

3. ALLIED MILITARY COMMITTEE.

THE SECRETARY read to the Committee an extract from a letter he had received from General Howard Vyse, in which it was said that whereas the French Military authorities were satisfied with the unanimity of views which existed between the French and British Staffs, they were nevertheless perturbed by the length of time taken to complete the examination of specific matters by the Allied Military Committee.

General Howard Vyse had suggested that delay in the proceedings of the Allied Military Committee was occasioned by the necessity for the French Delegates to refer back to Paris, and he suggested that when any matter was under discussion on which the British Delegates were fully briefed, the opportunity might be taken to transfer the discussions to Paris. Such an arrangement could be made without affecting the general principle that the Allied Military Committee should normally sit in London. The psychological effect on the French of a suggestion by us that the Committee should meet in France might be good at the present time. The Committee expressed their agreement with the suggestion made by General Howard Vyse, and thought that the Salonika problem might be discussed in Paris since the British Delegates had full instructions.

IT WAS AGREED -

That the Secretary should sound the French as to whether this idea appealed to them.

4. GENERAL BUTLER'S VISIT TO ANKARA.

(Previous Reference: C.O.S.(40) 9th Meeting, Minute 1.)

THE COMMITTEE had before them a copy of a letter from H.M. Ambassador in Ankara to the Foreign Office, covering a report by General Butler on his visit (Paper No. C.O.S.(40)204).

THE COMMITTEE -

- (a) Took note of General Butler's report.
- (b) Took note that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was opposed to releasing 18 pdr guns to the Turks; and that the Secretary of State for War was raising the matter on the Ministerial level.
- (c) Instructed the British Representatives on the Allied Military Committee to tell their French colleagues that Marshal Chakmak was anxious to receive more news of the Western Front, but that the British were unable to give it to him in view of the French responsibility for military operations in that theatre; and to invite the French to consider whether they could furnish the information to the Marshal.

5. SCANDINAVIA

(Previous Reference: C.O.S.(40) 9th Meeting, Minute 2).

SIR EDMUND IRONSIDE drew attention to a paper issued by the Allied Military Committee, containing General Gamelin's views on possible allied operations in Scandinavia. The Committee were informed that the paper was about to be issued to the Chiefs of Staff and they were asked to approve its simultaneous issue to the Joint Planning Committee for examination.

THE COMMITTEE agreed to the above proposal.

+ M.R.(J)(40)15 subsequently issued as C.O.S.(40) 214.

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REVISED ANNEX.RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE BELGIAN
AMBASSADOR IN LONDON AND MR. STRINGER ON 20TH
JANUARY, 1940.

M. Cambon gave me this morning the following information about recent exchanges between the French and Belgian Governments.

2. On January 17th the Belgian Ambassador in Paris handed a note to M. Daladier in reply to the communication made to the Belgian Ambassador by M. Daladier on January 15th, reported in Paris telegrams Nos. 11 and 12, copies attached.

3. The Belgian Government thanked the French Government for the measures which the latter had taken to meet the possibility of a German attack.

4. The Belgian Government did not consider it desirable to address an appeal for assistance to London and Paris before aggression by Germany became effective. Their reasons were the following:

- (i) By accepting the French suggestion, the Belgian Government would inevitably and immediately provoke an outbreak of war on Belgian soil.
- (ii) Belgium desired to maintain her moral position intact. She was determined to maintain her neutrality so long as her territory was respected by others and so long as her vital interests were not threatened.
- (iii) Any other course would do damage to Belgian-Dutch solidarity and would drag Holland into war.
- (iv) Germany would probably hesitate to attack Belgium now that her intentions were known. The proofs of German intentions which the Belgian Government now hold placed Germany in an odious position before the world. Now that her plans were known Germany would probably have to change them, or perhaps might abandon them altogether.
- (v) By adopting any other attitude Belgium would assume a frightful responsibility towards her people. Her present line was also in the interests of France and Great Britain. It was essential from the point of view both of law and of treaties that the entry of French and British troops into Belgium should not take place in advance of an effective violation of Belgian soil.
- (vi) To sum up: either Germany will renounce her plans or she will commit an act of aggression. In the latter event, the help which France and Great Britain would afford to Belgium would acquire a moral character which, in conjunction with the efforts of Belgium's own forces, would increase the chances of success.

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5. M. Daladier said that he took note of the statement that the Belgian Government did not wish the entry of French and British troops into Belgium to take place in advance of an effective violation of Belgian territory. He was bound to say that this statement would have technical consequences from the military point of view. The scope of the protection to be afforded to Belgium would necessarily be more restricted and would take longer to establish. The French Government would have to attend to the security of the French army during the movements of troops which would have to be undertaken; and since these movements would affect a large number of troops and a great quantity of material the question of ensuring their security was a very serious one.

6. In view of the reference in the Belgian note to an alleged suggestion made by the French Government (see paragraph 4 (i) above) it was thought well to return a written reply to the Belgian ambassador. This was done on 18th January.

7. The French note observed that, notwithstanding the statement in paragraph 1 of the Belgian note, the French Government made no suggestion to the Belgian Government that the latter should address a "preventive appeal" to France and Great Britain. The possibility of such an appeal having been brought to the knowledge of the French and British Governments in circumstances with which the Belgian ambassador was familiar, M. Daladier had (the note proceeds) limited himself to putting the Belgian ambassador in a position to enlighten his Government as to the military consequences which would result from the presentation or non-presentation of such an appeal by Belgium to France and Great Britain.

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