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**أوراق المؤتمر بين الإدارات حول شؤون الشرق الأوسط**

| | |
|---|---|
| المؤسسة المالكة | المكتبة البريطانية: أوراق خاصة وسجلات من مكتب الهند |
| المرجع | Mss Eur F112/275 |
| التاريخ/ التواريخ | ٠٧ يناير ١٩١٩٠-٧ ديسمبر ١٩٢٠ (ميلادي) |
| لغة الكتابة | الإنجليزية في اللاتينية |
| الحجم والشكل | ملف واحد (١٤٥ ورقة) |
| حق النشر | رخصة حكومة مفتوحة |

**حول هذا السجلّ**

يتألف هذا الملف من أوراق صادرة عن المؤتمر بين إدارات وزارة الخارجية حول شؤون الشرق الأوسط. وهو يتألف بالكامل من محاضر اجتماعات المؤتمر المطبوعة، وأغلبها برئاسة جورج كرزون.

يتضمن الحضور ممثلين كبار من وزارة الخارجية، مكتب الهند (وعلى الأخص وزير الدولة لشؤون الهند)، مكتب الحرب البريطاني، الأميرالية، وزارة الطيران، والخزينة (بما في ذلك وزير الخزانة). ومن الحضور الجديرين بالذكر هاري سانت جون بريدجر فيلبي وجيرترود مارجاريت لوثيان بيل.

تتعلق الاجتماعات بالسياسة البريطانية في الشرق الأوسط، وهي تتناول بشكل رئيسي المناطق الجغرافية التالية: بلاد الرافدين، كردستان، منطقة شرق بحر قزوين، جنوب القوقاز، بحر قزوين،

فلسطين، بلاد فارس، الحجاز، وأفغانستان. تتطرق بعض الاجتماعات أيضًا إلى مسائل تتعدى حدود الشرق الأوسط (مثال: الإبراق الاسلكي في التبت، صص. ٧٩-٨٠).

تشمل الموضوعات التي تتكرر مناقشتها: السكك الحديدية (خاصة فيما يتعلق ببلاد الرافدين)، والتأثير البلشفي في الشرق الأوسط (وخاصة في بلاد فارس ومنطقة شرق بحر قزوين)، والعلاقات بين الملك حسين (حسين بن علي الهاشمي) وابن سعود [عبد العزيز بن عبد الرحمن بن فيصل آل سعود].

تتضمن عدة مجموعات من المحاضر أيضًا مذكرات ذات صلة مدرجة كملاحق.

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. January* 1919.

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**I.D.C.E., 1st Minutes.**

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

(War Cabinet Meeting No. 515, Minute 2.)

*Minutes of an Inter-Departmental Conference held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, January 7,* 1919.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. Montagu, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. Shuckburgh, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. Cox, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General W. Thwaites, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. Storr, C.B.

Mr. J. M. Keynes, C.B., Treasury.

Mr. G. J. Kidston, Foreign Office (*Acting Secretary*).

General Malleson's Position in Trans-Caspia.

*The Chairman* reviewed briefly the position at Askabad, where a new mixed Russian and Tartar Government had just been set up, which depended entirely for its maintenance on what it might receive from General Malleson. He reminded the meeting that the Eastern Committee had recently decided on a policy of slow withdrawal from Trans-Caspia, and that a telegram instructing General Malleson to remove his force at once to Meshed had been drafted, and approved by himself and the India Office, but that the War Office had raised objection to the despatch of these instructions. The meeting had been called to discuss this situation.

Would the establishment of this new Government with General Malleson's support mean fresh commitments for His Majesty's Government?

*Mr. Montagu* considered that it would, and that our commitments would continue and increase until General Malleson's force was withdrawn. General Malleson was asking for more money, which could not be given—was it worth while? Who were the enemy against whom this force was being maintained? The only possible enemy were the Bolsheviks, but what harm could they do us in those regions? How could there be any danger of Bolshevik penetration in Persia and Afghanistan?

*The Chairman* raised the question of whether a point of honour was not involved. General Malleson had given a formal promise of support to the previous Government. Was that promise still





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applicable to the new one? He also pointed out that we might be in honour bound not to leave to the mercy of the Bolsheviks persons who had been faithful to our cause.

*General Thwaites* pointed out that General Malleson himself, in a recent telegram, had drawn attention to the necessity, in the event of a withdrawal, of its being so conducted as to enable our supporters to be got away in safety. He then gave the views of the War Office on the objects of General Malleson's mission, and the reasons why it was desirable to maintain it. The objects were three-fold:—

1. To prevent the Bolsheviks from penetrating into Persia.
2. To protect Krasnovodsk.
3. To hold on his front a force of 14,000 Bolsheviks, and prevent them from attacking the Orenburg Cossacks.

He then gave an account of the organisation of the Bolshevik army, which consisted of 12 separate armies, well provided and equipped, and which constituted, even now, a very formidable force, and might be largely increased in the spring. They had some German officers, and a number of coerced officers from the old Imperial Russian army, who had been forced by hunger or other circumstances to join them. Perhaps the most formidable of the Bolshevik armies was that which was threatening the Orenburg Cossacks further north. The latter formed a wedge between two Bolshevik forces, and if this were destroyed, the two Bolshevik forces might combine, and would be free to march without resistance on Persia or elsewhere.

From a military point of view, General Malleson was in a very good position, and his military expenses, properly so called, were relatively small, but the War Office agreed that our total financial commitments in respect of his mission generally were too large. They were prepared to suggest that economy should be effected in other directions, *e.g.*, in North-West Persia, where a saving of 12,370*l.* a month had already been made. The force in the Bushire hinterland, which was costing about 290,000*l.* a month, might also be withdrawn.

To Lord Curzon's enquiry as to how long the War Office would wish General Malleson to remain in Trans-Caspia, General Thwaites replied by enquiring for how long it would be necessary for us to maintain our position on the Caspian and on the line from Batum to Baku.

*General Cox* advised as a further reason for maintaining the forces in Trans-Caspia the necessity for making arrangements for the removal of Austro-Hungarian prisoners, whose number was estimated at 40,000. It was hoped soon to begin the evacuation of these prisoners across the Caspian, but if our forces were withdrawn from Trans Caspia it would be impossible to collect them.

*The Chairman* pointed out that even if it were decided to leave General Malleson in Trans-Caspia some solution would have to be found of the difficulty of financing him, and the Treasury must be consulted on this point.

It was suggested that Mr. Keynes should be invited to attend the meeting.

Mr. Keynes was summoned and asked on his arrival what means existed for supplying General Malleson with funds.

*Mr. Keynes* said that a difficulty arose because Persian krans were of no use to General Malleson, who required roubles. He thought that the only roubles at present available were some which had been bought recently at Copenhagen for the express purpose of providing funds for the Batum–Baku line.

*The Chairman* reminded the meeting that the Eastern Committee had recently decided to put a sum of 100,000*l.* at General Malleson's



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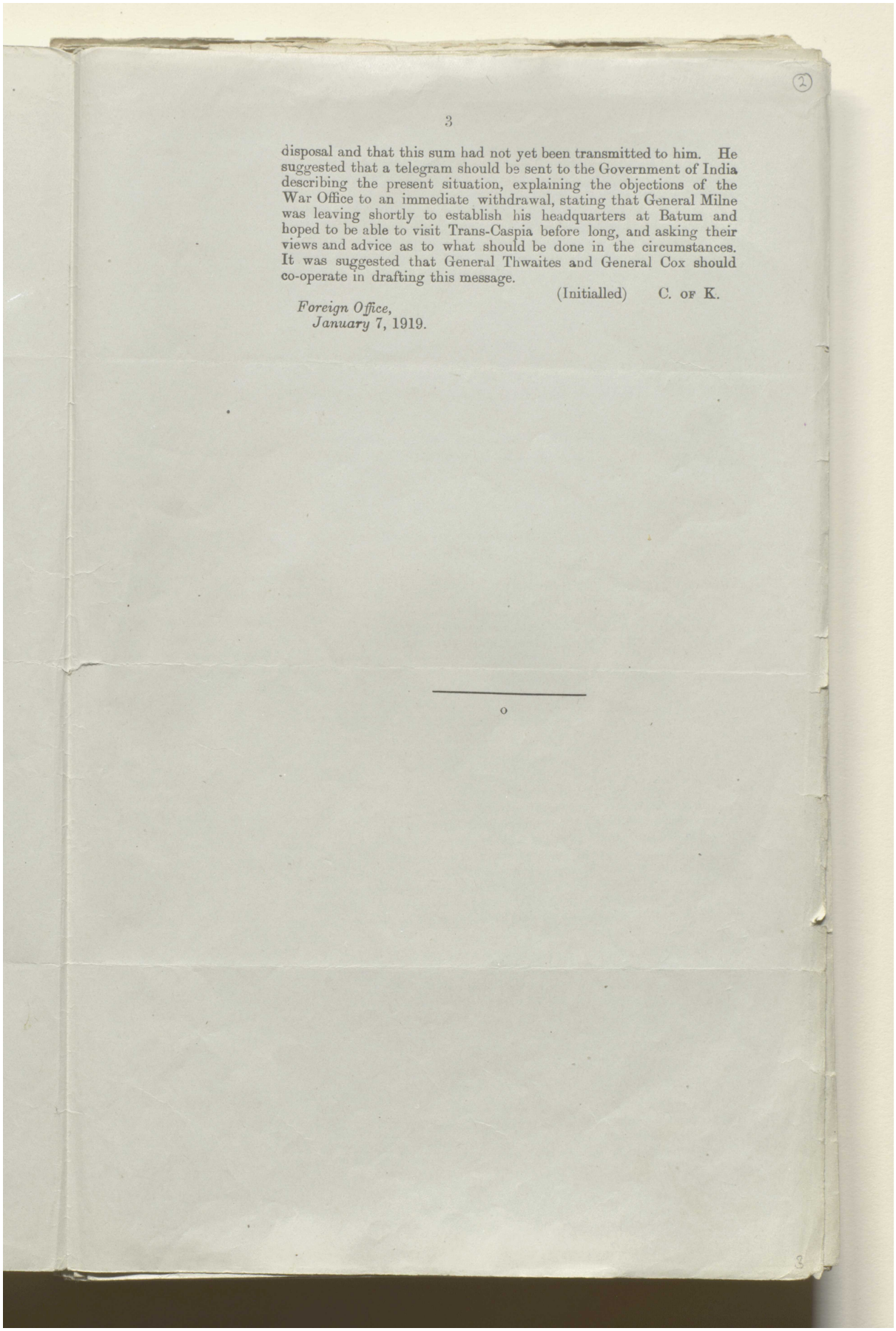



disposal and that this sum had not yet been transmitted to him. He suggested that a telegram should be sent to the Government of India describing the present situation, explaining the objections of the War Office to an immediate withdrawal, stating that General Milne was leaving shortly to establish his headquarters at Batum and hoped to be able to visit Trans-Caspia before long, and asking their views and advice as to what should be done in the circumstances. It was suggested that General Thwaites and General Cox should co-operate in drafting this message.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*January* 7, 1919.

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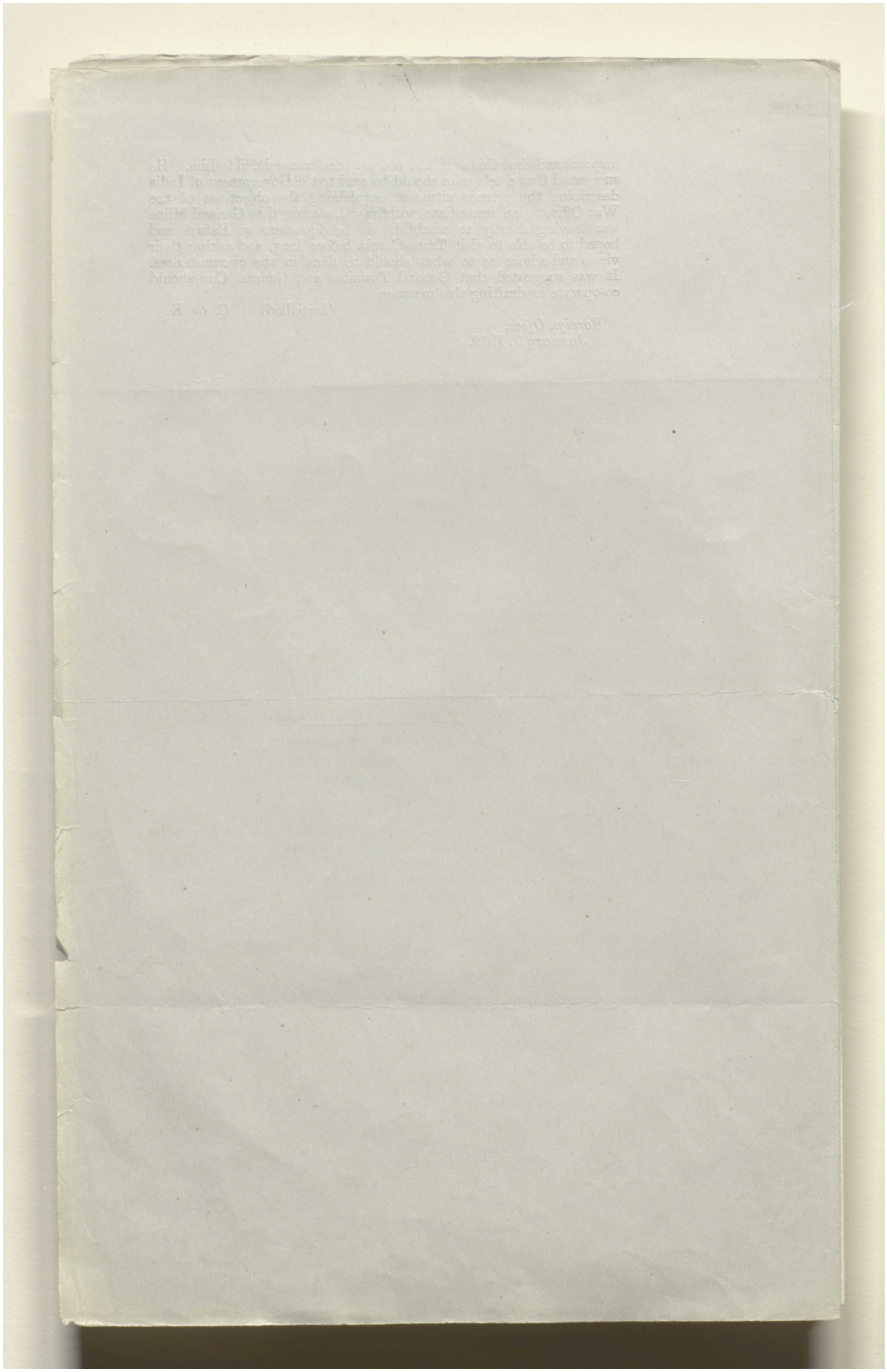
# أوراق المؤتمر بين الإدارات حول شؤون الشرق الأوسط [٢ظ] (٢٩٠/٤)





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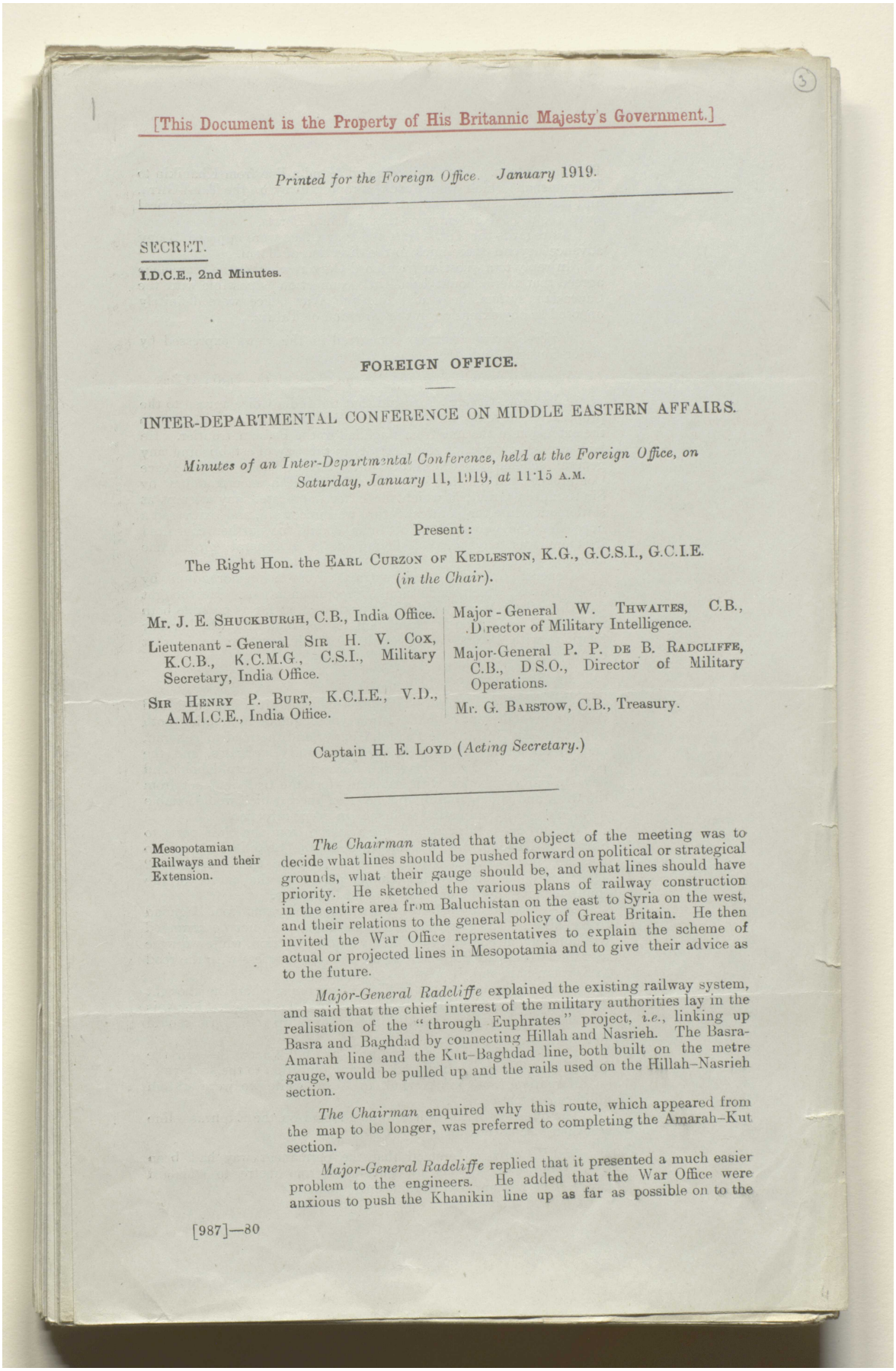

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. January* 1919.

SECRET.

I.D.C.E., 2nd Minutes.

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of an Inter-Departmental Conference, held at the Foreign Office, on Saturday, January* 11, 1919, *at* 11·15 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

SIR HENRY P. BURT, K.C.I.E., V.D., A.M.I.C.E., India Office.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Major-General P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations.

Mr. G. BARSTOW, C.B., Treasury.

Captain H. E. LOYD (*Acting Secretary.*)

Mesopotamian Railways and their Extension.

*The Chairman* stated that the object of the meeting was to decide what lines should be pushed forward on political or strategical grounds, what their gauge should be, and what lines should have priority. He sketched the various plans of railway construction in the entire area from Baluchistan on the east to Syria on the west, and their relations to the general policy of Great Britain. He then invited the War Office representatives to explain the scheme of actual or projected lines in Mesopotamia and to give their advice as to the future.

*Major-General Radcliffe* explained the existing railway system, and said that the chief interest of the military authorities lay in the realisation of the "through Euphrates" project, *i.e.*, linking up Basra and Baghdad by connecting Hillah and Nasrieh. The Basra-Amarah line and the Kut–Baghdad line, both built on the metre gauge, would be pulled up and the rails used on the Hillah–Nasrieh section.

*The Chairman* enquired why this route, which appeared from the map to be longer, was preferred to completing the Amarah–Kut section.

*Major-General Radcliffe* replied that it presented a much easier problem to the engineers. He added that the War Office were anxious to push the Khanikin line up as far as possible on to the

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Persian plateau. The engineers had found a line from Khanikin to Kermanshah which would avoid a rope railway up the Tak-i-Girra, and was now being surveyed. It was very desirable for strategical purposes to have an entry on this side into Persia.

As regards the Tigris line, the War Office were opposed to any advance beyond Shereimich in the direction of Mosul.

In reply to a question from Lord Curzon whether the War Office agreed that there should be as little connection as possible with the Caucasian system, he stated that the War Office were definitely opposed to any extension in the direction of Tabriz.

*Major-General Thwaites* concurred in the views expressed by Major-General Radcliffe.

*The Chairman* then asked for the views of the India Office.

*Lieutenant-General Cox* said that the India Office agreed to the proposal to develop the "through Euphrates" route and also to the extension of the line from Baghdad to the Persian frontier. He laid stress, however, on the difficulty in the way of establishing any general scheme for the future until the decisions of the Peace Conference had cleared the air. He read a memorandum by Sir Hamilton Grant, in which the latter deprecated any attempt at settlement while the political future was uncertain, and expressed a hope that the Government of India should be further consulted if there was any idea of laying down a general programme at once.

General Cox also read extracts from a memorandum by Sir A. Hirtzel, which made similar recommendations. He thought that the railway surveys should be pushed on as far as possible both into Persia and towards Mosul, but he was doubtful whether our relations with Persia would admit of much construction in that country.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* concurred.

*The Chairman* in reviewing the general situation suggested that the pivotal point of our position was Baghdad in relation both to the Persian Gulf, to the Persian frontier and the road to Teheran, and to the basins of the Upper Tigris and Euphrates, and the possible future of the old Baghdad Railway. We should hold and develop our connection with Baghdad from the Gulf and not from the west, and should build up a position there which would enable us to exercise a dominating influence in every direction.

He did not believe in building any line from the Gulf ports to Shiraz or Ispahan, nor in a line through the Bakhtiari country to Ispahan, nor again in a line through Luristan to Khorremabad. This would be rendered impossible, partly by the nature of the country, partly by the opposition of hostile tribes.

The only line to push forward without delay was from Baghdad to Khanikin. The extension to Kermanshah could not be arranged without Persian consent, but there was no objection, while we were in military occupation, to making all possible progress with the road to Kermanshah, and, if possible, to Hamadan.

He was nervous as to the Tigris proposals, where he thought that any advance would lead to trouble with the French. For this reason he would prefer that the line running up the Tigris should stop.

He was opposed to any railway by the Wazna Pass in the direction of Tabriz; but did not see any objection to the surveys of an alternative route viâ Kerkuk to Mosul while we were still in military occupation.

The question of the gauge to be adopted on the Euphrates line was then discussed.

*Sir H. Burt* understood that the permanent way had been constructed with a view to conversion from metre to standard gauge. He was opposed to this conversion.


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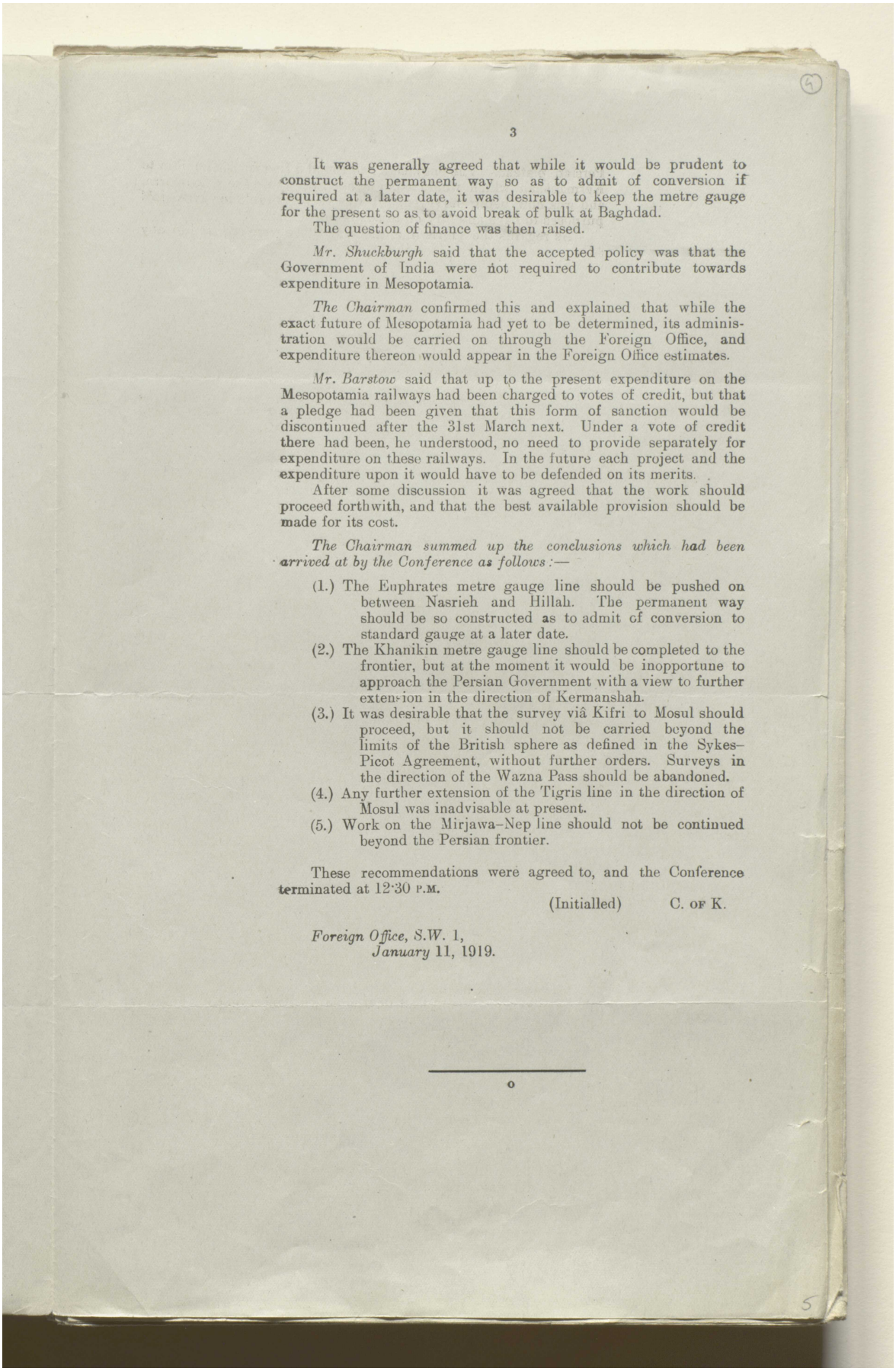



It was generally agreed that while it would be prudent to construct the permanent way so as to admit of conversion if required at a later date, it was desirable to keep the metre gauge for the present so as to avoid break of bulk at Baghdad.

The question of finance was then raised.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that the accepted policy was that the Government of India were not required to contribute towards expenditure in Mesopotamia.

*The Chairman* confirmed this and explained that while the exact future of Mesopotamia had yet to be determined, its administration would be carried on through the Foreign Office, and expenditure thereon would appear in the Foreign Office estimates.

*Mr. Barstow* said that up to the present expenditure on the Mesopotamia railways had been charged to votes of credit, but that a pledge had been given that this form of sanction would be discontinued after the 31st March next. Under a vote of credit there had been, he understood, no need to provide separately for expenditure on these railways. In the future each project and the expenditure upon it would have to be defended on its merits.

After some discussion it was agreed that the work should proceed forthwith, and that the best available provision should be made for its cost.

*The Chairman summed up the conclusions which had been arrived at by the Conference as follows:—*

(1.) The Euphrates metre gauge line should be pushed on between Nasrieh and Hillah. The permanent way should be so constructed as to admit of conversion to standard gauge at a later date.

(2.) The Khanikin metre gauge line should be completed to the frontier, but at the moment it would be inopportune to approach the Persian Government with a view to further extension in the direction of Kermanshah.

(3.) It was desirable that the survey viâ Kifri to Mosul should proceed, but it should not be carried beyond the limits of the British sphere as defined in the Sykes–Picot Agreement, without further orders. Surveys in the direction of the Wazna Pass should be abandoned.

(4.) Any further extension of the Tigris line in the direction of Mosul was inadvisable at present.

(5.) Work on the Mirjawa–Nep line should not be continued beyond the Persian frontier.

These recommendations were agreed to, and the Conference terminated at 12·30 P.M.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office, S.W. 1,*
*January* 11, 1919.

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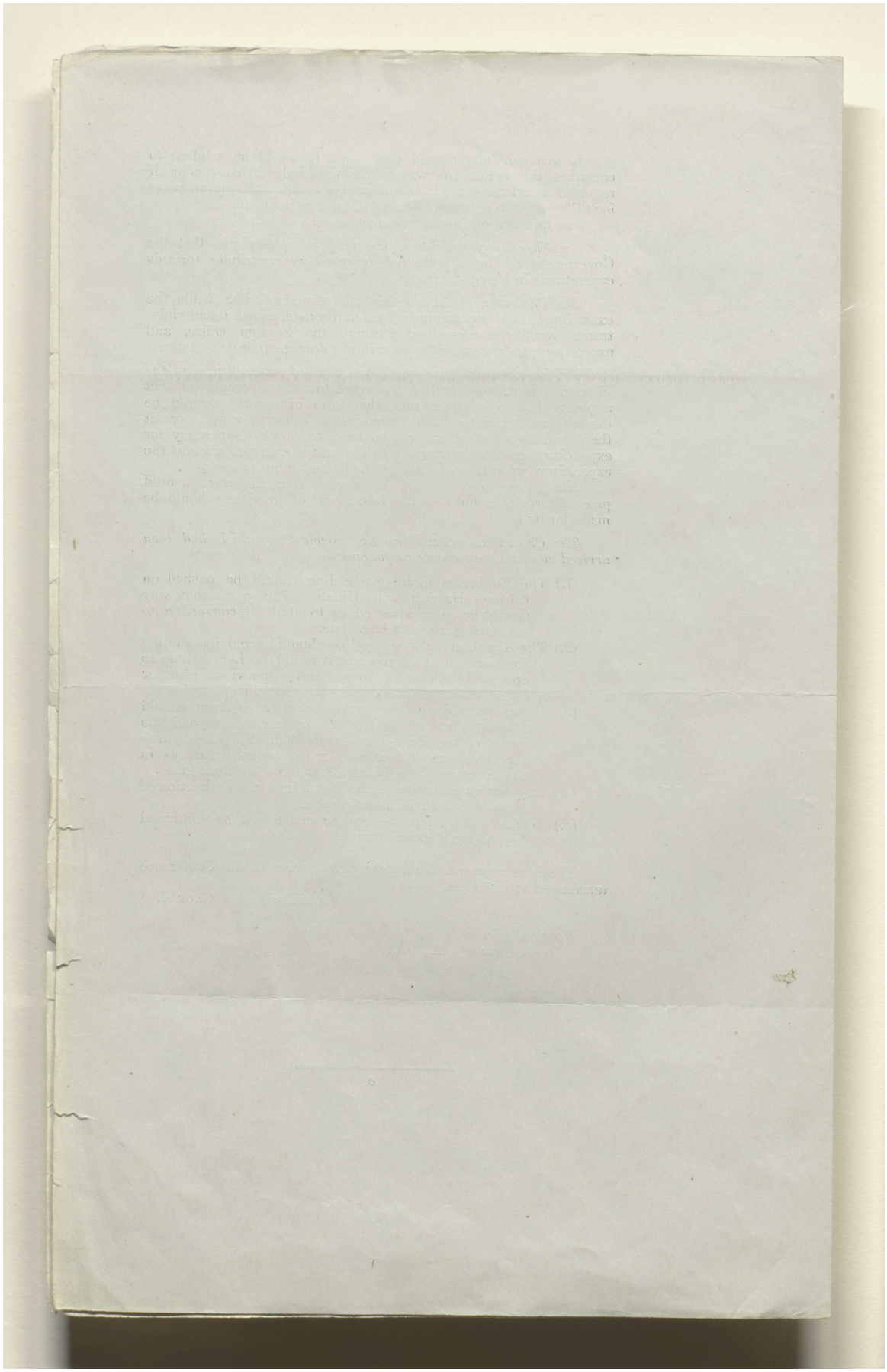



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## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Inter-Departmental Conference, held in the Secretary of State's Room, at the Foreign Office, on Tuesday, January* 14, 1919, *at* 6 *p.m.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Mr. J. E. Shuckburgh, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. Cox, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General W. Thwaites, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Sir Alfred Hamilton Grant, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. Storr, C.B. (*Acting Secretary*).

Mr. E. H. Jones.

Trans-Caspia: The Withdrawal of Malleson's Mission.

1. *The Chairman* said that, when the question of the withdrawal of Malleson's Mission had last been discussed, the late Eastern Committee had decided that a telegram should be sent giving certain military reasons for retaining that Force for the present. Since then, several important telegrams on the subject had passed between the Government of India, General Malleson, and the India Office. A Government of India telegram, No. 82, forwarded a message from Malleson in which he analysed the elements of population, argued the case of the Bolshevik front, and pushed his own policy of going to the Oxus line in order to crush Bolshevism, and to justify our incursion into Trans-Caspia. In forwarding this message the Indian Government stated that they themselves still adhered to the policy of withdrawal. In a later telegram, No. 364, the Viceroy communicated Malleson's latest views on the situation, in which the latter laid stress on the danger of a railway strike and on the effects of our withdrawal upon our prestige in Central Asia. Malleson, in conclusion, contended that it would be deplorable to withdraw military and financial aid. In the latest telegram received, No. 430, the Indian Government somewhat modified their view on learning of General Milne's proposed visit to Trans-Caspia. This, they considered, would involve Malleson remaining where he was, at any rate, for another month, and also some further temporary financial assistance to the Askabad Government. They had accordingly authorised Malleson to grant such assistance as was absolutely necessary; and they anticipated that he could do this by utilising the currency now in his hands, or *en route* from Tehran, and the five lakhs of rupees which had been sent to Meshed, as well as by the issue of further

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promissory notes. On the 7th instant the Viceroy reported that a telegram had been sent to Malleson to the effect that he was authorised, if necessary, to expend funds, or incur liabilities, to the extent necessary to secure the co-operation of the railway workmen in providing the necessary train service to enable him to concentrate at Askabad the troops east of that place.

*General Cox* said that the India Office desired the approval of the Conference to the action taken by the Indian Government. General Cox further stated that the Treasury, who had been consulted unofficially, strongly deprecated the proposal to issue promissory notes, for reasons connected with the exchange, &c., and because it was impossible to predict the situation six months hence. He reminded the Conference that the Imperial Bank of Persia had raised 2,000,000 roubles for Malleson, and he thought that this should suffice for his immediate wants.

*The Conference decided*:—

(a) To ask the India Office to telegraph to the effect that His Majesty's Government approved of the action taken and suggested by the Government of India, informing that Government at the same time that the Treasury were opposed to the issue of promissory notes, for reasons which should be set forth in the telegram.

(b) To ask the War Office to telegraph to General Milne suggesting that in view of the situation in Trans-Caspia it was desirable that he should proceed to Trans-Caspia first, in order to consult with General Malleson, and should thereafter proceed to the Caucasus.

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The King of Hejaz and Ibn Saud.

2. *The Chairman* stated that two papers had recently been circulated to members of the Conference in regard to the conflict between the King of the Hejaz and Ibn Saud. One paper, by Mr. Shuckburgh, advocated a policy which was in the nature of a compromise, and admittedly did not go to the root of the difficulty. The other paper, by Sir Hamilton Grant, suggested that the best thing would be for us to let these two chieftains fight it out between themselves. The Chairman said he noticed that Mr. Shuckburgh's paper omitted any reference to Ibn Saud's intrigue with Medina. The Conference was aware that Ibn Saud, the head of the Wahabi Sect, had pretentions to the Hejaz, where the Wahabis had once been in power.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* pointed out that the information in regard to Ibn Saud's reputed intrigues emanated from a source that could not be regarded as impartial, that is to say, from Ibn Rashid, and had only been confirmed by Captain Zia, the Turkish Envoy. The somewhat alarmist character of the reports received from Egypt had, he thought, scarcely been justified by events; it was frequently suggested that something very serious might happen; but nothing actually did happen. We had just heard of the fall of Medina, and this event should have a steadying effect. Mr. Shuckburgh said that the Secretary of State for India, who was absent in Paris, inclined to Sir Hamilton Grant's views rather than to his own.

*The Chairman* agreed that our general experience was that, if we left these rival chieftains alone, nothing in particular happened. He thought the best thing therefore was to ignore them. If, however, they did come to blows, and the Wahabis were victorious and the Hejaz or the Holy Places were threatened, he thought that we should be bound to support King Hussein with munitions, though in no circumstances with troops. We might, therefore, if a suitable occasion presented itself, intimate to King Hussein that His Majesty's



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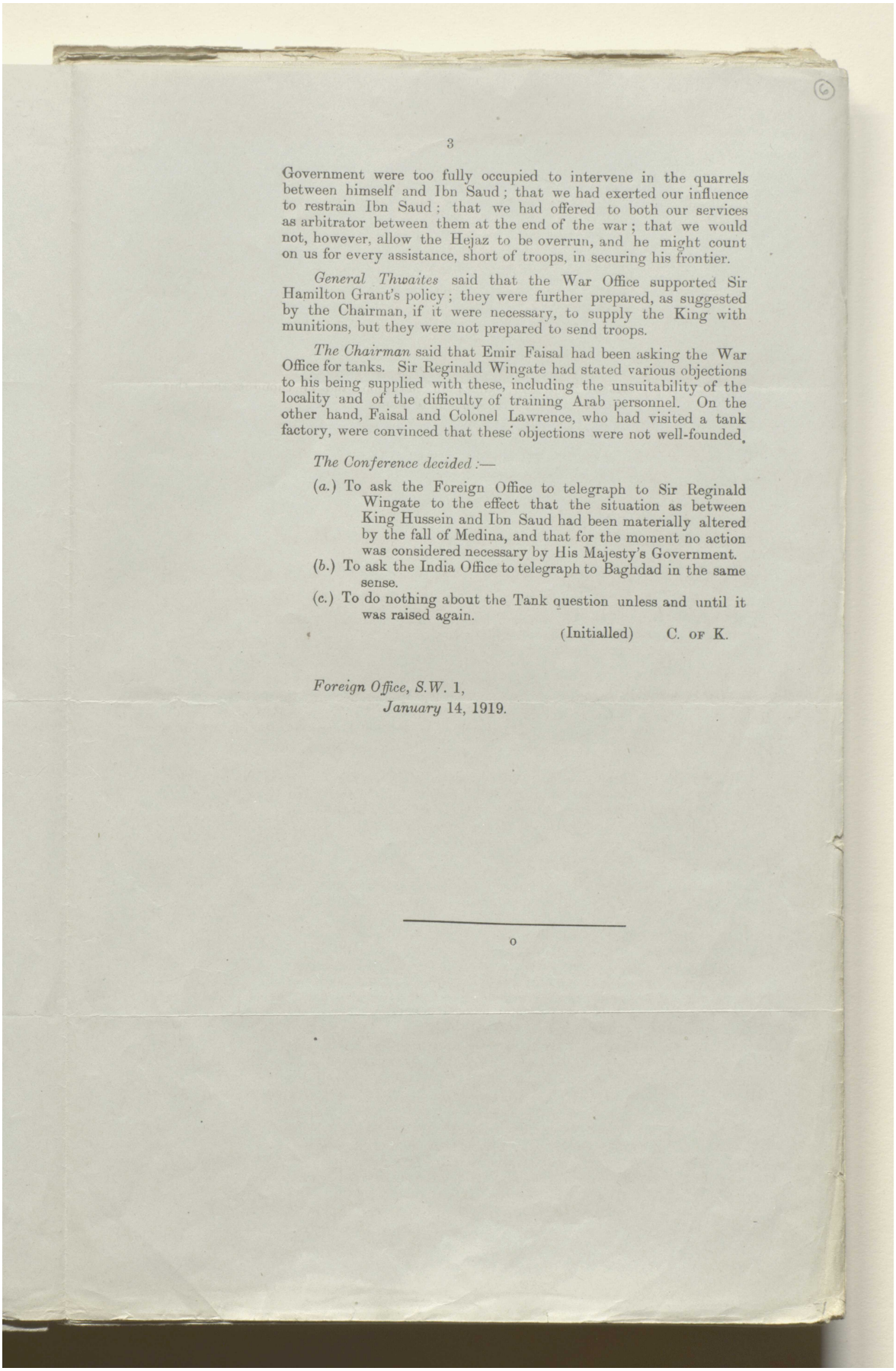



Government were too fully occupied to intervene in the quarrels between himself and Ibn Saud; that we had exerted our influence to restrain Ibn Saud; that we had offered to both our services as arbitrator between them at the end of the war; that we would not, however, allow the Hejaz to be overrun, and he might count on us for every assistance, short of troops, in securing his frontier.

*General Thwaites* said that the War Office supported Sir Hamilton Grant's policy; they were further prepared, as suggested by the Chairman, if it were necessary, to supply the King with munitions, but they were not prepared to send troops.

*The Chairman* said that Emir Faisal had been asking the War Office for tanks. Sir Reginald Wingate had stated various objections to his being supplied with these, including the unsuitability of the locality and of the difficulty of training Arab personnel. On the other hand, Faisal and Colonel Lawrence, who had visited a tank factory, were convinced that these objections were not well-founded.

*The Conference decided*:—

(*a.*) To ask the Foreign Office to telegraph to Sir Reginald Wingate to the effect that the situation as between King Hussein and Ibn Saud had been materially altered by the fall of Medina, and that for the moment no action was considered necessary by His Majesty's Government.

(*b.*) To ask the India Office to telegraph to Baghdad in the same sense.

(*c.*) To do nothing about the Tank question unless and until it was raised again.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office, S.W.* 1,
*January* 14, 1919.

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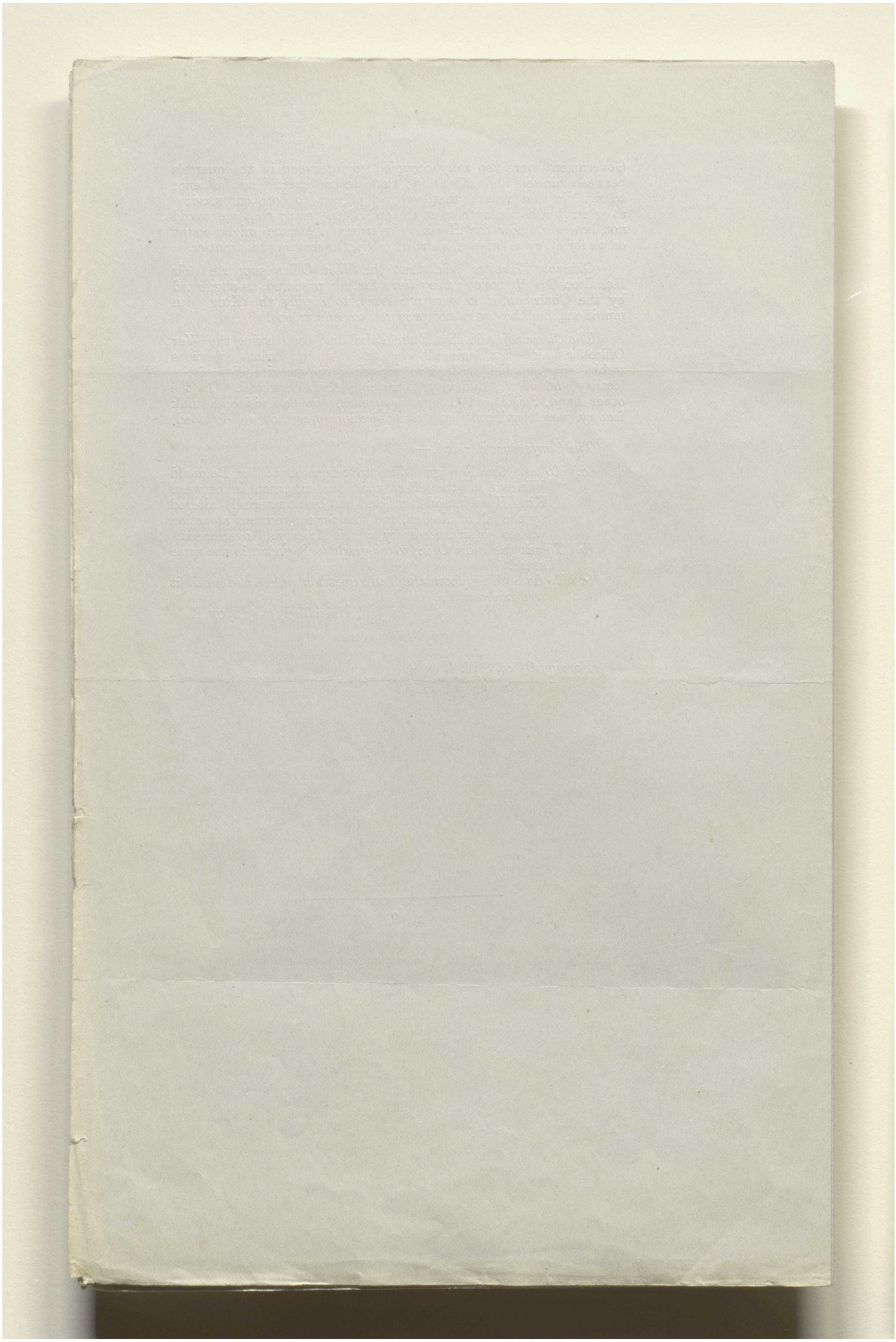



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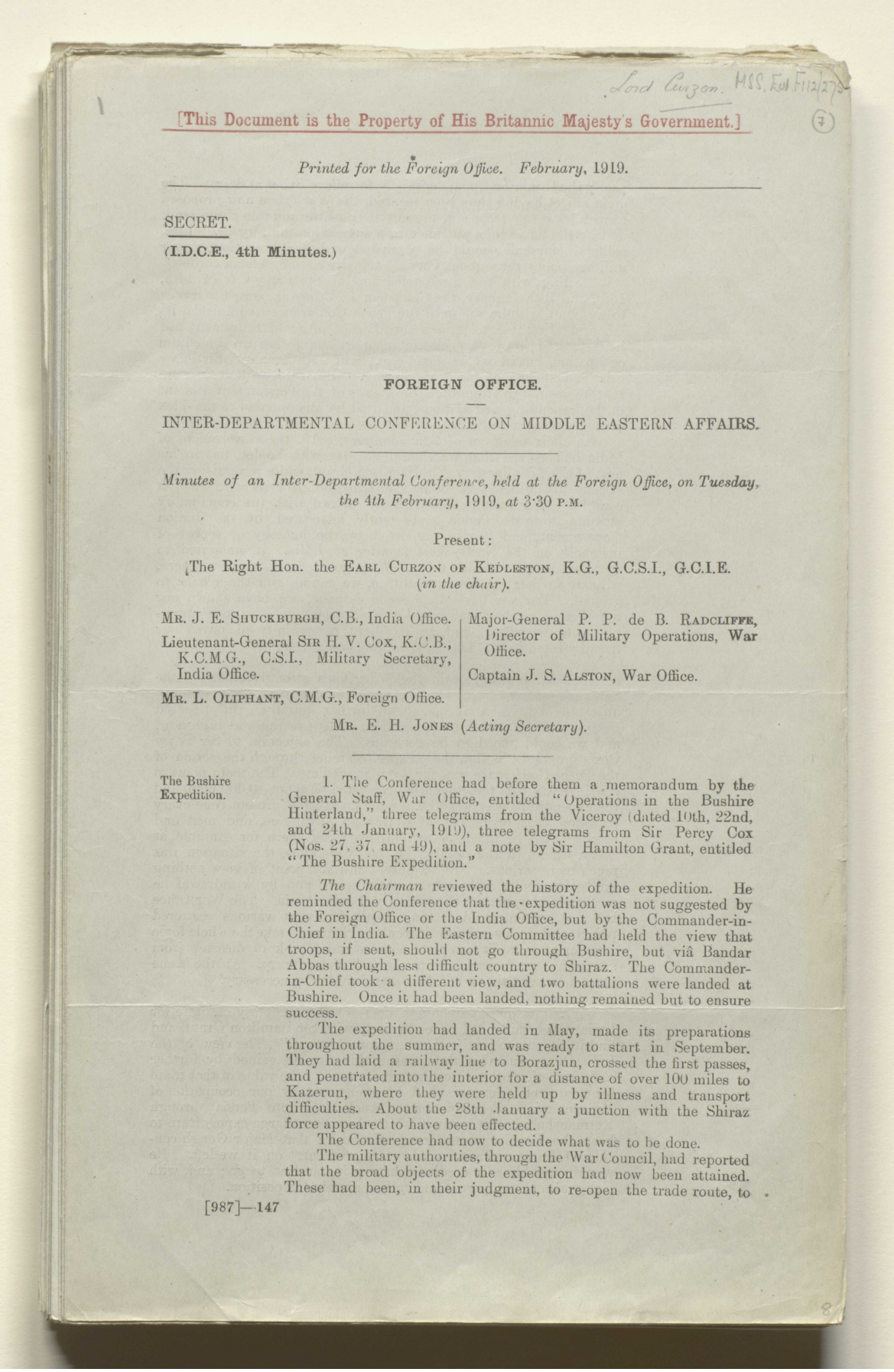

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. February, 1919.*

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**(I.D.C.E., 4th Minutes.)**

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of an Inter-Departmental Conference, held at the Foreign Office, on Tuesday, the 4th February, 1919, at 3·30 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the chair*).

MR. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

MR. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Major-General P. P. de B. RADCLIFFE, Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Captain J. S. ALSTON, War Office.

MR. E. H. JONES (*Acting Secretary*).

The Bushire Expedition.

1. The Conference had before them a memorandum by the General Staff, War Office, entitled "Operations in the Bushire Hinterland," three telegrams from the Viceroy (dated 10th, 22nd, and 24th January, 1919), three telegrams from Sir Percy Cox (Nos. 27, 37, and 49), and a note by Sir Hamilton Grant, entitled "The Bushire Expedition."

*The Chairman* reviewed the history of the expedition. He reminded the Conference that the expedition was not suggested by the Foreign Office or the India Office, but by the Commander-in-Chief in India. The Eastern Committee had held the view that troops, if sent, should not go through Bushire, but viâ Bandar Abbas through less difficult country to Shiraz. The Commander-in-Chief took a different view, and two battalions were landed at Bushire. Once it had been landed, nothing remained but to ensure success.

The expedition had landed in May, made its preparations throughout the summer, and was ready to start in September. They had laid a railway line to Borazjun, crossed the first passes, and penetrated into the interior for a distance of over 100 miles to Kazerun, where they were held up by illness and transport difficulties. About the 28th January a junction with the Shiraz force appeared to have been effected.

The Conference had now to decide what was to be done.

The military authorities, through the War Council, had reported that the broad objects of the expedition had now been attained. These had been, in their judgment, to re-open the trade route, to

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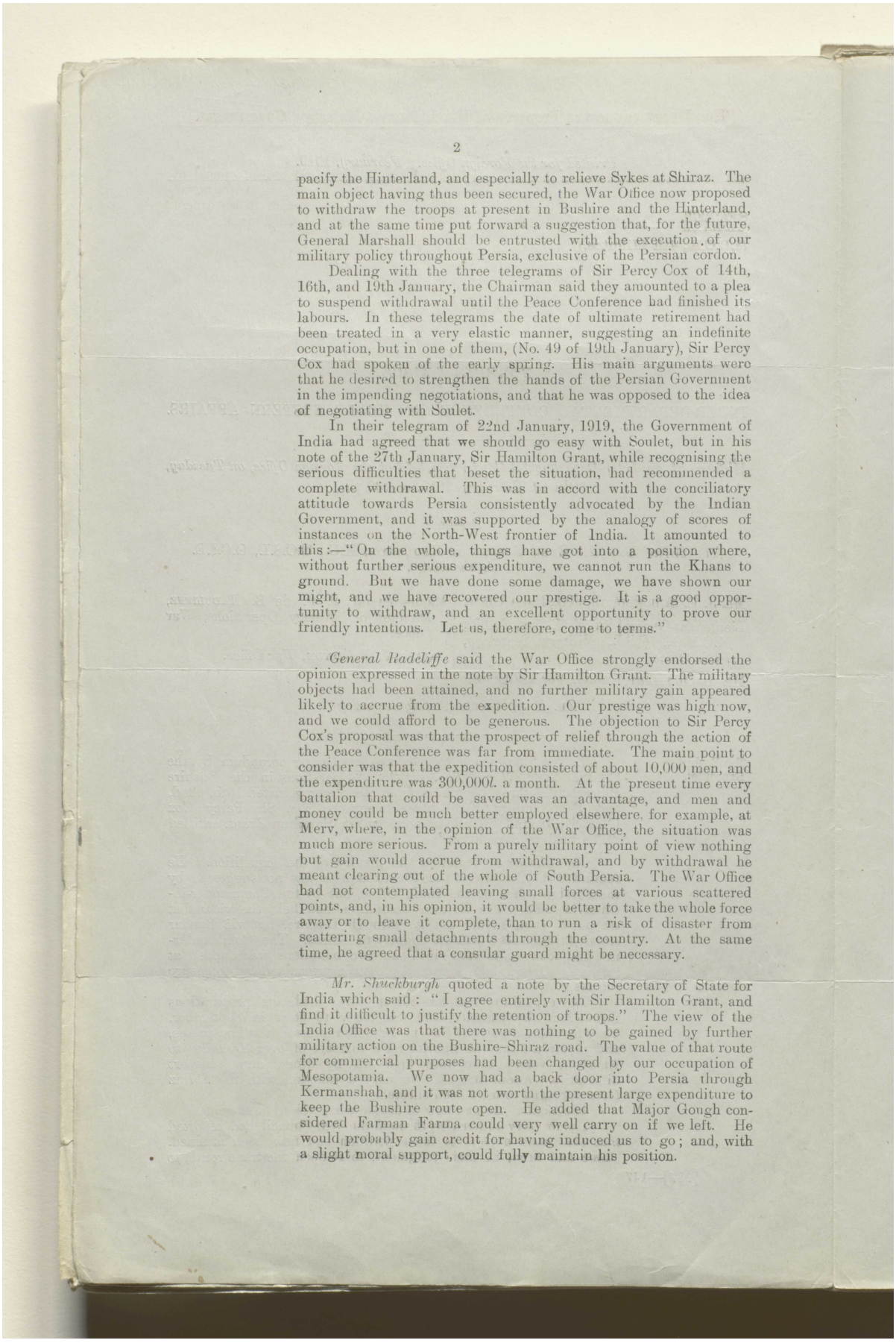



pacify the Hinterland, and especially to relieve Sykes at Shiraz. The main object having thus been secured, the War Office now proposed to withdraw the troops at present in Bushire and the Hinterland, and at the same time put forward a suggestion that, for the future, General Marshall should be entrusted with the execution of our military policy throughout Persia, exclusive of the Persian cordon.

Dealing with the three telegrams of Sir Percy Cox of 14th, 16th, and 19th January, the Chairman said they amounted to a plea to suspend withdrawal until the Peace Conference had finished its labours. In these telegrams the date of ultimate retirement had been treated in a very elastic manner, suggesting an indefinite occupation, but in one of them, (No. 49 of 19th January), Sir Percy Cox had spoken of the early spring. His main arguments were that he desired to strengthen the hands of the Persian Government in the impending negotiations, and that he was opposed to the idea of negotiating with Soulet.

In their telegram of 22nd January, 1919, the Government of India had agreed that we should go easy with Soulet, but in his note of the 27th January, Sir Hamilton Grant, while recognising the serious difficulties that beset the situation, had recommended a complete withdrawal. This was in accord with the conciliatory attitude towards Persia consistently advocated by the Indian Government, and it was supported by the analogy of scores of instances on the North-West frontier of India. It amounted to this :—"On the whole, things have got into a position where, without further serious expenditure, we cannot run the Khans to ground. But we have done some damage, we have shown our might, and we have recovered our prestige. It is a good opportunity to withdraw, and an excellent opportunity to prove our friendly intentions. Let us, therefore, come to terms."

*General Radcliffe* said the War Office strongly endorsed the opinion expressed in the note by Sir Hamilton Grant. The military objects had been attained, and no further military gain appeared likely to accrue from the expedition. Our prestige was high now, and we could afford to be generous. The objection to Sir Percy Cox's proposal was that the prospect of relief through the action of the Peace Conference was far from immediate. The main point to consider was that the expedition consisted of about 10,000 men, and the expenditure was 300,000*l.* a month. At the present time every battalion that could be saved was an advantage, and men and money could be much better employed elsewhere, for example, at Merv, where, in the opinion of the War Office, the situation was much more serious. From a purely military point of view nothing but gain would accrue from withdrawal, and by withdrawal he meant clearing out of the whole of South Persia. The War Office had not contemplated leaving small forces at various scattered points, and, in his opinion, it would be better to take the whole force away or to leave it complete, than to run a risk of disaster from scattering small detachments through the country. At the same time, he agreed that a consular guard might be necessary.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* quoted a note by the Secretary of State for India which said : "I agree entirely with Sir Hamilton Grant, and find it difficult to justify the retention of troops." The view of the India Office was that there was nothing to be gained by further military action on the Bushire-Shiraz road. The value of that route for commercial purposes had been changed by our occupation of Mesopotamia. We now had a back door into Persia through Kermanshah, and it was not worth the present large expenditure to keep the Bushire route open. He added that Major Gough considered Farman Farma could very well carry on if we left. He would probably gain credit for having induced us to go; and, with a slight moral support, could fully maintain his position.



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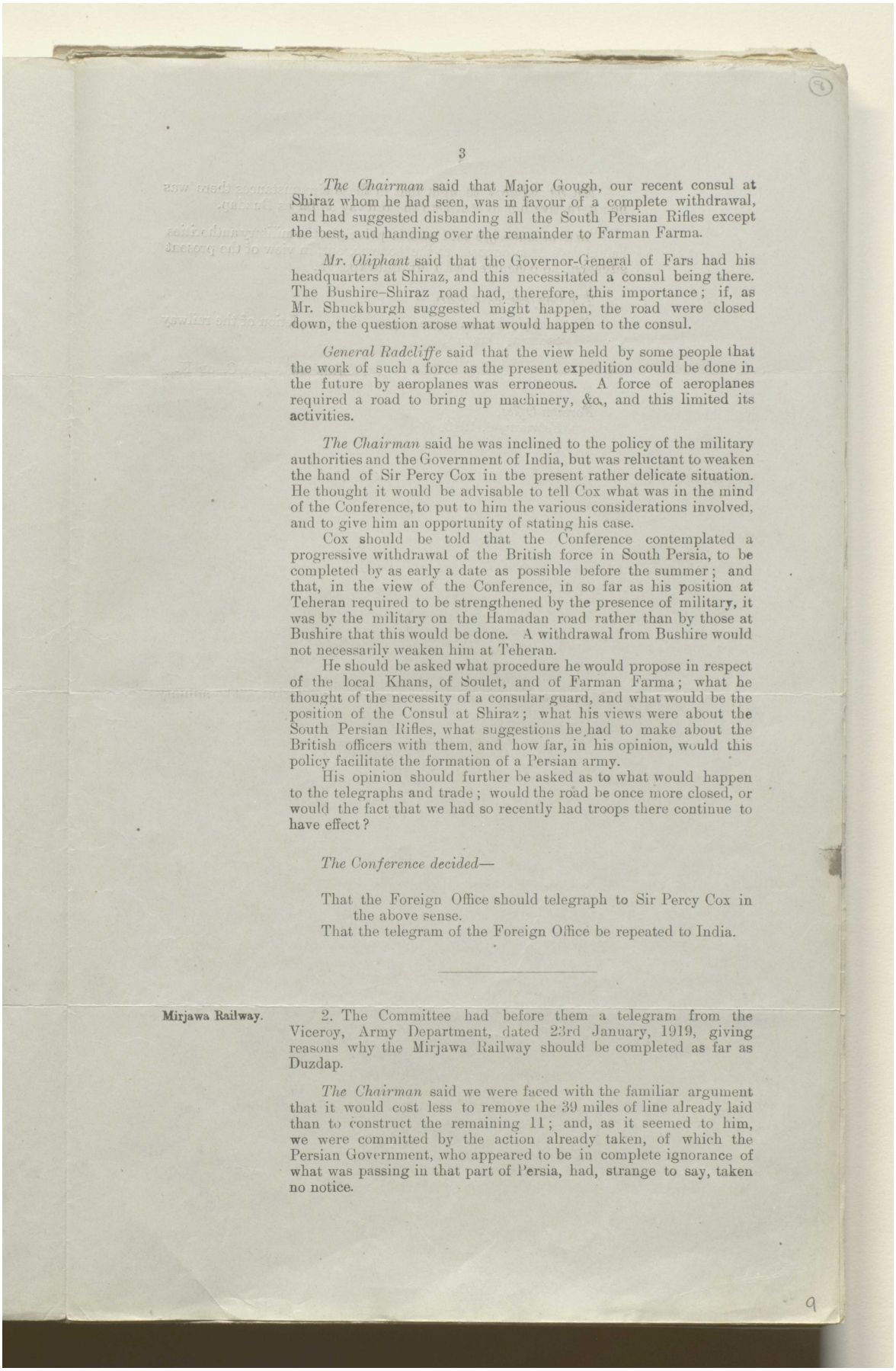



*The Chairman* said that Major Gough, our recent consul at Shiraz whom he had seen, was in favour of a complete withdrawal, and had suggested disbanding all the South Persian Rifles except the best, and handing over the remainder to Farman Farma.

*Mr. Oliphant* said that the Governor-General of Fars had his headquarters at Shiraz, and this necessitated a consul being there. The Bushire–Shiraz road had, therefore, this importance; if, as Mr. Shuckburgh suggested might happen, the road were closed down, the question arose what would happen to the consul.

*General Radcliffe* said that the view held by some people that the work of such a force as the present expedition could be done in the future by aeroplanes was erroneous. A force of aeroplanes required a road to bring up machinery, &c., and this limited its activities.

*The Chairman* said he was inclined to the policy of the military authorities and the Government of India, but was reluctant to weaken the hand of Sir Percy Cox in the present rather delicate situation. He thought it would be advisable to tell Cox what was in the mind of the Conference, to put to him the various considerations involved, and to give him an opportunity of stating his case.

Cox should be told that the Conference contemplated a progressive withdrawal of the British force in South Persia, to be completed by as early a date as possible before the summer; and that, in the view of the Conference, in so far as his position at Teheran required to be strengthened by the presence of military, it was by the military on the Hamadan road rather than by those at Bushire that this would be done. A withdrawal from Bushire would not necessarily weaken him at Teheran.

He should be asked what procedure he would propose in respect of the local Khans, of Soulet, and of Farman Farma; what he thought of the necessity of a consular guard, and what would be the position of the Consul at Shiraz; what his views were about the South Persian Rifles, what suggestions he had to make about the British officers with them, and how far, in his opinion, would this policy facilitate the formation of a Persian army.

His opinion should further be asked as to what would happen to the telegraphs and trade; would the road be once more closed, or would the fact that we had so recently had troops there continue to have effect?

*The Conference decided—*

That the Foreign Office should telegraph to Sir Percy Cox in the above sense.

That the telegram of the Foreign Office be repeated to India.

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**Mirjawa Railway.**

2. The Committee had before them a telegram from the Viceroy, Army Department, dated 23rd January, 1919, giving reasons why the Mirjawa Railway should be completed as far as Duzdap.

*The Chairman* said we were faced with the familiar argument that it would cost less to remove the 39 miles of line already laid than to construct the remaining 11; and, as it seemed to him, we were committed by the action already taken, of which the Persian Government, who appeared to be in complete ignorance of what was passing in that part of Persia, had, strange to say, taken no notice.



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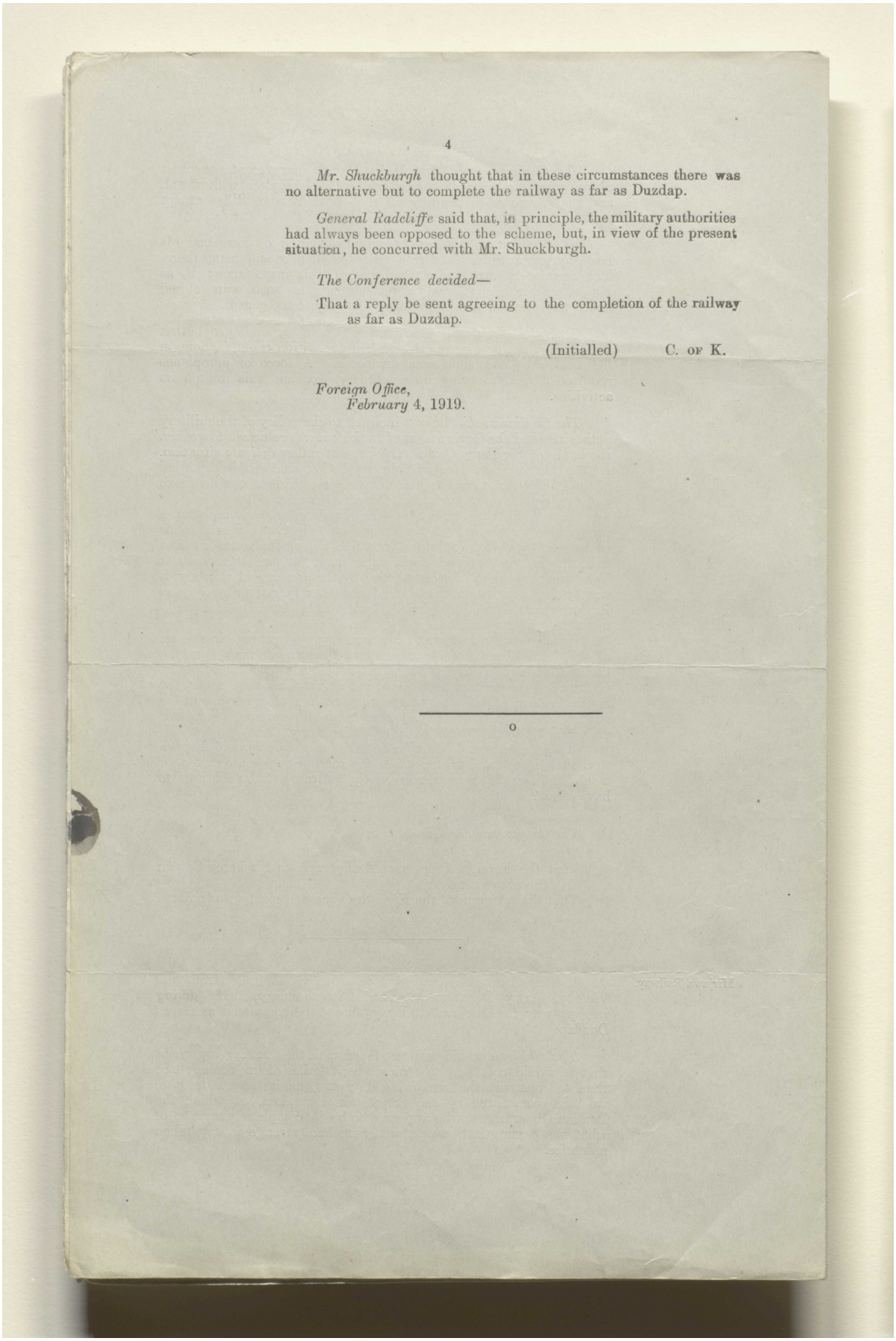

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*Mr. Shuckburgh* thought that in these circumstances there was no alternative but to complete the railway as far as Duzdap.

*General Radcliffe* said that, in principle, the military authorities had always been opposed to the scheme, but, in view of the present situation, he concurred with Mr. Shuckburgh.

*The Conference decided*—

That a reply be sent agreeing to the completion of the railway as far as Duzdap.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*February* 4, 1919.

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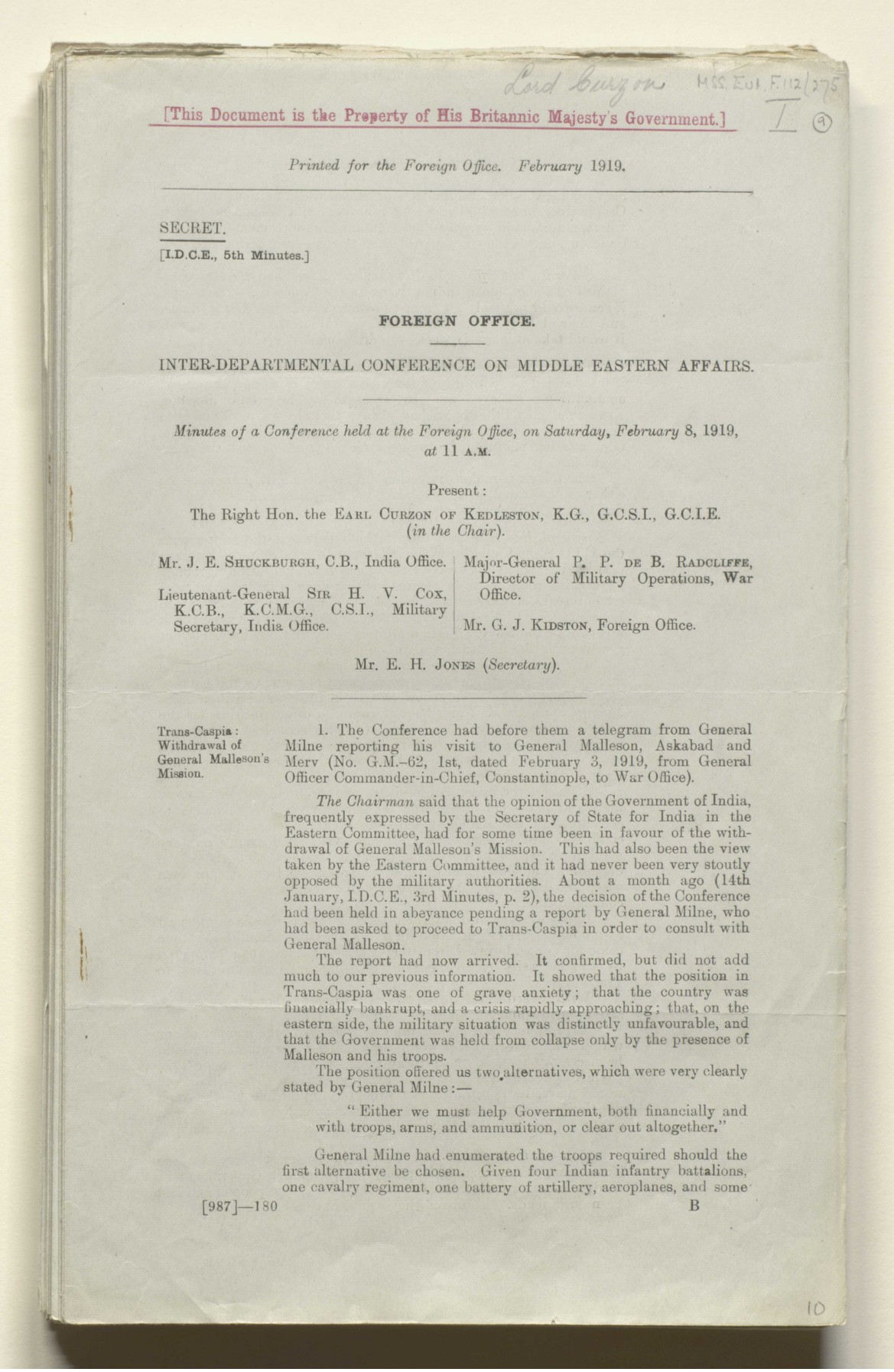

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. February* 1919.

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[I.D.C.E., 5th Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Conference held at the Foreign Office, on Saturday, February* 8, 1919, *at* 11 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

Trans-Caspia: Withdrawal of General Malleson's Mission.

1. The Conference had before them a telegram from General Milne reporting his visit to General Malleson, Askabad and Merv (No. G.M.–62, 1st, dated February 3, 1919, from General Officer Commander-in-Chief, Constantinople, to War Office).

*The Chairman* said that the opinion of the Government of India, frequently expressed by the Secretary of State for India in the Eastern Committee, had for some time been in favour of the withdrawal of General Malleson's Mission. This had also been the view taken by the Eastern Committee, and it had never been very stoutly opposed by the military authorities. About a month ago (14th January, I.D.C.E., 3rd Minutes, p. 2), the decision of the Conference had been held in abeyance pending a report by General Milne, who had been asked to proceed to Trans-Caspia in order to consult with General Malleson.

The report had now arrived. It confirmed, but did not add much to our previous information. It showed that the position in Trans-Caspia was one of grave anxiety; that the country was financially bankrupt, and a crisis rapidly approaching; that, on the eastern side, the military situation was distinctly unfavourable, and that the Government was held from collapse only by the presence of Malleson and his troops.

The position offered us two alternatives, which were very clearly stated by General Milne:—

> "Either we must help Government, both financially and with troops, arms, and ammunition, or clear out altogether."

General Milne had enumerated the troops required should the first alternative be chosen. Given four Indian infantry battalions, one cavalry regiment, one battery of artillery, aeroplanes, and some

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heavy guns, the British infantry (for whom the conditions in Trans-Caspia were unsuitable) could be relieved. But he had not stated whether he could supply these Indian reinforcements from the Caucasus, or whether they would have to come from India.

*General Radcliffe* said that General Milne had already complained of a shortage of Indian troops in the Caucasus. The troops, if sent, would probably go from the Caucasus in the first instance, and their place there would be filled by Indian troops from Egypt. It would take at least six weeks to get troops to Merv.

*The Chairman* said that General Milne considered it necessary, if we decided on withdrawal, to give a grant of money, arms, and ammunition. He even went so far as to say he would abandon Krasnovodsk. Hitherto we had always thought we would have to hold Krasnovodsk, although General Malleson in one of his telegrams had said that, if strongly attacked from the east, the place might fall.

The telegram under discussion did not definitely pronounce for either of the two alternatives stated, but the Chairman read *into* it that General Milne was in favour of withdrawal.

*General Radcliffe* said that he had discussed the matter with the C.I.G.S., and, on the whole, his opinion was that the military position was so unfavourable that, unless India had strong grounds for wishing the force to be retained with a view to the possibility of an outbreak of Bolshevism, he was in favour of withdrawal to Krasnovodsk and Meshed. The question of giving up Krasnovodsk was one for the Navy. From a military point of view he would not give it up in the first instance, although it was a future possibility.

The position had been very much altered, not only from the military, but also from the economic point of view, by the capture of Orenburg. The enemy now had through communication from Moscow to the front. This had, of course, a direct bearing on the question of reinforcements; and from the economic standpoint, there was now no hope of any trade coming out that way. There was, consequently, no prospect of a stable Government being created in the near future.

Such was the immediate position, and, taking a very long view, there did not seem any reason for our staying. If we took into consideration the strongest possible combination against us—a combination of Russians and Germans—we should, from a military point of view, be in the worst possible position. We should be defending our own front line, so to speak, in front of our own wire, and should be hampered by the length of our lines of communication.

Lastly, the retention of the mission in Trans-Caspia might lead to an embarrassing situation in the Caucasus. Should the time come for our withdrawal from the Caucasus we might be hampered by the necessity of maintaining our line of communication to Trans-Caspia.

With regard to the question of prestige, he thought we had to stand our loss and come away.

In reply to a question by the Chairman as to the manner of our withdrawal, he said that it would be a delicate operation. It would be necessary to keep the railway open, and, in order to do this, payments would have to be made to avoid strikes. The withdrawal would have to be gradual in order to give time to the civil population, and to our friends in Trans-Caspia, to secure their own safety. Their way to safety would probably be over the Caspian.

*The Chairman* said that he would be most sorry for the Turcomans. They had no capacity for forming a Government or of developing any organisation, but they were loyal people, and had been our friends. He feared they would have a bad time.



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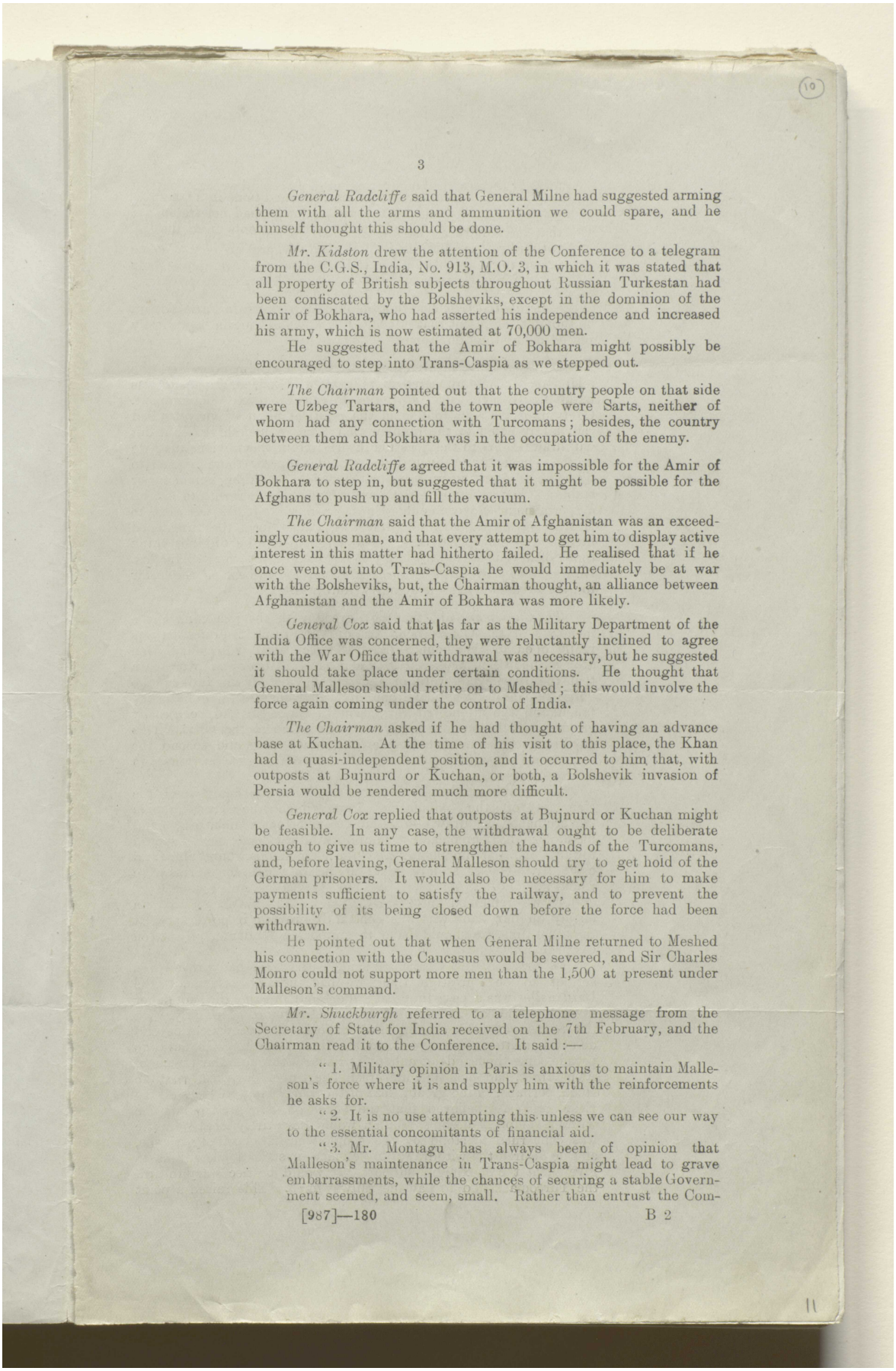

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*General Radcliffe* said that General Milne had suggested arming them with all the arms and ammunition we could spare, and he himself thought this should be done.

*Mr. Kidston* drew the attention of the Conference to a telegram from the C.G.S., India, No. 913, M.O. 3, in which it was stated that all property of British subjects throughout Russian Turkestan had been confiscated by the Bolsheviks, except in the dominion of the Amir of Bokhara, who had asserted his independence and increased his army, which is now estimated at 70,000 men.

He suggested that the Amir of Bokhara might possibly be encouraged to step into Trans-Caspia as we stepped out.

*The Chairman* pointed out that the country people on that side were Uzbeg Tartars, and the town people were Sarts, neither of whom had any connection with Turcomans; besides, the country between them and Bokhara was in the occupation of the enemy.

*General Radcliffe* agreed that it was impossible for the Amir of Bokhara to step in, but suggested that it might be possible for the Afghans to push up and fill the vacuum.

*The Chairman* said that the Amir of Afghanistan was an exceedingly cautious man, and that every attempt to get him to display active interest in this matter had hitherto failed. He realised that if he once went out into Trans-Caspia he would immediately be at war with the Bolsheviks, but, the Chairman thought, an alliance between Afghanistan and the Amir of Bokhara was more likely.

*General Cox* said that as far as the Military Department of the India Office was concerned, they were reluctantly inclined to agree with the War Office that withdrawal was necessary, but he suggested it should take place under certain conditions. He thought that General Malleson should retire on to Meshed; this would involve the force again coming under the control of India.

*The Chairman* asked if he had thought of having an advance base at Kuchan. At the time of his visit to this place, the Khan had a quasi-independent position, and it occurred to him that, with outposts at Bujnurd or Kuchan, or both, a Bolshevik invasion of Persia would be rendered much more difficult.

*General Cox* replied that outposts at Bujnurd or Kuchan might be feasible. In any case, the withdrawal ought to be deliberate enough to give us time to strengthen the hands of the Turcomans, and, before leaving, General Malleson should try to get hold of the German prisoners. It would also be necessary for him to make payments sufficient to satisfy the railway, and to prevent the possibility of its being closed down before the force had been withdrawn.

He pointed out that when General Milne returned to Meshed his connection with the Caucasus would be severed, and Sir Charles Monro could not support more men than the 1,500 at present under Malleson's command.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* referred to a telephone message from the Secretary of State for India received on the 7th February, and the Chairman read it to the Conference. It said:—

"1. Military opinion in Paris is anxious to maintain Malleson's force where it is and supply him with the reinforcements he asks for.

"2. It is no use attempting this unless we can see our way to the essential concomitants of financial aid.

"3. Mr. Montagu has always been of opinion that Malleson's maintenance in Trans-Caspia might lead to grave embarrassments, while the chances of securing a stable Government seemed, and seem, small. Rather than entrust the Com-

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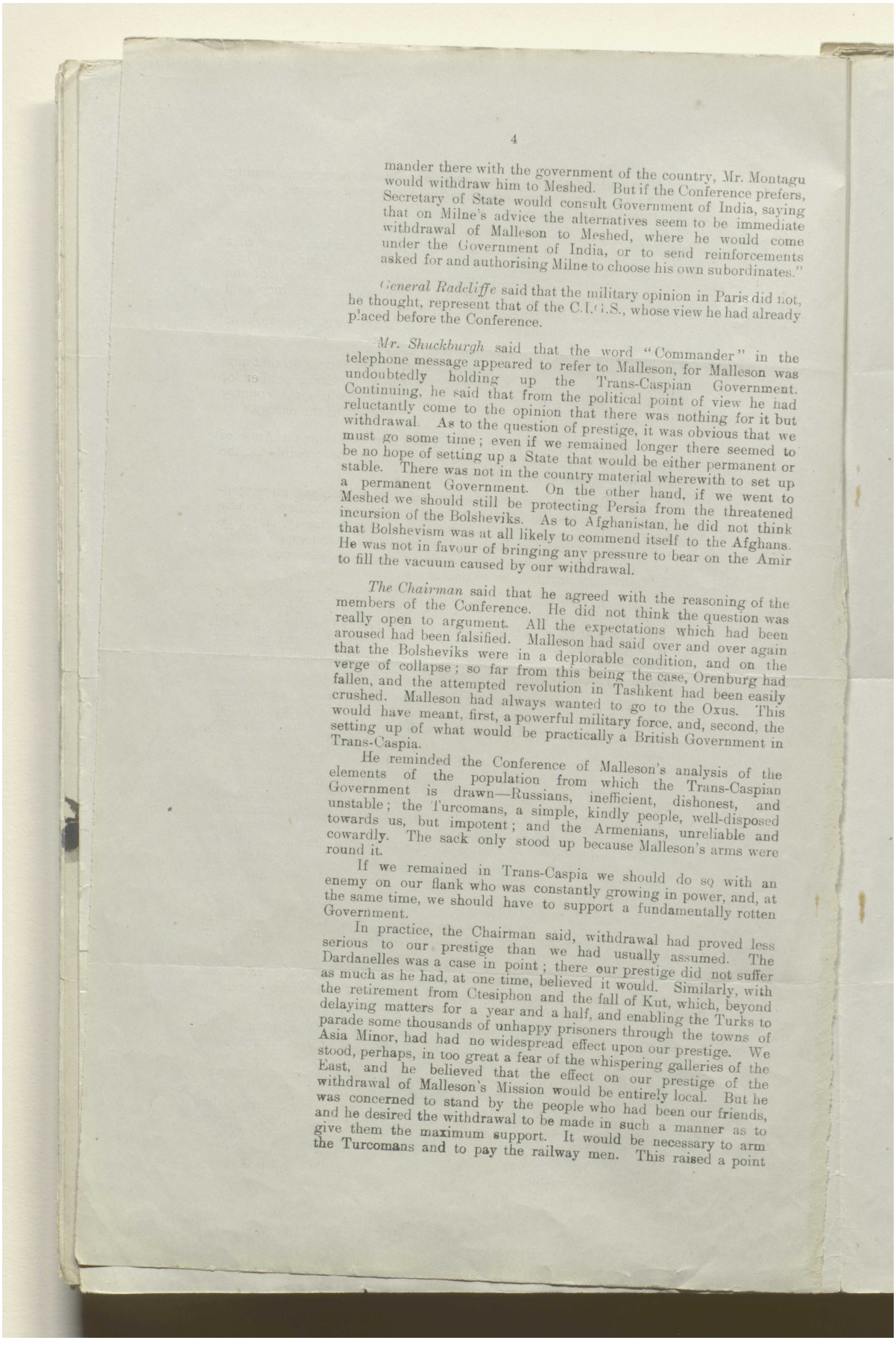



mander there with the government of the country, Mr. Montagu would withdraw him to Meshed. But if the Conference prefers, Secretary of State would consult Government of India, saying that on Milne's advice the alternatives seem to be immediate withdrawal of Malleson to Meshed, where he would come under the Government of India, or to send reinforcements asked for and authorising Milne to choose his own subordinates."

*General Radcliffe* said that the military opinion in Paris did not, he thought, represent that of the C.I.G.S., whose view he had already placed before the Conference.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that the word "Commander" in the telephone message appeared to refer to Malleson, for Malleson was undoubtedly holding up the Trans-Caspian Government. Continuing, he said that from the political point of view he had reluctantly come to the opinion that there was nothing for it but withdrawal. As to the question of prestige, it was obvious that we must go some time; even if we remained longer there seemed to be no hope of setting up a State that would be either permanent or stable. There was not in the country material wherewith to set up a permanent Government. On the other hand, if we went to Meshed we should still be protecting Persia from the threatened incursion of the Bolsheviks. As to Afghanistan, he did not think that Bolshevism was at all likely to commend itself to the Afghans. He was not in favour of bringing any pressure to bear on the Amir to fill the vacuum caused by our withdrawal.

*The Chairman* said that he agreed with the reasoning of the members of the Conference. He did not think the question was really open to argument. All the expectations which had been aroused had been falsified. Malleson had said over and over again that the Bolsheviks were in a deplorable condition, and on the verge of collapse; so far from this being the case, Orenburg had fallen, and the attempted revolution in Tashkent had been easily crushed. Malleson had always wanted to go to the Oxus. This would have meant, first, a powerful military force, and, second, the setting up of what would be practically a British Government in Trans-Caspia.

He reminded the Conference of Malleson's analysis of the elements of the population from which the Trans-Caspian Government is drawn—Russians, inefficient, dishonest, and unstable; the Turcomans, a simple, kindly people, well-disposed towards us, but impotent; and the Armenians, unreliable and cowardly. The sack only stood up because Malleson's arms were round it.

If we remained in Trans-Caspia we should do so with an enemy on our flank who was constantly growing in power, and, at the same time, we should have to support a fundamentally rotten Government.

In practice, the Chairman said, withdrawal had proved less serious to our prestige than we had usually assumed. The Dardanelles was a case in point; there our prestige did not suffer as much as he had, at one time, believed it would. Similarly, with the retirement from Ctesiphon and the fall of Kut, which, beyond delaying matters for a year and a half, and enabling the Turks to parade some thousands of unhappy prisoners through the towns of Asia Minor, had had no widespread effect upon our prestige. We stood, perhaps, in too great a fear of the whispering galleries of the East, and he believed that the effect on our prestige of the withdrawal of Malleson's Mission would be entirely local. But he was concerned to stand by the people who had been our friends, and he desired the withdrawal to be made in such a manner as to give them the maximum support. It would be necessary to arm the Turcomans and to pay the railway men. This raised a point



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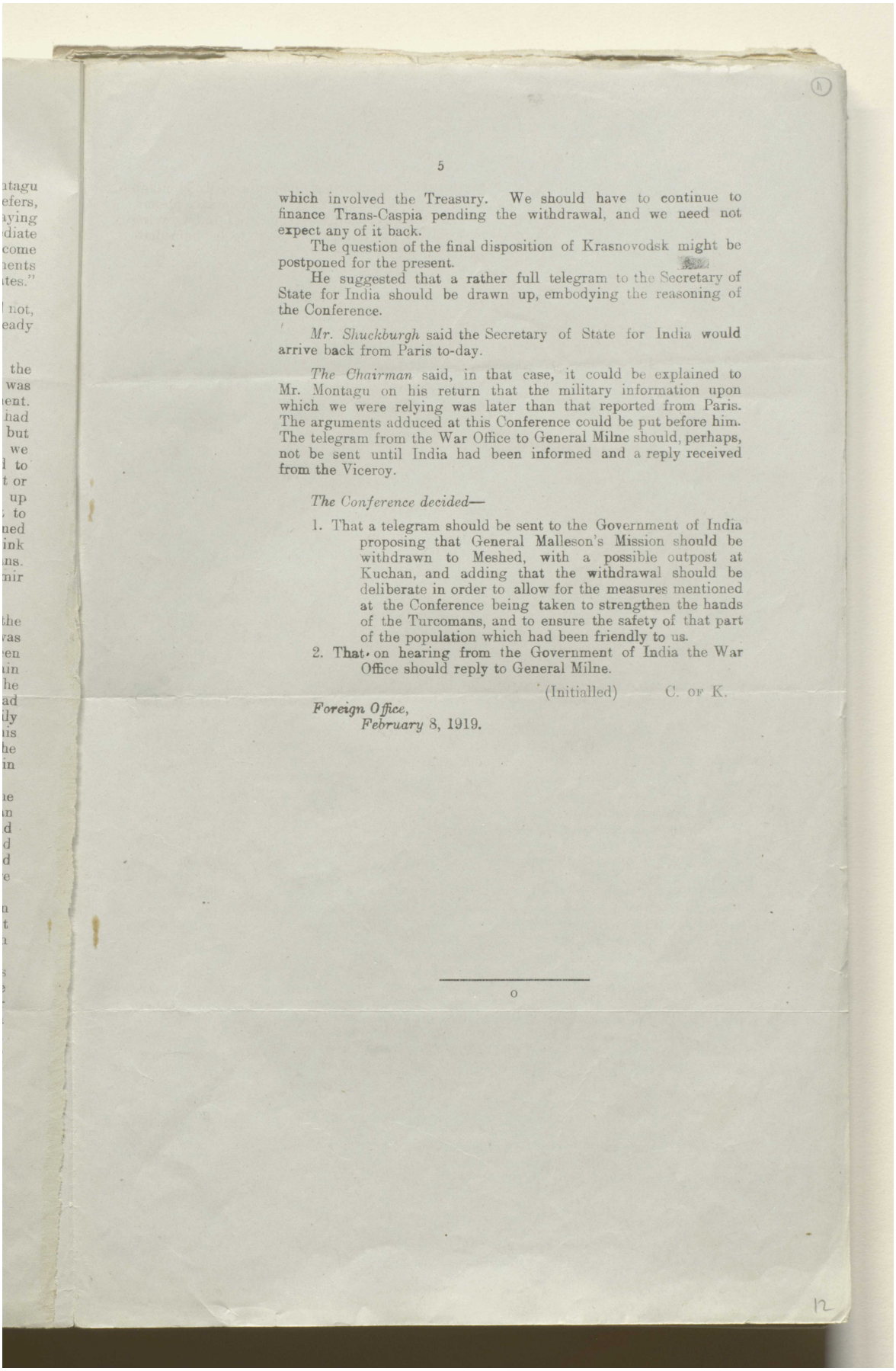

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which involved the Treasury. We should have to continue to finance Trans-Caspia pending the withdrawal, and we need not expect any of it back.

The question of the final disposition of Krasnovodsk might be postponed for the present.

He suggested that a rather full telegram to the Secretary of State for India should be drawn up, embodying the reasoning of the Conference.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said the Secretary of State for India would arrive back from Paris to-day.

*The Chairman* said, in that case, it could be explained to Mr. Montagu on his return that the military information upon which we were relying was later than that reported from Paris. The arguments adduced at this Conference could be put before him. The telegram from the War Office to General Milne should, perhaps, not be sent until India had been informed and a reply received from the Viceroy.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That a telegram should be sent to the Government of India proposing that General Malleson's Mission should be withdrawn to Meshed, with a possible outpost at Kuchan, and adding that the withdrawal should be deliberate in order to allow for the measures mentioned at the Conference being taken to strengthen the hands of the Turcomans, and to ensure the safety of that part of the population which had been friendly to us.
2. That, on hearing from the Government of India the War Office should reply to General Milne.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*February* 8, 1919.

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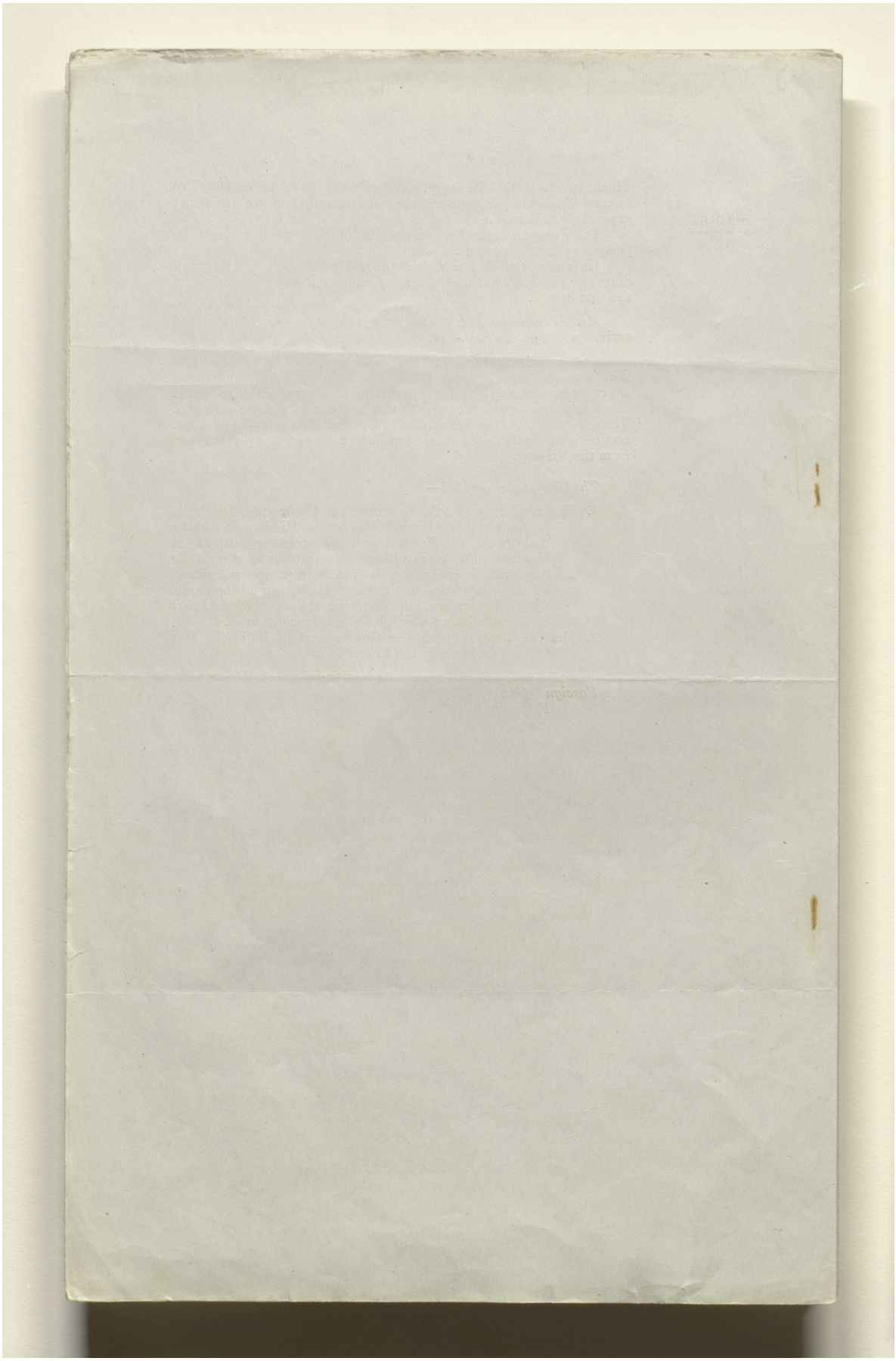

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Lord Curzon.

*Printed for the Foreign Office. March* 1919.

SECRET.

I.D.C.E., 6th Minutes.

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Conference, held at the Foreign Office, on Thursday, February* 13, 1919, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Professor SIMPSON, Foreign Office.

Major-General P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Brigadier-General BARTHOLOMEW, War Office.

Captain H. E.-F. AYLMER, Admiralty.

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

Circulation of Conference Papers.

1. *The Chairman* said that the late Eastern Committee had enabled them to discuss at their weekly meetings any Middle East questions that happened to arise. The present Conference was really the Eastern Committee in a more concentrated form, but certain dislocations had taken place and the new system had not proved entirely satisfactory. He himself, it was true, received all telegrams and papers relating to the Middle East, but they were no longer graded under headings suited to the purposes of the Conference, and they reached him mixed up in boxes with other departmental papers, so that it had been almost impossible to obtain a coherent grasp of the situation in the Caucasus, or indeed, in any of the other countries with which the Conference dealt. Other members had been worse off than himself. He quoted as an example two recent telegrams, copies of which had not been circulated to them. The present system was helter-skelter and bad. If the Conference was to continue to have the same powers, duties, and functions as the Eastern Committee, the only way was for Departments to see that these telegrams and memoranda should be sent all round. This could be done in one of two ways, either by direct circulation to members from the various Departments or through the Secretary of the Conference.

After a brief discussion, *the Conference decided* that—

(1.) The Departments concerned should send to the Secretary copies of telegrams and memoranda on Middle Eastern affairs in sufficient numbers for circulation to all members of the Conference.



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(2.) The Secretary should tabulate these telegrams and memoranda under heads suited to the purposes of the Conference, as was done in the Eastern Committee, and circulate them to members.

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The Caucasus.

2. The Conference had before them the following papers on the situation in Trans-Caucasia: A note by the chairman, dated the 2nd February, 1919; a Minute by Mr. G. J. Kidston, dated the 7th February; and a note by the General Staff, War Office, dated the 12th February.

*The Chairman* said there were indications that the situation in the Caucasus was tending to slip out of the grasp of the Conference. Our policy had been this: We had held that it would be necessary to maintain for a time in the Caucasus forces sufficient to hold the line from Batoum to Baku, keep order in the capital cities, and retain control over the Caspian. We had had no desire to encroach into inter-State quarrels, nor had we contemplated crossing the Caucasus on the north, or going to Erivan in the south. Our policy had not gone further than the maintenance of control from east to west, the important point being the Caspian. But from General Thomson's note, dated the 6th December, 1918, he had gathered that a much more extended series of military operations was being contemplated, and recent telegrams indicated that they had already commenced. Thus Petrovsk had been occupied. An aeroplane base appeared to have been created 60 miles north of Petrovsk. Bombing operations had been carried out against Grozny. Kars, he found to his surprise, had been entered. One division was in the Caucasus. Three battalions had been sent out to reinforce it, and still General Milne was not satisfied, and was asking for two divisions. At least a month ago, after consultation with General Thwaites, he had drawn up a telegram to General Milne asking for a survey of the position in the Caucasus. Up to date General Milne's reply had not been received.

*General Radcliffe* said the report had just left Constantinople, and was being brought by an officer.

*The Chairman* said we were very much in the dark as to what was actually happening in the Caucasus. He had felt it necessary to obtain more light on the subject, and had drawn up the note before the meeting asking the military authorities for their view of the situation. The reply of the General Staff had now arrived, and, as it had not been seen by everybody, he would read it to the Conference. But, before reading the note, he desired to mention that a meeting had apparently been convened of the military authorities of the Great Powers at Paris to discuss the occupation of the Caucasus pending peace, and it was reported that a decision had been arrived at to hand it over to the Italians. The proposition seemed to him astounding. It might be that it would afford a solution in the future, but he did not know any reason for it at the present time, nor could he understand why the Italians, who were quite detached from the Caucasus and its problems, should be willing to send troops there, in view of the fact that they were not less anxious to proceed with their demobilisation than we were ourselves, and that we were already on the spot. It seemed strange that, while the Americans had no intention of going to the Caucasus, the Italians should express their readiness to take up the burden. No doubt Mr. Montagu would throw some light on this point later on.

The Chairman then read to the Conference a note by the General Staff entitled "Situation in Trans-Caucasia" (Appendix I).

*General Radcliffe*, in answer to a question by the Chairman, said that the forces at present in the Caucasus amounted to one



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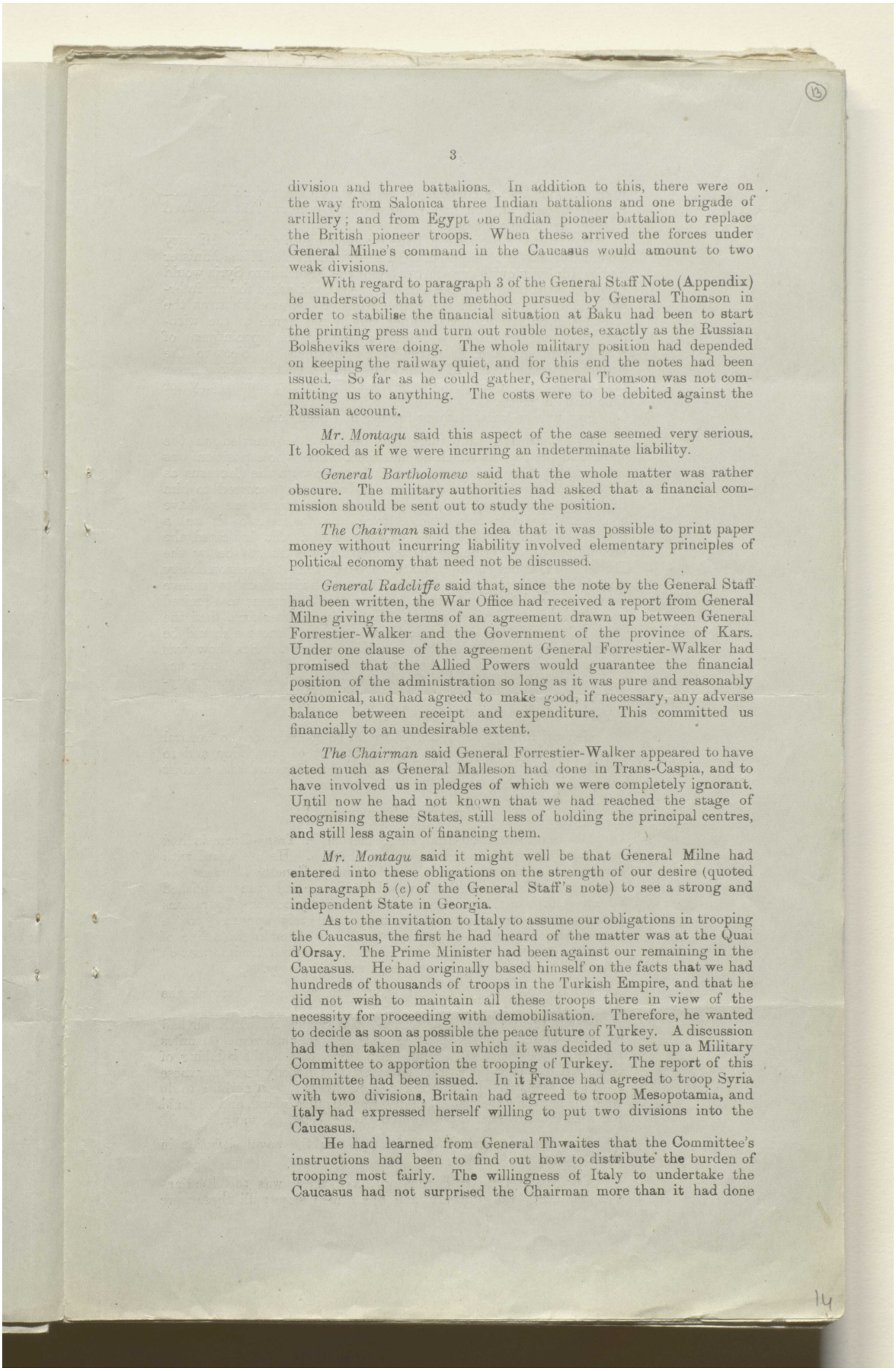



division and three battalions. In addition to this, there were on the way from Salonica three Indian battalions and one brigade of artillery; and from Egypt one Indian pioneer battalion to replace the British pioneer troops. When these arrived the forces under General Milne's command in the Caucasus would amount to two weak divisions.

With regard to paragraph 3 of the General Staff Note (Appendix) he understood that the method pursued by General Thomson in order to stabilise the financial situation at Baku had been to start the printing press and turn out rouble notes, exactly as the Russian Bolsheviks were doing. The whole military position had depended on keeping the railway quiet, and for this end the notes had been issued. So far as he could gather, General Thomson was not committing us to anything. The costs were to be debited against the Russian account.

*Mr. Montagu* said this aspect of the case seemed very serious. It looked as if we were incurring an indeterminate liability.

*General Bartholomew* said that the whole matter was rather obscure. The military authorities had asked that a financial commission should be sent out to study the position.

*The Chairman* said the idea that it was possible to print paper money without incurring liability involved elementary principles of political economy that need not be discussed.

*General Radcliffe* said that, since the note by the General Staff had been written, the War Office had received a report from General Milne giving the terms of an agreement drawn up between General Forrestier-Walker and the Government of the province of Kars. Under one clause of the agreement General Forrestier-Walker had promised that the Allied Powers would guarantee the financial position of the administration so long as it was pure and reasonably economical, and had agreed to make good, if necessary, any adverse balance between receipt and expenditure. This committed us financially to an undesirable extent.

*The Chairman* said General Forrestier-Walker appeared to have acted much as General Malleson had done in Trans-Caspia, and to have involved us in pledges of which we were completely ignorant. Until now he had not known that we had reached the stage of recognising these States, still less of holding the principal centres, and still less again of financing them.

*Mr. Montagu* said it might well be that General Milne had entered into these obligations on the strength of our desire (quoted in paragraph 5 (c) of the General Staff's note) to see a strong and independent State in Georgia.

As to the invitation to Italy to assume our obligations in trooping the Caucasus, the first he had heard of the matter was at the Quai d'Orsay. The Prime Minister had been against our remaining in the Caucasus. He had originally based himself on the facts that we had hundreds of thousands of troops in the Turkish Empire, and that he did not wish to maintain all these troops there in view of the necessity for proceeding with demobilisation. Therefore, he wanted to decide as soon as possible the peace future of Turkey. A discussion had then taken place in which it was decided to set up a Military Committee to apportion the trooping of Turkey. The report of this Committee had been issued. In it France had agreed to troop Syria with two divisions, Britain had agreed to troop Mesopotamia, and Italy had expressed herself willing to put two divisions into the Caucasus.

He had learned from General Thwaites that the Committee's instructions had been to find out how to distribute the burden of trooping most fairly. The willingness of Italy to undertake the Caucasus had not surprised the Chairman more than it had done





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himself. Sir Arthur Hirtzel, on being shown the report, had been equally astonished, and had expressed the opinion that the word "Italy" must be a misprint!

But it was not yet clear if the recommendation of the Military Committee would be adopted. On Friday night the Prime Minister had said he was quite sure the entry of the French into Syria would bring on hostilities with the Arabs. Feisal had asked for an international committee, and the Prime Minister suggested that, at the meeting on Saturday, Lord Milner should not agree to the withdrawal of our troops from Palestine pending the appointment of this Committee; and, as it might be invidious to object to the French entering Syria and at the same time to let the Italians enter the Caucasus, it would perhaps be best that Milner should play for time in both places.

So far as he knew nothing further had been done.

*The Chairman* said there had been nothing settled on the subject in the reports which he had seen. The whole position was astounding. The Italians had as little to do with the Caucasus as he with the Peak of Teneriffe, and it had never occurred to him that they would come in. No local considerations seem to have counted. It almost looked like a joke, and to his mind it was a chimera; but it was in one way important. It indicated the acceptance of the principle that occupation was not to be by the British, and, although it was still possible that the responsibility might finally devolve upon us—for it seemed ridiculous to believe that Italy would step in—it impelled us for the present to a limited occupation for a limited period. He thought, therefore, that the limits of our military and political action in the Caucasus should be clearly defined at the earliest possible moment. But how was a true appreciation of the facts to be obtained? The Conference was very much in the dark. The military might have done everything that was right, but more information was wanted, and he thought independent advice would prove valuable.

*General Radcliffe* said that it would be of assistance to General Milne even now to give him a clear statement of our policy, and to warn him against becoming involved in commitments and against attempting to bolster up the Trans-Caucasian States.

(*Captain Aylmer arrived.*)

*The Chairman* said that the situation in Trans-Caucasia had been affected by action taken in the Caspian. He had heard with surprise that, on the advice of the Admiralty, General Thomson had sent troops to Petrovsk, that a naval aerodrome had been established 60 miles north of the railway, and that recently bombing operations had been conducted against Grozny. All this appeared to be outside the scheme of our policy, which was to maintain a line of communications, not to fight Bolsheviks. He asked for information from the Admiralty why these things were necessary.

*Captain Aylmer* said that about the move on Petrovsk the Admiralty knew nothing except that it had been made.

With regard to the aerodrome, the Senior Naval Officer had reported having spoken about establishing an aerodrome 60 miles further north, but this had not been done. As to the bombing of Grozny it had been done from Petrovsk, and nobody knew at whose request it was carried out. So far as he knew it had nothing to do with the navy, for the placed bombed was 60 miles inland, and he could not conceive how such a place could have affected the navy.

*The Chairman* asked for information on the naval situation in the Caspian.

*Captain Aylmer* said that at Baku there was the Russian-Caspian fleet, two gunboats, and five armed ships; all these were



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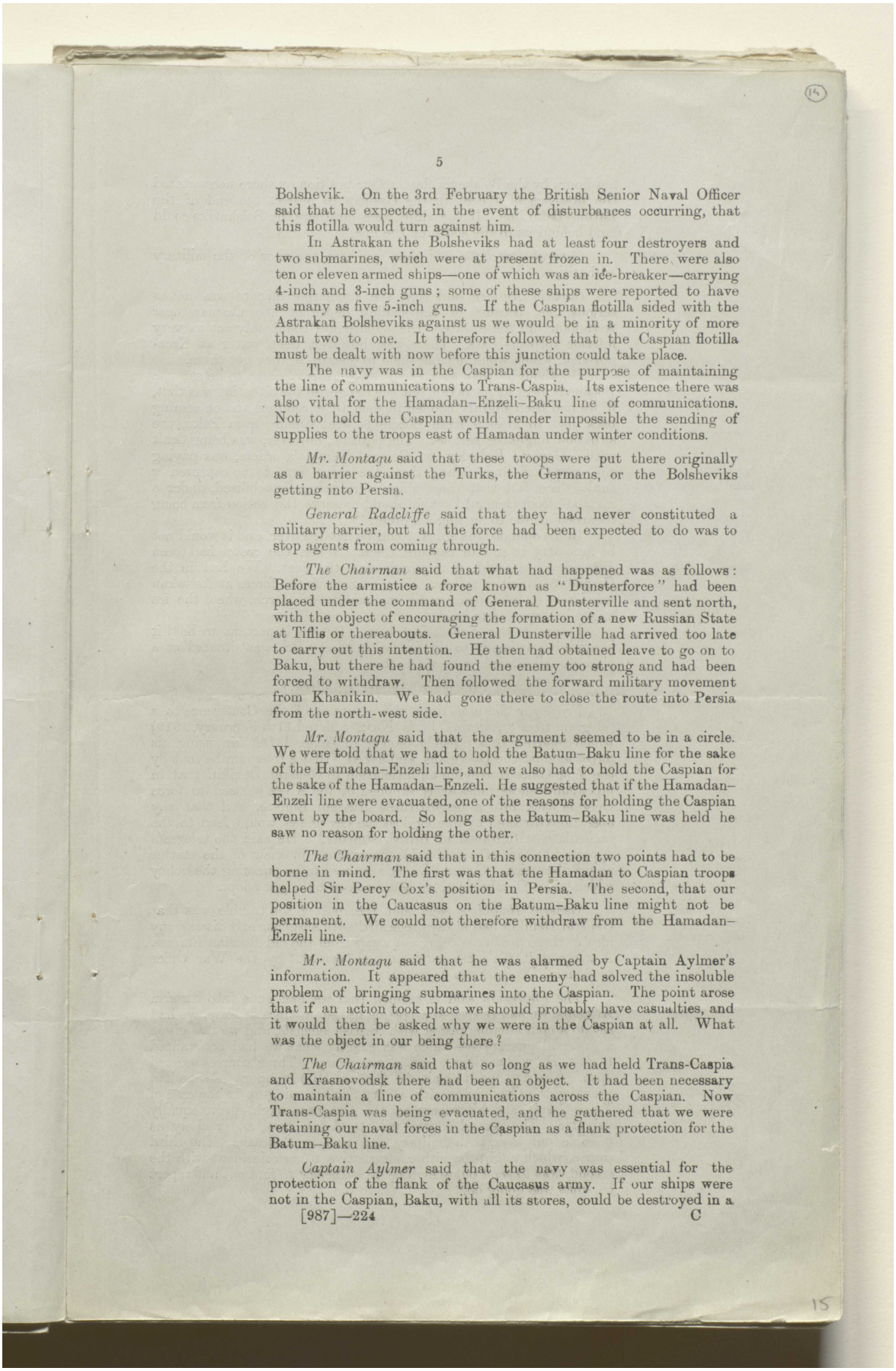



Bolshevik. On the 3rd February the British Senior Naval Officer said that he expected, in the event of disturbances occurring, that this flotilla would turn against him.

In Astrakan the Bolsheviks had at least four destroyers and two submarines, which were at present frozen in. There were also ten or eleven armed ships—one of which was an ice-breaker—carrying 4-inch and 3-inch guns; some of these ships were reported to have as many as five 5-inch guns. If the Caspian flotilla sided with the Astrakan Bolsheviks against us we would be in a minority of more than two to one. It therefore followed that the Caspian flotilla must be dealt with now before this junction could take place.

The navy was in the Caspian for the purpose of maintaining the line of communications to Trans-Caspia. Its existence there was also vital for the Hamadan–Enzeli–Baku line of communications. Not to hold the Caspian would render impossible the sending of supplies to the troops east of Hamadan under winter conditions.

*Mr. Montagu* said that these troops were put there originally as a barrier against the Turks, the Germans, or the Bolsheviks getting into Persia.

*General Radcliffe* said that they had never constituted a military barrier, but all the force had been expected to do was to stop agents from coming through.

*The Chairman* said that what had happened was as follows: Before the armistice a force known as "Dunsterforce" had been placed under the command of General Dunsterville and sent north, with the object of encouraging the formation of a new Russian State at Tiflis or thereabouts. General Dunsterville had arrived too late to carry out this intention. He then had obtained leave to go on to Baku, but there he had found the enemy too strong and had been forced to withdraw. Then followed the forward military movement from Khanikin. We had gone there to close the route into Persia from the north-west side.

*Mr. Montagu* said that the argument seemed to be in a circle. We were told that we had to hold the Batum–Baku line for the sake of the Hamadan–Enzeli line, and we also had to hold the Caspian for the sake of the Hamadan–Enzeli. He suggested that if the Hamadan–Enzeli line were evacuated, one of the reasons for holding the Caspian went by the board. So long as the Batum–Baku line was held he saw no reason for holding the other.

*The Chairman* said that in this connection two points had to be borne in mind. The first was that the Hamadan to Caspian troops helped Sir Percy Cox's position in Persia. The second, that our position in the Caucasus on the Batum–Baku line might not be permanent. We could not therefore withdraw from the Hamadan–Enzeli line.

*Mr. Montagu* said that he was alarmed by Captain Aylmer's information. It appeared that the enemy had solved the insoluble problem of bringing submarines into the Caspian. The point arose that if an action took place we should probably have casualties, and it would then be asked why we were in the Caspian at all. What was the object in our being there?

*The Chairman* said that so long as we had held Trans-Caspia and Krasnovodsk there had been an object. It had been necessary to maintain a line of communications across the Caspian. Now Trans-Caspia was being evacuated, and he gathered that we were retaining our naval forces in the Caspian as a flank protection for the Batum–Baku line.

*Captain Aylmer* said that the navy was essential for the protection of the flank of the Caucasus army. If our ships were not in the Caspian, Baku, with all its stores, could be destroyed in a





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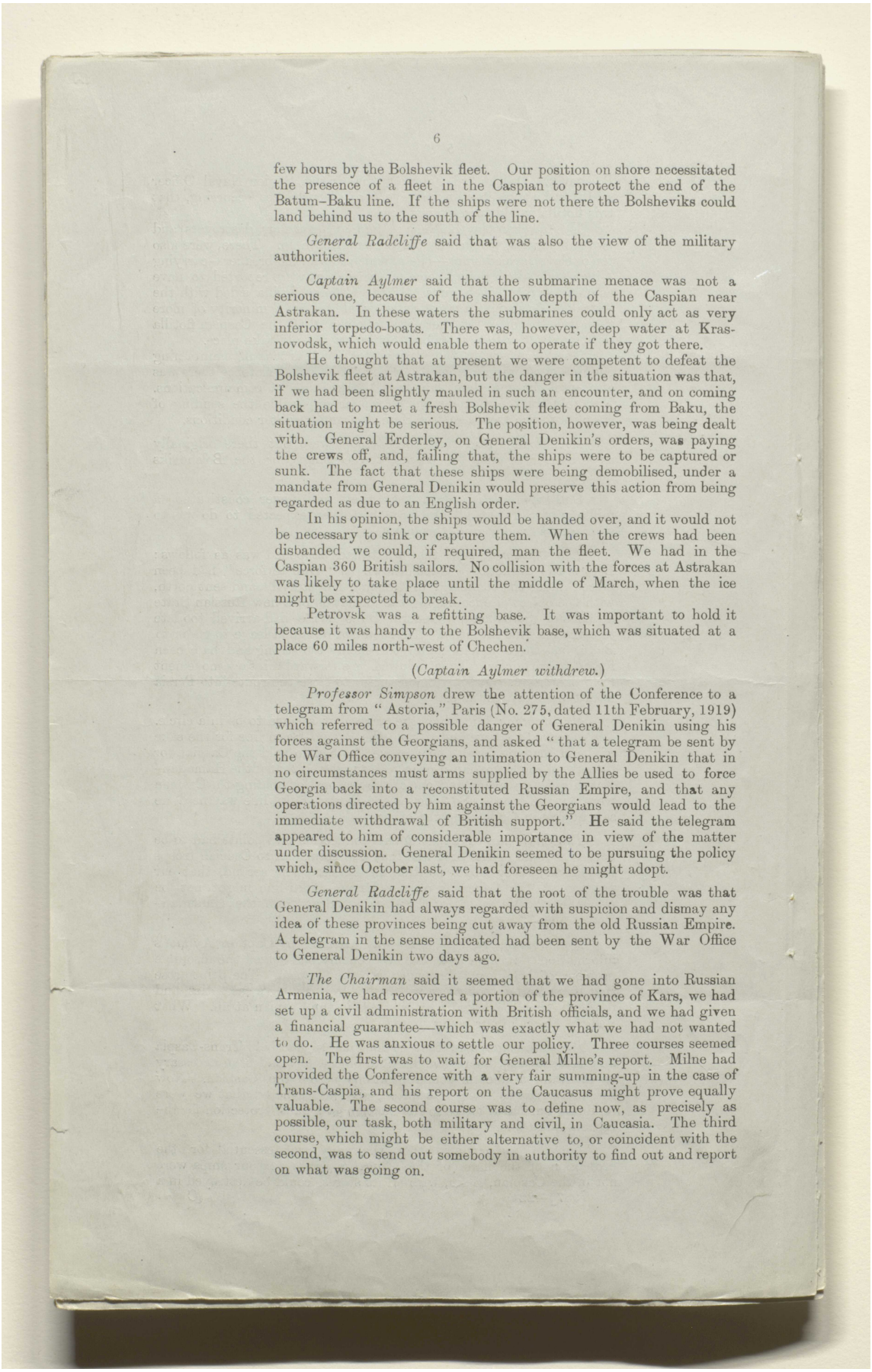



few hours by the Bolshevik fleet. Our position on shore necessitated the presence of a fleet in the Caspian to protect the end of the Batum–Baku line. If the ships were not there the Bolsheviks could land behind us to the south of the line.

*General Radcliffe* said that was also the view of the military authorities.

*Captain Aylmer* said that the submarine menace was not a serious one, because of the shallow depth of the Caspian near Astrakan. In these waters the submarines could only act as very inferior torpedo-boats. There was, however, deep water at Krasnovodsk, which would enable them to operate if they got there.

He thought that at present we were competent to defeat the Bolshevik fleet at Astrakan, but the danger in the situation was that, if we had been slightly mauled in such an encounter, and on coming back had to meet a fresh Bolshevik fleet coming from Baku, the situation might be serious. The position, however, was being dealt with. General Erderley, on General Denikin's orders, was paying the crews off, and, failing that, the ships were to be captured or sunk. The fact that these ships were being demobilised, under a mandate from General Denikin would preserve this action from being regarded as due to an English order.

In his opinion, the ships would be handed over, and it would not be necessary to sink or capture them. When the crews had been disbanded we could, if required, man the fleet. We had in the Caspian 360 British sailors. No collision with the forces at Astrakan was likely to take place until the middle of March, when the ice might be expected to break.

Petrovsk was a refitting base. It was important to hold it because it was handy to the Bolshevik base, which was situated at a place 60 miles north-west of Chechen.

(*Captain Aylmer withdrew.*)

*Professor Simpson* drew the attention of the Conference to a telegram from "Astoria," Paris (No. 275, dated 11th February, 1919) which referred to a possible danger of General Denikin using his forces against the Georgians, and asked "that a telegram be sent by the War Office conveying an intimation to General Denikin that in no circumstances must arms supplied by the Allies be used to force Georgia back into a reconstituted Russian Empire, and that any operations directed by him against the Georgians would lead to the immediate withdrawal of British support." He said the telegram appeared to him of considerable importance in view of the matter under discussion. General Denikin seemed to be pursuing the policy which, since October last, we had foreseen he might adopt.

*General Radcliffe* said that the root of the trouble was that General Denikin had always regarded with suspicion and dismay any idea of these provinces being cut away from the old Russian Empire. A telegram in the sense indicated had been sent by the War Office to General Denikin two days ago.

*The Chairman* said it seemed that we had gone into Russian Armenia, we had recovered a portion of the province of Kars, we had set up a civil administration with British officials, and we had given a financial guarantee—which was exactly what we had not wanted to do. He was anxious to settle our policy. Three courses seemed open. The first was to wait for General Milne's report. Milne had provided the Conference with a very fair summing-up in the case of Trans-Caspia, and his report on the Caucasus might prove equally valuable. The second course was to define now, as precisely as possible, our task, both military and civil, in Caucasia. The third course, which might be either alternative to, or coincident with the second, was to send out somebody in authority to find out and report on what was going on.



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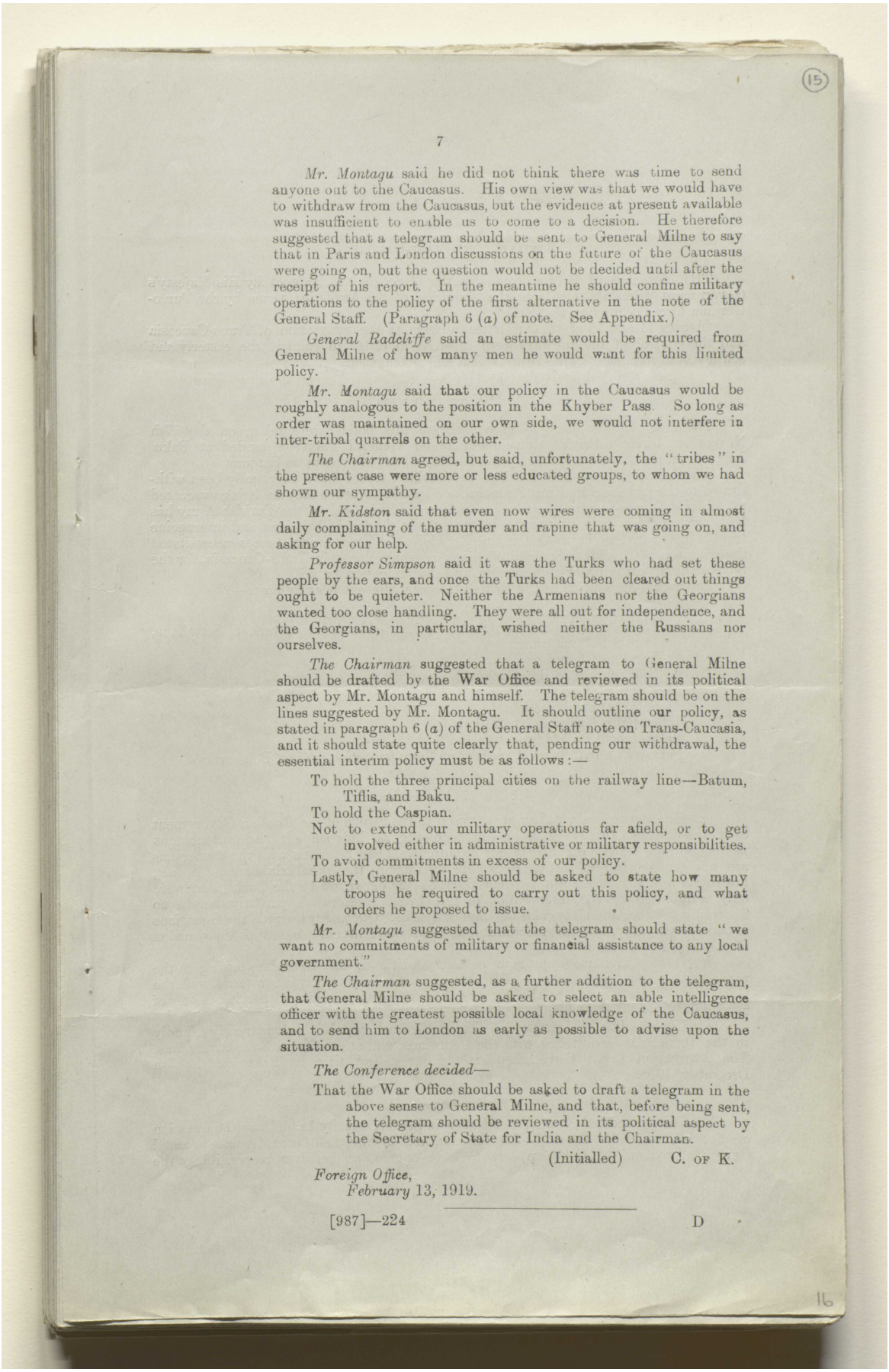

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*Mr. Montagu* said he did not think there was time to send anyone out to the Caucasus. His own view was that we would have to withdraw from the Caucasus, but the evidence at present available was insufficient to enable us to come to a decision. He therefore suggested that a telegram should be sent to General Milne to say that in Paris and London discussions on the future of the Caucasus were going on, but the question would not be decided until after the receipt of his report. In the meantime he should confine military operations to the policy of the first alternative in the note of the General Staff. (Paragraph 6 (*a*) of note. See Appendix.)

*General Radcliffe* said an estimate would be required from General Milne of how many men he would want for this limited policy.

*Mr. Montagu* said that our policy in the Caucasus would be roughly analogous to the position in the Khyber Pass. So long as order was maintained on our own side, we would not interfere in inter-tribal quarrels on the other.

*The Chairman* agreed, but said, unfortunately, the "tribes" in the present case were more or less educated groups, to whom we had shown our sympathy.

*Mr. Kidston* said that even now wires were coming in almost daily complaining of the murder and rapine that was going on, and asking for our help.

*Professor Simpson* said it was the Turks who had set these people by the ears, and once the Turks had been cleared out things ought to be quieter. Neither the Armenians nor the Georgians wanted too close handling. They were all out for independence, and the Georgians, in particular, wished neither the Russians nor ourselves.

*The Chairman* suggested that a telegram to General Milne should be drafted by the War Office and reviewed in its political aspect by Mr. Montagu and himself. The telegram should be on the lines suggested by Mr. Montagu. It should outline our policy, as stated in paragraph 6 (*a*) of the General Staff note on Trans-Caucasia, and it should state quite clearly that, pending our withdrawal, the essential interim policy must be as follows:—

To hold the three principal cities on the railway line—Batum, Tiflis, and Baku.

To hold the Caspian.

Not to extend our military operations far afield, or to get involved either in administrative or military responsibilities.

To avoid commitments in excess of our policy.

Lastly, General Milne should be asked to state how many troops he required to carry out this policy, and what orders he proposed to issue.

*Mr. Montagu* suggested that the telegram should state "we want no commitments of military or financial assistance to any local government."

*The Chairman* suggested, as a further addition to the telegram, that General Milne should be asked to select an able intelligence officer with the greatest possible local knowledge of the Caucasus, and to send him to London as early as possible to advise upon the situation.

*The Conference decided*—

That the War Office should be asked to draft a telegram in the above sense to General Milne, and that, before being sent, the telegram should be reviewed in its political aspect by the Secretary of State for India and the Chairman.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*February* 13, 1919.

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## APPENDIX.

### Situation in Trans-Caucasia.

THE despatch of British troops to the Caucasus was ordered by His Majesty's Government primarily to enforce the execution of the Armistice terms by the Turco-German forces occupying that area.

Clauses 11 and 15 of the Armistice relative to the evacuation of Trans-Caucasia and the control of the railways were inserted in order to combat the easterly and south-easterly spread of Pan-Turanianism and Bolshevism.

#### 1. *Military Situation.*

The first military steps to give effect to this policy were taken on the 17th November, when a British detachment under General Thomson landed at Baku followed on the 22nd December by the landing of British troops at Batoum.

After many protests and evasions the Turkish troops have eventually been withdrawn to the provinces of Kars, Ardahan, and Batoum, whence they are being evacuated to behind the pre-war frontier. This enforced withdrawal of the Turkish Army has been accompanied by looting and outrages against the local Christians, and internecine trouble between the Trans-Caucasian Republics. These circumstances necessitated the despatch of British troops and Missions to many places in Trans-Caucasia, for the purpose of restoring order and opening up communication by rail.

The actual disposition of the British troops at present is as follows :—*

At Batoum, 2 brigade headquarters and 2 battalions.
At Tiflis, 1 divisional headquarters, 1 brigade headquarters, 5 battalions, and 2 half battalions.
At Kars, half battalion.
At Nakhichevan, a detachment, } half battalion.
At Akhalkalaki. a detachment, }
At Balakhani, 1 battalion.
Tiflis–Baku Railway, 1 battalion.
Baku, 1 brigade headquarters and 3 battalions.
Petrovsk, 1 battalion (at request of Navy for action against Bolsheviks).

#### 2. *Political Situation.*

(*a.*) The Georgians are strongly opposed to the return of the Russian Government to Trans-Caucasia, are very intent on becoming an independent and autonomous people, and are frankly doubtful of our intentions. Their relations with the Armenians are not good owing to certain debatable territory in the Akhalkalaki area. In fact, hostilities actually broke out between them on the departure of the Turks, and were only terminated by the intervention of the British Mission. Apparently there is no ill-feeling between the Georgians and Azerbaijanlis. Our policy towards the Georgians is one of sympathy, but the recognition of their Government must await the decision of the Peace Conference.

(*b.*) The Armenians appear to be antagonistic to the Georgians owing to the territory in dispute, and the so-called Georgian treachery in coming to terms with the Germans. Their attitude to the Tartars, their hereditary religious enemies, is one of revenge.

(*c.*) The republic of Azerbaijan. This soi-disant republic is apparently friendly to the British, on good terms with the Georgians, and at enmity with the Armenians. The Azerbaijan Local Government met for the first time at Baku on the 7th December, 1918.

#### 3. *Finance.*

The British occupation of Trans-Caucasia has necessarily brought up the question of finance, which is causing the commanders in the field considerable anxiety. General Thomson at Baku appears to have opened on his own responsibility the

* Map.



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Russian State Bank in order to restart work and generally stabilise the situation at Baku. He appears, however, to have done this with certain misgivings, as he has on several occasions asked for a financial commission to be sent to Baku to study the position there. General Milne has also asked for a similar mission to examine the finance of Trans-Caucasia, as difficulties appear to be arising from the variety of currency in the different republics.*

The Treasury and the Foreign Office have been referred to on this matter, and as yet no steps have been taken.

### 4. *Economic.*

Owing to the British occupation of Baku and the railway, Batoum is now open, and sufficient oil has been freed for the partial working of the railway.†

As regards supplies, the Turkish advance which drove out the Armenians from the Erivan District, followed by their withdrawal, which was accompanied by looting and wanton destruction of grain stores, has resulted in a great shortage of corn. General Milne has asked for relief in the matter of foodstuffs.‡

### 5. *Policy.*

Our policy in the Caucasus, pending the decision of the Peace Conference, was communicated to General Milne in the C.I.G.S. telegram No. 72436 of the 11th December,§ in which it was stated that—

(*a*.) We should ensure that the Turks evacuate Trans-Caucasia.

(*b*.) We should ensure that the railway and pipe-line between the Black Sea and the Caspian should come under Allied control, and be placed at the disposal of the Allied authorities.

(*c*.) We desire to see strong and independent States in Georgia, Daghestan, and Russian Azerbaijan, but should take no action which would involve us in any continued obligations to the inhabitants.

(*a*) and (*b*) above may practically be considered as accomplished.

As regards (*c*) the application of the policy has been very difficult, but the Commanders concerned have so far kept within the limits laid down, except that Petrovsk has been occupied by General Thomson at the request of the Navy, in order to assist their operations against the Bolshevik flotilla in the Caspian. General Milne was given discretion in this matter.‖

It is true that General Thomson, in a report sent to the War Office, advocated what amounts to the assumption of a temporary protectorate over the whole of Trans-Caucasia south of the Vladikavkaz-Petrovsk Railway, but no steps have been taken to carry out this policy, and General Milne is abiding by his instructions (General Thomson's report ).¶

### 6. *Conclusions.*

Generally speaking, the situation at the present time may be summed up as follows :—

The military objects for which the expedition to the Caucasus was despatched have been to all intents and purposes attained, that is to say, the evacuation of the Turkish and German troops is nearly complete, and the Batoum–Baku railway is firmly

* Telegrams from Constantinople : 2 B 5626 of 1.2.19 ; 2 B 4321 of 7.1.19 ; 2 B 5210 of 24.1.19 ; 2 B 5335 of 28.1.19.
Telegrams from G.O.C., Mesopotamia : X 3960 of 20.11.18 ; X 3971 of 21.11.18 ; X 4383 of 10.12.18 ; X 4430 of 13.12.18 ; X 4516 of 18.12.18.
† Telegram from Constantinople : No. I 4664 of 31.1.19.
‡ Telegrams from G.O.C., Mesopotamia : X 3896 of 18.11.18 ; X 4050 of 25.11.18 ; X 4402 of 11.12.18 ; X 4483 of 16.12.18 ; X 4581 of 21.12.18.
To Admiral Webb : 63 of 2.12.18.
To Admiral Calthorpe : 201 of 21.12.18.
From Constantinople : I 4206 of 29.12.18 ; I 4245 of 2.1.19 ; 2 A 5646 of 1.2.19 ; 2 A 5093 of 22.1.19.
To Constantinople : 75017 of 6.2.19.
§ Telegram to Salonika : 72436 of 11.2.18.
‖ Telegram to Constantinople : 73552 of 7.1.19 ; 74441 of 24.1.19.
From Constantinople : S.C. 33 of 31.1.19 ; Letter from D.N.I., No. N.I.D./OL 341 dated 7.2.19.
¶ General Thomson's report on General Situation in the Caucasus.



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held, ensuring our line of communication to the Caspian, and thereby the maintenance of our naval supremacy on that sea. In addition to this, hostilities between the embryo States of Georgia and Armenia have been repressed, order has to a great extent been established, and railway communication restored throughout Trans-Caucasia. The accomplishment of these objects has necessitated a considerable dispersion of the British forces, and this has led to a request for further troops from General Milne.

The following alternative courses of action would now appear to present themselves, depending on the policy which His Majesty's Government may see fit to adopt :—

(*a.*) Confining ourselves to purely military action, and disclaiming all attempts to regulate the internal administration of the country, we should concentrate our forces for the immediate protection of the Batoum–Baku railway, withdrawing all detachments that are not essential for that purpose, except from Petrovsk, which the Navy require us to occupy. It must be realised that in this case there will be considerable risk of internal disorder, and even open hostilities breaking out between the rival States of the Caucasus.

In default of armed intervention it will then be for us to do our best to compose such differences by means of British Missions at the various seats of local Government, and be encouraging the development of trade gradually to induce the re-establishment of peace and prosperity.

(*b.*) We should definitely assume control of the administration of the various embryo States, including responsibility for finance, police, railways, &c., establishing for the time being what in fact would amount to a protectorate of Trans-Caucasia.

If (*a*) is adopted it is considered that with the troops now under orders to join him —which will give him nine British and ten Indian infantry battalions—General Milne will have sufficient forces to carry out the policy. Should it be decided, however, to adopt (*b*) the inevitable dispersion of troops thereby entailed would render further reinforcements necessary.

In view of those considerations and the urgent necessity of economising troops to meet the demands of demobilisation, the General Staff are in favour of reducing our commitments to the minimum and concentrating the available British forces for the immediate protection of the Batoum–Baku railway and of such places as Petrovsk, which are essential to our naval supremacy on the Caspian.

It is submitted that an early and definite decision should be taken on the question to obviate the danger of our being involved in matters of internal policy and administration from which it will be difficult ultimately to dissociate ourselves unless a clean cut be made forthwith.

(*c.*) There remains the possibility of immediately withdrawing our forces altogether from the Caucasus, but this course is open to the following objections :—

(i.) It will entail the abandonment of our naval control of the Caspian, and of our communications with Krasnovodsk.

(ii.) It will prevent the supply of General Marshall's troops in North-west Persia, which are at present fed from Enzeli under General Milne's arrangements.

(iii.) It will react most unfavourably on General Denikin's forces and encourage the growth of Bolshevism in Georgia and other districts of the Caucasus, which are already showing a tendency in that direction.

*General Staff, February* 12, 1919.

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**I.D.C.E., 7th Minutes.**

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Conference held at the Foreign Office on Monday, February* 17, 1919, *at* 5 P.M.

Present :

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.
Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.
Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.
Captain COODE, Director of Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.
Professor SIMPSON, Foreign Office.
Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.
Mr. J. B. CROSLAND, Director of Finance, War Office.
Mr. A. E. WIDDOWS, C.B., War Office.
Brigadier-General W. M. St. G. KIRKE, War Office.
Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, War Office.
Mr. S. BALDWIN, M.P., Financial Secretary to the Treasury.
Mr. A. P. WATERFIELD, Treasury.
Mr. S. D. WALEY, Treasury.
Lieutenant-Colonel E. V. GABRIEL, Occupied Enemy Territory Administration, Palestine.

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

1. The Conference had before them a Minute on the "Financial Situation in Mesopotamia and Palestine," by Mr. G. J Kidston, Foreign Office, dated the 10th February, 1919; a Minute on the same subject by Mr. A. P. Waterfield, Treasury, dated the 17th February, 1919,* and a note on the financial situation in the Caucasus by the Treasury, dated the 17th February, 1919.†

*The Chairman* said that troublesome questions had arisen in connection with the finance of some of the areas occupied by us in the Middle East, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was anxious that the question should be threshed out as early as possible. The difficulty to be met, the Chancellor had pointed out, was twofold: first, as to the provision of funds to meet the various liabilities in the occupied enemy territories after the end of this financial year, and, second, as to the establishment of effective local financial control. The matter was urgent, because Parliament would have to be asked to provide funds under a separate vote next year, and for this purpose an estimate would have to be prepared and submitted

* Appendix I. † Appendix II.







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to the Treasury at the earliest possible moment. The areas in which financial problems had arisen were Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria, and the Caucasus. Should there be time, the financial position in Persia might also be dealt with at this meeting.

Mesopotamia.

2. *Mr. Baldwin* said that the present arrangement for financial control in Mesopotamia appeared to the Treasury to be satisfactory. But he regarded with some alarm the proposal by the military authorities to incur expenditure on houses in the occupied territory, and also a request by them that a capital expenditure on railways amounting roughly to 312,000*l.*, should be sanctioned. It was essential to know what the limitations were going to be. All expenditure to be incurred in the future would have to be defended, and, he thought, unless it was definitely military expenditure it would have to come under the Foreign Office Vote after the 31st March.

*Mr. Crosland* said as long as operations had been going on there was virtually no external money control of local expenditure by the military commanders. But under the new conditions this system did not seem likely to prove satisfactory, and, in the opinion of the War Office financial authorities, future civil expenditure should be controlled by some officer appointed for that purpose and not by the military authorities.

*Mr. Montagu* said the present expenditure was under the Officer Commanding the Forces in Mesopotamia, and, therefore, it was War Office expenditure. Until the future of Mesopotamia had been decided at the Peace Conference, he considered we had no right to spend a penny except on purely military matters; or to embark on any schemes that involved a civil budget. Before the Conference had come to its decision, we were no more justified in incurring civil expenditure in Mesopotamia than we would be in putting our own civil law into force there. To do so would be regarded as jumping the position.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said there was a good deal of what might be regarded as civil expenditure already going on. Money was being spent on irrigation, on agriculture, and on grants to schools.

In answer to a question from the Chairman he added that the revenues of Mesopotamia went into the British Treasury by an adjustment made once a year with the India Office. The revenues more than sufficed to pay the expenses of the civil administration.

*Mr. Waterfield* said the Treasury had no complaints regarding current expenditure, but they had been asked to sanction capital expenditure on railways, which was a different matter.

*Mr. Crosland* said he did not think the present expenditure on railways could any longer be regarded as purely military. There was no question as to the work already done; but the proposals for the period after the 1st April appeared to go further than anything that could be called a War Office matter.

*The Chairman* said that the railways in Mesopotamia—the line up the Tigris to Amara, the Kut–Baghdad line, the extension beyond Baghdad, and the Euphrates line—were all military. He asked if it was not the fact that the problem before the Conference was to bridge the period between the 1st April and some date about the end of July when the Peace Conference would fix the responsibility for the future administration of Mesopotamia.

*Mr. Crosland* said the question at issue between military and civil funds had already been largely settled in other areas. If there



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were no civil expenditure, well and good; but if any were undertaken, he thought it should not come under the War Office any more than did similar expenditure in East Africa and Palestine.

*Mr. Waterfield* said the Treasury had always assumed that railway expenditure should be met from a civil vote which, in the present instance, would be Foreign Office funds

*Mr. Montagu* said before the 1st April expenditure was covered, after that date it was not, but the responsibility for it remained the same, and any civil expenditure after the 1st April must be conducted by the same authority. The 312,000*l.* should be therefore a War Office vote. He suggested there should be no expenditure unless it could come under the "military expenditure" of the Army of Occupation in the widest sense of the term. If the War Office wanted something for the Army of Occupation, then it should be paid for by the War Office. If, on the other hand, the War Office did not want it, the expenditure should not be sanctioned.

*Mr. Crosland* said he feared that a good deal of capital and current expenditure was being carried out for purposes of future development, which could hardly be called military, and it would be difficult to bring it under the head of requirements of the Army of Occupation. The War Office wished the control of civil expenditure to be taken over by the Foreign Office. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, when Secretary of State for India, had told the War Office he thought that civil expenditure was going on in Mesopotamia under a military guise.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that civil expenditure was checked by the Government of India. In reply to a question from the Chairman he added that the surplus revenue had been paid to the Treasury.

*Mr. Baldwin* said he would like to see all capital expenditure held up until we knew what was to happen to the country.

*The Chairman* said it was generally accepted that when a country was taken over such development expenditure as Mr. Crosland had referred to was a necessary consequence. Things could not be permitted to come to a standstill or to rust. What was needed was not to stop spending, but to see that none of it was wasteful. Nor, in his opinion, could the expenditure legitimately come under the Foreign Office Vote, for the civil administration was not under the Foreign Office. It was being carried on temporarily by the India Office. It seemed to him that, provided a caution were issued to the authorities in Mesopotamia to be extremely careful in embarking on any civil expenditure from the 1st April up to July, the present scheme could be continued until the Peace Conference had reached their decision.

*The Conference decided*—

That a telegram should be sent by the War Office to the authorities in Mesopotamia asking them to be extremely cautious about embarking on civil expenditure between the dates of the 1st April and the end of July, 1919, and containing a special query as to whether the Mesopotamian railways were now regarded as civil or military.

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Palestine and Syria.

3. *The Chairman* said that the Treasury Minute (Appendix I) dealt with the subject of Palestine under the four headings of O.E.T.A. South, O.E.T.A. East, O.E.T.A. West, and O.E.T.A. North. The financial position seemed to vary from district to district. The Southern Area was under General Allenby's direct control, the Eastern was administered through an Arab, with a M. Moulin as





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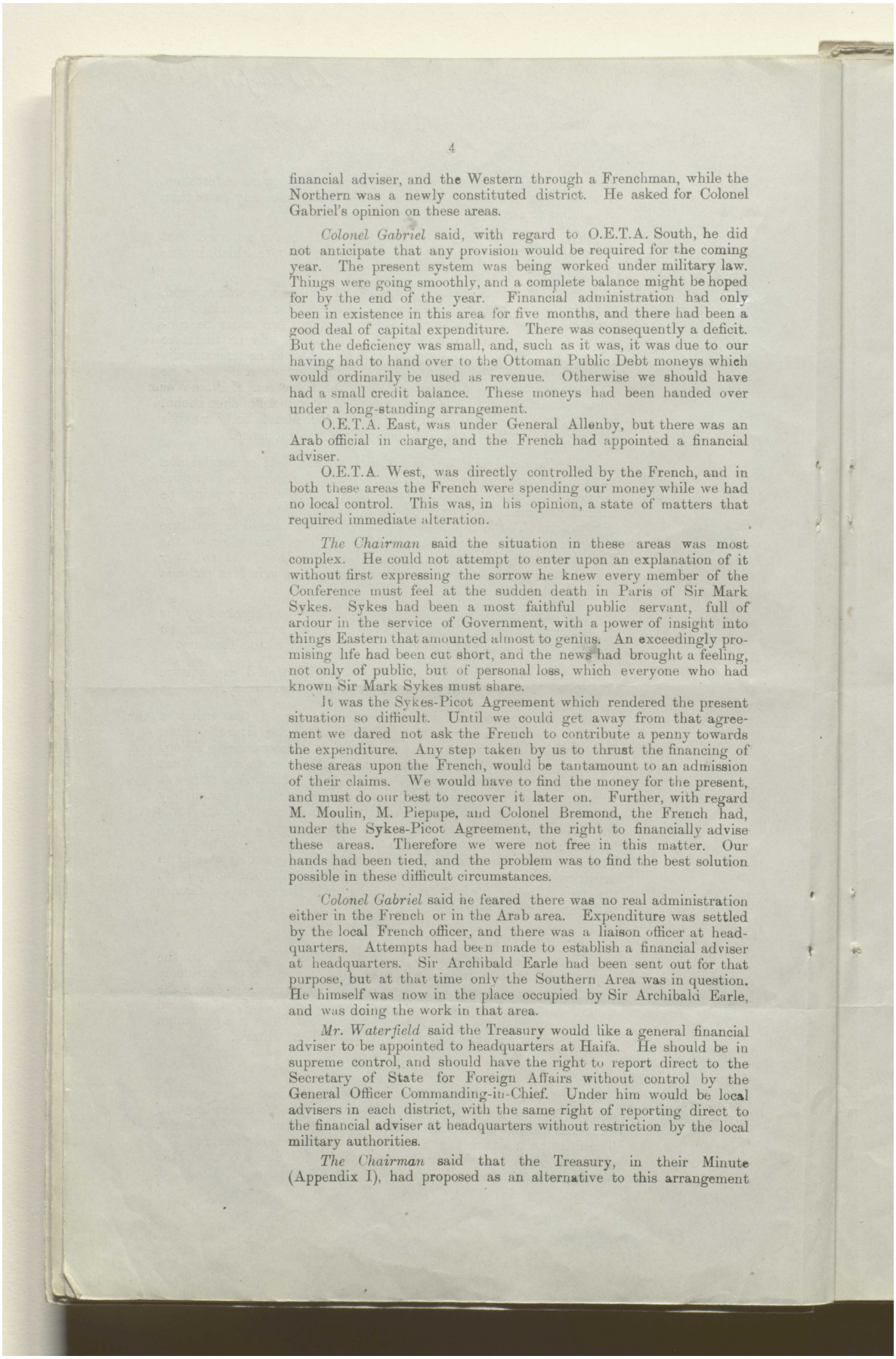



financial adviser, and the Western through a Frenchman, while the Northern was a newly constituted district. He asked for Colonel Gabriel's opinion on these areas.

*Colonel Gabriel* said, with regard to O.E.T.A. South, he did not anticipate that any provision would be required for the coming year. The present system was being worked under military law. Things were going smoothly, and a complete balance might be hoped for by the end of the year. Financial administration had only been in existence in this area for five months, and there had been a good deal of capital expenditure. There was consequently a deficit. But the deficiency was small, and, such as it was, it was due to our having had to hand over to the Ottoman Public Debt moneys which would ordinarily be used as revenue. Otherwise we should have had a small credit balance. These moneys had been handed over under a long-standing arrangement.

O.E.T.A. East, was under General Allenby, but there was an Arab official in charge, and the French had appointed a financial adviser.

O.E.T.A. West, was directly controlled by the French, and in both these areas the French were spending our money while we had no local control. This was, in his opinion, a state of matters that required immediate alteration.

*The Chairman* said the situation in these areas was most complex. He could not attempt to enter upon an explanation of it without first expressing the sorrow he knew every member of the Conference must feel at the sudden death in Paris of Sir Mark Sykes. Sykes had been a most faithful public servant, full of ardour in the service of Government, with a power of insight into things Eastern that amounted almost to genius. An exceedingly promising life had been cut short, and the news had brought a feeling, not only of public, but of personal loss, which everyone who had known Sir Mark Sykes must share.

It was the Sykes-Picot Agreement which rendered the present situation so difficult. Until we could get away from that agreement we dared not ask the French to contribute a penny towards the expenditure. Any step taken by us to thrust the financing of these areas upon the French, would be tantamount to an admission of their claims. We would have to find the money for the present, and must do our best to recover it later on. Further, with regard M. Moulin, M. Piepape, and Colonel Bremond, the French had, under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the right to financially advise these areas. Therefore we were not free in this matter. Our hands had been tied, and the problem was to find the best solution possible in these difficult circumstances.

*Colonel Gabriel* said he feared there was no real administration either in the French or in the Arab area. Expenditure was settled by the local French officer, and there was a liaison officer at headquarters. Attempts had been made to establish a financial adviser at headquarters. Sir Archibald Earle had been sent out for that purpose, but at that time only the Southern Area was in question. He himself was now in the place occupied by Sir Archibald Earle, and was doing the work in that area.

*Mr. Waterfield* said the Treasury would like a general financial adviser to be appointed to headquarters at Haifa. He should be in supreme control, and should have the right to report direct to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs without control by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief. Under him would be local advisers in each district, with the same right of reporting direct to the financial adviser at headquarters without restriction by the local military authorities.

*The Chairman* said that the Treasury, in their Minute (Appendix I), had proposed as an alternative to this arrangement



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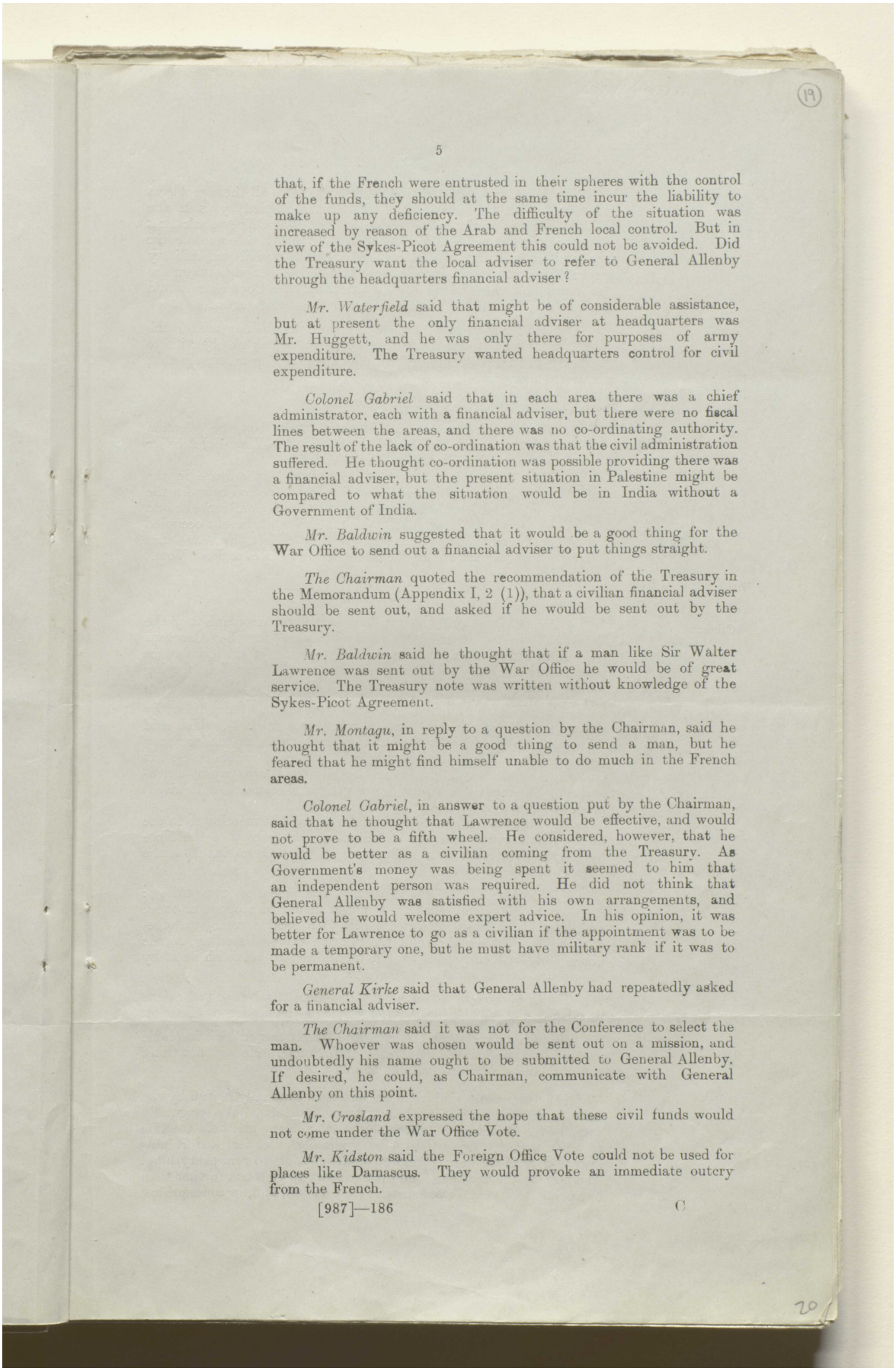

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that, if the French were entrusted in their spheres with the control of the funds, they should at the same time incur the liability to make up any deficiency. The difficulty of the situation was increased by reason of the Arab and French local control. But in view of the Sykes-Picot Agreement this could not be avoided. Did the Treasury want the local adviser to refer to General Allenby through the headquarters financial adviser?

*Mr. Waterfield* said that might be of considerable assistance, but at present the only financial adviser at headquarters was Mr. Huggett, and he was only there for purposes of army expenditure. The Treasury wanted headquarters control for civil expenditure.

*Colonel Gabriel* said that in each area there was a chief administrator, each with a financial adviser, but there were no fiscal lines between the areas, and there was no co-ordinating authority. The result of the lack of co-ordination was that the civil administration suffered. He thought co-ordination was possible providing there was a financial adviser, but the present situation in Palestine might be compared to what the situation would be in India without a Government of India.

*Mr. Baldwin* suggested that it would be a good thing for the War Office to send out a financial adviser to put things straight.

*The Chairman* quoted the recommendation of the Treasury in the Memorandum (Appendix I, 2 (1)), that a civilian financial adviser should be sent out, and asked if he would be sent out by the Treasury.

*Mr. Baldwin* said he thought that if a man like Sir Walter Lawrence was sent out by the War Office he would be of great service. The Treasury note was written without knowledge of the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

*Mr. Montagu*, in reply to a question by the Chairman, said he thought that it might be a good thing to send a man, but he feared that he might find himself unable to do much in the French areas.

*Colonel Gabriel*, in answer to a question put by the Chairman, said that he thought that Lawrence would be effective, and would not prove to be a fifth wheel. He considered, however, that he would be better as a civilian coming from the Treasury. As Government's money was being spent it seemed to him that an independent person was required. He did not think that General Allenby was satisfied with his own arrangements, and believed he would welcome expert advice. In his opinion, it was better for Lawrence to go as a civilian if the appointment was to be made a temporary one, but he must have military rank if it was to be permanent.

*General Kirke* said that General Allenby had repeatedly asked for a financial adviser.

*The Chairman* said it was not for the Conference to select the man. Whoever was chosen would be sent out on a mission, and undoubtedly his name ought to be submitted to General Allenby. If desired, he could, as Chairman, communicate with General Allenby on this point.

*Mr. Crosland* expressed the hope that these civil funds would not come under the War Office Vote.

*Mr. Kidston* said the Foreign Office Vote could not be used for places like Damascus. They would provoke an immediate outcry from the French.





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*Mr. Montagu* suggested that, in order to solve all these problems connected with the financing of the areas occupied by us in the Middle East, it would be advisable for the War Office to ask for a vote for the "Eastern Army of Occupation." Such a vote would cover the present difficulty of distinguishing between civil and military expenditure, and would enable us to bridge the period between the 1st April and the end of July, when the Peace Conference would have finally decided the responsibility for the various areas.

*Colonel Gribbon* said that, with regard to the new area in the north, so long as it was defined in detail there was no objection to its being financed by the French. At present expenditure in that area was in abeyance.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That, subject to General Allenby's approval of the selection made, a civilian should be appointed as Financial Adviser at headquarters to General Allenby.
2. That, in order to cover all necessary expenditure in the countries concerned and to bridge the period between the 1st April and the date when the Peace Conference should decide the responsibility for the areas at present occupied by our military forces in the Middle East, the War Office should ask for an "Eastern Army of Occupation" Vote.

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Caucasus.

4. *Mr. Montagu* said that, with reference to paragraph 2 of the Treasury Minute on the financial situation in the Caucasus (Appendix II), it appeared from the last meeting of the Conference that it was not only the Bolsheviks who were engaged in forging rouble notes.

*The Chairman* said that point had been clearly brought out by a caustic paragraph in the same Minute (paragraph 4), which said "the solution adopted by the military authorities, as the Treasury now learn for the first time, is the manufacture of rouble notes. It is not quite clear whether these are forged promises to pay by a non-existent Russian Government, or worthless (because unauthorised) promises to pay by His Majesty's Government."

The information had been obtained at the last meeting from the military authorities, and was contained in paragraph 3 of the Note by the General Staff on the situation in Trans-Caucasia, dated the 12th February, 1919.

*Mr. Montagu* said the Treasury recommended two things: (1) that the manufacture of these notes should be stopped at once; and, (2) that in future all interference with local currency arrangements should be avoided, and the relative value of sterling, rouble notes, and local currencies should be allowed to establish itself by the natural law of supply and demand.

*The Chairman* said that he thought more than these two points was necessary. A financial adviser seemed to be needed on the spot.

*Mr. Waley* said that the existing difficulties would be insoluble without heavy financial assistance from home. He did not think that a financial adviser would be of much use.

*The Chairman* said that we had been gradually driven by the force of circumstances into our present position. We originally went to the Caucasus in order to expel the enemy and hold the line to the Caspian. Operations were gradually extended, and it now appeared that we were running, or attempting to run, everything. The men on the spot had found it necessary to go much further than our policy had ever intended that they should, and, in consequence



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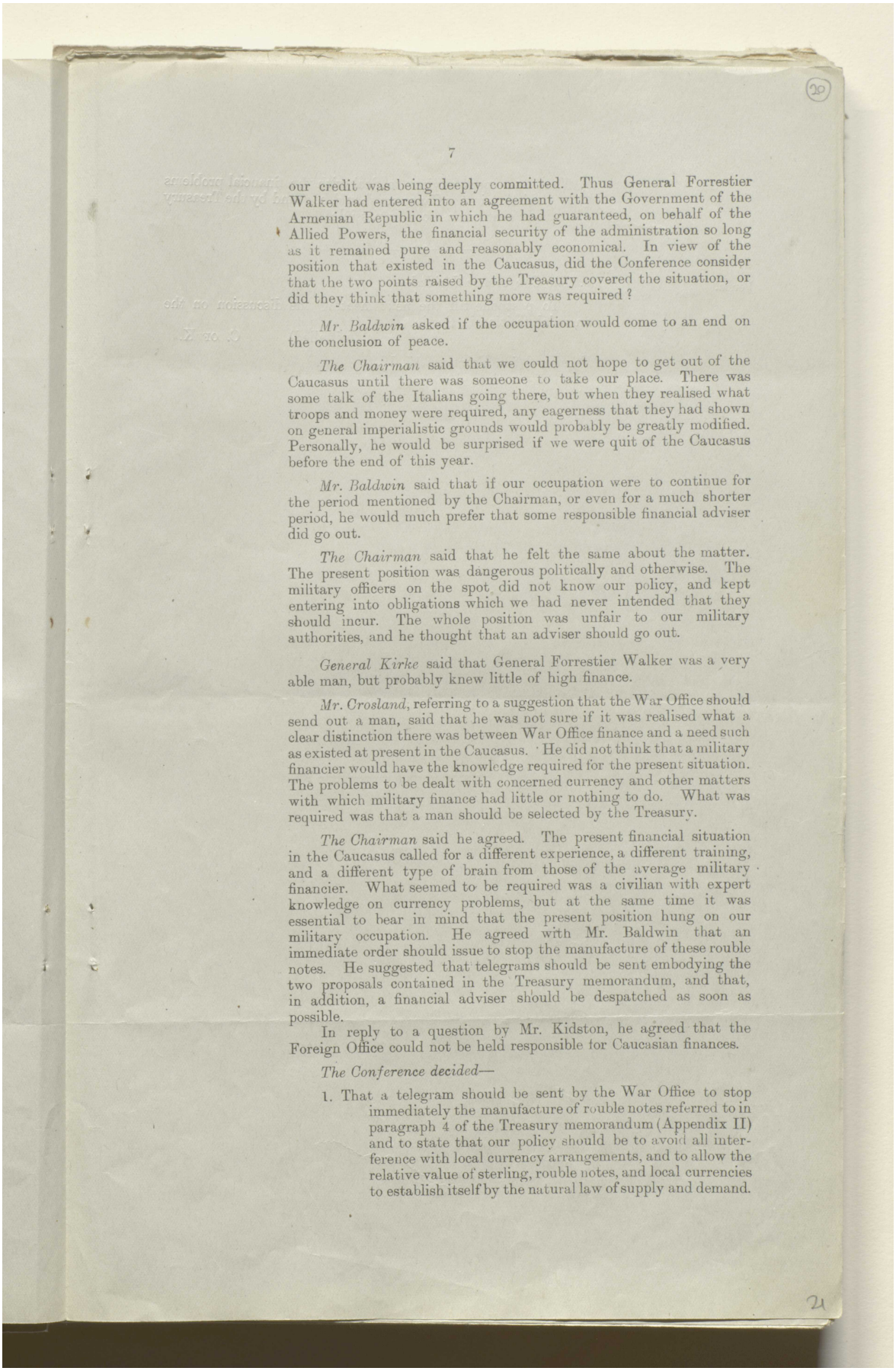



our credit was being deeply committed. Thus General Forrestier Walker had entered into an agreement with the Government of the Armenian Republic in which he had guaranteed, on behalf of the Allied Powers, the financial security of the administration so long as it remained pure and reasonably economical. In view of the position that existed in the Caucasus, did the Conference consider that the two points raised by the Treasury covered the situation, or did they think that something more was required?

*Mr. Baldwin* asked if the occupation would come to an end on the conclusion of peace.

*The Chairman* said that we could not hope to get out of the Caucasus until there was someone to take our place. There was some talk of the Italians going there, but when they realised what troops and money were required, any eagerness that they had shown on general imperialistic grounds would probably be greatly modified. Personally, he would be surprised if we were quit of the Caucasus before the end of this year.

*Mr. Baldwin* said that if our occupation were to continue for the period mentioned by the Chairman, or even for a much shorter period, he would much prefer that some responsible financial adviser did go out.

*The Chairman* said that he felt the same about the matter. The present position was dangerous politically and otherwise. The military officers on the spot did not know our policy, and kept entering into obligations which we had never intended that they should incur. The whole position was unfair to our military authorities, and he thought that an adviser should go out.

*General Kirke* said that General Forrestier Walker was a very able man, but probably knew little of high finance.

*Mr. Crosland*, referring to a suggestion that the War Office should send out a man, said that he was not sure if it was realised what a clear distinction there was between War Office finance and a need such as existed at present in the Caucasus. He did not think that a military financier would have the knowledge required for the present situation. The problems to be dealt with concerned currency and other matters with which military finance had little or nothing to do. What was required was that a man should be selected by the Treasury.

*The Chairman* said he agreed. The present financial situation in the Caucasus called for a different experience, a different training, and a different type of brain from those of the average military financier. What seemed to be required was a civilian with expert knowledge on currency problems, but at the same time it was essential to bear in mind that the present position hung on our military occupation. He agreed with Mr. Baldwin that an immediate order should issue to stop the manufacture of these rouble notes. He suggested that telegrams should be sent embodying the two proposals contained in the Treasury memorandum, and that, in addition, a financial adviser should be despatched as soon as possible.

In reply to a question by Mr. Kidston, he agreed that the Foreign Office could not be held responsible for Caucasian finances.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That a telegram should be sent by the War Office to stop immediately the manufacture of rouble notes referred to in paragraph 4 of the Treasury memorandum (Appendix II) and to state that our policy should be to avoid all interference with local currency arrangements, and to allow the relative value of sterling, rouble notes, and local currencies to establish itself by the natural law of supply and demand.



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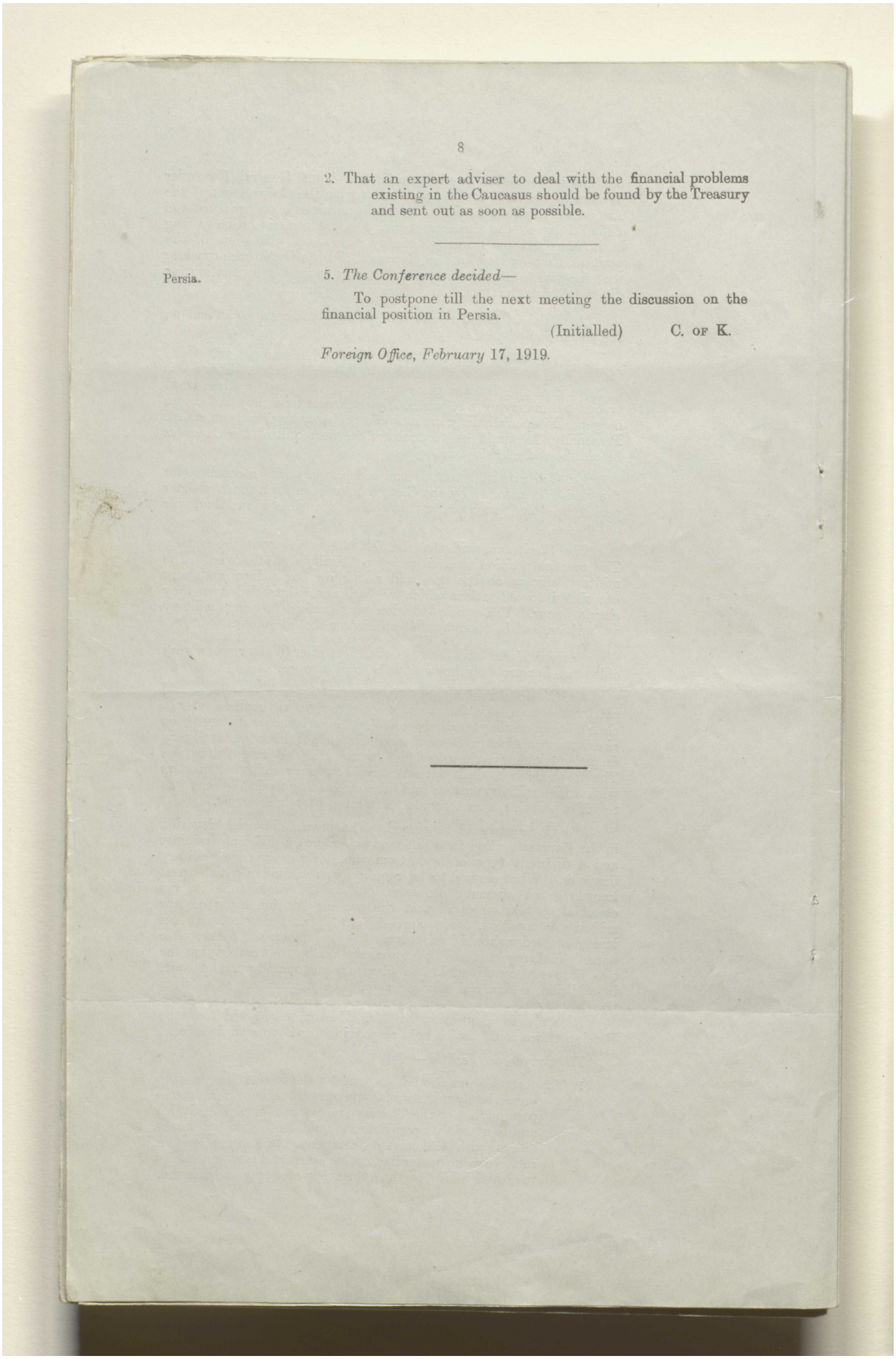

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2. That an expert adviser to deal with the financial problems existing in the Caucasus should be found by the Treasury and sent out as soon as possible.

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Persia.

5. *The Conference decided*—

To postpone till the next meeting the discussion on the financial position in Persia.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office, February* 17, 1919.

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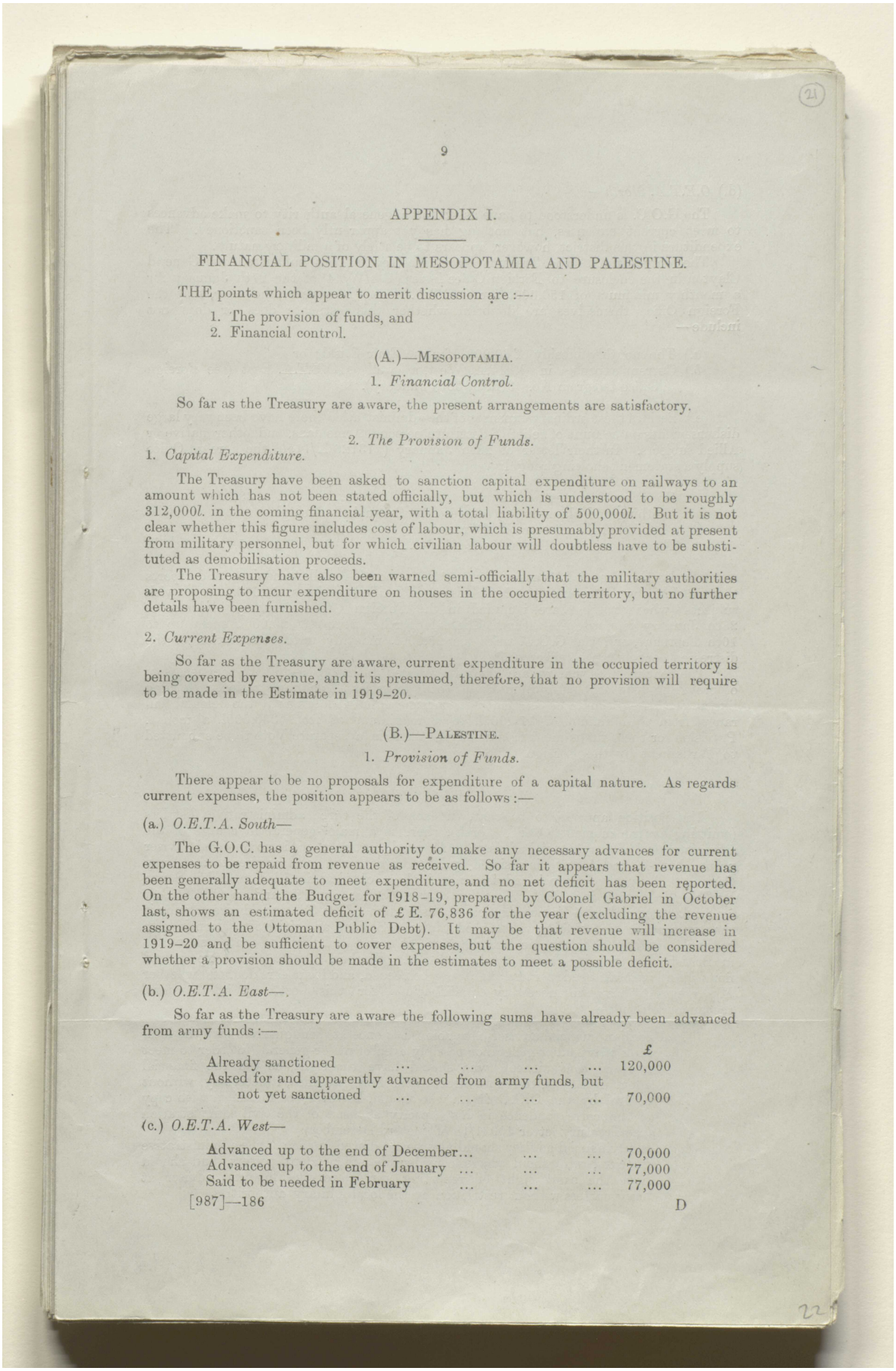



## APPENDIX I.

### FINANCIAL POSITION IN MESOPOTAMIA AND PALESTINE.

THE points which appear to merit discussion are :—

1. The provision of funds, and
2. Financial control.

(A.)—MESOPOTAMIA.

1. *Financial Control.*

So far as the Treasury are aware, the present arrangements are satisfactory.

2. *The Provision of Funds.*

1. *Capital Expenditure.*

The Treasury have been asked to sanction capital expenditure on railways to an amount which has not been stated officially, but which is understood to be roughly 312,000*l.* in the coming financial year, with a total liability of 500,000*l.* But it is not clear whether this figure includes cost of labour, which is presumably provided at present from military personnel, but for which civilian labour will doubtless have to be substituted as demobilisation proceeds.

The Treasury have also been warned semi-officially that the military authorities are proposing to incur expenditure on houses in the occupied territory, but no further details have been furnished.

2. *Current Expenses.*

So far as the Treasury are aware, current expenditure in the occupied territory is being covered by revenue, and it is presumed, therefore, that no provision will require to be made in the Estimate in 1919–20.

(B.)—PALESTINE.

1. *Provision of Funds.*

There appear to be no proposals for expenditure of a capital nature. As regards current expenses, the position appears to be as follows :—

(a.) *O.E.T.A. South*—

The G.O.C. has a general authority to make any necessary advances for current expenses to be repaid from revenue as received. So far it appears that revenue has been generally adequate to meet expenditure, and no net deficit has been reported. On the other hand the Budget for 1918–19, prepared by Colonel Gabriel in October last, shows an estimated deficit of £E. 76,836 for the year (excluding the revenue assigned to the Ottoman Public Debt). It may be that revenue will increase in 1919–20 and be sufficient to cover expenses, but the question should be considered whether a provision should be made in the estimates to meet a possible deficit.

(b.) *O.E.T.A. East*—.

So far as the Treasury are aware the following sums have already been advanced from army funds :—

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Already sanctioned ... ... ... ... | 120,000 |
| Asked for and apparently advanced from army funds, but not yet sanctioned ... ... ... ... | 70,000 |

(c.) *O.E.T.A. West*—

| | |
|---|---|
| Advanced up to the end of December... ... ... | 70,000 |
| Advanced up to the end of January ... ... ... | 77,000 |
| Said to be needed in February ... ... ... | 77,000 |







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(d.) *O.E.T.A. North*—

The G.O.C. is understood to have asked for a general authority to make advances to meet current expenses, but nothing has yet apparently been sanctioned. The expenditure in this district, however, appears to be solely of a military nature.

The only estimate the Treasury have received is that submitted by General Clayton in the enclosure to Foreign Office letter (114/W/44) of the 27th January for a monthly minimum of 150,000*l.* for O.E.T.A. East. It appears, however, that the Foreign Office themselves are doubtful whether this estimate does or does not include—

(*a.*) The monthly subsidy of 60,000*l.* for the Emir Feisal; or
(*b.*) Current expenses in O.E.T.A. West, as well as O.E.T.A. East (see Foreign Office telegram No. 43 R. of 30th January).

(e.) Besides these ordinary expenses of the administration there have been very large disbursements on account of relief of destitute persons, Armenians, and other native or Allied subjects. In their letter of 28th January (213126/X/1150) the Foreign Office supply a statement showing roughly—

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Spent up to the end of January ... ... ... | 33,000 |
| Clothing and blankets for refugees at Barquabah (? single disbursement or monthly recurrent) ... ... | 48,000 |
| For Armenians at Damascus, &c. ... ... | 25,000 a month. |

Besides this the G.O.C. asked for 1,000*l.* a month for all Armenians, and reports that in January he spent 3,000*l.* for distressed Allied subjects, 24,000*l.* for Jewish subjects (whether these are included in the Foreign Office summary in letter of 28th January is not quite clear). There is further reported 25,000*l.* spent up to 10th February, and the G.O.C. asks for 25,000*l.* monthly until repatriation of the distressed persons can be effected.

The conclusion is that we are likely to be faced during 1919–20 with the necessity of providing very large sums from Civil Votes to assist this administration. Nothing like an accurate estimate has so far been furnished, but it looks as if the demand will range from a minimum of 175,000*l.* to a maximum of from 330,000*l.* a month. Provision for these funds must presumably be made in a separate Vote to be submitted to Parliament by the Foreign Office.

2. *Financial Control.*

The position appears to be that, in each of the three administrative districts (omitting for the moment O.E.T. North), there is a major-general in charge of the administration with a financial adviser. At headquarters there is no financial adviser proper, but General Allenby is assisted by Mr. Huggett, the local adviser to the Army Council. The post of financial adviser in the three districts is filled in O.E.T. South by Colonel Gabriel, in O.E.T. West by certain French experts, and in O.E.T. East by an Arab official with French experts to assist him. The Treasury desire to submit that this is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. So long as British funds continue to be liable for any deficiency in local revenues, it is essential that the control should be in British, and not in French or Arab hands. Further, a strong and experienced financial adviser at headquarters appears to be needed, and it appears doubtful whether Mr. Huggett has the necessary qualifications for this post. It is, therefore, recommended that—

(1.) A civilian financial adviser be appointed at once at headquarters with the local rank of brigadier-general or possibly even of major-general (in order to meet military convenience), who should have the right, as did the financial agent in Egypt, to report direct to the Foreign Office, if necessary, without control by the G.O.C. in C., who should, however, be furnished with copy of the correspondence in his capacity as head of the civil administration (see Treasury letter 40931/18 of the 3rd December).
(2.) A local financial adviser should also be appointed in each of the administrative districts, who should have considerable independent powers, and should have the same right of reporting direct to the financial adviser at headquarters without restriction by the local military authorities.



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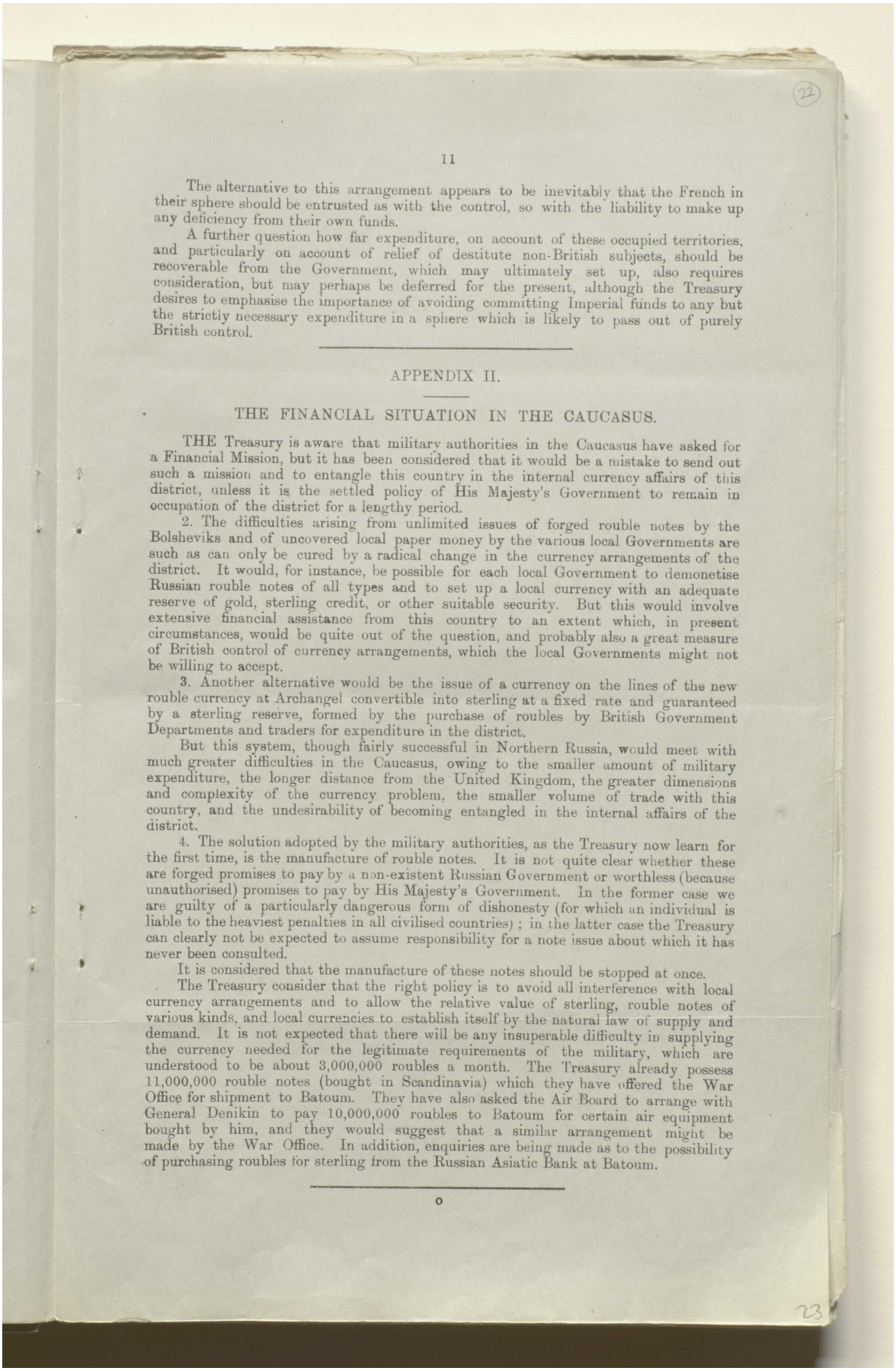



The alternative to this arrangement appears to be inevitably that the French in their sphere should be entrusted as with the control, so with the liability to make up any deficiency from their own funds.

A further question how far expenditure, on account of these occupied territories, and particularly on account of relief of destitute non-British subjects, should be recoverable from the Government, which may ultimately set up, also requires consideration, but may perhaps be deferred for the present, although the Treasury desires to emphasise the importance of avoiding committing Imperial funds to any but the strictly necessary expenditure in a sphere which is likely to pass out of purely British control.

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## APPENDIX II.

## THE FINANCIAL SITUATION IN THE CAUCASUS.

THE Treasury is aware that military authorities in the Caucasus have asked for a Financial Mission, but it has been considered that it would be a mistake to send out such a mission and to entangle this country in the internal currency affairs of this district, unless it is the settled policy of His Majesty's Government to remain in occupation of the district for a lengthy period.

2. The difficulties arising from unlimited issues of forged rouble notes by the Bolsheviks and of uncovered local paper money by the various local Governments are such as can only be cured by a radical change in the currency arrangements of the district. It would, for instance, be possible for each local Government to demonetise Russian rouble notes of all types and to set up a local currency with an adequate reserve of gold, sterling credit, or other suitable security. But this would involve extensive financial assistance from this country to an extent which, in present circumstances, would be quite out of the question, and probably also a great measure of British control of currency arrangements, which the local Governments might not be willing to accept.

3. Another alternative would be the issue of a currency on the lines of the new rouble currency at Archangel convertible into sterling at a fixed rate and guaranteed by a sterling reserve, formed by the purchase of roubles by British Government Departments and traders for expenditure in the district.

But this system, though fairly successful in Northern Russia, would meet with much greater difficulties in the Caucasus, owing to the smaller amount of military expenditure, the longer distance from the United Kingdom, the greater dimensions and complexity of the currency problem, the smaller volume of trade with this country, and the undesirability of becoming entangled in the internal affairs of the district.

4. The solution adopted by the military authorities, as the Treasury now learn for the first time, is the manufacture of rouble notes. It is not quite clear whether these are forged promises to pay by a non-existent Russian Government or worthless (because unauthorised) promises to pay by His Majesty's Government. In the former case we are guilty of a particularly dangerous form of dishonesty (for which an individual is liable to the heaviest penalties in all civilised countries); in the latter case the Treasury can clearly not be expected to assume responsibility for a note issue about which it has never been consulted.

It is considered that the manufacture of these notes should be stopped at once.

The Treasury consider that the right policy is to avoid all interference with local currency arrangements and to allow the relative value of sterling, rouble notes of various kinds, and local currencies to establish itself by the natural law of supply and demand. It is not expected that there will be any insuperable difficulty in supplying the currency needed for the legitimate requirements of the military, which are understood to be about 3,000,000 roubles a month. The Treasury already possess 11,000,000 rouble notes (bought in Scandinavia) which they have offered the War Office for shipment to Batoum. They have also asked the Air Board to arrange with General Denikin to pay 10,000,000 roubles to Batoum for certain air equipment bought by him, and they would suggest that a similar arrangement might be made by the War Office. In addition, enquiries are being made as to the possibility of purchasing roubles for sterling from the Russian Asiatic Bank at Batoum.

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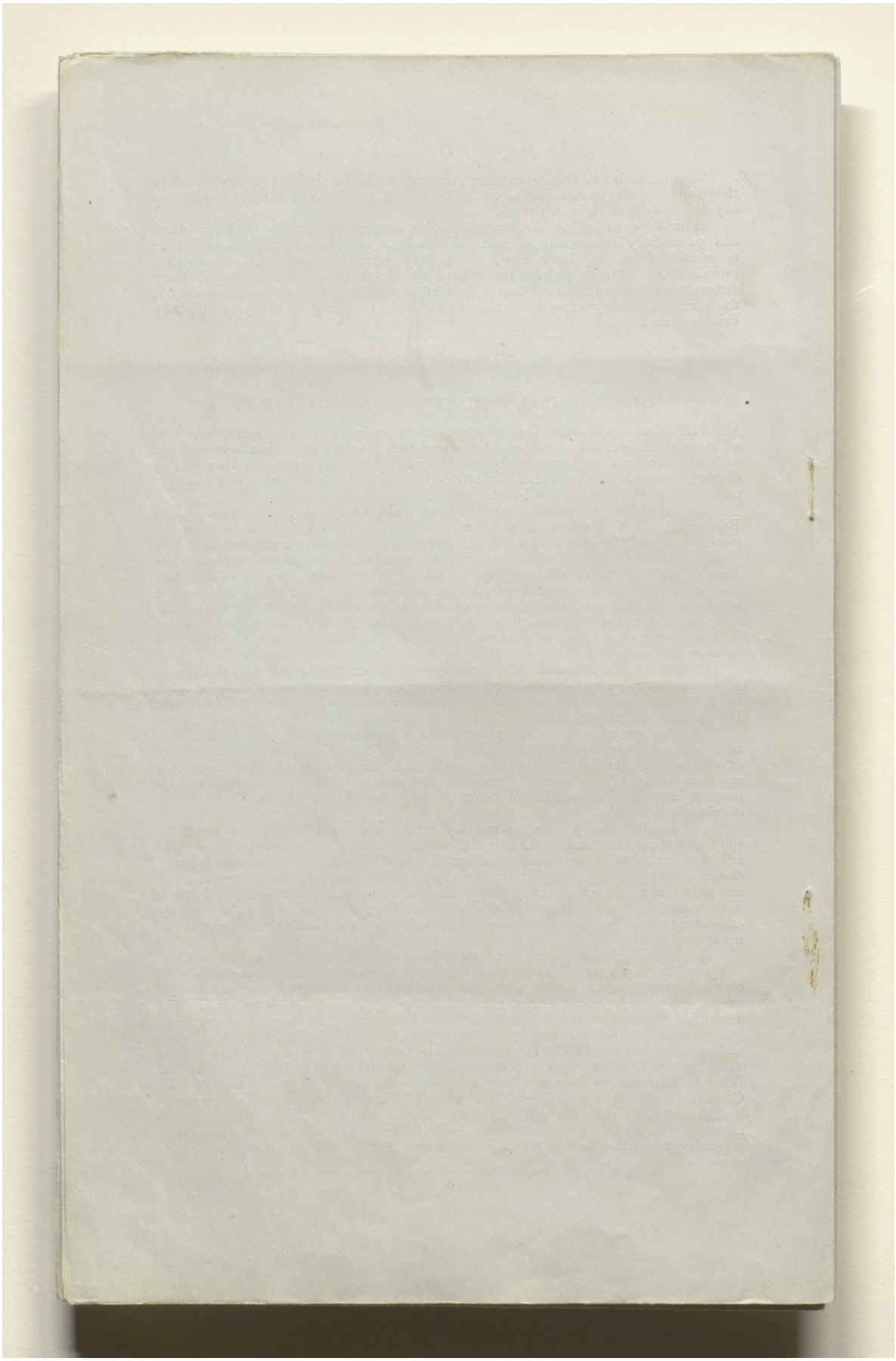



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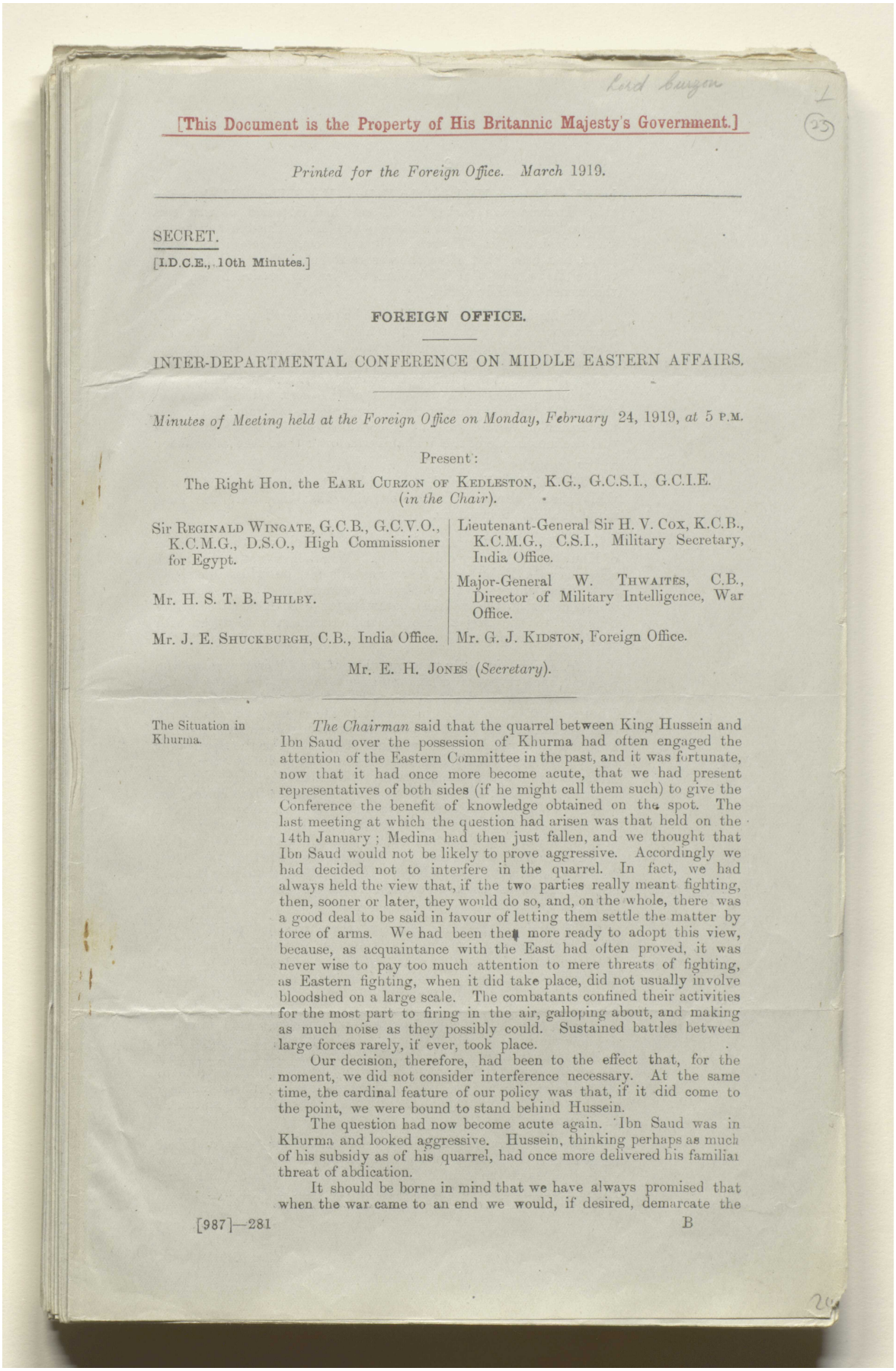

Lord Curzon

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. March 1919.*

SECRET.

[I.D.C.E., 10th Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Monday, February 24, 1919, at 5 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Sir REGINALD WINGATE, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., High Commissioner for Egypt.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence, War Office.

Mr. H. S. T. B. PHILBY.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

The Situation in Khurma.

*The Chairman* said that the quarrel between King Hussein and Ibn Saud over the possession of Khurma had often engaged the attention of the Eastern Committee in the past, and it was fortunate, now that it had once more become acute, that we had present representatives of both sides (if he might call them such) to give the Conference the benefit of knowledge obtained on the spot. The last meeting at which the question had arisen was that held on the 14th January; Medina had then just fallen, and we thought that Ibn Saud would not be likely to prove aggressive. Accordingly we had decided not to interfere in the quarrel. In fact, we had always held the view that, if the two parties really meant fighting, then, sooner or later, they would do so, and, on the whole, there was a good deal to be said in favour of letting them settle the matter by force of arms. We had been then more ready to adopt this view, because, as acquaintance with the East had often proved, it was never wise to pay too much attention to mere threats of fighting, as Eastern fighting, when it did take place, did not usually involve bloodshed on a large scale. The combatants confined their activities for the most part to firing in the air, galloping about, and making as much noise as they possibly could. Sustained battles between large forces rarely, if ever, took place.

Our decision, therefore, had been to the effect that, for the moment, we did not consider interference necessary. At the same time, the cardinal feature of our policy was that, if it did come to the point, we were bound to stand behind Hussein.

The question had now become acute again. Ibn Saud was in Khurma and looked aggressive. Hussein, thinking perhaps as much of his subsidy as of his quarrel, had once more delivered his familiar threat of abdication.

It should be borne in mind that we have always promised that when the war came to an end we would, if desired, demarcate the

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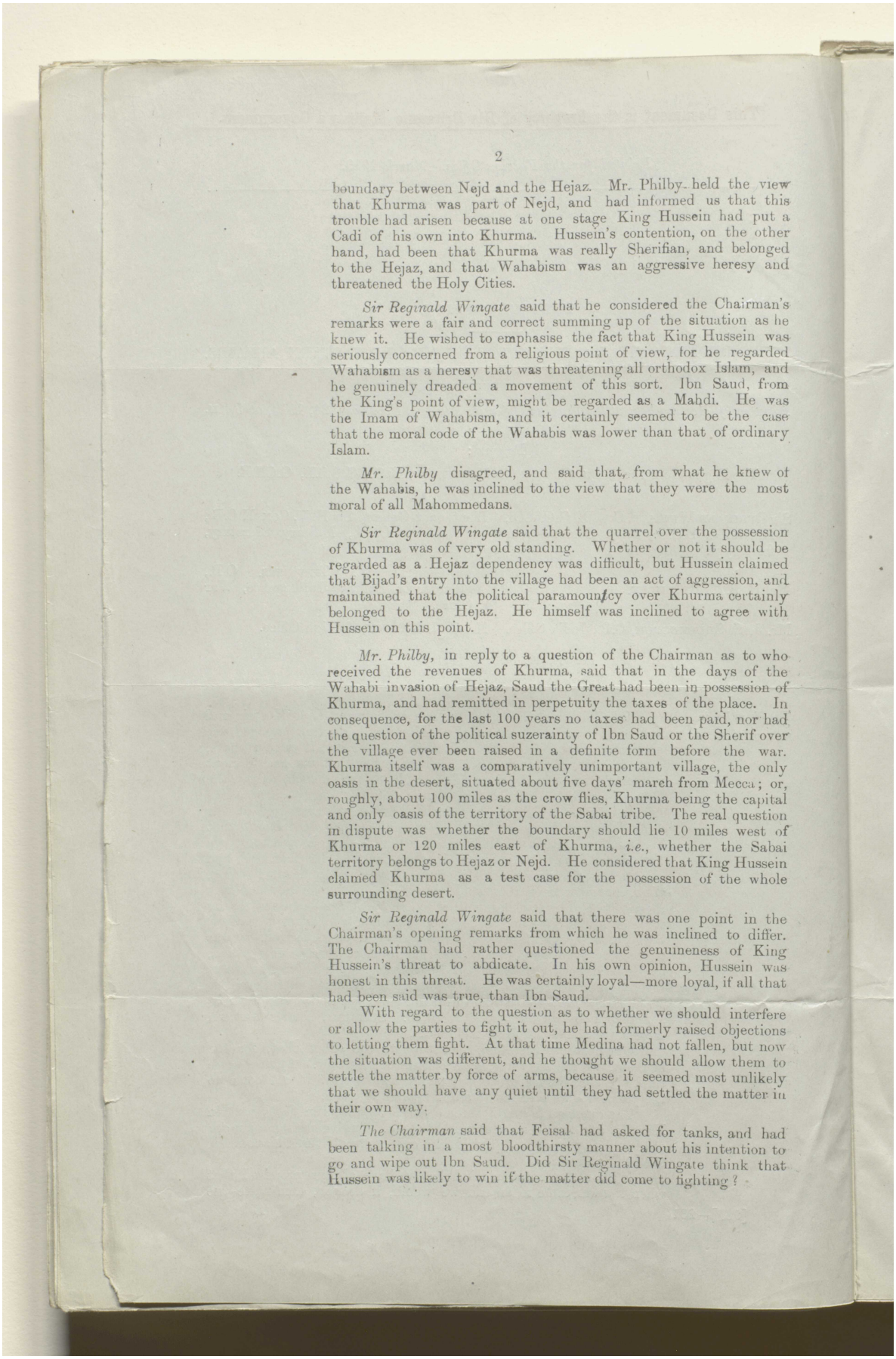



boundary between Nejd and the Hejaz. Mr. Philby held the view that Khurma was part of Nejd, and had informed us that this trouble had arisen because at one stage King Hussein had put a Cadi of his own into Khurma. Hussein's contention, on the other hand, had been that Khurma was really Sherifian, and belonged to the Hejaz, and that Wahabism was an aggressive heresy and threatened the Holy Cities.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said that he considered the Chairman's remarks were a fair and correct summing up of the situation as he knew it. He wished to emphasise the fact that King Hussein was seriously concerned from a religious point of view, for he regarded Wahabism as a heresy that was threatening all orthodox Islam, and he genuinely dreaded a movement of this sort. Ibn Saud, from the King's point of view, might be regarded as a Mahdi. He was the Imam of Wahabism, and it certainly seemed to be the case that the moral code of the Wahabis was lower than that of ordinary Islam.

*Mr. Philby* disagreed, and said that, from what he knew of the Wahabis, he was inclined to the view that they were the most moral of all Mahommedans.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said that the quarrel over the possession of Khurma was of very old standing. Whether or not it should be regarded as a Hejaz dependency was difficult, but Hussein claimed that Bijad's entry into the village had been an act of aggression, and maintained that the political paramountcy over Khurma certainly belonged to the Hejaz. He himself was inclined to agree with Hussein on this point.

*Mr. Philby*, in reply to a question of the Chairman as to who received the revenues of Khurma, said that in the days of the Wahabi invasion of Hejaz, Saud the Great had been in possession of Khurma, and had remitted in perpetuity the taxes of the place. In consequence, for the last 100 years no taxes had been paid, nor had the question of the political suzerainty of Ibn Saud or the Sherif over the village ever been raised in a definite form before the war. Khurma itself was a comparatively unimportant village, the only oasis in the desert, situated about five days' march from Mecca; or, roughly, about 100 miles as the crow flies, Khurma being the capital and only oasis of the territory of the Sabai tribe. The real question in dispute was whether the boundary should lie 10 miles west of Khurma or 120 miles east of Khurma, *i.e.*, whether the Sabai territory belongs to Hejaz or Nejd. He considered that King Hussein claimed Khurma as a test case for the possession of the whole surrounding desert.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said that there was one point in the Chairman's opening remarks from which he was inclined to differ. The Chairman had rather questioned the genuineness of King Hussein's threat to abdicate. In his own opinion, Hussein was honest in this threat. He was certainly loyal—more loyal, if all that had been said was true, than Ibn Saud.

With regard to the question as to whether we should interfere or allow the parties to fight it out, he had formerly raised objections to letting them fight. At that time Medina had not fallen, but now the situation was different, and he thought we should allow them to settle the matter by force of arms, because it seemed most unlikely that we should have any quiet until they had settled the matter in their own way.

*The Chairman* said that Feisal had asked for tanks, and had been talking in a most bloodthirsty manner about his intention to go and wipe out Ibn Saud. Did Sir Reginald Wingate think that Hussein was likely to win if the matter did come to fighting?



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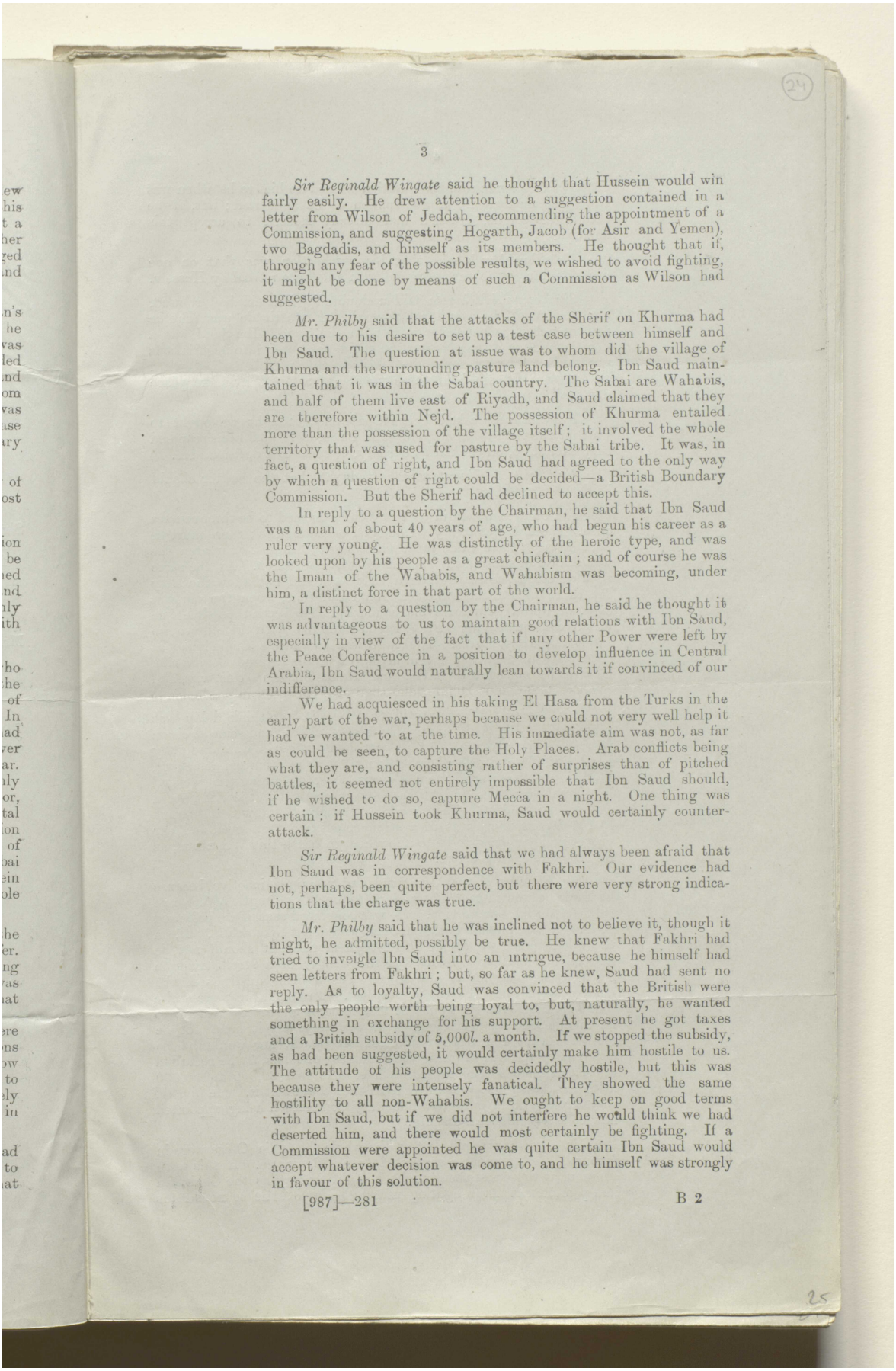



*Sir Reginald Wingate* said he thought that Hussein would win fairly easily. He drew attention to a suggestion contained in a letter from Wilson of Jeddah, recommending the appointment of a Commission, and suggesting Hogarth, Jacob (for Asir and Yemen), two Bagdadis, and himself as its members. He thought that if, through any fear of the possible results, we wished to avoid fighting, it might be done by means of such a Commission as Wilson had suggested.

*Mr. Philby* said that the attacks of the Sherif on Khurma had been due to his desire to set up a test case between himself and Ibn Saud. The question at issue was to whom did the village of Khurma and the surrounding pasture land belong. Ibn Saud maintained that it was in the Sabai country. The Sabai are Wahabis, and half of them live east of Riyadh, and Saud claimed that they are therefore within Nejd. The possession of Khurma entailed more than the possession of the village itself; it involved the whole territory that was used for pasture by the Sabai tribe. It was, in fact, a question of right, and Ibn Saud had agreed to the only way by which a question of right could be decided—a British Boundary Commission. But the Sherif had declined to accept this.

In reply to a question by the Chairman, he said that Ibn Saud was a man of about 40 years of age, who had begun his career as a ruler very young. He was distinctly of the heroic type, and was looked upon by his people as a great chieftain; and of course he was the Imam of the Wahabis, and Wahabism was becoming, under him, a distinct force in that part of the world.

In reply to a question by the Chairman, he said he thought it was advantageous to us to maintain good relations with Ibn Saud, especially in view of the fact that if any other Power were left by the Peace Conference in a position to develop influence in Central Arabia, Ibn Saud would naturally lean towards it if convinced of our indifference.

We had acquiesced in his taking El Hasa from the Turks in the early part of the war, perhaps because we could not very well help it had we wanted to at the time. His immediate aim was not, as far as could be seen, to capture the Holy Places. Arab conflicts being what they are, and consisting rather of surprises than of pitched battles, it seemed not entirely impossible that Ibn Saud should, if he wished to do so, capture Mecca in a night. One thing was certain: if Hussein took Khurma, Saud would certainly counter-attack.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said that we had always been afraid that Ibn Saud was in correspondence with Fakhri. Our evidence had not, perhaps, been quite perfect, but there were very strong indications that the charge was true.

*Mr. Philby* said that he was inclined not to believe it, though it might, he admitted, possibly be true. He knew that Fakhri had tried to inveigle Ibn Saud into an intrigue, because he himself had seen letters from Fakhri; but, so far as he knew, Saud had sent no reply. As to loyalty, Saud was convinced that the British were the only people worth being loyal to, but, naturally, he wanted something in exchange for his support. At present he got taxes and a British subsidy of 5,000*l.* a month. If we stopped the subsidy, as had been suggested, it would certainly make him hostile to us. The attitude of his people was decidedly hostile, but this was because they were intensely fanatical. They showed the same hostility to all non-Wahabis. We ought to keep on good terms with Ibn Saud, but if we did not interfere he would think we had deserted him, and there would most certainly be fighting. If a Commission were appointed he was quite certain Ibn Saud would accept whatever decision was come to, and he himself was strongly in favour of this solution.





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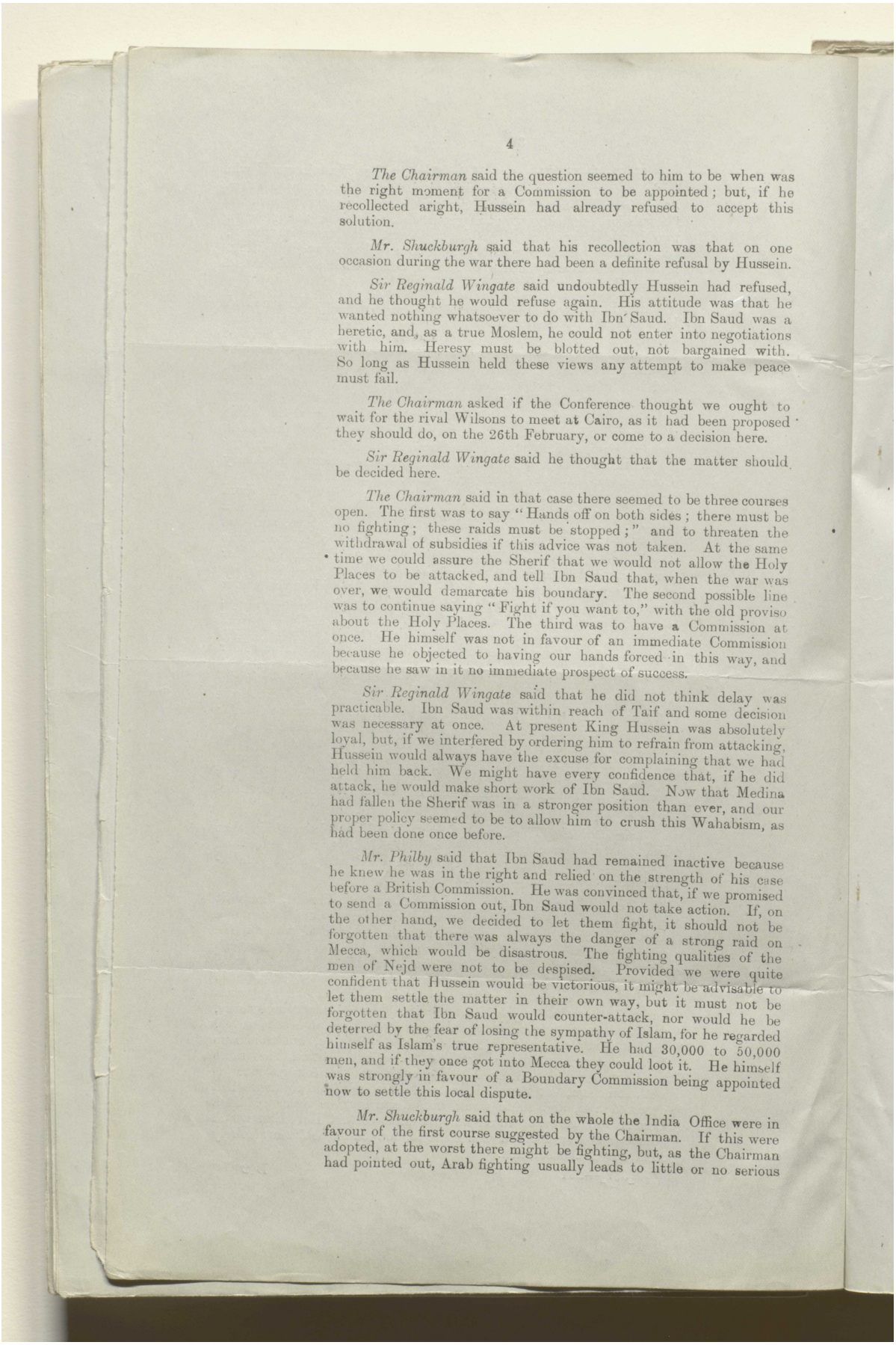



*The Chairman* said the question seemed to him to be when was the right moment for a Commission to be appointed; but, if he recollected aright, Hussein had already refused to accept this solution.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that his recollection was that on one occasion during the war there had been a definite refusal by Hussein.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said undoubtedly Hussein had refused, and he thought he would refuse again. His attitude was that he wanted nothing whatsoever to do with Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud was a heretic, and, as a true Moslem, he could not enter into negotiations with him. Heresy must be blotted out, not bargained with. So long as Hussein held these views any attempt to make peace must fail.

*The Chairman* asked if the Conference thought we ought to wait for the rival Wilsons to meet at Cairo, as it had been proposed they should do, on the 26th February, or come to a decision here.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said he thought that the matter should be decided here.

*The Chairman* said in that case there seemed to be three courses open. The first was to say "Hands off on both sides; there must be no fighting; these raids must be stopped;" and to threaten the withdrawal of subsidies if this advice was not taken. At the same time we could assure the Sherif that we would not allow the Holy Places to be attacked, and tell Ibn Saud that, when the war was over, we would demarcate his boundary. The second possible line was to continue saying "Fight if you want to," with the old proviso about the Holy Places. The third was to have a Commission at once. He himself was not in favour of an immediate Commission because he objected to having our hands forced in this way, and because he saw in it no immediate prospect of success.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said that he did not think delay was practicable. Ibn Saud was within reach of Taif and some decision was necessary at once. At present King Hussein was absolutely loyal, but, if we interfered by ordering him to refrain from attacking, Hussein would always have the excuse for complaining that we had held him back. We might have every confidence that, if he did attack, he would make short work of Ibn Saud. Now that Medina had fallen the Sherif was in a stronger position than ever, and our proper policy seemed to be to allow him to crush this Wahabism, as had been done once before.

*Mr. Philby* said that Ibn Saud had remained inactive because he knew he was in the right and relied on the strength of his case before a British Commission. He was convinced that, if we promised to send a Commission out, Ibn Saud would not take action. If, on the other hand, we decided to let them fight, it should not be forgotten that there was always the danger of a strong raid on Mecca, which would be disastrous. The fighting qualities of the men of Nejd were not to be despised. Provided we were quite confident that Hussein would be victorious, it might be advisable to let them settle the matter in their own way, but it must not be forgotten that Ibn Saud would counter-attack, nor would he be deterred by the fear of losing the sympathy of Islam, for he regarded himself as Islam's true representative. He had 30,000 to 50,000 men, and if they once got into Mecca they could loot it. He himself was strongly in favour of a Boundary Commission being appointed now to settle this local dispute.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that on the whole the India Office were in favour of the first course suggested by the Chairman. If this were adopted, at the worst there might be fighting, but, as the Chairman had pointed out, Arab fighting usually leads to little or no serious



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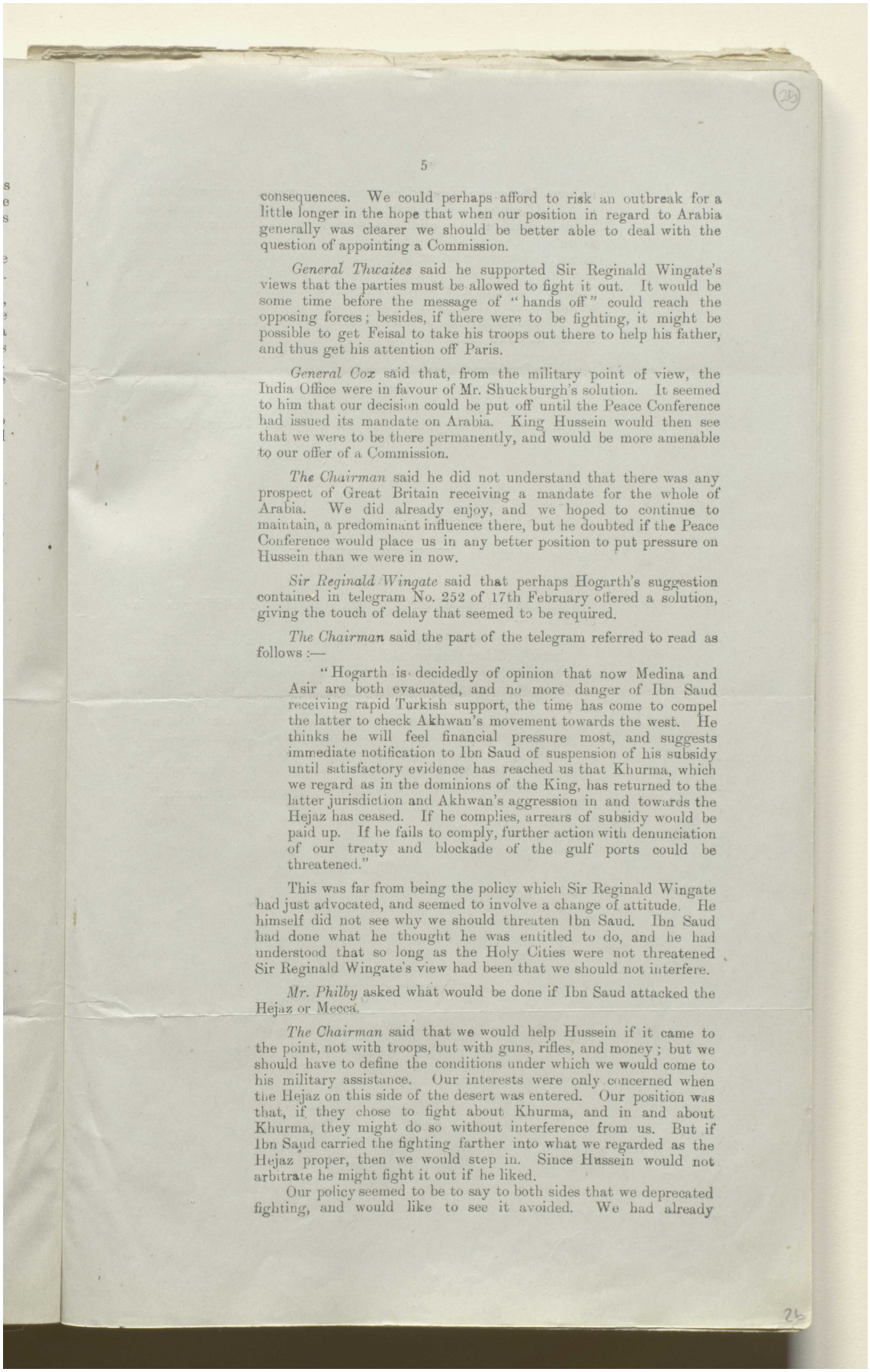



consequences. We could perhaps afford to risk an outbreak for a little longer in the hope that when our position in regard to Arabia generally was clearer we should be better able to deal with the question of appointing a Commission.

*General Thwaites* said he supported Sir Reginald Wingate's views that the parties must be allowed to fight it out. It would be some time before the message of "hands off" could reach the opposing forces; besides, if there were to be fighting, it might be possible to get Feisal to take his troops out there to help his father, and thus get his attention off Paris.

*General Cox* said that, from the military point of view, the India Office were in favour of Mr. Shuckburgh's solution. It seemed to him that our decision could be put off until the Peace Conference had issued its mandate on Arabia. King Hussein would then see that we were to be there permanently, and would be more amenable to our offer of a Commission.

*The Chairman* said he did not understand that there was any prospect of Great Britain receiving a mandate for the whole of Arabia. We did already enjoy, and we hoped to continue to maintain, a predominant influence there, but he doubted if the Peace Conference would place us in any better position to put pressure on Hussein than we were in now.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said that perhaps Hogarth's suggestion contained in telegram No. 252 of 17th February offered a solution, giving the touch of delay that seemed to be required.

*The Chairman* said the part of the telegram referred to read as follows:—

> "Hogarth is decidedly of opinion that now Medina and Asir are both evacuated, and no more danger of Ibn Saud receiving rapid Turkish support, the time has come to compel the latter to check Akhwan's movement towards the west. He thinks he will feel financial pressure most, and suggests immediate notification to Ibn Saud of suspension of his subsidy until satisfactory evidence has reached us that Khurma, which we regard as in the dominions of the King, has returned to the latter jurisdiction and Akhwan's aggression in and towards the Hejaz has ceased. If he complies, arrears of subsidy would be paid up. If he fails to comply, further action with denunciation of our treaty and blockade of the gulf ports could be threatened."

This was far from being the policy which Sir Reginald Wingate had just advocated, and seemed to involve a change of attitude. He himself did not see why we should threaten Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud had done what he thought he was entitled to do, and he had understood that so long as the Holy Cities were not threatened Sir Reginald Wingate's view had been that we should not interfere.

*Mr. Philby* asked what would be done if Ibn Saud attacked the Hejaz or Mecca.

*The Chairman* said that we would help Hussein if it came to the point, not with troops, but with guns, rifles, and money; but we should have to define the conditions under which we would come to his military assistance. Our interests were only concerned when the Hejaz on this side of the desert was entered. Our position was that, if they chose to fight about Khurma, and in and about Khurma, they might do so without interference from us. But if Ibn Saud carried the fighting farther into what we regarded as the Hejaz proper, then we would step in. Since Hussein would not arbitrate he might fight it out if he liked.

Our policy seemed to be to say to both sides that we deprecated fighting, and would like to see it avoided. We had already



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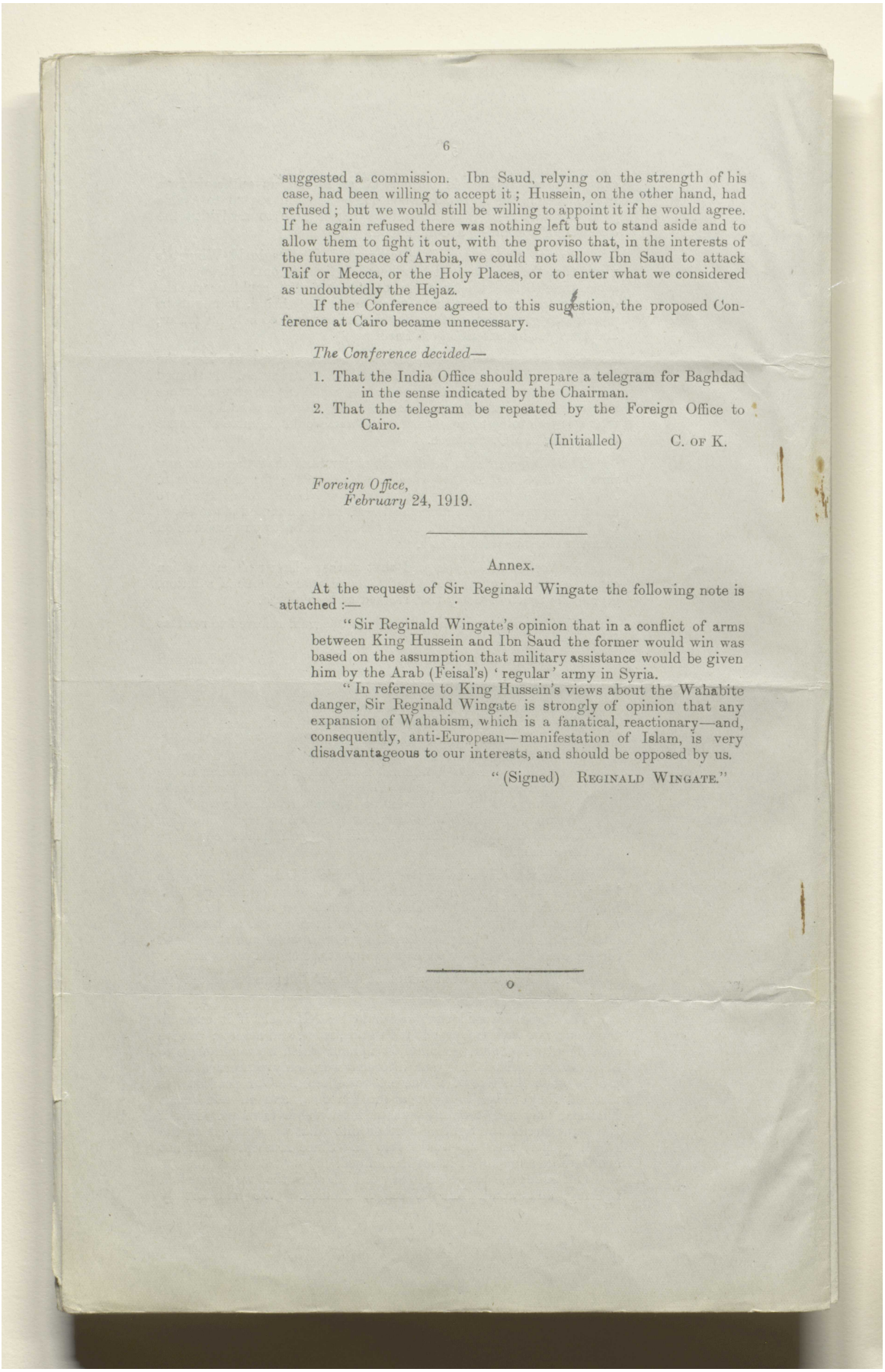



suggested a commission. Ibn Saud, relying on the strength of his case, had been willing to accept it; Hussein, on the other hand, had refused; but we would still be willing to appoint it if he would agree. If he again refused there was nothing left but to stand aside and to allow them to fight it out, with the proviso that, in the interests of the future peace of Arabia, we could not allow Ibn Saud to attack Taif or Mecca, or the Holy Places, or to enter what we considered as undoubtedly the Hejaz.

If the Conference agreed to this suggestion, the proposed Conference at Cairo became unnecessary.

*The Conference decided—*

1. That the India Office should prepare a telegram for Baghdad in the sense indicated by the Chairman.
2. That the telegram be repeated by the Foreign Office to Cairo.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*February* 24, 1919.

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Annex.

At the request of Sir Reginald Wingate the following note is attached :—

"Sir Reginald Wingate's opinion that in a conflict of arms between King Hussein and Ibn Saud the former would win was based on the assumption that military assistance would be given him by the Arab (Feisal's) 'regular' army in Syria.

"In reference to King Hussein's views about the Wahabite danger, Sir Reginald Wingate is strongly of opinion that any expansion of Wahabism, which is a fanatical, reactionary—and, consequently, anti-European—manifestation of Islam, is very disadvantageous to our interests, and should be opposed by us.

"(Signed) REGINALD WINGATE."

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Lord Curzon.

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. March 1919.*

SECRET.

[I.D.C.E., 11th Minutes.]

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Conference held at the Foreign Office on Thursday, March 6, 1919, at 10·30 A.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. WINSTON CHURCHILL, M.P., Secretary of State for War, War Office.

Admiral Sir SYDNEY R. FREMANTLE, K.C.B., M.V.O., Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, Admiralty.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, Director, Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Major-General P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Mr. J. Y. SIMPSON, Foreign Office.

Mr. S. D. WALEY, Treasury.

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

**Policy in the Caucasus, including Naval Policy in the Caspian**

The Conference had before them a Report from General G. F. Milne, Constantinople, dated the 6th February, 1919, a Memorandum by the Admiralty (undated), a Memorandum by the Foreign Office, dated the 5th March, 1919, and a Report by Major McDonnel (Tiflis), of the 27th January, 1919.

*The Chairman* said that the present position in the Caucasus was more confused than any with which the Eastern Committee had had to deal during the last year and a half. The Government and the Prime Minister were anxious to reduce our military commitments in the Caucasus, and to release the troops there at the earliest possible moment for three reasons: First, it was a secondary theatre of operations; second, the cost was already enormous; and third, fresh sums would have to be asked for and a case made out in the House of Commons. The explanation required was not an easy one to convey to the public, and it might be difficult to convince the House of Commons of the necessity for this expenditure.

Our commitments in the Caucasus had grown insensibly and without the knowledge of the Eastern Committee. Our policy itself had been consistent throughout.

We had gone there originally for the purpose of driving out the Germans and the Turks, and of enforcing the terms of the Armistice. This portion of our aim was complete, or very nearly complete.





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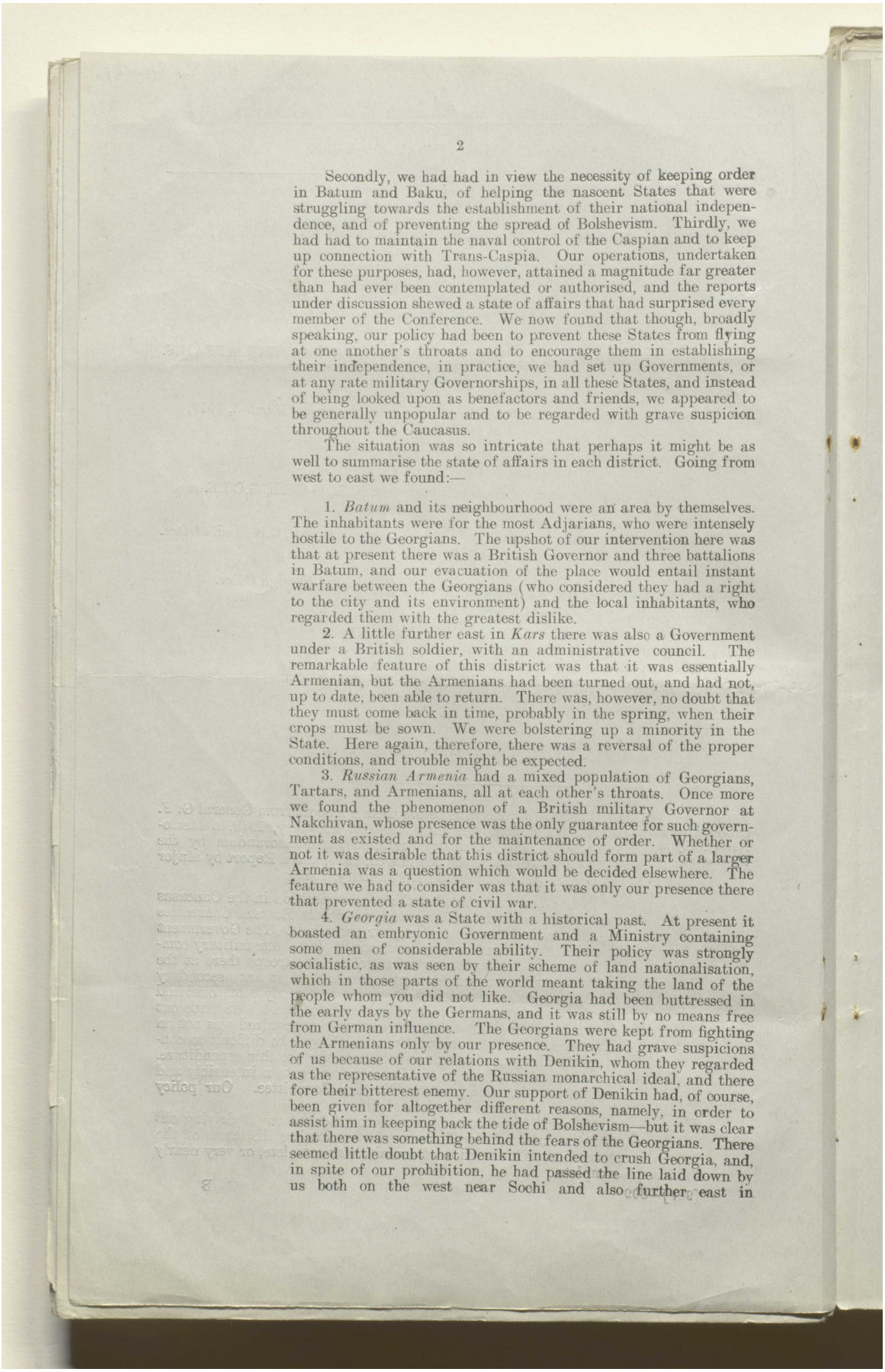



Secondly, we had had in view the necessity of keeping order in Batum and Baku, of helping the nascent States that were struggling towards the establishment of their national independence, and of preventing the spread of Bolshevism. Thirdly, we had had to maintain the naval control of the Caspian and to keep up connection with Trans-Caspia. Our operations, undertaken for these purposes, had, however, attained a magnitude far greater than had ever been contemplated or authorised, and the reports under discussion shewed a state of affairs that had surprised every member of the Conference. We now found that though, broadly speaking, our policy had been to prevent these States from flying at one another's throats and to encourage them in establishing their independence, in practice, we had set up Governments, or at any rate military Governorships, in all these States, and instead of being looked upon as benefactors and friends, we appeared to be generally unpopular and to be regarded with grave suspicion throughout the Caucasus.

The situation was so intricate that perhaps it might be as well to summarise the state of affairs in each district. Going from west to east we found:—

1. *Batum* and its neighbourhood were an area by themselves. The inhabitants were for the most Adjarians, who were intensely hostile to the Georgians. The upshot of our intervention here was that at present there was a British Governor and three battalions in Batum, and our evacuation of the place would entail instant warfare between the Georgians (who considered they had a right to the city and its environment) and the local inhabitants, who regarded them with the greatest dislike.

2. A little further east in *Kars* there was also a Government under a British soldier, with an administrative council. The remarkable feature of this district was that it was essentially Armenian, but the Armenians had been turned out, and had not, up to date, been able to return. There was, however, no doubt that they must come back in time, probably in the spring, when their crops must be sown. We were bolstering up a minority in the State. Here again, therefore, there was a reversal of the proper conditions, and trouble might be expected.

3. *Russian Armenia* had a mixed population of Georgians, Tartars, and Armenians, all at each other's throats. Once more we found the phenomenon of a British military Governor at Nakchivan, whose presence was the only guarantee for such government as existed and for the maintenance of order. Whether or not it was desirable that this district should form part of a larger Armenia was a question which would be decided elsewhere. The feature we had to consider was that it was only our presence there that prevented a state of civil war.

4. *Georgia* was a State with a historical past. At present it boasted an embryonic Government and a Ministry containing some men of considerable ability. Their policy was strongly socialistic, as was seen by their scheme of land nationalisation, which in those parts of the world meant taking the land of the people whom you did not like. Georgia had been buttressed in the early days by the Germans, and it was still by no means free from German influence. The Georgians were kept from fighting the Armenians only by our presence. They had grave suspicions of us because of our relations with Denikin, whom they regarded as the representative of the Russian monarchical ideal, and there fore their bitterest enemy. Our support of Denikin had, of course, been given for altogether different reasons, namely, in order to assist him in keeping back the tide of Bolshevism—but it was clear that there was something behind the fears of the Georgians. There seemed little doubt that Denikin intended to crush Georgia, and, in spite of our prohibition, he had passed the line laid down by us both on the west near Sochi and also further east in



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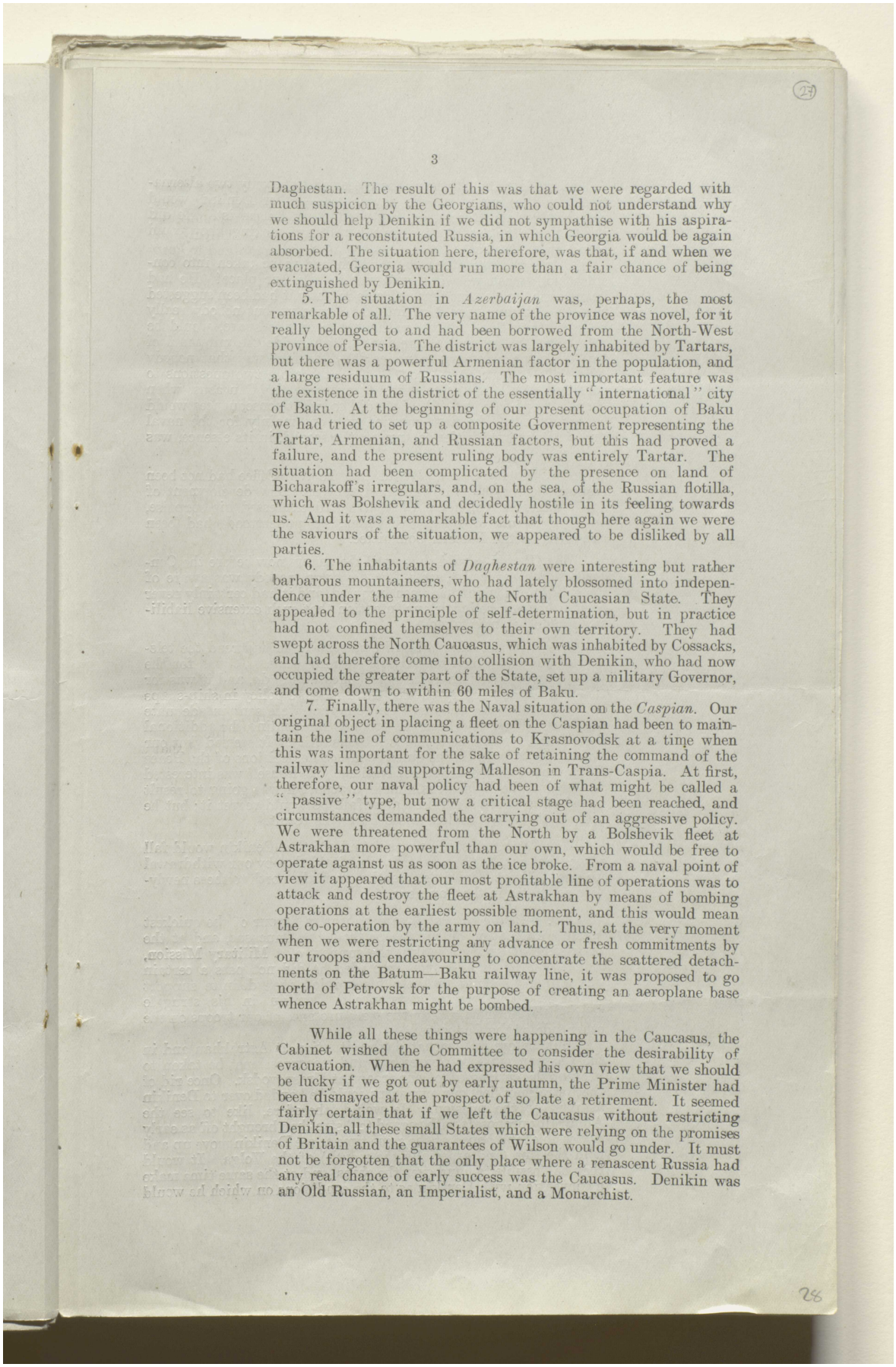



Daghestan. The result of this was that we were regarded with much suspicion by the Georgians, who could not understand why we should help Denikin if we did not sympathise with his aspirations for a reconstituted Russia, in which Georgia would be again absorbed. The situation here, therefore, was that, if and when we evacuated, Georgia would run more than a fair chance of being extinguished by Denikin.

5. The situation in *Azerbaijan* was, perhaps, the most remarkable of all. The very name of the province was novel, for it really belonged to and had been borrowed from the North-West province of Persia. The district was largely inhabited by Tartars, but there was a powerful Armenian factor in the population, and a large residuum of Russians. The most important feature was the existence in the district of the essentially "international" city of Baku. At the beginning of our present occupation of Baku we had tried to set up a composite Government representing the Tartar, Armenian, and Russian factors, but this had proved a failure, and the present ruling body was entirely Tartar. The situation had been complicated by the presence on land of Bicharakoff's irregulars, and, on the sea, of the Russian flotilla, which was Bolshevik and decidedly hostile in its feeling towards us. And it was a remarkable fact that though here again we were the saviours of the situation, we appeared to be disliked by all parties.

6. The inhabitants of *Daghestan* were interesting but rather barbarous mountaineers, who had lately blossomed into independence under the name of the North Caucasian State. They appealed to the principle of self-determination, but in practice had not confined themselves to their own territory. They had swept across the North Caucasus, which was inhabited by Cossacks, and had therefore come into collision with Denikin, who had now occupied the greater part of the State, set up a military Governor, and come down to within 60 miles of Baku.

7. Finally, there was the Naval situation on the *Caspian*. Our original object in placing a fleet on the Caspian had been to maintain the line of communications to Krasnovodsk at a time when this was important for the sake of retaining the command of the railway line and supporting Malleson in Trans-Caspia. At first, therefore, our naval policy had been of what might be called a "passive" type, but now a critical stage had been reached, and circumstances demanded the carrying out of an aggressive policy. We were threatened from the North by a Bolshevik fleet at Astrakhan more powerful than our own, which would be free to operate against us as soon as the ice broke. From a naval point of view it appeared that our most profitable line of operations was to attack and destroy the fleet at Astrakhan by means of bombing operations at the earliest possible moment, and this would mean the co-operation by the army on land. Thus, at the very moment when we were restricting any advance or fresh commitments by our troops and endeavouring to concentrate the scattered detachments on the Batum—Baku railway line, it was proposed to go north of Petrovsk for the purpose of creating an aeroplane base whence Astrakhan might be bombed.

While all these things were happening in the Caucasus, the Cabinet wished the Committee to consider the desirability of evacuation. When he had expressed his own view that we should be lucky if we got out by early autumn, the Prime Minister had been dismayed at the prospect of so late a retirement. It seemed fairly certain that if we left the Caucasus without restricting Denikin, all these small States which were relying on the promises of Britain and the guarantees of Wilson would go under. It must not be forgotten that the only place where a renascent Russia had any real chance of early success was the Caucasus. Denikin was an Old Russian, an Imperialist, and a Monarchist.



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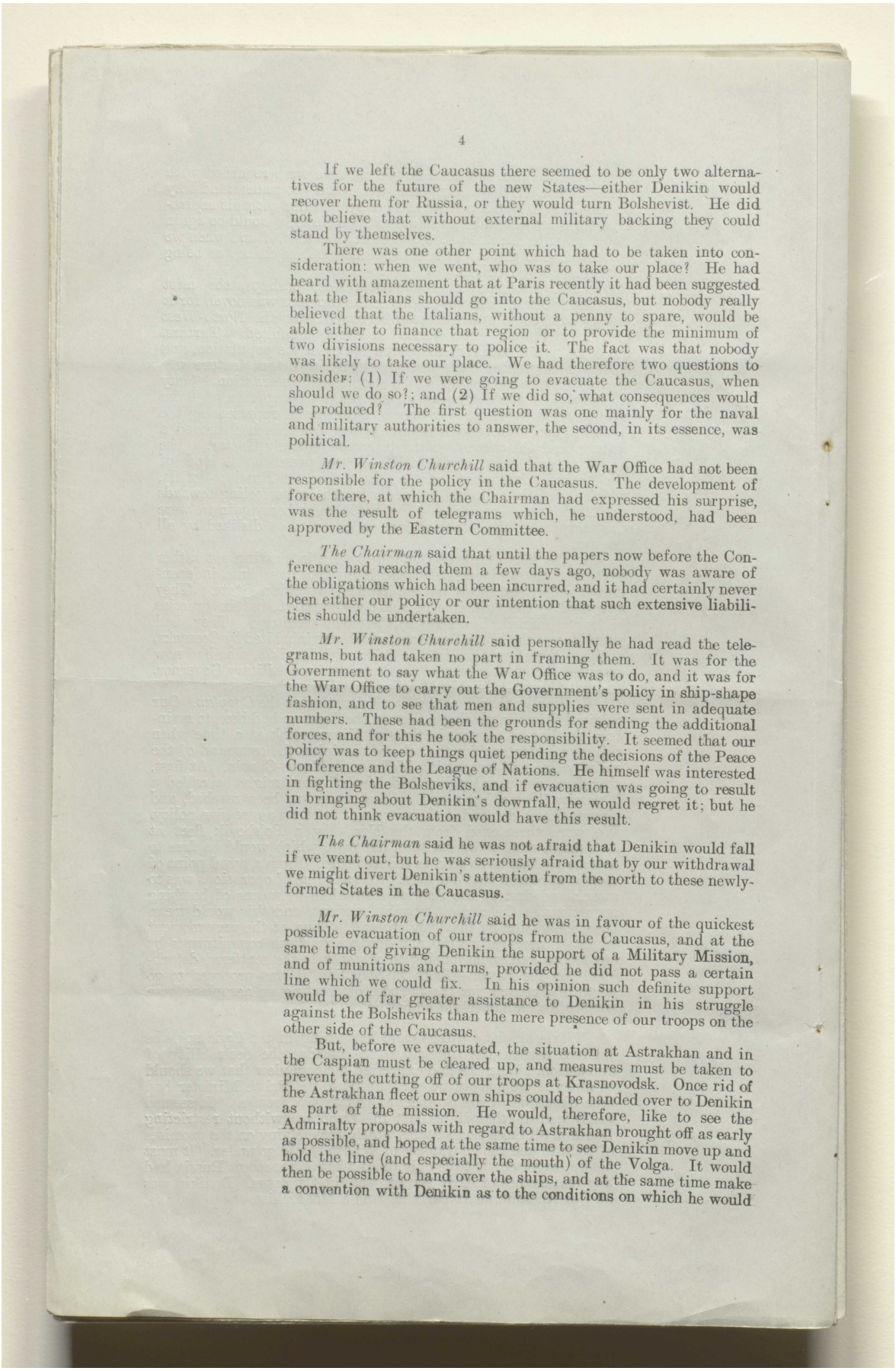



If we left the Caucasus there seemed to be only two alternatives for the future of the new States—either Denikin would recover them for Russia, or they would turn Bolshevist. He did not believe that without external military backing they could stand by themselves.

There was one other point which had to be taken into consideration: when we went, who was to take our place? He had heard with amazement that at Paris recently it had been suggested that the Italians should go into the Caucasus, but nobody really believed that the Italians, without a penny to spare, would be able either to finance that region or to provide the minimum of two divisions necessary to police it. The fact was that nobody was likely to take our place. We had therefore two questions to consider: (1) If we were going to evacuate the Caucasus, when should we do so?; and (2) If we did so, what consequences would be produced? The first question was one mainly for the naval and military authorities to answer, the second, in its essence, was political.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said that the War Office had not been responsible for the policy in the Caucasus. The development of force there, at which the Chairman had expressed his surprise, was the result of telegrams which, he understood, had been approved by the Eastern Committee.

*The Chairman* said that until the papers now before the Conference had reached them a few days ago, nobody was aware of the obligations which had been incurred, and it had certainly never been either our policy or our intention that such extensive liabilities should be undertaken.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said personally he had read the telegrams, but had taken no part in framing them. It was for the Government to say what the War Office was to do, and it was for the War Office to carry out the Government's policy in ship-shape fashion, and to see that men and supplies were sent in adequate numbers. These had been the grounds for sending the additional forces, and for this he took the responsibility. It seemed that our policy was to keep things quiet pending the decisions of the Peace Conference and the League of Nations. He himself was interested in fighting the Bolsheviks, and if evacuation was going to result in bringing about Denikin's downfall, he would regret it; but he did not think evacuation would have this result.

*The Chairman* said he was not afraid that Denikin would fall if we went out, but he was seriously afraid that by our withdrawal we might divert Denikin's attention from the north to these newly-formed States in the Caucasus.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said he was in favour of the quickest possible evacuation of our troops from the Caucasus, and at the same time of giving Denikin the support of a Military Mission, and of munitions and arms, provided he did not pass a certain line which we could fix. In his opinion such definite support would be of far greater assistance to Denikin in his struggle against the Bolsheviks than the mere presence of our troops on the other side of the Caucasus.

But, before we evacuated, the situation at Astrakhan and in the Caspian must be cleared up, and measures must be taken to prevent the cutting off of our troops at Krasnovodsk. Once rid of the Astrakhan fleet our own ships could be handed over to Denikin as part of the mission. He would, therefore, like to see the Admiralty proposals with regard to Astrakhan brought off as early as possible, and hoped at the same time to see Denikin move up and hold the line (and especially the mouth) of the Volga. It would then be possible to hand over the ships, and at the same time make a convention with Denikin as to the conditions on which he would



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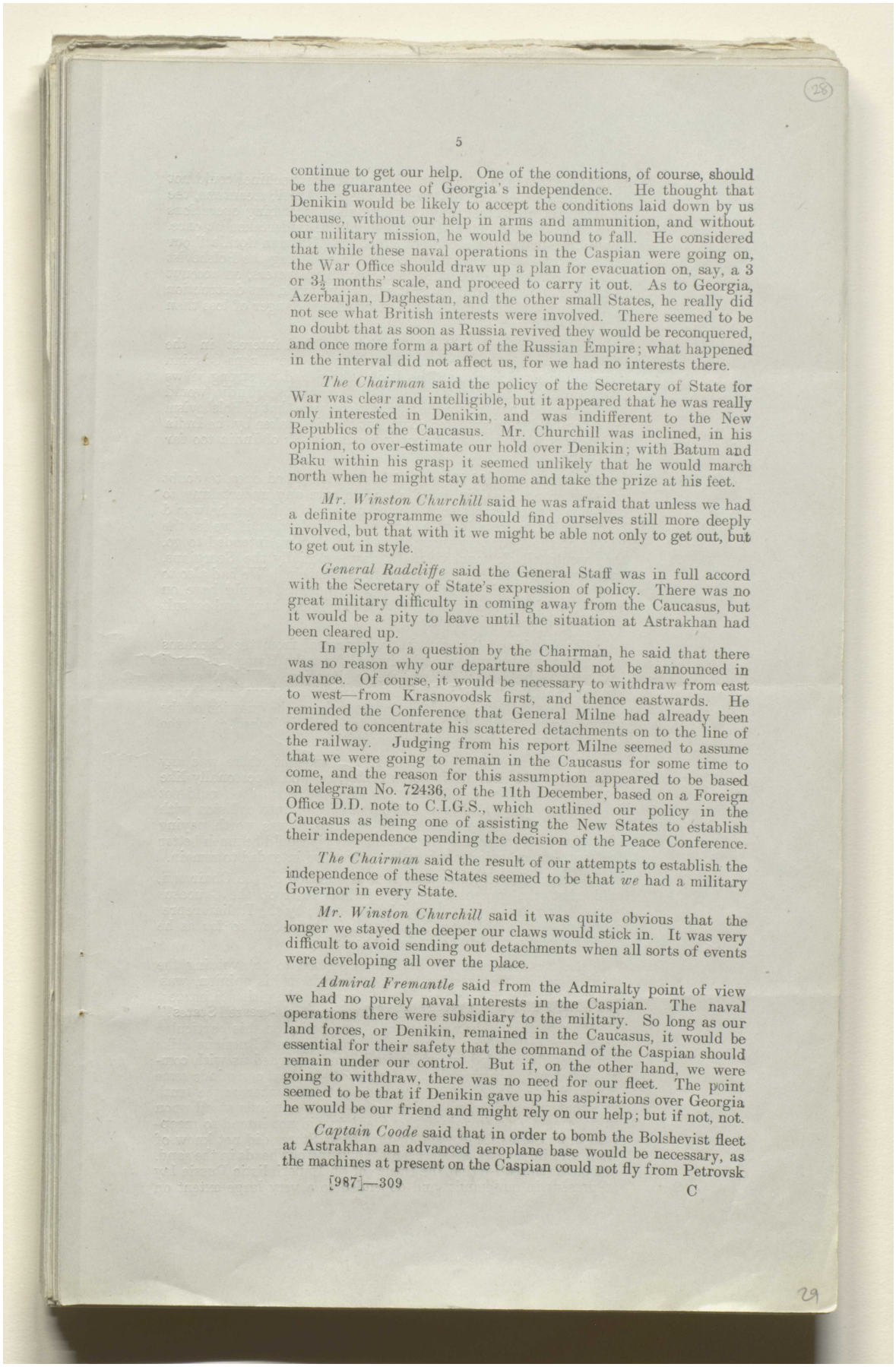



continue to get our help. One of the conditions, of course, should be the guarantee of Georgia's independence. He thought that Denikin would be likely to accept the conditions laid down by us because, without our help in arms and ammunition, and without our military mission, he would be bound to fall. He considered that while these naval operations in the Caspian were going on, the War Office should draw up a plan for evacuation on, say, a 3 or 3½ months' scale, and proceed to carry it out. As to Georgia, Azerbaijan, Daghestan, and the other small States, he really did not see what British interests were involved. There seemed to be no doubt that as soon as Russia revived they would be reconquered, and once more form a part of the Russian Empire; what happened in the interval did not affect us, for we had no interests there.

*The Chairman* said the policy of the Secretary of State for War was clear and intelligible, but it appeared that he was really only interested in Denikin, and was indifferent to the New Republics of the Caucasus. Mr. Churchill was inclined, in his opinion, to over-estimate our hold over Denikin; with Batum and Baku within his grasp it seemed unlikely that he would march north when he might stay at home and take the prize at his feet.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said he was afraid that unless we had a definite programme we should find ourselves still more deeply involved, but that with it we might be able not only to get out, but to get out in style.

*General Radcliffe* said the General Staff was in full accord with the Secretary of State's expression of policy. There was no great military difficulty in coming away from the Caucasus, but it would be a pity to leave until the situation at Astrakhan had been cleared up.

In reply to a question by the Chairman, he said that there was no reason why our departure should not be announced in advance. Of course, it would be necessary to withdraw from east to west—from Krasnovodsk first, and thence eastwards. He reminded the Conference that General Milne had already been ordered to concentrate his scattered detachments on to the line of the railway. Judging from his report Milne seemed to assume that we were going to remain in the Caucasus for some time to come, and the reason for this assumption appeared to be based on telegram No. 72436, of the 11th December, based on a Foreign Office D.D. note to C.I.G.S., which outlined our policy in the Caucasus as being one of assisting the New States to establish their independence pending the decision of the Peace Conference.

*The Chairman* said the result of our attempts to establish the independence of these States seemed to be that *we* had a military Governor in every State.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said it was quite obvious that the longer we stayed the deeper our claws would stick in. It was very difficult to avoid sending out detachments when all sorts of events were developing all over the place.

*Admiral Fremantle* said from the Admiralty point of view we had no purely naval interests in the Caspian. The naval operations there were subsidiary to the military. So long as our land forces, or Denikin, remained in the Caucasus, it would be essential for their safety that the command of the Caspian should remain under our control. But if, on the other hand, we were going to withdraw, there was no need for our fleet. The point seemed to be that if Denikin gave up his aspirations over Georgia he would be our friend and might rely on our help; but if not, not.

*Captain Coode* said that in order to bomb the Bolshevist fleet at Astrakhan an advanced aeroplane base would be necessary, as the machines at present on the Caspian could not fly from Petrovsk





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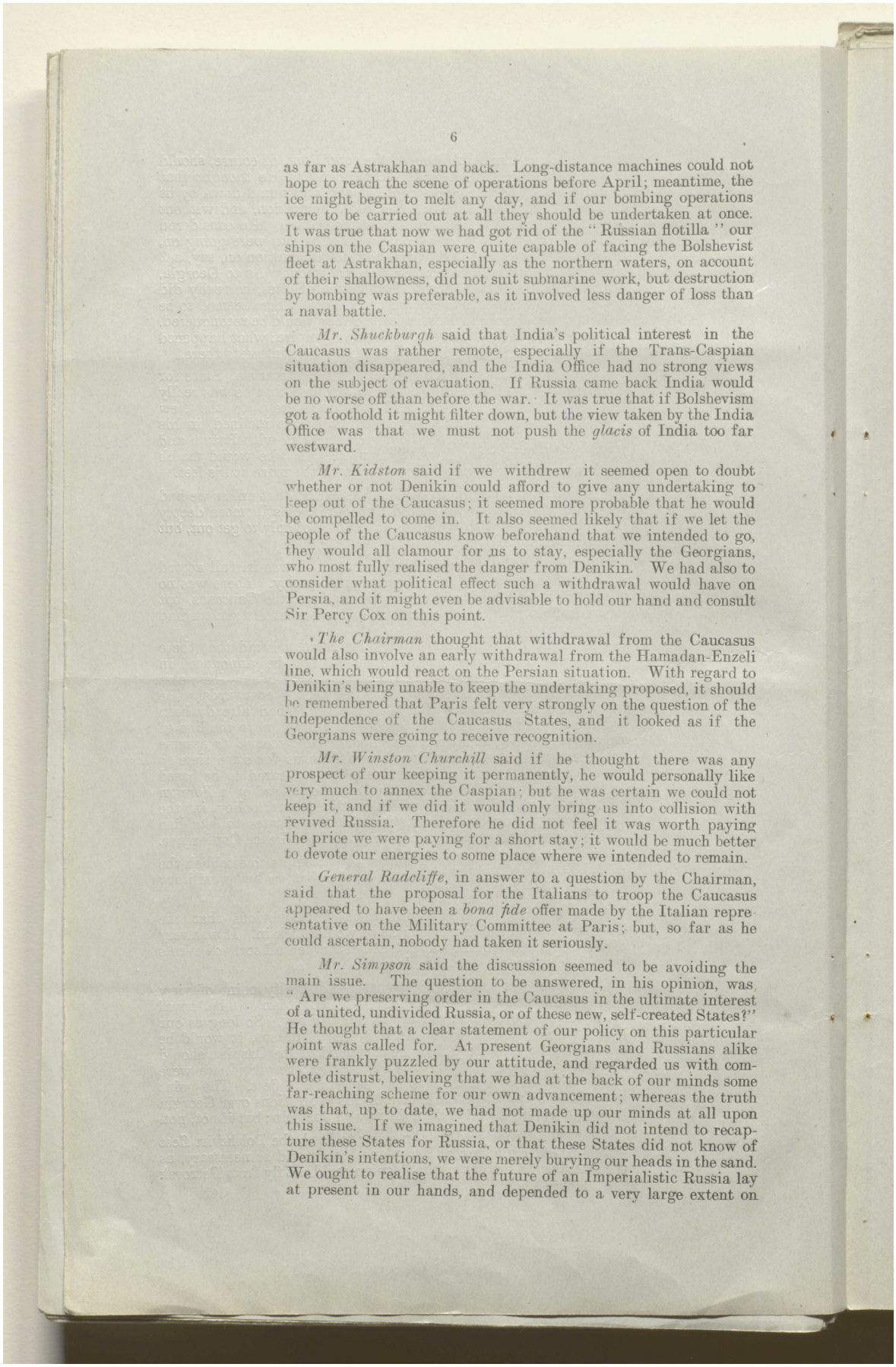



as far as Astrakhan and back. Long-distance machines could not hope to reach the scene of operations before April; meantime, the ice might begin to melt any day, and if our bombing operations were to be carried out at all they should be undertaken at once. It was true that now we had got rid of the "Russian flotilla" our ships on the Caspian were quite capable of facing the Bolshevist fleet at Astrakhan, especially as the northern waters, on account of their shallowness, did not suit submarine work, but destruction by bombing was preferable, as it involved less danger of loss than a naval battle.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that India's political interest in the Caucasus was rather remote, especially if the Trans-Caspian situation disappeared, and the India Office had no strong views on the subject of evacuation. If Russia came back India would be no worse off than before the war. It was true that if Bolshevism got a foothold it might filter down, but the view taken by the India Office was that we must not push the *glacis* of India too far westward.

*Mr. Kidston* said if we withdrew it seemed open to doubt whether or not Denikin could afford to give any undertaking to keep out of the Caucasus; it seemed more probable that he would be compelled to come in. It also seemed likely that if we let the people of the Caucasus know beforehand that we intended to go, they would all clamour for us to stay, especially the Georgians, who most fully realised the danger from Denikin. We had also to consider what political effect such a withdrawal would have on Persia, and it might even be advisable to hold our hand and consult Sir Percy Cox on this point.

*The Chairman* thought that withdrawal from the Caucasus would also involve an early withdrawal from the Hamadan-Enzeli line, which would react on the Persian situation. With regard to Denikin's being unable to keep the undertaking proposed, it should be remembered that Paris felt very strongly on the question of the independence of the Caucasus States, and it looked as if the Georgians were going to receive recognition.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said if he thought there was any prospect of our keeping it permanently, he would personally like very much to annex the Caspian; but he was certain we could not keep it, and if we did it would only bring us into collision with revived Russia. Therefore he did not feel it was worth paying the price we were paying for a short stay; it would be much better to devote our energies to some place where we intended to remain.

*General Radcliffe*, in answer to a question by the Chairman, said that the proposal for the Italians to troop the Caucasus appeared to have been a *bona fide* offer made by the Italian representative on the Military Committee at Paris; but, so far as he could ascertain, nobody had taken it seriously.

*Mr. Simpson* said the discussion seemed to be avoiding the main issue. The question to be answered, in his opinion, was "Are we preserving order in the Caucasus in the ultimate interest of a united, undivided Russia, or of these new, self-created States?" He thought that a clear statement of our policy on this particular point was called for. At present Georgians and Russians alike were frankly puzzled by our attitude, and regarded us with complete distrust, believing that we had at the back of our minds some far-reaching scheme for our own advancement; whereas the truth was that, up to date, we had not made up our minds at all upon this issue. If we imagined that Denikin did not intend to recapture these States for Russia, or that these States did not know of Denikin's intentions, we were merely burying our heads in the sand. We ought to realise that the future of an Imperialistic Russia lay at present in our hands, and depended to a very large extent on



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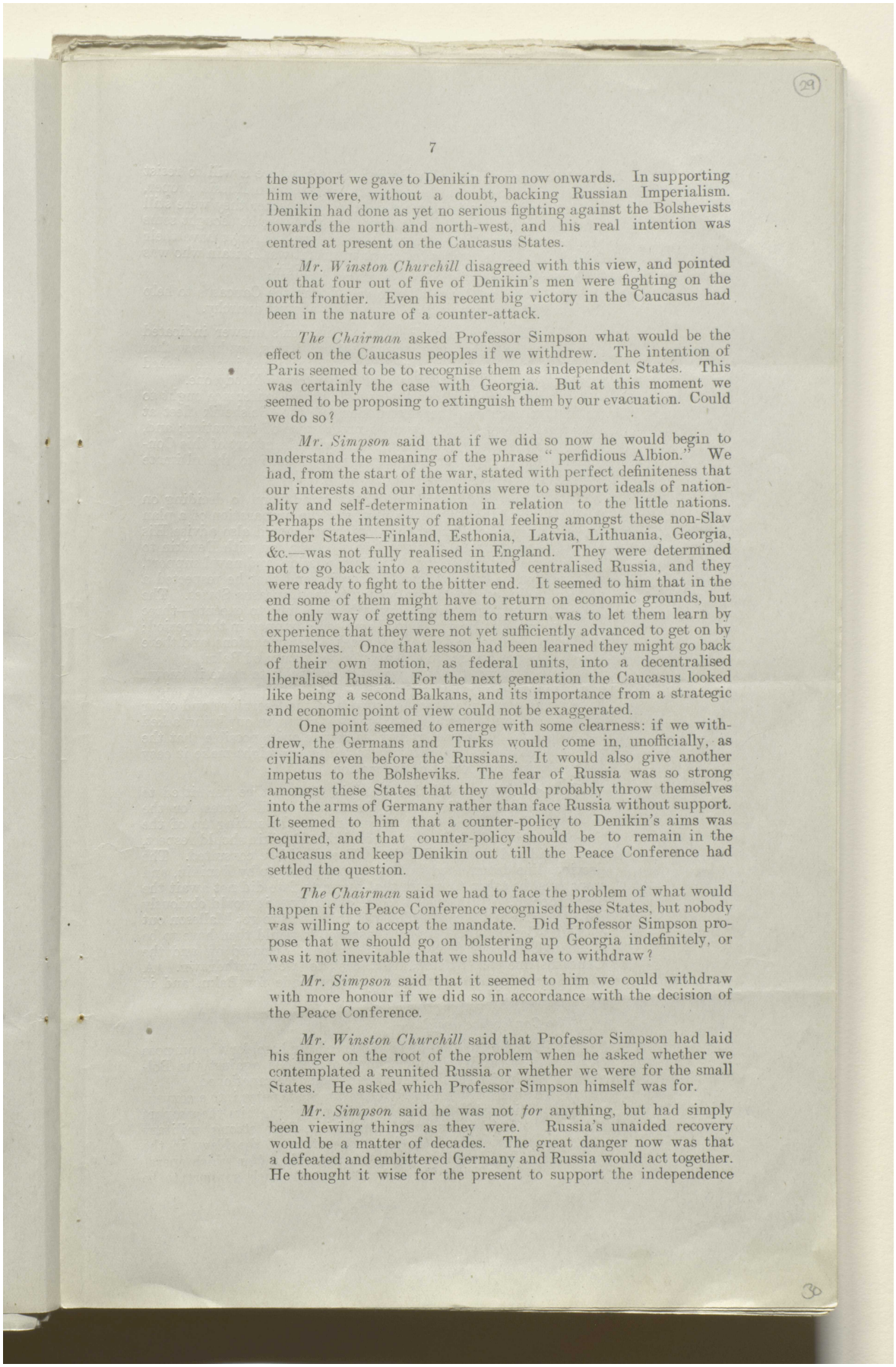

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the support we gave to Denikin from now onwards. In supporting him we were, without a doubt, backing Russian Imperialism. Denikin had done as yet no serious fighting against the Bolshevists towards the north and north-west, and his real intention was centred at present on the Caucasus States.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* disagreed with this view, and pointed out that four out of five of Denikin's men were fighting on the north frontier. Even his recent big victory in the Caucasus had been in the nature of a counter-attack.

*The Chairman* asked Professor Simpson what would be the effect on the Caucasus peoples if we withdrew. The intention of Paris seemed to be to recognise them as independent States. This was certainly the case with Georgia. But at this moment we seemed to be proposing to extinguish them by our evacuation. Could we do so?

*Mr. Simpson* said that if we did so now he would begin to understand the meaning of the phrase "perfidious Albion." We had, from the start of the war, stated with perfect definiteness that our interests and our intentions were to support ideals of nationality and self-determination in relation to the little nations. Perhaps the intensity of national feeling amongst these non-Slav Border States—Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, &c.—was not fully realised in England. They were determined not to go back into a reconstituted centralised Russia, and they were ready to fight to the bitter end. It seemed to him that in the end some of them might have to return on economic grounds, but the only way of getting them to return was to let them learn by experience that they were not yet sufficiently advanced to get on by themselves. Once that lesson had been learned they might go back of their own motion, as federal units, into a decentralised liberalised Russia. For the next generation the Caucasus looked like being a second Balkans, and its importance from a strategic and economic point of view could not be exaggerated.

One point seemed to emerge with some clearness: if we withdrew, the Germans and Turks would come in, unofficially, as civilians even before the Russians. It would also give another impetus to the Bolsheviks. The fear of Russia was so strong amongst these States that they would probably throw themselves into the arms of Germany rather than face Russia without support. It seemed to him that a counter-policy to Denikin's aims was required, and that counter-policy should be to remain in the Caucasus and keep Denikin out till the Peace Conference had settled the question.

*The Chairman* said we had to face the problem of what would happen if the Peace Conference recognised these States, but nobody was willing to accept the mandate. Did Professor Simpson propose that we should go on bolstering up Georgia indefinitely, or was it not inevitable that we should have to withdraw?

*Mr. Simpson* said that it seemed to him we could withdraw with more honour if we did so in accordance with the decision of the Peace Conference.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said that Professor Simpson had laid his finger on the root of the problem when he asked whether we contemplated a reunited Russia or whether we were for the small States. He asked which Professor Simpson himself was for.

*Mr. Simpson* said he was not *for* anything, but had simply been viewing things as they were. Russia's unaided recovery would be a matter of decades. The great danger now was that a defeated and embittered Germany and Russia would act together. He thought it wise for the present to support the independence

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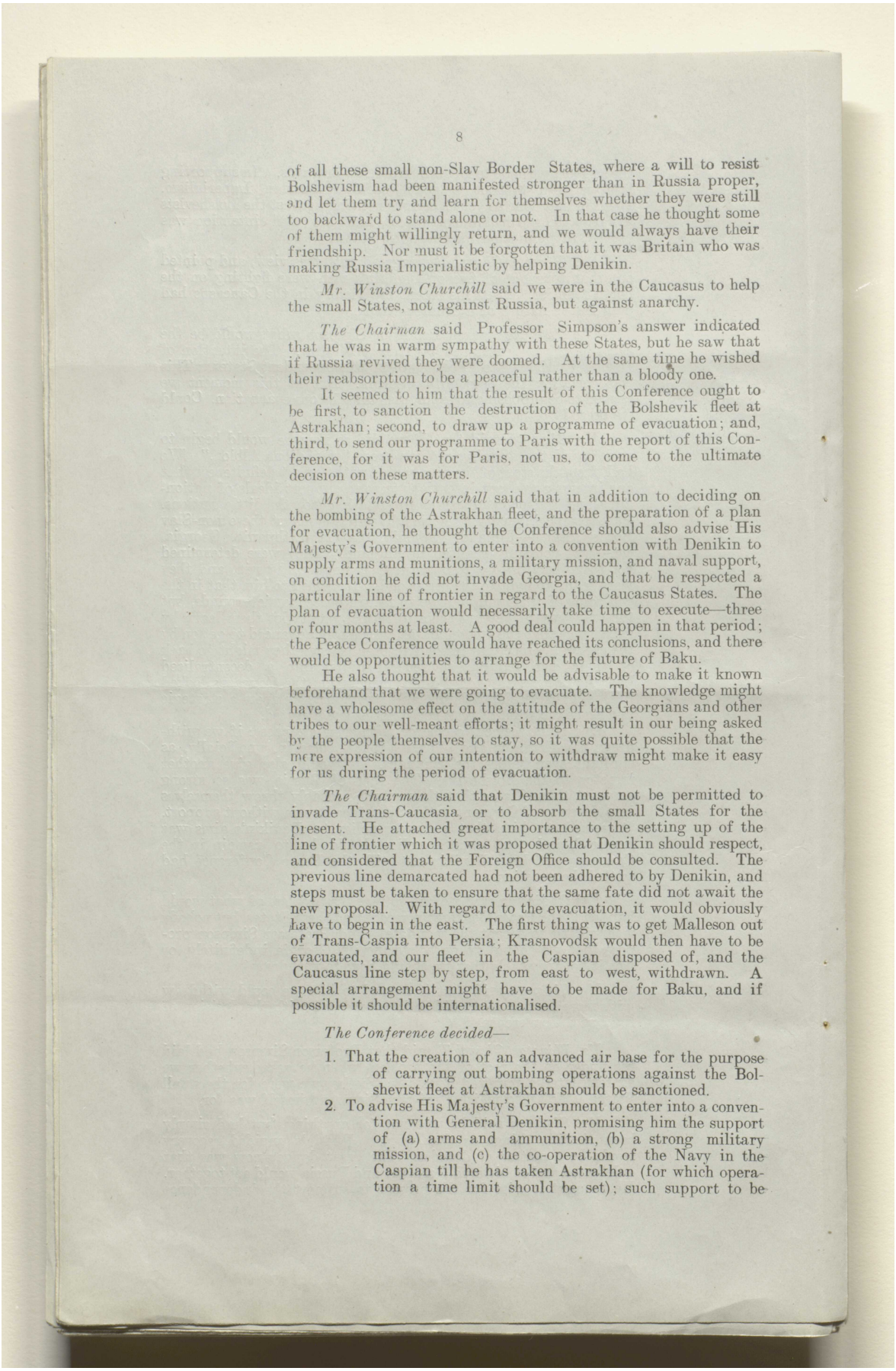



of all these small non-Slav Border States, where a will to resist Bolshevism had been manifested stronger than in Russia proper, and let them try and learn for themselves whether they were still too backward to stand alone or not. In that case he thought some of them might willingly return, and we would always have their friendship. Nor must it be forgotten that it was Britain who was making Russia Imperialistic by helping Denikin.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said we were in the Caucasus to help the small States, not against Russia, but against anarchy.

*The Chairman* said Professor Simpson's answer indicated that he was in warm sympathy with these States, but he saw that if Russia revived they were doomed. At the same time he wished their reabsorption to be a peaceful rather than a bloody one.

It seemed to him that the result of this Conference ought to be first, to sanction the destruction of the Bolshevik fleet at Astrakhan; second, to draw up a programme of evacuation; and, third, to send our programme to Paris with the report of this Conference, for it was for Paris, not us, to come to the ultimate decision on these matters.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said that in addition to deciding on the bombing of the Astrakhan fleet, and the preparation of a plan for evacuation, he thought the Conference should also advise His Majesty's Government to enter into a convention with Denikin to supply arms and munitions, a military mission, and naval support, on condition he did not invade Georgia, and that he respected a particular line of frontier in regard to the Caucasus States. The plan of evacuation would necessarily take time to execute—three or four months at least. A good deal could happen in that period; the Peace Conference would have reached its conclusions, and there would be opportunities to arrange for the future of Baku.

He also thought that it would be advisable to make it known beforehand that we were going to evacuate. The knowledge might have a wholesome effect on the attitude of the Georgians and other tribes to our well-meant efforts; it might result in our being asked by the people themselves to stay, so it was quite possible that the mere expression of our intention to withdraw might make it easy for us during the period of evacuation.

*The Chairman* said that Denikin must not be permitted to invade Trans-Caucasia, or to absorb the small States for the present. He attached great importance to the setting up of the line of frontier which it was proposed that Denikin should respect, and considered that the Foreign Office should be consulted. The previous line demarcated had not been adhered to by Denikin, and steps must be taken to ensure that the same fate did not await the new proposal. With regard to the evacuation, it would obviously have to begin in the east. The first thing was to get Malleson out of Trans-Caspia into Persia; Krasnovodsk would then have to be evacuated, and our fleet in the Caspian disposed of, and the Caucasus line step by step, from east to west, withdrawn. A special arrangement might have to be made for Baku, and if possible it should be internationalised.

*The Conference decided—*

1. That the creation of an advanced air base for the purpose of carrying out bombing operations against the Bolshevist fleet at Astrakhan should be sanctioned.
2. To advise His Majesty's Government to enter into a convention with General Denikin, promising him the support of (a) arms and ammunition, (b) a strong military mission, and (c) the co-operation of the Navy in the Caspian till he has taken Astrakhan (for which operation a time limit should be set); such support to be



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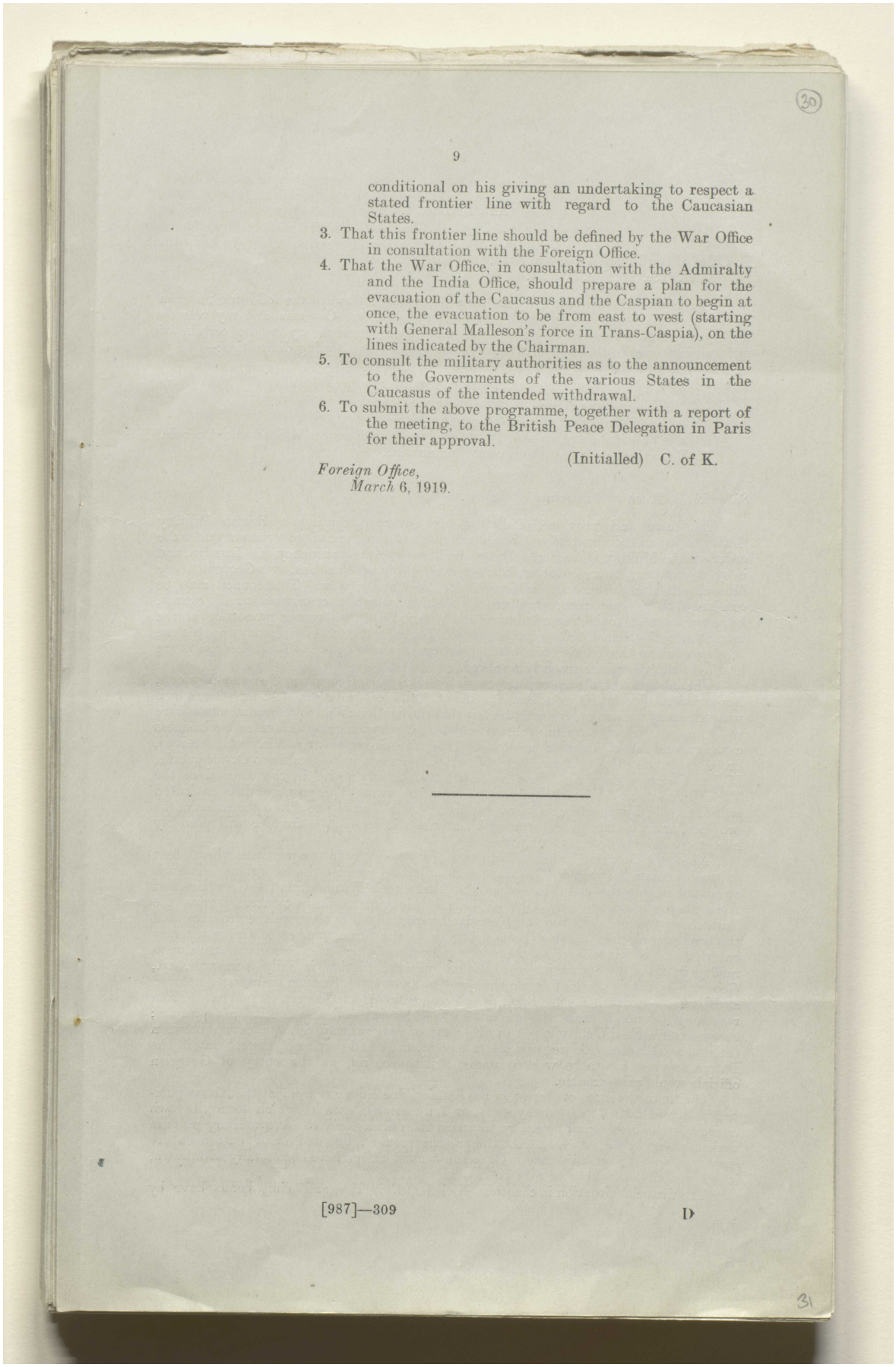

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conditional on his giving an undertaking to respect a stated frontier line with regard to the Caucasian States.

3. That this frontier line should be defined by the War Office in consultation with the Foreign Office.
4. That the War Office, in consultation with the Admiralty and the India Office, should prepare a plan for the evacuation of the Caucasus and the Caspian to begin at once, the evacuation to be from east to west (starting with General Malleson's force in Trans-Caspia), on the lines indicated by the Chairman.
5. To consult the military authorities as to the announcement to the Governments of the various States in the Caucasus of the intended withdrawal.
6. To submit the above programme, together with a report of the meeting, to the British Peace Delegation in Paris for their approval.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*March* 6, 1919.

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## APPENDIX I.

To Chief of the Imperial General Staff,
War Office, London, S.W. 1.

IN accordance with your telegraphic instructions, I forward the following remarks on the situation—political, financial, and military—in Trans-Caucasia, and my reasons for stating that I consider a garrison of two divisions necessary to be certain of maintaining order in the district which labours under the following difficulties :—

(*a.*) An armed population suffering from years of misrule.
(*b.*) Religious and national hatred, mistrust, and jealousy.
(*c.*) Doubt as to the future.
(*d.*) Financial bankruptcy and approaching famine.
(*e.*) The propaganda of Bolshevism working on an illiterate and uneducated people.
(*f.*) The absence of good means of communication.

*Situation in Town and Province of Batum.*

The town and province of Batum are governed through a British Military Governor, by an Administrative Council which carries on the civil government under the orders of the Military Governor. The council is under the presidency of a Russian, and is by way of being representative, being composed of two Russians, two Georgians, one Mussulman, one Armenian, one Greek, one Pole, and a Jew. This council may be considered to be fairly representative of the town, which is cosmopolitan. It cannot, however, be said to be representative of the province, the greater proportion of the inhabitants of which are Georgian-Moslems, *i.e.*, men of Georgian blood who became Moslems during the Turkish rule of the last century and before. These Georgians are hostile to the Georgians properly so-called.

The inhabitants of the province consist of Russians, Georgians, Georgian-Moslems, Armenians, Adjarians, Greeks, Persians, Kurds, Tartars, and Poles. At first the council was extremely unpopular, owing to the fact that the men available to become members were really nonentities without influence or knowledge, but with great assurance, no business capacity, and full of fantastic proposals. Now the Government is fairly well received, probably on the score that any form of self-government is preferable to Ottoman rule. Violent Georgian propaganda has become, however, very active in the town since the Turkish guards on the Georgian frontier were withdrawn. This propaganda is instituted without doubt by the Georgian Government, who are anxious to obtain possession of the province, and who have been warned that unless it ceases the frontier will probably have to be closed to all without passes.

No doubt Georgian propagandists have also been busy in the province, where great animosity exists between the Russians and Adjarians against the Georgians. To such an extent is this the case, that when the Turks took Batum from the Georgians last April, they were assisted by 2,000 Adjarians belonging to the province. During the Turkish occupation of Batum the Georgians were compelled to leave the province, and the frontier was closed against them. Owing to the large number of Georgians now entering the province, and to the minor difficulties which the Georgians are always raising in their dealings with the Batum officials, friction is daily increasing, *e.g.*, Georgian operators on the telegraphs refuse to answer the Russian operators employed at Batum; the Russo-Asiatic Bank, which was removed to Georgia, is prevented from returning; Batum officials who are now in Georgia are refused permission to return; every conceivable difficulty is put in the way of free railway communication between Georgia and Batum. As regards the last point, the small portion of the railway in the Batum province has to be worked under British control, as the entry of Georgian officials would raise trouble.

Owing to the state of unrest in the district, due chiefly to the fact that the population is divided into a great many sects all fully armed, each of which forms its own council, it has been found necessary to guard the railway and to have military posts in various places in the province. At the present moment two and a half battalions are employed carrying out this duty. Once the Turkish troops have been totally withdrawn, it is hoped that this number may be reduced.

The financial situation is chaotic. Nicholai, Kerensky, and Tiflis bonds have by



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proclamation been made legal tender of the same rouble value, but as the latter are not accepted outside the Caucasus, trade with Southern Russia is a matter of great difficulty, and the food question is adopting a serious attitude. Once the pipe-line is repaired, it may become possible to exchange oil for flour. Agitation is kept alive by the political societies, who, acting on President Wilson's principles, desire to send delegates to the Peace Conference. They fear to be incorporated with Georgia, which they hate. The future position of the province, which is certainly not Georgian, presents a problem of some complexity.

*Situation in the Province of Kars.*

It has been found necessary that, on the withdrawal of the Turkish Army formerly in occupation, the Government of the province of Kars should be carried on by a British Military Governor. An administrative council, so-called representative, carries on the civil government under his orders. It is representative in that it represents nothing but Moslems, for, as a result of Turkish rule in the province, practically the whole of the inhabitants left are Moslems, the proper Armenian population having been either killed or driven out. For the moment the council is getting on fairly well with the Military Governor, but unfortunately both the council and the Moslem inhabitants are at present determined to refuse to permit the several thousands of Armenian refugees of the province to return to their homes. Although it is not intended that these people should return until food and safety can be assured, this state of affairs can only be temporary. The national Moslem attitude must be either changed or overcome. With the complete departure of the Turkish troops and Turkish Governor, a more rational spirit may possibly prevail. In any case we must be prepared before the end of March, when they sow their fields, to allow the Armenians to return to their homes, and afford them protection when they are there. This will certainly not be effected without a show of force. Every man in the province is armed, with plenty of ammunition, and apparently there exists some form of militia, of which I have not yet obtained full particulars.

At least one infantry battalion and some cavalry are required as a permanent garrison, and, in the event of trouble, troops will have to be moved from the Tiflis reserve.

*Situation in the State of Armenia.*

The Government is democratic, very much in want of money, and is believed to as honest as any collection of Armenians is capable of being. It is practically prepare to do anything which the British command desires it to do. The population is chiefly Armenian, but there is a strong minority of Moslems and so-called Tartars, who are probably not really of Tartar descent. The size of the standing army is about eighteen battalions, but it cannot be viewed as a danger to us, as it is unlikely it would ever take the field against us. Though the Government and the senior officers can generally be trusted not to countenance the excesses against the Tartars, neither the Armenians nor the Tartars themselves can be trusted in the same way. There is also a very strong feeling of hostility between the Armenians and the Georgians, as was shown in the break-out of military operations shortly before the arrival of the 27th Division. As a whole, the Armenian Republic appears to be much more pro-Russian than either the Georgian or the Azerbaijan Republics; its army is said to contain many Russian officers. The real danger of trouble in this Republic exists in the hatred between the Armenians and Tartars. Herein lies the possibility of disturbances, and it is a very real and serious possibility.

The Tartar zones lie practically—

(*a.*) In the country south of the Apa Chai River,
(*b.*) In the country south-east of Shusha,
(*c.*) In the neighbourhood of Elizabetpol;

(*a*) is dealt with below under the heading of the Nakhichevan District; (*b*) and (*c*) are dealt with under the Azerbaijan Republic. In addition, there exist many Tartar villages, especially in the direction of Erivan, in the middle of an otherwise purely Armenian population, which constitutes a grave danger.

It would be advisable to keep one battalion in the Armenian Republic area.



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*Situation in the Nakhichevan District.*

This district, the northern and southern boundaries of which have not yet been completely defined, is mainly Tartar, and has never been occupied effectively by the Armenian Republic, which they claim to do. As the result of recent disturbances, it has been found necessary to institute a British Military Governorship for it, with the local emergency Tartar Government as an administrative council. How this will work time alone will show.

Every man is armed to the teeth, and, in addition, there exists some sort of armed forces of which I have not yet received particulars. The possibility of disturbances is very much the same as in the case of the Armenian Republic, except that here the Tartars are in the majority and will not be so easy to keep in order as the Armenians. When the spring comes, they will want to drive their herds on to the lands administered by the Armenian Republic. For this reason, I consider it essential that an infantry battalion and two troops of cavalry should remain in the district.

*Situation in the Georgian Republic.*

The Government, which calls itself democratic, is really ultra-Socialistic of the most advanced type. Nationalisation of land and wealth has been the rule, thus reducing the former ruling classes to impotency. Administrative posts have been filled with incompetent and wasteful staffs all drawing large salaries, and it is doubtful to what extent a single Government office contributes to the revenue of the country. Certainly the railways and telegraphs are run at a considerable loss. When funds run low some form of wealth is nationalised, and the money thus obtained, less official peculations, is applied to replenishing them. In this way a wealthy Armenian wine merchant in Tiflis has just been plundered of his stock by special Act of Parliament. In addition, it is said that the house property in Tiflis will shortly be nationalised; and as house property belongs chiefly to Armenians, whom the Georgians detest, the measure will be a popular method of temporarily increasing the revenue. In fact, the Republic is to all intents and purposes a Bolshevist Republic, which intends to keep its plunder to itself, and therefore has not much use for other Bolsheviks.

The President of the Council and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs are the two most moderate men in the Government, which is, however, a very weak one, and held together only by the cohesive force of a policy of universal national plunder. It is believed to be on the verge of bankruptcy, and in this fact now lies the chief danger; for bad and weak as the Government is, there does not appear to be any strong man to form a better one, that is to say, a Government which would try to put its house in order and would incur unpopularity to increase taxes and railway and postal charges. The Government is not popular with all parties, and two other parties are known to exist, one Russian and the other Bolshevist. Neither is powerful, but either or both is capable of making mischief should the Government get into trouble. So far as active hostility on the part of the present Government is concerned the situation has undoubtedly been greatly improved by the recent declaration of sympathy of the British Government, but covert hostility largely exists, *e.g.*, every conceivable difficulty is put in the way of railway administration, and up to date it has been found impossible to co-ordinate the railway administration of the different republics. Other difficulties are put in the way of procuring accommodation and supplies for the troops, and undoubtedly there is still a very strong pro-German feeling. Should the Government fail, there is considerable chance of an interregnum of anarchy. There are over 100,000 well-hated Armenians in the town, and a massacre is always to be feared.

The peace strength of the army is about eighteen battalions, but for service against Armenia in the recent conflict the Republic mobilised some 20,000 to 25,000 men in about a fortnight. It is unlikely that the army would be used against British troops, certainly not by the present Government; but still it is a danger requiring careful consideration, more especially having regard to the Bolshevist danger from the north, and to the possibility of having to defend Georgia from Bolshevist invasion from beyond the Caucasus main watershed. Bolshevists at Vladikavkaz may actually invade Georgia to obtain recruits, or may even be driven in to escape from a victorious Denikin's army. Undoubtedly they are filling Georgia with their agents and propaganda.

It would appear necessary to retain the following troops in Georgia:—

(*a.*) At Poti, half battalion until all the Germans have been evacuated.

(*b.*) On the railway between Notanebi and Tiflis, one battalion.



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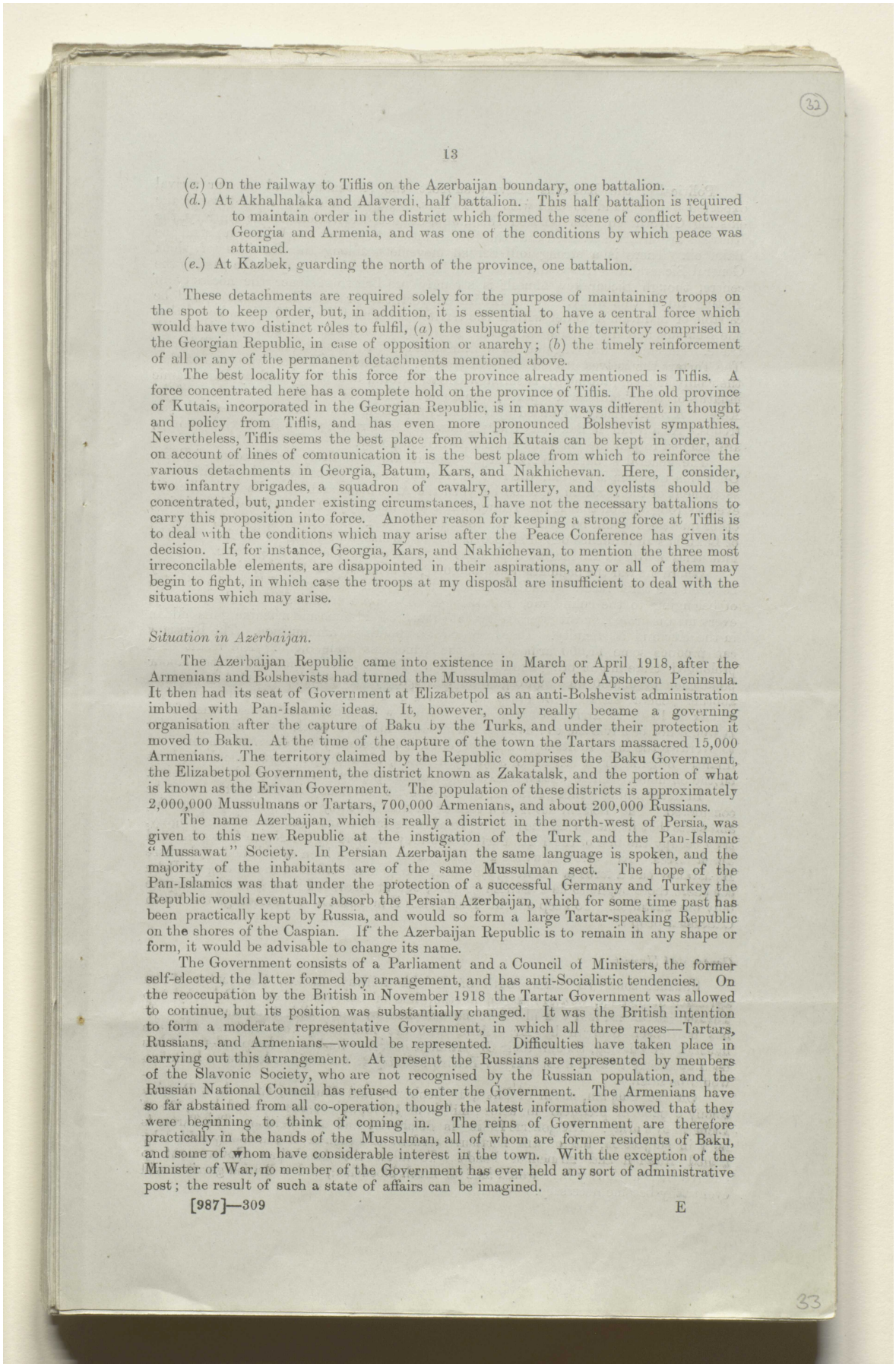



(*c.*) On the railway to Tiflis on the Azerbaijan boundary, one battalion.
(*d.*) At Akhalhalaka and Alaverdi, half battalion. This half battalion is required to maintain order in the district which formed the scene of conflict between Georgia and Armenia, and was one of the conditions by which peace was attained.
(*e.*) At Kazbek, guarding the north of the province, one battalion.

These detachments are required solely for the purpose of maintaining troops on the spot to keep order, but, in addition, it is essential to have a central force which would have two distinct rôles to fulfil, (*a*) the subjugation of the territory comprised in the Georgian Republic, in case of opposition or anarchy; (*b*) the timely reinforcement of all or any of the permanent detachments mentioned above.

The best locality for this force for the province already mentioned is Tiflis. A force concentrated here has a complete hold on the province of Tiflis. The old province of Kutais, incorporated in the Georgian Republic, is in many ways different in thought and policy from Tiflis, and has even more pronounced Bolshevist sympathies. Nevertheless, Tiflis seems the best place from which Kutais can be kept in order, and on account of lines of communication it is the best place from which to reinforce the various detachments in Georgia, Batum, Kars, and Nakhichevan. Here, I consider, two infantry brigades, a squadron of cavalry, artillery, and cyclists should be concentrated, but, under existing circumstances, I have not the necessary battalions to carry this proposition into force. Another reason for keeping a strong force at Tiflis is to deal with the conditions which may arise after the Peace Conference has given its decision. If, for instance, Georgia, Kars, and Nakhichevan, to mention the three most irreconcilable elements, are disappointed in their aspirations, any or all of them may begin to fight, in which case the troops at my disposal are insufficient to deal with the situations which may arise.

*Situation in Azerbaijan.*

The Azerbaijan Republic came into existence in March or April 1918, after the Armenians and Bolshevists had turned the Mussulman out of the Apsheron Peninsula. It then had its seat of Government at Elizabetpol as an anti-Bolshevist administration imbued with Pan-Islamic ideas. It, however, only really became a governing organisation after the capture of Baku by the Turks, and under their protection it moved to Baku. At the time of the capture of the town the Tartars massacred 15,000 Armenians. The territory claimed by the Republic comprises the Baku Government, the Elizabetpol Government, the district known as Zakatalsk, and the portion of what is known as the Erivan Government. The population of these districts is approximately 2,000,000 Mussulmans or Tartars, 700,000 Armenians, and about 200,000 Russians.

The name Azerbaijan, which is really a district in the north-west of Persia, was given to this new Republic at the instigation of the Turk and the Pan-Islamic "Mussawat" Society. In Persian Azerbaijan the same language is spoken, and the majority of the inhabitants are of the same Mussulman sect. The hope of the Pan-Islamics was that under the protection of a successful Germany and Turkey the Republic would eventually absorb the Persian Azerbaijan, which for some time past has been practically kept by Russia, and would so form a large Tartar-speaking Republic on the shores of the Caspian. If the Azerbaijan Republic is to remain in any shape or form, it would be advisable to change its name.

The Government consists of a Parliament and a Council of Ministers, the former self-elected, the latter formed by arrangement, and has anti-Socialistic tendencies. On the reoccupation by the British in November 1918 the Tartar Government was allowed to continue, but its position was substantially changed. It was the British intention to form a moderate representative Government, in which all three races—Tartars, Russians, and Armenians—would be represented. Difficulties have taken place in carrying out this arrangement. At present the Russians are represented by members of the Slavonic Society, who are not recognised by the Russian population, and the Russian National Council has refused to enter the Government. The Armenians have so far abstained from all co-operation, though the latest information showed that they were beginning to think of coming in. The reins of Government are therefore practically in the hands of the Mussulman, all of whom are former residents of Baku, and some of whom have considerable interest in the town. With the exception of the Minister of War, no member of the Government has ever held any sort of administrative post; the result of such a state of affairs can be imagined.

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Politically, the Russians actively support the Armenians, and on our arrival expected a free hand to deal with the Tartars. Our attitude of working through the existing Government has puzzled them, and, despite declarations to the contrary, the Russians are firmly convinced that the British intend to annex Azerbaijan and steal the Baku oil. There is a strong anti-British movement among the Russians, of which General Bicharakov's troops and fleet, paid largely by British money in the past, is the centre, though Bicharakov himself is strongly pro-British. Hence the necessity of getting rid of this army. With British support, the present Government would be capable of maintaining order within the territories claimed for itself. It is hoped that the Russians and Armenians will become gradually reconciled and busy themselves with trade. The chief agitator against us is M. Minorsky, of the Russian Legation at Teheran. The Tartars themselves are led by Hun Hoisky, an educated lawyer, who realises that their only hope of autonomy is through Great Britain, but is opposed by Pan-Islamic fanatics of the "Mussawat" party, who do not sufficiently recognise the victory of the Allies. A recent rising organised by this party near Shusha was put down by Azerbaijan troops. As a result, in Baku city the "Mussawat" leaders, who have Bolshevist leanings, are inclined to join the Russians in an anti-British policy.

The general situation in Azerbaijan depends almost entirely on the town of Baku. Once this question is settled, the rest of Azerbaijan will probably resolve itself into a settlement of the agrarian question between the Armenians and Mussulmans. There is even a strong opinion that if the Baku district was held by an International Commission, other questions would be settled with comparative ease. Owing to its wealth, the town of Baku has an influence out of all proportion to its size, and owing to the fact that the industries of Russia are largely dependent on Baku oil for their motive power.

Before the war the population was 350,000; it is now about 260,000, divided equally between the three races. The Russians supply the skilled labour and have the prestige of belonging to the ruling race in the past. Despite a proclamation to the contrary, every man is armed, and it is probable that there are field guns and machine guns hidden in the city and its vicinity. There are ample supplies of ammunition. The Russians can produce some 11,000 armed men, the Armenians some 8,000. The result of a prolonged strike might bring about a collision. The last strike showed that the labour population of 65,000 was well organised and led by the Russians. At the present, another general strike is in prospect. This is being staved off for the present, but a climax is likely to arrive sooner or later, when it will be necessary to use armed force. It would not be advisable to leave the Tartar Government to settle this strike. In order to overawe the inhabitants by a show of force, it is necessary to keep a minimum of an infantry brigade and a brigade of artillery in Baku, while further troops should be kept on the oil-fields. The eventual disarmament of the population must also be considered.

In determining other garrisons, the Bolshevist movement in the north has to be considered. The Bolshevists from a base at Astrakhan carry on an active propaganda, and state that in the spring they intend to advance by sea and land on Baku. Roughly, they occupy the line of the Kazi Yurt, where they are held by the North Caucasian and Terek forces. At Petrovsk, where a British naval base has been established, and where Bicharakov had a force of about 2,000 men, the general officer commanding at Baku considers there ought to be a British brigade, but at present I have been able to spare only one battalion. To keep off the Bolshevists it is essential to encourage the North Caucasian people.

*Centres of Unrest.*

Shusha, some 70 miles south of Evlakh railway station, the centre of an agricultural district, was garrisoned at the time of our occupation of Baku by two Turkish battalions, and was about to be attacked by Andronik's Armenian army. It has now been overrun by Armenians, who are murdering the Tartars, who are naturally retaliating, though their Government is trying its best to keep order. It has been necessary to send a company of British infantry to maintain order, but a battalion would be safer.

On the Caspian, south of Baku, at Lenkoran and Mughan, there is a Russian colony capable of producing an armed militia of 5,000, at present assisted by 2,000 of Bicharakov's army. The general feeling is Bolshevist and anti-British. The Tartar is held in subjection, and on the northern borders of Mughan is constantly raided by armed Russian and Armenian bands. To allow the Azerbaijan Government to enforce their authority here would lead to much bloodshed, and a British garrison will eventually become necessary.



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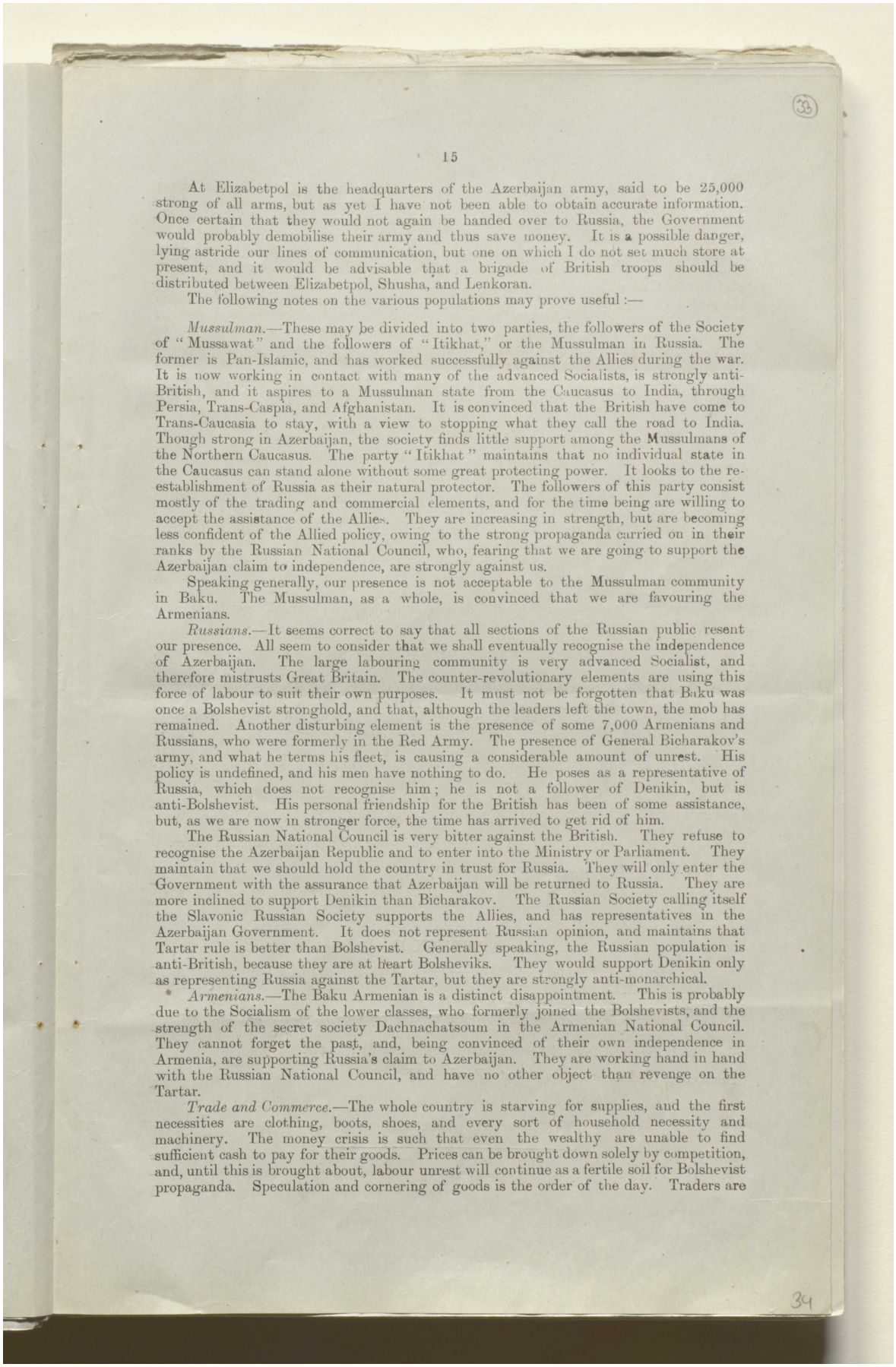



At Elizabetpol is the headquarters of the Azerbaijan army, said to be 25,000 strong of all arms, but as yet I have not been able to obtain accurate information. Once certain that they would not again be handed over to Russia, the Government would probably demobilise their army and thus save money. It is a possible danger, lying astride our lines of communication, but one on which I do not set much store at present, and it would be advisable that a brigade of British troops should be distributed between Elizabetpol, Shusha, and Lenkoran.

The following notes on the various populations may prove useful :—

*Mussulman.*—These may be divided into two parties, the followers of the Society of "Mussawat" and the followers of "Itikhat," or the Mussulman in Russia. The former is Pan-Islamic, and has worked successfully against the Allies during the war. It is now working in contact with many of the advanced Socialists, is strongly anti-British, and it aspires to a Mussulman state from the Caucasus to India, through Persia, Trans-Caspia, and Afghanistan. It is convinced that the British have come to Trans-Caucasia to stay, with a view to stopping what they call the road to India. Though strong in Azerbaijan, the society finds little support among the Mussulmans of the Northern Caucasus. The party "Itikhat" maintains that no individual state in the Caucasus can stand alone without some great protecting power. It looks to the re-establishment of Russia as their natural protector. The followers of this party consist mostly of the trading and commercial elements, and for the time being are willing to accept the assistance of the Allies. They are increasing in strength, but are becoming less confident of the Allied policy, owing to the strong propaganda carried on in their ranks by the Russian National Council, who, fearing that we are going to support the Azerbaijan claim to independence, are strongly against us.

Speaking generally, our presence is not acceptable to the Mussulman community in Baku. The Mussulman, as a whole, is convinced that we are favouring the Armenians.

*Russians.*—It seems correct to say that all sections of the Russian public resent our presence. All seem to consider that we shall eventually recognise the independence of Azerbaijan. The large labouring community is very advanced Socialist, and therefore mistrusts Great Britain. The counter-revolutionary elements are using this force of labour to suit their own purposes. It must not be forgotten that Baku was once a Bolshevist stronghold, and that, although the leaders left the town, the mob has remained. Another disturbing element is the presence of some 7,000 Armenians and Russians, who were formerly in the Red Army. The presence of General Bicharakov's army, and what he terms his fleet, is causing a considerable amount of unrest. His policy is undefined, and his men have nothing to do. He poses as a representative of Russia, which does not recognise him; he is not a follower of Denikin, but is anti-Bolshevist. His personal friendship for the British has been of some assistance, but, as we are now in stronger force, the time has arrived to get rid of him.

The Russian National Council is very bitter against the British. They refuse to recognise the Azerbaijan Republic and to enter into the Ministry or Parliament. They maintain that we should hold the country in trust for Russia. They will only enter the Government with the assurance that Azerbaijan will be returned to Russia. They are more inclined to support Denikin than Bicharakov. The Russian Society calling itself the Slavonic Russian Society supports the Allies, and has representatives in the Azerbaijan Government. It does not represent Russian opinion, and maintains that Tartar rule is better than Bolshevist. Generally speaking, the Russian population is anti-British, because they are at heart Bolsheviks. They would support Denikin only as representing Russia against the Tartar, but they are strongly anti-monarchical.

*Armenians.*—The Baku Armenian is a distinct disappointment. This is probably due to the Socialism of the lower classes, who formerly joined the Bolshevists, and the strength of the secret society Dachnachatsoum in the Armenian National Council. They cannot forget the past, and, being convinced of their own independence in Armenia, are supporting Russia's claim to Azerbaijan. They are working hand in hand with the Russian National Council, and have no other object than revenge on the Tartar.

*Trade and Commerce.*—The whole country is starving for supplies, and the first necessities are clothing, boots, shoes, and every sort of household necessity and machinery. The money crisis is such that even the wealthy are unable to find sufficient cash to pay for their goods. Prices can be brought down solely by competition, and, until this is brought about, labour unrest will continue as a fertile soil for Bolshevist propaganda. Speculation and cornering of goods is the order of the day. Traders are



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doing their best to maintain high prices. Indiscriminate importation of goods would result in the wealthy merchants buying up wholesale, and thus cornering supplies. The Russian bank has been taken over by the British, and is being conducted by them, but this can only be a temporary arrangement. Undoubtedly, steps will have to be taken at an early date by the Allied Governments to encourage imports and bring down prices. The financial question caused by the unstable position of the rouble requires also careful consideration, not only in Azerbaijan, but in the whole of Trans-Caucasia. Financially, the whole country seems to be rushing to ruin. It is to be noted that the French representatives are already booking trade orders in considerable quantities, and it might be advisable that British representatives, who have some knowledge of trade conditions in Russia, should be sent out to look after British interests. In each case, some form of granting credit would have to be arrived at by the British Government. All imported goods would have to be sold to the consumer, and under Allied control, otherwise cornering and profiteering will be rampant.

*General*

From the above it will be seen that the situation in Azerbaijan is more complicated and more full of danger than in Georgia. These dangers are :—

1. The lack of anybody holding the confidence of the people and administrative capabilities.
2. The anti-British attitude of the labouring and lower classes, due to their idea that the British Government intends taking Baku from Russia.
3. The fact that the population is armed.
4. The proximity to the Bolshevist army, and the hope of support from them. A strong Bolshevist propaganda is in progress.
5. The lack of employment for thousands of people, who naturally get themselves into mischief.

An official declaration of the Allied policy in Trans-Caucasia would do away with many of these difficulties, though it may necessitate the employment of troops to insis on that policy being carried out. While Georgia and Azerbaijan are endeavouring to maintain their independence, the Russians in Trans-Caucasia are strong upholders of some form of Russian Government there, and the same may be said of the Armenians outside Armenia. Whatever is decided, it is very doubtful whether those small States can ever be wholly independent. Free trade between the States, with one railway, postal, and telegraph system, appears absolutely essential owing to the interdependence of one part of the country on the other, and the governing factor that the Baku oilfield supplies not only the motive power, but the money for fuller development

(Signed) G. F. MILNE, *General*,
*Commanding-in-Chief, British Salonika Force.*

*G.H.Q., Constantinople, February* 6, 1919.

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## APPENDIX II.

(B, 1/2487. M.I. 2.) *March* 3, 1919.

THE Director of Military Intelligence presents his compliments to the Acting Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and begs to transmit herewith, for Sir Ronald Graham's information, copy of a report on the Georgian Government by Major McDonnell, received from General Headquarters, Constantinople.

The Acting Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office.

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The Director of Military Intelligence,
War Office, London, S.W.

I forward herewith for your information a report on the Georgian Government, which has been received from Major McDonnel, late British consul, Tiflis.

A précis of this report was sent you by telegram on the 27th January, under reference No. I. 4596.

(For Major-General, General Staff, British Salonika Force.)

(Signed) , *Lieutenant-Colonel, General Staff.*

*G.H.Q., Constantinople, January* 27, 1919.

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*G.H.Q., General Staff, "Intelligence,"*
*Constantinople, No.* 2643, *"I."*

GEORGIAN GOVERNMENT.

The following are the names of the members of the present Government at Tiflis :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Prime Minister | ... ... | M. Jordani (Social Democrat). |
| Foreign Affairs | ... ... | M. Gegechkori (Social Democrat). |
| Interior ... | ... ... | Ramishwilli (Social Democrat Labour). |
| Finance and Trade | ... ... | Jurilli (National Democrat). |
| War ... | ... ... | Georgadzi (Social Democrat). |
| Education ... | ... ... | Lorkashashwilli (Federatist). |
| Supplies ... | ... ... | Ardashwilli (Non-party). |
| Ways and Means | ... ... | Lorkepianidze (Social Revolutionary). |
| Justice .. | ... ... | Alexiev Meskiev (Federalist). |
| Lands and Agriculture | ... | Homeriki (Social Democrat). |
| President of the Parliament | ... | M. Cheidzi (Social Revolutionary). |

Nominally democratic, the Government is really entirely in the hands of the advanced Socialist party in the Parliament, who have gained very considerable popularity with the labouring and peasant classes. The actual members of the Council of Ministers are not true Georgians, but either Emeritins or Mongralians ; this causes a certain amount of discontent among the true Georgians. The methods and ethics of the Government are ultra-socialistic. Land has already been nationalised, and railways and all public institutions are to be nationalised during the early part of this year.

The Georgian Government maintains—

(1.) That they are already actually an established and independent State.
(2.) That no decision of any outside Power or peace conference can alter the fact of their independence.
(3.) That their boundaries are fixed by the history of their nation.
(4.) That all property and institutions at present within the boundaries of historical Georgia belong to the Georgian Republic.
(5.) That they are perfectly able to maintain order within their boundaries, and in this respect require no help from outside.

1. The actual establishment of the present Georgian Republic came about with the advent of the German troops. M. Gegechkori, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, states that he, as a representative of the then Tiflis Commissariate, applied to Colonel Pike, the representative of the British Mission in Tiflis, for British or Allied assistance in troops and finance in order to keep the Turk out of Georgia and to establish Georgian independence. On being informed that this was impossible, the Tiflis Commissariate accepted Germany's offer, and M. Gegechkori left the Government. He subsequently returned to office on the 4th December, when news of armistice and the removal of the Turk and German from the Caucasus was confirmed.

2. Their apparent conviction that nothing can alter the fact of their independence is based on statements of Mr. Lloyd George and President Wilson regarding the independence and self-determination of other small nations, and our own support of the rights of the Armenian people. This conviction makes arguments as to their attitude towards various questions almost impossible. Statements made by our own Labour party are constantly brought to bear when discussing their actions and the probability of these prejudicing their claims to future independence.





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3. Disputes between the Georgians and their neighbours are bound to arise over historical boundaries. Vast tracts of land were originally owned by the Georgian aristocracy. These people in many cases found that Armenian and Mussulman labour was cheaper and more industrious than their own people; large tracts of land, therefore, gradually became populated with Armenians and Mussulmans. Added to which, tribes were continually invading the country; and, further, after the conquest of the Caucasus, the Russian Government did everything to encourage colonisation by the Armenians and Tartar tribes. The Georgian aristocracy, who are a pleasure-seeking and lazy people, later fell into debt to these colonists, and mortgaged or sold them their lands. Consequently large tracts of historic Georgia are now actually populated with a preponderance of Armenians or Tartars and in many cases these people actually hold the lands. The Georgians now claim that these historic lands should be included in their territories, while the Armenians or Tartars, fearing the advanced socialism and nationalisation of lands by the Georgians, claim the right of the majority to settle their destinies, and are willing to fight for their lands.

4. That all property on Georgian territory belongs to the Georgian Republic is a source of endless dispute between the Georgians and the Russians, the latter maintaining that railways and institutions built up entirely on Russian money cannot be considered as the property of Georgia. The same applies to the large quantity of military stores and material supplied for the Russian armies on the Caucasian front, and at present in the hands of Georgia.

5. That the Georgian Government is able to maintain order within its boundaries seems to be more or less correct, and, compared with the rest of Russia, order exists. German troops have done much to establish this, although they never seem to have been used except for the moral effect of their presence. The Government maintain that the social reforms and nationalisation of the land did much to establish order and check Bolshevist propaganda. The German troops were under contract to support the Government, or risk an infringement of the contract, which meant the loss of trade concessions to Germany. The reactionary element is very weak in Georgia, and led by an indolent aristocracy.

The Prime Minister (M. Jordani) and the Minister for Foreign Affairs are undoubtedly the soundest elements in the Government. They are both former members of the old Russian Duma, men of enlightenment and high education, and more democratic than socialist. They are, however, almost entirely in the hands of the ultra-socialistic elements, which are led by Cheidzi and Ramishwilli, with Tseritilli in the background. Open support of Jordani and Gegechkori, with a fixed policy and a strong guiding hand on the part of the Allies, would probably have the effect of establishing a feeling of strength and confidence among the followers of the democratic element, and enable Messrs. Jordani, Gegechkori, and Co. to check the extreme socialistic left party. Even the most violent Monarchists are rightly of the opinion that a change of Government at the present time might lead to fatal results and place the country entirely in the hands of the ultra-socialists, and even, perhaps, the Bolshevists. It seems an established fact that certain members of the Parliament, if not actually members of the Government, have been flirting with the Bolshevists at Vladikavkas, and many of the infantry regiments are ready at any moment to throw in their lot with the Bolshevists. One of the reasons of this is the close proximity of Denikin and his army. The Socialists openly state that, rather than run the risk of conquest by Denikin and a Russian Monarchy, they would rather hand over the country to the Bolshevists.

*Anti-Russian Feeling.*—This is most extraordinarily strongly marked in all parties. On the one hand are the Russian Bolshevists' pretensions to Georgia, and, on the other, Denikin and his Monarchists, and the fact that every Russian looks upon the Caucasus as a part of the Russian Empire. Russians are badly treated, and looked upon with great suspicion.

*Anti-British Feeling.*—There is a feeling of distrust towards us more than dislike. Every Socialist naturally distrusts the British, and looks upon us as Imperialists. They cannot imagine that we have not come to stay in one form or another. The Georgian Nationalist cannot fathom our policy, and states that he cannot understand a policy which presumably aims at supporting the claims of small people, among whom Georgia should be included, yet, at the same time, supports Denikin, his volunteer army, the Czecho-Slavs, the Ufa Government, Kolchak, all of whom have the main object of re-establishing a Russian empire within her former boundaries.

*Armenian Question.*—The whole of this question is far too complicated and involved to be dealt with in this report. As far as concerns the limits of this report,



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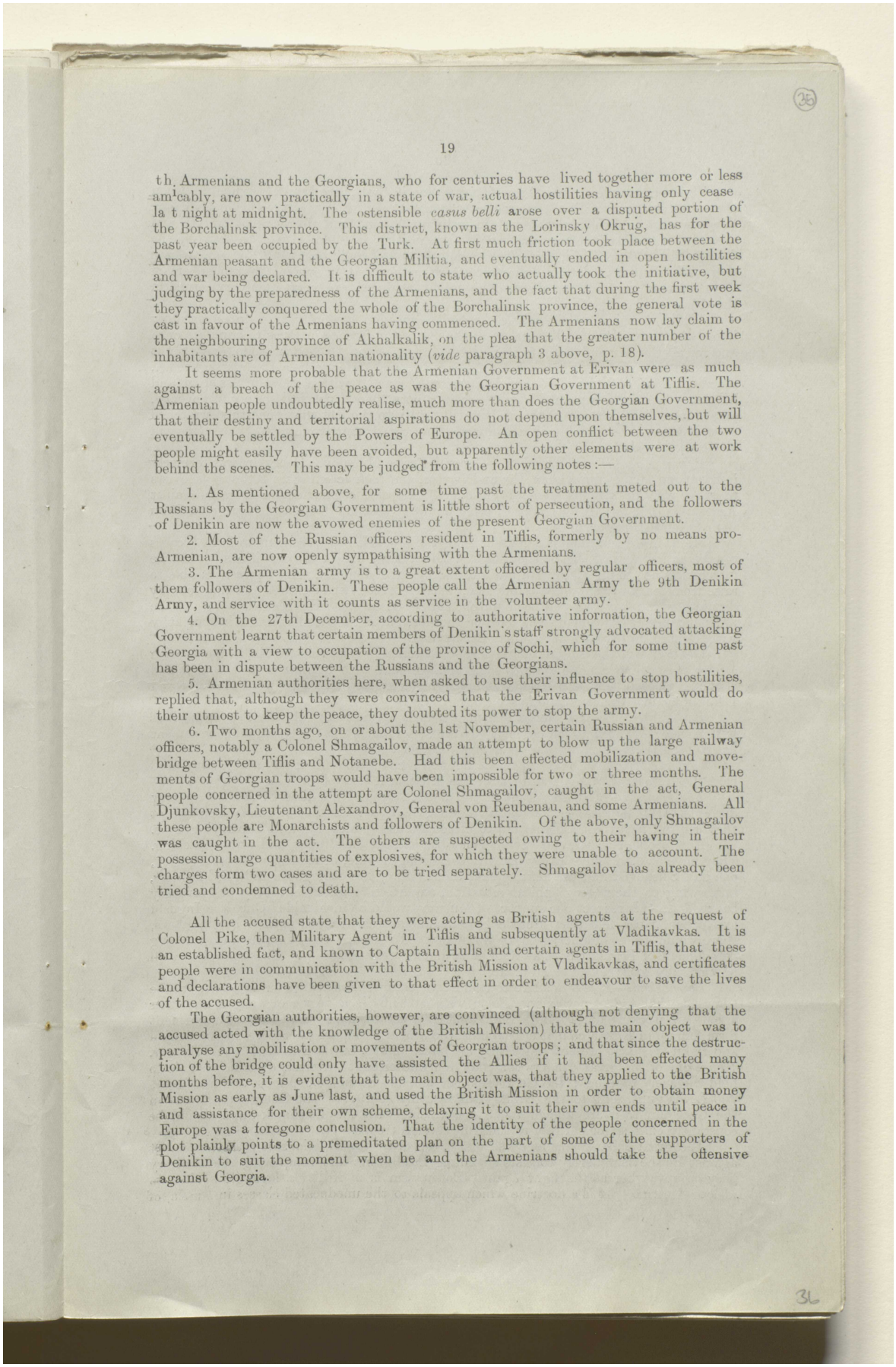



th, Armenians and the Georgians, who for centuries have lived together more or less amicably, are now practically in a state of war, actual hostilities having only cease la t night at midnight. The ostensible *casus belli* arose over a disputed portion of the Borchalinsk province. This district, known as the Lorinsky Okrug, has for the past year been occupied by the Turk. At first much friction took place between the Armenian peasant and the Georgian Militia, and eventually ended in open hostilities and war being declared. It is difficult to state who actually took the initiative, but judging by the preparedness of the Armenians, and the fact that during the first week they practically conquered the whole of the Borchalinsk province, the general vote is cast in favour of the Armenians having commenced. The Armenians now lay claim to the neighbouring province of Akhalkalik, on the plea that the greater number of the inhabitants are of Armenian nationality (*vide* paragraph 3 above, p. 18).

It seems more probable that the Armenian Government at Erivan were as much against a breach of the peace as was the Georgian Government at Tiflis. The Armenian people undoubtedly realise, much more than does the Georgian Government, that their destiny and territorial aspirations do not depend upon themselves, but will eventually be settled by the Powers of Europe. An open conflict between the two people might easily have been avoided, but apparently other elements were at work behind the scenes. This may be judged from the following notes :—

1. As mentioned above, for some time past the treatment meted out to the Russians by the Georgian Government is little short of persecution, and the followers of Denikin are now the avowed enemies of the present Georgian Government.

2. Most of the Russian officers resident in Tiflis, formerly by no means pro-Armenian, are now openly sympathising with the Armenians.

3. The Armenian army is to a great extent officered by regular officers, most of them followers of Denikin. These people call the Armenian Army the 9th Denikin Army, and service with it counts as service in the volunteer army.

4. On the 27th December, according to authoritative information, the Georgian Government learnt that certain members of Denikin's staff strongly advocated attacking Georgia with a view to occupation of the province of Sochi, which for some time past has been in dispute between the Russians and the Georgians.

5. Armenian authorities here, when asked to use their influence to stop hostilities, replied that, although they were convinced that the Erivan Government would do their utmost to keep the peace, they doubted its power to stop the army.

6. Two months ago, on or about the 1st November, certain Russian and Armenian officers, notably a Colonel Shmagailov, made an attempt to blow up the large railway bridge between Tiflis and Notanebe. Had this been effected mobilization and movements of Georgian troops would have been impossible for two or three months. The people concerned in the attempt are Colonel Shmagailov, caught in the act, General Djunkovsky, Lieutenant Alexandrov, General von Reubenau, and some Armenians. All these people are Monarchists and followers of Denikin. Of the above, only Shmagailov was caught in the act. The others are suspected owing to their having in their possession large quantities of explosives, for which they were unable to account. The charges form two cases and are to be tried separately. Shmagailov has already been tried and condemned to death.

All the accused state that they were acting as British agents at the request of Colonel Pike, then Military Agent in Tiflis and subsequently at Vladikavkas. It is an established fact, and known to Captain Hulls and certain agents in Tiflis, that these people were in communication with the British Mission at Vladikavkas, and certificates and declarations have been given to that effect in order to endeavour to save the lives of the accused.

The Georgian authorities, however, are convinced (although not denying that the accused acted with the knowledge of the British Mission) that the main object was to paralyse any mobilisation or movements of Georgian troops ; and that since the destruction of the bridge could only have assisted the Allies if it had been effected many months before, it is evident that the main object was, that they applied to the British Mission as early as June last, and used the British Mission in order to obtain money and assistance for their own scheme, delaying it to suit their own ends until peace in Europe was a foregone conclusion. That the identity of the people concerned in the plot plainly points to a premeditated plan on the part of some of the supporters of Denikin to suit the moment when he and the Armenians should take the offensive against Georgia.



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The extreme view of the Armenian question is that there is an agreement betwe n the volunteer army of Denikin and the Armenian Society known as the Dachnachatsoun. What is more probable is that certain individuals composed of groups of officers and members of the Dachnachatsoun, seeing that friction was likely to arise between the Georgians and Armenians, have done their utmost to bring about a state of war, and are now doing their utmost to complicate matters further. It is evident that members of the volunteer army and members of the Dachnachatsoun are very deeply concerned in the whole affair.

While touching on the whole Armenian question generally, it is to be sincerely hoped that every effort will be made at the Peace Conference in Paris to liquidate once and for all the Armenian Political Society known as the Dachnachatsoun, and that it will be made an international offence against law and order to be a Dachnatsagan, *i.e.*, member of the society. This society, originally started with a view to assisting and helping the Armenian people, is now nothing more than a political society of revenge, and thousands of Armenians themselves will testify to the fact that once this wretched society ceases to exist, all political intrigues and consequent troubles and massacres will also cease to exist.

*Prince Mugalov and his Aims.*—General Prince Mugalov, a Georgian, was formerly in command of the Mussulman Tartar Division, and took action against the Bolshevists together with the famous General Patlotsov. He also commanded a brigade against Azerbaijan, but retired his troops directly he heard that the British had arrived in Baku with General Dunsterville.

He has received unofficial consent from the Georgian Government to form a corps to take action against the Bolshevists in Vladikavkas; one of the conditions is that he undertakes not to interfere with the internal policy of Georgia. He hopes to be able to raise from ten to twenty thousand men, mostly of the better classes and the country districts which have as yet been untouched by Socialism. He is a supporter of the independence of Georgia in some form or another, but not a Socialist, and is in sympathy with Denikin in his struggle against Bolshevists.

General Mugalov's representative, Baron Steinhell, is leaving for Ekaterinodar with a view to endeavouring to come to some arrangement with Denikin as to the aims and claims of Georgia, and in the hopes of arranging concerted action between Mugalov and Denikin against the common enemy Bolshevist.

Baron Steinhell and General Mugalov wish to interview the British authorities with a view to obtaining support in finance and equipment, as the Georgian Government has refused them anything but their moral support.

General Mugalov has considerable influence among the hill tribes, and is convinced that the Ingushi, Checheni, and Daghestan tribes will also follow him.

*The Ingushi.*—This tribe inhabit the districts around Vladikavkas, and have now declared their readiness to take action against the Bolshevists. The chiefs declare that they can put into the field from ten to fifteen thousand men, all used to carrying arms.

As a people they are not very dependable, as they lack funds and strong backing. They have existed for years by backing the strongest side, hence their wavering policy, one day Bolshevist and the next against them. They are courageous and good fighters, but, owing to their geographical situation, require to realise that they are strongly backed. In this respect our support of Mugalov would be invaluable. Once the Ingushi and other tribes felt that Mugalov's detachment was strongly backed by the Allies, there would be no doubt as to their loyalty. To ensure this, finance and a strong detachment of British troops at Kazbek is undoubtedly necessary. These people are all now morally too weak to stand alone.

*Bolshevism.*—It is a mistake to think that because Bolshevism is not seen in the Caucasus that it does not exist. Bolshevism in Tiflis is a very real danger, and their agents are working hard. Both Baku and Tiflis are teeming with them. The virulent form felt up in Russia cannot appear until the armed forces are affected. In Azerbaijan and Baku this is at present practically an impossibility, but in Tiflis it is a real danger. Hence one of the great dangers is a change of the present Government, which is able to hold the army together; the Georgians can mobilise about 30,000 men, and have some 700 Lewis guns, sent to the Grand Duke's army in 1917. The Georgian outposts on the Georgian road are known to be fraternising with the Bolsheviks, and should be constantly changed or entirely replaced by foreign troops.

The great mistake made by so many, especially the Russians, is that the combat against Bolshevism merely consists of killing Bolshevists and conquering the territory they occupy, whereas the fight against Bolshevism is in reality a struggle against an idea or doctrine. It is a doctrine which appeals to the uneducated classes in Russia, of



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which there are over eighty of the total population. Bolshevism appeals to them by holding out the achievement of the ideal Socialistic State in a minimum of time. Leaders appeal to the baser instincts of the mob, and ply them with paper money which, as long as the Bolshevist State exists, is able to purchase them all they require. Probably the fact that most of the Georgian peasants read and write has done a great deal to save Georgia from the extreme form of Socialism.

*General.*—To sum up the general situation in Tiflis, the following points seem to deserve consideration :—

1. A defined policy on the part of the Allies as to the independence of Georgia and other small States.
2. An agreement with the anti-Socialist elements of Russia, whereby they shall for the present confine their energies to fighting Bolshevism, and leave small States who are able to keep comparative order to look after themselves, at least until such time as the Paris Conference settles their destinies.
3. Allied support of such elements in Russia as are fighting for the convening of the Executive Assembly, not such elements as wish to force an Emperor on the throne.
4. To maintain the present Government in Georgia, supporting the more democratic elements, and guide the whole into more liberal course, and so discount the extremists.
5. To endeavour to support elements wishing to combat Bolshevism from the north and prevent the Georgian army from becoming infected, and to retain a large and reliable force in Georgia.
6. A settlement of the Armenian question by making them sever connection with all counter-revolutionary elements in Russia, and a complete dissolution of their political societies, especially the Dachnachatsoun.

*Issued by General Staff "Intelligence," British Salonika Force, Constantinople, January 27, 1919.*

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## APPENDIX III.

### Memorandum by Admiralty.

1. ON 13th February, at a meeting in the Foreign Office presided over by Earl Curzon of Kedleston, it transpired that the total or partial evacuation of Trans-Caspia has been decided upon.

It is necessary to examine what effect this will have on the naval situation.

2. *The Naval Forces on the Caspian* :—

British.

| Ship. | Armament. |
|---|---|
| Kruger ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2—4-in. Q.F.<br>1—12 pr. |
| Emile Nobel ... ... ... ... ... ... | 1—4·7-in.<br>2—4-in. Q.F. |
| Slava ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 1—4·7-in.<br>1—12 pr. |
| Venture... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2—4-in. B.L. |
| Asia ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 1—4-in. Q.F.<br>1—12 pr. |
| Alla Verdi ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2—4-in. B.L. |
| Bibiabat ... ... ... ... ... ... | 4—12 pr. |
| Zoroaster ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2—4·7-in. |

Depôt for C.M.Bs. and seaplane carrier in course of preparation.

The following have been, or are being, sent to Baku :—

6—6-in. guns.
4—4-in. guns.
12 coastal motor boats.

*Royal Air Force.*

1 squadron D.H.
9 aeroplanes } part of this squadron is operating from Petrovsk.
1 squadron short seaplanes.





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RUSSIAN.

| Ship. | Armament. | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|
| Gunboats— | | |
| Kars ... ... ... | 4—4-in. | S.L. and W/T, 14 knots. |
| Ardagan ... ... ... | 3—4-in. | |
| | 1—3-in. | ,, ,, 14 ,, |
| Astrabad... ... ... | 2—3-in. | |
| | 2—3-pr. | S.L., 14 knots. |
| Armed Merchant Ships— | | |
| Lieutenant Smidt ... ... | 5—4·8-in. | W/T, 12 ,, |
| Centro Caspia ... ... | 2—4-in. | |
| | 1—3-in. | W/T, 12 ,, |
| Goektepe... ... ... | 2—4-in.* | |
| | 1—3-in. | W/T, 12 ,, |
| Orolonak ... ... ... | Unknown. | |
| Jupiter ... ... ... | 1—12 pr. | |
| Despatch vessel— | | |
| Aracks ... ... ... | Probably not armed. | |

* The 4-in. guns may not be properly mounted; are long and reported to be modern.

BOLSHEVIST.

| Ship. | Armament. | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|
| Armed Merchant Ships— | | |
| Kolomna ... ... | 2—4-in. | |
| Kaspy ... ... ... | 2—4-in. | |
| | 2—3-in. | Icebreakers. |
| Makaroff ... ... | 2—4-in. | |
| Vega ... ... ... | 2—4-in. or 2—3-in. | † |
| Nansen ... ... ... | | |
| Communist ... ... | | |
| Volodovski ... ... | | |
| Bombek ... ... ... | | |
| Three or four others ... | | |
| Horosan ... ... ... | 1—3-in. | Carries seaplanes and hydro-planes. |
| 4 Torpedo boats ... ... | Sokol type. | |
| 4 Submarines ... ... | ... | |
| 4 Destroyers ... ... | ... | Being converted from coal to oil burners. |

† Some are reported to be armed with 5—5-in. guns. There are some fast wooden motor-boats at Astrakhan. The defences of Astrakhan have 6-in. guns. There are a large quantity of mines at Astrakhan, and approaches to submarine repair and construction yard at Mogiluy (near mouth of Volga) reported mined. Naval port organised at Nijny Novgorod and some T.B.'s reported to have arrived there. Ammunition is plentiful. Provisions are scarce. Large numbers of naval ratings, ex-Baltic Fleet, reported at Astrakhan.

3. *Present Disposition of Naval Forces.*

These forces are believed to be at present disposed as follows:—

(*a.*) Naval Forces: Four ships off Baku watching force (B). Other four ships at Petrovsk at short notice. Air Force.
(*b.*) At Baku.
(*c.*) At Astrakhan.

4. *Relations between Naval Forces.*

*Between Forces (A) and (B).*

Our relations with the Caspian Fleet have from the first been of a most unsatisfactory nature. The best we have got out of them is that, while they would not act with us, they would not oppose us. The potential danger to our Naval forces from this semi-independent squadron was early recognised by the Admiralty, and orders were



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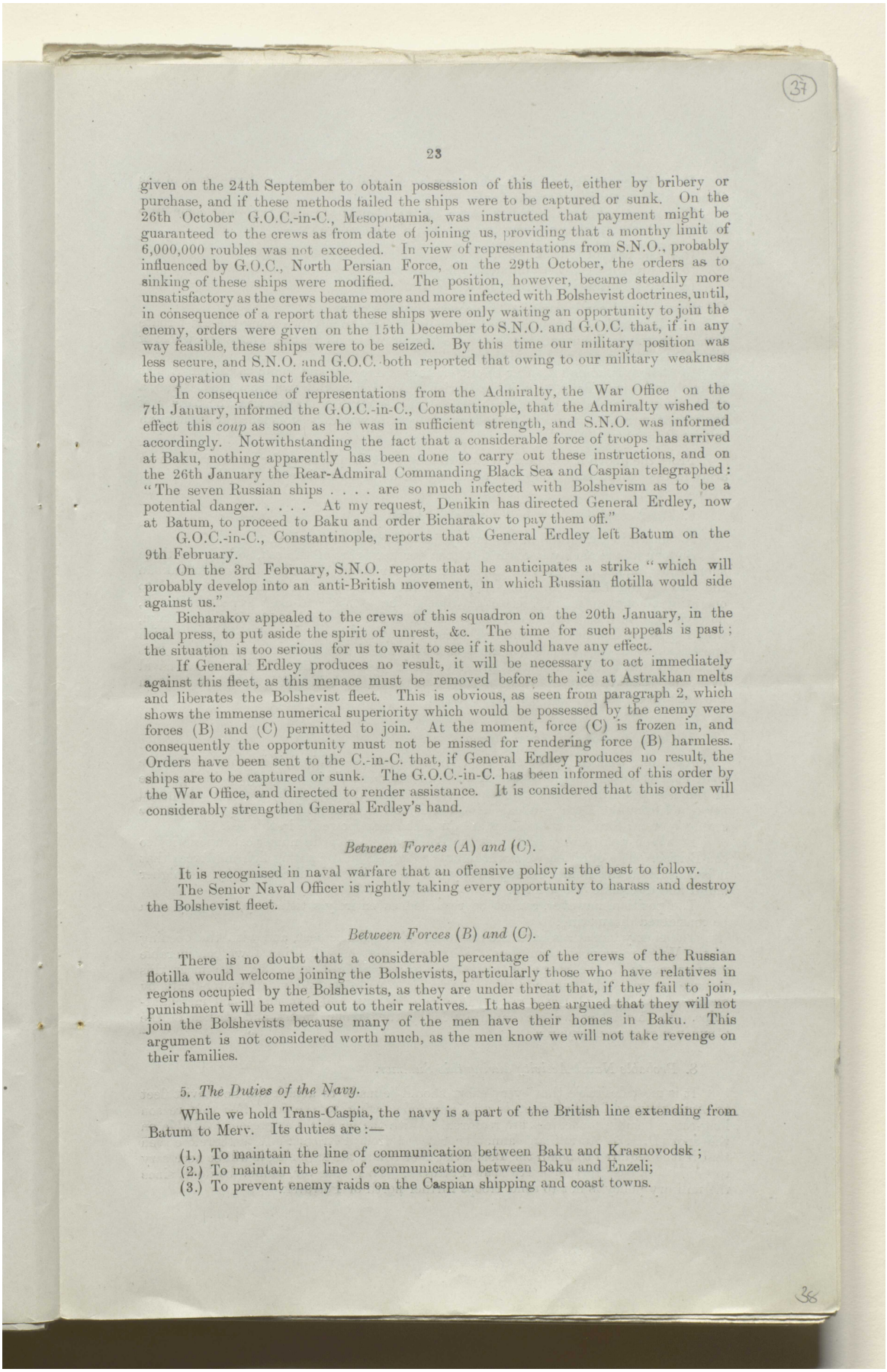

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given on the 24th September to obtain possession of this fleet, either by bribery or purchase, and if these methods failed the ships were to be captured or sunk. On the 26th October G.O.C.-in-C., Mesopotamia, was instructed that payment might be guaranteed to the crews as from date of joining us, providing that a monthly limit of 6,000,000 roubles was not exceeded. In view of representations from S.N.O., probably influenced by G.O.C., North Persian Force, on the 29th October, the orders as to sinking of these ships were modified. The position, however, became steadily more unsatisfactory as the crews became more and more infected with Bolshevist doctrines, until, in consequence of a report that these ships were only waiting an opportunity to join the enemy, orders were given on the 15th December to S.N.O. and G.O.C. that, if in any way feasible, these ships were to be seized. By this time our military position was less secure, and S.N.O. and G.O.C. both reported that owing to our military weakness the operation was not feasible.

In consequence of representations from the Admiralty, the War Office on the 7th January, informed the G.O.C.-in-C., Constantinople, that the Admiralty wished to effect this *coup* as soon as he was in sufficient strength, and S.N.O. was informed accordingly. Notwithstanding the fact that a considerable force of troops has arrived at Baku, nothing apparently has been done to carry out these instructions, and on the 26th January the Rear-Admiral Commanding Black Sea and Caspian telegraphed: "The seven Russian ships . . . . are so much infected with Bolshevism as to be a potential danger. . . . . At my request, Denikin has directed General Erdley, now at Batum, to proceed to Baku and order Bicharakov to pay them off."

G.O.C.-in-C., Constantinople, reports that General Erdley left Batum on the 9th February.

On the 3rd February, S.N.O. reports that he anticipates a strike "which will probably develop into an anti-British movement, in which Russian flotilla would side against us."

Bicharakov appealed to the crews of this squadron on the 20th January, in the local press, to put aside the spirit of unrest, &c. The time for such appeals is past; the situation is too serious for us to wait to see if it should have any effect.

If General Erdley produces no result, it will be necessary to act immediately against this fleet, as this menace must be removed before the ice at Astrakhan melts and liberates the Bolshevist fleet. This is obvious, as seen from paragraph 2, which shows the immense numerical superiority which would be possessed by the enemy were forces (B) and (C) permitted to join. At the moment, force (C) is frozen in, and consequently the opportunity must not be missed for rendering force (B) harmless. Orders have been sent to the C.-in-C. that, if General Erdley produces no result, the ships are to be captured or sunk. The G.O.C.-in-C. has been informed of this order by the War Office, and directed to render assistance. It is considered that this order will considerably strengthen General Erdley's hand.

*Between Forces (A) and (C).*

It is recognised in naval warfare that an offensive policy is the best to follow.

The Senior Naval Officer is rightly taking every opportunity to harass and destroy the Bolshevist fleet.

*Between Forces (B) and (C).*

There is no doubt that a considerable percentage of the crews of the Russian flotilla would welcome joining the Bolshevists, particularly those who have relatives in regions occupied by the Bolshevists, as they are under threat that, if they fail to join, punishment will be meted out to their relatives. It has been argued that they will not join the Bolshevists because many of the men have their homes in Baku. This argument is not considered worth much, as the men know we will not take revenge on their families.

5. *The Duties of the Navy.*

While we hold Trans-Caspia, the navy is a part of the British line extending from Batum to Merv. Its duties are:—

(1.) To maintain the line of communication between Baku and Krasnovodsk;
(2.) To maintain the line of communication between Baku and Enzeli;
(3.) To prevent enemy raids on the Caspian shipping and coast towns.

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If we evacuate Trans-Caspia, the navy is essential to the safety of the army of the Caucasus as protecting its right flank.

The army holding the valley south of the Caucasus range can only come into conflict with the Bolshevist army to the north of that range by—

(*a.*) The pass of Dariel.
(*b.*) Through Petrovsk and along the sea coast.
(*c.*) By a Bolshevist landing to the south of Baku.

Of these (*b*), and particularly (*c*), are covered by the navy.

(*b.*) It would be impracticable for a military force to advance along the coast route from Petrovsk to Baku without that force having command of the sea, as the whole of that route is open to naval bombardment.

(*c.*) There is no doubt, after the utterances of Trotsky and Lenin to the effect that their objective was Baku, that if the British Navy were withdrawn from the Caspian, a force would be landed in the neighbourhood of Lenkoran or Astara and the barrier of the mountain ranges would be turned, and our army would be compelled to fight in an unfriendly country.

From the above it can be seen that so long as it is necessary for us to maintain an army in the Caucasus, so long is it necessary for us to maintain a fleet on the Caspian.

6. *The Necessity of our holding Krasnovodsk.*

As shown in paragraph 2, the enemy forces include submarines.

So long as the enemy is confined to the northern part of the sea, so long are these submarines innocuous. This for the reason that for about 100 miles south of Astrakhan the water is too shallow for submarines to operate as such, and a submarine confined to operating on the surface depreciates in value to that of a second-class torpedo-boat. If, however, we were to evacuate Krasnovodsk, this fine port, only 150 miles from Baku, would with its Bolshevist population become a submarine and naval base from which operations could be conducted against us which would paralyse our naval forces. It is considered that the possession of Krasnovodsk is essential to the efficiency of our naval force, and that were we to evacuate it now we would probably have to recapture it in the near future for our own self-preservation.

7. *Considerations of Naval Strength.*

Assuming that the crews of force (*B*) have been demobilised, it is probable that we shall man the Caspian gunboats "Kars" and "Ardagan," either by demobilising some of the less powerful of the ships we have manned already, or by sending additional personnel from the Mediterranean fleet. This action alone will materially increase the strength of our force, as these ships are quite the most powerful in this sea.

It is seen from paragraph 2 that the Bolshevist force is in numerical superiority to the British. The question of *moral* figures so largely in comparing fighting forces that it is considered this numerical superiority can be considerably discounted by the higher *moral* and discipline of our force.

The position, however, cannot be regarded as entirely satisfactory, and may even be considered disquieting.

The enemy has at his back the resources of the Baltic fleet, and with the opening of the Volga to navigation in May it is expected that he will bring down considerable reinforcements in the shape of torpedo-boats, submarines, guns, &c. To meet this menace we can only send additional guns, air squadrons, and small motor-boats by means of the Trans-Caucasus railway, and can take up and arm additional merchant-ships. In this latter we are handicapped by the labour unrest and strikes in the Caspian ports and dockyards.

8. *Probable Naval Activity during this Summer.*

It is most desirable that every effort should be made to attack the Bolshevist fleet at Astrakhan while that fleet is still immobile owing to the ice. For this reason long-range bombing machines are required. With the machines at present available on the spot (D.H. 9) Astrakhan cannot be reached from Petrovsk. It is therefore seen that if it is required to bomb the Bolshevist fleet before the ice melts, it will be necessary to establish a base further north than Petrovsk. This, however, cannot be done, since the military policy is not to send troops further north of Petrovsk.



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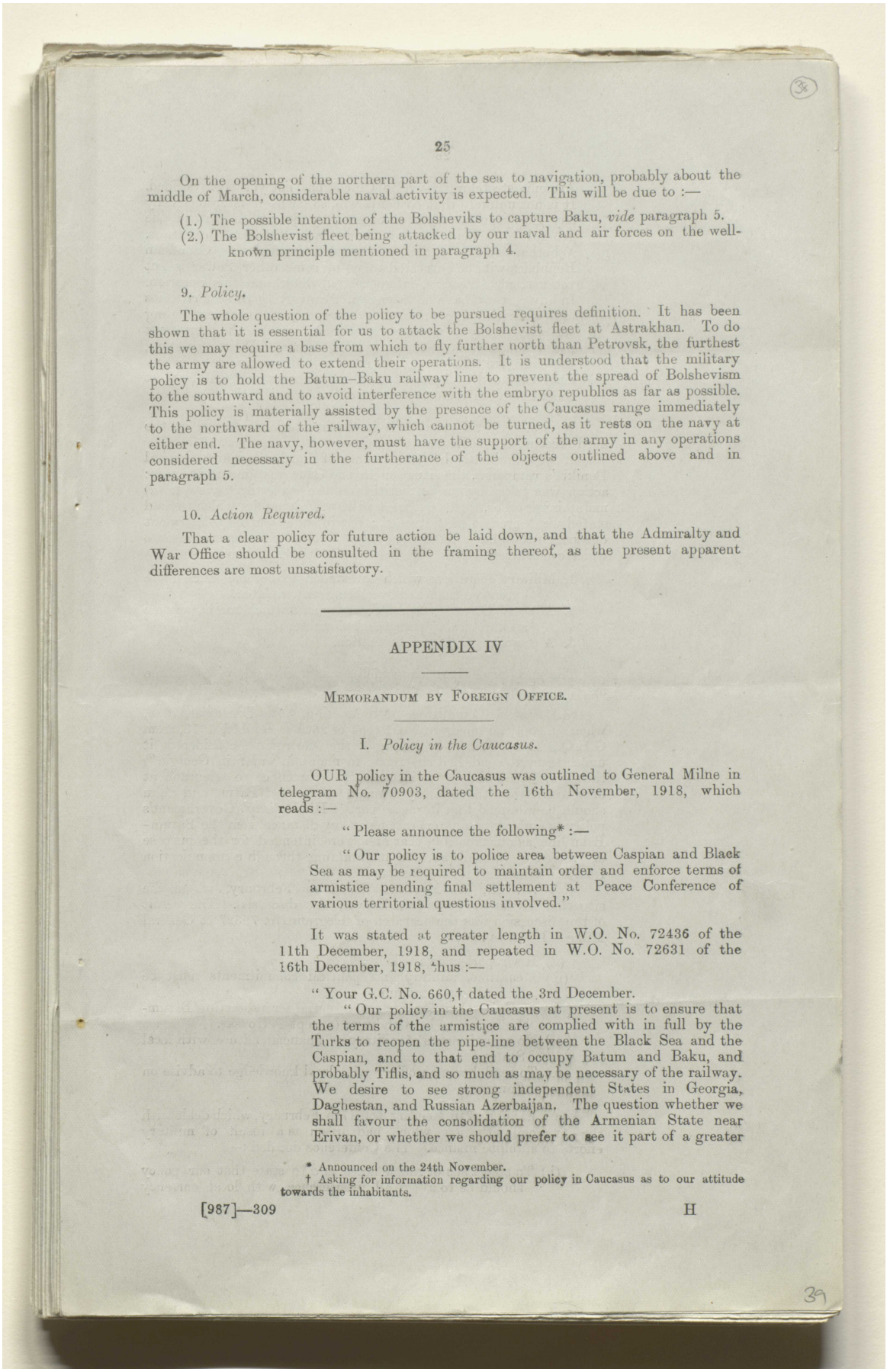



On the opening of the northern part of the sea to navigation, probably about the middle of March, considerable naval activity is expected. This will be due to :—

(1.) The possible intention of the Bolsheviks to capture Baku, *vide* paragraph 5.
(2.) The Bolshevist fleet being attacked by our naval and air forces on the well-known principle mentioned in paragraph 4.

9. *Policy.*

The whole question of the policy to be pursued requires definition. It has been shown that it is essential for us to attack the Bolshevist fleet at Astrakhan. To do this we may require a base from which to fly further north than Petrovsk, the furthest the army are allowed to extend their operations. It is understood that the military policy is to hold the Batum–Baku railway line to prevent the spread of Bolshevism to the southward and to avoid interference with the embryo republics as far as possible. This policy is materially assisted by the presence of the Caucasus range immediately to the northward of the railway, which cannot be turned, as it rests on the navy at either end. The navy, however, must have the support of the army in any operations considered necessary in the furtherance of the objects outlined above and in paragraph 5.

10. *Action Required.*

That a clear policy for future action be laid down, and that the Admiralty and War Office should be consulted in the framing thereof, as the present apparent differences are most unsatisfactory.

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## APPENDIX IV

### Memorandum by Foreign Office.

I. *Policy in the Caucasus.*

OUR policy in the Caucasus was outlined to General Milne in telegram No. 70903, dated the 16th November, 1918, which reads :—

"Please announce the following* :—

"Our policy is to police area between Caspian and Black Sea as may be required to maintain order and enforce terms of armistice pending final settlement at Peace Conference of various territorial questions involved."

It was stated at greater length in W.O. No. 72436 of the 11th December, 1918, and repeated in W.O. No. 72631 of the 16th December, 1918, thus :—

"Your G.C. No. 660,† dated the 3rd December.

"Our policy in the Caucasus at present is to ensure that the terms of the armistice are complied with in full by the Turks to reopen the pipe-line between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and to that end to occupy Batum and Baku, and probably Tiflis, and so much as may be necessary of the railway. We desire to see strong independent States in Georgia, Daghestan, and Russian Azerbaijan. The question whether we shall favour the consolidation of the Armenian State near Erivan, or whether we should prefer to see it part of a greater

* Announced on the 24th November.
† Asking for information regarding our policy in Caucasus as to our attitude towards the inhabitants.





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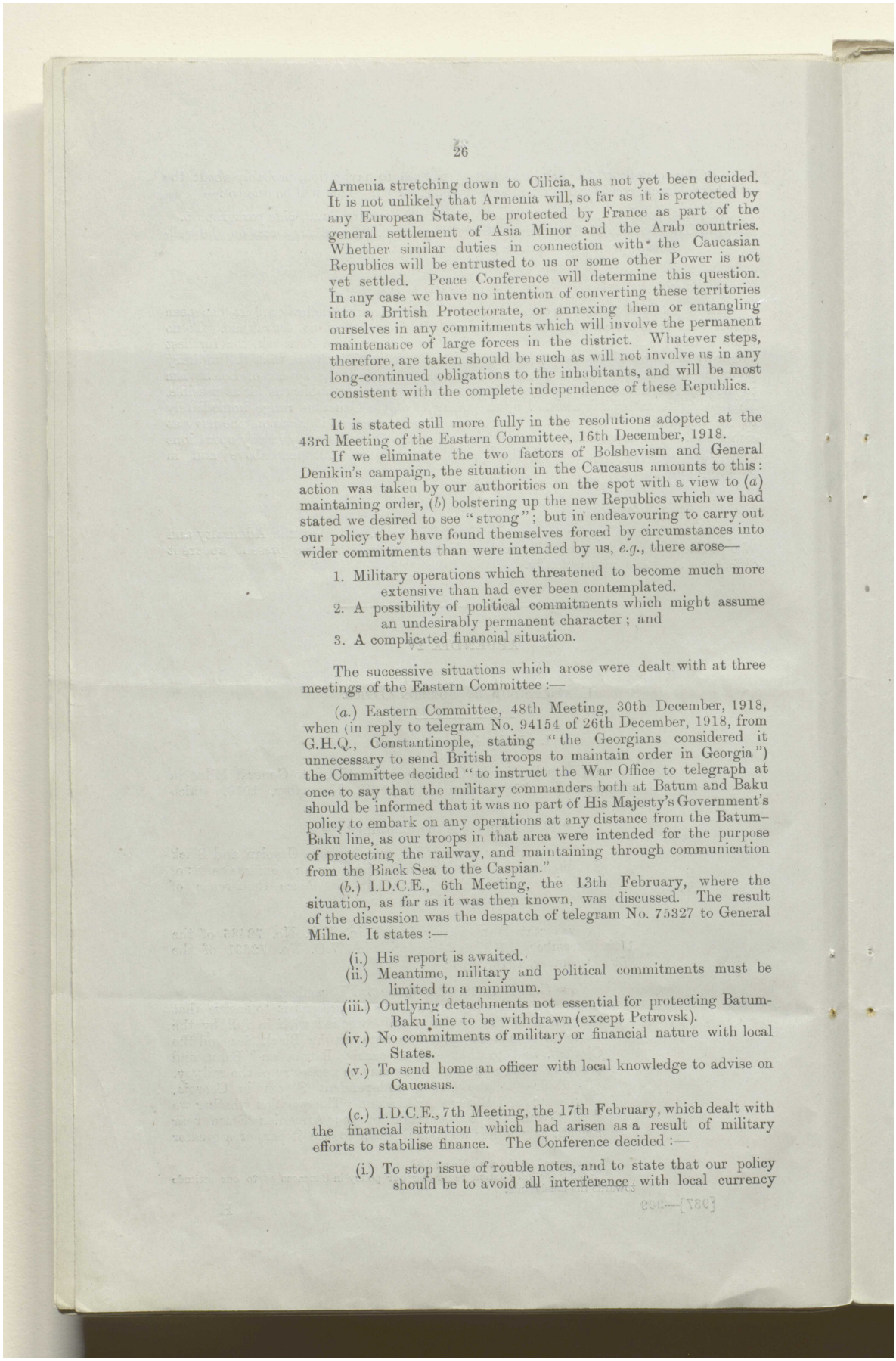



Armenia stretching down to Cilicia, has not yet been decided. It is not unlikely that Armenia will, so far as it is protected by any European State, be protected by France as part of the general settlement of Asia Minor and the Arab countries. Whether similar duties in connection with the Caucasian Republics will be entrusted to us or some other Power is not yet settled. Peace Conference will determine this question. In any case we have no intention of converting these territories into a British Protectorate, or annexing them or entangling ourselves in any commitments which will involve the permanent maintenance of large forces in the district. Whatever steps, therefore, are taken should be such as will not involve us in any long-continued obligations to the inhabitants, and will be most consistent with the complete independence of these Republics.

It is stated still more fully in the resolutions adopted at the 43rd Meeting of the Eastern Committee, 16th December, 1918.

If we eliminate the two factors of Bolshevism and General Denikin's campaign, the situation in the Caucasus amounts to this: action was taken by our authorities on the spot with a view to (*a*) maintaining order, (*b*) bolstering up the new Republics which we had stated we desired to see "strong"; but in endeavouring to carry out our policy they have found themselves forced by circumstances into wider commitments than were intended by us, *e.g.*, there arose—

1. Military operations which threatened to become much more extensive than had ever been contemplated.
2. A possibility of political commitments which might assume an undesirably permanent character; and
3. A complicated financial situation.

The successive situations which arose were dealt with at three meetings of the Eastern Committee :—

(*a.*) Eastern Committee, 48th Meeting, 30th December, 1918, when (in reply to telegram No. 94154 of 26th December, 1918, from G.H.Q., Constantinople, stating "the Georgians considered it unnecessary to send British troops to maintain order in Georgia") the Committee decided "to instruct the War Office to telegraph at once to say that the military commanders both at Batum and Baku should be informed that it was no part of His Majesty's Government's policy to embark on any operations at any distance from the Batum–Baku line, as our troops in that area were intended for the purpose of protecting the railway, and maintaining through communication from the Black Sea to the Caspian."

(*b.*) I.D.C.E., 6th Meeting, the 13th February, where the situation, as far as it was then known, was discussed. The result of the discussion was the despatch of telegram No. 75327 to General Milne. It states :—

(i.) His report is awaited.
(ii.) Meantime, military and political commitments must be limited to a minimum.
(iii.) Outlying detachments not essential for protecting Batum-Baku line to be withdrawn (except Petrovsk).
(iv.) No commitments of military or financial nature with local States.
(v.) To send home an officer with local knowledge to advise on Caucasus.

(*c.*) I.D.C.E., 7th Meeting, the 17th February, which dealt with the financial situation which had arisen as a result of military efforts to stabilise finance. The Conference decided :—

(i.) To stop issue of rouble notes, and to state that our policy should be to avoid all interference with local currency



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arrangements, and to allow the relative value of sterling, rouble notes, and local currencies to establish itself by the natural law of supply and demand.

(ii.) To send out an expert financial adviser.

If only the "new Republics" and ourselves were concerned, the above measures would probably be sufficient to ensure the policy of His Majesty's Government being carried out. But the situation is complicated by the entry of Denikin and the Bolshevists on the stage. Denikin appears to be credited by the new Republics with a double aim :—

But our policy towards Bolshevism in South Russia appears to require definition. Thus the C.-in-C., Mediterranean, asks the Admiralty (telegram No. 278, dated February 18, 1919) if active assistance may be given to the volunteer army.

1. To drive back the Bolshevists. In this he has our sympathy, which has expressed itself in the bombing of Grozny (telegram from Rear-Admiral, Black Sea, No. 835, the 19th February, 1919) and the proposed attack on the Astrakhan Fleet.
2. To re-establish the pre-war Russian frontier. With this aim, if it exists, we have no sympathy, but the fact of our *liaison* with Denikin, combined with his recent overrunning of Daghestan and parts of Georgia and Azerbaijan, has given the "new Republics" an excuse for doubting the genuineness of our desire to see "strong and independent" States in the Caucasus.

## II. *Denikin and Georgia.*

(a.) *Attitude of Georgians.*—The Georgians regard Denikin with the greatest suspicion :—

"Georgians are even more bitterly hostile to Denikin, who represents the monarchical ideal to them, than they are to the Bolshevists, and they consider any movement of Denikin's against the Georgian Republic must have received our support owing to our close *liaison* with him." (No. I. 4269 of the 3rd January).

In Georgia :—

"Anti-Russian feelings are strong in all parties, and British are distrusted." (Report by Major McDonnel, late British consul at Tiflis, dated the 1st January, quoted in telegram No. I. 4596 of the 25th January, from G.H.Q., Constantinople).

"Georgian public is at present just as favourably disposed towards the Bolshevists as towards us." (Telegram from advanced G.H.Q., Tiflis, quoted by G.H.Q., Constantinople, in No. I. 4578 of the 24th January).

I. 4269, January 3, 1919.

(b.) *Progress of Events.*—At the beginning of January the Georgians were firmly convinced Denikin was concentrating troops at Touapse for attack on Georgian Republic. G.H.Q., Batum, assured the Georgian representatives there that Denikin had no such intention. General Poole was asked by Constantinople to take such action with Denikin as he thought necessary.

I, 4449, January 15, 1919.

On the 15th January, on a proposal being made for a mission under General Lovchen, G.H.Q. sent a telegram to Poole, saying : "Consider Denikin's mission under General Lovchen would only complicate situation and lead to breakdown of present plans, and therefore that mission should be cancelled.

74791, February 1, 1919.

On the 1st February the War Office replied that they considered Denikin's Mission under Lovchen fulfils a useful purpose provided it did not interfere with area south of Kizil Burun Zakhtali, along crest of Caucasus to Touapse.

From G.O.C., Constantinople, C 90, February 7, 1919.

On the 6th February Denikin's Volunteer army landed south of Sochi and delivered ultimatum to effect that Georgians should lay





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down their arms and evacuate Sochi Province by midnight the 6th–7th February.

G.H.Q., Constantinople, took steps to make a strong protest to Denikin. Georgian Government accused British of having allowed the situation to arise.

From G.H.Q., Constantinople, G.C. 137, February 12, 1919.

On the 12th February Denikin's volunteer army was reported to be holding Sochi district up to Sukhum frontier. The telegram adds: "If troops of volunteer army are allowed to remain in Sochi district, I consider it will greatly shake the confidence of the Georgian Government in our support of their integrity, and will act as a further hindrance to our gaining their goodwill."

No. 275 from "Astoria," Paris. Received February 13, 1919.

On the 13th February, moved by the Georgian representatives, Paris requested War Office "to convey an intimation to General Denikin that in no circumstances must arms supplied by the Allies be used to force Georgia back into a reconstituted Russian Empire, and that any operations directed by him against the Georgians would lead to the immediate withdrawal of British support."

From W.O. 75277, February 14, 1919.

On the 14th February, in accordance with above Paris telegram, War Office asked G.H.Q., Constantinople, to inform Denikin hostilities at Sochi must cease, and he must withdraw his troops. Denikin must abide by the line laid down in our No. 74791 of the 1st February.

From Briggs, Constantinople, repeated W.O., K. 233, February 23, 1919.

On the 23rd February, these instructions were formally conveyed to Denikin. The marginally mentioned telegram gives General Denikin's answer.

*Note.*—Denikin says he never heard of the dividing line laid down in No. 74791.

### III. *Denikin and the Daghestan Area.*

G.O.C., Constantinople, No. 198, February 18.

The position appears to be fully summed up in a telegram from General Thornton, Baku. It amounts to this: Up to the receipt of telegram No. 74791 of the 1st February, our officers in Daghestan and Azerbaijan were working to carry out the policy outlined on paragraph 1 of this Note, and to maintain the *status quo*, pending decision by the Peace Conference. Then came telegram No. 74791 of the 1st February, which, in the words of the G.O.C., Constantinople, "practically upset the work of the last few months." Thornton says it "indicates reverse of policy laid down previously." The telegram reversed the suggestion of G.H.Q., Constantinople (in his No. I. 4449), that Denikin's mission under Lovchen should be cancelled, and ordered the control of the Ciscaucasia area (excepting the portion necessary for naval requirements) to be handed over to General Denikin.

The consequences are stated to be—

(i.) Denikin is within 65 miles of Baku.
(ii.) Daghestan has ceased to exist.
(iii.) Azerbaijan has lost some territory.
(iv.) Denikin has appointed Liarkof to be Governor of Terek and Daghestan.
(v.) Erdeli has admitted it is only our presence that keeps the Russians out of Baku.
(vi.) Caucasus people will interpret this as meaning that the Allies' talk of self-determination is insincere, and wil lose belief in British good faith.

The remedy suggested by G.H.Q., Constantinople, is as follows:—

In W.O. telegram No. 75277 of 15th February, 1919 (sent as a result of the discussion at the 6th Meeting I.D.C.E.), General Milne was asked to send home an officer or other responsible person with intimate knowledge of the political and economic conditions



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advise the Government. In response to this Colonel Stokes, 10th Hussars, and Major McDonel are leaving Tiflis. Milne asks for permission to send with them Tcherhoeff, President of the Peace Mission of the Caucasus, who could best put forward the case.

Effect of Situation in the Caspian on our General Policy.

Another factor which complicates the position is the naval situation in the Caspian. This is fully dealt with in a memorandum by the Admiralty (filed) which points out that the Caspian must be cleared of the enemy as early as possible if our position is to be maintained. Immediate action is required—

(*a.*) Against the Bolshevist Russian flotilla (this was discussed at the 8th I.D.C.E. Meeting, and orders were issued. The Bolshevist crews were to be got rid of by to-day, 1st March);

(*b.*) Against the Astrakhan fleet before the ice breaks, and before they can be further reinforced; and

(*c.*) With regard to the co-operation between the navy and the volunteer army (see telegram No. 278) orders are required.

The naval necessities in the Caspian seem to come into conflict with our Caucasus policy as a whole. Thus;—

The army programme is a watch-dog policy to concentrate on the Batoum–Baku line, and maintain an attitude of non-interference pending result of Peace Conference. (Telegram No. 75327.)

It is admitted that the maintenance of a force on the Batoum–Baku line is essential.

This force could not be so maintained without the navy to guard its flanks. (Admiralty note.)

The navy cannot guard the flanks without controlling the Caspian.

The control of the Caspian demands that our fleet should attack the Astrakan-Bolshevist. (Admiralty note.)

But such an attack entails co-operation with the army. (Admiralty note.)

Therefore our troops must go forward. (Petrovsk, and possibly further.)

The Admiralty asks for a clear definition of policy.

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IV. *Our position and Commitments towards the Trans-Caucasian Republics.*

1. *Georgia.*—Georgia is at once the most homogeneous of these nascent States, and that which on historical grounds possesses the clearest right to self-determination.

The present Government, while selfish and corrupt (General Milne's report of 6th February), is nevertheless the best available at the present time, and though its ultra-socialist members (Cheidze and Tseretelli, the former of whom as President of the first Soldier's and Workmen's Council, played so disastrous a part in the demoralisation of the Russian army) have carried it very far on the policy of land nationalisation and in other directions, there seems no real reason to believe that the Government themselves contemplate adopting the programme of Bolshevism, which is, however, said to be gaining ground among the masses. On the contrary, a wireless invitation from the Bolshevists for assistance against Baku, the interception of which General Poole reported from Ekaterinodar in January, has apparently been disregarded.

Feeling in Georgia appears to be strongly opposed to a renewal of the Russian connection, and to be somewhat unfriendly towards Great Britain owing (1) to our connection with Denikin; (2) to suspicion of our objects in Trans-Caucasia.

The Georgian-Moslem element, which is predominant at Batum, is hostile to the Georgians proper. The town and province are at present under a British military governor, and their separatist tendencies seem to emphasise the necessity for allowing the town a special position as a free port in the final settlement.

Our commitments towards Georgia are confined to a general message of sympathy. (Letter of 30th December to Georgian delegates in London, 201883)

There are representatives of the Georgian Government now in Paris.



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2. *Russian Armenia, or the Republic of Erivan.*

This Republic was proclaimed in May 1918, and its natural territory would seem to consist of the districts of Erivan and Etchmiadzin in the Government of the former, and of at least a part of the province of Kars. This latter province is at present under British military government, pending the return of the Armenians expelled by the Turks.

The ultimate destiny of this Republic is no doubt incorporation with Armenia proper. Its significance in Trans-Caucasian politics lies in the hostility prevailing between the Armenians and the Georgians on the one side, although fighting between the two has now come to an end, and the Tartars of the Azerbaijan Republic on the other. This hostility has even given rise to a belief that the Armenians have an agreement with Denikin for common action against Georgia (see Major McDonnel's report, Constantinople, No. 4643 I.).

3. *The Tartar Republic of Azerbaijan.*

This Republic was set up in May 1918, and in its present form appears to represent a Government by a land-owning oligarchy. Its stability is gravely compromised by the presence in Baku of General Bicharakov's troops and flotilla (the result of the measures to be taken to deal with the latter has not so far been reported), as well as by the recent dispute on the oil question which had arisen with the Georgians, and by the bad financial situation. The Republic, if it can be consolidated, would seem to offer a bulwark against Bolshevism. Its relations with the Georgian Government appear strangely enough to be at present satisfactory, but it is hostile to the Armenians.

A deputation from Azerbaijan is now at Constantinople, and we are endeavouring to obtain permission for it to proceed to Paris.

4. *Daghestan, or the North Caucasus Republic.*

This Republic was established in the summer of 1918, and, although lying to the north of the main Caucasus range cannot be omitted from any review of the conditions in Trans-Caucasia.

The situation of the so-called Republic, a delegation from which is at Constantinople awaiting permission to proceed to Paris, is described as follows in P.I.D. Special 2 :—

> "The tribes are so wild and split up (linguistically and geographically) that it is improbable that they have adopted any effective central administration. . . . The delegation (now at Constantinople) claimed for the North Caucasus Republic, a wide territory, including the country of the Terek and Kuban Cossacks, where the population is purely Russian and Ukrainian. But its authority is only acknowledged, if at all, by the Sunni Moslem tribes of Daghestan in North-Eastern Caucasia. The remnants of the former Moslem population of North-Western Caucasia (Kabardians, Abkhasians, &c.), seem to be holding aloof from it so far."

It would not appear that we have any commitments towards Daghestan, except in so far as the general expression of good-will towards Georgia, Daghestan, and Russian Azerbaijan, which was transmitted to General Milne, may have been communicated to the Daghestan chiefs. If, however, as would appear to be the case, conditions for the establishment of a stable and independent Republic are lacking in Daghestan, we would seem to be only courting a repetition of our experience with Albania in attempting to withhold this territory from Denikin, except in so far as its occupation by his forces would jeopardise the maintenance of the line laid down by the War Office, namely, Kizil Burun-Zakhatali, and thence along the crest of the Caucasus to Tuapse on the Black Sea (this line has already been broken by the advance of Denikin's forces through the Sochi district to the river Bzib)

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V. *Political and Economic Results to be anticipated from Withdrawal.*

While the military and naval position and the mutual dependence of the two forces in Trans-Caspia (where Merv has recently been evacuated under Bolshevist pressure), the Caspian and Trans-Caucasia have been dealt with in the memorandum already



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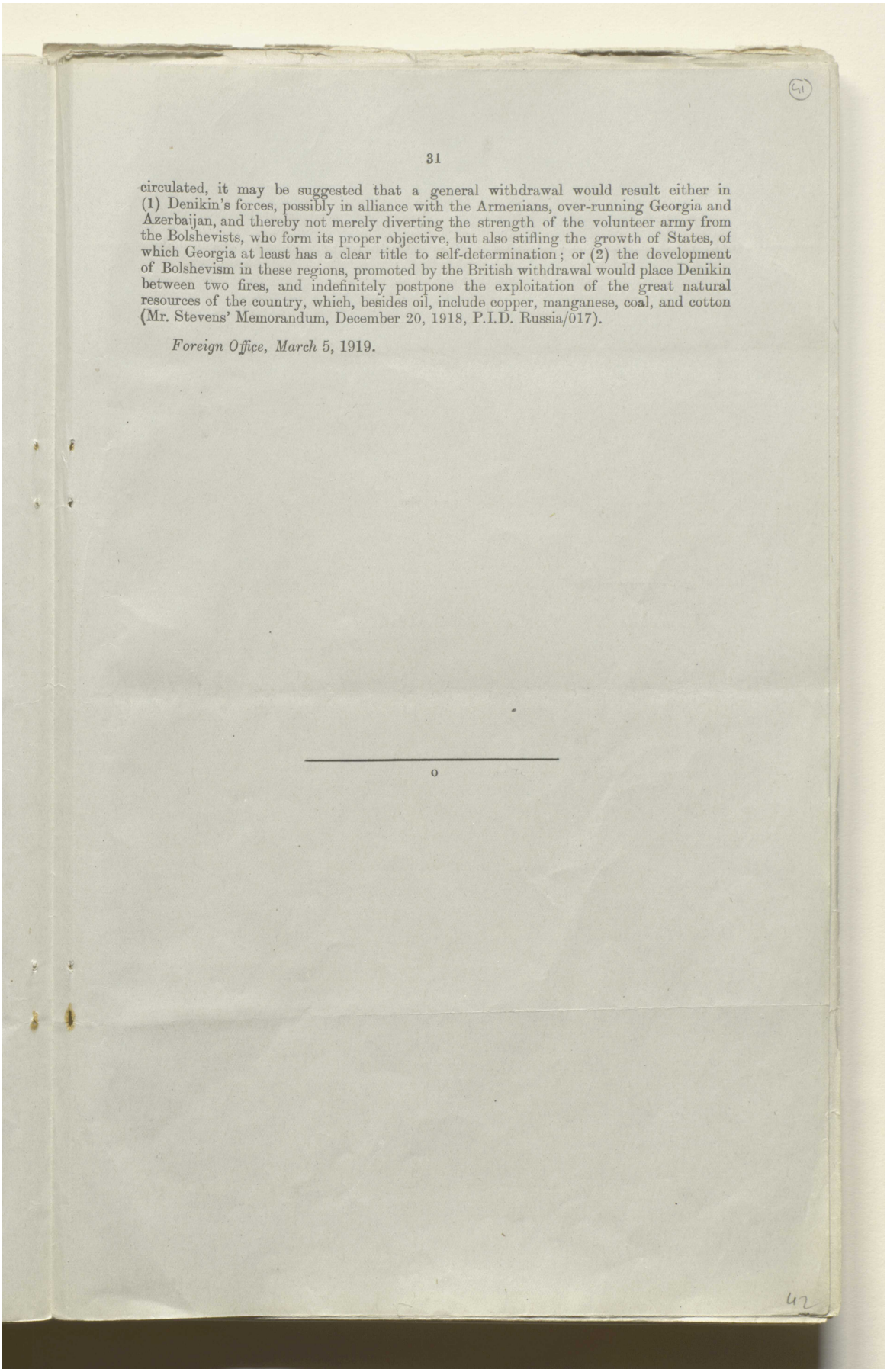

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circulated, it may be suggested that a general withdrawal would result either in (1) Denikin's forces, possibly in alliance with the Armenians, over-running Georgia and Azerbaijan, and thereby not merely diverting the strength of the volunteer army from the Bolshevists, who form its proper objective, but also stifling the growth of States, of which Georgia at least has a clear title to self-determination; or (2) the development of Bolshevism in these regions, promoted by the British withdrawal would place Denikin between two fires, and indefinitely postpone the exploitation of the great natural resources of the country, which, besides oil, include copper, manganese, coal, and cotton (Mr. Stevens' Memorandum, December 20, 1918, P.I.D. Russia/017).

*Foreign Office, March* 5, 1919.

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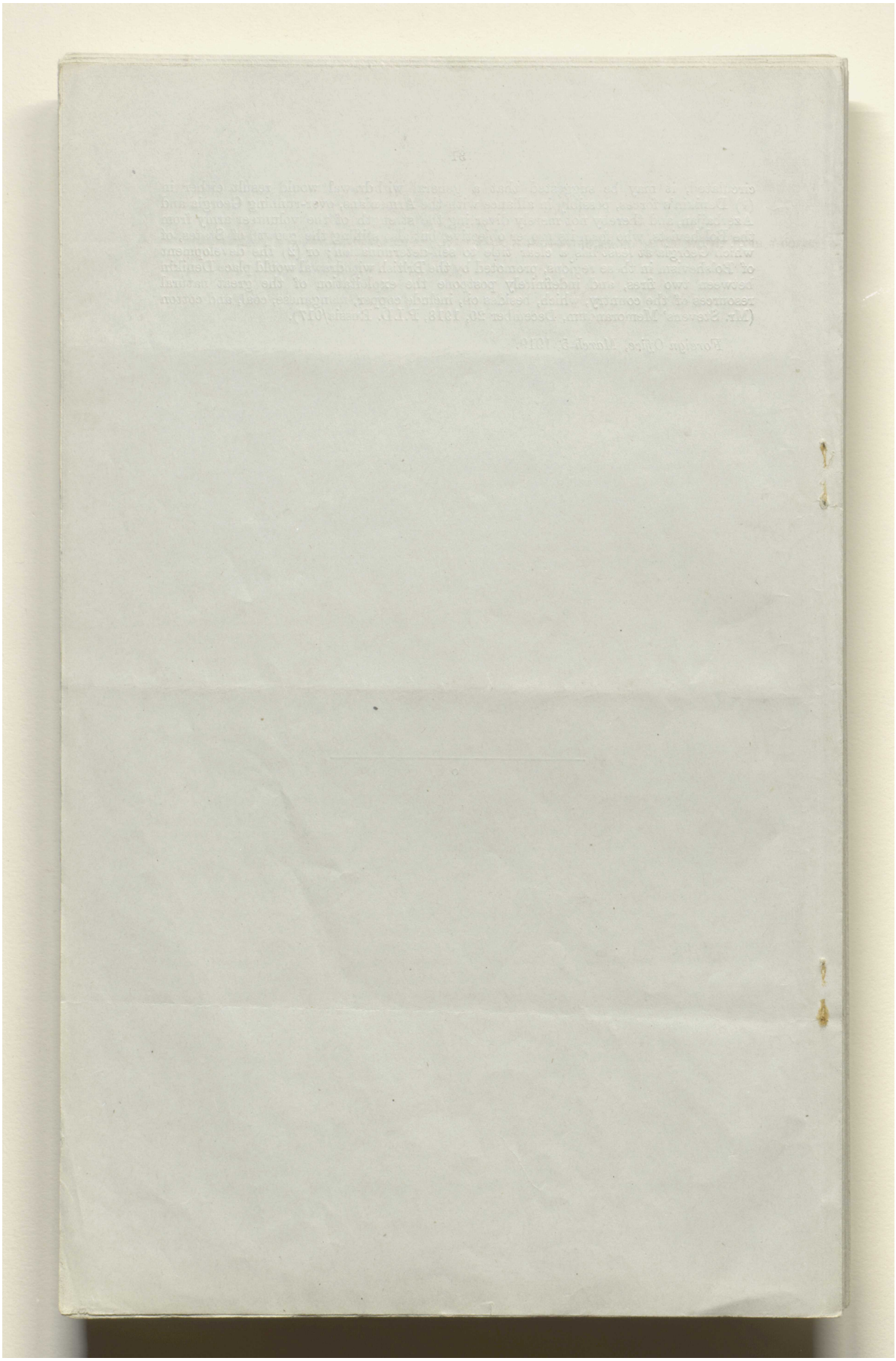



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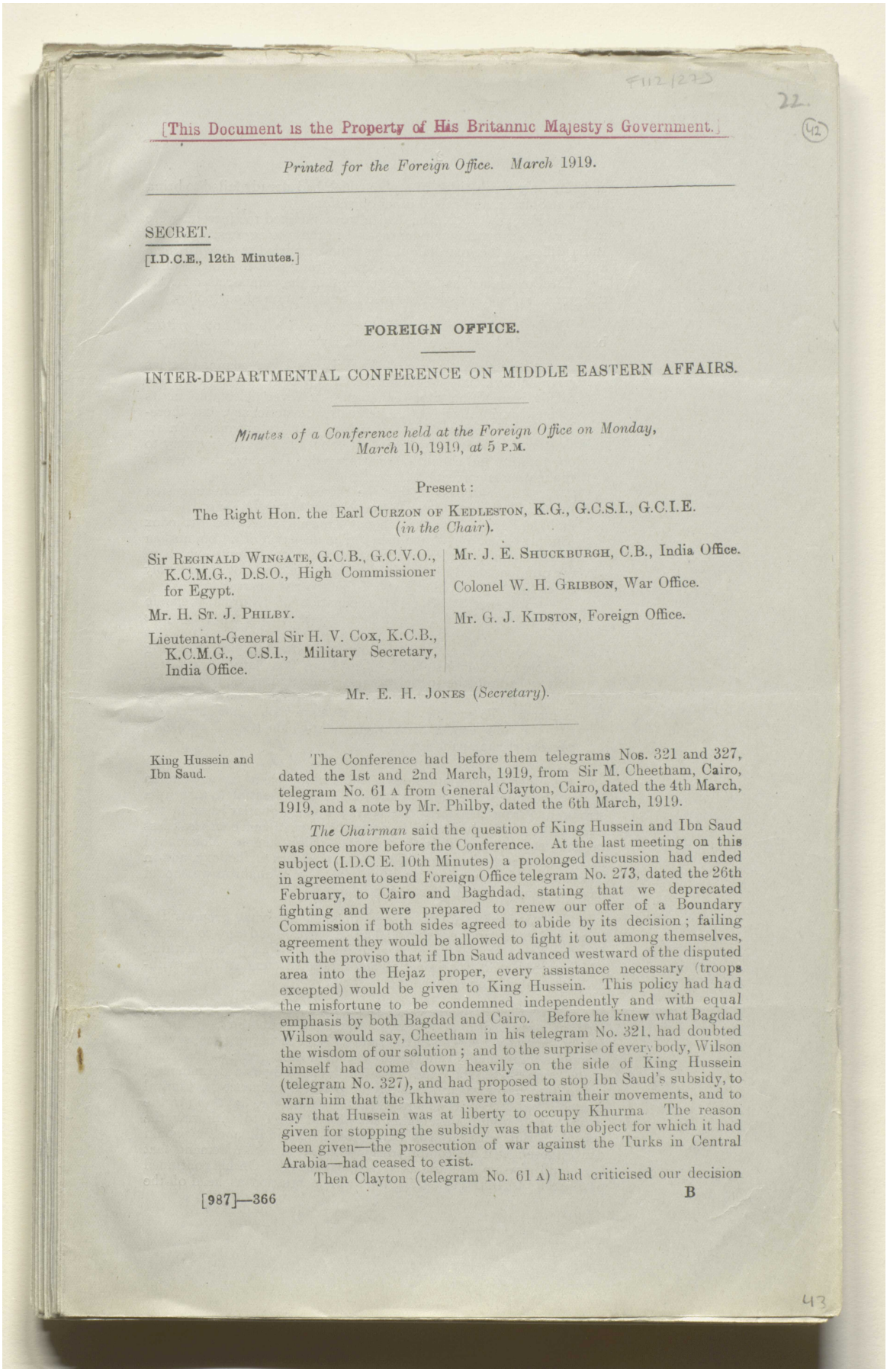

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[I.D.C.E., 12th Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Conference held at the Foreign Office on Monday, March 10, 1919, at 5 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Sir REGINALD WINGATE, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., High Commissioner for Egypt.

Mr. H. ST. J. PHILBY.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, War Office.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

King Hussein and Ibn Saud.

The Conference had before them telegrams Nos. 321 and 327, dated the 1st and 2nd March, 1919, from Sir M. Cheetham, Cairo, telegram No. 61 A from General Clayton, Cairo, dated the 4th March, 1919, and a note by Mr. Philby, dated the 6th March, 1919.

*The Chairman* said the question of King Hussein and Ibn Saud was once more before the Conference. At the last meeting on this subject (I.D.C E. 10th Minutes) a prolonged discussion had ended in agreement to send Foreign Office telegram No. 273, dated the 26th February, to Cairo and Baghdad, stating that we deprecated fighting and were prepared to renew our offer of a Boundary Commission if both sides agreed to abide by its decision; failing agreement they would be allowed to fight it out among themselves, with the proviso that if Ibn Saud advanced westward of the disputed area into the Hejaz proper, every assistance necessary (troops excepted) would be given to King Hussein. This policy had had the misfortune to be condemned independently and with equal emphasis by both Bagdad and Cairo. Before he knew what Bagdad Wilson would say, Cheetham in his telegram No. 321, had doubted the wisdom of our solution; and to the surprise of everybody, Wilson himself had come down heavily on the side of King Hussein (telegram No. 327), and had proposed to stop Ibn Saud's subsidy, to warn him that the Ikhwan were to restrain their movements, and to say that Hussein was at liberty to occupy Khurma. The reason given for stopping the subsidy was that the object for which it had been given—the prosecution of war against the Turks in Central Arabia—had ceased to exist.

Then Clayton (telegram No. 61 A) had criticised our decision

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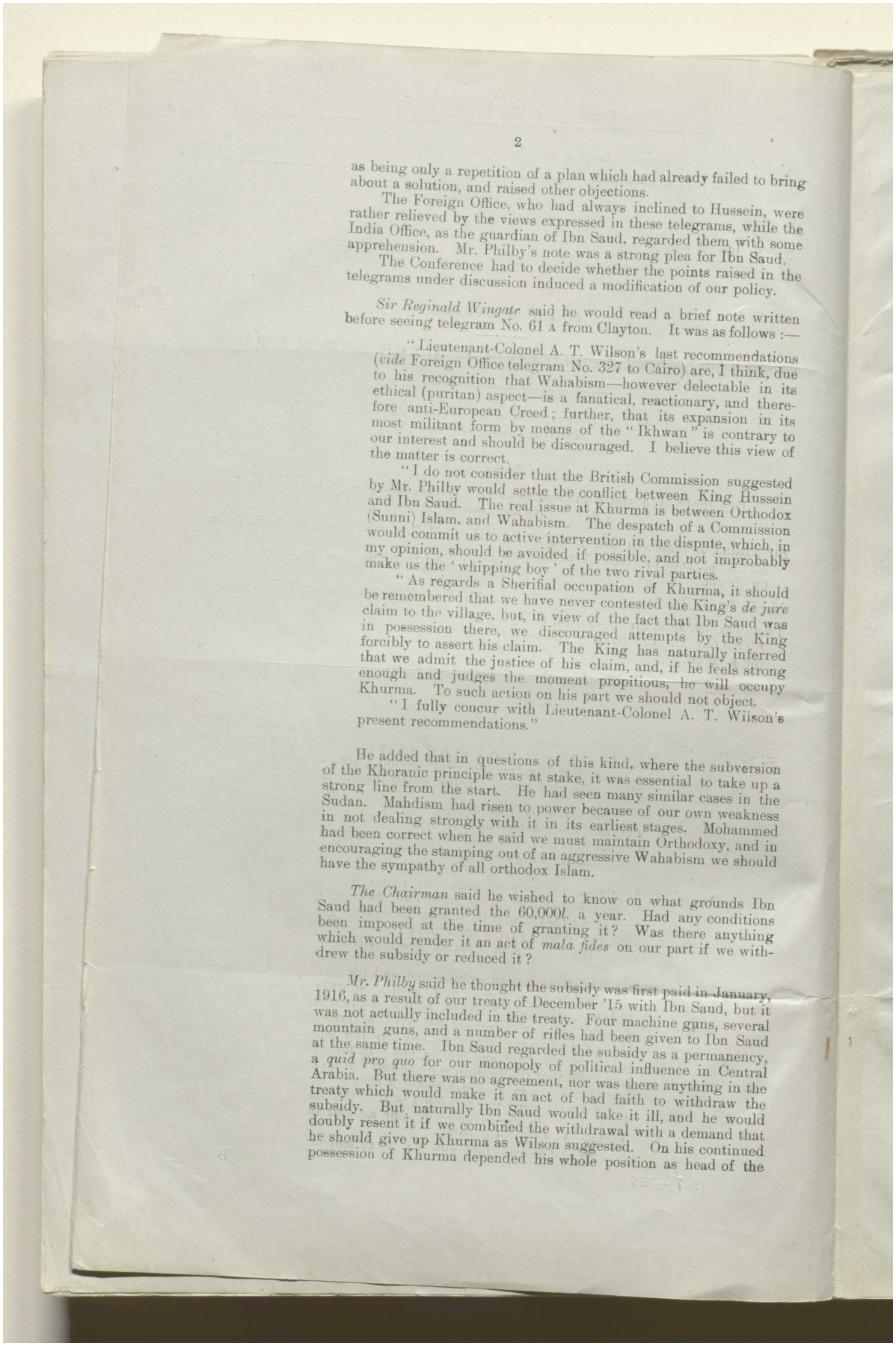



as being only a repetition of a plan which had already failed to bring about a solution, and raised other objections.

The Foreign Office, who had always inclined to Hussein, were rather relieved by the views expressed in these telegrams, while the India Office, as the guardian of Ibn Saud, regarded them with some apprehension. Mr. Philby's note was a strong plea for Ibn Saud.

The Conference had to decide whether the points raised in the telegrams under discussion induced a modification of our policy.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said he would read a brief note written before seeing telegram No. 61 A from Clayton. It was as follows :—

"Lieutenant-Colonel A. T. Wilson's last recommendations (*vide* Foreign Office telegram No. 327 to Cairo) are, I think, due to his recognition that Wahabism—however delectable in its ethical (puritan) aspect—is a fanatical, reactionary, and therefore anti-European Creed; further, that its expansion in its most militant form by means of the "Ikhwan" is contrary to our interest and should be discouraged. I believe this view of the matter is correct.

"I do not consider that the British Commission suggested by Mr. Philby would settle the conflict between King Hussein and Ibn Saud. The real issue at Khurma is between Orthodox (Sunni) Islam, and Wahabism. The despatch of a Commission would commit us to active intervention in the dispute, which, in my opinion, should be avoided if possible, and not improbably make us the 'whipping boy' of the two rival parties.

"As regards a Sherifial occupation of Khurma, it should be remembered that we have never contested the King's *de jure* claim to the village, but, in view of the fact that Ibn Saud was in possession there, we discouraged attempts by the King forcibly to assert his claim. The King has naturally inferred that we admit the justice of his claim, and, if he feels strong enough and judges the moment propitious, he will occupy Khurma. To such action on his part we should not object.

"I fully concur with Lieutenant-Colonel A. T. Wilson's present recommendations."

He added that in questions of this kind, where the subversion of the Khoranic principle was at stake, it was essential to take up a strong line from the start. He had seen many similar cases in the Sudan. Mahdism had risen to power because of our own weakness in not dealing strongly with it in its earliest stages. Mohammed had been correct when he said we must maintain Orthodoxy, and in encouraging the stamping out of an aggressive Wahabism we should have the sympathy of all orthodox Islam.

*The Chairman* said he wished to know on what grounds Ibn Saud had been granted the 60,000*l.* a year. Had any conditions been imposed at the time of granting it? Was there anything which would render it an act of *mala fides* on our part if we withdrew the subsidy or reduced it?

*Mr. Philby* said he thought the subsidy was first paid in January, 1916, as a result of our treaty of December '15 with Ibn Saud, but it was not actually included in the treaty. Four machine guns, several mountain guns, and a number of rifles had been given to Ibn Saud at the same time. Ibn Saud regarded the subsidy as a permanency, a *quid pro quo* for our monopoly of political influence in Central Arabia. But there was no agreement, nor was there anything in the treaty which would make it an act of bad faith to withdraw the subsidy. But naturally Ibn Saud would take it ill, and he would doubly resent it if we combined the withdrawal with a demand that he should give up Khurma as Wilson suggested. On his continued possession of Khurma depended his whole position as head of the



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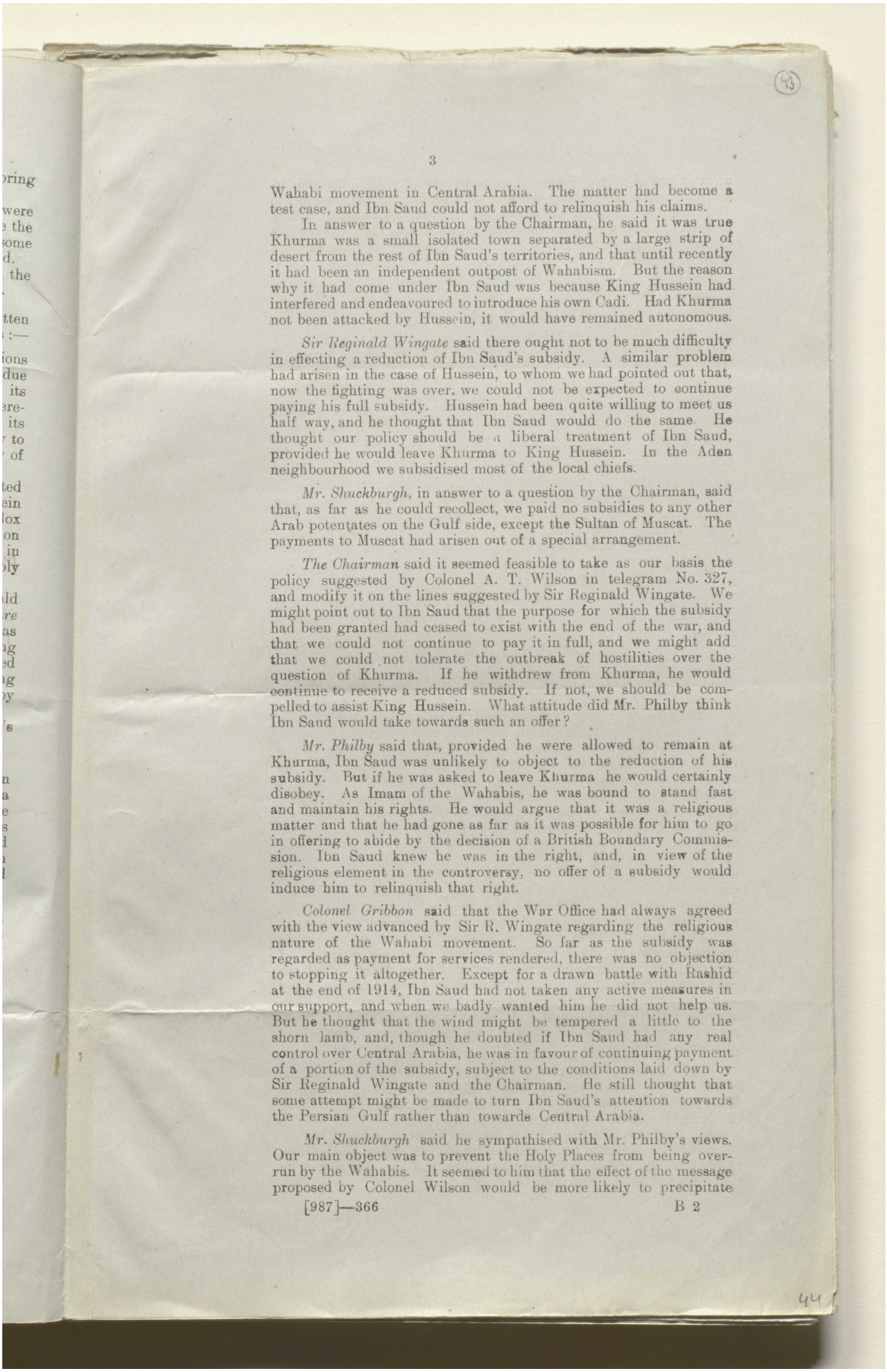



Wahabi movement in Central Arabia. The matter had become a test case, and Ibn Saud could not afford to relinquish his claims.

In answer to a question by the Chairman, he said it was true Khurma was a small isolated town separated by a large strip of desert from the rest of Ibn Saud's territories, and that until recently it had been an independent outpost of Wahabism. But the reason why it had come under Ibn Saud was because King Hussein had interfered and endeavoured to introduce his own Cadi. Had Khurma not been attacked by Hussein, it would have remained autonomous.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said there ought not to be much difficulty in effecting a reduction of Ibn Saud's subsidy. A similar problem had arisen in the case of Hussein, to whom we had pointed out that, now the fighting was over, we could not be expected to continue paying his full subsidy. Hussein had been quite willing to meet us half way, and he thought that Ibn Saud would do the same. He thought our policy should be a liberal treatment of Ibn Saud, provided he would leave Khurma to King Hussein. In the Aden neighbourhood we subsidised most of the local chiefs.

*Mr. Shuckburgh*, in answer to a question by the Chairman, said that, as far as he could recollect, we paid no subsidies to any other Arab potentates on the Gulf side, except the Sultan of Muscat. The payments to Muscat had arisen out of a special arrangement.

*The Chairman* said it seemed feasible to take as our basis the policy suggested by Colonel A. T. Wilson in telegram No. 327, and modify it on the lines suggested by Sir Reginald Wingate. We might point out to Ibn Saud that the purpose for which the subsidy had been granted had ceased to exist with the end of the war, and that we could not continue to pay it in full, and we might add that we could not tolerate the outbreak of hostilities over the question of Khurma. If he withdrew from Khurma, he would continue to receive a reduced subsidy. If not, we should be compelled to assist King Hussein. What attitude did Mr. Philby think Ibn Saud would take towards such an offer?

*Mr. Philby* said that, provided he were allowed to remain at Khurma, Ibn Saud was unlikely to object to the reduction of his subsidy. But if he was asked to leave Khurma he would certainly disobey. As Imam of the Wahabis, he was bound to stand fast and maintain his rights. He would argue that it was a religious matter and that he had gone as far as it was possible for him to go in offering to abide by the decision of a British Boundary Commission. Ibn Saud knew he was in the right, and, in view of the religious element in the controversy, no offer of a subsidy would induce him to relinquish that right.

*Colonel Gribbon* said that the War Office had always agreed with the view advanced by Sir R. Wingate regarding the religious nature of the Wahabi movement. So far as the subsidy was regarded as payment for services rendered, there was no objection to stopping it altogether. Except for a drawn battle with Rashid at the end of 1914, Ibn Saud had not taken any active measures in our support, and when we badly wanted him he did not help us. But he thought that the wind might be tempered a little to the shorn lamb, and, though he doubted if Ibn Saud had any real control over Central Arabia, he was in favour of continuing payment of a portion of the subsidy, subject to the conditions laid down by Sir Reginald Wingate and the Chairman. He still thought that some attempt might be made to turn Ibn Saud's attention towards the Persian Gulf rather than towards Central Arabia.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said he sympathised with Mr. Philby's views. Our main object was to prevent the Holy Places from being overrun by the Wahabis. It seemed to him that the effect of the message proposed by Colonel Wilson would be more likely to precipitate





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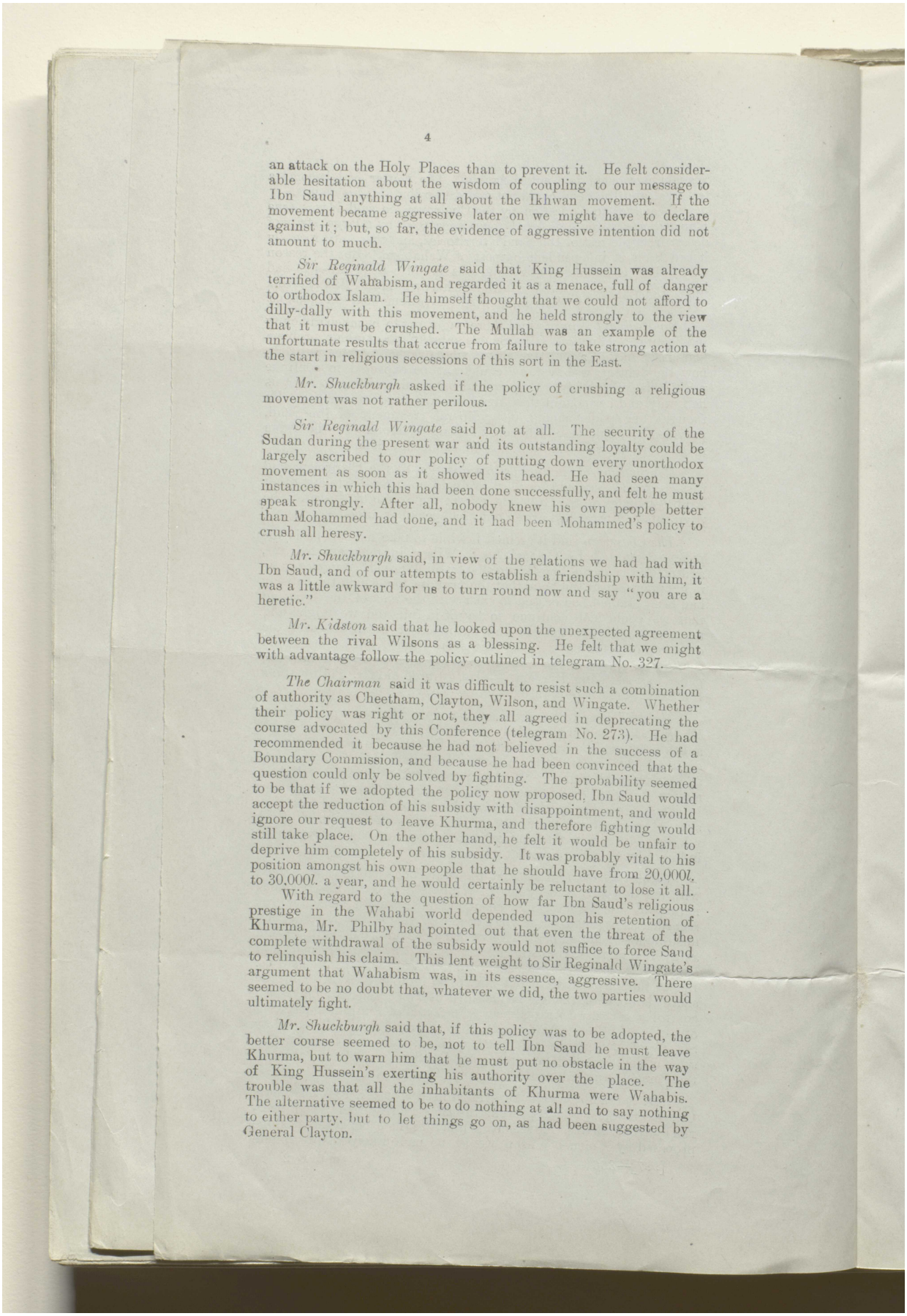



an attack on the Holy Places than to prevent it. He felt considerable hesitation about the wisdom of coupling to our message to Ibn Saud anything at all about the Ikhwan movement. If the movement became aggressive later on we might have to declare against it; but, so far, the evidence of aggressive intention did not amount to much.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said that King Hussein was already terrified of Wahabism, and regarded it as a menace, full of danger to orthodox Islam. He himself thought that we could not afford to dilly-dally with this movement, and he held strongly to the view that it must be crushed. The Mullah was an example of the unfortunate results that accrue from failure to take strong action at the start in religious secessions of this sort in the East.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* asked if the policy of crushing a religious movement was not rather perilous.

*Sir Reginald Wingate* said not at all. The security of the Sudan during the present war and its outstanding loyalty could be largely ascribed to our policy of putting down every unorthodox movement as soon as it showed its head. He had seen many instances in which this had been done successfully, and felt he must speak strongly. After all, nobody knew his own people better than Mohammed had done, and it had been Mohammed's policy to crush all heresy.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said, in view of the relations we had had with Ibn Saud, and of our attempts to establish a friendship with him, it was a little awkward for us to turn round now and say "you are a heretic."

*Mr. Kidston* said that he looked upon the unexpected agreement between the rival Wilsons as a blessing. He felt that we might with advantage follow the policy outlined in telegram No. 327.

*The Chairman* said it was difficult to resist such a combination of authority as Cheetham, Clayton, Wilson, and Wingate. Whether their policy was right or not, they all agreed in deprecating the course advocated by this Conference (telegram No. 273). He had recommended it because he had not believed in the success of a Boundary Commission, and because he had been convinced that the question could only be solved by fighting. The probability seemed to be that if we adopted the policy now proposed, Ibn Saud would accept the reduction of his subsidy with disappointment, and would ignore our request to leave Khurma, and therefore fighting would still take place. On the other hand, he felt it would be unfair to deprive him completely of his subsidy. It was probably vital to his position amongst his own people that he should have from 20,000*l.* to 30,000*l.* a year, and he would certainly be reluctant to lose it all.

With regard to the question of how far Ibn Saud's religious prestige in the Wahabi world depended upon his retention of Khurma, Mr. Philby had pointed out that even the threat of the complete withdrawal of the subsidy would not suffice to force Saud to relinquish his claim. This lent weight to Sir Reginald Wingate's argument that Wahabism was, in its essence, aggressive. There seemed to be no doubt that, whatever we did, the two parties would ultimately fight.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that, if this policy was to be adopted, the better course seemed to be, not to tell Ibn Saud he must leave Khurma, but to warn him that he must put no obstacle in the way of King Hussein's exerting his authority over the place. The trouble was that all the inhabitants of Khurma were Wahabis. The alternative seemed to be to do nothing at all and to say nothing to either party, but to let things go on, as had been suggested by General Clayton.



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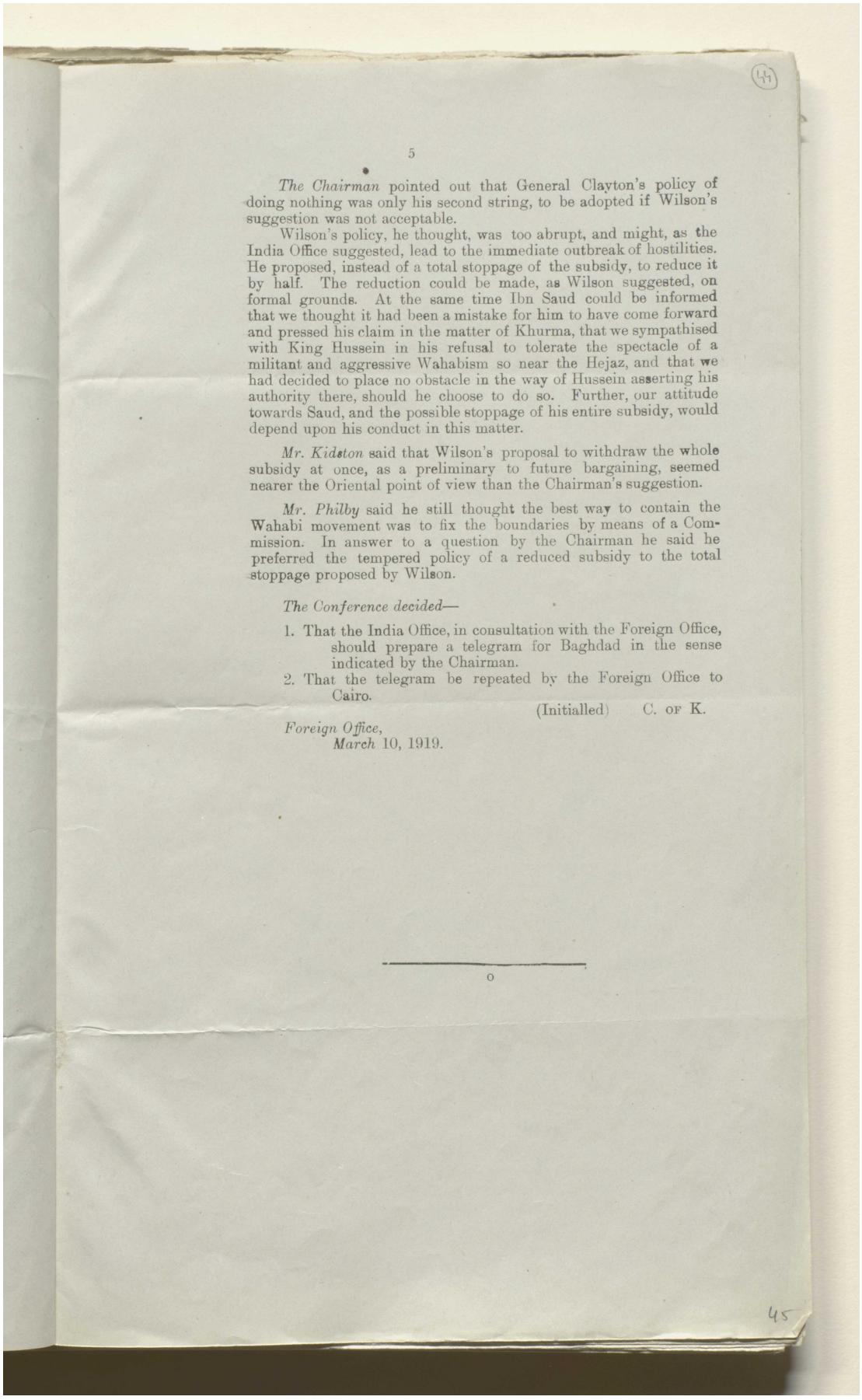

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*The Chairman* pointed out that General Clayton's policy of doing nothing was only his second string, to be adopted if Wilson's suggestion was not acceptable.

Wilson's policy, he thought, was too abrupt, and might, as the India Office suggested, lead to the immediate outbreak of hostilities. He proposed, instead of a total stoppage of the subsidy, to reduce it by half. The reduction could be made, as Wilson suggested, on formal grounds. At the same time Ibn Saud could be informed that we thought it had been a mistake for him to have come forward and pressed his claim in the matter of Khurma, that we sympathised with King Hussein in his refusal to tolerate the spectacle of a militant and aggressive Wahabism so near the Hejaz, and that we had decided to place no obstacle in the way of Hussein asserting his authority there, should he choose to do so. Further, our attitude towards Saud, and the possible stoppage of his entire subsidy, would depend upon his conduct in this matter.

*Mr. Kidston* said that Wilson's proposal to withdraw the whole subsidy at once, as a preliminary to future bargaining, seemed nearer the Oriental point of view than the Chairman's suggestion.

*Mr. Philby* said he still thought the best way to contain the Wahabi movement was to fix the boundaries by means of a Commission. In answer to a question by the Chairman he said he preferred the tempered policy of a reduced subsidy to the total stoppage proposed by Wilson.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That the India Office, in consultation with the Foreign Office, should prepare a telegram for Baghdad in the sense indicated by the Chairman.
2. That the telegram be repeated by the Foreign Office to Cairo.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*March* 10, 1919.

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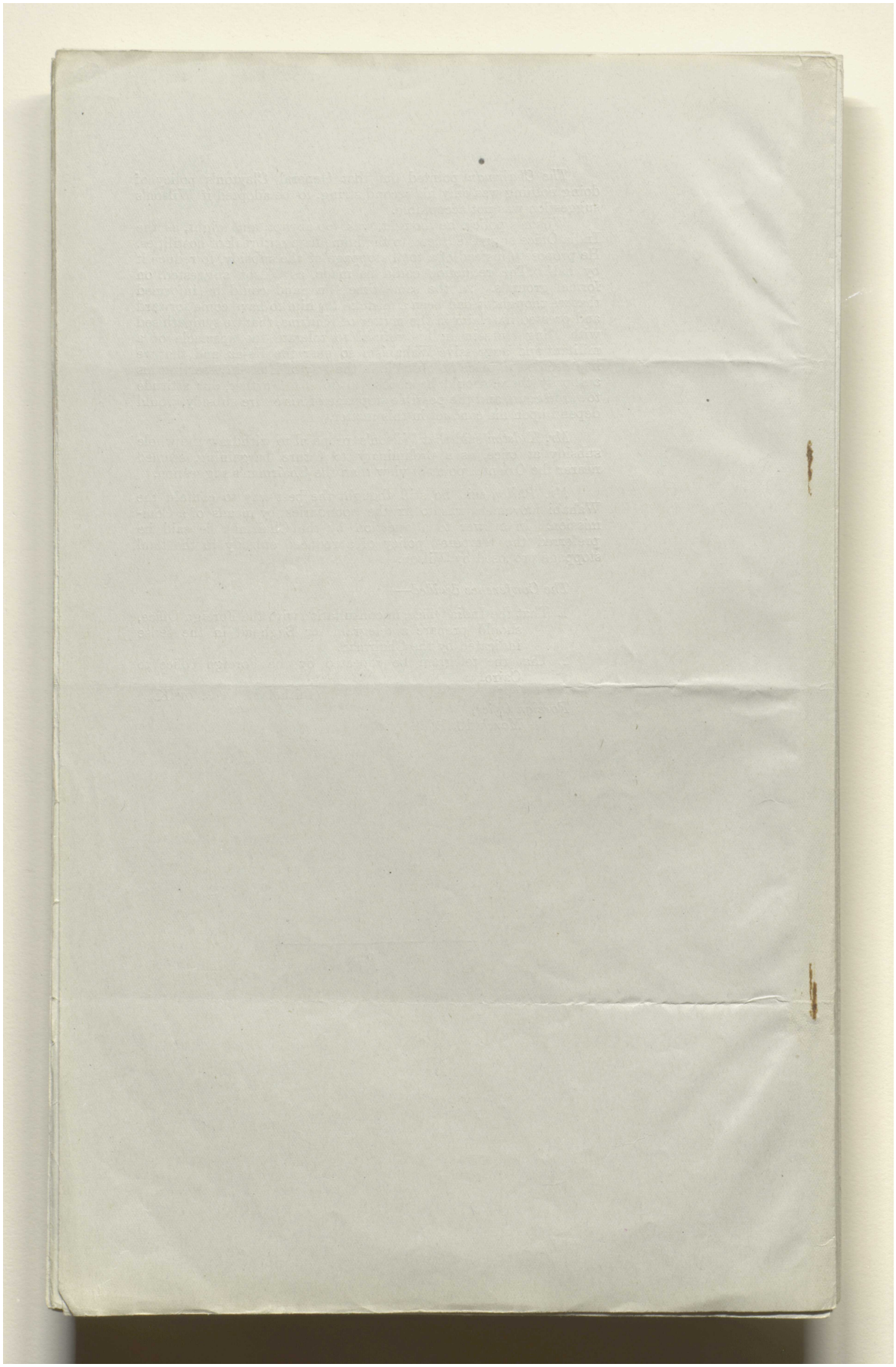

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**I.D.C.E., 13th Minutes.**

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Monday, March 21, 1919, at 6 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

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| Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office. | Mr. A. E. WIDDOWS, C.B., War Office. |
| Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office. | Mr. S. D. WALEY, M.C., Treasury. |
| Brigadier-General BARTHOLOMEW, C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office. | Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office. |

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

Bushire Expedition.

1. *The Chairman* said that on the 4th February (I.D.C.E., 4th Minutes) the Conference had decided in principle to evacuate the troops from Southern Persia, but, before issuing orders on the subject, they had desired Sir Percy Cox's opinion, and had put to him a number of definite questions to answer (telegram No. 74 of the 7th February). In reply, Sir Percy Cox had sent almost immediately a preliminary word of warning (telegram No. 111 of the 10th February), saying he feared immediate evacuation would affect adversely our influence in Persia, and that it would be a lasting pity to weaken our position at so critical a time.

On the 19th February General Douglas, G.O.C., Bushire, had telegraphed (see telegram from Viceroy, Foreign Department, dated the 7th March) that it was practically certain complete evacuation would be followed by the return of the Khans, the closing of the road, the destruction of the telegraph, and retaliatory measures against our friends. It would render the position of Farman Farma precarious, and that of the consul at Shiraz unenviable. Telegraphing again on the 4th March he had argued in favour of a reduction of our forces in Southern Persia, but against immediate evacuation, and had pointed out that the whole position hinged on the problem of Soulet. Two possible courses of action with regard to Soulet were proposed: (*i*) the imposition of severe terms, including banishment; or (*ii*) reinstatement after a chastening visit to Teheran.

Next, in a telegram of the 7th March from the Viceroy, the Government of India had expressed their entire opposition to the proposals of the G.O.C., Bushire, and suggested that the evacuation



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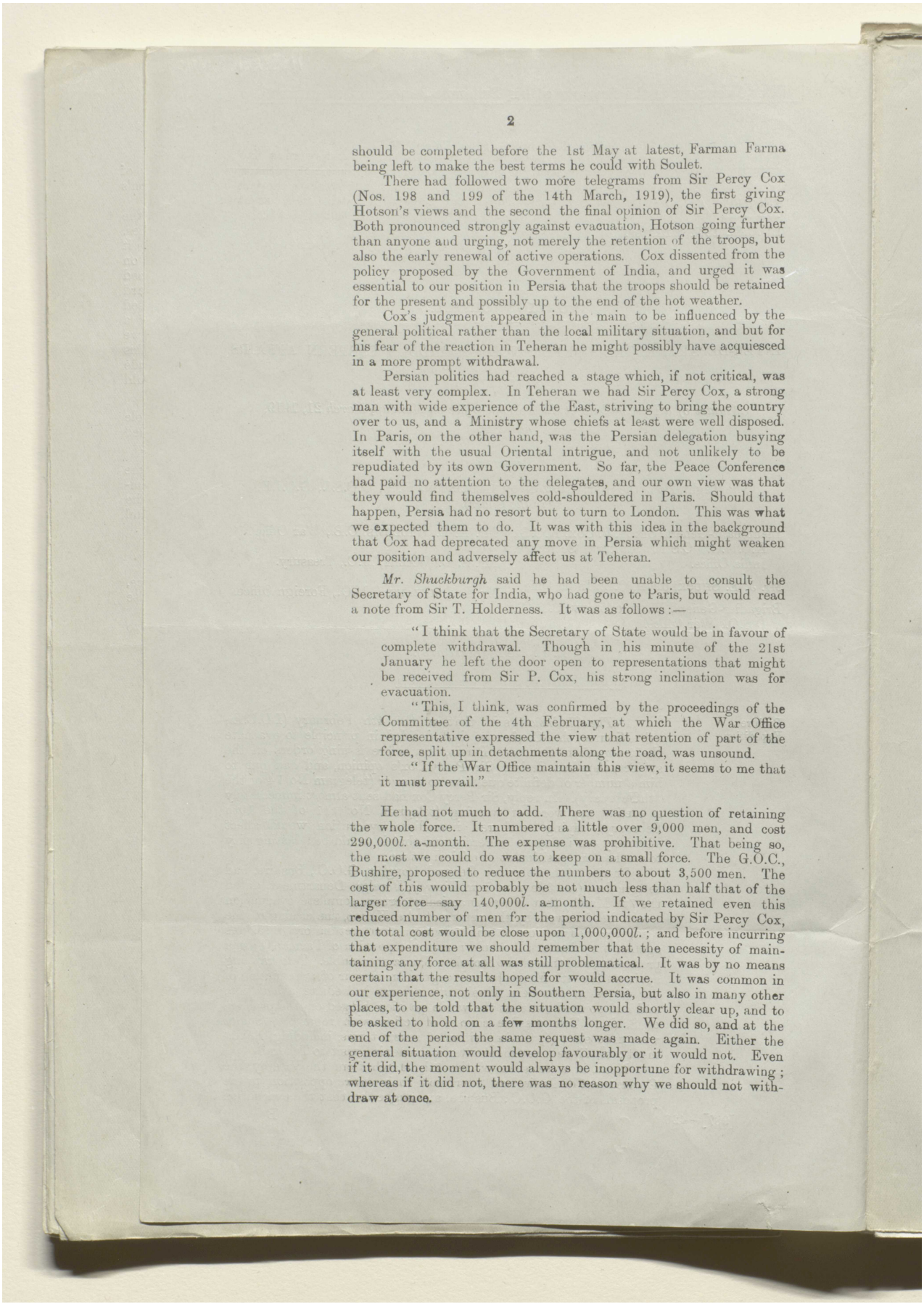



should be completed before the 1st May at latest, Farman Farma being left to make the best terms he could with Soulet.

There had followed two more telegrams from Sir Percy Cox (Nos. 198 and 199 of the 14th March, 1919), the first giving Hotson's views and the second the final opinion of Sir Percy Cox. Both pronounced strongly against evacuation, Hotson going further than anyone and urging, not merely the retention of the troops, but also the early renewal of active operations. Cox dissented from the policy proposed by the Government of India, and urged it was essential to our position in Persia that the troops should be retained for the present and possibly up to the end of the hot weather.

Cox's judgment appeared in the main to be influenced by the general political rather than the local military situation, and but for his fear of the reaction in Teheran he might possibly have acquiesced in a more prompt withdrawal.

Persian politics had reached a stage which, if not critical, was at least very complex. In Teheran we had Sir Percy Cox, a strong man with wide experience of the East, striving to bring the country over to us, and a Ministry whose chiefs at least were well disposed. In Paris, on the other hand, was the Persian delegation busying itself with the usual Oriental intrigue, and not unlikely to be repudiated by its own Government. So far, the Peace Conference had paid no attention to the delegates, and our own view was that they would find themselves cold-shouldered in Paris. Should that happen, Persia had no resort but to turn to London. This was what we expected them to do. It was with this idea in the background that Cox had deprecated any move in Persia which might weaken our position and adversely affect us at Teheran.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said he had been unable to consult the Secretary of State for India, who had gone to Paris, but would read a note from Sir T. Holderness. It was as follows:—

> "I think that the Secretary of State would be in favour of complete withdrawal. Though in his minute of the 21st January he left the door open to representations that might be received from Sir P. Cox, his strong inclination was for evacuation.
>
> "This, I think, was confirmed by the proceedings of the Committee of the 4th February, at which the War Office representative expressed the view that retention of part of the force, split up in detachments along the road, was unsound.
>
> "If the War Office maintain this view, it seems to me that it must prevail."

He had not much to add. There was no question of retaining the whole force. It numbered a little over 9,000 men, and cost 290,000*l.* a-month. The expense was prohibitive. That being so, the most we could do was to keep on a small force. The G.O.C., Bushire, proposed to reduce the numbers to about 3,500 men. The cost of this would probably be not much less than half that of the larger force—say 140,000*l.* a-month. If we retained even this reduced number of men for the period indicated by Sir Percy Cox, the total cost would be close upon 1,000,000*l.*; and before incurring that expenditure we should remember that the necessity of maintaining any force at all was still problematical. It was by no means certain that the results hoped for would accrue. It was common in our experience, not only in Southern Persia, but also in many other places, to be told that the situation would shortly clear up, and to be asked to hold on a few months longer. We did so, and at the end of the period the same request was made again. Either the general situation would develop favourably or it would not. Even if it did, the moment would always be inopportune for withdrawing; whereas if it did not, there was no reason why we should not withdraw at once.



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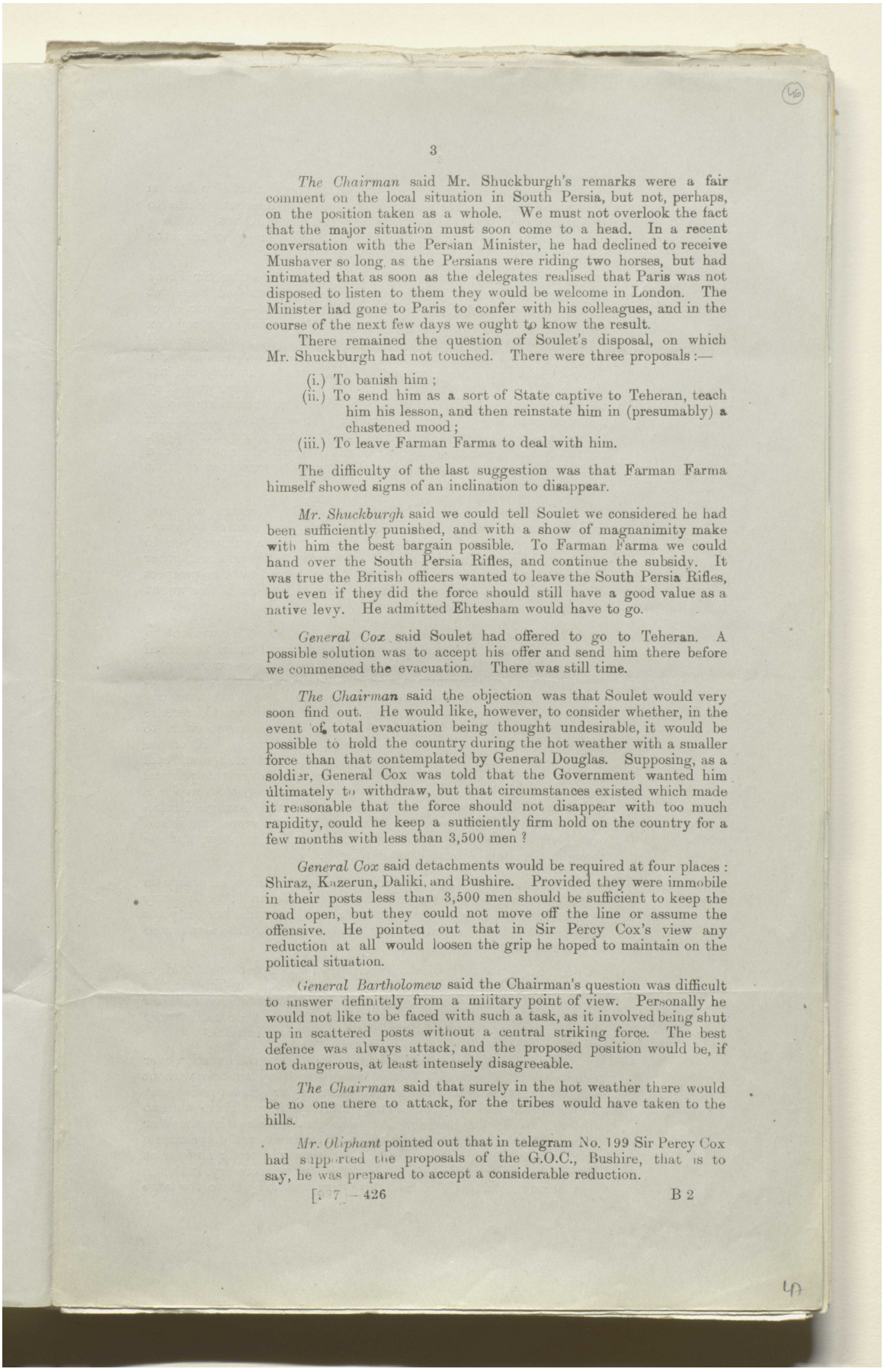



*The Chairman* said Mr. Shuckburgh's remarks were a fair comment on the local situation in South Persia, but not, perhaps, on the position taken as a whole. We must not overlook the fact that the major situation must soon come to a head. In a recent conversation with the Persian Minister, he had declined to receive Mushaver so long as the Persians were riding two horses, but had intimated that as soon as the delegates realised that Paris was not disposed to listen to them they would be welcome in London. The Minister had gone to Paris to confer with his colleagues, and in the course of the next few days we ought to know the result.

There remained the question of Soulet's disposal, on which Mr. Shuckburgh had not touched. There were three proposals :—

(i.) To banish him ;
(ii.) To send him as a sort of State captive to Teheran, teach him his lesson, and then reinstate him in (presumably) a chastened mood ;
(iii.) To leave Farman Farma to deal with him.

The difficulty of the last suggestion was that Farman Farma himself showed signs of an inclination to disappear.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said we could tell Soulet we considered he had been sufficiently punished, and with a show of magnanimity make with him the best bargain possible. To Farman Farma we could hand over the South Persia Rifles, and continue the subsidy. It was true the British officers wanted to leave the South Persia Rifles, but even if they did the force should still have a good value as a native levy. He admitted Ehtesham would have to go.

*General Cox* said Soulet had offered to go to Teheran. A possible solution was to accept his offer and send him there before we commenced the evacuation. There was still time.

*The Chairman* said the objection was that Soulet would very soon find out. He would like, however, to consider whether, in the event of total evacuation being thought undesirable, it would be possible to hold the country during the hot weather with a smaller force than that contemplated by General Douglas. Supposing, as a soldier, General Cox was told that the Government wanted him ultimately to withdraw, but that circumstances existed which made it reasonable that the force should not disappear with too much rapidity, could he keep a sufficiently firm hold on the country for a few months with less than 3,500 men ?

*General Cox* said detachments would be required at four places : Shiraz, Kazerun, Daliki, and Bushire. Provided they were immobile in their posts less than 3,500 men should be sufficient to keep the road open, but they could not move off the line or assume the offensive. He pointed out that in Sir Percy Cox's view any reduction at all would loosen the grip he hoped to maintain on the political situation.

*General Bartholomew* said the Chairman's question was difficult to answer definitely from a military point of view. Personally he would not like to be faced with such a task, as it involved being shut up in scattered posts without a central striking force. The best defence was always attack, and the proposed position would be, if not dangerous, at least intensely disagreeable.

*The Chairman* said that surely in the hot weather there would be no one there to attack, for the tribes would have taken to the hills.

*Mr. Oliphant* pointed out that in telegram No. 199 Sir Percy Cox had supported the proposals of the G.O.C., Bushire, that is to say, he was prepared to accept a considerable reduction.





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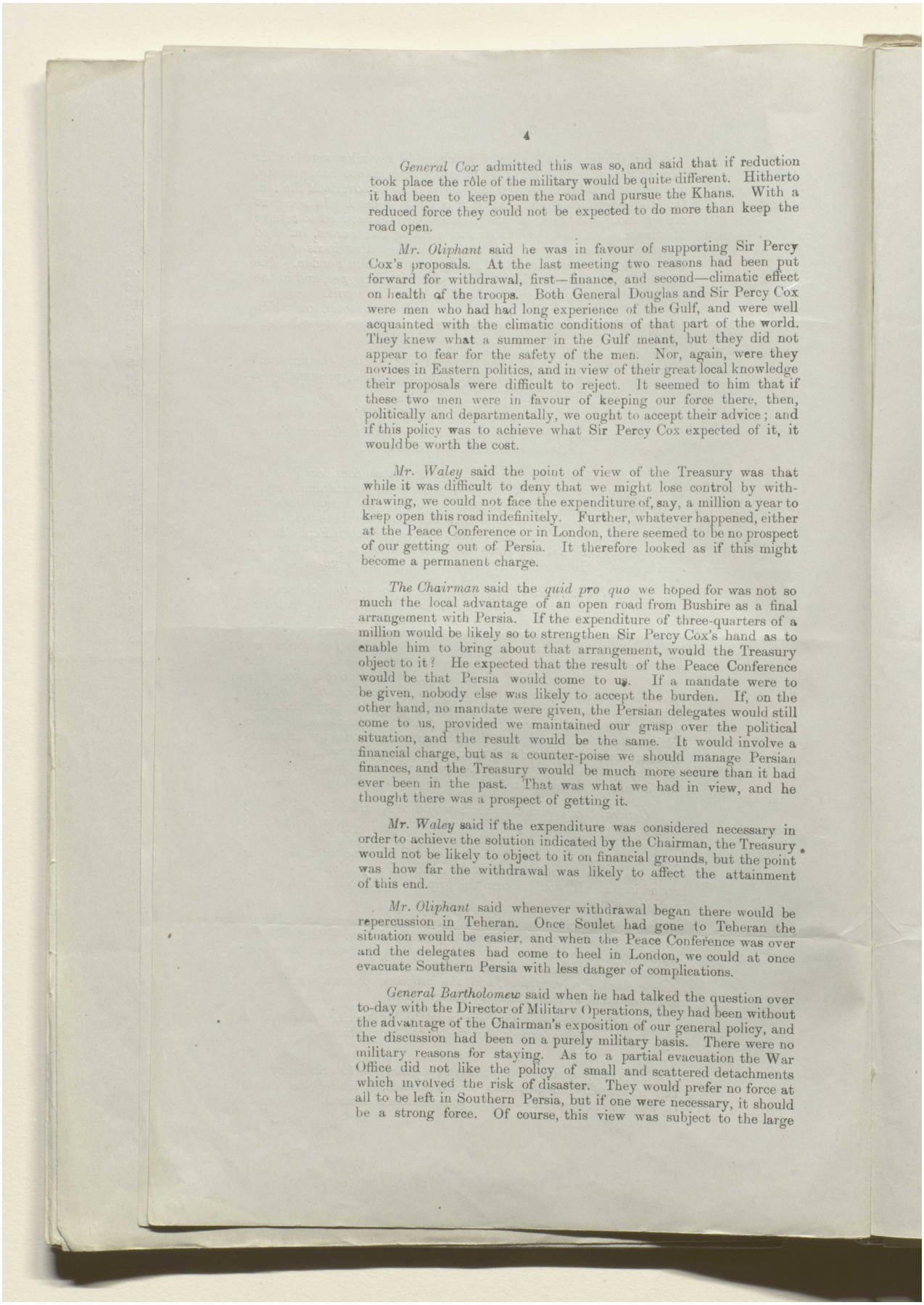



*General Cox* admitted this was so, and said that if reduction took place the rôle of the military would be quite different. Hitherto it had been to keep open the road and pursue the Khans. With a reduced force they could not be expected to do more than keep the road open.

*Mr. Oliphant* said he was in favour of supporting Sir Percy Cox's proposals. At the last meeting two reasons had been put forward for withdrawal, first—finance, and second—climatic effect on health of the troops. Both General Douglas and Sir Percy Cox were men who had had long experience of the Gulf, and were well acquainted with the climatic conditions of that part of the world. They knew what a summer in the Gulf meant, but they did not appear to fear for the safety of the men. Nor, again, were they novices in Eastern politics, and in view of their great local knowledge their proposals were difficult to reject. It seemed to him that if these two men were in favour of keeping our force there, then, politically and departmentally, we ought to accept their advice; and if this policy was to achieve what Sir Percy Cox expected of it, it would be worth the cost.

*Mr. Waley* said the point of view of the Treasury was that while it was difficult to deny that we might lose control by withdrawing, we could not face the expenditure of, say, a million a year to keep open this road indefinitely. Further, whatever happened, either at the Peace Conference or in London, there seemed to be no prospect of our getting out of Persia. It therefore looked as if this might become a permanent charge.

*The Chairman* said the *quid pro quo* we hoped for was not so much the local advantage of an open road from Bushire as a final arrangement with Persia. If the expenditure of three-quarters of a million would be likely so to strengthen Sir Percy Cox's hand as to enable him to bring about that arrangement, would the Treasury object to it? He expected that the result of the Peace Conference would be that Persia would come to us. If a mandate were to be given, nobody else was likely to accept the burden. If, on the other hand, no mandate were given, the Persian delegates would still come to us, provided we maintained our grasp over the political situation, and the result would be the same. It would involve a financial charge, but as a counter-poise we should manage Persian finances, and the Treasury would be much more secure than it had ever been in the past. That was what we had in view, and he thought there was a prospect of getting it.

*Mr. Waley* said if the expenditure was considered necessary in order to achieve the solution indicated by the Chairman, the Treasury would not be likely to object to it on financial grounds, but the point was how far the withdrawal was likely to affect the attainment of this end.

*Mr. Oliphant* said whenever withdrawal began there would be repercussion in Teheran. Once Soulet had gone to Teheran the situation would be easier, and when the Peace Conference was over and the delegates had come to heel in London, we could at once evacuate Southern Persia with less danger of complications.

*General Bartholomew* said when he had talked the question over to-day with the Director of Military Operations, they had been without the advantage of the Chairman's exposition of our general policy, and the discussion had been on a purely military basis. There were no military reasons for staying. As to a partial evacuation the War Office did not like the policy of small and scattered detachments which involved the risk of disaster. They would prefer no force at all to be left in Southern Persia, but if one were necessary, it should be a strong force. Of course, this view was subject to the large



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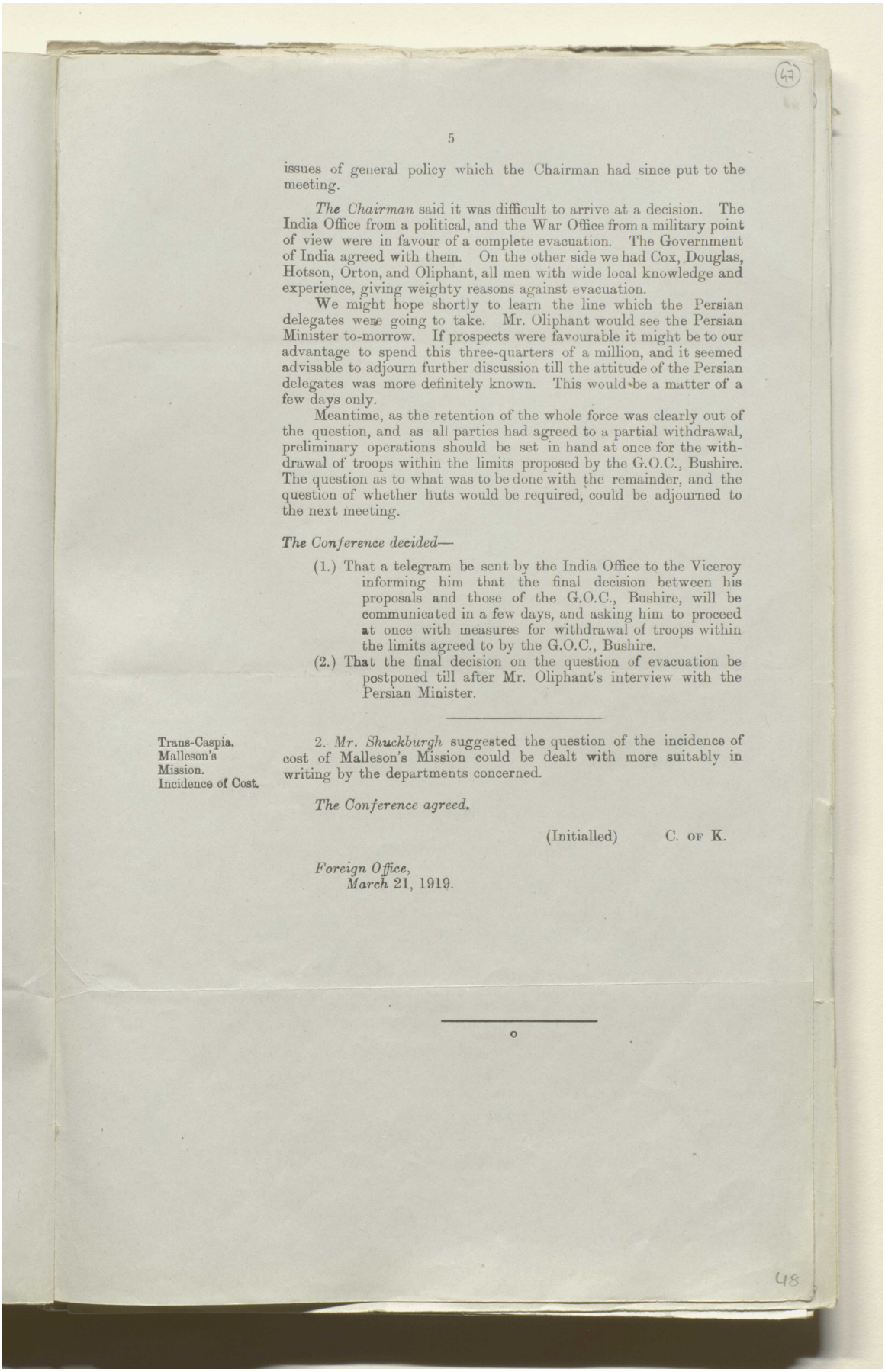



issues of general policy which the Chairman had since put to the meeting.

*The Chairman* said it was difficult to arrive at a decision. The India Office from a political, and the War Office from a military point of view were in favour of a complete evacuation. The Government of India agreed with them. On the other side we had Cox, Douglas, Hotson, Orton, and Oliphant, all men with wide local knowledge and experience, giving weighty reasons against evacuation.

We might hope shortly to learn the line which the Persian delegates were going to take. Mr. Oliphant would see the Persian Minister to-morrow. If prospects were favourable it might be to our advantage to spend this three-quarters of a million, and it seemed advisable to adjourn further discussion till the attitude of the Persian delegates was more definitely known. This would be a matter of a few days only.

Meantime, as the retention of the whole force was clearly out of the question, and as all parties had agreed to a partial withdrawal, preliminary operations should be set in hand at once for the withdrawal of troops within the limits proposed by the G.O.C., Bushire. The question as to what was to be done with the remainder, and the question of whether huts would be required, could be adjourned to the next meeting.

*The Conference decided*—

(1.) That a telegram be sent by the India Office to the Viceroy informing him that the final decision between his proposals and those of the G.O.C., Bushire, will be communicated in a few days, and asking him to proceed at once with measures for withdrawal of troops within the limits agreed to by the G.O.C., Bushire.

(2.) That the final decision on the question of evacuation be postponed till after Mr. Oliphant's interview with the Persian Minister.

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Trans-Caspia. Malleson's Mission. Incidence of Cost.

2. *Mr. Shuckburgh* suggested the question of the incidence of cost of Malleson's Mission could be dealt with more suitably in writing by the departments concerned.

*The Conference agreed.*

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*March* 21, 1919.

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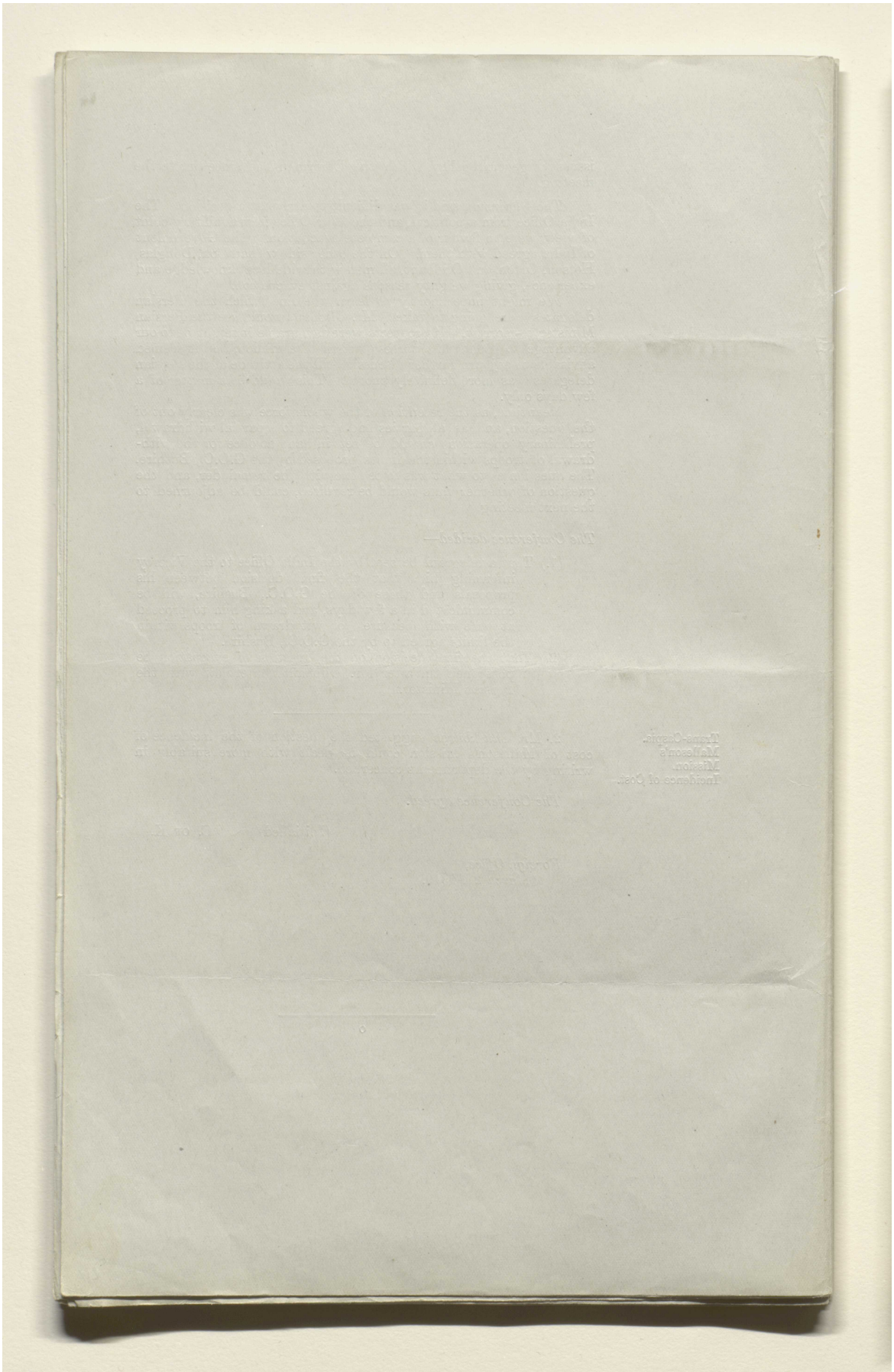



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Lord Curzon
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*Printed for the Foreign Office. April 1919.*

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I.D.C.E., 14th Minutes.

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Wednesday, April 9, 1919, at 6 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Major-General WM. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence, War Office.
Brigadier-General KIRKE, War Office.
Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.
Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.
Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.
Mr. S. D. WALEY, M.C., Treasury.

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

Bushire Expedition.

*The Chairman* said at the last meeting (21st March) the Conference had decided to commence the evacuation of troops from South Persia on the lines suggested by the General Officer Commanding, Bushire (telegram from Viceroy, Foreign Department, dated the 7th March, 1919). Instructions had been sent to that effect (telegram No. P. 1485, dated the 21st March, 1919) from Secretary of State to Viceroy, and were now being put into effect (telegram No. 4673 of 6th April, from Viceroy, Army Department).

The only reason for postponing complete withdrawal had been our fear of weakening Sir Percy Cox's hand in the political negotiations that were still in progress. Sir Percy Cox had been informed of this fact in Foreign Office telegram No. 172 (K) of the 25th March, but perhaps the telegram had not made it sufficiently clear that a reply was desired as to whether or not he thought the political situation would be weakened by an immediate and complete withdrawal. Until a reply arrived it was difficult to estimate to what extent the support given by the presence of our forces in South Persia was necessary. The question at issue was—ought we to spend half a million in giving this support.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said the policy suggested by the Government of India as an alternative to that of the General Officer Commanding, Bushire, was to lay down definite dates (i) for the withdrawal of the bulk of the force, and (ii) for the withdrawal of the remainder. The latest date should be May 1st. Definite dates, they considered, would confront the local authorities with the necessity of cutting their coat according to their cloth and finding a policy which would stand on its own merits without an indefinite backing of military force.

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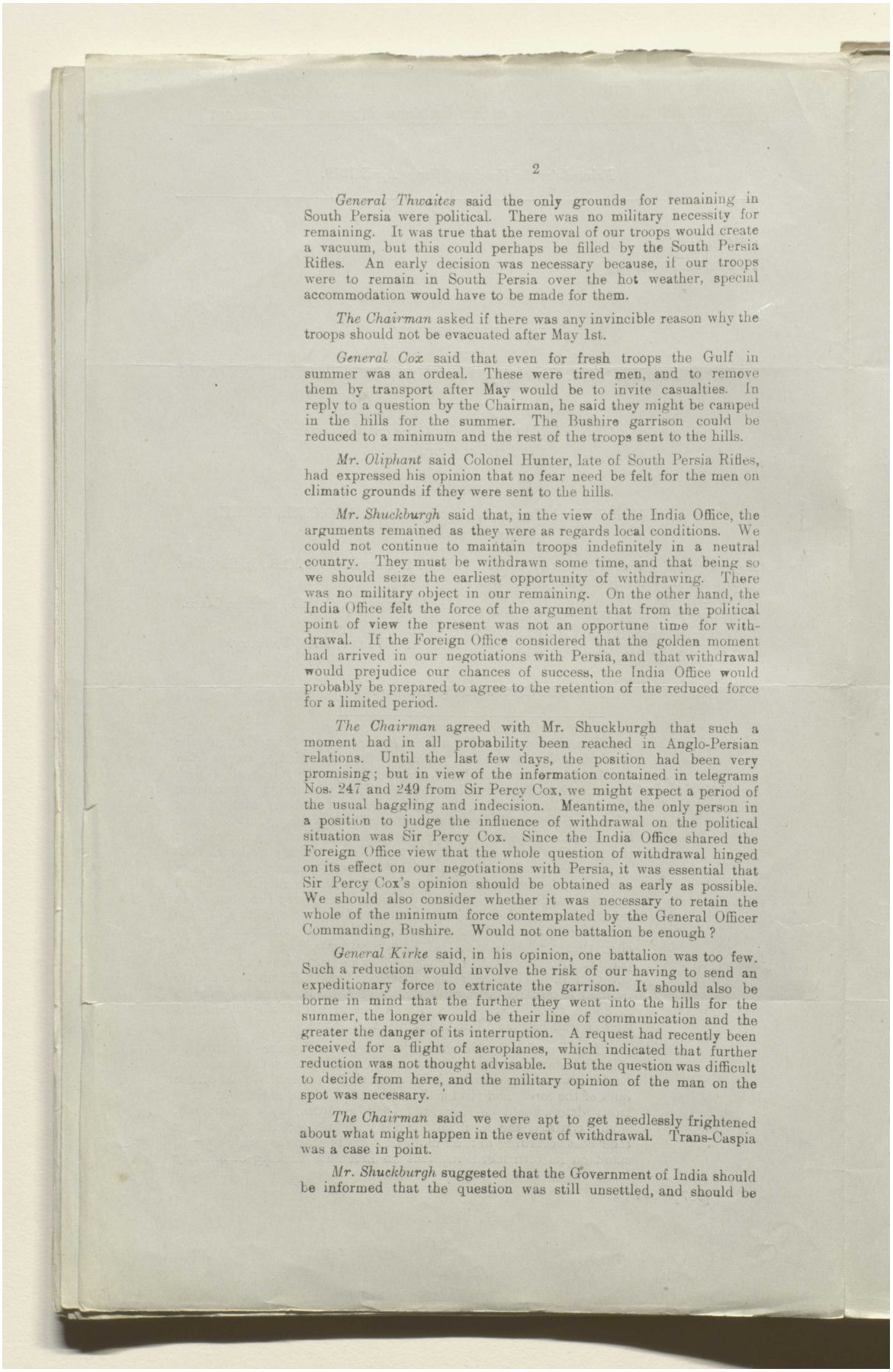



*General Thwaites* said the only grounds for remaining in South Persia were political. There was no military necessity for remaining. It was true that the removal of our troops would create a vacuum, but this could perhaps be filled by the South Persia Rifles. An early decision was necessary because, if our troops were to remain in South Persia over the hot weather, special accommodation would have to be made for them.

*The Chairman* asked if there was any invincible reason why the troops should not be evacuated after May 1st.

*General Cox* said that even for fresh troops the Gulf in summer was an ordeal. These were tired men, and to remove them by transport after May would be to invite casualties. In reply to a question by the Chairman, he said they might be camped in the hills for the summer. The Bushire garrison could be reduced to a minimum and the rest of the troops sent to the hills.

*Mr. Oliphant* said Colonel Hunter, late of South Persia Rifles, had expressed his opinion that no fear need be felt for the men on climatic grounds if they were sent to the hills.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that, in the view of the India Office, the arguments remained as they were as regards local conditions. We could not continue to maintain troops indefinitely in a neutral country. They must be withdrawn some time, and that being so we should seize the earliest opportunity of withdrawing. There was no military object in our remaining. On the other hand, the India Office felt the force of the argument that from the political point of view the present was not an opportune time for withdrawal. If the Foreign Office considered that the golden moment had arrived in our negotiations with Persia, and that withdrawal would prejudice our chances of success, the India Office would probably be prepared to agree to the retention of the reduced force for a limited period.

*The Chairman* agreed with Mr. Shuckburgh that such a moment had in all probability been reached in Anglo-Persian relations. Until the last few days, the position had been very promising; but in view of the information contained in telegrams Nos. 247 and 249 from Sir Percy Cox, we might expect a period of the usual haggling and indecision. Meantime, the only person in a position to judge the influence of withdrawal on the political situation was Sir Percy Cox. Since the India Office shared the Foreign Office view that the whole question of withdrawal hinged on its effect on our negotiations with Persia, it was essential that Sir Percy Cox's opinion should be obtained as early as possible. We should also consider whether it was necessary to retain the whole of the minimum force contemplated by the General Officer Commanding, Bushire. Would not one battalion be enough?

*General Kirke* said, in his opinion, one battalion was too few. Such a reduction would involve the risk of our having to send an expeditionary force to extricate the garrison. It should also be borne in mind that the further they went into the hills for the summer, the longer would be their line of communication and the greater the danger of its interruption. A request had recently been received for a flight of aeroplanes, which indicated that further reduction was not thought advisable. But the question was difficult to decide from here, and the military opinion of the man on the spot was necessary.

*The Chairman* said we were apt to get needlessly frightened about what might happen in the event of withdrawal. Trans-Caspia was a case in point.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* suggested that the Government of India should be informed that the question was still unsettled, and should be



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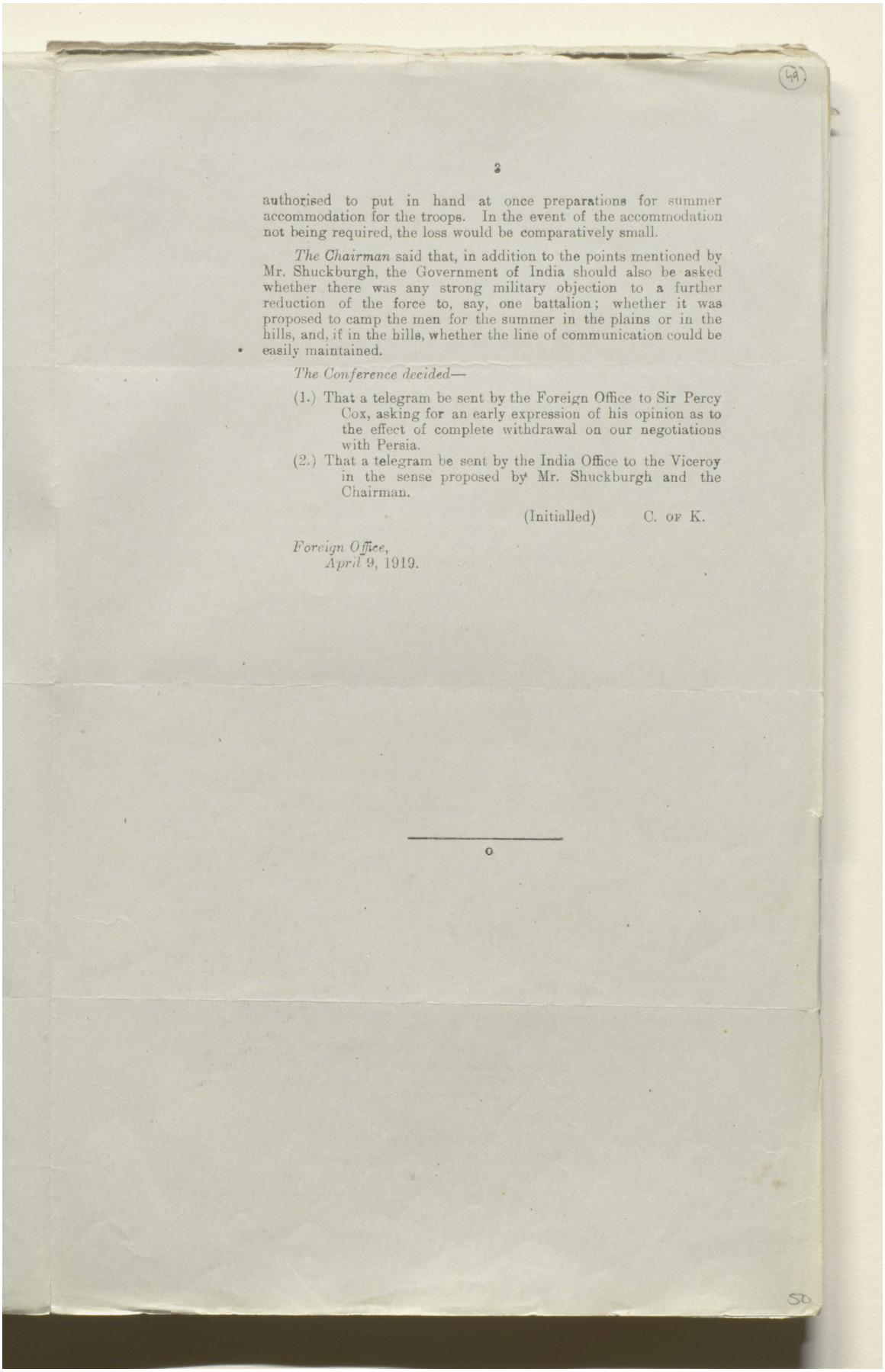

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authorised to put in hand at once preparations for summer accommodation for the troops. In the event of the accommodation not being required, the loss would be comparatively small.

*The Chairman* said that, in addition to the points mentioned by Mr. Shuckburgh, the Government of India should also be asked whether there was any strong military objection to a further reduction of the force to, say, one battalion; whether it was proposed to camp the men for the summer in the plains or in the hills, and, if in the hills, whether the line of communication could be easily maintained.

*The Conference decided*—

(1.) That a telegram be sent by the Foreign Office to Sir Percy Cox, asking for an early expression of his opinion as to the effect of complete withdrawal on our negotiations with Persia.

(2.) That a telegram be sent by the India Office to the Viceroy in the sense proposed by Mr. Shuckburgh and the Chairman.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*April 9, 1919.*



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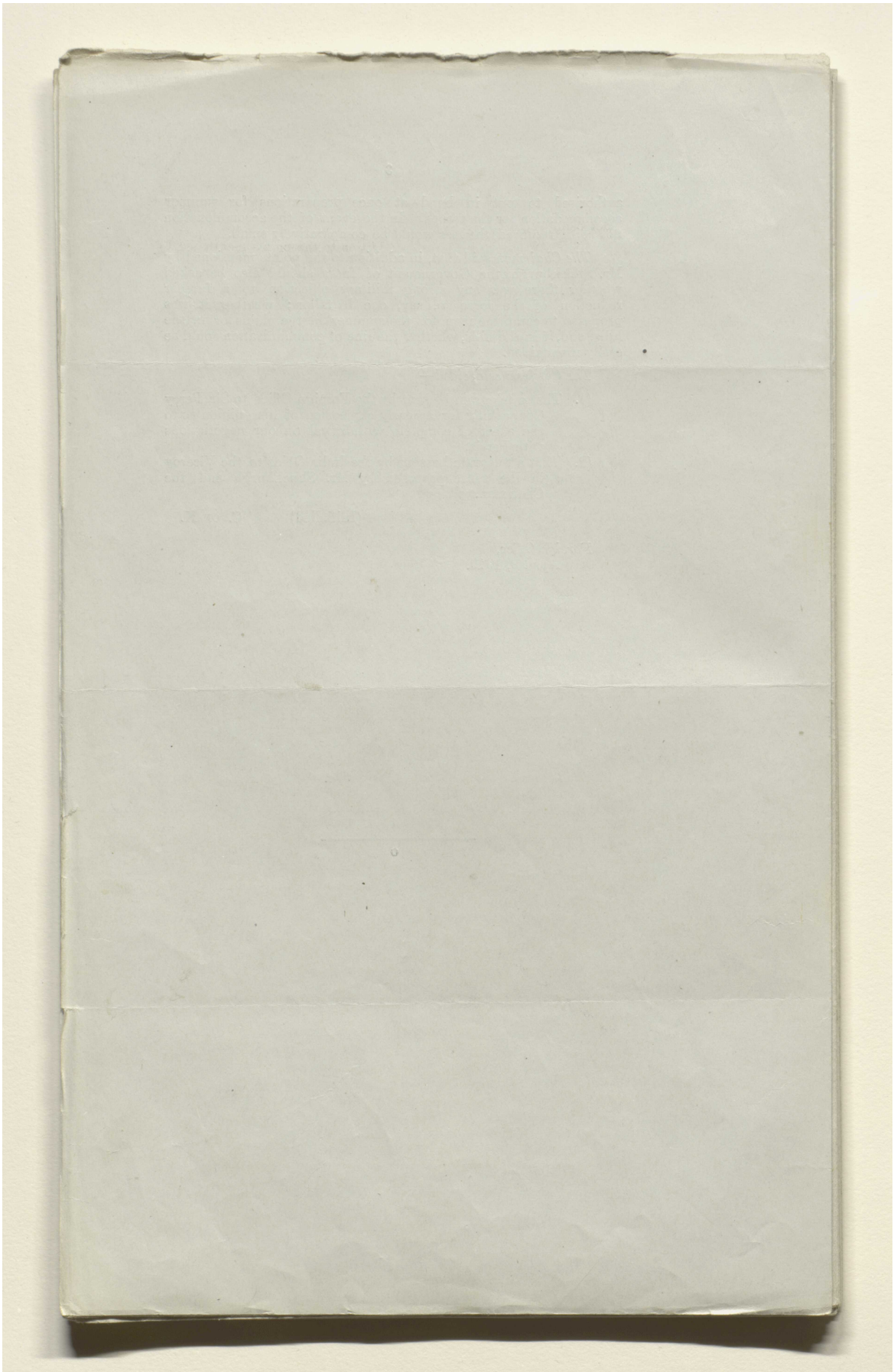

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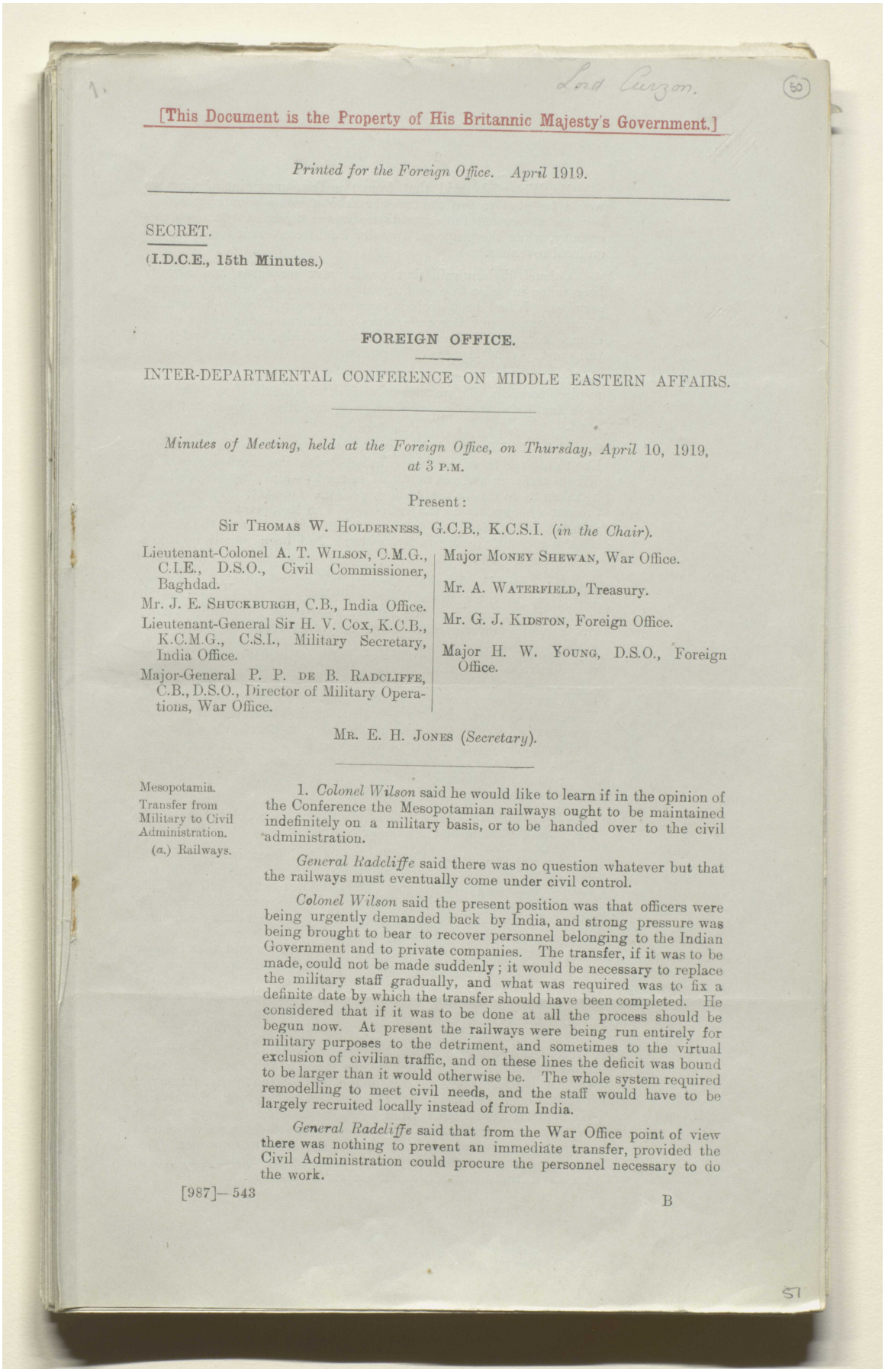

Lord Curzon.

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**(I.D.C.E., 15th Minutes.)**

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting, held at the Foreign Office, on Thursday, April* 10, 1919, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

Sir THOMAS W. HOLDERNESS, G.C.B., K.C.S.I. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-Colonel A. T. WILSON, C.M.G., C.I.E., D.S.O., Civil Commissioner, Baghdad.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Major MONEY SHEWAN, War Office.

Mr. A. WATERFIELD, Treasury.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O., Foreign Office.

MR. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

Mesopotamia. Transfer from Military to Civil Administration. (*a.*) Railways.

1. *Colonel Wilson* said he would like to learn if in the opinion of the Conference the Mesopotamian railways ought to be maintained indefinitely on a military basis, or to be handed over to the civil administration.

*General Radcliffe* said there was no question whatever but that the railways must eventually come under civil control.

*Colonel Wilson* said the present position was that officers were being urgently demanded back by India, and strong pressure was being brought to bear to recover personnel belonging to the Indian Government and to private companies. The transfer, if it was to be made, could not be made suddenly; it would be necessary to replace the military staff gradually, and what was required was to fix a definite date by which the transfer should have been completed. He considered that if it was to be done at all the process should be begun now. At present the railways were being run entirely for military purposes to the detriment, and sometimes to the virtual exclusion of civilian traffic, and on these lines the deficit was bound to be larger than it would otherwise be. The whole system required remodelling to meet civil needs, and the staff would have to be largely recruited locally instead of from India.

*General Radcliffe* said that from the War Office point of view there was nothing to prevent an immediate transfer, provided the Civil Administration could procure the personnel necessary to do the work.

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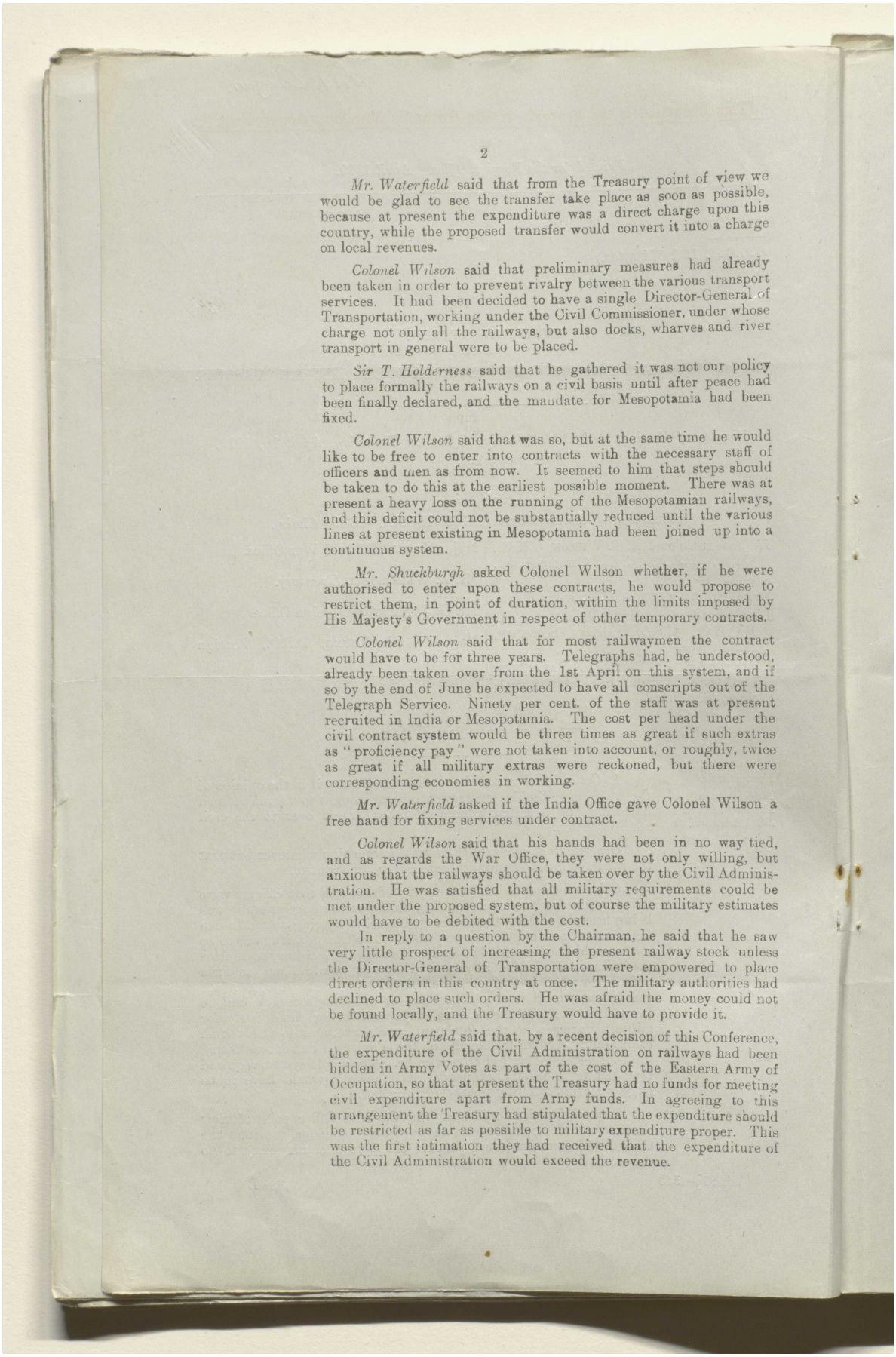



*Mr. Waterfield* said that from the Treasury point of view we would be glad to see the transfer take place as soon as possible, because at present the expenditure was a direct charge upon this country, while the proposed transfer would convert it into a charge on local revenues.

*Colonel Wilson* said that preliminary measures had already been taken in order to prevent rivalry between the various transport services. It had been decided to have a single Director-General of Transportation, working under the Civil Commissioner, under whose charge not only all the railways, but also docks, wharves and river transport in general were to be placed.

*Sir T. Holderness* said that he gathered it was not our policy to place formally the railways on a civil basis until after peace had been finally declared, and the mandate for Mesopotamia had been fixed.

*Colonel Wilson* said that was so, but at the same time he would like to be free to enter into contracts with the necessary staff of officers and men as from now. It seemed to him that steps should be taken to do this at the earliest possible moment. There was at present a heavy loss on the running of the Mesopotamian railways, and this deficit could not be substantially reduced until the various lines at present existing in Mesopotamia had been joined up into a continuous system.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* asked Colonel Wilson whether, if he were authorised to enter upon these contracts, he would propose to restrict them, in point of duration, within the limits imposed by His Majesty's Government in respect of other temporary contracts.

*Colonel Wilson* said that for most railwaymen the contract would have to be for three years. Telegraphs had, he understood, already been taken over from the 1st April on this system, and if so by the end of June he expected to have all conscripts out of the Telegraph Service. Ninety per cent. of the staff was at present recruited in India or Mesopotamia. The cost per head under the civil contract system would be three times as great if such extras as "proficiency pay" were not taken into account, or roughly, twice as great if all military extras were reckoned, but there were corresponding economies in working.

*Mr. Waterfield* asked if the India Office gave Colonel Wilson a free hand for fixing services under contract.

*Colonel Wilson* said that his hands had been in no way tied, and as regards the War Office, they were not only willing, but anxious that the railways should be taken over by the Civil Administration. He was satisfied that all military requirements could be met under the proposed system, but of course the military estimates would have to be debited with the cost.

In reply to a question by the Chairman, he said that he saw very little prospect of increasing the present railway stock unless the Director-General of Transportation were empowered to place direct orders in this country at once. The military authorities had declined to place such orders. He was afraid the money could not be found locally, and the Treasury would have to provide it.

*Mr. Waterfield* said that, by a recent decision of this Conference, the expenditure of the Civil Administration on railways had been hidden in Army Votes as part of the cost of the Eastern Army of Occupation, so that at present the Treasury had no funds for meeting civil expenditure apart from Army funds. In agreeing to this arrangement the Treasury had stipulated that the expenditure should be restricted as far as possible to military expenditure proper. This was the first intimation they had received that the expenditure of the Civil Administration would exceed the revenue.



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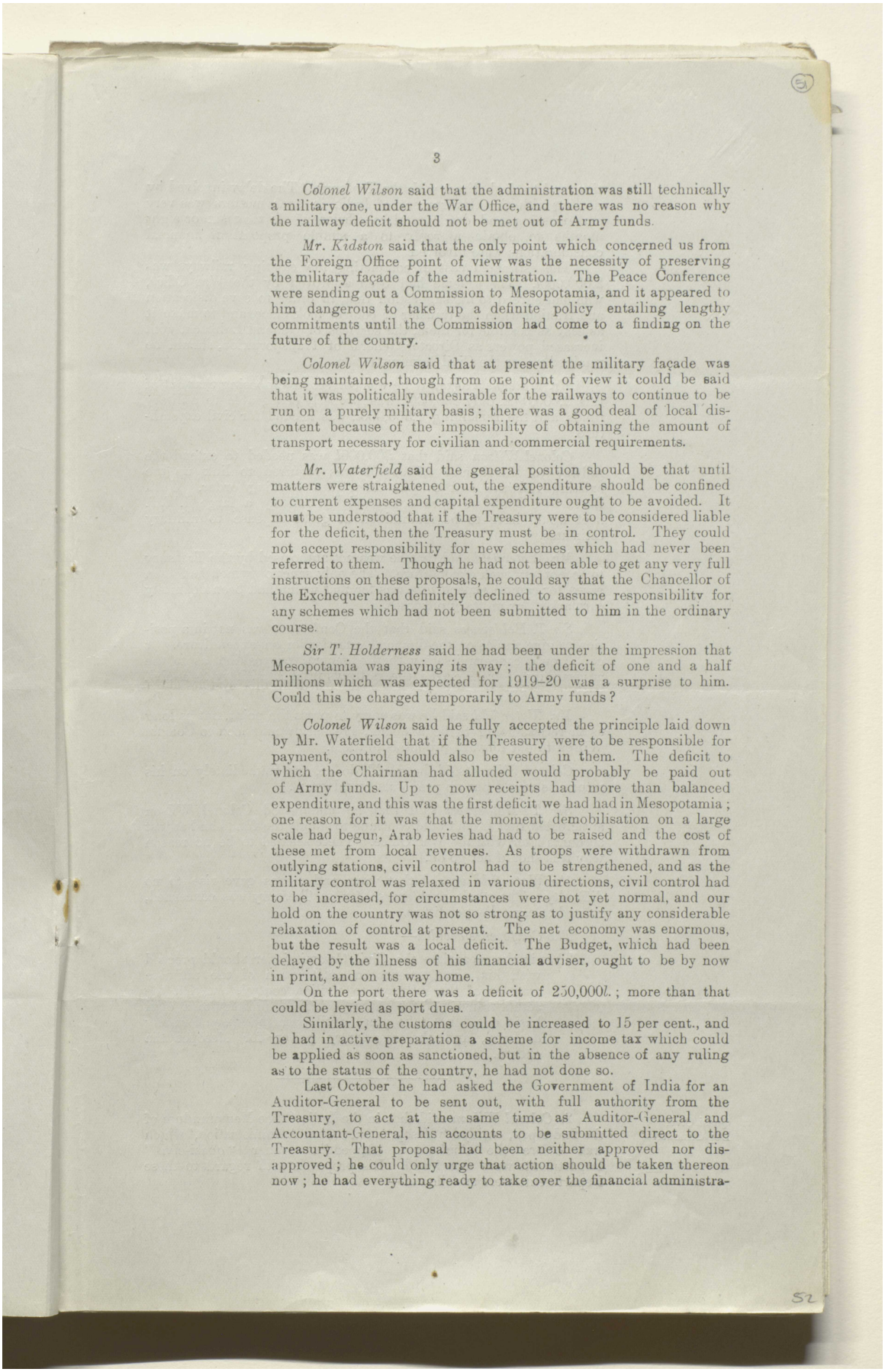



*Colonel Wilson* said that the administration was still technically a military one, under the War Office, and there was no reason why the railway deficit should not be met out of Army funds.

*Mr. Kidston* said that the only point which concerned us from the Foreign Office point of view was the necessity of preserving the military façade of the administration. The Peace Conference were sending out a Commission to Mesopotamia, and it appeared to him dangerous to take up a definite policy entailing lengthy commitments until the Commission had come to a finding on the future of the country.

*Colonel Wilson* said that at present the military façade was being maintained, though from one point of view it could be said that it was politically undesirable for the railways to continue to be run on a purely military basis; there was a good deal of local discontent because of the impossibility of obtaining the amount of transport necessary for civilian and commercial requirements.

*Mr. Waterfield* said the general position should be that until matters were straightened out, the expenditure should be confined to current expenses and capital expenditure ought to be avoided. It must be understood that if the Treasury were to be considered liable for the deficit, then the Treasury must be in control. They could not accept responsibility for new schemes which had never been referred to them. Though he had not been able to get any very full instructions on these proposals, he could say that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had definitely declined to assume responsibility for any schemes which had not been submitted to him in the ordinary course.

*Sir T. Holderness* said he had been under the impression that Mesopotamia was paying its way; the deficit of one and a half millions which was expected for 1919–20 was a surprise to him. Could this be charged temporarily to Army funds?

*Colonel Wilson* said he fully accepted the principle laid down by Mr. Waterfield that if the Treasury were to be responsible for payment, control should also be vested in them. The deficit to which the Chairman had alluded would probably be paid out of Army funds. Up to now receipts had more than balanced expenditure, and this was the first deficit we had had in Mesopotamia; one reason for it was that the moment demobilisation on a large scale had begun, Arab levies had had to be raised and the cost of these met from local revenues. As troops were withdrawn from outlying stations, civil control had to be strengthened, and as the military control was relaxed in various directions, civil control had to be increased, for circumstances were not yet normal, and our hold on the country was not so strong as to justify any considerable relaxation of control at present. The net economy was enormous, but the result was a local deficit. The Budget, which had been delayed by the illness of his financial adviser, ought to be by now in print, and on its way home.

On the port there was a deficit of 250,000*l.*; more than that could be levied as port dues.

Similarly, the customs could be increased to 15 per cent., and he had in active preparation a scheme for income tax which could be applied as soon as sanctioned, but in the absence of any ruling as to the status of the country, he had not done so.

Last October he had asked the Government of India for an Auditor-General to be sent out, with full authority from the Treasury, to act at the same time as Auditor-General and Accountant-General, his accounts to be submitted direct to the Treasury. That proposal had been neither approved nor disapproved; he could only urge that action should be taken thereon now; he had everything ready to take over the financial administra-





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tion, and to deal direct with the Treasury. The delay involved by dealing with the Government of India in such matters was very embarrassing and detrimental to efficiency. It took six or eight months to obtain a reply to a simple proposal if financial considerations were involved.

The estimated cost of completing the existing railways was 2,000,000*l.* The scheme had been approved by the War Office, who had agreed to his suggestion that, in order to save dislocation and friction when the transfer of control took place, and to make it as easy as possible for them, the services of General Lubbock, with increased powers as Director-General of Transportation, should be retained under the Civil Administration.

*Mr. Waterfield* asked if he was correct in supposing that out of this 2,000,000*l.* only 500,000*l.* was properly chargeable to military funds, and the remaining 1,500,000*l.* was needed for civil expenditure.

*Colonel Wilson* said that 500,000*l.* was needed to extend the railway to Mosul, and 1,500,000*l.* was required to link up the existing railways and to put them into working order. Until Basra and Baghdad were connected by railway a large I.W.T. fleet would have to be maintained at great expense to military estimates.

*Mr. Waterfield* said that he was not authorised by the Treasury to accept any such expenditure. The only sanction which had been given for capital expenditure was for that which had been definitely earmarked for military purposes.

*Sir T. Holderness* said that the Conference was not in a position to give advice on the financial question or on expenditure. It could only concern itself with the general proposition as to the advisability of transferring the railways from a military to a civil basis.

*Mr. Waterfield* said he was sorry to press the point, but as long as there was going to be a deficit, Treasury would look to Colonel Wilson to put forward proposals to them.

*Colonel Wilson* said he would do so, and immediately on his return he would put up proposals by telegram.

*Sir T. Holderness* said that he understood Colonel Wilson anticipated that India would continue to supply the funds and adjust accounts later with the War Office. There seemed to be no reason why this should not go on.

*Mr. Waterfield* agreed that ways and means gave rise to no difficulty. The whole problem, so far as Treasury was concerned, related to capital expenditure.

*The Conference decided*—

That in the meantime the Civil Commissioner should proceed with his arrangements in anticipation of the ultimate transfer of the railways to civilian control, but that the actual transfer of the railways from a military to a civil basis could not take place until peace had been formally declared, and the mandatory power for Mesopotamia chosen.

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Quasi Civil Departments.

2. *Colonel Wilson* said that in the India Office Memorandum of the 2nd April, entitled "Mesopotamia: Civil Administration," which was before the Conference (Appendix), other "quasi-civil" Departments were mentioned. His proposals with regard to these Departments were as follows:—



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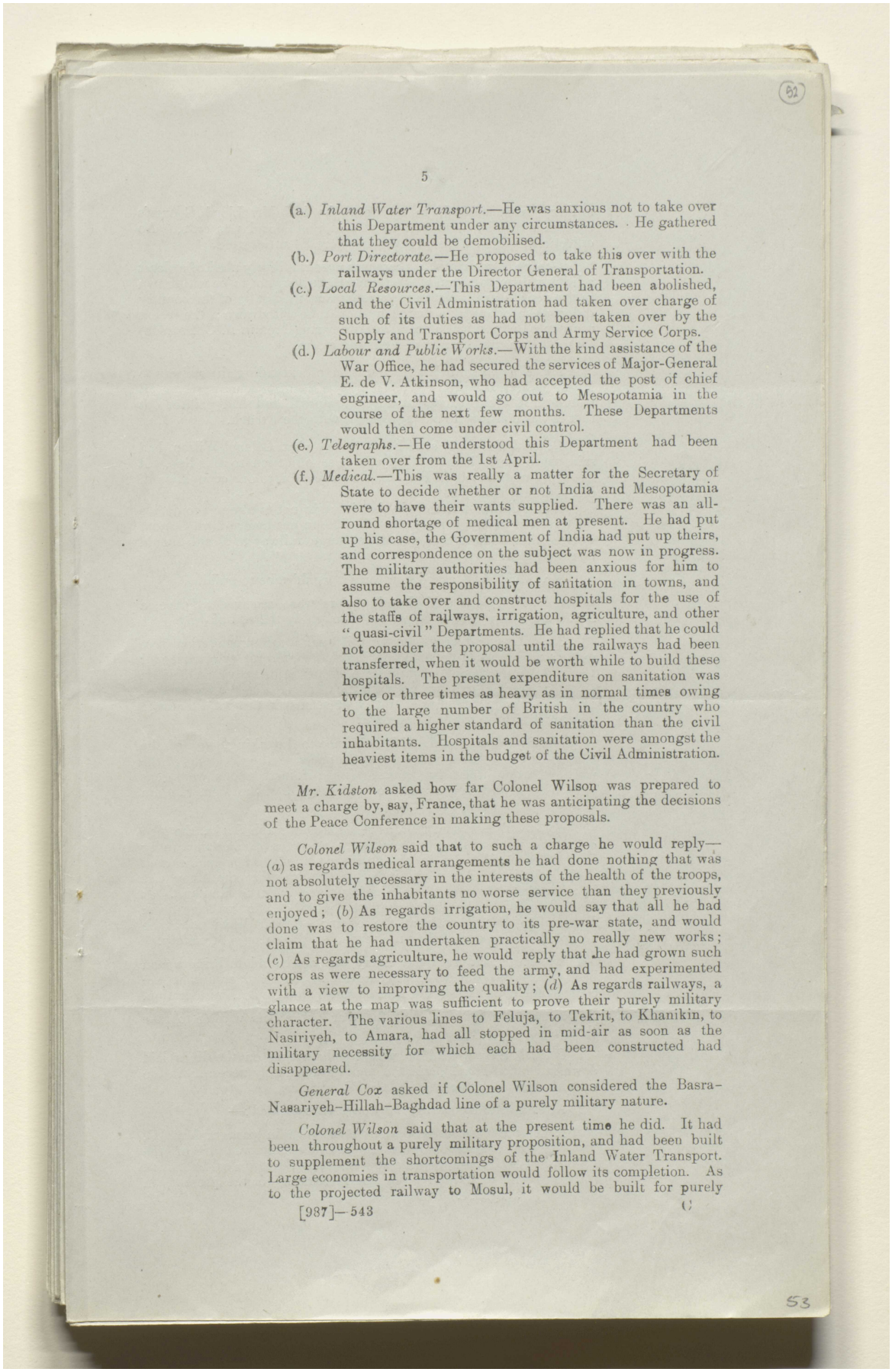



(a.) *Inland Water Transport.*—He was anxious not to take over this Department under any circumstances. He gathered that they could be demobilised.

(b.) *Port Directorate.*—He proposed to take this over with the railways under the Director General of Transportation.

(c.) *Local Resources.*—This Department had been abolished, and the Civil Administration had taken over charge of such of its duties as had not been taken over by the Supply and Transport Corps and Army Service Corps.

(d.) *Labour and Public Works.*—With the kind assistance of the War Office, he had secured the services of Major-General E. de V. Atkinson, who had accepted the post of chief engineer, and would go out to Mesopotamia in the course of the next few months. These Departments would then come under civil control.

(e.) *Telegraphs.*—He understood this Department had been taken over from the 1st April.

(f.) *Medical.*—This was really a matter for the Secretary of State to decide whether or not India and Mesopotamia were to have their wants supplied. There was an all-round shortage of medical men at present. He had put up his case, the Government of India had put up theirs, and correspondence on the subject was now in progress. The military authorities had been anxious for him to assume the responsibility of sanitation in towns, and also to take over and construct hospitals for the use of the staffs of railways, irrigation, agriculture, and other "quasi-civil" Departments. He had replied that he could not consider the proposal until the railways had been transferred, when it would be worth while to build these hospitals. The present expenditure on sanitation was twice or three times as heavy as in normal times owing to the large number of British in the country who required a higher standard of sanitation than the civil inhabitants. Hospitals and sanitation were amongst the heaviest items in the budget of the Civil Administration.

*Mr. Kidston* asked how far Colonel Wilson was prepared to meet a charge by, say, France, that he was anticipating the decisions of the Peace Conference in making these proposals.

*Colonel Wilson* said that to such a charge he would reply—(*a*) as regards medical arrangements he had done nothing that was not absolutely necessary in the interests of the health of the troops, and to give the inhabitants no worse service than they previously enjoyed; (*b*) As regards irrigation, he would say that all he had done was to restore the country to its pre-war state, and would claim that he had undertaken practically no really new works; (*c*) As regards agriculture, he would reply that he had grown such crops as were necessary to feed the army, and had experimented with a view to improving the quality; (*d*) As regards railways, a glance at the map was sufficient to prove their purely military character. The various lines to Feluja, to Tekrit, to Khanikin, to Nasiriyeh, to Amara, had all stopped in mid-air as soon as the military necessity for which each had been constructed had disappeared.

*General Cox* asked if Colonel Wilson considered the Basra–Nasariyeh–Hillah–Baghdad line of a purely military nature.

*Colonel Wilson* said that at the present time he did. It had been throughout a purely military proposition, and had been built to supplement the shortcomings of the Inland Water Transport. Large economies in transportation would follow its completion. As to the projected railway to Mosul, it would be built for purely



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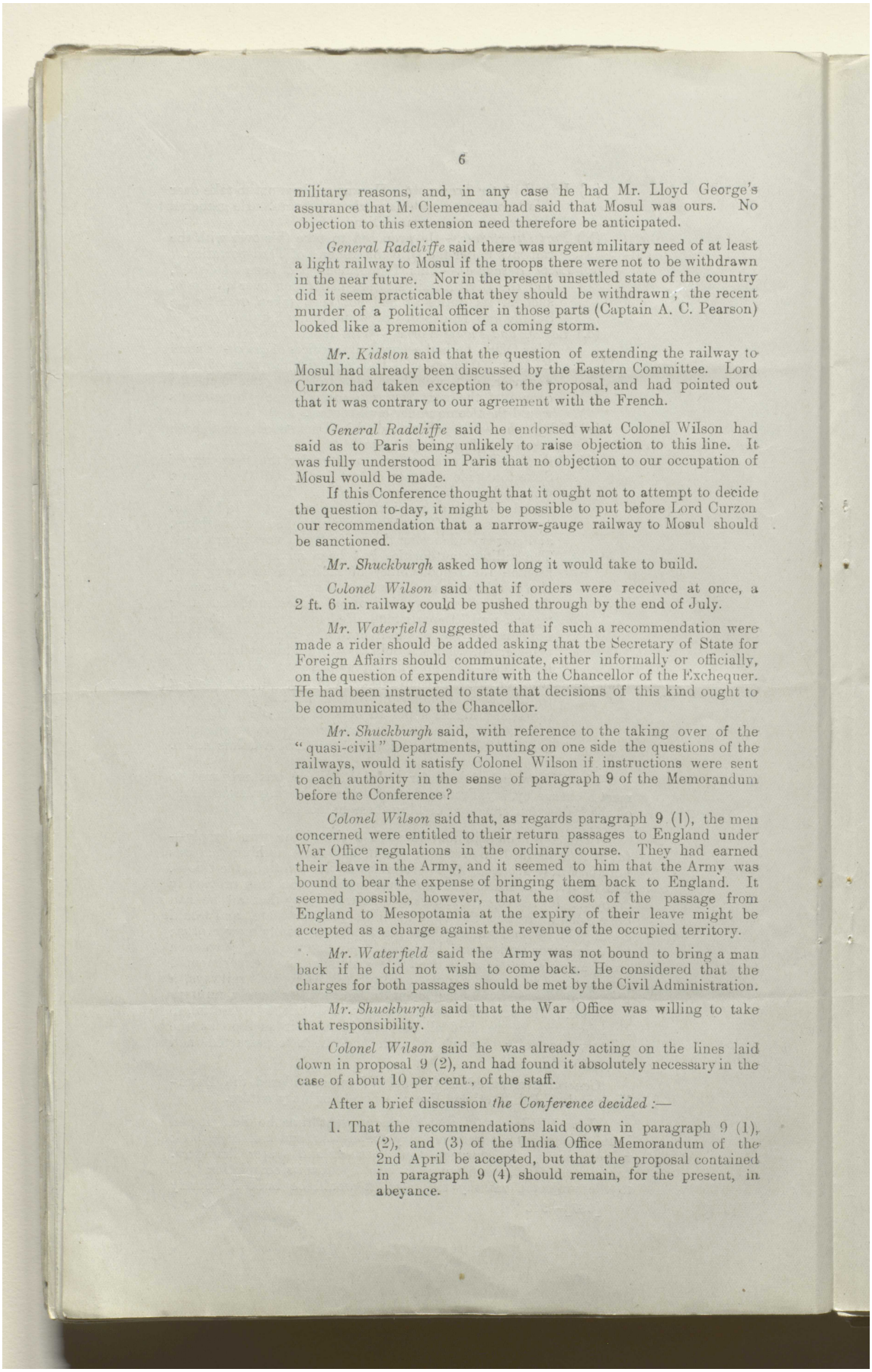



military reasons, and, in any case he had Mr. Lloyd George's assurance that M. Clemenceau had said that Mosul was ours. No objection to this extension need therefore be anticipated.

*General Radcliffe* said there was urgent military need of at least a light railway to Mosul if the troops there were not to be withdrawn in the near future. Nor in the present unsettled state of the country did it seem practicable that they should be withdrawn; the recent murder of a political officer in those parts (Captain A. C. Pearson) looked like a premonition of a coming storm.

*Mr. Kidston* said that the question of extending the railway to Mosul had already been discussed by the Eastern Committee. Lord Curzon had taken exception to the proposal, and had pointed out that it was contrary to our agreement with the French.

*General Radcliffe* said he endorsed what Colonel Wilson had said as to Paris being unlikely to raise objection to this line. It was fully understood in Paris that no objection to our occupation of Mosul would be made.

If this Conference thought that it ought not to attempt to decide the question to-day, it might be possible to put before Lord Curzon our recommendation that a narrow-gauge railway to Mosul should be sanctioned.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* asked how long it would take to build.

*Colonel Wilson* said that if orders were received at once, a 2 ft. 6 in. railway could be pushed through by the end of July.

*Mr. Waterfield* suggested that if such a recommendation were made a rider should be added asking that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should communicate, either informally or officially, on the question of expenditure with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had been instructed to state that decisions of this kind ought to be communicated to the Chancellor.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said, with reference to the taking over of the "quasi-civil" Departments, putting on one side the questions of the railways, would it satisfy Colonel Wilson if instructions were sent to each authority in the sense of paragraph 9 of the Memorandum before the Conference?

*Colonel Wilson* said that, as regards paragraph 9 (1), the men concerned were entitled to their return passages to England under War Office regulations in the ordinary course. They had earned their leave in the Army, and it seemed to him that the Army was bound to bear the expense of bringing them back to England. It seemed possible, however, that the cost of the passage from England to Mesopotamia at the expiry of their leave might be accepted as a charge against the revenue of the occupied territory.

*Mr. Waterfield* said the Army was not bound to bring a man back if he did not wish to come back. He considered that the charges for both passages should be met by the Civil Administration.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that the War Office was willing to take that responsibility.

*Colonel Wilson* said he was already acting on the lines laid down in proposal 9 (2), and had found it absolutely necessary in the case of about 10 per cent., of the staff.

After a brief discussion *the Conference decided*:—

1. That the recommendations laid down in paragraph 9 (1), (2), and (3) of the India Office Memorandum of the 2nd April be accepted, but that the proposal contained in paragraph 9 (4) should remain, for the present, in abeyance.



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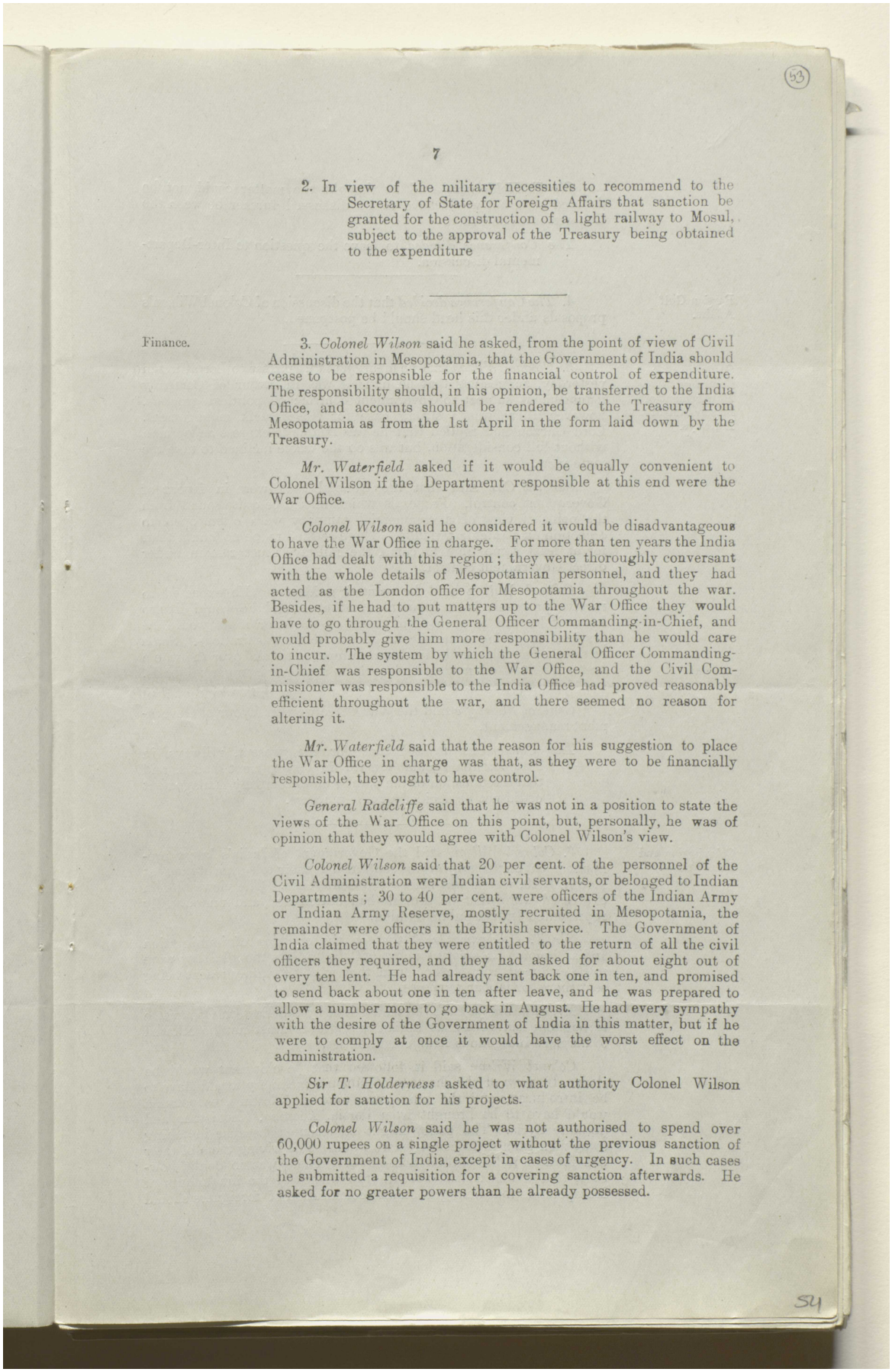



2. In view of the military necessities to recommend to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that sanction be granted for the construction of a light railway to Mosul, subject to the approval of the Treasury being obtained to the expenditure

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Finance.

3. *Colonel Wilson* said he asked, from the point of view of Civil Administration in Mesopotamia, that the Government of India should cease to be responsible for the financial control of expenditure. The responsibility should, in his opinion, be transferred to the India Office, and accounts should be rendered to the Treasury from Mesopotamia as from the 1st April in the form laid down by the Treasury.

*Mr. Waterfield* asked if it would be equally convenient to Colonel Wilson if the Department responsible at this end were the War Office.

*Colonel Wilson* said he considered it would be disadvantageous to have the War Office in charge. For more than ten years the India Office had dealt with this region; they were thoroughly conversant with the whole details of Mesopotamian personnel, and they had acted as the London office for Mesopotamia throughout the war. Besides, if he had to put matters up to the War Office they would have to go through the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, and would probably give him more responsibility than he would care to incur. The system by which the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief was responsible to the War Office, and the Civil Commissioner was responsible to the India Office had proved reasonably efficient throughout the war, and there seemed no reason for altering it.

*Mr. Waterfield* said that the reason for his suggestion to place the War Office in charge was that, as they were to be financially responsible, they ought to have control.

*General Radcliffe* said that he was not in a position to state the views of the War Office on this point, but, personally, he was of opinion that they would agree with Colonel Wilson's view.

*Colonel Wilson* said that 20 per cent. of the personnel of the Civil Administration were Indian civil servants, or belonged to Indian Departments; 30 to 40 per cent. were officers of the Indian Army or Indian Army Reserve, mostly recruited in Mesopotamia, the remainder were officers in the British service. The Government of India claimed that they were entitled to the return of all the civil officers they required, and they had asked for about eight out of every ten lent. He had already sent back one in ten, and promised to send back about one in ten after leave, and he was prepared to allow a number more to go back in August. He had every sympathy with the desire of the Government of India in this matter, but if he were to comply at once it would have the worst effect on the administration.

*Sir T. Holderness* asked to what authority Colonel Wilson applied for sanction for his projects.

*Colonel Wilson* said he was not authorised to spend over 60,000 rupees on a single project without the previous sanction of the Government of India, except in cases of urgency. In such cases he submitted a requisition for a covering sanction afterwards. He asked for no greater powers than he already possessed.



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*Sir T. Holderness* said he thought the matter could not be decided here, but would have to be discussed further between the Departments concerned.

*The Conference decided* to leave the question to Inter-Departmental discussion.

Persian Gulf Affairs.

4. *The Conference decided* that the discussion of Colonel Wilson's proposals under this head should be postponed.

Government *v.* Company Management of Mesopotamian Railways.

5. *Colonel Wilson* said he mentioned this matter to Lord Curzon yesterday, suggesting that he himself was in favour of Company management subject to Government control; on political grounds, however, there was a strong case for Government management. Lord Curzon had replied that he was unable to express an opinion without full consideration, but was on the whole inclined to take the same view.

*General Cox* said that the General Staff were in favour of Government control. Proposals which might be quite sound from the point of view of a commercial company were often open to objection on strategic grounds. There seemed to be no doubt that, for at least some time to come, the railways must remain under direct Government control.

*Colonel Wilson* said he wanted guidance. He expected to receive proposals from companies and firms, and he would like to know if he was to turn them down *ab initio*, or if he would be justified in giving some encouragement to their aspirations. Some of these companies, he believed, were prepared to take over the whole system as it stood now and place it on a proper commercial basis, and from one point of view their offer was certainly very tempting.

*General Radcliffe* said the War Office were in favour of Government management.

*The Conference decided* that for the present, railways in Mesopotamia should remain in Government hands, and that the question of the admission of company management could not be decided at this juncture.

Colonisation and Immigration.

6. *Colonel Wilson* said the Government of India's latest pronouncement on the subject was contained in their telegram of the 21st March, 1919, which was before the Conference. The views therein expressed were what he himself had anticipated, and undoubtedly represented Indian public opinion.

*Sir T. Holderness* said that on the question of immigration Indian opinion was very touchy. If the Indians thought they were to be excluded from Mesopotamia, they would certainly resent being sent there for labour purposes.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said the view taken by the Eastern Committee throughout had been that Indian immigrants must not be allowed to displace indigenous Arab communities.

*Colonel Wilson* said it followed that development would be slow. In view of the shortage of labour, machinery would have to be introduced, and the man-power unobtainable in Mesopotamia would have to be brought from Persia, Anatolia, Kurdistan, and possibly Syria. The policy might be resented because in taking away men from these countries we would be depriving them of their one form of riches —their man-power. There was no doubt, however, that it was consistent with the wishes of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia that immigration and colonisation of foreigners should



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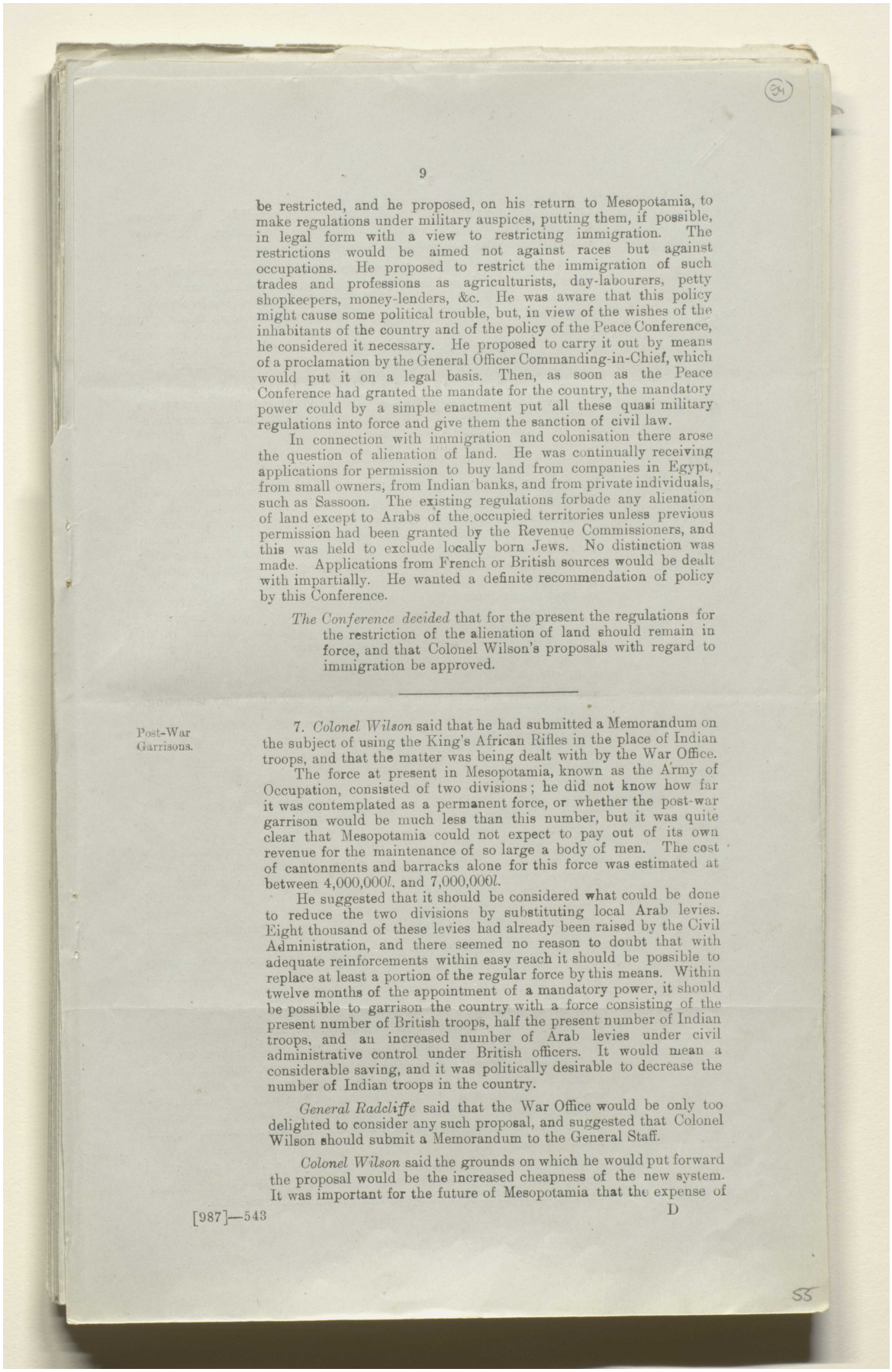



be restricted, and he proposed, on his return to Mesopotamia, to make regulations under military auspices, putting them, if possible, in legal form with a view to restricting immigration. The restrictions would be aimed not against races but against occupations. He proposed to restrict the immigration of such trades and professions as agriculturists, day-labourers, petty shopkeepers, money-lenders, &c. He was aware that this policy might cause some political trouble, but, in view of the wishes of the inhabitants of the country and of the policy of the Peace Conference, he considered it necessary. He proposed to carry it out by means of a proclamation by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, which would put it on a legal basis. Then, as soon as the Peace Conference had granted the mandate for the country, the mandatory power could by a simple enactment put all these quasi military regulations into force and give them the sanction of civil law.

In connection with immigration and colonisation there arose the question of alienation of land. He was continually receiving applications for permission to buy land from companies in Egypt, from small owners, from Indian banks, and from private individuals, such as Sassoon. The existing regulations forbade any alienation of land except to Arabs of the occupied territories unless previous permission had been granted by the Revenue Commissioners, and this was held to exclude locally born Jews. No distinction was made. Applications from French or British sources would be dealt with impartially. He wanted a definite recommendation of policy by this Conference.

*The Conference decided* that for the present the regulations for the restriction of the alienation of land should remain in force, and that Colonel Wilson's proposals with regard to immigration be approved.

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Post-War Garrisons.

7. *Colonel Wilson* said that he had submitted a Memorandum on the subject of using the King's African Rifles in the place of Indian troops, and that the matter was being dealt with by the War Office.

The force at present in Mesopotamia, known as the Army of Occupation, consisted of two divisions; he did not know how far it was contemplated as a permanent force, or whether the post-war garrison would be much less than this number, but it was quite clear that Mesopotamia could not expect to pay out of its own revenue for the maintenance of so large a body of men. The cost of cantonments and barracks alone for this force was estimated at between 4,000,000*l.* and 7,000,000*l.*

He suggested that it should be considered what could be done to reduce the two divisions by substituting local Arab levies. Eight thousand of these levies had already been raised by the Civil Administration, and there seemed no reason to doubt that with adequate reinforcements within easy reach it should be possible to replace at least a portion of the regular force by this means. Within twelve months of the appointment of a mandatory power, it should be possible to garrison the country with a force consisting of the present number of British troops, half the present number of Indian troops, and an increased number of Arab levies under civil administrative control under British officers. It would mean a considerable saving, and it was politically desirable to decrease the number of Indian troops in the country.

*General Radcliffe* said that the War Office would be only too delighted to consider any such proposal, and suggested that Colonel Wilson should submit a Memorandum to the General Staff.

*Colonel Wilson* said the grounds on which he would put forward the proposal would be the increased cheapness of the new system. It was important for the future of Mesopotamia that the expense of





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maintaining a garrison should be as light as possible. It was on this ground that he had ventured to mention the matter, which was otherwise somewhat beyond his competence.

*General Cox* said that another possible saving was in the construction of barracks. He considered we should avoid the mistake which had been made in India of building palatial barracks, which had the strategic objection that they tied us down to a single spot, and the financial objection of expense. We should follow our later experiences in the plains of India, which had shown the possibility of constructing house room on the hut system, with all facilities for hot weather, at a much lower cost.

*The Conference decided* that Colonel Wilson should draw up his proposals in the form of a memorandum for the consideration of the General Staff.

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Irrigation.

8. *Colonel Wilson* said that in the Irrigation Department he would have to look locally for his labour. The difficulties to be faced, apart from the labour trouble, were mainly financial. The Irrigation Department had been created under military auspices on an ambitious scale. It had a large capital expenditure and considerable capital commitments. After six months of discussion it was taken over by the Civil Administration on the 1st April. If we were obliged to cut down civil expenditure absolutely rigorously, the first Department to go would be that of irrigation, but it would be greatly against the interests of the country if this were done, and would put things back five years. The lowest sum on which we could keep it going was eighty lakhs of rupees a year. It was difficult at this stage to estimate the receipts, because they were all indirect and buried in the land revenue estimate. The estimate of expenditure for last year was 240 lakhs, but as we could not get sufficient labour we had only spent half that amount. He understood that he was to be asked to take over 50 per cent. of the cost of irrigation works, and that the other 50 per cent. was to be regarded as a bad debt. The estimated deficit of one and a half million included half a million on irrigation. The reason for this was that maintenance charges were very heavy. They covered extensive repairs to the Hindieh Barrage, which was wearing badly, and extensive works at Amara. In reply to a question by the Chairman, he said the land revenue was about 1,000,000*l.*; this year's crop from irrigated areas was three times, and last year's one and a half times, the pre-war average. He considered that the work we had done in irrigation had already yielded a return, but that it was not yet a very good return, as we had only just begun to reap the benefit of the work done, and the Civil Administration could usefully spend on irrigation 2,000,000*l.* a year for the next five years.

He asked if it was desirable to request contractors to take up part of the work. Our experience in Mesopotamia had hitherto been that we could do it considerably cheaper ourselves.

*Mr. Kidston* said Messrs. Pearson & Jackson claimed they had a monopoly over contracts for irrigation work in Mesopotamia.

*Colonel Wilson* said that meantime he had taken on the Irrigation Department at high wages for a year, and had made contracts with them. The new establishment would be 50 per cent. smaller than the military establishment. Contracts would be determinable at three months' notice. Any civilised country would call the expenditure for which he had budgeted maintenance, and not capital.

*Sir T. Holderness* said that he thought that the first thing which would have to be done after the Peace Conference had issued their mandate would be to appoint a Financial Commission.



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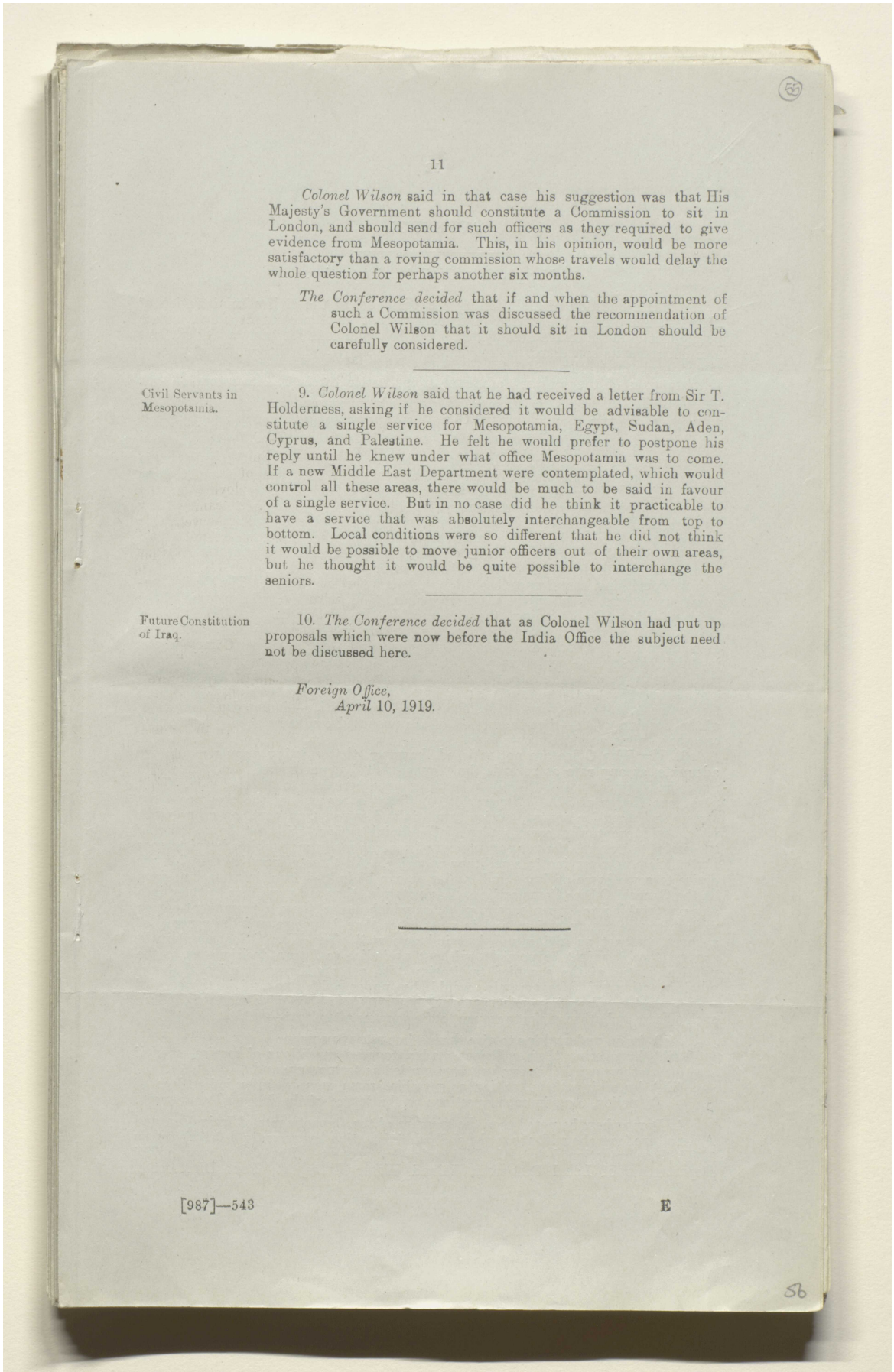



*Colonel Wilson* said in that case his suggestion was that His Majesty's Government should constitute a Commission to sit in London, and should send for such officers as they required to give evidence from Mesopotamia. This, in his opinion, would be more satisfactory than a roving commission whose travels would delay the whole question for perhaps another six months.

*The Conference decided* that if and when the appointment of such a Commission was discussed the recommendation of Colonel Wilson that it should sit in London should be carefully considered.

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Civil Servants in Mesopotamia.

9. *Colonel Wilson* said that he had received a letter from Sir T. Holderness, asking if he considered it would be advisable to constitute a single service for Mesopotamia, Egypt, Sudan, Aden, Cyprus, and Palestine. He felt he would prefer to postpone his reply until he knew under what office Mesopotamia was to come. If a new Middle East Department were contemplated, which would control all these areas, there would be much to be said in favour of a single service. But in no case did he think it practicable to have a service that was absolutely interchangeable from top to bottom. Local conditions were so different that he did not think it would be possible to move junior officers out of their own areas, but he thought it would be quite possible to interchange the seniors.

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Future Constitution of Iraq.

10. *The Conference decided* that as Colonel Wilson had put up proposals which were now before the India Office the subject need not be discussed here.

*Foreign Office,*
*April* 10, 1919.

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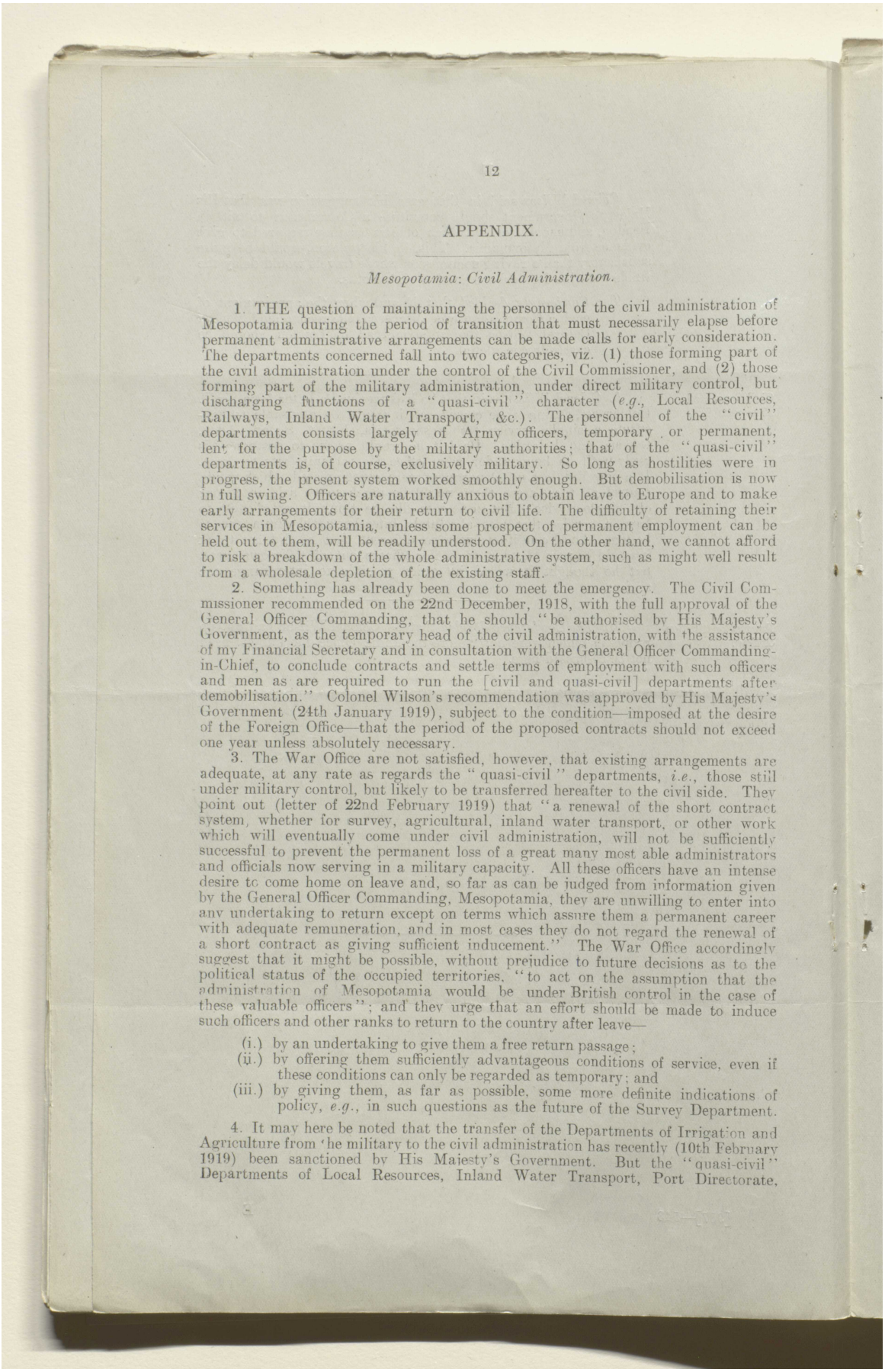



## APPENDIX.

*Mesopotamia: Civil Administration.*

1. THE question of maintaining the personnel of the civil administration of Mesopotamia during the period of transition that must necessarily elapse before permanent administrative arrangements can be made calls for early consideration. The departments concerned fall into two categories, viz. (1) those forming part of the civil administration under the control of the Civil Commissioner, and (2) those forming part of the military administration, under direct military control, but discharging functions of a "quasi-civil" character (*e.g.*, Local Resources, Railways, Inland Water Transport, &c.). The personnel of the "civil" departments consists largely of Army officers, temporary or permanent, lent for the purpose by the military authorities; that of the "quasi-civil" departments is, of course, exclusively military. So long as hostilities were in progress, the present system worked smoothly enough. But demobilisation is now in full swing. Officers are naturally anxious to obtain leave to Europe and to make early arrangements for their return to civil life. The difficulty of retaining their services in Mesopotamia, unless some prospect of permanent employment can be held out to them, will be readily understood. On the other hand, we cannot afford to risk a breakdown of the whole administrative system, such as might well result from a wholesale depletion of the existing staff.

2. Something has already been done to meet the emergency. The Civil Commissioner recommended on the 22nd December, 1918, with the full approval of the General Officer Commanding, that he should "be authorised by His Majesty's Government, as the temporary head of the civil administration, with the assistance of my Financial Secretary and in consultation with the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, to conclude contracts and settle terms of employment with such officers and men as are required to run the [civil and quasi-civil] departments after demobilisation." Colonel Wilson's recommendation was approved by His Majesty's Government (24th January 1919), subject to the condition—imposed at the desire of the Foreign Office—that the period of the proposed contracts should not exceed one year unless absolutely necessary.

3. The War Office are not satisfied, however, that existing arrangements are adequate, at any rate as regards the "quasi-civil" departments, *i.e.*, those still under military control, but likely to be transferred hereafter to the civil side. They point out (letter of 22nd February 1919) that "a renewal of the short contract system, whether for survey, agricultural, inland water transport, or other work which will eventually come under civil administration, will not be sufficiently successful to prevent the permanent loss of a great many most able administrators and officials now serving in a military capacity. All these officers have an intense desire to come home on leave and, so far as can be judged from information given by the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, they are unwilling to enter into any undertaking to return except on terms which assure them a permanent career with adequate remuneration, and in most cases they do not regard the renewal of a short contract as giving sufficient inducement." The War Office accordingly suggest that it might be possible, without prejudice to future decisions as to the political status of the occupied territories, "to act on the assumption that the administration of Mesopotamia would be under British control in the case of these valuable officers"; and they urge that an effort should be made to induce such officers and other ranks to return to the country after leave—

(i.) by an undertaking to give them a free return passage;
(ii.) by offering them sufficiently advantageous conditions of service, even if these conditions can only be regarded as temporary; and
(iii.) by giving them, as far as possible, some more definite indications of policy, *e.g.*, in such questions as the future of the Survey Department.

4. It may here be noted that the transfer of the Departments of Irrigation and Agriculture from the military to the civil administration has recently (10th February 1919) been sanctioned by His Majesty's Government. But the "quasi-civil" Departments of Local Resources, Inland Water Transport, Port Directorate,



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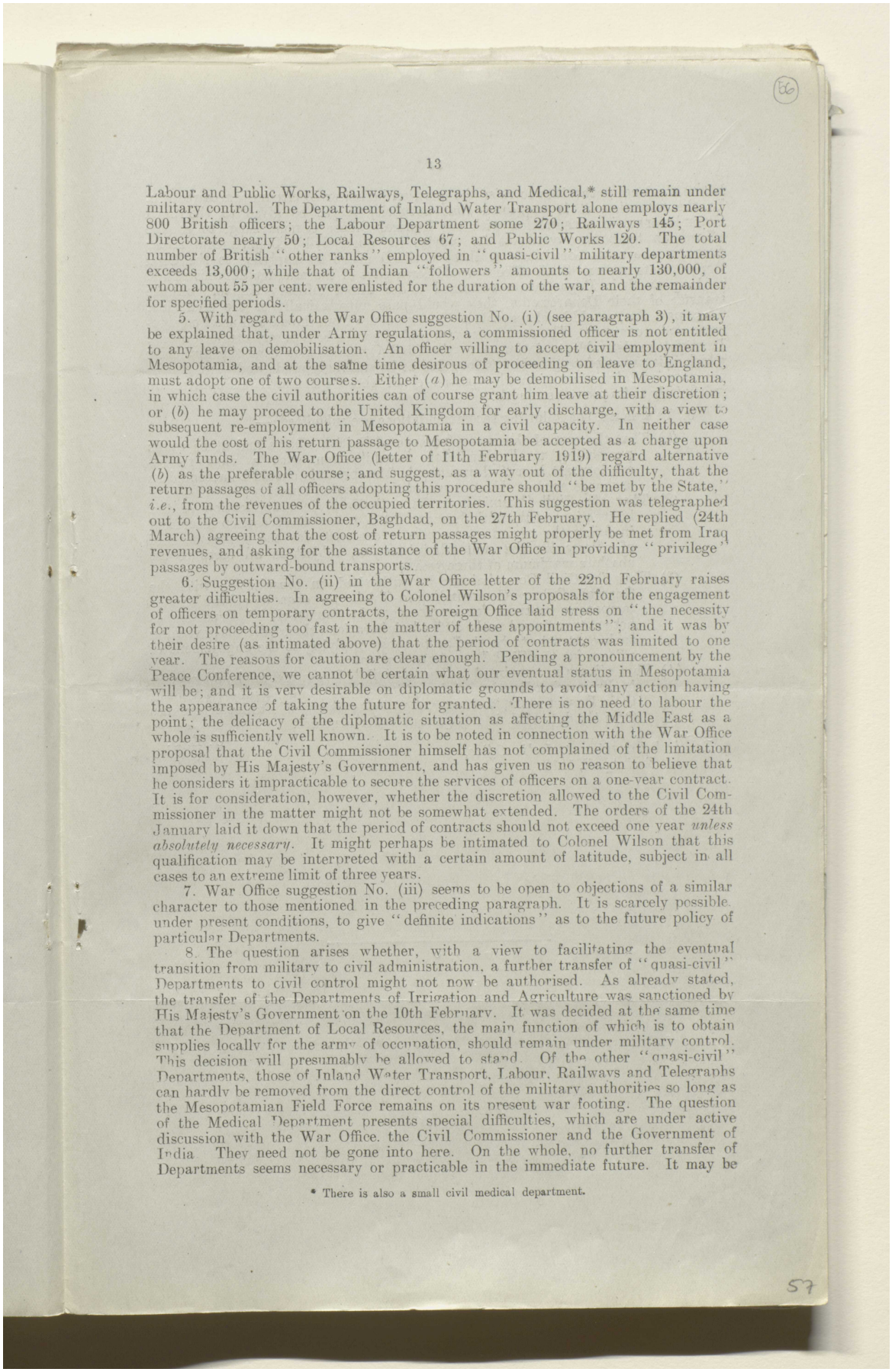

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Labour and Public Works, Railways, Telegraphs, and Medical,* still remain under military control. The Department of Inland Water Transport alone employs nearly 800 British officers; the Labour Department some 270; Railways 145; Port Directorate nearly 50; Local Resources 67; and Public Works 120. The total number of British "other ranks" employed in "quasi-civil" military departments exceeds 13,000; while that of Indian "followers" amounts to nearly 130,000, of whom about 55 per cent. were enlisted for the duration of the war, and the remainder for specified periods.

5. With regard to the War Office suggestion No. (i) (see paragraph 3), it may be explained that, under Army regulations, a commissioned officer is not entitled to any leave on demobilisation. An officer willing to accept civil employment in Mesopotamia, and at the same time desirous of proceeding on leave to England, must adopt one of two courses. Either (*a*) he may be demobilised in Mesopotamia, in which case the civil authorities can of course grant him leave at their discretion; or (*b*) he may proceed to the United Kingdom for early discharge, with a view to subsequent re-employment in Mesopotamia in a civil capacity. In neither case would the cost of his return passage to Mesopotamia be accepted as a charge upon Army funds. The War Office (letter of 11th February 1919) regard alternative (*b*) as the preferable course; and suggest, as a way out of the difficulty, that the return passages of all officers adopting this procedure should "be met by the State," *i.e.*, from the revenues of the occupied territories. This suggestion was telegraphed out to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, on the 27th February. He replied (24th March) agreeing that the cost of return passages might properly be met from Iraq revenues, and asking for the assistance of the War Office in providing "privilege" passages by outward-bound transports.

6. Suggestion No. (ii) in the War Office letter of the 22nd February raises greater difficulties. In agreeing to Colonel Wilson's proposals for the engagement of officers on temporary contracts, the Foreign Office laid stress on "the necessity for not proceeding too fast in the matter of these appointments"; and it was by their desire (as intimated above) that the period of contracts was limited to one year. The reasons for caution are clear enough. Pending a pronouncement by the Peace Conference, we cannot be certain what our eventual status in Mesopotamia will be; and it is very desirable on diplomatic grounds to avoid any action having the appearance of taking the future for granted. There is no need to labour the point; the delicacy of the diplomatic situation as affecting the Middle East as a whole is sufficiently well known. It is to be noted in connection with the War Office proposal that the Civil Commissioner himself has not complained of the limitation imposed by His Majesty's Government, and has given us no reason to believe that he considers it impracticable to secure the services of officers on a one-year contract. It is for consideration, however, whether the discretion allowed to the Civil Commissioner in the matter might not be somewhat extended. The orders of the 24th January laid it down that the period of contracts should not exceed one year *unless absolutely necessary*. It might perhaps be intimated to Colonel Wilson that this qualification may be interpreted with a certain amount of latitude, subject in all cases to an extreme limit of three years.

7. War Office suggestion No. (iii) seems to be open to objections of a similar character to those mentioned in the preceding paragraph. It is scarcely possible, under present conditions, to give "definite indications" as to the future policy of particular Departments.

8. The question arises whether, with a view to facilitating the eventual transition from military to civil administration, a further transfer of "quasi-civil" Departments to civil control might not now be authorised. As already stated, the transfer of the Departments of Irrigation and Agriculture was sanctioned by His Majesty's Government on the 10th February. It was decided at the same time that the Department of Local Resources, the main function of which is to obtain supplies locally for the army of occupation, should remain under military control. This decision will presumably be allowed to stand. Of the other "quasi-civil" Departments, those of Inland Water Transport, Labour, Railways and Telegraphs can hardly be removed from the direct control of the military authorities so long as the Mesopotamian Field Force remains on its present war footing. The question of the Medical Department presents special difficulties, which are under active discussion with the War Office, the Civil Commissioner and the Government of India. They need not be gone into here. On the whole, no further transfer of Departments seems necessary or practicable in the immediate future. It may be

* There is also a small civil medical department.



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left to the local authorities to raise the question hereafter as circumstances require. In the meantime it is suggested that authority might be given to the Civil Commissioner, in consultation with the General Officer Commanding, to engage officers on temporary contracts for service in "quasi-civil" Departments under precisely the same conditions as those outlined above as applying to the Civil Departments proper. Such officers would form part of the military administration so long as their Departments remained under direct military control; on the transfer of their Departments, they would pass automatically to the civil side. Their pay, &c., would be chargeable to local revenues from the date of their engagement under contract. The arrangement would of course be a purely temporary one. It might be desirable to intimate to the Civil Commissioner that the authority which it is proposed to give him is intended to be sparingly used; and there can be no question of maintaining the personnel of the "quasi-civil" Departments indefinitely at its present strength.

9. To sum up, the following recommendations are submitted:—

(1) That the cost of the return passage of British officers and other ranks proceeding to England for demobilisation with a view to re-employment in a civil capacity in Mesopotamia should be accepted as a charge against the revenues of the occupied territory;

(2) That the Civil Commissioner be authorised, in amplification of the instructions of the 24th January 1919, to exercise a certain discretion in fixing the period of temporary contracts for the engagement of of officers for the civil administration, subject in all cases to an absolute maximum of three years;

(3) That the Civil Commissioner be authorised, in consultation with the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, to engage officers under temporary contract for employment in "quasi-civil" Departments not yet transferred to the civil administration: the conditions governing such contracts to be similar to those applying to the engagement of officers for the Civil Departments proper;

(4) That officers so appointed to "quasi-civil" Departments should remain in direct subordination to the military authorities pending transfer of their Departments, their pay, &c., being chargeable to local revenues from the date of their engagement under contract.

J. E. S.

*Political Department, India Office,*
*2nd April*, 1919.

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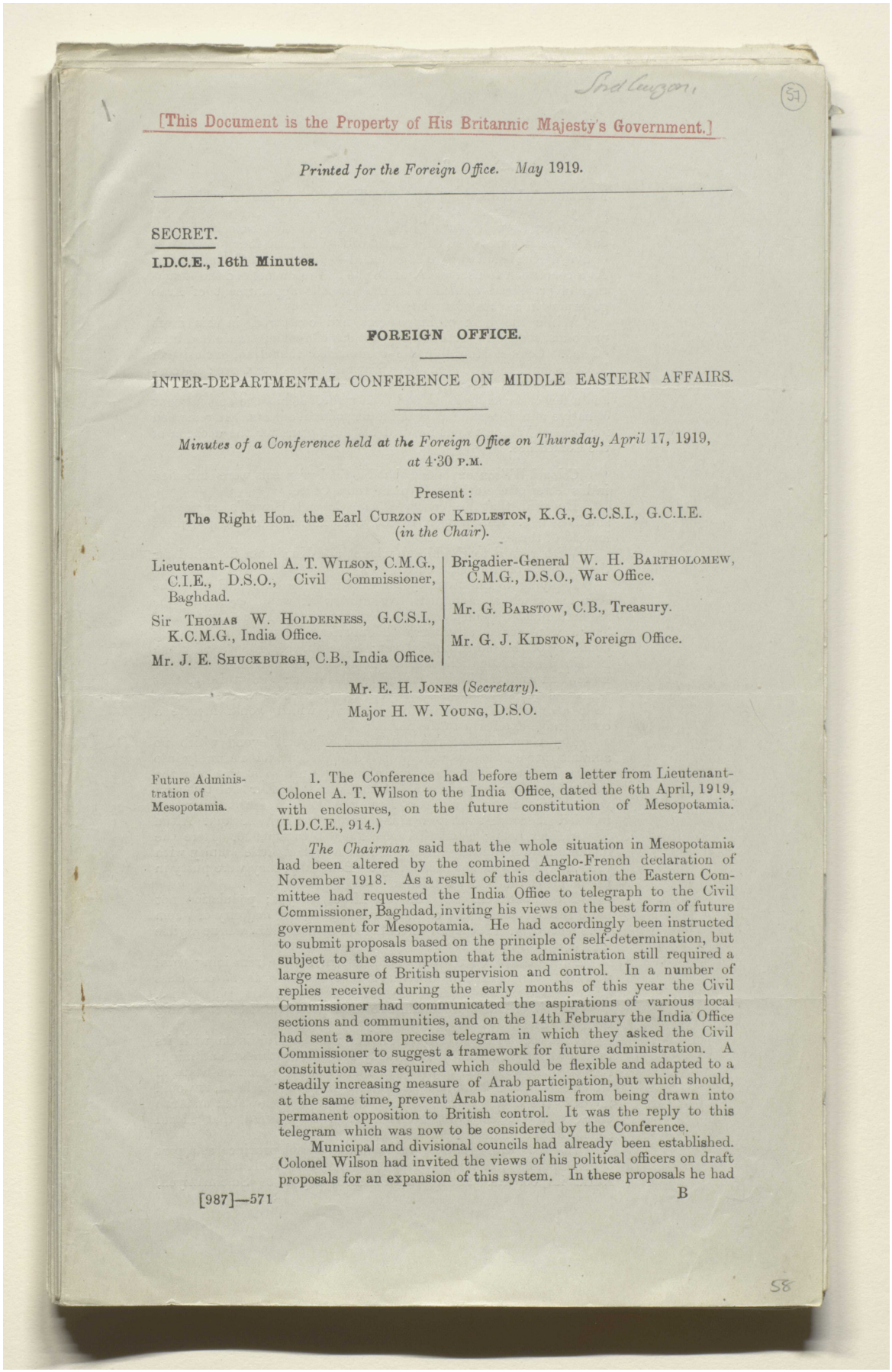

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. May* 1919.

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**I.D.C.E., 16th Minutes.**

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Conference held at the Foreign Office on Thursday, April* 17, 1919, *at* 4·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-Colonel A. T. WILSON, C.M.G., C.I.E., D.S.O., Civil Commissioner, Baghdad.

Sir THOMAS W. HOLDERNESS, G.C.S.I., K.C.M.G., India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Brigadier-General W. H. BARTHOLOMEW, C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office.

Mr. G. BARSTOW, C.B., Treasury.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Mr. E. H. JONES (*Secretary*).

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O.

Future Administration of Mesopotamia.

1. The Conference had before them a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel A. T. Wilson to the India Office, dated the 6th April, 1919, with enclosures, on the future constitution of Mesopotamia. (I.D.C.E., 914.)

*The Chairman* said that the whole situation in Mesopotamia had been altered by the combined Anglo-French declaration of November 1918. As a result of this declaration the Eastern Committee had requested the India Office to telegraph to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, inviting his views on the best form of future government for Mesopotamia. He had accordingly been instructed to submit proposals based on the principle of self-determination, but subject to the assumption that the administration still required a large measure of British supervision and control. In a number of replies received during the early months of this year the Civil Commissioner had communicated the aspirations of various local sections and communities, and on the 14th February the India Office had sent a more precise telegram in which they asked the Civil Commissioner to suggest a framework for future administration. A constitution was required which should be flexible and adapted to a steadily increasing measure of Arab participation, but which should, at the same time, prevent Arab nationalism from being drawn into permanent opposition to British control. It was the reply to this telegram which was now to be considered by the Conference.

Municipal and divisional councils had already been established. Colonel Wilson had invited the views of his political officers on draft proposals for an expansion of this system. In these proposals he had

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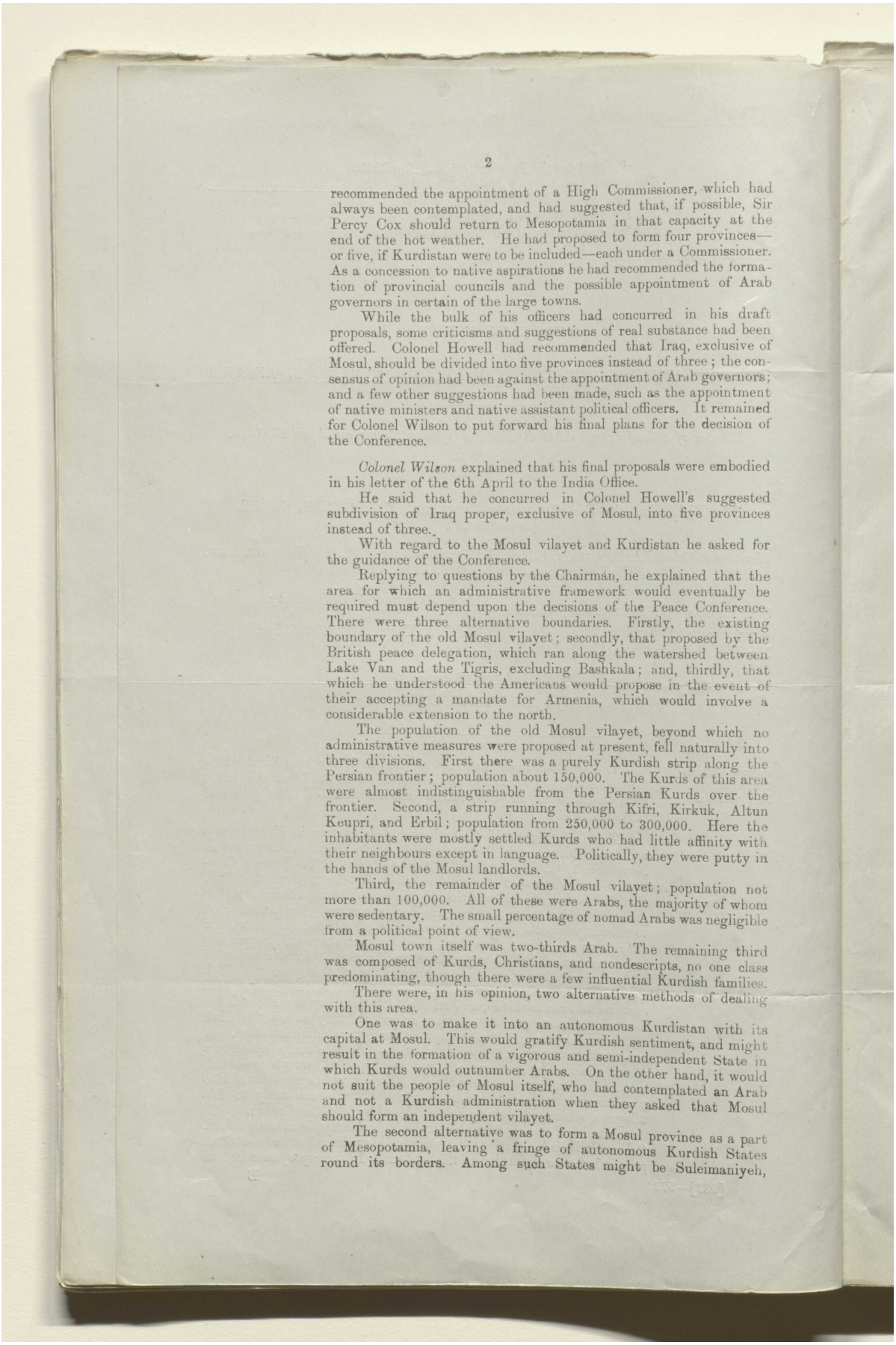



recommended the appointment of a High Commissioner, which had always been contemplated, and had suggested that, if possible, Sir Percy Cox should return to Mesopotamia in that capacity at the end of the hot weather. He had proposed to form four provinces—or five, if Kurdistan were to be included—each under a Commissioner. As a concession to native aspirations he had recommended the formation of provincial councils and the possible appointment of Arab governors in certain of the large towns.

While the bulk of his officers had concurred in his draft proposals, some criticisms and suggestions of real substance had been offered. Colonel Howell had recommended that Iraq, exclusive of Mosul, should be divided into five provinces instead of three; the consensus of opinion had been against the appointment of Arab governors; and a few other suggestions had been made, such as the appointment of native ministers and native assistant political officers. It remained for Colonel Wilson to put forward his final plans for the decision of the Conference.

*Colonel Wilson* explained that his final proposals were embodied in his letter of the 6th April to the India Office.

He said that he concurred in Colonel Howell's suggested subdivision of Iraq proper, exclusive of Mosul, into five provinces instead of three.

With regard to the Mosul vilayet and Kurdistan he asked for the guidance of the Conference.

Replying to questions by the Chairman, he explained that the area for which an administrative framework would eventually be required must depend upon the decisions of the Peace Conference. There were three alternative boundaries. Firstly, the existing boundary of the old Mosul vilayet; secondly, that proposed by the British peace delegation, which ran along the watershed between Lake Van and the Tigris, excluding Bashkala; and, thirdly, that which he understood the Americans would propose in the event of their accepting a mandate for Armenia, which would involve a considerable extension to the north.

The population of the old Mosul vilayet, beyond which no administrative measures were proposed at present, fell naturally into three divisions. First there was a purely Kurdish strip along the Persian frontier; population about 150,000. The Kurds of this area were almost indistinguishable from the Persian Kurds over the frontier. Second, a strip running through Kifri, Kirkuk, Altun Keupri, and Erbil; population from 250,000 to 300,000. Here the inhabitants were mostly settled Kurds who had little affinity with their neighbours except in language. Politically, they were putty in the hands of the Mosul landlords.

Third, the remainder of the Mosul vilayet; population not more than 100,000. All of these were Arabs, the majority of whom were sedentary. The small percentage of nomad Arabs was negligible from a political point of view.

Mosul town itself was two-thirds Arab. The remaining third was composed of Kurds, Christians, and nondescripts, no one class predominating, though there were a few influential Kurdish families.

There were, in his opinion, two alternative methods of dealing with this area.

One was to make it into an autonomous Kurdistan with its capital at Mosul. This would gratify Kurdish sentiment, and might result in the formation of a vigorous and semi-independent State in which Kurds would outnumber Arabs. On the other hand, it would not suit the people of Mosul itself, who had contemplated an Arab and not a Kurdish administration when they asked that Mosul should form an independent vilayet.

The second alternative was to form a Mosul province as a part of Mesopotamia, leaving a fringe of autonomous Kurdish States round its borders. Among such States might be Suleimaniyeh,



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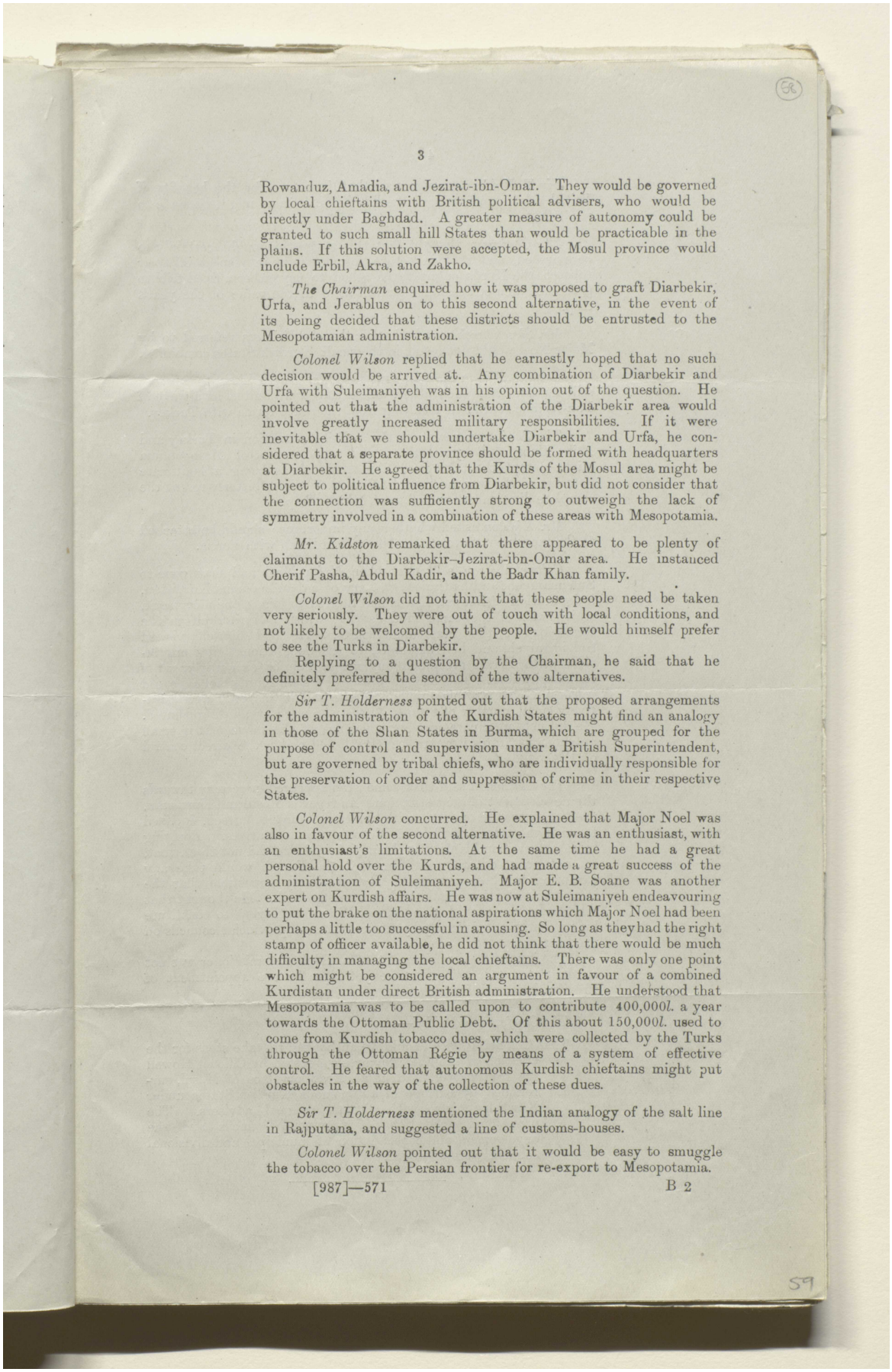



Rowanduz, Amadia, and Jezirat-ibn-Omar. They would be governed by local chieftains with British political advisers, who would be directly under Baghdad. A greater measure of autonomy could be granted to such small hill States than would be practicable in the plains. If this solution were accepted, the Mosul province would include Erbil, Akra, and Zakho.

*The Chairman* enquired how it was proposed to graft Diarbekir, Urfa, and Jerablus on to this second alternative, in the event of its being decided that these districts should be entrusted to the Mesopotamian administration.

*Colonel Wilson* replied that he earnestly hoped that no such decision would be arrived at. Any combination of Diarbekir and Urfa with Suleimaniyeh was in his opinion out of the question. He pointed out that the administration of the Diarbekir area would involve greatly increased military responsibilities. If it were inevitable that we should undertake Diarbekir and Urfa, he considered that a separate province should be formed with headquarters at Diarbekir. He agreed that the Kurds of the Mosul area might be subject to political influence from Diarbekir, but did not consider that the connection was sufficiently strong to outweigh the lack of symmetry involved in a combination of these areas with Mesopotamia.

*Mr. Kidston* remarked that there appeared to be plenty of claimants to the Diarbekir–Jezirat-ibn-Omar area. He instanced Cherif Pasha, Abdul Kadir, and the Badr Khan family.

*Colonel Wilson* did not think that these people need be taken very seriously. They were out of touch with local conditions, and not likely to be welcomed by the people. He would himself prefer to see the Turks in Diarbekir.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said that he definitely preferred the second of the two alternatives.

*Sir T. Holderness* pointed out that the proposed arrangements for the administration of the Kurdish States might find an analogy in those of the Shan States in Burma, which are grouped for the purpose of control and supervision under a British Superintendent, but are governed by tribal chiefs, who are individually responsible for the preservation of order and suppression of crime in their respective States.

*Colonel Wilson* concurred. He explained that Major Noel was also in favour of the second alternative. He was an enthusiast, with an enthusiast's limitations. At the same time he had a great personal hold over the Kurds, and had made a great success of the administration of Suleimaniyeh. Major E. B. Soane was another expert on Kurdish affairs. He was now at Suleimaniyeh endeavouring to put the brake on the national aspirations which Major Noel had been perhaps a little too successful in arousing. So long as they had the right stamp of officer available, he did not think that there would be much difficulty in managing the local chieftains. There was only one point which might be considered an argument in favour of a combined Kurdistan under direct British administration. He understood that Mesopotamia was to be called upon to contribute 400,000*l.* a year towards the Ottoman Public Debt. Of this about 150,000*l.* used to come from Kurdish tobacco dues, which were collected by the Turks through the Ottoman Régie by means of a system of effective control. He feared that autonomous Kurdish chieftains might put obstacles in the way of the collection of these dues.

*Sir T. Holderness* mentioned the Indian analogy of the salt line in Rajputana, and suggested a line of customs-houses.

*Colonel Wilson* pointed out that it would be easy to smuggle the tobacco over the Persian frontier for re-export to Mesopotamia.





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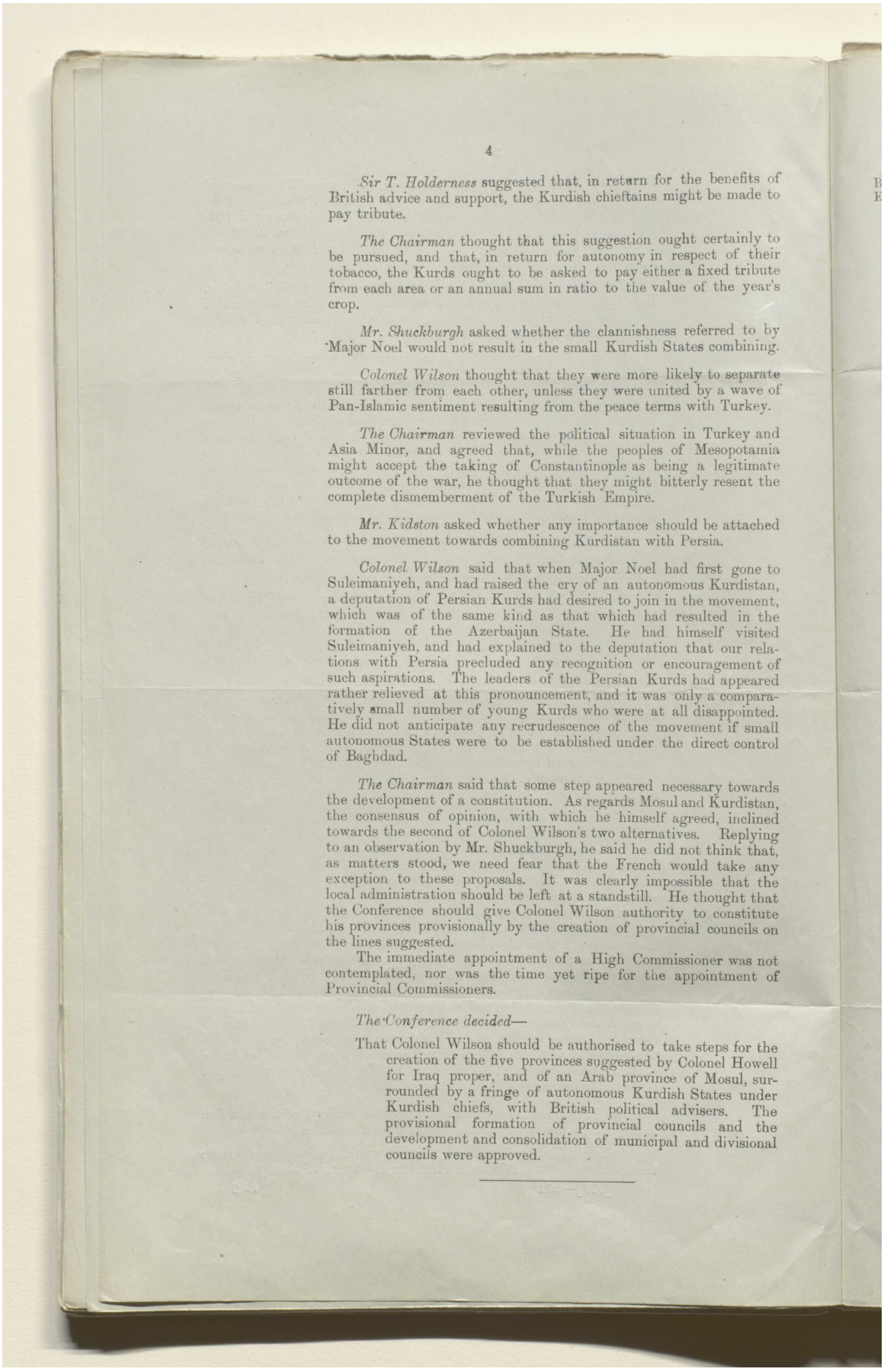



*Sir T. Holderness* suggested that, in return for the benefits of British advice and support, the Kurdish chieftains might be made to pay tribute.

*The Chairman* thought that this suggestion ought certainly to be pursued, and that, in return for autonomy in respect of their tobacco, the Kurds ought to be asked to pay either a fixed tribute from each area or an annual sum in ratio to the value of the year's crop.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* asked whether the clannishness referred to by Major Noel would not result in the small Kurdish States combining.

*Colonel Wilson* thought that they were more likely to separate still farther from each other, unless they were united by a wave of Pan-Islamic sentiment resulting from the peace terms with Turkey.

*The Chairman* reviewed the political situation in Turkey and Asia Minor, and agreed that, while the peoples of Mesopotamia might accept the taking of Constantinople as being a legitimate outcome of the war, he thought that they might bitterly resent the complete dismemberment of the Turkish Empire.

*Mr. Kidston* asked whether any importance should be attached to the movement towards combining Kurdistan with Persia.

*Colonel Wilson* said that when Major Noel had first gone to Suleimaniyeh, and had raised the cry of an autonomous Kurdistan, a deputation of Persian Kurds had desired to join in the movement, which was of the same kind as that which had resulted in the formation of the Azerbaijan State. He had himself visited Suleimaniyeh, and had explained to the deputation that our relations with Persia precluded any recognition or encouragement of such aspirations. The leaders of the Persian Kurds had appeared rather relieved at this pronouncement, and it was only a comparatively small number of young Kurds who were at all disappointed. He did not anticipate any recrudescence of the movement if small autonomous States were to be established under the direct control of Baghdad.

*The Chairman* said that some step appeared necessary towards the development of a constitution. As regards Mosul and Kurdistan, the consensus of opinion, with which he himself agreed, inclined towards the second of Colonel Wilson's two alternatives. Replying to an observation by Mr. Shuckburgh, he said he did not think that, as matters stood, we need fear that the French would take any exception to these proposals. It was clearly impossible that the local administration should be left at a standstill. He thought that the Conference should give Colonel Wilson authority to constitute his provinces provisionally by the creation of provincial councils on the lines suggested.

The immediate appointment of a High Commissioner was not contemplated, nor was the time yet ripe for the appointment of Provincial Commissioners.

*The Conference decided—*

That Colonel Wilson should be authorised to take steps for the creation of the five provinces suggested by Colonel Howell for Iraq proper, and of an Arab province of Mosul, surrounded by a fringe of autonomous Kurdish States under Kurdish chiefs, with British political advisers. The provisional formation of provincial councils and the development and consolidation of municipal and divisional councils were approved.

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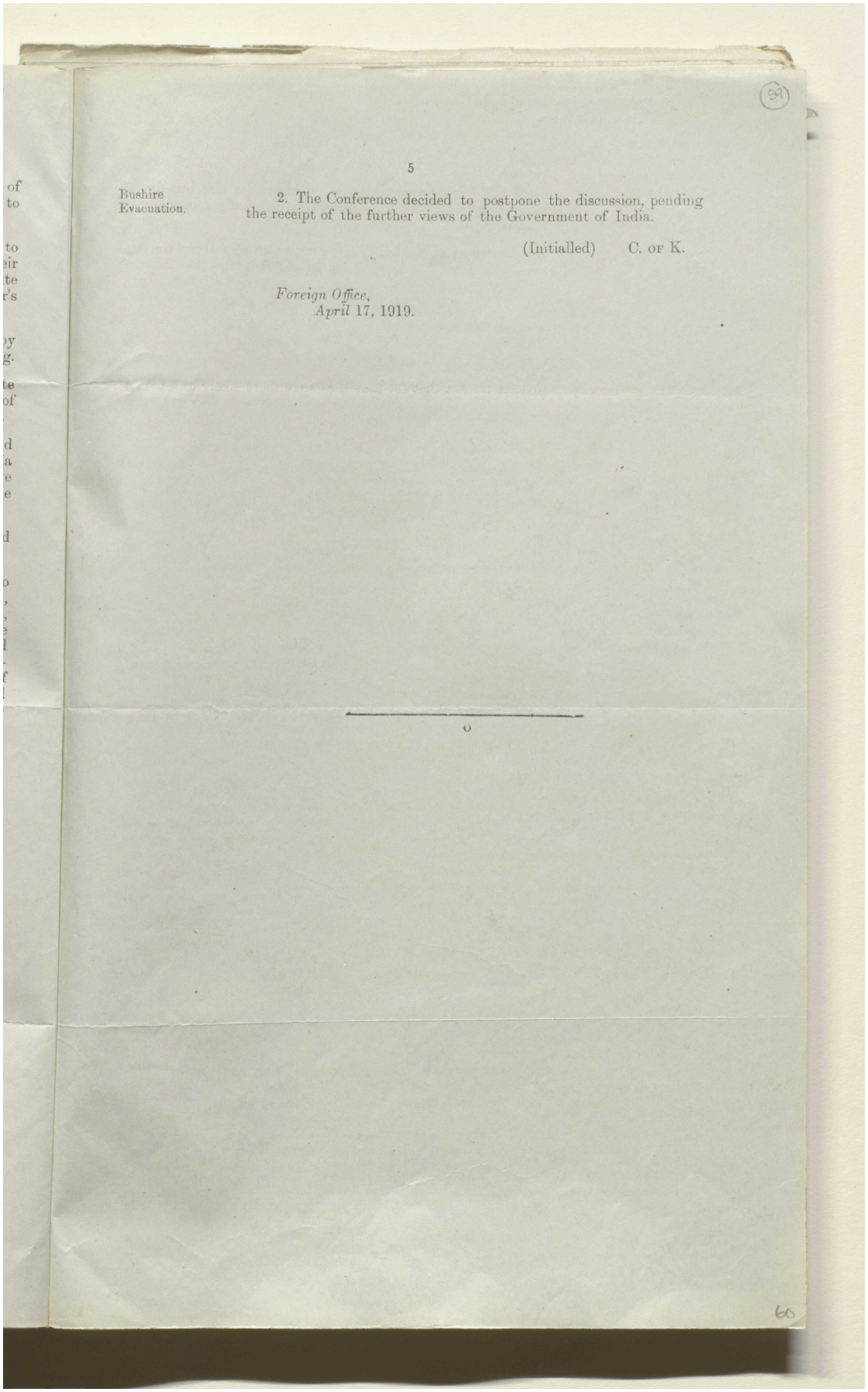

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Bushire Evacuation.

2. The Conference decided to postpone the discussion, pending the receipt of the further views of the Government of India.

(Initialled) C. or K.

*Foreign Office,*
*April* 17, 1919.



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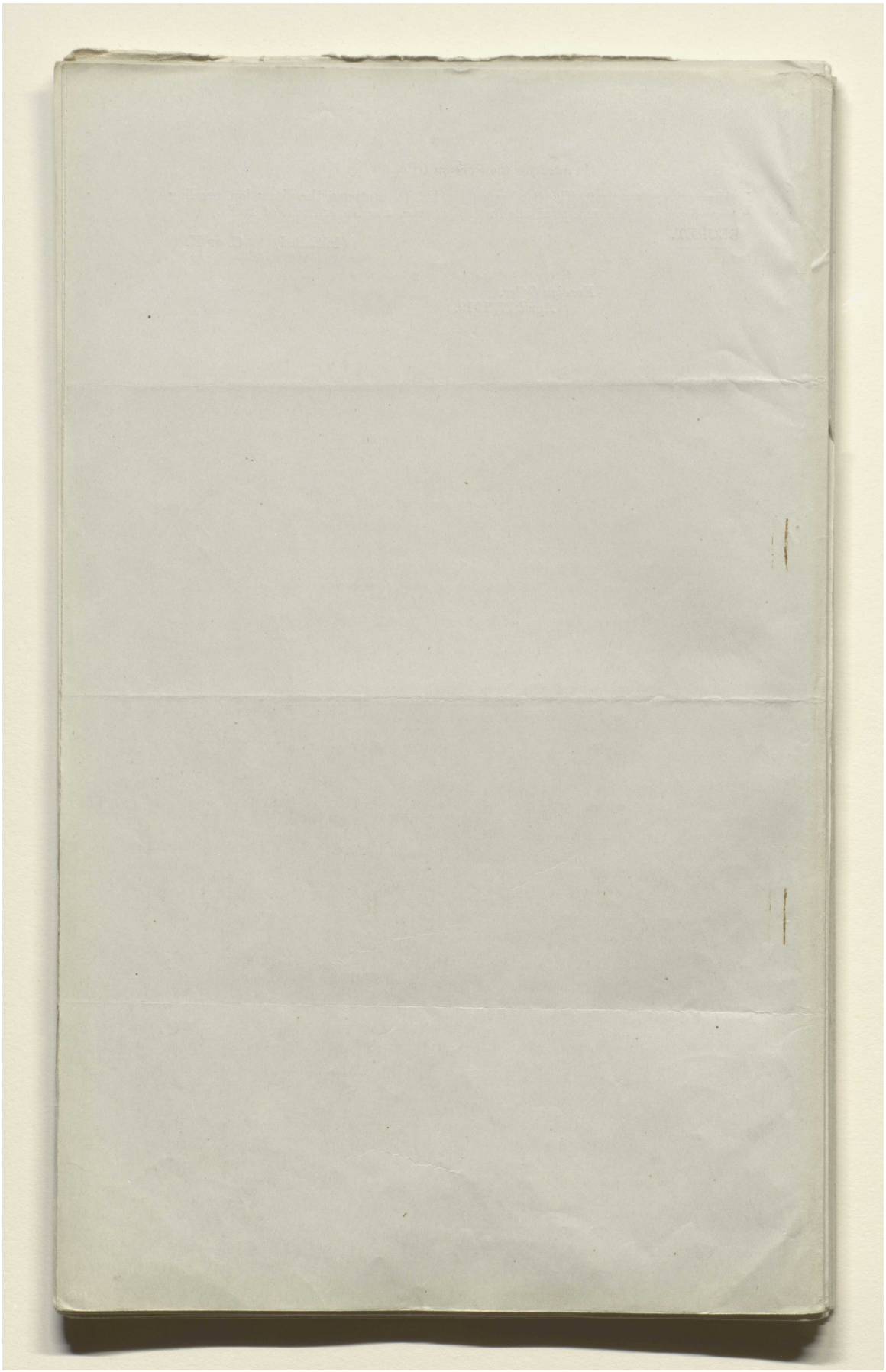



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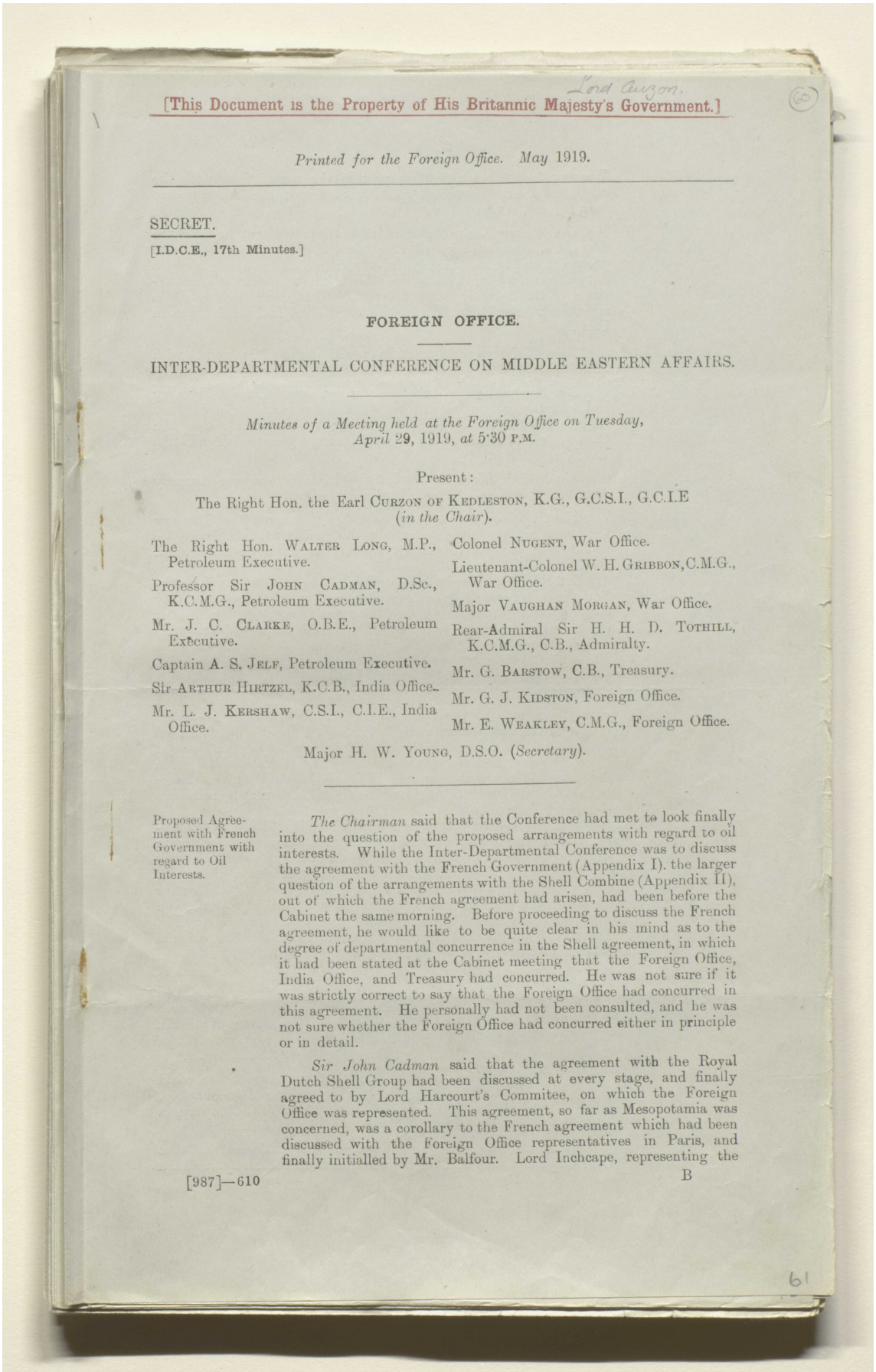

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Lord Curzon.

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. May 1919.*

SECRET.

[I.D.C.E., 17th Minutes.]

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, April 29, 1919, at 5·30 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. WALTER LONG, M.P., Petroleum Executive.

Professor Sir JOHN CADMAN, D.Sc., K.C.M.G., Petroleum Executive.

Mr. J. C. CLARKE, O.B.E., Petroleum Executive.

Captain A. S. JELF, Petroleum Executive.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.

Mr. L. J. KERSHAW, C.S.I., C.I.E., India Office.

Colonel NUGENT, War Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Major VAUGHAN MORGAN, War Office.

Rear-Admiral Sir H. H. D. TOTHILL, K.C.M.G., C.B., Admiralty.

Mr. G. BARSTOW, C.B., Treasury.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Mr. E. WEAKLEY, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Proposed Agreement with French Government with regard to Oil Interests.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference had met to look finally into the question of the proposed arrangements with regard to oil interests. While the Inter-Departmental Conference was to discuss the agreement with the French Government (Appendix I). the larger question of the arrangements with the Shell Combine (Appendix II), out of which the French agreement had arisen, had been before the Cabinet the same morning. Before proceeding to discuss the French agreement, he would like to be quite clear in his mind as to the degree of departmental concurrence in the Shell agreement, in which it had been stated at the Cabinet meeting that the Foreign Office, India Office, and Treasury had concurred. He was not sure if it was strictly correct to say that the Foreign Office had concurred in this agreement. He personally had not been consulted, and he was not sure whether the Foreign Office had concurred either in principle or in detail.

*Sir John Cadman* said that the agreement with the Royal Dutch Shell Group had been discussed at every stage, and finally agreed to by Lord Harcourt's Commitee, on which the Foreign Office was represented. This agreement, so far as Mesopotamia was concerned, was a corollary to the French agreement which had been discussed with the Foreign Office representatives in Paris, and finally initialled by Mr. Balfour. Lord Inchcape, representing the

[987]—610 B

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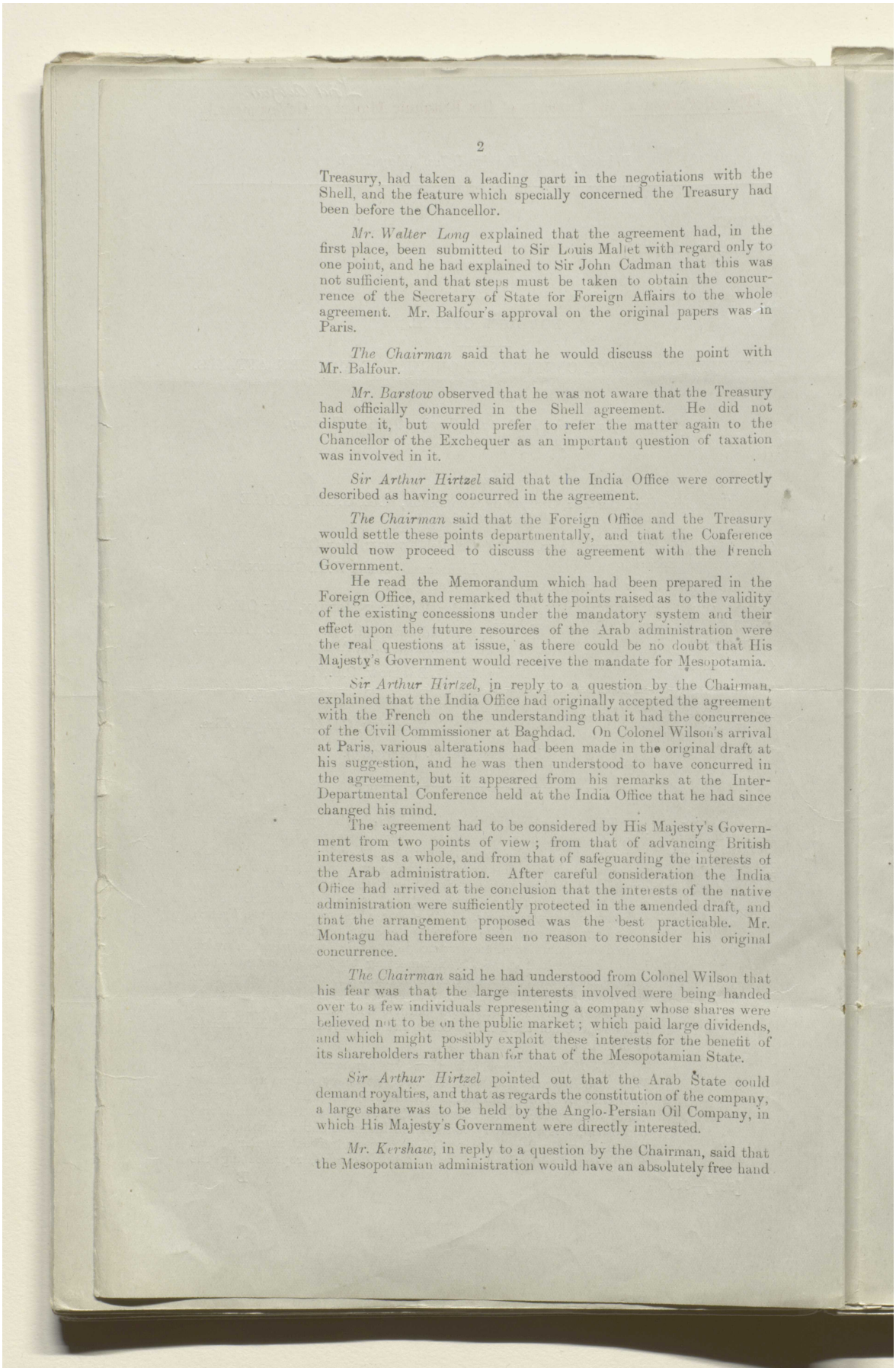



Treasury, had taken a leading part in the negotiations with the Shell, and the feature which specially concerned the Treasury had been before the Chancellor.

*Mr. Walter Long* explained that the agreement had, in the first place, been submitted to Sir Louis Mallet with regard only to one point, and he had explained to Sir John Cadman that this was not sufficient, and that steps must be taken to obtain the concurrence of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the whole agreement. Mr. Balfour's approval on the original papers was in Paris.

*The Chairman* said that he would discuss the point with Mr. Balfour.

*Mr. Barstow* observed that he was not aware that the Treasury had officially concurred in the Shell agreement. He did not dispute it, but would prefer to refer the matter again to the Chancellor of the Exchequer as an important question of taxation was involved in it.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that the India Office were correctly described as having concurred in the agreement.

*The Chairman* said that the Foreign Office and the Treasury would settle these points departmentally, and that the Conference would now proceed to discuss the agreement with the French Government.

He read the Memorandum which had been prepared in the Foreign Office, and remarked that the points raised as to the validity of the existing concessions under the mandatory system and their effect upon the future resources of the Arab administration were the real questions at issue, as there could be no doubt that His Majesty's Government would receive the mandate for Mesopotamia.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel*, in reply to a question by the Chairman, explained that the India Office had originally accepted the agreement with the French on the understanding that it had the concurrence of the Civil Commissioner at Baghdad. On Colonel Wilson's arrival at Paris, various alterations had been made in the original draft at his suggestion, and he was then understood to have concurred in the agreement, but it appeared from his remarks at the Inter-Departmental Conference held at the India Office that he had since changed his mind.

The agreement had to be considered by His Majesty's Government from two points of view; from that of advancing British interests as a whole, and from that of safeguarding the interests of the Arab administration. After careful consideration the India Office had arrived at the conclusion that the interests of the native administration were sufficiently protected in the amended draft, and that the arrangement proposed was the best practicable. Mr. Montagu had therefore seen no reason to reconsider his original concurrence.

*The Chairman* said he had understood from Colonel Wilson that his fear was that the large interests involved were being handed over to a few individuals representing a company whose shares were believed not to be on the public market; which paid large dividends, and which might possibly exploit these interests for the benefit of its shareholders rather than for that of the Mesopotamian State.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* pointed out that the Arab State could demand royalties, and that as regards the constitution of the company, a large share was to be held by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, in which His Majesty's Government were directly interested.

*Mr. Kershaw*, in reply to a question by the Chairman, said that the Mesopotamian administration would have an absolutely free hand



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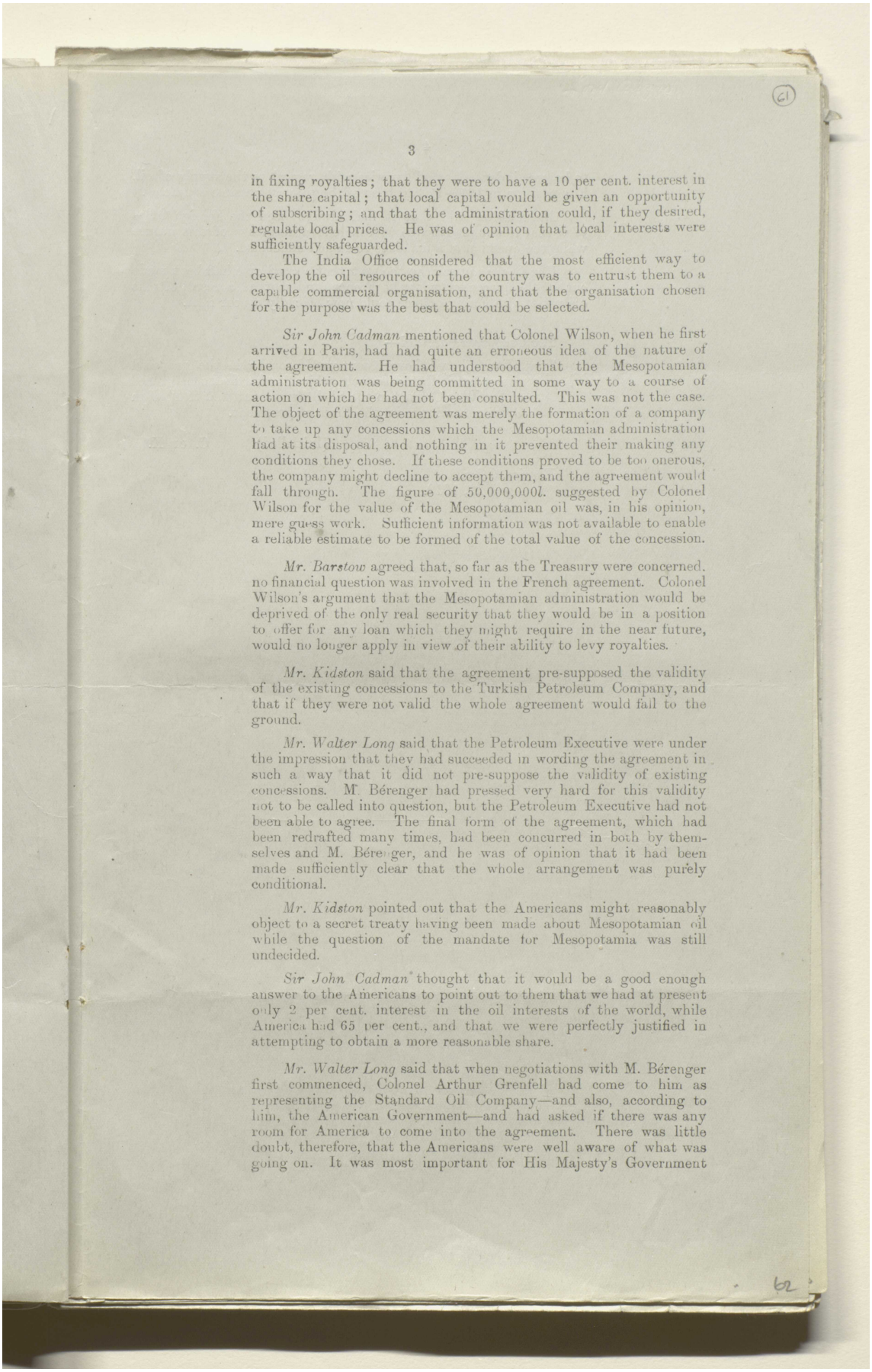



in fixing royalties; that they were to have a 10 per cent. interest in the share capital; that local capital would be given an opportunity of subscribing; and that the administration could, if they desired, regulate local prices. He was of opinion that local interests were sufficiently safeguarded.

The India Office considered that the most efficient way to develop the oil resources of the country was to entrust them to a capable commercial organisation, and that the organisation chosen for the purpose was the best that could be selected.

*Sir John Cadman* mentioned that Colonel Wilson, when he first arrived in Paris, had had quite an erroneous idea of the nature of the agreement. He had understood that the Mesopotamian administration was being committed in some way to a course of action on which he had not been consulted. This was not the case. The object of the agreement was merely the formation of a company to take up any concessions which the Mesopotamian administration had at its disposal, and nothing in it prevented their making any conditions they chose. If these conditions proved to be too onerous, the company might decline to accept them, and the agreement would fall through. The figure of 50,000,000*l.* suggested by Colonel Wilson for the value of the Mesopotamian oil was, in his opinion, mere guess work. Sufficient information was not available to enable a reliable estimate to be formed of the total value of the concession.

*Mr. Barstow* agreed that, so far as the Treasury were concerned, no financial question was involved in the French agreement. Colonel Wilson's argument that the Mesopotamian administration would be deprived of the only real security that they would be in a position to offer for any loan which they might require in the near future, would no longer apply in view of their ability to levy royalties.

*Mr. Kidston* said that the agreement pre-supposed the validity of the existing concessions to the Turkish Petroleum Company, and that if they were not valid the whole agreement would fall to the ground.

*Mr. Walter Long* said that the Petroleum Executive were under the impression that they had succeeded in wording the agreement in such a way that it did not pre-suppose the validity of existing concessions. M. Bérenger had pressed very hard for this validity not to be called into question, but the Petroleum Executive had not been able to agree. The final form of the agreement, which had been redrafted many times, had been concurred in both by themselves and M. Bérenger, and he was of opinion that it had been made sufficiently clear that the whole arrangement was purely conditional.

*Mr. Kidston* pointed out that the Americans might reasonably object to a secret treaty having been made about Mesopotamian oil while the question of the mandate for Mesopotamia was still undecided.

*Sir John Cadman* thought that it would be a good enough answer to the Americans to point out to them that we had at present only 2 per cent. interest in the oil interests of the world, while America had 65 per cent., and that we were perfectly justified in attempting to obtain a more reasonable share.

*Mr. Walter Long* said that when negotiations with M. Bérenger first commenced, Colonel Arthur Grenfell had come to him as representing the Standard Oil Company—and also, according to him, the American Government—and had asked if there was any room for America to come into the agreement. There was little doubt, therefore, that the Americans were well aware of what was going on. It was most important for His Majesty's Government



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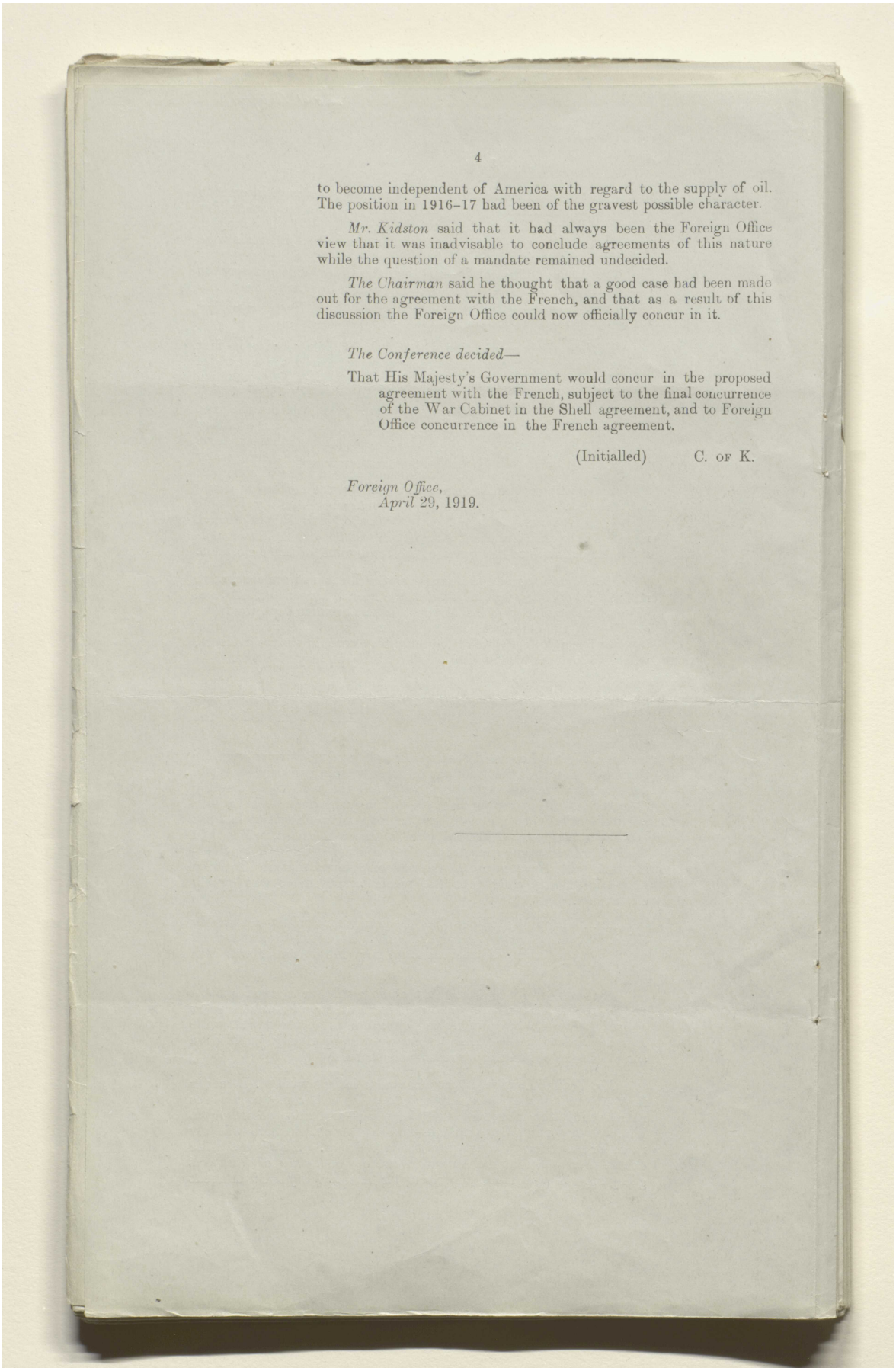



to become independent of America with regard to the supply of oil. The position in 1916–17 had been of the gravest possible character.

*Mr. Kidston* said that it had always been the Foreign Office view that it was inadvisable to conclude agreements of this nature while the question of a mandate remained undecided.

*The Chairman* said he thought that a good case had been made out for the agreement with the French, and that as a result of this discussion the Foreign Office could now officially concur in it.

*The Conference decided*—

That His Majesty's Government would concur in the proposed agreement with the French, subject to the final concurrence of the War Cabinet in the Shell agreement, and to Foreign Office concurrence in the French agreement.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*April* 29, 1919.



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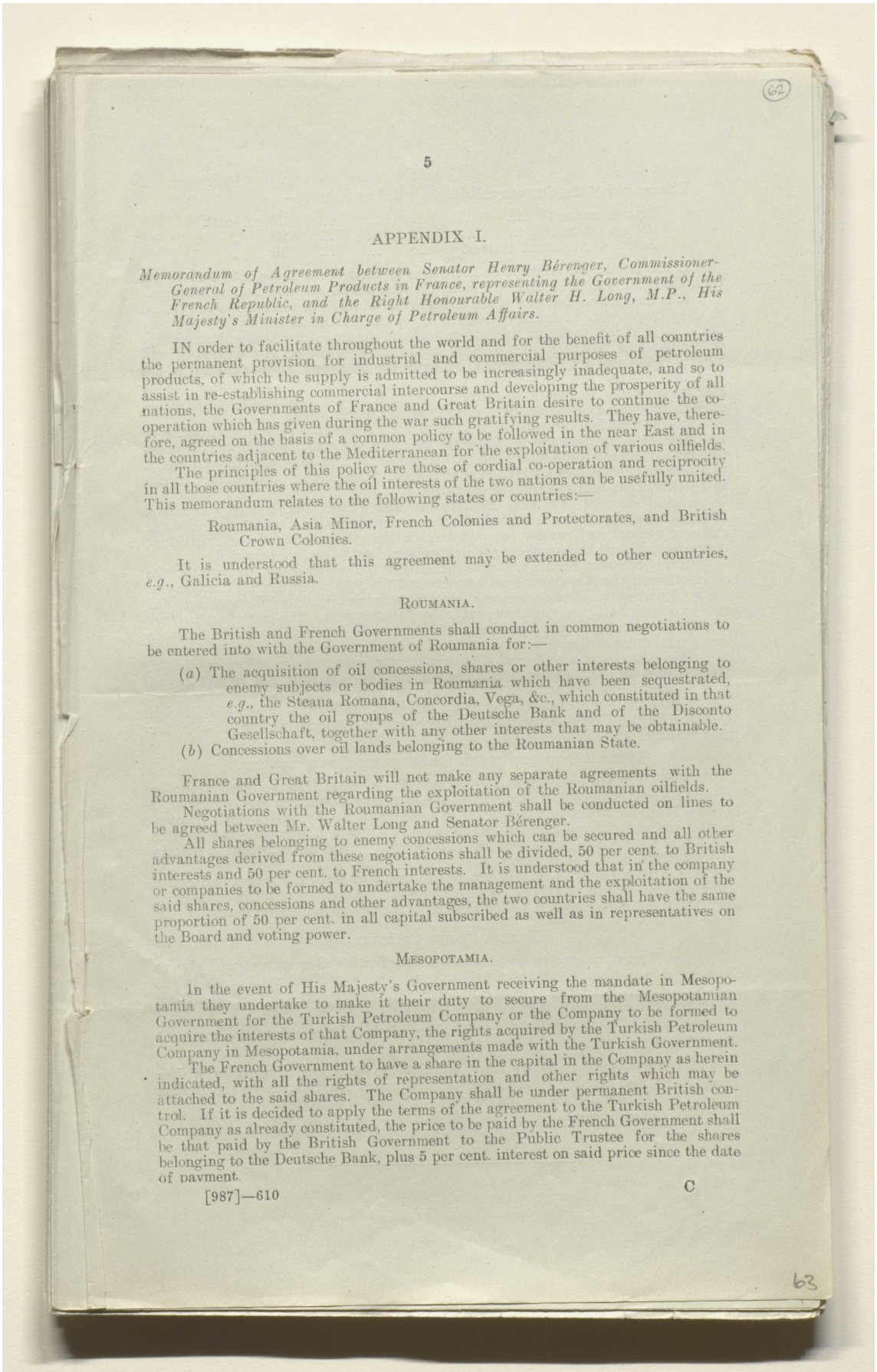

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## APPENDIX I.

*Memorandum of Agreement between Senator Henry Bérenger, Commissioner-General of Petroleum Products in France, representing the Government of the French Republic, and the Right Honourable Walter H. Long, M.P., His Majesty's Minister in Charge of Petroleum Affairs.*

IN order to facilitate throughout the world and for the benefit of all countries the permanent provision for industrial and commercial purposes of petroleum products, of which the supply is admitted to be increasingly inadequate, and so to assist in re-establishing commercial intercourse and developing the prosperity of all nations, the Governments of France and Great Britain desire to continue the co-operation which has given during the war such gratifying results. They have, therefore, agreed on the basis of a common policy to be followed in the near East and in the countries adjacent to the Mediterranean for the exploitation of various oilfields.

The principles of this policy are those of cordial co-operation and reciprocity in all those countries where the oil interests of the two nations can be usefully united. This memorandum relates to the following states or countries:—

Roumania, Asia Minor, French Colonies and Protectorates, and British Crown Colonies.

It is understood that this agreement may be extended to other countries, *e.g.*, Galicia and Russia.

### ROUMANIA.

The British and French Governments shall conduct in common negotiations to be entered into with the Government of Roumania for:—

(*a*) The acquisition of oil concessions, shares or other interests belonging to enemy subjects or bodies in Roumania which have been sequestrated, *e.g.*, the Steaua Romana, Concordia, Vega, &c., which constituted in that country the oil groups of the Deutsche Bank and of the Disconto Gesellschaft, together with any other interests that may be obtainable.

(*b*) Concessions over oil lands belonging to the Roumanian State.

France and Great Britain will not make any separate agreements with the Roumanian Government regarding the exploitation of the Roumanian oilfields.

Negotiations with the Roumanian Government shall be conducted on lines to be agreed between Mr. Walter Long and Senator Bérenger.

All shares belonging to enemy concessions which can be secured and all other advantages derived from these negotiations shall be divided, 50 per cent. to British interests and 50 per cent. to French interests. It is understood that in the company or companies to be formed to undertake the management and the exploitation of the said shares, concessions and other advantages, the two countries shall have the same proportion of 50 per cent. in all capital subscribed as well as in representatives on the Board and voting power.

### MESOPOTAMIA.

In the event of His Majesty's Government receiving the mandate in Mesopotamia they undertake to make it their duty to secure from the Mesopotamian Government for the Turkish Petroleum Company or the Company to be formed to acquire the interests of that Company, the rights acquired by the Turkish Petroleum Company in Mesopotamia, under arrangements made with the Turkish Government.

The French Government to have a share in the capital in the Company as herein indicated, with all the rights of representation and other rights which may be attached to the said shares. The Company shall be under permanent British control. If it is decided to apply the terms of the agreement to the Turkish Petroleum Company as already constituted, the price to be paid by the French Government shall be that paid by the British Government to the Public Trustee for the shares belonging to the Deutsche Bank, plus 5 per cent. interest on said price since the date of payment.

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The capital of the Company shall be divided as follows:—

| | |
|---|---|
| British interest ... ... ... ... ... | 70 per cent. |
| French interest ... ... ... ... ... | 20 „ |
| Native Government interest ... ... ... | 10 „ |

If the Native Government do not desire to participate to the extent of 10 per cent. the balance shall be divided equally between the British and French holdings.

It is understood that one of the terms to be embodied in the lease to be granted to the Company to work the oilfields will provide that local native interests may participate, if they so desire, up to 10 per cent. in the share capital of any subsidiary company which may be formed to work any of the oilfields, or, in the event of subsidiary companies not being formed, up to 10 per cent. of the share capital of the original company will be specially provided for this purpose in addition to the amount allocated to native government interests. This additional participation shall be provided by each group in proportion to their holding.

In consideration for said participation the French Government shall agree to facilitate by every means in its power, as soon as application is made, the construction of two separate pipe-lines for the transport of oil from Mesopotamia and Persia to a port or ports on the Eastern Mediterranean. The port or ports shall be chosen in agreement between the two Governments.

Should the pipe-lines cross territory in which France has received a mandate, France undertakes to use her good offices to secure every facility for the rights of crossing without any royalty or wayleaves on the oil transported. Nevertheless, compensation shall be payable to the land-owners for the surface occupied.

In the same way France will give facilities at the terminal port or ports for the acquisition by the Mesopotamian Company and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company of the land necessary for the erection of depôts, refineries, loading wharves, &c. Oil thus exported shall be exempt from export and transit dues. The material necessary for the construction of the pipe-lines, refineries, and other equipment shall also be free from import duties.

This agreement in so far as it relates to pipe-lines, storage refineries, depôts, loading wharves, &c., is entered into solely to facilitate the supply of petroleum and is in no way to be taken as implying that any territorial rights are in existence.

Should the Mesopotamian Company desire to lay a pipe-line to the Persian Gulf the British Government will use its good offices to secure similar facilities for that purpose.

NORTH AFRICA AND OTHER COLONIES AND PROTECTORATES.

The French Government will give facilities to any Franco-British group or groups of good standing, which furnish the necessary guarantees and comply with French laws, for the acquisition of oil concessions in the French Colonies, Protectorates and zones of influence, including Algeria, Tunis and Morocco. It should be noted that the French Parliament has resolved that groups so formed must contain at least 67 per cent. French interests.

The French Government will not fail to grant to Messrs. Pearson and Son a concession in Algeria as soon as they have proved the existence of oil in commercial quantities and have complied with all the requirements of the French laws.

BRITISH CROWN COLONIES.

In so far as existing regulations allow the British Government will give to French subjects who may wish to prospect and exploit petroliferous lands in the Crown Colonies, similar advantages to those which France is granting to British subjects in the French Colonies.

This note supersedes and is in the place of the Memorandum of Agreement dated 6th March, 1919.

This Agreement has to-day been initialled by the Right Honourable Walter Long, M.P., and Senator Henry Bérenger, subject to confirmation by the British and French Foreign Ministers respectively.

*Paris, April* 8, 1919.

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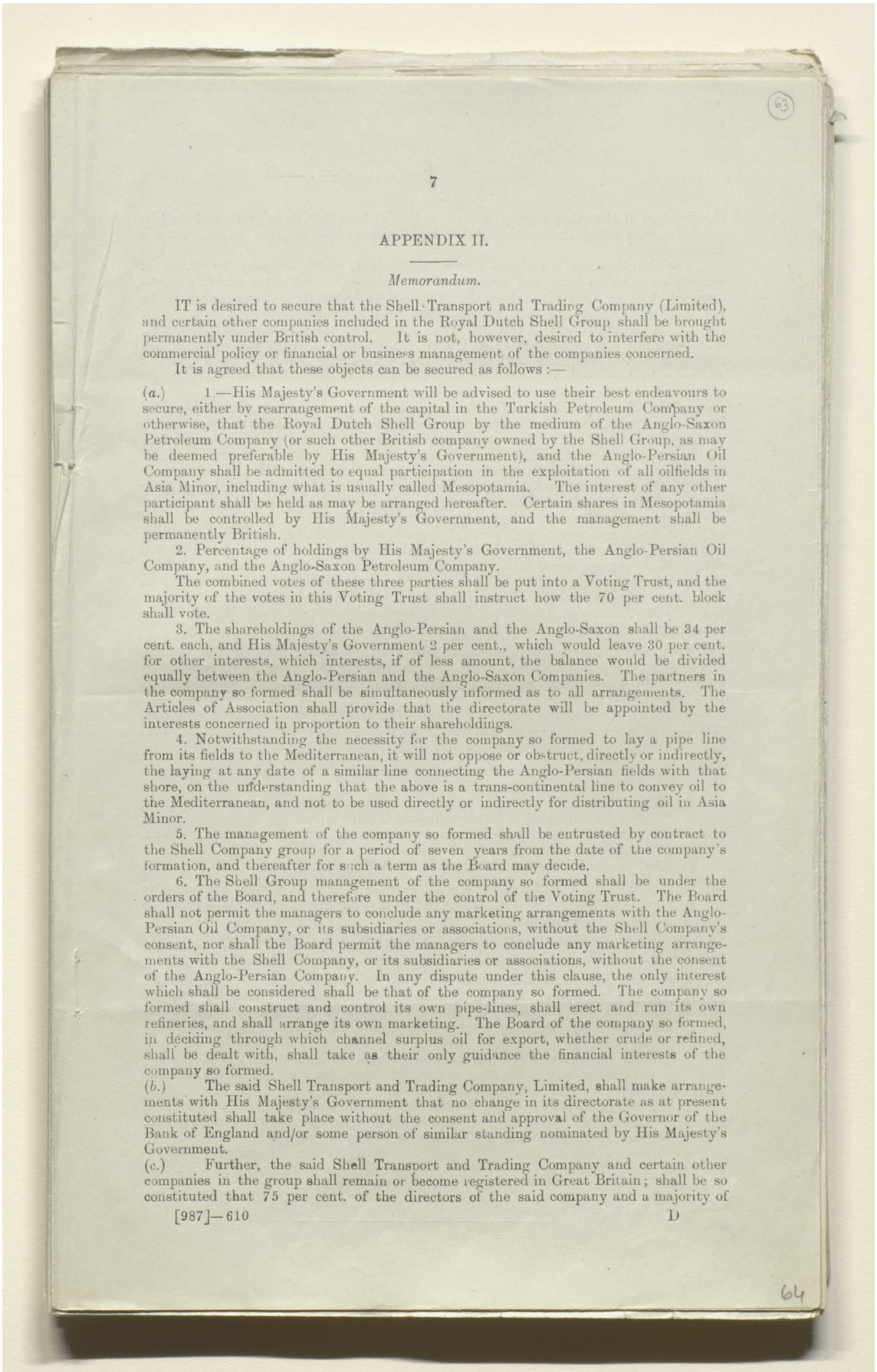



## APPENDIX II.

*Memorandum.*

IT is desired to secure that the Shell Transport and Trading Company (Limited), and certain other companies included in the Royal Dutch Shell Group shall be brought permanently under British control. It is not, however, desired to interfere with the commercial policy or financial or business management of the companies concerned.

It is agreed that these objects can be secured as follows :—

(*a.*) 1.—His Majesty's Government will be advised to use their best endeavours to secure, either by rearrangement of the capital in the Turkish Petroleum Company or otherwise, that the Royal Dutch Shell Group by the medium of the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company (or such other British company owned by the Shell Group, as may be deemed preferable by His Majesty's Government), and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company shall be admitted to equal participation in the exploitation of all oilfields in Asia Minor, including what is usually called Mesopotamia. The interest of any other participant shall be held as may be arranged hereafter. Certain shares in Mesopotamia shall be controlled by His Majesty's Government, and the management shall be permanently British.

2. Percentage of holdings by His Majesty's Government, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company.

The combined votes of these three parties shall be put into a Voting Trust, and the majority of the votes in this Voting Trust shall instruct how the 70 per cent. block shall vote.

3. The shareholdings of the Anglo-Persian and the Anglo-Saxon shall be 34 per cent. each, and His Majesty's Government 2 per cent., which would leave 30 per cent. for other interests, which interests, if of less amount, the balance would be divided equally between the Anglo-Persian and the Anglo-Saxon Companies. The partners in the company so formed shall be simultaneously informed as to all arrangements. The Articles of Association shall provide that the directorate will be appointed by the interests concerned in proportion to their shareholdings.

4. Notwithstanding the necessity for the company so formed to lay a pipe line from its fields to the Mediterranean, it will not oppose or obstruct, directly or indirectly, the laying at any date of a similar line connecting the Anglo-Persian fields with that shore, on the understanding that the above is a trans-continental line to convey oil to the Mediterranean, and not to be used directly or indirectly for distributing oil in Asia Minor.

5. The management of the company so formed shall be entrusted by contract to the Shell Company group for a period of seven years from the date of the company's formation, and thereafter for such a term as the Board may decide.

6. The Shell Group management of the company so formed shall be under the orders of the Board, and therefore under the control of the Voting Trust. The Board shall not permit the managers to conclude any marketing arrangements with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, or its subsidiaries or associations, without the Shell Company's consent, nor shall the Board permit the managers to conclude any marketing arrangements with the Shell Company, or its subsidiaries or associations, without the consent of the Anglo-Persian Company. In any dispute under this clause, the only interest which shall be considered shall be that of the company so formed. The company so formed shall construct and control its own pipe-lines, shall erect and run its own refineries, and shall arrange its own marketing. The Board of the company so formed, in deciding through which channel surplus oil for export, whether crude or refined, shall be dealt with, shall take as their only guidance the financial interests of the company so formed.

(*b.*) The said Shell Transport and Trading Company, Limited, shall make arrangements with His Majesty's Government that no change in its directorate as at present constituted shall take place without the consent and approval of the Governor of the Bank of England and/or some person of similar standing nominated by His Majesty's Government.

(*c.*) Further, the said Shell Transport and Trading Company and certain other companies in the group shall remain or become registered in Great Britain; shall be so constituted that 75 per cent. of the directors of the said company and a majority of





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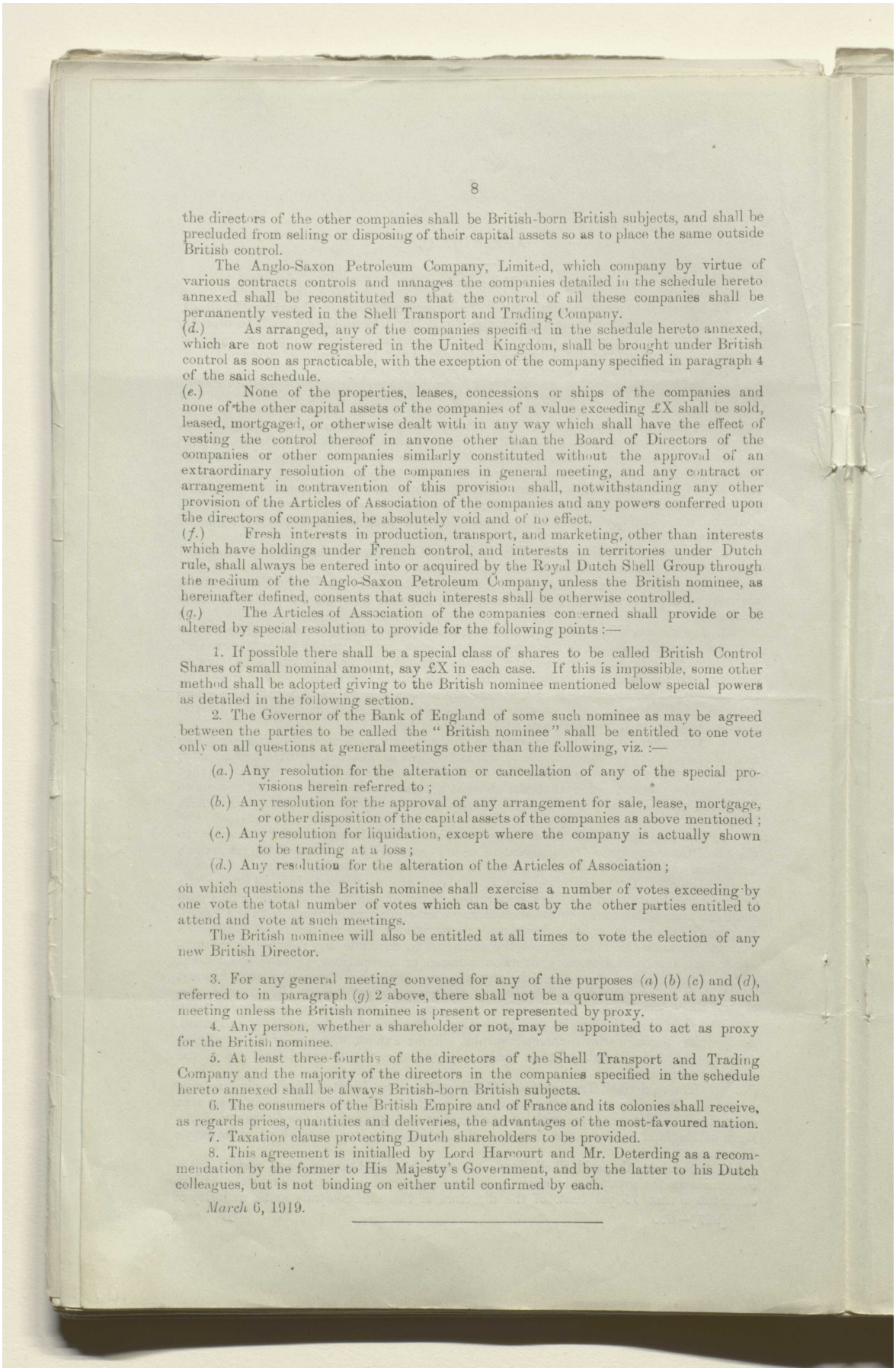



the directors of the other companies shall be British-born British subjects, and shall be precluded from selling or disposing of their capital assets so as to place the same outside British control.

The Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, Limited, which company by virtue of various contracts controls and manages the companies detailed in the schedule hereto annexed shall be reconstituted so that the control of all these companies shall be permanently vested in the Shell Transport and Trading Company.

(*d.*) As arranged, any of the companies specified in the schedule hereto annexed, which are not now registered in the United Kingdom, shall be brought under British control as soon as practicable, with the exception of the company specified in paragraph 4 of the said schedule.

(*e.*) None of the properties, leases, concessions or ships of the companies and none of the other capital assets of the companies of a value exceeding £X shall be sold, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise dealt with in any way which shall have the effect of vesting the control thereof in anyone other than the Board of Directors of the companies or other companies similarly constituted without the approval of an extraordinary resolution of the companies in general meeting, and any contract or arrangement in contravention of this provision shall, notwithstanding any other provision of the Articles of Association of the companies and any powers conferred upon the directors of companies, be absolutely void and of no effect.

(*f.*) Fresh interests in production, transport, and marketing, other than interests which have holdings under French control, and interests in territories under Dutch rule, shall always be entered into or acquired by the Royal Dutch Shell Group through the medium of the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, unless the British nominee, as hereinafter defined, consents that such interests shall be otherwise controlled.

(*g.*) The Articles of Association of the companies concerned shall provide or be altered by special resolution to provide for the following points :—

1. If possible there shall be a special class of shares to be called British Control Shares of small nominal amount, say £X in each case. If this is impossible, some other method shall be adopted giving to the British nominee mentioned below special powers as detailed in the following section.

2. The Governor of the Bank of England of some such nominee as may be agreed between the parties to be called the "British nominee" shall be entitled to one vote only on all questions at general meetings other than the following, viz. :—

(*a.*) Any resolution for the alteration or cancellation of any of the special provisions herein referred to ;

(*b.*) Any resolution for the approval of any arrangement for sale, lease, mortgage, or other disposition of the capital assets of the companies as above mentioned ;

(*c.*) Any resolution for liquidation, except where the company is actually shown to be trading at a loss ;

(*d.*) Any resolution for the alteration of the Articles of Association ;

on which questions the British nominee shall exercise a number of votes exceeding by one vote the total number of votes which can be cast by the other parties entitled to attend and vote at such meetings.

The British nominee will also be entitled at all times to vote the election of any new British Director.

3. For any general meeting convened for any of the purposes (*a*) (*b*) (*c*) and (*d*), referred to in paragraph (*g*) 2 above, there shall not be a quorum present at any such meeting unless the British nominee is present or represented by proxy.

4. Any person, whether a shareholder or not, may be appointed to act as proxy for the British nominee.

5. At least three-fourths of the directors of the Shell Transport and Trading Company and the majority of the directors in the companies specified in the schedule hereto annexed shall be always British-born British subjects.

6. The consumers of the British Empire and of France and its colonies shall receive, as regards prices, quantities and deliveries, the advantages of the most-favoured nation.

7. Taxation clause protecting Dutch shareholders to be provided.

8. This agreement is initialled by Lord Harcourt and Mr. Deterding as a recommendation by the former to His Majesty's Government, and by the latter to his Dutch colleagues, but is not binding on either until confirmed by each.

*March* 6, 1919.



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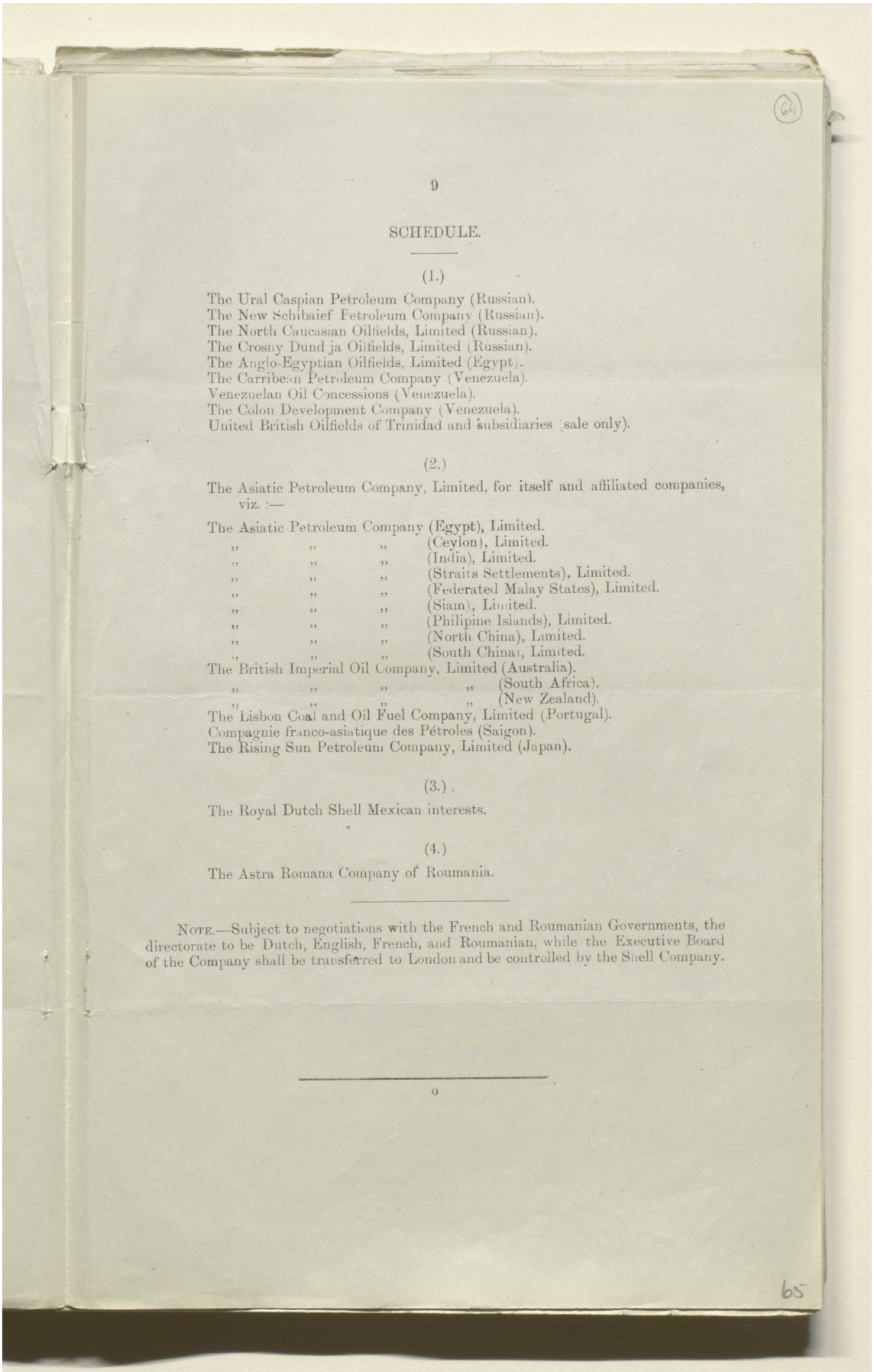



SCHEDULE.

(1.)

The Ural Caspian Petroleum Company (Russian).
The New Schibaief Petroleum Company (Russian).
The North Caucasian Oilfields, Limited (Russian).
The Crosny Dund ja Oilfields, Limited (Russian).
The Anglo-Egyptian Oilfields, Limited (Egypt).
The Carribean Petroleum Company (Venezuela).
Venezuelan Oil Concessions (Venezuela).
The Colon Development Company (Venezuela).
United British Oilfields of Trinidad and subsidiaries (sale only).

(2.)

The Asiatic Petroleum Company, Limited, for itself and affiliated companies, viz. :—

The Asiatic Petroleum Company (Egypt), Limited.
" " " (Ceylon), Limited.
" " " (India), Limited.
" " " (Straits Settlements), Limited.
" " " (Federated Malay States), Limited.
" " " (Siam), Limited.
" " " (Philipine Islands), Limited.
" " " (North China), Limited.
" " " (South China), Limited.
The British Imperial Oil Company, Limited (Australia).
" " " " (South Africa).
" " " " (New Zealand).
The Lisbon Coal and Oil Fuel Company, Limited (Portugal).
Compagnie franco-asiatique des Pétroles (Saigon).
The Rising Sun Petroleum Company, Limited (Japan).

(3.)

The Royal Dutch Shell Mexican interests.

(4.)

The Astra Romana Company of Roumania.

NOTE.—Subject to negotiations with the French and Roumanian Governments, the directorate to be Dutch, English, French, and Roumanian, while the Executive Board of the Company shall be transferred to London and be controlled by the Shell Company.

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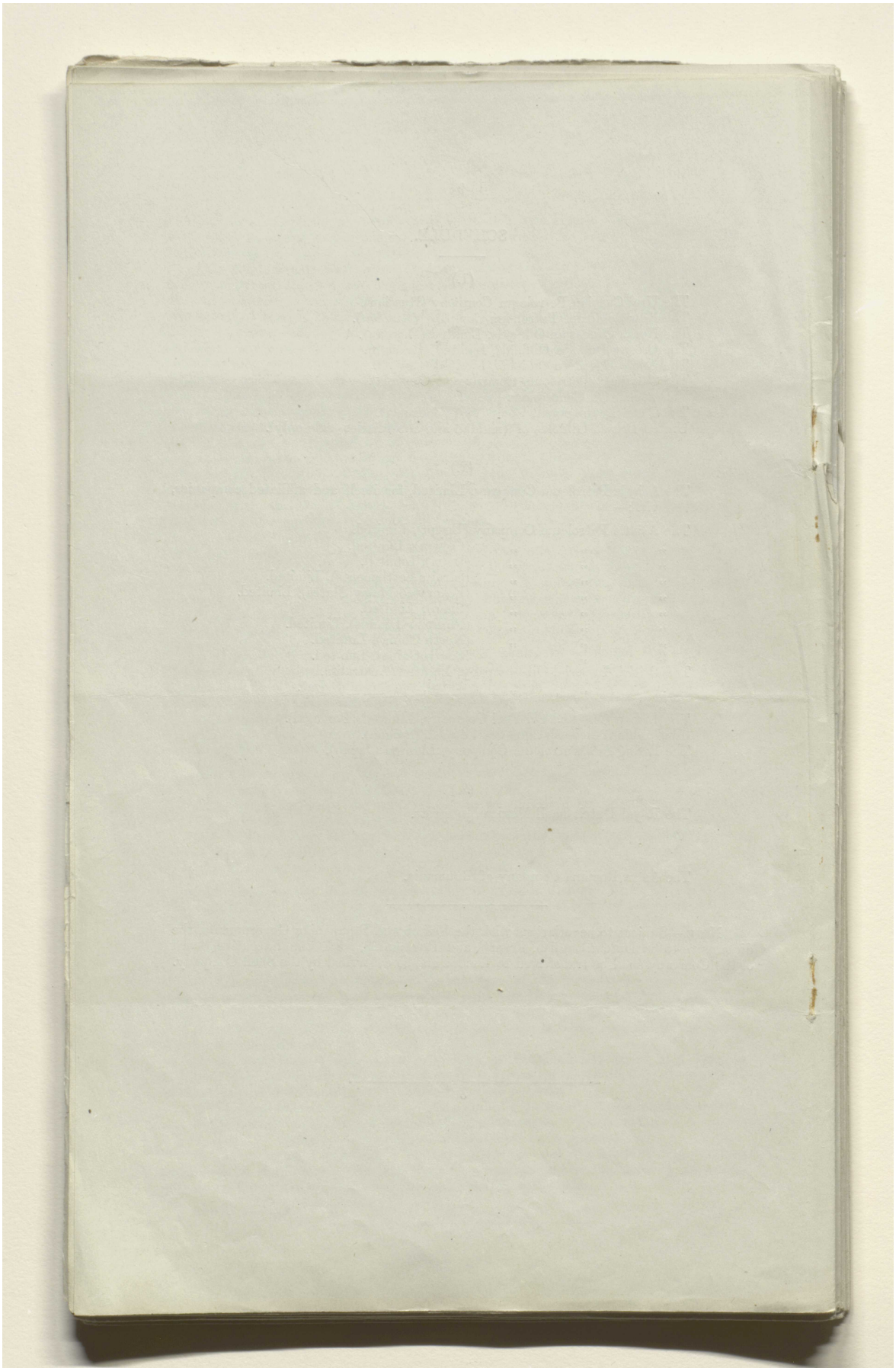



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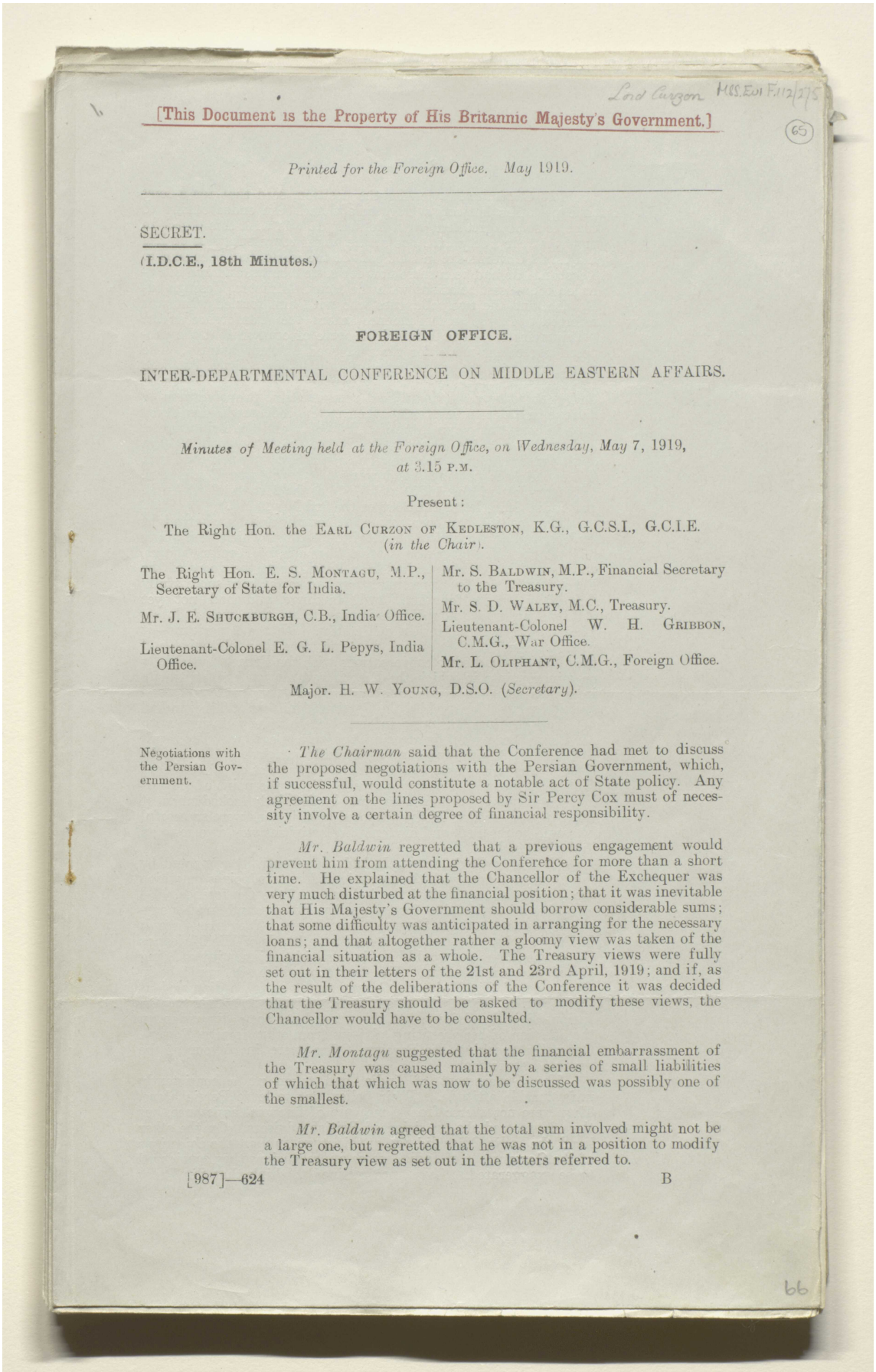

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. May 1919.*

SECRET.

(I.D.C.E., 18th Minutes.)

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office, on Wednesday, May 7, 1919, at 3.15 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel E. G. L. Pepys, India Office.

Mr. S. BALDWIN, M.P., Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr. S. D. WALEY, M.C., Treasury.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Major. H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Negotiations with the Persian Government.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference had met to discuss the proposed negotiations with the Persian Government, which, if successful, would constitute a notable act of State policy. Any agreement on the lines proposed by Sir Percy Cox must of necessity involve a certain degree of financial responsibility.

*Mr. Baldwin* regretted that a previous engagement would prevent him from attending the Conference for more than a short time. He explained that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was very much disturbed at the financial position; that it was inevitable that His Majesty's Government should borrow considerable sums; that some difficulty was anticipated in arranging for the necessary loans; and that altogether rather a gloomy view was taken of the financial situation as a whole. The Treasury views were fully set out in their letters of the 21st and 23rd April, 1919; and if, as the result of the deliberations of the Conference it was decided that the Treasury should be asked to modify these views, the Chancellor would have to be consulted.

*Mr. Montagu* suggested that the financial embarrassment of the Treasury was caused mainly by a series of small liabilities of which that which was now to be discussed was possibly one of the smallest.

*Mr. Baldwin* agreed that the total sum involved might not be a large one, but regretted that he was not in a position to modify the Treasury view as set out in the letters referred to.

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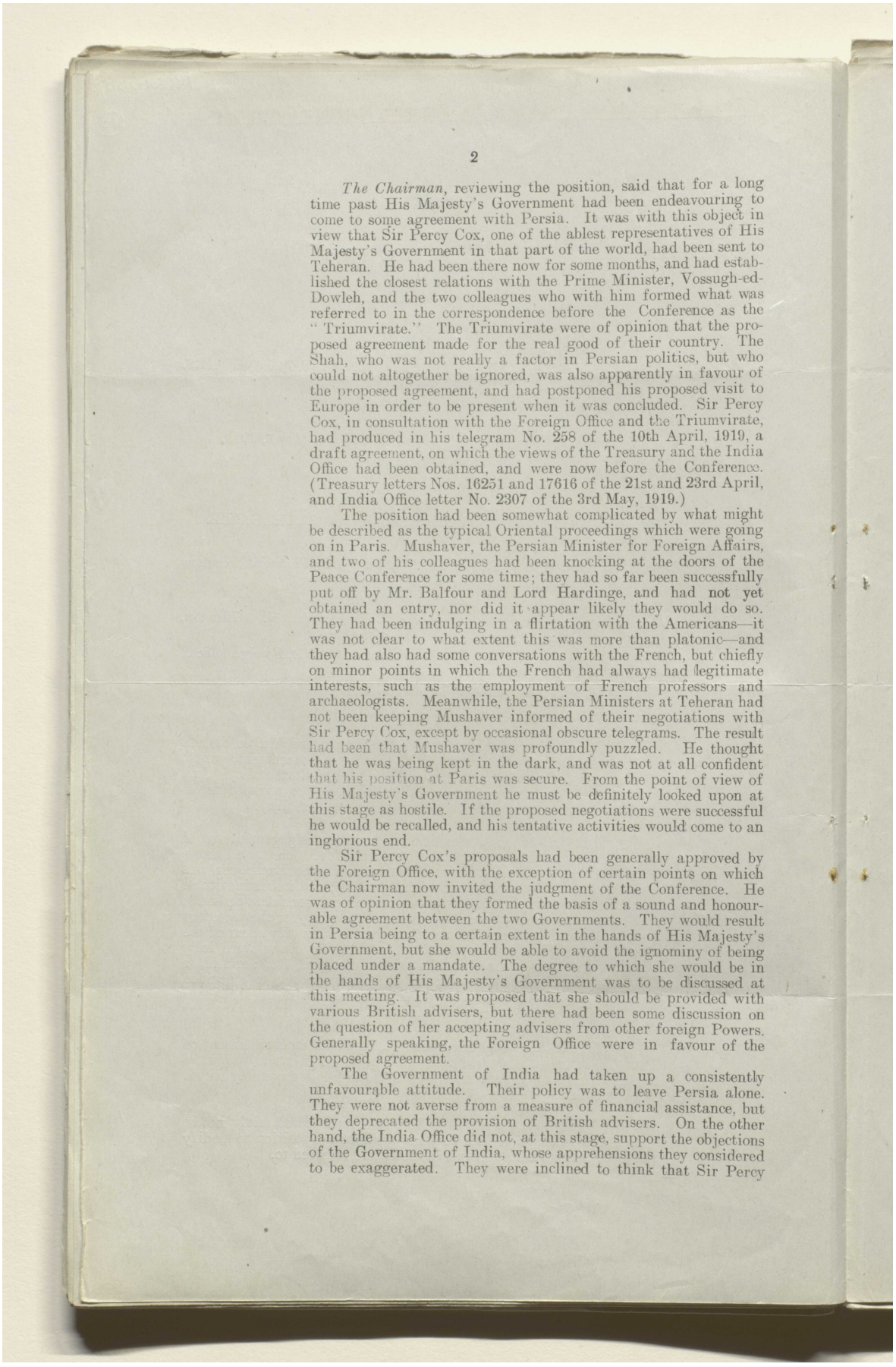



*The Chairman*, reviewing the position, said that for a long time past His Majesty's Government had been endeavouring to come to some agreement with Persia. It was with this object in view that Sir Percy Cox, one of the ablest representatives of His Majesty's Government in that part of the world, had been sent to Teheran. He had been there now for some months, and had established the closest relations with the Prime Minister, Vossugh-ed-Dowleh, and the two colleagues who with him formed what was referred to in the correspondence before the Conference as the "Triumvirate." The Triumvirate were of opinion that the proposed agreement made for the real good of their country. The Shah, who was not really a factor in Persian politics, but who could not altogether be ignored, was also apparently in favour of the proposed agreement, and had postponed his proposed visit to Europe in order to be present when it was concluded. Sir Percy Cox, in consultation with the Foreign Office and the Triumvirate, had produced in his telegram No. 258 of the 10th April, 1919, a draft agreement, on which the views of the Treasury and the India Office had been obtained, and were now before the Conference. (Treasury letters Nos. 16251 and 17616 of the 21st and 23rd April, and India Office letter No. 2307 of the 3rd May, 1919.)

The position had been somewhat complicated by what might be described as the typical Oriental proceedings which were going on in Paris. Mushaver, the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and two of his colleagues had been knocking at the doors of the Peace Conference for some time; they had so far been successfully put off by Mr. Balfour and Lord Hardinge, and had not yet obtained an entry, nor did it appear likely they would do so. They had been indulging in a flirtation with the Americans—it was not clear to what extent this was more than platonic—and they had also had some conversations with the French, but chiefly on minor points in which the French had always had legitimate interests, such as the employment of French professors and archaeologists. Meanwhile, the Persian Ministers at Teheran had not been keeping Mushaver informed of their negotiations with Sir Percy Cox, except by occasional obscure telegrams. The result had been that Mushaver was profoundly puzzled. He thought that he was being kept in the dark, and was not at all confident that his position at Paris was secure. From the point of view of His Majesty's Government he must be definitely looked upon at this stage as hostile. If the proposed negotiations were successful he would be recalled, and his tentative activities would come to an inglorious end.

Sir Percy Cox's proposals had been generally approved by the Foreign Office, with the exception of certain points on which the Chairman now invited the judgment of the Conference. He was of opinion that they formed the basis of a sound and honourable agreement between the two Governments. They would result in Persia being to a certain extent in the hands of His Majesty's Government, but she would be able to avoid the ignominy of being placed under a mandate. The degree to which she would be in the hands of His Majesty's Government was to be discussed at this meeting. It was proposed that she should be provided with various British advisers, but there had been some discussion on the question of her accepting advisers from other foreign Powers. Generally speaking, the Foreign Office were in favour of the proposed agreement.

The Government of India had taken up a consistently unfavourable attitude. Their policy was to leave Persia alone. They were not averse from a measure of financial assistance, but they deprecated the provision of British advisers. On the other hand, the India Office did not, at this stage, support the objections of the Government of India, whose apprehensions they considered to be exaggerated. They were inclined to think that Sir Percy



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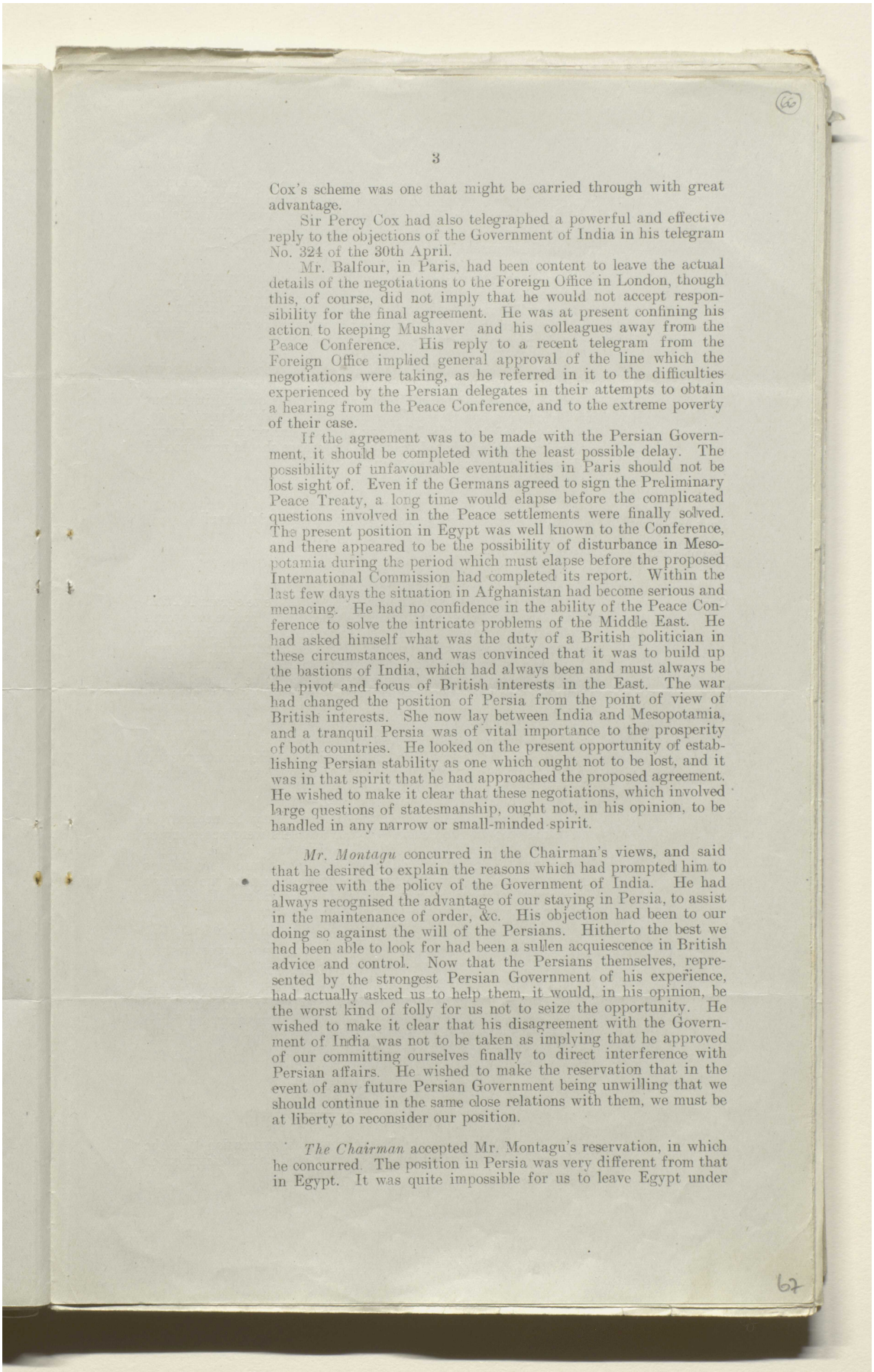



Cox's scheme was one that might be carried through with great advantage.

Sir Percy Cox had also telegraphed a powerful and effective reply to the objections of the Government of India in his telegram No. 324 of the 30th April.

Mr. Balfour, in Paris, had been content to leave the actual details of the negotiations to the Foreign Office in London, though this, of course, did not imply that he would not accept responsibility for the final agreement. He was at present confining his action to keeping Mushaver and his colleagues away from the Peace Conference. His reply to a recent telegram from the Foreign Office implied general approval of the line which the negotiations were taking, as he referred in it to the difficulties experienced by the Persian delegates in their attempts to obtain a hearing from the Peace Conference, and to the extreme poverty of their case.

If the agreement was to be made with the Persian Government, it should be completed with the least possible delay. The possibility of unfavourable eventualities in Paris should not be lost sight of. Even if the Germans agreed to sign the Preliminary Peace Treaty, a long time would elapse before the complicated questions involved in the Peace settlements were finally solved. The present position in Egypt was well known to the Conference, and there appeared to be the possibility of disturbance in Mesopotamia during the period which must elapse before the proposed International Commission had completed its report. Within the last few days the situation in Afghanistan had become serious and menacing. He had no confidence in the ability of the Peace Conference to solve the intricate problems of the Middle East. He had asked himself what was the duty of a British politician in these circumstances, and was convinced that it was to build up the bastions of India, which had always been and must always be the pivot and focus of British interests in the East. The war had changed the position of Persia from the point of view of British interests. She now lay between India and Mesopotamia, and a tranquil Persia was of vital importance to the prosperity of both countries. He looked on the present opportunity of establishing Persian stability as one which ought not to be lost, and it was in that spirit that he had approached the proposed agreement. He wished to make it clear that these negotiations, which involved large questions of statesmanship, ought not, in his opinion, to be handled in any narrow or small-minded spirit.

*Mr. Montagu* concurred in the Chairman's views, and said that he desired to explain the reasons which had prompted him to disagree with the policy of the Government of India. He had always recognised the advantage of our staying in Persia, to assist in the maintenance of order, &c. His objection had been to our doing so against the will of the Persians. Hitherto the best we had been able to look for had been a sullen acquiescence in British advice and control. Now that the Persians themselves, represented by the strongest Persian Government of his experience, had actually asked us to help them, it would, in his opinion, be the worst kind of folly for us not to seize the opportunity. He wished to make it clear that his disagreement with the Government of India was not to be taken as implying that he approved of our committing ourselves finally to direct interference with Persian affairs. He wished to make the reservation that in the event of any future Persian Government being unwilling that we should continue in the same close relations with them, we must be at liberty to reconsider our position.

*The Chairman* accepted Mr. Montagu's reservation, in which he concurred. The position in Persia was very different from that in Egypt. It was quite impossible for us to leave Egypt under



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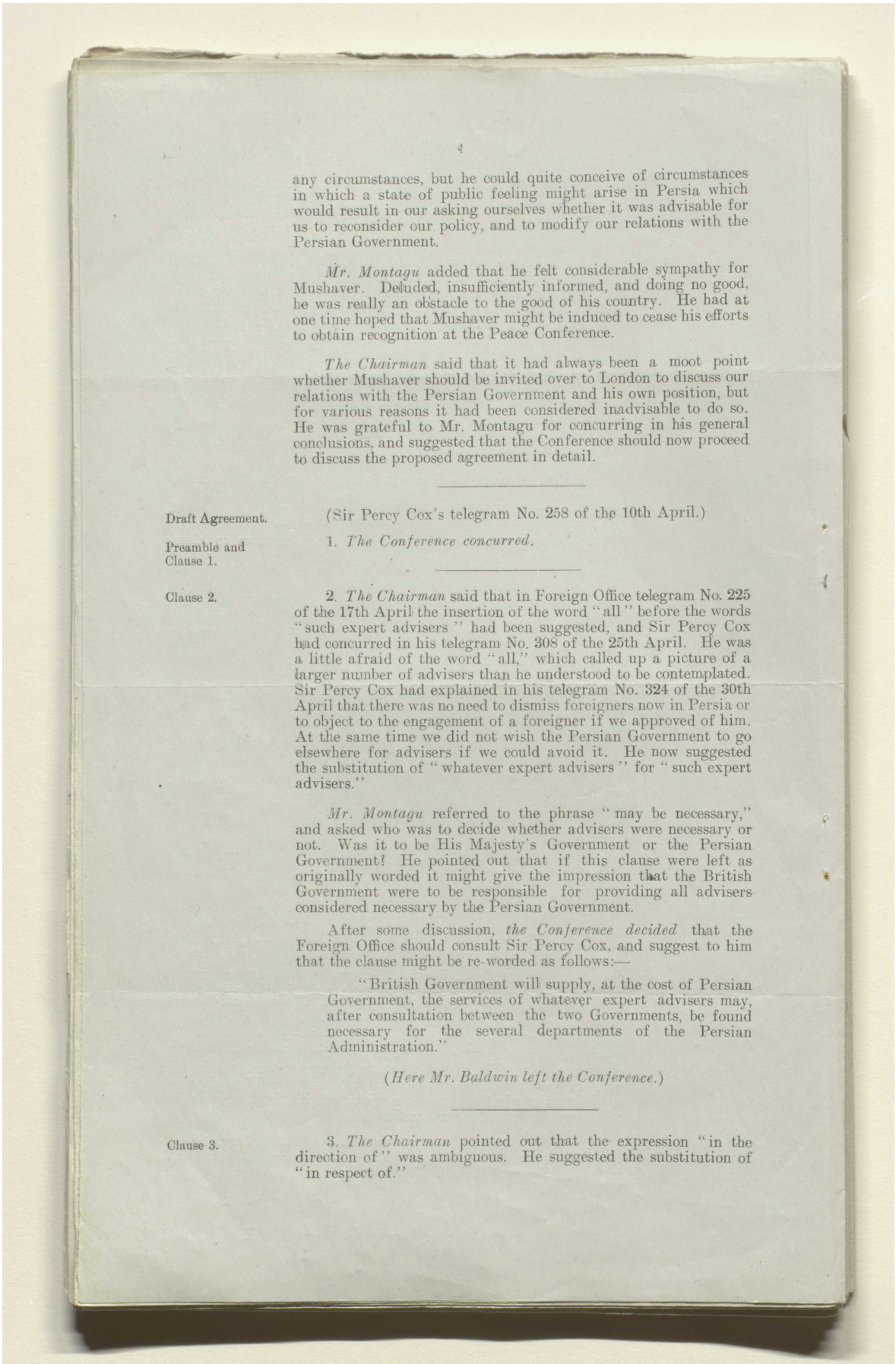

any circumstances, but he could quite conceive of circumstances in which a state of public feeling might arise in Persia which would result in our asking ourselves whether it was advisable for us to reconsider our policy, and to modify our relations with the Persian Government.

*Mr. Montagu* added that he felt considerable sympathy for Mushaver. Deluded, insufficiently informed, and doing no good, he was really an obstacle to the good of his country. He had at one time hoped that Mushaver might be induced to cease his efforts to obtain recognition at the Peace Conference.

*The Chairman* said that it had always been a moot point whether Mushaver should be invited over to London to discuss our relations with the Persian Government and his own position, but for various reasons it had been considered inadvisable to do so. He was grateful to Mr. Montagu for concurring in his general conclusions, and suggested that the Conference should now proceed to discuss the proposed agreement in detail.

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Draft Agreement.

(Sir Percy Cox's telegram No. 258 of the 10th April.)

Preamble and Clause 1.

1. *The Conference concurred.*

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Clause 2.

2. *The Chairman* said that in Foreign Office telegram No. 225 of the 17th April the insertion of the word "all" before the words "such expert advisers" had been suggested, and Sir Percy Cox had concurred in his telegram No. 308 of the 25th April. He was a little afraid of the word "all," which called up a picture of a larger number of advisers than he understood to be contemplated. Sir Percy Cox had explained in his telegram No. 324 of the 30th April that there was no need to dismiss foreigners now in Persia or to object to the engagement of a foreigner if we approved of him. At the same time we did not wish the Persian Government to go elsewhere for advisers if we could avoid it. He now suggested the substitution of "whatever expert advisers" for "such expert advisers."

*Mr. Montagu* referred to the phrase "may be necessary," and asked who was to decide whether advisers were necessary or not. Was it to be His Majesty's Government or the Persian Government? He pointed out that if this clause were left as originally worded it might give the impression that the British Government were to be responsible for providing all advisers considered necessary by the Persian Government.

After some discussion, *the Conference decided* that the Foreign Office should consult Sir Percy Cox, and suggest to him that the clause might be re-worded as follows:—

> "British Government will supply, at the cost of Persian Government, the services of whatever expert advisers may, after consultation between the two Governments, be found necessary for the several departments of the Persian Administration."

(*Here Mr. Baldwin left the Conference.*)

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Clause 3.

3. *The Chairman* pointed out that the expression "in the direction of" was ambiguous. He suggested the substitution of "in respect of."



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The expression "a uniform force" was considered to give the impression that the Persian Government had not decided on the policy of uniformity.

*The Conference decided* that the word "the" should be substituted for "a," and that the Foreign Office should suggest to Sir Percy Cox that the clause might be re-worded as follows:—

"... for the purpose of estimating the needs of Persia in respect of the uniform force which the Persian Government proposes," &c.

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Clause 4.

4. *The Chairman* said that this clause raised the big financial question on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer would have to be consulted. He understood that the existing British loans to Persia were secured on the Customs. As far as he remembered, the principle had been laid down when he was in India that the responsibility for these loans should be shared between His Majesty's Government and the Government of India. Was the Conference to understand from the last sentence of the Viceroy's telegram of the 28th January that this principle was now called in question? This was, in his opinion, an impossible attitude for the Government of India to take up. The negotiations were being conducted for India's benefit, and the Government of India should clearly bear their share in the financial responsibilities involved.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said he did not imagine the sentence referred to applied to loans. He thought that the Viceroy only had in view the possibility of the Government of India being called upon to provide further subsidies.

*The Chairman* asked to what extent Persian resources were already hypothecated to existing loans, and whether the country was capable of providing security for further loans.

*Mr. Oliphant* said that with an improvement in commerce the Southern Customs would undoubtedly increase.

*The Chairman* did not see why we should only consider Southern Customs. What was to become of the sources of revenue which had formerly been hypothecated to Russian loans, such as the fisheries in the Caspian? Would it be possible to have a statement prepared in the India Office or elsewhere showing the estimated resources of Persia, and the degree to which they were already earmarked for various loans?

*Mr. Montagu* undertook to have the statement prepared in the India Office. He observed that the clause under discussion was, in his opinion, rather strangely worded. It had to be remembered that the agreement would in all probability be read by persons who were interested in drawing from it conclusions unfavourable to His Majesty's Government. He pointed out that the clause as originally worded appeared to lay undue stress on the advantages which His Majesty's Government sought from the securing of the loan rather than on the favour which they were doing to the Persian Government by supplying it. He suggested that the clause should be transposed to correct this impression.

*Mr. Oliphant*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that the Treaty had been drafted in consultation with Persians, and that there had probably been good reasons for the wording selected by Sir Percy Cox.







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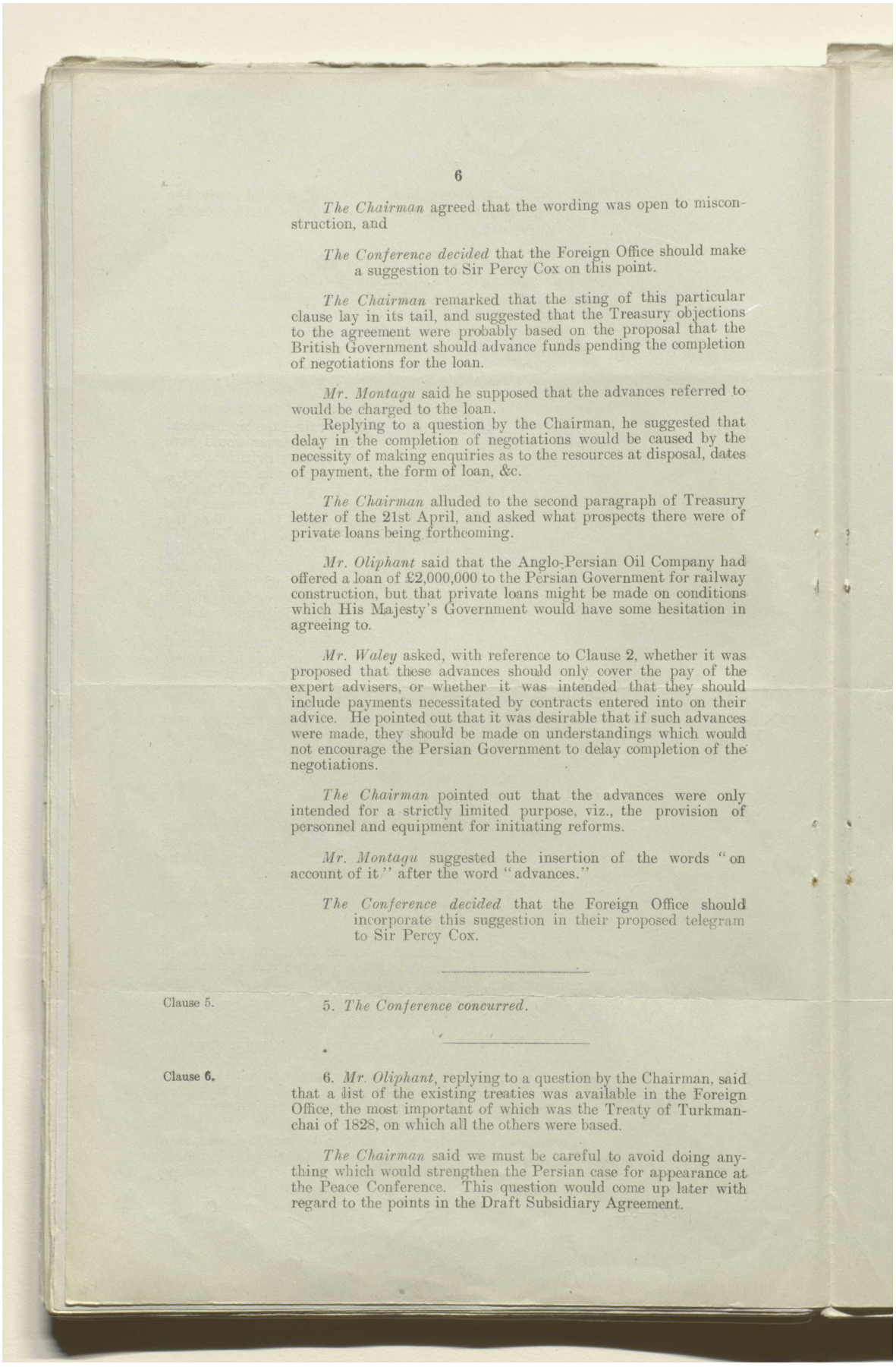



*The Chairman* agreed that the wording was open to misconstruction, and

*The Conference decided* that the Foreign Office should make a suggestion to Sir Percy Cox on this point.

*The Chairman* remarked that the sting of this particular clause lay in its tail, and suggested that the Treasury objections to the agreement were probably based on the proposal that the British Government should advance funds pending the completion of negotiations for the loan.

*Mr. Montagu* said he supposed that the advances referred to would be charged to the loan.
Replying to a question by the Chairman, he suggested that delay in the completion of negotiations would be caused by the necessity of making enquiries as to the resources at disposal, dates of payment, the form of loan, &c.

*The Chairman* alluded to the second paragraph of Treasury letter of the 21st April, and asked what prospects there were of private loans being forthcoming.

*Mr. Oliphant* said that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had offered a loan of £2,000,000 to the Persian Government for railway construction, but that private loans might be made on conditions which His Majesty's Government would have some hesitation in agreeing to.

*Mr. Waley* asked, with reference to Clause 2, whether it was proposed that these advances should only cover the pay of the expert advisers, or whether it was intended that they should include payments necessitated by contracts entered into on their advice. He pointed out that it was desirable that if such advances were made, they should be made on understandings which would not encourage the Persian Government to delay completion of the negotiations.

*The Chairman* pointed out that the advances were only intended for a strictly limited purpose, viz., the provision of personnel and equipment for initiating reforms.

*Mr. Montagu* suggested the insertion of the words "on account of it" after the word "advances."

*The Conference decided* that the Foreign Office should incorporate this suggestion in their proposed telegram to Sir Percy Cox.

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Clause 5. 5. *The Conference concurred.*

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Clause 6. 6. *Mr. Oliphant*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that a list of the existing treaties was available in the Foreign Office, the most important of which was the Treaty of Turkmanchai of 1828, on which all the others were based.

*The Chairman* said we must be careful to avoid doing anything which would strengthen the Persian case for appearance at the Peace Conference. This question would come up later with regard to the points in the Draft Subsidiary Agreement.



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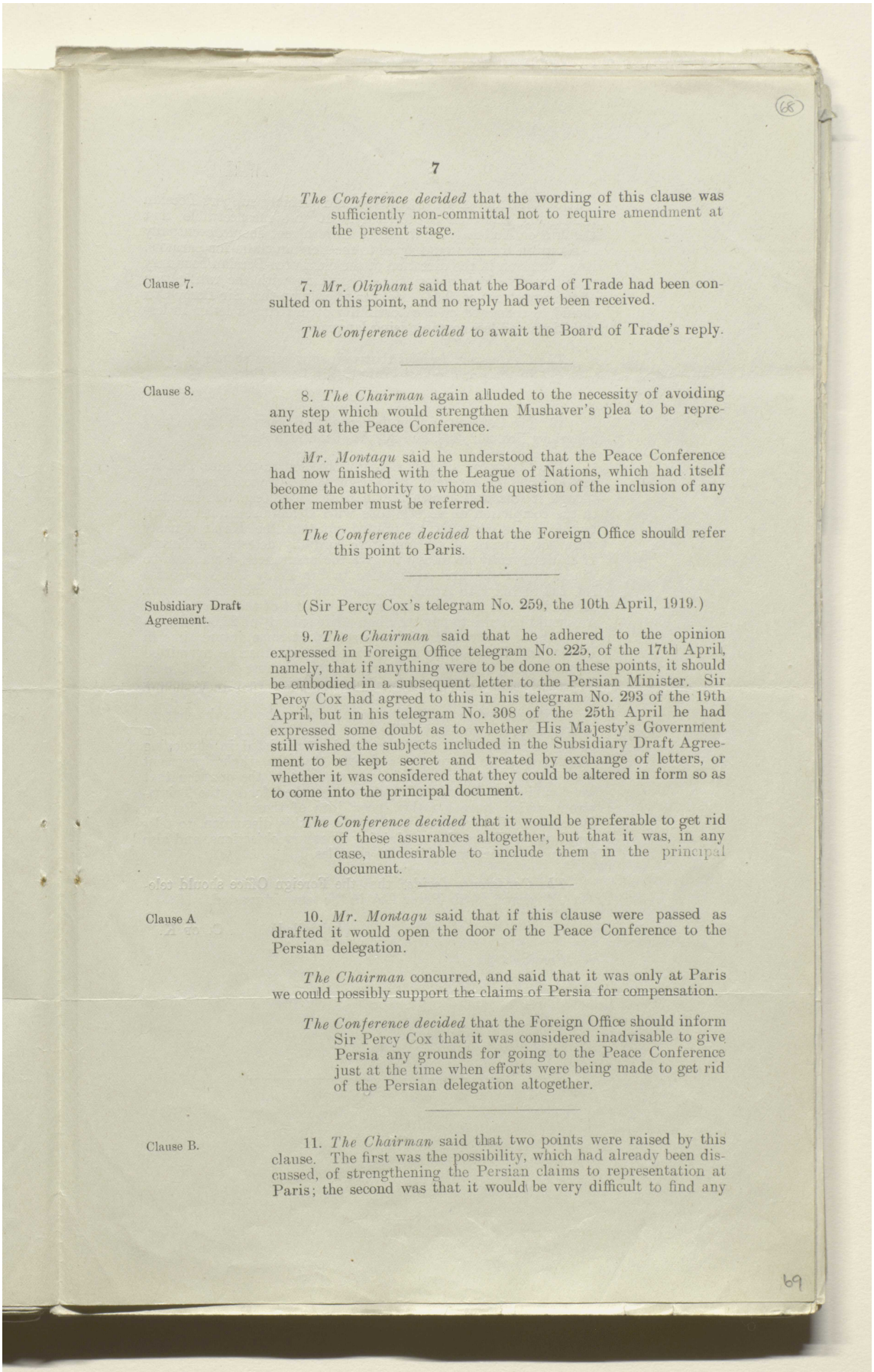

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*The Conference decided* that the wording of this clause was sufficiently non-committal not to require amendment at the present stage.

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Clause 7.

7. *Mr. Oliphant* said that the Board of Trade had been consulted on this point, and no reply had yet been received.

*The Conference decided* to await the Board of Trade's reply.

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Clause 8.

8. *The Chairman* again alluded to the necessity of avoiding any step which would strengthen Mushaver's plea to be represented at the Peace Conference.

*Mr. Montagu* said he understood that the Peace Conference had now finished with the League of Nations, which had itself become the authority to whom the question of the inclusion of any other member must be referred.

*The Conference decided* that the Foreign Office should refer this point to Paris.

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Subsidiary Draft Agreement.

(Sir Percy Cox's telegram No. 259, the 10th April, 1919.)

9. *The Chairman* said that he adhered to the opinion expressed in Foreign Office telegram No. 225, of the 17th April, namely, that if anything were to be done on these points, it should be embodied in a subsequent letter to the Persian Minister. Sir Percy Cox had agreed to this in his telegram No. 293 of the 19th April, but in his telegram No. 308 of the 25th April he had expressed some doubt as to whether His Majesty's Government still wished the subjects included in the Subsidiary Draft Agreement to be kept secret and treated by exchange of letters, or whether it was considered that they could be altered in form so as to come into the principal document.

*The Conference decided* that it would be preferable to get rid of these assurances altogether, but that it was, in any case, undesirable to include them in the principal document.

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Clause A

10. *Mr. Montagu* said that if this clause were passed as drafted it would open the door of the Peace Conference to the Persian delegation.

*The Chairman* concurred, and said that it was only at Paris we could possibly support the claims of Persia for compensation.

*The Conference decided* that the Foreign Office should inform Sir Percy Cox that it was considered inadvisable to give Persia any grounds for going to the Peace Conference just at the time when efforts were being made to get rid of the Persian delegation altogether.

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Clause B.

11. *The Chairman* said that two points were raised by this clause. The first was the possibility, which had already been discussed, of strengthening the Persian claims to representation at Paris; the second was that it would be very difficult to find any



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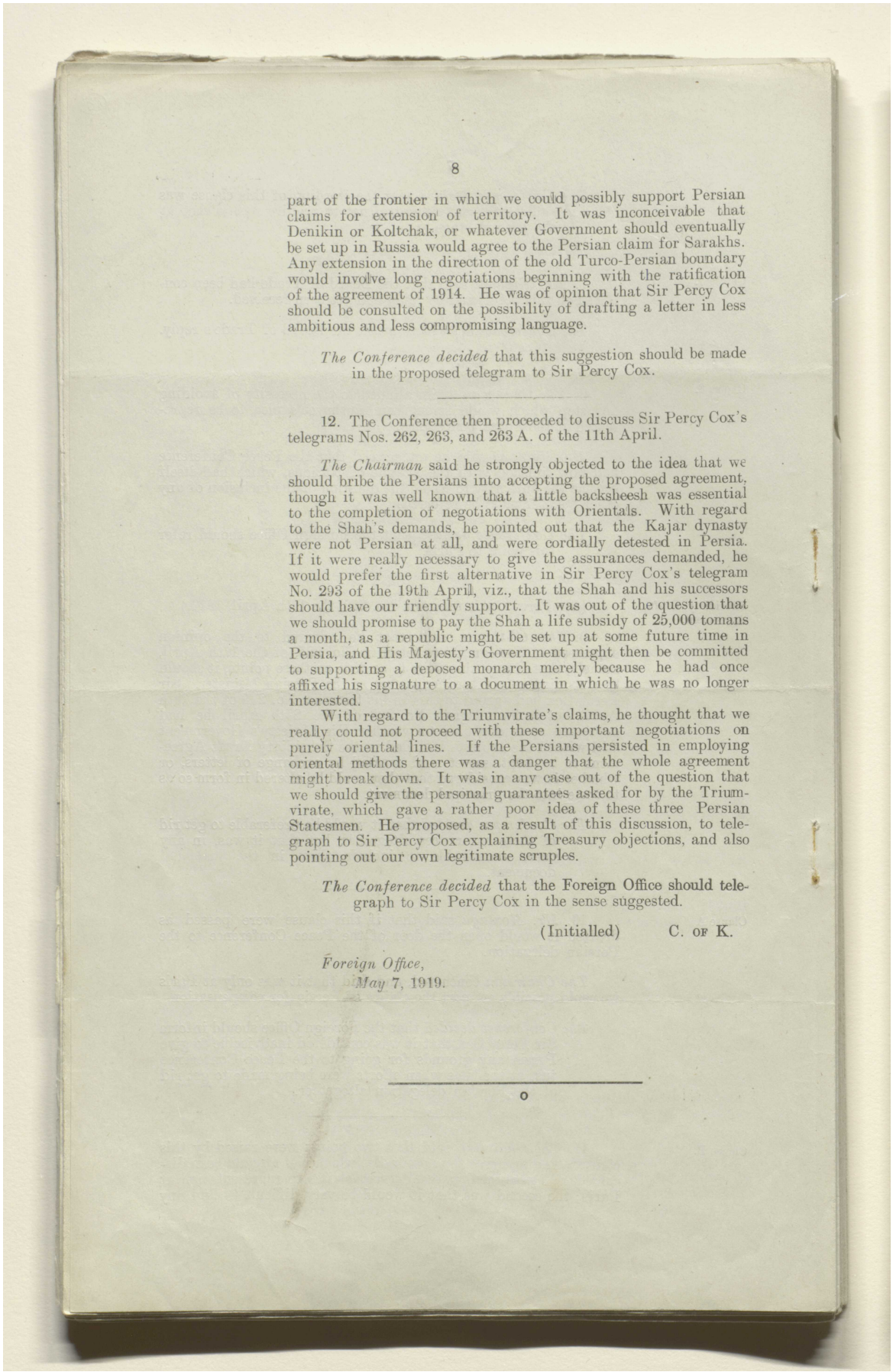



part of the frontier in which we could possibly support Persian claims for extension of territory. It was inconceivable that Denikin or Koltchak, or whatever Government should eventually be set up in Russia would agree to the Persian claim for Sarakhs. Any extension in the direction of the old Turco-Persian boundary would involve long negotiations beginning with the ratification of the agreement of 1914. He was of opinion that Sir Percy Cox should be consulted on the possibility of drafting a letter in less ambitious and less compromising language.

*The Conference decided* that this suggestion should be made in the proposed telegram to Sir Percy Cox.

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12. The Conference then proceeded to discuss Sir Percy Cox's telegrams Nos. 262, 263, and 263 A. of the 11th April.

*The Chairman* said he strongly objected to the idea that we should bribe the Persians into accepting the proposed agreement, though it was well known that a little backsheesh was essential to the completion of negotiations with Orientals. With regard to the Shah's demands, he pointed out that the Kajar dynasty were not Persian at all, and were cordially detested in Persia. If it were really necessary to give the assurances demanded, he would prefer the first alternative in Sir Percy Cox's telegram No. 293 of the 19th April, viz., that the Shah and his successors should have our friendly support. It was out of the question that we should promise to pay the Shah a life subsidy of 25,000 tomans a month, as a republic might be set up at some future time in Persia, and His Majesty's Government might then be committed to supporting a deposed monarch merely because he had once affixed his signature to a document in which he was no longer interested.

With regard to the Triumvirate's claims, he thought that we really could not proceed with these important negotiations on purely oriental lines. If the Persians persisted in employing oriental methods there was a danger that the whole agreement might break down. It was in any case out of the question that we should give the personal guarantees asked for by the Triumvirate, which gave a rather poor idea of these three Persian Statesmen. He proposed, as a result of this discussion, to telegraph to Sir Percy Cox explaining Treasury objections, and also pointing out our own legitimate scruples.

*The Conference decided* that the Foreign Office should telegraph to Sir Percy Cox in the sense suggested.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*May* 7, 1919.

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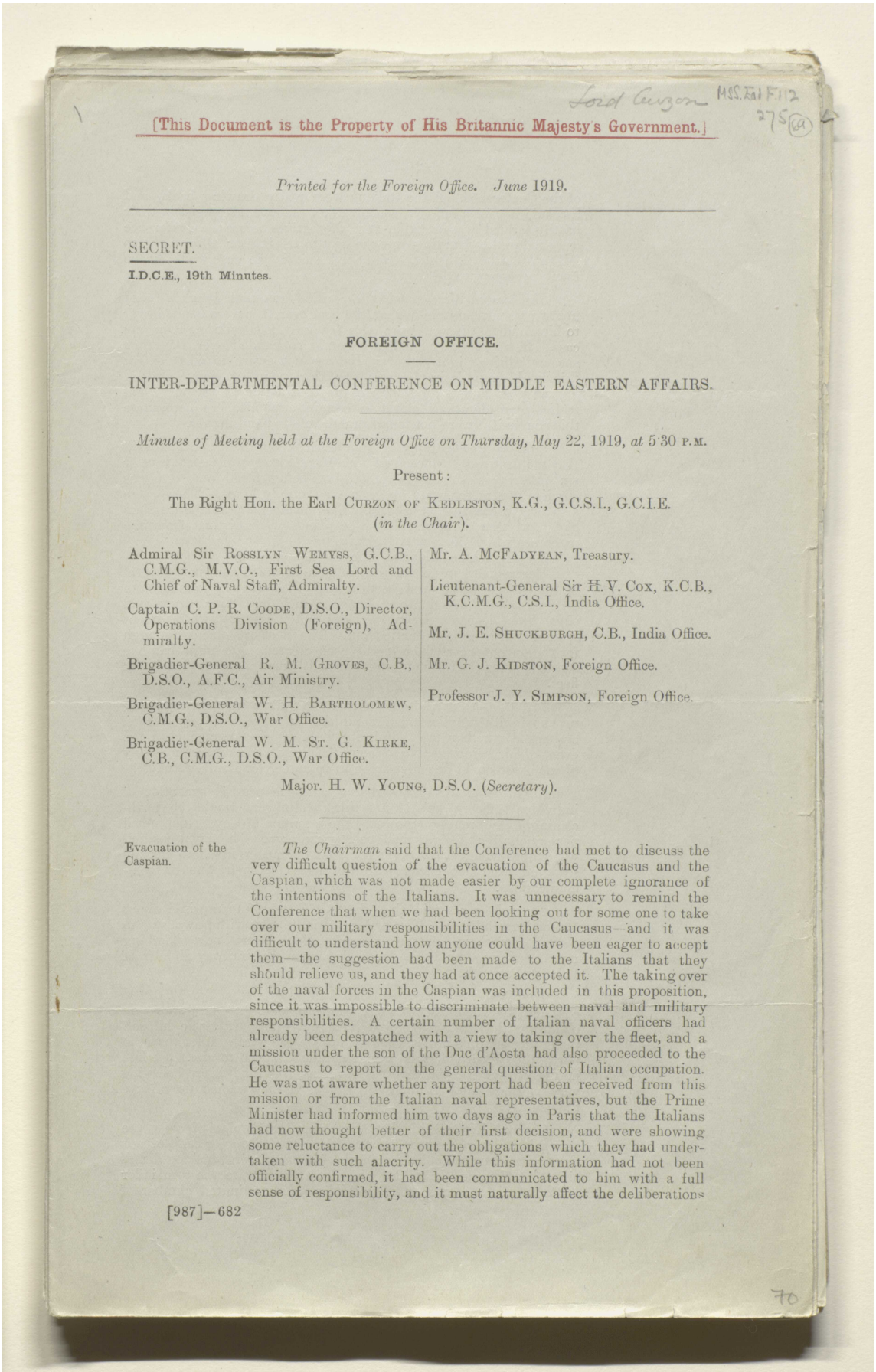

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I.D.C.E., 19th Minutes.

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Thursday, May 22, 1919, at 5·30 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Admiral Sir ROSSLYN WEMYSS, G.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O., First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, Admiralty.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, D.S.O., Director, Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Brigadier-General R. M. GROVES, C.B., D.S.O., A.F.C., Air Ministry.

Brigadier-General W. H. BARTHOLOMEW, C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office.

Brigadier-General W. M. ST. G. KIRKE, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office.

Mr. A. MCFADYEAN, Treasury.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Professor J. Y. SIMPSON, Foreign Office.

Major. H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Evacuation of the Caspian.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference had met to discuss the very difficult question of the evacuation of the Caucasus and the Caspian, which was not made easier by our complete ignorance of the intentions of the Italians. It was unnecessary to remind the Conference that when we had been looking out for some one to take over our military responsibilities in the Caucasus—and it was difficult to understand how anyone could have been eager to accept them—the suggestion had been made to the Italians that they should relieve us, and they had at once accepted it. The taking over of the naval forces in the Caspian was included in this proposition, since it was impossible to discriminate between naval and military responsibilities. A certain number of Italian naval officers had already been despatched with a view to taking over the fleet, and a mission under the son of the Duc d'Aosta had also proceeded to the Caucasus to report on the general question of Italian occupation. He was not aware whether any report had been received from this mission or from the Italian naval representatives, but the Prime Minister had informed him two days ago in Paris that the Italians had now thought better of their first decision, and were showing some reluctance to carry out the obligations which they had undertaken with such alacrity. While this information had not been officially confirmed, it had been communicated to him with a full sense of responsibility, and it must naturally affect the deliberations

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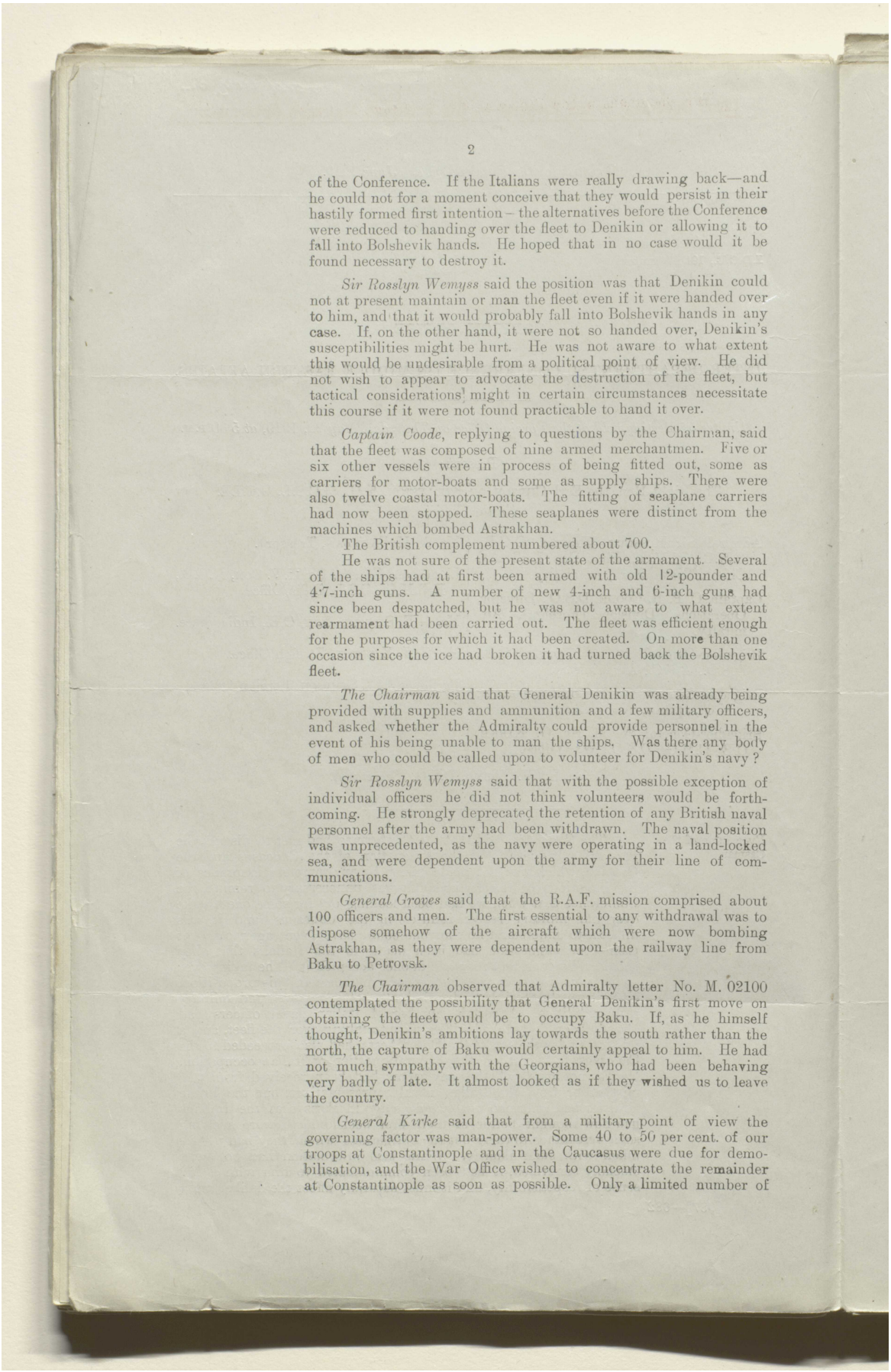



of the Conference. If the Italians were really drawing back—and he could not for a moment conceive that they would persist in their hastily formed first intention – the alternatives before the Conference were reduced to handing over the fleet to Denikin or allowing it to fall into Bolshevik hands. He hoped that in no case would it be found necessary to destroy it.

*Sir Rosslyn Wemyss* said the position was that Denikin could not at present maintain or man the fleet even if it were handed over to him, and that it would probably fall into Bolshevik hands in any case. If, on the other hand, it were not so handed over, Denikin's susceptibilities might be hurt. He was not aware to what extent this would be undesirable from a political point of view. He did not wish to appear to advocate the destruction of the fleet, but tactical considerations might in certain circumstances necessitate this course if it were not found practicable to hand it over.

*Captain Coode*, replying to questions by the Chairman, said that the fleet was composed of nine armed merchantmen. Five or six other vessels were in process of being fitted out, some as carriers for motor-boats and some as supply ships. There were also twelve coastal motor-boats. The fitting of seaplane carriers had now been stopped. These seaplanes were distinct from the machines which bombed Astrakhan.

The British complement numbered about 700.

He was not sure of the present state of the armament. Several of the ships had at first been armed with old 12-pounder and 4·7-inch guns. A number of new 4-inch and 6-inch guns had since been despatched, but he was not aware to what extent rearmament had been carried out. The fleet was efficient enough for the purposes for which it had been created. On more than one occasion since the ice had broken it had turned back the Bolshevik fleet.

*The Chairman* said that General Denikin was already being provided with supplies and ammunition and a few military officers, and asked whether the Admiralty could provide personnel in the event of his being unable to man the ships. Was there any body of men who could be called upon to volunteer for Denikin's navy?

*Sir Rosslyn Wemyss* said that with the possible exception of individual officers he did not think volunteers would be forthcoming. He strongly deprecated the retention of any British naval personnel after the army had been withdrawn. The naval position was unprecedented, as the navy were operating in a land-locked sea, and were dependent upon the army for their line of communications.

*General Groves* said that the R.A.F. mission comprised about 100 officers and men. The first essential to any withdrawal was to dispose somehow of the aircraft which were now bombing Astrakhan, as they were dependent upon the railway line from Baku to Petrovsk.

*The Chairman* observed that Admiralty letter No. M. 02100 contemplated the possibility that General Denikin's first move on obtaining the fleet would be to occupy Baku. If, as he himself thought, Denikin's ambitions lay towards the south rather than the north, the capture of Baku would certainly appeal to him. He had not much sympathy with the Georgians, who had been behaving very badly of late. It almost looked as if they wished us to leave the country.

*General Kirke* said that from a military point of view the governing factor was man-power. Some 40 to 50 per cent. of our troops at Constantinople and in the Caucasus were due for demobilisation, and the War Office wished to concentrate the remainder at Constantinople as soon as possible. Only a limited number of



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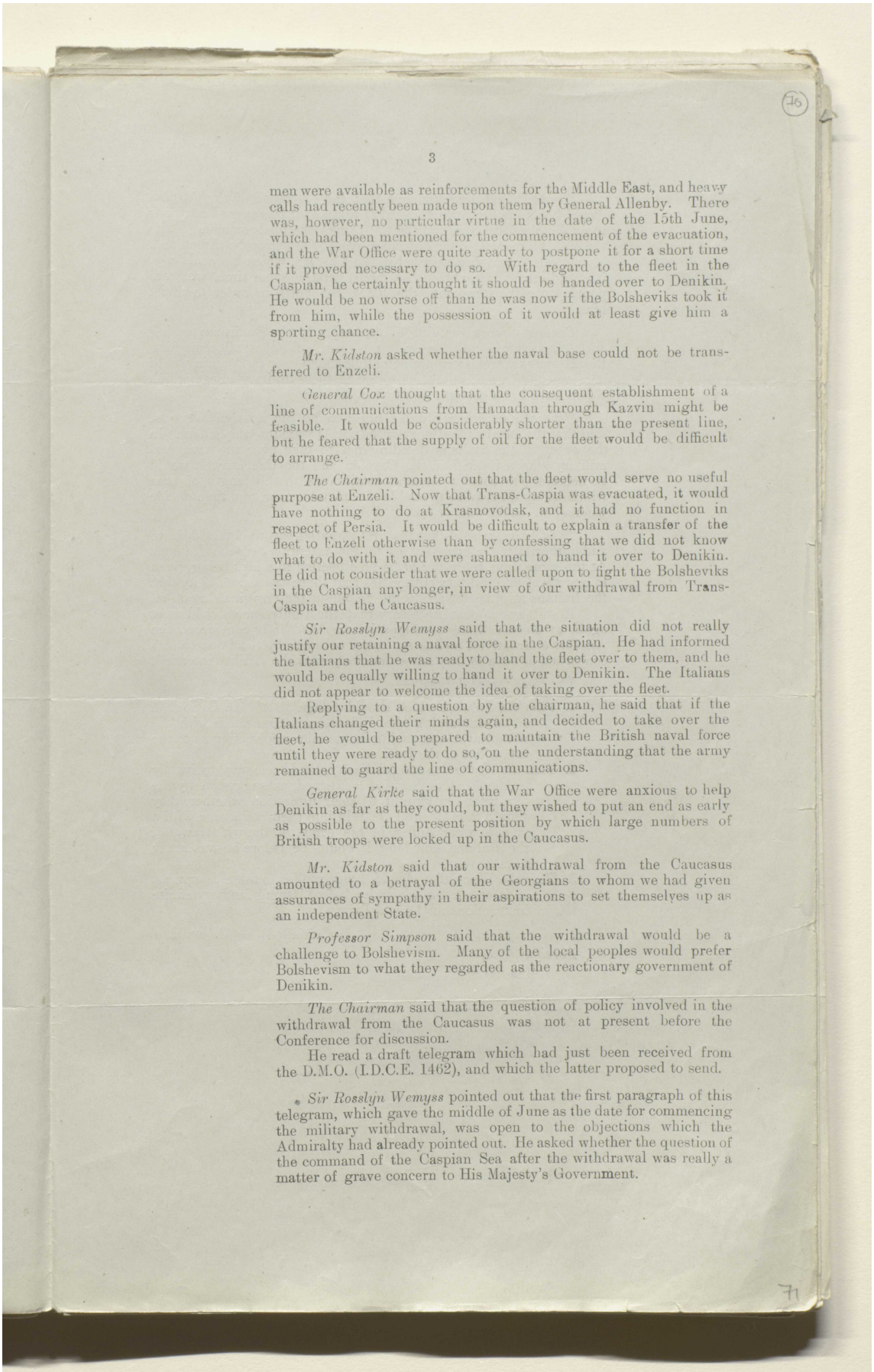



men were available as reinforcements for the Middle East, and heavy calls had recently been made upon them by General Allenby. There was, however, no particular virtue in the date of the 15th June, which had been mentioned for the commencement of the evacuation, and the War Office were quite ready to postpone it for a short time if it proved necessary to do so. With regard to the fleet in the Caspian, he certainly thought it should be handed over to Denikin. He would be no worse off than he was now if the Bolsheviks took it from him, while the possession of it would at least give him a sporting chance.

*Mr. Kidston* asked whether the naval base could not be transferred to Enzeli.

*General Cox* thought that the consequent establishment of a line of communications from Hamadan through Kazvin might be feasible. It would be considerably shorter than the present line, but he feared that the supply of oil for the fleet would be difficult to arrange.

*The Chairman* pointed out that the fleet would serve no useful purpose at Enzeli. Now that Trans-Caspia was evacuated, it would have nothing to do at Krasnovodsk, and it had no function in respect of Persia. It would be difficult to explain a transfer of the fleet to Enzeli otherwise than by confessing that we did not know what to do with it and were ashamed to hand it over to Denikin. He did not consider that we were called upon to fight the Bolsheviks in the Caspian any longer, in view of our withdrawal from Trans-Caspia and the Caucasus.

*Sir Rosslyn Wemyss* said that the situation did not really justify our retaining a naval force in the Caspian. He had informed the Italians that he was ready to hand the fleet over to them, and he would be equally willing to hand it over to Denikin. The Italians did not appear to welcome the idea of taking over the fleet.

Replying to a question by the chairman, he said that if the Italians changed their minds again, and decided to take over the fleet, he would be prepared to maintain the British naval force until they were ready to do so, on the understanding that the army remained to guard the line of communications.

*General Kirke* said that the War Office were anxious to help Denikin as far as they could, but they wished to put an end as early as possible to the present position by which large numbers of British troops were locked up in the Caucasus.

*Mr. Kidston* said that our withdrawal from the Caucasus amounted to a betrayal of the Georgians to whom we had given assurances of sympathy in their aspirations to set themselves up as an independent State.

*Professor Simpson* said that the withdrawal would be a challenge to Bolshevism. Many of the local peoples would prefer Bolshevism to what they regarded as the reactionary government of Denikin.

*The Chairman* said that the question of policy involved in the withdrawal from the Caucasus was not at present before the Conference for discussion.

He read a draft telegram which had just been received from the D.M.O. (I.D.C.E. 1462), and which the latter proposed to send.

*Sir Rosslyn Wemyss* pointed out that the first paragraph of this telegram, which gave the middle of June as the date for commencing the military withdrawal, was open to the objections which the Admiralty had already pointed out. He asked whether the question of the command of the Caspian Sea after the withdrawal was really a matter of grave concern to His Majesty's Government.



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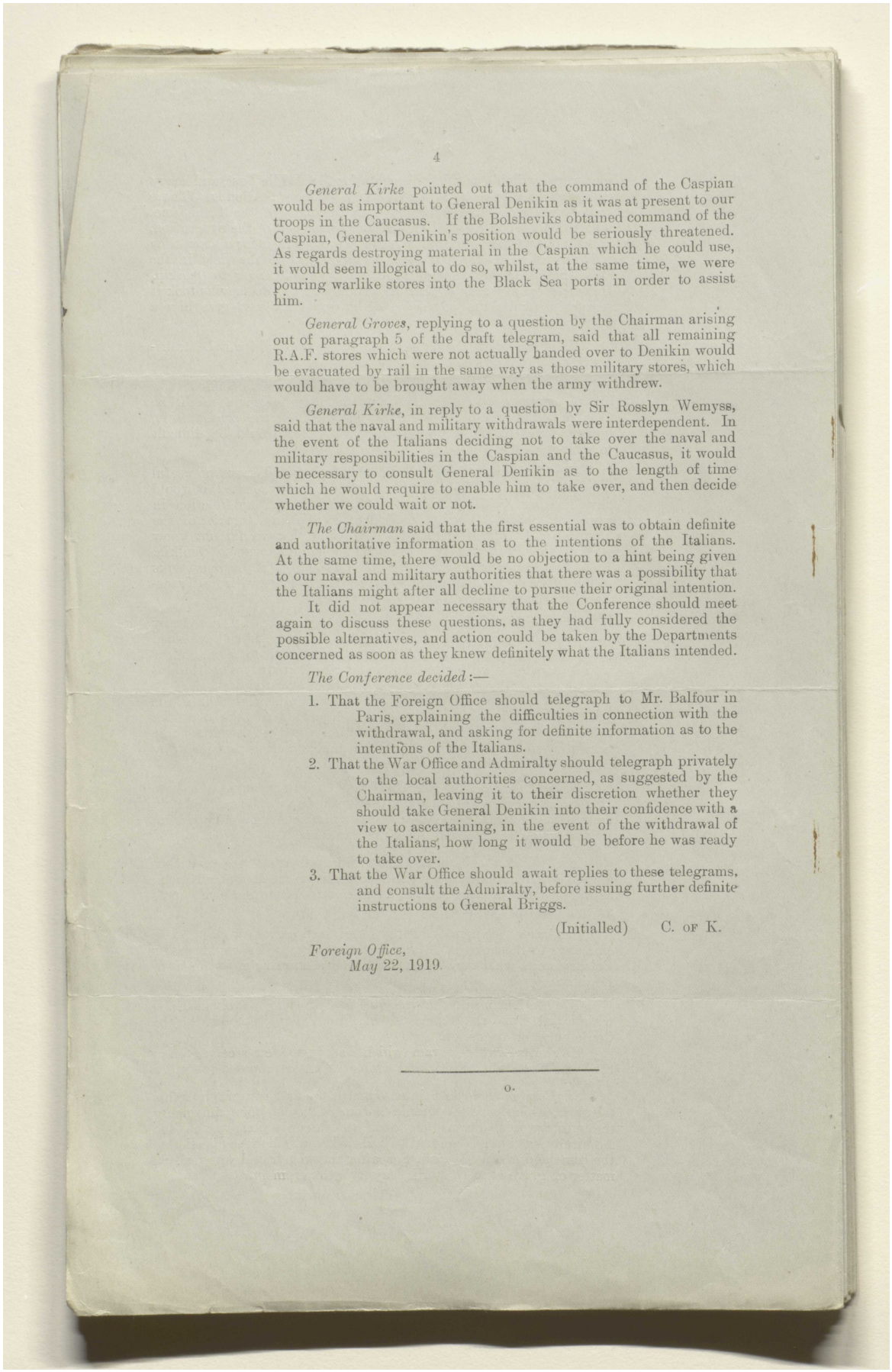

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*General Kirke* pointed out that the command of the Caspian would be as important to General Denikin as it was at present to our troops in the Caucasus. If the Bolsheviks obtained command of the Caspian, General Denikin's position would be seriously threatened. As regards destroying material in the Caspian which he could use, it would seem illogical to do so, whilst, at the same time, we were pouring warlike stores into the Black Sea ports in order to assist him.

*General Groves*, replying to a question by the Chairman arising out of paragraph 5 of the draft telegram, said that all remaining R.A.F. stores which were not actually handed over to Denikin would be evacuated by rail in the same way as those military stores, which would have to be brought away when the army withdrew.

*General Kirke*, in reply to a question by Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, said that the naval and military withdrawals were interdependent. In the event of the Italians deciding not to take over the naval and military responsibilities in the Caspian and the Caucasus, it would be necessary to consult General Denikin as to the length of time which he would require to enable him to take over, and then decide whether we could wait or not.

*The Chairman* said that the first essential was to obtain definite and authoritative information as to the intentions of the Italians. At the same time, there would be no objection to a hint being given to our naval and military authorities that there was a possibility that the Italians might after all decline to pursue their original intention.

It did not appear necessary that the Conference should meet again to discuss these questions, as they had fully considered the possible alternatives, and action could be taken by the Departments concerned as soon as they knew definitely what the Italians intended.

*The Conference decided*:—

1. That the Foreign Office should telegraph to Mr. Balfour in Paris, explaining the difficulties in connection with the withdrawal, and asking for definite information as to the intentions of the Italians.
2. That the War Office and Admiralty should telegraph privately to the local authorities concerned, as suggested by the Chairman, leaving it to their discretion whether they should take General Denikin into their confidence with a view to ascertaining, in the event of the withdrawal of the Italians, how long it would be before he was ready to take over.
3. That the War Office should await replies to these telegrams, and consult the Admiralty, before issuing further definite instructions to General Briggs.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*May* 22, 1919.

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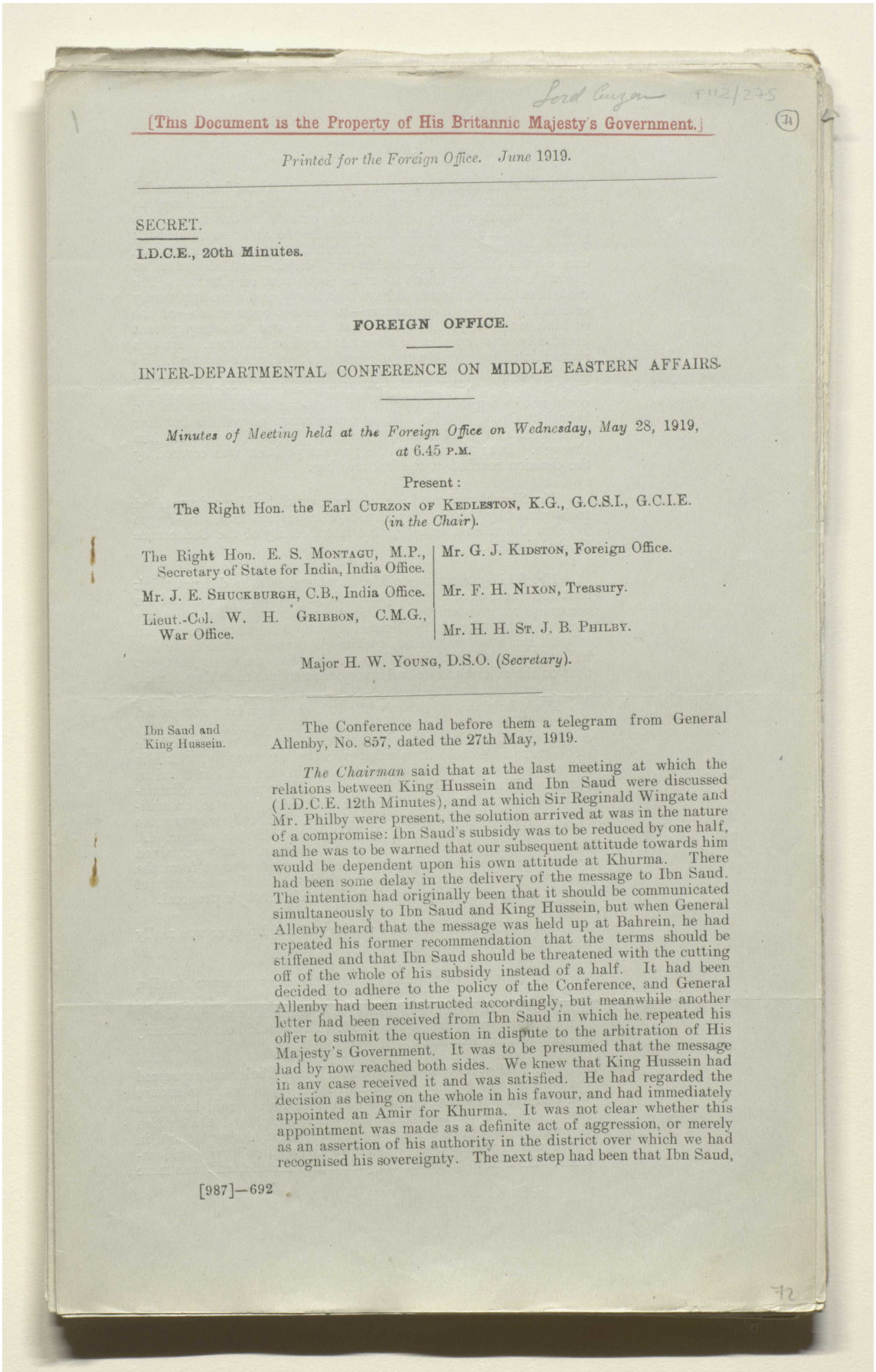

Lord Curzon F112/275

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. June 1919.*

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I.D.C.E., 20th Minutes.

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Wednesday, May 28, 1919, at 6.45 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

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| The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office. | Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office. |
| Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office. | Mr. F. H. NIXON, Treasury. |
| Lieut.-Col. W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office. | Mr. H. H. ST. J. B. PHILBY. |

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Ibn Saud and King Hussein.

The Conference had before them a telegram from General Allenby, No. 857, dated the 27th May, 1919.

*The Chairman* said that at the last meeting at which the relations between King Hussein and Ibn Saud were discussed (I.D.C.E. 12th Minutes), and at which Sir Reginald Wingate and Mr. Philby were present, the solution arrived at was in the nature of a compromise: Ibn Saud's subsidy was to be reduced by one half, and he was to be warned that our subsequent attitude towards him would be dependent upon his own attitude at Khurma. There had been some delay in the delivery of the message to Ibn Saud. The intention had originally been that it should be communicated simultaneously to Ibn Saud and King Hussein, but when General Allenby heard that the message was held up at Bahrein, he had repeated his former recommendation that the terms should be stiffened and that Ibn Saud should be threatened with the cutting off of the whole of his subsidy instead of a half. It had been decided to adhere to the policy of the Conference, and General Allenby had been instructed accordingly, but meanwhile another letter had been received from Ibn Saud in which he repeated his offer to submit the question in dispute to the arbitration of His Majesty's Government. It was to be presumed that the message had by now reached both sides. We knew that King Hussein had in any case received it and was satisfied. He had regarded the decision as being on the whole in his favour, and had immediately appointed an Amir for Khurma. It was not clear whether this appointment was made as a definite act of aggression, or merely as an assertion of his authority in the district over which we had recognised his sovereignty. The next step had been that Ibn Saud,

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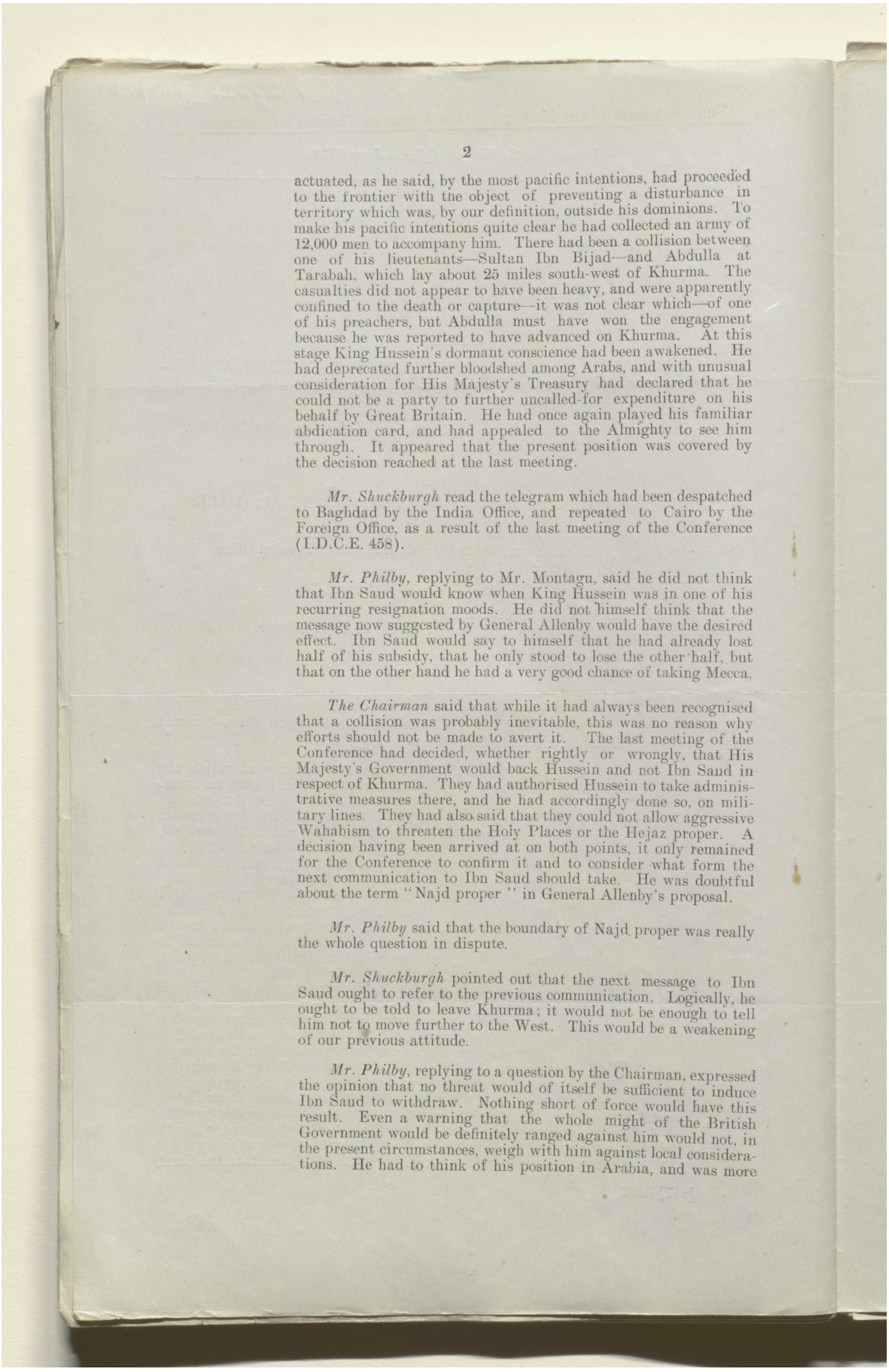



actuated, as he said, by the most pacific intentions, had proceeded to the frontier with the object of preventing a disturbance in territory which was, by our definition, outside his dominions. To make his pacific intentions quite clear he had collected an army of 12,000 men to accompany him. There had been a collision between one of his lieutenants—Sultan Ibn Bijad—and Abdulla at Tarabah, which lay about 25 miles south-west of Khurma. The casualties did not appear to have been heavy, and were apparently confined to the death or capture—it was not clear which—of one of his preachers, but Abdulla must have won the engagement because he was reported to have advanced on Khurma. At this stage King Hussein's dormant conscience had been awakened. He had deprecated further bloodshed among Arabs, and with unusual consideration for His Majesty's Treasury had declared that he could not be a party to further uncalled-for expenditure on his behalf by Great Britain. He had once again played his familiar abdication card, and had appealed to the Almighty to see him through. It appeared that the present position was covered by the decision reached at the last meeting.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* read the telegram which had been despatched to Baghdad by the India Office, and repeated to Cairo by the Foreign Office, as a result of the last meeting of the Conference (I.D.C.E. 458).

*Mr. Philby*, replying to Mr. Montagu, said he did not think that Ibn Saud would know when King Hussein was in one of his recurring resignation moods. He did not himself think that the message now suggested by General Allenby would have the desired effect. Ibn Saud would say to himself that he had already lost half of his subsidy, that he only stood to lose the other half, but that on the other hand he had a very good chance of taking Mecca.

*The Chairman* said that while it had always been recognised that a collision was probably inevitable, this was no reason why efforts should not be made to avert it. The last meeting of the Conference had decided, whether rightly or wrongly, that His Majesty's Government would back Hussein and not Ibn Saud in respect of Khurma. They had authorised Hussein to take administrative measures there, and he had accordingly done so, on military lines. They had also said that they could not allow aggressive Wahabism to threaten the Holy Places or the Hejaz proper. A decision having been arrived at on both points, it only remained for the Conference to confirm it and to consider what form the next communication to Ibn Saud should take. He was doubtful about the term "Najd proper" in General Allenby's proposal.

*Mr. Philby* said that the boundary of Najd proper was really the whole question in dispute.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* pointed out that the next message to Ibn Saud ought to refer to the previous communication. Logically, he ought to be told to leave Khurma; it would not be enough to tell him not to move further to the West. This would be a weakening of our previous attitude.

*Mr. Philby*, replying to a question by the Chairman, expressed the opinion that no threat would of itself be sufficient to induce Ibn Saud to withdraw. Nothing short of force would have this result. Even a warning that the whole might of the British Government would be definitely ranged against him would not, in the present circumstances, weigh with him against local considerations. He had to think of his position in Arabia, and was more



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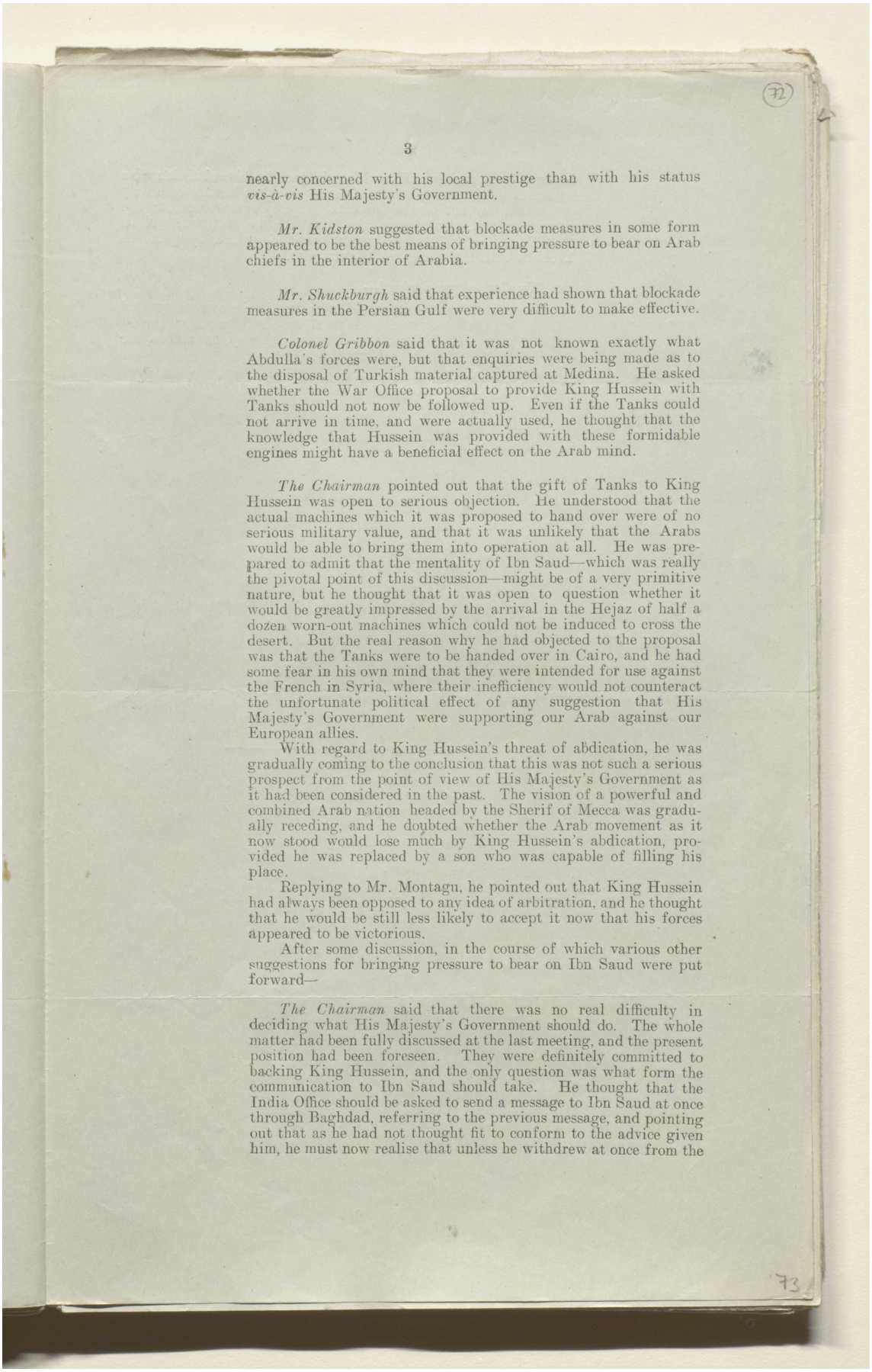

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nearly concerned with his local prestige than with his status *vis-à-vis* His Majesty's Government.

*Mr. Kidston* suggested that blockade measures in some form appeared to be the best means of bringing pressure to bear on Arab chiefs in the interior of Arabia.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that experience had shown that blockade measures in the Persian Gulf were very difficult to make effective.

*Colonel Gribbon* said that it was not known exactly what Abdulla's forces were, but that enquiries were being made as to the disposal of Turkish material captured at Medina. He asked whether the War Office proposal to provide King Hussein with Tanks should not now be followed up. Even if the Tanks could not arrive in time, and were actually used, he thought that the knowledge that Hussein was provided with these formidable engines might have a beneficial effect on the Arab mind.

*The Chairman* pointed out that the gift of Tanks to King Hussein was open to serious objection. He understood that the actual machines which it was proposed to hand over were of no serious military value, and that it was unlikely that the Arabs would be able to bring them into operation at all. He was prepared to admit that the mentality of Ibn Saud—which was really the pivotal point of this discussion—might be of a very primitive nature, but he thought that it was open to question whether it would be greatly impressed by the arrival in the Hejaz of half a dozen worn-out machines which could not be induced to cross the desert. But the real reason why he had objected to the proposal was that the Tanks were to be handed over in Cairo, and he had some fear in his own mind that they were intended for use against the French in Syria, where their inefficiency would not counteract the unfortunate political effect of any suggestion that His Majesty's Government were supporting our Arab against our European allies.

With regard to King Hussein's threat of abdication, he was gradually coming to the conclusion that this was not such a serious prospect from the point of view of His Majesty's Government as it had been considered in the past. The vision of a powerful and combined Arab nation headed by the Sherif of Mecca was gradually receding, and he doubted whether the Arab movement as it now stood would lose much by King Hussein's abdication, provided he was replaced by a son who was capable of filling his place.

Replying to Mr. Montagu, he pointed out that King Hussein had always been opposed to any idea of arbitration, and he thought that he would be still less likely to accept it now that his forces appeared to be victorious.

After some discussion, in the course of which various other suggestions for bringing pressure to bear on Ibn Saud were put forward—

*The Chairman* said that there was no real difficulty in deciding what His Majesty's Government should do. The whole matter had been fully discussed at the last meeting, and the present position had been foreseen. They were definitely committed to backing King Hussein, and the only question was what form the communication to Ibn Saud should take. He thought that the India Office should be asked to send a message to Ibn Saud at once through Baghdad, referring to the previous message, and pointing out that as he had not thought fit to conform to the advice given him, he must now realise that unless he withdrew at once from the

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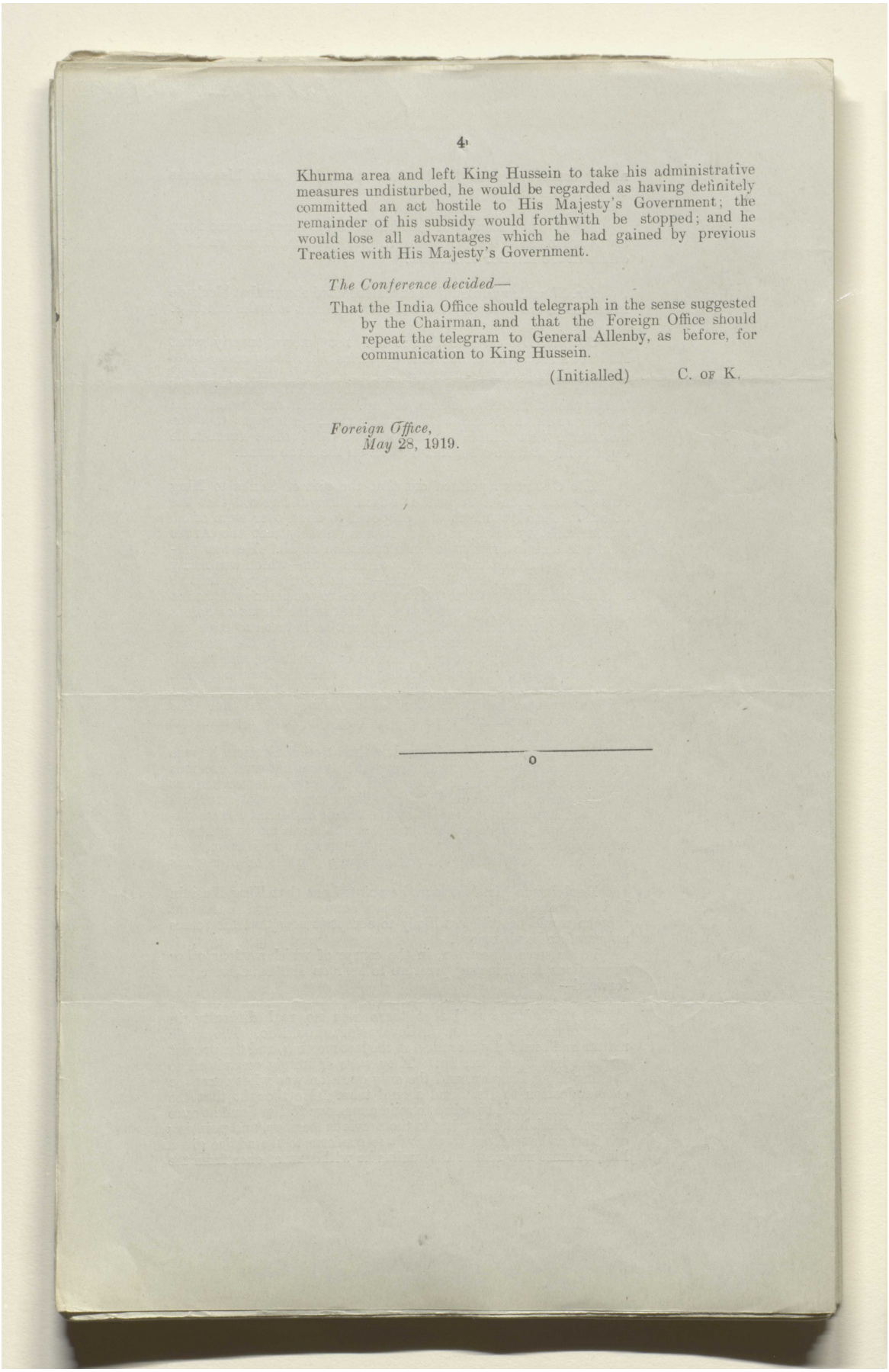

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Khurma area and left King Hussein to take his administrative measures undisturbed, he would be regarded as having definitely committed an act hostile to His Majesty's Government; the remainder of his subsidy would forthwith be stopped; and he would lose all advantages which he had gained by previous Treaties with His Majesty's Government.

*The Conference decided—*

That the India Office should telegraph in the sense suggested by the Chairman, and that the Foreign Office should repeat the telegram to General Allenby, as before, for communication to King Hussein.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*May* 28, 1919.

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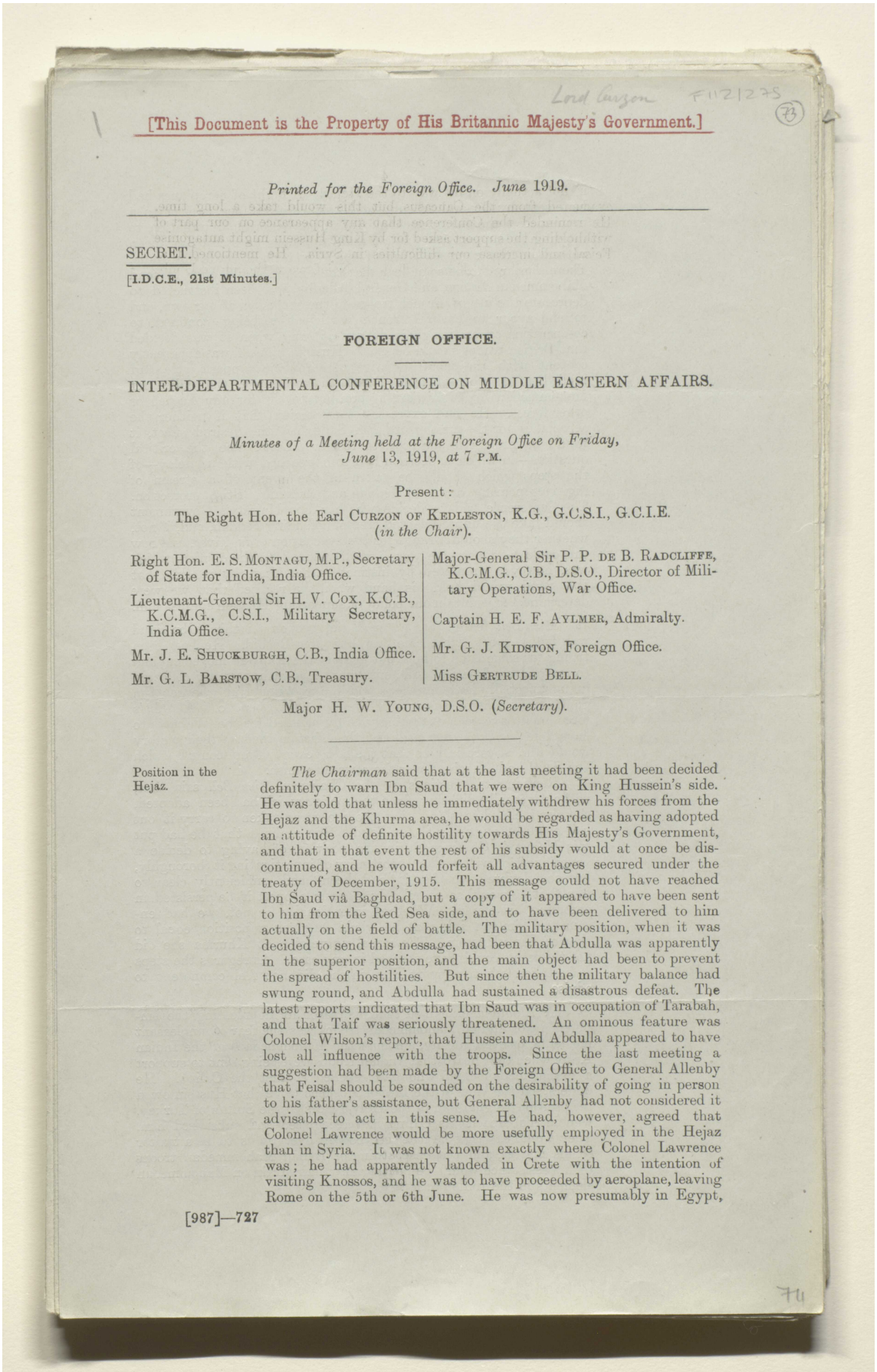

Lord Curzon F112/275 (73)

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[I.D.C.E., 21st Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Friday, June 13, 1919, at 7 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. G. L. BARSTOW, C.B., Treasury.

Major-General Sir P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Captain H. E. F. AYLMER, Admiralty.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.

Miss GERTRUDE BELL.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Position in the Hejaz.

*The Chairman* said that at the last meeting it had been decided definitely to warn Ibn Saud that we were on King Hussein's side. He was told that unless he immediately withdrew his forces from the Hejaz and the Khurma area, he would be regarded as having adopted an attitude of definite hostility towards His Majesty's Government, and that in that event the rest of his subsidy would at once be discontinued, and he would forfeit all advantages secured under the treaty of December, 1915. This message could not have reached Ibn Saud via Baghdad, but a copy of it appeared to have been sent to him from the Red Sea side, and to have been delivered to him actually on the field of battle. The military position, when it was decided to send this message, had been that Abdulla was apparently in the superior position, and the main object had been to prevent the spread of hostilities. But since then the military balance had swung round, and Abdulla had sustained a disastrous defeat. The latest reports indicated that Ibn Saud was in occupation of Tarabah, and that Taif was seriously threatened. An ominous feature was Colonel Wilson's report, that Hussein and Abdulla appeared to have lost all influence with the troops. Since the last meeting a suggestion had been made by the Foreign Office to General Allenby that Feisal should be sounded on the desirability of going in person to his father's assistance, but General Allenby had not considered it advisable to act in this sense. He had, however, agreed that Colonel Lawrence would be more usefully employed in the Hejaz than in Syria. It was not known exactly where Colonel Lawrence was; he had apparently landed in Crete with the intention of visiting Knossos, and he was to have proceeded by aeroplane, leaving Rome on the 5th or 6th June. He was now presumably in Egypt,

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if not actually on his way to the Hejaz. A flight of aeroplanes had been sent by General Allenby to Hussein's assistance, subject to a protest from the Government of India, but his original intention to despatch a company of Indian Mahommedans as escort had been vetoed on the representation of the Secretary of State for India. There appeared to be some fear that the French would offer to send Mahommedan troops, and General Allenby had been instructed to deprecate the use of French troops to the exclusion of our own, and to endeavour to ensure French participation being confined to co-operation on an insignificant scale, if and when it was decided that British troops should be sent. Hussein himself was apparently content with the moral prestige of aeroplane support. He had replied to a proposal from Feisal to call upon the Allies for Mahommedan troops by warning him not to ask for any French or other forces. He had expressed the opinion that if neither the aeroplanes nor the message to Ibn Saud had the desired effect, it would be preferable for him to resign. Last came the critical question—on which a decision had to be reached without delay—of the steps which should be taken in the event of a stream of fugitives pouring down to Jeddah and claiming British protection. The Conference had to decide whether His Majesty's Government should take the unprecedented step of defending Jeddah, and, if not, whether they should arrange for the evacuation of fugitives, and how this could be done. He was himself inclined to the opinion, which was, however, prompted by instinct rather than by reason, that Ibn Saud would hold his hand when he realised that we were determined to maintain our policy of supporting Hussein against him.

*Miss Bell* feared that we could not reckon on this. Ibn Saud was not a great tribal chieftain like Ibn Rashid. He had been trying for some time to hold out against the Akhwan movement and to restrain his fanatical adherents, but they had apparently collected in unexpectedly large numbers, and she was doubtful whether Ibn Saud could control them now even if he wished to. Abdulla's force must have been exceedingly badly handled for the Wahabis to have defeated it as they had, and the effect on them of their victory would almost certainly be that the last vestige of any control which Ibn Saud had exercised over them would vanish.

Replying to questions by the Chairman, *Miss Bell* said that, without actually differing from the policy which had been adopted, she was inclined to think that the measures taken to carry it out had not been quite fair to Ibn Saud. She realised that he had put His Majesty's Government in the position of having to decide a vexed question without an opportunity of investigating it thoroughly, but she doubted whether it had been made sufficiently clear to him that he would so completely lose our support if he persisted in enforcing his claims. Whether intentionally or not, we had encouraged him to think that he would be given a position equal to that of King Hussein. The actual aggression at Khurma she did not think he could have stopped in any case. As regards the steps to be taken now to support Hussein she did not feel competent to advise.

*Mr. Montagu* explained that his reason for deprecating the employment of Indian Mahommedan troops was the fear of unpleasant incidents, or even mutiny, amongst the Mahommedans of the Indian Army when they heard that Indian troops were being sent to support a Mahommedan chief who had rebelled against the Caliph. He understood the view of the Indian Moslems to be that Hussein owed his position as guardian of the Holy Places to the Sultan of Turkey, who in his capacity as Caliph had recognised and subsidised him. They would say that he had been bought over by us to be a traitor to his master, and the despatching of Indian Mahommedan troops to his assistance would be putting an unfair strain on Mahommedan elements in the Indian army.



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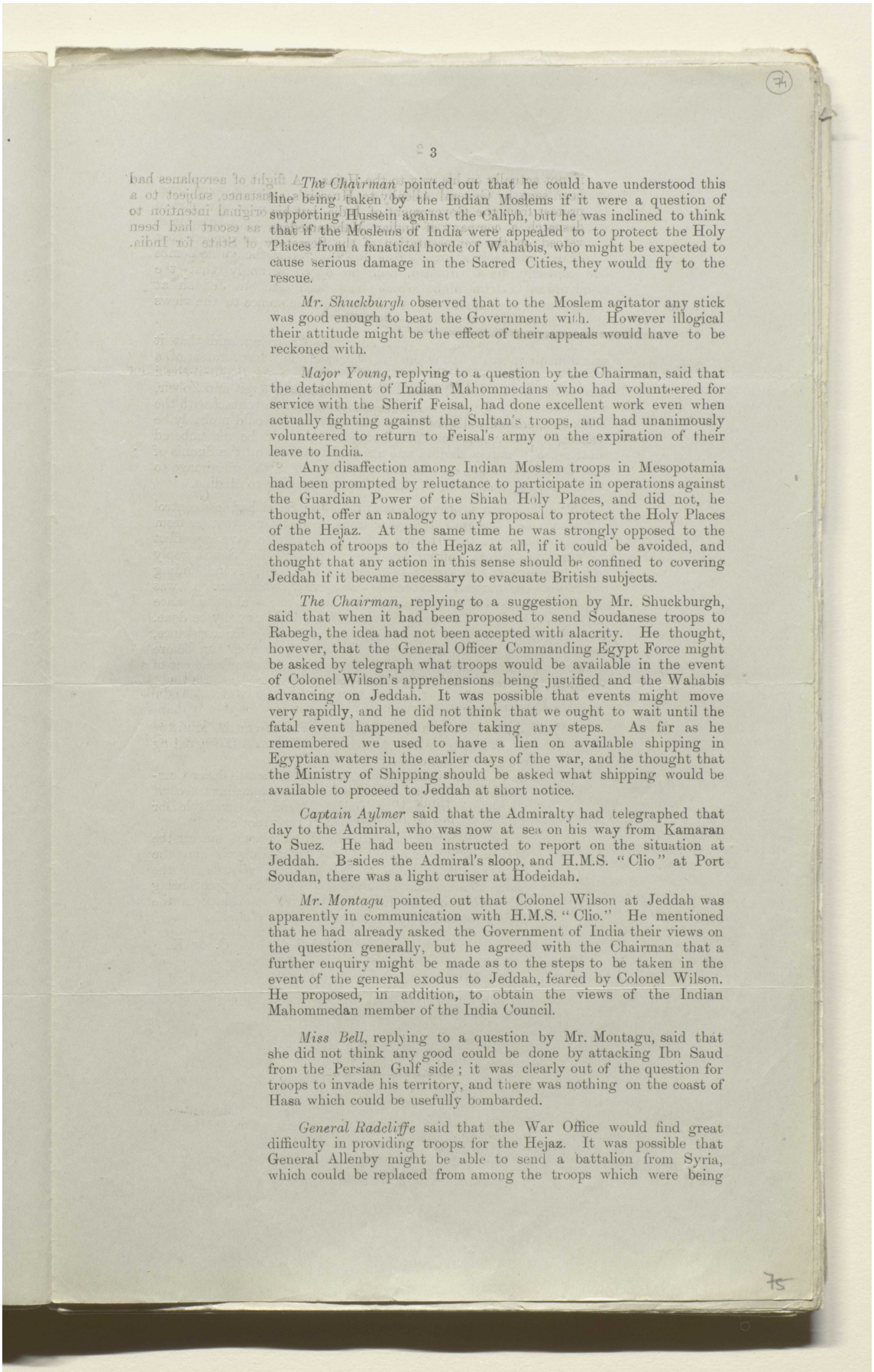



*The Chairman* pointed out that he could have understood this line being taken by the Indian Moslems if it were a question of supporting Hussein against the Caliph, but he was inclined to think that if the Moslems of India were appealed to to protect the Holy Places from a fanatical horde of Wahabis, who might be expected to cause serious damage in the Sacred Cities, they would fly to the rescue.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* observed that to the Moslem agitator any stick was good enough to beat the Government with. However illogical their attitude might be the effect of their appeals would have to be reckoned with.

*Major Young*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that the detachment of Indian Mahommedans who had volunteered for service with the Sherif Feisal, had done excellent work even when actually fighting against the Sultan's troops, and had unanimously volunteered to return to Feisal's army on the expiration of their leave to India.

Any disaffection among Indian Moslem troops in Mesopotamia had been prompted by reluctance to participate in operations against the Guardian Power of the Shiah Holy Places, and did not, he thought, offer an analogy to any proposal to protect the Holy Places of the Hejaz. At the same time he was strongly opposed to the despatch of troops to the Hejaz at all, if it could be avoided, and thought that any action in this sense should be confined to covering Jeddah if it became necessary to evacuate British subjects.

*The Chairman*, replying to a suggestion by Mr. Shuckburgh, said that when it had been proposed to send Soudanese troops to Rabegh, the idea had not been accepted with alacrity. He thought, however, that the General Officer Commanding Egypt Force might be asked by telegraph what troops would be available in the event of Colonel Wilson's apprehensions being justified and the Wahabis advancing on Jeddah. It was possible that events might move very rapidly, and he did not think that we ought to wait until the fatal event happened before taking any steps. As far as he remembered we used to have a lien on available shipping in Egyptian waters in the earlier days of the war, and he thought that the Ministry of Shipping should be asked what shipping would be available to proceed to Jeddah at short notice.

*Captain Aylmer* said that the Admiralty had telegraphed that day to the Admiral, who was now at sea on his way from Kamaran to Suez. He had been instructed to report on the situation at Jeddah. Besides the Admiral's sloop, and H.M.S. "Clio" at Port Soudan, there was a light cruiser at Hodeidah.

*Mr. Montagu* pointed out that Colonel Wilson at Jeddah was apparently in communication with H.M.S. "Clio." He mentioned that he had already asked the Government of India their views on the question generally, but he agreed with the Chairman that a further enquiry might be made as to the steps to be taken in the event of the general exodus to Jeddah, feared by Colonel Wilson. He proposed, in addition, to obtain the views of the Indian Mahommedan member of the India Council.

*Miss Bell*, replying to a question by Mr. Montagu, said that she did not think any good could be done by attacking Ibn Saud from the Persian Gulf side; it was clearly out of the question for troops to invade his territory, and there was nothing on the coast of Hasa which could be usefully bombarded.

*General Radcliffe* said that the War Office would find great difficulty in providing troops for the Hejaz. It was possible that General Allenby might be able to send a battalion from Syria, which could be replaced from among the troops which were being



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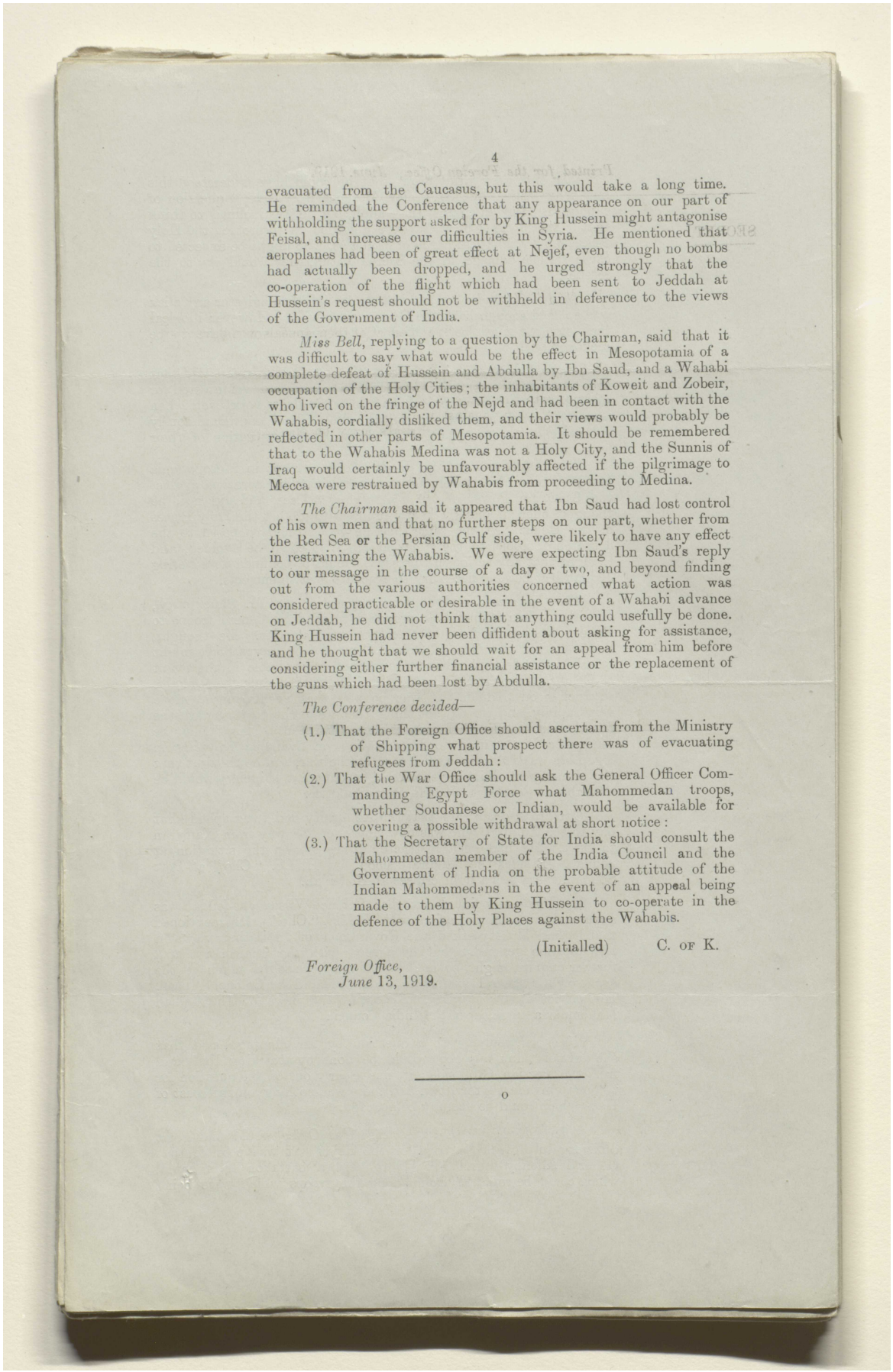



evacuated from the Caucasus, but this would take a long time. He reminded the Conference that any appearance on our part of withholding the support asked for by King Hussein might antagonise Feisal, and increase our difficulties in Syria. He mentioned that aeroplanes had been of great effect at Nejef, even though no bombs had actually been dropped, and he urged strongly that the co-operation of the flight which had been sent to Jeddah at Hussein's request should not be withheld in deference to the views of the Government of India.

*Miss Bell*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that it was difficult to say what would be the effect in Mesopotamia of a complete defeat of Hussein and Abdulla by Ibn Saud, and a Wahabi occupation of the Holy Cities; the inhabitants of Koweit and Zobeir, who lived on the fringe of the Nejd and had been in contact with the Wahabis, cordially disliked them, and their views would probably be reflected in other parts of Mesopotamia. It should be remembered that to the Wahabis Medina was not a Holy City, and the Sunnis of Iraq would certainly be unfavourably affected if the pilgrimage to Mecca were restrained by Wahabis from proceeding to Medina.

*The Chairman* said it appeared that Ibn Saud had lost control of his own men and that no further steps on our part, whether from the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf side, were likely to have any effect in restraining the Wahabis. We were expecting Ibn Saud's reply to our message in the course of a day or two, and beyond finding out from the various authorities concerned what action was considered practicable or desirable in the event of a Wahabi advance on Jeddah, he did not think that anything could usefully be done. King Hussein had never been diffident about asking for assistance, and he thought that we should wait for an appeal from him before considering either further financial assistance or the replacement of the guns which had been lost by Abdulla.

*The Conference decided*—

(1.) That the Foreign Office should ascertain from the Ministry of Shipping what prospect there was of evacuating refugees from Jeddah:

(2.) That the War Office should ask the General Officer Commanding Egypt Force what Mahommedan troops, whether Soudanese or Indian, would be available for covering a possible withdrawal at short notice:

(3.) That the Secretary of State for India should consult the Mahommedan member of the India Council and the Government of India on the probable attitude of the Indian Mahommedans in the event of an appeal being made to them by King Hussein to co-operate in the defence of the Holy Places against the Wahabis.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*June* 13, 1919.

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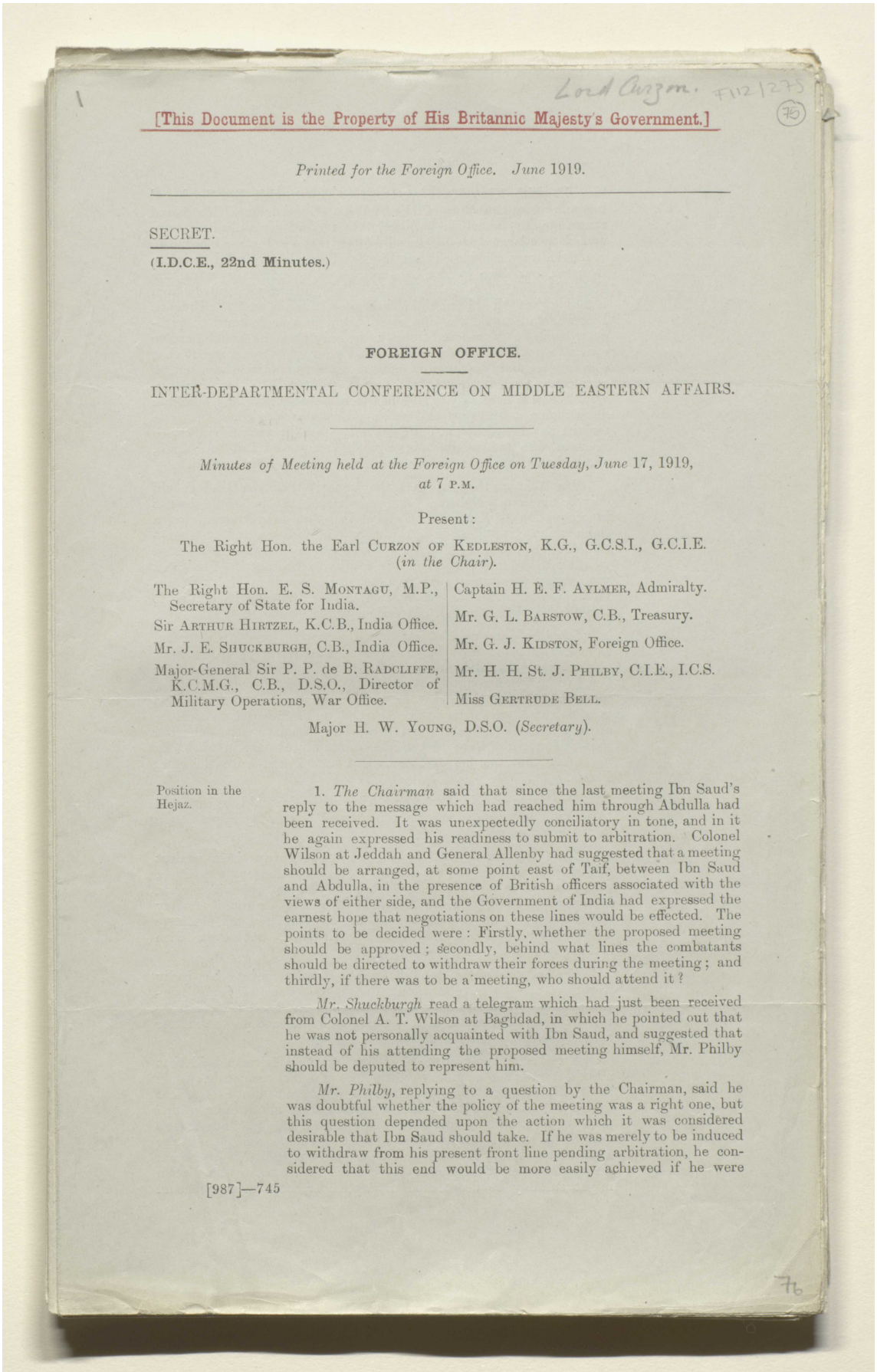

Lord Curzon. F112/275

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**(I.D.C.E., 22nd Minutes.)**

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, June 17, 1919, at 7 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.
Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.
Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.
Major-General Sir P. P. de B. RADCLIFFE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.
Captain H. E. F. AYLMER, Admiralty.
Mr. G. L. BARSTOW, C.B., Treasury.
Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.
Mr. H. H. St. J. PHILBY, C.I.E., I.C.S.
Miss GERTRUDE BELL.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Position in the Hejaz.

1. *The Chairman* said that since the last meeting Ibn Saud's reply to the message which had reached him through Abdulla had been received. It was unexpectedly conciliatory in tone, and in it he again expressed his readiness to submit to arbitration. Colonel Wilson at Jeddah and General Allenby had suggested that a meeting should be arranged, at some point east of Taif, between Ibn Saud and Abdulla, in the presence of British officers associated with the views of either side, and the Government of India had expressed the earnest hope that negotiations on these lines would be effected. The points to be decided were: Firstly, whether the proposed meeting should be approved; secondly, behind what lines the combatants should be directed to withdraw their forces during the meeting; and thirdly, if there was to be a meeting, who should attend it?

*Mr. Shuckburgh* read a telegram which had just been received from Colonel A. T. Wilson at Baghdad, in which he pointed out that he was not personally acquainted with Ibn Saud, and suggested that instead of his attending the proposed meeting himself, Mr. Philby should be deputed to represent him.

*Mr. Philby*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said he was doubtful whether the policy of the meeting was a right one, but this question depended upon the action which it was considered desirable that Ibn Saud should take. If he was merely to be induced to withdraw from his present front line pending arbitration, he considered that this end would be more easily achieved if he were

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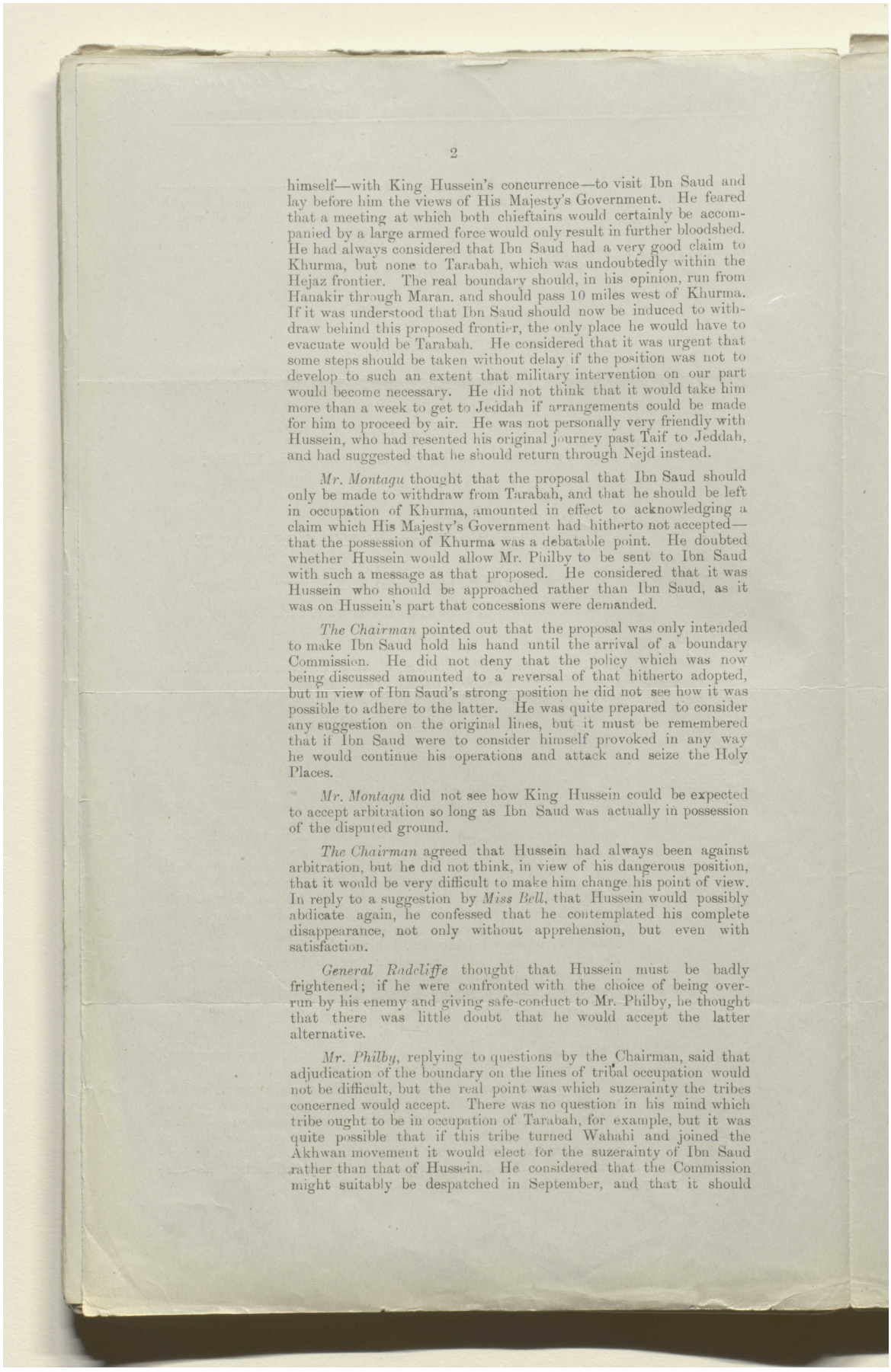



himself—with King Hussein's concurrence—to visit Ibn Saud and lay before him the views of His Majesty's Government. He feared that a meeting at which both chieftains would certainly be accompanied by a large armed force would only result in further bloodshed. He had always considered that Ibn Saud had a very good claim to Khurma, but none to Tarabah, which was undoubtedly within the Hejaz frontier. The real boundary should, in his opinion, run from Hanakir through Maran, and should pass 10 miles west of Khurma. If it was understood that Ibn Saud should now be induced to withdraw behind this proposed frontier, the only place he would have to evacuate would be Tarabah. He considered that it was urgent that some steps should be taken without delay if the position was not to develop to such an extent that military intervention on our part would become necessary. He did not think that it would take him more than a week to get to Jeddah if arrangements could be made for him to proceed by air. He was not personally very friendly with Hussein, who had resented his original journey past Taif to Jeddah, and had suggested that he should return through Nejd instead.

*Mr. Montagu* thought that the proposal that Ibn Saud should only be made to withdraw from Tarabah, and that he should be left in occupation of Khurma, amounted in effect to acknowledging a claim which His Majesty's Government had hitherto not accepted—that the possession of Khurma was a debatable point. He doubted whether Hussein would allow Mr. Philby to be sent to Ibn Saud with such a message as that proposed. He considered that it was Hussein who should be approached rather than Ibn Saud, as it was on Hussein's part that concessions were demanded.

*The Chairman* pointed out that the proposal was only intended to make Ibn Saud hold his hand until the arrival of a boundary Commission. He did not deny that the policy which was now being discussed amounted to a reversal of that hitherto adopted, but in view of Ibn Saud's strong position he did not see how it was possible to adhere to the latter. He was quite prepared to consider any suggestion on the original lines, but it must be remembered that if Ibn Saud were to consider himself provoked in any way he would continue his operations and attack and seize the Holy Places.

*Mr. Montagu* did not see how King Hussein could be expected to accept arbitration so long as Ibn Saud was actually in possession of the disputed ground.

*The Chairman* agreed that Hussein had always been against arbitration, but he did not think, in view of his dangerous position, that it would be very difficult to make him change his point of view. In reply to a suggestion by *Miss Bell*, that Hussein would possibly abdicate again, he confessed that he contemplated his complete disappearance, not only without apprehension, but even with satisfaction.

*General Radcliffe* thought that Hussein must be badly frightened; if he were confronted with the choice of being overrun by his enemy and giving safe-conduct to Mr. Philby, he thought that there was little doubt that he would accept the latter alternative.

*Mr. Philby*, replying to questions by the Chairman, said that adjudication of the boundary on the lines of tribal occupation would not be difficult, but the real point was which suzerainty the tribes concerned would accept. There was no question in his mind which tribe ought to be in occupation of Tarabah, for example, but it was quite possible that if this tribe turned Wahabi and joined the Akhwan movement it would elect for the suzerainty of Ibn Saud rather than that of Hussein. He considered that the Commission might suitably be despatched in September, and that it should



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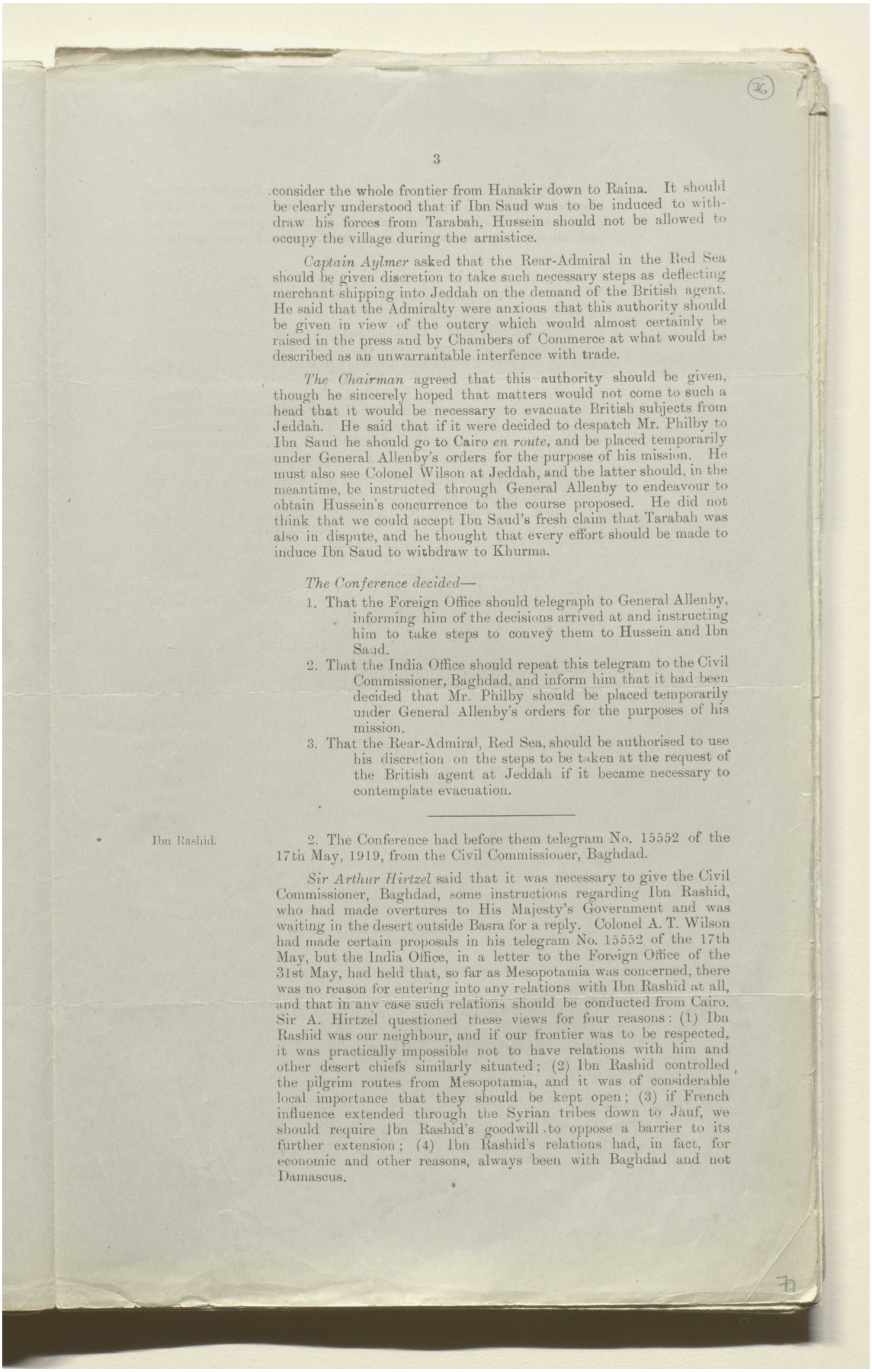



consider the whole frontier from Hanakir down to Raina. It should be clearly understood that if Ibn Saud was to be induced to withdraw his forces from Tarabah, Hussein should not be allowed to occupy the village during the armistice.

*Captain Aylmer* asked that the Rear-Admiral in the Red Sea should be given discretion to take such necessary steps as deflecting merchant shipping into Jeddah on the demand of the British agent. He said that the Admiralty were anxious that this authority should be given in view of the outcry which would almost certainly be raised in the press and by Chambers of Commerce at what would be described as an unwarrantable interfence with trade.

*The Chairman* agreed that this authority should be given, though he sincerely hoped that matters would not come to such a head that it would be necessary to evacuate British subjects from Jeddah. He said that if it were decided to despatch Mr. Philby to Ibn Saud he should go to Cairo *en route*, and be placed temporarily under General Allenby's orders for the purpose of his mission. He must also see Colonel Wilson at Jeddah, and the latter should, in the meantime, be instructed through General Allenby to endeavour to obtain Hussein's concurrence to the course proposed. He did not think that we could accept Ibn Saud's fresh claim that Tarabah was also in dispute, and he thought that every effort should be made to induce Ibn Saud to withdraw to Khurma.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That the Foreign Office should telegraph to General Allenby, informing him of the decisions arrived at and instructing him to take steps to convey them to Hussein and Ibn Saud.
2. That the India Office should repeat this telegram to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, and inform him that it had been decided that Mr. Philby should be placed temporarily under General Allenby's orders for the purposes of his mission.
3. That the Rear-Admiral, Red Sea, should be authorised to use his discretion on the steps to be taken at the request of the British agent at Jeddah if it became necessary to contemplate evacuation.

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Ibn Rashid.

2. The Conference had before them telegram No. 15552 of the 17th May, 1919, from the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that it was necessary to give the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, some instructions regarding Ibn Rashid, who had made overtures to His Majesty's Government and was waiting in the desert outside Basra for a reply. Colonel A. T. Wilson had made certain proposals in his telegram No. 15552 of the 17th May, but the India Office, in a letter to the Foreign Office of the 31st May, had held that, so far as Mesopotamia was concerned, there was no reason for entering into any relations with Ibn Rashid at all, and that in any case such relations should be conducted from Cairo. Sir A. Hirtzel questioned these views for four reasons: (1) Ibn Rashid was our neighbour, and if our frontier was to be respected, it was practically impossible not to have relations with him and other desert chiefs similarly situated; (2) Ibn Rashid controlled the pilgrim routes from Mesopotamia, and it was of considerable local importance that they should be kept open; (3) if French influence extended through the Syrian tribes down to Jauf, we should require Ibn Rashid's goodwill to oppose a barrier to its further extension; (4) Ibn Rashid's relations had, in fact, for economic and other reasons, always been with Baghdad and not Damascus.



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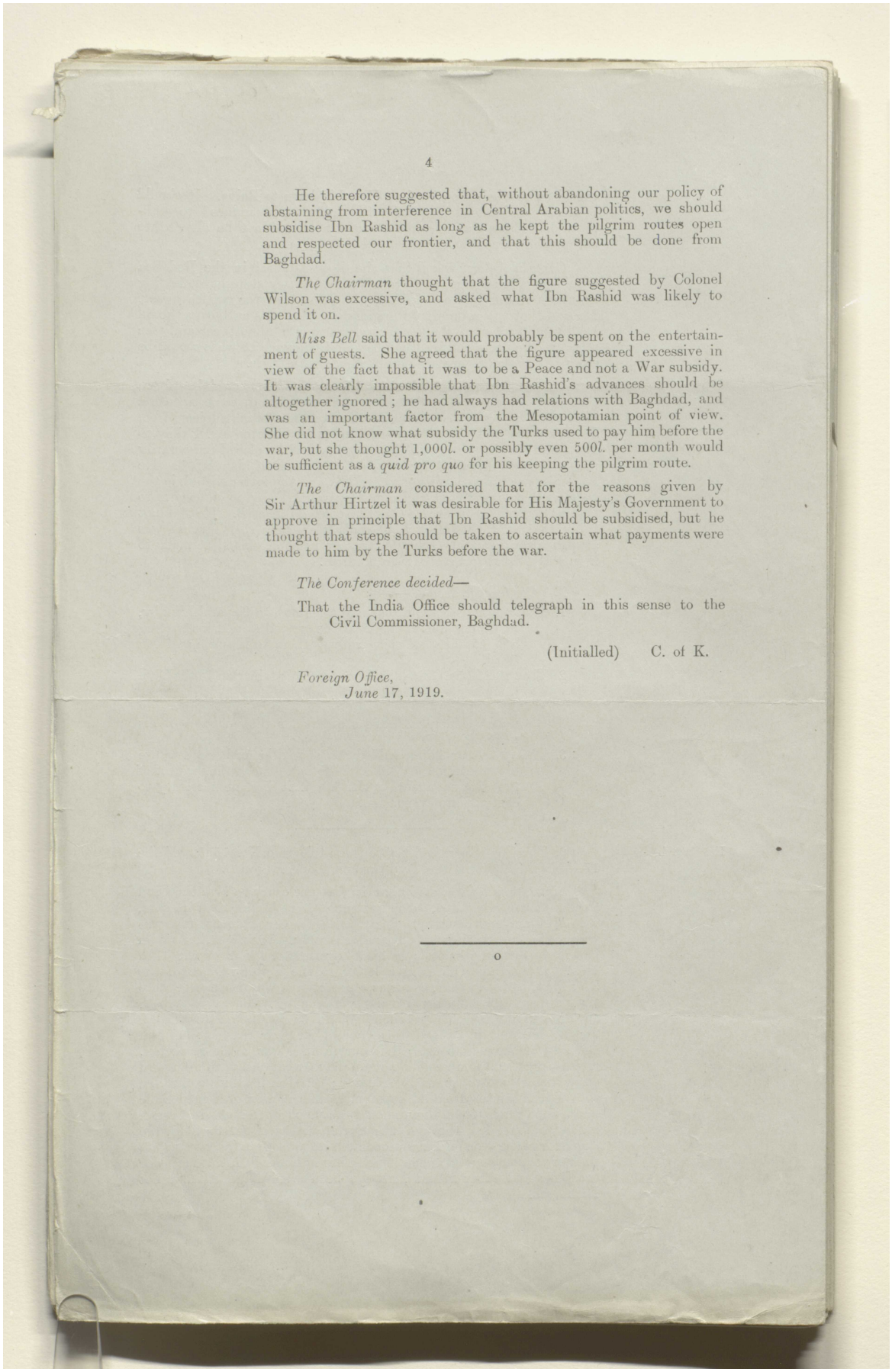



He therefore suggested that, without abandoning our policy of abstaining from interference in Central Arabian politics, we should subsidise Ibn Rashid as long as he kept the pilgrim routes open and respected our frontier, and that this should be done from Baghdad.

*The Chairman* thought that the figure suggested by Colonel Wilson was excessive, and asked what Ibn Rashid was likely to spend it on.

*Miss Bell* said that it would probably be spent on the entertainment of guests. She agreed that the figure appeared excessive in view of the fact that it was to be a Peace and not a War subsidy. It was clearly impossible that Ibn Rashid's advances should be altogether ignored; he had always had relations with Baghdad, and was an important factor from the Mesopotamian point of view. She did not know what subsidy the Turks used to pay him before the war, but she thought 1,000*l.* or possibly even 500*l.* per month would be sufficient as a *quid pro quo* for his keeping the pilgrim route.

*The Chairman* considered that for the reasons given by Sir Arthur Hirtzel it was desirable for His Majesty's Government to approve in principle that Ibn Rashid should be subsidised, but he thought that steps should be taken to ascertain what payments were made to him by the Turks before the war.

*The Conference decided*—

That the India Office should telegraph in this sense to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*June* 17, 1919.

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I.D.C.E., 23rd Minutes.

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Thursday, June 19, 1919, at 6·45 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., (*in the Chair*).

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.
Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., India Office.
Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.
Mr. W. H. M. SELBY, Foreign Office.
Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, Foreign Office.
Mr. G. P. CHURCHILL, War Department, Foreign Office.

Major. H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Meshed Mission.

*The Chairman* read a telegram, No. 8093, of the 14th June from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India. He remarked that the suggestion in paragraph 6—that General Malleson might have to withdraw as a last resort towards the railhead at Duzdap—was an alternative which could only be regarded as calamitous. He pointed out that the advance to Jelalabad mentioned in paragraph 7 was no longer contemplated, and agreed with the opinion expressed in paragraph 9 that it was entirely inadvisable for General Malleson to notify the Bolshevik and Afghan commanders as suggested in the third paragraph of his telegram of the 10th June to the Viceroy.

*General Cox*, replying to questions by the Chairman, said that an Afghan attack on Seistan with the object of cutting General Malleson's line of communications was quite feasible as a military operation. So far as was known, the Bolsheviks were not yet in actual occupation of Kaakha or Askhabad. With regard to paragraph 3 of the Viceroy's telegram, he said that all the troops referred to in the first sentence were regular troops, and that the total force strung out between the Meshed outposts and the railhead at Duzdap was about 2,700.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that it appeared from General Malleson's telegram of the 12th June, quoted in the Viceroy's No. 8051, of the following day, that the estimated Bolshevik strength of 10,000 in Turkestan was in the Merv area, and was not scattered through the territory usually known as Russian Turkestan, which extended as far as the boundary between Tashkent and Orenburg. He imagined that the name Diveh Buiposs should read Diveh Buyun, which was north-west of Meshed. The India Office view was that there was no alternative but to agree to the proposals of the Government of India as regards the general instructions to be given to General Malleson. The Viceroy had been instructed to repeat his telegram



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to Teheran, and Sir Percy Cox would probably have some observations to offer on the effect which would be produced in Persia by the withdrawal of General Malleson's force towards the Duzdap railhead.

*The Chairman* said that it was extremely desirable that General Malleson should stay at Meshed as long as possible. He was presumably acting in close co-operation with the Persian Governor, and the 1,200 gendarmerie, and 250 Cossacks mentioned in paragraph 3 of the Viceroy's telegram, were in the employ of the Persian Government. General Malleson, as the commander on the spot, would presumably be free to dispose of the available troops at his discretion. In what seemed the improbable event of the Bolsheviks crossing the Persian frontier, he would doubtless draw in his outposts from Bajgiram and Kuchan, and concentrate his force at Meshed.

*General Cox* pointed out that General Malleson's telegram had been despatched before he knew of the later Afghan developments, which were likely to result in a cessation of hostilities. He was clearly apprehensive of a combined attack by Bolsheviks and Afghans from the direction of Herat. The strategy of the proposed withdrawal to Kain was governed by the necessity of withdrawing his front to a point south of Herat, and thus minimising the danger of a blow being struck at his line of communications. There was a service of light cars from the Duzdap railhead to Meshed, but it would take a long time to arrange for the despatch of any reinforcements which might be required. In Seistan itself there was only a consular guard of twenty or thirty men. The Khorassan and Seistan levies were mostly Hazaras; they were good raw material but had only been raised recently, and could hardly be regarded yet as a disciplined force. He was strongly of opinion that it would be unwise to discount the probability of an offensive combination of Bolsheviks and Afghans until the month of Ramzan was well over.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that news had recently been received—he understood from Switzerland—that Enver Pasha had arrived in Turkestan. He was said to have very considerable influence with the Bolsheviks, and to be raising a large volunteer army, including many local Indians. As soon as direct communication was established with Afghanistan, Enver and his army were to enter the country, accompanied by many Russian, German, and Turkish officers. A mission left Berlin about the 24th May for Afghanistan viâ Bokhara and Merv. Another mission of available Indian and Afridi soldiers in Germany was organised on the 21st May, and was to proceed to the Indian frontier at once, with the help of facilities provided by the Bolshevik Government. The German Government had been asked to sanction 100,000 M. for each of the above missions.

These missions had clearly been despatched with the object of appealing to Pan-Islamic sentiment, and inducing the Moslems of those regions to combine with the Bolsheviks. He thought that they would play the Pan-Islamic card for all it was worth, and appeal to the Persians as fellow-Moslems to turn out what they would represent as the anti-Islamic element, represented by Malleson's force.

*The Chairman* said that these missions would be rather disconcerted if they found on their arrival that the Amir of Afghanistan had made peace with the British Government. He did not himself think that the advantage the Bolsheviks would gain by attacking General Malleson without Afghan co-operation would outweigh the disadvantages of military operations against the sacred city of Meshed. The Bolshevik line had been swaying backwards and forwards in the neighbourhood of the Krasnovodsk–Merv railway for some time, but he did not think that it was at all clear yet that



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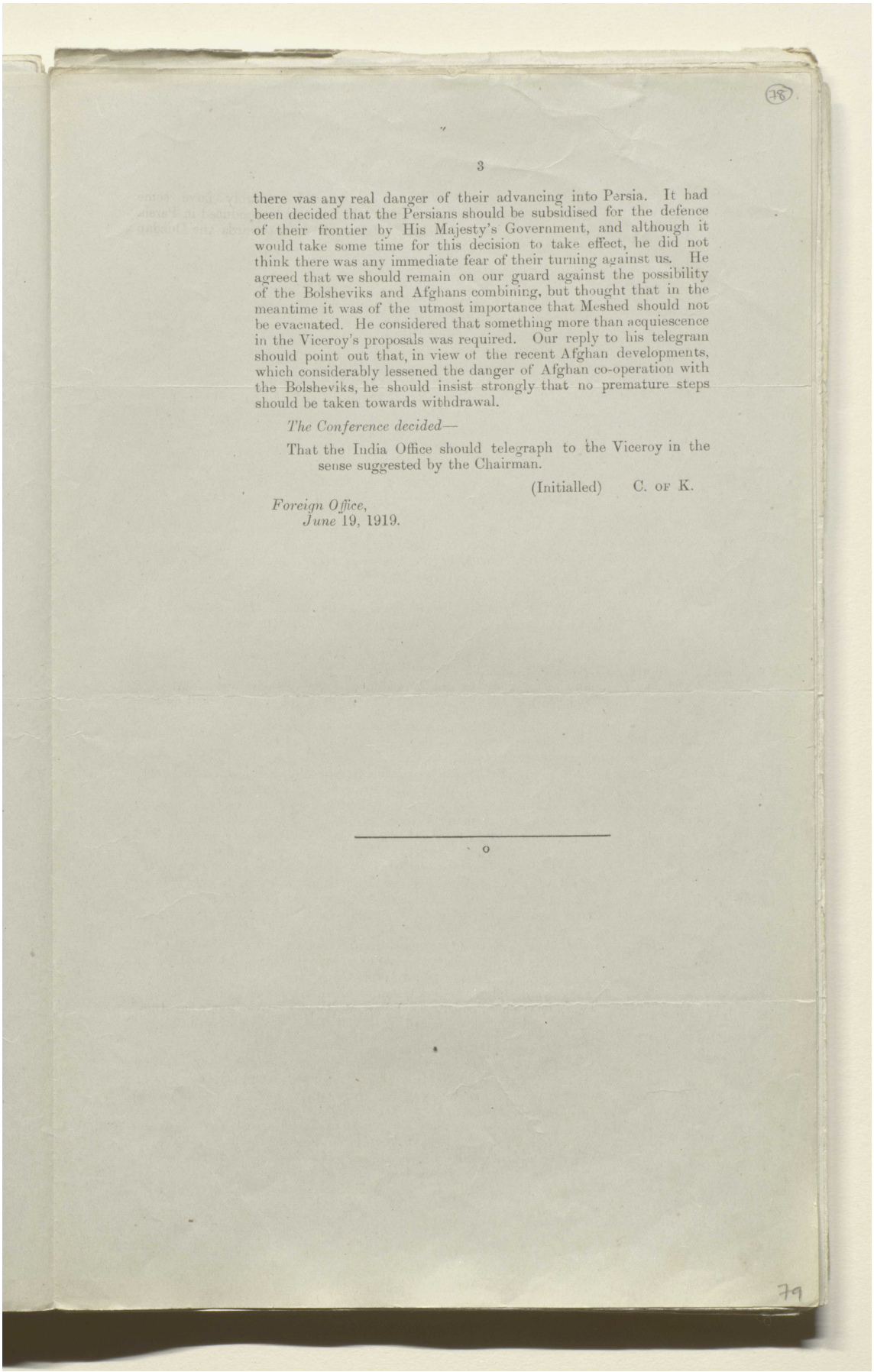

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there was any real danger of their advancing into Persia. It had been decided that the Persians should be subsidised for the defence of their frontier by His Majesty's Government, and although it would take some time for this decision to take effect, he did not think there was any immediate fear of their turning against us. He agreed that we should remain on our guard against the possibility of the Bolsheviks and Afghans combining, but thought that in the meantime it was of the utmost importance that Meshed should not be evacuated. He considered that something more than acquiescence in the Viceroy's proposals was required. Our reply to his telegram should point out that, in view of the recent Afghan developments, which considerably lessened the danger of Afghan co-operation with the Bolsheviks, he should insist strongly that no premature steps should be taken towards withdrawal.

*The Conference decided*—

That the India Office should telegraph to the Viceroy in the sense suggested by the Chairman.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*June* 19, 1919.

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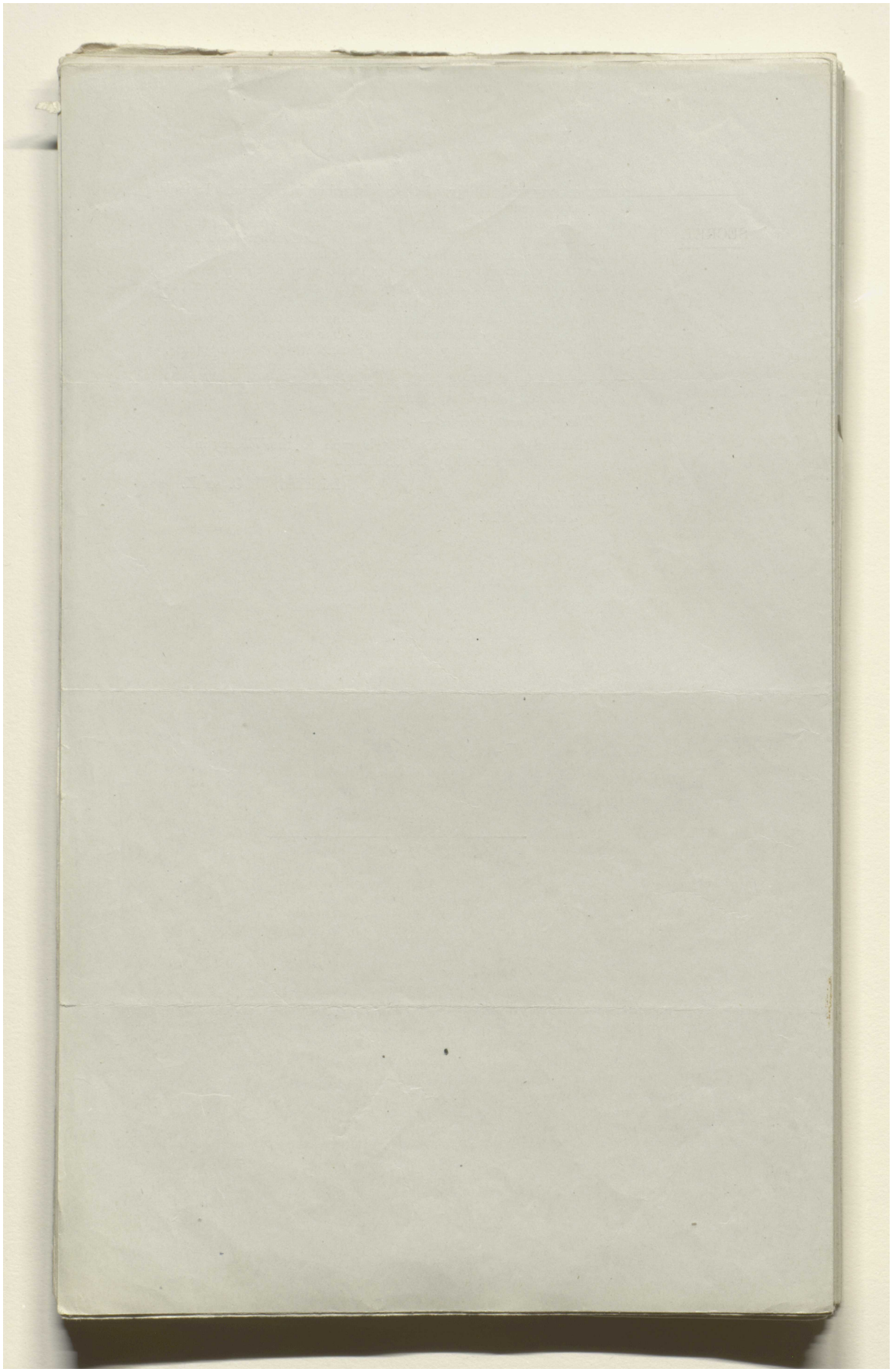



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*Printed for the Foreign Office. July* 1919.

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**I.D.C.E., 24th Minutes.**

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, July* 1, 1919, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., India Office.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.

Mr. L. D. WAKELEY, India Office.

Brigadier-General W. M. ST. G. KIRKE, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office.

Major L. R. HILL, War Office.

Brigadier-General W. H. BARTHOLOMEW, C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, D.S.O., Admiralty.

Mr. S. H. WRIGHT, Treasury.

Mr. H. M. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN, Foreign Office.

Mr. W. H. SELBY, Foreign Office.

Mr. W. G. MAX MULLER, C.B., M.V.O., Foreign Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Meshed Mission.

1. *The Chairman* said that since the last meeting, at which it had been decided that General Malleson was to hold Meshed as long as possible, there had been correspondence between London, Teheran, and India, as to the line by which he should retire should it become necessary for him to do so. The alternatives were either that he should retire south to Kain, which was on his existing line of communications to Duzdap, or that he should retire westward through Shahrud to Astrabad, or possibly to Teheran itself.

*General Kirke* said that, from a military point of view, it was physically impossible for General Malleson's force to be supported by the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, if he retired to the west. It was 560 miles from Meshed to Teheran, which was 460 miles from Mesopotamian railhead; the roads were very bad and there was no transport available. It was only 550 miles from Meshed to Duzdap, and a line of communications was already established in this direction. It was possible that Sir Percy Cox might, as a last resort, be able to organise local transport for General Malleson's force, whose total strength did not greatly exceed 2,000, but it was not specially desirable, from a military point of view, that this course should be adopted.





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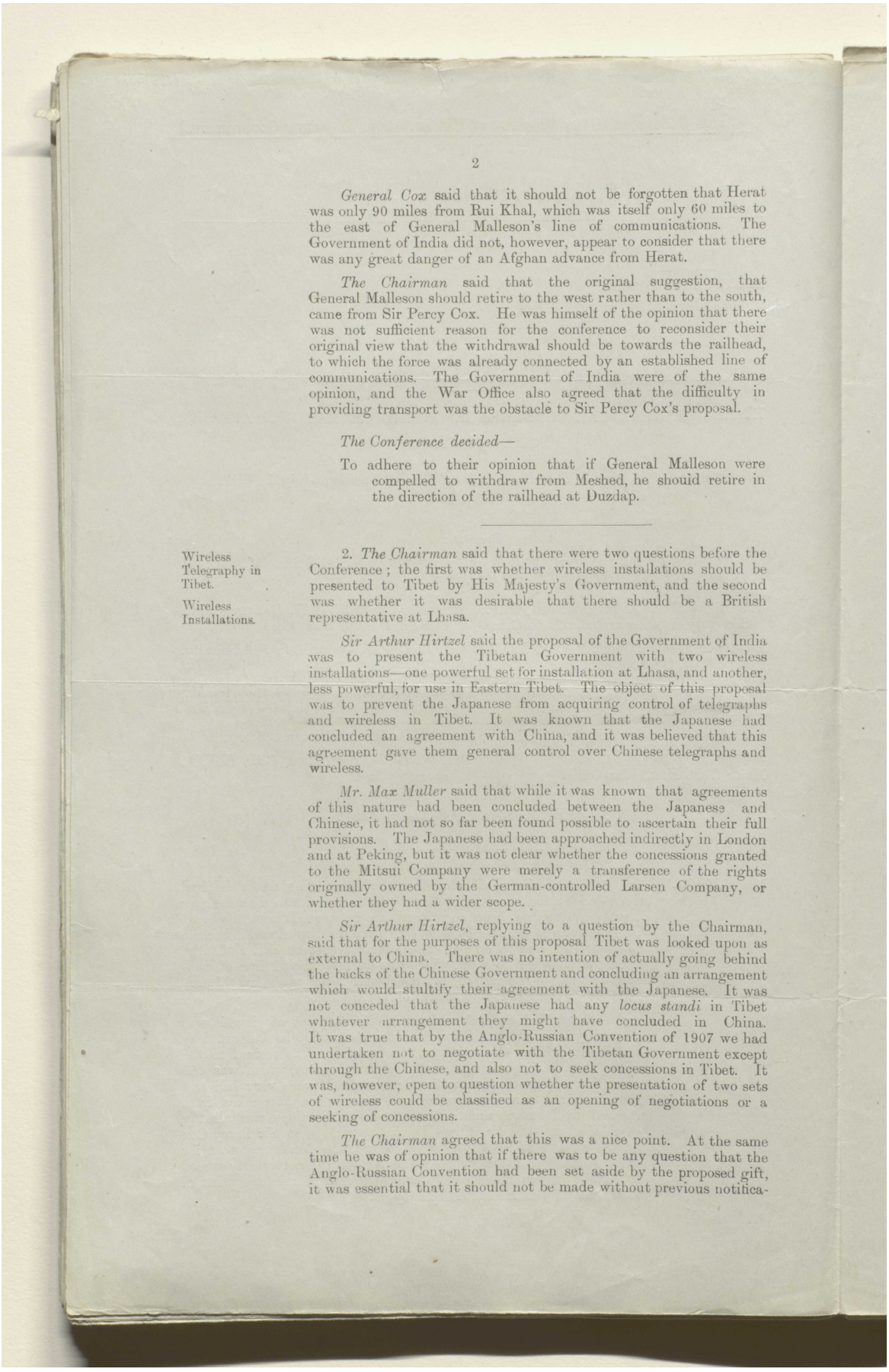



*General Cox* said that it should not be forgotten that Herat was only 90 miles from Rui Khal, which was itself only 60 miles to the east of General Malleson's line of communications. The Government of India did not, however, appear to consider that there was any great danger of an Afghan advance from Herat.

*The Chairman* said that the original suggestion, that General Malleson should retire to the west rather than to the south, came from Sir Percy Cox. He was himself of the opinion that there was not sufficient reason for the conference to reconsider their original view that the withdrawal should be towards the railhead, to which the force was already connected by an established line of communications. The Government of India were of the same opinion, and the War Office also agreed that the difficulty in providing transport was the obstacle to Sir Percy Cox's proposal.

*The Conference decided*—

To adhere to their opinion that if General Malleson were compelled to withdraw from Meshed, he should retire in the direction of the railhead at Duzdap.

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Wireless Telegraphy in Tibet.

Wireless Installations.

2. *The Chairman* said that there were two questions before the Conference; the first was whether wireless installations should be presented to Tibet by His Majesty's Government, and the second was whether it was desirable that there should be a British representative at Lhasa.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said the proposal of the Government of India was to present the Tibetan Government with two wireless installations—one powerful set for installation at Lhasa, and another, less powerful, for use in Eastern Tibet. The object of this proposal was to prevent the Japanese from acquiring control of telegraphs and wireless in Tibet. It was known that the Japanese had concluded an agreement with China, and it was believed that this agreement gave them general control over Chinese telegraphs and wireless.

*Mr. Max Muller* said that while it was known that agreements of this nature had been concluded between the Japanese and Chinese, it had not so far been found possible to ascertain their full provisions. The Japanese had been approached indirectly in London and at Peking, but it was not clear whether the concessions granted to the Mitsui Company were merely a transference of the rights originally owned by the German-controlled Larsen Company, or whether they had a wider scope.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that for the purposes of this proposal Tibet was looked upon as external to China. There was no intention of actually going behind the backs of the Chinese Government and concluding an arrangement which would stultify their agreement with the Japanese. It was not conceded that the Japanese had any *locus standi* in Tibet whatever arrangement they might have concluded in China. It was true that by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 we had undertaken not to negotiate with the Tibetan Government except through the Chinese, and also not to seek concessions in Tibet. It was, however, open to question whether the presentation of two sets of wireless could be classified as an opening of negotiations or a seeking of concessions.

*The Chairman* agreed that this was a nice point. At the same time he was of opinion that if there was to be any question that the Anglo-Russian Convention had been set aside by the proposed gift, it was essential that it should not be made without previous notifica-



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tion that His Majesty's Goverment no longer considered the Convention in force.

With regard to Persia, His Majesty's Government had taken the line that the Convention was in suspense, and would remain so until a Russian Government was established with sufficient authority to abrogate it. He considered that it would be an unusual course to take action in possible contravention of its terms, and then to announce when questioned that it was no longer considered valid.

*Mr. Max Muller* pointed out that under Article 3 of the Peking Convention of 1906, by which China recognised the Lhasa Convention of 1904, the British Government undertook that all concessions for telegraphs in Tibet should be denied to any State, or to the subject of any State other than China. The Foreign Office view was that the proposed presentation of wireless to the Tibetan Government would, in effect, violate this undertaking.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* observed that Article 6 of the Tripartite Convention of 1914 cancelled Article 3 of the Peking Convention of 1906. In the Chinese proposals for a new agreement which was to replace the Tripartite Convention, no mention was made of concessions, and it appeared that we would no longer be held by any previous undertakings in this respect.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said that the India Office had consulted the Government of India on the question of the suggested new agreement, and were now awaiting their reply.

*The Chairman* said that the proposal to present wireless installations to the Tibetan Government was mainly actuated by the fear that the Japanese would acquire control in a country bordering on the frontier of India in which His Majesty's Government must insist that their interests were predominant. He reminded the Conference that the Japanese were our Allies, and suggested that the first step to take was to approach them frankly on these lines. They should be told that His Majesty's Government were informed that they had concluded an agreement with the Chinese Government, by which they acquired control in some measure of telegraphs and wireless in China. He suggested that we should put our cards on the table, and say that we should view with disfavour any agreement which resulted in Japanese control of telegraphs in Tibet. It was a recognised procedure that friendly Powers should agree to recognise the interests of their Allies in parts of the world with which they were most directly concerned. He thought that the Japanese would be putting themselves in a very awkward position if they attempted to evade a direct question as to the nature of their agreement with China. He was inclined to think that the Japanese difficulty would best be met by our adopting this line.

With regard to China he would deprecate any attempt to establish what virtually amounted to British control of wireless in Tibet at the moment when negotiations were being conducted with the Chinese Government with a view to their acceptance of the agreement proposed by us in respect of Tibet.

*The Conference decided*—

(1.) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should enquire from the Japanese Ambassador what was the exact nature of the telegraphic agreement which the Japanese Government had concluded with the Chinese Government, and the extent of the concessions granted to the Mitsui Company, and should intimate to him that His Majesty's Government could not view with equanimity any attempt on the part of Japan to apply its provisions to connection with Tibet.





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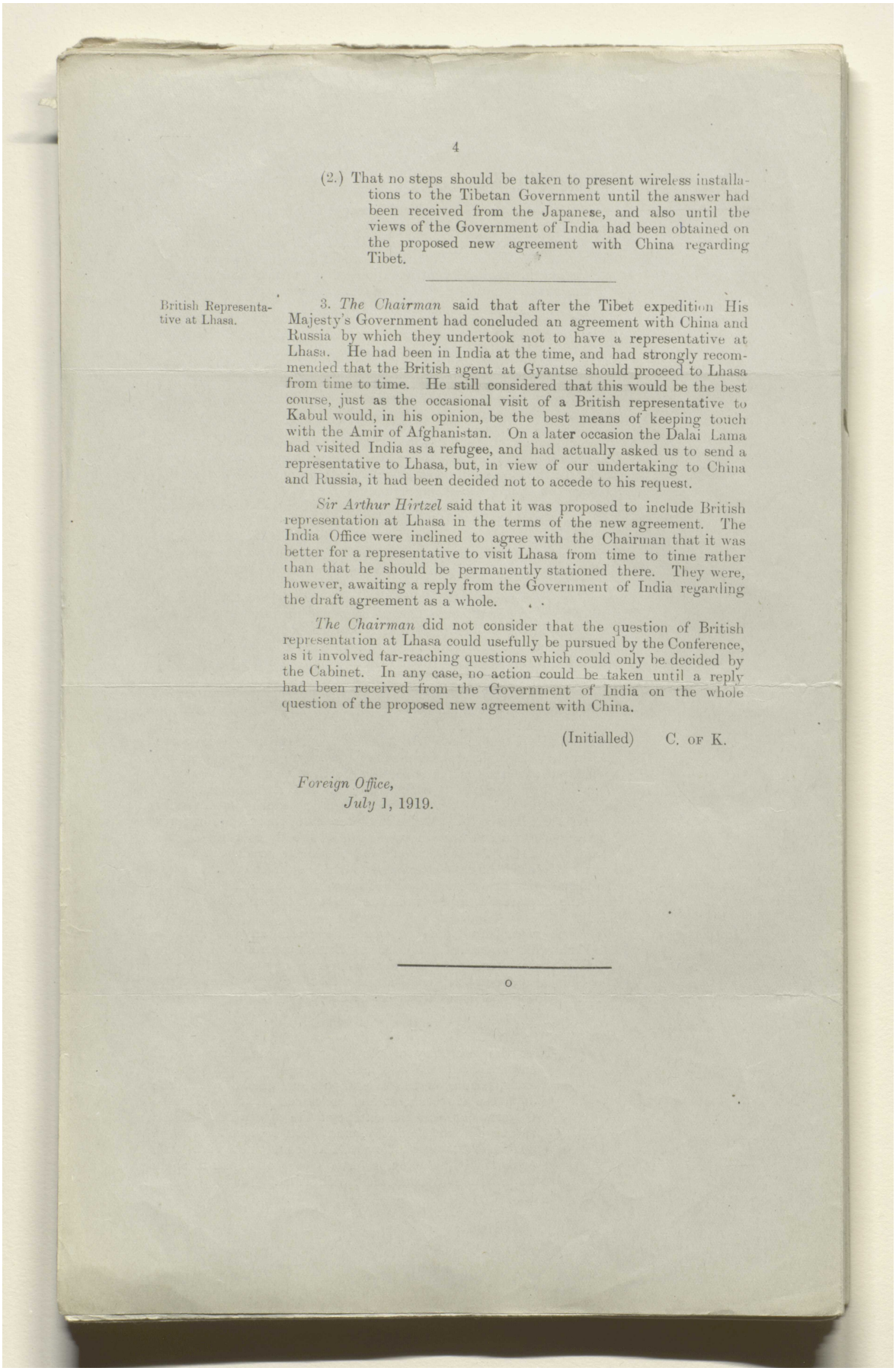



(2.) That no steps should be taken to present wireless installations to the Tibetan Government until the answer had been received from the Japanese, and also until the views of the Government of India had been obtained on the proposed new agreement with China regarding Tibet.

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British Representative at Lhasa.

3. *The Chairman* said that after the Tibet expedition His Majesty's Government had concluded an agreement with China and Russia by which they undertook not to have a representative at Lhasa. He had been in India at the time, and had strongly recommended that the British agent at Gyantse should proceed to Lhasa from time to time. He still considered that this would be the best course, just as the occasional visit of a British representative to Kabul would, in his opinion, be the best means of keeping touch with the Amir of Afghanistan. On a later occasion the Dalai Lama had visited India as a refugee, and had actually asked us to send a representative to Lhasa, but, in view of our undertaking to China and Russia, it had been decided not to accede to his request.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that it was proposed to include British representation at Lhasa in the terms of the new agreement. The India Office were inclined to agree with the Chairman that it was better for a representative to visit Lhasa from time to time rather than that he should be permanently stationed there. They were, however, awaiting a reply from the Government of India regarding the draft agreement as a whole.

*The Chairman* did not consider that the question of British representation at Lhasa could usefully be pursued by the Conference, as it involved far-reaching questions which could only be decided by the Cabinet. In any case, no action could be taken until a reply had been received from the Government of India on the whole question of the proposed new agreement with China.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*July* 1, 1919.

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. July 1919.*

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[I.D.C.E., 25th Minutes.]

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Friday, July 11, 1919, at 5·30 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General Sir P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, C.B., D.S.O., Director of Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Mr. S. H. WRIGHT, Treasury.

Mr. CLARK KERR, Foreign Office.

Mr. W. H. SELBY, Foreign Office.

Mr. KNATCHBULL HUGESSEN, Foreign Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Position in Trans-Caspia.

*The Chairman* said that he had summoned the Conference to meet at short notice in view of the urgent representation of the War Office that it was desirable to get an early decision as to the evacuation or continued occupation of Krasnovodsk. The Bolsheviks were pursuing a continuous and successful advance towards the Caspian. The so-called Trans-Caspian Government was reported to have retired to Krasnovodsk, with the exception of a few individuals who had remained at Askabad. The whole of Trans-Caspia was thus apparently at the mercy of the Bolsheviks. General Milne was of opinion that it was unlikely that they would consider an advance on Krasnovodsk for some weeks, but that it was advisable to be prepared for their doing so. The present garrison at Krasnovodsk was one Ghurka battalion, which he considered quite inadequate for the purpose of holding the town if it were attacked; it would have to be reinforced with infantry and artillery, but any such reinforcement—if it led to hostilities with the Bolsheviks—would make a subsequent withdrawal very difficult.

The Commander-in-Chief, India, had suggested as an alternative that Denikin should be encouraged and assisted to send a mixed force of 5,000 troops to recover the whole of Trans-Caspia up to the line of the Oxus. However desirable this might be, the Chairman thought it improbable that he would be able to spare so large a force. The decision which the Conference had to make depended largely on the fate of the Caspian. While it appeared unlikely that the Italians would take over the Caspian and the Caucasus, they themselves would not acknowledge that they had given up the

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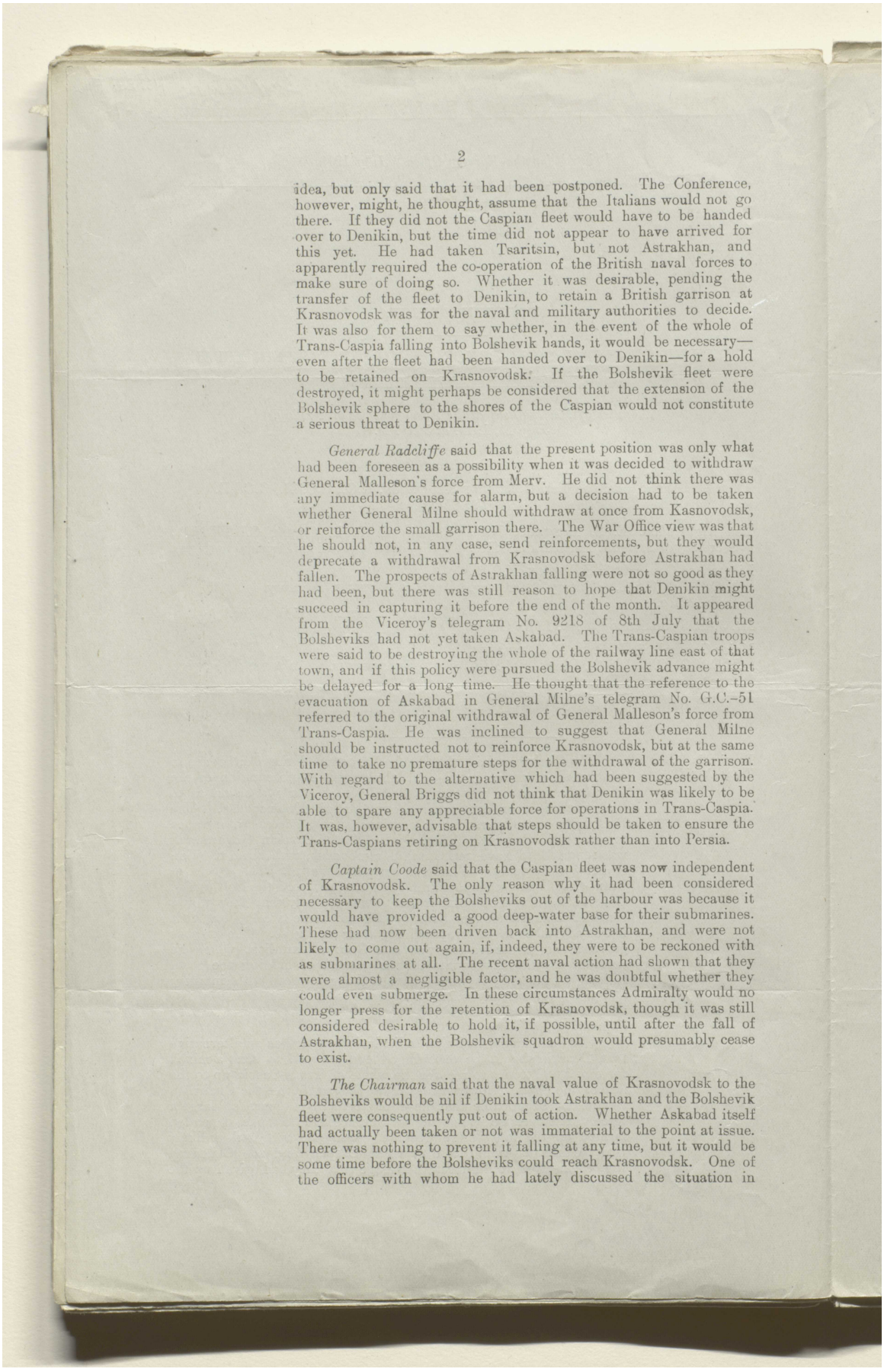



idea, but only said that it had been postponed. The Conference, however, might, he thought, assume that the Italians would not go there. If they did not the Caspian fleet would have to be handed over to Denikin, but the time did not appear to have arrived for this yet. He had taken Tsaritsin, but not Astrakhan, and apparently required the co-operation of the British naval forces to make sure of doing so. Whether it was desirable, pending the transfer of the fleet to Denikin, to retain a British garrison at Krasnovodsk was for the naval and military authorities to decide. It was also for them to say whether, in the event of the whole of Trans-Caspia falling into Bolshevik hands, it would be necessary—even after the fleet had been handed over to Denikin—for a hold to be retained on Krasnovodsk. If the Bolshevik fleet were destroyed, it might perhaps be considered that the extension of the Bolshevik sphere to the shores of the Caspian would not constitute a serious threat to Denikin.

*General Radcliffe* said that the present position was only what had been foreseen as a possibility when it was decided to withdraw General Malleson's force from Merv. He did not think there was any immediate cause for alarm, but a decision had to be taken whether General Milne should withdraw at once from Kasnovodsk, or reinforce the small garrison there. The War Office view was that he should not, in any case, send reinforcements, but they would deprecate a withdrawal from Krasnovodsk before Astrakhan had fallen. The prospects of Astrakhan falling were not so good as they had been, but there was still reason to hope that Denikin might succeed in capturing it before the end of the month. It appeared from the Viceroy's telegram No. 9218 of 8th July that the Bolsheviks had not yet taken Askabad. The Trans-Caspian troops were said to be destroying the whole of the railway line east of that town, and if this policy were pursued the Bolshevik advance might be delayed for a long time. He thought that the reference to the evacuation of Askabad in General Milne's telegram No. G.C.-51 referred to the original withdrawal of General Malleson's force from Trans-Caspia. He was inclined to suggest that General Milne should be instructed not to reinforce Krasnovodsk, but at the same time to take no premature steps for the withdrawal of the garrison. With regard to the alternative which had been suggested by the Viceroy, General Briggs did not think that Denikin was likely to be able to spare any appreciable force for operations in Trans-Caspia. It was, however, advisable that steps should be taken to ensure the Trans-Caspians retiring on Krasnovodsk rather than into Persia.

*Captain Coode* said that the Caspian fleet was now independent of Krasnovodsk. The only reason why it had been considered necessary to keep the Bolsheviks out of the harbour was because it would have provided a good deep-water base for their submarines. These had now been driven back into Astrakhan, and were not likely to come out again, if, indeed, they were to be reckoned with as submarines at all. The recent naval action had shown that they were almost a negligible factor, and he was doubtful whether they could even submerge. In these circumstances Admiralty would no longer press for the retention of Krasnovodsk, though it was still considered desirable to hold it, if possible, until after the fall of Astrakhan, when the Bolshevik squadron would presumably cease to exist.

*The Chairman* said that the naval value of Krasnovodsk to the Bolsheviks would be nil if Denikin took Astrakhan and the Bolshevik fleet were consequently put out of action. Whether Askabad itself had actually been taken or not was immaterial to the point at issue. There was nothing to prevent it falling at any time, but it would be some time before the Bolsheviks could reach Krasnovodsk. One of the officers with whom he had lately discussed the situation in



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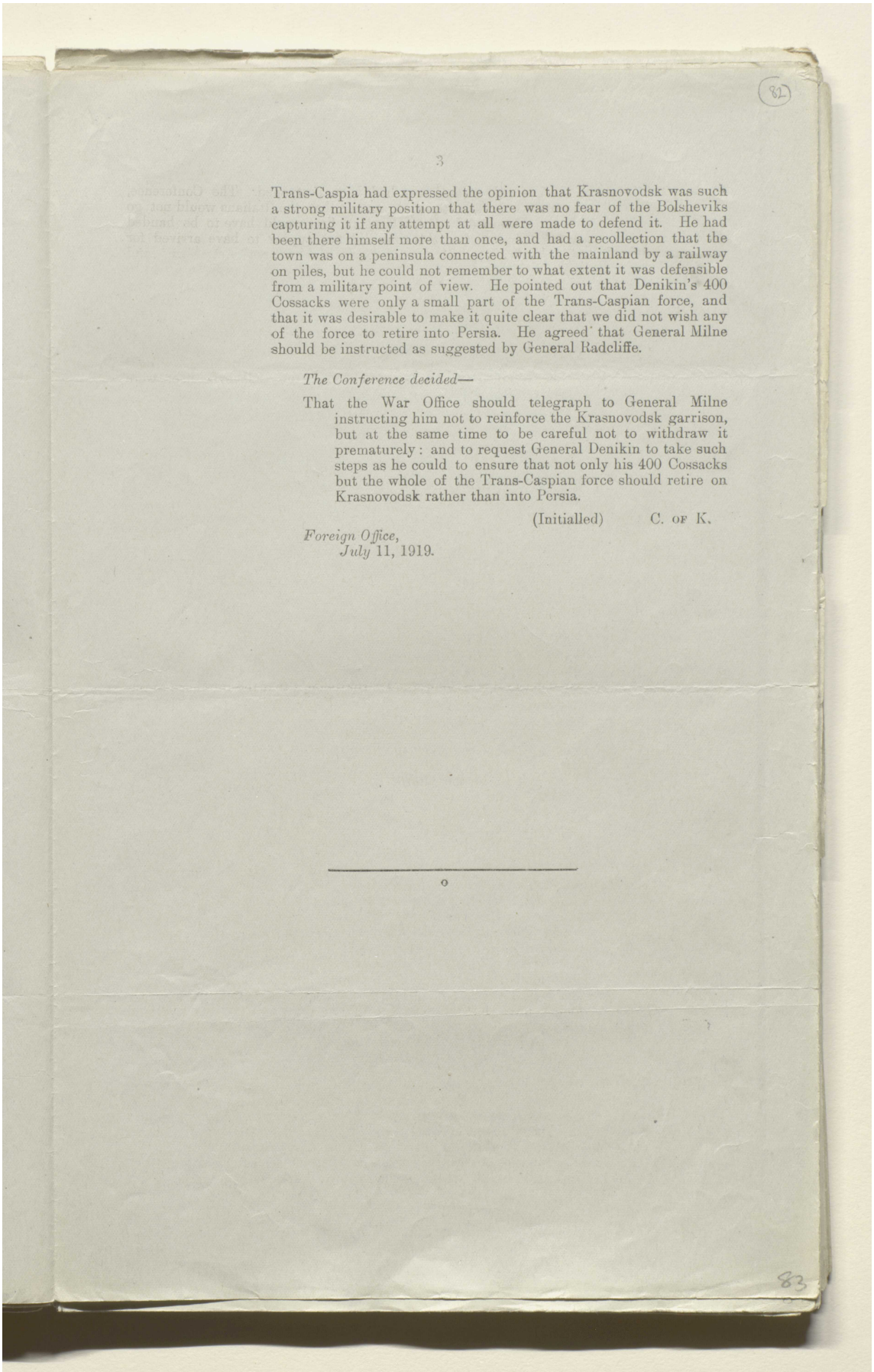

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Trans-Caspia had expressed the opinion that Krasnovodsk was such a strong military position that there was no fear of the Bolsheviks capturing it if any attempt at all were made to defend it. He had been there himself more than once, and had a recollection that the town was on a peninsula connected with the mainland by a railway on piles, but he could not remember to what extent it was defensible from a military point of view. He pointed out that Denikin's 400 Cossacks were only a small part of the Trans-Caspian force, and that it was desirable to make it quite clear that we did not wish any of the force to retire into Persia. He agreed that General Milne should be instructed as suggested by General Radcliffe.

*The Conference decided*—

That the War Office should telegraph to General Milne instructing him not to reinforce the Krasnovodsk garrison, but at the same time to be careful not to withdraw it prematurely: and to request General Denikin to take such steps as he could to ensure that not only his 400 Cossacks but the whole of the Trans-Caspian force should retire on Krasnovodsk rather than into Persia.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*July* 11, 1919.

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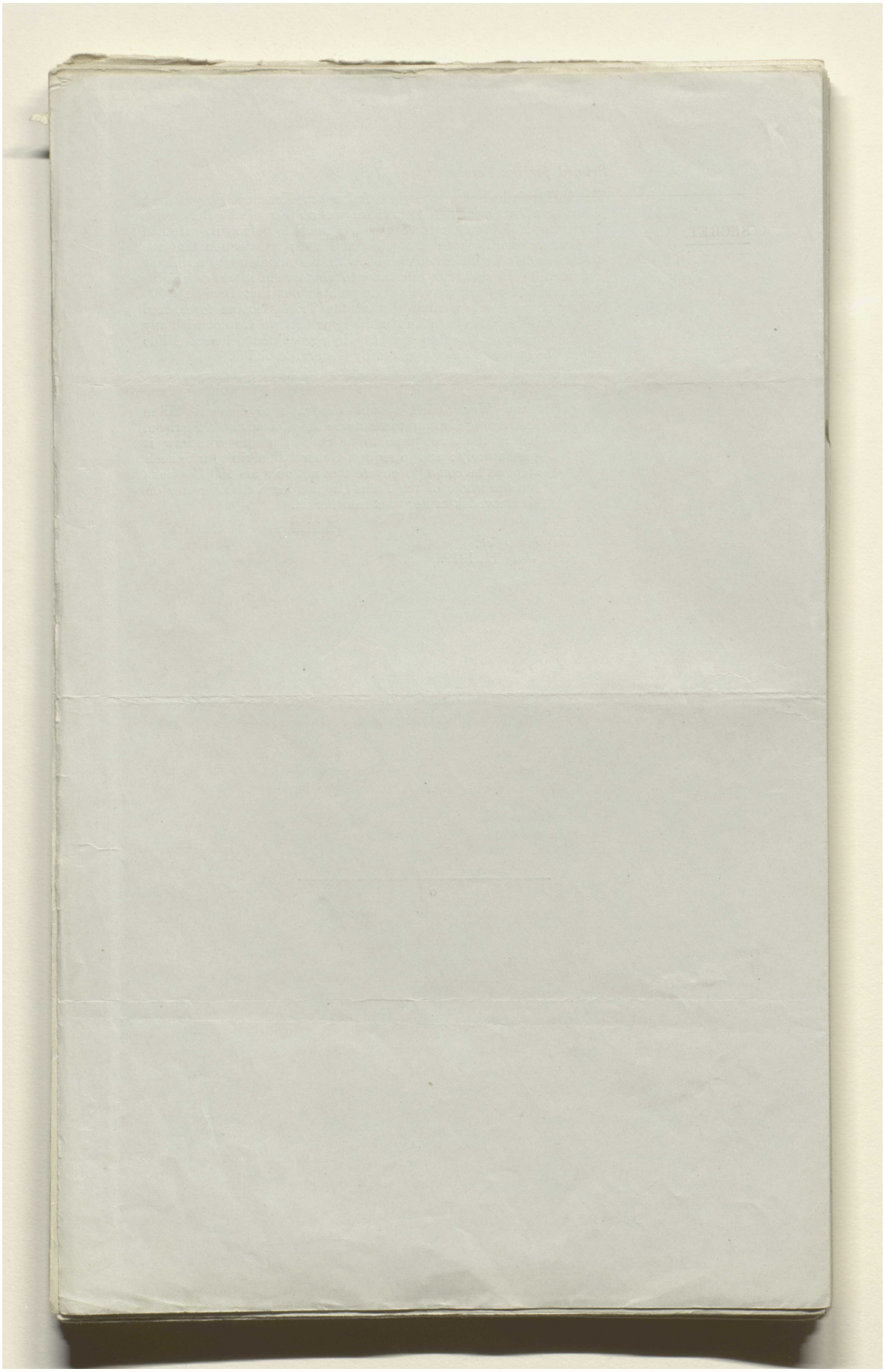

Lord Curzon (83)

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. August* 1919.

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[I.D.C.E., 26th Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held in Lord Curzon's room at the House of Lords on Monday, July 28, 1919, at 5 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieut.-General Sir TRAVERS E. CLARKE, K.C.M.G., C.B., Quartermaster-General, War Office.

Major-General R. S. MAY, Director of Movements, War Office.

Brigadier-General G. LUBBOCK, Director of Railways in Mesopotamia, War Office.

Mr. W. W. WOODS, War Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. C. C. GARBETT, India Office.

Mr. A. P. WATERFIELD, Treasury.

Mr. M. D. PETERSON (*Acting Secretary*).

Mesopotamian Railways.

The Conference had before them, (1) the War Office letter to the Foreign Office of the 4th July (No. 121/3/1302, M.O. 2), and (2) telegrams received from India and Baghdad since the meeting of the 11th January, 1919.

*The Chairman* reminded the Conference on the decisions reached at the meeting on the 11th January, and invited the War Office representatives to explain their present proposals.

*General Clarke* summarised the War Office proposals as follows:—

1. *Basra–Baghdad (Euphrates) Line.*

| Position on the 25th July, 1919. | Policy as now proposed. |
|---|---|
| *Work done.* | |
| (1.) Rails laid from Nasiriyeh to Samawa (60 miles). | (1.) Complete link between Samawa and Hilla as early as possible. |
| (2.) Earthwork between Samawa and Hilla, 80 per cent. completed. | (2.) Convert Baghdad–Hilla line from standard gauge to metre gauge. |
| (3.) Bridges, 75 per cent. completed. | |

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| Position on the 25th July, 1919. | Policy as now proposed. |
|---|---|
| *Work in hand.* | |
| (1.) Earthwork between Samawa and Hilla.<br>(2.) Bridge over Euphrates at Samawa.<br>(3.) Dismantling of Basra–Amara line to provide track material. | Expenditure anticipated in financial year 1919–20, 938,000*l.* (Previous estimate of 1,118,000*l.* less 180,000*l.* required for Quraitu line.) |
| *Latest orders given by W.O.* | |
| (1.) Work in progress may continue.<br>(2.) Hilla–Baghdad not to be converted at present.<br>(3.) Works not of an immediate military necessity to be postponed. | |
| 2. *Baghdad–Khanikin Line.* | |
| *Work done.* | |
| (1.) Line opened to Quraitu 20 miles north of Khanikin and on Persian frontier. Orders for extension from Khanikin to Quraitu were given by W.O. in February 1919. | Line being opened, no definition of policy is necessary. Expenditure anticipated on this line during current financial year amounts to about 180,000*l.* mainly on account of quarters and completing such items as engine sheds, watering arrangements, &c. |
| *Work in hand.* | |
| Completion of necessary quarters, &c., on line. | |
| 3. *Line to Mosul viâ Kifri and Kirkuk.* | |
| *Work done* | |
| (1.) Reconnaissance over the route has been completed. Detailed survey not yet put in hand. | (1.) Metre gauge should be laid from Kizil Robat to Kifri by using materials available with G.O.C. or promised from India. |
| (2.) Earthworks at Kizil Robat commenced and in hand. | (2.) Provision of 45 miles rails from France and sleepers from India to complete to a point about 70 miles from Kizil Robat. |
| (3.) Temporary bridge over Diyala completed. | (3.) Laying to Kirkuk when materials from Kut–Baghdad line become available. Estimated expenditure in this financial year 280,000*l.*, in next year 120,000*l.* |
| 4. *Extension towards Mosul from Standard Gauge Railhead on Tigris* | |
| *Work done.* | |
| (1.) Linking of standard gauge from Baiji about 27 miles complete. | (1.) On completion of standard gauge to Shergat a 60-centim. line to be laid to Qaiyara (42 miles south of Mosul). 60 centim. material to be sent out from England. Estimated cost 87,500*l.* |



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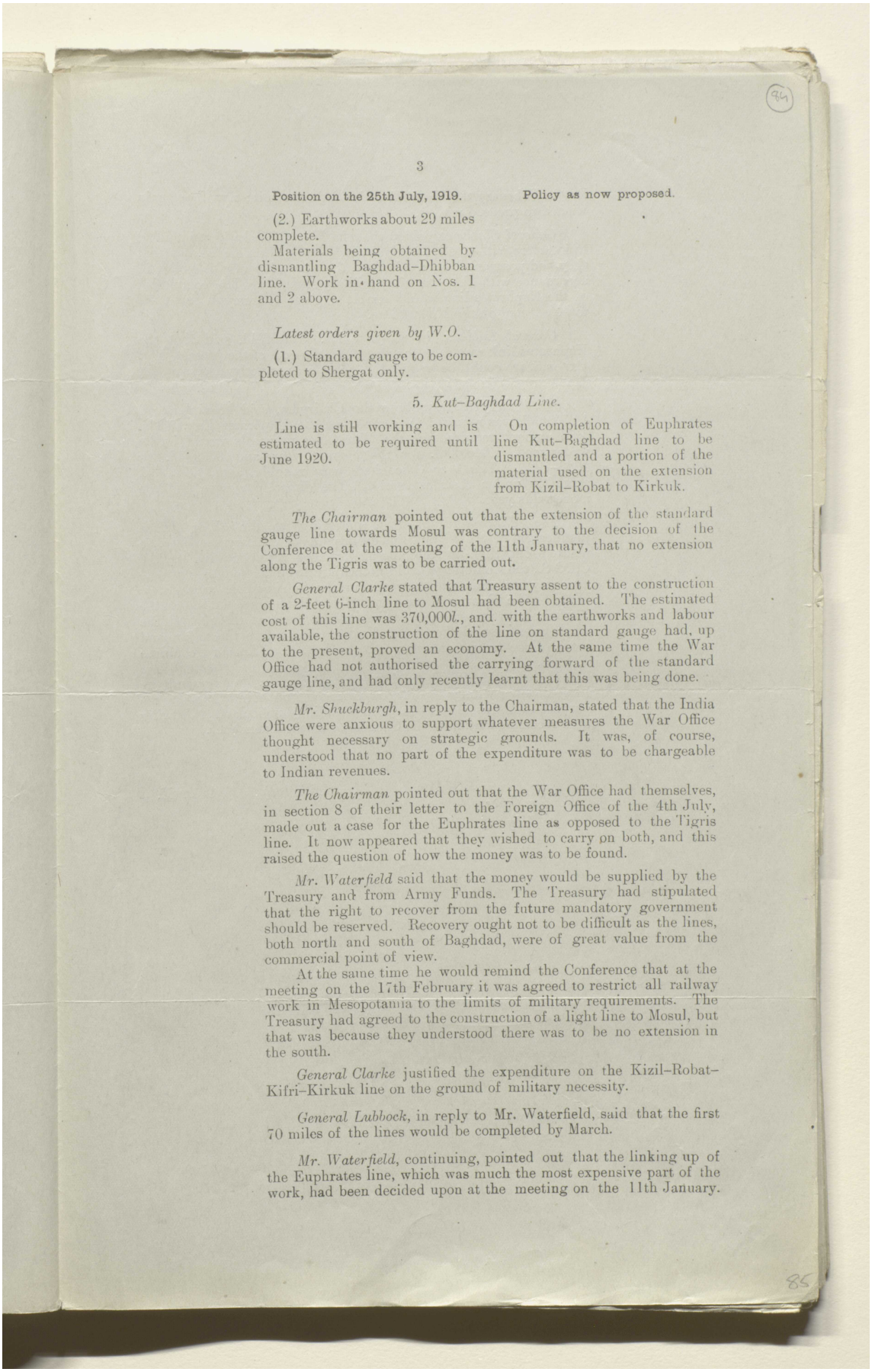



| Position on the 25th July, 1919. | Policy as now proposed. |
|---|---|
| (2.) Earthworks about 29 miles complete. Materials being obtained by dismantling Baghdad–Dhibban line. Work in hand on Nos. 1 and 2 above. | |
| *Latest orders given by W.O.* (1.) Standard gauge to be completed to Shergat only. | |

5. *Kut–Baghdad Line.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Line is still working and is estimated to be required until June 1920. | On completion of Euphrates line Kut–Baghdad line to be dismantled and a portion of the material used on the extension from Kizil–Robat to Kirkuk. |

*The Chairman* pointed out that the extension of the standard gauge line towards Mosul was contrary to the decision of the Conference at the meeting of the 11th January, that no extension along the Tigris was to be carried out.

*General Clarke* stated that Treasury assent to the construction of a 2-feet 6-inch line to Mosul had been obtained. The estimated cost of this line was 370,000*l.*, and with the earthworks and labour available, the construction of the line on standard gauge had, up to the present, proved an economy. At the same time the War Office had not authorised the carrying forward of the standard gauge line, and had only recently learnt that this was being done.

*Mr. Shuckburgh*, in reply to the Chairman, stated that the India Office were anxious to support whatever measures the War Office thought necessary on strategic grounds. It was, of course, understood that no part of the expenditure was to be chargeable to Indian revenues.

*The Chairman* pointed out that the War Office had themselves, in section 8 of their letter to the Foreign Office of the 4th July, made out a case for the Euphrates line as opposed to the Tigris line. It now appeared that they wished to carry on both, and this raised the question of how the money was to be found.

*Mr. Waterfield* said that the money would be supplied by the Treasury and from Army Funds. The Treasury had stipulated that the right to recover from the future mandatory government should be reserved. Recovery ought not to be difficult as the lines, both north and south of Baghdad, were of great value from the commercial point of view.

At the same time he would remind the Conference that at the meeting on the 17th February it was agreed to restrict all railway work in Mesopotamia to the limits of military requirements. The Treasury had agreed to the construction of a light line to Mosul, but that was because they understood there was to be no extension in the south.

*General Clarke* justified the expenditure on the Kizil–Robat–Kifri–Kirkuk line on the ground of military necessity.

*General Lubbock*, in reply to Mr. Waterfield, said that the first 70 miles of the lines would be completed by March.

*Mr. Waterfield*, continuing, pointed out that the linking up of the Euphrates line, which was much the most expensive part of the work, had been decided upon at the meeting on the 11th January.





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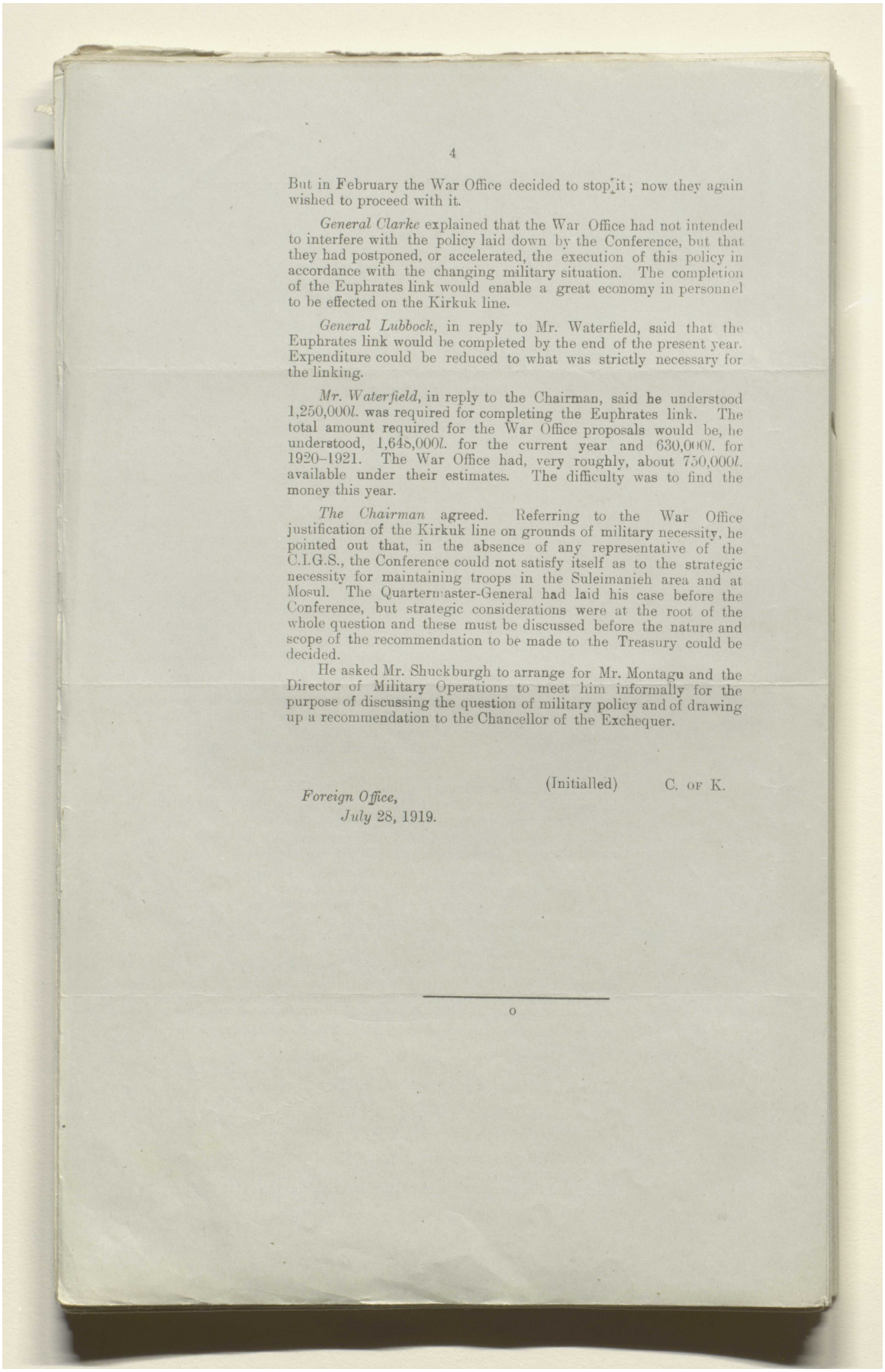



But in February the War Office decided to stop it; now they again wished to proceed with it.

*General Clarke* explained that the War Office had not intended to interfere with the policy laid down by the Conference, but that they had postponed, or accelerated, the execution of this policy in accordance with the changing military situation. The completion of the Euphrates link would enable a great economy in personnel to be effected on the Kirkuk line.

*General Lubbock*, in reply to Mr. Waterfield, said that the Euphrates link would be completed by the end of the present year. Expenditure could be reduced to what was strictly necessary for the linking.

*Mr. Waterfield*, in reply to the Chairman, said he understood 1,250,000*l.* was required for completing the Euphrates link. The total amount required for the War Office proposals would be, he understood, 1,648,000*l.* for the current year and 630,000*l.* for 1920–1921. The War Office had, very roughly, about 750,000*l.* available under their estimates. The difficulty was to find the money this year.

*The Chairman* agreed. Referring to the War Office justification of the Kirkuk line on grounds of military necessity, he pointed out that, in the absence of any representative of the C.I.G.S., the Conference could not satisfy itself as to the strategic necessity for maintaining troops in the Suleimanieh area and at Mosul. The Quartermaster-General had laid his case before the Conference, but strategic considerations were at the root of the whole question and these must be discussed before the nature and scope of the recommendation to be made to the Treasury could be decided.

He asked Mr. Shuckburgh to arrange for Mr. Montagu and the Director of Military Operations to meet him informally for the purpose of discussing the question of military policy and of drawing up a recommendation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*July* 28, 1919.

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. August* 1919.

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[I.D.C.E., 27th Minutes.]

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Monday, August* 4, 1919, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General Sir P. P. de B. RADCLIFFE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Brigadier-General W. H. BARTHOLOMEW, C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office.

Brigadier-General R. M. GROVES, C.B., D.S.O., A.F.C., Air Ministry.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, C.B., D.S.O., Director Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. J. D. GREGORY, Foreign Office.

Mr. J. O. WARDROP, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. M. D. PETERSON (*Acting Secretary*).

Position in Transcaucasia.

1. The Conference had before them the letter from the War Office to the Foreign Office of 30th July, 1919, No. 0149/7273 (M.I.R.b) with enclosures, and supplementary telegrams.

*General Bartholomew*, in reply to the Chairman, explained that the War Office felt it difficult to suppress the words: "Reckoning Azerbaijan as a portion of Russia," in General Denikin's message to the Government of Azerbaijan without obtaining his consent.

*General Radcliffe* stated that General Denikin had not previously recognised the independence of the Government of Azerbaijan, but only its existence.

*The Chairman* suggested that General Denikin should be informed that his message could only be transmitted if the sentence in question were omitted.

*The Conference decided*—

That General Denikin should be so informed.

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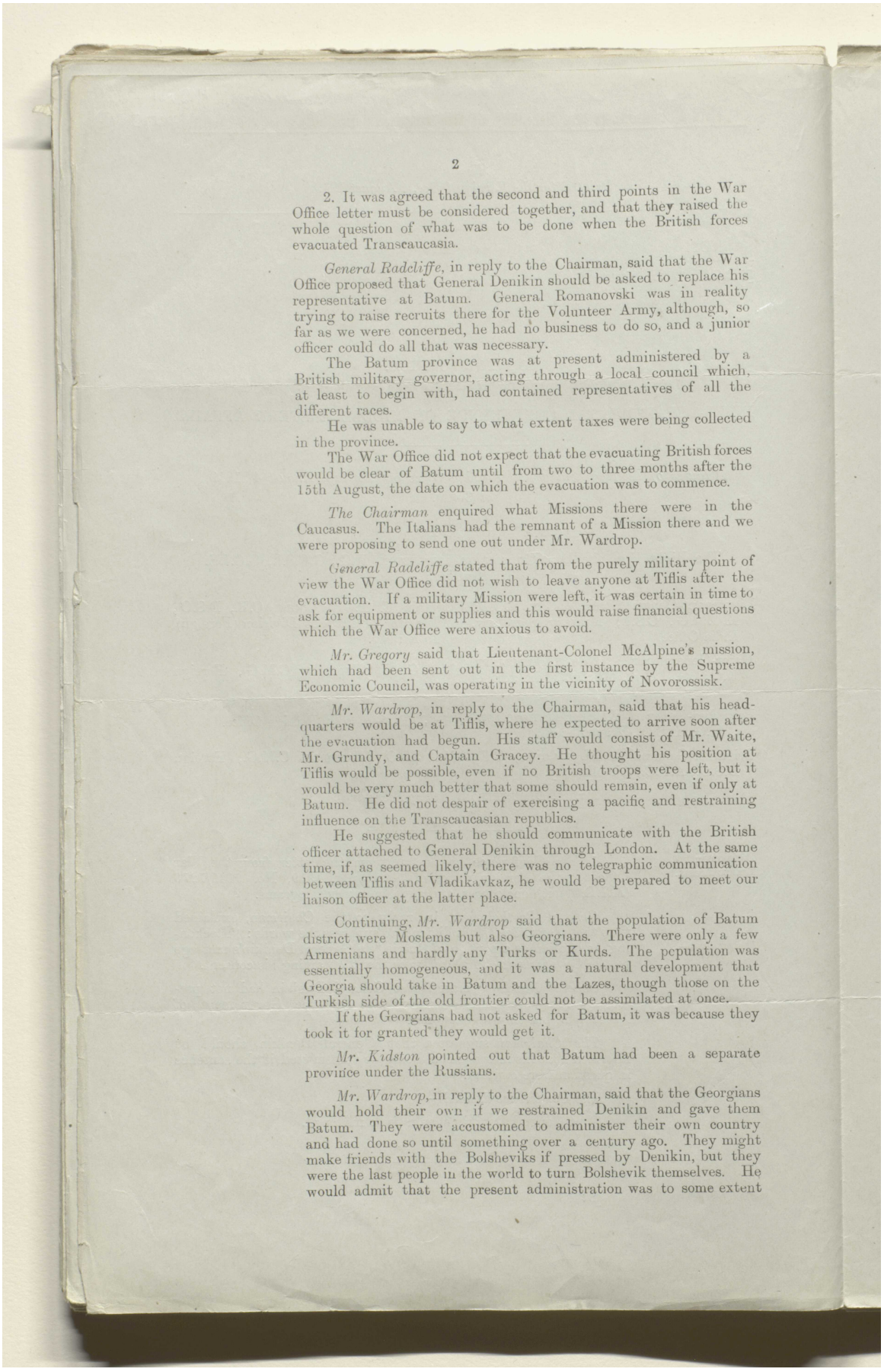



2. It was agreed that the second and third points in the War Office letter must be considered together, and that they raised the whole question of what was to be done when the British forces evacuated Transcaucasia.

*General Radcliffe*, in reply to the Chairman, said that the War Office proposed that General Denikin should be asked to replace his representative at Batum. General Romanovski was in reality trying to raise recruits there for the Volunteer Army, although, so far as we were concerned, he had no business to do so, and a junior officer could do all that was necessary.

The Batum province was at present administered by a British military governor, acting through a local council which, at least to begin with, had contained representatives of all the different races.

He was unable to say to what extent taxes were being collected in the province.

The War Office did not expect that the evacuating British forces would be clear of Batum until from two to three months after the 15th August, the date on which the evacuation was to commence.

*The Chairman* enquired what Missions there were in the Caucasus. The Italians had the remnant of a Mission there and we were proposing to send one out under Mr. Wardrop.

*General Radcliffe* stated that from the purely military point of view the War Office did not wish to leave anyone at Tiflis after the evacuation. If a military Mission were left, it was certain in time to ask for equipment or supplies and this would raise financial questions which the War Office were anxious to avoid.

*Mr. Gregory* said that Lieutenant-Colonel McAlpine's mission, which had been sent out in the first instance by the Supreme Economic Council, was operating in the vicinity of Novorossisk.

*Mr. Wardrop*, in reply to the Chairman, said that his head-quarters would be at Tiflis, where he expected to arrive soon after the evacuation had begun. His staff would consist of Mr. Waite, Mr. Grundy, and Captain Gracey. He thought his position at Tiflis would be possible, even if no British troops were left, but it would be very much better that some should remain, even if only at Batum. He did not despair of exercising a pacific and restraining influence on the Transcaucasian republics.

He suggested that he should communicate with the British officer attached to General Denikin through London. At the same time, if, as seemed likely, there was no telegraphic communication between Tiflis and Vladikavkaz, he would be prepared to meet our liaison officer at the latter place.

Continuing, *Mr. Wardrop* said that the population of Batum district were Moslems but also Georgians. There were only a few Armenians and hardly any Turks or Kurds. The population was essentially homogeneous, and it was a natural development that Georgia should take in Batum and the Lazes, though those on the Turkish side of the old frontier could not be assimilated at once.

If the Georgians had not asked for Batum, it was because they took it for granted they would get it.

*Mr. Kidston* pointed out that Batum had been a separate province under the Russians.

*Mr. Wardrop*, in reply to the Chairman, said that the Georgians would hold their own if we restrained Denikin and gave them Batum. They were accustomed to administer their own country and had done so until something over a century ago. They might make friends with the Bolsheviks if pressed by Denikin, but they were the last people in the world to turn Bolshevik themselves. He would admit that the present administration was to some extent



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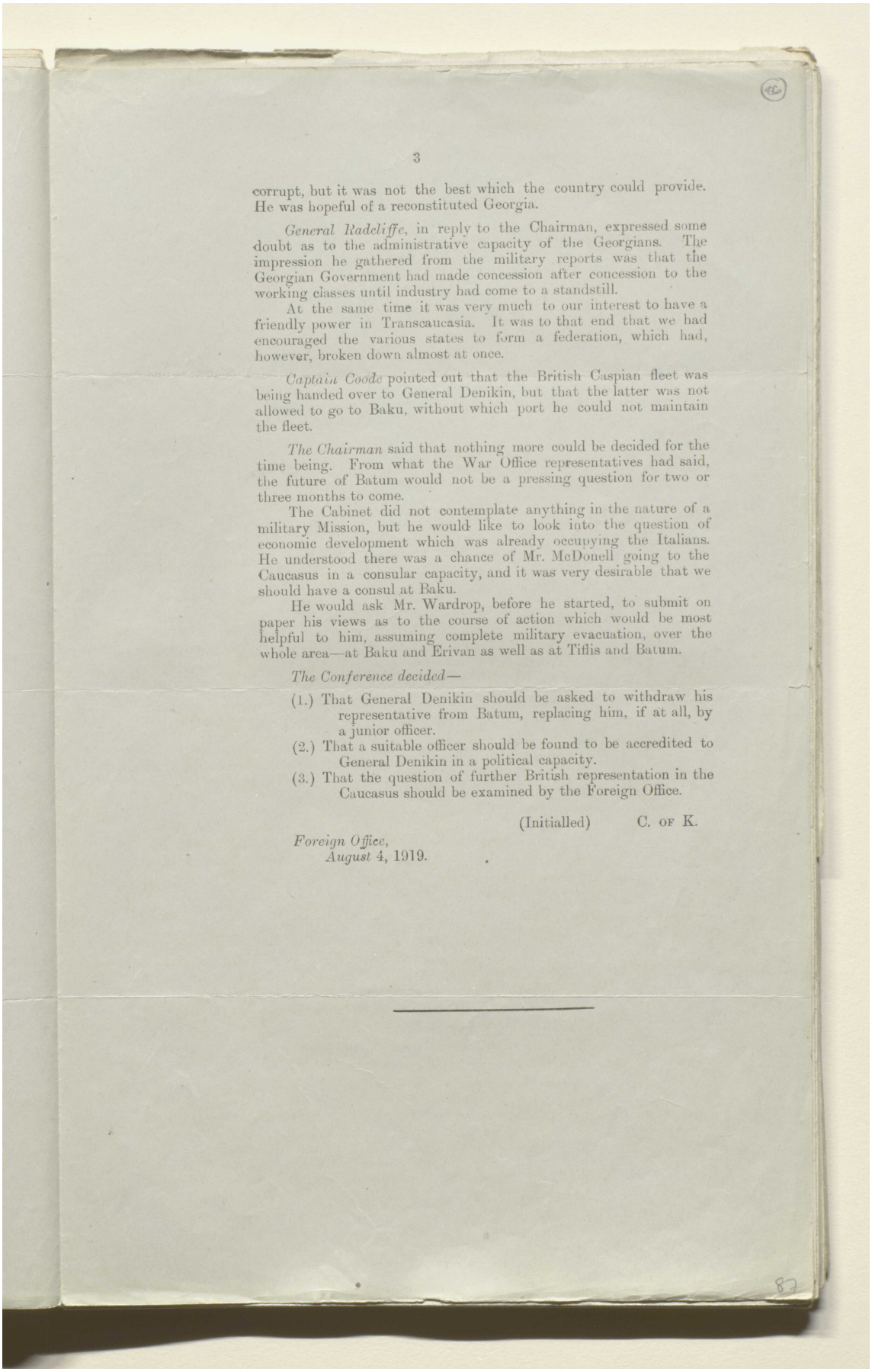

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corrupt, but it was not the best which the country could provide. He was hopeful of a reconstituted Georgia.

*General Radcliffe*, in reply to the Chairman, expressed some doubt as to the administrative capacity of the Georgians. The impression he gathered from the military reports was that the Georgian Government had made concession after concession to the working classes until industry had come to a standstill.

At the same time it was very much to our interest to have a friendly power in Transcaucasia. It was to that end that we had encouraged the various states to form a federation, which had, however, broken down almost at once.

*Captain Coode* pointed out that the British Caspian fleet was being handed over to General Denikin, but that the latter was not allowed to go to Baku, without which port he could not maintain the fleet.

*The Chairman* said that nothing more could be decided for the time being. From what the War Office representatives had said, the future of Batum would not be a pressing question for two or three months to come.

The Cabinet did not contemplate anything in the nature of a military Mission, but he would like to look into the question of economic development which was already occupying the Italians. He understood there was a chance of Mr. McDonell going to the Caucasus in a consular capacity, and it was very desirable that we should have a consul at Baku.

He would ask Mr. Wardrop, before he started, to submit on paper his views as to the course of action which would be most helpful to him, assuming complete military evacuation, over the whole area—at Baku and Erivan as well as at Tiflis and Batum.

*The Conference decided*—

(1.) That General Denikin should be asked to withdraw his representative from Batum, replacing him, if at all, by a junior officer.

(2.) That a suitable officer should be found to be accredited to General Denikin in a political capacity.

(3.) That the question of further British representation in the Caucasus should be examined by the Foreign Office.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*August* 4, 1919.



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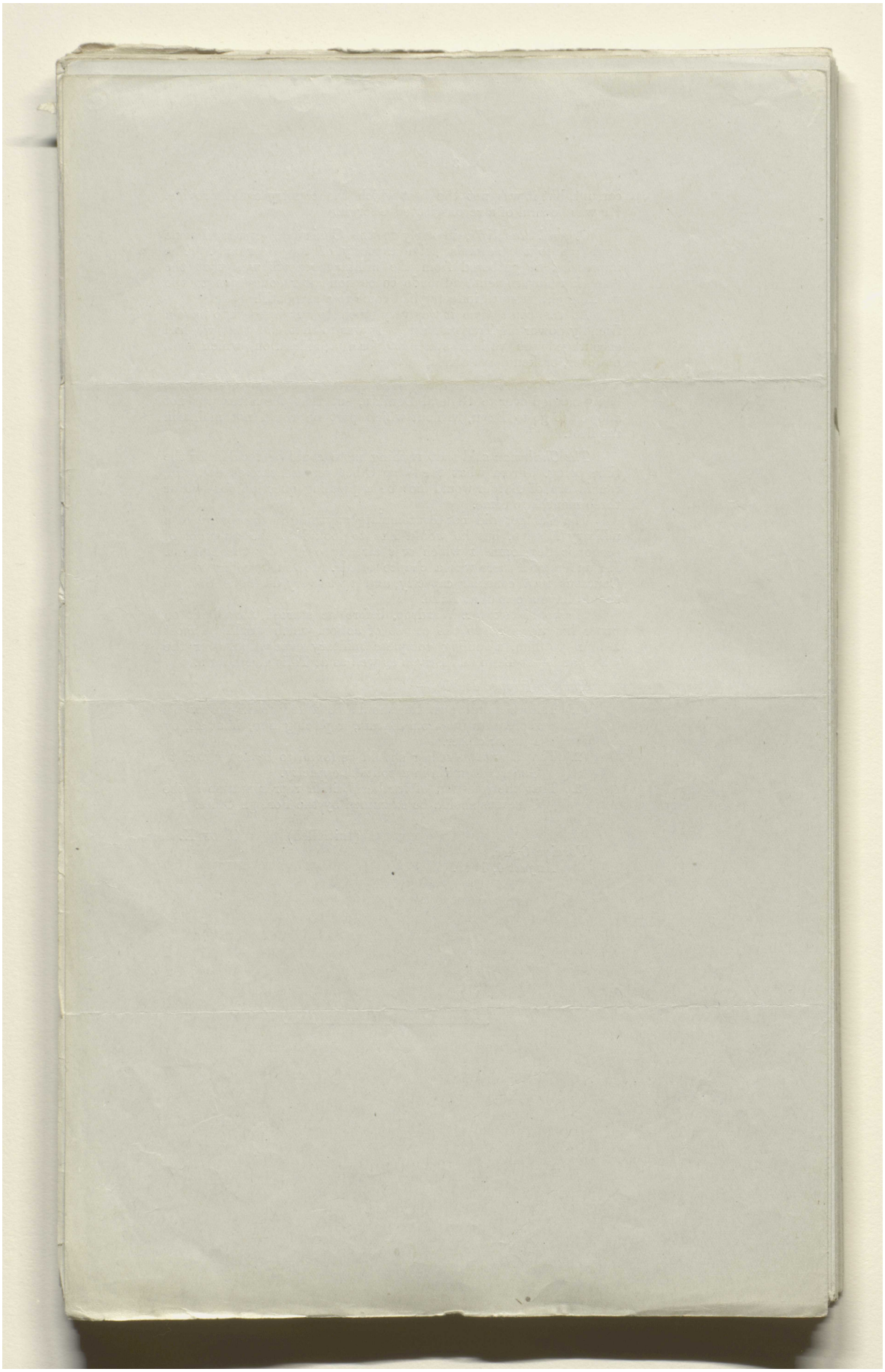


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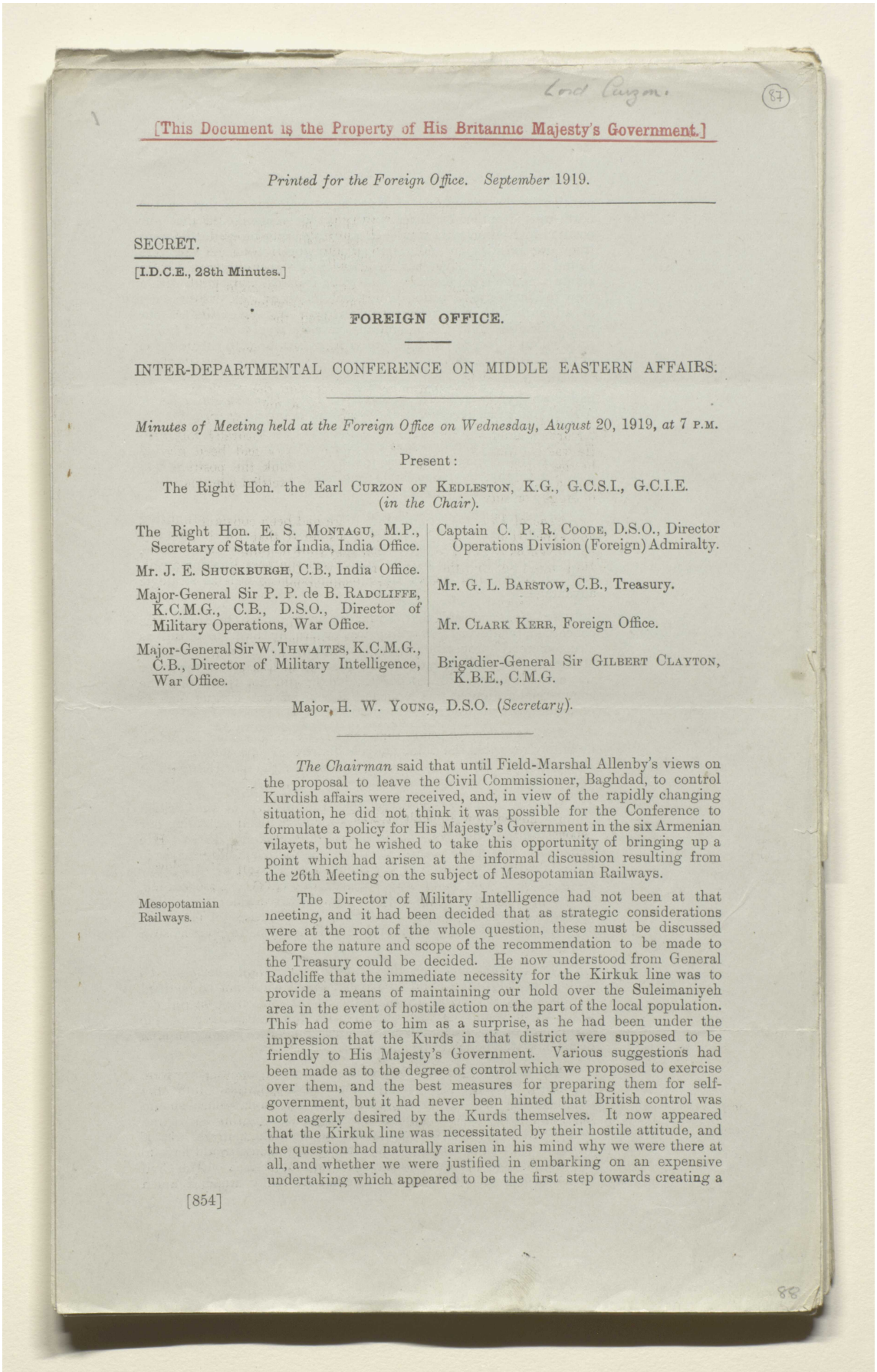

Lord Curzon. (87)

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. September* 1919.

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[I.D.C.E., 28th Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Wednesday, August* 20, 1919, *at* 7 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General Sir P. P. de B. RADCLIFFE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Major-General Sir W. THWAITES, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence, War Office.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, D.S.O., Director Operations Division (Foreign) Admiralty.

Mr. G. L. BARSTOW, C.B., Treasury.

Mr. CLARK KERR, Foreign Office.

Brigadier-General Sir GILBERT CLAYTON, K.B.E., C.M.G.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

*The Chairman* said that until Field-Marshal Allenby's views on the proposal to leave the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, to control Kurdish affairs were received, and, in view of the rapidly changing situation, he did not think it was possible for the Conference to formulate a policy for His Majesty's Government in the six Armenian vilayets, but he wished to take this opportunity of bringing up a point which had arisen at the informal discussion resulting from the 26th Meeting on the subject of Mesopotamian Railways.

Mesopotamian Railways.

The Director of Military Intelligence had not been at that meeting, and it had been decided that as strategic considerations were at the root of the whole question, these must be discussed before the nature and scope of the recommendation to be made to the Treasury could be decided. He now understood from General Radcliffe that the immediate necessity for the Kirkuk line was to provide a means of maintaining our hold over the Suleimaniyeh area in the event of hostile action on the part of the local population. This had come to him as a surprise, as he had been under the impression that the Kurds in that district were supposed to be friendly to His Majesty's Government. Various suggestions had been made as to the degree of control which we proposed to exercise over them, and the best measures for preparing them for self-government, but it had never been hinted that British control was not eagerly desired by the Kurds themselves. It now appeared that the Kirkuk line was necessitated by their hostile attitude, and the question had naturally arisen in his mind why we were there at all, and whether we were justified in embarking on an expensive undertaking which appeared to be the first step towards creating a

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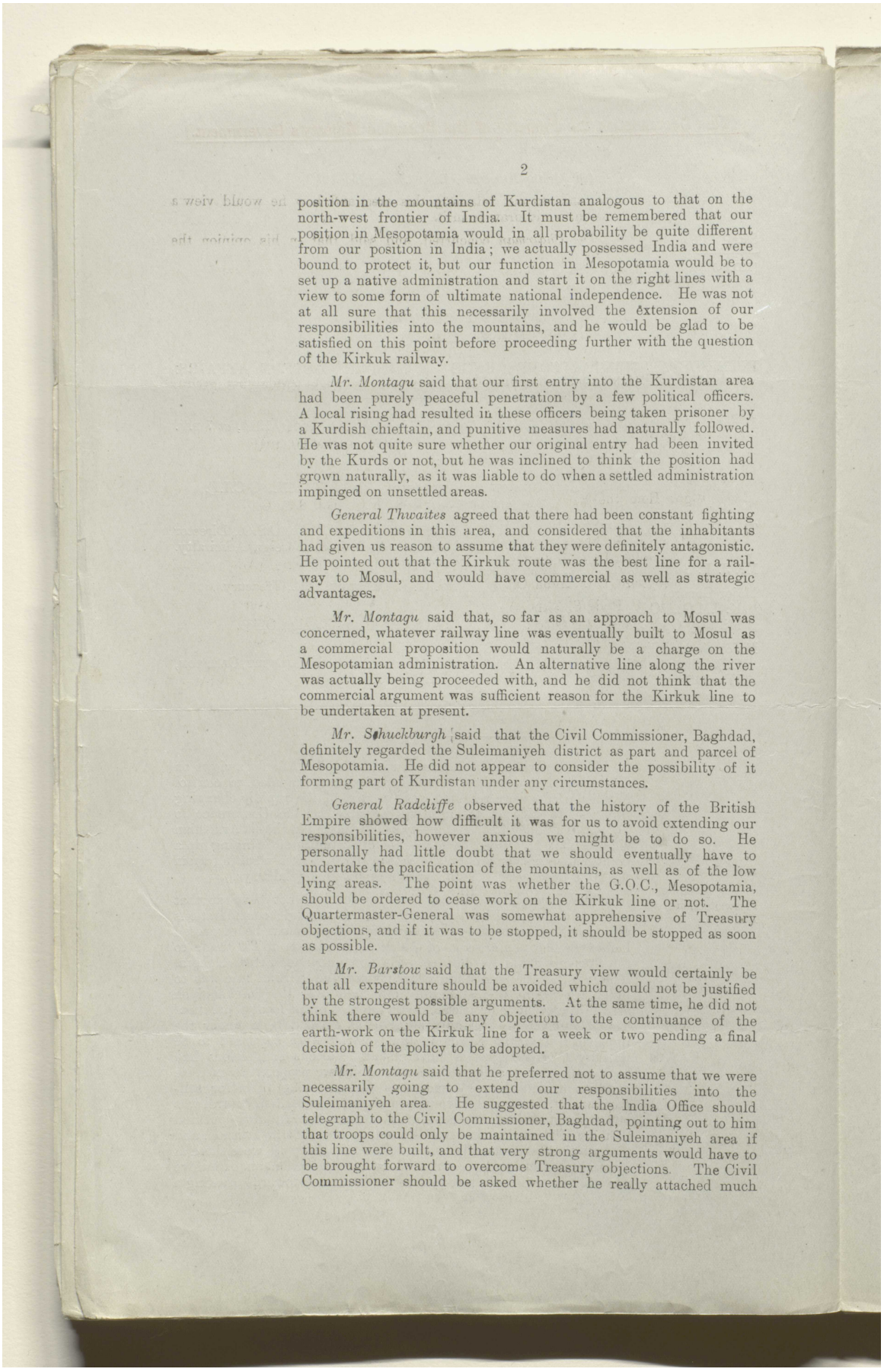



position in the mountains of Kurdistan analogous to that on the north-west frontier of India. It must be remembered that our position in Mesopotamia would in all probability be quite different from our position in India; we actually possessed India and were bound to protect it, but our function in Mesopotamia would be to set up a native administration and start it on the right lines with a view to some form of ultimate national independence. He was not at all sure that this necessarily involved the extension of our responsibilities into the mountains, and he would be glad to be satisfied on this point before proceeding further with the question of the Kirkuk railway.

*Mr. Montagu* said that our first entry into the Kurdistan area had been purely peaceful penetration by a few political officers. A local rising had resulted in these officers being taken prisoner by a Kurdish chieftain, and punitive measures had naturally followed. He was not quite sure whether our original entry had been invited by the Kurds or not, but he was inclined to think the position had grown naturally, as it was liable to do when a settled administration impinged on unsettled areas.

*General Thwaites* agreed that there had been constant fighting and expeditions in this area, and considered that the inhabitants had given us reason to assume that they were definitely antagonistic. He pointed out that the Kirkuk route was the best line for a railway to Mosul, and would have commercial as well as strategic advantages.

*Mr. Montagu* said that, so far as an approach to Mosul was concerned, whatever railway line was eventually built to Mosul as a commercial proposition would naturally be a charge on the Mesopotamian administration. An alternative line along the river was actually being proceeded with, and he did not think that the commercial argument was sufficient reason for the Kirkuk line to be undertaken at present.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, definitely regarded the Suleimaniyeh district as part and parcel of Mesopotamia. He did not appear to consider the possibility of it forming part of Kurdistan under any circumstances.

*General Radcliffe* observed that the history of the British Empire showed how difficult it was for us to avoid extending our responsibilities, however anxious we might be to do so. He personally had little doubt that we should eventually have to undertake the pacification of the mountains, as well as of the low lying areas. The point was whether the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, should be ordered to cease work on the Kirkuk line or not. The Quartermaster-General was somewhat apprehensive of Treasury objections, and if it was to be stopped, it should be stopped as soon as possible.

*Mr. Barstow* said that the Treasury view would certainly be that all expenditure should be avoided which could not be justified by the strongest possible arguments. At the same time, he did not think there would be any objection to the continuance of the earth-work on the Kirkuk line for a week or two pending a final decision of the policy to be adopted.

*Mr. Montagu* said that he preferred not to assume that we were necessarily going to extend our responsibilities into the Suleimaniyeh area. He suggested that the India Office should telegraph to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, pointing out to him that troops could only be maintained in the Suleimaniyeh area if this line were built, and that very strong arguments would have to be brought forward to overcome Treasury objections. The Civil Commissioner should be asked whether he really attached much



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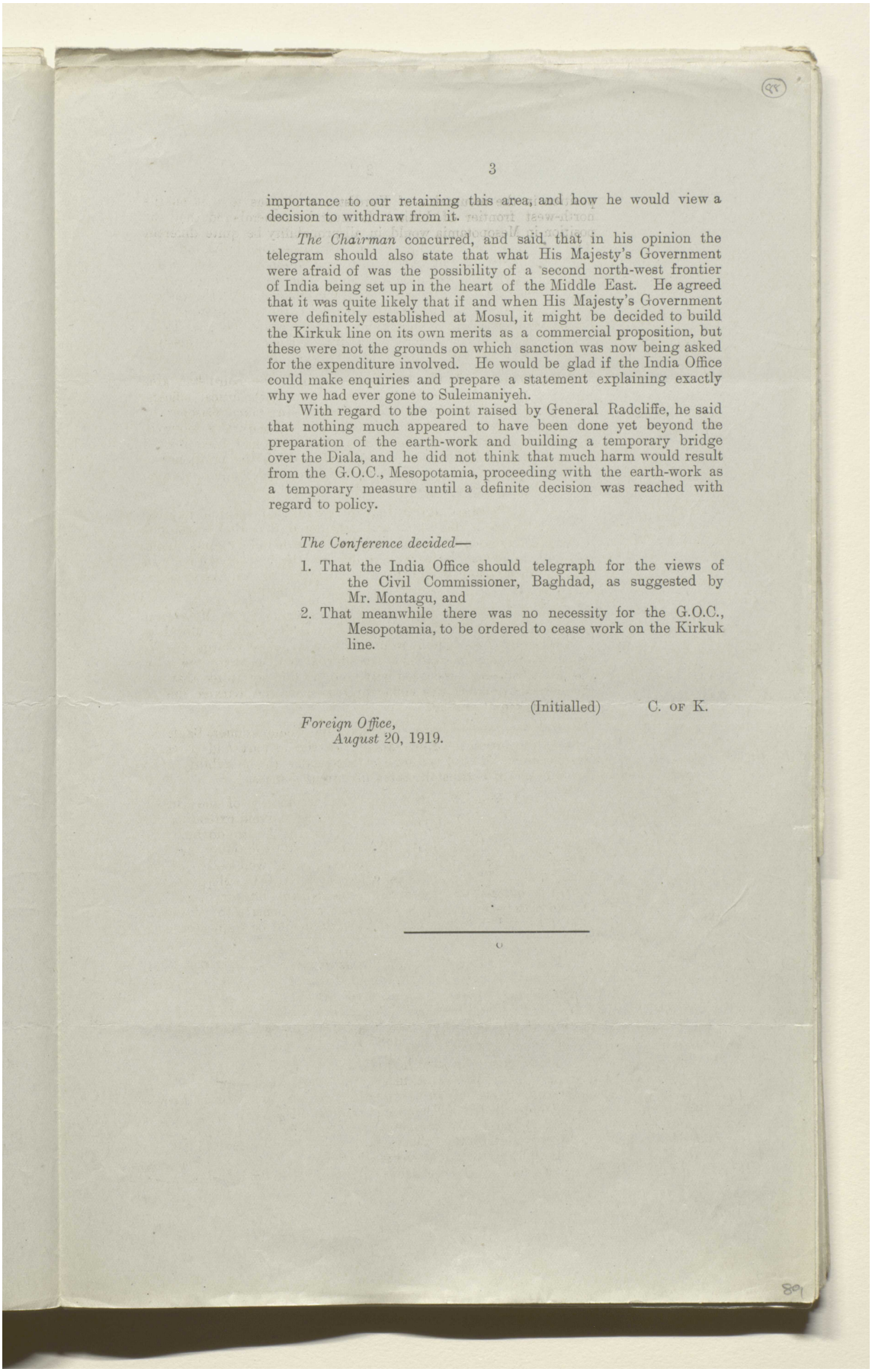



importance to our retaining this area, and how he would view a decision to withdraw from it.

*The Chairman* concurred, and said that in his opinion the telegram should also state that what His Majesty's Government were afraid of was the possibility of a second north-west frontier of India being set up in the heart of the Middle East. He agreed that it was quite likely that if and when His Majesty's Government were definitely established at Mosul, it might be decided to build the Kirkuk line on its own merits as a commercial proposition, but these were not the grounds on which sanction was now being asked for the expenditure involved. He would be glad if the India Office could make enquiries and prepare a statement explaining exactly why we had ever gone to Suleimaniyeh.

With regard to the point raised by General Radcliffe, he said that nothing much appeared to have been done yet beyond the preparation of the earth-work and building a temporary bridge over the Diala, and he did not think that much harm would result from the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, proceeding with the earth-work as a temporary measure until a definite decision was reached with regard to policy.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That the India Office should telegraph for the views of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, as suggested by Mr. Montagu, and
2. That meanwhile there was no necessity for the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, to be ordered to cease work on the Kirkuk line.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*August* 20, 1919.



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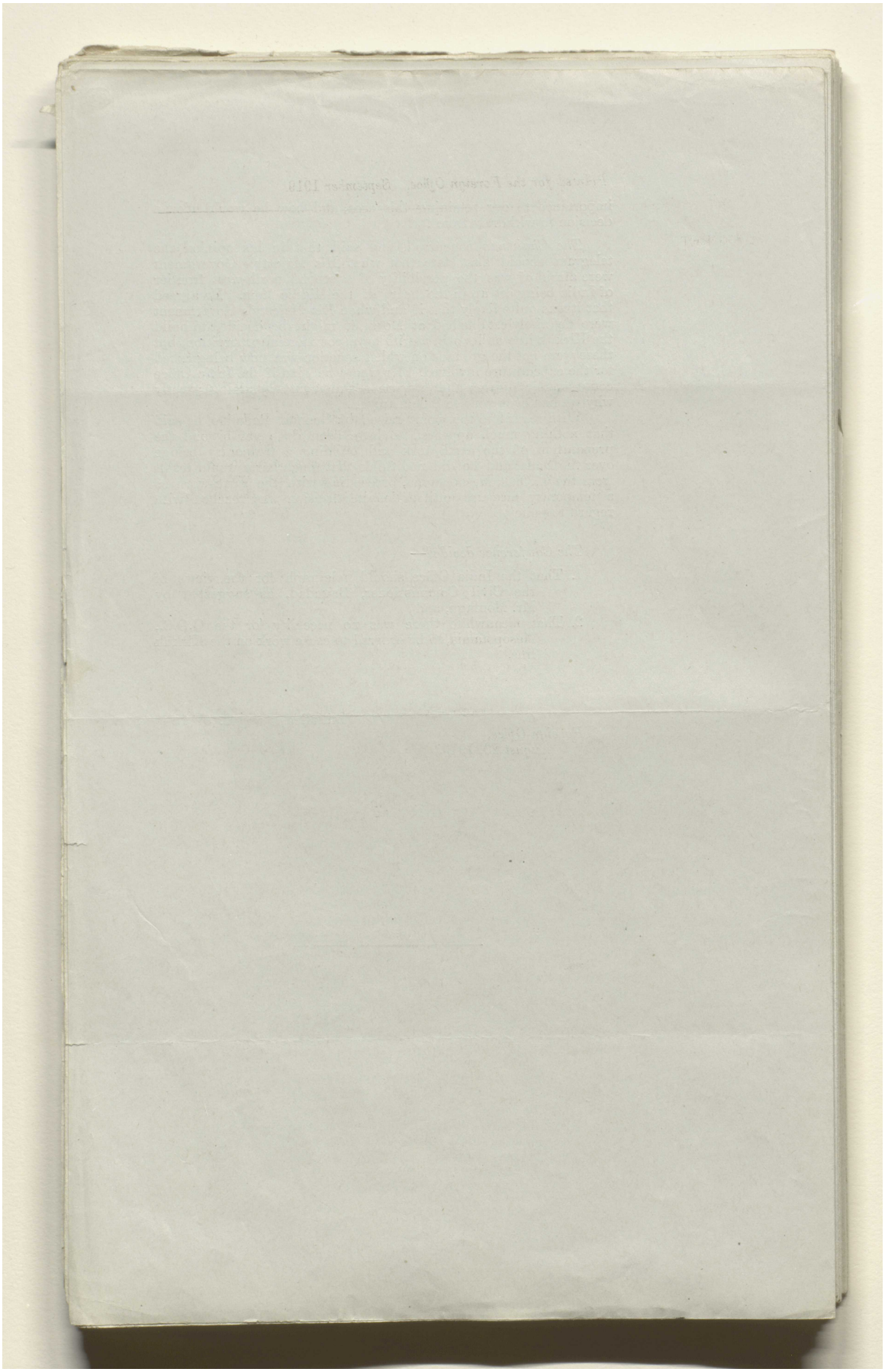



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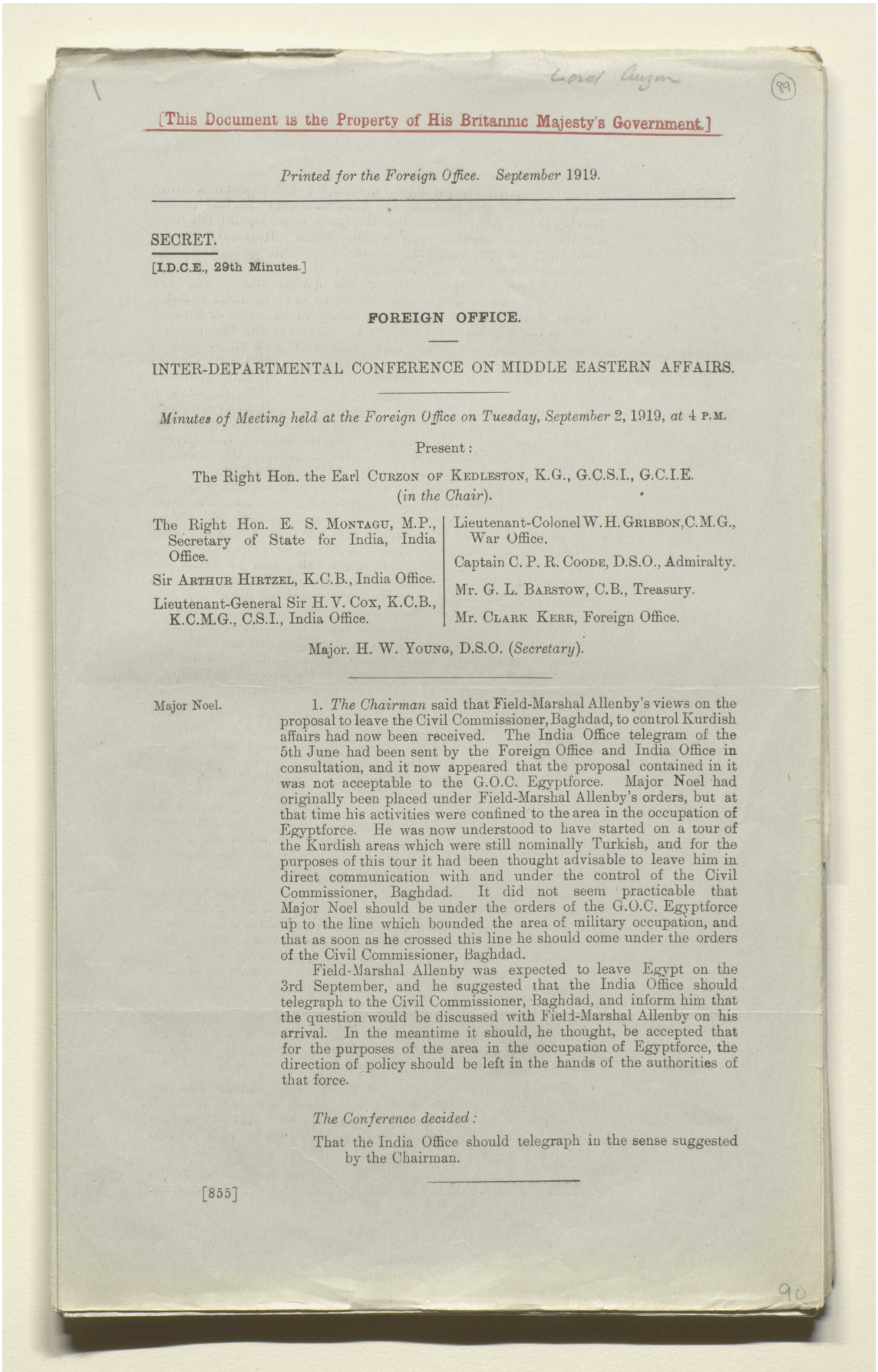

Lord Curzon

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[I.D.C.E., 29th Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, September* 2, 1919, *at* 4 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., India Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, D.S.O., Admiralty.

Mr. G. L. BARSTOW, C.B., Treasury.

Mr. CLARK KERR, Foreign Office.

Major. H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Major Noel.

1. *The Chairman* said that Field-Marshal Allenby's views on the proposal to leave the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, to control Kurdish affairs had now been received. The India Office telegram of the 5th June had been sent by the Foreign Office and India Office in consultation, and it now appeared that the proposal contained in it was not acceptable to the G.O.C. Egyptforce. Major Noel had originally been placed under Field-Marshal Allenby's orders, but at that time his activities were confined to the area in the occupation of Egyptforce. He was now understood to have started on a tour of the Kurdish areas which were still nominally Turkish, and for the purposes of this tour it had been thought advisable to leave him in direct communication with and under the control of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad. It did not seem practicable that Major Noel should be under the orders of the G.O.C. Egyptforce up to the line which bounded the area of military occupation, and that as soon as he crossed this line he should come under the orders of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad.

Field-Marshal Allenby was expected to leave Egypt on the 3rd September, and he suggested that the India Office should telegraph to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, and inform him that the question would be discussed with Field-Marshal Allenby on his arrival. In the meantime it should, he thought, be accepted that for the purposes of the area in the occupation of Egyptforce, the direction of policy should be left in the hands of the authorities of that force.

*The Conference decided:*

That the India Office should telegraph in the sense suggested by the Chairman.

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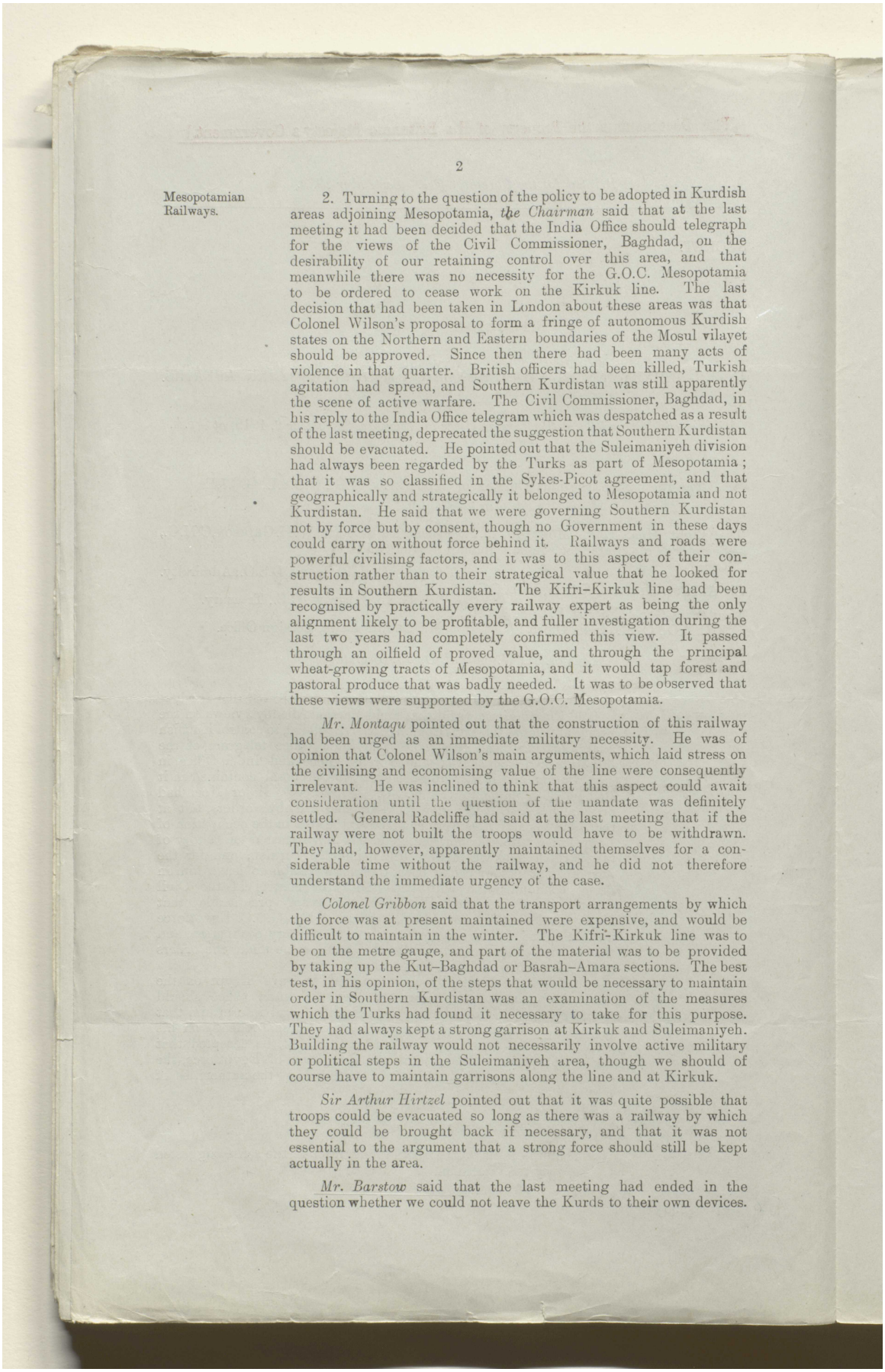



Mesopotamian Railways.

2. Turning to the question of the policy to be adopted in Kurdish areas adjoining Mesopotamia, *the Chairman* said that at the last meeting it had been decided that the India Office should telegraph for the views of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, on the desirability of our retaining control over this area, and that meanwhile there was no necessity for the G.O.C. Mesopotamia to be ordered to cease work on the Kirkuk line. The last decision that had been taken in London about these areas was that Colonel Wilson's proposal to form a fringe of autonomous Kurdish states on the Northern and Eastern boundaries of the Mosul vilayet should be approved. Since then there had been many acts of violence in that quarter. British officers had been killed, Turkish agitation had spread, and Southern Kurdistan was still apparently the scene of active warfare. The Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, in his reply to the India Office telegram which was despatched as a result of the last meeting, deprecated the suggestion that Southern Kurdistan should be evacuated. He pointed out that the Suleimaniyeh division had always been regarded by the Turks as part of Mesopotamia; that it was so classified in the Sykes-Picot agreement, and that geographically and strategically it belonged to Mesopotamia and not Kurdistan. He said that we were governing Southern Kurdistan not by force but by consent, though no Government in these days could carry on without force behind it. Railways and roads were powerful civilising factors, and it was to this aspect of their construction rather than to their strategical value that he looked for results in Southern Kurdistan. The Kifri–Kirkuk line had been recognised by practically every railway expert as being the only alignment likely to be profitable, and fuller investigation during the last two years had completely confirmed this view. It passed through an oilfield of proved value, and through the principal wheat-growing tracts of Mesopotamia, and it would tap forest and pastoral produce that was badly needed. It was to be observed that these views were supported by the G.O.C. Mesopotamia.

*Mr. Montagu* pointed out that the construction of this railway had been urged as an immediate military necessity. He was of opinion that Colonel Wilson's main arguments, which laid stress on the civilising and economising value of the line were consequently irrelevant. He was inclined to think that this aspect could await consideration until the question of the mandate was definitely settled. General Radcliffe had said at the last meeting that if the railway were not built the troops would have to be withdrawn. They had, however, apparently maintained themselves for a considerable time without the railway, and he did not therefore understand the immediate urgency of the case.

*Colonel Gribbon* said that the transport arrangements by which the force was at present maintained were expensive, and would be difficult to maintain in the winter. The Kifri-Kirkuk line was to be on the metre gauge, and part of the material was to be provided by taking up the Kut–Baghdad or Basrah–Amara sections. The best test, in his opinion, of the steps that would be necessary to maintain order in Southern Kurdistan was an examination of the measures which the Turks had found it necessary to take for this purpose. They had always kept a strong garrison at Kirkuk and Suleimaniyeh. Building the railway would not necessarily involve active military or political steps in the Suleimaniyeh area, though we should of course have to maintain garrisons along the line and at Kirkuk.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* pointed out that it was quite possible that troops could be evacuated so long as there was a railway by which they could be brought back if necessary, and that it was not essential to the argument that a strong force should still be kept actually in the area.

*Mr. Barstow* said that the last meeting had ended in the question whether we could not leave the Kurds to their own devices.



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If the construction of the line were now to be urged on purely commercial grounds, the proposal must be weighed against similar schemes in other parts of the Empire. The position appeared to be that Southern Kurdistan was a desirable place, and that we were entitled to it, but the economical development of the area would have to be considered in comparison with that of other areas in Africa and elsewhere. The line had also been recommended as the best means of access to Mosul. He was not aware whether the retention of Mosul was a matter in which His Majesty's Government were deeply interested.

*Mr. Montagu* said that Mosul had come to be regarded as a banner: he did not think that Colonel Wilson's views could be ignored, supported as they were by the G.O.C. Mesopotamia. If we ran away from Kurdistan, we ran the risk of weakening our hold on Mesopotamia. At the same time he wished to record his strong conviction, which he had expressed on more than one occasion, that it would be a mistake for us to treat Mesopotamia as if it were to become a second India, in the sense of assuming the whole responsibility for its administration.

*The Chairman* said that a mandate was about to be conferred on Great Britain for Mesopotamia, which would almost certainly include Mosul. It was true that the strategical argument for the construction of this line seemed to have disappeared. He was inclined to view the question more in the light of the necessity for providing a line of access to Mosul. Were we to be content with the alternative line by the river, or should we take up the other line, which had great economic possibilities? By common consent the Kirkuk line was pronounced to be the better of the two. Had we not better take advantage of the existing favourable conditions as regards labour and material, and of the fact that some proportion of the earthwork had already been completed, to finish it now? We might have Mosul under us in a year's time, and he feared that if we negatived the project now we might then regret having done so.

*Mr. Barstow* said that in his personal opinion there was a strong case for the line, but that he must refer the matter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He did not think that on the assumptions of policy as to Mosul the Treasury would contest the arguments that had been brought forward in its favour.

*The Conference decided*:

That, subject to the consent of the Treasury, the proposal should be approved.

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Policy of His Majesty's Government in Kurdistan.

3. *The Conference decided*:

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should discuss the whole question with Field-Marshal Allenby on his arrival, at the same time as the question of responsibility for Kurdish areas.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*September* 2, 1919.

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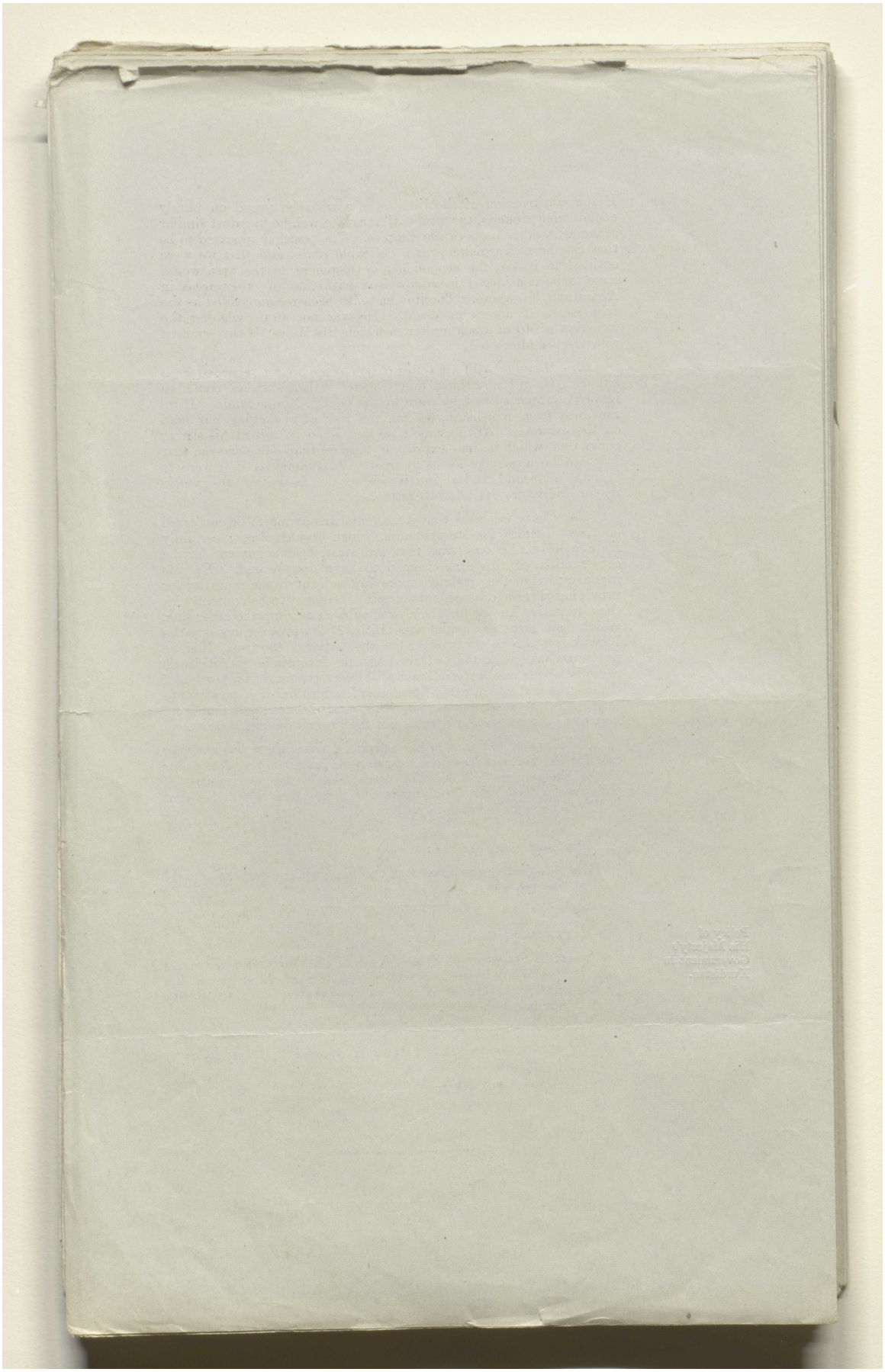

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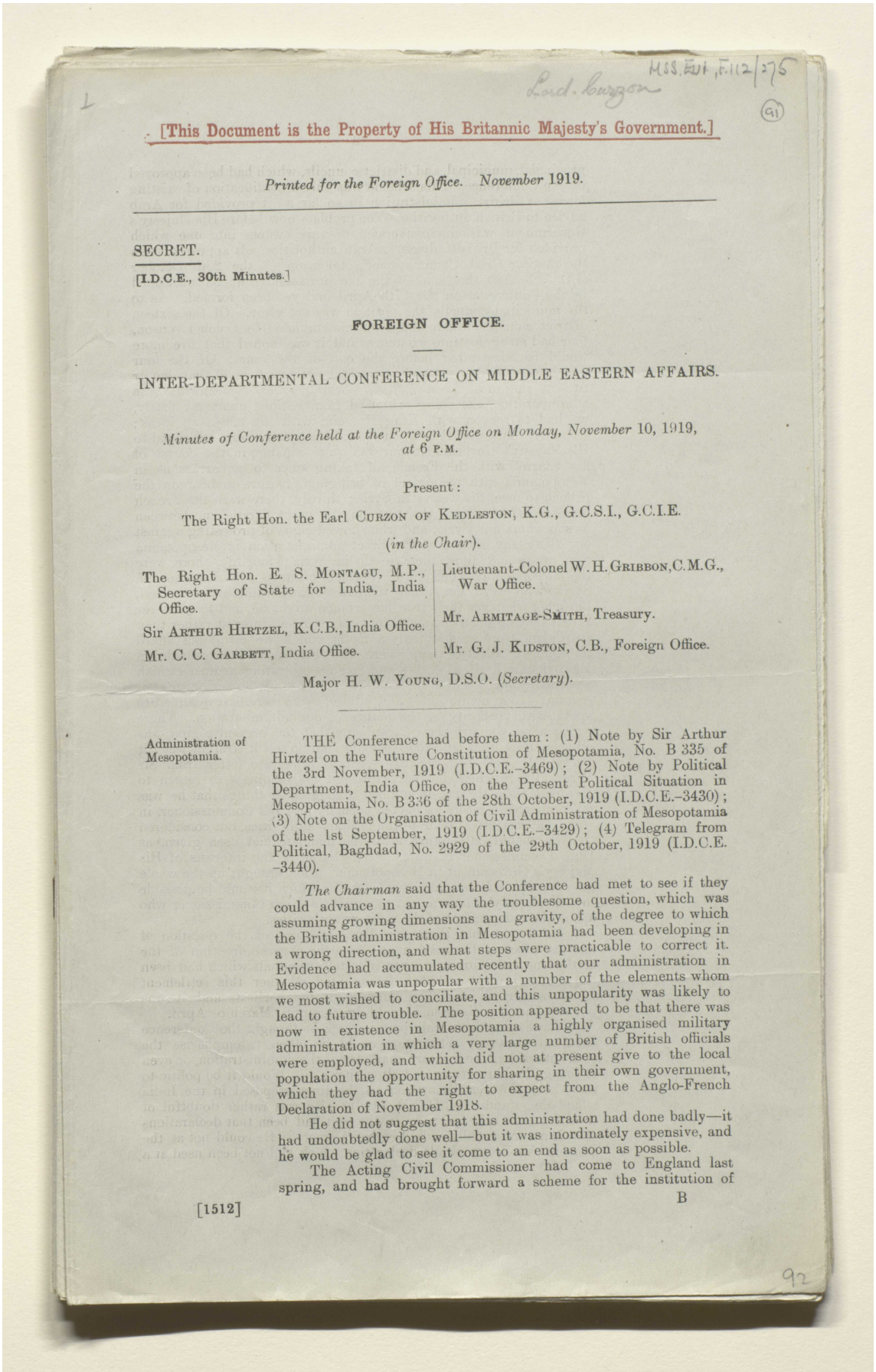

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Lord Curzon

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[I.D.C.E., 30th Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Conference held at the Foreign Office on Monday, November 10, 1919, at 6 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.
Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.
Mr. C. C. GARBETT, India Office.
Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.
Mr. ARMITAGE-SMITH, Treasury.
Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, C.B., Foreign Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Administration of Mesopotamia.

THE Conference had before them: (1) Note by Sir Arthur Hirtzel on the Future Constitution of Mesopotamia, No. B 335 of the 3rd November, 1919 (I.D.C.E.–3469); (2) Note by Political Department, India Office, on the Present Political Situation in Mesopotamia, No. B 336 of the 28th October, 1919 (I.D.C.E.–3430); (3) Note on the Organisation of Civil Administration of Mesopotamia of the 1st September, 1919 (I.D.C.E.–3429); (4) Telegram from Political, Baghdad, No. 2929 of the 29th October, 1919 (I.D.C.E.–3440).

*The Chairman* said that the Conference had met to see if they could advance in any way the troublesome question, which was assuming growing dimensions and gravity, of the degree to which the British administration in Mesopotamia had been developing in a wrong direction, and what steps were practicable to correct it. Evidence had accumulated recently that our administration in Mesopotamia was unpopular with a number of the elements whom we most wished to conciliate, and this unpopularity was likely to lead to future trouble. The position appeared to be that there was now in existence in Mesopotamia a highly organised military administration in which a very large number of British officials were employed, and which did not at present give to the local population the opportunity for sharing in their own government, which they had the right to expect from the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918.

He did not suggest that this administration had done badly—it had undoubtedly done well—but it was inordinately expensive, and he would be glad to see it come to an end as soon as possible.

The Acting Civil Commissioner had come to England last spring, and had brought forward a scheme for the institution of

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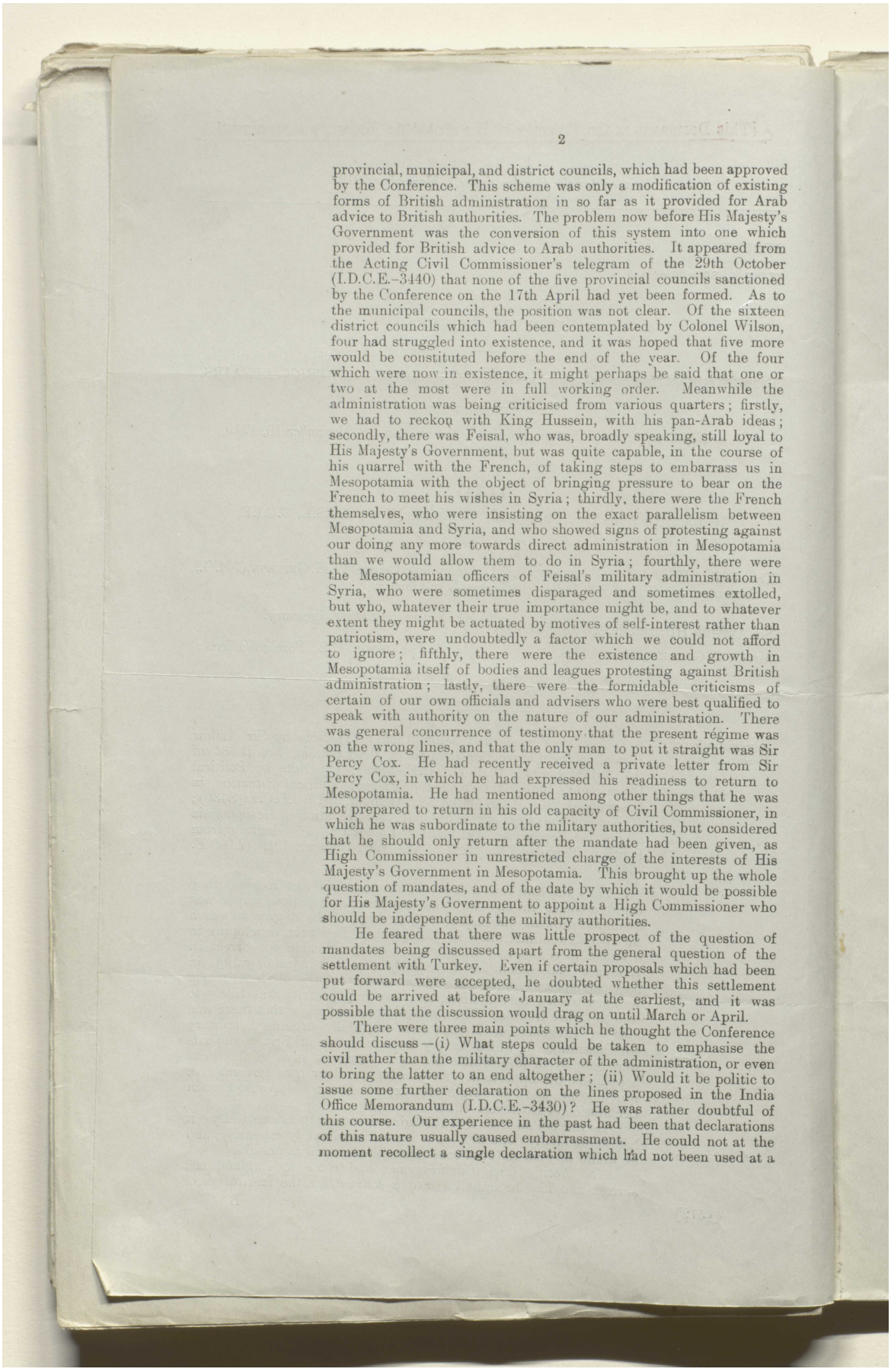



provincial, municipal, and district councils, which had been approved by the Conference. This scheme was only a modification of existing forms of British administration in so far as it provided for Arab advice to British authorities. The problem now before His Majesty's Government was the conversion of this system into one which provided for British advice to Arab authorities. It appeared from the Acting Civil Commissioner's telegram of the 29th October (I.D.C.E.-3440) that none of the five provincial councils sanctioned by the Conference on the 17th April had yet been formed. As to the municipal councils, the position was not clear. Of the sixteen district councils which had been contemplated by Colonel Wilson, four had struggled into existence, and it was hoped that five more would be constituted before the end of the year. Of the four which were now in existence, it might perhaps be said that one or two at the most were in full working order. Meanwhile the administration was being criticised from various quarters; firstly, we had to reckon with King Hussein, with his pan-Arab ideas; secondly, there was Feisal, who was, broadly speaking, still loyal to His Majesty's Government, but was quite capable, in the course of his quarrel with the French, of taking steps to embarrass us in Mesopotamia with the object of bringing pressure to bear on the French to meet his wishes in Syria; thirdly, there were the French themselves, who were insisting on the exact parallelism between Mesopotamia and Syria, and who showed signs of protesting against our doing any more towards direct administration in Mesopotamia than we would allow them to do in Syria; fourthly, there were the Mesopotamian officers of Feisal's military administration in Syria, who were sometimes disparaged and sometimes extolled, but who, whatever their true importance might be, and to whatever extent they might be actuated by motives of self-interest rather than patriotism, were undoubtedly a factor which we could not afford to ignore; fifthly, there were the existence and growth in Mesopotamia itself of bodies and leagues protesting against British administration; lastly, there were the formidable criticisms of certain of our own officials and advisers who were best qualified to speak with authority on the nature of our administration. There was general concurrence of testimony that the present régime was on the wrong lines, and that the only man to put it straight was Sir Percy Cox. He had recently received a private letter from Sir Percy Cox, in which he had expressed his readiness to return to Mesopotamia. He had mentioned among other things that he was not prepared to return in his old capacity of Civil Commissioner, in which he was subordinate to the military authorities, but considered that he should only return after the mandate had been given, as High Commissioner in unrestricted charge of the interests of His Majesty's Government in Mesopotamia. This brought up the whole question of mandates, and of the date by which it would be possible for His Majesty's Government to appoint a High Commissioner who should be independent of the military authorities.

He feared that there was little prospect of the question of mandates being discussed apart from the general question of the settlement with Turkey. Even if certain proposals which had been put forward were accepted, he doubted whether this settlement could be arrived at before January at the earliest, and it was possible that the discussion would drag on until March or April.

There were three main points which he thought the Conference should discuss—(i) What steps could be taken to emphasise the civil rather than the military character of the administration, or even to bring the latter to an end altogether; (ii) Would it be politic to issue some further declaration on the lines proposed in the India Office Memorandum (I.D.C.E.-3430)? He was rather doubtful of this course. Our experience in the past had been that declarations of this nature usually caused embarrassment. He could not at the moment recollect a single declaration which had not been used at a



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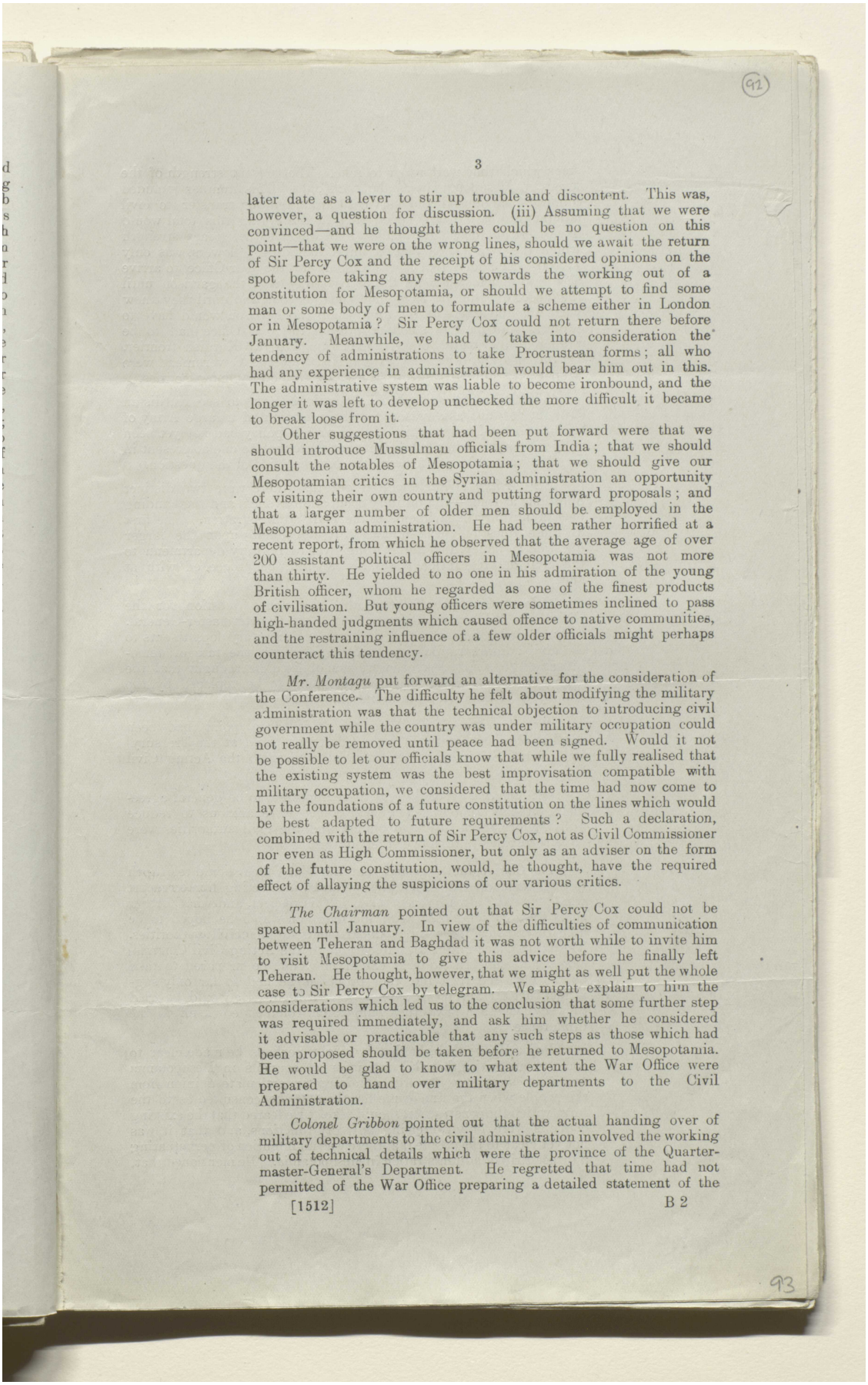

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later date as a lever to stir up trouble and discontent. This was, however, a question for discussion. (iii) Assuming that we were convinced—and he thought there could be no question on this point—that we were on the wrong lines, should we await the return of Sir Percy Cox and the receipt of his considered opinions on the spot before taking any steps towards the working out of a constitution for Mesopotamia, or should we attempt to find some man or some body of men to formulate a scheme either in London or in Mesopotamia? Sir Percy Cox could not return there before January. Meanwhile, we had to take into consideration the tendency of administrations to take Procrustean forms; all who had any experience in administration would bear him out in this. The administrative system was liable to become ironbound, and the longer it was left to develop unchecked the more difficult it became to break loose from it.

Other suggestions that had been put forward were that we should introduce Mussulman officials from India; that we should consult the notables of Mesopotamia; that we should give our Mesopotamian critics in the Syrian administration an opportunity of visiting their own country and putting forward proposals; and that a larger number of older men should be employed in the Mesopotamian administration. He had been rather horrified at a recent report, from which he observed that the average age of over 200 assistant political officers in Mesopotamia was not more than thirty. He yielded to no one in his admiration of the young British officer, whom he regarded as one of the finest products of civilisation. But young officers were sometimes inclined to pass high-handed judgments which caused offence to native communities, and the restraining influence of a few older officials might perhaps counteract this tendency.

*Mr. Montagu* put forward an alternative for the consideration of the Conference. The difficulty he felt about modifying the military administration was that the technical objection to introducing civil government while the country was under military occupation could not really be removed until peace had been signed. Would it not be possible to let our officials know that while we fully realised that the existing system was the best improvisation compatible with military occupation, we considered that the time had now come to lay the foundations of a future constitution on the lines which would be best adapted to future requirements? Such a declaration, combined with the return of Sir Percy Cox, not as Civil Commissioner nor even as High Commissioner, but only as an adviser on the form of the future constitution, would, he thought, have the required effect of allaying the suspicions of our various critics.

*The Chairman* pointed out that Sir Percy Cox could not be spared until January. In view of the difficulties of communication between Teheran and Baghdad it was not worth while to invite him to visit Mesopotamia to give this advice before he finally left Teheran. He thought, however, that we might as well put the whole case to Sir Percy Cox by telegram. We might explain to him the considerations which led us to the conclusion that some further step was required immediately, and ask him whether he considered it advisable or practicable that any such steps as those which had been proposed should be taken before he returned to Mesopotamia. He would be glad to know to what extent the War Office were prepared to hand over military departments to the Civil Administration.

*Colonel Gribbon* pointed out that the actual handing over of military departments to the civil administration involved the working out of technical details which were the province of the Quarter-master-General's Department. He regretted that time had not permitted of the War Office preparing a detailed statement of the



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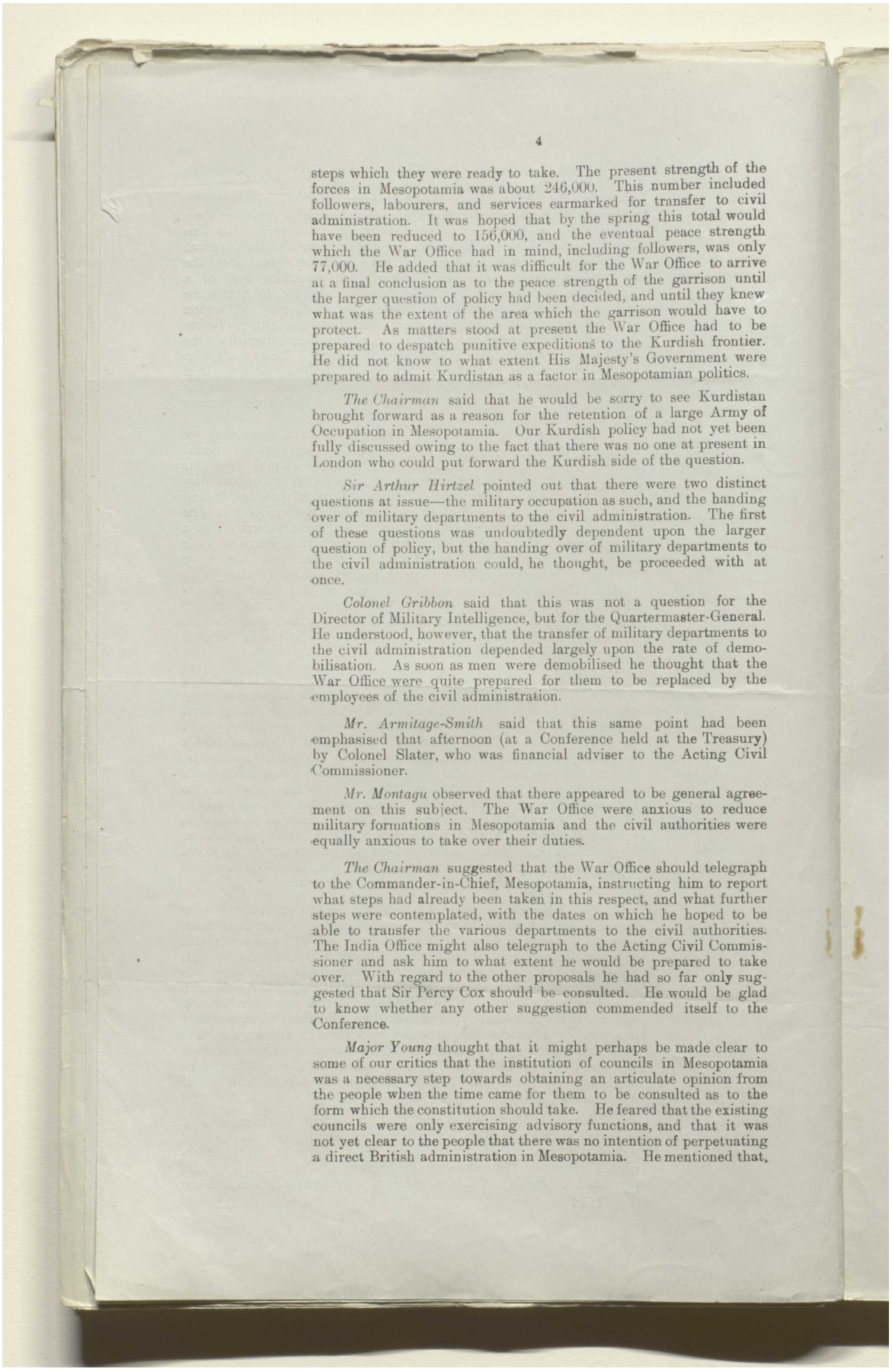



steps which they were ready to take. The present strength of the forces in Mesopotamia was about 246,000. This number included followers, labourers, and services earmarked for transfer to civil administration. It was hoped that by the spring this total would have been reduced to 156,000, and the eventual peace strength which the War Office had in mind, including followers, was only 77,000. He added that it was difficult for the War Office to arrive at a final conclusion as to the peace strength of the garrison until the larger question of policy had been decided, and until they knew what was the extent of the area which the garrison would have to protect. As matters stood at present the War Office had to be prepared to despatch punitive expeditions to the Kurdish frontier. He did not know to what extent His Majesty's Government were prepared to admit Kurdistan as a factor in Mesopotamian politics.

*The Chairman* said that he would be sorry to see Kurdistan brought forward as a reason for the retention of a large Army of Occupation in Mesopotamia. Our Kurdish policy had not yet been fully discussed owing to the fact that there was no one at present in London who could put forward the Kurdish side of the question.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* pointed out that there were two distinct questions at issue—the military occupation as such, and the handing over of military departments to the civil administration. The first of these questions was undoubtedly dependent upon the larger question of policy, but the handing over of military departments to the civil administration could, he thought, be proceeded with at once.

*Colonel Gribbon* said that this was not a question for the Director of Military Intelligence, but for the Quartermaster-General. He understood, however, that the transfer of military departments to the civil administration depended largely upon the rate of demobilisation. As soon as men were demobilised he thought that the War Office were quite prepared for them to be replaced by the employees of the civil administration.

*Mr. Armitage-Smith* said that this same point had been emphasised that afternoon (at a Conference held at the Treasury) by Colonel Slater, who was financial adviser to the Acting Civil Commissioner.

*Mr. Montagu* observed that there appeared to be general agreement on this subject. The War Office were anxious to reduce military formations in Mesopotamia and the civil authorities were equally anxious to take over their duties.

*The Chairman* suggested that the War Office should telegraph to the Commander-in-Chief, Mesopotamia, instructing him to report what steps had already been taken in this respect, and what further steps were contemplated, with the dates on which he hoped to be able to transfer the various departments to the civil authorities. The India Office might also telegraph to the Acting Civil Commissioner and ask him to what extent he would be prepared to take over. With regard to the other proposals he had so far only suggested that Sir Percy Cox should be consulted. He would be glad to know whether any other suggestion commended itself to the Conference.

*Major Young* thought that it might perhaps be made clear to some of our critics that the institution of councils in Mesopotamia was a necessary step towards obtaining an articulate opinion from the people when the time came for them to be consulted as to the form which the constitution should take. He feared that the existing councils were only exercising advisory functions, and that it was not yet clear to the people that there was no intention of perpetuating a direct British administration in Mesopotamia. He mentioned that,



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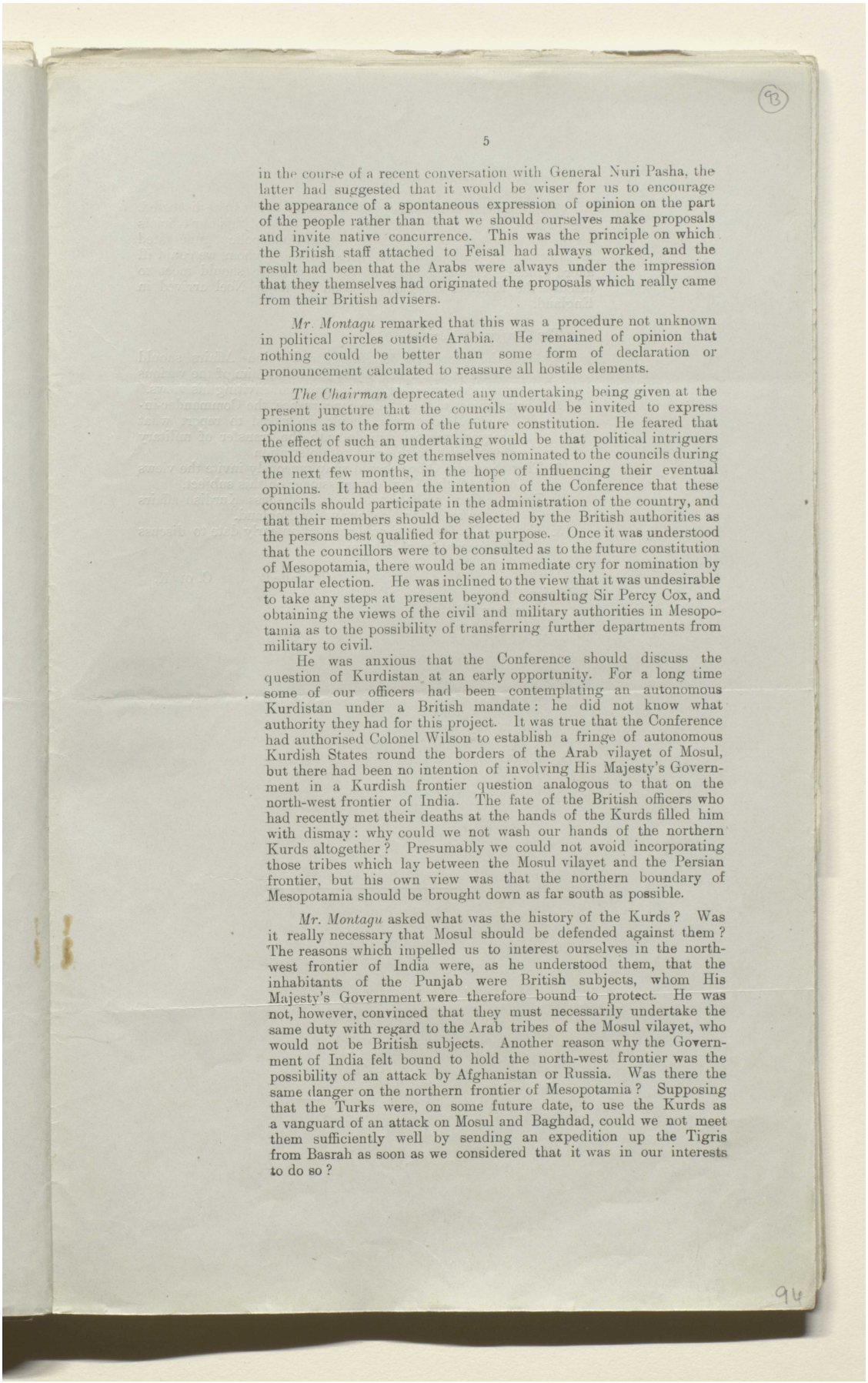

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in the course of a recent conversation with General Nuri Pasha, the latter had suggested that it would be wiser for us to encourage the appearance of a spontaneous expression of opinion on the part of the people rather than that we should ourselves make proposals and invite native concurrence. This was the principle on which the British staff attached to Feisal had always worked, and the result had been that the Arabs were always under the impression that they themselves had originated the proposals which really came from their British advisers.

*Mr. Montagu* remarked that this was a procedure not unknown in political circles outside Arabia. He remained of opinion that nothing could be better than some form of declaration or pronouncement calculated to reassure all hostile elements.

*The Chairman* deprecated any undertaking being given at the present juncture that the councils would be invited to express opinions as to the form of the future constitution. He feared that the effect of such an undertaking would be that political intriguers would endeavour to get themselves nominated to the councils during the next few months, in the hope of influencing their eventual opinions. It had been the intention of the Conference that these councils should participate in the administration of the country, and that their members should be selected by the British authorities as the persons best qualified for that purpose. Once it was understood that the councillors were to be consulted as to the future constitution of Mesopotamia, there would be an immediate cry for nomination by popular election. He was inclined to the view that it was undesirable to take any steps at present beyond consulting Sir Percy Cox, and obtaining the views of the civil and military authorities in Mesopotamia as to the possibility of transferring further departments from military to civil.

He was anxious that the Conference should discuss the question of Kurdistan at an early opportunity. For a long time some of our officers had been contemplating an autonomous Kurdistan under a British mandate: he did not know what authority they had for this project. It was true that the Conference had authorised Colonel Wilson to establish a fringe of autonomous Kurdish States round the borders of the Arab vilayet of Mosul, but there had been no intention of involving His Majesty's Government in a Kurdish frontier question analogous to that on the north-west frontier of India. The fate of the British officers who had recently met their deaths at the hands of the Kurds filled him with dismay: why could we not wash our hands of the northern Kurds altogether? Presumably we could not avoid incorporating those tribes which lay between the Mosul vilayet and the Persian frontier, but his own view was that the northern boundary of Mesopotamia should be brought down as far south as possible.

*Mr. Montagu* asked what was the history of the Kurds? Was it really necessary that Mosul should be defended against them? The reasons which impelled us to interest ourselves in the north-west frontier of India were, as he understood them, that the inhabitants of the Punjab were British subjects, whom His Majesty's Government were therefore bound to protect. He was not, however, convinced that they must necessarily undertake the same duty with regard to the Arab tribes of the Mosul vilayet, who would not be British subjects. Another reason why the Government of India felt bound to hold the north-west frontier was the possibility of an attack by Afghanistan or Russia. Was there the same danger on the northern frontier of Mesopotamia? Supposing that the Turks were, on some future date, to use the Kurds as a vanguard of an attack on Mosul and Baghdad, could we not meet them sufficiently well by sending an expedition up the Tigris from Basrah as soon as we considered that it was in our interests to do so?

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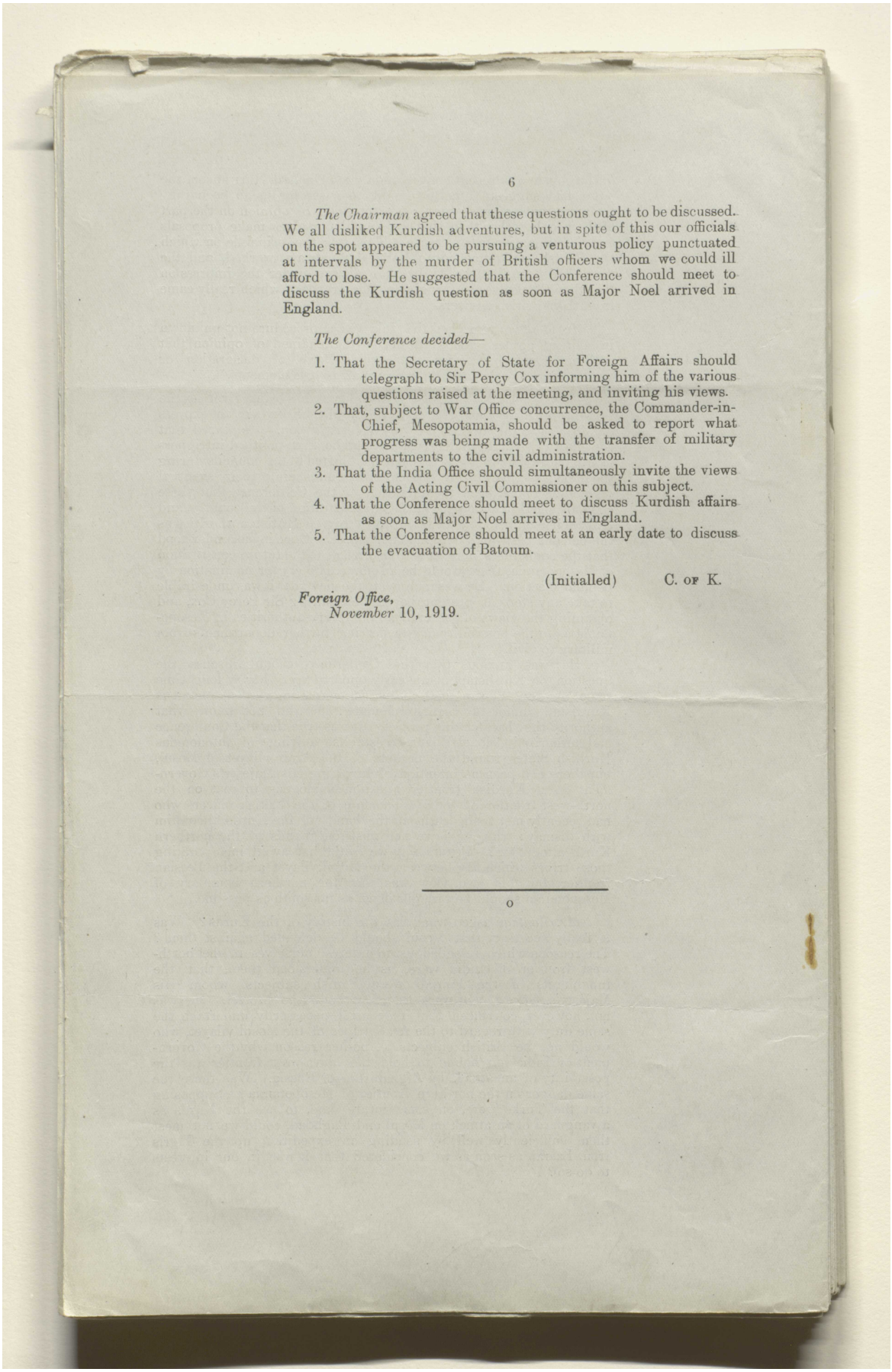

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*The Chairman* agreed that these questions ought to be discussed. We all disliked Kurdish adventures, but in spite of this our officials on the spot appeared to be pursuing a venturous policy punctuated at intervals by the murder of British officers whom we could ill afford to lose. He suggested that the Conference should meet to discuss the Kurdish question as soon as Major Noel arrived in England.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should telegraph to Sir Percy Cox informing him of the various questions raised at the meeting, and inviting his views.
2. That, subject to War Office concurrence, the Commander-in-Chief, Mesopotamia, should be asked to report what progress was being made with the transfer of military departments to the civil administration.
3. That the India Office should simultaneously invite the views of the Acting Civil Commissioner on this subject.
4. That the Conference should meet to discuss Kurdish affairs as soon as Major Noel arrives in England.
5. That the Conference should meet at an early date to discuss the evacuation of Batoum.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*November* 10, 1919.

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Ld. Curzon (94)

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. November* 1919.

SECRET.

[I.D.C.E., 31st Meeting.]

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Monday, November* 17, 1919, *at* 6 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Under-Secretary of State for India, India Office.

General Sir ALEXANDER COBBE, V.C., K.C.B., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major H. & W. NOEL, C.I.E., D.S.O.

Mr. S. ARMITAGE SMITH, C.B., Treasury.

Field-Marshal Sir HENRY WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of Imperial General Staff, War Office.

Major-General Sir W. THWAITES, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence, War Office.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, D.S.O., Director Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, C.B., Foreign Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Situation in Kurdistan.

Mesopotamian Railways.

The Conference had before them: (1) Note by the Secretary, I.D.C.E., on the situation in Kurdistan (I.D.C.E.–2671); (2) Additional note by Secretary, I.D.C.E., on the situation in Kurdistan (I.D.C.E.–3583); (3) Minutes of War Cabinet Committee meeting held on the 22nd September, 1919 (I.D.C.E.–3236); (4) *Aide-mémoire* (I.D.C.E.–3582).

*The Chairman* said that the Conference had met to discuss the question of the future of Kurdistan, and to consider British policy towards that part of the Middle East. This discussion had been postponed from time to time, not because its urgency was growing less acute—it had been growing more acute—but because they were awaiting the arrival in England of Major Noel, who was probably better qualified than anyone else to advise them on the subject.

As a consequence of the campaign in Mesopotamia, which had resulted in the capture of Baghdad, we had been brought into contact with the Kurds in the regions adjoining the Persian frontier, and at a later date, when by the terms of the armistice the Turks evacuated large areas inhabited by Kurds, we had naturally taken their place. These were the circumstances under which British garrisons and British political officers had originally been introduced into Kurdish areas. As time went on we had begun to ask ourselves what policy we should adopt towards these apparently friendly people, who led us to suppose that they were anxious to enter into closer relations with us.





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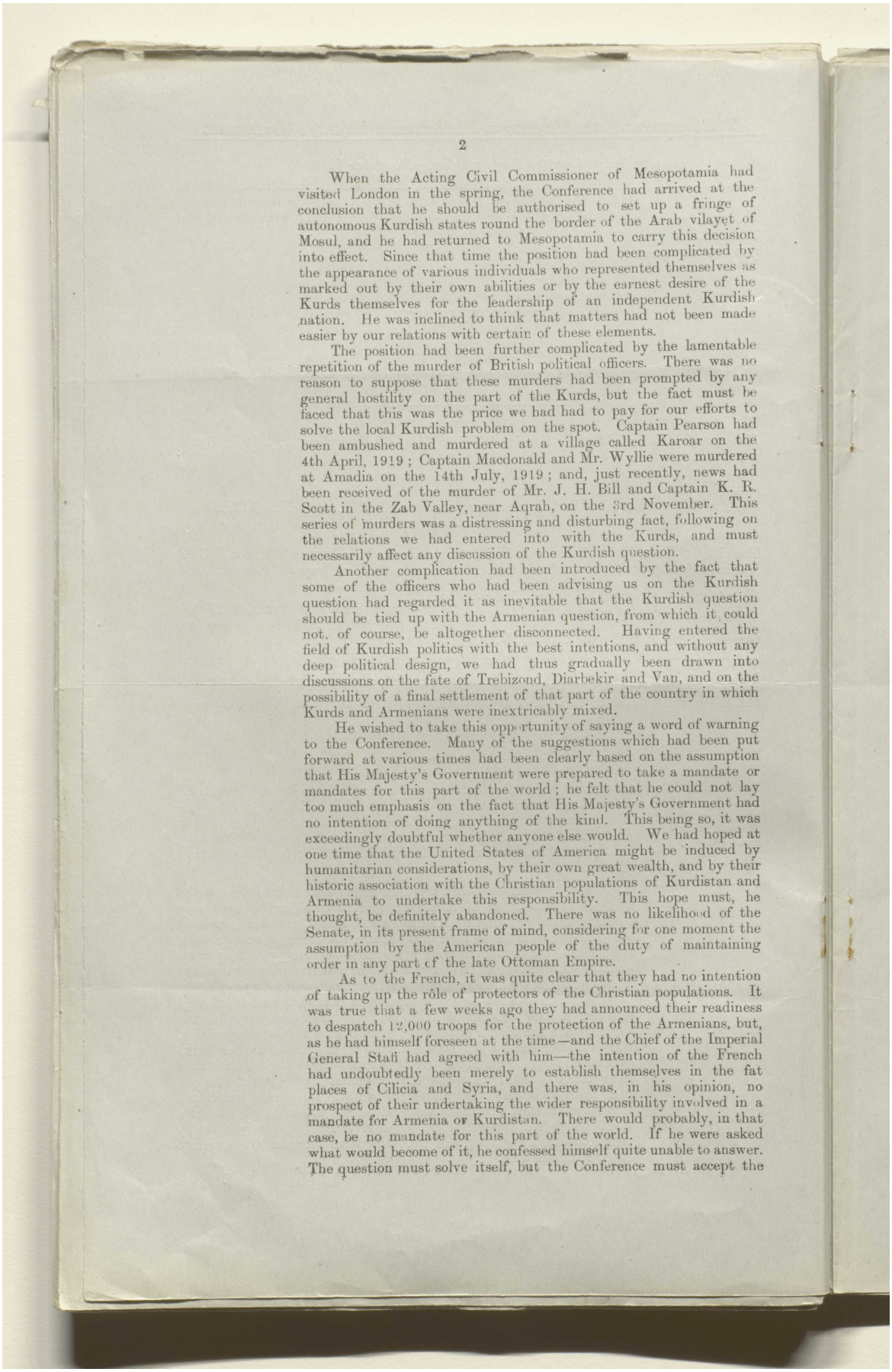



When the Acting Civil Commissioner of Mesopotamia had visited London in the spring, the Conference had arrived at the conclusion that he should be authorised to set up a fringe of autonomous Kurdish states round the border of the Arab vilayet of Mosul, and he had returned to Mesopotamia to carry this decision into effect. Since that time the position had been complicated by the appearance of various individuals who represented themselves as marked out by their own abilities or by the earnest desire of the Kurds themselves for the leadership of an independent Kurdish nation. He was inclined to think that matters had not been made easier by our relations with certain of these elements.

The position had been further complicated by the lamentable repetition of the murder of British political officers. There was no reason to suppose that these murders had been prompted by any general hostility on the part of the Kurds, but the fact must be faced that this was the price we had had to pay for our efforts to solve the local Kurdish problem on the spot. Captain Pearson had been ambushed and murdered at a village called Karoar on the 4th April, 1919; Captain Macdonald and Mr. Wyllie were murdered at Amadia on the 14th July, 1919; and, just recently, news had been received of the murder of Mr. J. H. Bill and Captain K. R. Scott in the Zab Valley, near Aqrah, on the 3rd November. This series of murders was a distressing and disturbing fact, following on the relations we had entered into with the Kurds, and must necessarily affect any discussion of the Kurdish question.

Another complication had been introduced by the fact that some of the officers who had been advising us on the Kurdish question had regarded it as inevitable that the Kurdish question should be tied up with the Armenian question, from which it could not, of course, be altogether disconnected. Having entered the field of Kurdish politics with the best intentions, and without any deep political design, we had thus gradually been drawn into discussions on the fate of Trebizond, Diarbekir and Van, and on the possibility of a final settlement of that part of the country in which Kurds and Armenians were inextricably mixed.

He wished to take this opportunity of saying a word of warning to the Conference. Many of the suggestions which had been put forward at various times had been clearly based on the assumption that His Majesty's Government were prepared to take a mandate or mandates for this part of the world; he felt that he could not lay too much emphasis on the fact that His Majesty's Government had no intention of doing anything of the kind. This being so, it was exceedingly doubtful whether anyone else would. We had hoped at one time that the United States of America might be induced by humanitarian considerations, by their own great wealth, and by their historic association with the Christian populations of Kurdistan and Armenia to undertake this responsibility. This hope must, he thought, be definitely abandoned. There was no likelihood of the Senate, in its present frame of mind, considering for one moment the assumption by the American people of the duty of maintaining order in any part of the late Ottoman Empire.

As to the French, it was quite clear that they had no intention of taking up the rôle of protectors of the Christian populations. It was true that a few weeks ago they had announced their readiness to despatch 12,000 troops for the protection of the Armenians, but, as he had himself foreseen at the time—and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had agreed with him—the intention of the French had undoubtedly been merely to establish themselves in the fat places of Cilicia and Syria, and there was, in his opinion, no prospect of their undertaking the wider responsibility involved in a mandate for Armenia or Kurdistan. There would probably, in that case, be no mandate for this part of the world. If he were asked what would become of it, he confessed himself quite unable to answer. The question must solve itself, but the Conference must accept the



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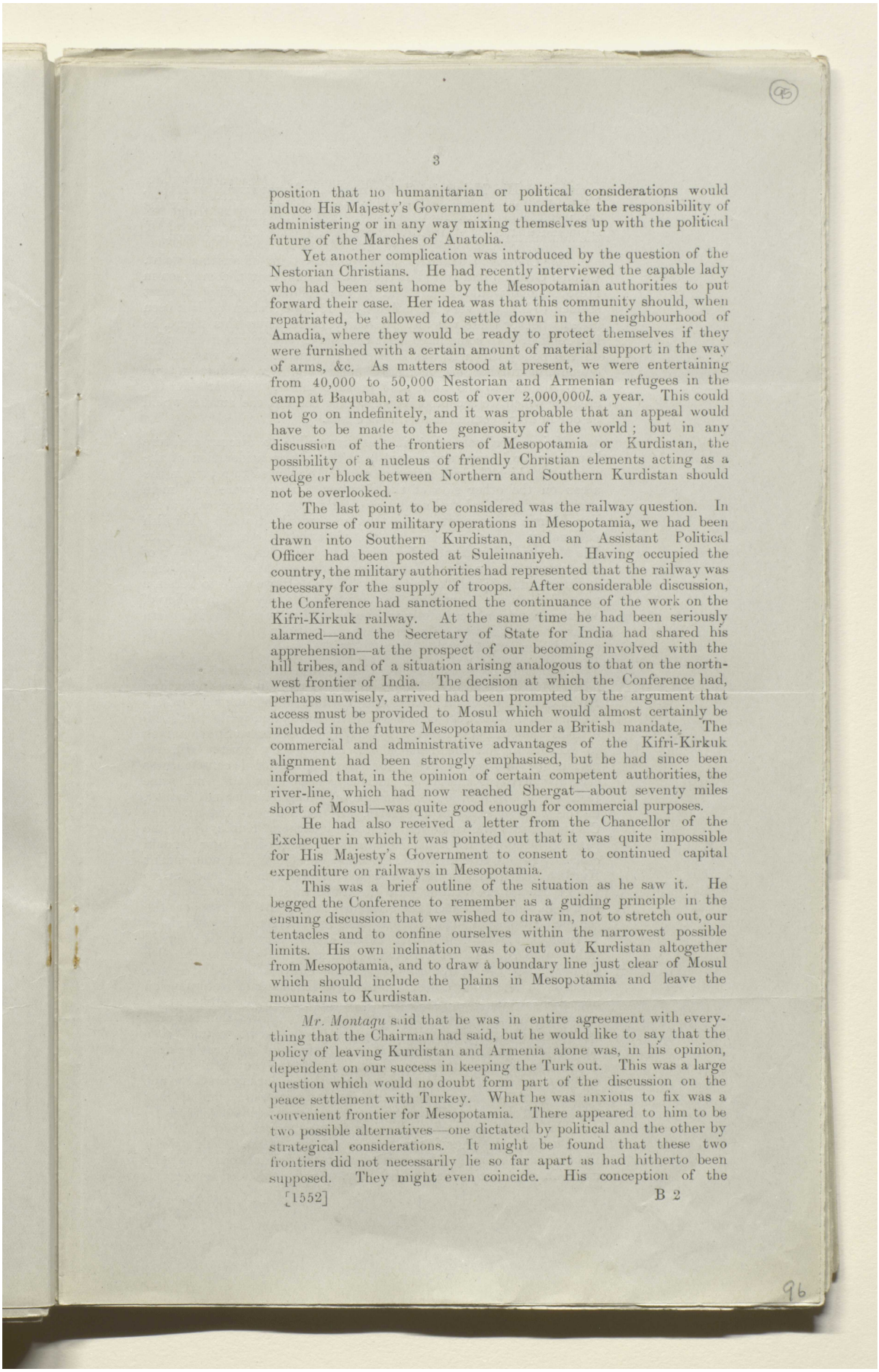



position that no humanitarian or political considerations would induce His Majesty's Government to undertake the responsibility of administering or in any way mixing themselves up with the political future of the Marches of Anatolia.

Yet another complication was introduced by the question of the Nestorian Christians. He had recently interviewed the capable lady who had been sent home by the Mesopotamian authorities to put forward their case. Her idea was that this community should, when repatriated, be allowed to settle down in the neighbourhood of Amadia, where they would be ready to protect themselves if they were furnished with a certain amount of material support in the way of arms, &c. As matters stood at present, we were entertaining from 40,000 to 50,000 Nestorian and Armenian refugees in the camp at Baqubah, at a cost of over 2,000,000*l.* a year. This could not go on indefinitely, and it was probable that an appeal would have to be made to the generosity of the world; but in any discussion of the frontiers of Mesopotamia or Kurdistan, the possibility of a nucleus of friendly Christian elements acting as a wedge or block between Northern and Southern Kurdistan should not be overlooked.

The last point to be considered was the railway question. In the course of our military operations in Mesopotamia, we had been drawn into Southern Kurdistan, and an Assistant Political Officer had been posted at Suleimaniyeh. Having occupied the country, the military authorities had represented that the railway was necessary for the supply of troops. After considerable discussion, the Conference had sanctioned the continuance of the work on the Kifri-Kirkuk railway. At the same time he had been seriously alarmed—and the Secretary of State for India had shared his apprehension—at the prospect of our becoming involved with the hill tribes, and of a situation arising analogous to that on the north-west frontier of India. The decision at which the Conference had, perhaps unwisely, arrived had been prompted by the argument that access must be provided to Mosul which would almost certainly be included in the future Mesopotamia under a British mandate. The commercial and administrative advantages of the Kifri-Kirkuk alignment had been strongly emphasised, but he had since been informed that, in the opinion of certain competent authorities, the river-line, which had now reached Shergat—about seventy miles short of Mosul—was quite good enough for commercial purposes.

He had also received a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer in which it was pointed out that it was quite impossible for His Majesty's Government to consent to continued capital expenditure on railways in Mesopotamia.

This was a brief outline of the situation as he saw it. He begged the Conference to remember as a guiding principle in the ensuing discussion that we wished to draw in, not to stretch out, our tentacles and to confine ourselves within the narrowest possible limits. His own inclination was to cut out Kurdistan altogether from Mesopotamia, and to draw a boundary line just clear of Mosul which should include the plains in Mesopotamia and leave the mountains to Kurdistan.

*Mr. Montagu* said that he was in entire agreement with everything that the Chairman had said, but he would like to say that the policy of leaving Kurdistan and Armenia alone was, in his opinion, dependent on our success in keeping the Turk out. This was a large question which would no doubt form part of the discussion on the peace settlement with Turkey. What he was anxious to fix was a convenient frontier for Mesopotamia. There appeared to him to be two possible alternatives—one dictated by political and the other by strategical considerations. It might be found that these two frontiers did not necessarily lie so far apart as had hitherto been supposed. They might even coincide. His conception of the





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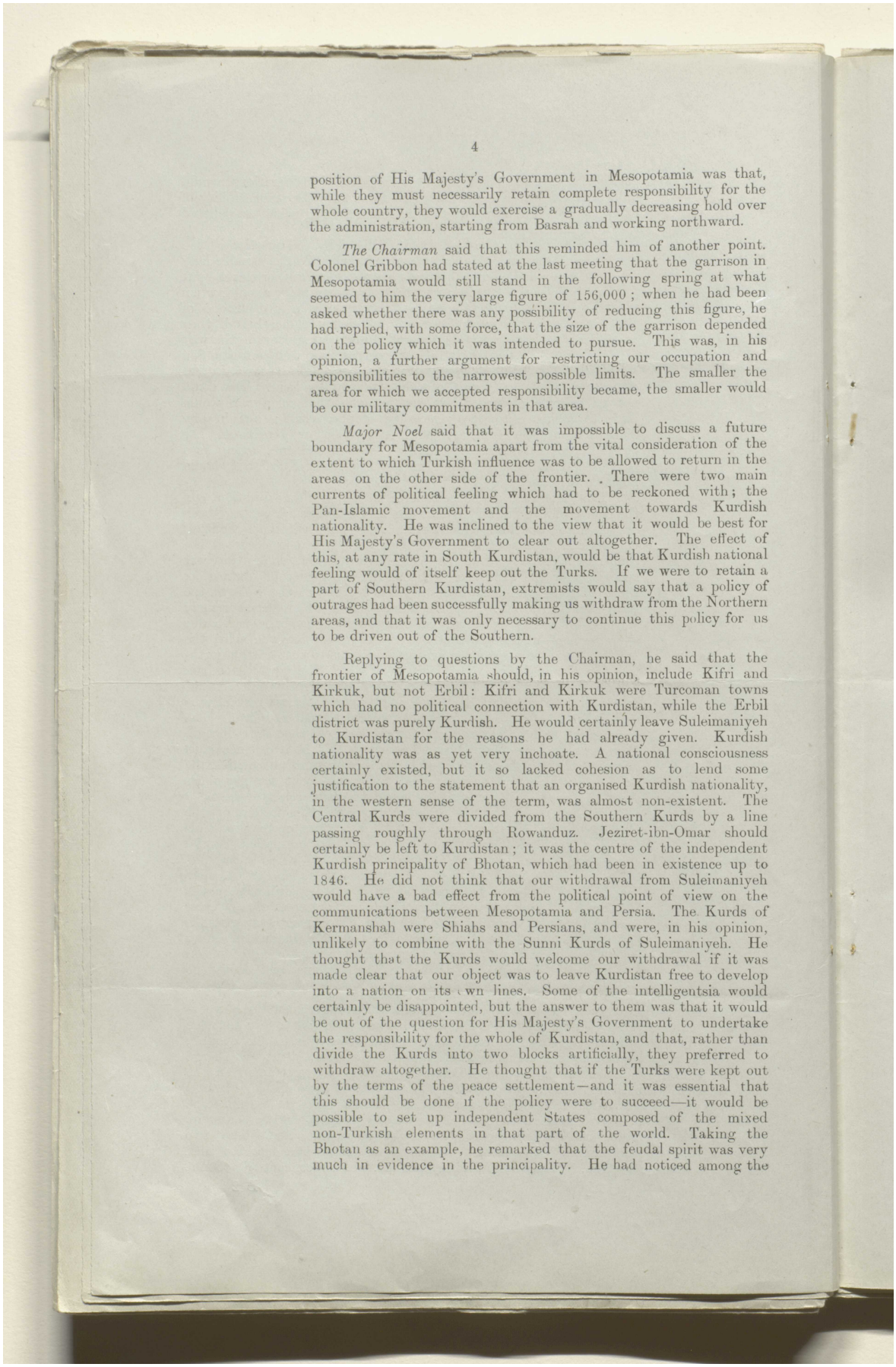



position of His Majesty's Government in Mesopotamia was that, while they must necessarily retain complete responsibility for the whole country, they would exercise a gradually decreasing hold over the administration, starting from Basrah and working northward.

*The Chairman* said that this reminded him of another point. Colonel Gribbon had stated at the last meeting that the garrison in Mesopotamia would still stand in the following spring at what seemed to him the very large figure of 156,000; when he had been asked whether there was any possibility of reducing this figure, he had replied, with some force, that the size of the garrison depended on the policy which it was intended to pursue. This was, in his opinion, a further argument for restricting our occupation and responsibilities to the narrowest possible limits. The smaller the area for which we accepted responsibility became, the smaller would be our military commitments in that area.

*Major Noel* said that it was impossible to discuss a future boundary for Mesopotamia apart from the vital consideration of the extent to which Turkish influence was to be allowed to return in the areas on the other side of the frontier. There were two main currents of political feeling which had to be reckoned with; the Pan-Islamic movement and the movement towards Kurdish nationality. He was inclined to the view that it would be best for His Majesty's Government to clear out altogether. The effect of this, at any rate in South Kurdistan, would be that Kurdish national feeling would of itself keep out the Turks. If we were to retain a part of Southern Kurdistan, extremists would say that a policy of outrages had been successfully making us withdraw from the Northern areas, and that it was only necessary to continue this policy for us to be driven out of the Southern.

Replying to questions by the Chairman, he said that the frontier of Mesopotamia should, in his opinion, include Kifri and Kirkuk, but not Erbil: Kifri and Kirkuk were Turcoman towns which had no political connection with Kurdistan, while the Erbil district was purely Kurdish. He would certainly leave Suleimaniyeh to Kurdistan for the reasons he had already given. Kurdish nationality was as yet very inchoate. A national consciousness certainly existed, but it so lacked cohesion as to lend some justification to the statement that an organised Kurdish nationality, in the western sense of the term, was almost non-existent. The Central Kurds were divided from the Southern Kurds by a line passing roughly through Rowanduz. Jeziret-ibn-Omar should certainly be left to Kurdistan; it was the centre of the independent Kurdish principality of Bhotan, which had been in existence up to 1846. He did not think that our withdrawal from Suleimaniyeh would have a bad effect from the political point of view on the communications between Mesopotamia and Persia. The Kurds of Kermanshah were Shiahs and Persians, and were, in his opinion, unlikely to combine with the Sunni Kurds of Suleimaniyeh. He thought that the Kurds would welcome our withdrawal if it was made clear that our object was to leave Kurdistan free to develop into a nation on its own lines. Some of the intelligentsia would certainly be disappointed, but the answer to them was that it would be out of the question for His Majesty's Government to undertake the responsibility for the whole of Kurdistan, and that, rather than divide the Kurds into two blocks artificially, they preferred to withdraw altogether. He thought that if the Turks were kept out by the terms of the peace settlement—and it was essential that this should be done if the policy were to succeed—it would be possible to set up independent States composed of the mixed non-Turkish elements in that part of the world. Taking the Bhotan as an example, he remarked that the feudal spirit was very much in evidence in the principality. He had noticed among the



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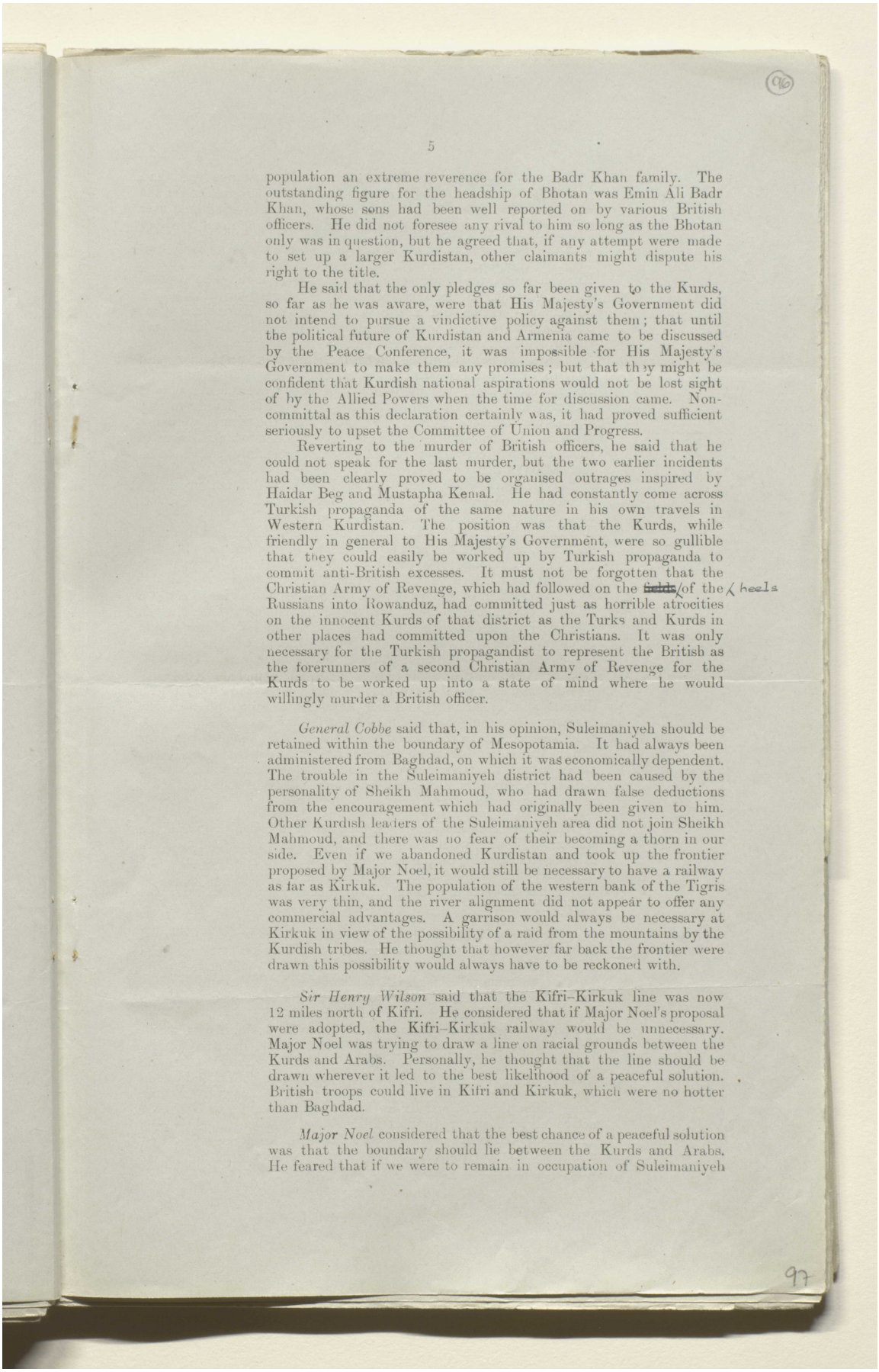

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population an extreme reverence for the Badr Khan family. The outstanding figure for the headship of Bhotan was Emin Ali Badr Khan, whose sons had been well reported on by various British officers. He did not foresee any rival to him so long as the Bhotan only was in question, but he agreed that, if any attempt were made to set up a larger Kurdistan, other claimants might dispute his right to the title.

He said that the only pledges so far been given to the Kurds, so far as he was aware, were that His Majesty's Government did not intend to pursue a vindictive policy against them; that until the political future of Kurdistan and Armenia came to be discussed by the Peace Conference, it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to make them any promises; but that they might be confident that Kurdish national aspirations would not be lost sight of by the Allied Powers when the time for discussion came. Non-committal as this declaration certainly was, it had proved sufficient seriously to upset the Committee of Union and Progress.

Reverting to the murder of British officers, he said that he could not speak for the last murder, but the two earlier incidents had been clearly proved to be organised outrages inspired by Haidar Beg and Mustapha Kemal. He had constantly come across Turkish propaganda of the same nature in his own travels in Western Kurdistan. The position was that the Kurds, while friendly in general to His Majesty's Government, were so gullible that they could easily be worked up by Turkish propaganda to commit anti-British excesses. It must not be forgotten that the Christian Army of Revenge, which had followed on the ~~fields~~/heels of the Russians into Rowanduz, had committed just as horrible atrocities on the innocent Kurds of that district as the Turks and Kurds in other places had committed upon the Christians. It was only necessary for the Turkish propagandist to represent the British as the forerunners of a second Christian Army of Revenge for the Kurds to be worked up into a state of mind where he would willingly murder a British officer.

*General Cobbe* said that, in his opinion, Suleimaniyeh should be retained within the boundary of Mesopotamia. It had always been administered from Baghdad, on which it was economically dependent. The trouble in the Suleimaniyeh district had been caused by the personality of Sheikh Mahmoud, who had drawn false deductions from the encouragement which had originally been given to him. Other Kurdish leaders of the Suleimaniyeh area did not join Sheikh Mahmoud, and there was no fear of their becoming a thorn in our side. Even if we abandoned Kurdistan and took up the frontier proposed by Major Noel, it would still be necessary to have a railway as far as Kirkuk. The population of the western bank of the Tigris was very thin, and the river alignment did not appear to offer any commercial advantages. A garrison would always be necessary at Kirkuk in view of the possibility of a raid from the mountains by the Kurdish tribes. He thought that however far back the frontier were drawn this possibility would always have to be reckoned with.

*Sir Henry Wilson* said that the Kifri–Kirkuk line was now 12 miles north of Kifri. He considered that if Major Noel's proposal were adopted, the Kifri–Kirkuk railway would be unnecessary. Major Noel was trying to draw a line on racial grounds between the Kurds and Arabs. Personally, he thought that the line should be drawn wherever it led to the best likelihood of a peaceful solution. British troops could live in Kifri and Kirkuk, which were no hotter than Baghdad.

*Major Noel* considered that the best chance of a peaceful solution was that the boundary should lie between the Kurds and Arabs. He feared that if we were to remain in occupation of Suleimaniyeh

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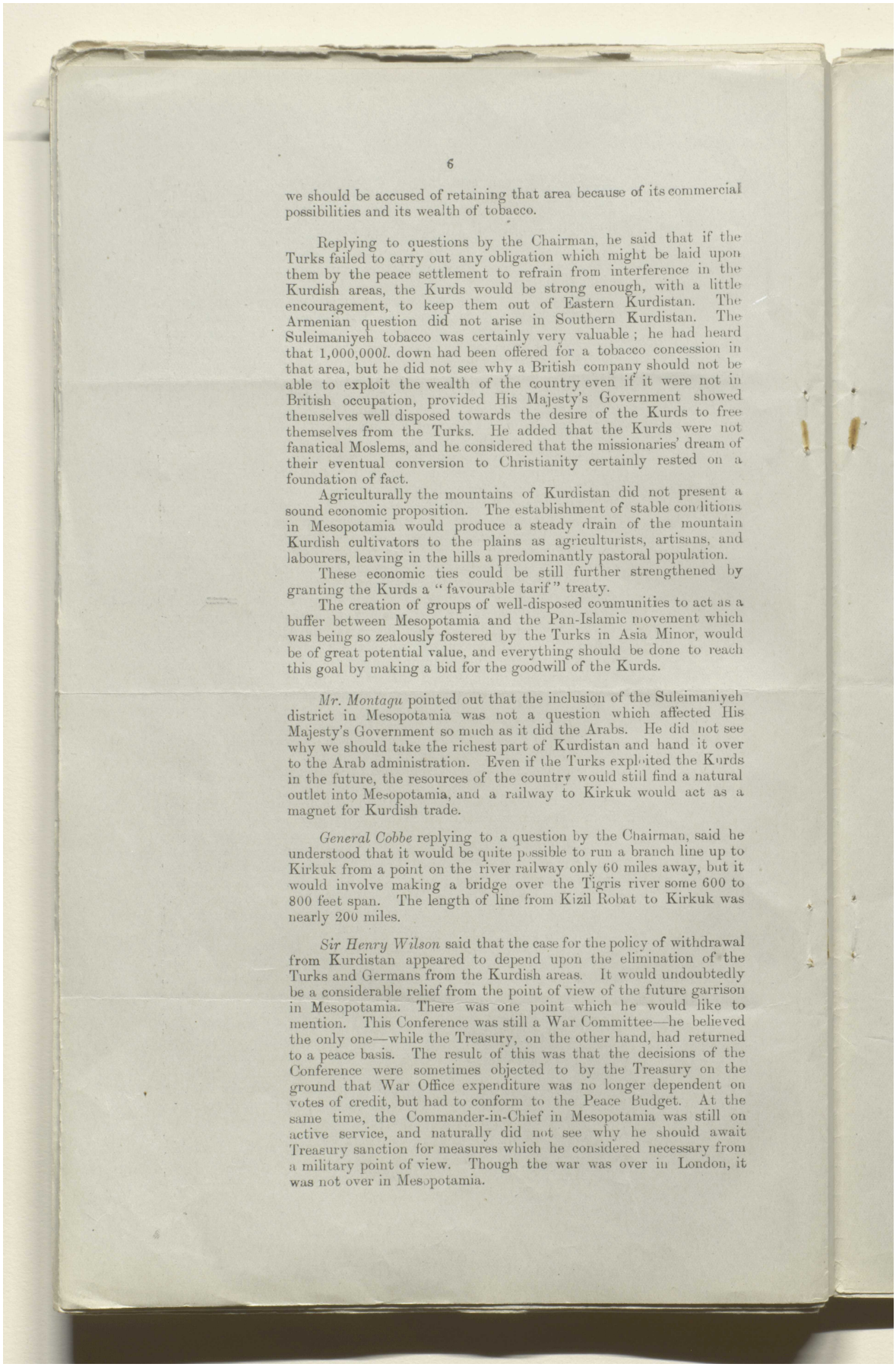



we should be accused of retaining that area because of its commercial possibilities and its wealth of tobacco.

Replying to questions by the Chairman, he said that if the Turks failed to carry out any obligation which might be laid upon them by the peace settlement to refrain from interference in the Kurdish areas, the Kurds would be strong enough, with a little encouragement, to keep them out of Eastern Kurdistan. The Armenian question did not arise in Southern Kurdistan. The Suleimaniyeh tobacco was certainly very valuable; he had heard that 1,000,000*l.* down had been offered for a tobacco concession in that area, but he did not see why a British company should not be able to exploit the wealth of the country even if it were not in British occupation, provided His Majesty's Government showed themselves well disposed towards the desire of the Kurds to free themselves from the Turks. He added that the Kurds were not fanatical Moslems, and he considered that the missionaries' dream of their eventual conversion to Christianity certainly rested on a foundation of fact.

Agriculturally the mountains of Kurdistan did not present a sound economic proposition. The establishment of stable conditions in Mesopotamia would produce a steady drain of the mountain Kurdish cultivators to the plains as agriculturists, artisans, and labourers, leaving in the hills a predominantly pastoral population.

These economic ties could be still further strengthened by granting the Kurds a "favourable tarif" treaty.

The creation of groups of well-disposed communities to act as a buffer between Mesopotamia and the Pan-Islamic movement which was being so zealously fostered by the Turks in Asia Minor, would be of great potential value, and everything should be done to reach this goal by making a bid for the goodwill of the Kurds.

*Mr. Montagu* pointed out that the inclusion of the Suleimaniyeh district in Mesopotamia was not a question which affected His Majesty's Government so much as it did the Arabs. He did not see why we should take the richest part of Kurdistan and hand it over to the Arab administration. Even if the Turks exploited the Kurds in the future, the resources of the country would still find a natural outlet into Mesopotamia, and a railway to Kirkuk would act as a magnet for Kurdish trade.

*General Cobbe* replying to a question by the Chairman, said he understood that it would be quite possible to run a branch line up to Kirkuk from a point on the river railway only 60 miles away, but it would involve making a bridge over the Tigris river some 600 to 800 feet span. The length of line from Kizil Robat to Kirkuk was nearly 200 miles.

*Sir Henry Wilson* said that the case for the policy of withdrawal from Kurdistan appeared to depend upon the elimination of the Turks and Germans from the Kurdish areas. It would undoubtedly be a considerable relief from the point of view of the future garrison in Mesopotamia. There was one point which he would like to mention. This Conference was still a War Committee—he believed the only one—while the Treasury, on the other hand, had returned to a peace basis. The result of this was that the decisions of the Conference were sometimes objected to by the Treasury on the ground that War Office expenditure was no longer dependent on votes of credit, but had to conform to the Peace Budget. At the same time, the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia was still on active service, and naturally did not see why he should await Treasury sanction for measures which he considered necessary from a military point of view. Though the war was over in London, it was not over in Mesopotamia.



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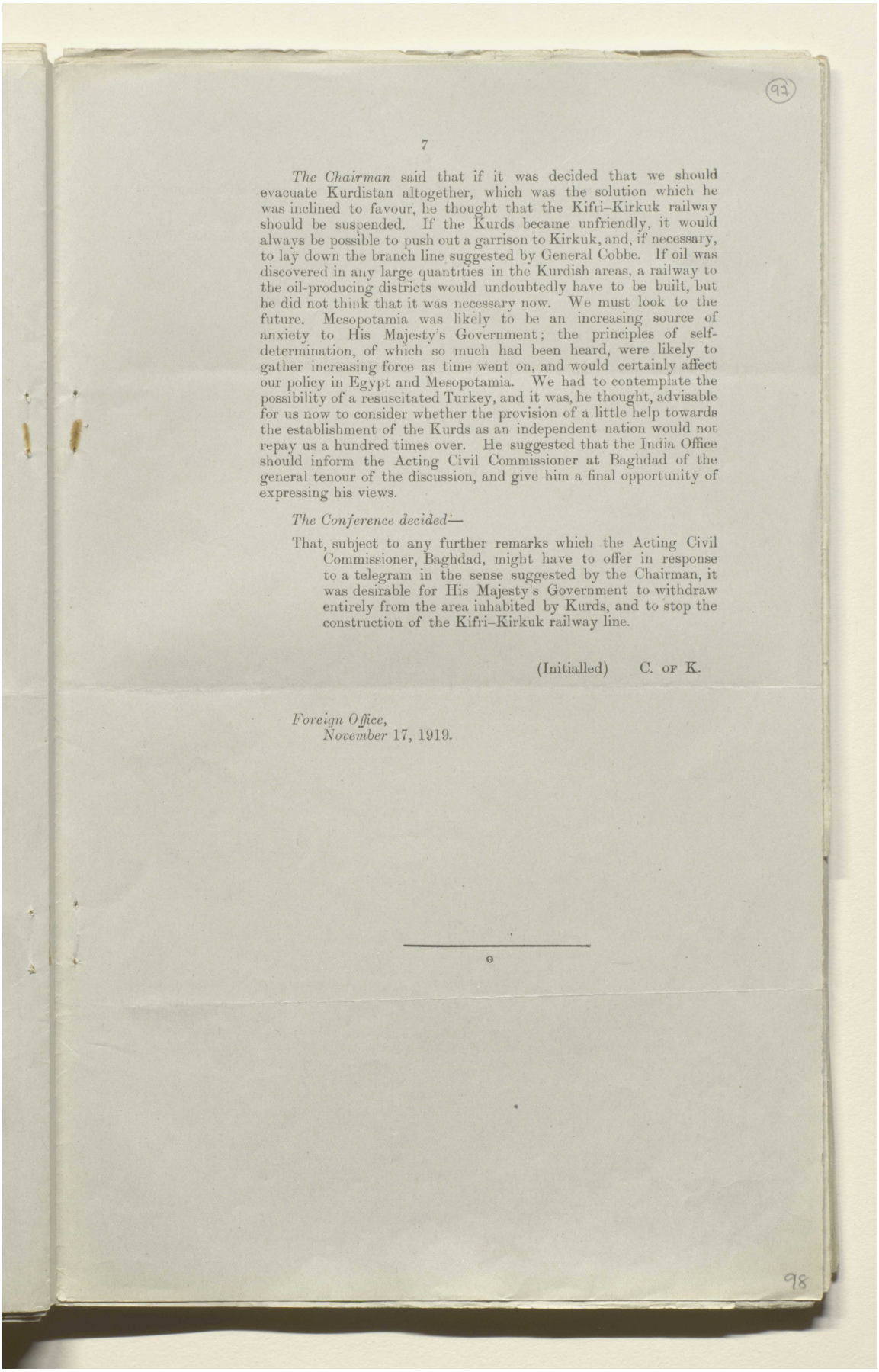

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*The Chairman* said that if it was decided that we should evacuate Kurdistan altogether, which was the solution which he was inclined to favour, he thought that the Kifri–Kirkuk railway should be suspended. If the Kurds became unfriendly, it would always be possible to push out a garrison to Kirkuk, and, if necessary, to lay down the branch line suggested by General Cobbe. If oil was discovered in any large quantities in the Kurdish areas, a railway to the oil-producing districts would undoubtedly have to be built, but he did not think that it was necessary now. We must look to the future. Mesopotamia was likely to be an increasing source of anxiety to His Majesty's Government; the principles of self-determination, of which so much had been heard, were likely to gather increasing force as time went on, and would certainly affect our policy in Egypt and Mesopotamia. We had to contemplate the possibility of a resuscitated Turkey, and it was, he thought, advisable for us now to consider whether the provision of a little help towards the establishment of the Kurds as an independent nation would not repay us a hundred times over. He suggested that the India Office should inform the Acting Civil Commissioner at Baghdad of the general tenour of the discussion, and give him a final opportunity of expressing his views.

*The Conference decided*—

That, subject to any further remarks which the Acting Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, might have to offer in response to a telegram in the sense suggested by the Chairman, it was desirable for His Majesty's Government to withdraw entirely from the area inhabited by Kurds, and to stop the construction of the Kifri–Kirkuk railway line.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*November* 17, 1919.

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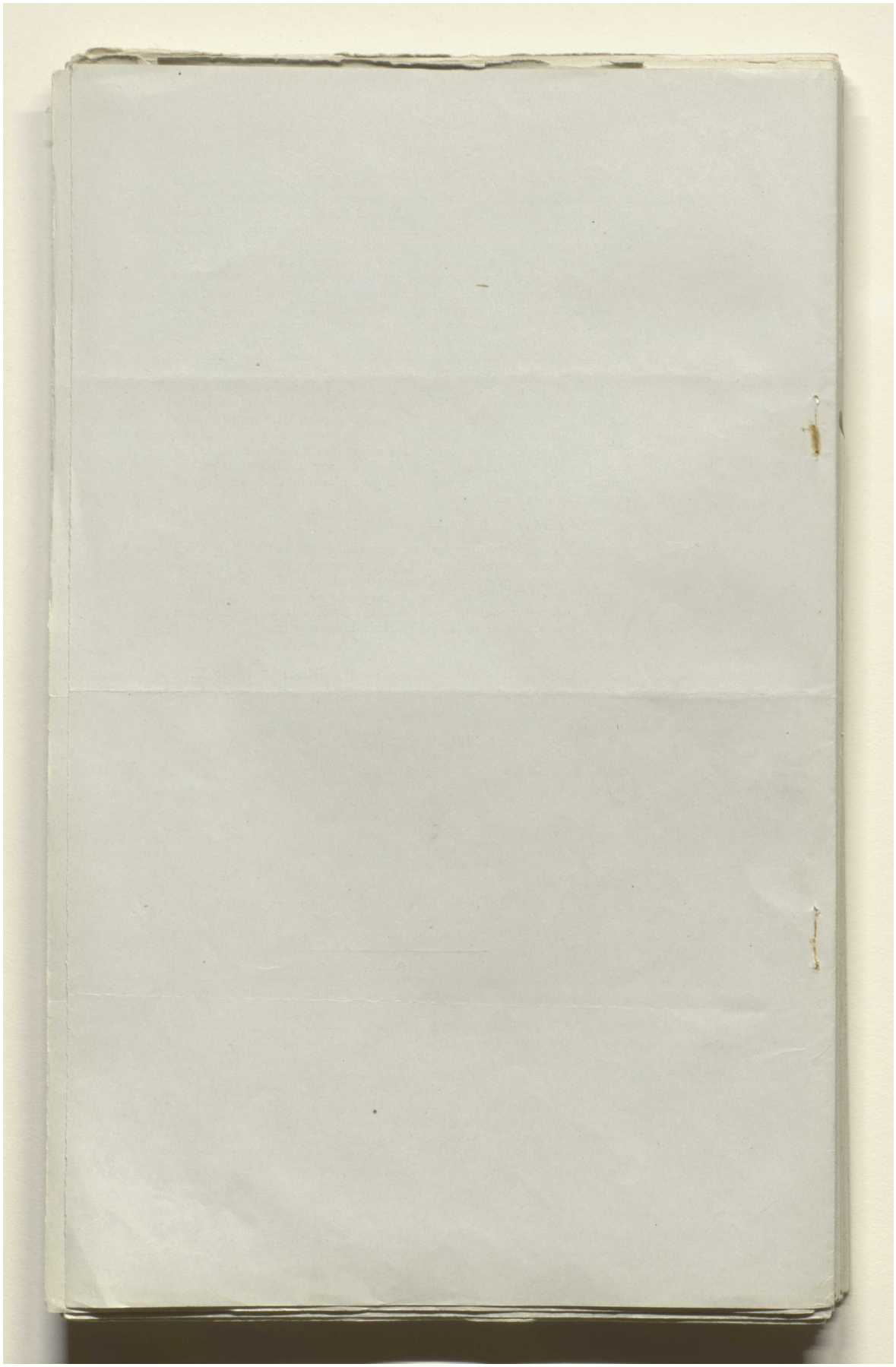

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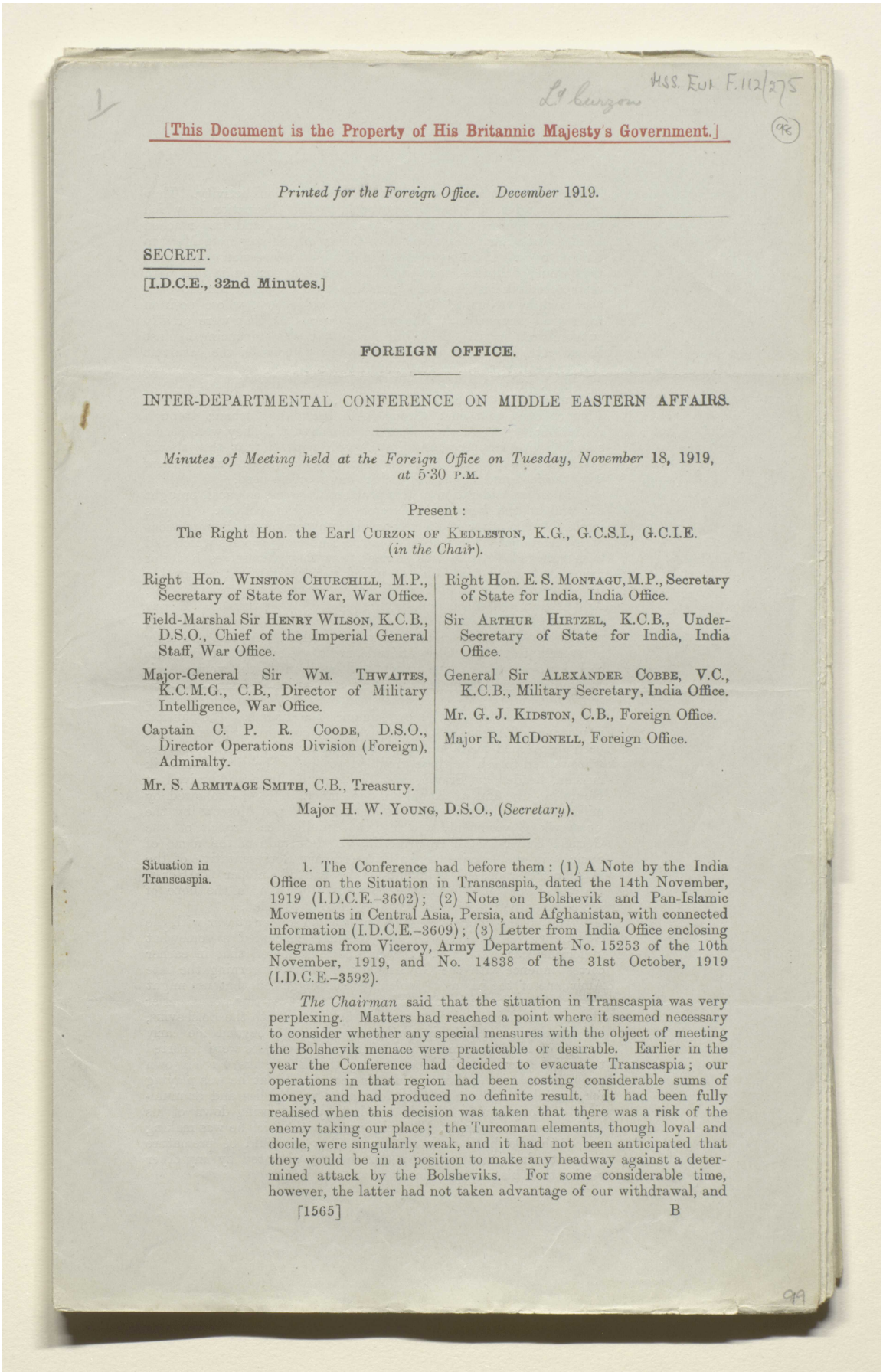

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Lord Curzon

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[I.D.C.E., 32nd Minutes.]

FOREIGN OFFICE.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, November* 18, 1919, *at* 5·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Right Hon. WINSTON CHURCHILL, M.P., Secretary of State for War, War Office.

Field-Marshal Sir HENRY WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff, War Office.

Major-General Sir WM. THWAITES, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence, War Office.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, D.S.O., Director Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Mr. S. ARMITAGE SMITH, C.B., Treasury.

Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Under-Secretary of State for India, India Office.

General Sir ALEXANDER COBBE, V.C., K.C.B., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, C.B., Foreign Office.

Major R. MCDONELL, Foreign Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O., (*Secretary*).

Situation in Transcaspia.

1. The Conference had before them: (1) A Note by the India Office on the Situation in Transcaspia, dated the 14th November, 1919 (I.D.C.E.–3602); (2) Note on Bolshevik and Pan-Islamic Movements in Central Asia, Persia, and Afghanistan, with connected information (I.D.C.E.–3609); (3) Letter from India Office enclosing telegrams from Viceroy, Army Department No. 15253 of the 10th November, 1919, and No. 14838 of the 31st October, 1919 (I.D.C.E.–3592).

*The Chairman* said that the situation in Transcaspia was very perplexing. Matters had reached a point where it seemed necessary to consider whether any special measures with the object of meeting the Bolshevik menace were practicable or desirable. Earlier in the year the Conference had decided to evacuate Transcaspia; our operations in that region had been costing considerable sums of money, and had produced no definite result. It had been fully realised when this decision was taken that there was a risk of the enemy taking our place; the Turcoman elements, though loyal and docile, were singularly weak, and it had not been anticipated that they would be in a position to make any headway against a determined attack by the Bolsheviks. For some considerable time, however, the latter had not taken advantage of our withdrawal, and





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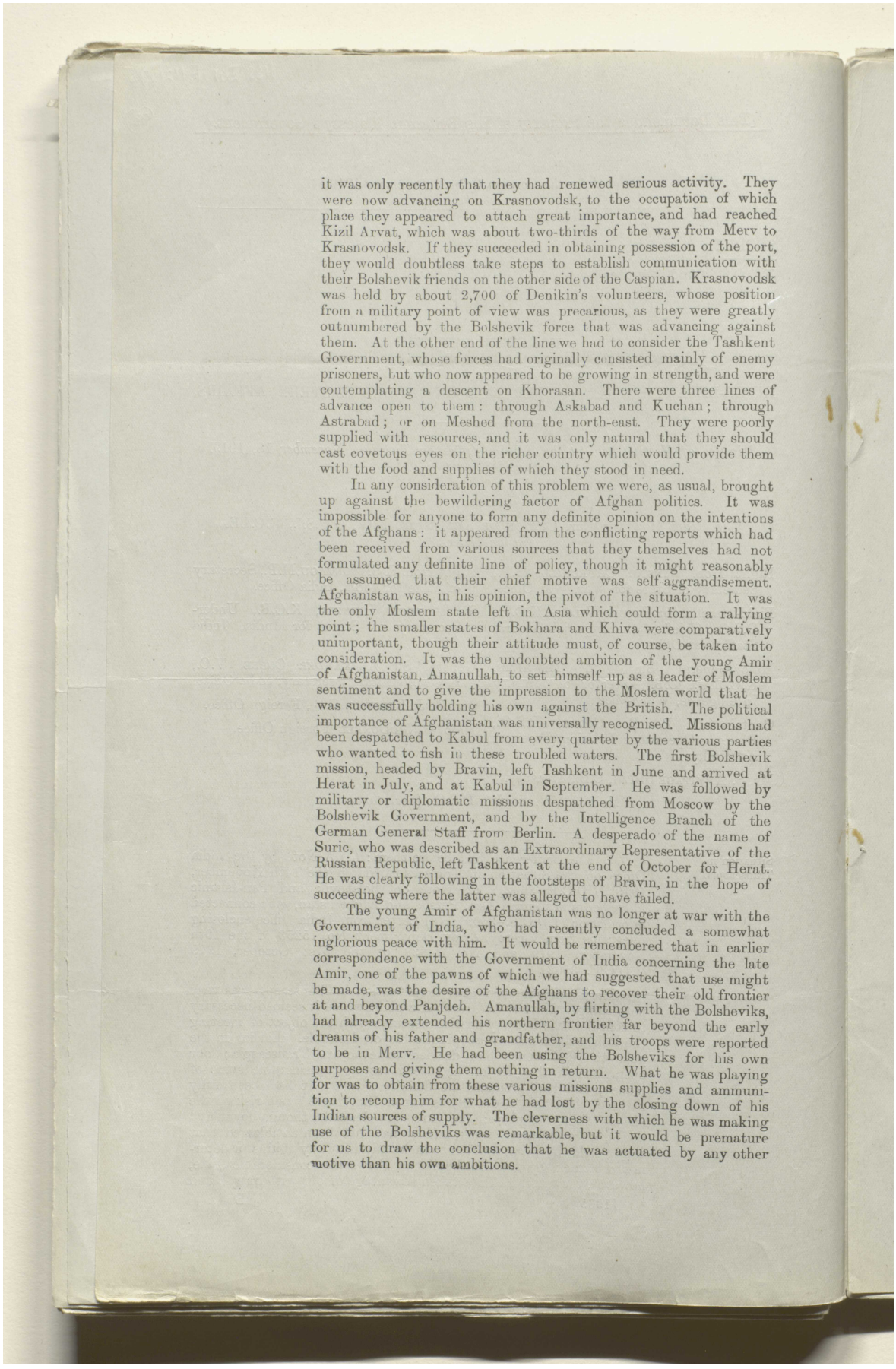

it was only recently that they had renewed serious activity. They were now advancing on Krasnovodsk, to the occupation of which place they appeared to attach great importance, and had reached Kizil Arvat, which was about two-thirds of the way from Merv to Krasnovodsk. If they succeeded in obtaining possession of the port, they would doubtless take steps to establish communication with their Bolshevik friends on the other side of the Caspian. Krasnovodsk was held by about 2,700 of Denikin's volunteers, whose position from a military point of view was precarious, as they were greatly outnumbered by the Bolshevik force that was advancing against them. At the other end of the line we had to consider the Tashkent Government, whose forces had originally consisted mainly of enemy prisoners, but who now appeared to be growing in strength, and were contemplating a descent on Khorasan. There were three lines of advance open to them: through Askabad and Kuchan; through Astrabad; or on Meshed from the north-east. They were poorly supplied with resources, and it was only natural that they should cast covetous eyes on the richer country which would provide them with the food and supplies of which they stood in need.

In any consideration of this problem we were, as usual, brought up against the bewildering factor of Afghan politics. It was impossible for anyone to form any definite opinion on the intentions of the Afghans: it appeared from the conflicting reports which had been received from various sources that they themselves had not formulated any definite line of policy, though it might reasonably be assumed that their chief motive was self-aggrandisement. Afghanistan was, in his opinion, the pivot of the situation. It was the only Moslem state left in Asia which could form a rallying point; the smaller states of Bokhara and Khiva were comparatively unimportant, though their attitude must, of course, be taken into consideration. It was the undoubted ambition of the young Amir of Afghanistan, Amanullah, to set himself up as a leader of Moslem sentiment and to give the impression to the Moslem world that he was successfully holding his own against the British. The political importance of Afghanistan was universally recognised. Missions had been despatched to Kabul from every quarter by the various parties who wanted to fish in these troubled waters. The first Bolshevik mission, headed by Bravin, left Tashkent in June and arrived at Herat in July, and at Kabul in September. He was followed by military or diplomatic missions despatched from Moscow by the Bolshevik Government, and by the Intelligence Branch of the German General Staff from Berlin. A desperado of the name of Suric, who was described as an Extraordinary Representative of the Russian Republic, left Tashkent at the end of October for Herat. He was clearly following in the footsteps of Bravin, in the hope of succeeding where the latter was alleged to have failed.

The young Amir of Afghanistan was no longer at war with the Government of India, who had recently concluded a somewhat inglorious peace with him. It would be remembered that in earlier correspondence with the Government of India concerning the late Amir, one of the pawns of which we had suggested that use might be made, was the desire of the Afghans to recover their old frontier at and beyond Panjdeh. Amanullah, by flirting with the Bolsheviks, had already extended his northern frontier far beyond the early dreams of his father and grandfather, and his troops were reported to be in Merv. He had been using the Bolsheviks for his own purposes and giving them nothing in return. What he was playing for was to obtain from these various missions supplies and ammunition to recoup him for what he had lost by the closing down of his Indian sources of supply. The cleverness with which he was making use of the Bolsheviks was remarkable, but it would be premature for us to draw the conclusion that he was actuated by any other motive than his own ambitions.



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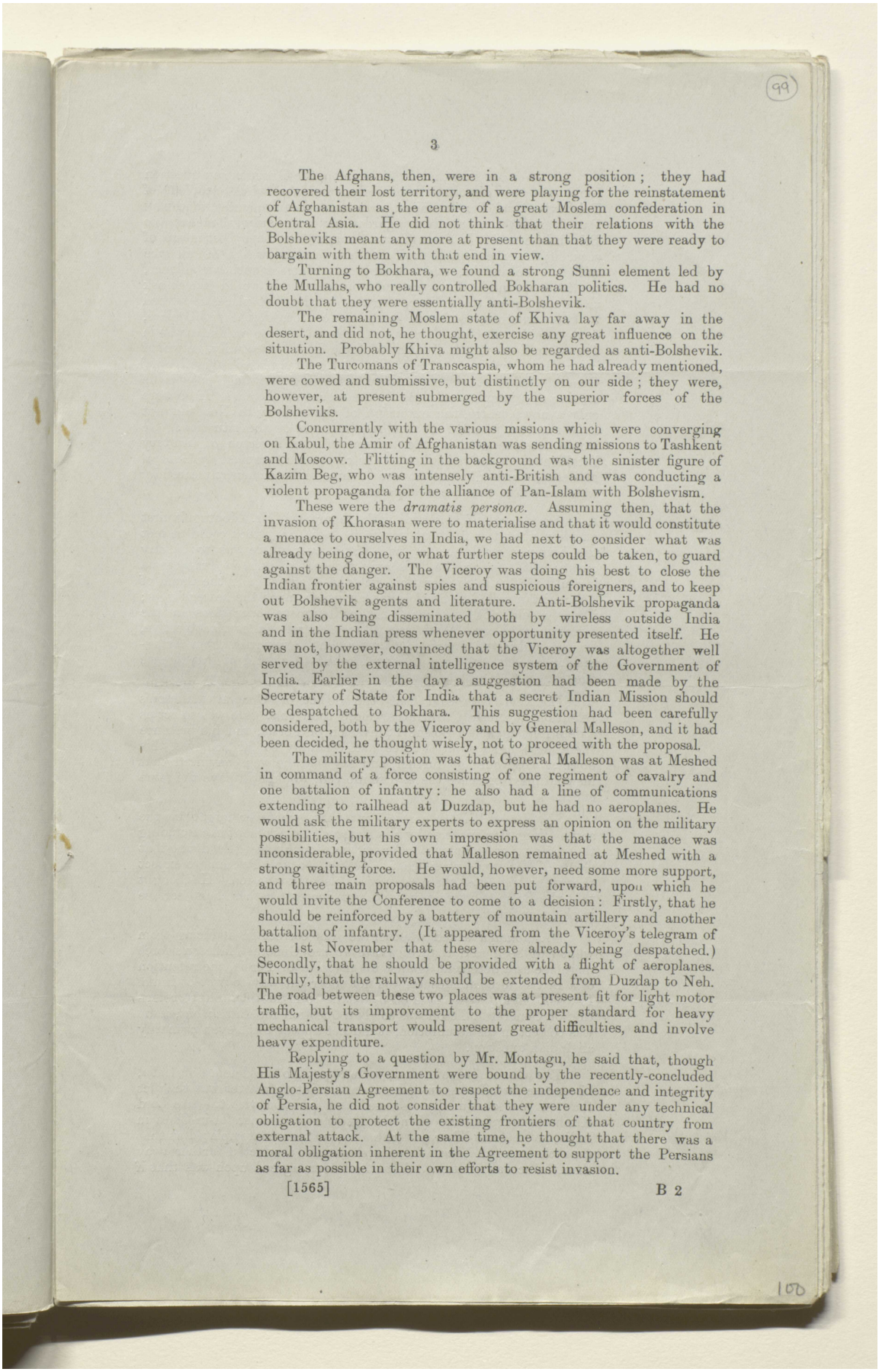



The Afghans, then, were in a strong position; they had recovered their lost territory, and were playing for the reinstatement of Afghanistan as the centre of a great Moslem confederation in Central Asia. He did not think that their relations with the Bolsheviks meant any more at present than that they were ready to bargain with them with that end in view.

Turning to Bokhara, we found a strong Sunni element led by the Mullahs, who really controlled Bokharan politics. He had no doubt that they were essentially anti-Bolshevik.

The remaining Moslem state of Khiva lay far away in the desert, and did not, he thought, exercise any great influence on the situation. Probably Khiva might also be regarded as anti-Bolshevik.

The Turcomans of Transcaspia, whom he had already mentioned, were cowed and submissive, but distinctly on our side; they were, however, at present submerged by the superior forces of the Bolsheviks.

Concurrently with the various missions which were converging on Kabul, the Amir of Afghanistan was sending missions to Tashkent and Moscow. Flitting in the background was the sinister figure of Kazim Beg, who was intensely anti-British and was conducting a violent propaganda for the alliance of Pan-Islam with Bolshevism.

These were the *dramatis personæ*. Assuming then, that the invasion of Khorasan were to materialise and that it would constitute a menace to ourselves in India, we had next to consider what was already being done, or what further steps could be taken, to guard against the danger. The Viceroy was doing his best to close the Indian frontier against spies and suspicious foreigners, and to keep out Bolshevik agents and literature. Anti-Bolshevik propaganda was also being disseminated both by wireless outside India and in the Indian press whenever opportunity presented itself. He was not, however, convinced that the Viceroy was altogether well served by the external intelligence system of the Government of India. Earlier in the day a suggestion had been made by the Secretary of State for India that a secret Indian Mission should be despatched to Bokhara. This suggestion had been carefully considered, both by the Viceroy and by General Malleson, and it had been decided, he thought wisely, not to proceed with the proposal.

The military position was that General Malleson was at Meshed in command of a force consisting of one regiment of cavalry and one battalion of infantry: he also had a line of communications extending to railhead at Duzdap, but he had no aeroplanes. He would ask the military experts to express an opinion on the military possibilities, but his own impression was that the menace was inconsiderable, provided that Malleson remained at Meshed with a strong waiting force. He would, however, need some more support, and three main proposals had been put forward, upon which he would invite the Conference to come to a decision: Firstly, that he should be reinforced by a battery of mountain artillery and another battalion of infantry. (It appeared from the Viceroy's telegram of the 1st November that these were already being despatched.) Secondly, that he should be provided with a flight of aeroplanes. Thirdly, that the railway should be extended from Duzdap to Neh. The road between these two places was at present fit for light motor traffic, but its improvement to the proper standard for heavy mechanical transport would present great difficulties, and involve heavy expenditure.

Replying to a question by Mr. Montagu, he said that, though His Majesty's Government were bound by the recently-concluded Anglo-Persian Agreement to respect the independence and integrity of Persia, he did not consider that they were under any technical obligation to protect the existing frontiers of that country from external attack. At the same time, he thought that there was a moral obligation inherent in the Agreement to support the Persians as far as possible in their own efforts to resist invasion.





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*Mr. Montagu* said that, in his opinion, the Transcaspian question could not be discussed separately from the whole problem of Bolshevism and Pan-Islamism. He did not quite understand why Pan-Islamism was always regarded as necessarily a menace to British interests. If the Afghans thought that their best means of securing the extension of their northern frontiers was by an alliance with the Bolsheviks, they would surely contract such an alliance, whatever we might do to try and stop them. He would like to ask two questions of the military experts: in the first place, he wished to know whether, so far as India was concerned, the right place, from a military point of view, to meet an attack on India was in Transcaspia or on the frontier of India itself. Secondly, he would be glad to know what was the real contemplated objective of General Malleson. Was he merely showing the flag, or was he serving as a jumping-off place for the defence of Persia? If he were only a news centre, the extension of the railway to Neh did not appear to be justified by the requirements of the situation. He would also be glad of the opinion of the Director of Military Intelligence on the reliability of the reports telegraphed by General Malleson, which did not appear to him to be sufficiently carefully weighed before they were despatched.

*Sir Henry Wilson* said, with regard to Mr. Montagu's first question, that the further away from India an attack could be met the better it would be for us. If, however, there was to be any question of meeting the Bolshevik menace to India in Transcaspia it could only be in co-operation with the Afghans. If the Amir of Afghanistan would fight the Bolsheviks, so much the better for us; if he would not, we could not contemplate operations in the direction of Merv. With regard to General Malleson's objective, he was under the impression that when he returned from Transcaspia, he was only retained at Meshed as a kind of intelligence agency.

*The Chairman* said that the object of General Malleson's retention at Meshed was rather more than this. He was to act as a deterrent against a Bolshevik invasion of Persia, and his presence there with a substantial force had certainly so far achieved this object. He would go further, and say that he was convinced that his continued presence there, if reinforced, would still have the same effect.

*Sir Henry Wilson* pointed out that, whatever might be the actual obligation incurred by His Majesty's Government in concluding the recent Agreement with Persia, there could be little doubt that General Malleson's presence at Meshed led the Persians to expect that we would assist them against a Bolshevik invasion. He thought that the Bolshevik threat was likely to increase rather than decrease in the near future.

*Mr. Montagu* asked whether he was correct in deducing from what had been said that, of whatever use General Malleson's force might be as a deterrent against an invasion of Persia, the retention of a British force at Meshed was not the right way to protect India. It would, in any case, have been absurd to maintain that the retention of General Malleson was solely a question for India; but, if he was correct in his assumption, it did not appear to be even primarily an Indian question.

*The Chairman* said that, with regard to the defence of India, his excuse for offering an opinion on a military matter was the fact that he had continually discussed the question with the late Lord Kitchener at the time when the latter was Commander-in-Chief in India, and he was Viceroy. It had never been contemplated at that time that the defence of India should be conducted further away than the actual frontier. What had been agreed upon was that if



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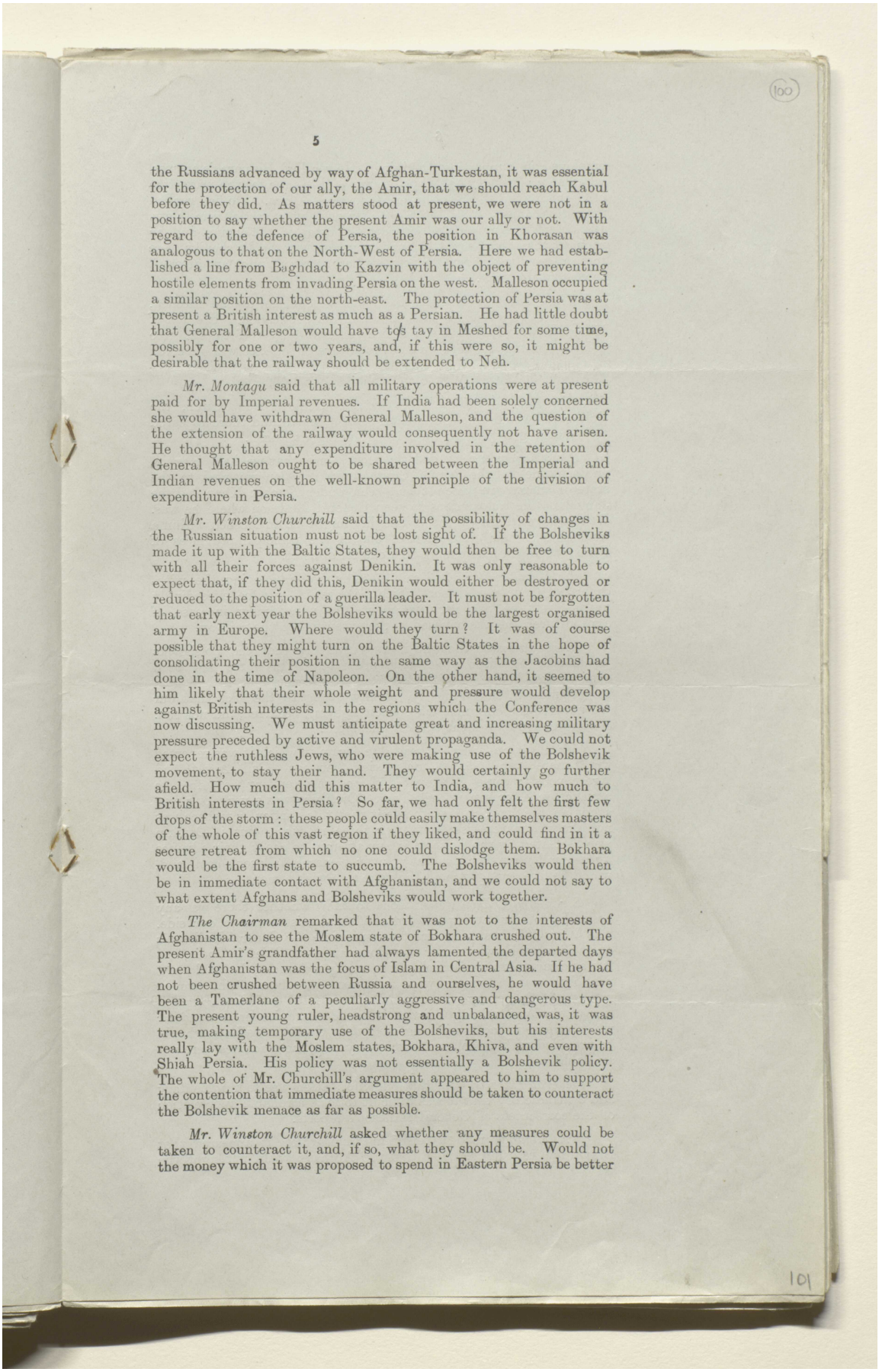

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the Russians advanced by way of Afghan-Turkestan, it was essential for the protection of our ally, the Amir, that we should reach Kabul before they did. As matters stood at present, we were not in a position to say whether the present Amir was our ally or not. With regard to the defence of Persia, the position in Khorasan was analogous to that on the North-West of Persia. Here we had established a line from Baghdad to Kazvin with the object of preventing hostile elements from invading Persia on the west. Malleson occupied a similar position on the north-east. The protection of Persia was at present a British interest as much as a Persian. He had little doubt that General Malleson would have to stay in Meshed for some time, possibly for one or two years, and, if this were so, it might be desirable that the railway should be extended to Neh.

*Mr. Montagu* said that all military operations were at present paid for by Imperial revenues. If India had been solely concerned she would have withdrawn General Malleson, and the question of the extension of the railway would consequently not have arisen. He thought that any expenditure involved in the retention of General Malleson ought to be shared between the Imperial and Indian revenues on the well-known principle of the division of expenditure in Persia.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said that the possibility of changes in the Russian situation must not be lost sight of. If the Bolsheviks made it up with the Baltic States, they would then be free to turn with all their forces against Denikin. It was only reasonable to expect that, if they did this, Denikin would either be destroyed or reduced to the position of a guerilla leader. It must not be forgotten that early next year the Bolsheviks would be the largest organised army in Europe. Where would they turn? It was of course possible that they might turn on the Baltic States in the hope of consolidating their position in the same way as the Jacobins had done in the time of Napoleon. On the other hand, it seemed to him likely that their whole weight and pressure would develop against British interests in the regions which the Conference was now discussing. We must anticipate great and increasing military pressure preceded by active and virulent propaganda. We could not expect the ruthless Jews, who were making use of the Bolshevik movement, to stay their hand. They would certainly go further afield. How much did this matter to India, and how much to British interests in Persia? So far, we had only felt the first few drops of the storm: these people could easily make themselves masters of the whole of this vast region if they liked, and could find in it a secure retreat from which no one could dislodge them. Bokhara would be the first state to succumb. The Bolsheviks would then be in immediate contact with Afghanistan, and we could not say to what extent Afghans and Bolsheviks would work together.

*The Chairman* remarked that it was not to the interests of Afghanistan to see the Moslem state of Bokhara crushed out. The present Amir's grandfather had always lamented the departed days when Afghanistan was the focus of Islam in Central Asia. If he had not been crushed between Russia and ourselves, he would have been a Tamerlane of a peculiarly aggressive and dangerous type. The present young ruler, headstrong and unbalanced, was, it was true, making temporary use of the Bolsheviks, but his interests really lay with the Moslem states, Bokhara, Khiva, and even with Shiah Persia. His policy was not essentially a Bolshevik policy. The whole of Mr. Churchill's argument appeared to him to support the contention that immediate measures should be taken to counteract the Bolshevik menace as far as possible.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* asked whether any measures could be taken to counteract it, and, if so, what they should be. Would not the money which it was proposed to spend in Eastern Persia be better

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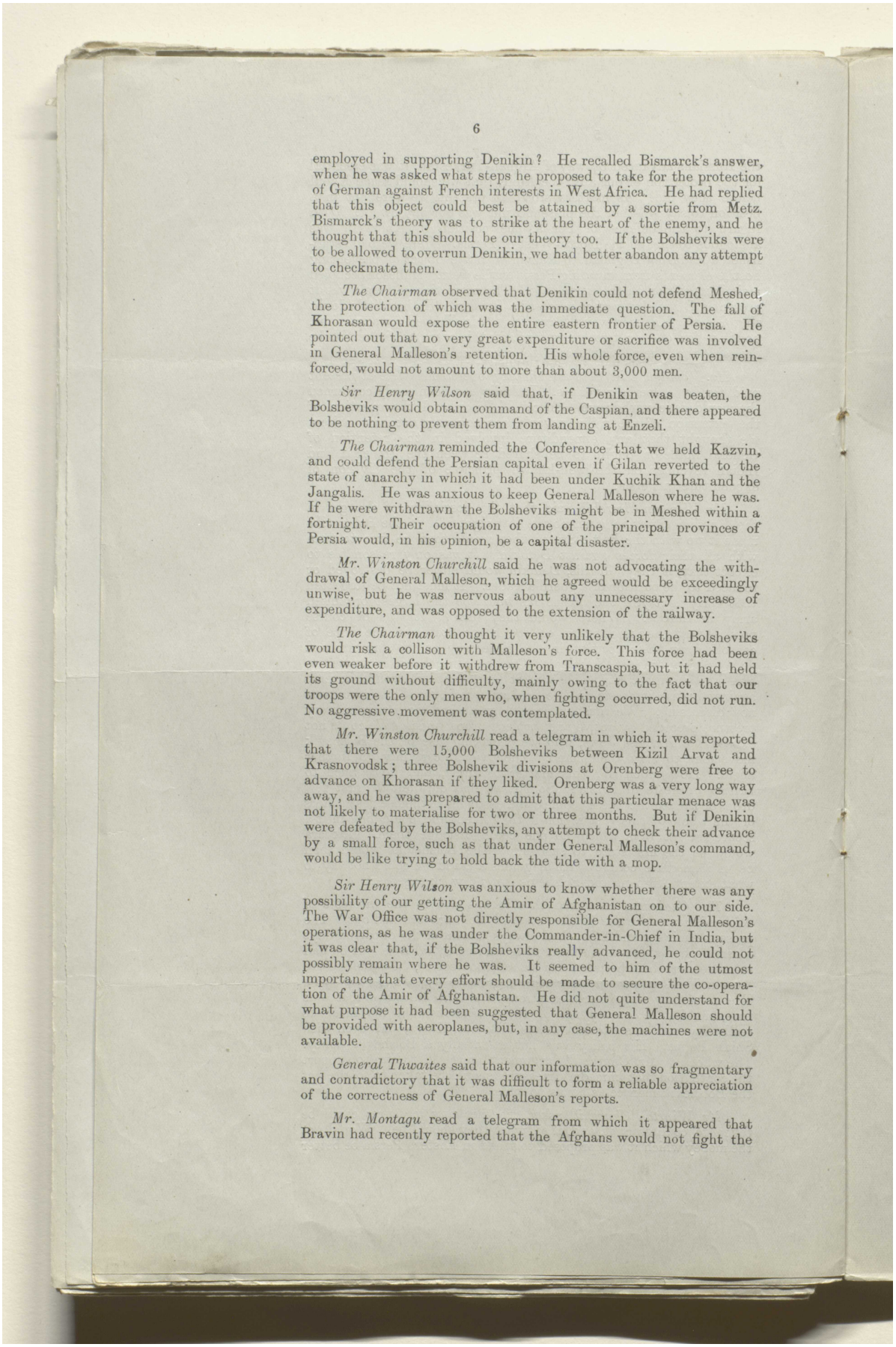



employed in supporting Denikin? He recalled Bismarck's answer, when he was asked what steps he proposed to take for the protection of German against French interests in West Africa. He had replied that this object could best be attained by a sortie from Metz. Bismarck's theory was to strike at the heart of the enemy, and he thought that this should be our theory too. If the Bolsheviks were to be allowed to overrun Denikin, we had better abandon any attempt to checkmate them.

*The Chairman* observed that Denikin could not defend Meshed, the protection of which was the immediate question. The fall of Khorasan would expose the entire eastern frontier of Persia. He pointed out that no very great expenditure or sacrifice was involved in General Malleson's retention. His whole force, even when reinforced, would not amount to more than about 3,000 men.

*Sir Henry Wilson* said that, if Denikin was beaten, the Bolsheviks would obtain command of the Caspian, and there appeared to be nothing to prevent them from landing at Enzeli.

*The Chairman* reminded the Conference that we held Kazvin, and could defend the Persian capital even if Gilan reverted to the state of anarchy in which it had been under Kuchik Khan and the Jangalis. He was anxious to keep General Malleson where he was. If he were withdrawn the Bolsheviks might be in Meshed within a fortnight. Their occupation of one of the principal provinces of Persia would, in his opinion, be a capital disaster.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said he was not advocating the withdrawal of General Malleson, which he agreed would be exceedingly unwise, but he was nervous about any unnecessary increase of expenditure, and was opposed to the extension of the railway.

*The Chairman* thought it very unlikely that the Bolsheviks would risk a collison with Malleson's force. This force had been even weaker before it withdrew from Transcaspia, but it had held its ground without difficulty, mainly owing to the fact that our troops were the only men who, when fighting occurred, did not run. No aggressive movement was contemplated.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* read a telegram in which it was reported that there were 15,000 Bolsheviks between Kizil Arvat and Krasnovodsk; three Bolshevik divisions at Orenberg were free to advance on Khorasan if they liked. Orenberg was a very long way away, and he was prepared to admit that this particular menace was not likely to materialise for two or three months. But if Denikin were defeated by the Bolsheviks, any attempt to check their advance by a small force, such as that under General Malleson's command, would be like trying to hold back the tide with a mop.

*Sir Henry Wilson* was anxious to know whether there was any possibility of our getting the Amir of Afghanistan on to our side. The War Office was not directly responsible for General Malleson's operations, as he was under the Commander-in-Chief in India, but it was clear that, if the Bolsheviks really advanced, he could not possibly remain where he was. It seemed to him of the utmost importance that every effort should be made to secure the co-operation of the Amir of Afghanistan. He did not quite understand for what purpose it had been suggested that General Malleson should be provided with aeroplanes, but, in any case, the machines were not available.

*General Thwaites* said that our information was so fragmentary and contradictory that it was difficult to form a reliable appreciation of the correctness of General Malleson's reports.

*Mr. Montagu* read a telegram from which it appeared that Bravin had recently reported that the Afghans would not fight the



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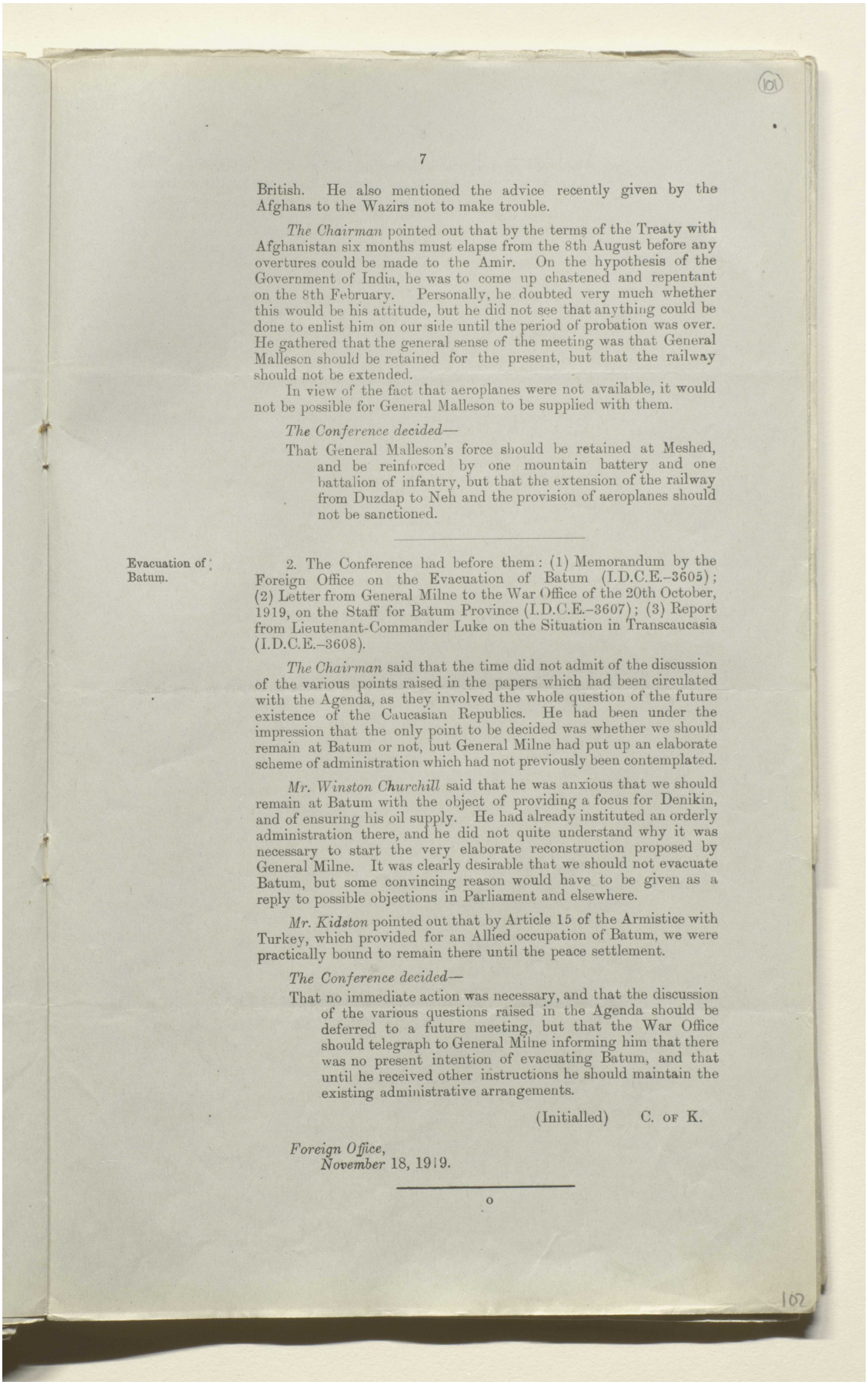



British. He also mentioned the advice recently given by the Afghans to the Wazirs not to make trouble.

*The Chairman* pointed out that by the terms of the Treaty with Afghanistan six months must elapse from the 8th August before any overtures could be made to the Amir. On the hypothesis of the Government of India, he was to come up chastened and repentant on the 8th February. Personally, he doubted very much whether this would be his attitude, but he did not see that anything could be done to enlist him on our side until the period of probation was over. He gathered that the general sense of the meeting was that General Malleson should be retained for the present, but that the railway should not be extended.

In view of the fact that aeroplanes were not available, it would not be possible for General Malleson to be supplied with them.

*The Conference decided*—

That General Malleson's force should be retained at Meshed, and be reinforced by one mountain battery and one battalion of infantry, but that the extension of the railway from Duzdap to Neh and the provision of aeroplanes should not be sanctioned.

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Evacuation of Batum.

2. The Conference had before them: (1) Memorandum by the Foreign Office on the Evacuation of Batum (I.D.C.E.–3605); (2) Letter from General Milne to the War Office of the 20th October, 1919, on the Staff for Batum Province (I.D.C.E.–3607); (3) Report from Lieutenant-Commander Luke on the Situation in Transcaucasia (I.D.C.E.–3608).

*The Chairman* said that the time did not admit of the discussion of the various points raised in the papers which had been circulated with the Agenda, as they involved the whole question of the future existence of the Caucasian Republics. He had been under the impression that the only point to be decided was whether we should remain at Batum or not, but General Milne had put up an elaborate scheme of administration which had not previously been contemplated.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said that he was anxious that we should remain at Batum with the object of providing a focus for Denikin, and of ensuring his oil supply. He had already instituted an orderly administration there, and he did not quite understand why it was necessary to start the very elaborate reconstruction proposed by General Milne. It was clearly desirable that we should not evacuate Batum, but some convincing reason would have to be given as a reply to possible objections in Parliament and elsewhere.

*Mr. Kidston* pointed out that by Article 15 of the Armistice with Turkey, which provided for an Allied occupation of Batum, we were practically bound to remain there until the peace settlement.

*The Conference decided*—

That no immediate action was necessary, and that the discussion of the various questions raised in the Agenda should be deferred to a future meeting, but that the War Office should telegraph to General Milne informing him that there was no present intention of evacuating Batum, and that until he received other instructions he should maintain the existing administrative arrangements.

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*Foreign Office,*
*November* 18, 1919.

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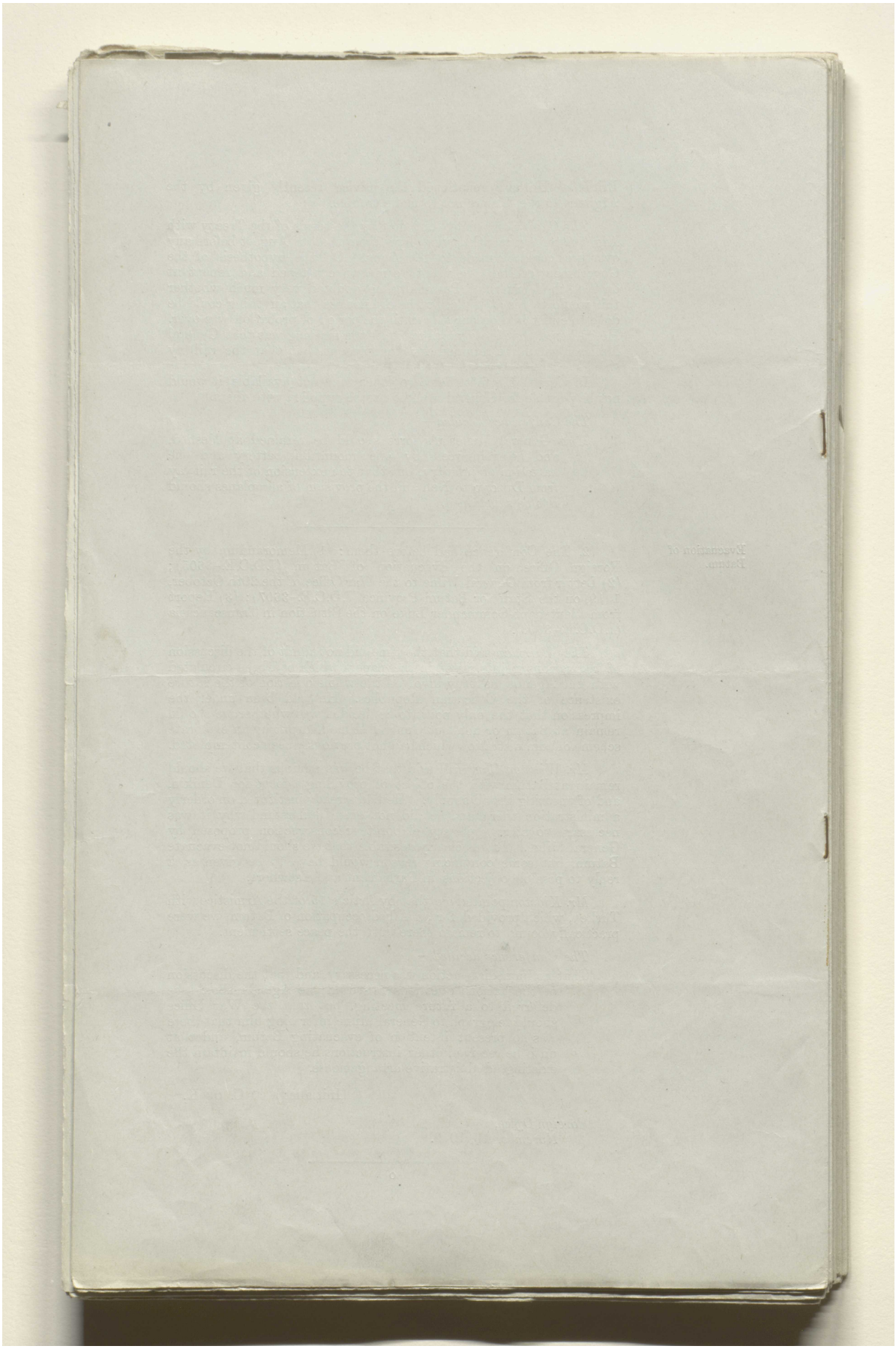

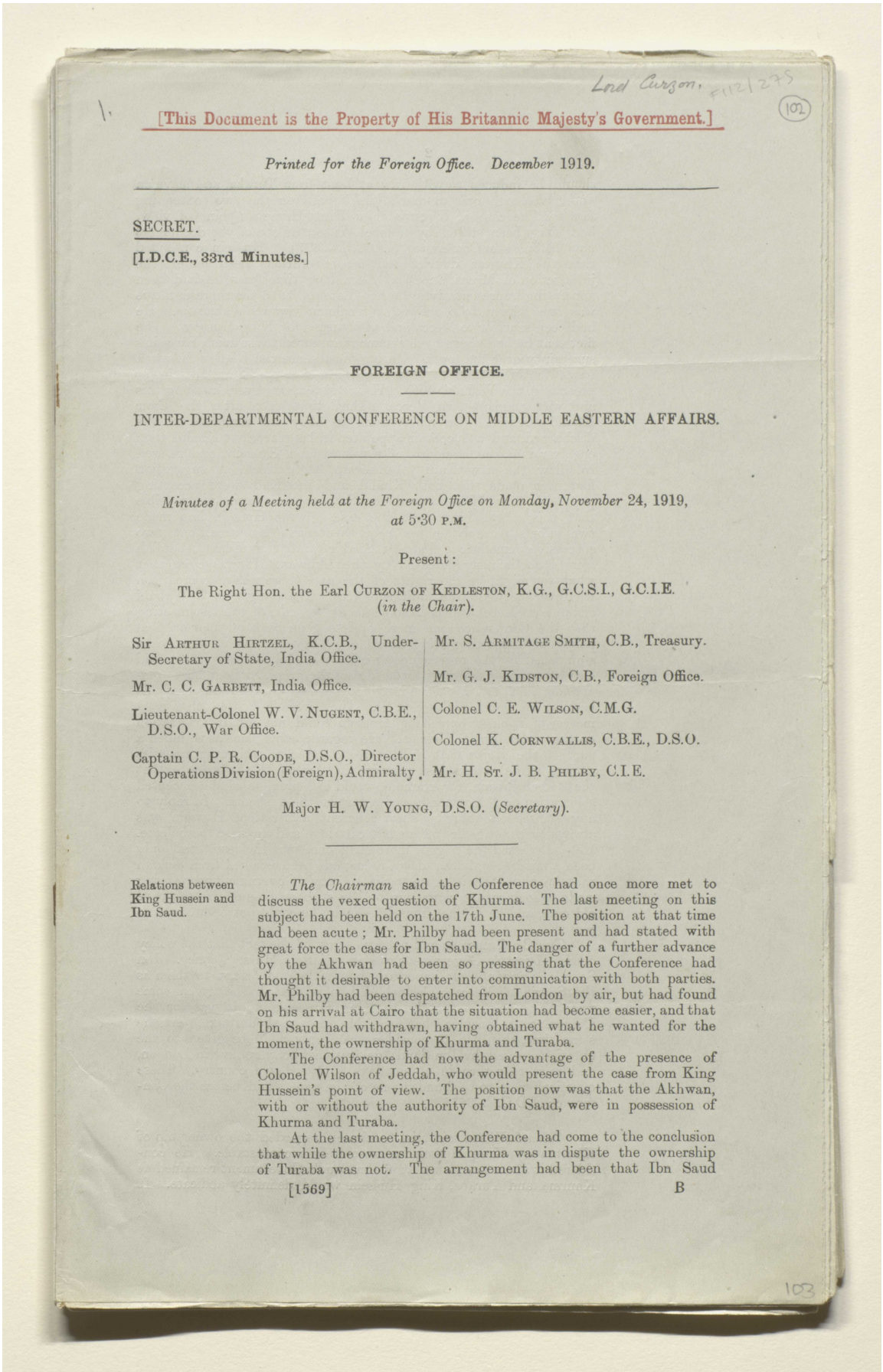

Lord Curzon, F112/275

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**[I.D.C.E., 33rd Minutes.]**

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Monday, November* 24, 1919, *at* 5·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Under-Secretary of State, India Office.

Mr. C. C. GARBETT, India Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. V. NUGENT, C.B.E., D.S.O., War Office.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, D.S.O., Director Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Mr. S. ARMITAGE SMITH, C.B., Treasury.

Mr. G. J. KIDSTON, C.B., Foreign Office.

Colonel C. E. WILSON, C.M.G.

Colonel K. CORNWALLIS, C.B.E., D.S.O.

Mr. H. ST. J. B. PHILBY, C.I.E.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Relations between King Hussein and Ibn Saud.

*The Chairman* said the Conference had once more met to discuss the vexed question of Khurma. The last meeting on this subject had been held on the 17th June. The position at that time had been acute; Mr. Philby had been present and had stated with great force the case for Ibn Saud. The danger of a further advance by the Akhwan had been so pressing that the Conference had thought it desirable to enter into communication with both parties. Mr. Philby had been despatched from London by air, but had found on his arrival at Cairo that the situation had become easier, and that Ibn Saud had withdrawn, having obtained what he wanted for the moment, the ownership of Khurma and Turaba.

The Conference had now the advantage of the presence of Colonel Wilson of Jeddah, who would present the case from King Hussein's point of view. The position now was that the Akhwan, with or without the authority of Ibn Saud, were in possession of Khurma and Turaba.

At the last meeting, the Conference had come to the conclusion that while the ownership of Khurma was in dispute the ownership of Turaba was not. The arrangement had been that Ibn Saud

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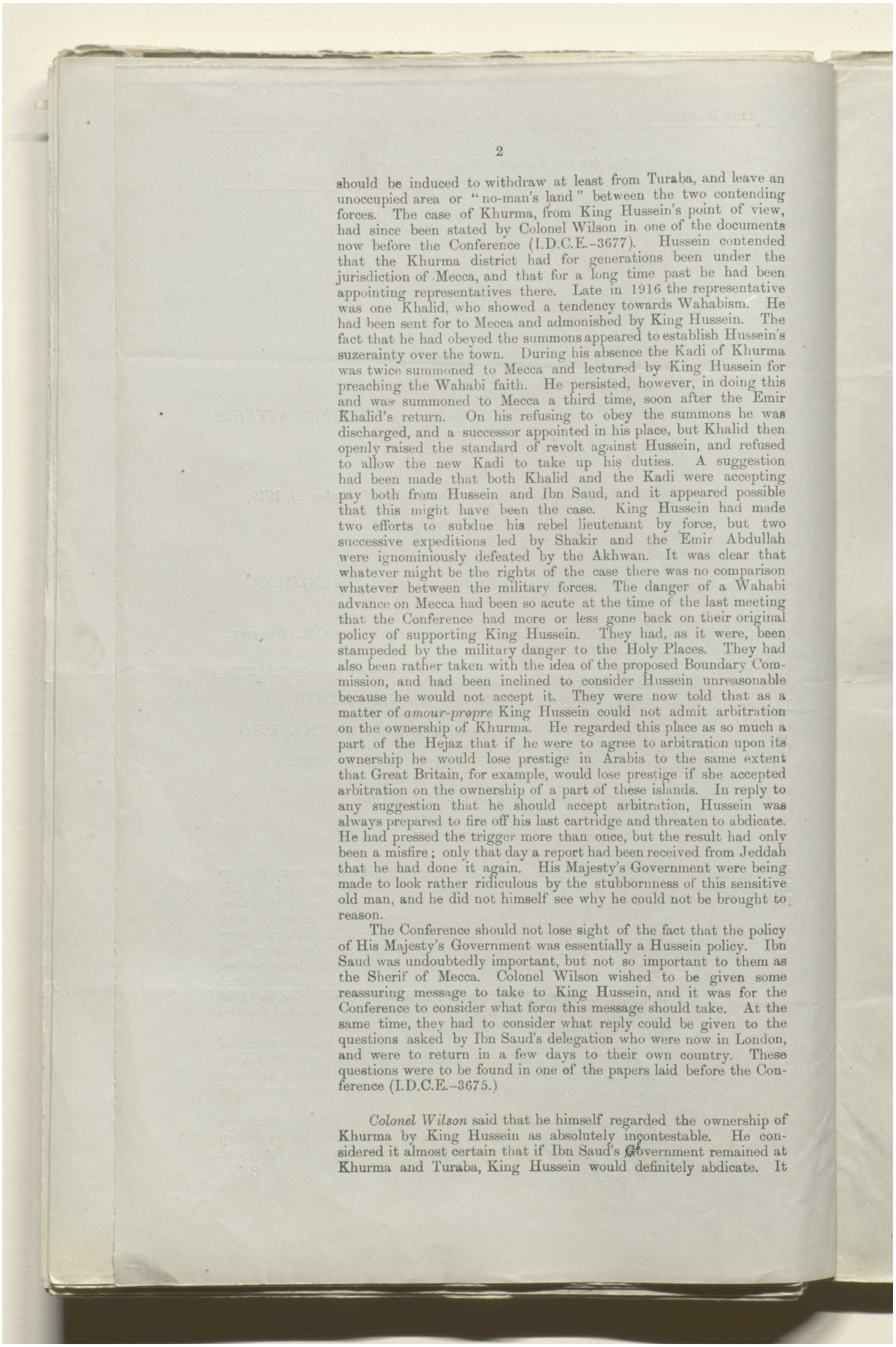



should be induced to withdraw at least from Turaba, and leave an unoccupied area or "no-man's land" between the two contending forces. The case of Khurma, from King Hussein's point of view, had since been stated by Colonel Wilson in one of the documents now before the Conference (I.D.C.E.–3677). Hussein contended that the Khurma district had for generations been under the jurisdiction of Mecca, and that for a long time past he had been appointing representatives there. Late in 1916 the representative was one Khalid, who showed a tendency towards Wahabism. He had been sent for to Mecca and admonished by King Hussein. The fact that he had obeyed the summons appeared to establish Hussein's suzerainty over the town. During his absence the Kadi of Khurma was twice summoned to Mecca and lectured by King Hussein for preaching the Wahabi faith. He persisted, however, in doing this and was summoned to Mecca a third time, soon after the Emir Khalid's return. On his refusing to obey the summons he was discharged, and a successor appointed in his place, but Khalid then openly raised the standard of revolt against Hussein, and refused to allow the new Kadi to take up his duties. A suggestion had been made that both Khalid and the Kadi were accepting pay both from Hussein and Ibn Saud, and it appeared possible that this might have been the case. King Hussein had made two efforts to subdue his rebel lieutenant by force, but two successive expeditions led by Shakir and the Emir Abdullah were ignominiously defeated by the Akhwan. It was clear that whatever might be the rights of the case there was no comparison whatever between the military forces. The danger of a Wahabi advance on Mecca had been so acute at the time of the last meeting that the Conference had more or less gone back on their original policy of supporting King Hussein. They had, as it were, been stampeded by the military danger to the Holy Places. They had also been rather taken with the idea of the proposed Boundary Commission, and had been inclined to consider Hussein unreasonable because he would not accept it. They were now told that as a matter of *amour-propre* King Hussein could not admit arbitration on the ownership of Khurma. He regarded this place as so much a part of the Hejaz that if he were to agree to arbitration upon its ownership he would lose prestige in Arabia to the same extent that Great Britain, for example, would lose prestige if she accepted arbitration on the ownership of a part of these islands. In reply to any suggestion that he should accept arbitration, Hussein was always prepared to fire off his last cartridge and threaten to abdicate. He had pressed the trigger more than once, but the result had only been a misfire; only that day a report had been received from Jeddah that he had done it again. His Majesty's Government were being made to look rather ridiculous by the stubbornness of this sensitive old man, and he did not himself see why he could not be brought to reason.

The Conference should not lose sight of the fact that the policy of His Majesty's Government was essentially a Hussein policy. Ibn Saud was undoubtedly important, but not so important to them as the Sherif of Mecca. Colonel Wilson wished to be given some reassuring message to take to King Hussein, and it was for the Conference to consider what form this message should take. At the same time, they had to consider what reply could be given to the questions asked by Ibn Saud's delegation who were now in London, and were to return in a few days to their own country. These questions were to be found in one of the papers laid before the Conference (I.D.C.E.–3675.)

*Colonel Wilson* said that he himself regarded the ownership of Khurma by King Hussein as absolutely incontestable. He considered it almost certain that if Ibn Saud's Government remained at Khurma and Turaba, King Hussein would definitely abdicate. It



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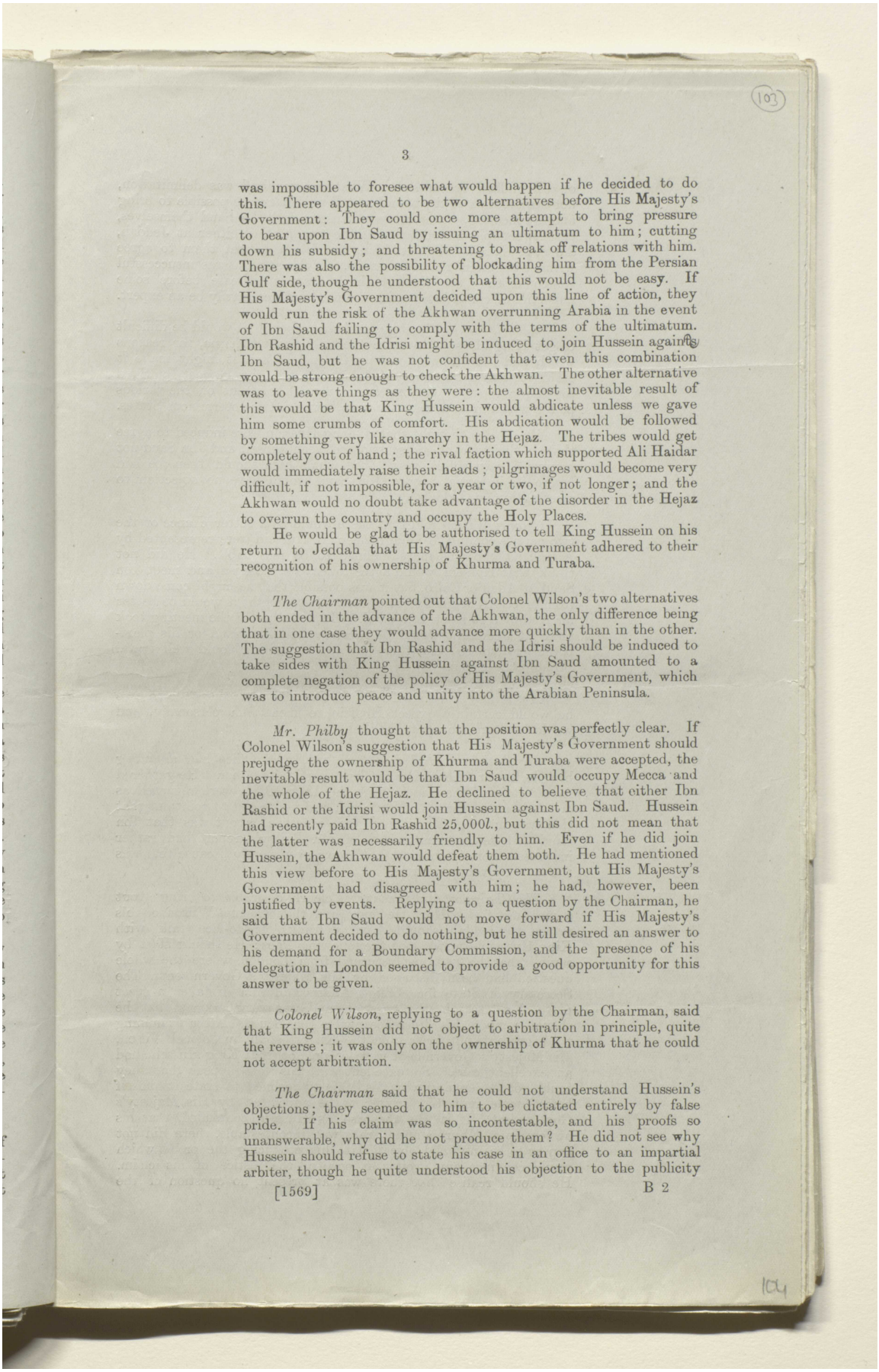



was impossible to foresee what would happen if he decided to do this. There appeared to be two alternatives before His Majesty's Government: They could once more attempt to bring pressure to bear upon Ibn Saud by issuing an ultimatum to him; cutting down his subsidy; and threatening to break off relations with him. There was also the possibility of blockading him from the Persian Gulf side, though he understood that this would not be easy. If His Majesty's Government decided upon this line of action, they would run the risk of the Akhwan overrunning Arabia in the event of Ibn Saud failing to comply with the terms of the ultimatum. Ibn Rashid and the Idrisi might be induced to join Hussein against Ibn Saud, but he was not confident that even this combination would be strong enough to check the Akhwan. The other alternative was to leave things as they were: the almost inevitable result of this would be that King Hussein would abdicate unless we gave him some crumbs of comfort. His abdication would be followed by something very like anarchy in the Hejaz. The tribes would get completely out of hand; the rival faction which supported Ali Haidar would immediately raise their heads; pilgrimages would become very difficult, if not impossible, for a year or two, if not longer; and the Akhwan would no doubt take advantage of the disorder in the Hejaz to overrun the country and occupy the Holy Places.

He would be glad to be authorised to tell King Hussein on his return to Jeddah that His Majesty's Government adhered to their recognition of his ownership of Khurma and Turaba.

*The Chairman* pointed out that Colonel Wilson's two alternatives both ended in the advance of the Akhwan, the only difference being that in one case they would advance more quickly than in the other. The suggestion that Ibn Rashid and the Idrisi should be induced to take sides with King Hussein against Ibn Saud amounted to a complete negation of the policy of His Majesty's Government, which was to introduce peace and unity into the Arabian Peninsula.

*Mr. Philby* thought that the position was perfectly clear. If Colonel Wilson's suggestion that His Majesty's Government should prejudge the ownership of Khurma and Turaba were accepted, the inevitable result would be that Ibn Saud would occupy Mecca and the whole of the Hejaz. He declined to believe that either Ibn Rashid or the Idrisi would join Hussein against Ibn Saud. Hussein had recently paid Ibn Rashid 25,000*l.*, but this did not mean that the latter was necessarily friendly to him. Even if he did join Hussein, the Akhwan would defeat them both. He had mentioned this view before to His Majesty's Government, but His Majesty's Government had disagreed with him; he had, however, been justified by events. Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said that Ibn Saud would not move forward if His Majesty's Government decided to do nothing, but he still desired an answer to his demand for a Boundary Commission, and the presence of his delegation in London seemed to provide a good opportunity for this answer to be given.

*Colonel Wilson*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that King Hussein did not object to arbitration in principle, quite the reverse; it was only on the ownership of Khurma that he could not accept arbitration.

*The Chairman* said that he could not understand Hussein's objections; they seemed to him to be dictated entirely by false pride. If his claim was so incontestable, and his proofs so unanswerable, why did he not produce them? He did not see why Hussein should refuse to state his case in an office to an impartial arbiter, though he quite understood his objection to the publicity





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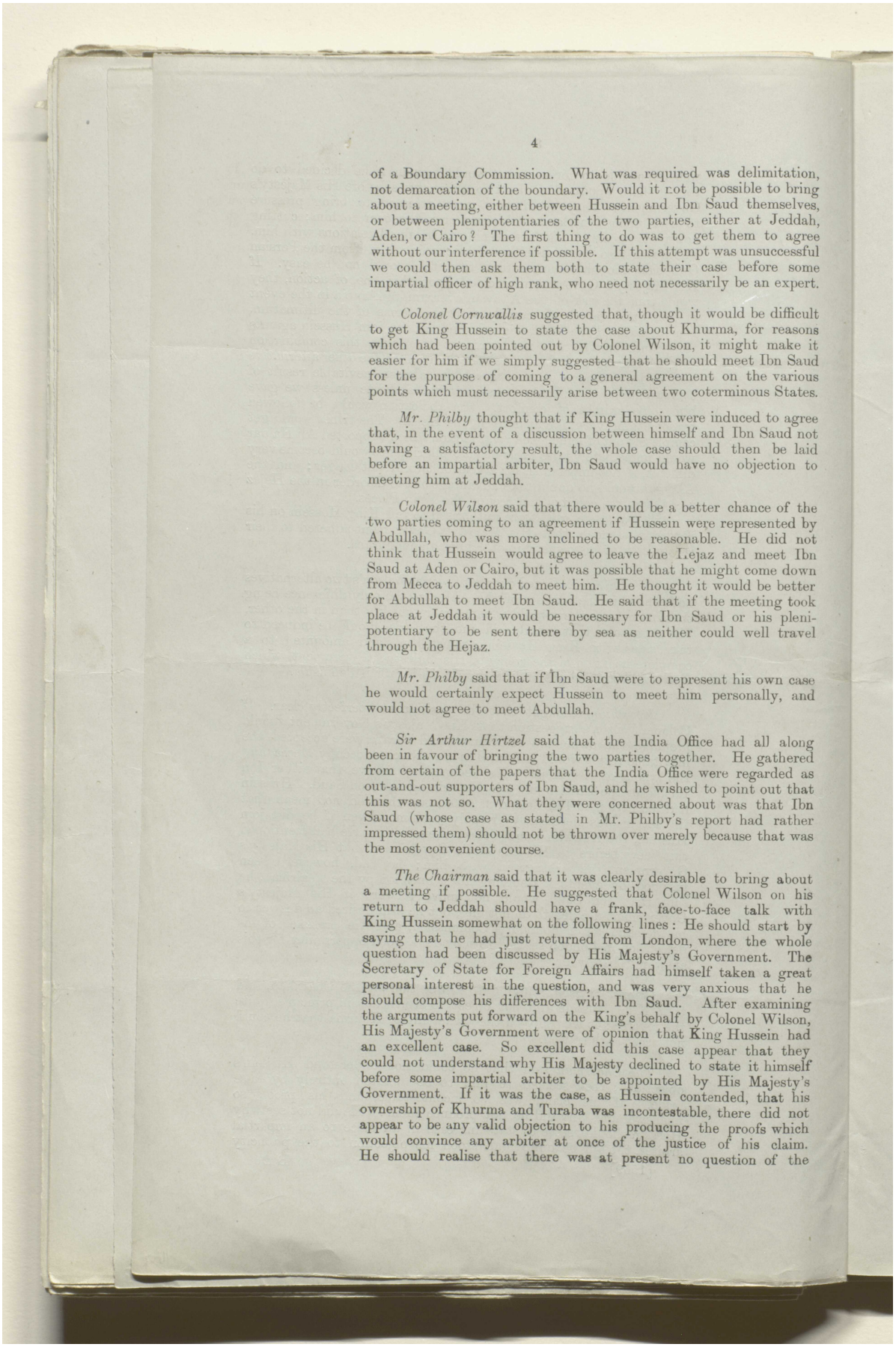



of a Boundary Commission. What was required was delimitation, not demarcation of the boundary. Would it not be possible to bring about a meeting, either between Hussein and Ibn Saud themselves, or between plenipotentiaries of the two parties, either at Jeddah, Aden, or Cairo? The first thing to do was to get them to agree without our interference if possible. If this attempt was unsuccessful we could then ask them both to state their case before some impartial officer of high rank, who need not necessarily be an expert.

*Colonel Cornwallis* suggested that, though it would be difficult to get King Hussein to state the case about Khurma, for reasons which had been pointed out by Colonel Wilson, it might make it easier for him if we simply suggested that he should meet Ibn Saud for the purpose of coming to a general agreement on the various points which must necessarily arise between two coterminous States.

*Mr. Philby* thought that if King Hussein were induced to agree that, in the event of a discussion between himself and Ibn Saud not having a satisfactory result, the whole case should then be laid before an impartial arbiter, Ibn Saud would have no objection to meeting him at Jeddah.

*Colonel Wilson* said that there would be a better chance of the two parties coming to an agreement if Hussein were represented by Abdullah, who was more inclined to be reasonable. He did not think that Hussein would agree to leave the Hejaz and meet Ibn Saud at Aden or Cairo, but it was possible that he might come down from Mecca to Jeddah to meet him. He thought it would be better for Abdullah to meet Ibn Saud. He said that if the meeting took place at Jeddah it would be necessary for Ibn Saud or his plenipotentiary to be sent there by sea as neither could well travel through the Hejaz.

*Mr. Philby* said that if Ibn Saud were to represent his own case he would certainly expect Hussein to meet him personally, and would not agree to meet Abdullah.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that the India Office had all along been in favour of bringing the two parties together. He gathered from certain of the papers that the India Office were regarded as out-and-out supporters of Ibn Saud, and he wished to point out that this was not so. What they were concerned about was that Ibn Saud (whose case as stated in Mr. Philby's report had rather impressed them) should not be thrown over merely because that was the most convenient course.

*The Chairman* said that it was clearly desirable to bring about a meeting if possible. He suggested that Colonel Wilson on his return to Jeddah should have a frank, face-to-face talk with King Hussein somewhat on the following lines: He should start by saying that he had just returned from London, where the whole question had been discussed by His Majesty's Government. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had himself taken a great personal interest in the question, and was very anxious that he should compose his differences with Ibn Saud. After examining the arguments put forward on the King's behalf by Colonel Wilson, His Majesty's Government were of opinion that King Hussein had an excellent case. So excellent did this case appear that they could not understand why His Majesty declined to state it himself before some impartial arbiter to be appointed by His Majesty's Government. If it was the case, as Hussein contended, that his ownership of Khurma and Turaba was incontestable, there did not appear to be any valid objection to his producing the proofs which would convince any arbiter at once of the justice of his claim. He should realise that there was at present no question of the



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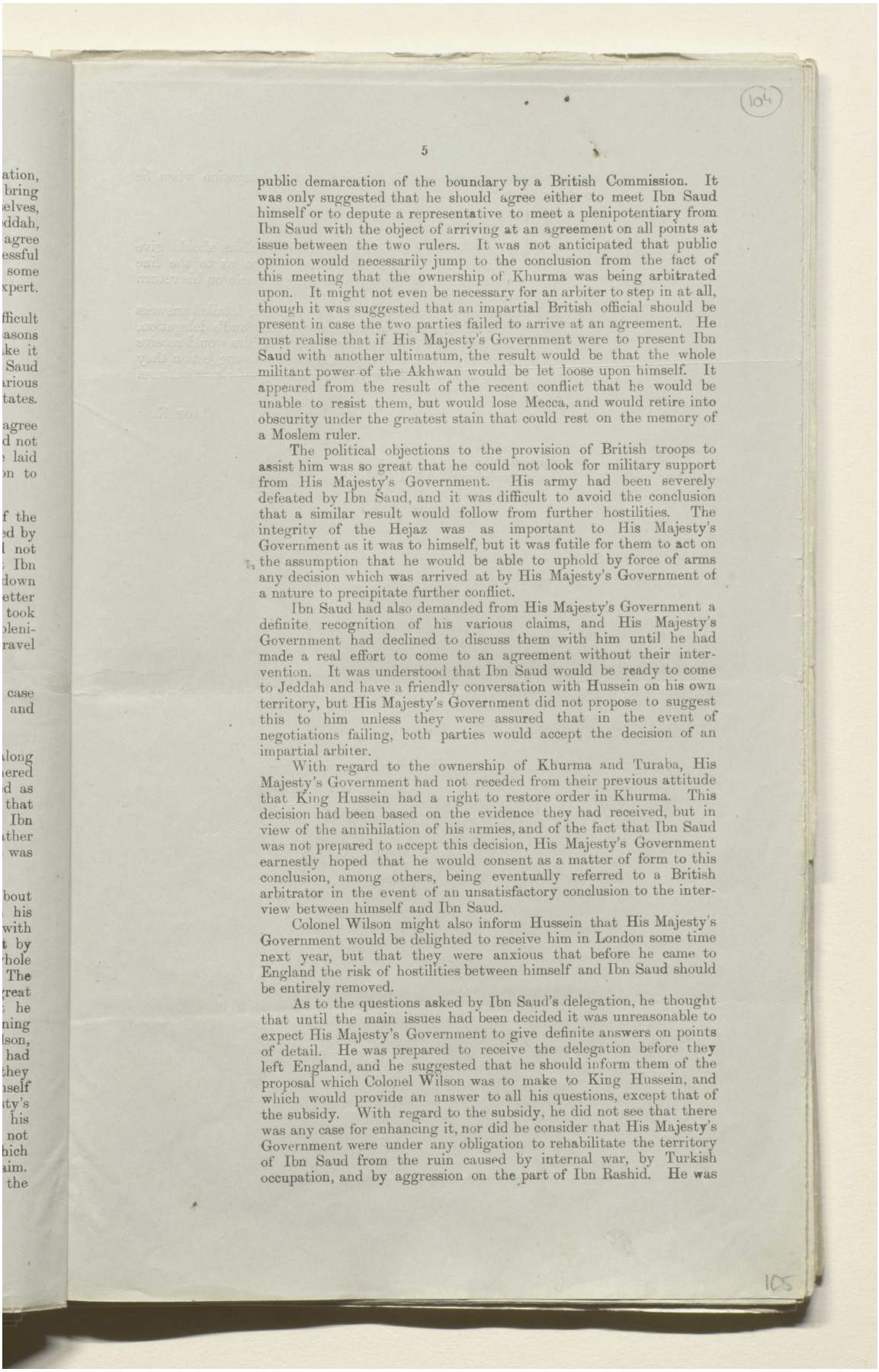

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public demarcation of the boundary by a British Commission. It was only suggested that he should agree either to meet Ibn Saud himself or to depute a representative to meet a plenipotentiary from Ibn Saud with the object of arriving at an agreement on all points at issue between the two rulers. It was not anticipated that public opinion would necessarily jump to the conclusion from the fact of this meeting that the ownership of Khurma was being arbitrated upon. It might not even be necessary for an arbiter to step in at all, though it was suggested that an impartial British official should be present in case the two parties failed to arrive at an agreement. He must realise that if His Majesty's Government were to present Ibn Saud with another ultimatum, the result would be that the whole militant power of the Akhwan would be let loose upon himself. It appeared from the result of the recent conflict that he would be unable to resist them, but would lose Mecca, and would retire into obscurity under the greatest stain that could rest on the memory of a Moslem ruler.

The political objections to the provision of British troops to assist him was so great that he could not look for military support from His Majesty's Government. His army had been severely defeated by Ibn Saud, and it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that a similar result would follow from further hostilities. The integrity of the Hejaz was as important to His Majesty's Government as it was to himself, but it was futile for them to act on the assumption that he would be able to uphold by force of arms any decision which was arrived at by His Majesty's Government of a nature to precipitate further conflict.

Ibn Saud had also demanded from His Majesty's Government a definite recognition of his various claims, and His Majesty's Government had declined to discuss them with him until he had made a real effort to come to an agreement without their intervention. It was understood that Ibn Saud would be ready to come to Jeddah and have a friendly conversation with Hussein on his own territory, but His Majesty's Government did not propose to suggest this to him unless they were assured that in the event of negotiations failing, both parties would accept the decision of an impartial arbiter.

With regard to the ownership of Khurma and Turaba, His Majesty's Government had not receded from their previous attitude that King Hussein had a right to restore order in Khurma. This decision had been based on the evidence they had received, but in view of the annihilation of his armies, and of the fact that Ibn Saud was not prepared to accept this decision, His Majesty's Government earnestly hoped that he would consent as a matter of form to this conclusion, among others, being eventually referred to a British arbitrator in the event of an unsatisfactory conclusion to the interview between himself and Ibn Saud.

Colonel Wilson might also inform Hussein that His Majesty's Government would be delighted to receive him in London some time next year, but that they were anxious that before he came to England the risk of hostilities between himself and Ibn Saud should be entirely removed.

As to the questions asked by Ibn Saud's delegation, he thought that until the main issues had been decided it was unreasonable to expect His Majesty's Government to give definite answers on points of detail. He was prepared to receive the delegation before they left England, and he suggested that he should inform them of the proposal which Colonel Wilson was to make to King Hussein, and which would provide an answer to all his questions, except that of the subsidy. With regard to the subsidy, he did not see that there was any case for enhancing it, nor did he consider that His Majesty's Government were under any obligation to rehabilitate the territory of Ibn Saud from the ruin caused by internal war, by Turkish occupation, and by aggression on the part of Ibn Rashid. He was

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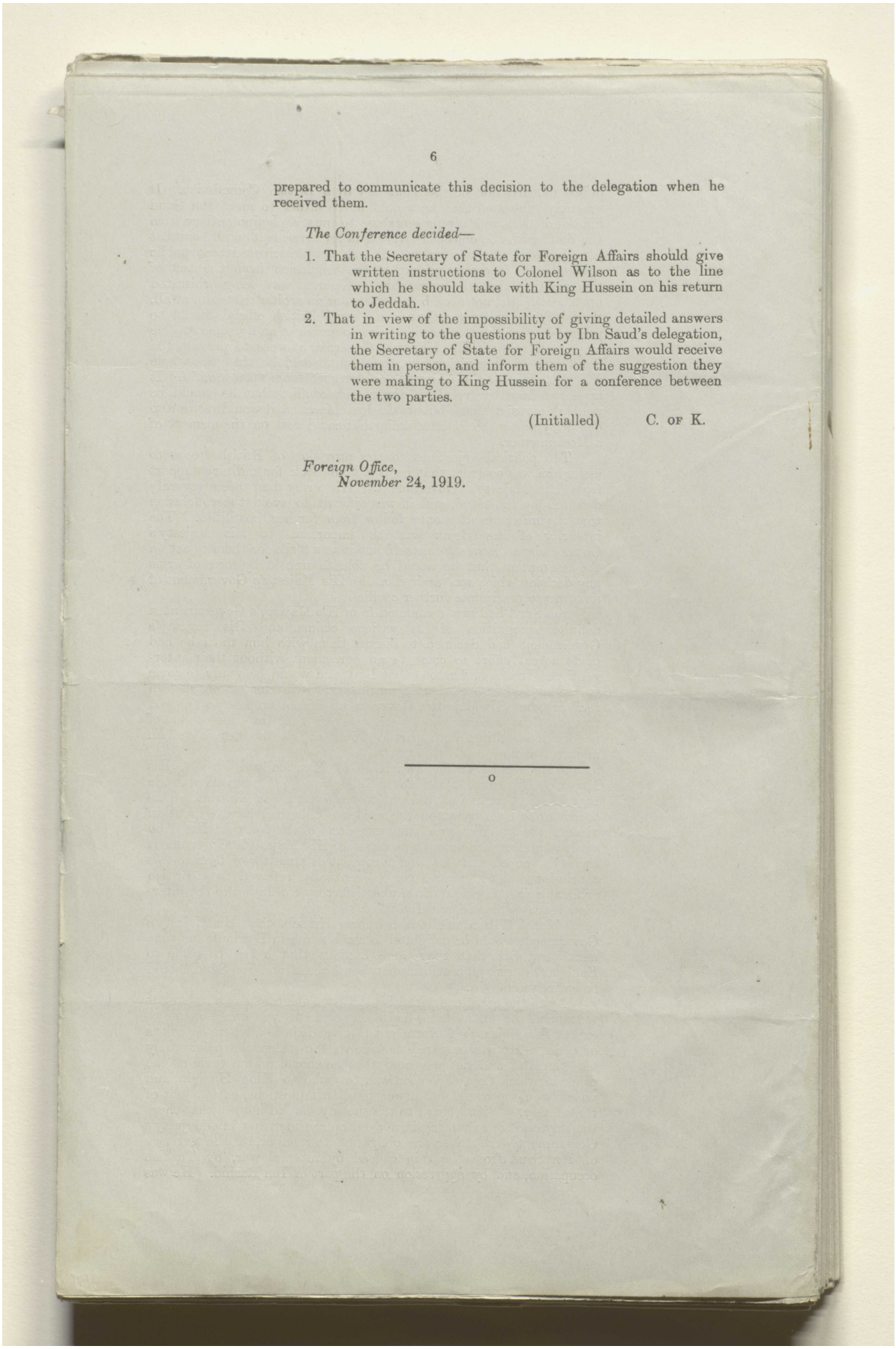



prepared to communicate this decision to the delegation when he received them.

*The Conference decided—*

1. That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should give written instructions to Colonel Wilson as to the line which he should take with King Hussein on his return to Jeddah.
2. That in view of the impossibility of giving detailed answers in writing to the questions put by Ibn Saud's delegation, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would receive them in person, and inform them of the suggestion they were making to King Hussein for a conference between the two parties.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*November* 24, 1919.

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[I.D.C.E., 34th Minutes.]

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Monday, January* 12, 1920, *at* 4 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. Lord HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., &c., Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State, India Office.

General Sir ALEXANDER COBBE, V.C., K.C.B., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. E. PHIPPS, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. R. H. HOARE, Foreign Office.

Major R. MCDONELL, C.B.E., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. WINSTON CHURCHILL, M.P., Secretary of State for War.

Field-Marshal Sir H. H. WILSON, Bart., G.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of Imperial General Staff, War Office.

Major-General Sir WM. THWAITES, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence, War Office.

Rear-Admiral Sir OSMOND DE B. BROCK, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, Admiralty.

Captain BARRY DOMVILE, C.M.G., Admiralty.

Air-Commodore J. M. STEEL, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director, Operations and Intelligence, Air Ministry.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Situation in the Black Sea, Caucasus, and North Persia.

THE Conference had before them telegram No. 19 of the 10th January, 1920, from Lord Derby to the Foreign Office, with the telegrams therein referred to, and the most recent telegrams on the subject under discussion.

*Mr. Austen Chamberlain* took the chair at Lord Hardinge's request, and said that as the Conference had been summoned by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs he would ask Lord Hardinge to open the proceedings by making a brief statement.

*Lord Hardinge* said that the Conference had met for the purpose of finding an answer to the question of what measures should be undertaken by His Majesty's Government or the Allies to stop the Bolshevik onslaught on the Caucasian Republics, Persia, and India. He informed the Conference that the Foreign Office had, on the same morning, communicated to the Republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan a *de facto* recognition which had been unanimously





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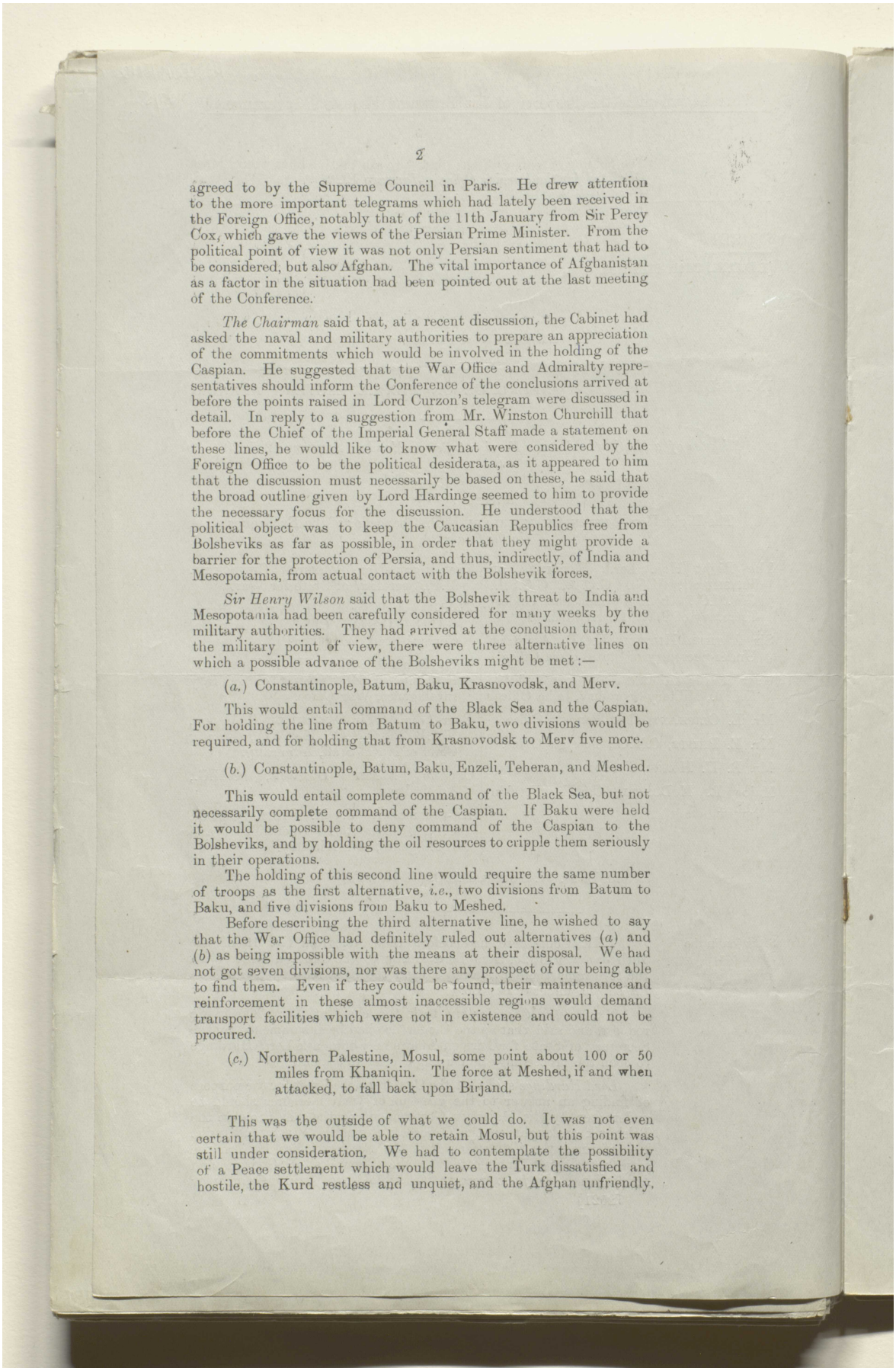



agreed to by the Supreme Council in Paris. He drew attention to the more important telegrams which had lately been received in the Foreign Office, notably that of the 11th January from Sir Percy Cox, which gave the views of the Persian Prime Minister. From the political point of view it was not only Persian sentiment that had to be considered, but also Afghan. The vital importance of Afghanistan as a factor in the situation had been pointed out at the last meeting of the Conference.

*The Chairman* said that, at a recent discussion, the Cabinet had asked the naval and military authorities to prepare an appreciation of the commitments which would be involved in the holding of the Caspian. He suggested that the War Office and Admiralty representatives should inform the Conference of the conclusions arrived at before the points raised in Lord Curzon's telegram were discussed in detail. In reply to a suggestion from Mr. Winston Churchill that before the Chief of the Imperial General Staff made a statement on these lines, he would like to know what were considered by the Foreign Office to be the political desiderata, as it appeared to him that the discussion must necessarily be based on these, he said that the broad outline given by Lord Hardinge seemed to him to provide the necessary focus for the discussion. He understood that the political object was to keep the Caucasian Republics free from Bolsheviks as far as possible, in order that they might provide a barrier for the protection of Persia, and thus, indirectly, of India and Mesopotamia, from actual contact with the Bolshevik forces.

*Sir Henry Wilson* said that the Bolshevik threat to India and Mesopotamia had been carefully considered for many weeks by the military authorities. They had arrived at the conclusion that, from the military point of view, there were three alternative lines on which a possible advance of the Bolsheviks might be met :—

(*a.*) Constantinople, Batum, Baku, Krasnovodsk, and Merv.

This would entail command of the Black Sea and the Caspian. For holding the line from Batum to Baku, two divisions would be required, and for holding that from Krasnovodsk to Merv five more.

(*b.*) Constantinople, Batum, Baku, Enzeli, Teheran, and Meshed.

This would entail complete command of the Black Sea, but not necessarily complete command of the Caspian. If Baku were held it would be possible to deny command of the Caspian to the Bolsheviks, and by holding the oil resources to cripple them seriously in their operations.

The holding of this second line would require the same number of troops as the first alternative, *i.e.*, two divisions from Batum to Baku, and five divisions from Baku to Meshed.

Before describing the third alternative line, he wished to say that the War Office had definitely ruled out alternatives (*a*) and (*b*) as being impossible with the means at their disposal. We had not got seven divisions, nor was there any prospect of our being able to find them. Even if they could be found, their maintenance and reinforcement in these almost inaccessible regions would demand transport facilities which were not in existence and could not be procured.

(*c.*) Northern Palestine, Mosul, some point about 100 or 50 miles from Khaniqin. The force at Meshed, if and when attacked, to fall back upon Birjand.

This was the outside of what we could do. It was not even certain that we would be able to retain Mosul, but this point was still under consideration. We had to contemplate the possibility of a Peace settlement which would leave the Turk dissatisfied and hostile, the Kurd restless and unquiet, and the Afghan unfriendly.



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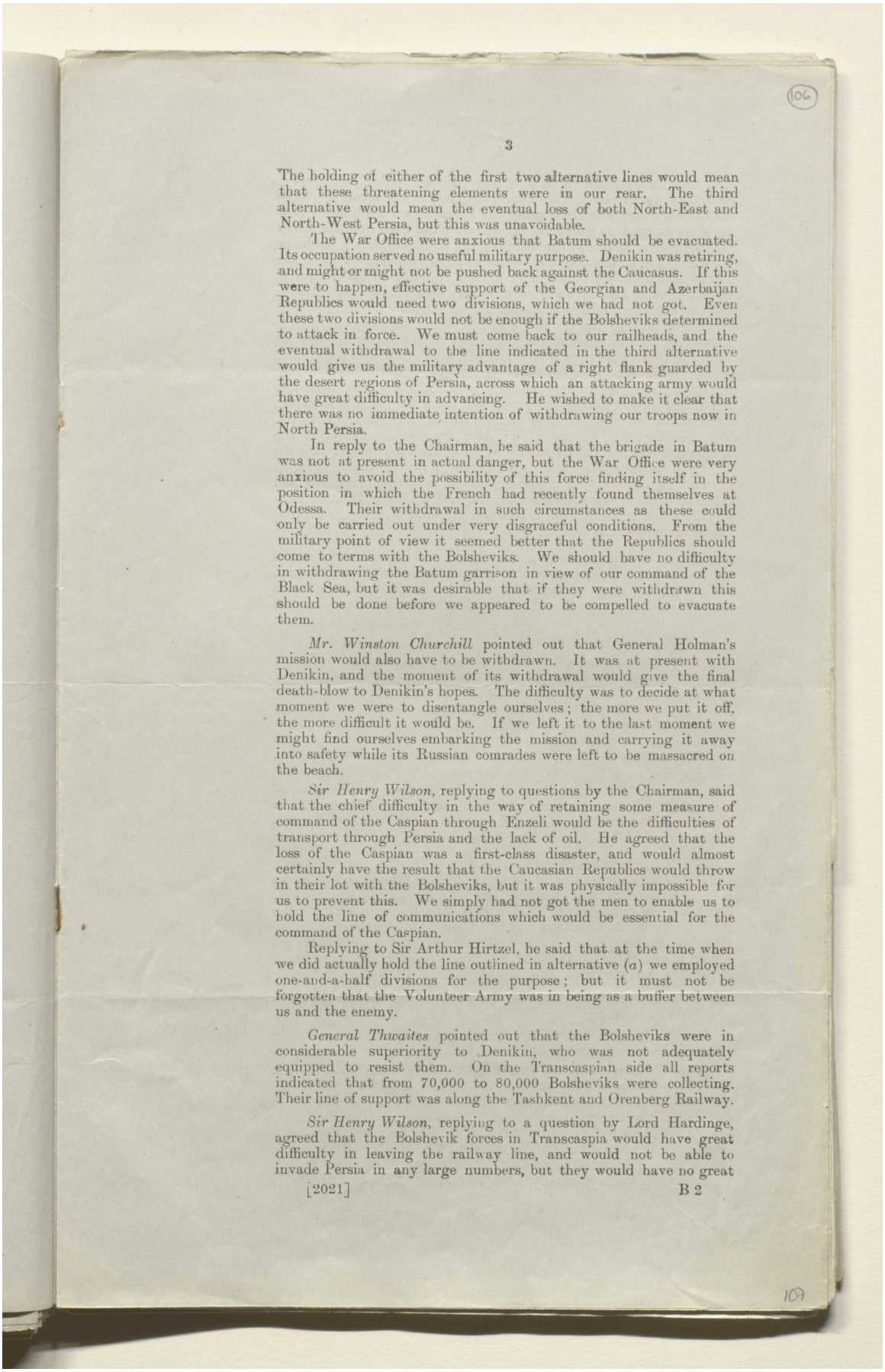

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The holding of either of the first two alternative lines would mean that these threatening elements were in our rear. The third alternative would mean the eventual loss of both North-East and North-West Persia, but this was unavoidable.

The War Office were anxious that Batum should be evacuated. Its occupation served no useful military purpose. Denikin was retiring, and might or might not be pushed back against the Caucasus. If this were to happen, effective support of the Georgian and Azerbaijan Republics would need two divisions, which we had not got. Even these two divisions would not be enough if the Bolsheviks determined to attack in force. We must come back to our railheads, and the eventual withdrawal to the line indicated in the third alternative would give us the military advantage of a right flank guarded by the desert regions of Persia, across which an attacking army would have great difficulty in advancing. He wished to make it clear that there was no immediate intention of withdrawing our troops now in North Persia.

In reply to the Chairman, he said that the brigade in Batum was not at present in actual danger, but the War Office were very anxious to avoid the possibility of this force finding itself in the position in which the French had recently found themselves at Odessa. Their withdrawal in such circumstances as these could only be carried out under very disgraceful conditions. From the military point of view it seemed better that the Republics should come to terms with the Bolsheviks. We should have no difficulty in withdrawing the Batum garrison in view of our command of the Black Sea, but it was desirable that if they were withdrawn this should be done before we appeared to be compelled to evacuate them.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* pointed out that General Holman's mission would also have to be withdrawn. It was at present with Denikin, and the moment of its withdrawal would give the final death-blow to Denikin's hopes. The difficulty was to decide at what moment we were to disentangle ourselves; the more we put it off, the more difficult it would be. If we left it to the last moment we might find ourselves embarking the mission and carrying it away into safety while its Russian comrades were left to be massacred on the beach.

*Sir Henry Wilson*, replying to questions by the Chairman, said that the chief difficulty in the way of retaining some measure of command of the Caspian through Enzeli would be the difficulties of transport through Persia and the lack of oil. He agreed that the loss of the Caspian was a first-class disaster, and would almost certainly have the result that the Caucasian Republics would throw in their lot with the Bolsheviks, but it was physically impossible for us to prevent this. We simply had not got the men to enable us to hold the line of communications which would be essential for the command of the Caspian.

Replying to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, he said that at the time when we did actually hold the line outlined in alternative (*a*) we employed one-and-a-half divisions for the purpose; but it must not be forgotten that the Volunteer Army was in being as a buffer between us and the enemy.

*General Thwaites* pointed out that the Bolsheviks were in considerable superiority to Denikin, who was not adequately equipped to resist them. On the Transcaspian side all reports indicated that from 70,000 to 80,000 Bolsheviks were collecting. Their line of support was along the Tashkent and Orenberg Railway.

*Sir Henry Wilson*, replying to a question by Lord Hardinge, agreed that the Bolshevik forces in Transcaspia would have great difficulty in leaving the railway line, and would not be able to invade Persia in any large numbers, but they would have no great



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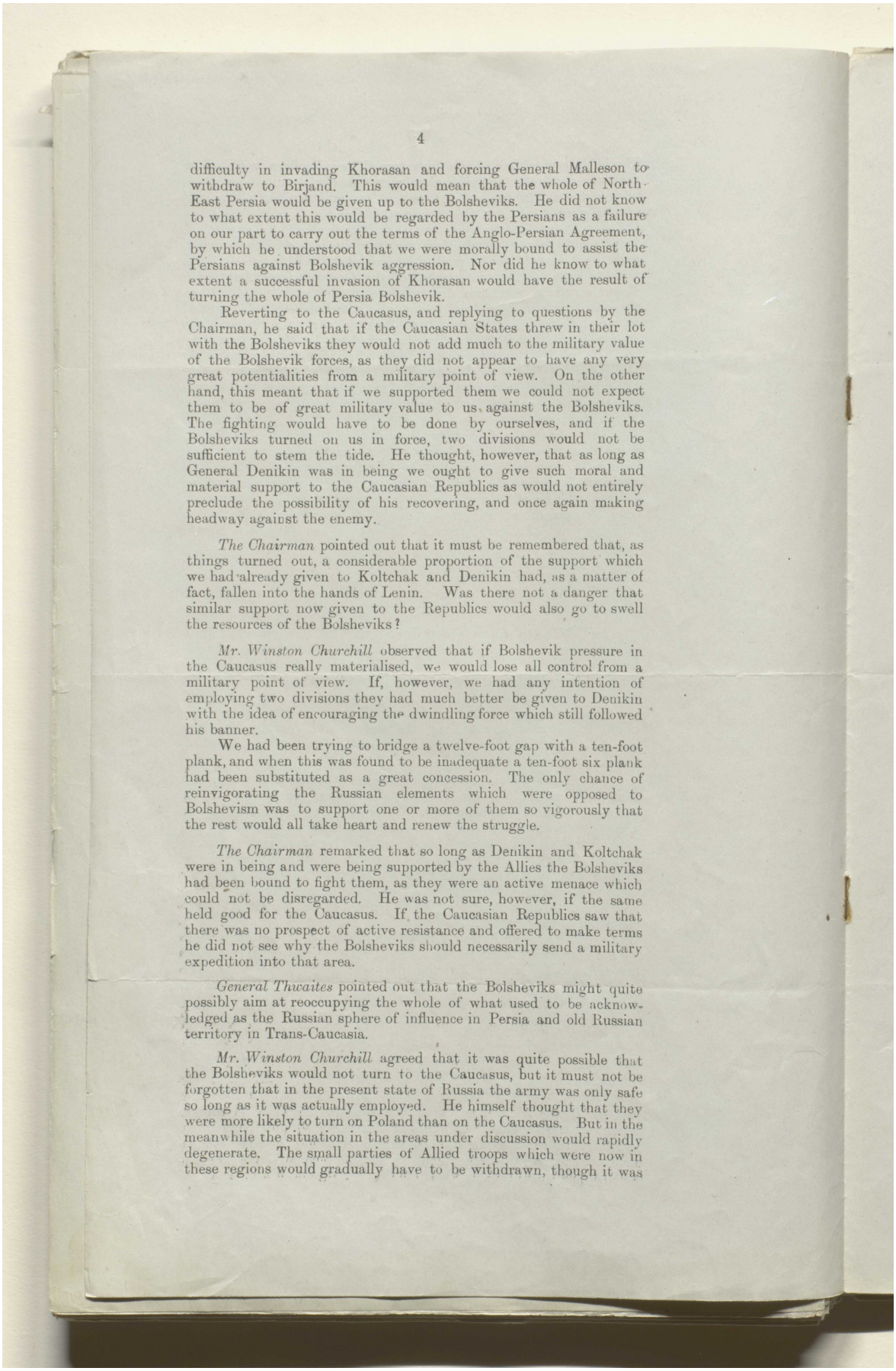



difficulty in invading Khorasan and forcing General Malleson to withdraw to Birjand. This would mean that the whole of North-East Persia would be given up to the Bolsheviks. He did not know to what extent this would be regarded by the Persians as a failure on our part to carry out the terms of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, by which he understood that we were morally bound to assist the Persians against Bolshevik aggression. Nor did he know to what extent a successful invasion of Khorasan would have the result of turning the whole of Persia Bolshevik.

Reverting to the Caucasus, and replying to questions by the Chairman, he said that if the Caucasian States threw in their lot with the Bolsheviks they would not add much to the military value of the Bolshevik forces, as they did not appear to have any very great potentialities from a military point of view. On the other hand, this meant that if we supported them we could not expect them to be of great military value to us against the Bolsheviks. The fighting would have to be done by ourselves, and if the Bolsheviks turned on us in force, two divisions would not be sufficient to stem the tide. He thought, however, that as long as General Denikin was in being we ought to give such moral and material support to the Caucasian Republics as would not entirely preclude the possibility of his recovering, and once again making headway against the enemy.

*The Chairman* pointed out that it must be remembered that, as things turned out, a considerable proportion of the support which we had already given to Koltchak and Denikin had, as a matter of fact, fallen into the hands of Lenin. Was there not a danger that similar support now given to the Republics would also go to swell the resources of the Bolsheviks?

*Mr. Winston Churchill* observed that if Bolshevik pressure in the Caucasus really materialised, we would lose all control from a military point of view. If, however, we had any intention of employing two divisions they had much better be given to Denikin with the idea of encouraging the dwindling force which still followed his banner.

We had been trying to bridge a twelve-foot gap with a ten-foot plank, and when this was found to be inadequate a ten-foot six plank had been substituted as a great concession. The only chance of reinvigorating the Russian elements which were opposed to Bolshevism was to support one or more of them so vigorously that the rest would all take heart and renew the struggle.

*The Chairman* remarked that so long as Denikin and Koltchak were in being and were being supported by the Allies the Bolsheviks had been bound to fight them, as they were an active menace which could not be disregarded. He was not sure, however, if the same held good for the Caucasus. If the Caucasian Republics saw that there was no prospect of active resistance and offered to make terms he did not see why the Bolsheviks should necessarily send a military expedition into that area.

*General Thwaites* pointed out that the Bolsheviks might quite possibly aim at reoccupying the whole of what used to be acknowledged as the Russian sphere of influence in Persia and old Russian territory in Trans-Caucasia.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* agreed that it was quite possible that the Bolsheviks would not turn to the Caucasus, but it must not be forgotten that in the present state of Russia the army was only safe so long as it was actually employed. He himself thought that they were more likely to turn on Poland than on the Caucasus. But in the meanwhile the situation in the areas under discussion would rapidly degenerate. The small parties of Allied troops which were now in these regions would gradually have to be withdrawn, though it was



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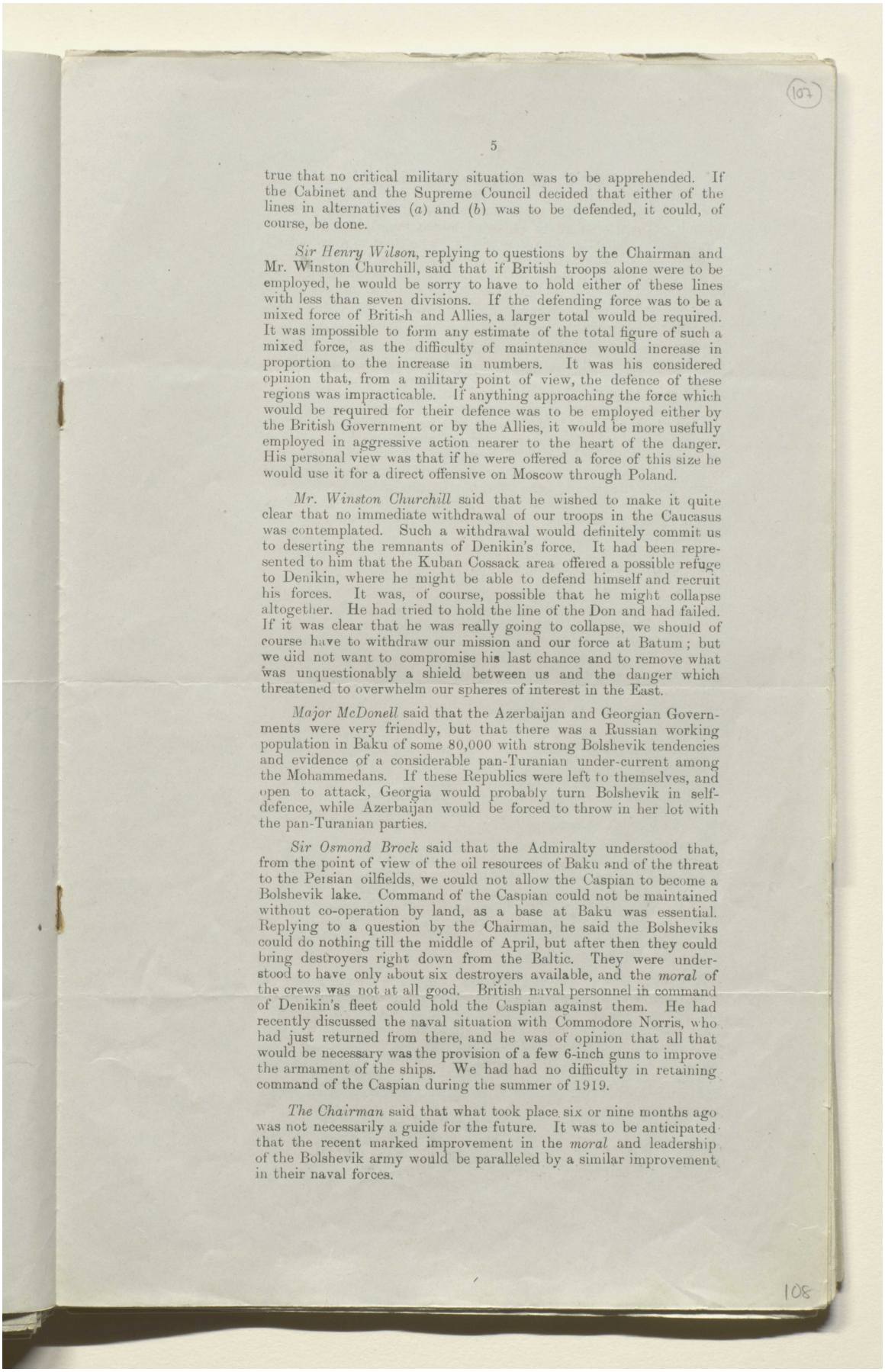



true that no critical military situation was to be apprehended. If the Cabinet and the Supreme Council decided that either of the lines in alternatives (*a*) and (*b*) was to be defended, it could, of course, be done.

*Sir Henry Wilson*, replying to questions by the Chairman and Mr. Winston Churchill, said that if British troops alone were to be employed, he would be sorry to have to hold either of these lines with less than seven divisions. If the defending force was to be a mixed force of British and Allies, a larger total would be required. It was impossible to form any estimate of the total figure of such a mixed force, as the difficulty of maintenance would increase in proportion to the increase in numbers. It was his considered opinion that, from a military point of view, the defence of these regions was impracticable. If anything approaching the force which would be required for their defence was to be employed either by the British Government or by the Allies, it would be more usefully employed in aggressive action nearer to the heart of the danger. His personal view was that if he were offered a force of this size he would use it for a direct offensive on Moscow through Poland.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said that he wished to make it quite clear that no immediate withdrawal of our troops in the Caucasus was contemplated. Such a withdrawal would definitely commit us to deserting the remnants of Denikin's force. It had been represented to him that the Kuban Cossack area offered a possible refuge to Denikin, where he might be able to defend himself and recruit his forces. It was, of course, possible that he might collapse altogether. He had tried to hold the line of the Don and had failed. If it was clear that he was really going to collapse, we should of course have to withdraw our mission and our force at Batum; but we did not want to compromise his last chance and to remove what was unquestionably a shield between us and the danger which threatened to overwhelm our spheres of interest in the East.

*Major McDonell* said that the Azerbaijan and Georgian Governments were very friendly, but that there was a Russian working population in Baku of some 80,000 with strong Bolshevik tendencies and evidence of a considerable pan-Turanian under-current among the Mohammedans. If these Republics were left to themselves, and open to attack, Georgia would probably turn Bolshevik in self-defence, while Azerbaijan would be forced to throw in her lot with the pan-Turanian parties.

*Sir Osmond Brock* said that the Admiralty understood that, from the point of view of the oil resources of Baku and of the threat to the Persian oilfields, we could not allow the Caspian to become a Bolshevik lake. Command of the Caspian could not be maintained without co-operation by land, as a base at Baku was essential. Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said the Bolsheviks could do nothing till the middle of April, but after then they could bring destroyers right down from the Baltic. They were understood to have only about six destroyers available, and the *moral* of the crews was not at all good. British naval personnel in command of Denikin's fleet could hold the Caspian against them. He had recently discussed the naval situation with Commodore Norris, who had just returned from there, and he was of opinion that all that would be necessary was the provision of a few 6-inch guns to improve the armament of the ships. We had had no difficulty in retaining command of the Caspian during the summer of 1919.

*The Chairman* said that what took place six or nine months ago was not necessarily a guide for the future. It was to be anticipated that the recent marked improvement in the *moral* and leadership of the Bolshevik army would be paralleled by a similar improvement in their naval forces.



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*Sir Osmond Brock* said that the Admiralty had received no information indicating any improvement in the Bolshevik naval forces. If Baku were not held, the provision of fuel would be very difficult. There were stores at Enzeli which might last for about three months, but after this it would be impossible to send oil up through Persia. The Admiralty were independent of the oil resources of the Baku district, and from the Government point of view the occupation of this area would only be of value as denying the oil to the Bolsheviks. The Persian oilfields were, however, vital to His Majesty's Government.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference were now in a position to discuss in detail the eleven points raised in Lord Curzon's telegram; of these, the first five hung together and referred mainly to the Caucasus.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that the case as it presented itself to the India Office was that the retention of the Caspian was of vital importance to His Majesty's Government. It was true that the protection of India would commonly be ensured by military operations on the Indian frontier, but the political situation which was likely to arise from the Mediterranean to that frontier if the Bolsheviks advanced into the areas under discussion could not be contemplated with equanimity. He did not quite understand why such a large force as five divisions would be required to hold the eastern portion of the lines outlined in alternative (*b*).

*Sir Henry Wilson* explained that the reinforcement and maintenance of troops along these lines would be impossible with the transport at our disposal. The Bolsheviks would have lines of railway and the Caspian Sea to depend upon, while we would have nothing. The totals had been arrived at on the assumption that it would be impracticable to reinforce the troops on that portion of the line, and the numbers were accordingly greater than what might actually be required in the first place for a successful resistance.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* drew attention to the two proposals that had been made in Lord Curzon's telegram for the disposal of the present Caspian fleet. The first was to hand it over to the British Navy. He was sure that Denikin would be delighted if the British naval personnel were to return; he would feel this a great encouragement; but, as an isolated measure of support now that the position had so much deteriorated, he thought that the sailors would be put into a very difficult position. The second alternative was that Denikin should be invited to destroy the fleet. He thought that this would be very wrong, nor did he think for a moment that Denikin would agree to do it. The only way by which pressure could be brought to bear upon him to destroy the fleet would be by withholding some part of the supplies which were now on their way to him, and he did not think that a threat to do this would produce the desired result.

*The Chairman* suggested that the Conference should report to Lord Curzon with regard to his first five queries that the military authorities were of opinion that the retention of either of the two lines outlined in alternatives (*a*) and (*b*) would require a force of at least seven divisions, and that even this might be insufficient. That we had not such a force to send, and that, even if we had, we could not reinforce the eastern portion of either of them strongly enough to be sure of holding it. We must therefore fall back on alternative (*c*). Batum should be evacuated before a definite threat materialised, and before we were forced into the ignominious position of withdrawing under pressure. The force in North-West Persia should retire on to Kasvin if and when compelled to do so. If there were any idea of employing the forces which were considered by the



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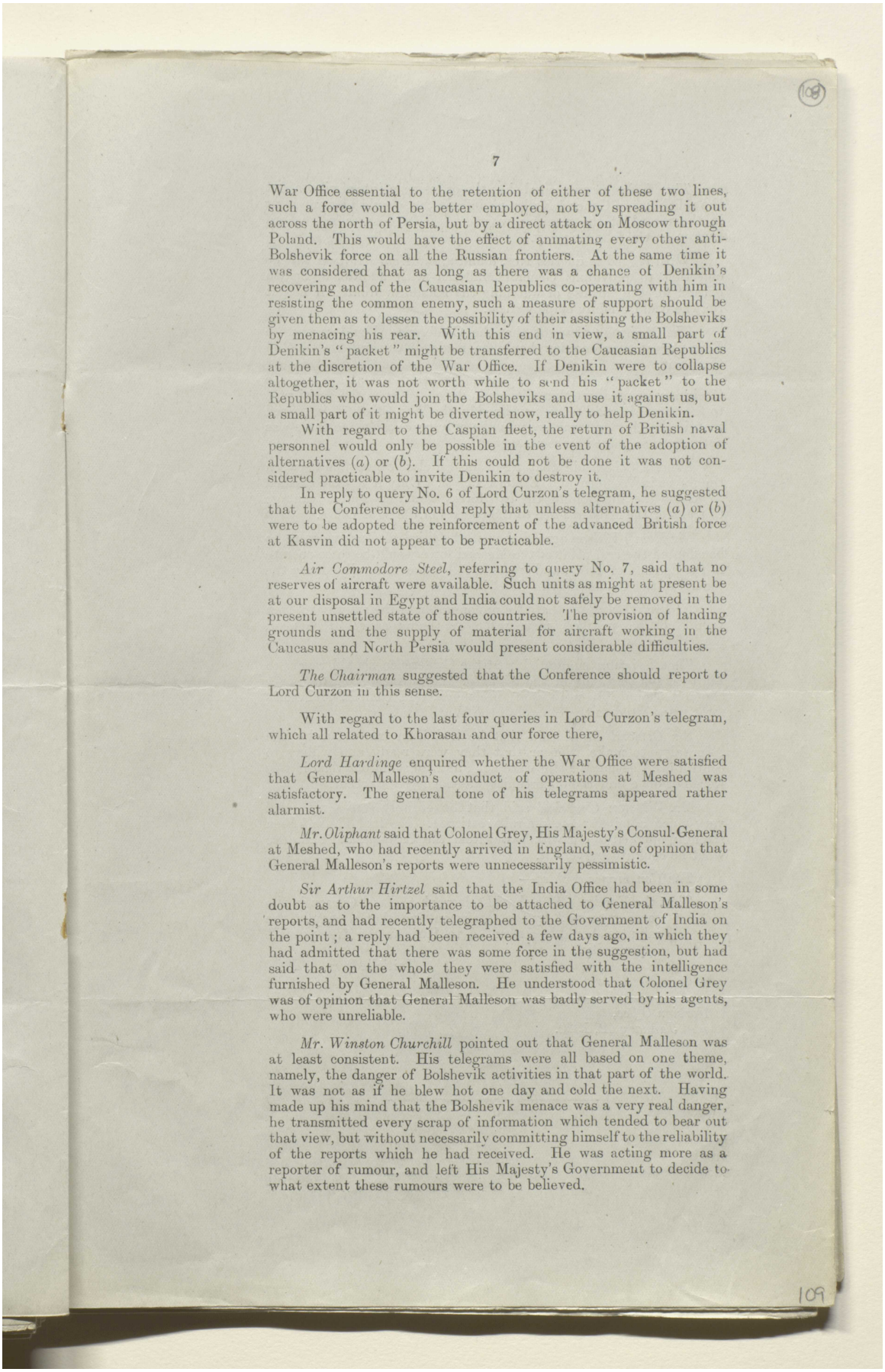



War Office essential to the retention of either of these two lines, such a force would be better employed, not by spreading it out across the north of Persia, but by a direct attack on Moscow through Poland. This would have the effect of animating every other anti-Bolshevik force on all the Russian frontiers. At the same time it was considered that as long as there was a chance of Denikin's recovering and of the Caucasian Republics co-operating with him in resisting the common enemy, such a measure of support should be given them as to lessen the possibility of their assisting the Bolsheviks by menacing his rear. With this end in view, a small part of Denikin's "packet" might be transferred to the Caucasian Republics at the discretion of the War Office. If Denikin were to collapse altogether, it was not worth while to send his "packet" to the Republics who would join the Bolsheviks and use it against us, but a small part of it might be diverted now, really to help Denikin.

With regard to the Caspian fleet, the return of British naval personnel would only be possible in the event of the adoption of alternatives (*a*) or (*b*). If this could not be done it was not considered practicable to invite Denikin to destroy it.

In reply to query No. 6 of Lord Curzon's telegram, he suggested that the Conference should reply that unless alternatives (*a*) or (*b*) were to be adopted the reinforcement of the advanced British force at Kasvin did not appear to be practicable.

*Air Commodore Steel*, referring to query No. 7, said that no reserves of aircraft were available. Such units as might at present be at our disposal in Egypt and India could not safely be removed in the present unsettled state of those countries. The provision of landing grounds and the supply of material for aircraft working in the Caucasus and North Persia would present considerable difficulties.

*The Chairman* suggested that the Conference should report to Lord Curzon in this sense.

With regard to the last four queries in Lord Curzon's telegram, which all related to Khorasan and our force there,

*Lord Hardinge* enquired whether the War Office were satisfied that General Malleson's conduct of operations at Meshed was satisfactory. The general tone of his telegrams appeared rather alarmist.

*Mr. Oliphant* said that Colonel Grey, His Majesty's Consul-General at Meshed, who had recently arrived in England, was of opinion that General Malleson's reports were unnecessarily pessimistic.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that the India Office had been in some doubt as to the importance to be attached to General Malleson's reports, and had recently telegraphed to the Government of India on the point; a reply had been received a few days ago, in which they had admitted that there was some force in the suggestion, but had said that on the whole they were satisfied with the intelligence furnished by General Malleson. He understood that Colonel Grey was of opinion that General Malleson was badly served by his agents, who were unreliable.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* pointed out that General Malleson was at least consistent. His telegrams were all based on one theme, namely, the danger of Bolshevik activities in that part of the world. It was not as if he blew hot one day and cold the next. Having made up his mind that the Bolshevik menace was a very real danger, he transmitted every scrap of information which tended to bear out that view, but without necessarily committing himself to the reliability of the reports which he had received. He was acting more as a reporter of rumour, and left His Majesty's Government to decide to what extent these rumours were to be believed.





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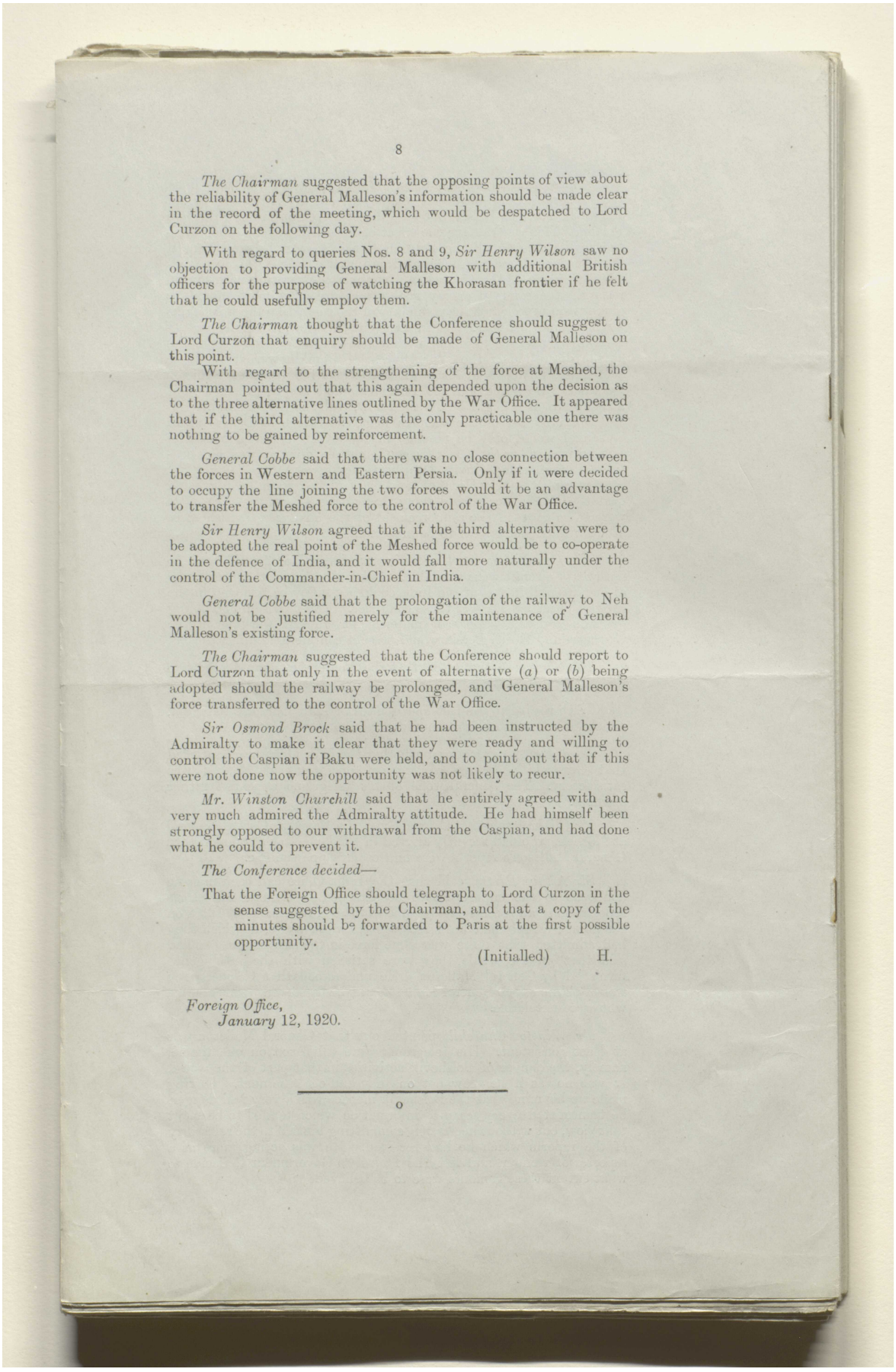



*The Chairman* suggested that the opposing points of view about the reliability of General Malleson's information should be made clear in the record of the meeting, which would be despatched to Lord Curzon on the following day.

With regard to queries Nos. 8 and 9, *Sir Henry Wilson* saw no objection to providing General Malleson with additional British officers for the purpose of watching the Khorasan frontier if he felt that he could usefully employ them.

*The Chairman* thought that the Conference should suggest to Lord Curzon that enquiry should be made of General Malleson on this point.

With regard to the strengthening of the force at Meshed, the Chairman pointed out that this again depended upon the decision as to the three alternative lines outlined by the War Office. It appeared that if the third alternative was the only practicable one there was nothing to be gained by reinforcement.

*General Cobbe* said that there was no close connection between the forces in Western and Eastern Persia. Only if it were decided to occupy the line joining the two forces would it be an advantage to transfer the Meshed force to the control of the War Office.

*Sir Henry Wilson* agreed that if the third alternative were to be adopted the real point of the Meshed force would be to co-operate in the defence of India, and it would fall more naturally under the control of the Commander-in-Chief in India.

*General Cobbe* said that the prolongation of the railway to Neh would not be justified merely for the maintenance of General Malleson's existing force.

*The Chairman* suggested that the Conference should report to Lord Curzon that only in the event of alternative (*a*) or (*b*) being adopted should the railway be prolonged, and General Malleson's force transferred to the control of the War Office.

*Sir Osmond Brock* said that he had been instructed by the Admiralty to make it clear that they were ready and willing to control the Caspian if Baku were held, and to point out that if this were not done now the opportunity was not likely to recur.

*Mr. Winston Churchill* said that he entirely agreed with and very much admired the Admiralty attitude. He had himself been strongly opposed to our withdrawal from the Caspian, and had done what he could to prevent it.

*The Conference decided*—

That the Foreign Office should telegraph to Lord Curzon in the sense suggested by the Chairman, and that a copy of the minutes should be forwarded to Paris at the first possible opportunity.

(Initialled) H.

*Foreign Office,*
*January* 12, 1920.

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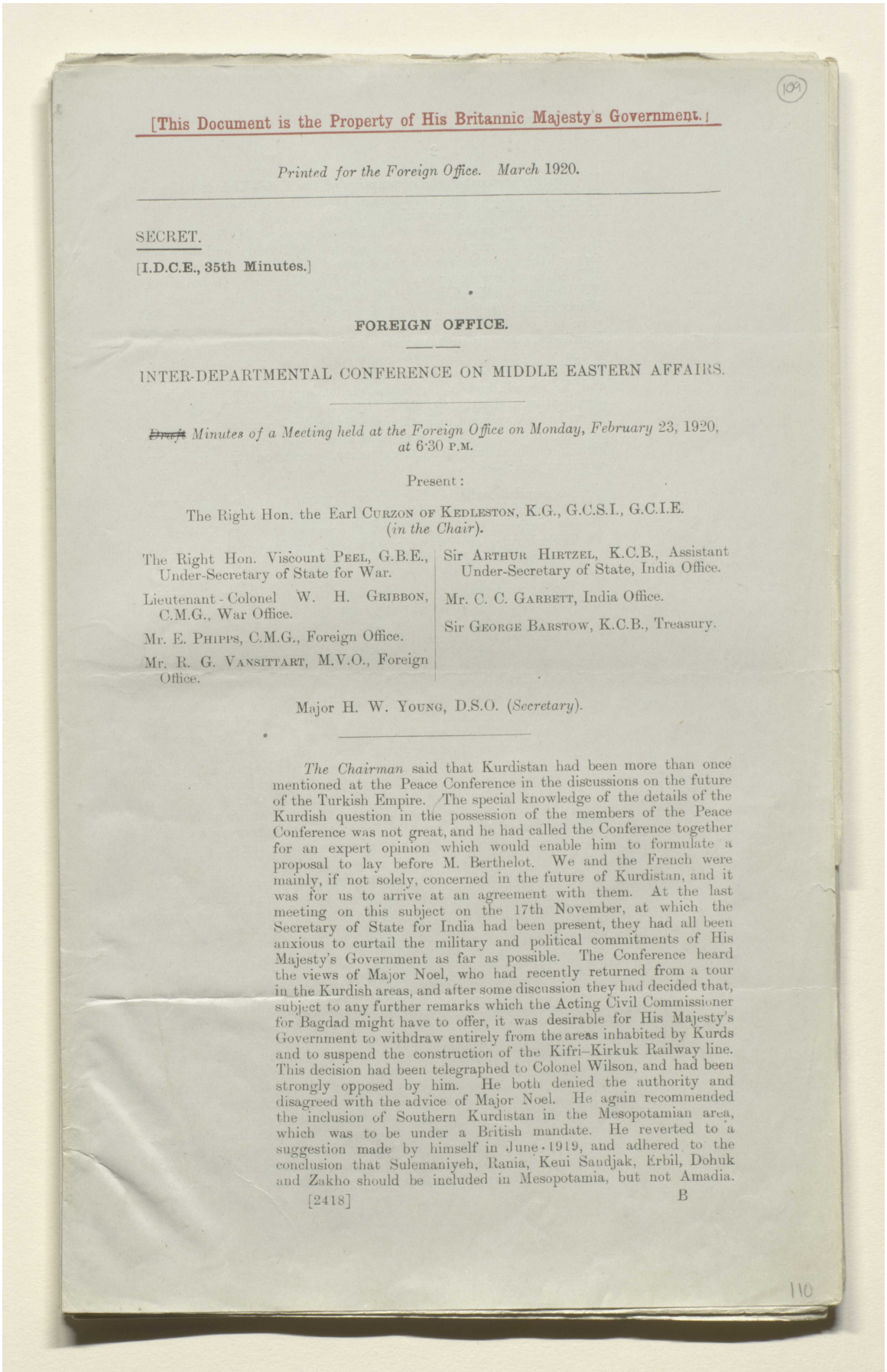

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[I.D.C.E., 35th Minutes.]

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

### INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

~~Draft~~ *Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Monday, February* 23, 1920, *at* 6·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. Viscount PEEL, G.B.E., Under-Secretary of State for War.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Mr. E. PHIPPS, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. R. G. VANSITTART, M.V.O., Foreign Office.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State, India Office.

Mr. C. C. GARBETT, India Office.

Sir GEORGE BARSTOW, K.C.B., Treasury.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

*The Chairman* said that Kurdistan had been more than once mentioned at the Peace Conference in the discussions on the future of the Turkish Empire. The special knowledge of the details of the Kurdish question in the possession of the members of the Peace Conference was not great, and he had called the Conference together for an expert opinion which would enable him to formulate a proposal to lay before M. Berthelot. We and the French were mainly, if not solely, concerned in the future of Kurdistan, and it was for us to arrive at an agreement with them. At the last meeting on this subject on the 17th November, at which the Secretary of State for India had been present, they had all been anxious to curtail the military and political commitments of His Majesty's Government as far as possible. The Conference heard the views of Major Noel, who had recently returned from a tour in the Kurdish areas, and after some discussion they had decided that, subject to any further remarks which the Acting Civil Commissioner for Bagdad might have to offer, it was desirable for His Majesty's Government to withdraw entirely from the areas inhabited by Kurds and to suspend the construction of the Kifri–Kirkuk Railway line. This decision had been telegraphed to Colonel Wilson, and had been strongly opposed by him. He both denied the authority and disagreed with the advice of Major Noel. He again recommended the inclusion of Southern Kurdistan in the Mesopotamian area, which was to be under a British mandate. He reverted to a suggestion made by himself in June 1919, and adhered to the conclusion that Sulemaniyeh, Rania, Keui Sandjak, Erbil, Dohuk and Zakho should be included in Mesopotamia, but not Amadia.



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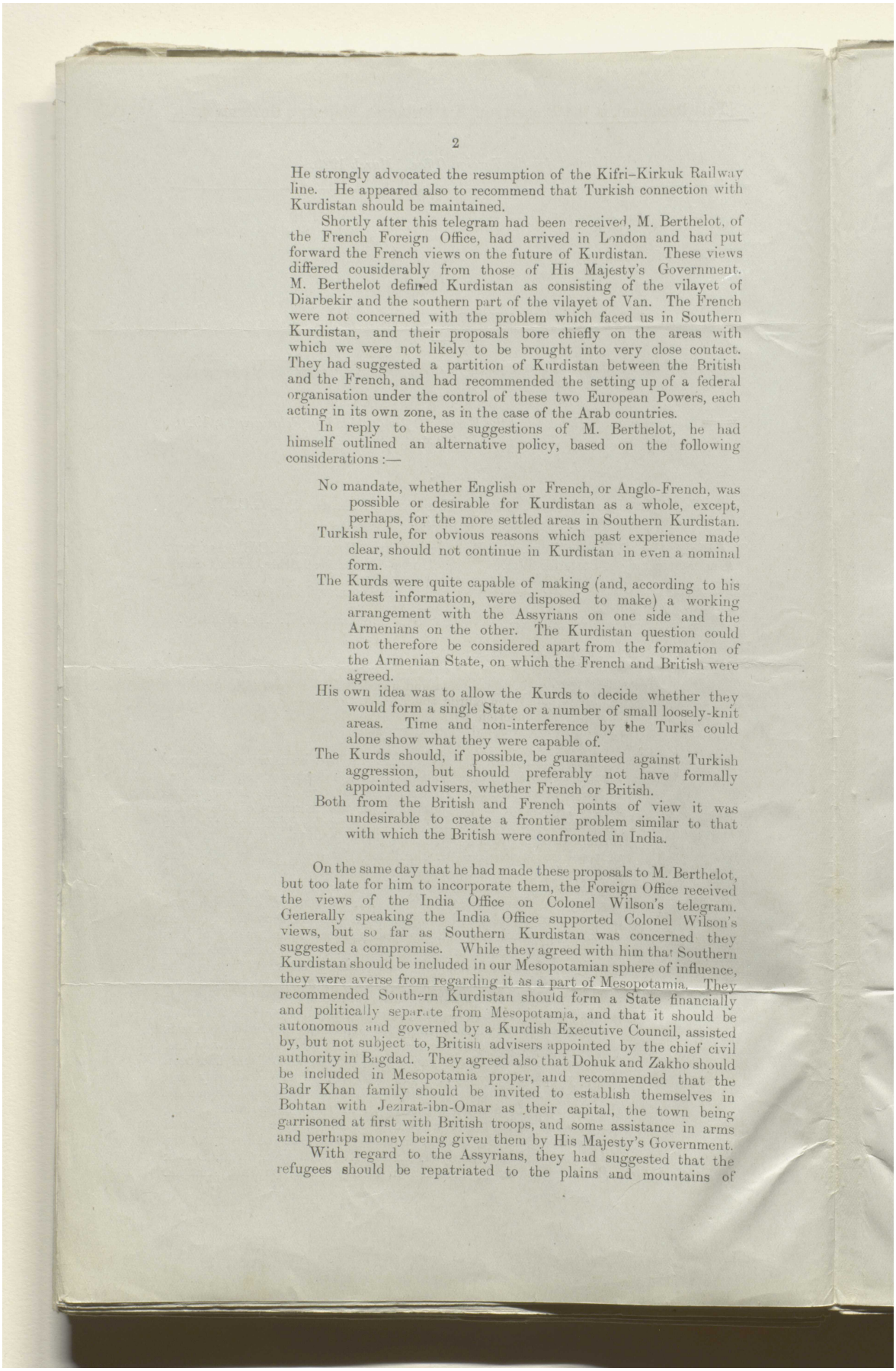



He strongly advocated the resumption of the Kifri–Kirkuk Railway line. He appeared also to recommend that Turkish connection with Kurdistan should be maintained.

Shortly after this telegram had been received, M. Berthelot, of the French Foreign Office, had arrived in London and had put forward the French views on the future of Kurdistan. These views differed cousiderably from those of His Majesty's Government. M. Berthelot defined Kurdistan as consisting of the vilayet of Diarbekir and the southern part of the vilayet of Van. The French were not concerned with the problem which faced us in Southern Kurdistan, and their proposals bore chiefly on the areas with which we were not likely to be brought into very close contact. They had suggested a partition of Kurdistan between the British and the French, and had recommended the setting up of a federal organisation under the control of these two European Powers, each acting in its own zone, as in the case of the Arab countries.

In reply to these suggestions of M. Berthelot, he had himself outlined an alternative policy, based on the following considerations :—

No mandate, whether English or French, or Anglo-French, was possible or desirable for Kurdistan as a whole, except, perhaps, for the more settled areas in Southern Kurdistan.

Turkish rule, for obvious reasons which past experience made clear, should not continue in Kurdistan in even a nominal form.

The Kurds were quite capable of making (and, according to his latest information, were disposed to make) a working arrangement with the Assyrians on one side and the Armenians on the other. The Kurdistan question could not therefore be considered apart from the formation of the Armenian State, on which the French and British were agreed.

His own idea was to allow the Kurds to decide whether they would form a single State or a number of small loosely-knit areas. Time and non-interference by the Turks could alone show what they were capable of.

The Kurds should, if possible, be guaranteed against Turkish aggression, but should preferably not have formally appointed advisers, whether French or British.

Both from the British and French points of view it was undesirable to create a frontier problem similar to that with which the British were confronted in India.

On the same day that he had made these proposals to M. Berthelot, but too late for him to incorporate them, the Foreign Office received the views of the India Office on Colonel Wilson's telegram. Generally speaking the India Office supported Colonel Wilson's views, but so far as Southern Kurdistan was concerned they suggested a compromise. While they agreed with him that Southern Kurdistan should be included in our Mesopotamian sphere of influence, they were averse from regarding it as a part of Mesopotamia. They recommended Southern Kurdistan should form a State financially and politically separate from Mesopotamia, and that it should be autonomous and governed by a Kurdish Executive Council, assisted by, but not subject to, British advisers appointed by the chief civil authority in Bagdad. They agreed also that Dohuk and Zakho should be included in Mesopotamia proper, and recommended that the Badr Khan family should be invited to establish themselves in Bohtan with Jezirat-ibn-Omar as their capital, the town being garrisoned at first with British troops, and some assistance in arms and perhaps money being given them by His Majesty's Government.

With regard to the Assyrians, they had suggested that the refugees should be repatriated to the plains and mountains of



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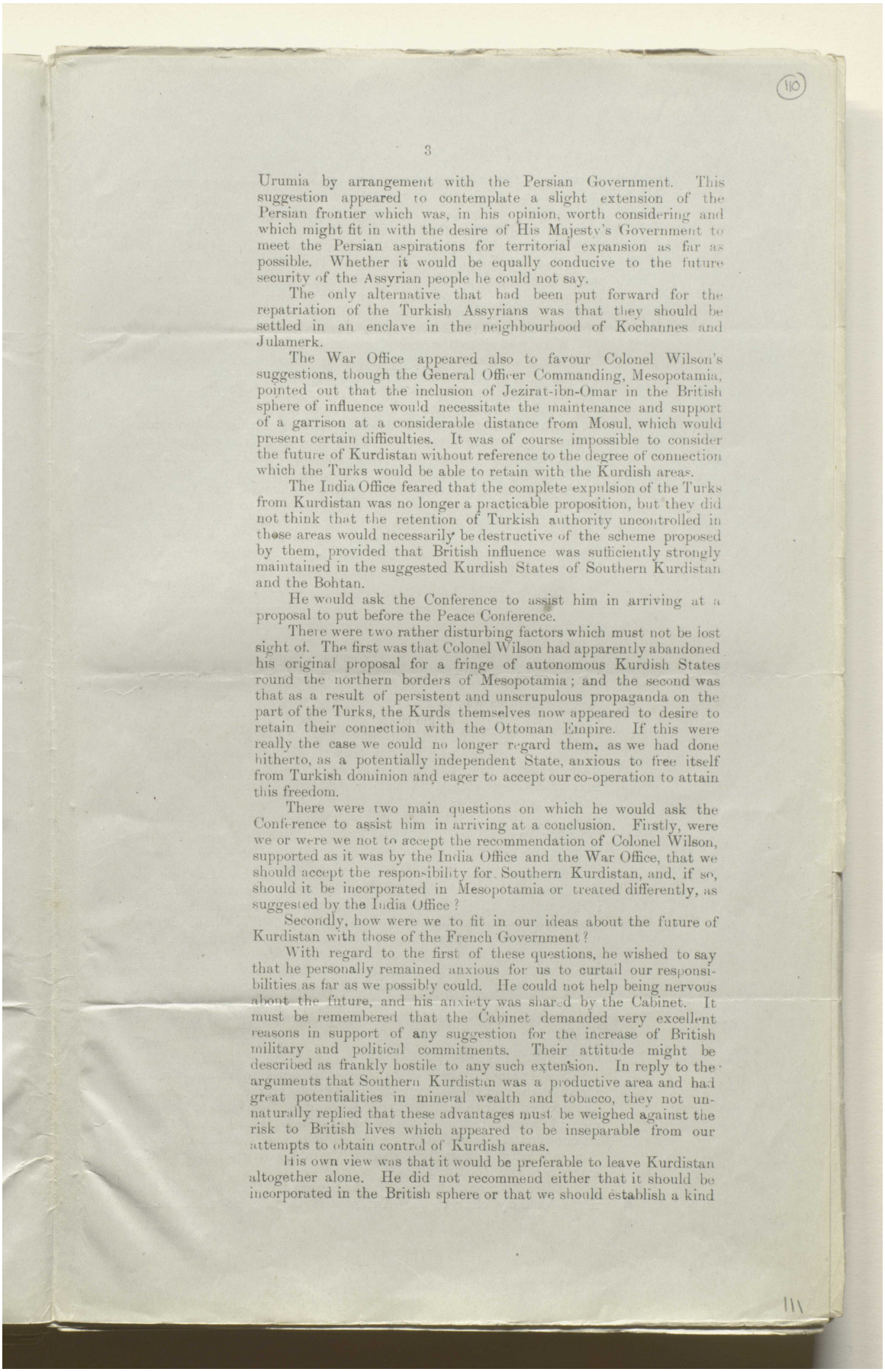



Urumia by arrangement with the Persian Government. This suggestion appeared to contemplate a slight extension of the Persian frontier which was, in his opinion, worth considering and which might fit in with the desire of His Majesty's Government to meet the Persian aspirations for territorial expansion as far as possible. Whether it would be equally conducive to the future security of the Assyrian people he could not say.

The only alternative that had been put forward for the repatriation of the Turkish Assyrians was that they should be settled in an enclave in the neighbourhood of Kochannes and Julamerk.

The War Office appeared also to favour Colonel Wilson's suggestions, though the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, pointed out that the inclusion of Jezirat-ibn-Omar in the British sphere of influence would necessitate the maintenance and support of a garrison at a considerable distance from Mosul, which would present certain difficulties. It was of course impossible to consider the future of Kurdistan without reference to the degree of connection which the Turks would be able to retain with the Kurdish areas.

The India Office feared that the complete expulsion of the Turks from Kurdistan was no longer a practicable proposition, but they did not think that the retention of Turkish authority uncontrolled in those areas would necessarily be destructive of the scheme proposed by them, provided that British influence was sufficiently strongly maintained in the suggested Kurdish States of Southern Kurdistan and the Bohtan.

He would ask the Conference to assist him in arriving at a proposal to put before the Peace Conference.

There were two rather disturbing factors which must not be lost sight of. The first was that Colonel Wilson had apparently abandoned his original proposal for a fringe of autonomous Kurdish States round the northern borders of Mesopotamia; and the second was that as a result of persistent and unscrupulous propaganda on the part of the Turks, the Kurds themselves now appeared to desire to retain their connection with the Ottoman Empire. If this were really the case we could no longer regard them, as we had done hitherto, as a potentially independent State, anxious to free itself from Turkish dominion and eager to accept our co-operation to attain this freedom.

There were two main questions on which he would ask the Conference to assist him in arriving at a conclusion. Firstly, were we or were we not to accept the recommendation of Colonel Wilson, supported as it was by the India Office and the War Office, that we should accept the responsibility for Southern Kurdistan, and, if so, should it be incorporated in Mesopotamia or treated differently, as suggested by the India Office?

Secondly, how were we to fit in our ideas about the future of Kurdistan with those of the French Government?

With regard to the first of these questions, he wished to say that he personally remained anxious for us to curtail our responsibilities as far as we possibly could. He could not help being nervous about the future, and his anxiety was shared by the Cabinet. It must be remembered that the Cabinet demanded very excellent reasons in support of any suggestion for the increase of British military and political commitments. Their attitude might be described as frankly hostile to any such extension. In reply to the arguments that Southern Kurdistan was a productive area and had great potentialities in mineral wealth and tobacco, they not unnaturally replied that these advantages must be weighed against the risk to British lives which appeared to be inseparable from our attempts to obtain control of Kurdish areas.

His own view was that it would be preferable to leave Kurdistan altogether alone. He did not recommend either that it should be incorporated in the British sphere or that we should establish a kind





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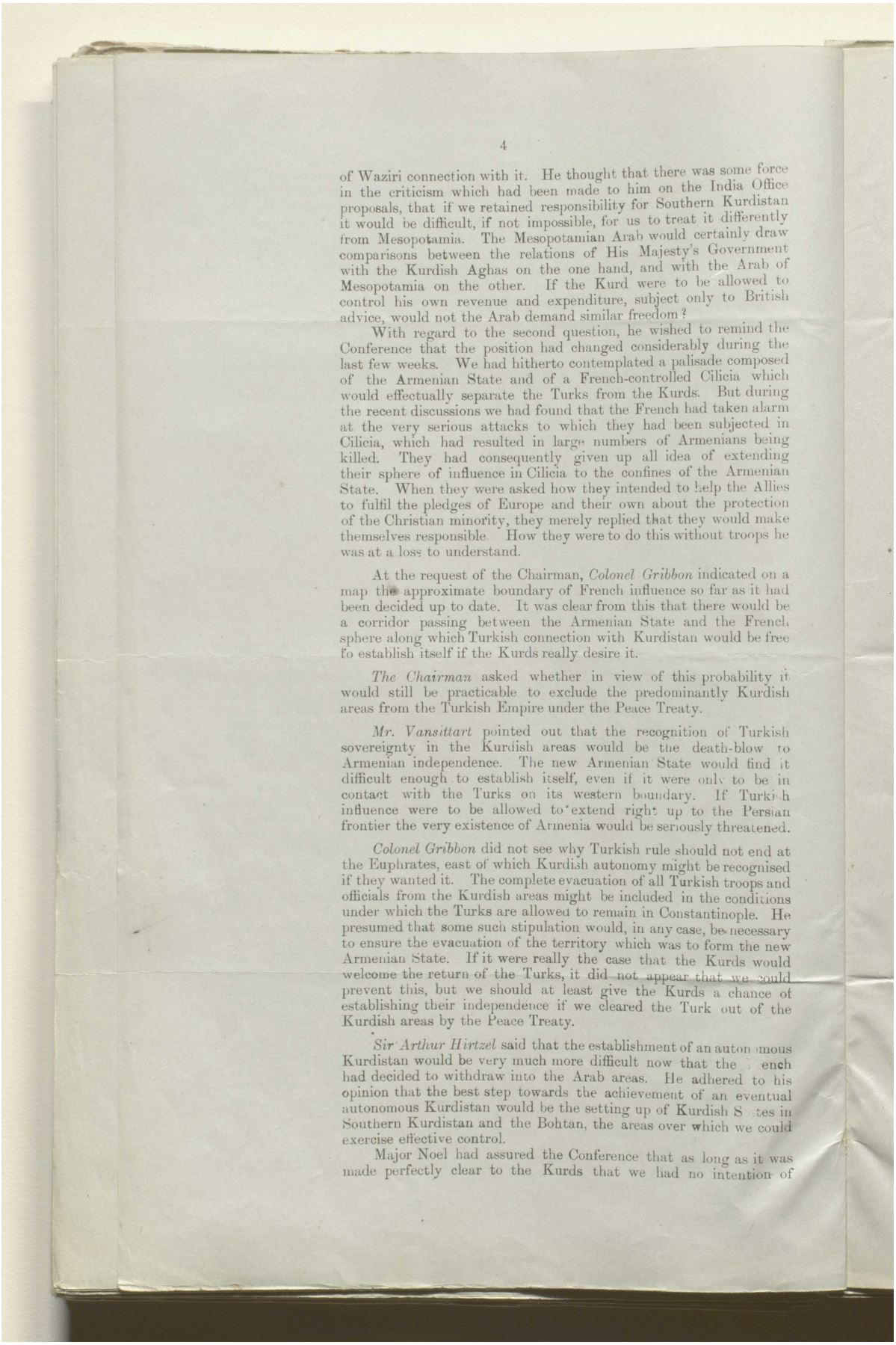



of Waziri connection with it. He thought that there was some force in the criticism which had been made to him on the India Office proposals, that if we retained responsibility for Southern Kurdistan it would be difficult, if not impossible, for us to treat it differently from Mesopotamia. The Mesopotamian Arab would certainly draw comparisons between the relations of His Majesty's Government with the Kurdish Aghas on the one hand, and with the Arab of Mesopotamia on the other. If the Kurd were to be allowed to control his own revenue and expenditure, subject only to British advice, would not the Arab demand similar freedom?

With regard to the second question, he wished to remind the Conference that the position had changed considerably during the last few weeks. We had hitherto contemplated a palisade composed of the Armenian State and of a French-controlled Cilicia which would effectually separate the Turks from the Kurds. But during the recent discussions we had found that the French had taken alarm at the very serious attacks to which they had been subjected in Cilicia, which had resulted in large numbers of Armenians being killed. They had consequently given up all idea of extending their sphere of influence in Cilicia to the confines of the Armenian State. When they were asked how they intended to help the Allies to fulfil the pledges of Europe and their own about the protection of the Christian minority, they merely replied that they would make themselves responsible. How they were to do this without troops he was at a loss to understand.

At the request of the Chairman, *Colonel Gribbon* indicated on a map the approximate boundary of French influence so far as it had been decided up to date. It was clear from this that there would be a corridor passing between the Armenian State and the French sphere along which Turkish connection with Kurdistan would be free to establish itself if the Kurds really desire it.

*The Chairman* asked whether in view of this probability it would still be practicable to exclude the predominantly Kurdish areas from the Turkish Empire under the Peace Treaty.

*Mr. Vansittart* pointed out that the recognition of Turkish sovereignty in the Kurdish areas would be the death-blow to Armenian independence. The new Armenian State would find it difficult enough to establish itself, even if it were only to be in contact with the Turks on its western boundary. If Turkish influence were to be allowed to extend right up to the Persian frontier the very existence of Armenia would be seriously threatened.

*Colonel Gribbon* did not see why Turkish rule should not end at the Euphrates, east of which Kurdish autonomy might be recognised if they wanted it. The complete evacuation of all Turkish troops and officials from the Kurdish areas might be included in the conditions under which the Turks are allowed to remain in Constantinople. He presumed that some such stipulation would, in any case, be necessary to ensure the evacuation of the territory which was to form the new Armenian State. If it were really the case that the Kurds would welcome the return of the Turks, it did not appear that we could prevent this, but we should at least give the Kurds a chance of establishing their independence if we cleared the Turk out of the Kurdish areas by the Peace Treaty.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that the establishment of an autonomous Kurdistan would be very much more difficult now that the French had decided to withdraw into the Arab areas. He adhered to his opinion that the best step towards the achievement of an eventual autonomous Kurdistan would be the setting up of Kurdish States in Southern Kurdistan and the Bohtan, the areas over which we could exercise effective control.

Major Noel had assured the Conference that as long as it was made perfectly clear to the Kurds that we had no intention of



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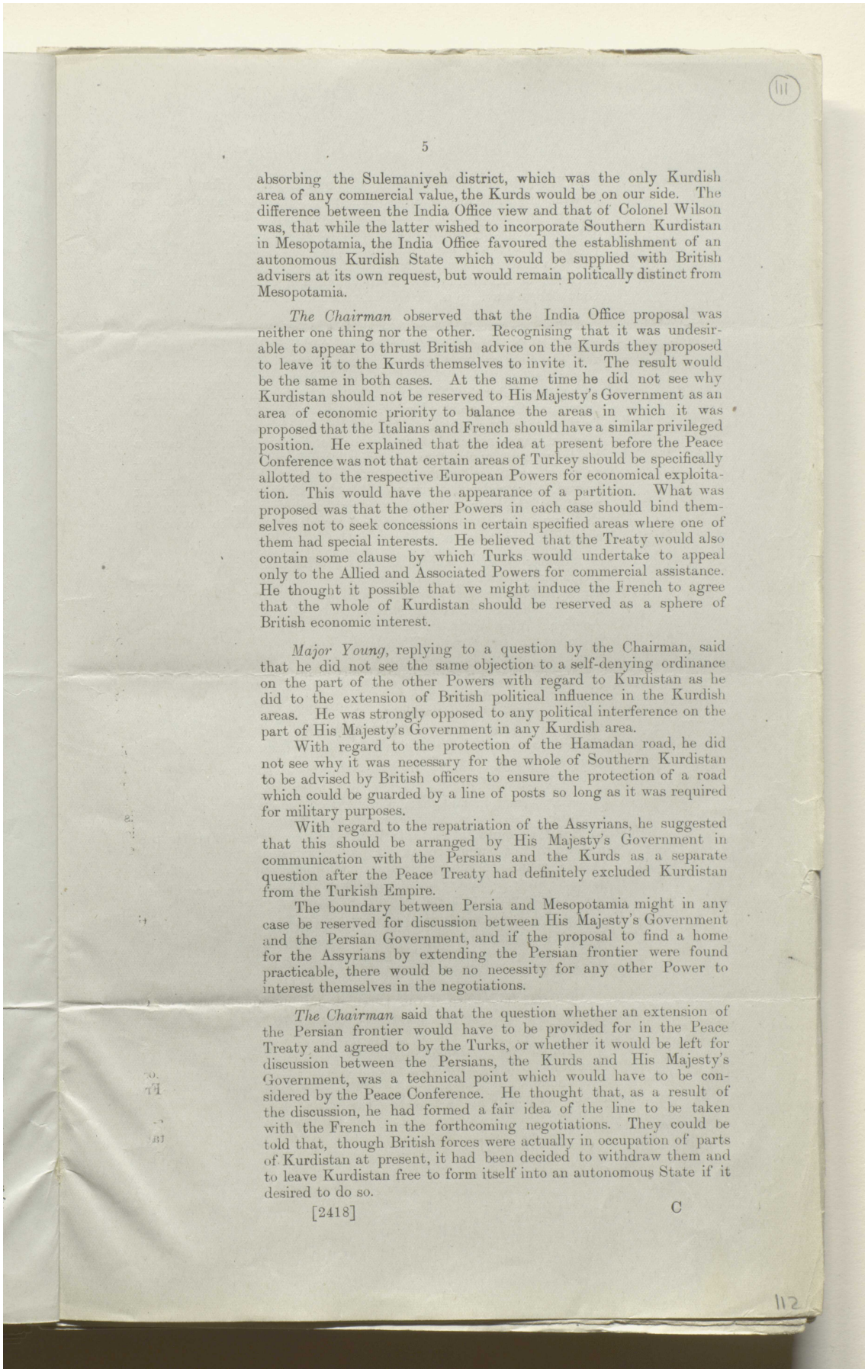



absorbing the Sulemaniyeh district, which was the only Kurdish area of any commercial value, the Kurds would be on our side. The difference between the India Office view and that of Colonel Wilson was, that while the latter wished to incorporate Southern Kurdistan in Mesopotamia, the India Office favoured the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish State which would be supplied with British advisers at its own request, but would remain politically distinct from Mesopotamia.

*The Chairman* observed that the India Office proposal was neither one thing nor the other. Recognising that it was undesirable to appear to thrust British advice on the Kurds they proposed to leave it to the Kurds themselves to invite it. The result would be the same in both cases. At the same time he did not see why Kurdistan should not be reserved to His Majesty's Government as an area of economic priority to balance the areas in which it was proposed that the Italians and French should have a similar privileged position. He explained that the idea at present before the Peace Conference was not that certain areas of Turkey should be specifically allotted to the respective European Powers for economical exploitation. This would have the appearance of a partition. What was proposed was that the other Powers in each case should bind themselves not to seek concessions in certain specified areas where one of them had special interests. He believed that the Treaty would also contain some clause by which Turks would undertake to appeal only to the Allied and Associated Powers for commercial assistance. He thought it possible that we might induce the French to agree that the whole of Kurdistan should be reserved as a sphere of British economic interest.

*Major Young*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that he did not see the same objection to a self-denying ordinance on the part of the other Powers with regard to Kurdistan as he did to the extension of British political influence in the Kurdish areas. He was strongly opposed to any political interference on the part of His Majesty's Government in any Kurdish area.

With regard to the protection of the Hamadan road, he did not see why it was necessary for the whole of Southern Kurdistan to be advised by British officers to ensure the protection of a road which could be guarded by a line of posts so long as it was required for military purposes.

With regard to the repatriation of the Assyrians, he suggested that this should be arranged by His Majesty's Government in communication with the Persians and the Kurds as a separate question after the Peace Treaty had definitely excluded Kurdistan from the Turkish Empire.

The boundary between Persia and Mesopotamia might in any case be reserved for discussion between His Majesty's Government and the Persian Government, and if the proposal to find a home for the Assyrians by extending the Persian frontier were found practicable, there would be no necessity for any other Power to interest themselves in the negotiations.

*The Chairman* said that the question whether an extension of the Persian frontier would have to be provided for in the Peace Treaty and agreed to by the Turks, or whether it would be left for discussion between the Persians, the Kurds and His Majesty's Government, was a technical point which would have to be considered by the Peace Conference. He thought that, as a result of the discussion, he had formed a fair idea of the line to be taken with the French in the forthcoming negotiations. They could be told that, though British forces were actually in occupation of parts of Kurdistan at present, it had been decided to withdraw them and to leave Kurdistan free to form itself into an autonomous State if it desired to do so.





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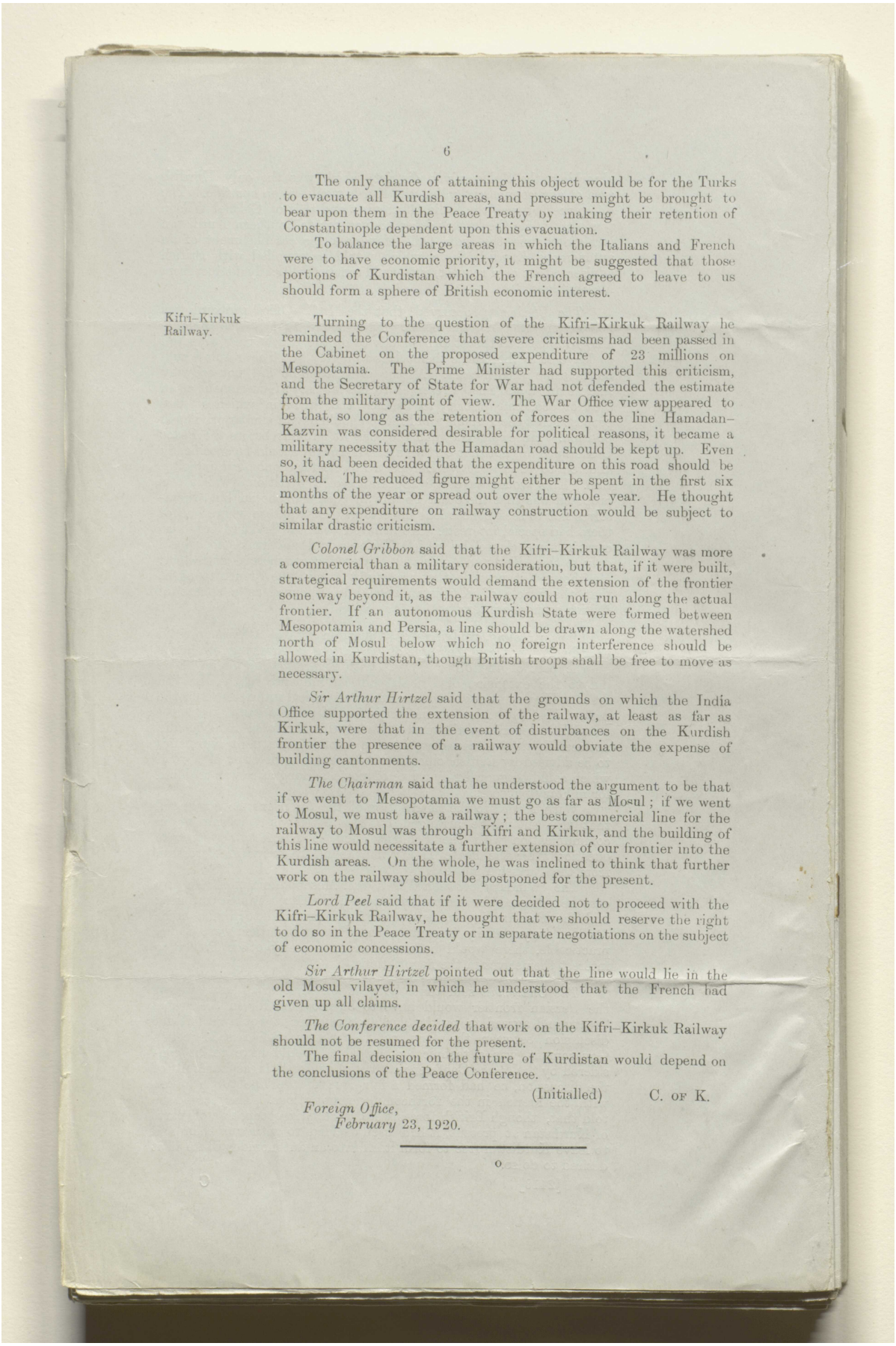



The only chance of attaining this object would be for the Turks to evacuate all Kurdish areas, and pressure might be brought to bear upon them in the Peace Treaty by making their retention of Constantinople dependent upon this evacuation.

To balance the large areas in which the Italians and French were to have economic priority, it might be suggested that those portions of Kurdistan which the French agreed to leave to us should form a sphere of British economic interest.

Kifri–Kirkuk Railway.

Turning to the question of the Kifri–Kirkuk Railway he reminded the Conference that severe criticisms had been passed in the Cabinet on the proposed expenditure of 23 millions on Mesopotamia. The Prime Minister had supported this criticism, and the Secretary of State for War had not defended the estimate from the military point of view. The War Office view appeared to be that, so long as the retention of forces on the line Hamadan–Kazvin was considered desirable for political reasons, it became a military necessity that the Hamadan road should be kept up. Even so, it had been decided that the expenditure on this road should be halved. The reduced figure might either be spent in the first six months of the year or spread out over the whole year. He thought that any expenditure on railway construction would be subject to similar drastic criticism.

*Colonel Gribbon* said that the Kifri–Kirkuk Railway was more a commercial than a military consideration, but that, if it were built, strategical requirements would demand the extension of the frontier some way beyond it, as the railway could not run along the actual frontier. If an autonomous Kurdish State were formed between Mesopotamia and Persia, a line should be drawn along the watershed north of Mosul below which no foreign interference should be allowed in Kurdistan, though British troops shall be free to move as necessary.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that the grounds on which the India Office supported the extension of the railway, at least as far as Kirkuk, were that in the event of disturbances on the Kurdish frontier the presence of a railway would obviate the expense of building cantonments.

*The Chairman* said that he understood the argument to be that if we went to Mesopotamia we must go as far as Mosul; if we went to Mosul, we must have a railway; the best commercial line for the railway to Mosul was through Kifri and Kirkuk, and the building of this line would necessitate a further extension of our frontier into the Kurdish areas. On the whole, he was inclined to think that further work on the railway should be postponed for the present.

*Lord Peel* said that if it were decided not to proceed with the Kifri–Kirkuk Railway, he thought that we should reserve the right to do so in the Peace Treaty or in separate negotiations on the subject of economic concessions.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* pointed out that the line would lie in the old Mosul vilayet, in which he understood that the French had given up all claims.

*The Conference decided* that work on the Kifri–Kirkuk Railway should not be resumed for the present.

The final decision on the future of Kurdistan would depend on the conclusions of the Peace Conference.

(Initialled) C. of K.

*Foreign Office,*
*February* 23, 1920.

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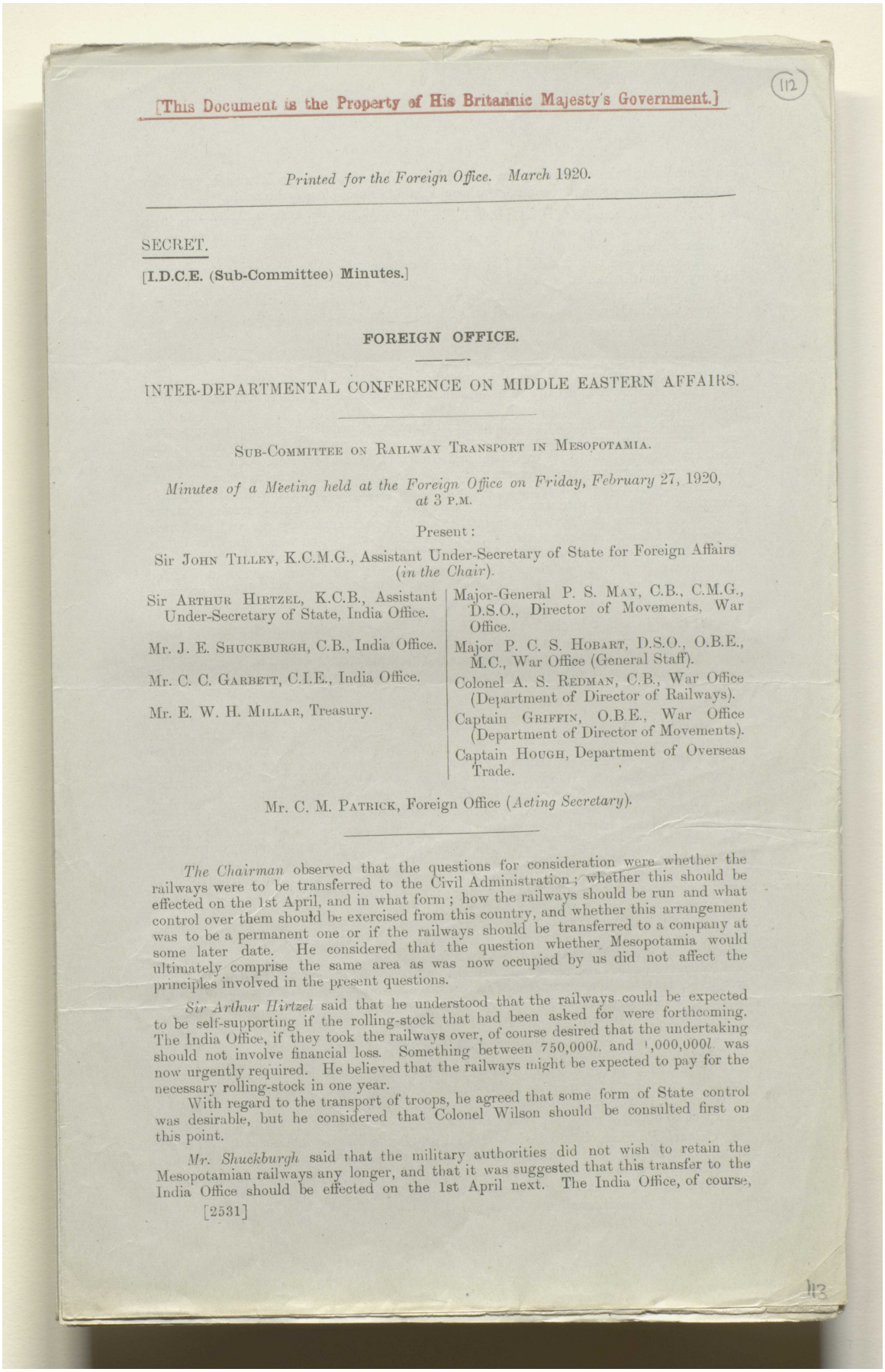

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SECRET.

[I.D.C.E. (Sub-Committee) Minutes.]

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

### Sub-Committee on Railway Transport in Mesopotamia.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Friday, February 27, 1920, at 3 P.M.*

Present:

Sir John Tilley, K.C.M.G., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (*in the Chair*).

Sir Arthur Hirtzel, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State, India Office.

Mr. J. E. Shuckburgh, C.B., India Office.

Mr. C. C. Garbett, C.I.E., India Office.

Mr. E. W. H. Millar, Treasury.

Major-General P. S. May, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Director of Movements, War Office.

Major P. C. S. Hobart, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., War Office (General Staff).

Colonel A. S. Redman, C.B., War Office (Department of Director of Railways).

Captain Griffin, O.B.E., War Office (Department of Director of Movements).

Captain Hough, Department of Overseas Trade.

Mr. C. M. Patrick, Foreign Office (*Acting Secretary*).

*The Chairman* observed that the questions for consideration were whether the railways were to be transferred to the Civil Administration; whether this should be effected on the 1st April, and in what form; how the railways should be run and what control over them should be exercised from this country, and whether this arrangement was to be a permanent one or if the railways should be transferred to a company at some later date. He considered that the question whether Mesopotamia would ultimately comprise the same area as was now occupied by us did not affect the principles involved in the present questions.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that he understood that the railways could be expected to be self-supporting if the rolling-stock that had been asked for were forthcoming. The India Office, if they took the railways over, of course desired that the undertaking should not involve financial loss. Something between 750,000*l.* and 1,000,000*l.* was now urgently required. He believed that the railways might be expected to pay for the necessary rolling-stock in one year.

With regard to the transport of troops, he agreed that some form of State control was desirable, but he considered that Colonel Wilson should be consulted first on this point.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that the military authorities did not wish to retain the Mesopotamian railways any longer, and that it was suggested that this transfer to the India Office should be effected on the 1st April next. The India Office, of course,

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did not wish to take over the railways if this would lead to a financial smash, but they were prepared to do so if the Treasury would meet reasonable requirements.

*Mr. Garbett* considered that, whatever might be decided, it was necessary to keep the railway in a good state of repair. Unless this were done the railways would deteriorate rapidly.

He considered that it might be in the interests of the Administration to run the railway, even if it had to be subsidised to meet river competition.

With regard to the suggestion that a private company should take over the railway, he considered that a question of policy was involved thereby. He did not know how much money had been received from Mesopotamian funds by the Treasury, but considered, however, that it would be satisfactory if they could receive Treasury authority that the Mesopotamian surplus of 645,000*l.* would be available for that country. No estimates had yet been received for the year 1921, but he understood that the Treasury had already received the surplus of half a million which accrued in 1915–1918.

With regard to the suggestion that the proposed provision of new rolling-stock was unnecessarily lavish, he pointed out that the matter was subject not only to the local inspection, but to War Office and India Office supervision. An increase in rolling-stock, moreover, would enormously increase the receipts of the railway.

In reply to a question from the Chairman, he stated that he considered it possible that there might be a rate war between the river and railway transportation systems. In view of the uncertainty which seemed to exist as to financial figures and estimates, he suggested that a sub-committee of the present committee, on which the War Office, the India Office and the Treasury should be represented, should meet to go into the financial aspects of the question. This suggestion was agreed to, and it was decided that the sub-committee should meet at the India Office on Monday, the 1st proximo, at 11·30 A.M.

*Mr. Millar* said that the Treasury lacked sufficient financial information on these questions on which to base an opinion.

*The Chairman* asked what the Treasury alternative was, if, having received the necessary figures, they found that considerable expenditure was essential? Did they consider it possible to let the railway become derelict? This was surely out of the question.

*Mr. Millar* said that he could not depart from his attitude of reserve. He added that the Treasury agreed that the transfer might be made, but they were unwilling to commit themselves as to provision of funds. The Treasury was desirous of knowing what Mesopotamia could do financially from its own resources, and whether a further balance of half-a-million was again to be expected. From the insufficient information in their possession they were unwilling to commit themselves in advance, but their general attitude was that capital expenditure should be kept as low as possible. The correspondence he had seen on the subject of rivercraft suggested the probability of railways being unable to compete economically with the river transportation. If, however, the railway would pay its own way he did not see why it should not be handed over to a company, which solution from the Treasury point of view would probably be preferable to transfer to the civil authorities.

In reply to a question from Mr. Garbett, he could not state how much money had been received by the Treasury from Mesopotamia, but all capital expenditure other than for purely military reasons must be put against it.

With regard to the surplus of 645,000*l.* which had been referred to, the Treasury would require to have the proposal definitely placed before them. If the railway could be self-supporting from its own revenues the Treasury would probably have no objection to the proposed transfer.

*General May* stated that the military authorities, from their point of view, did not desire to retain the railways.

With regard to the proposed new passenger-carriage stock, the new waggons were not so essential from the military point of view as they were from the commercial point of view. If, however, it were decided to sell the railways to a company it was useless to expect to obtain a good price unless the railway were kept in a good condition.

*Colonel Redman* observed that the railway, according to the estimates received, appeared to be in a good financial position. If it were decided to transfer the line to a private company he considered that at any rate sufficient expenditure should be incurred to keep the line in order and to ensure economical working.



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*Captain Griffin* pointed out that it was desirable to receive information as soon as possible regarding provision of funds. The labour question was the chief difficulty as most of the labour was imported from India. If the programme was not to be sanctioned then labour would have to be repatriated, and he pointed out that it was necessary to continue to pay the men until they actually returned to their homes. On the other hand, if money were not provided in good time and labour in the meantime repatriated, he pointed out that it would take a very long time to secure fresh labour from India. He added that the proposed central workshops at Baghdad were an absolute necessity. At present there were four local workshops in operation—a system which was unsatisfactory from both a financial and technical point of view.

In reply to a question by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, *Captain Griffin* stated that in India on lines other than State lines railway rates were controlled, and that no constructional or survey work could be undertaken without Government sanction. There was an arrangement by which the railways were bound to carry the necessary military traffic.

*Major Hobart* said that the General Staff were only concerned in the present question, and in so far as that some arrangement for transport of troops in case of emergency was absolutely essential. In this connection some form of State control was indispensable. In view of the fact that in India the Punjab lines are State-owned railways, he considered that there was an even stronger case for State-owned lines in Mesopotamia, both now and for some time to come. In view of the stringent conditions which it would be necessary to impose from the military point of view, he did not consider that any company would consent to take the railway over.

After some discussion, *General May* said the question of the Civil Administration taking over the inland water transport should be considered, and he pressed that this should be done at an early date concurrently with the railways.

*Colonel Redman* pointed out that there were no estimates available.

*General May* then suggested that the financial aspects of the question should be discussed by the Sub-Committee on the 1st proximo.

This was agreed to.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* referred to the question of the disposal of rivercraft in Mesopotamia. He said the general attitude of the India Office was in favour of free navigation as far as possible.

*General May*, with reference to the sale of vessels by Lord Inchcape, stated that the War Office attitude was that anything that would cause dissatisfaction or unrest was to be avoided. It was very late, however, to cancel our arrangements with Lord Inchcape in which the Ministry of Munitions were vitally concerned. Their attitude was that they could get rid of the ships in any way they thought fit in the interests of the taxpayer.

*Colonel Redman* observed that, owing to the fact that the railways were not completed, it was improbable that the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, had declared many vessels surplus to requirements. He considered the best form of control was a system of licences or control of rates.

*Captain Hough* remarked that the facilities for local purchasers appeared quite inadequate.

*The Chairman* suggested that the possibility of not proceeding further in the transaction with Lord Inchcape might be put to Colonel Wilson.

*Mr. Millar* observed that it was unsatisfactory to bolster up the railways by increasing to an artificial extent the river charges. He considered it too late to cancel arrangements with Lord Inchcape, and remarked that it was not known yet whether Lord Inchcape had sold the ships, the sale of which was announced for 15th February. He pointed out that the system of licences, &c., would affect the sale adversely.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* stated that Lord Inchcape had telegraphed to the same effect.

*Mr. Garbett*, in reply to a question by Mr. Millar, observed that it was a reasonable assumption that Lord Inchcape, whose firms controlled the ocean transport from Basra to Bombay, were reported to be interested in the Persian Railway, and had absorbed Lynch and Co., the pre-war monopolists of the Tigris trading fleet, would benefit by the sale of river craft in Mesopotamia. He pointed out that what must be avoided was a false adjustment of through rates. Lord Inchcape was now in a position to





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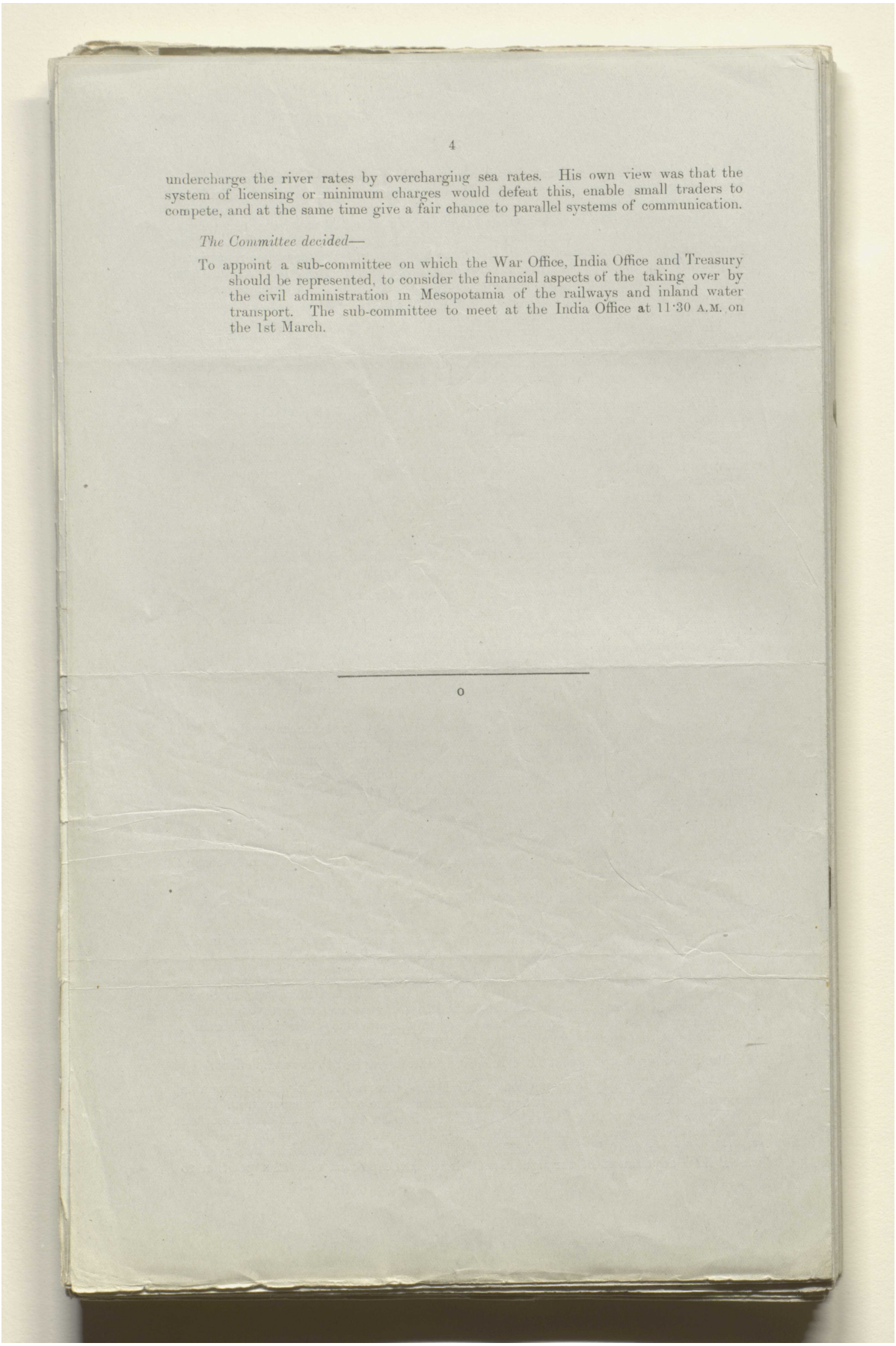

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undercharge the river rates by overcharging sea rates. His own view was that the system of licensing or minimum charges would defeat this, enable small traders to compete, and at the same time give a fair chance to parallel systems of communication.

*The Committee decided—*

To appoint a sub-committee on which the War Office, India Office and Treasury should be represented, to consider the financial aspects of the taking over by the civil administration in Mesopotamia of the railways and inland water transport. The sub-committee to meet at the India Office at 11·30 A.M. on the 1st March.

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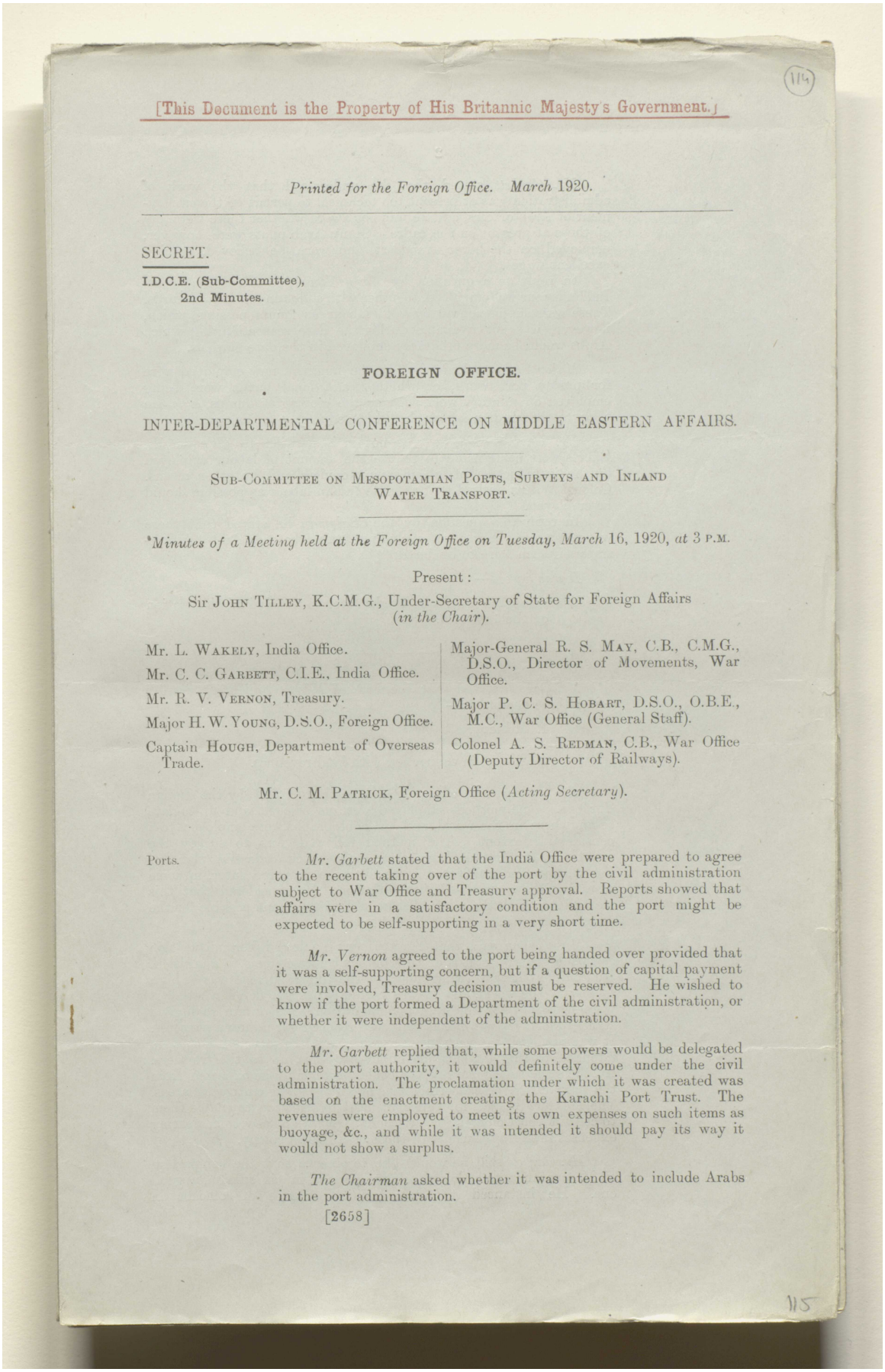

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**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

SUB-COMMITTEE ON MESOPOTAMIAN PORTS, SURVEYS AND INLAND WATER TRANSPORT.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, March* 16, 1920, *at* 3 P.M.

Present :

Sir JOHN TILLEY, K.C.M.G., Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (*in the Chair*).

Mr. L. WAKELY, India Office.
Mr. C. C. GARBETT, C.I.E., India Office.
Mr. R. V. VERNON, Treasury.
Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O., Foreign Office.
Captain HOUGH, Department of Overseas Trade.
Major-General R. S. MAY, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Director of Movements, War Office.
Major P. C. S. HOBART, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., War Office (General Staff).
Colonel A. S. REDMAN, C.B., War Office (Deputy Director of Railways).

Mr. C. M. PATRICK, Foreign Office (*Acting Secretary*).

Ports.

*Mr. Garbett* stated that the India Office were prepared to agree to the recent taking over of the port by the civil administration subject to War Office and Treasury approval. Reports showed that affairs were in a satisfactory condition and the port might be expected to be self-supporting in a very short time.

*Mr. Vernon* agreed to the port being handed over provided that it was a self-supporting concern, but if a question of capital payment were involved, Treasury decision must be reserved. He wished to know if the port formed a Department of the civil administration, or whether it were independent of the administration.

*Mr. Garbett* replied that, while some powers would be delegated to the port authority, it would definitely come under the civil administration. The proclamation under which it was created was based on the enactment creating the Karachi Port Trust. The revenues were employed to meet its own expenses on such items as buoyage, &c., and while it was intended it should pay its way it would not show a surplus.

*The Chairman* asked whether it was intended to include Arabs in the port administration.





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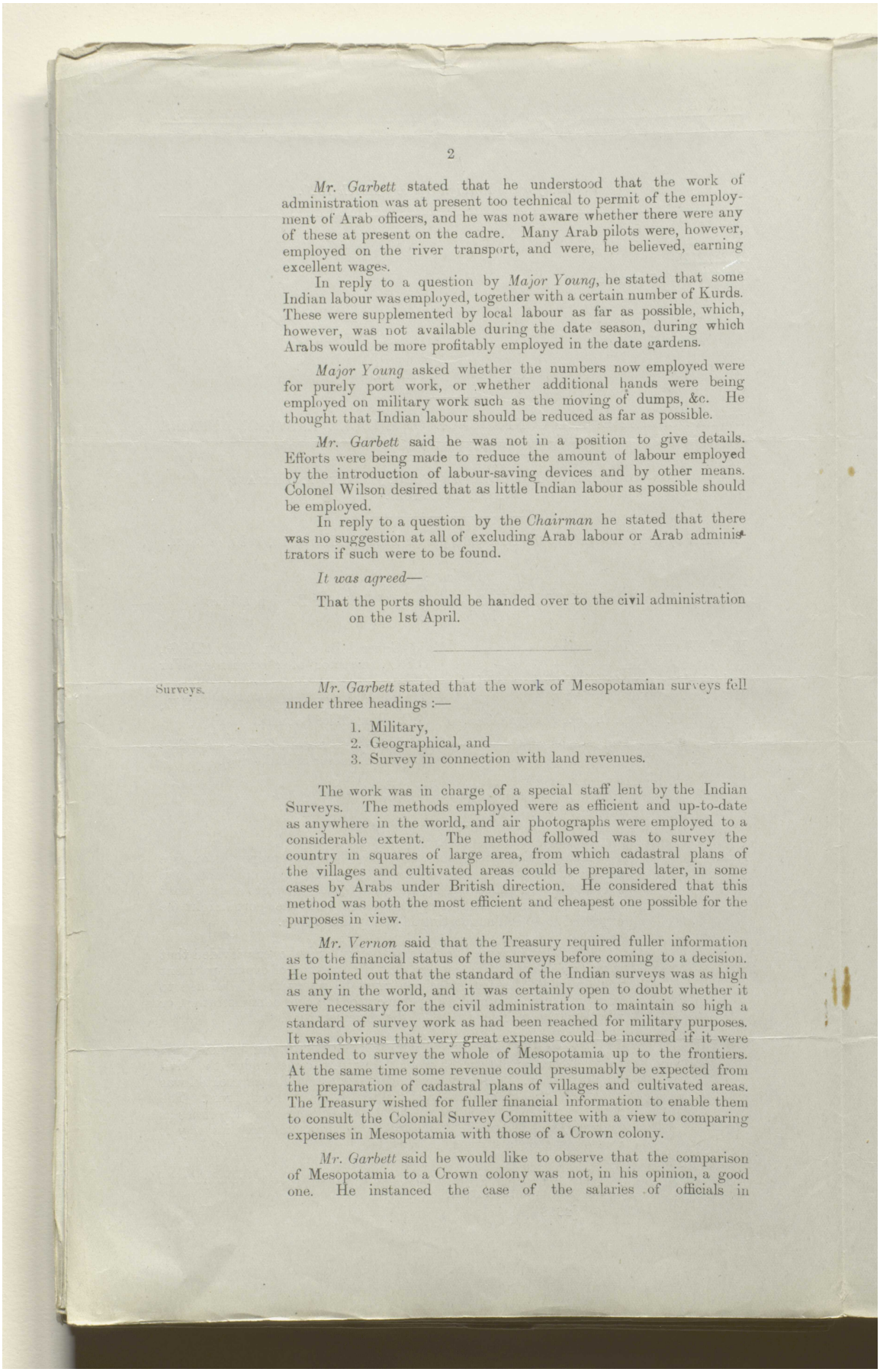



*Mr. Garbett* stated that he understood that the work of administration was at present too technical to permit of the employment of Arab officers, and he was not aware whether there were any of these at present on the cadre. Many Arab pilots were, however, employed on the river transport, and were, he believed, earning excellent wages.

In reply to a question by *Major Young*, he stated that some Indian labour was employed, together with a certain number of Kurds. These were supplemented by local labour as far as possible, which, however, was not available during the date season, during which Arabs would be more profitably employed in the date gardens.

*Major Young* asked whether the numbers now employed were for purely port work, or whether additional hands were being employed on military work such as the moving of dumps, &c. He thought that Indian labour should be reduced as far as possible.

*Mr. Garbett* said he was not in a position to give details. Efforts were being made to reduce the amount of labour employed by the introduction of labour-saving devices and by other means. Colonel Wilson desired that as little Indian labour as possible should be employed.

In reply to a question by the *Chairman* he stated that there was no suggestion at all of excluding Arab labour or Arab administrators if such were to be found.

*It was agreed*—

That the ports should be handed over to the civil administration on the 1st April.

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Surveys.

*Mr. Garbett* stated that the work of Mesopotamian surveys fell under three headings :—

1. Military,
2. Geographical, and
3. Survey in connection with land revenues.

The work was in charge of a special staff lent by the Indian Surveys. The methods employed were as efficient and up-to-date as anywhere in the world, and air photographs were employed to a considerable extent. The method followed was to survey the country in squares of large area, from which cadastral plans of the villages and cultivated areas could be prepared later, in some cases by Arabs under British direction. He considered that this method was both the most efficient and cheapest one possible for the purposes in view.

*Mr. Vernon* said that the Treasury required fuller information as to the financial status of the surveys before coming to a decision. He pointed out that the standard of the Indian surveys was as high as any in the world, and it was certainly open to doubt whether it were necessary for the civil administration to maintain so high a standard of survey work as had been reached for military purposes. It was obvious that very great expense could be incurred if it were intended to survey the whole of Mesopotamia up to the frontiers. At the same time some revenue could presumably be expected from the preparation of cadastral plans of villages and cultivated areas. The Treasury wished for fuller financial information to enable them to consult the Colonial Survey Committee with a view to comparing expenses in Mesopotamia with those of a Crown colony.

*Mr. Garbett* said he would like to observe that the comparison of Mesopotamia to a Crown colony was not, in his opinion, a good one. He instanced the case of the salaries of officials in



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Mesopotamia, which, however they might compare with a Crown colony, were, he understood, considerably less than those of British officials in Persia. Mesopotamia should, he considered, be placed more nearly on a footing with Persia in this respect than with a Crown colony, it being essential that officials should be in a position to maintain the rather high standard of the Arab gentleman.

*Major Young* said that if a parallel were to be drawn the criterion should be the ratio of the number of British officials employed to the total population. In this respect India appeared to provide a closer parallel to Mesopotamia than Persia. He hoped that this condition of affairs would not be permanent.

After some discussion, *Mr. Vernon* said that the decision on the general question raised must be reserved.

The question of surveys was again briefly discussed, and their handing over to the civil administration was agreed to in principle, subject to more detailed financial information being obtained from Baghdad and communicated to the Treasury.

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Inland Water Transport.

*Mr. Wakely* circulated telegram No. 2852 of the 3rd March from the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad. He observed that as regards some details Colonel Wilson's exact meaning was not very clear, but apparently he was now opposed on grounds of economy to taking over any of the inland water transport except for the three services mentioned—viz., Bridges, Dredging, and Civil Transportation Pool. It was clear that he was not now prepared to take over the vessels required for military purposes.

*General May* observed that it was not known exactly how many vessels were involved. He understood that the total number of the fleet was between 1,500 and 1,600, but whether or not the surplus was to be disposed of did not affect the principle of handing over the remainder to the civil administration. He raised the question of the proposed marine.

*Colonel Redman* said he understood the telegram to mean that any portion of the fleet that would be used for commercial purposes was to be disposed of and not retained under the civil administration. With regard to the defence vessels, the intention had been that the civil authorities should provide the crews and the military the gunners. The General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, was in favour of a joint marine for all Government vessels.

*Major Hobart* said that the General Staff considered that sufficient vessels should be retained for some years to come to move troops up or down the 500 miles of the River Tigris between Baghdad and Basrah in case of emergency. These vessels would not normally be required by the military authorities and could thus be lent to the civil administration for commercial purposes. He pointed out that, in addition to the other vessels, there were eight "fly-boats" armed with machine-guns or three or six-pounders which were useless for other than military purposes. These, he considered, might be taken over by the civil administration for police purposes. Another point was that certain vessels fitted with refrigerating apparatus, at present used for transport of frozen-meat rations for the troops, should be retained as he was not aware that there were any facilities for refrigerating on the railways. He also considered that when the surplus vessels were disposed of a clause should be added to the sale contract by which the military authorities had the right to commandeer them in case of emergency.

*Mr. Vernon* was of opinion that the Civil Transport Pool, Dredging and Bridges Service should, at any rate, be handed over to the civil authorities. He considered that Colonel Wilson ought



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not to take over any charges which involved liquidation of expenses incurred by the military authorities.

With regard to the suggestion that a clause on the subject of commandeering should be inserted in the sale contract, he did not think that this should be done until after the sale. He was not aware exactly what the Civil Transport Pool meant.

*Mr. Garbett* pointed out that the Civil Transport Pool was a necessity for the transportation of officers of the civil administration, it being practically impossible to get to many places in Mesopotamia without a launch.

*The Chairman*, referring to the telegram from Baghdad, asked what was the bearing of Colonel Wilson's objection to taking over the inland water transport on account of the heavy expenditure involved. He presumed that the expense had been borne by the Treasury hitherto, and if Colonel Wilson thought it was excessive he could cut it down when he took over.

*Mr. Garbett* said he thought Colonel Wilson's object was to take over only a continuing service and not one which would have to be liquidated. He observed that with regard to the eight "fly-boats," a question of policy was involved. If, under the mandate, the forces in Mesopotamia were to be those of the Mandatory Power and the forces of the Mandated Power were to be limited, we should not be justified in handing over these armed vessels, even as police boats, to the civil administration, who now represented the future Arab Government, *i.e.*, the Mandated Power.

*Colonel Redman* pointed out that the armament of these boats was movable.

*Major Young* thought we should be particularly careful about boats which were useless except for military purposes. Could not the military authorities retain them for the present? It would be difficult not to hand them over to a future Arab Government if they were now transferred to the civil administration.

*General May* pointed out that much uncertainty appeared to exist as to the number of vessels involved, &c. A telegram had been sent from the War Office to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, whose answer, when received, would probably clear up the situation. He suggested that the question should be again considered by the Sub-Committee after the receipt of the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia's answer.

*The Chairman* agreed, but considered that the handing over of the Civil Transport Pool and the Bridges and Dredging Services should be approved in principle. This was agreed to.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That the port should be handed over to the civil administration on the 1st April, 1920.
2. That the handing over of the surveys should be approved in principle, subject to fuller information being furnished to the Treasury.
3. That the handing over of the Civil Transport Pool and the Bridges and Dredging Services should be approved in principle.
4. That the Sub-Committee should again meet to consider the question of the Inland Water Transport on receipt of a reply from the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia.

(Initialled) J. T.

*Foreign Office,*
*March* 16, 1920.

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I.D.C.E., 36th Minutes.

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Wednesday, March 17, 1920, at 5 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Major-General Sir P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Captain C. P. R. COODE, C.B., D.S.O., Director, Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Mr. H. E. FASS, O.B.E., Treasury.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. R. G. VANSITTART, M.V.O., Foreign Office.

Mr. E. FORBES ADAM, Foreign Office.

Sir WILLIAM DUKE, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Under-Secretary of State for India.

General Sir ALEXANDER COBBE, V.C., K.C.B, Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. C. C. GARBETT, C.I.E., India Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Bolshevik Menace in Persia.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference had now to deal with a situation in Persia which was becoming somewhat complicated, if not actually dangerous. Specific suggestions had been made by Sir Percy Cox with regard to Starosselski and the Cossack division, upon which an immediate decision was necessary.

The question of the Cossack division was really a subordinate issue which as a part of the larger problem of our relations with the Persian Government had raised the whole question of the steps which could or should be taken by His Majesty's Government to meet the Bolshevik menace against Persia.

We had been not obscurely threatened that if we were unable to oppose a serious Bolshevik invasion of Persian soil either from Khorassan or from another direction, the present Persian Government and the Anglo-Persian Agreement would go by the board and we should lay ourselves open to a charge of serious breach of faith. He did not personally agree with the local estimate of the seriousness of the situation. His own view was that the Persian Government had incorrectly read into the Anglo-Persian Agreement a meaning which it had never been intended to bear. He was inclined to think that Sir Percy Cox was unduly affected by the local situation. At the same time answers had to be given to the questions asked by Vossugh-ud-Daulah and by Sir Percy Cox himself. These questions presented a number of difficult points on which he would ask the Conference to advise him. It seemed to him that the Conference had to make up its mind, firstly, what importance should be attached







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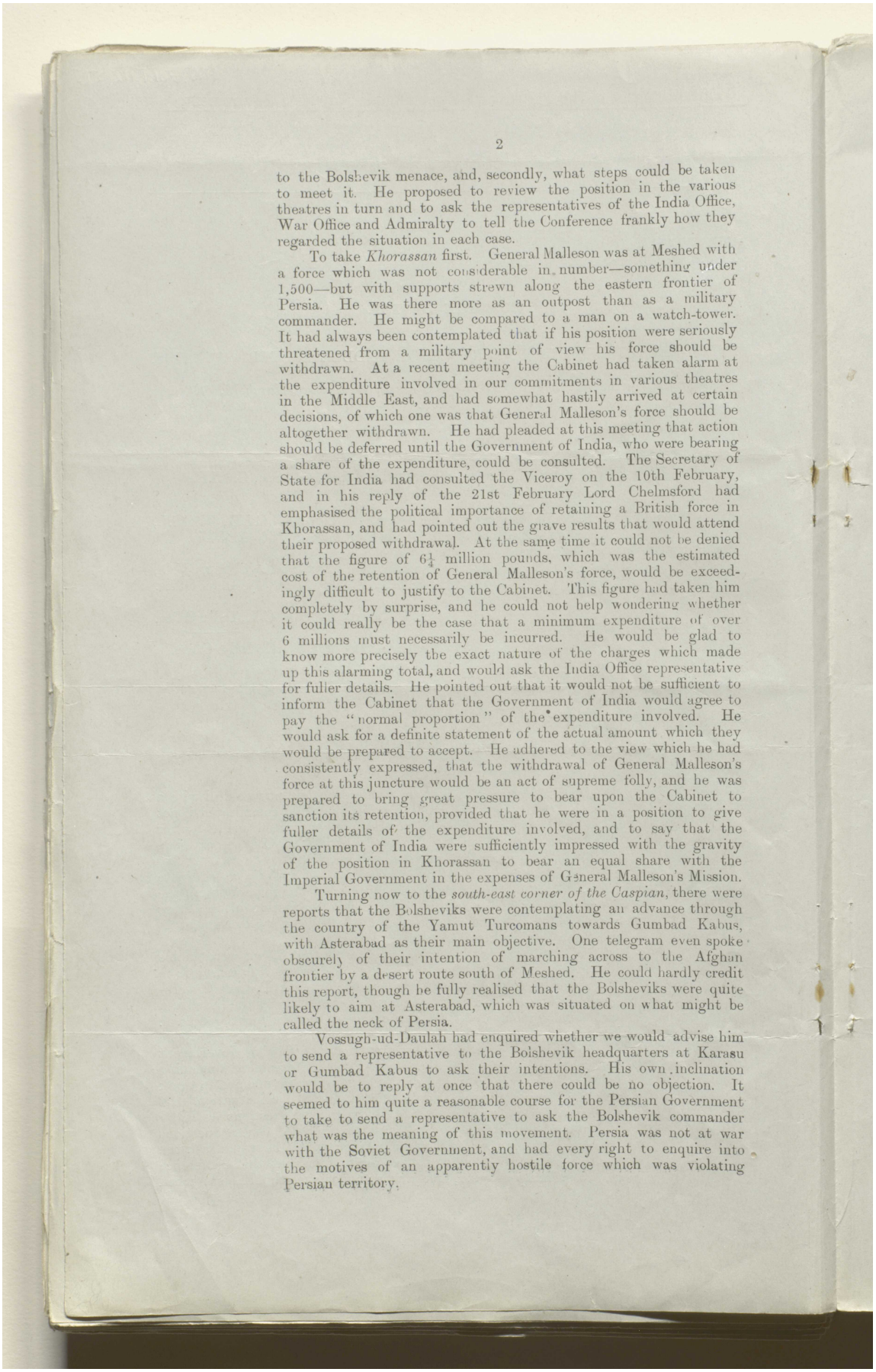



to the Bolshevik menace, and, secondly, what steps could be taken to meet it. He proposed to review the position in the various theatres in turn and to ask the representatives of the India Office, War Office and Admiralty to tell the Conference frankly how they regarded the situation in each case.

To take *Khorassan* first. General Malleson was at Meshed with a force which was not considerable in number—something under 1,500—but with supports strewn along the eastern frontier of Persia. He was there more as an outpost than as a military commander. He might be compared to a man on a watch-tower. It had always been contemplated that if his position were seriously threatened from a military point of view his force should be withdrawn. At a recent meeting the Cabinet had taken alarm at the expenditure involved in our commitments in various theatres in the Middle East, and had somewhat hastily arrived at certain decisions, of which one was that General Malleson's force should be altogether withdrawn. He had pleaded at this meeting that action should be deferred until the Government of India, who were bearing a share of the expenditure, could be consulted. The Secretary of State for India had consulted the Viceroy on the 10th February, and in his reply of the 21st February Lord Chelmsford had emphasised the political importance of retaining a British force in Khorassan, and had pointed out the grave results that would attend their proposed withdrawal. At the same time it could not be denied that the figure of $6\frac{1}{4}$ million pounds, which was the estimated cost of the retention of General Malleson's force, would be exceedingly difficult to justify to the Cabinet. This figure had taken him completely by surprise, and he could not help wondering whether it could really be the case that a minimum expenditure of over 6 millions must necessarily be incurred. He would be glad to know more precisely the exact nature of the charges which made up this alarming total, and would ask the India Office representative for fuller details. He pointed out that it would not be sufficient to inform the Cabinet that the Government of India would agree to pay the "normal proportion" of the expenditure involved. He would ask for a definite statement of the actual amount which they would be prepared to accept. He adhered to the view which he had consistently expressed, that the withdrawal of General Malleson's force at this juncture would be an act of supreme folly, and he was prepared to bring great pressure to bear upon the Cabinet to sanction its retention, provided that he were in a position to give fuller details of the expenditure involved, and to say that the Government of India were sufficiently impressed with the gravity of the position in Khorassan to bear an equal share with the Imperial Government in the expenses of General Malleson's Mission.

Turning now to the *south-east corner of the Caspian*, there were reports that the Bolsheviks were contemplating an advance through the country of the Yamut Turcomans towards Gumbad Kabus, with Asterabad as their main objective. One telegram even spoke obscurely of their intention of marching across to the Afghan frontier by a desert route south of Meshed. He could hardly credit this report, though he fully realised that the Bolsheviks were quite likely to aim at Asterabad, which was situated on what might be called the neck of Persia.

Vossugh-ud-Daulah had enquired whether we would advise him to send a representative to the Bolshevik headquarters at Karasu or Gumbad Kabus to ask their intentions. His own inclination would be to reply at once that there could be no objection. It seemed to him quite a reasonable course for the Persian Government to take to send a representative to ask the Bolshevik commander what was the meaning of this movement. Persia was not at war with the Soviet Government, and had every right to enquire into the motives of an apparently hostile force which was violating Persian territory.



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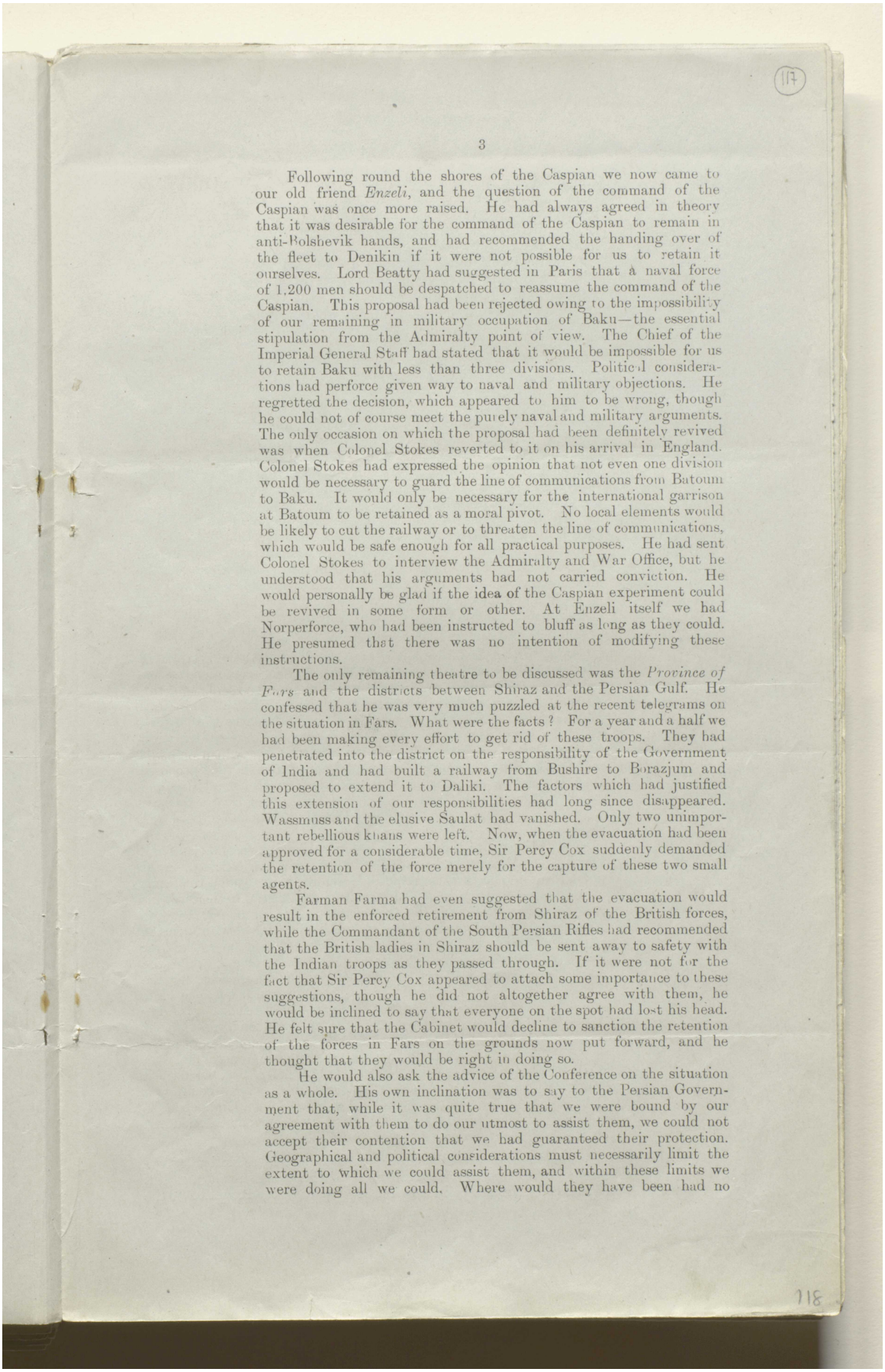



Following round the shores of the Caspian we now came to our old friend *Enzeli*, and the question of the command of the Caspian was once more raised. He had always agreed in theory that it was desirable for the command of the Caspian to remain in anti-Bolshevik hands, and had recommended the handing over of the fleet to Denikin if it were not possible for us to retain it ourselves. Lord Beatty had suggested in Paris that a naval force of 1,200 men should be despatched to reassume the command of the Caspian. This proposal had been rejected owing to the impossibility of our remaining in military occupation of Baku—the essential stipulation from the Admiralty point of view. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff had stated that it would be impossible for us to retain Baku with less than three divisions. Political considerations had perforce given way to naval and military objections. He regretted the decision, which appeared to him to be wrong, though he could not of course meet the purely naval and military arguments. The only occasion on which the proposal had been definitely revived was when Colonel Stokes reverted to it on his arrival in England. Colonel Stokes had expressed the opinion that not even one division would be necessary to guard the line of communications from Batoum to Baku. It would only be necessary for the international garrison at Batoum to be retained as a moral pivot. No local elements would be likely to cut the railway or to threaten the line of communications, which would be safe enough for all practical purposes. He had sent Colonel Stokes to interview the Admiralty and War Office, but he understood that his arguments had not carried conviction. He would personally be glad if the idea of the Caspian experiment could be revived in some form or other. At Enzeli itself we had Norperforce, who had been instructed to bluff as long as they could. He presumed that there was no intention of modifying these instructions.

The only remaining theatre to be discussed was the *Province of Fars* and the districts between Shiraz and the Persian Gulf. He confessed that he was very much puzzled at the recent telegrams on the situation in Fars. What were the facts? For a year and a half we had been making every effort to get rid of these troops. They had penetrated into the district on the responsibility of the Government of India and had built a railway from Bushire to Borazjum and proposed to extend it to Daliki. The factors which had justified this extension of our responsibilities had long since disappeared. Wassmuss and the elusive Saulat had vanished. Only two unimportant rebellious khans were left. Now, when the evacuation had been approved for a considerable time, Sir Percy Cox suddenly demanded the retention of the force merely for the capture of these two small agents.

Farman Farma had even suggested that the evacuation would result in the enforced retirement from Shiraz of the British forces, while the Commandant of the South Persian Rifles had recommended that the British ladies in Shiraz should be sent away to safety with the Indian troops as they passed through. If it were not for the fact that Sir Percy Cox appeared to attach some importance to these suggestions, though he did not altogether agree with them, he would be inclined to say that everyone on the spot had lost his head. He felt sure that the Cabinet would decline to sanction the retention of the forces in Fars on the grounds now put forward, and he thought that they would be right in doing so.

He would also ask the advice of the Conference on the situation as a whole. His own inclination was to say to the Persian Government that, while it was quite true that we were bound by our agreement with them to do our utmost to assist them, we could not accept their contention that we had guaranteed their protection. Geographical and political considerations must necessarily limit the extent to which we could assist them, and within these limits we were doing all we could. Where would they have been had no



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Anglo-Persian Agreement ever been concluded? Would they have been in a better position than they were in now? He would repudiate the suggestion that His Majesty's Government contemplated retiring from Persia and simply defending the frontiers of India, thus leaving Persia to be overrun.

It was to his mind ridiculous to imagine that the Bolsheviks with their imperfect organisation were in a position to overrun Persia at all. It was of course possible that they might get as far as Tehran, though he did not think this likely. He would be inclined to ask the Persian Government what they proposed to do themselves with their 10,000,000 people. He was sick of their whining attitude and continual complaints of bad faith, which were not in any way justified by the facts, and would be glad to put an end to them.

As to *Starosselski*, it should not be forgotten that he was one of the old school, a Koltchakite or Denikinite, and that he looked at the situation from the old Imperial Russian point of view. It was obvious that he was doing his best to retain his position in what he imagined to be Russian interests. He was a distinct source of danger to us, and yet we continued to pay him a monthly subsidy in which the Government of India shared.

He was inclined to the third alternative proposed by Sir Percy Cox in his telegram of the 13th March, namely, that Starossel-ki should be informed by the Persian Government that the British Government would no longer pay his monthly subsidy, and that he must forthwith reduce the numbers of the Cossack Division to what he could maintain on the 60,000 tomans now paid by the Persian Government. There was a certain element of risk in taking this course, but he thought that we should be prepared to face it.

*Sir William Duke* explained that the Viceroy's telegram of the 21st February was based on the Cabinet decision communicated to him in the India Office telegram of the 10th February. Taking this decision as final, he had estimated that the withdrawal of General Malleson's force from Meshed would take five months to complete, as the length of the route and the lack of water necessitated withdrawal in small echelons. If it began in March when the snow had melted it might thus not be completed until August. He proposed that a consular escort should be retained, consisting of one and a-half cavalry squadrons at Meshed and half a squadron at Seistan, with some light armoured cars at Meshed and possibly Ford van transport.

With regard to the line of communication between Birjand and Duzdap, the Viceroy had pointed out that if the 1,750 Seistan levies under British officers in this tract were suddenly disbanded the result would be to encourage Afghan raiding on British trade caravans and to produce disorder in the country. He proposed that the Khorasan levies in their present strength and the Seistan levies in reduced strength, both under British officers, should be taken over by the Persian Government, who should pay for them, while the cost of the consular escort at Meshed and Seistan, including the disbandment charges, should be borne in equal shares by His Majesty's Government and the Government of India. Having described the steps that he would take to carry out the Cabinet decision, he had emphasised the objections to complete withdrawal.

The India Office, in reply, had suggested that as General Malleson was not there to face a serious Bolshevik attack—a task which was admittedly beyond the powers of his force—but only to counteract Bolshevik activities and to check local disaffection, he might be able to carry out his functions successfully if the force at Meshed and on the line of communications were reduced.

*The Chairman* said that in his opinion the reduction of the forces on the line of communication was more important and less objectionable from a political point of view than the reduction of the



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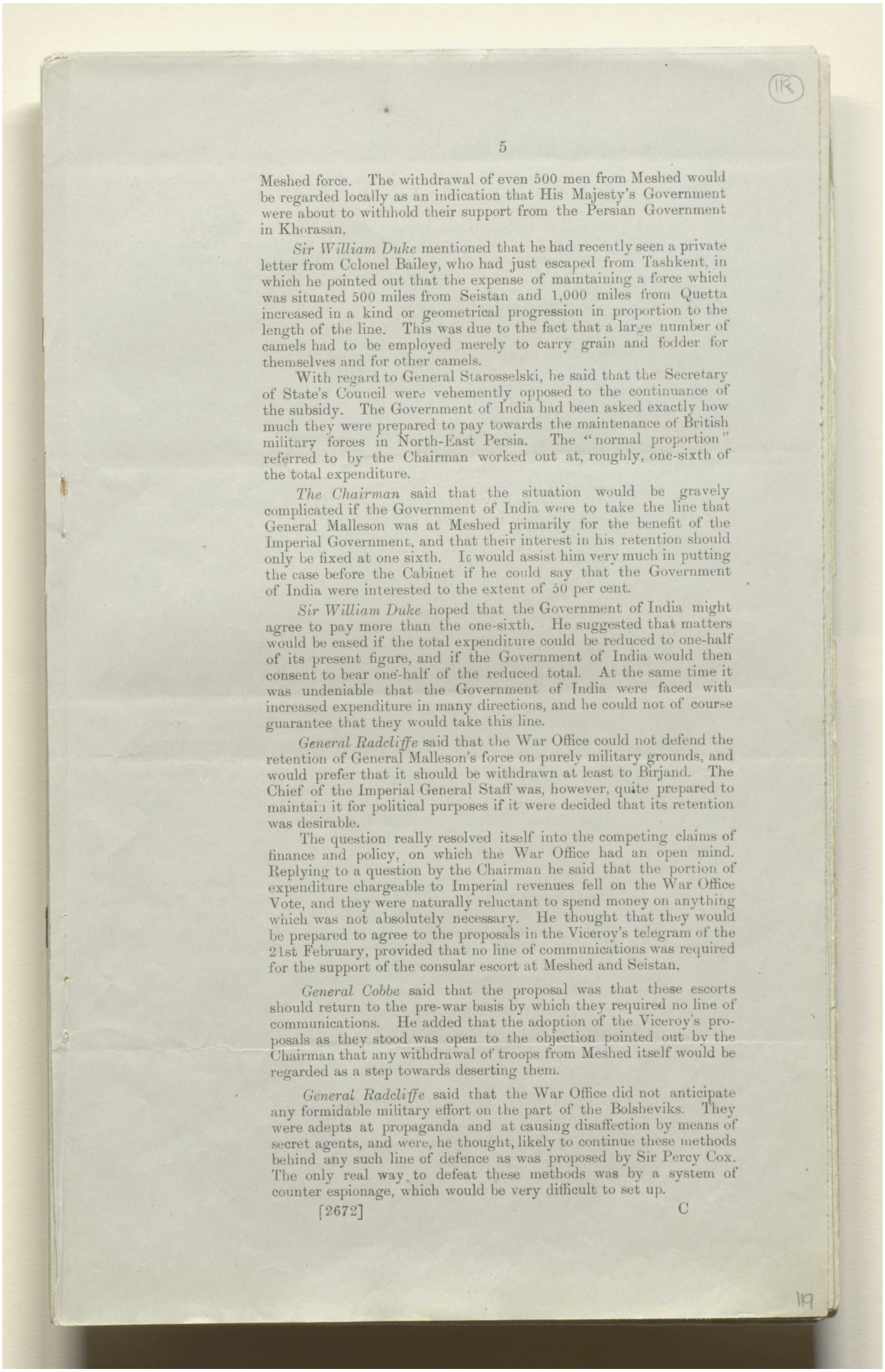



Meshed force. The withdrawal of even 500 men from Meshed would be regarded locally as an indication that His Majesty's Government were about to withhold their support from the Persian Government in Khorasan.

*Sir William Duke* mentioned that he had recently seen a private letter from Colonel Bailey, who had just escaped from Tashkent, in which he pointed out that the expense of maintaining a force which was situated 500 miles from Seistan and 1,000 miles from Quetta increased in a kind or geometrical progression in proportion to the length of the line. This was due to the fact that a large number of camels had to be employed merely to carry grain and fodder for themselves and for other camels.

With regard to General Starosselski, he said that the Secretary of State's Council were vehemently opposed to the continuance of the subsidy. The Government of India had been asked exactly how much they were prepared to pay towards the maintenance of British military forces in North-East Persia. The "normal proportion" referred to by the Chairman worked out at, roughly, one-sixth of the total expenditure.

*The Chairman* said that the situation would be gravely complicated if the Government of India were to take the line that General Malleson was at Meshed primarily for the benefit of the Imperial Government, and that their interest in his retention should only be fixed at one sixth. It would assist him very much in putting the case before the Cabinet if he could say that the Government of India were interested to the extent of 50 per cent.

*Sir William Duke* hoped that the Government of India might agree to pay more than the one-sixth. He suggested that matters would be eased if the total expenditure could be reduced to one-half of its present figure, and if the Government of India would then consent to bear one-half of the reduced total. At the same time it was undeniable that the Government of India were faced with increased expenditure in many directions, and he could not of course guarantee that they would take this line.

*General Radcliffe* said that the War Office could not defend the retention of General Malleson's force on purely military grounds, and would prefer that it should be withdrawn at least to Birjand. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff was, however, quite prepared to maintain it for political purposes if it were decided that its retention was desirable.

The question really resolved itself into the competing claims of finance and policy, on which the War Office had an open mind. Replying to a question by the Chairman he said that the portion of expenditure chargeable to Imperial revenues fell on the War Office Vote, and they were naturally reluctant to spend money on anything which was not absolutely necessary. He thought that they would be prepared to agree to the proposals in the Viceroy's telegram of the 21st February, provided that no line of communications was required for the support of the consular escort at Meshed and Seistan.

*General Cobbe* said that the proposal was that these escorts should return to the pre-war basis by which they required no line of communications. He added that the adoption of the Viceroy's proposals as they stood was open to the objection pointed out by the Chairman that any withdrawal of troops from Meshed itself would be regarded as a step towards deserting them.

*General Radcliffe* said that the War Office did not anticipate any formidable military effort on the part of the Bolsheviks. They were adepts at propaganda and at causing disaffection by means of secret agents, and were, he thought, likely to continue these methods behind any such line of defence as was proposed by Sir Percy Cox. The only real way to defeat these methods was by a system of counter espionage, which would be very difficult to set up.





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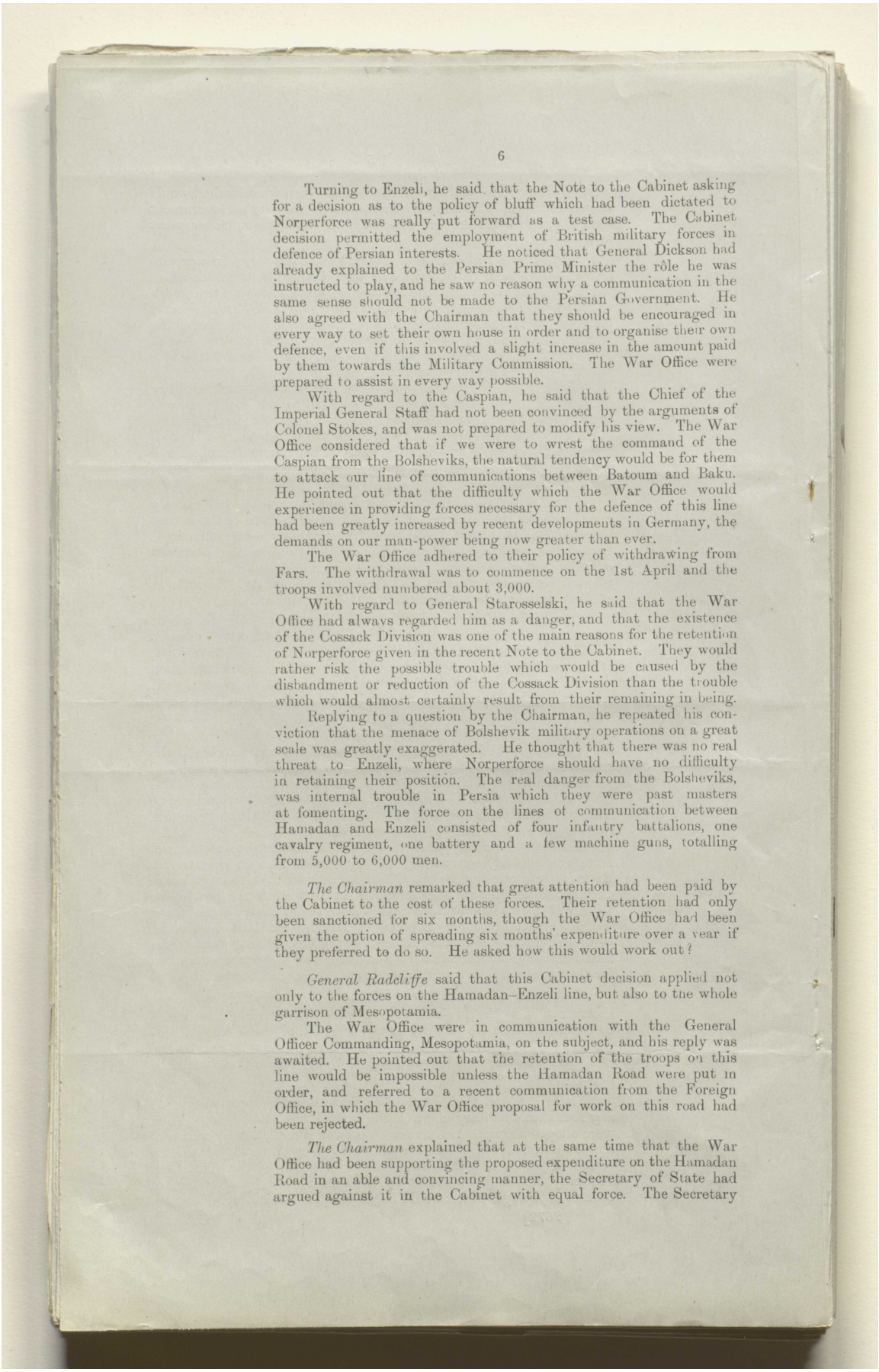



Turning to Enzeli, he said that the Note to the Cabinet asking for a decision as to the policy of bluff which had been dictated to Norperforce was really put forward as a test case. The Cabinet decision permitted the employment of British military forces in defence of Persian interests. He noticed that General Dickson had already explained to the Persian Prime Minister the rôle he was instructed to play, and he saw no reason why a communication in the same sense should not be made to the Persian Government. He also agreed with the Chairman that they should be encouraged in every way to set their own house in order and to organise their own defence, even if this involved a slight increase in the amount paid by them towards the Military Commission. The War Office were prepared to assist in every way possible.

With regard to the Caspian, he said that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had not been convinced by the arguments of Colonel Stokes, and was not prepared to modify his view. The War Office considered that if we were to wrest the command of the Caspian from the Bolsheviks, the natural tendency would be for them to attack our line of communications between Batoum and Baku. He pointed out that the difficulty which the War Office would experience in providing forces necessary for the defence of this line had been greatly increased by recent developments in Germany, the demands on our man-power being now greater than ever.

The War Office adhered to their policy of withdrawing from Fars. The withdrawal was to commence on the 1st April and the troops involved numbered about 3,000.

With regard to General Starosselski, he said that the War Office had always regarded him as a danger, and that the existence of the Cossack Division was one of the main reasons for the retention of Norperforce given in the recent Note to the Cabinet. They would rather risk the possible trouble which would be caused by the disbandment or reduction of the Cossack Division than the trouble which would almost certainly result from their remaining in being.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, he repeated his conviction that the menace of Bolshevik military operations on a great scale was greatly exaggerated. He thought that there was no real threat to Enzeli, where Norperforce should have no difficulty in retaining their position. The real danger from the Bolsheviks, was internal trouble in Persia which they were past masters at fomenting. The force on the lines of communication between Hamadan and Enzeli consisted of four infantry battalions, one cavalry regiment, one battery and a few machine guns, totalling from 5,000 to 6,000 men.

*The Chairman* remarked that great attention had been paid by the Cabinet to the cost of these forces. Their retention had only been sanctioned for six months, though the War Office had been given the option of spreading six months' expenditure over a year if they preferred to do so. He asked how this would work out?

*General Radcliffe* said that this Cabinet decision applied not only to the forces on the Hamadan–Enzeli line, but also to the whole garrison of Mesopotamia.

The War Office were in communication with the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, on the subject, and his reply was awaited. He pointed out that the retention of the troops on this line would be impossible unless the Hamadan Road were put in order, and referred to a recent communication from the Foreign Office, in which the War Office proposal for work on this road had been rejected.

*The Chairman* explained that at the same time that the War Office had been supporting the proposed expenditure on the Hamadan Road in an able and convincing manner, the Secretary of State had argued against it in the Cabinet with equal force. The Secretary



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of State had made no sort of defence for the retention of British forces in North-West Persia, and had been inclined to throw the responsibility on the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

*General Radcliffe* remarked that the War Office letter referred to had been passed by the Secretary of State, who had regarded the acceptance of the Cabinet decision that the force in North-West Persia should be retained as involving the upkeep of the Hamadan Road.

*Mr. Oliphant* said that the Foreign Office had supported the War Office view to the Treasury that the cost of this road should be borne on army funds, but had not yet received a reply. The Persian Railways Syndicate were not prepared to undertake the road, but only the railway. He understood, however, from Prince Firuz that Messrs. Richards, Thynne & Co. might be prepared to undertake the road if they were asked to do so. The sum involved was somewhere between 300,000*l.* and 400,000*l.*

*Captain Coode* said that the First Sea Lord was emphatic in maintaining his attitude that British naval personnel should not be sent to the Caspian unless Baku were held by the army and the line of communication viâ Batoum were secured. Colonel Stokes had informed him that there were 60,000 men in Baku who would be quite ready to join the Bolsheviks if they thought that their oil trade with the Volga would be cut off as a result of the command of the Caspian being in our hands. The amount of oil carried by the Batoum pipe-line was infinitesimal compared with that which normally found an outlet towards the Volga.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said that as soon as the Volga was open the Bolsheviks must be expected to take possession of Denikin's fleet and thus to secure the command of the Caspian. He did not think that they would attack Baku, provided that the Azerbaijan Republic would give them oil, which was what they really wanted.

*The Chairman* observed that if the Bolsheviks found that they could get all the oil they wanted from Baku they would be still less likely to embark on the hazardous adventures which they were said to be contemplating in Persia. There was no doubt that they would welcome any opportunity of embarrassing His Majesty's Government, but they could not really be anxious to leave their bones on the Persian deserts, and it occurred to him that we might strike a bargain with them. We had recently decided to reopen trade relations with the co-operative societies. This was clearly tantamount to opening trade relations with the Soviet Government, without whose sanction the co-operative societies would be unable to function. When Krassin—the Geddes of Russia—came to London to discuss the question of rolling-stock, he did not see why we should not take the following line with him. We could say that we intended to assist the co-operative societies, and thus indirectly the Soviet Government, to rebuild the material wealth of Russia. We could not be expected to do this if the Soviet Government were at the same time attacking us through Persia. It was true that the employment of these arguments was a tacit recognition of the Soviet Government, but this tacit recognition had already been accorded by the opening of trade relations with the co-operative societies. We could not afford to be too particular, and should, he thought, be perfectly frank.

*Sir William Duke* remarked that the Acting Secretary of State for India, at the time when the draft telegram to Lord Chelmsford on the subject of General Malleson's Mission was being prepared, had emphasised the desirability of an open peace with the Soviet Government. He did not therefore anticipate that the India Office would offer any objection to the course proposed by the Chairman.



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*The Chairman* said that the attitude of the Allies and of America offered insuperable objections to a formal peace with the Soviet Government, which had been consistently advocated by advanced politicians like Mr. Fisher, on the analogy of the recognition of the French Government after the French Revolution.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, *Sir William Duke* said that the withdrawal from Fars was regarded by the India Office as a *fait accompli*, or at any rate as *chose jugée*. The views recently expressed by Sir Percy Cox were as new to the India Office as they apparently were to everyone else.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* concurred, and pointed out that the withdrawal had been decided upon in principle for some months, during which no objection had been raised. It would certainly be inclined to adhere to the original policy. He called attention to the fact that recent information tended to show that friction between the Afghans and the Bolsheviks was increasing, and that the latter were growing doubtful of the wisdom of becoming involved with the former. This appeared to him to lessen the chance of a full-dress attack by the Bolsheviks against Persia.

He had seen somewhere a suggestion that the Caspian fleet should be handed over to the Azerbaijan Government, who would be assisted by the provision of British personnel. He did not know if this was a practical solution of the Caspian question.

*The Chairman* said that he was not inclined to support the suggestion that the command of the Caspian should be given to the Azerbaijanis, who were not at all reliable, being to some extent Bolshevik, and also believed to be in contact with Nuri Pasha and the Turks.

*Captain Coode* reminded the Conference of the request of the Persian Government to be allowed to purchase two ships from the Caspian fleet. He understood that the Persian Government could not afford to buy them without our assistance, but he wished to point out that the guns of these ships would be of great value for the defence of Enzeli, where there was now only one 12-pounder. They would also form a useful nucleus for a future Persian fleet.

*The Chairman* thanked the Conference for their advice, and said that in his reply to Sir Percy Cox he would follow the lines indicated in the course of the discussion.

He welcomed General Radcliffe's support of his own conviction that the Bolshevik menace was more political than military, and that the danger was internal rather than external.

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The Future of Kurdistan.

*The Chairman* said that the Peace Conference was at present engaged in deciding the future boundaries of Turkey.

Kurdistan was a part of the Turkish Empire inhabited by a non-Turkish people. On this ground it was the general desire of the Allied Powers to exclude Kurdistan from the future Turkey. The successful realisation of this policy would depend largely on the attitude of the Kurds themselves. If they were anxious to remain politically connected with Turkey, the policy would naturally fail. If, on the other hand, they wished to be separated from it, the Allied Powers would have to consider in what manner and to what extent they could be assisted to establish their complete independence.

The French Government had proposed a division of Kurdistan into two areas in which the British and French Governments should respectively be interested. He had stoutly opposed this proposal not only because he was not anxious to see the French in Kurdistan



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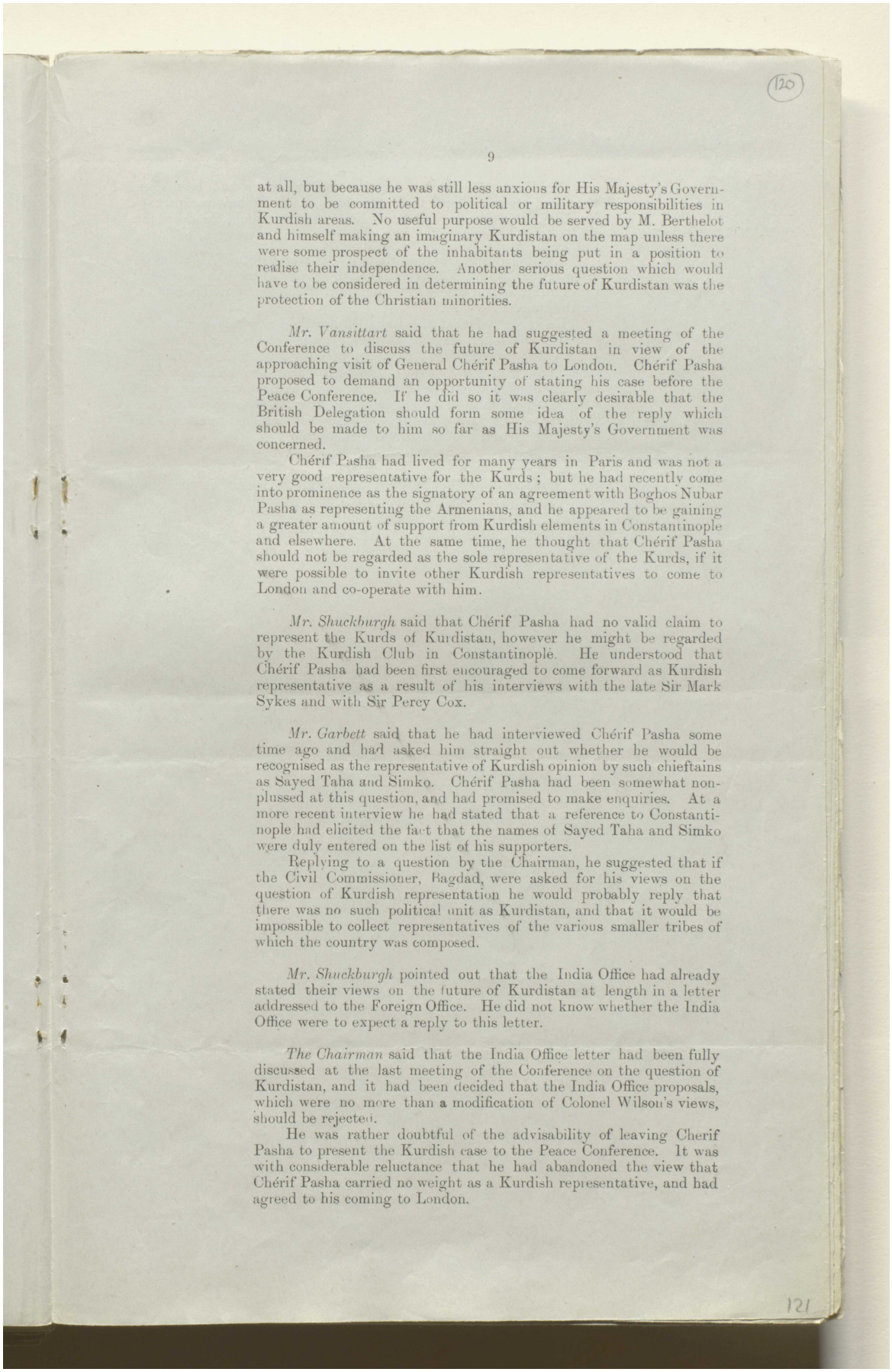

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at all, but because he was still less anxious for His Majesty's Government to be committed to political or military responsibilities in Kurdish areas. No useful purpose would be served by M. Berthelot and himself making an imaginary Kurdistan on the map unless there were some prospect of the inhabitants being put in a position to realise their independence. Another serious question which would have to be considered in determining the future of Kurdistan was the protection of the Christian minorities.

*Mr. Vansittart* said that he had suggested a meeting of the Conference to discuss the future of Kurdistan in view of the approaching visit of General Chérif Pasha to London. Chérif Pasha proposed to demand an opportunity of stating his case before the Peace Conference. If he did so it was clearly desirable that the British Delegation should form some idea of the reply which should be made to him so far as His Majesty's Government was concerned.

Chérif Pasha had lived for many years in Paris and was not a very good representative for the Kurds; but he had recently come into prominence as the signatory of an agreement with Boghos Nubar Pasha as representing the Armenians, and he appeared to be gaining a greater amount of support from Kurdish elements in Constantinople and elsewhere. At the same time, he thought that Chérif Pasha should not be regarded as the sole representative of the Kurds, if it were possible to invite other Kurdish representatives to come to London and co-operate with him.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that Chérif Pasha had no valid claim to represent the Kurds of Kurdistan, however he might be regarded by the Kurdish Club in Constantinople. He understood that Chérif Pasha had been first encouraged to come forward as Kurdish representative as a result of his interviews with the late Sir Mark Sykes and with Sir Percy Cox.

*Mr. Garbett* said that he had interviewed Chérif Pasha some time ago and had asked him straight out whether he would be recognised as the representative of Kurdish opinion by such chieftains as Sayed Taha and Simko. Chérif Pasha had been somewhat nonplussed at this question, and had promised to make enquiries. At a more recent interview he had stated that a reference to Constantinople had elicited the fact that the names of Sayed Taha and Simko were duly entered on the list of his supporters.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, he suggested that if the Civil Commissioner, Bagdad, were asked for his views on the question of Kurdish representation he would probably reply that there was no such political unit as Kurdistan, and that it would be impossible to collect representatives of the various smaller tribes of which the country was composed.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* pointed out that the India Office had already stated their views on the future of Kurdistan at length in a letter addressed to the Foreign Office. He did not know whether the India Office were to expect a reply to this letter.

*The Chairman* said that the India Office letter had been fully discussed at the last meeting of the Conference on the question of Kurdistan, and it had been decided that the India Office proposals, which were no more than a modification of Colonel Wilson's views, should be rejected.

He was rather doubtful of the advisability of leaving Cherif Pasha to present the Kurdish case to the Peace Conference. It was with considerable reluctance that he had abandoned the view that Chérif Pasha carried no weight as a Kurdish representative, and had agreed to his coming to London.

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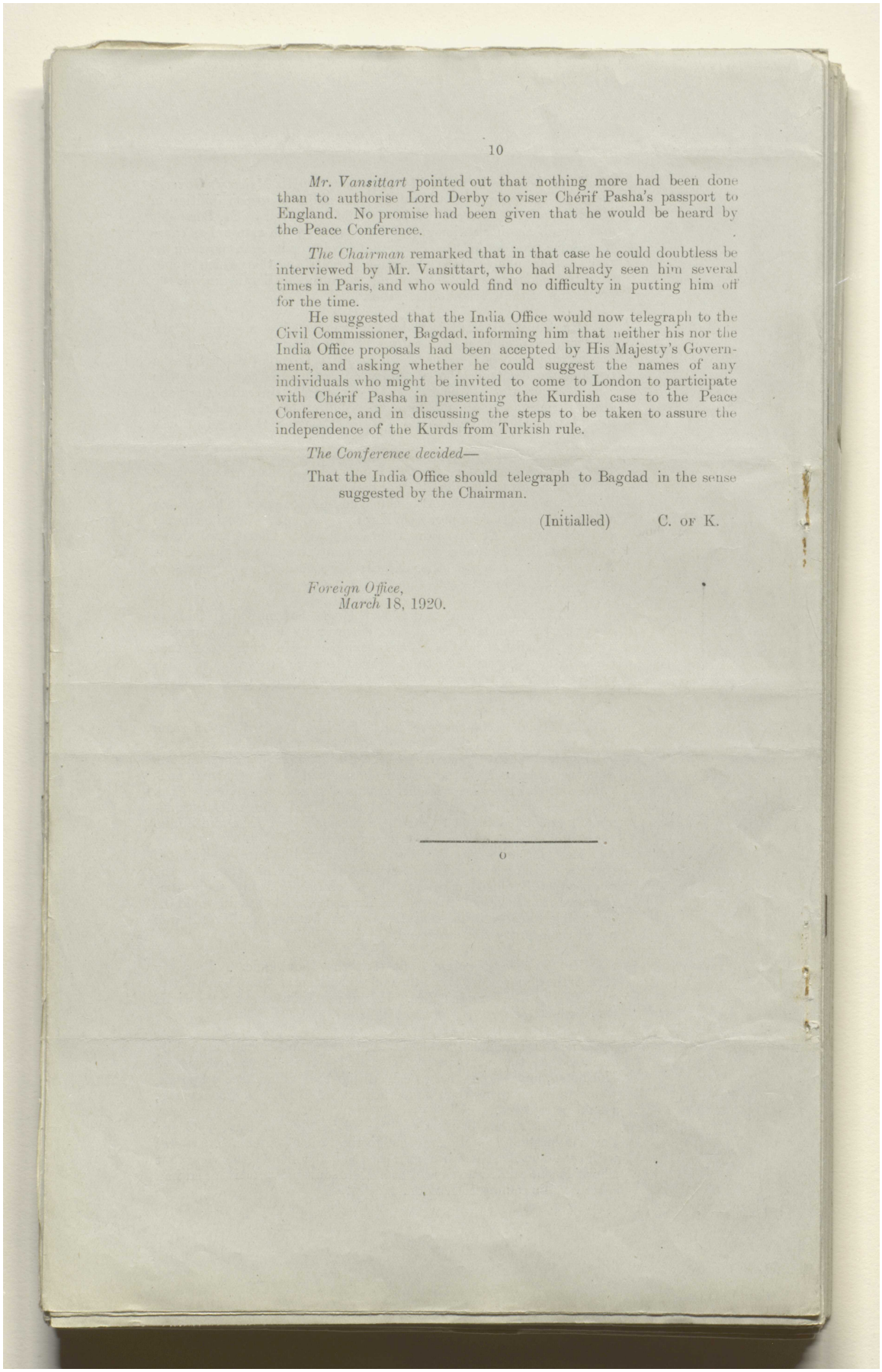



*Mr. Vansittart* pointed out that nothing more had been done than to authorise Lord Derby to viser Chérif Pasha's passport to England. No promise had been given that he would be heard by the Peace Conference.

*The Chairman* remarked that in that case he could doubtless be interviewed by Mr. Vansittart, who had already seen him several times in Paris, and who would find no difficulty in putting him off for the time.

He suggested that the India Office would now telegraph to the Civil Commissioner, Bagdad, informing him that neither his nor the India Office proposals had been accepted by His Majesty's Government, and asking whether he could suggest the names of any individuals who might be invited to come to London to participate with Chérif Pasha in presenting the Kurdish case to the Peace Conference, and in discussing the steps to be taken to assure the independence of the Kurds from Turkish rule.

*The Conference decided*—

That the India Office should telegraph to Bagdad in the sense suggested by the Chairman.

(Initialled) C. or K.

*Foreign Office,*
*March* 18, 1920.

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I.D.C.E., 37th Minutes.

# INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Draft Minutes of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, April* 13, 1920, *at* 5 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Major-General Sir P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Sir GEORGE BARSTOW, K.C.B., Treasury.

Sir JOHN TILLEY, K.C.M.G., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. E. FORBES ADAM, Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Captain H. G. E. LANE, Director of Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office

Mr. C. C. GARBETT, C.I.E., India Office.

Air-Marshal Sir HUGH TRENCHARD, K.C.B., D.S.O., Air Ministry, Chief of Air Staff.

Wing-Commander J. A. CHAMIER, C.M.G., D.S.O., Air Ministry.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Caspian Fleet.

*The Chairman* said that the question of the Caspian Fleet had to be considered in a twofold aspect; firstly, the disposal of the ships themselves, and secondly, the disposal of the refugees on board them, who appeared to be Denikinites from Petrovsk.

*General Radcliffe* said that there were 15 ships at Enzeli and 650 refugees, in addition to the crews. These refugees included women and children. Two thousand officers and men of Denikin's army had left the fleet at Baku and were being looked after by the Azerbaijan Government. The crews of the ships at Enzeli had at first indignantly repudiated the terms on which we had offered to repatriate them viâ Baghdad and Basrah. They had returned to Baku, where they found that Denikin's cause was lost. They had now come back again to Enzeli and accepted our terms. These terms did not, however, cover the 650 refugees. He gathered that these refugees were mostly Russian women and children who were not the remnant of Denikin's army. They were probably relations of the officers and crews off the ships, but this was not certain.

The War Office proposed that they should be treated in the same way as the crews of the ships, and repatriated viâ Baghdad and Basrah. The ships themselves should be handed over to the British, the crews being landed with the exception of sixteen persons per ship. The matter had been carefully discussed by the War



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Office and Admiralty, who had agreed upon the terms offered in the War Office telegram of the 17th February, in which he believed that the Foreign Office had concurred.

*The Chairman* did not remember that the Foreign Office had been consulted before this telegram was sent. The cost and trouble of repatriating these crews, and probably the refugees also, appeared certain to fall upon His Majesty's Government. He did not understand why His Majesty's Government should commit themselves to making these arrangements, nor did he agree that repatriation was part and parcel of the policy of supporting Denikin. It had only been wedged into this policy by Mr. Mackinder's unauthorised pledge as regards the Black Sea area. Even if the War Office telegram of the 17th February committed His Majesty's Government to repatriating the officers and crews, it did not commit them to repatriating the refugees. (*At this point Mr. Montagu entered.*) Not only would transport difficulties be very great, but the Persian Government and Sir Percy Cox both objected strongly to these Russians entering Persia.

*Mr. Montagu* pointed out that if His Majesty's Government were pledged to repatriate the 1,400 officers and men, the repatriation of the additional 600 refugees would not make a very great difference. It seemed to him rather hard to tell a married officer, who was fleeing with his wife and family from the Bolsheviks, that he would be repatriated, but that his family must make their own arrangements.

In reply to a question by the Chairman, *General Radcliffe* said that it was not known for certain that these refugees were the wives and families of the officers and men of the fleet. It was more than likely that they were stray Denikinites who had found their way on to the ships at Petrovsk. He admitted that we were not legally bound to remove them, but agreed with Mr. Montagu that it would be a hard bargain to discriminate between them and the men whom we were legally pledged to repatriate. He understood that negotiations were being opened with the Soviet Government as to the repatriation of the remnants of Denikin's supporters in the Crimea, and thought that the Enzeli refugees should also be arranged for in these negotiations. It was hoped that by the time they had been taken across Persia and transport had been found for them from Basrah, the situation would admit of their being taken to the Crimea.

*The Chairman* said that he did not consider himself personally bound by the bargain of the 17th February, though if the Foreign Office had concurred in it officially he would have no more to say. His own impression was that it was absurd to repatriate either the officers and men or the refugees to the Crimea viâ Baghdad and Basrah. Here they were within a few hundred miles of the Crimea already. The Azerbaijan Government were friendly and were on their knees to us nearly every day. They had already agreed to absorb the 2,000 officers and men of Denikin's army and to do their best to aid them financially. He did not see why an effort should not be made to induce them also to undertake the repatriation of the sailors and their families. The repatriation of these people viâ Baghdad and Basrah would present considerable difficulties. Problems of transport, food and shipping alike would not be easy to solve. The presence of these people in Persia was strongly objected to by the Persians and would be a continual embarrassment to His Majesty's Government. The position in the Caucasus was not, in his opinion, as bad as some people made out. He did not regard it as probable that the crews and refugees would come to any harm at Baku. He was strongly of opinion that pressure should be brought to bear on the Azerbaijan Government to treat them in the same way as the 2,000 officers and men. He asked what was proposed with regard to the ships.



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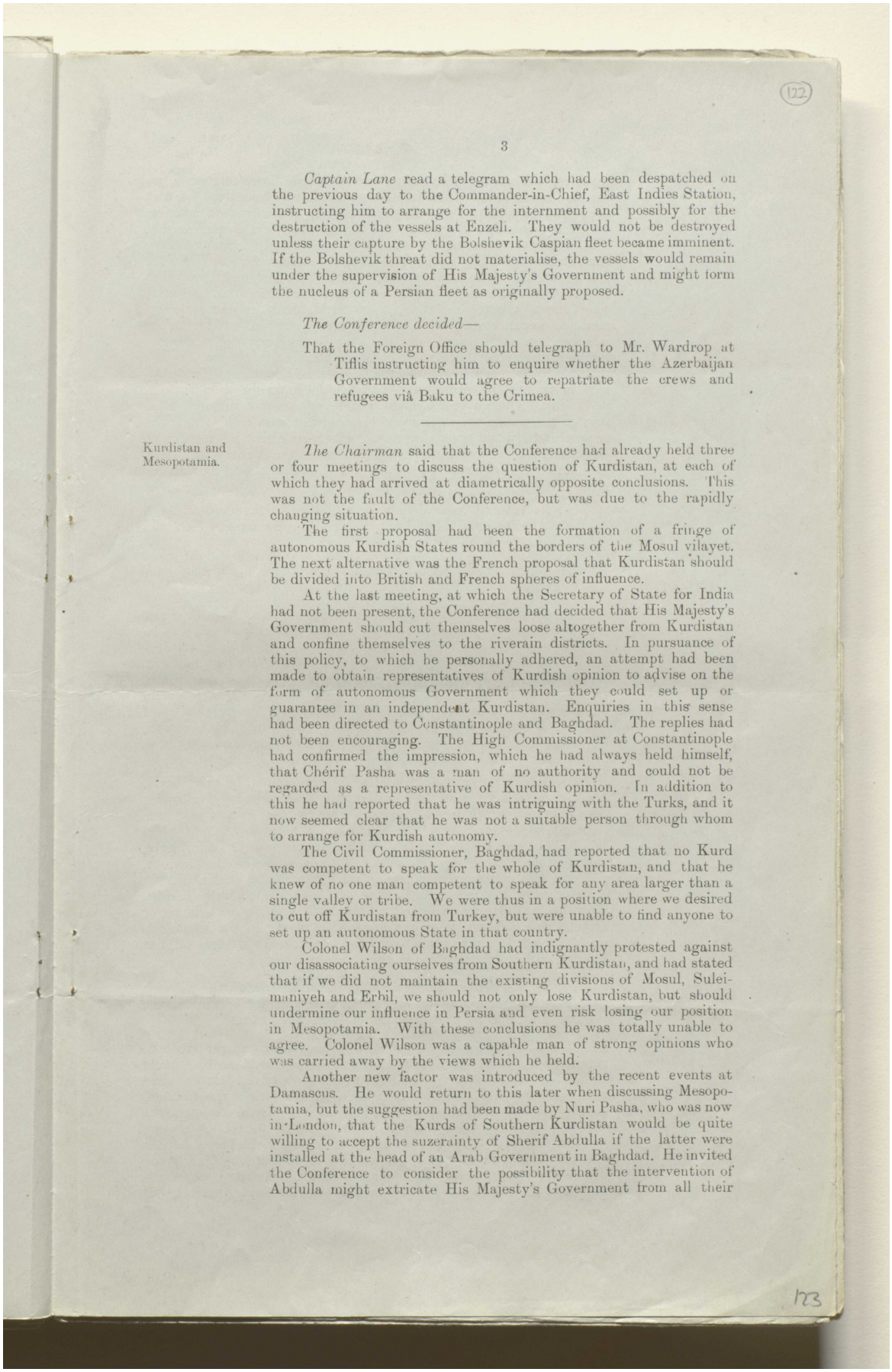

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*Captain Lane* read a telegram which had been despatched on the previous day to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Station, instructing him to arrange for the internment and possibly for the destruction of the vessels at Enzeli. They would not be destroyed unless their capture by the Bolshevik Caspian fleet became imminent. If the Bolshevik threat did not materialise, the vessels would remain under the supervision of His Majesty's Government and might form the nucleus of a Persian fleet as originally proposed.

*The Conference decided*—

That the Foreign Office should telegraph to Mr. Wardrop at Tiflis instructing him to enquire whether the Azerbaijan Government would agree to repatriate the crews and refugees viâ Baku to the Crimea.

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Kurdistan and Mesopotamia.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference had already held three or four meetings to discuss the question of Kurdistan, at each of which they had arrived at diametrically opposite conclusions. This was not the fault of the Conference, but was due to the rapidly changing situation.

The first proposal had been the formation of a fringe of autonomous Kurdish States round the borders of the Mosul vilayet. The next alternative was the French proposal that Kurdistan should be divided into British and French spheres of influence.

At the last meeting, at which the Secretary of State for India had not been present, the Conference had decided that His Majesty's Government should cut themselves loose altogether from Kurdistan and confine themselves to the riverain districts. In pursuance of this policy, to which he personally adhered, an attempt had been made to obtain representatives of Kurdish opinion to advise on the form of autonomous Government which they could set up or guarantee in an independent Kurdistan. Enquiries in this sense had been directed to Constantinople and Baghdad. The replies had not been encouraging. The High Commissioner at Constantinople had confirmed the impression, which he had always held himself, that Chérif Pasha was a man of no authority and could not be regarded as a representative of Kurdish opinion. In addition to this he had reported that he was intriguing with the Turks, and it now seemed clear that he was not a suitable person through whom to arrange for Kurdish autonomy.

The Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, had reported that no Kurd was competent to speak for the whole of Kurdistan, and that he knew of no one man competent to speak for any area larger than a single valley or tribe. We were thus in a position where we desired to cut off Kurdistan from Turkey, but were unable to find anyone to set up an autonomous State in that country.

Colonel Wilson of Baghdad had indignantly protested against our disassociating ourselves from Southern Kurdistan, and had stated that if we did not maintain the existing divisions of Mosul, Sulei-maniyeh and Erbil, we should not only lose Kurdistan, but should undermine our influence in Persia and even risk losing our position in Mesopotamia. With these conclusions he was totally unable to agree. Colonel Wilson was a capable man of strong opinions who was carried away by the views which he held.

Another new factor was introduced by the recent events at Damascus. He would return to this later when discussing Mesopotamia, but the suggestion had been made by Nuri Pasha, who was now in London, that the Kurds of Southern Kurdistan would be quite willing to accept the suzerainty of Sherif Abdulla if the latter were installed at the head of an Arab Government in Baghdad. He invited the Conference to consider the possibility that the intervention of Abdulla might extricate His Majesty's Government from all their

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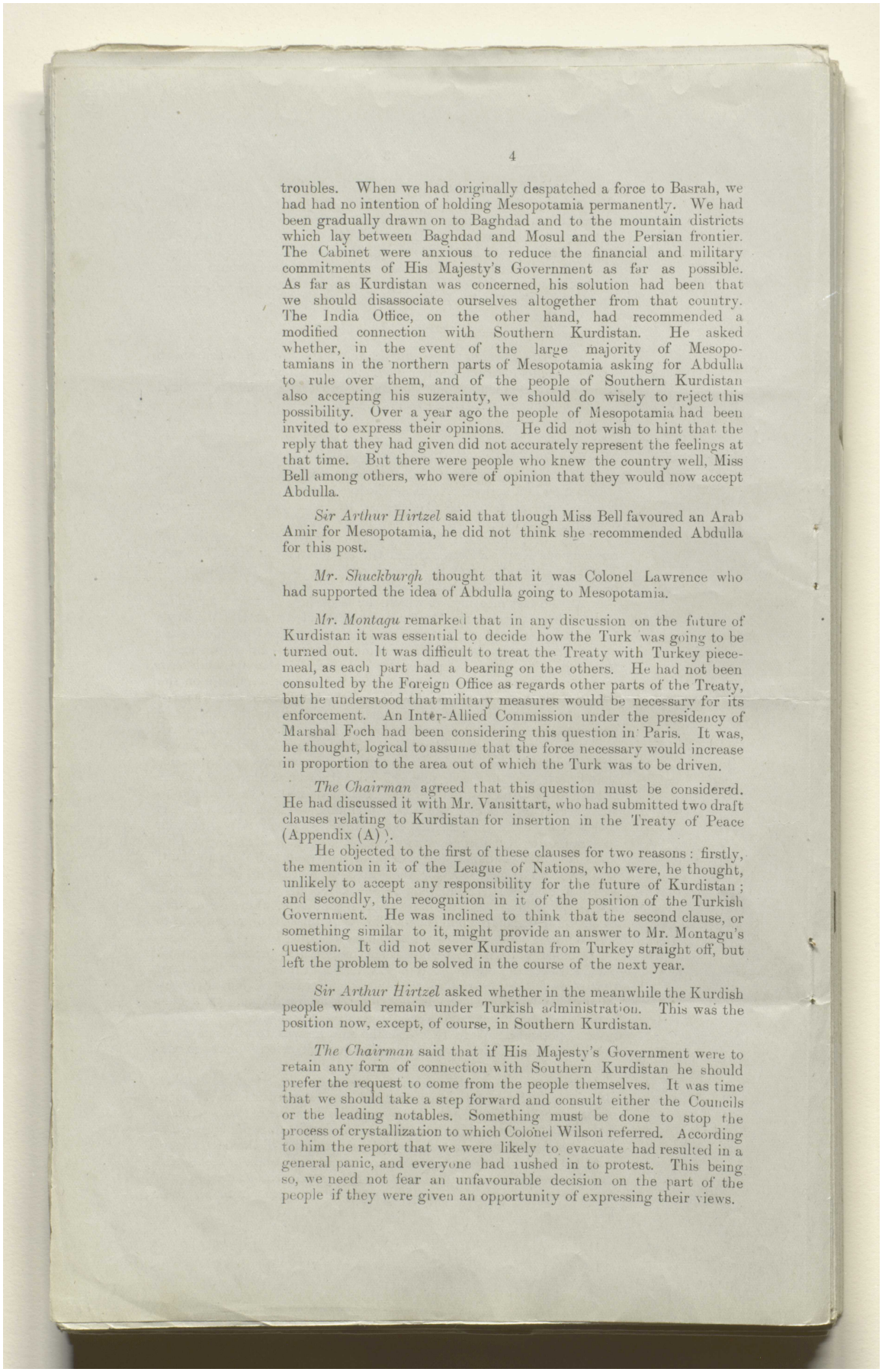



troubles. When we had originally despatched a force to Basrah, we had had no intention of holding Mesopotamia permanently. We had been gradually drawn on to Baghdad and to the mountain districts which lay between Baghdad and Mosul and the Persian frontier. The Cabinet were anxious to reduce the financial and military commitments of His Majesty's Government as far as possible. As far as Kurdistan was concerned, his solution had been that we should disassociate ourselves altogether from that country. The India Office, on the other hand, had recommended a modified connection with Southern Kurdistan. He asked whether, in the event of the large majority of Mesopotamians in the northern parts of Mesopotamia asking for Abdulla to rule over them, and of the people of Southern Kurdistan also accepting his suzerainty, we should do wisely to reject this possibility. Over a year ago the people of Mesopotamia had been invited to express their opinions. He did not wish to hint that the reply that they had given did not accurately represent the feelings at that time. But there were people who knew the country well, Miss Bell among others, who were of opinion that they would now accept Abdulla.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that though Miss Bell favoured an Arab Amir for Mesopotamia, he did not think she recommended Abdulla for this post.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* thought that it was Colonel Lawrence who had supported the idea of Abdulla going to Mesopotamia.

*Mr. Montagu* remarked that in any discussion on the future of Kurdistan it was essential to decide how the Turk was going to be turned out. It was difficult to treat the Treaty with Turkey piecemeal, as each part had a bearing on the others. He had not been consulted by the Foreign Office as regards other parts of the Treaty, but he understood that military measures would be necessary for its enforcement. An Inter-Allied Commission under the presidency of Marshal Foch had been considering this question in Paris. It was, he thought, logical to assume that the force necessary would increase in proportion to the area out of which the Turk was to be driven.

*The Chairman* agreed that this question must be considered. He had discussed it with Mr. Vansittart, who had submitted two draft clauses relating to Kurdistan for insertion in the Treaty of Peace (Appendix (A)).

He objected to the first of these clauses for two reasons: firstly, the mention in it of the League of Nations, who were, he thought, unlikely to accept any responsibility for the future of Kurdistan; and secondly, the recognition in it of the position of the Turkish Government. He was inclined to think that the second clause, or something similar to it, might provide an answer to Mr. Montagu's question. It did not sever Kurdistan from Turkey straight off, but left the problem to be solved in the course of the next year.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* asked whether in the meanwhile the Kurdish people would remain under Turkish administration. This was the position now, except, of course, in Southern Kurdistan.

*The Chairman* said that if His Majesty's Government were to retain any form of connection with Southern Kurdistan he should prefer the request to come from the people themselves. It was time that we should take a step forward and consult either the Councils or the leading notables. Something must be done to stop the process of crystallization to which Colonel Wilson referred. According to him the report that we were likely to evacuate had resulted in a general panic, and everyone had rushed in to protest. This being so, we need not fear an unfavourable decision on the part of the people if they were given an opportunity of expressing their views.



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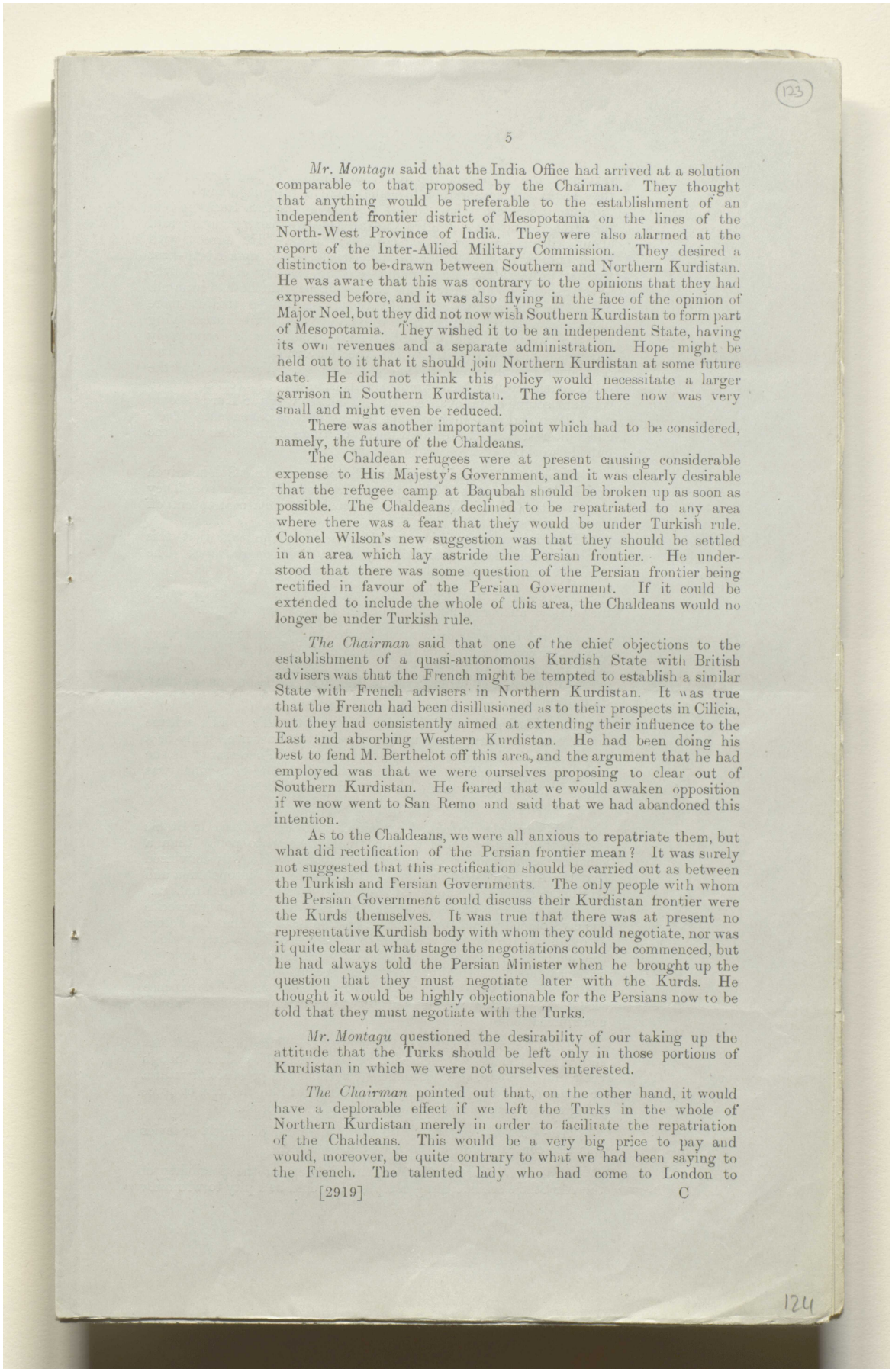

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*Mr. Montagu* said that the India Office had arrived at a solution comparable to that proposed by the Chairman. They thought that anything would be preferable to the establishment of an independent frontier district of Mesopotamia on the lines of the North-West Province of India. They were also alarmed at the report of the Inter-Allied Military Commission. They desired a distinction to be drawn between Southern and Northern Kurdistan. He was aware that this was contrary to the opinions that they had expressed before, and it was also flying in the face of the opinion of Major Noel, but they did not now wish Southern Kurdistan to form part of Mesopotamia. They wished it to be an independent State, having its own revenues and a separate administration. Hope might be held out to it that it should join Northern Kurdistan at some future date. He did not think this policy would necessitate a larger garrison in Southern Kurdistan. The force there now was very small and might even be reduced.

There was another important point which had to be considered, namely, the future of the Chaldeans.

The Chaldean refugees were at present causing considerable expense to His Majesty's Government, and it was clearly desirable that the refugee camp at Baqubah should be broken up as soon as possible. The Chaldeans declined to be repatriated to any area where there was a fear that they would be under Turkish rule. Colonel Wilson's new suggestion was that they should be settled in an area which lay astride the Persian frontier. He understood that there was some question of the Persian frontier being rectified in favour of the Persian Government. If it could be extended to include the whole of this area, the Chaldeans would no longer be under Turkish rule.

*The Chairman* said that one of the chief objections to the establishment of a quasi-autonomous Kurdish State with British advisers was that the French might be tempted to establish a similar State with French advisers in Northern Kurdistan. It was true that the French had been disillusioned as to their prospects in Cilicia, but they had consistently aimed at extending their influence to the East and absorbing Western Kurdistan. He had been doing his best to fend M. Berthelot off this area, and the argument that he had employed was that we were ourselves proposing to clear out of Southern Kurdistan. He feared that we would awaken opposition if we now went to San Remo and said that we had abandoned this intention.

As to the Chaldeans, we were all anxious to repatriate them, but what did rectification of the Persian frontier mean? It was surely not suggested that this rectification should be carried out as between the Turkish and Persian Governments. The only people with whom the Persian Government could discuss their Kurdistan frontier were the Kurds themselves. It was true that there was at present no representative Kurdish body with whom they could negotiate, nor was it quite clear at what stage the negotiations could be commenced, but he had always told the Persian Minister when he brought up the question that they must negotiate later with the Kurds. He thought it would be highly objectionable for the Persians now to be told that they must negotiate with the Turks.

*Mr. Montagu* questioned the desirability of our taking up the attitude that the Turks should be left only in those portions of Kurdistan in which we were not ourselves interested.

*The Chairman* pointed out that, on the other hand, it would have a deplorable effect if we left the Turks in the whole of Northern Kurdistan merely in order to facilitate the repatriation of the Chaldeans. This would be a very big price to pay and would, moreover, be quite contrary to what we had been saying to the French. The talented lady who had come to London to



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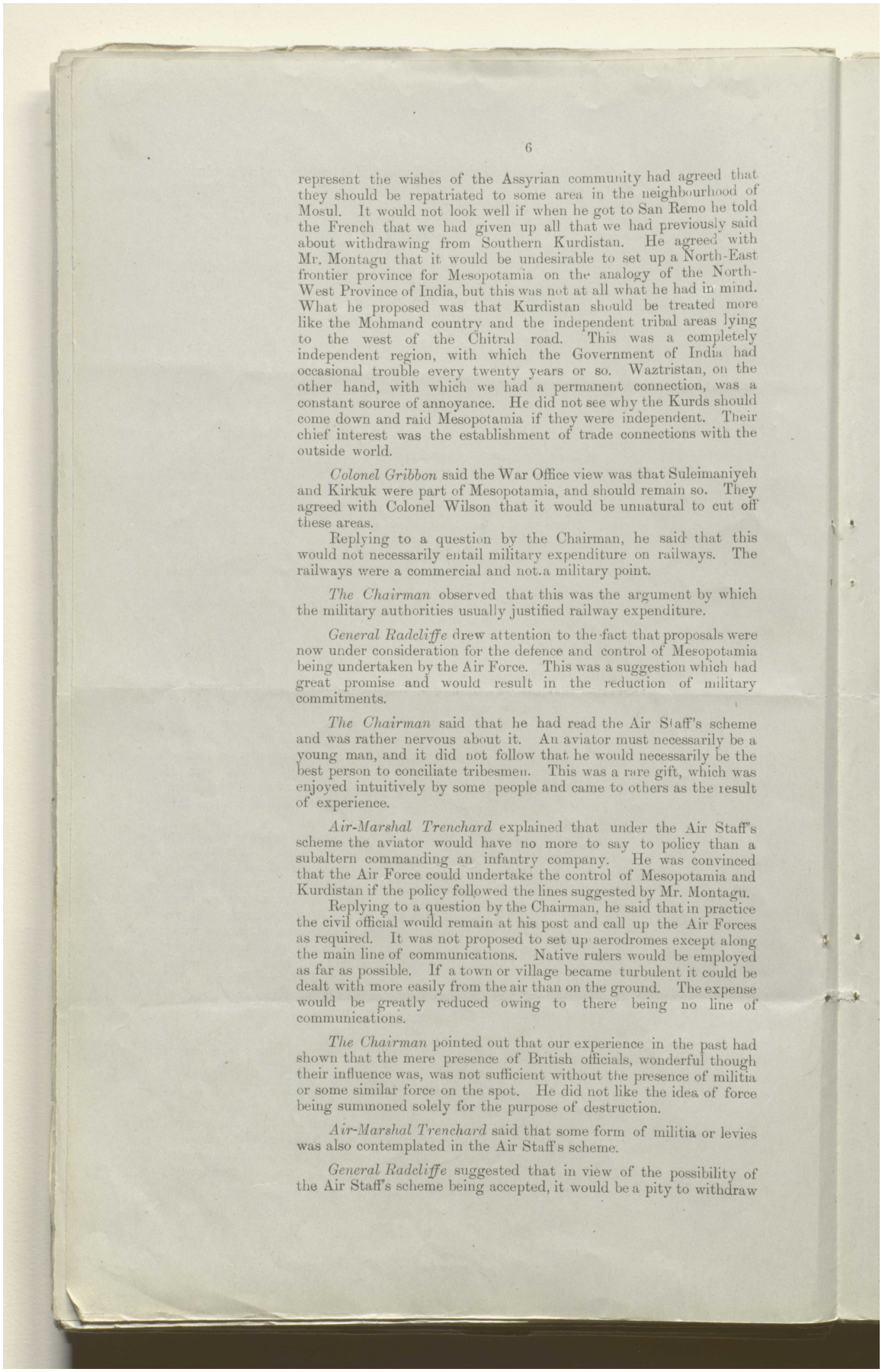



represent the wishes of the Assyrian community had agreed that they should be repatriated to some area in the neighbourhood of Mosul. It would not look well if when he got to San Remo he told the French that we had given up all that we had previously said about withdrawing from Southern Kurdistan. He agreed with Mr. Montagu that it would be undesirable to set up a North-East frontier province for Mesopotamia on the analogy of the North-West Province of India, but this was not at all what he had in mind. What he proposed was that Kurdistan should be treated more like the Mohmand country and the independent tribal areas lying to the west of the Chitral road. This was a completely independent region, with which the Government of India had occasional trouble every twenty years or so. Waztristan, on the other hand, with which we had a permanent connection, was a constant source of annoyance. He did not see why the Kurds should come down and raid Mesopotamia if they were independent. Their chief interest was the establishment of trade connections with the outside world.

*Colonel Gribbon* said the War Office view was that Suleimaniyeh and Kirkuk were part of Mesopotamia, and should remain so. They agreed with Colonel Wilson that it would be unnatural to cut off these areas.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said that this would not necessarily entail military expenditure on railways. The railways were a commercial and not a military point.

*The Chairman* observed that this was the argument by which the military authorities usually justified railway expenditure.

*General Radcliffe* drew attention to the fact that proposals were now under consideration for the defence and control of Mesopotamia being undertaken by the Air Force. This was a suggestion which had great promise and would result in the reduction of military commitments.

*The Chairman* said that he had read the Air Staff's scheme and was rather nervous about it. An aviator must necessarily be a young man, and it did not follow that he would necessarily be the best person to conciliate tribesmen. This was a rare gift, which was enjoyed intuitively by some people and came to others as the result of experience.

*Air-Marshal Trenchard* explained that under the Air Staff's scheme the aviator would have no more to say to policy than a subaltern commanding an infantry company. He was convinced that the Air Force could undertake the control of Mesopotamia and Kurdistan if the policy followed the lines suggested by Mr. Montagu.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said that in practice the civil official would remain at his post and call up the Air Forces as required. It was not proposed to set up aerodromes except along the main line of communications. Native rulers would be employed as far as possible. If a town or village became turbulent it could be dealt with more easily from the air than on the ground. The expense would be greatly reduced owing to there being no line of communications.

*The Chairman* pointed out that our experience in the past had shown that the mere presence of British officials, wonderful though their influence was, was not sufficient without the presence of militia or some similar force on the spot. He did not like the idea of force being summoned solely for the purpose of destruction.

*Air-Marshal Trenchard* said that some form of militia or levies was also contemplated in the Air Staff's scheme.

*General Radcliffe* suggested that in view of the possibility of the Air Staff's scheme being accepted, it would be a pity to withdraw



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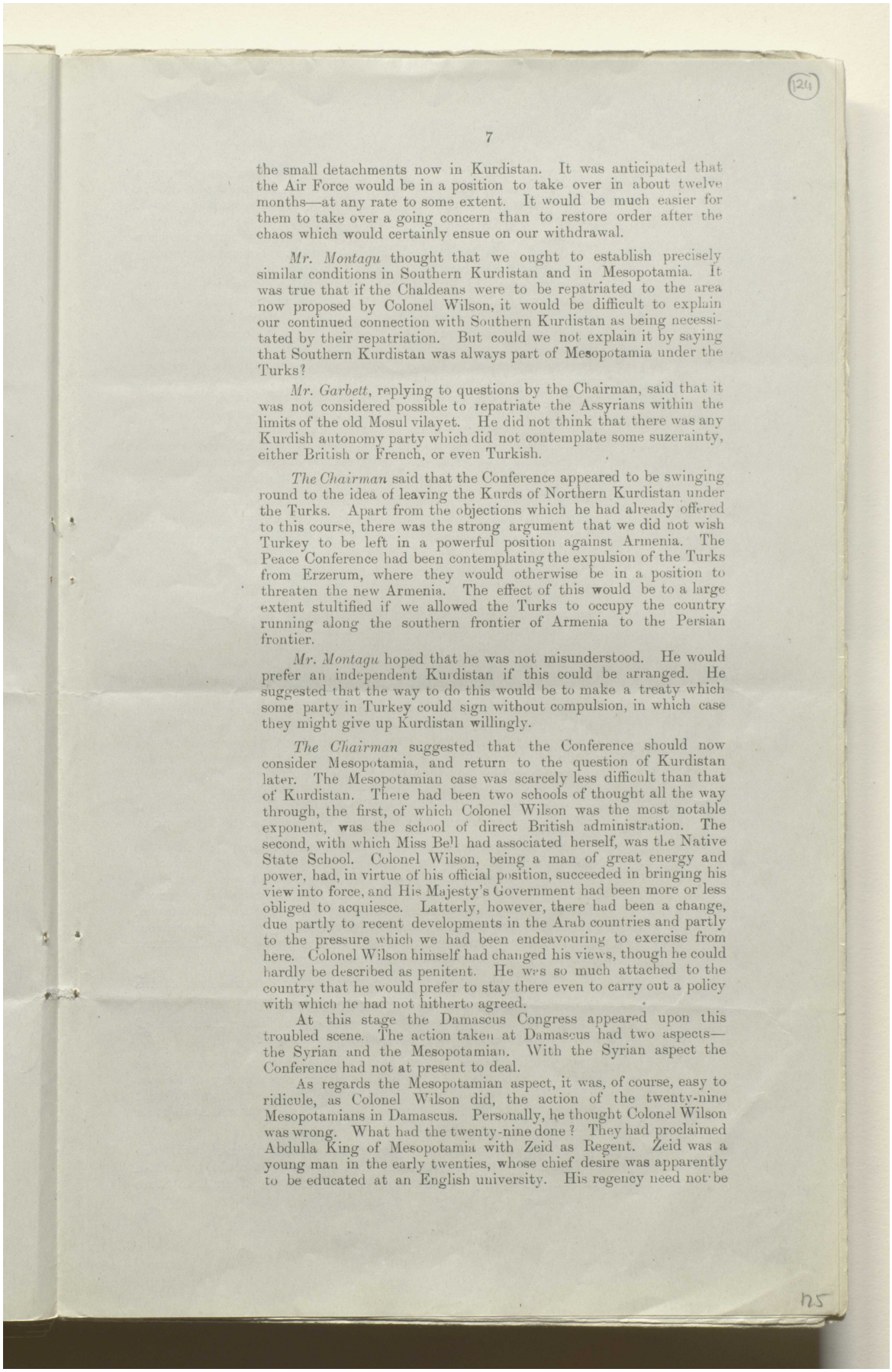



the small detachments now in Kurdistan. It was anticipated that the Air Force would be in a position to take over in about twelve months—at any rate to some extent. It would be much easier for them to take over a going concern than to restore order after the chaos which would certainly ensue on our withdrawal.

*Mr. Montagu* thought that we ought to establish precisely similar conditions in Southern Kurdistan and in Mesopotamia. It was true that if the Chaldeans were to be repatriated to the area now proposed by Colonel Wilson, it would be difficult to explain our continued connection with Southern Kurdistan as being necessitated by their repatriation. But could we not explain it by saying that Southern Kurdistan was always part of Mesopotamia under the Turks?

*Mr. Garbett*, replying to questions by the Chairman, said that it was not considered possible to repatriate the Assyrians within the limits of the old Mosul vilayet. He did not think that there was any Kurdish autonomy party which did not contemplate some suzerainty, either British or French, or even Turkish.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference appeared to be swinging round to the idea of leaving the Kurds of Northern Kurdistan under the Turks. Apart from the objections which he had already offered to this course, there was the strong argument that we did not wish Turkey to be left in a powerful position against Armenia. The Peace Conference had been contemplating the expulsion of the Turks from Erzerum, where they would otherwise be in a position to threaten the new Armenia. The effect of this would be to a large extent stultified if we allowed the Turks to occupy the country running along the southern frontier of Armenia to the Persian frontier.

*Mr. Montagu* hoped that he was not misunderstood. He would prefer an independent Kurdistan if this could be arranged. He suggested that the way to do this would be to make a treaty which some party in Turkey could sign without compulsion, in which case they might give up Kurdistan willingly.

*The Chairman* suggested that the Conference should now consider Mesopotamia, and return to the question of Kurdistan later. The Mesopotamian case was scarcely less difficult than that of Kurdistan. There had been two schools of thought all the way through, the first, of which Colonel Wilson was the most notable exponent, was the school of direct British administration. The second, with which Miss Bell had associated herself, was the Native State School. Colonel Wilson, being a man of great energy and power, had, in virtue of his official position, succeeded in bringing his view into force, and His Majesty's Government had been more or less obliged to acquiesce. Latterly, however, there had been a change, due partly to recent developments in the Arab countries and partly to the pressure which we had been endeavouring to exercise from here. Colonel Wilson himself had changed his views, though he could hardly be described as penitent. He was so much attached to the country that he would prefer to stay there even to carry out a policy with which he had not hitherto agreed.

At this stage the Damascus Congress appeared upon this troubled scene. The action taken at Damascus had two aspects—the Syrian and the Mesopotamian. With the Syrian aspect the Conference had not at present to deal.

As regards the Mesopotamian aspect, it was, of course, easy to ridicule, as Colonel Wilson did, the action of the twenty-nine Mesopotamians in Damascus. Personally, he thought Colonel Wilson was wrong. What had the twenty-nine done? They had proclaimed Abdulla King of Mesopotamia with Zeid as Regent. Zeid was a young man in the early twenties, whose chief desire was apparently to be educated at an English university. His regency need not be



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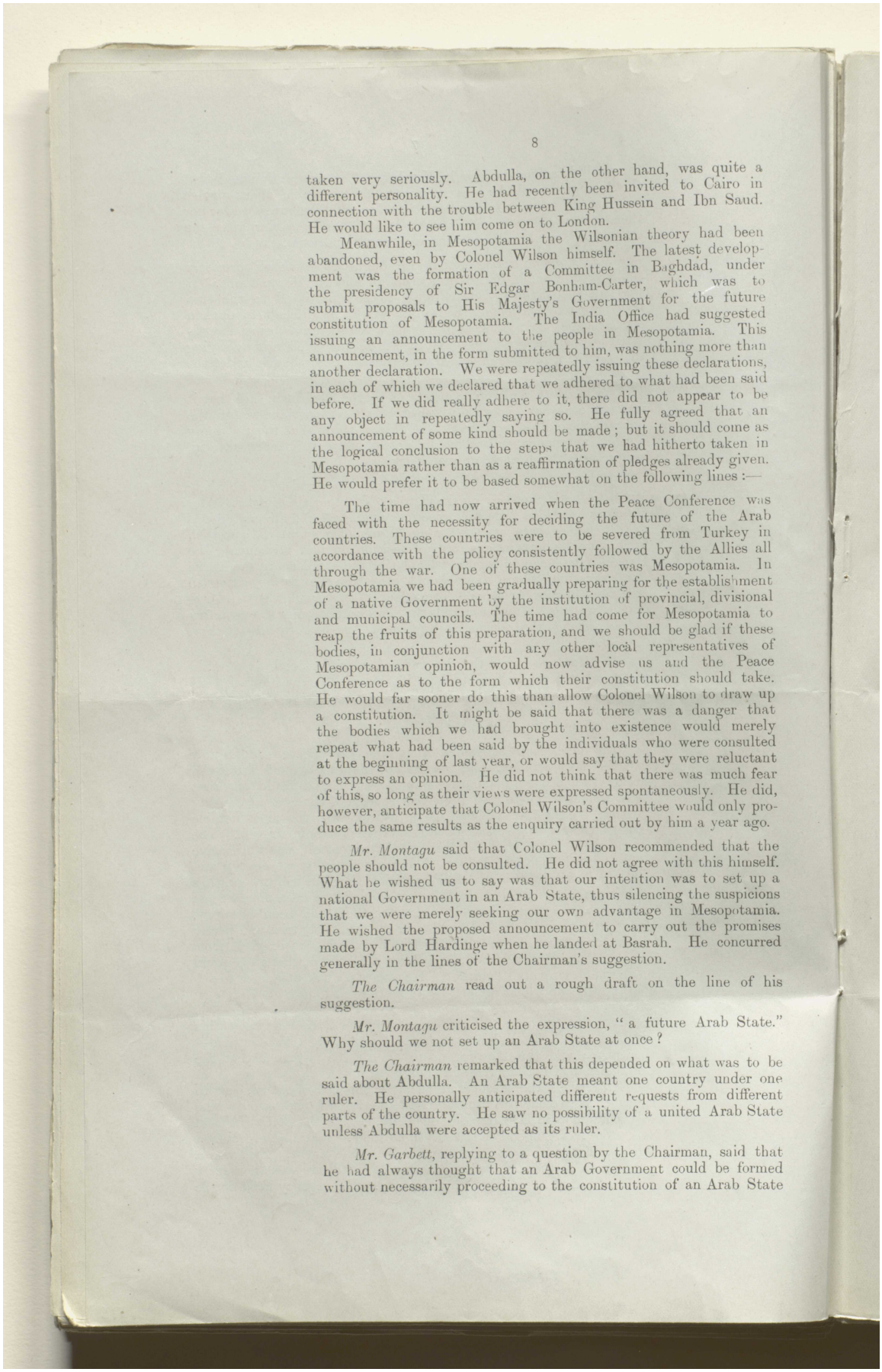



taken very seriously. Abdulla, on the other hand, was quite a different personality. He had recently been invited to Cairo in connection with the trouble between King Hussein and Ibn Saud. He would like to see him come on to London.

Meanwhile, in Mesopotamia the Wilsonian theory had been abandoned, even by Colonel Wilson himself. The latest development was the formation of a Committee in Baghdad, under the presidency of Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter, which was to submit proposals to His Majesty's Government for the future constitution of Mesopotamia. The India Office had suggested issuing an announcement to the people in Mesopotamia. This announcement, in the form submitted to him, was nothing more than another declaration. We were repeatedly issuing these declarations, in each of which we declared that we adhered to what had been said before. If we did really adhere to it, there did not appear to be any object in repeatedly saying so. He fully agreed that an announcement of some kind should be made; but it should come as the logical conclusion to the steps that we had hitherto taken in Mesopotamia rather than as a reaffirmation of pledges already given. He would prefer it to be based somewhat on the following lines :—

The time had now arrived when the Peace Conference was faced with the necessity for deciding the future of the Arab countries. These countries were to be severed from Turkey in accordance with the policy consistently followed by the Allies all through the war. One of these countries was Mesopotamia. In Mesopotamia we had been gradually preparing for the establishment of a native Government by the institution of provincial, divisional and municipal councils. The time had come for Mesopotamia to reap the fruits of this preparation, and we should be glad if these bodies, in conjunction with any other local representatives of Mesopotamian opinion, would now advise us and the Peace Conference as to the form which their constitution should take. He would far sooner do this than allow Colonel Wilson to draw up a constitution. It might be said that there was a danger that the bodies which we had brought into existence would merely repeat what had been said by the individuals who were consulted at the beginning of last year, or would say that they were reluctant to express an opinion. He did not think that there was much fear of this, so long as their views were expressed spontaneously. He did, however, anticipate that Colonel Wilson's Committee would only produce the same results as the enquiry carried out by him a year ago.

*Mr. Montagu* said that Colonel Wilson recommended that the people should not be consulted. He did not agree with this himself. What he wished us to say was that our intention was to set up a national Government in an Arab State, thus silencing the suspicions that we were merely seeking our own advantage in Mesopotamia. He wished the proposed announcement to carry out the promises made by Lord Hardinge when he landed at Basrah. He concurred generally in the lines of the Chairman's suggestion.

*The Chairman* read out a rough draft on the line of his suggestion.

*Mr. Montagu* criticised the expression, "a future Arab State." Why should we not set up an Arab State at once ?

*The Chairman* remarked that this depended on what was to be said about Abdulla. An Arab State meant one country under one ruler. He personally anticipated different requests from different parts of the country. He saw no possibility of a united Arab State unless Abdulla were accepted as its ruler.

*Mr. Garbett*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that he had always thought that an Arab Government could be formed without necessarily proceeding to the constitution of an Arab State



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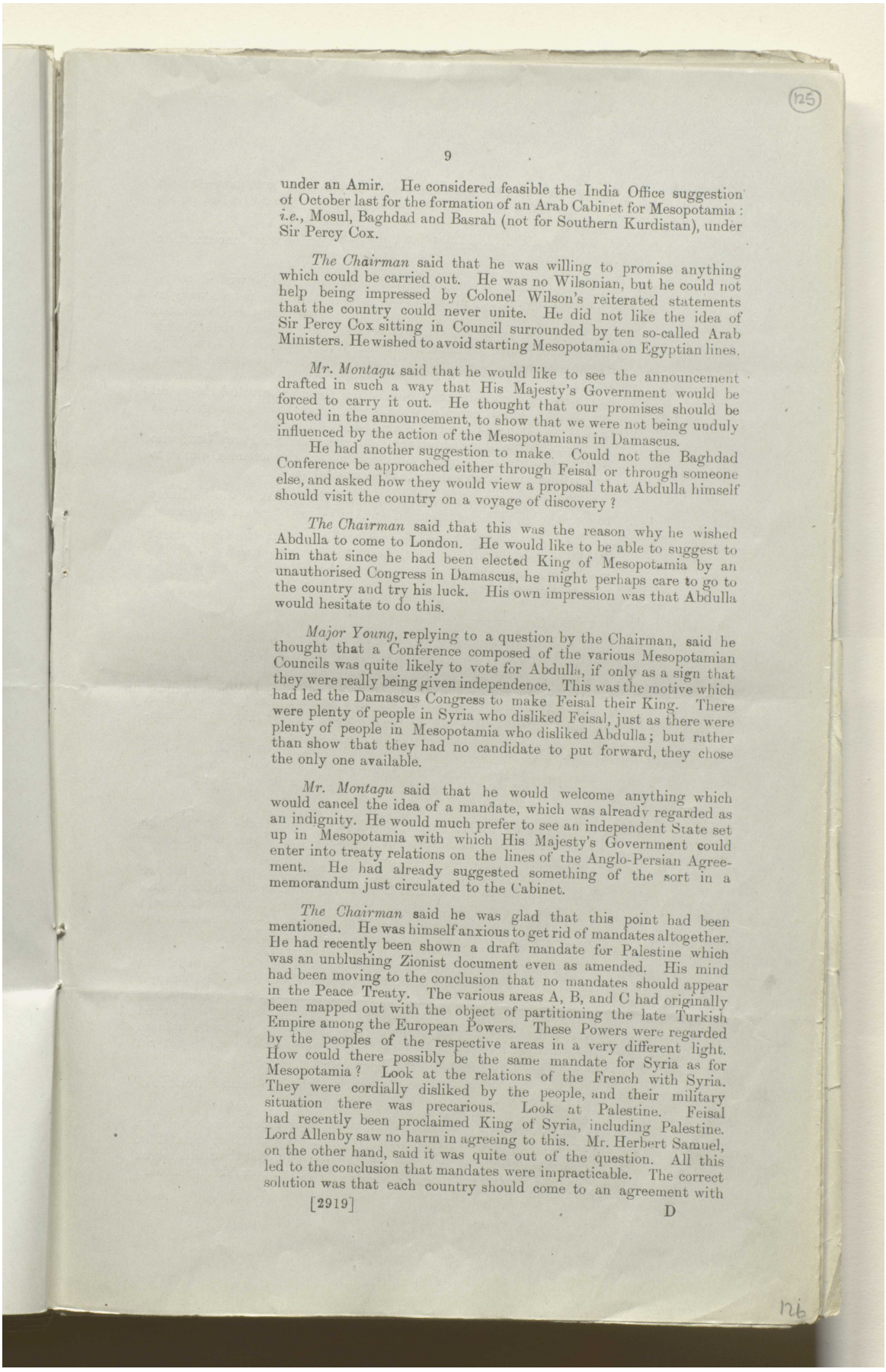

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under an Amir. He considered feasible the India Office suggestion of October last for the formation of an Arab Cabinet for Mesopotamia: *i.e.*, Mosul, Baghdad and Basrah (not for Southern Kurdistan), under Sir Percy Cox.

*The Chairman* said that he was willing to promise anything which could be carried out. He was no Wilsonian, but he could not help being impressed by Colonel Wilson's reiterated statements that the country could never unite. He did not like the idea of Sir Percy Cox sitting in Council surrounded by ten so-called Arab Ministers. He wished to avoid starting Mesopotamia on Egyptian lines.

*Mr. Montagu* said that he would like to see the announcement drafted in such a way that His Majesty's Government would be forced to carry it out. He thought that our promises should be quoted in the announcement, to show that we were not being unduly influenced by the action of the Mesopotamians in Damascus.

He had another suggestion to make. Could not the Baghdad Conference be approached either through Feisal or through someone else, and asked how they would view a proposal that Abdulla himself should visit the country on a voyage of discovery?

*The Chairman* said that this was the reason why he wished Abdulla to come to London. He would like to be able to suggest to him that since he had been elected King of Mesopotamia by an unauthorised Congress in Damascus, he might perhaps care to go to the country and try his luck. His own impression was that Abdulla would hesitate to do this.

*Major Young*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said he thought that a Conference composed of the various Mesopotamian Councils was quite likely to vote for Abdulla, if only as a sign that they were really being given independence. This was the motive which had led the Damascus Congress to make Feisal their King. There were plenty of people in Syria who disliked Feisal, just as there were plenty of people in Mesopotamia who disliked Abdulla; but rather than show that they had no candidate to put forward, they chose the only one available.

*Mr. Montagu* said that he would welcome anything which would cancel the idea of a mandate, which was already regarded as an indignity. He would much prefer to see an independent State set up in Mesopotamia with which His Majesty's Government could enter into treaty relations on the lines of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. He had already suggested something of the sort in a memorandum just circulated to the Cabinet.

*The Chairman* said he was glad that this point had been mentioned. He was himself anxious to get rid of mandates altogether. He had recently been shown a draft mandate for Palestine which was an unblushing Zionist document even as amended. His mind had been moving to the conclusion that no mandates should appear in the Peace Treaty. The various areas A, B, and C had originally been mapped out with the object of partitioning the late Turkish Empire among the European Powers. These Powers were regarded by the peoples of the respective areas in a very different light. How could there possibly be the same mandate for Syria as for Mesopotamia? Look at the relations of the French with Syria. They were cordially disliked by the people, and their military situation there was precarious. Look at Palestine. Feisal had recently been proclaimed King of Syria, including Palestine. Lord Allenby saw no harm in agreeing to this. Mr. Herbert Samuel, on the other hand, said it was quite out of the question. All this led to the conclusion that mandates were impracticable. The correct solution was that each country should come to an agreement with



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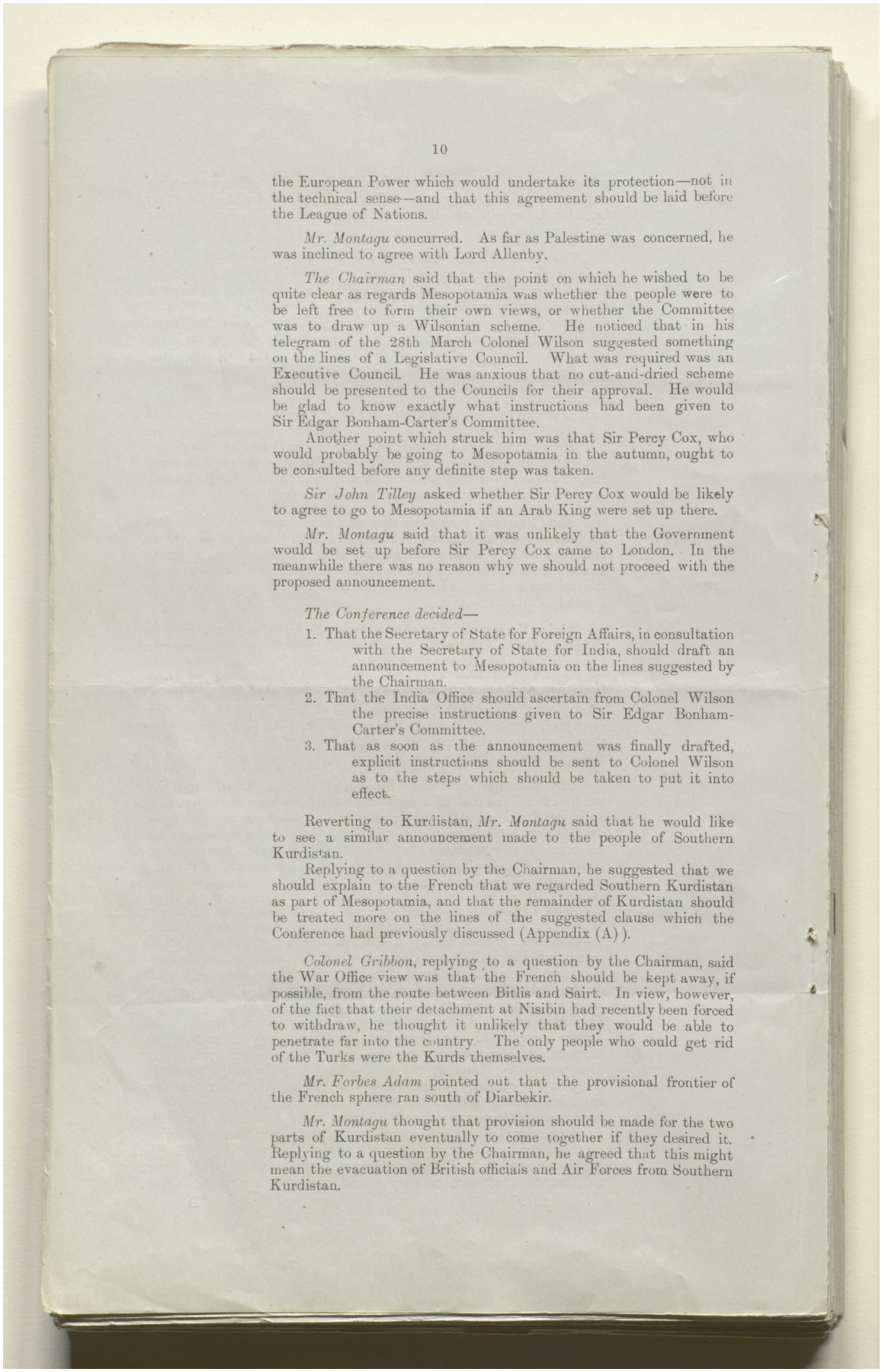



the European Power which would undertake its protection—not in the technical sense—and that this agreement should be laid before the League of Nations.

*Mr. Montagu* concurred. As far as Palestine was concerned, he was inclined to agree with Lord Allenby.

*The Chairman* said that the point on which he wished to be quite clear as regards Mesopotamia was whether the people were to be left free to form their own views, or whether the Committee was to draw up a Wilsonian scheme. He noticed that in his telegram of the 28th March Colonel Wilson suggested something on the lines of a Legislative Council. What was required was an Executive Council. He was anxious that no cut-and-dried scheme should be presented to the Councils for their approval. He would be glad to know exactly what instructions had been given to Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter's Committee.

Another point which struck him was that Sir Percy Cox, who would probably be going to Mesopotamia in the autumn, ought to be consulted before any definite step was taken.

*Sir John Tilley* asked whether Sir Percy Cox would be likely to agree to go to Mesopotamia if an Arab King were set up there.

*Mr. Montagu* said that it was unlikely that the Government would be set up before Sir Percy Cox came to London. In the meanwhile there was no reason why we should not proceed with the proposed announcement.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of State for India, should draft an announcement to Mesopotamia on the lines suggested by the Chairman.
2. That the India Office should ascertain from Colonel Wilson the precise instructions given to Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter's Committee.
3. That as soon as the announcement was finally drafted, explicit instructions should be sent to Colonel Wilson as to the steps which should be taken to put it into effect.

Reverting to Kurdistan, *Mr. Montagu* said that he would like to see a similar announcement made to the people of Southern Kurdistan.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, he suggested that we should explain to the French that we regarded Southern Kurdistan as part of Mesopotamia, and that the remainder of Kurdistan should be treated more on the lines of the suggested clause which the Conference had previously discussed (Appendix (A)).

*Colonel Gribbon*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said the War Office view was that the French should be kept away, if possible, from the route between Bitlis and Sairt. In view, however, of the fact that their detachment at Nisibin had recently been forced to withdraw, he thought it unlikely that they would be able to penetrate far into the country. The only people who could get rid of the Turks were the Kurds themselves.

*Mr. Forbes Adam* pointed out that the provisional frontier of the French sphere ran south of Diarbekir.

*Mr. Montagu* thought that provision should be made for the two parts of Kurdistan eventually to come together if they desired it. Replying to a question by the Chairman, he agreed that this might mean the evacuation of British officials and Air Forces from Southern Kurdistan.



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*Major Young* suggested that we should say to the French that while we had no intention of forcibly incorporating Southern Kurdistan with Mesopotamia, the fact that it had formed part of Mesopotamia under the Turks appeared to justify its inclusion in that country by the Peace Conference. At the same time, we might make it clear that our intention was to set up an independent State in Southern Kurdistan, which could opt later on to join either Mesopotamia or Northern Kurdistan, if the latter eventually succeeded in establishing its autonomy.

*Mr. Garbett* questioned whether Southern Kurdistan could be said to have formed part of Iraq under the Turks. Mosul was looked upon as a "vilayet" of Turkey proper, Baghdad and Basrah as provinces of the Empire. The distinction was emphasised in the law relating to land tenure.

*The Chairman* said that he would bear in mind the various suggestions that had been made in the course of the discussion. It must be remembered that the French would possibly lay claim to commercial concessions in any purely independent Kurdistan, though it was true that their economic sphere had hitherto been restricted to Cilicia.

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Malleson's Force at Meshed.

*Mr. Montagu* remarked that General Malleson had now been replaced, owing to some local friction between him and the Consul-General at Meshed.

*The Chairman* said that he was rather concerned about Malleson's force. At the last meeting it had been stated that the cost of this force amounted to over 6,000,000*l.* per annum. This seemed a very large figure, and appeared to justify the attitude of the Cabinet. There were two questions he would like to ask. Firstly, could we not reduce this expenditure without necessarily withdrawing the force altogether, and, secondly, could not the Government of India be more explicit as to the exact nature of the expenditure? Sir William Duke had expressed the hope at the last meeting that it would be possible both to reduce the expenditure and to increase the proportion borne by the Government of India. The India Office had telegraphed to the Viceroy two days before the meeting, and the Government of India had replied on the 19th March in a most contentious telegram. What did we all want to do? He did not in the least agree with the contention of the Government of India that Malleson's force served as a bait for the Bolsheviks. In his opinion the contrary was the case, and its presence at Meshed served more as a deterrent to a Bolshevik advance. Meanwhile Sir Percy Cox had told us that the Governor-General of Khorasan, who was a loyal friend of ours, would fall if General Malleson's force were withdrawn. It appeared to him that the case for retaining someone at Meshed was overwhelming, that the idea of complete withdrawal was absurd; and that to say that the Bolsheviks would be convinced of our pacific intentions as a result of such a withdrawal was fantastic. The result of complete withdrawal might be that the whole Anglo-Persian Agreement would crumble. North-East Persia was a part of the glacis of India. Let the Government of India frankly agree to pay the moiety or a reasonable proportion of the expenditure involved.

*Mr. Montagu* said the India Office position was that the retention of Malleson's force was a Foreign Office matter. It was only there to keep up the Anglo-Persian Agreement. The Government of India had never agreed to share military expenditure in Persia with the Imperial Government but only political expenditure. While it might be true to say that the military position in Persia affected India, there could be no doubt that the 3,000,000*l.* which it was suggested should be spent on the retention of Malleson's force could





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be better spent on the Indian side of the Afghanistan frontier. He personally concurred in the Viceroy's telegram of the 19th March. The Government of India proposed to replace Malleson's force by consular escorts at Meshed and Seistan. Would not this be enough?

*The Chairman* remarked that when he was in India Meshed was always recognised as an Indian interest, and so was Seistan. The Resident at Meshed and the political officers in Seistan were invariably officers of the Indian Political Department. The idea that India should now wash her hands of Eastern Persia appeared to him to be inconsistent with the attitude of the Government of India before the war.

*Mr. Montagu* remarked that he was not supporting the idea that India should wash her hands of Eastern Persia. His contention was merely that she should share only in political expenditure in Persia, and that from her point of view military expenditure would be more advantageously incurred on her own side of the Afghan frontier. He would like to add that he was finding it increasingly difficult to persuade his Council—with whom the ultimate decision rested—to continue to bear their share even of diplomatic expenditure in Persia.

*The Chairman* asked why the Government of India should not be confronted with their own earlier telegram of the 21st February, in which they pointed out the objections to a complete withdrawal from Meshed?

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* explained that this telegram had been sent under the impression that the Cabinet had arrived at a definite decision to withdraw. The India Office view was that this decision must stand unless it were reversed.

*The Chairman* did not accept this view. He observed that at that meeting the Cabinet had been inclined to arrive at a number of conclusions on the score of economy, which would have resulted, among other things, in our virtual withdrawal from Mesopotamia. He had agreed to evacuate South Persia, but as far as Meshed was concerned he had induced them to say that the Government of India must first be consulted.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that this point had been brought up when the minutes were circulated and that the Prime Minister had not taken this view.

*The Chairman* did not feel himself bound by a subsequent interpretation of the minutes in which he had not personally concurred. Sir William Duke had undertaken at the last meeting of the Conference to ascertain the views of the Government of India.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* observed that perhaps it had not been made quite clear at the last meeting that the Viceroy's views had already been invited. When the reply came the India Office had felt that the bottom was knocked out of their case.

*The Chairman* did not understand why this should have been so, and suggested that the India Office should make further representations to the Government of India.

*Mr. Montagu* remarked that he was more in agreement with the Viceroy than the Chairman appeared to be. He thought it would be sufficient to leave the consular escorts proposed by the Government of India.

*General Radcliffe* pointed out that this would result in the disappearance of the expensive lines of communication.

Replying to question by the Chairman, *Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that there were small detachments at Kuchan and Bajgiran. At the



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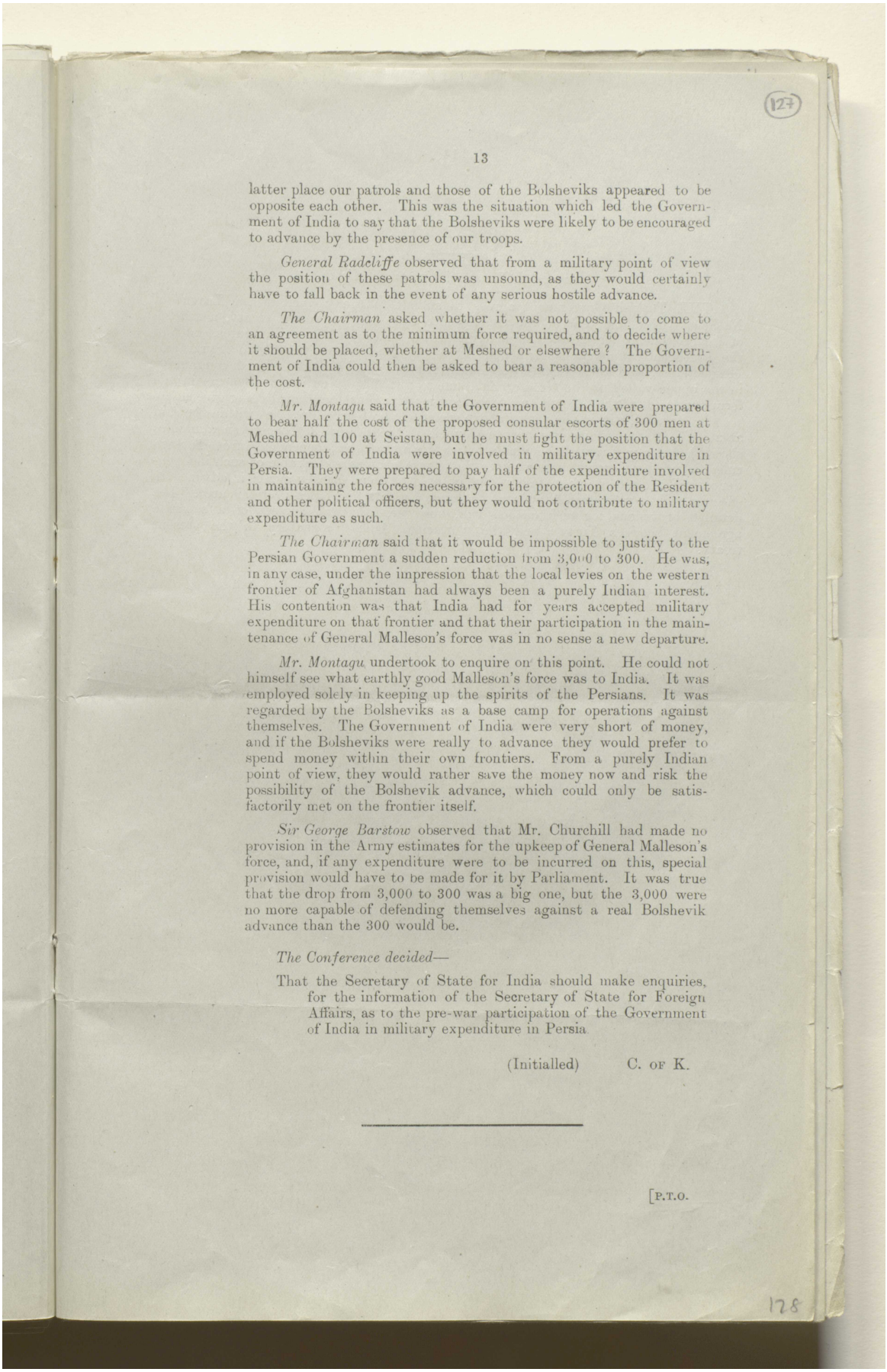

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latter place our patrols and those of the Bolsheviks appeared to be opposite each other. This was the situation which led the Government of India to say that the Bolsheviks were likely to be encouraged to advance by the presence of our troops.

*General Radcliffe* observed that from a military point of view the position of these patrols was unsound, as they would certainly have to fall back in the event of any serious hostile advance.

*The Chairman* asked whether it was not possible to come to an agreement as to the minimum force required, and to decide where it should be placed, whether at Meshed or elsewhere? The Government of India could then be asked to bear a reasonable proportion of the cost.

*Mr. Montagu* said that the Government of India were prepared to bear half the cost of the proposed consular escorts of 300 men at Meshed and 100 at Seistan, but he must fight the position that the Government of India were involved in military expenditure in Persia. They were prepared to pay half of the expenditure involved in maintaining the forces necessary for the protection of the Resident and other political officers, but they would not contribute to military expenditure as such.

*The Chairman* said that it would be impossible to justify to the Persian Government a sudden reduction from 3,000 to 300. He was, in any case, under the impression that the local levies on the western frontier of Afghanistan had always been a purely Indian interest. His contention was that India had for years accepted military expenditure on that frontier and that their participation in the maintenance of General Malleson's force was in no sense a new departure.

*Mr. Montagu* undertook to enquire on this point. He could not himself see what earthly good Malleson's force was to India. It was employed solely in keeping up the spirits of the Persians. It was regarded by the Bolsheviks as a base camp for operations against themselves. The Government of India were very short of money, and if the Bolsheviks were really to advance they would prefer to spend money within their own frontiers. From a purely Indian point of view, they would rather save the money now and risk the possibility of the Bolshevik advance, which could only be satisfactorily met on the frontier itself.

*Sir George Barstow* observed that Mr. Churchill had made no provision in the Army estimates for the upkeep of General Malleson's force, and, if any expenditure were to be incurred on this, special provision would have to be made for it by Parliament. It was true that the drop from 3,000 to 300 was a big one, but the 3,000 were no more capable of defending themselves against a real Bolshevik advance than the 300 would be.

*The Conference decided*—

That the Secretary of State for India should make enquiries, for the information of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, as to the pre-war participation of the Government of India in military expenditure in Persia.

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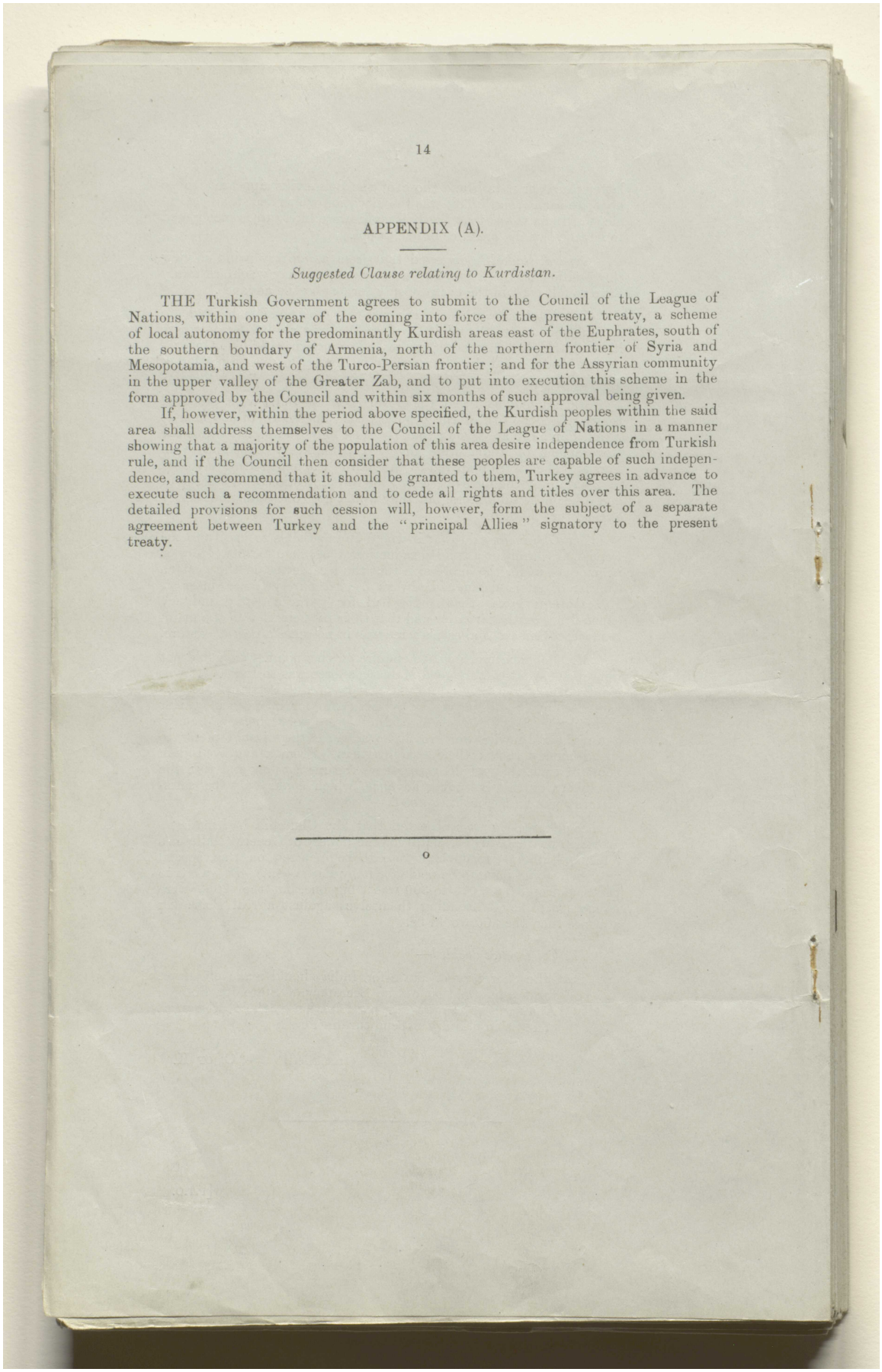

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APPENDIX (A).

*Suggested Clause relating to Kurdistan.*

THE Turkish Government agrees to submit to the Council of the League of Nations, within one year of the coming into force of the present treaty, a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia, north of the northern frontier of Syria and Mesopotamia, and west of the Turco-Persian frontier; and for the Assyrian community in the upper valley of the Greater Zab, and to put into execution this scheme in the form approved by the Council and within six months of such approval being given.

If, however, within the period above specified, the Kurdish peoples within the said area shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in a manner showing that a majority of the population of this area desire independence from Turkish rule, and if the Council then consider that these peoples are capable of such independence, and recommend that it should be granted to them, Turkey agrees in advance to execute such a recommendation and to cede all rights and titles over this area. The detailed provisions for such cession will, however, form the subject of a separate agreement between Turkey and the "principal Allies" signatory to the present treaty.

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SECRET.

I.D.C.E., 38th Minutes.

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE-EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of an Inter-Departmental Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Monday, May 17, 1920, at 3 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. C. C. GARBETT, C.I.E., India Office.

General Sir ALEXANDER COBBE, V.C., K.C.B., Military Secretary, India Office.

Sir GEORGE BARSTOW, K.C.B., Treasury.

Sir JOHN TILLEY, K.C.M.G., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Major-General Sir P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations, War Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Captain H. G. E. LANE, Director of Operations Division (Foreign), Admiralty.

Commander LANG, D.S.O., Admiralty.

Commander LE PAGE, D.S.O., Admiralty.

Air-Commodore J. M. STEEL, C.M.G., C.B.E., Director, Operations and Intelligence, Air Ministry.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

1. Situation in North-West Persia.

THE Conference had before them a memorandum by the General Staff on the situation in North-West Persia, dated the 13th May, 1920 (I.D.C.E.–5215), and connected telegrams.

*The Chairman* said that the present question to be discussed with regard to Persia arose out of a series of telegrams from Sir Percy Cox, various communications which had been received by the War Office from the military authorities on the spot, and lastly a memorandum by General Radcliffe which summarised the present position.

The situation in Persia was gravely affected by the Bolshevik menace and by the success which appeared to be attending the Bolshevik arms in the Caucasus. The Bolsheviks were established at Baku, or, at any rate, a Government had come into power which was favourable to them. They were in occupation of the town, and presumably commanded the oil. From Baku they were pressing down towards Persia and contemplating a landing on Persian soil. One report stated that a detachment had actually landed at Persian Astara. In any case, four transports and two warships were reported to have arrived at Lenkoran, and 600 infantry and some artillery had been landed. One ship with two long-range naval guns and an armoured car had reached Russian Astara. Their attitude was distinctly menacing.







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The position at Tabriz was also disquieting. The British force there consisted of only two platoons, and was in a precarious position. They were threatened from the direction of Astara by a numerically superior force of Cossacks in Tabriz itself. If Tabriz went, Persian Azerbaijan, the present Persian Ministry, and with them the Anglo-Persian Agreement, would also go.

Simultaneously the position was acute in the Caucasus States. The degree of Bolshevik penetration was not clear, but Azerbaijan appeared to be in the hollow of their hands. The new Government at Erivan was rather inexplicably said by Commander Luke to be more hostile to the Bolsheviks than the late Government. In any case, it seemed not to have been proved that the Armenian Republic had gone over to the Bolsheviks, though there appeared to be a chance of this happening in the near future. The news from Georgia was conflicting, and he only mentioned the situation in the Caucasus on account of its reflex influence on the Persian situation.

Turning again to the Persian situation, there was the rather uncomfortable element of Starosselski. The distribution of the Russian Cossack forces in Persia at the time when the General Staff memorandum was written was as follows :—

At Tabriz ... 700 rifles and sabres.
At Astara ... 250 rifles and sabres.
At Teheran ... 1,500 rifles and sabres and 12 guns.
At Hamadan... 780 rifles.
Between Hamadan and Ispahan, 500 rifles and sabres and 4 guns.

Starosselski, as the Conference were aware, was playing the old Russian game. He was out to recover Russia's old position in Persia. Three points were especially noteworthy :—

(*a.*) That having 1,500 rifles and sabres and 12 guns at Teheran, he was local master of the situation.
(*b.*) That he was said to have the Shah behind him.
(*c.*) That we had not actually broken with him; we had even been continuing payment of his subsidy until quite recently.

Two alternatives had been considered by the authorities on the spot :—Firstly, to arrest and deport Starosselski and his Russian officers and to disarm the Cossack division temporarily, accepting such risks as might result from the liberation of the Cossack detachments in the provinces. Secondly, to await the arrival of the Shah, and meanwhile to inform Starosselski that the British subsidy would be discontinued in view of the Commission's report; that he must reduce his numbers accordingly; and that the precise manner of incorporation of the Cossack division and the South Persia rifles into a new uniform force would be discussed in due course.

So far as pressure could be exercised on the Shah while he was in Europe, this had been done. His return to Persia, for which he had strongly pressed, had been made conditional on his supporting Vossugh, adhering strictly to the Anglo-Persian Agreement and dealing firmly with Starosselski. It would be unwise to expect too much from the undertakings that he had given, but at any rate something had been done. With regard to our own forces the Conference had decided at the last meeting, on the advice of the War Office, to retain the detachment at Enzeli as a bluff. The General Officer Commanding, Norperforce, reported that, while he considered himself secure at Enzeli from direct attack either by land or by sea, a Russian advance from Astara against his lines of communication would oblige him to fall back. The War Office recommended the withdrawal of the Enzeli and Tabriz detachments to Kasvin. The Persian Prime Minister had agreed to this course



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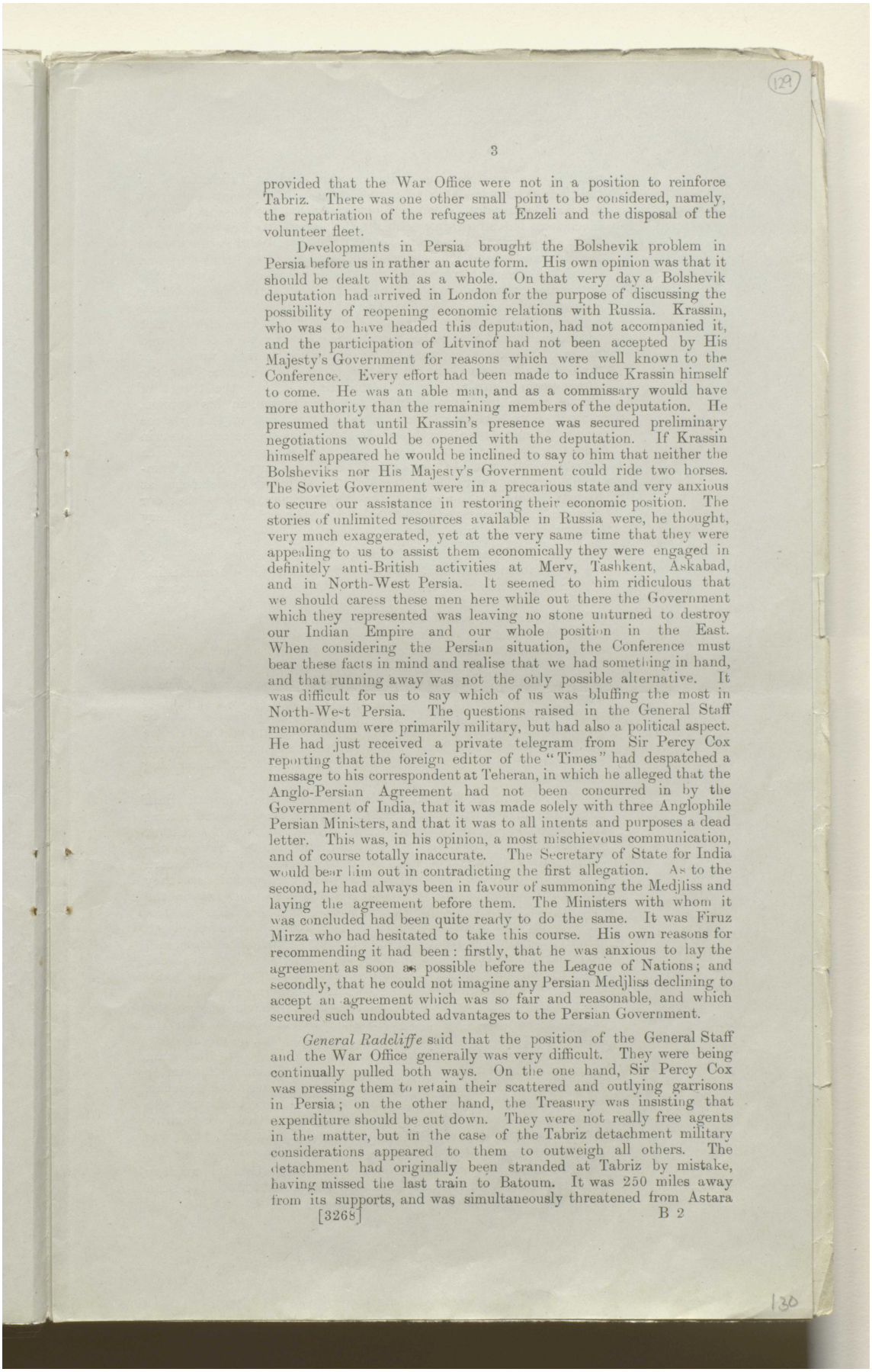



provided that the War Office were not in a position to reinforce Tabriz. There was one other small point to be considered, namely, the repatriation of the refugees at Enzeli and the disposal of the volunteer fleet.

Developments in Persia brought the Bolshevik problem in Persia before us in rather an acute form. His own opinion was that it should be dealt with as a whole. On that very day a Bolshevik deputation had arrived in London for the purpose of discussing the possibility of reopening economic relations with Russia. Krassin, who was to have headed this deputation, had not accompanied it, and the participation of Litvinof had not been accepted by His Majesty's Government for reasons which were well known to the Conference. Every effort had been made to induce Krassin himself to come. He was an able man, and as a commissary would have more authority than the remaining members of the deputation. He presumed that until Krassin's presence was secured preliminary negotiations would be opened with the deputation. If Krassin himself appeared he would be inclined to say to him that neither the Bolsheviks nor His Majesty's Government could ride two horses. The Soviet Government were in a precarious state and very anxious to secure our assistance in restoring their economic position. The stories of unlimited resources available in Russia were, he thought, very much exaggerated, yet at the very same time that they were appealing to us to assist them economically they were engaged in definitely anti-British activities at Merv, Tashkent, Askabad, and in North-West Persia. It seemed to him ridiculous that we should caress these men here while out there the Government which they represented was leaving no stone unturned to destroy our Indian Empire and our whole position in the East. When considering the Persian situation, the Conference must bear these facts in mind and realise that we had something in hand, and that running away was not the only possible alternative. It was difficult for us to say which of us was bluffing the most in North-West Persia. The questions raised in the General Staff memorandum were primarily military, but had also a political aspect. He had just received a private telegram from Sir Percy Cox reporting that the foreign editor of the "Times" had despatched a message to his correspondent at Teheran, in which he alleged that the Anglo-Persian Agreement had not been concurred in by the Government of India, that it was made solely with three Anglophile Persian Ministers, and that it was to all intents and purposes a dead letter. This was, in his opinion, a most mischievous communication, and of course totally inaccurate. The Secretary of State for India would bear him out in contradicting the first allegation. As to the second, he had always been in favour of summoning the Medjliss and laying the agreement before them. The Ministers with whom it was concluded had been quite ready to do the same. It was Firuz Mirza who had hesitated to take this course. His own reasons for recommending it had been: firstly, that he was anxious to lay the agreement as soon as possible before the League of Nations; and secondly, that he could not imagine any Persian Medjliss declining to accept an agreement which was so fair and reasonable, and which secured such undoubted advantages to the Persian Government.

*General Radcliffe* said that the position of the General Staff and the War Office generally was very difficult. They were being continually pulled both ways. On the one hand, Sir Percy Cox was pressing them to retain their scattered and outlying garrisons in Persia; on the other hand, the Treasury was insisting that expenditure should be cut down. They were not really free agents in the matter, but in the case of the Tabriz detachment military considerations appeared to them to outweigh all others. The detachment had originally been stranded at Tabriz by mistake, having missed the last train to Batoum. It was 250 miles away from its supports, and was simultaneously threatened from Astara





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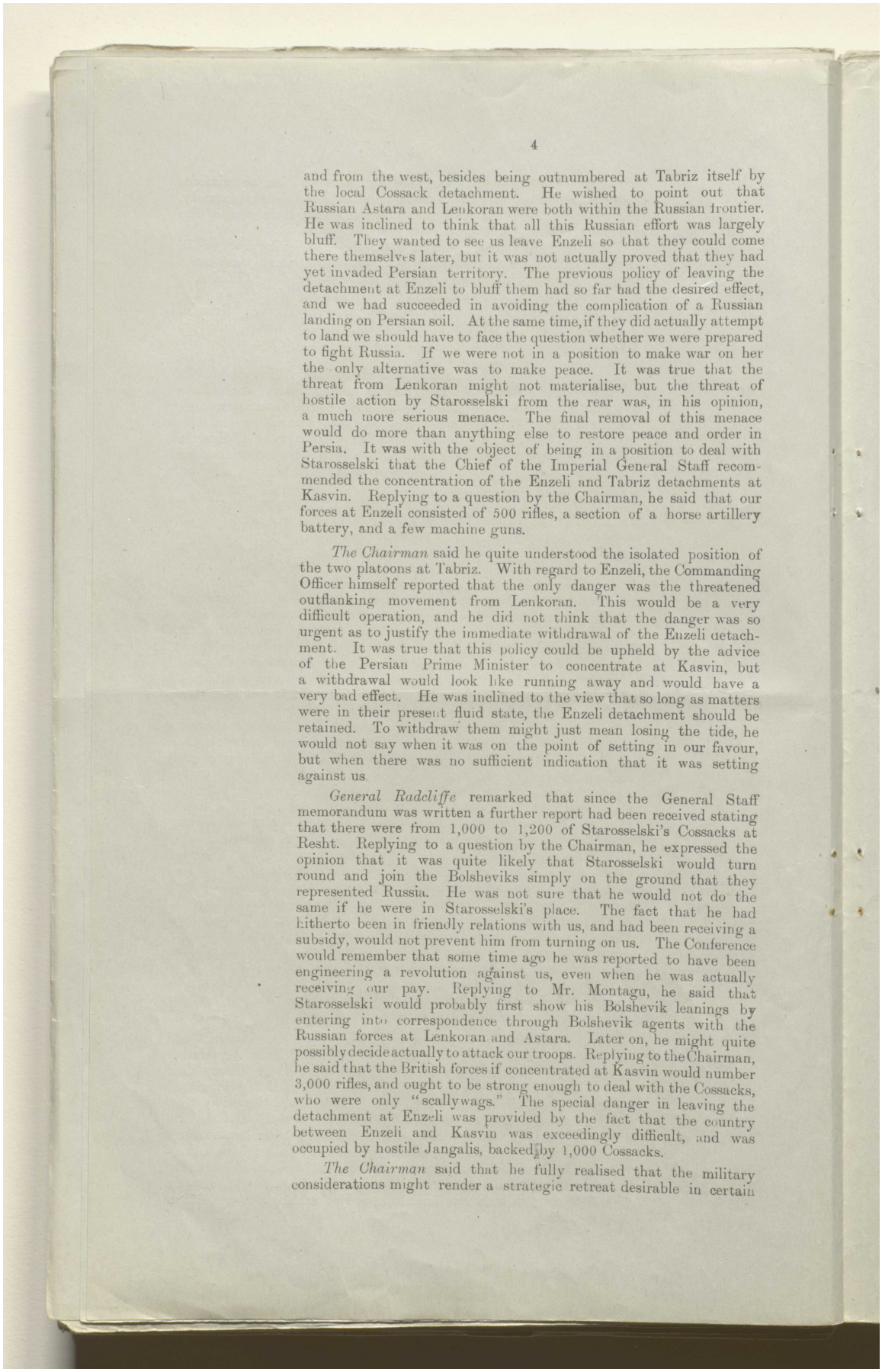



and from the west, besides being outnumbered at Tabriz itself by the local Cossack detachment. He wished to point out that Russian Astara and Lenkoran were both within the Russian frontier. He was inclined to think that all this Russian effort was largely bluff. They wanted to see us leave Enzeli so that they could come there themselves later, but it was not actually proved that they had yet invaded Persian territory. The previous policy of leaving the detachment at Enzeli to bluff them had so far had the desired effect, and we had succeeded in avoiding the complication of a Russian landing on Persian soil. At the same time, if they did actually attempt to land we should have to face the question whether we were prepared to fight Russia. If we were not in a position to make war on her the only alternative was to make peace. It was true that the threat from Lenkoran might not materialise, but the threat of hostile action by Starosselski from the rear was, in his opinion, a much more serious menace. The final removal of this menace would do more than anything else to restore peace and order in Persia. It was with the object of being in a position to deal with Starosselski that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff recommended the concentration of the Enzeli and Tabriz detachments at Kasvin. Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said that our forces at Enzeli consisted of 500 rifles, a section of a horse artillery battery, and a few machine guns.

*The Chairman* said he quite understood the isolated position of the two platoons at Tabriz. With regard to Enzeli, the Commanding Officer himself reported that the only danger was the threatened outflanking movement from Lenkoran. This would be a very difficult operation, and he did not think that the danger was so urgent as to justify the immediate withdrawal of the Enzeli detachment. It was true that this policy could be upheld by the advice of the Persian Prime Minister to concentrate at Kasvin, but a withdrawal would look like running away and would have a very bad effect. He was inclined to the view that so long as matters were in their present fluid state, the Enzeli detachment should be retained. To withdraw them might just mean losing the tide, he would not say when it was on the point of setting in our favour, but when there was no sufficient indication that it was setting against us.

*General Radcliffe* remarked that since the General Staff memorandum was written a further report had been received stating that there were from 1,000 to 1,200 of Starosselski's Cossacks at Resht. Replying to a question by the Chairman, he expressed the opinion that it was quite likely that Starosselski would turn round and join the Bolsheviks simply on the ground that they represented Russia. He was not sure that he would not do the same if he were in Starosselski's place. The fact that he had hitherto been in friendly relations with us, and had been receiving a subsidy, would not prevent him from turning on us. The Conference would remember that some time ago he was reported to have been engineering a revolution against us, even when he was actually receiving our pay. Replying to Mr. Montagu, he said that Starosselski would probably first show his Bolshevik leanings by entering into correspondence through Bolshevik agents with the Russian forces at Lenkoran and Astara. Later on, he might quite possibly decide actually to attack our troops. Replying to the Chairman, he said that the British forces if concentrated at Kasvin would number 3,000 rifles, and ought to be strong enough to deal with the Cossacks, who were only "scallywags." The special danger in leaving the detachment at Enzeli was provided by the fact that the country between Enzeli and Kasvin was exceedingly difficult, and was occupied by hostile Jangalis, backed by 1,000 Cossacks.

*The Chairman* said that he fully realised that the military considerations might render a strategic retreat desirable in certain



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cases, but he was very anxious to avoid what would be tantamount to an invitation to the Bolsheviks to land at Enzeli. Why should the War Office not wait until it was really necessary to move? A premature withdrawal might have the effect of bringing down the whole castle about our ears.

*Mr. Montagu* suggested that the best solution would be for instructions to be sent to the General Officer Commanding on the lines of those recently despatched by Cabinet decision in the analogous case of Batoum. The Officer Commanding at Batoum had been told that he must at all costs avoid any possibility of a military disaster, but that, at the same time, it was desirable for political reasons that he should retain his position as long as he possibly could.

*General Radcliffe* stated that this was putting an unfair responsibility on the local commander who would naturally try to hang on as long as he could – all honour to him for doing so—but we who have a wider view of the whole situation should take the responsibility of ordering him away.

*Mr. Montagu* said that he did not quite understand the argument that the Enzeli force must be withdrawn to meet Treasury objections. There did not seem to be any difference from a Treasury point of view whether the small force concerned were at Enzeli or at Kasvin. He drew attention to the three proposals made by the Persian Prime Minister, and reported by Sir Percy Cox in his telegram of the 14th May, and suggested that they should be discussed.

*The Chairman* concurred. He had of course no wish to interfere in purely military matters, and it was obviously undesirable that we should risk a military disaster, but he thought that the decision should be left to the man on the spot, as in the case of Batoum. The three proposals of the Persian Prime Minister were based on the hypothesis that His Majesty's Government were still not prepared in any circumstances to send any reinforcements of British troops to Persia. He supposed this hypothesis was correct. The first proposal was that the garrison of gendarmes now at Ispahan should be withdrawn and re laced by a detachment of South Persia rifles from Kerman, or failing that by a Bakhtiari garrison.

*General Radcliffe* said that the War Office had no opinion to offer on this proposal.

*Mr. Oliphant* said that the position at Kerman was quite quiet, and that no news had been received of any local feeling there in favour of the Bolsheviks.

*The Chairman* saw no objection to the first proposal. The second proposal was that the gendarmes thus released, with the addition of the Central Brigade and such other units as could be spared from the capital, to a total number of 3,000, should be sent urgently to Tabriz. This was a matter for Persia to decide. While he did not wish to press strongly for the retention of the two platoons at Tabriz, he thought it possible that the two questions might be combined. Might we not say to the Persian Government that our detachment there was a very small one and could obviously not remain unsupported? We might accordingly suggest that the Prime Minister's second proposal should be carried into effect immediately, and the question of withdrawing the two platoons might be deferred until the arrival of the 3,000 men at Tabriz. At the same time, he was rather doubtful whether these 3,000 men would ever materialise.

*Mr. Montagu* pointed out that the second proposal was conditional on the third, which was that to make up for the suggested depletion at the Centre, Norperforce, whether it remained distributed between Kasvin and Enzeli, or whether it were concentrated at Kasvin, should be substantially reinforced from Bagdad sufficiently





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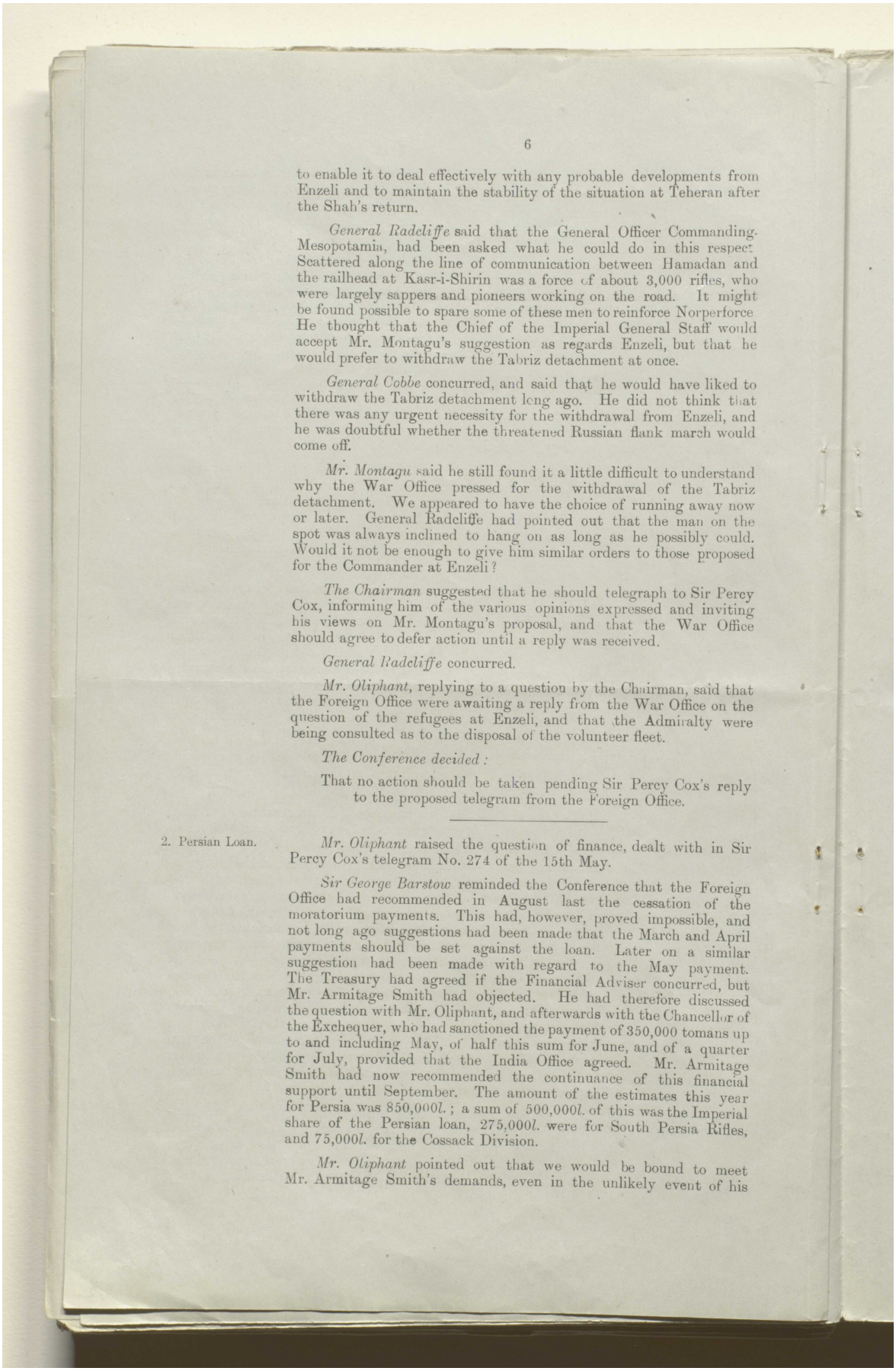



to enable it to deal effectively with any probable developments from Enzeli and to maintain the stability of the situation at Teheran after the Shah's return.

*General Radcliffe* said that the General Officer Commanding Mesopotamia, had been asked what he could do in this respect. Scattered along the line of communication between Hamadan and the railhead at Kasr-i-Shirin was a force of about 3,000 rifles, who were largely sappers and pioneers working on the road. It might be found possible to spare some of these men to reinforce Norperforce. He thought that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff would accept Mr. Montagu's suggestion as regards Enzeli, but that he would prefer to withdraw the Tabriz detachment at once.

*General Cobbe* concurred, and said that he would have liked to withdraw the Tabriz detachment long ago. He did not think that there was any urgent necessity for the withdrawal from Enzeli, and he was doubtful whether the threatened Russian flank march would come off.

*Mr. Montagu* said he still found it a little difficult to understand why the War Office pressed for the withdrawal of the Tabriz detachment. We appeared to have the choice of running away now or later. General Radcliffe had pointed out that the man on the spot was always inclined to hang on as long as he possibly could. Would it not be enough to give him similar orders to those proposed for the Commander at Enzeli?

*The Chairman* suggested that he should telegraph to Sir Percy Cox, informing him of the various opinions expressed and inviting his views on Mr. Montagu's proposal, and that the War Office should agree to defer action until a reply was received.

*General Radcliffe* concurred.

*Mr. Oliphant*, replying to a question by the Chairman, said that the Foreign Office were awaiting a reply from the War Office on the question of the refugees at Enzeli, and that the Admiralty were being consulted as to the disposal of the volunteer fleet.

*The Conference decided:*

That no action should be taken pending Sir Percy Cox's reply to the proposed telegram from the Foreign Office.

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2. Persian Loan.

*Mr. Oliphant* raised the question of finance, dealt with in Sir Percy Cox's telegram No. 274 of the 15th May.

*Sir George Barstow* reminded the Conference that the Foreign Office had recommended in August last the cessation of the moratorium payments. This had, however, proved impossible, and not long ago suggestions had been made that the March and April payments should be set against the loan. Later on a similar suggestion had been made with regard to the May payment. The Treasury had agreed if the Financial Adviser concurred, but Mr. Armitage Smith had objected. He had therefore discussed the question with Mr. Oliphant, and afterwards with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had sanctioned the payment of 350,000 tomans up to and including May, of half this sum for June, and of a quarter for July, provided that the India Office agreed. Mr. Armitage Smith had now recommended the continuance of this financial support until September. The amount of the estimates this year for Persia was 850,000*l.*; a sum of 500,000*l.* of this was the Imperial share of the Persian loan, 275,000*l.* were for South Persia Rifles, and 75,000*l.* for the Cossack Division.

*Mr. Oliphant* pointed out that we would be bound to meet Mr. Armitage Smith's demands, even in the unlikely event of his

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calling upon us to pay the whole 2,000,000 in the course of this year, so that the provision made in the estimates did not finally fix the amount to be expended during the year.

*Sir George Barstow* agreed, and thought that there would be no difficulty in explaining this to Parliament, but they would certainly be against any extra payment.

*Mr. Oliphant* said that the whole amount was only 350,000 tomans a month, or about 150,000*l.*, of which the Imperial share would be 75,000*l.* The Chancellor of the Exchequer had already agreed to this sum being paid up to and including May, to half the amount being paid for June and a quarter for July. Mr. Armitage Smith's request thus amounted only to an additional 75,000*l.* for June, 112,500*l.* for July and 15,000*l.* for August. The South Persia Rifles were to be incorporated in the uniform force by June if possible, after which no extra payment would be required for them. It also appeared possible that the sum earmarked for the Cossack Division would not be required.

*Mr. Montagu* said that if the Treasury were prepared to concur in Mr. Armitage Smith's proposals he would lay them before the India Council. He wished, however, to point out that he had told the Council many times that successive requests were positively final, and he anticipated considerable difficulty. The Government of India were, as the Conference knew, hostile to the continuance of this payment. He would do his best.

*The Chairman* said that Mr. Armitage Smith must be given a chance. Every effort should be made to induce the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the India Office to extend their generosity for a few months more. He invited the Conference to compare the present position with the position last year. Very considerable reductions had been made and were being systematically continued. The sum involved was not large.

*The Conference decided* :—

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should take the question up with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for India.

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3. Mesopotamia.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference had to deal with a series of telegrams which had passed between the India Office and the Civil Commissioner, Bagdad, since the last meeting, and to determine what immediate steps, if any, were to be taken for the setting up of a constitution in Mesopotamia. The order of events had been as follows. At the end of April the Conference had heard of Sir Edgar Bonham Carter's Committee, a small body composed of four able men, all Englishmen, with whom no Arab was associated. This Committee had taken no evidence, but were reported to have consulted local opinion to some extent. They had profited by their own experience of local conditions, and had evolved a series of recommendations which had been telegraphed by the Civil Commissioner in three telegrams, dated the 27th April. They had begun with a prefatory statement which laid stress on the low standard of education in the country and the absence of individuals who were capable of filling even lower administrative appointments. Anticipating a demand for further local enquiry, they agreed that fuller attempts should be made to ascertain the wishes of the people, but considered that before this could be done with any hope of success a mandate must be granted. They also made special recommendations regarding the terms of the mandate, into which it was not necessary to enter in detail at the moment. They then put forward their proposals for a constitution. There were to be two





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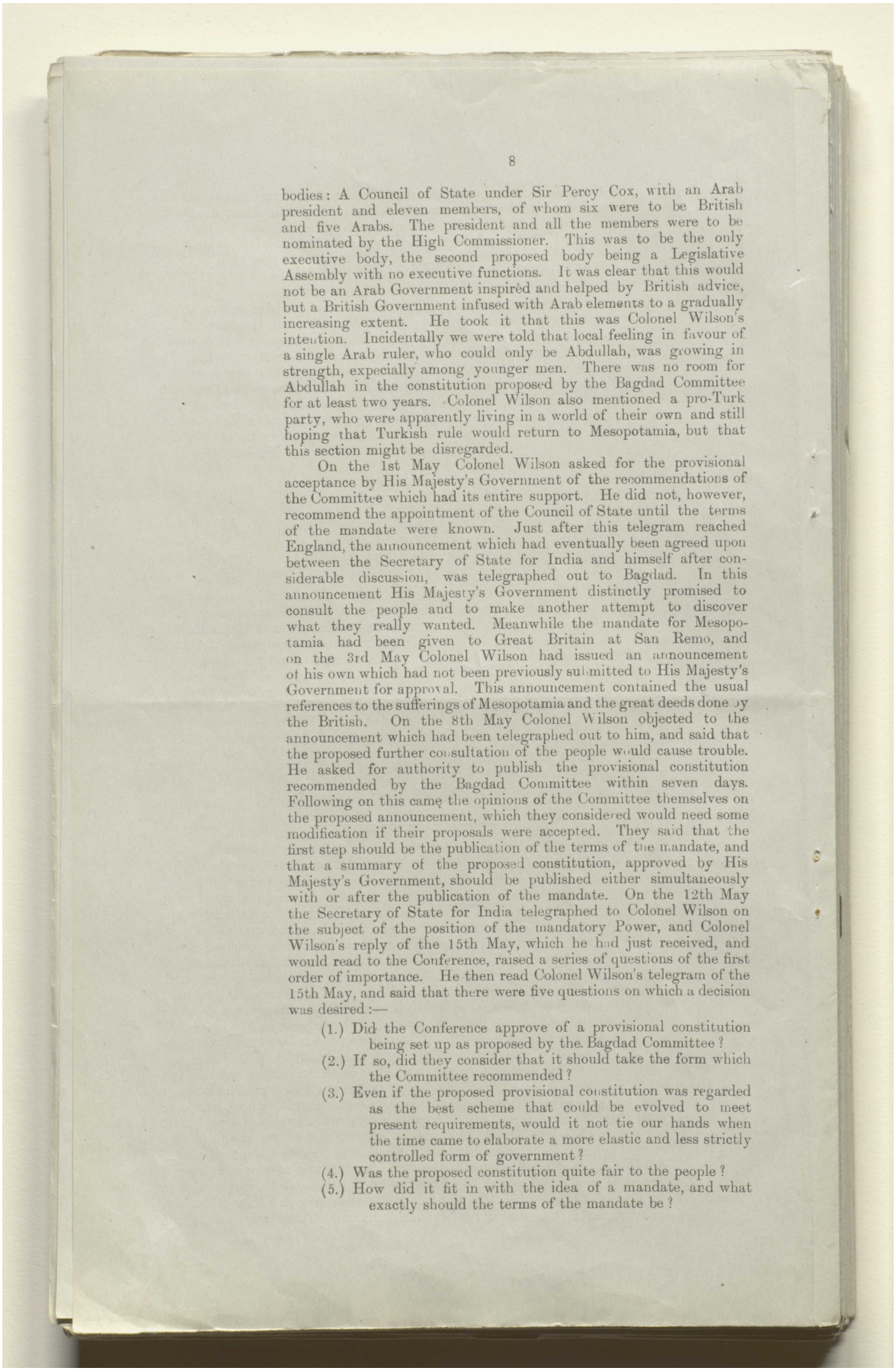



bodies: A Council of State under Sir Percy Cox, with an Arab president and eleven members, of whom six were to be British and five Arabs. The president and all the members were to be nominated by the High Commissioner. This was to be the only executive body, the second proposed body being a Legislative Assembly with no executive functions. It was clear that this would not be an Arab Government inspired and helped by British advice, but a British Government infused with Arab elements to a gradually increasing extent. He took it that this was Colonel Wilson's intention. Incidentally we were told that local feeling in favour of a single Arab ruler, who could only be Abdullah, was growing in strength, especially among younger men. There was no room for Abdullah in the constitution proposed by the Bagdad Committee for at least two years. Colonel Wilson also mentioned a pro-Turk party, who were apparently living in a world of their own and still hoping that Turkish rule would return to Mesopotamia, but that this section might be disregarded.

On the 1st May Colonel Wilson asked for the provisional acceptance by His Majesty's Government of the recommendations of the Committee which had its entire support. He did not, however, recommend the appointment of the Council of State until the terms of the mandate were known. Just after this telegram reached England, the announcement which had eventually been agreed upon between the Secretary of State for India and himself after considerable discussion, was telegraphed out to Bagdad. In this announcement His Majesty's Government distinctly promised to consult the people and to make another attempt to discover what they really wanted. Meanwhile the mandate for Mesopotamia had been given to Great Britain at San Remo, and on the 3rd May Colonel Wilson had issued an announcement of his own which had not been previously submitted to His Majesty's Government for approval. This announcement contained the usual references to the sufferings of Mesopotamia and the great deeds done by the British. On the 8th May Colonel Wilson objected to the announcement which had been telegraphed out to him, and said that the proposed further consultation of the people would cause trouble. He asked for authority to publish the provisional constitution recommended by the Bagdad Committee within seven days. Following on this came the opinions of the Committee themselves on the proposed announcement, which they considered would need some modification if their proposals were accepted. They said that the first step should be the publication of the terms of the mandate, and that a summary of the proposed constitution, approved by His Majesty's Government, should be published either simultaneously with or after the publication of the mandate. On the 12th May the Secretary of State for India telegraphed to Colonel Wilson on the subject of the position of the mandatory Power, and Colonel Wilson's reply of the 15th May, which he had just received, and would read to the Conference, raised a series of questions of the first order of importance. He then read Colonel Wilson's telegram of the 15th May, and said that there were five questions on which a decision was desired:—

(1.) Did the Conference approve of a provisional constitution being set up as proposed by the Bagdad Committee?
(2.) If so, did they consider that it should take the form which the Committee recommended?
(3.) Even if the proposed provisional constitution was regarded as the best scheme that could be evolved to meet present requirements, would it not tie our hands when the time came to elaborate a more elastic and less strictly controlled form of government?
(4.) Was the proposed constitution quite fair to the people?
(5.) How did it fit in with the idea of a mandate, and what exactly should the terms of the mandate be?



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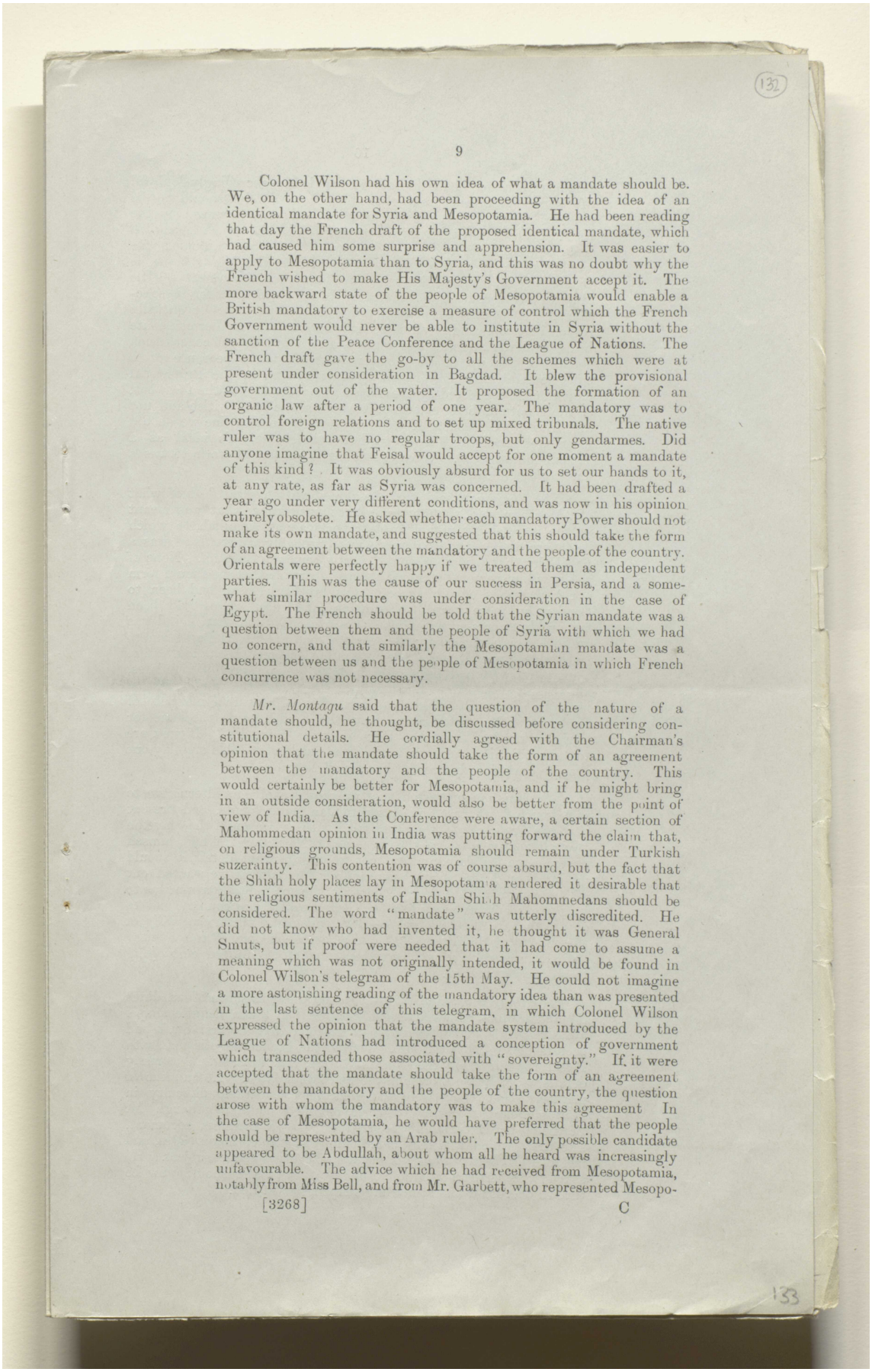



Colonel Wilson had his own idea of what a mandate should be. We, on the other hand, had been proceeding with the idea of an identical mandate for Syria and Mesopotamia. He had been reading that day the French draft of the proposed identical mandate, which had caused him some surprise and apprehension. It was easier to apply to Mesopotamia than to Syria, and this was no doubt why the French wished to make His Majesty's Government accept it. The more backward state of the people of Mesopotamia would enable a British mandatory to exercise a measure of control which the French Government would never be able to institute in Syria without the sanction of the Peace Conference and the League of Nations. The French draft gave the go-by to all the schemes which were at present under consideration in Bagdad. It blew the provisional government out of the water. It proposed the formation of an organic law after a period of one year. The mandatory was to control foreign relations and to set up mixed tribunals. The native ruler was to have no regular troops, but only gendarmes. Did anyone imagine that Feisal would accept for one moment a mandate of this kind? It was obviously absurd for us to set our hands to it, at any rate, as far as Syria was concerned. It had been drafted a year ago under very different conditions, and was now in his opinion entirely obsolete. He asked whether each mandatory Power should not make its own mandate, and suggested that this should take the form of an agreement between the mandatory and the people of the country. Orientals were perfectly happy if we treated them as independent parties. This was the cause of our success in Persia, and a somewhat similar procedure was under consideration in the case of Egypt. The French should be told that the Syrian mandate was a question between them and the people of Syria with which we had no concern, and that similarly the Mesopotamian mandate was a question between us and the people of Mesopotamia in which French concurrence was not necessary.

*Mr. Montagu* said that the question of the nature of a mandate should, he thought, be discussed before considering constitutional details. He cordially agreed with the Chairman's opinion that the mandate should take the form of an agreement between the mandatory and the people of the country. This would certainly be better for Mesopotamia, and if he might bring in an outside consideration, would also be better from the point of view of India. As the Conference were aware, a certain section of Mahommedan opinion in India was putting forward the claim that, on religious grounds, Mesopotamia should remain under Turkish suzerainty. This contention was of course absurd, but the fact that the Shiah holy places lay in Mesopotamia rendered it desirable that the religious sentiments of Indian Shiah Mahommedans should be considered. The word "mandate" was utterly discredited. He did not know who had invented it, he thought it was General Smuts, but if proof were needed that it had come to assume a meaning which was not originally intended, it would be found in Colonel Wilson's telegram of the 15th May. He could not imagine a more astonishing reading of the mandatory idea than was presented in the last sentence of this telegram, in which Colonel Wilson expressed the opinion that the mandate system introduced by the League of Nations had introduced a conception of government which transcended those associated with "sovereignty." If it were accepted that the mandate should take the form of an agreement between the mandatory and the people of the country, the question arose with whom the mandatory was to make this agreement. In the case of Mesopotamia, he would have preferred that the people should be represented by an Arab ruler. The only possible candidate appeared to be Abdullah, about whom all he heard was increasingly unfavourable. The advice which he had received from Mesopotamia, notably from Miss Bell, and from Mr. Garbett, who represented Mesopo-





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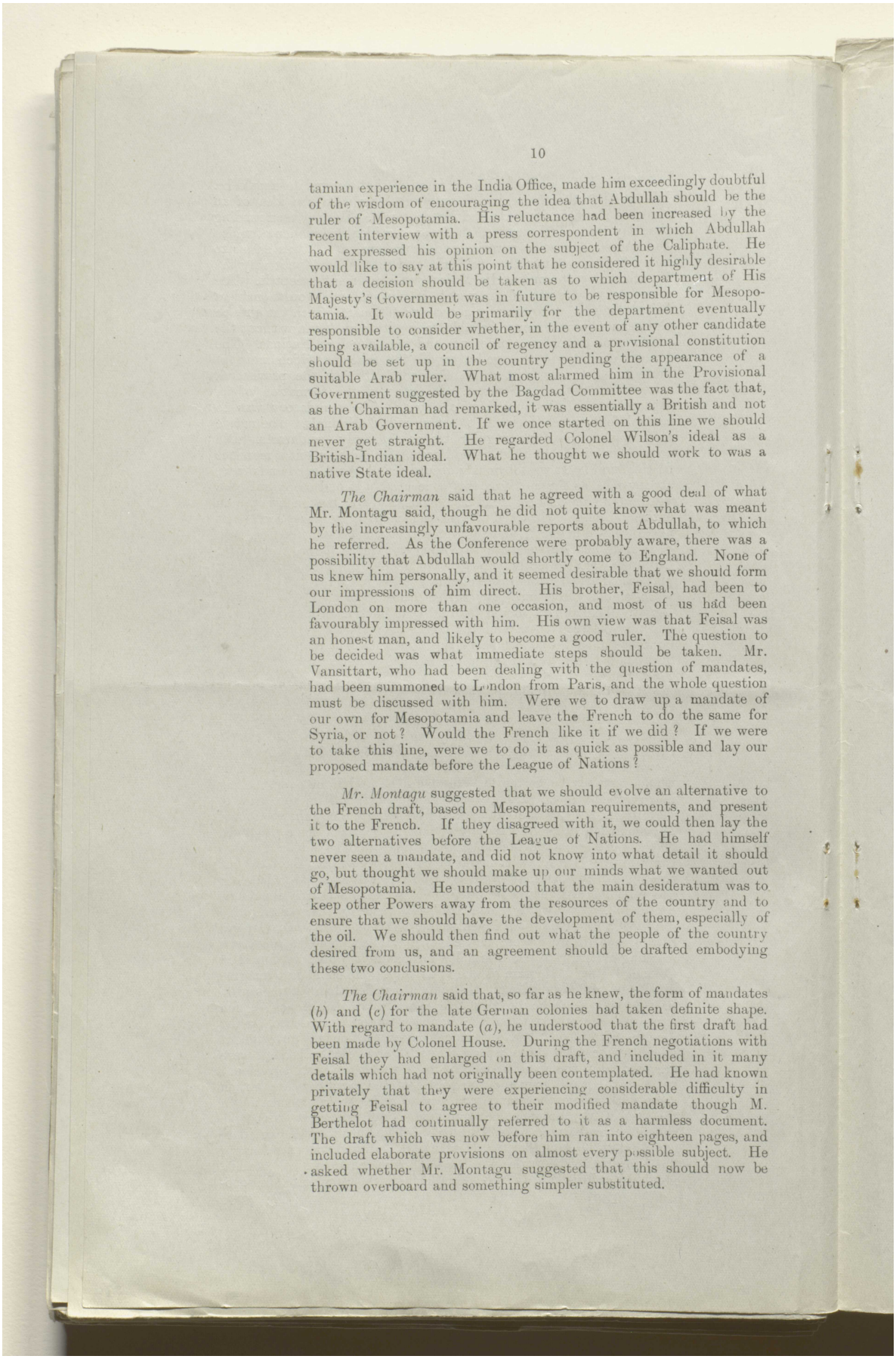



tamian experience in the India Office, made him exceedingly doubtful of the wisdom of encouraging the idea that Abdullah should be the ruler of Mesopotamia. His reluctance had been increased by the recent interview with a press correspondent in which Abdullah had expressed his opinion on the subject of the Caliphate. He would like to say at this point that he considered it highly desirable that a decision should be taken as to which department of His Majesty's Government was in future to be responsible for Mesopotamia. It would be primarily for the department eventually responsible to consider whether, in the event of any other candidate being available, a council of regency and a provisional constitution should be set up in the country pending the appearance of a suitable Arab ruler. What most alarmed him in the Provisional Government suggested by the Bagdad Committee was the fact that, as the Chairman had remarked, it was essentially a British and not an Arab Government. If we once started on this line we should never get straight. He regarded Colonel Wilson's ideal as a British-Indian ideal. What he thought we should work to was a native State ideal.

*The Chairman* said that he agreed with a good deal of what Mr. Montagu said, though he did not quite know what was meant by the increasingly unfavourable reports about Abdullah, to which he referred. As the Conference were probably aware, there was a possibility that Abdullah would shortly come to England. None of us knew him personally, and it seemed desirable that we should form our impressions of him direct. His brother, Feisal, had been to London on more than one occasion, and most of us had been favourably impressed with him. His own view was that Feisal was an honest man, and likely to become a good ruler. The question to be decided was what immediate steps should be taken. Mr. Vansittart, who had been dealing with the question of mandates, had been summoned to London from Paris, and the whole question must be discussed with him. Were we to draw up a mandate of our own for Mesopotamia and leave the French to do the same for Syria, or not? Would the French like it if we did? If we were to take this line, were we to do it as quick as possible and lay our proposed mandate before the League of Nations?

*Mr. Montagu* suggested that we should evolve an alternative to the French draft, based on Mesopotamian requirements, and present it to the French. If they disagreed with it, we could then lay the two alternatives before the League of Nations. He had himself never seen a mandate, and did not know into what detail it should go, but thought we should make up our minds what we wanted out of Mesopotamia. He understood that the main desideratum was to keep other Powers away from the resources of the country and to ensure that we should have the development of them, especially of the oil. We should then find out what the people of the country desired from us, and an agreement should be drafted embodying these two conclusions.

*The Chairman* said that, so far as he knew, the form of mandates (*b*) and (*c*) for the late German colonies had taken definite shape. With regard to mandate (*a*), he understood that the first draft had been made by Colonel House. During the French negotiations with Feisal they had enlarged on this draft, and included in it many details which had not originally been contemplated. He had known privately that they were experiencing considerable difficulty in getting Feisal to agree to their modified mandate though M. Berthelot had continually referred to it as a harmless document. The draft which was now before him ran into eighteen pages, and included elaborate provisions on almost every possible subject. He asked whether Mr. Montagu suggested that this should now be thrown overboard and something simpler substituted.



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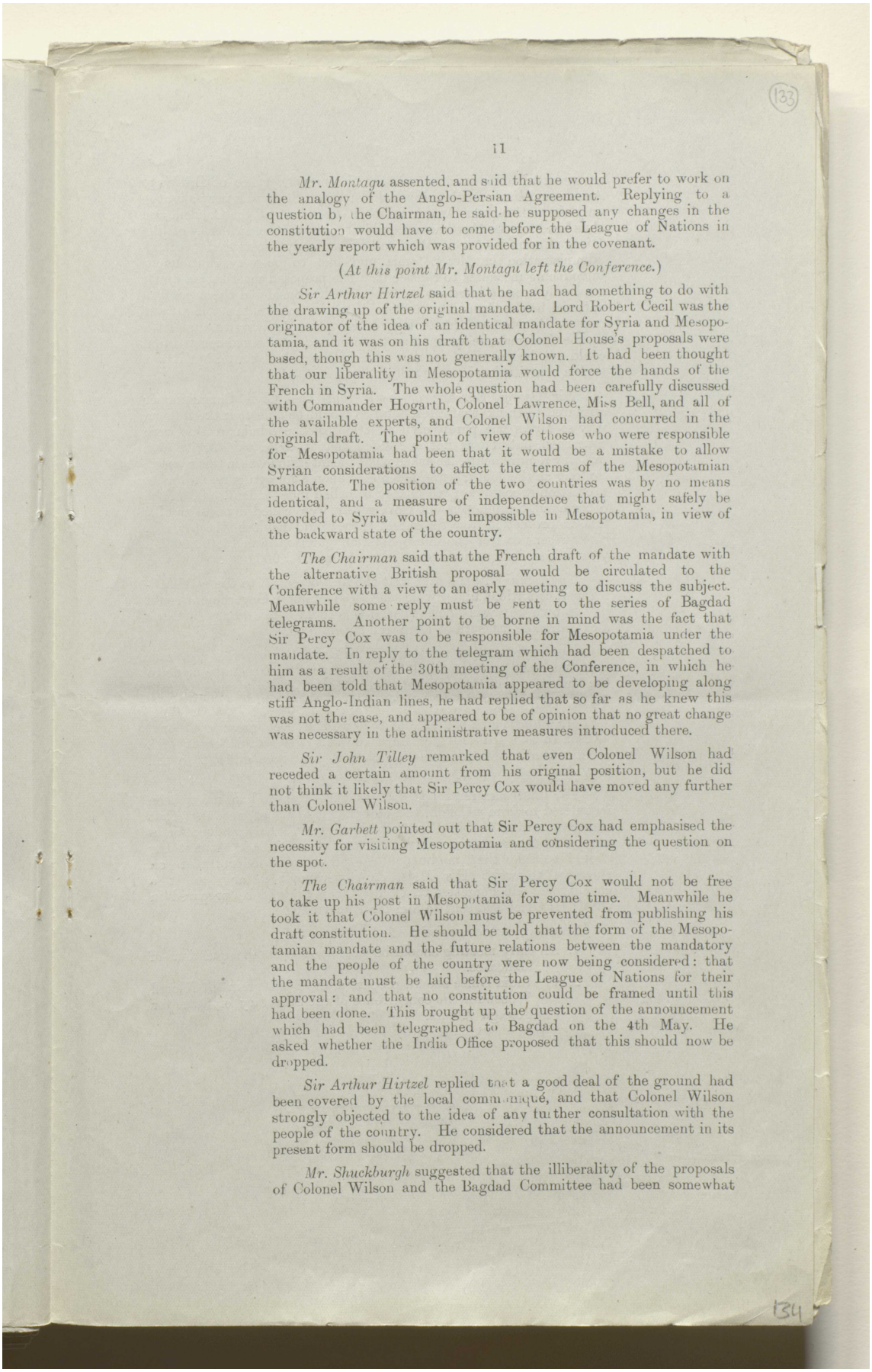



*Mr. Montagu* assented, and said that he would prefer to work on the analogy of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. Replying to a question by the Chairman, he said he supposed any changes in the constitution would have to come before the League of Nations in the yearly report which was provided for in the covenant.

(*At this point Mr. Montagu left the Conference.*)

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that he had had something to do with the drawing up of the original mandate. Lord Robert Cecil was the originator of the idea of an identical mandate for Syria and Mesopotamia, and it was on his draft that Colonel House's proposals were based, though this was not generally known. It had been thought that our liberality in Mesopotamia would force the hands of the French in Syria. The whole question had been carefully discussed with Commander Hogarth, Colonel Lawrence, Miss Bell, and all of the available experts, and Colonel Wilson had concurred in the original draft. The point of view of those who were responsible for Mesopotamia had been that it would be a mistake to allow Syrian considerations to affect the terms of the Mesopotamian mandate. The position of the two countries was by no means identical, and a measure of independence that might safely be accorded to Syria would be impossible in Mesopotamia, in view of the backward state of the country.

*The Chairman* said that the French draft of the mandate with the alternative British proposal would be circulated to the Conference with a view to an early meeting to discuss the subject. Meanwhile some reply must be sent to the series of Bagdad telegrams. Another point to be borne in mind was the fact that Sir Percy Cox was to be responsible for Mesopotamia under the mandate. In reply to the telegram which had been despatched to him as a result of the 30th meeting of the Conference, in which he had been told that Mesopotamia appeared to be developing along stiff Anglo-Indian lines, he had replied that so far as he knew this was not the case, and appeared to be of opinion that no great change was necessary in the administrative measures introduced there.

*Sir John Tilley* remarked that even Colonel Wilson had receded a certain amount from his original position, but he did not think it likely that Sir Percy Cox would have moved any further than Colonel Wilson.

*Mr. Garbett* pointed out that Sir Percy Cox had emphasised the necessity for visiting Mesopotamia and considering the question on the spot.

*The Chairman* said that Sir Percy Cox would not be free to take up his post in Mesopotamia for some time. Meanwhile he took it that Colonel Wilson must be prevented from publishing his draft constitution. He should be told that the form of the Mesopotamian mandate and the future relations between the mandatory and the people of the country were now being considered: that the mandate must be laid before the League of Nations for their approval: and that no constitution could be framed until this had been done. This brought up the question of the announcement which had been telegraphed to Bagdad on the 4th May. He asked whether the India Office proposed that this should now be dropped.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* replied that a good deal of the ground had been covered by the local communiqué, and that Colonel Wilson strongly objected to the idea of any further consultation with the people of the country. He considered that the announcement in its present form should be dropped.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* suggested that the illiberality of the proposals of Colonel Wilson and the Bagdad Committee had been somewhat



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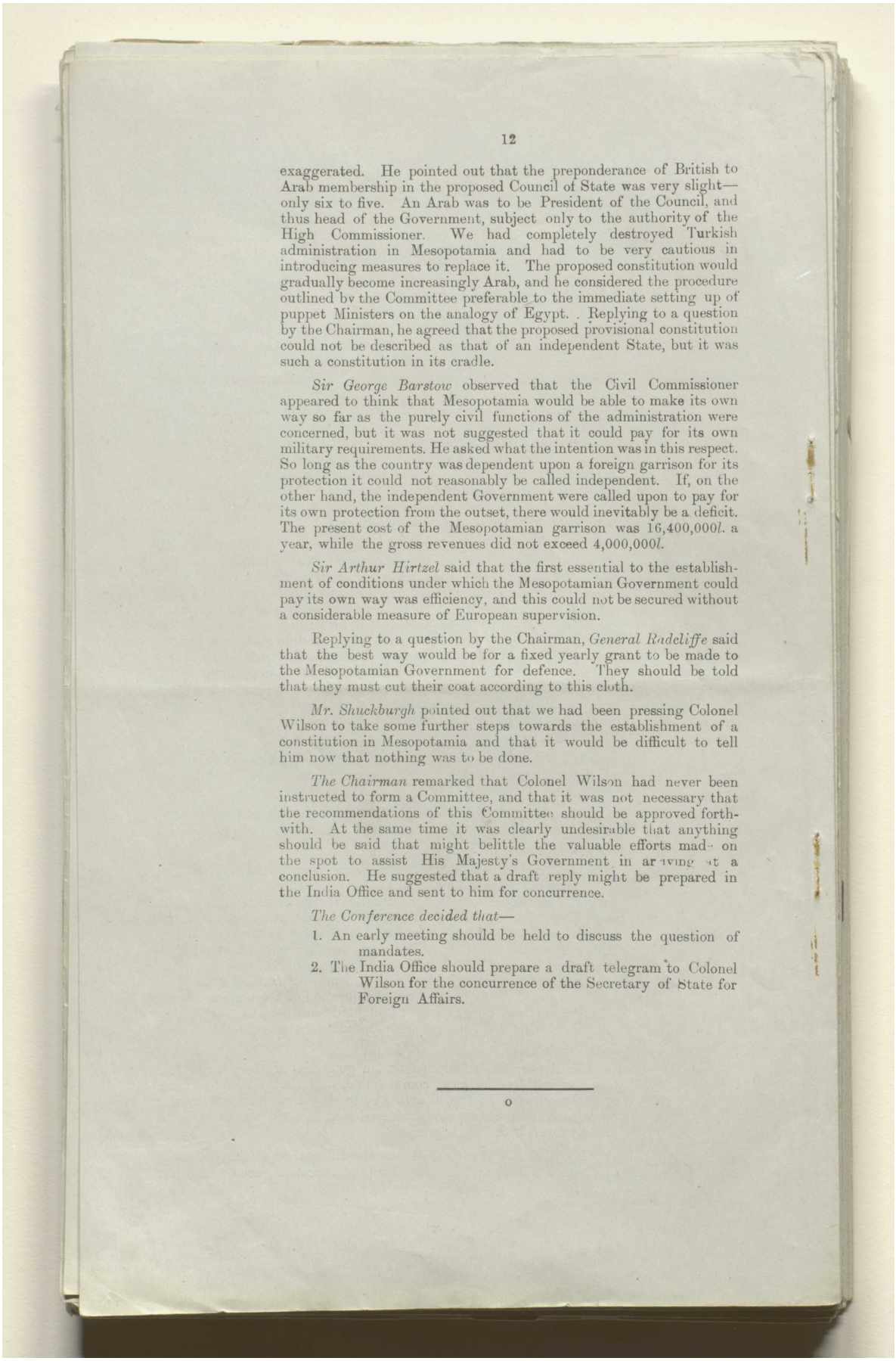



exaggerated. He pointed out that the preponderance of British to Arab membership in the proposed Council of State was very slight—only six to five. An Arab was to be President of the Council, and thus head of the Government, subject only to the authority of the High Commissioner. We had completely destroyed Turkish administration in Mesopotamia and had to be very cautious in introducing measures to replace it. The proposed constitution would gradually become increasingly Arab, and he considered the procedure outlined by the Committee preferable to the immediate setting up of puppet Ministers on the analogy of Egypt. Replying to a question by the Chairman, he agreed that the proposed provisional constitution could not be described as that of an independent State, but it was such a constitution in its cradle.

*Sir George Barstow* observed that the Civil Commissioner appeared to think that Mesopotamia would be able to make its own way so far as the purely civil functions of the administration were concerned, but it was not suggested that it could pay for its own military requirements. He asked what the intention was in this respect. So long as the country was dependent upon a foreign garrison for its protection it could not reasonably be called independent. If, on the other hand, the independent Government were called upon to pay for its own protection from the outset, there would inevitably be a deficit. The present cost of the Mesopotamian garrison was 16,400,000*l.* a year, while the gross revenues did not exceed 4,000,000*l.*

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that the first essential to the establishment of conditions under which the Mesopotamian Government could pay its own way was efficiency, and this could not be secured without a considerable measure of European supervision.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, *General Radcliffe* said that the best way would be for a fixed yearly grant to be made to the Mesopotamian Government for defence. They should be told that they must cut their coat according to this cloth.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* pointed out that we had been pressing Colonel Wilson to take some further steps towards the establishment of a constitution in Mesopotamia and that it would be difficult to tell him now that nothing was to be done.

*The Chairman* remarked that Colonel Wilson had never been instructed to form a Committee, and that it was not necessary that the recommendations of this Committee should be approved forthwith. At the same time it was clearly undesirable that anything should be said that might belittle the valuable efforts made on the spot to assist His Majesty's Government in arriving at a conclusion. He suggested that a draft reply might be prepared in the India Office and sent to him for concurrence.

*The Conference decided that*—

1. An early meeting should be held to discuss the question of mandates.
2. The India Office should prepare a draft telegram to Colonel Wilson for the concurrence of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

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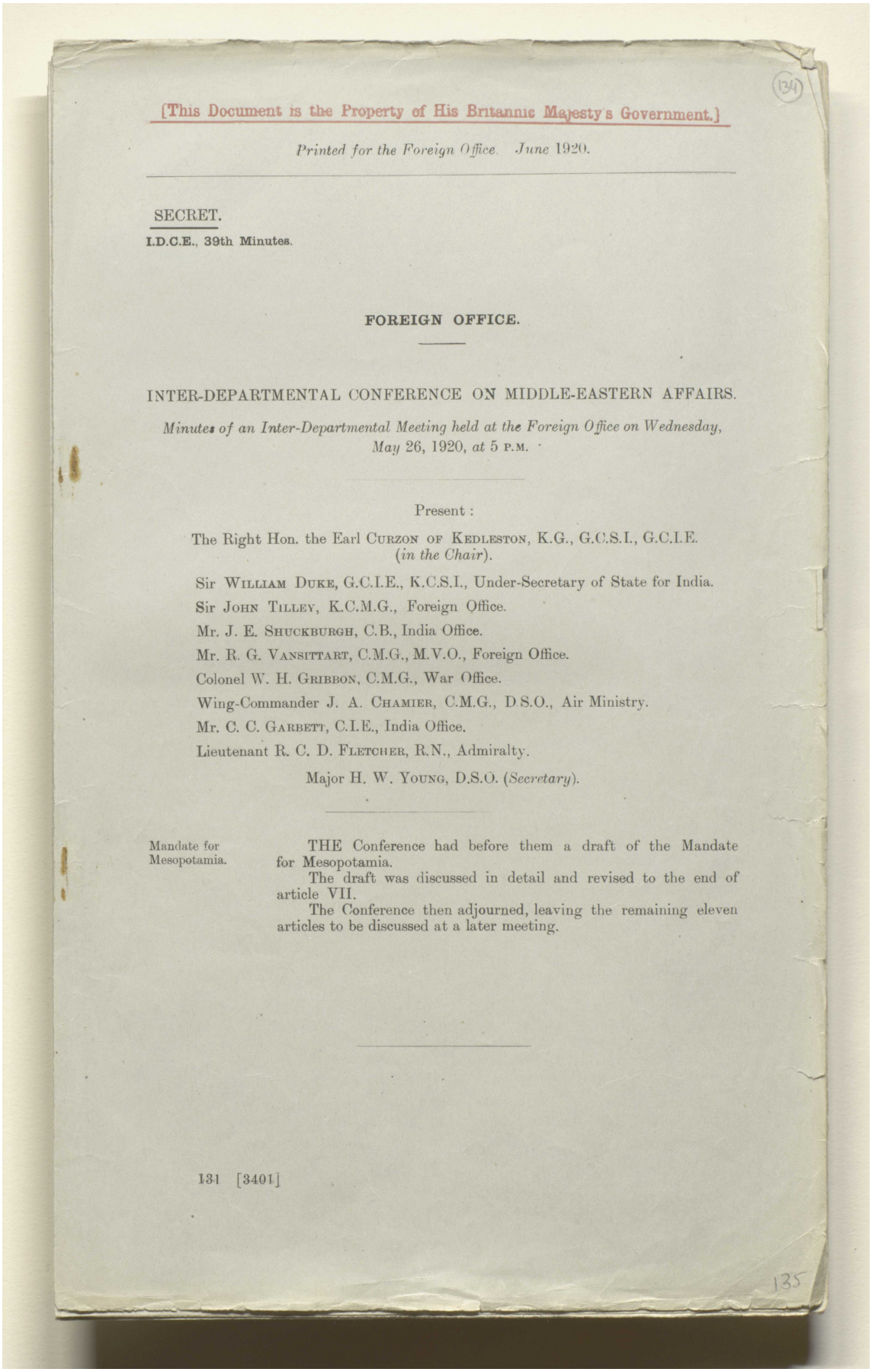

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*Printed for the Foreign Office. June 1920.*

SECRET.

I.D.C.E., 39th Minutes.

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE-EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of an Inter-Departmental Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Wednesday, May 26, 1920, at 5 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Sir WILLIAM DUKE, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Under-Secretary of State for India.
Sir JOHN TILLEY, K.C.M.G., Foreign Office.
Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.
Mr. R. G. VANSITTART, C.M.G., M.V.O., Foreign Office.
Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.
Wing-Commander J. A. CHAMIER, C.M.G., D.S.O., Air Ministry.
Mr. C. C. GARBETT, C.I.E., India Office.
Lieutenant R. C. D. FLETCHER, R.N., Admiralty.
Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

Mandate for Mesopotamia.

THE Conference had before them a draft of the Mandate for Mesopotamia.

The draft was discussed in detail and revised to the end of article VII.

The Conference then adjourned, leaving the remaining eleven articles to be discussed at a later meeting.

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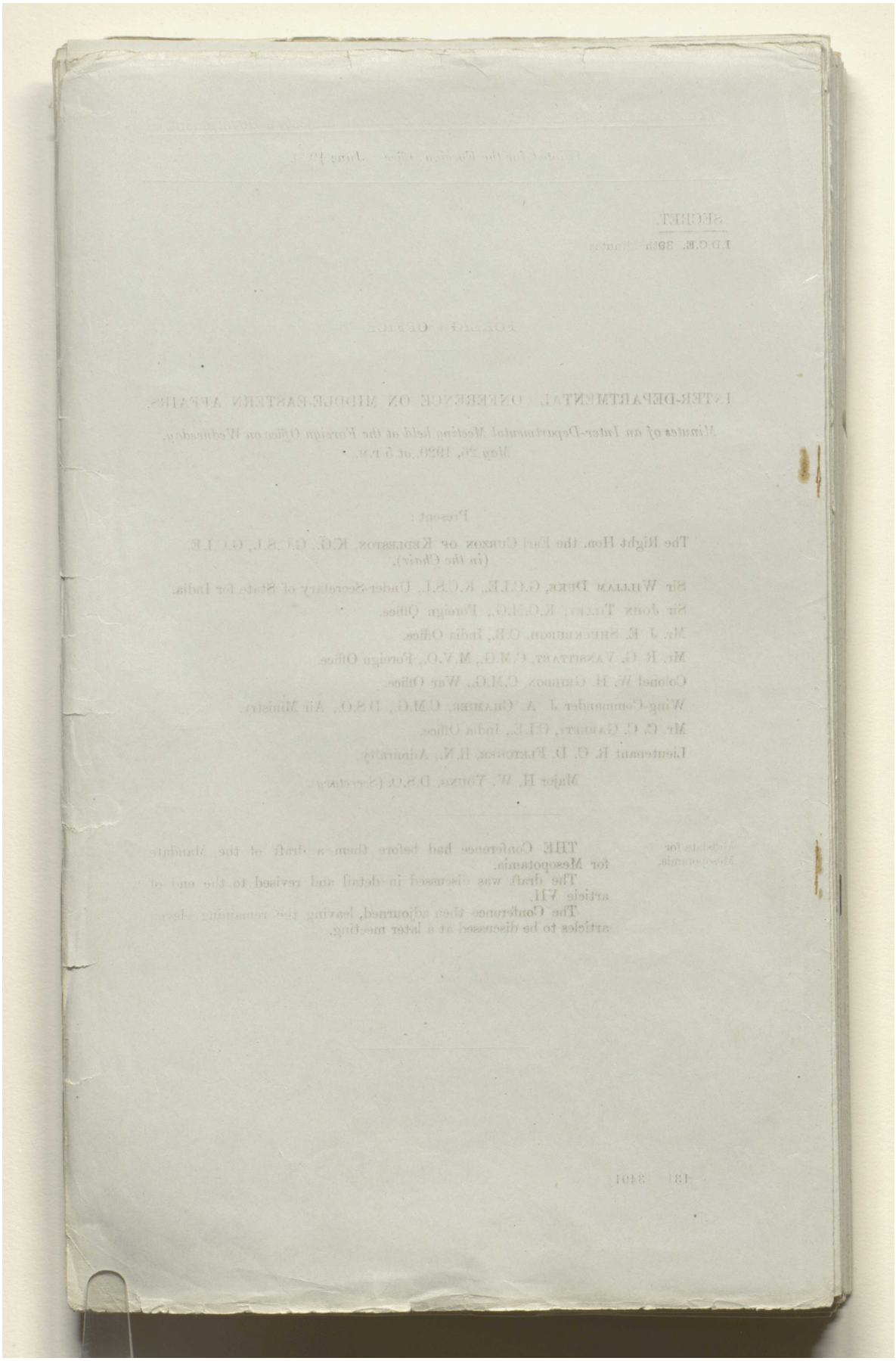



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I.D.C.E., 40th Minutes.

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of an Inter-Departmental Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, June* 1, 1920, *at* 5 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. C. C. GARBETT, C.I.E., India Office.

Sir JOHN TILLEY, K.C.M.G., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. R. G. VANSITTART, C.M.G., M.V.O., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Brevet Colonel C. A. C. GODWIN, C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office.

Lieutenant R. C. D. FLETCHER, R.N., Admiralty.

Commander G. H. LANG, D.S.O., R.N., Admiralty.

Wing Commander J. A. CHAMIER, C.M.G., D.S.O., Air Ministry.

Sir GEORGE BARSTOW, K.C.B., Treasury.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

1. Air Forces in Mesopotamia.

*Wing Commander Chamier* called attention to the telegram of the 15th May from the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, and pointed out certain inaccuracies in the description of the Air Force machines available in Mesopotamia. On the suggestion of Mr. Montagu it was decided that the Air Ministry should write officially through the War Office to the India Office pointing out the correct state of affairs.

2. Future Constitution of Mesopotamia.

*The Chairman* said that at Mr. Montagu's request he proposed, before resuming the discussion on the draft mandate for Mesopotamia, to consider India Office letter of the 20th May on the subject of a possible *ad interim* constitution during the two years before the Organic Law was set up. The proposals of the India Office were a modification of the scheme suggested by Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter's Committee in Baghdad. They also raised the question of the return of Sir Percy Cox to Mesopotamia. Some doubts had been expressed as to the advisability of moving Sir Percy Cox in view of the delicate political situation in Persia. He was of opinion that, in spite of recent events, Sir Percy Cox would be able to leave Persia as soon as Mr. Norman had taken over charge. The Caspian situation had calmed down and the Bolsheviks had apparently no intention of invading Persia; even if they did, the concentration of





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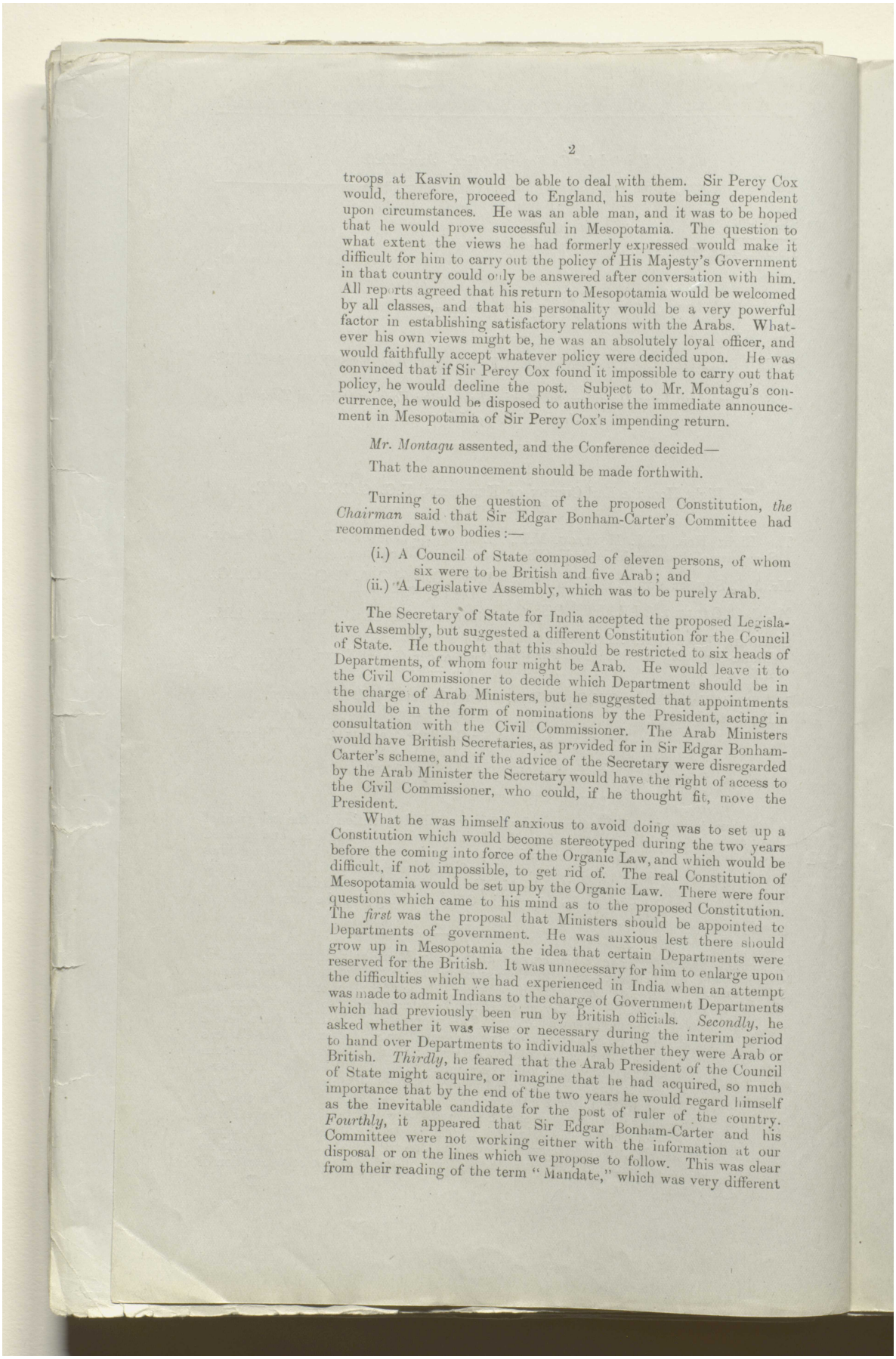



troops at Kasvin would be able to deal with them. Sir Percy Cox would, therefore, proceed to England, his route being dependent upon circumstances. He was an able man, and it was to be hoped that he would prove successful in Mesopotamia. The question to what extent the views he had formerly expressed would make it difficult for him to carry out the policy of His Majesty's Government in that country could only be answered after conversation with him. All reports agreed that his return to Mesopotamia would be welcomed by all classes, and that his personality would be a very powerful factor in establishing satisfactory relations with the Arabs. Whatever his own views might be, he was an absolutely loyal officer, and would faithfully accept whatever policy were decided upon. He was convinced that if Sir Percy Cox found it impossible to carry out that policy, he would decline the post. Subject to Mr. Montagu's concurrence, he would be disposed to authorise the immediate announcement in Mesopotamia of Sir Percy Cox's impending return.

*Mr. Montagu* assented, and the Conference decided—

That the announcement should be made forthwith.

Turning to the question of the proposed Constitution, *the Chairman* said that Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter's Committee had recommended two bodies:—

(i.) A Council of State composed of eleven persons, of whom six were to be British and five Arab; and
(ii.) A Legislative Assembly, which was to be purely Arab.

The Secretary of State for India accepted the proposed Legislative Assembly, but suggested a different Constitution for the Council of State. He thought that this should be restricted to six heads of Departments, of whom four might be Arab. He would leave it to the Civil Commissioner to decide which Department should be in the charge of Arab Ministers, but he suggested that appointments should be in the form of nominations by the President, acting in consultation with the Civil Commissioner. The Arab Ministers would have British Secretaries, as provided for in Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter's scheme, and if the advice of the Secretary were disregarded by the Arab Minister the Secretary would have the right of access to the Civil Commissioner, who could, if he thought fit, move the President.

What he was himself anxious to avoid doing was to set up a Constitution which would become stereotyped during the two years before the coming into force of the Organic Law, and which would be difficult, if not impossible, to get rid of. The real Constitution of Mesopotamia would be set up by the Organic Law. There were four questions which came to his mind as to the proposed Constitution. The *first* was the proposal that Ministers should be appointed to Departments of government. He was anxious lest there should grow up in Mesopotamia the idea that certain Departments were reserved for the British. It was unnecessary for him to enlarge upon the difficulties which we had experienced in India when an attempt was made to admit Indians to the charge of Government Departments which had previously been run by British officials. *Secondly*, he asked whether it was wise or necessary during the interim period to hand over Departments to individuals whether they were Arab or British. *Thirdly*, he feared that the Arab President of the Council of State might acquire, or imagine that he had acquired, so much importance that by the end of the two years he would regard himself as the inevitable candidate for the post of ruler of the country. *Fourthly*, it appeared that Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter and his Committee were not working either with the information at our disposal or on the lines which we propose to follow. This was clear from their reading of the term "Mandate," which was very different



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from that accepted by the Conference. There were three problems which had to be solved :—

1. Administering the country during the period which would elapse before the coming into force of the Organic Law.
2. Discovering the wishes of the inhabitants as to the form that the Organic Law should take.
3. Satisfying them of our sincerity.

He would like an explanation from the India Office representatives whether the constitution proposed in India Office letter of the 20th May fulfilled their three requirements or not. It must be remembered that by establishing a constitution in advance of the Organic Law we might be calling into being an old man of the sea, whom we should have great difficulty in shaking from our shoulders.

*Mr. Montagu* observed that most of what the Chairman said commanded his support, but the objections raised by him appeared to apply more to Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter's original scheme than to the India Office modifications of it. Something had to be done, and, in the absence of an alternative proposal, he thought that the India Office scheme should be accepted. He was strongly opposed to the British majority contemplated in Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter's scheme. Any transfer of departments from British to Arab officials in the future would involve a lessening of this majority and an alteration in the balance of power. The most difficult fence to jump would be that of transition from a British to an Arab majority. It was true that a British majority produced more efficient results, but there was the danger that their very efficiency would stereotype the form of government to an extent which would render a conversion to an Arab majority impossible. Nothing would show our sincerity better than the fact that from the beginning we started with an Arab majority in the Council of State.

He shared the Chairman's objections to stereotyping certain portfolios as Arab and others as British. He wished he could think of some way out of this difficulty. Mr. Shuckburgh and Mr. Garbett had little doubt which two portfolios should be in British hands, but were not inclined to recommend that they should be named. He wished to avoid what was known in the terminology of the India Office as "transferred and reserved subjects." As to the Arab President of the Council of State, he said he would not be a sovereign ruler. He did not see why the Arab President should not develop into an Amir, if he had sufficient authority and power to commend himself to the people and to the Legislative Assembly. If he had not, he could disappear, as recommended by Miss Bell. The difficulty in Mesopotamia was that there was no suitable candidate available for the Amirate. If the first President of the Council of State turned out after two years to be such a candidate, it might be an advantage rather than otherwise.

*The Chairman* asked what was the real object in view. Clearly to draw up the Organic Law. Who was going to do this? The proposed Legislative Assembly would not be in a position to introduce any legislation which was not purely temporary. Was it proposed that they should justify their existence by drawing up the Organic Law? If so, what would the Council of State do? It was true that we had provided for a period of two years in the mandate, but he hoped that it would not take so long as two years to work out the Organic Law, and he did not himself see what useful purpose these two bodies would fulfil during the comparatively short period before the real constitution of Mesopotamia was decided upon. As to the six departments, he was not sure that portfolios were necessary at all. He fully appreciated Mr. Montagu's arguments as to the merits of





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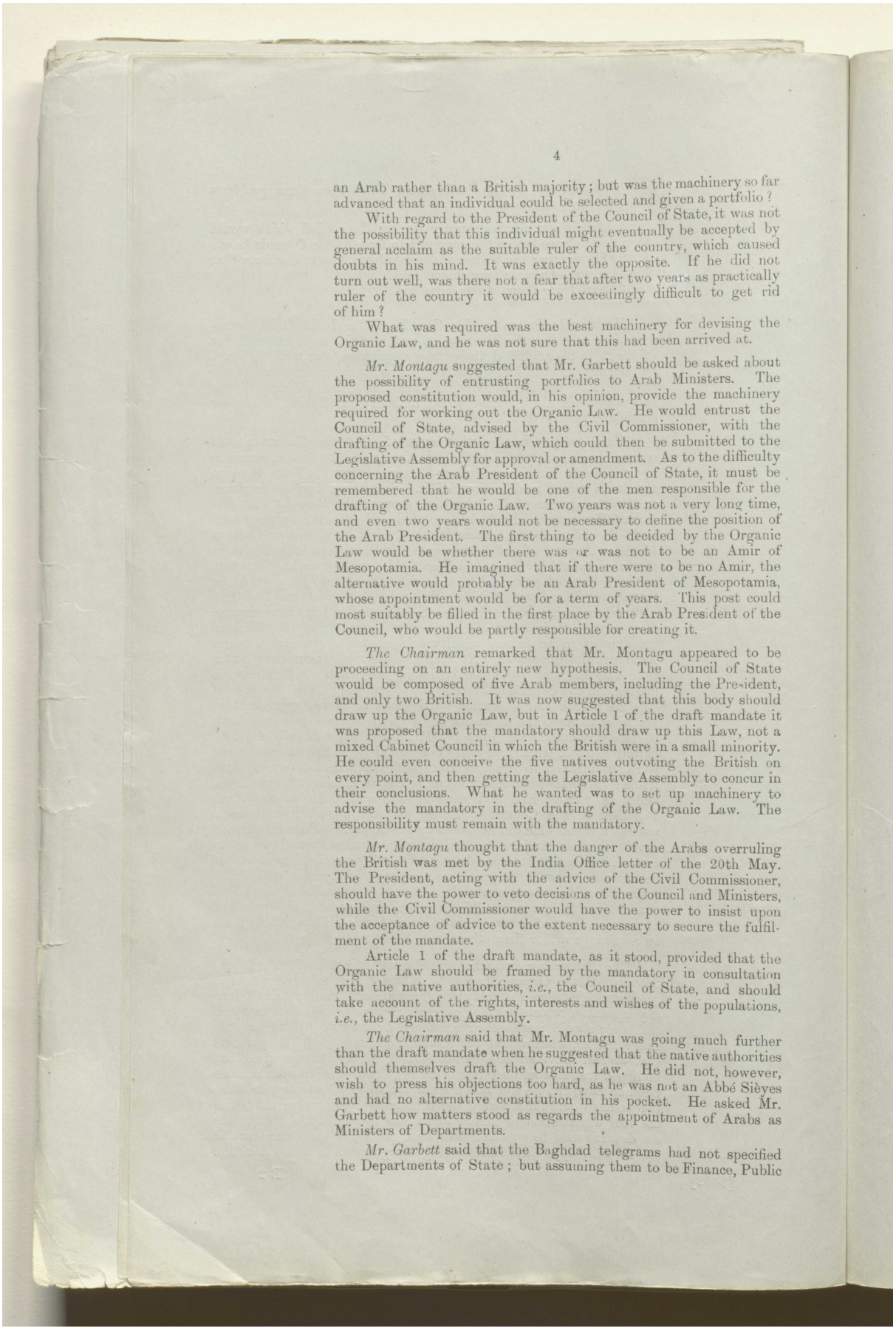



an Arab rather than a British majority; but was the machinery so far advanced that an individual could be selected and given a portfolio?

With regard to the President of the Council of State, it was not the possibility that this individual might eventually be accepted by general acclaim as the suitable ruler of the country, which caused doubts in his mind. It was exactly the opposite. If he did not turn out well, was there not a fear that after two years as practically ruler of the country it would be exceedingly difficult to get rid of him?

What was required was the best machinery for devising the Organic Law, and he was not sure that this had been arrived at.

*Mr. Montagu* suggested that Mr. Garbett should be asked about the possibility of entrusting portfolios to Arab Ministers. The proposed constitution would, in his opinion, provide the machinery required for working out the Organic Law. He would entrust the Council of State, advised by the Civil Commissioner, with the drafting of the Organic Law, which could then be submitted to the Legislative Assembly for approval or amendment. As to the difficulty concerning the Arab President of the Council of State, it must be remembered that he would be one of the men responsible for the drafting of the Organic Law. Two years was not a very long time, and even two years would not be necessary to define the position of the Arab President. The first thing to be decided by the Organic Law would be whether there was or was not to be an Amir of Mesopotamia. He imagined that if there were to be no Amir, the alternative would probably be an Arab President of Mesopotamia, whose appointment would be for a term of years. This post could most suitably be filled in the first place by the Arab President of the Council, who would be partly responsible for creating it.

*The Chairman* remarked that Mr. Montagu appeared to be proceeding on an entirely new hypothesis. The Council of State would be composed of five Arab members, including the President, and only two British. It was now suggested that this body should draw up the Organic Law, but in Article 1 of the draft mandate it was proposed that the mandatory should draw up this Law, not a mixed Cabinet Council in which the British were in a small minority. He could even conceive the five natives outvoting the British on every point, and then getting the Legislative Assembly to concur in their conclusions. What he wanted was to set up machinery to advise the mandatory in the drafting of the Organic Law. The responsibility must remain with the mandatory.

*Mr. Montagu* thought that the danger of the Arabs overruling the British was met by the India Office letter of the 20th May. The President, acting with the advice of the Civil Commissioner, should have the power to veto decisions of the Council and Ministers, while the Civil Commissioner would have the power to insist upon the acceptance of advice to the extent necessary to secure the fulfilment of the mandate.

Article 1 of the draft mandate, as it stood, provided that the Organic Law should be framed by the mandatory in consultation with the native authorities, *i.e.*, the Council of State, and should take account of the rights, interests and wishes of the populations, *i.e.*, the Legislative Assembly.

*The Chairman* said that Mr. Montagu was going much further than the draft mandate when he suggested that the native authorities should themselves draft the Organic Law. He did not, however, wish to press his objections too hard, as he was not an Abbé Sièyes and had no alternative constitution in his pocket. He asked Mr. Garbett how matters stood as regards the appointment of Arabs as Ministers of Departments.

*Mr. Garbett* said that the Baghdad telegrams had not specified the Departments of State; but assuming them to be Finance, Public



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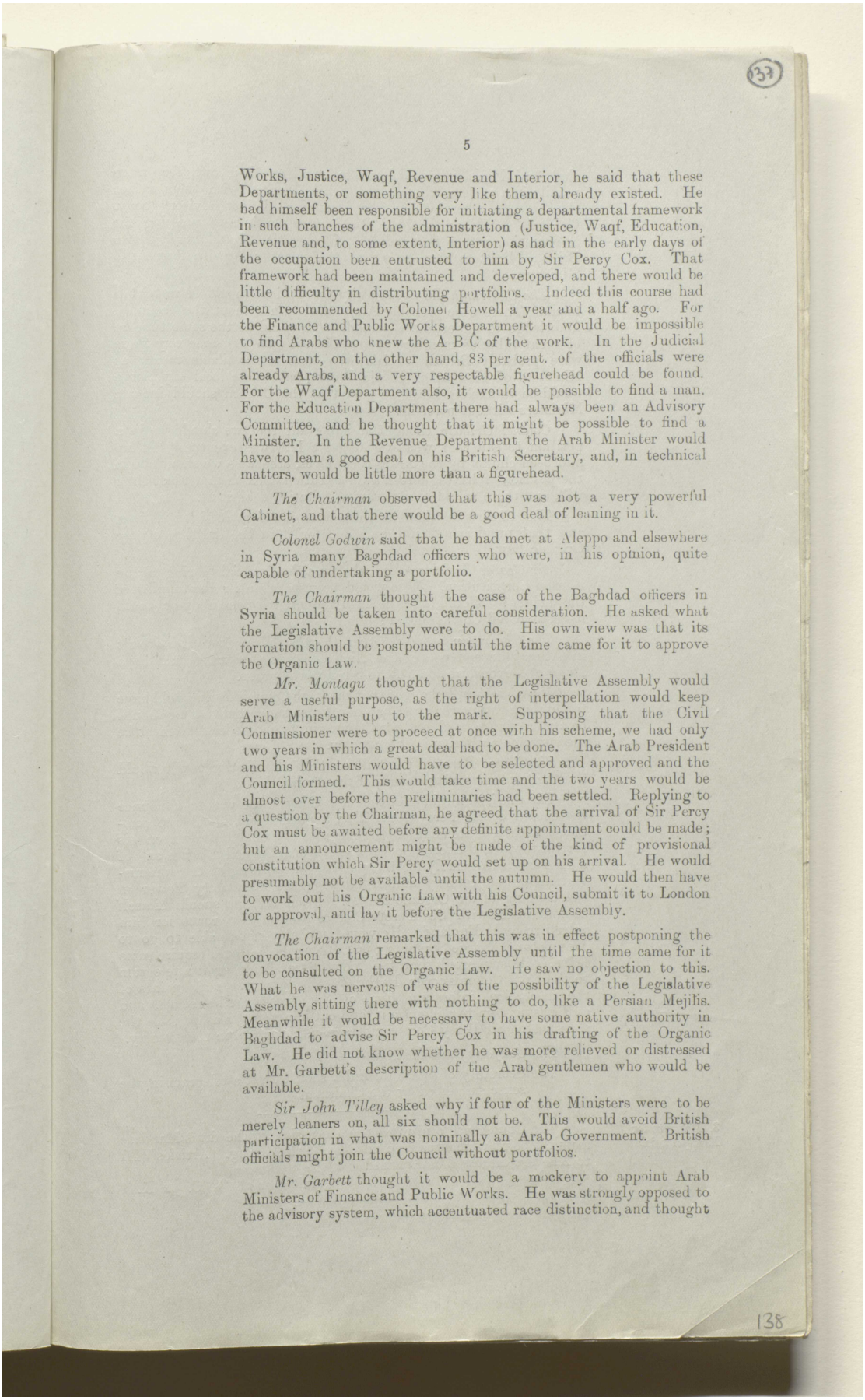



Works, Justice, Waqf, Revenue and Interior, he said that these Departments, or something very like them, already existed. He had himself been responsible for initiating a departmental framework in such branches of the administration (Justice, Waqf, Education, Revenue and, to some extent, Interior) as had in the early days of the occupation been entrusted to him by Sir Percy Cox. That framework had been maintained and developed, and there would be little difficulty in distributing portfolios. Indeed this course had been recommended by Colonel Howell a year and a half ago. For the Finance and Public Works Department it would be impossible to find Arabs who knew the A B C of the work. In the Judicial Department, on the other hand, 83 per cent. of the officials were already Arabs, and a very respectable figurehead could be found. For the Waqf Department also, it would be possible to find a man. For the Education Department there had always been an Advisory Committee, and he thought that it might be possible to find a Minister. In the Revenue Department the Arab Minister would have to lean a good deal on his British Secretary, and, in technical matters, would be little more than a figurehead.

*The Chairman* observed that this was not a very powerful Cabinet, and that there would be a good deal of leaning in it.

*Colonel Godwin* said that he had met at Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria many Baghdad officers who were, in his opinion, quite capable of undertaking a portfolio.

*The Chairman* thought the case of the Baghdad officers in Syria should be taken into careful consideration. He asked what the Legislative Assembly were to do. His own view was that its formation should be postponed until the time came for it to approve the Organic Law.

*Mr. Montagu* thought that the Legislative Assembly would serve a useful purpose, as the right of interpellation would keep Arab Ministers up to the mark. Supposing that the Civil Commissioner were to proceed at once with his scheme, we had only two years in which a great deal had to be done. The Arab President and his Ministers would have to be selected and approved and the Council formed. This would take time and the two years would be almost over before the preliminaries had been settled. Replying to a question by the Chairman, he agreed that the arrival of Sir Percy Cox must be awaited before any definite appointment could be made; but an announcement might be made of the kind of provisional constitution which Sir Percy would set up on his arrival. He would presumably not be available until the autumn. He would then have to work out his Organic Law with his Council, submit it to London for approval, and lay it before the Legislative Assembly.

*The Chairman* remarked that this was in effect postponing the convocation of the Legislative Assembly until the time came for it to be consulted on the Organic Law. He saw no objection to this. What he was nervous of was of the possibility of the Legislative Assembly sitting there with nothing to do, like a Persian Mejilis. Meanwhile it would be necessary to have some native authority in Baghdad to advise Sir Percy Cox in his drafting of the Organic Law. He did not know whether he was more relieved or distressed at Mr. Garbett's description of the Arab gentlemen who would be available.

*Sir John Tilley* asked why if four of the Ministers were to be merely leaners on, all six should not be. This would avoid British participation in what was nominally an Arab Government. British officials might join the Council without portfolios.

*Mr. Garbett* thought it would be a mockery to appoint Arab Ministers of Finance and Public Works. He was strongly opposed to the advisory system, which accentuated race distinction, and thought





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that Arab Ministers would learn to stand on their own feet more readily in a system whereby the British worked with them rather than in one whereby they were kept as a distinct advisory body. Generals Nuri and Haddad Pasha were continually pressing for co-operation rather than advice. Co-operation would result if two British Ministers were to sit at the same table with four Arab Ministers.

*The Chairman* did not see why the Cabinet should be restricted to six. There were probably Arab gentlemen without the technical knowledge to undertake a portfolio who would at the same time be of great value as members of the Council. In the same way there were probably British officials who were not available to act as Ministers of Finance or Public Works, but whose local experience would be valuable. He suggested that the Council should include Ministers without portfolio.

*Colonel Gribbon* thought it important that we should be in a position to say that whatever Organic Law was eventually set up had been chosen by the Arabs themselves, otherwise we should be in the position of having forced a Constitution upon them against their will, and there would be a continual agitation against us.

*The Chairman* thought there was considerable force in this, and that provision should be made for it in the drafting of the Organic Law.

*Sir George Barstow* asked what was the financial bearing of the interim Constitution. Who would be responsible for the framing of the budget? Would it be the six Ministers sitting as a body or would it be the Civil Commissioner?

*The Chairman* asked whether the Council of State were to sit in entire independence of the High Commissioner who would be a Duke of Devonshire to an Arab Sir Robert Borden.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* thought that the High Commissioner would have to be given full powers. It had never been suggested that he should be a mere figure head, and for the interim period at least he must be the supreme authority in the country.

*Sir George Barstow* pointed out that all effective power would thus be taken out of the hands of the Arab Cabinet.

*The Chairman* said that the first thing to do was to announce the return of Sir Percy Cox. This announcement should be combined with a statement of the steps that would be taken on his arrival towards the formation of a provisional Council of State and of a Legislative Assembly for the purpose of assisting in the administration of the country and of advising the Mandatory Power in the forming of an Organic Law. He said that he should himself communicate with Sir Percy Cox as to the best route for him to return by to England. He would probably not be able to go to Mesopotamia before September or October, as he would require some leave. He suggested that the India Office should draft a telegram to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, embodying the main points of the discussion, informing him of Sir Percy Cox's return, and authorising him to announce it, and outlining so far as possible the steps which Sir Percy Cox would take on his arrival in the country.

*The Conference decided that—*

The Secretary of State for India should draft a telegram in the sense suggested by the Chairman.

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3. Mandate for Mesopotamia.

The Conference continued the discussion of the draft Mandate from the point which was reached at the 39th Meeting. Articles VIII to XI were discussed and revised.

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I.D.C.E., 41st Minutes.

## FOREIGN OFFICE.

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of an Inter-Departmental Meeting held at the Foreign Office on Wednesday, June* 16, 1920, *at* 5 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Mr. C. C. GARBETT, C.I.E., India Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel G. L. PEPYS, D.S.O., India Office.

Brevet Colonel C. A. C. GODWIN, C.M.G., D.S.O., War Office.

Wing Commander J. A. CHAMIER, C.M.G., D.S.O., Air Ministry.

Sir JOHN TILLEY, K.C.M.G., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O. (*Secretary*).

1. Anglo-Persian Agreement.

*Mr. Montagu* said that he wished to raise a preliminary point before the Conference considered the question before them. The Secretary of State for War had recently circulated to the Cabinet a whole series of papers on the subject of the Middle East. Among these was one by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dated the 6th of June, in which the following passage occurred:—

> "At the same time it is only fair to point out that the Anglo-Persian Agreement was negotiated last year without any previous reference to the War Office, and therefore the General Staff were given no opportunity of expressing an opinion as to military commitments thereby involved or as to the possibility of meeting them."

He had been very much surprised to see this. The Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs became farcical if departments who were free to send, and did in fact send, at their discretion Cabinet Ministers, soldiers and officials to its meetings allowed statements of this kind to be circulated to the Cabinet. He called attention to the 18th Minutes of the Conference at which the draft Anglo-Persian Agreement was discussed article by article, and at which the War Office were represented by Lieutenant-Colonel Gribbon. He thought that a record should be made in the Minutes of the Conference, and that the position should be explained to the Cabinet.

*The Chairman* said that he entirely concurred in the view of the Secretary of State for India. The position was even worse than







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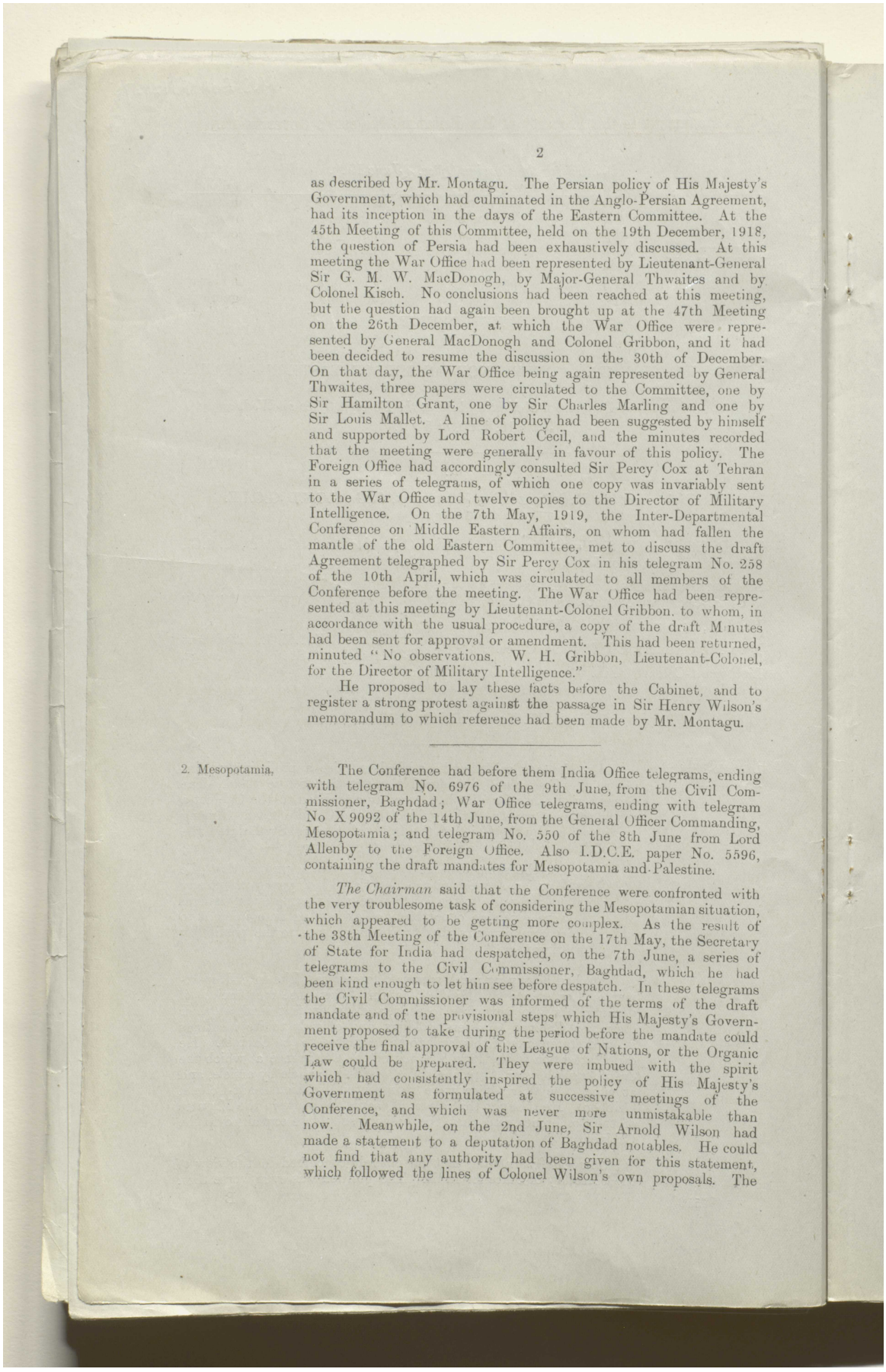



as described by Mr. Montagu. The Persian policy of His Majesty's Government, which had culminated in the Anglo-Persian Agreement, had its inception in the days of the Eastern Committee. At the 45th Meeting of this Committee, held on the 19th December, 1918, the question of Persia had been exhaustively discussed. At this meeting the War Office had been represented by Lieutenant-General Sir G. M. W. MacDonogh, by Major-General Thwaites and by Colonel Kisch. No conclusions had been reached at this meeting, but the question had again been brought up at the 47th Meeting on the 26th December, at which the War Office were represented by General MacDonogh and Colonel Gribbon, and it had been decided to resume the discussion on the 30th of December. On that day, the War Office being again represented by General Thwaites, three papers were circulated to the Committee, one by Sir Hamilton Grant, one by Sir Charles Marling and one by Sir Louis Mallet. A line of policy had been suggested by himself and supported by Lord Robert Cecil, and the minutes recorded that the meeting were generally in favour of this policy. The Foreign Office had accordingly consulted Sir Percy Cox at Tehran in a series of telegrams, of which one copy was invariably sent to the War Office and twelve copies to the Director of Military Intelligence. On the 7th May, 1919, the Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, on whom had fallen the mantle of the old Eastern Committee, met to discuss the draft Agreement telegraphed by Sir Percy Cox in his telegram No. 258 of the 10th April, which was circulated to all members of the Conference before the meeting. The War Office had been represented at this meeting by Lieutenant-Colonel Gribbon, to whom, in accordance with the usual procedure, a copy of the draft Minutes had been sent for approval or amendment. This had been returned, minuted "No observations. W. H. Gribbon, Lieutenant-Colonel, for the Director of Military Intelligence."

He proposed to lay these facts before the Cabinet, and to register a strong protest against the passage in Sir Henry Wilson's memorandum to which reference had been made by Mr. Montagu.

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2. Mesopotamia.

The Conference had before them India Office telegrams, ending with telegram No. 6976 of the 9th June, from the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad; War Office telegrams, ending with telegram No X 9092 of the 14th June, from the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia; and telegram No. 550 of the 8th June from Lord Allenby to the Foreign Office. Also I.D.C.E. paper No. 5596, containing the draft mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine.

*The Chairman* said that the Conference were confronted with the very troublesome task of considering the Mesopotamian situation, which appeared to be getting more complex. As the result of the 38th Meeting of the Conference on the 17th May, the Secretary of State for India had despatched, on the 7th June, a series of telegrams to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, which he had been kind enough to let him see before despatch. In these telegrams the Civil Commissioner was informed of the terms of the draft mandate and of the provisional steps which His Majesty's Government proposed to take during the period before the mandate could receive the final approval of the League of Nations, or the Organic Law could be prepared. They were imbued with the spirit which had consistently inspired the policy of His Majesty's Government as formulated at successive meetings of the Conference, and which was never more unmistakable than now. Meanwhile, on the 2nd June, Sir Arnold Wilson had made a statement to a deputation of Baghdad notables. He could not find that any authority had been given for this statement, which followed the lines of Colonel Wilson's own proposals. The



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Conference had now to consider the later telegrams from Baghdad. Of these the most important was telegram No. 6948 of the 9th June, in which Colonel Wilson spoke of the general political unrest in Mesopotamia and of the weakness of our forces in that country. He expressed the opinion that effect could not be given to the mandate without risk of disaster, unless His Majesty's Government were prepared to maintain for the next two years at least as many troops in that country as they now had. He talked of regaining possession of Dar-as-Zor up to Rakka inclusive, and considered that unless this town were included in Mesopotamia we should have to keep more and not less troops than we now had. He proceeded to make a series of astounding statements in paragraph IX of his telegram, where he said that we could not maintain our position as mandatory by a policy of conciliating extremists, and that we must be prepared, *regardless of the League of Nations*, to go very slowly with constitutional and democratic institutions, the application of which to Eastern countries had been attempted of late years with so small a degree of success. He concluded by saying that there were only two alternatives: either to follow the policy outlined by himself, or to evacuate Mesopotamia. He appeared to be prepared himself to adopt and carry out either of these two contradictory policies. In a later telegram, despatched on the same day, No. 6976, Colonel Wilson suggested the despatch to England of a deputation of eight persons, who would no doubt be carefully selected by himself. In an earlier telegram, No. 6791 of the 7th June, he suggested that Sir Percy Cox should be smuggled *incognito* through Mesopotamia, and that no good purpose would be served by his seeing the extremists in Baghdad.

He could only say that these telegrams left him with an unpleasant impression of Colonel Wilson's incapacity to deal with the situation. He must ask the Secretary of State for India to say whether he considered that the policy on which they were in perfect agreement, and which they would have to defend against a powerful attack in the Cabinet on the following day, was likely to be carried into effect so long as Sir Arnold Wilson remained in political control in Mesopotamia.

*Mr. Montagu* prefaced his remarks by informing the Conference that he had circulated to the Cabinet the two Baghdad telegrams of the 9th June. He reminded them that the announcement authorised in India Office telegrams of the 7th June had not been considered by the Cabinet, and in view of the larger questions raised in these telegrams, which could only be decided by the Cabinet, he had thought it his duty to place them in possession of Colonel Wilson's views, though he was quite prepared to express his own disagreement with them. He wished also to mention the further point that it had been hoped that Colonel Wilson's hands would have been strengthened by the India Office telegrams of the 7th June, but that Colonel Wilson did not seem to be of this opinion. He had not been able to consult the Chairman on the previous day, and, as the matter appeared to him of great urgency, he had telegraphed to Sir Arnold Wilson, informing him that in view of his very grave telegrams the publication of the announcement should for the present be postponed. As he understood that Sir Percy Cox was expected to arrive in Baghdad on the 18th June, he had also directed that he should be consulted.

Referring to the Chairman's question, he said that he had never held the view that Colonel Wilson, with his marked inclination to concentrate power in his own hands, could fairly be asked to carry out the policy of His Majesty's Government in Mesopotamia. He could not, however, come to England until Sir Percy Cox had taken over, as there was no one to take his place. He had consulted Colonel Wilson privately on this point, and had received a reply to







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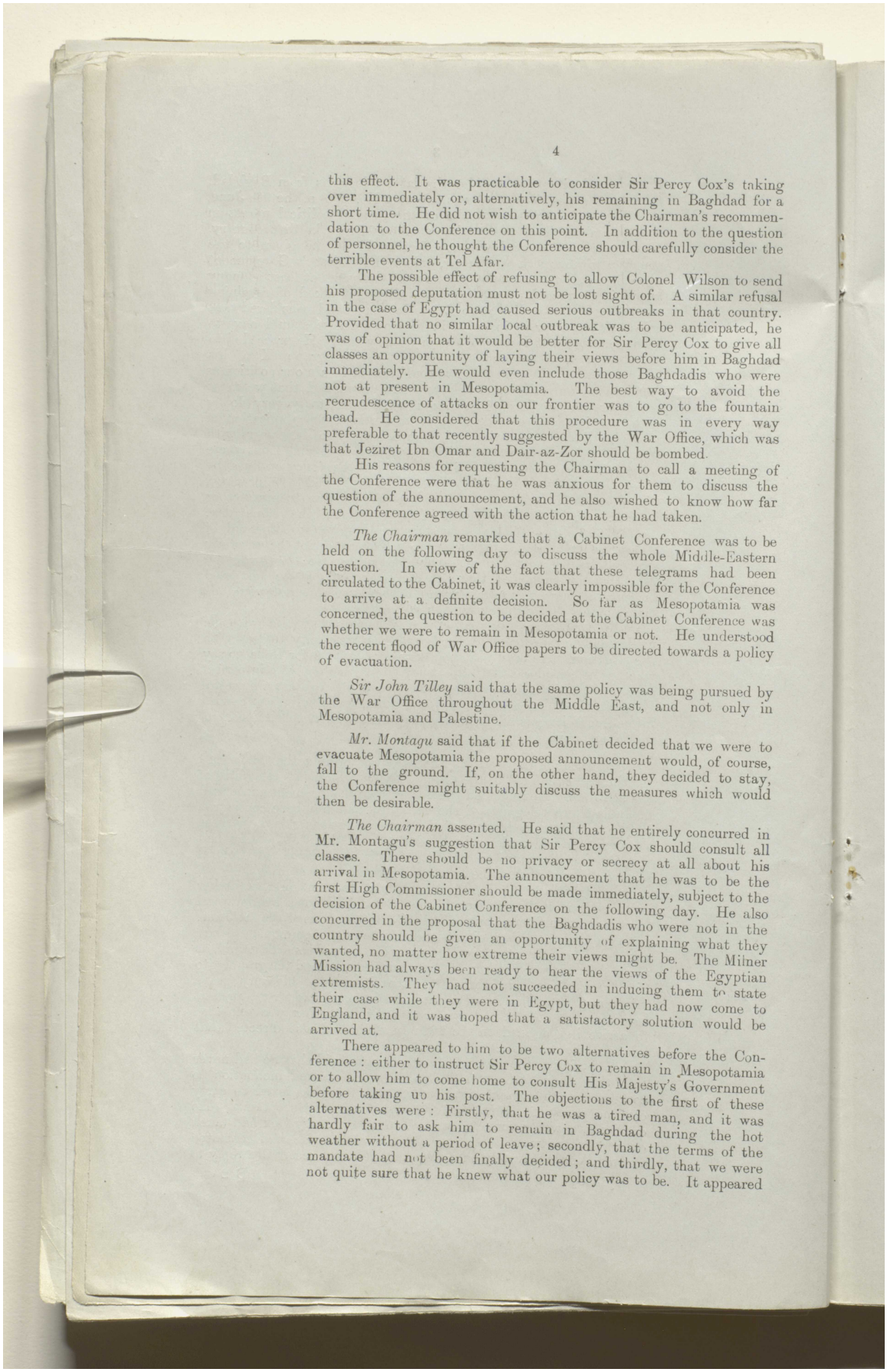



this effect. It was practicable to consider Sir Percy Cox's taking over immediately or, alternatively, his remaining in Baghdad for a short time. He did not wish to anticipate the Chairman's recommendation to the Conference on this point. In addition to the question of personnel, he thought the Conference should carefully consider the terrible events at Tel Afar.

The possible effect of refusing to allow Colonel Wilson to send his proposed deputation must not be lost sight of. A similar refusal in the case of Egypt had caused serious outbreaks in that country. Provided that no similar local outbreak was to be anticipated, he was of opinion that it would be better for Sir Percy Cox to give all classes an opportunity of laying their views before him in Baghdad immediately. He would even include those Baghdadis who were not at present in Mesopotamia. The best way to avoid the recrudescence of attacks on our frontier was to go to the fountain head. He considered that this procedure was in every way preferable to that recently suggested by the War Office, which was that Jeziret Ibn Omar and Dair-az-Zor should be bombed.

His reasons for requesting the Chairman to call a meeting of the Conference were that he was anxious for them to discuss the question of the announcement, and he also wished to know how far the Conference agreed with the action that he had taken.

*The Chairman* remarked that a Cabinet Conference was to be held on the following day to discuss the whole Middle-Eastern question. In view of the fact that these telegrams had been circulated to the Cabinet, it was clearly impossible for the Conference to arrive at a definite decision. So far as Mesopotamia was concerned, the question to be decided at the Cabinet Conference was whether we were to remain in Mesopotamia or not. He understood the recent flood of War Office papers to be directed towards a policy of evacuation.

*Sir John Tilley* said that the same policy was being pursued by the War Office throughout the Middle East, and not only in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

*Mr. Montagu* said that if the Cabinet decided that we were to evacuate Mesopotamia the proposed announcement would, of course, fall to the ground. If, on the other hand, they decided to stay, the Conference might suitably discuss the measures which would then be desirable.

*The Chairman* assented. He said that he entirely concurred in Mr. Montagu's suggestion that Sir Percy Cox should consult all classes. There should be no privacy or secrecy at all about his arrival in Mesopotamia. The announcement that he was to be the first High Commissioner should be made immediately, subject to the decision of the Cabinet Conference on the following day. He also concurred in the proposal that the Baghdadis who were not in the country should be given an opportunity of explaining what they wanted, no matter how extreme their views might be. The Milner Mission had always been ready to hear the views of the Egyptian extremists. They had not succeeded in inducing them to state their case while they were in Egypt, but they had now come to England, and it was hoped that a satisfactory solution would be arrived at.

There appeared to him to be two alternatives before the Conference: either to instruct Sir Percy Cox to remain in Mesopotamia or to allow him to come home to consult His Majesty's Government before taking up his post. The objections to the first of these alternatives were: Firstly, that he was a tired man, and it was hardly fair to ask him to remain in Baghdad during the hot weather without a period of leave; secondly, that the terms of the mandate had not been finally decided; and thirdly, that we were not quite sure that he knew what our policy was to be. It appeared



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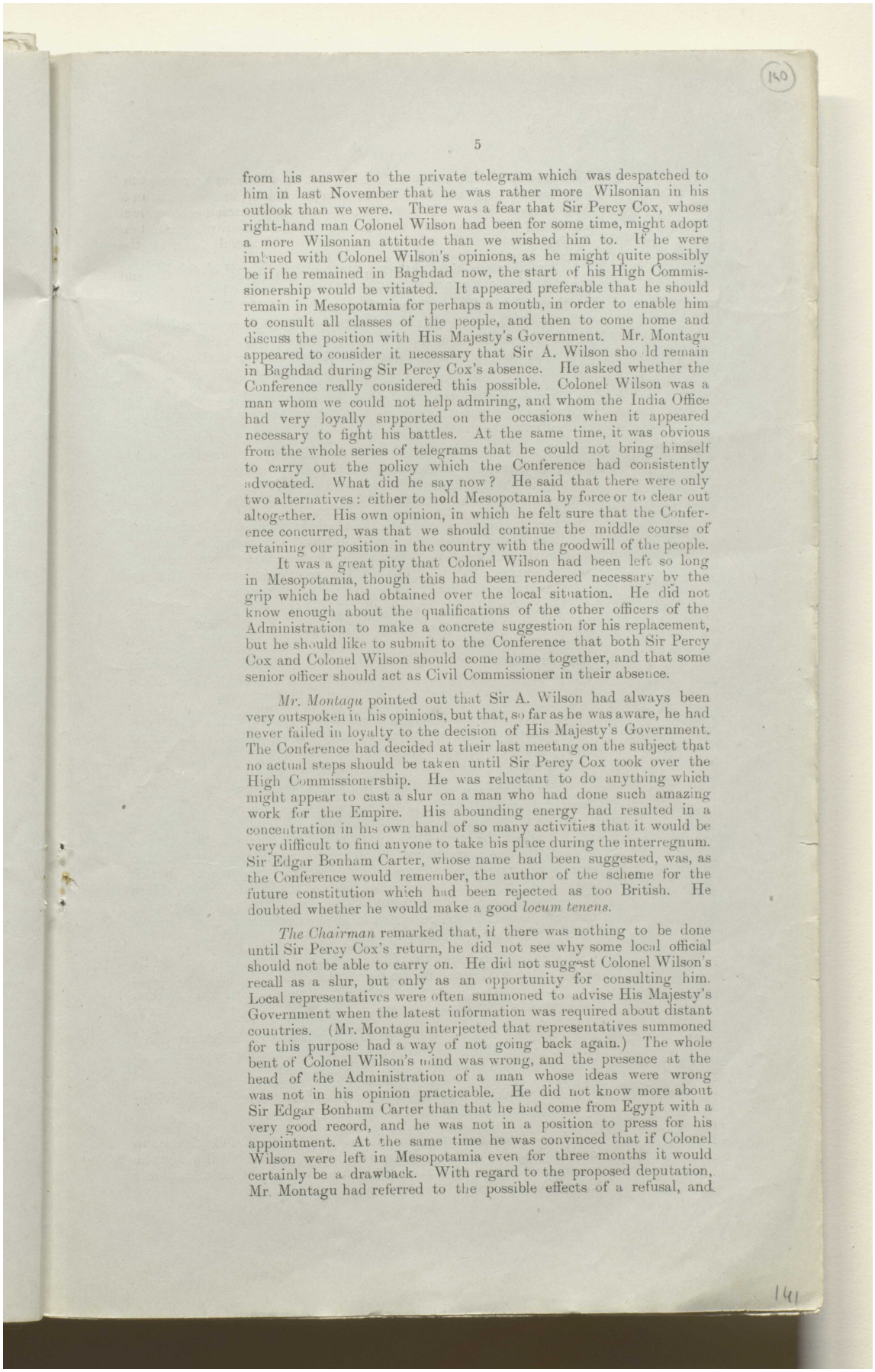



from his answer to the private telegram which was despatched to him in last November that he was rather more Wilsonian in his outlook than we were. There was a fear that Sir Percy Cox, whose right-hand man Colonel Wilson had been for some time, might adopt a more Wilsonian attitude than we wished him to. If he were imbued with Colonel Wilson's opinions, as he might quite possibly be if he remained in Baghdad now, the start of his High Commissionership would be vitiated. It appeared preferable that he should remain in Mesopotamia for perhaps a month, in order to enable him to consult all classes of the people, and then to come home and discuss the position with His Majesty's Government. Mr. Montagu appeared to consider it necessary that Sir A. Wilson sho ld remain in Baghdad during Sir Percy Cox's absence. He asked whether the Conference really considered this possible. Colonel Wilson was a man whom we could not help admiring, and whom the India Office had very loyally supported on the occasions when it appeared necessary to fight his battles. At the same time, it was obvious from the whole series of telegrams that he could not bring himself to carry out the policy which the Conference had consistently advocated. What did he say now? He said that there were only two alternatives: either to hold Mesopotamia by force or to clear out altogether. His own opinion, in which he felt sure that the Conference concurred, was that we should continue the middle course of retaining our position in the country with the goodwill of the people.

It was a great pity that Colonel Wilson had been left so long in Mesopotamia, though this had been rendered necessary by the grip which he had obtained over the local situation. He did not know enough about the qualifications of the other officers of the Administration to make a concrete suggestion for his replacement, but he should like to submit to the Conference that both Sir Percy Cox and Colonel Wilson should come home together, and that some senior officer should act as Civil Commissioner in their absence.

*Mr. Montagu* pointed out that Sir A. Wilson had always been very outspoken in his opinions, but that, so far as he was aware, he had never failed in loyalty to the decision of His Majesty's Government. The Conference had decided at their last meeting on the subject that no actual steps should be taken until Sir Percy Cox took over the High Commissionership. He was reluctant to do anything which might appear to cast a slur on a man who had done such amazing work for the Empire. His abounding energy had resulted in a concentration in his own hand of so many activities that it would be very difficult to find anyone to take his place during the interregnum. Sir Edgar Bonham Carter, whose name had been suggested, was, as the Conference would remember, the author of the scheme for the future constitution which had been rejected as too British. He doubted whether he would make a good *locum tenens*.

*The Chairman* remarked that, if there was nothing to be done until Sir Percy Cox's return, he did not see why some local official should not be able to carry on. He did not suggest Colonel Wilson's recall as a slur, but only as an opportunity for consulting him. Local representatives were often summoned to advise His Majesty's Government when the latest information was required about distant countries. (Mr. Montagu interjected that representatives summoned for this purpose had a way of not going back again.) The whole bent of Colonel Wilson's mind was wrong, and the presence at the head of the Administration of a man whose ideas were wrong was not in his opinion practicable. He did not know more about Sir Edgar Bonham Carter than that he had come from Egypt with a very good record, and he was not in a position to press for his appointment. At the same time he was convinced that if Colonel Wilson were left in Mesopotamia even for three months it would certainly be a drawback. With regard to the proposed deputation, Mr. Montagu had referred to the possible effects of a refusal, and





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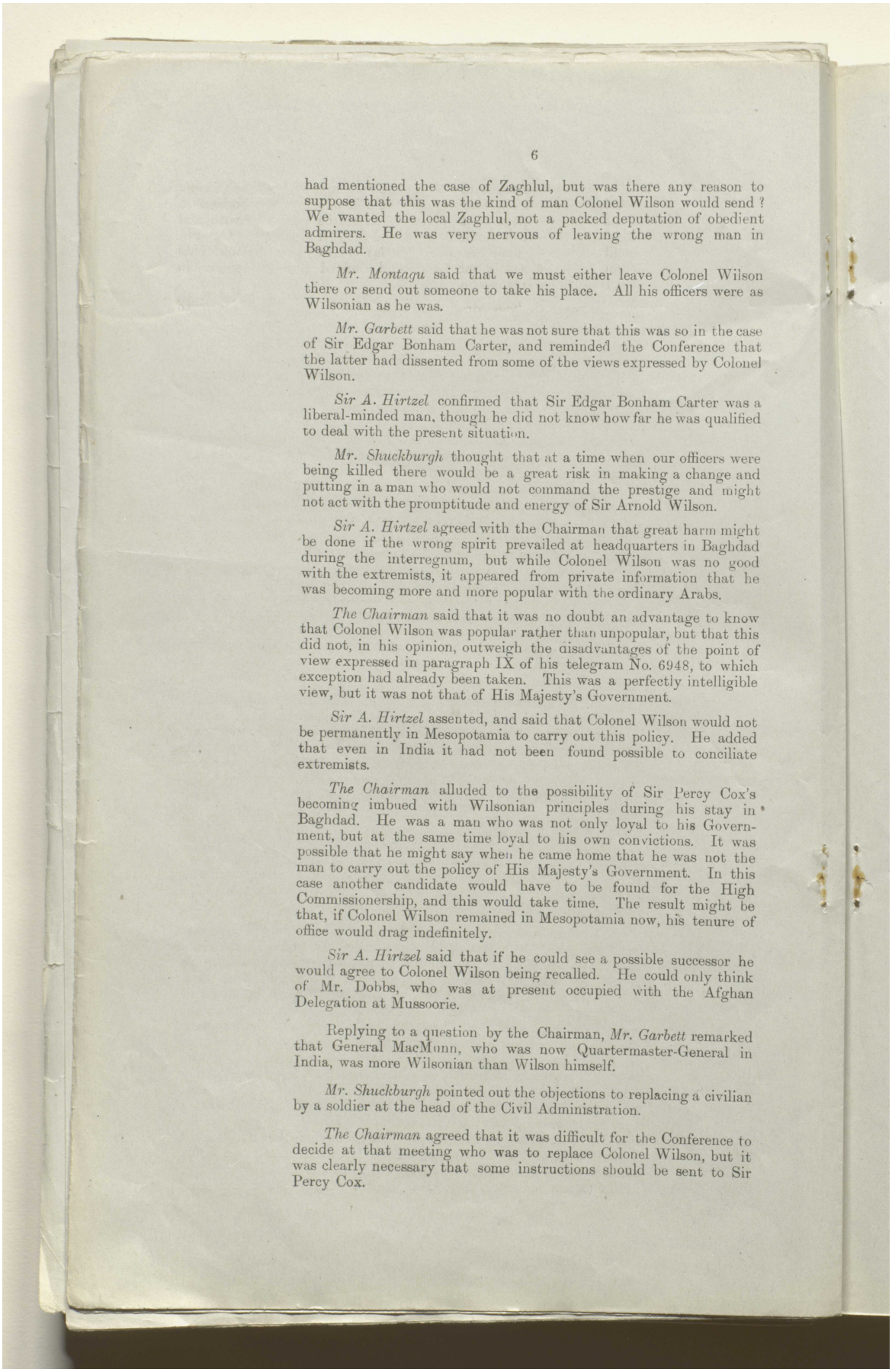



had mentioned the case of Zaghlul, but was there any reason to suppose that this was the kind of man Colonel Wilson would send? We wanted the local Zaghlul, not a packed deputation of obedient admirers. He was very nervous of leaving the wrong man in Baghdad.

*Mr. Montagu* said that we must either leave Colonel Wilson there or send out someone to take his place. All his officers were as Wilsonian as he was.

*Mr. Garbett* said that he was not sure that this was so in the case of Sir Edgar Bonham Carter, and reminded the Conference that the latter had dissented from some of the views expressed by Colonel Wilson.

*Sir A. Hirtzel* confirmed that Sir Edgar Bonham Carter was a liberal-minded man, though he did not know how far he was qualified to deal with the present situation.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* thought that at a time when our officers were being killed there would be a great risk in making a change and putting in a man who would not command the prestige and might not act with the promptitude and energy of Sir Arnold Wilson.

*Sir A. Hirtzel* agreed with the Chairman that great harm might be done if the wrong spirit prevailed at headquarters in Baghdad during the interregnum, but while Colonel Wilson was no good with the extremists, it appeared from private information that he was becoming more and more popular with the ordinary Arabs.

*The Chairman* said that it was no doubt an advantage to know that Colonel Wilson was popular rather than unpopular, but that this did not, in his opinion, outweigh the disadvantages of the point of view expressed in paragraph IX of his telegram No. 6948, to which exception had already been taken. This was a perfectly intelligible view, but it was not that of His Majesty's Government.

*Sir A. Hirtzel* assented, and said that Colonel Wilson would not be permanently in Mesopotamia to carry out this policy. He added that even in India it had not been found possible to conciliate extremists.

*The Chairman* alluded to the possibility of Sir Percy Cox's becoming imbued with Wilsonian principles during his stay in Baghdad. He was a man who was not only loyal to his Government, but at the same time loyal to his own convictions. It was possible that he might say when he came home that he was not the man to carry out the policy of His Majesty's Government. In this case another candidate would have to be found for the High Commissionership, and this would take time. The result might be that, if Colonel Wilson remained in Mesopotamia now, his tenure of office would drag indefinitely.

*Sir A. Hirtzel* said that if he could see a possible successor he would agree to Colonel Wilson being recalled. He could only think of Mr. Dobbs, who was at present occupied with the Afghan Delegation at Mussoorie.

Replying to a question by the Chairman, *Mr. Garbett* remarked that General MacMunn, who was now Quartermaster-General in India, was more Wilsonian than Wilson himself.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* pointed out the objections to replacing a civilian by a soldier at the head of the Civil Administration.

*The Chairman* agreed that it was difficult for the Conference to decide at that meeting who was to replace Colonel Wilson, but it was clearly necessary that some instructions should be sent to Sir Percy Cox.



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*Mr. Montagu* suggested that, on the assumption that the Cabinet decided to remain in Mesopotamia, the announcement authorised in India Office telegram of the 7th June should be made forthwith, and that Colonel Wilson should be informed that His Majesty's Government disagreed with his proposal that Sir Percy Cox should pass through Mesopotamia incognito, and desired him to remain in Baghdad to consult local opinion.

*Colonel Godwin* drew the attention of the Conference to telegram No. x/r 11 of the 12th June from General Haldane, which had been sent from Kasvin. In this telegram General Haldane expressed the view that Colonel Wilson's telegram No. 6948, as worded, might convey an exaggerated impression, and promised to telegraph further on his arrival in Baghdad on the 18th June.

*The Conference decided*—

1. That the Secretary of State for India should draft a telegram to Colonel Wilson for the concurrence of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, directing him to invite Sir Percy Cox to remain in Baghdad pending a further communication, which could not be made until after the Cabinet decision of the following day.
2. That in the event of the Cabinet deciding that His Majesty's Government should remain in Mesopotamia the announcement authorised in India Office telegram of the 7th June should be made forthwith in Baghdad, and that the Civil Commissioner should be informed that His Majesty's Government wished Sir Percy Cox to remain in Baghdad to consult every shade of Mesopotamian opinion, including, if necessary, such Mesopotamians, not at present in the country, as were responsible for the existing unrest on the frontier.

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3. Bombing of Towns outside the Mesopotamian Frontier.

*Colonel Godwin* invited the Conference to concur in a draft telegram to the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia directing him not to bomb Jeziret Ibn Omar, as it was in the French sphere, or the actual town of Dair-az-Zor, except for some local military purpose.

*Mr. Montagu* pointed out that, Dair-az-Zor being in the Arab sphere, the bombing of that town would be tantamount to a declaration of war on Feisal.

*The Chairman* asked whether the India Office had any confirmation of Colonel Wilson's repeated assurances that the raiding parties on the Mesopotamian frontier were led by Sherifian officers. He did not know exactly what this expression meant.

*Mr. Shuckburgh* said that the India Office had telegraphed to Colonel Wilson asking for fuller information on this point, and for any evidence which might be in his possession to show that the Arab Government was responsible for the action of these individuals.

*The Conference*—

Approved the draft telegram with the exception of the last sentence, as it would not now be necessary for the Foreign Office to be consulted.

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4. Questions to come before the Cabinet Conference.

*Mr. Montagu*, replying to questions by the Chairman, said that he did not see how the control of Mesopotamia could be handed over, either to the Foreign Office or to another Department, until the mandate for Mesopotamia had been decided upon. The League of Nations were not in a position to approve the mandate, and would



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not be so until Turkey had at any rate given up all claim to Mesopotamia by signing the Treaty.

His own view was that a new Department of State should be created for the Middle East, but it was clear that, whatever decision might be arrived at, it would be impossible for the control to be handed over immediately after the Cabinet meeting.

He wished to record that he had not had an opportunity of expressing his views on the Palestine mandate as finally drafted and circulated to the Conference, and he announced his intention of making certain suggestions on the articles which referred to Moslem Holy Places.

Replying to a question by the Chairman he said that we were certainly under an obligation to remain in Mesopotamia, but he could not answer for the military situation. The proposal of the Secretary of State for War and Air that the military control of Mesopotamia should be entrusted to the Royal Air Force was difficult to reconcile with the continual reports which were being received of the difficulty of keeping aircraft serviceable in a tropical climate.

*The Chairman* feared that the Cabinet would not agree to the formation of a Middle Eastern Ministry, which was an "ideal" solution, but not, he thought, practicable. He had understood that the India Office were longing to hand over Mesopotamia to someone. They had on many occasions appealed to the Foreign Office to relieve them of their responsibility there. The public, excited by a press campaign, the origin of which was believed to be known; were crying for an end to be put to what they were pleased to call a policy of muddle. He thought that the state of confusion was very much exaggerated, but at the same time it was clearly desirable that some permanent arrangement should be made as soon as possible.

Replying to Sir A. Hirtzel, he said that the draft mandate for Mesopotamia was to be shown by Mr. Vansittart to the French in Paris. He did not fear the delay anticipated by Mr. Montagu. The League of Nations were anxious to identify themselves with the new régime in those parts of the Turkish dominions which were to be severed from the Ottoman Empire, and would not necessarily await the signature of the treaty. As a matter of fact it appeared likely that the treaty would never be signed, but that need not prevent the Allied Powers from acting in certain cases as though it had been.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*June* 17, 1920.

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[I.D.C.E., 42nd Minutes.]

**FOREIGN OFFICE.**

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS.

*Minutes of a Meeting held in the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, December 7, 1920, at 11 A.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. Earl CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair.*)

The Right Hon. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Sir GEORGE BARSTOW, K.C.B., Treasury.

Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., C.B.E., War Office.

Colonel C. A. KER, C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O., War Office.

Commander G. H. LANG, D.S.O., R.N., Admiralty.

Lieutenant R. C. D. FLETCHER, R.N., Admiralty.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Sir ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major R. MARRS, India Office.

Sir JOHN TILLEY, K.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. K. CORNWALLIS, C.B.E., D.S.O., Foreign Office.

Major H. W. YOUNG, D.S.O., Foreign Office (*Secretary*).

The Committee had before them Foreign Office Memorandum on Arabian Policy (I.D.C.E., No. 7263); India Office Memorandum on Arabia (I.D.C.E., No. 7264); Report on the political situation at Nejd by the Political Agent at Bahrein (I.D.C.E., No. 7272); and connected papers.

Subsidies.

*The Chairman* explained that the meeting had been called in the first instance at the request of the Secretary of State for India to discuss the question of the subsidy to Ibn Saud. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had requested that opportunity should be taken of the meeting to discuss the whole financial bearing of the policy of His Majesty's Government in Arabia. A large number of papers had been circulated to the Conference for their information. It was not proposed that all the questions dealt with in these papers should now be examined, but he anticipated that a certain number of them would arise in the course of the discussion.

*Mr. Chamberlain* explained that what he was particularly anxious that the Conference should consider was the question of subsidies and of financial policy. In the Foreign Office Memorandum the suggestion had been made that the policy of subsidies should be continued. He observed from the statement in paragraph 11 that a good many subsidies were actually being paid, and he would be glad to know what it was proposed that His Majesty's Government should accept as financial liabilities in the Arabian Peninsula.



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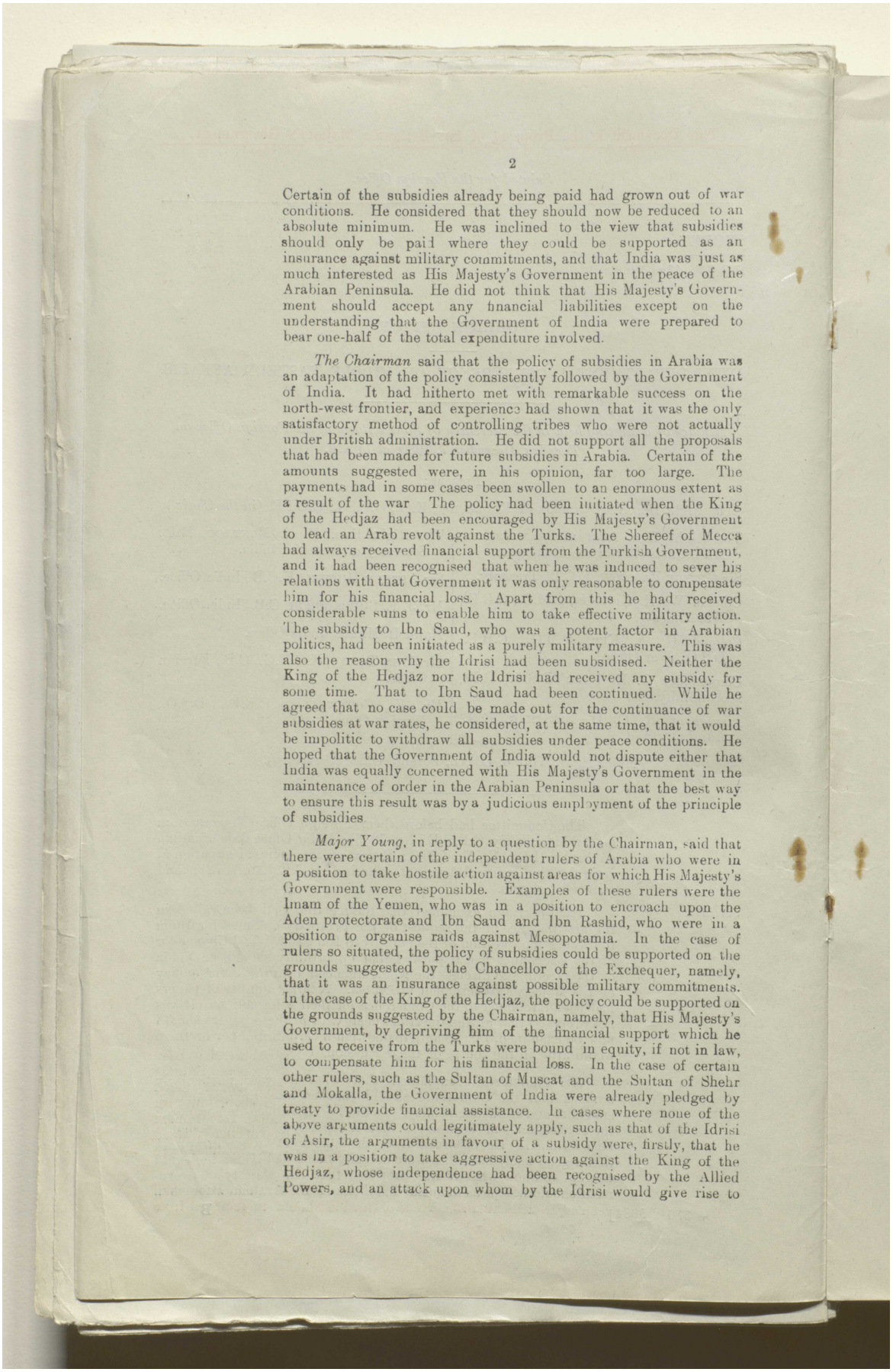



Certain of the subsidies already being paid had grown out of war conditions. He considered that they should now be reduced to an absolute minimum. He was inclined to the view that subsidies should only be paid where they could be supported as an insurance against military commitments, and that India was just as much interested as His Majesty's Government in the peace of the Arabian Peninsula. He did not think that His Majesty's Government should accept any financial liabilities except on the understanding that the Government of India were prepared to bear one-half of the total expenditure involved.

*The Chairman* said that the policy of subsidies in Arabia was an adaptation of the policy consistently followed by the Government of India. It had hitherto met with remarkable success on the north-west frontier, and experience had shown that it was the only satisfactory method of controlling tribes who were not actually under British administration. He did not support all the proposals that had been made for future subsidies in Arabia. Certain of the amounts suggested were, in his opinion, far too large. The payments had in some cases been swollen to an enormous extent as a result of the war. The policy had been initiated when the King of the Hedjaz had been encouraged by His Majesty's Government to lead an Arab revolt against the Turks. The Shereef of Mecca had always received financial support from the Turkish Government, and it had been recognised that when he was induced to sever his relations with that Government it was only reasonable to compensate him for his financial loss. Apart from this he had received considerable sums to enable him to take effective military action. The subsidy to Ibn Saud, who was a potent factor in Arabian politics, had been initiated as a purely military measure. This was also the reason why the Idrisi had been subsidised. Neither the King of the Hedjaz nor the Idrisi had received any subsidy for some time. That to Ibn Saud had been continued. While he agreed that no case could be made out for the continuance of war subsidies at war rates, he considered, at the same time, that it would be impolitic to withdraw all subsidies under peace conditions. He hoped that the Government of India would not dispute either that India was equally concerned with His Majesty's Government in the maintenance of order in the Arabian Peninsula or that the best way to ensure this result was by a judicious employment of the principle of subsidies.

*Major Young*, in reply to a question by the Chairman, said that there were certain of the independent rulers of Arabia who were in a position to take hostile action against areas for which His Majesty's Government were responsible. Examples of these rulers were the Imam of the Yemen, who was in a position to encroach upon the Aden protectorate and Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid, who were in a position to organise raids against Mesopotamia. In the case of rulers so situated, the policy of subsidies could be supported on the grounds suggested by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, namely, that it was an insurance against possible military commitments. In the case of the King of the Hedjaz, the policy could be supported on the grounds suggested by the Chairman, namely, that His Majesty's Government, by depriving him of the financial support which he used to receive from the Turks were bound in equity, if not in law, to compensate him for his financial loss. In the case of certain other rulers, such as the Sultan of Muscat and the Sultan of Shehr and Mokalla, the Government of India were already pledged by treaty to provide financial assistance. In cases where none of the above arguments could legitimately apply, such as that of the Idrisi of Asir, the arguments in favour of a subsidy were, firstly, that he was in a position to take aggressive action against the King of the Hedjaz, whose independence had been recognised by the Allied Powers, and an attack upon whom by the Idrisi would give rise to



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protests from those Powers against His Majesty's Government (if, as was hoped, the special position of that Government in Arabia, exclusive of the Hedjaz, had been recognised by them). Secondly, that if the Imam was subsidised and the Idrisi was not, the latter would complain that, in spite of his services to the allied cause, he was not being treated so generously as a ruler who had remained consistently hostile to the Allies throughout the war.

*Mr. Shuckburgh*, in reply to a question by the Chairman, said that while the 100,000 rupees per annum granted to the Sultan of Muscat in 1911 might not be regarded as a treaty engagement, it would be scarcely possible in any circumstances to repudiate the subsidy of 86,400 rupees per annum paid by the Government of India since 1873 and representing the amount of the tribute formerly paid by the Sultan of Zanzibar under an arbitration award delivered by Lord Canning, Viceroy of India in 1861.

*The Chairman* read paragraph 11 of the Foreign Office Memorandum and pointed out that all the subsidies actually in force were being paid either through the India Office or the Government of India.

*Mr. Montagu* hoped that the Conference would not confuse the Government of India with the India Office. He was not altogether convinced that India was at all interested in the Arabian Peninsula. For his part, he would be only too glad if the responsibility for making recommendations for financial policy in Arabia were taken off the shoulders of the India Office and placed elsewhere. He did not, of course, mean by this to repudiate any Treaty obligations already entered into by the Government of India.

*The Chairman* remarked that this would be an entirely new departure. If any such suggestion had been made when he was Viceroy of India it would have been received with some consternation. In reply to a question by Mr. Montagu as to the potential value or danger to India of such a ruler as Ibn Saud, he said that the Persian Gulf had always been regarded as an Indian interest. The ships sailing on the Persian Gulf were almost entirely Indian ships. The Sultan of Muscat was practically an Indian chieftain. The arrangements for the political control of the Gulf had been made by India. The whole position had been defined in the report of the Welby Commission. It was true that at that date the political control exercised by the Government of India did not extend above Fao, but even before the war the Resident at Baghdad had been nominated by the Government of India. Had there been any question of relations being established with Ibn Saud when he was Viceroy he felt sure that the Government of India would have strongly objected to these relations being established otherwise than through them. It was a great shock to him to hear the suggestion put forward that the Government of India should now wash their hands of Arabia except in so far as they were already bound by Treaty. So far as he remembered, certain of the Arabian chiefs—the Sultan of Muscat, the Sultan of Shehr and Mokalla and the Sultans of Lahej and Socotra—had attended the Delhi Durbar as Indian gun-chiefs. They would surely be horrified if they were told that India had now lost all interest in them.

*Mr. Montagu* reminded the Conference that there had been considerable controversy on the subject of a proposed Middle Eastern Department. He had always taken the view that if such a Department were formed it ought to take over all responsibility for the whole of Arabia. He was aware that the Indian Government had recently expressed a desire to retain control of the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf, but it had been his intention to differ from them if the question came up again for discussion.

*Sir Arthur Hirtzel* said that the Eastern Committee had decided in 1917 that the whole of Arabia should be removed from





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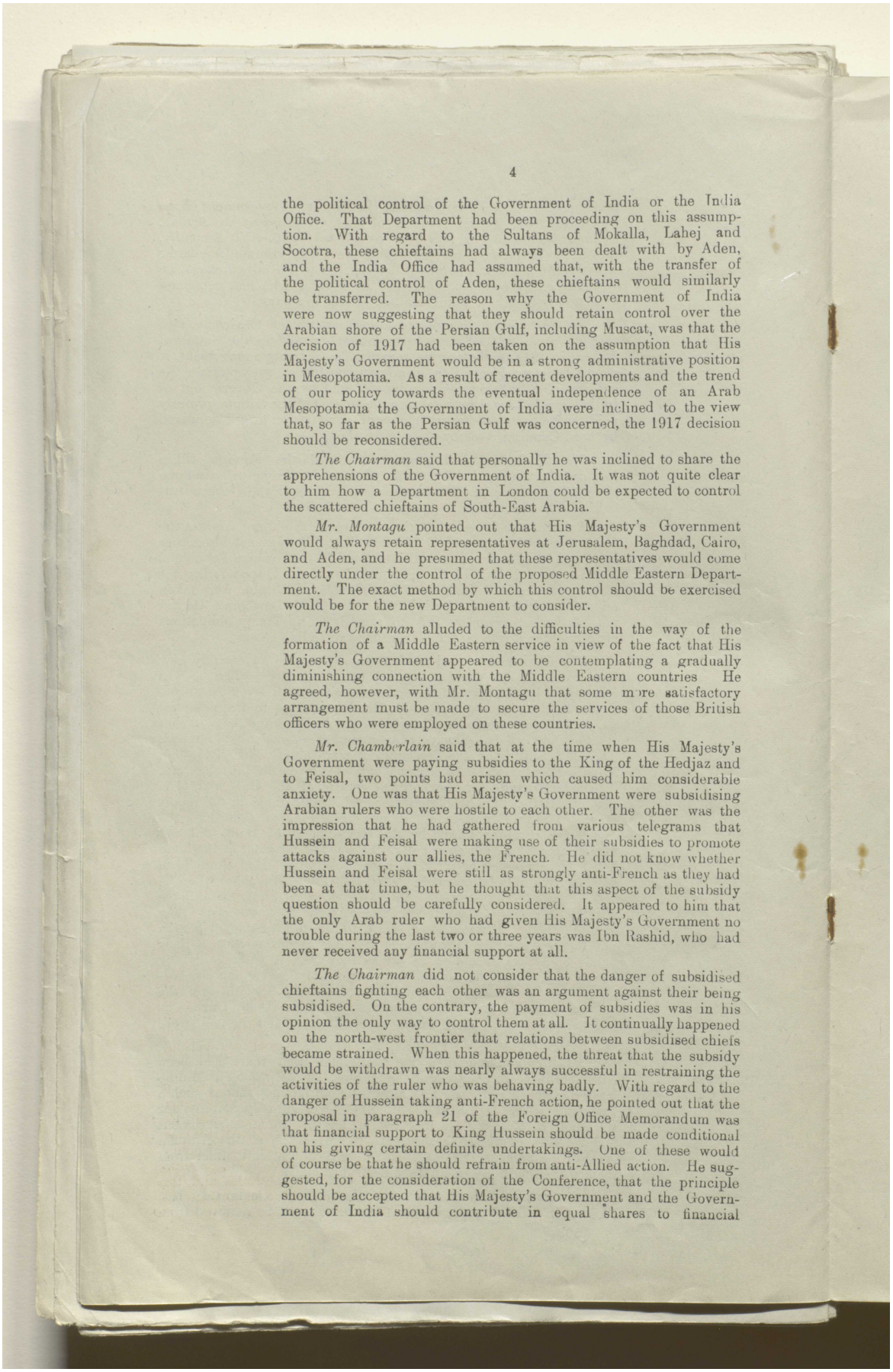



the political control of the Government of India or the India Office. That Department had been proceeding on this assumption. With regard to the Sultans of Mokalla, Lahej and Socotra, these chieftains had always been dealt with by Aden, and the India Office had assumed that, with the transfer of the political control of Aden, these chieftains would similarly be transferred. The reason why the Government of India were now suggesting that they should retain control over the Arabian shore of the Persian Gulf, including Muscat, was that the decision of 1917 had been taken on the assumption that His Majesty's Government would be in a strong administrative position in Mesopotamia. As a result of recent developments and the trend of our policy towards the eventual independence of an Arab Mesopotamia the Government of India were inclined to the view that, so far as the Persian Gulf was concerned, the 1917 decision should be reconsidered.

*The Chairman* said that personally he was inclined to share the apprehensions of the Government of India. It was not quite clear to him how a Department in London could be expected to control the scattered chieftains of South-East Arabia.

*Mr. Montagu* pointed out that His Majesty's Government would always retain representatives at Jerusalem, Baghdad, Cairo, and Aden, and he presumed that these representatives would come directly under the control of the proposed Middle Eastern Department. The exact method by which this control should be exercised would be for the new Department to consider.

*The Chairman* alluded to the difficulties in the way of the formation of a Middle Eastern service in view of the fact that His Majesty's Government appeared to be contemplating a gradually diminishing connection with the Middle Eastern countries. He agreed, however, with Mr. Montagu that some more satisfactory arrangement must be made to secure the services of those British officers who were employed on these countries.

*Mr. Chamberlain* said that at the time when His Majesty's Government were paying subsidies to the King of the Hedjaz and to Feisal, two points had arisen which caused him considerable anxiety. One was that His Majesty's Government were subsidising Arabian rulers who were hostile to each other. The other was the impression that he had gathered from various telegrams that Hussein and Feisal were making use of their subsidies to promote attacks against our allies, the French. He did not know whether Hussein and Feisal were still as strongly anti-French as they had been at that time, but he thought that this aspect of the subsidy question should be carefully considered. It appeared to him that the only Arab ruler who had given His Majesty's Government no trouble during the last two or three years was Ibn Rashid, who had never received any financial support at all.

*The Chairman* did not consider that the danger of subsidised chieftains fighting each other was an argument against their being subsidised. On the contrary, the payment of subsidies was in his opinion the only way to control them at all. It continually happened on the north-west frontier that relations between subsidised chiefs became strained. When this happened, the threat that the subsidy would be withdrawn was nearly always successful in restraining the activities of the ruler who was behaving badly. With regard to the danger of Hussein taking anti-French action, he pointed out that the proposal in paragraph 21 of the Foreign Office Memorandum was that financial support to King Hussein should be made conditional on his giving certain definite undertakings. One of these would of course be that he should refrain from anti-Allied action. He suggested, for the consideration of the Conference, that the principle should be accepted that His Majesty's Government and the Government of India should contribute in equal shares to financial



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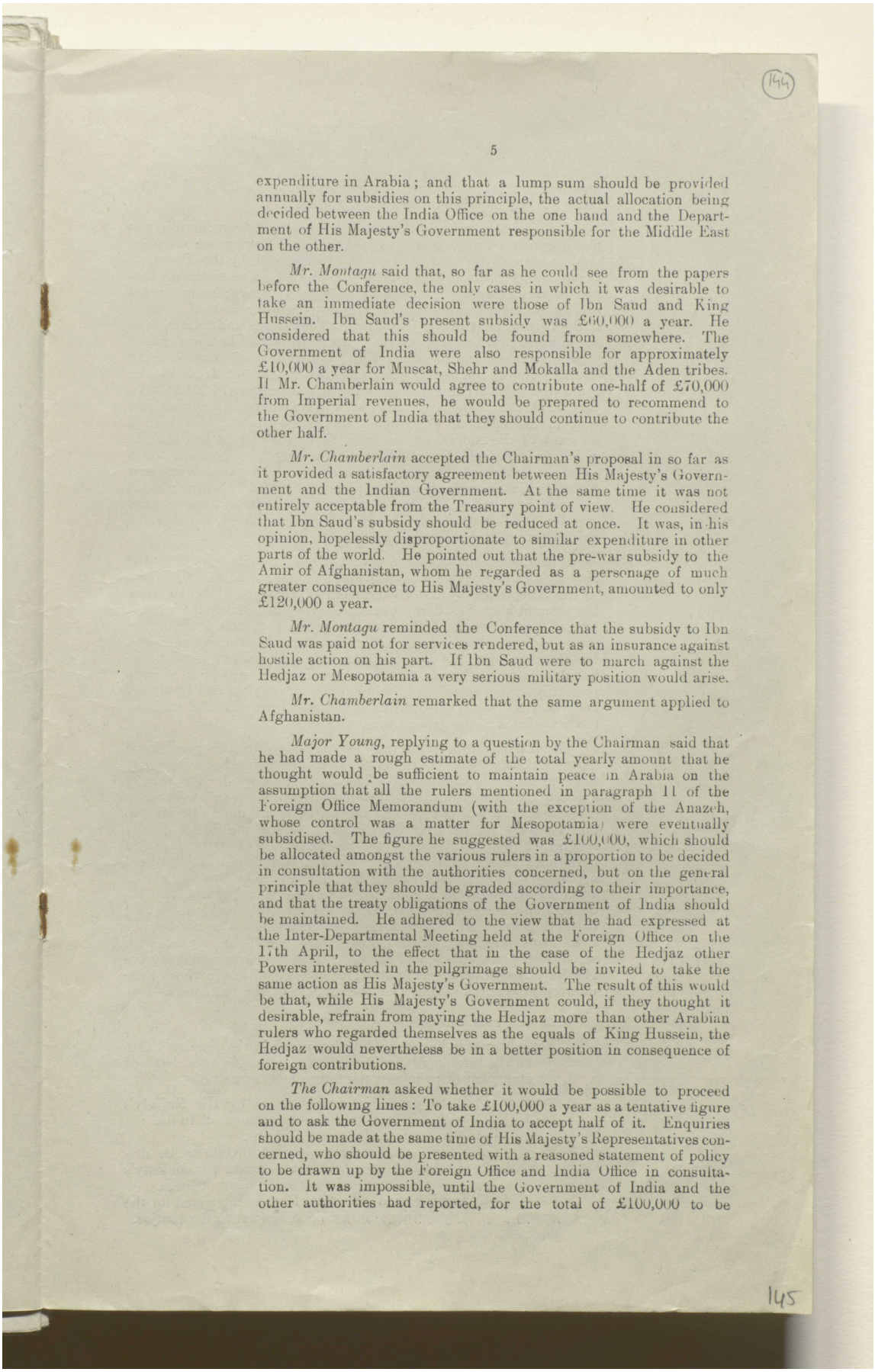



expenditure in Arabia; and that a lump sum should be provided annually for subsidies on this principle, the actual allocation being decided between the India Office on the one hand and the Department of His Majesty's Government responsible for the Middle East on the other.

*Mr. Montagu* said that, so far as he could see from the papers before the Conference, the only cases in which it was desirable to take an immediate decision were those of Ibn Saud and King Hussein. Ibn Saud's present subsidy was £60,000 a year. He considered that this should be found from somewhere. The Government of India were also responsible for approximately £10,000 a year for Muscat, Shehr and Mokalla and the Aden tribes. If Mr. Chamberlain would agree to contribute one-half of £70,000 from Imperial revenues, he would be prepared to recommend to the Government of India that they should continue to contribute the other half.

*Mr. Chamberlain* accepted the Chairman's proposal in so far as it provided a satisfactory agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Indian Government. At the same time it was not entirely acceptable from the Treasury point of view. He considered that Ibn Saud's subsidy should be reduced at once. It was, in his opinion, hopelessly disproportionate to similar expenditure in other parts of the world. He pointed out that the pre-war subsidy to the Amir of Afghanistan, whom he regarded as a personage of much greater consequence to His Majesty's Government, amounted to only £120,000 a year.

*Mr. Montagu* reminded the Conference that the subsidy to Ibn Saud was paid not for services rendered, but as an insurance against hostile action on his part. If Ibn Saud were to march against the Hedjaz or Mesopotamia a very serious military position would arise.

*Mr. Chamberlain* remarked that the same argument applied to Afghanistan.

*Major Young*, replying to a question by the Chairman said that he had made a rough estimate of the total yearly amount that he thought would be sufficient to maintain peace in Arabia on the assumption that all the rulers mentioned in paragraph 11 of the Foreign Office Memorandum (with the exception of the Anazeh, whose control was a matter for Mesopotamia) were eventually subsidised. The figure he suggested was £100,000, which should be allocated amongst the various rulers in a proportion to be decided in consultation with the authorities concerned, but on the general principle that they should be graded according to their importance, and that the treaty obligations of the Government of India should be maintained. He adhered to the view that he had expressed at the Inter-Departmental Meeting held at the Foreign Office on the 17th April, to the effect that in the case of the Hedjaz other Powers interested in the pilgrimage should be invited to take the same action as His Majesty's Government. The result of this would be that, while His Majesty's Government could, if they thought it desirable, refrain from paying the Hedjaz more than other Arabian rulers who regarded themselves as the equals of King Hussein, the Hedjaz would nevertheless be in a better position in consequence of foreign contributions.

*The Chairman* asked whether it would be possible to proceed on the following lines: To take £100,000 a year as a tentative figure and to ask the Government of India to accept half of it. Enquiries should be made at the same time of His Majesty's Representatives concerned, who should be presented with a reasoned statement of policy to be drawn up by the Foreign Office and India Office in consultation. It was impossible, until the Government of India and the other authorities had reported, for the total of £100,000 to be



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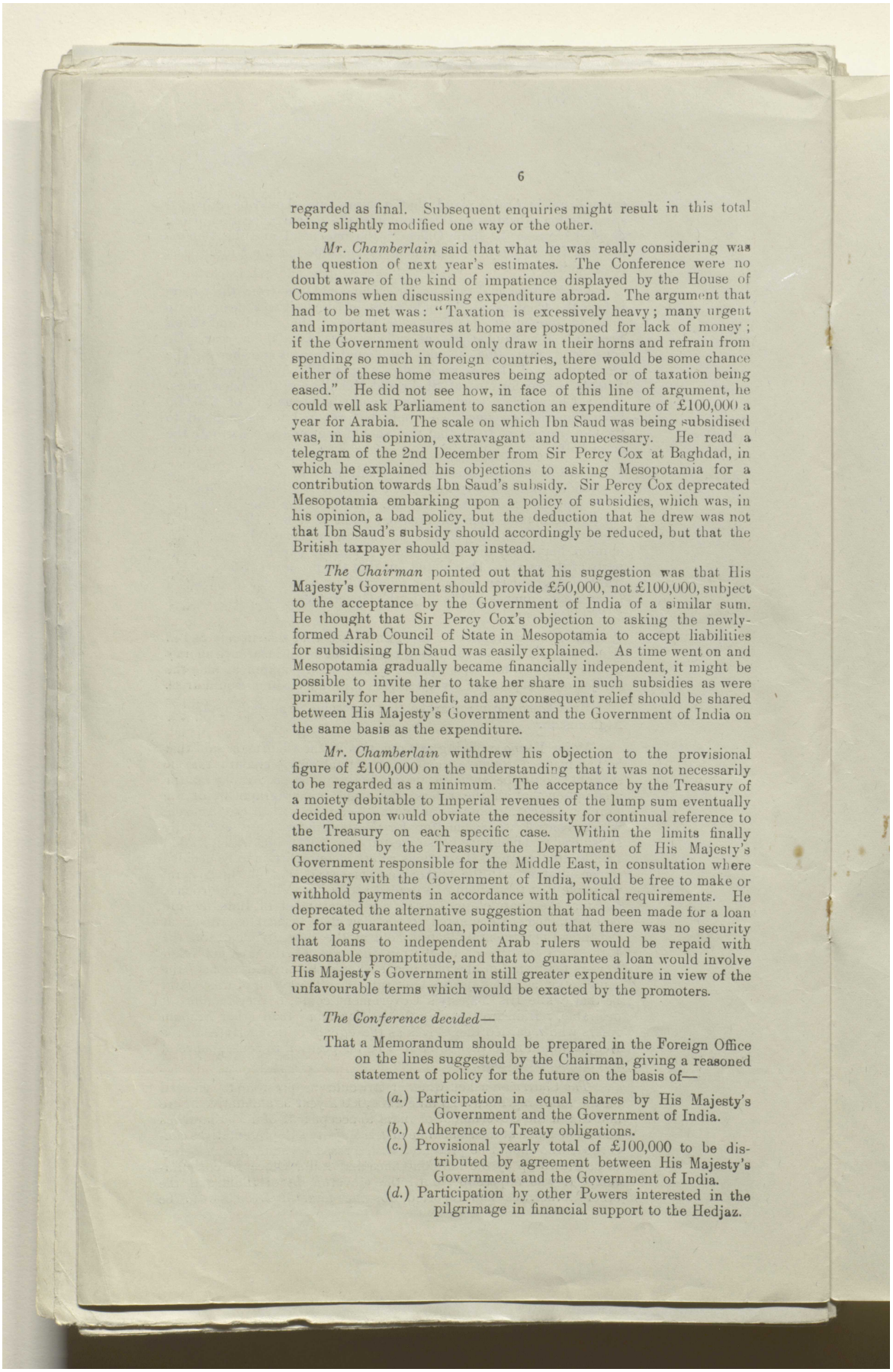



regarded as final. Subsequent enquiries might result in this total being slightly modified one way or the other.

*Mr. Chamberlain* said that what he was really considering was the question of next year's estimates. The Conference were no doubt aware of the kind of impatience displayed by the House of Commons when discussing expenditure abroad. The argument that had to be met was: "Taxation is excessively heavy; many urgent and important measures at home are postponed for lack of money; if the Government would only draw in their horns and refrain from spending so much in foreign countries, there would be some chance either of these home measures being adopted or of taxation being eased." He did not see how, in face of this line of argument, he could well ask Parliament to sanction an expenditure of £100,000 a year for Arabia. The scale on which Ibn Saud was being subsidised was, in his opinion, extravagant and unnecessary. He read a telegram of the 2nd December from Sir Percy Cox at Baghdad, in which he explained his objections to asking Mesopotamia for a contribution towards Ibn Saud's subsidy. Sir Percy Cox deprecated Mesopotamia embarking upon a policy of subsidies, which was, in his opinion, a bad policy, but the deduction that he drew was not that Ibn Saud's subsidy should accordingly be reduced, but that the British taxpayer should pay instead.

*The Chairman* pointed out that his suggestion was that His Majesty's Government should provide £50,000, not £100,000, subject to the acceptance by the Government of India of a similar sum. He thought that Sir Percy Cox's objection to asking the newly-formed Arab Council of State in Mesopotamia to accept liabilities for subsidising Ibn Saud was easily explained. As time went on and Mesopotamia gradually became financially independent, it might be possible to invite her to take her share in such subsidies as were primarily for her benefit, and any consequent relief should be shared between His Majesty's Government and the Government of India on the same basis as the expenditure.

*Mr. Chamberlain* withdrew his objection to the provisional figure of £100,000 on the understanding that it was not necessarily to be regarded as a minimum. The acceptance by the Treasury of a moiety debitable to Imperial revenues of the lump sum eventually decided upon would obviate the necessity for continual reference to the Treasury on each specific case. Within the limits finally sanctioned by the Treasury the Department of His Majesty's Government responsible for the Middle East, in consultation where necessary with the Government of India, would be free to make or withhold payments in accordance with political requirements. He deprecated the alternative suggestion that had been made for a loan or for a guaranteed loan, pointing out that there was no security that loans to independent Arab rulers would be repaid with reasonable promptitude, and that to guarantee a loan would involve His Majesty's Government in still greater expenditure in view of the unfavourable terms which would be exacted by the promoters.

*The Conference decided—*

That a Memorandum should be prepared in the Foreign Office on the lines suggested by the Chairman, giving a reasoned statement of policy for the future on the basis of—

(*a.*) Participation in equal shares by His Majesty's Government and the Government of India.
(*b.*) Adherence to Treaty obligations.
(*c.*) Provisional yearly total of £100,000 to be distributed by agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Government of India.
(*d.*) Participation by other Powers interested in the pilgrimage in financial support to the Hedjaz.



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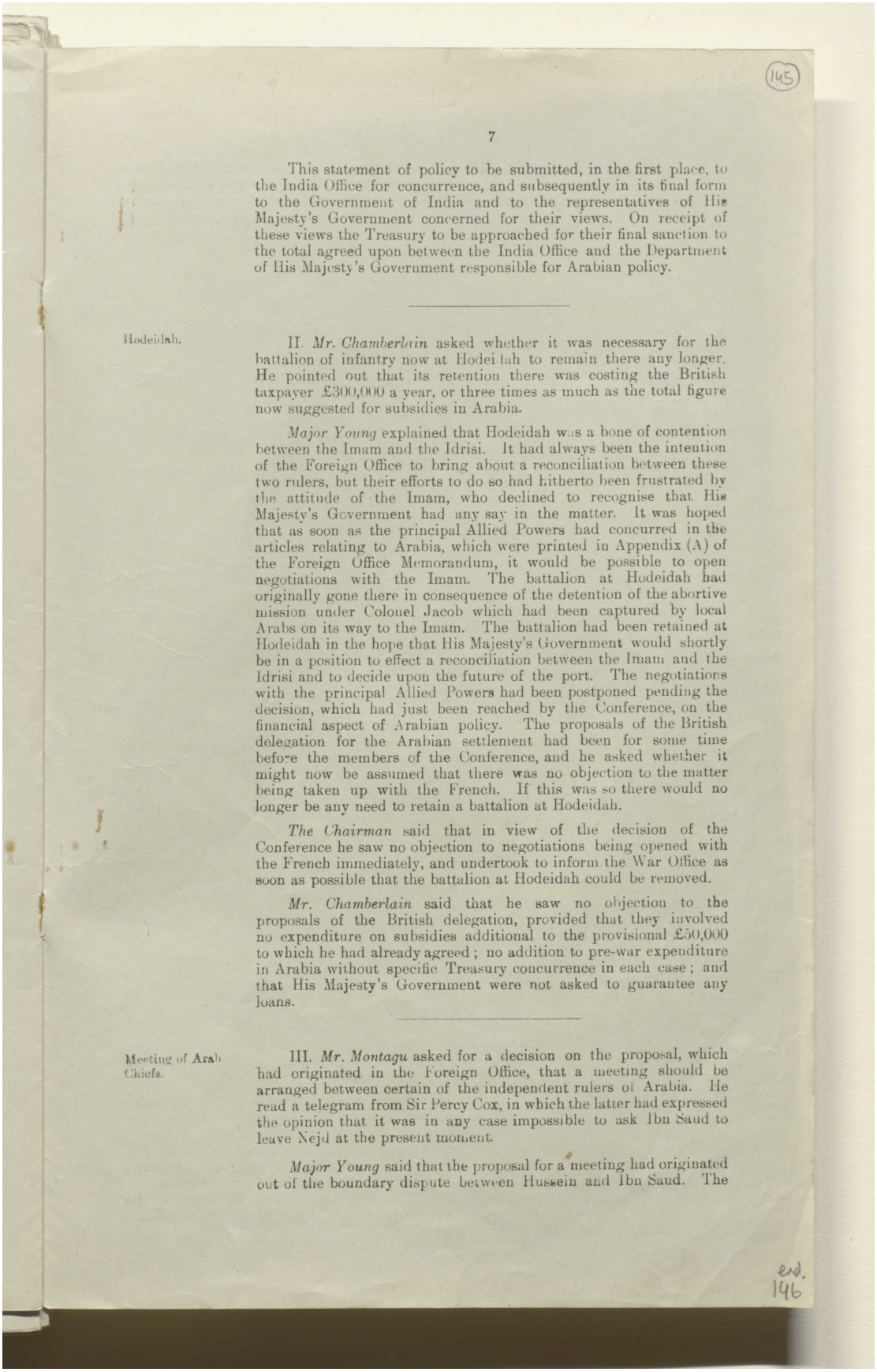

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This statement of policy to be submitted, in the first place, to the India Office for concurrence, and subsequently in its final form to the Government of India and to the representatives of His Majesty's Government concerned for their views. On receipt of these views the Treasury to be approached for their final sanction to the total agreed upon between the India Office and the Department of His Majesty's Government responsible for Arabian policy.

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Hodeidah.

II. *Mr. Chamberlain* asked whether it was necessary for the battalion of infantry now at Hodeidah to remain there any longer. He pointed out that its retention there was costing the British taxpayer £300,000 a year, or three times as much as the total figure now suggested for subsidies in Arabia.

*Major Young* explained that Hodeidah was a bone of contention between the Imam and the Idrisi. It had always been the intention of the Foreign Office to bring about a reconciliation between these two rulers, but their efforts to do so had hitherto been frustrated by the attitude of the Imam, who declined to recognise that His Majesty's Government had any say in the matter. It was hoped that as soon as the principal Allied Powers had concurred in the articles relating to Arabia, which were printed in Appendix (A) of the Foreign Office Memorandum, it would be possible to open negotiations with the Imam. The battalion at Hodeidah had originally gone there in consequence of the detention of the abortive mission under Colonel Jacob which had been captured by local Arabs on its way to the Imam. The battalion had been retained at Hodeidah in the hope that His Majesty's Government would shortly be in a position to effect a reconciliation between the Imam and the Idrisi and to decide upon the future of the port. The negotiations with the principal Allied Powers had been postponed pending the decision, which had just been reached by the Conference, on the financial aspect of Arabian policy. The proposals of the British delegation for the Arabian settlement had been for some time before the members of the Conference, and he asked whether it might now be assumed that there was no objection to the matter being taken up with the French. If this was so there would no longer be any need to retain a battalion at Hodeidah.

*The Chairman* said that in view of the decision of the Conference he saw no objection to negotiations being opened with the French immediately, and undertook to inform the War Office as soon as possible that the battalion at Hodeidah could be removed.

*Mr. Chamberlain* said that he saw no objection to the proposals of the British delegation, provided that they involved no expenditure on subsidies additional to the provisional £50,000 to which he had already agreed; no addition to pre-war expenditure in Arabia without specific Treasury concurrence in each case; and that His Majesty's Government were not asked to guarantee any loans.

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Meeting of Arab Chiefs.

III. *Mr. Montagu* asked for a decision on the proposal, which had originated in the Foreign Office, that a meeting should be arranged between certain of the independent rulers of Arabia. He read a telegram from Sir Percy Cox, in which the latter had expressed the opinion that it was in any case impossible to ask Ibn Saud to leave Nejd at the present moment.

*Major Young* said that the proposal for a meeting had originated out of the boundary dispute between Hussein and Ibn Saud. The

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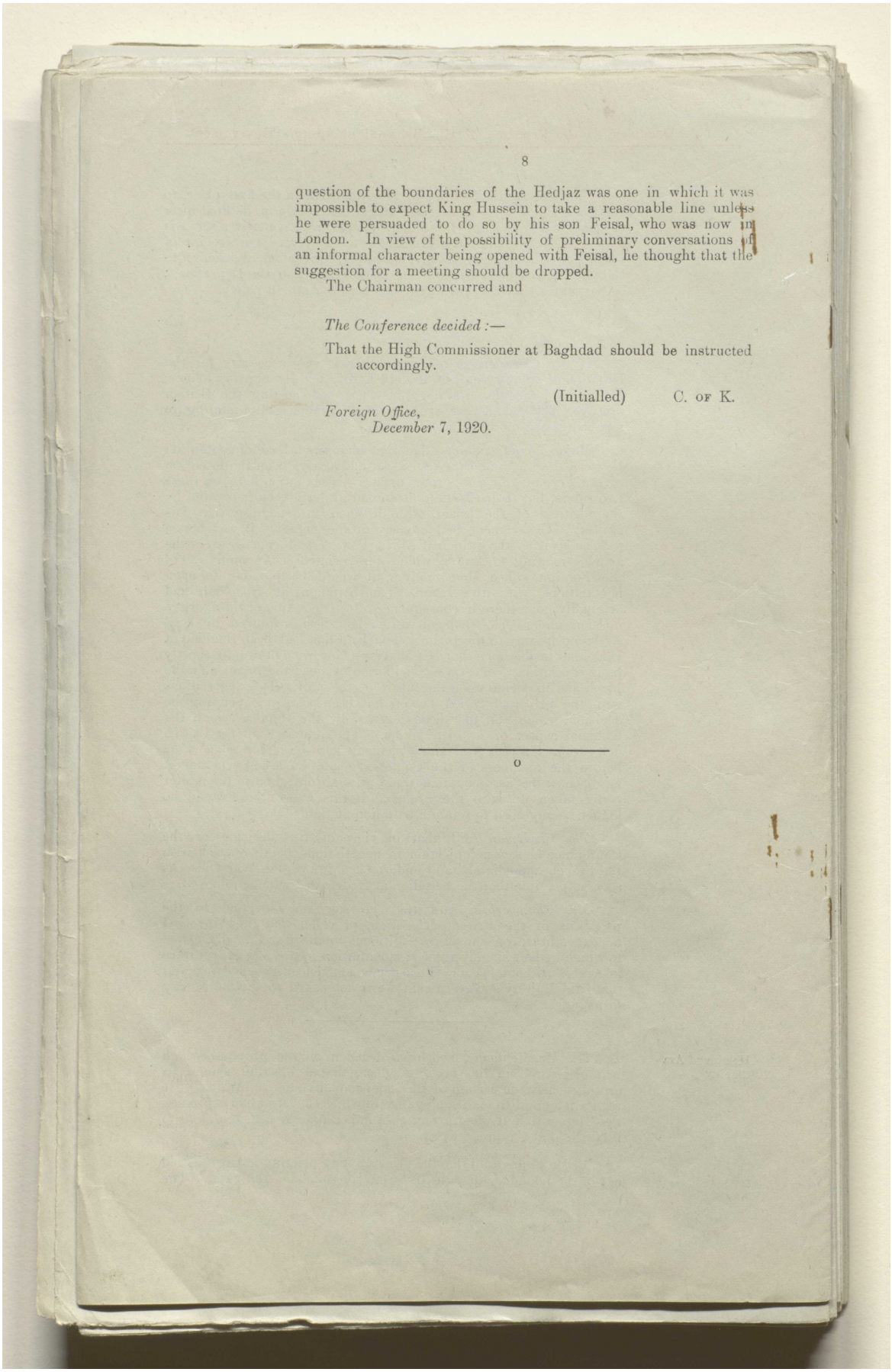

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question of the boundaries of the Hedjaz was one in which it was impossible to expect King Hussein to take a reasonable line unless he were persuaded to do so by his son Feisal, who was now in London. In view of the possibility of preliminary conversations of an informal character being opened with Feisal, he thought that the suggestion for a meeting should be dropped.

The Chairman concurred and

*The Conference decided :—*

That the High Commissioner at Baghdad should be instructed accordingly.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

*Foreign Office,*
*December 7, 1920.*

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