ABSTRACT

Persia's importance in the latter part of the nineteenth century stemmed from her position between the rapidly expanding Russian empire on one side and Great Britain's Indian empire on the other. Three departments in London—the Foreign Office, the India Office, and the War Office—were concerned with the affairs of that country. This study is, in part, an analysis of their interests.

British statesmen approached the Persian problem from two points of view. Some favoured building the country into a strong and truly independent buffer state. Then Persia, like Afghanistan, would constitute a substantial outwork in Indian defence and a barrier to the Russian movement south. Others, however, believed that the obstacles in the way of reform and regeneration were too great to be surmounted. Their alternative was agreement with Russia and the eventual division of the country into spheres of influence.

In the years of this study, from 1885 to 1892, Lord Salisbury was the dominating personality in foreign affairs. As a result of his previous service as Secretary of State for India he was keenly aware of the problems of Central Asia. Persia figured more prominently in his plans than in those of many of his colleagues. He upheld the principle of the buffer state, and he sent Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Tehran for the purpose of giving life to that policy.

Wolff's years in Persia, 1888 to 1891, were successful ones. He sponsored measures, such as the opening of the Karun river to navigation
and the establishment of the Imperial Bank, which would promote the welfare of Persia as well as strengthen the position of England there. Simultaneously, however, he carried on the negotiations for an understanding with Russia.
BRITISH POLICY IN PERSIA, 1885-1892

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Iran, or Ariana, designates the region to which the Aryans migrated, and it is sometimes translated "Land of the Aryans." Persia is a corruption of the name of the province Parsa, later Pars, in the southwest. The Achaemenid dynasty chose this region as the site for its elaborate palaces and capitals. When the Greeks and Romans extended their empires into the East they found in Parsa a highly developed centre of civilization and power. They applied the term Parsa, slightly changed to Persia by the Greeks, to the much larger area of the whole Achaemenid empire. The Romans modified the word still further into its present form—Persia. For centuries, therefore, Persia has denoted an entire political entity, not merely the original province. In this study, in accordance with the tradition in Western nations, the term Persia will be applied to the country ruled by the Shah in the nineteenth century.

The term Iranian plateau has a geographical, not a political, significance, and it includes Afghanistan and Baluchistan as well as Persia. This plateau is an immense tableland between two lowlands—the Mesopotamian valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the west and the Indus valley on the east. The level of the tableland itself averages three thousand to five thousand feet, but it is rimmed on all
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE LAND OF THE KAJARS

A country called Iran or Persia has played some part in history for as long as records can be traced. The two words—Iran and Persia—are often used interchangeably, but their meanings are different. Iran, or Ariana, designates the region to which the Aryans migrated, and it is sometimes translated "land of the Aryans." Persia is a corruption of the name of the province Parsa, later Fars, in the southwest. The Achaemid dynasty chose this region as the site for its elaborate palaces and capitals. When the Greeks and Romans extended their empires into the East they found in Parsa a highly developed centre of civilization and power. They applied the term Parsa, slightly changed to Persis by the Greeks, to the much larger area of the whole Achaemid empire. The Romans modified the word still further into its present form—Persia. For centuries, therefore, Persia has denoted an entire political entity, not merely the original province. In this study, in accordance with the tradition in Western nations, the term Persia will be applied to the country ruled by the Shah in the nineteenth century.

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sides by loftier mountain walls. The interior highland, though overshadowed by mountain ramparts, is frequently called a depression or basin. The Iranian plateau comprises an area of approximately one million square miles of which Persia occupies nearly two thirds. Thus the country can be pictured as a high, arid plateau outlined on three sides by much taller mountain walls. The interior, however, is not flat since innumerable low mountain ranges run parallel to the outer chains. In spite of its mountain boundary fortification, Persia is accessible. The frequency with which the nation has been crossed by both traders and invaders testifies to that point. That it is a land between two seas—the Caspian and the Persian Gulf—suggests a possible means of entrance.

Once the Caspian Sea was Persian. Much of the territory in Russia's Caucasus provinces had also belonged to Persia. In the northeast her boundaries had stretched to that river around which so much of Central Asia's history and legend revolved—the Oxus, by whose shores Sohrab bled and died. But the Persia over which Shah Naser-ed-din ruled from 1848 to 1896 was a shrunken country. The Atrak river, which flows hundreds of miles south and west of the yellow waters of the Oxus, formed part of Persia's northeastern boundary after 1881.

In the west the Aras river, the Araxes of classical times, had from 1828 onwards separated the kingdom of the Shah from the empire of

1 Memorandum by Hertalet, respecting the boundary between Persia and Russia; and the Understanding between Great Britain and Russia as to the Maintenance of the Independence and Integrity of Persia, 22 April 1874. F.O. 251/57.
the Czar.

In spite of these diminutions the area over which the Shah ruled remained surprisingly large. Its 628,000 square miles surpassed the combined land area of the British Isles, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. Its sparsity of population was as striking as its size. When George Nathaniel Curzon travelled through Persia in 1890, he wrote:

As regards the population, which is estimated (not, however, upon any trustworthy basis of calculation) at from seven and one half to eight millions, the ruined cities and deserted towns show that it must once have largely exceeded this total; while the long lines of choked up kanats \[\text{irrigation tunnels}\], and wide acres that have relapsed into sand and stones, show the paralysis that has overtaken the agricultural interests, and transformed the country from what historians describe as a garden to what travellers denounce as a desert.\(^2\)

The first American Minister to Tehran, Mr. Samuel Benjamin, guessed Persia's population to be nearer nine millions, however.\(^3\)

The climate varies tremendously from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian. The humid heat of the Gulf is legendary and has provided the traveller with a tale of horror for hundreds of years. The key ports ofOrmuz and Bundar Abbas, vital to any power coveting ascendancy in the Gulf, have been described scathingly by merchants and soldiers, and the Persian Gulf itself has the reputation of being the hottest

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2 Special article in *The Times*, 31 January 1890.

body of water in the world. The gunboats of the British and Indian Navies which patrolled that sea for pirates and slave dealers had to be of a special heat-proof construction in order that their crews might survive. At some points around the Gulf the people proudly boast of a record temperature of 189° F. Ralph Fitch wrote in 1583 of Bundar Abbas:

Nature seemed not to have designed it should be inhabited. It is situated at the foot of a ridge of mountains of excessive height; the air you breathe seems to be on fire; mortal vapours continually exhale from the bowels of the earth; the fields are black and dry as if they had been scorched with fire. 1

Interior Persia has a climate unique enough to merit a separate classification—Iran type. This name is applied to interior basins at high elevations in warm temperate latitudes. In winter the cold is sharp, hovering around freezing with frequent dips to zero; while in summer the cloudless skies and dry air combine to produce intense heat with temperatures well above 100° F. Therefore, despite the height, the summer climate of the plateau is not pleasant. An officer who had lived in Persia for more than twenty years recalled the June of 1896 in Shushtar "with the thermometer registering the shade temperature with monotonous regularity at 129°." 2

1 Quoted in George Nathaniel Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), II, l21.

Persia is dry as well as hot in the summer. Rainfall is scanty over the plateau, and it usually does not exceed fourteen inches per year. Snow falls during the wintertime on the mountains, and provides water for irrigation if properly handled when it melts. The Persians could not, as the Romans did, build open aqueducts since the hot sun and winds would soon evaporate the exposed water. Instead, long subterranean tunnels called kanats radiated out from the village to water pockets in the surrounding hills or mountains. The underground channels choke up easily, however, and without their reconstruction an entire settlement may disappear. Since most of Persia's people were agriculturalists who lived in small villages of from fifteen to forty mud houses, a proper irrigation system was vitally important to the country. But the nineteenth century found Persia's irrigation works in a crumbling state. Water has undoubtedly been the country's most precious resource, and attention to the problem of supplying adequate amounts "brought Iran prosperity in the past; neglect of it led to her decay."

The paucity of rivers handicaps the country. The Karun of the

1 Stamp, op. cit., p. 153.

2 Quotation from Laurence Paul Elwell-Sutton, Modern Iran (London: George Routledge, 1911), p. 82
southwest, however, is truly magnificent. Rising in the heart of the Bakhtiar mountain country it rushes through tortuous gorges until it turns sharply southward towards the Persian Gulf just north of Shushtar. Persia had no other navigable river and few roads, but the Karun was not utilized for commerce until 1888 when the Shah, at British instigation, opened it to the world as a trade route.

The Karun winds through the provinces of Luristan and Arabistan (Khuzistan), and belongs to the old fertile crescent area. Once this locality was the centre of a flourishing empire, but by the nineteenth century only the long-deteriorating ruins gave evidence of wealth. Large mounds marked the site of former dwellings; stone columns and broken pottery were met at every turn. But the great dams which had harnessed the river's water had been useless for centuries. Instead of thousands of acres under cultivation only a few settlements dotted the Karun's banks and for many years it had been used mainly by the nomadic Arabs, Lurs, and Bakhtiaris who paused briefly by its shores to water their wandering flocks. The regions


which once were granaries had turned into wastelands, but many writers
still hold that much of the land could be restored to productivity
by an intensive irrigation and reclamation scheme.

Some localities, however, seem to be condemned to eternal desicca-
tion. The most casual examination of a map of Persia will disclose a
glaring and imposing blank in the eastern and central sections of the
country. Perhaps the words Dasht-i-Kavir and Dasht-i-Lut may spread
boldly across an otherwise vacant space. Here lie the great deserts
which have been termed "the dead heart of Persia." Statistics regarding
their exact sizes are lacking, but some writers estimate that the
two account for one third of Persia's land area.

The salt deserts begin in the northwest near Tehran and stretch
southeastward for nearly five hundred miles. The two are often de-
scribed as merging together, but a low range of hills which consti-
tutes the main caravan trail of the east central area separates the
Kavir in the north from the Lut in the south at about the thirty-fourth

1 Arthur Millsbaugh, Americans in Persia (Washington: Brookings Insti-
tute, 1946), pp. 4-5.
Stamp, op. cit., p. 158.
Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, I, 9-11; II, 306, 344, 491-
92.
Some writers, however, maintain that the decrease in population and
productivity has been caused by climatic changes and increasing
aridity. See for example Sykes, History of Persia, I, 11-14.


3 William S. Haas, Iran (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946),
p. 51.
Elgin Groseclose, Introduction to Iran (Oxford: University Press,
1947), pp. 4-5.
parallel of latitude. Both forbid human settlements, and are rarely 
crossed. The Kavir, however, apparently surpasses the Lut in its al-
most complete absence of vegetation. The latter does grudgingly give 
life to a few miserable shrubs and some poisonous snakes. The Kavir 
has the reputation of being outside the ice packs around the poles, 
the largest "absolutely barren" region on earth. The former American 
financial adviser, Arthur Millspaugh, wrote of the Kavir: "This of 
all deserts in the world is probably the most lifeless, the most track-
less, and the most hopeless."

The influence of the two deserts is great. They reduce tremen-
dously the useful land area, and they make the task of government more 
difficult. Driven like a great wedge through the nation, they separate 
parts of eastern Persia from the rest of the country—a detachment 
which makes effective control over the outlying portions almost impos-
sible. Rebellious chiefs and contenders for the throne, if defeated, 
have often escaped into the vast expanses. The scorching heat in 
summer, bitter cold in winter, quicksands, moving hills and windstorms, 
and poisonous vermin took their toll of those who dared to enter—but 
some survived to challenge authority another day. That the British 
took note of this geographical feature is illustrated by Curzon's ob-
servation:

1 Millspaugh, op. cit., p. 3.
2 Sykes, History of Persia, I, 21-22.
Should it ever be the fate of Persia to submit to territorial and political partition, nature has, in this part at any rate, saved the contracting or conflicting parties the expense and trouble of a Boundary Commission.¹

Other regions are more pleasant. In the northern provinces around the Caspian enough rain falls to cover the Elburz mountains with dense forests and luxuriant vegetation. Conditions differ so markedly that one geographer has referred to Gilan, Mazanderan, and Azerbaijan as comprising the "alien Caspian province...alien in scenery, in climate, in history."²

Gilan and Mazanderan have a transmontane maritime belt almost four hundred miles long, varying between twenty and sixty miles in width. This belt is situated between the Caspian and the Elburz. Along the coast where the waves of the sea meet the shore, the wash of the surf and the violence of the winds have combined to form sandhills. Between and beyond these hills, low morasses and lagoons appear and eventually merge into the densely forested area of trees which thrive in swampy soil. From the lagoons the jungle moves inland to the base of the mountains. Only with a skilled guide is travel feasible, but many villages are scattered throughout this malarial jungle. Sugar, cotton, and rice—the staple products of the two provinces—grow abundantly in the village clearings.

Beyond the marshes and jungles rise the foothills of the Elburz.

¹ Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, II, 251.
Thick forests with innumerable varieties of trees (walnut, ash, oak, elm, maple, box, beech, and juniper) give the birds and animals a real paradise. Among the larger game animals are tigers, leopards, wolves, bears, wild boar, jackals, lynx, and deer. Towns, surrounded by orchards and gardens abounding in every variety of fruit and vegetable, appear in the valleys. The windward side of the Elburz, alone in Persia, receives generous amounts of rainfall. Sericulture once made Gilan world famous, but disease badly crippled that industry in the nineteenth century. The lucrative fishing industry further enhanced the value of the Persian Caspian crescent.

Azerbaijan, bordering Russia in the extreme northwest, has long been the richest and most densely populated of the Shah's provinces. Its agriculturalists live in the valleys in the Aras, the Kuzil Uzun, the Sefid Rud, and in the fertile Lake Rezaieh (formerly Lake Uremieh) basin. Nevertheless, a sizable nomadic element, principally Kurdish, roamed over the uplands here as elsewhere in Persia. The capital of the province, Tabriz, was the Tauris of classical times, and in the nineteenth century it was the busiest commercial centre of the country. Traditionally, the Valiahd (Heir Apparent) governed this prize possession—a custom unfortunate for the British because of Russia's

proximity and her intrenchment there. One of England's ablest Ministers to Persia, Sir Arthur Hardinge, described Nasr-ed-din's son and successor as "a weak, childish and ignorant puppet, brought up, whilst acting as nominal viceroy of Azerbaijan, in an atmosphere of subservience to Russia."

In southwestern Persia, in Luristan and Khuzistan, the highlands were excellent for grazing. The melting of the winter snow enabled trees to grow on the mountains and made pasturage available in the valleys. The density of its timber was surpassed only by Gilan and Mezanderan. Here the most powerful tribes had their strongholds, and visitors who encountered them held emphatic but divergent views about their character and habits. Some considered them uncouth and without honour. One traveller referred to the typical Lur as "an undiluted swine" whose philosophy could be expressed in the slogan "your money or your life."

The physical features of the country---its mountain and desert combination---inevitably produced a nomadic population, remote and difficult to control. All of the tribal units possessed an unbounded spirit of independence, resented any type of authority, looked with contempt upon the agriculturalists, and were willing to defend their concept of freedom by force if provoked. A Persian proverb summarized their outlook:


I and my tribe against the nation. I and my cousins against the tribe. I and my brothers against my cousins. I against my brothers.

The Bakhtiaris, Kurds, Lurs, as well as the Turcomans of Khorassan, ranked with the best in the world as warriors. Any government would have found them a challenge, and to Shah Nasr-ed-din they presented an insuperable barrier to coordination.

In the 1890's Persia's urban population was small. The only city which numbered more than 200,000 people was the relatively new capital, Tehran. When the Turkish Kajar tribe revolted and inaugurated a new ruling line in the latter part of the eighteenth century they moved the capital city from Isfahan to Tehran—nearer to their tribal home. This new location presented many problems for the British since Tehran lies well to the north near the Russian border.

Russia and England were both interested in the land of the Kajars. In the early years of the nineteenth century the Russians pushed down from the Caucasus and extracted substantial territorial cessions by treaties concluded in 1813 and 1828. By the latter part of the century, however, the centre of pressure had moved from Azerbaijan in the west to Khorassan, which occupied a similar position in the east. The Perso-Russian frontier stretched along a 1,200 mile line from Turkey's Ararat to the Perso-Afghan village of Sarakhs.

Russia's objectives in Persia were frequently discussed, but they seemed to elude precise definition. Some believed that she hoped to obtain a port on the Gulf. Others held that she aimed at incorporating
the four northern provinces in order to enhance the wealth of Imperial Russia—but still others thought that the Shah's kingdom might be used as a convenient route for the eventual conquest of India.

The British based their analyses of Russian motives less on the spurious will of Peter the Great than on the writings of Russian generals, the facts connected with her expansion in Central Asia, and the tenor of her important newspapers—but the following passage from that apocryphal testament was often quoted in contemporary writings:

Hasten the decadence of Persia, penetrate to the Persian Gulf, re-establish the ancient commerce of the Levant, and advance to the Indies, which are the treasure-house of the world.

In the east the British were Persia's neighbours from Zulficar to Gwattar—a distance of approximately eight hundred miles. The Seistan basin, on the Perso-Afghan border, was most important to the British since it commanded the valley of the Helmund and with it a route to India. Charles Christie had called attention to its importance in the early part of the last century, and from that time forward the question of Seistan, like that of Herat, persistently re-emerged. Curzon stressed its strategical worth in one of his letters to The Times.

1 Laurence Lockhart, "The 'Political Testament' of Peter the Great," Slavonic Review, XIV (1936), 438-441.


...if Russia reaches Seistan before Britain, a more serious blow will have been dealt to British influence in the East, and even at British power in India, than would be involved in the capture of Balich or the fall of Herat.¹

Seistan had from time to time belonged to Persia, but in the nineteenth century the Shah's authority was vaguely felt in the area and much of it was either quasi-independent or under Afghan rule. The population, however, was predominantly Persian. A British commission had, at the Shah's request, demarcated the boundary in 1872. By their award, approximately half the area---or 950 square miles---went to Persia.

The potentiality of this basin was not limited to its command of one of the gates to India. In other times it had been known as the granary of Asia, but the region had never recovered from Tamerlane's devastation. In the nineteenth century it supported only 100,000 people, but its rich alluvial soil was capable of great production if the waters of the Helmund were properly channelled. The British feared that the area might be occupied, developed by the Russians, and then used as a base for moving troops towards India or the sea. As Valentine Chirolo put it:

Seistan...alone, amidst the wildernesses of Eastern Persia would afford her [Russia], in virtue of its natural resources and of its geographical position a tempting field for economic and political expansion, as well as a strategic base for

¹ Special article in The Times, 21 December 1889.

future military operations. Seistan lies midway athwart the track of the shortest line which could be built to connect the Trans-Caspian Railway with the Indian Ocean.¹

In the closing years of the last century, the "sands of Seistan" became a scene of lively activity, and the "meeting point of the advanced pioneers of British and Russian influence."²

Since the British were Persia's neighbours in the east and since the Navy maintained virtually unchallenged supremacy in the Gulf, it would seem that England's dominance in those regions paralleled Russia's sway in the north. Such a comparison, however, is not valid. Persia's northern provinces bordered on a portion of Russia proper in which strategic transportation facilities were being constantly developed. The Imperial Government could at any time order thousands of soldiers to march against the Shah's forces. The problem of supply was almost non-existent. With such proximity and overwhelming military superiority, the Russians could speak persuasively at Tehran.

The position in the east and south was by no means so advantageous. British control over Afghanistan consisted mainly of keeping other powers out. Baluchistan had recently been incorporated,

¹ Valentine Chirol, Middle Eastern Question or Some Problems of Indian Defence (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 285.

² The Government of India to the Secretary of State for India in Council, 21 September 1899; Cd. 3882, Persia No. 1 (1908), p. 6. This Command Paper reproduces only an extract from a Government of India dispatch relative to British policy in Persia.
and was one of the most advanced points of the Indian frontier. The Perso-Baluch land connection was unacceptable as a route for reaching Persia until roads and railways were constructed. The other feasible means of entry was via the Persian Gulf. This entailed a debilitating sea journey for the soldiers before reaching the country, hard marches into the interior over roads little better than caravan trails, and almost prohibitive supply lines. Moreover, the Persian Gulf was not a mare clausum, and hostile powers could menace the British troops en route.

The Russians imposed Persia's northern boundary upon her, and British commissions supervised the delimitation of her frontiers with Afghanistan and Baluchistan. The British-controlled Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf clearly marked her southern limits from Gwattar to the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab—a distance of nearly nine hundred miles. Turkey on the west completed the encirclement. Persia's relations with both Afghanistan and Turkey were embittered by religious cleavages. The majority of Persians were Moslems belonging to the Shiite sect, but the Afghans and Turks held to the Sunnite faith. Antagonisms between these two branches of the Moslem religion reached fanatical heights, and often resulted in persecutions. Moreover, the Turkish possession of the sacred Shiite shrines of Kerbela and Najef rankled with the Persians as much as Afghan rule over Herat—a fortress over which the standard of the Lion and the Sun had often floated. Persia's relations with her neighbours to the east and to the west were
far from friendly, but the real foreign impact came from the north and south—from the Russians and the British. The American Minis-
ter in Tehran wrote: "The Representatives of the other Powers in-
cluding your own are merely lookers on and watchers of the game
which the two Powers, above named, are playing."

The Marquis of Wellesley, by dispatching Cecil Buxton on a mis-
mission to Tehran in 1799, took the initial step in bringing Persia
into the orbit of Indian foreign policy. For nearly 15 years
thereafter Persia as a quantity entered into the calculations of

1. Hamilton to Curzon, Private, 26 January 1902. Papers of the Confer-
dence, India, Part II, Vol. V, Fac. Hamilton Papers, Library of
Congress.

2. For a summary of Great Britain's traditional policy see Longuay
on Hardenge, unnumbered, September 1901.

3. The Foreign Office, 16 September 1901. Lewis papers.

4. The Foreign Office, 19 September 1901. Lewis papers.

5. Documents on the Making of the War (III series), London


Winston to Bayard, Diplomatic Series No. 14, 20 April 1886.
Persia, II, American Department of State.
CHAPTER II

INDIAN INTERESTS AND MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS IN PERSIA

Persia's geographical position, between the rapidly expanding Russian empire on one side and Great Britain's Indian empire on the other, gave to that country a diplomatic importance greater than that of other, more powerful nations. Throughout the nineteenth century Persia was a buffer state—the "outer glacis of an extreme bastion." The Shah's domain and that of his neighbour the Amir served as outworks in Indian defence.

The Marquis of Wellesley, by dispatching Mehdi Ali Khan on a mission to Tehran in 1799, took the initial step in bringing Persia into the orbit of Indian foreign policy. For nearly 150 years thereafter Persia as a quantity entered into the calculations of


2 For a summary of Great Britain's traditional policy see Lansdowne to Hardinge, unnumbered, September, 1901. Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, 14 September 1901. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers. This draft dispatch was submitted to Salisbury, revised, and sent to Tehran. The document is reproduced in George F. Gooch, Harold Temperley, Lillian M. Penson (editors), British Documents on the Origins of the War (Il vols.; London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926-1938); hereafter cited as B. D. Lansdowne to Hardinge, No. 2, 6 January 1902. IV, 369-71.


those who planned the defence of the Indian Empire. Persia's role might be described as a variable since it changed radically according to the circumstances of the moment—such as the geographical proximity of Russia and the state of relations between England and Russia in Europe—and it also changed according to the school of frontier policy in ascendancy at a given time. But Persia as a quantity was ever present.

England's position vis-à-vis Russia acted as a powerful conditioning factor in the determination of Persian policy, and unless viewed against its Anglo-Russian background the conduct of Britain in Persia presents a series of mystifying variations. The British emphasized commercial interests, then sacrificed them; cooperated with the Shah as a friend and ally, then made war on him; urged reforms for the improvement of the country; then failed to encourage those reforms when they appeared; blocked Russian advances into the Iranian area, then cooperated in the promotion of Russia's "natural

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interests" there. Yet all these apparent reversals and seeming inconsistencies become at least comprehensible and to a large extent justifiable when looked at from both the European and Asiatic and not merely the local point of view. The basic decisions involved the line taken towards Russia as well as the measures agreed upon for the defence of India. The course pursued in Persia had to be contingent upon these larger choices. Typical of this situation was Lord Derby's request for India Office opinion on a question which had arisen in Persia "bearing in mind the very delicate peculiar relations now existing between England and Russia."

Uneasiness characterized the spirit of Anglo-Russian relations, and negotiations were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual distrust which sometimes flared into open hostility. Even Sir John Lawrence admitted that Russia's approach to India was "fraught with trouble and danger." Of Lord Roberts it has been written: "through his Indian service, dispassionately and without panic, he assumed the

1 The best published survey of Anglo-Persian relations from 1799 to 1875 is given in the first two chapters of Rawlinson, op. cit. See also George Nathaniel Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), II, 605-7.


2 Minute by Lord Derby (2/3 July) on Foreign Office draft to India Office, 28 June 1877. F.O. 65/990.

3 Memorandum by Lawrence on the Central Asian Question, 4 November 1871. F.O. 65/904.
certainly of a struggle in Asia with Russia." India lacked the military strength to deal with Russia alone, and in any serious conflict depended upon reinforcements. Therefore, the War Office was directly concerned with Central Asian and Persian affairs.

Great Britain's nineteenth century interest in the Shah's kingdom was confined neither to strategic considerations nor to commercial interests. These conditions constituted a firm tie, but the needs of India overshadowed all other factors in the determination of policy. Lord Salisbury once declared: "were it not for our possessing India, we should trouble ourselves but little about Persia." Over a decade later Lord George Hamilton reaffirmed that principle: "the more you investigate the sources of our interest in Persia the clearer it becomes that they are almost exclusively Indian." The

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3 Indian Office to Foreign Office, 16 May 1890. F.O. 60/506. Indian contributions for China Establishments, East Indian Squadron, and Persian Mission respectively. Memorandum drawn up at the Treasury, recording the several Agreements made between the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and India, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the First Lord of the Admiralty, at a Conference held in the Foreign Office, on 26 March 1890. F.O. 60/517.

4 Hamilton to Curzon, Private, 7 November 1901. Private Correspondence, India, Part II, Vol. VI, Pte Hamilton Papers, India Office Library.
administration of the Legation at Tehran was under the jurisdiction of the India Office from 1823 to 1835 and again in 1858 and 1859. From 1860 onward the Foreign Office exercised control, but the Government of India continued to pay a substantial sum (five-twelfths) of the costs of British establishments in Persia. That this arrangement did not give complete satisfaction, however, is evident by Lord Salisbury's assertion in 1879 that "the whole Legation ought to be handed over to India." In later years, while continuing to recognize the primacy of India's interests, he believed that the transfer was impossible if for no other reason than the intractable attitude of the Shah who imagined that control from India relegated the affairs of his country to a lower level.

Persia's dual significance, her relationship to India and to Russia, rendered it inevitable that the formulation of policy towards her would be a slow and complex process. Its determination involved three offices in London—the Foreign Office, India Office, and War Office—the Government of India, the Minister in Tehran, and the Ambassador in St. Petersburgh. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office bore by

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1 Rawlinson, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

2 Minute by Lord Salisbury to India Office to Foreign Office, 17 July 1879. F.O. 60/426.
far the greatest responsibility.

Both Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery, however, appreciated India's vital concern, and reached their conclusions only after careful consultations with the India Office. On important issues, the opinions of the Government of India were weighed as well. During the years from 1885 to 1892 the tripartite control of the three major bodies—the Foreign Office, India Office, and Government of India—was characterized by its essential harmony and unity of purpose. Occasionally, however, conflicting advice induced the Foreign Secretary to rely on the discretion of the British representative in Tehran. One of the most striking evidences is the following. There are few such examples, however.

...under the circumstances—considering that F.O.—I.O. ---& I.G.—have all different views on the subject: & that Persia says one thing here and another at Tehran—I think Nicolson ought to be allowed to act according to his own judgment....2

The Russians set the tone of Anglo-Persian relations by their relentless advance through Central Asia in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Reactions to that southward drive occurred in Persia, in India, and in England. Shah Naṣr-ʿed-dīn remembered that his grand-

1 Indian Contributions for China Establishments, East Indian Squadron, and Persian Mission, respectively. Memorandum drawn up etc..., 26 March 1890. F.O. 60/517.
Salisbury to Nicolson, No. 45, 21 May 1887. F.O. 60/485.

2 Minute by Lord Salisbury (4 October) on Foreign Office Memorandum on Afghan refugees, 3 October 1887. F.O. 65/1323.
father had once ruled Georgia, Dagestan, and Karabagh, and that his
domain had also included the Caspian Sea. The loss of all these ter-
ritories together with the recognition of Russia's exclusive rights
over the Caspian was the price Fath Ali Shah paid for having the Czar
as his neighbour in the northwest. As Russian generals possessed
with the "K. C. B. mania" pushed nearer to Persia along a line stretch-
ing for hundreds of miles east of the Caspian, Nasr-ed-din and his min-
isters became progressively more alarmed. The Persians appealed to
England for protection.

The Government of India, too, watched anxiously. No longer was
Russia's approach regarded as a vague menace which might require at-
tention some day. Lord Lytton described her encroachment upon India's
frontiers as a "very real, a very close, and a very ponderable, dan-
ger." Steps were taken to meet the challenge. Little could be
accomplished without accurate information on Russian movements and
apparent intentions. Therefore, a succession of Indian military of-
icers proceeded to Khorassan and Baluchistan with orders to organize
an intelligence service and to inject an element of stability into the

1 Aitchison, op. cit., p. 8; Appendix No. V, Translation of the treaty
of Gulistan between Russia and Persia, 1813, pp. xv-xviii; Appendix
No. VII, Translation of the treaty of Turcmanchai between Russia and
Persia, 1828, pp. xxiii-xxxiv.

2 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 2 June 1876. Bound volume, Letters
from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.

3 Lytton to Salisbury, Private, 16 July 1877. B. M. Add. MSS. 39,164,
Vol. CGXXXIV, Pte Layard Papers.
border regions if possible. The Government of India, prodded by Lord Roberts, also prepared for "eventualities" by drawing up elaborate defence plans. These were submitted to the Home Government for revision. In the field of frontier policy the British sought to bolster the remaining buffer states and to strengthen Britain's position in Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and Persia. Afghanistan and Baluchistan were transformed into protectorates. For Persia, more remote and more nearly resembling a modern national state, the protectorate solution seemed unwise. In the period under consideration and for years thereafter many able men, in London and in India, grappled with the Persian question but with such lack of success that it almost seemed as if the fates had elected that the Persian problem would

1 Memorandum by E. B., 18 December 1882. F.O. 65/1153.
Foreign Secretary, Viceroy's Camp, Rangoon, to Colonel Charles S. Maclean, No. 7, Secret telegram, 6 February 1886. F.O. 65/1147.
Secretary to the Government of India to Brigadier General Charles S. Maclean, No. 20057, 6 October 1887. F.O. 24/1450.


Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 5 May 1876; Same to same, Private, 26 May 1876; Same to same, Private, 4 August 1876. Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.
remain unsolved and forever "very tiresome and very serious."

The conquest of Khiva in 1873 induced the Shah to make representations to England which brought the whole Persian question into focus. The Government of India examined the factors carefully and submitted to London separate minutes by the Viceroy and all the members of his Council. Their suggestions met with scant approval in the Foreign Office as Lord Tenterden noted: "what they...the Government of India...seem to me to be aiming at is an English Protectorate over Persia."

In reality, the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, did not advocate, as did Napier of Magdala, a guarantee of territorial inviolability, but he emphasized Persia's importance to the Empire and put forward several concrete proposals to be undertaken for mutual advantage—such as the improvement of communications between the Gulf and the capital and the reorganization of the Shah's army by Indian officers.

The India Office, as illustrated by Lord Salisbury's endorsement of the Viceroy's minute and by Sir Henry Rawlinson's memoranda, advocated a milder course than a guarantee and protectorate but deprecated

1 Minute by Grey (21 October) on O'Beirne to Grey, No. 252, Telegram, Confidential, 19 October 1911; E. D., X, Part I, 613.
2 Enclosures in Government of India, Foreign Department, to Secretary of State for India, No. 123 of 1875, Secret, 7 June 1875. F.O. 60/377.
3 Minute by Lord Tenterden on India Office to Foreign Office, 17 August 1875. Minute undated. F.O. 60/377.
4 Enclosures in Government of India, Foreign Department, to Secretary of State for India, No. 123 of 1875, Secret, 7 June 1875. F.O. 60/377.
the policy of drift. Lord Salisbury reiterated the reasons for constructing roads and railways from the Gulf towards the central cities and ultimately to Tehran. He also favoured giving the Shah diplomatic support at St. Petersburgh.

Rawlinson, drawing on his forty years of experience in the East, perceived that a "juste milieu" had to be found between an aggressive policy which would provoke a collision with Russia and lethargic inaction which would inevitably end in Persia's complete submission to her neighbour in the north. Differences might arise over the suitability of the suggestions, but Rawlinson was convinced that at least one point could not be doubted.

Some activity must be shown, some expense, some responsibility must be incurred, if we are to arrest the downward course of events which are rapidly converting Persia into an outlying Russian dependency.

The ensuing years saw no satiation of the Russian appetite for land, and Lord Salisbury wrote in 1877: "The one absorbing question is our policy towards Russia." As the generals carried their standard nearer Merv, Persia attracted more attention since the Shah claimed a

1 India Office to Foreign Office, 17 August 1875. F. O. 60/377.
2 India Office to Foreign Office, 6 August 1874. F. O. 60/106.
3 Enclosures in India Office to Foreign Office, 13 October 1874. Memoranda on the Persian Question by Rawlinson, 5 and 12 October 1874. F. O. 60/368.
4 Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 137.
vague suzerainty over the Turcoman tribes of that area. The Viceroy and his Council again exhaustively reviewed the Russo-Persian situation with special reference to the fate of Merv, and sent a unanimous recommendation to London urging the utilization of Persia to stem Russia's advance. The Government of India asked that "no time...be lost in making every possible effort to restore British influence at Teheran," offered a number of suggestions for immediate action, and even volunteered some "pecuniary sacrifice" for the attainment of their objectives.

Neither the Foreign Office nor the India Office was prepared to accept this scheme in toto, but they did not brush it lightly aside. Some of the moderate proposals for strengthening Persia received favourable endorsement, and the British Ambassador in St. Petersburgh was instructed to make clear the "evil consequences" that would follow the occupation of Merv. Probably this firmness accounts, at least in part, for the postponement of the disappearance of the tribal territories surrounding the oasis as independent entities. The Indian authorities, however, regretted that all of their proposals had not been energetically applied. Sir Owen Burne wrote to Lord Lytton: "Do you ever read and re-read your Despatch of 2 July 1877? It gives me great satisfaction

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1 Government of India, Foreign Department, to the Secretary of State for India, No. 21 of 1877, Secret, 2 July 1877. F.O. 65/992.

2 Foreign Office draft to Loftus, No. 244, 13 June 1877. F.O. 65/990.
   India Office to Government of India, No. 68, Secret, 13 October 1877. F.O. 65/992.
Less than a decade later, the Turcomans of Merv and Penjdeh owed their allegiance to the Czar. The British considered the capitulation serious. Sir Mortimer Durand, then Under-Secretary in the Indian Foreign Office, wrote in his diary: "The Russian question has assumed an altogether new phase." One of the ramifications of this new phase in Anglo-Russian relations was a more energetic policy in Persia.

No longer did the remote Government of India stand alone in exhorting for decisive action. The India Office, alarmed by the Merv and Penjdeh incidents, took the initiative. In the years from 1885 to 1892 three men held the post of Secretary of State for India—Lord Kimberley, Lord Randolph Churchill, and Lord Cross. The Liberal representative, Lord Kimberley, supervised the work of that office several times during his career. His numerous minutes and long private letters portray not only a conscientious and assiduous minister, but also a head of department who directed affairs with penetrating insight and a sure hand. In 1885, however, the Penjdeh crisis was the all-ab-


sorbing topic, and his brief return from February to August, 1886, gave little opportunity for originality in policy. Lord Kimberley did not underestimate the importance of Persia. After Germany refused to cooperate with England in developing the country, however, he despaired of saving its northern regions. British energies, he maintained, should be concentrated in the south. His attitude towards Russian expansion and its bearing upon India is set forth in the following minute.

In two or three years at longest the Russian railway will be extended to Merv or perhaps nearer their new frontiers. The difficulties of transport etc. will then be greatly lessened. Further, I fully anticipate that ere long Khorasan will fall into the hands of Russia. A march to Herat will then be comparatively easy, and it can hardly be maintained that, when the Russians are firmly established in the Herat district, India will be inaccessible to them except by a "gigantic" effort. Russia, it must be recollected, has a very large army composed of troops (putting aside her Central Asian irregulars), more than a match for any but our best native troops (of whom we have but a limited number). Poland and the Caucasus and the preservation of internal order in her vast and not very contented Empire absorb, it is true, a great number of these troops: but still, allowing for this, she has a powerful force at her disposal for a foreign expedition, and her position on the Caspian, communicating with the interior of her Empire and the Volga, and with the Black Sea via Tiflis is very favourable for the movement of such a force towards India.

Without pursuing the matter further I have said enough to show why I am strongly of opinion that India should have

1 Kimberley to Ripon, Private, 25 July 1884; Same to same, Private, 8 August 1884. Bound volume, Letters to the Marquis of Ripon, January 1884 to November 1884. Pte Kimberley Papers.
Foreign Office draft dispatch (written by Granville and revised by Kimberley) to Thomson, 16 August 1884. F.O. 65/1209.
Minute by Kimberley, 1 April 1886, to Persian Correspondence, Nos. 30-35, received March 1886. Persian Correspondence, 1886, Vol. CIX, India Office Records.
a properly armed frontier, such as exists between the great Continental States.

If we settle our present difference with Russia, we shall have an interval which she will use to improve her means of aggression. If we on our side use it diligently to put our frontier in a real state of defence, we have no reason to dread the future, but on this condition only.¹

The Penjdeh crisis had not passed through its acute stage when a Conservative government came to power. Lord Randolph Churchill succeeded Lord Kimberley. Writing to Lord Salisbury a decade later, Sir Philip Currie's thoughts carried him back through the years; he recalled: "when you formed your Government in 1878 (and said) that the India Office would be a padded room for that restless being." Restless, Lord Randolph proved to be. Communications between the India Office and the Foreign Office increased in volume, and the Indian Secretary pressed for vigorous action in Persia. Lord Randolph's plans were bold, but they also appear to have been well conceived and the product of careful thought. How much the "new order" owed to Lord Randolph Churchill, however, is questionable. His minutes were infrequent. Moreover, for several years the permanent staff of the India Office had advocated a more forceful line against Russia, had called for a clarification of Persian policy, and had writhed as their recommendations went

¹ Minute by Kimberley of 5 April 1885 on Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, No. 38 of 1885, Foreign/Secret. Letters from India, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XIII, India Office Records.

The policy, whether originated by the Secretary of State or his subordinates, was twofold. In a letter of 25 July 1885 the India Office recommended that the long sought assurance of material support should be granted to the Shah to encourage him to resist inroads upon his territory, and that Prince Bismarck should be invited to join with England in sponsoring enterprises designed to rescue Persia from final subordination to Russia. These two projects collapsed, but at the time the Government fell a more moderate scheme was being devised—a middle course between a pledge of direct military support and passive acquiescence in Persia's dismemberment.

The Liberal Government of 1886 was short-lived, and Lord Kimberley barely secured the reins in his hands before he relinquished them to his Conservative successor. Lord Cross, appointed Secretary of State for India by Lord Salisbury in 1886, held that position until the government finally came to an end in 1892. Lord Cross was persona grata with the Queen, and he often discussed Indian frontier policy


2 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 25 July 1885. F.O. 65/1247.

3 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret, 11 August 1885. F.O. 65/128.
Case 1255, Persia, India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 24 September 1885. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. LXXVII, India Office Records.
Queen Victoria considered him admirably qualified with "genius in knowledge & insight" into the affairs of her vast Eastern empire. The Queen's references to Persia became more frequent, and she remarked in a letter to Lord Salisbury: "Lord Cross was telling the Queen last night a good deal about Persia & the intention of cultivating more friendly relations with the Shah which the Queen thinks very important."

During these years British officials in London and Simla pulled together in an effort to checkmate Russia, and worked to revive and strengthen British influence in Persia. Lord Cross was "most anxious" to place relations with Persia on a more "satisfactory footing." He appreciated the magnitude of the task, however, and after familiarizing himself with the papers commented: "There is much to do." But if the country did not remain intact, he wrote in a letter to the Foreign Office, the results for the Eastern Empire "must be disastrous."

Like many of his predecessors he regarded Persia as important be-

1 The Queen to Lord Salisbury, Private, 13 November 1887. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
2 The Queen to Lord Salisbury, Private, 18 March 1887. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
3 Case 262, Persia: Future Policy towards, Draft of a letter from India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 5 March 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCII, India Office Records.
4 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 5 March 1887. F.O. 60/1190.
cause it was one of the "outlying portions of the defences of India." By 1886, the time had come for prompt action, and the hand of Russia had to be stayed. Lord Cross's policy was to consolidate Great Britain's position in southern Persia by stationing an officer at Isfahan, promoting the Karun river and railway schemes, encouraging trade, and cultivating the Zil-es-sultan, who was the de facto ruler of southern Persia. He also hoped to regain some of the lost ground by sending a man of prestige and ability to Tehran as Minister.

It was Persia in its Russo-Indian setting that absorbed attention, and occasionally the letters of Lord Cross betray an atmosphere of gloom over the respective positions of England and her Asiatic rival.

...it is an undoubted fact that the Russian Empire is looked upon in Central Asia as the growing and spreading power, and that the British Empire is not so regarded. So people worship the rising sun.

The India Office carefully reviewed the intelligence reports from the Government of India since its policy had to be based upon the solid ground of what could be done in the frontier regions. The possibility of a Russian advance was never far from mind, and officials in London

1 Case UH,3, Persian Mission—Indian Contribution, Department minute on Secret letter from the Government of India, No. 51, 25 March 1891. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. CXI, India Office Records.

2 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 5 March 1887; Same to same, 2h June 1887. F.O. 60/190. Cross to Salisbury, Private, 20 October 1888. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

3 Cross to Salisbury, Private, 31 May 1887. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
and so systematically endeavoured to harmonize their viewpoints and to prepare for eventualities. Lord Cross inclined towards the views of General Sir Frederick Roberts, and some evidence indicates that Lord Salisbury also belonged to the Roberts school.

Great Britain's soldiers have, throughout the course of their country's contact with Persia, demonstrated a lively interest in the Iranian area and have often advocated policies beyond the range of those the Foreign Office consented to undertake. Sir Henry Rawlinson summarized the value of Persia from the strategist's angle.

... any serious Russian advance from the Caspian in the direction of Merv and Herat would be impossible if the column were threatened on the flank from Persia; and they will further maintain that if we are to defend India from attack, it would be better to fight our intended invader in Persia than upon our own frontier, where any check would raise a host of enemies in our rear.²

Persian policy was exhaustively reviewed in 1875 by the Governor General and his Council. At that time, the Commander-in-Chief, Napier of Magdala, presented the strongest case for supporting the Shah. He focused upon the Russian menace and pointed out that in the final analysis the defence of India depended upon 60,000 Europeans—a force that was expendable. The nearer approach of Russia had to be prevented, he argued, and for this objective Persia should receive the "friendship

1 Cross to Salisbury, Private, 6 October 1888; Same to same, Private, 27 October 1891. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
Roberts to Salisbury, Private, 1 July 1890. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

2 Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 137.
she seeks." The Commander-in-Chief recommended in conclusion:

We should immediately oppose any further encroachment on Persian territory. By increasing our diplomatic influence in Persia, we shall best be able to prevent that country from giving Russia cause for aggression, but should we be driven to war, the people of Persia, supported by a British contingent and aided by British arms, supplies and officers, would render the task of conquering the country as difficult and exhaustive as the conquest of the Spanish Peninsula was to France.¹

In a memorandum written eight years later the master of experts on frontier policy, Lord Roberts, concurred with the above and regretted that the proposals had not received favourable endorsement. Russian progress in Central Asia might have been checked, he maintained, if Persia’s request for British army officers had been granted and if real efforts had been made to regain predominance at the Court in Tehran. By 1883, he despaired of saving Merv, the surrounding Turcoman areas, and even northern Persia itself. Merv will fall, he wrote, "whenever it may suit Russia." ² It suited Russia less than a year later.

The Merv crisis of 1884 precipitated a detailed examination of Indian frontier policy and defence plans. General Thomas F. Wilson called attention to the unfortunate tendencies towards retrogression and bankruptcy in Persia, discussed Russia’s intrenchment on the

¹ Minute by Napier of Magdala (14 May), Government of India to Secretary of State for India, No. 123 of 1875, Foreign, 7 June 1875. F.O. 60/377.

² Confidential memorandum by Roberts, Is an Invasion of India by Russia Possible, 31 December 1883. Pte Kimberley Papers.
Khorassan border and its implications, and emphasized the need for counter action since "the integrity and political future of Persia is important to English interests." In the following year, when war seemed unavoidable, the military authorities examined the possibilities offered by Persia as a means of reaching Russia. After the emergency subsided, the strategists still were attracted by the potentialities of the Shah's kingdom. The Director of Military Intelligence, General Sir Henry Brackenbury, explained in his letter to Sir Julian Pauncefote the significance of a railway from the Persian Gulf to the capital city.

If we could regain our influence in Persia, we might laugh at Russian advances in Central Asia. A railway from the Gulf to Tehran would enable us to seize the throat of Russian communications on the Black Sea.

The War Office continued to obtain information on Russian troop concentrations, military developments, and objectives. In the autumn of 1886 General Brackenbury wrote: "The greatest interest for this

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1 Minute by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas F. Wilson (10 September 1886), Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, No. 38 of 1885, Secret/Frontier, 10 March 1885. Letters from India, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XLIII, India Office Records. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, No. 25 of 1884, Secret/Frontier, 22 September 1884. Letters from India, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XLI, India Office Records.

2 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 24 April 1885; Same to same, Private telegram, 25 April 1885. Pte Kimberley Papers. Dufferin to Kimberley, Private telegram, 27 April 1885. Pte Kimberley Papers.

3 Brackenbury to Pauncefote, Covering letter for memorandum on Railway from Tehran to Persian Gulf, 4 September 1886. F.O. 65/1291.
country centres in the movements of Russia." He maintained that Russian defence work at Batoum and on the Turkish frontier in Asia, her railway construction in Caucasus and Central Asia, and her building of a powerful Black Sea fleet all pointed to a "determination to obtain the command of the Black Sea, and to prosecute her designs in Asia." He consistently asserted, however, that Russia's primary objective, though not necessarily first in time, was Constantinople. The British military analyst, utilizing recently acquired Russian documents, attributed the activity in Central Asia to a desire to reach "a position from which by threatening our East Indian possessions she can at the opportune moment influence the general policy of England." Lord Kimberley had perceived the danger two years previously. After a conversation with the Russian Ambassador over Merv he disclosed his apprehensions to the Viceroy:

Russia, he [the Russian Ambassador] said, had no design on India, but of course if we quarreled with her in other parts of the world, we must expect that she would use her position in Central Asia accordingly. This is exactly what we have to apprehend, and what makes her advances so significant.

Russia's presence in the regions immediately beyond the shadows of the Hindu Kush induced both Indian and English soldiers to define the territories which were absolutely essential for Indian defence and to meet the question of how further encroachments could be fore-

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1. General Sketch of the Situation Abroad and at Home from a Military Standpoint, Secret, 3 August 1886. W.O. 33/46.

stalled. The Government of India, War Office, India Office, and Foreign Office systematically exchanged information and coordinated their policies. Defence proposals from the Government of India were often reviewed by a joint committee of the India Office and War Office and then submitted to the Prime Minister or the Cabinet. The Director of Military Intelligence consulted frequently with Foreign Office staff and forwarded copies of important War Office memoranda for consideration. He also kept in close touch with the India Office and received weekly from the Political and Secret Department the secret papers relating to India. General Edward F. Chapman, Director of Military Intelligence from 1891 to 1893, said that he saw a great deal of Currie at the Foreign Office and Neal at the India Office.

After the demarcation of Afghanistan’s northern boundary by a joint Anglo-Russian commission in 1887, General Brackenbury in a long letter to the Foreign Office put forward the War Office opinion that for the safety of India a line should be drawn beyond which Russia

1 Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, Confidential, Military Department, No. 112 of 1885, 10 July 1885. W.O. 32/263. No. 10233/1.
India Office to War Office, M/033, Immediate, 6 August 1885. W.O. 32/263. No. 10233/1.
Secret Memorandum on the relations between the Intelligence Departments and the War Office, Admiralty, and India, Henry Brackenbury, 15 May 1890. W.O. 33/50.

must not be allowed to pass. He believed that a small secret committee of the Government of India should be appointed to consider their needs in the event of war, the number of reinforcements expected from home, and the tactics to be employed in meeting Russian forces. But military advisability and diplomatic practicability did not coincide. Lord Salisbury stated:

As the Foreign Office are asked their opinion, I would say that I concur in the proposal that the Indian Government should be asked to refer this question as a whole to the strongest small Commission of military experts it can find. But I demur to laying down beforehand that they are to trace a military frontier beyond which Russia shall not be allowed to pass. 1st. Because it is impossible. It implies a continuity of policy which our Government in recent times has not shown & is not likely to show. 2nd. Because it is superfluous—because if Afghanistan is to be the only theatre of war the point where Russia is to be checked must depend on the circumstances of the moment. The memorandum shows that "making war with Russia all over the world" is an empty phrase unless we command the Turkish army: & I think it is as certain as any diplomatic forecast can be that we never shall have command of the Turkish army. Lastly—but this is a military objection which I offer with great diffidence—does not the idea of a military frontier line ignore the character which our struggle must assume whenever it comes? It will be a war not of battles but of devastation our security will be not to defeat them but to make it impossible for them to live within reach of us. And that will imply not a frontier line but a frontier region.

1 Enclosure in War Office to Foreign Office, Secret, 16 August 1887. Memorandum by Brackenbury, as to the determination of a Military Frontier Line for India, 7 August 1887. F.O. 65/1321. The opinions of the India Office are given in Case 899, England and Russia in Asia, September 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCVI, India Office Records.

2 Minute (19 August) by Salisbury on Brackenbury's memorandum of 7 August 1887. F.O. 65/1321.
For the next five years the military and diplomatic authorities in India and in England devoted considerable time to devising a realistic Russo-Indian policy. Out of the masses of documents and statements of conflicting views certain basic principles finally emerged. Indian forces alone could not deal with Russia, but in a serious emergency would depend upon reinforcements from home. Final decisions regarding Russian policy, even in relation to Central Asia and to India, did not rest with the Government of India but with the Foreign Office in London. The incident most likely to cause a rupture between England and Russia was the violation by the latter power of Afghan territory. If war did break out the main theatre of operation would be somewhere in Central Asia, although simultaneously measures against Russia would be taken in the Baltic, the Black Sea area, and the Far East. In any such conflict, England did not aim at decisive military victories, but expected to exhaust Russia financially and thus force a favourable peace.

1 Memorandum by Lieutenant General Brackenbury, Director of Military Intelligence, War Office, and Major-General Newmarch, Military Secretary, India Office, 19 August 1889. W.O. 33/49. War Office to India Office, Secret, 15 March 1892. W.O. 32/264. Nos. 01/9/1/564, 569, 571, 574, 575. Notes [mainly printed] written for the information of His Excellency by Colonel Ardagh, Case 64, [1891/], F. R. O. 30/h0/12.


By 1892, after the Prime Minister and the Cabinet had modified successive programmes, General Chapman could with satisfaction inform his colleagues that the government was quite prepared for "eventualities in India," and possessed a scheme of mobilization dealing with the questions from an Imperial point of view and really "based on the idea of war." When the whole problem was considered again in 1902 the conclusions reached in 1892 were reaffirmed. The War Office accepted the principle that "in fighting for India, England will be fighting for her Imperial existence," and also agreed that although war with Russia would involve military proceedings in many parts of the world the focal point had to be Central Asia.

England would be compelled by the necessity for maintaining her prestige to apply her main strength across the Indian frontier; and as Russia can nowhere put effective pressure on England except in Afghanistan, it is there that the contest must be decided.

Persia figured consistently in these deliberations. In the Indian Mobilization Committee report of 1887, which strongly urged meeting Russia in Afghanistan, it was pointed out that other lines of


2 The Military Resources of Russia, and Probable Method of their employment in a war between England and Russia, Secret, 1902. W.O. 106/18. E3/1. See also Military Needs of the Empire in a War with France and Russia, Secret, 1901. W.O. 106/18. E3/2. This document is of very great importance since it summarizes many of the letters and memoranda relating to the Indian defence negotiations.
operation were feasible. British forces based on the Persian Gulf could advance to Russia either by way of the Tigris and Euphrates valley or by way of Tehran. General Wolseley, commenting on the various schemes, discussed Persia.

...if an active alliance with Persia were possible, we should then be in a position to strike at Russia in a very vital quarter. The materials for the rank and file of a very powerful army exist in Persia; we could supply the officers...from a strategical point of view a powerful Persia would occupy the most important position in the settlement of this central Asian question. Is it possible to make Persia strong, and have her for an active ally? General Chapman’s private letters contain frequent references to Persia. He asked one of his subordinates in India to send to him as much information as possible about Persia, and described that country as "constantly in my thoughts." General Chapman also wrote to an officer in Persia asking for periodic confidential reports, and explained that he was most interested in Persian affairs "especially at this critical period." As a definite line of policy he advocated immediate application to the consolidation of Britain’s position in the southern provinces in order to keep Russia out of the Gulf.

Within a time span of twenty-five years England's military leaders had looked at Persia from several angles. In Napier of Magdala's delineation the picture of a strong ally and formidable bulwark emerges. To the War Office of the middle eighties, the country provided a possible means for reaching the enemy and cutting her communication lines. By the close of the century, its strategical worth was confined to the Gulf littoral and Seistan in the east.

Persia as a factor in military considerations, if contrasted with India's concrete interests, seems intangible and ill-defined. Partly this is explained by the duties of the military men. They fitted Persia into their Russo-Indian schemes, collected and sifted information, and gave advice. The soldiers presented to the Foreign Office Persia's potentialities from a strictly military point of view. Decisions regarding diplomatic practicableness—the feasibility of an alliance with the Shah or the possibility of securing Turkish cooperation—rested in other hands. Moreover, since the long-expected war in Central Asia did not occur, all arrangements for military action against Russia were destined to become nothing more than paper exercises and all plans passed into the limbo of the theoretical and the forgotten.
CHAPTER III
THE GENESIS OF LORD SALISBURY'S PERSIAN POLICY

The military interests of Great Britain in Persia seem intangible, but her Indian interests were real and vital. Lord George Hamilton asserted that "if you exclude Indian interests from Persia, British interests in themselves are a very small quantity." But neither the India Office nor the Government of India enjoyed a commanding voice in the conduct of Anglo-Persian relations.

Two factors accounted for this anomaly. The impact of Russia upon Persia and upon Anglo-Persian affairs brought the Shah's kingdom into the vortex of European politics. The Duke of Argyll wrote:

"Teheran is the Capital where Indian and European politics meet. But the centre of interest is European. Even as regards Indian questions, the methods of operating upon them in Persia, are essentially connected with the main currents of European diplomacy."  

Furthermore, the technological developments of the cable and the electric telegraph enabled the Home Government to maintain a closer contact with and to tighten its control over Indian officials. When Lord Curzon writhed under the stringent supervision from London, he

1 Hamilton to Curzon, Private, 17 October 1901. Private Correspondence, India, Part II, Vol. VI, Pte Hamilton Papers, India Office Library.

But the increased facilities of communication, and the much greater publicity that is given to everything the Government of India do, necessitate a much more frequent exchange of opinion than in the old days was necessary. And the advance of Russia, till her territories or protectorates border upon India, has made a number of questions which in the old days were purely Asiatic, now of European import.

Thus the mastery over Persian affairs fell neither to the Indian officials, nor to the soldiers, but to the diplomats. Whether it suited Anglo-Indians or not, and considerable evidence exists in the negative, they had to recognize this supremacy. Sir Henry Rawlinson acknowledged Foreign Office ascendancy in a letter to one of his colleagues in the India Office.

The real embarrassment seems to be how far we are competent to deal with such matters [Persian] at the India Office. The Foreign Office must decide, and we can only throw out hints in support of the interests of India.

This trend culminated in 1907 when the Anglo-Russian convention was concluded in spite of bitter opposition from India. Sir Charles Hardinge wrote from the Foreign Office: "Recently we have left the Government of India entirely out of our account.

1 Hamilton to Curzon, Private, 1 October 1902. Private Correspondence, India, Part II, Vol. VII, Pte Hamilton Papers, India Office Library.

2 Case 630, Rawlinson to Sir Edward Bradford, Private, 26 May 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCV, India Office Records.

From 1885 to 1892 the Foreign Office depended primarily upon Lord Salisbury's guidance. His concepts and experience, therefore, in dealing with India, Russia, and Persia are of fundamental importance. Twice, Lord Salisbury's official headquarters were in the India Office—for a brief interval in 1866 and again from 1874 to 1878. Unfortunately, his career as Secretary of State for India has not yet been studied. Lord George Hamilton, who worked closely with him during part of this time and who later held the post of Secretary of State for India for nearly a decade, emphasized Lord Salisbury's "remarkable performance at the India Office" and alluded to his new principles in frontier policy. In his reflections he paid tribute to his former chief's ability, noted particularly his accessibility, and praised his skill in draftsmanship.

Lord Salisbury's work at the India Office, his special mission to Constantinople in 1877, and his experience as Foreign Secretary from 1878 to 1880 trained him thoroughly in Russian politics and methods. He had no illusions about the character of Great Britain's Asiatic rival. "It is an internal necessity to Russia to move on——Directly her frontier becomes fixed her political troubles begin," he wrote in 1876. Fifteen years later, he said: "They believe in Russia for the

1 Hamilton to Lady St. Aldwyn, Private, 3 February 1922. Pte Hicks Beach Papers.


3 Salisbury to Lytton, Private and Confidential, 10 March 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.
Russians, reserving to themselves the liberty of making Russia stand for as large a territory as they can manage."

Similarly, he relied not at all upon the "talisman of diplomatic remonstrance." Little could be accomplished through protests at St. Petersburg. Partly, this was because of the shadowy control the Russian Government maintained over its frontier officers. But Russia's indifference to British annoyance stemmed primarily from her secure and almost invulnerable location. Russia wanted, in European politics, to increase her influence in the Black Sea area—which was, as Lord Salisbury said, "the one thing we cannot willingly see her acquire."

Otherwise, England could neither smooth nor obstruct Russia's way in Europe. In Asia, however, the picture changed:

Of course, an announcement of an intention to resist in Asia—whether it is made by you or us—is received with respect, & influences calculations because it is a threat which has power behind it. But this is not pressure from home such as your colleagues are fond of suggesting. They seem to fancy that we can save them the trouble of parrying the Russian lunge by getting behind their opponent & holding his arm. And this is the difference between the older & the younger prophets of the Lawrentine school. The older men do not believe in the possibility of a Russian lunge at all: the younger, who are in India, cannot so far blind themselves: but they think it is our duty, not theirs, to repel it. Of course we


shall do our best—as in the case of Kaufmann’s letter: for which Schouvaloff shall be duly admonished. But his future abstinence from such a maneuver depends on the skill with which you play your very difficult game of chess. Whatever you do protect Khelat—it is your Queen.1

The theme of Russia’s invulnerability flowed through his letters to Viceroyos, Ambassadors, and Ministers, and to members of the Royal Family. With Turkey effete and questionably disposed to England, the only feasible meeting point for Russian and British forces was in Central Asia. Hence, Lord Salisbury envisaged and pressed as persistently as he could an elaborate system of railway construction—from India to Kandahar and on to Herat; from India to Quetta and thence to Nushki and Persia’s Seistan province; from the Persian Gulf to the inland cities and finally to Tehran. Had these lines been completed, England could have met the enemy far from India’s borders, threatened Russia’s flank, and interrupted her transportation system. If a conflict broke out, Lord Salisbury expected to strike at once at Russia’s long communication lines. He tried to pursue a defensive policy diplomatically, but simultaneously he prepared for an offensive war. “India is singularly unsuited for purely defensive strategy,” he wrote in a letter devoted primarily to an analysis of Persia as a possible base of operations against Russia.

1 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 16 August 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.

2 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 22 June 1877; Same to same, Private, 13 July 1877. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, II, Pte Lytton Papers.

3 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 4 August 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.
Throughout his career Lord Salisbury was intensely interested in Indian frontier defence. He closed the ties with Khelat and contributed to the establishment of a protectorate over Baluchistan. "If Beloochistan is well in hand," he reasoned, "the importance of the Amir to us is sensibly diminished." He promoted the organization of an effective intelligence service and placed a premium on the collection of accurate geographical information about the regions surrounding India. The exploration of the northwestern frontier passes, a surveillance over Herat and Merv, and the examination of the ground around Seistan were the main objectives of many roving British officers. No frontier can be impregnable, but India's natural fortress was as strong as any could be. Lord Salisbury told Lord Lytton: "If...you can stop up that hole at Merve, & prevent Afghanistan from becoming a Russian outpost I believe you may sleep in peace." Lord Salisbury's concern over Indian defence did not cease when he left the India Office. In 1887 Lord

1 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 5 May 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.

2 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 5 May 1876; Same to same, 12 May 1876; Same to same, Private, 19 May 1876; Same to same, 26 May 1876; Same to same, Private, 2 June 1876; Same to same, 16 August 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers. Same to same, Private, 4 May 1877. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, II, Pte Lytton Papers.

3 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 24 March 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.
Dufferin, who was then nearing the close of his Viceroyalty, reported:

I have also noted your recommendations about the fortification of our frontier. In reply I can give you the most positive assurance that we are straining every nerve to carry out your wishes in this respect. In fact the placing of India in a proper state of defence has been the chief object of my solicitude since I came to the country....

On the other hand, Lord Salisbury seemed unafraid of Russian power and contemptuous of her diplomacy. The former was evaluated as "feeble," and when Russia blustered for the establishment of a Consulate at Meshed in 1888, he rated her diplomacy as "so bad that we have no cause to fear its extension." Her penniless exchequer provided him with an endless source of comfort since any serious campaign against Great Britain in Central Asia would be an expensive undertaking. Furthermore, the ever increasing amount of equipment required for modern warfare was a source of strength to India. The Asiatic conquerors of old had descended as ravaging hordes and had carried most of the materials on their backs. But impediments such as rifles, quantities of ammunition, and artillery made the piercing of the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas a more formidable
Lord Salisbury received Lord Lytton's dark forebodings and militant recommendations for counter measures with a detachment bordering on philosophic unconcern. The casual reference to large scale maps is the most popular example of his conviction that the Russian menace was not immediately crucial. He explained privately to the Viceroy, however, that "sedatives" were needed before active measures on the Indian frontier would be accepted in England. Many influential writers and speakers had, in their youth, seen the "Afghan ghost," and condemned any movement on the Indian frontier as a revival of Lord Auckland's policy. Still, Lord Salisbury's task of soothing the opposition at home did not completely bridge the gap between his views and those of Lord Lytton on Russia in Central Asia. In answer to an anxious exposition on Merv, he argued: "You foreshorten the vista of the future, and crowd up into the next few years, or less, events which will take a generation to complete." Merv, however, capitulated in 1884—thus

1 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 21 March 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.


3 Cecil, op. cit., II, 155-56.

4 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 13 July 1877. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, II, Pte Lytton Papers.

vindicating the judgment of the Viceroy and not that of his superior in London. But the Japanese proved that the Colossus did have but feet of clay, and the war between England and Russia in Asia has not yet come to pass.

In spite of the fact that Lord Salisbury showed no traces of panic and refused to join those who prophesied the inevitable conflict between Cossack and Sepoy, it must not be assumed that he paid but slight attention to Russia's advance in Central Asia. The number of drafts and minutes in his own hand in the Central Asian correspondence testify to the time which was consumed in grappling with the problem of Russia vis-à-vis India. If he did not believe in an unavoidable clash with Russia, neither did the possibility of war appear chimerical. Nor was the idea of an expedition against India considered fantastic. Even in the year when the Russian danger had faded into the "shadow of a shade," he admitted that Russia's superiority in light cavalry constituted a potential threat. Later, when he was Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, he confided to his Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne:

Of late years I think the balance has inclined to the positive or more gloomy side of that discussion [war with Russia]. It is not only that Russia has advanced to the very borders of the country over which the Indian Government exercises influence, but that circumstances have tended and still

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1 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 21-22 September 1877. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, II, Pte Lytton Papers.

2 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 27 April 1877. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, II, Pte Lytton Papers.
tend to increase the probability of Russia being involved in war. The unabated thirst of the French for their revenge: the fact that a war between them and Germany would remove the principal military check on Russian ambition: the growing weakness of Turkey: the approach of Russian armaments to their full development: all these things seem to point to an early effort on the part of Russia to make herself mistress of the Straits: and there is no doubt that she will try an expedition against India to put pressure upon England in order to paralyse her resistance in the Bosporus.1

As a result of his experience in the latter part of the seventies, Lord Salisbury acquired a thorough knowledge of Persia and her problems. While he was Secretary of State for India, he alone dealt with matters touching India's frontier and her relations with neighbouring countries. Sir Owen Burne said that he kept "all frontier information even from the Political Committee."

Evidence that Lord Salisbury hoped to improve relations with Persia can be found as early as 1876. He was dissatisfied with the management of the Legation in Tehran and was in favour of placing it under Indian supervision. In 1879 he even proposed to Lord Cranbrook to "hand Persia back to the India Office," but the latter did not welcome such

1 Salisbury to Lansdowne, Private, 21 October 1891. Loose papers, Bundle entitled "Drafts, Copies, Minutes, Memo/Fandra/, etc., 1890-1892," Pte Salisbury Papers.

2 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 4 May 1877. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, II, Pte Lytton Papers.


4 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 23 June 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.
an increase in responsibility. Subsequently, however, Lord Salisbury believed that such a transfer, although desirable, was not practicable. In a letter to Lord Lansdowne, written in 1891, the affairs of Persia were described as "strictly a Foreign Office matter."

Interest in Persia was stimulated by the breach which was developing between England and the Amir, Sher Ali. Afghanistan was no longer a stable buffer state, and her unreliability caused the British to search for substitute outposts in Indian defence. As Sher Ali continued to gravitate towards Russia, the interest of British statesmen in Baluchistan and in Persia deepened.

While Lord Salisbury was Secretary of State for India no real attempt was made to cultivate the friendship of the Shah. It was in this period that his ideas concerning Persia germinated. He gathered information assiduously, and showed particular interest in Seistan and in Sir Lewis Pelly's favourite project, the navigation of the Karun.

While he was Foreign Secretary from 1878 to 1880, however, a new Persian policy evolved. This new policy emerged from the Afghan tangle. Sher Ali had ventured to trust his fate to Russian promises, and British troops were set in motion late in 1878. The campaign enjoyed a speedy...
success since the Afghans, deserted by the Russians, put up little resistance. But all authority within Afghanistan had been undermined by the uncertainty of the past years. The new Amir, Yakub Khan, was unable to control his people. Amid seeming calm all of the members of the British mission in Cabul were suddenly massacred, and their shocking deaths brought more British brigades into the country.

Afghanistan's future was an open question. Several of the more competent authorities thought that its disintegration was unavoidable. Indeed, in 1879, the picture of a united, strong, and friendly Afghanistan was difficult to conceive. A dangerous political vacuum engulfed Herat and Seistan, and therefore Lord Salisbury turned to Persia.

His Persian plans were seconded by Sir Owen Burne, who had long preached alliance with Persia.

Lord Salisbury's aim in his negotiations of 1879 and 1880 was to


2 Salisbury to Thomson, No. 16, Draft telegram, 22 October 1879, Endorsed "Lord Beaconsfield, copy sent to the Queen, C/F/ Chancellor of Exchequer." F.O. 60/119.

Burne did, however, criticize Lord Salisbury's negotiations with Persia—which he approved in principle—on the grounds that they were proceeding too rapidly. See for example Burne to Lytton, Private, 11 November 1879. Bound volume, Letters from England, VIII, Pte Lytton Papers.
make Persia instead of Afghanistan the main bulwark in Indian defence. He carried the Cabinet with him and he kept the Queen informed, but he, practically alone, carried forward these tedious negotiations with the Shah. According to the terms which were offered to Nasr-ed-din, Persia would acquire the coveted Herat and Seistan territories, and she would receive a subsidy. The Shah should permit British officers in Herat, place no obstacles in the way of constructing a railroad from Kandahar to Herat; resist further Russian inroads; and undertake, under British supervision, projects for internal reform and for improving transportation from the Gulf inland. In a letter to the Queen he explained the motives underlying this policy.

If...we admit Persia...we place Herat in the hands of a responsible Power whom we can punish by operating on her seaboard, as we did in 1857: and we give Persia a strong interest to resist to the utmost of her power the further advance of Russia. This appears to Your Majesty's advisers the best arrangement to make at all events for the time. There is indeed no alternative between this, and advancing ourselves to Herat in defiance both of Persia and Russia. If we give Herat to Persia and she proves faithful we shall escape the necessity of this dangerous advance for a long time. If she is faithless, we may have to make the advance in a few years. But by that time our railway will be made to Candahar, perhaps further, and the supply of the troops operating on Herat will be very much facilitated.2

1 The volumes in both the F.O. 60 and the F.O. 65 (Russia in Central Asia) series contain quantities of material on these negotiations. There are numerous red ink drafts in Lord Salisbury's hand. For an outline of the terms see Draft Convention between Her Majesty and the Shah of Persia, Most Secret, undated. F.O. 65/1097.

2 Salisbury to the Queen, Private, 30 December 1879. Bound volume, Drafts, The Queen, 1878-1880, Pte Salisbury Papers.
Nasr-ed-din, although obviously pleased with the offer, protracted the discussions and suspended them temporarily in 1880. Lord Salisbury, however, continued to believe that a successful conclusion would eventually be reached. In 1880, however, the Liberals returned to power, and such an extension of responsibility was unthinkable. Thus, by his untimely haggling, Nasr-ed-din passed by the opportunities for territorial aggrandizement and for British support which would not come again.

In his Persian policy from 1885 to 1892, Lord Salisbury was guided by two main principles. One was his concept of Persia as a buffer state, and to him the words "independence and integrity of Persia" were more than an outworn and empty phrase. He strove for the regeneration of that ancient land and sponsored reform programmes, refusing to look exclusively to British interests in the south and east, until it became obvious that the Persians lacked not only the means but also the will to oppose Russia.

Lord Salisbury's other principle was more practical and specific. It concerned the improvement of communications between the Gulf and Tehran. The finest fleet of ironclads could not save Khorassan. Thus for years he hammered incessantly, in conversations with Malcom Khan in


2 Contrast Salisbury's addition on draft dispatch to Thomson, No. 75A, 6 August 1885; F. O. 60/468; with his private letter to Morier, 10 May 1891; Bound volume, Russia, I, Pte Salisbury Papers.
London and in instructions sent to Tehran, on the theme of the abso-
lute necessity of a railway from the Gulf inland. But the Kajar ru-
lers refused to allow this innovation, and no such line was constructed
until the twentieth century—by Persia's iron man and the founder of a
new dynasty, Reza Shah Pahlavi.

These changes took place in Asia. The Russians drove east to emerge
at Vladivostock in 1860, and then south until they struck the Bri-
tish protected Afghan outposts at Panjdeh in 1885.

The reasons for Russia's expansion, so striking both in its ra-
pidity and in its extent, are still obscure. The theory which ori-
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...Russia's advance in Central Asia is reported by M. de
Gieres as a deliberate retort, intended to end a situation
in which Britain could hit Russia whenever she pleased,
while herself remaining out of reach. There can, however,
be little doubt that he has oversimplified the facts; for
the process of Russian expansion was due to a combination
of causes—safety, order and trade alike, not to mention
what Proude calls "the natural and inevitable consequences
of the intercourse between civilised nations and barbar-
ians."2

1 For a translation of the circular see Sir William Ross Freese
Tytler, Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central
Hansard, Lords, 12 May 1885, Third Series, C00719, 383-385.

2 A. M., "Russo-British Relations in the Eighties," Slavonic Review,
CHAPTER IV

THE MERV AND PENJDEH INCIDENTS OF 1884 AND 1885

Territorial changes occurred during the last half of the nineteenth century which affected not only the position of Great Britain in Asia but also her relations with the Great Powers in Europe. These changes took place in Asia. The Russians drove east to emerge at Vladivostock in 1860, and then south until they struck the British protected Afghan outposts at Penjdeh in 1885.

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Russia's incorporation of the Central Asian khanates is rarely


described as a systematic or premeditated campaign. There were exceptions, however. Some evidence indicates that the southward push was carefully planned and had a well defined objective. In 1884 Colonel Belyarsky drew up a long compendium for official use in the Asiatic Department. This document, 163 printed pages, described in detail Russia's connection with Central Asia. The Intelligence Branch of the British War Office showed keen interest in the following passage:

The Crimean War, and the hostile relations with England resulting therefrom, introduced important modifications in the bearings of the Central Asian question. Whereas up to this time our Government had been anxious for the enlargement of the trade with Central Asia, and had striven to ensure the peaceful existence of its Kirghis subjects, it now more particularly applied itself to the extension of its influence over all the Khanates of Central Asia, in order thereby to be able at the opportune moment to influence the general policy of England.

In 1857, when England was making preparations for the invasion of Persia, and proposed to occupy Kabul and Herat, the Commander of the Caucasus Corps, Prince Baryatinsky, declared his opinion that it was absolutely necessary for us to be in a constant state of preparation, in order to oppose the designs of England; and in case, among other things, of war with this Power and the Afghans, he proposed to move a body of troops up the Amu-Darya, and for this purpose to construct a road from the Caspian to the Sea of Aral. After due consideration of this memorandum,

1 See for example "An Indian Officer," Russia's March towards India (2 vols.; London: Sampson Low, Marston, and Co., 1894). Major-General Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia (London: John Murray, 1875); "Anyone who traces the movements of Russia towards India on the map of Asia cannot fail to be struck with the resemblance which these movements bear to the operations of an army opening parallels against a beleaguered fortress," p. 285.
it was decided in 1857 that it was absolutely necessary to take measures to secure our position in Central Asia.

The results of this determination took shape in and near the Caspian in increased means of transport on that sea and the River Volga, in the taking of Krasnovodsk in 1869, and subsequently the annexation of the whole of the Trans-Caspian country.

In the decades of the 1860's and 1870's fortress after fortress fell in Central Asia. Khokand, Tashkent, Samarcand, Bokhara, and Khiva became part of Russia's trans-Caspian province. From time to time the British discussed these transformations with the Russians. Always they were assured that the Russian Government had no intention of increasing its responsibilities by territorial increments. Nevertheless, the generals pushed their forces forward, and where they went they always stayed. In 1865 part of the Czar's "immutable policy" was to respect the independence of Tashkent, but he formally annexed it in the same year. In January, 1873, Count Schuvaloff assured Lord Granville that his Emperor had issued explicit orders against the occupation of Khiva. Before the year was out Khiva formed part of Russia.

1 Case 866, Affairs in Turkestan, Compiled by Colonel Belyarsky of the Russian General Staff, St. Petersburg, 23 November 1881; translated in the Intelligence Branch of the War Office, with a preface by Major-General Sir Henry Brackenbury, London, Printed at the War Office, 1886. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. LXXXVII, India Office Records.

2 Correspondence, from 1864 to 1881, respecting the movements of Russia in Central Asia and her relations with Afghanistan, Secret, India Office, Political and Secret Department, 8 February 1882. F.O. 65/1150.
After the conquest of Khiva only the semi-independent Turcomans, over which Persia exercised a vague suzerainty, remained between Russia and the borders of Persia and Afghanistan. Both the Yomud and Tekke Turcomans resisted desperately. The Russians answered the small-scale Turcoman victories by sending in more raiding columns. Since each expedition involved another, the final conquest of the tribesmen became inevitable.

The Turkish war of 1877 and 1878 diverted attention. But serious Russian action was resumed in 1879. A force sent out in that year, however, suffered a severe defeat. The Turcoman triumph sealed their doom. The news of the reverse spread through Central Asia, shook Russian power in the entire area, and encouraged hitherto submissive peoples to revive their spark of resistance. Russia's new empire was in danger of crumbling if prestige was not regained at once. General Mikhail Skobelev, the picturesque and brilliant "White General" of the Turkish wars, took command and carefully prepared for the siege of the main enemy stronghold—Geok Teppe (Blue Hill). There in January, 1881, the Russians crushed the Turcomans in their last bitter stand.

1 The literature on Russia in Central Asia is abundant, but few scholarly works exist. The following are useful, however. George N. Curzon, Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889). Henry Sutherland Edwards, Russian Projects against India: From the Czar Peter to General Skobelev (London: Remington and Co., 1885). Colonel Sir Frederic John Goldsmid, Central Asia, and its Question (London: Edward Stanford, 1873).
Only the Merv oasis remained. The nineteenth century city bore little resemblance to the ancient commercial emporium and medieval seat of learning. But decadence and ill-fortune were not new experiences for its people. Peace had but rarely dwelt in its precincts, and Genghis Khan destroyed the city in his cataclysmic descent to the Indus. Yakut, the geographer, wrote that the abodes of the people and the public buildings were dwellings "for the owl and the

The long and exhaustive reviews of Russian expansion in Asia prepared for official use are valuable. For example:
Government of India, Foreign Department, to the Secretary of State for India, No. 21 of 1877, Secret, 2 July 1877. F.O. 65/992.
Correspondence, from 1864 to 1881, respecting the movements of Russia in Central Asia and her relations with Afghanistan, Secret, India Office, Political and Secret Department, 8 February 1882. F.O. 65/1150.
raven." Within three centuries, however, Merv had become one of Asia's foremost cities and a cultural centre of the Moslem Renaissance. Then, in 1784, the Amir of Bokhara reduced it to ruins again. Alexander of Macedon; Euthydemus of Bactria; Orodes, the Parthian; Ardeshir, the founder of the Persian Sassanian dynasty; Kutayba, the Arab Moslem warrior; Mahmud, the Turk; Tamerlane; and Nadir Shah had all subjugated Merv. The natural resilience of its people, however, constantly reasserted itself; and, as the power of the successive overlords waned, the city and the surrounding oasis persistently re-emerged as an independent unit. But Merv in the nineteenth century was in ruins—a "Golgotha of cities." Edmond O'Donovan, the Daily News correspondent who visited the city in 1881, wrote:

I climbed to the summit of a ruined building, half dwelling-house, half fortalice, whence a commanding view was obtained over the crumbling expanse of cities. A feeling of oppressive loneliness comes over the spirit as the eye ranges across the voiceless wilderness, so deserted, so desolate, yet teeming with eloquent testimonies of what it had been of old. The heart of Zenghis Khan himself would feel exultant at the absolute, hopeless lifelessness of those sites, where great cities had stood and myriad populations swarmed...It was strange to think that a few yards of dam upon the Murgab, some trenches dug by illiterate toilers, had once made these present deserts vernal, and had entitled this Golgotha of cities to the proud name of Queen of the World. 

The disheartening condition of the oasis, however, did not detract from its importance and potentialities. For the British alone


2 O'Donovan, op. cit., II, 254.
the approach to India was from the south and by way of the sea. The
great Asiatic conquerors had poured down from the north, through the
lofty mountain passes, and over some of the oldest roads known to man.
Many of these leaders had first taken Merv and Herat, rested in those
fertile regions, and then pushed on to the Indus. Before the decade
of the seventies had closed it was obvious that, though their inten-
tions might differ, the Russians would soon join the list of rulers
who had resided on the banks of the Murghab. By 1882 Sir Alfred Lyall
could write:

From Merv, last home of the free-lance, the clansmen are
scattering far,
And the Turkman horses are harnessed to the guns of the
Russian Czar.2

Signs of apprehension appeared in India and in England as the rest-
less Russian soldiers carried the double eagle nearer Merv. The Council
of the Government of India unanimously recommended vigorous action in
order to rescue the last of the Turcomans. Counter moves in Persia formed
an essential part of their programme. Lord Salisbury, at the India Of-
cifice, believed it necessary to place "every possible diplomatic obsta-
cle" in the way of Russian encroachments towards Afghanistan and Persia.

1 Holdich, Gates of India, pp. 5-6, 239-47.
Sykes, History of Afghanistan, I, vii, 90, 110, 125, 160.
Fraser-Tytler, op. cit., pp. 9-10.


3 Government of India, Foreign Department, to Secretary of State for
India, No. 21 of 1877, Secret, 2 July 1877. F.O. 65/992.
Lytton to Cranbrook, Private, 3 August 1878. Quoted in Lady Betty
Balfour, Personal and Literary Letters of Robert First Earl of Lyt-

Sir Henry Rawlinson, in public and official writings, attempted to educate his countrymen in Central Asian politics and to acquaint them with the strategic significance of certain localities—particularly Merv and Herat. Even the confirmed exponent of "masterly inactivity" in Indian frontier policy, Sir John Lawrence, declared "that England ought to make the permanent occupation of Merv on the part of Russia a casus belli between the two countries."

In 1879, rumours of a Russian expedition to Merv were rife. General Lazareff, who was intrepid and determined, led a column from Chikisliar across the Kara Kum sands towards the Merv oasis. But the campaign failed, and Lazareff died. In 1880, however, General Skobelev took command of the trans-Caspian army. Military manoeuvres began anew, and in 1882 ominous tales concerning visits of Colonel Alikhanoff and General Dondoukoff-Korsakoff to Merv filtered through the bazaars of Central Asia. Vague uneasiness turned into anxiety. The

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1 His views are clearly expressed in his book England and Russia in the East.

2 Memorandum by Lawrence on the Central Asian Question, 1 November 1871. F.O. 65/901.

3 Cranbrooke to Lytton, Private, 24 June 1879; Same to same, Private, 6 August 1879; Same to same, Private, 15 August 1879; Same to same, Private, 1 September 1879. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, IV, Pte Lytton Papers.

4 Correspondence respecting the occupation of Merv by Russia and her proceedings on the Khorassan Frontier of Persia, India Office, Political and Secret Department, 15 August 1881. F.O. 65/1209.
India Office wrote to the Foreign Office: "If such a calamity [war] is not rendered inevitable it is at least rendered more probable by the nearer approach of Russia to the frontier of Afghanistan." Once again the British Ambassador in St. Petersburgh discussed the problem with the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and once again he reported to London the familiar chant that the Emperor had no intention of extending the frontiers of Russia—"an assurance which was repeated on an average of more than once a year in the decade from 1874 to 1884."

In 1881 and 1885 the British were deeply embroiled in Egypt and the Soudan. Lord Kimberley, like Lord Salisbury, often wished that "we had never gone into Egypt." The announcement by Giers, on 15 February 1884, that the Emperor of Russia had decided to accept the allegiance of the Merv Turcomans coincided with British troubles in the Soudan.

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1 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 21 February 1882. F.O. 65/1150.
   Granville to Thornton, No. 12, Draft dispatch, 29 February 1884. F.O. 65/1203.
   Memorandum on Correspondence with the Russian Government in regard to Merv, 1874-1884, Confidential, Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, 26 February 1884. F.O. 65/1203.
   Kimberley to Ripon, 22 February 1884; Same to same, Private, 8 August 1884. Bound volume, Letters to the Marquis of Ripon, January 1884 to November 1884, Pte Kimberley Papers.
   Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 6 March 1885; Same to same, Private, 28 May 1885. Bound volume, Letters to the Earl of Dufferin, November 1884 to July 1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.
Prolonged discussions ensued in which Lord Granville expressed to Baron Mohrenheim, the Russian Ambassador in London, his "real surprise" at the forward movement and recalled the previous assurances. Baron Mohrenheim said that his Emperor's surprise equalled Lord Granville's, apologized for the untimeliness of the incident, and alluded to the absurdity of quarrelling over the Turcomans—adding that had Mr. Gladstone not held office "the Russian Cabinet would have formally declined to discuss the matter at all." Kimberley considered the latter a "novel doctrine."

Russia's incorporation of the oasis precipitated a mild flurry of activity in London---Cabinet meetings, debates in Parliament, consultations with the India Office, and a rapid exchange of telegrams with St. Petersburgh and Simla. The Cabinet decided that a remonstrance had to be delivered on the grounds of self respect alone, but Mr. Gladstone's Government did not intend to strain relations with Russia. One tangible result ensued, however. The Government of India was ordered to resume work on the Quetta railway as a demonstration to all that the British guarantee to Afghanistan was seriously meant. Lord Kimberley

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1 Granville to Thornton, No. 73A, Draft dispatch, 1 April 1884. Endorsed "The Queen, Mr. Gladstone, Cabinet." F.O. 65/1205.
2 Same to same, No. 81, Confidential, 9 April 1884. Endorsed "The Queen, Mr. Gladstone." F.O. 65/1205.

2 Case l35, Minute by Kimberley on Granville to Thornton, No. 81B, Confidential, 9 April 1884. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. LX, India Office Records.
ley, informing the Viceroy of the Cabinet's views on this "difficult and important" subject, described the occupation of Merv as "a very grave occurrence bringing as it does Russia into immediate contact with the Herat territory."

The incident precipitated a public reaction—in the press and in Parliament. Both, on the whole, endorsed the Government's decision to respond with calmness but not with indifference. The Times tried to soothe its readers by pointing out that Russia had regarded her pledge as "rather conditional than absolute." The leading article, without being alarmist, reviewed Merv's strategic significance and prophesied that Persia would require more attention in the future.

In Parliament, too, a moderate line predominated. The Duke of Argyll, having already diagnosed the late Conservative Government's ills as "Nervousness," spoke again in that vein. Lord Lytton, on the other hand, rebuked the Government for its apathy, and sarcastically stated that if the Liberals would create two new departments of the Foreign and War Offices "devoted to the careful preparation of


2 Leading article in The Times, 11 March 1881.


4 Hansard, Lords, 10 March 1881, Third Series, CCLXXXV, 980-91.
measures to be taken only when too late" they would be the busiest in
Downing Street.

Lord Salisbury said that the course of annexation which had re-
cently taken Russia to Merv had been motivated, at least superficially,
by the "dens of robbers" on her frontier. Since "dens of robbers"
still inhabited the borderlands along Persian Khorassan and Afghan
Turkestan the centripetal force which had thrown the territory from
the Aral Sea to the Murghab River into Russia was probably not yet
spent.

Lord Salisbury's main emphasis, however, was on that "impalpable
power"—prestige. "Your frontier may be as strong as you please; your
fortress may be as impregnable as you please;" he argued, "but if the
prestige of the Power coming against you is greater than your own, it
will penetrate through that barrier; it will undermine your sway; it
will dissolve the loyalty and patriotism of those you rule." To Lord
Salisbury the absorption of the Turcoman oasis was a grave event. As
Secretary of State for India and as Foreign Secretary, from 1874 to
1880, he had endeavoured to keep Merv out of Russian hands and to up-

1 Ibid., pp. 959-60.
2 Ibid., p. 975.

His reasoning coincided with that of Rawlinson who wrote: "The
same law of advance which has taken Russia from Ashkabad to Merv,
must necessarily take her from Merv to Herat, unless some counter
law be applied." Case 212, Merv: Conversation between Lord Gran-
ville and the Russian Ambassador. Home Correspondence, Political
and Secret Department, VoL LXII, India Office Records.
hold the choice of the chieftains who wished either to remain independent or to give their allegiance and their tribal lands to the Shah of Persia. He explained why the capitulation of Merv was a danger to India.

...if it should happen that any Viceroy should occupy the position which Lord Dalhousie was said to desire—of being Viceroy of India when the Russian invasion takes place—what he would have to contend with would not be a direct attack of the Russian Army coming through the Khyber and Bolan Passes. It would be the undermining of his strength in India by the production of intrigues and rebellions among the Natives of India, the gradual weakening of the respect for the English arms, disaffection towards the English Raj, and the gradual crumbling away of our resources before Russia has struck a blow against our frontier. That is the real danger we have to fear; that is why it is a matter of life and death to us that Afghanistan should be kept clear not only of Russian soldiers, but of Russian influence and intrigue. That is why the acquisition of Merv must not be put aside by platitudes about the advantage of having a humane instead of an inhuman Power upon the borders of Afghanistan, or with the consolation that Merv is not on the route to anywhere in particular. The event must be looked on in a graver light than that. It is the gravest that has happened with respect to our Empire in the East.1

Russia's incorporation of Merv produced two tangible results. The community of interest between England and Persia was strengthened, and the decision to define the boundary between Russia and Afghanistan was reached. The Shah, helpless and frightened, was likened by Curzon to 2

a fly in a spider's web. His representative in London, Malcom Khan, called frequently at the Foreign Office and pleaded for the re-establish-

1 Hansard, Lords, 10 March 1881, Third Series, CCLXXXV, 1009-10.
2 Curzon, Russia in Central Asia, p. 376.
ment of closer ties with England. But the Salisbury scheme of 1879 and 1880 had failed. The attempt of the Liberal Government in 1882 to induce the Shah to reassert his authority over the Merv Turcomans had also failed. In these circumstances the Foreign Office entered into new discussions without enthusiasm. Lord Granville did, however, give some encouragement to the flagging Persian Government. He assured the Shah that the Anglo-Russian agreements relating to the independence and integrity of Persia were still in force. He also declared that England would support Persia diplomatically at St. Petersburg if Russian encroachments on the Khorassan frontier continued.

Lord Kimberley, in a letter to Lord Ripon, discussed the effect of the absorption of the khanates on Anglo-Persian relations, the plight of the Shah, and the obstacles in the way of effective British support. Nevertheless, some assurance had to be given, for as Lord Kimberley put it:

...we can hardly look on with indifference whilst Russia turns the flank of Afghanistan and gets, as she cleverly intends to do, possession of the direct and easy road from Meshed to Herat. If she can establish herself there, the


Correspondence respecting the movements of Russia in Central Asia, and her relations with Afghanistan, Part IV, Continuation of memorandum of 30 May 1882, Secret. F.O. 65/1202.
question of the North/Western Boundary will sink into comparative insignificance.¹

The decision to define the boundary between Afghanistan and Russia also emerged from the Merv incident. Early in 1882 the Government of India had advocated settling the Persian and Afghan frontiers as a deterrent to Russia's movement south. At that time, however, the Foreign Office was endeavouring to revitalize Persia's rule over the territory east of the Caspian—unaware that the Shah had relinquished his claims by a secret agreement with Russia in the previous year. While the fruitless negotiations between Great Britain and Persia dragged on, the Russian generals crossed the sands and deserts that finally led to Merv. The cartographers in St. Petersburgh also promoted the business of expansion. In 1884 an official map appeared which stretched Russia's southern boundary beyond the oasis for more than two hundred miles and terminated it less than twenty miles from Herat.

The British had to act. The Government of India again pressed for a demarcation of frontiers—this time to a more receptive Lord Granville.

¹ Lord Kimberley to Lord Ripon, Private, 8 August 1884. Bound volume, Letters to the Marquis of Ripon, January 1884 to November 1884, Pte Kimberley Papers.

² India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 2 January 1882. F.O. 65/1150.

³ War Office to Foreign Office, No. 7603/4382, 16 April 1884. F.O. 65/1205.
Memorandum by Hertslet on Russian maps in Central Asia, 19 April 1884. Endorsed "Cabinet." F.O. 65/1205.

⁴ Foreign Department to Secretary of State for India, No. 16 of 1884, Secret, 11 March 1884. F.O. 65/1205.
Telegram from Viceroy, Secret, 21 February 1884. F.O. 65/1203.
Within two months the British and Russian Governments had agreed that a joint commission should survey Afghanistan's northern boundary, but the Russians persistently refused to recognize any British claims to representation in the Russo-Persian negotiations over Khorassan. The British selected General Sir Peter Lumsden to head their side of the commission, and he reached the Afghan frontier with his party in the autumn of 1884.

The agreement en principe over Afghanistan did not settle all of the questions, however. Long discussions ensued as to whether the survey should be from west to east or from east to west, whether the decisions should be made in London and St. Petersburgh or left to the men on the spot, and whether the work should commence in 1884 or await the arrival of the warm season in 1885. Tedious as these problems were, they were overshadowed by disquieting reports of continued Russian probing actions and encroachments.

The negotiations did not proceed smoothly, and Lord Granville complained of the difficulty of advising the Amir "to yield indefinitely territory which has never been in the possession of Russia."

1 Thornton to Granville, No. 324, 1 November 1884. F.O. 65/1211. Same to same, Private, 20 November 1884. Pte Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/186. Memorandum by Barrington on Negotiations with the Russian Government for the Demarcation of the Boundary of Afghanistan since the Annexation of Merv, Confidential, 21 March 1885. Endorsed "The Queen, Mr. Gladstone, Kimberley, Hartington, Northbrook, Dilke, India Office, Petersburgh, Tehran, Lumsden, Embassies." Bears notation: "I am much obliged for this excellent and useful Memorandum. G." F.O. 65/1238.

2 Granville to Thornton, No. 60, Draft telegram, Confidential, 3 March 1885. F.O. 65/1237.
On 19 February 1885 the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Sir Edward Thornton, wrote that relations with Russia were growing "very delicate." Less than a week later Lord Granville wrote: "This question of the Afghan boundary is becoming very serious." General Lumsden reported that Russia's advance was continuing and her forces were approaching Penjdeh. The Queen, in her anxiety, appealed personally to the Emperor of Russia to prevent the "calamity" of an armed conflict.

But the crisis became still more acute. At the Penjdeh oasis in the closing days of March, Russian and Afghan troops met and fought. The Afghans acquitted themselves well, lost heavily, and finally retreated. The British boundary commissioners intervened as effectively as they could for peace, then dispatched protests to India and to London condemning the Russian offensive. Mr. Gladstone,

1 Thornton to Granville, Private, 19 February 1885. Pte Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/186.
4 The Queen to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia, Telegram, 4 March 1885. Pte Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/45.
5 Lumsden to Granville, No. 29, Confidential, 16 April 1885. Enclosure by Yate, "Memorandum on the recent Russian advance on Penjdeh," 15 April 1885. F.O. 65/1240.
in an address to Parliament, described the clash as a "grave occurrence," admitted that it looked like "unprovoked aggression," and asked for £11,000,000 for war preparations—not a paltry sum in 1885. Indeed, the Prime Minister observed that it was the largest vote of credit requested in the preceding seventy years with the possible exception of the Crimean War supply. Gone was the mildness which had characterized the British Government in the Merv crisis twelve months before.

General Komaroff's occupation of Penjdeh seemed the more provocative since Giers, only two weeks previously, had signed an agreement promising that there would be no advance of Russian troops into the debatable territory. Mr. Gladstone proclaimed:

...it was a very solemn covenant. It was a covenant involving great issues....What has happened? A bloody engagement on the 30th of March followed the covenant of the 16th....The cause of that deplorable collision may be uncertain. What is certain is that the attack was a Russian attack. What was the provocation is a matter of the utmost consequence. We only know that the attack was a Russian attack. We know that the Afghans suffered in life, in spirit, and in repute. We know that a blow was struck at the credit and the authority of a Sovereign—our ally—our protected ally—who had committed no offence.

The pledge of the British Prime Minister to have "right done in the matter" brought his nation to the verge of war with Russia.

Asia: Travels with the Afghan Boundary Commission (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1887), Ch. IX, pp. 311-60.

1 Hansard, Commons, 9 April 1885, Third Series, CCXCVI, 1159, 1162-63.
2 Hansard, Commons, 27 April 1885, Third Series, CCXCVII, 859.
3 Ibid., pp. 863-65. Quotations from p. 865.
When the Foreign Office received the news of the Penjdeh encounter, the major Embassies were warned by telegraph that a situation of "utmost gravity" had arisen. Documents announcing a state of war between England and Russia were printed. It was expected that most other nations would declare their neutrality, and the effects of such neutrality on the conduct of the war were investigated. Particular interest was shown in the status of the Japanese navy yards. The Admiralty sent out instructions to watch all Russian ships. On 26 April the governments of Japan, China, and Korea were notified that the British fleet had occupied Port Hamilton. That port was to be

1 Lumsden's telegram announcing the engagement between the Russians and Afghans, dated 1 April, was not received until 7 April. It had to be conveyed by pony express from his camp on the Afghan frontier over five hundred miles of deserts to the telegraph office at Meshed, Persia. See Foreign Office memorandum and telegram to Currie, 8 April 1885, instructing him to draw up a telegram to Thornton. Granville to Thornton, No. 129, Draft extender telegram, 8 April 1885, F.O. 65/1239.

2 The extent of preparations can be gauged by an examination of the documents, most of which were never used, in the volume entitled Russia. Maritime and Commercial Questions which would be raised by outbreak of war, 1885. F.O. 65/1253.

3 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, Telegram, 20 April 1885. Bound volume, Telegrams to and from India, March 1885 to June 1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.

used as a base for operations against Vladivostock. In India the
Viceroy quietly prepared to move 25,000 men to Quetta, placed General
Roberts in command, considered several possible plans of campaign,
and received assurances that reinforcements from England would be
forthcoming. Throughout the anxious months of April, May, and June
the letters from Lord Kimberley to Lord Dufferin were dominated by
the idea that England was "hovering... on the very brink of war."
Thorton, in St. Petersburgh, foresaw a "very possible rupture."
The French Ambassador in London said that his German and Italian
colleagues regarded war as inevitable. The Queen wrote to Lord

1 Memorandum by Northbrook on Port Hamilton, 28 July 1885. Pte
Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/22A.

2 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 10 April 1885; Same to same, Pri-
ivate, 17 April 1885; Same to same, Private, 24 April 1885. Bound
volume, Letters to the Earl of Dufferin, November 1884 to July
1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.
Dufferin to Kimberley, Private, 23 March 1885. Bound volume, Let-
ters from the Earl of Dufferin, December 1884 to June 1885, Pte
Kimberley Papers.

3 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 10 April 1885; Same to same, Pri-
ivate, 1 May 1885. Bound volume, Letters to the Earl of Dufferin,
November 1884 to July 1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.

4 Thornton to Granville, Private, 9 April 1885. Pte Granville Papers,
P. R. O. 30/29/186.

5 Documents diplomatiques fran\'ais, 1871-1914 (First Series, 1871-
1900, 11 vols.; Paris: Commission de Publication des Documents
Relatifs aux Origines de la Guerre de 1914, 1929 ff.); hereafter
cited as D. D. F. Waddington to Freycinet, Telegram, 10 April
1885; VI, 5-6.
Granville:

She feels naturally all the responsibility which a declaration of war with Russia entails upon herself & her Government—as well as the very serious consequences which may result to the country thereafter, tho she has not a moment's anxiety as to the ultimate issue. But on the other hand, after having done what she can to avert such a painful Eventuality, she feels it to be our bound duty to be very firm & not to agree to any patching up of this question which goes much further & is of much more serious import than appears on the surface.

The British Government, however, in spite of its fiery pronouncements and military measures, hoped to surmount the crisis without going to war. Fortunately, neither the Viceroy nor the Amir of Afghanistan 2 thought that Penjdeh was worth a full scale fight. But a few more miles to the south lay Herat—the cause of two British wars with Persia and long regarded as the "gate" or "key" to India.

Herat's origins can be traced to the Heroiva of pre-Achaemenian times. Its fluctuations of fortune throughout the centuries paralleled those of Merv. Alexander and Nadir Shah passed that way, and Genghis Khan spared neither the city nor its people. In commercial, cultural, and strategic significance, however, Herat frequently outstripped its neighbour to the north. "In the whole habitable world there is not

1 The Queen to Granville, Private, Aix le Bains, 17 April 1885. Pte Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/31.

2 Dufferin to Kimberley, Private, Telegram, 4 April 1885. Bound volume, Telegrams to and from India, March 1885 to June 1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.

such another city," wrote Baber. A proverb, still repeated in the nineteenth century, termed Khorassan the oyster shell of the world and Herat the pearl. Tamerlane brought wealth and glory to his capital city, Samarcand, and inaugurated the Timurid Renaissance---a cultural movement which his successors carried forward with such zeal that many writers maintain that it was not surpassed by the Italian Renaissance. Tamerlane's son, Shah Rukh, made Herat famous and transformed his palace centre into the foremost city in Asia. Its mosques became the pride of the Mohammedan world and its many institutions of learning attracted the most talented scholars in the East. By the nineteenth century, however, travellers discerned little evidence of affluence; a series of rulers---Tartar, Afghan, Uzbek, and Persian---had come and gone; and the fortress ramparts themselves were crumbling. But, still, its four remaining gates, its sky blue minarets, and its elaborate shrines left a lasting impression upon all who visited there.

The British, however, were not primarily interested in the city's antiquarian remains. The easiest way to the Indus was via Herat and Kandahar. Explorers from Conolly onward commented on the remarkable fertility of the region and its unique strategic location on the "main


2 Sykes, History of Afghanistan, I, 266-68, 272-73.
Lane-Poole, op. cit., pp. 103-4.

Yate, England and Russia in Asia, pp. 25-29, 134-39.
In 1885 the fate of Herat was the subject of immediate and grave concern. Many statesmen feared that the Russian drive which had incorporated Penjdeh on the thirtieth of March aimed at Herat as its real objective. The Duke of Argyll, who accepted the label of Russophile without shame, stated plainly that the whole situation altered "the moment that Russia...put one step forward towards Herat." His questions in Parliament caused Lord Granville to exclaim: "I am almost inclined to say to him, 'Et tu Brute!'

In the critical days of February and March, 1885, the British Government worked out its policy towards Herat. Six weeks before the Penjdeh incident the Military Attache in St. Petersburgh reported that the Russian military party talked of taking Herat, and he suggested that it be put in readiness. His report followed a private

1 Quotation from Fraser-Tytler, op. cit., p. 7.
Benjamin to Frelinghuyson, Diplomatic Series No. 72, 14 June 1884.
Persia, I, American Department of State.

2 Hansard, Lords, 27 March 1885, Third Series, CXXCVI, 805.

3 Ibid., p. 806.

4 Memorandum by Trench on State of Opinion at St. Petersburg regarding the delimitation of Russo-Afghan Frontier, Intended Russian occupation of Herat, etc., 17 February 1885. Endorsed "Circulate among Members of the Committee. C." F.O. 65/1236.
letter from Thornton. The latter stated that the military men were steadily gaining influence over the more moderate elements in the Russian Foreign Office. Lord Kimberley wrote the following minute on the Military Attaché's memorandum:

This is a very important memorandum:—The suggestion that our escort should in the event of the negotiations breaking off take up its quarters in Herat appears to me to be a very good one. I will telegraph today privately to Dufferin to ask his opinion on it, and whether the Amir might not, as Dufferin suggested to me as a possible measure, receive some money to put Herat in a state of defence against a coup-de-main.²

An exchange of views took place among members of the Cabinet. Later, when Lord Dufferin asked if it was intended to keep Herat out of Russian hands at any price, he received an immediate telegram from Lord Kimberley. "An attack on Herat will mean war with Russia everywhere," it read. Lord Kimberley amplified this point in a private letter two days later.

Both my "secret" and "private" telegrams of the 25th about Herat were seen and approved by the Cabinet, and expressed our "innermost" mind on the subject. Our feeling is that it is now not a mere question about a few miles more or less of Afghan territory but of our whole relations

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1 Thornton to Granville, Private, 29 January 1885. Pte Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/186.

2 Minute by Kimberley (19 February) on Memorandum by Trench on State of Opinion at St. Petersburgh regarding the delimitation of Russo-Afghan Frontier, Intended Russian occupation of Herat, etc., 17 February 1885. F.O. 65/1236.
Telegraph to Viceroy, 23 February 1885. F.O. 65/1236.

3 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, Telegram, 25 March 1885. Bound volume, Telegrams to and from India, March 1885 to June 1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.
with Russia in Asia.

Simultaneously, Thornton carried out his instructions to inform Giers that any attempt by Russian troops to occupy Herat would be considered tantamount to a declaration of war.

The Russians, having struck a hard substance, halted in the Kushk valley. The British were anxious to avoid hostilities, and they struggled for a compromise settlement. The tension gradually relaxed, and negotiations continued in a less charged atmosphere. Thornton reported, early in May, that the peace party was gaining strength in Russia. Moreover, it had been pointed out in a council summoned by the Emperor that the moment was not opportune for beginning a great war. The Russian army was in the midst of reorganization, the navy and the coast defences were unprepared, and the treasury was empty. The turning point in the crisis came when the Russian Emperor agreed to the principle of arbitration. The Germans believed that their pressure on Turkey for the closing of the Dardanelles to British warships had also contributed

1 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 27 March 1885. Bound volume, Letters to the Earl of Dufferin, November 1884 to July 1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.

2 Thornton to Granville, No. 77, Confidential, 29 March 1885. F.O. 65/1237.

3 Thornton to Granville, Private, 7 May 1885. Pte Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/186.

4 Granville to Steaal, 1 May 1885. F.O. 65/1242.
to the maintenance of peace. Early in June, Lord Kimberley could tell
the Viceroy that, although the Government was still, as he said, aux-
prises with the Russians, the fundamental differences had been narrowed
to the single question of the disposition of Zulficar Pass—an issue
about which the British Government remained adamant. The pass, which
runs east and west, concerned Persia more immediately than Herat and
India since it constituted the old plundering road of the Turcomans
and was the traditional "way out to Persia."

The Liberal Government, however, did not survive to conclude its
Afghan negotiations. Newspapers articles and narrow divisions in Parli-
ament were manifestations of the growing popular discontent. This dis-
satisfaction had been produced by a combination of incidents in foreign
policy—the Khartoum crisis and General Gordon's death, the Merv capitu-
lation, and the Penjdeh encounter. The Government which had rashly de-
clared its intentions to crush the Mahdi and to see right done in Af-

1 Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn, Bartholdy, and Friedrich
Thimme (editors), Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette,
1871-1914 (40 vols.; Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsfesellschaft für
Politik und Geschichte, 1922-27); hereafter cited as G. P. Prince
Bismarck to Prince Henry VII of Reuss, in Vienna, No. 60, Secret
telegram, 9 April 1885. IV, Nr. 765, 113-19.
Notation by the editors on Münster to Count Herbert Bismarck, Very

2 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 4 June 1885. Bound volume, Letters
to the Earl of Dufferin, November 1884 to July 1885, Pte Kimberley
Papers.
Memorandum by Kimberley (16 April) of conversations between Lord
Granville and Lord Kimberley, and M. de Staal and M. Lessar on
14 April 1885. F.O. 65/1240.
ghanistan had ended by retreating from the Soudan and leaving Penjdeh to the Russians. All this contributed to a rising feeling that British prestige was sustaining a series of telling blows and that the repercussions extended beyond the mountains of the Hindu Kush and the waters of the Nile to react upon the major Courts in Europe.

Early in May, 1885, the Liberals failed to muster sufficient votes in a division over a relatively minor issue. A month later Lord Salisbury, as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, assumed leadership of a minority government which lasted for seven months. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, later in his life, recalled that Lord Salisbury had boarded the train for Balmoral intending to decline the office, but in deference to the Queen's wishes he had changed his plans and consented to form a government. Irish issues were ablaze; Parliamentary reform was in progress once more; and England's relations with other Powers were, as the Queen told him, in a sorry plight. Upon returning from Balmoral, he remarked:

"They [the Liberal Government] have at least achieved their long desired 'Concert of Europe.' They have succeeded in uniting the continent of Europe—against England.

From a general diplomatic point of view the British position was indeed as Lord Salisbury said in a letter to Sir William White—"not enviable." At the outset, the Afghan frontier constituted the most

1 Lord St. Aldwyn to Lady Gwendolen Cecil, undated but filed between 16 December 1913 and 23 January 1914. Pte Hicks Beach Papers.

2 Quoted in Cecil, op. cit., III, 136.

3 Salisbury to White, Private, 11 July 1885. Pte White Papers, F.O. 364/1."
acute danger zone, and the crisis with Russia intensified momentarily. The dispute over Zulficar Pass was not settled; one of Lord Granville's last acts was to accept General Lumsden's resignation as head of the boundary commission; the Government of India relayed reports of renewed Russian troop movements; and the Cabinet again considered war preparations.

When Sir West Ridgeway took command of the frontier commission, he faced incessant Russian probing actions, tense and dissatisfied Afghans, and the threat of a collapse in the morale of his staff. The Salisbury-Dufferin-Ridgeway combination worked together smoothly, however. After long and tiresome negotiations, interspersed with more than one anxious moment, a partial settlement of the boundary was achieved in 1885.

But the diplomatic triumph was not easily won. A controversy over Zulficar slowed the negotiations to a near stop, and so strained relations that the British investigated the possibility of a stand at Herat.

1 The work of the British boundary commission deserves fuller treatment than it has yet received. The commission itself, partly appointed by Lord Granville and partly by Lord Ripon, does not seem to have been happily constituted. General Lumsden's resignation was the climax to a series of differences existing within the commission itself and between it and higher authorities in London and Simla. Nevertheless, it acquitted itself well as far as its actual task was concerned. The F.O. 65 series for 1884 and 1885 contains an abundance of pertinent material, and so do the records in the Commonwealth Relations Office.

2 Sir West Ridgeway replaced General Lumsden. The Afghan negotiations continued until 1887, and Ridgeway was on the frontier until they terminated. He wrote an interesting article on the frontier delimitation. West Ridgeway, "The New Afghan Frontier," Nineteenth Century, XXII (1887), 470-82.
The strategic disposition of Zulficar and its relation to Persia and to India had been all too clearly delineated by General Petrusciewitch on his military maps several years before. His pamphlet and illustrative work in cartography reached the British Foreign Office in the closing days of 1881. These documents were studied carefully and still had pertinence in 1888 when copies were given to the new Minister of Tehran, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. General Petrusciewitch lucidly demonstrated that the Afghan barrier could be outflanked by penetrating Khorassan and that Zulficar unlocked the Persian door. Both Lord Kimberley and Lord Salisbury tenaciously refused to consider the pass as anything but a sine qua non. The Queen directed Lord Salisbury to hold firm on Zulficar whatever results may be."

In April, when a state of war between England and Russia lacked little more than the official declaration, the Russians had accepted the formula—Penjdeh for Zulficar. But before Lord Granville left the Foreign Office the question had been reopened, and discussions were taking place

1 See Appendix III.

2 The Queen to Salisbury, Private, Telegram, 11 July 1885. Bound volume, From The Queen, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury Papers.

over whether Zulficar was a pass or a village. The Amir's attitude added to the delicacy of the question. Abdur Rahman had accepted the loss of Panjdeh without a remonstrance, but he told the Viceroy plainly that he would not honour any settlement which relinquished his rights to certain other districts. One of these was Zulficar.

On the frontier itself Colonel Ridgeway was apprehensive about the outbreak of war, and feared that "Colonel Alikhanoff's first endeavour may be to capture the mission and parade it through Turkistan."

The Queen used the words "very ugly" to appraise the Afghan situation, and she confided to Lord Salisbury her dread of an "explosion" before anything could be done. In his report to the Queen about his first reception of the diplomatic corps, Lord Salisbury described the Russian Ambassador's bearing as "stiff and formal." Such was the situation in the summer of 1885.

Under Lord Salisbury's supervision the preparations for war went

1 Baron Alexandre Meyendorff (editor), Correspondance diplomatique de Baron de Staal (2 vols.; Paris: Librairie des Sciences Politiques et Sociales, 1929). Giers to Staal, Telegram, 4/16 April 1885. I, 192.


3 Ridgeway to Foreign Department, Government of India, No. 35, Telegram, 7 June 1885. Letters from India, Political and Secret Department, Vol.XCIV, India Office Records.

4 The Queen to Salisbury, Private, Telegram, 17 July 1885. Bound volume, From The Queen, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury Papers.

5 Salisbury to The Queen, Private, 26 June 1885. Bound volume, To The Queen, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury Papers.
forward. The boundary commissioners received detailed instructions
in case war broke out. A collision between Russian patrols and Af-
ghan outposts seemed possible, and Sir West Ridgeway telegraphed for
guidance in the event that "Russians, few or many, advance into the
Herat valley." Lord Salisbury consulted the India Office and the
Government of India. The latter unanimously declared that any such
advance would be so "unwarrantable" that it would "justly constitute
a casus belli." The Russian Foreign Minister received another warn-
ing about Herat.

The drafts and minutes in his own hand, including telegrams to
the Viceroy, reveal the extent to which Lord Salisbury personally con-
ducted these negotiations and also his amazing grasp of detail in Cen-
tral Asian affairs. Neither Lord Salisbury's drafts nor his private

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1 Case 1044, Afghan Boundary: Instructions in the event of hostili-
ties, July 1885. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret De-
partment, Vol. LXXV, India Office Records.

2 Ridgeway to Salisbury, No. 132, Decypher telegram, 16 August 1885.
F.O. 65/1248.

3 India Office to Foreign Office and minutes by Currie and Salisbury,
Secret, 28 August 1885. F.O. 65/1242.
Salisbury to Ridgeway, No. 65, Draft telegram, Confidential, 21 Sep-
tember 1885. F.O. 65/1250.

4 Salisbury to Grosvenor, No. 336, Draft telegram, Confidential, 11
September 1885. F.O. 65/1250.

5 Both the F.O. 65 series and the F.O. 60 series (Russia in Central
Asia and Persia) contain numerous drafts and minutes in his own
hand. Some of his drafts to the Viceroy appear in the Home Corres-
pondence, Political and Secret Department, India Office Records,
for 1885.
writings, however, betray an immediate anticipation of war. To his
Ambassador in St. Petersburgh, he wrote:

...The Russian negotiation seems as if it had arrived at
an impasse. I don't think that at present they mean war
—but I fear they have pledged themselves too strongly
not to grant the whole pass, and that they cannot retract. 1
Of course we cannot retract, for we are bound to the Ameer.

A fortnight later, he continued:

I do not apprehend any change in Afghanistan so long as the
heat continues, but I do not feel at all secure against an
incident fâchoux as soon as October begins. However the de-
defences of Herat are going forward, and barring treachery
I do not believe that they will be open to a coup de main.2

Sir Edward Thornton agreed. He did not think that the Russians in-
tended to go to war in the immediate future, nor over the Afghan bound-
dary. But their military preparations looked serious:

These preparations were begun when there really seemed to be
a danger of a conflict with England, and they have not been discon-
tinued; indeed the change of our Government seemed
rather to have intensified them....My impression is that their
real objective is always Constantinople and that their threat-
ening attitude towards India through Afghanistan is merely a
detail and intended to induce us to send as many troops as
possible to India to keep them there far away from the real
object of their ambition.3

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1 Salisbury to Thornton, Private, 21 July 1885. Bound volume, To
Austria, Belgium, China, France, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Holland,
Italy, Russia, Turkey, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury
Papers.

2 Salisbury to Thornton, Private, 5 August 1885. Bound volume, To
Austria, Belgium, China, France, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Holland,
Italy, Russia, Turkey, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury
Papers.

3 Thornton to Salisbury, Private, 29 July 1885. Bound volume, From
Turkey, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Egypt, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-
1886, Pte Salisbury Papers.
Still, throughout July and August, the constant Russian procrastinations and obstructions threatened to wreck the attempt to define the boundary. The Cabinet, at a meeting on 29 July, recommended the withdrawal of the commission on the grounds that such large scale military preparations could not be financed indefinitely and that the negotiations were involving "no inconsiderable humiliation and discredit" for Her Majesty's Government. The recall of the commission and the consequent breakdown of the deliberations seem to have been averted by the combined efforts of the Government of India and Colonel Ridgeway. They argued that the departure of British officers would probably be followed immediately by the loss of Herat.

The month of August produced ominous reports of Russian troop movements, a crisis over Herat, and negligible progress with the Zulficar dispute. On the first day of September, Lord Salisbury wrote in a letter to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff: "The Afghanistan negotiation hangs fire but I do not think the war will come out of that. Barring accidents I do not think it will come till the Russian railway to Sarakhs is finished." Sir Philip Currie thought that the reports from St.

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1 Case 1112, Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy, Secret telegram, 30 July 1885. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. CXXVI, India Office Records.

2 Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, Secret telegram, 3 August 1885. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. CXXVI, India Office Records.

3 Salisbury to Wolff, Private, 1 September 1885. Bound volume, To Austria, Belgium, China, France, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Russia, Turkey, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury Papers.
Petersburgh confirmed "Bismarck's view that the Russians mean business." He suggested:

In view of the likelihood of the crisis some months hence, might it not be useful if a Committee of representatives of the India Office, Foreign Office, War Office, and Admiralty were appointed to put together all the information we have got in the respective offices, bearing on hostilities with Russia, with the view of a complete plan of operations being prepared for the consideration of the Cabinet...

Within two weeks, however, the Russians had abandoned their claims to Zulficar, had accepted Lord Salisbury's terms, and had signed a preliminary protocol (10 September) which defined in general terms over three hundred miles of boundary from Zulficar on the Heri Rud to Khwaja Salar on the Oxus. In one of his last private letters from St. Petersburgh, Sir Edward Thornton remarked on the Russian Government's "come down from their previous pretentions."

It is difficult to account for this volte face. Clearly, Baron de Staal believed that it was useless to treat for Zulficar. He reminded Monsieur Vlangaly, in St. Petersburgh, that the British Government possessed a formal written statement acknowledging Afghan rights to Zulficar Pass. Furthermore:

Si lord Granville n'a pas cru pouvoir rétracter cette promesse, lord Salisbury, qui a accepté l'héritage politique

1 Currie to Salisbury, Private, 22 August 1885. Loose Papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

2 Thornton to Salisbury, Private, 27 August 1885. Bound volume, From Turkey, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Egypt, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury Papers.
But Lord Salisbury insisted that the Russian Government paid little heed to Staal's exhortations.

In Central Europe, however, Giers and Morier took up the question of Zulfiqar. While en route to St. Petersburgh as the newly appointed British Ambassador, Morier stopped at Franzensbad in order to meet with Giers. There began the frank and friendly discussions which characterized the relationship of these two men for many years. Morier said that the British lion was a peaceful beast, "but had a chorda sensible, like all respectable carnivora." It had a bone to defend—India. Herat was not the bone, but it was within the precincts of the bone, and any British Government would fight for India and its outposts. These discussions may not have had a decisive bearing, but ten days later the protocol was signed.

Another curious time relationship was the rising in Roumelia— which occurred eight days after the Afghan settlement. It seems highly probable that the eruption in the Balkans did not come, as Baron Jomini maintained, as a "complete surprise" to the Russians.

1 Staal to Vlangaly, No. 90, 26 July/8 August 1885. Meyendorff, op. cit., I, 254.

2 Morier to Salisbury, Private, Marienbad, 1 September 1885. Loose Papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

3 Thornton to Salisbury, No. 311, Confidential, 21 September 1885; Same to Same, No. 322, Confidential, 23 September 1885. F.O. 65/1218.
CHAPTER XV

THE EFFECTS OF THE MERV AND PENJDEH INCIDENTS

The connection, if any, between the stirrings in the Balkans and the temporary calm that settled over Afghanistan remains obscure. But the effect of the Afghan frontier proceedings upon the neighboring country of Persia was pronounced and clear cut. The news from Penjdeh, even more than that from Merv, reverberated in Tehran.

In the years immediately preceding 1885 the Russians had whittled away at the Shah's loosely controlled northeastern territories. The reports from Lieutenant Colonel Charles Stewart, on duty on the Khorassan frontier, graphically depict the Russian incursions into the Ateek and Aikal country, the ever slackening hold of the Shah on his outlying regions, the increasing number of Persian officials in the pay of Russia, and the gross misgovernment which sapped the people's will to resist encroachments. By 1885 Russian bases dotted Persia's border—at Chishishliar, Kizil Arvat, Geok Tepe, Ashkabad, Merv, and even Saraldis—and the fighting at Penjdeh took place less than one hundred miles from the Shah's domain. Would Khorassan, the Parthia of the Romans and a bone of contention throughout the centuries be-

1. Case 148, Lieutenant Colonel Stewart’s report and minutes by India Office Staff, Report printed 3 March 1883. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. LV, India Office Records. Case 179, Central Asia: M. de Giers declines to admit that the Ateek territory is an integral part of Persia. 12 March 1883. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. LV,
The excitement in northern Afghanistan roused Nasr-ed-din, who, seized with a dread of impending danger, turned to the British for help. In conversations with the British Minister in Tehran, Sir Ronald Thomson, he asked for a formal territorial guarantee and for protection against possible Russian aggression. Little was said about Persia's own precarious position, but the Shah stressed the danger to India arising from Khorassan's unsettled frontier.

Lord Granville, beset with graver troubles, replied that the representations would be "borne in mind," and gave the usual advice— that the Shah should strengthen his hold in Khorassan by appointing a reliable governor and by improving the quality of his administration. "Prompt and energetic measures" should also be taken to establish better means of communication between the Gulf and Tehran.

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1 Thomson to Granville, No. 144, Confidential, 7 April 1885. F.O. 65/1239.
Same to same, No. 129, Decypher telegram, 25 May 1885. F.O. 60/471.

2 Minute by Currie on Thomson to Granville, No. 144, Confidential, 7 April 1885. F.O. 65/1239.
Granville to Thomson, No. 61, Draft telegram, 27 May 1885. F.O. 60/471.
Several questions involving Persian policy were pending when the Conservatives came into power in mid-1885. Lord Salisbury attached real significance to that country's role in Indian defence, and Persian issues soon attracted his attention. On 17 July 1885 a relatively minor dispute brought forth a firm statement. The Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs had stated that Great Britain had no interest in Persia's rights over the Atrek country. Sir Philip Currie stated in one of his minutes that the reference should be allowed to pass unnoticed. Lord Salisbury, however, disagreed and gave directions to inform the Russians that "in our view the integrity of Persia is a matter of serious importance to this country."

Almost simultaneously he received a dispatch from Sir Ronald Thomson describing Nasr-ed-din's fright and his unsettled state of mind. Thomson advocated a limited assurance for the Shah, and he also suggested that attempts might be made to bring Germany onto the Persian scene. This document was, at Lord Salisbury's instructions, to be

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Thomson to Granville and minutes by Currie and Granville, No. 1, Confidential, 10 January 1885. F.O. 65/1235.
Granville to Thomson, No. 25, 11 March 1885. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. LXXI, India Office Records.
Thomson to Granville and minutes by Currie and Salisbury, 17 July 1885. F.O. 65/12h6.
Salisbury to Thornton, No. 276, Draft dispatch, 22 July 1885. F.O. 65/12h7.
Memorandum by Sanderson on Rights of Persia over the Atrek, 25 August 1885. F.O. 65/12h9.
Lord Salisbury also granted time to Malcom Khan for lengthy interviews. The Persian representative in London, a man of considerable literary and political ability, was genuinely distressed by the deplorable state of affairs within his country and by the growing subservience to Russia. He had long believed that the continued existence of his country as an independent state depended upon the identification of her interests with those of Great Britain together with the inauguration of a serious reform programme. Arthur Nicolson, in charge of the Legation in 1886 and 1887, criticized Malcom Khan for devising schemes which would bestow the "paraphernalia of civilization" upon a people whose experiences had not included self government, or good government, or any government at all in some cases. That an element of unreality did creep into his plans, which sometimes verged on panaceas, is not surprising since his long residence in England can be measured not merely in years but in decades. Malcom Khan's concern and unremitting efforts for the improvement of his country, however, separate him from the vast majority of his countrymen who had all but ceased to struggle

1 Thomson to Granville and minutes by Currie and Salisbury, No. 65, Secret, 9 June 1885. F.O. 65/1244.
2 Salisbury to Lytton, Private, 4 August 1876. Bound volume, Letters from the Secretary of State, I, Pte Lytton Papers.
3 Nicolson to Iddesleigh, No. 142, Confidential, 3 December 1886. F.O. 65/1293.
against the velocity of the downward trend.

The evidence indicates that Malcom Khan's interviews with Lord Salisbury in 1885 stemmed from his own initiative and not from Nasr-ed-din's instructions. He apparently hoped that messages from London would draw the Shah's attention from the hunt and would stimulate some action for the public good.

In these conferences Malcom Khan asked how Persia might meet both her external challenge and the progressive deterioration of the state itself. Lord Salisbury, in his answer, restated the principles which formed the pillars of his Persian policy—the improvement of communications between the Gulf and the northern regions and the instigation of a programme which would arrest the ever increasing internal decomposition. He spoke frankly to Malcom Khan.

...if England in the future was to be of any use in sustaining Persia against the probably encroachments of and gradual absorption by Russia, two things were necessary. In the first place, that such strategic precautions should be taken as should oppose the greatest difficulty to a Russian attack, and give the greatest facility for possible English succour; and, in the second place, that the corruptions which were eating into the kingdom and bringing it to decay should be attacked with a firm hand.

In the course of these conversations Lord Salisbury alluded to the desirability, both from Persia's and Britain's point of view, of moving


2 Salisbury to Thomson, No. 102, Draft telegram, 12 August 1885. F.O. 60/471.
the capital city 300 miles south to the old Safavi palace centre——
Isfahan.

A complete record of these conferences was transmitted to Tehran, and Sir Ronald Thomson was told to give similar advice to the Shah. Lord Salisbury's concluding words have an almost optimistic ring:

It is evident that the Persian Government is seriously impressed by the dangers which are gradually closing round it: & it is possible that even yet it may derive from them the resolution and energy which it seemed to have finally lost. Any such appearance of returning vigour should be watched for, & carefully encouraged. It may not, even now, be too late to undertake the arduous work of internal reform, & to make the necessary preparations for self-defence. The sympathy, & so far as it can be practically given, the assistance of H[er] Majesty's Government may be counted on by the Government of Persia in any such endeavours. But the appearance of Russia on the Heri Rud sufficiently proclaims that there is no time to lose.  

The course of events shows that British statesmen concerned themselves more with Persia's welfare than did its ruler. The Shah was progressive in the sense that he thought of visiting the United States whose Gatling Guns delighted him. His three trips to Europe illustrate his innate curiosity and the firm foundation of his rule. Yet, in his conduct of government he displayed a conspicuous lack of realism. He wanted, indeed he would plead pathetically for, British support, but he consistently denied his would-be protectors the means

1 Salisbury to Thomson, No. 75A, Draft dispatch, 6 August 1885. F.O. 65/1248.

2 Pratt to Bayard, 30 June 1887. Persia, II, American Department of State.
by which aid could be given. In this particular instance, Nasr-ed-din sulked after receiving the dispatches from London and ignored the advice they contained until after Lord Salisbury had been replaced by the Liberal interlude of 1886.

Meanwhile, the India Office tackled the Persian dilemma. Sir Ronald Thomson's dispatch, which Lord Salisbury had ordered printed for the Cabinet, inspired a thorough re-examination of possible courses of action. Sir Owen Burne recalled that in 1883 the question had arisen "for the hundredth time, and was as usual shifted off to the shoulders of the futurity." But each year the problems grew more acute, England's position more difficult, the Persian Government weaker, and the feasible alternatives fewer. By 1885 the India Office visualized only two real solutions: Either a joint guarantee by Germany, Austria, and England; or a wholesale withdrawal from northern Persia and Afghanistan—Herat included—concomitant with the occupation of Kandahar, Seistan, Bunder Abbas, and the recognition of the Zil-es-sultan as the lawful and British-protected ruler of southern Persia. But no middle course. As a prologue to "active measures Persia-wards" the appointment of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff as Minister to Tehran, since Sir Henry Rawlinson probably could not undertake the duties, was strongly recommended.

1 Thomson to Salisbury, No. 111, 28 September 1885. F.O. 60/470.
A few days later Lord Randolph Churchill sent a cogently worded letter to the Foreign Office advocating steps which would inject new life into England's Persian policy. His communication of 25 July 1885 stressed the incongruity of protecting Afghanistan and not Persia, and counselled a corresponding extension of responsibility. The Persians could not stand against the Russians on good intentions and resolutions alone. Unless the Persians believed that England would support them in a struggle for independence they would drift along on their lethargic course which could only end in further, and perhaps complete, Russianization. Finally, Lord Randolph Churchill recommended that Prince Bismarck be invited to join with England in sponsoring enterprises designed to rescue Persia from final subordination to her powerful northern neighbour. Lord Salisbury agreed that a stronger line was needed, but he was impressed by the unpleasant facts of geography. He wrote:

Reply that the difficulty of supporting Persia against Russia lies in the fact that the regions in which Russian encroachments are likely to be made lie wholly beyond the reach of any material assistance which Her Majesty's Government could furnish to the Persian Government. Any promise, therefore, of assistance to Persia runs the danger of inducing the Persian Government to rely upon support, which, if the occasion arose, it would probably be impracticable to give.

Sir Owen Burne described the Foreign Office reply as "disappoint-
"ing," but the India Office was unwilling to let the matter drop and within a few days they returned a rebuttal. The minutes of the permanent officials in the India Office indicate that these letters represented more than Lord Randolph's personal views, which were denounced as swashbuckling in Liberal Circles.

Lord Salisbury rejected the proposal to extend to Persia the same protection accorded Afghanistan, but he considered the possibility of German cooperation worth investigating. The suggestion regarding an Anglo-German guarantee for Persia coincided with and gave impetus to a general trend in policy already underway. In his last private letter to the Viceroy in 1885, Lord Kimberley expressed regret over the continuous reports of Russian aggression on the frontier. But, he said: "The present Government have one advantage over us that Bismarck is better disposed towards them."

The foundation of Lord Salisbury's policy in 1885 was the nurturing of this friendly disposition—insofar as it existed at all.


2 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret, 11 August 1885. F.O. 65/1218.
Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 14 May 1885. Bound volume, Letters to the Earl of Dufferin, November 1884 to July 1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.

3 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 1 June 1885. Bound volume, Letters to the Earl of Dufferin, November 1884 to July 1885, Pte Kimberley Papers.

He expended some effort in fostering better relations between England and Italy, but his most significant overtures by far were directed towards the Iron Chancellor. The Queen, though displeased with Berlin on several scores, considered it necessary "to cultivate the most friendly relations with Germany." Sir William White, who probably was Lord Salisbury's most trusted Ambassador, wrote:

Austrian policy is obscure indeed. Calice is most unsatisfactory and I always considered Kalnoky more Russian than German. If I could venture to suggest anything I should advise our getting as close to Germany as we properly can....

In his first interviews with Count Münster, the German Ambassador in London, Lord Salisbury disclosed the direction of his policy. According to Count Münster's report, Lord Salisbury said that his basic premise was the restoration of close relations with Germany——"ein gutes Einverständnis mit Deutschland zu erhalten und zu pflegen."

A few days later, in another conversation with Münster, Lord Salisbury recalled Prince Bismarck's statement that the combination of Germany, 

1 Salisbury to Lumley, Private, 11 September 1885. Bound volume. To Austria, Belgium, China, France, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Russia, Turkey, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-1886. Pte Salisbury Papers.

2 The Queen to Salisbury, Private, 6 October 1885. Bound volume, Letters from the Queen, 1885-1886. Pte Salisbury Papers.

3 White to Salisbury, Private, 29 September 1885. Bound volume, From Turkey, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Egypt, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury Papers.

4 Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn, Bartholdy, and Friedrich Thimme (editors), Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914 (40 vols.; Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsfesellschaft für
England, and Austria could maintain the peace of Europe.

These observations were followed by a more direct overture. On 2 July 1885 Lord Salisbury wrote privately to Prince Bismarck, spoke warmly of his recollections of Berlin in 1876 and 1878, and stated more clearly his objective in foreign policy.

...to restore the good understanding between the two countries which we value as of supreme importance, but which in recent times has been slightly clouded. I think you may reasonably count on a continuity of policy in this matter. I do not know what the real intentions of the Russian Cabinet are: but our wish is distinctly for peace. To speak candidly, our railroad towards Candahar will not be finished for two years; and I believe Russia is in precisely the same condition. We have both, therefore, the strongest interest to keep the peace for that time, if no longer; but I hope it may be for much longer.  

Bismarck's reply was polite but non-committal. He expressed friendship for England—-but for Russia too—-and he looked upon war between them as a calamity.

Lord Salisbury's efforts for improved relations with Germany were

1 Münster to the German Foreign Office, No. 176, Cypher telegram, 29 June 1885. G. P., IV, Nr. 761, 132.

2 Salisbury to Bismarck, Private, 2 July 1885. G. P., IV, Nr. 782, 132-33. A copy of this document is in the private Salisbury papers. Bound volume, To Austria, Belgium, China, France, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Russia, Turkey, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-1886. An extract has been printed in Cecil, op. cit., III, 224.

3 Bismarck to Salisbury, 8 July 1885. G. P., IV, Nr. 783, 133-34. See also Cecil, op. cit., III, 226.
not confined to conversations with the Ambassador and letters to Prince Bismarck. On the practical level he aided Germany by his mediations of her blazing disputes over Zanzibar and the Caroline Islands. Moreover, in August and September the negotiations between Sir Philip Currie, the "avowed though unofficial emissary of the Foreign Secretary," and Prince Bismarck and Count Herbert Bismarck took place. The evidence is still incomplete since Lord Salisbury's original instructions and his letters to Currie are missing. Nevertheless, the frequent and full reports written by Currie to Lord Salisbury throw light on the reasons for the mission and recount the conversations in detail. Affairs on the Afghan frontier, and the Zulficar crisis particularly, seem to account for Currie's presence at Königstein, Hamburg, and Friedrichsruhe in the late summer of 1885.

In his first conversation with Count Herbert Bismarck at Königstein in the opening days of August, Currie summarized the highlights of the Anglo-Russian crisis in Central Asia. He gave a brief historical survey and discussed the current outlook. His words to Count Herbert Bismarck indicate that the crisis was not yet passed.

The position is critical and, if a settlement is not arrived at within the next few months, it is very likely to lead to war. The Russian Commanders are enterprising

1 Cecil, op. cit., III, 227-30.
2 Ibid., p. 226.
3 See Appendix I.
and are eager for a dash at Herat. The Afghans are rash, and another Penjdeh affair may occur at any moment. Either of these contingencies would inevitably produce a rupture between England and Russia, which would lead to hostilities, not only in Central Asia, but in every part of the world where England could deal a blow at her antagonist.

Currie also explained that the British would attempt, if a full scale war with Russia broke out, to sever Russia's communication lines with her trans-Caspian provinces. This could be accomplished only after acquiring access to the Black Sea, and "this we should unquestionably do by some means or other, whatever view Europe might hold as to the localisation of the war." Currie's declaration seems to have been a considered one. It coincided with a similar statement made by Lord Salisbury in one of his letters to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. Prior agreements on the subject would be worthless, Lord Salisbury wrote, but if war between England and Russia did occur "we should in one way or another force a passage of the Dardanelles." Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, many years later, recalled that the one occasion on which Lord Salisbury was more bellicose than his Cabinet colleagues was when the question of forcing the Straits was under consideration a decade later.

1 Copy of paper shewn to Count Herbert Bismarck at Königstein, 3 August 1885. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

2 Salisbury to Wolff, Private, 1 September 1885. Bound volume, To Austria, Belgium, China, France, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Russia, Turkey, Sir H. D. Wolff, 1885-1886, Pte Salisbury Papers.

3 Lord St. Aldwyn to Lady Gwendolen Cecil, Private, undated but filed between 16 December 1913 and 23 January 1914, Pte Hicks-Beach Papers.
Currie asked for Bismarck's mediation of the Zulficar dispute in order to avert the catastrophe of a war between the two great Asiatic powers. He presented the British view of the claims over Zulficar, and pledged his country's adherence to the decision the Chancellor handed down—whatever it might be. His arbitration would enhance Prince Bismarck's already great reputation as a peacemaker.

From England he could expect "lasting gratitude."

...and he would be laying the foundations of a closer and more intimate alliance between the two Countries.

The present Prime Minister of England is known to be favorable to such an alliance in the fullest sense of the terms, and once established, the English people, who have the strongest leaning towards their old Protestant ally, would not allow their Government (from whatever party it might be taken) to swerve from it. A close union between the greatest military power and the greatest naval power would produce a combination that would not only secure the peace of the world, but would also be in the highest degree advantageous to the interests of the two Countries. It would put Germany at ease as regards the safety of her Colonial possessions in the event of European complications, and it would leave England free to defend her interests in the event of unprovoked aggression on the part of Russia against her Indian Empire, without fear of hostile neutrality on the part of the European Powers. 1

These conversations continued for nearly two months. Count Herbert Bismarck seemed to be favourably disposed to the idea of an Anglo-German alliance, but two obstacles existed. Such a friendship might not be continued by Mr. Gladstone when he returned to power, and a Liberal victory in the not too distant future seemed probable.

1 Copy of paper shewn to Count Herbert Bismarck at Königstein, 3 August 1885. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
Moreover, closer association with England would irritate Russia, and Germany's eastern frontier was long, exposed, and vulnerable. "The water," said Count Herbert Bismarck, "is too hot for us to put our finger in." He did, however, arrange for Currie to discuss these issues with his father.

At Friedricksruhe, in September, Prince Bismarck received Sir Philip Currie. Prussia's traditional policy had been friendship with England, Prince Bismarck said, but it was impossible to deal with Mr. Gladstone. The warmest personal regard was, however, felt for Lord Salisbury. As a step forward to better relations Count Münster would be recalled, and Count Hatzfeldt would take his place. The selection of Count Hatzfeldt as the new Ambassador to London proved to be a wise move. Lord Salisbury considered him trustworthy and spoke to him with a rare frankness.

In the course of the September discussions, Prince Bismarck observed that England's two potential enemies were France and Russia. He promised aid in the event of trouble with the former, but if England and Russia went to war he could pledge neutrality only. Russia, though despicable in attack, was not easily accessible. Prince Bismarck and Sir Philip Currie discussed Near Eastern problems—Bulgaria, the Straits, and Egypt—at length.

The views and objectives of both England and Germany were clarified.

1 Currie to Salisbury, Private, 1 August 1885. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
fied by the conversations, and Currie concluded:

When I took leave of the Prince, he spoke very kindly of the pleasure he had felt in seeing me at Friedricksrūhe, desired me to convey his best regards to you & said he hoped there would now be the best possible understanding between the 2 Countries. I said I hoped he would not forget to instruct his agents in Egypt to support our Rep[resentative]. He said that they would certainly do so.1

It is not clear whether other members of the Cabinet were informed of these conversations. They seem indeed to have been, to some extent at least, informal and unofficial. Several months later, however, Lord Randolph Churchill complained to Count Hatzfeldt about Germany's uncooperative attitude. "A nous deux nous pourrions gouverner le monde. Mais vous n'avez pas voulu." Prince Bismarck, in reply to his Ambassador's report, declared that he did not understand the reference to an alliance. No offer was made to him, he maintained, that he could refuse. Moreover, an alliance with England would require an act of Parliament—other agreements were but castles in the air.

In still another sphere Lord Salisbury attempted to harmonize the policies of England and Germany. The roots of these negotiations go back to the Shah's kingdom in the previous decade. In 1872 the Persian Grand Vizier persuaded Nasr-ed-din to grant a startling conces-

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The Grand Vizier thought that if England had a stake in the country she would protect it.

Baron Julius de Reuter, a former Coburg subject who became British by naturalization, obtained almost complete control over Persia's industrial resources, for a period of seventy years. He was empowered to construct a railway from the Gulf to the Caspian, and any branches he deemed feasible; to build tramways throughout the country; to work all mines except gold and silver; to undertake irrigation projects; to establish a national bank; to construct roads, bridges, and telegraphs; and to manage the customs for twenty-five years. For his part Baron Reuter agreed to pay a fixed sum for the privilege of operating the customs for the first five years and then sixty per cent of the net revenue for the period remaining. Twenty per cent of the profits from railways and fifteen per cent of the profits from all other sources were to be paid to the Shah. After seventy years all improvements reverted to Persia.

The Shah travelled to Europe in the following year. His bargain with Baron Reuter was severely criticized, and the Russians were very angry. Upon returning to Persia he cancelled the concession. Shortly thereafter, the Persian Minister in London held a confidential conversation with Lord Tenterden in which he explained why the concession

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1 Little has been written about this concession. Three case volumes, however—F.O. 60/405, 406, and 407—deal with the Reuter negotiations. The best printed summary is in Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East, pp. 122-28; an abstract of the concession is given in Appendix V.
had been granted originally and disclosed "the real fact...that the
Concession had been broken at the demand of the Russian Government."

Sir Henry Rawlinson quickly pointed out the significance of the
proposed railway to the defence of India. If no interest was shown
in upholding the legal rights of a British subject, he warned, an in-
evitable gravitation towards Russia would ensue. The Duke of Argyll,
then Secretary of State for India, regretted the cancellation since
the railway lines and irrigation works would benefit Persia, "and
would serve the only interest which England can have---namely that
of making the country stronger and more prosperous."

The British Government adopted a moderate official policy. On
one hand they approved of the Shah's decision to nullify the contract
since the mammoth concession was considered unworkable and it left
only a shadow of independence to the Persian Government. On the other
hand, however, Nasr-ed-din's repudiation was difficult to justify on
legal grounds since Baron Reuter had not violated the terms of the
agreement. Moreover, the projects for internal development would
have been mutually beneficial—to Persia and to British interests
there. Consequently, Baron Reuter was given unofficial diplomatic
support at Tehran. From this the principle evolved that no concession

1 Memorandum by Tenterden on Baron Reuter and Persia, 9 November
1894. F.O. 60/406.
2 Memorandum by Rawlinson on Baron Reuter's Railway proposals, 5
June 1873. F.O. 60/405.
3 India Office to Foreign Office, 13 December 1873. F.O. 60/405.
for railways should be granted to a foreign power or to its subjects until a settlement of the Baron's claims had been reached. For twelve years the negotiations produced a bulky correspondence, but nothing more.

In 1885, when the Penjdeh crisis was at its height, Baron Reuter pressed his claims for compensation with renewed force. His threats to sell his rights to Russia or Germany had long been troublesome, and in May and June of 1885 his case went before the Cabinet. Lord Northbrook, at the Admiralty, proposed to dismiss the question summarily. Lord Hartington, however, looking at the situation from the War Office point of view, held that "means of making our influence felt in Persia might be useful just now." Ultimately, it was decided that Baron Reuter should discuss his proposals with Sir Henry Rawlinson. Serious consultations were underway when the Liberal Government fell.

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1 Much of the correspondence in F.O. 60/1406 concerns the evolution of the official British attitude. See for example Derby to Tennent, undated but filed between 19 May and 28 May 1874.

2 Cabinet Opinion of Northbrook, 25 April 1885. Pte Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/1/5.

3 Cabinet Opinion of Hartington, 26 April 1885. Pte Granville Papers, P. R. O. 30/29/1/5.

4 Cabinet Opinions of Granville, Kimberley, and Hartington, 27/28 April 1885. Pte Granville Papers, P. R.O. 30/29/1/5.

5 Memorandum by Rawlinson on conversations with Baron Reuter, 15 May 1885. Endorsed "Drawn up for the Cabinet." F.O. 60/1476.
These discussions were continued by Lord Salisbury. Baron Reuter conversed with Sir Julian Pauncefote, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. The Baron planned to organize an international company, backed by Prince Bismarck and Lord Rothschild, for the purpose of working his railway concession and establishing Persia as a strong bulwark against Russia. Lord Salisbury wrote on Pauncefote's report: "I am very much disposed to recommend him to associate England and Germany in this matter and England will go as far as Germany will."

Pauncefote, who assisted Lord Salisbury in this venture, interviewed Lord Rothschild privately. The financier seemed pleased to cooperate, but he doubted that sufficient monetary backing would be forthcoming unless both the concession and the integrity of Persia were guaranteed by England and Germany. Pauncefote asked Lord Salisbury if he would still go as far as Germany. He seemed favourably inclined "since Germany will not commit herself rashly. But it is a rather grave pledge." Lord Salisbury then decided to ask for the opinions of the other members of his government.

1. Abstract of Correspondence relating to the Concession granted to Baron Reuter by the Persian Government in 1872, Confidential/5120, Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, Endorsed "Copy to Queen, Lord Iddesleigh." F.O. 60/176.

2. Memorandum by Pauncefote on conversation with Baron Reuter and minute by Salisbury, 11 August 1885. F.O. 60/176.

Memoranda were circulated. Lord Iddesleigh, though cautious and prone to see difficulties, approved. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, thought that action in concert with Germany would be "advantageous," but he doubted whether it could be obtained. Mr. W. H. Smith, then Secretary for War, favoured the inflow of British and German capital into Persia as a "check to Russian ambition."

Lord Randolph Churchill rejoiced to find that the Foreign Office project coincided with that put forward earlier by the India Office.

Protection of Persia as well as Afghanistan was axiomatic to Lord Randolph Churchill. He argued:

Generally, any arrangement under which the integrity of Persia might become an object of material solicitude to Germany so as to lead her to join with England in guaranteeing it could not fail to be of the utmost advantage to Indian interests to which the integrity of Persia, or at any rate the independence of Persia from Russian influence, is as essential as the integrity of Afghanistan and the independence of that country from Russian influence. 1

Simultaneously, Lord Randolph Churchill discussed Anglo-Russian relations with Count William Bismarck. Churchill repeated his conviction that Persia was as important to England as Afghanistan. In fact, Russia's machinations in the former country were even more dangerous since material support was so difficult to give. "Es würde ihm, Churchill, erwünscht sein, wenn die Integrität Persiens von Deutschland und England zusammen garantiert würde, und das ganze settlement...

in Persien, wie der Ausbau der Eisenbahnen pp. in deutsche Hände komme." Count William Bismarck's reaction was discouraging; such cooperation, he said, could only be interpreted as a spearpoint against Russia.

Here, as is often the case, the extent to which the conversation was authorized is uncertain. The negotiations which stemmed from the Reuters memoranda, however, were official and concrete.

Lord Salisbury sent the memoranda relating to Baron Reuter's concession to Sir Edward Malet in Berlin. Malet was instructed to acquaint the Chancellor with British hopes for the development of Persia and to inform him that in this task "there is no one whose opinion and cooperation they would more value than Prince Bismarck's."

The Foreign Office decided, after receiving recommendations from the India Office, that the association of Austria was also desirable. France and Russia, however, would not be welcomed.

Three days later the British Ambassador reported that he had submitted the documents and made the explanations to Count Herbert Bismarck who, without comment, promised to submit the material for Prince Bismarck's consideration. September passed—October—November—

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2 Salisbury to Malet, No. 371, Draft dispatch, Confidential, 2 September 1885. Endorsed "The Queen, Lord Iddesleigh, Copy to India Office for concurrence." F.O. 61/1074.
3 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 3 September 1885. F.O. 65/1100.
and December neared its close. Lord Salisbury, on 22 December, telegraphed to Malet saying that he would be "very glad to learn" if any hint had been given regarding Germany's attitude. Late in January 1886 the Chancellor announced his verdict. Perhaps the vision of the Speerspitze of Russian diplomacy turning west to probe the line of Germany's eastern frontier seemed no more attractive to Prince Bismarck than it had been in the preceding May. For whatever reason, he refused to involve Germany in Persian affairs, and he was "unwilling to side for or against England or Russia on points where their interests were opposed."

Thus the attempts to develop an Anglo-German policy for Persia failed. It would seem that Lord Salisbury's exertions in cultivating the friendship of the Bismarcks paid very small dividends. But perhaps not. Lord Kimberley's first letter to the Viceroy, written after the Liberal return to power early in 1886, commented on the work of his predecessor:

Salisbury has greatly advanced his own reputation by his successful management of foreign affairs, and I am hopeful that Rosebery, whose appointment gives general satisfaction, will keep us in the right path. It is no small gain that he is persona grata to the Berlin Dictator.²

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1 Salisbury to Malet, No. 550, Decypher telegram, Very Confidential, 22 December 1885. F.O. 61/1075.


4 Kimberley to Dufferin, Private, 5 February 1886. Bound volume, Letters to the Earl of Dufferin, February 1886 to September 1886, Pte Kimberley Papers.
CHAPTER VI

THE PERSIAN PROBLEM: 1885-1888
AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA AS A POSSIBLE APPROACH

In the waning years of the last century the Indian frontier outposts of Afghanistan and Persia caused anxiety—often grave, sometimes needless, but seemingly endless. The Amir's health, the Shah's vacillations, Herat's vulnerability, Khorassan's effete-ness, the ever-recurring war scares, the ever-increasing defence burden combined to exasperate. Negotiations invariably became entangled in a web of Oriental intrigue, and they frequently closed abruptly with the announcement of a secret agreement of several years vintage which prohibited the desired action. Rare was the conversation between the British Minister and Persian officials which did not reach, at least in a distorted form, one of Russia's representatives. The reverse was also true, and one British diplomat upon leaving Persia said that he had felt "like a jellyfish in a whirlpool." The capital city excelled in a lively trade in secret and official documents—with treaties commanding a particularly choice price. The


2 See for example: Benjamin to Frelinghuysen, Diplomatic Series No. 23, Confidential, 19 July 1883. Persia, I, American Department of State. The American Minister wrote to his chief in Washington about a treaty between Persia and Russia "secretly placed at my disposal for the modest sum of $8,500. I might have had a copy for $100, but the disavowal by England suddenly sent the price up."
machinations never ceased. Even when the general relations between England and Russia seemed harmonious, the good feeling did not filter down to far away Tehran where their agents continued to wage an undeclared war of their own.

The policy of ending the sordid rivalry and embarking upon a new age of friendship and cooperation is popularly associated with Sir Edward Grey. The idea of settling controversial issues by an arrangement with the Russians had always been attractive, however, and the thoughts of many a nineteenth century Foreign Secretary, Ambassador, and Viceroy turned longingly in that direction. Partition of Persia into spheres of influence, as eventually accomplished by Grey in 1907, was only one and perhaps the most extreme of the "agreement with Russia" themes.

In 1834, when rivalry in Central Asia was passing through one of its more acute phases, Palmerston succeeded in obtaining Russia's adherence to the principle that both Governments were "animated by a sincere desire to maintain, not only the internal tranquillity, but also the independence and integrity of Persia." The British extracted from St. Petersburgh a reiteration of this pledge in 1838, 1865, 1873, 1874, and 1888. But not until 1873 did the Shah learn


2 Buchanan to Russell, No. 10, 12 September 1865. B. F. S. P.
of this territorial guarantee. The Russian attitude towards these declarations has been expressed by one of her foreign policy makers.

In 1904 when Count Vladimir Lamsdorff discussed the long and stubborn struggle with Great Britain for predominance in Persia, he reminded the newly appointed Russian Minister to Tehran of the prevailing view:

Two incidents in this struggle, namely the so-called "agreements" of 1831 and 1888, serve as the object of constant reference from England which endeavours on that basis to make a settlement in our relations with Persia. These assurances... concerned circumstances of the immediate moment... It must be borne in mind that they by no means served as final words.

This interpretation was not publicly divulged, and throughout the Salisbury era the agreements constituted one of the cornerstones of Great Britain's Persian policy.

Lord Ripon, Viceroy of India from 1880 to 1881, proposed a more

1 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 21 February 1882. F.O. 65/1150.
Correspondence respecting the occupation of Merv by Russia and her proceedings on the Khorassan Frontier of Persia, Secret, A. W. M., India Office, Political and Secret Department, 15 August 1884. F.O. 65/1209.
See also Appendix II.

2 Lamsdorff to Speyer, Secret, 30 September/13 October 1904. Krasnnyi Arhiv, LIII, 15-16. The citations from Russian sources in this study were translated from the Russian by Mr. Myrl Powell, formerly of the University of Kansas.
formal and far reaching arrangement. In his private letters to Lord Kimberley and in an official Government of India dispatch, he advocated the opening of negotiations with Russia for a treaty which would adjust the differences between the two countries sur toute la ligne. The London authorities were united in their scepticism. The India Office drew up an exhaustive review, nearly 150 printed pages, contrasting Russian assurances and actions during the preceding two decades. From these marshalled facts they concluded that past experience did not justify any trust in pledges—even if sincerely undertaken by the Emperor and others in St. Petersburg.

Considerable weight was attached to the opinion of Lord Dufferin, formerly Ambassador to Russia and soon to be Lord Ripon's successor. Lord Dufferin asserted that such a treaty would have value as "collateral security" only. As diplomat and Viceroy he consistently maintained that "no promise, assurance, undertaking, convention, or treaty would have the slightest effect in permanently arresting the advance of Russia." Her progress could be stopped only by the exhibition of and perhaps the resort to physi-

1 Correspondence, from 1864 to 1881, respecting the movements of Russia in Central Asia and her relations with Afghanistan, Secret, A. W. M., Political and Secret Department, India Office, 6 February 1882. F.0. 65/1150. Case 221, Memorandum by Sir Lepel Griffin, 5 March 1881. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, LXII, India Office Records.
Lord Kimberley, too, lacked confidence in Russian promises. His private letters reveal that his experience as Ambassador to St. Petersburgh, though long ago, still strongly influenced him. He argued that a treaty with Russia was not practicable, and even if practicable England would derive no benefit from it. Russian governors and military officers on the frontier would not consider such an instrument binding. Furthermore, the danger of a conflict would actually be increased since the violation of a fixed and recognized border could not be supinely ignored. The Cabinet at a meeting on 20 April 1883 rejected the Viceroy's proposed overture on the grounds set forth by Lord Kimberley.

The Merv and Penjdeh incidents precluded any further movements in the direction of an all-embracing treaty. The Liberal Government was, in fact, fully occupied in defending its Russian policy against the Conservative onslaught. The Afghan negotiations which Lord Granville had begun in 1884 presupposed some good will.

1 Quoted in Correspondence, from 1864 to 1881, respecting the movements of Russia in Central Asia and her relations with Afghanistan, Secret, A. W. M., Political and Secret Department, India Office, 8 February 1882. F.O. 65/1150.

2 Kimberley to Ripon, 11 January 1883; Same to same, Private, 11 February 1883. Bound volume, Letters to the Marquis of Ripon, December 1882 to December 1883, Pte Kimberley Papers.

on the part of the Russians, but the subsequent battle on the banks of the River Kuskh disillusioned the Liberals and provided the opposition with deadly ammunition. Early in May, 1885, Lord Randolph Churchill presented to the House of Commons a vivid description of previous breaches of engagements and scornfully derided the Government for having faith in the Russian word. His indictment was closely followed by Lord Salisbury's forceful speech at Hackney.

He told his audience:

My belief is that it was a fundamental error to attempt to engage in negotiations with Russia for the determination of a boundary in Afghanistan. I do not mean to say that if you could have got a trustworthy engagement it would not have been a good thing. That I am entirely ready to admit, but then experience surely should have taught us that trustworthy engagements with Russia are not things which we can count upon obtaining.... I do not attribute to the Russian Government an intention to deceive. It is not necessary for my purpose that I should make any such disagreeable suggestion. When they said that they would not go to Khiva, and immediately did go to Khiva; when they said they would not extend their boundaries to the east of the Caspian, and immediately did so; when they said they would not take Merv, and allowed Merv to surrender to them; it is very possible that they were not acting with any intention to mislead the English Government, but that circumstances were stronger than men. But it really does not matter. If
a man does not keep his promise in commercial matters, if he does it intentionally you say that he is a swindler; if he fails to keep his promise because he cannot keep it you say he is a bankrupt. But whether swindler or bankrupt you are very careful about trusting him the next time, and therefore, making the fullest allowance for the difficulties of the vast Russian Empire, and the impossibility of controlling the military element, which is the only sure foundation for the Throne—making all these allowances I still say that where we are now, with the lessons of history behind us, it was not wise to seek as the main object of our policy to rest the defence of India upon the guarantee of Russia. If we wish to defend the frontier of India we must do it as Lord Beaconsfield proposed—we must do it ourselves.1

Thus the advent of the Conservatives in 1885 did not presage a bright new era of good feeling between England and Russia. Throughout that year the Afghan crisis overshadowed all other Central Asian considerations, and the boundary negotiations continued to absorb a surprising proportion of diplomatic energies in 1886 and 1887. In this time span the single British bid for cooperation with Russia over Persia concerned the delimitation of the Khorassan frontier. The authorities in St. Petersburgh, however, emphatically denied that Great Britain had any right to a voice in the matter, and for obvious reasons preferred to deal with the Shah alone.

The English and the Persians occupied themselves with intermi-

1. The Times, 6 May 1885. This speech excited considerable comment. Lord Granville denounced it in the House of Lords. Hansard, Lords, 12 May 1885, Third Series, CXCVIII, 293-99; and Commons, 11 May 1885, p. 272.
noble discussions about railway building, but the monotony of these conversations was interrupted by the discovery of several disquieting Russian documents. In April 1886, the Chargé d'Affaires, Mr. Arthur Nicolson, relayed copies of secret Russian plans which had been acquired surreptitiously from their Legation. The first was a memorandum written by Colonel Kasmin Karavieff, nominally in charge of the Persian Cossack Brigade but actually still on the Head Quarters' Staff in St. Petersburg. This memorandum announced the cession of a sizeable slice of Khorassan. The second was penned by General Alekseyev Nikolaeivich Kuropatkin, the successor and disciple of General Skobelev, who followed the example of his former chief and mapped out his own plan for the invasion of India. According to his scheme the Russian army would advance simultaneously from three points—on Cabul via Balkh, on Herat via Haimena, and on Herat through Khorassan. Mr. Gladstone, whose attention to foreign affairs was confined to the more urgent issues, wrote: "This is very serious, if true." Sir Philip Currie reasoned that the documents probably represented the desiderata of the Russian officials rather than accomplished facts, but he agreed that the strictest

1 Nicolson to Rosebery, Separate and Secret, 29 April 1886. F.O. 65/1285.

2 Rosebery to Gladstone, Private and Confidential, 15 January 1889. E.M. Add. MSS., No. 111, 289, Vol. CCIV, Pte Gladstone Papers. "I remember when I took the Foreign Office you said that the important matter was to keep foreign affairs from disturbing us in Ireland, where we had a great enterprise on hand which would fully occupy our energies."
attention had to be paid to the happenings on the Persian front.

The Karavieff and Kuropatkin revelations had scarcely been digested by the British Foreign Office when General Schepeleff appeared in Tehran. General Schepeleff, who held the post of Chief of Chancery, ranked second to Prince Dondoukoff Korsadoff in the Caucasus Government. Ostensibly his business concerned minor rectifications of the Khorassan frontier, but prevailing rumours attributed a more sinister motive to his journey. Nicolson soon verified the worst suspicions when he procured a copy of a draft secret convention drawn up by the Russian general. It was verbose and involved, but when the fundamentals were laid bare it provided that Russia would assist the Shah in his disputes with Turkey if Khorassan could be used as a base for operations against India. In fact, the Persians should divest themselves of all interest in events occurring on their eastern frontier. The draft convention and Nicolson's secret dispatches were printed for the Cabinet.

In the India Office, Sir Owen Burne observed that even if the con-

1 Minutes on Nicolson to Rosebery, Separate and Secret, 29 April 1886. F.O. 65/1285.

2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 326, 26 September 1887. F.O. 65/1298.

3 Nicolson to Rosebery and enclosure, Separate and Secret, 3 June 1886. F.O. 60/480.
Same to same, No. 85, Very Secret, 25 June 1886. F.O. 60/480.
Memorandum by Sir R. Thomson, Secret and Confidential, 8 June 1886. F.O. 60/480.
Case 22, Correspondence on Nicolson's secret documents, Printed for use of the Cabinet, 21 December 1886. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCI, India Office Records.
vention were only partially carried out Persia would become en-
fiefed to Russia. Lord Kimberley directed that "the special at-
tention of my successor should be called to this important paper."

In the summer of 1886, however, General Schepelaff left Teh-
ran as suddenly and as mysteriously as he had come. The Shah con-
sistently declared that Schepelaff had put no pressure upon him and
also maintained that their discussions had been limited to inconse-
quential details. Nicolson, in private and official letters to Lord
Salisbury, expounded his interpretation of the visit. He believed
that the general, having found the moment unpropitious, gave the
draft convention to a Persian deputy with instructions to tempt Nasr-
ed-din with specious offers of assistance against Turkey when the
circumstances seemed more favourable. Nicolson attached real signi-
ficance to the Karavieff, Kuropatkin, and Schepelaff papers and on
more than one occasion stressed their authenticity and implications.
Nicolson did not intimate that Russia would violate Persian terri-
tory by a precipitate and outright invasion, but he warned that the
Russian Legation appeared to be preparing the ground for a diplo-
matic coup and that their ends could be achieved by the "insidious
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terms of the Draft Convention."

1 Minutes on letter from Persia, 25 June 1886, Russia and Persia,
Draft of Secret Convention drawn up by General Schepelaff, Per-
sian Correspondence, 1886, Vol. CIX, Political Department, India
Office Records.

2 Nicolson to Currie, Private, 1 July 1886. F.O. 65/1288.
Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 12, Very Confidential, 24 January 1887.
Before the tumult caused by the generals had subsided, a new Russian minister arrived in Tehran. A picturesque and ambitious Prince with powerful family connections in St. Petersburg, Nicolas Dolgorouki came to Persia intent on winning his diplomatic spurs with all dispatch and moving on to the more coveted post of Constantinople. He was vain and arrogant, disdainful and demanding, and he scornfully refused to treat the Shah with either the respect or courtesy due to the head of a sovereign nation. Dolgorouki's intimidation, more than the wily intrigues of the military men, annoyed and alarmed Nasr-ed-din who reiterated anew his appeals to Great Britain.

In 1885, when he was terrified by the Penjdeh incident, Nasr-ed-din's entreaties had such a ring of desperation that Sir Ronald Thomson advised giving a limited guarantee. Likewise, in 1888, the Shah's despair became acute enough to convince Nicolson that some definite statement of good will and sympathy had to be forth-

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1 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 60, 27 April 1887. F.O. 60/486.
2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 368, Secret, 9 November 1887. F.O. 65/1324.
3 Thomson to Granville, No. 65, Secret, 9 June 1885. F.O. 65/1244.
coming in order to avert a wholesale capitulation to Russia. The British Minister judged that an offer of moral support would suffice as a temporary morale booster, though the Shah's ultimate goal was the promise of material aid.

Early in 1888 the British tested a Persian policy which, in order to be understood, must be viewed not only in its Central Asian setting but also against the general background of Anglo-Russian relations. Sir Robert Morier often stressed the "action and reaction on each other of political events at the European and Asiatic poles of the Russian cosmos." The impact of the Afghan settlement and the Bulgarian crisis upon the line of conduct at Tehran exemplifies this dictum.

In the winter and spring of 1887 the tedious negotiations over the Amir's northern frontier bogged down once more, and a complete breakdown seemed likely. During the summer, however, the atmosphere suddenly improved, and the final protocol was signed in St. Petersburg. Sir West Ridgeway's "summing up" for Lord Salisbury is dated 15 August 1885. This sharp change on the Central Asian front is probably accounted for by Russia's preoccupation with the kaleido-

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1 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 12, Secret, 10 January 1888. F.O. 65/1347.
Nicolson to Currie, Private, 12 January 1888. F.O. 60/193.
3 Ridgeway to Salisbury, No. 8, 15 August 1887. Asia/Confidential/611. F.O. 65/1347.
scopic transformations occurring in the western peripheral regions of her empire.

The tense moments in the Afghan delimitation negotiations during the winter of 1886-1887 coincided with a darkening horizon elsewhere. Sir William White in his first letter to Lord Iddesleigh in 1887 used the word "sombre" to describe the outlook for the new year and dwelt particularly upon the Austro-Russian rivalry in the Balkans which must inevitably lead to a collision. In the opening days of 1887 European Chanceries were dominated by the question: Would Russia forcibly occupy Bulgaria? If she took such a forward step it seemed certain that Austria would resist. And Lord Salisbury instructed the Ambassador in St. Petersburgh to impress upon Giers that Austria would not stand alone. This message was not intended to be provocative but was aimed at deterring the Czar from a course which would be catastrophic for Europe and for Russia alike.

Sir Robert Morier often asserted that leaders of nations rarely pursued a course of calculated suicide, and Russia's conduct in 1887 seems to bear out his maxim. She faced the combined opposition of England, Austria, and Italy—a grouping which the Mediterranean

1 White to Iddesleigh, Private, 1 January 1887. Pte White Papers. F.0. 364/1.
2 Lady Gwendolen Cecil, Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury (4 vols.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921-32); IV, 10.
Agreements of February and December of 1887 turned into a more solid front. Gradually Russian war-talk subsided, and her leaders set off on a new tack designed to gain their ends in southeastern Europe. This new approach was concession and negotiation. While the winter and spring of 1887 saw the Afghan discussions deadlocked, the summer found them drawing swiftly to a successful end.

Just prior to the Afghan settlement the Sobranje in Bulgaria had voted in favour of Ferdinand of Coburg as their ruler. Prince Ferdinand reached Sofia in August. The Russians considered him totally unacceptable, proclaimed his election illegal, and worked for his expulsion. Since 1885, however, Great Britain had supported the "living barrier" formed by the "breast of freemen" in the embryonic Balkan states as a bar to Russia's drive towards Constantinople. It was this check to Russian aspirations that Giers hoped to remove by concessions in Central Asia.

Immediately before the Afghan protocol was signed, Giers, both verbally and in writing, expressed his hope that the two countries

One of the best short summaries on British policy in the Balkans is the "Memorandum on the Situation" of September, 1886, Pte White Papers. F.O. 364/1.
would discuss the Bulgarian question "in the same friendly tone."

At Constantinople, Sir William White complained of Nelidov's taking every opportunity to make "political capital" out of the Central Asian settlement by representing it as the beginning of a comprehensive rapprochement. After some preliminary conversations Giers made a more direct overture in mid-August which, at his request, was telegraphed to London. The Russian Foreign Minister hoped that the "restoration of good will" produced by the boundary agreement might be extended to Bulgaria.

He [Giers] said there were those who had very keenly hoped that the Afghan frontier negotiations would have led to a serious rupture and who bitterly lamented its favourable issue. This was the more reason to make it a stepping stone to a better understanding all round, and this was the light in which the Emperor as well as himself regarded our late accord.

Sir Villiers Lister denounced the two and one half page message as a "monstrous waste of money," and another member of the Foreign Office staff computed the exact cost of the telegram. Lord Salisbury personally drafted the reply. He almost curtly set forth the

1 Morier to Salisbury and enclosures, No. 260, Confidential, 26 July 1887. F.O. 65/1297.


3 Morier to Salisbury, No. 61, Decypher telegram, Secret, 18 August 1887. F.O. 65/1300.

See also Same to same, No. 287, Secret, 17 August 1887. F.O. 65/1298.

4 Minutes following Morier to Salisbury, No. 61, Decypher telegram, Secret, 18 August 1887. F.O. 65/1300.
reasons why Her Majesty's Government could not "safely draw closer to Russia on the subject of Bulgaria."

Upon learning of England's cold reaction, Giers shifted the emphasis from Bulgaria to the necessity for Anglo-Russian cooperation in the event of a Franco-German war. Agreement in the Balkans, however, constituted the door which opened the way for the development of this friendship. Such bait failed to tempt the British, but tentative Russian approaches continued throughout 1887.

Sir Philip Currie was the first to suggest that this material of diplomacy might be utilized in Persia. He declared, in a long minute following one of Nicolson's appeals on behalf of the Shah, that the "only chance" of helping Persia "would be to take advantage of the friendly disposition of the Russian Government and try to have some kind of exchange of ideas with them." Currie had faith in the essential prudence of the Czar, though he believed Prince Dolgorouki and the trans-Caspian officials were "eager for the fray." He urged Lord Salisbury to use the frenzied outburst in the Russian press, caused by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff's appointment as Minister to Tehran, as

1 Salisbury to Morier, No. 112, Draft telegram, 19 August 1887; Same to same, No. 113, Draft telegram, 22 August 1887. F.O. 65/1300.
See also the extenders of these telegrams. Salisbury to Morier, No. 237, 19 August 1887; Same to same, No. 239, 22 August 1887. F.O. 65/1294.

2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 294, 24 August 1887; Same to same, No. 325, 21 September 1887. F.O. 65/1298.
a basis for broaching the subject of Persia to Steal. According
to this journalistic hysteria, which Morier thought was inspired,
Wolff intended not only to re-establish British paramountcy in
Persia but also to launch an anti-Russian pan-Islamic crusade
throughout the East.

Currie then laid down the essentials of the British side of
the proposed Salisbury-Stael conversation. He recommended that
the importance attached to the Wolff mission be admitted. But hos­
tility to Russia did not follow as a logical deduction. England
coveted no exclusive rights in Persia, and she would welcome co­
operation in upholding the integrity of the country and in promoting
its development. Commercial enterprise, particularly, should be en­
couraged. In that connection the British Government took special
interest in the improvement of communications from the Gulf inland.
Currie argued, finally, that even if nothing tangible emerged, the
Shah would have proof of England's solicitude. Lord Salisbury's
sole comment was that the attempt should be channelled through Mo­
rier "since they pay no attention to Steal at all.'

Action soon followed. In Tehran, information reached Nicolson

1 Minute by Currie (17 February) following Nicolson to Salisbury,
No. 12, Secret, 10 January 1888. F.O. 65/1347.

2 Morier to Salisbury and enclosures, No. 398, 5 December 1887.
F.O. 65/1299.

3 Minutes by Currie and Salisbury (17 February) following Nicolson
to Salisbury, No. 12, Secret, 10 January 1888. F.O. 65/1347.
by telegraph of the Foreign Office decision to assuage the Shah's fears through representations in St. Petersburgh. Nicolson was assured that his secret messages would not be mentioned. The communications would be based entirely on Wolff's impending departure and on the already existing agreements over Persia. Simultaneously, Currie drafted a long dispatch to Morier, and Salisbury revised it extensively.

This joint composition elaborated Currie's minute. It explained the purpose of the Wolff mission, stressed the futility of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia, and emphasized the need for cooperation in the development of the country. The British dexterously returned the Afghan ball by putting forward their hope of supplementing that agreement by an accord in Persia. They argued that the commercial field was extensive enough to provide an outlet for the enterprise of both nations, and they restated their primary aims of opening the Karun to navigation and building railways in order to tap fertile but torpid districts. Britain promised not to oppose Russia commercially in northern Persia. Lord Salisbury, however, put on record the interest his government had in northern Persia since any frontier changes in Khorassan affected the independence and integrity of the country. Thus Russian commercial supremacy did not imply political subservience.

1 Salisbury to Nicolson, No. 9, Draft telegram, Secret, 21 February 1888. F.O. 60/194.

2 Salisbury to Morier, No. 51, Draft dispatch, endorsed "The
Herein, Lord Salisbury's Persian policy illustrates one of his more elusive concepts—an economic partition of preponderance. Two questions arise. What were the motives behind this policy and what did this policy imply? Lord Salisbury seems not to have envisaged economic preponderance as a preliminary to partition into spheres of influence with ultimate absorption by England and Russia of their particular areas. Partition into spheres of economic preponderance would serve a dual function. It would mitigate the friction between England and Russia by reducing their points of contact. It would also bolster up the country under consideration, in this case Persia, by the opening of the country by railways, by the ever increasing trade and industrial development, and by the flow of capital into the respective spheres.

Once the process began, other nations, such as Germany and the United States, would trade and invest in Persia—not only in the British dominated south but also in the north. After Great Britain and other powers had established their stake in the country, Russian designs would be thwarted. The improved condition of Persia itself would constitute an obstacle as would the combined opposition of the interested parties.

One of Lord Salisbury's aims in Persia was to bring other Powers into the field and to transform the question from an Anglo-Russian one into an international one.

The Foreign Office sent their Persian dispatch to Sir Robert

Queen," 21 February 1888. F.O. 65/1347.
Salisbury to Morier, No. 52, Secret, 21 February 1888. F.O. 65/1347.
Moriér, and as a curb to his irresistible tendencies for independent action instructed him to read it to Giers. But not even this communication escaped Sir Robert's revisionist pen. In this case his changes were minor. Exactly a week later Morier reported that Giers wished to see the Emperor before giving a definite reply. The Russian Foreign Minister had, however, apologized for the gauche conduct of Prince Dolgorouki, and seemed generally well disposed to the English overture. Morier concluded with the happy prophecy that the Russians would "fully enter into the views of Her Majesty's Government as recorded in Your Lordship's No. 51."

Once again the affairs of Bulgaria and Persia interacted. The Russians, in the meantime, had renewed their agitation for the removal of Prince Ferdinand. Their new plan was to unseat him by pressure of the Powers acting through the Porte. This programme was essentially negative since it provided for the downfall of a regime without putting anything in its place. Lord Salisbury unhesitatingly refused to participate in the scheme since Prince Ferdinand's overthrow would deprive Bulgaria of its main element of sta-

1 Salisbury to Morier, No. 51, 21 February 1888. F.O. 65/1347.
2 Morier to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 2 March 1888. F.O. 65/1330.
4 Morier to Salisbury, No. 60, 15 February 1888. F.O. 65/1329.
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bility.

This spurning annoyed St. Petersburgh. Morier reported that Giers was discouraged and that the Emperor was disappointed by the "summary dismissal" of their Bulgarian programme. When Morier and Giers again turned to Persia the tone of their discussion was set by the impasse in Bulgaria. Giers made no effort to conceal his pique. He did agree, but without enthusiasm, to send instructions to Staal authorizing him to discuss the Persian problem in London. Morier still felt optimistic and seemed certain that the Russians would cooperate to lessen the tension in Persia, but his conviction was less sure as the appendage marked "secret" to his telegram reveals.

I found M. de Giers much less warm on the subject [Persia] than he had been on Monday. I attribute this to his great discouragement at our attitude in regard to Bulgaria and to the belief which I strongly suspect he holds that the opposition to the scheme has been mainly organized by us.

The Foreign Office staff did not view the situation au tragique.

Sir Thomas Sanderson commented: "This is as much as we could expect while they are out of temper."

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2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 65, Confidential, 22 February 1888; Same to same, No. 72, 24 February 1888. F.O. 65/1329.
3 Morier to Salisbury, No. 16, Decypher telegram, 1 March 1888; appendage marked "secret." minute by Sanderson of 1 March. F.O. 65/1346.
The scene of negotiations shifted to London. Giers sent the instructions, but they are not included in the published Giers-Staal correspondence. Both Lord Salisbury and Sir Henry Drummond Wolff exchanged views with Monsieur de Staal. Memoranda by the two British officials are extant, as are Staal's reports to St. Petersburg. The London conversations centred around three issues. The British pressed for a renewal of the 1834 and 1838 assurances, and secured Russia's consent. Then, they sounded the Russians on a programme for the joint development of Persia and advocated an understanding as to the railways each country would build. The Russians were frigid on the subject of railways. In their opinion, it was an individual matter which each should take up separately with the Shah. Finally, the British referred to the desirability of concluding the Khorassan frontier negotiations, but the Russians consistently maintained that the delimitation concerned Russia and Persia alone.

Negotiations along similar lines were to be carried forward by Wolff and Dolgorouki in Tehran. The Shah was informed of the representations which had already resulted in the Russian promise "to attach the greatest value to the integrity of Persia."  

1 Wolff to Salisbury, 3 March 1888. F.O. 65/1348.
Memorandum by Salisbury, 8 March 1888. F.O. 65/1348.

2 Salisbury to Nicolson, No. 11, Draft dispatch, 9 March 1888. F.O. 60/494.
received the news with lively satisfaction and said that the tone of the Russian Legation was already less severe.

Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, meanwhile, crossed Europe and the Caucasus on the way to his new post. Before reaching his destination he began to collect interesting information. At Tiflis he was entertained by the Governor General of the Caucasus and the trans-Caspian provinces---Prince Dondoukoff-Korsakoff. The Governor General was ambitious and able, powerful and popular. Most British authorities credited him with the Penjdeh coup.

By 1888, however, Penjdeh was three years past, and no further Russian advances had strained relations in Central Asia. Prince Dondoukoff received Wolff with an impressive display of hospitality and déraison. While banqueting, the Prince and the British diplomat recalled old times in Bulgaria where each did unpleasant things to the other in pursuance of his duty. Then, in the midst of this entertainment, Prince Dondoukoff and his adjunct, General Cheremetieff, turned their talents to general prognostications.

Cheremetieff confessed that even Russian extremists saw the difficulties involved in holding India if taken. But it could, he mused, serve as a useful bargaining lever. The Prince, in one of his gloomier moments, predicted the partition of Persia and suggested that the surgeon's knife be sharpened for an impending operation.

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Then he brightened the conversation by extolling the blessings of Russian rule in Central Asia. Dondoukoff-Korsakoff even foresaw his responsibilities increased by an Herati petition asking for incorporation into the Czar's trans-Caspian provinces.

Wolff's account of his Tiflis sojourn produced a reaction in the Foreign Office. The proposed Persian bisection was disquieting. Far more serious, however, was the probing of that ever sensitive area—Herat. Sir Julian Paunceforte found the recital "interesting." Sir Thomas Sanderson drew up a memorandum on Herat. Sir Philip Currie suggested that if Wolff's Russian colleagues talked further of incorporating Herat they should be informed that war would automatically follow such a territorial transformation. Lord Salisbury directed that simultaneous instructions be drafted for Sir Robert Morier. The British Ambassador in St. Petersburgh should open a conversation with M. de Giers by expressing appreciation of the hospitality accorded Wolff during his trans-Caspian crossing. In

Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 39, Records telegram, 6 April 1888. F.O. 60/196.

2 Minute by Paunceforte on Wolff to Salisbury, Separate, Secret, and Confidential, 9 April 1888. F.O. 65/13h8.

3 Memorandum by Sanderson, To Russia over Herat, undated but endorsed by Salisbury on 6 April 1888. F.O. 65/13h8.

4 Minute by Currie following Wolff to Salisbury, Separate, Secret, and Confidential, 9 April 1888. F.O. 65/13h8.
Salisbury to Wolff, No. 17, Draft telegram, 9 April 1888. F.O. 60/49h.
alluding to Prince Dondoukoff's conversation, however, Morier was to "remind Giers that he has been several times instructed to say that Herat means war," and to recall the previous warnings which had been given.

Sir Robert Morier was persona grata in St. Petersburgh. On more than one occasion he had irritated his own superiors by toning down communications which, in his opinion, might be wounding. He strove towards a resolution of differences between the two empires as the crowning of his diplomatic career. As an effective instrument for remonstrance, he could hardly be surpassed since his pro-Russian proclivities were so well known. A grave or belligerent tone from Sir Robert had the most salutary effect on Czarist officialdom.

Threatening the Russians with war whenever a Cossack pony turned its head towards Herat did not suit Morier's taste. Nevertheless, the Ambassador held his "Herat interview" with Giers and apparently carried out his instructions without independent interpretation. His report to the Foreign Office constitutes a masterpiece of Morier prose.

Having cordially thanked Giers for the hospitable entertainment provided for Sir Henry Wolff, he mentioned that the new Minister to Persia had been charmed by the "sprightliness" of Prince

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1 Minute by Salisbury on Wolff to Salisbury, Separate, Secret, and Confidential, 9 April 1888. F.O. 65/1348.
Dondoukoff's witticisms. The Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, immediately suspecting his frontier official of indiscretions, pressed for an elaboration. Giers showed genuine apprehension over Lord Salisbury's reaction. Morier assured him that Lord Salisbury had "seized the humourous side of Prince Dondukow Korsakov's observations." The real importance attached to them, he went on to say, was that of the straw which indicates a current—and that there was a current sweeping towards Herat in Russian military circles was undeniable. Giers did not contradict this statement, but he insisted that nothing was more remote from his own mind and from that of the Emperor than the annexation of Herat. Morier expressed gratification, but he also explained that English statesmen of all political shades were united in their conviction that a move on that fortress would be a casus belli. He continued:

...if for the sake of argument, we took Prince Dondukow's diagnosis au sérieux and the Heratis signed a monster petition for annexation to Russia and the signature of this petition synchronised with the appearance on the frontier of Colonel Alikhanow with a body of Cossacks and Turkoman cavalry His Excellency might be quite sure that this would mean war.

Morier then turned to Prince Dondoukoff's pessimistic reflections on Persia. Giers hastened to repudiate any thought of partition, and passed off the Governor General's remarks as the idle speculation of one who knew nothing of foreign policy. The renewal of the 1834 agreement represented a working basis for Anglo-Russian cooperation, and Prince Dolgorouki had already received his instructions to continue the conversations so auspiciously begun in London.
Giers concluded with the hope that Wolff would not be misled by the otiose wanderings of a remote frontier officer.

Thus the admonition seems to have been conspicuously successful. The Russians had categorically repudiated any ambitions Heratwards. Moreover, Giers had spoken reassuringly on Persia. In the course of this conversation Morier also gained additional information about the Penjdeh incident. During that prolonged crisis, both Liberal and Conservative Governments had informed the Russians that an advance on Herat would plunge the two countries over the precipice. A Cabinet which met in March, 1885, decided that Great Britain would have to declare war if Herat were threatened. The question arises: Did the Russians plan an advance on that city?

In his résumé Morier referred to

...the great council to which many of the military notabilities had been summoned, and which, I gathered, must have met about the period of the Penjdeh incident and when the issues of peace and war trembled in the balance. There was a strong expression of opinion, His Excellency said, in favour of a march upon Herat, and of the annexation of that city. He himself opposed the project with all his might and main and the one General who had rallied to his opinion had been Prince Dondukow who now rhapsodised about annexation by petition.¹

¹ Morier to Salisbury, No. 146, Confidential, 18 April 1888. F.O. 65/13148.
CHAPTER VII

THE PERSIAN PROBLEM: 1888-1892
AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA AS A POSSIBLE APPROACH

The appointment of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff as Minister to Tehran in 1888 was a manifestation of the stronger British line in Persia. Consultations between the India Office and the Foreign Office had been taking place since 1885 on the subject of Sir Ronald Thomson's successor. The Chargé d'Affaires, Mr. Arthur Nicolson, performed his duties assiduously in the long three-year interval between Ministers. He was inexperienced, however, and in certain critical negotiations failed to fathom the intricacies of the never ending plots which characterized the Persian Court. The junior diplomat, who developed into one of the architects of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, received a decoration at the close of his Tehran service. According to his biographer this portion of his early career "ended in triumphant success." But shortly after his departure Lord Salisbury wrote: "I am afraid Nicolson did not see very far."1

The future Lord Carnock worked under one unavoidable handicap. He lacked prestige. Nicolson was fully cognizant of this defect,

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2 Minute on Wolff to Salisbury, No. 60, Decipher teleogram, Most Secret and Confidential, 6 May 1888. F.O. 65/1349.
and in a private letter to Sir Henry Rawlinson he explained why
the new Minister should be a man of standing as well as one of
innate capacity. The appointment of an Ambassador Extraordinary
to Persia was, for a time, under consideration. Nicolson advised
against this innovation on two grounds. First, such a challenge
would antagonize the Russians and stimulate them to even greater
activity. Moreover, the Shah would develop an exaggerated notion
of his own importance and would become still more refractory.
The idea of sending an Ambassador to Persia was ultimately aban-
donned.

Those who selected the new Minister, however, took into ac-
count the fact that worship of the golden calf prevailed at Tehran.
Lord Dufferin, then Viceroy of India, put forward Sir Donald Mac-
kenzie Wallace as his candidate for the post. The India Office
recommended either Sir Henry Rawlinson or Sir Henry Drummond Wolff
as men of distinction with suitable backgrounds. The 1880's, how-
ever, saw the former in the twilight of his eminent Indian career.
The choice finally devolved upon Sir Henry Drummond Wolff whom

1 Nicolson to Rawlinson, Private, 26 April 1887. Case 630, Home
Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCV, India
Office Records.
He expressed the same opinion in a private letter to Sir Thomas
Sanderson. Nicolson to Sanderson, Private, 28 May 1887. F.O.
60/136.
Nicolson, op. cit., p. 68.

2 Dufferin to Salisbury, Private, 4 October 1887. Loose papers,
Pte Salisbury Papers.
Lord Salisbury described as "a great master of Oriental diplomacy."

Wolff’s diplomatic experience had already been long and praiseworthy. He was fresh from two special tours of duty in Constantinople. These missions did not accomplish their immediate objectives, but the failure stemmed from the outside forces of French and Russian interference. In the judgment of Sir William White, the Wolff negotiations of 1885 and 1887 served a useful purpose.

Wolff, one of England’s leading diplomats, was a many-sided individual. He was an ambitious man with boundless energy, keen insight, and an inquiring mind. He probed and investigated every imaginable line of procedure. That he left a stone unturned was not a criticism to be applied to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. But he inspired little affection. He was respected—at a distance. Subordinates and colleagues found their work difficult and at times vexing, but

1 Salisbury to Morier, Private, 22 October 1890. Bound volume, Russia, I, Pte Salisbury Papers.


3 White to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 31 May 1887; Same to same, Private and Confidential, 16 July 1887. Pte White Papers, F.O. 364/1.

4 Cartwright to White, Private, 4 September 1888. Pte White Papers, F.O. 364/1.
Kennedy to White, Private and Confidential, 27 November 1889. Pte White Papers, F.O. 364/1.
on the other hand his temperament frequently provided an outlet for humorous asides. Sir Thomas Sanderson wrote:

The Wolff from the mountains will be down upon us very soon. He is coming home to look after the Shah. I hope you will get the Persian Order in Council out of the office somewhere before he arrives—or he will rend us in pieces.¹

Wolff's restiveness and his determination to explore all possibilities exposed him to the criticism of having "fads" in his conduct of affairs. In Persia he embarked on innumerable projects. But he successfully carried through, after long and tedious negotiations, more schemes for the mutual benefit of Persia and Great Britain than had any British Minister for many a year.

Wolff fostered a dual Persian policy. He sought to conclude an agreement with Russia whereby the two countries would cease their rivalry, cooperate in the promotion of commerce, encourage better government, and recognize their respective superior positions. Though a preponderance of influence was admitted, he did not envisage a division of the country. The goal of his proposed Anglo-Russian activity was the improvement of Persia and its transformation into a stable buffer state.

His other line of approach consisted of the immediate bolstering of Persia by various devices. Measures designed to promote trade, to improve internal security, and to develop the country's rich natural resources were sponsored. He attached particular importance

¹ Sanderson to Davidson, Private, 4 May 1889. F.O. 60/518.
to the introduction of western capital, not only from Great Britain but from Continental and American Powers as well. Untiringly, Wolff pressed the Shah to favour legitimate foreign enterprise. He reasoned that when other nations invested in Persia they too would take an interest in its preservation as an independent state.

From Wolff's point of view the two horns of his Persian policy were not contradictory. Both were pursued with equal intensity, but not with equal success. In the final analysis not only his but all efforts to bring about a reconciliation with Russia in the latter part of the nineteenth century failed. No statesman put forth more sincere and pertinacious efforts in that direction than the British Minister to Persia. Such was his zeal that one of his subordinates denounced this facet of his multifarious activities as "Randolphian.

Wolff did expend an immense amount of time and energy in these negotiations, and he mentions in his recollections that a substantial part of his Tehran interlude was "occupied in devising some arrangement with Russia." This project, however, seems to have been doomed at the outset. Count Lamsdorff maintained:

1 Wolff to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 21 April 1888, printed for the use of the Cabinet, 24 May 1888. F.O. 60/492. This document is among the private Salisbury papers.

2 Kennedy to White, Private and Confidential, 27 November 1889. Pte White Papers, F.O. 36h/1.

All efforts of this statesman to involve Russia in a definite agreement with England concerning Persian affairs were not and could not be successful on account of the primordial aim of Russian politics.\(^1\)

Wolff's policies had a single objective—the improvement of Persia. For such resuscitation drastic reforms were needed. These changes could be inaugurated by the Persian central government itself, or they could be imposed from without by the two great neighbouring Powers. After a preliminary study Wolff concluded that sweeping innovations would not mark the close of Nasr-ed-din's reign. The old Shah thought primarily of his own peace of mind, and was entrapped in a succession of dilemmas and vicious circles which would have discouraged far greater men. The character of the Shah and the acuteness of the Persian crisis accounts, at least in part, for Wolff's stubborn insistence upon an agreement with the Russians.\(^2\)

The London interviews of March, held between Salisbury and Wolff on one side and Staal on the other, were to be continued in Tehran. The original topics, however, encompassed three specific issues only—the renewal of the previous agreements, the Khorassan boundary, and the construction of railways. Wolff widened the scope of the

1 Lamsdorff to Speyer, Secret, 30 September/13 October 1904. Krasnnyi Arkhive, LIII, 16.

discussions and drew up a comprehensive programme for the rejuvenation of Persia. Soon after reaching his post he launched "completely unofficial and personal" conversations with Dolgorouki.

To implement his elaborate plans Wolff advocated the formation of mixed commissions with British, Persian, and Russian members. These bodies were to perform diverse functions. The first task was to define Persia's elusive boundaries. Thus the perennial problem of the Khorassan frontier might be laid to rest. Moreover, the Perso-Turkish boundary was one of the few in the world which throughout the nineteenth century lurked "unmaterialized and unknown." Indefiniteness gave rise to chronic disturbances which threatened to involve both Great Britain and Russia. Since 1843 efforts had been made to adjudicate the line, but Wolff's attempt was abortive and the last pillar was not erected until the autumn of 1914.

The second commission, composed of officers with special qualifications, was to perform tasks of a scientific and technical nature.

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 43, Most Confidential, 2 May 1888. F.O. 65/1349.


Its members were to survey the country, and then draw up a report on resources with recommendations for improving means of transportation. Persia's commercial interests, not strategic considerations, constituted the criterion for the projected roads, canals, and railroads. After assembling the preliminary data and determining the desiderata, England and Russia should jointly undertake to facilitate the realization of the internal development programme. Wolff told Dolgorouki:

> It seems to me that by establishing the prosperity of this country, and by assisting in the development of her resources, her two neighbours will interpose between their frontiers a neutral territory, which, while profiting by their support and legitimate influence, would remove the friction which is the inevitable result of a state of uncertainty.

Prince Dolgorouki professed himself converted to the idea of an Anglo-Russian rapprochement, and he conversed pleasantly during the summer of 1888. His interest centred less on cooperation in Persia, however, than on reaching a general understanding with England. Indeed, it was a saturnine Dolgorouki who spoke of Persia and its fate.

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1 Wolff to Salisbury and enclosure, Private and Confidential, 21 April 1888, Printed for the use of the Cabinet, 24 May 1888. F.O. 60/192. This document is among the private Salisbury papers. Same to same, No. 71, Decypher telegram, Urgent and Secret, 13 June 1888. F.O. 60/195. Wolff to Dolgorouki, Very Confidential, 13 June 1888. Reproduced in full in Wolff, op. cit., II, 317-50; quotation from p. 317.

Nor was the Russian alone in his doubts. Both Sir Henry Rawlinson and Sir Alfred Lyall, though for different reasons than Prince Dolgorouki, viewed Wolff's draft convention with the "gravest suspicion" and opposed it vigorously. The Indian authorities conceded that Persia's neighbours, without arrière pensee, had it within their power to cleanse the Augean stable. But Rawlinson was unable to conjure the picture in his mind of Russian endeavours to transform Persia into a flourishing state. Both Lyall and Rawlinson detected a hidden motive in Russia's willingness to participate—assuming that willingness existed. Since the scope of the proposed mixed commissions included the whole of the country, the two Indian experts reasoned that the Russians saw in these commissions a strategem for establishing a foothold in southern Persia and in penetrating to the Gulf. Sir Alfred Lyall reminded his colleagues that the reform of a third country by two outsiders was at best a delicate operation, and historically England and Russia had differed fundamentally inter se in their ideas of good government, their political and commercial interests, and their missions in Asia. In conclusion Lyall suggested that one limited and specific reform—such as Persian finance—should be attempted as a trial before Wolff's complicated machinery was set up, misunderstandings occurred, and the mutual distrust intensified. These opinions went to Lord Salisbury, who con-

1 Memorandum on the State of Affairs in Persia by Major-General Sir H. Rawlinson, 26 June 1888; Note by A. Lyall on Affairs in Persia, 27 June 1888; Confidential/1888. Case 574, Home Correspondence,
fided privately to Wolff.

Some of the Indian Council are very much distressed at the policy you are pursuing in coming to an agreement with Russia. I have begged them to write down their views in full & send them out by this mail for your consideration. I do not attach very much value to them—as Indian opinions so soon become obsolete. And as far as I understand their views (I have not seen their papers) they do not take into consideration the almost hopeless dilemma in which we find ourselves. Until some road or railway is made we can not help Persia: & at present it is only with Russia's leave that we can get these made. If we get that leave from her it will be a real success. But if we do not, at least our negotiations may amuse her & keep her from mischief until either Germany or Russia [sic: Austria] take off our hands the task of keeping her employed. The gist of the information I get is that Russia will be ready for the swoop on Constantinople, possibly next summer, certainly the summer after: & all appearances—so far as preparations go—are in favour of her making it. But I do not believe in a merely naval attack: & a land attack must bring the Central Powers into the field. I hope our frontier defences in India will be ready by the time I have named: and I hope there is every probability of Annenkoff's railway being worn out at the same time.¹

Since Dolgorouki had not responded with alacrity to his joint commissions scheme, Wolff resolved to reach the Russian by means of a tripartite treaty. Having decided to induce the Shah to initiate the proceedings, he requested Lord Salisbury's permission to plant such a thought with the Persian ruler. Lord Salisbury consented but not without reservations. "Take care Russia does not use the Shah

to ask impossible conditions from us, & put us in the wrong if we refuse," he telegraphed in reply. The permanent Foreign Office staff shared Lord Salisbury's doubts. Sir Julian Pauncefote, for example, commented: "He seems to be stirring up muddy waters rather vigorously."

Three-sided conversations seem to breed complications spontaneously, and the tripartite treaty discussions fulfilled the worst expectations. Wolff walked onto swampy soil when he attempted to carry on concurrent negotiations with the Shah and the Russian Minister. Versions of the Dolgorouki-Nasr-ed-din talks varied with the nationality of the speaker. Wolff was distressed still more by the distortions which reached him of his own proposals to the Russian and the Persian. Reluctantly, he resigned himself to the interpretation that the Shah was holding a "Dutch auction" and that "Dolgorouky is something of a liar." Sanderson remarked: "A national quality of Russians."

The inchoate tripartite treaty did bear some fruit, however. When Wolff first requested approval of his project, Lord Salisbury

   Same to same, Decypher telegram, Urgent, Private, and Confidential, 10 June 1888. F.O. 50/495.

2 Wolff to Salisbury and minutes by Sanderson and Pauncefote, No. 71, Secret and Confidential, 1 June 1888. F.O. 1350.

3 Wolff to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 4 October 1888;
   Same to same, Private, 20 June 1888; underlining in pencil and comment by Sanderson. Bound volume, Persia, I, Pte Salisbury Papers.
inquired about a precedent for such a treaty. Sir Edward Hertslet's research led to the compilation and publication of an excellent reference volume on nineteenth century Anglo-Persian relations.

Despite the early demise of the joint commissions and the tripartite treaty the Wolff-Dolgorouki exchanges continued throughout the summer. Dolgorouki assumed the initiative. But he interjected the affairs of southeastern Europe into Persian discussions. The Russian Minister suggested: If Lord Salisbury would settle the Bulgarian dispute with Staal, he would conclude a Persian agreement with Wolff. Dolgorouki argued that an Anglo-Russian understanding should not be restricted to Persia but should extend *sur toute la ligne*. Wolff's competence did not include Bulgaria, and Lord Salisbury was not convinced that "overtures from us to Russia on the Eastern Question are desirable at present." The insistence upon

1 Wolff to Salisbury and minutes by Salisbury and Currie, Decypher telegram, Urgent, Private, and Confidential, 10 June 1888. F.O. 60/195.
Memorandum by Hertslet, 13 June 1888. F.O. 60/198.
Hertslet to Foreign Office, 23 September 1889. F.O. 60/501.
Sir Edward Hertslet (compiler), Treaties, etc., Concluded between Great Britain and Persia, and between Persia and other Foreign Powers, Wholly or Partially in Force on the 1 April 1891. (London: Butterworth's, 1891.)

Same to same, No. 10i, 6 July 1888. F.O. 65/1351.
Same to same and minutes by Sanderson and Salisbury, No. 97, Decypher telegram, Secret and Confidential, 6 July 1888. F.O. 60/195.
Same to same, No. 111, Records telegram, Most Secret and Confidential, 20 July 1888. F.O. 60/196.

3 Salisbury to Wolff, Draft telegram, 1 August 1888. F.O. 60/194.
Bulgaria stultified the negotiations.

The British reasoned that a détente in Persia, similar to that in Afghanistan, would be as beneficial to Russia as to England. Concessions in Bulgaria were therefore superfluous. Moreover, the Persian question concerned the British and Russians alone, but the Bulgarian imbroglio involved the interests of the Powers signatory to the Berlin Treaty. Finally, Lord Salisbury thought the Dolgorouki overture lacked substance and reality. He wrote privately to Wolff:

Your Eastern Question negotiations with Dolgorouki have puzzled me a good deal: for they do not correspond to any simultaneous action of Russia in other parts of the world. No overtures have been made at St. Petersburgh, or at Vienna, or at Constantinople. Staal has been here this afternoon: he talked very agreeably about everything: professed great confidence in the maintenance of peace: but he did not utter a single word—suggestive of special & separate negotiations between England & Russia. Nor do we get any such suggestions from the Germans, who have hitherto been generally employed by Russia when she wants to approach us for any particular question. I conclude, therefore, either that Dolgorouki's language was a mere belated edition of the conversation held with Randolph in the beginning of the year: or that he was acting entirely on his own hook without any instructions at all.3

1 Wolff to Salisbury and minute by Salisbury, Decypher telegram, Private, 2 August 1888. F.O. 60/195.
Salisbury to Wolff, No. 96, 16 August 1888. F.O. 60/191.


Wolff to Salisbury and minute by Salisbury, Decypher telegram, Private and Confidential, 28 July 1888; Same to same and minute by Currie, Private telegram, 30 July 1888. F.O. 60/195.
Salisbury to Wolff, No. 147, Draft telegram, 6 August 1888; Same to same, No. 50, Draft telegram, 15 August 1888. F.O. 60/194.
Same to same, No. 94, Draft dispatch, 15 August 1888. F.O. 65/1352.
The Ministers carried on subsequent discussions, but in a
desultory fashion, until Wolff left Persia in 1889 to accompany
the Shah on his trip to England. He took advantage of his journey
home to clarify the lines of Central Asian policy. Many possibili-
ties were considered, but Wolff's belief in the necessity for an
agreement with Russia remained unshaken.

While he was still in England, Wolff learned that Czar Alexan-
der III's visit to Berlin would coincide with his own transit through
the Continent en route to Tehran. He had suspected for several months
that Giers was not providing the Emperor with full reports of his ap-
proaches for cooperation in Persia, and he longed to take his grand
dessein to the fountainhead. On 22 September 1889 Wolff sent to
Lord Salisbury a memorandum on Anglo-Russian relations in Persia,
and he suggested in his covering letter that the Emperor be informed
of its contents.

Three days later Wolff dined with the Prince of Wales. Lord
Randolph Churchill had introduced them several years earlier, and a
cordial friendship had developed. "The cynical frankness of Wolff's

1 Baron Alexandre Meyendorff, Correspondance diplomatique de Baron
de Staël (2 vols.; Paris: Librairie des Sciences Politiques et
Sociales, 1929). Staël to Giers, Lettre Confidentielle, 15/27
August 1889. II, 49-51.

2 Memorandum by Wolff on the Relations of England and Russia in
Persia, 22 September 1889. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
Wolff to Salisbury, Private, 22 September 1889. Loose papers,
Pte Salisbury Papers.
Staal to Giers, Lettre, 23 October/4 November 1889. Meyendorff,
on cit., II, 56-58.
conversation and his lively epistolary style made him welcome to
the Prince as a companion and a correspondent." At the luncheon
Wolff discussed his Persian problems, and the Prince of Wales "un-
dertook to speak to the Emperor whom he will see next week." Lord
Salisbury was informed at once.

Lord Salisbury did not forbid the meeting, but he refused to
promote it. He wrote:

The message must be entirely from you \( \frac{1}{2} \) in no sense
from me. I could not be party to it without exposing my-
self to the imputation of intriguing against Giers. Un-
der these circumstances the precise language had better be
left to you. \( \frac{3}{4} \)

Wolff and the Prince of Wales proceeded with the arrangements. Eight
days after their first conversation the Prince of Wales telegraphed
from Fredensborg Slot the news that the Russian Emperor had con-

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1 Sir Sidney Lee, King Edward VII. A Biography (2 vols.; London:

2 Wolff to Salisbury, Private, 25 September 1889. Loose papers,
Bundle entitled: "Drafts, Copies, Minutes, Memoranda, etc., 1889."
Pte Salisbury Papers.
Wolff, op. cit., II, 367-68.
According to Sir Sidney Lee the idea of the meeting with the Czar
originated with the Prince of Wales. The documents show that the
plan was suggested by Wolff, and the Prince of Wales made the ar-

3 Draft telegram on Wolff to Salisbury, Private, Chalet Cecil, Puys,
Dieppe, 25 September 1889. Loose papers, bundle entitled "Drafts,
Copies, Minutes, Memoranda, etc., 1889." Pte Salisbury Papers.
Compare Lee, op. cit., I, 687.

4 The Prince of Wales to Wolff, Private and Confidential, 3 October
1889. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
In Berlin, Wolff supplemented his audience with the Czar by two short talks with Count Herbert Bismarck. Earlier in the year, attempts had been made on the German side to draw closer to England. Views concerning Persia, however, had not altered since 1885. Interference there, Count Bismarck said, would only irritate Russia and might lead to reprisals on Germany's eastern frontier.

The interview with Alexander III, however, appeared to be a real triumph. Wolff described his conference of nearly an hour as "long and most satisfactory." He presented his case for an Anglo-Russian understanding and emphasized that its objective was the joint development of Persia. The Czar responded with a three-point message for Lord Salisbury: He too wanted an agreement over Persia; such an agreement must be completely reciprocal insofar as it applied to railways, waterways, and industrial undertakings; if the British Ambassador in St. Petersburgh would state formally to the Imperial Government that Wolff was authorized to negotiate in the above sense the new Russian Minister would be given like instructions. At the close of the session Alexander III said:

1 Memorandum by Currie of a conversation with Count Herbert Bismarck, 26 March 1889. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

Compare Lee, op. cit., I, 686-88. He overlooks, as do many other writers, the joint development aspect of Wolff's Anglo-Russian programme.
I am most desirous to come to an understanding with England in Persia. We have no interests in common in Europe. Our common interests lie in Asia. There I desire to live in friendship with her, and to establish an understanding which will enable us to be friends.\(^1\)

The Queen, who disapproved generally of negotiations and treaties with Russia, looked askance at the Berlin coup. She saw Russian traps. Sir Philip Currie, on the other hand, commended Wolff's skillful handling of the Emperor. Optimistically he wrote to Lord Salisbury: "I think, after what we have obtained, the Russians, whether they like it or not, must go in for developing Persia."\(^2\)

Sanderson and Currie composed a dispatch for Petersburgh, and Lord Salisbury praised it as a "well drawn draft." The Foreign Secretary's revisions were sparse. This communication together with its predecessor of 21 February 1888 comprises two of the fundamental official expositions on Persian policy and its Anglo-Russian refinements. The tenets embodied in the previous instructions were reiterated. The British continued to hope that Persia's material and political progress might be accompanied by increased friendship instead of jealousy and discord between the two major Powers. The preliminary efforts of


2 The Queen to Salisbury, Private, 2 June 1888; Same to same, Private, 19 October 1889; Same to same, Private, 5 November 1889. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

3 Currie to Salisbury, Private, undated but filed between 3 and 14 October 1889. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.
Wolff and Dolgoroudi were noted, and a more definite invitation to open negotiations for an understanding was extended. Still, Lord Salisbury shared the Queen's doubts at least to some extent. In a telegram which intercepted Wolff at Constantinople, he set forth the salient features of the Petersburgh dispatch and authorized Wolff to continue conversations at Tehran. But, he warned: "The discussions will require careful conduct. Material development may mean only an easier way to Herat."  

Queen Victoria and Sir Robert Morier rarely agreed. Their Russian attitudes were antipodal, and the Queen made little attempt to conceal her dissatisfaction over Morier's management of the Petersburgh Embassy. Not only the Queen, but Liberal and Conservative Foreign Secretaries alike, collided with their Ambassador's recalcitrant nature. "Sir Robert Morier's despatches are expositions of Russian not British policy," complained Lord Rosebery, and Lord Id-

1 Salisbury to Morier, No. 307, Draft dispatch, 28 October 1889. F.O. 65/1379.
2 Salisbury to Wolff, unnumbered. Draft telegram, Secret, 21 October 1889. F.O. 60/503.
3 Quoted in George Earle Buckle (editor), The Letters of Queen Victoria. Third Series. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal between the Years 1886 and 1901. (3 vols.; London: John Murray, 1930-32). The Queen to Rosebery, 3 March 1886. I, 70.
4 Rosebery to The Queen, 4 March 1886. Letters of Queen Victoria, Third Series, I, 72.
desleigh alleged: "he [Morier]...writes as if he enjoyed a controversy with his own chief much more than with M. de Giers." But, curiously, the Queen and Sir Robert took the same unfavourable view of Wolff's negotiations with the Emperor.

Morier preached settlement with Russia with the persistency of monomania, but he preached settlement in Bulgaria. He interested himself little in Persian and Central Asian affairs, and after Wolff's appointment his demeanour was uncooperative if not obstructive. Between Wolff and Morier the green-eyed monster raised its head. Originally, Wolff had planned his itinerary back to Persia to include St. Petersburg, but Morier effectively discouraged this visit. Giers, who had not relished locking horns with Wolff over Persia, received the news of Morier's triumph with a "satisfied chuckle."

The Foreign Office dispatch concerning Persia coupled with orders to transmit to Giers the summary of Wolff's audience with Alexander III had a dampening effect. Morier's displeasure, though shrouded in brilliant prose, occasionally betrays itself. Giers listened uncomfortably to the recital of Wolff's interview, and asked only if he was expected to lay the report before the Emperor. The Ambassador said that he could not possibly express an opinion. The friendly banter which characterized so many of the Petersburg conversations was conspicuous-

1 Iddesleigh to Salisbury, Confidential, 16 September 1886. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

Giers received the proposals regarding Persia pessimistically. He recounted the difficulties involved in raising Persia to a higher level of civilization. Furthermore, Russian finance was in no condition to permit expenditures abroad since M. Wyshnegradsky had more projects to provide for within Russia than funds. Giers spoke glumly of Great Britain's experience, capital, and resources, and argued that this superior equipment for launching enterprises in Persia precluded a favourable Russian showing. His attitude parallels an observation which, according to Wolff, Dolgorouki made to him: "The principal difficulty in the way of an arrangement was the fact that where British commerce flourished, Russian trade failed."

Morie r, taking his cue from Giers, discouraged the whole concept of developing Persia. He referred to a memorandum written by the Director of Military Intelligence in which General Brackenbury had denounced the promotion of railway building in northern Persia as "little short of treason." Morier explained that "cooperation in Persia" to Giers and the Emperor meant railway construction—in the north by the Russians and in the south by the British.

1 Morier to Salisbury, No. 342, Secret, 6 November 1889. F.O. 65/1379.
2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 341, Secret and Confidential, 6 November 1889. F.O. 65/1379.
A week later Giers returned to the subject of Wolff's Berlin stroke. He maintained that the British diplomat had misunderstood his Emperor on two vital issues.

The first had reference to the parties between whom the negotiations contemplated should take place. The Emperor's wish had been to convey that they should be carried on between the two Governments (de gouvernement à gouvernement) and not at Tehran between the representatives of the two governments.

The second touched the concluding words attributed by Sir Henry Wolff to His Majesty, when the Czar used "almost" the words "we have no interests in common in Europe. Our common interests lie in Asia. There I desire to live in friendship with her (England) and to establish an understanding which will enable us to be friends," His Majesty did not intend to contrast Europe and Asia as they appear drawn upon a map but Europe and the East. His meaning distinctly was that, whilst England and Russia had few common interests in European Europe (if I may so call it) their common interests lay in the East, that is in Asia, and if I may so say, in Asiatic Europe. It was here and especially in the so called Eastern question that we both had great interests on which we were at present divided and on which, as is well known, the Emperor desires to arrive at an understanding with us.

Great was the discrepancy. Morier contended that the misunderstanding was conceivable because the Emperor was shy and his French was not fluent. Wolff countered with the assertion that the Czar spoke excellent French. The Wolff-Morier controversy raged around these issues for the remainder of their professional lives, and the


3 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 37, 5 February 1890. F.O. 60/509.
lack of cooperation between Tehran and St. Petersburgh inevitably brought all schemes for Anglo-Russian cooperation in Persia to the ground. Lord Salisbury expressed his opinions in a private letter to Wolff.

I hope that the great Wolff-Morier conflict on the question of Persian railways is approaching its truce. I always thought your interview with the Czar a mistake. Giers was certain to look upon it as poaching, & to do what in him lay to prevent it having any effect: & that is what has happened. But I do not applaud Morier's treatment of the difficulty—which he did little to remedy or diminish. As for the railways—I have never believed in an agreement with Russia—not because I doubted the value of such an agreement if honestly carried out—but because I thought the light of the past sufficient to show that cooperation of the most formal kind was the utmost that was to be expected. The Emperor is probably honest—but he is probably unique among Russians in that respect. An agreement would have been at best a truce from which neither side could hope anything except the opportunity of gaining time. I do not say that it is not wise to ask for an Agreement: but it would not be at all wise to trust it, if obtained. The Russians are deceptive. The Czar would deny, probably with perfect honesty, that he is either one or another. He does not tell his officers to lie: or to invade territory that does not belong to him. But when they lie, or enroach, he has to approve what they have done & to accept all the responsibility of their acts.}

Wolff left Persia in the spring of 1891 after a failure in health. His departure was a great loss, but his experience was utilized after his return to England. In 1891 the Persia question, both per se and in its Anglo-Russian setting, was passing through one of its critical phases. Lord Salisbury requested Wolff to draw up a memorandum setting forth the condition of the country and possi-

ble alternative policies. This memorandum was considered by the Cabinet. Again, one of the features of Wolff's Persian policy was an understanding with Russia.

The possibility of coming to an agreement over Persia was put forward by Wolff's successor, Sir Frank Lascelles. Lord Rosebery studied the question thoroughly and asked for the Wolff papers. But the Pamir crisis so strained the relations between the two countries that negotiations for an understanding were not feasible. Tentative approaches to Russia were made by Lord Salisbury in 1898 and by Lord Lansdowne in 1901. Not until 1907, however, under Sir Edward Grey, was a convention between England and Russia concluded. One of the few Eastern authorities who approved of the 1907 agreement was


He never abandoned the idea of an understanding with Russia. For example: Wolff to Salisbury, Private, 8 October 1889. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

2 Currie to Rosebery and minute by Rosebery, 28 October 1892. F.O. 60/533.

3 George P. Gooch, Harold Temperley, and Lillian M. Benson (editors), British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914 (11 vols.; London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926-38); hereafter cited as E. D. Salisbury to O'Conor, No. 36, 8 February 1898. I, ll.

Hamilton to Curzon, Private, 23 October 1901; Same to same, Private, 7 November 1901. Bound volume, Private Correspondence, India, Part II, Vol. VI, India Office Library.

4 For the full text of the convention together with a map of Persia showing the areas of the respective spheres of influence, see: E. D., IV, 618-20.
Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. The Grey arrangement, however, bore little resemblance to Wolff's dream since it failed to provide for the development of Persia and constituted essentially a division of the country into spheres of influence. That such an understanding was a solution is open to doubt. Persian issues grew even more acute during the years from 1907 to 1914, Russian aggressiveness intensified, and Sir Edward Grey reflected: "Persia tried my patience more than any other subject."

The buffer principle, by contrast, was the strong and unbroken cord. Statesmen pursued the buffer state policy with varying points of emphasis and with violent fluctuations in the degree of success achieved. It, nevertheless, supplied British policy in Persia with the elements of consistency and reality it possessed.

The preservation of a zone of outlying independent states on the fringe of her Indian Empire was England's answer to the challenge of Russia's Asiatic drive. By the 1860's, Russia's southward movement had assumed menacing proportions and had acquired the character of seeming endlessness. As a result of his Persian experience Sir Arthur Nicolson decided that the approach of his country's rival "towards the Indian Frontier was no mere Cossack adventurism but some great tidal movement." A contemporary journalist struggled to articulate the reasons behind Russian insatiability, creating, glassy speculation.

Throughout the whole of the nineteenth century two main threads wound through Great Britain's Persian policy. The weaker one was the "agreement with Russia" strand. This line of policy periodically faded away, but in spite of all its defects it persistently re-emerged with ever increasing tendencies towards predominance. The buffer principle, by contrast, was the strong and unbroken cord. Statesmen pursued the buffer state policy with varying points of emphasis and with violent fluctuations in the degree of success achieved. It, nevertheless, supplied British policy in Persia with the elements of consistency and reality it possessed.

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When weighed in the scales of European standards, Russian government seemed primitive and crude indeed. The political practices of the Czars, however, were less barbaric than those of the bordering khanates and countries. One by one the little states gravitated into the orbit of the neighbouring colossus, and local Russian officials hastened this natural trend by military pressure and internal intrigue. The Turcomans and Uzbeks, and even many Persians and Afghans, gradually came to envisage the giant to the north as the cynosure of the Asiatic peoples. Russian border officers actively promoted deterioration in the successive frontier regions as a premeditated technique in softening a country or group of people staked out for annexation. The Czar and Giers, at least nominally, disavowed the "rotting process." But the powerful military party in Petersburgh, backed by such men as Zinovieff, Kapnist, and Chichkine, believed in Russia's ruling destiny, and promoted its growth with crusading faith and dogged determination. They vied with the more moderate Foreign Office Officials for control of policy, and acted as defence counsel for overzealous officers whose incursions into adjacent states or massacres of Turcomans had become too outrageous to pass unnoticed. Sir Robert Morier, in a typical analysis of Russia's Persian policy wrote:

The worse the condition of these neighbours therefore, the more hopeless their squalor and decadence, the nearer she [Russia] is to the attainment of her goal and the less she can look with equanimity on any attempts made to endow them with the blessings of civilisation otherwise than as annexes of the Russian Empire; therefore, that Persians and other Asiatics similarly situated should go on stewing in their
own gravy is the simple credo which she opposes to your earnest prayers for joint energetic action.  

While statesmen from the banks of the Neva watched Persia's stagnation with contentment and satisfaction, the British struggled to avert her transformation into a Russian province or puppet state. Several motives account for this interest. Russian control over the northeastern province of Khorassan would open a new and easy approach to Herat. If anything was axiomatic in nineteenth century British Indian foreign policy it was the safety of that fortress. Moreover, entry into Khorassan would bring the Russians to within striking distance of Seistan. That area controlled another route to India, and its occupation by Russia would have had the effect of turning of the flank of the British land defences in Afghanistan. The backbone of Sir Edward Grey's case for the Anglo-Russian Convention was the "real" strategic gain achieved by the safeguarding of Seistan. It was also known that the Russians contemplated, in their long range plans, the construction of railways connecting their trans-Caspian system with a port on the Gulf. Besides breaking the British monopoly in the Persian Gulf, this would have the same effect as the occupation of Herat and Seistan. Finally, when Russia wielded an iron grip over

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Central Asia and intrenched herself firmly in Persia, she could apply pressure from those positions to influence Britain's policy in Europe.

In hammering out Persian and Central Asian policy, Lord Salisbury laid down the main lines, made many decisions on immediate questions, and wrote frequently to his Minister in Persia and to the Viceroy of India. The Foreign Secretary's second in command was Sir Philip Currie, whose jurisdiction as a permanent Foreign Office official included Persia. Currie's minutes on Persian policy outnumber those of any other individual, despite the fact that Lord Salisbury personally drafted and revised a surprising amount of the outgoing correspondence. Both the Foreign Secretary and his subordinate realized that the Czar's empire, ivy-like, grew fat on decaying organisms. Zinovieff, one of Russia's most astute policy makers, prophesied that Persia would soon fall like an over-ripe pear, and "we will walk in when the time comes without striking a blow." Sir Philip, fully aware of these factors and currents, succinctly rejoined: "Our policy should be, as far as we can, to make Persia something."

In the task of strengthening Persia, however, the British en-

1 Currie to Salisbury, Private, 13 March 1889. Loose papers, Pte Salisbury Papers.

   Thornton to Granville, No. 65, Confidential, 12 March 1883. F.O. 65/1151.
   Same to same, Private, 8 October 1881. F.O. 65/1211.
countered resistance not only from the Russians but from the Persians as well. The Shah's inertness was partly justifiable. At the close of the nineteenth century two trends prevailed in his realm—the ever tightening shackles of foreign domination and the rapid internal disintegration. Russia ruled the trans-Caucasian and trans-Caspian regions, held the Caspian as a national lake, and negotiated for control over the rich limitrophe provinces of Azerbaijan, Gilan, Mazanderan, and Khorassan. Confronted with overwhelming strength along a 1,200 mile frontier and with his only efficient military unit officered by Cossacks, the Shah lived with a pistol at his head. Nasr-ed-din's sympathies were unmistakably pro-British, but he was thoroughly cowed by Russian might. In this conflict of emotions, fear emerged predominant.

The Russians did not constitute the only obstacle to Persian regeneration, however. In the last decade of his life, the old Kajar potentate thought more of his personal indulgence than of his country's welfare and preferred tent life to the affairs of state. With few exceptions, Nasr-ed-din surrounded himself with uninspiring and

1 Thomson to Granville, No. 44, Confidential, 7 April 1885. F.O. 65/1239.
Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 12, Secret, 10 January 1888. F.O. 65/1347.
Same to same, No. 172, Most Secret and Confidential, 5 September 1888. F.O. 65/1353.
Case 555, Memorandum by Durand on the Present Position in Central Asia, 21 May 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCIV, India Office Records.
parasitic men who undermined reforms, discouraged innovations, and nurtured suspicions of Western enterprise. Far from dismissing such officials, he preferred courtiers "who were not clever and who did not know whether 'Brussels' was a city or a cabbagel"

In his latter years, too, the Shah's idiosyncrasies became more pronounced. He doted on cats; he bestowed the rank of Field Marshall in the Persian army upon a child of twelve—a child moreover who before he was fifteen had made more than one attempt on the life of his patron and king. A British Legation secretary described the lad as a "snake seedling." The moods and unpredictability of the Persian ruler affected his conduct of state business. Today's project was shelved tomorrow. Little that was constructive emanated from Tehran. Curzon, upon returning from his travels in Persia, maintained: "The Shah is about as likely to undertake a genuinely great public work as he is to turn Protestant."


4 Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, II, 317. George Nathaniel Curzon (later Curzon of Kedleston and Viceroy of India) was the highest authority on Persia in this period. His two volume work still stands as a classic, and references to it in Foreign Office papers are frequent. His chapter on the Shah (Vol. II, Ch. XIII, 391-432) is interesting and informative, but critical.
In the final analysis, however, the most powerful personal factor which accounted for Nasr-ed-din's lethargy was his determination to avoid crises and to live out the remainder of his numbered days in peace. The embers of internal discontent smouldered in the eighties and were clearly discernible. The Shah proclaimed few measures designed to alleviate the misery of his people; however, he hoped that the flames of revolution would not burst forth until after his death. But this hope was not fulfilled. In 1896, as he entered the Mosque of Shah Abdul Asim to hear the Friday prayers, an assassin's bullet killed him.

Nasr-ed-din also strove to postpone the day of reckoning with Russia. If he remained inactive, he reasoned, the Russians would have no excuse for stepping up their tactics of harassing frontier activity. The Shah was haunted by the nightmare of a Russian ultimatum which would deprive him of territory and infringe his sovereign rights. The resolution to retain his power unimpaired was the corollary to his "live in peace" principle. The British were cognizant of these sides of the Persian's nature. Lord Salisbury wrote privately to Sir Frank Lascelles:

1 See for example Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 35, 25 March 1887. F.O. 60/486.

2 A balanced picture of the Shah and the situation he faced was presented by an American Minister to his Secretary of State. Winston to Bayard, No. 11, 20 April 1896. Persia, II, American Department of State. Wolff to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 21 April 1888. F.O. 60/192.
...if circumstances move you, as well they may, to try & diminish in any respect or instance the misgovernment under which the Persians labour, you should be very careful not to inspire the Shah with suspicion that you have any settled plan for diminishing his power. He has a mortal dread of reform, & of all that may lead to it, & the fear lest measures for the development of his country should issue in the curtailment of his own power, stands for very much in the passive resistance which he has offered to most of our attempts to benefit his people. If he once suspects you mean to clip his wings, he will start away from you, & never let you get near him again.

In order to implement their buffer policy the British repeatedly attempted to induce the Shah to build roads, construct railways, and open the Karun River to navigation. The years over which these negotiations spread slipped into decades. Still, by 1885, no roads other than pack-saddle trails existed, no railroads connected Persia's urban centres, and no steamer traffic plied along the Karun. When the Shah was frightened by Russia's annexation of Merv and frantically appealed to the Gladstone government for assistance, Lord Granville urged him to facilitate ingress by providing good roads and by opening the Karun. No tangible results ensued.

Lord Salisbury's conception of Persia's position in British foreign policy germinated in the decade of the seventies—when he was Secretary

1 Salisbury to Lascalles, Private, 6 October 1891. Bound volume, Persia, II, Pte Salisbury Papers. Sir Frank Lascalles succeeded Sir Henry Drummond Wolff as Minister to Persia.

2 Granville to Thomson, Draft dispatch, 16 August 1884. F.O. 65/1209. The rough outline of this communication is in Granville's hand, but Kimberley revised the dispatch extensively.
of State for India and later Foreign Secretary. He attached greater significance to the Persian question than did his Liberal countrymen, and he encouraged internal development schemes more earnestly and hopefully. In his 1885 conversations with Malcom Khan, Lord Salisbury stressed both the importance of grappling with the evils of a corrupt administrative system and of constructing roads and railways from the Gulf inland. This advice was relayed to the Shah. Nasr-ed-din did not respond to the communication warmly, however, but adopted a resentful tone. Again, action did not follow.

In one of his last official dispatches Sir Ronald Thomson recapitulated the story of his own negotiations for Persian reform and improved transportation. He maintained that the Legation had strained every nerve in sponsoring such measures. Nor could the absence of roads be explained by lack of foreign capital. Persia's retrograde

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1 For his Persian negotiations of 1879-80, see supra, pp. 54-58. His interest in Persia also reveals itself in many small ways. For example: A memorandum by Dickson, 2 March 1880, on the importance of a railway in southern Persia was endorsed by Lord Salisbury "to be printed." F.O. 60/130.

Dispatches in the commercial series rarely bore endorsements by the Foreign Secretary. Commercial No. 3 from Tehran, 30 July 1879, however, analysed the importance of improving transportation in southern Persia. It was endorsed by Lord Salisbury, "Print. Circulate to Anatolian Consuls--Bagdad--Damascus--Beyrut." F.O. 60/124.

2 Salisbury to Thomson, No. 75A, Draft dispatch, 6 August 1885. F.O. 60/468. See also another draft of this same document in F.O. 65/1218.

Salisbury to Thomson, No. 102, Draft telegram, 12 August 1885. F.O. 60/471.
condition, the British Minister asserted, must be "attributed to the strong disinclination of the Shah himself to grant the Karun concession or to seriously enter even into a discussion of projects of internal development and improvement."

Sir Ronald Thomson returned to England on leave from Persia late in 1885. Subsequently, he resigned his post because of ill health. For several years thereafter, however, he acted as an adviser on Persian affairs, and attended official meetings in London. Upon the Minister's departure in 1885, Arthur Nicolson took over the management of the Legation. He immediately took up the transportation question with the enthusiasm of a fledgling diplomat.

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1 Thomson to Salisbury, No. 111, 28 September 1885. F.O. 60/470.


3 For many years preceding Nicolson's arrival in Tehran the British had pressed the Shah to build roads and to open the Karun. The official records prove that Sir Ronald Thomson had, during his many years as Minister to Persia, pressed vigorously for both of these measures. Nicolson showed conspicuous ability in continuing these negotiations, but the concepts did not originate with him. Harold Nicolson in his life of Lord Carnock, however, leaves the reader with the impression that Arthur Nicolson initiated the idea of improving transportation and opening the Karun river. He wrote: "The first conflict which arose was in regard to the construction of roads linking Tehran with the Caspian and the Persian Gulf. Sir Ronald Thomson had argued that a road from Resht to the capital would place the Shah at the mercy of Russia and had advocated that all proposals for road construction should therefore be opposed. Nicolson disagreed with this view. He contended that, if it came to physical force, the Government at Tehran were in any case at the mercy of Russia, and that the slight advantage which would accrue to Russia from the construction of a road to the Cas-
In May, 1886, the Shah suddenly announced his conversion to progress, and stated his belief in the "absolute necessity" of facilitating ingress from the Persian Gulf. He preferred the construction of a railway by an European or a Perso-European Company. Nasr-ed-din also declared that the opening of the Karun would follow the railroad as a natural consequence. If the railway project proved impracticable, he would revert to road building. Nicolson's representations undoubtedly account, at least partially, for this volte face, but other factors may have had bearing on it.

The Shah had recently elevated Yakia Khan, the Moushir-ed-dowleh, to the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs. Yakia Khan's pro-Russian proclivities were notorious, and it was he who had persuaded the Shah to sign the disastrous Russo-Persian treaty of 1881. His return boded ill for British influence. Sir Philip Currie called Lord Rosebery's attention to the appointment.

Sir Ronald Thomson, our Minister at Teheran, spoke to me yesterday about the recent application as Foreign Minister of Yahya Khan, who is known to be a creature of the Russians, and of the probability that he will connive at further cessions to Russia of territory in Khorassan. The result of this would be very injurious to our own interests, as it would enable Russia to push southwards along the left

plan would be balanced by the commercial benefits which would be reaped by British trade if good communications could concurrently be opened in the south. He applied therefore for a concession for navigation of the Karun river, and for the construction of a southern trade route linking Mohammerah, via Shustar, Khoremabab and Burujird with Tehran." Nicolson, op. cit., p. 63.

1 Thomson to Currie, Private, 19 March 1886. F.O. 65/1264.
bank of the Herirud towards Seistan, and thus to turn the
flank of the N[orth]/W[estern] boundary of Afghanistan. 1

While deferring to Russia by favouring Yakia Khan, the Shah also angled
for a territorial guarantee from England. Expediency dictated, there-
fore, at least an outward display of interest in traditional British
projects.

The Foreign Office responded with alacrity to the Shah's sudden
preoccupation with railway building. Sir Philip Currie, after calling
attention to Baron Reuter's prior claims, urged a speedy decision:

"The matter should be considered at once with Sir Ronald Thomson &
the India Office, as we ought to clinch it before the Shah changes
his mind." A telegram was soon on its way to Nicolson instructing
him to express "gratification" over the decision and to inform the
Persian Government that the project was receiving "immediate considera-
tion."

The Foreign Office became the headquarters for Persian railway
conferences. Sir Philip Currie apparently assumed the administrative
burden and conducted the discussions when more pressing business pre-
cluded the attendance of the Foreign Secretary. The India Office sent
Sir Owen Tudor Burne as its representative. Lord Kimberley and Lord

1 Memorandum by Currie for Lord Rosebery, 19 March 1886. F.O. 65/
1284. See also Lord Rosebery's comment which follows.

2 Minute on Nicolson to Rosebery, No. 88, Decypher telegram, 17 May
1886. F.O. 60/481.

3 Rosebery to Nicolson, No. 25, Draft telegram, 18 May 1886. F.O.
60/481.
Cross, however, kept abreast of the consultations. In one of his typical minutes Lord Cross wrote: "I should like to see Sir [Room 1] Burne after he has been to the [Foreign Office]." Sir Ronald Thomson regularly attended the sessions, and supplied information from the local point of view. Two capitalists, Sir William Mackinnon and Sir George Mackenzie, completed the contingent. The financiers computed Persian railway costs and estimated future returns on the investment.

On the British side the consideration appears to have been sincere and realistic. Experts scrutinized the possible routes. Draft concessions were formulated, subjected to searching criticism, and then revised. In Tehran, meanwhile, firmness and conviction gave way to haggling and delay as the Shah renounced his former stand. Less than two weeks had elapsed since Naṣr-ed-dīn had approached Nicolson. Already, however, the Persian spoke timorously of Russian reprisals.

The Shah's initial modification of policy was comparatively

1 Case 1245, minute on "Persia, Railway projects," 12 August 1886. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XC, India Office Records.


3 Nicolson to Rosebery, Text telegram, No. 98, 28 May 1886. F.O. 65/1286.
minor. He asked that the railway be constructed by the nationals of a remote and neutral Power—at least, preferably America. The official attitude towards the hypothetical American company indicates that the British thought in terms of Persian advancement—not exclusively of their own developments in that country. The Foreign Office staff welcomed the newcomers since "the great thing is to get the Railway made." Two successive Ministers from the United States, Mr. Frederick H. Winston and Mr. E. Spencer Pratt, endeavoured vainly to interest their Government in sponsoring enterprises in Persia, and emphasized the benefits which would accrue from railway construction. In 1886 a private American scheme was submitted to the Shah. But the British denounced the plan as "visionary," and then redoubled their own efforts.

Nasr-ed-din's predilection for a neutral Power was natural, but

1 Nicolson to Rosebery and minute by Currie, No. 98, Decypher telegram, 26 May 1886. F.O. 60/481.

2 See for example Winston to Bayard, No. 18, 12 May 1886; Same to same, No. 23, 4 June 1886. Persia, II, American Department of State. Pratt to Bayard, No. 9, 29 November 1886. Persia, II, American Department of State.

his subsequent waverings throw doubt upon the sincerity of his request for the railway. Mr. Mackenzie, after consulting with Mr. 1 Mackinnon and Baron Reuter, prepared a draft concession. It was therefore possible for Nicolson to present the Shah with a tentative outline less than a month after having received the initial appeal. The British envisaged the formation of an international company domiciled in London. This business establishment should undertake to construct a narrow gauge line from the Gulf to Burujird, with an extension to Tehran and branch lines to follow later. For his part the Shah should furnish the land and timber. Since the railway could not be sufficiently remunerative in its first few years of operation the Company planned to take over the management of the customs of Bushire, Mohammerah, and Shushtar as a temporary expedient. Nasr-ed-din was guaranteed a yearly sum equivalent to his annual return under Persian management, and he would receive in addition the amount that remained after the company had paid a seven per cent dividend.

The Shah objected to the customs provisions; then shifted ground completely. His enthusiasm for railways waned, and road building absorbed attention for the moment. Nicolson told Nasr-ed-din frankly

1 Foreign Office to India Office, 4 June 1886. F.O. 65/1287.
Nicolson to Rosebery and minute by Currie, No. 102, Decypher telegram, 2 June 1886. F.O. 60/481.

2 Rosebery to Nicolson, No. 31, Draft telegram, 4 June 1886. F.O. 60/481.
that such vacillation made the work of negotiation "weary and dis-
heartening," but he recommended nevertheless to his own superiors
that the new project be received in a cooperative spirit. Currie
investigated the cost of roads, and estimated the expenditure re-
quired to be only slightly below the amount calculated for the
railway. Nicolson expatiated incessantly "on the necessity of do-
ing something," and felt reasonably certain of obtaining a road if
not a railway. Early in July, however, the Shah departed abruptly
for the hills, and the negotiations fell into temporary abeyance.

In England, the month of July brought a Conservative victory.
Lord Salisbury again became Prime Minister. He appointed Lord Iddes-
leigh to the post of Foreign Secretary, but took over that position
himself in January 1887. Lord Cross was Secretary of State for India.

Persian railway talks were resumed. The British composed draft
concession after draft concession, but the shadow of fear hung over
Tehran. Trepidation over possible Russian retaliation and anxiety
over his authority being curbed by Western innovations combined to
lessen the Shah's desire for internal improvements. He became pro-

1 Nicolson to Rosebery, No. 115, Text telegram, 10 June 1886. F.O.
65/1287.
Same to same, No. 77, 11 June 1886; Same to same, No. 81, 21 June
1886. F.O. 65/1287.

2 Foreign Office to India Office, Secret and Immediate, 22 June
1886. F.O. 65/1287.
Rosebery to Nicolson, No. 39, Draft telegram, 23 June 1886. F.O.
60/481.

3 Nicolson to Currie, Private, 1 July 1886. F.O. 65/1288.
gressively more dubious as the negotiations became more concrete, and his attitude did not augur favourably for the ultimate success of the scheme. As the British revised drafts, the Persians raised fresh objections.

The Shah ingeniously invented excuses for maintaining the status quo. He spoke intermittently about his preference for a neutral power, and he sounded warnings over too rapid changes, but his most consistent objection to the British proposals centred around the hypothecation of his customs. On the financial issue the negotiations eventually broke down. The British finally realized that the Shah was adamant in his views concerning the customs, and they attempted to solve the money question by other means. The capitalists, Mackinnon and Mackenzie, however, refused to build Persian railroads without a guarantee, reminded the Foreign Office that the project had its origin in that office, but promised to assist with the enterprise as a public service if proper financial arrangements could be made.

1 Nicolson to Iddesleigh, No. 133, 26 October 1886. F.O. 65/1292.
Nicolson to Currie, Private, 29 October 1886.
Salisbury to Nicolson and enclosure, No. 2, 11 January 1887. F.O. 60/485.

Same to same, No. 33, 21 March 1887. F.O. 60/486.
Nicolson to Currie, Private, 30 March 1887. F.O. 60/486.
Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 43, 30 March 1887; Same to same, No. 62, Confidential, 4 May 1887. F.O. 60/486.

3 Memorandum by Mackinnon for Foreign Office on proposed Persian Railway and Navigation Concession, 4 April 1887. F.O. 60/490.
Lord Gross, in the India Office, considered the Persian question one of the vital issues with which he had to deal. In a letter of 5 March 1887, drafted in his own hand, he set forth the salient features of his stronger policy. He believed that England should demonstrate more tangibly her active interest in the welfare of Persia.

With regard to the railway, he said:

...even if the Shah's acquiescence be obtained... it may be found difficult to obtain the necessary funds from the English public for the carrying out of the scheme without some guarantee from the Imperial and Indian Governments; but he proposes to communicate on this matter with the Government of India, and to address the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs separately...?

On this occasion, however, the Government of India proved uncooperative. The Viceroy and his Council paid tribute to the significance of Persia and admitted the desirability of taking steps which would recoup Britain's once superior position. But they declined to spend more money. The Government of India not only refused to carry the entire burden of the guarantee, but also hesitated to share the expense with the Home Government. This decision, however, was reached by a vote of four to three, with the Viceroy,

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1 Case 262, Persia—Future Policy towards, 5 March 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCIII. India Office Records.

Minute by Cross of 28 April on Letters from Persia. Persian Correspondence, 1887, Vol. CX, India Office Records.

2 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 5 March 1887. F.O. 60/190.

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the Commander-in-Chief, and Mr. Schoble dissenting.

Lord Salisbury attached real significance to the construction of Persian railways, and his minutes show that he followed the course of the negotiations closely. He did not believe, however, that a subscription of English capital would be forthcoming without a guarantee. In searching for a solution to the financial quandary the Foreign Secretary asked whether the minerals in southern Persia would be sufficient to attract capital investment. This casual inquiry seems to be the first evidence of British interest in natural resources.

The report returned was so uninspiring, however, that the matter dropped. The railway discussions proceeded capriciously and with little hope of positive results. The Persians, still anxious for a British assurance, submitted several counter proposals. The Foreign Office considered them unrealistic and unacceptable. Typical of the comments was: "We shall never raise a farthing on these terms." Nevertheless,

1. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, No. 100A, 24 June 1887, Foreign Department, Secret/External. F.O. 60/490.

2. India Office to Foreign Office and enclosed telegram from Viceroy, 27 June 1887. F.O. 60/490.


Lord Salisbury's enquiry as to any trustworthy account of the mineral resources of southern Persia, 15 October 1888. F.O. 60/495.

policy in Persia could not be effective without means of ingress, and as Lord Salisbury laconically put it: "Unless he the Shah will make a railway to the Sea Coast—all advice is bunchum."

By 1888, however, the British had lost their bid for Persian railway construction. The question was also of importance for Russia, and her agents had not been idle. The Russians planned eventually to connect Persian lines with their own system, but M. Wishnegradsky was faced by internal expenses far beyond the capacity of the treasury. Therefore, the government determined to persuade the Shah to postpone construction until the moment was more propitious. By a secret agreement of September 1887 Nasr-ed-din signed away his freedom of action and thwarted British efforts. The Shah pledged "not to give orders or permission to construct railways or waterways to Companies of foreign nations before consulting with His Majesty the Emperor." Harold

1 Minute of 1 May by Lord Salisbury on Currie's memorandum concerning his conversation with Malcom Khan, 3 May 1888. F.O. 60/197.

2 Lansdorff to Speyer, Secret, 30 September/13 October 1904. Krasnyi Arkhiv, LIII, 16-17, 34.
"Die zaristische Diplomatie über Russlands Aufgaben im Orient im Jahre 1900," Die Kreigsschuldfrage, VI (1928), 649-50; a translation of Count Muraviev's Memorandum of 1900 from the Russian in Krasnyi Arkhiv, XVIII, into German.

3 Enclosure No. 2 in Wolff to Salisbury, No. 201, Secret and Confidential, 1 October 1888. F.O. 60/195. The enclosure is a translation of a Secret and Confidential Memorandum concluded between the Shah and Prince Dolgorouki in the Month of Zi Hejjah, 1304 (21 August to 18 September 1887). This agreement was kept secret for a year. See also Wolff to Salisbury, No. 199, Most Secret and Confidential, 30 September 1888. F.O. 60/195.
Nicolson was apparently unaware of this Russo-Persian agreement. He wrote:

...twelve months after Nicolson's arrival the Shah pledged his word of honour that he would not enter into any secret agreement with Russia without first "consulting" Her Majesty's Government. This interview took place in a garden: The Shah, grunting enormous under his diamond aigrette, twirling his huge moustaches, sat on one side of a little stream under a bower of jasmine. Nicolson, on the other side of the stream, was shaded by a pine tree. It was in such idyllic circumstances that the pact was made. Nasr-ed-Din Shah, who was a man of honour, maintained his promise in the spirit and the letter.

In striving for their Persian railway the British did not negotiate with the Shah alone. His eldest son, Sultan Masud Mirza, the Zil-es-sultan (Shadow of the King), ruled over much of southern Persia from his palace at Isfahan. That he was the son of the Shah by a morganatic marriage disqualified the Zil from succeeding his father. He was, however, a man of conspicuous talents and progressive tendencies. Many contemporary observers rated him as the ablest man in Persia.

The Shah had pensioned off his eldest son with the governorship of Isfahan. It was then up to the Zil to extract a suitable living. Control from Tehran over the outlying areas was ineffective, and he enjoyed a free hand in his vaguely defined theatre of ascendancy.

1 Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

Samuel G. W. Benjamin, Persia and the Persians (Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1887), pp. 185-86.
Territory after territory was incorporated until, in 1887, he ruled nearly half of Persia—including the provinces of Isfahan, Aras- tan, Burujird, Kurdistan, Kirmanshah, Kamara, Farse, Mahallet, Goolpycan and Khunoor, Irak and Dargjazin. The population of these regions constituted the beau ideal of military material. The Zil subdued the warlike and usually uncontrollable tribesmen, and out of these rugged individuals forged a well drilled and disciplined army. With at least two fifths of Persia under his sway and with 20,000 admirably trained men as an instrument of persuasion, the Zil seemed a likely candidate for the Peacock Throne despite the legal claims of his half-brother, the Valiahd, in Azerbaijan.

The British cultivated the Prince. Three fourths of their telegraph lines passed through his territories; while the Zil ruled, trouble in keeping the lines intact was reduced to a minimum. His realm was orderly, and trade flourished. Moreover, he made no secret of his pro-British leanings, and he showed acute awareness of the evils which stemmed from the rapacity abounding in the central government.

Lieutenant-Colonel R. Murdoch Smith, who had supervised the British telegraph system in Persia for twenty years, was sent to Tehran on a special mission in 1887. His primary objective was to renew

1 Wolff to Salisbury, Separate—Secret and Confidential, 13 April 1890. Endorsed: "For the Queen. Not to be printed." F.O. 60/511.
Report on the Persian Army. Compiled in the Intelligence Branch of the Quarter Master General's Department in India. Confidential, 1 August 1892. F.O. 60/536.
one of the telegraph conventions, but he was also instructed to promote the railway project if the opportunity arose. He held a most encouraging conversation with his old friend the Zil. The latter professed friendship for England, stated that he would help with the railway, but asked for a "sign" that his assistance would be welcomed. The Zil said:

But with every desire to do service to England and win her friendship, I must think of many things. We Princes, especially those of us who are Asiatic, occupy very precarious positions. Since I first began to be occupied in affairs of Government, and I am hardly forty years old, what have I myself seen? Abdul Aziz, Sultan of Turkey, kicked off his throne and killed. Khedive Ismail sent off to wander about the different capitals of Europe. Napoleon first a prisoner and then an exile. The Emperor Alexander blown up in the streets. Amir Shir Ali dying while a fugitive, and his sons prisoners, one in India and another in Tehran. Getewayo, poor devil, carried off to England and sent back to his country, only to have his throat cut. Alexander, of Bulgaria, snapped up in the night. The King of Burmah dethroned, exiled, and imprisoned. All this makes a Prince think.

The Prince did not follow the recital of these ominous precedents with an outright request for support. He asked for a "sign" that his services were wanted. The "sign" was the G.C.S.I.

Bestowing a decoration upon the Zil had much to recommend it.

The French, a short time previously, had conferred upon him the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour. Nicolson pointed out that if

1 India Office to Foreign Office, Secret and Immediate, 5 March 1887. F.O. 60/190.

2 Nicolson to Salisbury and enclosures, No. 98, 26 July 1887. F.O. 60/487. The enclosures consist of Colonel Smith's reports of his interviews with the Zil-es-sultan.

3 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 51, 16 April 1887. F.O. 60/486.
the "sign" were refused, the Zil would despair of British friendship and would become more susceptible to Russian cajoleries. There were, however, two conceivable drawbacks—the attitude of the Shah and the jealousy of the Valiagh. But, as Nicolson put it in a private letter to Sir Henry Rawlinson:

Although he [the Zil] has many faults he is the only real man in Persia. If it were skilfully done, I do not think the Shah would resent any attention we paid to the Zil. The Valiagh and the other brother might possibly do so, but they are both lost to us & the latter is a wretched creature. But I do think that the Zil is beginning to despair of our being of any support to him: & it is always possible he may make terms with the other side.

A decoration, moreover, committed Great Britain to no definite line of policy, but could be interpreted merely as a recognition of the Zil's distinction.

Both the Foreign Office and the India Office considered the Zil's request within the framework of the larger issues of their policy in southern Persia. Lord Salisbury asked for the opinion of the Council, and expressed his own tendency to concur with Nicolson's recommendations. "What we want is a hold over the South of Persia,"

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1 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 92, Telegram, 30 August 1887. F.O. 60/488.
2 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 111, Confidential, 31 August 1887. F.O. 60/487.
3 Nicolson to Rawlinson, Private, 26 April 1887. Case 630, Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCV, India Office Records.
4 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 111, Confidential, 31 August 1887. F.O. 60/487.
he declared. Sir Henry Rawlinson also inclined to that view. He, like many others, envisaged the break-up of Persia after Nasr-ed-din's death with the Zil ruling the southern regions from Isfahan and the Vali of the north from Tabriz. The India Office decided in favour of the investiture, and maintained that "a commanding influence in Southern and Central Persia should be secured for the English Government." Colonel Smith also favoured the more active course since "to do nothing is to let Russia go on unchecked." The one dissenting voice was that of Sir Ronald Thomson. The former Minister appreciated the wisdom of encouraging the Zil, but he warned against antagonizing other members of the Royal Family.

The India Office decided to bestow the decoration, and so ad-


2 Case 630, Rawlinson to Neal, 26 May 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCV, India Office Records.

3 Resolution of the Political Committee, 8 June 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCV, India Office Records. H. W. Rawlinson, R. Montgomery, and A. Eden were members of the Political Committee.

4 Case 905, Zil's Decoration, Smith to Neal, 13 September 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCV, India Office Records.

5 Thomson to Sanderson, Private, 31 August 1887. F.O. 60/487.
Lord Salisbury authorized Nicolson to proceed with the formalities. He was delighted. The Zil responded warmly to the honour and talked cordially with Nicolson during the visit to Tehran early in 1888. Then, suddenly, the wheel of fortune turned. A telegram from Nicolson brought the shocking news that the Zil, while in Tehran far from his supporting forces, had been compelled to resign all his governorships except Isfahan and had been stripped of all but a fragment of his fine army. Currie commented: "It is unfortunate & shows that we did not bestow the G. C. S. I. wisely." The Foreign Office instructed Nicolson to proceed carefully since their information indicated that the Shah was in a "suspicious state" and "incaution might cost the Zil his life." Later instructions, however, authorized Nicolson to explain to the Shah the implications of his unfortunate action upon Anglo-Persia relations.

1 Case 934, Zil's Decoration, India Office to Foreign Office, 24 September 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCVII, India Office Records.

2 Nicolson to Currie, Private, 29 September 1887. F.O. 65/1323.
See also Salisbury to Nicolson, No. 43, Telegram, 29 August 1887; Same to same, No. 52, Telegram, 20 September 1887. F.O. 60/488. Salisbury to Nicolson, No. 104, 7 November 1887. F.O. 60/485.

Nicolson to Currie, Private, 2 February 1888. F.O. 60/492.

4 Nicolson to Salisbury and minutes, No. 25, Decypher telegram, 21 February 1888. F.O. 60/495.

5 Salisbury to Nicolson, No. 12, Telegram, Secret, 27 February 1888. F.O. 60/194.
The Shah professed the most friendly feeling for England, but refused to reinstate the Zil.

The reasons for the Zil's fall are still obscure. His rivalry with the Amin-es-sultan and the latter's intrigues with the Shah undoubtedly had some effect. The Shah's own susceptibilities were also probably aroused. But some saw the hand of Russia. That the incident occurred shortly after a visit of three days by the Russian Minister to the Shah's shooting camp is probably more than strangely coincidental.

Ultimately the Zil received his decoration, but never again did he regain a fraction of the authority and power he wielded at his zenith in 1887. For the British the blow to their prestige was great. Few decorations were accorded in later years and when a candidate was recommended the stock Foreign Office attitude was: "The result may be as fatal to him as to the Zil." Lord Salisbury summarized the effect of the episode in a letter to Lascelles:

... in the past we have made a mistake, as we have done

1 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 30, Secret, 5 March 1888; Same to same, No. 32, 13 March 1888. F.O. 65/13h8.

2 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 30, Telegram, 28 February 1888. F.O. 60/496. Same to same, No. 26, Confidential, 28 February 1888; Same to same, No. 27, Secret, 28 February 1888. F.O. 65/13h7.

3 Wolff to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 3 June 1888. F.O. 60/495.

4 Minute by Currie on Wolff to Salisbury, No. 211, Decypher telegram, Very Secret, 27 September 1888. F.O. 60/495.
elsewhere, by running a special candidate for power. We backed the Zil, the second son of the Shah, a man of English proclivities & considerable ability. But we backed him so clumsily that the Shah took fright, & stripped him of all his dignities & power, & now he is of very little value. All that we have got from the support we gave him is the ill will of the eldest son, the Vali-ahd, who is his competitor in his father’s good graces, & who, by a more reserved line of conduct, has contrived to maintain his position.

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Although the British were more vitally interested in the south, the cardinal principle of their policy in Persia was to maintain the country intact and to encourage its regeneration and reform. The success of any undertaking, whether it concerned the north or the south, depended upon the influence of the Minister in Tehran. That influence was almost always proportionate to his standing in his home country. This applied not only to Britain but to Russia. Thus, in spite of all his faults, Dolgorouki served Russia well. He was a Prince and one of the Emperor’s favourites. Moreover, the first secretary in the Russian Legation was the son of the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs. Nasr-ed-din, therefore, felt that the hand of the government in St. Petersburgh was never far away, and in the end he usually capitulated to the demands made by the Russian Legation.


2 Case 630, Nicolson to Rawlinson, Private, 26 April 1887. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. XCV, India Office Records.
Nicolson to Sanderson, Private, 28 May 1887. F.O. 60/186.
Nicolson to Currie, Private, 15 September 1887. F.O. 65/1322.
Same to same, Private, 29 September 1887. F.O. 65/1323.
The India Office staff had, for many years, contended that the surest way of regaining lost ground was to strengthen the Legation staff. Two of the most competent advisers, Sir Owen Burne and Sir Henry Rawlinson, attached more importance to the appointment of an able and dynamic Minister to Tehran than to any of the other projects under consideration. When Lord Salisbury sought to win the Shah by the cession of Seistan in 1879, Sir Owen Burne advised: "Don't cede the Shah territory before you settle our position in Tehran. What you really want is to make Rawlinson (for instance) a Baronet & send him out as Minister." But nearly a decade elapsed before a distinguished personage proceeded to that post.

The strong recommendations from Lord Cross at the India Office, coupled with Lord Salisbury's natural inclinations to take the Persian question seriously, culminated in the appointment of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. Before his departure, the Foreign Office acquainted their new Minister with the salient features of Persian policy by presenting him with seven printed pages of detailed instructions and eighteen enclosures. The basic premise, and it is significant that...

3 See Appendix III.
here Lord Salisbury himself was responsible for the final wording,

was:

It is to the interest of this country that the integrity of Persia should be maintained, that its resources should be developed, and that its Government should be strong, independent, and friendly. It is to the promotion of these objects that your attention should be directed, and so long, at least, as there is any reasonable hope of their being realized, the efforts of Her Majesty's Government would be directed to frustrate any policy incompatible with them.  

Thus, the objective of the Wolff mission, as the Foreign Office envisaged it, was the revitalization of the buffer policy.

On his journey en route to Tehran, Wolff took a keen interest in the regions through which he passed. He saw in the Persians an "aptitude for civilization," but their innate capacities were choked by extortion and maladministration. The observations of other travellers and officials verify his conclusions. Nicolson, though often critical of the Persians, wrote privately to Currie: "I think we should all be surprised how rapidly this country would civilize."

General Sir R. Murdoch Smith, after long residence in Persia, described the people as "one of the finest races in the world physically and in-

1 Salisbury to Wolff, No. 11, Very Confidential, 29 February 1888. F.O. 60/491.

2 Wolff to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 21 April 1888. Printed for the use of the Cabinet, 30 April 1891. F.O. 60/192.

Sir Henry Rawlinson rated their capabilities far above the Turks, Indians, Uzbeks, and Afghans. He consistently maintained that training and encouragement would pay handsome dividends.

Decay and inertia, not advancement and enterprise, were the distinguishing characteristics of the country, however. Since their governors could extract from the people, through pishkesh, any profits or valuable possessions, a very large part of the population lived at a subsistence level and nothing more. In 1887 a British officer traversed the country on a special mission to purchase horses for the Indian Army. He, too, deplored the deterioration everywhere about him and the suppression of a potentially creative people. Even horse breeding, an occupation in which the Persians had long taken pride, had so far declined that the Colonel had trouble in filling his quota with satisfactory animals. Any good foal was requisitioned by the local authorities. Colonel Williams attributed Persia's ills to the "utterly unscrupulous" and rapacious governing classes.

Wolff discussed his impressions with Nicolson, and then concluded that improvements would not be forthcoming until individual initiative


3 Colonel B. Williams, on special duty in Persia, to Lieutenant-Colonel E. H. H. Collen, Government of India, Military Department, Calcutta, No. 70, 1 February 1887. F.O. 2138/150.
was restored. Further investigation soon convinced him that laws for
order and stability were more urgently needed than roads and railways.
He therefore pressed the Shah for the promulgation of a decree declar-
ing that all Persian subjects were secure in their lives, liberties,
and possessions until publicly condemned by a competent tribunal. The
aim of this projected reform was twofold. It would encourage the Per-
sians to work, save, and invest. It would also favourably impress pub-
lic opinion in other nations—nations to whom Persia might look for
help in the not too distant future.

At this time Nasr-ed-din was negotiating for a territorial guaran-
tee. At the beginning of the year he had appealed plaintively for sup-
port. He accused England of giving "honeyed words—but nothing else,"
and he asked for a definite pledge to resist Russia if she seized Per-
sian territory. The substance of England's reply is contained in
Sir Philip Currie's minute.

...that we cannot pledge ourselves to go to war in unknown
eventualities: but that the maintenance of the integrity
of Persia is a part of the policy of England & that the
Shah may rest assured that she will use her best efforts
to secure it.

1 Wolff to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 21 April 1888.
Printed for the use of the Cabinet, 30 April 1891. F.O. 60/1292.
2 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 43, Most Confidential, 2 May 1888. F.O.
65/1349.
3 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 56, Most Secret and Confidential, 11 May
1888. F.O. 65/1349.
4 Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 9, Secret, 5 January 1888. F.O. 65/
1347.
Lord Salisbury added: "but that without a railway our assistance must be in any case less efficacious."

In their initial conversations with Wolff, the Shah and his powerful aide, the Amin-es-sultan, recalled the days of Fath Ali Shah when the relations between England and Persia were closer. Indeed, a defensive alliance bound the two countries. When Wolff talked of reform measures and proclamations, the Shah and the Amin-es-sultan turned to assurances and guarantees.

Wolff argued that if Persia wanted protection she should clearly demonstrate to her potential friends that she was worth sustaining. He pressed for the life and property decree "as a preliminary which should at once be carried out." The Amin-es-sultan soon reported that the Shah had decided in favour of such a proclamation, and he would promulgate it in the most public manner. In the same conversation the Persian alluded to the Shah's desire to build railroads and to foster more cordial relations with England. But, he asked: "What support would be given to him if his so doing should entail upon him the execution of the threats of Russia." Wolff said that he would

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1 Minutes by Currie and Salisbury (5 February) on Nicolson to Salisbury, No. 9, Secret, 5 January 1888. F.O. 1347. These points were amplified in Salisbury to Nicolson, No. 6, Secret, 8 February 1888. F.O. 65/1347.

2 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 56, Most Secret and Confidential, 11 May 1888. Endorsed for Queen and Cabinet. F.O. 65/1349.

have to obtain more specific instructions, but he urged that no time should be lost in publishing the decree.

The Amin-es-sultan, with Wolff's assistance, drafted the proclamation, and the Shah announced it at a levee on 22 May 1888. Later, it was read in the mosques and the public meeting places, and lesser authorities were required to deposit bonds to ensure the execution of its provisions. Wolff was delighted with the "Magna Carta for the Persian middle class," and asked Lord Salisbury to convey an encouraging message to the Shah. Wolff suggested:

Continuance in the course thus inaugurated will double the claims of His Majesty on the support of H[eir] Majesty's Government & the Shah will find in the moment of difficulty that the friendship of England will not be wanting.

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1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 57, Decypher telegram, 17 May 1888. F.O. 60/196.
3 The expression is used in Wolff to Salisbury, 23 May 1888. B.F.S.P., LXXIX, 704.
4 Wolff to Salisbury, Decypher telegram, Private and Confidential, 23 May 1888. F.O. 60/195.
Lord Salisbury, though pleased with these hopeful signs was more cautious. He replied:

You may add that continuance in the course thus inaugurated cannot fail to enhance the claims of His Majesty to the friendship of England.¹

Stimulated by his swift initial success, Wolff turned his attention to a project which is traditionally associated with British policy in Persia—the opening of the Karun river to navigation. Sir Henry Layard, as early as 1841 and 1842, had described the potentialities of that river as a means of entry into the Shah's isolated central provinces.² The latent possibilities were casually investigated, but active negotiations did not begin until the decade of the seventies. According to the provisions of Lord Salisbury's abortive treaty of 1879, part of the price Shah Nasr-ed-din would have to pay for Herat and Seistan was the opening of the Karun. Lord Granville, too, pushed this project. In 1881, he drafted a dispatch to be communicated to the Shah in which he recalled previous efforts in this direction, and advised the Persian ruler to take "immediate & effective" steps if he wished to see British interest in his country "greatly

¹ Salisbury to Wolff, 23 May 1888; See also Same to same, 22 June 1888. B. F.s P., LXXIX, 704-7. Quotation from p. 705.


³ Salisbury to Thomson, No. 17, Extender of telegram, Secret, 27 October 1879. F.O. 60/119.
& speedily developed."

No action followed.

The British promotion of the Karun scheme was consistent and serious. The Shah demurred—partly because of Russian hostility, and partly because of internal complications. The Arab and Bakhtiari tribes in their remote mountain strongholds of the southwest maintained scant connection with the central authorities and did not conceal their hostility to the Turkish Kajars. Since ties of neither race nor loyalty bound them to the Tehran government, the Shah suspected that they would become pliant tools in the hands of a foreign power.

Nasr-ed-din doubted and procrastinated, but other Persians favoured the enterprise. The Zil-es-sultan, whose territories would be directly affected, was an enthusiastic convert. The Nasr-ul-mulk wrote a memorandum in which he depicted the former prosperity of the region and argued that with irrigation and proper care the rich alluvial soil could again support a thriving population. Sir Henry Rawlinson wrote on Nasr-ul-mulk's paper: "This is a very excellent report and does credit to its Persian author." The restoration that

1 Granville to Thomson, unnumbered, Draft dispatch, 16 August 1881. This dispatch is extensively revised by Kimberley. F.O. 65/1209. One of the best summaries of early British efforts is given by Hertslet's Memorandum of 20 May 1888. F.O. 97/590.

2 Enclosures (two confidential reports by Mr. Edward Fitzgerald Law) in Wolff to Salisbury, Private and Confidential, 20 July 1882. F.O. 60/192.

3 Enclosure in Thomson to Granville and minute by Rawlinson, No. 18, Commercial, 26 December 1882. Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, 17 February 1883. Home Correspondence, Political and
the Naṣr-ʿul-mulk envisaged cannot be dismissed as chimerical. Those who explored the Persian southwest considered the Karun plains cap-
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able of becoming one of the granaries of the world. Rawlinson described the Karun project as "a delusion and a snare," and preferred the construction of a metalled road to Isfahan. He stood alone, however, in his opposition. Other authorities considered it advantageous both commercially and politically. Commercially, it would place England on a more equal footing. The Russians had persuaded the Shah to build roads from the Caspian to Tehran and Meshed, and they constantly developed transportation facilities in the north. Their goods were penetrating into the heart of the country and were providing keen competition as far south as Isfahan. In the south the British had to transport their products over picturesque but expensive caravan trails. The Indian Intelligence Department summarized the effects from the political point of view.

...it would give England, as the country which would most largely employ the new route, paramount influence in Southern Persia, while the possibility of bringing troops

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2 Memoranda on the Karun River by Sir H. Rawlinson, Sir O. St. John, Mr. W. Abling, Capt. H. Wells, and Mr. Ronald Thomson. Intelligence Department, India, Secret, 1882. F.O. 243/1172.
within a few hundred miles of the most important Persian towns naturally would contribute largely to the re-establishment of British influence at Tehran.  

Wolff believed that the hardy and warlike tribes of the southwest could be made into an effective counterpoise to Russia's Cossack Brigade in Tehran.

In 1885, following his return from Persia after many years there, Colonel R. Murdoch Smith acquainted the Foreign Office with his views on Persian affairs. His plans provided for the improvement of communications in southern Persia and in Turkish Arabia by putting steamers on the Tigris and the Karun Rivers and by building a carriageable road from Shushtar to Kum. The results would be mutually beneficial. Persia's trade and revenue would increase, and England would establish supremacy along a line from Mosul, through Kerman-shah, Isfahan, and Yazd, to Herat. Sir Philip Currie considered the question "very important," but not until the energetic days of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was the Shah's opposition overcome.

1 Karun River Precis, 1879-1883, Intelligence Department, India, Secret, 16 August 1883. F.O. 2h8/472.

Same to same, No. 172, Most Secret and Confidential, 5 September 1888. F.O. 65/1353.

3 Smith to Stokes and minute by Currie, Private, 24 July 1885. F.O. 65/1247.
Case 1255, Letter from Lieutenant Colonel Murdoch Smith as to improvement of communications in Southern Persia and Turkish Arabia. Home Correspondence, Political and Secret Department, Vol. LXXVII, India Office Records.
When the Shah and the Amin-as-sultan spoke of their need for support, Wolff pointed to the practical obstacles which precluded effective help. Troops could not advance over mule tracks. Furthermore, English public opinion was not sufficiently alive to Persia's difficulties, and did not understand her struggle for continued existence as an independent state.

Wolff suggested to Lord Salisbury that Britain might, under the most favoured nation clause of their treaty with Persia in 1857, demand the right of putting steamers on the Karun, since Turkish vessels used the river. The Law Officers decided, however, that the small Turkish grain and cargo boats did not justify a claim for steamers. Ultimately, Wolff and the Shah worked out the formula—an assurance in exchange for the opening of the Karun.

The Foreign Office consulted Mr. George MacKenzie about business details. He had advocated the opening of the Karun for many years, and his connection with the firm Gray, Dawes, and Company, of Bushire enabled him to make recommendations based upon local know-

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 56, Most Secret and Confidential, 11 May 1888. Endorsed for Queen and Cabinet. F.O. 65/13h9.
Same to same, No. 71, Secret and Confidential, 1 June 1888. F.O. 65/1350.

2 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 106, 7 July 1888. F.O. 60/192.

3 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 66, Decypher telegram, 30 May 1888. F.O. 60/194.
Salisbury to Wolff, No. 23, Draft telegram, 31 May 1888. F.O. 60/194.
ledge. Mackenzie believed that the Karun region offered exceptionally promising opportunities for development. He favoured the sponsoring of Persian enterprise from the outset. A Persian company with European shareholders should undertake to establish steamer trade on the Karun between Mohammerah and Shushtar, and, in return for the right, the company should construct a wagon road from Shushtar via Dizful and Burujird towards Kum. The road when finished would belong to the Persian Government, and subsequently other lateral branches connecting the central cities could be built. Mr. Mackenzie suggested getting into contact with the Tigris and Euphrates Steam Navigation Company which would, he thought, assist in the inauguration of the enterprise for a proportionate increase in their subsidy. The Foreign Office took up the financial question with the India Office. Lord Cross responded favourably, and pledged the Government of India to contribute a "material share."

Wolff carried on these negotiations throughout the summer of 1888. He did not ask for a concession, but for a Royal Proclamation opening the river for trade to all nations. Wolff and the Amin-es-sultan


worked out the terms, and in mid-October the Shah decided in favour of the measure. His circular of 30 October 1888 permitted commercial vessels of all nations to use the Karun. The broad and swift river was navigable for 117 miles from Mohammerah to the little village of Ahwaz. There, however, rapids intervened, and the great dams of the Sassanian monarchs were useless—though still imposing in decay. In its upper course the river was navigable up to the plains which surrounded Shushtar—an ancient royal centre. By opening the Karun, approximately 320 miles of water carriage could be substituted for as many miles of fatiguing travel over hazardous mountain trails.

General Smith in an address to a London audience explained:

To realise what this means, let us imagine for a moment the whole traffic between London and Scotland carried on by means of beasts of burden, and then a line of steamers.

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 196, 27 September 1888; Same to same, No. 203, 2 October 1888. F.O. 97/590. Same to same, No. 219, Secret and Confidential, 10 October 1888. F.O. 65/1354.

2 Aitchison, op. cit., Appendix No. XII, translation of a Persian circular announcing the opening of the Karun river from Mohammerah to Ahwaz, 30 October 1888, p. lxxvii. Wolff to Salisbury, No. 211, Decypher telegram, 29 October 1888. F.O. 97/590.


to be suddenly started between London and Berwick.

The reaction to the Shah's decision was mixed. The American

Minister in Tehran described it as a "step in the direction of true

progress." The British Resident at Bushire, in his annual report,
predicted that it would be a boon not only to British trade but also
to southwestern Persia itself. Lord Salisbury, in his Guildhall ad-
dress, said:

In Persia, the Shah has recently by a wise and statesman-
like measure, opened the only navigable river of his domin-
ions for all nations for their commerce. It is not a favour
for England, but it is the beginning of a policy by which
new life can be breathed into Persia, and new prosperity
brought to its commerce and industry. 4

The most sanguine expectations were justified. Messr. Lynch,
of the Tigris and Euphrates Steam Navigation Company, transferred
steamers to the Karun and operated a regular service on both the
lower and upper river. A Vice-Consulate was founded at Mohammerah,

1 Quoted in Wolff, op. cit., II, p. 343.
This speech is quoted in Ainsworth, op. cit., pp. 217-23.

2 Pratt to Bayard, Diplomatic Series No. 311, 2 November 1888. Per-
sia, IV, American Department of State.

3 Selections from the Records of the Government of India (Foreign
Department, Calcutta: Published by Authority), CCLIX. Adminis-
tration Report on the Persian Gulf Political Residency and Mussat
Political Agency for 1888-89, p. 29.

4 Speech at the Guildhall on 9 November 1888. Reported in The Times,
10 November 1888, p. 10.
See also Hansard, Third Series, Lords, 18 December 1888, CCCXXXI,
1738-39.

5 Henry Finsis Blosse Lynch, "Notes on the present state of the
Karun River," Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society,
XIII (1891), pp. 292-93.
and the agent's first report was published in 1891. British trade
in the Karun region in that year was valued at £16,000, but by 1902
it had risen to £271,732. The tonnage of shipping which passed
through the port of Mohammerah increased steadily, and the city's
population trebled within a decade. By the turn of the century,
the superior merits of the Karun route had been proved. From Bush-shire to Isfahan, a distance of about five hundred miles, the journey
took approximately a month. Travelling via the Karun reduced the
time by half. The freight rates were considerably cheaper. When
the telegraph company brought in 157 tons of material they saved
$2,682 by choosing the waterway. In later years, the developments
which accompanied the Karun river enterprise became the keystone for
British predominance in the south.

Throughout the Karun river negotiations the Shah bargained for

an assurance from England. His secret agreement with Russia of

1 Selections from the Records of the Government of India, OCLXXXV,
Administration Report of the Persian Gulf Political Residency
and Muscat Political Agency for 1890-91, pp. 47-50.
Valentine Chirol, The Middle Eastern Question or Some Political
Problems of Indian Defence (London: John Murray, 1903), 167-68.
Special articles by Chirol in The Times, 15 December and 23 De-
cember 1902.

2 An impartial account of British developments on the Karun River is
given in a long and detailed trade report from the American Minis-
by Adley "valuable report." Persia, XI, American Department of State.

3 Hamilton to Elgin, Private, 6 December 1895; Same to same, Private,
7 February 1896. Private Correspondence, India, Part I, Vol. I,
Ite Hamilton Papers, India Office Library.
September, 1887, however, had to be revealed. It prohibited water-
way and railway concessions to foreign powers, but its restrictive
provisions were circumvented by the opening of the Karun river to all
nations. The fact that Nasr-ed-din had entered into another secret
agreement with Russia, however, caused the British to doubt his re-
liability. Nevertheless, they assumed a limited obligation. The
Shah hoped for a promise of direct material assistance, but Lord Sa-
lisbury specifically forbade any such pledge "as we are really power-
less till there is railway communication with the Coast." But a
written promise to make "earnest representations" at St. Petersburg
in case Russia infringed Persia's sovereign rights was given.

The Russians made persistent enquiries during the course of the
negotiations, and protested "in a very blustering manner" against
the opening of the river. M. de Poggio, the Charge d'Affaires said

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1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 199, Most Secret and Confidential, 30
September 1888; Same to same and enclosures, No. 201, Secret and
Confidential, 1 October 1888. F.O. 60/495.

2 Salisbury to Wolff, No. 21, Draft telegram, 23 May 1888; Same to
same, Private, 25 May 1888. F.O. 60/494.

3 See Appendix IV.
F.O. 97/590.
Salisbury to Wolff and minute, No. 78, Draft telegram, 13 October
1888. F.O. 97/590.
Assurances given by British Minister to Shah respecting maintenance
of Integrity of Persia, Tehran, 24 October 1888. Treaty series 11B.
Persia, F.O. 93/74/11B.

4 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 209, Decypher telegram, Very Secret, 27
October 1888. F.O. 97/590.
that the Emperor would be very angry. Prince Dolgorouki, feeling secure with his 1887 secret engagement, had left Tehran temporarily in order to accompany the Emperor in his procession through his Caucasus dominions. At the Imperial Court he was persona gratissima. The Petersburgh Herald carried glowing accounts of his triumphant Tehran service; the Emperor received him cordially. Victory over Sir Henry Drummond Wolff had been easy for Prince Nicolas Dolgorouki.

Into this serene and complacent atmosphere dropped the bomb of the Shah's circular of 30 October 1888—opening the Karun river.

Dolgorouki fumed; the Emperor chafed; the press ranted; and Giers brought this "serious matter" before Morier. The "greatest irritation" had been caused by the opening of the Karun, and the equilibrium had been upset in Persia. Russia would have her revanche, Giers said, and corresponding measures would be taken.

In Tehran, too, M. de Poggio reproached the Shah in strong and insulting terms. Currie thought that the Shah should be supported, and with Sanderson's assistance he drafted a telegram to Morier.

1 Morier to Salisbury, No. 382, Most Secret, 14 November 1888; Same to same, No. 383, Most Secret, 14 November 1888. F.O. 65/1355.

2 Morier to Salisbury and minute by Currie, No. 396, Extender of telegram No. 66, 21 November 1888. F.O. 97/590.
   Same to same and enclosure, No. 383, 14 November 1888; Same to same and enclosure, No. 402, 23 November 1888. F.O. 65/1355.
   Same to same, No. 423, 12 December 1888. F.O. 65/1356.

3 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 228, Decypher telegram, Most Confidential, 21 November 1888. F.O. 97/590.
   Same to same, No. 257, Most Confidential, 21 November 1888. F.O. 65/1355.
The Foreign Office registered "pain and surprise" at the attitude of the Russian Government. Their dispatch of 21 February 1888 had clearly expressed the British views, and the opening of the Karun river had formed an essential part of their stated programme. The Russian Government had not expressed opposition in February. Moreover, England had obtained no concession, and certainly the Shah retained the right to do as he pleased with his own rivers. Lord Salisbury drafted the conclusion, with his own hand, and hoped that Russia would not quarrel with England over "a policy on our part which has only been inspired by the common interests of civilization, & to which she herself [Russia] has in principle emphatically assented."

The Russians did not frame their retaliatory demands immediately. They accused Wolff of blocking their efforts to obtain a Consul at Meshed and of obstructing their negotiations for a road from Askabad to Meshed. But they did not ask concessions for compensation. "La réalité est," wrote Giers to Staal, "que nous ne sommes nullement à bout de moyens d'obtenir quelques équivalents des avantages que s'est assurés le Gouvernement anglais..."

1 Salisbury to Morier, No. 64, Draft telegram, 23 November 1888. Endorsed "The Queen." F.O. 65/1355.

2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 69, Decypher telegram, Secret, 5 December 1888. F.O. 65/1334.

When Morier held his "Karun river" interview with Giers—a conversation which was delayed for several days because of Morier's indisposition—he emphasized the February dispatch. Giers was obviously embarrassed, and he gave no articulate reply. He pointed to the violence of the Russian press and explained that public opinion had to be soothed by compensation of some type. That compensation, however, had not yet been determined. Morier concluded, in his report to Lord Salisbury, that the Emperor had taken a personal interest in the issue since it touched one of his favourites—Nicolas Dolgorouki. The concern of the Emperor, who was impulsive and stubborn, turned the minor dispute into one not "free from danger." As the year 1888 drew to a close, breakers seemed to be ahead for England and Russia in Central Asia. Morier warned Salisbury:

...in the present temper of the Czar, of his military advisers, and of public opinion, were Baron Reuter by means of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff's indefatigable energy to secure his concessions behind the back of Russia, I believe there would be no small risk of some violent and ill-considered step, which might force on earlier than would perhaps be convenient to us, the moment when we should be bound in honour to afford material support to the Shah of Persia.

CHAPTER X

THE WOLFF MISSION TO PERSIA
ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE BUFFER POLICY, 1889-1891

Russia's tone continued to be strident long after the initial shock of the opening of the Karun had been absorbed. Some newspapers advocated military action, and Morier referred to the "super-excited state of feeling which still prevails here in regard to Persia." Attention focused on three issues—the new Reuter concession then in process of negotiation, the Meshed consulate, and the construction of railways. Intemperate language was not uncommon. The Russian Charge d'Affaires, Monsieur de Poggio, stormed about Baron George de Reuter, then in Tehran on business for his father. The Persian Government should, he said, "either send him away or strike him in the mouth if he again opened it concerning his concession." Zinovieff talked of reconsidering the territorial guarantee if further privileges were granted to England.

The French Minister in Tehran "insinuated very clearly that however unreasonable the anger of Russia on our part in the extension

1 Morier to Salisbury, No. 423, 12 December 1888. F.O. 65/1356.
2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 439, Confidential, 26 December 1888. F.O. 65/1356.
4 Morier to Salisbury, No. 441, Secret, 28 December 1888. F.O. 65/1356.
of trade might lead Russia to war."

The first demand was for a consulate at Meshed. That city of 60,000 occupied a position in the northeast comparable to Tabriz in the northwest. It was important to the Russians as an approach to Herat, to the British as a point d'appui for observations in Central Asia, and to the Persians as a religious centre. Because it was a sacred city all requests by foreign powers to establish any type of official headquarters there had been refused. Russian imperiousness in 1888 and 1889, however, induced the Shah to reverse this decision. After his capitulation to the Russians, Nasr-ed-din asked the British to send a representative to Meshed in order that the Russian flag would not fly alone. General Maclean, already on duty along the Khorassan frontier, was ordered to proceed to that city as its first British Consul General.

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 27, Confidential, 29 January 1889. F.O. 60/500.

2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 69, Decypher telegram, Secret, 5 December 1888. F.O. 65/133ff.
   Wolff to Salisbury, No. 255, Decypher telegram, Most Confidential, 14 December 1888. F.O. 60/496.

3 Minute by Salisbury on Wolff to Salisbury, No. 217, Decypher telegram, Confidential, 7 December 1888. F.O. 60/495.
   Same to same, No. 13, Decypher telegram, 14 January 1889. F.O. 60/503.
   Same to same, No. 25, Records telegram, Very Secret, 29 January 1889. F.O. 60/504.
With regard to railways severe pressure was applied. In the initial stages of the long discussions which continued through 1889 and 1890, the Russians seemed to angle for a concession— in spite of the fact that Morier had always maintained: "So long as Wyshnegradsky remains Minister of Finance, not one copeck will be found for a Persian railway." The British did not object to a commercial line for, when Staal had complained about the Karun, Lord Salisbury had suggested that a railway might suffice for compensation. But strategical construction was a different matter. A line to the capital, either from Asterabad or from Resht and Kazvin, was an obvious Russian move. The British, however, decided not to oppose these projects since their military analysts had long ago decided that Tehran was an easy prey for invasion and already lay at the mercy of her neighbour to the north—with or without railroads. Construction in Khorassan would be far more dangerous. Its eastern districts constituted "the highway for Russian flank attack on Afghanistan," and Wolff should resist lines in that province "to the utmost" of his power.

1 Morier to Salisbury, Private, 28 June 1891. Bound volume, Russia, I, Pte Salisbury Papers.
4 Salisbury to Wolff, No. 17, Most Confidential, 4 February 1889. F.O. 65/1377.
5 Salisbury to Wolff, unnumbered, Draft telegram, Secret and Confidential, 19 May 1890. F.O. 60/513.
In the summer of 1889 the Shah journeyed to Europe for the third and last time. Thus railway negotiations were temporarily suspended, although conversations were held on that subject both in St. Petersburgh and in London. The Emperor spoke in a friendly vein, but "insisted very strongly on the maintenance of the Shah's promise not to grant Railway Concessions for five years." In London, on the other hand, the benefits which would be derived from such construction were emphasized. Wolff accompanied the Shah during the month he spent in England. Nasr-ed-din came with a suite of forty, was entertained at England's expense, and was shown every honour. He had expressed the desire to arrive in London via the Thames, and Wolff thought that he should be conveyed in an impressive vessel. The royal yacht, the Victoria and Albert, brought him from Antwerp to England, and while there he stayed at Buckingham Palace. The Prince of Wales was "assiduous in personal attendance," and Wolff arranged for the Shah to meet many leading financiers and to visit industrial centres.

The Shah's sojourn in England was, on the whole, most successful, but one unfortunate repercussion ensued. Malcom Khan obtained a concession for state lotteries, and then sold his rights to the Anglo-Asiatic Syndicate.

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 211, Most Confidential, 21 November 1889. F.O. 60/502.
2 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 81, 5 April 1889. F.O. 60/500.
   Same to same, No. 103, Very Secret, 1 April 1889; Same to same, No. 107, Records telegram, 10 April 1889. F.O. 60/504.
Upon returning to Persia the Shah found his people in an angry mood because of his indulgence in an expensive European tour at a time when the country was on the brink of bankruptcy. Their rage focused on the lottery concession. Since the Russian Charge d'Affaires also remonstrated against it, Nasr-ed-din tried to secure its repeal. The personal rivalry between the Amin-es-sultan and Malcom Khan aggravated the controversy, and finally Malcom Khan was recalled. In December the concession was cancelled without compensation, and this episode together with the memory of Reuter made capitalists sceptical of Persia as a sound field for investment.

Not all financial enterprise was discouraged, however. In mid-1888 the New Oriental Bank Corporation which operated throughout the East—in Aden, Bombay, Colombo, Hongkong, Singapore, and Yokohama—extended its business to Persia. When Mr. Charles Duffield arrived in Tehran to begin his work as head of the branch in that city, he was welcomed enthusiastically by Wolff who thought that the plans for a bank were of a "most promising character." The undertaking flourished, and soon agencies had spread to Tabriz, Resht, Meshed, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Bushire. No concession was required for the bank to carry on its work, and it per-

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 167, Records telegram, Secret and Confidential, 30 November 1889; Same to same, No. 176, Records telegram, 8 December 1889. F.O. 60/504. The Times, 11 January 1892.

2 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 145, Confidential, 14 August 1888. F.O. 60/493.

formed such services as the transmission of taxes from the provinces to the capital, the issuance of paper currency, and the loaning of money at moderate interest rates. The Foreign Office tried to promote its growth by transferring to it the Legation account, but the Treasury refused to sanction the change.

While the New Oriental Bank was laying its groundwork, the son of Baron Julius de Reuter arrived in Tehran. Nasr-ed-din had told Wolff that he would give Reuter the right to found a National Bank as compensation for the 1873 abrogation, and he asked the British Minister to prepare a draft concession. But Reuter pressed for the Karun railway in addition.

The negotiations were rendered more delicate by the irritation which Wolff's Karun coup produced. In Tehran the Russian Chargé d'Affaires spoke "very loudly" against Reuter, and Morier warned from St. Petersburg that further concessions to England would be regarded as a "hostile act."

Monsieur de Poggio argued that clause six of the 1887 agreement prohibited the granting of concessions without Russia's consent. The

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1 Foreign Office to Treasury, Immediate, 14 August 1888. F.O. 60/498.
2 Treasury to Foreign Office, Immediate, 22 August 1888. F.O. 60/498.
4 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 241, Decypher telegram, Very Secret, 3 December 1888; Same to same, No. 251, Decypher telegram, Very Secret, 12 December 1888. F.O. 60/496.
5 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 213, Decypher telegram, Urgent and Very Secret, 29 October 1888. F.O. 60/496.
7 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 68, 27 March 1889, Asia/Confidential/1095. F.O. 60/513.
The Amin-es-sultan, however, upheld Baron Reuter since his claims long preceded the secret undertaking with Russia. Moreover, he saw in the Reuter concession a "means of liberating Persia from the dictation of Russia." Early in 1889 permission to establish a national bank was given in lieu of the original grant. Wolff's part in the negotiations was limited to extending to "Baron George de Reuter such advice as he asked for from time to time and to counsel the Shah and his Government to terminate as speedily as possible this long standing claim." The Foreign Office expressed "gratification" at the settlement since, although the original concession contained "obvious objections," the construction commenced and the expenditures made deserved some compensation. In the future, Lord Salisbury said, it should be easier for Persia to obtain foreign capital for the development of public works.

The year 1889 closed with the promulgation of two British Orders in Council. The need for such enactments had been recognized for many years, but not until Wolff took up the question with typical energy and enthusiasm were they brought into force. The first Order in Council invoked the Foreign Jurisdiction Acts of 1813 and 1878, and established consular control over British subjects in Persia. The second extended the same privileges to the Gulf littoral and included the semi-independent

2 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 28, 2 February 1889. F.O. 60/500.
3 Salisbury to Wolff, No. 11, Draft dispatch, 1 February 1889. F.O. 60/199.
Same to same, No. 92, Decypher telegram, 29 March 1889. F.O. 60/503.
shaikhdoms along the Arabian shore. These acts were the natural out-
growth of the increased numbers of British subjects who resided in
Persia as a result of the banking activities, the opening of the Karun,
the operation of telegraph lines, and the mining explorations. The
Times responded warmly, and pointed out that some stability had to be
established before merchants and investors would risk their lives and
fortunes in the development of Persia. The editorial concluded:

The day of doing nothing, and of letting the over-
ripe Persian pear fall into Russia's mouth, of dis-
couraging still further by our apathy the already
discharged Persians, seems to have passed away,
and in its place has arrived one marked by energetic
but not provocative action, but the resolve to uphold
our legitimate rights against all comers, ...

In 1890 the Imperial Bank of Persia acquired the assets of the
Persian branch of the New Oriental Bank. The Imperial Bank was
originally chartered for sixty years, was empowered to undertake "all
matters financial, industrial, or commercial," and had the exclusive
right of issuing banknotes. In addition to its banking privileges it
obtained a monopoly over all mines, except gold, silver, and precious
stones, which were not already worked. The caution money, £100,000,
which was deposited in the Bank of England in 1872 by Baron Reuter
was to be handed over to the Persian Government as a guarantee that

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1 The two Orders in Council of 13 December 1889 relating to Consular
Jurisdiction in Persia and along the Persian Gulf have been re-
printed in British and Foreign State Papers (London: Her Majesty's

2 Foreign Office to Law Officers of the Crown, 7 May 1889. F.O. 60/518.
Wolff to Salisbury, No. 3, Consular, 30 March 1889. F.O. 60/518.

3 Leading article in The Times, 26 December 1889.
the bank would be formed. Upon its establishment, however, the sum
reverted to Reuter.

The Bank was incorporated under a Royal Charter in London, in spite
of the fact that the Treasury refused such applications as a general
policy. In this case they apparently acceded to Lord Salisbury's request.
He urged that every possible encouragement should be given to the insti-
tution since its failure would be detrimental politically. To the Lords
Commissioners of the Treasury he wrote:

...Persia stands at this moment at a very critical
point in her history. If no development of her
resources can be accomplished, decay, which for
several generations past has set in, can only be
expected to continue, & her absorption by a power-
ful military neighbour can only be a question of
years. On the other hand, if her wealth & prosperity
can be increased, if advantage can be taken of her
great natural capabilities, & above all, if communi-
tions with the sea & with India by railway can be
established, the difficulties in the way of Russian
subjugation will be largely increased, & if suf-
ficient interval for the accomplishment of that
growth can be obtained the danger will probably be
dispelled altogether. If the railways are made,
Persia will be able to fight for herself, & may
obtain friends to fight for her: if the railways
are not made, she must be the defenceless prey of
an invader.

On this account it becomes a matter of capital
importance to encourage the creation of commercial
machinery by which undertakings of this kind can
be carried out. The accumulation of money in Persia
is only possible through the medium of a successful
banking system, & in face of the diplomatic conditions
which exist, it is not probable that the necessary
communications will ever be established with the
sea, & with other countries, except by the action
of native enterprise, nominally at least supported by
native resources.

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 28, 2 February 1889. F.O. 60/500.
Copy of Concession for the Imperial Bank of Persia, 4 February 1889.
F.O. 60/506.

2 Foreign Office to Treasury, 2 July 1889. F.O. 60/507.
The Lords of the Treasury honoured Lord Salisbury's "urgent representations" and gave their consent for a Royal Charter. But they insisted upon certain modifications and pointed out that a twenty-five year old precedent was being broken. By the time the prospectus of the Imperial Bank Corporation was published the venture seemed so secure that "within a few hours of the date of issue, the capital, amounting to £1,000,000 was subscribed fifteen times over." The capital of the bank was fixed at four million sterling, and the Persian Government was guaranteed six per cent of the net profits annually but not less than £4,000. Mr. Joseph Rabino was its first manager, and under his indefatigable and astute management the bank became an accepted national institution. Several years after its formation the American Minister in Tehran said that the "only Banking business in Persia conducted in a regular and systematic manner is that of the Imperial Bank of Persia." Other concessions were acquired and lost, other enterprises were attempted and failed, but the bank has continued its operations into the present decade.

A supplement to the concession provided that the mining rights

1 Treasury to Foreign Office, 13 July 1889. F.O. 60/507.
2 Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, I, 475.
3 McDonald to Sherman, Diplomatic Series No. 297, 24 May 1897. Persia, IX, American Department of State.
should not be worked by the bank itself. Hence, in 1890, the Persian Bank Mining Rights Corporation was formed in London with a capitalization of £1,000,000. Persia's latent mineral wealth was known to be great. Sir Charles MacGregor, Sir R. Murdoch Smith, Colonel Mark Bell, and General A. Houtum Schindler had all returned glowing reports. The American Minister in Tehran stated that Persia was "abundantly supplied" with minerals, and he described the quantities of coal, iron, and copper as "almost inexhaustible."

The petroleum deposits seemed especially promising, and those around the Karun were reported to be "perfectly colourless and exceptionally pure." The company took boring equipment to Daliki, near Bushire, but their drilling was not successful. Then they moved to the island of Kishm where some experimental shafts were sunk. The coal deposits around Bushire were investigated, and so were the manganese mines of Kerman. It had been thought that mining activity would more than amply reward anyone who undertook the task, but the obstructionism of the Persians and the cost of transportation had not been suffi-

1 Imperial Bank of Persia, Additions to Concession, Appendix No. 4. F.O. 50/501.
2 Special report on "The Mines of Persia" in The Times, 10 April 1890.
3 Pratt to Bayard, Diplomatic Series No. 153, 19 December 1887; Same to same and enclosure, Diplomatic Series No. 163, 31 December 1887. Persia, III, American Department of State.
4 Quotation from special report on "The Mines of Persia" in The Times, 10 April 1890.

See also Great Britain, Foreign Office, Diplomatic and Consular Reports, Miscellaneous Series No. 207 (London: Stationery Office, 1891), "Report on a Journey from Tehran to Karun and Mohamrah, via
ciently taken into account. In 1893 the Company disbanded its activities and went into liquidation.

The Imperial Bank also acquired a concession, formerly held by Yahia Khan, for a wheel road from Ahwaz to Tehran. Wolff was enthusiastic over the advantages which would be obtained if its construction proved feasible. The road was to pass through Kum, Sultanabad, and Burujird. Various branch roads were also planned. In 1890, the building began—proceeding from Tehran southward. Two years later the section to Kum, approximately one hundred miles, was completed, but the expenses had so far exceeded expectations that work was suspended, and not until Messrs. Lynch took over the concessions at the close of the century did a road connect Ahwaz and central Persia.

In 1890, when the railway dispute loomed up anew, the British did not present a united front. Morier consistently opposed all activity

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For the claims of the company see the case volume entitled Persian Bank Mining Rights Corporation. F.O. 60/576.

2 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 13, Confidential, 14 January 1890. F.O. 60/509.

which touched upon the construction of railways in Persia. Let sleeping dogs lie, was his philosophy. Both Giers and Wishnegradsky, too, thought the moment unpromising for raising the issue of Persian railways, but they were constantly assailed by the military party which pressed for lines through Khorassan to Herat, Seistan, and the Gulf.  

Morier's contentions were reinforced by the Director of Military Intelligence, General Brackenbury. He argued that the British position in Baluchistan was not consolidated, and only when it had been developed would it be time to move on to Persia. Moreover, nothing should be done which might stimulate the Russians to build lines in the north:

...The construction of this railway to Seistan would be a direct incentive to Russia to push forward railways into Khorassan. It would strengthen the hands of the Russian military party, which is anxious to make such railways for purposes of aggrandisement, against the Finance Minister, who for motives of economy...desires to prevent their being made, and any possible advantages that our Indian trade might derive from it would, in my opinion, be far more than counter-balanced by the advance of Russian railways, which would hasten on that evil day when, with an advanced and improved base of operations, Russia will be in a position to threaten our Indian frontier.

Wolff, on the other hand, tried desperately to convince his government of the benefits which would be derived, and he believed that a railway to Seistan was the answer to Russian strides in Central Asia. This line, moreover, could be financially remunerative since it would

1 Morier to Salisbury, Private, 8 November 1889. Bound volume, Russia, III, Pte Salisbury Papers.  
Same to same, No. 353, Most Secret, 13 November 1889. F.O. 65/1379.  
Same to same, No. 41, Secret, 8 February 1890. F.O. 65/1392.

2 Memorandum by Brackenbury on the subject of proposed Seistan Railway, Secret, 21 October 1890. F.O. 60/517.
facilitate the entry of Indian goods into Khorassan and it might lead to the revitalization of Seistan. Herein, Wolff was supported by Lord Salisbury, who wrote in a minute to General Brackenbury's memorandum:

If Russia makes her railway through Khorassan the North of Persia is hopelessly lost. Will the South of Persia, the region which stretches South of the desert & includes Shuster, Ispahan, & Seistan — be lost also? The answer to that question largely depends on some such line as under consideration. If it is not made, Southern Persia must fall too — Afghanistan so embraced must be indefensible. The advanced Russian forts will be on the Halmund. I should, however, myself prefer a railway to Seistan from the sea.

From time to time the Russians attempted to obtain exclusive rights over railway construction in Persia. In the final analysis, however, their counter demands took the form of a prohibition on construction.

In 1889 the Shah agreed to a delay of five years. Simultaneously, however, Wolff received from the Shah a written promise to give England priority over construction in the south. Furthermore, England would receive a concession for the line to Shushtar whenever any other power was given railway privileges in Persia.

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 42, Most Confidential, 19 February 1889. F.O. 65/1377.
   Same to same, No. 246, Secret, 25 July 1890. F.O. 65/1394.

2 Minute by Salisbury on Brackenbury's memorandum on the subject of proposed Seistan Railway, Secret, 21 October 1890. F.O. 60/517.
   See also Salisbury to Wolff, Draft telegram, Secret and Confidential, 19 May 1890. F.O. 60/513.

3 Wolff to Salisbury and enclosure, No. 68, 27 March 1889, Asia/Confidential/1095. F.O. 60/513.

The new Russian Minister, Monsieur de Butzow, tried to persuade Naṣr-ed-din to extend the prohibitory period to the end of his lifetime. Later, he changed the demands, and asked for a ten year restriction. The British encouraged the Shah to oppose the monopoly provisions and to retain his freedom of action. They believed that ten years was too long an interval, but a temporary postponement was not distressing in view of their own difficulties in raising money for Persian railway construction. That the Shah should retain his sovereignty was the main concern.

When it became obvious that the Russians were in earnest about their prolongation negotiations, the British interfered for Naṣr-ed-din in St. Petersburgh. Lord Salisbury wrote to Morier:

We cannot accept as valid so barbarous a measure as consent by the Shah that his subjects shall be permanently deprived of the benefit of railways: nor can we admit that their enjoyment of it is to depend on the will of Russia. He suggested that a modus vivendi might be reached according to which England and Russia would agree to postpone railway construction in Persia for perhaps two or three years. When Morier broached the subject of this joint delay, Giers "gave an exclamation of pleased surprise."

1 Salisbury to Wolff, No. 87, Draft telegram, Very Secret, 12 September 1890. Endorsed "Print—for Cabinet only." F.O. 60/513.

2 Salisbury to Morier, No. 31, Draft telegram, 10 November 1890, Endorsed "For Cabinet." F.O. 65/1395.

3 Salisbury to Morier, No. 29, Draft telegram, 1 November 1890, Endorsed "Print for Cabinet." F.O. 65/1395.
Rarely had the Russian Foreign Minister displayed such "unalloyed pleasure." But the representations came too late since, in Tehran, the Shah was in a "state of almost incredible dread of Russia's subsequent vengeance." Nasr-ed-din agreed to the ten year restriction, and in their next conversations over Persia the tone of Giers changed abruptly as he recounted to Morier a long, inaccurate, and bitter survey of British misdeeds in Persia.

In another sphere, too, the British were unfortunate. Major Gerald Talbot obtained complete control over the production, sale, and export of all Persian tobacco, including tumbaku, widely used in the water pipe. Nasr-ed-din was to receive £15,000 annually in addition to a quarter of the profits. The company's prospectus appeared late in 1890, but it aroused little attention and the initial work of organization proceeded normally.

The tobacco concession per se seems to have been innocuous. Those who mentioned it at all in its early days predicted that it would be generally beneficial. It was, however, the ideal incident for a popular rising—and one had been brewing for several years. Almost everyone in Persia smoked, and there were few whom the tobacco monopoly did

1 Morier to Salisbury, No. 283, Confidential, 12 February 1890. F.O. 65/1395.

2 Kennedy to Salisbury, No. 226, Decipher telegram, Secret, 9 November 1890. F.O. 60/513.

3 Wolff to Salisbury and enclosure, No. 101, 3 April 1890. F.O. 60/553.
not touch. Other concessions, moreover, were so far into the realm of politics that the people could not grasp their significance. Vaguely they realized: "De concession en concession, la Perse sera bientôt tout entière entre les mains des étrangers."

The religious leaders took the initiative in promoting the agitation. Two factors account for their decision to encourage the opposition to the concession. They realized that Nasr-od-din was selling the country bit by bit, and that continuance along that road could only lead to the break up of the kingdom. Furthermore, the contest between the lay and spiritual elements for supremacy in Persia had been going on for centuries. Their rivalry was compared to the situation in Europe during the Middle Ages. None of the Shahs have, like the Turkish Sultan, been recognized as the head of a religious community. The Safavi monarchs did, however, trace their lineage back to one of the holy Imams. But the Kajars had no sacred connections. The Persian Shiite religious teachers considered the whole dynasty illegal, looked upon the Kajars as nothing more than Turkish interlopers, and planned to tolerate them only until an opportunity came for their overthrow.

The original connection between the British Legation and the concessionaire was vague. Wolff wrote:

2 Tyler to Gresham, Diplomatic Series No. 122, 25 August 1894. Persia, VII, American Department of State.
Sometime ago the Imperial Bank, on depositing the stipulated sum on behalf of Major Talbot, received a concession for him and registered it. At the same time I heard Major Talbot was forming an international company. Since then I know nothing,...

The Russians protested against the tobacco monopoly—vigorously, officially, and immediately. The Shah and the Amin-es-sultan seemed frightened at the outset, and Wolff's illness which later necessitated his permanent departure from Tehran handicapped the British in meeting the crisis. Not until the summer of 1891, however, did the Persian people become aroused, but at that time the tobacco monopoly became the all-engrossing topic of conversation in the bazaars. The first complaints centred around the excessive profits the company was expected to make. Nor was an influx of foreigners welcomed. Mr. Julius Ornstein, the company manager, worked assiduously to soothe the populace, but he would barely quiet one locality when risings would break out in another. By July the agitation was becoming violent, and in Tabriz an anonymous placard warned: "We will kill the Europeans first and then plunder their property."

1 Wolff to Salisbury, No. 154, Decypher telegram, 13 June 1890. F.O. 60/553.
2 Kennedy to Salisbury, No. 286, Decypher telegram, Very Secret, 23 September 1890; same to same, No. 272, Decypher telegram, 12 November 1890. F.O. 60/553.
3 Wolff to Salisbury and minutes by Sanderson and Salisbury, No. 240, Decypher telegram, Secret, 25 September 1890. F.O. 60/553.
4 Kennedy to Salisbury, No. 180, Confidential, 27 July 1891. F.O. 60/553.
The tone became progressively more menacing, and a full scale fanatical outbreak was feared. Russian agents promoted the discontent, the mullas preached with ever increasing vehemence, Malcom Khan supported the agitators, and the people obediently followed this leadership. The Shah and the Amin wanted desperately to rescind the concession, but such a capitulation could only be interpreted as weakness. When they appealed to Lord Salisbury for advice, he said that severe measures should be taken only if necessary in the interest of the country and for the preservation of the Shah's authority. "We do not wish to assume the invidious position of urging vigorous measures, in order that foreigners may make money," he asserted.

The operations of the régime were temporarily suspended in Azerbaijan and in other localities where the excitement was intense. In the autumn a temporary lull ensued, and a peaceful arrangement seemed in sight. Then, however, one of the chief mujtahids placed an interdict on smoking and branded all tobacco "unclean" until the concession was repealed. Sir Frank Lascelles, who had replaced Wolff, reported that those in highest authority saw only two alternatives if the concession were maintained—civil war or the retirement of the Amin-es-sultan. The American Minister in Tehran described the uneasy

1 Kennedy to Salisbury, No. 106, Decypher telegram, 20 May 1891. F.O. 60/525.
2 Salisbury to Kennedy, Private, Telegram, 6 September 1891. F.O. 60/553.
3 Kennedy to Salisbury, No. 164, Decypher telegram, 9 September 1891. F.O. 60/553.
4 Lascelles to Salisbury, No. 230, Decypher telegram, 12 December 1891. F.O. 60/553.
Christmas spent by the European colony in Tehran amid incendiary pla-
cards reading: "Death to the Infidels!"

Ultimately, the company negotiated for compensation. Lord Salisbury
instructed Lascelles to give advice and whatever unofficial sup-
port he could since the company had not been at fault. Such support
was not unqualified, however. When demands seemed excessive, Lord
Salisbury telegraphed: "Remember that the first thing we have to care
for is the maintenance of the Persian State." The compensation negoti-
ations were protracted, but ultimately the Shah agreed to pay £500,000.
The Persian Government had no reserve funds; indeed lack of revenue ac-
counted for the original concession. But money was available from one
source. The Russians offered the sum on very liberal terms. Eventually,
however, the Imperial Bank made the loan and met the Russian proposal.

The loan inaugurated Persia's national debt. The long discussions
had tried the patience of the British, the Shah, and the Amin-es-sultan.
The crisis had arisen at an untimely moment for its early stages coin-
cided with Wolff's illness. In 1891 he left Persia forever. His de-
parture was a severe blow for the British. Lord Curzon wrote to Lord
Salisbury: "The whole machinery of British prestige & success, polit-
ical or commercial, at Tehran depended on Wolff."

1 Beale to Blaine, Diplomatic Series No. 29, 28 December 1891. Persia,
V, American Department of State.

2 Salisbury to Lascelles, No. 62, Telegram, 15 December 1891. F.O. 60/
553.

3 Sanderson to Lascelles, Private, 20 April 1892. F.O. 60/555.

4 Curzon to Salisbury, Private, 6 October 1890. Loose Papers,
Special Letters, Pte Salisbury Papers.
CHAPTER XI

PERSIA AT THE CLOSE OF THE SALISBURY ADMINISTRATION

The abolition of the tobacco concession lowered Persia's reputation in European financial circles, and halted the flow of capital into the country, but it produced no change in England's official policy. When Sir Frank Lascelles left England late in 1891 to begin his work as Minister to Tehran, he carried with him private instructions from Lord Salisbury. His task was to build on the foundation laid by Wolff, for as Lord Salisbury put it:

Wolff has done very much to aid in the development of Persia. The Oriental Bank, the opening of the Karun, & the tobacco monopoly are all measures which as they work will strengthen Persia very much. We have to go on in the same lines, favouring every enterprise which will increase the well being of the Persian people & the strength of the Persian Government.

Lascelles found a disheartening situation. Only a few months had passed since Wolff's untimely departure, but even in that short interlude deterioration had set in. No longer was the Foreign Office surprised by the receipt of a dispatch recounting the details of riots and seditious plots in Tehran. Malcom Khan, a Minister in disgrace, assailed the Shah's government through his newspaper, Qānim (Law),

1 Salisbury to Wolff, Private, 6 October 1891. Bound volume, Persia, II, Pte Salisbury Papers.
2 Kennedy to Salisbury, No. 117, Confidential, 2 May 1891; Same to same, No. 120, 7 May 1891. F.O. 60/523.
which was published in London and distributed secretly throughout Persia. He did not preach violence and revolution, but favoured a gradual improvement through constitutional government, codified law, and fair tribunals. But his new order presupposed the disappearance of the present rulers. The very nature of the Qānūn makes impossible any evaluation of the extent of its circulation and its impact upon the people.

The mention of Malcom Khan's name, however, was enough to throw the Shah into one of "those paroxysms of irritation and alarm."

Persia's internal crisis was, by 1891, acute. In Khorassan, where the authority of the central government was almost non-existent, still more ominous events were taking place. The Yomud Turcomans were in revolt. This nomadic tribe passed half its time in Persia and the other half in Russia—where it came under the influence of General Kuropatkin. He had been trained by General Skobelev, and there were those who attributed Skobelev's laurels to Kuropatkin's work. Personal scandal, however, relegated him to the position of Governor-General of the trans-Caspia. But, wherever he was assigned, Kuropatkin seemed determined to leave his mark. He intrigued with the Turcomans, bribed Persia's frontier officials, collected large quantities of military supplies in the Sarakhs-Zulfiqar vicinity, communicated with the Governor of Herat, and visited nearby Persian villages "for a change of air" with two hundred "invalid" soldiers. Morier wrote that the reports of Kuropatkin

1 Kennedy to Salisbury, No. 26, 10 March 1891. F.O. 60/522.
   Same to same, No. 36, Decypher telegram, 6 March 1891. F.O. 60/525.

2 Kennedy to Salisbury, No. 187, 1 August 1891. F.O. 60/524.
patkin's doings "were not pleasant reading for one with nerves un-strung." Since Khorassan had all but slipped from his grip, the Shah turned to England for aid and advice. Lord Salisbury urged him to send thoroughly reliable officials to the disturbed areas, to bring the Yomuds under control by military force, and to build a chain of forts along the border. The British had already transferred Colonel Charles Stewart from Tabriz to the critical region around Asterabad. The Shah concluded that the advice given by Lord Salisbury and that relayed to him periodically by Colonel Stewart was wise, and he resolutely ordered the work on the first fort to begin.

Same to same, No. 10, Decypher telegram, 29 January 1891. F.O. 65/1l12.
Same to same, No. 70, Decypher telegram, 10 April 1891. F.O. 65/1l13.
India Office to Foreign Office, 13 May 1891. F.O. 65/1l14.
Morier to Salisbury, No. 130, 20 May 1891. F.O. 65/1l14.
Memorandum of information regarding the course of affairs beyond the North-Western Frontier, received during the month of July 1891. Simla, Foreign Department, Secret/Frontier. F.O. 65/1l15.

1 Morier to Salisbury, Private, 12 May 1891. Bound volume, Russia, I, Pte Salisbury Papers.

2 Salisbury to Kennedy, No. h, Draft telegram, 28 January 1891, F.O. 65/1l12.
Draft memorandum to Mirza Mahomed Ali Khan, Foreign Office, 16 May 1891. This document was drafted by Currie, revised and approved by Salisbury, and is marked "seen and concurred" by Wolff. F.O. 65/1l1h.

3 Kennedy to Salisbury and minutes by Currie and Salisbury, No. 9, Decypher telegram, 29 January 1891. F.O. 65/1l12.

Same to same, No. 161, 27 July 1891. F.O. 65/1l15.
But the anxiety over Khorassan was soon overshadowed by graver troubles. Count Hatzfeldt passed on to Lord Salisbury information that General Caprivi had acquired. A Russian expedition of three hundred cavalry and three hundred infantry had been ordered to the Pamirs to take the territory which controlled the passes through the mountains into India. Lord Salisbury thanked Hatzfeldt for the communication, but he very seriously doubted its veracity. Still, after consultations with the India Office and the Director of Military Intelligence, he decided to put the rumour before Giers with a few words added to convey the impression that the report had reached British authorities through an Eastern source.

Mr. Howard, who was in charge of the Embassy in Morier's absence, brought the question to the attention of Chichkine, the Russian Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs. Chichkine said, "positively," that there was "absolutely no foundation for the rumour." When Giers returned from Finland, however, the assurances were less categorical.

A small force was proceeding to that region, but only eighty men were involved and they were going to shoot big game.

Foreign Office to India Office, Secret, 16 July 1891. F.O. 65/1415.
2 Director of Military Intelligence to Foreign Office and minute by Salisbury, Secret, 27 July 1891. F.O. 65/1415.
3 Howard to Salisbury, No. 34, Decypher telegram, 30 July 1891. F.O. 65/1415.
4 Howard to Salisbury, No. 35, Decypher telegram, 5 August 1891; Same to same, No. 212, Secret, 19 August 1891. F.O. 65/1415.
Within a few days the Viceroy telegraphed that Captain Francis Younghusband, who had been investigating the extent of Chinese authority in the Pamirs, had contacted the Russian party. In the beginning he was received cordially, but shortly thereafter he was informed by the Colonel in command that the Governor-General of Turkestan had decided to annex the region. Captain Younghusband's expulsion from the "newly acquired Russian territory" rapidly ensued, and his colleague, Lieutenant Davison, was seized and held temporarily.

Indignation swept through the British Foreign Office. Mr. Howard was instructed to recapitulate the various phases through which the episode had passed—from "no foundation," to game shooting, to the acquisition of territory—and explanations were requested. Giers listened to the recital sympathetically, and insisted that there must be some "great misunderstanding." He did not, however, divulge any information which would clarify it. The continued reports of Russian

1 Telegram from the Viceroy, 28 August 1891. F.O. 65/11:15.


4 Howard to Salisbury, No. 42, 16 September 1891. F.O. 65/11:15.
probing actions and excursions into territory considered under British protection threatened to produce a serious crisis. Lord Salisbury, anxious that Morier should fully understand the views of the Government before he returned to St. Petersburgh, consulted with the India Office and the War Office before he drew up precise instructions.

The Morier-Giers combination, however, found no immediate solution to the difficulty. Giers, ill and the victim of rivalry within his own department, was no longer a pleasant person with whom to deal, and Morier's reports of these negotiations are strikingly different from those in former days. When he asked for an explanation of the proceedings in Central Asia, the reply returned was denounced as "so crude, so unfriendly, and so inconceivably fatuous." The Russian note, he said, possessed the qualities of "arrogance, superficiality, contempt for facts, and offensive self-assertion which we might expect in a missive of the Czar to the Amir of Bokhara." When his efforts with Giers proved unsuccessful, Morier discussed the crisis with Monsieur Wishnegradski, the Russian Minister of Finance. Morier rarely resorted to a threatening tone, but in the Pamirs dispute he spared

1 Foreign Office to India Office, Secret, 3 November 1891. F.O. 65/1417.

2 Morier to Salisbury, No. 97, 10 May 1891. F.O. 65/1437.
Same to same, Private, 28 January 1892. Bound volume, Russia, I, Pt Salisbury Papers.

no one. If an apology were not forthcoming, he would leave St. Petersburgh. A partial break in relations would necessitate the publication of a Blue Book, into which, Morier warned, certain damaging revelations about the precarious state of Russian finance might find their way. But he told Lord Salisbury privately: "They not only dare not risk war, but they dare not risk the faintest rumour of war because it would bring about an immediate collapse in their finances and this when the back of the country is broken with this terrible famine." The almost militant representations were effective, and Staal delivered a vague apology to Lord Salisbury. This was later reinforced by a more specific repudiation from Giers to Morier, and by the Emperor's admission that the proceedings had been "illegal and regrettable."

In the summer of 1892, however, Lord Salisbury's long ministry came to an end. The flames of the Pamirs dispute were dying back, but

One of Morier's greatest assets was his skill in diagnosing the forces at work within Russia. His dispatches on the internal situation and his analyses of the people with whom he dealt were often endorsed "candid" or "interesting." See for example minutes on Morier to Salisbury, No. 2h, Confidential, 26 January 1887. F.O. 65/1295. Same to same, No. 92, 21 March 1887. F.O. 65/1296.

2 Morier to Salisbury, Private, 28 January 1892.Bound volume, Russia, I, Pte Salisbury Papers.


4 Morier to Salisbury, No. 98, Secret, 10 May 1892. F.O. 65/1438.
Lord Rosebery still found it one of the three "most pressing" issues with which he had to deal. For several months preceding the Conservative defeat the problems connected with Persia had been subordinated to the more acute controversies about the high plateau further east in Central Asia. Lord Salisbury's last significant pronouncements on Persian policy were contained in his letters to the Viceroy and to Lascelles in October, 1891. In both of these communications, he maintained that a serious gap existed in Indian defence plans, Persia constituted that gap. The importance of the country from Lord Salisbury's point of view is summarized in his own words to Lascelles:

That Russia should seduce Afghanistan from her alliance, or that she should occupy one or more important positions in the country, & that she should, from these, operate upon the allegiance of the people of India, has been a danger ever present to the mind of the Indian Government, & all their precautions have been directed to avert it. But I do not think they have done wisely to neglect the Persian dangers to the extent to which they have done. The same circumstances & motives which might carry Russia into Afghanistan, might, if she finds it too dangerous a venture, carry her into Persia. A successful occupation of Persia, reducing it to Russian vassalage, using & improving all its vast resources, & preparing them for that base for a further move Eastward, would be a policy that might attract a Russian Government, & might be very menacing to India. It can only really be frustrated by the construction of railways from the coast or the mountains, from Quetta, Kurrachi or Gwadah, which should carry troops up to within striking distance of Meshed. But to any policy of this kind the Indian Government is at present very averse, partly because it is at variance with recent traditions, partly because it involves financial burdens which at present they are in no condition to bear. I cannot but hope that they will see the mistake they are committing of

neglecting this great danger, & the remedies which are required to meet it. But in the meantime we on our side must do what we can in a similar direction...

Throughout the years 1885 to 1892, his two main principles in Persian policy were to encourage internal reform and to build railways. With regard to the former, success did not come during his own lifetime. Conditions within Persia worsened steadily throughout the decade of the nineties, and the deep-seated popular discontent revealed itself in the assassination of Shah Nasr-ed-din in 1896. Improvement did not follow his removal, however, since the last of the Kajars were a wretched lot indeed. They sacrificed their country's remaining resources for paltry sums of money, and virtually completed the thraldom to Russia through two disastrous loans. Nevertheless, the events of 1905 and 1906 proved that reform in Persia was something more than a high sounding and impractical ideal.

Railways seemed even more distant than reform. The restrictive treaty with Russia was again renewed and did not expire until shortly before the outbreak of the first World War. Lord Salisbury had envisaged two possible lines—from India to Seistan through Quetta and Nushki and from the Gulf to Tehran. The former was one of the favourite projects of Indian military authorities. Lord Roberts wrote in 1889:

We should be in a very different position if we had a railway to Kandahar, or what would be still better, to Seistan, with material ready to extend the line towards Meshed

1 Salisbury to Lascelles, Private, 6 October 1891. Bound volume, Persia, II, Pte Salisbury Papers.
in one direction, and the Persian Gulf in the other.

At the turn of the century the Cabinet decided to develop the route from India and Baluchistan to Seistan and on to Meshed—first as a trade route and later as a railway. By 1901, Lord George Hamilton could describe the Nushki-Seistan scheme as "a great success." In India, Lord Curzon planned, in accordance with "Lord Salisbury's ideas, to push on the line in the direction of Seistan itself," and by 1905, the Quetta-Nushki branch of the railway was completed. With regard to the line from the Gulf to Tehran, however, no progress was made until the present century when Reza Shah Pahlavi promoted its construction. The quantity of supplies which passed through Persia from 1941 to 1945 testifies to the practicability of the route as a means of reaching Russia.

1 Roberts to Salisbury, Private, 5 September 1889. Loose papers, Pte, Salisbury Papers.

2 Hamilton to Curzon, Private, 21 June 1901; Same to same, 27 June 1901. Private Correspondence, India, Part II, Vol. VI, Pte Hamilton Papers, India Office Library.

APPENDIX I

SIR PHILIP CURRIE'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH COUNT HERBERT AND PRINCE OTTO VON BISMARCK IN THE AUTUMN OF 1885.

Hamburg, 4 August 1885

Dear Lord Salisbury

I am staying here to drink the waters and have fallen in with Herbert Bismarck, who is at Königsstein, a few miles from this place. Being aware, from recent conversations, of your views as to the possibility of arriving at a settlement of the Zulfiqar difficulty through the intervention of Prince Bismarck, I thought it might be useful if I spoke to his son in that sense. I accordingly explained to him how matters stand, & how the discussion is now narrowed to the single point of the Zulfiqar Pass: I pointed out the danger to the peace of the world of leaving things in a state which may at any moment produce a rupture between England & Russia, and asked him whether it would be possible to induce the Prince to arbitrate upon the interpretation to be given to the words of M. de Giers's Telegram of April 16 in which he agreed to the exchange of Zulfiqar for Penjdeh. I referred to the position of Prince Bismarck, which made him practically the arbiter of the destinies of Europe, and to the certainty that any assistance he might give us in coming to a settlement, would establish a claim on the gratitude of the English nation and would lead in the future to a closer union between Germany & England.

Count Herbert listened to what I said with much attention, but expressed unwillingness to make any communication to his father on the subject, at a time when he was holiday making, and had been for some weeks absent from Berlin. He did not think the Prince would approve of his doing so. He asked why a communication could not be made through Malet who is on the point of returning to Germany. I said that I thought you would be very glad to know privately in the first instance how such a communication would be received; that if made through our Ambassador, however confidentially, it would assume to a certain extent, an official form, and that therefore I ventured to ask him to write to the Chancellor & sound him on the subject.

After some discussion he agreed to do so, but said he must warn me that the answer would probably be that the proposal must come through the ordinary channels. According to his experience of his father, he would not enter into the question on any other footing. I asked him to use his influence, and to try & get at any rate some indication as to the reception the proposal would
meet if made confidentially through the Ambassador.

Count Herbert then spoke generally of the question. He did
not believe in the probability of a rupture, thought the Russians
had no present intention of advancing on Herat, & that the Afghans
were in much greater force on the frontier than they were. He
doubted Russia agreeing to arbitration as to Zulfiyar. It was a
question of prestige. The Emperor had taken the matter into his
own hands & for the first time had gained some popularity by being
supposed to have shown more firmness than his Ministers. He would
wish to confirm this reputation & was vain of his diplomatic tri-
umph.

Count Herbert entirely concurred as to the value of a close
alliance between England & Germany. He said the German Gover-
ment had always held the same view, but that the irritating policy
of the late Cabinet had been impossible to understand. He referred
to his last visit to England when he had reminded Lord Granville
of the proposals he had made on a former occasion for an agreement as
to Colonial questions. Lord Granville had at first denied that
they had ever been made, but on Count Herbert repeating the words
he had used, admitted that something had been said, but that he had
not fully understood it. He had added that he was not conversant
with Colonial questions, and had suggested that Count Herbert should
have conversations with Lord Kimberley & Lord Derby. Count Her-
bert replied that he had not come to hold conferences, but to dis-
cuss the matter with the foreign minister. There was no danger, he
said, of such misunderstandings under the present Government.
Your thorough knowledge of foreign questions would prevent them,
and if difficulties arose, you would look into them yourself.

In the course of the conversation as to the suggested arbitra-
tion, Count Herbert said that his father might be unwilling to under-
take the task from fear of irritating public opinion in England if
the decision were unfavorable. In Russia, if the Emperor was
satisfied, there was nothing more to be thought of, but in England
with our parliament & free press, a solution might satisfy the Cabi-
ett & yet be badly received by the Country. Lord Rosebery, who is
staying here, had told him that the question was one about which
there was a very strong feeling in England. Count Münster had re-
ported that Sir Charles Dilke had used similar language at a dinner
at which you were present. I said that the feeling against fur-
ther concessions to Russia was no doubt very strong, but there was
also a great desire for the settlement of the question, and I did
not believe that a decision fairly & impartially given, even if it
proved adverse, would cause any irritation in England against the
 Arbitrator.

Count Herbert mentioned incidentally that if arbitration were
to take place, the Emperor as Head of the State would have to be
the nominal arbitrator.
He believed his father's view was that it was better that the sovereigns of the smaller states should arbitrate between the Great Powers, as the latter had common or conflicting interests on so many points that it was difficult for them to appear quite impartial judges between two of their own number.

Ever dear Lord Salisbury
Yours very truly,
Philip W. Currie

P.S. I inclose a copy of a short résumé, which I had prepared before seeing Count Herbert, of what I proposed saying to him, and which I gave him to read.

Copy of paper shewn to Count Herbert Bismarck at Königstein. 3 August 1885.

The Afghan [sic] boundary negotiations have come to a deadlock on the question as to how much of Zulficar Pass is to be given to Afghanistan. The Russian Government undertook, before Lord Salisbury came into office, to exchange Zulficar for Penjdeh. The Ameer was formally promised that he would have the Zulficar Pass and agreed to a boundary traced on that basis.

Our officers are unanimously of opinion that the pass extends to a point 9 or 10 verses from the Heri Rud marked C upon the map. The Russians will only give the first portion of the pass (about 3 verses of it) and object to ceding the remainder on the ground that it would interfere with the communications on their side of the frontier.

The position is critical and, if a settlement is not arrived at within the next few months, is very likely to lead to war. The Russian Commanders are enterprising and are eager for a dash at Herat. The Afghans are rash, and another Penjdeh affair may occur at any moment. Either of these contingencies would inevitably produce a rupture between England & Russia, which would lead to hostilities, not only in Central Asia, but in every part of the world where England could deal a blow at her antagonist. The point on which we should concentrate the greatest part of our energies would be the cutting of the communications between Russia and her Central Asian possessions. For this it would be an absolute necessity for us to obtain an entrance to the Black Sea for our ships, and this we should unquestionably do by some means or other, whatever view Europe might hold as to the localisation of the war.

In order to avert this calamity, the only plan seems to be to make an appeal to Prince Bismarck to mediate between the 2 Countries. The questions at issue being now reduced to the one point of Zulficar, all that would be required to bring about a settlement, would be that [sic] His Highness should adjudicate upon the interpretation
of the words of M. de Giers's Telegram of April 16 agreeing to cede Zulficar in exchange for Penjdeh. We could lay before him the evidence of our officers as to what is included in the Zulficar Pass. The Russians might do the same. Or if the Prince thought it necessary, he might send a German officer to the spot to decide the question. In making this appeal to the Prince, stress might be laid upon the unprecedented position which he occupies in Europe, which has made him practically the arbiter of the destinies of other nations. The constant and unswerving desire for the maintenance of Peace which he has shown, his moderation and justice towards other Countries, inspire confidence that his intervention (if he would give it) would be exercised with perfect fairness. The English people trust him and would be satisfied with his verdict. It is not likely that in Russia, where it is believed that (outside the ranks of the military party) a sincere desire exists for peace, his judgment would be questioned. The Prince would be adding lustre to his renown, and it would not be the least of his great achievements that his moderating & pacific influence should have secured peace between two of the great Powers of Europe, when all other hopes of agreement had failed.

If he were to effect this, he would secure for himself and his Country the lasting gratitude of England, and he would be laying the foundations of a closer and more intimate alliance between the two Countries.

The present Prime Minister of England is known to be favorable to such an alliance in the fullest sense of the terms, and once established, the English people, who have the strongest leaning towards their old Protestant ally, would not allow their Government (from whatever party it might be taken) to swerve from it. A close union between the greatest military power and the greatest naval power would produce a combination that would not only secure the peace of the world, but would also be in the highest degree advantageous to the interests of the two Countries. It would put Germany at ease as regards the safety of her Colonial possessions in the event of European complications, and it would leave England free to defend her interests in the event of unprovoked aggression on the part of Russia against her Indian Empire, without fear of hostile neutrality on the part of the European Powers.

Hamburg, 7 August 1885
Private

Dear Lord Salisbury,

Jocelyn was away from Darmstadt for a few days so I was not able to send you a telegram: but forwarded the figures to Arlington Street by post. I now take advantage of the monthly messenger
who leaves on the 9th to send you a written report of my interview with Herbert Bismarck. He was very cordial & friendly, spoke of his respect & regard for you in the warmest terms, and said that he felt flattered at your wishing to make the communication through him.

But he was evidently afraid of a snub from his father. When I asked him to use his influence, he said 'no one has any influence with my father---'. The only point that seemed rather to surprise him in the paper I showed him was the declaration that we must & should go into the Black Sea in case of war with Russia. He said 'but it is closed by a Treaty to which all the Powers of Europe are parties.' I said 'not if the Porte invited us in' and that they could not expect us to make war with one arm tied behind our backs. He read the paper carefully through 3 or 4 times. Our conversation lasted for some hours & I argued thru every point with him at length, but I think I have given you the gist of all that he said of importance. A telegram to Jocelyn Darmstadt would reach me at once, as he is now here and it would be forwarded. I propose to stay here till next Thursday evening the 13th by which time an answer will I hope have arrived. I then return to England & take a week's holiday before returning to work at the Foreign Office.

Yours very truly,
Philip W. Currie

Hamburg, 9 August 1885
Private and Confidential

Dear Lord Salisbury

With reference to what Herbert Bismarck said as to the Prince's readiness to state his views to one of your Colleagues or a person in your confidence, I asked him if he thought it would be well for me to go to Varzin at once & see the Prince. He said that he thought there would be a better opportunity of doing so a month hence when the Prince would move to Friederichsruehe, which was more accessible, being on the railway between Hamburg and Berlin, and where the visit of an Englishman would excite less observation. It was then he said that Count Schouvaloff had twice visited his father before the Berlin Congress, and a Cardinal had once been entertained there and had come down to dinner in a red suit, without the fact becoming known.

Nothing could be more friendly than Herbert's manner and he seems really fond of his English friends of whom there are many here.

I propose to leave on Thursday morning unless I hear from you to the contrary. I have sent off a telegram, containing the substance of my letters, this morning.

Yours very truly,
P. W. Currie
Dear Lord Salisbury

Herbert Bismarck came over yesterday from Königstein & brought an English translation which he had made of his father's answer, and which he allowed me to read. I regret to say that it was unfavorable, though couched in the most friendly terms. It had been dictated by the Prince to his son in law M. de Rautzow, and was a lengthy document filling nearly two sheets of foolscap.

It began by stating that the Prince was flattered at your having made the communication to him, and that he would have been very glad to do what he could to promote good relations and peace between England & Russia, but doubted whether the course suggested would have that effect. He could not undertake arbitration unless it was also proposed by Russia in concert with England; and this was unlikely as Russia had already shown her dislike to German arbitration when the Penjdeh affair was under discussion.

The Prince was of opinion that the object of Russia in prolonging the negotiations was to gain time until she was better prepared and her railroads completed. He was more inclined, than Lord Salisbury seemed to be, to think that Russia intended a further advance, and if this was the case, she would be unwilling to agree to German arbitration, which might have the effect of depriving her of the further acquisitions to which she was looking forward.

The Prince had at one time thought that the object of Mr. Gladstone's Government was to engage in war with Russia in order to conciliate the public opinion of England which had been alienated by the blunders of his foreign policy. His Highness now believed that the Russian Government might be inclined to push matters on with a view of combating the Miliilism which was on the increase in the Russian army.

Any declaration made by the Prince of his willingness to arbitrate between England & Russia would be construed as pressure on the part of Germany on Russia. The Prince thought that arbitrations between the Great Powers should be conducted by the Sovereigns of the smaller States. Otherwise they tended to produce bad blood between the arbitrary state & the disputants. It was the interest of Germany to be on good & friendly terms both with England & Russia, & arbitration would be sure to alienate one if not both of them. The two parties to a law suit were invariably each convinced of the justice of their respective claims; & the one against which judgment was given always thought that an unfair view had been taken of his case. It was the same in disputes between nations. The arbitrator would suffer from the annoyance felt by the defeated party.

The Prince thought that the question might be examined by experts (This was not clearly explained, but I understood that he meant English and Russian experts, which would agree with M de Staal's last
If Germany he undertook arbitration and decided against Russia, the Russian press would at once commence a crusade against Germany, and it was not sure that it would not provoke Russian hostility, even if he decided in their favor. He referred to the Berlin Congress as a case in point, when he had supported all that he understood Russia to want, and had then been violently attacked for preventing Russia from continuing the war & depriving her of the advantages which, it was pretended, she might have gained in a further campaign, although she would have had (as Herbert Bismarck added) England and Austria against her as well as Turkey.

The Prince added that if he decided against England, public opinion there would probably resent it, and his arbitration might then do the present Government more harm than good. He believed that Mr. Gladstone's Government had been upset in consequence of the failure of their foreign policy, and a defeat on the Zulficar question might lead to a downfall of the present administration.

The Prince concluded by saying that he was most anxious to please Lord Salisbury personally and that he desired strongly to comply with his request, but that the interests of Germany did not allow him to do so, and that Lord Salisbury as a patriotic statesman, would understand that they must be his first care.

After I had read the letter of which the above is a summary, Count Herbert said that M. de Rautzau, who was acting as his father's secretary at Varzin, had written him a private letter containing in still stronger terms the friendly feeling of Prince Bismarck towards Lord Salisbury's Government & stating his readiness to assist them as much as he could in Turkey, Egypt & elsewhere abroad, and his wish that he was able to do so equally at home (i.e. in England). The Prince was pleased at the communication having been made through a strictly private channel as it enabled him to answer without reserve, and dispensed him from communicating with the Emperor. The fact of its having been made would be known only to the Prince, his son in law and Count Herbert. The Count said that in writing to his father he had mentioned that I had expressed a hope that his answer would give some indication of the reception his view of the suggested arbitration, in the event of his referring saying that it must come through the usual channel (see my letter of Aug/ust 14). Prince Bismarck appears to have understood this as a request for an expression of his views generally on the question, and M. de Rautzau wrote that although the Prince would not like to put them on paper, he would be willing to state them "between 4 eyes" if he saw a colleague or confidential agent of Lord Salisbury.

In the course of our conversation Herbert Bismarck repeated still more emphatically what he had said at our previous interview as to the difficulty of a settlement being increased by the fact that the Emperor of Russia was dealing with the boundary question
himself, & having been lauded up to the skies by his courtiers for his supposed diplomatic triumph, was now persuaded that he was the first diplomatist of the age. He also said that according to the reports received from Russia at Berlin, Nihilism was much on the increase in the navy, line regiments & artillery. In the two last named services it was especially due to the partiality shewn to the officers of the Imperial guard, to whom the commands of all regiments were given, while the line officers never rose above the command of a battalion. Herbert Bismarck's line towards Russia was one of bitterness & dislike. I suspect that in this as in other things he shares his father's opinions, but (as he said) "what we have to think of is the danger of a coalition against us of Russia and France," and it is the fear of such an eventuality which determines the Prince to do nothing that might fan into a flame the smouldering hatred of the Russian nation against Germany. He is convinced that his interference in the Afghan quarrel would have this effect and for the present I do not believe that anything would turn him from his resolution to stand aloof from it.

"The water" said Herbert "is too hot for us to put our finger in."

Yours very truly,

Philip W. Currie

21 September 1885

Dear Lord Salisbury

I have received the inclosed today from Herbert Bismarck proposing that I should go to Friedricksruhe on Saturday next, & giving me all directions via Flushing. If you would like to see me first, I ought, I suppose, to start for Dieppe on Friday morning & after seeing you, go on to Paris by an evening train so as to be in time to go from Paris on Saturday. I have failed in discovering in a foreign Bradshaw when the trains go from Paris to Hamburg or how long they take. Perhaps you could kindly have this looked out in an indicator as I ought to let Herbert Bismarck know at once ---at what hour I should arrive at Friedricksruhe---The boat leaves Newhaven at 9 on Friday morning so that I should be with you in good time. Will you write me a letter desiring me to come over to Dieppe for a few days on business which will serve as my reason for going away. I think it might be best to ask Pancefote to come Lister will have to remain in sole charge, unless you think it woulde be worth while asking Pancefote to come up for a few days from Christchurch.

Ever yours truly,

Philip W. Currie
Notes of conversations with Prince Bismarck at Friedtherkuhe.
28 September 1885

For Lord Salisbury

Notes of my visit to Friedtherkuhe [sic]. September 1885. Secret.

In the morning I walked with the Prince alone.

He said that he was glad to have an opportunity of talking openly with a person in the confidence of Lord Salisbury though he regretted that this conversation did not follow the elections instead of preceding them. Though he hoped that the present Government would remain in office it was possible that Mr. Gladstone might become Prime Minister again & he was a man who had no knowledge of foreign affairs & with whom it was impossible to do business.

But what he was about to say had reference to England as a nation.

Friendship with England had been the traditional policy of Prussia. The first thing that had interrupted it was the conduct of England during the Franco German War—Her neutrality had a leaning on the French side, and this the German nation had not forgiven. Later had come the Colonial questions. But the policy which he had pursued and which had been considered as unfriendly to England was related only to questions where England & France were at variance and he had sided with France in order to try and extinguish the animosity of that country against Germany. He had thought, (mistakenly, as he now saw) that in time it would be possible for France to be so far reconciled to Germany that she would give up seeking constantly for an opportunity of revenge—Such had been the case after Waterloo, & France which had been on the most hostile terms with England in 1810 had been close friends with her 10 years later.

With this view he had humored and made love to the French. He had helped them in Egypt & Madagascar and had indulged them in the Congo affair. He had persevered in this policy for 15 years, but it had entirely failed and he had now finally made up his mind that he had been following a wild goose chase. The game was beyond his power to catch. All his efforts had been thrown away & France was as ready to seize any opportunity of attacking Germany as ever. The Spanish affair had been the last drop in the balance which had decided him. He now washed his hands of France and was prepared to side with England in questions between the 2 Countries. There were now no points of difference between England & Germany. As far as the Colonies went, he had got all he wanted, and more than he believed Germany could digest. He had never favored the Colonial idea himself, but opinion in Germany ran so strongly in favor of Colonial enterprise that he could not resist it, or rather that he could not refrain from turning the Colonial stream into the main channel of his Parliamentary policy. He would support England against France, and if ever the differences between the two Countries were pushed to the brink of war, he would not allow the war to take place. It was impossible for the French
to engage in war with a power like England without being secured on her Eastern frontier and that security he would not give her. A war between England & France would in no case be favorable to German interests. If England was victorious, it would leave things no better than they were at present. If France conquered by invading England, the balance of Power in Europe would be permanently disturbed, and France might ally herself with Russia against Germany.

The only other Power with which we were likely to come in conflict was Russia and in that case he could only promise us neutrality. He considered that for Germany a war with Russia was much more serious than with France. Even however victorious the German armies might be it would take a very long time to bring Russia to terms. The Country would not support an invading army, the villages were mere wood shacks, unfit to lodge troops and the experience of Charles XII and Napoleon showed the difficulties to be contended with. He wished France and England to remain at peace, as a quarrel between two of one’s friends was always disagreeable, but his chief preoccupation must be to prevent a quarrel between Russia & Austria. The dam which he had built up between them burst on the average once a year, and then he had, like a bricklayer, to patch it up.

If Russia & Austria went to war & Germany remained neutral, the losing Power would have an undying hatred for her, and would look out for opportunities of revenge. He could not say which side would win, ‘perhaps Russia,’ but the result, if Austria lost, would be her total annihilation or her falling under the influence of Russia who might purchase her alliance by territorial concessions. Neither alternative would suit him. He would not annex the German provinces of Austria—there were too many discordant nationalities in them & too many Catholics and the unity of Germany would be impaired by such an accession of hostile elements. On the other hand, he could not have Russia at Vienna.

With reference to his promise of neutrality between Russia & England, I asked if the assurance given to the former that German & Austrian influence would be exerted to prevent Turkey opening the Straits to us was not a departure from strict neutrality and an encouragement to Russia to persevere in an aggressive policy against us.

The Prince defended himself rather lamely: said that Russia had asked his opinion whether Turkey would be justified in admitting the English fleet, and he had been obliged to answer that he considered that she had no right to do so unless herself a belligerent. It was a question he said of existing treaties.

The Prince expressed pleasure at our having come to an arrangement with Russia and hoped that it would be lasting. I said that even if it were not it had given us time to prepare and that Lord Salisbury believed that in a few months we should be in such a position that we need not fear a Russian advance.

At 11 o'clock we sat down to a repast of peaches & grapes which is part of the 'regime' which the Prince is following—-
He talked about the Bulgarian question: He observed that in ordinary times Russia desired the union & Austria opposed it: but now the case was reversed. The Russians would like to undo it, if by this means Prince Alexander whom they hated could be got rid of. The Austrians on the other hand seemed disposed to agree to it, and to look upon it as the best means of maintaining tranquillity in the Balkan peninsula.

The Prince said that his principal object must be to prevent the affair from leading to a quarrel between Austria & Russia, but that he had not made up his mind what would be the best arrangement. The Turks had lost the favorable moment for intervening. (I understood from Count Herbert Bismarck that the Prince had advised the Sultan through the Turkish Ambassador at Berlin to take this course but that the Sultan had telegraphed a second time for a confirmation of the advice and that the Prince had then declined to renew it).

The Prince said he did not know Lord Salisbury's views. I said that your view was that as the Turks had not taken action and did not appear disposed to do so, the union could not be undone. But you attached importance to the maintenance of distinct constitutions in Bulgaria & Eastern Roumelia. You thought the Bulgarian Constitution unworkable & considered that the existence of the two different constitutions might enable the Prince to play off one part of his dominions against another and would thus give him see more security to his position. You also thought that Austria should declare her intention of not allowing the movement to spread to Macedonia. The Prince appeared to agree in these views & said that Austria had already done what she could in regard to Macedonia.

At 1 we met at luncheon. Count Rautzow, the Prince's son in law & secretary being present. The Prince talked again of the Bulgarian question. He thought a solution might perhaps be found if the Porte nominated Prince Alexander Governor General of Eastern Roumelia. He did not know if Russia would consent on account of her dislike of the Prince. I asked how the Bulgarians would be induced to agree. Would they do so merely out of deference to the will of Europe? He suggested that the Servians, who were burning for the fray, might be used as an instrument of pressure. The Servian army he said was much better than the Bulgarian and the threat of letting them loose on them might bring the Bulgarians to reason. With regard to Macedonia he observed that not more than 1/3 of the population were Bulgarian. In the South they were Greeks, in the west Bulgarians Albanians. Austria was uneasy about Servia and felt obliged to give her her head to a certain extent, from fear that King Milan might lose his throne if he did not comply with the wishes of his subjects, or that the Servians might throw themselves into the arms of Russia.

He then referred to the suggestion he made to Males as to sending the English fleet to Athens. I said you objected to do this as an isolated act which might be misconstrued, but that I believed you
would be willing, if a general plan of proceeding was concerted, to put pressure upon Greece in the interests of general peace: but, nationality for nationality, you were on the side of the Greeks. The Prince explained that he had thought that the presence of one or two English ships at Piraeus would be a visible sign to the excited populations that Europe had its eye on their proceedings. He did not however press the point. He alluded again to the hatred felt against Prince Alexander by the Russians who went so far as to bring disgraceful charges against him.

At dinner the conversation did not turn on politics, but after it was over the Prince sat down to a large China pipe of which four were ready filled for him & which he smoked in succession.

He observed that there were some people in Austria who wished to substitute for the treaty between Austria & Germany a law to be passed in each Country, by which their alliance would become an essential part of the Constitution of both states. He explained that the object would be that the union of the two Countries would not terminate with the expiration of the Treaty and would not be dependent on the will of the Sovereigns, but would continue until the law was repealed by the respective Parliaments. He went on to say that a Treaty with England was an uncertain thing, as with a change of Ministry it might no longer be considered binding. I said that in England Treaties concluded under one Government were equally binding on their successor and asked if he thought England less faithful to Treaties than other nations.

He answered that he would not say that, but there was the Luxemburg Treaty which was no sooner signed than it was explained away by the Minister of the day. Would England fight if Belgium were attacked?

I said, no doubt, if she had an ally and reminded him of the steps taken by Mr. Gladstone's Gov[ernment] to secure the neutrality of Belgium in 1870. He said 'Yes but new Treaties were thought necessary.'

I said that ever since I had been in the Foreign Office Belgium and Constantinople had been looked upon as questions about which England would fight, and though she might not now be prepared to engage in a war with Russia for the latter object unsupported, she would no doubt do so if other Powers would join her.

He said the feeling in Austria was that she could not count no reliance could be placed on the support of England. Mr. Gladstone had denounced the Austrian Government & thrown over their Austrian alliance & this might happen again. I said I was not going to defend Mr. Gladstone's declaration against Austria, but it was made when he was out of office, and did not apply to the question of a Russian attack on Cons/ tantinople but to the supposed intention of Austria to interfere with the emancipation of the Christians in the Balkan States from Turkish rule. I thought that even Mr. Gladstone would act with Austria in opposing the Russian occupation of Cons/ tantinople. The Prince referred to Mr. Gladstone's visit to the Emperor of Russia at Copenhagen as having increased the distrust of his intentions felt in Austria.
We then had a long discussion as to the result of Russia obtaining possession of Constantinople. He maintained that it would do no harm to any one except Russia herself, who would be weakened by the extension of her line of defence and would become more vulnerable. The strength of Russia, he said, consisted entirely in the millions of peasants inhabiting Russia proper and in their devotion to the Czar who lived in the midst of them. If he moved his residence from Petersbourg & Moscow the whole thing would fall to pieces. Constantinople could therefore only be an outpost of the Empire. Even if the Emperor went too often to Copenhagen, he might hear one day that a catastrophe like the one in Eastern Roumelia had happened during his absence. The Country was full of secret societies: there were many nihilists in the army: the peasants were discontented on account of the unfair way in which their lands were redistributed every 2 or 3 years under the Communal system: enormous corruption prevailed everywhere. He did not believe that the present Government in Russia had as much stability as even the French Republic. If Russia was not on the frontiers of his Country, he should not trouble himself about her at all. But he dreaded a war with her, not because he doubted the success of the German arms, but because it would be impossible to bring the war to a speedy termination, owing to the nature of the Country. In attack, Russia was despicable: She would have been beaten by the Turks in the last war if she had not bribed the Turkish Generals, and Osman Pasha, was had been overlooked whom by inadvertence they had omitted to buy, had repeatedly defeated them at Plevna.

But she was not vulnerable to attack. He admitted that he could not get the Austrians to agree with him as to the unimportance of the acquisition of Constantinople by Russia, but said that people in Germany who had thoroughly studied the question took his view.

Austria would no doubt be disposed to resist the advance of Russia if she could count on the alliance of England. I said it was difficult for any one who had been brought up in the English view of foreign policy to admit that the possession of Constantinople by Russia would not be a misfortune for the rest of Europe. Surely her increase of prestige and the stimulus it would give to her energies would alone be a menace to Germany and still more to Austria, while it would inevitably bring the Slav populations of the Balkan peninsula under her rule. As far as England was concerned the evil result was perhaps confined to the loss of the only vulnerable point where we could strike at Russia in the event of her attacking India and by occupying the Black Sea with our fleet could cut her communication in the Caucasus.

He would not admit that it would strengthen Russia in any way. She had already more population than she could manage. She was obligated to keep up enormous forces in her provinces and in Poland, and if she held Constantinople, would have to keep at least 200,000 men
there. Russia could never become a formidable naval power. He had said this to the Emperor of the French who had observed to him (I think in 1867) that if Russia held Constantinople the preponderance of France in the Mediterranean would be in danger, as Russia would acquire a Greek maritime population to man her navy. Russia therefore would not, owing to her possession of the Dardanelles, become dangerous to England as a rival Naval Power. As to the Black Sea being a vulnerable point, that was all a mistake. Nothing could be done in the Caucasus. The independence of the Country had been entirely destroyed and the tribes broken up and defeated. The road to Central Asia was down the Volga and across the Caspian, not through the Caucasus. It would be easier to stir up an insurrection in Poland than in Circassia. The Baltic was more vulnerable than the Black Sea. Our fleet could do nothing more than bombard Odessa & clear the Sea of Russian shipping, neither of which measures would injure Russian trade, which (as he knew to his cost) took the inland route, the railways flooding Germany with cheap corn.

I pressed him on this question of the Russian possession of Constantinople in the hope of discovering what his real intentions are in the matter. He gave me the impression of having labored, with only partial success, to convince himself that Germany could stand aside and leave Constantinople either to fall into Russian hands, or to be kept out of them by an Anglo-Austrian alliance.

His language occasionally betrays distrust of Austria. Towards Russia his tone is one of dislike & contempt & he dwells with pleasure on stories of Russian corruption, and dishonesty.

The conversation then turned to Egypt. He said the existence of the Canal made it essential for England to hold the Country. I asked if our naval superiority would not enable us to secure the use of the Canal in time of war. He said that was not enough as the banks might be occupied & the canal blocked. By the explosion.

I said that your view was that our occupation should not be permanent, but that you could not fix a date for evacuation, and that you considered that we ought to retain a privileged position, and that the task of sending troops if necessary to restore order should be confided to us. Did he think that the Powers would agree to our having such a position? He said he saw no reason why the German Powers should object. Russia or France might do so, and our danger would be that Turkish troops supported by Russia, or the French fleet might arrive before us.---I said your idea was that we might have troops in Cyprus for the purpose. He said that our principal difficulty would no doubt be with France, but we need not so much mind her, as she could not go to war with us, without security on her Eastern frontier which he did not intend to give her. I spoke of the efforts we had made and were making to improve the condition of the people. He seemed to look upon this rather as an amiable weakness on our part, and said that in Egypt they complained that we had abolished the combash & that the peasants
would not work.

September 29

The Prince came to my room in the morning & mentioned that Count Münster would be recalled & would be succeeded by Count Hatzfeldt. The latter was the diplomatist he had most confidence in and his selection for the post was due to the Prince's wish to establish real & intimate relations with England. Count Münster he said was a worthy honest man but was always riding & driving & did not attend properly to business. In mentioning that Count Münster was appointed to Paris he said that it did not much matter who the German Representative there was, now that he had washed his hands of France the attempt given up any idea of improving the relations of Germany with France.

The Prince then read me the telegram he had received on the Eastern Roumelian question.

M. de Giers arrived at 11 o'clock to spend the day and in consequence I did not see the Prince alone again except for a short time in his room. When I said that as I might not have another opportunity I wished to tell him that you had charged me to say that if he would state his views on the Bulgarian question you would act with him as far as your position allowed, the difficulties of which he would understand. Italy professed her desire to act entirely with us and you were anxious that as far as possible the 4 Powers should act together. He concurred and said that now that he had broken with France he should find his relations with Italy much more easy.

In the course of conversation the Prince referring to the dispute with Spain about the Caroline Islands said Germany could afford to take no notice of Spanish violence. Her military reputation was not at stake. Once on a time she had been "Fighting Bob," but that was when it was necessary by blood & iron to emerge from the impossible position in which she was placed. She had been hemmed in on all sides & had not room to breathe; but that was all changed now. Germany did not require any more glory & had got all she wanted. She would be foolish to engage in further quarrels.

The Prince said that he was much obliged to you for the assistance you had given him in the question of the Caroline Islands. If an arrangement was come to with Spain through the arbitration of the Pope, which he had proposed, or in any other way, he should stipulate for the same advantage for English commerce as for German commerce. He also intended to invite the United States Government to become a party to the convention on account of their missionary interests in the Islands. He had sounded the United States Minister on the subject.

September 30

I spent the day at Friedricksruhe but did not have much poli-
tical conversation with the Chancellor. In the morning he was at work & during the rest of the day he talked principally on other topics.

With regard to the Bulgarian Question, he was waiting to hear from M. de Giers the result of his interview with the Emperor of Russia at Copenhagen.

When I took leave of the Prince, he spoke very kindly of the pleasure he had felt in seeing me at Friedericksruhe, desired me to convey his best regards to you & said he hoped there would now be the best possible understanding between the 2 Countries. I said I hoped he would not forget to instruct his agents in Egypt to support our Representative. He said that they would certainly do so.

These documents were in a separate bundle entitled "P. Currie's negotiations with Bismarck. 1885." Loose papers, Pte. Salisbury Papers.
APPENDIX II

Extract from: Memorandum respecting the Boundary between Persia and Russia; and the Understanding between Great Britain and Russia as to the Maintenance of the Independence and Integrity of Persia. P.O. 251/57.

The following is the "Understanding" between this country and Russia as to the maintenance of the integrity and independence of Persia.

No formal Treaty or agreement exists by which England and Russia mutually agree to respect the integrity of the Persian territory; but in 1834, on the occasion of the nomination by the Shah of Persia of Mahommed Meerza as his successor, an "Understanding" was come to between the British and Russian Governments on the subject of Persia.

In a despatch to Mr. Bligh, dated 5th September, 1834, Lord Palmerston said: ---

"You will also say that Her Majesty's Government are gratified to find that the Governments of Great Britain and Russia are acting, with regard to the affairs of Persia, in the same spirit, and are equally animated by a sincere desire to maintain, not only the internal tranquillity, but also the independence and integrity of Persia."

In November 1838 Russia alluded to the "happy agreement of views and actions" which the two governments had so much at heart to form in 1834, and a copy of the foregoing despatch, written by Lord Palmerston to Mr. Bligh in September 1834, was forwarded from St. Petersburg to the Russian Ambassador in London, in order that he might show it to Lord Palmerston, with an assurance that the same desire which then influenced the Russian Government to have a friendly understanding with England upon the affairs of Persia still existed, and an expression of regret on the part of Russia that the good understanding which had existed between the Court of London and that of Tehran was disturbed for the time.

Lord Palmerston expressed his entire satisfaction at receiving this declaration that Russian policy with regard to Persia remained unchanged, and that it was the same which the two Powers had agreed to adopt in 1834.

The correspondence of 1834 and 1838 was laid before Parliament in 1839, with other papers relating to the affairs of Persia and Afghanistan, and the passages quoted above are to be found at pages 3, and 191, 192.

This correspondence is also printed in a separate volume in octavo.

In June 1873, the Persian Government inquired what understand-
ing existed between Great Britain and Russia respecting the maintenance of the integrity of Persia, when it was informed of what had passed in 1834 and 1838.

Count Brunnow was also told of the communication which had been made to the Persian Government, at which he expressed his satisfaction.

From: F.O. 60/191

On your departure from England to take up your appointment of Her Majesty’s Envoy at Tehran, it may be convenient that you should be furnished with a brief statement of the principal questions with which you have to deal.

The enclosed copies of correspondence which has passed between this Department and the India Office will place you in possession of the views of Her Majesty’s Government as to the leading features of the policy to be pursued by Great Britain towards Persia.

It is to the interest of this country that the integrity of Persia should be maintained, that its resources should be developed, and that its Government should be strong, independent, and friendly. It is to the promotion of these objects that your attention should be directed, and so long, at least, as there is any reasonable hope of their being realized, the efforts of Her Majesty’s Government would be directed to frustrate any policy incompatible with them.

An understanding exists between this country and Russia as to the maintenance of the integrity and independence of Persia, but it is of a somewhat informal and indefinite nature, consisting mainly of an exchange of assurances in 1834 and 1836 as to the identity of the policy of the two countries in this respect.

The correspondence has been laid before Parliament, and in 1873 the Persian Government, in reply to an inquiry as to the nature of the understanding, was officially informed of it by Her Majesty’s Government, and the Russian Ambassador in London expressed his satisfaction at the communication.

It is to be noticed that when, in 1865, Lord Russell proposed an exchange of declarations with the Russian Government containing an Agreement not to disturb the then state of possession in Central Asia, and also to respect the independence of the Persian Monarchy, to abstain from encroachments upon the territory of Persia, and to act in such a manner as might best support and strengthen the Sovereignty of the Shah, Prince Gortschakoff declined to make a corresponding declaration, alleging the behaviour of the Khan of Bokhara as a ground for not entering into the engagement respecting Central Asia, and remarking that he could not understand the connection between Central Asia and the Persian Monarchy. Lord Russell’s declaration, as regards the latter country, Prince Gortschakoff described as very satisfactory and quite in accordance with the views of the Imperial Government, but he added that he had never suspected Her Majesty’s Government of any intention of encroaching upon the territory of the Shah.
APPENDIX III

THE MARQUIS OF SALISBURY TO SIR HENRY DRUMMOND WOLFF
NO. 14, VERY CONFIDENTIAL, 29 FEBRUARY 1888

From: F.O. 60/1491.

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The assurances, however, of the desire of the Russian Government to respect the integrity and promote the independence and prosperity of Persia were renewed in the correspondence which took place on this occasion.

The northern frontier between Russia and Persia, to the west of the Caspian Sea, was laid down in the Treaty of Gulistan of the 12th October, 1813, and subsequently modified by the Treaty of Turkaman-chai of 10th (22nd) February, 1828.

The frontier to the east of the Caspian for a long time remained undefined, and was the subject of protracted discussions, which it is not necessary here to recapitulate.

On the 21st December, 1881, a Treaty was signed between Russia and Persia at Tehran, which made the course of the Atrek the boundary between the possessions of the two countries from the Caspian Sea to Chat, and laid down the frontier from the latter place as far as Baba-Dormuz. This Treaty was made public, and was laid before Parliament at the time.

But on the same occasion a further Secret Treaty was signed, defining the frontier as far as the neighbourhood of Sarakhs, and containing some further arrangements respecting the administration of the districts on either side of the line. The existence of this Agreement was for a long time denied, but the Shah, in January of last year, gave a copy of it secretly to Mr. Nicolson, with a Map showing the direction of the frontier-line. This map cannot, however, be relied upon for accuracy, and we are not at present in possession of surveys of the country which would enable the frontier to be fully identified.

There have for some time been reports of further negotiations having been entered upon, and of fresh demands on the part of Russia being in contemplation, if not actually advanced, but the information on the subject is vague and doubtful. I inclose herewith an interesting collection of very confidential papers bearing on the subject which includes a Report on the Russian administration of the frontier districts, an abstract of a supposed plan of a future possible advance by Russia on India, and the bases of a Convention to be proposed to the Persian Government.

You will perceive that, even supposing the Russian Government to abide by the frontier-line laid down in the Secret Convention of 1881 as far as Sarakhs, there will still remain a tract of some 70 miles of frontier to be defined between that place and the extreme north-western point of the Afghan frontier at Zulifcar. Some indication of the claims which the Russian negotiators may possibly put forward in regard to this part of the frontier, as well as of the modifications which they may desire in other parts, is furnished by a remarkable pamphlet published in 1881 by General Petruscsvitch, of which a copy is herewith enclosed, with a Memorandum on it by Colonel Napier.

\[ Marginal Note. In India Office Letter of 7 December 1881. No Copies of pamphlet obtainable. Copy of Map only sent herewith. Copy sent to Tehran in F.O. Desp. No. 121, 16 December 1881.\]
In connection with this subject, and as illustrative both of the interest which Her Majesty's Government have taken in it, and of the difficulty of obtaining the entire confidence of the Shah and his Ministers in any transactions which affect their attitude towards Russia, it may be useful to mention some episodes in the history of the transactions which took place during the Russian progress towards Merv and before the eventual occupation of that place by the Russian forces.

In October 1879, after the massacre of the British Mission at Kabul had led to the renewal of the war with Afghanistan, and to the deposition of the Ameer Yakoub Khan, it was proposed by Sir Ronald Thomson that Persia should be placed in temporary possession of Herat on certain conditions, on the proper fulfilment of which the continued occupation would depend. The idea was approved by Her Majesty's Government, and a long negotiation followed with the Persian Government as to the terms of the Convention. The principal conditions will be found in the inclosed drafts of a Convention, and of notes to be signed by the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs. They included the right to appoint a British Resident at Herat with a sufficient escort, and to occupy the city and territory with British troops in the event of its security being threatened, the exclusion of foreign officers or agents other than British, the conclusion of a Commercial Treaty between Persia and Great Britain favourable to British commerce, and the opening of the Karun River to steam navigation for foreign mercantile ships. The Persian Government were to do what they could to prevent the advance of Russia in the Turkoman country, or a Russian occupation of Merv.

These conditions had, at an early stage, been accepted by the Shah, but after an almost interminable series of discussions on points of detail and changes of wording, and when matters appeared almost ripe for the signature of the Convention, the Persian Government announced suddenly, in February 1880, that they were not prepared to proceed further unless the arrangement were made permanent.

The matter was consequently dropped. A change of Administration in this country occurred shortly afterwards, and an offer on the part of the Persian Government in the following May to renew the negotiations was declined.

The Treaty between Russia and Persia of December 1881, defining the frontier as far as Baba-Dormuz, having been made public, and the Persian Government having positively denied the existence of any Agreement as to the frontier beyond that place, Lord Granville, in February 1882, proposed to the Russian Government that an Agreement should be come to between England and Russia and Persia for the settlement of this frontier as far as the point where it met that of Afghanistan in the neighbourhood of the Heri-Rud, and for its subsequent demarcation by English, Russian, and Persian officers.

The Russian Government declined this proposal, on the ground that the question concerned Russia and Persia alone, but expressed their readiness to come to an agreement as to the frontier of Afghanistan.
At the same time, the Government of India, with a view of preventing a Persian cession of the Atak and of Sarakhs to Russia, and of strengthening Persia's hold over those districts by making her occupation of them effective, agreed, if necessary, to grant an annual subsidy of 5 lacs of rupees to the Persian Government for a limited period.

Sir Ronald Thomson, in March 1882 and again in May 1883, made it understood to the Shah and his Ministers, in guarded language, that Her Majesty's Government were prepared to offer such a subsidy. But on neither occasion was the offer taken up in any way.

The subsequent occupation of Merv by Russia, which it had been the object of Her Majesty's Government at the time to prevent, and the settlement of the north-western frontier of Afghanistan, have greatly changed the situation; but it is obvious that the security of Herat may still be seriously affected by the acquisition of territory by Russia in Khorassan to the immediate north-west, or a fortiori to the west or south-west of the Afghan frontier near Zulfiqar, as suggested by General Petrushevitch.

The matter is one which should be closely and carefully watched. It has not been lost sight of by the War Office, and attention was called in a Memorandum forwarded by that Department in July 1886, of which copy is herewith inclosed, to the importance of settling the frontier between Persia and Afghanistan, with a view to preventing such encroachments as far as possible, by a previous definition of the territory acknowledged to be Persian. The suggestion was considered, but the Secretary of State for India was disposed to doubt the expediency of raising the question at that time, more especially as the arbitral decision given by Her Majesty's Government in 1873 in regard to the Seistan portion of the frontier had been received with dissatisfaction by both Persia and Afghanistan, and has ever since been the subject of repeated complaints.

As lately as May 1885, a fresh difference has arisen between Persia and Afghanistan as to the possession of a district named Hashdan, in the neighbourhood of Kafir Kalah, which the Afghans claim on the ground of ancient pasturage rights. It was agreed last summer by the two parties that the question should be investigated and decided by Brigadier-General Maclean, an officer of the Government of India, who is stationed on the Perso-Afghan border for purposes of observation, and for the settlement of any matters which may arise between the Persian and Afghan officials. It does not appear that the inquiry has yet taken place. Should the dispute be settled fairly to the satisfaction of both parties, which, perhaps, is too sanguine an expectation, an opportunity might be afforded to propose a definition of the whole frontier. But the question is one of much delicacy, and should not be entered upon without careful consideration and full consultation between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of India.

In the meanwhile, the Persian Government should be encouraged and warned to do their utmost in strengthening the administration and police of the frontier districts. Measures for this purpose, while materially
useful for the establishment of their territorial claims, cannot be interpreted as having any unfriendly signification towards the Russian authorities.

Copies of the correspondence respecting Brigadier-General Maclean's appointment, and the instructions under which he is acting, are inclosed herewith for your information. It will be seen that he is under the orders of the Government of India, but you will receive copies of his reports, and there are many subjects on which he will require your advice, and possibly a reference by you to this Department. In such cases care must be taken that the Government of India should be kept fully informed of what passes, so that there may be no chance of confusion or contradictory directions.

On the side of Turkey the frontier of Persia is still in parts not accurately defined.

An attempt was made in 1844 to settle the differences which had arisen between Turkey and Persia on this and other subjects by a Commission, which met at Erzeroum, composed of Plenipotentiaries of those two Powers, and of Commissioners nominated by England and Russia.

These negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Erzeroum of the 31st May, 1847, which stipulated that the frontier should be laid down by Commissioners and engineers appointed for the purpose by the Contracting Parties.

Subsequent meetings of the Commission were held in 1849, 1850, and 1851 in Bagdad and Mohammerah, but it became evident that no immediate agreement could be hoped for between the two parties directly interested, and in accordance with a proposal made by Lord Palmerston in 1851 surveys were made and Maps prepared at great expense, by the British and Russian Commissioners, of the districts through which the mediating Powers considered that the frontier ran.

The preparation of the Map, which embraced territory 700 miles in length by from 20 to 40 miles broad, was not completed till 1865.

In May of that year the Porte was informed that, in the opinion of the mediating Powers, the future line of boundary between the respective dominions of the Sultan and the Shah was to be found within the limits traced on the Map; that the two Mahomedan Governments should themselves mark out the line; and that, in the event of any difference arising between them in regard to any particular locality, the points in dispute should be referred to the decision of the Government of England and Russia. A similar communication was made to the Persian Government. A further delay of several years, however, occurred before the Map was actually presented in its final shape, as it was found necessary to compare and correct the English and Russian versions, and to reproduce it in an amended form.

On the 3rd August, 1869, a Convention was signed at Constantinople between the Grand Vizier and the Persian Ambassador, by which it was agreed that, pending the settlement of the disputed boundary, the status quo should be maintained, and no new buildings should be erected upon the disputed territories.
Shortly afterwards, the British and Russian Representatives at Constantinople each presented the Ottoman Government with a copy of the Map; copies were similarly presented by the British and Russian Representatives at Tehran in February 1870.

Both the Persian and Turkish Governments are therefore in possession of two copies of the Map, the intention being that one copy should be retained by each Government, and that the other two copies should be intrusted to any Commission which should be formed for the purpose of marking out the actual frontier-line. Copies of the Map also exist in the British and Russian Missions at Constantinople and Tehran, in this office, and in the Government archives at St. Petersburg.

No Commission, however, has ever been appointed to lay down the frontier, and from time to time disputes arise as to certain districts.

One source of difference has been removed by the provision contained in Article IX of the Treaty of Berlin, by which the town and territory of Khotur were ceded by Turkey to Persia.

But this has not prevented the occurrence of questions regarding other parts of the frontier. The latest of these arose in 1884, and was the revival of an old dispute respecting certain districts on the slope of the Pusht-i-luh range, near the Tigris. An attempt was made to settle the points at issue under the mediation of Great Britain and Russia, and it was arranged that the status quo should, in the meanwhile, be observed. But, although the Shah pressed in July last for some steps to arrange definitely this and other unsettled points, it has been found impossible to induce the Porte to move further.

The districts traversed by the frontier are still so wild and sparsely populated that the absence of a defined boundary, which would in more civilized countries be intolerable, is probably not very severely felt. It is, in any case, a question which can only be satisfactorily settled with the good-will of the two parties principally concerned, and Her Majesty's Government can do no more than use their good offices to produce such a favourable disposition on either side.

You will find in the archives of Her Majesty's Legation some recent correspondence respecting the erection by the Turkish authorities of a fort at Fao, near the mouth of the Shat-el-Arab. This proceeding is in contravention of the agreement come to at the time of the signature of the Treaty of 1814, that the two parties should abstain from erecting fortifications on their respective sides of the river between Mohammerah and the sea. Her Majesty's Government are interested in the trade and navigation of the river which is to a large extent in British hands, and have remonstrated against the completion of the fort. But the Porte has contended that the point is one to be discussed between Turkey and Persia and, although the course of negotiations in 1816-17 afforded good grounds for a contention to the contrary, it has been thought better that the subject should be dropped, unless strongly taken up by the Persian Government.

As regards the internal condition of the country, the inclosed Report by Mr. Herbert, then Second Secretary in Her Majesty's Legation
at Tehran, would go far to confirm the gloomy account given by Malcolm Khan to Viscount Gross; but it is in some respects corrected by the observations, also inclosed, of Colonel Sir Murdoch Smith, whose long experience as Director of the Indo-European Telegraph in Persia entitles him to speak with authority.

The efforts of Her Majesty's Government for the promotion of internal progress have been principally directed of late years towards opening the South of Persia to British and other foreign commerce by improved means of communication. They have constantly urged upon the Shah and his Ministers that the Karun should be thrown open to steam navigation, but, owing in great part it is believed to Russian opposition, their representations have been unsuccessful. They have also at intervals advocated the construction of railways and waggon-roads.

In 1872, some months before his visit to Europe, the Shah granted to Baron Reuter a Concession for seventy years for the construction of a railway from Reash through Tehran to the Persian Gulf, with an exclusive right to the working of all mines, except gold and silver mines, the execution of irrigation works, the management of the State forests and uncultivated lands, and the regie of the Customs for twenty years. The Concession was of an extravagant character, amounting to a virtual monopoly of the industrial and natural resources of the country. Consequently, when, on the failure of Baron Reuter to perform certain conditions of the Contract, the Persian Government took advantage of the circumstance to cancel the whole concession, Her Majesty's Government did not consider that they had acted otherwise than judiciously in their own interests.

But, in view of the considerable expense to which Baron Reuter had been put, and if his assertions that his failure to fulfil the Contract was due to the negligence or obstruction of the Persian officials, Her Majesty's Government have urged that he is entitled to some compensation, or to a Concession of a more limited character. And, whenever endeavours have been made at Tehran to obtain railway Concessions for other parties, Her Majesty's Government have supported Baron Reuter's protests against the grant of such Concessions until his claims have in some way been satisfied.

As the railway schemes which have hitherto been brought forward in this manner have scarcely been of a substantial or serious nature, this action of Her Majesty's Government cannot be said to have really operated to the discouragement of enterprise in Persia. But their attitude in this respect could not be indefinitely maintained without inconvenience and an apparent want of friendship towards Persia.

In 1885, a proposal was made by Baron Reuter to make use of his Concession for the formation of an International Company under the protection of such of the Great Powers as might be willing to join in it, and an attempt was made by Her Majesty's Government to obtain the co-operation of the Government of Germany in supporting it. But their overtures were not favourably received, and the project was dropped.

Her Majesty's Government did not, however, desist from urging on the Shah, at every favourable opportunity, the desirability of improv-
ing the means of communication between the capital and the south of Persia, and in May 1836 His Majesty informed Mr. Nicolson that he was desirous of seeing a railway from the south, undertaken by a European, or mixed Persian and European Company; that, if a railway were impracticable, he would fall back upon a road; that he had also decided to throw open the Karun to navigation, but thought this had better wait till the railway or road were open, when it would follow as a natural consequence, and that he would like the navigation to be under a Persian Company.

A reply was sent expressing the gratification of Her Majesty's Government at this decision, and, in deference to the Shah's wish to be furnished with a complete scheme, consultations were held with the competent authorities of the India Office, with Mr. Mackinnon, and with Mr. Mackenzie, of the firm of Gray, Dawes, and Co. (who have the principal share of the steam navigation of the Tigris and Euphrates). A draft Concession was drawn up, framed on the model of those granted by the Government of India, with such modifications as the different circumstances of the case suggested, which it was believed might be accepted, and put forward with fair chance of success, by English financiers. Steps were also taken to make Baron Reuter a party to the scheme, and he professed his willingness to accept a share in it, as a recognition of his claims under his former Concession. The draft Concession was submitted to the Persian Government for their examination. The latter at first required certain modifications in the draft, some of which were agreed to, but they have now presented a Counter-Project, which, in its present shape, would certainly not be acceptable to European capitalists.

The principal points of divergence between the views of the two Governments are as follows:

Her Majesty's Government, and the authorities they have consulted, look naturally to the necessity of offering to the public a fair prospect of sufficient return for the money invested. For this purpose it is important to keep the scheme within moderate limits, to make use of the river navigation as far as the Karun is open for vessels of proper draught, that is to say, up to the neighbourhood of Ahwaz, to commence the railway from that point only, and not to extend it further in the first instance than is necessary to give access to the rich wheat-growing plateau which lies to the north and north-west of Dizful.

The line so far does not present any great engineering difficulties, would, therefore, be comparatively inexpensive, and promises a speedy return of remunerative traffic. The estimated cost of a railway from the starting point, 6 miles below Ahwaz, to a point on the Kerkha River, 12 miles north of Dizful (in all, about 100 miles), is less than 500,000l, to which would be added the cost of establishing steam navigation up the Karun from Mohammerah. The further sections of the railway from the Kerkha River to Khoramabad, and from thence to Kum and Tehran (a distance of 400 miles, in the latter part over mountainous country, and estimated to cost not less than 4,000,000l), would be left to be completed gradually, at first by waggon-roads,
and subsequently by railways, as circumstances and the success of
the first part of the undertaking might permit. The wish of the
Shah, on the other hand, is avowedly for complete railway between
Mohammerah and Tehran, a distance in all of 622 miles, estimated to
cost not less than 5,500,000. His Majesty shows a rooted aversion
to opening the Karun to a British Steam Navigation Company, and main-
tains that any Company founded for the purpose must be purely Persian,
and under Persian control. Messrs. Gray, Dawes, and Co., would not
object to the company being nominally Persian, and to the vessels flying
the Persian flag. But Mr. MacKenzie has pointed out that, in or-
der to have any security for its proper working, it is essential that
the management should be in English hands. In a confidential message
sent to Mr. Nicolson by the Shah in October 1886 His Majesty explained
that his reluctance to open the Karun was caused by a threat of the
Russian Government to enter the Gulf of Eenzeli, on the Caspian, if this
concession were made. It is difficult to understand the exact meaning
and purport of this threat, if indeed it has any existence in fact;
but no further explanations have been obtained on the subject. The ob-
jections of the Persian Government to opening the Karun to foreign navi-
gation seem, however, from the language of their Counter-Draft of Con-
cession, to be still undiminished.

Finally, a most serious obstacle to the successful initiation of
the scheme consists in the difficulty of finding sufficient security
for the payment of a certain and moderate interest on the capital dur-
ing the first stages of the undertaking, and at any subsequent period
when the working profits may prove insufficient. Without some such
security it is not to be hoped that British capitalists will be ready
to invest their money in an enterprise, which contains so many elements
of risk. It will be seen from the inclosed copy of a letter from the
India Office that the Government of India are not prepared to guaran-
tee a rate of interest on the railway, though they might possibly be
induced to entertain a proposal to share such a guarantee with the Im-
perial Government. I am not of opinion, however, that a proposal for
such a guarantee could under present circumstances be submitted to Par-
liament with any hope of a favourable reception. The efforts of Her
Majesty's Government have therefore been directed to obtaining a pro-
mise of a lien on the Persian Customs for the amount required to make
up a certain rate of interest on the capital that may be subscribed.
The Persian Government have hitherto shown considerable reluctance to
grant the powers of supervision that would be necessary to make such
a lien effective. This reluctance is perhaps not unnatural, but there
is little doubt that under European supervision the Customs would be-
come much more remunerative, and without it the security for a fixed
contribution would be little more than nominal.

Such are the principal points at issue, and it will be for you to
consider on your arrival at Tehran whether and in what manner you should
continue to urge the scheme, or whether for a time it should be left in
abeyance. It has the support of the Zil-es-Sultan, who has recently re-
ceived the distinction of the G. C. S. I., and who is alive to the benefits which the southern provinces under his rule would derive from the railway. And there are not wanting arguments which should strongly dispose the Shah in favour. Irrespective of the increased prosperity which it promises to bring (a consideration which perhaps weighs little with an Oriental Ruler, except in so far as it involves increased revenue), there can be no question that the improved communication with the south would increase the hold of the Central Government over that portion of the kingdom, and that, while scarcely available for purposes of hostile invasion, it would render it much easier for England in case of need to assist the Shah against foreign aggression or pressure.

The financial aspect of the question is, however, the most difficult one from a practical point of view. Her Majesty's Government in this respect are working at some disadvantage, inasmuch as they are not at present proposing conditions on behalf of any actual or even prospective Company, but have been endeavouring to frame a basis on which such a Company might be formed. The negotiation would perhaps be on a more satisfactory, and certainly on a more regular, footing, if it were in the hands of some financial Association, supposing that such could be found, who would be willing to treat with the Persian Government with your assistance and support.

In this and in all other questions of progress and reform, such as the employment of Europeans in the administration (as often recommended by the Persian Minister in this country), you will probably find it necessary to proceed with great caution, and to bear constantly in mind the fact that, leaving out of the question any personal feelings of timidity or indolence, the Sovereign of Persia is at the head of a very loosely organized system of government, largely tainted by corruption, and that he has to deal with a public opinion still highly fanatical and exclusive, not easily controlled or informed, and not the less dangerous when roused because it has few legitimate means of expression.

A list of eighteen enclosures follows this document.
ASSURANCES GIVEN BY BRITISH MINISTER TO SHAH RESPECTING
MAINTENANCE OF INTEGRITY OF PERSIA.
TEHRAN, 24 OCTOBER 1888

Assurance given to the Amin-es-Sultan by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff

From: Treaty series 11B. Persia. F.O. 93/75/11B.

"In the event of any Power making an attack without just cause or provocation on Persia, or attempting to take possession of Persian territory against the will of the Persian Government, His Majesty's Government engage to make earnest representations against such proceedings & to take such steps as may in their judgment be best calculated to prevent any infringement of the integrity of Persia.

It is understood that, in order to enable His Majesty's Government to carry out this engagement, the Persian Government will give His Majesty's Government immediate notice of any demands threatening to the integrity of Persia which may be made upon them by any foreign Power."


Your telegram very secret of 11th Instant.

H[er] Majesty's['] Government would agree to following form of assurance to be given to the Persian Government in return for the opening of the Karun.

"In the event of any Power making an unprovoked attack on Persia or attempting to take possession of Persian territory against the will of the Persian Government, H[er] Majesty's['] Government engage to make strong earnest representations against such proceedings, and to take such steps as may in their judgment be best calculated to prevent any infringement of the integrity of Persia.

It is understood that in order to enable H[er] Majesty's['] Government to carry out this engagement the Persian Government will give H[er] Majesty's['] Government immediate notice of any demands threatening to the integrity of Persia which may be made upon them by any Foreign Power, and will be guided by the advice which H. M. Gov. may then offer to them."

Revisions were made by Lord Salisbury who wrote the following minute.

The closing clause would I think have the effect of pledging us to guide them—a formidable responsibility.

S.
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B. Private Papers

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a. Public Record Office

The Papers of Sir John Ardagh

The following items were relevant:


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The Papers of George Leveson Gower, Second Earl of Granville

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The Papers of Stafford Henry Northcote, First Earl of Iddesleigh.

This collection is deposited temporarily in the Public Record Office. It is large and full for the earlier period, but few documents for the period of Lord Iddesleigh's Foreign Secretaryship, August 1886 to January 1887, are extant. The material was examined, but it had little relevance to this study, though some of the memoranda and letterbooks added interesting information.

The Papers of Sir William White.

This collection consists of two volumes of diplomatic correspondence in which some very useful items were found.

The Papers of Lord George Francis Hamilton.

This collection contains thirty-five bound volumes of private and semi-private correspondence between Lord George Hamilton, Secretary at War in the Ministry from 1895 to 1903, and the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon.

The Papers of William Ewart Gladstone.

The following items were relevant.

The Papers of Sir Henry Layard.

Of these papers, only one volume pertained to this study. It contained some letters exchanged between Lord Salisbury and Lord Lytton. These were used before access to the Lytton Papers was obtained.

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The Papers of Lord George Francis Hamilton.

This collection contains thirty-five bound volumes of private and semi-private correspondence between Lord George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India from 1895 to 1903, and the Viceroy of India, Lord Elgin and Lord Curzon. These papers are in the possession of the family at Colin, St. Albans. They have been carefully sorted and catalogued. Much in the collection was very useful from the general point of view, but little material here directly on Persia.
d. Christ Church, Oxford

The Papers of Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne Cecil, First Marquis of Salisbury.

The papers of Lord Salisbury are now deposited in Christ Church, Oxford. Considerable material for this study came from this large collection. The bound volumes of the private Foreign Office correspondence were rewarding, and some of the more useful ones are listed below. Much of the material is not bound, however, but is arranged in bundles. Here, too, significant items can be found.

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e. In Private Houses.

The Papers of Sir Michael Hicks Beach, First Earl St. Aldwyn.

These papers are in the possession of the family at Coln, St. Aldwyn. They have been carefully sorted and catalogued. Work in the collection was very useful from the general point of view, but little material bore directly on Persia.
The Papers of Edward Robert Bulwer, First Earl of Lytton.

Robert, Earl of Lytton, was Viceroy of India from 1876 to 1880. His papers are located at Knebworth, and are in the possession of his granddaughter, Lady Hermione Cobbold. She very kindly granted permission to use these manuscripts. The Indian collection is very impressive—both in its bulk and in the quality of the material. The originals of Lord Salisbury's letters to Lord Lytton are in this collection. Some of the documents relating to India are on temporary deposit at the Public Record Office. The volumes are nicely bound and well kept. Those related are:

1876-1880——Letters despatched. 5 Vols.
1876-1880——Letters from England. 9 Vols.
1876-1880——Letters from the Secretary of State. 5 Vols.
1876-1880——Letters from the Queen and Royal Family. 2 Vols.
1876-1880——Minutes and Notes. 5 Vols.

The Papers of John Wodehouse, First Earl of Kimberley.

These papers are still in the possession of the family, and are located at Kimberley House. The collection is very large, and has not been completely sorted and catalogued. Considerable material, however, was directly related to this study. Work in the Kimberley papers proved to be most rewarding. The correspondence of Lord Kimberley with the Viceroy——Lord Ripon and Lord Dufferin and later Lord Lansdowne——was invaluable.

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\[ \begin{align*} 
\text{\ldots} & \text{"Masterly Inactivity," \ F o r t n i g h t l y \ R e v i e w , \ N e w \ S e r i e s,} \\
& \text{VI (December, 1869), 585-615.} \\
\text{\ldots} & \text{"Mischievous Activity," \ F o r t n i g h t l y \ R e v i e w , \ N e w \ S e r i e s,} \\
& \text{VII (March, 1870), 278-308.} \\
\end{align*} \]


\[ \begin{align*} 
\text{\ldots} & \text{"The Frontiers of Baluchistan," \ I m p e r i a l \ a n d \ A s i a t i c \ Q u a r t e r l y \ R e v i e w , \ T h i r d \ S e r i e s,} \\
& \text{XXVIII (July, 1909), 103-8.} \\
\text{\ldots} & \text{"The Reform of Persia," \ I m p e r i a l \ a n d \ A s i a t i c \ Q u a r t e r l y \ R e v i e w , \ T h i r d \ S e r i e s,XXXIV (October, 1912), 225-35.} \\
\end{align*} \]
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RIVAL PROJECTS OF RAILWAYS IN PERSIA

July, 1887

PROPOSED RAILWAYS.

British

Knsatat

Scale

100 Miles