THE BERLIN-BAGHDAD RAILWAY AS A CAUSE OF WORLD WAR I

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I. Railways and "The New Imperialism".

Shortly after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the European Powers, Japan, and the United States entered upon an era of unprecedented industrial and commercial expansion. One feature of this expansion was the rapid development of rail transportation to unite widely separated and, frequently, sparsely settled areas. A second aspect was the aggressive scramble for colonies, protectorates, naval bases and spheres of influence. It was discovered that railroads, in addition to opening markets and securing sources of supply, served to politically unify new territories and vastly simplified the problem of military defense and control of the region. Equally important, the railroads became the dominant business interest in the new mines and industries on either side of the railway, in the towns along the right of way, and in the farming areas for miles around the railroad. This was true both of railways in "colonial areas" and in home areas: for example, the major railways of Germany, Russia, and the United States.

Railways having become so important, it was soon merely sufficient for one nation to announce the preliminary plans for a new railway to engender suspicion, hostility, and jealousy in other powers. Such was the effect on the French of England's projected Cape Town-to-Cairo Railway, which would conflict with the French-planned East-West Railway across the bulge of Africa. Similarly, the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 grew out of a struggle for control of railways in Manchuria and was precipitated, in part, by the Japanese determination to strike before the Trans-Siberian Railroad—which would considerably strengthen Russia's hold in the Far East—could be completed.

The Baghdad Railway was a project as grand in conception and as sweeping in scope as any of the railways already mentioned. At first a modest effort in north-eastern Anatolia, it soon captured the enthusiasm of important men in German and Austrian financial, industrial, and political circles. This growing interest of Germany, by a sort of political third law of motion, engendered an equal and opposite reaction in Russia, France, and England.

In this paper I trace the history of the Baghdad Railway from its conception in 1888 to the beginning of World War I. I will show how important the Railway was in the political, economic, and diplomatic events which led up to the First World War.
II. German-Turkish Background to the Baghdad Railway

There are far too many facets to the Baghdad Railway project to be considered adequately in a short paper. Many will only be mentioned in passing. However, two factors seem of crucial importance as background to the Railway throughout the course of its development. These were: (1) the swelling flood of German economic power and her emergence as a major world trader; and (2) the disintegration of Turkish politics.

The growth of Germany as a world power is best summarized by means of a few tables of comparative statistics. These data were taken from a little book by Dr. Karl Helferich which was published on the eve of World War I [11].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Europe**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>25,000,000</td>
<td>200,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>41,000,000</td>
<td>300,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>48,000,000</td>
<td>360,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>66,000,000</td>
<td>460,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In population growth, Germany's rate of increase was about that of Europe as a whole (but much greater than France's).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steel Production, Thousands of Tons (Helferich, p. 72)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 1910, Germany had far surpassed Great Britain in steel production; in fact, her production was greater than that of Great Britain.

* Dr. Helferich was appointed Assistant General Manager of the Anatolian Railway in 1906 at the age of 34. He was the son-in-law of Dr. Siemens—who was then head of the Deutsche Bank, the bank behind the Bagdad Railway. Helferich became director of the bank and was later Germany's Finance Minister during part of World War I. The book he wrote in 1914 was part of a nation-wide celebration at every level--social, political, economic--of the 25th anniversary of Kaiser Wilhelm II's accession to power. It provides a glimpse of how Germans viewed themselves and the world in 1914.

** Encyclopaedia Britannica.
Britain, Russia, and France combined. Yet Germany's population was still (in 1910) only one eighth that of Europe.

**Total Import-Export Trade, Millions of Marks (Helferich, p. 73)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1887</th>
<th>1912</th>
<th>Increase (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 1912, Germany's visible trade had increased from one half that of England's in 1887 to almost equal that of England in 1912—despite a doubling of English trade in this period.

**Shipping (Helferich, p. 77)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1885</th>
<th>1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the increase in German economic wealth again is marked. Despite lack of extensive coastal trade, by 1910, she had reached parity with the United States in registered tonnage of steam ships and had one fourth the tonnage of Britain—versus one tenth in 1887. By 1910, Germany had three times the carrying capacity of France or Norway—whereas in 1887, she was only equal to these countries.

The table also shows that the German ships were larger on the average than those of her competitors. This reflects the relatively greater importance to the Germans of world versus local trade.
Hoffman [14] documents the British reaction to the German trade increase by citations of the despairing cries of innumerable British consular reports. German traders were more energetic and were much better supported by their home government and by their home banks than were the British. Taylor [5], writing during World War II, sees in all this an unholy alliance of government, industry, and labor, artificially maintained, aggressive, selfish, ruthless. Helferich, in his preface to his little book, sees the 25 years in Germany prior to World War I as a bursting forward of a whole people unparalleled since the Reformation and the Renaissance [11, p. 4]. Certainly, a new colossus had arisen in the middle of Europe and certainly this new colossus would be expected to press for expanded world trade and world power. Helferich himself, writing in Die Deutsche Turken Politik (p. 8), said; "it was neither accident nor deliberate purpose, as much as it was the course of German economic development which led Germany to take an active interest in Turkey." (As quoted in Earle [7, p. 52]).

In contrast to Germany's growth in power and unity, Turkey during this period became weaker, and her sovereignty was steadily compromised. In 1875, Turkey was forced to repudiate her debts to the European powers. In 1876, the liberal group in Turkey was able to force a constitution on its own carefully chosen Sultan, Murad V. However, Murad went insane within the year, and Abdul Hamid II came to power. Abdul pretended to accept the constitution, but the 1877-1878 War with Russia gave him an excuse to dissolve the newly formed National Assembly. This step was followed by the arrest or exiling of the liberals and the de facto suspension of the constitution. At the end of the War with Russia Britain supported Turkey at the Congress of Berlin and picked up Cyprus as a reward. Abdul Hamid then embarked on a series of economic and military reforms. These paid off in the defeat of Greece in an 1897 War. However, they were of no avail in protecting far-off Tripoli, which fell to Italy in 1911.

In 1912, the first Balkan War stripped Turkey of territory closer to home—including the important city of Adrianople. But Adrianople was regained in the second Balkan War of 1913, directed against Bulgaria by the other Balkan powers and by Turkey (a last-minute entry).

Domestically, Abdul Hamid's rule was characterized by extensive graft and corruption, a vast political police organization, a huge and slow-moving bureaucracy, and a series of insurrections of minority groups. Yalman [29] who grew up in the Salonika which sheltered Mustafa Kemal and other Young Turks, describes the long stream of exiles that passed through Salonika on their way to the capitals of Europe, the
unrest, the ferment of excitement*, the clandestine newspapers (of one of which he was the editor). In 1908, the Young Turks were strong enough to force a constitutional government on Abdul Hamid. The Sultan's attempted counter-revolution of April, 1909 failed, and Abdul Hamid was deposed. Mohammed V, Abdul's brother, became the Sultan.

Although the Young Turks were fired with the liberal ideas of Europe, they had no better solution to the nationalities problem than to continue to hold down the subject peoples by force. This policy was to give way to the idea of a nation-state only in the 1920s under Mustafa Kemal.

In economic affairs, the repudiation of the Turkish public debt in 1875 led to an ineffective consortium of European Powers in 1876 which lasted until 1881. In that year, the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (P.D.A.) was set up. By assigning to the P.D.A. certain Turkish state revenues, it was possible to begin to pay Turkey's creditors in a systematic fashion. This restored Turkish credit, and a series of loans were made to Turkey under the protecting aegis of the P.D.A. As expenses mounted, so did the role of the P.D.A. Turkey was slowly being mortgaged to the European Powers (Earle, [7]).

By the twentieth century, the P.D.A. had assigned to it one fourth of the state revenues (Blaisdell, [21], p. 150). These assigned revenues were the most readily expandable and the easiest to collect— for example, customs duties (Blaisdell, [21], p. 151). By the control of the tax rates in these areas, the P.D.A. could, and did, control Turkish capital expenditures. For example, French-British delegates to the P.D.A. blocked an increase in customs revenues in 1911 to prevent Turkey from acquiring the capital needed to build certain sections of the Baghdad Railway (Blaisdell, [21], p. 224). Finally, the P.D.A., because of the interlocking directorships with the Ottoman Bank (French-dominated) and the Deutsche Bank (backers of the Baghdad Railway) and the various European-controlled railways, harbor facilities, and industries, assumed a dominating role in the Turkish economy—as is well documented by Blaisdell [21]. The P.D.A. thus became extremely important in the history of the Baghdad Railway.

* Innumerable writers sprang up to criticize the regime. One of the most popular, Teufik Fikret, wrote a poem titled "What's The Use" in which he recounted an imaginary dialogue with a political favorite. "What is the use," said the favorite, "of having schools, books, hospitals, and factories which have only an impermanent existence in a temporal world?" To which the poet answered, "And what is the use of having your state and all its worldly riches as long as they mean only darkness, slavery, misery, and humiliation for us?"
III. The First Phase: A Commercial Venture, 1888-1899

As early as 1835, Molke, who had served as military advisor in Turkey, suggested German development of the area. Subsequently, in 1871, von Pressel made certain surveys which impressed the Turkish Government, and a short railway was built. It was not, however, until 1888 that the Baghdad project can be said to have begun. In that year, Dr. Siemens' Deutsche Bank founded the Anatolian Railway Company. The new company took over an existing British line and began to extend it into southern Anatolia. Included in the concession was an agreement by the Anatolian Railway to consider extension to Baghdad at some subsequent date. Bismarck opposed this extension provision but was overruled.

There was virtually no opposition to the railway on the part of other European powers at this time. Wolf [9, p. 17], reports a small skirmish in December, 1892, when Sir Clare Ford, British Ambassador to Constantinople, raised objections to the German concession. Marschall von Biederstein, then German Foreign Minister, countered by having the German Consul General in Egypt withhold his consent to further British advances in Egypt. Lord Cormmer, the British chief in Egypt, protested vigorously and urged the British Foreign Office to reconsider the Railway project. Two days later, Lord Rosebury withdrew the British objections.

With a few exceptions like this, the Railway was a quiet commercial venture during these years. The Germans ran their railways effectively and honestly, and the Turkish Government was very favorably impressed.
IV. The Second Phase: Drang Nach Osten, 1899-1908.

In 1897, the Turks had won a war with Greece in which the German railways had been a material factor in their success. This, more than the much publicized second visit of the Kaiser to Constantinople, induced the Sultan to push for continuation of the railway project. This facet of the railway is carefully documented by Wolf [9, p. 19 et seq.] and is his most important contribution to the history of the Railway, as Chapman [6] correctly points out in her bibliography.

On November 27, 1899, the Germans were given a definite concession to extend the railway to Baghdad. Included in the concession were guarantees of a certain revenue per kilometer of track laid—the so-called Kilometer Guarantees—and carefully worded provisions spelling out German rights to establish and operate irrigation projects, harbors, and various industries along the right of way. To back up the Kilometer Guarantees, certain state revenues in certain districts of Turkey were assigned to the railway.

The proposed route was from Haidar Pasha (the Asiatic side of Constantinople) through Angora, Adana, Mosul, Aleppo, Baghdad, and on to Basra and the Persian Gulf. There were two immediate reactions to this proposal. First, the Russians objected to the line going through Angora as being a potential threat to her interests in eastern Anatolia. By the Black Sea Basin Agreement of 1899, the route was shifted westward so that it would pass through Konia instead of Angora, and Russia withdrew her objections. Second, the British, fearing the possibility of a German naval base on the Persian Gulf, made a protectorate out of Kuwait by agreement with the Sheik of Kuwait (1899). This effectively barred the Railway from a southern terminus on the Gulf. The result was that Basra, on the Shatt-al-Arab (the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers) 60 miles north of the Gulf, became the proposed terminus. The line as projected, therefore, ran from Constantinople to Basra—a distance of 2,500 miles. This was a project of greater magnitude than the Santa Fe from Chicago to Los Angeles, or the Union Pacific from Omaha to San Francisco (Earle, [7], p. 75).

The Railway offered the Turks definite advantages over lines proposed by other European Powers. The main factor was that the line would tie together Turkey's scattered provinces. This was not true of lines ending at the Mediterranean below Anatolia. Such lines tended to detach Turkish territory. A second advantage was that the line went through the Taurus Mountains of western Anatolia rather than along the sea coast. This meant the Railway was safe from interdiction by European naval guns in time of war. A third advantage was that the Germans, unlike the other European powers, were not likely to attempt annexation of territory served by the Railway.

Despite the bellicose tone of the Pan-Germanic League and the Kaiser himself, despite the slogans of "mittel Europa" and "Drang nach
osten," the Railway project was received rather calmly by the British and French press. In fact, on November 30, 1889, the London Times said: "There is no Power into whose hands Englishmen would more gladly see the enterprise fall than Germany's." (As quoted in the Edinburg review of 1907, [31]). At the same time, "less cordial sentiments were expressed toward Russia and France" (Earle, [7], p. 67).

From 1899 to 1902, nothing much happened. The British were exercised over the 1900 German naval expansion, but the Railway was not part of this clamor. In the meanwhile, the Germans were quietly surveying the route and trying to estimate its cost. After a period of renegotiation with the Sultan over financial terms, a "final" concession to the German company was announced on March 18, 1902. Shortage of money led the Germans to offer shares in the Railway to France and Britain as a means of helping to float loans in these countries. Sir Nicolas O'Connor, British Ambassador to Constantinople, was in favor of this "internationalization" (Gwinner, [36]), as were the British Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister.

However, a tremendous outcry was raised against the project in the British press. Chapman [6, p. 208] agrees with Hoffman [14] that this outcry was led by special interests—such as the Lynch Brothers' shipping concession on the Euphrates—which capitalized on the wave of anti-German feeling then sweeping the country. In any event, all authorities agree that public pressure helped the British Government to repudiate internationalization. Hoffman [14, p. 147] feels that British banking interests had changed their minds about the finances of the concession, while Chapman [6, p. 208] points out that the German guarantee of equity in freight rates was never clearly brought before the British public.

Though the press uproar subsided and was never again as violent on the Railway issue, the British and French Governments continued to obstruct the Railway. In addition to blocking Germany from access to the British or French securities market, Britain put pressure on the Turks to slow down the Railway. In cooperation with the French, England worked through the Ottoman Public Debt Administration to block Turkish increases in tariffs which would be used to finance the Railway (Blaisdell, [21], op. cit.). Finally, when Germany asked for a conference with Britain, the English countered by requiring French and Russian participation. The Germans, fearing to be outvoted, refused. England then made prior agreements of Germany with France and Russia a sine qua non for negotiations with England (Chapman, [6], p. 208).

Taken all together, these policies of France and England (and, to a certain extent, Russia) constituted a most determined and consistent opposition. Yet, Sarolea [15, p. 249] and Fraser [34], writing in 1912, derided German talk of Entente opposition to the Railway! This type of journalism could not and did not contribute to a better international atmosphere.
V. The Third Phase: The Germans Compromise, 1908-1914

The British had warned the Russians during the Reval negotiations that they could not permanently obstruct the Railway (Brandenburg, [12]). In 1908, the Germans compromised, and turned the Baghdad-to-Basra section of the Railway concession back to Turkey. ("The dream of the German Baghdad Railway is dreamed away" wrote one of the directors—Benns, [1, p. 77]). This concession removed the grounds for the chief British objection, yet it was with Russia, at Potsdam in 1910, that the first agreement with an Entente power was made. Russia's Persian sphere of influence was recognized. More delays followed. Despite British fears of a German-Russian rapprochement (Mosely, [30], makes it clear that even after 1910 the Germans still had room for maneuvers against the solidarity of the Entente.), it was not Britain, but France who made the next agreement, in February, 1914. (France got northern Anatolia and Syria as spheres of influence, the Deutsche Bank and the French-dominated Ottoman Bank came to terms, and the German sphere of influence around her railway in Anatolia was recognized.)

Finally, on June 15, 1914, the British initialed an agreement which hinged on still further agreements of the British and the Germans with Turkey. The agreement involved recognition of the German railway monopoly in most parts of Turkey, a stoppage of the railway at Basra, British control south of Basra, the allowance of an increase in Turkish customs, German monopoly around Adana, British monopoly in Mesopotamia, and making the Shatt-al-Arab an open body of water (Chapman, [6], p. 206-7). There is no doubt (Earle, [7]) that Britain got the best of this arrangement. In addition, she had so delayed construction of the Railway as to seriously hinder Turkish troop movements during the war. In return for these "tactical" advantages, Britain had contributed to German fears of encirclement and had strengthened the system of alliances which helped make World War I a terribly costly and protracted struggle.
VI. The Baghdad Railway as a Cause of World War I

Affirmative Arguments

The strongest case for the Baghdad Railway as a cause of World War I is put by Benns [1, p. 78]: "Although before the outbreak of the War in 1914, understandings were thus eventually reached regarding the Baghdad Railway by Germany, Russia, France, and Great Britain, the project had already done much to poison the international atmosphere. Germany had come to believe that the opposition of the Entente Powers was only part of their general policy of encirclement...Russia, Great Britain, and France had become deeply suspicious of Germany's plans in the Near East...Russia's realization that the Austro-German advance into the Balkans and Turkey must be checked if her own plans for securing control of the Straits at Constantinople were not to be thwarted had much to do with the course of events during the fateful days of July, 1914."

This statement by Benns seems rather strong. It is not backed up by the references he cites specific to the Baghdad Railway, but apparently is based on a general appraisal of the diplomatic chess game prior to World War I.

A more moderate argument is presented by Hoffman [14] who views the Railway from the standpoint of its influence on British trade in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia. He makes a convincing case for the Railway as an integral part of an all-out German assault on English trade in the area. He cites (p. 159-161) a very early British reaction—the September 21, 1899 "Curzon Dispatch." In this dispatch, the Indian Government voiced its alarm over German penetration into Persia and urged conciliation over the Persian issue with Russia so that the two powers could jointly repel the Germans. This line of reasoning led, according to Hoffman, to the Reval Agreement with Russia of 1907. For 1909, Hoffman (p. 166) cites Sir Charles Hardwage's message to the British Ambassador in Berlin: "If we and the Russians present a solid front and cooperate very closely in Persia, I think we shall in the end defeat the Germans as we are the two powers who are in a position to exert the most pressure."

British fears of discriminatory rates on the Baghdad Railway are cited many times by Hoffman. For example (p. 153), Sir Edward Grey to the German Ambassador in London in 1908: "It is impossible to agree to an increase in customs duties unless we have additional safeguards against the use of these additional revenues for the purpose of displacing British trade in Mesopotamia. We feel that we must either

* Earle himself [7] does not argue much one way or the other on the link between the Railway and World War I. He is more interested in it as a case history of imperialism.
The strategic menace to Britain was the theme of the 1903 hue and cry in the British press against the Baghdad Railway. This is also the theme of Fraser's 1911 and 1912 articles [33, and 34] and Geraud's 1914 article [35]. Most of these writers were concerned with the idea of a Persian Gulf naval base being athwart England's life line to India, or of a Turkish attack on Egypt. Fraser [33] also saw, as early as 1911, that the railway from Germany to Turkey would enable Germany to block the Dardanelles and cut British-Russian communications in wartime. This was a rare reaction. The fear of Germany's military domination of Turkey was fairly general, however, especially in 1903 when Dr. Paul von Rohrback published in his Die Baghdadbahn:

"A direct attack upon England across the North Sea is out of the question....The prospect of a German invasion of England is a fantastic dream....England can be attacked in only one place: Egypt....Turkey, however, can never dream of recovering Egypt until she is mistress of a developed railway system through Asia Minor and Syria, and until through the progress of the Anatolian Railway to Baghdad, she is in a position to withstand an attack by England upon Mesopotamia....The policy of protecting Turkey, which is now pursued by Germany, has no other object but the desire to effect an insurance against the danger of a war with England. (Rohrback's italics; cited in Lynch, [38], p. 380).

The counter reactions of the British press were violent. These statements are supposed by some writers to have aggravated Anglo-German misunderstanding and so helped bring on the War.

A final argument is that of Wolf [9]. He sees the Baghdad Railway as an important source of friction between Germany and the Entente (p. 102) but believes the railway was mainly "Germany's pawn in the Entente-making game which failed to stave off the war" (Preface). He is not too impressed with the trade arguments--such as those developed by Hoffman and Earle. As he points out (p. 103), although Earle's figures show a vast percentage increase in German trade with Turkey, Earle does not mention that this trade was only a small fraction of Germany's total trade.

Negative Arguments

Mrs. Chapman's book [6] is the most recent study devoted to the Baghdad Railway. She is a most forthright disbeliever in the Railway as
a cause of World War I. Whereas Benns emphasizes Great Power squabbles
over the Railway going on right up to the war, Mrs. Chapman sees the
Railway as "one of the few subjects on which Anglo-German agreement was
obtained." The fact that the conflict was being settled in the very
years when international tensions were so great and that "the agreements
were initialed when the War broke out is probably the best proof that
the Baghdad Railway was at most a minor contributing irritant in Anglo-
German relations prior to 1914" (p. 210-211). She does not believe that
the war could have been advanced or stopped a single day by any British
action with regard to the Railway. As to the press reaction, she
believes the 1903 outcries of the British press to be the only important
instances, and there they were more part of a general anti-German
sentiment than a direct result of the German railway plans.

A more fundamental objection is that of S.B. Fay in his "Origins of
the World War" [25]. Professor Fay (p. 32) sees these five main
underlying causes of World War I:

1. The system of secret alliances
2. Militarism
3. Nationalism
4. Economic imperialism
5. The newspaper press

In a brief discussion of these underlying causes, Fay says that railway
concessions "are one of the most important forms of economic imperialism
because they involve political as well as economic interests." However,
Fay disclaims further effort to trace underlying causes as being beyond
the scope of any one book. Yet on page 46, at the beginning of his
study, he writes: "Generally speaking, however, this economic
imperialism is usually exaggerated as one of the underlying causes of
the War.... If one reads the diplomatic correspondence of the years
before the War, one is struck by the relatively slight emphasis which is
given to these economic rivalries, which haunt so largely the mind of
the agitated business man and newspaper editor. It is not so much
questions of economic rivalry as those of prestige, boundaries, armies
and navies, the balance of power, and possible shiftings in the system
of alliances which provide reams of diplomatic correspondence and raise
the temperature in the Foreign Offices to the danger point." After
which, Professor Fay plunges into a marvelously vivid account of the
diplomatic exchanges prior to the war. At the end of his study he
returns to the attack. On page 558 he says: "Economic rivalry,
national ambitions and antagonisms, and newspaper incitements [played a
role in bringing on the Great War]. But it is doubtful if all these
[together] could have led to war if it had not been for the
assassination of Franz Ferdinand. This was the flame which caused...the
rapid and complex succession of events which culminated in a world war,
and for this Serbian nationalism was ultimately responsible."
The essence of Professor Fay's objection to the Railway (or economic factors in general) as a cause of the war is quite clear from these extracts. Diplomacy turns out to be the all-in-all, or virtually the all-in-all, for Fay. I will discuss this line of argument and the points of view brought out earlier, in the concluding section of this paper.

Conclusion

Professor Fay's line of reasoning strikes at the very roots of the idea of the Baghdad Railway, or any other economic problem for that matter, as being a cause of war. Therefore, I will deal with Professor Fay first before tackling the other arguments.

What does Fay do? He cuts the statesman off from the whole material world. The world becomes a stage on which intrigues are spun out, bluffs are made or called, and shouts and strange silences become the weapons in a shadow game of conflict. And in the end, what happens? An assassin's bullet rings down the curtain. But can this really be the case? Do diplomats argue in a void? Or is it more reasonable to say that the real world is somehow the substructure of the idea world in which wars are hatched? Even a Descartes cannot trace the exact transformation from the thing-in-itself to the thing-in-the-mind. But psychology has shown us that the most horrible nightmares are derived from certain distinct physical and psychical realities. With less irrational behavior, the underlying causes are more easily found. So it is with World War I. One of these realities behind the war is the Baghdad Railway. I shall now do my best to prove this.

In the early sections of this paper I have emphasized the economic development of Germany prior to the war. The incredible increase in Germany's industrial might became a factor in the thinking of all Europeans. Non-Germans were jealous and frightened of this power; Germans were filled with exaltation at their own deeds (see Helferich, [11]). With this might behind her, Germany became a world power for the first time in history. She sought colonies, fought trade wars, threatened Britain's naval supremacy. And in the Near East she began the economic penetration of Turkey—spearheaded by the Baghdad Railway. These are facts; these are facts only because of Germany's increase in economic power; diplomacy has nothing to do with this. Diplomacy does not create a Krupp or an I.G. Farben, but a Krupp or a Farben gives a new edge to diplomacy.

Now, was the Railway important to European diplomacy or was it not? Was it just a footnote (Fay, [25]), a pawn (Wolf, [9]), a minor irritant (Chapman, [6])? The answer is no. Those who have studied the Railway, including Wolf and Chapman, fill their theses with details of disputes, deadlocks, arguments. As early as 1899, England was forming a protectorate over Kuwait to block the Railway's access to the Persian Gulf. Refusal to let the Turks raise customs duties to pay for the
Railway, refusal to join in the Railway management, refusal to allow Railway shares to be traded on their exchanges—these were the actions of France and England. Does this make the Railway a minor matter? I think not.

What about the Germans themselves? Brandenburg, in his "Bismarck to World War" [12], has a reference to the Railway in 42 out of 520 pages. Admittedly, some of the references are to agreements into which the Railway entered only as a bargaining point. But what a persistent bargaining point! Why was this? It was because Turkey and the Railway had become to Germany what Morocco was to France and what Egypt was to England. No colony of Germany had this status. The visits of the Kaiser to the Sultan were momentous occasions to European chancelleries. Writers like Rohrback made trip after trip to Turkey to report back on the more and more wonderful possibilities for mining, irrigation, markets, military usefulness. Marschall von Biederstein, probably the best diplomat of the German Foreign Service, chose Constantinople for his Ambassadorship when he stepped down from the office of Foreign Secretary in 1897—and he stayed there as long as he could. Turkey was Germany's white hope. Was Germany reasonable in this? Was she not paying too high a price for a problematical future? Perhaps. But the same can be said of Britain's obsession with the route to India and the French fanaticism about North Africa—which persisted into the post-World War II period. The important facts are that Turkey existed, the Baghdad Railway was in progress, and the Germans had definite and strong ideas on the importance of these facts to them as a nation. To argue that the trade with Turkey was only a small fraction of Germany's world trade (Wolf) is to miss the essential connection between facts and national hopes based on these facts.

So far I have attempted to show that the Railway was:

1. A continued source of conflict between Germany and other world powers

2. A key facet of German's national hopes and ambitions.

There is remaining, however, the most important aspect of all: the role of the Railway in promoting the alliance system which had so much to do with the stupendous scale of World War I. In 1875, Bismarck had stated in the Reichstag that Germany's interests in the Turkish-Balkan area "were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian Grenadier." Bismarck was determined not to be involved in an area where Austria and Russia were at odds. As he said in 1886, since Germany could not appease one of these nations in this area without offending the other—both extremely dangerous as enemies—it was not at all worthwhile to become involved.
This was not a difficult policy to follow in these early days.* But the world was changing. Not by accident, not by design (as Helferich puts it [11]), Germany's economic power began to flow into southeastern Europe and into the Ottoman Empire. What was the result? Germany became involved in the Balkans as she had not been in Bismarck's time. England was able to let Germany guard Constantinople and began to cut loose from Turkey (Brandenburg, [12]). The French and English began working together against Germany in the Public Debt Administration of Turkey (Blaisdell, [21]). Faced with the new German threat to Persia, Russia and England were able to settle their differences in 1907 at Reval--to make the "unmakable entente" (Hoffman, [14]). All the other sources of conflict—Alsace-Lorraine, Bosnia, Herzegovina, the German Navy—affected only one of the Entente powers. Only the Baghdad Railway had the unenviable distinction of developing hostility in all three Entente powers simultaneously. The result was to make Germany feel ever more encircled and to move her closer to a dangerous alliance with Austria.

In summing up: the Railway was a manifestation of a dramatic and alarming growth of German economic power. It played a role in the British-German trade rivalry, in their strategic maneuverings, and in the German-English press controversies. The Railway helped unite the Entente powers against Germany and this led Germany into a fear of encirclement, her increasing involvement in the Balkans, and her dangerous alliance with Austria. German hopes for the Railway undoubtedly were exaggerated, but failure to recognize these hopes on the part of the Entente powers helped bring on World War I. As Mills says in his "The Causes of World War III" [26], allowing sources of national conflicts to grow without attending to them is to court disaster. The Railway involved a major conflict of national interests; failure to estimate these sources of this conflict correctly on both German and Entente sides definitely helped bring on World War I.

* Austrian, British, French, and Italian ships dominated the eastern Mediterranean trade. It was not until 1889 that the first German passenger ship reached the Near East (Rosen, [28], p. 39). Contrast this with Morgenthau's description of the first train to make it all the way from Berlin to Constantinople on January 17, 1916. (Morgenthau was American Ambassador to Turkey [27, p. 273]. "There was great rejoicing in Constantinople,... The railroad station was decorated with flags and flowers and the whole German and Austrian population, including the Embassy's staffs, turned out to welcome the incoming train."

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AFTERWORD

This paper was prepared in the spring of 1959 for a New York University Graduate History Seminar in 20th Century European History. I believe it has value for a CNA audience in two important respects:

First, it documents a complex web of interests and rivalries in the Middle East. Today some of the players have changed, but the interaction of strategies and economic interests, of shifting alliances, and of interventions by the great powers continues.

Second, the paper illustrates how difficult it is to ascribe cause-and-effect relations in human affairs—even after the event. How much more difficult, then, to predict the consequences of what we do today on what tomorrow holds—for ourselves and for those who dwell in this crossroads of the world.
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BOOKS

General


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   "In the rest of Europe, religious reform meant going forward; with Luther, it meant going back, repudiating everything that was carrying civilized life beyond barbarism....Even the technical occasion of his breach with Rome was symbolic: he objected to the sale of indulgences in order to raise money for the building of St. Peter's—if it had been for the purpose of massacring German peasants, Luther might never have become a Protestant.")

The Berlin-Baghdad Railway

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German Economic Development


11. Helferich, Dr. Karl. *Germany's Economic Progress and National Wealth, 1888-1913.* New York, 1914. (Helferich was first son-in-law to the director of the Deutsche Bank, later director and Germany's finance minister. The essence of this little book is the irresistible growth of German economic power: the world must give way!)

German Foreign Policy and Trade Rivalry

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feeling among the German people for one purpose only: war. If the Germans would only recognize that England just must have the biggest navy, and that only a few countries came to power at the right time to win colonies!


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The Causes of War

25. Fay, Sidney Bradshaw. *The Origins of the World War.* 2nd. ed., revised. 2 vols. in one. New York, 1930. (A thorough study, on the political level, of documentary and autobiographical material available up to the date of publication. The German documents available were substantially complete by 1930; the English and Austrian, fairly complete; the French were just beginning to publish. Many Russian documents had been published by the Bolsheviks. No official collections were available from Serbia, though numerous unofficial collections, memoirs, and the like had been published.

The tone of the work is admirably moderate. The style is slightly old-fashioned. My chief criticism is that Fay slights the economic and social causes of the war in his concentration on personalities and diplomacy. All in all, however, it is an astounding piece of research. It is a shame a more recent edition was not possible—but even so it has been and will continue to be an extremely valuable book.)


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Russia, Turkey, and the Great Powers

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Contemporary British Opinion

With the exception of the Article by Dr. Gwinner of the Deutsche Bank, all the articles which follow were written by Englishmen between 1900 and 1917. These articles, which are only a small sample of the total, cover a number of writers, journals, and dates. The reactions to the Baghdad Railway are varied. They range from opposition to it as a dangerous German plan to dominate the Near East or belief that it is a foolish or inconsequential enterprise, to support for the Railway as a promoter of trade and a civilizing influence.

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33. Fraser, Lovat. "Why Help the Baghdad Railway?". The National Review, 314-322, vol. 57, 1911. (The same general line of argument as in his 1912 article or in Geraud's 1914 article....He urges Britain not to let Turkey raise her duties—which would help subsidize railway building at the expense of British trade. Sees "internationalization" as much a blunder in 1911 as it was in 1903 in the days of Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne. Unlike Hogarth, believes the Germans will make Basra, on the Shatt-al-Arab (the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates) a first-class port which will not threaten the British on the Persian Gulf. But if the British were to let the line extend to Kuwait...
and build a naval base there, England would be "giving hostages to fortune"."

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(Lynch dismisses the idea of a dramatic increase in German trade with Turkey or of extensive German colonization as fanciful. But the strategic threat to Egypt, Persia, and the Suez Canal he considers to be very real. He is also alarmed at the idea of the custom increase needed to pay for the extension of the Railway.)

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