

An Officially Independent Afghanistan: Independent Afghanistan

By CLAIR PRICE

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PRINCESS FATIMA SULTANA, cousin to His Highness Amanullah Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, has been in New York on her way from Kabul to England, where two of her sons are to enter Oxford and a third is to trade his turban for an Eton topper. At the same time Mohammed Wali Khan, former Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan Army, has reached New York with his suite en route from Kabul via Tashkent and Moscow to the capitals of the world. The meeting of the two Afghan notables and their suites in New York brings together a greater number of Afghans than have ever congregated at this distance from home.

Even at Oxford, whose student body is one of the most cosmopolitan in the world, there has been heretofore no Afghan colony; the only recent Afghan student at any British school has been the Sirdar Ikkal Ali Shah, at Edinburgh University, and even he returned to Kabul last year after completing his studies. For Afghans heretofore have never traveled and not more than one American in ten years has ever gone up the Khyber Pass and off the map into Afghanistan. Twenty years ago, an American dentist went up to Kabul to attend to the teeth of the great Amir Abdur Rahman Khan; in May, 1911, an American electrical engineer went up to build a power house for the late Amir Habibullah Khan at Jebel-us-Siraj, some forty miles from Kabul; and once I met at Beirut a certain New Yorker with a weird floppy-brimmed cloth hat which he said he had bought in Afghanistan.

Outside of these instances, Americans have probably seen as little of Afghanistan as of any other country on earth, yet before the war Great Britain's Indian Empire was buttressed on the unknown land of Afghanistan. Today, however, the Russian Bear is dead and Afghanistan has suddenly become "officially free and independent, both internal and external."

Before the war three empires met along its northern frontier in Central Asia, and no foreigner ever rode into the mud village of Herat or poked his way up into the vast loneliness of the Pamir plateau without occasioning concern in London, St. Petersburg or Peking, particularly in London or St. Petersburg. London's repeated attempts to define that northern frontier more than once brought it to the verge of war with St. Petersburg, for the northern frontier of Afghanistan was the most exposed fibre—a fibre which St. Petersburg had rubbed raw—in all the highly sensitive nervous system of Indian defense.

Since 1880 London had held it by making Afghanistan a political appendage to the Government of India, defending the Amir in his possession of the throne while London administered his foreign affairs at St. Petersburg. Under this arrangement London finally compelled St. Petersburg in 1887 and 1895 to agree to definitions of the Amir's northern frontier and in the famous Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1907, St. Petersburg abandoned Afghanistan to London in return for a heavy concession in Persia. So the wild country of Afghanistan, which consists of some 250,000 square miles tilting up to the roof of the world, became an Indian frontier State locked in the vise-like grip of an Anglo-Russian treaty. And along India's northwest frontier—a frontier which is utterly unlike any other frontier in the world, a 1,000-mile frontier which belongs to the British by day and to the tribes by night—a period followed of comparative peace.

But today St. Petersburg is dead, the 1907 treaty has disappeared, and Afghanistan automatically has become "officially free and independent, both internal and external." Its Amir Habibullah Khan, whose

iron loyalty had saved the British from being stabbed in the back in India, was assassinated on Feb. 20, 1919, and all the pent-up passions of the war period broke loose in Afghanistan. His younger brother, Nasrullah Khan, Afghan Commander-in-Chief and idol of a fanatical war party, seized the throne at Kabul, but was convicted in open durbar of murdering the Amir and was dethroned.

With the late Amir's third son, Amanullah Khan, now enthroned, Nasrullah's powerful following rushed pell-mell into an invasion of India, but was hurled back by the Indian army. Having occupied Dakke within the Afghan frontier beyond the Khyber Pass, the Indian army immediately evacuated it, granted a two months' armistice and in the provisional Treaty of Rawal Pindi, signed in August, 1919, confirmed Afghanistan's independence, postponing the elaboration of a permanent Anglo-Afghan understanding pending developments in Central Asia, which was then in a state of the most complete chaos.

Immediately the tribes along India's northwest frontier began to boil, attacking for the first time in the long and stormy history of the frontier with modern rifles and in modern military formation. The frontier was still a-boil when, at the Anglo-Afghan Conference of Mussoorie in 1920, the Government of India announced its intention of extending its military railway from Jemrud, at the Indian end of the Khyber Pass, some thirty miles through the pass to Lendi Kotal, which lies in the Afghan entrance to the pass and just across the Afghan line from Dakke. The new Amir Amanullah Khan favored the proposed Khyber Railway, but the fiery Afghan nationalism, which had rushed into an invasion of India in revenge for the dethroning of its idol Nasrullah, contended that the

railway would make it the more difficult for Afghanistan to disagree with the Government of India, and thus constituted a threat to Afghanistan's independence. Already Amanullah had been forced to appoint his first Foreign Minister and the Ministry of Sardar-i-Ale Mahmud Beg Khan Tarzi, publisher of the Kabul newspaper Sitaraj-ul-Akhhair, had become a rallying point for Afghan national pride. Sardar Mahmud Tarzi had at once become one of the busiest Foreign Ministers in any capital. The British Khyber Railway proposition had no sooner become known than he secured Djemal Pasha, former Turkish Commander in Chief on the Palestine front, who, with Enver Pasha and Talaat Pasha, had been one of Turkey's Big Three during the war, and made him Minister for War in Amanullah's new Cabinet. Djemal opened an Afghan Military College, imported forty Turkish officers from London; to whip the Afghan Regular Army into shape, and began training mountain batteries and throwing up hill redoubts overlooking the Afghan end of the Khyber.

In the meantime, Amanullah had no sooner been enthroned than the Nationalists had forced him to dispatch Mohammed Wali Khan to Tashkent en route to Paris, where he was to persuade the Peace Conference to confirm Afghanistan's independence; but with Kolchak holding the Orenburg-Tashkent railway and the British holding the Transcaspians line, he was hung up in Tashkent until Kolchak's retreat opened the Orenburg line, when he left Tashkent for Moscow instead. Here Mahmud Tarzi used him to draw up a Russo-Afghan treaty with which to frighten the Government of India, out of its Khyber railway scheme. This treaty, which was signed last Feb. 28 at Moscow, contains clauses which would make any dead viceroys of India sit up in his

shrouds and shriek, but in view of the provisions of the Anglo-Russian trade agreement, it is possible that the Russian Government has refrained from ratifying it.

In it the Russian Government agrees to give the Amir a "yearly free subsidy of 1,000,000 rubles in gold or silver, in coin or bullion"; to place at the disposal of "the sovereign Government of Afghanistan" technical and other specialists; to extend the Russian telegraph system from Kushk via Herat and Kandahar to Kabul; to receive seven Afghan Consuls and to assign Russian Consuls to Herat, Maimana, Mazar-i-Sheriff, Kandahar and Gazni, but "without the right of giving asylum to persons whom the local Government officially recognizes as having broken the laws of the country"; to return certain northern frontier provinces which St. Petersburg had taken from Afghanistan by arrangement with London; to recognize the independence of Bokhara and Khiva; and finally "not to enter with any third State (presumably Great Britain) into any military or political agreement which would damage one of the contracting parties."

All this was to take effect "within two months after the present treaty becomes valid," but so far as the present writer knows the present treaty has not yet become valid. Having drawn it, however, Mohammed Wali was sent from Moscow to Angora, whence, after concluding a Turco-Afghan treaty, he embarked with the rest of his mission on a tour of Europe's capitals (except London), announcing the independence of his country and endeavoring to reach the bases of commercial conventions. This is his present purpose in visiting Washington.

Whether the Russo-Afghan Treaty is to be taken seriously or otherwise, there can be no doubt however that the Turco-Afghan Treaty is to be

taken very seriously. It is the first definite move out of the chaos into which Islam has been thrown by the break-up of the old Turkish Empire and the proclamation of the Treaty of Sevres. It is the first step toward the formation of an entente between the Turkish Caliph and the Sunni Moslem peoples of the old Russian Empire, potentially the strongest group of Moslem peoples in the world, but a group which had been steadily declining for ten centuries until the old Russian Empire fell.

Mahmud Tarzi is already negotiating with Teheran to fetch the Shi'ah Moslems of Persia into it and to make it a Moslem league of nations stretching continuously from the Bosphorus to Bengal Bay.

In its planning, it is nothing new. As far back as 1889 Amir Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan, stung by the loss of Panjdeh to Russia in the Anglo-Russian demarcation of his frontier two years before, attempted to persuade the Shah Nasraddin of Persia to admit the suzerainty of the Turkish Caliph, Sultan Abdul Hamid. This Pan-Islamic scheme was so far-reaching in its scope that it at last resulted in the project for a conference of all Islam at Mecca in 1902, but Abdul Hamid's fear that his Arab populations would use the conference to aid their secessionist program led him to quash the conference and Pan-Islamism gave way to the new Pan-Turanian program. This was a scheme under which the Tartar Moslems were to shelve the Arabs who had given Islam to the world, the Turkish tongue was to supplant Arabic as the sacred language of Islam and all Arabic words were to be rooted out of the Turkish language.

It was too large a morsel for conservative Islam to swallow, and Pan-Turanianism followed Pan-Islamism into oblivion. As a rigorously restricted political program, however, the project of wading the Tartar

peoples against Russia's further advance maintained a fitful but vigorous life. For the old Russian Empire by this time had become the life-and-death enemy of Islam. Moslems of the older generation have not yet forgotten a letter which the Russian General Kaufmann sent his Government through Count Schouvaloff, Russian Ambassador in London in 1876, proposing that the Russian and British Empires divide Asia into spheres of influence and branding Islam as the enemy of the West.

Islam has watched the old Russian Empire befall the name of its Turkish Caliph by engineering Armenian massacres from Constantinople and Tiflis; it has watched Russia ruthlessly stamping out the independence of Persia; and in Central Asia it has never forgotten the appalling massacres with which Russian Cossacks smashed the Moslem States of Bokhara and Khiva. The Amir of Afghanistan had seen Russian treachery at work in the theft of the Panjdeh province in 1885; he had seen his Shiguan and Roshan provinces on the Pamir plateau—wild empty country which commands some of the easiest passes into India—ceded to Russia in 1895; he had seen the Armenians, Russian Jews and Persian traders who inhabit the half of the Selistan weaken his rule until it hung only on British goodwill; and he had seen Russian money flowing so rapidly that he had to change his Herat garrison every two months.

Herat has more than once been called "the throat of India"; and, indeed, a better name for the Berlin-Baku-Bokhara scheme which succeeded the old Berlin-to-Bagdad scheme upon the British capture of Bagdad—would be the Hamburg-Herat scheme. He had seen Russian railroads close in on his northern frontier until Bokhara City became a standing threat to Balkh, and the Murghab Valley spur to Kushk enabled the Bear to threaten Herat with the fate of Panjdeh. To the south he had seen the British Lion make New Chaman a railhead which threatened Kandahar, and Jamrud a railhead which threatened the Khyber and Kabul. In this desperate situation he had made what terms he could with the Lion, knowing that Islam had never in its thirteen centuries of life known an enemy like the Russian Bear.

When the war broke out in 1914 the Court at Kabul was divided into two parties, one led by the Amir's stepmother, Bibi Helima, which backed him in sticking loyally to the British, the other led by his younger brother, Nasrullah Khan, which demanded that he seize the chance of powerful alliance in making war on Russia and on Russia's British ally, Nagrullah's war party grew by leaps and bounds despite the fact that Amir Habibullah Khan fought it with every resource at his command. He confronted it personally when in November, 1914, he strode onto Kabul Bridge in royal state and holding the Koran in his hand, declaimed to his enemies: "These Feringhis [British] are our friends. [A pause.] They are my friends. [Another pause.] I, the Light of Faith, I, the Torch of the Nation, have decreed, and now repeat my decree, that no subject of mine shall lift a finger against the Feringhis."

He was still sticking loyally to the British when the Russian Bear fell in 1917, and all of Central Asia fell with it into the most complete confusion, with 150,000 German and Austrian prisoners loosed, with 15,000,000 pounds of Turkestan cotton waiting for an owner at Ferghana and Samarkand, and with a "Provisional Government of India" bobbing about like a cork in the chaos.

The British East India Cordon had immediately seized the old Russian Transcaspians Railway and as soon as the Turkish armistice was signed on Oct. 30, 1918, the British command at Constantinople held a single front which extended all the way from the Bosphorus to the back of China. Habibullah Khan had reached enough of an understanding with Said Mir Alim Khan, the Amir of Bokhara, so that when

Lieut. Col. F. M. Bailey, C. I. E., of the Indian Political Service, reached Bokhara City from Tashkent late in 1919 disguised as an Austrian officer in the Bolshevik Secret Service, he counted himself at last on friendly soil. But in the meantime Habibullah Khan had been assassinated, Nasrullah's war party had overwhelmed the new Amir Amanullah Khan, the East Persia Cordon had hurried back into India, and on Aug. 20, 1920, a Bolshevik revolution in Bokhara City had sent the Amir fleeing into Afghanistan and had set up in his place a Bokhara Republic.

With the Nasrullah party running Afghanistan Mahmud Tarzi quickly received Yusuf-Zade Khan, the envoy of the new Bokhara, at Kabul, and began negotiating an Afghan-Bokharan entente with him. An Afghan envoy was dispatched to Teheran to bring Persia into the new entente and last April Mohammed Veli Khan signed the Turco-Afghan Treaty at Angora. By this treaty, of which only an official summary has been given out, Afghanistan recognizes the Turkish Caliphate, both signatories recognize the independence of Bokhara and Khiva and both bind themselves to sign no treaty with "any alien imperialism" without the knowledge of the other.

Meanwhile, the Government of India, having withdrawn the East Persia Cordon when the assassination of Habibullah threatened its rear, was confronted again with the problem of its northwest frontier. This is an area of difficult foothills, garrisoned by isolated pickets of British and Indian troops, whose combined strength has never exceed-

ed 50,000 and whose job is that of making 500,000 semi-independent tribesmen behave themselves. French gun-running at Muscat, in the Persian Gulf, which continued right down to 1914, has helped to make the northwest frontier heavily expensive for the British ever since 1849; in fact, the only reason the British have been able to hold it is because the tribes have never been able to agree either among themselves or with the Amir of Afghanistan in their rear, who is himself the crux of the frontier situation.

Various moves have been urged upon the Government of India for the solution of its chronic frontier problem. From the occupation of the Independent Territory to the occupation of Afghanistan up to Kandahar and Kabul. But the memory of the Anglo-Afghan war of 1839, when General Euphrates's expeditionary force was literally wiped out of existence in the greatest disaster which British arms have ever known in India, has contributed to the Government of India's conservatism respecting proposals to occupy Afghan territory.

In these circumstances the Government of India has heretofore secured the loyalty of Afghanistan by granting its Amir a subsidy of £120,000 a year, leaving the Commander in Chief, Indian Army, to attend to individual tribes along the frontier as necessity might arise. This arrangement had prevailed since 1880, when the war broke out in 1914. It was then found necessary to disband certain native Indian regiments whose loyalty was uncertain and whose personnel returned to the frontier tribes. The use of the Indian Army thereafter in France,

Egypt, Syria, German East Africa and Mesopotamia diluted the garrison in India to such a point that in the recent Mahsud campaign on the frontier one of the Brigadiers in command was compelled to station his own pickets, so inexperienced were his officers in the difficult tactics of frontier warfare.

Meanwhile, as soon as the fall of Russia abrogated the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1907 and removed Afghanistan automatically from the Government of India's control, new lines of communication were driven into the foothills in readiness for any situation which might arise as a result of Afghanistan's independence. Among these was a second road to Khyber Pass which proved of the highest usefulness in throwing back the Afghan troops who swarmed across the frontier on May 2, 1919. Quickly evacuating Dakka rather than increase its already great difficulties on the frontier, the Government of India stipulated in the Treaty of Rawal Pindi a boundary revision in the West Khyber where the Afghan troops had crossed, and at the Mussoorie Conference last year, the Government's decision to add the 30-mile Khyber Railway to its lines of frontier communication became known. Much might be said for this railway as the first step toward the 400-mile Transafghanistan Railway, which will one day connect the Indian State railways with the Russian Orenburg-Tashkent line and bring Bombay within seven days of London; but at present East meets West as unmistakably at the Khyber as at the Bosphorus, and the Khyber Railway scheme aroused such feeling at

Kabul that further Anglo-Afghan conversations became necessary.

Accordingly, early this year the Government of India dispatched Sir Henry Dobbs, C. I. E., to Kabul with a mission whose accompaniment included a wireless set. With all of Islam thrown into a state of violent unrest, with the Afghan Government negotiating a Russo-Afghan treaty whose provisions were calculated to send cold chills up any British spine, with the frontier boiling with "self-determination" behind it, the Dobbs Mission entered the "Sovereign State of Afghanistan" at an exceedingly delicate moment. It was housed in the Arq Palace at Kabul, and the Arq Palace was made the scene of an official celebration on March 4 of Afghanistan's independence, with the Dobbs Mission as especial guests of honor.

Here in the great Durbar Hall, some 120 feet long, with massive pillars of green and pink marble supporting its lofty ceiling, 800 Afghan notables stood in full military and civil regalia, facing the dais where the Amir's arms were emblazoned in gold. In front of them, before the dais, the Dobbs Mission was seated between Djemal Pasha, the Turkish War Minister of Afghanistan, clad in plain khaki with a black astrakhan fez, and Mahmud Sami Pasha, Turkish head of the Afghan Military College. The shrill half and quarter tones of the Afghan national anthem heralded the entry of the Amir Amanullah Khan, a small, black-eyed figure with the diamond star of the new Order of the Alaman blazing from the front of his astrakhan fez, with the diamond collar of the order on his breast and its

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The Afghan and His Neighbors.

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scarlet cloak falling from his shoulders.

Sardar Abdul Azla, his Minister for Home Affairs, advanced to the foot of the dais and read a long congratulatory address in Persian to the Amir, recounting the opening of various new schools throughout the country, including a girls' school in Kabul, the opening of the Jebal-us-Siraj electric power station which operates the Kabul arsenal, the opening of a new system of telegraphs and telephones, the founding of new newspapers, new Ministries in the Cabinet and a new system of war pensions. The Amir, then left the Arq and, attended by Sir Henry Dobbs, Djemal Pasha, and General

Nadir Khan, Afghan Commander in Chief, walked through the Arq gardens to the banqueting room in Dilkusha Palace, which had been hung with rich silks for the occasion. Here after a program by the pupils of the military college and of the war orphans' home, the Amir finally addressed the Dobbs Mission at some length. Talking in Persian, the language of the Kabul Court, he said that "Afghanistan desires to be friendly toward other Governments and wishes to live on terms of mutual friendship, provided—"

And there the Amir's speech abruptly ended. What happens in Afghanistan's "officially free and independent" capital during the next twelve months will finish the sentence.