

CONFIDENTIAL

18

88

MESOPOTAMIAN ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEEMeeting held on Monday, 19th March, 1917.

The provisional recommendations of the Committee were:

1. That the occupied territories in Mesopotamia, consisting at the present moment of the greater parts of the Basra and Baghdad Vilayets although they are at present and must for the time being remain in military occupation, should in the future be administered not by the Indian Government but by His Majesty's Government.
2. That, in view of the pledges that have already been given, and of the political interests involved, it will be necessary that the territory approximately contained in the Basra Vilayet should remain permanently under British administration.
3. That the boundaries of the region in question should be approximately a line drawn from Nasirieh, along the Shat-el-Hai through Kut-el-Amara to Bedrai on the West; along the Persian frontier (Pusht-i-Kuh) to the borders of Khuzistan and Arabistan on the North-east and East; and the present boundaries of the Basra Vilayet on the South.
4. That it would be premature to fix at present the exact northern or western boundaries of the Baghdad Vilayet, but that the region to be controlled from thence should be approximately that coloured in the Map attached to the Anglo-Franco-Russian agreement of 1915.
5. That it would be premature to determine at present what should be the precise form of Arab government to be ultimately set up in the Baghdad Vilayet and contiguous Arab sphere, but that the provisional British administration to be established in the occupied territories outside of the Basra Vilayet should be framed with a view to such a development in the future.
6. That the holy places, Nejef, Kerbela and Kazimain will thus remain in the Arab sphere and not be placed directly under British control. It was noted that the Shichs of India would be much perturbed at the establishment of a British Protectorate over the territory containing the Holy Places of their faith.
7. That it will be desirable to place the political control of Koweit under the suggested British administration of the Basra Vilayet.
8. That the question whether the head of such an administration, which will be directly under the Foreign Office, should reside in Basra or Baghdad, and what should be the title or scope of his office, cannot at present be determined.

- 2 -

9. That the British service which will administer the new Mesopotamian province or sphere should be, not the Indian Civil Service but a special service, either independent or connected with the Levant or other British services.- Doubtless in the initial stages Indian officers will be required.

10. That Arabistan being a Persian Province, the Sheikh of Mohammara being a Persian subject and the Karun River being an artery that flows entirely through Persian territory, it seems desirable that they should remain under the same form of political influence as will exist in the remainder of S. Persia.

11. That, under the revision of the Anglo-Russian Agreement about Persia that will be inevitable when the war is over, this influence will necessarily be a British influence, and will naturally be exercised by the Indian Government.

12. That the British sphere of influence, as exercised by the Indian Government, should include the Bakhtiari country, and the regions hitherto included in the neutral zone, i.e. the regions South of Ispahan, Yazd and Kerman. It will therefore be contiguous with the existing Russian sphere.

13. That the British Consuls or Officers in this region, i.e. at any or all of the following places: Mohammara, Ahwaz, Dizful, Shushter, Shiraz, Bushire, Lingah, Bunder Abbas, Kerman, etc. should be nominated by the Indian Government, although in the cases of Shiraz and Kerman (?) they would require to report also to the British Minister at Teheran.

14. That the Arab tribes on the West and Southern shores of the Persian Gulf from the Southern borders of Kowait to and including Muscat should remain as now under the Indian Government, i.e. under a British Resident at Bushire.

15. That the sphere of the Government of India should for the present include as now the Southern coasts of Arabia and the Hadramaut, leaving over the question of the future of Aden.

16. That it is not desirable at present to contemplate any disturbance of the Cairo sphere of influence, which should include Western Arabia (Hejaz, Asir and Yemen).

17. That a Sub-Committee consisting of Sir T. Holderness (Chairman), Sir A. Hirtzel, Sir H. Sykes, M.P. and Sir R. Graham, be appointed to investigate the details of the division between the Indian and Mesopotamian services, and the sources of recruitment for the latter, and to report to the Committee.

21st March 1917

(Sd) Mark Sykes