

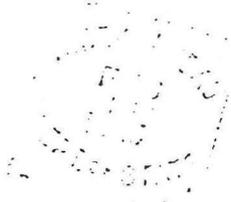
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AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE REPORT

No. 59 Date of Preparation: Jan. 24, 1925.  
To. Department of State Date of Mailing: Jan. 25, 1925.  
Office: American Consulate, Teheran, Persia.

Reference to request: In answer to Department's Instructions of September 24, 1924, File No. 165.210/181, and Commerce letter September 17, enclosing letter from National Automobile Chamber of Commerce.

Geographical designation: Persia - Iraq - Syria.

Schedule No. and Subject: E - 7020 - Roads.

Title: DEVELOPMENTS IN BEIRUT-BAGDAD-TEHERAN MOTOR TRANSPORT

Source: Director of route.

George Gregg Fuller  
Officer Preparing Report

*George Gregg Fuller*  
George Gregg Fuller  
American Vice Consul.

MAR 17 1925

Reference to previous reports: Bushire report of May 30, 1924 entitled "Three Motor Routes Across Syrian Desert", published in Commerce Reports of September 8th.

Over

Over a year of successful operation has proven that the automobile route from Beirut and Damascus to Bagdad and Teheran, is feasible and practical. It has rapidly grown in popularity and few persons think of traveling to Europe by any other route. This report deals with the improvements in the roads, service available to individuals, and changes in the service via Palmyra.

### THE ROADS

One correction of previous reports is the distance from Beirut to Damascus, which is about 72 miles instead of 107. Another correction is in the map of the Persian route. This should go from Hamadan to Kazvin (the road to Resht) and there turn east to Teheran.

On the desert trail itself little has been done or needs to be done in the way of improvements. Most of the way when one track gets bad there is an endless choice of ground on either side for a new track. The worst part of that road was through a short, narrow valley out of the Wadi Hauran, and there the rocks and stones have been removed. The French authorities have improved a swampy bit south of Palmyra, and also the road between Damascus and Palmyra which was rather rough. The mud is still bad as one approaches the Euphrates river, especially when the water is high, but this is difficult to remedy and has never proven an insurmountable barrier.

Work on the Persian section has been going on all year. The <sup>swampy</sup> swampy part between Teheran and Kazvin has been greatly improved, and it is hoped that there will be no delays there this spring when the floods sweep down from the mountains. The greatest obstacle is the snow during December, January and February. During these months the mountain passes are almost

impassable

impassable, but each car of the Eastern Transport will carry two drivers, and by frequent shoveling they hope to maintain their schedule with no delays. At most there will be only a delay of a day or two. The snow drifts across the road to a great depth in a few hours, so it requires constant work to keep the route open. Up to the present time, there have been no delays this winter.

In general it can be said that the entire route is very good from May to December, that there is some mud in the desert after rains in February or March, and the Persian section is liable to delays of up to one or two days because of snow during the three winter months.

#### SERVICE AND SUPPLIES

There are garages in Beirut, Damascus, Bagdad, Khanikin and Teheran. Repairs can be made more or less satisfactorily at each of these places. <sup>Spare parts</sup> Spare parts for many American cars are carried at Beirut and Bagdad.

Gasoline is kept at the above towns, and also at Kebeissa, Palmyra and Hitt. The stocks at these places are the property of the Eastern Transport, and could not be sold to a private tourist except in emergency and on presentation of permission from the main office. The price of gasoline varies from 40 cents to \$1.50 per gallon, depending on the locality. In Teheran Russian gasoline is available, very volatile but often unclean. At Khanikin, Bagdad, Kebeissa and Hitt, Anglo-Persian gasoline of poor quality is sold. Palmyra, Damascus and Beirut have good gasoline from America.

American lubricating oil is obtainable everywhere as far as the Persian border. In Persia Russian oil must be purchased

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purchased. It is dirty and on some cars seems to lose all lubricating properties within 100 miles. In Teheran it costs around \$7 to \$8 per gallon.

#### COMPETING COMPANY IN PERSIA ELIMINATED

The British Company which runs direct from Damascus to Bagdad, the Nairn Transport Company, financed an independent driver during 1924 on the Bagdad-Teheran route. A fortnightly service was maintained with two American cars, and the British Legation mail was carried, but this service did not prove profitable and was discontinued on January 1st.

#### RATES

The Nairn Company charges 30 pounds sterling from Beirut to Bagdad and carries without charge 60 pounds of baggage. The Eastern Transport carries 80 pounds and charges 25 pounds for the same trip. The average price from Bagdad to Aleppo is \$85.

Independent drivers can be secured for various prices depending on the season. They are always obtainable for \$40 to \$50, and during the pilgrim season, when 500 or more persons are carried in one direction on their way to or from Mecca, the empty cars returning can often be obtained for \$8 to \$10. These cars are usually in the last stages of disrepair and are constantly breaking down on the Nairn route and waiting for some of the regular service cars to come and give them help or supplies.

The fare from Bagdad to Teheran is likewise 25 pounds. From Teheran the fare is in Persian currency, being Tomans 112½ to Bagdad or Tomans 225 to Beirut. This includes the rail fare from the Persian border to Bagdad.

Single cars can be secured for the Teheran-Bagdad trip for Tomans 375. The toman is approximately equivalent to the dollar.

Out of these Persian fares there must be paid Tomans 44 per car as road tolls in Persia, Tomans 34 for each truck, and Krans 54 for each passenger. Hence over 40% of the fare in Persia goes to the Government as taxes.

#### BAGGAGE RATES

The Eastern carry baggage up to 80 pounds without charge. Above that, or for baggage not accompanying passengers there is a charge of 2 shillings per kilo for either half trip, or 4 shillings per kilo for the entire trip, up to 125 kilos.

From 125 to 150 kilos the charge is 1 shilling 8 pence per kilo; from 250 kilos up 1 shilling 6 pence. Contract rates are made as low as 1 shilling per kilo.

#### SCHEDULE OF EASTERN TRANSPORT COMPANY

The Eastern now have established two services; the fast service makes the trip between Beirut and Bagdad via Palmyra in a day and a half, and the so-called "tourist" service, in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  days as <sup>bisher</sup> hitherto. Cars on the fast service are driven night and day, but stops are made at Kebeissa and Palmyra for hot meals. The tourist service allows passengers to spend one night in Hitt and another in Palmyra.

The fast service leaves Beirut every Friday morning and arrives in Bagdad every Saturday afternoon. The tourist service leaves Beirut every Monday morning and arrives in Bagdad every Wednesday afternoon.

Returning, the fast service leaves Bagdad every Thursday morning, arriving the next day in Beirut, while the tourist service leaves on Sunday mornings and arrives on the following Tuesday afternoon.

The Persian service leaves Bagdad on alternate Sundays beginning January 4th, at 10 P.M., by railway. The motors have hitherto been carried on <sup>flat</sup> cars on each train, but beginning in February they will not be taken to Bagdad, but will remain in Persia. The train arrives at Khanikin early Monday morning. The cars leave Khanikin at 8 A.M., Monday and run to Kermanshah on that day, to Hamadan on Tuesday, to Teheran on Wednesday. During the winter months this schedule must be modified and one more day required, the cars running from Hamadan to Kazvin on Wednesdays, and on to Teheran on Thursdays.

Southbound the schedule is the same, except that the cars leave Teheran on alternate Fridays at noon, beginning January 2nd. When the weather is better they will leave on Saturday mornings. The same time is taken between each city, and Bagdad is reached by the Khanikin train at 7 A.M. on Tuesday.

More or less close connections are made at Beirut with the Messageries Maritime Line for Marseille, and with the Lloyd Trestino or Sitmar Lines for Italy. Both of these lines proceed first to Egypt. The slow service passengers can take the train from Beirut to Alexandria and there catch the fast Lloyd Trestino steamer for Italy.

#### FRENCH CARS PARTIALLY DISPLACE AMERICAN

Both the Nairn and the Eastern continue to use American cars only, and each company has attached to its convoy light speed trucks to carry the passengers' baggage. Beginning April 1st the Eastern will adopt a heavier American 2-ton truck.

On the Eastern's fast service American cars will not be used. Panhard-Levassor cars have been purchased, with 30 H.P., sleeve valve engines. The all-weather bodies will be equipped  
with

with 6 Pullman individuals seats, shock-absorbers and super-springing, so passengers can sleep during the all night journey.

This adoption of a French car was partly for political reasons. The company is Syrian and is dependent on French support in maintaining roads and other ways. It may also be that American manufacturers were partly to blame. One Near East agent of a large American automobile company, complained that American companies adopted too superior an attitude. He had prepared or was intending to prepare, a series of interesting photographs, showing his cars in difficult and historic surroundings, but the company wrote they would pay him nothing for such pictures as its cars were so well known they needed no advertising.

Although this was probably true, it did not increase the good will of the native force, and may be compared with the policy of the German Mercedes. When a German writer was to start on a trip through Persia, the Mercedes factory furnished a large car paid its freight to Persia and return, then made the traveler a present of a new 90 H.P. Mercedes, all for mention in travel letters and 6 photographs.