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Col. Jones

194

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- 3939.

INTELLIGENCE BUREAU OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION.Memorandum by General Smuts.(Prepared in accordance with War Cabinet 359, Minute 7).

The War Cabinet referred to me the question whether the Intelligence Bureau hitherto existing under Colonel Buchan's Information Department should in future come under the newly constituted Ministry of Information or should, in accordance with a previous War Cabinet decision, come under the Foreign Office. After hearing the evidence of the two Departments I came to the conclusion that it would be wrong to deprive the new Ministry of the Intelligence functions which seemed to me necessary for the proper execution of its duties, and I ruled that the existing Intelligence Bureau should continue with the new Ministry which has taken the place of the Information Department under which the Bureau had hitherto worked. This ruling was accepted by the parties.

The Foreign Office represented, however, that an Intelligence Department of its own, which could direct, sift, and co-ordinate all the important political information, much of it of a very secret character, coming to it not only from its own representatives but also the War Office and Admiralty, was essential to a proper discharge of its duties, and I accordingly decided that the Foreign Office should constitute such a department which would be responsible for this and for supplying the Cabinet with intelligence reports based on all the information coming to it.

It was admitted that the Ministry of Information was entitled to receive very full information, not only from the Foreign Office but also from the Admiralty and the War Office, in order that it might have the fullest material for its propaganda work. In view of the secret character of much of their intelligence, the Admiralty and the War Office expressed their strong preference for supplying all their political information to the Foreign Office instead of direct to the Ministry of Information, the Foreign Office undertaking to supply the Ministry of Information with all such information as was useful for propaganda and was not of too confidential or secret a nature. The Ministry of Information preferred to obtain its information direct from the Admiralty and War Office instead of through the intermediation of the Foreign Office, but agreed to accept that intermediation as a provisional arrangement with the idea of again raising the question later on.

After these decisions had been taken the principal officials of the Intelligence Bureau resigned, presumably because they wished to remain responsible under the Foreign Office for writing the Intelligence reports for the Cabinet. Lord Beaverbrook asked for a ruling from me that these gentlemen should not be engaged by the Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office after their resignation from his Department. I declined to lay down this ruling as they were not civil servants but independent experts voluntarily serving the country in war time, and as the Foreign Office represented (no doubt with perfect truth) that their expert services

services could not be spared, and if they did not work under the Ministry of Information, they should be allowed to work under the Foreign Office.

Various expedients tried by me to overcome the difficulty have failed, and I can only report the situation to the Cabinet for a definite decision on the point.

Lord Beaverbrook will probably also raise the other question whether he is not entitled to be supplied with Admiralty and War Office Intelligence direct instead of through the channel of the Foreign Office.

A way out of the difficulty is for the Cabinet to decide that the Intelligence Bureau should remain with the Ministry of Information, and that its functions should remain exactly as they have been hitherto. In that case the Cabinet will get two sets of Intelligence reports - one from the Foreign Office, and the other from the Ministry of Information. In spite of this multiplication of the papers coming before the Cabinet, I advise that this solution be adopted.

(Initialled). J.C.S.

15th March, 1918.

J.C. Smuts. (Mar. 15, 1918). SECRET INTELLIGENCE BUREAU OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION, Memorandum by General Smuts, Prepared in accordance with War Cabinet 359, Minute 7, GT 3939, Cat. Ref. CAB 24-45-39. The National Archives.

TRANSCRIPT

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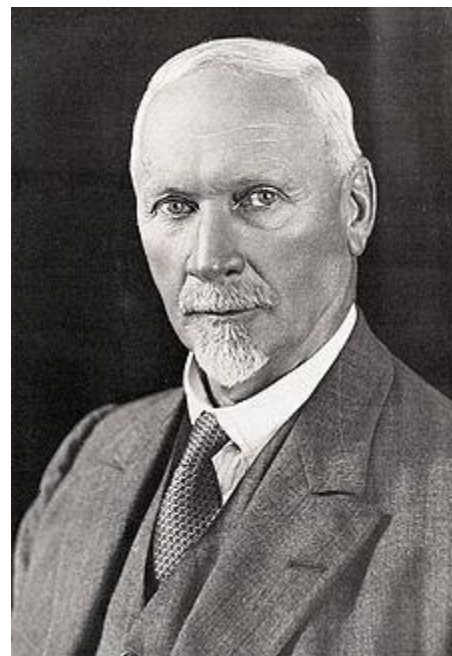


Figure 1: Field Marshal Jan Christian Smuts  
PC, OM, CH, DTD, ED, KC, FRS



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[Lord Beaverbrook: William Maxwell Aitken, 1st Baron Beaverbrook, PC, ONB (25 May 1879 – 9 June 1964). During the First World War he ran the Canadian Records office in London, and played a role in the removal of H. H. Asquith as prime minister in 1916. The resulting coalition government (with Lloyd George as prime minister and Bonar Law as Chancellor of the Exchequer), rewarded Aitken with a peerage and, briefly, a Cabinet post as Minister of Information. *Wikipedia*.]

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