

the night of November 2, moved his ship into the Shaṭṭ near ḲAbādān to better protect the refinery. The campaign in Mesopotamia had begun.¹⁸

KHAZḲAL AND THE OPENING OF THE MESOPOTAMIAN CAMPAIGN

The expeditionary force, after pausing to capture the Turkish telegraph station at Fao, moved up the Shaṭṭ and disembarked on the Turkish bank at Sanīyah, two miles up river from ḲAbādān. The troops were all ashore by November 10.¹⁹

Sir Percy Cox, who had received Hardinge's permission to accompany the expedition as Chief Political Officer, quickly established constant communications with Shaykh KhazḲal. The assurance which Cox had already been authorized to grant on the opening of hostilities had been reaffirmed (see note V-13), and he determined to enlist KhazḲal's help at once. His foresight was rewarded. On the night of the 10th, KhazḲal sent word that the Turks opposite Muḥammarah, ten miles up river from the British perimeter camp, were preparing to attack. At three a.m. he signaled that the Turkish troops were moving. Warned, the British easily repulsed the assault. Delamain, the General Officer Command-

¹⁸Ibid., 8; Corbett, *Naval Operations*, Vol. I, 392; Knox to Government of India, Tel., Bushihr, October 24, 1914, F.O. 371/2142; Mallet to Grey, Tel. No. 1079, Very Confidential, Constantinople, October 28, 1914, F.O. 371/2142.

¹⁹Corbett, *Naval Operations*, Vol. I, 391-92; Barker, *Bastard War*, 26-27.

ing, conveyed through Cox his "most hearty thanks."²⁰

On the 14th, the victorious expeditionary force was joined by the remainder of the 6th Poona Division, who brought the disturbing news that Shi^ci divines in Iraq and ^cArabistān were preaching the jihād against the British. Captain Ranking, the Vice Consul at Aḥwāz, warned that a certain Shaykh ^cĪsā was holding meetings every night, hoping to stir Khaz^cal's subjects to join. Khaz^cal "managed to settle the mullahs" at Muḥammarah and sent word to his son at Aḥwāz to "deal with Sheikh Isa."

So far, there had been no overt signs of disaffection among Khaz^cal's subjects, but the British were understandably jittery about the prospect of a holy war. And their nervousness increased when shortly afterward Khaz^cal received messages from the leading Mujtahids of Najaf warning him as a Shi^ci prince to join the jihād. Simultaneously the Wāli of Baṣrah and the Turkish troop commander urged him to join forces with them.

Khaz^cal told Cox that he thought the religious leaders were acting under duress and he had replied to both the divines and the Turks that "apart from other considerations, his obligations as a Persian subject to preserve his neutrality made it out of the question for him to entertain such a

²⁰Graves, Sir Percy Cox, 181; Cox to Major A. P. Trevor, Consul, Muḥammarah, Tel., ^cĀbādān, November 11, 1914, F.O. 460/4.

proposal." To this the Turkish commander replied that Khaz^{Cal}'s name "stinks in the nostrils of the Arabs" and threatened to attack Muḥammarah at once unless the Shaykh joined Turkey. To give point to his threat, he massed a force of Arabs at Khaz^{Cal}'s border on the left bank of the river. But he was, for the moment, careful not to violate the Persian frontier.

Cox took the threat seriously and wired Townley in Tehran to induce the Persian Government to pressure the Mujtahids into stopping the agitation against Shaykh Khaz^{Cal} and the British.²¹ He sent a request to the naval commander asking that the steamer Comet, anchored off Muḥammarah, leave Persian waters so as not to imply Khaz^{Cal}'s countenance of this violation of Persian neutrality. And he recommended to General Barrett, Commander of the now reunited division, that the British "press on past Mohammerah with all practicable dispatch."

As a result, Barrett immediately--on October 14th--

²¹As a result, the Persian Government, which was completely dominated by the war-united Russia and Britain, expressed "great satisfaction" at the attitude adopted by the Shaykh of Muḥammarah "in answer to appeals and threats addressed to him." They even promised to keep news of the telegrams from leaking out although the Shāh, Ministers, and Majlis, as "true Moslems," had been urged to join the jihād and to order Shaykh Khaz^{Cal} to defend those "most important outposts of Islam"--Baṣrah and Muḥammarah--against the infidel British. Cox to Townley, Tel., Bushihr, November 15, 1914, F.O. 371/2143; Cox to Townley, Tel., ḌAbādān, November 16, 1914, F.O. 371/2143; Townley to F.O., Tel. No. 342, Tehran, November 18, 1914, F.O. 371/2080; Townley to F.O., Tel. No. 349, Tehran, November 20, 1914, F.O. 371/2080.

sent out a reconnaissance-in-force to drive in a Turkish outpost a few miles up river. On the 17th, after heavy resistance, he pushed the Turks out of a fortified position at Sahil.

Khaz^{Cal} sent word that the enemy was regrouping just up river from Muḥammārah in what appeared to be their main defensive position and that they had sunk three vessels to block the channel of the lower Shaṭṭ, hoping to prevent the deadly British flotilla of small warships from again turning their flank. Therefore, on the 19th, the Espiègle shelled the Turkish position, drove off the covering Turkish gunboat Marmaris, and investigated the obstruction. It could be negotiated. (A cable had parted at the last moment, and the Hamburg-Amerika liner Ecbetana had swung out of position with the tide as she settled to the bottom.)

Barrett ordered another advance for the dawn of the 21st, but once again Shaykh Khaz^{Cal} sent valuable intelligence. The Turks, his scouts reported, had abandoned their new position and indeed even Baṣrah itself. The city was occupied without incident.²²

Shortly after this, Shaykh Khaz^{Cal} came to Cox suggesting that changes be made in the wording of his assurance. The

²²Corbett, Naval Operations, Vol. I, 403-07; Barker, Bastard War, 27-30; Wilson, Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914-1917, 10; Captain Ranking, Vice Consul, Ahwāz, to Trevor, Tel. No. 228, Ahwāz, November 14, 1914, F.O. 460/4; Trevor to Ranking, Tel. No. 188, Muḥammārah, November 14, 1914, F.O. 460/4.

reference to aiding the British in their attack on the Turks was embarrassing to his "neutral" position. Cox agreed and early in 1915 secured Hardinge's approval when the latter made his viceregal tour of the Mesopotamian front. The approved version was back-dated to November 21st, the date of Basrah's occupation by victorious British forces. The terms were essentially those put forward in June 1914 which, by this time, had been approved by the authorities in London. They were as follows:

With reference to the assurances conveyed to Your Excellency in my letter No. 307 dated the 15th October 1910 (11th Shawwal 1328) and having regard to the further valued services and cooperation which Your Excellency has rendered to the British Government and to British interests in Arabistan and the Shatt-el-Arab, I am now authorized to assure Your Excellency personally, and do so by this writing, that whatever change may take place in the form of the Government of Persia, and whether it be Royalist or Nationalist, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to afford you the support necessary for obtaining a solution satisfactory both to yourself and to us in the event of any encroachment by the Persian Government on your jurisdiction and recognized rights or on your property in Persia. In like manner they will safeguard you to the best of their ability against any unprovoked attack by a Foreign Power or against any encroachment by such Power on your said jurisdiction and recognized rights or on your property in Persia. These assurances are given for yourself and for your successors from among your male descendants and shall hold good so long as you and they do not fail to observe your and their obligations towards the Persian Government provided always that the nomination of your successors from among your male descendants shall be subject to confidential consultation with, and the approval of His Majesty's Government, and so long as you and they shall continue to be guided by the advice of his Majesty's Government and to maintain an attitude satisfactory to the Government.

Vis-a-vis the Persian Government, we shall do our best to maintain Your Excellency in your present state of local autonomy.

Further, the date gardens which you now possess

on the Turkish side of the Shatt-el-Arab shall remain in full possession of you and your heirs and immune from taxation.²³

These terms provided no great advance over those granted in 1910, except for the British, who gained greater control over the choice of Khaz^cal's successor and over the Arab amirate's internal affairs by the insistence on British advice being followed and a "satisfactory attitude" being maintained.²⁴ The terms did differ from the earlier 1914 assurance--which was delivered privately and secretly--in that they were more binding on the Shaykh in respect to remaining loyal to the Persian Government.

In view of Khaz^cal's earlier experience of this kind, when one assurance had been granted for the examination of his tribesmen and a different version for his eyes alone, it is quite possible that he regarded the earlier draft as the true one, the second as purely for popular perusal. This, in fact, seems to be the case, because he requested that the second version omit all references to his active cooperation with the British in their capture of Baṣrah. His de facto aid to Britain had been substantial enough without de jure evidence of it being held before the eyes

²³Cox to Khaz^cal, November 21, 1914, F.O. 371/2489 and F.O. 371/19997; Cox to Government of India, Tel., Baṣrah, April 1, 1915, F.O. 371/2489.

²⁴Since these were, in fact, the last assurances ever to be granted the Shaykh with London's approval, they determined the Home Government's legal obligations to Khaz^cal in the years which followed.

of neutral Persia or belligerent Turkey in an official undertaking.²⁵

There is also some basis for the supposition that the Government of India regarded the earlier assurance as the one to be implemented. The whole imperialistic flavor of India's Mesopotamian campaign lends credence to this idea. Cox, on November 27, requested permission to announce that Britain's occupation of Basrah would be permanent. Lord Hardinge concurred and forwarded the request to London. He realized that a public announcement might be embarrassing, but a private assurance from London to that effect would be sufficient for India to proceed in setting up a permanent administration--not to mention settling forever "the question of Gulf supremacy," insuring the "safety and development of Abadan, "securing the "position of Khazal and Mubarak," and ending the "issue of the Baghdad Railway terminus."

London, especially Grey at the Foreign Office, opposed annexation. This disapproval did not prevent Hardinge from wiring Cox that while the British Government could not, for fear of international complications, announce permanent British occupation, "we ought, I think, to base our administration on that hypothesis." Cox's valued subordinate, A. T. Wilson, put the issue more bluntly--"I should like to see it announced that Mesopotamia was to be annexed to India as

²⁵Cox to Government of India, Basrah, April 1, 1915, F.O. 371/2480

a colony for India and Indians. . . "26

If Indian officials intended to change Başrah from a Turkish vilayet into an Indian district, in clear violation of directives from London--as seems to be the case--no great stretch of the imagination is required to suppose that those same officials were considering changing Muḥammarah into an Indian "native state." By extension of the argument it seems probable that the concealment from London of the terms of the earlier 1914 assurance was deliberate. It was also deliberate that KhazCak was not enjoined by this assurance to remain loyal to the Persian Government: this would facilitate his declaration of independence and India's declaration of a formal protectorate.

In any case, the auspicious proceedings occasioned by Britain's capture of Başrah were marred somewhat by disturbing reports from upcountry and from Tehran.

Townley wired expressing his fear that the content of telegrams from the Mujtahids of Najaf and the Turks calling on the Persian Government to join the jihād might eventually leak out. He was uncertain as to how the news might affect the people or the position of the Shaykh of Muḥammarah. Although the telegrams were suppressed as far as possible by complaisant Persian authorities, it was then, as ever, impossible to keep secrets in Tehran. "The latest," Townley wired Grey, "call on Prime Minister and Shah to see that

²⁶Busch, Britain, India, and the Arabs, 21-22.

Sheikh of Mohammerah and frontier officials do not assist infidels. Former is specially accused of assisting British expedition in its advance on Basra, and Shah is exhorted to summon him to Ispahan or Tehran. It is hinted that refusal to obey would be punished by Assassination."

The Persian Prime Minister, however, solemnly assured the British Minister that the actions of the Shaykh of Muḥ-ammarah had their full approval and that he had done nothing without consulting them.²⁷ Yet the Persian Government's approval, even if sincere, meant little. The Government was powerless. The new Majlis which had opened in December only provided a forum for chaos, and the country itself was sliding rapidly toward anarchy and foreign occupation.

Meanwhile, from Ranking at Aḥwāz came news that indicated that Townley's fears were realized. "From a source which I believe reliable," the Vice Consul reported, "I have received information to the effect that for some time past the Arab tribes have been wavering in their allegiance to the Sheikh." Their disaffection was accentuated by the adherence to the Turkish cause of Shaykh Ghaḍbān, paramount chief of the powerful border tribe of Banū Lam and an old arch-foe of Khazāal. Ranking continued,

²⁷Townley to F.O., Tel. No. 348, Tehran, November 20, 1914, F.O. 371/2080; Townley to Grey, Tel. No. 367, Secret, Tehran, December 9, 1914, F.O. 371/2080; Townley to Grey, Tel. No. 369, Tehran, December 11, 1914, F.O. 371/2080.

I hear now that a section of the Chab . . . are disaffected, their feeling being augmented by fanatical preaching. It is said that they are awaiting the signal to murder Sheikh--and rise against Sheikh of Mohammerah. The signal is unknown but probably some hostile action on the part of Gasban, the Turks, or the Persian Govt.²⁸

THE REBELLION AGAINST THE SHAYKH

The hostile act, if not the assassination attempt, was not long in coming. In January 1915, Shaykh Ghadbân and a large contingent of the Banū Lām--acting as auxiliaries to Turkish forces under the command of Muḥammad Faḍal Pāsha al-Daghastāni and accompanied by "men of religion"--crossed into the Hawīzah district. To the surprise of many observers, the Shi'ī Banū Turuf joined the Sunnī Turks and their hereditary enemies the Banū Lām in the jihād.²⁹ Within a few days, Bisitayn and Hawīzah had gone over to their old foes against their old overlord.

That the Shaykh's tribes should revolt was in no way surprising. Khaz'āl was a zealous tax collector, a grasping landlord, an expansionist ruler. His government, in terms of its time, place, and society, was effective and therefore burdensome to the governed. The Banū Turuf had risen against the Shaykh at frequent intervals, and their rising

²⁸Ranking to Trevor, Tel. No. 237, Ahwāz, November 20, 1914, F.O. 460/4.

²⁹Al-Hilū, Al-Ahwāz: ḶArabistān, III, 108; Wilson, Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914-1917, 23-24, 27; Towmley to F.O., Tel. No. 28, Tehran, January 26, 1915, F.O. 371/2080.