



The Hongkong Government Gazette Extraordinary.

Published by Authority.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1914.

The following Notification is published,

By command,

CLAUD SEVERN,
Colonial Secretary.

NOTICES.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT.

No. 422.—The following statement concerning relations with Turkey is published by direction of His Majesty's Government.

CLAUD SEVERN,
Colonial Secretary.

2nd November, 1914.

The attitude adopted by the Turkish Government in regard to the German Men-of-War *Gorben* and *Breslau* aroused great misgiving in London, Paris and St. Petersburg. These ships were flying from the French and British Fleets in the Mediterranean and took refuge in the Dardanelles where by the rules of international law and under Turkish treaties they should have been laid up by the Turkish Government and their crews detained until the close of the war, or made to leave for the open sea at the end of twenty-four hours.

Instead the ships were allowed to remain in shelter and to exercise on a basis of belligerent rights, and then it was suddenly announced that they had been purchased by Turkey who retained the German crews and dismissed the British Admiral from his executive command of the Turkish Fleet.

At the same time the passage of the Dardanelles was sown with mines and all British merchant vessels in those waters or coming through from the Black Sea were held up, first on the pretext that their cargoes were wanted for troops whom Turkey was mobilizing, and then that the presence of mines rendered it unsafe for the vessels to proceed. This was not only totally unjustifiable interference on the part of a neutral state with the trade of Great Britain involving both shippers and merchants in heavy loss but it paralysed the movements of all British shipping in the Black Sea, amounting at the time to sixty or seventy vessels, since not only was it impossible to get through into the Mediterranean, but there was nothing to prevent the *Goeben* and *Breslau* passing into the Black Sea and destroying all the shipping collected there. The Dardanelles have now been closed in defiance of international treaty.

Another reason for grave disquietude has been the unfriendly treatment by responsible Turkish officials in Bagdad and Mesopotamia of British subjects and the open incitement of the population by Turkish official circles against Great Britain and her allies.

Notwithstanding all this provocation His Majesty's Government intimated that if Turkish were substituted for German crews on the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, if British merchant shipping was not impeded, and if Turkey would honourably carry out the duties of a neutral state, all these illegalities and hostile acts would be overlooked, and a solemn and written guarantee would be given that Great Britain will scrupulously respect the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

Furthermore assurances were given that at the conclusion of peace Great Britain would see that no conditions were laid down which would impair that independence and integrity and that economic conditions of a character favourable to Turkey would be obtained.

In spite of these assurances the attitude of Turkey towards Great Britain became increasingly provocative. Evidence continued to reach His Majesty's Government of military preparations in Syria which could have no other purpose than to facilitate attack upon Egypt; and of active propaganda carried on by Turkish and German agents among Bedouin Arabs in regions adjoining the Egyptian frontier. Similar intrigues were set on foot elsewhere and reports were even received of the despatch of Turkish emissaries to India with a view to stirring up anti-British feeling among Indian Mahomedans.

Great Britain the greatest Mahomedan Power in the world and the faithful and consistent friend of Turkey, whom she has steadfastly helped to recover the stability shaken in the Balkan Wars, would see with the greatest regret that Turkey had been decoyed into ranging herself on the side of England's enemies, and adopting an attitude as unjustifiable as it would be ungrateful, but it cannot be denied that the present situation shows that there is a chauvinistic element endeavouring to drive Turkey into war with England for the benefit of Germany and of Austria, the secular enemy of the Turkish State.

A striking illustration of the extent to which intrigues have been carried on is furnished by the case of a German employé in the Alexandria City Police who lately returned from leave *via* Constantinople saying that he had been excused from military service. He was arrested on suspicion on landing, and on him were found a detailed map of the Suez Canal, a sheet of cypher messages concealed in his tarboosh, and other compromising correspondence. He had also entrusted to members of ships' companies two boxes of detonators for exploding dynamite and nitro-glycerine.

Further a steady stream of German officers and men both naval and military together with all kinds of war material has flowed unceasingly into Constantinople, which has been converted to all intents and purposes into a German military base. German officers are known to have penetrated far into the interior of the Turkish Empire in the endeavour to stir up agitation against Great Britain and her allies. All these movements, it is impossible to doubt, have been carried out with the direct connivance of the Ottoman Authorities and can point to only one conclusion.

That this neutral power meant deliberately and intentionally to provoke Great Britain to war is shewn by instructions issued not later than October 18th to the Turkish commandant at Jaffa by the Turkish Minister of War, which already allude to His Majesty's Government as the enemy, give detailed orders as to resisting attack by warships and include an order to break the Consulate flagstaff and remove the insignia.

The Mosul Damascus Army Corps have since their mobilization been constantly sending troops South preparatory to an invasion of Egypt and the Suez Canal from Akaba and Gaza. A large body of Bedouin Arabs have been called out and armed to assist in this venture. Transport has been collected and the roads have been prepared up to the frontier of Egypt. Mines have been despatched to be laid in the Gulf of Akaba to protect the force from naval attack and the notorious Sheikh Aziz Shawish who has been so well-known as a fire-brand in raising Moslem feeling against Christians has published and disseminated through Syria and probably India an inflammatory document urging Mahomedans to rise against Great Britain. Doctor Prueller who was so long engaged in intrigues in Cairo against British occupation and is now attached to the German Embassy in Constantinople has been busily occupied in Syria trying to incite the people to take part in this conflict.

Aggressive action was certain to be the result of the activity of the numerous German officers employed in the Turkish Army and acting under the orders of the German Government who thus have succeeded in forcing the Advisers of the Sultan.

German intrigue cannot influence the loyalty to Great Britain of the 70,000,000 of Mahomedans in India and the feeling of the Mahomedan inhabitants of Egypt or of the millions of Moslems in Africa and in Malaya and elsewhere under His Majesty's protection. They must look with detestation on misguided action under foreign influence at Constantinople which would inevitably lead to the disintegration of the Turkish Empire and which shows such forgetfulness of the many occasions on which Great Britain has shown friendship to Turkey. They must feel bitterly the degeneration of their co-religionists who can thus be dominated against their will by German influences and many of them realise that when Turkey is pushed into war by Germany they must dissociate themselves from a course of action that is so prejudicial to the position of Turkey itself.

The Turkish Government summarily and without notice on Friday shut off telegraphic communication with the British Embassy at Constantinople. This is no doubt the prelude to further acts of aggression on their part and the British Government must take whatever action is required to protect British interests, British territory and also Egypt from attacks that have been made and are threatened.