CAB/42/18/4

S E C R E T.
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MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH
MEETING OF THE WAR COMMITTEE HELD
AT 10, DOWNING STREET, S. W.
ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 22nd., 1916, AT 11.30.a.m.

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PRESENT.

The Prime Minister, (in the Chair)

The Rt. Hon. R. McKenna, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Rt. Hon. The Viscount Grey of Fallodon, K.G., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, G.C.B., G.C.M.G. G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., K.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., Foreign Office.

The Rt. Hon. A.J. Balfour, O.M. M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty.

Admiral Sir H.B. Jackson, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., First Sea Lord of the Admiralty.

Vice-Admiral Sir H.F. Oliver, K.C.B., M.V.O., Chief of the War Staff, Admiralty.

* The Rt. Hon. A. Chamberlain, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

* Sir F.A. Hirtzel, K.C.B., India Office.

* The Rt. Hon. W. Runciman, M.P. President of the Board of Trade.

The Rt. Hon. The Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., Lord Privy Seal.

The Rt. Hon. E.S. Montagu, M.P., Minister of Munitions.

The Rt. Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George, M.P., Secretary of State for War.

General Sir W.R. Robertson, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

* Colonel The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War.

* Brigadier-General A.C. Geddes, Director of Recruiting, War Office.

* The Rt. Hon. W. Long, M.P., President of the Local Government Board.

* Sir E. Troup, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary, Home Office.

Lt. Col. Sir M.P.A.Hankey, K.C.B., Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence.

Lt. Col. W. Dally Jones, Assistant Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence.

* Attended in connection with the subjects with which they were respectively concerned.

COLONEL JONES.

- SECRET -

WAR COMMITTEE.

AGENDA.

Meeting to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, August 22nd, 1916, at 11.30 A.M.

. . . . . .

1. STATEMENTS ON THE POLITICAL, NAVAL, MILITARY AND MUNITIONS SITUATIONS AS REQUIRED.

2. EXTENSION OF THE QUETTA-NUSHKI RAILWAY TO SEISTAN.

Memorandum by the India Office Note by the C.I.G.S.	Already circulated.
C.I.D. Paper 109-D, Note by the Secretary. C.I.D. Paper 110-D, Memorandum by Lord Curzon.	Already circulated.

(Also reprinted C.I.D.Papers Nos. 21-D, 30-D and 32-D) — Already circulated.

3. MAN-POWER DISTRIBUTION BOARD. Draft Terms of Reference — Already circulated.

4. THE EXPORT OF MUNITIONS TO RUSSIA *via* THE UNITED STATES, VLADIVOSTOCK AND TRANS-SIBERIAN ROUTE.

(Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War — Circulated herewith).

5. THE PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION IN MESOPOTAMIA.

(Note by the C.I.G.S. — circulated herewith).

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2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
21st August, 1916.

COLONEL JONES.

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21st August, 1916.

COL. JONES.

S E C R E T.

WAR COMMITTEE.

ADDITIONAL AGENDA for the Meeting to be held on Tuesday, August 22, 1916.

The Secretary of State for War requests that the following questions discussed at the last Meeting at which he was not present may be raised again:-

(1) FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIA.

(2) RAILWAY MATÉRIEL FOR RUSSIA.

(3) THE CANCELLATION OF ORDERS FOR RIFLES PLACED IN AMERICA.

Also The Memorandum of his recent visit to Paris. (Appendix II to War Committee Paper W.C.-61, about to be circulated.)

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,

August 21, 1916.

NAVAL ENGAGEMENT

Prime Minister referred to Mr. Balfour who said that the First Sea Lord would give an account.

Sir H. Jackson said that after repairs had been effected the Battle Cruiser Squadron went to Scapa Flow for battle practice, and stayed there for ten days. The Commander-in-Chief was on leave. No doubt the Germans got to know of this move. On Wednesday (16th) they returned to the Forth and re-fuelled ready for sea. It was thought that it would be a good thing to have them out, as there had been suspicious wireless messages indicating a movement of the German High Sea Fleet. On Friday ~~night~~ the Commander-in-Chief took the whole fleet out. The German fleet came out that night. The Commander-in-Chief brought the fleet down about 100 miles from the East Coast. Two of our light cruisers were sunk, torpedoed by submarines. There were many submarines and Zeppelins out evidently scouting for the High Sea Fleet. Our fleet on its way south was seen by the Zeppelins &c. and reported to the High Sea fleet which was west of Flamborough, and was probably making for the Tyne. On receiving the report the German fleet went back. All our fleet was out except the five Dreadnoughts. The Russians had recently been troubled by the Germans in the Baltic, and it was a good thing to keep the latter on this side of the Kiel Canal. We sent out a large number of submarines, which may have done some damage. Many of them are still out, and we might not hear anything for two days.

Lord Curzon asked where the two cruisers were lost.

Sir H. Oliver replied between Flamborough and the Tyne.

Lord Curzon asked if we had any aircraft patrols out our-selves - to any distance.

Sir H. Oliver replied that we had coastal aircraft out, and that one went as far as Terschelling.

Lord Curzon asked if there was only one Carrier out.

Sir H. Jackson replied that they had had no full report yet.

Lord Curzon said that one of the things that had been borne in on the Air Board, was the use of carriers for sea-planes.

Mr. Lloyd George enquired if they could be carried on battle ships.

Mr. Balfour replied in the negative, as they cumbered the whole deck.

Sir H. Jackson said that they were fitting the "Furious" for it, but there had been some delay. Existing ships could not be altered, as 150 feet was required.

Lord Curzon thought it was an important and interesting question whether it was not possible to improve the scouting and the eyes of our fleet by extending the use of air-planes. That it was, was the opinion of airmen. It might be that three cruisers had been lost through lack of scouting.

Sir H. Jackson said that he had been working ~~for this~~ all his time for air scouting from our own coasts. But in this case the situation would not have been altered, as the weather was against the use of air planes.

Lord Curzon thought that more might be done. The Admiralty representations on the Air Board were not very encouraging. Both Sir J. Jellicoe and Sir D. Beatty realized the value of sea-planes.

Sir H. Jackson said that it was not a day for sea-planes to get up.

Mr. Lloyd George enquired as to air-ships.

Mr. Balfour replied that Zeppelin ships were being finished but were not ready yet.

Lord Curzon said that these ships were being built on obsolete designs, and suggested scrapping the last seven or eight, and getting Messrs. Vickers to make a Specification for an improved sort. What they would have, would be no good in this war.

Mr. Balfour demurred to this Statement.

Sir H. Jackson said that they must go on, as they must have them.

LOWMOOR EXPLOSION.

Prime Minister asked for details.

Mr. Montagu had received a wire. The works at Lowmoor were for the manufacture of picric acid. They had been completely destroyed, and 100 men killed. It could not have been a very sudden affair, or there would have been more casualties. We had large stocks of picric and other factories were coming on. It was not so serious a loss as it might have been.

Mr. Runciman explaining the position of Lowmoor, said that Bradford in Yorkshire had a number of little towns all round it, of which Lowmoor was one about Seven miles away.

THE MILITARY SITUATION

Sir W. Robertson reported as follows: —

Russia: — had to go slow so as to effect a proper organization of lines of Communication. The Austro-Germans had brought up 31 divisions south of Pripet. No Contact had been made with the Turks. The Russians had been careless with their prisoners in Asia. The prisoners they had in Askabad had been allowed to get across the Persian frontier, and were responsible for the disturbances in Persia.

Lord Curzon: suggested that Merv which was in the desert would be a better place than Askabad.

Sir W. Robertson continued: —

Italy: — had had much wet weather, which was

the reason for not much work having been done. There had also been considerable difficulty in the water supply.

Western Front:— the news continued good. The operations of the 18th had been excellent. The German losses were returned at 180,000 on this front, the Bavarian division had lost so heavily that it had been sent back altogether.

Caucasus:— the Russians had moved troops down to the south to meet the attack there, and were now superior in numbers to the Turks.

East Africa:— a reply had been received from the Belgian Government that they would not give us the 8000 native troops. We should have to do without them.

Mr. Bonar Law thought the Belgians were influenced by the question of command or of prestige, and not so much of men.

Sir W. Robertson said "they were not for it."

Lord Grey suggested that if these native troops were an independent command under Belgian officers, and we paid for them, they might come, but they would not be of much use.

Sir W. Robertson said the question was, were they to go on in this matter, or were they not.

Mr. Bonar Law proposed that Sir W. Robertson should ask General Smuts if he thought it would be worth while to try to get these troops, on the understanding that they would be under their own officers, and we should pay them.

Sir W. Robertson said that he would do that.

Sir W. Robertson continued:—

Salonica:— he explained the situation on the map. One reason of Bulgaria's move was to

get hold of a piece of Greece to bargain with, and another was to shorten their line.

Roumania :— from the information in a Foreign Office paper, Roumania would put up 600,000 men formed into four armies, three of which were to go into Transylvania, and one kept behind. They said they had 1,000,000 trained men. They also said that they would be ready by the 15th or 16th September to invade Transylvania. The Austrians only had three divisions there now.

Persia :— there was no news. The Turks seemed not to have gone beyond Hamadan, but had sent two small columns South.

ROUMANIA

Mr. Lloyd George invited the Committee to deal with the question of negotiations with Roumania. He pointed out that the French had communicated with Russia after pressing us not to do so before Roumania came in. Now that Roumania had signed the Conventions, he thought that we ought to put the whole thing before Russia, because the French had omitted to refer to the proposal as to sending guns to Russia through Bulgaria, on condition that Russia assisted to open the road. France had done two things that they had asked us not to do. The number of Russians 200,000 to assist Roumania had been given to Russia, and France had communicated with Russia before the conventions were signed. He thought we should communicate with Russia

Lord Grey asked Mr. Lloyd George for the telegram he referred to.

Mr. Lloyd George said that Lord Grey had it, and he could found his telegram on it. It came forward in the last proceedings. He quoted para 3 of App. 107.

Lord Grey agreed that that would be a good thing on which to found his telegram. He then read a telegram which

he had received from Petrograd that morning regarding Bulgarian overtures for peace. He had consulted France and Russia on the subject, and this was the Russian reply. (App. 108).
He said he could reply by telling Sir G. Buchanan that we agreed with his views, and that the first thing was to get a big Russian force on the Roumanian frontier, the object being to get Russian guns in through Bulgaria. (App. 108)

Mr. Lloyd George said that with 200,000 Russians there, there would be 350,000 troops on that front. (App. 108)

Lord Grey proposed that a communication to the same effect should be sent to General Alexeieff through the War Office. He would send a copy of his telegram to Sir W. Robertson, and if he concurred he could send to General Walter, and he himself would send to Sir G. Buchanan.

Prime Minister asked what would be the effect of sending 200,000 men.

Mr. Lloyd George replied that the Bulgarians would find 70,000 men against them, some on the north, and some on the South, and would collapse.

Prime Minister was afraid that Russia could not send so many.

Mr. McKenna asked if Russia would not press us to send her the guns by any other way, by Vladivostock for instance.

Mr. Lloyd George replied that they had guns at Vladivostock, and could not move them - the quays were congested.

Lord Grey said the guns could not start until December.

Mr. Lloyd George observed that they could get them through Salonica in six days. (from where?)

MRS SKEFFINGTON

Sir W. Robertson had one more question for the Committee. Mrs. Skeffington wanted to go to the United States to lecture. Sir T. Maxwell wanted her to go, because he

thought she was more harmful here, than she would be there

Prime Minister said that he would let her go.

Lord Curzon agreed, provided she stayed away.

Mr. Lloyd George thought that it was more a Foreign Office question, than a War Office question.

Lord Grey observed that if she went it would serve to fan animosity against us, and if she did not go, she would establish a grievance.

Prime Minister remarked that she could not go now while the Inquiry was on.

Lord Grey said that on the whole he would not not let her go as it would open the way to grievance, and to reproach under which he would squirm. They did not make so much of these things in the United States when they recognized that the object was political. The interest soon evaporated.

Prime Minister agreed and instanced Casement.

Mr. Bonar Law asked if they should not consult Sir C. Spring Rice.

Prime Minister thought that he would not want Mrs. Skeffington.

Lord Grey referred to the case of Mrs. Connolly who had been stopped on the ground of the harm she would do. Sir C. Spring Rice was not consulted in that case.

Prime Minister said that the Irish Secretary should be consulted.

Lord Grey said that the Irish Authorities were taking an entirely different view of this case from the Connolly case. He thought that the two cases should go together.

Lord Curzon held strong views that neither should be allowed to go. Mrs. Skeffington might do great harm to the Allied cause in the United States, and comparatively none in Ireland.

Prime Minister observed that it was only a negative grievance, not being allowed to go.

Mr Montagu thought this was a worse case than Mrs Connolly's, the latter wanted to go with her husband to settle in the States, whereas Mrs Skeffington wanted to go to lecture.

Sir W. Robertson read a letter from Mrs Skeffington which had been stopped by the Censor.

Prime Minister thought it would be difficult to justify stopping it.

Lord Grey thought Mr Duke should see it.

Mr Lloyd George said the War Office would hand it over to Lord Grey.

Lord Grey said he would discuss the question with Mr Duke.

Mr Bonar Law proposed that the Cabinet should consider the question before the final decision was given.

QUETTA-SEISTAN RAILWAY (App. 108 B)

Mr Chamberlain explained that he had been unable to bring Sir E. Barrow, who was attending before the Mesopotamian Enquiry Commission. Sir L. A. Hirtzel attended instead.

Mr Chamberlain opened the question by reference to papers circulated from the India Office to the War Committee (App. 108 B) and quoted from telegrams printed therein giving the views of the Viceroy and the ~~Chief of the Staff~~ Commander-in-Chief. He could not understand the estimate of £500,000 for rolling stock, and was telegraphing to India for a report on this matter. (App. 108 B).

Sir W. Robertson in reply to a question said that the distance from Nushki to Robat was 350 miles.

Prime Minister asked Mr Chamberlain if he had any further information, or anything to say.

Mr Chamberlain said he had no further information. He would speak with great hesitation if he were asked to give his opinion. A very big question was raised, and many different views had been expressed by the Defence

Committee. The War Committee could hardly be expected to give full attention to a subject involving a survey of the whole future question of Persia. He would have liked the question to be dealt with by the employment of motor transport. The Commander in Chief however seemed to think that that was impossible. He also would have preferred a smaller gauge line to Dalbandin, but that required consideration, because he was not certain that there was rolling stock ready, whereas for the broader gauge rolling stock was already available on the other line.

Sir W. Robertson said he had recommended either motor transport or a light railway. The Commander in Chief had wired back that motor transport could not be used because there was no road, and there was no road because there was no water. Moreover he would want 250 lorries and could not have them before the date on which he said the railway could be finished.

Mr. Lloyd George asked if this did not raise a serious question of policy.

Lord Curzon did not think so at all. Not even if the line was extended the full 370 miles to Robat, certainly not for the 115 miles to Dalbandin. He referred to his memorandum which had been circulated to the Committee (App. 108), and pointed out that there were three alternatives - 1st. A broad gauge line for the whole distance. This would be expensive, although the extra cost would not be very great on condition that they took the material from the Chaman reserve store. If however they did this, it must be an essential condition that the material should be replaced as soon as possible. 2nd. A metre gauge line, which he mentioned because there were many miles of it in India. It was in use for the Rajputana railways.

3rd a 2'6" gauge. It was the constant practice in India to push out on this gauge, and to increase it as the increase of traffic demanded. It was very serviceable and would last 10, 15, or 20 years and could be replaced. He suggested as a 4th alternative what was called a light line.

Sir W. Robertson pointed out that this was the same thing as the 2'6" gauge.

Lord Curzon said he was disposed to advise an extension to Dalbandin, for the reason that he thought it would not touch the big question of policy, but might affect the present tickish position in East Persia. He was quite certain that we should want some means of getting in in that quarter, and attached great importance to the provision of it.

Mr. Montagu said that from a munitions point of view he would prefer to have the railway to Hindu Bagh, because of the chrome deposits there. This material was very necessary for munition work. There were the only main deposits besides those in Africa which might be giving out the next year.

Mr. Chamberlain said that this railway was being reluctantly made to help munition work. The Admiralty and War Office had acquiesced in its desirability.

Prime Minister asked what was the importance of Chrome.

Mr. Montagu replied that it was important in the manufacture of steel.

Sir W. Robertson stated that when he wrote his paper (App. 108 B.3) he was not aware of the Commander-in-Chief's objections about motor transport. He was now disposed to get on with the railway on the larger gauge. He agreed with Lord Curzon and Mr. Chamberlain.

Mr. Balfour objected on the whole to the railway policy in India,

but thought that in this case it might be desirable

Lord Curzon pointed out that it meant only 90 miles of railway, it was not going as far as Sheistan.

Mr. Chamberlain added that it reduced the number of motors required from 250 to 70, and the Commander-in-Chief had half of them now.

Prime Minister enquired how long the construction would take.

Sir W. Robertson replied, four to six months.

Mr. Chamberlain made a warning that his reserve was decreasing and that he might have to come to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Balfour asked what was the exact importance of chrome. Did it mean that if they had no chrome, they would have no steel plates at the end of the year?

Mr. Montagu replied that such was his information.

Lord Curzon was entirely in accordance ~~of~~ with the proposal to construct the railway as far as Dalhandin, on the understanding that the question of the higher policy of the Trans-Persian railway must be held over. (For previous papers see Apps. 108 B.B.G.B.7.)

MESOPOTAMIA.

Prime Minister asked Sir W. Robertson if he had anything to tell the Committee on the present position in Mesopotamia.

Sir W. Robertson said he had nothing to add to what was in his paper which had been circulated to the Committee. (App. 108). They could not do any more than they were doing now.

Mr. Chamberlain wished to say of the Mesopotamian ~~operations~~ situation that ~~they~~ it reflected a light on past operations. We had saved ourselves at a critical time by the adoption of a venturous policy at a particular moment. We had held the Turks and had allowed the Russians to get on.

MAN-POWER DISTRIBUTION

Prime Minister said that this was a question of the terms of reference to the Committee.

Lord Derby explained that the suggested terms in his paper circulated to the Committee (App. 108/D) represented the unanimous opinion of the Committee appointed by the War Committee on August 5th to consider the terms of reference.

Mr. Lloyd George thought that the appointment of a Chairman was the difficult question. Lord Curzon, he said, pressed for the selection of a Member of the Government. He referred to Mr. Long for his views.

Mr. Long did not think that a Member of the Government could do the work. They wanted a strong man who could give all his time.

Mr. Lloyd George said he had discussed the matter with Lord Derby and suggested Lord Middleton

Mr. Long agreed.

Prime Minister asked on what grounds Mr. Lloyd George made this suggestion.

Mr. Lloyd George replied that Lord Middleton having been at the War Office, knew something about the question.

Mr. Balfour said that Lord Middleton knew the War Office, but had no experience of the Admiralty, or of commerce or of munitions.

Mr. Montagu thought Lord Middleton would be prejudiced by his want of knowledge of anything but the War Office. (A general discussion of Lord Middleton's qualifications ensued)

Lord Curzon wished to say a word as regarded the selection of a Cabinet Minister. They could not get a man with knowledge of all departments, and they wanted a man with authority. They wanted a man whose authority carried weight and was acceptable.

He urged most strongly that they should get a Cabinet Minister if they could, for smooth working and authority.

Mr. Long agreed with Lord Curzon in principle, but was confident that there was no Cabinet Minister who had time for the intricate and constant work which had to be done.

Mr. Runciman hoped that Mr. Long was wrong in thinking that so much time would be required. There would be numerous questions to come before the Committee, and an enormous amount of work could be done by conferences, behind and outside the Committee. If every question of allocation of men was to go before the Board it would break down.

Prime Minister thought the discussion was getting beside the question. What they wanted was a strong man.

Lord Grey suggested Mr. Chamberlain.

Mr. Balfour thought he would be an excellent man if he had time.

Lord Curzon doubted if Mr. Chamberlain could find time. He had to be constantly at the India Office, on Wednesdays, and for Committees.

Mr. Bonar Law did not believe in Lord Curzon's idea of a Cabinet Minister being chairman. The Chairman must either do the work himself or let someone else do it - if he has no time the latter happens. He suggested the name of Sir George Younger.

Lord Curzon pointed out that he would have to sit every afternoon at 3. o'clock, and could not do it. He agreed with Mr. Runciman that a great deal could be done behind the scenes by a good Secretary.

Mr. Montague said that he had assented to the scheme on the understanding that a Cabinet Minister would preside. He considered that that was essential.

Mr. Runciman concurred.

Mr. Bonar Law said that he had not more to do than Mr. Chamberlain, but that he would not undertake it.

Mr. Lloyd George agreed with Mr. Montagu that they should get a Cabinet Minister, if they could find one that had the time.

Mr. McKenna suggested Mr. Tennant.

Prime Minister thought it was worth trying Mr. Chamberlain, but was afraid he would say "No". He asked Lord Curzon if he would approach Mr. Chamberlain.

Lord Curzon undertook to back up the invitation by such arguments as he could.

Mr. Lloyd George enquired if the other members were to be representatives of departments.

Lord Derby replied "Certainly not". They would be representatives of Labour.

Lord Curzon suggested to Lord Derby that they might have Lord Middleton as a deputy-Chairman, and call him Vice-Chairman.

Lord Derby thought that that might be a satisfactory conclusion.

Prime Minister approved of the proposal, but said that Mr. Chamberlain should be asked first.

Mr. Lloyd George said that they wanted a Committee with authority.

Lord Curzon said that they wanted a Committee that would accept the authority of the Chairman.

Prime Minister asked Lord Derby to make out a list of alternative names of members, on the supposition that Mr. Chamberlain would be Chairman.

FINANCE.

Mr. McKenna informed the Committee that a Meeting had been arranged to take place on the following Thursday in Paris to arrange for a new advance to the French. They had already met last month for preliminary

discussion, and he hoped to arrange a joint loan in America next November. In the meantime it would be necessary to satisfy needs by borrowing in America on the security of stocks, or by bonds secured on American securities. The French were then trying to arrange a hundred million dollar loan on collateral security, and in order not to influence the French market we waited until that was concluded before entering on a similar arrangement. On the 9th or 10th of August, when we were about to issue ours through a Corporation, Morgans telegraphed over that they were doubtful of the success of the French scheme, as they had had to buy in the bonds, and recommended an issue by a Syndicate secured by collateral security. By a telegram of August 11th, to that time we had had to spend 60 million dollars in New York. In the following week we sold 27 million dollars. No doubt Morgans became alarmed or terrified at such an outflow in a fortnight. We consulted the Bank of England who thought we should not agree. Messrs Morgan made the offer of their final plans on the Monday, consequently Mr. McKenna made an immediate communication to the Foreign Office in accordance with the terms of the protocol referred to in M. Ribot's report. (App. 108).

Prime Minister enquired what was the date of the protocol.

Mr. McKenna replied that it was about 15th July. He proceeded to say that M. Ribot now took the line that our issue was opposed to the joint loan in November without collateral security. That was quite right, it did. M. Ribot also said that it was contrary to the terms of the Aide-Mémoire. That was not so. There were a great many questions to be discussed by the French Cabinet, in some of which this question was concerned. M. Ribot put forward the suggestion that

the Prime Minister should meet M. Briand at the same time that Mr. McKenna met M. Ribot, then the four Ministers could discuss the six points raised in M. Ribot's report. The six points were as follows:—

Mr. McKenna read para 1. (App. 108/E p. 5). on which he observed that as long as we had a gold standard it was essential for us to maintain the exchange. In our case, in addition to War Office and Admiralty requirements, we had to consider commercial requirements of which we could not give an exact estimate, unless we gave up the gold standard. Other countries had no exchange standard, and therefore could limit their requirements.

Prime Minister remarked that we could give an estimate of Government requirements.

Mr. Lloyd George thought that there was a good deal to be said from our point of view of proportion, if we could bring French gold into the resources.

Mr. Montagu asked if no estimate could be made of commercial demands.

Mr. McKenna said it was quite impossible. He then proceeded to read the remaining five conditions. (see App. 108/E p. 5)

Mr. Lloyd George thought that No. 6 was the only one for discussion.

Prime Minister said that Russia would not agree to it. He added that Russia had not been represented in the discussion of these matters.

Mr. Bonar Law said that the principle of all the conditions lay in No. 6. viz: that all purchases would be made as for one, and our credit was to be used.

Mr. McKenna agreed, that there would be one central buying authority.

Mr. Montagu observed that M. Thomas' scheme was for

a single purchasing body in London.

Mr. Lloyd George hoped that the Prime Minister would see his way to attending the Conference.

Prime Minister said that he did not want to go, and thought he would be of no use if he did.

Mr. Lloyd George thought otherwise. The Conference wanted the Prime Minister's authority in taking any risks that ought to be taken. France and Russia were under the impression that they had made enormous sacrifices, and that we were not prepared to take the same risks. That was putting the Russian point of view with reference to rails and ammunition. It was an important thing that at the end of the war the Allies should have a good feeling towards us. The trouble would be when they came to consider the terms of peace, if the Allies said that we had not done our best to help them. It was important that there should be no feeling in their minds that we had been driven from point to point in order to help them. He thought that the Prime Minister could dispel all this notion, and help to maintain thoroughly good relations. No. 6 seemed to give an opportunity. If Russia was told that the English gold standard was imperilled, and was asked to assist, Russia would assent to the export of gold to England as something to help. That was in accordance with their commercial temperament. He advocated the Prime Minister's going to the Conference.

Prime Minister said the question was mainly one with the French at present. The French were nettled by the issue of this loan in New York. They said it ought not to have been issued without their knowledge and consent. They must be smoothed over this as far as

possible. But what was to be said after that?

Mr. Lloyd George said that the restoration of good feeling was most important.

Prime Minister said that we knew that the charge against us was unjust; that we had run great risks; that the gold standard was in danger at the moment. But we should not conciliate them by exalting our services. Our gold standard was in danger, and we must tell them that.

Mr. Bonar Law thought it desirable to create an atmosphere of peace.

Mr. Lloyd George concurred.

Lord Grey said we should go as far as we could with our purchases, under Condition No 1. We could get definitely the information about certain things, but could not about a floating mass like commercial purchases. He thought that an estimate could be made of Government purchases.

Mr. McKenna replied that they could not even estimate Government purchases. They had placed orders for 100 million dollars in America in the last fortnight.

Mr Montagu said that they could not say exactly what their foreign orders would be, but they could give an approximate estimate, within 50 millions one way or another for the 12 months.

Mr. Runciman drew attention to the difficulty of giving an estimate, owing to the variation in the price of wheat. They might give a maximum and a minimum with a 40 % margin.

Lord Grey said it must be understood that 'resources' included securities and gold.

Mr. Montagu referring to Condition No 2 said that M. Thomas had put forward a scheme for a common purchasing agency.

Lord Grey observed that anything they could get the French to agree to, they would press on Russia. He understood that the word 'orders' meant warlike orders.

Mr. McKenna said that the objection to condition No 3, was having to ask the consent of the Allies to get credits, while it was we who gave credits.

Prime Minister thought that what was meant was that we should not repeat the transaction to which they had objected.

Mr. Balfour suggested the addition of "except in so far as is necessary to pay for obligations already entered into".

Mr. McKenna said he could not agree for one minute to consent not to raise money in America if we wanted to.

Mr. Lloyd George thought that they were a little sore about that loan. Otherwise he could not imagine what their objection could be.

Mr. McKenna said he had to raise 50 million dollars every month, and how could he wait for their permission.

Lord Grey thought they might make a reservation to meet existing obligations.

Lord Curzon thought that they ought to meet these people and discuss all the questions.

Mr. Lloyd George said they should not be discussed one by one. He thought the Prime Minister should have a free hand to deal with them as a whole.

Prime Minister said it was not a mission that he was fond of. He was not well enough up in the details. If it was thought necessary he would go.

It was agreed that Mr. Montagu and Mr. McKenna should accompany him and discuss the questions with the French representatives.

MUNITIONS TO RUSSIA

Mr. Lloyd George brought forward the question of a Conference to consider the proposals of Mr. Hill contained in his paper (App. $\frac{103}{F}$).

Prime Minister decided that they should be considered in the first place by a Committee composed of Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Montagu & Lord Curzon.

Mr. McKenna.

SECRET.

WAR COMMITTEE.

DRAFT CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting held at 10 Downing Street, on Tuesday, August 22, 1916, at 11.30 a.m.

GERMAN EAST AFRICA. (1) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Committee that the Belgian Government had declined the request of the British Government to put at our disposal several thousand native troops for use in the final operations for the conquest of German East Africa, which might have to be carried out in unhealthy districts. The War Committee thought it by no means unlikely that the Belgian Government might reconsider their decision if they were informed that these troops would be employed under their own Belgian officers, their entire cost being defrayed by the British Government.

Before making a fresh proposal to the Belgian Government, it was decided that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff should ask General Smuts whether he would care to have the Belgian troops on these terms.

BULGARIA. (2) The agreement between the Secretary of State for War and M. Briand, signed on August 11, 1916, (W.C.-61, Appendix II), provided that as soon as the Military and Political Conventions between Roumania and the Entente Powers had been signed the Russian Government should at once be approached with the proposal that Russia should place in the field against Bulgaria sufficient force to conduct a successful offensive in co-operation with the Roumanian forces.

The Secretary of State for War drew the attention of the War Committee to the fact that according to telegram No.1320 from the British Ambassador in Petrograd, dated August 18, the French Government had, without waiting for the signature of the Roumanian Treaties, made a communication to the Russian Government. In this communication they had apparently omitted to make any mention of the inducement to the Russian Government, namely, to open a road through Bulgaria and Roumania for the delivery of a great quantity of ordnance and ammunition which would thereby be obtained several months earlier, and had, in addition, mentioned 200,000 men as the number which the Russian Government should send to co-operate with the Roumanian Army, which it had been agreed at Paris should not be mentioned until a later stage.

It was agreed that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should now make a communication on behalf of the British Government to the Russian Government on this subject, and that an identical communication should be made by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to General Alexeieff.

MRS SKEFFINGTON.

(3) The Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Committee that Mrs. Skeffington wished to visit America for the purpose of giving lectures, and that General Maxwell was inclined to think she ought to be allowed to go. In the course of discussion it transpired that permission had been refused to Mrs. Connolly, who wished to go to America with her children to settle there. It was generally agreed that

Mrs. Skeffington might do harm to the Allied cause in the United States of America, particularly in view of the forthcoming Presidential Elections, but the question arose whether even more damage might not be done to the Allied cause by refusing permission which might be represented as a mean act on our part.

The War Committee decided that the question should be discussed in the first instance between the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Chief Secretary for Ireland, but that the final decision should not be reached without reference to the Cabinet.

THE PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE QUETTA-NUSHKI RAILWAY TO SEISTAN.

(4) The War Committee had before them Memoranda by the Secretary of State for India, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Lord Curzon, and the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, on the subject of the proposed extension of the Quetta-Nushki Railway to Seistan, a preliminary discussion on which had taken place at the meeting held on August 10th, (W.C.-60, Conclusion 2).

The War Committee consider it a cogent military necessity that steps must be taken to improve the communications of the Anglo-Indian forces which are now with the consent, if not at the request, of the Persian Government, operating within our sphere in the Eastern part of Persia for the purpose of preventing that region from passing into the hands of Germans and screening Afghanistan from German penetration.

They are not unmindful, however, of the objections which have been urged in the past against the construction of any scheme of railways linking Russia with India

through Persia, and they are aware that the construction of the Quetta-Seistan Railway has in the past been opposed on these grounds.

In these circumstances, the War Committee, with the concurrence of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, decided on the adoption of General Sir Beauchamp Duff's proposal for an extension of the railway on the broad gauge from Nushki to Dalbandin, a distance of only 115 or 120 miles. From Dalbandin the communication will have to be maintained by animals and lorries.

They make this recommendation on the distinct understanding that it in no way compromises the question of the Trans-Persian Railway, and they understand that the Nushki-Dalbandin Railway does not traverse the desert.

The Committee further decided that the Indian Government should be authorised to utilise the Chaman reserve for the construction of the railway, but only on the understanding that this reserve, the maintenance of which has for many years been accepted as a cardinal principle of Indian defence policy, should be replaced without delay.

One reason for recommending a broad gauge line is that the necessary material is immediately available in the Chaman reserve. Another reason is that the material for a ~~metre~~ 2ft 6 inch gauge railway could only be provided by suspending the construction of the railway to the chrome deposits of Hindu Bagh, the early completion of which is urgently required by the Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions.

The above decision to be communicated to the Indian Government by the Secretary of State for India.

MESOPOTAMIA. (5) The War Committee had before them the Memorandum, dated August 21, 1916, promised by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the previous Meeting, on

the present military situation in Mesopotamia.

The Committee take note of the measures which are being adopted to render the force ~~sufficient~~ efficient and ready to carry out such tasks as may devolve upon it.

(Insert A.)

THE MAN-POWER DISTRIBUTION BOARD.

(6) The War Committee approved the establishment of a Man-Power Distribution Board with the following Terms of Reference, drawn up by Lord Derby's Special Committee set up by the resolution adopted at the Meeting held on August 5. (W.C.-59, Conclusion 6):-

(1) To determine all questions arising between Government Departments, relating to the allocation or economic utilization of man-power for the purpose of the successful prosecution of the war and, in order to give effect to its determination, to direct the Government Departments concerned to create the machinery necessary to co-ordinate their activities in regard to the distribution or utilization of men and women.

(2) Further, a proposal put forward by any Government Department requiring any important demand for more man-power shall be referred to the Board which will decide on the feasibility of the proposal from that standpoint.

(3) The Board to have power to call for any evidence it thinks necessary and to direct Departments to obtain such information as it may require.

(4) The decisions of the Board to be final unless appealed against to the War Committee.

The Committee also had a preliminary discussion on the question of the composition of the Board. Lord Derby undertook to submit to the Prime Minister a list of names.

THE FINANCE OF THE ALLIES.

(7) The Committee discussed a Memorandum from the French Government, dated the 21st August, on the subject of the payments of the Allies abroad and credits in the United States.

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THE MAN-POWER DISTRIBUTION BOARD.

(6) The War Committee approved the establishment of a Man-Power Distribution Board with the following Terms of Reference drawn up by Lord Derby's Special Committee

A. The attention of the War Committee was directed by the Secretary of State for India to the present situation in Persia as reflecting a light on past operations in Mesopotamia. By the adoption there of a venturous policy at a particular moment, we had saved ourselves at a critical time. We had held the Turks, and so enabled the Russians to restore the position in ~~in~~ Persia, and to advance in Armenia. Our offensive in 1915 had relieved the situation in Persia, and removed the possible peril which threatened the North West Frontier of India, besides easing ourselves from danger in Egypt.

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THE FINANCE OF THE ALLIES.

(7) The Committee discussed a Memorandum from the French Government, dated the 21st August, on the subject of the payments of the Allies abroad and credits in the United States.

It was agreed that the Prime Minister, accompanied by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Minister of Munitions, should confer with the French Prime Minister, and other representatives of the French Government, on the question at an early date. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to make a communication to the French Government to this effect.

THE TRANSPORT OF MUNITIONS TO RUSSIA.

(8) The War Committee had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, dated 19th August, 1916, on the subject of the transport of munitions to Russia. The Prime Minister decided that the question should be considered, in the first place, by a Committee composed of the Secretary of State for War, the Minister of Munitions, and Lord Curzon.

~~THE CANCELLATION OF ORDERS FOR RIFLES IN AMERICA.~~

~~(9) Action on the Conclusion reached on this subject at the last Meeting of the War Committee (W.C.-51, Conclusion 13), had been postponed at the request of the Secretary of State for War. It was arranged that the Minister of Munitions should communicate with the Master-General of the Ordnance on the subject of the telegram to be sent to Messrs. Morgan.~~

. . . . . .

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
Aug. 23, 1916.

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A

Bulgaria

RUSSIA.

POLITICAL

Decypher. Sir G. Buchanan (Petrograd) August 21st.

D. 9. 6 pm August 21st.

R. 9. 25 am August 22nd.

No. 1333.

Your telegram No. 1795 to Paris.

Minister for Foreign Affairs agrees that we should not close the door against all overtures from Bulgaria and that it is only under military pressure that she is likely to accept any terms that would be fair to (? Serbia). Initiative (? in the matter) must however be taken by Bulgaria who should make proposals direct to Allies. His Excellency does not wish that Roumania should act as intermediary.

I expressed personal opinion that negotiations would be greatly facilitated were we to use Roumania as channel of communications between us and Bulgaria at all events during their initial stages.

His Excellency and French Ambassador who was present expressed contrary views. I gathered from what former said that Russian Government will insist that King of Bulgarians abdicate .

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A1

RUSSIA.

MILITARY.

Cypher telegram to Sir G. Buchanan (Petrograd)

Foreign Office August 23rd. 12.20 pm

No. 1884.

Your telegram No. 1333 of August 21st.

At a recent meeting of the Secretary of State for War and the French President of the Council the question of military operations in the Near East and of possible Bulgarian overtures for peace came under discussion, and an understanding was arrived at, having as its object a scheme for the opening of direct railway communication between Salonica and Roumania, with a view to the earliest delivery to Russia of heavy guns and munitions which could otherwise only reach the Russian Armies about next May.

Now that Roumania is about to declare war, the British and French Governments would propose that the Russian Government should put into the field against Bulgaria a sufficient force to insure the success of a Roumanian offensive against Bulgaria. The objective of this operation would be to open, by joint action with the Allies from Salonica, direct railway communication between Salonica and Roumania, or to create such a situation of direct menace to

Bulgaria

Bulgaria that she would be disposed to sue for peace on terms acceptable to the Allies.

In the event of the Russian Government being able to adopt this proposal and the road from Salonica to the Roumanian frontier being opened, the British Government would engage to supply to Russia at the dates indicated the following war material :-

One hundred howitzers of 4.5 calibre at the end of October or the beginning of November 1916;

Fifty heavy guns of six inches and more in December 1916;

Fifty heavy guns of the same category in January 1917; and

Fifty more heavy guns in February 1917.

The hundred heavy guns to be delivered to Russia in December and January would comprise about sixty howitzers of six inches, and the remainder would be eight inch or nine point two howitzers with some sixty pounder guns. Ammunition for these would be supplied at the rate of 300 to 450 rounds for each gun per month.

As regards the French Government although the demands made upon their factories will not permit them to accelerate the dates of delivery, the opening of the road through Bulgaria would enable them to insure the punctuality of their monthly deliveries even during the winter.

The

The French Government would further undertake, on this understanding, to provide the Russian Government with six hundred machine rifles and hundred machine guns every month.

You should, in conjunction with your French Colleague place this proposal before the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and urge upon him its advantage as a means of bringing the war to an early and successful conclusion. In the event of its being adopted by the Russian Government, the Allied Governments will concert amongst themselves such diplomatic or military measures as may result in the earliest possible opening of the road through the East.

Repeated to Paris No. 1826.

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A2

Pulpit

RUSSIA

MILITARY

Cypher telegram to Sir G. Buchanan (Petrograd)

Foreign Office, August 23rd.1916. 12.15 p.m.

No. 1885.

My immediately preceding telegram.

The suggestion is that Russia should add a force of 200,000 men to the 150,000 Roumanians who are to be placed on the frontier of the Dobrudja, and thus to place Bulgaria between two forces each of 350,000 men on her Northern and Southern frontiers.

This is for your information but the idea is that if this force could be placed in the Bulgarian frontier the effect of it combined with Allied operations at Salonika would be to produce overtures from Bulgaria that might be acceptable to the Allies. If this happened it would effect a denoument in the East that might quickly decide the whole war.

Unless the road from Salonika to Russia is cleared the heavy guns and ammunition promised by us cannot be delivered in Russia before May 1917 as we shall not be ready to begin delivery until some weeks after the port of Archangel is ice-bound this winter. This should be clearly explained to Russian Government.

Repeated to Paris No. 1327.

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B

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SECRET.

820

QUETTA-SEISTAN RAILWAY.

PRIME MINISTER.

I have received the following private telegram from the Viceroy:—

From Viceroy, 25th July 1916.

Private. Reference to my official telegram Nushki-Robat railway. I took the matter in Council, 21st July. Majority would have rejected proposal, but in view of Commander-in-Chief's plea of cogent military necessity owing to possibility of Turkish advance through Persia to Afghanistan, I suggested that we should have advice of Chief of Imperial General Staff as to possible danger from this direction. I can scarcely think it such as to warrant so grave an expenditure for what we consider so small political or commercial results. But I did not wish Council to over-rule Army Member when he put forward a cogent military necessity. There is further the larger question of the future of Persia. We do not from that wish to extend our responsibilities, but this may be forced upon us by larger Imperial conditions. This cannot be left out of account in considering question of proposed railway, but I regard it as a matter to be decided by the Imperial Government rather than by us.

The official telegram is printed on pages 6–7 of these notes, which give a summary of the past history of the question and the comments of my advisers.

I suggest that the papers be referred to the Imperial General Staff for report, and circulated to the War Committee which could discuss them as soon as the report of the Imperial General Staff is received.

An immediate decision is required on the questions—

(1) Whether an extension of the line is a "cogent military necessity" to be proceeded with at once.

(2) Whether in that case the extension can be effected in time to be of use for the purposes named by the Commander-in-Chief?

(3) Whether the extension to Dalbandin would suffice for the time?

But these questions can scarcely be answered without some consideration of the larger question whether the construction of a permanent broad-gauge railway to or towards Seistan would be advantageous or disadvantageous on general strategical grounds?

A. C.

4th August 1916.

The Commander-in-Chief in India has urged the extension of the Quetta–Nushki Railway to Seistan on grounds of "cogent military necessity."

The earlier history of this scheme, and the significance of the scheme itself, were thus described by Lord Curzon in a Minute, dated 4th September 1899:—

"The first idea of some such railway appears to have originated with the late Sir J. Browne, who, as early as 1884, advocated a line from the neighbourhood of Quetta *via* Nushki, not to Seistan, but to Safar, on the Helmand. This proposal was put forward, without any reference to Persia, for strategical reasons, namely, in order to prevent, at any future period, a Russian advance upon Kandahar. It is interesting to me to learn from a study of the papers what I did not know before, viz., that five years later, when I was travelling in Persia, and was first writing about this question, it had just been raised both in India and in Persia by a report from Colonel Bell, at that time Head of the Intelligence Department in India, who, in the autumn of 1888, marched from India by Kharan and Mashkel to Seistan, and strongly recommended the construction of a railway and a lease in perpetuity of Seistan from the Persian Government, with a view to the grant of a great irrigation concession to Reuter or to some other company. The

suggestion was eagerly taken up by Sir H. D. Wolff, whose imagination was at that time suffused with halcyon dreams of a regeneration of Persia by universal railways, and was recommended by him both to the Government of India and to Lord Salisbury. Lord Lansdowne's Government, in a telegram dated the 20th January 1889, said that 'railway extension through 'Baluchistan was regarded by the military authorities as a most valuable 'adjunct to the defences of India, and as deserving of the utmost encourage-'ment.' Sir H. Wolff's proposals did not make much advance, but were reiterated by him in despatches to the Foreign Office, dated the 25th July and 19th August 1890. Unfortunately in these, as in his original despatch of the 19th February 1889, Sir H. Wolff rested his defence of the scheme upon extremely contentious and entirely unacceptable grounds. He advocated it for two reasons: as a menace to the Transcaspian Railway of Russia, and as the saving of a long land march in the event of our desiring to take the offensive against that Power. This line of argument was completely riddled in a memorandum, dated the 2nd October 1890, by General Brackenbury, at that time Head of the Intelligence Department at home. He pointed out that a single line to a remote corner of Persia could not counterbalance the position of Russia in that country, would not help us in the least on the Afghan border or in Afghan-Turkestan, and would be of no use for assuming the offensive. He concluded by saying: 'By far the 'more important task is not the construction of a new line to Seistan, but 'the consolidation of our power there by bringing the frontier tribes under 'our influence, and by developing Baluchistan and converting it into a 'fertile base of operations. When this has been done, it will be time to 'push forward into Persia.'

"23. General Brackenbury's criticism was destructive of the proposal viewed as an offensive and strategical scheme. But a corresponding flaw in his own argument was at once pointed out by Lord Salisbury, who noted that the real object of a Seistan railway would be not to attack Russia in Northern Persia, but to save Southern Persia from falling into her grasp, which could be done either by a line from Quetta, or, as he would himself prefer, by a line from the sea.

"24. General Brackenbury's criticism was sent out to the Government of India, and was thus noted upon by Sir G. Chesney on the 13th January 1891: 'The railway can only be regarded as a work of military precaution. 'From this point of view it appears to me that the time cannot be far distant 'when it will be deemed necessary. Still more important is a railway from 'the Persian Gulf north to Seistan, but the connecting link between this 'line and the Quetta railway system will also be found necessary.'

"25. A little later Sir H. Brackenbury, now Military Member in India, again noted upon the scheme, and it is interesting to read his remarks in the light of his former opinion. He now explained (27th April 1891) that he had only objected to a Seistan railway so long as the Russian railway did not extend south of the Transcaspian line, and because to construct a railway to Seistan would compel her to make extensions. 'But if circumstances should 'change, and if Russia should take the lead in making railways southward, 'then it may become necessary for us to follow her lead. We ought to be 'able to keep pace with her.'

"26. These conditions had not yet been realised, and the Government of India decided to proceed no further with the scheme. The question of a more southerly line from the sea was at the same time considered in connection with Sir R. Sandeman's proposals to take over Kej and Panjgur—a project which was revived in 1894 by his successor, Sir J. Browne. On both occasions, however (as again at a later date), the proposal to assume administrative responsibility for Makran was negatived by the Government of India, and with it the idea of a Makran railway from the sea to Seistan was dropped also. Since then the question has not been revived.

"27. It will be clear from the above narrative, firstly, that the idea of a Seistan railway does not appear to have ever been considered by the Government of India from the only point of view in which, in my opinion, it ought to be regarded, viz., as a protective, and not an offensive, measure. The reason perhaps is that, at that time, Russia had not given such

unmistakable evidence of her intention to move southward from Meshed, and to draw Seistan within the radius of her political influence. The railway was accordingly discussed and condemned as a means of attacking Russia in Northern Persia, not as a means of keeping Russia out of Southern Persia. Moreover, at that time, the Quetta-Seistan trade route not having yet been opened, the possible commercial value of the line was not taken into account at all. Secondly, it will be noticed that the conditions postulated by Sir H. Brackenbury in London as precedent to any idea of railway construction in this quarter have since been realised. Baluchistan is rapidly being developed, the frontier tribes have passed completely under our control, a permanent line of communication with Seistan has been opened, while the very conditions which he said, when in India, might compel a change of attitude on our part, viz., Russian initiative in the process of southerly extension from her existing railway system, have been fulfilled by the construction on her part, without provocation or incentive from us, of the Merv-Kushk line. It is clear, therefore, that the question stands on a different footing from any that it has previously occupied, and that the facts and arguments which weighed with our predecessors are inapplicable to the present situation.

* * * *

"30. The Government of India have in the accompanying despatch suggested the desirability of coming to an understanding with Russia concerning spheres of interest in Persia, which would leave Seistan within the British zone. In such a case there might be no necessity, at any rate for the present, for a Quetta-Seistan railway. We could then devote ourselves to the diligent promotion of the resuscitated caravan route, and look forward to the day when, the Helmand being in our hands, we might convert Seistan into a flourishing outpost on the flanks of British India that would call for railway connection with the lines and resources of the interior."

Again, in a Minute of 28th October 1901, Lord Curzon wrote:—

"The Russian Railway to Kushk (where the materials are stored for the 70 miles prolongation to Herat) already places that fortress within the grasp of Russia, should she at any time care to run the risk of a *casus belli* with Great Britain. But the Russian railway about to be constructed to Meshed if prolonged, as is the intention, to Seistan, and ultimately to the Gulf, will dispense Russia from the necessity of crossing the Afghan frontier on the Herat side. From Persian territory she will menace the entire western flank of Afghanistan. She will command the Herat-Kandahar road and will render insecure any future British occupation of Kandahar. Lower down, in the unsettled tracts of Baluchistan and Makran, which we have at present only imperfectly brought under our control, there would be limitless scope for frontier disturbance and local intrigue. We should be compelled, at the cost of a great expenditure of money and of a serious addition to our responsibilities, to invest our authority over those regions with a more concrete character, and to maintain posts and garrisons to guard what would then have become a vulnerable, though it is now a negligible, section of the Indian border.

"14. The Minute which I wrote on 4th September 1899, and sent home to the India Office with the Government of India's Despatch of 21st September 1899, sufficiently indicated the extreme strategical importance to India of Seistan. The success that has attended the efforts which we have since made to develop the trade route from India to that part of Persia —the value of the trade having risen in two years from 7½ to 15 lakhs— has tended to increase both our interest and our influence in that portion of the Shah's dominions, and has encouraged us to project the early construction of a railway from Quetta to Nushki, *i.e.*, over the first 90 miles of the route. A Russian railway through Seistan to the Gulf—followed as it must be by the political absorption of Seistan—would not merely kill this promising enterprise, and close the one remaining overland trade route (that to Yarkand and Kashgar is already nearly dead) that still remains open to Indian commerce, but it would have the following further and even more

serious consequences. It would place Russia in control of a district ethnographically connected with Baluchistan, would profoundly affect our prestige both with Afghan and Baluch, and would greatly enhance the difficulties that we already experience in managing the cognate tribes on the Indian side of the border. If Great Britain is ever called upon to advance to Kandahar, as she will probably one day be compelled to do, an intolerable state of friction would arise between the Powers that would then control the upper and the lower waters of the Helmund. Moreover, while Seistan, if it ever fell under British influence, could, owing to the protecting floods upon the north, be easily defended against Russian attack from the direction of Meshed, our present frontier (should Seistan pass into the hands of Russia), being entirely exposed, would enjoy no similar immunity. I might easily enlarge at greater length upon the strategical importance to India of Seistan. But as I believe it to be now generally recognised both here and in England, it will be sufficient to say that a Russian railway through Eastern Persia to the Persian Gulf means neither more nor less than the final loss to Great Britain of Seistan; and that the recent declarations of the British Government as to our interests in that quarter forbid me to believe that they would acquiesce in any such calamity."

In 1903 the extension of the Indian railway system from Quetta to Nushki (98 miles) was begun, and finished in 1905. The line is on the 5 ft. 6 in. gauge, and is single.

In the meantime questions connected with Seistan had occupied a large place in the examination of the general question of the defence of India in 1903-05. It is impossible to summarise these discussions, but some points must be noted. In 1903 a scheme came to the knowledge of His Majesty's Government which had been prepared by the Russian Captain Rittich in 1900 for the construction of a railway across Persia *viâ* Tabriz, Tehran, Yezd, Kerman, to Chahbar outside the Persian Gulf, with a branch from Bam to Seistan, which district "might undoubtedly serve as a *place d'armes* for a movement on Kandahar, and through Nushki to Quetta." The writer observed that the English had already facilitated this latter operation for the Russians by constructing a caravan road and digging wells. This scheme was examined in India (where Lord Kitchener was Commander-in-Chief), and pronounced to be the most dangerous yet contemplated. The best countermove was considered to be a railway from Bunder Abbas to Narmashir and thence to Seistan. "All concurred," Lord Curzon told the Committee of Imperial Defence, "in the supreme strategical importance of "Seistan. There was also a general concurrence that a railway direct from "Nushki to Seistan would, on strategical grounds, be inadvisable, although "it might be preferable to a policy of inaction." Lord Curzon was in England in 1904 and placed his views before the Committee of Imperial Defence in a Minute of 1st June. He held that if it were maintained that Seistan must be regarded as exclusively within the British sphere, we should be driven to a more active policy.

"It seems to have been assumed in the papers under discussion that if "the defence of India impels us to interfere more actively in the affairs of "Seistan, the means, or at least the sequel, of our doing so, must be the "prolongation of the railway from Nushki to Robat and Nasratabad. I do "not myself share the view that if we were to build such a line, and were "later on compelled to retire from Seistan it would be a present of great "tactical value to Russia. For it would divert her from her true line of "advance *viâ* Kandahar, while the chances, if we controlled the Helmand, of "destroying the line by floods over an immense extent of ground do not "appear to have been considered." But he pointed out that the necessity of "presenting a railway of any sort to Russia" might be avoided by building, not to Seistan, but to the Helmand either from Kandahar *viâ* Girishk or Kila Bist, or from Nushki to Bagat.

Eventually the Committee of Imperial Defence decided that Lord Kitchener should be asked, "whether, assuming the reorganised strength "of the Indian Army and reinforcements from Great Britain, he would "advocate an occupation of the province as part of the operations for the "defence of India in the event of war, in specified conditions as regards "the Russian communications present and future." (Minutes, 9th June 1904.)

The records of the Committee of Imperial Defence do not show what the immediate sequel was, but, as is well-known, Lord Kitchener's plan of campaign for the defence of India against Russia contemplated an advance on the Kabul-Kandahar line; and it did not include the detachment of any force to Seistan. The ultimate sequel was the negotiation in 1907 of the Anglo-Russian Convention, which brought the "race for Seistan," as a question of immediate urgency, to an end by including the district in the British sphere, thus gaining the point which the military authorities held to be of paramount importance. The railway scheme was no more heard of in this country until 1910, when it again came into prominence in connection with the Russian scheme of a Trans-Persian Railway. Under this scheme, the railway after Kerman would run to Seistan, and thence to Nushki and Quetta. The proposal was referred to India, and there was some diversity of opinion there as to this portion of it. Sir H. McMahon, who had always been in favour of the Seistan scheme, held that "the railway and political "disadvantages of inter-railway communication are less than might at first "sight be supposed, and are largely counteracted by the access afforded by "the line to Seistan." His general conclusions were that:—

"In order to minimize the preliminary advantages of Russia, to assist British trade, prevent Russia getting an undue start of British and Indian trade, and for strategic purposes it is absolutely essential:—

"(1) To construct a line under British control from Bunder Abbas or other Gulf port to the central line.

"(2) That the Indian railway system be extended to the Indo-Persian border by the easiest and quickest route, *i.e.*, from Nushki.

"(3) That work on (1) and also from the Indo-Persian border westwards should commence simultaneously with that at the Russian end.

"(4) That work on (2) be pushed on with speed without necessarily waiting for the commencement of the Persian line.

"(5) That a line be constructed in due course from Karachi to meet the central line within British limits.

"(6) That no time be lost in commencing the necessary railway surveys for all the above lines."

The President of the Railway Board (Sir T. Wynne) suggested that our attitude should be:—

"(1) To cordially accept and support the proposal that an international line should be made from Seistan to Baku.

"(2) To assist in this project India would build at once, with its own funds, the line from Nushki to Seistan and include it in her railway system. The gauge of this line at the present time to be left to India to decide, but it should be made an essential point that a break of gauge should occur at Seistan junction."

The Chief of the General Staff (Sir D. Haig), on the other hand, took the view that this alignment "would enable Russia, in the event of war, to turn "the Kandahar and Quetta positions, and to develop on the borders of India "a force far stronger than we could oppose with Indian troops alone, and to "do so probably before we could obtain reinforcements from home. It is "for this reason that the General Staff urge that no extension of the Nushki "line should ever be undertaken. There is no position on this route suitable "for a strong fortress that could delay the advance of Russia's land forces. "This alignment possesses, in fact, every strategic disadvantage." This view was adopted by the Indian Interdepartmental Committee, of which Sir D. Haig was a member:—

"The adoption of this route would give to Russia a railway leading directly to the frontier of Afghanistan, and would enable her, in the event of war, to turn the Kandahar and Quetta positions. It would also facilitate the transportation by Russia of a very large army across two almost waterless deserts—a task which, under present conditions and without the help of a railway, may be regarded as practically impossible of accomplishment. As against this, India would receive no compensating strategical advantages. A line to Seistan from Nushki might to some extent assist India to control Western Afghanistan, but no point is offered from which a force from India could undertake offensive operations against Russia; while the extension of

our line to Seistan would make it difficult to resist a claim on the part of Russia to connect the Trans-Caspian Railway with the proposed route, in which case she would be able to concentrate from two directions. Finally, the adoption of the Seistan-Nushki alignment would, owing to its distance from the seacoast, completely neutralise the strategical advantage which Great Britain possesses in her naval supremacy."

The Government of India, too, accepted this view, which has held the field ever since, and the *tracé* of the Trans-Persian Railway was deflected by His Majesty's Government from Kerman to Bunder Abbas. This deflection was strongly opposed by the Russians who laid no particular stress on the Seistan alignment, but urged that, if the railway was to go to the Gulf, it should at least reach it at Chahbar. His Majesty's Government, however, were firm, and the negotiations were in an *impasse* when war broke out. It should be noted that His Majesty's Government had made it a condition of adhering to the scheme that—

"In return for the co-operation of Great Britain in the project, which examination has shown to be likely to benefit Russia far more than Great Britain or India, Russia shall pledge herself not to entertain or support, without coming to an understanding with Great Britain, any proposal for a line in the neighbourhood of the Perso-Afghan frontier within the Russian or neutral sphere in Persia."

The Russian Government accepted this; but when the *impasse* was reached they hinted that if the scheme broke down they would consider their hands to be free. In the spring of this year overtures were made by the French for the resumption of negotiations, but His Majesty's Government did not think the moment opportune. A little later the Russian Government (who, since the beginning of the war had connected Julfa with Tabriz by rail) announced that they were about to apply for a concession for a railway from Baku to Tehran, *i.e.*, the first link in the Trans-Persian scheme. Thereupon His Majesty's Government decided to apply for a concession for a line from Bunder Abbas to Kerman. The international scheme may thus be taken to be at an end, and it is a significant comment on its failure—as well as an important factor in the consideration of the Nushki-Seistan project—that on 24th July 1916, His Majesty's Minister, Tehran, telegraphed: "A concession, Russian Minister tells me, is being dicussed for a branch from the Trans-Caspian Railway to Meshed."

It was at this juncture that the following telegrams were received from the Government of India:—

Telegram from Viceroy, Army Department, dated 26th July 1916.

7174. As you are aware, military opinion formerly regarded extension of broad-gauge railway from Nushki to Seistan as undesirable because it would bridge the desert lying between our frontier and the territory under Russian influence. The developments of the present war however have, in the opinion of our military advisers, intruded factors which require reconsideration of this policy, viz.:—(1) German-Turkish plans to bring Persia and Afghanistan into the field against us. Consequently, necessity on our part of countering this plan by the employment in co-operation with the Russians of military force in Eastern Persia. Any continuation of recent Turkish advance into West Persia may result in the Government of India having to increase their force now operating in Eastern Persia. (2) The maintenance of this force by pure animal transport has always been very difficult and now makes demands which cannot be met without drawing to a dangerous extent on the camel transport retained for force detailed for initial operations in event of a campaign on our North-West Frontier. (3) Unless therefore we are to withdraw or so reduce the force in East Persia that it will not be able satisfactorily to co-operate with the Russians in disposing of the German-Turkish parties who, though foiled for, may be expected to return to the charge we have to improve communications towards Seistan. (4) It was at one time thought that mechanical transport alone would meet the wants as suggested in your telegram dated 24th January 1916. But experience and further investigation leads to the conclusion that distance

(360 miles) is too great to admit of this solution, particularly as the essential improvement and upkeep of this waterless road is considered to present such difficulties as to make it an unreliable communication. Moreover, the supply of the official lorries (250) estimated as necessary to support even the present force would be difficult and would necessarily interfere with important demands for mechanical transport and its personnel elsewhere. A personal report from General Sir Malcolm Grover, who had just inspected the forces in Eastern Persia, made it clear that unless our present communications were improved the maintenance even of our present forces was near to a breakdown, while local opinion doubts the feasibility of a steady and sufficient mechanical transport over the road and the distance. Consequently the Commander-in-Chief consulted the Railway Board as to the possibility of light railway, and learns from them that most economical and satisfactory solution is to extend the broad gauge from Nushki by utilising available material and avoiding break of gauge. Examination of the mechanical transport *versus* railway proposals shows that as against greater initial cost later (sic? latter) should be set much greater running expenses of the mechanical transport. These considerations have led Commander-in-Chief to ask for extension of the broad-gauge railway from Nushki as fast as possible combined with use, mechanical transport in advance of railhead, so as to place our communications with Seistan on a more satisfactory footing. In his opinion a practical initiation of the project would be the extension of the railway 120 miles through Dalbandin, which is most difficult section of the route for animals and lorries than the use of mechanical transport to Mushki Chah 130 miles and thence animals to Robat. Looking to the future strategical situation in Persia such events and negotiations as we are aware point to the fact that we may be forced to strengthen our hold on Southern Persia, in which case the railway extension now under reference would become essential, in fact the protective measure foreshadowed by Lord Curzon in his note of 4th September 1899 would have to be adopted.

The foregoing are the military considerations which have prompted this proposal and we think it right to state them fully.

At the same time we wish to make it clear in our opinion the scheme cannot at present be supported on commercial grounds.

Since Seistan is now within British sphere the political considerations which led to Lord Curzon to press it have now largely disappeared. We may, moreover, reasonably hope that the present emergency which necessitates the maintenance of British forces in Eastern Persia will shortly pass and we have no intention thereafter of proposing permanent retention of the garrison there. The local political advantages of the scheme are small and incommensurate with cost.

The commercial advantages are even more problematical. In spite of the generous measures to stimulate it trade on Nushki-Seistan route has remained insignificant, and even with a railway to our frontier no great increase could be expected in the near future owing to sparseness of the population and distance of the markets.

As regards the cost we are somewhat diffident of the rough estimate indicated and think we must prepare for higher figures, possibly 2,000,000*l.* for whole extension. This is serious matter not only in view of the present financial position but because railway programme has been cut down to lowest possible limit. Provision of the permanent way would, moreover, cause some inconvenience, and would in the first instance have to be drawn from Chaman reserve. To sum up, we hold that scheme as can only be justified on cogent military grounds. It is for His Majesty's Government to decide whether these exist. In any case we deprecate any limitation of the extension to Dalbandin as a half measure calculated neither to give prompt or adequate relief to the present situation, nor to meet wider strategical contingencies which we trust may not arise.

Telegram from Viceroy, Army Department, dated 29th July 1916.

7437. Your telegram of the 26th instant. Seistan Railway. Railway Board roughly estimate expenditure on laying of railway at Rs. 50,000 a mile up to date of opening throughout, without rolling stock or works, which will almost certainly be necessary after opening if railway permanently

retained, for example, fortified station buildings and provision of bridging over waterways temporarily closed by embankment. Estimate 2,000,000*l.* indicates aggregate maximum expenditure which we think may eventually be involved in construction of railway and equipment with rolling stock.

MINUTE BY POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, INDIA OFFICE.

The previous history of the question has been summarised above. But the political situation is, of course, widely different now. Seistan is admittedly within our sphere, and will become still more so if, after the war, the neutral sphere disappears. To say that, however, is not to say the last word on the subject—as the Government of India appear to think. A sphere is not yours unless you use it. Failure to use our sphere is largely responsible for the present situation in Eastern and South-Eastern Persia, in which a position built up precariously during 20 years, but never really consolidated, collapsed in almost as many days when the Germans appeared on the scene. No lines drawn on the map can alter the political and strategical importance of Seistan; and its commercial possibilities—which it is our business to help the Persian Government to convert into actualities—are very great.

As will have been seen, this line was last under consideration in connection with the proposed Trans-Persian railway. That large scheme is not now on the *tapis*; but it cannot be left out of account. Moreover, as the Government of India's Committee observed, "the extension of our line "to Seistan would make it difficult to resist a claim on the part of Russia "to connect the Trans-Caspian railway with the proposed route, in which "case she would be able to concentrate from two directions." It is a curious coincidence that two days before the Government of India's present telegram was received Sir C. Marling telegraphed that the Russian Minister had informed him that a concession is being discussed for a branch from the Trans-Caspian railway to Meshed—the first step towards Seistan, so much dreaded 10 years ago. This, if true, is interesting for another reason, viz., because we made it a condition of adhering to the Trans-Persian scheme that Russia should undertake not to take up this project without coming to an understanding with us. Apparently therefore the Russian Government consider the Trans-Persian scheme at an end and are assuming a free hand. Thus they may build towards Seistan as far as Yezd without our being able to demur.

It is obvious from the above that there are still strategical questions of fundamental importance to be answered before the construction of a broad-gauge railway to Seistan can be approved even as a measure of "cogent military necessity." It must be assumed that Sir B. Duff (who, when he was Military Secretary here, was a strong supporter of the then orthodox view of the dangers involved) has entirely changed his views; since it is hardly conceivable that, if he still shared the views of the Indian General Staff of 1911, he would now press for this line on the off-chance—and it is surely not very much more—of a serious Turkish advance through Persia to Afghanistan. It cannot be said that this is a particularly opportune moment for examining so great a question as that of the defence of India in the event of war with Russia; not only because there are plenty of other matters on hand, but also because it is surely premature until the lessons of the present war have been digested, and until we know *inter alia* what military system, if any, this country will have in future (for in the last resort it is a question of numbers, pure and simple). Yet it is obvious that we cannot build this line in a panic without stopping to consider fully where it is going to land us.

It is not for this department to express an opinion on the strategical question. But from the political point of view it would appear to be wise to lay our military plans on the hypothesis that within the next half century Kerman will be the junction of lines from Bunder Abbas, Tehran and Meshed; and if that is so, that we shall be wise to get on the flank of the latter as soon as possible by building from Nushki to Seistan. These lines

will not be primarily "threats to India." But the possession of the Dardanelles will not make less necessary eventually, when the vast resources of Central Asia are fully developed, an outlet for Russian trade farther E.

The Government of India speak slightingly of the commercial prospects of the line. It will run of course through a wilderness. But it will have Seistan at the end of it, and Seistan when it enjoys settled government and is developed, and when the Persian Government becomes more civilised in its economic policy, will be a region of great wealth; and the same is true of the adjoining Afghan territory. As regards existing trade with Persia *via* Nushki, the figures for the last three years before the war were:—

1911–12 - - -	19·4 lakhs.
1912–13 - - -	22·7 „
1913–14 - - -	24·2 „

Most of this is with Meshed, and for the last two years our Consul-General there has been clamouring for the Nushki-Seistan extension, which will reduce the length of the journey by some 20 marches out of 85. A not inconsiderable amount of British trade is also believed to pass through Russia to Meshed, including Indian tea. If the Russians build their branch to Meshed, we shall be at a still greater disadvantage than we are at present in competing with them, and they in turn will fight the harder against any version of the Customs tariff that will help our trade coming in *via* Seistan. A further consideration is the paucity of exports from Khorasan to India, and it would seem that this branch of trade will require much nursing if a great many trains are not to return empty to Quetta. Nevertheless the Consul-General (Lieutenant-Colonel Haig) holds that the steady expansion of trade even under existing conditions would justify the extension (Report 1913–14, page 4). On the other hand, if there is ever a Bunder Abbas-Kerman-Meshed connection, the Nushki-Seistan line will presumably lose its Meshed trade. Indeed, if one thinks of the railway map of Persia as it may be in a remoter future, it would seem that, for goods traffic, the line will depend on Seistan and the neighbouring Afghan districts. Suppose, for example, that Tehran and Seistan are both connected with Kerman, it is improbable that heavy traffic between India and Kerman or Northern Persia will move *viâ* Seistan rather than *viâ* Bunder Abbas. On the other hand, the former will be the natural route for passengers and mails, if and when through connection with Europe is established *viâ* Russia. The general conclusion would seem to be that the ultimate commercial prospects are sufficient to justify the construction of a line the cost of which is not likely to be prohibitive.

On this point there are no details. The Government of India think that the total cost may come to 2,000,000*l.* (3 crores of rupees). The route has never been surveyed, but Mr. Johns made a reconnaissance of it in 1903, according to which an alignment following the caravan track presents practically no engineering difficulties, and is estimated to cost roughly 2 crores (1,333,000*l.*) at a rate of Rs. 55,000 per mile.

The immediate construction of the railway as far as Dalbandin is urged by Sir B. Duff on grounds of "urgent military necessity," *i.e.*, to supply the force at present in Seistan and any increased force which a Turkish advance may call for. The Government of India are opposed to this "half measure," and if the line is to be built at all would build it all at once Neither of them tell us how long it is going to take, though this seems a point of vital importance—in fact, it is the whole point at present. The distance from Nushki to Robat is 360 miles; from Nushki to Dalbandin, 120. Mr. Johns thought that "with adequate arrangements Robat could be reached in less than two years, a very moderate estimate"—but not much use if "the maintenance even of our present force is near a breakdown." If the broad gauge line could be built at the rate of one mile a day (which is most unlikely), it would still take a year to reach Robat, and four months to reach Dalbandin. It would seem therefore that in spite of the inconvenience of breaking bulk first at Dalbandin and then at Nushki Shah, the Commander-in-Chief's proposal is the more practical of the two; but the relief to the strain on the present transport arrangements would still be remote. It would, however, obviously be unwise to reject the scheme, in whole or part,

solely on this ground. We did not begin a Tigris railway last November because the military authorities thought that the military operations would be finished before the railway; and it would be imprudent to rely on similar expectations in Persia.

In any case it would seem advisable to get on to Dalbandin as quickly as possible, and be guided by events on getting there.

It may, perhaps, be added that this Department advised the construction of this line some months ago, but had in mind a light railway only.

27th July 1916.

MINUTE BY GENERAL SIR EDMUND BARROW, G.C.B.

I am concerned only with the military aspects of this case, but even those embrace such wide considerations that I cannot fully deal with them within the limited scope of an office "minute." Happily the ABC of the subject is tersely expressed in the passages from Lord Curzon's minutes quoted above. Quite briefly those elementary considerations emphasize the cardinal point that Seistan will some day inevitably be necessary to us, not for an *offensive* campaign against Russia, but for the indirect defence of India. It is, in fact, a bastion covering a sally port against either a Russian march from Herat to Kandahar or a Russian advance to Southern Persia and the sea.

When the subject was taken up in 1911 in connection with the scheme of linking up the European and Indian Railways, the Government of India practically endorsed the views of the military authorities in India that any connection should be from Bunder Abbas along the sea coast to Karachi, and not *viâ* Seistan and Nushki. I will not waste time by going into the presentation of the case made by the then Chief of the General Staff (Sir Douglas Haig), but I will merely observe that the General Staff case rests on the supposition that the guns of the fleet will always be available to protect our railway along the Mekran Coast, a supposition which will not bear examination as some new combination, such as a Russo-Japanese alliance against us, might deprive us of local Naval superiority. Moreover, I cannot conceive a more inhospitable alignment for a railway than the Mekran Coast in summer, whether it be for war or commerce. We have seen lately what the Indus Valley line is like in summer. The Mekran line would be no better. On the other hand, the Seistan–Nushki alignment is along the high ground of the Perso-Baluch plateau, which, at any rate, is climatically preferable. That line has, however, been condemned by some of our military advisers on the ground that it is readily exposed to attack, and might be seized and utilized by our enemy. In reply, I would only say that the great Napoleon laid it down as an axiom that the greatest military obstacle in nature was a desert, and I would point out that the northern flank of this line is protected by the Dasht-i-Lut, the swamps of Seistan, the Dasht-i-Murgo, and the Registán, so that Napoleon would have considered it an ideal line for safety from serious attack. I am not talking of the attacks of a few marauders with a sack full of combustibles.

Assuming then that there are no tenable military objections to a railway line from Nushki to Seistan we come to the immediate question at issue.

The distance to Robat is 360 miles; therefore at the very least the entire line would take 1½ years to build, that is to say it would not be ready for use till the hot weather of 1918, and therefore it is not likely, I trust, to be of much use to us during the present war. For this reason I am inclined to agree with the compromise proposed by the Commander-in-Chief, viz., to continue the railway to Dalbandin and trust to motor and camel transport for the rest of the way. The distance is 120 miles only and therefore we might hope to cover this distance in six or seven months, that is to say by the end of the coming cold season, when it may still be useful to us in connection with the war.

If the war comes to an end by then it will be a matter for consideration whether we should carry it further for commercial purposes. It is possible

that our whole position in Seistan and Southern Persia may be changed by the war, or rather by the peace. We may find ourselves the guardians for good order in Southern Persia. The development of Seistan may have devolved upon us, and in such a case a railway connection not only with Seistan, but also with Kerman, may be a necessity. The line even to Dalbandin will facilitate and expedite such a consummation.

E. G. BARROW.

28th July 1916.

MINUTE BY SIR T. W. HOLDERNESS, K.C.B.

The last paragraph of the Goverment of India sums up the question in a simple sentence:—"The scheme can only be justified on cogent military grounds." As such it is purely a matter for the Imperial General of Staff and the Committee of Imperial Defence, and should, I venture to think, be considered by them solely with reference to the actual or possible necessities of the present war, without importing into the discussion the future political, commercial or strategical requirements of the Indian Empire, *vis-à-vis* of Afghanistan, Persia and Russia.

If, for instance, it is found that the railway cannot be completed for the whole length in time to be of use in the present war, and that its construction as far as Dalbandin within the next four months would be as valueless as the Government of India believe, that, I would submit, should be conclusive against the proposal. It is essentially a war measure. If undertaken as a war measure, it would seem to be chargeable, at any rate in the first instance, to the Imperial Government as extraordinary military expenditure.

If not undertaken now, because it would be useless as a war measure, it might nevertheless be undertaken hereafter by the Government of India as a political, commercial or defensive project. But that is quite a separate question, and would require careful study of all factors as existing in Persia after the war is over. The one question should not be allowed to prejudice the other.

If the Government of India are required to construct it now, not as a war measure, but because the present opportunity of building a strategic line of permanent value is one which the General Staff consider should not be let slip, it may be necessary to apply to the Treasury for an advance of the requisite funds. The Government of India have no free money for this railway. They have cut down their railway budget to the lowest point and are starving in consequence the existing railways on which the prosperity, and even the safety, of India depend. Their last loan raised in India was not a success, and they are not allowed during the war to borrow in this country.

29th July 1916. T. W. H.

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SECRET.

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COPY TELEGRAM FROM SECRETARY OF STATE TO VICEROY, ARMY DEPARTMENT,

DATED 22ND AUGUST 1916.

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3393. Your 7174 of 26th July. Seistan Railway and subsequent telegrams. Opinion of General Staff as reported by me in my 3392 of the 17th is modified by further explanation contained in Telegram 72997 from Commander-inChief India to C.I.G.S.

On advice of General Staff War Committee approve extension of broad gauge to Dalbandin as urgent war measure. You will use Kandahar material but this must be replaced as early as possible. I do not understand estimate of Rs.80 lakhs for replacing rolling stock. Estimate seems excessive for 120 miles additional railway with little traffic. Please report fully by mail about this and about proposed fortifications. In this connection please see Johns Reconnaissanse Report 1903.

This decision is given on grounds of present military necessity and is without prejudice to future decision on larger issues of policy raised in your telegram and in previous discussion of Robat extension.

COL. JONES.

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Printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. August 1916.

SECRET.
110-D.

14

NUSHKI-SEISTAN RAILWAY.

Memorandum by Lord Curzon.

AS one who has had a good deal to do with the Seistan question for the last quarter of a century, and has been to a large extent responsible for the Quetta–Nushki–Seistan developments, both in politics, strategy, and trade, during that period, I may perhaps be permitted to say something about the latest proposal of the Indian Commander-in-chief. It should be premised that, since the last occasion when the question of a railway extension to Seistan was discussed, viz., in 1903–1904, the situation has completely changed. At that time Russia was animated by any but friendly feelings towards ourselves; Seistan was the field of an active Russian propaganda and intrigue, directed against our interests; Russia still dreamed of a railway connection along the eastern frontier of Persia with the waters of the Gulf; and it was at least likely that Seistan might at no distant date fall definitely within the sphere of Russian influence. To frustrate that ending, which would have been so perilous to the future security of India, the efforts of the Government of India were unceasingly directed in the decade 1897–1907.

The perspective was entirely changed by the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Agreement in 1907. Russia definitely retired from the competition with ourselves on this section of the Perso-Afghan border; Seistan and the tract of Persian territory north of it, up to and including Birjand, passed into the British sphere of influence; and the whole of Eastern Persia south of that point was included in the same sphere. It is important to emphasise this change in the situation, because it renders the greater part of the strategical arguments that were employed in the pre-1907 period obsolete. We now have to regard the question of railway extension to Seistan in its bearing upon a situation which is no longer one of acute international rivalry, but is based upon a formally recognised British interest, already developing rapidly, and certain, whether we will it or not, of further expansion in the future. This is shown by the fact that forces, both British and native, commanded by British officers, are now, with the consent, if not at the request, of the Persian Government, moving freely about the eastern parts of Persia, which fall within our sphere, that they alone are capable of preventing that region from passing into the hands of the Germans, and of screening Afghanistan from a similar menace, and that, through their instrumentality, a portion of the frontier defence of India is now being conducted far across the outermost border in Persia itself. It is in these circumstances that the suggestion comes before us to extend the railway from Nushki across the desert in the direction of Seistan, if not actually to the edge of Seistan, and that we have to decide whether to adhere to or to modify the formulas that were devised for an epoch that is now past and gone.

I do not think that this question can be decided exclusively from the point of view of the present strategical situation in Eastern Persia, or of the "cogent military necessity" of the hour. I will deal with that aspect in a moment. If, however, we authorise the proposed extension, either in whole or in part, we are bound to consider the effect that it may have not only on impending vicissitudes, but on our future position and policy in Eastern Persia, on our relations with the Russian sphere of interest in Khorasan, on a possible ulterior junction of the proposed railway, assuming it to be built on the broad gauge, with other railways of the future, Russian or Persian, on the development of trade between India and Persia, on our future action in Seistan itself, and finally upon the defence of India as a whole. For an extension, hastily decided upon to meet a particular emergency, may well be found to have compromised

the future of each, or all, of the above problems, since it is in the nature of frontier railways to go forward rather than to go back, and to substitute a larger for a smaller purpose.

Though I am disinclined in this paper to advocate the extreme extension which is favoured by Sir B. Duff, I must yet point out that, from all the points of view above indicated, a case can now be made out for his proposal which would have been less easy ten years ago.

1. While I agree with Sir W. Robertson in thinking it most undesirable that the frontier defences of India should be pushed permanently forward into Eastern Persia, it is unquestionable that, with the British sphere imposing upon the forces to be raised in those regions, and to be commanded in the future by British officers, the exclusive responsibility for law and order in the tracts adjoining the Baluch border, and in face of the increasing decrepitude of the Persian Government, our position in Eastern Persia will require a more effective support than it has yet received. A railway from Quetta to Seistan would undoubtedly, without the despatch of a company, or the increase of a garrison, enable us to exercise a very dominating influence in and beyond the border in future. Had it been in existence, we should have been spared the humiliating experience of the past year, in which British consuls, bank managers, and colonies have had to bolt from Persian cities within our own sphere of influence, while little knots of German filibusters have marched with impunity about the country, and even into Afghanistan, and gangs of Persian maranders have spread havoc and destruction far across the border into British Mekran.

2. In the fortunately abortive discussions upon the Trans-Persian Railway scheme that were suspended upon the outbreak of the war, it appears to have been successfully contended by our military authorities, both in India and at home, that such a line, if ever made, should, in the interests of Indian defence, pursue a southerly route in the neighbourhood of the shores of the Gulf. An isolated extension from Nushki to Seistan, particularly if on a different gauge, will not therefore be exposed to the suspicion of providing a prospective link in a trans-continental connection, to which objection might be taken for strategical reasons. It can be defended on its own merits, without reference to larger plans, involving co-operation with other Powers.

3. The strategical advantages of such a railway would not be confined to its influence upon the situation in Eastern Persia. It is hardly conceivable that we shall not, at some time in the future, have trouble with or in Afghanistan. A Nushki–Seistan Railway would, in such circumstances, enable us very effectively to control the Helmund valley up to Girishk, and would place us on the flank of any hostile force descending from the neighbourhood of Herat to attack the Indian frontier.

4. An incidental advantage, not previously mentioned, would be that such a line would impose a more effective barrage upon the illicit arms traffic from the Gulf, by which all Afghanistan, and even the Pathans on our own border, are in process of being armed, than the very expensive maritime patrol which we have been compelled to maintain in the Gulf

5. I need not elaborate the trade argument. By itself it could probably neither justify nor recoup the financial outlay to be incurred. But a trade with India that has already swollen to 350,000*l.* per annum is by no means to be despised. Were it not for the delays and the ruinous cost of camel transport (last year there were at one moment 2,000 camel-loads of goods lying stacked on the Nushki railway platform waiting for transport) these figures would have been much larger; and with the increasing security that will settle down upon Eastern Persia, if properly policed by the British-commanded levies, I think it quite likely that the Nushki–Seistan line will become the principal trade route for Eastern Khorasan and North-East Afghanistan, and perhaps for a wider area.

We must expect the Russians in time to build a railway from Teheran to Meshed, or more probably from Askabad to Meshed, and to such a line, whether viewed commercially or strategically, an Indian line to Seistan is the inevitable counterpart. It may be added that the construction of such a line would have a subsidiary financial consequence of very appreciable value in reducing the cost of feeding the large British garrison at Quetta.

6. When Lord Kitchener and I were in India we were asked by His Majesty's Government to give our views upon a Report of the Imperial Defence Committee on the Defence of India. In our Memorandum, dated the 7th August, 1903, which has not been referred to in these papers, we discussed the very extension that is now proposed. At that time the views of the military authorities in England were affected by the considerations that Russia herself might before long establish a political

ascendancy in Seistan, that she might build a railway from Askabad viâ Meshed to Seistan, that a British railway to Seistan might in these circumstances be utilised by the Russians for a hostile advance upon India, and could not, in any case, be maintained by ourselves. As I have already indicated, these arguments have now become obsolete. But even at that date Lord Kitchener and I pointed to the existence of certain strategical considerations that had been overlooked. More particularly we adumbrated a scheme for acquiring control by means of a lease, either from the Amir or from Persia, or from both, of the upper waters of the Helmund, which would not only once again convert Seistan into a granary of great potential wealth, but which would enable us, by a manipulation of the water, effectively to bar the advance of any enemy from the north. I cannot doubt myself that, when the war is over and a railway has been built (if it is built) from India to Seistan, some such project will at once engage the attention of our Government, and that in its solution will be found the surest guarantee for the future peace and prosperity of these once flourishing, but now desolate, areas. While the political destiny of Seistan remained undecided, fears might be entertained of providing both the material and the means for a Russian advance upon India. Now that Seistan has passed definitely into the British sphere and that we are free to consolidate our position, the situation is very different.

I hope to have shown that, as regards the larger interests involved, the project of a Nushki-Seistan railway is no longer open to the suspicions which formerly retarded its acceptance. Indeed, I do not entertain any doubt that, short of some political metamorphosis that cannot now be anticipated, it is certain sooner or later, and ought, to be made. The question before the War Committee is whether it should be undertaken, in whole or in part, now.

I think that the Government of India have exaggerated both the cost and the length of time required for construction. The line would run over a flat, stony plain, with no tunnels, cuttings, or embankments, and only one river bed between Nushki and the frontier. Expensive stations would not be required. Indeed, I cannot see why, if any portion of the line be commenced at once, old rolling-stock and second-hand rails (if they are procurable) should not be used. Since the construction is advocated on the grounds of cogent military necessity, perfection cannot be expected, and speed should be the first consideration.

I am myself a good deal astonished at the proposal of the Indian Railway Board to lay a broad-gauge line for the entire distance. Of course, they may possess an abundance of broad-gauge material (in the Chaman reserve or elsewhere), and I can understand the desire not to break bulk. But it is more than doubtful whether it would be sound policy to encroach upon the Chaman reserve, which was constituted, and ought to be maintained intact, for a quite different purpose. Moreover, none of us who have interested ourselves in this matter for years have ever contemplated anything larger, at any rate to begin with, than a metre-gauge line across the desert—some would even have been content with less. Even now I should be inclined to suggest a 2 ft. 6 in. gauge, which will answer all purposes for some time to come, besides being very cheap. Anyhow, the proposal, when the total railway expenditure of India has been cut down to 3,000,000*l.* in consequence of the war, to spend an extra 2,000,000*l.* upon a full-blown broad-gauge railway to Seistan, seems to demand a greater justification than it has so far received.

The Government of India further deprecate a limitation of the extension to Dalbandin (115 miles), as "a half-measure calculated neither to give prompt or adequate relief to the present situation, nor to meet wider strategical contingencies which we trust may not arise." It is clear that the relief afforded by the Commander-in-chief's project, which it was calculated in 1903 would take two years, even supposing that this period could be reduced to one and a half years, would, if adequate, at any rate not be prompt. What are the wider strategical contingencies referred to I do not know. If the phrase means the exigencies of the present war, it is to be hoped that they will no longer be in existence one and a half or two years hence. If the reference is to the future, I can hardly believe that a situation is ever likely to arise when bodies of Indian troops will require to be moved in great numbers to the borders of Seistan.

My own inclination would be to accept the Commander-in-chief's minor suggestion for an immediate extension to Dalbandin only, but to do it on a smaller gauge, and with no undue elaboration or degree of perfection. I would utilise any second-hand rails or rolling-stock that could be procured. The line could, in these circumstances, probably be laid in time materially to affect the existing position in Eastern Persia and the course of the war. When we get to Dalbandin, it could be decided whether

to stop or to go ahead. The extension from Quetta and Nushki (90 miles), for which I was responsible, had many critics at the time, but has justified itself a hundred times over since. I believe that a Dalbandin extension will do the same. If the Government of India have not got or cannot procure the narrow-gauge rails or rolling-stock, it may be necessary to sanction the broad gauge. But I would prefer to treat the whole matter in this stage as tentative and experimental, and to make speed of construction the principal test. If the broad gauge is wanted later on, conversion can be carried out without difficulty.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

August 17, 1916.

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EXTENSION OF THE QUETTA—NUSHKI RAILWAY TO SEISTAN.

1. The question of the extension of the Quetta—Nushki Railway was brought before the Prime Minister in a Minute by the Secretary of State for India dated 4th August, 1916, and was referred to me for report by the War Committee at its meeting of 10th August.

2. The present military position in Persia is briefly as follows:—

In Western Persia a force of some 15,000 Turks, based on Baghdad, has pressed back the Russian forces under General Baratoff, estimated at about 12,000, and penetrated via Kasr-i-Shirin and Kermanshah as far as Hamadan. The result of this may be unrest in Afghanistan and further trouble in Persia.

In Central Persia Sir Percy Sykes, with an escort of 500 regular troops, has marched via Bundar Abbas and Kerman to Yezd, and is engaged in consolidating British influence and raising a Persian gendarmerie under British officers.

In Eastern Persia, Russian and British troops have formed a thin cordon from north to south, along the Perso—Afghanistan and Perso—Baluchistan frontier, and are engaged in preventing Turco-German emissaries and armed bands from working through from Persia into Afghanistan and Baluchistan.

3. Of this joint cordon force in Eastern Persia, the British portion, which I will call for convenience the Seistan Force, amounts to:—

(*a*.) Regular troops	680 rifles. 470 sabres. 2 guns.
(*b*.) Levies, roughly	1,100.

It occupies a line of outposts from Birjand to Kacha and Robat (a distance of 350 miles), and some of the troops have been operating to a distance of 150 miles south of the latter places.

In addition to enforcing a cordon system, this force has been obliged to undertake a certain measure of punitive work among disaffected tribes.

4. Hitherto military opinion has regarded an extension of the broad-gauge railway from Nushki to Seistan as undesirable, because it would bridge the desert lying between our frontier and the territory under Russian influence. The developments of the present war have, however, in the opinion of the Indian military authorities, introduced factors which necessitate a reconsideration of this policy, and the Commander-in-Chief in India, therefore, asks for an extension of the railway as fast as possible. The distance from Nushki to the Seistan frontier is 360 miles, and the Commander-in-Chief considers that a practical initiation of the project would be an extension of the railway for 120 miles. He bases his recommendation on the possibility that Turkish action may necessitate the strengthening of the Seistan force above mentioned, and on the difficulty of supplying the troops at present in Seistan. He states that the maintenance of this force by animal transport has always been very difficult, and now makes demands which cannot be met without drawing to a dangerous extent on the camel transport retained for the force detailed for initial operations in the event of a campaign on the North-West Frontier.

5. As regards the first of these reasons for the extension, the Viceroy in his telegram, No. 7174 of the 26th July, says that his military advisers are urging extension because of "German-Turkish plans to bring Persia and Afghanistan into the field against us. Consequently, necessity on our part of countering this plan by the employment, in co-operation with the Russian forces, of military force in Eastern Persia. Any continuation of recent Turkish advance into Western Persia may result in the Government of India having to increase their force now operating in Eastern Persia."

I do not quite understand what is meant by the "employment of military force," nor do I know what the plans of the Government of India are for the defence of India, but the above passage appears to indicate a tendency to extend into Eastern Persia the zone of defensive operations against attack on India from the north. As to this, I can only say that the size of the force which the Turks could make available, the nature of

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the country, and the distances to be covered render it highly improbable that they could attempt an attack in force across Persia and Seistan towards the Indian frontier. Further, if the Turks, Germans, or others succeeded in raising Afghanistan actively against us, I can conceive no worse strategy, so far as my imperfect knowledge of India's defence plans enable me to judge, than to send any considerable body of troops to a remote corner of Baluchistan.

6. On the other hand it is quite likely that the recent Turkish successes against General Baratoff's force will lead to a recrudescence of Turco-German propaganda in Southern Persia and in Afghanistan, and we must expect renewed attempts on a larger scale than before on the part of Turco-German parties to enter Afghanistan. To prevent this it may be necessary to increase the size of the small parties we now have in Seistan, but as to this I have no means of judging. I am convinced, however, that prompt action should be taken to improve our position in Southern Persia, and it was to meet the eventuality which has now arisen that I have repeatedly urged upon the India Office the importance of such action, and in particular of developing the force under Sir Percy Sykes, and of improving his communication with the coast at Bundar Abbas. The construction of a broad-gauge line to either Dalbadin or Robat would not enable us to take this prompt action, and as I have already stated extensive military operations in Eastern Persia seem neither desirable nor likely to become necessary.

7. As regards the difficulty of supplying the present Seistan force, I have not sufficient data in my possession to enable me to express a definite opinion, but it is certain that the extension of the broad-gauge line could give no immediate relief, and it seems possible that some other measure such as the improvement of the motor road and motor transport, or the construction of a light line for a part at least of the distance, would meet the requirements of the military situation.

8. Another argument advanced for extending the railway is that, "looking to the future strategical situation in Persia, such events and negotiations as we are aware of point to the fact that we may be forced to strengthen our hold on Southern Persia, in which case the railway extension now under reference would become essential." As to this, we cannot say how long the present grouping of the European Powers may continue, and it should not therefore affect our military railway policy in Persia. This policy should continue to be guided by the strategical principles which influenced the General Staff before the war in condemning proposals for railway lines from the Indian system to Seistan.

9. In his Minute of 4th August to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for India asks for an immediate decision on three specific qnestions:—

(i.) Whether an extension of the line is a "cogent military necessity" to be proceeded with at once?

(ii.) Whether, in that case, the extension can be effected in time for the use and purposes named by the Commander-in-Chief?

(iii.) Whether an extension to Dalbadin would suffice for the time?

As far as I am able to judge, an extension of the line to Robat is not a "cogent military necessity"; it is not likely during the present war to be of use for the purposes named by the Commander-in-Chief; and the cost and effort involved by the extension to Dalbadin are, as regards the present war, disproportionate to the military advantage to be gained.

I am, however, strongly of opinion that it is necessary to maintain the Seistan force for the purpose of preventing access by Turco-German bands into Afghanistan, and that suitable measures should be taken to make its supply satisfactory in the shortest possible time, regard being had, moreover, to the probable necessity of having to increase the strength of the force slightly. What form these measures should take I am unable to say, but I believe that the problem could be solved without the construction of a broad-gauge railway, even as far as Dalbadin.

Finally, I again urge the importance of at once taking every possible step to improve the position of Sir Percy Sykes' force in Southern Persia.

W. R. Robertson.

Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

WAR OFFICE,
16*th August*, 1916.

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Printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. August 1916.

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THE NUSHKI-SEISTAN RAILWAY.

Note by the Secretary.

1. THE proposal for an extension of the existing railway from Quetta to Nushki as far as Seistan, which is submitted by the Commander-in-Chief in India as a matter of cogent military necessity, raises the whole question of the Trans-Persian Railway. As this question has in the past occupied a great deal of attention by the Committee of Imperial Defence, it would, perhaps, be useful to the War Committee to have some notes on this subject.

Anglo-Russian relations prior to 1907.

2 Although, in consequence of knowledge that the question would, sooner or later, be raised, the subject had been examined in connection with the defence of India, no definite concrete proposals for a Trans-Persian railroad to link up the Russian and Indian systems appear to have been examined by His Majesty's Government previous to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Up to that time the relations of the two countries had been characterized by mutual suspicion and distrust, and, from 1890 until 1910, what has been appropriately termed the "Sterilizing Agreement" between the Russian and Persian Governments, had rendered any railway construction in Persia unlikely. There is no doubt that in those days His Majesty's Government was opposed in principle to any linking-up of the Indian and Russian systems.

Views of the C.I.D. in 1903.

3. In a Memorandum on the Defence of India (C.I.D. Paper, 21–D), which was approved at the 16th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence held on the 11th June, 1903, Mr. Balfour, while discussing proposals for a railway from India to Seistan, stated that—

> "any advantage it might thus confer would be dearly bought if it occasioned the construction of a line from the north; and this is not merely or chiefly because such a line would, as has been pointed out, give Russia the power of seizing Seistan whenever it seemed worth her while, but because a continuous railway route between Central Asia and Quetta, or even Nushki, would create a new and formidable danger to our Indian frontier. So far, then, as our present information goes, the risk involved in extending the Baluchistan Railway beyond Nushki seems too great to be worth incurring, and our best plan would seem to be to make such an agreement with Russia as will defer all railway building in Eastern Persia for as long a period as possible.
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> "From a commercial point of view, such a policy is, no doubt, unsatisfactory, since its very essence is to stop railways which would otherwise be built. But, from a military point of view, the arguments in its favour seem overwhelming, and no advantage to be derived from the trade of Seistan can be comparable, even from a financial point of view, with the disadvantage of any policy which increases the burden of Indian Defence."

4. It will be noted that Mr. Balfour was considering only the possibility of a railway passing westwards through Seistan (which makes the foregoing extract the more pertinent), and he was not contemplating an alternative alignment which might obviate or reduce the menace to India.

5. It was not until after the Anglo-Russian Convention of August 1907 had substituted a policy of co-operation between the two countries for a period of rivalry and distrust that the proposals for a through connection began to take definite shape. The avowed objects of this Convention were to preserve order in Persia, to secure its peaceful development and equal advantages for the trade and industry of all other nations, and more especially to avoid all cause of conflict between the respective interests of the two countries in the provinces of Persia adjoining the Russian frontier on the one hand, and the Afghan and Baluchistan frontiers on the other. Under the Convention Great Britain and Russia mutually agreed not to seek concessions for themselves within each other's spheres, and to refrain from supporting them in favour of their own subjects, or in favour of the subjects of a third Power. Each country further undertook not to oppose, without previous arrangement with the other, the grant of concessions to its own subjects within the neutral zone.

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.

6. In August 1910 His Majesty's Government received an outline of a Trans-Persian Railway scheme put forward by a Russian consortium. The enterprise was to be Anglo-Franco-Russian. After this proposal had been exhaustively examined in the United Kingdom and in India, His Majesty's Government informed the Russian Government in May 1911 that *they were ready to assent to it in principle*, and to agree to the initiation of negotiations between its promoters in this country and in Russia, subject to certain conditions and reservations as to alignment, gauge, equality of treatment, and branch line concessions, &c.

The 1910 Proposals.

The attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the scheme may therefore be described as benevolent but non-committal.

7. The reasons for this decision are contained in correspondence between the Government of India, the India Office, and the Foreign Office, printed in 1913. The exhaustive examination of the question contained in these papers does not lend itself to summarization, but the main reason is contained in the following extract from a letter addressed by the India Office to the Foreign Office on 6th April, 1911 :—

> "It may be pointed out that with the advent of other Powers in Persia, seeking spheres of commercial if not of political expansion, the geographical isolation of India is necessarily doomed, and that it behoves those who are responsible for her interests to be foremost in the race for concessions, so as to ensure that such at least as may be strategically and politically essential shall be in her own hands."

The same idea is contained in the following statement made by Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons on the 10th July, 1912 :—

> "The moment an overland route to India becomes a possibility, I do not believe it can be indefinitely resisted. It is sure to be made. If an overland route is possible between Europe and Asia, it will be constructed sooner or later. Therefore we came to the conclusion, when the idea of a Trans-Persian Railway was mooted, that we ought not on principle to oppose it, and to say. 'No, our policy is never to have a Trans-Persian Railway at all. We shall always oppose the overland route to India.' I do not think that that would be a wise or practicable policy for us to adopt in the long run. Therefore we have said that we have no objection to going into the question of the Trans-Persian Railway and to look at it from a financial and economic point of view."

8. The attitude of the Russian Government was somewhat similar to that of His Majesty's Government. This agreement between the two countries resulted in the formation of a Société d'Etudes, representing British, Russian, and French interests to study the project, and to apply for an option.

The Société d'Études.

9. In November 1912 Sir W. Garstin, on behalf of the British element in the Société, informed the Foreign Office that it was proposed to send a mission to Tehran, and sought the diplomatic support of His Majesty's

Government in the furtherance of its objects. These objects were stated to be to secure :—

(i.) Permission to make investigation for the construction of the main line, and for all extensions calculated to further its essential objects.

(ii.) An option for a concession for these lines and for the building of branch lines which should be the natural feeders of the main line, or which under foreign control might injuriously affect its traffic.

(iii.) Maritime facilities at terminal points.

10. Sir W. Garstin was informed in reply that His Majesty's Government were unable to commit themselves to proposals of so far-reaching a character, the second of which constituted a virtual monopoly of railway enterprise in Southern Persia, while the third opened up questions of great political importance in the Persian Gulf. That they were not prepared to go further than to support an option for the main line, subject to certain reservations regarding details, and then only on the condition that the option was not exercised beyond the Russian sphere until His Majesty's Government considered it both politic and feasible.

11. The Société were reluctant to proceed in the business before obtaining further information. His Majesty's Government were, therefore, invited to express their views somewhat more definitely and comprehensively than they had done hitherto, and to state how far they were committed to support other applicants for concessions in the neutral zone and in the British sphere.

It was accordingly decided by the Foreign Office to refer the matter to the Committee of Imperial Defence, and to take the opportunity of reviewing the whole question *ab initio*.

C.I.D. Inquiry, 1913.

12. By direction of the Prime Minister a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was appointed in January 1913, under the chairmanship of Viscount (then Sir Edward) Grey, to advise, first, as to the expediency of modifying the attitude hitherto adopted by His Majesty's Government towards the scheme for the construction of the Trans-Persian Railway; second, as to the nature of the reply to be sent to Sir William Garstin; and, third, as to what, if any, naval and military measures it could be expedient to take should an aligment be selected bringing the railway to the Persian Gulf. The Sub-Committee met on two occasions only, in January 1913. Although the Sub-Committee limited itself to agreeing on the terms of a letter to Sir William Garstin, and did not present a report, there is available a very full summary by the Secretary, prepared with a view to a report, and it is thought that the War Committee might like to have before them some of the arguments used in regard to the Trans-Persian Railway project. On the one hand, powerful objections on financial, as well as strategical, grounds were urged against the construction of an uninterrupted railroad through the country. On the other hand, there were obvious perils in maintaining an attitude of aloofness.

Military Objections.

13. *Military Objections.*—The military objections to the construction of any railway to connect the Russian and Indian systems were the most cogent.

Military opinion, both in the United Kingdom and in India, had always been, and still continued to be, opposed on strategical grounds to the connection being made at all, whatever alignment might be selected. It was pointed out that one of the fundamental principles upon which the arrangements for the defence of India had been based was that security against invasion depends largely upon the difficulties of transport which an invader would have to overcome, and that it had hitherto been assumed that the absence of good communications through the "buffer States" which separate Indian from Russian territory rendered it impossible for Russia to make effective use of her overwhelming numerical superiority for an attack on India. However carefully the alignment might be selected, so as to bring the

railway within immediate reach of our sea power, and whatever precautions might be adopted, such as breaks of gauge and the construction of fortified posts, and even of fortresses on the line of the railway, it was urged that, once the railway is constructed, India can never be so secure as in her present state of isolation. A Russian army would be able to advance far along the railway towards the Indian frontier before reaching the sections of the line vulnerable to attack from the sea, and, if these sections could not be rendered secure against naval attack (a point on which expert opinion was not unanimous), they might be reconstructed farther inland. Breaks of gauge and fortified posts, though inconvenient, would present no insurmountable obstacle to an invader.

It was stated that, however carefully the security of India might be safeguarded by such means as those discussed above, the construction of a through line must sooner or later impose a heavy additional burden of military expenditure on India and perhaps on the United Kingdom.

14. While it was admitted that in the then existing state of our political relations with Russia there was no immediate danger of an attack on India, it was contended that no reliance can be placed on a perpetual continuance of amicable relations between the two nations. To abandon the great natural advantage for defence purposes which India obtains from the absence of good land communications with the rest of Asia would, it was argued, be to make too great a sacrifice in the interest of the continuance of good international relations, and would be a policy of shortsighted opportunism.

Commercial Objections.

15. *Commercial Objections.*—Even on commercial grounds it was urged that the construction of a through line would not confer any considerable advantage to British trade. Although all authorities appeared to agree that branch lines from the Gulf into Southern Persia and the extension of Russian lines to Tehran and Ispahan should be profitable undertakings, they were confident that the through line, whatever its alignment, would never prove remunerative.

16. The commercial aspect of the project of a through line was carefully examined by the Board of Trade, who reported that—

> "while Russian trade would probably be considerably benefited by the construction of such a line as that proposed—and possibly Indian trade also in a less degree—United Kingdom trade would probably not be benefited by it to any material extent, at any rate for a long time after its opening. The possibility, indeed, might have to be faced that the expansion of Russian trade in the interior of Persia might take place at the expense of purely United Kingdom trade."

The views of Indian trade experts, though not quite unanimous, were in general agreement with those of the Board of Trade, and the opinion was expressed that the railway would do a good deal more for Russian than for Indian trade.

17. Reference has already been made in this Note to the fact that many not incompetent judges regarded the eventual linking up, viâ Persia, of the Indian and Russian systems as inevitable. As, however, it has been urged with reason that a railway is only inevitable if it is certain that it will pay, or if it is necessary to the parties concerned on commercial, strategical, or political grounds, the Sub-Committee were not disposed to accept the contention of its "inevitability," for reasons given above.

Policy of "Aloofness."

18. Closely bound up with the question of inevitability is the problem of the wisdom or otherwise of a policy of aloofness. If Russia's diplomatic advances were definitely rejected by His Majesty's Government, there was the danger that the co-operation of other European nations would be sought by the Government at Petrograd. Apprehensions of this character undoubtedly led Lord Morley in his despatch No. 32, Secret, of the 4th December, 1910, to ask the Indian Government when examining the scheme "to bear in mind

the desire of His Majesty's Government to find themselves on common ground with the Russian Government so far as they could do so, consistently with their primary duty of ensuring Indian interests against all possible risks." In other words, the authorities at Simla were invited to approach the problem as sympathetically as they could, so long as the integrity of the Dependency was not imperilled. The opinions expressed at the time by these authorities may therefore be regarded as being as favourable as their consciences would permit.

In considering the effect of adopting an attitude of aloofness, the Sub-Committee were aware that such a posture would be fraught with serious diplomatic and other consequences. The first result would inevitably be the exclusion of the British representatives from the Société d'Études. Consequently we should lose the lever which this representation gave us for influencing the alignment of the railway in a manner favourable to our own military, political, and commercial interests.

Russia would be free to carry her railway projects not only to the limits of her own sphere at Yzed, but also through the neutral sphere right up to the gates of Kerman, which is within 260 miles of Seistan, and is regarded by military experts as dangerously close to the Indian frontier. The only opposition that we could offer would be diplomatic, but, owing to the fact that Tehran is situated in the Russian sphere, Russia is always likely to be in a stronger diplomatic position than we are at the Persian capital. Hence, even on purely military grounds, a policy of refusing all connection between the Indian and Russian railways through Persia was not devoid of risk.

19. In the event of our withdrawal from the Société d'Études it was probable that Germany would take our place. A Russo-Franco-German association would then have been formed for the development of railways in the neutral zone, and we might have found ourselves confronted by concessions for lines up to Kerman coming not only from the north, but also from the west from Khanikin on the extension of the Baghdad Railway. What the Russians did not build the Germans would, until the neutral zone would be covered with Russian and German lines.

20. Politically, the result of this would have been the disappearance of British influence in Persia. Commercially, the effect would have been that throughout the Russian neutral zones British trade would be liable to discriminating rates, and would consequently be at a disadvantage in competition with Russian and German trade.

21. The advantage which participation in the Société conferred of safeguarding British trade against discrimination not only in the British and neutral spheres, but even in the Russian sphere, would be lost, and the British Empire would be left out of any commercial development which may follow the construction of railways in Central and Northern Persia.

22. Another of the results of withdrawing our assent to the principle of a Trans-Persian Railway was that His Majesty's Government would have to expect opposition from the Russian Government to the construction of a completely British railway from Mohammerah towards the Russian frontier. The construction of this line had been held to be necessary to safeguard British interests against the otherwise detrimental effect of the prolongation of the Baghdad Railway to the Persian Gulf and of its branch to Khanikin.

23. The most far-reaching objection, however, to repudiating our assent to the principle of a Trans-Persian Railway and to an attempt to sterilize the neutral zone by holding back all railway extension at the frontier of the Russian sphere, would have been the effect on Anglo-Russian relations, and consequently upon the whole European situation and balance of power.

Conclusions of Sub-Committee.

24. The general conclusions of the Sub-Committee are summed up in the following draft of a letter from the Foreign Office to Sir W. E. Garstin, which contains the latest expression of the Government's views, of which the

Committee of Imperial Defence has knowledge, on the question of the Trans-Persian Railway :—

" Sir, *Foreign Office, February* 4, 1913.

" His Majesty's Government have had under careful consideration the letters which you addressed to this Department on the 9th and 20th December on the subject of the Trans-Persian Railway project.

" In your letter of the 9th December, while recognizing that the attitude of His Majesty's Government had hitherto been to reserve complete freedom of action pending submission of the survey you were to furnish, you intimate that you do not now feel justified in sending a delegate to Tehran to negotiate, in concert with French and Russian associates, with the Persian Government; and, before proceeding further, you ask that indications may be afforded to you on the following points :—

" (*a.*) It would seem essential to learn whether His Majesty's Government view with favour or disfavour the prospect of direct railway communication between India and Europe viâ Russia.

" *b.*) It would appear desirable to know whether His Majesty's Government desire British financial interests to continue co-operation in the Société d'Études in spite of such co-operation leading primarily to facilitating railway construction in Northern Persia only.

" (*c.*) In the event of His Majesty's Government being already committed to support other applicants for railway concessions in the British and neutral spheres, it would seem essential to learn the scope of such concessions.

" (*d.*) In view of the possible advancement of conflicting projects for railway service in the British and neutral spheres, the British group would be glad to learn whether His Majesty's Government have any suggestions as to a solution of the situation which may arise from rival claims in this portion of Persian territory.

" I am now directed by Secretary Sir E. Grey to make the following observations on each of these points :—

" (*a.*) His Majesty's Government have already expressed themselves prepared to assent in principle to the project of a Trans-Persian Railway: that assent is made subject to the following, among other, conditions :—

" That no part of the line or its connections shall be constructed outside the Russian sphere until, and in such measure as, His Majesty's Government shall consider it politic and feasible; that the main line must pass through Ispahan by Shiraz, and if it, or any branch, is continued to the British sphere, it must reach that sphere at Bunder Abbas; that His Majesty's Government do not think that the time has yet come for a connection between Bunder Abbas and Karachi to be made, and as there must be no question of making it until His Majesty's Government consider that the time has come when it is desirable, the question of branch and local lines should be considered on their merits, and their commercial advantages should not be sacrificed to the project of through connection; that His Majesty's Government undertake no financial guarantee in regard to the project; that the point where the line touches the Persian Gulf shall be referred to His Majesty's Government when the surveys have been completed, and the arrangements for the maritime terminus, and for its control, shall be submitted to their approval; that the question of the gauge outside the Russian sphere shall be submitted to His Majesty's Government; that effective means must be provided, to the satisfaction of His Majesty's Government, to secure British trade against differential treatment of any kind, direct or indirect, on any railway constructed under a concession obtained by the Société d'Études; that British control must predominate in the Southern or Gulf section of any Trans-Persian line, or of the branches which may be made, and that this control shall not be invalidated by any arrangement which may be made in regard to the percentage of other (*i e.*, non-British) participation in the undertaking.

It is not desirable to tell the Société all the conditions, *e.g.*, about no Russian line being built near the Perso-Afghan frontier.

This is put in to cover the possibility of fortifications at Bunder Abbas, which the Government of India and the General Staff consider may be necessary.

" (*b.*) His Majesty's Government raise no objection, regarding it as very desirable on general grounds that the British group should co-operate in the

Société d'Études, but they trust that such progress may be made in regard to a well-considered scheme of railway development in the south as will render possible an early, and if possible simultaneous, start in construction from the Persian Gulf.

"(*c.*) That His Majesty's Government are committed, and were so before the constitution of the Société d'Études; that the concessions in question are the Bunder-Abbas–Kerman one in the British sphere (which would have to be purely British-controlled), and certain lines in the neutral sphere (other than the Mohammerah–Khorremmabad project) which, in view of the great predominance of British trade, should be preponderatingly British, though not without a substantial international participation both in construction and management.

"(*d.*) His Majesty's Government would be prepared to recommend to the parties interested in the projects (other than the Mohammerah–Khorremmabad line) in the neutral sphere that it would serve British interests if they would join with the British group of the Société d'Études, who, in consultation with His Majesty's Government, might then arrange the degree and nature of the foreign participation in question.

"I am to express Sir E. Grey's view that the arrangements for securing British control on certain portions of the line need not necessarily conflict with the principle of equal representation of British, Russian, and French interests in the undertaking from the northern frontier of Persia to the sea.

"In conclusion, I am to state that, subject to the acceptance of the conditions laid down, His Majesty's Government are willing to support your Société in the negotiations proposed at Tehran; but that they would recommend the substitution of the words 'd'un chemin de fer traversant la Perse du nord au sud par Téhéran' for the words 'sur territoire persan, &c., &c., ... par Téhéran' in the note which you propose to address to the Persian Government (see Enclosure (A) in your letter of the 20th December).

"E. G."

Our present position.

From the above it will be seen that the present position of this country towards the Trans-Persian Railway is that we have *assented in principle* subject to the conditions mentioned in the Foreign Office letter to Sir W. E. Garstin of 4th February, 1913.

(Signed) M. P. A. HANKEY.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,*
August 17, 1916.

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COL. JONES.

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SECRET.

21-D.

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Second Instalment of Draft Conclusions on Indian Defence by Mr. Balfour, dealing chiefly with Seistan.

VI.

THE preceding argument has proceeded on the supposition that any invasion of India by Russia must be either by way of Herat and Kandahar, or by Cabul, or, more probably, by both. Though, in existing circumstances, it seems certain that these will be the main lines of attack, we cannot assume that they are the only ones. And we have now to examine how far India is vulnerable either to the north-east or to the south-west of these positions.

As regards the north-east, the only passes through which an advance could be made from Russian Turkestan into India are the Manda, the Dorah, the Denkot, and the Killik. The routes over the first two of these meet at Dir; that over the second is barred by Chitral; while those over the last two join at Gilgit. All traverse a country of extreme difficulty, and wholly denuded of supplies; all climb passes varying from 14,800 to 15,600 feet, impracticable for eight months in the year. It is considered impossible for an enemy to penetrate our frontier by any of these except in small bodies of 1,000 or under; and in every case these isolated detachments would be compelled to reckon with our garrisons at Dir, at Chitral, or at Gilgit. It has further to be remarked that, difficult as are these mountain tracks at present, they could easily be made impassable by the destruction of the wooden galleries and bridges which alone make it practicable to travel over the more precipitous portions of the route.

It would thus seem that no important movement can be made through this portion of the Hindoo Koosh, and that no large force is required to check the raids which are alone possible. [Details are discussed in the Appendix.]

VII.

An advance through Persia and Seistan presents problems of much greater difficulty. If, indeed, the means of transit through Persia remain as they are, it does not seem that Russia would gain anything material by approaching our frontier along a route lying to the west of Afghanistan rather than through Afghanistan itself. Such a procedure would be a violation of Persian integrity, which Russia is bound to maintain, and would so evidently be directed against India as to justify us in treating it precisely as we should treat an invasion of Afghanistan itself. These diplomatic considerations, taken by themselves, might have but a slight deterrent effect. Taken in connection with the military argument that an army moving on Kandahar from the railway at Askabad would be 100 miles further from its objective than one moving from Kushk, they justify the conclusion that, as things are at present, an advance through Persia is hardly likely to be attempted, except as part of a general advance, the chief portion of which would be by Herat or Cabul. As such, it calls for no modification of, or addition to, the conclusions already arrived at.

A case may, however, arise in Persia which, so far as we can see, is never likely to find a parallel in Afghanistan. The Russians may peaceably and silently Russianise those portions of Persian territory which lie adjacent to the western frontier of Afghanistan, the Persian Government being a consenting party, and Persian sovereignty remaining nominally untouched.

This process is now rapidly going on in Northern Persia, where it matters to us very little; but it might easily be extended to Eastern and Southern Persia, where it would matter to us a great deal. A new state of affairs might thus come into being, the military effects of which require careful consideration.

Perhaps the most convenient way of attacking the problem is to assume that the Russianising process has got as far south as Seistan; that this fertile region is connected by a railway with the general Russian system at (say) Askabad (a distance of about 500 miles); that it lies completely under Russian influence, and is largely peopled by Russian subjects. How would this novel condition of things affect the question of Indian defence?

The principal advantage conferred by it on the Russians would be the practical control of a rich district easy to convert into a base of operations against Kandahar. It is true that any direct advance on that place would be barred by the Helmund

desert. But even if the invading force had to make a detour and join the Herat-Kandahar Road at Farah or Girishk, it would still be considerably nearer its objective if it operated from from Nasrabad than if it operated from Kushk.*

This in itself constitutes a considerable advantage to the invaders; but at first sight it might seem as if the practical possession of Seistan would carry with it an even greater gain, namely, the power to turn the Kandahar position altogether, and proceed to the invasion of India through Beluchistan towards Haiderabad or Sukkur.

It seems, however, highly improbable that, in the present dearth of railway communication through Beluchistan, any such attempt would be made, or if made would be successful.

The difficulty of traversing with any important force the deserts lying to the south of Afghanistan and the north of Beluchistan would be great, if not insuperable. And if these deserts are to be skirted along their southern border, it would involve a march of 600 or 700 miles to reach the Indus from Seistan, and this through a country which, though not waste, is at least very ill-fitted to support large bodies of troops. If, however, we suppose this feat to have been accomplished, the invading army, with long and vulnerable lines of communications behind it, would find itself close to our maritime base at Karachi, and to the Indian railway system connected with all our great military centres. If it struck east it would get involved in the Great Scinde Desert. If it struck north-east it must be for the purpose of attacking the Punjaub, and the Punjaub could be far more easily attacked by a direct movement through Kandahar or Cabul.

It would seem, then, that the military advantages which Russia might obtain by the practical occupation of Seistan would only be the same in kind as those she would obtain by the annexation of the Plain of Herat, though it might be larger in amount. In both cases the gain would consist in her obtaining an advanced base in a district of great natural resources, from which Kandahar could be threatened, or, if need be, attacked. The main difference with which we are concerned is that Seistan can be peaceably Russianised, with the permission of its nominal owners; Herat cannot.

What, then, is the proper course for us to adopt in order to meet this particular form of Russian expansion?

The obvious plan seems to be to do all in our power to secure that British influences shall filter in from the East faster than Russian influences filter in from the North. Each Russian move must be watched, and everything done to encourage the idea that Britain has interests in Seistan as predominant as those which Russia possesses in Northern Persia.

This policy, however, if pressed to its natural limits, would seem to include the immediate construction of a British railway between Seistan and India. And this is a conclusion which on purely military grounds cannot be unreservedly adopted.

The present position of affairs in Persia as regards railways is this: Persia has bound herself to Russia not to construct railways herself, or to allow them to be constructed by others, until 1910. On the other hand, if at any time Persia grants railway concessions to Russia or to Russian companies in the north, she will be obliged, by a secret engagement with us, to grant a concession to Britain or a British company for a railway from Tehran to Shuster, and to consult us—though not necessarily to take our advice—before granting a concession to a foreign company for a southern railway of any kind.

Whether, under her agreement with Russia, Persia could even grant us a terminus in Seistan for an Indo-Persian railway is doubtful. It would seem that, if the agreement is strictly interpreted, she could not. It is also doubtful whether permission could be obtained from the Ameer for such a railway to cross the small corner of Afghan territory which blocks the most convenient route between Beluchistan and Seistan. It will, however, be assumed in what follows that, if India thinks it expedient to build the railway, she will be foiled by no diplomatic difficulty. It is certain that no material difficulties exist. The most arduous portion of the road —that which runs through the hilly region between Quetta and Nushki—has already been surveyed and sanctioned. The remaining 300 miles would pass through a desert, which, if it promises small profit to the trader, presents no embarrassment to the engineer.

The question, then, arises whether, from the point of view of Indian defence, this railway should be continued to the Persian frontier, or whether the Indian Government should for the present hold its hand.

* The distance, for example, from Nasrabad to Farah is just half the distance of Kushk to Farah—100 as compared to 200 miles.

The answer to this question must, in a large measure, depend on the course which Russia would pursue if the first of these alternatives were adopted. No doubt the Russian Government are at this moment reluctant to embark in fresh railway enterprises. They have spent, and are still spending, vast sums on the Siberian line. They are engaged in completing the Orenburg and Tashkend line. Their agreement with Persia, just cited, shows that they are in no hurry to undertake similar enterprises in Persia. It is possible, therefore, that they would silently acquiesce in India obtaining all the predominance in Seistan which the possession of the only railway communicating with that country seems likely to confer. In that event we might gain much, and should, apparently, lose nothing, by pressing on the enterprise.

There is, however, another side to the question. Instead of acquiescing, Russia might retort in kind, and, releasing Persia from her engagement, might push on a rival line from Askabad viâ Meshed to Nasrabad. The first part of this route is understood to be already surveyed; the remainder presents no physical difficulties of a serious character. There would then be through railway communication between St. Petersburgh and Calcutta, impeded only by a break of gauge at the point where the Indian and Russian systems met.

Would such a condition of affairs be to our advantage? It may be doubted. The dominating argument of this paper has been that the security of India depends largely upon the difficulties of transport which an invading force would have to overcome. These difficulties, of course, would no longer exist for Russia if she were in complete possession of a through railway from Central Asia to India; and we have to ask ourselves how far this favourable situation would be altered to her disadvantage either by the fact that an Indo-Persian railway could be destroyed before the invaders were in a position to utilize it, or by the fact that the break of gauge in Seistan would render it useless to the invaders as soon as we had withdrawn our rolling-stock to the Indian terminus.

On the first of these points it has to be remarked that experience proves that, except by the destruction of railway bridges across wide rivers, or possibly of tunnels through high and continuous mountain ranges, it is difficult, even impracticable, to render a railway impassable for more than a very brief period by the mere use of dynamite or other destructive agent.* On the proposed Indo-Seistan railway there are no important bridges to be blown up and no tunnels west of Nushki. Even if these tunnels were permanently destroyed (a very arduous operation), the remaining part of the railway through the Beluchistan desert would bring Russia to within 80 miles of Quetta; would enable her to turn the Kandahar position; and would open a new route for the invasion of India.

All this, of course, is on the supposition that Russia had the command of sufficient rolling-stock suitable for the Indian line. The Russian gauge is narrower than the Indian; and, as Indian rails are laid on iron sleepers, it would be difficult, or impossible, to relay the line so as to accommodate Russian trucks. But, though the permanent-way could not be adapted to Russian rolling-stock, Russian rolling-stock might be adapted to the permanent-way, or even built specially to suit it; and, if this were done, our own railway would, apparently, at once become a potent military instrument in the hands of our enemies.

The provisional conclusions to which the arguments contained in this portion of the paper seem to point may be thus summarized:—

(*a.*) The best thing that could happen, from the point of view of Indian defence, is the maintenance of the *status quo*. As things are at present, and in the absence of all railways, no use can be made by Russia of Seistan as a base for an attack on Kandahar, or on any portion of the Indian frontier.

(*b.*) If, and when, Russia builds an Askabad-Seistan railway, she will be in a position, whenever she chooses, to take military possession of the whole country through which the railway runs. The belief that in such an event we should go to war might in ordinary times deter her. But it would clearly not deter her if the occupation of Seistan were part of a general advance towards the Indian frontier, since this would mean war in any case.

(*c.*) In the event of such a war, it would not be possible for this country to hold Seistan. Any attempt to do so with our small field army would be inexpedient, since it would dangerously weaken the force available for the defence of the Cabul-Kandahar line. It would also be almost certainly

* See Appendix by Lord Roberts on the lesson taught by the South African War on this subject.

unsuccessful, since by hypothesis Russia would have railway communication right up to our front, and could concentrate troops for the attack on Seistan in far larger numbers than those we could provide for its defence.

(*d.*) Since, then, Seistan could not, under the conditions supposed, be defended against invasion, there seems to be only two reasons why we should attempt to Anglicise it, or at least to prevent it being Russianised.

The first is that until Russia has had it for some time in practical possession, she will obviously not be able to turn it to full account as a base of operation against India. If she can be prevented from occupying it until the struggle has actually begun, its military value to her will be far less than if she had had long opportunities of preparing the ground beforehand. She will have to content herself (so to speak) with the raw material instead of the manufactured article.

The second reason is, that if it were Anglicised, Russia would have less temptation to make that railway connection with Askabad, on which the whole military value of Seistan as a base for the invasion of India has been shown to depend.

(*e.*) These are most important objects. But they may possibly be incompatible. The construction of an Indian line from the east is probably the most effectual method of Anglicising Seistan. But any advantage it might thus confer would be dearly bought if it occasioned the construction of a Russian line from the north.

(*f.*) And this not merely or chiefly because such a line would, as has been pointed out, give Russia the power of seizing Seistan whenever it seemed worth her while, but because a continuous railway route between Central Asia and Quetta, or even Nushki, would create a new and most formidable danger to our Indian frontier.

(*g.*) So far, then, as our present information goes, the risk involved in extending the Beluchistan Railway beyond Nushki seems too great to be worth incurring; and our best plan would seem to be to make such an agreement with Russia as will defer all railway-building in Eastern Persia for as long a period as possible. If it be objected that Russia is neither likely to enter into such an agreement nor to keep it (since what is good for us must, in this connection, be bad for her), the answer is, that Russia has other things in view besides the invasion of India; and that she may very well be content indefinitely to postpone a very costly and unremunerative addition to a very costly and unremunerative railway system, provided she is assured that no rival will step in and take commercial or political advantage of her abstention.

From a commercial point of view such a policy is no doubt unsatisfactory, since its very essence is to stop railways which would otherwise be built. But from a military point of view the arguments in its favour seem overwhelming; and no advantage to be derived from trade with Seistan can be comparable, even from a financial point of view, with the disadvantage of any policy which increases the burden of Indian defence.

The questions raised, however, are very difficult; and further local examination is certainly required before a final decision can be arrived at.

A. J. B.

May 20, 1903.

NOTE.—The Committee of the 24th December, 1901, reported in favour of the Quetta-Seistan railway. But they had not under their consideration the possibility that this might be followed by an Askabad-Seistan railway.

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SECRET.

30-D.

COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

Memorandum by the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief on the Provisional Report of the Defence Committee on Indian Defence.

SECRET.

MEMORANDUM BY THE VICEROY AND THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ON THE PROVISIONAL REPORT OF THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN DEFENCE.

1. WE have been asked to state our opinions and to offer any recommendations that we may desire to make upon the provisional Report of the Defence Committee, a copy of which has been forwarded to us by the Secretary of State. We accordingly comply with this request.

2. Mr. Balfour in his opening memorandum speaks of the Committee as having "provisionally accepted the conclusion already arrived at by the Indian Government "that the present field army in India would, unless obligatory garrisons could be "reduced, be less by about 30,000 men, that the number which might, within a period "not exceeding four months, be required to meet the enemy forces in Afghanistan, that "in six months from the outbreak of hostilities a further force of 70,000 men would "have to be landed in India to make good wastage and casualties, as well as to "increase the strength of the forces at the front, and that before the end of the first "year a third reinforcement would be required." Mr. Balfour adds that "these "numbers are based on the supposition that Russia had completed the Orenburg-"Tashkend Railway, and that India had completed railway communication from "Peshawar to the Afghan frontier." We think it desirable, for accuracy's sake, to point out (1) that the Government of India have never yet framed any calculations based upon the above hypotheses, even though the latter have, as stated, been considered by the Defence Committee in England in arriving at their conclusions; (2) that the Government of India have not committed themselves to the conclusion above recorded. This conclusion, or something like it, was arrived at by a meeting of the Indian Mobilisation Committee, comprising Generals Collen, Maitland, Elles, and Gaselee, which met at Calcutta on the 23rd February, 1900, in order to consider the lines of a definite military policy in Afghanistan. In paragraph 17 of their Report this Committee recommended that on mobilisation "a first reinforcement of 30,000 additional "British troops should be sent to India," and in paragraph 19 they declared that, "in the event of prolonged hostilities with Russia, we should require an additional "70,000 troops of all arms from home." They said nothing, however, about a third reinforcement before the end of the first year. Nor were their conclusions accepted in their entirety by the Government of India. In paragraph 12 of the despatch of the 26th April, 1900, the Indian Government alluded, without any expression of opinion, to the above findings of the Mobilisation Committee, and in paragraph 6 they expressly guarded themselves against the assumption that they had "accepted all of the "propositions laid down, or the proposals put forward by the Committee." Similarly when, in their memorandum of the 1st September, 1900 (which was forwarded to the Secretary of State by the Government of India with a despatch dated the 20th September, 1900), Sir P. Palmer and Sir E. Collen again represented the case as regards the first reinforcement from England of 30,000 and the second of 70,000 men, the Indian Government again "desired to guard themselves against a complete "acceptance of all the propositions put forward by the Commander-in-Chief and the "Military Member." It is for consideration, therefore, whether the passage in Mr. Balfour's memorandum, to which we have referred, might not be amended, since it seems undesirable to quote the authority of the Government of India for propositions which, in the form above stated, they have not as yet either accepted or discussed. They might accept them upon discussion now or in the future; but the fact remains that they have not done so up to the present time.

3. Passing to the draft report of the Defence Committee, we have no general observations to offer on Part I. This is confined to a statement of the character, dimensions, and complexity of the problem under discussion, and we are in general accord with the propositions so well and clearly laid down. We should like, however,

to be made acquainted with the calculations which have led up to the conclusion on page 2, that each of the two Russian lines of railway to the frontiers of Afghanistan can bring up to its railhead in six months, and thereafter keep fully supplied an army of 100,000 men. From such computations as we have made, we are disposed to think that the above is an under-estimate of the facts, and that the capacity of the railways would be considerably greater than has been supposed. Moreover, the figures of the memorandum do not seem to be consistent with the finding of the Home Committee of December 1901, which recorded on page 11 of its report that—omitting from consideration the Orenburg–Tashkend line—Russia could with her remaining facilities "place between "180,000 and 200,000 men altogether in Central Asia, by the end of the fourth or fifth "month after mobilisation."

4. In Part II we may confine our observations to the question raised in section VII, in connection with our policy in Eastern Persia and Seistan. We do not quite follow the argument at the top of page 2. The reasons for which Russia, in the event of a forward move in the direction of the Helmund, would probably advance through Eastern Khorasan in preference or in supplement to a route through Western Afghanistan, are that (1) she would not have to fight her way; (2) she would advance through a country that she had already permeated with her influence; (3) she would find abundant supplies. The Russian guarantees of the integrity of Persia are in our view worthless; and it is significant, in illustration of the above propositions, that she is believed some years ago to have concluded a secret treaty with the Persian Government, one of the clauses of which provided for the free passage of her troops through Khorasan in the event of hostilities on the Afghan border.

5. Page 3: The danger of complete Russian ascendancy in Seistan (apart from the greater facilities that it would provide for an attack upon Kandahar) appears to us to lie not in any opening that it might afford for an invasion of India through Beluchistan in the direction of Sind, but in the opportunities that it would provide for unsettling and embroiling the Beluch border from Seistan through Mekran to the sea. Already Russia, through her agents in Seistan, is perpetually intriguing with discontented or restless spirits on that border, and a situation might easily be developed which would cause us the same sort of trouble as we are so familiar with on the Pathan frontier of India. Hitherto we have been able to leave Western Beluchistan and Mekran pretty well alone. If the Russians finally consolidated their power in Seistan, we should have to defend, watch, and patrol the entire Beluch frontier from Robat to Gwetter. This would involve great outlay, much annoyance, and no small risk. Moreover, the Russianisation of Eastern Persia cannot stop with Seistan. If it reaches there, it will go further and make towards the Gulf. First Sarbad, and then Persian Beluchistan would fall into the mesh. This is the vital difference between the British and the Russian aims. If the British were installed in Seistan they would not thereby be impelled to push northwards to Meshed. But if the Russians were installed, every motive of self-interest and advantage would draw them southwards towards the sea. We may put it in another way translated into terms of railroads. If Russia acquires Seistan, she can realise her project of a railway from Trans-Caspia to the eastern end of the Gulf (assuming that such a line is found to be an engineering possibility). If she does not get Seistan, she cannot.

6. There are other reasons, the corollary of the above, which would render the control of Seistan by Russia most injurious to British interests. Our prestige could not fail to be affected throughout Western Afghanistan and Beluchistan, particularly the former. Again, when Great Britain is driven by further Russian advance to push forward to Kandahar and the Helmund Valley, there would be great and perpetual danger of conflict, supposing the Russians to be in occupation of Seistan, between the Powers in possession of the upper and the lower reaches of the river.

7. We pass to the discussion of the policy of extending the British Quetta-Nushki Railway to Seistan, which occupies the four concluding pages of the Memorandum. The conclusions arrived at by the Defence Committee are hostile to the continuance of this railway beyond Nushki, at any rate for the present; and the reasons given by them are the following:—

(i.) The Russians might be provoked by such a challenge to build a Russian line from Ashkabad viâ Meshed to Seistan.

(ii.) In the event of war, the Russians might use our railway from Seistan onwards to transport their forces to the invasion of India, and thus "a new and most formidable danger would be created to our Indian frontier."

(iii.) If we were to build a railway with the object of holding Seistan, such a policy would be vain, since, in the event of war, it would not be possible for us with our small field army, confronted by a Russian railway and by superior Russian forces, to continue to hold Seistan.

8. Though we are for the present in substantial agreement with the conclusions of the Defence Committee, we are not influenced by precisely the same reasons. The grounds advanced by them appear to us to be of unequal value. The first reason is most important, and we will revert to it presently. But the second opens up a wide field of discussion and of possible difference. The advance of Russia from Seistan to India does not appear likely to be determined by the existence or the reverse of a line of rails upon which to transport her forces. It will be affected rather by conditions of water and food-supply through the 400 miles of barren country which the railway would traverse. Moreover, should the railway be left intact (which seems highly improbable), it is open to consideration whether the very worst thing that Russia could do for herself, and the best thing that she could do for us, would not be to utilise the line to hurl her forces at that point of the Indian frontier which has been the subject of more careful attention and greater expenditure upon military defences than any other part of the border. It is not because it will facilitate the invasion of India that we so strongly deprecate the consolidation of Russian power in Seistan. It is rather, as has been pointed out, because it will immediately and prejudicially affect the questions (*a*) of Afghanistan and Kandahar, (*b*) of Beluchistan, and, ultimately, (*c*) of the Persian Gulf.

9. Similarly, as regards the third reason advanced by the Defence Committee, we do not think that even were a British railway built to Seistan, we should be committed to the necessity of holding that region in strength against a superior force of the enemy. There are other positions adjacent to Seistan upon the Helmund and elsewhere, where we could operate greatly to his disadvantage. In the Report of the Committee that assembled at Simla under the presidency of the Viceroy on the 6th June, 1902, and that was sent home with the Government of India's despatch of the 21st August, 1902, it was stated that "the building of a railway to Seistan is not the only method by which "a mobile British force would be able to observe, to hamper, or to retard the movements "of the Russians in that quarter. The despatch of such a forward column from "Kandahar to the Helmund, which has always formed a feature of the Indian plans of "campaign, is an alternative, and perhaps a preferable, method of obtaining the same "result." The degree to which these alternative movements might be pursued, will depend largely upon considerations that we shall mention later on.

10. Perhaps, however, we shall best facilitate the advancement of the case if we here state the point of view from which the question of arresting or continuing the Seistan line presents itself to us in India, where we have lately been called upon to reconsider it in the light of the information that has reached us from the engineering and irrigation experts who were deputed with Colonel McMahon's mission to Seistan with the special object of reporting on this subject.

11. The existing position of affairs is that the railway (on the broad gauge) from Quetta to Nushki, a distance of 90 miles, is being rapidly pushed forward. It will reach Nushki in January 1905. As this line has been sanctioned by the Secretary of State, it is not necessary to explain or to defend its construction here. But we may say that both from the political and strategical (as well as from the commercial) points of view we regard the line as of great importance, and as certain to add materially to the strength of this section of the border.

12. The question then arises whether, as soon as the railhead has reached Nushki, we should contemplate carrying it forward in the direction of Seistan. As the decision upon this point will not require to be taken for another year and a half, it may appear superfluous at present to consider it. But it is possible that in the interval circumstances may occur which will completely revolutionise the situation. Inasmuch as these circumstances have not hitherto been placed before His Majesty's Government, and were not available to the Defence Committee when the first part of their Report was written,

we shall proceed to explain them with some fulness, and to indicate the manner in which they may affect the question of the railway.

13. So far it has been the custom to treat the political and territorial factors in the Seistan problem as fixed, and to regard the British trade route as a long and precarious arm pushed out towards Koh-i-Malik Siah, skirting an irksome corner of the Afghan boundary on the way, and terminating at the southern point of a Persian province, where it is unlikely that we shall be able to exert any greater influence in the future, and may possibly have to be content with less than we at present enjoy. But supposing these conditions to be entirely reversed, will not the problem be revolutionised also? This is the condition we are about to discuss.

14. When the Viceroy despatched Colonel McMahon's party, he ordered them to proceed by the Helmund route through Afghanistan from Nushki, in order that they might investigate the conditions and capabilities of the Helmund Valley from the point (Lundi Wali Mohammed) at which the river, after running nearly due south from Girishk, takes a turn to the west, and proceeds to flow towards Seistan. This also is the point at which the inhabitants of the surrounding country, and notably the southern bank (the northern being almost uninhabited), cease to be Pathans and become Beluchis, *i.e.*, men whose natural affinity is rather with India than with Afghanistan. The idea to the Viceroy's mind was to suggest to the Amir (should a conference take place between them later on) a lease of the country on the left bank of the Helmund from this point; or, if the Amir objects to this, then from Rudbar or some other spot lower down, as far as Bund-i-Seistan, where the Helmund for the first time constitutes the boundary between Afghanistan and Persia, the lease to include the isosceles triangle known as the Tarkun tract, of which the Koh-i-Malik Siah is the apex, and which opposes such an inconvenient obstacle to our shortest route to Seistan.

15. The reports received from the engineers surpass all anticipations, and the following are the facts or conclusions which they establish. Above Kala-i-Bist, the point of junction between the Helmund and the Argandab, the former river drains a basin of 56,500 square miles (as compared with a catchment area of 11,400 square miles in the case of the Chenab river, and 14,300 square miles in that of the Jhelum). From Lundi Wali Mohammed the river flows in a channel containing a normal depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$–3 feet of water (and, of course, much more in flood), and a discharge of 3,000–4,000 cubic feet per second, with an average fall of 3 feet per mile. As far as Bund-i-Kamal Khan, the river valley is confined to a narrow alluvial plain about 2 miles wide, held in on both sides by clay scarps from 100–300 feet in height. Within these limits a scanty cultivation is conducted by means of small canals from the river by the scattered Beluchi population to whom reference has been made. There is no cultivation beyond the bluffs.

16. At Bund-i-Kamal Khan the real irrigational possibilities of the river begin: and from this point it is not too much to say that there is no river in Asia (certainly none in India) that within a similar available space contains such potential elements of wealth, or is capable of producing more astonishing results. The historic fame of Seistan and the ruins of fallen cities and choked-up canals with which it abounds in every direction show what it once was, several hundred years ago. But this is nothing to what it might again become if irrigated by modern scientific methods and with the knowledge and experience that are possessed by Indian engineers.

17. With a proper control of the river it is computed that over 3,000,000 acres, or 4,700 square miles, of land in Persia and Afghanistan combined can be commanded, of which 750,000 acres of spring crop, and more of autumn crop, can be fully irrigated in each year. At present only 75,000 acres, or one-tenth of this total, are under spring cultivation, in the proportion of 50,000 acres in Persia and 25,000 in Afghanistan.

The present population of Persian Seistan is supposed to be somewhere about 80,000 people. It is estimated that the total area, if irrigated, could support a population of at least 2,000,000. Colonel McMahon is of opinion (judging from Indian analogies which we have verified) that there could be derived from Seistan a minimum land revenue of half a crore of rupees or 330,000*l.* per annum, and that it is difficult to fix a limit to which this might not eventually be raised. With scientific methods the swamps with which the country is covered (and with them the insects and other pests to life) would disappear: the bottom soil does not appear anywhere to have been

spoiled by its prolonged inundation, but is of extraordinary sweetness and fertility. The area that admits of being thus redeemed covers nearly the whole of the Tarkun triangle, of which we have spoken, on the west bank of the river, as well as a space on the right or Afghan bank to the east of Kala-i-Fath and Bund-i-Seistan, over 800 square miles in extent, which is now a barren desert encumbered only with crumbling ruins. It is also probable that this space will admit of almost indefinite expansion. At Bund-i-Seistan Colonel McMahon measured the discharge in April last as 52,000 cubic feet per second, or a sufficient amount of water to cover 100 square miles of land one foot deep in 24 hours.

18. But this is not all. The configuration of the river bed and the surrounding country is such that the party which controls the Helmund from Bund-i-Kamal Kahn to Kala-i-Fath (both on the Afghan section of the river) can, by constructing a weir at a point between Chehar Burjak and Bund-i-Kamal Khan and by taking off the water in canals at or near to that spot, control the entire water supply alike of Persian and Afghan Seistan, developing either or both districts to unheard-of wealth and prosperity, or reducing them to irretrievable ruin. This extraordinary potentiality is enhanced by the fact that close to Bund-i-Kamal Khan an old channel has been discovered, down which a large portion of the Helmund, instead of running as it now does northwards, formerly took a bend to the south and emptied its waters into the God-i-Zirreh. The excavation of a cutting 10 feet deep and 4 miles long would reopen this ancient channel, and would, if required, discharge the entire surplus waters of the Helmund into this great depression.

19. From this description it is clear that if the Government of India could obtain a lease of the southern bank of the Helmund, or even of the Tarkun triangle alone, with power to manipulate the river, the whole of Seistan would be at their mercy. They could reduce it to a desert in a single season, or they could pour enormously multiplied revenues into the treasuries both of Persia and Afghanistan. Afghanistan could be tempted by the rent that she would receive for the Tarkun tract and by the reopened cultivation of the Sar-u-tar desert. Persia would have to accept almost any terms that we might choose to exact, whether commercial, political, or otherwise, since the future existence of Seistan would be absolutely at our mercy. We should not be bound by existing stipulations as to the integrity of Persia to guarantee the Shah's Government more than the present revenues and area under cultivation. Anything beyond, that we might be in a position to offer, would be a matter of bargain.

20. These considerations will indicate how vitally the Seistan problem may be affected by the arrangement which the Viceroy has in mind. It is not too much to say that it would revolutionise the entire Central Asian question in its Afghan and Persian aspects, and would effectually kill all Russian ambitions in the region south of Khorasan. For the Russian position in Seistan would become absolutely untenable, if indeed in such circumstances the Shah did not find it necessary to accept any arrangements that we might propose for the future land-revenue administration of Persian Seistan. But it is obvious that if this consummation be obtained, the railway problem at once stands out in a new perspective. It would no longer be a strategic line *en l'air*, but a secure link of communication with what would soon become one of the most fertile oases in Asia, in which Russian interests would find no place. Furthermore, instead of being a wholly unremunerative venture, the line would be absolutely required to carry away the surplus grain of the newly-cultivated areas, and would in a short time pay handsome dividends to the Indian Exchequer. In fact, our garrison at Quetta would be fed, at a greatly reduced cost, from Seistan.

21. For here attention must be drawn to another point that has not been under the notice of the Defence Committee. It appears to have been assumed that the railway opportunities of India and Russia in this quarter may fairly be balanced against each other, and that in a race for Seistan neither side would possess any great advantage. This is far from being the case. The railway engineers with Colonel McMahon have shown that a line could be constructed along or near to the present trade route from Nushki to Robat (a distance of 360 miles) at a cost of only 2 crores, or 1,300,000*l*, in less than two years. We do not doubt that it could be completed in less than eighteen months. For this is what the engineer has reported about the country that would be traversed: "From end to end a cheap line could be built without any works whatever, "except a short low bridge or two at Baghak below Nushki . . . . It would be difficult

'anywhere in India to find an equal length of line either cheaper to construct or less 'easy to damage." If we were in possession of the Tarkun tract, we should, perhaps, prolong the railway from Robat to Bund-i-Seistan, a further distance of 70 miles.

22. In the alternative contingency of the Amir leasing to the Government of India the whole of the south bank of the Helmund from Lundi Wali Mohammed downwards, it might be possible to run a railway from Nushki to that place—a distance of 156 miles—at a cost of 1¼ crores, and then to navigate the Helmund by flat-bottomed stern wheelers down to the great weir. If the railway were continued down the left bank to Bund-i-Seistan, the total length would be 335 miles. But the railroad entirely in British territory would probably be found preferable.

23. But it may be said that none of these hypotheses is at all likely to be realised; that the Amir will not meet the Viceroy; or that, if he does, he will never consent to lease any portion of Afghan territory. We hope that this will not be the case. But we are bound to assume that it may be, and we accordingly proceed to state the advice that we should offer, assuming present conditions to continue without any substantial modification.

24. We should be disposed for the present to refrain from pushing forward our railway from Nushki, not because we could do so with greater advantage than the Russians could do theirs, but because we might thereby sacrifice the advantage as regards speed of construction, and rapidity of reaching the objective, which we now enjoy. Although, as the Defence Committee have pointed out, it is conceivable that the Russians may be so busily occupied in the Far East as to permit us to commence the construction of a Seistan railway without retaliating in kind, yet we agree with them in thinking that Russia would more probably accept the challenge, would compel the Persian Government to withdraw the existing embargo on railway construction, and would at once begin a line to Meshed either from Ashkabad on the north-west or from the direction of Sarakhs or Sheikh Junaid on the north-east. It would not matter much that this line would probably take between five and six years to reach Seistan, while the Indian line would occupy less than one-third of that time. The point is that, supposing peace to be maintained in the interval, and no obstruction to the Russian railway to occur, it would eventually reach Seistan; and that the situation thus created, with a Russian line running from Meshed through a Russianised Khorasan into a Russianised Seistan, and there meeting an Indian railway projected from Nushki somewhat into space would, on the whole, be more prejudicial to our interests than a continuance of the existing situation, in which so long as we do not commence building, Russia will probably not do so either; while, should hostilities break out, we should retain the incalculable advantage, supposing Seistan to be a point that we desired to reinforce or retain, of being able to reach it with a railway before the Russians were one-third of the way. On the other hand, should the Russians throw down the challenge by laying a single mile of railroad in Khorasan (which we do not think they are at all likely to do for the present), we would advise His Majesty's Government to respond at once by pushing forward the line to Seistan without the least delay. In this context we lay great stress upon the difference in the conditions under which the Russian Government and the Government of India would undertake their respective lines. The distance from Ashkabad to Nasratabad is 670 miles, from Sarakhs (which is not connected by railway with the Russian system) 506 miles. Not only, therefore, should we possess a considerable advantage in respect of the distance to be traversed, but the Indian railroad would be a service line laid with great ease and rapidity through our own territory, while the materials would be brought by a double track from Karachi. The Russian line would be laid through a foreign country, and would encounter many physical obstacles, while all stores would have to be conveyed from Europe, across the Caspian, and then transported by a single line of rails to the front.

25. It will be seen from the above that, as at present advised, we concur generally with the conclusions that have been summarised by Mr. Balfour; but that our concurrence is entirely dependent upon the failure to realise the plans which the Viceroy has in view. Should those plans be successful, we can hardly imagine that they would not be welcomed as a solution of the problem almost immeasurably more favourable by any that has yet been contemplated by the Defence Committee or by His Majesty's Government. We would further add that we are advising on the existing

situation and in the light of existing probabilities. Matters move so rapidly in the East, that in a few years from now we might find that our present opinion was out of date.

26. For the reasons that have been given, we would, however, strongly deprecate any such agreement with Russia "to defer all railway building in Eastern Persia for as long a period as possible," as has been suggested on the concluding page of the Memorandum. If such an agreement were to apply, as *ex hypothesi* appears to be the case, to a Nushki–Seistan railway, it would be manifestly one-sided; for whereas Russia would merely be pledging herself to a policy of abstention in Persian territory, *i.e.*, in territory not her own, we should be tying our hands within our own borders. Secondly, it would be fatal to the complete success of any such arrangement as that proposed by the Viceroy, either now or in the future. Thirdly, it would sacrifice the immense advantage enjoyed by us, in the event of hostilities, of being able to reach Seistan with a railroad so greatly in advance of our opponents.

27. We may add as an additional reason for our reluctance (if the contemplated lease falls through) to proceed at once with a Seistan railway from India, that we should prefer to devote such funds as we can spare for frontier railways during the next few years to the construction of a railroad from Peshawar to the neighbourhood of Dakka, supposing a suitable alignment to be found, and supposing our impending frontier-demarcation with the Amir in the neighbourhood of Smatsai to provide us with the means of descending from the Shilman hills to the level of the Kabul river.

CURZON.
KITCHENER.

August 7, 1903.

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COL. JONES. 108 B7

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DEFENCE OF INDIA.

Draft Reply to Memorandum by Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener of August 7, 1903.

Draft Reply to Memorandum by Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener of August 7, 1903.

THE most fundamental question on which Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener appear to hold views on Indian defence, which are at variance with those expressed by the Defence Committee in their Memoranda of the 28th April and the 20th May, relates to the expediency of establishing railway communication between Seistan and India.

The argument of the Defence Committee is in substance as follows:—

1. Russia has at her disposal an army with which, in point of number, we cannot expect to compete, either now or hereafter.

2. There are two reasons—and, from a strictly military point of view, only two reasons—why she cannot make the immeasurable superiority fully felt on our Indian frontier:

(*a.*) The imperfect means of communication at present existing through her own territory (which is being rapidly remedied);

(*b.*) The complete absence of railways, and the comparative dearth of roads through the two States, Persia and Afghanistan, which lie between her Asiatic possessions and the north-west frontier of India;

(*c.*) The independence of these two States, which, in the case of Afghanistan, may oblige Russia to push her advance through a hostile population as well as a difficult country, and, in the case of Persia, is still sufficient to prevent her turning Seistan to the best account as a base for the invasion of India.

From these premises the Committee of Defence inferred not merely that everything which tended to strengthen these "buffer States" was an advantage to India—a conclusion in which Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener would agree—but *also* that everything which improved Seistan as a base of operation against India, either by increasing its surplus food supply, or by bringing it into railway communication with Quetta, must be a source of military weakness.

In this conclusion it appears that Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener do *not* agree. On the contrary, so far from desiring to discourage the development of Seistan, and easy access from it to India, they advocate a scheme of irrigation which would convert Seistan into one of the richest agricultural areas of the world, would multiply its population twentyfold, and would make the completion of the Quetta-Seistan Railway a matter of inevitable commercial necessity.

If we rightly understand the principles on which this policy is based, they may be summarized as follows:—

1. It is most important that Seistan should not be "Russianized"—in this it need hardly be said the Committee of Defence entirely agree.

2. The "Russianization" of Seistan will be impossible so long as the irrigation on which its prosperity depends is under the complete control of the Indian Government. It cannot be worth Russia's while to struggle for a province which, by simply opening a sluice, can in six months be turned from a garden to a desert. This conclusion the Committee of Defence is able only partially to accept.

3. The real danger of Russian influence in Seistan arises, *not* from the strategic advantage she would thereby gain for the direct invasion of India, but from the facilities which it would confer on her for intrigue along the Beluchu border, and from the fact that Seistan would prove a convenient half-way house to a port on or near the Persian Gulf. With this view also the Committee of Defence feel it difficult to express anything but a qualified concurrence.

Our grounds of difference are these :—

It seems to us that the conversion of Seistan into a rich agricultural region will invite, rather than repel, the extension of Russian railway enterprise in that direction. Russian railways have so often been strategic rather than commercial, that any scheme which combines both merits must present unusual attractions to her statesmen. They might hesitate to construct a line from Askabad to Nasribad for the mere purpose of defeating British influence in Seistan, or threatening British predominence in India. But if these desirable objects could be secured by a remunerative railway connecting Central Asia with a thickly peopled and fertile area, surely the temptation to construct it would prove irresistible.

Nor can we feel confident that this danger would be greatly diminished by the fact that the Indian Government controlled the irrigation on which both the population and the fertility of the province depended. There are some remedies so powerful that they can never be applied, and among them we must surely reckon one which would reduce to starvation 1,920,000 out of a total population of 2,000,000. We do not dogmatize as to the amount of misery which a state of war justifies the combatants in inflicting on the non-combatants. For the evil we anticipate would have its origin not in time of war, but in time of peace. The order of events, we suppose, would be something of this kind:—The Indian Government would carry out the proposed scheme of irrigation; the population would rapidly increase; the railway would be completed between Nushki and Nasribad. Then the Russians would demand from Persia a concession to build a line to the same terminus through Khorassan. What power have we to interfere with such a project? We cannot go to war to stop railway construction in a friendly country; still less could we hinder it by threatening with famine a province whose fertility we had ourselves created, and whose population was there in consequence of our policy, and, as it were, at our invitation. The Russian railway would therefore be built. In time of peace it would certainly tend to consolidate Russian influence in the region which it traversed. In time of war its consequences would, as it seems to the Committee of Defence, be still more serious.

We here come to the second point on which there seems to be a certain divergence of view between the Committee on the one side and Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener on the other.

The latter are of opinion (1) that a line of railway between Seistan and Quetta would not facilitate a Russian advance through Beluchistan; and (2) that if it did, and Russia took advantage of it, such a result might be desirable rather than the reverse.

As regards (1), it seems very difficult to believe that railway communication, which is of infinite military advantage everywhere else, should be useless in Beluchistan alone. Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener consider that it is "conditions of water and food supply through 400 miles of barren country," *not* the existence or non-existence of the railway which would determine the Russian strategy. But surely a barren and waterless country, which in its natural state may render a frontier impregnable, looses most of its defensive virtue if it be traversed by a railway in hostile hands. And if this be so, can we doubt that its construction must, for good or evil, have a profound strategical importance?

But then, it is urged, the line of advance through Beluchistan, however much it may be facilitated by the construction of a railway, seems in itself so unadvisable from the invader's point of view that the very best thing that could happen to us might be that Russia should "hurl her forces at that portion of the Indian frontier which has been the subject of more careful attention and greater expenditure upon military defences than any other part of the border."

This opinion seems difficult to sustain. No doubt a great deal of money has been spent in fortifying Quetta and bringing it into convenient railway communication with our military bases, as well as in preparing railway material for a further extension, in case of war, to Kandahar. But, even after all this expenditure, on one doubts that, if Russia invaded India, one main line of her advance would be towards Kandahar and Quetta, and that we should have to put forth all our strength to resist it. Could anything be conceived more likely to render our difficult task more difficult than the acquisition by the invader of a second route, which would enable him to threaten the lines of communication between Kandahar and India?

To summarize the same contention in a somewhat different form: If no attempt is made to carry out the Seistan irrigation scheme, there can be no commercial necessity for us to build a railway to Seistan, and no great commercial motive for the Russians to build one. But if, on the other hand, we succeed in so enriching the soil

by irrigation that 2,000,000 persons will live where 80,000 live now, it is certain that we must build a railway from the east, and that Russia will reply by building one from the north.

At present Russia has but two main lines of attack on India—that by Kabul and that by Kandahar. Neither of these are provided with railways or with good roads, and, under Afghan rule, neither railways nor good roads are likely to be constructed.

In the state of things likely to be brought about by the Seistan irrigation scheme, on the other hand, there will be *three* main routes, not two, by which India can be invaded: and the third of these will be a railway in direct communication with the Indian system at one end and the Russian system at the other.

It seems to us incredible that the change will not be disadvantageous to the Power which has barely troops to defend two routes, and advantageous to the Power which is, at present, only prevented by difficulties of transport from overwhelming us by mere weight of numbers. Nor can we see any safety in the control over the fortunes of Seistan conferred on us by our possession of the sluices on the Helmund. This power (as we have said) could never be used in time of peace. It might conceivably be used in time of war; though, even in time of war, men would hesitate by a single act to reduce nearly 2,000,000 souls to starvation. But, even if used, it would have no decisive effect. The railway communication would remain unaffected. The wastes of Beluchistan would still be passable. Quetta would still be threatened. While if Russia were able to seize the sluices before the artificial drought, which we desired to create, had ruined the crops, the whole scheme of control would crumble to nothing.

While, therefore, we are entirely at one with Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener in desiring to exclude Russian influence from Seistan, we find it difficult to agree in their proposed scheme for attaining this end; and we are still disposed to take a far more pessimistic view than they of the danger to which an Askabad-Seistan-Quetta railway would expose our north-west frontier.

The subject of a Russian port on or near the Persian Gulf, and connected with Central Asia by rail, to which Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener refer in the course of their commentary, raises a different set of considerations: and on these we propose to prepare a separate Memorandum.

A. J. B.

November 24, 1903.

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COLONEL JONES. 108/C

SECRET.

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PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION IN MESOPOTAMIA.

1. Affairs in Mesopotamia have been stationary for so long that the War Committee may wish to have a statement of the situation as it now is, more especially in view of the recent Turkish successes in north-west Persia against General Baratoff.

2. With regard to the objective of the earlier operations, I understand that General Nixon was authorized to advance to Kut for the purpose of securing control of both ends of the Shatt-el-Hai, and thereby making more safe the occupation of Nasiryeh, which it appeared essential to hold in pursuance of the policy of occupying and controlling effectively the vilayet of Busra. The successful occupation of Kut led to the abortive expedition to Baghdad and to the siege and fall of Kut.

3. On 30th April last, after the fall of Kut, the following instructions were sent to the Commander-in-Chief, India, for the guidance of Sir Percy Lake, with the approval of the War Committee :—

"At present our policy in Mesopotamia is defensive, and we do not attach any importance to the possession of Kut or to the occupation of Baghdad. It is, of course, impracticable to prescribe policy for a long time ahead. Lake would probably be directed to fall back to Amara, or even to Kurna, if no other considerations were involved, but it is important to minimize and counteract the effect of the fall of Kut and in order to assist the Russians to keep occupied the Turks now opposed to the Tigris Corps. For these reasons Lake should, for the present, maintain as forward a position as can be made secure tactically and be ready to take advantage of any weakening of the Turks on his front, so long as this can be effected without incurring heavy loss, whether caused by the enemy or by unhealthy conditions.

"It is undesirable and impossible to reinforce Lake owing to the conditions in other theatres of war, but he will be kept adequately supplied with drafts and munitions. His forces are superior to those of the enemy, according to our information, and he should therefore have no difficulty in carrying out the above policy until the Turks are strongly reinforced. In that event he should be given full discretion to fall back; at any rate he must be clearly shown that the security of his force is of primary importance, and that neither now nor at any time is he required to maintain a more forward position than he thinks he can hold with reasonable safety."

4. The reasons for these instructions were that it was important to neutralize the moral effect of the fall of Kut, and at the same time reduce our commitments in Mesopotamia as much as possible. In my opinion the necessity for retaining our troops opposite Kut still exists, for although the fall of Kut has not reacted unfavourably on our position in Southern Persia and India, and is now ancient history, the recent Turkish successes in Persia would, if followed by a withdrawal on our part in Mesopotamia, undoubtedly increase Turkish prestige, and it might produce a most embarrassing situation in the East. At the same time I desire to make it quite clear that owing to the effect of the climate on the health of the troops, to very defective communications, and to various other causes, the Force is not at present in a good condition, and could not undertake offensive operations except to a very limited extent.

5. We have opposite Kut a force of four divisions and a cavalry brigade, with a strength of 21,000 infantry, 1,500 sabres and 150 guns; this is opposed by a Turkish force of three divisions of about 17,600 infantry, 300 sabres and 64 guns. We have also at and about Nasiryeh 4,700 infantry, 250 sabres and 27 guns, and at Busra a reserve of 3,500 infantry, 600 sabres and 14 guns, the remainder of Force "D" being scattered in posts along the Tigris and Karun Rivers.

6. Owing to the wastage from sickness suffered by young troops in hot weather it has been arranged on the suggestion of the Commander-in-Chief, India, that drafts are not to be sent to join their units until next month when the climate will improve, but the necessary drafts have been earmarked.

The artillery of the Force has been improved by the substitution of modern 4·5-inch howitzers for 5-inch howitzers, and an increase in the number both of 18-pr.

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field guns and of heavy artillery. The Cavalry Brigade and several of the native battalions are being exchanged with fresh units from India and the Commander-in-Chief has been asked to exchange as many British battalions as possible. A second Indian Cavalry Brigade has just reached Busra from France.

By the middle or end of October we hope to have :—

—	Infantry.	Sabres.	Guns.
Vicinity of Kut (Tigris Corps)	37,800	3,500	174
Euphrates Line	9,000	200	30
On Lines of Commmunication	6,000	900	24
Total Force	52,000	4,600	228

7. As regards the question of communications, the Committee is aware that India declined to sanction certain proposals for railway construction, and that in general the operations were allowed in 1915 to develop without proper regard to the vital questions of supply and maintenance. Consequently, in this respect we have, ever since the War Office has been in control, been engaged in a struggle to make up lee-way. Owing, however, to the special difficulties of river navigation in Mesopotamia we have so far been unable to do more than keep pace with the bare necessities of the Force, and make good the continual wastage of river craft. In spite of all that has been done and is being done in this respect it is unlikely that any material progress will be made until the monsoon is over, about the end of September, when it will be possible to despatch craft now collected in India, and the arrangements which are now in hand for the re-erection in Mesopotamia of the craft sent out in sections will have matured. All that it is possible to say, at the present time, is, that it is hoped that the river transport will be on a sound footing by the end of December.

As regards railways, three are now under construction :—

(*a.*) A 2-ft. 6-in. line from Sheikh Saad to the Es Sinn position on the right bank of the Tigris, which is nearing completion, and should be finished not later than the end of this month.

(*b.*) A 2-ft. 6-in. line from Kurna to Amara, which Sir Percy Lake estimates should be open some time between the 15th October and the 15th November.

(*c.*) A metre-gauge line from Busra to Nasiryeh which Sir Percy Lake estimates should be completed in January, 1917.

8. The Turks have succeeded in driving back General Baratoff's Force beyond Hamadan, and they have also been operating successfully against the Grand Duke Nicholas's left wing, and have occupied Mush and Bitlis. The object of these operations may be to remove the Russian threat to the Turkish communications in Mesopotamia and to Baghdad, and then to contain the Russian forces in Persia and in Southern Armenia with detachments when the season of the year is unsuitable for active operations in the hilly country, and transfer thence reinforcements to operate against us on the Tigris at a time when the climatic conditions in Lower Mesopotamia are most favourable. If this is so, and if the Turkish operations against the Russians continue to be successful, it is possible that the force now opposing us on the Tigris may be increased to some 60,000 fighting troops of all arms. It appears improbable that, even if the situation in Armenia and Persia admitted of the concentration of a larger force in Mesopotamia, the Turks would be able to maintain more than this number below Kut. Against such a force the troops mentioned in paragraph 6 should be able to hold their own defensively. If, on the other hand, no such move is made against us our troops can be employed offensively according as the situation may demand.

9. Having gone so far forward as Kut, it seems to me that we cannot, at present at any rate, withdraw, except at the risk of incurring considerable trouble in Persia and perhaps in Afghanistan also.

W. R. Robertson.

Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

WAR OFFICE,
21 August, 1916.

COL. JONES. 108

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CONFIDENTIAL.

WAR COMMITTEE.

Lord Derby has forwarded the enclosed suggested terms of reference for the Man-Power Distribution Committee, which terms were agreed to unanimously by the Committee appointed by the War Committee. (See Conclusion 6, War Committee Paper W.C.-59 of August 5th. 1916.)

(Intd.) M.P.A.H.

15.8.16.

The Committee recommends that the remit to the Man-Power Board shall be:-

1. To determine all questions arising between Government Departments, relating to the allocation or economic utilization of man power for the purpose of the successful prosecution of the war and, in order to give effect to its determination, to direct the Government Departments concerned to create the machinery necessary to co-ordinate their activities in regard to the distribution or utilization of men and women.

2. Further, a proposal put forward by any Government Department requiring any important demand for more man power shall be referred to the Board which will decide on the feasibility of the proposal from that standpoint.

3. The Board to have power to call for any evidence it thinks necessary and to direct Departments to obtain such information as it may require.

4. The decisions of the Board to be final unless appealed against to the War Committee.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.
15th. August, 1916.

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AMBASSADE DE FRANCE À LONDRES,
LONDRES,
le 21 Août, 1916.

(164658/16).

La question des paiements des Alliés à l'étranger et celle des crédits à obtenir aux Etats Unis ont paru si graves à Monsieur le Ministre des Finances qu'il en a fait l'objet d'un rapport au Conseil Francais des Ministres.

Monsieur Ribot déclare, dans ce rapport, que la situation doit faire l'objet d'arrangements immédiats entre les Gouvernements Francais et Britannique et suggère les bases de ces arrangements. Il estime, d'autre part, que les questions envisagées dépassent la compétence des Ministres des Finances et qu'elles doivent faire, à bref délai, l'objet d'une conférence entre les chefs des deux Gouvernements assistés des Ministres des Finances.

Ces conclusions ont été adoptées par le Conseil des Ministres.

Le Chargé d'Affaires de France prie le Secrétaire d'Etat pour les Affaires Etrangères de vouloir bien transmettre le texte, ci-joint, du rapport de Monsieur Ribot au Premier Ministre en l'informant de l'adhésion du Gouvernement Francais aux conclusions de ce rapport. Il espère que M. Asquith voudra bien accepter de s'entretenir le plus tôt possible avec Monsieur Briand des questions indiquées dans le rapport

de Monsieur Ribot, les deux Premiers Ministres devant être accompagnés des deux Ministres des Finances.

Le Chancelier de l'Echiquier est attendu à Paris Jeudi prochain 24 Août. Monsieur Briand serait tout disposé à rencontrer le 24 Août M. Asquith à Calais si ce projet agréait au Premier Ministre et devait faciliter son déplacement. De cette manière le voyage de M.McKenna ne serait pas retardé.

Rapport de Monsieur le Ministre des Finances au Conseil des Ministres du 19 Août, 1916.

La question de nos paiements à l'étranger, et en particulier aux Etats Unis, sur laquelle j'ai souvent depuis plusieurs mois, appelé l'attention du Conseil est devenue plus critique.

Le Conseil a eu connaissance du protocole signé à Londres le 15 Juillet dernier.

Il y est expliqué que les Gouvernements de France et d'Angleterre se proposent de faire conjointement un emprunt aux Etats Unis dès que les circonstances le permettront, c'est à dire après l'élection presidentielle.

En attendant, chacun des deux Gouvernements se procurera des ressources soit en écoulant des titres Américains sue le marché de New York soit en empruntant sur titres à des banquiers ou par l'intermédiaire de corporations américaines qui émettront leurs propres obligations. Il va de soi que les deux Gouvernements ayant résolu de faire un emprunt conjoint, ne pouvaient pas, en attendant l'époque

favorable, emprunter séparément sous leur signature et surtout en donnant un gage par le dépot de titres, ce qui, de toute évidence, rendrait impossible un emprunt fait dans d'autres conditions.

Cependent le Chancelier de l'Echiquier vient de faire annoncer une émission aux Etats-Unis de bons du Trésor Britannique, à échéance de deux ans, garantis par des titres des Etats Unis, du Canada et de pays neutres avec une marge de 20%.

L'emprunt porte sue une somme de 250 millions de dollars. Le taux nominal de l'intérêt est de 5%; mais, l'émission étant faite à 98 francs, l'intérêt et la prime de remboursement se montent à plus de 6% non comprise la commission aux banquiers.

On voit combien est difficule la situation financière aux Etats Unis puisqu'une grande Puissance financière comme l'Angleterre ne croit pas pouvoir emprunter à deux années sue sa simple signature.

Une première consequence de l'émission annoncée par le Chancelier de l'Echiquier a été de faire baisser à New York l'emprunt anglo-francais et aussi l'emprunt récemment fait pour notre compte par la corporation dont Monsieur Robert Bacon est le Président, si bien que la Maison Morgan nous a demandé, avant hier, de l'autoriser à racheter à nos frais et risques une partie de cet emprunt ce a quoi nous nous sommes refusés.

D'autre part, les lois américaines sur les banques ne permettent pas à ces dernières d'engager au profit d'une seule personne ou d'un seul gouvernement une somme excédant le dixième de leur capital et de leurs réserves, de sorte que lorsqu'il s'agira de faire un nouvel emprunt pour la France et l'Angleterre les banques répondront qu'elles ont épuisé à l'egard

de l'Angleterre, leur facilité de faire des avances et, par conséquent, de souscrire à l'emprunt.

En lancant son émission de deux cent cinquante millions de dollars avant que nous n'ayons pu émettre nous mêmes la deuxième tranche de 100 millions de dollars de l'opération faite à New York pour notre compte, le Chancelier de l'Echiquier rend singulièrement difficile cette seconde émission. Les ressources du marché de New York sont limitées. On ne peut y puiser en même temps pour tous les gouvernements alliés. Il est indispensable que les Gouvernements s'entendent pour ne pas se gèner et se nuire réciproquement.

Aussi est-il infiniment regrettable de constater que, malgré les termes de l'arrangement signé à Londres, le 15 Juillet, le Gouvernement Francais n'ait pas été prévenu de l'emprunt Anglais de New York.

Le Gouvernement Francais a fait tous ses efforts pour que les alliés unissent leurs forces et leur action sue le terrain financier, aussi bien que sur le terrain militaire. L'unité de front est aussi nécessaire pour les opérations financières que pour les opérations de guerre, car la durée de la guerre est étroitement liée à celle de nos moyens de crédit à l'étranger et si nous agissons les uns et les autres en ordre dispersé, en nous faisant concurrance au lieu de nous soutenir mutuellement, nous épuiserons avant l'heure des ressources qui, mises en commun et sagement aménagées, auraient pu suffir à mener la guerre pendant de longs mois malgré l'énormité de nos dépenses au dehors.

La situation est si grave qu'elle dépasse la compétence des Ministres des Finances et qu'elle doit être l'objet à très brève échéance, d'une conférence entre les chefs des deux Gouvernements assistés des Ministres de Finances.

Tout le sort de la guerre dépend des décisions qui seront prises et, à l'heure ou nous sommes, il n'y a plus une faute à commettre.

Il faut, de toute nécessité:-

1. que les Gouvernements alliés fassent le compte exact de leurs besoins d'achats à l'étranger et des ressources qu'ils peuvent mettre en commun;

2. qu'ils fassent les achats par l'intermédiaire d'un bureau unique qui centralisera les ordres et les aménagera en les restreignant au possibilité d'exécution sur le marché des Etats Unis et aussi à l'étendue des moyens de paiement dont disposent les alliés;

3. que les Gouvernements alliés s'interdisent de faire isolément aucune opération de crédit aux Etats Unis ou ailleurs;

4. que les gouvernements alliés étudient sérieusement le moyen d'obliger les fournisseurs américains de leur accorder des délais de paiement en se procurant eux mêmes des crédits auprès des banques des Etats Unis;

5. que l'Angleterre ouvre plus largement à ses alliés des crédits pour le paiement des achats faits en Angleterre de produits anglais tels que le

charbon et le fer, ainsi que pour le paiement des frets;

6. qu'en retour, la France et la Russie aident l'Angleterre à maintenir la parité de l'Or et des billets de la Banque d'Angleterre en prêtant à la Banque d'Angleterre l'or dont elle a besoin, sous condition de restitution en un certain nombre d'années après la conclusion de la paix.

Toutes ces conditions doivent être l'objet d'un examen approfondi et d'un accord complet. C'est à la France à prendre l'initiative de cette entente, plus indispensable que jamais, au moment où la victoire apparait comme certaine et où nous serions inexcusables de la laisser échapper, faute d'avoir su combiner et aménager nos ressources financières.

COLONEL JONES.

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SECRET.
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WAR COMMITTEE.

TRANSPORT OF MUNITIONS TO RUSSIA.

(Circulated at the request of the Secretary of State for War.)

The problem of delivering to Russia the arms and munitions that she needs, in order to equip for the field the vast reserves of trained soldiers that she already possesses, is notorious and of ever increasing urgency. The Archangel route is unavailable for a large portion of the year, the Kola Bat Railway will not be finished before next Spring at earliest, and the Trans-Siberian route is (under present conditions) proving itself incapable of accommodating the traffic which should properly come over it.

It seems clear that little could in any case be done to increase the volume of tonnage which reaches Russia by the two former of these routes, but there is good reason to believe that the Trans-Siberian Railway is physically capable of carrying very much more - if it could be operated on more scientific and economic lines.

For some time past this problem has been engaging the close attention of a powerful and responsible group of American financiers and Railway Presidents who have been impressed by the growing accumulations of munitions for Russia which have been made in America and which, owing to lack of transport facilities, are piling up and congesting the terminals at Seattle and Vladivostock. They realise, moreover, that these undelivered stocks represent merely the advanced guard of the great flood of munitions which Russia has ordered in the United States and England and which can hardly reach her during the present war unless existing facilities are enormously improved. They have therefore formed a powerful combination, or syndicate, representing the principal railroads which connect New York and the Middle West with Seattle, together with the American and Japanese Trans-Pacific Steamship lines which would form the connecting link with Vladivostock.

They have appointed as their representive, to submit their scheme to the British and Russian Governments, Mr. Samuel Hill who is well known in the American business world and who is armed with the necessary credentials.

Mr. Hill has explained to me the general scope of these proposals and has convinced me that they are worthy of the most careful examination and consideration.

They

They group themselves under three main heads:-

(a) Improvement of traffic facilities in the United States.

This is to be effected by the special co-operation of the Erie, Chicago and Great Western, and the Northern Pacific railway systems, which form a through connection between New York and the Pacific Coast.

(b) Increased shipping facilities from Seattle to Vladivostock.

These to be provided by the promised co-operation of the Pacific Coast Steamship Co., the Nippon Yusen Kaisha line, and the Russian "Volunteer Fleet".

(c) Additional equipment for the Trans-Siberian Railway, with a complete reorganisation of its terminal facilities <u>and its methods of operation</u>.

This last point is the crux of the whole problem and unless it is accepted by the Russian Government the whole scheme falls to the ground. It involves nothing less than the handing over to American railway experts of the entire responsibility for the management and operation of the Trans-Siberian railway from Vladivostock to the fighting front. This does not mean that the Russian operating and subordinate staffs would be displaced but that the posts of General Manager and Traffic Superintendent would be filled by American experts who would have to have full powers and responsibility. For the working head of this organisation the American Syndicate has already secured, provisionally, the services of Mr. J. F. Stevens, who was largely responsible for the building of the Great Northern Railway and the Panama Canal and who has the highest reputation as an Engineer and Railway Manager.

Whether such drastic proposals as these would ever be accepted by the Russian Government may well be open to doubt, (especially in view of its traditional objection to any kind of foreign interference) but the issues involved are so immense and urgent that the attempt is worth making.

The only possibilities of success lie in the following considerations:-

(A) The needs of Russia - with regard both to Munitions and railway equipment - are unsatisfied, and growing daily more insistent.

(B) The Russian demands (for railway equipment especially) cannot be satisfied under existing conditions and the Russian Government must know this.

(C)

(C) The American Railroads above referred to would be prepared to spare from their own systems, and from other sources available to them, a substantial amount of the additional equipment required by the Russian Government. They would, however, only be willing to do this on the condition that the equipment thus provided was utilised to the best advantage and under their own management.

(D) If by these means the carrying capacity of the Russian railways was largely increased, a much greater supply of heavy artillery and ammunition could be sent through from England, in time to reach the Russian armies before the campaign of next spring. Under existing conditions they could hardly be delivered until the summer of next year.

These considerations, if they can be satisfied, should prove a powerful inducement to the Russian Government, but it is hardly to be expected that they would be accepted, unless as the result of the most influential and persuasive pressure.

It is suggested that this could only be applied by a joint appeal of the British and French Governments, which should, preferably, be addressed to the Czar direct, and, if possible, in person by a Special Envoy accredited for the purpose. This would involve the sending of a Mission, (somewhat on the lines of that arranged for Lord Kitchener) which could at the same time undertake other and outstanding negotiations which might be pending between the British and Russian Governments.

19.8.16. D. Ll. G.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

August 21st., 1916.