Lord Curzon. (1)

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SECRET.

M.E.C.-1.

WAR CABINET.

MIDDLE EAST COMMITTEE.

Summary of Information No.1, for week ending January 18th, 1918.

APPRECIATION.

The outstanding questions for this next Meeting will be as follows:-

i. Organisation of Palestine and Hejaz political machinery.

ii. Palestine Administration.

iii. The functions and status of the Zionist Commission and question of a liaison officer thereto.

iv. Consideration of Sir P. Cox's telegram 388.

After points i.ii. & iii have been decided, it is submitted that a full "Policy" telegram should be despatched both to General Clayton and Sir R. Wingate in addition to the telegrams explaining administrative decisions.

These officers both require a clear lead on the many thorny and complicated matters with which they have to deal.

It should also be noted that General Clayton is evidently short handed, and requires serious additions to his staff.

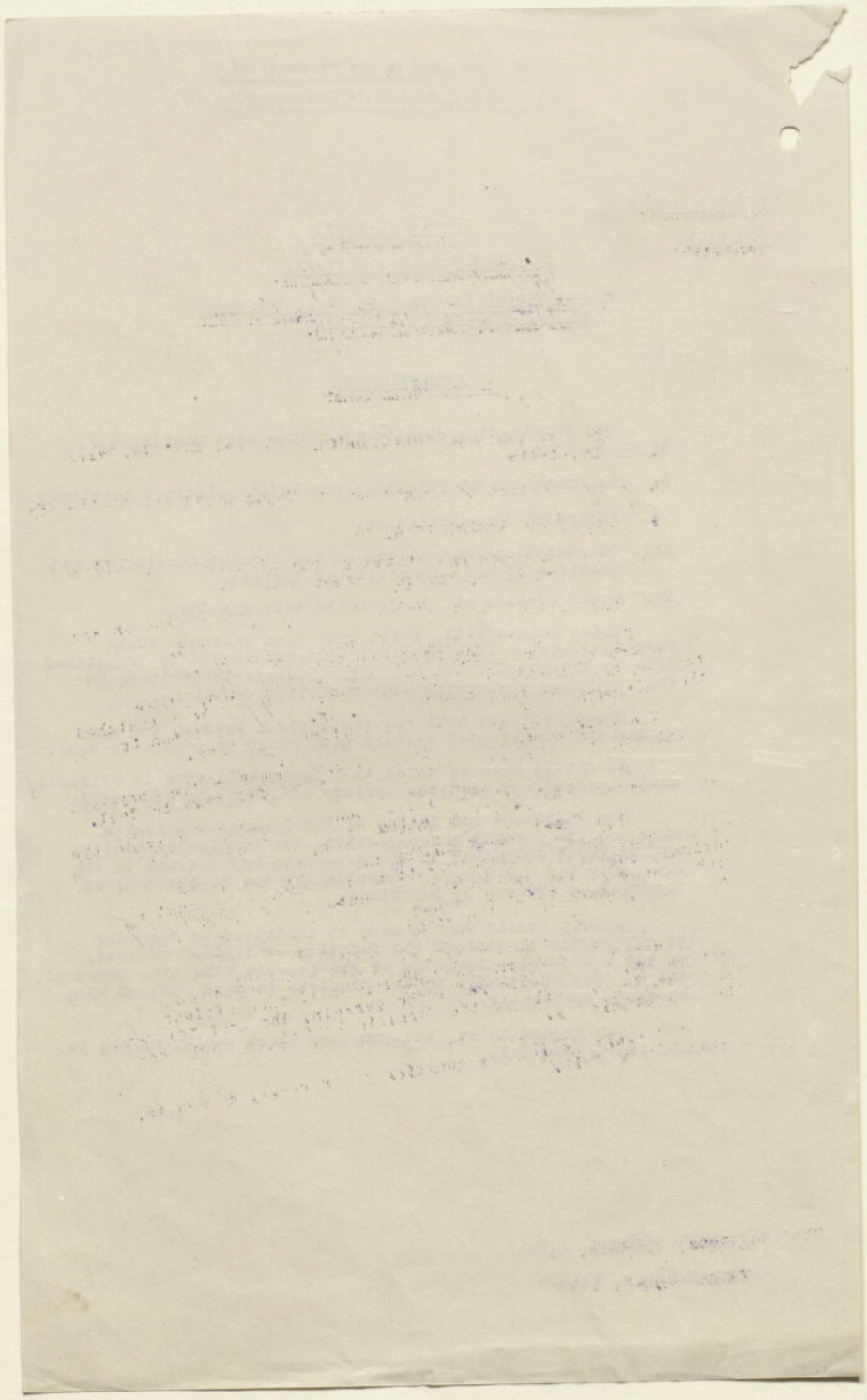
The functions and status of the Zionist Commission will require careful consideration, the Commission must be entirely sub ordinated in its movements and actions to the wishes of the C.O.C.in.C., consequently the appointment of the liaison officer is important.

Captain Ormsby Gore's name is submitted as the only likely person to perform the function of liaison officer. He has a complete knowledge of the terrain, the Arab movement, and is very acceptable to the Zionists leaders, all of whom he knows personally.

With regard to iv, the question which really arises is, who is to have Hail.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

18th January, 1918.



Lord Curzon. (2)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1918.

SECRET.

M.E.C. 1st Meeting.
(New Series.)

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WAR CABINET.

MIDDLE EAST COMMITTEE.

Draft Minutes of a Meeting of the Middle East Committee held in the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office at 11·30 A.M. *on Saturday, January* 19, 1918.

Present:

The Right Hon. The EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).
Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P.
Right Hon. LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O.
Sir MARK SYKES, Bart., M.P.
Major-General Sir G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M G., C.B.
Right Hon. LORD ISLINGTON, G.C.M.G., D.S.O.
Mr. SHUCKBURGH.

Captain Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P. (*Secretary*).

Palestine: Position of General Clayton.

1. THE Committee considered telegram No. 97, dated the 15th January, from Sir Reginald Wingate, which formed a reply to the Foreign Office telegram No. 59 to Sir Reginald Wingate. From this telegram it appeared that both Sir Reginald Wingate and General Allenby were satisfied with the *status quo* in regard to the position occupied by General Clayton and the line of demarcation between operations under their respective commands. It was pointed out to the Committee—

(1.) That at present General Clayton had to serve two masters, viz., in Palestine he was under General Allenby, whereas as head of the Arab Bureau and Brigadier-General, General Staff, for operations in the Hejaz, he was under Sir Reginald Wingate.
(2.) It was desirable from a political and diplomatic point of view that a clear line of demarcation should be drawn between Palestine and Egypt.

It was further pointed out that it was desirable to draw a distinction between the function of Chief Political Officer and Supreme Political Adviser in Palestine on the one hand and the function of Director of Military Administration in the occupied territories on the other.

It was suggested that, while General Clayton should fulfil the former function, the latter should be entrusted to another officer.

It was suggested that a new and separate branch of the Arab Bureau should be established in Palestine under General Clayton, who would be an independent Political Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief in Palestine, while the Cairo branch of the Arab Bureau should remain at Cairo under Sir Reginald Wingate, and another officer appointed as its head.

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Discussion took place, upon the suggestion of Sir Mark Sykes, that a new line of demarcation should be drawn between the theatres of operations under General Allenby and Sir Reginald Wingate respectively.

It was suggested that, as the more energetic portion of the Arab forces were now operating in co-operation with General Allenby's forces east of the Dead Sea, these Arab forces which were based upon Akaba should be transferred from Sir Reginald Wingate to General Allenby. Operations in the area south of Tebuk might continue as heretofore under the control and guidance of Sir Reginald Wingate.

In view of the above considerations, the Committee decided—

That, after consultation with the Foreign Office, the War Office should send telegrams to General Allenby and Sir Reginald Wingate laying down clearly the importance of separating political responsibility in Palestine from that in Egypt and the Hejaz as the set policy of His Majesty's Government.

That General Allenby and Sir Reginald Wingate should be invited to reconsider the re-allocation of duties and areas for which each was responsible in view of this policy.

The Committee also decided—

That the Foreign Office should instruct General Clayton direct on all questions affecting policy in Palestine, and a telegram concerning this should be despatched to him forthwith.

Zionist Commission.

2. The Committee were informed that for some weeks past negotiations had been in progress between the Foreign Office and the responsible leaders of the Zionist organisation in this country with a view to sending out a Zionist Commission to Palestine. The need of such a Commission appeared urgent for the following reasons :—

(1.) The important political results that had accrued from the declaration of His Majesty's Government to the Zionists and the need for putting the assurance given in this declaration into practice.

(2.) The inadequacy of existing Zionist representations in Egypt and Palestine.

(3.) The necessity of bringing the British authorities in Egypt and Palestine and the Arabs into contact with the responsible leaders of the organisation in *Entente* countries.

Sir Mark Sykes pointed out that it was apparent that considerable uneasiness existed in Palestine and Egypt regarding the progress of Zionism, and this was largely due to a misunderstanding of Zionist aims and intentions. For instance, it was thought that Zionism involved the expropriation of Arab proprietors and the handing over to future Jewish tutelage of Christian and Moslem sites. Both these objections had been clearly and emphatically disavowed by the responsible leaders of Zionism, who were not at present represented in Palestine. It was pointed out that the functions and activities of the proposed Zionist Commission must be clearly subject to military considerations and to the political authority vested in the Commander-in-Chief. It would therefore be necessary to entrust the Commission to a British officer who would act under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, *i.e.*, under General Clayton.

General Macdonogh stated that no communication had yet been sent by the War Office to General Allenby regarding the proposed Zionist Commission.

Mr. Balfour stated that Dr. Weizmann had visited him on the 16th January, with a view to ascertaining his views with regard to four special points regarding the possible duties and functions of the Commission. These four points were embodied in a letter addressed by Dr. Weizmann to Sir Mark Sykes, dated the 16th January, copies of which were laid before the Committee.

Mr. Balfour stated that, as drafted, Dr. Weizmann's letter seemed to underline rather too definitely certain expressions of approval and sympathy which he—Mr. Balfour—had made. He thought therefore that a carefully worded reply should be sent to Dr. Weizmann. In regard to one of the four points—the prevention of speculation in land—Mr. Balfour felt very strongly that some action should be taken, but that such action would have to be very carefully considered in the light of advices received from Palestine.

The Committee approved of the despatch of the Zionist Commission, under the leadership of Dr. Weizmann, accompanied by a specially detailed British Political Officer, with the following objects:—

(1.) To help in establishing friendly relations between the Jews on the one hand, and the Arabs and other non-Jewish communities on the other.

(2.) To form a link between the British authorities and the Jewish population in Palestine.

(3.) To help with relief work in Palestine, and to assist in the repatriation of evacuated persons and refugees, so far as the military situation will allow.

(4.) To assist in restoring and developing the Jewish colonies, and in re-organising the Jewish population in general.

(5.) To collect information and report upon the possibilities of future Jewish developments in Palestine in the light of the declaration of His Majesty's Government.

The Committee decided—

That the War Office should inform General Allenby of the desirability of the Commission proceeding to Palestine as soon as possible and inviting his concurrence, and that the Foreign Office should submit a statement regarding the functions and duties of the Political Officer in charge of the Commission to the Army Council for their approval.

Ibn Saud.

3. The Committee had before them a telegram from Sir Percy Cox asking for a reconsideration of the policy adopted by the Committee at their last meeting towards Ibn Saud (reference Secretary of State for India's telegram to Viceroy's Department, P. 181, dated 14th January).

After some discussion the Committee requested that the War Office should prepare a memorandum upon the situation in Central Arabia for their consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

Hit.

4. Lord Curzon enquired concerning the possibility of operations up the Euphrates with a view to obtaining possession of Hit.

General Macdonogh explained in detail the reasons why these operations had not yet been undertaken.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
January 19, 1918.

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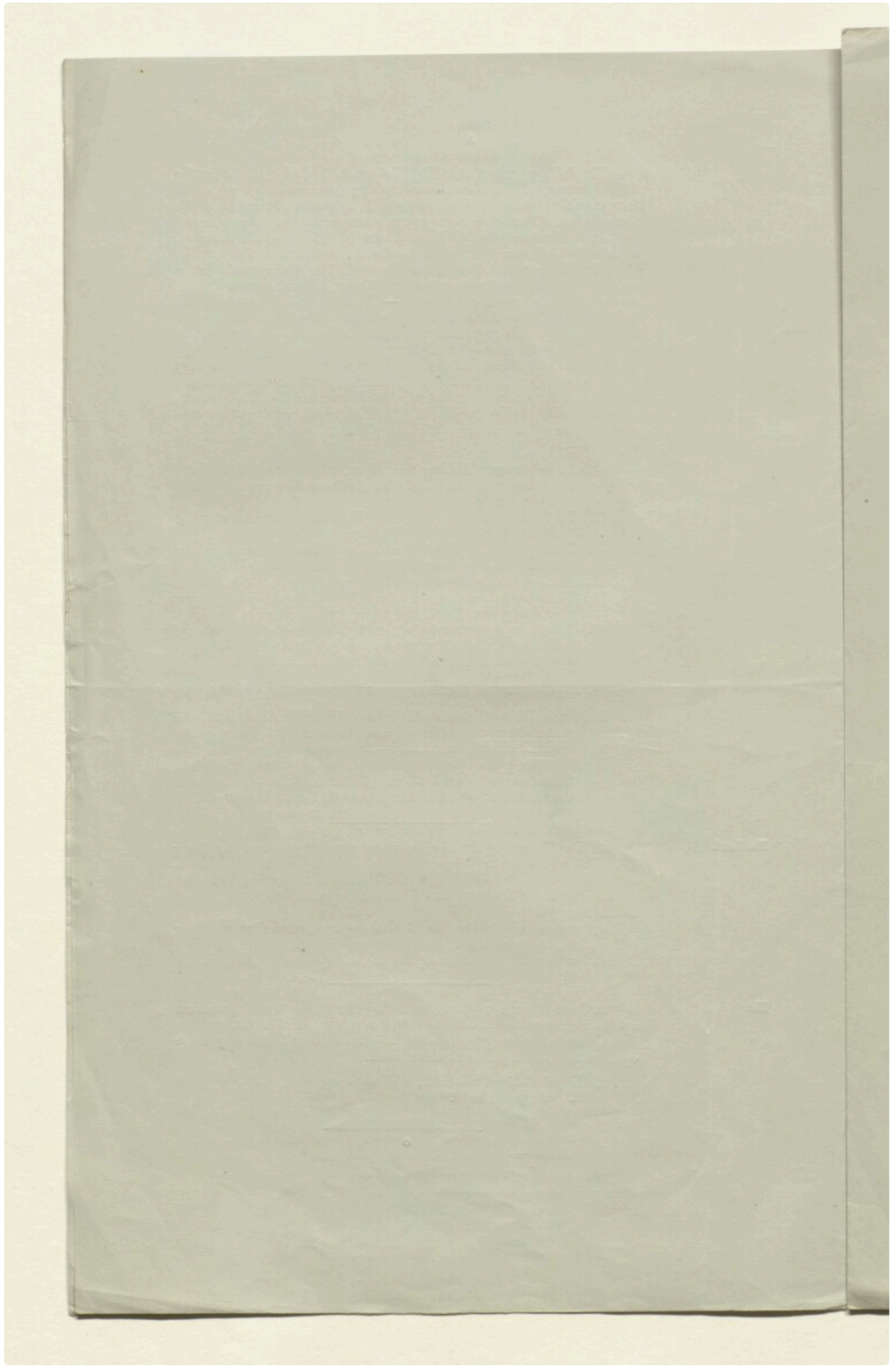
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