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"بلاد فارس: شؤون عربستان"

المكتبة البريطانية: أوراق خاصة وسجلات من مكتب الهند

IOR/L/PS/18/C201

٣٠ أكتوبر ١٩٢٠ (ميلادي)

الإنجليزية في اللاتينية

ملف واحد (٣ أوراق)

رخصة حكومة مفتوحة

المؤسسة المالكة

المرجع

التاريخ/ التواريخ

لغة الكتابة

الحجم والشكل

حق النشر



حول هذا السجل

تتألف المذكرة من نسخة عن رسالة من المقدم السير أرنولد تالبوت ويلسون، المقيم السياسي الممارس في الخليج العربي، موجهة إلى سكرتير الحكومة في الهند، الإدارة الخارجية والسياسية في شيملا. تتناول المذكرة جولة أجزاها مؤخرًا السير أرنولد في عربستان وذلك قبل تسليمه المقيمة البريطانية إلى خليفته. يُقدّم التقرير نظرة عامة على التطورات في المنطقة خلال الأعوام الثلاثة المنصرمة، من بينها تعليقات تُظهر احترام سلطة شيخ المحمرة [خرمشهر] ومعلومات محدثة حول شؤون بختاري. إضافة لذلك، يُقدّم التقرير معلومات محدثة مقتضبة حول الترتيبات البريدية والتلغرافية.

كما يُقدّم التقرير موجزًا حول الترتيبات الحالية للوكالات القنصلية والسياسية في عربستان ويستعرض بإيجاز مقترحات بإعادة تنظيمها.

Copy No. 1

C. 201.

PERSIA: AFFAIRS OF ARABISTAN.

Letter from Lieut.-Colonel Sir A. T. Wilson, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., C.M.G.,
D.S.O., Officiating Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, to the
Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political
Department, Simla.

No. W./9.
Sir,

Bushire,
30th October 1920.

In continuation of my letter of 20th October, I have the honour to invite a reference to Sir P. Cox's Despatch of the 11th September 1917, No. 5310, regarding the situation in Arabistan, and to its enclosures, and to my memorandum on Political and Tribal Developments in Arabistan from July 1917 to March 1918, which was submitted to the Government of India on 15th March 1918.

2. As already explained to the Government of India by telegraph, I was anxious, before proceeding on leave and before handing over charge of this Residency to my successor, to pay a personal visit of inspection to Arabistan in order to facilitate the re-transfer to Bushire of the responsibility for the administration of Consular Offices in this area, which since the outbreak of war have been under the supervision of Mesopotamia.

3. Immediately after handing over charge of the Office of the Civil Commissioner of Mesopotamia to Sir P. Cox on the forenoon of 5th October, I proceeded, together with my Personal Assistant, Lieut. H. R. Lewis, Indian Army, by launch to Mohammerah, accompanied by the Shaikh of Mohammerah and his sons. From Mohammerah, after meeting Mr. Greenwood, the Acting General Manager of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, I proceeded by car to Ahwaz, which was reached the same evening. On 6th October, accompanied by His Majesty's Vice-Consul, Ahwaz, I went to Shush, where I met His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Dizful, Major Meade, who accompanied me to Dizful. From Dizful I proceeded to Shushtar, whence Major Meade returned to Dizful.

4. On 9th October I left Shushtar, and from that day until the 20th I was touring in the low hills north of the Karun, reaching the oilfields on 20th October. Route reports and other notes of military interest dealing with this area have already been submitted to the Government of India with my letter of the 28th October.

5. I reached Ahwaz on the 21st and Mohammerah on the evening of the 22nd, where I took an official farewell of the Shaikh of Mohammerah. At Mohammerah I received news of the outbreak of hostilities between the Shaikh of Koweit and Bin Saud. I boarded the *Ivy*, which I met going downstream on my way to Basrah, and after a brief conversation with the Senior Naval Officer who was on board, I proceeded to Koweit and held a conference there on the 23rd with the Political Agent and the Senior Naval Officer as to the steps necessary to maintain public confidence and to discourage further hostilities. I returned by air to Basrah on 23rd October to give effect, with the assistance of the military authorities, to the proposals of the conference, which had meanwhile received the concurrence of the High Commissioner, and left Basrah again on the evening of the 24th for Koweit in the launch *Industry*. I left Koweit on the morning of the 26th in the *Lawrence*, which had gone to Koweit in connection with the disturbances, proceeded to Abadan to take in oil, made a detailed inspection of the refinery there, and received a further visit from the Shaikh of Mohammerah, who was much perturbed at the rumours that had reached him regarding the state of affairs at Koweit. Bushire was reached on the morning of the 28th, where Lieut.-Col. Trevor joined the ship on his way to Bombay *via* Bahrein, Kishm, Bandar Abbas, Charbar and Muscat.

6. The subject-matter of this report may conveniently be considered under four heads:--

- (1) A brief retrospect of developments during the past three years.
- (2) Postal arrangements.
- (3) Telegraph arrangements.
- (4) The existing and proposed disposition of political and consular agencies and officers, including hospitals and dispensaries.

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The existing and proposed financial provision will be dealt with in a separate communication.

7. *Developments during the past three years.*—In my report of 1st July 1917, No. 9855, to Sir P. Cox, I wrote :—

" We do not know what the future holds in store for us. More than once in the past three years the fortune of war has temporarily gone against us and our allies in these regions, and on each occasion it has turned again in our favour.

" If our present position in Arabistan is maintained, we need not apprehend a rapid revulsion of local feeling, even if the situation in Persia or Iraq should again become temporarily unfavourable."

Events have justified this anticipation of the probable trend of events in Arabistan, which province has been wholly unaffected hitherto by the disorders which have prevailed in parts of Persia and of Iraq.

8. The Assistant Political Officer at Shushtar was withdrawn in May 1919, and his duties have since then been performed by the Assistant Political Officer at Dizful, who had been placed in telephonic communication, both with Shushtar, Shush and Ahwaz, to enable him to do so.

9. The Sagwand Tribal Levy at Dizful, after some vicissitudes, has established itself as a small but useful force of some 50 mounted men under a British officer with headquarters at Shush, supported by two Ford vans, on which are mounted machine guns manned by six Indian infantry (all supplied by Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force).

10. A Persian Deputy Governor has been installed at Dizful and a Judicial Department (Adliyah) recognised by the Persian Government has worked for two years with success.

11. The Dizful Bridge has been renewed, and is now the property of a Persian Company with a paid-up capital of 60,000 tomans, of which 35,100 has been locally subscribed, and 24,900 is held by the British Government, this amount representing the sums expended by, or on behalf of, the military authorities, who required the erection of the bridge on military grounds. The British Government shares pay 9 per cent. dividend.

12. Agencies of the Imperial Bank of Persia have been established at Dizful and Shushtar, and have already more than justified their existence.

13. Difficulties between the Shaikh of Mohammerah and the Bakhtiari have been satisfactorily, if temporarily, settled, and do not present a lively problem at present.

14. Friendly relations with the leading landowners and priests have been maintained and improved, and there is now no important section of the tribal town or village community which does not desire a maintenance of the present system whereby a British consular officer is enabled to exert such influence over the local government as will force it to maintain order and give effect to its elementary duties.

15. There has been a continued increase in areas under cultivation, and in local revenue receipts; this has been effected not by increased incidence of taxation, but by careful check on receipts and expenditure.

16. Our relations with the tribes of Luristan, who depend on Dizful, have steadily improved. There has been a welcome cessation from highway robbery and inter-tribal dissensions which were formerly characteristics of the Luristan tribes, and it may be accurately stated that of the many divergent clans of Luristan there are none at this time that, by reason of misconduct, are debarred from free ingress to the town of Dizful, the southern gate of Luristan. While it would be premature to prophesy a millennium of eternal peace in an area at once so inaccessible and so rife with possibilities of undesirable incidents, it may fairly be stated that the portion of Luristan that is brought more directly under the notice of the Political Officer at Dizful, has shown, and is showing, an amiable tendency to appreciate the tranquillity of Northern Arabistan and to realise that this was not merely a transitory condition due to the military exigencies of flank protection. Although mention of the territory of the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh may be considered extraneous to the matter of this report, it might, as a matter of interest, be noted that preliminary surveys and the initial steps in location of petroleum have been successfully carried out in that territory without incident.

17. It will thus be seen that the record in Northern Arabistan during the past three years has been one of steady progress on the lines initiated in 1915-17, and that

there have been no serious setbacks. Simultaneously, as will be explained later, there has been a steady decrease of political expenditure.

18. In that part of Arabistan controlled by the Shaikh of Mohammerah, the state of affairs has been equally satisfactory. The power and influence of the Shaikh of Mohammerah have increased, public order has been well maintained and trade is increasing, though less than would be the case if local affairs at Mohammerah were managed as well as at Ahwaz; pilfering of cargo at Ahwaz has reached a point at which it has become a grave scandal and a menace to trade.

19. The refinery at Abadan has doubled in size; the output has trebled since the war; powerful pumping stations have been erected at various points along the pipe line. Each station is complete with comfortable quarters for the Resident Engineer and their British, Indian and local staff.

20. *Bakhtiari Affairs.*—The long-talked-of expedition against the Kuhgelus materialised in the summer of 1918, when, at my request, General Headquarters found themselves in a position to place a section of a mountain battery under the command of a British officer, at the disposal of Sirdars Zaffar and Ashjaa. The expedition, which was accompanied by His Majesty's Vice Consul, Ahwaz, was completely successful. Its chief efforts were directed against the Taibi tribes, who had for years systematically plundered caravans using the Lynch Road. Their strongholds were occupied, hostages taken, and arrears of revenue collected. The effect of this expedition on the security of the Lynch Road has been most marked. No organised robberies by Kuhgelus occurred between the autumn of 1917 and the time of writing, but during the summer of 1920 pilfering has been rife owing to the absence of a recognised Ilkhani and Ilbegi for Bakhtiari.

21. In the early autumn of 1918 His Majesty's Government decided to finance a force of 500 Bakhtiari sowars with the object of maintaining the authority of the Ilkhani and Ilbegi in Bakhtiari and checking the activities of the brigands who at that time infested the Isfahan district. The subsidy was continued until March 1919, although the brigands were not finally destroyed until August of the same year. In November 1919 Sirdars Zaffar and Ashjaa, dissatisfied with the arrangements made at a general meeting of the Khans at Isfahan a few months earlier, and no longer able to count on financial support from His Majesty's Government, tendered their resignations and their successors have not as yet been officially appointed.

22. The close intercourse with the Khans established by His Majesty's representatives in Arabistan during the war has borne fruit. The former appear well content to accept the decisions of local Political Officers on questions affecting their interests in Arabistan instead of resorting to armed force as hitherto. They have waived their claim to maintain a force of 50 Bakhtiari sowars in Shushtar, who were supposed to assist the Governor-General to maintain law and order, but actually preyed on the inhabitants and incidentally cost the Persian Government Ts. 1,000 per month. Last year, for the first time for many years, revenue was collected and paid to the Persian Government from the extensive Bakhtiari estates in the Ram Hormuz district.

23. It is not to be supposed that an abandonment of such previous perquisites is in any way spontaneous, and it is certain that progress on present lines can only be secured by a continuance of the present régime, under which it is understood by the public at large that we are determined not to allow this fertile district to lapse into its former anarchy, while we are at the same time prepared to meet any legitimate claims on our good offices.

24. *Postal Arrangements.*—The Mohammerah Post Office was established in the nineties: that at Ahwaz took shape in 1913, that at Ababan in 1916, that at the oil-fields in 1919. The last two are destined primarily to serve the needs of the large Indian staff of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at these places; they are very much appreciated and highly profitable and are an important feature in the life of the community.

25. *Telegraph Arrangements.*—All offices in Arabistan are manned at present by the Mesopotamian Telegraph Department by arrangement with the Indo-European Telegraph Department, the Persian Government receiving a sum as compensation out of all proportion to the net receipts. The service is very efficient, but telegrams cannot at present be sent in Persian; this is now being arranged. The general

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question of future administration is under separate consideration. Our principal desiderata are :—

- (1) Maintenance of our own telegraph offices at Mohammerah and Abadan in direct communication with Basrah.
- (2) Maintenance of efficient telegraphic service at Dizful, Shushtar and Ahwaz.
- (3) Maintenance of telephone between offices of His Majesty's Consular Officers at Shushtar, Dizful and Ahwaz.

26. *Existing and Proposed Disposition of Political and Consular Agencies and Officers.*—Existing arrangements as in force before the war were as follows :—

A Consular Officer of the Indian Political Department, with the title of Consul for Arabistan, has been stationed at Mohammerah since 1909, with the addition in 1915 that the powers of a Vice-Consul were conferred on the Assistant Surgeon who resides at Mohammerah for quarantine duties. Under the Consul for Arabistan in theory, but in practice virtually independent, was an officer of the Indian Political Department with the title of Vice-Consul, Ahwaz, whose duties in Ahwaz itself were light, and whose main functions related to the Bakhtiari Khans.

At Dizful, since 1911, a Political Officer of the Indian Political Department has been stationed "on special duty," no official application having been made to the Persian Government for the recognition of his consular status.

There was a Consular Agent at Shushtar, a local Persian, who had by no means given uniform satisfaction.

27. As already explained by me in my telegram of 9th October from Dizful, I recommend that the future disposition of officers should be as follows :—

- (1) His Majesty's Consul for Arabistan should reside at Ahwaz in future, the duties for the present being combined with those of the Vice-Consul, Ahwaz.
- (2) He should be at all times provided with an assistant, who would be designated His Majesty's Vice-Consul, Ahwaz, and who would be responsible for local and judicial work, other than serious cases, and would assist the Consul generally and would officiate for him during his temporary absence.

In this connection I should explain that whereas Mohammerah has shown no tendency to grow, and whilst consular and political work there has shown a tendency to decrease, Ahwaz has quadrupled in size during the past six years, and there is every indication that this rate of progress will be maintained.

28. The creation of Basrah as a free port, under the provisions of the Turkish Peace Treaty, will almost certainly result in goods destined for Ahwaz being landed, not at Mohammerah, but at Basrah, where exceptional facilities for rapid discharge, handling, and storage exist, and whence they can be transported by river boat direct to Ahwaz, not merely as cheaply as from Mohammerah, but more cheaply, owing to handling facilities and wharfage at Basrah. They would pass through Customs at Ahwaz, Ahwaz being "a port" under the Persian tariff and by virtue of the Karun River regulations. There is, moreover, every probability that, if and when railway construction in Southern Persia starts, the terminus of the railway will be, not at Mohammerah, but on the left bank of the Shatt-al-Arab opposite the port of Basrah and then to Ahwaz direct. Not only will this line be no longer than the Mohammerah-Ahwaz line, but it will avoid the necessity of constructing a port at Mohammerah, only 20 miles away from Basrah, which has greater facilities than most ports in the East for handling cargo. Ahwaz will then become a point of entry both by river and by rail.

A surveyor sent by Sir Charles Greenway is, I understand, already in the country in connection with this line, which the Anglo-Persian Oil Company may possibly need for the purposes of their own business.

29. Consular duties at Mohammerah can be performed as at present by Dr. C. H. Lincoln, the Assistant Surgeon, who has performed them in an exemplary manner for the past three years in addition to his other duties, an arrangement which is at once satisfactory to local interests and economical from the point of view of Government. The dealings with the Shaikh on matters of political importance would normally not be conducted by him, but by His Majesty's Consul for Arabistan at Ahwaz. As, however, Mohammerah has been brought within three hours of Ahwaz by motor cars and motor boats, and as the Shaikh of Mohammerah has for the past three years spent almost as much time at Ahwaz as at Mohammerah, there seems no objection to the adoption of this course.

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30. It is understood that His Majesty's Consul for Arabistan at Ahwaz would not ordinarily leave Arabistan, except with the previous concurrence of the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, and would not be absent from his post for more than a month. He would also hold charge of Bakhtiari affairs, and would deal with the Khans direct on these matters in the same way as is done now by His Majesty's Vice-Consul, Ahwaz, when they visit the plains in the winter. The necessity for the annual migration of the Political Officer with the Khans to the Persian Plateau no longer exists. It was initiated at a time when political conditions were very different from what they are now, when the Khans were wholly out of touch with His Majesty's Legation and almost equally so with His Majesty's Consul-General at Isfahan. Ahwaz, moreover, was a small town with only one or two British subjects and with very little political or consular work other than that relative to the Bakhtiari Khans, viz., the oilfields and the Bakhtiari road. It is now a large and growing town with about 100 British subjects resident on the spot. It is, moreover, most desirable in British interests that the conduct of our affairs in Bakhtiari country should be in the same hands as those in Arabistan, which are now so closely intermingled that separation is bound to lead to friction and delay. With these views Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor expresses his concurrence and agrees that under these conditions His Majesty's Vice-Consul, Ahwaz, should be gazetted Acting Consul for Arabistan as from 5th October in addition to his other duties. In this connection I would invite reference to para. 35 below.

31. During the past three years, the system which I now propose has been virtually in existence, as whilst in Baghdad I made a practice of dealing with all Arabistan affairs, as well as those of Bakhtiari, through or in consultation with Captain Peel, His Majesty's Vice-Consul, with results that have been most satisfactory.

32. As regards Dizful, the post is not one provided for on the cadre of the Indian Political Department, but I strongly recommend that this now be done, and the provision also be made, at all events for the next three years, for an assistant for him, who would be a junior officer under training and would hold charge of the Sagwand Levy. This would make it possible for His Majesty's Vice-Consul, Dizful, who has a full day's work, and cannot at present leave Dizful for more than a short period without detriment thereto, to tour occasionally in Pusht-i-Kuh, where the Anglo-Persian Oil Company are now working, and in Lauristan.

33. We have at present at Shushtar a most competent Persian, of proved integrity, whose forefathers have served the Bushire Residency for the past 100 years, as Consular Agent on a salary of Rs. 500. This arrangement should be maintained, and he should be placed directly under His Majesty's Consul for Arabistan at Ahwaz, from which point it is only three hours by car to Shushtar and supervision is easy.

34. It should be mentioned that there is a likelihood in the near future of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company extending their operations to the plains of Lali and Andaka, north of the Karun. This will for some time to come involve additional work for the Political Officer and his staff, for which it is necessary to make due provision, it being remembered that work of this sort in practice imposes considerable strain on officers and demands local knowledge and practical experience which cannot be obtained elsewhere; it is therefore very desirable that there should be a small reserve of Political Officers on the spot, so that they can officiate for each other when one of them goes on short leave, and thus avoid the heavy delay and expense of frequent transfers.

35. To summarise my recommendations, I propose:—

- (i) One senior officer as Consul for Arabistan at Ahwaz.
- (ii) One junior but experienced officer as Vice-Consul, Ahwaz.
- (iii) One junior but experienced officer as Vice-Consul, Dizful.
- (iv) One junior officer under training as assistant to Vice-Consul, Dizful, with charge of the Sagwand Levy.
- (v) One Assistant Surgeon at Mohammerah to hold charge as Vice-Consul as at present.
- (vi) One Persian Consular Agent at Shushtar as at present.

This only involves the addition of one junior officer under training to the pre-war strength of Political Officers in this region.

The proposals made in this despatch have been discussed with Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor, who asks me to say that he has been rather out of touch with Arabistan since he gave over charge of the Mohammerah Consulate in April 1915, since when, as mentioned above, our officers in Arabistan have been supervised from Mesopotamia.

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Subject to this proviso, he cordially agrees with recommendations (ii), (iii), (iv), and (vi) above.

As regards recommendations (i) and (v), he would prefer to limit his concurrence to the tenure of their respective posts by the present incumbents at Ahwaz and Mohammerah, and to hold himself free to make fresh recommendations in the light of experience in due course.

36. The Government of India will observe that, notwithstanding the large number of Europeans and Indians in the oilfields and the important interests centred there, I have not proposed that there should be any Government representative there. I have reached the conclusion, after much consideration, that the balance of advantage lies in leaving the responsible representatives of the Company on the oilfields, as at Abadan, to work out their own salvation as far as possible with local interests and with their own employees, consular intervention being sought only in emergency. This plan has been followed for the past 10 years, and we have no reason to regret it.

37. On the oilfields the Company owes its immunity from serious disputes between Indian employees and between British and Indian employees, and between themselves and the local Persian labourers and residents, and surrounding nomads, mainly to the personality of Dr. M. Y. Young, C.I.E., who has carried the complete confidence of all classes. He was given judicial powers as a First Class Magistrate in 1918, and has used them, though somewhat reluctantly, with good effect without arousing any sort of resentment.

The time will come when Dr. Young will seek some fresh sphere of activity, and it will be the duty of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to see that he is succeeded by an equally sympathetic officer with a knowledge both of Persia and of India. I have no doubt that this will be done.

At Abadan the position is easier, as Mohammerah is only 9 miles away, and both the British and Indian employees are not slow to refer such differences as cannot be settled locally, to His Majesty's Vice-Consul.

38. The Vice-Consuls referred to above should have the powers of First Class Magistrates.

His Majesty's Consul for Arabistan should have the powers of a Judicial Assistant to the Political Resident. These powers have already been conferred upon Captain Peel, and the exercise of them has been found useful in practice, and of all the appeals against decisions of successive Judicial Assistants that have been received and dealt with by me at Baghdad during the past three years, only in one case did the Judicial Secretary, who advised me in these matters, consider that there had been any appreciable failure to comply with the due provisions of law and procedure. In no case was there a failure of justice, nor was any decision reversed on appeal.

39. It remains to refer to the question of a British representative at Behbahan. This is an important town which has for some time past come within the scope of the Bakhtiari Khans, and is of considerable potential importance from the point of view of British trade, and is, like other areas in this region, a potential oilfield.

The reasons for and against our taking active interest in its affairs have been fully brought out in previous correspondence. I need only record my opinion that steps should be taken as soon as we conveniently can to establish a Consular Agent of our own there under Ahwaz, who should be a Persian subject but not a local man; and that steps should be taken, in communication with the Bakhtiari Khans and the Shaikh of Mohammerah, to make a motor road as soon as possible from Ahwaz to Behbahan. This would only involve, as far as I know, the expenditure of a few thousand pounds, and it should prove a highly profitable venture, as have the Ahwaz-Shushtar and Ahwaz-Dizful roads, for which local money should readily be forthcoming, a company being formed, and a toll being put on motor vehicles using the road.

40. It may be of interest in this connection for the Government of India to know that since the armistice some 20 motor vehicles have been purchased by local merchants at Ahwaz and Shushtar, and that a regular motor service is being maintained between these towns and between Ahwaz and Mohammerah, which is understood to be very profitable to the promoters.

I am, &c.,
A. T. WILSON,
Lieut.-Col., I.A.,
Officiating Political Resident in the Persian Gulf.