

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Hill DATE 6-23-70

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FEB 5 1923
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

INDEX BUREAU
FEB 3 1923
DEPT. OF STATE

IMPERIAL LEGATION OF PERSIA
WASHINGTON
FEB 10 1923

February 2, 1923.

February 12, 1923.

My dear Mr. Dulles:-

In order to acquaint the Department more fully with the attitude of my Government towards the Assyrians, and to demonstrate that this minority has no ground for complaint against my country, I am enclosing you, as promised yesterday, copies of letters addressed in 1919 by members of the Persian Delegation in Paris, to Doctor Westermann of the American Peace Commission, and to the New York TIMES.

I have now received a repetition of the first part of my Government's cable dated the 25th ult. of which I enclosed you the substance in my letter of January 29th. I am, therefore, sending you a more complete rendering of the despatch in question.

Believe me, dear Mr. Dulles,

Yours very sincerely,

Russell H. Hill

Mr. A. W. Dulles,
Chief, Near Eastern Division,
Department of State,
Washington, D.C.

(Enclosures, 3) *oh*

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ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT

BY

Ralph P. Jones

DATE 6-23-70

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June 16th, 1919.

Dear Sir:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated the 11th inst. which reached me on the 13th, and I am constrained to say at once, in the same unofficial manner, that the information furnished you does not represent the situation in its true light.

Before replying to your three questions, allow me to make a few general remarks which, I hope, will dispel all misunderstanding.

The Christian subjects of Persia, whether Nestorians or Armenians, have always been well treated by the Persian Government; they have reason to be grateful for the consideration and protection extended to them; they have even enjoyed privileges which Moslems did not possess. It is also well known that from very ancient times the spirit of toleration of the Persians has allowed Christians and Jews to find within our borders a refuge against the persecution of foreign powers.

The hardships to which you refer were due to the peculiar circumstances created by the world conflagration, which spread into Persian territory against our will and by reason of the violation of our neutrality. Moreover the losses and wrongs inflicted upon the Persian people during the war were not confined to the Christian Community or to the districts of Urumieh and Salmas. It may be stated with truth that the plight of the Musulman population was a thousand times worse and the area of destruction extended far and wide.

There is also a tendency to forget that much of the trouble created and the damage done in Azerbaidjan was brought about by the Christians themselves. If you will refer to our memorandum of March (p.12), you will see that the Djelou tribesmen, who are Christians, followed the Russian troops out of Turkey into Persia, were armed by the Russians and in spite of all our protests remained on in the Urumieh district after the Russian retreat with an increased equipment of cannon and ammunition. These wild and unbridled tribes abandoned themselves to all kinds of cruelty and depredation towards the Moslems whom they massacred by thousands; the town of Urumieh was destroyed by them and much property was looted. Disregarding the neutrality of Persia, these Djelous and other Christians in Persia were trained and armed by foreign officers and proved a formidable element of discord and unrest in Azerbaidjan.

The responsibility for the harm done to Persian subjects whether Moslems or Christians, must be laid at the door of the Russians and the Turks who violated our neutrality, and thus weakened the hands of the Government at Teheran, preventing it from exercising sufficient authority in those far removed districts to check lawlessness and safeguard the lives and belongings of its subjects.

As regards indemnification, the Persian Government have of course the earnest desire of mitigating the sufferings of the hundreds of thousands of their subjects, Moslems and Christians, who have been reduced to misery during the war. It is for this purpose that the Delegation here have claimed in their memoranda, submitted long ago to the Peace Conference, reparation for the losses sustained

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by Persia at the hands of the belligerent powers. The havoc wrought is so great that the public or private means of Persia do not allow of coping with the situation.

Now as regards the replies to your questions, I would venture first of all to point out that any territorial claims formulated by us would not seem to have any connection with the losses inflicted upon Persian subjects, Christians or Moslems, within the limits of the Persian empire. I will answer questions 1 and 2 by saying that if we obtain satisfaction at the Conference, the first thought and most pressing duty of the Persian Government will be to repatriate, indemnify and assure the well-being of all its bona fide subjects, Christians as well as Moslems, who have been sorely tried by the consequences of Russo-Turkish military operations and aggressions in Persian territory.

Indeed the Persian Government has been so eager to relieve the poor of Urumieh, that a subscription has been opened in Tehran to which His Imperial Majesty the Shah and the Ministers have contributed.

The guarantees to which you allude in question 3 are already provided in the Constitutional Laws of Persia, wherein it is laid down that all Persians, irrespective of religion or race, are equal before the law. The Christians are, therefore, on the same footing with Moslems as regards civil and political rights, the right to vote and to be elected to Parliament, to sit in provincial and municipal councils, etc. As stated before, in normal times the Christian subjects of Persia have never had reason to complain of the treatment meted out to them.

In order, however, to insure the future happiness and prosperity of the Christians in Persia, for whom you show concern, as well as to provide for the progress and welfare of the Moslems, it is absolutely necessary that the shackles which have hitherto cramped the efforts of the Persian Government be removed by the Peace Conference and full attention and satisfaction be granted to their just demands. They will thus be enabled to devote themselves undivided and unafraid to the necessary reforms and to the development of the country.

This is our chief concern, and it should meet with the entire sympathy and support of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace.

Believe me, dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) HUSSEIN ALAI

Professor W. I. Westermann,
American Commission to Negotiate Peace,
4, place de la Concorde, Paris.

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ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT

BY

Ralph P. Hines

DATE

6-23-70

COPY

PERSIAN PEACE DELEGATION

July 26/19.

To the Editor of the New York "Times"

NEW YORK, U.S.A.

Dear Sir:

In your issue of June 29, 1919, a letter is published bearing the signature of "Paul Shimmon", containing unwarranted attacks upon the Persian Government for what is alleged to be Persia's responsibility for the Urumiah troubles. The charges made are so obviously false and the misrepresentations contained in the article so glaring, that they contradict themselves even to the most superficial reader and would therefore need no answer on our part but for the importance which readers in America and abroad justly attach to your valuable paper.

This very fact also necessitates the issuance of a refutation on our part of the charges made by an individual who is so discredited by his own people that he does not deserve the dignity of being noticed or challenged. That he does not at all represent the Assyrians in Persia or America and is by no means qualified or accepted to be their spokesman is borne out by outspoken opposition to his candidacy before the convention of the American National Association of Assyrians who assembled a few months ago to choose a delegate to come to Paris to present their case to the Peace Conference.

In fact, as the American papers widely published the account of the meeting the opposition culminated in chairs and tables being used as weapons, and the conflict assumed such seriousness that finally the police had to enter to prevent fatal results. The Department of State at Washington has on file formal notices from the Assyrian associations in America disclaiming Paul Shimmon as their spokesman.

The article charges the Government with having "encouraged" the Persians in the Province of Azerbaidjan to take steps against the Assyrians of Salmas and Urumiah. This is absolutely false. The Assyrians of Urumiah will themselves testify to the spirit of toleration and benevolence always shown them by the Government as long as the Government of Azerbaidjan was free to act. But the public should remember that for a number of years previous to the world war and in the teeth of repeated protests of the Persian Government, - the armies of the Tsar unjustly occupied most of the districts of Azerbaidjan and supported and held in office notorious reactionaries whose misdeeds were calculated to justify the Russian occupation. This act not only paralysed but practically annihilated the authority of the Persian Government in those parts. Then, when the war broke out, and, at the request of the Allies, Persia declared her neutrality and insisted upon the evacuation of her territory by Russian troops, her just demand was utterly rejected and ignored by Russia. This furnished Turkey the excuse to follow suit and invade Persia with her armed forces to fight the Russians. This state of things provoked a general confusion which not only eliminated every remaining vestige of Persian authority in Azerbaidjan but subjected the country to the dire consequences of famine, massacre and ruin entailed by the violation of Persian neutrality by the neighbouring belligerents. Amongst the acts of foreign aggression was the arming of the Christian population in the north-west and the attacks made upon the Moslem inhabitants - formerly in perfect peace

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with their Christian neighbours - for which foreign intrigue had paved the way. Persia lodged energetic protests against all these acts of aggression with all the Allied Powers, but no step was taken by the powers to effect the withdrawal of foreign troops from Persian territory and respect that country's neutrality and thus enable the Persian Government to check the terrible conflagration which cost the lives of a vast section of the population and the loss of hundreds of millions in property.

Now to attach any responsibility to the Persian Government for wrongs done in the occupied zones would be too ridiculous even to deserve notice were it not too cruel to be ignored.

The wrongs suffered by Persia are recognized even by Russia who was at the time the greatest author of Persia's ruin. In fact, at the outset of the war, when Persia protested against the Russian occupation of the country and disclaimed responsibility for all ensuing wrongs, Russia officially shouldered the responsibility and promised to indemnify all those suffering losses from her invasion of Persia. This places the unfounded charges made by a so-called sympathizer of Persian Assyrians in their true light.

As to the death of Marshimon, the facts filed with the foreign offices of the Allied Governments prove that Mar Shamoon was killed while making an attack upon the town of Salmas on which occasion many thousands of unarmed Moslems lost their lives. He would have been spared had he not put himself at the head of an armed force on the neutral soil of Persia.

As regards the troubles in Urumiah again there is a tendency to forget that the hardships endured by Christians and Moslems alike were due to the abnormal conditions created by the World conflagration which spread into Persia against her will and by reason of the violation of her neutrality; moreover much of the harm done was brought about by the Christians themselves. Djelou tribesmen, who are Christians, followed the Russian troops out of Turkey into Persia, were armed by the Russians and in spite of the Persian Government's protests remained on in the Urumiah district after the Russian retreat with an increased equipment of cannon and ammunition. These wild and unbridled tribes abandoned themselves to all kinds of cruelty and depredation towards the Moslems whom they massacred by thousands; the town of Urumiah was destroyed by them and much property was looted. The murder of Monseigneur Sontag was much deplored by the Persian Government but it is absolutely unfair to throw the blame of responsibility for this deplorable act on them and quite untrue to say that any officer of the Persian Gendarmerie was implicated in the assassination of the Apostolic Delegate.

As regards the "additional territory" Persia is alleged to have claimed before the Peace Conference: to begin with the chief claims of Persia consist in the indemnification of her people for the damages suffered from the belligerents who converted the country into a theatre of war. She further claims guarantees for her judicial, economic and political independence which has suffered from unjust foreign attacks for over a century. The so-called "additional territory" constitutes but a part of the patrimony of Persia which has been, on various occasions, wrested from her by foreign aggressors. While the territorial claims are all just and are intended to restore particular sections which are essential and vital to guaranty the country's independence in the light of the 14 principles, Persia leaves the entire matter to the Justice of the Peace Conference and will be willing to abide by any disposition to be made by that august body.

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The claims for indemnity referred to in the article are true except in the amount which is far below the estimate which has hitherto been made of the enormous losses sustained by the country and people: Persia courts a Commission to be appointed by the Peace Conference to go to Persia, to inquire into the charges made concerning the Urumia matters and invites an estimate to be made of the devastation wrought by the war which made the country the Belgium of Asia. It will then be found that the indemnity asked is not only a minimum of losses suffered but is essential for the reparation of regions where hundreds of thousands are homeless and reduced to dire indigence.

America which sent the Judson relief mission to Persia knows the true facts about the great sufferings of the people in that country. We therefore hope and trust that the American public will not be misled by false representations of men guided by personal interest and false prejudice. Our confidence in the friendship of America justifies the hope that American public opinion will not only assist the just claims of Persia before the Peace Conference, but will make it impossible for any further wrongs to be committed in the future against a country which was the cradle of the Aryan race and civilization.

Persia asks nothing which has not been demanded by the United States and supported by all the Allied governments, on behalf of the small nations and in the cause of a just and durable peace.

(S) Mirza Ali-Kuli Khan, N.D.