

BRITISH INFLUENCE IN MESOPOTAMIA 1900-1914

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. BRITISH INFLUENCE IN MESOPOTAMIA AND THE PERSIAN GULF UP TO 1900	1
II. RENEWAL OF EUROPEAN RIVALRIES	13
III. GERMAN ECONOMIC PENETRATION AND THE BAGHDAD RAILWAY	40
IV. BRITISH MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD HER POSITION	64
V. CONCENTRATION OF BRITISH INTERESTS BEFORE WORLD WAR I	85
THE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	112
APPENDIX 1. ASIATIC TURKEY - 1914	120
APPENDIX 2. RAILWAYS IN ASIATIC TURKEY - 1914	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY	122

CHAPTER I

British Influence in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf up to 1900

Although several European powers showed early interest in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, its natural land extension, Britain was more successful than her rivals in exploiting commercial and political possibilities in the area, and over a period of three centuries gradually emerged as the dominant foreign power there. Britain, however, was not the first European nation to be attracted to the Gulf; that honor was reserved for Portugal. The ambition and energy of Alfonso d'Albuquerque, one of the shrewdest of the Portuguese sea-rovers, was largely responsible for Portugal's early success in that area. D'Albuquerque's occupation of Hormuz, a very important strategic port at the entrance to the Gulf, in 1513, and his later occupation of other strategic points, helped Portugal to control the trade between Europe and India for nearly a century.¹

The occupation of Hormuz marked the beginning of a long struggle between Persia and Portugal which was to have an important bearing on the Portuguese position.²

1. S.B. Miles, The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf (London: Harrison & Sons, 1919), II, 140-141.
2. Sir Percy Sykes, A History of Persia (London: Mac-Millan, 1941), II, 86-87.

A more important challenge came to the Portuguese from Britain and the Netherlands.

British activities in the Gulf date back to the sixteenth century. In 1561 Anthony Jenkinson, an English adventurer, tried to open up the trade route to Persia across Russia and Europe. He failed in his attempt, mostly because there was no stable government he could rely on at that time. More serious British efforts to establish relations with Persia were made by Anthony Sherley. He and his brother, Sir Robert Sherley, with 26 other Englishmen, presented themselves before Shah Abbas the Great in 1598 as English knights. Sherley was very successful in his mission and was able to persuade the Shah to establish friendly relations between Persia and England.¹ The cooperation between the Persians and the British which began with Sherley's mission ended Portuguese supremacy in this part of the world.

The formation of the East India Company in 1600 opened a new era in Britain's relations with India and the Persian Gulf. The friendship between her and Persia deepened. In 1617 Edward Connock established a factory for the Company at Shiraz. When he presented himself before Shah Abbas, the Shah referred to King James I as his elder brother, and added that he would give either Jask (an important Gulf

1. Ibid., II, 175.

port), or any other port, to the British as requested.¹

In 1622 the British, with the Persians, occupied Hormuz. British assistance to Persia was based on certain special terms.² However, the most important benefit to the British was the breaking of Portuguese power in the Gulf. The Portuguese continued their activities, based on Muscat, but their power declined after the fall of Hormuz, and Muscat was captured by the Arab tribes in 1648.

The British victory over the Portuguese considerably enhanced their prestige. Shah Abbas agreed in 1622 that the East India Company could keep two men-of-war in the Persian Gulf as a protection for their trade. "This agreement marked the first attempt of the English to obtain a political status in the Gulf, and formed the beginning of that British political influence over Persia and Mesopotamia, the end of which has not yet been reached."³

The British success in breaking Portuguese power did not give them a clear field for long. They soon found themselves faced with new competition, which came from the

1. Arnold T. Wilson, The Persian Gulf, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 193.
2. These terms were never carried out by the Persians after their victory. See C.R. Low, History of the Indian Navy (London: Richard Bentley, 1877), I, 37.
3. Richard Coke, The Heart of the Middle East (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1925), p. 108.

Dutch, mainly through the Dutch East India Company, formed in 1602. As a matter of fact, the Dutch were very active in the Persian Gulf during the entire seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. Their first efforts were to monopolize the profitable spice trade. When Shah Abbas died in 1629, the British lost their best friend in the Persian Gulf. The Dutch began to pay higher prices for Persian commodities than the British did, and used threats of force to extract more privileges from the Shah. The new Dutch competition affected the British interests so much that the East India Company decided to remove its property from Bandar Abbas to Basra, farther north. In 1639 the Company started a factory in Basra and opened a serious British commercial penetration of Mesopotamia.

Dutch activities in the Persian Gulf faded mostly because of the shift of strength in Europe to the French under Louis XIV. The Dutch and Spanish fleets were destroyed by the French in the Mediterranean in 1676. This defeat disasterously affected the Dutch hegemony in the Gulf, although their last station, Kharak, was not taken until 1766, by the Arabs, and ships from the Netherlands practically disappeared from the Gulf.

1. Wilson, op. cit., p. 164.

2. Zaki Saleh, Origins of British Influence in Mesopotamia (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 17.

France now became Britain's chief rival in the Middle East. The two powers collided over colonial and commercial interests, not only there, but all over the world, throughout the eighteenth century. By the end of the century Britain had attained a clear-cut victory.

The French Revolution and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt encouraged a new British policy in the Persian Gulf and generally throughout the Middle East. At the beginning of the French Revolution the French prestige in the Persian Gulf was low. But Napoleon's arrival in Egypt and his diplomatic activities there changed the balance of power. France regained her prestige. Napoleon sent letters from Egypt to the Imam of Muscat and to Tippoo Sahib, announced his arrival, and asked for help.¹ The French were also very active in Persia and Mesopotamia. In 1796-1797 they sent a political mission to Mesopotamia and appointed a counsellor at Baghdad.² These French activities were checked by the defeat of Napoleon and Britain reasserted her power in the Gulf. However, this threat spurred her to consolidate her power in the area. The importance of the Middle East to her Indian empire became evident. A few strategic points were occupied, friendships with local rulers strengthened, and other actions undertaken.

1. Miles, op. cit., II, 290.

2. Great Britain, Foreign Office, Mesopotamia Handbook, No. 63 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920), p. 25.

Harford Jones, the Resident at Basra, was appointed Permanent Resident at Baghdad. This impressed local authorities although his appointment was made mainly to enable him to watch the activities of French agents there.¹ In 1812 the title of British Resident at Baghdad was changed to that of Political Agent in Turkish Arabia, and Baghdad became an important center of British influence in the Ottoman Empire.

British diplomacy in the early nineteenth century was more occupied in Persia than in any other country in the Middle East. The Preliminary Treaty concluded between the two countries in 1809 was followed by the Definitive Treaty of 1812, which gave the British many special privileges. In the first article of this treaty the Persian Government declared that all former alliances with other European States were null and void, and that Persia would not allow any other European power the right of transit towards India or the use of any Persian port.² Thus Persia was the country in which the British were first established by treaty relations in the Middle East.³

British supremacy in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, which seemed unchallenged after the Napoleonic Wars,

1. Philip Willard Ireland, Iraq: A Study in Political Development (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1937), pp. 36-37.
2. C.U. Aitchison, (Comp.) A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighboring Countries (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publications Branch, 1929-33), XIII, 56.
3. Saleh, op. cit., p. 67.

was soon to be seriously opposed by the rise of a new European country, Russia. The Russian annexation of Georgia in 1800 brought her into direct contact with Persia. The Treaty of Gulistan concluded between Russia and Persia in 1813 was considered a disaster for Persia. She ceded Derbent, Baku, Shirwan, Shaki, Karabagh, and part of Talish to Russia. The Treaty of Turkomanchai in 1828 gave Russia so many political and commercial privileges that Persia¹ practically ceased to be an independent nation. This Russian expansion at Persia's expense seriously alarmed the British. British-Russian rivalry over Persia, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and in the Ottoman Empire took up most of the nineteenth century. Britain's main efforts were to prevent Russia from approaching close to India. This explains the continuation of the British policy of consolidation, which began after the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, in the Gulf and Mesopotamia.

In pursuit of this policy Britain occupied a number of new strategic stations, the most important of which was Aden (1839), which became "not merely a way station, but one of the defensive bases of the Empire."² To maintain the security of Aden, the British gained the friendship of the Chief of Lahaj, whose tribes, "Abdalees," were very strong on the south Arabian coast, and reached agreements

1. Sykes, op. cit., II, 320.

2. Halford Hoskins, British Routes to India (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1928), p. 207.

with other chiefs in the vicinity of Aden. It is important to mention that a combination of expeditions in force, followed by a series of treaties, enabled Britain to liquidate the piracy problem in the Gulf, and this success helped her to maintain her supremacy in these waters, as well as to protect her interests.

Nor was Mesopotamia neglected in these increasing British activities; in fact the nineteenth century witnessed important developments in British penetration there. As was mentioned earlier, British commercial relations with Mesopotamia were established in the first half of the seventeenth century. In the nineteenth century political and strategic interests became much more important to Britain in Mesopotamia than were commercial interests. The Napoleonic campaigns in Egypt led to British efforts to seek a new route to India shorter than the one around the Cape of Good Hope or even the land route through Egypt. This produced the idea that the Euphrates Valley was a short cut to India. It is important to mention that during the Napoleonic Wars the British used this route to dispatch the mails to India.¹

In 1830 Francis R. Chesney, a British adventurer, with two officers of the Indian Navy, made a preliminary survey of the Mesopotamian river system. Then in 1834 Chesney testified before the Steam Committee of the House of

1. Coke, op. cit., p. 3.

Commons in favor of the Euphrates route over the Egyptian route.¹ He brought two vessels, the Tigris and the Euphrates, in 1836, and set sail from the source of the Euphrates in the north, bound for the Shat-el-Arab in the south. The Tigris was lost but the Euphrates succeeded in reaching the south. This voyage encouraged general British approval of an overland route to the Tigris and Euphrates, instead of an Egyptian canal to the Red Sea.² In 1843 Alexander Campbell proposed a railway "from England to India" through the Euphrates valley; subsequently, in 1851, James Wyld published a map of the project as Campbell had proposed it.³ The next step was taken in 1854 with the formation of a company to build a railway from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf through the Euphrates valley. Palmerston was one of the supporters of the project; however, it was abandoned in 1857 because of French pressure.⁴

When the Suez Canal was opened in 1869 many people thought that a British Baghdad Railway was out of the question, but in 1872 it was revived and a committee in the House of Commons appointed to study the project. Their report was favorable but the project was again abandoned

1. Low, op. cit., II, 33.

2. Henry A. Foster, The Making of Modern Iraq (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1925), p. 31.

3. A Traveller, The Euphrates Valley, a Route to India (London: Edward Stamford, 1856), p. 8.

4. Hoskins, op. cit., p. 50.

as a result of Britain's successful purchase of the Khedive's share in the Suez Canal Company in 1875. At the end of the century there was even talk of a Russian project to build a railway to Kuwait; but more serious threats to British leadership were the Ottoman concessions to Germany to build railways in Asia Minor and later concessions to extend them to Baghdad, and ultimately to the Persian Gulf (the so-called "Baghdad Railway").

Britain's next step toward improving her position in Mesopotamia in the nineteenth century was the development of her navigational interests on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. As previously mentioned, the British attempt to find a short route to India led them to survey the Mesopotamian river system. In 1839 the East India Company brought three steamers to use along the Tigris; the Company put another one into operation the following year. These four steamers completed the survey of the Tigris. The company wanted to withdraw the steamers after they had completed their work, and Thomas Kerr Lynch, a British adventurer, attempted to bring in several ships of his own to replace them. After lengthy negotiations with the British Government and the Sublime Porte, Lynch was able to get permission, and in 1860 the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company came into being. The company brought about the improvement of commercial conditions in Mesopotamia

I. E.A.W. Budge, By Nile and Tigris (London: John Murray, 1920), I, 211.

despite the difficulties and obstacles imposed by Turkish authorities.¹

In 1861 a Turkish-owned telegraph communications system was put into operation by British engineers, linking Istanbul and Baghdad. Two years later the system was extended to the Persian Gulf. At the end of the nineteenth century the Mesopotamian telegraph system was linked to those of Turkey, Persia, and India.² British-Indian post offices were opened in Baghdad and Basra in 1868. By the end of the century there was a British post office in every large city in Mesopotamia.³

The protection of traffic on the Shat-el-Arab, and the British right to protect Indian pilgrims to the Holy Cities, both enhanced British prestige in Mesopotamia.⁴

At the end of the nineteenth century Great Britain was the only European power with important interests in Mesopotamia, although France had some religious and cultural activities there, and until 1881 these were the only two European powers represented at Baghdad. In that year a Russian consulate was established there; in 1901 it was

1. Hoskins, op. cit., p. 425.

2. Stephen Hensley Longrigg, Four Centuries of Modern Iraq (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 296.

3. Ibid., p. 317.

4. The King of Oudh used to make yearly contributions to the Holy Cities, Nejef and Kerbela. In 1852 he made his contribution from the Baghdad treasury through the British Resident. (Mesopotamia Handbook, op. cit., p. 25).

raised to the status of a Consulate-General. Germany, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, and the United States each had very few commercial interests in Mesopotamia, and at the end of the century each established a consulate in Baghdad.¹

It is clear that by the end of the nineteenth century England had an important economic and political interest in Mesopotamia. The Euphrates Valley railway project had failed, but the idea of its importance as a route to India remained alive. It seemed then that the British position in this part of the world was secure. But the twentieth century brought new changes. Both Russia and France renewed their activities in the Middle East. Russia became particularly interested in Persia, and together with France made serious efforts to obtain a foothold on the Persian Gulf. Another major development was the appearance of Germany as a new European power interested in the Middle East. The German-sponsored Baghdad Railway project, given as a concession to Germany by the Ottoman Sultan, offered a serious challenge to British ascendancy in Mesopotamia.

1. Ibid., p. 26.

CHAPTER II

Renewal of European Rivalries

The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth century witnessed increasing European activities in the Middle East. British isolation, intensified by the war in South Africa, had affected the British position in this part of the world, and had given to the other European powers a good opportunity to extend their influence. France concentrated her efforts in Muscat to obtain a foothold on the Persian Gulf. Russian activities in Persia represented a real threat to the British Empire in India. German economic penetration of the Ottoman Empire and the German attempt to find a suitable terminus for their big project, the Baghdad Railway, constituted another challenge to British supremacy. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, in his long dispatch of September 21, 1899 to the Secretary of State for India in Council, mentioned all these European activities and demanded a stronger policy of British consolidation. The Secretary of State, Lord Hamilton, in his reply to the Indian Government on July 6, 1900, thus described the British position:

Your Excellency is also aware of the course of events in the Gulf, which have already modified that theory of "unchallenged supremacy both naval and commercial" . . . France has resolutely asserted her right to joint protectorate over Muscat with all

the consequences that may flow from the guarantee of 1862. Germany is interested in the development of railway enterprise, and her agents have lately proceeded to Koweit. Russian ships have visited Bunder Abbas and adjoining islands, as well as other ports in the Gulf. In these and various other ways the unquestioned position, which was formerly asserted and exercised by us, has, even in the Gulf itself, been encroached upon.¹

This renewal of European activities led Great Britain to protect her position. As a matter of fact, the appointment of Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India on August 11, 1898 marked a new period of energetic British conduct both in India and in the Middle East. It is important to mention that Lord Curzon came to India with an excellent knowledge of the history and problems of the Middle East. His work, Persia and the Persian Question, reveals this.

The first problem Lord Curzon faced as Viceroy was the increasing French interest at Muscat. According to an agreement of 1862 France and Britain were pledged to preserve Muscat independence.² But in fact Great Britain exercised greater influence over Muscat after 1862, many times aiding the Sultan against his enemies. In 1891 the Sultan concluded a treaty with Great Britain which provided that he "does pledge and bind himself, his heirs and

1. G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (ed.), British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927-1938, IV, 354.

2. Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 304-305.

successors never to cede, to sell, to mortgage or otherwise give for occupation, save to the British Government, the dominions of Muscat and Oman or any of their dependencies."¹

In 1894 the French established a consulate at Muscat. M. Paul-Antoine Ottavi, who had a very good knowledge of Arabic, was appointed as consul. A very active official, he soon made himself popular among the chief tribes as well as becoming a friend of the Sultan of Muscat himself. His eagerness to obtain a port on the Gulf was rewarded in March 1898 when the Sultan leased Bandar Jesseh, five miles² southeast of Muscat, to the French as a coaling station. The news of this lease induced the British Navy to dispatch a force to Muscat, where it threatened the bombardment of the Sultan's palace, if he would not submit to several British demands.³ The Sultan soon withdrew his support from France and agreed to all the British terms.

To the French this British success was most humiliating, arousing bitter anti-British feelings in France. M. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, explained the French views on this subject and the French need for a coaling station on the Gulf. He added that France in the

1. Ibid., XI, 318.

2. Lovat Fraser, India Under Curzon and After (London: William Heinemann, 1911), p. 87.

3. Philip Graves, The Life of Sir Percy Cox (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1941), pp. 61-62.

Muscat incident and elsewhere had been treated by the British "in an exceptionally unfavorable and humiliating manner."¹ This event occurred at a time when England had a real desire to settle her difficulties with France in Africa and in other parts of the world. Hence, in order to establish friendlier relations Lord Salisbury, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, suggested to the French Ambassador on June 7, 1899 that the British sell to the French one of their three coal-sheds.² The French Ambassador was not satisfied with this offer, explaining that French acceptance would hurt the national pride. At the same time he repeated the French demand for a coaling station, designating Riyan. He made clear to Lord Salisbury that this choice of a depot, only three miles from Muscat, would exclude the possibility of hostile fortifications, because it would be within cannon shot.³ Lord Salisbury in his reply doubted that Great Britain could accept this French demand. However, on April 25, 1900, the French Ambassador announced that his government would accept the former British proposal that the French be permitted to share several coal-sheds with the British.⁴

There was still another source of friction between the British and the French at Muscat, the flying of the

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., I, 211.

2. Ibid., I, 212.

3. Ibid., I, 213.

4. Ibid., I, 214.

French flag by owners of Muscat dhows. France had issued ship's papers authorizing the Sultan's subjects to fly the French flag, thus affecting the jurisdiction of the Sultan over his own subjects. By this procedure Muscat dhows carrying slaves and arms were protected alike against British officials and those of the Sultan. By 1900 the widespread trade in arms among the tribes on the Persian Gulf and in Persia and Mesopotamia had alarmed the authorities of these countries. Muscat had become the center of this trade.¹ In harmony with their desire to settle these differences, the British and French at length concluded an agreement. According to this pact, which was signed at London on October 13, 1904, and on January 13, 1905, the question of the grant of French flags to Muscat dhows was submitted to the Hague Tribunal. Both parties agreed that the Court's decision would be final.² The settlement of the foregoing problems ended the British-French friction, and helped the British to consolidate their influence in the Persian Gulf area.

The menace to British prestige posed by Russian activities was, however, much more serious than the British difficulties with the French. The center of British-

1. Graves, op. cit., p. 59.

2. Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. CIII (Accounts and Papers, Vol. IX), Cmd. 2380, January, 1905, "Agreements between the United Kingdom and France Referring to Arbitration the Question of the Grant of the French Flag to Muscat Dhows", p. 6.

Russian rivalry was Persia, about which Lord Curzon wrote: "It is a country which, for good or ill, may powerfully affect the fortunes of Great Britain's Empire in the East."¹ As a matter of fact, Russian diplomacy had been very successful in this country, having achieved a great victory by the Convention of 1890 with Persia. This agreement gave Russia complete control over railway construction in Persia for ten years: "For a period of ten years beginning from the date of the Signature of this Convention the Persian Government engages neither to construct a railway in Persia, nor permit others to do so, and will not grant any concession for the construction of railways in Persia to anyone."² Russia was not at that time ready to carry out the construction of the railways in Persia by herself, and she wished to forestall the engagement of any other power in this activity.³ Apparently the Convention of 1890 was directed particularly against any British scheme of railway construction in Persia, since Great Britain was the only European power interested in such a project at that time.

The next step which strengthened Russian influence in Persia was the loan of 1900. The Shah, in financial

1. George N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892), II, 443.
2. Donald Stuart, The Struggle for Persia (London: Methuen & Co., 1902), pp. 95-96.
3. "The Persian Gulf," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CLXXIV, (July, 1903), 135-144.

straits, turned first to British capitalists, but they refused to lend him what he needed, unless the British government guaranteed the loan. While the British government hesitated, Russia seized the opportunity to offer a loan to the Shah. In return for a loan of £ 2,250,000 sterling, Persia bound herself never to borrow money from any European power except Russia. Furthermore, the Persian customs from all sources, except the Gulf ports, were pledged as security for the loan.¹

In addition to the Convention of 1890 and the loan of 1900 Russia had gained many other privileges in Persia by 1900. The Persian-Cossack force, the only organized army in Persia, was staffed entirely by Russian officers.² Russia had established a bank which was actually a branch of the Bank of Russia. Although the British Imperial Bank of Persia had to pay a subsidy of £ 5000, the Russian Bank paid nothing.³ Furthermore, Russian influence framed Persian tariffs to Russia's own commercial interests and against those of the British.⁴ Long distances between the larger Persian cities were surveyed by Russian officials for making roads and the most important roads in the north were in Russian hands. H. Caldwell Lipsett wrote in 1903

1. Ibid.

2. Stuart, op. cit., p. 176.

3. Great Britain, 4 Parliamentary Debates, CXXI (1903), 1333.

4. Ibid., CXXI, 1333.

that "... in short, Persia is at this moment in everything but name a Russian province."¹

These Russian activities, confined mainly to the north, were watched by the British with concern. The real British interests in Persia, concentrated in the south, were still secure. Lord Curzon himself was not especially worried about Russian penetration in the north; as a matter of fact, he anticipated that Russia would occupy all of North Persia and annex it to Russia. Only the opportune moment, such as war or revolt, was wanting to justify her action.² The Curzon reply to this Russian extension was to stress Britain's moral responsibility to advocate Persian independence, an affair of little importance as compared with Britain's own interests. So far as the south was concerned, the matter was different. Lord Curzon wrote: "Here not only would any Englishman protest in the interests of Persia, but any English Government would be bound to protest in the interests of Great Britain."³

Russia did in fact soon extend her activities to the south. Russian consulates were established at several points on the Gulf -- Basra, Bushire, and Bandar Abbas. Russian commercial missions were sent to different parts of the country; railway surveys were made at several places in

1. Caldwell Lipsett, Lord Curzon in India, 1898-1903, (London: R.A. Everett & Co., 1903), pp. 21-22.

2. Curzon, op. cit., II, 603.

3. Ibid., II, 603.

the south by Russian officials. Much interest was shown in Chaahbar as the most convenient port on the Indian Ocean.¹ A Russian company was formed in Odessa to carry out the trade with the Persian Gulf and on February 14, 1900 a Russian gunboat reached Bandar Abbas. In the next year other Russian cruisers came to the Gulf and made tours of the same Persian ports.² Most important to the British, however, was Russia's determined effort to obtain a port on the Persian Gulf. Russian newspapers in 1899 openly explained the Russian necessity to have a port on the Gulf.³ Bandar Abbas was mentioned for this purpose, with the idea of making it the terminus of the railway which Russia wished to build across Persia. Count Kapnist, a Russian subject, had also asked for a concession to build a railway starting at Tripoli in Syria and running to a terminus at Kuwait, rather than Bandar Abbas. The Russian consul at Baghdad was also active in trying to obtain a port for Russia on the Gulf.⁴

The possibility of Russia's having a port on the Gulf was widely discussed in government circles and in the newspapers of Great Britain. Lord Curzon had already written in 1892:

1. Fraser, op. cit., p. 92.

2. The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1928), II, 310.

3. Ibid., II, 310.

4. Wilson, op. cit., p. 252.

I should regard the concession of a port upon the Persian Gulf to Russia by any power as a deliberate insult to Great Britain, as a wanton rupture of the status quo, and as an intentional provocation to war; and I should impeach the British Minister, who was guilty of acquiescing in such a surrender, as a traitor to his Country.¹

Lord Lamington stated in the House of Lords on May 5, 1903: "Her only object for an outlet there can be to secure a naval base, and that naval base could only have one object -- that of threatening our trade in the Southern Sea."² The National Review of September, 1902 also took up the importance of the Persian Gulf to Great Britain, asserting that the security of the British position in India, British commerce with India and the Far East, the interests of Indian subjects in the Persian Gulf countries and Mesopotamia, would all be undermined by any concession given to another power in the Gulf.³ Blackwood's Magazine of July, 1903 discussed the British-Russian friction in Persia, mentioning that Russia had already established herself in the north and that

to enable her to complete her conquest of that country, by connecting her vast resources in the North with a port in the Persian Gulf, would be nothing short of criminal negligence. She would then

1. Curzon, op. cit., II, 465.
2. Great Britain, 4 Parliamentary Debates, CXXI (1903), 1334.
3. A.T. Mahan, "The Persian Gulf and International Relations," The National Review, XL (September, 1902), 27-45.

have the whole western flank of our Indian Empire at her command.¹

All these warning voices and objections to the Russian advance to the south provided solid grounds on which Lord Curzon might move ahead to block Russian and other European attempts to approach the Gulf, and he was firmly backed by the British government in London. To restore British prestige and to consolidate her power, he caused the displays of naval force by Russia to be met by British demonstrations of superior strength. Further surveys of roads, islands, and inlets were carried out. A flotilla of gunboats for permanent service in the Gulf was established and more telegraph cables laid. Two British missions were sent to Persia, and the staff of the British Consulate was increased. Still he urged London to sanction a more vigorous policy in the Middle East. Lord Lansdowne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a former Viceroy of India and a firm believer in the necessity for a more vigorous policy in the Middle East, instructed the British Minister at Tehran early in 1902 to inform the Persian Government that Great Britain would not tolerate any encroachment by Russia in the south, and that Great Britain was ready to protect her interests.² Far more important was his announcement of May 5, 1902 in the House of Lords, which might be considered a kind of British "Monroe

1. Blackwood's, CLXXIV, 135-144.

2. Ronaldshay, op. cit., II, 310-311.

Doctrine" for the Persian Gulf.

I say it without hesitation -- we should regard the establishment of a naval base, or a fortified port, in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it by all the means at our disposal.¹

By 1903 the British position was much better. Russian attempts to hold Bandar Abbas or any other port on the Gulf had been blocked; the French determination to obtain a foothold at Muscat had also been thwarted; England was, furthermore, in a position to rebuff German aspirations as well. To cap his country's success, Lord Curzon, accompanied by a large British naval force, made a grand tour in November and December, 1903, in the Persian Gulf, the first such visit in the history of the area. He visited Muscat, Shargah, Bandar Abbas, Lingh, Bahrein, Kuwait, and Bushire, making speeches in most of these places. To chiefs at Shargah he said: "The peace of these waters must still be maintained; your independence will continue to be upheld; and the influence of the British Government must remain supreme."²

The tour was in fact a brilliant demonstration of British power and naval supremacy.

No such assemblage of warships had ever been in the Gulf and its approaches in modern times.. "The

1. Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, CXXI (1903), 1348.

2. Ronaldshay, op. cit., II, 316.

small harbour," Lord Curzon wrote when describing his visit to Muscat, "with our big white ship and the Lawrence in the foreground, and behind them the dark hulls of no less than six British men-of-war, presented a spectacle such as the Muscatis can never before have witnessed."¹

The tour and the imposing conditions under which it was made left a deep impression upon the people of the Gulf, and did much to increase British prestige and strengthen relations between Great Britain and the rulers of the Persian Gulf countries.

It has been mentioned that during the nineteenth century Great Britain succeeded in concluding a series of friendship treaties with the rulers of the countries on the Persian Gulf and with the chiefs of the tribes there -- agreements which undoubtedly helped to maintain British influence. At the beginning of the twentieth century Great Britain was more successful than ever in establishing friendly relations with very powerful Arab rulers. As a matter of fact, the period 1900-1914 was one of tremendous Arabic activity in the Middle East, with strong and ambitious leaders appearing in nearly every country of the Arab world, evidence of a new Arab nationalism. Relations between Great Britain and three of these powerful rulers were of vital importance to the British position in Mesopotamia. These three were Sheikh Mubarak of Kuwait, who ruled a vital

1. Fraser, op. cit., p. 110.

strategic point at the head of the Gulf; Abdul Aziz bin Saud, a refugee at Kuwait in 1900, but by 1914 the strongest man in the whole of Arabia; Sheikh Khazaal of Muhammera, whose territories included part of Shat-el-Arab and a good deal of the Karun River Valley. Turkey claimed sovereignty over both Kuwait and central Arabia; Persia claimed sovereignty over Muhammera. Through cementing friendships with the three Arab "strong men," Great Britain was able to offer each ruler protection against his enemies and against his nominal sovereign, while at the same time providing herself with an effective means of blocking any approach to the Gulf by another European power. With Britain thus firmly allied to the three most powerful Arabs in the upper Persian Gulf area, Mesopotamia was now entirely at the mercy of Great Britain, and any attempt on her part to conquer Mesopotamia would be assured of success.

In 1896 Sheikh Mubarak became ruler of Kuwait after having slain his brother, the former Sheikh.¹ At first Turkey made no objection to this act; furthermore, she recognized Mubarak as Sheikh of Kuwait. However, because Yusuf Abdula Albrahim of Dora (a small city near Basra), brother-in-law of the slain Sheikh, objected to the new ruler, and also because of the Turkish desire to exercise real authority over Kuwait, tension mounted between Kuwait and

1. H.R.P. Dickson, Kuwait and Her Neighbours (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1956), p. 136.

the Turks. In 1897 Mubarak requested an interview with the British Political Resident in the Persian Gulf. His demand was refused,¹ but in the same year an assistant to the Resident arrived at Kuwait, to whom Mubarak explained his desire to be under British protection to avoid annexation by the Turks. The British were unenthusiastic, and when he repeated his demand in the following year the answer was still negative.² In 1899, and within a month of Lord Curzon's arrival in India as Viceroy, an agreement was signed between Great Britain and Kuwait. Lord Curzon's aim was to counter Russia's movements in Kuwait at that time, and to counteract also the new German activities, especially the visit of the Kaiser to the Sultan in the previous year.³ A secret agreement between the Sheikh of Kuwait and the British, concluded on January 23, 1899, provided that the Sheikh bind himself and his successors "not to alienate any part of his territory without the Consent of the British Government; and Her Majesty's Government undertook, so long as he and his heirs and successors acted up to their obligations under the agreements, to support them and accord them their good offices."⁴

In 1900 Herr Stemrich, German Consul at Constantinople,

1. Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 202.

2. Ibid., XI, 202.

3. The Times History of the War (London: The Times, 1914-19), III, 92.

4. Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 202.

came as head of a mission to Kuwait. Having no knowledge of the British agreement with the Sheikh, he asked for a terminus on the Bay of Kuwait. He proposed to buy a site at Ras Kathama, at the head of the Bay, and to lease twenty square miles of territory around it.¹ When the Sheikh refused Stemrich's demand the Turks tried hard to bring him under control. Mubarak, too, suffered a serious defeat at Sarif when he led a campaign against his enemy Ibn Rashid in central Arabia.² During the years 1901-1902 Mubarak was in a very difficult position, surrounded as he was by enemies on every side -- the Turks in Basra, Yusef Albrahim with Hamid, Mubarak's own nephew, and Ibn Rashid -- all of whom made several attempts to capture Kuwait. But a considerable British naval force was maintained in Kuwait harbor during all the critical period,³ a fact which led the Sheikh to depend more and more upon British help and to ask for further British protection. When the Viceroy came to Kuwait in November 1903 the consolidation of British power was even more apparent; Mubarak now openly considered himself under British protection. In the next year he agreed not to allow the establishment of a post office by any other government. More important than that, the Sheikh agreed to lease to the British

1. The Times History of the War, op. cit., III, 92.

2. Dickson, op. cit., pp. 137-38.

3. H.J. Whigham, The Persian Problem, (London: Isbister and Company Ltd., 1903), p. 96.

government a plot of land to the south of Bandar Shuwaikh for Rs. 60,000 per annum, with the British having the right to relinquish the lease at any time they chose. In return the British government assured him that the town of Kuwait and its boundaries belonged to him and his heirs. Mubarak pledged himself in 1912 not to permit the exploitation of the oil in his territories by anyone not recommended by the British government.¹ In World War I Mubarak proved a strong and faithful friend to Great Britain.

Abdul Aziz ibn Saud² was destined to become another friend of the British. The position of this prominent Arab who had, with members of his family, been living at Kuwait since 1897 as a refugee, seemed hopeless; the family had been without power since the loss of their territory in central Arabia to their bitter enemy, Ibn Rashid. But in 1901 Ibn Saud made a surprise attack on Riyadh, his family seat, and captured it. The situation now took this form: Ibn Saud's ally was Mubarak of Kuwait, who by this time was on very good terms with Great Britain. His enemy, Ibn Rashid, on the other hand, was traditionally friendly to the Turks, while both Ibn Rashid and the Turks were on bad terms with Ibn Saud and Mubarak. Naturally enough, Ibn Saud next sought British friendship. In

1. Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 264.

2. His full name was Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman bin Faisal, but he was commonly known by his family name, Ibn Saud.

1902 he wrote to the British Resident asking that he might be regarded "as one having relations with the British Government" and that "the eyes of the benevolent British Government might be fixed on him."¹ In the meantime Ibn Saud marched from victory to victory against his enemy. When he visited Kuwait in October, 1903 an interview took place between him and the Russian Consul-General, who had come to Kuwait from Bushire. It was subsequently reported to the British government that Russia had offered to help Ibn Saud with money and arms. At the same time the British government insisted that it did not wish to interfere in central Arabia. In January, 1904 Ibn Rashid wired Constantinople that Ibn Saud was seeking diplomatic relations with the British, who were going to furnish him with arms. Rifles and ammunition from Baghdad were indeed sent to him, and accordingly a Turkish force of 2,000 men and six light guns marched from Samawah on the Euphrates to help Ibn Rashid against Ibn Saud. Because Lord Curzon now believed that Turkish interference in central Arabia and the hostility of the Turks toward Mubarak of Kuwait might affect British interests and prestige, the British policy of non-interference in central Arabian affairs was modified, and the British were led to help Mu-

1. J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia, (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1915), I, 1157.

barak's ally, Ibn Saud, by furnishing arms.¹ But Ibn Saud wanted more than that. His letter to the British Resident in 1904 carried a protest against Turkish interference and asked for active British protection. In the same year the British Resident received a message from Mubarak of Kuwait which enclosed a letter from Ibn Saud to Mubarak, in which Ibn Saud hinted that should Great Britain refuse to defend him, he might be forced to accept the Russian offer of assistance which had been made to him in 1903.² However, the British still had no desire for intervention to any serious extent in central Arabia. In 1905 when Ibn Rashid was defeated and slain, together with members of his family, Ibn Saud became sole master in central Arabia.³

He turned now to Hasa, a province on the Persian Gulf, which was under Turkish rule at that time. Ibn Saud commenced bargaining with the British Resident. In the event of Ibn Saud's attacking Hasa, he asked, would Great Britain protect him from Turkey on the sea, in exchange for permission to maintain a British political officer in Hasa?⁴ The British authorities refused his

1. Graves, op. cit., p. 102.

2. Ibid., p. 102.

3. H. St. J.B Philby, Arabia (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1930), p. 106.

4. Lorimer, op. cit., I, 1160.

request on the premise that the building up of Ibn Saud's power on the ruin of the Turks, and his appearance as a strong ruler on the Gulf might threaten British interests.¹ Nevertheless, Ibn Saud was still on good terms with the British. Despite their refusal of his request, he visited Kuwait in 1911 and enjoyed friendly interviews with the British political agent there.² Two years later he captured Hasa from the Turks, thus bringing himself into direct contact with the British, who now felt that with the increase of German activities in the Middle East, the appearance of a strong and friendly power on the Gulf, such as Ibn Saud, might provide an effective counterbalance.³ At the end of 1913 Ibn Saud had a friendly meeting with the political agents in Bahrein and Kuwait.⁴ Furthermore, Captain W.H.I. Shakespear, the political agent at Kuwait, visited Ibn Saud's capital during the winter of 1913-14, by which time Ibn Saud had formed a solid compact with Great Britain, a friendship which was maintained throughout the war.

Sheikh Khazaal of the Muhammera was a semi-independent ruler, his nominal sovereign being the Shah of Persia. Khazaal's territory was on the eastern shore of the

1. Graves, op. cit., p. 106.

2. Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 188.

3. Philby, op. cit., p. 231.

4. Aitchison, op. cit., XI, 188.

Shat-el-Arab and part of the Karun River Valley, inhabited mostly by Arab tribes and commonly known as Arabistan. As a result of the weakness of the Persian government, the Sheikh of Muhammera exercised wide authority, although the Shah's claim on the Muhammera was much more logical than the Sultan's claim on Kuwait and the other Arab states of the Persian Gulf and in central Arabia. Sheikh Khazaal, not less ambitious than Mubarak or Ibn Saud, soon discovered that the establishment of good relations with Great Britain would be the best guarantee for his security. His main problem was to maintain his hereditary autonomy against the Persian government. In 1897 he explained to the British Vice-Consul at Muhammera that his desire was to be a secret friend, and that he wished Great Britain to accept his services in future.¹ When the Persian government attempted to collect the customs of Arabistan, which had formerly been a source of revenue to the Sheikh, he openly asked the British Vice-Consul to protect him. The British government, however, made it clear that it could not help him against his own government. But once more the appearance of Russia led to a modification of British policy.

In 1899 the Russian Consul-General at Isfahan had visited Muhammera, in which he took great interest. The

1. Lorimer, op. cit., I, 1755.

Sheikh was now able to bargain with the British, and consequently on December 7, 1902 he received some kind of assurance from the British government.

So long as you behaved to us in friendly manner, our influence would be exerted to maintain you and your tribes in the enjoyment of your hereditary rights and customs, and to dissuade the Government of Tehran from any endeavour to diminish or interfere with them.¹

Great Britain from that time on supported Sheikh Khazaal against his enemies. In 1908, when he feared Turkish aggression in his territory, Britain made clear to the Turkish government that any attack on him would be resisted by Great Britain.² By 1914 Sheikh Khazaal was still a firm and faithful friend of the British.

The activities of Lord Curzon, the settlement of the differences between England and France, Britain's friendly relations with powerful Arab rulers -- all these increased British prestige in the Middle East. But the pressure on the British in India and the Persian Gulf continued, in that Russian and later German ambitions were still alive. But at length, after tentative negotiations, Great Britain and Russia settled their differences in Asia and the resulting Anglo-Russian Convention was signed on August 31, 1907.

1. Ibid., I, 1758.

2. Graves, op. cit., p. 115.

The decisive defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War and the fact that Russia was beset by internal difficulties were important reasons for her willingness to sign the convention. As far as Great Britain was concerned, the desire for some kind of compromise with Russia, especially in Persia, was apparent long before that. Lord Curzon wrote on September 21, 1899 to the Secretary of State for India in Council: "The political destinies of a country and a Government, such as those of Persia, are likely to be determined in the main by her geographical position in relation to her neighbours, the principal of whom are Russia and Great Britain."¹ In the same dispatch he suggested recognition of British and Russian spheres of interest in the country of the Shah. The British, as a matter of fact, realized that Russia had overwhelming influence in Persia, especially in the north, and that some kind of compromise would relieve the pressure on the Middle East. The Foreign Office memorandum of October 31, 1905, on British policy in Persia, mentioned that geographical and political considerations gave Russia a preponderant influence in Persia, making the British conflict

1. Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. CXXV (Accounts and Papers, Vol. LXIV), Comd. 3882, February, 1908, Extract From a Despatch From the Government of India to the Secretary of State For India in Council, p. 457.

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with Russia in this country a very unequal one.

It has been mentioned previously in this study that Russian attempts to approach the Gulf were met by British opposition -- by the government, by Parliament, and in the newspapers -- but it is quite important to mention that there were some who believed the Russian threat had been exaggerated. The Fortnightly Review wrote on July 1, 1901 that "The key of India is not Herat. It is not Bunder Abbas. The key of India is the power of England."² Furthermore, a new military view had been adopted by Lord Kitchener by 1906; he believed that even if Russia or Germany held ports on the Persian Gulf the British Navy could easily destroy these footholds in the event of war.³

More vital than all the reasons mentioned heretofore, leading to the signature of the Anglo-Russian Convention, was the menace of Germany, already on extremely good terms with the Turkish Sultan, as a strong rival to both Britain and Russia in the Middle East. Germany established a vice-consulate at Bushire in 1897, when there

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., Vol. IV, 367.

2. "Russia and Her Problem," Fortnightly Review, LXXVI (July, 1901), 124-138.

3. Sykes, op. cit., II, 412-13.

were only six German subjects in the whole of the Gulf. In 1900 a German mission arrived at Kuwait, asking that the Sheikh designate Kuwait as the Terminus of the Baghdad Railway. The firm of Wonckhaus, established at Lingah in 1897, was transferred to Bahrein and branches were opened in Basra and Bandar Abbas.² It seems quite clear that the Germans urged the Turks to occupy Kuwait, using the Sultan's claim to the territory in gaining a foothold there. The Hamburg-Amerika Company came to the Gulf in 1906, and German trade increased, especially at Basra.³ Even in Persia, where up to this time Britain and Russia had been the only European powers involved, Germany began to take an interest. In 1906 Sir N. O'Connor, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, wrote to Sir Edward Grey informing him of the increasing German penetration into Persia, and of their interference in the Turkish-Persian frontiers conflict.

...In face of the above facts it appears to me very probable that if Great Britain and Russia do not very soon come to an agreement with regard to their respective interests in Persia, they may find themselves confronted there with Germany, very much as did France in Morocco.⁴

1. The Times History of the War, op. cit., III, 71.
2. Ibid., III, 91.
3. Sykes, op. cit., II, 432.
4. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., IV, 381-82.

All these factors induced Britain and Russia to reach a compromise. The convention signed on August 31, 1907, so far as Persia was concerned, divided the country into three parts. The Russian sphere of influence in the north started with the line from Kasr-i-Shirin, passing through Isfahan, Yezd and Kalhk, and ending at a point on the Persian frontier at the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers. The line of the British sphere of influence started from the Afghan frontier and continued by way of Gazik, Birjand, and Kerman, and ended at Bandar Abbas.¹ Between these two regions lay a neutral zone.

The Russian sphere was plainly larger and more populous, but the outlines of the British sphere had been drawn for military considerations. Lord Kitchener urged that the British limit their responsibilities to the semi-desert portion of Persia, especially at the head of the Persian Gulf and in the Karun Valley.² This definition meant complete British control of Shat-el-Arab and the Mesopotamian plain, from which the German threat was now marching. Furthermore, England held all the entrances to the Persian Gulf, and it appeared that she was still not

1. Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. CXXV (Accounts and Papers, Vol. IXIV), Comd. 3750, August, 1907, Convention Between Great Britain and Russia Containing Arrangements on the Subjects of Persia, Afghanistan, and Thibet, p. 477.
2. Sykes, op. cit., II, 412-13.

ready to grant concessions to any other power in the Gulf. Sir Edward Grey made this fact clear to the Russian government in a message to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Sir Arthur Nicolson:

In order to make it quite clear that the present arrangement is not intended to affect the position in the Gulf, and does not imply any change of policy respecting it on the part of Great Britain, His Majesty's Government think it desirable to draw attention to previous declarations of British policy, and to reaffirm generally previous statements as to British interests in the Persian Gulf and the importance of maintaining them.¹

The agreement aroused bitter feelings among the Persian people, who saw how the great powers had divided their country. True, the agreement mentioned Persian independence, but only in the vaguest terms; Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the British Minister at Tehran, believed the agreement contained no formal and definite pledge to the independence of Persia.² Hence, because Persia had not been consulted, Great Britain lost her popularity as the friend of Persia against Russia. This circumstance was the reason for the success of German propaganda during the war.³ But in any case the agreement relieved the great pressure on Britain and placed her in a more suitable position to counter German activities in Baghdad.

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., I, 471.

2. Ibid., I, 415.

3. Sykes, op. cit., II, 413.

CHAPTER III

German Economic Penetration and the Baghdad Railway

In 1867 Bismarck said, "The Orient is so far away that I do not even read the reports of our ambassador in Constantinople."¹ Prussia before 1870 had slight interest in the Near East, her efforts being mostly concentrated on German unification and on continental problems. But Germany after her unification in 1870 could no longer keep aloof, and soon found herself involved in the Near Eastern question,² in spite of the fact that Bismarck had no desire for German expansion in the Ottoman Empire or elsewhere. His diplomacy after 1870 was to keep the peace in Europe, to maintain Germany as the first power on the continent, and to concentrate on isolating France and preventing her from making a revengeful war against Germany.

Bismarck's anti-colonial policy was soon to meet strong opposition, as a result of the increase of German nationalism on the one hand and, on the other hand, the industrial revolution in Germany which created a strong capitalistic group. Thus the German colonial propagandists

1. William Harbutt Dawson, The German Empire 1867-1914 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1919), p. 116.

2. Bismarck played a very important part in the Congress of Berlin in 1878. He also cooperated with the British in the Egyptian question.

soon became very interested in the Near East. They saw in the Ottoman Empire both a good sphere for economic-exploitation and for political aspirations.

Among the first German activities in Turkey were those of their military mission. General von der Galtz, a distinguished officer, was at the head of the mission from 1883 to 1895. He organized the Turkish army, established a military school, and helped in founding several military organizations.¹ At the same time Turkish officers entered the German army, and German officials were lent to Turkey for the reform of her administration and finance. Count Hatzfeld, the German Ambassador at Constantinople, a really gifted diplomat, gained the confidence of the Sultan and became his personal friend.

In 1888 the young Kaiser Wilhelm II came to the throne with great ambitions. In the following year he decided to go to Constantinople, after he had visited Athens. Bismarck, fearing the visit might create suspicion in Russia, tried to dissuade the Kaiser, but the monarch insisted. Bismarck wrote on this occasion:

...it was accordingly impossible that the visit of our majesties should take on a political complexion. The admission of Turkey into the Triple Alliance was not possible for us; we could not lay on the German people the obligation to fight Russia for the future

1. Frederic William Wile, Men Around the Kaiser (Toronto: The Maclean Publishing Company Ltd., 1913), p. 223.

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of Baghdad.

The Kaiser's visit to the Sultan increased German prestige, and established good personal relations between the Kaiser and the Sultan. With Bismarck's removal in 1890, the Kaiser and the colonial propagandists in Germany had good opportunity to pursue their political ambitions abroad, for the chancellors who succeeded the mighty Bismarck had not enough power to check the Kaiser. At the same time, German national feeling was at its highest point and German industry had made great strides. Prince von Buelow, the German Chancellor, wrote in 1898: "The tremendous development of German industry and German trade forces Germany to open for herself new markets not only overseas, but also in Asia Minor."² The Kaiser hoped, through his friendship with the Sultan, to open the Ottoman Empire to the German financiers and traders, whom he supported as much as possible, saying, "I have it from the ruler of this land himself, that you have established for yourselves a high position in this Capital."³

In 1897 a new German Ambassador was appointed in Constantinople, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, a former German

1. Edward Mead Earle, Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Baghdad Railway (New York: Macmillan Co., 1923), p. 42.
2. John B. Wolf, The Diplomatic History of the Baghdad Railroad (Columbia: The University of Missouri, 1936), p. 9.
3. The Times (London), October 28, 1898, p. 5.

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and a very capable man, with excellent diplomatic experience. The next year the Kaiser made his second visit to the Sultan. This time he visited Jerusalem and Damascus, where he made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Saladdin, the great Muslim hero. Declaring his friendship to the Muslim world he stated: "Let his majesty the Sultan, as well as the three hundred millions of Mohammedans, who venerate him as their Kalif, be assured that the German Emperor will always remain their friend."¹

By the end of the nineteenth century Germany had remarkable commercial and financial interests. The London Times of October 28, 1898 mentioned that England was faced with increasing German competition, adding that fifteen percent of the bicycles exported into Asia Minor were delivered by German firms. The Turkish army was equipped mostly by German arms factories. Wrought iron furniture, tables, and other small articles were exported from Germany to Jaffa. Where only a few years before fifty percent of the clothing exports were in the hands of the British, the other fifty percent in the hands of the French and the Belgians, by 1898 at least twenty percent was in German hands.²

1. Evans Lewin, The German Road to the East (London: William Heinemann, 1916), p. 25.

2. The Times (London), October 28, 1898, p. 5.

Most important among all these German activities was the engagement of Germany in establishing and developing the railway system in the Ottoman Empire. Railway enterprise in Asia Minor before 1888 was entirely in British hands. The Mersina-Adana, the Smyrna-Aidin, the Smyrna-Cassaba, and the Haider Pasha Ismid lines were all¹ built with British capital and under British management. In this year an important event took place: the Germans on October 4, 1888 succeeded in gaining a new railway concession which gave them the right to operate the existing line of Haider Pasha-Ismid and to extend it to Angora. This concession marked the first German railway enterprise in the Ottoman Empire. At the same time it also marked the first step toward completion of the Baghdad Railway project, which aimed to link Constantinople with the Persian Gulf.

The idea of establishing a railway from Constantinople to Baghdad and the Persian Gulf was first suggested by Wilhelm von Pressel, an Austrian engineer, the Sultan's technical adviser, who was thoroughly familiar with the railway problems of Asia Minor.² Von Pressel drafted a plan for a railway to embrace the whole of the Ottoman Empire, from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf. This scheme,

1. Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XCVI (Accounts and Papers, Vol. XLVIII), Comd. 8019, May 1896, Turkey No. 4, "Report by Major Law on Railways in Asiatic Turkey," p. 1.

2. Earle, op. cit., p. 18.

which would link the Sultan's capital with the richest of Turkey's Asiatic provinces, Syria and Mesopotamia, attracted the Sultan more than any other. Hence, when he was asked in 1868 to give a concession for the building of a railway from Haider Pasha-Isaid to Angora, he was entirely willing, because he believed the project would be the first step in the fulfillment of his dream.

As a matter of fact several financial groups had asked for the above concession in 1868, the most important among them being a German group represented by the Deutsche Bank, the French-controlled Imperial Ottoman Bank, and a British-Italian group headed by Sir Vincent Caillard, which, however, had little hope of gaining the concession. ¹

As a matter of fact Sir Vincent was more interested in blocking French activities than in attaining the concession himself. ² Accordingly he cooperated with the German group

against the French, a move which helped the German syndicate to gain a concession on October 4, 1868, giving them the right to operate the Haider Pasha-Isaid line and extend it to Angora. The concession was made with substantial financial guarantees from the Ottoman Government and

1. The British were now very unpopular in the Ottoman Empire, having annexed Cyprus and occupied Egypt.

2. Maybelle Kennedy Chapman, Great Britain and the Bagdad Railway 1868-1914, Smith College Studies in History, Vol. XXXI. Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1948, p. 22.

was for a period of ninety-nine years.¹ A corporation called the Anatolian Railway Company was organized to carry out the concession.

The work of constructing the line to Angora was completed in 1892; in the next year the Anatolian Railway Company asked a further concession for a two-fold extension. The first extension would run from Angora to Cassarea, and the second from Eski-Shehr, a point about midway between Haider-Pasha and Angora, to Konia. The new Konia line threatened to cut the two existing British lines, the Smyrna-Aiden Railway and the Smyrna-Cassaba Railway, from their hinterland.² This circumstance led to the first British capitalist agitation against the German railway activities. Sir Clare Ford, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, also protested against the Anatolian Railway's concession. His protest marked Britain's first formal attempt to block the German Railway enterprise in the Ottoman Empire. The British Ambassador's attitude led the German government to interfere, at a time when the British needed German support for the British administration in Egypt. Count Leyden, the German Consul-General in Cairo, informed Lord Cromer, British Consul-General and Agent in

1. Alwyn Parker, "The Baghdad Railway Negotiations," The Quarterly Review, CCVIII (October, 1917), pp. 487-528.

2. Ibid.

Egypt, that he was instructed by his government to cease his support to the British administration in Egypt, and added that the present German attitude was due to the British policy toward German railway schemes in Asia Minor.¹ The British government then informed the Germans that "Her Majesty's Government have no desire to take any step inimical to German influence or interest at Constantinople."²

British opposition having ceased, the concession was granted to the Germans in February, 1893. The concession was based upon the security of kilometric guarantees.³

After the line of Eski-Shehr-Konia was completed in 1896 the Deutsche Bank was not enthusiastic about extending the Konia line farther. George von Siemens, the head of the Deutsche Bank, wrote to the German Foreign Office that the Anatolian Railway Company would not object if foreign capitalists wished to build the road from Konia to Baghdad, which would increase the traffic over the German roads as well.³ But Marschall von Bieberstein, the German Ambassador at Constantihople, argued that any project extending the railway to Baghdad ought to be undertaken by

1. Ibid.

2. Chapman, op. cit., p. 29.

3. The system of the Anatolian Railway by which the Turkish government guaranteed the Angora line a minimum annual revenue of 15,000 francs per kilometre.

4. Wolf, op. cit., p. 20.

Germany. He believed that French success in gaining such a concession would injure German prestige.¹ At the same time the Sultan himself was still distrustful of both British and French interests. The Turkish-Greek war had greatly increased the Sultan's interest in railroads, for he had seen how easily and quickly he was able to bring his troops from the Terminal and dispatch them to the front, enabling him to defeat his enemies. Another effect of the Turkish-Greek war was to demonstrate the superiority of German arms and technique, because both these had been used by the Turkish army in winning the war. Thus the Sultan's confidence in Germany was increased, and he was more ready to open his empire to further German economic exploitation. By this time, too, he was very anxious to extend the Konia line to Baghdad, hoping that the project would help to resurrect the Ottoman Empire, by enabling the Sultan to exercise actual control over the Asiatic Turkish provinces, which now recognized only the nominal authority of the Sultan. It would also enable him to carry troops from Asia Minor to those provinces to crush the strong rebellious tribes in both Syria and Mesopotamia and to keep them in order. This done, the provinces would have to share in the defense of the empire, both in money and in blood. There was still another advantage: the railway

1. The French were the most powerful and active rivals of Germany in Turkey by that time.

would create a feeling of unity among the different people of the empire, which had never existed before. Thus the Sultan saw in the Baghdad Railway the best instrument to serve the Pan-Islamic movement which during his reign had become quite strong. He emphasized the religious character of the authority of the Sultan and used religious feeling to resist the European, not only in his own provinces but in India and in North Africa where both the British and French had vital interests.

During the Kaiser's second visit to Constantinople in 1898 the proposal to complete the line from Konia to Baghdad again was discussed. In the following year the Anatolian Railway Company made a serious attempt to gain the concession for this extension. Baron von Bieberstein wished to keep the project purely in German hands, while Dr. Kurt Zander, the Anatolian Railway Company director, wanted to include British and French capital in such a project, to avoid political complications on one hand and to secure larger foreign financial support on the other hand,¹ especially since the Anatolian Railway Company was in financial difficulties.

Georg von Siemens began to seek European investors, first approaching British financiers. But both British financiers and the British government were too busy in South

1. Wolf, op. cit., p. 19.

Africa to be interested at this time. Von Siemens then turned to the French capitalists, and an agreement was made between German and French groups in May 1899. According to this agreement the Germans were required to secure the concession in the name of the Anatolian Railway Company, but the road was to be built by a Franco-German syndicate. The French group were to receive forty percent of the stock and the German group, sixty, forty percent for the Deutsche Bank and twenty percent for Austria and Switzerland.¹ To French public opinion it appeared that the French were on equal terms with the Germans: "With the conclusion of this agreement, the first and decisive step had been taken toward internationalizing the Baghdad Railway project, and thereby toward neutralizing it politically."² French opposition to the project changed to cooperation, and the Anatolian Railway Company proceeded to ask the Sultan for the concession.

A preliminary concession was given to the Anatolian Railway Company in December 1899, it being agreed to leave the details for a later convention. The concession was met with some little suspicion in Britain, where it was feared the British position in the Persian Gulf might be

1. It was well known by this time that the Austrians and Swiss, who were interested in the railway projects in Asia Minor, were supported by the Deutsche Bank, and were under its influence.

2. Chapman, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

affected.¹ But there was no strong opposition either from the British government or from British public opinion. The Franco-German Agreement of May 1899 left the door open to other European financiers if they wished to cooperate with the German and French groups.²

After the Germans had received the preliminary concession they tried again to interest British finance in the Baghdad Railway project, for it appeared to the Germans that British cooperation was indispensable. English participation would open British financial resources to the project and furthermore, would decrease the political complications. Two additional points made British cooperation both necessary and important: British consent to an increase in Turkish customs duties, and the finding of a suitable terminus.

With regard to the question of the Turkish tariff it is important to mention that once the great European powers had agreed to an increase in the Turkish customs duties, the requisite money for the kilometric guarantees could be obtained. Turkish government finance was under the control of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, whose council was composed of representatives of the foreign bondholders, and was responsible only to them.³ It is

1. Parker, The Quarterly Review, CCVIII, 487-528.

2. Wolf, p. 22.

3. Earle, op. cit., p. 11.

easy to understand now why the cooperation of the European powers, especially Great Britain, which had the largest trade with Turkey, was vital to the project, and how easy it would be for the European powers to block it.¹

Selecting a suitable terminus on the Persian Gulf represented another problem for the Baghdad Railway project. The most likely port was Kuwait, where Great Britain had already concluded a treaty specifying that the Sheikh of Kuwait was not to cede or lease any part of his territories to a foreign government without British consent.² On a visit to England in 1901 Von Siemens asked the British Foreign Office whether there was any possibility of obtaining English capital, and whether Great Britain was going to use the new route to India for mail, if it should prove to be the shortest way.³ Von Siemens' mission failed, however, for neither the British government nor British financiers were interested.

After the Germans failed to interest the British in cooperating with these German and French groups, they turned to Russia, knowing that opposition from both Russia and Great Britain was enough to block the project. As a matter of fact Russia had opposed the German Railway activities from the very beginning, believing that any

1. The Council represented Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria and Hungary, Italy and Turkey.

2. Aitchison, op. cit., XI, p. 202.

3. Wolf, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

railway project in the Ottoman Empire would strengthen the Sultan and work against Russian aspirations in the Near East. In April, 1899, Count Osten-Sachen, the Russian Ambassador at Berlin, explained to Bulow Russia's misgivings concerning German activities in the Near East, saying: "German economic interests in Turkey might easily develop into political hegemony and ultimately into a conflict of interests between Germany and Russia."¹ Osten-Sachen made it clear that he believed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was at hand, and that Russia would then have to be sure of securing the Straits. If Germany agreed to give her assurance on this point, Russia would give Germany a free hand in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Bulow's reply to this Russian argument was that German aims in Turkey were purely commercial and that Germany would not oppose Russian political aims.² This reply nevertheless did not satisfy Russia, and both the Russian government and the press were hostile to the Baghdad Railway project. The Germans now asked their French partners to help persuade the Russians. M. Theophile Delcassé, on his visit to St. Petersburg in the spring of 1901, discussed the Baghdad Railway scheme and the Russian attitude

1. William L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism 1890-1902 (New York and London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935), II, 640.

2. Ibid., II, p. 640.

toward it. He persuaded the Czar to cease Russian opposition to the Baghdad Railway scheme, and to conclude a new Russo-Turkish treaty of commerce. At the same time Russia was assured that (1) none of the increase from the tariff would go to the Turkish army, (2) the project would be an international company under the control of all the shareholders and (3) Russian capital would share in the syndicate.¹

The news of this agreement had its effect on the British attitude. Great Britain would find herself in a difficult position should all these powers -- Germany, France and Russia -- agree to increase the Turkish customs duties. England could not withhold her consent to an increase of the Turkish customs duties because it would then appear to the world that she was trying to block a project which would help the people and the country which the project was going to serve. Sir Nicholas O'Connor wrote to Lord Lansdowne on June 25, 1901:

A British syndicate should be formed to enter into negotiations with the German and French groups and to enquire for themselves into the merits and details of the scheme, so as to be in a position to obtain for the British public, as well as for British trade and commerce, such advantages as may be reaped by those who participate in the original concession... I believe it would be very difficult, standing alone as we probably should, to oppose or to question the rights of the Turkish government to apply

1. Wolf, op. cit., p. 30.

this revenue to such purpose as it thinks most conducive to the economic development of the country.¹

It is evident that the Germans were now in a good position. On January 2, 1902 the Sultan definitely awarded the Baghdad Railway concession to the Anatolian Railway Company, without serious opposition from the other powers.² Lord Lansdowne took a long step toward British participation by explaining to the German Ambassador on March 18, 1902 that Great Britain did not regard the Baghdad Railway project with unfriendly eyes; all that she asked was that a share, at least equal to that given to any other power,³ should be given to her. Lord Lansdowne went so far as to urge British capitalists to participate and to promise them British governmental support so far as possible. British financiers agreed to participate, but asked first that the British government agree to support the project in three ways: (1) by the grant of a subsidy for the carriage of mail to India; (2) by facilitating the introduction of the new Turkish customs tariff; and (3) by aiding the promoters to obtain a terminus at or near Kuwait. Lansdowne answered that the government had no reason not to accept these conditions.⁴

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., II, pp. 176-177.

2. Wolf, op. cit., p. 37.

3. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., p. 11; pp. 177-178.

4. Ibid., II, pp. 179-180.

While British capitalists were engaged in negotiating with the British government and with German and French capitalists, the German and French groups met at Berlin in February 1903 and made a preliminary agreement for the distribution of the shares for a new syndicate, with the British included in the project. The distribution of shares was made as follows: twenty-five percent to Germany, twenty-five to France, twenty-five to Britain, ten to the Anatolian Railway Company, fifteen to various parties. The Board of Directors was to consist of eight Germans, eight French, eight British; one person nominated by the Ottoman Bank, one Austrian nominated by the Deutsche Bank, and two Swiss, of whom one was to be nominated by the Deutsche Bank and the other by the Ottoman Bank; and three persons¹ to be nominated by the Anatolian Railway Company.

Negotiations for a final settlement continued during February and March of 1903. The British capitalists asked Arthur von Gwinner, Director of the Deutsche Bank, that the Anatolian Railway Company (which was in full control on the line of Haider-Pasha-Konia) should be brought into the arrangement and should not continue as a purely German company. They asked also that the representation of the powers concerned upon the Board of Management must be preserved as set up in the agreement of February.² Von Gwinner

1. Ibid., II, n. 180.

2. Ibid., II, 183.

accepted these two provisions, but on condition that the British government should allow (1) Turkey to increase her customs, (2) guarantee a large share of the Indian mail and passengers for the line as soon as it was established, and (3) secure a suitable port at Kuwait.¹ It has been mentioned above that Lord Lansdowne had already accepted these three points, and on March 23, 1903 he gave full assurances.² It now appeared that British opposition had ceased and that an international company would be formed to carry out the project.

The last step in the Baghdad Railway concession came when the concession of 1902 was replaced by the definitive Baghdad Railway Convention of March 1903. This convention, containing forty-six articles, stated that the concession was for a period of ninety-nine years. It included, in addition to the extension of the railway from Konia to Baghdad and Basra, many branch lines. The concessionnaires were furthermore given permission to work all the minerals found within twenty kilometers on each side of the railway. Materials necessary for the initial establishment, such as iron, wood and coal, which the concessionnaires would purchase in Turkey or import from abroad, were exempted from all taxes and customs duties. Public lands

1. Ibid., II, 184-5.

2. Ibid., II, 85.

needed for the project were to be granted. The concessionnaires were given the right to build harbors at Baghdad and Basra, and at the terminal point on the Persian Gulf. Article 8 provided that the concessionnaires would form a company under the name of the "Imperial Ottoman Baghdad Railway Company," replacing the Ottoman Anatolian Railway Company. In addition, concessionnaires were to be allowed to navigate the Tigris, Euphrates, and Shat el-Arab,¹ to carry the materials necessary for the construction. It was indeed true that "The Baghdad Railroad concession was a choice plum from the concession tree of the Ottoman empire."²

It has been mentioned before that during February and March of 1903 British capitalists were busy in negotiations with the British government on the one side and with foreign capitalists on the other. By this time it seemed they were very close to reaching final settlement and that the British, as well as the Germans and the French, were going to have a part in the Baghdad Railway project. But now a new development arose, which was to have a vital effect on the future of the Baghdad Railway project.

In April 1903 the Baghdad Railway project was severely

1. Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. CII (Accounts and Papers, Vol. 59), Cmd. 5635, May, 1911, "Bagdad Railway Convention of March 5, 1903, pp. 37-48.
2. Wolf, op. cit., p. 41.

attacked by the British press,¹ from several points of view. Most of the papers urged the British government not to cooperate with the Germans and not to share in the project. The Spectator of April 4, 1903 wrote: "It is essential that we should tell the German that politically we will have nothing whatever to do with the scheme, that Germany must fight her own battle with Russia, and that financially we will also stand neutral."² The same magazine of April 11, 1903 attacked the project on the basis that it would be established at the expense of British trade,³ since British goods were the chief payers of customs. It was argued by another magazine that British cooperation with the Germans would remove any possibility of reconciliation between Britain and Russia, and would at the same time serve the purposes of Britain's industrial competitors in central Europe. "There has not often been a nearer parallel in real life to the case of being made to pay for the razor to cut one's own throat."⁴

1. It was attacked by very influential newspapers and magazines; the London Times, The Economist, The National Review, The Spectator, The Saturday Review, and the Fortnightly Review.
2. "The Baghdad Railway," The Spectator, XC (April 4, 1903), 520-521.
3. "The Baghdad Railway," The Spectator, XC (April 11, 1903), 560-561.
4. "The Latin Rapprochement and the Baghdad Imbroglia," The Fortnightly Review, LXXIII (May 1, 1903), 809-826.

British cooperation in the Baghdad Railway project was discussed in the British Parliament on April 7, 1903. Mr. A.J. Balfour, the British Prime Minister, was asked in the House of Commons whether any communications had already passed between the British government and foreign governments relating to the German Anatolian or Baghdad Railway. He answered that there had been no formal communication between the British government and any foreign government. But negotiations were still in progress between British capitalists and foreign capitalists.¹ On April 9, 1903 the London Times started its first attack on the Baghdad Railway project,² and on April 11, 1903 published a report on the Baghdad Railway by Mr. Alexander Telford Waugh, the British Vice-Consul at Constantinople, which opposed the project. Waugh maintained that the entire management of the line was in German hands, independent of the nationalities who were taking part in financing the line. This management, he believed, would use its power for the benefit of German goods conveyed over the line.³ Mr. H.F.B. Lynch, whose family had an important navigation interest in Mesopotamia, wrote on April 18, 1903:

1. Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, CXX (1903, 1247-1248).

2. The Times (London), April 9, 1903, p. 6.

3. The Times (London), April 9, 1903, p. 6.

It seems that this question will be decided by the powers above without consulting those who have made a special study of such problems...This railway scheme is not only calculated to affect our hold upon a market of present importance and almost immeasurable potential value, but it is capable of altering to our detriment the balance of political influence in the borderlands of India.¹

As a matter of fact British public opinion became very hostile to the Baghdad Railway project as a result of this press campaign, and in this unfriendly atmosphere the London Times published the summary of the Baghdad Railway Convention of March 1903.² Opinion was already firmly against the Baghdad Railway; the public now saw in this convention far more evidence that the project was against British interests. Lord Lansdowne, however, still favored the project. In a memorandum of April 14, 1903 presented to the Cabinet, he emphasized:

Although our abstention may have the effect of retarding the completion of the line, I feel little doubt that it will eventually be made. That it should be made without British participation would, to my mind, be a national misfortune. It will be a most important highway to the East. It will shorten the journey to India by about three days. It will open up new regions, some of which will certainly prove

1. The Times (London), April 11, 1903, p. 5.

2. The Times (London), April 18, 1903, p. 13.

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rich and productive.

British government policy toward the railway project faltered in the face of the attitude of the British press; Lansdowne himself ceased to encourage the British capitalists, referring to the articles in the National Review and Spectator, when he told representatives of the British capitalists on April 7, 1903:

...that a serious attempt was apparently being made to discredit the enterprise...we felt that, until we were better able to judge of the proportions which this hostile movement might assume, it would be desirable that we should avoid giving it any further encouragement.²

On April 22, 1903 Mr. Arthur Balfour announced in the House of Commons that the Baghdad Railway Convention of March 5, 1903

leaves the whole scheme of railway development through Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf entirely in the hands of a company under German control. To such a convention we have never been asked to assent, and we could not in any case be a party to it.³

From 1903-1914 the Baghdad Railway project became one of the most important political problems in European diplomacy. There is no doubt that it increased the tension between Germany, which was interested in the project,

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., II, pp. 187-188.

2. Ibid., II, 185.

3. Great Britain, 4 Parliamentary Debates, CXXI (1903), 222.

and the other powers -- England, France and Russia -- who did everything possible to block it. There is no doubt that British public opinion had adversely affected the British government's policy toward the project. By 1903 there was strong anti-German feeling in England because of the German attitude toward the Boer War, the German naval policy, and the competition of German trade with British commerce in several parts of the world. So far as British interests in Mesopotamia and the Near East were concerned there was no doubt that the Baghdad Railway would open this part of the world to Germany. As a matter of fact even if the project were to be internationalized, that would not be enough for the British, since it would give other European powers equality with the British in provinces where they had previously enjoyed a predominant role. Mr. H.F.B. Lynch wrote: "The whole policy of letting in other countries to a position enabling them to exercise political pressure in regions of such great importance to us as Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf is open to serious question..."¹ Actually British diplomacy toward the Baghdad Railway project after 1903 was to protect her predominant position in Mesopotamia and to maintain and increase her interests there.

1. The Times (London), April 18, 1903, p. 13.

CHAPTER IV

British Measures to Safeguard Her Position

After the withdrawal of Great Britain from the Baghdad Railway project, France was under great pressure from her ally Russia, to withdraw also. For St. Petersburg, despite having agreed with the French in 1901 to cease her opposition and to conclude a new commercial treaty with the Turks, was in fact still hostile to the railway.¹ Now that the British had pulled out, the Russians believed that to block the project they had only to persuade the French to do the same. Delcassé, the Russians found, was willing to listen to the Russian arguments.

After the British withdrawal Germany would have liked to return to the French-German agreement of 1899, giving to the French forty percent of the capital stock and to the Germans, sixty percent, with forty percent held by the Deutsche Bank and twenty percent by Germany's associates, the Swiss and the Austrians. But Delcassé now insisted that French capital must share equally with German, and that France should be on equal terms with Germany in the management and control of the Railway.² On October 1,

1. Parker, The Quarterly Review, CCXIII, 487-528.

2. Ibid.

1903 French and German financiers met at Brussels and reached an agreement which gave the French equality, but only as a facade; in reality, control was kept in German hands.¹ Delcassé, however, under Russian pressure, insisted that the new agreement did not protect French interests, with the result that Franco-German cooperation ceased. Germany was now left to carry out the project alone in the face of the opposition of Great Britain, Russia, and France, although she realized full well that she could not finance it unaided, and that Turkey at the same time could not provide funds to guarantee the construction so long as political opposition continued.

However, the Germans carried out by themselves the construction of the section from Konia to Bulgurbu, which was opened on October 25, 1904. But neither the Germans nor the Turks could extend the line any farther, for the next section would be the most difficult and expensive stretch, since it would pass through the Taurus Mountains.

In actual fact the determination to control the lower Mesopotamia section of the Baghdad Railway became the pillar of British policy toward the project. It was now increasingly clear that Britain's first aim with regard to the Baghdad Railway project was to secure shares on equality with the other powers involved. Whereas she had before

1. On the same basis: 40 percent to the French, 40 percent to the Germans, 20 percent to the Austrians and Swiss. (Earle, op. cit., p. 93.)

1903 concentrated her efforts on trying to internationalize the whole line from sea to sea, after 1903 a new policy emerged. Not satisfied with mere internationalization, Britain was now going to insist on the sectionalization of the line, with definite British control of the lower Mesopotamian stretch. The idea was first adopted by influential Englishmen who were well known as specialists on the Near Eastern question. H.F.B. Lynch, whose family had exercised a monopoly of navigation in Mesopotamia for three generations, wrote on April 18, 1903 that any future settlement with regard to the Baghdad Railway should secure British control of lower Mesopotamia.¹ Valentine Chirol, author of The Middle Eastern Question, an authoritative work on British interests in the Near East, urged the European powers to divide the Turkish Empire into spheres of influence for the exploitation of the railways, with Britain controlling the Mesopotamian part. He wrote:

Let us have the construction, management, and control of the railway on conditions to be mutually agreed upon, from the Persian Gulf up to Baghdad, including the branch line to the Persian frontier at Khankin. Let the others have the same rights on similar terms with regard to the rest of the line from Constantinople downwards.²

1. The Times (London), April 18, 1903, p. 13.

2. Valentine Chirol, The Middle Eastern Question (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 229.

A memorandum presented by the Committee of the Imperial Defence on August 4, 1904, to the Foreign Office, described the Baghdad Railway situation at that time. The memorandum mentioned that Germany had already secured complete control over the Anatolian Railway, while at the same time France had a monopoly of railway construction in Syria. That Britain should control the Basra-Baghdad section was both legitimate and just, the paper concluded. The memorandum went on to provide several proposals for final settlement of the Baghdad Railway dilemma: Germany should retain control of the Anatolian Railway, France should have control of the Syrian railways, and Great Britain should construct, control and manage the Baghdad Gulf section; the intervening section with all its branches and connections, should be internationalized.¹

Another memorandum communicated by the Board of Trade to the Foreign Office on June 23, 1905 emphasized that Great Britain should control the last part of the Baghdad Railway.

Our aim, if any negotiations were undertaken, should be to secure the predominance of British capital and direction in the construction and administration of the section of the line from the Persian Gulf to Baghdad or possibly further, say, to Tekrit or even to Mosul. This would balance the predominantly German character of the existing Anatolian Railway

¹ I. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., VI, 331-334.

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as far as Konia.

However, no serious negotiation between Germany and Great Britain took place between April 1903 and November of 1907, when the Kaiser visited London. Great Britain stood firmly opposed to any increase in the Turkish tariff which might be used in the construction of the Baghdad Railway.

Serious talks between the British and the Germans were resumed in November 1907, during the Kaiser's visit to England. Sir Edward Grey, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had already prepared a memorandum representing the views of the Foreign Office on subjects which the German Emperor might possibly discuss during his visit to Windsor, with the Baghdad Railway first on the agenda.

As regards the Baghdad Railway, the attitude of His Majesty's Government is by no means one of determined opposition, provided that Great Britain and France are allowed a fair share in the control of the Railway, and that any arrangement which may be come to does not conflict with the views of the Russian Government.¹

Just as Grey had anticipated, the Kaiser brought up the matter of the Baghdad Railway with the British government. During a personal discussion one evening at Windsor between the Kaiser and Richard Haldane, the British Secretary of

1. Ibid., VI, 328.

2. Ibid., VI, 91.

State for War, the Kaiser suddenly pointed out that he was sorry there was a good deal of friction over the Baghdad Railway between the Germans and the British. He added that he would like to know what exactly the British wanted and what was the real reason for their opposition to such a project. Haldane's answer was that, as Minister of War, he realized the importance to Britain of a "gate" to protect India from troops which might be moved down via the Baghdad Railway. When the Kaiser asked him what he meant by "gate" Haldane answered that he was referring to British control of the section which would come near the Persian Gulf. The Kaiser replied that he was ready to give that "gate" to Great Britain. Haldane left for London the next morning to report the Kaiser's answer to Sir Edward Grey and to ask that negotiations on the Baghdad Railway be reopened. Sir Edward answered that Great Britain would be very glad to discuss the project with the Kaiser, but that he must insist on consultation with both France and Russia before any settlement was made, because both these powers had vital interests in the project. Haldane then returned to the Kaiser at Windsor and explained Sir Edward's views on the British position, which were contained in a memorandum he had brought back. Haldane then suggested that a conference at Berlin composed of the four powers -- Germany, Great Britain, France, and Russia -- would be necessary to discuss

and settle the problem. The Kaiser at first accepted the idea, but after he had been back in Germany for several weeks, Germany informed the British government that she was ready to discuss the Baghdad Railway with Great Britain only, and not with France and Russia. A four-power conference was certain to fail, the Germans believed, thus accentuating the differences between Germany and the other three powers, with Germany standing alone against Great Britain, **France** and Russia.¹

Grey's former memorandum on the Baghdad Railway, and his insistence that any negotiations must now include both France and Russia, marked a new development in British policy. From 1907 to 1911 the three powers, Great Britain, France and Russia, formed what was called the Triple Entente, working together as a solid front against Germany, to block her dream of the Baghdad Railway. Germany's refusal to attend the proposed four-power conference led to still another deadlock in the situation.

Following the revolution of the Young Turks in 1908 and 1909 the positions of the European powers in Turkey were considerably altered. Great Britain, which had been unpopular, now found herself in favor with the new regime. Many members of the Committee of Union and Progress, who led the revolution, had received a western education in

1. Viscount Haldane, Before the War (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1920), pp. 48-51.

Paris or London, and hence had come to admire French and British institutions, as well as western European democracy.¹ At the same time the influence of Germany at Constantinople declined, for the Young Turks believed that Germany had supported Abdul Hamid. Turkish hostility toward Germany naturally affected the fortunes of the Baghdad Railway, which the Young Turks considered a German colonial project and "as a concrete manifestation of German hegemony at the Sublime Porte and as the crowning achievement of the friendship of those two autocrats of the autocrats, Abdul Hamid and William II."² On August 11, 1908 Sir Gerard Lowther, the new British Ambassador at Constantinople, wrote to Sir Edward Grey that from one end of the Ottoman Empire to the other England was considered as the natural friend of Turkey.³ Kiamil Pasha, the Turkish Grand Vizier, was on very good terms with the British Ambassador. Two British experts were appointed to help put the Turkish customs in order, an English admiral was asked to reorganize the Turkish navy, and Sir William Willcocks was to study the irrigation problem in Mesopotamia. Furthermore, a large number of Turkish

1. Charles Roden Buxton, Turkey in Revolution (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), pp. 147-148.

2. Earle, op. cit., pp. 218-219.

3. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., V, 265.

students were sent to England and France.¹ The annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria further increased German difficulties and the unpopularity of the Central Powers in the Ottoman Empire.

The British were to enjoy this favored position in Constantinople for only a short time. When the military elements of the Young Turks came to power early in 1909, Kiamil Pasha, Britain's good friend, gave way to Hilmi Pasha, who felt more kindly toward the Germans. The new government proceeded to send for Herr von der Goltz to reorganize the Turkish army, while the Turkish officers also applied to Germany for military instruction. The hostile attitude of the Young Turks toward the Baghdad Railway, which had prevailed at the beginning of the revolution, was soon to be changed. The Young Turks recognized, just as Abdul Hamid had done, the importance of the Baghdad Railway to the Ottoman Empire. When Great Britain refused the Turkish demand for an increase in their tariff, she lost any hope for better relations with the new regime.

In the spring of 1909 the Ottoman Empire found itself in a very difficult financial position. The Young Turks turned to the powers to gain their consent for increasing the Turkish tariff from eleven to fifteen percent. Great Britain, with the Baghdad Railway project in mind, refused

1. Buxton, op. cit., p. 145.

to sanction this increase. Sir Edward Grey emphasized the fact that about one third of the increase in duties would fall on British commerce, and that this money, secured at the expense of British trade, might be used to build a railway which would threaten vital British interests in Mesopotamia.¹ While the Turkish demand was refused, at the same time the door was again open for a series of renewed negotiations regarding the Baghdad Railway.

It should be emphasized here that British policy toward the Baghdad Railway prior to 1903 had been to secure control over the lower part, lying between Baghdad and the Persian Gulf. But in 1909 a new development in British plans became evident. This was their desire to build a railway in Mesopotamia between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf, via Baghdad and Basra. A report prepared by Lt. J. Ramsay, the British Resident and Consul-General at Baghdad, demanded a concession for a railway connecting Mesopotamia with the Mediterranean at Alexandria by way of the Euphrates Valley and Aleppo. He emphasized that this project would safeguard the interests of both the British and the Turks. At the same time he criticized the German Baghdad Railway project. A memorandum to the Sultan, prepared by Sir William Willcocks,

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., VI, 378.

adviser to the Ottoman Ministry of Public Works, advocated the idea of the construction of such a Euphrates Valley Railway as a necessity for the economic development of Mesopotamia.¹

The British government officially adopted the project. On August 18, 1909, Sir Edward Grey instructed the British Ambassador at Constantinople to make a formal request to the Turkish Government for the concession and to inform the Turks that this concession would not require a financial guarantee from the Turkish government.² The British government made it clear that their consent to an increase in the Turkish tariff depended on Turkish willingness to give the new railway concession to the British. Hilmi Pasha, the Grand Vizier, explained that it would be better to postpone the actual demand for the concession until after the question of a four percent increase in the Turkish tariff had been settled, because if the Germans knew of such a concession they would never consent to an increase in the Turkish tariff.³

These British stipulations put the Grand Vizier in a very difficult position. He had no desire to give Britain any further concessions in Mesopotamia and thereby increase

1. Ibid., VI, 371.

2. Ibid., VI, 374.

3. Ibid., VI, 377.

British influence, which was already very strong. But at the same time he found it hard to refuse the British demand. He could neither explain to his Parliament why he should refuse to grant this attractive concession, which did not ask financial guarantees, nor could he resist the increasing British pressure. He turned now to the German Ambassador, appealing for his help in persuading the German government to agree with the British and the French on the building of the Baghdad Railway,¹ emphasizing his need to conciliate Great Britain. Arthur Von Gwinner, the director of the Deutsche Bank, explained to him, however, that Great Britain's real aim was not simply to get a percentage share of the project, but to obtain a geographical part of Turkey as a sphere of influence; he added, further, that if the Turks themselves would allow England to control the section of the line from the Persian Gulf to Baghdad he could easily reach an understanding with England, so long as German interests were secured in other parts of the line.² However, Turkish desires to ease the situation induced them to ask the Germans in May 1910 to abandon their right to build the section between Baghdad and the Gulf. They also asked Von Gwinner to negotiate on the basis that England would secure fifty percent of the stocks in that

1. Chapman, op. cit., p. 96.

2. Wolf, op. cit., p. 58.

section and that the remaining fifty percent would remain with the Germans and the Turks themselves. But British insistence on complete control again caused the failure of the negotiations.¹

The Turks then turned to another suggestion, that they themselves should build the Persian Gulf section of the railway. In reply to this idea the British government prepared a memorandum on February 20, 1910 to the Turkish government, in which they insisted that the Baghdad Railway enterprise, under the existing concession, was an undoubted menace to the legitimate position of British trade in Mesopotamia. The memorandum made it clear, however, that the British favored the Turkish government's building the section of the line between Baghdad and the Gulf. The Ottoman government, however, should guarantee that British merchandise would not be subjected to adverse manipulation of rates, and that British railway contractors should be given a majority share (about sixty percent) in the provision of the railway materials. It was further stipulated that Kuwait should be the terminus for the railway, not Basra, which was unsuitable as the maritime terminus of a great transcontinental railway, and that Great Britain should be allowed to build a harbor in Kuwait.² Again negotiations were deadlocked, as the Turks were unwilling

1. Ibid., p. 58.

2. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., VI, 503-504.

to submit to all these British demands.

It has been previously mentioned that the German Baghdad Railway enterprise had faced the combined opposition of three powers -- Great Britain, France and Russia -- since 1907. Each country had a different reason for blocking the project. Although Great Britain had kept France and Russia informed of all her negotiations with the Germans and the Turks since 1907, Russia was suspicious, believing that Great Britain would forget the Russian and French interests whenever she could secure her own. This fear on the part of Russia induced her to negotiate separately with Germany in November 1910, when the Tsar visited the Kaiser at Potsdam, an event which was considered a good opportunity to restore the old Russian-German friendship.

Serge Sazonoff, appointed as Russian Foreign Minister in 1910, came to this office with little experience. He was almost totally unfamiliar with Entente diplomacy in general and with Entente policy toward the Baghdad Railway in particular. His first task as Foreign Minister was to accompany the Tsar to the Potsdam meeting with the Kaiser. During this visit Sazonoff became amenable to the restoration of friendly relations with Germany.¹ England and France, already alarmed by this meeting, were further

1. G.P. Gooch, Before the War (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938), II, 291.

disturbed by Sazonoff's friendly attitude toward Germany. Sir Edward Grey reminded Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, of the British attitude during the Kaiser's visit to London in 1907, when the British government had refused to negotiate with Germany on the Baghdad Railway, unless Russia and France participated in any negotiation on this question.¹ Sazonoff recognized that the Baghdad Railway and the situation in Persia would be discussed, but he promised the British that the talks would not deal with the neutral zone in Persia, for here Russia would consult England on matters concerning the zone. Sazonoff went further by announcing in Berlin that Russia sought an understanding with England toward removing the differences between England and Germany, but that if England wanted to follow an anti-German policy, Russia would not be on her side.²

Conversations between Sazonoff and German high officials began on November 4, 1910 at Potsdam, in which Germany declared that she had no political aims in Persia, and that she was not seeking any territorial concession in the Russian zone there. Her only desire was to secure a free

1. B. de Siebert, Entente Diplomacy and the World, trans. Zibert, Benno Aleksandrovich (ed.), New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), p. 320.

2. Gooch, op. cit., II, 291-292.

entry for her goods. Russia declared that she did not wish to obstruct German trade, or German railway activities. Furthermore, if Russia constructed a system in north Persia she would meet German wishes by connecting the proposed Russian line with the future Baghdad line at Khanikin. The Potsdam announcements became the basis for negotiation between the two governments during the next ten months. After a series of drafts and counter drafts an agreement was signed in August 1911. In the final phase, it was agreed that Russia would cease her opposition to the Baghdad Railway, while Germany, on her part, recognized Russia's full interest in the northern zone in Persia, where Germany guaranteed not to seek any kind of concession.¹

The Potsdam Agreement was of great importance in European diplomacy before the war, for it created an important breach in the wall of strong opposition from the Triple Entente to the Baghdad Railway. Sir Edward Grey made it clear to the Russian Ambassador at London that England's position was now seriously weakened in her future negotiations with Germany, since Germany had obtained two very important concessions from Russia in the Potsdam Agreement: first, the Baghdad Railway had found an outlet in northern Persia; and second, Germany had obtained assurances that Russia would cease her opposition to the principles of the

1. Ibid., p. 293.

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Baghdad Railway project.

The Agreement created bitter feelings in both Great Britain and France, and there is no doubt that it weakened the Triple Entente. Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, in his dispatch to Sir Edward Grey, described the agreement as a triumph for Germany at the expense of Russia and the other members of the Triple Entente. He added that M. Sazonoff was the official largely responsible, since in his lack of diplomatic experience he had disregarded the understanding on which Great Britain, France and Russia had hitherto acted, that no member of the Triple Entente was to conclude an agreement with Germany until the other two had obtained satisfaction for their interests.² The whole principle of the Triple Entente was attacked in both France and Great Britain. During a discussion of the Entente policy in the British Parliament Mr. George Lloyd, a member of the House of Commons, commented on the Potsdam Agreement, asking that the government reconsider her attitude toward the Triple Entente, and saying:

I ask the Government to inform us whether in such case we were informed not only of the subjects to be discussed but of the policy that would be adopted with regard

1. Siebert, op. cit., p. 330.

2. Gooch and Temperley, X, Part I, 156.

to the subjects that were going to be discussed...I think really, the time has come, when for the sake of the peace of Europe, and our own interests and even for the sake of **British interests**, we should understand clearly where we are in regard to this matter.¹

Edward Hare Pickersgill, another member of Parliament, urged the British government to cease her antagonism toward Germany. An understanding with Germany, he felt, was very necessary after what had happened at Potsdam. He said that he could not understand the policy of this continued antagonism to Germany, adding:

The interests of Germany are absolutely compatible with the interests of this country, and there is only one part of the world in which there might possibly be friction between the two countries, that is, the Euphrates Valley. There is no reason why we should not come to some reasonable arrangement with Germany.²

Sir Edward Grey made a speech in Parliament on March 8, 1911, explaining the difficult position in which the British government found itself with regard to the Baghdad Railway. He argued that the Liberal government was not responsible for the development of the Baghdad Railway crisis. The concession of this railway having come into existence before he had been in office, the time

1. Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), XXI (1911), 247.

2. Ibid., XXI, 82.

to oppose the project, if it was to be opposed, was before the concession was granted. Now the Baghdad Railway was a German concession in Turkish territory and Great Britain could not prevent Germany or Turkey from constructing the railway. As far as British interests were concerned, the British government saw it as her duty to protect them; to do so Great Britain still had an influential instrument in hand -- the necessity for Turkey to obtain Britain's consent to an increase in the tariff. Although the British government had a real desire to help the Turkish government to improve and reform her lands, it would be necessary to refuse any increase in the Turkish tariff if it appeared that the money might be spent on a project which would threaten the British trade.¹

The Turks, in financial straits, badly needed British consent for increasing the tariff. Furthermore, their position in the Balkans was critical. Continued British and French pressure, added to the foregoing factors, induced them to try to settle the Baghdad Railway problem once and for all. In the spring of 1913 Hakki Pasha, the Turkish delegate at the London Conference which followed the first Balkan war, opened serious negotiations with the British. By now any settlement between the Turks and the British had become a very complicated affair, because it was involved with other very important problems: the position of

1. Ibid., XXII, 1285-1290.

Kuwait, the Persian-Turkish frontiers, and navigation in the Mesopotamian rivers, the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Shat-el-Arab.

As far as the Baghdad Railway was concerned, the final settlement was reached in August of that year, after extensive negotiations and after many drafts and counter-drafts. The British-Turkish convention provided that Turkey would guarantee equality of treatment for British commerce on the Baghdad Railway, with two British members sitting on the Board of Directors of the Baghdad Railway Company. Basra was to be the terminus of the line, and no further building was to take place between Basra and the Gulf without British consent.¹ The British-Turkish agreement regarding the Baghdad Railway was followed by a series of agreements between the two governments, concerning other problems: the traffic in the Shat-el-Arab, status in the Persian Gulf, navigation in the Mesopotamian rivers, and the Persian-Turkish frontiers.

These arrangements with Turkey were followed by negotiations between England and Germany, ending with the conclusion of the Anglo-German convention of 1914 regarding the Baghdad Railway. This convention originated in London on June 15, 1914, but World War I prevented its ratification. The convention provided that Great Britain

1. Parker, The Quarterly Review, CCVIII, 487-528.

would cease her opposition to the construction of the Baghdad Railway, while the German government agreed that two British members were to be elected to the board of directors of the Baghdad Railway Company as representatives of the British shareholders. The terminus of the line was to be at Basra. The Baghdad Railway Company renounced its previously granted right to construct the branch line from Basra to the Persian Gulf, and also gave up the privilege of building a port on the Gulf. No line could be built to the Gulf without previous understanding, and Germany would respect the aforementioned Turkish agreements regarding navigation in the Mesopotamian rivers.¹

Thus it appeared Germany would at last realize her dream of building the Baghdad Railway. The Anglo-Turkish and Anglo-German agreements represented a significant compromise between these powers; Asia Minor would be opened for German exploitation. But these German activities in Mesopotamia were to be very restricted, for Great Britain was still solidly entrenched in lower Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf area. Great Britain was assured that no line would be built from Basra to the Gulf without her consent. Thus Germany gave up any hope of reaching or establishing a port on the Gulf.

1. Edward Mead Earle, "The Secret Anglo-German Convention of 1914 Regarding Asiatic Turkey," Political Science Quarterly, XXXVIII (March, 1923), 24-35.

CHAPTER V

Concentration of British Interests before World War I

The period 1900-1914 was distinguished by intensified British efforts to protect her interests in Mesopotamia, which went back to the first half of the seventeenth century. In the main Great Britain was successful, for not only did she maintain her former interests, but she also established legal justification for them. Furthermore, British activities penetrated several new fields, namely navigation on the Mesopotamian rivers, the export trade, oil, and irrigation.

In the sphere of navigation, the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company, formed in 1860 by the Lynch group, was very successful despite the tactics of the Turkish authorities, who wished to restrain its trade. The company was prevented from sending vessels above Baghdad; further, although the Tigris trade was expanding all the while, the company was forbidden to employ more than two vessels, regardless of increasing demands. In 1867 the Turkish government organized its own steamship service, the Uman-Ottoman Administration, which bought several new, modern steamers, since, unlike the Lynch concern, it was not limited in its expansion.¹ In 1875 the Euphrates and

I. Hoskins, op. cit., p. 427.

Tigris Steam Navigation Company was allowed to employ a third steamer, but only to act as a reserve vessel with the two others then in service.¹ However, in the beginning of the twentieth century the company was still enjoying a very profitable traffic on the Tigris between Baghdad and Basra. In fact all the cargo shipped between these two cities was carried by one of these groups; the two steamers of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company; the six steamers belonging to the Turkish government; or by local sailing vessels. Yet though the steamers of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company were the most popular means of transport,² its difficulties continued. In 1904 Turkish competition increased when the Turkish steamship service was reorganized and given a new name, Hamidieh, in honor of the Sultan. Among other obstacles which the company had faced was the insecurity and lawlessness which prevailed in Mesopotamia before 1914. The Turkish vessels were customarily attacked and fired upon by Arabs, especially those of two strong tribes, the Beni Lam and Albu Muhammed, who lived midway between Baghdad and Basra on the Tigris banks, and whose pot shots were a means of expressing their opposition to, and discontent with, the Turkish regime. The year 1908 was particularly unsafe for

1. Ibid., p. 427.

2. Great Britain, Foreign Office, Diplomatic and Consular Reports; No. 3663, Annual Series, Report for the Year 1907 on the Trade of Basra (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908).

the navigation of the Tigris and Shat-el-Arab, because these tribes objected to reforms introduced by Nazim Pasha, the Wali of Baghdad in that year.¹

The most important threat to British navigation interests was presented by the Baghdad Railway Convention of March 1903, since the concessionnaires were given the right to construct harbors at Baghdad and Basra and to navigate the Tigris, Euphrates, and Shat-el-Arab.² Mr. F.H. Lynch was of course an enthusiastic volunteer in the campaign against the Baghdad Railway project from April 1903 onward. He wrote in the Fortnightly Review of March 1911 that Mesopotamia needed no railways whatsoever and that there were many schemes of more importance to Mesopotamia. Railways might be necessary to Anatolia, he pointed out, because there were no natural communications such as navigable waterways in that area, but as far as Mesopotamia was concerned, natural communications had already been provided by the existence of the two great rivers. He added that if the Germans and Turks insisted on extending the railway to the Mesopotamian plain, the extension would be for military and administrative reasons, nothing else.³

The navigation question played an important part in British negotiations with the Turks and with the Germans,

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., V, 301-302.

2. See above, pp. 57-58.

3. F.H. Lynch, "The Baghdad Railway," The Fortnightly Review, XCV (March 1911), 375-387.

prior to a settlement of problems among these powers before World War I. In the British memorandum of July 18, 1912 Great Britain demanded that permission be given for three British steamers to navigate between Baghdad and Basra in addition to the number already allowed. This demand was one among other British stipulations put forward by the British government as a basis for further negotiation.¹ In 1912 a new development arose, when one of the most influential of British capitalists, Lord Inchcape, became interested in the navigation of the Mesopotamian rivers.² On February 26, 1913 Sir Louis Mallet, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, during a discussion of this question with Hakki Pasha, emphasized that the British claim to exceptional rights of navigation on the rivers of Mesopotamia, such as were not enjoyed by any other nation, was based on several very important facts, foremost of which was that British trade interests had been paramount in the area since the seventeenth century. He went on to say: "The foregoing summary clearly shows that His Majesty's Government would be justified, both on historical and legal grounds, in claiming for British vessels unlimited rights of navigation on the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates."³

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1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., X, Part II, 78.
 2. Since Lord Inchcape had become interested in Mesopotamian navigation, the British government had given little attention to the Lynch interests.
 3. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., X, Part II, 90-91.

Following this British explanation Hakki Pasha asked the British government whether it preferred the expansion and maintenance of the existing Lynch company as the basis for further negotiation on this subject, or whether it preferred to form a new company, as Lord Inchcape wished. The British answered in May 1913 that they favored a concession from the Turkish government for a new Ottoman Company jointly controlled and financed by the British and the Turks, with the Lynch Company maintained simultaneously, as a separate enterprise.¹ Thus the formation of a new company became the basis for negotiations on the question of navigation. On May 20, 1913 a declaration regarding this question was initialled by the Turkish representative. A memorandum sent to Hakki Pasha by the British Foreign Office on June 5, 1913 declared that the British government accepted the aforementioned declaration as a satisfactory settlement for the navigation question.²

The declaration provided that the Turkish government should give a monopoly of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers navigation to a concessionnaire designated by the British government, which would form a new company to carry out the concession. An unlimited number of steamers could be used, the period of the concession was to be sixty years, and the new firm was to be called the Ottoman Company, with capital equally divided between the British and the

1. Ibid., X, Part II, 119.

2. Ibid., X, Part II, 148-149.

Turks. The president of the company would be a Turkish national, but the director would be British.¹

Certain limitations were imposed on the new company's monopoly, the first of which reaffirmed the Lynch company's right to operate two boats, with a third boat as a reserve.² The other problem regarded the Baghdad Railway Company interests in this navigation. The Baghdad Railway Convention of 1903 provided that the concessionnaires had the right to navigate the rivers for transporting construction materials in building the railway and harbors at Baghdad and Basra.³ According to this convention the Germans demanded the right to participate in the navigation to protect their interests. On May 7, 1913 Herr von Kuehlmann, Counsellor at the Embassy in London, explained to Mr. Alwyn Parker in the British Foreign Office, that German subjects would not attempt to participate in navigation on the Tigris and Euphrates. If a reasonable and fair arrangement could be made for the conveyance of materials for the railway while it was being built, then the Germans would abandon any claim to navigation on those rivers.⁴ But German opinion was not entirely satisfied with this arrangement, for on June 4, 1913 Herr von Kuehlmann explained that important German shipping interests had demanded that one

1. Chapman, op. cit., p. 163.

2. Ibid., p. 163.

3. See above, pp. 57-58.

4. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., X, Part II, 138.

German representative must sit on the board of the navigation company, which was to be formed according to the above Turkish declaration, the duty of this representative being to observe the operation of the new company, to secure guarantees against any differential treatment, and to make sure there was no possibility of discrimination.¹ On June 7, 1913 the Germans went further; Herr von Gwinner explained to Mr. Parker during their discussion of the Baghdad Railway at the German Embassy in London, that the Germans hoped Great Britain would agree to their sharing in the proposed navigation company, this share to be taken from the Turkish allotment.²

British and German representatives reached an agreement on this question on February 23, 1914, the signatories being the Baghdad Railway Company and Lord Inchcape, who had been named by the British government as concessionaires for the proposed Ottoman Company. The agreement assured Lord Inchcape a monopoly in the transportation on the Tigris from Basra to Baghdad, of all materials arriving at Basra for use on the Baghdad Railway, its branches, and the Railway's port and terminal works at Baghdad.³ This agreement was supplemented by a further convention on March 27,

1. Ibid., X, Part II, 138.

2. Ibid., X, Part II, 150.

3. Earle, Political Science Quarterly, XXXVIII, 24-35.

1914, between the Baghdad Railway Company, Lord Inchcape and Mr. Lynch. Lord Inchcape and Mr. Lynch together were to hold forty percent of the stock in a German company engaged in constructing port works at Baghdad, while German bankers were to have twenty percent of the shares in the proposed navigation concern, their portion to be taken from the Turkish share.¹

Navigation on the Shat-el-Arab was separately arranged for Great Britain, in that the largest number of vessels reaching Basra every year were English. In a memorandum presented by the British Foreign Office in July, 1911 the British government demanded that the Ottoman government should recognize formally that river dues would not be imposed on British shipping on the Shat-el-Arab without the consent of the British government. Satisfaction on this point was considered by the British as the basic issue for any further negotiation between the two governments.² During the talks between Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Secretary, Political Department, India Office, and Mr. Parker, assistant clerk in the British Foreign Office, with Hakki Pasha, the British suggested a joint commission to carry out the responsibility of arranging navigation on the Shat-el-Arab. The Turkish representative proposed instead of this joint commission, an Ottoman commission including a British engineer in the service of the Turkish

1. Ibid.

2. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., X, Part II, 46.

government. The commission, as the Turks saw it, would consist of two members only: the proposed British engineer and a Turkish member, with British and Turkish members having equal power. Furthermore, the British member would be given the right to correspond with the British government¹ as he pleased.

These proposals became the subject of a draft convention submitted to the Turks by the British government, providing for the establishment by the Turkish government of a Shat-el-Arab Navigation Commission, to control the navigation of this river. The commission would consist of two members only, one of them British, selected from candidates suggested by the British government. The commission should carry out the improvement of the river channel and would have the right to enforce regulations necessary for navigation. The commission would also have the sole right to levy any dues or charges it found necessary to cover the expenses of works undertaken and services maintained by it. But these charges should be levied impartially and to all vessels. The local authorities should not interfere in any way with the property of the commission or with its funds. Finally, the authority of the commission was to exist for² sixty-one years from the day of its signature. This draft

1. Ibid., X, Part II, 72.

2. Ibid., X, Part II, 81-83.

was accepted by the Turkish government and was signed on July 29, 1913 as a part of the British-Turkish agreement.

One of the most fortunate developments in Mesopotamia before World War One was the increase of Turkish and British interest in the irrigation scheme for the country. Five hundred years of anarchy and neglect had allowed Mesopotamia's excellent irrigation system to be destroyed, with floods taking place roughly every year. In 1904 Sir William Willcocks, one of the most famous hydraulic engineers in the world at that time, visited Mesopotamia and spent one month in Babylonia, studying the ancient canals.¹ In 1908, at the beginning of the Young Turks regime, Kiamil Pasha, the Grand Vizier, sent for Willcocks and asked him to restore the ancient irrigation works of Mesopotamia, after which he was appointed an adviser to the Ottoman Ministry of Public Works. Willcocks first of all asked for and received from the Turkish government a fixed sum, with which he could complete the preliminary work. Afterward he visited England to engage competent engineers and to make contracts for the materials which would be necessary for his project. During his visit he discussed the irrigation scheme in Mesopotamia with Sir Charles Hardinge, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. During his conversation with Hardinge, Willcocks pointed

1. Sir William Willcocks, Sixty Years in the East (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., 1935), pp. 232-33.

out that he believed that before any serious irrigation works were undertaken in Mesopotamia, it would be necessary to control the flood of the two rivers. This achieved, the delta would allow a fertility of which history had no record, and every town and village from Baghdad to Basra¹ would be safe from the danger of flooding.

Willcocks believed that to protect Baghdad itself, a new dam must be erected and new canals be opened on both the Tigris and the Euphrates. This scheme would protect Baghdad and at the same time would change the land around Baghdad from a desert to green and cultivated soil, irrigating 3,000,000 acres and carrying water free of silt. The irrigated acres would be capable of producing 1,000,000 tons of wheat and 2,000,000 cwt. of cotton, as well as other produce.² Owing to the lack of funds and the preoccupation of Turkish officials with international problems, the Willcocks projects were not carried out before the war; however, Willcocks completed one important scheme, the Hindia Barrage on the Euphrates south of Baghdad, to control the flow of Euphrates water. The British firm of Sir John Jackson, Ltd. undertook the work in 1911 and completed it in December 1913.³

1. Ibid., p. 234.

2. Sir William Willcocks, "Mesopotamia: Past, Present and Future," The Geographical Journal, XXXV (January, 1910), 1-18.

3. Mesopotamia Handbook, op. cit., p. 35.

Separate negotiations took place on the irrigation question, between Turks and British on the one hand and British and Germans on the other. In June, 1913 the British government informed Turkey that British firms had considerable interest in the extension of irrigation in Mesopotamia, and that they would be very pleased to be offered further contracts, as well as to be guaranteed fulfillment of concessions already obtained by British firms from the Ottoman government in 1912.¹ The Germans, however, insisted that the principle of open competition be applied to all works of irrigation in Mesopotamia. The British reiterated their demand that the sections conceded exclusively to British firms in the previous year should still be reserved to those firms.² The Germans had already acquired exclusive irrigation contracts in Anatolia around Konia, it was pointed out, and therefore it would be reasonable that the British should have sole control of irrigation works in Mesopotamia.³

Finally, in June 1914, German and British representatives agreed to the principle of open competition with regard to contracts and concessions for future irrigation works in Asiatic Turkey. British firms whose bids had been

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., X, Part II, 153-154.

2. In 1912 only British firms had submitted offers to carry out Willcocks' schemes.

3. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., X, Part II, 370.

accepted in 1912 were to fulfill their contracts as previously allowed, with no objection from the German government, which would not encourage its subjects to compete. The British government on its part would raise no objection to the irrigation project on the plain of Adana, already carried out by German subjects; neither would the United Kingdom support any claims which might be advanced by British subjects wishing to compete in that enterprise.

The production of oil in Persia and Mesopotamia represented another vital British interest in this part of the world. The oil fields of Mesopotamia were well known long before the nineteenth century, and for a time were exploited in a primitive manner by the natives. Germany was the first European country to become interested in Mesopotamian oil. As early as 1871 several German experts had visited Mesopotamia, but all pointed out that the difficulties of transport were such that petroleum from the United States was able to compete in Mesopotamia with the local product.

At the end of the nineteenth century Captain F.R. Maunsell, a British traveller, visited the Mesopotamia oil fields. Afterward he described the whole district in

1. Ibid., X, Part II, 392.

2. "The Mesopotamia Oilfields," The Near East, XIII (October, 1917), 516.

which oil had been found and was being produced, if rather primitively, pointing out that a great industry might be developed there.¹ In 1901 a German mission also made a very favorable report, especially concerning the districts of Mosul and Baghdad, where they felt the petroleum regions were among the richest in the world.² These reports led to an increase in the Sultan's interest. Accordingly a decree which he had issued in 1889, declaring that the oil interests belonged to him personally, was reinforced by a similar decree in December 1903. Meanwhile, prior to World War I, German, British and American interests all sought to gain concessions for the discovery and exploitation of Mesopotamian oil, and each claimed the right to do so.

The Germans based their claim first of all on the Baghdad Railway Convention, which had given its concessionnaires the right to exploit a twenty-kilometer strip of land on either side of the railway line.³ Secondly the Germans cited an agreement of July 1904 between the Sultan and the Anatolian Railway Company, which provided that the Anatolian Railway, controlled by the Deutsche Bank, had the right to one year's exploration for oil in the Baghdad

1. F.R. Maunsell, "The Mesopotamia Oil Fields," The Geographical Journal, IX (1897), 523-32.

2. The Near East, XIII, 516.

3. See above, pp. 57-58.

and Basra provinces. It was agreed between the Germans and the Ottoman government that if oil were found, a forty-year concession would be granted by the Sultan, with division of the profits between the concessionaire and the Sultan himself, the proportions to be decided later. A German mission visited Mesopotamia for this purpose and made a favorable report. Because of financial difficulties, however, the German government was not ready to produce oil immediately, and hence the Turks declared the agreement inoperative. The Germans then demanded 20,000 pounds for exploration expenses, and the Turks refused. Nevertheless the Germans insisted that the previous agreement was still in effect.¹

The British claim went back to 1901. William Knox D'Arcy, after he had secured the right to seek oil in Persia in that year, tried to obtain a similar concession in the Baghdad and Mosul provinces. In 1903 he won approval for his proposed Ottoman Petroleum Syndicate, for the exploitation of oil in Mesopotamia. The D'Arcy claim was² later to be adopted by the British government.

The Americans also had very strong claims to the oil of Mesopotamia, based on the activities of Rear Admiral Colby Chester of the United States Navy. Chester's interest

1. Stephen Hensley Longrigg, Oil in the Middle East (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 28.

2. Ibid., p. 30.

in the Near East went back to 1899, when he was sent to Turkey to secure payment of indemnity for the destruction of property belonging to American missionaries. Chester, by not indulging in a demonstration of gunboat diplomacy, became a firm friend of the Sultan. On his return to America Chester urged American business men to visit Turkey and to do business in the Ottoman Empire. In 1908 Chester was sent to Constantinople by the Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade and Transportation of New York to survey the state of Turkish business, with a view to increasing trade relations between the United States and this part of the world.¹ Abdul Hamid, faithful to his friend, soon favored Chester with a number of generous concessions, including railways, the construction of harbors, and exploration for oil and minerals. When the Young Turks came in-² to power they approved these concessions, so that by 1910 definite plans of operation, lacking only the approval of the Ottoman Parliament, were drawn up for the oil conces-³ sion. Parliamentary approval could not be obtained, however, because of the German-British cooperation to block this new competition.

1. Henry Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims in Turkey," Current History, XV (October, 1922), 953-959.

2. After the Young Turks came into power, all oil previously found and all that might be found in future was taken from the Sultan and given the Turkish government.

3. Woodhouse, Current History, XV, 953-59.

In addition to these three claimants -- the German, represented in the Deutsche Bank, the British, represented in the D'Arcy group and the American, represented by Chester -- a new British combine became both interested and active in 1910, when the National Bank of Turkey was established with British capital. The new company, in cooperation with the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company on the one hand and the Deutsche Bank on the other, had become strong enough to block the American activities, while at that time the enthusiasm of the D'Arcy group temporarily flagged. Eventually the National Bank reached an agreement with the Deutsche Bank and the Turkish Petroleum Company, formed in 1912, asked for a definite concession from the Sultan for the oil in Mesopotamia. But this company soon found itself faced with effective competition from the revived interest of the D'Arcy group, which in 1909 formed a new syndicate calling itself the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. This company showed new interest in the Mesopotamia oil, after having had considerable success in Persia.

At this juncture in the competition among these different groups, Chester ceased to be a strong contender, the main struggle now being between the Turkish Petroleum Company (represented by the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, the Deutsche Bank and the National Bank) and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. In each of these groups the British government

had an interest, but no clear attitude as to which she preferred. On June 11, 1913 Hakki Pasha explained to Mr. Parker that the two groups must be brought to terms, otherwise the Turkish government would be obliged to hold up the granting of concessions.¹ The British government then came out for the D'Arcy group. On July 2, 1913, during a discussion of the oil question between Mr. Parker and Herr von Kuehlmann, the latter pointed out that the German desire to reach a settlement on this point had induced them to negotiate with the National Bank group, since the Germans had had no idea that this company did not enjoy British government support. Mr. Parker's answer was that the British government was committed to support the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and that unless the National Bank and Deutsche Bank groups could arrange for adequate representation of the former company in the proposed amalgamation, no settlement seemed possible.²

On August 20 Mr. Parker and Herr von Kuehlmann again explored the oil question thoroughly, Mr. Parker summarizing the official British aims as follows: to maintain the independence of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company; to secure satisfactory marketing arrangements; to secure a supply of oil at a reasonable price; and to support the Anglo-Persian

1. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., X, Part II, 152.

2. Ibid., X, Part II, 163.

Oil Company in what it was considered to be a just claim to the concession. He added that it would be difficult at this time to decide the percentage of shares which the Anglo-Persian Oil Company would require in the proposed amalgamation, but he believed that any amount short of six-¹ty percent would be regarded as inadequate. Several months passed before the important final settlement on the question was reached among the several interested groups. The agreement provided that the various interests in the Mesopotamia oil fields would be divided as follows: fifty percent to the D'Arcy group,² twenty-five percent to the Deutsche Bank, and twenty-five percent to the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, with the interests of the National Bank liquidated in favor of other British interests. The Board of Directors would consist of eight members, of whom four would be nominated by the D'Arcy group, two by the Deutsche Bank, and two by the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company.³ This agreement enabled the British and the Germans to approach the Turkish government for the definite grant of the Mesopotamia oil concessions to this new Anglo-German group. On June 28, 1914 the Turkish government agreed to lease to the Turkish Petroleum Company the concession for the oil industry in Mesopotamia.

1. Ibid., X, Part II, 215.

2. Ibid., X, Part II, 345.

3. The London Daily News, June 25, 1920, p. 1.

British interests, which had enjoyed a virtual monopoly in Mesopotamian economic spheres since the first half of the seventeenth century, based their objections to the approach of any other European power wishing to do business in Mesopotamia on the theory that such approaches would undermine the privilege of British trade. This trade, always flourishing, saw a considerable increase at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to the British Consular Report on the trade of Basra in 1899, the total tonnage which reached Basra, Mesopotamia's sole port, in 1899 was 165,574 against 126,236 in the previous year; of this amount 134,401 tons came from Great Britain and the remainder from India. In the same year 105 British steamers and 78 sailing vessels entered Basra port, while in the previous year British steamships numbered only 80 and sailing vessels, 23. This increase was due largely to the expansion of trade with India. In the same year, 1899, there were only eleven French sailing vessels and no French steamships visiting the port; one Dutch steamer, two from Austria-Hungary and three from Norway.¹ The British Consular Report on Basra for the year 1900 mentioned that the value of trade passing through Basra was very great, probably the largest ever known, and that the share of tonnage

1. Diplomatic and Consular Reports, No. 2428, Report for the Year 1899 on the trade of Basra, 1900.

in the port handled by British shipping continued to be highly satisfactory, amounting to eighty-five percent of the whole.¹

British trade increased year by year. In 1904 about three-fourths of the tea and spices were imported from India. There was in fact no serious European competition to the British trade in Mesopotamia until 1906, when an agency of the Hamburg-Amerika Line was established in Basra. That year six German ships entered the port for the first time, bringing chiefly granulated sugar, cases of loaf sugar, pieces of lead and tin, candles, window glass, wine, beer and spirits, sewing machines and matches. In exchange the German traders took back dates, barley, wheat and wool. Altogether these German steamships carried to Basra 9,411 tons of the above articles. As against these six German ships, 243 British steamers and sailing vessels carried² 218,711 tons of goods to Mesopotamia.

However, the effect on the British monopoly of German competition was felt in 1907, in two ways, first in the increasing demand for certain German articles, especially among the poorer classes because of their cheapness; and second, in the enforced lowering of British shipping rates after the Hamburg-Amerika line had charged less than British lines had been receiving. German ships reaching Basra in 1907 numbered twelve, double those which had previously

1. Ibid., No. 2712, 1901.

2. Ibid., No. 3865, 1907.

served the port.¹ German competition was so strong before the war that it seemed the Germans were aiming to oust British articles from the Mesopotamian market as much as possible, even at a loss to themselves.² Germany's purpose in pushing her trade with Mesopotamia was that superiority in the economic sphere would give her strong grounds for any settlement with Great Britain, since that country had repeatedly asserted that her claim to exceptional rights in Mesopotamia, such as were not enjoyed by any other nation, was based on British supremacy in trade. A marked increase in German trade would give Germany an opportunity to claim the right to protect her interests there. Furthermore, German methods of advertising were superior to the British; many German commercial travellers had visited every part of the Ottoman Empire, including Mesopotamia, to show their wares and open new agencies.³ Most of these salesmen were extremely successful.

In spite of these German commercial triumphs, British firms continued to hold the majority of business in Mesopotamia, the last report made on Basra trade before 1914 showing that Great Britain had a clear superiority in the imports field.⁴

1. Mesopotamia Handbook, op. cit., p. 98.

2. Ibid., pp. 98-99.

3. "German Methods in Turkey," The Quarterly Review, CCVIII (October, 1917), 296-314.

4. Diplomatic and Consular Report, No. 5369, Report for the Year 1913 on the Trade of Basra, 1914.

There is no doubt that Great Britain gained tremendous privileges and a variety of concessions during the period 1900-1914 in Mesopotamia. The British agreements with Germany on the one hand and with Turkey on the other helped her to keep her previous interests and to gain a legal existence for, and recognition of, these interests by the other European powers and Turkey herself. Actually Germany, France and Russia had all obtained considerable privilege in the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Germany acquired wide concessions in Asia Minor, and some even in Mesopotamia itself; France secured privileges in Syria; Russia made economic gains in northern Persia, while most of the British privileges and concessions were concentrated in Mesopotamia. It might safely be said that this part of the world had been peacefully divided among the great powers of Europe into spheres of influence for economic exploitation. British economic success definitely deepened her political and social influence in Mesopotamia. This concentration of British interests explains the 1914 British campaign in that country.

1. During the summer of 1913 important meetings were held in Berlin among French and German financiers and representatives of the French, German and Ottoman Foreign Offices. The result was the secret Franco-German Convention of Feb. 15, 1914, providing that the French would not oppose German activities in Turkey, but France was privileged to develop the railways in northern Anatolia, and her interest in Syria was safeguarded (Earle op. cit., pp. 247-48.)

Early in October 1914 Great Britain dispatched troops from India to the Persian Gulf, and on October 23 these troops reached Bahrein. Late that month Russia, followed by France and Great Britain, declared war against Turkey after the Turkish fleet had bombarded Odessa. On November 6 the British entered the Shat-el-Arab; Basra was occupied on November 22.¹ From the fact that the British immediately moved troops into Mesopotamia after the declaration of the war in Europe it might well be interpreted that the idea for this occupation was not new. There is in fact much evidence to show that many British officials had demanded it. Furthermore, the plan for the occupation had evidently been drawn up before the war. In a dispatch from Sir G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, dealing with the British post offices in Turkey, Sir George asserted that Great Britain had to maintain these post offices, especially in Mesopotamia. He added: "In view of possible ultimate dissolution of Turkey and formation meanwhile of foreign spheres of interest it seems desirable to maintain and even increase our establishment in Mesopotamia which is region² where our stake is most large and our claims greatest."

1. Brig.-Gen. F.J. Moberly, History of the Great War Based on Official Documents; the Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923), I, 100-101.
2. Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., X, Part II, 160-161.

A British expedition on Mesopotamia was seriously discussed in 1911 as a result of the increasing tension between the British and the Turks, both in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf area. The British desire to stop Turkish hostilities and to protect British interests induced the Indian government to study the situation very carefully. The question was referred to a committee of four important officials in India, the naval Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, the Chief of the General Staff, India, and the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf. One among many recommendations the committee made to protect British interests was the occupation of Basra. This report was submitted on January 15, 1912, but by this time relations had improved and the recommendation was dropped. This British aspiration to occupy Mesopotamia was made known among the Turks themselves and even among the natives before 1914. In a speech given by a member of the Committee of Union and Progress at Baghdad, on April 18, 1911, he stated:

Listen, dear compatriots -- for a number of years England has been endeavouring to increase her political influence in the Persian Gulf. This influence is being felt in Basra...We must be ready to resist any political aggression on our territories. We must awaken

1. F.J. Moberly, op. cit., I, 73-74.

our Government to take immediate steps to protect Basra.¹

Al-Misbah, a Baghdad newspaper, wrote on March 14, 1913 that England wanted to do in Turkish Mesopotamia just what she had done in India. The paper advised its readers to be ready to fight for their country.² Further proof that the idea of a British occupation of Mesopotamia was widespread among the people before 1914 was given by the report of David Fraser, a British traveller who visited Mesopotamia from 1909-1912. Fraser mentioned that there was much agitation against England at this time because the people suspected that she wanted to occupy the country. In 1909 there was a proposal to amalgamate the Turkish steamship navigation line with the Euphrates and Tigris Navigation Company owned, it will be recalled, by the British Lynch group. Mr. Lynch was very desirous of this amalgamation, as was the Turkish government. But thousands of Baghdad people held meetings and sent telegrams to Constantinople protesting the merger, which, it was thought, would strengthen the Lynch interests and might lead to the occupation of Mesopotamia by Great Britain, or at least might constitute a step toward that occupation.³ Thus the campaign in

1. Ireland, op. cit., p. 44.

2. Ibid., p. 44.

3. Fraser, David, Persia and Turkey in Revolt (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1910), p. 303.

Mesopotamia was not unexpected, either among the British or by the Turkish and Mesopotamians. World War One provided the opportunity for Great Britain to justify her aspirations in Mesopotamia.

THE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The British interests in Mesopotamia go back to the first half of the seventeenth century when the East India Company established her first factory at Basra in 1639. But these British interests were limited and mostly commercial. This situation continued until the end of the eighteenth century. The French invasion of Egypt led Great Britain to adopt a new policy not only in Mesopotamia but throughout the Middle East. It became clear to the British that the Persian Gulf, and its natural extension the Tigris and Euphrates valley, were very important for the safety of India. Furthermore, Britain started to seek a new road to India shorter than the Cape of Good Hope route. At the time France was considering adoption of the Suez Canal project, Great Britain became interested in the Euphrates valley railway as a short cut to India.

Early in the nineteenth century the rivers of Mesopotamia were surveyed by some British adventurers and reports were made to the British government on the suitability of these rivers for navigation. However, in the middle of the nineteenth century there was much talk about a British project for a Euphrates Valley Railway which would link the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf through the Euphrates Valley. The project was discussed in the British Parliament and by the British press, but nothing was done. The project

was finally abandoned after the opening of the Suez Canal, and eventually the British became major shareholders in the Suez Canal Company, having purchased the Khedive's share. Thus during the nineteenth century the British political and strategical interests in Mesopotamia became more important than her commercial interests. During that century the British gained a concession to navigate the Mesopotamia rivers, telegraph lines were built by British engineers, and British post offices were opened in many cities in the country. At the close of the century Great Britain was the only European power which had interests in this part of the Turkish Empire.

The period 1900-1914 was distinguished by tremendous European activities in the Middle East. Other European powers challenged Great Britain, undermining her superior position in this part of the world. France was very active in the Persian Gulf. Her aspiration was to secure a port on the Gulf, and Muscat became the center of her intrigues. Russia was more of a menace than France. She was very successful in her efforts in north Persia, gaining so many privileges in the north of that country that it ceased to be as a truly independent state. Russia soon extended her activities toward the south with a strong desire to have a port on the Gulf. Germany, the latest power to be interested in the Middle East, was very successful in Constantinople itself and soon she appeared in the Gulf as a new rival to the British.

All these European activities led Great Britain to consolidate her power in the Middle East. Lord Curzon was appointed as the Viceroy of India in 1898. For five years he worked energetically to protect British interests and he was very successful. The French attempt to secure a port on the Gulf failed because the Sultan of Muscat, under a British threat, refused to cooperate with the French. The Russian activities in the south of Persia were stopped by the firm determination of Lord Curzon to prevent any further Russian penetration toward the Gulf.

By a series of agreements Great Britain settled her differences with the French in Muscat in 1905. Great Britain and Russia also reached a compromise. The Anglo-Russian Convention of August, 1907 divided Persia into three parts -- a Russian sphere of influence in the north, a British sphere of influence in the south, and a neutral zone between these two. These settlements with both France and Russia left Great Britain in a very strong position in the Gulf. She was successful also in establishing friendly relations with strong local Arab rulers, the Sheikh of Kuwait, the Sheikh of Muhammera, and Ibn Saud of Arabia. Great Britain's solid position in the Gulf, and her friendly relations with these Arab rulers whose territories surrounded Mesopotamia on the south, west and east, strengthened her position in Mesopotamia and eased the way should the British decide to occupy the country.

Great Britain, having successfully settled her difficulties with Russia and France, turned to block German activities and penetration in the Middle East. These activities crystallized in the so-called Baghdad Railway project.

Germany's first railway activities started in 1888 when a German group gained a concession to extend the existing line of Haider Pasha-Ismid to Angora. Between 1888 and 1903 the Germans gained several concessions to build the railways in the Ottoman Empire. Their success induced them and the Sultan to think of a big railway project -- the Baghdad Railway -- which would link Constantinople and the Persian Gulf. The British attitude toward the project was not hostile in the beginning. They merely wanted to secure an equal share for British capital in the project with the other European powers. The Germans were eager to obtain British cooperation, firstly to secure British capital, secondly to avoid any political complications. But at the same time the Germans were not ready to share equally with others. In all arrangements or suggestions which they made they kept for themselves some kind of superior position in the project. However, early in 1903 there was a great possibility of some kind of compromise between the Germans and the British as well as the other interested European powers, France and Russia. But the British press undertook a strong campaign early in April, 1903 against the project. This attack started when the negotiations between the British and Germans

were still going on and when there was still a good chance for a settlement to be reached. As a result of the hostility of the press the British public became very unfriendly toward the project, and when the text of the Baghdad Railway Concession appeared for the first time in the London Times on April 18, 1903, British public opinion found much evidence that the project represented a real threat to British interests in India as well as in Mesopotamia. The British were concerned because the concession provided that the terminus of the line would be on the Persian Gulf, and the concessionnaires had the right to build a port on the Gulf. Furthermore, the concessionnaires gained many privileges in Mesopotamia which constituted a real threat to the British political and commercial interests in this country.

The attitude of the British press was responsible to a great degree for the British government's withdrawal from the negotiations, and after the failure of these negotiations of 1903 a new attitude was adopted by the British government and the British press toward the project. This new attitude emphasized that any settlement for the Baghdad Railway project must give Great Britain sole control of the lower part of the line which would pass through Mesopotamia down to the Persian Gulf.

In 1907 Kaiser William II visited England and during his visit he discussed the project with the British authorities. He agreed to give the British control of the lower

part of the railway line and that this would be the basis for further negotiations between the two governments. But Great Britain insisted that any negotiations on the subject must include both France and Russia, and any settlement must be satisfactory to them too. Germany refused to accept this kind of negotiation because it would be one against three.

Thus, after 1907 the three powers, Great Britain, France and Russia, forming the Triple Entente, worked together to block the project. This combined opposition of these three powers was first breached in 1910 when Serge Sazonoff, new Russian Foreign Minister, concluded the Potsdam Agreement with Germany in an effort to reestablish friendly relations. The Agreement provided that Russia would cease her opposition to the project, and in return Germany would recognize Russian interests in Persia.

The Potsdam Agreement weakened the British position. By that time Turkey and Germany were willing to put an end to the Baghdad Railway problem. In fact, all powers involved desired to reach a settlement. In August, 1913 the Anglo-Turkish Convention concerning the Baghdad Railway was signed, opening the way for direct negotiations between the Germans and the British. The result was the Anglo-German Convention of 1914. These two Conventions secured the British interests because Germany and Turkey agreed that the terminus of the line would not be directly on the Gulf, and the line would not be extended to the Gulf without British consent. Furthermore, the Germans renounced their right to

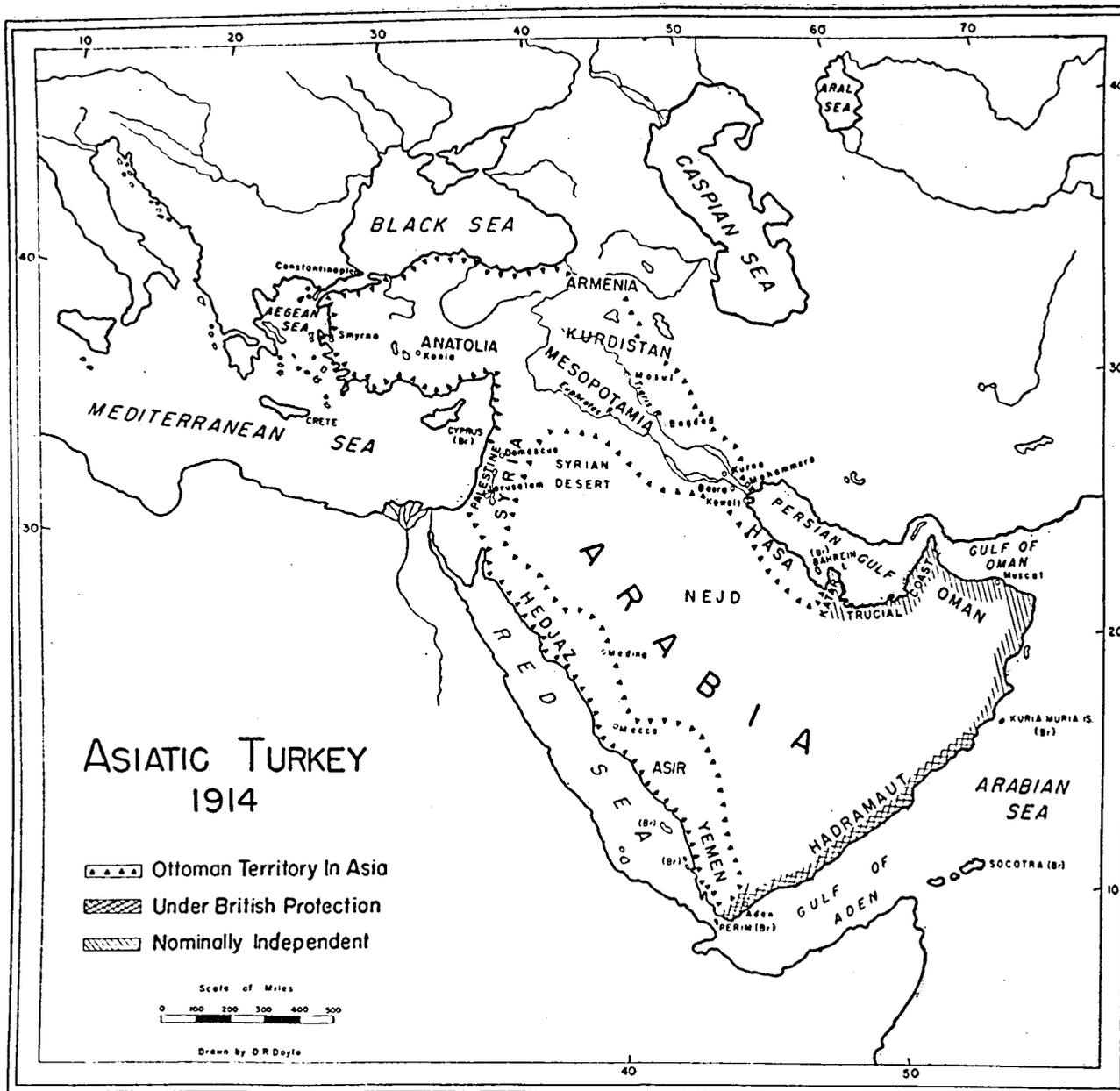
build a port on the Gulf. Thus the line would no longer be a menace to the safety of India.

It seems by 1914 the great powers reached satisfactory agreements among themselves regarding the Middle East. The British-Russian Convention of 1907 ended the British-Russian friction in Persia and elsewhere. The Potsdam Agreement settled German-Russian differences in Turkey and Persia. The Franco-German Convention of February 1914 represented a compromise between these two powers. France recognized German interests in Asia Minor and Germany recognized French interests in Syria. The Anglo-German Convention which dealt with the Baghdad Railway project was followed by a series of agreements regarding other British and German interests in the Turkish Empire. These agreements provided in general for the recognition of German interests in Asia Minor and British interests in Mesopotamia.

As a result of these European compromises and agreements, Great Britain retained her position in Mesopotamia, her old interests gained a legal status and were recognized by all interested powers including Turkey. During the period 1900-1914 Britain not only protected her earlier interests, but founded a new one. The British-Turkish Convention of August 1913 regarding the Baghdad Railway was followed by other Turkish-British agreements concerning navigation, irrigation, and the oil fields. A new concession for the navigation was given by the Sultan to the British subjects. Another concession for irrigation projects was granted too.

More important than these, Britain reached a satisfactory agreement with the Turkish government regarding her interests in the Mesopotamia oil fields. During this period also Great Britain's trade represented the largest percentage of Mesopotamia commercial interests.

Thus, the realization of the strategic importance of Mesopotamia for the safety of the British Empire in India on one hand and the intensive development of British financial and commercial interests in Mesopotamia by 1914 on the other hand, explains the British move to occupy this part of the Ottoman Empire immediately upon the outbreak of World War I.



APPENDIX I: ASIATIC TURKEY - 1914

FROM MAYBELLE KENNEDY CHAPMAN, GREAT BRITAIN AND THE BAGDAD RAILWAY 1833-1914, SMITH COLLEGE STUDIES IN HISTORY, VOLUME XXXI, (MENASHA, WISCONSIN: GEORGE BANTA PUBLISHING CO., 1948) MAP I

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