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EAST AFR. PROT

REG^d
REG^d 17 AUG 16

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W

Foreign Office

1916

August 16th

Last previous Paper.

39135

German East Africa

Forward for obs^r correspondence regarding the proposed employment of Belgian troops by General Smuts.

Mr. Balthazar
Mr. Lambert

The Belgian question is becoming a very distinct one. They are occupying a large tract of country through the merit of their own, but because Gen. Smuts' operations have drawn off away all the enemy troops. Moreover we have made great advance possible owing to the assistance given them in transport, munitions, etc. They are maintaining a very uncompromising attitude towards our requests and we know that there has been + is considerable friction

To Mr. Balthazar
Copy to Mr. G. P. 15/6 24 August

Next subsequent Paper

39324

between British & Belgian officers, Gray
Pl. see in this connection memo, below
written on this subject a "little" time
ago. It really seems very desirable
that we should find out from the
Belgian Govt. at an early date, what
their aspirations are, so that we
may at any rate fix upon some
modus vivendi locally. The position
is rapidly becoming an impossible
one.

As regards the more immediate
question dealt with in this paper -
employment of a Belgian Brigade
of native troops by General Smuts,
it appears to be clear that the
Belgians will not agree to the
proposal. So far as C.O. is concerned,
we are naturally anxious to
avoid obligations to the Belgians
in S. Africa as far as possible,
and it seems to me that
our reply to G.O. can only be
that the we regard this
as mainly a military question &

no. 4000
to 39324

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specially
interest
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He; h
leave
to con
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noce

as such primarily one for the West
but that as far as the Dept. of
Concerns the S. of S. agrees with
Lord Grey that the proposal made
by Gen. Smuts cannot in the circumstances
be pressed.

and copy of our letter to D. to
go to W. C.

27 18/8/16

On the military point I agree.
On the territorial question I think things
would be greatly simplified if we could
give Belgium an assurance that G. E. Africa
will, when taken, be held entirely at the
disposal of the Imperial Govt. It is
unthinkable that the Union should have
ambitions - except perhaps of a very
vague kind - towards the administration
of a country which is separated from
them by the whole of Rhodesia.

As to the first part of R. H. H. H.
minutes, we must not underestimate
the service which Belgium rendered
in the early stages of the war in S. Africa,
in monopolising the attention of a
considerable portion of our forces. Even now her
help in this way must be of value to us.
Smuts - ^{at the start} ~~at the start~~ we might have seen

been overruled.

Co. C.B. 18/8/16

It is true that the Belgians & others
will help in defending the
Rhodesian border & we were
rather alarmed at one time
when they were withdrawing troops.
But their claim to territorial
expansion seems to me inherently
weak & if they insist that with
they should be held to it. (in the formal)

I don't think Union could
put forward any claim to Africa
- they are I think too smooth to
do this - & an assurance
might safely be given that any
territory in E.A. conquered by the
association of Union troops would
be held at disposal of U.K.
(Union for this pledge with regard
to S.W.A. - which in fact must go
to the Union)

W2 18/8/16

AMM v. 8

August 16th, 1916

W. 158648/16.

The Under-Secretary of State,
Foreign Office,
London.

Secret.

Sir:-

I am directed by Viscount Grey of Fallodon to transmit to you, herewith, to be laid before Mr. Secretary Bonar Law, a copy of a letter from the War Office, regarding certain proposals made by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, East Africa, for the future employment of the Belgian Congo troops now operating in that theatre. Copies of a telegram, of a despatch and of a letter from His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Le Havre on the subject, are also enclosed, for Mr. Bonar Law's very confidential information.

In view of Lord Kilmarnock's observations Lord Grey is of opinion that, for political reasons, General Smuts' suggestion cannot be pressed, and he would propose, if Mr. Bonar Law concurs, to state, when informing the Belgian Government to this effect, that the campaign in East Africa, like every other campaign, has been undertaken in the general interest of all the Allies: and that this alone, and not any individual interest, is the cause of any proposals made by His Majesty's Government in connection with the joint military operations of the Allies.

A

The Under Secretary of State,
Colonial Office.

July 78
Kilmanock
Aug 16/16
9 private

A similar letter has been addressed to the
War Office.

I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient,
humble Servant,

Maurice de Mullen

Copy.

0165/7775. (M.O.2.B.)

(147967)

Secret.

WAR OFFICE,

LONDON, S.W.

330

28th July, 1916.

Sir:-

I am commanded by the Army Council to transmit for the information of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs extracts from telegrams received from the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, East Africa, containing proposals relative to the future employment of the Belgian Congo troops now operating in that theatre.

2. The movements now in progress by the Allied Forces are directed towards the effective seizure and control of the enemy's main lateral line of communication, the Central Railway, and when completed will mark the close of a distinct phase of the operations. From information in the possession of the Council it is probable that on completion of the phase the German Commander may withdraw his remaining forces into the districts of Iringa and Mahenge, south of the Railway, and endeavour to prolong the campaign.

3. The Council would prefer on many grounds to employ in the final phase of the campaign, which may approximate to guerilla warfare, forces composed as far as possible of African troops, releasing as far as may be found practicable the Imperial, white South Africa, and Regular Indian units now serving under General Smuts. In anticipation of this the Council have despatched a certain number of West African troops to East Africa, and

Under Secretary of State,
Foreign Office.

and a considerable expansion of the Kings African Rifles
has already been undertaken: 331

Difficulties, however, are encountered in rendering available with sufficient rapidity the full numbers of African troops likely to be required for the conclusion of the campaign and for the necessary garrisons in the occupied territory. These difficulties arise principally in connection with the recruiting, training, and officering of the new units in time to be of service.

4. In consequence, Lieutenant-General Smuts has proposed that, when the Belgian Congo forces have occupied Kigoma and Ujiji, the Belgian Government should be approached with a view to securing their assent to our taking over all or the greater portion of their troops in the field, for incorporation in our forces under British Officers, thus providing a fully-trained and well-organised accession of strength.

It is considered that on completion of the operations specified the Belgian Government will have little interest in the final stages of the campaign, and may be glad to be relieved of the financial liabilities connected with the maintenance of their forces, especially as it is understood that these have had to be replaced in the Congo to some extent by the raising of fresh recruits.

I am therefore to request that preliminary steps may be taken to ascertain the opinion of the Belgian Government on these proposals.

I am, etc.,

(Signed) E. B. Gabbit.

DATED 6th JULY, 1916.

332

.... There is no doubt that it is the intention of the enemy eventually to retreat to the Iringa and Mahenge districts where the campaign will be made very difficult and practically impossible for white troops by the diseases of men and animals.

I venture to make the following suggestion:-

The Belgians have a well-trained native Army numbering between 8,000 and 10,000 rifles. These troops who belong to the period before the war now form part of the army of advance, their place in the Congo having been taken by recruits. The Congo Government will be seriously embarrassed after this War, by the large numbers of troops and they might welcome an opportunity to get rid of the financial liability.

My suggestion is that the British Government should approach the Belgian Government and propose after the occupation of Ujiji to take over the native army with native N.C.O.'s and men and incorporate them in the British army under British Officers for the duration of the campaign.

The Belgians have no further interest in the campaign after the occupation of Ruanda and Urundi which they have already accomplished and after the occupation of Ujiji (which ought to take place soon) and they might be pleased to agree.....

EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM GENERAL SMUTS

DATED 18th JULY, 1916.

333

Training and recruitment of the new King's African Rifle battalions is proceeding slowly and it is doubtful whether they will be fit for the field when the secondary campaign south of the central railway begins. I propose in the meantime to continue the campaign with present troops even after the occupation of the railway until these battalions are properly trained.

As regards the question of Belgian troops I consider it advisable to ask for 8,000 rifles which will be 10 battalions of 600 men each according to the Congo Free State establishment.

Wastage will be considerable and the probability of guerilla warfare on the part of the enemy in a difficult country will necessitate a considerable force on our part.

BELGIUM

MILITARY

334

Decypher of telegram from Lord Kilmarnock (Havre).

August 13th 1915.

(d. 1.40 p.m. r. 6.20 p.m. August 13th).

No.44.

Secret.

My despatch Treaty No.133.

Belgian Government regret that they are unable to accept General Smuts' proposal. Reasons given are:-

- (1) that Belgian Colonial troops cannot fight under another flag and officers;
- (2) probable refusal of natives to fight except for their own sovereign under their own officers and practical difficulties involved in change of methods and language of command;

(3) lack of Belgian interest justifying before public opinion the sacrifice of Belgian Congo soldiers.

Note states that Belgian Military action in German East Africa appears to be terminated with march of General Tombeur on Tabora beyond which point he has been instructed in no case to pass.

If however it can be shown that Belgian interests exist justifying the sacrifices which continuation of the campaign would entail, the Belgian Government are ready to examine with sincere desire to arrive at an understanding the considerations and projects which may be submitted to them.

August 9, 1914.

33

My Lord,

Your despatch No. 62 Secret of the 1st instant reached me yesterday by bag and I called this morning at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and, in the absence of Baron Beyens at La Panne, handed to the Political Director a Note Verbale, copies of which I have the honour to enclose, asking for the views of the Belgian Government on General Amets' proposal for the employment of Belgian Native troops under British Officers in the final phase of the campaign in German East Africa.

Baron Gaiffier said that the matter was far too important for him to give any official opinion on but that he would lay it before Baron Beyens immediately on his return which would be on Saturday. His Excellency would then doubtless consult the Minister of Colonies and possibly the Cabinet.

Meanwhile Baron Gaiffier, speaking in his personal and private capacity, said that he would not disguise from me that he feared the proposal would meet with objections and arouse susceptibilities in certain quarters. He was quite doubtful now as to whether it was possible from a practical point of view and whether the native troops could be relied on to obey Officers other than those who had trained them.

I pointed out that the proposal was ^a purely military one and that all I was instructed to do at present was to ask for the views of the Belgian Government on it.

At. Hon.

but

Colonel Grey of Fallogon R.G.

&c. &c. &c.

but I said that I was sure my Government would be much gratified if it were accepted. I also laid stress on the advantages to be derived from the employment of natives, whereby white troops would be released for service elsewhere, possibly on the Continent of Europe. In this connection I gathered from something I saw in Galignani's paper that the Belgian Government might be contemplating the possibility of using their native troops on their own front in Belgium.

I have the honour to be with the highest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

humble servant.

(Sd) *John Lubbock*

The Army Council have resolved to propose the following
 units, formed of local personnel, in the first instance, with
 a view to the evolution of a division of the type proposed
 in the conduct of future operations in the area.

The Council note that the operations in progress
 by the allied forces are directed to the seizure of
 the main line of communication, the central railway, and then
 will mark the close of a distinct phase of the operations.
 On completion of this phase, the German Commander
 will withdraw his remaining forces into the districts of
 Livingstone and Mahenge, south of the railway, and
 prolong the campaign which will be rendered very difficult
 and practically impossible for white troops on account of
 the diseases to which men are liable in this area.

The Council would prefer on any proposal to rely
 in this final phase of the campaign, which may involve
 to guerilla warfare, forces composed of local personnel
 or African troops, thus releasing for service elsewhere
 as far as may be found practicable the regular, British,
 South African and regular Indian units now under General
 Smith's command. In anticipation of this the Council have
 despatched a certain number of West African troops to
 East Africa, and a considerable expansion of the White
 African Field has already been undertaken.

Difficulties, however, are being encountered in
 getting available with sufficient regularity the full number
 of African troops likely to be required for the conclusion
 of

of the campaign and of the necessary strength in the occupied territory. These difficulties arise principally in connection with the recruiting and training of the new levies in time to be of service and it is doubtful whether they will be fit for the field when the secondary operations of the Central will be begun. 338

In consequence General Gault has proposed that when the Belgian Congo forces have occupied Léopoldville and the Kasai, the Belgian Government should be approached with a view to securing their assent to our taking over all or the greater portion of their native troops with their native non-commissioned officers, not in the field for incorporation in our forces under British Officers, thus providing a fully trained and well organized accession of strength - amounting to say 8000 rifles, the equivalent of some 10 battalions according to the Congo establishment.

In supporting this proposal the War Council believe that on completion of the operations specified above the Belgian Government will probably feel comparatively little interest in the final stages of the campaign, and will be glad to be relieved of the financial liabilities connected with the maintenance of this large force of native troops, especially as it is understood that the latter have had to be replaced in the Congo to a considerable extent by the raising of fresh recruits.

I am instructed to bring the above to the notice of the Belgian Government, and to enquire how they would be disposed to view General Gault's proposal.

copy
1669217

H A W R E,

August 9th, 1916.

Private and Secret.

339

My dear Langley:-

The proposal put forward by General Smuts for the incorporation of the Belgian native troops in our forces under British Officers (see F.O. despatch No. 62 of August 1st) is so important from a military point of view that I am very reluctant to say anything which might appear to be putting difficulties in the way of its realization, but as I have reported in my despatch No. 133 of to-day's date Baron Gaiffier while reserving any official expression of opinion, showed me very plainly that his personal view was that serious objection would be entertained to it by the Belgian Government. I confess that I was not surprised at this and it must I think, be pretty clear that Belgian susceptibilities will be aroused and that we must be prepared to meet with opposition on the part of the Minister of Colonies, if not an entire refusal. You will remember how much the Belgians objected to General Smuts' former proposal that we should take over the administration of the whole of German East Africa and how Renkin's consent was only eventually secured for the presence of one British official with the Belgian forces. The argument that their prestige with the natives will be seriously affected (see Sir F. Villiers' despatch No. 81 Confidential of May 4th), will probably be put forward again at this time, it would appear, with more justification.

I

I have not given Gaiffier's language in full as he was most emphatic in disclaiming any competence to give any official opinion at all, but I fear that his views are only too likely to be shared by his chief, and to be held even more strongly by the Minister of Colonies. One of the things he said to me was "If the positions were reversed, would your Government consent to such a proposal?".

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I said all I could to smooth susceptibilities - such as pointing out that the proposal was a purely military one and that I was only instructed to ask for the views of the Belgian Government, but at the same time I made it clear that I was sure His Majesty's Government hoped to secure their assent. The argument as to relieving them of financial liability did not seem to "bite" at all.

Meanwhile Baron Beyens' absence gives us, I feel, a few days grace and I should like to put forward a suggestion which has occurred to me so that we might be prepared with an alternative course in case of refusal or extreme reluctance being evinced by the Belgian Government to agree to our original proposal.

It seems to me that, the same - or nearly the same - military results would be obtained by our asking for the Belgian native troops with their regimental European Officers and undertaking at the same time the financial liability during the war. Of course I am not competent to judge of the objections to this course from a military point of view but the troops would thus be left under the command of the officers to whom they are accustomed whilst Belgian feelings would be spared. The brigade commands could then be given to British officers under

General

General Smuts. I feel some diffidence about putting this idea forward officially, so make it to you privately in the first instance.

The rest of my conversation with Gaiffier was quite instructive. I could see that the name of Smuts was not grateful to his nostrils and he seemed to be suspicious of ulterior designs on the part of that General. Referring to the former proposals as to administration, he said that though Baron Beyens and de Broqueville did not share his views, he personally regretted that our Governments had not come to some agreement as to the ultimate disposal of German East Africa. I said that it was, I believed, the considered policy of His Majesty's Government that all such questions should be left over for settlement after the war, but I asked what he had in his mind: did he mean partition? He said "No" - that his Government had, he believed, no territorial ambitions at all in these regions - that they had got as much as they could manage now - but that he hoped His Majesty's Government had not given any pledge as to handing over any of the territory to the South African Union. (I said I thought it most unlikely that they had done so.) His idea seemed to be that we ought to keep our hands free to hand the Colony back to Germany as part of the price of Belgian independence in the event of complete military victory proving unattainable. He said of course that this was only his absolutely personal idea and that it could never be put forward as it seemed to throw doubt on the completeness of the ultimate victory of the Allies.

The whole of the latter part of our conversation was of course purely personal and private, but I thought it might

might be of interest to you to know some of the items he mentioned.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Kilmarnock

342

73 24.38 EAO

~~S 30~~

1343

DOVE HOUSE STREET.

13 August, 1916.

Secret

DRAFT.

Sir,

I am directed by Mr Secretary

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOREIGN OFFICE.

MINUTE.

- Mr. Mächtig 22 8.16
- Mr. *B. Ker* 22 *f 3*
- Mr.
- Mr. Grindle.
- Mr. Lambert.
- Mr. Read.
- Sir G. Fiddes.
- Mr. Steel-Maitland.
- Mr. Bonar Law.

Bonar Law to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. W 158848/16 of the 16th August *and No. W. 161300/16 of the 19th August* regarding proposals made by the General Officer Commanding in Chief, East Africa, for the employment by him of the Belgian Congo troops now operating in German East Africa, and, in reply, to request you to inform Viscount Grey of Fallodon that Mr Bonar Law regards this as a military question, and, as such, primarily one for the War Office, but that so far as this Department is concerned, he agrees that the proposal made by General Santa cannot, in the circumstances, be pressed.

to be to
to to

Jan
63
K.L.