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SECRET.

71

WAR CABINET, 387.

*Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.,
on Tuesday, April 9, 1918, 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.

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G.,
G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for
War.

Major-General SIR F. B. MAURICE,
K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military
Intelligence. Operations.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B.,
Deputy First Sea Lord.

Major-General SIR R. D. WHIGHAM,
K.C.B., D.S.O., Deputy Chief of the
Imperial General Staff.

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

Captain L. F. BURGIS, *Assistant Secretary.*

Paymaster-in-Chief P. H. ROW, R.N., *Assistant Secretary.*

The Western Front:
German Attack.

1. THE Director of Military Operations informed the War Cabinet that the enemy, after a heavy bombardment on a front of 15,000 yards between La Bassée and Armentières, had made an attack with four divisions. By the latest information it appeared that the enemy had only entered our front line at Fauquissart and La Cordonnerie Farm.

General Maurice stated that it appeared probable that the attack was of the nature of a demonstration only, as the front on which the attack was made was large for the force employed and was a very intricate one and strongly entrenched.

General Maurice explained on a map the new lines of defence that had been and were being made in rear of the British front. He stated that, from information received, the fighting on the Western front on the 7th instant was of a very severe nature, and it appeared that the Germans made a very determined attempt to get through, but were repulsed with very heavy losses. Since the attack, the Australian divisions had taken over the whole of that portion of the front and had captured Bouzencourt.

Macedonia.

2. The Director of Military Operations informed the War Cabinet that information had been received from General Guillaumat to the effect that a peace propaganda was being carried out to a great extent amongst the Serbian officers on the Macedonian front, and that General Guillaumat took a serious view of such action.

Co-operation of the
United States of
America.

3. With reference to War Cabinet 386, Minute 3, General Whigham informed the War Cabinet that he had just returned from France, where he had seen General Pershing in connection with the transport of American troops to France and their employment in British and French divisions. This was the meeting at which General Hutchinson had been present. General Pershing had stated that he had seen it mentioned that 120,000 men per month, composed of infantry and machine-gun units, were to be transported during the next four months to Europe, with a view to their incorporation, but that he did not know the basis on which these figures had been arrived at. Although Mr. Baker, who was present at the meeting, confirmed the views General Whigham had expressed, General Pershing had reverted to his original scheme of bringing the men across in divisions, and stated that he required guns and equipment for such divisions. Furthermore, General Pershing did not appear to visualise that any troops incorporated in British and French divisions would long remain there. He was further in favour of all replacement troops being at his disposal and not that of the Allies. As regards the agreement arrived at on the 27th March by the Military Representatives of the Supreme War Council, to the effect that for the present only infantry and machine-gun units should be despatched from America, General Pershing had stated that he looked upon that agreement as only a temporary one, and subject to alteration. In reply to a question as to what number of troops the British might expect to receive, General Pershing had agreed that we should receive the 60,000 during April which come through England, after which he would reconsider the question. General Whigham said that he had gathered that General Bliss was in favour of carrying out the agreement, and that Mr. Baker, who had sailed for America the previous day, also agreed to the necessity for the maximum suitable American reinforcements being utilised in accordance with the Versailles Agreement. Summing up the attitude of General Pershing, General Whigham added that he had had created in his mind the impression that General Pershing wanted to make a United States army instead of helping us during the critical summer months. Difficulties had also arisen as regards the training of the American Higher Command, but General Whigham had made suggestions which seemed acceptable to General Pershing, and had added that if, in original British divisions, American troops ultimately predominated, American commanders might be placed in command, and British guns and gunners placed at their disposal. Mr. Baker had been very helpful throughout the Conference.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the War Cabinet that he had seen General Hutchinson on this matter, and had despatched a telegram to Lord Reading setting out the situation

as had been explained by General Whigham, and requesting Lord Reading to bring to the notice of the authorities at Washington the apparent difference of opinion between General Pershing, on the one side, and what we conceive to be the President's policy, on the other. A paraphrase of the telegram appears in the Appendix.

Vladivostock.

4. With reference to War Cabinet 386, Minute 7, the Deputy First Sea Lord reported that a telegram had been received from the Captain of H.M.S. "Suffolk," dated the 8th April, saying that no armed force had been landed from the U.S.S. "Brooklyn," and that Washington had not supported the view put forward by the American Admiral as to the use of force, if necessary, in the event of any attempt being made to send Allied stores away from Vladivostock. The telegram further stated that the Japanese Government had expressed themselves as ready to support the Japanese Admiral in the event of Bolshevik opposition. It further appeared that the Japanese Admiral had proposed to his Government the desirability of disarming the Red Guard, and encouraging the local authorities to form a strong militia for the purpose of adequately policing the town. The Captain of the "Suffolk" was of opinion, however, that the disarming of the Red Guard was impracticable without occupation, as it could not be carried out except by military intervention, and had added that it was essential to contemplate the possibility of active opposition by the Bolsheviks by the arrival of reinforcements from Siberia, in which case a new situation would be created. It appeared that no disturbances had taken place at Vladivostock since the parties had landed.

Mr. Balfour stated that in this matter there were divergent views between the United States of America and ourselves, and that the former had not supported us. Our present action had been entirely of a local nature for the protection of British subjects in Vladivostock, and that the Japanese had only landed 200 men, and ourselves 50.

Lord Derby added that we had a battalion at Hong-Kong earmarked for Vladivostock in case its services were required there.

The Glycerine
Position.

*5. The War Cabinet had under consideration Paper G.T.-4032, by the Ministry of Munitions, on the Glycerine Position in 1918, and also a note by the Food Controller (Paper G.T.-4114).

Lord Curzon stated that he was agreeable, if so desired, to settle this matter on behalf of the War Cabinet, and the War Cabinet requested him to be good enough to do so.

Tobacco Stocks.

*6. Lord Curzon further stated that he was willing to go into the question of the present position of tobacco stocks in this country (Paper G.T.-3988), and the question as to whether any restrictions should be placed on the consumption of the Naval and Military Forces at home and abroad, and the civil population in this country.

The War Cabinet authorised—

Lord Curzon to act on their behalf in this matter.

Organisation of
Government
Offices.

*7. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Paper G.T.-4143) as to enquiries into the organisation and staffing of Government Offices, which indicated that, in order to enable the Committee which had been appointed to consider this matter to make further progress, it was essential that they should be authorised to make investigations in the Depart-

ments themselves. It was therefore proposed that two inspectors should be appointed for each Department.

The War Cabinet authorised the appointment of these inspecting officers, and invited the Departments to afford the same every facility in carrying out their work.

Extra Accommodation for the Foreign Office.

*8. The War Cabinet had under consideration a memorandum by Mr. Long (Paper G.T.-3896), a memorandum by Lord Robert Cecil (Paper G.T.-3941), and a memorandum by Lord Islington (Paper G.T.-3980) in connection with the provision of extra accommodation for the Foreign Office.

It was mentioned that possibly an extension of the Foreign Office might be made by erecting temporary buildings on the Parade Ground in the vicinity of the Foreign Office.

The War Cabinet directed—

The Secretary to write to Lord Robert Cecil suggesting that he should state his requirements to the First Commissioner of Works and ask for any suggestions the latter might make to provide the requisite accommodation required by the Foreign Office.

Trade Relations of the United Kingdom within the Empire.

*9. With reference to the First and Second Reports on Raw Materials (Paper G.T.-4015 and 4015A) by the Committee on Trade Relations of the United Kingdom within the Empire, the War Cabinet decided that—

Subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, copies of these reports should be sent to the several Dominions as soon as possible by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Development and Supply of Tanks.

*10. With reference to a memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Paper G.T.-3969) relative to the development and supply of tanks, General Maurice stated that the whole question hinged on the supply of men, and that quite apart from the men required for manning additional tanks, there was a minimum of man-power required for holding the trenches, and we were not at present getting that minimum; consequently, there were no men available for tanks.

It was mentioned that 45,000 men would be required for the new tank programme, and that South Africa, Canada, and New Zealand had expressed their willingness to assist in providing a certain amount of man-power to meet this number, but that probably no more than 2,000 would be obtained from these sources.

The War Cabinet felt that the question of the increased tank programme depended on the result of the Man-Power Bill which was to be introduced into Parliament that day, and decided that—

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff should again raise this question of the increased tank programme when the man-power situation was clearer.

The Food Situation.

*11. As regards the food situation, Lord Milner informed the War Cabinet that he was going into the matter, and that the present position as regards supplies was much better than had been anticipated some few months ago. The consideration of the re-organisation of the Ministry of Food had not yet, however, reached such a stage that it could be brought before the War Cabinet.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
April 9, 1918.

* The items marked with an asterisk were only discussed very briefly and without the presence of the heads of Departments concerned.

APPENDIX.

Paraphrase of Telegram sent to Lord Reading on April 8, 1918. No. 2017.

A CONVERSATION took place in Paris on the 7th instant between General Hutchinson and General Pershing and Mr. Baker, the gist of which has somewhat alarmed us.

According to General Pershing, it has never been promised that United States infantry and machine-gun units should be transported during four months at the rate of 120,000 a month for incorporation in British and French divisions.

All that he recognises is an agreement to transport during the month of April, in British vessels, 60,000 United States infantry and machine-gun units appertaining to the six divisions, these to be incorporated on arrival in British divisions. You will remember that, before the German offensive had begun or Mr. Lloyd George had appealed to President Wilson, this proposal was, in substance, agreed to.

It became apparent during the conversation that the view held by General Pershing is that these six American divisions should be only a very short time with British troops and then incorporated in the American army now in construction. His opinion apparently is that the infantry units from these six divisions should, on their withdrawal from the British divisions, be replaced by a similar number of men transported from the United States.

From the account of the interview, it is obvious that the views held by General Pershing are entirely opposed to those which, we understand, have been accepted by President Wilson. General Pershing will admit of no promise that during the next four months 480,000 American infantry and machine-gun units should be incorporated in British or French divisions and does not attempt to hide the fact that he disapproves of this policy, and herein lies the chief point of disagreement.

A less important point of difference is that the British Government does not approve of the policy of withdrawing American troops in British and French divisions until October or November, when the season, for active operation purposes, will be at an end.

Although loth to trouble President Wilson with any criticisms of his officers, the matter must be cleared up, as it is obvious that the widely-differing view held by General Pershing, on the one hand, and the President, on the other, is a fundamental one and bears on the result of this present battle, and, possibly, on the issue of the war.

The means by which our views can best and most expeditiously be impressed on the United States Government I leave entirely to your discretion, knowing that you fully realise the great importance of the matter.

General Bliss and Mr. Baker are, I believe, broadly speaking, of the same opinion as ourselves, and the latter, who attended the meeting between Generals Hutchinson and Pershing, is leaving France to-day for America.

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