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Iran - 1951

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PERSIA

I took an opportunity yesterday evening of finding out what Miss Lambton thought about the present position in Persia. She is, as you know, now lecturer in Persian at the School of Oriental Studies and, as such, in close touch with Persians in this country. For most of the war she was Press Attaché at our Embassy in Tehran and, both before and after then, has spent long periods in Persia and probably knows the language and mentality of its people better than anyone else in this country.

Miss Lambton who knows Mr. Moussadek, but not really well, is of the decided opinion that it is not possible to do business with him. She therefore thinks that it is right to make no concessions to the present Prime Minister except to the minimum extent needed to maintain some degree of order in Southern Persia, if this is possible.

Miss Lambton suggested that H.M.G. should, about a month ago, have quietly strengthened up their Public Relations side in Tehran with a view by covert means

- (a) to under-mine the position of Mr. Moussadek; and
- (b) to give encouragement to the substantial body of Persian friends we still have who are unlikely to show their faces and risk being called traitors without some support.

Miss Lambton feels that without a campaign on the above lines it is not possible to create the sort of climate in Tehran which is necessary to change the régime.

More specifically, and probably because this is what is being said by Persians in London, Miss Lambton thinks that the sort of delusion which should be corrected by suitable action on the above lines is that even if all Anglo-Iranian staff leaves Persia and the Persians are not able to sell more than, say, five or ten million tons of oil a year instead of 30 million tons as at present, they will be better off than they are now if they get the full vast profit on the smaller quantity.

I asked Miss Lambton whether she had any further suggestions as to how the sort of campaign she had in mind might be conducted. She said that the ideal man to do it would be Dr. Zaehner, a British subject of Swiss origin who is now lecturer in Persian in Oxford, attached to Christchurch. Dr. Zaehner was apparently extremely successful in covert propaganda in 1944 at the time that there was a serious threat that the Russians would take over Azerbaijan. He knows almost everyone who matters in Tehran and is a man of great subtlety. The line then was, of course, to mobilise public opinion from the bazaars upwards about the dangers of Russian penetration.

Although, as I previously knew, Miss Lambton has thought for years that the Anglo-Iranian attitude in Persia has been, to say the least of it, unimaginative, she ascribes the present crisis to the complete failure of successive Persian governments to

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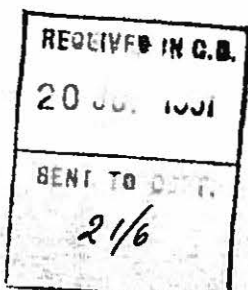
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administer the national finances properly and to raise the standard of living. The Anglo-Iranian are therefore the scape-goats and have been an easy prey owing to their complete failure to make their own achievements known in Persia.

Miss Lambton is well-aware of the danger that Mr. Moussadek might be followed by someone worse, but she thinks that a good deal can be done now and has been done in the past, to influence the choice of the successor. In her opinion, the best man would be Mr. Zia. He is of course, regarded as pro-British but in fact he is pro-Persian whilst being friendly to us. If he refused, she thinks the next best man would be Mr. Qavam, provided that Mr. Zia was a member of his government; or again failing Mr. Qavam, Mr. Soheily, Persian Ambassador in London although he would certainly not be keen, and could not be expected to do more than set up a provisional government.

Conclusion

I have no doubt that you have already given thought to the strengthening of the Public Relations staff in Tehran, and to the sort of things suggested by Miss Lambton. I am inclined to think that in spite of the well-known views of the Americans on matters of this kind, when it comes to other countries and not themselves, the suggestion of sending Dr. Zaehner to Tehran is worthy of consideration.

I attach a spare copy of this in case you care to send it to Sir F. Shepherd.

E. A. Berthoud
E. A. Berthoud
15th June, 1951.

Mr. Bowker.

This connects up with our talk with Col. Wheeler yesterday & should be considered in the light of the results of his consultation with Miss Lambton which we want to have today.

Mr. Farlowe.

R. G. J.
15/6

This has now been written by 5th development. 19.6