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THE RUSSIAN RAILWAY
TO HERAT AND INDIA.

BY
CHARLES MARVIN,
AUTHOR OF "THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE TOWARDS INDIA," "MERY, THE
QUEEN OF THE WORLD," "THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TURCOMANS,"
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ARMINIUS VÁMBÉRY,

AND A FAC-SIMILE OF

GENERAL ANNENKOFF'S MAP OF THE PROJECTED
ROUTE.

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PUBLISHERS TO THE INDIA OFFICE.

1883.

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HE
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east Quetta, and the construction of a key to the Persian Gulf have been carried out years before it is a futile and unnecessary discussion. With the Russians 200 miles nearer.
HE remark made by Sir Henry Rawlinson at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, a few weeks ago, that "the mere finding the money for such an undertaking" as a Russian railway to India "would be a difficulty of the first magnitude," led me to include in the series of articles on Central Asia I was contributing to the *Morning Post*, one on the subject containing data I had obtained during my two visits to Russia in 1882, and my conversations there with the designer of the railway, General Annenkoff, who had been instrumental in sending Lessar to survey for the line the country lying between Askabad and Herat. On the appearance of the article, a number of requests were addressed to me to issue it in a pamphlet form, and Arminius Vâmbéry was so good as to express his readiness to append an introduction if I would do so. I have accordingly complied with this wish by revising the article and adding additional Russian data, and trust that it, and what may be called the Russian official map of the project, may have some effect in promoting on the one hand the extension of the Sibi line to at least Quetta, and, on the other hand, the immediate construction of a line through the Euphrates Valley to the Persian Gulf—a project which would have been carried out years ago, had there been less futile and unnecessary discussion over the matter. With the Russians 200 miles nearer
Herat than ourselves, and able to occupy it a fortnight in advance of our Quetta troops, there can be hardly a question that the time is already ripe for combining against Russia to save the "Key of India"; and that now, if ever, is the moment for giving some sort of organisation to that agitation which has alternately flickered and flamed in England for the last fifty years, without effecting any good (for want of energetic leadership) in arresting the Russian advance towards India. It is a well-known fact that in the body of the general public are a large number of patriotic individuals, as anxious as the recognised experts of the Russo-Indian Question to supplement the present desultory and impotent discussion with something more effective. Hitherto no invitation has been held out to these to co-operate in the agitation, nor have even experts sought among themselves to combine. The evil of this I recognised years ago, before I had written a line on Central Asia, and when a rabble of English writers were gallantly but ineffectually striving to prevent the organised forces of Russia advancing to the Oxus. In the interval, the conviction of the futility of agitation without organisation has deepened in my mind, and, having vainly waited for someone of greater political weight than myself to take the task in hand, I now invite communications, through my publishers, from all desirous of co-operating to protect English interests against Russian encroachments in the East, with a view to giving form and coherence to the movement.

CHARLES MARVIN.

February 15th, 1883.
INTRODUCTION.

THE UNIVERSITY, BUDA-PEST,
February 2nd, 1883.

MY DEAR MR. MARVIN,

The truth of the Oriental proverb, "Eza dja al kaza amm' al basr," i.e. "With the arrival of misfortune the human mind becomes blind," has rarely been more amply demonstrated than in the unpardonable carelessness of English politicians in regard to Russia's recent movements in Central Asia. When on a lecturing round in the United Kingdom, some fifteen years ago, I was struck with the cold indifference of the British public to all matters connected with Central Asia, but always sought to find an excuse for it in the uncertain position of Russia at that time in the three khanates, and the hazy mist enshrouding her operations. But the position of Russia has, since that period, essentially changed, the veil has been torn asunder by the bayonets of the ever-advancing Russian soldier, Russia stands close to the Gate of India, and England is not in the least disturbed in her ominous sleep of security. Is not this, I ask, a true illustration of the Oriental proverb I have quoted?

Whilst all the Russian agencies at home and abroad are working along one line, in one direction, namely, to
convince Europe, and particularly England, of Russia's purely humanitarian mission among the Turcomans, and of the sweet friendship that will subsist in the immediate future between John Bull and his conterminous Muscovite neighbour—is it not the saddest of spectacles that the English should be the only one of all nations uniformly deceived by Russia's treacherous promises? I say all nations, because the Continental world, although an indifferent spectator, is highly astonished at that incomprehensible credulity of your countrymen. Excluding your open enemies, and those who envy you, everybody deeply regrets the disastrous policy in regard to Russia in Central Asia pursued by the ruling English statesmen of the day.

On this account I need, therefore, scarcely say how glad I am to see that you do not hesitate to avoid breaking that ominous silence, and I hope that your publications in connection with the Central Asian Question will ultimately succeed in dispersing that disastrous stupor now prevailing in England. In advocating the construction of an overland railway to India you have hit the nail on the head, for Russia is now overcoming her greatest enemy, as the Emperor Nicholas used to call Distance, by connecting the Black Sea with the Caspian, and by trying to extend her railroad from Kizil Arvat towards Herat—an undertaking hardly to be viewed in the light of an entirely private character, as the learned Russian geographer, I mean M. Venyukoff, tried recently to convince the President of the Royal Geographical Society. It would be sinful to underrate the advantages Russia is gaining by the accomplishment of this scheme. Russia will not only get a much shorter and cheaper route to Herat, but even the means for
military transport will be considerably facilitated, partly by the ethnical elements, partly by the territorial conditions of the country across which the new line of communication will run. It has been lately ascertained that the Atok, i.e. the skirt of the Persian mountains, consists of fertile tracts, containing abundance of forage and water, and where, owing to the vicinity of Khorassan, the victualling of an army offers no difficulty whatever. As to the ethnical elements, it must be borne in mind that the Turcomans, the most redoubtable warriors in Central Asia, have surprised the world by the readiness they have shown in adopting the Russian cause. Whilst the Kazaks (Kirghizes) were never available in the contest with the Khanates, the Yomoods at once flocked to the Russian banner, and did good service, under General Skobeleff, in the recent Turcoman campaign. What the Yomoods did the Akhal Tekkes will do in any fight against their kinsmen of the Merv Oasis, and these latter will, no doubt, be equally ready to help conquer the Salors, the Sariks, and the Aimaks.

England has no such advantages to boast of. Her railway from the Bolan Pass to Herat will be much costlier than the Russian line from Michailovsk to the Paropamisus; and as for the Afghans, they will hardly be serviceable for British interests, for their worth as auxiliaries was sadly proved at Maiwand. Unable, therefore, to lean upon the Central-Asiatics in her future contest with Russia, England is bound to shorten the distance between England and the mother-country. She must take in hand the Euphrates Valley railway. She must seek her auxiliaries in Asia Minor, where her prestige has not been marred, in spite of all the blunders of short-sighted statesmen, and where she can still count
on sympathies of people hating Russia as an evil-doer and a deadly enemy of Islam.

There is no time to lose over barren discussions. The feverish activity which Russia is secretly developing all along her southern frontier in Asia, is only to be ignored by those who delight in self-deception. The sooner Great Britain resorts to action the better will it be for those Imperial interests of hers whose benignant influence upon Asia is appreciated by every right-feeling man. If party spirit and party egotism in England are reckless enough to trifle with such sacred interests—the outcome of your national culture—we, at least, ought not to remain indifferent spectators, but do our duty as Europeans and men.

Believe me, dear Mr. Marvin,

Yours very truly,

Arminius Vámbéry.
THE

RUSSIAN RAILWAY TO HERAT
AND INDIA.

Although the scheme of General Annenkov for constructing a railway to Herat and India has provoked considerable attention and uneasiness in this country, no attempt has yet been made to define approximately the cost of such an enterprise. It was the absence of any data bearing upon this point that probably led Sir Henry Rawlinson, at the November meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, when the subject was discussed, to express the opinion that "the mere finding the money for such an undertaking would be a difficulty of the first magnitude." But data have been published in Russia of late which render this really a minor consideration. That Russia is likely to suspend her ambitious and aggressive enterprise, because she failed a short time ago to float a nine million loan in the European markets, is a matter disposed of pretty conclusively by the fact of her having since then entered into arrangements with Herr Krupp, for the supply of steel projectiles for the 250 11-inch guns mounted of late years on her fortresses, the total cost of which will exceed a million sterling. The pressure of
financial difficulties exercises only a slight check upon Russia’s military and political undertakings. It is the education, the public works of a purely commercial character, and the local institutions of Russia that have to suffer if money is not forthcoming, and anyone who will analyse the budgets of the last five years will see that while the amounts disbursed under these headings have remained the same, or have been largely curtailed, funds have been always freely furnished by the Minister of Finance for the development of Russia’s military strength and the extension of her authority in the East. Thus the financial condition of Russia, serious though it is, cannot be expected to exercise a paralysing effect upon her railway schemes in Central Asia if it can be proved that Annenkoff’s Russo-Indian line can be constructed at a moderate outlay. That this is possible, we think we shall be able to show by statistical calculations, based, in the first place, upon General Annenkoff’s conversations on the subject (“Russian Advance towards India,” chapter 10), and in the second upon the data that have been forthcoming in connection with Lessar’s surveys. A reference afterwards to Sir William Andrew’s admirable work just published, “The Euphrates Valley Railway in connection with the Egyptian and Central Asian Questions” will then be sufficient to show how great are the advantages possessed by Russia in the matter of a Euro-Indian railway, and how essential it is that an effort should be speedily made to construct the Euphrates line, in order to recover the ground already lost in the engineering race to India.

The Transcaspian Railway, stretching from Michailoysk to Kizil Arvat, is 217 versts, or 144 miles long,
and cost £4,500 a mile, or £648,000 altogether. The terminal point of the line is sometimes said to be Bami, forty miles beyond Kizil Arvat; but this is a mistake, as any reference to a 40-copeck Russian railway timetable book will show. The error has arisen from the circumstance that the line throughout its advance across the Transcaspian steppe was preceded by a Decauville railway, which, in the absence of animal transport, and on account of the scarcity of labour, was able to render immense assistance to the engineers. This railway was sixty-five miles long, with a gauge of only twenty inches, and was worked by miniature 2½-ton petroleum-heated locomotives, which looked like toys alongside the 23-ton locomotives running on the permanent five-foot gauge railway. Ever preceded by the Decauville railway, by the time the regular line reached Kizil Arvat, the former had penetrated to Bami. There it would have probably remained for a time, but for the discovery of immense deposits of naphtha and ozokerit at the celebrated Naphtha Hill, sixteen and a half miles south-west of the Tageer wells, and fifty-three from the railway. These deposits, valued at thirty-five millions sterling, lie spread over an area of a few square miles. Up to the time of their discovery the petroleum residue, used as fuel by the locomotives, had been brought from the island of Tcheleken or from Baku, on the opposite side of the Caspian, but in consequence of this valuable find the nimble little Decauville railway was picked up and relaid as a branch extension from the regular railway to the Naphtha Hill, in which form it renders invaluable service to-day in conveying fuel for the use of the large locomotives. In this manner railway communication east of the Caspian was shortened.
to Kizil Arvat, to which point trains run daily from Michailovsk, the fare being 8s. 8d. second class, and 4s. 4d. third for the entire journey of 144 miles. No first-class carriages exist on the line, except one or two for the use of the Governor of the Transcaspian region and the higher officials of his staff. The manager of the line is Prince Khilkoff, a man who has had a remarkable career. Having been expelled from the St. Petersburg University on account of his turbulence, he went to America, learnt his trade as a mechanic, worked some time as locomotive driver on the Pacific Railroad, returned to Russia, rose from an humble capacity to the post of traffic manager on the Koursk-Moscow Railway, and finally was selected by Annenkoff as controller of the Transcaspian Line. On account of his energy he is know among his friends as the "Yankee-Russian," and is reckoned one of the best railway managers in Russia.

From Kizil Arvat to India the country is divided into four stages—Kizil Arvat to Askabad, Askabad to Sarakhs, Sarakhs to Herat, and Herat to Sibi, at the mouth of the Bolan Pass. If we deal briefly with each stage in succession, we shall be able to arrive at a very close estimate of the probable cost of the entire line. The first section, from Kizil Arvat to Askabad, is 146 miles long, which might be shortened to about 135 by avoiding the sinuosities of the present route. The ground is level the whole of the way, and traverses no stream of any magnitude. Annenkoff is of opinion that this section could easily be constructed for £4,000 a mile; the higher cost of the completed stage, from Michailovsk to Kizil Arvat, £4,500 a mile, having been occasioned by the construction of extensive harbour
works, embankments to ward off the shifting desert sands and the overflow of the Caspian, and the huge distilleries to furnish water in the desert. At £4,000 a mile, the section extending from Kizil Arvat to Askabad would thus involve an outlay of £540,000. The second section, from Askabad to Sarakhs, extends a distance of 280 versts, or 185½ miles. According to Lessar, the country between these two points is equally level, and presents no obstacle to a railway whatever. Calculating its cost at the same rate as the first section, a total of £742,000 is attained, or, together with the Kizil Arvat extension, £1,282,000. The third stage would extend from Sarakhs to Herat, a distance of 305 versts, or 202½ miles. Half of this, according to Lessar, would be country similar to the preceding sections; the remaining half identical with that of Russia—that is to say, easy to traverse, but less easy than the rest of the ground, owing to undulations. If we reckon £5,000 a mile for the 100 miles of line traversing the more undulating section, and £4,000 a mile for the remainder, we shall probably arrive at a fair estimate of the outlay, the cost of the incomparably more difficult Sibi-Sukhur section of the Candahar railway having been only £5,000 a mile. The final extension to Herat would thus occasion an expenditure of £910,000. In this manner the total cost of extending the Transcaspian Railway to Herat would be as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Miles</th>
<th>Cost per Mile</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kizil Arvat to Askabad</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>£4,000</td>
<td>£540,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Askabad to Sarakhs</td>
<td>185½</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>742,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sarakhs to Herat</td>
<td>102½</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>910,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>528 miles</td>
<td>£2,192,000</td>
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Total length and cost
We thus see that the extension of the Russian railway system to the "key of India" would cost but very little over £2,000,000, or less than a quarter of the sum expended on the Transcaucasian railway—£8,904,200. Russia could accomplish this without straining her finances in the slightest, by simply leaving off building ironclads for three or four years. Considering the vast sums already expended on the conquest of Central Asia, and on the construction of strategical railways, the disbursement of a couple of millions is such a trifling financial consideration that the conviction is irresistibly forced upon the mind that before many years elapse the Russian locomotive will be puffing into Herat.

Be it particularly borne in mind that Lessar's surveys have shown that the hardest part of the road lies between India and Herat, not between Herat and Russia. The imaginary mountains, 10,000 or 15,000 feet high, geographers had placed between Sarakhs and Herat, on the east bank of the Hari Rud river, have been found by Lessar to be a mere stretch of insignificant hills, with an easy crossing, less than three times the height of St. Paul's Cathedral, fit in its existing primitive condition for vehicular traffic, and across which a railway could run without any great difficulty. This discovery has had the effect of placing Herat all the more in Russia's hands, since it has demonstrated that between Askabad and Herat the only natural obstacle is a hill-crossing 900 feet high, whereas between Sibi and Herat exist the difficult Bolan Pass, the hilly country between Quetta and Candrahar, and the second stretch of hills again between Kandahar and Herat. If it is so easy for Russia, therefore, to march to Herat, and so difficult
for England to advance to protect it, all the more necessary is it to push on the Sibi railway through the Bolan to Quetta and Candahar without a moment’s delay.

If Lessar’s surveys have demonstrated that not a single engineering obstacle exists against the extension of the Transcaspian railway to Herat, they have also conclusively proved the absence of any political barrier, save that of the opposition of England. Russia can extend the line to Sarakhs without seriously infringing Persian territory. She can turn the corner there, and run the line along the east bank of the Hari Rud, without interfering with either Persian or Afghan settlements, until she reaches Kohsan, the first Afghan outpost, a little more than sixty miles from Herat. It has been said that a barrier might be raised to the Russian advance by giving prominence to the vague suzerainty of Persia over the Atok; but the most superficial reading of Lessar’s narrative, and a survey of the recent relations between Russia and Persia, should be sufficient to drive home the conviction that this obstacle is a mere cobweb which Russian diplomacy would dispel with a puff. The only real difficulty attending the extension of the railway to Herat, is the excitement and alarm the measure would undoubtedly provoke in England. As, however, the aim of the railway would be to coerce us in Europe by frightening us in Asia, this is a consideration which cannot be expected to have much weight with Russia. Violent outbursts of public opinion against Russia have never yet exercised a restraining effect upon her advances in the East, and the political history of the last twenty years is rich with instances of the impotence of mere diplomatic expostulations and protests.
Herat converted into the easternmost terminus of the Russian railway system, only 599 miles would remain to be covered by metals to join the line with the head of the Indian system at Sibi. At £5,000 a mile, the estimated cost of the Candahar railway, the outlay would be under three millions, and even if every allowance be made for unexpected engineering obstacles, the country not having been surveyed by railway engineers as in the case of the Russian section, the total would not exceed four millions sterling. In this manner, to connect Europe and India by railway would not cost much more than six millions sterling, and might be achieved for even less.

| Kizil Arvat to Herat  | 523 | 2,192,000 |
| Herat to Sibi (extreme estimate) | 599 | 4,000,000 |
| **Total length and cost** | **1,122** | **6,192,000** |

To join India and Europe by railway would cost, therefore, less than the sum Russia has already spent on the Transcaucasian Railway (£8,904,200) to connect merely the Black Sea and the Caspian. The result of such a railway would be to place the Russian military resources of the Caucasus within four or five days' reach of the Indian frontier. It is obvious that if Russia can quicken her means of attaining India to such an extent as this, something must be done by England to establish a counterpoise. We do not believe any diplomatic action on the part of England would be successful in preventing the extension of the Transcaspian railway to Sarakhs, and, once there, we question whether England would resort to a war to prevent its continuation to Herat, however aggrieved she might feel by the advance. To thoroughly consolidate our hold upon Egypt is
rendered essential by Russia’s railway progress; but this does not meet the difficulty, for, however tight may be our grip upon the Suez Canal, and however much we may strengthen it, we cannot quicken steamship communication with India beyond a certain point. We can hardly reduce the voyage to India to under three weeks, while Russia, by a railway, can place Herat within three days’ distance of the Caucasus. Nor does the suggestion to continue our Sibi line to Candahar afford by itself a satisfactory solution of the problem, in spite of being rendered almost imperative by the Russian advance. What is needed is something that shall shorten the journey between England and India, and this is only to be attained by running a railway from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, and extending it through Southern Persia and Beluchistan to the Indus. The strategical merits and demerits of such a line may be left undiscussed on this occasion; be it sufficient to point out that, whatever may be the objection to the line, it affords the only practical solution of the problem, How to furnish England with a railway of her own to India to serve as a counterpoise to the projected Russian one. To start such a line from Constantinople would be folly; because, in the first place, we could not hope, in the event of a war, to carry troops across the Continent to the Turkish capital—hence Alexandretta would be considerably nearer; and, in the second, we cannot always rely on Constantinople remaining in friendly hands. It would be better, therefore, to commence the line somewhere opposite Cyprus, under the protection of that place of arms and close to the resources we shall command when we consolidate our power in Egypt, and bring it out near the head of the
Persian Gulf, where it could be again defended by English shipping and Sepoys from India. The Euphrates Valley Railway, with the advocacy of which the name of Sir William Andrew is imperishably associated, and which Mr. Edward Cazalet has recently been urging the construction of in connection with his grand scheme of Jewish colonisation of the region, answers both these conditions, and could hardly be surpassed. The construction of the Euphrates Valley Railway would at once lessen the distance between England and India by 1,000 miles, and would constitute the first section of the Anglo-Indian line, to be afterwards extended to India itself. From Alexandretta, on the Mediterranean, to Grain, on the Persian Gulf, the line would be 920 miles long, and in the substantial form advocated by Sir William Andrew would cost about eight millions sterling. It would thus cost considerably more than a Russian line from Kizil Arvat to India (£6,192,000), and there would be this difference between the two, that whereas the Russian railway would connect Europe and India at a stroke, the Euphrates line would only be the preliminary section of a railway having the same aim in view, the ultimate cost of which, with the Euphrates section, would exceed £20,000,000, and might probably reach £25,000,000. Even if the Russian line were constructed in a more substantial form than that recommended by Annenkoff, and the average cost of Indian railways—£10,000 a mile—was adopted, the money disbursed in extending the present Transcaspian railway from Kizil Arvat to Herat would be only £5,230,000 sterling, and from Kizil Arvat to India £11,220,000. But this is a cost that would never be attained by a Russian railway to India, on account of nearly one-half
of it traversing country absolutely flat and devoid of rivers requiring bridges, or hills involving cuttings and tunnels. The country would be less difficult for two-thirds the distance than the country between Ekaterinburg and Tiumen, to be shortly traversed by the Siberian railway, and for the construction of which section the highest tender recently presented to the Russian Government has been £6,000 a mile. Taking, then, the cost of the Russian railway to India at the sum originally worked out by our calculations—£6,192,000—and lowering the estimate for the Euphrates Valley Railway by adopting a cheaper line, even in that case it is a question whether it would be possible to construct the latter for less than the former, and there would still remain double the distance to traverse before it could touch India. Russia thus has in her hands a most important political card. By the conquest of the Akhal Tekkes and the construction of the Transcaspian railway she has acquired a control over the shortest and the quickest road to India. She can join India with Europe for one-third the amount we threw away on the Afghan war, and Herat with St. Petersburg by the outlay of a sum of money less than that which Admiral Popoff expended in the aggregate on the frigate "Peter the Great" and the two Black Sea "Popoff'kas." Although her Transcaspian railway is only fifteen months old, and although the scheme for any railway at all from the Caspian to India dates only from 1881, Russia has already gained a start over the Euphrates Valley Railway, which England has discussed and discussed for more than a quarter of a century. Such a fact is not at all flattering to the national pride, and provokes the question as to whether
it is not time that action followed upon all this endless discussion. It certainly seems to us that an effort of some sort ought to be made by the recognised authorities on the Central Asian Question to excite public attention in the matter, and that pressure ought to be brought to bear upon the Government to cause it to rise higher to the occasion than to purpose meeting the advance of the Russian locomotive by the paltry and contemptible expedient of making a more level caravan road between Sibi and Quetta.

While* Her Majesty's Government and the Marquis of Ripon are discussing whether England can afford the construction of a miserable caravan road to connect our outlying post of Quetta with the Indian railway system at Sibi, a matter of some eighty-five miles, the Ministers of the Czar of Russia are examining a statement which the Governor-General of the Caucasus, Prince Dondukoff-Korsakoff, has just brought to St. Petersburg, respecting the extension and completion of the Caucasian railway network. For several years past Russian railway engineers have been busily engaged marking out and taking surveys of projected railways, and this document may be said to embody the greater part of their labour. At present the Russian railway system terminates at Vladikavkaz, at the foot of the Caucasian range, and midway between the Black Sea and the Caspian. This point was reached in 1874, but the colossal barrier of the Caucasus has hitherto prevented its extension 120 miles beyond to Tiflis. South of the Caucasian range is a line running from Batoum

and Poti to Tiflis and Baku, with a short branch line near Poti to the coal-field of Kutais. The first section of this line, from Poti to Tiflis, was opened in 1873; the extension thence to Baku was completed last summer; and at the present moment the finishing touch is being given to a branch from Poti to Batoum. General Don-dukoff-Korsakoff's memorandum deals in the first place with the junction of the Russian railway system with the Transcaucasian Railroad (the Poti-Baku line), and, in the second, with the extension of the latter to Kars.

Two projects exist for carrying out the first undertaking. One proposes to link Vladikavkaz with Tiflis by a direct line across the Caucasian range, and the other by a circuitous railway that would avoid the range by running to the Caspian and proceeding thence to Baku. The first would start from Darkoh, fifty-two versts (thirty-five miles) from Vladikavkaz, and run through the Rokskoi Pass to Gori and Tiflis, a distance of 167 versts (111 miles). This would involve the boring of several tunnels, including one thirteen versts (8½ miles) long, would cost 254,000 roubles a verst, or over £30,000 a mile, and lead to a total outlay of 42,500,000 roubles, or, at the current rate of exchange, £4,250,000. The construction of the line, under the most favourable circumstances, could not be effected in less than nine years. The alternative route would run from the Vesler station, near Vladikavkaz, to the Caspian port of Petrovsk, 246 versts, costing 16,000,000 roubles; and thence along the Caspian shore to Baku, where it would join the Baku-Tiflis Railway. This would involve the construction of a line several times as long as the direct one, but the total cost would only
be 21,000,000 roubles, or less than half the latter. The direct Vladikavkaz-Tiflis Railway would open up scarcely any resources, and would enjoy little or no local traffic. On the other hand, the Vladikavkaz-Petrovsk line would establish direct railway communication between Russia and the Caspian; it would enable Asiatic wares that are now sent up to the Volga to Tsaritzin to be forwarded to Russia from Petrovsk—a great advantage this, considering that Petrovsk is open to navigation all the year round, while the Volga is closed for traffic six months out of the twelve—and, finally, if Russia were at war with England, and were unable to send troops from Odessa to Poti to be forwarded thence to Armenia or Central Asia, it would permit of her despatching them direct from Russia proper to the Caspian without exposing them at any point to attack. Instead of having one railway running to the Caspian, she would have two, and hence would double her power of attack on Herat and Erzeroum. Further, the line to Petrovsk would open up country that is being rapidly settled upon by immigrants. It would develop the Caspian littoral of the Caucasus in running from Petrovsk to Baku. It would create a fresh market for Baku oil, and would render the military stores at Vladikavkaz—one of the principal depôts of the Caucasus—accessible to all parts of the Caspian region. Its great drawback is that it would be longer than the direct line, the journey from Rostoff to Tiflis by it being 1,723 versts instead of 887, as in the case of the former. But, on the other hand, in excess of the considerations noted above, it would stand a chance of paying at least its expenses, and, more important than all, it would only take two or three years to con-
struct. Of the two, it certainly seems to have the best chance of being taken first in hand.

Up to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, Russia greatly favoured a scheme for extending the Transcaucasian railway (the Poti-Baku line) from Tiflis to Teheran, so as to ultimately join St. Petersburg with the Persian capital. Surveys were accordingly made from Tiflis to Julfa, on the Persian frontier, a distance of 284 miles, whence an extension through Tabreez of 459 miles would carry the line to Teheran. The entire distance of the line would be 743 miles. The project has now been dropped, however, owing to two circumstances—the acquisition of Kars, and the grant of a concession by the Shah to a French company for a line from Resht, or rather Enzeli, its port on the Caspian, to Teheran, 219 miles long. This will establish railway communication between St. Petersburg and Teheran without any outlay on Russia’s part; the present route being from St. Petersburg to Odessa or Sebastopol, thence by sea to Poti, by rail to Baku, by sea to Enzeli, and finally by rail to Teheran. When the Transcaucasian railway is joined to Russia by the direct or circuitous Vladikavkaz-Tiflis railway above referred to, there will only be one sea-break the whole distance from Baku to Enzeli. Under these circumstances, with the prospect of an early junction of the Persian capital with the Russian railway system without any effort on the part of Russia, it would be folly for the Government to construct a line from Tiflis to Teheran, 743 miles long. The cost of such a line would be sufficient to pay for a railway from Kizil Arvat to India, while possessing no importance compared with the latter scheme. Hence the Tiflis-Julfa-Teheran
railway has disappeared from the portfolio of the Russian Minister of Ways of Communication, and another project has been drawn up for constructing a line from Tiflis to Kars. This would be about 200 miles long, and would cost 30,500,000 roubles, or £3,050,000 sterling. It is unnecessary to dilate upon its strategic value. From Kars to Erzeroum is 170 miles; from Trebizond—the nearest Turkish supporting point—to Erzeroum is 185 miles. After the close of the war of 1877-78, the military macadamised road from Tiflis to the fortress of Alexandropol was extended to Kars, forty-five miles beyond, and a chaussée was constructed from Batoum to Kars also. The newly-annexed territory is thus well provided with roads, and its army capable of easily occupying Erzeroum, even if the Tiflis-Kars railway be deferred for a year or two.

Besides having in view the two schemes for joining the Transcaucasian line with the Russian railway system on the one hand, and extending it to Kars on the other, the Caucasian Government also recommends the construction of three other sections of railways. One is an extension of the Kutais branch of the Poti-Tiflis line to the coal-fields of Tkvibooli, so as to provide the Caucasus with cheaper fuel, and enable the Black Sea fleet to draw a supply therefrom instead of being dependent upon Cardiff and Newcastle. The length of this line would be thirty-seven versts (twenty-four miles), and the cost a little over £300,000. The second railway is a branch from the Rostoff-Vladikavkaz line to the port of Novorossisk in the Black Sea. This is more of a commercial than of a strategical character, and is intended to give the Cis-Caucasian region an outlet in the Black Sea for its rich and varied produce. As a glance
at the Russian railway map will show, the railway system after quitting Rostoff-on-the-Don runs stark across the plains of Stavropol to Vladikavkaz without throwing out a branch on either side, or approaching the sea at all, for a distance of nearly 500 miles. The produce of the Cis-Caucasian region thus has to flow all the way to the single port of Rostoff, where there is not a particularly good harbour, and that frozen over for two or three months every year. The goods traffic converging upon this point exceeds 150,000 tons annually, and is growing every year, the expansion being due to the colonisation of the Stavropol plains by peasants from Central Russia. This movement of the agricultural population of Russia towards the Caucasus has become very marked of late years, and it is believed that before long the new-comers will engulf the Cossacks of the Stavropol and Koubon region, whom they already exceed in numbers in many places. The construction of the Novorossisk Railway would greatly accelerate this colonisation movement, and there is hardly a doubt that it will be taken in hand before long, as it stands first on Prince Dondukoff-Korsakoff's list. The line would be 260 versts (172\(\frac{1}{2}\) miles) long, and would run from the Tikhoretski or Kavkazski station, on the Rostoff-Vladikavkaz line, to Novorossisk, on improving the port of which 1,500,000 roubles would be spent; the total outlay being 14,000,000 roubles, or £1,400,000 sterling. Near Novorossisk immense petroleum deposits have been lately discovered, and are now being worked by a French company. The residue of the refined oil would serve excellently as fuel for the line. The third line proposed is on the opposite side of the Caspian, and is no other than an extension of the Transcaspian Railway from Kizil Arvat to Geok
Tepé, at a cost of 2,500,000 roubles, or £250,000 sterling. On a recent occasion we drew attention to the importance of the Transcaspian Railway, and the probability of its gradual extension to Sarakhs, Herat, and India. The importance the Caucasian Government attaches to it is shown by the circumstance that it stands on Prince Dondukoff-Korsakoff's list before even the Vladikavkaz-Tiflis or the Tiflis-Kars railways. Geok Tepé is only forty-five miles from Askabad, and is situate close to a pass across the Kopet Dagh and adjacent mountains, enabling direct communication to be established with Meshed. Last year the Russian Government sanctioned a grant for the construction of a military road from Geok Tepé to the Persian frontier, and Persia has promised on her part to improve the Meshed road. Once the railway reaches Geok Tepé its extension to Askabad—the capital of the Transcaspian territory—is inevitable, and from this point to Sarakhs and Herat is only a question of time; the cost of a railway from Geok Tepé to Herat involving an outlay of not more than £1,750,000 sterling. If it be remembered that the three leading projected extensions from Kizil Arvat to Geok Tepé and beyond, from Vladikavkaz to Tiflis, and from Tiflis to Kars, are each of them calculated to enable Russia to throw her immense military resources with greater facility into Afghanistan, on the one hand, and into Asia Minor on the other, the notion of Her Majesty's Government meeting the danger by merely scraping a little smoother the already-existing caravan road between Sibi and Quetta, is so pitifully ridiculous as to suggest the inquiry whether the folly of "masterly inactivity" can be possibly carried to greater lengths.
The following is an extract from the report of the Kurrachee Chamber of Commerce for 1882:

It is a matter of regret that the Government has not deemed it advisable to carry the Kandahar State Railway further than to this side of the Bolan Pass. The large trade in English manufactured goods which now passes from India into Afghanistan is a conclusive argument in favour of its commercial utility. But the slow return of merchandise to India by this route has practically demonstrated that the line has failed to reach the large centres of trade there, and so to open up the resources of Afghanistan, and also to grasp at least a portion of the Central Asian trade, which has no other outlets. It is necessary that the means of inter-communication should be made more feasible than at present, and that the railway should be extended through the Bolan Pass to Kandahar, as at first proposed, or, at least, to Quetta. In the absence of such extension, the trade to and from Afghanistan can never become reciprocal, and no better results can be expected from so unsatisfactory a connection.

Mr. A. H. Keane, M.A.I., author of "Asia" (Stanford's Compendium of Geography), writes as under to the Author with reference to Russian railway to India:

In the face of the Russian railway projects our caravan roads seem rather out of date, but I suppose the present Ministry will not grasp the situation till the Russian locomotive is steaming into Herat. In my opinion the Afghan railway question is one that ought to be dealt with seriously at once. An urgent necessity exists for completing our line to Quetta and Candahar, and taking up a strong position on the Helmund, which would bar an advance of the Russians in that direction, in the event of their carrying Herat by a coup de main—an exploit that is now in their power to achieve at any moment.
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