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## THE FEDERATION OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES UNDER THE KABUL GOVERNMENT.

A MEETING of the Central Asian Society was held at 74, Grosvenor Street, London, W.1, on Wednesday, November 10, 1920, when Sirdar Ikbāl Ali Shah delivered an address on the Federation of the Central Asian States. General Sir Edmund Barrow (in the absence of Lord Carnock) presided.

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the proceedings, said: Ladies and Gentlemen,—I regret to say that Lord Carnock is unable to attend this afternoon owing to indisposition; and I particularly regret it, because I shall have to take the chair in his place, and I am afraid I do not even know what the lecturer is going to talk about. I will now introduce to you Sirdar Ikbāl Ali Shah, who will soon enlighten you on that point.

### THE LECTURE.

THE question of a federation of Central Asian States of which I shall speak to-day is no novel one. Its origins are probably to be referred to an amalgamation of the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turanian movements. Both of these movements are religious as well as racial in character, but when they effected a junction and developed into the ideal of a federation of the States of Central Asia, they took on a colour more purely political. So long ago as 1863, in the reign of Amir Dost Mohammed Khan, Syed Jamaluddin, "The Afghan," posed as the protagonist of a Pan-Islamic doctrine, and his most powerful argument on behalf of the cause he advocated was that the Moslem Powers should ally themselves for the consolidation of Islam, and should in future possess a common political aim.

However reasonable in itself was the ambition of Syed Jamaluddin, it soon became evident that he was merely the instrument of forces whose aims were by no means so idealistic as he would have had his hearers believe. It was observed that during his travels in Egypt, India, and Persia, his exhortations were marked by studious moderation, but that when he reached Turkey they became more militant in tone. It then became apparent that Sultan Abdul Hamid was using him as an agent for the promotion of his own private and less innocent Pan-Islamic doctrines throughout the

East. For example, in 1889, during the reign of Shah Nasiruddin of Persia, Jamaluddin was urging the Persians to acknowledge the Sultan's claim to suzerainty over their country, his chief argument being that it would be well that all the Islamic countries should place themselves under the direction of the Yildiz Kiosk if they desired freedom from European interference. Later it became abundantly clear that for Abdul Hamid the Pan-Islamic movement meant a movement for his own personal aggrandizement. It was proposed to hold a great Moslem conference at Mecca in 1902. But Abdul Hamid dreaded that such a conference might bring the claims of the Arab nation into prominence, a claim which the Arabs as the founders of Islam might be very likely to try to further, so he at once took steps to quash the conference at Mecca.

A year or two after this the Pan-Turanian movement was launched. It was, of course, calculated to bring about not only a cultural and religious, but also a political bond amongst the Tartar race. The party responsible for this movement at first proposed that the sermons (*khutba*) should be read in Turk language, that that language should be used throughout the Mohammedan world, and that all Arabic words should be eliminated from the Turkish literature and language.

At first sight that programme looked to be antagonistic to the views of the orthodox Moslem Church, as indeed it was. Its promoters modified their doctrines, so that the two movements were irreconcilable for a time, but for a time only.

These earlier and diverse forms of the Asian national idea, although crude and unworkable, had a lasting effect on the people of Central Asia, causing them to reflect on political affairs generally, arousing them to the danger of the Russian menace. As time went on, the notion of a confederacy of Central Asian States grew in popularity, and men looked backward with more kindly eyes to the Pan-Turanian and Pan-Islamic efforts, trying to discover in them a basis for the affiliation of the several States which owe allegiance to the rule of Islam, in the hope that a barrier might thus be erected against Russian aggression; for Russia was and is an avowed enemy of Islam.

The various forms which such an allegiance might take were keenly discussed, but without much definite result, until at last Amir Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan suggested a definite alliance between his own country, Persia, and Bokhara. The chief intention behind this proposal was that it might act as a check to Russian aggression. This union, as then outlined, was purely a defensive one, and the parties to it retained their normal position as rulers of the several countries involved, no one being exalted above another. But simple as was the scheme, Abdur Rahman did his utmost to

render it of as much practical utility as possible. He had been a witness of the virtual ruin of Khiva and the fall of Bokhara; he had marked the course of the Russian overtures to Persia, and had seen the results of the Muscovite treachery at Panjdeh. The rulers of the new allies had no illusions as regards the intentions of Russia towards their several States. The Russian policy was one through which the Islamic kingdoms in Asia would assuredly suffer a slow but certain disintegration. This was to be effected in three different ways: first by force of arms; secondly by false alliance with the several Islamic States, by which the territorial expansion of Russia might be aided; thirdly by the creation of political difficulties between the Islamic countries of Asia and the British and French, with the intention of weakening the Asian countries so that they might more easily fall a prey. No stone, indeed, was left unturned to arouse anarchy and unrest. For example, it has now been proved to the hilt that Russia was primarily responsible for the origin and continuance of the Armenian massacres. These massacres were not due to religious movements, but political, and history bears witness that that political move was of Russia and Russia alone. That move was directed towards Turkey, so that Islam should have a bad name for those massacres. It is known, too, that the quarrel between Britain and Amir Sher Ali was brought about through Russian intrigue. If it be hoped that this malevolent policy has disappeared with the rise of Bolshevism, that hope must speedily be dispelled in view of the overwhelming evidence regarding the Bolshevik operations in Central Asia, which, if they were responsible for nothing else, were certainly the cause of the Anglo-Afghan War of last year. The character of a people does not alter with a change in the form of their government.

That Russia had always aimed at the destruction of Islam is demonstrated, amongst other things, by a letter which General Kaufman dispatched to his Government through Count Schouvaloff, the Russian Minister in London in 1875. It pretended to set forth that the mission of Russia in the East was a civilizing one, and that the true enemy of the Western nations was Islam. It suggested that Afghanistan and the Central Asian States generally should be divided into Russian and British spheres of influence. Kaufman was perfectly correct in his statement that Russia had a dangerous foe in Islam, and not without reason; for the entire Mohammedan world fiercely resented the constant aggression of the Muscovite upon its boundaries.

When the late Amir of Afghanistan, Habibullah Khan, came to the throne, he at once attempted to bring the scheme of his illustrious father into the sphere of practical politics. He recognized that, if the States of Central Asia were to save themselves from the hungry

northern bear, they must defend their freedom by the creation of a common federacy.

When the Bolsheviks first came into contact with the peoples of Central Asia they posed as being the saviours of Islam. They at once gave their freedom to the Khanates, but that freedom was only a nominal one, as they made the condition that the dissemination of their pernicious doctrines should be carried on throughout Central Asia. So long as they desired to keep themselves safe from attack in these regions they kept peace with the Usbeks and ceded the region of Merv to the Afghans. They made Tashkend their headquarters for propagandist purposes, sedulously sowing their doctrines in Afghanistan. Amir Habibullah was unfavourable to the Red philosophy, however, and tried to bring about a Central Asian alliance against Russia. From that moment he was a marked man, and his tragic end was undoubtedly the result of Bolshevik agency.

The present Amir of Afghanistan showed almost at once that he was in favour of a Central Asian confederacy. He has by no means been convinced by the arguments of the Bolshevik envoys who thronged his court, being fully aware that it is not in the nature of things that Russia should wish well to Islam, her hereditary enemy. Nor had the Amir of Bokhara a dissimilar experience.

The Bolsheviks have nothing to learn from their Czarist predecessors. In their true Russian fashion intrigues were set up in Persia and Bokhara alike. As was the case with Kocheh Khan's party in Tabriz, so also in the Khanate a Bokharian revolutionary unit was organized, and these Bokhariots proclaimed a revolution on the morning of August 29; this event was organized to take place on Friday, August 27, after the Juma'h prayer.

Immediately masses of Bolshevik mounted troops pushed along the railway from the east and the west towards Bokhara. The Amir concentrated the majority of his available forces and such Afghan troops as were in Bokhara for the defence of the city, and the Red advance met with little opposition from small detachments along the railway, although the Bokharan and Turkoman irregulars caused casualties in their ranks at various points. At Bokhara itself the Bolshevik command found it had underestimated the strength of its opponents, and the spirit of resistance displayed by the Bokharan people came as a complete surprise.

The battle for the city swayed to and fro, both sides losing heavily. Positions were won and lost again and again. The Red command was forced to draw more and more on its reserves before the capture of the city was completed, and the Amir forced to fly towards the Afghan frontier with the remnants of his army. After capture Bokhara was given over to the troops to loot, and its wealth and the bazaars fell into the hands of the Red soldiery. This is an

irony of fate, that once Abdur Rahman was a refugee at Bokhara, and now the Amir of Bokhara is a refugee at Kabul.

As a measure of self-defence it is absolutely essential that Afghanistan should proceed with the task of founding a Central Asian alliance. This design is one which should be of the greatest importance to the British people, who by fostering such a scheme will help to erect a barrier between Bolshevism and their Indian Empire. It must not be forgotten that the British Empire is now more truly an Eastern Empire than at any time in its history; intrigues against its position in the East should be resisted with all the address at its command. The danger of Bolshevik aggression in the East is no mere bogey, no mere journalistic figment, but a very real menace indeed, the shadow of which is gradually creeping farther and farther south. It is therefore essential to take the most active steps for the protection of your interests in Asia, which are most assuredly in jeopardy from the Bolshevik operations in Turkestan and Persia. It seems to me that an alliance between the Central Asian States and Great Britain, as one of the paramount Powers in that region, is inevitable if the threat of Bolshevism is to be successfully combated.

However sound the idea of a Central Asian alliance, it is clear that if it is to be brought to a successful issue the means employed to achieve this end must differ materially from any so far put forward. It has already been recognized that the best way of dealing with the Asian peoples is to show sympathy with their aspirations and sentiments—not to ignore them or throw cold water upon them, but to attempt to enter into the new spirit which most certainly lies behind the Asian desire for advancement. If Great Britain desires to remain paramount in Asia, she must show its peoples that she sympathizes with their point of view, and that she is willing to foster and advance this rather than foist upon them only the kind of institutions she deems good for them. It would be ill that she should try to increase her prestige by belittling that of her Asian friends. Doubtless one day administrators will understand how easy it is to guide Asian peoples, to lead them, how very difficult to drive them. It is quite a mistake to suppose, as some officials still do, that the most dignified way of administering the British Raj is to do so with a high hand. And let it be said that this is precisely the spirit in which the Russians in Central Asia behaved when the country was subject to them—their present attitude, in fact. That may be partly true, but times have changed: the outlook is entirely different, and it is highly injudicious for any rulers, British or Asian, to speak to the people from a pedestal. By doing so you are throwing them into the arms of the Bolsheviks. Treat them as reasonable men, and you will find them so. It seems

to me that the root of political difficulties all the world over is planted in official loftiness. Has this not been the case in Ireland, in Germany, in Russia—in fact, in those very spheres where revolution and disaffection now raise their heads?

It is difficult to express oneself regarding the harm, the great harm, that one knows is brought about in Central Asia by inconsidered speeches or even remarks of a public nature in this country. Your respected President, Lord Curzon, speaking at the annual dinner of this Society, gave it as his opinion that Afghanistan some years ago was more or less under the protection of Great Britain, "but had now acquired something like independence." With all due respect to your able and brilliant President, one of the wisest and most remarkable men of his time, I am very much afraid that the phrase in question will make rather bad hearing at Kabul. Afghanistan, as a matter of fact, has from the beginning of its existence exercised a complete independence. It owes suzerainty to no one; it is a free and a sovereign State—as free in every sense as Spain or Denmark or any other separate kingdom. Such a statement as Lord Curzon's is calculated to foment the deepest regret at Kabul. But I, for one, do not believe that it was more than a passing indiscretion, and I am sure that if Lord Curzon was definitely questioned on the point he would be the very first to admit the full independence of Afghanistan. At the same time this is the very kind of remark that alienates Asian sympathies and breeds a sense of insecurity and unfriendliness, which the British nation cannot afford, owing to its imperial interests in Asia.

I pass on to the question of the Khilafat. I am not sure that that question comes within the province of my lecture, yet I will just mention that, to my way of thinking, the question of the Khilafat is purely a religious one, and might well be left to the Moslems themselves. With it is bound up the subject of Hijrat or the migration of Moslems from India to Afghanistan. I am not going out of my way when I discuss this Moslem emigration, because the Central Asian alliance, the subject of this lecture, is intended first and foremost to safeguard Asia from Bolshevism, and the emigration of the Moslems is in a manner bound up with this, because anything which agitates popular sentiment in India is certain to have a bearing upon the subject of popular unrest in the East.

Mr. Montagu, the Secretary for India, has to my mind shown great insight in dealing with this matter, and has, indeed, more than once saved the situation. I may say that I speak with some personal knowledge of the facts. No restraints were placed upon the emigration of the Moslems into Afghanistan. This was not the gravamen of the complaint, but those who were responsible for the

emigration arrangements did not, unless I am badly informed, act wisely in the matter. Neither the Indian Government nor the authorities at Kabul saw any harm in the passage of the Mohajirin or emigrants from one sphere to the other. Molana Abdul Bari, the Sheik ul Islam, or High Priest of India, announced that Hijret, or emigration, might take place; in consequence thousands of people left their homes without adequate preparation, without arrangements for food-supplies or shelter. No special railway or other facilities were extended to them. Indeed, the migration was more of the nature of a folk-movement on a small scale, a sort of nomadic trek, than a well-conceived plan. Unused to the severity of the Afghan climate and exposed to the dangers and difficulties of the long and arduous journey, many of these poor emigrants laid down their lives. It is surely extraordinary that these people should have been permitted to leave their homes and to travel hundreds of miles to a strange country without adequate transport and other arrangements having been made. Surely, in the first place, a committee might have proceeded to Afghanistan to enquire regarding the territory available for the emigrants, the possibilities of labour in these districts, and so forth—in fact, to examine into the feasibility of the whole scheme. Relief committees ought also to have been established. The great majority of the emigrants were impecunious families of the lower classes, who, influenced by promises of material prosperity, believed themselves to be bound for a land of milk and honey. Many of them seemed to have the idea that the Afghans would provide them with food and clothing and, above all, with rich agricultural land. The Afghans are a hard-working race, intolerant of indolence, shrewd and careful, and they were not inclined to regard this invasion of penniless thousands with any degree of satisfaction if the emigrants came as permanent guests. Also, a suitable committee ought to have been appointed to examine the fitness of intending emigrants, and to ensure that every kind of nondescript who wished to go to Kabul was not allowed to do so.

The reasons for a failure in that direction have been, therefore, those of which I have spoken above, and the Hijret has in no sense received a set-back on the part of the Afghans themselves. I have discussed this for the reason that, if a large number of emigrants populated a province in Afghanistan, their attitude has to be taken into consideration in any undertaking to which Afghanistan may commit itself, such as a Central Asian alliance. It is a pity that Hijret has not been handled more efficiently.

To return, in conclusion, to the question of a Central Asian alliance, this is undoubtedly a matter which should at present be discussed fully at home as well as in India. A more fitting opportunity for the establishment of such an alliance could scarcely be



hoped for. Popular as well as educated opinion in the Central Asian States is most ripe to entertain it. Bolshevism, at first almost welcomed in Asia, has now been unmasked and is regarded with the greatest disquietude—at least, by the ruling and educated classes. A Central Asian alliance which had the countenance and assistance of Great Britain would render the intrigues of Moscow entirely nugatory in the Khanates and in Persia, would check the onward flow of the distorted philosophy of Lenin, and would, indeed, act as a barrier, both moral and physical, between Red Russia and susceptible India. The desire of the Central Asian peoples for such an alliance does not arise out of a wish for aggrandisement, and is not so much an expression of nationality as an aspiration after peace and territorial security. His Majesty Amir Amanullah Khan, in a meeting of Council Chambers on September 20 last, convened at the *'Arq*,\* has most pointedly favoured the question. The first step towards this is naturally the Afghan ratification of the Massuri Conference. That wise nobleman Sirdar Mahmud Beg Tarzai, and his compatriots General Abdul Qodoos Khan and the Prime Minister, have now been able to secure the help of General Nadir Khan also. That, to my mind, marks the dawn of a great age in the Middle East. Our common enemy is Bolshevism, and to defend ourselves we must have a Central Asian Alliance.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I invite discussion there are one or two remarks I might make in order to clear the ground. I noted that the lecturer said or thought that the British Mission had actually gone to Kabul. That is not the case; no such British Mission has gone.

The LECTURER: I said it might have gone.

The CHAIRMAN: It actually has not gone. Another remark that I noticed was that he said the terminus of the Nushki railway was at Neh. Well, that I am sorry to say is not the case. The terminus of the Nushki line is at least sixty or a hundred miles—I really do not recollect how many miles, but that at the very least—from Neh. In fact, I think it is well over a hundred miles from Neh, at a place called Duzdap, which he may possibly know. It is almost at the meeting-point of Persia, Afghanistan, and British Beluchistan. The lecturer also made certain remarks about the Khyber Pass. He expressed a hope that the Khyber Pass would soon be opened every day of the week, and said he could not understand why this was not done. The real reason is that we have only a certain number of men to guard the Khyber Pass, and if they were on duty every day of the week—a duty which goes on for about twelve consecutive

\* Regarding the *'Arq* at Kabul, see Angus Hamilton's *Afghanistan*, pp. 348-9. The Dane Mission of 1904-5 was quartered in the *'Arq*.—A. C. Y.

hours through the day—they would soon be worn out. In fact, more than two days would be quite impossible under our present arrangements in the Khyber. I will now invite discussion on the lecturer's remarks.

Mr. W. E. D. ALLEN: I only speak with some diffidence, as I have never been in Central Asia, but I happen to have read one of Ikbal Ali Shah's articles. I referred it to a member of the South Russian Government, and asked his opinion on it. I think we are more or less under moral obligations to Russia, because of the service she rendered us at the beginning of the war. He expressed the personal opinion that the South Russian Government, as representing Russia, would certainly not favour any movement on the part of Britain to support a nationalist movement in Central Asia; and he seemed to be of the opinion that they would rather have Russia there in any form than that the Russians should be expelled. Personally, I do not see how we can possibly hope to defend Central Asia if Russia ever attempts to regain it, granting that it has attained its independence. Further, Central Asia is but an economic unit of Russia. We have the example of Azerbaijan, which attempted to be independent; the result was that they found they could not export their oil, and had to go Bolshevik in order to get rid of the surplus oil. I think it would be a mistake for us, when Russia, so to speak, is in the dust, to support promiscuous nationalist movements, such as Poland and Roumania in Europe or Bokhara in Central Asia. I think it is thoroughly disloyal, and about on a level with Russia turning against us on the ground that we had a revolution in this country.

Colonel C. E. YATE, M.P.: Ladies and gentlemen, I did not quite follow the last speaker, as I could hardly hear him; consequently I cannot make any remarks on what he said. One of the things the lecturer told us—which I have not heard before—was that the Afghan boundary was not at Kushk, but at Merv. This is news to me, and, I think, to most of us. We have heard that some Afghans were in Merv, but we must always remember that Merv is one of the stations on the Transcaspian railway, and I think it very doubtful, if there is any power in Russia at all, that they will allow their Transcaspian railway to be cut by Afghanistan. Whether the Afghans have succeeded in that I cannot say, but it seems to me rather a dangerous policy to pursue. I am one of those who look back to the arduous days in the eighties when we defined the Afghan boundary, and Panjdeh was given over to Russia. The Afghans may have returned there, but what authority the lecturer has for saying that Merv is now an Afghan possession I do not know.

The LECTURER: About this question of Merv, I may just recall to your mind that just before the close of the war, just a few months

before that, a certain detachment of the British forces was in the north-east of Persia; and they were pressing rather hard on the Bolsheviks there. The Cossacks in Central Asia and Afghans were asked whether they could go up and create a sort of wedge there to stop the Bolsheviks coming to Hamadan and Meshed. The Afghans got up to that city, viz., Merv, and the recent information which I have received has given me reason to believe that the Afghans are to this day at Merv. They are in Merv, not as enemies of Bolshevism, because there is a great deal of predominance of Bolshevism in Central Asia; they, viz., the Bolsheviks, can drive even a bigger power than the Afghans out; but there is just that question going on whether the Afghans are going Bolshevik or not. If the Afghans finally decide not to go Bolshevik, Afghanistan will probably be shoved back right to Herat; but up till now Merv is in Afghan hands, and they are discussing on what terms friendship can be retained with Russia. The Massuri Conference has put this finally before them, that they must be friends either of the Bolsheviks or of Great Britain. After a discussion it has been resolved that Afghanistan is to be a friend of Great Britain, and in that case I am afraid that the Afghans might have to retire; but they must endeavour to retain a territory up to Panjdeh—that was undisputedly Afghan territory.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I can throw some light on the matter. I believe what the Sirdar has just told us is true—that Afghan troops, certain detachments of them, are in Merv; but at the same time a very much larger number of Bolsheviks are much farther south in Kushk.

Colonel C. E. YATE, M.P.: At any rate, the Afghan possession of Merv is apparently rather nebulous at the present time. We can hardly say, from what Sirdar Ikbāl Ali Shah has told us, that Merv is now in fact an Afghan possession. Whether the Afghans will eventually turn to the Bolsheviks or to the British we cannot say. At any rate, they do not seem to be in great force at Merv, and I do not think they can have control there at the present time from what has been said. Another curious point was raised. The lecturer told us that Enzeli, a port on the Caspian Sea, was to be the scene of the great battle of the future—battle of the future between what?

The LECTURER: That is what I cannot commit myself to.

Colonel C. E. YATE, M.P.: I am afraid none of us can commit ourselves to it. Enzeli, as we all know, at the present moment, is apparently in the possession of a small force of the Bolsheviks; and, so far as we can gather, the Persian troops, known as the Persian Cossacks, have been driven back, and have retreated through the British lines. I do not know whether they have disbanded themselves or what has happened; but apparently there is a British force

at Kasvin which is holding the road to Tehran. I think we can all agree—all who know Persia—that if there is anything we can reckon on from Persia or the Persian army, it is that very few Persian soldiers will give up their lives to save their country from invasion. That is my experience of the Persian sarbaz as a fighting man. Consequently, the safety of Tehran at the present moment rests very largely with that small British force which is now holding Kasvin. We have seen a considerable Persian force raised in Southern Persia, known as the Southern Persian Rifles, under British officers and non-commissioned officers. They are a disciplined force. What has become of the Persian Cossack force in the north we none of us can say, and whether they will be brought together again, or be able to make a stand against the Bolsheviks, we cannot say either. At present, I think, the defence of Persia against the Bolsheviks seems to rest in British hands. We have a great agitation going on in this country at the present moment to reduce our expenditure in Mesopotamia and evacuate that country. I trust everybody will try to maintain British honour (applause), and not permit this sudden collapse of British prestige in all those regions. We want to see order restored in Mesopotamia. We have heard it said that the Arabs of Mesopotamia are revolting against what, I think, the lecturer described as the high-handedness of British officials. Was not that the expression used?

The LECTURER: Yes.

Colonel C. E. YATE, M.P.: At any rate, the Afghan conception of high-handedness of British officials in Mesopotamia. The British officials in Mesopotamia have done their best to make that country flourish again. They have succeeded to an extraordinary extent, both economically and agriculturally, and the unrest has been caused by the agitators—Bolsheviks and Turks—coming down from the north and inciting the Shiah element among the marsh Arabs and along the Euphrates to come out for loot. That is all they are out for—loot; and, unfortunately, they have got it. But I think they are now being brought to order, and I trust there will be no question of withdrawing until we have restored order. When we have got order by all means let us set up an Arab Council, and Arab Assembly, and let the people have as much Arab rule as they care to be blessed with. Mesopotamia, so far as I know, consists of many chiefs and many tribes, but I do not think any chief or any tribe will acknowledge the overlordship of any other chief or of any other tribe; and they are all, tribes and chiefs, equally determined not to have the overlordship of any outside chief, whether from the Hejaz or anywhere else. There is great diversity among the tribes, and it would be very difficult to find any chief acceptable to all. I do not think we could have a better prospect than the arrangement

made by Sir Percy Cox for an Arab Council under his supervision. I hope that will remain for some time, until we have things straight. The lecturer, again, has told us we ought to have a federation of Persia, Afghanistan, and Bokhara, and he has told us the Ameer of Bokhara is now a refugee at Kabul. I do not know even that he is in Afghanistan; I do not think anybody here knows where the Ameer of Bokhara is at the present time.

The LECTURER: My latest information is that he is in Kabul.

Colonel C. E. YATE, M.P.: The question was asked in the House of Commons two days ago, and the representative of the Foreign Office said he had no information as to where the Ameer of Bokhara was.

The LECTURER: I have no desire to go contrary to the Foreign Office of Great Britain, but I speak from the unofficial information I get.

Colonel C. E. YATE, M.P.: We could wish him safe in Afghanistan. Perhaps Sir Edmund Barrow can tell us?

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think the Government know anything about it at all; they do not know where he is.

Colonel C. E. YATE, M.P.: Nobody, apparently, knows where he is. We will trust he is alive and well, and safely out of the hands of the Bolsheviks; but where he is we cannot say. Well, as to whether an alliance can be formed between Afghanistan, Persia, and Bokhara is a difficult question. We must remember that there is no love lost between Afghans and Persians, and the Afghans undoubtedly could overrun Persia again to-morrow if they wished, if the Persians were to be left to themselves. The Usbeks are not particularly friendly to the Afghans either. Whether they will ever come to a federation such as the lecturer talks about I cannot say. I dare say, if they could, it would result in stability generally throughout Central Asia, but at the present moment I honestly say that my experience of these three races is that it is very difficult to make them combine at all. The lecturer finally spoke a good deal about the independence of Afghanistan. That was a point he raised very strongly. I think all must acknowledge that when the British Government put the Ameer Abdul Rahman on the throne, and agreed to look after his foreign relations and defend him, the British Government did a great deal for Afghanistan; and the independence of Afghanistan rests a great deal on what the British Government did at that time. Now the Afghans claim absolute independence, and, so far as foreign relations are concerned, the British Government has granted it; but that could not have been possible if the British Government had not first of all guaranteed the Ameer Abdul Rahman on his throne, and guaranteed him against foreign interference. I agree with the lecturer that we all wish to see a friendly

and independent Afghanistan; but, with regard to the Ameer, we all remember the uncalled-for and outrageous attack on India, where he was in alliance with the rebels in India in all the Punjab disturbances last year, and we have very serious doubts as to what the real feelings of the present Ameer are. Whether he is going to turn over a new leaf we cannot say. Our lecturer said he hoped to see the Khyber Pass opened and a railway constructed through it. Sir Edmund Barrow has told us how very difficult it is for us to picket the Khyber as it is, and that we cannot allow more caravans through than two days a week. I agree. Some of the Afridis are apparently always ready to snipe the Khyber Pass, according to the telegrams we get, and we have great difficulty in protecting the caravans. Had the General Officer in Command after the last war with the Afghans been instructed to dictate the terms of peace at Dacca in Afghan territory, instead of the Government of India granting an armistice and wasting two months in useless talking at Rawalpindi, and thus giving time to the Afghans to stir up the Border tribes into a rebellion that is not even yet disposed of, how different the case would have been. Had the General dictated the terms of peace, settled himself at Dacca, and held the whole of the Khyber, we might by now have had the prospect of a railway through the Khyber. If we held Dacca at the other end, it would be possible to make the railway right through, but as it is, without Dacca, there is no proper terminus. Under present circumstances I very much doubt if such a line is practicable, but whether that line will ever come about or not will all depend on the friendship now shown to us by the Afghans, and whether they turn to the Bolsheviks or whether they turn to the British. (Applause.)

Colonel A. C. YATE: I am not going to discuss the subject of the lecture, or enter into any political discussion whatever. I have one or two remarks that I should like to make with regard to the lecturer himself. I do not think that an Afghan, as far as I am aware, has ever before lectured to a London audience. (Applause.) It must be three years since I took up the *Edinburgh Review*, and, to my interest and astonishment, saw in it an article manifestly written by an Afghan, and signed "Ikbal Ali Shah." I wrote to Mr. Harold Cox and expressed my extreme interest, and, through Mr. Cox, Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah and I became acquainted. Our acquaintanceship has led, I am glad to say, to his becoming a member of the Central Asian Society, and to his twice coming here and lecturing to us. That is a career for an Afghan in this country which I think so far is unexampled. If there is a previous example, and anybody knows it, I shall be delighted to hear it. Ikbal Ali Shah is leaving this country for Kabul in two or three weeks' time, and I think it must be a matter of interest to us who have known him to consider

what his career there is likely to be. We have heard his political opinions, and I have said to him myself that I hoped he would keep up a correspondence with me. I must say for myself that I shall follow his career with the very greatest interest. We know he is a friend of Britain, and I trust he will produce that good feeling between Afghanistan and Britain which will result both in the development of Afghanistan and the stability of the British Empire in the Middle East.

Colonel PEMBERTON: I think the lecture must have been of great interest to many in this audience, especially to those among us who have had the advantage of visiting Central Asia, as it has been my good fortune to do on two occasions, though it is now twenty-eight years since my travels took me to Bokhara.

You will remember that Russian domination in that part of the world may in a manner be said to date from the capture of Tashkent by General Tcherniaief in 1865, and at the date of my visit in 1892 it was still in process of consolidation.

I must pay the Russians the tribute of saying that their administration seemed good, and in a material sense to be benefiting the country; and it may certainly be claimed for them that they excelled in the rapidity with which they pushed forward railway construction, setting in this respect an example to many nations—the British in India among them.

True, this construction was undertaken chiefly on strategic grounds, but none the less the lines, forming great arteries of trade and traffic, were entirely beneficial in assisting very materially the development of the resources of the country, and its commercial relations with other Asiatic lands as well as with Europe.

Then, too, the Russian Government speedily turned their attention to cotton-growing, developing the industry in a very satisfactory manner; while in the Merv oasis, under the guidance of a foreign expert, our countryman Scott Moncrieff, whose services were lent by the British Government, they restored the elaborate systems of canals cut from the Murghab River, and which as a means of irrigation have from time immemorial maintained the well-known fertility of this island in the desert.

On the whole I think there was little to condemn in the Russian methods of civil administration in Central Asia, when you consider the mode of thought and training and arbitrary ways of the official classes in the days of the Autocracy. True, native prejudices were at times disregarded in a harsh manner, but this would appear to be not easily avoidable in dealing with backward races, and to be justified on occasion when not carried beyond a certain point—notably in such matters as sanitation, the prevention of disease, and avoidance of infection, which concern the health and well-being of the general population. Certain it is, however, that the general

impression in my mind of Russian rule in Asia was at that time a favourable one, and I had the advantage of knowing the language and of having had much intercourse with Russians of all classes in Siberia before entering Turkestan from the north.

I gathered from the remarks of one of the speakers that in his opinion a sense of moral obligation to our late Allies should preclude our dealing with the present political position in Central Asia too strictly on its merits. While sharing to some extent the generous sentiments which lead him to take this view, I do myself feel rather strongly that in the recent war we British loyally played our part, and that we cannot be said to owe Russia anything, and that, if the latter country has come to grief, the fault does not lie with us, nor is it advisable that we should consider our hands tied or our freedom of action fettered at a time like this, when new political forces are at work making for progress and reconstruction, and for a possible regrouping of the native States in those regions of Asia.

In the lecturer we have to-day a man who should certainly command our sympathies, for our relations with Afghanistan have not always been of a happy nature, or such as we can look back upon with satisfaction. Let us hope a happier era has begun; but, as Colonel Yate, than whom no one can speak with greater authority on Afghan matters, very justly observes, the nature of our future relations with that country will depend very largely on the attitude of its ruler and Government.

We must look to the Afghans to play their part, and I doubt whether latterly we have not rather looked in vain, or whether the conciliatory attitude of the Indian Government has been properly appreciated across the border.

Talk about the Khyber Pass being opened! Why, it would be opened at once could the Ameer see his way to co-operate with the Indian authorities in curbing the lawless violence of the local tribes. Railways could span Afghanistan to-morrow if the Afghan Government would give assistance and encouragement instead of placing a veto on their construction.

The Sirdar Ikbāl Ali Shah has laid great stress on the fact that Afghanistan is now a sovereign State. We in this country most truly wish God-speed to Afghanistan as such, but I would remind him that to maintain the status his native land will stand in need of the assistance, both moral and material, of its powerful neighbour in India, and not less of its goodwill. If the kingdoms and khanates of Central Asia are in the future to enjoy security and prosperity, their rulers must, above all, display the true qualities of statesmanship—moderation and political sobriety. Of course, no one who was in Tashkent, Bokhara, and Merv so long ago as 1692, and acquainted with the strength of the Tsarist Government in Central Asia at that time, can be otherwise than amazed at the general *bouleversement*



that has taken place as the result of the great Bolshevik wave which has swept over the land, submerging in its course rulers, Government, peoples, and institutions.

But we have seen so many extraordinary things happen in the world of late that we must now, in a political sense, never rule out anything. None the less, it is difficult to conceive that countries and peoples so different as are Afghanistan, Bokhara, and Persia, should be able to form a federation, however loose the political and military ties connecting them might be; for the racial and religious differences which separate them are both real and acute. In any case it behoves their leaders to remember that should the element of Chauvinism, in the form of Pan-Islamic propaganda, prove to be one of the political motives in the creation of the proposed federation of States, the union would at once forfeit the sympathy and goodwill of the Christian Powers.

It seems to me that the lecturer and the administrators of those countries have much to do before they can accomplish their purpose. Meanwhile, let us accept his assurance that their aspiration is one for safety, progress, and not aggression.

Mr. SKRINE: I should like to make one or two remarks. Like Colonel Pemberton, I am one of the few people in this country who have been in Bokhara, Tashkent, and those parts. I was very kindly received by the Ameer of Bokhara, and it was very grievous news to me to hear that he had been dethroned and exiled. I cannot believe the Afghans are in Merv. It is amazing news. It is a wonderful country; I assure you I have walked round Merv knee-deep in grapes. I could have bought a coolie-load, as much as a man could carry, for a halfpenny. I cannot believe the Afghans have got in there. If they have, all I can say is that the Afghans are Bolsheviks. (Laughter.) It is the devil or the deep sea, I do not know which. One or two little things happened to me in that tour of mine. I was very much interested hearing about Kushk. Looking at the lovely slides we had—they are extraordinarily good—those slides made me feel homesick, and carried me back more than twenty years to when I roamed over those countries. You could almost shut your eyes and fancy you were back there. A funny thing happened at Kushk. I had got some Cossacks who followed me about, but I had a Persian there who was more than a match for the Cossacks. We dodged the Cossacks, and I pitched my two tents on a range of hills south of Kushk, known as the Paropamisus. Those hills are supposed to be a terrible drawback to railway construction; they are really about twice as high as Primrose Hill. Well, I got my tent there, and on the other side of the Kushk River I saw a number of tents pitched. I called to my servant to know what it was. "Oh," he said, that is a regiment of Afghan cavalry." I said, "Will you kindly give my salaams to the colonel and major, and ask them to have a cup

of tea." They rode over in the afternoon on superb horses. These were cast horses from the Ameer's stable, the only horses in Kabul marked with a crescent. They were splendid horses, proud as Jupiter. When they came up to my tent I saw, to my astonishment, on the collar of the colonel "Ticket Collector," and on the other man's collar "Guard"—in English. After salaams we sat down and began to eat, and I said, "Do you know what those words are?" They replied, "Oh no; we do not know what they mean. They are English words; I believe one means 'General,' and the other something like that." I do not know whether I ought to tell you this, but the Ameer, although a very great man, had a frugal mind; and he was in the habit of buying at auction in Peshawar the old cast-off uniforms from the State railways—uniforms previously used by the railway officers. I wish our present Government would take a leaf out of his book without going quite so far as that. (Laughter.) The Turcoman carpets are really marvellous. I cannot for the life of me understand how they are made. They are of most extraordinary, beautiful, and complicated patterns; but the last time I was in Bokhara I found them being ruined by German aniline dyes. They used to use old vegetable dyes. What puzzled me was that they have absolutely no pattern. The pattern is given out in a humming tone by an old woman who learned it from her grandmother, and the weavers work according to her verbal instructions. That is how the thing is done—a most remarkable exhibition of the power of the human memory. I will not say any more beyond expressing the great pleasure I have had in the lecture. Also I have learned a great deal from Colonel Yate and Colonel Pemberton. I thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Colonel E. V. GABRIEL: I should like to express my entire concurrence in the view of Sir Mortimer Durand,\* that we should not criticize but show sympathy with the proposal of the lecturer. Our main preoccupation at the present time is to protect India, not from Russia, but from Bolshevism. (Hear, hear.) Anything that tends towards that end should command our sympathy, and this proposed federation is not necessarily a permanent union of those three States—that might cause trouble in another way; it is merely a protective federation against what we regard as a pernicious political creed that is worming its way through to India. It would be a political federation much in the same way as the Holy Alliance of Metternich in 1814, and might dissolve in the same way. There is another point that I hope Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah will have no doubts about. He

\* It is much to be regretted that no report of Sir Mortimer Durand's brief but, as coming from him, weighty pronouncement on the subject of a Central Asian Federation has reached me. The opinion which I heard him deliver was opposed to that of Mr. W. E. D. Allen and in agreement with that expressed by Colonels Pemberton and Gabriel. He saw no reason why Britain should be other than benevolently passive, if Afghanistan, Persia, and the Khanates formed a confederacy intended to keep Bolshevik Russia at bay.—A. C. Y.

talked about the high-handedness of the British. Well, from the point of view of the Asiatic, I can quite understand what he means. I consider that the action of the British officers in Mesopotamia, which was mentioned by Colonel Yate, was certainly very high-handed. I am recently from the Near East myself, and I have seen many examples of it. I have been secretary on the North-West Frontier, and have seen many examples of it there. I talk about high-handedness from the point of view of Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah; I do not mean that it is actual high-handedness. We have all of us done our best to avoid anything of the kind on the spot; but we have received orders from people sitting in easy-chairs in London sometimes, that have led us to do what we consider on the spot high-handed action. (Hear, hear.) It has gone very much against the grain, and we sympathize entirely with the Asiatic view on that particular point. But these are matters of high policy with which we cannot interfere, and I hope he will not think that British officers on the spot have taken that attitude generally. It is too late to discuss the main question.

The CHAIRMAN: The lecturer will now sum up.

The LECTURER: Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I may be permitted to elucidate one or two points which have arisen. It was not my intention to bring the Persian and the Mesopotamia questions into our present discussion. I am not sure whether, in such a Central Asian Federation, one would propose to amalgamate Persian and Mesopotamian interests with those of Bokhara and Afghanistan. Personally I do not think so. Besides, I do not believe in discussing either of these countries till I have more data in hand than I possess to-day. A friend of ours who spoke before me said something about official thralldom and high-handedness. What I stated was that all officials, whether British or Asian, should not speak to the people from a pedestal. No doubt at times an official is bound down to the traditions of his service, but I know it for a fact that whenever he is made to do something not quite correct he resents it all the time he is doing it. Further, it is my belief—which I have formed through meeting various people in this country—that a British gentleman is very difficult to beat. Some people possess rare abilities, and to my mind they are not only the Empire-makers, but Empire-sustainers; the latter of the two qualities is the more important. What I complained was that no indiscreet remarks should be made to prejudice foreign people in the East, and particularly the Afghans.

Coming to the actual question, I cannot too often emphasize the fact that this federation of Central Asia is purely a defensive measure. Sir Mortimer Durand has, as you have heard, *attested to the truth*. I have done my best in telling you about Bolshevism. I am not an avowed enemy of Russia, I am an avowed enemy of a bad system,

of a destructive scheme. Give it any name you like, as long as it is a bad doctrine I am an enemy to it. As it happens, Bolshevism is a bad system, and as Bolshevism is an enemy of Islam, also an enemy of peace of your Asiatic possessions, I consider it important that, if you cannot help in the federation, you should not hinder its progression. It will be a barrier to stand firm in the way of the Bolsheviks—Bolshevism, the common enemy of yours and ours.

I cannot let another point pass which, although I have discussed it in my paper, has not sufficiently been appreciated. This is a perfectly friendly discussion, and I wish to be nothing but a friend of Great Britain, but I must say that whatever obligations may have been on Amir Abdur Rahman, and whatever the status of his illustrious son, Habibullah Khan, there is no denying the fact that we cannot hear such terms used for Afghan independence as "*Afghanistan has now acquired something like an independence.*" The Afghans have complete independence. The phrase "something like an independence" is the only phrase to which I object. Beyond that I consider what Lord Curzon has said is just and right, and I certainly reckon him as an authority on Eastern matters. The present attitude of the Afghans is friendly towards you; do not do anything which may cause misunderstandings. If you can put in a good word for their cause, go out of your way and try to placate them, and bring sentiments of a lasting friendship, so that we can bring the Central Asian people together. I hope to live to see a day when a complete and sincere friendship will be cemented between the East and the West—certainly between Afghanistan and India. I hope to play my part in the furtherance of that noble task, and I am going to the East with this intention.

My friend Colonel A. C. Yate has told you rightly that I have learned a great deal of the inner life of our British gentlemen. He has praised me, and has given me credit which I do not deserve. It is the result of his own noble-mindedness. I have accomplished nothing as yet, but one thing I have acquired, that being to see the fine points of British character. People had often spoken about so-called Jingo Imperialists. Well, I have met many British gentlemen of varied ways of thinking, but I have not as yet come across one single man who may be styled as Jingo. Those people who really matter in this country have no thought of belittling the East. Mistakes have undoubtedly been made, and which human being is free from faults?

You should make a common cause with the Afghans, and when I go to the East, and you are friendly inclined, medicine would be my secondary work, but I shall devote my attention first to advocate Anglo-Afghan friendship.

I may add, ladies and gentlemen, that whatever line of policy I may adopt, I will first and foremost advocate it for the Afghans.

But as would readily be understood, no politics can be discussed, unless one sides with some really useful and disinterested friend. In Afghanistan potentialities there are in plenty, but the help of someone must be sought to build up a greater nation in Afghanistan. The comparative study of various political doctrines has strengthened my mind that by far the best friend that the Afghans can get is this country. But it is not implied that any exploitation of Afghanistan may be the price paid for its development. For my own part, I do not see any fear of that. It must be a disinterested help, and that kind can only be given by this Government. It is, therefore, for this reason that, in advocating the cause of Afghanistan, I praised Great Britain. On that account people have called me traitor to the East and a pro-British. I regard such allegations with the contempt which they deserve. I have no sympathy with the firebrand Easterner. No country has ever gained anything through the agency of bomb-throwers. Russia is a living example.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I ask you to pass a vote of thanks to the lecturer for what he has told us to-night, I would like to observe that I am sure we here are all in agreement that we wish sincerely for the independence of Afghanistan. I am sure those who have had the most to do with Afghanistan are only anxious to maintain that independence. (Applause.) Further, I would say that I think we are all in agreement with him that the spread of Bolshevism to the East is just as dangerous as the spread of Bolshevism to the West. It is a poison which is being disseminated over the whole world, and anything which will arrest the spread of this poison East and West is, I think, to be welcomed. I hope the lecturer, when he goes back to his own country, will endeavour to impress that view upon all those who have any influence in shaping the course of Afghan politics. (Hear, hear.) Remarks have been made here regarding Mesopotamia and Persia, and I can only say this, that if we ever withdrew—but I will not use the word *ever*, as that connotes the future—if we *now* withdrew from those countries we should undoubtedly see them overrun with Bolshevik ideas; and with that fact before us we know that the poison would soon spread to India; and possibly cause the ruin of the British Indian Empire. (Hear, hear.) I will now conclude by asking you to pass a vote of thanks to the lecturer for having come here to-day to inform us of the views of his own countrymen regarding the several movements that are going on in Central Asia at the present time. (Applause.)

The vote of thanks was unanimously accorded, and this ended the meeting.

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*Note.*—As Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah left for Kabul very soon after delivering this lecture, he requested me to correct his proof. This has been done with every care.—A. C. Y.