitzers, 806—4-inch guns will be gained for the Navy.

Under this scheme the Admiralty minimum requirement will not be satisfied, at the earliest, before July 1917.

It was agreed that the Admiralty and War Office should concert a modification in Scheme (B) to avoid the War Office foregoing 196—4.5-inch howitzers, in order to give the Navy 60—4-inch guns.

8. Evidence was heard as to the latest submarine losses, which have very seriously increased during the last few months, particularly among neutrals. The figures for these losses are shown in Appendix III.

Figures were also given to show the lower percentage of loss among ships attacked when they are armed, viz., that during the last three months 66 per cent. of the armed merchant steamers that had been attacked had escaped.

The War Cabinet re-affirmed the principle approved by the late War Committee on the 13th November, 1916:

"That as a question of principle the arming of merchant ships up to the number considered by the Admiralty as indispensable should be a first charge on our artillery resources."

9. It was further decided that the Ministry of Munitions, War Office, and Admiralty should prepare, for the consideration of the War Cabinet, at the earliest possible date a scheme for meeting the requirements of the Admiralty by April 1917.
10. An International Ministerial Conference to consider naval and shipping questions was approved in principle, to be held as soon as possible.

11. As a preliminary to the holding of the Anglo-French Conference on the subject of guns for merchant ships, it was decided that the Minister of Munitions should communicate with the French and Italian Ministries of Munitions, and that the First Lord of the Admiralty should communicate with the French and Italian Ministers of Marine in order to ascertain:

(a.) The present and prospective position of the French and Italians respecting the arming of merchant ships.
(b.) To what extent they can respectively help us in the matter.

12. The First Lord of the Admiralty stated that the Admiralty, with other Departments concerned, was going exhaustively into the question of what was the best allocation of our shipbuilding resources between the different classes of warships and merchant ships.

13. The War Cabinet decided to examine at an early date the question of curtailing the traffic in the raw materials of the Liquor Trade, with a view to reducing the volume of Shipping and Railway Transport now devoted to this purpose. It was agreed that, as a preliminary step, Lord Milner should discuss with Mr. Butler (a Midland brewer) the probable effect on the brewing trade, and should also obtain the views of Lord d’Abernon, Chairman of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), on the subject.

14. The War Cabinet decided to invite the French Government to send representatives to a Conference on Finance, to be held in London at the earliest possible date. It was agreed that, in view of the Prime Minister’s recent illness and the fact that the last two Conferences have been held in France, the French Government might reasonably be asked to come to London. In order that the question of finance may be discussed on the widest ground of general policy, and determined in a way that will carry the fullest authority, it was decided to urge the importance of the French Prime Minister attending in person.

15. The War Cabinet decided that the Allies concerned should be immediately informed that we are not yet ready for the Petrograd Conference, and that we propose to postpone the departure of our representatives for a fortnight from the 26th December, the date previously fixed.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 20, 1916.

(Initialled) D. Ll. G.
YOU are requested to submit the following telegrams of His Majesty the King of
the Hellenes to His Britannic Majesty:

"The new ultimatum addressed to us has again been accepted by My Government
as a supreme token of the friendly feelings which we have not ceased to profess
towards the Powers, and in (view) order to confirm once more the most formal and
most solemn assurances that I personally, and all the Hellenic Governments which
have succeeded to each other, have not failed to give repeatedly as regards our sincere
desire not to depart from a friendly attitude.

"It is absolutely untrue that My Government, or their agents, have ever promised
or sent any support to the enemies of the Entente. On the contrary, we have given
efficacious help to the operations of the Entente. We have four times during the
European war made proposals of co-operation, one of which has not been accepted
and the other three left unanswered.

"If all this has been misinterpreted, the cause is to be found in the systematic
calamities that the unscrupulous and desperate opposition of a Statesman towards Me,
have succeeded in propagating against the sincerity of My intentions.

"Owing to the same campaign the Powers, induced in error as to the actual
dispositions of the Greek people, have stopped the constitutional life of My country.
Having demanded the dissolution of the Parliament, they have, a few weeks afterwards,
presented new elections to be held, without allowing the existing House to sit again.

"The recent events are the result of a violent revolutionary movement, which has
broken out at Athens on the 1st December.

"Criminal schemes had been manifested at Salonica, where a second Greek
Government had been constituted, dismissing the Authorities of the Kingdom;
forbidding the bishops to pray for Me in the churches; removing the royal emblems;
pretending to be only a national Government and not an anti-dynastic one, when they
became aware of the bad impression that this had produced in Europe; proceeding by
unmentioned cruelties to a compelled conscription of the inhabitants; persecuting by
fire and flame, all those who remained faithful to their allegiance.

"Notwithstanding all this, I have, in My desire not to give an impression of
impeding the action of the Powers, been so far as to consent to the establishment of a
neutral zone, dividing de facto My country in two parts; I have notified that I allow
every man at liberty to enlist to do so in the army which would support the cause of
the Allies, and I have only requested that all officers and officials willing to go to
Salonica should previously tender their resignation.

"After the demobilisation of our army, and the de-existence of our entire navy, the
Powers have been so far as to demand the complete disarming of Greece.

"This would have been impossible to be accepted by My people, and the more so
owing to the certainty that the arms taken would have been sent to the army of
Venizelos.

"The most unfortunate incident which occurred between Greek and Allied forces
has taken place against any expectation, and it has not been proved at all that My
armies, which had formal orders not to fire first, have attacked the marines of the
Allied Powers, which were marching against the capital, with a view to occupying the
dominating heights, and accompanied by Venizelists.

"It is proved to-day beyond doubt that, if the town had been occupied by the
Venizelist revolutionary movement, which had broken out, would have coincided and
would have succeeded to impose itself [sic].

"The friends of mark of Venizelos, his Prime Minister, and several of his Ministers
were awaiting on board the ship of the French Admiral the seizure of the capital. Under
these circumstances I feel the necessity to appeal once more to your feelings as regards
My person and My dynasty, which feels itself united to you and to your dynasty by
indissoluble bonds, and point out to you the dangers to which the present precarious
state of affairs and the monarchical principles are exposed at this moment in Greece.

"Following Macedonia, Crete, Chios, and Mitylene, the islands of Old Greece
are, the one after the other, now occupied, through the help of the Allies’ navies, which
have established there revolutionary authorities.
"The Greek people, seeing that the assurances of the Allied Ministers not to support the Venizelist movement in respect to the internal affairs have been contradicted by the fact that Allied warships have been, and are, at the disposal of the Revolution, are afraid that, through the terror exercised by an infinite minority under a foreign shield, the subversive movement might continue to spread, while the defensive power of the country is considerably diminished after the acceptance of ultimatum of the day before yesterday.

"I am convinced that you will use all your influence to make your Government realise the true aspect of the situation.

"The maintenance of order in Greece, indispensable to save the remainder of My country from anarchy, would at the same time profit the security of the Allied armies in Macedonia much more than all measures taken to weaken us, or than the few soldiers who have joined Venizelos.

"Any guarantees in this sense given to Us by the Powers' answer, according to My absolute conviction, to the principles of equity and to the common interests of our countries.

(Signed) "CONSTANTINE R.
"ZALOCOSTAS,
"Ministre des Affaires Etrangères."

APPENDIX II.

Guns for Merchant Ships.

(L.)—Letter from War Office to Secretary of the War Cabinet, 19th December, 1916.

(II.)—Letter from Ministry of Munitions to War Office of the 14th December, 1916.

57/3/5215 (A. 2).

Sir,

I AM commanded by the Army Council to acquaint you, for the information of the War Committee, with reference to their decision that the Admiralty demands for 4-inch guns for arming merchant steamers should be a first charge on the artillery resources of the country, that they have been in consultation with the Director of Naval Ordnance and representatives of the Ministry of Munitions.

2. A scheme* was prepared by the Minister of Munitions, and it is understood a copy has already been forwarded to you.

3. This scheme has been considered by the Army Council. The giving up of guns will result in postponing the dates by which units will be armed and ready to go into the field, in reducing the number of guns available to replace damaged or worn guns, and may prevent further assistance being given to the Allies. The Army Council, however, are prepared to agree to Alternative (B), provided no 4-5-inch howitzers are given up. To obtain only 90—4-inch guns at the expense of no less than 196 howitzers would appear to be a pro-German procedure.

4. In view of the small proportion of long-range guns now with the Army, it does not seem advisable to curtail the supply of these. For this reason the Army Council prefer Alternative (B) to Alternative (A) as regards 60-pr. and 6-inch guns.

5. The net result of these proposals will, therefore, be that the Army will give up manufacturing capacity to enable 746—4-inch guns to be constructed for the Navy.

6. This, it will be seen, does not meet the Admiralty requirements, and I am to suggest that if the manufacture of these 4-inch guns is to be continued into 1918 it would be advisable that the Minister of Munitions should be authorised to provide further manufacturing facilities.

7. With regard to immediate assistance towards the provision of guns for arming merchant ships, I am to say that the Army Council have already handed over, or will shortly have available for transfer, to the Admiralty the following number of guns:—

120—15-pr. B.L.D. and Q.f.
202—4-7-inch guns.
201—4-7-inch cradles.
89 mountings.

* A copy of this scheme is annexed.

War Office, S.W.

57/3/5215 (A. 2).
They have also arranged to withdraw fifty more 15-pr. from France and may possibly be able, during the next three or four months, to supply some more of this nature when these can be released by the substitution of 18-pr.

I am, &c.

(Signed) H. H. FAWCETT.

(II.)

Sir,

I AM directed by the Minister of Munitions to state that, as a result of an interdepartmental conference held at the Admiralty on the 29th November, he has had under consideration the effect on the output of artillery for land service of the very large demands for 4-inch guns which have been put forward by the Admiralty. The result of the investigation has shown that by sacrificing some 942 guns and howitzers of various calibres 1,055—4-inch guns could be obtained during 1917, or, if a smaller scheme is adopted, by the sacrifice of 721 guns and howitzers of various calibres 806—4-inch guns would be gained. The numbers of various calibres to be sacrificed are as follows:

### Scheme (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guns Lost</th>
<th>4-in. Guns Gained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-pr.</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 in. howitzer</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-in. (Mark VI)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-in. (Mark VII)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-in. (Mark VII)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-in. (Mark XIX)</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>942</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,055</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Scheme (B)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guns Lost</th>
<th>4-in. Guns Gained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-pr.</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 in. howitzer</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-in. (Mark VI)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-in. (Mark VII)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-in. (Mark VII)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-in. (Mark XIX)</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>724</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>806</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

"Guns Lost" represent a deduction from the total number available for all purposes (including the War Office establishment, spare guns to replace losses of guns unsuitable for repair, and guns for the Allies), including the output which would have resulted from the recent instruction to maintain production at a maximum rate independently of the repair programme. This instruction was estimated to yield about 100—60-prs., 64—8-inch howitzers, and about 200—4.5-inch howitzers in addition to the numbers previously notified to the War Office. But since this instruction was given, the War Office has asked for an additional 100 each of 60-prs. and 4.5-inch for equipment purposes. In the case of the 60-prs., this last demand would have been more than met by the new extension. But if Scheme (A) is carried out it will allow for all equipment demands, but will reduce the number of spare guns to 109, while guns which it had been hoped would have been available for the Allies will not be forthcoming. Scheme (B) would allow of 207 spare guns and a few carriages. Similarly, the new 4.5-inch demand, which could have been met by these extensions, can only be fulfilled if spare guns and repaired carriages are used, and there will be a loss of nearly 100 spare guns which had been provided in order to replace losses by premature.
6-48-inch howitzers Mark VI., which would be lost under either scheme, have not yet been brought into any previous estimate, while as regards the 8-inch Mark VII., the loss of 40 could be made up from spare guns, while extra carriages could be obtained. In all these cases the general effect of either scheme would be (a) to limit our assistance to the Allies in these natures to the guns already promised, except in so far as the Army Council is prepared to assign equipments from its own requirements, and (b) to reduce largely the margin of spare guns, provision for which had been arranged as an essential part of the repair and replacement programme. As regards 6-inch guns, Scheme (B) would reduce the programme to the July demand, i.e., it would cut out the additional orders given during October for a general increase in the number of equipments, while Scheme (A) would reduce the equipments to approximately one half of Sir Douglas Haig's demand.

It is not known whether the recent demand for 100 additional equipments of each calibre, and a 25 reserve on the overseas equipments is additional to these demands. If this is not the case, requirements have been overstated. On the other hand, the figures represent makers' estimates of deliveries, and it would perhaps be prudent to discount them by assuming the total numbers will not be delivered until the end of February or March, 1918.

If the Admiralty order for 90-12-pr. 12-cwt. guns is accelerated so as to obtain 10 in January, 30 in February, 50 in March, 50 in April, and 10 in May, instead of 50 per month (May, June, and July) as originally promised, the output of 18-prs. will be correspondingly delayed in January, February, and March, the deficit being made up in May, June, and July. The Minister will be glad of a decision as to whether this priority is to be granted.

The schemes outlined above will involve a very considerable deduction from the artillery which would otherwise have been available for the War Office and for the Allies. The decision which must be taken as to whether this programme of substitution should be adopted in whole or in part is not one on which the Minister of Munitions can express an opinion. But as the authority responsible for the exploitation of our artillery resources to the best advantage, it is perhaps appropriate for him to point out that to put new guns on merchant ships involves a very large drain on our artillery resources, as it means that a large potential firing capacity will remain unused or only partially used. A more economical way of allocating our gun resources would be to take guns from the Field which still have left an effective life of a hundred or so rounds. If, for example, 6-inch 35-calibre guns could be used on merchant ships their manufacture might be continued and a scheme worked out for passing them on the Admiralty while they still have an effective life of 100 or 200 rounds, and replacing them in the Field with new guns. This would involve manufacturing plant being utilised in making new guns instead of relining those returned from the Field, and would somewhat reduce the total number of guns available for the Navy. But it would enable the Army to get the benefit of the greater part of the effective life of new equipment.

I am to state that all the preceding statements are contingent upon labour being forthcoming for the construction and manning of the extensions of works which are in hand. It is, moreover, of at least equal importance that labour should not be taken from the machine tool manufacturers until the plant for these extensions has been delivered. The estimates which have been made are already endangered by the labour shortage in the machine tool trade, and the Minister wishes it to be understood by the Army Council that without their co-operation in this matter the output which he has foreshadowed cannot possibly be realised.

I am to add that the gun manufacturers are at present being held up in their arrangements, and that if the output of artillery is to be maintained this matter should be settled at a very early date.

I am, &c.  
(Signed) EDMUND PHIPPS.
APPENDIX III.

SUBMARINE LOSSES.

During November.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>British shipping</th>
<th>Allied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tons</td>
<td>158,000</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>304,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

as compared with 331,768 tons in October a total of

During December (to the 18th).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>British</th>
<th>Allies</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tons</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>57,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For first 18 days of December</td>
<td>184,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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