Chapter VI

THE TURCO-GERMAN INTRIGUES IN INDIA DURING WORLD WAR I

The use of dissident groups within hostile states has been a characteristic feature of Machiavellian state policy. The Bourbons traditionally incited Scottish and Irish risings against England. In the twentieth century the dimensions widened with the induction of political ideologies. By encouraging minority or revolutionary groups the attempt was now made to weaken present or potential enemies. Ottoman Turkey used the cult of the Khalifa and propagated pan-Islamism and pan-Turanianism as pressure tactics against the Russians and the British who had large Muslim populations in their empire. Britain exploited Christian attachments to the Christian Holy Places and later Jewish sentiments for a home in Palestine, and the Russian Czar had for long laid claim to a kind of protectorate over Ottoman Turkey's Christian minorities. Moreover, Britain used the Sharif Husain of Mecca and Arab national discontent against the Turks once the war broke out with the Turks. On its part Germany not only stood forth as a great friend and ally of Islam, but equally of Indian revolutionaries seeking to rid India of the foreign tyrant.1

1. For a recent German study of this aspect see Fritz Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War (London, 1967), a translation of his Griff Nach der Weltmacht (1961), pp. 120-131.
With the outbreak of the war, German plans crystallised rapidly. These saw three possible allies in India, the Bengal revolutionaries; the Ghadr party, a largely Sikh movement with considerable support among the emigrant communities of North America and East Asia,¹ and the pro-Turkey pan-Islamists. We are here mainly concerned with the Turco-German Intrigues in which Ghadr revolutionaries and pan-Islamists were involved. The 'Silk letter' conspiracy was never connected with the Bengal revolutionary movement.²

I

Even before the outbreak of the war, both Berlin and Constantinople had become centres of attraction for Indian exiles and leading Indian nationalist revolutionaries frequently visited these places. There was great fascination for Germany among Indian students.³ They had keenly observed the growing rivalry between Britain and Germany so that a war seemed inevitable. For Indians there would be an opportunity to over-

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1. For the role of these two elements see Thomas G. Fraser, 'Germany and Indian Revolution 1914-18', JCH, Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1977, pp. 252-272.

2. See Cleveland DCI's note in Home Poll. B., July 1918, F. No. 292-316 & K.N., NAI.

throw British rule in India.  

In 1911 Virendra Nath Chattopadhyya formulated a revolutionary scheme which, he thought might take one or ten years to accomplish. He envisaged enlisting the support of Turkey, Egypt and Afghanistan and station emissaries at the Holy Places of Mecca and Kerbala. He also hoped to utilise Sikh discontent against the British. Having thus prepared the ground he would enter into an agreement with Germany to declare war against Britain at the outbreak of a revolution in India. There were dreams of a security treaty with Japan and of the right to use its navy. The scheme was discovered by the British Intelligence, which quite naturally dismissed it as visionary and unpractical in view of the mutual jealousies and distrust among the various revolutionary groups.

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1. The Indian revolutionary plan was to conduct propaganda against Britain among Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army (news item in the Gaelic American (San Francisco), 28 November 1908, Pro.No. 4, Home Poll. B., February 1909, Nos. 2-11, NAI). At a meeting of the Free India Society held in Dec-Jan 1909-10, it was argued by C. Srikishan that soon Britain and Germany would be forced to withdraw troops from India and give the Indians an opportunity for revolution. (Pro.No. 79, Home Poll. B., April 1910, Nos. 72-80, NAI). The revolutionary paper Talwar published from Berlin expressed similar views in an article entitled: 'The Anglo-German War Clouds: England's Peril Hindustan's Opportunity', (W.Rt. of DCI, 2 April 1910, Home Poll. B., June 1910, Nos. 17-25, NAI).

2. W.Rt. of DCI, 21 February 1911, Home Poll. B., March 1911, Nos. 1-4, NAI.
In the autumn of 1913, P.N. Dutt alias Dawood Ali Khan, a student in the United States, met Madame Cama and Champakraman Pillai in Paris; from there he went to Constantinople. He found the Turks were sympathetic to the Indian revolutionary movement and had great expectations from the Bengal revolutionaries. He held discussions with Sheikh Abdul Aziz Shawish, the Tunisian pan-Islamic revolutionary; he subsequently advised Madame Cama, S.R. Rana and Har Dayal to visit Constantinople. In response to this Har Dayal visited Constantinople in September 1914 and had talks with the editor of Jehan-i-Islam, Abu Saiyed and other Turkish leaders. We do not know who among the Turkish leaders he actually met.¹

After the outbreak of war the Ghadrites sent a message to the Turkish ambassador in the United States to ask if Turkey would join the war against Britain; in such an eventuality they would support it and fight against its enemy Britain. Barkatullah

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¹ Har Dayal realised the importance of Constantinople and even thought of building a colony for Indian revolutionaries with the financial assistance of some Indian capitalists. (See Pro. No. 220, Home Poll. B., December 1914, Nos. 218-222, NAI). Enver Pasha was sympathetic and even praised the activities of the Indian revolutionaries in his speech published in the Jehan-i-Islam on 20 November 1914; saying: "This is the time that the Ghadr should be declared in India, the magazines of the English should be plundered, their weapons looted and they should be killed therewith." Cited in the Sedition Committee Report (Calcutta 1918), p. 169.
contested British claims of Indian loyalty and expressed his admiration and friendship for Germany. 1 Swept away by revolutionary zeal and anti-British feelings some went on to say that they would even welcome German rule in India. 2

Within India, the prevailing nationalist view was, of course, quite different: it was against aligning the nationalist cause with the German in its struggle against British imperialism. With reference to the Indian revolutionaries allying with Germany and Turkey, Lajpat Rai expressed serious doubts as to the "wisdom of their cause". 3

1. He expressed these views in a signed letter published in the Gaelic American (San Francisco), 6 September 1914, W.Rt. of DCI, 10 November 1914, Home Polli. B., December 1914, Nos. 223-226, NAI.

2. Such a view was expressed by Achuta Sridhai Bhandarkar in the Boston Sunday American, 18 November 1914, Pro. No. 229, Home Polli. B., December 1914, Nos. 227-229, NAI.

3. When C.K. Chakravarty and other Ghadrites had been arrested by the American authorities in connection with German plots, he confessed that he had been fomenting revolt in India at the instance of Germany. Lajpat Rai was provoked to address a letter to a New York paper to say that "I am sorry for him and his patriotism, I am a Hindu Nationalist working for the attainment of Self-Government for India; but I do not believe that it would be worthwhile to achieve that end by foreign military aid. I am sure that the vast bulk of my fellow Nationalists in India and elsewhere are of the same mind. What we want is Self-Government and not the change of masters." See in Pro. No. 445, Home Polli. B., May 1916, Nos. 445-448, NAI, also see his farewell speech in New York on 28 November 1919, in V.C. Joshi (ed.), Lala Lajpat Rai-Writings and Speeches, 1889-1919 (Delhi, 1965), Vol. I, p. 392 and V.C. Joshi (ed.), Lajpat Rai: Autobiographical Writings (Delhi, 1965), pp. 198-99.
India had been a special target of Imperial Germany, owing to its political and economic importance to British imperialism.¹ When war broke out in 1914, the German government immediately considered the practical possibilities of using the Indian nationalist revolutionaries.²

In November 1899, William II, in his Damascus speech proclaimed himself the protector of three hundred million Muslims of the world. The inspiration to utilise pan-Islamism came from the theories of Oppenheim.³ Since then Germany had been nurturing friendship with Turkey; this had culminated in the conclusion of the German-Turkish alliance on 2 August 1914, which envisaged a pan-Islamic movement and jehad proclaimed by the Khalifa against Britain and other Entente Powers.⁴ The possibilities of using pan-Islamism and the revolutionaries of Bengal was also advocated by General Von

1. In 1908, during the European crisis when war seemed imminent William II wrote: "The British had better realise that war with Germany means the loss of India, and there with the World War", quoted in Fritz Fischer, op.cit., p. 121.


3. For his career and views see A.L. Melka, 'Max Freiherr Von Oppenheim: Sixty years of scholarship and Political Intrigue in the Middle East', Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. IX, January 1973, pp. 81-93.

Bernhardi. Thus on the outbreak of the war, Germany made concerted attempts to arouse the Muslims in their favour from 'Lahore to Casablanca'. The German Emperor expected that his "Consuls in Turkey and India, agents etc., must inflame the whole Mohammedan world to revolt against" Britain. On 2 August 1914 Moltke, the German Chief of the General Staff, sketched out to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg revolutionary plans in which Turkey was to be made the basis of operations in India, Egypt and Persia. The German Foreign Ministry directed these subversive activities with Bethmann Hollweg, Von Jagow, Zimmermann and Rudolph Nadolny as the principal figures.

On 2 August 1914, Oppenheim was recalled to head the newly organised "Intelligence Bureau for the East", and in his memorandum of September 1914 he gave definite shape to German plans, recommending calls for "jihad" and pan-Islamic propaganda and the despatch of expeditionary forces to Persia and Egypt to revolutionise the Muslim world. On 4 September 1914, Bethmann Hollweg officially sanctioned a German-inspired campaign of unrest against Britain in India and Egypt.

1. See his Germany and the Next War (English trans. 1914), p. 96.

2. Fritz Fischer, op. cit., p. 121.

3. Moltke to Bethmann Hollweg, 2 August 1914, cited in Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 124.
German efforts to secure Persia as an ally and placate Sharif Husain of Mecca did not however succeed.¹ The German Emperor in a hand-written letter to the Amir of Afghanistan asserted that "it has long been --- my wish to see the Mohammedian nations independent --- I am therefore not only immediately concerned to help the Mohammedian peoples in their struggle for independence, but will support them in the future through My Imperial Government --- after the end of the war."²

Oppenheim immediately contacted the Indian exiles and students studying in Germany. The original Berlin Indian Committee included M. Prabhakar, Abdur Rahman and A. Siddiqi, but there was a search for more experienced and recognised Indians. Virendra Nath Chattopadhyya and Abhinash Chandra Bhattacharyya entered into negotiations with the German Foreign Office. Before making any final agreement Oppenheim wanted to include Har Dayal also.³ Except for Chattopadhyya, Har Dayal and Bhupendra Nath Dutt, other member of the Berlin Indian Committee had previously not taken any active part in the revolutionary movements in India or abroad.⁴

1. For biographical note see Appendix A.

2. The letter was drafted for him by Zimmermann, quoted in Ibid., p. 120.

3. Oppenheim to Har Dayal, 21 September 1914. GPM, No. 397, available in the NAI.

4. The other prominent member of the committee was Abdul Hafiz and Champakraman Pillai. See M.N. Roy, Memoirs, p. 286.
In 1915 Oppenheim left for Constantinople, and the task of organising revolutionary outbreaks was given to the Legation Secretary, Von Wesendonck; these outbreaks were to be especially organised along the borders of the Russian empire. Having formed the Berlin Indian Committee, the German plans had to encounter the problem of India's remoteness. Wesendonck also thought of associating some influential Indian Muslim into his schemes. He had even enquired from his contact about the suitability of Jinnah as an agent.1

The Berlin Indian Committee's plan was to establish a provisional government but the German insistence was that it should be headed by an Indian Prince. This is how Raja Mahendra Pratap of Hathras and Murshid was invited to Germany through Umre Sol Singh Majithia. He was met by Har Dayal, Chattopadhyaya and Von Wesendonck in Switzerland.2 Mahendra Pratap insisted upon a meeting with the German Emperor.3

1. Wesendonck discussed this with some unidentified British agent who had replied in the negative. As Jinnah's brother was at Zurich it was thought that he could be smuggled into Germany. We have no information whether it remained merely an idea or any contacts were made. Moreover, it appears to be a case of mistaken identity. See notes F.D. Sec-War, October 1917, Nos. 181-184, NAI.

2. Statement of a member of the Berlin Indian Committee to British Intelligence, 26 February 1919, see Pro. No. 184, Home Poll. B., February 1919, Nos. 181-184, NAI.

3. Mahendra Pratap, My Life Story of Fifty Five Years (Delhi, 1947), pp. 38-39. According to M.N. Roy, he was received by the Crown Prince and not the German Emperor. See his Memoirs, p. 289.
Enver Pasha too laid out plans of his own. On 10 August 1914 he had made a proposal to Von Wangenheim, the German ambassador in Constantinople, to organise revolutionary movements and send German officers to Afghanistan.\(^1\) The Turkish ambassador at Tehran sent letters to the Amir of Afghanistan through two Persians, Pasha Khan and Said Halim calling upon him to join the war in the defence of Islam. Both the messengers were captured by the British at Kariz.\(^2\) Soon after entering the war, Turkey sent a mission under Obeidullah Effendi, a Professor at the University of Smyrna and a Deputy in the Turkish Parliament, to Afghanistan to present a sword of Islam to the Amir.\(^3\)

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1. Enver Pasha’s proposal was taken by Emir Chekib Arslan, a Deputy of the Turkish parliament on 10 August 1914 to Wangenheim. See A.C. Bose, 'Efforts at Seeking Foreign intervention through the Middle East during the World War I', IHC, Poona, 1963, p. 216.

2. Adamec holds that the message was conveyed to the Amir and he gave an assurance in a letter that he would do his Islamic duty. See Ludwig W. Adamec, Afghanistan’s Foreign Affairs to Mid-Twentieth Century: Relations with the USSR, Germany and Britain (Arizona, 1974), p. 21.

3. Von Hentig provided this information to A.C. Bose in a letter dated 7 April 1916. According to him this mission failed; the sword was taken to the Amir but without any effect. See A.C. Bose, op. cit., p. 216. Obeidullah Effendi was Turkish ambassador designate to Afghanistan; he was detained by the Persian authorities who handed him over to the British. He was detained at Quetta during the war. Sykes, Inspector General, South Persia Military to Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, Pro. No. 178, P.D. Sec-War, July 1917, Nos. 147-536, NAI.
Enver Pasha had even formulated a scheme for the despatch of a force, of three regiments through Persia to India to stir up Muslims against Britain. For this he sounded Mustafa Kemal (then a Lieutenant-Colonel) through an emissary. Kemal dismissed the scheme as fanciful and remarked, "I am not such a hero". Yet on the British side, apprehensions of a Turco-German invasion of India had been aroused as early as 1906.

At Constantinople the Turco-German intrigues had been guided by a committee which included besides Enver Pasha, the Sheikh-ul-Islam and the German ambassador. Sheikh Shawish had prepared a manifesto which was to be sent to India and Egypt. He was also to accompany a group of thirteen emissaries and

1. Mustafa Kemal was of the view that for such an operation, a force of just three regiments would be useless. Subsequently he remarked "Had it been possible, I shouldn't have waited for orders. I should have gone myself and found my troops. (Only a single officer was needed, who would raise his troops on the way). I should have conquered India and become an Emperor!". Quoted in Lord Kinross, Ataturk: The Birth of a Nation (London, 1964, reprinted with corrections in 1965), p. 69.

2. The occasion for such a discussion arose on the construction of the Hejaz Railway and the interest shown by Germany in the project. Na'ivar-i-Asam (Moradabad), 19 November 1906, Nizam-ul-Mulk (Moradabad), 24 November 1906, KONNP-UP.

3. This information was given by Waugh an official of the American Embassy to the British ambassador in Rome. See Rodd to Grey, 4 December 1914, P 4951/1914, L/P9/10/472, IOR; Rodd to Viceroy, 4 December 1914, Telegram Pro.No. 178, F.D. Sec-War, July 1916, Nos. 176-194, NAI.
deliver it to the Amir of Afghanistan.¹ The British authorities were alerted about this plan and asked to seize him if he came.²

The Berlin Indian Committee and the German Foreign Office made plans with the aim of directing anti-British propaganda from Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan. They too envisaged sending of missions to these places. Accordingly, Enver Pasha had informed the Vali of Basrah that arms and ammunition were being sent under the German flag to Basrah and that thirty-two secret emissaries including German officers were on their way to preach jehad in India, Baluchistan and Afghanistan.³

The Berlin Indian Committee sent Har Dayal to Constantinople⁴ and Enver Pasha provided all facilities through the Taskilat-i-Makhsusa Edari (a section of the Turkish Ministry of war. Here the mission got divided into two groups. The first was to carry on anti-British propaganda among Indian troops in

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1. Louis Mallet to Grey, 22 October 1914, P 4115/1914, L/PS/10/472, IOR.

2. India Office to Viceroy, 28 December 1914, F.D. Sec.-War, July, 1915, Nos. 176-194, NAI.

3. Political Resident, Persian Gulf, Bushire to Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, Telegram, 26 September 1914, Pro. No. 12, Home Poll. A., November 1914, Nos. 1-27, NAI.

the Suez Canal area. Thus included in this task were Tarak Nath Das, M.P.T. Acharya and Zainul Abidin.¹ The other group was to work in Baghdad; and this included P.N. Dutt alias Dawood Ali Khan, Pandurang Khankhoji and others. Har Dayal wanted to carry on propaganda through the Jehan-i-Islam under nationalist control. This was not possible in view of the fact that through this journal the fatawa of Sheikh-ul-Islam and jehad was propagated among Muslims of India.² So Har Dayal's suggestion was approved neither by the German Foreign Office nor the Turkish War Office. Har Dayal resented the exclusive emphasis placed on pan-Islamism at Constantinople. In order to avoid any rupture between the nationalist revolutionaries and pan-Islamicist at Turkey, Har Dayal was replaced by Dr Abdul Hafiz in November 1915 by the Berlin Indian Committee and the German Foreign Office.³ With a view to

1. See "Report on the Suez Canal Mission" 12 October 1915, GFM-Roll No. 398, NAI. Also see Pro.No. 161, 11 January 1919, Home Poll. B. January 1919, Nos.150-63, NAI. Zain ul Abidin, son of Abdus Sattar Shah, Sub-Assistant Surgeon, Sialkot (Punjab) belonged to the Ahmadi sect. In the spring of 1915 he worked with Husain Raouf Beg a Turkish Naval Officer for propaganda work in Persia. On his return he became a Professor in the University of Salehedin Ayub at Jerusalem, which was founded by Jamal Pasha in October 1915, with Shawish as its first Director, for anti-British and pro-Turkish propaganda among Arabs. Here Zainul Abidin met Oppenheim. In October 1918 he was arrested by the British in Damascus and deported to India, Ibid.


3. Har Dayal's relations were far from cordial with the pan-Islamic group headed by Abdul Sattar and Abdul (Footnote continued...)
placating the Turkish Government the Indian revolutionaries formed a 'Young Hindustan Association' at Constantinople.\(^1\) Subsequently, Har Dayal was detained in Germany.\(^2\)

Berlin executed its schemes by sending Wassmuss, who had been acting German Consul at Bushire before the war to Constantinople and Baghdad on a mission in September 1914. Wassmuss organised his mission by including revolutionaries who had arrived from United States, including Kedar Nath Sahni, Khan-khoji alias Muhammad Khan and Sufi Amba Prasad who was at Shiraz.\(^3\) Wassmuss was looked upon as a "German Lawrence".\(^4\)

(Previous Footnote continued)

Jabbar, C.R. Sreen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad, 1905-1920.* (Delhi 1979), pp. 166-67n. See also F.D. Frontr-Sec, February 1920, Nos. 77-171, NAI.

1. It was founded on 1 March 1916, with Dr Abdul Hafiz as President, Dr Mansur, Vice-President and Ata Muhammad, Tarak Nath Das, M.P.T. Acharya, Das Gupta and Maqbul Hussain as members. The Association was under the Taskila-Mahsusa Edari, see F.D. Extl. B, (Secret), August 1920, Nos. 441-49, NAI.

2. Har Dayal after his stay in Germany was convinced that "German imperialism is a very great menace to the progress of humanity" and expressed his intention to write a pamphlet entitled 'Forty Four Months in Germany' (which was published in 1920), *San Francisco Call,* 4 December 1918, Pro. No. 182, Home Poll. B, February 1919, Nos. 181-84, NAI. Bhupendra Nath Dutt was of the view that Har Dayal was respected by the German Government till the end of the war. See Mamnath Nath Gupta, *History of the Indian Revolutionary Movement* (Bombay, 1972), p. 77.

3. See Pro. No. 253, F.D. Sec-War, May 1916, Nos. 1-288, NAI.

But the British succeeded in breaking up his force and captured Dr. Listemann, Consul at Bushire.¹

Germany had sent a series of expeditions to Persia to make contacts with the Amir of Afghanistan. Soon after his arrival in Berlin on 10 February 1915 Mahendra Pratap submitted a scheme to the German Foreign Office.² Accordingly the preparation was made, with a view to concluding an alliance with Afghanistan, while Mahendra Pratap would carry letters addressed to the Amir of Afghanistan, and twenty-six Indian Princes given by the German Chancellor.³ Wesendonck and Nadolny selected Werner Otto von Hentig, a German diplomat of the rank of a legation Secretary to accompany Mahendra Pratap as a representative to conclude an alliance with Afghanistan.⁴ Mahendra Pratap and Hentig Mission left Berlin on 10 April 1915. Mahendra Pratap was assured by Bethmann Hollweg that "you may rely on the powerful support of the Imperial Government" for the Indian cause.⁵

1. From him the British obtained the secret German code. He was interned at Ahmadnagar during the war. See Pro. No. 253, F.D. Sec-War, May 1916, Nos. 1-288, NAI.

2. He claimed that he had prepared the list of Indian Princes, Mahendra Pratap, op.cit., p. 41.

3. For the list see Encl. 2, in Pro. No. 297, F.D. Sec-War, July 1917, Nos. 147-536, NAI.

4. The other members of the mission were Barkatullah, Dr. Karl Baker, Lieutenant Walter Rohr and a number of Afghan-Afridi soldiers (from amongst the prisoners of war).


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At Constantinople he had an audience with the Sultan and met Hilmi Pasha, the Turkish Prime Minister, Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, Talaat Pasha and the Sheikh-ul-Islam. Mahendra Pratap requested Enver Pasha to get an introductory letter for the Amir of Afghanistan from the Khalifa and for some Indian Princes from the Prime Minister, as well as a Turkish Officer to accompany his mission. Captain Kazim Bey was deputed to represent the Turkish Government. It would therefore be appropriate to call it the Indo-Turco-German Mission. Har Dayal saw him off at Constantinople. Here another German expeditionary mission led by Niedermeyer joined the Mahendra Pratap and Hentig mission.

The British authorities in India had received information about such a mission initially from two sources, first, from their Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, and secondly from the Turkish and Egyptian nationals detained in India. The

1. Mahendra Pratap, op.cit., pp. 44-45. Barkatullah told Enver Pasha that many of the revolutionaries who had assumed Muslim names were all Hindus. Enver Pasha was pleased to hear this and remarked 'I keep religion and politics in two separate pockets'. See Manmath Nath Gupta, op.cit., p. 73.

2. Muhammad Amin Bey son of Jalaluddin stated that he reached Muscat on 22 July and was a guest of the Sultan. He left Muscat on 15 September 1914. He was detained at Karachi. See B. C. Gregson, Superintendent of Police, on Special Duty in the Foreign Department, 28 September 1914, Pro. No. 14, Home Foll. A., November 1914, Nos. 1-27, NAI. Abdul Majid, editor of the Ullat (SIC) and was a Captain in the Egyptian Army, arrived Karachi from Muscat accompanied with a Turk Tewfik Shukri; he too was detained at Karachi. See note by A. Majid in the DCI Office, 14 September 1914, Home Foll. A., December 1914, Nos. 195-214, NAI.
authorities had suspicion against such persons as possible emissaries but could not obtain positive evidence of their involvement in an organised mission. However from their statements it could be gathered that there existed a conspiracy against the British engineered by Turkey and Germany. The British authorities tended to dismiss such missions as mere fancies in view of the difficulties in crossing Persia and Afghanistan and calculated that if at all any propaganda was carried on it would reach Kabul via British India.¹

But the full revelations were soon to come. Harish Chandra who had accompanied Mahendra Pratap to Switzerland was instructed to return to India and send revolutionaries to Kabul. It was he who divulged the entire plan to the British authorities in London.² He had actually been planted by Cleveland the Director of Criminal Intelligence who claimed that he had been working for him in Europe.³ Even before the mission had set out, Delhi had obtained all the details and informed the Amir of Afghanistan about the Turco-German parties and agents. The Amir affirmed his neutrality and assured the Viceroy that the German parties would be disarmed

1. Ibid.

2. Foreign Office No. 371/3067/1917, FRO.

3. Cleveland to Meston, 2 June 1916, Meston Papers - 136/47, IOL.
and interned till the end of the war.\textsuperscript{1} The Amir needed no other proof about the resourcefulness of Britain.

The mission thus lost its significance, and the British harassed its passage through Persia. Delhi received regular reports about its journey to Afghanistan. The Government of India authorized its Consul at Sistan to spend freely the 'Secret Service Money'; to track "the movements of the parties and on arousing local resistance against them."\textsuperscript{2}

Several of the Indian revolutionaries connected with the Turco-German mission were captured by the British military and executed without any proper trial.\textsuperscript{3} This was preferred by Cleveland, Director of Criminal Intelligence as their trial in India would have been troublesome in the absence of witnesses and evidence. As for the interesting information such captives might have, he remarked: "Generally speaking we have had more information than punishments, and I should like to see the

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\item The assurance about Afghanistan's neutrality was given by the Amir Habibullah in a postscript in his own handwriting in his reply to the Viceroy, Viceroy to India Office, 11 August 1915. P 2930/1915, L/PS/10/478, Part III, IOL.
\item Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department to British Consul at Sistan, Teleg., 2 July 1915, Pro. No. 50, F.D. Sec-War, January 1916, Nos. 1-202, NAI.
\item Chief of the General Staff, Southern Persian Rifles, Shiraz to Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department, Teleg. 23 February 1918, Pro. No. 247, F.D. Sec-War, March 1919, Nos. 1-254, NAI.
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balance redressed by a policy of execution.\(^1\) Such executions had been carried out by the British military without the knowledge of Persian authorities and the public.\(^2\) Kedar Nath Sahni was executed on 24 February 1918 by Major Dyer by firing

1. Cleveland expressed these views on the capture of two Indian revolutionaries. Kershash Hormuz and Ajit Singh in Persia; their cases had been referred to Delhi for a decision. Notes, 3 September 1916, F.D. Sec-War, July 1917, Nos. 147-536, NAI. Hormuz alias Hasan Ali was a Parsi, resident of Cumbale Hill Bombay. He was studying Chemistry in Berlin, and helped the Germans as a bomb expert. He was captured while carrying a letter from Sailor to Niedermayer on 5 August 1916. He was sent to Quetta for detention by the British. (See Sistan and Kain Consulate Diary, No. 33, 12 August 1916, F.D. Sec-War, October 1917, Nos. 1-319, NAI). Ajit Singh alias Hasan Khan was in the employ of Massmuss. He was helping the Germans in the Asiatic Turkey and Persia among the Indian soldiers of the British army. (See F.D. Sec-War, August 1915, Nos. 215-221, NAI.) Saiyid Mustafa was interned at Quetta, the Agent in Baluchistan was directed by the Government of India that "should his continued internment appear to you to be unnecessary, proposals for his disposal otherwise should be submitted." Deputy Secretary, Foreign Department to Colonel Ramsay, Agent to G.G. in Baluchistan, 2 April 1917, Pro. No. 220, F.D. Sec-War, December 1917, Nos. 1-199, NAI.

2. Sufi Amba Prasad was tried by a Military Court at Shiraz. The British Minister at Tehran had opposed his trial being held in Persia for fear of adverse effect on local opinion as the Sufi had lived there as a Persian. (See Pro. Nos. 16 and 103, F.D. Sec-War, September 1917, Nos. 1-212, NAI). Shiraz became an important centre of anti-British agitation largely because of the activities of Sufi. The revolutionary paper 'Intiqam' was believed to be an organ of revolutionary nationalists; and its Manager and editor 'Nasr-ul-Islam' was believed to be Sufi himself (Note by DCI, 13 January 1916, Pro. No. 272, F.D. Sec-War, March 1916, Nos. 272-279, NAI).
a volley of shots at close range.\(^1\)

The Mahendra Pratap-Kentig mission managed to reach Herat on 24 August 1915, and from there it was allowed to proceed to Kabul on 2 October 1915. They were accommodated at the Bagh-i-Babar. At Kabul there already existed a group which favoured a war against the British. This included Nasrullah, the Prime Minister, the sons of the Amir, Inayat-ullah and Amanullah, General Nadir Khan, the Commander-in-Chief, and Mahmud Tarzi, the Foreign Minister.\(^2\) The members of the mission had several meetings with the Amir and Nasrullah.\(^3\) The real intentions of the Amir remained obscure

1. Sahni had several aliases e.g., Abdul Karim Khan, Karim Khan, Kadir Ali, accompanied the German mission in Persia (son of Pheru Kam of Rawalpindi, Punjab). He was a Ghedrite, and had reached Germany from New York in December 1914. He was arrested at Bajgah on 19 February 1918, and from him was recovered a map of the 'scene of the Holy War' (Turkish chee Reich) and a pamphlet entitled 'hemara nam wa hemara kam' signed as 'Intigam'. The Military authorities at Shiraz concluded that he was an extremist and seditionist in the pay of Germans and 'a dangerous spy' who had "aided and abetted our enemies". South Persian Rifles to Marling, Minister at Shiraz, 26 Feb. 1918, Proc. No. 178, and Encl. F. D. Sec-War, September 1918, Nos. 178-196, NAI.

Cleveland, the DCI considered Nasrullah as one of the chief plotters in Kabul. He had withheld evidence and refused to produce it before the Sedition Committee for high political reasons. See the Collection of Material for the Sedition Committee, Note by DCI, Home Poll. 5, July 1918, F. No. 292-316 & K.\(^m\). NAI.

to the mission. Attempts to win him over were made by Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah. The Government of India found it the opportune time to agree to raise Amir's subsidy by two lakh rupees.\(^1\) Because of the presence of a pro-Turkish and anti-British opinion among certain sections of the Afghan people, the Amir allowed the mission to while away its time.\(^2\) Mahendra Pratap on 1 December 1915 formed a Provisional Government of India; he himself became its life President; Barkatullah was Prime Minister, and Obeidullah Sindhi, its Home Minister.\(^3\) As the members of the mission were neither statesmen of high calibre not military personnel of high rank, they failed to impress the Amir. The neutrality of the Amir and loyalty to Britain which was lavishly rewarded by the British upset the entire Turco-German plan.

**IV**

Another significant development was the attempt of Mahmud Hasan of Deoband and Obeidullah Sindhi to revive the

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1. "Diary of the British Agent Kabul", 8 November 1915, F.D. Sec-Har, May 1916, Nos. 1-268, NAI.

2. *The Siraj ul Akhbar* (Kabul) 6 May 1916, published Mahendra Pratap's letter in which he stated that owing to the neutrality of the Amir he was still waiting, see W.Rt. of DCI, 13 June 1916, Pro. No. 472, Home Poll. B. June 1916, Nos. 470-473, NAI.

old Wahabi elements. ¹ The British had hitherto considered the
Anjuman-i-Khuddoo-i-Kaaba, “a dangerous and aggressive pan-
Islamic institution”, and during the war its activity was under
surveillance.² In spite of this, the group of Maulvis around
Mahmud Hasan resorted to militant anti-British revolutionary
path.

It was not a sudden development Mahmud Hasan it is
claimed, had conceived of a plan for the liberation of India
with Turkish military help received through Persia and
Afghanistan.³ His scheme envisaged the cooperation of all
Muslims, and an understanding between Turkey, Persia and
Afghanistan. Under his guidance some kind of liaison had been
established with the revolutionaries.⁴

Mahmud Hasan was convinced that initial work had to be
done in the North West Frontier areas known as Yaghistan, where
arms and ammunition were to be sent to prepare for the next

². Note by DCl, March 1914, P 4260/1916, I/P3/10/633,
IOR.
⁴. In 1909 Obaidullah Sindhi had organised the Jamiat-
ul-Ansar as a secret organisation. Ibid., pp. 130
and 135, Madni, Nagh-i-Hayat, Vol. II, pp. 138-39,
Muhammad Sarwar, Obaidullah Sindhi (Lahore, 1959),
p. 129.

...334
In the winter of 1914-15 emissaries from the North West Frontier 'mujahidin' visited Mahmud Hasan and Obeidullah. In February 1915, fifteen students of Lahore secretly left for Kabul, where they met the members of the Turco-German mission. Some of them were given posts in the Provisional Government. As the frontier tribes were scattered and troubled with internal dissentions, it needed a capable leader to unite them. Mahmud Hasan sent Maulana Saifur Rahman of Fatehpuri Mosque, Delhi, in June 1915 to persuade Haji Turangzai to help and preach jehad. He also directed Maulana Fazle Rabbi and Fazal Mahmud of Peshawar and Muhammad Akbar to proceed to Yaghistan. In August 1915 Obeidullah Sindhi made his way to Kabul on the orders of Mahmud Hasan. He was accompanied by

1. Khaliquzzaman says that he and the Ali Brothers visited the tribal area in the NWF to explore the arms factories in that region. For this he gives no convincing evidence. From it, however, it appears that some kind of vague possibilities of violent steps had been explored; but the idea could not be given any concrete shape. See his Pathway to Pakistan, pp. 30-32.

2. It was believed that these students had consultations with Abul Kalam Azad and Obeidullah Sindhi. See note by Freemantle on 'The Silk Letter conspiracy' in Meston Papers-136/15, IOL.

Abdullah, Fateh Muhammad and Muhammad Ali. Obeidullah stated that it was only on his arrival that he realised why he was sent there. Mahmud Hasan had left India for Hejaz on 19 September 1915, after having consultations with Abul Kalam Azad. But this was later on denied by Mahmud Hasan himself.

Even before he could sail from Bombay, the Delhi authorities were informed that the object of his visit was not haj but, pursuit of a project to secure the help of Turkey and Germany.

1. Safar Nama-i-Hind quoted in Muhammad Mian, Ulma-i-Haqq, Vol. I, p. 136; Madi Naghs-i-Hayat, Vol. II, pp. 138-39. Kazim Beg, the Turkish representative of the Mahendra Pratap-Hentig mission too had devised a scheme to unite the various groups and incite them to rise against Britain. Rooskeppel to Grant, 4 October 1916, Pro. No. 101, P.D. Sec-Front., April 1917, Nos. 1-155, NAI.

2. Arrangement for his journey was made by Dr M.A. Ansari and financed by his brother Hakim Abdur Razzak. He was accompanied by Maulanas Muhammad Mian of Ambeth (Seharanpur), Aziz Gul, Nusrat Husain, Murtaza Hasan, and Haji Khan Muhammad Matlub-ur-Rehman Deobandi etc. Muhammat Mian, Ulma-i-Haqq, Vol. I, p. 138.

3. Azad had discouraged him from leaving India, believing that the Turco-German armies would advance through Persia. At that time a man of his stature would be needed to arouse people in an uprising. See Note by Vivian, Home Poll. A, June 1919, Nos. 517-25, NAI; and Cf. Afzal Iqbal, Life and Times of Mohamed Ali (Delhi, 1978), p. 174.

against the British. The authorities made an attempt to detain him at Bombay or en route to Hejaz; they only desisted in view of the presence of a large number of mahajirs. To keep a watch on him, a Police Inspector, Bahauddin, was sent to Mecca. Mahmud Hasan met Ghalib Pasha, the Turkish Governor of Mecca and presented his scheme to him. Ghalib Pasha gave Mahmud Hasan a fatwa and a letter for Basri Pasha, Governor of Medina to help him to meet Enver Pasha. Mahmud Hasan sent the fatwa to India through Muhammad Mian, this being photo copied and taken to North West Frontier. Mahmud Hasan met Enver Pasha and obtained a letter from him; the latter advised him to go back to India and work amongst the tribes in the northern provinces.

1. The secret information to authorities was given by Maulvi Muhammad Ahmad, Shamsul Ulema of Deoband, Chief Secretary, U.P. to Secretary, Home Department, 12 December 1918, Home Poll. A. August 1919, Nos. 415-26; the D.C.I claimed that Mahmud Hasan was going to meet an emissary of Enver Pasha at Medina. H.Rt., Pro No. 652, Home Poll. B. September 1916, Nos. 652-56. The D.C.I was convinced that he was undoubtedly involved in a conspiracy to get help from the Germans and Turks in the task of expelling the British from India, note of 21 September 1917, Home Poll. B. January 1918, Nos. 123-28, HAI.


3. Ibid., p. 140.

4. Ibid., The fatwa became famous as 'Ghalib Nama', for its text see Sedition Committee Report, p. 179.

land, but was advised by Enver Pasha to take the sea route in view of the presence of the British in Persia.1 We have no information whether Enver Pasha discussed with Mahmud Hasan his scheme of sending troops to India, that had earlier been dismissed by Mustafa Kemal. However, Mahmud Hasan had sent to India the letter of Enver Pasha obtained by him. The authorities in India had the information that it was with some one at Deoband. An attempt to secure it was made unsuccessfully. The responsible persons however, preferred to burn the letter rather than allow it to fall in the hands of the British.2 Evidently some understanding had been made between the two concerning India.

V

Before Mahmud Hasan could plan his next move Sharif Husain of Mecca revolted against Turkey and joined the British side (June 1916). For long the advantages and desirability of separating Arabia from Turkey had held forth great attraction for the British. It had been argued already in 1914 that "Pan-Islamism which from time to time has been trouble some" in India and Egypt, demanded a separation of the temporal and spiritual powers of Turkey "in keeping with the spirit of the age." This would remove the sting from this politico-sectarian issue.3 Certain assurances to the Sharif had even been given

1. Ibid., p. 143.

2. Madni says that the authorities in India, sent a former student of Mahmud Hasan from Afghanistan to Deoband with the message that the Amir wants that letter. Maulana Seifuddin got suspicious of him and the letter was destroyed. Madni, op.cit., p. 171.

3. Memorandum by Fitzmaurice (Foreign Office expert on Arabia), enclosure in Mallet to Grey, 22 September 1914. F.D. Poll. Sec-War, May 1915, Nos. 433-452, NAI.
by the British Government without consulting the India Office.¹

The news of the Sharif's declaration of independence was made public on 23 June 1916 in India. The Government of India had considerable reservations in doing so, lest British hand was suspected by Indian Muslims; so as to give a fresh vent to "pan-Islamic agitation in India."² The Secretary of State told the Viceroy that his "local difficulties" were "not underrated", yet "any divergence between policies pursued by our two Governments would be disastrous."³ Still the Government of India felt it was inopportune to issue any official declaration of support for the Sharif.⁴

¹. See Minute by Hirtzel, 12 December 1914. Crewe Secretary of State for India remarked that "this was a private communication from Kitchener", 14 December 1914, P4854/1915, L/PS/10/523, IOR. Apologies were later given by the Foreign Office to India Office. But the policy of the British Government had all the time been quite clear: "You can give the assurance you suggest in the name of British Government --- The Arab movement should be encouraged in every possible way" Grey to Cheetham (Cairo), 16 November 1914, P 4463/1914, L/PS/10/523, IOR; See also Meeton to Chelmsford, 1 March 1917 (Cairo), No. 79, Chelmsford Papers-264/15, IOL.

². Viceroy to India Office, 15 July 1916, P2825/1916, L/PS/10/599, IOR.

³. India Office to Viceroy, Telegram, 28 June 1916, Serial No. 112, F.D. Sec-Mar, September 1916, Nos. 248-441, NAI.

⁴. The Arabian Report No. XXIII A, 21 July 1916, P3146/1916, L/PS/10/586, IOR. Sharif Husain of Mecca informed Wilson an official connected with the Arab Bureau, Cairo, that he had himself sent his communication to India. This surprised McMahon who sought to enquire about the channel used, McMahon to Foreign Office, 14 August 1914, P2278/1916, L/PS/10/599, IOR.
The news of the Sharif's revolt did not cause as much disturbance, as was apprehended by the authorities in India. Partly this was because the full implications of an Arab revolt against the Turks were perhaps not widely understood.

The Anglo-Indian Statesman of Calcutta was, however, entirely incorrect, and even provocative, in claiming that the Indian Muslims were delighted to hear the news of Sharif's declaration of independence. The paper even advocated the case for an Arab Khilafat. Abdul Bari as Khadim-ul-Khuddam (Head) of the Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba sent a telegram to the Viceroy expressing "consternation and painful anxiety" of the Muslims that the Sharif's action would "convert their most sacred places into the fields of slaughter and carnage." He affirmed that "the impudent beisieger of the tomb of the Holy Prophet and his sympathisers will stand for ever condemned in the eyes of the Muslim world as enemies of Islam."  

The Council of the All India Muslim League presided over by Raja of Mahmudabad at Lucknow, passed a resolution on


2. Pro. No. 442. Ibid. The telegram was published in the Bombay Chronicle, 26 June 1916.
the lines of Abdul Bari's telegram. On 27 June 1916 a public meeting was held at Lucknow and the League resolution was publicly adopted. By another resolution the Statesman's claims about Indian Muslim feelings was disclaimed. The Lucknow ulema and Muslim leaders thus took the lead in condemning the Sharif's action. At Delhi Dr M.A. Ansari held a meeting and reminded the Viceroy about his assurance regarding the Holy Places given at the beginning of the

1. Meston with the concurrence of Chelmsford and acting through Verney Lovett warned the Raja of Mahmudabad that as telugder he had certain obligations towards the government, and he was called upon to prevent the dangerous agitation among Indian Muslims; otherwise his rights and title would be annulled. Memorandum by Meston, Enclosure in Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 July 1916, No.18, Chelmsford Papers - 264/2, IOL.

2. The public meeting was presided over by Syed Nabiullah, Barrister, and the first resolution was moved by Maulvi Nizam-ud-din Hasan and seconded by Muhammad Nasim, Advocate; the second resolution was moved by Shahid Musain (Kidwai) and seconded by Syed Wasir Hasan, Indian Daily Telegraph (Lucknow), 29 June 1916. See in P 3484/1916, Appendix B, L/P8/10/586, IOR.

3. The Lucknow initiative was supported by Vakil (Amritsar), 1 July 1916, Kisan (Lahore), 30 June 1916 (a paper started after the closer of the Zamindar), KONNP-Punjab. The loyalist papers, the Paisa Akhbar (Lahore), 5 July 1916, KONNP-Punjab; and Mashriq (Forakhpur), 11 and 25 July 1916, KONNP-UP, supported the Arab attempt to establish a National government in Arabia.
war.\(^1\) Abdul Bari also proposed that a deputation of Indian Muslims should visit Mecca to ascertain the facts and correctness of the news of the Sharif's revolt.\(^2\)

The general press preferred to adopt an attitude of aloofness.\(^3\) The Leader of Allahabad observed that Muslim opinion outside Arabia would have no effect on the leaders of the Arab revolt.\(^4\) The Navak of Calcutta made the obvious point that this event would help the British to weaken German power in the area.\(^5\)

Mushir Husain Kidwai, saw in the Arab revolt, the collapse of his pan-Islamism; he wrote to the Nation of London:

"While the Irish rebel Casement was hanged once for his treason, Husain (Sharif) should be hanged twice because he had rebelled against his sovereign and against

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1. Meetings were also held at Calcutta, Bombay and Bareilly. See Pro. No. 443, Home Poll. B, February 1916, Nos. 441-45, NAI.

2. His circular letter was published in the Mashriq (Forakhpur), 4 July 1916. see Pro. No. 444, Ibid.


4. Leader (Allahabad), 1 July 1916, RONNP-UP.

his Khalifa."\(^1\)

All this showed that the Indian Muslims sympathies still lay inherently with Turkey, and in whatever direction the Arabs went was not likely to affect these sympathies. Thus a fertile soil could still be looked for to further Turco-German plans in India.\(^2\)

Once the Sharif's revolt and his alliance with Britain had become fait accompli the Government of India, reversed their earlier attitude and advised the Home Government to redouble its efforts to counter Turco-German propaganda, and support Sharif Husain by all means at their disposal. They saw in the Arab movement as the "main plank, in our platform"; and hoped that the success of the movement

1. Kidwai was in London when he wrote to the Nation (London), 29 July 1916. The Government of India intercepted copies of the journal. See Home Poll. 9 August 1916, Nos. 436-39, NAI; Kidwai, op.cit., pp. 124-5. By implication Kidwai seemed to advocate the assassination of the Sharif Husain of Mecca (See 'Appreciation' of Mark Sykes to Arab Report No. IV, 9 August 1916, P 3273/1916, L/P5/10/586, IOR). Syed Ameer Ali contended "there cannot be two Imams coexisting at one and the same time"; the present lawful Caliph has not yet been deposed, and he can only be deposed by the consensus of the people (Ijma-ul-Ummat)" quoted in the Indian Daily Telegraph (Lucknow), 18 July 1916. See Appendix IV, Arab Report No. V, 16 August 1916, P 3311/1916, L/P5/10/586, IOR.

might turn Muslim opinion in favour of Sharif Husain.\(^1\) On his part, Sharif Husain got Mahmud Hasan arrested and handed him over to the British, who detained him in Malta until the end of the war.\(^2\)

VI

In August 1916, Obedidullah Sindhi sent two letters in Persian written on yellow silk to Mahmud Hasan by a special messenger Abdul Haq to be handed over to Sheikh Abdul Rahim of Hyderabad (Sind),\(^3\) for onward transmission through someone or personally by him. Abdul Haq inadvertently showed them to a loyalist, Khan Bahadur Rab Nawaz Khan, whose two sons Allah Nawaz and Shah Nawaz had gone to Kabul. This gentleman got hold of the silk letters and handed them over to the Commi-

\(^1\) Viceroy to India Office, 29 June 1916, F2612/1916, L/PS/10/597, 1OR.

\(^2\) Before Mahmud Hasan was arrested by Sharif Husain, an attempt was made to persuade him to issue a fatwa condemning Turkey. For this purpose Khan Bahadur Mubarak Ali of Aurangabad was secretly sent from India to Mecca. He got an istitha prepared by the pro-Sharif Ulama. Mahmud Hasan refused to sign it. Consequently many others also refused. Mahmud Hasan also refused to sign a mahzar of the Sharif. Muhammad Mian, Ulama-i-Haqq, Vol. I, pp. 143-52.

\(^3\) Brother of Acharya Kripalani, converted to Islam.
ssioner of Multan.¹

In these letters Obeidullah gave a resume of his activities and the circumstances under which he had decided to join the Provisional Government. He stressed that Mahmud Hasan should not make any attempt to come back to India, but should rather immediately convey its details to the Turkish Government and attempt to form an alliance between Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan. A description of Al-Janud-i-Sabbaniyā (The Army of God) followed. Obeidullah Sindhi planned making Mahmud Hasan al-Qa'id, the General-in-Chief, with headquarters at Medina and secondary centres at Constantinople, Tehran and Kabul. It contained the names of the commanders with their ranks. Of these Sharīf Husain was one, which indicates that Obeidullah Sindhi was unaware of his revolt.² For this reason the Government of India did not take the 'silk letters' seriously.³

¹ The letters were written on 9th July 1916. See in C.E.M. Sands, "Reports on the Silk Letter Conspiracy Case" P4260/1916, L/PS/10/633, IOR; also see Muhammad Mian, (ed) Tehrik-i-Shaikhul Hinē, p. 219; O'Dwyer, op.cit., p. 181.

² The Sultan, Shah and Amir were to be the patrons; and there were to be eleven Field Marshals of whom Sharīf Husain of Mecca was the fifth! Viceroy to India Office, 15 September 1916, P2992/1916, L/PS/10/633, IOR.

³ Cf. O'Dwyer, op.cit., p. 181.
Mehmud Hasan's apprehension had certainly caused much relief to the British authorities in India. Though no overt act had been committed in India, there were searches and arrests in Peshawar, Sind, Delhi and the Punjab. In the United Provinces further enquiries were made. Dr. M.A. Ansari's name had figured in the 'Silk Letters'; Meston was, nevertheless, opposed to his arrest since "his sympathy is passive rather than active". Chelmsford discounted the need for his arrest. With timely action taken, no real danger was apprehended.

The 'Silk Letters' were not the result of a closely organised conspiracy, but of airy schemes. Moreover, it depended on the willingness of Afghanistan and other Muslim countries to go over to armed hostility against the British Empire. Moreover, its exclusive emphasis on a purely Islamic adventure could have had no appeal for Indian nationalists.

1. Among those arrested were Maulvi Sadiq of Karachi, Maulvi Hamidullah, Hasrat Mohani, Abul Kalam Azad etc. P 4260/1916, L/P8/10/633, IOR.

2. Meston to Cleveland, Telegram, 6 September 1916, Meston Papers-136/4, IOL.

3. Chelmsford to Meston, 16 September 1916, Meston Papers-136/1, IOL.

4. Mehmud Hasan appeared more realistic in the statement he gave to R. Burn; how could he convince the Sultans and Kings to sink their age old differences? how would they be able to send their armies to India? and even if they could do so, would they be able to fight against the British empire? He did regard the Sharif a mere rebel. Statement to R. Burn, 11 December 1917, Home Poll. B, July 1918, Nos. 92-101 & K.W. NAI, Muhammed Mian, Ulama-i-Haqq, Vol. I, p. 156.
The Turco-German Mission failed in its efforts to
persuade the Amir of Afghanistan to go to war against Britain. The Amir demanded the fulfilment of certain conditions from Germany and Turkey. Niedermayer found the Amir unwilling to let them leave on the excuse that should the circumstances change, he would require their services. Niedermayer vainly suggested to the Amir to send an influential mission to Turkey. At last in clear disappointment the Germans left Kabul on 21 June 1916. This practically coincided with the revolt of Sharif Hussain against Turkey.

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1. See the interview of Mahendra Pratap given to Professor Ludwig Stein on his return to Berlin; Vossische Zeitung, 28 March 1918, W. Rt. of DCI, June 1918, Nos. 491-94, NAI.

2. Statement of Paschen, Appendix to Meshed Diary No. 33, 12 August 1916, Pro. No. 530, F.D. Sec-War, July 1917, Nos. 147-536, NAI.

3. See Notes on Niedermayer. The information was based on the statement of a British agent who travelled with him on the Baghdad Railway to Constantinople. The British War Office trusted the veracity of the report, F.D. Sec-War, December 1917, Nos. 1-190, NAI.

4. Zugmayer wrote to Niedermayer "what we can produce there is not a declaration of war but a rebellion". See enclosure to Pro. No. 535, F.D. Sec-E, June 1920, Nos. 534-53, NAI.
This was the end of the Turco-German effort, well before the actual end of the war. The Berlin Indian Committee was disbanded in November 1918 upon the Armistice.\(^1\) Now the centre of revolutionary and pan-Islamic activities shifted from Berlin to Bern. To many revolutionaries and pan-Islamists, Bolshevik Russia now appeared as a more convincing ally in their fight against British imperialism.\(^2\)

The Turco-German attempts in India failed for several reasons. First, there was lack of cohesion, each group was working for different objectives. All through there was tension among their Indian allies.\(^3\) The Indian revolutionaries were seen by the Germans not really as partners, but as tools and so

\(^1\) Cleveland, DCI, claimed that he had knowledge about the German intrigues against India; he had taken precautionary measures, but refrained from taking any preemptive measures lest the Germans change their plans. Secrecy was given up only when the collapse of the mission was complete and its members had been rendered helpless. HRt., Home Poll. B., April 1916, Nos. 475-76, NAI.

\(^2\) For example Cheidullah Sindhi, Barkatullah and Chattopadhya established contact with the Bolsheviks. For this see Sareen, op.cit.

\(^3\) Butler wrote to Kitchener that the German scheme failed because they relied on orientals to work out the details. 10 February 1916, Butler Papers - 116/33, IOIL.
treated with contempt.¹

The Turco-German understanding about the Indian situation was also inadequate; nor were their contacts in India sufficiently vigilant.² The Germans also underestimated the efficiency and effectiveness of the British intelligence network. Subsequently, the Germans later changed their strategy and limited their interest to merely causing disturbances in India to force Britain to keep more of its troops there.³ They also became more cautious in

1. For instance Zugmayer wrote to Wassmuss on 19 December 1915 about Kadir Ali (Kedar Nath Sahni) that he was "simply a swine dog who does nothing and eats upon our good Germany's money"; and to Niedermayer about "those greasy blackguardly Bengal revolutionaries"; Griesinger noted in his diary: "we got nothing but the damned rubbish from the Indian revolutionary swine ---- our dirty beasts". See No. 368, enclosure to Pro. No. 535, P.D. Sec-Mar, June 1920, Nos. 534-53, NAI, Indian and German members tended to blame each other for their failure. Cf. Madni, Nagah-i-Hayat, Vol. XII, p. 159.

2. For example Hasrat Mohani (on 31 March 1916) showed a letter from Barkatullah to a rais at Aligarh and told him about his intention of going to Kabul. He was immediately arrested and interned at Lalitpur. See Note by Freemantle, on 'The Silk Letter Conspiracy", December 1917, Neston Papers-136/15, IOL.

supplying funds to their hopeful allies.¹

The Turco-German policy had been based on the equally false assumption that Persia and Afghanistan would cooperate and risk antagonising Britain. Conversely the assumption of the Indian revolutionaries that the British would be fully engaged by Germany in the west, proved to be far too optimistic.

In spite of all these divisions and disappointments, the Berlin Indian Committee did succeed in focusing on the question of Indian independence. It lit a torch which could not be carried with the help of Ottoman Turkey or Imperial Germany; but once lit it could also not be put out.

¹ Mahendra Pratap attributed it as one of the factors in the failure of the mission, see his note in GFM/490, NAI; M.N. Roy also stressed that they failed to keep their promises. See his Memoirs, p. 12.