

3852

hardly be mooted whilst all the energies of Azan bin Ghes are being directed to the repulse of the Wahabees, who are marching against him. Syud Nusseer's title to his position in Mekran is, like that of Azan bin Ghes in Oman, one of might, not of right.

(Sd.) C. G.

16-2-70.

THIS is an exceedingly difficult question which has been raised, and a great deal can be said on both sides: and it is not to my mind by any means clear how far we should allow Azan to recover these ports by sending armed ships across the sea.

In the first place, Syud Nusseer, who has succeeded in taking Gwador and Charbar, and who is a son of the late Syud Thoweynee by a concubine, did not, in taking Gwador, commit a breach of the maritime peace. He escaped from Muscat on 5th April in an *unarmed* vessel, which had been sent for him from Gwador. He was accompanied only by one person of the name of Daho. He reached Gwador on 8th April. The same night, a plot was hatched to put him in power. The project was prevented by the interference of Captain Ross. But on 15th April Syud Nusseer formally took possession of the town under a salute; the people, with exception of Syud Saif, the Governor, and his sepoys, un-animously declared for him, so that no disturbance was caused.

In fact, all the conditions have been fulfilled in the case of Syud Nusseer, on which we were formerly willing to allow Toorkee to leave Bombay and try his fortunes at Muscat. Although Toorkee was told that no one whatever would be permitted to enter Muscat by force from the sea-board, still, if his presence were desired by the people or a large majority, he would be permitted to return. Nusseer has obtained power with the unanimous voice of the people; he committed no breach of the peace in his progress to power; and it is not clear to me how we can consistently allow Azan under these circumstances to break the peace at sea, when we refused to allow the members of the old dynasty to recover Muscat by the same means. The decision of Government, not to allow either Salim or Toorkee to recover Muscat by naval operations, was approved by the Secretary of State in his despatch No. 40 of 25th February 1869.

Then again, in recognizing Azan as the *de facto* ruler of Muscat I am not sure that we recognize his right to any more than he actually holds, or that good policy or justice in any way requires us to waive for a time the position we have assumed as protectors of the peace at sea, in order that Muscat may recover her outlying possessions. Muscat is as much out of place at Gwador or Charbar as we should be at Calais or Boulogne, and I doubt whether it is advisable to attempt to perpetuate or stereotype so abnormal a state of things.

Then again the right of Muscat to Gwador is by no means very clear. The Khan of Khelat has never given up his claim nor has Persia. And although we have disputed the Persian claim, we have never directly pronounced a decision on that of Khelat. If Azan were to attack the place by sea, a variety of old claims would probably be revived, and serious disturbances would take place in localities in which, owing to our telegraphic communications, it is desirable that peace should be maintained.

No. 153.

No. 17 of 1870.

31
3853

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,
FOREIGN DEPARTMENT.
Secret.

To
HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF ARGYLL, K.T.,
Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

FORT WILLIAM, the 22nd February 1870.

MY LORD DUKE,

In continuation of our despatches, noted in the margin, we have the honor to submit a further Report of our views on the question of the formal recognition of the Government of Azan bin Ghias in Muscat.

No. 4, dated 18th January 1870.
No. 6, dated 25th January " "

2. In paragraph 3 of your despatch No. 7, dated 30th July 1869, your Grace intimated that, if our anticipations regarding the permanence of Azan's rule should be realized, Her Majesty's Government would approve of the policy of formally recognizing him as Ruler of Muscat, in accordance with the wishes of the people. We accordingly instructed the Bombay Government to direct Colonel Pelly to repair to Muscat, and, after such enquiries as might be practicable, to report, as distinctly as possible, what was the real position of Azan bin Ghias, and what was the probability of his maintaining his rule, or of his being supplanted either by a member of the late ruling family or by any other Chief or Power.

3. These instructions could not be fully carried out at the time, but with our despatch No. 4, of 18th January 1870, we had the honor to submit to your Grace various Reports, from which we were led to conclude that the time was approaching when it would be necessary to take some steps for the formal recognition of a Government in Muscat. We intimated our opinion that if, after enquiry, Colonel Pelly should consider that there was nothing in the internal affairs of the Muscat Government to render it probable that Azan might soon be dethroned by an internal revolution, we should not be indisposed formally to recognize his authority, and that we did not think that the mere fact of a menaced war with the Ameer of Riadh ought to deter us from the recognition of a Chief who had succeeded in establishing his authority and maintaining himself as *de facto* Ruler for a considerable time, and who appeared to be the only Chief of whom it could be said that there was any reasonable expectation of his being able to maintain his power.

4. The information of which we were then in possession, however, was not in sufficient detail, nor was its bearing on the permanence or otherwise

of Azan's rule sufficiently clear to enable us to decide at once on the expediency of formally recognizing Azan bin Ghias. We therefore repeated our instructions to Colonel Pelly to return to Muscat, and endeavour to make himself acquainted with the feelings of the people on the subject of Azan's rule, as far as opportunities of quietly obtaining information might present themselves.

5. Circumstances arising out of the recent operations at Bahrein have prevented our instructions from being fully carried out, and in the meantime the advance of the Wahabee Ameer upon Bareymee, as reported in the enclosures of this despatch, has somewhat altered the complexion of affairs. According to the latest Report which we have received from Muscat, dated February 4th, the Ameer of Riadh had left Lahsa with a force probably not less than two thousand or more than five thousand men, and was within five days' march of Bareymee. He had granted an amnesty to all the Naeem tribe of Bareymee who may return to their allegiance to the Wahabees, and had declared his intention of marching on the town of Muscat itself after reducing Bareymee. At the latter place it was anticipated that he would meet with no check. The Chiefs from Rasool Khyma to Debaye had shown no signs of hostility to the Wahabees. Syud Salim had expressed his intention of joining the Ameer's army, but by the latest account had not left Kishm. On the other hand, it is reported that Azan bin Ghias has not been successful in collecting men and money, and that the Chief of Aboothabee, on whose support he had counted, was likely to remain neutral. It is also rumoured that the Beniboo Ali, against whom Azan was lately victorious in Jaalan, have rebelled, and refused to co-operate with him against the Wahabees.

6. Although we were of opinion that the mere fact of threatened hostilities with the Wahabees ought not to deter us from recognizing Azan if we were satisfied that his authority was secure against internal revolution, yet now that hostilities have actually broken out, the effect of which upon the allegiance of the people of Muscat to Azan bin Ghias it is impossible to foresee, we deem it desirable, for the present at least, to postpone any decisive steps. We are of opinion, however, that, should he succeed in adjusting his differences with the Wahabees and still retain his power in Muscat, we should proceed formally to recognize him.

7. Before doing so, however, it is necessary that we should be placed in possession of your Grace's final decision regarding the Zanzibar subsidy.

8. In your despatch of 30th July 1869 it is intimated that the recognition of Azan "is not to be supposed to carry with it any obligations on our part to enforce or support those external engagements with Persia and Zanzibar which Syud Thoweynee had formed, and which were inherited by Syud Salim as his son and recognized successor." Your Grace accordingly directed that we should not interfere further in the matter of the lease of Bunder Abbass, and that we should "inform the Sultan of Zanzibar that the British Government are willing to consider the arrangement which was made in 1861, and communicated to His Highness in Lord Canning's letter of the 2nd April of that year, to have lapsed on the expulsion of Syud Salim from Muscat, and that it will rest with him (Syud Majid) to enter into such engagements with the new Ruler of Muscat as, in the present altered circumstances, he may consider to be advisable."

9. In regard to the relations between Muscat and Persia, we have already* expressed our concurrence in the views of Her Majesty's Government. But in regard to the Zanzibar subsidy, we have drawn† attention to certain circumstances, which Her Majesty's Government may possibly have overlooked, connected with the payment of Syud Toorkee's stipend from this source; and we have desired, before committing ourselves to a definite admission of the right of Syud Majid to be released from the payment of the subsidy, to be favoured with the instructions of Her Majesty's Government as to the communication to be made to the Ruler of Muscat relative to the stipend of Syud Toorkee.

10. In our telegram of the 10th December we again drew attention to this subject, and we think it necessary that your Grace's final decision should be conveyed to us before we take positive steps for the formal recognition of Azan. In our former despatches, marginally noted, we have so fully discussed the considerations of justice, policy, and good faith, which, in our opinion, render it incumbent on us to insist on the continued payment of the subsidy by Zanzibar to the Muscat State irrespectively of dynastic changes, that we can do little more than refer to them.

11. It is quite true, as observed in the 7th paragraph of your Grace's despatch No. 1, dated 6th January 1869, that an arbitrator does not necessarily bind himself to enforce his awards. But the case of the Zanzibar subsidy is different from an ordinary arbitration. The negotiations which resulted in Lord Canning's decision were, as we have pointed out in former despatches, undertaken at a time when Syud Thoweynee of Muscat had actually started on an expedition against Zanzibar, in which there was every prospect of his being successful: our interference was supported by vessels of war; and we have already on two occasions actually enforced the award and required the Sultan of Zanzibar to pay up the subsidy with arrears. In one particular case the arrears due amounted to \$80,000, which sum was, after a protracted discussion with the British Agent, paid by the Sultan of Zanzibar and forwarded to Muscat in one of Syud Thoweynee's men-of-war.

12. The argument moreover, however, in accordance with the ideas of European diplomacy, is one which no oriental nation can appreciate. In the eyes of the Ruler of Muscat and of all the Chiefs and tribes of the Persian Gulf, we are bound to see our just decision carried out; and it will be impossible to persuade these people that an arbitrament so made and actually enforced by us differs in any way from a solemn Treaty. We apprehend, therefore, that little respect will be paid to our awards either in the Persian Gulf or elsewhere if the idea gain ground that they may be evaded by either party. It has been our consistent policy for the last fifty years in the Persian Gulf and the sea of Oman to induce the predatory tribes to abandon their internecine wars, and rely for the settlement of their disputes on the arbitration of the British Government. This policy has saved much bloodshed, has averted many political difficulties, has suppressed piracy, and rendered commerce in those regions secure. But we fear that for the future these Chiefs will prefer the adjustment of their quarrels by the sword if we give them ground to believe that we are indifferent to the execution of our awards.

3856

13. We have already stated that we consider the subsidy to be due to the Muscat State, and not merely to the Ruler of it for the time being; that the honor and good faith of the British Government are pledged to the continued payment of it; and that the political reasons which induced Lord Canning to effect the arrangement still exist in all their force and intensity. To that opinion, after the most mature consideration, we still adhere; and having been placed by the visit of Colonel Pelly to Calcutta in possession of more complete information, we feel it to be our duty to state to your Grace that our former views have been much strengthened thereby. The subsidy was intended as compensation to Muscat for the abandonment of valuable claims in Zanzibar from which its revenues could be recruited. It is expressly so described in the deed of arbitrament. The Muscat State is poor, and its resources have been so exhausted by internal revolutions, that, as already noted in paragraph 5 of this despatch, Azan bin Ghias has difficulty in raising money to defend himself from Wahabee invasion, and he naturally looks to the subsidy to recruit his resources. The loss of this annual payment will be felt, not only by the Ruler of Muscat, but by the numerous subordinate Chiefs whose interests are affected, and who look to it as the source from which their honorary presents from the Sultan are defrayed, and from which they are enabled to meet the cost of the tribal forces necessary for the defence of the State.

The Resident in the Persian Gulf informs us that every man amongst these Chiefs is impressed with the idea that British Faith and British Honor are pledged to the punctual payment of a subsidy a portion of which they have long been in the habit of receiving, and which has formed in many cases the only bond of union between them and the Ruler of the Muscat State.

14. Though it is not within our province to offer any opinion upon the amount of success or failure in the suppression of the traffic in slaves on the eastern coast of Africa which has attended the proceedings of Her Majesty's squadron in those waters, we feel it our duty to state that, having heard the views of those best qualified to give an opinion on the subject, we are convinced that the release of the Zanzibar State from the payment of the Muscat subsidy is not likely to have any perceptible influence in the extinction of the slave trade.

15. We cannot, therefore, fail to look upon the cessation of this subsidy as a matter fraught with danger to the permanence of the Muscat State. Our recognition of the *de facto* Government in Muscat will be of small value and will be little appreciated if we are not prepared to accompany it with the assurance that we intend to maintain the same position with regard to Azan bin Ghias as with former Rulers, and that the payment of the Zanzibar subsidy, so essential to the maintenance of a settled Government, will be continued. We can conceive nothing more detrimental to our good name, more damaging to our legitimate influence in Oman, or more likely to encourage a resort to force and violence in the settlement of the quarrels that are constantly arising in the Persian Gulf, than a declaration that we are prepared to countenance the Sultan of Zanzibar in the evasion of the just demands of the Muscat State.

16. The question of the claims which, in the event of his formal recognition, Azan bin Ghias may put forward to the occupation of Gwador

35
3857

(5)

and other places on the Mekran Coast, is now under our consideration, and our views on this subject will be communicated to your Grace hereafter.

We have the honor to be,

MY LORD DUKE,

Your Grace's most obedient, humble Servants,

- (Signed) MAYO.
- „ W. R. MANSFIELD.
- „ G. N. TAYLOR.
- „ H. M. DURAND.
- „ R. TEMPLE.
- „ J. F. STEPHEN.