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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander C. Knox, July 15, 1910

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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July 15, 1910.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Hereewith an interesting despatch from Doctor Hill on the German attitude towards our railway enterprise in Turkey. Mr. Young and I had a conference with young Mr. Chester and Mr. MacArthur. A little later they will send people to confer at Berlin with the German company's representatives. They also intend to send a man to the provinces affected by the railway project, which should have the result of causing warm advocacy thereof to be reflected by the local members in the Turkish Parliament which meets November 14th. We think the Germans have committed themselves so far in principle in welcoming American enterprise in Turkey that when discussion between the interests concerned shall have had results we shall be in a good position to proceed with official pressure. Mr. Straus wants to take leave of absence from late September which would make him absent from his post during the most important early days of the Turkish Parliament. Although Mr. Straus is said to be doing a little better it has occurred to
me that the best thing might be to give him his full
leave and to send Mr. Leishman to Constantinople in
early November on a special mission with an autograph
letter to the Sultan and to let him do his utmost to
put the concession through. I suppose Mr. Leishman
will visit you this summer. Unless you desire to adopt
the course suggested then Mr. Young and I think that
Mr. Straus should not be allowed to be absent in November,
but we much prefer the alternative if it could be managed
without offence to Mr. Straus,—as, for instance, by
postponing answering his application for leave until
later and then telegraphing that we shall do this if he
is absent in November.

I also enclose a Petersburg despatch showing that
the Guggenheims are likely to get a huge concession for
mines in Western Siberia.

I think you have some papers on the Jewish question
in Russia which, perhaps, require attention. If you de-
sire anything done we can attend to them whenever you
send them back.

The Chief Clerk of the Department after exhaustive
investigation stated that there was no one among the
clerks
clerks of the Department capable of doing the work of the $1600 grade. For this reason we sent for Mr. Fowlco, a most competent clerk in the Embassy at Constantinople, to take this clerkship under Mr. Young.

The Embassy has lots of student interpreters and such an abundant personnel that it can be no hardship to them. This, I think, covers the Near Eastern Division's matters.

With reference to Mr. Calhoun's telegram of July 14, 7 p. m., Mr. Miller and I submit the following as the gist of a reply we might make:

"The Department deprecates any undue panic on the part of the Chinese Government. It generally approves your remarks to the Foreign Office and suggests further that the Chinese Government should help itself by prompt and strenuous measures for currency reform and tariff reform to gain that revenue indispensable to strength, in the promotion of which the United States is prepared to give cordial cooperation. It should be unnecessary to give fresh expression of the uniform policy of the United States in the Far East. As for the question of the Chin Ai Railway and particularly of proceeding now to construct
construct to Taonanfu,— that is one primarily for the banking group which will ultimately give from New York its definite instruction to its own representative, while the attitude of this Government on that question will be determined in due time and with due regard to the attitude of Great Britain,— the project being Anglo-American,— after examining the attitude of other powers including Russia and, perhaps also, the question of German participation and support on an important scale. This last idea being confidential for the present."

I cannot see why China should get so very panicly as this process is familiar enough to her. I should think her role was to strengthen herself as fast as possible and make all possible reservations on paper.

Herewith are enclosed copies of the following:
(1) a long report from Straight to the Morgans, (2-3) Mr. Post Wheeler's despatches of June 26 and June 29 on the same subject of Straight's visit, (4) copy of Mr. Greene's despatch from Harbin of June 7th with Mr. Miller's comment on the Harbin question and (5) a copy of memorandum of Mr. Miller's conversation with Mr. Fletcher on the Chin Ai Railway question and the Harbin question.
You will notice that the Russians have come out flat footed and said they would oppose the Chin Ai Railway although they could not prevent it. We may be in the dilemma of offending Russia or of doing something much worse,—of losing China's confidence and losing face everywhere by abandoning what is the first practical test of our much vaunted Far Eastern policy. On the other hand if we compel China to offend Russia China may turn upon us. It naturally occurs to one that there may develop the opportunity to tear down the Anglo-Japanese alliance and to bring about a fresh alignment of Germany, Great Britain and the United States in the Far East. I don't see how we can do anything with good results even for the first section of the road without sincere and strong British and German support.

As for Rockhill,—we suppose he understands that he is to sit tight on these matters pending instructions. The fear that our slight concession at Harbin is going to be twisted into a sign of weakness suggests going exceedingly slow on that subject. Mr. Miller and I are rather inclined to send Rockhill a brief cable to
make sure he is remaining non-committal.

I am sure you will be interested in studying this unusually difficult situation. I do not see that there is anything definite to do now unless quietly to sound Great Britain and Germany. The Far Eastern Division will meanwhile be studying it in the hope that ultimately our best course may become clear.

Yours very sincerely,

Huntington Wilson.

The Honorable P. C. Knox,
Cap e May Hotel,
Cape May, N. J.