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"بيان حول البعثة الموفدة إلى بلاد الرافدين بقلم السكرتير السياسي لمكتب الهند"

المكتبة البريطانية: أوراق خاصة وسجلات من مكتب الهند

IOR/L/PS/18/B236

سبتمبر ١٩١٦ (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

هذه المذكرة المطبوعة المصنفة على أنها "سرية" عبارة عن بيان بقلم السير فريدريك آرثر هيرتزل السكرتير السياسي في مكتب الهند بتاريخ ٣٠ أغسطس ١٩١٦، بشأن الحملة البريطانية ضد تركيا في بلاد الرافدين [العراق] في إطار الحرب العالمية الأولى، وبشكل خاص نوايا بريطانيا التقدم نحو بغداد. المذكرة مقسمة إلى ثلاثة أقسام تحمل العناوين التالية: "الأسباب السياسية للبعثة"، و"أهمية بغداد" و"التقدم نحو بغداد". توجد إشارات في النص إلى المراسلات المتبادلة بين السير تشارلز موراي مارلينج الوزير البريطاني في طهران ووزارة الخارجية في سنة ١٩١٥.

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B. 236 3569/16 ①
SECRET.

Statement by Political Secretary, India Office.

I.—*The Political Reasons for the Expedition.*

The strategical importance to India of the Persian Gulf is axiomatic. Our supremacy in the Gulf is based ultimately on our command of the sea, but also, for the purposes of every-day life, on a network of political relations, the object of which is to make recourse to force unnecessary. Of these the most valuable are at the head of the Gulf, and are based on the position which, by a century of commerce and diplomacy, we had built up in Mesopotamia, and on our traditional friendship with the Sheikdoms of Koweit and Mohammerah on either side of the Shatt-el-Arab. But during the 15 years preceding the war the influence of His Majesty's Government in Mesopotamia had greatly declined. The efforts made by the Germans to increase their sea-borne trade, the advent of the Bagdad Railway without British participation, and the growth of German political influence throughout Turkey had contributed to this result; while so aggressive had the Porte become that His Majesty's Government—who had been on the verge of presenting an ultimatum in 1910—found it advisable in 1913 to open negotiations for an agreement which should remove the constantly growing causes of friction. These negotiations, in which Germany participated, were directed mainly to securing that the Bagdad Railway should not be extended to Basra without previous agreement with His Majesty's Government; that British interests in the oil deposits of Mesopotamia should be recognised; that the Shatt-el-Arab should be open to the shipping of all nations, while British interests should predominate on the Tigris, and the conservancy of both be in the hands of Great Britain; that the *de facto* autonomy of Koweit should be secured; and that Mohammerah should be protected from Turkish aggression by a demarcation of its frontier. Both Koweit and Mohammerah (whose Sheikhs own considerable property in Turkish territory) figured in these negotiations, and both Sheikhs had in the past incurred the hostility of the Turkish Government owing to their friendship with us. In order to reach an agreement it had been necessary for us not only to sacrifice some rights which we had ourselves previously enjoyed, but also to put pressure on the Sheikh of Koweit to withdraw some of his claims. In return we had been successful in obtaining, after more than a year of hard bargaining, an assured and recognised position both for our interests and for his.

When Turkey decided to abandon neutrality, it was quite certain that she would endeavour to recover by force what she had lost by agreement; for, though the issue of the war might be decided in Europe, it was obvious that she would be in a stronger position for negotiation if at the end of the war she were found in possession. And not only the very important British interests in Mesopotamia, but also those of our two allies were threatened. To the Sheikh of Mohammerah, as long ago as 1902, the British Government had promised protection against attack by sea; and in 1910 they had given a more general assurance that they would "safeguard [him] to the best of [their] ability against an unprovoked "attack by a foreign power, or against any encroachment by such power on [his] "jurisdiction and recognised rights." To the Sheikh of Koweit we were under no similar formal obligation, but His Majesty's Government had undertaken to defend Koweit in 1902, when it was threatened by the Amir of Hail, and as recently as 1911 they regarded this undertaking as still binding upon themselves, though the nature of the assistance to be given was undefined. Apart, however, from any formal agreement or treaty, our relations with the Sheikh were such as to make it a moral obligation to protect him, and the effect of throwing over either of these rulers would have been disastrous. The two men were intimate friends, and were in the habit of acting together. The minor Sheikhs along the Arabian coast down to Muscat would have drawn their own inference. The Amir of Nejd, the most powerful chief of central Arabia, and a friend of the Sheikh of Koweit—who had risen against the Turks and ejected them from El Hasa before the war, but had been driven by our lukewarmness to make terms with them, though he still preferred our friendship—would have definitely joined the enemy. The Turks, as it turned out, were relying on his assistance for their Egyptian expedition, and they would have got it. The Sultan of Muscat—who for a year before the war had been struggling with a

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revolution largely caused by his friendly relations with us—would have gone under. In short, we should have had to anticipate a solid Arab bloc against us on the one side, and on the other the defection of the powerful Persian tribes adjoining Mohammerah—such as the Lurs and Bakhtiaris—the effect of which would have been felt throughout the length and breadth of Persia. In such conditions not only would British prestige have suffered irretrievably, while the Gulf itself would have been a serious embarrassment to the Government of India, but the declaration of *jihad* would hardly have failed—as in the event it did fail—to bring all Islam into the field from Egypt to the North-West Frontier of India.

Such were the political considerations in the mind of His Majesty's Government when they decided to send the expedition to Basra, thus driving into Islamic territory a wedge which is holding to this day. The question of protecting the oilfields has already been dealt with by Sir E. Barrow.

II.—*The Importance of Bagdad.*

Bagdad is strategically and politically the capital of Turkish Irak. I had noted, in connection with Sir P. Cox's telegram of 23rd November 1914 (*Précis*, page 10), that, from the point of view of the Political Department, "the eventual occupation of Bagdad is so desirable as to be practically essential" (*ib.*, page 11), and a further careful study of the question in the spring of 1915, in connection with the problem of the future of Asiatic Turkey, confirmed me in this opinion. It seemed clear that there is no point south of it at which it is possible to stop, without leaving the advantage, political and military, in the hands of the enemy. To stop short of it would be interpreted by our friends, and still more by the doubtful and hostile tribes, as failure, with the probable result, not only of embarrassing the local operations, but also of endangering the main purpose of the expedition. With Bagdad as a Turkish base for concentrating troops and for intriguing with the tribes, Basra, it seemed, would eventually become untenable; deprived of Bagdad, the Turks would have no nearer bases than Mosul and Aleppo, with a desert in between.

Moreover—and this was a point the importance of which became clearer in the course of 1915—only Bagdad (or, more accurately, Samarra, which in this connection must be included in the idea) sufficiently commands the approaches to Persia to ensure the security of that country from serious Turkish aggression south of the Wazna Pass.

The entry of Turkey into the war had had an immediate effect upon the situation in Persia. The Turks lost little time in violating the Persian frontier (the presence of Russian troops on Persian soil affording them a ready excuse), and in January 1915 occupied Tabriz, where, according to the British Minister at Teheran,¹ they were "welcomed by two-thirds of the population." About the same time German intrigues began to make themselves felt in various parts of the country, and it became evident that German agents in Persia were acting in close co-operation with the Turkish invading force, and were consequently directly concerned in the violation of Persian neutrality. The events which led, in March 1915, to the arrest of the German Consul and other Germans by the British authorities at Bushire have been made the subject of a published statement, and need not be recapitulated here; but it may be mentioned that intercepted telegrams indicated a scheme that was to involve the whole of Persia in the spring.

On the 4th May 1915 the British Minister at Teheran² reported that the situation was not improving; that anti-Russian sentiment in the Persian Mejliss and general populace was being sedulously exploited by the Germans; and that the German Minister was endeavouring to enlist men by bribery, and had introduced a considerable quantity of arms. He added, on the 8th May, that the position, always precarious, had become critical, and that the Germans were "completely masters of the situation at Teheran." In the same month reports reached His Majesty's Government from various sources that parties of Turks and Germans were on their way to Afghanistan.

The situation at Teheran was saved by the approach of a small Russian force from the north; but the Germans, though their efforts at the capital were checked, continued to intrigue actively in the interior. Mr. Marling reported as follows on the

24th June³:—"German activity in the provinces is increasing. Wassmuss is endeavouring to organise an attack by local tribes on Bushire;

¹ Sir W. Townley to Foreign Office, dated 10th January 1915.

² Mr. Marling to Foreign Office, No. 180, dated 4th May 1915.

³ Mr. Marling to Foreign Office, No. 214, dated 24th June 1915.

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" party of Germans, strengthened by men locally recruited, and Austrian prisoners of war, who have escaped in some numbers from Trans-Caspia *via* Meshed, is starting for Birjand and Afghanistan, and another similar party, under Zugmeyer and Griesinger, for Kerman. Pugin is leaving for Meshed. At Ispahan, thanks largely to German connivance, murderer of Russian bank manager is still at large. . . . Prime Minister is falling more and more under influence of pro-German Democrats, and, though he makes profuse promises that he will check German intrigues, nothing effective is done. . . . Russian retirement in Galicia is not without its effect at this moment. . . . I do not think that Persia will intentionally join enemy: danger is that (bands employed by ?) German agents are so powerful (in one or two instances they number 50 or more armed men with probably a machine gun, while German Consul at Ispahan is said to have 200 retainers) that they cannot be arrested without actual fighting, for which no Persian Cabinet cares to be responsible. Thus it is possible that mission to Afghanistan will reach its destination, while other will succeed in producing in Kerman state of things that made murder of Russian bank manager possible."

During the summer of 1915 the situation steadily deteriorated, and our difficulties were increased by the attitude of the Swedish *gendarmerie* officers, most of whom

were at little pains to conceal their German sympathies. Mr. Marling¹ reported on the 6th July that several of these officers were "exhibiting marked pro-German bias," in particular the Commandant at Teheran, who was stated to be "entirely in the hands of pro-Germans."

On the 3rd August Mr. Marling² telegraphed in the following terms:—

"His Majesty's Consul-General at Ispahan has reported that he has reason to believe that there will shortly be some 300 Germans and Austrians (latter being prisoners of war escaped from Transcaspia) assembled in that town. They are camped a short distance outside the town and possessed of large quantities of rifles and ammunition, besides machine-guns, bombs, and a wireless telegraphy apparatus, and allow no one to approach their camp. They have also considerable number of Mujahid in their pay. Small parties of Germans are continually coming *via* Kermanshah, and amongst them probably Oppenheim. Attitude of Bakhtiari at Ispahan is exceedingly dubious. Germans have more than once interrupted Indo-European Department wires south of Ispahan, and German Consul there has even written to Department's officers threatening to do so. Acts of this kind and this considerable concentration at Ispahan obviously implies more than a mere attack on our Consulates, and popular rumour here asserts that German design urged by democrats is to carry off the Shah and Government to Ispahan. This is far-fetched, but it is not improbable that hostile Legations contemplate flight to Ispahan should Russian troops arrive at Kasvin and threaten the capital. Idea was currently talked of three months ago. From this centre, with communications open to Turkey *via* Kermanshah, they would hope to throw all Persia into disorder, and paralyse the Persian Government's action by destruction of telegraph lines, and trust to a chapter of accidents to involve her in war with us. It has also occurred to me that they might be contemplating an attack on oil fields or threatening our position at Basrah. These speculations may seem far-fetched, but I can offer no better guess at the objects of German preparations at Ispahan."

Towards the end of August news was received that, as Mr. Marling had anticipated, German emissaries had succeeded in making their way into Afghanistan. Their arrival at Kabul and their reception by the Amir produced an acutely critical situation. The Amir had hitherto firmly maintained his neutrality, despite considerable pressure from his own entourage and from the more fanatical elements of his people, who were constantly urging him to assume the true rôle of a "King of Islam" and to range himself beside the Sultan of Turkey in the "Holy War" against the infidel. But his position was an extremely difficult one, and there was every reason to doubt whether his power of resistance to popular clamour could stand much additional strain. The appearance at Kabul of German and Turkish officers, representing themselves as the advance guard of a Turco-German army, was bound

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It required no gift of prophecy to foresee this, and the prospect was such that the Political Department felt justified in strongly advocating an advance to Bagdad on two main grounds, viz. :—(1) the desirability of striking some signal blow, which, by restoring British prestige in the Middle East, would help to avert a grave military danger from India; and (2) the great advantage of cutting the Turco-German line of communications between Persia and the outside world. This recommendation was based on the view then held by the Military authorities (though unfortunately belied by subsequent events) that the actual capture of Bagdad—apart from the question of holding it permanently against Turkish counter-attack—presented no serious military difficulties and could be accomplished without reinforcing the troops under Sir J. Nixon's command in Mesopotamia. Moreover, it appeared probable that if the Turco-Germans could put into the field a force capable of turning us out of Bagdad, the same force would be able—even if we did not occupy Bagdad—to produce a condition of affairs in Mesopotamia and Persia that would necessitate withdrawal from Kut-el-Amara, with political consequences that would have been most unfortunate; so that the question was not whether Kut was more tenable than Bagdad, so much as what reasonable probability there was that the Turks would be able to detach such a force (*Précis*, page 36).

The political considerations on which the advance was advocated still appear to the Department to have been of the utmost weight, and (regard being had to the military estimate of its feasibility) to have fully warranted the view that the risk was one which it was necessary to run. That the failure to reach Bagdad has not yet been attended by the untoward political consequences which it was hoped that its capture would avert is, in the opinion of the Department, due solely to the successful Russian campaign in the Caucasus, and to their advance in Persia under General Baratoff, neither of which was there in October 1915 any reason to anticipate. The latter not only compelled the enemy Legations to leave Teheran on the 15th November—thus restoring the general political situation in Persia—but by the subsequent occupation of Kermanshah in February 1916, cut the enemy's line of communications east of the Persian frontier, whereupon the German movement in southern and eastern Persia collapsed. The danger of leaving this line open is sufficiently illustrated at the present moment, when the Turks, having forced the Russian troops to fall back from Kermanshah, are actually in a position to threaten the Persian capital, and the British and Russian Legations have been authorised to withdraw, in case of necessity, to a place of greater safety.

A. HIRTZEL,

Secretary, Political Department, India Office.

30th August 1916.

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