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15SECRETMESOPOTAMIA ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE.

G.T. 1146

Notes by Sir Mark Sykes on Sir Reginald Wingate's Telegram No. 609.

I find the simplest way of commenting on Sir R. Wingate's criticisms of the proposed draft report prepared by M. Picot and myself is to reprint the High Commissioner's telegram with notes dealing with the specific points raised:-

"I should welcome any arrangement which promises on the one hand to give fair scope to legitimate Arab Nationalist aspirations and on the other hand to secure a uniform policy and prevent a clash of interests between French and us.

I regard recognition by France of our "free hand" in Arabian Peninsula South of Area "A" as a prime necessity to latter: the French undertaking that their position in Syrian littoral will be analogous to our position at Baghdad provides a satisfactory guarantee that principle of Arab unity will not be contravened at the outset".

NOTE I.

With this paragraph I am in hearty agreement provided always that it is clear that we do not include Hejaz in our sphere of political influence. If there is to be a King of Hejaz he must be independent of all foreign control otherwise he has no value or influence and is only a danger. We may make such trade and commercial treaties as we like with him, but unless we are to incur the permanent hostility of the Moslem world and confirm the Ottoman Caliphate as a permanent institution, we must be clear in our own minds that the cities of Mecca and Medina are absolutely independent of the control of any Christian power, ourselves included.

*With Sykes-Picot desire to achieve a general understanding and agreement between the two Powers as to broad line of policy each will follow in their respective spheres, I am in perfect sympathy. But having regard to extraordinary diversity of natives and local conditions within the area, the different method of

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Government by French and ourselves, and present illusory character of an Arabian Federal system, I am of opinion that similarity of administration is unattainable in practice and, even if laid down in theory, would be liable to tie the hands of both Governments in dealing with various native problems and political and economic interests of their respective spheres".

NOTE II.

This observation of the High Commissioner's brings us up against the question which has been present to my mind for the last two years, namely, 'are the relations of European peoples towards 'subject Asiatic peoples going to be the same after 'the war as before the war?' If there is anything in the tendency of the age, in the advance of democracy, in the expressed view of the powers with regard to small nationalities, I conclude that the answer is in the negative.

If I thought that post-war England and France would in any way resemble pre-war England and France I should agree with the High Commissioner, but I am too strongly sensible of the fundamental change which has come over the democracies of the world to imagine that either country can ever return to pre-war Imperial methods, no matter how liberal and enlightened they were.

If we and the French intend to work towards annexation then I am certain that our plans will sink in chaos and failure; if on the other hand the two Governments resolve to work hand in hand to revive and re-establish a great people and assist in the development of a new civilization, and will protect these things in a dictionary and not a diplomatic sense, then I feel we have before us the prospect of great success, and an opportunity of obtaining for the democracies of England and France the full economic reward which they require.

"With Sykes's 'observations' I agree generally, subject to vitally important exception to paragraph 2 of his 'British political policy' to which I have already referred in paragraph 1 of my telegram No.605. Our policy should be to obtain French recognition of our predominant position in Arabian Peninsula as a preliminary to concluding a treaty with King Hussein which, whilst not impairing his independence vis-à-vis of Moslem world,

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will prevent any foreign power under guise of pilgrim interest from acquiring rights and privileges detrimental to our special political and economic interests in the Hedjaz. My remarks under paragraph 2 of my telegram No.605 and at the beginning of this telegram apply generally to Sykes' "recommendations" ".

NOTE III. I again agree with the High Commissioner in the whole of this paragraph, with the exception of the expression "political rights". If the suggestion is that the King of the Hedjaz is to be under a kind of disguised British Suzerainty, nothing could I am sure be worse for us or for him. As King of Mecca he must be as free to deal with any power as with us. Is it to be imagined that we could object to the King of Hedjaz sending a mission to the Sultan of Turkey in peace time without impairing his position vis-a-vis the Moslem world? If we cannot in future object to his holding diplomatic converse with our existing enemies how can we prevent him from having dealings with any power which has Moslem subjects?

If we reduce him to the position of a feudatory chief in our pay, then we not only destroy the Arab movement but we throw the whole control of the Moslem world into the hands of the Turks, the pan-islamists, the seditionists and the Egyptian revolutionary Nationalists.

"As regards his "scheme" I join issue with Sykes on following points.

Paragraph 2. I deem it inconceivable that any useful or real similarity of legal or education systems can be attained owing to contrast of French and British methods. I therefore regard a discussion on these points as academic and premature.

NOTE IV. I should not have made this suggestion were I not certain that the French were prepared to revise their previous methods. If the French were going to annex and govern, I should agree with the High Commissioner, but as it is to be presumed that the native personnel, both legal and educational, must be drawn from the same sources, namely, educated Arabs of both spheres, and as education and law have been identical hitherto, and as the services will probably remain in the hands of the same lawyers and schoolmasters,

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as were employed by the Turkish Government, I cannot see what there is inconceivable in both Powers agreeing to follow a similar policy.

"Paragraph 3. Question of advisers is more likely to become acute in French sphere than in our own. Departmental control would be nugatory over greater part of region and local conditions even in more enlightened Bagdad area and on Syrian littoral are too similar to warrant identical treatment. I deprecate anything in the nature of an agreement on the subject although an interchange of views may be desirable from the standpoint of both Governments".

NOTE V. The High Commissioner seems not to have quite understood the meaning of the draft. Our draft proposal is not that the two Powers should come to an agreement with one another, but that they should come to separate but identical agreements with the Arab political elements. It is to be noted that Sir Reginald admits that an interchange of views may be desirable - no more is suggested in the draft. As to identical treatment not being warranted owing to dis-similarity of conditions prevailing in Bagdad and Damascus, the draft explains the danger to both Powers of one Power shewing greater or less liberality of policy than the other.

"Paragraph 4. (3) I agree that King Hussein should have an assured revenue but latter part of this proposal, translated into practice, would mean that he must look to Syria, that is to France, for bulk of his revenue. This proposal therefore is most (dangerous?) and we should oppose any attempt by French to terminate our direct subsidy to the King before his financial state can be secured on a basis more consistent with our political interests (his telegram)".

NOTE VI. This criticism is based on the assumption that the King of Hejaz should remain a British

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pensioner.

I quite agree that neither Power's sphere should supply the bulk of his revenue, but that the contribution should nominally come from the Wakfs, and that we should bring our Mesopotamia Wakf contribution up to the amount yielded by the French area by an addition from the Crown lands which could be handed over to the Mesopotamia Wakf administration.

"I think stipulation regarding King's temporary residence outside Hedjaz would be politically very ill-advised and in conflict with recommendation under Section (2).

I do not consider the King could agree to a proposal so detrimental to his prestige: nor do I think we should ask him to do so."

NOTE VII. Unless we come to some arrangement as to the King of Hedjaz not residing in Syria or Irak we shall presently be confronted with the danger of one Power holding the titular Suzerain of the other Power's sphere.

"(5) Question of succession can well be left over for the present".

NOTE VIII. Unless we recognise and organise the Arab movement on businesslike lines now, we shall be faced with dynastic troubles in the future.
To turn the movement into reasonable channels is the best guarantee we can have that it will not break up and become hostile to us, as if left to dissension, quarrels and jealousies it may well do.

(Sgd) MARK SYKES.

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