AFGHANISTAN

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN PRESIDENT HARDING AND AMIR AMANULLAH KHAN OF AFGHANISTAN

033.90h11/14a

The Secretary of State to President Harding

WASHINGTON, *July 18, 1921.*

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: There is a Mission here from Afghanistan apparently with full powers and desirous of having American participation in the development of that country. Apparently we have hitherto had no relations with Afghanistan directly as formerly our dealings with that country were through Great Britain. In 1919 Great Britain recognized the independence of Afghanistan. In a statement from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, dated August 9, 1919, it was said:

"By the said Treaty, and this letter, therefore, Afghanistan is left officially free and independent in its affairs, both internal and external."

I am informed that this Mission was received in France by M. Briand and by the President of the French Republic. Our Embassy in Paris was also advised by the British Ambassador at Paris that there was no objection to our receiving the Mission, although he added that the British Government did not look with favor on its activities or its endeavors to conclude agreements with other Governments inasmuch as Afghanistan, although ostensibly independent, was still within the British "sphere of political influence."

There is, however, no way of having relations with Afghanistan at this time unless they are had directly and there is nothing in the British position which precludes our reception of the Mission.

It also appears that Afghanistan has made a treaty with the Soviet Government in which, among other things, it is agreed that the latter shall give a free subsidy yearly to the extent of one million roubles to Afghanistan, and also supply technical and other specialists. But the Soviet Government has dealings with other Powers with which we are in relation and I do not believe that the Soviet Treaty with Afghanistan furnishes a reason for precluding ourselves from the opportunity which otherwise might be open in that country.

I have informed the Mission that I shall receive them on Wednesday at the Department and I think that it would be well, if you approve, that you should also receive them. I do not think, however, that pending further inquiries it is necessary or advisable to go beyond their courteous reception.

. . . . . .

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES E. HUGHES

033.90h11/14b

The Secretary of State to President Harding

WASHINGTON, *July 21, 1921.*

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Referring to our conversation yesterday afternoon with respect to the Mission from Afghanistan, I find that the members of the Mission do desire to be received by you,—in fact are quite keen about it—and if agreeable to you I shall be glad to advise them of an appointment for such time as you may suggest. Permit me again to bring to your attention the fact that according to the letter delivered to me, and on the basis of which I received the Mission, they are here merely as a special mission to press the request for the establishment of diplomatic relations. It appears that we have never had diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, in fact not even a consular representation in that country. Now that Great Britain has relinquished her protectorate, we cannot have any relations with Afghanistan except directly. If you approve, nothing further should be said at this time than that the matter will be taken under careful consideration. I also pointed out to the Mission the fact that if a permanent legation were to be established it would be necessary for Congress to make provision for it, as no such provision now exists.

While Great Britain has relinquished her protectorate, there is still some sensitiveness as to the making of any special agreements with Afghanistan, and I understand that there was some feeling created by the fact that Italy entered into such an agreement, and I am advised that in France the Mission was received but no promises were made.

My inquiry as to the commercial opportunities for our people in Afghanistan indicates that they are extremely limited; in fact, so far as our present information goes, there is little or no opportunity for trade, aside from the products of the sapphire and of the lapis lazuli mines.

I think that the special ambassador has a letter from the Amir addressed to you which he is desirous to deliver; this letter, I understand, is to the same effect as the one delivered to me, and involves no committal on your part if received.

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES E. HUGHES

033.90h11/15

The Secretary to President Harding (Christian) to the Secretary of State

THE WHITE HOUSE, *July 22, 1921.*

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY: The President directs me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of July 21st and to say that he will be glad to receive the members of the Mission from Afghanistan at the White House Tuesday afternoon, July 26th at 3:00 o'clock.

Sincerely yours,

GEO. B. CHRISTIAN, JR.

890h.001 Am 1/–

Amir Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan to President Harding [1]

TO MY GREAT FRIEND, MR. PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: Expressing my friendly feeling to Your Excellency, I intend to inform Your Excellency's high Government about my coronation.

After the tragic death of my father His Majesty Amir Habibulla Khan who was killed during His royal Territorial excursion, I came to the throne of Afghanistan, as it was my right and all public desire of Afghan nation.

For the expression of friendly feelings of my Government, I sent one of my Generals G. Mohemmed Wali Khan as Extraordinary Ambassador to Your Excellency's high Government.

As I used to have the sincere wish to establish a permanent friendly relation between Afghanistan and high Government of the United States, I expect that Your Excellency's high Government may be satisfied with the keeping of this friendly relation too.

Sending to Your Excellency my sincere greeting I beg to express herewith to Your Excellency and Your Excellency's high Government my highest esteem.

AMIR AMANULLAH KHAN

[1] Copy received by the Department is undated.

890h.001 Am 1/1

President Harding to Amir Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan

GREAT AND GOOD FRIEND: I have received from the hands of G. Mohemmed Wali Khan the letter by which Your Majesty advises me of the death of your father, his late Majesty Amir Habibullah Khan, and of your ascension to the throne of Afghanistan, as well as of your desire to establish friendly diplomatic relations between the United States and Afghanistan.

While I have learned with sorrow of the tragic death of Your Majesty's father, and offer to you my sincere sympathy in this great affliction, I congratulate Your Majesty on your ascension to the throne and trust that your reign will redound to Your Majesty's glory and the prosperity of Afghanistan.

It is my wish that the relations between the United States and Afghanistan may always be of a friendly character, and I shall be happy to cooperate with Your Majesty to this end. I am constrained, however, to confirm to Your Majesty what was stated orally to G. Mohemmed Wali Khan, that with respect to the United States the question of the creation of a Diplomatic Mission and of the appropriate action to that end by the Congress of the United States must be reserved for further consideration.

In thanking Your Majesty for your friendly sentiments, I desire to assure you of my own good wishes for your personal happiness and for the prosperity of your country.[2]

Your Good Friend,

WARREN G. HARDING

By the President:

CHARLES E. HUGHES
Secretary of State.

WASHINGTON, *July 29, 1921.*

707.1190h/–: Telegram

The Chargé in Persia (Engert) to the Secretary of State

TEHERAN, *August 21, 1921—8 a.m.*
[Received August 22—9 p.m.]

46. I should appreciate the Department's telegraphic instructions as to my relations if any with the Legation of Afghanistan. Calls had been exchanged before I assumed charge and as I wished to

[2] The reception of the Afghan Mission by the President was generally accepted as according recognition to the regime of King Amanullah.

interest Afghanistan Minister in the possibility of American petroleum exploitation in his country I thought it best to continue informal personal relations but excused myself from attending official dinners. British [Legation] has no relations whatever with him.

Could the Department inform me for my guidance of the result of the recent Afghan mission to Washington as it aroused the greatest interest here; [it] is being widely discussed and perhaps misrepresented.

ENGERT

707.1190h/–: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Persia (Engert)

WASHINGTON, *August 25, 1921—6 p. m.*

24. Your 46, August 21, 8 a.m.

Your course approved. Mission announcing accession of Amir received July 20th by Secretary and 26th by President, who accepted and answered respectively letters from Foreign Minister [3] and Amir. Overture toward establishment of diplomatic relations met by pointing out necessity of Congressional action and further consideration. Formal recognition of independence neither asked for nor granted.

HUGHES

[3] Letter from Foreign Minister not printed.