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VOLUME 1
1885-1919

1. INITIAL REPORTS AND OIL COMPANY INAUGURATIONS: ROUMANIA AND TRANSCAUCASIA 1885-1905

1.1 Précis of information concerning Trans-Caucasia 1885

Extract from 'Précis of information concerning Trans-Caucasia, 1885', War Office
[See map 1 in the map box.]
[FO 881/5219]

1.2 Status of the Port of Batoum in 1886

Despatch No. 231 from Sir R. Morier, HM Ambassador, St Petersburgh, to the Earl of Rosebery, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs [Foreign Secretary], 9 July 1886, referring to a newspaper article, and enclosing a translation of same, concerning the end of Batoum's status as a 'free port', and implications for shipping [and therefore oil trade], forwarding two items: Translation of extract from the Official Gazette, 27 June 1886, denying any plans of the Russian government affecting Batoum, which would contravene terms of the Treaty of Berlin; Translation of extract from the Novoye Vremya, 27 June 1886, arguing that Batoum has been commercially successful under Russian control, especially the naphtha industry
[FO 418/14]

Despatch No. 284 from Mr C.S. Scott, HM Consul (?), Berlin, to the Earl of Rosebery, Foreign Secretary, London, 10 July 1886, conveying German response to Russia's violation of Treaty of Berlin
[FO 418/14]

Despatch No. 157 from the Earl of Rosebery, Foreign Secretary, London, to Sir R. Morier, HM Ambassador, St Petersburgh, 13 July 1886, responding to the Russian declaration over Batoum, detailing how this contravenes the Treaty of Berlin, British concern over the disregard of an international agreement
[FO 418/14]

Despatch from Vice-Consul D.R. Peacock, Batoum, to Acting Consul-General Stevens, 17 July 1886, referring to the formal declaration that Batoum ceases to be a free port, and implications for British commerce, noting general problems in trade operations in the Caspian and Trans-Caucasus; implications for shipping trade; Russian defence/military efforts
[FO 418/14]

1 This volume covers the earliest period of British investment in oil concessions in the Trans-Caucasus and Roumania, depicting typical commercial procedures, involvement of land owners, and the set-back to the industry brought about by the Russian Revolution of 1905.
Despatch No. 260 from Sir R. Morier, HM Ambassador, St Petersburgh, to the Earl of Rosebery, Foreign Secretary, London, 27 July 1886, forwarding an extract from a French translation of a letter from the Mayor of Batoum, Governor General of the Caucasus, as published in *Journal de St Petersburgh*, 15 July 1886, concerning the effects on naphtha trade of Batoum's altered status [FO 418/14]

Despatch No. 204 from Sir J.S. Lumley, Rome, to the Earl of Rosebery, Foreign Secretary, London, 27 July 1886, relaying views of Photiades Pasha [Ottoman official] on the change to Batoum's status, its defensibility and military role [FO 418/14]

1.3 Report by Colonel Herbert, Military Attaché at St Petersburgh, of a visit to the Caucasus and Crimea in 1889

Despatch No. 345 from Sir R. Morier, HM Ambassador, St Petersburgh, to the Marquis of Salisbury (Foreign Secretary), 7 November 1889, forwarding a report by Col. I. Herbert, Military Attaché, St Petersburgh, 7 November 1889: brief report, describing railway and other communications available in the region, its remoteness and great distances between towns and ports stressed, notes geographical obstacles to overland travel and trade; heavy military presence, and referring to planned railway routes [FO 881/5855]

1.4 British investment in the fledging oil trade in Trans-Caucasia and Roumania, 1894-1904: Examples of companies created to facilitate British investment in oil exploration and development on a small scale, includes details of some of the Roumanian and Caucasian land owners and officials, methods of arranging early concessions

1.4.1 The Black Sea Petroleum Co. Ltd, 1894

Formed in London in 1894, the records do not indicate date of dissolution. Memorandum of Association, formed with an initial investment of £15,000, 8 February 1894, by several associates including an engineer; Agreement between the Comtesse de Valhamey with the Black Sea Petroleum Company, 10 February 1894, to direct locations for prospecting in Osoorgeti (?), with a Schedule defining ownership of land in Osoorgeti, terms of lease and exploitation of the concession [BT 31/09342/69401]

1.4.2 Poiana Oil Co. (Roumania) Ltd, 1901

Memorandum and Articles of Association, (extract), 19 February 1901; Summary of capital and shares, with extract from long list of small investors; Certificate and Prospectus, noting development to take place in district of Poiana, Roumania, ‘where deposits have been proved to exist’, giving examples of existing hand wells; detailed statement and procès verbale from local officials, outlining exacting terms and conditions of development of the concessions; further brief agreement, 27 February 1901; deed of cession and Concession (5/1/99); procès verbale 27 November 1900; Contract of Cession; Resolution winding up the company, June 1902 [BT 31/09342/69401]
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[FO 65/1738]

Despatch No. 602 from [Sir] Charles Hardinge, (HM Ambassador to Russia), St Petersburgh, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 8 October 1905, regarding the Russian government responses to the problem, mainly the offer of a loan to affected companies, commenting on attitude of the various British companies, and their legitimate claim to protection from such losses

[FO 65/1738]

Letter from Mr E. Hubbard, Chairman and Secretary, Baku Russian Petroleum & Liquid Fuel Co. Ltd, London, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 11 October 1905, forwarding Statement of Claim estimating that losses amounted to over one million roubles; further detailed claim, 11 October 1905, refers to the extent of the business, 'The Company is recognised under Imperial Ukase as an English Company working in Russia, which assured to it the protection

[FO 65/1738]

There were losses and there was enormous destruction to plant, machinery, and wells as a result of protests, riots, strikes and inter-racial fighting; military restoration of order came to Baku in 1905. Events led to the collapse of many small concessions and companies, and presaged worse to come later in the century.
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of the Russian Imperial Government ... with a separate statement of losses for the European Petroleum Co. at Baku, [set up in 1899]
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1.7 Russian policy respecting foreign claims, 1905

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[FO 65/1738]

Memorandum of Evidence of omission on part of Russian government to take proper measures for protection of life and property on the Baku oil fields during the recent disorders, by the Russian Petroleum and Liquid Fuel Co., 13 October 1905. This claim relates the sequence of local disturbances, action of the military, threat to the British colony in the vicinity
[FO 65/1738]

Paraphrase of telegram No. 196 from Sir Charles Hardinge, St Petersburgh, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, London, 16 October 1905, comments by various companies on the extent of claims
[FO 65/1738]

Despatch No. 631 from Sir Charles Hardinge, St Petersburgh, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, London, 21 October 1905, reporting the responses of the Russian government to claims made by various British companies at Baku, which was that no direct compensation would be offered, instead a loan 'on easy terms', to restart work in the oilfields. Notes on attitude of some of the companies, and suggestion of further land grants as a means of compensation. Forwards: note verbale from Sir Charles Hardinge, St Petersburgh, to HE Count Lamsdorff, 7/20 October 1905, urging some compensation for British firms
[FO 65/1738]

Memorandum outlining the losses sustained by the Baku Russian Petroleum Co. Ltd, the Russian Petroleum and Liquid Fuel Co. Ltd, the European Petroleum Co. Ltd, 20 October 1905
[FO 65/1738]

Despatch No. 44 from Sir Charles Hardinge, St Petersburgh, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, London, 12 December 1905, reporting that the Baku Oil Companies had come to an arrangement with the Russian government
[FO 65/1738]

1.8 Impact of the Russian Revolution on British oil interests at Batoum, 1905. All shipping and work relating to the oil industry was brought to a standstill; Batoum was dominated by an especially strong section of revolutionaries – the Batoum Committee of Russian Democratic Labour

Despatch No. 1 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 26 January 1905, describing the effect on British oil interests of the militarisation of the region: all work comes to a standstill
[FO 65/1714]
Despatch No. 3 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 2 February 1905, reporting increasingly grave situation, led by the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, effect on shipments of petroleum; requests for the protection of British shipping made to the governor
[FO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 5 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 8 February 1905, reporting that all transport was frozen
[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 8 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 1 March 1905, reporting anarchy in some of the ports, attempts by Russian troops to subjugate the people and re-conquer the country
[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 21 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 30 March 1905, reporting the spread of the uprising into other parts of Trans-Caucasia
[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 22 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 15 April 1905, which asserts that trade has been ruined; attempts by some merchants to continue shipments of oil described
[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 30 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 22 May 1905, referring to impact of cheaper American oil on the Batoum industry
[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 31 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 31 May 1905, reports the assassination of the Governor of Baku, and a further general strike at the oil wells, as well as inter-racial fighting and murders
[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 35 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 10 July 1905, referring to the situation with transport services, noting that some towns were completely closed off, such as Tiflis and Batoum
[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 36 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 5 August 1905, reporting that a strike at the oil wells had spread; there were fires at petroleum refineries, and fighting in the oilfields, concluding ‘the whole petroleum industry of Baku has suffered a blow from which it will take a very long time to recover’
[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 43 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 12 September 1905,
further details on damage to the oil industry, noting the oilfields had
been literally burnt out, and the trade therefore ruined; also reports on
detailed fighting between various racial groups, murders, etc.

[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 45 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the
Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 9 October 1905,
forwarding returns ["Estimated Damages and Losses..."] showing
destruction of oil well region of Apscheron, estimates that up to 4.25
million pounds sterling had been lost, but that about 42 per cent of the
wells had not been damaged. However, it could not be calculated when
oil production might re-commence. Includes 2 tables of damages and
losses sustained in the Baku fields

[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 53 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the
Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 7 November 1905,
further details of the situation at Baku, including mob rule, chaos and
murder, that the oil wells were burnt out

[FCO 65/1714]

Despatch No. 55 from Mr P. Stevens, British Consul, Batoum, to the
Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, London, 22 November
1905, forwarding a report from Mr A.E. Ranald McDonell, Acting Vice
Consul, Baku, 31 October 1905, 'Report on the Situation in Baku from 15
to 31 October 1905

[FCO 65/1714]

2. STATUS OF ROUMANIAN AND TRANSCAUCASIAN OIL
DEVELOPMENT POST-1905

2.1 Extract from Foreign Office General Report on Roumania
for 1906

Despatch No. 1 from Sir C. Greene, Bucharest, to Sir Edward Grey,
Foreign Secretary, London, 1 January 1907, forwarding Foreign Office
General Report on Roumania for 1906: extracts include an overview of
Roumania's foreign relations and policies, relevant treaties and review of
relations with Britain; section on trade includes a review of the
petroleum industry (p.17); also of relevance are shipping and transport
notes

[FO 421/248] ^

2.2 Extract from Annual Report on Roumania for 1907

Despatch No. 60 from Sir C. Greene, Bucharest to Sir Edward Grey,
Foreign Secretary, 25 December 1907, forwarding Foreign Office Annual
Report on Roumania 1907: extract referring to a major revolution which
occurred in 1907 over land use and ownership, resulting in agrarian
reforms

[FO 421/248]
2.3 Extracts from the Military Report on Trans-Caucasia, 1907

Extracts from report prepared by the General Staff, War Office, 1907; included for this study include an outline of events of 1904–1905, and comments on their impact; state and administrative boundaries of Tiflis, Kutais, Erivan, Baku, Elisavetpol, Chernomoria; system of communications – roads; mining and resources, notes ‘the most important product of Trans-Caucasia is petroleum, which is obtained in large quantities from the celebrated oil fields in the neighbourhood of Baku’; which resource had been hand-dug until about 1877; notes a pipeline had been built between Baku and Batoum, ways and means of exporting goods locally; extent of British investment thought to be about 6 million pounds sterling; value of exports; prices; also included is a section on the Caspian Ports [FO 881/8999X]

2.4 Extract from Annual Report on Roumania, 1908

Despatch No. 1, from Sir C. Greene, Bucharest to Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary, 1 January 1909, forwarding Annual Report for 1908, report on the impact of agrarian land reforms, implications for oil concessions [FO 371/724]

2.5 Revival of interest in oil concessions in Trans-Caucasia, 1911–1912

2.5.1 The Kuban Black Sea Oilfield Ltd, 1911
Memorandum of Association, 24 March 1911; Agreement between the K.B.O. Syndicate Ltd and Kuban Black Sea Oilfields Ltd, 6 April 1911, regarding a concession in the province of Kuban, specifically the village of Suvorovsko-Tcherkeski [BT 31/35000/114883]

2.5.2 The Trans-Caspian Petroleum Co. Ltd, 1912
Memorandum of Association, 10 August 1912, with a Certificate of Incorporation; list of shareholders; notice of dissolution, 5 February 1914 [BT 31/20863]

2.6 Strategic appraisal of the progress of improvements to railway and other facilities, and to nearby ports, Baku 1914

Report No. LVI from [Military Attaché (?)], British Embassy, St Petersburgh, to War Office, London, 8 June 1914, ‘Caspian Ports’. Reviews facilities at Astrakhan; Petrovsk (a very important port for oil distribution); Baku, with a detailed plan of the town; the Caspian Flotilla; and the Bokhara Railway. Illustrated with postcard photos of the ports, including the naval harbour at Bailov, south of Baku [See Map 2 in the map box.][WO 106/1042]
2.7 British need for Roumanian oil stocks in 1915 and ensuing policy

Telegram No. 38 from Sir G. Barclay, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 15 February 1915, problems of oil storage in Roumania in view of possible bombardment [T1/11829]

Treasury minute, 28 January 1915, estimating oil quantities [T1/11829]

Despatch No. 4688 from Treasury to Admiralty, 22 February 1915 [T1/11829]

Despatch No. 173 from Sir G. Barclay, Bucharest, to Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary, London, 10 April 1915, oil supplies [T1/11829]

Despatch No. 9387 from Treasury to Foreign Office, 16 April 1915, policy to terminate all Roumanian contracts [T1/11829]

Treasury minute, 26 March 1915, outlining the general situation respecting the purchase of Roumanian oil, in the context of Admiralty needs [T1/11829]

Despatch No. 47 from Sir G. Barclay, Bucharest, to Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary, London, 29 August 1915, on the recent assessment of oil stocks, enclosing a letter (in French), from Roumanian official to the British Minister, Roumania, 24 August 1915, outlining the situation vis-à-vis oil stocks [T1/11829]


3.1 Establishment of an Inter-Allied Petroleum Executive to be based in London, 1918

Terms of reference, as suggested by the Ministry of Fuel and Power, no date; Note read at the Fourth Preliminary Meeting of the Inter-Allied Petroleum Conference by the Director of the French Delegation, 27 February 1918; Minutes of the Fifth Informal Meeting of the Inter-Allied

Note: In 1916, a British Military Mission was sent to Roumania to oversee the destruction of the oilfields so that the petroleum resources were not captured by the Germans; although this was a crucial event, and is referred to after the event, no contemporary report was located within War Office records.

War damage within the Roumanian oilfields affected not only British businesses, but French as well, and became a major post-war settlement issue. In addition to damages to equipment, worse was to come: the government of Roumania expropriated the fields leading to a major international rift, which the British came to refer to as 'stolen oil' and which was never effectively settled. (This happened again after the Second World War, but for different reasons.)

Reflecting the growing dependency of the British Navy on petroleum resources and increasing appreciation and search for it world-wide, the British government created a Petroleum Executive in 1918 to specialise in the many and urgent questions.
Petroleum Conference, 28 February 1918, joint European interests and needs regarding petroleum products

[POWE 33/8]

3.2 Negotiations regarding the Petroleum Policy of His Majesty's Government, 1918–1919

Historical summary, with selected appendices:
Appendix A: Royal Dutch Shell agreement: memorandum by Rt. Hon. W.H. Long, MP, for the War Cabinet, 22 February 1919. A schedule to the agreement lists the company’s interests in Russia, viz, the Ural Caspian Petroleum Co., the New Schibaieff Petroleum Co., the North Caucasian Oilfields Ltd, the Crosny Sundja Oilfields Ltd;
Appendix C: Anglo-French Agreement: notes of a meeting, 17 December 1918; Memorandum of Agreement, 8 April 1919;
Appendix D: Memorandum for the basis of negotiations between Roumania and Great Britain and France, regarding the oil policy in Roumania, 4 April 1919;
Appendix F: Cooperation of British firms in South Russia: Notes of a meeting held at the offices of HM Petroleum Executive, 11 April 1919, to evaluate ways and means of acquiring greater oil interests

[POWE 33/14]

3.3 Military operations in the region of the Caspian Sea, 1918–1919: Impact and implications for the petroleum industry, including the aspect of political allegiance and independence in the context of the advance of the Bolshevik Army

Despatch No. M.05367 from Mr A. Flint, Secretary to the Admiralty, to Secretary, War Office, 20 June 1918, responding to the War Office’s request for information on the ports of the Caspian Sea, its defence position, suitability for motor launches and for seaplanes. Forwards: Memorandum on the Caspian Sea, by the Naval Intelligence Department, June 1918. Prepared from: (a) Russian Pilot, 1908 with supplement to January 1915, (b) War Office publications, (c) Other details.
The report includes broad geographical considerations, territorial issues and boundaries, resources; system of communications, for example: railway links overall, followed by details of each major port, including Petrovsk, Baku, Astara and other smaller ports. Especially relevant are detailed comments on the oilfields, including completion of a pipeline between Baku and Batoum. There are also notes on the administration of the district, a brief summary of each port, notes on defensibility, navigation problems, and an index

[WO 32/5671]

Despatch No. 0149/5212 from the Army Council to the Admiralty, London, 4 June 1918, commenting on need for control of the Caspian Sea

[WO 32/5671]

Draft message, reference 0149/5212, no date, c. 4 June 1918, regarding policy in the Caspian Sea (not sent)
[WO 32/5671]
Paraphrase of three telegrams from Baghdad, 26-27 August 1918, regarding possible oil supply at Krasnovodsk
[WO 32/5671]

Précis of a telegram from the Senior Naval Office, Enzei, forwarded by the Director of Military Operations, War Office, 31 October 1918, reporting plans of Russians to control oil supply from Krasnovodsk
[WO 32/5672]

Letter from Maj. Gen. W.M. Thomson, Commanding Northern Persian Force, Enzei, to General Bicherakov, 3 November 1918, conveying Allied policy for the Caucasus, plan to reoccupy Baku, with the defeat of the Turks
[WO 32/5672]

Telegram No. 2 from Senior Naval Officer, Caspian Sea, to General Officer Commanding, Northern Persian Force, 7 November 1918, reporting his arrival, and difficulties in liaising with the Russian fleet, which could lead to British acting independently in the region
[WO 32/5672]

Extract from the diary of Maj. Gen. W.M. Thomson, Commanding Northern Persian Force, “Situation on arrival in Trans-Caucasia: Narrative of the first few days in Baku, 17-24 November 1918”, 24 November 1918, relating attitude of the local civilian population, and of the Russians; hopes of re-opening an oil pipeline, and means of getting state business generally re-opened, effect of military presence
[CAB 45/107]

Telegram No. OD757 from Naval Staff, Operations Division, to the Director of Military Operations, 16 November 1918, forwarding paraphrases of four telegrams: from R.A. Egypt [to Senior Naval Officer, Caspian]; from Senior Naval Officer, Caspian, to Admiralty; from Admiralty to Senior Naval Officer, Caspian; from Commander in Chief, East Indies, to Senior Naval Officer, Caspian, on oil situation at Baku
[WO 32/5672]

Telegram No. OD782 from Naval Staff, Operations Division, to the Director of Military Operations, 25 November 1918, forwarding paraphrases of two telegrams: from Senior Naval Officer, Caspian; from Commander in Chief, Mediterranean, on oil situation at Baku
[WO 32/5672]

Telegram No. OD822 from Naval Staff, Operations Division, to the Director of Military Operations, 9 December 1918, forwarding a paraphrase of a telegram received by the Senior Naval Officer, Caspian, reporting that Lenin had emphasised the (strategic) importance of Baku, and Bolsheviks intended to take it
[WO 32/5672]

Telegram No. OD850 from Naval Staff, Operations Division, to the Director of Military Operations, 16 December 1918, amendment to telegram on defence required for Caspian and Baku, 12 December 1918
[WO 32/5672]
Telegram No. NID/OL4482 from Director, Naval Intelligence, to Director, Military Intelligence, 23 December 1918, forwarding a paraphrase of telegram from Senior Naval Officer, Caspian Sea, as to Russian plans for the winter
[WO 32/5672]

Telegram No. OD877 from Director, Operations Division, to Director, Military Intelligence, 23 December 1918, enclosing 'Appreciation of Naval Situation on Caspian' by Senior Naval Officer, Caspian, as to armaments of Russian, Bolshevik and British in the area
[WO 32/5672]

3.4 Review of Baku oil industry

Report by [Senior Naval Officer, Baku], to General Officer Commanding, British Forces, Baku, 13 December 1918, summarising current companies, requirements and selling prices
[WO 32/10118]

Telegram No. OD 11(?), from Director, Operations Division, to Director, Military Intelligence, 3 January 1919, forwarding a paraphrase of telegram No. 887Z from Commander in Chief, Mediterranean, 2 January 1919, commenting on repairs to Baku-Batoum pipeline, potential oil supply
[WO 32/5672]

Telegram No. 842 from R.A., Black Sea, Pera, to Admiralty, 23 February 1919, announcing the arrival of Denikin’s forces near Astrakhan, and problems in Baku with Russian forces
[WO 32/5672]

3.5 British military occupation of the Caucasus, August 1919

"Notes on Trans-Caucasia", by Maj. Gen. W.M. Thomson, Commanding Northern Persian Force, 26 May 1919, an appreciation of the situation at 13 May 1919, memorandum and notes
[FO 845/107]

Report by Lt. Col. H.K. Newcombe, Controller of Finance, (undated but received early August 1919), on conditions at Baku, noting the prevailing lawlessness and disorder, effect of currency problems on trade, need to restore financial system of sorts; aid of 4 million roubles given by British to pay off troops, restore some financial order, etc.
[T 1/12368]

Minute by Mr A.B. Beavis, Constantinople, to Director of Finances, Army Audit Office, 10 April 1919, forwarding a report by Mr H.P. Fennell, 5 April 1919: an audit and appraisal of the complex financial positions at Tiflis and Baku, citing plans of the Azerbaijan government in supporting the oil industry in sorting impending industrial problems (probable strikes) in the oilfields through advances to the oil companies to pay wage arrears. Reports amounts transferred to Russian army and leaders for dispersal; notes that despite oil potential there was no scope for export, and hence no revenue. Outlines the unusual war-time situation of a British military officer acting as oil controller and the main points of British (military) financial administration of oilfields. Also
3.6 International interest in the search for oil, January–July 1919:
Attempt by the British Government to review potential oil sources outside Eastern Europe and Russia; appraisal of Shell Oil's interests in various territories; liaison with France over obtaining oil


Foreign Office minute, 30 January 1919, titled ‘Petroleum’, further to production within British administered territory

Draft memorandum, undated (c. 1–3 February 1919), considers bringing Royal Dutch Shell within HM Government's closer control, setting out terms and conditions. The Russian companies scheduled in a possible arrangement include: The Ural Caspian Petroleum Co.; the New Schiabaieff Petroleum Co.; the North Caucasian Oilfields Ltd; the Crosny Sundja Oilfields

Letter from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, London, to Secretary, Board of Trade, London, 13 March 1919, enclosing a copy of a provisional Memorandum of Agreement between HM Government, as arranged by Rt. Hon. Mr Walter Long, MP, Petroleum Executive, and HM Minister for Petroleum Affairs, and Senator Berenger, Commissioner General of Petroleum Products for France, for the French government, allowing for cooperation in aspects of petroleum enterprises, including in Roumania

Minutes of an interdepartmental meeting held at the Foreign Office, 29 April 1919, involving the War Office, Treasury and Admiralty, relating to international oil arrangements. Appendices I and II duplicate items included previously, and are not reproduced.

Letter from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, London, to Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, 15 May 1919, referring to joint Anglo-French negotiations planned, including with Roumania, enclosing copy No. 2 of a memorandum which will form the basis of negotiations between the Government of Roumania and the Governments of Great Britain and France regarding the oil policy in Roumania

Letter No. 56571/C/117 from Mr V. Wellesley, Foreign Office, to Monsieur Gambon, French Foreign Minister, 16 May 1919

5 American exclusion from Anglo-French cooperative agreement on oil purchases in Roumania caused the plan to be abandoned.
3.7 British commercial oil trade interests in the Caucasus and the Caspian region in 1919, during a period of extensive military and political upheaval

Foreign Office minute by Mr C. Tufton, 8 February 1919, referring to a meeting between Mr Ghambashidze, representing the Georgian government and Sir Robert Llewellyn Smith, on increasing Georgian commercial relations with the UK, noting rival European interests [FO 608/230]

Peace Congress, 1919, Economic Section, report circulating to the Foreign Office: a list of principal oil companies operating around Caspian and Black Seas and the Interior of Caucasus; a note, with a map depicting location of copper, manganese and petroleum industries in the Caucasus; a list of British interests in the Caucasus, all 31 December 1918 [date of receipt in the Foreign Office is 21 February 1919]. The extensive list of companies provides date of inception, region of
operation and any output – numerous of these had yet to produce any oil; the fields of operation included Grozny, Maikop and Baku. The note on British companies provides a brief summary of companies, including the Anglo-Maikop Corporation, Anglo-Russian Petroleum Ltd, Baku Russian Petroleum Ltd, London, Australian and General Exploration Ltd, Maikop Refineries Ltd

[FO 608/230]

3.8 Changing situation in the Roumanian oil industry 1918–1920: British official interest through the new Petroleum Executive in acquisition of Steaua Romana, position of other companies, such as Sphinx, following the capping of wells in November 1916

Letter No. S.37 from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, London, to Secretary to the Treasurer, 9 May 1918, HM Government to review interests of Anglo-Persian Oil Co. outside Persia

[T 1/12366]

Letter from Mr Walter Long, [Board of Trade (?)], to the Rt. Hon. Mr A. Bonar Law, MP, 16 May 1918, calling for a coherent, unified government policy respecting the petroleum industry

[T 1/12366]

Letter No. PE/S37 from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, London, to the Secretary to the Treasury, 16 May 1918, policy regarding the oil companies’ acquisition of new interests

[T 1/12366]

Letter from the Rt. Hon. Mr A. Bonar Law, to Lord Inchcape, 21 May 1918, nominations for the Committee to advise on policy concerning supplies of oil for naval, military and industrial purposes

[T 1/12366]

Letter from Secretary, Anglo-Persian Oil Co., London, to the Rt. Hon. Lord Inchcape and Mr W. St. D. Jenkins, Government Directors [in Anglo-Persian Oil], 10 July 1918, responding to HM Government’s request to not enter into any undertaking outside Persia without government approval

[T 1/12366]

Letter from Secretary, Anglo-Persian Oil Co., London, to Secretary to the Treasury, 2 August 1918, conveying view that government policy would lead to a restriction of Anglo-Persian business, supplying fiscal evidence

[T 1/12366]

Letter No. S.240 from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, London, to President, Board of Trade, 25 November 1918, as to Anglo-Persian’s interest in buying ‘Steaua Romana’

[POWE 33/57]


[POWE 33/57]
Cypher telegram No. 523 from Sir G. Barclay, Jassy, to Foreign Office, 7 December 1918, on the Roumanian government's sequestering of German-owned property and businesses

[T 1/12366]

Series of telegrams from Sir G. Barclay, 7-27 December 1918, reviewing British interests in the Roumanian oil industry, and policy on reconstruction of the fields; ways and means of exercising a concession which would cut out German interests

[POWE 33/57]

Minute, no date, Sphinx Petroleum Co. Ltd: regarding a Petition of Right, claims against the Roumanian government for loss of property in Roumania; with letter from Arthur Rutherford, Solicitor, London, to the Home Office, 4 January 1919, enclosing a list of companies engaged in presenting Petitions of Right; and Petition of Right pertaining to the Sphinx Petroleum Co. Ltd, formed in May 1913, referring to damage by the British Foreign Mission, under Sir John Norton Griffiths, which destroyed and capped means of production from the oilfields in 1916, protesting that the named company had not agreed to any of the procedures

[HO 45/10900/372670]

Letter No. S.240 from Sir John Cadman to Mr C. Greenway, Anglo-Persian Oil Company, 14 January 1919, regarding the proposed purchase of Steaua Romana

[POWE 33/57]

Letter No. S.240 from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, London, to Secretary to the Treasury, 16 January 1919, support for Anglo-Persian mission to Roumania offered

[T 1/12366]


[T 1/12366]

Letter No. 9311/W/19 from Mr J.A.C. Riley, Foreign Office, to HM Petroleum Executive, London, 22 January 1919, concerning proposed mission to Roumania

[POWE 33/57]

Treasury minute, 10 February 1919, reviewing the protection of British interests, following a vote of funds to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, whether the company's operations and plans adhered to terms, which allowed for investment in Persia

[T 1/12366]

Despatch from the Rt. Hon. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to Mr Walter Long, [Board of Trade], 19 February 1919, concerning the Anglo-Persian Oil Co.'s plans to take-over various Russian oil companies

[T 1/12366]
Despatch from the Rt. Hon. Walter Long, [Board of Trade], to the Rt. Hon. Austen Chamberlain, Treasury, 24 February 1919, proposing that the Petroleum Executive should consult with the Government Directors and Chairman of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. and produce a report for the consideration of the Government
[T 1/12366]

Despatch from the Rt. Hon. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to Mr Walter Long, [Board of Trade], 25 February 1919, agreeing to the new proposal, and reply, (I) March 1919
[T 1/12366]

Letter No. S.335 from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, London, to Secretary to the Treasury, 3 March 1919, referring to several companies’ interest in acquiring Roumanian oil rights
[T 1/12366]

Letter No. 9859 from Mr T.L. Heath, Treasury, to Director, HM Petroleum Executive, 15 April 1919, reporting that negotiations for the acquisition of oil concessions in Roumania was a matter for the Foreign Office
[T 1/12366]

Notes of a meeting at the Treasury, 6 May 1919, aspects of HM Government’s control of Anglo-Persian Oil Co. in view of the possible Steaua purchase
[T 1/12366]

Letter No. S.292 from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, to Secretary to Treasury, 24 July 1919, referring to a letter sent to the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. and enclosing copy of letter No. S.292 from Sir John Cadman, HM Petroleum Executive, to [The Board of] Anglo-Persian Oil Co., 23 July 1919, as to commercial risk involved in acquiring oil interests in South Russia
[T 1/12366]

Telegram No. 22 from HM Chargé d’Affaires, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 11 January 1920, ownership as a consequence of the war
[POWE 33/57]

Despatch from the Department of Overseas Trade, London, to HM Petroleum Executive, London, 14 January 1920, forwarding despatch No. DOT.2710/20 from Mr A. Adams, British Legation, Bucharest, to Department of Overseas Trade, London, 29 December 1919, further to negotiations for the purchase of Steaua Romana
[POWE 33/57]

3.9 Allied negotiations with Roumanian oil companies and government officials in Roumania informed by post-war oil needs, 1919

Letter from Director of Military Operations, Paris, to Lord Hardinge, 19 February 1919, urging that support be given to Roumania, and

Note: the argument was made that Roumania should be assisted as much as possible to help stave off the Bolshevik influence, specifically allowances for railway equipment, and a cargo ship.
forwarding a short report by Maj. Gen. W.H. Greenly, 17 February 1919, on the present situation in Roumania
[FO 608/224]

[FO 608/224]

Report by Mr W.H.P. Woodroffe, Chief British Relief Mission, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 25 March 1919, regarding "provisions for immediate needs of Rumania"
[FO 608/224]

Foreign Office minutes, 'Oil Industry in Roumania', summarising petroleum output of Roumania, 31 January 1919
[FO 608/224]

Extract from Secret Weekly Bulletin, No. 164, summarising oil output in Roumania for 3–9 January 1919
[FO 608/224]

Report of an interview [in Paris] between Senator Berenger and Dr Mrazec, representing the Roumanian government, (2 April 1919), on the possible association of the French government with the Roumanian oil industry. Considers likely international opposition to the scheme, what measures in this respect could be included in the peace treaty. Also reviews some recent history, e.g., Roumania’s position at the outbreak of the war, Roumania’s position of neutrality, and continued German influences. The French were concerned with future reparations and compensation as well as the ‘industrial, commercial and financial combinations which France might desire to arrange with Roumania either alone or with their allies...’.

The report calls for prudence in dealing with the oil companies, especially [the US firm] Standard Oil which had its own plans, and cites its activities pre-war. Generally reflects the new political recognition of the importance of petroleum, and the need for definite political policies
[POWE 33/72]

Statement by Professor Mrazac as to the ‘Desires of Roumania’, 3 April 1919
[POWE 33/72]

Notes for the basis of discussion between Senator Berenger, M. Bratiano and Sir John Cadman, 3 April 1919, with Translation which broadly constitutes an agreement to work together to build up the Roumanian oil industry to prevent German interests regaining any influence
[POWE 33/72]

Memo, possibly by British Delegation, Peace Conference, Paris, 3 April 1919, formally outlining agreement reached between the three countries on Roumanian oil
[POWE 33/72]

Letter [in French] from an Administrative Delegate, Aquila Franco
Roman, Paris, to Senator Berenger, 3 April 1919, commenting on, and forwarding a letter from a staff member at Bucharest, 26 March 1919, with its further enclosure: a copy of an article from L'Orient, titled 'Le petrole Roumain et les liberaux', which summarises a conference on the topic held in Bucharest, titled the Peace of Bucharest and Petroleum Questions. The writer of the letter has minimum hopes for the future, refers to the problems associated with exports, and that conditions at present were exceptional because of the war. The conference reviewed these questions in detail, including the views of the former director of Steaua Romana; refers to need for new legislation to bring the industry further under state control, aspects of state monopolies affecting exports of oil.

English version of 'Memo to form a basis in the negotiations which are now under discussion between the Government of Roumania and the Government of Great Britain and France, regarding the oil policy in Roumania", c. 7 April 1919.

Report No. 3 from Mr W.H.P. Woodroffe, Chief of British Mission to Roumania, Supreme Economic Council, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 7 April 1919, reviewing exports and shipments.

Handwritten minutes from various British delegates at the Peace Conference, reporting conversations with Mr V. Bratiano indicating veiled threats from US delegates, including Mr Hoover: the American government lobbying for Standard Oil's interest in Roumania, suggesting that United States relief to Roumania would be cut off if oil concessions were not granted, 28–30 April 1919.

Report from Commercial Attaché, Bucharest to Foreign Office, 16 May 1919, problems with the commercial export of oil from Roumania, outlining practical and political difficulties connected with exporting oil in exchange.

Final report by Mr W.H.P. Woodroffe, Chief of British Mission to Roumania, to Foreign Office, 2 August 1919. The Report describes the general conditions in Roumania; the nature and effect of Allied relief, refers to an extensive American Mission already present, and disagrees with an American report which exaggerated the negative aspects of conditions in Roumania. Comments on poor administrative practices as a factor in resolving aid distribution; specific reference to the position of the petroleum industry in the context of shortages, noting the trade had been effectively nationalised, and that exports amounted to about 1 percent of the 1913 figures:

'Before the War 75% of the oil interests were German, American and Dutch, the balance being divided between English, French, Belgian and Roumanian. After the War the Roumanian government confiscated the German holdings [and] attempted to force a pool of all interests...'
3.10 Issues relating to the exports of petroleum from South Russia (the Caucasus and Caspian), 1919–1920

‘Memorandum on the question of the export of oil from South Russia’, 30 September 1919, commenting on and forwarding a paper by the Quartermaster General, War Office, regarding the possibility of immediate export of oil
[WO 32/10118]

Minute to the Secretary of State [for War], 20 October 1919, enclosing a report by Mr Robert Waley-Cohen, 13 October 1919, regarding possible means of exporting petroleum from South Russia, which is a detailed analysis of problems and risks as well as the benefits involved, including economic relief to General Denikin [and the White Russian forces]
[WO 32/10118]

Despatch from the Rt. Hon. Mr Winston Churchill to the Rt. Hon. Walter Long, MP (and First Lord of the Admiralty), 30 October 1919, urging support for the scheme of rehabilitating the Baku oil trade, in support of Major Denikin
[WO 32/10118]

War Office minute to Secretary of State, 30 October 1919, referring to using British Military in the Caucasus to aid in oil exportation
[WO 32/10118]

Despatch No. 137202/ME.58 from Mr N. Wellesley, Foreign Office, to Secretary to the Army Council, 3 November 1919, concluding that the export scheme, with British aid, could not be justified
[WO 32/10118]

Extract from minutes, Quartermaster General to Secretary of State (for War), 7 November 1919, commenting on the Foreign Office view, that none of the proposals can proceed
[WO 32/10118]

[WO 32/10118]

Letter No. S.332 from Mr J.C. Clarke, HM Petroleum Executive, London, to Under Secretary of State, London, 3 December 1919, suggesting a modified scheme for the export of South Russian oil, together with reply, 11 December 1919, approving the new arrangements
[WO 32/10118]