Abstract

To Iraq, her relationship with Britain has been a factor of major importance for the greater part of this century. At times, the connection has been particularly close, especially between 1914 and the end of the Mandate in 1932, and during the second World War, when British forces once again occupied the country. Until recently, Britain was Iraq's most important ally, and is still her major trading partner. This thesis examines Anglo-Iraqi relations during the Occupation and Mandate periods, and attempts to assess their effect on the political and socio-economic life of the country.

In October 1918, after four years of military administration, Britain found herself in overall control of the whole of Iraq. A complicated administrative machine had been set up to enable British officials to run the country along the lines of an Indian province. Under the terms of the League of Nations Charter, and in the new international political and financial atmosphere after the war, annexation was impossible, and new methods of control had to be found to replace direct rule by foreign powers. This study attemps to explain how British influence was exerted under these new conditions, and the mechanisms through which pressures could be brought to bear.

A mass of archival material in London and Delhi enables a detailed picture of the operation of the Mandate to be formed. The papers are concerned not only with Anglo-Iraqi relations, but also with the day to day

administration of the country during the Occupation and Mandate period. Correspondence with ministries and other departments gives insight into the way in which the government functioned, and also into the complicated mechanisms working within Iraqi politics. It is difficult to form a complete picture of the period from the Iraqi point of view, since the materials available are far less extensive, and suffer from being less immediate. Archives may be weeded, but the excisions are normally recorded: diaries and memoirs are not usually subjected to such rigorous control.

The main theme of this study is the operation of the Mandate, and the institutions created in Iraq to enable it to function cheaply and efficiently. The British authorities exercised control by taking over and adapting existing intitutions and creating new ones, and new policies. In the course of time it became apparent that control was a qualitative rather than a quantitative concept. The impossibility of annexation, for diplomatic and financial reasons, forced a major reappraisal of the ways in which control could be exercised, and a result of this was continuing debate and enquiry as to how British aims and interests in Iraq could best be served. By the end of the period a system of control had been devised which was almost self-regulating, and this development allowed the early termination of the Mandate.

The thesis has been divided into two parts. The first deals with the main events of the Occupation and Mandate, while the second, together with the appendices, deals with certain aspects of political and administrative practice. In Part 1, the emphasis generally is on Anglo-Iraqi

relations and political developments within Iraq. Part 2 examines the policies adopted towards land tenure and finance, and defence and internal security. The Iraq Government's policies and attitudes towards its Shia and Kurdish populations are discussed within the general historical framework of Chapters I - V.

In Part 1, after a short Introduction, Chapter I gives a historical account of the period between 1914 and 1921, with a discussion of some of the elements contributing to the head-on collision between traditional British-Indian administrative principles with the new transatlantic notions of 'self-determination' and 'economic equality'. Chapters II and III deal with the setting up of the Iraq state, and the major problems encountered during its first few years. These included the difficulties over the first Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, the Mosul question, the Turkish Petroleum Company's concession, and the new Government's financial problems. Chapters IV and V cover the years between the award of the Mosul wilayet to Iraq in 1926 and the end of the Mandate in 1932, a period which has been almost entirely neglected by historians. This was the time when Britain gradually relaxed her overt control over Iraq, and when important Iraqi political and religious pressure groups were formed. The opposition of these groups to the Iraq Government and to each other enabled Britain to make her position as arbiter and manipulator especially secure.

Part 2, together with the appendices, contains detailed studies of policy, administration and politics. Chapter VI discusses the development of tribal, tenurial and revenue policies from Ottoman to British and Iraqi control, with a special study of land tenure in 'Amara liwa forming

Appendix II. Chapter VII examines defence policy, and the role of the Iraq Army and the R.A.F. in maintaining internal security, and in extending the authority of the Iraq Government over parts of the country which had previously been independent of administrative control. Appendix I, which follows a brief conclusion, is an examination of the role of the Shia in Iraqi politics.

With very limited resources, but with a long tradition of colonial administration behind them, the British authorities in Iraq built up a system of skilful control by a mixture of cajolery, blandishment and bluff. They brought King Faisal from the Hijaz, with a following as dependent on him as he was on Britain. For the first few years there were serious struggles and disagreements, when Faisal and his circle were unwilling to accept too much British direction of their affairs. But gradually, as the need for this close direction receded, because the objectives which required it had been achieved, the Iraq Government learnt to tolerate a necessary minimum of British control. Both sides knew, in the end, that there was no alternative, and that they depended on each other to maintain their continuing presence and influence in the country.

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PROFIT AND LOSS FROM THE BRITISH MANDATE :

BRITISH INFLUENCE AND ADMINISTRATION IN IRAQ, 1914 - 1932.

by

PETER SLUGLETT

Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in the University

of Oxford.

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Preface

The emphasis of this thesis has changed considerably since it began, early in 1968, as an attempt to survey the work of the Ministries of Health and Education in Iraq during the Mandate. It soon became clear that there was no detailed historical study of the whole Mandate period, and I have therefore tried to write one. I should like to thank Mr Albert Hourani for having encouraged me to enlarge the scope of my work, and for his many kindnesses and patient criticism.

I am grateful to all the individuals and institutions who have given me assistance of various kinds. For financial help, I would like to thank the Department of Education and Science, which granted me a Hayter Studentship for three years, and enabled me to spend six months researching in New Delhi; the Warden and Fellows of St. Antony's College, who awarded me a College Studentship, and above all to my Father, for having supported me financially for so many years.

In the archival collections and libraries which I have consulted, I am grateful to the staff of the India Office library, especially Dr. Bingle and Mrs. Tuson; to the staff of the Public Record Office at Ashridge Park, Little Gaddesden, especially Mr Franklin; to the staff of the Public Record Office in the East Room, Portugal Street, especially Mr Donovan and Mr Monger; to the staff of the National Archives of India, New Delhi,

especially Miss D.G. Keswani, and also in Delhi, Dr R.N. Duggal of the Historical Section of the Ministry of External Affairs.

In the Middle East Centre at Oxford, I should like to thank Miss Elizabeth Monroe and Dr Derek Hopwood for helpful comments on parts of the text.

For their generous hospitality in Baghdad, I should like to thank H.M.'s former Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. (now Sir) Glen Balfour Paul, and, sadly, his late wife; in Delhi, Dr Bahadur Singh for his generosity in accommodating a 'friend of a friend' for so long. In Bristol, I must thank Mrs Mary McCormack for having loaned me a study in her house, and also for her patient criticism and improvement of the prose style of the later chapters.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my parents, for having encouraged and supported me in every way through all the stages of my education, and to Marion Omar Farouk, for having read every word of the thesis, and for infinitely more besides.

Abbreviations

*	Air	Air Ministry Files
*	BHCF	Baghdad High Commission File, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
*	CO	Colonial Office Files.
	DBFP	Documents on British Foreign Policy
*	FO	Foreign Office Files.
	J. (R.) C.A.S.	Journal of the (Royal) Central Asian Society
*	LP & S 10	India Office, Letters, Political and Secret, File 10.

* See bibliography for further details.

Notes on transliteration.

1. Transliteration has been kept as simple and consistent as possible. No diacritical marks (ṙ, ḍ etc) have been used.

2. When an Arabic word or name has a form which has been commonly accepted in English, it has been used (shaikh) and not underlined. Technical terms (mugata'a, sirkal) have been underlined throughout.

3. 'ain and hamza have been indicated by ' . Hamza has only been transliterated in proper names, e.g. Karbala ', but liwa.

4. Kurdish, Persian and Turkish names, and some of the more obscure Arabic names that have not been found written in Arabic have been copied from the Police Intelligence Reports in the form most commonly found.

5. For convenience, ' Shia ' has been used as noun and adjective throughout.

Introduction

Under the late Ottoman Empire, the area which now forms the state of Iraq[1] was divided into the three wilayets (provinces) of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. In this area lived Arabs, Kurds, Turks and Persians, most of whom were Sunni or Shia Muslims, together with communities of Jews, Yazidis and Sabaeans and various Christian sects[2]. The uneasy co-existence of these various racial and religious groups meant that tension and violence were never far below the surface, and later conquerors were to find the creation of a unified state a most formidable task. Deep antipathies existed between Arabs and Kurds: the more sophisticated Sunni population of the towns despised, but also feared, the far more numerous Shia cultivators living south of Baghdad, who in their turn were hostile to the tax-collecting effendis employed by the Ottomans. The Jewish population of Baghdad, estimated to be the largest single element in the city in 1917[3], as well as the Christians of Mosul and Baghdad, looked to the European powers to protect them from their potentially hostile neighbours. Furthermore, until comparatively recently, the geography of the country enabled the people of Iraq to resist the

---

1. The word 'Iraq' has been used throughout interchangeably with 'Turkish Arabia' and 'Mesopotamia' to indicate the area covered by the modern state.
2. The composition of the population remains the same today, except that the large Jewish community has dwindled to about 3000.
3. Kedourie, E., The Kingdom of Iraq, a Retrospect, in The Chatham House Version and other Middle Eastern Studies, pp 236-262. (The evidence on which the statement is based is in ibid, p.437, footnote 65)

imposition of any authority not of their own choosing. In the North, the mountains provided an almost impenetrable fortress for the Kurdish population, while until the middle of the nineteenth century the desert confederations, and the Shia tribes of the river valleys generally succeeded in defying the military expeditions which the Ottomans despatched to subdue them.

Until the time of Midhat Pasha, the capable and enlightened Governor of Baghdad between 1869 and 1872, Mosul, Baghdad and Basra were only under the nominal and occasional control of the authorities in Constantinople. The powers of the local representatives of the Porte extended little beyond the suburbs of the towns in which their garrisons were quartered, and the rural area was composed of a series of largely independent chiefdoms with overlapping spheres of control and influence. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, the Ottomans slowly extended their authority by force of arms, though their efforts at pacification were helped by current changes in rural society and economy. With the opening of the Suez Canal, and the growth of river communications, the Tigris and Euphrates valleys were more accessible to the outside world, and as a result the growing of cereal crops for sale or barter became more attractive than rearing stock for subsistence. The closed economy was greatly modified, and the surplus produce was sold to outsiders, who resold either to the towns or to India and the Gulf[1].

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1. Hasan, M.S. The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq 1864-1964: A Study in the Development of a Dependent Economy, in Cook, M.A.,(ed) Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East. (Hasan I)

The desire for greater security needed to achieve steady agricultural production broke down some of the resistance to the Ottomans' attempts to pacify the country, and enabled them to bring more of the area under their control.

The three Iraqi provinces, like other parts of the Empire, were governed by a tacit partnership between the Ottoman authorities and the local notables, each group knowing its own and the other's limitations.[1] However, by the end of the nineteenth century this traditional mechanism was being challenged. The effects of European nationalist movements, and the activities of reforming groups within Turkey itself had been to create the stirrings first of a constitutional and then a nationalist movement in Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. Later on, young Iraqi officers and lawyers became bitterly disappointed at the failure of the Committee of Union and Progress to give to the Arab provinces the greater degree of self-government for which they had hoped. It was these people, rather than members of the traditional noble families who rallied round Faisal between 1919 and 1921; several of the officers had been with him in the Hijaz since 1915. Many of the prominent members of the pre-war 'Ahd al-Iraqi (Nuri al-Sa'id, Yasin al-Hashimi, Ja'far al-'Askari, Jamil Midfa'i, Maulud Mukhlis and others) went on to take high office under the monarchy.[2]

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1. Hourani, A.H., Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables in Polk, W.R., and Chambers, R.L., (eds) The Beginnings of Modernisation in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century pp 41-69

2. 'Attiyah, G.R., Iraq, a Study in Political Consciousness, 1908-1921 (Edinburgh Univ. Ph.D. Thesis 1968)

Foreign Interests in Iraq before World War I

Britain's connection with Iraq and the Gulf had grown out of her interest in protecting the route to India, and Indian trade. From the early nineteenth century Britain had been concerned to prevent increasingly frequent attacks on her shipping from the Gulf coasts and after a series of naval encounters had entered into Treaty relations with the rulers of the shaikhdoms, aimed at the suppression of piracy in return for British protection. The ensuing peace enabled British and Indian merchants to trade freely again with both shores of the Gulf and with Iraq, whose principal export was grain. The total volume of trade was small, but it grew steadily in the years before the First World War:

Year	Total (£M)	British share	British percentage
1906	8.20	6.47	79
1914	12.84	9.60	76 [1]

Britain's only rival in the area, though clearly a long way behind, was Germany, which came into prominence particularly after being awarded the concession to build the Baghdad Railway in 1903. Foreshadowing the recommendation of the de Bunsen committee several years later, that the Tigris and Euphrates valleys could provide suitable accommodation for the surplus populations of India, pamphlets were written to encourage German farmers to emigrate to Iraq and to use

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1. Prospects for British Trade in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf (Holland-Wilson Report) prepared 1917, published Calcutta 1919. India Office, LP & S 10 1283/1913/19/5/8193.

German expertise to improve the productivity of the area.[1] In view of the decline in importance of Iraq as a producer of grain, which dates from almost immediately after the end of the First World War, it is interesting that the notion of the country as one of the 'potential storehouses of food ... for the world' long formed a major attraction for European powers.[2]

At the same time, another factor emerged of a more permanent significance: the growing interest of Western governments and the commercial interests in the oilfields of South Persia and the potential oil wealth of the Ottoman Empire. The Baghdad Railway concession included rights over minerals in the 20 kilometres on either side of the track, though no major oil discoveries were made before the outbreak of war in 1914. In South Persia, however, the definite existence of oil had been established for some time, and

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1. e.g. : Anon, Mesopotamien, das Land der Zukunft : seine wissenschaftlische Bedeutumg fur Mitteleuropa. (Mesopotamia, land of the future: its 'scientific implications' for Central Europe) Berlin, 1906. I am grateful to Marion Omar Farouk for this reference.

2. Sir Mark Sykes to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, 16 January 1918. Foreign Office, FO 800/221 (Sykes Papers).
c.f. W. Ormsby Gore, speech in House of Commons 10 March 1920: '...we are going to undertake the gagantic task of restoring to production the 14,000,000 acres that once formed part of the cultivable area of Mesopotamia which was once the granary of the world ... The development of Mesopotamia is one of the things which must be looked to in order to reduce prices and increase the produce of the world.'
Quoted in Wilson, A.T., A Clash of Loyalties, Mesopotamia 1917-1920. pp 241-42. (Wilson II)

the Admiralty's interest in securing a steady supply for the British Navy prompted the Government's acquisition of a majority shareholding in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in 1914. Hence, when Turkey joined the war on the side of the Central Powers, the British authorities in India were concerned that German prompted Turkish activity might hinder trade and communications with India, and also threaten the Persian oilfields. Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' was therefore despatched to Basra, to perform a holding operation. In October 1914 there was no question of 'marching into Mesopotamia' : the force's task was simply to deter the Turks from interfering with British interests at the Head of the Gulf.

Foundations of British Policy

Almost immediately after the first landings at Fao, British policy underwent a complete change. The holding operation was seen to be rather a tame objective beside the possibility of advancing to Baghdad, and in spite of reversals and high casualties, Britain found herself in overall control of the three wilayets by November 1918. The problems brought about by the British occupation, inherent since the beginning of the campaign but hitherto subordinated to the effort of winning the war, now began to be seen with increasing clarity and alarm. As the army advanced a complete civil administration was constructed, and the country was organised along the lines of a province of British India. Under the changed international atmosphere which followed the Armistice, such outright annexation of territory was no longer acceptable; other methods of control had to be invented to

replace those already in existence.

The necessary adjustment proved too difficult for many of the British personnel, especially the Acting Civil Commissioner, Sir Arnold Wilson, who was left in sole charge of the country between 1918 and 1920. His disregard of the new climate of opinion and of London's instructions was a major cause of the rising of 1920. British policy had to be tailored not only to serve British ends, but also to satisfy President Wilson's notions of self-determination, and equality of economic opportunity for all powers. The system of 'A' mandates was an attempt to reconcile these two uncomfortable bed-fellows, though the actual operation of the Mandate ensured that Britain's own strategic and commercial aims were given first priority.

In spite of the looser control which it implied, the new policy was a welcome relief to the British Treasury after the high cost of the Mesopotamia campaign. Especially after the air control scheme was introduced in 1922, the Mandate became extremely cheap to administer. All colonies were supposed to pay their own way, but it was evident that some form of military occupation was necessary in Iraq if the country was to be held together as a coherent entity. Keepingthe British Army there had cost over £32 million as late as the year 1920/21. Once the theoretical principles of the Mandate policy had been agreed upon by the international community, its application was left to the Mandatory Power. The British authorities chose to set up an Arab Government, recruited largely from the Sunni dignitaries of the towns, backed by a network of British advisers in the ministries in Baghdad

and in the headquarters of the local provincial administration. [1]

This thesis attempts to examine some of the major problems facing the British and Iraqi authorities in Iraq. Perhaps the most far-reaching of these was the lack of any sense of national unity. The diversity of the population within the three wilayets was more apparent than any unifying factors, while of the three main towns, Mosul looked more towards Aleppo and South Turkey than to Baghdad; Basra had long established trading connections with India and the Gulf, while Baghdad itself was a centre of the Persian transit trade. Encouraging either town, especially Basra[2], to surrender its traditional autonomy to Baghdad was not an easy task, although an extremely necessary one. Basra's importance as an outlet to the sea had grown with increasing trade, and apart from the potential wealth of the Mosul oilfields, the inclusion

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1. Under the terms of the British Officials' Agreement (annexed to the 1922 Anglo-Iraq Treaty) senior posts in the Ministries of Justice, Finance and Interior were reserved for British officials. The last Adviser to the Ministry of Interior, A. I. Kitchburn, was still serving in 1950, while the last Adviser to Justice, H. I. Lloyd, retired in 1949, and the last Chief Justice, Sir John Prichard, in 1951.

2. The British authorities never understood this problem. In 1921 the High Commissioner was informed that:

   '... a strong argument to be used in conversation against any request for different treatment for one part of Iraq is that this is precisely the cause of grievance against the French in Syria.' (S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad, Tgm 36 of 13 April 1921. Colonial Office, CO 537/819/18699.

of the Sunni Kurdish population of the area within Iraq was vital to the new state.[1] Outside the towns, loyalty to the new Government depended largely on the persuasive powers of British police officers and officials of the Ministry of Interior.

As well as being threatened by disruptive elements inside and outside its borders, the Iraq Government was weakened by constant shortages of money. The financial and military agreements subsidiary to the 1922 Treaty with Britain imposed a crushing burden on the Treasury which was only to be relieved in the distant future by income from oil. The payment of Iraq's share of the Ottoman Public Debt, the salaries of British officials[2] and the equipment and maintenance of the Iraq Army accounted for about 40% of the budget throughout the Mandate. The chief sources of income were land revenue and customs and excise, and the former could only be collected on a large scale if peace prevailed in the countryside. With the general lack of enthusiasm for the Government, such conditions could only be secured by a policy of making friends with the more complaisant, and threatening to bomb the more recalcitrant, of the local magnates. Towards the end of the Mandate the policy of conciliation had had to be pursued so far that land revenue had ceased to provide a significant part of the national income.

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1. Without the Mosul wilayet, the Shia majority would have been even greater: see Appendix I, p. 379

2. These salaries amounted to 30 lakhs of rupees in 1924, rather more than the expenditure of the Ministry of Education in any year between 1921 and 1927.

The whole apparatus and style of the Iraq Government was imported from outside, and in order to maintain it a network of new interdependencies was constructed. The new government had also to present itself as a fully integrated part of the national state and capable of taking responsibility for the conduct of affairs. Especially during the early years of the Mandate, this fiction proved difficult to maintain, since Iraqi defence forces on their own could not conceivably have held off the Ikhwan of Najd and the combined Turkish and Kurdish forces at the same time. The gap, of necessity, was filled by the British military presence.

As well as having created the new government, the British authorities had also to maintain and widen its area of influence. Extension of control, especially in Kurdistan, which had been promised some form of local autonomy, and in the Euphrates area, which had never shown enthusiasm for any form of government, was resisted by the local populations, who could only be brought to heel by being confronted with vastly superior forces. The aeroplanes of the Royal Air Force were indispensable to the very survival of the new Government, a fact which was readily apparent to both sides. Again, the Iraq Government was in no sense 'popular', or representative: it was composed of members of the Sunni Arab urban communities, who although more sophisticated and educated than the Shias and the Kurds, formed a minority of the total population. Their support came partly from the tribal shaikhs and landlords whose powers had been

greatly enhanced during the course of the British occupation and from the British authorities themselves. This partnership outlasted the Mandate and was only finally broken in 1958.

Although the small group which formed and sustained the Government was deeply dependent on Britain, the relationship was a reciprocal one. International pressures and financial exigencies meant that the Mandatory Power had to behave with a good deal of circumspection. Too many refusals of Iraqi demands by Britain might drive the 'court party' into a firm alliance with the opposition and produce the kind of combination that so nearly wrecked the 'Iraq experiment' during the 1920 rising. Constant bargaining by the British authorities for political, economic and strategic objectives indicated that their control was by no means absolute.

Primarily, Britain's objectives in Iraq were the security of communications with India and the Empire Air Route, and the protection of the Persian and Iraqi oilfields. In the course of the 1920's, the new Imperial thinking, which had been brought about by changes in international opinion after the War and the introduction of the Mandate system, itself underwent further modification. If British interests could be as well guaranteed by a more discreet but equally reliable form of control, it seemed unnecessary to force the Iraq Government to accept conditions which wounded their amour propre and were potentially damaging to their credibility within the country. Provided the substance of authority could be guaranteed, some relaxation of the form could be made with no sacrifice and considerable advantage.

Part of the problem lay in devising institutions through which British influence could be quietly exercised, but another difficulty facing successive High Commissioners in Baghdad lay in convincing officials and politicians in London, and occasionally their own subordinates, that some relaxation of control was both possible and desirable. It is rare to find the Colonial Office giving a lead in this direction, and the second High Commissioner, Sir Henry Dobbs, constantly impressed upon his superiors the need for greater flexibility, for a move away from the 'meticulous insistence on paper pledges' which only served to complicate his own relations with the Iraqis.[1] In the last resort, he claimed, Britain could always produce her trump card, the threat to withdraw her forces.

The main concern of the following chapters is to show how the British authorities arranged Anglo-Iraqi relations, and the various administrative institutions within Iraq, to enable the government of the country to be carried on in the way which would best serve British and Imperial interests. Writing five years after Britain left Iraq, the author of the most thorough survey of the early years of the Mandate gave a useful corrective to the altruistic and humanitarian ideas often associated with the new policy:[2]

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Confidential 'D' of 18 October 1923. CO 730/42/52434.

2. Mejcher, H.M., The Birth of the Mandate Idea and its Fulfilment in Iraq up to 1926 (Oxford Univ. D. Phil.thesis, 1970)

'Nations do not vie amongst themselves for control over lands ... primarily to give justice or to raise standards of living among the people or suppress disorder per se ... If these benefits extend to the natives of the country it is because the latter cannot, in the very nature of the circumstances, help sharing them. If conscious efforts are made to extend improved conditions among the native populations, it is because any increase of their well-being must lead to their increased productiveness and purchasing power and less costly methods of control and of administration. It cannot be denied that individual officials and even the mother country itself are often genuinely concerned for the well-being of the peoples they have taken in charge ... In a conflict of interests ... it is very natural that those of the mother country should come first and that the good of the people must, in reality, be subordinated to the expected material and political returns.'[1]

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1. Ireland, P.W., Iraq, a Study in Political Development, pp 34-35

PART I:

Iraq under British Occupation and Mandate.

CHAPTER I

FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WAR TO THE CAIRO CONFERENCE

On 8 October 1914, Sir Percy Cox wrote from Bombay :-

> 'The expedition to Bahrain starts today. Personally I have never been much in favour of this expedition to the Persian Gulf unless we were in a state of war with Turkey, in which case I would strongly advocate it. The danger, in my opinion, is that we may provoke war, while the position of our ships in the Shatt al-Arab, from an international point of view, is undoubtedly a weak one. The local authorities in Mesopotamia appear to be more hostile than those in Constantinople, and this perhaps makes the risk all the greater.'[1]

Some six weeks later, Sir Percy could not see how 'we can avoid taking over Baghdad'.[2] The two statements do not contradict one another directly, but Cox' conversion from a state of obvious reluctance to one of optimistic enthusiasm is characteristic of the atmosphere of the whole campaign. The extreme incompetence engendered by this kind of overconfidence came near to bringing the whole expedition to total disaster.

The Mesopotamia campaign was launched with distinctly limited objectives[3]; the India Office in London wanted a holding operation, the kind of exercise for which the Military Department of the

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1. Graves, P., Life of Sir Percy Cox, p.179
2. Cox to Viceroy, 23 Nov. 1914. Quoted Ireland, P.W., Iraq, a Study in Political Development, p.63
3. These were, according to General Barrow of the Military Department of the India Office, fourfold; to checkmate Turkish intrigue; to encourage the local Arabs, particularly the shaikhs of Kuwait and Muhammarah, to rally to the British side; to safeguard Egypt (given out as the Force's ostensible destination); and to secure the free flow of oil from Abadan. India Office Minute, 26 Sept. 1914. Quoted in Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire Into the Origin, Inception and Operations of the War in Mesopotamia (subsequently referred to as Mesopotamia Commission Reports) Cmd.8610, 1917, p.11

Government of India was best suited. Its main purpose was to deter any German-prompted Turkish activity at the head of the Gulf. But the lack of any real opposition encountered by General Delamain's forces and his advance as far as Qurna by 9 December, seem to have produced a sense of general euphoria. The temptation to advance proved irresistible, and it was not checked by any serious vacillations from behind the scenes. Cox' suggestion of an immediate advance on Baghdad was turned down by London, but the eventual possibility was not ruled out.[1] The idea of an extension northwards was taking firm root in Simla; by March 1915 the Commander in Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff, instructed Sir John Nixon, the new commander of Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' to submit, on his arrival in Basra, plans for effective occupation of the Basra wilayet and for a 'subsequent advance on Baghdad.'[2]

The strictly military side of the campaign has been amply documented elsewhere,[3] and will only be discussed in connection with the gradual expansion in administrative machinery which strategic gains necessitated. In Basra, Cox' first request in his capacity as Chief Political Officer was for permission to establish a civil administration; for this he requested sanction from the Viceroy on 27 November, five days after the town had been occupied.[4] At the same time he asked to be allowed to

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1. '....we are not disposed to authorise an advance on Baghdad at present...' S of S/I to Viceroy, 27 Dec. 1914. Mesopotamia Commission Report, p.20
2. Mesopotamia Commission Report, p.16
3. Barker, A.J., The Neglected War : Wilson, A.T., Loyalties, Mesopotamia, 1914-17 (subsequently referred to as Wilson, I) : Wilson, A.T., Mesopotamia, 1917-20 : A Clash of Loyalties (subsequently referred to as Wilson, II)
4. Cox to Viceroy, 27 No.1914. I.O. LP & S 10 4097/14/4726

announce that the occupation of Basra would be permanent, to allay genuine local fears of Turkish reprisals if the Turks were to return. Presumably for international reasons, London demurred; the proposal was ' peremptorily swept aside '.[1]

In his telegram to the Viceroy, Cox specified five objectives. He was concerned to set up machinery for the management of state property and auqaf, the collection of land revenue and the Ottoman Public Debt, and for the supervision of the Tobacco Régie.[2] Two interesting comments on these proposals were made in the India Office; General Barrow, the Military Secretary, wanted the administration to be 'as efficiently organised as possible, as we should contemplate the probability of a prolonged occupation', (though this could not, apparently, be announced publicly) and Hirtzel, head of the Political Department, whose wisdom and farsightedness is remarkable for its consistent quality, minuted :-

> 'It will probably be admitted that the government will be undertaken by the Government of India; but it is by no means certain that it will eventually prove desirable to take an Indian district as the model for it.' [3]

Clearly, some sort of administration was an immediate necessity, as the Turkish provincial authorities had been in full retreat since the time that I.E.F. 'D' had landed on Fao on 6 November.

However, it soon became clear that London and Simla had differing views on how best to proceed. The India Office in London, from the autumn of 1914 to the spring of 1915, was anxious merely to

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1. Mesopotamia Commission Report, p 15
2. See page 15 note 4
3. See page 15 note 4

consolidate a bridgehead, to gain firm control of Basra and its environs, while Simla, or more accurately the Military Department of the Government of India, came to have more ambitious ideas, as did both political and military staffs in Mesopotamia itself. London's caution and hesitancy accurately anticipated what was to come, for time and time again precipitate action in the field was to force reappraisals on London. Also, it is quite clear from the India Office records and the report of the Mesopotamia Commission that no-one in India appreciated either the true complexity of the organisational side of the campaign, or the political implications of maintaining even a semblance of order in the Occupied Territories.

Thus a constant theme of the campaign emerged; reluctant acceptance by London of demands by India and the Chief Political Officer of the Force for a more vigorous prosecution of the campaign. Indian officials in the Secretariat at Simla seemed to view the operation as a kind of Frontier War, pushing ever onwards to subdue the rebel forces beyond. It gradually became clear that the administrative expertise necessary to conduct a military campaign on this scale was almost entirely lacking. For its part, London could only endorse a series of fortuitous military faits accomplis, though politically greater restraint could be urged. Hirtzel, characteristically, displayed a very real understanding of the essentially delicate nature of the situation; in December 1914 he stressed the :

> '..importance of avoiding excessive strictness in revenue collection...I am asking F.O. to suggest some officers of Egypt and Sudan experience for eventual employment, as I

am not sure that Indian administrative methods will necessarily prove suitable.'[1]

There are further instances of his farsighted attitude through 1914 and 1915,[2] and when the differences between London and Baghdad became most acute between 1918 and 1920, it is in Hirtzel's letters to Wilson that the nature of the eventual regime is most accurately, tactfully and consistently forecast.

It has already been mentioned that General Nixon's instructions of March 1915 from Simla included the formation of a plan for 'the effective occupation of the Basra wilayet'.[3] By June 1915, General Townshend had captured 'Amara; by September Kut was occupied, and by October General Townshend was a mere 50 miles from Baghdad, at 'Aziziya. To Nixon, though later himself censured for ignoring intelligence reports of 30,000 Turkish troops massing above Baghdad, his subordinate must have seemed invincible, and his desire to advance as far and as fast as possible seems to have blinded him to the risks he

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1. India Office Minute, 16 Dec. 1914. LP & S 10 4097/14/4887. See Appendix.

2. e.g., in answer to a query whether officers of the Indian Army would be eligible for employment in Mesopotamia after the war : 'The whole question of the future of Mesopotamia is so uncertain that it is impossible to answer queries of this kind.' India Office Minute, 24 Dec. 1915. LP & S 10 4097/14/(1915)/4239

3. The precise meaning of the word 'wilayet' was importantly misunderstood elsewhere by an 'Indian' official; see Report of a Committee set up to consider certain correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif of Mecca in 1915 and 1916, Cmd. 5974 of 1939. It is possible that similarly loose terminology was used on this occasion, and that Sir John Nixon' instructions were not actually intended to extend to the whole of the province, but merely to the environs of Basra town.

was taking. At home, the continuing stalemate in the Dardanelles may have contributed to creating a sense of euphoria over the apparently spectacular successes in Mesopotamia. On 23 July 1915, the Secretary of State for India, Austen Chamberlain, had written to the Viceroy :-

'I am glad you see no necessity for an advance to Kut al 'Amara.'

By 8 October he had been converted :-

> 'There is, it would seem, an opportunity within our grasp for a great success, such as we have not yet achieved in any quarter, and it is difficult to overrate the political (and even military) advantages which would flow from it throughout the Far East.'[1]

The actual decision to march on Baghdad was phrased more cautiously, but even so, the possible effects of such a stretching of limited resources do not seem to have been very carefully calculated.[2] By December the Turkish forces, by then greatly augmented, had rallied and were able to drive Townshend back at Ctesiphon and finally to Kut, where his forces endured the bitter hardships of five months siege and ultimate surrender.[3]

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1. Petrie, C., The Life and Letters of Sir Austen Chamberlain, Vol II, pp 35, 36 -37
2. ...'Expert opinion was therefore unanimous on the point that to take and occupy Baghdad with the existing forces would be an unjustifiable risk and that for the task of holding Baghdad General Nixon should have a reinforcement of two divisions. There was however a concurrence of expert opinion that Nixon's existing force was sufficient in the first instance to take Baghdad.' Mesopotamia Commission Report, p 24
3. As a result of this reversal, and the news of the deficiencies of supply, medical services etc., in Mesopotamia, the Military Department of the Government of India was relieved of its command on 3 Feb. 1916. Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' became the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, and the War Office took full military charge of operations.

Meanwhile, the process of establishing an administrative machine for the Occupied Territories, based at Basra, had continued almost unaffected by the struggle on the higher reaches of the rivers. Local provision for sanitation and medical arrangements had been made; a judicial department had been set up; the Iraq Occupied Territories Code had been introduced (a penal code based on Indian models) and, highly important for the future, the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation, another Indian importation modified for Mesopotamian use, had been inaugurated.[1]

The initiative for this kind of activity seems to have derived almost entirely from the local authorities, especially as far as the actual details were concerned. The absence of any clear-cut instructions at this time is emphasised by Gertrude Bell :-

> 'Politically too, we rushed into the business with our usual disregard for a comprehensive political scheme... The co-ordinating of Arabian policies and the creation of an Arabian policy should have been done at home - it could only have been successfully done at home. There was no-one to do it, no-one who had ever thought of it, and it was left to our people in Egypt to thrash out, in the face of tremendous opposition from India and London some sort of wide scheme which will, I am persuaded, ultimately form the basis of our relations with the Arabs.'

And again, later in 1916 :-

> 'The real difficulty here is that we don't know exactly what we intend to do in this country. Can you persuade people to take your side when you are not sure in the end whether you'll be there to take theirs? No wonder they hesitate; and it would take a good deal of potent persuasion to make them think that your side and theirs are compatible. The elements of prevailing persuasiveness

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1. Wilson I, pp 64-78, 143-69: Ireland, P.W., pp 74-95

are denied to us. So we just make the best of things, say what we can, and don't do very much.' [1]

Miss Bell's own ignorance of London's overall intentions is not surprising in view of the fact that her own chief was at that time working equally in the dark. It was only in May 1917, a full year after the secret endorsement of Sykes-Picot by the three Allies, that Cox was informed by Sykes of the details of the agreement.[2] Whether or not this was a deliberate omission is open to question, but it certainly illustrates the kind of difficulties under which the Civil Administration was labouring and the lack of real communication between London and Baghdad. In any case, Sykes-Picot merely assigned spheres of greater and lesser influence, and gave scant indication of the sort of regimes which would be created. Cox's first instructions, giving a broad outline of the proposed Mesopotamian administration, were not received until after the capture of Baghdad.

In the absence of earlier instructions, those on the spot, recruited largely from the Indian Army and Indian Civil Service, could only set up and maintain the kind of administrative machine with which they themselves were familiar. The need was acute; in 1917, in the

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1. Lady Bell, The Letters of Gertrude Bell, Vols I and II (subsequently referred to as Lady Bell I and II): Vol I pp 373-75, dated 27 April 1916. Burgoyne, E., Gertrude Bell, from her Personal Papers 1914-26 p 43, dated 15 July 1916
   c.f. Storrs, R., Orientations, p 161
   Klieman, A.S., Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921, pp 6-7

2. Monroe, E., Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956, p 36

Baghdad wilayet, only 48 out of the original 170 Ottoman officials had remained at their posts.[1] Gradually, the type of administration familiar from the Basra wilayet, of direct rule of subdivisions of the province by British Officers, was introduced elsewhere as more and more territory came under British occupation.[2]

In fact, the capture of Baghdad proved to be the watershed in the campaign. There was a great deal of fighting to be done before the Turks were finally defeated, but the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force was able to advance without any serious check. Even the collapse of the Russian forces in Persia seems to have made little difference. By May 1917 Samarra' was captured; by September Ramadi, an important source of supply for the Turkish army, was occupied. Early in 1918 General Marshall was ordered to occupy Kirkuk, 200 miles North of Baghdad in a complicated operation designed to support General Dunsterville's quixotic adventures in Persia, but by the Spring the M.E.F. was being depleted by transfers of divisions to more important theatres elsewhere, notably Palestine and Salonika.[3] At the very end of the campaign almost indecent haste ensured that Mosul town and most of the Mosul wilayet were out of Turkish hands.[4]

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1. Despatch, Cox to India Office, 20 Apr 1917. LP & S 10 4097/14/(1917)/1661

2. Administrative unity of the two wilayets was not achieved until October 1918

3. This account derives largely from Barker, A.J., pp 385-457

4. ...'every effort was made to score as heavily as possible on the Tigris before the whistle blew.' (Wilson II, p11) Col Wilson's account makes it quite clear that Mosul town was captured, on War Office instructions, some three days after the Armistice of Mudros (p 17)
c.f. ...."I disapproved strongly of Wilson's efforts after the Armistice to continue the war so that Mosul might be in our hands before the bargaining began at the Peace Conference."
Philby, H.St. J., Mesopotage, p 308

We have seen that the first instructions regarding the future administration of Mesopotamia were issued in March 1917. Their general tone was not such as to cause the administrators on the spot to make any significant changes in their practice. But increasingly, as other pressures made themselves felt, the existing bureaucratic controls in the Occupied Territories came in for severe criticism. The problem became more acute following the entry of the United States into the war, and more particularly after the publication of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. Long established and hitherto almost unchallenged traditions had to be reconciled with a whole set of new requirements. The task became to adapt the existing machinery, derived from Indian administrative models, to a new and less direct form of control, which was to be unfamiliar and occasionally unpalatable to those called upon to operate it. For some a major reappraisal was necessary, and the transition involved both physical and psychological adjustments which were often by no means easy to make.[1]

The difficulties faced by the administrators in Mesopotamia, both immediately after the war and during the mandate period, are a reflection of far wider trends, and are only an example of similar developments in processes of devolution visible at this time. In considering the events of the next few years, especially the crucial period between the Armistice of Mudros in October 1918 and the signature of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of October 1922, a broad perspective

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1. e.g. on Dobbs :-
'We had after all been trained in the same school and his larger experience of it had rather tended to rivet its shackles on his mind while I was rather in favour of tempering the shorn lamb of Indian methods to the fiercer blasts of the Arabian sirocco.'
Philby, H.St. J., p 42

is necessary. To obtain this, some reference must be made to contemporary developments in Britain's relations both with India and with the U.S.A. in the war of 1914-18; India, to understand the nature of the old methods, and the gradual questioning of them, and the U.S.A. to understand the extent and mature of the new pressures being brought to bear.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century Britain had ruled large areas of India through a comparatively small number of British officials, who exercised direct executive authority. Except in the princely states, where the rulers had British 'advisors' but their own subordinates as ministers and administrators, relatively few Indians held positions of major responsibility. It was widely held and believed that the British Officer's impartiality and his independence of local factional interests enabled him to carry out his task more competently than an Indian, and further that few Indians were capable of shouldering the necessary responsibilities. Most men who lived and worked in India (or the Persian Gulf) believed that the highest standards of administrative efficiency were of paramount importance. Though some could be frankly racialist,[1] an important theme of many memoirs is a sense of deep concern for the welfare of the inarticulate cultivator, and an almost equally deep contempt for the educated man. Education, in the wrong hands, was dangerous; Indians were incompetent to rule, and if educated Indians

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1. e.g. Lord Kitchener :-
'However well-educated and clever a native may be, and however brave he may have proved himself, I believe that no rank we can bestow upon him can cause him to be considered the equal of a British officer.'
Pannikar, K.M. Asia and Western Dominance, p 150

had the opportunity to exercise real power, other Indians, particularly the mass of poor farmers, who formed the backbone of the country, would suffer.

Among other typical and consistent advocates of this point of view was Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who ended a long career in India as Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab. He is of particular interest as he was the mentor of two distinguished members of the Occupation and Mandate administrations, Colonel Howell, the Revenue Secretary under A.T. Wilson, and Sir Francis Humphrys, last High Commissioner in Baghdad and first British Ambassador to Iraq. Towards the end of his autobiography, O'Dwyer quotes with approval the words of John Lawrence :-

> 'We are here by our moral superiority, by the force of circumstances and the will of providence. These alone constitute our charter of government, and in doing the best we can for the people we are bound by our consciences and not theirs.'[1]

His opposition to reform was based on the fear that the self-seekers would use their new-found power to tyrannise the peasants, the kind of despotism which he saw already existing in the princely states.[2] He had grudgingly accepted the reforms of Morley and Minto, but he thought that India was not ready for those of Montagu and Chelmsford.[3] To men of this stamp, the notion of leaving India, or devolving some Imperial power into Indian hands, was tantamount to a betrayal, and signified the abandoning of a sacred trust. But the presence of two Liberal Secretaries of State at the India Office, and gradual changes in

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1. O'Dwyer, M., India As I Knew It, p 407
2. O'Dwyer, M., pp 155-56
3. O'Dwyer, M., p 309

international opinion ensured that a stand like O'Dwyer's could no longer be either fashionable or feasible.

Both Morley and Montagu were attracted by the notion of partnership and co-operation, of the gradual accession of Indians to positions of responsibility.[1] In the course of the 1914-18 war the doctrine of dyarchy, or transferred and reserved subjects, came to be evolved. This was foreshadowed in the remarkably forthright declaration drafted by Curzon but delivered by Montagu on 20 August 1917:-

> 'The policy of H.M. Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.' 2

Later, Curzon's own speech in the Lords on Indian reform showed the great risks that were being taken:-

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1. See Wolpert, S., Morley and India 1909-1910. c.f. E.S. Montagu's 4th budget speech, 8 Aug 1913:-

> 'There are in India millions who do not, cannot, and probably never will aspire to a share in the government of their country ... We measure their lands, we administer justice to them... But all this is to them but as a phase in the eternal scheme of things... What I ask is that where the machinery ... suited to the twentieth century is introduced ... let every effort be made to simplify, to adjust, to explain ... If we make co-operation and devolution our guiding principles, I am sure that we are on the right lines.' (Waley, p 57) Quoted Waley, S.D., Edwin Montagu A Memoir and an Account of his Visit to India, p 57

2. Waley, S.D., p 136.

'This is a great experiment. I would not have quarrelled with anyone who used the words 'daring experiment'. I am not certain that I should cavill even at the word 'rash'... I do not think (India) will be so well governed; I think the standard will tend to fall...' 1

The same variations of reaction can be seen among the personnel of the Mesopotamian Administration, who had also to be persuaded that direct rule was no longer a practical possibility. In the early years of the campaign, most of the officials on the political side had been seconded from the Indian Political Service. Men trained either in the Central or Presidency administrations would tend to approach the kinds of political and administrative problems presented to them in Mesopotamia along the lines which they had been taught in India. Particularly hard for such men was being forced to accept what they regarded as second-rate standards.

The instructions of March 1917 indicated that Basra should continue under direct British rule and that Baghdad should be 'an Arab state with local ruler or government under British protectorate (sic) in everything but name,' 2

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1. Lord Ronaldshay, Life of Lord Curzon, Vol III, p 176.

2. '.. Basra with Nasiriyah, Shatt al-Hai, Kut and Badrai as its Northern limits to remain permanently under British Administration..' S/S for India to Viceroy, Foreign Department, Simla, 29 March 1917. Quoted Ireland, P.W., pp 36-37

along lines which generally tended to support a continuation of previous practice.[1] This was to a certain extent comprehensible, and was easy to apply and understand; in contrast was the very different tone of the instructions which Cox received in August 1917:-

> 'For the present such minimum of administrative efficiency should be aimed at as is necessary for the maintenance of order and to meet the requirements of the Force; the amendment of laws and the introduction of reforms should be kept within the narrowest possible limits. H.M. Government do not wish large or controversial administrative questions raised or referred to them until the danger of Turkish attack is passed.' 2

Long after the danger of Turkish attack had passed, H.M. Government's feelings on the subject remained substantially the same. The strain that this imposed was particularly trying for Cox and Wilson, both of whom were trained to regard considerations of administrative efficiency as assuming the highest importance. Neither could easily tolerate the casual approach implied in the August instructions. But up to and beyond the capture of Baghdad city, the Indian system, whereby native officials rarely advanced beyond subordinate posts, and British officials took all real responsibility, held sway. Further, and more important, few in the Mesopotamian Civil Administration seem to have

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1. 'This was on the whole good news, though it seemed that A.T.V. was thoroughly despondent at the implied decision that whatever might be the fate of the Basra wilayet, there was to be no annexation of the Baghdad wilayet to the British Empire.' Philby, H.St.J. p 253.

2. Ireland, P.W. p 108.

been aware that this state of affairs could not continue.

As we have seen, changes in policy towards India were rapidly combining to make the continued application of Indian methods in Mesopotamia more difficult. Mesopotamia could not easily be saddled with the system that was gradually being dismantled in India, especially in view of some of the pressures behind the Indian reforms.[1] However, as far as the country was concerned directly, at this stage only Hirtzel sounded the appropriate note of caution; at the latter end of 1917 he wrote to the Commercial Intelligence Section of the Department of Overseas Trade that:-

> '...(the Turkish) menace has apparently been removed. But another has taken its place, of a different kind, and one which, I think, makes it imperative for us to get to work. What I mean is that we must at least consider the possibility of a peace which will not give us the absolute political control of Mesopotamia that we should like to have...' 2

The new 'menace' was presumably emerging in the shape of the

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1. 'We are really making concessions to India because of the free talk about liberty, democracy, nationality and self-government which have become the common shibboleths of the Allies (this is June 1917) and because we are expected to translate into practice in our own domestic household the sentiments which we have so enthusiastically preached.' Ronaldshay, Vol. III, pp 163-64.

2. Hirtzel to W.H. Clark, Private, 31 Dec. 1917 FO 368/1999/1071.

first formulations of the system of indirect control later embodied in the mandate.[1] But earlier than this there had been indications that the old world of secret diplomacy was threatened, and that in any future peace settlement, there would be no parcelling out of territory among the victors. The prime mover, in a practical political sense, of this fundamental change, was President Wilson, who was determined to see a new world order emerge as the Allies' price for his committing his country to their side in the struggle. His reply to the German peace offer of December 12th 1916 gave an early indication that American intervention would not be without its drawbacks:-

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1. Mejcher, H.M. The Birth of the Mandate Idea and Its Fullfilment in Iraq up to 1926 (Oxford Univ. D.Phil Thesis 1970), pp 110-16, dates the beginning of the articulation of the 'A' Mandate policy in detail by Sir Mark Sykes as December 1917 - January 1918. At the same time, G.L. Beer, of Colonel House's 'Inquiry' team, was developing a remarkably similar theory, which embodied President Wilson's notions of Trusteeship. See Beer, G.L., African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference: pp 411-29, The Future of Mesopotamia, dated 1 Jan. 1918. In this Memorandum Beer proposed protection of the natives from exploitation; equality of access for all nations to the economic development of the country, and 'concentration of responsibility onto Great Britain.'

   c.f. also Lloyd George's speech of 5 Jan 1918:-
   ' Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine are in our judgement entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions.'

> ' "The objects which the statesmen of the belligerents have in mind in this war," said Wilson, "are virtually the same..." The sentence was accurate if the words were understood in a strict sense....But the Allies would not enjoy the implication that their war aims were on the sameplane as Germany's' 1

When the United States eventually decided to enter the war as an 'Associate Power' Balfour was sent to New York to confess what the Allies had been up to amongst themselves. Colonel House, Wilson's confidential agent, describes his conference with Balfour much in the tones of a prefect questioning a guilty schoolboy; for his part Balfour was anxious to cover up as much as he could for the others:-

> '... Crossing the Bosphorus we come to (Turkey in Asia). It is here that the secret treaties between the Allies come in most prominently. They have agreed to give Russia a sphere of influence in Armenia and the Northern part. The British take in Mesopotamia and the (region which is) closest to Egypt.... This is all bad, and I told Balfour so. They are making it a breeding ground for future war. I asked what the spheres of influence included. B.(alfour) was hazy concerning this; whether it meant that each nation had the exclusive right to develop the resources within their own sphere he was not altogether clear.' 2

Balfour was lucky to get off so lightly, but it was clear that the headmaster's disapproval lingered on. Late in July 1917 Wilson wrote to the House:-

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1. Seymour, C.S., (ed.) The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, v 4 vols. (subsequently referred to as House, I-IV) Vol II p 407.

2. 28 April 1917, House III, pp 47-48, Typically, House saw Balfour before the President did.

> 'England and France have not the same views with regard to peace that we have by any means. When the war is over we can force them to our way of thinking. 1

It was of course not only the Allies' attitude to secret diplomacy and future colonial settlement that upset the President; Colonel House's last two volumes of memoirs dealing with the period from the U.S.A's entry into the war until the President's final illness, contain few direct references to Near Eastern, Colonial, or Mandate questions. However, Wilson's anxiety to find out what the Allies did think on such matters, his calls for clear statements of War Aims, had important side effects, such as the setting up of the 'Inquiry', [2] a group of experts to examine the sorts of questions which might emerge at a Peace Conference, and the despatch of Colonel House's peace mission to Europe in November 1917. The failure of the peace mission to prise any statement of aims out of the Allies, and the confusion brought about by the Bolsheviks' revelation of the secret treaties prompted the President to state his aims in the Fourteen Points Speech of January 8th, 1918.

It is difficult to assess the precise effect of these developments on events in Mesopotamia at the time. Certainly the Civil Commissioner

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1. President Wilson to Colonel House, 18 July 1917. Quoted HouseIII p 54.

2. House III, p 174, The 'Inquiry' bore some resemblance to the wartime 'Garden Suburb' in Downing Street.

forbade the local publication of the Fourteen Points which only appeared in Baghdad on October 11th, 1918, [1] perhaps an indication of how lethal he thought they were. But in London a synthesis of reaction to the President's statement and contemporaneous developments within the Foreign Office began to take shape. Any solution to the problem of the future of Mesopotamia had to be made to seem to conform to the American President's high ideals. [2] Even so, later events proved that it was some time before the India Office and the Mesopotamian authorities were brought to a true realisation of the changed state of affairs. The attitude of outraged surprise is most clearly evident in Colonel Wilson's frantic telegrams after the publication of the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918. And it is true that much of the confusion which was to follow the Armistice, and which came to a head in the summer of 1920, though deriving partly from London's inability to present a clear line of action, sprang also from the difficulty of convincing civil servants, both in Baghdad and

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1. Ireland, P.W., p 136: Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia, by Miss G.L. Bell. Cmd 1061, 1920, p 126 (subsequently referred to as Bell, Review.)

2. An India Office Memo of 31 Jan 1918 suggested that the general trend of the war and "the U.S. President's notions of self-determination" had brought about a situation where Britain would have to act towards Mesopotamia as a 'candidate towards its constituents' (B.277 in LP&S 10 2571/17/1918)

in the India Office itself [1] that, at least overtly, Indian administrative methods and machinery could not longer be used in whatever future scheme was devised for Mesopotamia.

In the spring of 1918 it was decided to recall Sir Percy Cox to London for consultation, a summons that turned out to be a prelude to his long secondment to the British Legation at Teheran. By this time it had been agreed in the India Office that some scheme would have to be devised for Mesopotamia which would retain strong British influence without seeming to necessitate close British control. Before his arrival, the Political Department of the India Office agreed that his advice would be sought on two main points:-

'i) Is the administrative system now being built up adapted to the contingency of the cessation of direct British control?

ii) What further means, if any, can be devised locally to secure that, what ever form the ultimate settlement may take, the main object devised by H.M. Government, viz., a Mesopotamia under British influence, shall be secured to the utmost extent that circumstances permit?' 2

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1. At times Hirtzel and Shuckburgh, from within the same department of the same office, were putting forward suggestions which were totally at variance.

2. "The conclusions that seem to follow a reconsideration are as follows:

i) That if our claim to control the destinies of Mesopotamia after that war is to be established, it will have to be based on other grounds that mere right of conquest and
ii) that the nature of British supervision will have to be less direct and overt than was contemplated in March 1917

This being the position our policy during the period of occupation should, while avoiding the system of a British administrative system of a permanent character, aim at placing British influence

Cox was also to be asked for information on certain specific points. Could any local ruler be brought to identify himself and his interests with Great Britain? What sort of personnel existed for the setting up of a local administration? How long would British troops have to support a friendly regime? How soon could trade begin again? What elements in the local population should be specially encouraged as being most likely to direct their choice of self-determination towards a continuation of the British connection?

On his arrival in London in April, Cox dealt as far as he could with these points. He acknowledged that annexation was no longer possible, but wanted supervision of the Arab facade to be exercised by a nominated local council. It was particularly vital to exclude any Turkish participation in the regime. In answer to the more detailed questions, Cox' replies cannot have been particularly heartening either to the India Office or to the Eastern Committee. Incidentally, the records of these meetings provide a useful corrective to the rather easily assumed polarisation of Cox and Wilson as representatives of respectively

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note continued from previous page.

and interests in the country (already very favourably established) on so secure a basis as to guarantee their maintenance under any administrative system that might ultimately be introduced." India Office memo B. 281 of 3 April 1918 LP&S 10 2571/1917/18.

[illegible]A little earlier (January 1918) in Khartum Wingate had suggested the wisdom of a compromise with King Hussain; heconsidered it desirable to obtain the King's assent to a definite modification of McMahon's unfortunate pledge in the light of the actual factsand his acceptance of the principle that we should have the right to continue administration in both wilayets with the object of gradually building up self-government in both."
(B. 273 of 30 Jan. 1918 LP&S 10 2571)

more liberal and more reactionary schools of thought.[1] It is more accurate to describe the differences between them as 'more procedural than substantive.'[2]

Cox felt that the family of the Naqib of Baghdad was the most suitable 'dynastic element' for the rulership of Mesopotamia, in contrast to the family of the Sharif of Mecca, a figure who 'carries no weight in Iraq, where only the most distant interest is taken in him.'[3] Cox, (and Wilson after him, for similar reasons) had little success in recruiting suitable Arab personnel for responsible subordinate posts:[4] naturally, after the

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1. e.g. '...if committee procedures had been shortened, the protests and arguments of A.T. Wilson overruled, and Cox, perhaps, retained in Baghdad, then many troubles, losses and legacies of bitterness could have been avoided,' Longrigg, S.H., Iraq 1900-1950, p 100

2. Klieman, A.S. p. 67

3. Cox, Memorandum of 22 April 1918. I.O., LP & S 10 4722/18/5064.

4. 'The population, from the cultivator to the well-to-do merchant or landowner, infinitely prefers to be handled by a British Officer who of course employs Arab subordinates ... I may mention that whereas I have done my utmost to employ experimentally any inhabitants of this country at all likely to be suitable, this laudable endeavour finds no favour at all with the local inhabitants concerned.' Cox, Memorandum of 22 April 1918 (See Note 3 above).

   Further, in Mesopotamia 'Indian' notions had ruled out any attempt to organise the local population against the Turks. ~~the India Office's support for Ibn Sa'ud was more to keep him quiet than to encourage him to take part in anti-Turkish activities.~~
   See Ireland, P.W., pp 102-06, 240: Marlowe, J., Late Victorian A Biography of Sir Arnold Wilson, pp 126-27 Wilson II, pp 3-4.

war, those Mesopotamians who had served with Faisal in the Hijaz, or as senior officers in the Turkish army, were to find service in a low-ranking position in their own country particularly galling, and their discontent was to become a potent focus of opposition in the future.[1]

On the pressing question of troop reduction, Cox could not be optimistic, though some divisions, as we have seen, had already been released for service on other fronts. He could also give little hope of a speedy re-establishment of conditions which would bring about the normal functioning of British trade, though attention had in fact been paid to creating opportunities for British commerce when the war was over.[2]

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1. Burgoyne, E., p 202. letter dated 30 Jan. 1921.

2. i) Capt. G. Lloyd, M.P., (later Lord Lloyd of Dolobran): 'Economic Situation in the Persian and Mesopotamian Markets', where the underselling possible on the German 'through-rate' system is commended. (FO 368/1650/199753: Sept/Oct 1916)

   ii) Memo by Captain Fitzgerald to the Department of Overseas Trade, 4 Jan. 1917 ... by prompt action and cooperation of existing firms we may ensure the establishment of British trade in Mesopotamia so firmly that competition by foreign firms may be unappreciable if not altogether non-existent.' (FO 368/1827/64629)

   iii) Prospects for British Trade in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf (The Report of the Holland/Wilson Commission) prepared 1917, published 1919: this included useful advice on marketing techniques:-

   'The Marketing of cheap goods does not necessarily imply and lowering of business honesty but generally connotes an adaptability and readiness to study the market which has hitherto been disregarded by the conservative attitudes of British manufacturers.'

   Generally Britain's commercial pre-eminence in the Gulf and Mesopotamian markets before the war was undisputed, although the overall figures were not high:

	Total £000,000	British share	British %age
1906	8.20	6.47	79
1914	12.84	9.60	76

   The Mesopotamian campaign is estimated as having cost £200 million, or 20 years of '1914 trade'.

LP & S 10 1283/1913/19/5/8193

As likely objects for British persuasion and influence, Cox listed the Baghdad Jews, the notables of Baghdad and Basra, wealthy landlords and the Shaikhs of settled tribes.

This meeting between Cox and the officials of the India Office and the Eastern Committee had little effect on the course of events in Mesopotamia; its real purpose seems to have been to give London a clear picture of the state of affairs on the ground. Cox himself stayed in England on leave, and returned to Baghdad only for a short time early in September, on his way to relieve Marling at Teheran. In Baghdad, A.T. Wilson made one attempt to elicit some sort of policy statement from London, largely to see what significance he or anyone else should attach to President Wilson's Twelfth Point:

> 'In a rash moment I inquired by telegraph what if any significance attached to the 'Twelfth Commandment'... I was referred in reply to the instructions given in August 1917 that 'no large or controversial administrative questions were to be raised'. Thus discouraged I took no further steps until after the Armistice to inquire of the India Office what in their view the future might hold in store. I presumed, perhaps rightly, that if their oracles were dumb it was because their doubts were even greater than ours.' 1

Though warned privately by Hirtzel [2] that a certain 're-orientation is necessary', Wilson was given no more specific details, and nothing of any major consequence emanated from London until the bombshell of the Anglo-French Declaration burst over Baghdad in November. Late in September, Wilson requested the despatch of a commission to study the

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1. Wilson, II, p 99 (I have not been able to trace this correspondence in the India Office Files.)

2. Wilson, II, p 166, quoted Ireland P.W., p 150 and Marlowe J p. 134.

future of Mesopotamia, [1] but this was simply shelved by London, and by the time it was raised again, Wilson hastily suggested a local committee; a deputation from London would, he said, be 'widely misunderstood.' [2]

Throughout 1918, the Civil Administration continued to dig itself in. Militarily, as we have seen, there was little real resistance. By placating the tribal leaders, [3] by determining to keep order, and by providing a ready market for labour and foodstuffs of all kinds, the British presence endeavoured to gain influential support. Gertrude Bell discussed a period of general optimism.

> To Chirol, January 1918: 'On the whole the country is being opened up, and on the whole the people like it.'
> To Hardinge, February 22, 1918 (Cox was on his way to England) 'You will hear from Sir Percy, but I should like to tell you, what amazing strides have been made towards ordered government since last March. Basra Wilayet is, as far as administration is concerned, under peace conditions, and we have had almost no trouble in Baghdad Wilayet.... 4

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1. Political, Baghdad, to S/S India 27 Sept. 1918 (LP & S 10 2571/17/1918//4252)

2. S/S India to Political, Baghdad, 2 Nov. 1918 Political, Baghdad, to S/S India, 23 Nov. 1918 (LP & S 10/2571/17/1918/4872, 5179).

3. 'I hear that the shaikhs were very much impressed by the fact that the Commander in Chief stood up to receive them. They said that no Turkish vali had ever done more than loll in his chair when they paid their respects.'
Gertrude Bell to her Father, 19 Sept 1918. Burgoyne, E., pp 95-96

4. Burgoyne, E., pp 75-76, 79-79.

In London too a similar note of congratulation was struck; Lord Robert Cecil told the House of Commons that Britain had 'redeemed Mesopotamia from the state of ruin into which it had fallen under the Turks' [1] Generally, the process of consolidation continued, and except for a temporary set-back in Najaf in March, where a British officer was murdered, and savage reprisals taken by the authorities, little resistance was encountered. Minor annoyances, like billeting and the blockade, were offset for the majority of the town population by the very real peace and order that prevailed.

It is a strange irony that the tortuous and involved McMahon/Hussain correspondence and the Sykes-Picot agreement have been held up to this day, together with the Balfour Declaration, as the outstanding examples of Britain's perfidy to the Arabs. In contrast, the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918, a shorter, simpler, and far less equivocal document, has managed to escape equal censure. Professor Kedourie has argued [2] that there are no basic contradictions between Sykes-Picot and the undertakings to King Husain, and it does seem that Husain's precise standing in the negotiations was never made entirely clear to anyone, including the parties involved. On the other hand the text of the Anglo-French Declaration, which, as its title implies, was a published

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1. House of Commons Debates, 23 July 1918, quoted Wilson II, p 99.

2. See Kedourie, E., 'Cairo and Khartoum on the Arab Question, 1915-18; in The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies, pp 13-32

document and not a secret arrangement, is short and to the point. On the issue dealt with in President Wilson's Twelfth Point, which promised "absolutely unmolested autonomous development" to the ex-Ottoman territories, it asserted that:

> '... Far from wishing to impose any particular institution on these lands, they (i.e. the Allies) have no other care but to secure by their support and effective aid the normal workings of the Governments and Administrations which they shall have adopted of their own free will.'

Such a statement would seem to present little difficulty of interpretation.

There has been no detailed examination of the precise origins of the pronouncement, when and how it came to be drafted. When A.T. Wilson protested, the India Office explained that it was issued 'primarily to clear up the existing situation in Syria which Arab suspicions of French intentions had created', implying that Iraq was somehow only included to save French face. [1] There is no obvious single explanation. The

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1. S/S India, to Political, Baghdad 29 Nov. 1918 quoted Ireland P.W., p 151 and S/S India to Viceroy 28 Oct. 1918: copy of telegram from S/S Foreign Affairs, to H.M. Ambassador, Washington 23 Octo. 1918.

   '...it has become essential to make some public declaration in order to allay the suspicions and misgivings of the Arabs and Syrians which may be dangerously exploited by our enemies: it has therefore been decided to issue an Anglo-French Declaration....
   (LP&S 4722/18/1918/1/

   In this context Temperley's strange comment (History of the Peace Conference of Paris, Vol vi. p 180) is worth remarking on: he says that the Declaration was aimed primarily "at Syria and the Hijaz but applied of course by Iraqis to Mesopotamia"; whereas Iraq is mentioned by name in the Declaration, the Hijaz is not. See also Nevakivi, J., pp 80-81.

Declaration can be seen partly as a sop to the Americans, whose attempts at dictating peace terms would surely begin the moment the Armistice was signed; equally possibly it could have been an attempt on the part of the two Allies to present a common front, an appearance of solidarity in their Middle Eastern policy, to lull the Americans, Syrians and Iraqis into thinking that the Allies would do the decent thing.[1] This harmony, both between the Allies and towards their Middle Eastern clients, was of course short-lived.

Wilson based his own opposition both on the dangers the Declaration presented to British interests, and the poor prospects it held out for the Iraqis:

> '... The average Arab, as opposed to the handful of amateur politicians of Baghdad, sees the future as one of fair dealing and material and moral progress under the aegis of Great Britain... With the experience of my Political Officers behind me, I can confidently declare that the country as a whole neither expects nor desires any such sweeping schemes of independence as are adumbrated, if not clearly denoted, in the Anglo-French Declaration.' 2

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1. This has been suggested by Roger Adelson.

2. Political, Baghdad, to S/S for India, 16 No. 1918, quoted Marlowe, J., 136-37, etc. Gertrude Bell and A.T. Wilson seem at this stage to have been more or less unanimous; in 'Self-Determination in Mesopotamia (February 1919) she described the Anglo-French declaration as a regrettable necessity'.

   Philby seems to have been guilty of wishful thinking: '...it is safe to say that alone of all the 'politicals', Miss Bell and I assumed that the Anglo-French Declaration was deliberately intended to mean exactly what it said and we welcomed it with enthusiasm in that sense.' Philby, H. St. J, p 308

With hindsight it is easy to accuse Wilson of swimming against the tide, of accusing all except himself of being out of step. But his whole temperament and training were opposed to the doctrines being put forward. More remarkable, perhaps, than his failure to grasp the reality of the situation, was, first, that he did not resign his post when asked to implement a policy he did not believe to be valid, and secondly, that in the face of his evident lack of co-operation, the India Office did not seek his resignation. For this the ultimate responsibility lay of course with H.M. Government; at the very end of Wilson's time as Acting Civil Commissioner, the position was neatly summarised by Shuckburgh:

> 'The policy pursued in Mesopotamia may have been wise or unwise, but in any case final responsibility for it rests with H.M. Government and not with their agent on the spot. If they were dissatisfied with the way their agent was carrying out their wishes, then they should have censured...or recalled him. By not doing so they have assumed responsibility for his views, and cannot, in fairness and decency, throw him over. If... Sir Arnold Wilson's policy, which was the policy of H.M. Government was not the brilliant thing we then thought it, the fact still remains that H.M. Government was equally at fault and are bound in honour to take the blame (if blame there be) upon themselves and not to throw it upon their unfortunate subordinate officer who ex hypothesi merely did their bidding.' 1

Looking back at the immediately postwar period in the Middle East, it seems almost incredible that, quite apart from the question

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1. Minute of 22 Sept 1920. LP & S 10 4722/18/1920/8/7145.

of the status of the Mosul Wilayet, two years should have elapsed between the Armistice of Mudros and the installation of Sir Percy Cox in Baghdad in the autumn of 1920 with virtual carte blanche to try to save the situation. The delays have been variously explained, for the period has been extensively researched and well documented from the papers and memoirs of two of the principal actors in the drama, Gertrude Bell and A.T. Wilson.

The causes of the seemingly interminable wrangles and procrastination are still by no means entirely clear. Had not H.M. Government had, from the very beginning, tacit support from the U.S.A. for her claims to Mesopotamia? [1] Was it simply not to offend French susceptibilities in Syria that Curzon felt himself unable to give the India Office permission to give Wilson more precise instructions? Exactly what was the nature of the Anglo-French dispute over Mosul that the Berenger/Long agreement did not resolve? Granted that a revitalised Turkey might make efforts to regain Northern Kurdistan; were there any signs of such moves in 1919-20? And finally, why did Colonel Wilson constantly refuse to accept the unofficial advice pressed upon him by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, and build up an Arab state likely to be acceptable to the League, instead of complaining in September 1919 that:

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1. G.L. Beer rejected the idea of an International Protectorate, in favour of a 'concentration of responsibility on Britain'. Beer, G.L., pp 421, 423-24.

'Your statement that we are going to have an Arab state whether Mesopotamia wants it or not is the first indication I have had as to the real significance of self-determination for this country'? 1

Such questions are worth considering because of the effect they had in shaping the future of the country; in this respect the two years were of inestimable importance. The delay gave time for some sort of Iraqi national identity to develop and eventually forced Britain into a policy of greater accommodation to nationalist demands. But it is important not to over estimate the degree of unity that existed on either side; the alliance between town and country (another over simplification) that was displayed in the revolt of 1920 was temporary and ad hoc, as will be seen, and there were divergences of opinion between the India Office and the Foreign Office, the India Office and Baghdad, within the India Office and within the Residency at Baghdad as well.

In fact, Hirtzel at the India Office is the one authority whose attitude scarcely changed from 1914 to 1921, who recognised that Indianisation would not be possible in Mesopotamia even before the implications of President Wilson's anti-annexationist beliefs came to be appreciated. Throughout 1919 and 1920 he wrote to Wilson in Baghdad, emphasising time and time again that no form of veiled protectorate would be acceptable to the League. Wilson was cut off by education, training and experience from new currents of ideas in Europe; he seems to have thought of the future of his state in terms of that form of government which all right thinking men would choose for themselves if they were in full

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1. Wilson to Hirtzel, 12 Sept. 1919; (LP & S 10 4722/18/1919/3/6202).

possession of the necessary facts, and capable of making decisions in their own best interests. In the face of their inability to articulate, and his responsibility for their welfare, his duty was to decide for them. This was of course a further echo of the 'Indian' belief that law and order and efficient and just administration were entirely adequate and widely acceptable substitutes for self government. His point of view and that of some of his superiors was well illustrated in a despatch to the India Office in mid-November 1919:

> 'I believe it impossible in these days to create a new sovereign Muhammadan state by diplomatic or administrative means out of the remnants of the Turkish Empire ... For some years to come the appointment of Arab Governors or high officials except in an advisory capacity would involve the rapid decay of authority, law and order ... any attempts to introduce institutions on the lines desired by the Sunni politicians of Syria would involve the concentration of power in the hands of a few persons whose ambitions and methods would rapidly bring about the collapse of organised government ... the results would be the antithesis of democratic government.'

Shuckburgh comented:

> 'Our pledges and declarations, wisely or unwisely made, oblige us to confer the blessings of Arab rule upon Mesopotamia also; but that is no reason to decry the good work we have accomplished during the period of military occupation. On the merits -- apart from pledges and other political considerations -- I believe Colonel Wilson to be right, i.e. I believe that the policy he advocates would conduce more to the good government and prosperity of Mesopotamia than that which we may feel ourselves bound to adopt. Lord Morley once remarked that politics were the 'science of the second best'. I must confess that I feel a little sympathy with Colonel Wilson's hankering after the 'first best'. Few men can have worked harder for it.'

Hirztel added:

> 'Colonel Wilson is an apostle of efficient administration as efficiency is understood by Anglo-Saxons, and I share Mr. Shuckburgh's sympathy to that extent. But let us grasp

> the fact that this not an administrative but a political question. If Iraq al-Jazira were really an island somewhere in mid-Pacific, then Colonel Wilson's constitution might do, for a time. But it is unfortunately in the middle of a continent. Colonel Wilson appears to suggest that there has been some recent development in the policy of H.M. Government. It has in fact never varied since it was first laid down on 29 March 1917, and it was only the fear that the local authorities were not sufficiently alive to it that was recent, Colonel Wilson's policy will not allay that fear.'

His chief agreed:

> Sir A. Hirtzel hits the mark. It is a political and not an administrative question. I should myself not be prepared to submit to foreign administration even if it assured me 'good government and prosperity.' I am going to plump for the November 1918 policy as the only one to succeed in the long run.' 1

The problems facing the Mesopotamian authorities should not of course be underestimated. They were sent very general directives, which by and large they did not approve, and permission to proceed in what they considered to be a positive and constructive direction was almost invariably withheld. London's constant fear was that somehow the decisions of the Peace Conference might be wrongly anticipated. In the circumstances, since the business of the Mesopotamian state had somehow to be carried on, the Civil Administration kept to well worn paths. Also, it should not be thought that relations between Baghdad and London were characterised by constant tension; particularly in the early days there was a fair degree

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1. Political, Baghdad to S/S India, 17 Nov. 1919 with minutes of January 1920; (LP & S 10 4722/18/1920/3/8573).

of harmony between Baghdad and certain sections of the India Office.

In a telegram of 17 November, 1918, Wilson continued his attack on the Anglo-French Declaration, and suggested instead that the policy that he and Cox had pursued should be taken to its logical conclusion:

> 'I think therefore that our best course is to declare Mesopotamia to be a protectorate, under which all classes and races will be given forthwith maximum liberty...'

On which Shuckburgh minuted on 20 November:

> 'It is clear that the enlightened and progressive Arab in whom the enthusiasts ask us to believe is a mere fiction as far as Mesopotamia is concerned. Such progressive elements as do exist in the country are not Arabs at all but Jews and Christians. It will be a poor kind of self-determination that places such people at the mercy of an uncontrolled Arab administration.'

The General Officer Commanding found himself in agreement with the Acting Civil Commissioner; he emphasised the practical aspects of the situation, especially the military realities, which neither the local political authorities nor any department in London seem to have grasped adequately:

> '...there must continue to be an army of occupation in Mesopotamia, the country is ipso facto under British protectorate, and it would seem preferable that this should be made clear from the outset.' 1

A few days later Wilson, anxiously awaiting instructions, echoed his chief's previous objections [2] to any 'contemplated Sharifian settlement'; [3]

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1. Political, Baghdad to S/S India, 17 Nov 1918; minute by J.E. Shuckburgh, 29 Nov. 1918 G.O.C. Baghdad to War Office, 19 Nov. 1918. (LP & S 10 4722/18/1918/1/5104)

2. See page 36.

3. Political, Baghdad, to S/S India 22 Nov 1918; LP & S 10 4722/18/1918/1/5164.

at the India Office, Monteath commented when the telegram arrived::

> 'Captain Wilson's views on the Future of Mesopotamia, strongly expressed as they are, will, I hope be favourably considered by the Eastern Committee, especially his conviction regarding the future effect of the Anglo-French Declaration of 8 November. Time should not be lost in withdrawing from this foolish entanglement as regard Mesopotamia.' 1

However, the 'consent' rather than the 'authority' principle prevailed, and London asked Wilson whether any suitable condidates existed for the rulership of Mesopotamia. His lengthy reply was of considerable importance for the future. He suggested (and it is interesting that the initiative came from him and not from London) that public opinion should be consulted over the selection of a candidate, and himself put forward four names for consideration. His attitude towardsthe possible candidature of a son of the Sharif was surprising, and caused some confusion in the India Office, which had been building up a case against Husain's ~~eldest~~ second son 'Abdullah; a member of the Sharif's family would, said Wilson:

> '... meet with widespread acceptance in Baghdad and would probably be well received outside because all know who the Sharif is. 2 It is also considered that he would be acceptable to Shias on account of Sharif's widespread latitude in religious

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1. Ibid; minute of 20 Nov. 1918.

2. See page 48, and page 36 ...the Sharif of Mecca, a figure who carries no weight in Iraq, 'where only the most distant interest is taken in him.'

views.[1] For reasons connected with Persian Gulf and Central Arabian politics I am however strongly opposed to it'.

In view of his earlier attitudes and those of Cox, Shuckburgh was taken aback:

> 'Captain Wilson's present report that a son of the Sharif would command wide acceptance locally comes as a complete surprise and knocks the ground from under most of the arguments on which we have hitherto opposed the 'Abdullah solution.' 2

Wilson's own solution was to make Cox head of state with no Arab Amir at all, and Gertrude Bell wrote home that 'on two points they (the Iraqis) are practically all agreed; they want us to control their affairs and they want Sir Percy as Commissioner.' 3

London welcomed the idea of a "plebiscite," as Wilson's rather contrived local soundings came to be called, but quietly shelved the idea of Cox as head of state. The tone of the instructions sent to Baghdad a few days later cannot have been much to the Acting Civil Commissioner's liking, for they reiterated the policy set out in the Anglo-French Declaration and underlined the point that it was merely a prelude to the Peace Conference:

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1. Whereas the Naqib was the leading Sunni dignitary.

2. Political Baghdad to S/S India, Telegram, 24 Nov. 1918, and Minute by J.E. Shuckburgh 26 Nov. 1918. LP & S 10 4722/18/1918/1/5200 However, for further somersaults, see Political, Baghdad, to S/S India, 29 Nov. 1918.

   'Najaf and Karbala' and the Shias at large who form the majority of the country have not made their views known, but it may be confidently anticipated that they will throw their weight into the scale against a son of the Sharif or indeed any possible condidate for the Amirate.'

   (LP & S 10, 4722/18/1918/1/5373). Wilson, II, 109 quotes part of this telegram but omits this passage.

3. Gertrude Bell to her Father, 28 Nov 1918 Lady Bell, Vol II p 463

> ".... it is the policy of H.M. Government to aid in establishing native governments in the liberated areas and not to impose on the populations any form of government which they dislike. Subject to those two conditions we desire to see in Mesopotamia the strongest and most settled government possible and we are prepared to give all British assistance necessary for that, including an army of occupation." 1

The hand of the Foreign Office is in evidence here; the original draft, sent to Lord Curzon for his approval, ends:

> 'There will be no annexation and as far as can be seen at the moment no formal protectorate.'

Curzon altered this to:

> 'There will be no annexation and as far as can be seen at the moment no formal declaration of a protectorate."

In the course of the next two months, Wilson toured the country in an attempt to gauge public opinion. Ireland has pointed out that, given his evident personal predilections, such activity was bound to be fruitless and irrelevant. [2] The various reports which he received from Political Officers showed a remarkable unanimity of feeling in favour of continued British control, as was only to be expected, except in Baghdad and the Shia holy cities. The way in which soundings were taken effectively prevented an accurate picture being presented to London, as any expression

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1. S/S India to Political, Baghdad, 28 Nov. 1918 (LP & S 10 4722/18/1918/1/5244.

2. Ireland, P.W. pp 160-75.

of nationalist opinion was either ignored or silenced.[1] However, at a meeting of the Eastern Committee on 24 December, Louis Mallet tried to steer opinion back to the November Declaration; he recognised too that the existence of Faisal's Arab Government in Damascus was likely to have a powerful effect on public opinion in Mesopotamia:

> 'If it be really the case that sentiment in favour of a purely British administration exists throughout Mesopotamia we are certainly placed in some difficulty, but I doubt if we should be wise in accepting entirely at their face value the assurances which are made to Captain Wilson by the native authorities whom he visits, and we cannot disregard the influence which it is asserted that the Amir Faisal exercises over the Arab element in Mesopotamia ... I venture to suggest that Captain Wilson's attention be drawn to our undertaking and that he be reminded that whilst H.M. Government are resolved, in accordance with the wishes of the population, to support and assist them, they are precluded by these arguments from setting up a protectorate or protectorates in Iraq.' 2

Over the next months this question was debated at some length. Curzon consulted Cox in Teheran, who replied that although a protectorate was clearly out of the question, it would not be difficult so to order things that 'secure control of Foreign Relations and a full supervision of Administration ... will ... amount to a Protectorate and (give) us all

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1. 'Seven Arabs were deported from Baghdad for their activities in connection with the plebiscite. The declaration of the chosen representatives of the Baghdad Muslims, far from being accepted as the official declaration as originally intended, was dismissed as being unrepresentative of the politically and economically important inhabitants of Baghdad'... etc. etc. (Ireland, P.W. 173)

2. Eastern Committee, 24 Dec. 1918 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/1/37)

we need' --- further proof that his attitudes were not so very different from Wilson's. Shuckburgh agreed:

> 'It is generally agreed that we must not go through the official pantomime known as 'declaring a protectorate'; but it is not clear that this disability need limit to any appreciable extent the practical control we are able to exercise over Mesopotamian affairs.' 1

Even at this stage the numerous anomalies inherent in the Mesopotamian morass were becoming more and more evident. Support for some kind of Sharifian settlement would at least have the merit of partially fulfilling the Husain/McMahon undertakings, but it would have the demerit of irritating the French, whose annoyance at the state of affairs in Syria was palpable. In Paris, in January, Balfour asked for information about 'Abdullah, who seemed at the time to be most likely the condidate for the Mesopotamian throne. Kidston of the Foreign Office wrote to Shuckburgh in a refreshingly cynical vein:

> 'You will understand that what is wanted is a King who will be content to reign but not govern and whose religious views are such that shaikhs may acquiesce in his rule. I have...suggested that if it is really desirable to get a character for Abdulla this might perhaps be obtained through Cairo. Wilson of Jedda will probably be able to say whether he steals or drinks and whether he is likely to cause trouble with the other servants'. 2

Shuckburgh and Hirtzel were both worried that sending 'Abdullah to Baghdad at the same time as Cox would be seen to be forcing the Mesopotamians'

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1. Cox (Teheran) to Foreign Office, 24 Dec. 1918 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/1/16) Minute by J.E. Shuckburgh, 4 Jan. 1919.

2. Kidston, Foreign Office, to Shuckburgh, 25 Jan 1919 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/1/516)

hands, and would thus form an easy target for French and other international criticism, as did in fact happen with Faisal in 1921. Hirtzel was also uneasily aware of the ramifications of the situation on another level:

> 'If the French remain in Syria we shall have to avoid giving them the excuse of setting up a Protectorate. If they go, or we appear to be reactionary in Mesopotamia, there is always the risk that Faisal will encourage the Americans to take over both and it should be borne in mind that the Standard Oil Company is very anxious to take over Iraq.' 1

At this point, and throughout most of 1919, Gertrude Bell and A.T. Wilson were co-operating harmoniously; Wilson approved Miss Bell's Memorandum on Self Determination in Mesopotamia, and despatched her to Paris to represent him at the Peace Conference before he himself arrived. The Memorandum is of considerable interest; it was the outcome of the soundings which had taken place over the previous months; [2] generally its theme was that a continuation of British rule was desired by almost all Iraqis, and if there was an Arab Amir, he should be 'under British protection'. But there was a strong movement in favour of direct British rule. The Naqib would neither consider accepting the post of ruler, nor give his approval to the selection of a son of the Sharif. In a veiled rebuke to London, it was suggested that the trouble stirred

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1. Hirtzel, Minute of 1 Feb. 1919 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/1/551)

2. Reproduced in Wilson II, 330-36; dated 22 Feb. 1919.

up by the constant questioning had simply had the effect of hastening the birth of a 'nationalist party with inflated ambitions'; this event had 'frightened ... the stabler elements of the community into closer co-operation with the British administration.' [1]

Though capable of considerable tenacity, one of Gertrude Bell's great strengthslay in her flexibility and her ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Whereas Wilson never really accepted that nationalism was a force to be accommodated rather than silenced, Gertrude Bell eventually came to realise that it was, and that at least some concession must be made to the fact that for reasons best known to themselves people prefer to manage their own affairs incompetently than to have other people manage them well on their behalf. [2] Wilson's most articulate male colleague in the Civil Administration, his Judicial Adviser Bonham-Carter, whose experience was drawn not from India but from Egypt and the Sudan, came to a similar conclusion. Early in February 1919 he wrote an illuminating paper entitled The Place of the Arab in the Administration, which anticipated with considerable accuracy what actually

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1. She recanted later: 'In the light of experience it may be doubted whether any such enquiry carried out under official auspices would have been likely to elicit answers which might serve to guide the questioner.' Bell, Review, p 127.

2. See Montagu's comment on page 47.

happened under the Mandate. Generally he felt that at this stage too little attention was being paid to Arab aspirations and foresaw that difficulties would follow if this state of affairs was allowed to continue. His own brand of cautious liberalism was reflected in the very considerable degree of harmony that existed subsequently in the Ministry of Justice under his auspices; similar arrangements were to exist in other ministries as well:

> 'It is clearly not desirable, nor do I think possible, to follow the Egyptian model and have an entirely Arab staff. But if we are to avoid a course which will take us definitely away from the goal for which we profess to set out it is essential that even at the start we should make the fullest use of Arab staff, and what is hardly less important give them a standing in the Administration.
>
> A Cabinet of Native Ministers such as exists in Egypt, who in all essentials have to act under British direction has advantages. It keeps the form of Government largely Arab, and it maintains the social and political status of the Arab and it provides a legislative machinery which should at least delay the premature introduction of representative institutions in advance of the need of the country.
>
> I should welcome the appointment of an Arab Judicial Secretary or even an Arab Minister of Justice with myself as adviser, provided he was carefully chosen and that it was clearly understood that he must either comply with the decisions of the British Government or resign.' 1

Early in 1919 it was felt that expert advice from Mesopotamia might be of assistance in Paris. Accordingly, preceded by his Oriental Secretary, Wilson set out from Mesopotamia for the conference. He arrived

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1. Bonham-Carter, Baghdad, 5 Feb. 1919 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/1/1463).

on 20 March, the very day of the famous secret meeting on the Middle East, when President Wilson first mooted the suggestion of an International Commission to report to the Peace Conference on what kind of government the inhabitants of the ex-Ottoman territories wanted for themselves. [1] The precise status of the India Office delegation (which consisted, apparently, simply of Arnold Wilson, Gertrude Bell, and Montagu) was not clear; Montagu wrote plaintively to Balfour five days later:

> 'I really do not want to bother you but it is extremely difficult to reconcile oneself to the fact that one's only raison d'etre in Paris is to represent Indian interests and the Mesopotamian Government which is at the moment responsible to me when it is quite impossible to discover what is going on. We have now collected in Paris Miss Bell and Colonel Wilson. They are responsible to me. They come to me and say 'We are here. What do you want of us?' I can give them no information of what is going on. I cannot tell them what we were asked to come to Paris for' [2]

Wilson was equally unimpressed, and was disturbed by the fact that the Cairo faction, intent on advancing Sharifian claims, occupied such an important place in the British delegation. [3] Little progress towards any clarification in fact took place before Wilson's visit to London, where he put forward his own suggestions at a meeting of the Eastern Committee on 6 April. These amounted largely to a division of

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1. Baker, R.S., Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, Vol III, pp 1-19

2. Montagu to Balfour, 25 March 1919, FO 800/215 p 369.

3. Wilson, II, p 116; Montagu to Balfour, 25 Mar. 1919 (Balfour Papers) FO 800/215 p 150.

Iraq into 5 provinces, administered by British officials with Arab advisers; municipal and district councils with appointed and not elected members, and giving

> 'carefully selected Arabs of good birth and education belonging to Iraq by birth from the very outset positions of executive and administrative responsibility.' 1

It is not clear precisely what he had in mind.

Wilson's division of Iraq into provinces was approved in the instructions he received from London on his return to Baghdad in May, but he seems to have been completely unprepared for Whitehall's insistence on different regimes for the 'Arab province of Mosul' and 'Iraq proper'. [2] Pleas for the alteration of these instructions went unheeded, presumably because of continuing Anglo-French misunderstandings over Mosul. [3] However, the risings in Kurdistan in the summer and autumn

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1. Wilson, II, p 118.
2. S/S India to Political, Baghdad, 9 May 1919 quoted Ireland p 186 None of these councils was in fact in existence by 29 Oct. 1919 Meeting of Inter-Departmental Committee, 10 Nov. 1919 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/3/7546).
3. The Mosul problem of 1919-20 should not be confused with the Anglo-Turkish boundary dispute of Lausanne and later. Originally, Mosul had been allotted to France under Sykes-Picot, to prevent Great Britain and Russia from having a common frontier (in view of the southward extension of the Russian zone under the same Sykes-Picot agreement). After various negotiations in London in the winter of 1918, it is certain that Clemenceau agreed on the transfer of Mosul to Britain on 15 Feb. 1919 (See Baker R.S., Vol III p 5) The quid pro quo was the Berenger/Long oil agreement of 18 March 1919 which assigned to France the former German share of 25% in the Turkish Petroleum Company. A further conference between Lloyd George and Clemenceau in May 1919 seemed to have caused Clemenceau to reconsider the wisdom of a major territorial concession, and final accord was only reached in December 1920 (See Cmd 1195 of 1921).

of 1919 further convinced the Acting Civil Commissioner of any constitutional arrangement for the area which did not include close British control.

Nearly a year elapsed between the signature of the Treaty of Versailles and the distribution of the Near Eastern Mandates at San Remo in April 1920. Among other important developments of those months which were to have far-reaching consequences for the future of the area were the Greek landings in Smyrna, the American 'repudiation both of Wilson and of Europe' [1] Curzon's resumption of full charge of the Foreign Office in London, the signature, but not the ratification, of the Anglo-Persian convention, and perhaps most significant of all, increasing friction between France and Britain over Syria. In Iraq, as 1919 wore on and no clear cut declarations of policy issued from the Residency, an acute restlessness developed, partly due to the mounting inconveniences of what seemed an endless military occupation, [2] and partly to resentment of the fact that while the Syrians were judged competent to run their own affairs, the Iraqis apparently were not.

On his way back from Europe in the late spring of 1919, A.T. Wilson, according to Miss Bell's account written some two years later, gave somewhat short shrift to a group of officers originally from Iraq who were

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1. Nicolson, H.N., Curzon : The Last Phase, p 111

2. See note 1 page 89.

occupying responsible posts in the Syrian administration:

> '... Tant bien que mal they were at that time running the whole of the military and civil administration of Syria ... it was preposterous to tell these ... Major-Generals...and trained administrators that they must be content to run municipal councils. From that day they despaired of ever getting native institutions in Mesopotamia.' 1

Faisal himself made clear to General Clayton the widespread animosity with which his subordinates in Damascus regarded the regime in Baghdad:

> 'To those who maintain that it is impossible to constitute such a government in Baghdad owing to the lack of trained men, I will say that until now not the slightest effort has been made to collect them, for most of the posts in the O.E.T. are filled by Baghdadis today.' 2

And at the same the British Liaison Officer at Aleppo reported the candid fears of the Iraqis around him (who included Ja'far al'Askari, Maulud Mukhlis, 'Ali Jaudat and Naji Suwaidi [3]) that the longer foreign rule continued in Iraq the more difficult a task they would have to set up an acceptable national government to replace it. [4]

Other overtures were made to London throughout the year; in June Nuri al Sa'id asked Hubert Young of the Foreign Office (who had served in the Hijaz during the war) for

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1. Burgoyne, E., p 202.

2. Faisal to Clayton, 24 May 1919. LP & S 10 4722/1918/19/2/3649.

3. Naji Suwaidi was invited to Baghdad in June to 'advise' Colonel Wilson on an Arab Government; he was so dissatisfied with his reception that he returned almost at once.

4. Despatch, 57, Chief Political Officer, Egyptian Expeditionary Force to Foreign Office, 8 June 1919 enclosing Brayne, B.L.O. Aleppo, to C.P.O. E.E.F. 7 May 1919: (LP&S 10 4722/1918/19/2/3912).

> 'an assurance along the lines of the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 that no form of government should be forced on the country without the consent of the inhabitants ... his friends in Mesopotamia were firmly convinced that the British authorities were deliberately encouraging the tribes to the detriment of the smaller class of educated landowners 1, because the tribes were armed and difficult to control.' 2

Wilson stubbornly maintained his own contention:

> 'To install an Arab Government in Mesopotamia is impossible and if we attempt it we shall abandon the Middle East to anarchy.' 3

In this view he was still not entirely without support from his masters, and certainly his views were shared by substantial numbers of his subordinates; J.S. Mann, a Political Officer killed in the last days of the rising of 1920 wrote home that 'Any idea of an Arab state is simply bloodstained fooling at present...' [4] and in the India Office Shuckburgh commented:

> 'How can the local population settle down when we won't tell them what we are going to do? Colonel Wilson is bound to act on the assumption that we intend to go on governing Mesopotamia and he would be wanting in his duty if he did not take a firm line with intrigues, the object of which is to make our government impossible. We must either govern Mesopotamia or not govern it.'

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1. A device to which Nuri himself resorted freely when in power ; Battatu, J., Shaikh and Peasant in Iraq (Harvard Ph.D. thesis 1958)

2. Interview between Nuri al Sa'id and Hubert Young, 21 Oct. 1919 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/5/6876)

3. Political, Baghdad to S/S India 11 July 1919 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/4/4264

4. Mann, J.S. An Administrator in the Making p 182; Letter to Major Cumberbatch, 15 Dec. 1919.

Patiently Hirtzel explained:

> 'I thought everyone knew that we were not going to 'govern' Mesopotamia in the sense in which I understand Mr. Shuckburgh to use that word and my complaint against Colonel Wilson (whose achievements for the rest I fully appreciate) does not seem to comprehend the fact although he has been here and seen and heard for himself.' 1

If such differences could exist within the same department of the same Office, Wilson's bewilderment three and a half thousand miles away is perhaps understandable. Yet, throughout this trying time it is true to say that the official voice of the India Office did not give Wilson any reason to hope that a British Indian administration would be acceptable, whatever future was to be devised for Mesopotamia. [2] Hirtzel wrote privately with increasing urgency to Wilson throughout 1919 and 1920, and he emerges with complete credit as the consistent advocate of the acceptable; he realised that provincial and district councils would not and could not alone constitute an Arab state, and that no Mandate on these lines would have a chance of being approved by the League of Nations'. [3] His strict, almost Machiavellian practicality is revealed:

> 'What we want to have in existence, what we ought to have been creating in this time is some administration with Arab institutions which we can safely leave while pulling the strings ourselves; something that won't cost very much, which Labour can swallow consistent with its principles, but under which our economic and political interests will be secure.' 4

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1. Minutes of Shuckburgh (9 August. 1919) and Hirtzel (11August 1919) on LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/2/4264

2. See pages 46-47.

3. Minute by Hirtzel. 8 July 1919 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/2/4019)

4. Marlowe, J., 182-83

In the end of course he won the day; what appeared in the 1920's was anticipated in his proposals to Wilson immediately after the war. As we have seen [1] the battle for the minds of Ministers was won long before A.T. Wilson's intransigence was pitched against the nationalists in the rising of the summer of 1920; Wilson was fighting his own masters as well as Faisal's men by then.

At the end of 1919 the British position in Mesopotamia was under attack from several directions. In Kurdistan, Shaikh Mahmud had refused to be as pliable as the British authorities would have liked; disaffection and discontent was widespread in the towns and the countryside, and the Sharifians were growing more determined to extend the benefits of their newly acquired freedom to Iraq. In England, the adverse political and financial effects of keeping up a 'highly organised military administration' were beginning to be noticed in official circles and in the Northcliffe press [2]

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1. See pages 46-47.

2. Interdepartmental Committee, 10 Oct. 1919:
..'The Chairman (Lord Curzon) said that the conference had met to see if they could advance in any way the troublesome question...of the degree to which the British Administration in Mesopotamia had been developing in the wrong direction...there was now in existence in in Mesopotamia a highly organised military administration...which did not...give to the local population the opportunity for sharing in their own government which they had the right to expect from the Anglo-French Declaration...He did not suggest that this administration had done badly...but it was inordinately expensive and hewould be glad to see it come to an end as soon as possible'.
(LP & S 10 4722/18/1919/3/7546).

though when Kerr, Lloyd George's secretary told Shuckburgh in the spring of 1920 that Parliament would not consent to incur liabilities 'in respect of Mesopotamia for more than a limited period' Hirtzel retorted:

> '...What the high authorities should be brought to realise is that if what they are avowedly out for is oil and other commodities they cannot have them without public security, and they cannot have public security under an Arab or any other Government without paying for it.' 1

By this time Wilson had become even more convinced that application of the Anglo-French Declaration would destroy all the constructive work that had been accomplished during the period of the British occupation. Kurds, Shias and country people would not accept the rule of Sunni officers from the towns; given such an administration they would probably be clamouring for the return of the Turks after a few years. Further, if the Government set up by the British did not command widespread acceptance in the country, its activities as a revenue collector would be defied, and the State would become bankrupt. Apart from the anarchy which would follow, Britain would not get back any of the money which should be paid for the various assets transferred to the Civil Administration. British investment stood at about £16 million, and the capitalised value of the oilfields about £50 million. If these were to be exploited for the benefit of Britain (and of Mesopotamia), stability, efficiency and good government were essential, and these conditions could not be achieved by abandoning Mesopotamia to an Arab government composed of Sunni effendis

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1. Kerr to Shuckburgh 31 March 1920; Minute by Hirtzel 1 April 1920 (LP&S 10 4722/3/18/1920/2326)

whose claims to be the backbone of the country were highly dubious, and foreigners from the Hijaz whose benevolent intentions were palpably questionable.[1]

At this point Wilson's own problems were increased by the "defection" of his Oriental Secretary. In 'Syria in October' she seems to have realised for the first time what kind of state was being sought after by the nationalists who were working with Faisal at Damascus. Yasin al-Hashimi's views, which may perhaps have been moderated for Miss Bell's consumption, seem strikingly reasonable; he acknowledged the British claim to advise, and accepted that a British High Commissioner (preferably Sir Percy Cox), would be needed to support and guide an Arab Amir. He agreed too that Arab provincial governors should have British advisers. He would prefer one country to take the Mandate for both Syria and Iraq, but if this was impossible he wanted an identical educational and judicial system to be set up in the two States. He criticised current educational policy in Iraq, which was mainly concerned with building up from the bottom, with primary and technical schools:

> 'You may possibly create through them good farmers and good engineers but in fifty years' time we shall be no further forward in obtaining a class of highly educated men fit to take over the government of the country.'[2]

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1. Condensed from Wilson to Hirtzel, 12 Sep 1919 and Political, Baghdad, to S/S India, 15 Sept. 1919 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/2/8253).

2. Syria in October by Miss G.L. Bell, 11 Oct 1919. LP & S 10 4722/18/1919/2/8253.

While she did not entirely agree with him, Miss Bell appreciated the force of much of Yasin's arguments, particularly his definite willingness to accept some sort of foreign tutelage; Wilson's refusal to compromise this far lost him her sympathy and support, as the situation become more and more serious.

The Acting Civil Commissioner himself, aware of the dangers of a 'serious breakdown in 1920' [1] could see no other course than his own. Shia hostility was expressed by the chief mujtahid's pronouncement that all service under the British was unlawful [2] and the ceremonies in Damascus did not pass unnoticed in Baghdad. By March he had set up a constitutional committee under Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter. This produced a cabinet-type Council of State with a majority of British members, with Arabs attached in subordinate positions. There was also to be a legislative assembly to be appointed on a collegiate basis from elected local councillors. [3] In spite of the frustrations and delays caused by H.M. Government's inability to make a firm declaration of intent, it seems almost incredible that Wilson could have imagined that these proposals, providing as they did for so little real Arab participation, stood the

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1. Political, Baghdad, to S/S India, 18 Jan. 1920 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1920/2/487).

2. Political, Baghdad, to S/S India, 18 March 1920 (LP&S 10 4722/18/ 1920/2/2211)

3. Wilson II 242-47

remotest chance of being accepted by the India Office. [1]

The Constitutional Committee's report arrived in England at the same time that the official statement that the Iraq Mandate had been awarded to Great Britain arrived in Baghdad. [2] This prompted Wilson to make a flowery if suitably vague announcement 'to amplify the bald statement from San Remo' [3] The announcement contained no reference to any further consultation of local opinion, but a few days later Wilson was dismayed to receive instructions which did call for a further consultation, which should be undertaken before the precise form of the mandate could be decided. [4] He immediately requested permission to delay this announcement, or substitute for it a summary of the Bonham-Carter proposals, which he would promise to put into effect in the course of the autumn:

> '... There are grounds for hoping that we shall be able to count upon the support of a strong bloc of moderate opinion and once this is done we shall be in a position to deal with the extremists.' 5

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1. B.342 (India Office Memo. by H.R.C. Dobbs on the proposals of the Bonham-Carter Committee).

2. S/S India to Political, Baghdad, 4 May 1920. (LP&S 10 4722/18/1920/3/3326).

3. Wilson, II, 248-49.

4. S/S India to Political, Baghdad, 5 May 1920. LP & S 10 4722/18/1920/3/3390.

5. Political, Baghdad, to S/S India 8 May 1920 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1920/3/3747).

The India Office sanctioned his request after a meeting of the Eastern Committee on 20 May [1] but this was purely a temporary respite; a few days earlier Shuckburgh and Hirtzel pointed out in a private telegram that the draft Mandate included a clause whereby the authorities were bound to submit a constitution for the League's approval within a year of the award of the Mandate.[2]

The situation grew more menacing as time passed, especially as Ramadhan fell between 19 May and 18 June. Early in June Wilson decided to hold a meeting with the 'mandubin' who had approached him in the hope of eliciting a promise of negotiations over what was to happen next, and a group of Baghdad notables who were thought to be pro-British. In the course of a prepared speech at the Sarai he referred to H.M. Government's never having deviated from either the Anglo-French Declaration or Article 22 of the League of Nations Charter. He pointed to the causes beyond his control which had combined to delay the establishment of civil government. Any threats to public order would be vigorously countered. He promised his audience a Council of State under an Arab President 'to hold office until the question of the final constitution of Iraq has been submitted to the Legislative Assembly which we propose to call' [3]

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1. S/S India to Political, Baghdad, 20 May 1920; LP&S 10 4722/18/1920/3/3839. Quoted Ireland P.W. p 214-15.

2. Hirtzel and Shuckburgh, Private to Wilson, Baghdad, 12 May 1920 (LP&S 10 4722/18/1920/3/3817.)

3. For an account of this meeting, which took place on 2 June 1920 see Wilson, II, pp 255-57.

The whole tenour of his speech was not calculated to appeal to any but the most enthusiastic advocates of British rule, and confirmed rather than allayed nationalist fears. A few days later Wilson received authority to announce Cox's impending return[1] but by now resentment had reached a point where it could no longer be contained by such palliatives. The Acting Civil Commissioner himself, in an outspoken telegram to London, recommended that Whitehall should make a swift and decisive choice between evacuation on one hand and firm British rule on the other.[2] At a meeting of the Eastern Committee Curzon commented that the news from Baghdad left him with 'an unpleasant impression of Colonel Wilson's incapacity to deal with the situation'[3] and within a few weeks widespread disorder had broken out on the Lower Euphrates.

The rising of 1920 has been extensively discussed and its causes variously attributed. The long delays in setting up some form of faintly representative government were of course a substantial source of dissatisfaction, and the sheer range and extent of the activities of the

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1. S/S India to Political, Baghdad 7 June 1920 (LP&S 10/4722/18/1920/5/4216)

2. Political, Baghdad to S/S India 9 June 1920 (LP&S 10/4722/18/1920/5/4935)

3. Eastern Committee, Meeting of 10 June 1920 (LP&S 10/940/19/1920/

civil and military authorities had become a growing irritant to many of those people whose concept of good government was no government at all.[1] The Sharifians combined briefly with rebellious tribesmen, Shia mujtahids and disgruntled ex-Ottoman officials to resist British rule and appressive taxation, with the hope, on the part of the Sharifians that they might succeed in establishing the kind of government that they ~~had been~~ were being forced to abandon at Damascus. Ignoring the warnings of Gertrude Bell and Arnold Wilson,[2] the G.O.C. stumped doggedly off to summer quarters at Karind. The unprepared state of the army, together with confused rumours of imminent evacuation, probably contributed to the revolt's inital impetus and its surprisingly long duration.

The revolt brought almost total anarchy to the countryside throughout the late summer and early autumn of 1920. Civil administration ceased to function outside the towns throughout most of July, August and September, and a successful outcome for British arms was by no means always a certainty.

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1. 'In my experience external influences and subversive propaganda seldom incite orientals of the lowest class, especially the peasantry, to extreme action, unless the ground is prepared by the existence of grievances, real or fancied.' Clayton, Cairo, to Foreign Office, 26 August 1920 quoted 'Atiyyah, G.R. Iraq, a Study in Political Consciousness 1908-1921 (Edinburgh Univ. Ph.D., 1968) p 527.

2.

Casualties on both sides were high [1] and punitive expeditions and displays of force continued well into 1921. One effect was to place the whole policy of the continued British occupation of Mesopotamia in jeopardy, especially when the extent of expenditure and commitment of manpower became more widely known. Politicians were faced with a dilemma, for although aware of the immense potential of Mesopotamian oil they could scarcely use it as an argument for the continued out-pouring of British 'blood and treasure' there. Such an explanation might have brought reliefs from press attacks [2] but would have occasioned howls of fury from Europe and America.

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1. Ireland, P.W. p 273: there were over 2,000 British casualties, missing, or prisoners, and 8,450 among the Iraqis.

2. These were severe and continued well into 1922. See The Times, 16 Aug 1920, 6 Nov. 1920: The Near East, 12 Aug 1920. See also T.E. Lawrence's letter to The Times of 22 July 1920:

> 'The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honour... The sins of commission are those of the British civil authorities in Mesopotamia ... who were given a free hand by London ... They availed themselves of the necessary discretion of war-time to carry over their dangerous independence in times of peace. They contested every suggestion of real self-government sent them from home. A recent proclamation about autonomy circulated with unction from Baghdad was drafted and published in a hurry to forestall a more liberal statement in preparation in London.'

The Times, Leader, 6 Sept. 1920:

> 'The principal cause of the rising in Mesopotamia is that after the Arabs had been firmly promised that they should control their own affairs under advisory guidance the British authorities proceeded to act as though we meant to take over the whole country lock, stock and barrel.'

By October the army had restored some semblance of order; Wilson had at last been replaced by Cox, and it was clear that some as yet unspecified method of choosing a ruler by consulting local opinion would be brought into play. However, until Whitehall definitely made up its mind to support the candidature of a son of the Sharif, Cox remained necessarily as much at a loss about H.M. Government's intentions as Wilson had been, though of course he was readier to understand the wisdom of speedy preliminaries.

We have already noticed how Wilson has been blamed for doing what Cox would never have done if he had been in Baghdad throughout, and it seems only just to try and correct the balance. [1] When Curzon asked Cox for advice on future Mesopotamian policy in November 1919, the latter agreed that things were not going well but could only produce the same arguments about the lack of suitably qualified Arabs to take part in the administration that he had put to the Eastern Committee in April 1918. [2] He also seriously doubted the practicability of applying the Anglo-French Declaration as it stood. Essentially Cox was a diplomat and not an administrator; Cox' unquestioned talents as a negotiator kept him in Teheran for 2½ years, and his very swift success in Iraq when presented

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1. Largely by Miss Bell, but c.f. also Longrigg S.H., Iraq 1900-1950, p 100.

2. See above p 13-15, and Curzon to Cox 14 Nov. 1919: Cox to Curzon 23 Nov. 1919(from Teheran) LP&S 10 4722/18/1919/3/7723, 7749.

with Faisal and a policy [1] only confirm his high abilities in this sphere. On the other hand Wilson's zeal and skill as an organiser had the grave consequence of causing him to exceed his political brief, though he does not always seem to have understood in what that brief consisted. Wilson's biographer admits his subject's faults but does not lay sufficient emphasis on this aspect. Cox was a poor administrator [2] and Wilson a useless negotiator, but whereas Cox' incompetence was a nuisance, Wilson's ineptitude was a disaster.

Thus in October 1920 a familiar situation recurred; all were waiting for the oracle to speak. Some far-reaching policy statement was expected and none could for the time being be given; the situation was of course eased by Cox' great prestige and the general sense, not

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1. c.f. 'For two years we in Mesopotamia waited for a decision as regards policy. Mr. Winston Churchill gave us one in as many months and Sir Percy Cox with the help of his staff has done in twelve months what I thought would take five years to accomplish (Sir Arnold Wilson, Address to Royal Central Asian Society, September 1921, J. R. C.A.S., 1921.

2. In the course of 1921, Hubert Young of the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office was instructed to pay a visit to Baghdad to assess the personnel and other needs of the Residency, and also to establish a closer link between the Residency and the Department. Referring to the desirability of appointing a senior officer to to act as 'civil secretary', or effectively as the High Commissioner's second in command, he said that 'Sir Percy Cox, with all his diplomatic and political ability, has no administrative experience'.
Minute of 17 July 1921.
This was endorsed by Shuckburgh:
'All my colleagues concur in the view that admirably as Sir Percy Cox is carrying out the policy of the H.M. Government in its wider aspects the regular administrative machinery in Baghdad is not working very smoothly in everyday affairs.' (29 July 1921: CO 730/3/37171).

unjustified, that his return was an augury of better things to come.[1]

He described his task as that of undertaking:

> '... a complete and necessarily rapid transformation of the facade of the existing administration from British to Arab, and, in the process a wholesale reduction in the numbers of British and British Indian personnel employed ... Whatever the primary feelings of many of my comrades may have been, indeed must have been, most of them gradually came round to the view that as an alternative to the bag and baggage policy the experiment was worth trying and not necessarily doomed to failure... 2

Within a fortnight of his arrival Cox had managed to persuade the elderly Naqib to head a Council of State and thus give a visible demonstration of his intention of setting up an Arab Government; most of those invited to sit on the Council did so, and on 11 November Cox proclaimed the Provisional Government as an established fact.[3] What Cox was unable to do was to announce any details about the future head of state, and this question understandably became the chief topic of concern over the coming months.

An acceptable ruler was of vital importance to H.M. Government in the light of changed attitudes in Whitehall. In the summer of 1920 Montagu had suggested that it would be advisable to reconsider the precise relationship that Britain was to have with Iraq, and whether in fact the Mandate as it stood would be the most suitable vehicle. As a result of this emerged the notion that a fairly cheap concession to nationalist

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1. Ireland, P.W., pp 277-78

2. Sir Percy Cox in Lady Bell, II pp 527-78.

3. This proclamation is reproduced in full in Ireland P.W., p 287.

sentiment would be to dispense with the form of the Mandate while retaining its substance, and to substitute a treaty for the Mandate relationship. With such a formula it followed that two parties were necessary for a treaty, and the future ruler of Iraq was to be the buttress on which the other side of the bridge would rest, as it was essential that some individual be empowered to act on behalf of the Mesopotamian people.

The events of the summer had served as additional warning of the likely result of any attempt to foist an unwanted ruler on the country. Even in January 1919 the India Office had opposed 'Abdullah's accompanying Cox to Baghdad on the grounds that such obvious British support would have been tantamount to forcing the Iraqis' hands and thus an easy target for international criticism.[1] So it was essential that whoever was chosen by Whitehall should at least not be widely opposed in Iraq. With this proviso, there were only three serious condidates: 'Abdullah, Saiyid Talib of Basra, and Faisal. The Naqib of Baghdad, although showing a certain amount of interest in the throne from time to time, was effectively debarred from seeking it both through his great age and through his close identification with Sunni orthodoxy. He was eventually persuaded to support Faisal's condidature, and served as Prime Minister until 1922.

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1. See pages 53-54.

After the Sharifian rout at Maysalun in July, 'Abdullah became a virtual political nonentity, a suitable recipient for the booby prize of Transjordan. Without Maysalun, 'Abdullah, as the older brother, might well have become King of Iraq in the same circumstances as Faisal. He was as acceptable to the Shia as his brother,[1] and seemingly also to the British, for in April 1920 Curzon had suggested inviting him to London. The proposal was firmly resisted by the India Office; Hirtzel commented wryly:

> '...the idea that we shall be any the wiser when we have seen 'Abdullah is disproved by experience. All that will happen (as in the case of Faisal) is that we shall be hoodwinked by his interpreter.' 2

Saiyid Talib was a rather more serious condidate. Gertrude Bell reported throughout the summer of 1920 that he was attempting to build up a moderate party and it is certain that he was largely responsible for the relative calm in Baghdad and the ease with which Cox was able to proceed towards the setting up of a Council of State. Also he was being financed from British funds, as were the other candidates; in his case Miss Bell defended this on the grounds that:

> 'He's bound to play a big part in the future and till that time comes we've got to try and keep him out of mischief.' 3

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1. Philby, H.St.J., p 428.
2. Note by Hirtzel, 19 April 1920 LP&S 10 4722/18/1920/6/3888
3. Burgoyne, E., Gertrude Bell to her Father 30 Aug. 1920, p 160

However, his close connection with local politics was at once an advantage and a disadvantage; as a Sunni Basrawi it is difficult to imagine him capable of mustering widespread support nationally, and his notoriety dating back to Turkish times did not stand him in good stead. It seems likely that his deportation in 1921 was arranged more to clear away an undesirable subordinate than to eliminate a potentially successful candidate for the throne. Bullard remarked early in 1921:

> 'Unless Saiyid Talib takes office under the Amir and gives proof of loyal service the High Commissioner will probably have to exile him. He is too capable, energetic and intriguing a character to be left at a loose end.' 1

Probably Britain still wanted a king who would be content 'to reign but not govern',[2] and Faisal seems to have been regarded in official circles as a suitably pliant instrument. Certainly when he began, almost at once, to behave in a most un-puppet-like fashion his insubordination appeared to the authorities at the time and Professor Kedourie some forty years later as a monstrous breach of faith and rank ingratitude.[3] But in spite of criticisms both before and after his installation, Faisal was the only possible choice, for very much the same reasons, ironically, as A.T. Wilson had put forward in November 1918;[4] Faisal belonged to a family which was by now well

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1. Minute by Bullard on Intelligence Report of 30 Dec. 1920 ; Minute dated 4 March 1921 CO 730/1/9829

2. See above , page 53.

3. E. Kedourie, "The Kingdom of Iraq, a Retrospect". in The Chatham House Version, pp 236-82.

4. See above , page 49.

known throughout the Arab world; his tolerance in matters of religion made him acceptable to most of the Shia, and he was justly famous as a nationalist leader.

Nevertheless, in spite of Faisal's desirability on grounds of personality, reliability for H.M. Government, and popularity with certain elements in Mesopotamia, some serious difficulties would have to be overcome. Cox' instructions of August 1920 [1] certainly implied that his candidature would be highly desirable, but it was not until Cairo, some eight months later, that the king makers were certain of success. The problem was to reconcile the various conflicting elements so that Faisal could be made acceptable to the nationalists, those who wanted close British control and of course to the French.

The original official suggestion was made, surprisingly by A.T. Wilson at the very end of July, 1920; in his memoirs he describes his conversion in slightly roseate terms, but also includes his own telegram of the time which indicates that he did consider the matter worth serious consideration. [2] French objections followed swiftly

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1. Laid before Cabinet, 5 Aug 1920. These included the appointment of Faisal as ruler; foreign affairs in the hands of the Mandatory Power, and the British representative in charge of the garrison. LP & S 10 5876/1920/20/5876.
2. cf Wilson II, pp 305-06:

   'The proposal was well received by Mr. Montagu who a few days earlier had welcomed me as a 'late convert to the idea of an Arab state.' The phrase was not wholly justified, for although I had made no secret of my doubts as to the success of indigenous governments adumbrated in the Anglo-French Declaration of 1918, I had from the very beginning expressed the belief that the Amir Faisal was more likely than any other candidate to preside successfully over the destinies of Iraq.'

on the publication of a rumour of Faisal's candidature published in Le Matin. The French ambassador pointed out to Curzon:

> '... si les deux puissances sont chacune maîtresse dans leur zone leur situation respective crée entre elles une solidarité évidente et cette solidarité serait mise à une rude épreuve par l'installation de l'Emir Faisal à Baghdad. Il est certain que l'Emir Faisal n'oubliera pas son règne ephemère de Damas et qu'il cherchera à renouer des intrigues dans cette dernière ville.' 1

but a formula was evolved soon afterwards which was to be produced with slight variations to meet this contingency in the future. Sir Eyre Crowe told the French ambassador:

> '...whether the natives of Mesopotamia demanded to have Faisal for their king or not Sir Eyre Crowe could not say, but it was obvious that if such a demand were put forward it would not be easy for the British government to turn a deaf ear to it.' 2

Faisal's own interest in securing the throne of Mesopotamia was unofficially conveyed quite quickly to the British authorities. In September 1920, Colonel Frank Balfour of the Mesopotamian Civil Administration, then on leave in London had a conversation with General Haddad, Faisal's advisor; he reported later that 'Faisal is definitely out for Iraq and would take it as more or less satisfying his undeniable grouse against us (over Syria)' 3 His acceptance was conditional on three

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1. M. Mitterand to Lord Curzon, 17 Aug. 1920; LP&S 10 5876/20/1920/6582.

2. Minute of a discussion between M. Mitterand and Sir Eyre Crowe, 24 Jan 1921; LP&S 10 5876/20/1921/603. FO 371, E 1090/4/91 of Churchill to Lloyd George (from Cairo) 14 Mar. 1921 "In response to enquiries of adherents of the Emir Faisal, the British Government have stated that they will place no obstacles in the way of his candidature as ruler of Iraq and that if he is chosen he will have our support." Do you think Lord Curzon has said enough to the French to justify our proceeding on this basis? FO 371/6350

3. Note of a conversation between Colonel Frank Balfour and General Haddad; September, 1920; Balfour papers, Sudan Archive, Durham

main factors; the agreement of his brother 'Abdullah, a promise of British support, and a reasonably clear definition of his functions. With assurances on these points, the way ahead would be reasonably clear.

As far as London was concerned no other candidate was ever very seriously considered, but it was difficult at this stage to see how best his candidature should be supported. We have already seen that Faisal would not by all accounts be widely opposed, but the fact still remained that without some indication of British approval it would be difficult to muster sufficient solid support for him. The British authorities were thus faced with the problem of exactly how much open encouragement they should give their candidate; either too much or too little could prove equally fatal.

In December/January 1920-21 Cox made his views clear to the India Office. He believed that a ruler should not be imposed but found that the people whom he consulted would welcome a lead from Britain. He felt that a procedure which insisted on the adoption and election of a candidate by the National Assembly (as yet unformed) would be too lengthy and uncertain to be permitted. Generally he urged that H.M. Government should come out clearly for Faisal as candidate:

> '... My belief and that of those of my staff on whose judgement I rely is that such an announcement of <u>fait accompli</u> would be a welcome relief to the majority of the people of Mesopotamia and that it would have the support of the moderate elements among the Nationalists while it would take the wind out of the sails of the young extremists who want to get rid of the Mandate altogether. After announcement of Faisal's candidature we

should soon learn whether public opinion in his favour was so general as to make it unnecessary to wait for elections or whether we should allow elections to take their course and allow Faisal to canvass for himself like others.' 1

Cornwallis and Young at the Foreign Office in London warmly approved these suggestions. It was agreed that French susceptibilities should be overriden and that Faisal should be made to promise explicitly neither to intrigue against the French nor to make any attempt to try to recover Damascus. At that stage, in January, before the possibility of Transjordan had appeared, Faisal felt unwilling to accept the offer of H.M. Government as it stood, unless 'Abdullah had either declined the offer or been rejected by both Britain and Mesopotamia; but he continued:

'I would only consent to go to Mesopotamia after I had been fully informed about the form of government which H.M. Government envisaged there, and after I had satisfied myself that it was being set up in the spirit which marked our earlier deliberations. I have little doubt that it will be so, but I could accept nothing blindly.' 2

Cornwallis returned much impressed from this interview, and it was decided by the Foreign Office that Cox' advice should be followed. The installation of 'Abdullah in Transjordan and the return of the Baghdadi officers to Iraq from Syria in the Spring of 1921 further increased Faisal's chances of success in Iraq.

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1. Tgm. 1488 to High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S India 2 Jan 1921 E 277/100/93 : FO 371/6349

2. Col. K. Cornwallis: report of an interview with the Amir Faisal, 7 Jan 1921 E 553/100/93 : FO 371/6349.

Sir Percy Cox' problems in Baghdad were not simply confined to the creation of circumstances favouring a suitable candidate for the Mesopotamian throne, or persuading unwilling Ministers to take up the portfolios that had been offered them. [1] In the late autumn of 1920 it was felt in some circles that there was considerable doubt as to whether Britain would stay in Mesopotamia at all, or whether British troops might not be withdrawn to Basra. This uncertainty, which was to persist to a greater or lesser extent until the final definition of the Northern Frontier in 1926, was particularly crucial at this early early stage. [2] British Press and Parliamentary disapproval of continued expenditure in Mesopotamia was not slow to reach Baghdad, especially the scheme of partial withdrawal to Basra. This proposal caused consternation, for in Miss Bell's words 'You can't withdraw to Basra and carry out the Mandate.' [3] The British Chamber of Commerce at Baghdad sent a pungent telegram of protest to the India Office:

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1. E.g. Lady Bell, Vol II, letters of 24 October, 1 November 1920 pp 568-70.

2. ...'the civil and military authorities are agreed that 'whereas withdrawal to line indicated might be possible two years' hence proposition is not a practical one for the present purpose.' Note by E.S. Montagu of 24 Dec. 1920. in E 318/100/93. FO 371/6349.

3. Burgoyne, E., Gertrude Bell to her Father, 18 Dec. 1920, p 191.

'...British forces by their occupation of Mesopotamia destroyed the only form of government that country had known for centuries... evacuation at the present time will leave it without any government worthy of the name. Thus the final result of British intervention in Mesopotamia would be its complete ruin, for which ultimate responsibility will rest with H.M. Government. The chamber fully realises the urgent need of lightening the burden of the British taxpayer and believes that this can be obtained with safety and honour along the lines at present contemplated and inaugurated by H.M. Government'. 1

Eventually a continued British presence was assured through the measures adopted at Cairo, and equally by the encouragement of a candidate for the throne who was thought to be likely to bring the greatest amount of stability to the country.

While the negotiations over Faisal were being conducted in London, an administrative change was taking place which was to have a profound and permanent significance for British Middle Eastern policy. This was the creation of a new Department within the Colonial Office to deal especially with the Middle Eastern mandated territories. The formation of the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office was a recognition that some new arrangement was necessary for running the affairs of the mandated territories, a function which the India Office could not best exercise and which the Foreign Office was by its nature not equipped to perform. The details of the formation of the Department have been described elsewhere; it was the outcome of a long process of discussion which had begun as long ago as 1917, but whose form in 1920-21 owed

1. High Commissioner, Mesopotamia to S/S India, Tgm. 15339 of 29 Dec 1920. E 172/100/93 : FO 371/6349

most to the initiative and drive of Churchill.[1] As Minister of War, anxious to cut down military spending as far as possible, he had mooted an economical scheme for controlling Mesopotamia through the use of the infant R.A.F.[2] In February 1921, Churchill had been transferred from the War Office to the Colonial Office, by which time the Masterton-Smith Committee had taken the necessary steps towards

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1. See Mejcher, H.M., 102 f., Klieman A.S., 88-92, Ireland P.W., 310-11. For earlier efforts at rationalisation, and for the antecedents of the department, v. :
   a) Lord Robert Cecil to E.S. Montagu, 5 Sept. 1918:

   'The kind of arrangement that I have in mind is to leave things formally as they are and to provide that all affairs of South Persia, Mesopotamia and Eastern Arabia, so far as they come to the India Office, should be dealt with by Shuckburgh and he should deal with them in accordance with the policy and subject to the directions of the Middle East Department of the Foreign Office. I do not pretend that this organisation will be very perfect but I believe it can be made to work.' (FO 800/207)

   b) India Office Memo. B. 328; Mesopotamia; Administrative Record under British Occupation, dated 20 Aug. 1919.

   'An informal committee (known as the Mesopotamian Administration Committee) was first appointed in March 1917 to deal with the problems arising out of the occupation of Baghdad. The functions of this Committee were subsequently enlarged and its name changed to 'Middle East Committee'. Later the whole position was regularised and the Committee was reconstituted by order of the War Cabinet, under the title of 'Eastern Committee'. The Eastern Committee was dissolved in January 1919 but its functions are to a great extent carried on by an Inter-Department Committee on Eastern Affairs, which meets from time to time at the Foreign Office. Lord Curzon has been the Chairman of all these Committees.' (Copy in Air 5/224).

2. For more details, se below, Chapter VII.

the creation of the new Department.[1] It contained men who were no strangers to the affairs of the area: Shuckburgh, of the India Office, headed the Department, which included amongst others Major Young from the Foreign Office, who had taken part in the Arab revolt and the Mesopotamia Campaign; R.W. Bullard, former Governor of Baghdad; Colonel Meinertzhagen, formerly Chief Political Officer, Palestine who was Military Adviser to the department, and, for a couple of years, at Churchill's special insistence T.E. Lawrence. This department was to be closely responsible for the day to day communication between London and Baghdad for the next eleven years.[2]

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1. The report is reproduced in full in CO 730/13/9209; c.f. High Commissioner to India Office, 8 Feb. 1921 Tgm 334 S.

   'Having found it necessary to discount promptly the harm which would otherwise be done by a heated article which has appeared in a local paper attacking the reported decision of Parliament to place Mesopotamia under the Colonial Office I have inspired para cited below...

   "It is understood that the present Ministry of the Colonies is under reconstruction in order to meet requirements and developments of the day. The greater British colonies having in this process of development become self-governing dominions, this department of state seems likely to become a Ministry for Self-Governing Dominions, and to have attached to it a special department for dealing with mandated territories. H.M. Government's reason for this arrangement is probably that the British Foreign Office is already overburdened and does not possess special experience and personnel necessary for guiding fortunes of a mandated state, and the India Office, now that the war is at an end, has no further connection with the administration of the mandate territories in question.'
   E 2066/100/93 : FO 371/6349.

2. 'My object with the Arabs was to make them stand on their own feet. The work I did constructively for M.S.C. in 1921 and 1922 seems to me in retrospect the best I ever did.'
   Lawrence T.E. Letters to his Biographers (Robert Graves and B.H. Liddell Hart) To Graves, 3 Aug. 1927 p 113

The most pressing task of the new department was to organise the Cairo Conference, a meeting of high British and Arab officials in the Middle East to discuss the future political financial and military arrangements for the mandated territories. The main object of the Conference, as described by Churchill [1] was to maintain firm British control as cheaply as possible. [2] For Iraq, the air scheme was adopted and the main lines of the Treaty which would be negotiated with the future Iraq government were laid down; Britain should control Iraq's foreign relations and have what amounted to a right of veto in military and financial matters. On the question of a ruler, it was felt vital that Britain should give a lead : as we have seen, Faisal's candidature was more or less a foregone conclusion some months before, but more formal approaches to Faisal, 'Abdullah, the Iraqis and the French were agreed upon. Discussion also took place on the subject of Kurdistan;

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1. Churchill, W.S., Mesopotamia and the New Government, Empire Review, July 1923, pp 691-98.

2. See FO 371/6343 for full text of Cairo Conference.

'The first consideration is the reduction of British military commitments in Mesopotamia. No local interest can be allowed to stand in the way of an immediate programme for reducing the British army of Occupation. Whatever may be the political status of the country under the Mandate it is out of the question that forces of anything like the present dimensions should be supported by the British taxpayer.' W.S. Churchill speech at Cairo.

on the apparently excessive cost of administering Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya, Major Young remarked somewhat naively that 'they would therefore be no loss to Mesopotamia.' [1]

Various other matters, including details of financial arrangements, the assets transferred by H.M. Government to the Mesopotamian Civil Administration, the refugee problem and the siting of bases were discussed, but the main objects were the reduction of military expenditure and the selection of a suitable ruler. It was thought likely that the turbulence in the country would soon subside after the establishment of a national government, and the R.A.F. commitment was planned on a reducing scale from the very beginning. The Colonial Office took overall co-ordinating responsibility for these arrangements, which meant that the Air Officer Commanding in Baghdad was subordinate to the High Commissioner, in the same way as the Air Ministry in London was directed in Iraqi affairs by the Colonial Office.

It was over a year before the political arrangements arrived at in Cairo were formalised by a Treaty between Britain and Iraq, and three more years before that Treaty was ratified by the Iraq Government. Even then several important matters were still under negotiation, either between the British and Iraq governments directly, or with other

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1. Meeting of the third Palestine and Mesopotamia Committee, 14 March 1921 FO 371/6343.

powers; final arrangements for the delineation of the frontier between Iraq and Turkey were not made until 1927. Thus Cairo was simply an expression by Britain of future military and financial commitments in the Middle East, the extent to which the Imperial burden would be lightened. It marked the beginning of a new kind of colonial policy, and formalised the end of the period of direct British rule in Iraq. The immediate reasons for the decisions taken are not hard to find; massive expenditure in Mesopotamia [1] could not be continued in the face of so many other more pressing demands on the British Treasury. It was becoming increasingly difficult to explain either in or out of Parliament how the spending of millions on the Tigris and Euphrates contributed to the building of homes fit for heroes.

For Iraq, perhaps the most important immediate achievement of the Cairo Conference was its removal of the main uncertainty which had plagued the country since before the Armistice, the question of whether the Anglo-Iraqi relationship would be a permanent one. We have already noticed Gertrude Bell realising in 1916 how difficult it was to expect support for a British regime if the Turks were

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1. In answer to a Parliamentary Question on 17 Feb. 1921, Sir A Williamson for the War Office replied that the monthly cost of the British Army in Mesopotamia was £2,300,000.
   E 2219/100/93; FO 371/6349.

eventually to return. And although the years between 1914 and 1920 had been highly profitable for those with money in the first place, and for a few more who had been in a position either to wield authority locally or to make fortunes out of the army of occupation and its ancillary services, it was an unsettling and trying time for many sections of the population who had had to endure billetting and the various other inconveniences of military rule, [1] on top of the difficulty of not knowing whether or not the British would eventually stay in Iraq. After Cairo the way ahead was a little clearer, and although the British authorities could and did threaten the Iraq Government with withdrawal to Basra or even beyond, it became increasingly unlikely that anything short of force majeure would bring this about.

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1. For billetting, see Political, Baghdad, to S/S India, 20 June 1920

'Much of the present unrest in Baghdad is traceable directly to the resentment felt by individuals and the public at large to the continued compulsory occupation of their private dwellings.'

LP & S 10 1913/20/1920/5938.

In August 1922 the Iraq Government were still complaining to the High Commissioner that they were being charged for military billets.

Despatch CO 562, High Commissioner to S/S Colonies 31 Aug. 1922. CO 730/24/45364.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE CAIRO CONFERENCE TO THE RATIFICATION OF THE ANGLO-IRAQ TREATY. APRIL 1921 - SEPTEMBER 1924

The three years which followed Cairo were filled with intense diplomatic activity in London and Baghdad. Signs of disharmony, and of considerable acrimony, appeared almost immediately, both Britain and Iraq accusing each other of making unacceptable demands and of breaking faith. The events of these years well illustrate the permanent problem facing Faisal and the Iraq Government; they were vitally bound to Britain for their very existence, yet in order to appear credible within Iraq they had to appear to oppose all attempts at British control. Thus, particularly in the early years, until, in fact, the end of the Mosul frontier dispute and the signature of the oil concession, British rule had to make itself felt. Later on, when these major issues had been settled, it was possible for the British to relax their control.

The immediate question now facing the British authorities was the somewhat comic opera matter of Faisal's 'election'. His adoption by Britain had effectively precluded the possibility of any other candidate being successful, but it was essential that public opinion in Iraq should be broadly in favour of him, and that he should be seen at least not to be widely opposed.[1] Two of the three local candidates would probably in any case have had little chance of success,

1. Kedourie, E., The Kingdom of Iraq, a Retrospect, in The Chatham House Version, pp 239-242

the Naqib being too old and the Shaikh of Muhammarah a Shia; the former was nudged into dropping his candidature[1] and the latter was directly advised not to stand by Sir Percy Cox. The third, Saiyid Talib, presented a real challenge, and he was eventually removed by

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1. The course of the Naqib's 'conversion' is interesting:

a). May 1921

'It would appear that the Naqib has in no way withdrawn his candidature to the Amirate but he is reported to have relaxed something of his determined opposition to the candidature of a son of the Sharif to the extent of saying that the country will do its best to follow the wishes of H.M. Government whatever they may be.'

Intelligence Report, 1 May 1922. CO 730/2/29462.

b). June 1921

'I learn that while disinclined to come further into open he (the Naqib) has been pursuing behind the scenes a strongly anti-Shairifian line and without doubt has been endeavouring to induce important tribal shaikhs to publish anti-Sharifian madhbatas...the drafts for which he has provided.'

High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, 9.vi.21 no.171 E 6831/100/93 : FO 371/6351.

c). August 1921

'When I saw that Faisal was fit to be King and knew that the great British Government favoured him I determined that I must avoid all talk and gossip by rising myself in the council and pronouncing him King.'

Report of a conversation with the Naqib; Burgoyne, E., pp 231, 6 August 1921.

the British authorities in circumstances that are still something of a mystery.[1] With his disappearance Faisal's success was even more of a foregone conclusion.[2]

Faisal's position in the period before his election was especially delicate, since he had the same time to appear to be both an Arab nationalist and to be conforming to the broad wishes of H.M. Government.

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1. Saiyid Talib's removal is said to have been occasioned by his threatening an armed uprising at a private dinner party, attended by, amongst others, a correspondent of the Daily Telegraph. The circumstances of his arrest are obscure, but it seems that he was detained after leaving a tea engagement with Lady Cox at the Residency.

   See Burgoyne, E., p.214, 17 April 1921, and Lt-Col Bovrill's account:- 'It was known to me that he was taking tea with Lady Cox and that he suggested the visit himself. I was for this reason very strongly opposed to his being apprehended on his return from the Residency..it was in my opinion certain to result in adverse criticism and that it might be .. represented ..as a breach of hospitality. 'Graves, P., pp 290-91.

2. Though a few days before Saiyid Talib's arrest, Percival Landon, the Daily Telegraph correspondent present at the dinner party where Talib is alleged to have threatened an uprising, wrote from Baghdad:

   > '..In accordance with our promise a National Assembly will shortly be elected and it seems improbable that an absolute majority of votes can be secured therein either by the Amir Faisal or the Naqib of Baghdad. The disinclination of Kurdistan and the mid-Euphrates region to serve under either seems as pronounced as ever..'

   Despatch from Baghdad, dated 14 April, in Daily Telegraph of 3 May E 5210/100/93.

Thus he could not be seen to arrive in Iraq at the express invitation of H.M. Government, but it should nevertheless be clear where they stood with regard to him. There was thus a good deal of movement and correspondence between Baghdad, Jidda and London after the High Commissioner's return from Cairo, although the timetable for Faisal's journey had been worked out there in considerable detail. In fact nearly two months (April 18 to June 12) elapsed between Cox' return to Baghdad and Faisal's departure from Jidda aboard a British mail vessel. To clarify matters Cox asked that an announcement of British intentions should be made in England[1]. Churchill agreed, and the announcement was made in the House of Commons on June 14. The text of an officially inspired Reuters communiqué was sent to Baghdad a few days earlier:

> 'In response to enquiries from adherents of the Emir Faisal the British Government have announced that they will place no obstacles in the way of his candidature[2] and that if he is chosen he will have their support.

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1. 'Receipt here of news of Faisal's conveyance to Iraq in a British Government vessel will make position here very difficult especially in absence of any public announcement from you since conference regarding Mesopotamia and it is of highest importance that action should be taken immediately to clear ground...'

   High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 171 9.vi.21 E 6831/100/93 : FO 371/6351.

2. Predictably, the announcement was soon followed by angry reactions in the French press, which was especially critical of the fact that Faisal's candidature was being announced while the League had decided to defer consideration of the 'A' and 'B' mandates. Hardinge reported current opinion in Paris that:

....continued on next page..

It is difficult to judge how popular Faisal actually was at this stage. Descriptions of his arrival and reception vary:[1] Cox' most frequent adjective to describe local feeling is 'cordial'.[2]

Note continued from previous page.

'Great Britain in Mesopotamia and Palestine and France in Syria have powers of occupation and administration which cannot permit the creation of a Kingdom of Iraq for the benefit of the Emir Faisal or of a principality of Transjordan for the benefit of Emir Abdulla.'

Hardinge, Paris to S/S Foreign Affairs, Despatch 1824, 19 June 1921 CO 730/9/32250.

Text of announcement contained in S/S Colonies to High Commissioner No 153 of 10 June 1921 : E 6831/100/93 : FO 371/6351.

1. 'It is rumoured in the bazaars that Faisal has arrived at Aden on route for Baghdad. This 'news' is regarded with disfavour as being an attempt on the part of the British Government to force the hand of the people of Iraq.'

Abstract of Police Intelligence, 7 May 1921.

2. '...it appeared ... from Basra that Faisal received a most cordial reception...
....little cordiality was shown at Karbala and Najaf...
At Hilla reception was however cordial...'

High Commissioner to S/S Colonies Telegram 250 of 1 July 1921. CO 730/3/33044.

'Mosul has sent a ... deputation ... promising him no less cordial a reception than he received here.'

High Commissioner to S/S Colonies Telegram 280 of 9 July 1921. CO 730/3/34418.

Large numbers of shaikhs appeared in Baghdad to welcome him, clearly stirred into this action by the knowledge that he was the candidate whom the British supported. After his speech to the shaikhs at Ramadi, 'Ali Sulaiman of Dulaim and Fahad Beg of 'Anaiza declared:

> 'We swear allegiance to you because you are acceptable to the British Government.'[1]

Miss Bell reports that Faisal seemed 'a little surprised', though it seems highly unlikely that any other consideration would have drawn the shaikhs' support. It is in fact difficult to point to any group beyond the educated urban Sunnis and the 'Baghdadi officers' who actively desired to place Faisal on the throne of Iraq.

By the time of the Amir's arrival in Iraq a new policy element had been introduced. Ireland's contention that the idea of replacing the Mandate by a Treaty dates from Cairo is not borne out by the sources he cites[2] ; it does not seem to have been until early June that Cox realised that the Mandate in its original state was unlikely to gain general acceptance. On June 4th he suggested that a statement should be made along the lines that since:

> '...the process of evolution towards national government is proceeding so much more expeditiously than had been formerly anticipated ... certain provisions of the draft mandate framed under conditions which existed a year ago were getting out of date and that in view of the fact that there was reason to hope ... that a permanent national Government would be established at a very early date, H.M. Government had decided to defer further consideration of terms of mandate until a new ruler had been installed and could be

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1. Lady Bell, p.615. c.f. Tgm 529 of 27 September 1921 in E 10985/369/93; FO 371/6359.
2. Ireland, P.W., p.338.

> consulted as to the precise form of compact between the two countries which would best serve the mutual interests of both.'[1]

Gertrude Bell wrote home at the same time:

> 'Sir Percy has urged that we should drop the Mandate altogether and go for a treaty with the Arab state when it is constituted. It would be a magnificent move, if we're bold enough to do it.'[2]

At this stage, and for a few months afterwards, it seems that Faisal genuinely believed that the substitution of a treaty for the Mandate implied an essentially different kind of relationship. The immediate task of the High Commissioner and his staff between June and August was to try to persuade Faisal, once accepted by popular acclamation, to consent to be crowned without this new relationship being accurately defined. The important thing was to ensure that Faisal was safely on the throne. Questions of his status, the position of both Kurdistan and Basra within or associated with Iraq, and the precise definition of Iraq's relationship to Britain would best be attended to after Faisal's accession and the formal creation of the Iraq state.[3]

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1. Sir Percy Cox to Mr. Winston Churchill, Telegram, Private and Personal, unnumbered, 4 June 1921. CO 730/2/27917
2. Burgoyne, E., p.218.
3. c.f. Churchill:

   'There is too much talk about 'mandates', 'mandatories' and things like that. All this obsolescent rigmarole is not worth telegraphing about. It is quite possible that in a year or two there will be no mandates and no League of Nations. Something quite different may have taken their place.
   Do let us get the practical salient points of the policy in our minds:

... continued on next page..

In order to facilitate this, the High Commissioner urged that the 'Iraqi people' should be consulted about the Council of Ministers' unanimous decision to nominate Faisal King of Iraq. Thus another referendum was held, producing a 96% majority in favour of Faisal, and on 23rd August he was crowned in Baghdad. The vagueness of all the parties about their relationships with each other at this stage augured uncomfortably for the future: Cox warned early in August that Faisal would expect to exercise royal perogatives as soon as he was crowned, and urged H.M. Government to give due consideration to the delicacy of the situation:

> '... at present nationalism in Iraq is a plant of disappointingly sensitive and tender material ... It is therefore necessary for us to bend every tendril to form and pattern a national state and that this may be accomplished I beg as regards mandate that hand of H.M. Government will bear very gently.'[1]

Note continued from previous page.

i) To get another large wave of troops out of the country and so reduce the expenditure to the British taxpayer.

ii) To get Faisal on the throne as quickly as possible.

iii) To make whatever arrangements are most likely to conduce to the above objects with regard to Basra (about which I have a perfectly open mind) and Kurdistan (about which the only principle is that we do not put Kurds under Arabs)."

Minute, 9 July 1921, on CO 730/3/33549.

1. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 376, 10 August 1921 CO 730/4/40185.

The advice was timely; Faisal nearly refused the throne because of H.M. Government's insistence, eventually withdrawn, that he should declare his formal subordination to the High Commissioner in his accession speech.

The problem was and long continued to be one of finding a formula acceptable to both sides. This was not achieved at once, and the fierce in-fighting of the next few years illustrates the difficulties encountered in arriving at a satisfactory settlement. Gradually, in the course of the 1920's, the British authorities realised that there were subtler and less openly offensive methods of exercising control than had originally been considered necessary. It was perfectly possible for the Iraq Government to exercise its authority in certain limited spheres without perpetual interference in matters of detail either from the British advisers or the High Commissioner, and it became increasingly clear that direct confrontation was more usefully avoided.

In 1921, this particular lesson had yet to be learnt. Cox, clearly under considerable pressure from London, pointed out that:

> '... the reservation of ultimate control to the High Commissioner must be carefully wrapped up for as you will remember suspicion of our motives and good faith is very near (the) surface and there are always elements anxious to raise it.' [1]

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1. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 379, 11 August 1921 CO 730/4/40742

The current difficulty was essentially a legal one. H.M. Government could only define Faisal's position in the Treaty, whose terms had yet to be negotiated. Until Faisal was on the throne, the negotiations could not begin, since there was as yet no party to contract on behalf of the Iraq State. For his part, Faisal was understandably reluctant to commit himself to a totally uncertain future, relying entirely on the good faith of H.M. Government.

The deadlock was temporarily broken by both sides agreeing to climb down to enable the coronation to take place. Faisal withdrew his insistence on obtaining full clarification of his powers beforehand, and the Colonial Office withdrew their insistence that he should announce his suboridination to Britain in his accession speech. Faisal pointed out that the practical limitations of his own position provided a more ample security to Britain than any formal undertakings:

> 'His attitude is practically this. He says "Apart from my personal ideas in direction of Arab nationality I am an instrument of British policy. H.M. Government and I are in the same boat and must sink or swim together. Were instrument to fail and in consequence they left Iraq, I should have to leave too. Having, so as to speak, chosen me, you must treat me as one of yourselves, and I must be trusted as H.M. Government trust you... I undertake to be guided by your advice in all important matters and the mere fact of your presence here and that of Advisors should be sufficient guarantee to those whom it may concern of preservation of your interests".[1]

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1. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 397, 17 August 1921 CO 730/4/41616

Generally Cox appears to have been sympathetic to Faisal, though he pointed out that as a member of the League of Nations H.M. Government were not entirely free to do as they wished, and that the mandate relationship had to be retained in some form or other for that reason. Eventually, it was decided that the League would be informed that Britain intended to carry out her obligations under the mandate by means of a Treaty with Faisal under suitable guarantees,[1] and Faisal was asked to sign a document promising that, until the actual signature of the Treaty, he would undertake to safeguard Britain's international obligations towards Iraq, her obligations under the terms of the Mandate and her previous and current financial commitments in Iraq. Additionally Cox was asked not to raise the matter with Faisal again until H.M. Government had communicated the matter to the League.[2] Meanwhile the British Representative at Geneva should inform his colleagues that:-

> '... while King Faisal is clearly ready and willing to include in his treaty with H.M. Government all proper provisions to ensure that the Government of Mesopotamia shall be carried on in strict conformity with the spirit of the Covenant of the League of Nations, it is in the opinion of H.M. Government undesirable that the treaty should appear to subvert that independence which was already provisionally recognised before there was a national government in the country.'[3]

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1. a) to High Commissioner Telegram 427, 26 August 1921. CO 730/4/41616.
   b) High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 427, 26 August 1921. CO 730/4/42913
2. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Telegram 364, 2 September 1921 E 10046/100/93 :: FO 371/6353
3. Colonial Office to Cabinet Office, 29 August 1921. Letter 43326 in E 9854/100/93 : FO 371/6352.

Unfortunately for the future harmony of Anglo-Iraqi relations, such harmonious development did not take place.

Owing to the non-ratification of the Treaty of Sevres and the greatly changed circumstances produced by the Turkish nationalist movement, the League was forced to postpone its consideration of the 'A' Mandates. It was however decided in London that the High Commissioner in Baghdad should be instructed to go ahead with the negotiations for the Treaty. In October and early November 1921 negotiations on a variety of subjects were proceeding smoothly; Young, who had been deputed by the Colonial Office to help Cox conduct business in Baghdad, wrote home on 23rd October:

> '...We do not intend to let ourselves be unduly bound by any provision which is included in the draft mandate if we are satisfied that it would really cause trouble if we insisted on Faisal agreeing to it... In spite of the fact that we have presented what we call the final draft of the Mandate to the Council of the League of Nations it is not too late, if it proves absolutely necessary, to suggest further alterations.'[1]

In the light of the evident cordiality of these discussions, and Cox' general inclination to side with Faisal's less extreme suggestions, Fisher's announcement to the League of Britain's intentions towards Iraq came as a considerable shock. Cox seems to have been as unprepared for it as Faisal;[2] on 20th November he suggested that either the Mandate should be disregarded entirely or H.M. Government should so arrange

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1. Young to Shuckburgh, 23 October 1921. CO 730/16/55863.

2. 'Seeing it on his return from tour Faisal is somewhat surprised and upset at this sudden pronouncement without warning just at time when he was making arrangements prompted by hope that mandate as at present might disappear.'
High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 729, 29 September 1921

things as to eliminate the more irritating features of the League's requirements. Faisal, Cox felt, could well be spared the necessity of accepting an undertaking not to discriminate against the French. Cox favoured a 'normal treaty relationship unhampered by the Mandate'[1], seemingly unaware that Fisher had stated three days earlier at Geneva:

> 'It will be understood that the proposed treaty will serve merely to regulate the relations between H.M. Government, as Mandatory power, and the Arab Government of Iraq. It is not intended as a substitute for the mandate, which will remain the operative document defining the obligations undertaken by H.M. Government on behalf of the League of Nations.' 2

Gertrude Bell wrote home early in December:

> 'The word Mandate produces much the same effect here as the word Protectorate did in Egypt. Fisher's declaration to the League...has raised a minor hurricane. Even Faisal was taken aback -- the Mandate, he understood, was to be dropped and here it was reappearing in another form.' 3

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1. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 699, 20 November 1921. E 12960/100/93 :: FO 371/6354.

2. Official Journal, League of Nations, No 10-12 (1921) p.1217 Quoted Ireland, P.W., p.340.

3. To her Father, 4 December 1921. Burgoyne, E., p 253.

The Geneva declaration marked the end of the period of general agreement, and was broadly responsible for the delays before Faisal's signature of the Treaty. The King became deeply suspicious of the true nature of British intentions and saw the military threat from Turkey and later from Najd as part of an Allied master-plan to terrify him into submission. His already considerable suspicions of France's intentions had been reinforced by the Franklin-Bouillon agreement between France and Turkey of October 1921, which seemed to him to be an invitation to the Turks to attack Northern Kurdistan. His sensitivity on these and other issues drew sharp rebukes from the Colonial Secretary:

> 'I have come to the conclusion that Faisal is rather too prone to raise difficult constitutional and foreign questions... In a few years all these points will doubtless be settled, but meanwhile why instead of fretting and fussing cannot he live quietly and do his ordinary practical work as a ruler... the enormous cost and burden Iraq has been and still is to us is the important point for him to notice...'
>
> 'All the time he takes our money he will have to take our directions. In my opinion you ought to cool him off with considerations of this kind expressed in your own admirable manner. As regards the French, we will deal with them from here. Above all do not let him work himself up against them.'[1]

Faisal had in fact made his own position clear at an interview with Young towards the end of October. He said that he had explained to T.E. Lawrence in Cairo that 'he would not accept the terms of the

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1. Private and Personal, Mr. Churchill to Sir Percy Cox, 29 November 1921. Although Churchill was anxious that Cox should keep reminding Faisal of his client status, it should be pointed out that most of the expenditure incurred in Iraq at this time was directed towards

...continued on next page....

document which we (H.M. Government) have submitted to the League of Nations,'[1] but he was prepared to accept the Mandate as it stood for a limited period, during which time both parties would busy themselves with the preparation of the Treaty. As we have seen, Young also believed that the terms could be modified,[2] but the Geneva announcement appeared to make this impossible. All hope that the Treaty would be easily and smoothly concluded was now lost.

Note continued from previous page..

financing the army of occupation, paying for the railways and paying for the salaries of British officials. Further, most of the debts incurred by the Iraq Government at this stage resulted either from British control of Government expenditure, or from the handing over to Iraq of surplus British military equipment or public works installations supplied or constructed for the needs of the army of occupation. These, the so-called 'Transferred Assets' produced an immediate deficit of 95 lakhs on the Iraq Government account.

1. The facts seem to be as follows:

1) Allenby to Curzon (Lawrence to Churchill) from Cairo 15 April 1921 re Lawrence's interview with Faisal:

'He will accept mandate condition if he is allowed in his first public statement in Iraq to add qualifying clause accepted by H.M.Government by which modifications in mandate may be made, after ratification of Organic Law by negotiation between duly constituted Government of Mesopotamia and British Government.'

E 4509/100/93 :: FO 371/6350

2) Churchill to Lawrence (London to Cairo) 19 April 1921

'Faisal may be assured by you that in his first public statement in Iraq he may be allowed to say that H.M. Government agreed that after ratification of the Organic Law modifications may be made between duly constituted Government of Mesopotamia and H.M. Government.'

E 4700/4531/93 :: FO 371/6365

2. See page 101 note 1.

Both Faisal and the Naqib proved obdurate towards British demands, so much so that Mejcher has good grounds for believing that it was only Faisal's providential appendicitis in the summer of 1922 that saved the Iraqi monarchy from early extinction.[1]

It was not the Colonial Office which acted as prime mover in the decision not to modify the Treaty in a way which would have been acceptable to Faisal and the Iraq Government. The Foreign Office, always concerned not to annoy the French, seem to have been most responsible for Fisher's stand at Geneva. Lindsay wrote in January 1922:

> '...our policy in Iraq is in strong contrast to the French policy in Syria and must be causing heart-burnings in Paris. To go to Geneva and ask that the draft mandate for Iraq be modified in such a manner as to accentuate further the divergence between French and English Arab policy is I submit impossible.'[2]

In a similar vein the Foreign Secretary in Cabinet a few weeks later referred to the dangers of allowing the different treatment of Syria by France and Iraq by Britain to become over-emphasised. For this reason he also felt unable to accede to Iraqi requests for diplomatic representation abroad.[3]

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1. Mejcher, H., The Birth of the Mandate Idea... p.294.
2. Minute by R.C. Lindsay on E 1032/33/93, 30 January 1922, FO 371/7770
3. E 2103/33/93 Cabinet 12(22)

The profound effect of this rift on Anglo-Iraqi relations can hardly be overestimated. Typical of many similar requests was a telegram from Cox of December 1921:

> 'Both Faisal and the Naqib press for insertion of some words demonstrating that hated mandate as understood is at an end. I have already explained Faisal's reasons.'

Young too took up the cudgels on Faisal's behalf:

> 'Difficulties in the way of conclusion of satisfactory arrangements about British staff, Kurdistan, military policy and financial arrangements will be greatly reduced by conclusion of main treaty on lines desired by Faisal.'[1]

A month or so later, back in England at a meeting of the Cabinet's Middle Eastern Committee, he stated that:

> '...the object of both sides in all the discussions at Baghdad had been to arrive at a treaty that would justify Faisal in the eyes of his own people while preserving the necessary position of H.M. Government vis a vis the League of Nations.'

He suggested that if necessary H.M. Government's relations with Faisal could be regulated by secret letters, but was told that such agreements could no longer have any validity.[2]

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1. a) High Commissioner to S/S Colonies Telegram 815 20 December 1921. CO 730/8/63366.

   b) High Commissioner (for Major Young) Telegram 817 21 December 1921. CO 730/8/63225.

2. Middle East Committee, 6th Minutes, 27 January 1922. E 1461/33/93 FO 371/7770

The refusal of Britain to consider modifications in the Mandate at this time, largely for fear of wounding French susceptibilities, but probably also not to risk weakening the British position in Iraq while things were still uncertain, had far reaching effects on the determination of the eventual form taken by the Iraq Government. This was due to the ambiguity of Faisal's status and his lack of a real power base within the country, together with his natural disinclination to accept these particular terms. He was forced by circumstances into the position of having to resist British demands as far as possible: not to do so would have lost him what credibility he had in the eyes of the Iraqis. Professor Kedourie's polemic is particularly accurate here:

> '...British protection and support made it all the more necessary for Faisal to cultivate anti-British sentiment... Here then was Faisal's dilemma: he could not dispense with British military support, since he was a foreigner who had neither position nor following in the country, and to create this position and this following he had to oppose his benefactors, the British...'[1]

Between December 1921 and August 1922, detailed discussions on the Anglo-Iraq Treaty took place. There was to be a main treaty defining the shape of Anglo-Iraqi relations, and subsidiary agreements dealing with military and financial matters and the numbers and duties

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1. Kedourie, E., The Kingdom of Iraq... pp 242-43

of the British officials to be employed by the Iraq Government. The Treaty itself was to last for twenty years. The negotiations took place against a background of mounting opposition and unrest, coupled with Turkish raids across the Northern frontier and Turksih aid and encouragement for the Kurds. Over these months British irritation at Faisal grew, as he himself was driven from one subterfuge to another, either associating himself openly with avowed opponents of the Treaty or making clumsy approaches to the Shiak leadership of the Holy Cities. In the end, in August, a major crisis was only averted by the deus ex machina of Faisal's illness, which enabled Cox to take full power into his own hands until the King was well enough to sign the Treaty. It was a particularly anxious time, and those on the spot drew parallels between that summer and the circumstances of the rising two years before.

The contents of the treaty have been carefully analysed by Ireland.[1] It covered such matters as British representation of Iraq in foreign countries, the number and duties of British officials, British supervision of the judicial system, the adoption of the principle of the Open Door, implying economic equality for all foreign states including the U.S.A. and payment for the public works constructed during the period of military occupation. The real stumbling block, however lay in the underwriting of the Treaty for Iraq by H.M. Government, the gurantees required to ensure that

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1. Ireland, P. W. pp. 351-60

it would be carried out. It was on this provision, and the details of the separate agreements, that the Treaty almost foundered.

By February 1922 Cox was beginning to feel the strain of his negotiating position in Baghdad. He believed that the best policy was simply to go ahead and make an agreement which Faisal would be content to associate himself with, in such a way that neither he nor H.M. Government would lose face:

> 'Considering the impossibility of adopting any costly policy in Iraq it seems in view of attitude (of) British Taxpayer more prudent to secure goodwill of Iraqis by giving them what they want than to adopt policy which will probably have contrary effect.'

Churchill explained that it was now too late to abrogate the mandate, and continued in a particularly revealing reply:

> 'All legal claim to special position in Iraq on which whole policy of Treaty depends would be forfeited by Great Britain if mandate were abandoned.'[1]

Various expedients were advanced; Churchill suggested sending Lawrence to Baghdad to try to reason with Faisal; Cox demurred, but offered to come to London either by himself or with the King.

Early in April, reports of a forthcoming conference at Karbala' appeared in the weekly police intelligence summaries, and later in the month both the Persian and Arab Shia 'ulama' met there to protest against the Mandate. Faisal seems to have been connected with these meetings, though rather obscurely: he probably hoped

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1. a) High Commissioner to S/S Colonies Telegram 163, 27 February 1922. CO 730/20/10151.

   b) S/S Colonies to High Commissioner Telegram 182, 16 March 1922 CO 730/20/10405.

to be able to gather convincing evidence of the country's hostility towards the Treaty. Most of the 'ulama did declare themselves opposed to the Treaty[1] though not quite so trenchantly on this occasion as in the course of the following autumn. Though the meetings did not give Faisal quite the support for which he had hoped, they marked the beginning of a period of fairly close contact between the court and the 'ulama lasting until their exile to Persia the following summer.

The constant procrastination over the Treaty, due to persistent nationalist agitation which gained strength with the passage of time, was the cause of deep frustration and exasperation in Whitehall. In the course of angry exchanges a ploy which was to become very familiar over the years ahead was used for the first time; the threat either to withdraw the British presence to Basra or to evacuate the country altogether, if British demands were not complied with. Churchill warned wryly:

> 'Faisal should be under no delusions in this matter. He will be a long time looking for a third throne'. [2]

Every attempt was made to 'explain' the benevolent nature of the Mandate, but officially inspired newspaper articles and announcements had little

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1. Abstracts of Police Intelligence, April 1,8,15, May 27, June 10, 1922.
2. Minute by Churchill, April 1922, CO730/21/18047.

effect upon public opinion. Wholehearted support for the Treaty as it stood was confined to a very few groups within the country. These were, broadly speaking, those tribal leaders whom the British had either supported or elevated in the past, or who had remained on the British side in the 1920 insurrection and who found themselves victimised for their pains by officials of the Iraq Government: the urban notables of Basra who saw the British connection as the best security to safeguard their interests, and the great majority of the Christian and Jewish population who trusted to Britain's continued presence in Iraq for their own protection.

By the summer of 1922 the failure to come to any agreement had produced one of the frequent crises of the Mandate period. In the Spring the raids from Najd had begun, and the King and Cabinet wished to allocate considerable sums to defend the country against this threat. The uncertainty of the intentions of both H.M. Government and the Iraq Government are reflected in a letter from the Minister of Finance, Sasun Hasqayl, threatening resignation over this issue. It is particularly indicative of the prevailing confusions, since this respected and distinguished individual was staunchly pro-British:

> 'In a good cause it may be justifiable to spend beyond one's means, but the man who has to bear the odium of laying this burden upon the community, either present or future, must be in a position to know whether the end justifies the means. I am not at present in that

> position. I do not know what danger has to be guarded against, or to what extent the British Government accept liability for the defence of the country.'[1]

Sasun was eventually persuaded not to resign, but the Shia Minister of Commerce, Ja'far abu'l-Timman, did do so, and it took constant cajoling on the part of Sir Percy Cox and Miss Bell to keep even the Naqib's hands on the reins of office. In the summer there were rumours that the most influential mujtahid of Kadhimain, Shaikh Mahdi al-Khalisi, had issued a fatwa against the treaty, which would have resulted in solid opposition from all the leading Shia; the Euphrates leader 'Abd al-Wahid Sikar had already persuaded most of his neighbours to refuse the Mandate, and an anti-Treaty fatwa would have had serious repercussions. The rumours were not at this stage substantiated, but they foreshadow the major campaign by the 'ulama against the elections which took place in the following year.

Throughout May June and July 1922 protests against the Treaty continued. There was an important meeting between the Shamiya Shaikhs and the Najaf 'ulama in August, at which Faisal's Shia go-between Saiyid Baqir ibn Saiyid Ahmad Baqir al-'Ain announced that the king did not want the mandate either, and was working for its abolition and there were other meetings, public and private, in Baghdad where the leaders were Shaikh Muhammad al-Baqir al-Hilli, Ja'far abu'l-Timman and Hamdi Pachachi[2].Cox telegraphed that Faisal was untrustworthy, that

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1. Sasun Effendi to Sir Percy Cox, 8 April 1922. Delhi, BHCP, File 23/14/1. Resignation of Sasun Effendi.

2. Abstracts of Police Intelligence, June to August 1922.

he was ' crooked and insincere '[1] and noted also that the delays were having the effect of bringing most Government business to a standstill.[2] Events finally came to a head on August 23rd, when Cox was publicly jeered by a crowd at the Palace on his way to offer his congratulations to Faisal at the end of his first year in office. Cox asked for, and received, an immediate apology; Faisal fell miraculously ill with appendicitis the next day, and Cox assumed full powers, packed the nationalist leaders off to Henjam, and saw to it that the Treaty would eventually be accepted. After formally submitting his resignation, and then calling together a new Cabinet, the Naqib was finally persuaded to put his signature to the document on October 10th, shortly before the fall of Lloyd George's coalition Government in England.

The signature of the Treaty by the Naqib, as Faisal's plenipotentiary, might have been the end of the matter, but this was by no means the case : the Cabinet had felt able to accept the Treaty only on condition that it was ratified subsequently by the Consituent Assembly. This body, whose task was also to pass the Iraq Constitution, or Organic Law, had yet to be elected, and although the Treaty is dated October 1922 it was not ratified until June 1924. During this interval

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1. Sir Percy Cox to Mr. Churchill, Private and Personal 29 July 1922 CO 730/22/37397.

2. Report of the Iraq Economy Committee, Baghdad 17 August 1922 CO 730/23/43331

of nearly two years several events occurred both inside and outside Iraq which greatly changed the position and aims of the two High Contracting Parties to the Treaty. The fall of Lloyd George's cabinet, occasioned by the threat of an outbreak of war with Turkey has already been mentioned; this was shortly followed by the Lausanne conference at which Britain failed immediately to secure Mosul for Iraq, increased Turkish pressure on the Northern frontier, and the continuing anti-British and anti-Treaty agitation within Iraq, taking the form of an attempted boycott of the elections to the Constituent Assembly, and then of a campaign of resistance to the Treaty within the Chamber itself.

In England, during the early months of the Bonar Law ministry, the possible final evacuation of Iraq was quite seriously considered, and a Cabinet committee was formed specifically to discuss policy in Iraq. It was thought that aid to Iraq to resist Turkish pressures might well bring about a fresh outbreak of Anglo-Turkish hostilities for which there would be no public support in England. Throughout November and December 1922 possible cession of Mosul to Turkey was seriously contemplated in both London and Baghdad. Success in Western Asia Minor had made Turkish strength seem more of a menace than it actually was; the threat to the frontier in the North of Iraq was thought to be a very real one. Defeat of Britain by Turkish arms was unthinkable, but withdrawal still remained a possibility.

The British Government, doubting its own ability to hold Mosul, was hampered by its inability to state clearly why it should be so

concerned to do so, and a fierce newspaper 'Quit Mesopotamia' campaign was soon raging. The Cabinet were particularly anxious about Curzon's role at the Lausanne conference, and feared that the negotiations might break down over Mosul:

> 'The Prime Minister and the Cabinet, being sensitive on oil questions, were terrified lest Curzon, by taking a strong line on this matter might place them in a disagreeable position...He (Bonar Law) feared that Turkey might manoeuvre us into a rupture upon this question of Mosul. "This", he wrote, "would be the most unfortunate thing that could happen, since... half our people and the whole of the world would say that we had refused peace for the sake of the oil...If I made up my mind that we were free to leave I would certainly not be responsible for continuing to hold the mandate."'[1]

In the end Curzon succeeded in shelving rather than solving the frontier problem, by putting the matter in the hands of the League. This delay meant that the disturbances in Kurdistan continued to vex the Iraq Government, give employment to the Royal Air Force and to cause the putting down of a string of embarassing Parliamentary Questions.[2]

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1. Nicolson, H.N., Curzon, the Last Phase, pp 330-31
   and c.f. Curzon to Lady Curzon, 1 Jan 1923:
   'I found Bonar longing to clear out of Mosul, the straits and Constantinople, willing to give up anything and everything rather than have a row: astonished at the responsibility I have assumed at Lausanne and prepared for me to back down everywhere.'
   Lord Ronaldshay, Life of Lord Curzon, vol III p 332.
   See also Chapter III,
2. Question on the costs of the Mesopotamian Garrison, 20 February 1923.
   Question on Treasury payments to the Arab forces in Mesopotamia, 27 February 1923

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Early in 1923 Cox was summoned to England to appear before the Cabinet's special Iraq Committee. He was presented with a long questionnaire which he answered at a meeting of the Committee early in February; his replies seem to have been acceptable to most of his audience. Generally, he considered, British policy was popular in Iraq, except in Baghdad and the Holy Cities. He did not recommend a plebiscite for Mosul, and thought that a satisfactory peace with Turkey would solve the whole problem. He stated frankly that the Iraq Government could not collect taxes without the active support of H.M. Government and the R.A.F. Britain's interests in Iraq he listed as the oil of the Transferred Territories[1] and the potential of the oilfields of Mosul. Also,:

> '...if we evacuate we seem to wreck the British Empire Air route scheme. Moreover as the Chief of Air Staff has recorded, the terrain of Iraq forms an ideal training ground and experimental sphere for the R.A.F. and its strategical value will increase from year to year.'

Finally, the High Commissioner felt, it would be especially wrong for Great Britain to violate her pledges to the people of Basra: Britain should under no circumstances evacuate Iraq completely, but if forced to withdraw should not go farther than Basra.

Note continued from previous page

Question on number of bombing expeditions against Arabs in Iraq ('this Hunnish and barbarous method of warfare against unarmed people') 12 April 1923

CO 730/51/8179,9523,16039.

1. The territories transferred by Persia to the Ottoman Empire as a result of the boundary commission of 1913.

Generally:

> 'I confess that I can see no ground for clearing out of Iraq which is not altogether outweighedd by the disastrous possibilities of doing so or the material advantages of remaining.'[1]

The change of policy which resulted from this and other meetings was a Protocol reducing the operative period of the 1922 Treaty from twenty years to four years after the date of the signature of peace with Turkey. This move was designed to limit British commitments of manpower and money and must be seen as response to the 'Quit Mesopotamia' campaign. Earlier in March, H.M. Government had stated their general intentions towards Iraq in a statement to the House of Commons which was also designed to allay fears in Iraq:

> 'The Under Secretary of State for the Colonies... stated that after victories in Great War we were not going out of Iraq at point of Turkish bayonet. Pending conclusion of peace with Turkey we were pledged in honour not only to Allies but under international obligations not to be driven by armed forces out of (the) country. Further we were committed to policy of setting up Arab national state in Iraq and were bound in honour to endeavour to carry that policy through and do our best for the Iraq state.'[2]

The statement had come as a response to a plea from Dobbs for some initiative from London to ease the situation in Baghdad, where the business of the Iraq Government was gradually becoming paralysed

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1. Cabinet, Committee on Iraq, I.R.Q. 30. 5 February 1923

2. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner Telegram 116 of 3 March 1923 CO 730/46/11818

as a result of the failure to come to conclusive agreement at Lausanne. The situation had been further complicated by Ismet's offer of independence to the Arabs under the leadership of Sharif Husain,[1] which had had a natural appeal among the less realistic elements in Baghdad for some weeks. However, it was some time before H.M. Government were able to commit themselves more definitely; it is probable that the reoccupation of Rawanduz by British troops on 20 April and the decision to adopt a 'forward policy' in Kurdistan had something to do with the timing of the announcement of the Protocol, which appeared simultaneously in

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1. 'Ismet's message containing Turkish offer of independence to Arabs was received here ... but at the request of Faisal publication has been withheld. Faisal has now received telegram from Husain stating that he has telegraphed Ministry of Foreign Affairs Angora expressing satisfaction with Turkish intentions towards Arabs which he accepts without reserve. Faisal is... telegraphing Husain saying that as Mosul is essential to Iraq Turks will if their offer is genuine naturally give up their claim to it. He also warns Husain to be on his guard against Turkish double dealing as evidenced in the past. I understand that King Faisal also intends to suggest that a phrase in Ismet's message alluding to the Arabs as forming half of the Turkish Empire is a trap and that it may well imply that their offer of independence is subject to retaining Turkish suzerainty. Air Officer Commanding and I fear that the Turkish offer may cause a revulsion of feeling amongst the Arabs here when it becomes known and that they might think that they can dispense with British supports...'

   High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 114 of 14 Feb 1923. CO 730/38/8324.

in London and Baghdad on 30 April and was the subject of a Commons statement on 3 May.[1]

The general effect of the Protocol on Anglo-Iraqi relations was mixed, but it certainly did not result in an immediate clearing of the atmosphere. The Iraq Government's chief concern was to discover how far Britain would be prepared to assist Iraq against the Turks and the Ikhwan of Najd: would Britain continue to support Iraq's claim to Mosul under any circumstances, and how much help would Britain give? The real question was how much Iraq could afford to spend on her own defence and whether Britain was prepared to bridge the gap between that and actual requirements. The Protocol was welcomed by the nationalists, in that it placed a limit of sorts on the length of the British connection, but by this time the Iraq Government had become more aware of the necessity of British aid against Turkey and were alarmed at a possible limitation of this help. However, the saving clause of the Protocol did not pass unnoticed:

> '...Nothing in this Protocol shall prevent a fresh agreement from being concluded with a view to regulating subsequent relations before the expiration (of the four years)...'

If either the Colonial Office or the High Commission had imagined that the new arrangement would facilitate the ratification

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1. For the text of the Protocol, see Ireland, P.W., pp 470-71. Cox was concerned about the effect that the announcement of the Protocol might have on the Turks, suggesting that there was a danger that they might abate their claim for the time being and raise it again in four years' time. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 230 of 13 April 1923 CO 730/39/18816.

of the Treaty they were to be disappointed. Preparations for the elections to the Constituent Assembly, in any case a slow and cumbersome business, were held up by events in Turkey and Kurdistan[1] and by the fatwas issued by the Shia mujtahids from November 1922 onwards. These delays gave time for the opponents of the Treaty to marshall their forces again, with the result that the final ratification was very much in the balance. The small overall effect of the Protocol probably derived from a feeling in Iraq that any modifications in the British connection would probably make little difference after the network of British control and supervision had been established.

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1. The Colonial Office had apparently imagined that the elections would have to be delayed until the frontier question was settled. However Dobbs was informed on 7 June 1923:

> 'We have no desire to place obstacles in the way if you and the Iraq Government are satisfied that elections can now be held with real prospect of success. We shall on the contrary be glad to see Constituent Assembly formed as soon as possible. Following is one point to bear in mind, i.e. that case of Iraq Government in event of Mosul boundary question being referred hereafter to arbitration may be to some extent weakened by Kurdish vote against participation in elections...'

S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Telegram 261 of 7 June 1923. CO 730/48/28506.

It is difficult to specify whether the discontented Shia 'ulama of the Holy Cities were more deeply opposed to the Sunni Government of King Faisal and his followers, or to the power of Britain behind the throne. At the time of the Karbala' meetings in April 1922 Faisal seems to have contemplated seriously some sort of alliance between himself and the Shia hierarchy against Britain; even after their 'expulsion' from Iraq in the summer of 1923 he began almost immediately secret negotiations with them over the terms under which they would be permitted to return. But while the tone of the Karbala' conference was 'pro-Faisal and anti-Treaty' the hierarchy's most powerful supporters, the dissident Euphrates shaikhs led by 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar, were almost equally hostile to the monarchy and the Baghdad politicians. This party presented a more substantial threat and was thus especially to be feared.

By November 1922 the rumours which had been circulating in the early part of the year about fatwas against the Treaty took slightly different but more substantial form. The mujtahids issued interdictions against participation in the elections, and posters carrying the text of these fatwas were widely displayed. Their general tone was uncompromising.

> 'Participation in the elections or anything resembling them which will injure the future prosperity of Iraq is pronounced haram by the unanimous verdict of Islam.'[1]

The situation had become all the more serious because the fatwas were now emanating not only from the firebrand Mahdi al-Khalisi, but from the elderly al-Na'ini and al-Isfahani, the chief mujtahids

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 10 November 1922. Quoted in Delhi, BHCF File 23/15/1 Vol 1, Propaganda and Activities against Participation in Iraq Elections.

of Karbala' and Najaf, and would thus command far wider respect and obedience. Reports from Karbala' and Ba'quba noted that the election committees in both towns had tendered their resignations, and that there was every indication that the Shia population would obey the hierarchy.

Faisal was quick to appreciate the implications of this development. At the end of November he wrote to Cox:-

> 'I am fully confident that if we succeed in winning over these shaikhs and separating them from the 'ulama who think that they are blindly obedient to them we shall attain our desire to make a success of the elections and to ratify the Treaty without any trouble.'[1]

Judging by the considerable tax arrears of various Euphrates shaikhs which mounted up in the course of the next few months, the Iraq Government seems to have come to the conclusion that the only means of detaching the shaikhs from the 'ulama was to press very lightly in matters touching revenue.[2]

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1. King Faisal to Sir Percy Cox, unnumbered, 30 November 1922. Delhi, BHCF, 23/15/1 Vol I.

2. The High Commissioner intervened early in 1923 to prevent the registration of 'Abd al-Wahid's lands in the names of his sarkals: 30% arrears were reported in the Kut and Hai areas in mid February and 'Abd al-Wahid's lands were further protected, and 18 lakhs of rupees taxation remitted, in April.
   Intelligence Reports 31 January, 14 February, 1 April, 14 April.
   CO 730/38/10607, 13500; 39/20387,23176.
   See Chapter VI.

As far as relations with the 'ulama' were concerned, there seems to have been a brief reconciliation between Faisal and al-Khalisi in mid-March 1923, but to little effect. The anti-election campaign, temporarily halted, started again in earnest a few weeks later, when fatwas reappeared in Kadhimain. The prohibitions were confirmed by al-Sadr, al-Isfahani, al-Na'ini, al-Shirazi, and al-Khalisi, and the ban on participation in the elections was accompanied by a further fatwa forbidding the Shia to assist the Iraq Government against the Turks.

In the face of this continued opposition, the Iraq Cabinet decided in June that strong measures were necessary if the authority of the Government was not to fall hopelessly into disrepute. After a hostile demonstration at Kadhimain on 21st June, and another at Karbala' on 24th June, it was decided that al-Khalisi, undoubtedly the guiding spirit behind the hierarchy's anti-election campaign, should be deported as an undesirable alien,[1] and the other leading mujtahids promptly left for Persia in protest. In spite of Dobbs' forecast of a 'fearsome squeal from Teheran'[2] Persian official reaction was fairly mild after the first salvoes, one of the most surprising features of the whole episode. There were complaints from India, and misgivings expressed in London, no doubt prompted by the concern of the British Ambassador in

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1. al-Khalisi, like many of the other Shia 'ulama' was a Persian national.

2. Minute dated 28 June by Dobbs on Adviser, Ministry of Interior to mutasarrif Karbala', Tgm 10122 of 28 June 1923. Delhi, BHCF 23/13/1 Vol I., Propaganda and Activities against Participation in Iraq elections.

Teheran, Sir Percy Loraine, but these were effectively countered by the Iraq Government and the Residency.[1] It was explained that the 'ulama, with the exception of al-Khalisi and his immediate following had not been expelled; they were free to return whenever they wished, provided they undertook not to interfere in politics and to revoke the fatwas forbidding participation in the elections.

In general, this firm action on the Government's part solved the immediate crisis, without, of course solving the much deeper problem of inter-sectarian hostility which persisted long after the end of the Mandate. The King had tried to come to some friendly understanding with both Shia clergy and Shia laity, but the more influential of the leading politicians, with the general approval of the British Advisors, were more concerned to put the Shia hierarchy in their place. Communications with Whitehall were entirely concerned with the importance of keeping clerical meddlers out of politics rather than with the more serious question of Shia grievances. In much the same vein, Cornwallis wrote to Dobbs:

> 'Their religious beliefs alone prevent them from countenancing the Iraq Government and I believe that when they set out from Karbala'the other day they would have raised a rebellion had they had any encouragement.'[2]

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1. Ambassador, Teheran, to High Commissioner, Baghdad, tgms 97, 100, 5 and 7 July 1923. CO 730/48/35201.

   Letters of protest from Patna Muslims sent to India Office, passed on to Colonial Office with India Office letter P 4325 of 15 November 1923. CO 730/50/55340.

2. Cornwallis to Dobbs, Secret and Personal C/1428, 18 July 1923. Delhi, BHCF File 23/15/1 Vol 1, Propaganda and Activities against Participation in Iraq Elections.

In attempting to justify their policy towards the Shia, the Iraq Government were able to point out, correctly, that until Iraq became independent the Shia had had no voice at all in politics, no separate courts and no publicly financed educational facilities. However, the obvious imbalance of Shia in the Cabinet, the Chamber of Deputies and in the Civil Service as a whole was a constantly exploitable source of irritation. More immediately important for our period, however, was that Faisal was forced to abandon his attempt to broaden the basis of his support within the country, although his continued negotiations with the 'ulama' in exile contributed to bringing about the resignation of 'Abd al-Muhsin's ministry in November. However, the way ahead was now clear for the elections.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly, whose task was to pass the Organic Law, or Constitution, and ratify the Treaty, occupied the period between July 1923 and March 1924; the elections began on July 12 and the Assembly met for the first time on March 27. This long gap was largely due to the complex business of registration of electors and the electoral system itself, which was an indirect or collegeiate one. Those entitled to vote, male taxpayers over 21, were duly registered, and voted for the secondary electors, one secondary elector per 250 primary electors; these then voted for the deputies. Representation for the Christians and Jews was secured by providing four reserved seats for each religion. Additionally, for the Constituent assembly, but not for the regular Iraq Parliaments, special additional

representation for tribesmen was provided, which had the apparently unexpected effect of packing the Assembly with some 40 tribal shaikhs.[1] The shaiks at first formed a solid block of Treaty supporters, though threats, intimidation and the passage of time contributed to reduce their enthusiasm.

In the course of the autumn of 1923 King Faisal's constant interference in the affairs of government, and especially his secret negotiations with the migrant 'ulama' brought him into open conflict with his Prime Minister, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun. 'Abd al-Muhsin had for his part considerably annoyed the King by his refusal to ensure that Faisal's name was read before the Sultan-Caliph's in the khutba in the mosques of Baghdad.[2]

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1. In Hilla and Dulaim Liwas the number of tribal voters swamped those from towns and villages:

	Tribesmen	Townsmen
Hilla	40,000	13,000
Dulaim	37,319	7,208

'If the shaikhs know how to use the political power which has been given to them by the registration en masse of their tribesmen the Assembly will present a colour curiously different from any part of the former Ottoman Empire, where the intelligentsia of the towns completely overrode the agrarian population. Shaikh 'Ali Sulaiman to take a remarkable instance, has registered over 12,000 tribesmen which means that if the final number of primary electors including 'Anah may be taken at about 50,000, he controls about half the division. Besides this he has a seat in the Assembly as tribal representative.'

Intelligence Report, 1 November 1923. CO 730/43/54840.

2. Apparently the khutba was still read in Baghdad (though not in other towns) in the name of the sultan caliph. Later Faisal and his father Husain were mentioned jointly. (See High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Secret Despatch of 22 November 1923, CO 730/43/60034.)

....continued on next page....

Relations between the two men were never particularly cordial, and it was often the case that the Residency had to force the King to accept Sa'dun as Premier in order that the latter could act as a restraining influence. In spite of Dobbs' pleas for reasonableness the Ministry resigned, and Ja'far al-'Askari, a weaker personality but a man both loyal to and trusted by the King, was appointed to head a new Cabinet. Advantage was taken of this change to distribute two portfolios, Finance and Education, to Shia Ministers, Muhsin al-Shallash and Abu'l-Muhaisin. The High Commissioner apparently consented to the change of Cabinet at this critical moment because he felt that there were limits to the extent that Faisal could be manipulated:

> 'So long as His Majesty is guided with a light rein I find that he confides to me with a fair amount of frankness even his less reputable plans which can then be criticised and discouraged; but too strict and constant opposition only drives him to deceit.'[1]

The change of Ministry was shortly followed by an intimation from the exiled 'ulama minus Shaikh Mahdi al-Khalisi that they would now be prepared to pronounce the elections lawful. They did not in fact return

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Note continued from previous page.

There is an amusing story in this connection in 1921. When Faisal's name was first mentioned in the Khutba after his coronation, a prominent nationalist is said to have remarked that King George V's name would have been more appropriate. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 27 August 1921.

The question was reported as having been resolved in the Intelligence Report of 7 February 1924. CO 730/57/7995.

1. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Secret Despatch of 22 November 1923, CO 730/43/60034.

to Iraq until April 1924, by which time al-Khalisi had died of apoplexy at Mashhad. Meanwhile the advent to power in England of the first Labour Government had served for a short while to cast doubt on the future shape of Anglo-Iraqi relations, but it became rapidly apparent, much to the chagrin of the nationalists, that continuity would be preserved. Nevertheless, the change of government at least gave some grounds for hope in Baghdad that there might be some chance of modification in the terms of the Treaty and Agreements[1] and gave added force to those opposed to their ratification.

A further cause of uncertainty was the whole future of the Kurdish areas. Events in Kurdistan in the summer of 1923, particularly the evacuation of Sulaimaniya and Rawanduz by British troops and the reappearance of Shaikh Mahmud, gave rise to considerable anxiety about the extent of British help that could be expected over the Mosul wilayet, an anxiety underlined in the Assembly's rider to the treaty ratification in June 1924. The evident weakness of British forces naturally increased these uncertainties; Dobbs pointed out late in December 1923 in a private letter to Shuckburgh how vital it was that Britain should be seen to appear serious and determined over the frontier situation to allay the very real local fears that evacuation

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1. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, 24 January 1924, Telegram 54. The Iraq Government asked to be allowed to send a delegation to London; Major Young minuted his annoyance at 'this rather impertinent proposal'.
CO 730/57/3931.

might take place. He urged immediate ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne, and the speedy inauguration of a conference on the frontier. This, he pointed out, would also facilitate a more rapid reduction in the numbers of the British garrison.[1]

This tense situation persisted over the next months: the major problems facing the British authorities were what to do in the event of the non-ratification of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty, and what to do if the Mosul wilayet was not given to Iraq. The dilemma was only partly resolved by presenting British support for Mosul as being dependent on Iraqi support for the Treaty. In fact, Dobbs told the Iraq Government in March 1924 that Iraq's position in the Mosul wilayet would be greatly strengthened if the Treaty and Agreements were accepted by the Constituent Assembly before the Mosul negotiations began[2]; by the end of the month, two days before the first session of the Constituent Assembly, the Agreements were accepted by the Cabinet. The Anglo-Turkish talks at Constantinople on the future of the Mosul wilayet were scheduled to begin in May.

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1. Sir Henry Dobbs to Sir John Shuckburgh, Private and Personal, 27 December 1923. CO 730/55/1235 (included with 1924 papers).

2. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies Telegram 129 11 March 1924. CO 730/58/11898.

Any hope that the passage of the Treaty through the Constituent Assembly would be a mere formality were very soon dashed. Gradually opposition groups began to form even among those thought to be the staunchest supporters of the British connection. The Kurds and the 'loyal' tribal leaders were soon found to be wavering in their allegiance, particularly after two pro-Treaty shaikhs,'Addai al-Jaryan and Salman al-Barrak, were attacked and beaten by an unidentified gang, which caused a certain amount of apprehension among their colleagues. Again, a group of tribal deputies led by Salim al-Khayyun demanded, in return for their support of the Treaty, the extension of the use of the Tribal Disputes Regulation and increased tribal representation in the future Chamber of Deputies. Finally, the

> '...terms of the agreements have caused Assembly and the general public to be taken by surprise.'

Nevertheless, the Acting High Commissioner considered that ratification was possible if he could announce that the end of the Treaty would also signify the end of the mandate, four years from the date of the signature of peace with Turkey, even if Iraq was not by then a member of the League. He also considered that no further alterations in the treaty should be allowed, to bring an end to speculation and discussion.[1]

A few days after the Assembly had met for the first time it appointed a committee to consider the terms of the Treaty and agreements. According to the High Commissioner, Faisal had insisted that a few known

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1. Acting High Commissioner Baghdad to S/S Colonies Tgm 211 of 17 April 1924 CO 730/58/18923.

opponents of the Treaty should be appointed to this body to give it a more representative appearance, but it gradually became clear that the opposition was taking over:

> 'It is clear that the King is directly responsible for the present difficulties as in most instances.'[1]

To ease the situation, the Colonial Office agreed to inform the Iraq Government through the High Commissioner that they would ask the League to accept the Treaty, Protocol and Agreements instead of the Mandate, and that

> '...H.M. Government have no intention of continuing to hold after termination of the Treaty any position in relation to Iraq other than that defined by the Treaty... or by such subsequent agreements as may be hereafter concluded with the Iraq Government as contemplated in the Protocol.'[2]

Such assurances, however, do not seem to have had the desired effect, and it became clear a few weeks later that an emergency policy would have to be prepared to meet the contingency of the non-ratification of the Treaty. Dobbs considered that H.M. Government's intentions in this event should be publicly announced, but the Colonial Office demurred. Eventually, in mid-May 1924 Dobbs was informed by London that :

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1. High Commissioner, to S/S Colonies, unnumbered of 18 April 1924. CO 730/58/18924.

2. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner Telegram 181 of 26 April 1924 CO 730/58/19150.

'...we hold the view that we shall have no option but to carry on for the time being on present lines if Treaty is rejected, merely inviting the League of Nations to acquiesce in our action,

and, a few days later, that if the Treaty had not been ratified by the time of the Permanent Mandates Commission meeting on 11 June, H.M. Government would have to obtain the League's consent to an as yet unspecified 'alternative arrangement' :

'...It will be seen that formula outlined
i) Does not commit H.M. Government to any definite course of action if Treaty etc. are not accepted and
ii) Leaves initiative to H.M. Government and not the Permanet Mandates Commission in proposing and alternative.'[1]

By now there was every indication that a direct confrontation was approaching. After the 'Id adjournment, which finished on 10 May, only 54 of the 110 deputies elected took their seats in the Chamber, two short of the number required to form a quorum. In the next few days there were noisy street demonstrations and on 29 May the armed followers of Salim al-Khayyun paraded outside the Assembly building, some actually penetrating to the Chamber itself.[2]

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1. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner Telegram 213 of 14 May 1924
S/S Colonies to High Commissioner Telegram 218 of 19 May 1924
CO 730/59/22744, 23489.

2. There were unsubstantiated rumours that Salim al-Khayyun was working for the exiled Saiyid Talib.
Intelligence Reports, 15 May, 12 June 1924; CO 730/59/25048, 60/29844.
High Commissioner to S/S Colonies Telegram 312 of 23 June 1924.
CO 730/60/29934.

On 2 June Dobbs cabled:

> 'Assembly met today and a succession of speakers denounced the Treaty in unmeasured terms. I do not think that there is the slightest chance of its being accepted. I shall immediately cause Faisal to dissolve the Assembly if Treaty is rejected before I receive H.M. Government's decision.'

In the Colonial Office Young minuted rather plaintively

> '...if...they would prefer to see us go at all costs then I am inclined to think that we had better go.'[1]

Sterner counsels, however, prevailed. The Treaty and Agreements were eventually ratified in circumstances of high drama on the evening of 10 June, the day after the breakdown of the Anglo-Turkish talks in Constantinople and just in time for the meeting of the Permanent Mandates Commission, by a majority of 13 (37 for, 24 against, 8 abstensions). A compromise of sorts was provided in the last sentence of the resolution passing the Treaty which rendered it null and void if Britain failed in her efforts to secure the Mosul wilayet for Iraq. However, as the Colonial Office was able to point out, Britain was no longer in a position to be responsible for this, since the matter had been passed to the League.[2]

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1. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 282 of 2 June 1924. Minute by H.W. Young, 7 June 1924.
   CO 730/60/26555.
2. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Telegram 249 of 16 June 1924.
   CO 730/66/29037.

The ratification of the Treaty was vitally important for the continuation of the mandate relationship. Since direct control had been abandoned in 1920 it was essential that Britain's Iraq policy should be acquiesced in by the Iraqis. Further, British terms had not only to be accepted but to be seen to be accepted : hence the plebiscite of 1918-19, the referendum for Faisal's election, the elections to the Constituent Assembly and the ratification of the Treaty in 1924. Direct control was no longer a practical possibility; as it was, the arrangement arrived at brought sharp protests from the U.S.A. at its implied economic exclusivity, and British involvement on the Northern frontier proved almost too much for British public opinion to swallow. Furthermore, closer control would have greatly increased the price to be paid for the relationship:

> '...the success of the Iraq experiment is primarily dependent upon the extent to which Iraq may prove capable of paying for her own administration, including her defence, and meeting her obligations, including those to Britain and the Ottoman Debt Administration.'[1]

By the time that the ratification question had reached crisis proportions, Dobbs was beginning to realise that there were limits to the amount of pressure which could profitably be brought to bear on the Iraq government. He pointed out too that one of the consequences of the Protocol was that Britain was now trying to secure the same financial settlement with Iraq in four years as had been originally

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1. Sir John Shuckburgh to Sir Henry Dobbs, demi-official, 24 January 1924. CO 730/64/3166.

contemplated in twenty, while expecting Iraq simultaneously to take responsibility for her own defence. Rather tongue in cheek he had written to the Colonial Office in February:

> '... it is obvious that H.M. Government are not likely to wish to weaken or destroy by excessive demands the State which they have been at such pains to set up.'[1]

It is clear that the Iraq state was simply not in a position to bear the crushing weight of excessive political, financial and military demands at this time. Also, writing about defence Dobbs stated firmly in June that:

> '...insistence on complicated agreements of this kind ...had helped to bring about the present political situation by making it appear to the Iraqi public that H.B.M.'s Government is desirous of binding them hand and foot. I should prefer to settle each question as it arises...'[2]

This 'meticulous insistence on paper pledges'[3] was the cause of many of

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1. Sir Henry Dobbs to Sir John Shuckburgh, demi-official, 7 February 1924. CO 730/71/8246.

2. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Confidential Despatch 'B', 10 June 1924. CO 730/60/29840.

3. 'My own view is that it would be far better to secure a somewhat more loosely worded agreement, the working of which will, as a matter of fact, be quite as satisfactory as our present arrangements are, than to force the Iraq Government now jurare in verba magistri, and to be faced with the possibility of having to evacuate Iraq because we have, after angry discussions over verbal points, failed to secure the passage of the agreement through the Constituent Assembly.'

   High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Confidential Despatch of 18 October 1923, CO 730/42/52434.

the crises which developed over the course of the next few years. The Iraq Government were constantly being asked to enter into agreements which they either could not possibly afford to carry out (such as payments to Britain and the Ottoman Debt Administration) or which they found humiliating and difficult to justify to the Iraqi public (parts of the Treaty and Agreements). Ultimately most of the difficulties and disagreements affecting Anglo-Iraqi relations originated either from the high cost of many of the measures which Britain insisted on the Iraqis carrying out, or from the obviously subordinate relationship to which the actual texts of the documents relegated Iraq's role. In time, some of the more objectionable features of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship began to be removed, but this development was sufficiently long delayed to encourage the growth of deep resentments, and a determination to obstruct as far as possible anything that might be interpreted as a limitation on Iraqi sovereignty.

Nevertheless, the rough passage afforded the Treaty does not seem to have caused more than very momentary misgivings in Whitehall; the Empire air route, the oilfields, the R.A.F. training ground, British prestige and investments, could not be given up simply because the Iraqis did not want them. But it was important that the Iraqis should be able to be presented as desiring the continuation of the British connection. Commenting on the tranquillity of the days following the ratification crisis, the Intelligence Report of 26 June noted:

> '... the facility with which the Asiatic accommodates himself to any marked intention on the part of his Government to take a strong line.'[1]

1. CO 730/60/32183

Of course, the fierce opposition to ratification should not be allowed to obscure the vital dependence of the Iraq Government on Britain for their continued existence. This dependence resulted, as we have seen from the very limited basis of the Government's support within the country and the general lack of feelings of national identity.

> 'Concerning the political life of the country it is difficult to speak. An Iraq nationality has hardly yet developed. Men feel the ties of loyalty to their tribe or their town or family more than to their country. A patriotic sense of public duty is often lacking...There are as yet no political parties and not even any very clear personal programmes.'[1]

It was of course vital for the Government that such a sense of national solidarity should come into being as quickly as possible, but its activities did not encourage this development. The confrontation with the 'ulama had lost the Government any chance of the active support of most of the Shia, and even Kurdish participation in the elections had expressed more of a desire to obtain British support for a Kurdistan free from Turkish influence than any solidarity with the Iraq Government; many Kurds, in fact still hankered for a wholly independent Kurdistan. Hence the Government was forced to buy the loyalty of the tribal shaikhs and landlords, with tax remissions and concessions so that they would be encouraged at least not to be actively hostile to the Government.[2]

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1. Iraq Report. 1924, p 17
2. See Chapter VI

Ultimately, the only support on which the regime could rely permanently was that of Britain, which, in practical terms meant the co-operation of the R.A.F. in dealing with elements within the country hostile to the Iraq Government. In May 1925, after his visit to Iraq, Amery wrote of the R.A.F:

> 'It is due to its ceaseless vigilance that the work of political construction is able to proceed. Without its presence the novel experiment which we are conducting in the country would have no chance whatever of success...If the writ of King Faisal runs effectively throughout his kingdom it is entirely due to British aeroplanes. If the aeroplanes were removed tomorrow the whole structure would inevitably fall to pieces.'[1]

Thus a vicious circle emerged. However 'nationalist' and 'independent' the Iraq Government might attempt to be it was always forced into a position of subjection to Britain because of its own weaknesses. By 1924 the more permanent members of the Iraq Government had begun to realise that there was no escape and that the only hope of amelioration lay in tinkering with the details of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship, and trusting that Britain might eventually be persuaded that greater liberality over, for instance, the railways or the Transferred Assets, would pay some sort of dividends. Magnanimity would cost little especially when there was no obvious prospect of repayment in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the more practical among the politicians were not slow to realise the more tangible rewards of cooperation which would accrue from their remaining

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1. CP 235 (25), 11 May 1925. CO 730/82/22162

in office. Yasin al Hashimi and Nuri al-Sa'id, former soldiers in the Ottoman Army, took advantage of their positions both to acquire lands and to pass laws either validating the transactions or securing tax exemptions, and even 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun was not above using his office to advance his family's claims in the Muntafiq.[1] If accommodation was a distasteful necessity, it could at least be made to pay.

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1. For Yasin's acquisitions, see Kedourie, E., The Kingdom of Iraq pp 268-69

Both Yasin and Nuri came to Iraq with nothing:

'The state of affairs which permits the State Domains Department to dish out lands wholesale to politicians and the like while ignoring the requirements of the Government itself is highly anomalous. Only quite recently, as you may have heard, the large estate of Abu 'Ausaj has been granted to four politicians including Nuri al-Sa'id and Mahmud Ramiz.'

Edmonds to Holt, DO C/2100/63/12/8 of 25 June 1929. Delhi, BHCF, Personalities, File 27/411, Salim al-Khayyun.

For Sa'dun, see Situation on the Shatt al-Gharraf 1927-30 Air 23/121. (This concerns the struggle between the Mayyah sarkals and the Sa'dun landlords in the Hai qadha of Kut liwa

SSO Nasiriyah to Air Headquarters, I/N/4, 7 Aug 1927:

'The mallaks ('Abd al-Razzaq al-Sa'dun, Muhammad al-Sa'dun, 'Abd al-Karim al-Sa'dun, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sa'dun) all had the assistance of their brother 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun a couple of years ago in getting reinstated on some of the muqata's (which are registered Tapu lands) on which they live as landlords...

CHAPTER III

Oil, boundaries and insolvency; political and economic problems, 1924-1926

The oil of Mosul, the location of the northern frontier of Iraq, and the financial problems and difficulties of the Iraq Government, formed the chief preoccupations of Anglo-Iraqi relations during the two years which followed the ratification of the 1922 Treaty by the Constituent Assembly in June 1924. These three issues are closely interconnected, though each has its own history and background; exploitation of Iraqi oil by any or all of the Allied Powers necessitated Mosul's remaining a part of Iraq, and ensuring that Iraq would be able to defend the ground that she had 'won' involved straining the financial and strategic resources of the Iraq Government to the uttermost, serving to emphasize yet again the Government's heavy dependence on Britain. In order to understand how these three issues impinged on one another and on the course of Anglo-Iraqi relations, the more strictly chronological framework of the previous two chapters will be set aside. We shall examine first the role of oil in Anglo-Iraqi relations, then the problems surrounding the Turco-Iraqi boundary, and finally the financial difficulties of the Iraq Government incurred under the circumstances of the mandatory relationship.

1. Great Britain and Iraqi Oil

Although Britain's dominant role in the exploitation of Iraqi oil has been the most enduring result of her involvement in the country's

affairs, it has become almost bad manners to say so, largely, perhaps, because of the vigorous public denials of the connection made by statesmen at the end of the War and in the early 1920's.[1] Few commentators have explicitly examined the role of oil in British policy either in the context of one of the stated objectives of I.E.F. 'D'[2] or in the context of British efforts to secure the Mosul wilayet for Iraq. Until recently, only Gerig and some German historians writing between the wars have subjected British motives to this line of examination 3, but new evidence, used extensively by Mejcher, reveals beyond reasonable doubt that oil as much as strategic considerations dominated British official thinking towards Iraq. It is certainly true that Britain's subsequent interest in Iraqi affairs has approximated very closely to the interest of

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1. Monroe, E., p.101.
2. See Chapter II p. 14.
3. Gerig, B., The Open Door and the Mandates System: Hoepli, H.U., England im Nahen Osten: Hoffman, K., The Struggle for Oil in Iraq (Oelpolitik und angelsaechsicher Imperialismus.)

the Iraq Petroleum Company.[1] For a closer understanding of the events of the post-war years it is necessary to consider the evolution of British oil policy and trace the development of British commercial interest in Middle Eastern Oil.

Once oil began to be widely used, mostly by the world's navies, it was essential that supplies and reserves should be freely available, that the Great Powers should be able to ensure that their own access to sources would not be impeded. Hence the guidelines of British oil policy were formulated very quickly; that Britain

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1. Miss Monroe (pp 98-99) considers that the British Government's purchase of a majority holding in Anglo Persian in 1914 'accounts for a world-wide impression of British Government interference in the trade'.

   Details of the oil companies' connections with the British Government are too complex to be discussed adequately in this Chapter, but the inter-weaving of public and private interest in the early days is plainly discernible from the following letter from G. Kidston at the Foreign Office, written to Sir George Clerk, then attending the negotiations in Paris. The letter is dated 29th July 1919

   > '...With regard to the present situation I do not see what we can do to prevent combines and syndicates on a large scale being formed for the eventual exploitation of oil resources in any part of the world ... I hear quite vaguely that Lord Inchcape and Messageries Maritimes are the moving spirits in the new combine of which you speak. Lord Inchcape is, I understand, a member of the Petroleum Executive and also a Director on behalf of H.M. Government of the Anglo Persian Oil Company. The Petroleum Executive, I believe I am right in saying, is largely composed of people who have a direct personal interest in oil enterprises. What can one expect, therefore, when private and public interests are inextricably mixed up in a Government body of control?'

   FO 800/217 (Balfour Papers).

should be in a position of political influence or control in the territories where oil was known,or equally important, thought likely, to exist, and that other Powers should be excluded as far as possible, both politically and commercially, from these areas.

The appreciation of the potential usefulness of oil as a fuel for the British navy antedates the beginning of this century. Professor Marder tells us that Admiral Fisher was known as the 'oil maniac' as early as 1886 'in naval and departmental circles'.[1] In the years before World War One, when Fisher was First Sea Lord Churchill First Lord of the Admiralty, this enthusiasm was translated into more practical terms.[2] In 1912 a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the question of oil supplies in the context of naval requirements;[3] it agreed with Churchill that:

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1. Marder, A., From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol. I p. 45

2. Churchill was First Lord of the Admiralty from October 1911 to May 1915; Fisher was Chief of Naval Staff between 1904 and 1911, and First Sea Lord 1914 to 1915.

3. At this stage the commercial use of oil does not seem to have been given much consideration:

   '... The A.P.O.C. urge that as fuel oil cannot be remuneratively shipped from the Persian Gulf to markets west of the Suez Canal in competition with oil produced from Russian and Rumanian oilfields, the only likely outlet for Persian oil,other than the Admiralty, is with the Indian Railways.'

   Admiralty to India Office, 26th March 1912. LP & S 10 3877/1912/1/4743.

> 'We must become the owners or at any rate the controllers at the source of at least a proportion of the oil which we require', [1]

a point of view put forward again in almost identical terms by Admiralty spokesmen at the time of the Lausanne Conference.

At this time, the great bulk of world supplies came either from the U.S.A. or Mexico, then entirely dominated by the U.S.A. However, smaller quantities of oil were also being produced in Rumania and Russia, and, since 1909, a small trickle from Persia, where production and marketing was being carried out by a single British company. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company had been formed by W.K. D'Arcy in 1909 to exploit a concession which he had been granted by the Shah in 1901, and the Abadan refinery produced 273,000 tons of oil in 1914, its first year of operation. It should be remembered that Anglo-Persian remained the sole oil producing undertaking in the Middle East until 1927; its operations were first confined to Persia itself and then extended to the Naft-Khana fields in the former Persian territories transferred to the Ottoman Government as a result of the Perso-Turkish Frontier Commission of 1913. [2]

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1. W.S. Churchill, speech in House of Commons, 17th July 1913, quoted in Agreement with Anglo-Persian Oil Co. Ltd. with an Explanatory Memorandum and the Report of the Committee of Experts on their Local Investigations, Cmd 7419, 1914.

2. Production in the 'Transferred Territories' began in 1923.

In the Ottoman Empire, numerous rival international groups made bids for oil concessions between 1900 and 1914. Their persistence may well have caused the Imperial authorities to realise that they had powers of disposal over a commodity of more than passing value and to temporise accordingly. Eventually, in 1912, a group consisting of British, Dutch and German interests managed to combine to form the Turkish Petroleum Company [1] which was given, in rather obscure circumstances, a concession to prospect for oil in the Baghdad and Mosul wilayets just before the outbreak of war. German interests had already obtained mineral rights over the land on either side of the proposed Baghdad railway by a convention dating from 1903. The participants in the Turkish Petroleum Company agreed that they would not interest themselves in the production of oil in any part of the Empire 'otherwise than in association with their T.P.C. colleagues'.[2]

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1. These interests were:

	Company	Capital	Nationality
i)	Shell	£ 20,000	Anglo-Dutch
ii)	National Bank of Turkey	£ 28,000	British
iii)	Deutsche Bank	£ 20,000	German
iv)	C.S. Gulbenkian	£ 12,000	Ottoman.

2. Longrigg, S.H., Oil in the Middle East, p. 30

This was partly an attempt to prevent U.S. interests gaining access to the area, France having not as yet seriously sought a foothold, and partly an attempt to force the hand of the Ottoman authorities by reducing the number of concession hunters. In April 1913 a merger between the Anglo-Persian and Turkish Petroleum Companies was proposed, which took place a year later. [1]

The British Government, prompted, as has been mentioned by the Admiralty, had for some time taken a considerable interest in Middle Eastern oil. In 1913, in the course of the Turkish Petroleum Company's negotiations with the Ottoman authorities, the Turkish Ambassador in London was handed a statement of intent by the Foreign Office:

> 'H.M. Government... rely on the Ottoman Government to make without delay arrangements in regard to the oilwells of Mesopotamia which will ensure British control and meet with their approval in matters of detail.' 2.

However, the most important expression of the British Government's interest in oil was its decision to purchase 51% of the shares of Anglo-Persian a few days before the outbreak of war in 1914, a transaction which automatically gave the Government a large interest in the Turkish Petroleum Company at the same time.

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1. The Company was constituted as follows:

	Company participating	Capital	Nationality	
i)	Anglo-Persian	£ 80,000	British	(+)
ii)	Deutsche Bank	£ 40,000	German	(+)
iii)	Anglo-Saxon	£ 40,000	Anglo-Dutch	

(+) Mr. Gulbenkian's 5% was divided between the A.P.O.C. and the Deutsche Bank.

2. Quoted in Grey to Lowther, Despatch No. 239 of 5 June 1913. L P & S 10 3877/1912/1913/1/2222.

All possibility of the T.P.C. being actually able to take up its concession had to be abandoned following the outbreak of war. No prospecting was undertaken during the war itself, but surveys, whose general indications were highly favourable, were carried out in slightly sub rosa circumstances in 1919 [1]. During the war, as is stated in the Curzon/Colby correspondence [2] a certain amount of oil-working took place to provide for the daily requirement of both the British and Turkish armies. A Cabinet Memorandum of June 1921, Petroleum in Mesopotamia and Palestine, referred to the German-worked wells at Qaiyara yielding 10,000 gallons a day in wartime, with lesser quantities being extracted at Tuz Karmatli, Qala' Naft and Zakho. The Report admitted that deep drilling had yet to be undertaken, but stressed the close geological correlation between the areas north of Baghdad and the Maidan-i-Naftun field in Persia:

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1. In the Spring of 1919 General Sir John Cowan arrived in Mesopotamia to negotiate for oil concessions, accompanied by two geologists, Messrs. Noble and Evans. According to one Foreign Office source, quoted in India Office correspondence, Cowan was acting on behalf of the Shell Company, though Kidston in the letter quoted on page 142 note 1 remarks that:-

> '... The despatch of General Cowan to Mesopotamia was, I understand, a job put through by the War Office about which neither we (i.e. the Foreign Office) nor the India Office was consulted.'

Cowan left Baghdad on 10th May 1919, after his presence had been noted by employees of Standard Oil. Noble and Evans stayed on, apparently continuing their surveying operations.
See LP & S 10 2249/1915/1919/2, pp 2191, 1733, 4002, 5206.

2. Correspondence between H.M. Government and the Government of the United States of America Respecting Economic Rights in Mandated Territories, Miscellaneous no. 10, 1921, Cmd.1226.

'It is not possible to give any estimate of the potential production of Mesopotamia as this can only be determined when deep drilling has been carried out over a wide area. There is no doubt however, that this region can safely be regarded as extremely promising. The actual output of the Maidan-i-Naftun field in Persia is at present two million tons per annum, and this quantity could if necessary be very materially increased from the wells already drilled' [1].

In the period after the war, the question of British control of Middle Eastern petroleum was a subject of intense concern to several departments in Whitehall. It was above all vital that no power should be in a position to deny access of supplies to Britain. A Foreign Office Memorandum of March 1918 had noted that this was a matter which:

'... cannot be treated as a purely commercial venture but must be envisaged as a national responsibility which admits of no half-measures or ill-considered action' [2]

At a conference at the India Office later in the year, Colonel A.T. Wilson explained that:

'... oil is the only immediately available asset of the Occupied Territories, the only real security the Iraq administration are in a position to offer for the loan which they will undoubtedly require in the near future from the British Treasury.'

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1. Cabinet Paper E 25, Memorandum by the Minister in Charge of Petroleum Affairs, 30th June 1921.
   E 7613/382/93 : FO 371/6361.

2. Foreign Office Memorandum 14th March 1918
   LP & S 10 2249/1915/1918/1/996.

He committed himself a little more specifically a year later:

> 'The capital value of the oilfields of Mesopotamia is £50 millions, based on a conservative estimate.' [1.]

As we have seen in Chapter I, 'every effort was made to score as heavily as possible on the Tigris before the whistle blew', with the result that General Marshall, following instructions from the War Office, captured Mosul (thus gaining formal control over the Mosul wilayet) some three days after the Armistice of Mudros. [2.]

The immediate problem facing the British Government was that of devising circumstances under which the oil could actually be exploited. In the world which emerged after 1918, in which the principle of 'economic equality' was paramount, no one country could be seen to dominate the trade of another, especially if the dominating country was not the United States of America. From this arose the long struggle which developed after the war for the control of the oil resources of the Middle East, especially those of Iraq. As a consequence of control being so long disputed, prospecting and

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1. i. Paper B. 322 (September 1918)
LP & S 10 2249/2915/1918/1/4145
ii. Acting Civil Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S India, T 8169 of 21st July 1919. Quoted Ireland, P.W. p. 140

In his autobiographical account of the period written some ten years later, Colonel Wilson seems a little ingenuous:

> 'The daily press in Europe and the U.S.A. was during the latter part of 1919 and the whole of 1920 full of reference to the fancied connection between the reputed oil deposits of Mesopotamia and the acceptance by Great Britain of the Mandate, and nothing that British statesmen could do or say availed against the attacks and innuendoes appearing in the daily press of Europe and the U.S.A.'

Wilson II, p. 216.

2. See page 22.

surveying had to be suspended as well.

British surveyors had visited Iraq in 1919 and American companies were pressing Britain through the American Embassy in London for the grant of similar facilities. It seems eventually to have been decided that the adoption of a policy of non possumus to all comers was the least offensive solution, and after an India Office conference in October 1919 all prospecting and surveying in the Occupied Territories was halted. Curzon wrote to the American ambassador:

> '...the provisional character of the military occupation does not warrant the taking of decisions by the Occupying Power in matters concerning the future economy and development of the country ... we have also felt that to open the Occupied Territories to prospectors during the period of military tenure would be most undesirable as it would lead to a rush of speculators and others who, under the guise of simple investigators, would aim at securing definite and exclusive rights or options from native landowners.' [1]

Nevertheless, in spite of this self-denying ordinance, international negotiations over Iraqi oil took place on the implicit assumption that Britain would have the controlling voice in its development. In April 1919, before the signature of the Treaty of Versailles, a provisional oil agreement had been signed by the British and French petroleum Ministers, Long and Berenger. The French had handed over Mosul to Britain in December 1918(it had been designated as part of the French sphere under the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement) and had so far received nothing in return [2]:

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1. Lord Curzon to Mr. Davis November 1919
   LP & S 10 2249/1915/1918/2/7380
2. Baker, R.S., Vol. III, pp 1-20.

the Long-Berenger agreement solved the problem by making over the Deutsche Bank's former 25% share in the Turkish Petroleum Company, (confiscated during the war by the Custodian of Enemy Property) to French interests. This action was formalised a year later in the San Remo Oil Agreement.

These Anglo-French negotiations did not escape the notice of the United States Government, which protested sharply to Britain against what it considered to be the exclusive nature of the arrangements; the Americans particularly objected to the assertion in San Remo that the company working the Iraqi oilfields should be 'under permanent British control.' The State Department pointed out that the agreement was in clear breach of the 'Open Door', the principle that all countries had equal rights in former enemy territories. Furthermore, they went on to challenge the basis of the Turkish Petroleum Company's claim, by questioning the validity of the whole concession. The original concession had in fact been issued in the form of a grant from the Grand Vizier, rather than a firman of the Sultan; [1] it was not,

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1. The position is summed up in a Foreign Office Minute in June 1917:

> 'No actual grants of oil concessions in Mesopotamia appear to have been made to British subjects or firms by the Turkish Government prior to the War, but Mr. D'Arcy was promised the concession of the oil deposits of Mosul and Baghdad and was given the support of H.M. Government in this matter. D'Arcy's interests and those of the Baghdad Railway were merged in the Turkish Petroleum Company, and the British and German Governments gave an undertaking to support the Company. This fusion of interests took place on 19th March 1914.

in Longrigg's words, a 'legally sanctioned concession', [1] and it remained in force largely because it was supported by H.M. Government.[2] Curzon asserted that Britain supported the claim; Colby countered that the U.S. Government did not.

Footnote continued from previous page:-

After the entry of Turkey into the War H.M. Government held that the Agreement of 1914 no longer had legal validity and could not be taken into account when the time came to arrange for the future of the oil areas in Mesopotamia. It was understood however that Mr. D'Arcy's rights, derived prior to the Agreement, would remain unaffected by the disappearance of the Agreement although to secure them effectively it would be necessary to make express provision in respect of them in the terms of peace.'

Minute, signed 'E.P.' 29th June 1917. FO 368/1828/125460.

1. Longrigg, S.H., Oil in the Middle East, p. 31

2. Churchill wrote in 1922:

> 'H.M. Government, though they maintain that the Turkish Petroleum Company's rights are sound, admit that they were not acquired by the procedure which governed the acquisition of ordinary concession in Turkey before the War, and it is not possible to say what the result of arbitration would be. The highest legal opinion has been obtained privately by the Turkish Petroleum Company and it amounts in effect to this: that this claim, although indubitably justified by abstract considerations of equity, rests upon a diplomatic rather than a legal basis'.

Cabinet Paper C.P. 3832, Iraq Oil, circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13th March 1922 CO 730/28/7703

Thus, for some time, an impasse existed. In a Cabinet paper early in 1922 Churchill noted:

> '... There is some reason to believe that neither the United States nor France would be sorry to see the Turks back in Mosul in a position to give to their nationals the oil concessions which are at present claimed by H.M. Government for the Turkish Petroleum Company.' 1

He feared that continued American opposition was likely to jeopardise the whole future development of Iraqi oil. Churchill argued that the vigour with which the T.P.C.'s claim had been supported in the past made it impossible for Britain suddenly to withdraw, and that since the claim rested on a diplomatic rather than a legal basis, it was unwise to submit the matter to arbitration. This left two possibilities; either the Company's activities could be restricted to a limited concession area within Iraq, or the United States, and possibly also Italy, should be invited to participate in the Company. The latter alternative was ultimately adopted, and by 1923 provisional accommodation for United States interests had been agreed, to the extent of approximately a quarter of the Company's share capital. Little more was heard about the Open Door after that.[2]

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1. See immediately preceding note.
2. See Gerig, B., pp 131-141

   The possibility of Anglo-American co-operation in the development of Iraqi oil had been mooted as early as 1921. In November of that year Mr. C.S. Gulbenkian had an interview with Sir William Tyrell at the Foreign Office, in which he stated that the current anti-British Franco-American oil alliance was being financed by Standard Oil, and that it would be to Britain's advantage to come to early terms with the Americans. Sir Eyre Crowe, commenting on this interview ('This is a most remarkable communication') noted his own belief that '...the Colonial Office are not at all averse to letting the Americans into Mesopotamia.'
   E 13144/382/93 :: FO 371/6363. Minutes of 24 and 25 November 1921

While these inter-Allied wranglings were taking place, the business of maintaining British control over the areas in question continued, not without opposition and difficulty. Tensions were further aggravated, as has been mentioned by the vigorous 'Quit Mesopotamia' campaign waged in the Northcliffe Press. However, by 1921, after Cairo and the installation of Faisal, the pattern of the general strategy followed over the next few years is discernible. Control of the areas in which oil was strongly suspected to exist was to be vested in Britain through the agency of the Mandate. If other powers attempted to gain participation for their nationals Britain would be prepared to surrender some part of the T.P.C's interest in order to maintain the peace. Until the status of the disputed territories had finally been decided, no oil prospecting or surveying was to be allowed. Lastly, ratification of any concession would have to be made by the Iraq Cabinet and the IraqParliament.

Inevitably, all the problems surrounding the development of Iraqi oil depended on the permanent inclusion of Mosul within Iraq. Oil and the frontier award are so inextricably mixed that it is difficult to discuss one except in terms of the other; in spite of all the denials, the Lausanne Conference was as concerned about oil as it was about Mosul. A letter from the Admiralty to the Foreign Office, written a few days before the opening of the Conference, underlines the nature of Britain's interest:

'... from a strategical point of view the essential point is that Great Britain should control the territories on which the oilfields are situated ... provided this can be secured the composition of the company or companies which work the oilfields is a matter of less importance.' 1

It was rightly anticipated that the Mosul question would prove the most intractable of all the problems of the Turkish peace settlement, and the subject was therefore postponed to the later sessions of the Lausanne Conference. Nicolson has described Curzon's rhetorical and diplomatic skill in undermining the Turkish case, but he points out the great delicacy of the situation, especially in view of British fears of provoking another crisis with Turkey.[2] Of particular interest was the Foreign Secretary's attempt to disclaim any connection between the oil of Mosul and the inclusion of the area within the Iraq State. In his speech on 23rd January 1923, Curzon argued that the existance of the oil was no more than hypothetical, and that in any case the T.P.C. had invited inter-Allied participation in its activities:

'It is supposed and alleged that the attitude of the British Government to the wilayet of Mosul is affected by the question of oil. The question of the oil of the Mosul wilayet has nothing to do with my argument. I have presented the case on its own merits and quite independently of any natural resources that may be in the country. I do not know how much oil there may be in the neighbourhood of Mosul, or whether it can be worked at a profit or whether it may turn out after all to be a fraud ... but both the British Government and the T.P.C. itself recognise that oil is a commodity in which the world is interested and as to which it is a great mistake to claim or exercise a monopoly. Accordingly,

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1. Admiralty to Foreign Office M/43677/22 of 6th December 1922. Enclosed in Admiralty to Colonial Office, 7th December 1922 CO 730/27/60792.

2. See Chapter II, page 115, note 1.

> the Company, with the full knowledge and support of the British Government, took steps and negotiations have ever since been proceeding to associate the interests of other countries and other parties in this concern so that all those who are equally interested may have a share. If the enterprise is successful, Iraq will be the main gainer and I have no doubt that Anatolia will profit in turn. That is the substance of the oil affair which I have explained to the Conference in order that they may know the exact amount of influence, and that is nil, which has been exercised in respect of oil on the attitude which I have ventured to take up on the question of Mosul.' 1

This forthright statement seems to have been at variance with most of the information available to Curzon, especially the 1919 surveys, and the 1921 Report on Palestine and Mesopotamian Oil, both of which indicated the extremely high probability of the existence of oil in commercial quantities. Furthermore, the Admiralty letter quoted above, and Mr. Bonar Law's fears as expressed by Nicolson, [2] contrast strangely with the whole tenour of the Foreign Secretary's speech, as does his conversation with the Italian representative at the Conference a few weeks earlier:

> 'I told Marquis Garroni that when we have definitely settled the question of Mosul (which we had no intention of relinquishing) we would give them a share of the oil. And he expressed the most unbounded gratification.' 3

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1. Speech by Lord Curzon at Lausanne, 23rd January 1923. CO 730/46/4849.
2. Nicolson, H.N., Curzon, the Last Phase, pp 330-31.
3. Note by Lord Curzon, 16th December 1922. FO 839/10 (Lausanne Conference)

The Conference broke up without an agreement on the question, and the Mosul dispute was referred to the League. Inevitably, Turkish Petroleum's prospecting operations were further delayed, but a temporary surplus of world oil supplies cushioned the company from any adverse effects of postponement. However, even while the Conference was still in session the British Government began to put pressure on Iraq in the hope of facilitating the bargaining with Turkey. It had been agreed at San Remo that the Iraq Government should be allowed an option of 20% equity participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company. It was now suggested, early in 1923, that this option should be surrendered to the Turkish (or Turkish and Italian) Government, in exchange for Turkish recognition of Iraqi sovereignty over the Mosul wilayet. The Colonial Office telegraphed to Dobbs:

> 'You should point out that definite assurance of possession of Mosul Wilayet is Iraq's main interest in Turkish treaty and is worth serious sacrifice... H.M. Government think that Iraq will benefit by showing that they are more concerned about integrity of their country than about oil dividends' 1

At this stage, the 'sacrifice' was not required, because of the Conference's failure to come to an agreement, but later on, in 1924, the negotiations between the Iraq Government and the T.P.C. reached a serious impasse on the same question, of whether Iraq should be allowed the promised participation, or simply be given royalties. Payment on a royalty basis left the Government far more dependent on the Company, over whose affairs it would have no control, and meant that the country's

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1. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner Baghdad, Telegram 1 of 2 January 1923. CO 730/51/635.

oil income would be determined by the amount of production which the Company considered to be in its own, rather than Iraq's, best interests. The Minister of Finance, Sasun Hasqayil, made every possible effort to secure equity participation but failed, due to the determination of the T.P.C. and his Government's inability to raise the necessary capital.

As a result, negotiations between the Government and the Company were suspended between May 1924 and February 1925; by the latter date, it seemed that no Iraqi cabinet could be formed willing to take responsibility for granting a concession on the terms offered, and the Company was being equally obdurate. The points of disagreement seemed fundamental. For its part the Iraq Government wanted, apart from equity participation, a gold rather than sterling basis for its royalties. It wanted to retain for its disposal all lands outside the plots selected for exploitation by the Company. It wanted a sliding scale introduced so that more production would bring a higher percentage of royalties. Finally, it was not prepared to waive import duties on materials for the Company's exploratory operations for fear of massive abuses. Dobbs advised the Colonial Office that the normal tactic of forcing the Government's resignation simply would not work, since the terms were so widely unacceptable.[1] The Cabinet added more fuel to the flames by refusing to pay its contribution to the Ottoman Public Debt.

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies Telegrams 112 and 113 of 23rd February 1925 : CO 730/73/9364.

Eventually, compromises were made and accepted, closely following a curious episode in which Count Teleki, the President of the Boundary Commission, offered to act as mediator between the T.P.C. and the Iraq Government. It is impossible to assess the influence he may have had on the Cabinet, but it is a fact that agreement was reached very shortly after his meeting with them.[1] The Iraqi demand for a gold basis was agreed to and the sliding scale for royalties introduced. A combination of these concessions, the Count's intervention, and a renewed awareness of the necessity of British support in the struggle to retain Mosul, seems ultimately to have had the desired effect. The Cabinet's assent was obtained by Dobbs and the Company's negotiator, E.H. Keeling (though very nearly lost again after a disagreement over the Company's local selling price) and the Concession was signed on 14th March 1925.

Although some prospecting was undertaken in the areas of the Company's concession in the Baghdad wilayet in the course of 1925, work in the richer areas of the Mosul wilayet had to await the award of the region to Iraq by the Permanent Court of International Justice. Final ratification of the concession by the Iraq Parliament did not take place

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1. Reported in High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Telegram 120 of 2nd March 1925. CO 730/73/10185.

until June 1926, partly because of the continuing uncertainties along the Northern frontier, and partly because the British Government, apparently intent on agreement at any price, had once more raised the spectre of Turkish participation in the Company. This curiously inept suggestion, most probably a brainchild of the Foreign Office, provoked considerable dismay in Whitehall [1] but the difficulty was finally resolved by a provision in the Turco-Iraqi treaty giving Turkey 10% of Iraq's oil royalties for 25 years.

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1. Colonial Office Minute, 25th February 1926:

> 'Any such proposal would excite violent opposition in Baghdad. It would be said that we were making Iraq a tributary of Turkey and so forth... We have already imposed one crushing and inequitable burden upon Iraq in the shape of the Ottoman Public Debt contribution. How can we proceed to cripple her future resources by pledging away in perpetuity what may prove to be her most valuablesource of income?'

The Foreign Office seems to have been prepared to ride roughshod over this concern for Iraq's revenues; Chamberlain wrote privately to Amery in April 1926:

> '... I think we shall have in this matter to tell the Iraq Government frankly that we will not carry the military and financial responsibilities of their protection unless they follow our advice in external affairs and accept what we consider a reasonable settlement of the Turkish claim. I am uneasy because the Colonial Office seems to me to be subordinating essential conditions of British policy to tenderness for Iraq's susceptibilities.'

Minute on CO 730/106/4841.
Sir A. Chamberlain to Mr. L.S. Amery, 29th April 1926.
CO 730/107/9641.

Nearly nine years after the end of the war, in April 1927, exploratory work began in earnest in the most promising areas, and on 15 October oil was found in enormous quantity at Baba Gurgur near Kirkuk. In spite of this important discovery, the general surplus of oil to world requirements ensured that development would proceed for the next few years at a leisurely pace, a fact of less concern to the Company (in 1929 re-named the Iraq Petroleum Company) than to the Iraq Government; with very little production the Government received correspondingly little revenue, while the value of the Company as a major potential supplier gradually increased. To compensate for this lack of revenue, the Iraq Petroleum Company agreed to lend the Government £400,000 in 1931, in form of an advance against royalties, which saved the country from serious financial difficulties and initiated the Government's almost permanent dependence on the Company for ordinary revenue. It was not until after 1945 that oil receipts began to make a substantial contribution to the economy.

The two most enduring consequences of Britain's intervention in Iraqi affairs were first that imports, at least until 1958, came mainly from Britain [1] and secondly that the oil resources of the country were

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1. The provenance and value of imports were as follows:

Year	Value (dinars)	%age British	%age U.S.A.
1912-13	3.5 million	49	9
1952-58	92.0 million	33⅓	15

Hasan, M.A., The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq 1864-1964 : a study in the Development of a Dependent Economy.

controlled by a British dominated company. British concern for Iraqi oil was more profound in the early days of the mandate than has been thought, and denials by statesmen that oil played any major part in British calculations seem to have been given exaggerated credence by historians. This seems partly to have been due to the impression that the existence of large quantities of oil was at best very hypothetical and partly due to the fact that the importance of the matter was unlikely to have been obvious at the time to contemporary administrators who wrote letters at the time or books later,[1] since they would inevitably have been concerned with more day to day issues. However, it is now possible to find archival evidence which suggests that the War Office, Admiralty, Foreign Office and Colonial Office had a very good idea indeed of the oil potential of Iraq, and that it had been a matter of constant concern to high officials in England at least since the beginning of 1918.[2] Curzon's 'lusty denials' at Lausanne and elsewhere [3] were probably essential in view of the state of international, and particularly American, opinion at the time.

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1. See Edmonds, C.J., Kurds, Turks and Arabs, p 398, quoted in Monroe, E., pp 103-04, and compare Mann, J.S., An Administrator in the Making:

   '... I do not think that any political or military officer cares a blow who gets the (oil) wells as long as we get a decent frontier which doesn't break up tribal or other divisions.... Yes, it is all a tragedy. But we'll beat the oil people yet...

   Letter to Gilbert Murray, 21 May 1920, pp 263-64.

2. See Sykes to Hirtzel, 16 January 1918, Sykes Papers, FO 800/221 c.f. Chapter

3. Monroe, Elizabeth, p 103.

In July 1919 George Kidston, an official at the Foreign Office, wrote to Sir George Clerk, who was then attending the negotiations in Paris:

> 'In Mesopotamia, as far as I can see, we ought to have little difficulty in keeping things in our own hands. The rights possessed by the Turkish Petroleum Company and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company apparently cover the whole field and the Administration will presumably take control of the whole thing. But the situation there and elsewhere will of course depend largely on the terms of the Mandate and it is up to you in Paris to see to them.' 1

Formally, of course, the terms of the Mandate promised economic equality to all comers, but the reality of the circumstances of the Mandate ensured that the Mandatory was always in the best position to advance her own interests. A major part of Britain's concern for Iraq was an abiding concern to control, as far as possible, the exploitation and development of the country's oil. It is significant that when this control was achieved there was a perceptible relaxation in the watchful scrutiny exercised by Britain in Iraq. Furthermore, it seems most likely that the Mandate could terminate so relatively quickly after 1926 because these objectives had been secured. With the country more or less pacified, with Mosul a part of Iraq, and with development of the oilfields securely in British hands, the major aims of British policy seem to have been achieved. Though conscientious High Commissioners continued to do battle with the Iraq Government, Whitehall generally seems to have become less and less interested in matters of administration and government.

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1. G.Kidston to Sir George Clerk, 29 July 1919. Balfour Papers FO 800/217.

The Mosul Boundary Dispute.

In the preceding section the incorporation of the Mosul wilayet into Iraq has been discussed in terms of oil politics, and there is a clear interrelation between the two issues. Of course the Mosul question also had other important ramifications within Iraqi internal politics and within Anglo-Iraqi relations. It seems probable that most of the Arab population of the Mosul wilayet were anxious for inclusion within Iraq, and that this was also desired by the Sunni inhabitants of the Baghdad and Basra wilayets: without Mosul, Iraq would be effectively a Shia state. As far as Anglo-Iraqi relations were concerned, the resolution of the Mosul question in Iraq's favour was an almost unique issue: it was sought with almost equal fervour by both the British and Iraqi Governments.

One misleading line of enquiry should be dealt with first. It has been suggested that Britain was concerned, in the negotiations with Turkey over the Turco-Iraqi border, to establish a strategic frontier between the two countries.[1] Although this consideration may appear to be a sound one, the fact remains that it does not seem to have been mentioned either in the Colonial Office or in British official circles in Iraq. The similarities between the situation in Iraq and on the North West Frontier of British India are illusory, since strategy in India depended on the presence, albeit at a distance of a military force immensely superior to anything that could be set against it. The

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1. Monroe, E, p 103: Edmonds, C.J., Kurds, Turks and Arabs, p 398.

establishment of local chiefs to police the frontiers and prevent raiding must be seen in the context of the forces of the Indian Army being able to tackle any really serious border violations which might pose a major threat to security. There was not, and would never be, any military force in Iraq sufficient to contain a serious invasion from Turkey.

In a despatch of February 1924 Dobbs discussed the arguments for and against building a railway link between Mosul and Nisibin. He believed that Mosul would benefit economically from this route, and discounted the strategic risks:

> '... the Northern frontier of Iraq is so essentially indefensible against Turkey by any force that Iraq is ever likely to raise that the latter will always have to trust mainly to diplomatic means to defend herself against the former.' 1

Even allowing for Dobbs' well know scepticism of the ability of the Iraq Army, it is difficult to contradict this argument: no arrangement of the Frontier would ever be able to act as a major deterrent in the face of a determined Turkish advance.

With this in view, British and Iraqi policy over Mosul is best seen in terms first of the desire to ensure that the oilfields remained on the Iraqi side of the de facto frontier, and secondly to maintain the integrity of the Iraq State as constituted. The chief barrier to this policy, apart from the international wranglings over oil, was the intransigence of some of the Kurdish elements in the region itself. Some of these,

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Confidential 'A', 28 February 1924, E 4351/1560/93 :: EO 371/10108.

aided to a greater or lesser extent by Turkey, cherished varying, imprecise, but strongly maintained, notions of autonomy along the lines which had been promised to them in the Treaty of Sèvres. It was the extreme complexity of the Kurdish problem, and the new situation which came into being with the rise of the independent Turkish state, which accounted for many of the delays in the settlement of the frontier between Iraq and Turkey.

The Kurdish Problem and the Mosul Boundary.

Four days after the end of the war with Turkey, on 3 November 1918, the town of Mosul was entered and occupied by British troops, and the area of British occupation was held to extend over the whole of the Mosul wilayet. Kurdish nationalist groups in exile outside Turkey, and local leaders in Kurdistan had long been asking for some sort of separate status for the area, and saw the defeat of the Turks and the occupation of Mosul by Britain as a golden opportunity of pressing their claims. In Iraq, two British officers with long experience of Kurdish affairs, E.B. Soane and B.W.C. Noel were instructed immediately to begin negotiations with local leaders. The Civil Commissioner in Baghdad recommended to London on 30 October 1918 that a central council of chiefs for Southern Kurdistan should be set up 'under British auspices', [1]

1. Political, Baghdad, to S/S India, T.9267, 30 October 1918. Air 20/512.

and after three weeks in the area Noel recommended the establishment of a Kurdish state extending as far North as Van in Eastern Anatolia (some 90 miles north of the present Turco-Iraqi frontier). [1] In mid November, Shaikh Mahmud Barzinji, head of one of the leading saiyid families in the region was appointed qaimmaqam of Sulaimaniya.

The unity which the Turkish defeat had produced among the Kurds of Turkey and Iraq was shortlived; Noel reported in the Spring of 1919 that Kurdish solidarity in central Anatolia had been based largely on fears that the Allies would exact retribution for the displacement and destruction of the Armenians and Assyrians, and this seemed no longer likely to materialize. [2] Disputes broke out among rival tribes, none of whom would accept the overlordship of any one single leader. The geography of the region, mountainous terrain with fertile valleys, together with traditional tribal rivalries, made the preservation of 'order' on British Indian lines virtually impossible. The complications of Kurdish politics seem almost endless, but the difficulties were increased by the British predilection for the construction of tidy administrative units, governed by 'reliable' or subsidised local leaders.

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1. E. Noel to Civil Commissioner Baghdad (undated and unnumbered, but between 23 and 27 November 1918) Air 20/512

2. E. Noel to Civil Commissioner Baghdad, no. 54 of 24 April 1919 Air 20/714.

The chief difficulty was that the whole concept of self-determination required general acquiescence in the recognition of representatives for the 'Kurdish people'. The Kurds of the central area of Northern Iraq, around Dohuk, 'Amadiya and Zakho, and those of Barzan and Arbil did not accept that Shaikh Mahmud's overlordship of Sulaimaniya entitled him to be recognised by them as King of Kurdistan; Mahmud was in fact unable to control even Halabja and Penjwin, both only twenty miles from his capital. The Badr Khans, from an ancient Kurdish family exiled to Constantinople since the mid-nineteenth century, may have had the ear of the British authorities there, but were no longer able to command support locally, and the same was true of the Baban family, long resident in Baghdad. W.R. Hay, Political Officer at Arbil, noted in December 1919:

> 'The more I see of the Kurds the more convinced I am that neither do they want nor are they fitted for self-government', 1

a reflection of the incomprehension and of the dilemma of the Occupation authorities.

The truth seems to have been that, had they been given the opportunity, the Kurds would probably have preferred to have been left to make their own administrative arrangements. They welcomed their freedom from Turkish rule, and though there is some evidence that they would have

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1. Political Officer, Arbil, to Civil Commissioner, Baghdad 26 December 1919. Air 20/513.

been prepared to accept nominal British suzerainty, this can be explained more by their wishing to ensure that the Turks stayed away that by active desire to be controlled by Britain. Further, the desire for Kurdish autonomy did not, because of traditional tribal and clan rivalries, at this stage produce any coherent movement towards Kurdish unity.[1] By May 1919 the British authorities were forced to remove Shaikh Mahmud, who had succeeded in alienating almost all those upon whom he had relied to maintain his position in Sulaimaniya. A rival leader, Saiyid Taha of Neri, a descendant of Ubaidullah, the leader of the great Kurdish revolt of 1896, now appeared, claiming to be able to head an independent Kurdish state under British protection, but it was clear that he also had too narrow a basis of support to ensure him any lasting success. The Treaty of Sèvres, which included provision for an independent Kurdistan, was soon nullified by the revival of Turkish strength in the summer of 1920.

Throughout late 1919 and for most of 1920 British troops were kept busy on the Northern frontiers of Iraq. Revolts flared up everywhere; some were inspired by the Turks in an attempt to drive British troops out of the Mosul area, and some were simply the normal Kurdish expression of distaste at the imposition of yet another outside authority. Gertrude Bell, with a somewhat limited comprehension of guerrilla warfare, considered that the only answer was to 'beat the aghawat', and deprive the Kurds of their leaders,[2] who were preventing the more generally

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1. c.f. here A Note on Northern Kurdistan, by G.L. Bell, 8 March 1920 Air 20/513.
2. See note 1.

desired co-operation with Britain, but Soane, writing more knowledgeably about actual conditions in Southern Kurdistan, showed greater insight:

> 'Generally the mass of people desire no change at all; above all they do not want a council for Kurdistan, they rejoice at being saved from Shaikh Mahmud, and clearly Shaikh Mahmud's rebellion failed because they did not support it. They, after all, know that we could not do anything if they chose to rise against us.' 1

Late in March 1920, the British Cabinet authorised a public statement about the Mesopotamian mandate. Britain would accept it, and Mesopotamia must include Mosul; the Cabinet conclusions note that:

> '... the oil-bearing regions of Mosul are essential to the revenues on which the future development of the whole country will depend.' 2

This decision was welcome news in Baghdad, but its significance was not at all welcome in Kurdistan. It is worth remarking that the decision antedates by some five months the statement in the Treaty of Sèvres that a plebiscite would be held in the area. From that time onwards it has always been clear that the Kurds in Iraq have never wanted to be governed from Baghdad, but it has nevertheless always been essential, in terms of first British, and later Iraqi, policy that they should be. Safeguards could be introduced: guarantees that the Kurdish language would be maintained and Kurdish officials employed, even the direct administration of Sulaimaniya by the British High Commissioner;

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1. Note on the Political Situation in Southern Kurdistan by E.B. Soane, April 1920. Air 20/513

2. Cabinet conclusions.
LP & S 10 4722/1918/1920/3/2463.

but these paper promises were not enough. Even the most minimal attempts by H.M. Government to secure some sort of special treatment for the Kurds were vigorously resisted by the Iraq Government. By the early 1920's the situation in the area presented more problems than before: it was reported from Sulaimaniya that public opinion that would oppose 'even a conditional unity with the Iraq Government' [1] while Dohuk,'Amadiya and Zakho would not object to incorporation within Iraq. Rawanduz was still occupied by Turkish irregulars, while Arbil would accept a mutasarrif from Baghdad if closely supervised by the British Political Officer. [2] No uniform treatment of the whole area seemed possible [3], but separate regimes for each area would naturally arouse other, so far dormant, issues; the Turcoman population of Kirkuk, about to vote solidly against Faisal in the referendum was reported in June 1921 as 'solidly anti-Arab... though not anti-British.' [4]

It was not long before any serious consideration of separate treatment was abandoned, and the idea of wholesale incorporation of the area into the Iraq state was generally adopted. In September, Cox telegraphed a summary of his own and Faisal's views. Faisal feared that

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1. H. Goldsmith, P.O. Sulaimaniya to High Commissioner Baghdad, 14 May 1921 P/1072/1/E. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, 13/14/Vol. I

2. Draft communique prepared in Residency, Baghdad May 1921. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, 13/14/Vol. I.

3. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Telegram 201 of 21 June 1921. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, 13/14/ Vol. I.

4. Kirkuk Report, 11-25 June 1921 (P.O. Kirkuk, to High Commissioner, Baghdad) No. 8. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, 13/14/Vol I.

if any sort of separate Kurdish state were to be encouraged, the Iraqi Kurds would join with their fellows in Turkey and Persia and thus constitute a permanent menace to Iraq. Furthermore, and this is the earliest specific statement to this effect, the King wanted the inclusion of Kurdistantwithin Iraq to secure a permanent preponderance of Sunni over Shia in the Constituent Assembly. Cox concluded:

> 'To my mind it seems that it would be a reasonable course to work for the inclusion of Kurdish districts and their participation in National Assembly on conditions of local assent and special supervision by British Officers and if necessary by High Commissioner.'

Churchill replied:

> 'I appreciate force of arguments in your 503 (above) -- subject to proviso that Kurds are not to be put under Arabs if they do not wish to be.' 1

Even this proviso was doomed to be relegated to the lumber room of broken diplomatic promises. It soon became clear that it would simply not be possible to allow free expression of opinion on the part of the Kurds, who were not at all content with the prospect of being permanently joined to Iraq. It became essential to devise circumstances which would effectively rule out the possibility of the creation of an independent Kurdistan, or anything which might make the Kurds believe that this could be achieved. Cox wrote to Faisal in January 1922 that both Turkey and Iraq would profit from agreement on this issue.

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Telegram No. 503 of 20 September 1921 : S/S Colonies to High Commissioner Baghdad, Telegram 423 of 3 October 1921. E 12182/43/93 :: FO 371/6347.

'.... the effect of this will be that while having to abandon the contingent possibility of the Kurdish areas of Iraq joining a Kurdistan which would by definition be entirely independent of Turkey, the Turkish Government would also be free from the obligation of allowing the Kurdish areas of Turkey itself to opt for complete independence.' 1

In the absence of any immediate agreement with Turkey, however, the security situation continued to deteriorate. Between July 1921 and December 1922 eight British officers were killed on the northern frontier; some were ambushed in ugly incidents, and others killed on active military service. By the autumn of 1922, the British authorities were forced to bring back Shaikh Mahmud to Sulaimaniya in a second attempt to bring order out of chaos. Predictably, he proved no more acceptable, either to those who had installed him or to those over whom he ruled, than he had in 1919, since he was unwilling to confine his activities to Sulaimaniya. Noel reported the situation there in October:

'I am up against the universal suspicion, in some cases almost amounting to a certainty, that we are determined to get the Kurds into Iraq by hook or by crook and that the election business is all eyewash (i.e. the elections to the Constituent Assembly)... I would point out that to the Kurdish mind the assurances that no Kurds will be forced into Iraq cannot be squared with the principle of Kirkuk liwa as an electoral college.' 2

We have already noticed the problems caused by the delays over the ratification of the treaty by the Constituent Assembly, and these

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1. Sir Percy Cox to King Faisal, 4 January 1922. Delhi, BHCF Events in Kurdistan, 13/14/ Vol II.

2. I.e. if Kirkuk was designated as an electoral college, this implied that it was part of Iraq. E. Noel, Sulaimaniya, to B.H. Bourdillon, Baghdad, 10 October 1922. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, 13/14/ Vol II.

difficulties were compounded in the North by the lack of enthusiasm of a large proportion of the population for the whole idea of the Iraq State. Kirkuk, as we have seen, had little enthusiasm for Iraq, and even less for Shaikh Mahmud. Furthermore, as the leading citizens of Kirkuk town pointed out, while they knew of and did not like the arrangements Britain had made for Iraq, they had no idea of what Britain intended for Sulaimaniya and the rest of Kurdistan. C.J. Edmonds, the Political Officer in Kirkuk, suggested inviting representatives from Kirkuk and Arbil liwas to Baghdad to discuss a possible federation which might be arranged on the lines of an Indian Political Agency. [1] It became widely apparent to the Kurds that there was no longer any hope for Kurdish independence, but merely a limited autonomy within Iraq; Kurdish disapproval of this arrangement explains the failure of the formal offer to the Kurds in December 1922:

> 'H.B.M. Government and the Government of Iraq recognise the rights of the Kurds living within the boundaries of Iraq to set up a Kurdish government within those boundaries and hope that the different Kurdish elements will, as soon as possible, arrive at an agreement between themselves as to the form which they wish that the Government should take and the boundaries within which they wish to extend and will send responsible delegates to Baghdad to discuss their economic and political relations with H.B.M. Government and the Government of Iraq.' 2

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1. C.J. Edmonds, Kirkuk, to B.H. Bourdillon, Baghdad, K 847 of 26 Oct 1922, Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, 13/14/ Vol II.

2. Iraq Report 1922-23, p 38

The terms of this invitation seem to have encouraged Shaikh Mahmud to listen more attentively to the emissaries who had been visiting him with promises of cooperation from Turkey, although he was at the same time losing ground in his own bailiwick of Sulaimaniya. There is strong evidence of a disagreement between Noel and Edmonds over whether to continue to support Mahmud; reports received in the Residency were both contradictory and acrimonious, and it is difficult to get a clear picture of events in the area. What does emerge is that by the end of December a band of Turkish irregulars under one Euz Demir had gained ascendancy over Shaikh Mahmud himself. Noel reported from Arbil that Mahmud was definitely opposed to any form of Iraqi suzerainty, that he was gaining more support in Arbil and Kirkuk and that he was financing himself by means of the tobacco excise.[1]

Early in 1923, with the failure of Lausanne to come to any immediate settlement of the boundary, it was decided that a major show of force was the only way of dealing with the situation. This development was the beginning of the 'Forward Policy' noted in Chapter II, which caused considerable alarm in Whitehall, but correspondence captured later in the year revealed Turkish plans to penetrate as far south as Khaniqin, 70 miles south of Sulaimaniya and only 80 miles north east of Baghdad.[2]

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1. E. Noel, Arbil, to High Commissioner, Baghdad, 21 Dec 1922. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, Vol II

2. See Minute by J.E. Shuckburgh, 30 April 1923 on CO 730/48/23813, and High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies 10 May 1923, CO 730/40/24591.

Local Administrative Inspectors were informed:

> 'In the course of the operations it is hoped...to extend the influence of the Iraq Government among the Kurds who are at present not subject to it, and any opportunity which presents itself...should be seized upon and reported at once.' 1

Rawanduz was occupied by Imperial troops on 22 April, and Koi and Rania shortly afterwards. It was decided that the garrisons should await the arrival of the proposed frontier delimitation commission, since evacuation would merely enable the Turks to reoccupy at once and proclaim the status quo in Turkey's favour. The turbulence which continued on the frontier throughout the remainder of the year was, according to the High Commissioner due to lingering Turkish fears that the authorities in Iraq intended somehow to give independence to the Kurds in Iraq, thus forcing Turkey into an embarassing position vis à vis her own Kurdish population:

> 'I suggest that it might considerably ease the frontier negotiations if we could give preliminary official pledge to Turkey that in the changed circumstances we have abandoned the idea of Kurdish autonomy included in the Treaty of Sèvres and that our aim is to incorporate in Iraq as far as may be feasible under normal Iraqi administration all the Kurdish areas which may fall on the Mosul side of the frontier as the result of the negotiations.' 2

Attacks by combined Turkish and Kurdish forces continued through the autumn and winter of 1923 and into the spring of 1924. However, by the middle of the year it was apparent that British forces had the upper hand, especially after the re-occupation of Sulaimaniya in July 1924.

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to Administrative Inspectors, Mosul, Kirkuk and Arbil, Telegram 188/S of 6 April 1923. Delhi BHCF, Events of Kurdistan, 13/14/ Vol III.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Telegram 543 of 1 Oct 1923. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan

In a final attempt to prove themselves a force to be reckoned with, Turkish troops crossed the Hazil Su in the autumn and attacked Assyrian settlements in the vicinity of 'Amadiya and Dohuk; on this occasion the Turks were not simply encouraging irregulars, but were employing Turkish army units. The Air Officer Commanding noted that had an attack on Zakho not been frustrated by prompt action, Mosul would have been seriously at risk.[1] It seems that the Turks were determined to make the most of the delay between the appointment of the Frontier Commission and the plotting of the status quo frontier, which lasted from 30 September to 15 November 1924.

We have already noticed that both the British and Iraq Governments wanted the inclusion of Mosul within the Iraq State; it will be equally clear that the Kurdish inhabitants of the area were at best indifferent and at worst positively hostile to this aim. The Turks and the Kurds took advantage of the delay in the settlement of the frontier to keep the area as turbulent as possible: the Kurds, to gain maximum advantage in terms of control, and the Turks to keep as much of the area as they could under nominal Turkish suzerainty. Neither the Turks nor the authorities in Baghdad could afford to allow independence or even autonomy to be granted in the area, the Turks fearful of the consequences of an unruly Kurdish state on their borders, and the British and Iraqis not

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Secret 'A' of 28 May 1925, enclosing A.O.C.'s report 'Operations on the Northern Frontier of Iraq, September - November 1924' CO 730/75/25923.

wishing to single out areas of Iraq for any form of special treatment which would limit the authority of the Iraq Government.

By June 1924, a few days after the ratification of the 1922 Treaty by the Constituent Assembly, direct negotiations over the frontier between Britain and Turkey broke down in Constantinople, and the dispute was referred to the arbitration of the League of Nations. An international commission was appointed by the League to investigate local conditions and generally to sound out local opinion, to discover whether the inhabitants wished to stay with Iraq or go over to Turkey. The activities of the commission were confined to the southern, or Iraqi, side of the status quo frontier, the so-called Brussels line.

The commissioners commenced their work with a series of meetings and interviews in London in late November, and did not arrive in Iraq until early in January 1925. We have seen that Turkish pressure increased throughout the autumn of 1924; Shaikh Mahmud's activities in the vicinity of Sulaimaniya had occasioned the bombing of the town by the R.A.F. in November, a decision which occasioned some unease in London. [1] The area was therefore still in a state of unrest at the time of the Commission's visit, though the coming of winter had forced an end to serious campaigning. In the course of a visit lasting from January to March,

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1. Sulaimaniya was attacked by Shaikh Mahmud on 7 September 1924: See Intelligence Report, 18 September 1924, CO 730/62/46069. It was bombed on 7 November: See High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Telegram 574 of 8 November 1924, CO 730/63/53102.

the Commission heard evidence in Baghdad, and made extensive tours of the Mosul wilayet under close British supervision; at one point the members threatened to resign if facilities for snap visits to areas were not made available, but they did in fact complete their work, and managed to travel to most of the more important centres.

It emerged fairly early in the Commission's visit that its members were likely to recommend, in some form or other, an extension of the British connection. Dobbs wrote to the Colonial Office at the end of February that he was convinced that Iraq would be awarded the Mosul wilayet if British tutelage was extended 'far beyond the Protocol period.' [1] However, the Commissioners continued their interviews and tours, causing political officers to complain of 'paralysis' of administration and the 'well-nigh impossible strain' caused by their visits. [2] The fact was that by early 1925 the more accessible parts of the Mosul wilayet had been under the direct and effective control of the Iraq Government for over six years, and integration of administration and services was almost total; six years under Anglo-Iraqi control had made

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies Despatch, Secret, 26 Feb 1925. CO 730/72/10992.

2. of C.J. Edmonds' Diary, 5 March 1925. CO 730/72/12194: Report of the British Assessor to the Frontier Commission, 19-22 March 1925, enclosed in High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies Despatch, Secret, 26 March 1925. CO 730/74/ 15900: Arbil Report, March 1925, enclosed in High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies S.O. 817 of 9 April 1925. CO 730/74/17892.

the prospect of Turkish reoccupation seem remote, and on the whole unwelcome.[1] Furthermore, the Commission seem to have considered that the welfare of the Christian minority population of the area, and, apparently, of the Kurds, would be better served by the Iraqi than by the Turkish Government. It is difficult to gauge the Commission's attitude in the matter of the exploitation of the Mosul oilfields; Count Teleki's intervention has already been mentioned, and it is a fact that the concession rights to the Turkish Petroleum Company was signed by the Cabinet at the very end of the Commission's visit.[2]

The Commission presented its full report to the League on 17 July 1925, very much on the lines anticipated by Dobbs. It laid down that Mosul was to be part of Iraq, subject to an extension of the connection with Britain and subject also to safeguards to preserve

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1. Though there is some evidence of intimidation:

> 'Mosul 28 January. The Tohalla family are patrolling the town in groups with strict instructions that should they meet any of the Turkish representatives of the Frontier Commission they should assault him.... Anyone who shouted for the Turks when the Commission arrived was set upon and beaten up.'
>
> Abstract of Police Intelligence 31 January 1925.
> Jamil Midfa'i, formerly mutasarrif of the Muntafiq, had been appointed mutasarrif of Mosul just before the Commission arrived; he was connected with the Tohallas, one of whom achieved notoriety later as one of the chief perpetrators of the Assyrian massacre at Simel in 1933.

2. See page 159.

the character of the Kurdish areas in such matters as administrative personnel, education, and language:

> 'The British Government is invited to submit to the Council of the League of Nations a new Treaty with Iraq, ensuring the continuance for 25 years of the mandatory regime defined by the Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and Iraq and by the British Government's undertaking, approved by the Council on 27 September 1924, unless Iraq is, in conformity with Article I of the Covenant, admitted as a member of the League before the expiration of this period ... The British Government, as Mandatory Power is invited to lay before the Council the administrative measures which will be taken with a view to securing for the Kurdish populations mentioned in the Commission of Inquiry the guarantee regarding local administration recommended by the Commission in its final conclusions.' 1

There was some delay in the acceptance of the Report: Turkish diplomacy succeeded in referring the matter for final settlement to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague. However, the Commission's Report was not to be reversed, and by 18 July 1926 it had been accepted by all the parties concerned.

In spite of the prolongation of the period of mandatory control which it entailed, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of January 1926, which embodied the League's recommendations, was received without serious opposition in Iraqi political circles, except among the pro-Turkish groups in Kirkuk, Mosul and Sulaimaniya. The note of resignation is evident in a contemporary report of Baghdad public opinion:

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1. Quoted Ireland, P.W., pp 406-07

> 'Those in favour of the Treaty, on whatever grounds, use the argument that the Treaty is not only essential for the retention of the Mosul wilayet but is also essential for the actual existence of the independence of Iraq and its monarchy, which, it has been freely stated, were created and exist by the goodwill and assistance of the British.' 1

In the Chamber, the Treaty was passed unanimously on 18 January 1926; there were 58 votes in favour, and 19 abstensions, corresponding to Yasin al-Hashimi's followers associated with his Hizb al Sha'b (People's Party). A rumour reported from Hilla suggested that the Machiavellian British had ingeniously arranged this token opposition to avoid the criticism that they had created an artifical unanimity. 2

Apart from the stipulations on Kurdistan, which were underlined in the course of an impressive speech by the Prime Minister, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, on 21 January, 3 the new Treaty included provisions for reviewing the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of October 1922 every four years. On the occasion of each review, H.M. Government undertook to consider either recommending Iraq for admission to the League of Nations, or, if this was not judged possible, to consider amending the Military and Financial Agreements attached to the 1922 Treaty. 4

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence 9 Jan 1926.
2. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 6 Feb 1926.
3. Quoted in full on page 251.
4. Treaty between the United Kingdom and Iraq, signed at Baghdad 13 January 1926. Cmd 2587 (1926) : Article III.

The first of these reviews would fall due, in accordance with the Protocol of 1923, in the Spring of 1927. It is worth pointing out that the 1926 Treaty in no way contradicts the Frontier Commission's Report, as Professor Kedourie seems to imply;[1] both documents stipulate that the Mandate shall continue for 25 years, but equally, both contain clauses providing for the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations before that date. Naturally, King Faisal and the Baghdad politicians seized on the 'escape' clause, and began at once to work for the earliest possible entry of Iraq into the League.

Financial Difficulties

The third major concern of Anglo-Iraqi relations in the years between the ratification of the Treaty and the solution of the Mosul question was the extreme gravity of the Iraq Government's financial position. We shall discuss the very different problems of revenue raising in another chapter[2] but for the moment we shall review the particular difficulties of the middle 1920's, which troubled the Residency as much as the Iraq Government, and the various attempts to deal with them.

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1. Kedourie, E., The Kingdom of Iraq.... , p 237.

2. See Chapter VI.

Between 1924 and 1926 the Iraq Government was confronted with demands from all sides, as well as by emergencies requiring immediate expenditure. Severe flooding and greatly increased military and relief expenditure had added to the country's financial difficulties, but these were also reflected in the poor state of the economy. This was partly due to the bad harvest which followed the floods, but also to the decline in the Persian transit trade. There were several bankruptcies in Baghdad, particularly among merchants trading in sugar and cheap textiles, who were unable to get rid of their stocks.[1] Foreign investment, which the country desperately needed, was not forthcoming, probably because of the continuing uncertainties in the North.

The chief formal claims on the Iraq Treasury were first, its liabilities to the Ottoman Public Debt Administration and to the British Government, and secondly the stipulation that 25% of all revenue should be devoted to Defence, under the terms of the Agreements subsidiary to the 1922 Treaty. Some of the "debts" to Britain were rather questionable: when an official British valuation of the Iraq Railways was submitted to the Ministry of Finance in 1924, Dobbs protested to London that the figure arrived at included the Sharqat line, which was of no commercial use whatever and had been constructed for purely military purposes during the war, and the Kirkuk, Karbala'

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1. See the Economic Reports for July, October, November and December 1925. CO 730/76/35730
CO 730/79/49541, 54917, 57327.

and Khaniqin extensions which had been financed by the Iraq Government themselves.[1] The whole history of the Iraq railways is a remarkable example of official penny-pinching and meanness, the more ridiculous because the British Government had so very little chance of obtaining redress from its penniless dependent. Much the same is true of the Transferred Assets, the stores, military equipment and public utilities left behind or constructed by the Occupation authorities. Their valuation and immediate charge to the Iraq Government account meant that the country began its existence in 1921 with an immediate deficit of 95 lakhs of rupees.

The Treasury's general disinclination to be generous towards Iraq, a country which undoubtedly represented an enormously profitable potential investment, can probably be explained first in terms of the general currency of the principle that colonial (or quasi-colonial) territories should be able to pay their own way, and secondly by the considerable and widely criticised sums spent in Iraq immediately after the war. By 1926/27, however, Iraq's share of the Middle Eastern Services' vote had fallen considerably:

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Telegram 244 of 8 May 1924. CO 730/59/22213.

Year	Expenditure (£ million)
1920-21	32.00
1921-22	23.36
1922-23	7.81
1923-24	5.74
1924-25	4.48
1925-26	4.12
1926-27	3.90 1

In 1926-27, £3.1 million of the £3.9 million total was spent on defence. Since the duties of the R.A.F. in Iraq were divided in unspecified proportions between the defence of Iraq and the defence of the Empire, the figure of £3.1 million does not represent 'straight' spending on Iraq. All in all, it was surprising to the British officials in Iraq that the Treasury should need quite so much persuading:

> '... In a contract between two parties of an uneven strength the stronger can well afford not to insist upon too sharp a delineation of rights which it knows it will be able to enforce if the time comes when it will be necessary to do so: the weaker naturally wants to insist on full paper safeguards.' 2

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1. See Hansard, 18 Feb 1926.
   The £3.9 million (actually £3,893,4000) was divided as follows:

Defence (R.A.F.)	£ 3,112,900
Grant in Aid - Iraq Levies	617,000
Grant in Aid - Iraq Army	135,000
Other (including moiety of expenses of High Commission)	28,500
	3,893,400
(For comparative purposes) Cost of R.A.F. in Egypt and Sudan, 1925-26.	1,170,000

   CO 730/101/3532.

2. Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch Secret 'C' of 7 Jan 1926. CO 730/92/1535.

It was in the interests of both British and Iraq Governments that the latter should be able to defend itself, and spread its authority from the centre into the countryside. We shall see that the major pacification operations of the R.A.F. on the Euphrates and elsewhere in Southern Iraq were more or less complete by the middle 1920's. [1] There was, of course, no question of Iraq being able to defend herself against a fullscale invasion from outside, but the Military Agreement was supposed to end in August 1928, after which Iraq would theoretically be responsible for her own defence. [2] The preparations undertaken by Iraq inevitably involved the Government in serious shortages of money, since British aid was by no means generous, and the Iraq Government was incapable of finding more revenue. [3]

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1. See Chapter VII.

2. B.H. Bourdillon to Sir John Shuckburgh, Private and Personal Telegram no 12 of 6 Jan 1926: 'It is of course not known to Iraq Government that subsidy up to 1931 was contained in Air Ministry scheme.'

   E 244/44/93 : FO 371/11457.

3. 'Full allowance must, I respectfully submit, be given to the stage of self-government now reached in Iraq. It is not possible, with an elected parliament and a friendly but insecure Government that needs not only careful and tactful handling but also considerable support ... to force through measures for higher taxation. The ground needs to be carefully prepared for such measures, and if the weight of public opinion as represented by the elected deputies is against the proposals, there exists no machinery ... whereby legislation can be enforced.'

   An accurate if somewhat misleading assessment of the situation: see Chapter VI.

   Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch Confidential 'C' of 7 Jan 1926. CO 730/92/1531.

By the beginning of 1925 it was quite clear that the Ministry of Finance would be unable to balance its budget for the coming year, a situation quite unthinkable in terms of fiscal practice at the time. The Colonial Office, determined not to spend money on bailing Iraq out, commissioned Sir E. Hilton Young, M.P., and Mr. R.V. Vernon of the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office 'to enquire into the financial position and prospects of the Iraq Government'. Their terms of reference were:

> 'To enquire and report to H.M. Government and to the Iraq Government what steps should be taken to ensure that it shall be possible to balance the Iraqi budget during the Treaty period and afterwards, having regard to the requirements of the country for defence and security, administration and development, the provisions of the Financial Agreement and the obligations in respect of the Ottoman Public Debt imposed by the Treaty of Lausanne.' 1

The results of the mission, which was hoped to be able to suggest permanent solutions to the Government's financial difficulties were almost wholly, if inevitably, disappointing. It could only show the country how to make the best of its meagre resources rather than suggest ways of increasing receipts by taxational changes, or more productive uses of its revenue. The mission suggested economies and reductions in salaries in the lower ranks of the Ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture, and, incredibly, Irrigation. It was aptly

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1. Report of the Financial Mission Appointed ... to enquire into the Financial Position and Prospects of the Government of Iraq.

   Cmd. 2438, 1925. The letter of appointment is dated 3 March 1925: see CO 730/82/9925.

remarked in a newspaper article in May 1925 that since irrigation was the chief means by which the Government might hope to increase its resources, it was sheer madness to restrict that Ministry's activities.[1]

However, if the Hilton Young's Report's recommendations had been carried out in their entirety, the immediate problems facing the Ministry of Finance might have been reduced, since the mission also suggested measures to be taken by Britain to ease the situation. These included a loan for the railways, a generous reconsideration of the Transferred Assets, and the liquidation of Iraq's liabilities to H.M. Government, which included such minor irritants as Iraq's compulsory contribution to the costs of the High Commissioner and his staff. The recommendations, in sum, amounted to the suggestion that the Financial Agreement attached to the 1922 Treaty should be dropped.

In a despatch written a few days before the passage of the 1926 Treaty through the Chamber of Deputies, the Acting High Commissioner, B.H. Bourdillon, urged that the new Treaty should include a provision to the effect that H.M. Government should undertake the immediate amendment of the military and financial agreements:

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1. al-Iraq, 6 May, 9 May. Intelligence Report, 14 May 1925. CO 730/75/23974.

> 'It is a fact that the Treaty and Agreements would never have passed the Constituent Assembly (i.e. in 1924) had it not been for repeated assurances both verbal and written that H.M. Government would sympathetically consider amendment of the Agreements.' [1]

In the event, as has been mentioned the new Treaty postponed any efforts at revision until the spring of 1927. However, as far as the Financial Agreement was concerned, the Colonial Office was eventually able to convince the Treasury of the futility of continuing to press for money which could not and would not be found, and a policy of greater leniency in financial matters was gradually adopted, though the relatively satisfactory resolution of these difficulties was not accompanied by an equal measure of agreement on future military policy, an area of constant conflict in Anglo-Iraqi relations over the next four years.

Until 1926, no actual relaxation of Britain's financial claims upon Iraq had taken place beyond a small grant in aid to the Iraq army, amounting to £125,000 per annum for four years. [2] Although no payments for the Transferred Assets had in fact been made, it was widely feared in Iraq Government circles that since there had been no formal renunciation, the demand would soon be presented. There was the further matter of the Ottoman Public Debt, of which Iraq's share had been assessed at £T9½ million; Bourdillon pointed out:

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1. Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch Secret 'C' of 7 Jan 1926. CO 730/92/1535.

2. See King Faisal to the Acting High Commissioner, Secret, 30 December 1925 enclosed in Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Secret 'A' 30 December 1925. CO 730/92/872.

> 'If it were not for the Ottoman Public Debt charge Iraq would be able not only to dispense with the subsidy for the Army, but also to contribute to the cost of the Levies. Turkey herself can pay nothing on account of the Ottoman Public Debt and I presume that it is now admitted that the Iraq share is quite inequitable.' 1

By a policy of quiet procrastination, this liability was greatly reduced; by the time that Iraq stopped payment in 1935, only £T1.6 million had been received by the Debt administration. [2] As regards the Transferred Assets, H.M. Government was finally prepared to see reason; writing off the 95 lakhs (about £600,000) was a fairly cheap piece of philanthropy, especially as the money had been spent eight or ten years before. After appeals from the High Commissioner and R.V. Vernon (formerly of the Colonial Office, by now Adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of Finance) the Colonial Secretary took up the matter personally with the Chancellor of the Exchequer:

> 'If I could wire out to Baghdad that we are willing to waive the claim to the Transferred Assets, and if they will play up over the oil royalty (the proposed 10% payable to the Turkish Government for 25 years), it may just enable us to fix everything with the Turks while they are reasonable and so save you large sums in the long run. In any case it ought to save you far more in the next few budgets than you could ever hope to get from these trifling but bitterly resented instalments of payments for these assets.' 3

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1. Acting High Commissioner Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Telegram 39 of 22 January 1926. CO 730/92/2026.

2. Report.... on the Progress of Iraq 1920-1931. p 127

3. L.S. Amery, Private and Personal to W.S. Churchill, 29 April 1926. CO 730/93/9075.

The Treasury finally surrendered its claim in June, in time for the High Commissioner to be able to announce the decision at an important State banquet on June 25th. [1]

Conclusion

The events between the ratification of the Treaty and the final ratification of the Mosul boundary serve to emphasise the continuing subordination of Iraq to Britain, necessary if the Iraq Government was to survive in its existing form. The Iraq Government seems to have become aware, even more sharply than before, of the urgency of maintaining its relationship with the Mandatory, and seems also, during this period, to have given up any serious attempts at acts of defiance. Iraq needed Mosul for its survival; only British aid, both diplomatic and military, could secure the area, keep the Turks out and keep the Kurds reasonably quiet. Again, only Britain could close the gap between Iraq's capacity for defence spending and her actual defence needs. This indispensability, seen most clearly in the context of the Mosul question, explains the acceptance of the Iraq Petroleum Company's concession on terms which were not particularly favourable to Iraq, and the Government's rapid and generally willing acquiescence in the new Anglo-Iraq Treaty, prolonging the mandate from four to twenty-five years. The Iraq Government was neither strong nor popular, most

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1. Intelligence Report, 6 July 1926. CO 730/105/312.

probably neither more or less so than any other form of government would have been, but this meant that it had to look outside Iraq in order to maintain itself in power, until it had devised sufficiently strong machinery of its own.

By the middle 1920's, therefore, it had become clear that no further very serious resistance to British pressures was likely, or even possible. The remaining six years of the Mandate comprise a period of general cooperation with Britain, in contrast to the sharp conflicts of the earlier years. This is reflected at first sight perhaps paradoxically in the gradual loosening of the formal ties beinding the two governments. It seems likely that Britain, now so sure of her standing in Iraq, could afford a relaxation in her control. There were, of course, running quarrels from 1926 to 1932, over such matters as conscription and safeguards for minorities, but it is difficult to avoid the impression that once the major objectives had been achieved, and provided British bases would remain in Iraq for the forseeable future, less overt and more subtle ways of controlling the Iraq Government could be employed. It should be remembered that some eighteen months after the 1926 Treaty was signed, binding Britain to Iraq for 25 years unless Iraq entered the League before the expiry of the period, responsible authorities in the Colonial Office and the

Baghdad Residency were canvassing Iraq's possible entry to the League in 1928.[1] By that time, the British authorities seem to have come to the conclusion that the machinery of constraint could be safely left under less careful supervision, since the mechanisms were beginning to work automatically.

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1. e.g.

> 'You need not be alarmed about our 25 years' mandate. If we go on as fast we we've gone for the last two years, Iraq will be a member of the League before five or six years have passed, and our direct responsibility will have ceased.'
>
> Gertude Bell to her Father, 13 Jan 1926. Lady Bell, Vol II p 747.

CHAPTER IV

The Years of Frustration, 1926-1929

1926-1929

In January 1926, at the time of the signature of the new Treaty with Britain, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun had been Prime Minister of Iraq for some six months, heading a cabinet which included Nuri al-Sa'id as Minister of Defence, and Sabhi Nashat as Minister of Finance. The Government was supported in the Chamber of Deputies by a bloc associated with the Prime Minister's Hizb al-Taqaddum, while the 'opposition', led by Yasin al-Hashimi and Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani, drew its support from Yasin's Hizb al-Sha'b and Amin Charchafchi's Hizb al-Nahdha.[1]

The general policy of the Taqaddum party was of cooperation with Britain and the pursuit of independence for Iraq at whatever pace Britain seemed to be dictating. In consequence, 'Abd al-Muhsin's relations with the Residency were normally excellent, which inevitably strained his relations with King Faisal. The King, while respecting his Prime Minister's competence, saw his own role in the conduct of affairs diminishing, and, seeking to provide a counter-balance suggested to 'Abd al-Muhsin at the end of October that members of the opposition should be given under-secretaryships at ministries, and other measures

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1. Taqaddum = Progress, Sha'b = People, Nahdha = Renaissance. The Taqaddum Party was the bloc of moderates who could be relied upon to support more or less any measure the Government put forward, the Sha'b were on the whole anti-Government and anti-British, while the Nahdha stood in the main for Shia interests. See Appendix for a more detailed analysis.

disagreeable to the Prime Minister.[1] 'Abd al-Muhsin suggested an election, which he considered would strengthen his position in the Chamber, but the King, fearing just this result, opposed a dissolution. 'Abd al-Muhsin, annoyed at the King's evident lack of support for his Cabinet, decided to make the election of the President of the Chamber of Deputies a vote of confidence in himself, so that when his nominee, Hikmat Sulaiman, was defeated by Rashid 'Ali, he promptly resigned from office. The opposition, headed by Yasin, suggested that Ja'far al-'Askari should be invited to return from the Legation in London to head a Government which would include Yasin and Rashid 'Ali, and this course was adopted.

The real reason for this change was that the King, together with Nuri and Yasin, wanted to form a Cabinet which would have a greater chance of persuading the Chamber to accept conscription, and thus be in what they considered a better position to obtain independence in 1928. 'Abd al-Muhsin would not, it was felt, be able to act contrary to the known views of the Residency, while Ja'far would be content to act as a figurehead for Nuri, Rashid'Ali and Yasin, all of whom, with the King, were strong advocates of compulsory military service. A conscript army would be within Iraq's current means, and since military self-sufficiency was considered a vital criterion for independence, a pro-conscription Cabinet would have a better chance of achieving early League membership.

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1. S.O. 2671, Bourdillon to Shuckburgh, 4 Nov 1926. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations, File 23/14/5, Formation of a Cabinet under 'Abd al-Muhsin Beg al-Sa'dun July 1925 - November 1926.

Conscription as a Political Issue.

The role of the Iraq Army, together with the function of the R.A.F, will be discussed in Chapter VII. However, the controversy surrounding the introduction of conscription had important effects both on Anglo-Iraqi relations and on the internal politics of Iraq, and it is appropriate to separate the political from the specifically military aspects of the problem. Under the arrangements in force in the autumn of 1926, the Military Agreement of 1924 would terminate at the end of 1928. At that time, theoretically, Iraq would assume full responsibility for her own defence. How, in practice, could this be achieved?

There seemed to be two alternatives. First, that Iraq should request Britain to continue to allow the R.A.F. and the Levies to come to the assistance of the Iraq Government in situations where it was unable to exert control adequately through the medium of the Iraq Army. At the same time, pressure would be brought on Britain to make good the promise of an Iraq Air Force, which had in fact been promised under the 1924 Military Agreement but whose formation had been successfully blocked by the Air Ministry. In the Spring of 1925, in the course of the visit of the Secretaries of State for Air and the Colonies to Baghdad, Dobbs had declared:

'The experience of the past two years supports my contention that 9000 efficient ground troops would keep internal order as an appendage to a sufficient mercenary air force.' 1

He favoured the formation of exemplar units, with technical assistance to be provided by a British Military Mission. Clearly, such an army would necessarily have been limited to the role of maintaining internal security: Dobbs did not visualise the possibility of Iraq alone ever being able to defend herself against invasion from outside. This view did not imply an early end either to the British military presence or the British Mandate.

The second alternative was that favoured by King Faisal and his close personal associates, most prominent among whom were the ex-Ottoman soldiers Nuri and Yasin. They wanted a much larger army (figures of between fifteen and twenty thousand were mentioned)together with an Iraq Air Force. Only this, they considered, would be sufficient to guarantee the country's independence, for only with so large an Army could Iraq even attempt to dispense with British military help. Yasin, who was Prime Minister at the time of the Baghdad discussions in April 1925, took exception to Dobbs' scheme on two main grounds:

'...first, that what was most badly needed for the Iraq Army was rapid expansion which would only be got by conscription, and secondly that the Iraq people would believe the scheme to be a plan for putting their army under British control.' 2

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1. Minute by Dobbs on Memorandum from Adviser, Ministry of Defence, to High Commissioner, M.D/C/76 Confidential of 28 March 1925. Minute dated 26 April 1925. CO 730/82/24432.

2. Despatch, Secret, High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, 16 April 1925. CO 730/74/19004.

The pro-conscription lobby gained an important ally in the person of Major-General Daly, Inspector-General of the Iraq Army who had arrived in Baghdad in the early summer of 1925. After a few months exposure to the King and Nuri he seems to have become convinced of the soundness of their views.

By March 1926, Daly had completed the preparation of a defence scheme for Iraq, which took account of the gradually decreasing role to be played by British forces. The scheme was designed to maintain existing defence strength, but with a greater commitment on Iraq's part. The plans outlined were infinitely more ambitious and grandiose than Dobbs desired, and rested on principles to which he was fundamentally opposed. The Inspector-General envisaged a total of 19,000 troops, including the Iraq Army, Levies and Air Force. Even without the Air Force it would cost 119 lakhs of rupees, while the High Commissioner's own scheme would cost only 51 lakhs. [1]

The largest flaw in the proposed scheme, apart from the obvious impossibility of raising the money required, was the fact that however much conscription might appeal to ex-officers of the Ottoman Army, it would meet with serious opposition from the rest of the population of the country. The Sunni townsmen would officer the army, and thus be

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret of 16 Sept. 1926, enclosing Daly's Memorandum of 7 March 1926. CO 730/95/18538.

able to maintain the traditional dominance of town over countryside, while the Shia tribes in the South, and the Kurds and Yazidis in the North, would not acquiesce in the scheme for precisely that reason. Conscription under the Turks had been arbitrary and brutal, and the Shia tribes had borne the brunt of it. Both the High Comissioner and the Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior were well aware that conscription would be strenuously resisted if it was introduced. Furthermore, as Cornwallis pointed out, its application would strengthen the hands of tribal shaikhs, who would be able to pay off old scores by picking tribal sections led by their rivals for the leadership and sending them off to the army.[1] Certain areas, especially the Euphrates below Baghdad, would have to be excluded; in fact, if conscription were to be introduced at all the tribal areas as a whole would be better removed from its application.

In addition to this probably necessary limitation on the field of recruitment, there was another important objection. In the same despatch, the High Commissioner pointed out:

> 'It is to my mind out of the questi n that British aeroplanes should bomb Iraq tribesmen for resistance to conscription for the Iraq Army and should thus divert against the British in Iraq the discontent which will inevitably be produced by an attempt to enforce among

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1. Adviser, Minister of Interior, to Secretariat of H.E. the High Commissioner, C/2341/8/3 of 22 August 1926. Delhi, BHCF, Military, File 4/69 Vol I Conscription.

> the tribes a policy never enforced by the Turks. If the Iraq Army and the Police are likely to be strong enough by 1928 to see through a policy of conscription among the tribes, let them see it through! 1.

In the following month, October 1926, the Iraq Government presented Dobbs with a draft Conscription Law. By submitting the draft, together with his own comments, to the Colonial Office, Dobbs left Whitehall with little alternative but to tackle the problem and to reach conclusions identical to his own. Shuckburgh pointed out that the use of British troops to enforce conscription in Iraq would meet with serious opposition from other government departments, and indeed, more generally in Britain. Conscription was:

> 'a policy which is against all our traditions and which has never been enforced in this country (sc. Great Britain) except for one brief period...during the stress of the Great War.'

He continued:

> 'Sir Henry Dobbs suggests a middle course. He proposes that we should allow the Iraq Government to proceed with their law but should warn them in advance, that if it leads to trouble they must not expect our help. Sir Henry Dobbs apparently hopes that the Iraq Government, knowing that they cannot count on support from us will realise that the task is beyond their powers and will drop the project. If so, well and good. But it is in the nature of a gamble and like other gambles may not come off. But in all the circumstances I can see no better alternative.' 2.

The decision, that active British support would not be given, was communicated to the Iraq Government in January 1927. Although there

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret of 1 September 1926. CO 730/95/17572.

2. Minute, dated 18 November 1926. CO 730/96/19851.

was no official announcement, the attitude of the Residency, and, by extension, of the Colonial Office, was well known in Baghdad political circles. In the middle of May Faisal complained somewhat naively to Dobbs that he felt that the conscription Law would not command a majority in the Chamber of Deputies unless it was helped by popular enthusiasm...:

> 'which he maintains would be created by the desired announcement that H.M. Government will at the close of the Protocol period press for Iraq's admission to the League...Unless he can obtain it he thinks he will have to withdraw the Conscription bill. This would make it impossible for Iraq to afford troops to replace the British forces and make all discussions regarding the new military Agreement very difficult. [1]

As this conversation implies, there had as yet been no actual announcement that British troops would not be used to enforce conscription: Dobbs, fearing a Cabinet crisis, had urged meeting Faisal's wishes this far, and not insisting on a formal statement unless direct questions were asked in the Chamber of Deputies. [2] By mid-May, with no actual progress either on Conscription or the revision of the agreements, which would enable Iraq to enter the League in 1928, the Cabinet's resignation was expected daily. [3]

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1. Report of a conversation with King Faisal, 13 May 1927. Enclosed in High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies Secret 'D' of 13 May 1927. Delhi, BHCF, Military, File 4/69 Vol I Conscription.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm. 229 of 18 May 1927 CO 730/108/40008.

3. See Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations, File 23/14/7, Cabinet Crisis May-June 1927

It was rumoured in Shia circles that the new Cabinet would contain as many as three Shias, provided that they agreed to support conscription. According to Ridha al-Shabibi, the King had promised him the Ministry of Education, and Muhsin al-Shallash the Ministry of Irrigation and Agriculture: al-Shabibi told the King that the country as a whole was opposed to conscription, and that none of his group, the Hizb al-Nahdha, were prepared to cooperate with the Cabinet.[1] On the following day, 27 May, the King again begged the Shia politicians to support the Cabinet on this issue, but al-Shabibi told his audience at the Nahdha's headquarters that since the British were opposed to conscription they should not fall in with the King's wishes. The Nahdha members agreed, and suggested further that any Shia supporting the Cabinet should be threatened with dire consequences.[2]

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence 28 May 1927. For a more detailed discussion of the Shia position and Shia politics generally at this time, see Appendix I.

2. Especially Muhsin abu Tabikh, Salman al-Yasiri, Mizhir al-Fira'un, Haji al-Salih, 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar, 'Abadi al-Husain. All these were reported as pro-conscription in Abstract of Police Intelligence, 18 June 1927. It is bewildering to follow the two latter shaikhs' allegiances: 'Abd al-Wahid supported conscription until mid-September, when he joined the Hizb al-Nadha; (see Appendix I.) while 'Abadi al-Husain, three weeks before the report above associating him with the pro-conscription lobby had had an interview with Bourdillon at the Residency in which:

> 'He asked me straight out about conscription. He said that the Shias outside were under the impression that H.M. Government were opposed to conscription and were very pleased in consequence.'

Note by B.H. Bourdillon, 20 May 1927. Delhi, BHCF, Military File 4/69 Vol I, Conscription.

By this time, however, Faisal was clutching at straws. Dobbs reported to London on 27 May that the whole matter of the Cabinet's threatened resignation had been staged by the King, in order to enable the Cabinet to publish their criticisms of H.M. Government's dilatoriness over military policy and the whole question of Iraq's entry to the League. Faisal apparently hoped that this would jolt Britain into beginning negotiations at once. Dobbs 'found it difficult to combat in respectful terms this petulant and childish plan', and advised the King to refuse to accept the Cabinet's resignation, informing him at the same time of his own efforts to obtain London's approval of a policy of silence over the exact nature of British participation in the enforcement of conscription. [1] Four days later it was reported that the Cabinet had withdrawn its resignation:

> 'Public opinion in Baghdad is now convinced that the threats and manoeuvres of the Cabinet were merely intended to impress and coerce the British into agreeing to support the Conscription Bill and secure modification of the Military and Financial Agreements. It is said that unless the British will support the Government in putting the bill into effect, it matters little whether the law is passed or not'. 2

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1. The telegram concludes:

> 'I regret to say that Faisal did not appear to be convinced...He is very tête montée owing to the glorification of him in Lawrence's book and has apparently set his heart on an early visit to London.'

High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 241 of 27 May 1927. CO 730/108/40008.

2. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 31 May 1927.

On 1 June, Dobbs was told that the Iraq Government need not announce that British assistance would not be forthcoming, [1] and on 8 June, the last day of the Parliamentary session, the Conscription Bill was given its first formal reading in the Chamber of Deputies. As had been expected the Shia Minister of Education, Saiyid 'Abd al-Mahdi, resigned immediately, but with the ending of the session, the issue slipped quietly into the background for the time being. [2]

Prelude to Deadlock: Iraq's attempts to secure League entry for 1928

Though conscription was a major pre-occupation in Iraqi political circles at this time, it was of course subsidiary to the wider question of whether Britain would be prepared to countenance the prospect of League entry in 1928. Considering the matter in the spring of 1927, Dobbs realised that entry in 1928 would run the risk of opposition from the League, because of the recommendations of the Frontier Commission's Report, and 'strong French opposition on other grounds.' He felt, however, that considerable progress had since been made in Iraq, and that the Report thus bore little relevance to current conditions within the country. Furthermore, he believed that the relative tranquillity which now prevailed was due to the Iraqi conviction that Britain would press for Iraq's early entry to the League. He suggested

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1. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad, Tgm 183 of 1 June 1927. Delhi, BHCF, Military, File 4/69 Vol I, Conscription.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 262 of 10 June 1927. CO 730/108/40004.

that outstanding defence problems could be solved by the conclusion of:

> '...a Treaty of specially close friendship with Great Britain the terms of which will not be such as to disqualify Iraq for membership...(and) which Iraq would be likely to accept (and which would include)...the stationing for some years in Iraq of a comparatively small and cheap British Air Force and a promise to train up an Iraq Air Force during that period, a renewal of the portions of the Military and Financial Agreements necessary for its maintenance there, including especially the power of refusal to lend its aid unless the policy of Iraq conforms to our wishes...'[1]

Although the political situation in Baghdad had calmed down for the time being, Dobbs was concerned at the behaviour of the King and his immediate circle. In a personal letter to Amery on 14 June, he suggested that the King, Yasin and Nuri were deliberately trying to confuse the issue by making out that all British forces would leave Iraq entirely at the end of 1928, whereas it had in fact already been agreed that the R.A.F. would stay. They wanted to build up:

> '...a large army free of British control, and at the same time to be helped and safeguarded by us while in the process of making this army.'

Further, they maintained that such an army could only be created by conscription, and again, that Parliament would only consent to conscription if it was told that Iraq would enter the League in 1928. For his part, Faisal realised that he needed the R.A.F to stay on in Iraq, but believed that Britain was equally anxious to keep air squadrons there to protect the oil, Imperial communications and other

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret, 31 March 1927. CO 730/119/40199 Part I.

British interests. Hence, as the High Commissioner saw it, Faisal would make a bargain; Britain should recommend Iraq for membership of the League in 1928, and in return, Faisal would allow the R.A.F to stay on in Iraq for a limited period. Additionally, the King and the Iraq Government would require to be given complete control of the Iraq Army. Britain would not, whatever happened, leave Iraq in chaos, since this would be as inimical to their interests as to Iraq's. On the other hand, if Britain would not yield, the King and his circle might attempt to start a rising in the country in favour of complete independence:

> 'What the King, Nuri and Yasin want to do is, on the one hand to rouse anti-British feeling or demonstrations sufficiently to pass conscription and frighten the British Government into relaxing all control, and on the other hand to smother the agitation when they have gained their ends and return bowing and smiling to a comfortably relaxed British alliance. The King took precisely the same position in 1922 when Cox was insulted at the Palace. The King's fortunate attack of appendicitis then saved the situation. We cannot count on appendicitis again.'

The High Commissioner considered that if the R.A.F was to remain in Iraq after 1928, there should be no question of any relaxation of British control over the Iraqi armed forces. Thus both the Palace and the Residency considered that they possessed the trump card: Faisal, that the British would not leave because of the oil, and Dobbs, that Faisal could not hold his throne without a British military presence. [1]

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1. Dobbs to Amery, H.C. S.O. 1334, 14 June 1927 CO 730/120/40299 Pt. II.

In London, discussions were taking place on military policy, and the general question of League entry. The Chief of Air Staff, Sir Hugh Trenchard, considered that the Iraq Government already had far too much control over the Iraq Army, and that the Government was also labouring under the misleading impression that independence was just around the corner. When informed by Sir Samuel Wilson of the Colonial Office that British policy was in fact directed to just this end,

> 'Sir Hugh Trenchard retorted in effect that it was time that this play-acting ceased. He had on several occasions been informed by several members of the Cabinet that they had no intention of withdrawing from Iraq at however distant a date provided it was possible to retain a hold on the country; the present policy was only designed to meet criticism in this country and in Iraq.' 1

Eventually it was agreed that Britain should maintain the R.A.F in Iraq, train and equip an Iraq Air Force, and maintain two battalions of Assyrian Levies as Imperial troops to act as aerodrome guards. On 6 July, after these arrangements had been agreed upon by the British Government, Dobbs was told to communicate them to the Iraq Cabinet, together with the assurance that Britain would support Iraq's condidature for the League in 1932, provided that the present rate of progress was maintained. The Iraq Government might, if it so wished,

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1. Report of a conversation between Sir S. Wilson and Sir H. Trenchard at the Colonial Office on 28 June 1927. CO 730/120/40299 Pt. II.

make a public statement to this effect. (1)

A few days later, Dobbs flew to London to discuss the situation with the Colonial Secretary. It was decided that amendment and revision of the 1926 Treaty could usefully be commenced, but on an informal basis until the autumn when official sanction could be given by H.M. Government.(2) This proposal seems to have been occasioned by immediate as well as long-term political considerations: Dobbs was anxious to find some means of getting Faisal away from Baghdad, where his constant interference(3) was affecting the whole running of the administration. Accordingly, on 21 July, the message that the Colonial Secretary personally favoured revision of the Treaty and Agreements, was conveyed to Faisal.(4) Unfortunately for the future tranquillity of Anglo-Iraqi relations, Faisal seems to have taken this communication as containing the promise of a far more substantial improvement in Iraq's status than was in fact being offered:

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1. Cab 38(27) 4 July 1927: S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad Tgm 232 6 July 1927. CO 730/120/40299 Pt. II
   By the end of September, no public statement had been made in Baghdad: it was widely assumed in Iraq that substantial changes, even admission to the League, were still being negotiated. See Iraq: Suggested Treaty Revision. Middle EastDepartment of the Colonial Office, 28 Sept 1927. CO 730/120/40299 A Part I.

2. The Colonial Secretary gave his personal sanction to these discussions since full British Cabinet approval was impossible to obtain before his summer tour.

3. See page 218

4. S/S Colonies to Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, Tgm 258 of 21 July 1927. CO 730/120/40299 Part II.

he left almost at once for Europe, under the impression that entry in 1928 still remained a possibility.(1) This confusion greatly complicated matters both in Baghdad and in Switzerland where Faisal took up residence. Political circles in Baghdad were convinced that Faisal would bring back complete independence, or something very close to it, from Europe.(2) In the course of meetings with Hall and Shuckburgh of the Colonial Office at Aix-les-Bains early in September, it became clear that Faisal imagined that he had been summoned to Europe for this very purpose:

> 'He declared that unless he could take back with him a revised Treaty he would not return to Iraq... His visit to Europe had been the subject of general discussion and high expectations had been raised. If he returned empty-handed, not only would the disappointment be intense, but he himself would suffer an irreparable loss of prestige.' (3)

During the next few months, relations between Faisal and H.M. Government were tense and strained, as the King continued to stand firm, refusing to go back to Iraq empty-handed. In Baghdad there was rumour and confusion, and a bewildering and constantly changing variety of political groupings and

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1. On the way to Europe, King Faisal stopped at Cyprus to visit his Father, King Hussin of the Hijaz. The Governor of Cyprus, Sir Ronald Storrs, reported:
   > 'In the course of a long conversation this morning Faisal confided his intention of 'abdicating' unless he got a satisfactory agreement in Switzerland, where he thinks he is going to meet Dobbs or Shuckburgh. The remark was clearly released for me to pass on, which I do for what it may be worth. After lunch we taught him and Zaid golf croquet, a great alleviation.'

   Storrs to Ormsby-Gore, 10 August 1927. CO 730/120/40299 Part II.

2. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 20 August 1927.

3. Conversations with King Faisal at Aix-les-Bains, 5 to 7 September 1927. Report by Sir John Shuckburgh, printed by the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office, September 1927. CO/730/120/40299 Part II.

alliances. In the earlier part of the year, relations between Sunni and Shia had become more than usually tense, largely over the possible introduction of conscription. The unease and dissatisfaction expressed by some Shia politicians upset the 'nationalists' who feared that failure to present a united front in Baghdad for an independent Iraq would jeopardise the outcome of the negotiations in Switzerland and London.

Sunni/Shia Antagonism as a Political Factor, January to December 1927

After the deportation of the 'ulama' in the summer of 1923, the Shia political and tribal leadership can be roughly divided into those advocating cooperation with Sunni nationalist politicians against Britain, and those who pressed for Shia solidarity to secure specifically Shia objectives, such as greater representation in the government and civil service.(1) Occasionally the two groups would come into conflict, especially when the Residency seemed to be more concerned to press for Shia rights than the Sunni Government was to grant them. Neither of the Shia groups nor the Sunni nationalists ever managed to gain exclusive political power, which was normally wielded by another clique, consisting of Sunni politicians close to the King. This group, although opposed in principle to Britain's presence in Iraq, came to realise that too determined an opposition to Britain might mean permanent unemployment for themselves. It is not always easy to determine, at any given moment, the position of an individual vis à vis any particular group because of the personalised nature of Iraq

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1. See Appendix I

politics at this time, but these broad divisions apply generally to the period under discussion.(1)

The position of the Shia 'non-nationalists', as we may call them, was particularly vital in the conscription controversy, since on this issue their influence would be decisive. We have already seen that conscription would be bitterly opposed by most Shia leaders, who would see it as one more instance of Sunni effendi domination.(2) However, while the 'non-nationalists'

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1. Politicians may be divided very roughly as follows :-

   A. Nationalist (mostly Sunni) independent: 'anti-British'
   B. Court : Faisal and immediate circle
   C. Shia : non-nationalist.

   Thus, following these broad classifications:- (where an individual is attached to more than one group, his other allegiances are indicated in brackets)

   A. : Rashid 'Ali (B), Yasin al-Hashimi (B), Ra'uf Chadirchi, Hikmat Sulaiman, Jamil Midfa'i, (B), Naji Shaukat, Naji al-Suwaidi, Taufiq al-Suwaidi, Shaikh Ahmad al-Da'ud, Ja'far abu'l-Timman (SHIA), Muhsin abu'l-Tabikh (SHIA, B,C,) Bahjat Zainal, Ali Mahmud, Sunni lawyers.

   B. Nuri al-Sa'id, Ja'far al-'Askari, 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Qassab, Jamil Midfa'i (A), Yasin al-Hashimi (A), Rashid 'Ali (A) Ali Jaudat, Muhsin abu'l-Tabikh (A,C), Muhammad al-Sadr (Shia, C).

   C. Amin al-Charchafchi, Muhammad al-Sadr (B), Muhsin al-Shallash, Shabibi brothers, most Shia tribal leaders and most Shia Cabinet members, Muhsin abu'l-Tabikh (A,B)

   These groupings are not intended to be anything more than a rough guide to the positions of the more important political figures. Not all of them can be accommodated: 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, for example, is difficult to classify with any of these groups, and many of the tribal leaders such as 'Abd al-Wahid al-Sikker and 'Abadi al-Husain follow complicated courses of action much as has been indicated for Muhsin abu'l-Tabikh.

2. See above, pages 199-200

could do little of their own accord to adjust the continuing and resented imbalance in Cabinet and civil service, they and their supporters were in a position to resist conscription: the tribes, united, would be more than a match for the Iraq army, and, as was well known, Britain would not be prepared to allow British troops to be used in the implementation of a policy of which the Residency so plainly disapproved. In these circumstances, instead of trying to placate these Shia leaders, or winning them over by suitable concessions, the Iraq Government seems to have taken no particular care to prevent what appears to have been a series of almost gratuitous offences to Shia susceptibilities.

The first sign of this tactlessness was a history of Islam published for use as a school textbook by the Ministry of Education. The book contained passages attacking the Shia which were bound to cause considerable annoyance. The book was subsequently banned, and the author dismissed from the educational service, but the bitterness remained, and there was a demonstration of secondary school students against the banning and the dismissal.(1) Further trouble occurred within the Ministry when a young Shia teacher, a personal protege of the Minister of Education (himself the only Shia in the Cabinet) was dismissed for a poem in praise of Persia which appeared in a provincial newspaper.(2) The Minister held that all dismissals should be referred to him for sanction, but the Director-General, Sati' al-Husri, disagreed. These trivial incidents annoyed the 'non nationalists', who believed that they were part of a

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 8 Jan, 5 Feb, 19 March 1927.
2. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 26 April 1927.

calculated programme of intrigue to force the Minister's resignation.

In mid-February, the rapid growth of the professedly sectarian al-Nahdha party had caused some alarm both at the Palace and at the Residency. Its General Secretary, Amin al-Charchafchi, was pressing for permission to publish a newspaper to be called either al-Nahdha or al-Ittihad: the intelligence report of the time notes :

> 'The men at the head of the movement are showing an unmistakable desire to intensify the exclusively Shia bias of the party, and the High Commissioner has spoken to the King of the dangers of a Sunni counter-movement being provoked if the activities of the Shia party became too prominent. His Majesty entirely agreed and said that the Iraq Government would refuse permission for the publication of the proposed new newspaper. He would also speak severely to Amin al-Charchafchi and other working with him and would attempt to prevent the formation of a purely sectarian political party.' (1)

Tensions rose in the provinces as well as in the capital: it was reported from Kut liwa of the longstanding quarrels between the Hai sirkals and their powerful Sa'dun landlords that 'the flames were fanned by the general Sunni/Shia tension, the judge there and the sirkals being Shias and the qaimmaqam and the mallaks all being Sunnis.' (2) The high water mark of the period however, occurred on a specifically religious occasion, the Muharram processions at Kadhimain.

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1. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 15 February 1927.

2. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 5 July 1927. For further details see Air 23/121. The dispute continued until the following Spring, the Government taking up the cause of the mallaks, who were substantially sided by their powerful brother, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun. See also page 139 note 1 for details of Sa'dun's part in the affair.

In 1927, Muharram, the month of Shia processions and 'passion plays', began on 1 July. The first few days passed off without incident, but on 9 July the Acting High Commissioner was concerned to varify a report which had reached him, that the Ministry of Defence considered it necessary to send a detachment of the Iraq Army to Kadhimain, since the Police were normally capable of controlling the crowds. Ja'far al-'Askari denied that troops had been sent. On the following day, 10 July, the course of the religious procession, a detachment of the Iraq army was seen to be present. Shots were fired: the crowd panicked, and a number of deaths and serious injuries resulted. The commander of the Army detachment, A.P.M. Muhi al-Din, a protégé of Nuri al-Sa'id, fired the first shot, but was acquitted of blame at a court of inquiry. For a time serious repercussions, in the form of more riots, seemed likely, in spite of an offer of compensation from the King. There are signs that the riot may have been deliberately provoked. Apart from the unusual presence of troops, there was:

> '... a story to the effect that on 4 July Ja'far al-'Askari's wife asked a lot of other ladies to take lunch with her at Kadhimain on the 10th and see the show. On the 8th or 9th she is stated to have cancelled the whole arrangement on the grounds that she had heard something would happen and she strongly advised the others not to visit the mosque on July 10th.' (1)

The acquittal, and even worse, the subsequent promotion, of Muhi al-Din, was not calculated to allay Shia suspicions that the riot was another and moreviolent development in the Government's campaign. The only concession to the Shia which followed the incident was the grant of permission to Amin

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1. See generally Delhi, BHCF, Miscellaneous File 34/83/1, Riot at Kadhimain on 10 July 1927. The quotation is from Edmonds to Bourdillon, D.O. SA 12 July 1927. c.f. a similar incident at Basra where soldiers attempted to interfere with the Muharram procession: SSO Basra to Air Headquarters Baghdad I/799 of 17 July 1927.
Air 23/432.

al-Charchafchi by the Ministry of Interior for the publication of al-Nahdha, which lost no time, in its first issue on 10 August in attacking the Cabinet, conscription, and the Government's failure so far to publish the results of the Kadhimain inquiry.(1) In fact, after less than eight weeks the paper was suspended by an order of the Council of Ministers, which occasioned angry correspondence between the Residency, the Prime Minister's Office and the Palace, where ex-King 'Ali was acting as Regent for his brother. Attempts by Cornwallis and the Acting High Commissioner to make the Government lift the suspension resulted in the resignation first of Yasin al-Hashimi and then of Rashid 'Ali from the Cabinet on the grounds of over-interference by H.M. Government in the internal affairs of Iraq.(2) A further incident took place at the end of the year, in which Shia 'ulama were alleged to have been manhandled in the cellars of the mosque at Samarra' :

> 'No issue of any importance is expected from this incident at Samarra', but following so closely upon the suspension of al-Nahdha,..... the tally of Shia grievances,....which cover a wide area, is increased by one.'(3)

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1. Note of 10 August 1927 in Delhi, BHCF, Press and Propaganda, File 29/93, al-Nahdha

2. Cornwallis to Acting High Commissioner, SA/97 of 23 October 1927, protesting against the suspension of al-Nahdha without Cornwallis' permission: Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 524 of 28 October 1927, reporting Yasin's resignation: High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 611 of 20 December 1927, reporting Rashid 'Ali's resignation. Delhi, BHCF, Press and Propaganda File 29/93, al-Nahdha.

3. SSO Baghdad to Air Headquarters, I/Bd/39, 14 Nov 1927. Air 23/432.

Predictably, the Shia leaders, and al-Charchafchi in particular, were subjected to swinging criticisms when the King and his party returned from Europe with so much less than they had hoped for. Ja'far al-'Askari blamed the al-Nahdha group and its activities, and the King was reported as being exceedingly angry. At an interview at the Palace on 23 December, al-Charchafchi was rebuked severely by the King for having broken the oath he had sworn, to refrain from agitation in any way during the King's absence: he replied that the failure of the Government to punish Muhi al-Din, the prime mover of the Kadhimain riot, had made further silence impossible.[1] Again :

> 'In conversation on 21 December Nuri Pasha stated that during the London conversation appeals from the Shia leaders were constantly being received from the Colonial Office; these greatly weakened the position of the Iraqi delegates and influenced the British delegates in refusing extensive concessions.'[2]

There is however little real evidence to support this contention. Dobbs and the Colonial Office certainly knew of the agitation in Iraq, but H.M. Government were animated far more by the necessity of devising a new formula for British control in Iraq than by anything more than a passing solicitude for Shia aspirations.

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1. Apparently Amin al-Charchafchi and Fakhri al-Kammuna had taken this oath: see Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 6 August 1927.

2. Intelligence Report, 21 December 1927: Abstract of Police Intelligence, 17, 24 December 1927. al-Charchafchi's attitude also lost him the support of other Shias, notably Ridha al-Shabibi and Ja'far abu-l-Timman who considered that 'touting for British support was directly opposed to the idea of national freedom.' See SSO to AHQ I/Bd/35 of 22 December 1927. Air 23/432.

Negotiations for a new Treaty, September to December 1927

We have seen that one of the motives behind the unfortunately worded invitation sent to Faisal in July was simply to get him away from Baghdad, where his presence was becoming unbearable. Bourdillon, Edmonds, and Air-Vice Marshal Ellington all seriously canvassed the idea that if Faisal could not be persuaded to stop his interventions in the administration, he should be made to abdicate. Edmonds noted :-

> '....the opinion is widely expressed in the most unexpected circles that the disappearance of the dangerous neurotic is after all the only solution to the present problems.'[1]

Unfortunately, having managed to lure the 'dangerous neurotic' away from Baghdad, it was not, at first, found possible to mollify him. It was clear that Britain did not contemplate much more, at this stage, than a provisional recommendation for Iraq's entry to the League in 1932, and this was not sufficient to satisfy Faisal and those close to him. Shuckburgh and Hall returned from Aix-les-Bains after their conversations with Faisal somewhat perplexed as to the best policy to pursue.[2] However, by the end of September, the Colonial Office and the High Commissioner (who remained in London until December) had reached a new agreement which meant in effect that Faisal would not have to go home empty-handed. A revised Treaty was proposed which would relax Britain's formal rights of intervention in the affairs of Iraq, but which would at the same time maintain firm control over everything affecting British interests and Britain's external obligations. 'In other words', as the Middle East Department's memorandum succinctly puts it, 'to retain the substance at some sacrifice of form.' This memorandum also takes due note of the fact

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1. Note on the Political Situation to 27 September 1927, by C.J. Edmonds, enclosed in D.O. 2032 Sturges to Shuckburgh, 1 October 1927. CO 730/123/40465.
2. See Page 210

that, not only did Faisal need Britain in order to maintain himself in power, but that Britain also needed a pliant and cooperative ruler in Iraq :

> 'For better or for worse we have chosen King Faisal as the instrument of our policy. In the eyes of the world we are identified with his regime. He may have his failings like the rest of us, but upon the whole he has served us well and there is the greatest objection to any course which would seriously antagonise him or place him a position which he would regard as untenable. The loss of his goodwill and cooperation (to say nothing of his covert hostility) would make our position untenable. We cannot, in fact, have a contented Iraq without a reasonably contented Faisal.'[1]

Furthermore, it was a fact that Britain's formal right to restrain the Iraq Government, or the King, had never been invoked, since the High Commissioner's power was based far more on his ability to threaten the withdrawal of British support than by any more overt sanctions. Unfortunately for the authorities in London, Faisal also realised that nothing of 'substance' was being offered.

Thus although the negotiations could begin for a new Treaty, they reached deadlock almost immediately. The cause of the first difficulty was the control of the defence of Iraq. Faisal and his entourage argued that if Britain actually intended to carry out the terms of the Military Agreement in 1928, and leave Iraq at the end of that year, then, ipso facto, control of defence must logically thereafter rest with the Iraq Government. It followed that the right of the High Commissioner even to offer advice could not under those circumstances continue. Dobbs considered that it would be wise for Britain formally to waive the stipulation that British

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1. See Iraq: suggested Treaty Revision Memorandum prepared in the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office, 28 September 1927. CO 730/120/40299 A Part I.

forces would leave:

> 'the recent enormous commitments of the T.P.C. and the A.P.O.C in Iraq and the discoveries of immense quantities of oil in the concessions of both of them make it now impossible to abandon control of Iraq without damaging important British and foreign interests. It was very different when the existence of oil was doubtful, as it was when the last Anglo-Iraqi treaty was discussed.'[1]

Once Britain had committed herself to staying in Iraq, this implied that the situation as far as ultimate responsibility for defence remained as before, in Britain's hands. Faisal however was particularly fond of a form of words which included either 'joint responsibility' or a 'share in responsibility' for defence: Dobbs wrote to Shuckburgh on 11 November that 'he has always been a slave of this phrase and a fanatic upon it even from the time of his earliest discussions with Cox.'[2] This concession was of course unacceptable to the Air Ministry in particular: Dobbs tried apparently in vain for two days to convince Faisal of the argument that the dispensation from <u>having</u> to accept the High Commissioner's advice was based upon the premise that H.M. Government would withdraw all its troops; since Britain was now prepared to stay to help the Iraq Government, she must retain her former powers.[3] For the time being Faisal seemed immoveable; on 18 November the Acting High Commissioner in Baghdad was

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1. Memorandum by Sir Henry Dobbs, 18 October 1927. CO 730/123/40465. The great oil strike at Baba Gurgur had occurred on 15 October.

2. Memorandum for Sir John Shuckburgh, 11 Nov 1927. CO 730/120/42088A Part II.

3. Report of a meeting between King Faisal and Sir Henry Dobbs, 17-18 November 1927, CO 730/120/40299 A Part II.

informed that Faisal had decided to suspend negotiations for the Treaty, and to explain this in Baghdad by reference to Britain's promise to take full responsibility for the defence of Iraq after 1928. This was followed by several days of stalemate, in the course of which Faisal vacillated between this policy, refusal to return to Iraq, and abdication.[1]

After ten days of suspense, a face-saving formula was devised. At a lunch party at Claridges on 28 November, Faisal asked Chamberlain whether Britain would come to Iraq's aid in the event of trouble arising as a result of Iraq following Britain's advice. Chamberlain replied that he was sure that Britain would not fail to do what was necessary in those circumstances: Faisal said that he would be prepared to accept that assurance and negotiations were resumed.[2] On 2 December Baghdad was informed that agreement had been reached and that the signature of the new Treaty was expected daily. This took place on 14 December, and by 20 December Faisal was back in Baghdad, faced with the uphill task of convincing both supporters and waverers that something substantial had in fact been achieved.

The task proved, as had been foreseen, not only uphill but virtually impossible. The two strong men of the Cabinet, Yasin and Rashid'Ali, had already resigned over the Nahdha incident, and it was only a matter of a few days before Nuri and Ja'far handed in their resignations as well. The

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1. S/S Colonies to Acting High Commissioner Baghdad Tgm 414 of 18 November 1927. Note by Dobbs for Shuckburgh, 24 November 1927. CO 730/120/40299A Part II.

2. Memorandum of events subsequent to the breaking off of discussions with King Faisal on 18 November, dated 29 November 1927.

announcement that Britain would formally support Iraq in 1932 on the condition that all went well in the interim, that Britain would not abandon Iraq in 1928, and that the ratification of the new Treaty depended on a satisfactory revision of the Military and Financial Agreements, did not serve so much to conclude the events that had gone before as to open up a period of renewed and more intense disagreement and conflict between Britain and Iraq. Britain was prepared to be obstinate until the essential safeguards for her interests were obtained, while the Iraq Government for their part persisted in refusing to be deflected from the goal of the kind of independence which they sought.

Stalemate. December 1927 to September 1929

On 7 January 1928, in view of the resignations, and the Prime Minister's undoubted anxiety to escape back to the Legation in London, Ja'far's cabinet resigned. The situation, just as in, November 1922 and July 1925, called for a more or less 'non-political' ministry, since neither the nationalists nor the court party would accept office under the circumstances of the latest Treaty negotiations. Only one man, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, could be relied upon both by the Palace and by the Residency, to form a government, and the known coolness between Sa'dun and the King had the advantage of enabling the latter to plead, if necessary, to his own supporters that the choice had been forced upon him by Britain.[1] The new

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1. Or even to oppose the Prime Minister: Faisal was reported to have told Amin al-Charchafchi to work ostensibly with 'Abd al-Muhsin, but in fact to take orders from Yasin, and work against 'Abd al-Muhsin, if he wished to secure his rights. Abstract of Police Intelligence 28 January 1928.

ministry contained Sa'dun himself at Defence, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Qassab at Interior, Yusuf al-Ghanima at Finance, Hikmat Sulaiman at Justice, Taufiq al-Suwaidi at Education and Shaikh Ahmad al-Da'ud at Auqaf. There were two Shia members, Muhsin al-Shallash at Communications and Works and Salman al-Barrak at Irrigation and Agriculture, much to the dissatisfaction of Shia politicians, who had expected four Shia representatives and who had in any case never forgiven Sa'dun for his involvement in the deportation of the 'ulama.[1]

The most pressing problem facing the new Government was the revision of the Military agreement with Britain that had been written into the 1927 Treaty. Particularly, this involved problems of finance and organisation: how much money would Iraq be asked to spend, and could she afford it? On 20 December 1927, Dobbs had informed the Colonial Office that the Cabinet were anxious for detailed proposals from Britain on the amount and nature of the assistance which would be given to the Iraqi forces, to enable the Government to produce estimates for the coming budget. The problem of defence arrangements had become particularly acute in the face of threats of invasion from Najd and pressure from the Baghdad press for an 'active' defence policy. Dobbs asked for authorisation to tell the Government formally that the 'Daly scheme' must now be dropped, because of opposition to conscription: that the R.A.F. and the two Levy battalions would stay in Iraq and be paid for out of British funds: that surplus stores and equipment would be handed over at 10% of their book value at the conclusion of the new Military

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1. Neither of the two Shia were closely connected with the Hizb al-Nahdha. See Abstract of Police Intelligence, 14 January 1928.

Agreement: that H.M. Government should continue to give a subsidy to the Iraq Army for 1928-31, provided that there was no reduction in the number of British officers, and finally that Britain would continue to honour her pledge to train Iraqis for the Iraq Air Force. It took 20 months to wheedle an agreement out of H.M. Government on these items.[1]

The situation early in 1928, therefore, was that although it was known that the R.A.F. would be retained in Iraq for some indefinite period after the end of 1928, the precise details, and particularly the cost to Iraq, had still to be worked out. In the absence of any definite information on such matters, conscription still remained a live issue: Sa'dun was not inclined to favour its introduction, but realised that it might become an important issue in the elections:

> 'If he is forced by election exigiencies to disclose his policy about conscription he will say that he considers that it will ultimately be necessary but that public opinion is not ripe for it.'[2]

To ease the Prime Minister's difficulties, and to make clear his own and the Air Officer Commanding's position, Dobbs requested that a Parliamentary Question should be asked and answered in London to the effect that Britain, while doubting the advisability of conscription, would not oppose it, but would not help the Iraq Government to enforce it, nor take any responsibility if any trouble broke out in consequence.[3]

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies Tgm 612 of 20 Dec 1927. CO 730/125/40626.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 14 of 8 Jan 1928. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations, File 24/14/8, Formation of a Cabinet under 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun.

3. Dobbs to Shuckburgh, DO. SO 259 1 Feb 1928. CO 730/128/58003.

The requested assurance was eventually given in the House of Commons at the end of April.[1]

On the question of costs, H.M. Government was less compliant. It was insisted, as a matter of principle, that Iraq should pay the difference, about £20,000 per annum, between the costs of the R.A.F's being stationed at home and being stationed in Iraq.[2] Dobbs pointed out, for the time being in vain, that the Iraq Government regarded such a payment as inequitable, and also that they feared that once the principle of surplus costs was admitted, Iraq might have to pay substantial sums in the event of any large-scale air operations based in Iraq. Furthermore:

> '....there is an increasing tendency to regard British forces in Iraq as available for Imperial purposes outside Iraq, e.g., the defence of Kuwait and ensuring the safety of British personnel on the oilfields of the A.P.O.C. It will be exceedingly difficult to justify to the Iraq Parliament the principle of payment for excess costs.'[3]

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1. Hansard, 23 April 1928. See Iraq Times, 25 April 1928.

2. The total cost to Britain was divided as follows :

	1928-29	1929-30
R.A.F.	£ 232,000	£ 185,000
Levies	225,000	200,000
Indian Battalion	63,000	-
Grant in Aid to Army	75,000	75,000
Moiety of High Commission expenses	25,000	25,000
	620,000	485,000

Trenchard to Shuckburgh, 31 October 1927. CO 730/125/40607.

3. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies Tgm 211 of 10 April 1928. CO 730/129/58011.

In fact, in the course of the year it became clear that Iraqi politicians, of whatever political complexion, were convinced that the object of British policy was to maintain Iraq in a state of dependence on Britain and not to allow her to build up the necessary forces to make the promised independence a reality.

The elections for a new Chamber of Deputies occupied the period between mid-January and mid-May. In the course of these months Faisal and Nuri did their best to secure an anti-Sa'dun chamber, hoping, apparently, to defeat the new Cabinet and force the reappointments of the 'Askari Cabinet with enhanced powers.[1] The new Cabinet was itself in a highly unenviable position, since it lacked the support of the Palace, the nationalists, and the Shia, and the Prime Minister could be attacked, with some justification, by all three groups, on the grounds that he was no more than the High Commissioner's nominee. Three weeks after the dissolution of Parliament there was a violent demonstration against Britain and Zionism, occasioned by the visit of Sir Alfred Mond to Baghdad. The demonstration was ostensibly organised by Yusuf Zainal, Hamid Dabbuni and Talib Mushtaq of the Teachers Training College, but further investigations gave strong grounds for the belief that the teachers and pupils taking part had received active encouragement from more august quarters. Yasin and Rashid 'Ali had met with Zainal and Mushtaq a few days before the incidents, and the King

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1. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 18 Jan 1928.

was widely believed to have been implicated.[1] It was also reported that Nuri al-Sa'id, as Deputy Commander in Chief, had given special leave of absence to a number of his tougher personal adherents in the Iraq Army to be available to encourage voters to vote against the Government candidates.[2]

At the same time, Faisal was trying to influence the Shia party either to oppose 'Abd al-Muhsin themselves, or to join the Palace party. To this end, Yasin and Ja'far al-'Askari were sent on conciliatory visits to leading Shia, including 'Umran al-Hajji al-Sa'dun, the Shabibi brothers and Naji Salih, pointing out 'Abd al-Muhsin's record of intolerance towards the Shia. Efforts were made to encourage Ja'far abu-l-Timman to take part in politics again, while Amin al-Charchafchi was carefully excluded from the Baghdad election inspection committee once he had announced his support for the Prime Minister.[3] However, by the time the new Parliament met in May, most of the opposition to the Government had either been defeated at the polls or simply melted away. Out of a Chamber of 88, 66 Deputies could be counted upon to support the Government,[4] proving almost

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1. See High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies Tgm 82 of 9 Feb 1928: Secret Police Report, Wilkins to Dobbs, 12 Feb: Smith (Inspector-General of Education) to Dobbs, 19 Feb: D.O. R.O. 49, Dobbs to Faisal 20 Feb, suggesting that it was unwise to bring political offenders before the courts, but recommending their exile under section 40 of the TCCDR. Delhi, BHCF, Interior, File 7/17/144. Anti-Zionist Demonstration on the occasion of the visit of Sir Alfred Mond to Iraq, 1928.

2. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 1 February 1928. Muhi al-Din of the Kadhimain riot was one of these.

3. Abstracts of Police Intelligence, 18, 25 Feb 1928.

4. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 23 May 1928.

incontrovertibly the power of the Government of the day to rig the returns in its own favour. On this occasion, allegations of irregularities at the polls were received from Baghdad, Basra, Mosul and Kut where the election was actually declared invalid.[1]

Little progress towards the re-negotiation of the agreements had been possible over these months, although Dobbs had repeatedly tried to ease his own and Sa'dun's position by asking the Colonial Office to intercede with the Treasury to make concessions in the more sensitive areas of disagreement, the R.A.F. costs and the railways. It is almost incredible that the Treasury remained so obstinate for so long: as Dobbs and many other people realised, British forces would stay on in Iraq whether the Iraqis paid the difference or not. The Air Force, the High Commissioner maintained, was in Iraq to protect the Abadan oil refinery, the developing Iraqi oilfields, to safeguard Imperial air communications, and to be trained in terrain offering useful facilities for practice and development. Moreover, he concluded, 'the people of Iraq are as well aware of these facts as we are.'[2]

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1. Baghdad: - Abstract of Police Intelligence 12 May 1928: Basra and Mosul:- Fortnightly Intelligence Report 23 May 1928: Kut:- See A.I. Kut to Adviser, Minister of Interior S/543/91 of 3 June 1928, which contains reports of 'fantastic' exaggerations in the lists of primary voters submitted to the election committees:
   '..of these irregularities some have been caused by the practical impossibility of applying the letter of the law to a purely tribal area such as this division: others can only be described as deliberate.'
   Enclosed in High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch Secret 'S' of 16 June 1928. CO 730/130/58139.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 423 of 18 August 1928. CO 730/134/58400.

al-Wadha' al-Shadd

It was at this time, between the conditional promise and the unconditional offer of independence, that Iraqis seemed to have found the anomalies of the mandate system in their country most perplexing and bewildering. The phrase, "al Wadha' al-Shadd" became the common shorthand to describe the situation:

> 'When the King is impotent to work his will it is the Wadha' al-Shadd: when the ministers are criticised, their answer is the Wadha' al-Shadd: when officials fail in their duty it is the Wadha' al-Shadd, and when the cry goes up from the peasants that they are starving the fat effendi finds his conscience easy: 'Que voulez-vous, c'est l'oudha al-shadd.' ... The belief is widespread that there is, inherent in the present peculiar 'perplexing predicament' of the country, something fundamental which is an insuperable obstacle to progress towards real independence, and that this obstacle is the Wadha' al-Shadd for which England is alone responsible.'[1]

Perhaps the hyperbolic style of this passage is the best proof of its authenticity; the fortnightly intelligence reports from one of which this extract is taken, were compiled by the Oriental Secretary, the member of the Residency staff officially most closely in touch with local feeling and opinion.[2] The countless contradictions and difficulties which confronted Iraqi politicians and leaders must have been the subject of endless conversations in Holt's office. The Report on Iraq for 1928 notes that this situation was imaginary and existed 'only in the minds of fervid patriots', but since this Report was not published until the autumn of the following year, by which time relations had significantly improved, the

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1. Intelligence Report, 26 September 1928: of Ireland, P.W. p 368.

2. Miss Gertrude Bell was Oriental Secretary from 1916-1926: she was succeeded by Captain Vyvyan Holt who served from 1926 to 1947.

the difficulties inherent in Anglo-Iraqi relations in 1928 are probably characterised fairly accurately here.[1] At that time, no proposal could be put forward by the Iraq Prime Minister or the Cabinet that the Colonial Office did not seem to reject out of hand, and yet the possibility of independence was only five years away.

The whole period between the autumn of 1927 and September 1929 is marked by a sense of impotence of the Iraq Government, in the face of British refusal to compromise, and thus any chance of manoeuvre was eagerly seized upon. The B.O.D. Company's bid for a share in Iraqi oil in April 1928, which enabled the Iraq Government to delay regranting the T.P.C.'s concession, was a welcome opportunity for the Iraq Government to use what bargaining power it possessed, and here at least it appeared for a time that progress might be made. The B.O.D's offer, of immediate exploitation of any oil the company found, as well as the construction of a pipeline and railway between the Tigris and the Mediterranean, was probably fanciful, given the B.O.D.'s lack of share capital[2], but it had the effect of forcing the T.P.C to come forward with a similar construction project. Thus the Iraq Government was content to play the two companies off against each other in the hope of raising the bidding.. In the event of course, the T.P.C. was given the concession, and built the pipeline, but for a while, until the Cabinet's resignation at the end of 1928, the Iraq Government managed to keep the upper hand in at least one important area of conflict.

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1. Iraq Report, 1928.... pp 16-27.

2. Longrigg, S.H. Oil in the Middle East, p 74

The main difference outstanding between the British and Iraq Government at this stage was the question of defence. Britain was not, because of her Imperial and commercial interests, prepared to allow Iraq to take responsibility for her own defence.[1] In October, Dobbs wondered whether it might not after all be possible for Britain to relax her control over the Iraq Army and let the Iraqis go their own way.[2]

After some weeks the Cabinet replied that after careful consideration:

> 'H.M. Government are unable to accept policy suggested.... and are not prepared to dissassociate themselves from organisation... of Iraq Army to extent proposed... you should emphasise that H.M. Government are not prepared to make any further concessions on matters of principle.'[3]

If presented direct to the Iraq Government this statement would, as Dobbs knew, cause the Cabinet's immediate resignation. Moved by a high regard for

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1. For the 'orthodox' policy see S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad, Tgm 423 of 25 Oct 1928:
   > 'The ultimate control of the defence forces of Iraq whether British or Iraqi must remain in British hands as long as final responsibility for the defence of the country rests with H.M. Government.'
   Clayton Papers, University of Durham, Box 472/13.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch Secret 'B' of 20 October 1928. CO 730/134/58400.

3. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad, Tgm 633 of 31 Dec 1928 CO 730/134/58400.

'Abd al-Muhsin and, understandably, by a desire to clear things up for his successor, Sir Gilbert Clayton, Dobbs made a final effort to clear up the situation. He asked H.M. Government earnestly to consider whether the advantages of persisting to secure all possible treaty safeguards for British forces would outweigh the disadvantages which might attend the Cabinet's resignation, and suggested that it would be far better to use his own favourite weapon, the threat of refusal to permit the Iraq Government to call on the assistance of British forces in emergencies.

> 'There have in fact been recent signs that (the moderates) genuinely suspect that H.M. Government have changed their policy regarding Iraq because of the increased importance of Iraq as a corridor for aircraft and the discoveries of oil. I feel that we risk a final defeat of an independent Iraq 'friendly and bound by ties of obligation to H.M. Government.' 1

This appeal was of no avail, and although agreeing to stay in office as caretakers, the Cabinet resigned on 21 January 1929.

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Tgm 633 of 31 Dece 1928. CO 730/134/58400 Part II.

In London, the seriousness of the situation was readily apparent. It was feared that the whole basis of cooperation in which the existing arrangements depended might collapse. Jebb minuted:

> 'The outlook is bleak. The King and Nuri want to manoeuvre us into the position of having either to acquiesce in measures which would damage our Imperial interests or to tear down the Treaty facade from the mandatory building, the latter is the more likely probability. But perhaps Sir Gilbert Clayton will be able to rescue us from this dilemma.' 1

However, in spite of the crisis in Baghdad, there were no signs that it had spread beyond the confines of political circles in the city; the 'complete and unprecedented' state of public security in the country was not being adversely affected.[2] In spite of his pessimism about the chances of finding a successor to Sa'dun, Dobbs felt at the end of January that it would be better to wait for Clayton's arrival before actually pressing matters any further. The Iraq Government apparently hoped that the new High Commissioner, an old friend of the King and Nuri, might be able to find some way out of the dilemma that would be less wounding to Iraqi susceptibilities. When they were forced to realise that Clayton would not yield either, and the Government was faced with what would then certainly be regarded as a final refusal, Dobbs believed that Sa'dun would be able to carry on as before, 'since the country is perfectly tranquil and little interest is taken in the political crisis outside Baghdad.' 3

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1. Minute on High Commissioner's Telgram 524 of 16 October 1928 by G.Jebb (Foreign Office), 18 Oct 1928: E5000/133/93,FO 371/13035.
2. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Despatch Confidential 'B', 4 December 1928. Clayton Papers, University of Durham, Box 472/13.
3. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Tgm 48 of 29 Jan 1929. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations, File 23/14/8. Formation of a Cabinet under 'Abd al-Muhsin Beg al-Sa'dun.

Dobbs summarised the situation in a final despatch written at the end of January 1929, three days before he left. Faisal had made Sa'dun's position impossible by telling all the prominent political and tribal personalities that anyone who accepted the 1927 Treaty was a traitor: in the face of mounting pressures of this kind, the Prime Minister could not continue. Faisal had told the High Commissioner that his sole aim was to secure Iraq's entry to the League in 1932: if Britain really intended to support Iraq's candidature, let her show her determination by strengthening the Iraq Army sufficiently for the purpose. All he asked from Britain was a promise that unreserved support would be given for this date, and that Britain should withdraw from Iraqi defence affairs to a position of simply helping out the Iraq Army in emergencies. Meanwhile, the King and his circle felt that they had little to lose by maintaining the present stalemate.[1]

For the first two months after Clayton's arrival there was no sign of any progress at all, and the Iraq Government took advantage of the lull to enter the lists once more with the T.P.C. At this stage the interim extensions of the original concession given by the Iraq Government to the Company seemed unlikely to be renewed, and the Government had drawn up a new list of conditions. They were prepared to extend the concession for five years, but on the condition that after two years a railway and pipeline survey had been made, and that in the latter three years, the surveys would be followed by construction. The T.P.C. found itself in a dilemma. First,

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret 31 Jan 1929. Delhi, BHCF, Military, File 4/69 Vol II Conscription.

as Gulbenkian pointed out, it was an oil company and not a civil engineering firm; while it might well be prepared to sign a concession agreement and arrange for a survey, it was doubtful whether the former should be made depend upon the latter. Secondly, the route of the proposed pipeline and railway was a sensitive matter: the French members of the T.P.C. board preferred Tripoli as the point of debouchment, while the British members naturally wanted Haifa. Fortunately for Britain, King Faisal also preferred Haifa, and it was agreed in London in March, that if Faisal and the Iraqis wanted Haifa, they should be allowed to have it.[1] It might be difficult to convince the French that Britain was acting entirely disinterestedly in the matter, but as the Colonial Office argued, it was the Mandatory's duty to protect her charge from exploitation by sophisticated European concessionaires.[2] In the face of rumours in April that the French were starting to build a railway from Homs to Dair al-Zor, the Colonial Office proposed that H.M. Government should immediately offer an interest free loan to Iraq to enable the construction of the Tigris-Mediterranean railway.[3] After many delays, as we shall see, the railway project was dropped, but the pipeline was commenced after the T.P.C. had secured a new concession in 1931, and was finally completed in 1934.

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1. Cab 12(29), Meeting of 20 March 1929. CO 730/146/68354 I 'B'.
2. Cabinet Paper C.P. 125(29) 24 April 1929. CO 730/146/68354 I 'B'
3. Draft Memorandum, Colonial Office, 29 April 1929. CO 730/146/68354 I 'B'.

Dobbs left Baghdad on 3 February, and his successor arrived there a month later. During the brief interregnum there had been attempts to rally public opinion behind a new combination of court and nationalist factions, attempting yet again to convince the Shia that the interests of the country would be best served by the introduction of conscription. However, after a fervent speech by Ali Mahmud, a prominent lawyer and member of the newly formed Hizb al-Watani (patriotic party), to an audience at the Shia Nadi al-Nahdha,

> '....an uncomfortable silence followed his being asked how the Shias would defend themselves from the Sunnis after the British had left.' [1]

Soon after his arrival, Clayton found that the King and the Prime Minister had found a new formula, which, if accepted, would at least enable the Cabinet to resume its active responsibilities. The best way out of the impasse was simply to sidestep the main problem and concentrate on what were considered to be the more negotiable issues. Sa'dun and Faisal put five proposals to Clayton. First, the 1927 Treaty should be done away with, and the 1924 Agreements should simply be prolonged: second, that H.M. Government should at once inform the League of the precise date at which they would be putting forward Iraq's candidature: third, that H.M. Government should relax its attitude towards conscription: fourth, that H.M. Government should encourage British capital to finance enterprises in Iraq, and finally that the negotiations over the Iraq railways should be reopened. The High Commissioner himself tended to support all these proposals except the third. He felt that the present difficulties stemmed from a suspicion and lack of confidence on the part of the Iraqis of

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 16 February 1929.

Britain's real intentions. They could not see in particular how the prevailing military arrangements accorded with the promise to support Iraqi candidature in 1932 and believed that the conditional clause was a ploy through which this recommendation could be deferred. Hence Clayton supported the removal of the condition, and the announcement of definite support for 1932. [1]

For their part, H.M. Government were only able to accept the first proposal without reservation. The most crucial, the demand for an immediate application to the League would not, it was alleged, be granted since the League would not accept notification so far in advance. The furthest that London was prepared to go was :

> 'to inform League Council at earliest opportunity when notifying that body that it is not proposed to proceed with 1927 Treaty, and that it is H.M. Government's intention, unless in the meantime any serious check in the political or economic progress of the country has occurred, to recommend to the Council at their June session in 1932....that Iraq should be admitted to membership of the League forthwith.' [2]

As Clayton had expected, this disappointing answer, together with an equally dampening statement on conscription, caused Sa'dun to hand in his resignation immediately. He promised to give full support to any ministry which might beformed, but he could no longer lead a Cabinet which he considered to have no legal authority. His position, between the King, the Residency and the rest of the Cabinet, was far from enviable, and it

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgms 110,111 of 14 March 1929, printed in C.P. 103 (29) CO 730/139/68015 Part II.

2. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad, Tgm 108 of 25 March 1929. CO 730/139/68015 Part II.

seems likely that it is his refusal to compromise in these difficult months, together with his dramatic death in the autumn, that led to his remaining something approaching a national hero in Iraq, one of the only such survivals from the Mandate period. Even Muhammad al-Sadr, who often bitterly criticised what he considered Sa'dun's anti-Shia policies, praised him for 'strengthening the national spirit.' [1]

Until some substantial move was made by one or other of the two sides, the only way to progress at all was to ignore all major problems. At the end of April:

> 'His Majesty informed me that the Ministers had held a meeting and had decided that as they did not consider that the proposals as modified by H.B.M.G. would form a basis on which a Ministry could be formed with any prospect of the support of Parliament, they had come to the conclusion that it would be preferable to form a Ministry without making any allusion to these proposals merely on the basis of dropping the 1927 Treaty and the negotiations for the Military and Financial Agreements. The question of admission to the League would thus not form part of the Ministry's programme... His Majesty brought the interview to a close by saying that by this arrangement the crisis was finished.' [2]

Taufiq al-Suwaidi was disposed to accept these principles and form a Cabinet at the King's request, though he came under heavy fire from the nationalists for doing so. In his memoirs he recalls that he and Nuri were both invited to the Palace: Nuri refused to take office with al-Suwaidi, though al-Suwaidi did not object to Nuri. [3] Thus the Cabinet was at last formed, without Nuri, Amin Zaki taking the portfolio of Defence: Yusuf al-Ghanima and the two Shia members retained their offices, and the newcomers to the Ministry included 'Abd al'Aziz al-Qassab, Khalid Sulaiman

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 16 March 1929.

2. Note of an interview with King Faisal 24 April 1929. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations File 23/14/9: Cabinet of Taufiq Beg al-Suwaidi.

3. Taufiq al-Suwaidi, Mudhakkirat, pp 129-40.

and Da'ud al-Haidari at Interior, Education, and Justice respectively. In spite of wild talk in nationalists circles about demonstrations and even tribal risings, nothing happened at all. It is a curious feature of this period, between the beginning of 1928 and the autumn of 1929, that apart from the 1928 elections, political activity seems to have been confined to a kind of vacuum, in which the main participants were sealed off from the rest of the population. There was little of the widespread political activity among the Shia that had characterised the period immediately before, nor the deep hostility to the court party's government which emerged afterwards.

Thus in spite of criticisms, and in spite of its inability to break the deadlock now in existence for almost a year, the very appearance of a government after a period of some months in which business had been virtually suspended was generally welcomed outside the immediate circle of nationalist and palace politicians. In the Hizb al-Taqaddum, the bloc of moderates led by 'Abd al-Muhsin, on whom any Cabinet had to base its majority, only seven out of fifty-four members opposed giving the new Cabinet their support.[1] Perhaps the continuing calm may be explained by a feeling that the initiative now lay well and truly with Britain, since the Iraq Government had done everything possible in the way of accommodation. For his part, Clayton continued to press London for concessions, arguing, as Dobbs had done that such concessions would have

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1. Ma'ruf al-Chiawuk, Nuri al-Sa'id, Ahmad al-Da'ud, Naji Shaukat, Isma'il al-Kawanduzi, Jamil al-Rawi, Jalal Baban.

infinitely greater effect if they could be made spontaneously, rather than at the end of a period of acrimonious bargaining.[1]

It was predictable that in these strained circumstances the King and his party would not be able to contain themselves for long: Faisal was soon having recourse to the tactics which he had employed to undermine Sa'dun. In the middle of June, 'Abd al-Muhsin reported to Edmonds that the King was doing his best to destroy the al-Suwaidi Cabinet. Faisal proposed a 'coalition' under Nuri: 'Abd al-Muhsin considered this unconstitutional, especially in view of the fact that the Chamber of Deputies had recently shown its confidence in the ministry by passing the budget by forty-five votes to nine. Clayton took Faisal to task for his interference, but the King's underground tactics continued. Both the court and the nationalist groups gained additional encouragement from the hope of a Labour victory in the British general elections, which, as they correctly anticipated, might bring about a change in British policy. Meanwhile, the King was making conditions impossible for Taufiq al-Suwaidi: Edmonds wrote to Clayton at the end of June:

> ' 'Abd al-Muhsin has little doubt that the next step would be for the palace (--- that is Nuri, the two are synonymous) to organise bands of roughs to insult ministers publicly, while the King would stultify the work of the Cabinet by refusing to assent to its decisions.'[2]

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies Despatch, Secret 'B' of 13 May 1929. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations, File 23/14/9 Cabinet of Taufiq Beg al-Suwaidi.

2. Note of an interview with 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, 17 June 1929: enclosed in C.J. Edmonds to Sir Gilbert Clayton, 17 June 1929. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations File 23/14/9: Cabinet of Taufiq Beg al-Suwaidi.

The Labour victory in England did not, ultimately, disappoint the more moderate Baghdad politicians, though its effect took some little time to reach Baghdad. In June 1929 a Cabinet committee was set up under the chairmanship of the Lord Privy Seal to consider development projects in the colonies in the light of the unemployment situation in Britain. Before considering any such project in Iraq the chairman, J.H. Thomas, considered that the whole question of Britain's Iraq policy should be reviewed. Shuckburgh noted on 1 July:

> 'If I understand Mr. Thomas rightly, his idea is that the question should be raised in its broadest from, viz., are we or are we not, to maintain our present connection with Iraq?'[1]

In Iraq, since no immediate pronouncement was forthcoming from London, business was suspended again. 'Abd al-Muhsin was summoned from Lebanon to try to take charge of the situation: the nationalists suggested a deputation to London: letters and telegrams of protest were despatched. On 31 August Taufiq al-Suwaidi formally resigned. Reduced to essentials, Clayton had stated very precisely what Britain and Iraq required from one another in a despatch sent to the Colonial Office at the end of July. Britain wanted security for Imperial communications, the continued presence of the R.A.F. and an assurance that all foreign officials should be British. Iraq wanted her payments for the High Commissioner and British forces suspended, her affairs to be handled by the Foreign Office rather than the Colonial Office, and an unconditional statement of support for Iraq entry to the League in 1932.[2]

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1. Note by Shuckburgh, 1 July 1929. CO 730/148/68043.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret 'B' of 22 July 1929. CO 730/148/68444 Part I.

These proposals were submitted to the usual lengthy consideration from London, but eventually the new political atmosphere, and the accumulated advice from Baghdad, prevailed. On 11 September the Colonial Office informed the High Commissioner that H.M. Government were now prepared to agree to suspend the 1927 Treaty and approach the League in the sense that the Iraqis required, and nearly two years of deadlock were broken. Tragically, Clayton never knew the result of his endeavours, as he died on the day that the telegram was sent from London: it was left to the Air Officer Commanding, as Acting High Commissioner, together with C.J. Edmonds as interpreter, to break the news to King Faisal three days later.[1] The King was delighted, and 'Abd al-Muhsin agreed to form his fourth and last Cabinet on the condition that he did not have 'to suffer .... unconstitutional interference from the Palace after the new Government was in office.'[2]

September 1929 was the real watershed in Anglo-Iraqi relations, probably of more genuine significance than the actual termination of the Mandate. It was at last realised that it was possible to seem to relax control

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1. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad Tgm 264 of 11 September 1929: Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies Despatch, Secret 'A' of 23 September 1929. CO 730/148/68403.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Tgm 323 of 16 September 1929. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations, File 23/14/10, Formation of Cabinet under 'Abd al-Muhsin Beg al-Sa'dun.

without actually doing so. The Iraq Government did not want and could not contemplate the withdrawal of British forces, but it could also not be seen to be too heavily dependent on Britain. Conscription had been an assertion of independence which in fact failed through sheer lack of support. It was necessary for Britain to make some affirmation of the fact that, in formal terms, she did not intend to stay in Iraq. This was done first through promising unconditional support in 1929 for entry in three years' time, and again in 1930 by the new Anglo-Iraq Treaty which asserted that Iraq would be responsible for her own defence, but that British troops would nevertheless be stationed in Iraq. It was a paradox, but it was a paradox which was acceptable in London and also to those who counted in political circles in Baghdad. The new Government in London, encouraged by the Residency and some quarters in the Colonial Office, had come to realise that the cost of continuing to irritate and disappoint the Iraqis was greater than the risk of promising them independence in 1932. The King and Nuri were beginning to lose their credibility, and since they and their group formed the only really coherent base of power within the country, they could not be seen to be ineffective indefinitely. To destroy their position in Iraq would be to destroy Britain's too.

Over the next three years, with the prospect of entry to the League in 1932 firmly established, there was time to work out the details of the disengagement, the real extent of the relaxation of control and influence that Britain was prepared to permit. The most taxing task for the British officials on the spot was to accustom themselves to playing a less active part in the administration, especially difficult when the advisers were faced with the Iraq Government apparently hell-bent on policies of

repression towards the various minority groups within the country, which nearly provoked the Permanent Mandates Commission to reconsider the whole question of Iraqi entry. The problems of the next three years, apart from the negotiation of the future details of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship, were largely concerned with the amount of 'advice' that the Iraq Government would, in these changed circumstances, be prepared to take from the Residency and the British officials. The line between amicable persuasion and intolerable interference was, even more than in the previous years of the Mandate, an extremely fine one.

CHAPTER V

PRELUDE TO INDEPENDENCE, 1929-1932.

The declaration of 14 September was generally welcomed by most shades of political opinion in Baghdad, except some of the Shia. 'Abd al-Muhsin's new Cabinet pleased the nationalists, since it included Naji al-Suwaidi and Yasin al-Hashimi, but the inclusion of only one Shia, 'Abd al-Husain Chalabi, occasioned criticism, while Ja'far Abu'l-Timman remarked that only total lack of principle and blatant personal ambition could have inspired Yasin to take office.[1] On the other side, 'Abd al-Muhsin assured his anxious supporters in the Taqaddum Party that Yasin's inclusion had been at the express wish of the King, and that in any case it would considerably weaken the opposition to have so prominent a member of their number in the Cabinet.[2]

However feasible the partnership between the court, the nationalists and the moderates may have seemed in the wave of euphoria following the declaration, it soon broke down, for once more the strain of trying to keep some sort of balance between the various factions proved too much for the Prime Minister. 'Everyone seems to agree, 'Lionel Smith wrote to Dobbs in mid-November, 'that since his return from Beirut (Sa'dun)

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 29 September, 1929.
2. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 5 October 1929.

has been extraordinarily nervy and sensitive.'[1] He committed suicide in the evening of 13 November, and the note which he left, even in the garbled version which his colleagues presented to the press for publication, reflects the isolation in which he found himself.[2] His successor, Naji al-Suwaidi, although able to form a Cabinet from virtually the same personnel, also found that his position as arbiter between the court, the Residency and the various political factions gradually became intolerable. In a few months he too was obliged to confess failure and handed over to Nuri early in March 1930.

Both Prime Ministers had been faced with insistent pressure from their Minister of Finance, Yasin al-Hashimi, that they should seek a major reduction in the number of British officials. Edmonds described his amazement when 'Abd al-Muhsin presented this demand on 17 September, just after he had been asked to form a new Cabinet. Sa'dun replied that this was an attempt to reach common ground between himself, the King, Naji al-Suwaidi and Yasin. The Acting High Commissioner refused to accept this

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1. Smith to Dobbs, 15 November 1929. Enclosed in Dobbs to Shuckburgh, 1 December 1929. (Dobbs was living in retirement at this time) CO 730/148/68444 Part II.

2. As sent to London in High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Tgm 401 of 14 November:

> 'The nation expects service and the British do not agree. I have no helper, and the Iraqis, who claim independence, are weak and incompetent and very far away from independence. They are also unable to appreciate the advice of a man of honour like myself. They call me a traitor to my country and a servant of the British. What a calamity this is. I am a most sincere martyr to my country.'

Various doctored versions of the letter, futher edifying the Iraqis and damning the British, were circulated to the Baghdad newspapers. See Delhi, Personalities File 2/7598, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun.

as a condition upon which Sa'dun would form a Cabinet, and for a time it seemed as though the veto had been accepted. However, the Cabinet was not slow to change its mind: In February, Naji al-Suwaidi attempted a slightly more drastic expedient, of reducing the officials simply by excluding their salaries from the budget. The new High Commissioner, Sir Francis Humphrys, told the Prime Minister that such high-handedness could not be tolerated: he preferred a spirit of greater frankness, to avoid being forced into a position of embarassing the Government by insisting that he should be consulted before any new administrative steps were taken.[1]

As Minister of Finance, Yasin had been primarily responsible for this suggestion: Naji al-Suwaidi seems to have been pushed into it from behind rather than taking the initiative himself. At the time of his appointment in November, he had appealed to the opposition for their cooperation: both he and Sa'dun were put in embarassing situations by Yasin's demands, which, although popular with the nationalists had little chance of acceptance by Britain. The real difficulty was that Yasin had the King's ear, and an important following among the Baghdad politicians. Only Nuri had more influence, and in the end it was only Nuri, through having the support of the King and the Residency, and backed up by his followers in the Army, who could form a Cabinet from which Yasin could safely be excluded.

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1. Report of a conversation with Naji al-Suwaidi by Sir F Humphrys, 6 March 1930. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations, File 23/14/11, Cabinet of Naji Beg Al-Suwaidi.

Only Nuri had sufficient power to be able to ignore Yasin, and to be almost completely impervious to charges of collusion with Britain. For these reasons he remained Prime Minister from March 1930 to October 1932.

This term of office, which lasted over 2½ years, was the longest in Iraqi political history up to this time. Nuri's ministry included his brother-in-law, Ja'far al'Askari, at Defence, 'Ali Jaudat at Finance, and Jamil Midfa'i at Interior:[1] it was composed entirely of the court faction, and was determined to come to a lasting agreement with Britain. The Cabinet's programme provided for a gradual 'transfer of responsibility from British to Iraqi hands'[2] efforts to solve the pressing problems caused in Iraq by the fall in world food prices, and the negotiation of a new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty ensuring complete independence, but 'bearing in mind at the same time the necessity for cementing friendly relations between the two countries on the basis of ... reciprocity of interests.'[3] When negotiated, the Treaty would be presented to the people at a general election.

The Anglo-Iraq Treaty of 1930.

In contrast to most of the previous Treaty negotiations, those of 1930 were concluded with great speed, (largely because Nuri knew he had no real opposition to contend with.)

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1. With Jalal Baban, Jamil al-Rawi, and 'Abd al-Husain Chalabi at Justice, Communications and Works and Education respectively.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Telegram 172/of 26 March 1930: Delhi, BRCF, Cabinet Formations, File 23/14/12: Cabinets of Nuri al-Sa'id

3. Fortnightly Intelligence Report 31 March 1930.

The more extreme Baghdad politicians, either nationalist or Shia, were too disorganised even to combine effectively amongst themselves, and the major upheavals in Kurdistan which followed the publication of the Treaty tended to play into the Ministry's hands: Baghdad would certainly be united against attempts at dictation from Barzan or Sulaimaniya. Further, as we have seen if the Government was determined to stay in power, there was no constitutional means of dislodging them. Finally, however uneasy some of the British advisers may have been of Nuri's honesty and good intentions, there seemed no obvious alternative short of far stricter mandatory controls.

As a whole, the Treaty and its annexures represented a somewhat limited progress towards national sovereignty. Apart from stipulations about the precedence to be given to the British representative, the employment of British officials and the stationing of a British Military Mission, the Treaty declared that 'responsibility for the maintenance of internal order rests with the King of Iraq',[1] while Britain was bound to go to the help of her ally in the event of the invasion of Iraq from outside. Air bases, on sites to be selected by H.M. Government, were to be maintained for the R.A.F. rent-free by the Iraq Government, and the privileges and immunities in force for British troops would contune. Armaments and aeroplanes 'of the latest available type' were to be supplied from Britain to the Iraq armed forces, on contract. The Treaty, which was to last 25 years, would come

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1. For the limitations on this responsibility, see page 310-313

into force when Iraq entered the League of Nations in 1932. Clause 11 states:

> 'At any time after 20 years from the coming into force of this Treaty, the High Contracting Parties will, at the request of either of them, conclude a new Treaty which shall provide for the maintenance and protection in all circumstances of the essential communications of His Britannic Majesty.'

A few days after the Treaty negotiations ended, Nuri, followed soon afterwards by the High Commissioner, flew to London to begin conversations on the financial matters outstanding between Britain and Iraq, namely the Iraq Railways, Basra Port, the question of linking Habbaniya up with the Iraq railway system, and the transfer of the R.A.F.'s buildings and surplus stores at Mosul and Hinaidi.[1]

The Treaty caused little rejoicing in Baghdad, though, as usual, political circles were so divided that effective opposition was impossible. Press comment centred mainly on three aspects of the Treaty: that it was not to come into force for two years: that it provided for a further Treaty in the same terms after 25 years, and that leasing the air bases free of charge to a foreign power was not compatible with true independence. Such opposition as could be effectively canalised was directed towards support for anti-Treaty candidates in the general election: Parliament had been dissolved on 1 July, and the elections were held at the beginning of October. However, Nuri's Cabinet proved as effective as its predecessors in securing the election of an overwhelming bloc of supporters, and the opposition could claim little success. However, although the Treaty was

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1. Treaty between Great Britain and Iraq signed at Baghdad on 30 June 1930. Cmd 3797, Accounts and Papers, 1929-30, Vol XXXIV.

reluctantly accepted in Baghdad, there were signs among a large and powerful section of the population that they would not acquiesce so easily. As a result of their failure to gain concessions from the Iraq Government in the past, the Kurds were particularly dismayed that no guarantees of their special position in Iraq had been written into the Treaty. By 1930, Kurdistan and the Kurdish question had once more become a central and volatile issue in Iraqi politics.

Kurdistan 1926 to 1930.

On 21 January 1926, three days after the passage of the 1926 Anglo-Iraq Treaty, there was a Debate in the Chamber of Deputies on the implementation of the Frontier Commission's report in so far as it affected the Kurdish areas of Iraq: the Prime Minister, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, declared roundly:

> 'Gentlemen! This nation cannot live unless it gives all Iraqi elements their rights.... The fate of Turkey should be a lesson to us and we should not revert to the policy formerly pursued by the Ottoman Government. We should give the Kurds their rights. Their officials should be from among them: their tongue should be their official language and their children should learn their own tongue in the schools. It is incumbent upon us to treat all elements, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, with fairness and justice, and give them their rights.' 1

By the time of the 1930 negotiations, virtually nothing had been done by any Iraqi Government to convince the Kurds that their problems were being sympathetically considered, let alone being actively solved. It was only six years since the Kurds had been offered an autonomous Kurdistan, under the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres: in 1926 they were being offered

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1. Proceedings of Chamber of Deputies, 21 January 1926. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 19/14 Vol V.

a special regime and limited autonomy: by 1930 even this had been whittled away.

In the spring of 1926, the situation in the Kurdish areas was generally quiet. Continued peace depended partly on the goodwill of Shaikh Mahmud, and also on the provision of some kind of local administration which would be generally acceptable to the Kurds (while not veering too close to the sort of local autonomy which would offend susceptibilities in Baghdad.) The adoption of Kurdish for official, judicial, and educational purposes, and the employment of their own officials, were desired by most Kurds, though some definitely preferred the reorganisation of the Kurdish area into a single administrative entity under a British supervisory officer.

In Baghdad, there were two schools of thought on Kurdistan and Kurdish affairs, the Arab and the British. The Arab ministers and officials at the ministeries most directly concerned (generally Education, Justice and Interior) tended to dismiss the problem as having no foundation except in the minds of the British advisers, anxious to weaken national unity. For their part, the advisers accused the ministers and officials of deliberately ignoring the legitimate aspirations of the Kurds. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation, and whether or not the pledges had been forced out of a reluctant Iraq Government, the fact remained that the pledges had certainly been made, and that the Kurds were waiting for them to be carried out.

There were of course problems surrounding the official and educational use of Kurdish: there was little written literature, and a whole series of school text-books would have to be prepared. The language was divided into a number of dialects which were fairly widely different from one another. However, as Lionel Smith remarked, such problems could be overcome: 'It is true that there is not standardized Kurdish. We must standardize it.' Lionel Smith suggested that there should be two secondary boarding schools in the area, one at Arbil and the other at Sulaimaniya, where the basic language of instruction should be Kurdish, but where Arabic should also be taught so that pupils could go on to higher studies at an Arabic medium institution.[1] In contrast, the Minister of Interior, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Qassab, remarked that although Kurdish had been taught in some schools, it was of such little practical use that even the parents were not enthusiastic:

> ' (He) suggested that an order should quietly issue with regard to the Mosul Liwa schools that the Arabic textbooks should be used, as being better drawn up and more suitable for the purposes of instruction, and that wherever the pupils do not understand Arabic the teacher should explain and translate to them in the Kurdish tongue. He thinks there would be no clamour over this. New schools in the Mosul Liwa should have instruction in the Arabic tongue.' 2

1. Note on the position of the Ministry of Education as regards Kurdish Schools, by Lionel Smith, 5 May 1926 : Delhi, BHCF, Education, File 5/4/8 Vol I, Kurdish Education.

2. Dobbs to Cornwallis, DO 30 1372 of 25 June 1926. Delhi, BHCF, Education, File 5/4/8 Vol I, Kurdish Education.

It is difficult to disentangle any consistent 'Kurdish policy' on the part of the Residency or the Colonial Office until 1930, when it became essential that the Kurds should be seen to be fully integrated members of the Iraq state. Over the four years between 1926 and 1930, Shaikh Mahmud, technically exiled from Iraq, had occasional meetings and frequent correspondence with the Administrative Inspector, Sulaimaniya, the Adviser to the Ministry of Interior, and the Oriental Secretary to the High Commissioner. Officially, the British authorities had insisted that only a formal 'dakhala'(submission) to King Faisal and an undertaking to live peacefully on the Persian side of the frontier would satisfy both Iraqi and British requirements. In the summer of 1927, Shaikh Mahmud came to Baghdad and gave an undertaking in this sense, promising also that his eldest song, Baba Ali, would be sent to Victoria College in Alexandra. He was to be allowed to enjoy the income from his estates in Iraq, provided, again, he did not enter the country.[1] Yet in January 1928 the SSO Sulaimaniya reported that Shaikh Mahmud was making a prolonged tour among the Jaf on the Iraqi side of the frontier, and throughout that spring had frequent meetings on Iraq territory with the local Administrative Inspector and the mutasarrif. He was put under no restraint, never arrested, and apprently never even ordered to leave the country. In the following year, three weeks after being reminded by Clayton that he must keep, out of politics, Mahmud was sent a present of 1000 shotgun cartridges, presumably for shooting game, paid for out of secret service funds![2]

1. A.I. Sulaimaniya C/252 to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, of 1 June 1927. Delhi, BHCF, File 13/22 Vol II, Shaikh Mahmud.

2. Clayton to Shaikh Mahmud, no 5049 of 5 May 1929, Delhi, BHCF, File 13/22 Vol II, Shaikh Mahmud.

His reply to Clayton's letter is interesting:

> 'Don't think that my obedience to the British Government is for the sake of my properties ... our obedience is to the British Government however and not to Iraq. Please think of this point for a moment. If we were entirely obedient to Iraq, would that suit you? If you were to order us to be perfectly obedient in all matters to Iraq then in this as in other matters we should obey you. Then we should act according to their orders and you would not be able to blame us for the consequences...' 1

In November 1929, Captain Gowan, the Administrative Inspector, Sulaimaniya, described a meeting with Mahmud at which the latter asked for a larger subsidy,[2] and later in the month noted that the Shaikh had complained to the qaimmaqam of Sharbazhar that two of his men had been arrested for theft. Gowan told Mahmud 'in future no notice will be taken of any complaints written by you to qaimmaqams or mudirs direct, but only if they are sent first to the mutasarrif or myself.'3

It is not clear how far the Arab officials in Baghdad were aware of these cordial relations, but there is obviously some foundation for Arab suspicions that the British were pursuing a clandestine policy if

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1. Shaikh Mahmud to Clayton, 27 May 1929, BHCF, File 13/22 Vol LL, Shaikh Mahmud.

2. A.I. Sulaimaniya to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, C/1263 of 4 Nov. 1929. Delhi, BHCF, File 13/22 Vol III, Shaikh Mahmud.

3. A.I. Sulaimaniya to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, C/2/7/1, 4 Jan 1930, Delhi, BHCF, File 13/22 Vol IV, Shaikh Mahmud.

if not of alliance at least of generous accommodation with Shaikh Mahmud. Such suspicions may help to explain the evident hostility on the part of Baghdadi politicians and civil servants towards anything which smacked of consessions to Kurdistan, which were normally attributed to dark British designs on the fragile unity of the country.

By the spring of 1927, the Iraq Government had shown no signs of implementing the promises given by 'Abd al-Muhsin. Bourdillon complained to the Prime Minister that there was no sign of the promised Kurdish translation bureau (which was to deal with laws and school text-books) and that no progress had been made on the projected Decauville railway linking Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya.[1] The Government seem to have thought that they would do best not to commit themselves: Edmonds remarked:-

> ' Nobody denies that the practical application of the solution to the Kurdish problem bristles with difficulties, but all efforts are concentrated on not overcoming them.'

Thus, when challenged that there were no teachers in schools in Kurdistan, the Ministry of Education replied that there were no qualified men available, Edmonds pointed out that none were being trained. Similarly, there were no textbooks for the schools, but none were being produced.[2]

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1. Bourdillon to Ja'far al-'Askari, D.O. P.O. 104 of 7 Mar 1927 The railway, which would cover a distance of about 80 miles, would have cost between 80,000 and 100,000 rupees. Delhi, BHCF. Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol V.

2. Edmonds to Holt, D.O. S.A. 232, 9 May 1928. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol V.

Gradually, however, some sort of movement began to take shape. In April 1929 some of the more daring Kurdish deputies[1], including Isma'il al-Rawanduzi, Jamil Baban (Arbil), Hazim Beg (Mosul) Muhammad Beg Jaf (Kirkuk), Muhammad Salih and Saifullah Khandan (Sulaimaniya) presented a formal list of grievances to the Prime Minister. They complained that no tangible progress had been made on the Frontier Commission's proposals, and pointed especially to the lack of educational facilities in the area, not simply in the Kurdish language, but the generally poor provision of schools and teachers. They suggested further that Dohuk should be the headquarters of a 'Kurdish Liwa' which would include the Kurdish qadhas of Mosul ('Aqra, 'Amadiya, Zibar, Zakho and Dohuk), and that the administration of Sulaimaniya, Kirkuk, Arbil and 'Dohuk' should be under a general inspectorate presided over by a distinguished Kurd. Finally, they suggested that Tapu Registration should be encouraged by waiving Tapu fees for two years.[2]

At the same time, the police reports noted that the desire for decentralisation in Kurdistan was 'almost universal',[3]

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1. Ma'ruf al-Chiawuk and Amin Zaki opposed the project on the grounds that any hints of Kurdish autonomy would be dangerous. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 6 April 1929

2. Letter to Prime Minister of 4 April 1929. Delhi, BHCF. Events in Kurdistan File 13/14/ Vol VI

3. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 26 April 1929.

and Clayton informed the Prime Minister that he was in constant receipt of petitions and madhbatas from the area. The High Commissioner himself was not in favour of the proposed 'Dohuk Liwa' or any separatist suggestions, but asked the Prime Minister to take urgent practical steps to remedy the deficient educational facilities in the area.[1] In the following month Cornwallis and Edmonds sent notes on the Kurdish question to the Residency, underscoring the obstructive attitude of successive Ministers of Education. They also criticised the Director of Education for Mosul, fiercely anti-Kurdish, who was also in charge of Arbil and Kirkuk. Edmonds favoured the 'Dohuk Liwa' scheme on the grounds of administrative efficiency: on the question of officials and civil servants, he was inclined to make the Kurdish language rather than the Kurdish race the criterion for employment in Kurdish areas. As a preliminary to any major administrative reform, however, he stressed the need for the immediate reorganisation of the educational districts, and, once more, the translation bureau which had been promised since the beginning of 1926.[2]

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1. Clayton to Sa'dun, DO PO 139 of 20 April 1929. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan File 13/14/ Vol VI.

2. Cornwallis to Clayton, S.A. 321 of 12 May, enclosing Edmonds' memo of 11 May 1929. Delhi, BHCF Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14 Vol VI.

Against this background Britain's announcement of unconditional support for Iraqi entry into the League, issued in September 1929, caused serious concern in Kurdistan, misgivings which turned into consternation when it was known that the 1930 Anglo-Iraq Treaty contained no formal safeguards for Kurdish interests. At the Residency, in the early part of 1930, Young was faced with embarassing requests for enlightment on the question of who would be available, when Iraq entered the League in 1932, to underwrite the regime which had been promised (but showed no sign of being created) for Kurdistan.[1] Reports from the North indicated a variety of developments. In Kirkuk, the local Kurdish nationalists felt that they had been cheated by Britain: they had been promised a Treaty with 25 years' British protection, and they were now to be cut off after six. In Arbil, Kitching felt that the Government' attitude was causing such discontent that British forces would be compelled to intervene. He was certain that the Iraq Government would 'cease to exist in the mountains of this liwa early in 1932.' None of the Administrative Inspectors or Special Service Officers considered that an organised revolutionary movement was in existence or being constructed, but all felt that some positive action on the part of the Iraq Government should not be delayed any longer.[2]

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1. Minute by H.W. Young, 21 January 1930 on Delhi, BMCF, Events in Kurdistan File 13/14/ Vol VII

2. Administrative Inspector, Arbil, to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, S/123 of 11 Feb. 1930: A.I. Kirkuk to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, S/78 of 10 Feb 1930: Delhi, BMCF, Events in Kurdistan File 13/14/ Vol VII.

As a result of these representations, and of a conference of the local British officials and the British staff in the Ministry of Interior in mid-March, Cornwallis, put up a note on the Kurdish question for the new Minister of the Interior, Jamil Midfa'i containing what the conference had considered to be the minima which would satisfy the Kurds. Apart from transfers of individuals, Cornwallis and his colleagues requested that the Kurdish areas should be made into a single educational inspectorate, that a Kurdish Assistant Director-General should be appointed to the Ministry of Interior, that all court proceedings where Kurds were concerned should be in Kurdish, that police and all officials in the Kurdish areas should be able to speak the language, and that Kurdish should be the official language of Sulaimaniya, Kirkuk and the designated parts of Mosul, and one of the official languages of Kirkuk.. They also asked for the incorporation of a recognisably Kurdish symbol into the national flag, and, as ever, a translation bureau.[1]

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1. Adviser, Ministry of Interior, to Secretariat containing paper for Minister of Interior, C/1183/27/3, 3 April 1930. The paper includes the percentage of Kurds in the various liwas:

Arbil	78.6
Kirkuk	49.5
Mosul @	70.0
Sulaimaniya	99.0

Mosul(@) .. i.e. qadhasof Zakho, Zibar,'Amadiya,'Aqra, Dohuk.
Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol VII.

Following this and other pressures from British official sources, the Government promised a policy centred round a Local Languages Law, in a policy statement at the beginning of April 1930.[1] In spite of constant pressure from the British authorities, this law had still to be drafted by May 1931,[2] and when it eventually appeared was so emasculated as to be almost unrecognisable.

We have already seen that the omission of any direct mention of Kurdistan in the 1930 Treaty had caused grave concern in the North. Cornwallis hoped that the publication of the Treaty might serve as a suitable occasion for the Government to re-emphasise the pledges to the Kurds, and to set in motion a proper programme which would satisfy the aspirations of the Kurdish moderates. At a meeting of the Cabinet on 17 July, the Ministers considered the details of the suggestions put forward by British officials which had occasioned the blanket pronouncement of intent issued three months earlier. Most of the measures requested were agreed to, including the creation of an Educational Inspectorate for the Kurdish areas, the appointment of an Assistant Director-General in the Ministry of Interior, with two translators directly under him,

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1. Communique issued by Iraq Prime Minister, 8 April 1930, Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan File 13/14/ Vol VII.

2. Amin Zaki to Humphrys, 30 May 1931. Delhi, BHCF Education, 5/1/103, Local Languages Law. The writer also complained about the Iraq Government's neglect of Kurdish education. In 1927 the Government spent 1% of the revenues of Sulaimaniya, 3% of Arbil, 38% of Baghdad, 18% of Karbala' on Education.

the training of police officers in Kurdish, the criterion of langauge rather than race as a qualification for employment in the Kurdish areas, and the principle that all judicial procedures in the area should be conducted in Kurdish.[1]

By this time, with telegrams of protest being sent in considerable number, to the League of Nations[2], the problem had ceased to be confined to Iraqi politics. The League had stated in January 1930 that Iraq's entry would be welcomed in 1932, but one of the conditions for entry would be that 'effective guarantees be secured for the observance of all Treaty obligations in Iraq for the benefit of racial and religious minorities...'[3] and the volume of discontent in Kurdistan was likely to attract unfavourable attention at Geneva. Accordingly, early in August, the Acting High Commissioner and the Acting Prime Minister, Major Young and Ja'far al-'Askari, made a tour of the Kurdish areas to emphasis the evils of separation and to demonstrate the complete unanimity of British and Iraqi policy towards Kurdistan. In the course of the tour, Ja'far made several

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1. Council of Ministers to Secretariat, Confidential 2080 of 17 July 1930, Enclosed in High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Secret 'B' of 23 July 1930, Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14 Vol VIII.

2. There are three thick bound volumes of Kurdish petitions covering the period 1930-1931. Delhi, BHCF, Kurdish Petitions, File 13/14/B, Vols I - III

3. Meeting of Council of the League of Nations, 13-16 January 1930, League of Nations, Official Journal, February 1930, pp 142-43.

speeches (on the lines of the Cabinet decisions of 17 July,) which, gave the impression that these measures had already been put into effect.

The tour was not a success, particularly in Sulaimaniya, the centre of the strongest sentiments for Kurdish separatism. Guns and picquets of the Iraq Army had been placed on the hills above the town, and machine guns were clearly visible on the rooftops of the houses.[1] Furthermore, it was only when Young returned to Baghdad that he realised that Ja'far's statements about the Language Law, justice and officials were promises for the future rather than descriptions of what had been done. As a result, Young undertook to forward, with his official blessing, petitions to the League signed by leading citizens of Sulaimaniya complaining that the Iraq Government was not implementing its policies as it claimed:

> 'I am telling the Regent and the Acting Prime Minister that unless I am satisfied immediately that policy which I have publicly endorsed on behalf of H.M. Government is carried out in spirit as well as letter I shall be obliged to recommend that in forwarding Sulaimaniya petition to the League, H.M. Government should explain that my announcements (i.e. on tour in Kurdistan) was made under a misapprehension and that the Iraq Government are not in fact carrying out their programme.' 2

At the same time, Cornwallis issued a stiff memorandum to his minister, Jasil Midfa'i, who had been incensed by the Sulaimaniya petition and had removed the popular mutasarrif, Taufiq Wahbi.

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1. SSO Sulaimaniya to AHQ, I/S/I of 12 August 1930. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol VIII

2. Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 381 of 18 August 1930. Delhi, BHCF. Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol VIII.

Cornwallis pointed out that the Kurds were quite capable, if sufficiently provoked, of causing the Iraq Government the greatest embarassment. He has always been apprehensive of trouble, in the form of some sort of Kurdish rising, but was particularly anxious that it should not arise as a result of mismanagement on the part of the Iraq Government. Although Midfa'i was angry with the Sulaimaniya leaders, he should not forget that they had telegraphed their warm approbation of the proposed Language Law when it had been mooted in April. Unfortunately the good effect had been spoilt by the Prime Minister's announcement that Language and not race would be the test of employment in the Kurdish areas in the future. The choice remained: the Government could either suppress the moderate Kurdish leaders or try to win them over. Cornwallis recommended that all the proposals which had been made should be put into practice immediately with the maximum publicity, and a number of Kurds appointed to senior positions. If this failed, he pointed out, the Iraq Government could consider themselves completely vindicated.[1]

By early September 1930, the Colonial Office had become aware of the gravity of the situation, and furthermore that attempts at concealment of its seriousness from the League might give rise to grave embarassments in the future. Young was informed that H.M. Government required some concrete evidence of the Iraq Government's good faith,

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1. Cornwallis to Jamil Midfa'i, 19 August 1930. Enclosed in fortnightly Intelligence Report, 2 September 1930.

(such as publication of the Local Languages Law.) When the Prime Minister (Nuri) returned from Europe, he should be told that the law must be published, that the present anti-Kurdish attitudes must be eliminated from the Cabinet, and that the policy already given publicity should be put into immediate effect. When this telegram arrived at the Residency, Sturges noted "this strengthens our hand considerably."[1]

Although London was now realising the gravity of the situation, there was little, short of the Iraq Government actually carrying out the promised policies, that could be done to avert serious trouble in Iraq. In Sulaimaniya, Taufiq Wahbi had been removed by the Ministry of Interior in mid-August because of his evident sympathy with the leader of the Sulaimaniya moderates, Shaikh Qadir,(brother-in-law of Shaikh Mahmud.) The moderates had voted in a body in July to boycott the forthcoming elections. While Taufiq Wahbi remained in Sulaimaniya, Shaikh Qadir felt safe from outside pressures, but when he was replaced by Ahmad Beg-i-Taufiq Beg, Qadir turned once more to his brother-in-law for help.[2] Ahmad ordered the election of the inspection committee to go ahead, and a detachment of the Iraq Army was brought in to supervise the proceedings. On 6 September, there was serious rioting as a result of the army's attempt to force the holding of the election. One soldier and fourteen civilians were killed, and a large number of civilians, including Shaikh Qadir, were arrested. Two days later, Midfa'i was at last persuaded to sign a

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1. S/S Colonies to Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, Tgm 333 of 2 Sept 1930: Minutes by Sturges 3 Sept. Delhi, BMCF, Events in Kurdistan File 13/14 Vol IX.

2. Precis of Events 1 June to 4 Dec 1930, Air Headquarters, undated and unsigned. Delhi, BMCF Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol IX

memorandum on Kurdish policy to be sent to the mutasarrifs of the Northern liwas, instructing them to act in accordance with the provisions of the Draft Local Languages Law which had still not been published.[1]

The Acting High Commissioner telegraphed to London:

> 'Apart from the fact that the Iraq Government are not in the mood to reconsider concessions to the Kurds at present I consider that any actual concession, such as the publication of the Local Languages Law at this moment would be interpreted by the Kurds as a result of the violent tactics adopted at Sulaimaniya. I propose to confine myself for the time being ... to ensuring that justice is done to those arrested as instigators of the riot and to impressing on the Iraq Government the fact that the riot at Sulaimaniya must not alter the general policy of conciliation.' 2

The immediate result of the incident at Sulaimaniya was to bring Shaikh Mahmud back into the arena of Kurdish politics. Eleven days after the riot he crossed the frontier into Iraq, sending his son Baba Ali to inform the mutasarrif and Administrative Inspector of Sulaimaniya of his arrival, professedly on a visit to perform condolence ceremonies with some of the Pizhder chiefs. In fact he was building up support among the Pizhder and the Avroman tribes. The Acting High Commissioner admitted that it might seem strange that no action was taken to restrain the Shaikh, but he believed that it

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1. Note on Promises made to the Kurds by R.S.M. Sturges, 10 October 1930. Delhi. BHCF. Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol VIII

2. Acting High Commissioner (Brooke-Popham) to S/S Colonies Tgm 411 of 8 September 1930. Delhi, BHCF. Events in Kurdistan File 13/14/ Vol IX.

was up to the Iraq Government to take the initiative, as Mahmud could always slip back across the Persian frontier. The Iraq Army would have great difficulty in resisting him successfully without the help of the R.A.F. and it was therefore desirable to wait until the situation had actually deteriorated.[1]

Mahmud did in fact return to Persia after some weeks in Iraq, but in the course of his stay he complained bitterly to the High Commissioner about the shootings in Sulaimaniya. In mid October he wrote that the Kurds 'from Zakho to Khaniqin' were united in wanting separation from Iraq and independence under British protection. He asked that those who had been imprisoned in Sulaimaniya should be released, and also for an extensive administrative reorganisation of the area.[2] By this time such pleas fell on deaf ears: the Residency and the British officials could not support Iraq's candidature for the League and at the same time be seen to be encouraging a rebel against the Government's authority. Thus a message was sent from Baghdad to Sulaimaniya informing the Shaikh that the Government considered him an outlaw and would under no circumstances listen to his demands. The only acceptable course would be the Shaikh's surrender and the dispersal of his forces.[3]

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1. Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret of 26 Sept 1930. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ IX.

2. Shaikh Mahmud to Acting High Commissioner, 17 Sept, 2 Oct, 1930. Delhi, BHCF, Shaikh Mahmud. File 13/22 Vol III.

3. Adviser, Ministry of Interior to A.I. Sulaimaniya, C/3872 of 15 November 1930. Delhi, BHCF, Shaikh Mahmud, File 13/22 Vol III.

At the end of the year it seemed extremely likely that Mahmud would be leading an uprising against the Government in the spring, and petitions from Kurdistan were pouring in to the Residency in his favour.[1] Two months later the Administrative Inspector Mosul confirmed that most of the important aghas in his liwa had also pledged their support to Mahmud. Edmonds wondered how this threat would be dealt with: 'The Iraq Treasury is empty and I imagine that the R.A.F. budget has been considerably curtailed since the halcyon days of Sir John Salmond when the R.A.F. still had to make good.'[2]

In the middle of October the Residency returned to the charge in an attempt to find out how far the 'promises' had been implemented since Young and Ja'far had made their tour in August. On the face of it, things seemed to be improving: on 24 August Salih Zaki of Chamchamal had been appointed Assistant Director-General in the Ministry of Interior, in charge of Kurdish affairs, with two Kurdish translators; on 30 September Saiyid Nuri Barzinji had been made Inspector of Kurdish schools.[3]

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1. Note by Sturges, 17 Oct 1930, Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol X.

2. A.I. Mosul to Adviser Ministry of Interior, S/711 of 13 Dec 1930: Note on Kurdish policy by C.J. Edmonds, 17 November 1930. Delhi, BHCF Events in Kurdistan 13/14/ Vol X.

3. Note on Promises made to the Kurds by R.S.M. Sturges, 10 Oct 1930 Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan File 13/14/ Vol VIII

However, the Local Languages Law had still not been published in the aftermath of the Sulaimaniya incident and it was feared in London that awkward questions would shortly be asked at Geneva.[1]

Such fears were well-founded. Major Young, appearing on Britain's behalf before the Permanent Mandates Commission in November, was given something of a rough passage. The Chairman of the committee, pointing out the instability of the Iraq Government as indicated by the numerous changes of Cabinet, also wondered whether the Mandatory was actually fulfilling its duties in respect of Iraq:

> ' If the British Government had definitely decided to recommend Iraq for entry into the League in 1932, then it must inform the P.M.C. of the reasons which had led to that decision. Every time, however, that the P.M.C. asked for these reasons, the accredited representative of Great Britain merely urged it to wait until the moment arrived.' 2

There were other serious considerations facing the Colonial Office and the Residency at this time. In December, Humphrys informed London that the Iraq Government were preparing their own comments on the Sulaimaniya petition, and they had pointed out to him that:

> '...the policy pursued by them in the administration of the Kurdish districts had never been the cause of dissatisfaction among the Kurds and that this had been indicated in the annual reports submitted to the League by H.M. Government.'

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1. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad, Despatch Secret 'A' of 23 Oct 1930, Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol X

2. Permanent Mandates Commission, 19th session 10-11 Nov 1930. CO 730/152/78076.

They quoted passages from the 1925 and 1926 reports:

> 'The system of employing Kurdish officials in Kurdish districts has long been accepted together with the use of the Kurdish language in the schools, and local correspondence is conducted in Kurdish if desired. In respecting Kurdish susceptibilities the Iraq Government has rightly comprehended that a united state can be built up of diverse elements and has set an example among Near Eastern Countries.'
>
> 'Everywhere in the Kurdish areas, officials, with very few exceptions, were Kurds, and the Kurdish language was the official language of the courts and schools. The policy enunciated by the Prime Minister on 21 January 1926 has been loyally carried out by all departments and accepted by the Kurds themselves.'

Humphrys continued:

> 'I do not know whether Your Lordship intends to transmit these comments of the Iraq Government to the League with the final comments of H.M. Government on the Kurdish question, but it appears to me that if the League are to be presented with documents which show a divergence of view between the British and Iraq Governments on the manner in which the Kurds have been handled in the past, the effect upon the League will be most unfortunate.'

Some new line of argument had to be found, therefore, which the British and Iraq Governments could present to the League in an attempt to explain why, if the British authorities had painted so rosy a picture of Kurdistan in the past, signs of obvious discontent should be appearing in 1930. Humphrys argued that a possible escape lay in arguing that the Frontier Commission's recommendations had become unworkable, because these had been made at a time when the promises of Sèvres were still very much alive in Kurdish minds. He suggested that further petitions should not be forwarded to the League until the Mandates Commission had intimated whether or not they concurred in the Iraq Government's new policy, embodied in the

Local Languages Law, which had been issued on 11 November.[1]

However, the League was by now even more concerned about the situation in Kurdistan. On 22 December, the High Commissioner received the Mandates Commission's comments on the petitions which it had received so far. They recommended that the plea for an independent Kurdish Government under the League should be rejected, but invited the cooperation of the Mandatory to ensure that the 'legislative and administrative measures designed to secure for the Kurds the position to which they are entitled are promptly put into effect and properly enforced.' Further, they asked H.M. Government to consider measures of guaranteeing Kurdish rights after the termination of the Mandate.[2]

As the High Commissioner had realised, the British authorities were now in an extremely embarassing position. Nothing in their previous reports to the League had given the slightest sign that all was not well in Kurdistan, but they were now faced not only with evident and widespread dissatisfaction in the area but even the strong possibility of an armed uprising. The Iraq Government claimed that this was the result of

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret 'A' 19 December 1930. CO 730/157/78315. Iraq Report. 1925..., pp 22-23: Iraq Report. 1926.... p 14

2. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad, Tgm 488 of 22 Dec 1930 High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies Tgm 623 of 31 Dec 1930 Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol X

pandering to the Kurds, while the British authorities claimed that, on the contrary, it was the result of not taking Kurdish demands seriously enough. For its part the Iraq Government seems to have realised by the end of 1930 that Britain was not only anxious to be able to leave Iraq in 1932, but that failure to do so because the League judged Iraq incompetent would reflect highly unfavourably on British integrity at Geneva. Thus of all the parties the Iraq Government was in fact in the strongest position: provided the threat posed by Shaikh Mahmud could be satisfactorily dealt with, and that any suggestion of a League Commissioner could be headed off, it was difficult to see how Iraq ran the risk of much more than a rebuke from the League if the Kurds were not satisfied after the end of the Mandate. They also knew that H.M. Government was extremely sensitive, because of relations with Turkey and Persia, to any insinuation that Britain was attempting to return to the conditions of the Treaty of Sèvres. Provided the Government could make paper concessions, and continue to procrastinate, no serious attempt to resolve the Kurdish problem seemed necessary.

Internal Affairs and Financial Difficulties, 1930-1931

At the same time as the Iraq Government was facing these problems in Kurdistan, it was confronted with a serious economic crisis affecting the whole country. At the beginning of 1930, in common with other countries which relied mainly on grain production it could be foreseen that an acute financial crisis was approaching. As in 1925, it seemed unlikely that the Government would be able to balance the budget, and once more Sir Hilton

Young was asked to visit Iraq and advise on suitable economies. By March there was already a deficit of 25 lakhs of revenue from agricultural produce, and a final deficit of between 30 and 40 lakhs was forecast.[1] In his report Hilton Young noted that although there had been an increase in production, there had been no improvement in the quality of the produce: in addition, the increase had been at the expense of soil exhaustion and excessive salination, due to the widespread use of mechanical pumps without proper drainage arrangements. Furthermore, an acute agricultural labour shortage had arisen; the fellahin's share in what they produced was insufficient to live on, and many had migrated to the towns in search of paid employment.

Young did not think it wise to meet the crisis by making permanent structural alterations either to the administration or to the economy, as this would lead to long term weaknesses. He suggested that Defence expenditure might be reduced by 9 lakhs, and small cuts of 2 lakhs each in the Agricultural and Health budgets. In fact the situation eventually called for more drastic cuts than he had anticipated: by September 1930 cuts of 10 lakhs in Public Works, 8 lakhs in Irrigation and a further 5 lakhs in Defence were necessary, since the returns from Customs and Excise proved to have fallen far short of what had been forecast.[2]

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch CO 1280 of 27 March 1930. CO 730/156/78275.

2. Brooke-Popham to Shuckburgh, DO SO 983 9 Sept 1930. CO 730/156/78275

On the positive side, it was recommended that the Iraq Government should pay special attention to improving the quality of agricultural produce, and concentrate on more valuable cash crops, such as cotton. As part of a major public works programme, Young suggested the construction of two flood prevention works, at Aqar Quf and Habbaniyya, the completion of the railway extension to Mosul, and the construction of a bridge across the Tigris at Baghdad to link the northern and southern halves of the railway system. A loan should be obtained on the security of the oil revenues, which 'would provide a strong buttress for credit.'[1] However, since the new oil agreement had still to be signed, the oil revenues at this stage formed an inconsiderable part of the national income.[2]

The severity of the economic crisis increased through 1930 and 1931, and serious conditions were reported from many areas.[3] Since grain prices were so low, revenue from land fell off sharply, and this development probably contributed to a major change in the method of collection of revenue, summarised in the Istihlak Law of 1931, whereby tax was paid on sale rather

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1. Report on Economic Conditions and Policy and A Note on Loan Policy by Sir E. Hilton Young. E 6048/42/93 : FO 371/14509. (Printed June 1930).

2. Oil Revenue, 1927 to 1929 was as follows: (£000,000)

1927	1928	1929
1.05	1.65	1.85

(These were from the Anglo-Persian fields in the Transferred Territories) Report...on the Progress of Iraq, 1920-1931, pp 90-91

3. See Appendix II for conditions in 'Amara.

than production of grain. We shall consider the socio-economic implications of this Law in more detail in Chapter VI, but it is sufficient to mention here that the change altered the whole basis of the Iraqi taxation system: land revenue gradually dwindled to under 10% of the total revenue, and the bulk of the national income was drawn from Customs and Excise,[1] and, eventually, from oil revenue.

Until pressing financial considerations virtually forced its capitulation in 1931, the Iraq Government proved exceedingly obstinate in its dealings with the Petroleum Company, renamed the Iraq Petroleum Company (I.P.C.) in 1929. The second series of negotiations had begun as long ago as 1927 when I.P.C. began its attempt to persuade the Government to abandon the plot system[2] and to extend the time limit of the concessions. By November 1929, after the Government had granted two extensions, the Company informed the Government of the plots which it had selected, but applied at the same time for a revision of the concession, to extend it over a wider area. As Longrigg explains, the Company could afford to proceed at a 'leisurely tempo' because of the glut of world oil supplies;[3] this increased the Company's value, while postponing the

1. There was a general increase of 10% customs on all imports, and 20% on clothes, arms, ammunition, clocks, watches, alcohol, cars, tobacco and imported foodstuffs (except sugar tea and coffee) in November 1930. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 10 November 1930.
2. The 24 x 8 square mile plots laid down in the T.P.C. concession of 1925.
3. Longrigg, S.H. Oil in the Middle East, p 74.

benefit that the Government would have derived from active exploitation of the oil.

As we have seen, the B.O.D. group's offer had shown the Iraq Government that it might be possible to squeeze better terms out of the I.P.C. This had prompted the Government's request that any new concession should be linked with the construction of a railway and a pipeline, which I.P.C. had been forced to consider since the spring of 1929: the Iraq Government had come round to a very serious consideration of the B.O.D's offer, especially as the latter Company was content to follow the Iraq Government's insistence on the southern alignment of the pipeline. By May 1930, the Colonial Office seems to have become so disillusioned with the slow progress of the I.P.C.'s negotiations that they suggested that H.M. Government should transfer their support from that Company to the B.O.D. Company. In a useful memorandum, Rendel of the Foreign Office pointed out that this was quite impossible. The reasons given throw considerable light on the locus standi of H.M. Government as regards the oil of Iraq.

Under the San Remo Oil Agreement of 1921, it had been laid down that French interests should be entitled to a 25% share in any company formed to exploit Iraqi oil. Thus, under the 1928 Red Line Agreement, the Turkish Petroleum Company's concession had been divided as follows:

Company	Percentage	Nationality & Constituents
1. Participations and Investments Ltd	5.00	(C.S. Gulbenkian)
2. Near East Development Corporation	23.75	USA: Socony Vacuum Oil Co and Standard Oil of New Jersey 50% each.
3. D'Arcy Exploration Co.,	23.75	GB (APOC): 66% H.M.G., 22% Burmah Oil Co., 12% Public.

4. Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company	23.75	Anglo-Dutch: 60% Royal Dutch, 40% Shell Transport and Trading Co.
5. Compagnie Francaise des Petroles	23.75	French: 35% French Government, 65% public, banks, etc.

Since the British Government and other British shareholders had a major interest in Companies (3) and (4), they were in a dominant position on the board of the Iraq Petroleum Company. If, on the other hand, H.M. Government were to allow the B.O.D.'s claim to be accepted, the situation would be completely different. In 1930, the B.O.D. Company was constituted as follows:

Participation	Percentage
British	51
Italian	35
Dutch	14

Since no French interest were represented in the B.O.D. the San Remo allotment would presumably have to be met out of the 51% British interest, and it was also inevitable that United States' interests would also demand a share equivalent to that which they had in I.P.C.

Hence the only chance of breaking the deadlock lay with I.P.C. who would have to be brought to drop their objection to the southern alignment of the pipeline, 'in order to reach an early and satisfactory agreement with the Iraq Government.' As we have seen, by the happiest of

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1. By 1931, when negotiations were proceeding for the West-of-Tigris area, the Company's composition had changed:

Participation	Percentage
British	46
Italian (AGIP)	30
Franco-Swiss German-Dutch	12

coincidences both British and Iraqi interests favoured the Kirkuk/Haifa route: Iraqi preference combined neatly with Britain's desire to run the pipeline over British controlled territory.[1] At the end of June the Iraq Government confirmed that they had no intention of revising the I.P.C's concession unless the pipeline debouched at Haifa: they had dropped their stipulation that the concession was conditional upon the construction of a railway, but under no circumstances would they budge over the alignment.[2]

However, (as we have seen) the Iraq Government was also at this stage in serious financial difficulties. Nuri left Baghdad for London to discuss outstanding financial differences between the British and Iraq Governments the moment the Treaty had been signed, and it was clear that money was needed not only for development projects, but also for dealing with the budget deficit. By 30 September agreement had been reached between Nuri and the Colonial Office on a board of management for the railways, and a Trust for Basra Port.[3] Later in the year, a compromise was suggested on the pipeline in the form of a bifurcation, possibly at or above Rutba, with one arm running to Haifa and the other to Tripoli, and this was eventually written in to the agreement with I.P.C. which was finally signed in March 1931.

1. Memorandum by G.W. Rendel, 26 May 1930. E 2654/51/93 : FO 371/14511

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 296 of 24 June 1930 E 3419/51/93. FO 371/14511.

3. Notes exchanged with the Iraq Prime Minister embodying the separate Agreement on Financial Questions referred to in the second exchange of Notes appended to the Anglo-Iraq Treaty of 30 June 1930. Cmd. 3627, Accounts and Papers 1930-31, vol XXXIV

By this time, the Iraq Government was in really desperate need of money, and the dead rent payments (advances against future royalties,) which were made by the Company as part of the concession were a vital necessity. The money was not spent on development projects, but turned directly over to the Treasury, so that the country became more or less dependent on dead rents or royalties for its solvency. Total oil revenue for the period 1933-1940 amounted to about £2 million per year, about one quarter of the total national revenue. The figures for 1930-1932 show how narrowly the crisis was averted:

Year	Revenue (Lakhs)	Expenditure	Deficit	I.P.C. Oil. C. Royalties
1929-30	576.66	574.61	2.05	-
1930-31	464.57	511.58	47.01	-
1931-32	481.74	509.19	17.45	86.70 1

Even with the oil revenues, there was a deficit of 17.45 lakhs in 1931-32: without them, it would have been over 100 lakhs. The previous year, 1930-31, had seen the highest deficit in the country's 10 years' history. It is possible that the Company was able to obtain highly favourable terms from the Government because the latter had very little alternative.

As a result of the new concession, instead of 24 plots of eight square miles, the Company obtained a blanket concession for the whole of the 35,000 square miles of Iraq East of the Tigris in the Baghdad and Mosul wilayets. The royalty rate of 4s gold remained unchanged, though

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1. Ireland, P.W. p 437

it was not honoured when sterling was devalued late in 1931. This left the rest of the country open to competition from other oil interests, and it was generally considered advisable in Whitehall that the I.P.C. should be excluded from bidding for rights in these areas: Humphrys accordingly informed the Iraq Government in May 1931 that they would be wise to exercise a veto in this respect.[1] Britain's attitude here seems to have been influenced by the stand taken by the Italian Government at Geneva in the Spring of 1931. The Italian ambassador in Baghdad informed Humphrys quite frankly that:

> '... the Italian Government were not really interested in the question of principle which they had raised, nor in the despatch of a commission of enquiry. Their main motive -- apart from a desire to make their weight felt - was to extract some solid consideration for the withdrawal of their opposition, and in the course of the conversation it became clear that they have in mind a share in the development of Iraqi oil.' 2

Apparently the Italian ambassador also feared that the British group which was the majority shareholder within the B.O.D. might sell out its interest to the highest bidder, presumably the I.P.C. In fact this was avoided, and the B.O.D. obtained the concession for the rest of the Baghdad and Mosul wilayets in May 1932. Later developments, however, saw I.P.C. eventually extend its control over the whole of Iraq:

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1. High Commissioner to Prime Minister, P.O. 85 of 1 May 1931. E 3580/5/93. FO 371/15307.

2. Hall (Colonial Office) to Sterndale-Bennett (Foreign Office) 31 July 1931. E 3993/5/93. FO 371/15308.

by 1935 the Italians had become majority shareholders in B.O.D. but could not pay the agreed £200,000 yearly to the Iraq Government. In 1936 a holding company had bought out the Germans and Italians on behalf of the I.P.C., and by 1938, I.P.C. controlled all oil concessions not only in the Baghdad and Mosul wilayets, but also in Basra and the Iraqi-Sa'udi neutral zone.

Shaikh Mahmud and Kurdish politics, 1930-1931.

In the Ministry of Interior at the end of 1930 widespread misgivings were expressed by British officials over the Iraq Government's Kurdish policy. Edmonds pointed out that the signatories of the Kurdish petition to the League asking for a separate state had been treated as though they were guilty of treason; they had themselves realised that they could not hope for complete independence, but understandably stated their maximum demands to be sure of being granted the minimum.[1] After the shootings at Sulaimaniya, Shaikh Mahmud could come forward as champion of a just cause; three quarters of the Iraq Army was now in Sulaimaniya liwa, incapable of preventing the situation from deteriorating. Further, although the Iraq Government claimed to be fulfilling its obligations, this was far from the actual state of affairs. The Kurdish Assistant Director-General in the Ministry of Interior had been given no work: the Ministry was still appointing Arab qaimmaqams to Kurdish areas, and the Language Law had not been applied.[2]

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1. Note on Kurdish policy by C.J. Edmonds, undated, November 1930. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol X
2. Cornwallis to Young, DO SA 627 10 December 1930. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol X

Some slight relief was afforded by the resignation of Jamil Midfa'i from the Ministry of Interior early in February: the post was taken for nearly three months by Nuri himself, but his full-time successor, Muzahim Pachachi, was a considerable improvement, as far as his attitude to Kurdish problems was concerned. The replies to the Sulaimaniya petitioners, though communicated to the High Commissioner at the end of December, did not reach the petitioners themselves until the end of February, and in the meantime Cornwallis in particular pressed the Minister to make every effort to try to remove the distrust for the central Government felt by the vast majority of Kurds. He asked the Minister again to make sure that the Government's declared policies were implemented, and made detailed recommendations for new schools and the appointment of Kurdish speaking Police and other officials.

Meanwhile it was gradually becoming clear in Whitehall that the Iraq Government were still not carrying out the policies which Britain had undertaken to see put through. The Colonial Office warned that Iraq might be forced to accept the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry, or, even worse, a Resident Commissioner, if Geneva was not satisfied. H.M. Government wished to be able to tell the next meeting of the Permanent Mandates Commission in June that the Iraq Government's declared policy had been 'carried into full effect.' Meanwhile, London asked for as much information as possible to be sent from Baghdad:

> 'There is I think no doubt that for some reason or other the P.M.C have got the impression that we have been intentionally withholding information from them. ... The F.O. are anything but sanguine of Iraq's prospects of entry next year, and the only apparent means open to us of

improving those prospects in the interval would seem to be by satisfying the P.M.C. by the weight and volume of evidence that Iraq is really fit for independence.' 1

Some of the information being presented to the League was in the form of a memorandum drawn up by Hall of the Colonial Office commenting on seven petitions received from the inhabitants of Sulaimaniya, which had been despatched after the shootings on 6 September 1930. He took pains to exonerate the behaviour of the army, and dismissed four of the petitions by describing them as emanating from the 'notorious rebel and bandit Shaikh Mahmud'. The memorandum fails to point out the material fact that Shaikh Mahmud's reappearance in Kurdish politics was a direct consequence of the shootings. Two of the other petitions could also be treated cursorily since they originated from the 'bandit's'brother, Shaikh Qadir (whom, as we have seen was well known to be the leader of the moderate Kurds in Sulaimaniya). There was no attempt to deal with any point of substance raised in any one of the petitions. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Mandates Commission's suspicion that Britain was 'intentionally withholding information' was entirely justified.[2]

In the spring of 1931, miltary action was taken against Shaikh Mahmud. By mid March he was in control of Halabja and Khurmal and was collecting taxes in the Kara Dagh villages, with a following of about 600 men, successfully defying the Iraq Government, who had sent a force of 350

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1. S/S Colonies to High Commissioner, Baghdad, 19 Feb 1931 Tgm 108: Flood (Colonial Office) to Humphrys, Private and Personal, 20 Feb 1931. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, 13/14 Vol XI.

2. Memorandum by J.H. Hall, 20 Feb 1931. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol XI.

mounted police to the area. The Air Officer Commanding, although in overall control of operations, decided to leave the actual command of forces in the field to the Iraq Army: no levies were used, and, according to his lengthy report on the operation written in October 1931, the R.A.F's part was not primary until March.[1] On 26th March the High Commissioner received a formal request for aerial assistance from the Iraq Government, and on the 28th the villages of Kani Kermanj, Shawazi

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1. There is a certain amount of confusion about the role played by the R.A.F. in these operations. In his report, A.V-M. Ludlow-Hewitt was obviously anxious to give the impression that the Iraq Army were running things themselves, and only helped out by the R.A.F. when things became really difficult:

   'I advised that air action against the rebels should only be taken if the Iraq Army was actually being attacked and was in need of assistance'

   The impression given is that, apart from demonstration and reconnaissance flights, the R.A.F. was not seriously employed until the final phase of the operations. This was no doubt to give the impression that the Iraq Army was capable of conducting an expedition of this kind. Compare, however, the account of the Barzan operations the following year. A V-M Ludlow-Hewitt, Report on Operations in Kurdistan to May 1931, 16 October 1931, CO 730/163/88069, and see P.359.

   See also monthly summary of air operations, November 1930, where the bombing of Panjwin is described: January 1931, where the bombing of Shaikh Sadiq and Risha' (5 Jan) and Dalash (24 Jan) are described. Air 5/1292

and Bagh Anaran were bombed in order to free a squadron of police which had been hemmed in by the Kurdish forces.

After a month's harrying by the army and R.A.F. together, Mahmud indicated that he was prepared to come to terms. After some wrangling between the Ministry of Interior and the Residency, it was agreed that Interior should sign the letter which the Residency had drafted. Mahmud was informed that his life and the lives of his family would be spared, that he was to live in Iraq at a place appointed by the Iraq Government, and that he would receive an adequate allowance. On 13 May, Holt and the Shaikh met at Panjwin: Mahmud accepted the terms and was installed at Ur on 15 May:-

> 'It is interesting to note that at the first meeting at Panjwin Shaikh Mahmud went up to an R.A.F. officer who was present, and pointing to the wings on his tunic said, "You are the people who have broken my spirit."' 1

The Iraq Army was sent to Jalabagh to finish the operation, and the area was quiet until the following winter: peace was further ensured by siting of a semi-permanent Levy camp at Ser'Amadiya, and further detachments of Levies were sent to Sulaimaniya in August.

Among the less militant Kurdish leaders, the reply of the League to the petitions was generally well received. The moderates seem to have taken the reply as indicating that the League would keep an eye

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1. Report on Air Operations, May 1931, Air 5/1292

on their interests. The Administrative Inspector Sulaimaniya believed that, following the reply, 'we may expect a continuance of the legitimate demand for the fulfilment of the 1926 promises'.[1] Thus Shaikh Qadir wrote to the High Commissioner:

> 'I have been asked by my fellow countrymen to ... enquire whether the Mandatory power intends to carry out the terms of the resolutions ... It is now about two months since the resolution was passed but no changes have taken place and it is presumed that Your Excellency has no objection to our making further demands to the League of Nations if this resolution is longer postponed.' 2

Five weeks later, Humphrys forwarded a copy of the letter to Nuri commenting that 'it gives an indication of the effect which has been produced upon the signatories of the Kurdish petition by the reply which has been sent them from Geneva, and shows how important it is that immediate steps should be taken to reassure them'[3]

At the same time, Cornwallis reported that the attitude of the new Minister of Interior, Muzahim Pachachi, was 'very sensible', that he had been seeing leading Kurds in Baghdad and was planning a tour of the Kurdish areas in May. Cornwallis considered that the British officials should therefore 'keep in the background until we see whether there is

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1. A.I. Sulaimaniya, to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, C/284/27/3 of 15 April 1931. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol XI.

2. Shaikh Qadir to Sir Francis Humphrys, 31 March 1931, Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol XI.

3. High Commissioner to Prime Minister, P.O. 87, 9 May 1931. Delhi, BHCF Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol XI.

really a genuine desire to adopt a conciliatory policy.'[1] His tour of the Kurdish areas was evidently a success and reports from both Sulaimaniya and Arbil were favourable. However, there was still little progress in the implementing of the promised administrative reforms. The Kurdish Director-General at Interior was being given work of a 'general nature': The Education officer was only an Inspector and did not have final authority in his area, and there were still large numbers of non-Kurdish speaking police in the Kurdish areas.[2] On the other main issue, the Local Languages Law, the Cabinet continued to drag its feet: in February Nuri had told the High Commissioner that progress had been halted due to the discovery that no standard form of Kurdish existed, as Smith had observed some five years previously. Eventually, after a good deal of argument, the Law was passed on 19 May, but it had suffered considerable reduction in its scope by this time. Technical departments were excluded from the Law: a knowledge of the Kurdish language replaced race as the criterion for employment in the Kurdish areas, and the Kurdish qadhas of Mosul liwa were to be given a year to decide upon the dialect of Kurdish which they preferred. Holt pointed out angrily:-

> 'My own view is that the King and Nuri are determined to do their utmost to maintain the use of Arabic in these qadhas. If they can delay for a few months implementing the stipulation ascertaining the wishes of the people the Mandate may come to an end before the year is up and then there will be no-one to press them to honour their pledges.'

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1. Cornwallis to Young, DO SA 62 of 26 April 1931 Delhi, BHCF Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol XI

2. See Page 262.

He pointed out further, commenting on a letter from Nuri on the application of the Law, that if it was interpreted as the Prime Minister chose, to imply that those in the Technical services need not know Kurdish, this would mean that 'any Kurds wishing to use the public services in the Kurdish areas, e.g., to buy stamps or to be treated at the hospitals will have to use Arabic: 'he considered that the whole letter' was a useful exposure of the Iraq Government's complete lack of good faith with regard to the treatment of the Kurds.'[1]

The British authorities in Baghdad continued to press the Iraq Government to take action, but as Holt and others had correctly anticipated, the latter took refuge in a policy of procrastination. After prolonged correspondence, Nuri admitted that 'technical services' only referred to the actual technical personnel (doctors, engineers, electricians etc.) : the administrative staffs would be recruited locally.[2] The Residency pointed out that it should be remembered that the Law had not been introduced simply to legalise existing practice, but:

> 'as part of a programme of legal and administrative reforms "designed to rectify the situation created by the fact that of recent years the Iraq Government had somewhat fallen away from the promises given by a former Iraqi Prime Minister in 1926" (my quotation is from the minutes of the 19th session of the Permanent Mandates Commission)...I feel that it would

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1. Minute by Holt, 2 June 1931 on Prime Minister to High Commissioner, 2251 of 30 May 1931. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol XI

2. Prime Minister to High Commissioner, Confiential, 27 July 1931. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan File 13/14 Vol XII.

> be dangerous to admit any 'no change' principle .. since I am convinced that the Iraq Government would only be too willing to avail themselves of it to restrict the application of the Law to other public services and even to education.' 1

Between January 1931 and July 1932, the British authorities in London and Baghdad were obliged to steer an uneasy course between satisfying individual powers and the League as a whole that Iraq actually was fit for independence, and nudging the Iraq Government into accepting a minority policy which they could adopt without the loss of amour propre. Thus H.M. Government had to interpret Iraq's policy to the League, and the League's policy to Iraq in terms as conciliatory as possible to both parties. As we have seen, the Italian Government in particular was thought likely to attempt to block Iraq's entry if proper attention was not paid to their interests. It is important to realise that as late as July 1931 there was a good deal of uncertainty about the whole matter:-

> 'Many of us think here (Foreign Office) that (Iraq's) ambition will be attained. Others of us feel that it is a very moot point, the more so as one or two of our late allies of the war cannot cease from asking questions about Iraq which lead us to think that they may be out to make trouble or demand a high price for their support.' 2

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1. Minute by Holt, 26 June 1931, Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan, File 13/14/ Vol XI.

2. L. Oliphant (Foreign Office) to Sir George Clerk (Ankara). Private and Personal 31 July 1931. E 3671/3137/93. FO 371/15323.

In the middle of June 1931, Humphrys was to appear before the Permanent Mandates Commission, to keep the Commission informed about current developments in Iraq. If Young had been faced with challenges in November 1930, his chief was given an even more critical reception on this occasion. Humphrys was closely questioned on the Special Report ... on the Progress of Iraq 1920 to 1931, which had been specially prepared for the purpose of assisting the Commission to decide on Iraq's fitness for League entry. The burden of the High Commissioner's advocacy, on this and other occasions, was that the Commission could and should rely on the good faith and integrity of H.M. Government's promises:-

> 'Should Iraq prove herself unworthy of the confidence which has been placed in her, the moral responsibility must rest with H.M. Government. ... The new Treaty contained no obligation to assist the Iraq Government to suppress disorder, but if such assistance was given the British Government would make its own terms. It would never agree to give assistance by means of the R.A.F. until it was sure that such assistance was justified. ... He could assure the Commission that the British Government had no intention of becoming the tool of the Iraq Government or of suppressing risings due to bad administration and oppression.' 1

The Council's final decision was left over until November: the issue was still by no means clear at this stage.

It seems at this stage as if Britain's chief concern was to provide the League with evidence that Iraq was actively considering appropriate measures, while omitting to mention that actual implementation was not taking place. The Iraq Government were safe in the knowledge that provided

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1. Permanent Mandates Commission, 20th session, 18-19 June 1931.

they could avoid the appointment of a Resident representative of the League, they could give all the required promises of fair treatment of minorities, safe in the knowledge that they would never have to implement them in the future. Britain's position was just as cynical: although individual administrators might make every effort to see that justice was done to the Kurds, it was British policy to support League entry in 1932, and the great weight of evidence showing that the Iraq Government were not fulfilling their obligations to the Kurds, and clearly had no intention of doing so, had to be hushed up rather than brought out into the open. With luck, and with the main focus of Kurdish resistance languishing under house arrest in Nasiriya, any further open confrontation would be avoided. There should be no doubt, however that both the British authorities in Baghdad and the Colonial Office in London were fully informed as to the true state of affairs.

Baghdad Politics, January to August 1931

At the beginning of the year, a new party, Hizb al-Ikha al-Watani, was busy collecting supporters, and branches were formed in several provincial centres. Early in January a number of tribal leaders met a delegation from Baghdad at Karbala', where it was hoped to hold a mass meeting. All the anti-Government groups, the Hizb al-Watani, Hizb al-Ikha al-Watani, and Hizb al-Nahdha had declared that they would participate, but the mutasarrif refused to allow the meeting to take place. The opposition, already disgruntled by the defection of Muzahim Pachachi.[1]

1. Pachachi, formerly a prominent member of the opposition, had accepted office as Minister of Communications and Works on 5 Jan 1931.

were further dismayed by the failure of the Karbala' meeting, and also by their inability to secure the aid of the Karbala' 'ulama.

Previous attempts to organise opposition to the Government, or to any particular measure, had not been successful because although temporary alliances were possible, the interests of the various anti-Government groups differed so widely from each other that unity soon broke down. This was still largely the case at the beginning of 1931, but it gradually became clear that there was some hope of organising a concerted attempt to bring down the Cabinet. This aim had support from groups as far apart politically as trade union leaders in Baghdad and Basra and tribal leaders in the Euphrates. It is interesting that the opposition in 1931 was directed not so much at the iniquity of the terms imposed by Britian in the 1930 Treaty and the oil concession, but against the craven acceptance of these terms by the Cabinet and the Chamber, and the Cabinet's policy of stifling any criticism of its policy in the press.[1]

It is difficult to distinguish a separate role for the two main parties: generally the Hizb al-Watani was the old Sunni nationalist group, while the Ikha was more Shia-centred. However, the largest of the trade unions, the Jam'iyat Ashab al-San'a, (Artisans' Society) was closely associated with the Ikha: the two most prominent opposition leaders, Ja'far abu'l-Timman and Yasin al-Hashimi distrusted each other intensely

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1. On the 25 January the Council of Ministers banned Nida' al-Sha'b for publishing Dobbs' article in the Daily Telegraph criticising the 'Palace-Residency Alliance.', and another article from the Daily Herald which alleged that the Iraq Government were accepting bribes from Sir John Cadman. Fortnightly Intelligence Report 4 February 1931.

and were both attached to both parties. The main task of the leadership was to ensure that the Euphrates chiefs did not break away from the parties: in spite of their general dislike of the Government, the Euphrates leaders had not forgotten what they considered to have been their betrayal by the Sunni politicians after the rising of 1920, when they had done all the fighting and the 'effendis' had reaped all the rewards. For their part, the urban leaders knew that no serious challenge could be posed to the Government without at least the threat of an armed tribal rising.

At the official opening of the Hizb al-Ikha al-Watani in Baghdad in March, Rashid 'Ali and Yasin addressed a meeting of about 2000 people: they called for a new Government and a Cabinet pledged to reconsider the political relations of Britain and Iraq. There were reports of strong 'anti-Government and anti-King' feeling in Baghdad, and large scale arms purchases in the Euphrates towns.[1] The economic depression, and the Government's failure to take account of it by allowing tax remissions, had particularly aggravated tribal leaders, but conditions in the country were also affecting wage earners. At the end of February there was a brief strike of railway workers, organised by the Jami'yat Ashab al-San'a protesting against short time working on the railways, but the management's explanation that this was the only alternative to dismissals was accepted.[2]

1. Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, 3 March, 18 March 1931.

2. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 4 March 1931.

By the end of April the mood had become more militant. There were petitions to the King calling for the Cabinet's dismissal, suggestions of boycotts of foreign goods, and attempts to organise more strikes. Requests for mass public meetings were normally refused but the parties held large gatherings at their own headquarters. A joint committee to coordinate the activities of the two parties was set up, consisting of Yasin, Rashid 'Ali, Ja'far abu'l-Timman and Mahmud Ramiz: strenuous efforts were made to maintain friendly links with the tribal leaders, who were deeply distrustful of Yasin and Rashid 'Ali.[1] Early in June the two parties decided on a joint campaign to refuse payment of taxes, and further attempts were made to involve the 'ulama. However, at this stage there are signs that the movement was beginning to lose its impetus, and was saved from a slow decline by the appearance of a tangible issue which acted as a focus of popular grievance. The Municipal Fees Law, a revised scale of taxation on all tradesmen, was a serious annoyance to large sections of the urban community, and a general strike, lasting over two weeks, was successfully organised.

On 4 July, the King left Baghdad for Europe, leaving behind his brother, ex-King 'Ali of the Hijaz as Regent. Early in the morning of the next day, shops were deserted, and by midday buses had almost ceased to run. All day there were street parades and demonstrations, and speeches against the Fees Law. The Jami'yat called for its repeal, and over the next few days, for the release of those arrested for demonstrating.

1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 11 April, 29 April 1931.

After presenting a petition to the Regent, the secretary-general of the Jami'yat Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz, was arrested and the Jam'iyat compulsorily closed by order of the Ministry of Interior. Both the party headquarters were raided by the police. After a few days, food was still obtainable, but there was virtually no public transport in Baghdad. Reporting to London on 11 July, the Residency seems to have been taken unawares:-

> 'Situation reveals surprising lack of support for present Government and unpopularity of King Faisal. Republican cries have been openly raised in the streets and Yasin has been publicly hailed as future President, while except in Government newspapers there has been no sign of loyalty to King or support for Government. 1

For the first few days of the strike, the opposition party leaders hung back, presumably to see how widely supported it was. After five or six days, however, after a meeting at the Hizb al-Watani (including Ja'far abu'l-Timman, Yasin, Rashid 'Ali, Ali Mahmud, Baqir al-Shabibi), it was resolved to send a deputation to the King 'Ali, and letters to the 'ulama of Karbala' and Najaf. On 11 July, Muhsin abu Tabikh met 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar and Samawi al-Challub in Kadhimain: the two latter agrred to call out the tribes around Diwaniya when the time was ripe. Meanwhile, on the same day, the demonstrations in Baghdad were becoming more violent; 50 people were arrested and there were reports from Kufa and Diwaniya that most of the shops had closed down.

By the middle of the month the strike had spread to most of the towns on the Euphrates, and was particularly serious in Rumaitha, Kufa

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1. Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 304 of 11 July 1931. Delhi, BHCF, Interior, File 7/4/22 Pt I, General Strike in Baghdad in Protest Against the Municipal Fees Law.

and Diwaniya, and later on, Basra. Demonstration flights were made by the R.A.F. over the area on 13 and 14 July.[1] On 15 July Nuri returned to Baghdad, and the capital gradually quietened down, but the disturbances in the provinces continued, especially at Basra. Reinforcements of police were ferried from Baghdad to Basra in R.A.F. transport planes in response to an urgent request from the Administrative Inspector.[2] By 20 July order had been restored in most of the main towns, but al-Jaza'iri reported from Najaf to Muhammad al-Sadr that the tribes remained in a turbulent state.[3] In Baghdad, Nuri asked the Acting High Commissioner to consent to Yasin's removal from the capital under section 40 of the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation, but consent was refused. By now things were returning to normal, and an attempt to start the strike again on 24 July in Baghdad was unsuccessful.

The stike was more remarkable in revealing the organisation of the opposition and the contempt in which the Government was held than for any concrete achievements in the way of concessions. The party leaders had obviously taken charge after the first few days, and after al-Qazzaz's arrest their coordination had ensured that the strikes spread to provincial towns. The Air Officer Commanding, who was also Acting High Commissioner, considered that his action in sending demonstration flights over Rumaitha and Diwaniya had had the necessary 'steadying effect'.

1. Monthly report of air operations, July 1931. Air 5/1292.

2. A.I. Basra to Ministry of Interior, Tgm 991 of 17 July, Delhi, BHCF, Interior, File 7/4/22 Part I, General Strike...

3. Abstract of Police Intelligence 21 July 1931.

However, his diagnosis of the situation was perceptive:

> 'I must confess to having had a certain amount of sympathy for the position of the opposition. As you know, their chance of exercising their influence in a constitutional manner within the majlis was virtually destroyed by the Government's manipulation of the elections. Finding themselves in a hopeless minority in the majlis, they resigned, believing their only means of influencing the situation to be through a press and propaganda campaign in the country.'

The only way that the Opposition could overthrow the Cabinet was to engage in the sort of popular agitation that had taken place. Unfortunately, this would not simply stop at political change, but lead to tribal risings as well. In the circumstances, Ludlow-Hewitt confirmed that he would have agreed to the arrest of the opposition leaders if absolutely necessary: accordingly he interviewed Yasin and told him that while H.M. Government intended to take a 'neutral attitude' to domestic politics, they could not remain indifferent to any attempt to stir up the tribes, and that they would be obliged to take the 'strongest and most severe action' to prevent this sort of agitation.[1]

By mid-August the situation had returned to normal. Several of those arrested during the strike had been exiled under Section 40 of the T.C.C.D.R. and the Jami'yat Ashab al-San'a was still disbanded. Although theimmediate crisis had passed, Young realised that the underlying causes of discontent were unaffected:

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1. Ludlow-Hewitt to Humphrys, SO 961 23 July 1931 (Humphrys was in London) Delhi, BHCF, Interior File 7/4/22 Part I General Strike... The situation has close parallels with the rising of 1935.

See pages 358-59

'On the one hand there is Nuri Pasha, looking perhaps to such models as Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal, and determined with King Faisal to set up an autocratic government in Baghdad. On the other hand stands Yasin Pasha, with the opposition leaders, including most of the best brains in the country, who refuse to cooperate with Nuri Pasha and who will naturally not consent to be permanently removed from participation in the government without a struggle.' 1

On 26 September there was another raid on the party offices, which seem to have had a dampening effect on the spirit of the opposition: promises of massive demonstrations on the King's return to Baghdad did not come to anything. There was a brief flurry of excitement in the middle of October, when it was rumoured that the Cabinet might resign, but what actually took place was a minor reshuffle caused by Muzahim's having fallen out with his colleagues: the only important new appointments were Naji Shawkat to Interior and Ja'far al-'Askari to Defence; with Muzahim himself taking over the Legation in London.[2]

The opposition took some time to recover from these reversals. The real difficulty was that the spectre of the 1920 revolt was still alive: a tribal rising was so uncertain and so uncontrollable a manifestation that the British authorities, and thus the R.A.F., would always range themselves against one. Furthermore, the unity among the opposition was always vulnerable, particularly since some of the more prominent politicians actually did have the chance of office from time to time, and,

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1. Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies Despatch, Secret, of 14 August 1931. CO 730/170/88369.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Tgm 366 of 19 Oct 1931. CO 730/160/88016.

more venal considerations apart, it might be argued that Yasin or Rashid'Ali, might have more chance of solid achievement from within rather than fighting the Cabinet as a perpetual outsider. The same was true of the tribal leaders, who criticised Ja'far for associating with Sunni politicians, at the same time as he was threatening to have nothing to do with Yasin if he took office. In these circumstances the King and Nuri well knew that until another and stronger threat developed, their own position was virtually unassailable.

Kurdistan and the League, 1931 to 1932

As a result of the decisions taken at the Permanent Mandates Commission in June, the British authorities were forced to continue to exert pressure on the Iraq Government to see that the Kurdish policies were actually being carried out. In September 1933 Young complained to Nuri that there were still far too few Kurdish policemen, and that Humphrys would need detailed evidence that the Language Law was working effectively. The prospects were not hopeful; on the transcript of a typically evasive interview between a senior Interior official and the Prime Minister Holt noted:

> 'This report of Mr. Chapman's conversation with the Prime Minister strengthens my fear that the latter intends to use every dodge to avoid employing Kurds in the public services. Christians and Jews are to be called Kurds in order to make the statistics look better. The Local Languages Law is not to be applied to the Auqaf department... only in the kindergarten schools are non-Kurds to be replaced by Kurdish teachers.' 1

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1. A.J. Chapman (Interior) to Secretariat, C/1139 of 26 Sept 1931: Minute by Holt, 29 September 1931. Delhi, BHCF, Events in Kurdistan File 13/14 Vol XII

At Geneva, H.M. Government continued to maintain the attitude taken up in the summer, that Iraqi entry should be a matter of British honour. If possible, even supplementary guarantees for Iraq to sign should be avoided. The Permanent Mandates Commission, however, was still far from happy about the Iraqi minorities. It reported that it had had 'no opportunity of observing at first hand the moral condition and internal policy of Iraq, the degree of efficiency reached by its administrative organisation, the spirit in which its laws are applied and in which its institutions function.' The Commission therefore had to lean heavily on Humphrys' declaration of Britain's moral responsibility which he had made in the course of the previous session:

> 'Had it not been for this declaration, the Commission would for its part have been unable to contemplate the termination of a regime which appeared some years ago to be necessary in the interests of all sections of the population.' 1

The final decision had to be left over to the full Council of the League, due to meet at the end of January 1932. As a result of the Commission's report, it was felt that the Italians might still attempt to raise the possibility of a Commission of Enquiry. At a meeting in London to discuss ways of countering this, Hall pointed out that 'if it was a question of giving the Italians anything in Iraq', their representative might be able to 'come to an arrangement with the Iraq Prime Minister direct', since Nuri would be at Geneva, and noted further that the Iraqis were currently engaged in discussions with the B.O.D. company. It was realised by now that guarantees were going to be required, but Hall assured

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1. Permanent Mandates Commission, 21st session, 10 Nov 1931.

the meeting that there was no danger of the Iraq Parliament refusing to ratify any such guarantee after they had been accepted by the Iraqi representative at Geneva.[1] Whether or not Nuri came to some sort of arrangement with the Italians in the corridors of the Palais des Nations is a matter for conjecture, but no objections of substance were in fact raised to Iraq's entry.[2] On 28 January 1932 the Council of the League agreed to Iraq's admission subject to the signature of various guarantees including the administration of justice and the general safeguarding of minority rights, with full membership to take effect after the October 1932 meeting of the League Council.

Last attempts by the Minorities: Barzan and the Assyrians.

The signature of the minority declaration by Nuri on 30 May 1932 at Geneva effectively marked the end of the Mandate, though there must have been some anxious moments at the Residency and in Whitehall in the spring and summer of 1932, when two final challenges to the Iraq Government's pro-independence authority appeared, the Barzani tribe and the Assyrian Levies. It had dawned on the Assyrians rather later than on the Kurds that when Britain left Iraq, their small community, (estimated at about 40,000 at the beginning of 1933)[3] would be entirely at the mercy of the Iraq Government: their main source of employment, the Levies, would gradually

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1. Record of a meeting at the Foreign Office to consider the P.M.C's report to the League Council on the release of Iraq from the Mandatory Regime. 14 December 1931 E 8219/93/93. FO 371/16028.

2. The B.O.D. Concession was signed in May 1932.

3. McCarthy, J.J., The Assyrian Tragedy, p 41

decline, and they would be surrounded by a generally hostile population, whether Arab or Kurd. In 1925, when the recommendations of the Frontier commission had dashed all hope of their being able to return to their old home, the Hakkiari mountains in South-Eastern Turkey, those of the Assyrians who were not employed in the Levies, and many of the families of those who were, had settled in the Northern part of the Mosul liwa. Eventually, under pressure from Interior and the Residency, the Iraq Government was persuaded to set aside part of the area around Baradost for the Assyrians, and a settlement scheme was planned to start in August 1932. However, the Baradost qadha, controlled by Shaikh Rashid, lay adjacent to the lands of the Barzanis, and the latter area had not by this time been brought under firm control by the central government.

The more important activities of the Barzani leaders lie outside our period: Mulla Mustafa, the brother of the nominal leader Shaikh Ahmad, became the centre of resistance to the Iraq Government after the arrest of Shaikh Mahmud, and the de facto leader of the Kurds, a position which he still occupies. But at this stage the Barzanis' long struggle against the Iraq Government was just beginning. In the spring of 1931, reports began to reach Baghdad that Shaikh Ahmad had founded a new form of religion and had begun to impose it upon his subjects. By June the disturbances consequent on his missionary zeal had reached Baradost, where the preparations for the Assyrian settlement scheme were beginning. Apart from its bizarre religious overtones, the fighting appeared at first to be the kind of inter-tribal skirmishing almost endemic to that part of the country. However by 11 July the levy garrison at Billeh was replaced by Iraqi troops, presumably to act as a deterrent, but which naturally

had the effect of removing a strong armed body of Assyrians from the area. In spite of what appears to have been a relatively trivial situation, Nuri suggested to Ludlow-Hewitt, then acting as High Commissioner as well as Air Officer Commanding, that joint air and land operations should be undertaken against Barzan:

> 'As you know, these operations were turned down a month ago because the season was already too late. He had no plan in his mind at all and is simply putting up the Barzan operations as a means of scotching the Assyrian settlement plan ...it is definitely too late to alter the original decision of the Government and also I do not think it is safe to commit a considerable part of the Iraq Army to operations of unknown duration in the Barzan hills when the tribal situation is so unsettled in the South. I am afraid it only reveals Nuri's intention to obstruct the Assyrian settlement scheme.' 1

It is naturally difficult to establish a definite connection between the fighting in Barzan and the desire of the Government to frustrate the settlement scheme. On 9 December 1931 a column of the Army was sent to surround Bazran village, which was fairly close to the army post at Billeh, but they were beaten off. Air action was requested, and the Iraq Government bombed Barzan village; for a while Ahmad desisted from further activity, but in February he was active again and defeated another column of the Iraq Army sent out from Billeh.[2] At this point, the Government decided that it was time to bring the area under proper administrative control, and a larger force was despatched in March.[3]

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1. Ludlow-Hewitt to Humphrys, SO 961, 23 July 1931. Delhi, BHCF Interior, File 7/4/22 Part I, General Strike...

2. 'When I was in Mosul and Kirkuk last February the 'defeat' of the Iraq Army was freely talked of' G.W. Rendel, Foreign Office, Minute on E 1820/617/93 FO 371/16045.

3. Operations summarised to this point by P.J. Dixon on E 1820/617/93 FO 371/16045.

The troops were routed by the Barzan tribesmen under Mulla Mustafa, and the situation was 'only saved from complete disaster by the support of the R.A.F.' [1] which from then on took complete charge. The terrain, steep valleys and wooded mountainsides, favoured guerilla activity but as usual repeated attacks by the aeroplanes on the tribesmen and their villages lost the Kurds many of their supporters. There were pourparlers in April and May, and on 22 June Shaikh Ahmad crossed the border and sought asylum in Turkey.

Whether or not the connection was intentional, the Barzan operating did prevent the proposed programme of Assyrian settlement being put into effect, and thus the tensions already caused by the prospects of imminent British departure were increased. Like the Kurds, the Assyrians had been promised vague safeguards by the Boundary Commissioners in 1925. :-

> 'We feel it our duty to point out that the Assyrians should be granted the re-establishment of the ancient privileges which they possessed in practice if not officially before the war. Whichever may be the sovereign state, it ought to grant the Assyrians a certain local autonomy.' 2

To this end it will be remembered that the British had unsuccessfully urged the inclusion of the Hakkiari mountains in Iraq.

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1. Summary of Air Operations, March 1932, Air 5/1292.
See also Chapter VII page 359
2. Permanent Mandates Commission, 7th session, June 1925.

The recommendation of some sort of special regime for the Assyrians was treated by the Iraq Government with the same degree of concern as the idea of special measures for the Kurds, but with the Assyrians the problem was further complicated by their close and somewhat equivocal connection with Britain through the Levies. This force, of about 2000 men, was generally considered more reliable and efficient than the Iraq Army by the British authorities, and had been used in conjunction with the R.A.F. for all the operations in Kurdistan until 1930. The Levies, though a homogeneous entity, were loyal to their British commanders, as they were Imperial and not Iraqi troops; their own national allegiance was centred on the person of their patriarch, the Mar Shimun, in 1932 a young man in his early twenties who had studies at school and theological college in England between 1925 and 1929 under the auspices of the Archbishop of Canterbury.[1]

As the time for Iraqi independence drew nearer, and the plans for Assyrian settlement continued to be delayed, the Assyrian Levy troops decided that they should take matters into their own hands. Accordingly on 2 June, the Levy officers presented their resignation as a body to the Air Officer Commanding. The Iraq Government, and the British Government, feared that if this resignation took effect, the battalions would simply make for the North immediately, and when established there, would engage in a confrontation with the Iraq Army which they would be almost certain

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1. Lambeth had maintained a friendly interest in the (non-Uniate Catholic) Assyrians since the establishment of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission.

to win. If the Assyrians could defy the Iraq Government successfully, the Kurds would be given renewed encouragement to do the same. It was also to be considered that while British troops could be used to put down rebel Kurdish Muslims, it was another matter to send them out against discontented Assyrian Christians. A few days later, Humphrys reported that the Assyrians showed no signs of not being in earnest, and in London the affair was taken sufficiently seriously to be the subject of a special cabinet meeting. Humphrys had requested that a battalion should be flown in from Egypt, to act as a deterrent; the British Cabinet, most reluctantly, gave permission, but left the actual decision to the High Commissioner.[1] On 22 and 23 June the troops arrived, and Humphrys reported the 'very steadying effect' : by 30 June the immediate crisis was over.[2]

In the course of these weeks, the Mar Shimun had put forward a petition to the High Commissioner, which contained his community's requests. Ideally, the Assyrians still wanted to return to Hakkiari, but if this was impossible, the Mar Shimun asked that they should be allowed to settle around Dohuk, with an Arab Governor assisted by a British adviser. The patriarch's own right to administer the millet[3] both spiritually and temporally should be

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1. This was the first "international" operation involving the transport of troops by air.

2. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies Tgm 199 of 11 June 1932:

3. The old Ottoman concept of "Religious Community," under which the religious leader had spiritual and temporal authority over his people. This particular point was an important feature of the quarrel between the Mar Shimun and the High Commissioner before the massacre in 1933.

officially recognised. He asked for an Assyrian member of the Chamber of Deputies, and for schools and hospitals in the Assyrian area. Finally he asked that these demands should be embodied in a guarantee which Iraq should present to the League, and that the guarantee should also be made part of the Organic Law of Iraq.[1] Naturally, the Iraq Government rejected the petition at once, but neither the British nor Iraq Governments could stop the Assyrians resigning from the Levies if they wished to do so.

As with the Kurds, the British authorities were caught between a desire to do some sort of justice to the Assyrians, soothing the League and not offending the amour propre of the Iraqis. Humphrys knew that the most acceptable solution to the problem would be for the Assyrians to return to Hakkiari, and wondered whether the Turks might be prepared to take Barzan as a straight swap.[2] Although the Assyrians had done some damage to their cause by precipitate action, the problem of their eventual settlement had still to be solved: the Acting High Commissioner pointed out in August that although the Iraq Government were supposed to be settling the Assyrians in Baradost they were not actually doing so.[3]

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1. Forwarded to the Colonial Office on 18 June 1932. High Commissioner Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret. CO 730/177/96602.

2. Suggested to the Foreign Office in Hall (Geneva) to Rendel, 26 Sept 1932. E 4981/23/93 FO 371/16035.

3. Ludlow-Hewitt to Humphrys, 8 Aug 1932. E 4226/23/93 FO 371/16035.

Tentative approaches were made to the Turks, but no progress seemed likely, and the problem was left for the Iraq Government to solve. At Geneva on 9 December the Iraqi representative turned down the proposal for a Nansen office referee to be sent to Iraq: Hall, then at Geneva, noted that opinion was strongly critical of Britain. It was alleged that there was plenty of land available and 'our denial of this fact is merely a piece of British chicanery done with the object of propitiating the Iraq Government.' Humphrys replied:

> 'The essence of the Iraq Government's opposition to the League Commissioner is not ... that they fear that he would find land which they have said does not exist, but that if he came they would cease to be masters in their own house. As the King says they would have escaped from the British mandate only to come under the mandate of a collection of cranks from Geneva.' 1

Nothing more, it seemed, could be done.

The end of the Mandate.

The great enthusiasm was desplayed in Iraq in October when the country was finally admitted to the League. The year had been marked by the usual fruitless opposition activity, with the revival of specifically Shia groupings again in the spring. In May the King

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1. Hall to Humphrys, 9 Dec 1932: Humphrys to Hall, 15 Dec 1932: E 6569, E6913/23/93. FO 371/19037.

and Nuri quarelled: this was resolved at the time by Nuri taking six weeks leave, since, as Humphrys pointed out, a change of Government at this stage would not be looked on with favour at Geneva.[1] The King's attitude seems to have been inspired by an uncomfortable feeling that Nuri was stealing the limelight, and Nuri had hardly had time to return home from Geneva at the end of October when he was ordered to tender his resignation. The King, according to Young and Humphrys, while acknowledging his Prime Minister's signal successes in international affairs, had become increasingly worried about the Cabinet's unpopularity at home.[2] In any event a Cabinet consisting mainly of civil servants was appointed under the premiership of Naji Shaukat, and Nuri left the country with the Residency speculating how well the King would manage without him.

It may seem strange that so little excitement was generated by the ending of the Mandate in October, or by the earlier meetings of the League

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Tgm 185 1 June 1932. Delhi, Cabinet Formations, File 23/14/12, Cabinet of Nuri al-Sa'id.

2. Counsellor, Baghdad, to S/S Foreign Affairs Despatch 1060 of 3 November 1932: Ambassador, Baghdad to S/S Foreign Affairs Despatch 1093 of 17 November 1932. Delhi, BHCF, Cabinet Formations File 23/14/13 Cabinet of Naji Shaukat Beg.

which had made Iraq's being accepted in the autumn more or less a ceremonial formality. However, those in Iraq who understood the realities of the situation, and who were not members of the very small circle to whom power was actually entrusted, realised that there was little to be jubilant about. The real extent of British influence had not been perceptibly limited: while Britain could no longer overtly interfere in internal affairs, the 1930 Treaty had left her a considerable latitude in matters of defence, and, in fact of administration, through the retention of senior British officials at key posts in important Ministries. These two matters, the position of the Ambassador and the Advisers, and the relations between the R.A.F. and the Iraq Government, were the subject of constant discussion between London and Baghdad over the last three years of the Mandate.

The R.A.F's role after 1932.

In the months preceding the negotiation of the 1930 Treaty, the position of the R.A.F. was hammered out in negotiations between the Foreign and Colonial Offices and the Air Ministry. As far as defence against invasion from outside was concerned, Britain would certainly come to Iraq's aid: the more delicate problem of internal security was, the Air Ministry considered, too complex''to be entrusted to the Government at Baghdad'. Eventually an Iraq Air Force would be capable of taking over those duties, but this was not likely to materialise as a fighting force for several years. In fact, the Treaty (Article 5) does state that 'responsibility for the internal defence of Iraq rests with the King of Iraq' but it became clear that Britain's duty to protect Imperial

interests in Iraq would be susceptible of fairly wide interpretation if the situation called for it. The opposition might complain that the presence of bases in the country was not compatible with true independence, but the Iraq Government themselves well knew that they depended on the R.A.F. for their survival in office, and they had no alternative but to accept the bases, and the British Military Mission: Humphrys stressed at the time:

> '... the success or failure of the new order after Iraq has been admitted to the League will largely depend upon the moral influence which the R.A.F. will continue to exert on a people naturally lawless and averse to paying taxes.' 1

As we have seen, it was feared in some circles in England that by implication, the presence of the R.A.F. in Iraq after the country became independent would involve that body in being forced to act as a mercenary body for the Iraq Government. Attempts to define the precise position of British forces after the end of the Mandate soon became bogged down in sesantic and logical difficulties. The preservation of internal security was the province of the Iraq Government, but the protection of Imperial interests devolved upon the forces of H.M. Government; nevertheless, a case might well occur when internal disturbances might begin in the country which were not a direct threat to British interests, but which might, if left unchecked, or if left solely for Iraq forces to deal with, prove to be so.[2]

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1. High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Despatch, Secret, 8 July 1930, E 3728/41/93. FO 371/14507.

2. Report of an Interdepartmental Committee (FO, CO, AM) 22 Oct 1931. E 5316/3226/93 FO 371/15324.

These anomalies were not cleared up by the instructions given to the High Commissioner in the summer of 1932. Their general tone was to leave him with wide discretionary powers when he became Ambassador at the end of the Mandate. The Air Officer Commanding was to be responsible to the Air Ministry and not the Ambassador, though if the former wished to employ the R.A.F. this should not be undertaken without prior consultation with the Ambassador, unless this proved absolutely impossible. As far as internal security was concerned, independent action by the R.A.F. was ruled out. In general:

> '...the R.A.F. should not be employed except upon a request in writing from the Iraq Government to the Ambassador ... the Ambassador should satisfy himself in every case in which British interests are not directly involved that the R.A.F. is not being used in support of governmental oppression or the introduction of unpopular innovations.' 1

The instructions are couched in the vaguest possible terms: there is no definition of 'air action', no indication of whether it implied demonstration flights or bombing raids. In fact the mere presence of aircraft proved a sufficient deterrent, as had been the experience in the general strike in 1931 and would be seen again in the Euphrates troubles of 1935, both of which can be traced to maladministration on the part of the Iraq Government. In practical terms, the position of the R.A.F. changed very little after the end of the Mandate: with the concurrence of the

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1. Enclosed in S/S Colonies to High Commissioner Baghdad, Despatch, Secret 28 July 1932 E 3846/894/93 : FO 371/16045.

Ambassador and the Air Officer Commanding the Iraq Government could request its cooperation, just as they had done in the past. Furthermore, since the same man, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, remained head of the advisory staff of the Ministry of Interior, through whom the actual requests for assistance would come, it is even more difficult to detect any substantial change in the situation.

The Position of the Ambassador and the British Advisers.

In the Spring of 1930, Naji al-Suwaidi's Government resigned, actually because the Prime Minister and his colleagues were not prepared to negotiate the new Anglo-Iraq Treaty, but ostensibly because the High Commissioner would not agree to reductions in the British advisory staffs. It was appreciated by the Colonial Office that it was natural and reasonable that the Iraqis themselves should wish to take on an increasing share of the responsibility for the running of the country between that time and 1932, and it was moreover likely to be a matter of interest to the authorities at Geneva to know how far a genuine transfer of power was taking place. In a note for his new chief, Humphrys, Young had outlined the difficulties of the situation: the ministers in particular realised that they could not easily dispense with British officials, but hesitated to risk the odium of too obvious a reliance on them. Young recommended that where measures were proposed by the Iraq Government that would limit the powers of the 18 holders of the 'Treaty posts' (i.e. those defined in the first Anglo-Iraq Treaty on 1922 as part of the conditions of the mandate), the High Commissioner's

permission must be sought in advance. Actual intervention by the High Commissioner would only follow a request from an adviser.[1]

In the Special Report on Iraq ... 1920 to 1931 there is a reproduction of the official letter sent to all British advisers, which informed them officially of H.M. Government's intention to support Iraq's candidature for the League in 1932. The letter points out that in order to enable Iraq to enter the League in 1932:-

> '... it is desirable to accelerate the assumption of administrative responsibility by the Iraq Government so far as this is constent with their treaty obligations, and a progressive share in the administration ... (was to be assumed by Iraqi officials.)'

The High Commissioner stated that he did not intend to intervene in 'domestic matters' where the British officials were satisfied with the proposed actions of the Iraq Government, but he would still be kept informed of the introduction of any new administrative measures with a view to enable him to let it be known, unofficially, 'what attitude I intend to adopt in the event of the responsible British adviser concerned being unsuccessful in inducing the Iraq Government to accept his advice.'[2]

This letter was intended to cover the period between 1930 and 1932, and in 1932 the question arose of the kind of relations which should exist between the advisers and the Embassy when Iraq became independent:-

> 'It is true that the proposal is that (another) circular letter to British officials should not actually be sent to them until Iraq has been elected a member of the League ... but I understand that the idea is that it should be

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1. Note by H.W. Young, 18 Dec 1929. Enclosed in High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, Secret of 19 Dec 1929. E 670/41/93 FO 371/14503.

2. Special Report... 1930-31 pp 290-292

> secretly agreed with the King before that date and one can only imagine the effect that would be produced at Geneva if it became known that any such letter was under discussion... From the point of view of our relations with Iraq itself, the objections seem equally serious. I understand that the system of British officials ...in Iraq is by no means universally popular...were the proposed letter to be issued, might it not, if a copy got into the wrong hands -- a possibility which cannot be ignored, particularly in view of the wide circulation which it would receive -- furnish such circles with a most dangerous and effective weapon against British officials in future and make the position of all British officials in Iraq untenable.' 1

It was recommended that such a letter should not be sent at all, which was the course eventually adopted, not without some misgving from Baghdad. As far as the High Commissioner's position was concerned, Young reported in September 1932 that Humphrys paid at least one weekly visit to the King and the Prime Minister normally paid a weekly visit to the High Commissioner. The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs had always worked closely with the Residency, and Young urged that this should continue. Young also assumed a close liaison between the head of the British Military Mission and the Embassy. The Embassy, however, could no longer call for information from British officials as of right, as the High Commission had done in the past.[2] It seems to have been arranged in London first that the British Ambassador at Baghdad was in a special position in Iraq, and secondly, that when Humphrys himself left Iraq, the position should be reviewed afresh.[3] Humphrys himself asked for authority to arrange privately with

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1. Mendel to Hall, 14 July 1932, E 3070/2576/93 : FO 371/16047
2. Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, 1 Sept 1932. CO 730/177/96600 ; S/S Colonies to Acting High Commissioner, Baghdad, 20 Sept 1932. E 4767/9/93 : FO 371/16031
3. Simon to Moore, 6 Aug 1932, E 4196/249/93 FO 371/16041

King Faisal and the Prime Minister to receive informally from Cornwallis, de facto senior British adviser:-

> '... news of importance affecting the internal security of the country so as to be in a position to advise, in the event of the services of the R.A.F. being requested to deal with internal troubles, Sir Francis Humphrys is confident that this procedure will be regarded as entirely natural and that King Faisal and his Prime Minister will raise no objection.' 1

Surprisingly little change was noticeable in this area either.

'No state', A.J. Balfour wrote in 1919, 'can be described as really independent which has habitually and normally to follow foreign advice, supported, if the worst comes to the worst, by troops, aeroplanes and tanks.'[2] It is clearly an exaggeration to speak of Iraq in these terms in 1932, but it is not much of an exaggeration. Whatever the true nnttnee of British power and influence after the country entered the League, it was widely believed by Iraqis that they were not the true masters of their country. Victory, of a kind had been won, but it was a limited victory, a conditional independence. Further, it had not been won by the country as a whole, but only by a small clique imposed on the country from outside, which had few claims to the acceptance, approbation or trust of the rest of the population. Having proclaimed that she would give up

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1. E 4224/249/93 fO 371/16041

2. DBFP Vol IV, p 344. See Thornton, A.P., The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies, p 168.

the Mandate, Britain was determined to do so, but naturally took good care to see that her influence on the things that mattered remained as near as possible to what it had been before. The end of the Mandate had significance for the small group of Sunni officials and soldiers gathered around King Faisal, in giving them a freer hand to exercise control within the country, but the British authorities still retained supreme power, and the vast majority of the population still possessed no power at all.

PART II:

Aspects of Policy and Administration.

CHAPTER VI

TENURIAL, REVENUE AND TRIBAL POLICY

Until the last years of the Mandate, taxation of agricultural produce formed the greater part of the revenues of Iraq. The amount of tax, and the way in which it was collected, depended largely upon the system of land tenure, which was determined partly by social and economic conditions in the countryside and partly by administrative orders from the central Government. In the period when Iraq was becoming a part of the world economy major changes in the patterns of cultivation took place and new tenurial arrangements were introduced. The resulting confusion was heightened by the Great War and the political and economic upheavals which resulted.

In broad terms, the period between 1850 and 1950 was one of retrogression rather than progress for the average Iraqi cultivator. During this time a society of generally free tribesmen became transformed into one of groups of near-serfs bound to the soil, in which traditional leaders and 'new' landowners gained unprecedented legal and economic powers over their peasantry. Paradoxically, the avowed intention of most of the land legislation passed during this period was to enable individual cultivators to make legal registration of what had been only their customary rights in land, and to underline the authority of the State as landlord. But whatever the purpose of the Ottoman Land Law, Midhat Pasha's 'reforms', or the later efforts of British and Iraqi officials, the effect

was the widespread conversion of State land into the private property of largely absentee landlords.[1]

During the Occupation and Mandate period, it became first convenient and then necessary to give political and economic authority in rural areas to individuals selected for their likely loyalty either to the Civil Administration or the Iraq Government. The gradual weakening of shaikhly authority which had taken place over the previous decades was arrested by giving official recognition to powers which the shaikhs had long ceased to exercise in practice. By the middle 1920's an informal alliance had grown up between the Iraq Government and the larger landowners, whereby in return for their support, the landowners would be left as far as possible to their own devices.

One far reaching effect of this policy was the almost incessant financial difficulties in which the Government found itself. Forced into dependence on local leaders, it was in no position to present its chief supporters with realistic tax demands. Eventually, taxes from land declined from about 42% of the national income in 1911 to about 14% in 1933, the difference being made up first by all round increases in customs and excise and later by oil revenues.[2]

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1. Karpat, K.H., The Land Regime, Social Structure and Modernisation in the Ottoman Empire in Polk, W., and Chambers, R., The Beginnings of Modernisation in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century, pp 69-90.

2. Himadeh, S., Taxation in the 1900's (al-NIdham al-iqtisadi fi al-Iraq) in Issawi, C., Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914.

This change affected the landlord, but not the fellah, since the landlord paid less tax, but the fellah, was compelled to hand over the same amount of his crop to the landlord or his agent as before.

The Main Features of the System in the Later Ottoman Period.[1]

For our purposes, the most important social and economic changes in the later Ottoman period were the gradual spread of settled agriculture, and concurrently the decline in the cohesion of the tribe as a unit. At first, agricultural production was confined to the banks of canals in the vicinity of towns. Since water supplies were highly unreliable, especially before the introduction of mechanical pumps, the area under cultivation would vary from year to year. Also, the transition from nomadism to sedentary crop-raising took place at different times in different places, depending on the kind of tribal organisation and the type of land available. Tribesmen did not necessarily abandon desert life altogether: a report of 1918 notes that:

> 'Roughly speaking on the Euphrates from Ramadi to Abu Ghuraib the lift land is cultivated by tribesmen who settle down for a few years to agriculture and then return to desert life in alternative spells.' 2

Since agricultural production necessitated relative peace and stability, the martial virtues which had been important in promoting tribal cohesion became less significant. In consequence, the position and influence of the paramount shaikh were beginning to wane. [3]

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1. This account of land tenure is only concerned with the irrigation zone of Iraq.

2. Administrative Report, Revenue Board, Baghdad 22 March to 31 December 191' Baghdad, 1918. FO 371/3406/139231.

3. 'Settled agriculture and extended civilisation have tended to weaken the power of the shaikh.' See Note 2 above.

Prowess in battle, and the presence of a force of armed retainers became less important as the occasions requiring such resources occurred less and less frequently. Hence the powers of the shaikh declined, and those of the lesser shaikhs, or sirkals, increased. Whereas the sirkals had been bound to pay dues to their shaikhs, they now became very largely independent, and were to be found paying taxes direct to Government, especially in Basra wilayet. Furthermore, as agriculture became a profitable activity and not simply a means of subsistence, the relationship of the tribe to the land changed. The dira, or tribal land, was formerly the common possession of the tribe,[1] though individuals could develop prescriptive rights (lazma) over particular areas,

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1. Though authorities differ here; e.g. Fernea, R.A., Shaikh and Effendi : Changing Patterns of Authority among the El Shabana of Southern Iraq:-
'No clear evidence suggests that land was ever considered the corporate property of an 'ashira. Rather, informants say, segments of the 'ashira always claimed certain sections of land, and within the segments individual men and their sons claimed the right to farm individual fields. Dowson reports that in general shaikhs assigned landholdings to their tribesmen.' (p 97)

Prescriptive rights (lazma) were more highly developed in some areas than others (see the next note) ; in the Daghghara region described by Fernea, rights to particular pieces of land were of comparatively ancient origin. This would not apply to regions where although tribal lands were extensive the area under cultivation formed only a small fraction of the whole.

normally by verbal tradition. However, since actual cultivation was most commonly based on extended family units, other tribesmen might in practice be partners of the lazma holder.[1] Gradually, however, boundaries, leases and conditions of tenure became issues of considerable importance as well as sources of friction under the largely free-for-all situation which prevailed.

In the course of the nineteenth century, the relations between the tribes and the authorities became closer, in the sense that Ottoman control became effective over a wider area. The powerful Kurdish principalities of the North were reduced, and frequent expenditure to the Middle Euphrates helped to break the powers of the tribal conferations there as well as weakening the position of the Sa'dun rulers of the Muntafiq. As the process of extension of Government control was almost entirely a one-way one, of revenue extraction in return for very few tangible benefits, constant tribal resistance to government is hardly surprising.

While Government remained weak, tax collecting was confined to the immediate vicinity of towns, but the general principle on which taxes were gathered remained the same when the 'pacified' area increased in size.

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1. Haider, S., in his Land Problems of Iraq (London University Ph.D thesis, 1942, extracted and edited in Issawi, C., (ed) The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914, p 169) has classified areas of Southern Iraq as follows:

   a) areas where tribalism remained strong.
   b) areas where individual sirkal holdings predominated.
   c) areas where the tribal system had largely disappeared.

   These were:

   a) Muntafiq
      Diwaniya
      'Amara
      Dulaim (Rabi'a)
      Hilla (Albu Sultan)

   b) Samarra'
      Dujaila
      Mahmudiya
      Tigris between Baghdad and Bughaila
      Hilla (Fatlah, Bani Hasan)

   c) Diyala
      Karbala'
      Most of Basra wilayet
      Baghdad town & environs

Taxation was based on a percentage of the annual gross yield, which fluctuated according to the size of the crop. Local variation would depend upon the type of irrigation, the kind of crop, local cesses, and the honesty of the revenue officials. A model of the revenue system would show the fellah at the bottom of the pyramid. He would probably own the simple implements required for agriculture, and would normally be directed to work in different parts of the dira by the sirkal, a kind of foreman or bailiff, who 'divided the plots, fixed the dates of sowing and harvesting and occasionally advanced seed or money.'[1] Above him in the hierarchy came the shaikh, who might be the head of the pyramid, and thus the intermediary between the tribe and the Government (if such relations existed) or, nearer the end of the Ottoman period, might be subordinate himself to a landlord or mallak.[2]

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1. Haider/Issawi, p 163-64

2. It is difficult to specify when the mallak appeared in the hierarchy and in fact there is no consensus as to the exact meaning of the word:
'The different stages in the agricultural and tribal development of (Basra and Baghdad) wilayets are reflected in the meaning of technical terms in common use. In Basra, 'mallak' usually means proprietor, the owner of freehold property, mulk. In Baghdad it designates the sirkal who finances the fellah. Similarly tapu property in Basra usually means mulk or freehold: in Baghdad it refers to a particular tenancy created by Midhat Pasha.'

See page 320 note 2.

Until well into the twentieth century, the fellah seems to have been little affected by any changes in administrative organisation:

> '...In a country where land is unlimited and cultivators few a population of nomadic origin could not be brought to cultivate at all unless the fellah, the actual pusher of the plough, were secured at least half a share in the produce of his labours.' 1

The major source of agrarian conflict in our period and well after derived from the new relationship between the sirkal and the mallak. Until the British came, the mallaks had only been able to make feeble attempts to collect their landlord dues (mallakiya) : after the Occupation and Mandate they were given official authority to collect these, which meant that the income of the sirkals was proportionately reduced.[2] This was most acutely felt in areas where the sirkals had long been accustomed to paying revenue direct to Government themselves.

Until 1831, the government of Iraq was in the hands of Mameluke pashas, who were more or less independent of the Ottoman authorities. The Government was backed up by a corps of janissaries aided by local armed forces which could be used to maintain limited security in the vicinity

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1. Muntafiq Report, 1919, p 7. CO 696/2.

2. See here Situation on the Shatt al-Gharraf, 1927-31 in Air 23/121, and pp 139 and 214.

of the towns. After 1831, however, officials were appointed direct from Istanbul. To be sent to serve in Baghdad or Basra was a mild punishment to the official concerned, though appointments were usually short-term, to prevent an individual building up a local power base. The result of the short duration of appointments, and the system of tax-farming, was that the governor's real power over the province was very limited. He could only hope to exert control by means of a conciliatory alliance between himself and the local notables, based on mutual necessity. Baghdad's situation as a 'frontier province' probably forced the governor to rely rather more heavily than elsewhere in the notables, but their own position, surrounded by powerful armed tribes, necessitated an equally greater measure of support from the Ottoman administration.[1] The main feature of the alliance was the interposition of a number of intermediaries between the Revenue authorities and the taxpayer:

> '...It is a feature of the Turkish fiscal system that everyone from the Government downwards, leased out his rights and passed on his liabilities to someone else.' 2

This arrangement was modified but by no means destroyed by the Tanzimat reforms initiated in the years after 1839. The principal aim of the reforms was to reassert the rights of the central government and to draw the provinces more closely under the control of the Imperial authorities. The Land Law of 1858 was one of the cornerstones of the

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1. Hourani, A.H., Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables in Polk., W, and Chambers, R, pp 41-69

2. Howell, Lt. Col. E.B., Note on Land Policy (printed) Baghdad, 29 May 1919, enclosed in India Office to Foreign Office, Letter P.4804 of 10 Nov. 1919. FO 371/4150/127807.

system, upholding the rights of the Ottoman Government as the owner and lessor of all land, in order to obtain at least its traditional share in the gradually increasing fruits of the soil.

The Ottoman Land Law

The new code set down various categories of land, of which only two, miri (state or unalienated land) and mulk (private land -- houses, gardens, orchards and so forth) are important.[1] The basic premise of the code was that the State alone was sole landlord, and possessed raqaba, ownership. It could grant out tasarruf, usufruct, to multazims or muhassils, lessees, who could acquire leases by making bids for them at periodic auctions. This is true miri, miri sirf tenure, where the Government's position as ultimate owner is quite clear, and where the holding of rights was only permanent in the sense that continuity could be achieved by the same man or his heirs putting in the highest bid at the auctions, normally held every three, five, or ten years. A development in the 1858 law provided that:

> '...possession of this kind of immoveable property will henceforward be acquired by leave of and grant by the agent of the government ... Those who acquire possession will receive a title deed bearing the Imperial cypher. The amount paid in advance (mu'ajjala) for the right of possession is called the tapu fee.' [2]

The intention here seems to have been to validate the rights of those in possession by the grant of title deeds, called tapu sanads. Theoretically the sanads offered more or less permanent rights of possession (without the auctions, or periodic regranting), encouraged greater investment in land

1. For a comprehensive description of the Land Categories, see Haider, S., Land Problems of Iraq (London University Ph.D. thesis, 1942).

2. Fisher, S., Ottoman Land Law, p 3

through security of tenure, and enabled Government and revenue payer to deal directly with one another.

Naturally, the Land Code was far from being an act of disinterested benevolence on the part of the Ottoman authorities. As well as enabling Government to assert its control over the provinces, the growing tendency towards sedentarisation and the increasing cereal production which resulted probably acted as a spur to a more vigorous revenue policy. Also, more peaceful conditions in the countryside were gradually making tax collection easier. Primarily the code was designed for conditions in Anatolia, where by creating a body of leasehold tenants the fragmentation of large estates would result in breaking the power of the 'lords of the valleys'. It was felt that the possessors of sanads, 'a body of industrious peasant proprietors and taxpayers'[1] would be more ready to pay taxes to a Government which had confirmed them in the possession of their lands.

In Iraq, however, these conditions did not apply. The Code could not fit around the kind of corporate communal ownership which existed and the difficulties which followed Midhat Pasha's introduction of the Land Code to the area in 1869 largely derived from the incompatibility of the customary and official systems. Neither Islamic, nor, at this stage Ottoman law recognised the existence of corporate legal entities[2] which

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1. Dowson, E.M., An Enquiry into Land Tenure and Related Questions p.6

2. A law of 1 March 1914 permitted ownership by corporate bodies, but this was in practice confined to buildings belonging to State companies or municipalities.

meant that leases could only be given to individuals rather than the 'X' or 'Y' tribe. Thus in Iraq the code was used to restore or even to create the authority of tribal leaders by giving individuals rights over lands which had formerly been held in common by the leaders and their followers together.

The Application of the Code in Iraq.

Although published in 1858, the land code was not applied in Iraq until Midhat Pasha's arrival as governor of Baghdad in 1869. At first Midhat attempted to force the tribes into submission by military expeditions, but in contrast to his predecessors he also took active steps to bring about a land settlement. The policy of distributing tapu sanads, however, produced results almost precisely the reverse of those Midhat seems to have intended.[1] Many of those who came forward to claim tapu sanads were not entitled to them : fears on the part of individual lazma holders that rights might somehow be taken away, or that registration might facilitate conscription, or that there was no advantage, and might even be some suspicion, attached to claiming what they considered their own already, all deterred legitimate claimants from registering their rights. Hence:

> 'The class of tapu tenant thus created has always been the object of the tribesman's bitterest hostility...but the tribes were not always ready to be openly defiant of authority. Their leaders were often bought with the land, and the purchaser

1. See here Haider, S., Juwaideh, A., Midhat Pasha and the Land System of Lower Iraq (St Antony's Papers Vol XVI pp 106-137) Warriner, D., The Real Meaning of the Ottoman Land Code, in Issawi, C., pp 72-78, and Longrigg, S.H., Four Centuries of Modern Iraq., p 306.

> was often content at first to bide his time. When the authorities were complacent and powerful enough to enable him to recover the share due according to custom to the landlord, he recovered it or something less. When times were adverse, he came to terms with the tribal shaikh, to whom he would lease out his rights for a fraction of their nominal value.[1]

What happened, in many cases, was that the tribal leaders would register the land in their own names, thus making the whole dira to all intents and purposes the personal property of the sanad holder.

However, the effects of tapu sanads should not be overestimated, in the sense that they were not universally distributed. The Tapu Department virtually ceased to function as an effective registry after 1882, and other factors contributed to narrowing its field of activity. Some 30% of all land in the Baghdad wilayet was the personal property of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid: these, the Sarniya, or Crown Lands, which included the 'Amara rice estates, were managed by a special department and hence never registered in Tapu. Further, the authorities soon realised the disadvantages of the enduring nature of the transaction; permanent alienation meant the loss of a powerful weapon of control, whereas the issue of miri sirf tenancies could be confined to loyal and trustworthy lessees. By the time of the British occupation the majority of the land was still held under this latter form of tenure, with tapu holdings in the Irrigation Zone confined to areas near towns, the banks of the Diyala,

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1. Howell, Lt. Col. E.B. See p 325.

the Shamiya, parts of the Muntafiq, and from Fao to Qurna in the Delta.[1]

Hence the 'system of tenure' prevailing in 1914 was not really a system at all, but a hodge-podge of different practices in different areas. Also, the application of the Land Code in circumstances in which it was often quite irrelevant, had created highly anomalous situations, which the British authorities in many cases took as the normal order of things. Although the Occupation and Mandate authorities took pains to assert that their policies were not innovatory, but simply attempts to follow existing practices, what was produced was a selection of those practices which facilitated the simplest and most effective system of administrative control, combined with the collection of as much revenue as possible. The most

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1. Dowson summarised the position:

> 'Under the regular operation of the Land Code all state lands held and used by the public should be possessed in Tapu tenure. But no systematic grant of Tapu tenure was made ... when the code was introduced. Consequently Tapu tenure was the occasional and imperfectly realised privilege of the few instead of the regular tenure of State Land it was intended to be. In many cases grants in Tapu tenure were no doubt made to those best entitled to enjoy its rights and best able to discharge its obligations. But as a rule grants were made without any satisfactory investigation of conflicting claims.'
>
> Dowson, E.M., p 19.

important result of this policy was to create a small number of large property holders, either through land grants to individuals, or through measures designed to bolster the powers of tribal shaikhs and landlords.

Policy and Practice under the British Occupation.

Between November 1914 and September 1915, British troops advanced from Fao to Kut, a distance of some 400 miles. Since most of the Turkish administrators had joined the retreating Turkish army, the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force found itself confronted not only with military objectives, but also with the task of the civil administration of the occupied territories. By the autumn of 1915 there were political officers in all the important towns on the Tigris and Euphrates, as far as Kut and Nasiriya.

For the first few months, revenue was not collected on a large scale and in remoter and less pacific areas it was some years before any taxation was levied at all. Nevertheless, where British control was secure, collection was begun, and was undertaken with such efficiency and over so wide and an area that the thoroughness of the work has been adduced as one of the major causes of the rising of 1920.[1]

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1. Revenue collection in the Muntafiq division amounted to Rs 33,557 in 1915-16, Rs 135,139 in 1917-18, and Rs 1,661,823 in 1919-20. Muntafiq Report, 1921, p 31. CO 696/4.

   c.f. 'Efficiency of collection is undoubtedly greater than uder the Turks but this seems scarcely fair ground for attack ... It must be remembered that efficiency in collection includes and is inseparable from, a more equitable distribution of the burden'.

   Such admirable notions of fair play seem to have fallen on barren soil in the Middle Euphrates. Political, Baghdad, to S/S India, Tgm 8724 of 21 July 1920. LP & S 10 4722/18/1920/8/5732.

Although British methods did not differ in principle from those of the Turks, Turkish demands had rearely if ever been met in full, since the necessary means of enforcement were lacking. In contrast, the British authorities had such powers at their disposal and did not hesitate to use them.

Revenue was inextricably linked with tenure, and here the British authorities also aimed to leave things more or less as they found them. In 1919 the Revenue Commissioner noted:

> 'We must recognise that it is primarily our business not to give rights to those who have them not, but to secure their rights to those who have them.' 1

This policy was generally adhered to, although there was by no means any general consensus that such rights as existed had been either justly or irrevocably acquired. The Tapu Department, the only attempt to register title in Ottoman times, had to be maintained. In general, the guiding principle animating the tenurial, fiscal and tribal policies of the Civil Administration during the war, which were largely continued during the Mandate, was to maintain "traditional practice" and to uphold the supposed status quo. The British authorities tried to preserve a system based partly on 'tradition' and partly on the Turkish model, the latter being thought to be not so much inherently bad as incompetently administered. Several drawbacks followed the adoption of these principles. First, Ottoman Law bore little relation to many of the actual tenurial arrangements in force in Iraq, a fact for which the authorities, in so far

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1. Howell, Lt. Col E.B. See

as they were aware of it, made very little allowance. Further, even where Ottoman law was in use, its application did not antedate the time of Midhat Pasha, some forty-five years before 1914. Finally, the British authorities misunderstood both the nature of tribal organisation and the effect of Turkish policies upon it, attributing the main cause of tribal disintegration to attacks on the system by the Ottomans rather than to natural forces arising from the process of sedentarisation.

Tribal Policy

Very broadly speaking, the authority of the shaikh in pre-agricultural nomadic society was founded on the basis of reciprocity, a combination of prestige and consensus, in which the latter played a highly important part:

> '... le peuple a tendance à considérer le chef comme un arbitre qu'on peut recuser, dont on peut provoquer le remplacement.' 1

British officials considered that the fragmentation and breakdown of shaikhly authority which had taken place was due to the Turkish policy of fomenting discord between tribes and sections. Their own aim was to restore the broken bonds, by re-establishing the authority of the shaikh, which would also provide a basis of loyalty to the civil administration and simplify the task and reduce the cost of rural peace-keeping. As well as its practical advantages, the policy seems also to have been justified

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1. Rondot, P., Les Tribus montagnardes de l'Asie Antérieure: quelques aspects sociaux des population Kurdes et Assyriennes. Bulletin des Études Orientales de l'Institut Français de Damas, Vol VI 1936.

by the assumption of a community of interest between the shaikh and the tribe. This sense of cohesion was in fact already weak, but it often disappeared altogether when the shaikh became not only entitled but enabled to exercise the functions of landlord and revenue collector. The most important official instrument of British tribal policy was the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation, (abbreviated to Tribal Disputes Regulation), first issued in 1916, governing disputes in the occupied territories in which 'either or any of the parties was a tribesman.' 1

The general sense of the Tribal Disputes Regulation was that tribesman who were accustomed to settling their differences by tribal methods, under the jurisdiction of their shaikh or majlis, should be able to continue to do so, and should thus be spared the complexities and expense of the ordinary courts. At the time of its original issue, the Regulation was designed for immediate and specific purposes: it was essential that the areas through which the M.E.F.'s lines of communication passed should be in the hands of friendly tribal leaders, since total control could not be achieved by the Occupation forces alone. Loyalty was paid for by subsidies for good behaviour, and more important because

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1. A tribesman is defined as 'a member of a tribe which has been accustomed to settle its disputes in accordance with tribal custom.' The 1918 version of the Regulation is printed in the Special Report... on the Progress of Iraq 1920-1931.

it lasted long after the subsidies had ceased to be paid, official recognition of selected shaikhs as the shaikh, or the paramount shaikh, of their tribe. The Regulation further enhanced the shaikh's position by giving him absolute jural authority over his tribe, while other courts, with codes based on Indian civil and penal systems, were set up for the rest of the population. Thus the selected shaikh was confirmed in his office, became the accredited agent of the central administration, and had official power to act as judge and jury in civil and criminal matters.

The powers conferred by the Tribal Disputes Regulation are extremely wide, a feature that may have been judged necessary for wartime conditions, but which seems generally questionable in terms of equity. No appeals were allowed from any decision given or sentence passed under the Regulation: there was no habeas corpus, and even the finality of proceedings resulting in acquittal was brought under question, since retrial for any offence arising out of the same facts was possible for a period of up to two years after the case had been discharged. (Sections 11 and 50) As well as giving wide powers to the shaikh, the Regulation also conferred wide authority on Political Officers: whole tribal sections could be removed to another area of the Officer's area of jurisdiction, and under the notorious section 40, frequently to be used against political offenders in the future, 'dangerous characters' could be made to reside outside their home areas, a kind of internal exile, at the discretion of the High Commissioner.

The original Tribal Disputes Regulation, and its reissue of 1918, were framed with a view to their being supervised by British Political

Officers, since the employment of Iraqis as administrative officials was not yet contemplated. Later, however, provision for a separate tribal jurisdiction was included in the Organic Law at the insistence of the Mandate authorities, and the Regulation itself became part of the ordinary law of the land in December 1924. On this occasion suitable changes in wording were made in order to substitute Iraqi for British officials. J.S. Mann's experiences as a young political officer in Umm al-Barur during 1919 and 1920 show that much of his time was taken up with the settlement of disputes between tribal factions. Such conflicts could normally be settled disinterestedly by the Political Officer, but when his functions were taken over by the despised effendis from the towns, an equal lack of bias was less likely. As a foreigner, the British official was entirely outside the local social machinery, and would rarely be exposed either to the temptations or the threats which were to confront his Iraqi successors.[1]

In common with much of the administrative machinery introduced during the Mesopotamia campaign, the notion of a separate tribal jurisdiction was imported directly from India. Sir Henry Dobbs, Revenue Commissioner and later High Commissioner, and his contemporaries were strongly influenced

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1. J.S. Mann, ed., An Administrator in the Making: J.S. Mann 1893 to 1920. c.f. Fernea, R.A., pp 139-142.

by the methods of Sir Robert Sandeman, Governor of Kaharistan in the North-West Frontier Provinces in the late nineteenth century. Sandeman's solution to the problems created by tribal warfare and disputes within tribes was to give official recognition to tribal chiefs and to tribal law, and to set up the chiefs, under the overlordship of the Raj, to police their own districts. The assumption was that:

> 'The balance of power is turned directly the headmen are given the means to entertain armed servants of their own and when supported by suitable allowances and the prestige of connection with our power they both can and do exert themselves successfully to keep their tribes in order.' 1

The advantages to the British authorities, both in India and in Iraq, was that such a system was extremely cheap to administer, and that leaders who were granted this form of official recognition owed their authority entirely to the central administration:

> 'McMahon (Dobbs' chief as Agent-General for Baluchistan) pointed out that in countries where customary and tribal law exists in full force, it forms:
>
> "an instrument for the suppression of crime which in simplicity and effectiveness can be surpassed by no other legal system which we can invent, for the simple reason that it is based on the character, idiosyncracies and prejudices of the people among whom it has originated and by whom it has been evolved during long periods of time to meet their own requirements and remedy their failings." ' 2

However, although such a system was apparently an effective means of keeping the peace in 'tribal areas', it provided endless possibilities for abuse. In situations where the prosecution were themselves the judge

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1. Thornton, T.H., Life of Sir Robert Sandeman, p 301

2. Dobbs to Pulley (Interior) D.O. S.O. 2140 of 28 Sept 1924. Delhi, BHCF, Justice File 8/4 Vol I.

the Sa'dun family because of his humble birth. The murderer explained that it was his duty to avenge the family honour by killing his niece's husband, and that his action entitled him to trial under the Tribal Disputes Regulation. His plea was successful, and his sentence commuted to a term of imprisonment.[1] The reverse side of the coin, of 'urban', or broadly speaking 'political' offenders being submitted to the 'tribal' jurisdiction, can be seen in the treatment of those convicted either for their part in the demonstration against Sir Alfred Mond in 1928, or in the General Strike of 1931. These offenders were sentenced to periods of internal exile under section 40 of the Tribal Disputes Regulation.[2] This latter use of the Regulation was still in force well after the Iraqi revolution of 1958.

The Application of Tribal and Revenue Policy

Even in societies where the powers of local leaders remained strong, the policy of official support for a selected chief caused discontent and unrest. In Iraq, where such powers had greatly declined, the difficulties were considerable. A report of 1917 states that:

> 'Settled agriculture and extended civilisation have tended to disintegrate the tribe and to weaken the influence of the shaikhs. To restore and continue the power of the tribal shaikhs is not the least interesting of the problems in land administration which the (Baghdad) wilayet presents.' 3

1. See Selhi, BHCF, Interior, File 7/17/168, Murder of 'Abdullah Beg al-Sani'.
2. See Delhi, BHCF, Interior, File 7/17/144, Anti-Zionist Demonstration on the Occasion of the Visit of Sir Alfred Mond to Iraq in 1928 and File 7/4/22, General Strike in Baghdad in Protest Against the Municipal Fees Law, 1931, c.f. also:
...'it must have been very galling for the Opposition leaders to discover that the executive could arrest and exile to distant parts of Iraq unwelcome agitators in Baghdad and Ba'quba under powers conferred by the Tribal ... Disputes Regulation, devised by Sir Henry Dobbs in 1916 to compose tribal differences in the marshes of 'Amara.'
The Near East and India, 21 August 1931

3. See page 320 note 2.

In 1919 the Acting Civil Commissioner described the dilemma facing the British authorities in the context of administrative reconstruction in the Shamiya:

> 'The tribes accepted the new system with alacrity, showing themselves almost too ready to throw off their allegiance to their chiefs and to deal directly with civil officials in regard to revenue and other matters.'

This posed an important question of principle:

> '... ought we to aim at a 'bureaucratic' form of administration .. involving direct control by a central government and the replacement of the powerful tribal confederation by the smaller tribal or sub-tribal unit, as a prelude to individual in place of communal ownership of land, or should our aim be to retain, and subject to official safeguards to strengthen, the authority of tribal chiefs and to make them the agents and official representatives of Government within their respective areas? The latter policy had already been adopted, in default of a better, in the Basra wilayet, and especially in the Muntafiq division: was it wise to apply it to the Baghdad wilayet? ' 1

Over wide areas of Iraq, the powers of tribal leaders had become negligible until the Civil Administration restored or in some cases created those powers. Eventually both shaikhs and landlords became so strong that the Iraq Government, with its extremely limited support from within the country, was forced into dependence upon their support. They became the 'intermediaries', retreating in large numbers to the towns, since their enhanced economic status meant that they no longer had to live on their properties.

Thus in return for tax and other concessions, the shaikhs and landlords were persuaded to support the government on both local

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1. Wilson II, pp 76-77

and national levels. In spite of the spread of the authority of the Iraq Government from the centre to the countryside, and the use of the R.A.F. to prevent any serious check to the process, internal security, if not to be inordinately expensive, depended on the cooperation of tribal leaders in seeing that the peace was kept and that a modicum of taxation was paid, although towards the end of the Mandate period, the latter purpose was not being achieved. In the financial year 1924-25 the 'Amara shaikhs were given substantial tax remissions, specifically because their 'complaints were reiterated at the somewhat difficult moment of the passage of the (June 1924) Treaty and this circumstance no doubt lent them a special importance.'[1] In Samawa the familiar system of intermediaries can be seen at work:

> 'The period of absence of Government in the area had resulted in rapid tribal disintegration. Every lilliputian leader who could raise three or four followers refused to obey his shaikh and struck out on his own. This state of affairs is inconvenient for Government, and now a certain number of shaikhs are being recognised officially. Such men as these will be great gainers by the re-establishment of control by Government, which means that of themselves over their tribes also. Shaikhs will always, for the edification of their followers, raise loud lamentations over the question of taxes. Actually ... they are the gainers by them. Of all the taxes they collect for Government they retain a share for themselves. Consequently the more Government is known to be pressing for taxes, the more the shaikhs can squeeze out of the cultivators and the more they get for themselves. It was very noticeable that as soon as tax-collecting began in Samawa all the shaikhs blossomed out in new clothes.' [2]

1. Revenue Report, 1925, pp 25-26. CO 696/5
2. S.S.O. Samawa (J.B.Glubb) to Air Headquarters, D.582 of 23 December 1923. Air 23/445.

Occasionally, rigid adherence to the policy of supporting the officially appointed paramount shaikh resulted in strange anomalies. In 1917, 'Ali Sulaiman of the Dulaim was appointed leader of the Dulaim bairaq (camel corps), and official chief of his tribe. His elevation was looked upon with some disfavour by other members of the Dulaim and subsequently by the Iraq Government, who were forced to subsidise him and regarded him as a British puppet. However, after the rising of 1920,

> ' ... several sectional leaders ... in order to avoid being punished for acts of hostility ... agreed to recognise 'Ali Sulaiman as their paramount shaikh ... and to pay him the customary shaikhly dues.' 1

'Ali managed to collect these dues for two years, but by 1923, apparently with a certain amount of quiet encouragement from liwa headquarters, the sirkals refused to pay. With the arrival of a new mutasarrif, 'Ali pressed for the restoration of his rights. The Administrative Inspector discovered that before British forces had occupied Ramadi, Shaikh Dhari (outlawed for the murder of Colonel Leachman in 1920) had been paramount shaikh of the Dulaim: 'Ali, it seemed, had no traditional right to the office. Although he might be listed as paramount shaikh of the Dulaim in the files of the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad, in the Dulaim itself his presence was a hindrance to the work of revenue collection, since taxes could more easily be collected direct from the sirkals.[2]

The confederation which 'Ali Sulaiman was supposed to control included both cultivators and nomads. In 1926 Dobbs asked that Government

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1. Dulaim Revenue Report, January 1924. Delhi, BHCF, Interior, File 7/22/15, Shaikh 'Ali Sulaiman.

2. Dulaim Report, 27 August to 13 November 1924. Delhi, BHCF, Interior File 7/22/15, Shaikh 'Ali Sulaiman

should collect 'Ali's dues for him from the cultivators of the Ghurma Khor canal and the karads (irrigation devices) alongside it. If this could be done,

> ' ... he would then practically abandon his position as shaikh of the badu section of the tribe, which brings him no profit and no honour and a great deal of worry. But this would make him quite useless to Government ... it is best to arrange for Government to collect a percentage of the gross produce for the shaikh ... But this should be on condition that ... he retains full responsibility for the badu in the desert...'

Interior replied:

> 'Although some formula must be found defining Shaikh 'Ali's responsibilities, should it be decided to collect for him a percentage of the gross produce of the Ghurma, I do not think that it will be practicable to make him responsible for all the Dulaim badu. The main point however is to maintain the authority of all the shaikhs and use it to reinforce the police.' 1

Similar objections were made by their British colleagues to attempts by Iraqi administrators to weaken shaikhly power in order to extend the authority of the central government over the tribes. During Yasin al-Hashimi's tenure of office as mutasarrif of the Muntafiq, the British assumption that what was good for the shaikh must ipso facto be good for the tribe as a whole is clearly illustrated.[2] Yasin was appointed in June 1922: his predecessor had 'received on his appointment by the King in November 1921 direct orders that he was to bring the shaikhs to heel', 3

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1. Dobbs to Cornwallis, 17 October 1925, D.O.SQ. 2607 : Cornwallis to Dobbs, 21 October 1925, DO C/36791. Delhi, BHCF, Interior, File 7/22/15, Shaikh 'Ali Sulaiman.

2. One contemporary administrator wrote later that British policy was: 'a veiled rule through the natural chiefs whom the native soil had evolved, namely the tribal shaikhs'.
Thomas, B., Alarms and Excursions in Arabia, p 24

3. High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, CO 528 of 17 August 1922, with enclosure, Report on the Unrest in the Nasiriya Division, by District Adviser, Muntafiq. CO 730/23/43319.

and both he and Yasin tried to work on these lines. Early in August 1922, Yasin attempted to replace the mudir of Batha', a tribal shaikh, Manshad al-Hubaiyib[1] with a permanent civil servant from Baghdad, but the mutasarrif's nominee was kidnapped by Manshad's al-Ghazzi tribesmen on his way to take up his post. In reply, a few days later,

> ' ... a few tribal nonetities, egged on by the Mayor of Nasiriya, 'Abd al-Karim al-Sabti, held a meeting ... and decided to send a petition protesting against any tribal shaikh occupying the position of mudir ... this was directed against the paramount shaikhs of the Nasiriya qadha.' 2

The shaikhs themselves now took up the struggle, complaining to the District Adviser that 'outside interests' (the lesser government officials) were plotting together with the sirkals to fabricate false charges against them which had reached the ears of the mutasarrif. In spite of the well known difficulties which had been brought about by the assertion of paramountcy and the nomination of selected leaders as revenue payers in the Muntafiq, and the resulting hardship to the sirkals, the District Adviser summed up the position:

> 'My great difficulty with the mutasarrif has been to persuade him ... that because a number of unimportant sirkals have informed him that they are opposed to their shaikhs, it does not mean that the shaikhs have not got their tribes solidly behind them. Further this is not a case of a cabal of shaikhs trying to enforce their will on Government, but the

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1. al-Hubaiyib had been a supporter of the British authorities during the 1920 rising, and maintained frequent contact with the Residency during the Mandate. See Delhi, BHCF, Personalities, File 27/728, Manshad al-Hubaiyib of the Ghazzi at Ur.

2. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 1 Sept 1922. CO 730/24/48131.

representatives of the cultivating classes[1] determined to defend their rights which they believe are endangered.' 2

As a result of the processes initiated by the British Occupation authorities during and immediately after the War, the Iraq Government became increasingly dependent upon the services and the cooperation of tribal leaders. There was a tendency either to allow powerful individuals to hold tracts of land for very little taxation, or to be indulgent with major revenue defaulters. The quarrel between 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar and his sirkals shows how essentially political considerations could triumph over matters of revenue collection and equity.

In Ottoman times, the Shamiya and Mishkhab areas were ruled by the Khaza'il tribe. In order to bring peace to the area, the authorities encouraged two tribes of cultivators, the Fatlah and the Ibrahim, to settle there. 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar was one of the five sons of the Fatlah leader Fira'un, among whom the tribal lands had been divided after Fira'un's death in the early years of this century. A few years before the war some of the Fatlah shaikhs fell foul of the Ottoman authorities and the Khaza'il sirkals took repossession, registering the lands in their names and dealing directly with Government. Under the

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1. My emphasis.

2. See above, page 343 note 3, and c.f. Major Pulley, P.O. Hilla to Civil Commissioner, 6 August 1920, referring to conversations with prisoners captured during the rising:
'... they are miserably oppressed by their sub-shaikhs, who seem to me to be like feudal barons. Many of them were small men of no account until we made them powerful and rich.'
I.P. & S 10 4722/18/1920/8/6035.

British occuptation, the Fatlah leaders returned and were registered as the paramount family:

> 'On this occasion 'Abd al-Wahid was registered as cultivating all the Raqq al-Haswa estate, which, on the occasion of his flight from the Turks a few years previously had been divided up between his sirkals.' 1

For reasons which are not entirely clear (since the British had restored the Fatlah family), 'Abd al-Wahid was prominent in anti-British activity during the 1920 rising, and closely associated subsequently with the dissident 'ulama in 1922. As a result the British authorities were determined not to let him secure the title deeds of the Raqq al-Haswa, and the Iraq Government equally anxious that he should. Thus at one time the District Adviser, Diwaniya, made a register of all the sirkals of the Raqq al-Haswa with a view to registering the land in their names and so eliminating 'Abd al-Wahid, but after his transfer to another district the attempt was not continued. In June 1923 after protracted bargaining a compromise was reached. The land was to be registered in 'Abd al-Wahid's name, but the sirkals could not be evicted without the agreement of the Government. They had to recognise 'Abd al-Wahid as shaikh 'according to tribal law' but 'Abd al-Wahid himself was liable to eviction in the event of misconduct or revenue default.

This solution, however, did not satisfy the Fira'un family. Together with his brother, Mizhir ibn Fira'un, and his nephew, Taklif ibn Mubdir, 'Abd al-Wahid was determined to restore all the family land to their direct control. As a first step, Mizhir burnt down several villages occupied by

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1. Note by SSO Hilla (J.B. Glubb) 19 July 1924. Air 23/447.

sub-sections which had become independent of his control, and Taklif attempted to evict a sirkal who had long paid taxes direct to Government. Both these actions were fined, but Government was unable to prevent their recurrence. In May 1924, 'Abd al-Wahid himself burnt down the village of a sub-chief in the Raqq al-Haswa, and arranged for an official of the Tapu Department to come to measure the area prior to issuing him with the sanads. The latter development was the result of 'Abd al-Wahid's influence in Baghdad, since the official did not have authorisation either from the Tapu Department itself nor from the local administrative authorities. His arrival caused consternation in the area, and many sirkals attempted to treat with 'Abd al-Wahid, who made use of the bluff to carry out further evictions.

In July 1924 the local Administrative Inspector visited the Raqq al-Haswa to investigate complaints from the sirkals. He found that 'Abd al-Wahid had been terrorising the whole area by pretending that he was acting under Government orders, and that the qaimmaqam of Abu Sukhair was powerless to stop him. While the Administrative Inspector was on tour taking evidence, he was followed around by Nizhir ibn Fira'un, who threatened anyone giving unfavourable answers. The advantages derived by Government from permitting this state of affairs to continue (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) were certainly not financial:

> '... it is noticeable that the .. Fira'un are very heavily in debt for revenue, whereas most of the independent sub-chiefs have paid their taxes in full. Thus 'Abd al-Wahid owes nearly half a lakh of rupees; Taklif ibn Mubdir owes some Rs 10,000, while Fahim al-Muhammad, whose land he wants to acquire, has paid in full up to date.' 1

1. See page 346 note 1.

This dispute continued well after the end of the Mandate, and 'Abd al-Wahid was the leader of a major rising in the Mishkhab in 1935.

The episode illustrates the powerlessness of Government in the face of local leaders with their own armed following. Government's enforced support of the shaikh's immunity was a direct result of the British policy of re-establishing, or in some cases establishing, particular individuals as tribal leaders and landlords de jure, and the failure to recognise the existing rights of the sub-tenants.

Origins and Consequences of British Land and Tribal Policy

Sir Henry Dobbs was the initiator of the greater part of the land, revenue and tribal policy under the Occupation and continued under the Mandate. As Revenue Commissioner in 1916 he had set up most of the arrangements for the Basra wilayet. His tenure of office as High Commissioner from 1923 to 1929 ensured that his principles would be maintained in practice. In 1926, in a Note on Land Tenure, he asserted that in contrast to the practice prevailing in many parts of British India[2] it would be impossible in Iraq to deal directly with individual cultivators for revenue purposes, because of poor communications and unsettled conditions in the country. The only method of preventing a serious decline in administration

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1. See Chapter VII, page 370.

2. See Howell, E., (formerly Revenue Commissioner in Mesopotamia) The Canun al-Aradhi, and a Note by Sir Michael O'Dwyer in J.C.A.S. 1922, pp 21-39, 81-85, where the Indian and Mesopotamian systems are compared and contrasted.

after the withdrawal of British forces (then scheduled to take place in 1928 or 1929), was to grant out large parcels of miri land to individuals for as long periods as possible, subject to occasional review and somewhat vague safeguards for the good treatment of the cultivators:

> 'Where possible the holdings of the existing tribal chiefs should be recognised by giving them perhaps a somewhat larger holding than other persons and possibly in some cases by imposing on them the task of collecting Government revenues and taking a percentage for the expenses of collection ... the tribal landlord with tribal cultivators below him is much more effectively restrained by tribal custom from oppression and exaction than can ordinarily be managed by regular laws.' 1

In fact, such grants, together with the Tribal Disputes Regulation, brought about just that oppresion and exaction that Dobbs sought to prevent. The 'tribal custom' that was presumed to act as a sanction ceased to work effectively when authority was bestowed upon the shaikh from above, and when he was in a position to back up his demands by calling on resources outside the tribal framework. The desirability of providing stringent safeguards for the cultivators was outweighed by the advantages of securing a body of loyal shaikhs and landlords.

In 1932 the Iraq Government invited Sir Ernest Dowson to survey the state of land tenure. In correspondence with Dobbs' successor Humphrys, Dowson criticised the former by implication:

> 'I do not think that either simplification or public peace or economic advantage are to be realised by a deliberate policy of establishing a series of large landowners as intermediaries ... The recurrent troubles in the Muntafiq and along the Hai were ... bred by a policy which ... bore at least this general character.

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1. Note on Land Tenure by Dobbs, enclosed in High Commissioner, Baghdad to S/S Colonies, CO 894 of 21 July 1926. CO 730/94/15136.

> Where small-holders, paying, or wishing to pay their revenue direct to Government are found to exist ... they should be recognised. Where large holders with satellite cultivating tenants are found to exist, this should also be recognised, provided that relations are healthy and subject to due record of the smaller man's reasonable rights. And where genuine tribal tenure still survives, and the land is farmed by the tribe as a whole, this again should be recognised. But I do not think that any of these varying conditions should be artificially promoted or artificially preserved.' 1

Dobbs' policy of giving benevolent landlords long-term security of tenure over the heads of their contented peasantry was based on an entirely wrong conception: it bore little or no relation to actual conditions in the countryside. It took no account of long established lazma rights, of the changing (blurs) of the sirkal, and the concurrent decline in the 'traditional' authority of the shaikh. It was only relevant to conditions within the liwas of Kut and 'Amara, and it is clear from Battatu's findings that the extreme economic deprivation suffered in these areas was very largely the result of the system of land tenure in force. 2

As a result of these policies, and as a result of the world agricultural depression in the late 1920's and early 1930's, land revenue declined steadily from just under half the state's revenues at the beginning

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1. Dowson to Humphrys, 15 Jan. 1932. E 3588/3588/93. FO 371/16049.

2. See Appendix II and Battatu, The Shaikh and the Peasant in Iraq, (Harvard University Ph.D. Thesis 1958) pp 157-60.

of our period to just over a tenth at the end. This decline was not due to any falling off in cultivation or productivity, but partly to falling prices, and partly to the Government's inability to collect the money.[1] As a result it became necessary to find alternative sources of revenue. Accordingly the rates of duty on imported goods were increased by 10% in all cases, and 20% in some selected categories in November 1931, and in June 1931 a radical revision of the land taxes was made by the introduction of the Istihlak or consumption tax. By this means, the basis of agricultural taxation was changed from a percentage of the gross produce to the surplus produced for sale. The produce for sale was taken to special centres where the duty, normally 10% was deducted. In the somewhat limited state of administrative organisation prevailing at the time together

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1. According to M.S. Hasan, the area under cultivation increased from 'Probably less than 100,000 donums in the 1860's to about 1,613,000 donums in 1913 to 9,258,000 donums during the second world war....' (Hasan I)

   In our period, the numbers of mechanical pumps increased from 143 serving 190 square kilometres in 1921 to 2031 serving 7380 square kilometres in 1929. (Dowson, E.M., page 29) Similarly the value of imports rose from I.D. 3.5 million in 1912-13 to I.D. 7.6 million in 1933/39. (Hasan I)

   These figures suggest first, increased productivity, and secondly, increased personal wealth. Neither factor is reflected in the total returns from taxation, which, apart from animal taxes, declined steadily over the period. See the tables in Special Report ... on Iraq 1920-1931, p 83

with the very wide powers of the landowners, it is most probable that the sharp falls in agricultural (though not animal) receipts can be explained as much in terms of evasion of payment as in any actual reductions which the law may have introduced.

A little after the end of the Mandate, the absolute powers of landlords were formally enshrined in legislation. In 1933 the Law Governing the Rights and Duties of Cultivators was passed, defining the legal responsibilities of farmowners, sirkals, and fellahin. Under the law, the fellah could be held responsible, on grounds of negligence for almost any disaster that might befall the crop, and he and the sirkal were liable to be evicted under a variety of circumstances that could be very widely interpreted: hence, if guilty of:-

> ' ... an act leading to the disturbance of peaceful relations between himself and others with a view to obstructing the management of the farm, he shall be punishable by eviction from the farm by orders of the administrative official concerned according to the provisions of the Tribal ... Disputes Regulation.' 1

A contemporary observer remarked:

> 'Theoretically the fellah has certain rights which are to be safeguarded, but when one considers the relative position of the two parties, should a dispute be laid before a mudir nahiya or qaimmaqam, one is obliged to regard the fellah's rights as theoretical only.' 2

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1. Article 49. The Law was published in the Iraq Government Gazette of 30 July 1933. A copy appears in FO 624/1/428/1

2. Note on the Law by the Inspector General of Agriculture, Nov.1933 enclosed in Ambassador, Baghdad to S/S Foreign Affairs, Despatch No. 807 of 22 December 1933. FO 624/1/428/7.

One of the worst features of the law was that fellahin who were indebted to a farm owner could not leave his employment until the debts were paid off. Since the fellahin could be held liable for any damage or disaster that might occur, and since the whole agricultural system depended on a system of advances from the farm-owners to the cultivators, it was virtually impossible for the latter to break out of the circle of debt other than by running away from the farm. The application of this law, coinciding with a time of severe agricultural depression, explains much of the movement of population from rural to urban areas in search of employment at this time. The provisions of the Cultivators' Law were so extreme that even the Iraq Cabinet wondered if they might not be contravening some of the clauses of the International Anti-Slavery Convention.[1]

Summary

The land and revenue policies pursued under the Mandate resulted from the difficulties confronting the Government in ruling over a country where its authority did not derive from any firm basis of consent. The British authorities had solved the problem during the Occupation period by creating islands of support in rural areas through land grants and the conferring of jurisdictional and fiscal privileges upon selected leaders. In some cases, the Iraq Government at first attempted to take away these privileges, but they were very often forced into the realisation that it was only by the formation of some sort of alliance between themselves and local magnates that they would be able to maintain themselves in power. This was especially

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1. Ambassador, Baghdad, to S/S Foreign Affairs, Despatch no 807 of 22 December 1933. FO 624/1/428/7.

true of the period before the Second World War, when the Iraq Army was very far from being a match for the possible simultaneous occurrence of a Kurdish rising in the North and a tribal rebellion on the Middle Euphrates. A policy of conciliation was the only means whereby the system of Government as created could continue to function. Furthermore, when the permanent caucus which formed the Iraq Government themselves made incursions into agriculture, they quickly realised the advantages inherent in the tenurial arrangements and tax concessions which they supported. Hence the policy must not simply be regarded as the best means by which the King's government could be carried on, but also as the policy which was in the best interests of those entrusted with the task.

The most important effects of the policies pursued bore first upon rural society in general, and secondly on revenue arrangements. As the powers and rights of landlors increased, those of their tenants declined. Fellahin and sirkals were bound to their landlords by a combination of debt, the Tribal Disputes Regulation, and the Cultivators' Law. The control of the landlord was complete, and the fellah or sirkal had no way of improving his position except by leaving the land. As far as the Treasury was concerned, the land and revenue policy resulted in the gradual decline of receipts from agriculture. The Government was forced to look for other sources of income, and found first Customs Duties, and then, providentially, the oil revenues. A relatively painless solution could be found for the economic dislocations caused by the policy: the same means were not available to resolve the long-term political and social upheavals which it brought about.

CHAPTER VII

Defence and Internal Security : The Role of the Iraq Army and the R.A.F.

As Mandatory power, Britain was legally responsible for the defence of Iraq against invasion, but her troops were also in the country to protect the route to India and the Persian and later the Iraqi oilfields. This duality of roles produced a certain amount of ambiguity, as a rising in Iraq, even if wholly brought about by the folly of the Government, was also a threat to Imperial interests, and Britain would be bound to intervene to uphold the Government's authority. Hence some Iraqis could allege that their country's defence policy was planned to serve Britain's rather than their own best interests.

Altogether, Britain's objectives in the defence of Iraq were fourfold: to protect her own interests and Imperial communications, to defend Iraq against invasion, to maintain internal peace and security, and to achieve the first three aims as cheaply as possible. It was decided at the Cairo Conference that defence should be undertaken jointly by the British and Iraq Governments, the Iraqis providing an Army and the British a detachment of the Royal Air Force. In the Military Agreement of 1924, the obligations of both countries were set down: Iraq was to devote 25% of her revenues to defence and be prepared to take full military responsibility for herself at the end of 1928. Britain's contribution was to hold the ring for the four years and to pay the entire costs of Imperial forces stationed in Iraq, which included British or Indian battalions, armoured car companies,

squadrons of the R.A.F. and the Iraq Levies. The latter were a body of auxiliary infantry, largely drawn from the Assyrian community, and officered by British personnel. British military commitments were planned on a reducing scale, and expenditure dropped from about £32 million in 1920-21 to about £4 million in 1926-27. (1)

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(1) The reductions were as follows:-

	British and Indian Army	R.A.F.	Levies		Cost £ million
March 1921	33 battalions 16 batteries 6 S.M.C. 6 Car Regts.	4 sqdns.	-		(*)
October 1921	17 battalions 13 batteries	6 sqdns.	2 bns.	(*)	23.4
October 1923	6 battalions	8 sqdns. 4 ACCs	4 bns.		5.7
October 1926	3 battalions 1 S.M.C.	8 sqdns. 3 ACCs	4 bns.		3.9
October 1928	1 battalion 1 S.M.C.	5 sqdns. 1½ ACCs	2 bns.		-
October 1929	Nil	4 sqdns. 1½ ACCs	2 bns.		.62
October 1930	Nil	4 sqdns. 1 ACC	2 bns.		.48

S.M.C. = Sappers' and Miners' Company

ACC = Armoured Car Company

* = Expenditure for 1920/21 was £32,000,000
and for 1921/22 was £23,355,950

Total ... £55,355,950

Costs from Hansard, 18 Feb 1926, CO 730/101/3532 and Trenchard to Shuckburgh, 31 Oct 1927 CO 730/125/40607
Troops: Special Report..on the Progress of Iraq 1920-32, pp 47-48

Largely because the oilfields and the Empire air route were too important to be left unprotected, British troops did not in fact leave in 1928, or in 1932, and air bases were maintained in Iraq until 1958. It was also considered that the Iraq Army had reached an insufficient state of preparedness to take sole charge of the country's defence. Throughout the Mandate there was considerable controversy about the size of the Army and its functions. To the Iraqis, and especially King Faisal and his circle, many of whom had been officers in the Ottoman Army, a strong Army implied a greater degree of independence from British control, and an earlier possibility of entry to the League of Nations. Further, if the King and Nuri could gain control of a large military force, their own power within the country would be considerably enhanced. Their enthusiasm for expansion, and the opposition to it from Shia politicians who realised exactly what it implied, was at the centre of the conscription controversy in the years after 1927. (1)

Most British officials were opposed to increasing the numbers of the Army or widening its functions, not simply because it would give so much more power to the 'court party', but also because the Army was inadequate, and the Government's small revenues did not permit significant military expansion. Thus it was allowed to increase slowly, from about 3500 men in 1921 to about 12,000 men in 1932, a figure far lower than Nuri and his friends considered adequate. The Army at this stage was no more than a glorified gendarmerie acting as an occasional adjunct

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(1) See Chapter IV, pp 197-201 and Appendix I

to the R.A.F., and the Iraq Government knew this and resented it. (1) In the early 1920's, the Army was considered so wasteful that it was suggested that it should be virtually dispensed with: Trenchard wanted to concentrate entirely on the Levies, which were demonstrably more efficient, and 'let the Arab Army remain purely as eyewash.' (2). This, however, would have been politically impossible:

> 'If we are to embark on a policy of bolstering up the Levies into a permanent force, and of neglecting the Arab Army, we must realise that it entails not only a change in our military policy, but in the wider policy governing our very interest in Iraq. It also tends to lessen rather than foster the idea of an eventually independent Iraq.' (3)

Thus in spite of its apparent incompetence, the Army had to be maintained, and after several years of wrangling Britain was persuaded to allow it £600,000 spread over four years as a grant-in-aid. This sum was largely swallowed up in payments of the salaries of the British Military Mission which Iraq had to accept. In general, although featuring prominently in the political bargaining of the period, the Army played a minor military role until the very end of the Mandate. It first saw extended active service in the operations against Shaikh Mahmud in 1930, when the ground had first been carefully prepared by the R.A.F:

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(1) See Chapter IV, pp 197-98

(2) Trenchard to Shuckburgh, 9 December 1921. CO 730/8/61008

(3) Minute by C.J.Howard on High Commissioner, Baghdad, to S/S Colonies, Tgm 707 of 23 Nov.1921. Minute dated 28 Nov. CO 730/7/58553.

> 'In these operations, the policy of the British Military Mission, that of training the Army to stand alone, was pursued to limits hitherto regarded as dangerous. The risks taken were fully justified by events, for the Iraqi leaders exercised their functions for the most part satisfactorily and the Army in consequence faces its future with a considerable access of confidence.' (1)

This optimistic account, extracted from the Report on Iraq's progress between 1920 and 1931, written for the Permanent Mandates Commission was not echoed in the R.A.F.'s internally circulated description of the Barzan operations two years later:

> 'Leadership and discipline broke down at a particularly critical stage, and the British Officers, whose function was to act only as advisers and who had no legal authority found themselves compelled to take complete charge and to issue direct orders themselves.' (2)

Hence, because of the general inadequacy of the Army, the tasks of defence and internal security were largely undertaken by the R.A.F. and the Levies. Discounting the R.A.F.'s police work in the Southern Desert, and the operations against Turkish irregulars in the early 1920's, there were few threats of invasion from outside, and in any case the deterrent effect of the British connection was the main bulwark against such possibilities. The main task of the R.A.F. in Iraq was to maintain tranquillity within the country, and it made use of the opportunity to prove itself capable of playing a cheap and efficient peace-keeping role. In this way it also helped to ensure its own future as a permanent independent branch of the British Armed Services.

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(1) Special Report...on the Progress of Iraq 1920-32, p 47

(2) Monthly summaries of air operations, April 1932. Air 5/1292

The Royal Air Force in Iraq

The first aeroplanes of the Royal Flying Corps had arrived in Mesopotamia in 1916. In the first months, their use was confined to reconnaissance and guidance of artillery fire, but gradually the advantages of using aircraft in offensive operations became as apparent in the Middle East as they had become on the Western Front. The notion that aeroplanes had their uses in checking disturbances in areas considered impenetrable by ordinary troops began to gain currency. In April 1919:

> 'Bombing still continues to be carried out. No sooner has one area been subdued than another breakes out into revolt and has to be dealt with by aeroplane...all these tribal disturbances have been dealt with from the air... thus the Army has been saved from marching many weary miles over bad country and sustaining casualties.' (1)

The advantages of air control, its speed, its great savings in time, personnel and expense were to become increasingly obvious over the following years . Even traditional military men were brought round: General Haldane, Commander-in-Chief in Baghdad wrote to Churchill in June 1921:

> 'Indeed, I now think that had I had sufficient aircraft last year I might have prevented the insurrection spreading from beyond the first incident at Rumaitha.' (2)

As Secretary of State for War, Churchill instructed Trenchard to prepare a scheme for the maintenance of internal security for

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(1) War Diary, 31st Wing R.F.C. April 1919. Air1/2207

(2) Sir A. Haldane to W. S. Churchill, 26 June 1921. Air 8/34 p 12.

Mesopotamia. (1) Churchill envisaged a series of landing grounds in the middle of defended areas, thus doing away with the long lines of communication which had bedevilled the campaign during the war. After a tour of the country, Sir Geoffrey Salmond, brother of the first Air Officer Commanding in Baghdad, concluded that the scheme was suitable in principle:

> 'It must be taken as an essential part of our position in Mesopotamia that the civil administration of this country is only possible because military force exists. The task which the R.A.F. will be called upon to undertake is to maintain the status quo without imperilling the civil administration, even though the worst situation should arise, namely a general rising throughout the country, an improbable event.' (2)

In spite of Salmond's predictions, the improbable did take place: the insurrection began a few months later and heavy fighting and considerable loss of life resulted. Hence the arguments for the air scheme became even stronger, in terms of the general war-weariness and the desperate need for economy now pressing in upon Whitehall. Churchill, now Colonial Secretary, strongly advocated the policy, which was finally adopted in August 1921, and scheduled to take effect after October 1922. (3)

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(1) S/S War to Chief of Air Staff, Memorandum of 29 Feb 1920. R.A.F. Scheme of Defence for Mesopotamia, Air 20/526. T.E. Lawrence claimed that he had suggested the idea to Churchill: see Graves, R. and Liddell Hart, B.H., T.E.Lawrence to his Biographers, p. 112. (to Liddell Hart).

(2) Note (undated, but Spring 1920) by Sir G.Salmond. Air 20/526.

(3) See C.P. 3240, 17 August 1921. Air 8/34.

Britain's obligations as Mandatory power were to be carried out by employing squadrons of the R.A.F. together with a number of armoured car companies and battalions of Levies. This garrison was under the Air Officer Commanding, who was himself responsible to the High Commissioner and not to the Air Ministry.

Apart from the savings of money involved, Trenchard considered that the air scheme was based on the principle that:

> '...if the Arabs have nothing to fight against on the ground, and no loot or rifles to be obtained, and nobody to kill, but have to deal with aeroplanes which are out of their reach they are certain to come in and there will be no risk of disasters or heavy casualties such as are always suffered by small infantry patrols in uncivilised countries.' (1)

However, the principles of air control were the subject of protracted controversy. The opposition put up by the War Office was largely based on lines of demarcation, but even within the Colonial Office misgivings were expressed which were in fact substantially justified during the period of the Mandate. One official asked:

> 'How far would it be legitimate or desirable for British Forces to help the Arab Government put down risings or to enforce obedience?... suppose the middle Euphrates area revolts against the Amir and pushes out all the Amir's officials and sets up a Shia administration: is the Mandatory to help restore the Amir's authority?' (2)

Churchill informed Cox in June, 1921:

> 'Aerial action is a legitimate means of quelling disturbances of enforcing the maintenance of order but it should in no circumstances be employed in support of purely

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(1) Trenchard to Shuckburgh, 29 July 1921. CO 730/15/37682

(2) Minute by R. W. Bullard, 4 March 1921. CO 730/2/9565

> administrative measures such as the collection of revenue...' (1)

an injunction which was to be largely honoured in the breach in the future.

In practical terms, the preservation of 'internal security' was equivalent to extending the area of authority of the Iraq Government. In order to achieve this, parts of the country which were more or less anarchic and had rarely paid taxes had to be pacified. To the Kurds, and to the tribesmen of the Middle and Lower Euphrates, the policy pursued by Britain and the Iraq Government seemed in practice little different from that of the Turks. For the tribesmen, 'government' meant the twin evils of taxation and conscription, both of which they had almost succeeded in keeping at arm's length in Ottoman times. After the Occupation, it became clear that the Civil Administration was determined not only to impose taxes but also to collect them, and where the Iraq Government could afford to do so without damaging local susceptibilities, it also showed energy in this respect.

Inevitably, bombing developed into an instrument of repression. As a result of several operations in Iraq in 1923 and 1924, the Harmsworth and Beaverbrook presses, which were strongly opposed to any further British involvement in the Middle East, seized on the vigorous peace-keeping activities of the R.A.F. as a further argument

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(1) Churchill to Cox, Private and Unnumbered Telegram, 7 June 1921. CO 730/2/27278.

to 'Quit Mesopotamia', (1) and there were a number of embarrassing Parliamentary Questions. Lansbury fulminated against 'this Hunnish and barbarous method of warfare against unarmed people' but he was not alone in his attacks on the policy:

> 'Lord Curzon has interested himself in this question. I gather that Lord Curzon was not satisfied that there is any real difference between bombing for non-payment of taxes and bombing for non-appearance when summoned to explain non-payment of taxes.' (2)

In August 1924 the Labour Minister for Air presented to Parliament a Note on the Employment of the Air Arm in Iraq, apparently an attempt at a blanket answer to these criticisms. It described the circumstances under which R.A.F. assistance could be requested, and the administrative procedures involved, emphasising that aeroplanes were only to be used if all other means had failed. The alternatives to air control were dismissed as impossibly unwieldy and expensive. The Note claimed that air defence was cheap, that it provided 'a method of control more effective and less costly to life and suffering', and that it enabled outbreaks to be controlled before they spread. Furthermore, when bombing was about to take place, the local population was always warned in advance by leaflets being dropped to enable them to take cover, so that 'the compulsion exercised by the air arm rests more on the damage to morale and on the interruption to the normal life of the tribe than on actual casualties.' (3)

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(1) See Daily Mail, 27 January, Daily Express, 29January, Evening Standard 30 January 1924. Collected in CO 730/64/4566.

(2) Minute by H. W. Young, 2 March 1923 on Air Officer Commanding, Baghdad, to S/S Air, Tgm 130A of 22 February 1923: CO 730/45/10674.

(3) Cmd 2217 of 1924

Both the principles and the abuses of the system in practice are best illustrated by studying a single operation. The largest offensive mounted by the R.A.F. in Southern Iraq during the 1920's was the action taken against the Bani Huchaim confederation in Samawa qadha in the late autumn and winter of 1923-24. In the autumn of 1923, the authorites attempted to collect taxes in the Samawa qadha for the first time for many years. There was no suggestion that there had been any serious unruliness or disorder in the area, and the fact that British Officers were able to tour freely confirms this. Glubb, who was then Special Service Officer at Hillah, discovered that the serious water shortages in the area was largely due to the diversion of the channels by Sha'lan abu Chon, the most powerful local shaikh who, like his associate 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar, enjoyed virtual immunity from taxation. No irrigation official had ever visited the qadha and the mutasarrif was rarely seen. The tribes themselves were:

> '...exceptionally poor...it is a regrettable fact that Government at the moment presents itself to their minds as a kind of absentee landlord which never concerns itself with them except periodically to demand revenue.' (1)

Glubb suggested that it would be sensible to talk to the local leaders, listen to their grievances, and make whatever adjustments were possible. At the same time, however (as is evident from the dates of theletters) the Administrative Inspector, Diwaniyah, was recommending punitive action should be taken for non-payment of taxes. Units of the Iraq

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(1) S.S.O. Hilla (J. B. Glubb) to Air Headquarters, D.495 of 18 November 1923. Air 23/443.

Army and police were moved into position well before it was suggested that the 'rebels' should be summoned to Samawa. The letter sent by the Ministry of Interior to the Administrative Inspector stressed that the latter should be 'careful not to impose collection of revenue as the main condition since if it is found necessary to bomb them it must be for defiance of Government orders and not to increase the exchequer', (1) the distinction which Lord Curzon had found so hard to appreciate.

A week or so later Moore, the S.S.O. at Samawa, made another tour of the area, listening to complaints:

> 'In each mudhif (tribal guest-house) we heard the same opinions and grievances that have been embodied in Captain Glubb's report...albu Jayyash in particular were loud in their praise of the old days when water was fairly distributed and a man could feel reasonably safe in his house.' (2).

Nevertheless, late in November, the shaikhs of several subsections of the Bani Huchaim confederation were 'peremptorily' summoned to Samawa at 48 hours' notice and required to give a deposit of money as surety of their tribes' good behaviour (3). Two of the three shaikhs who arrived confessed that they had long lost the ability to control their tribes, an answer which although considered unsatisfactory was more than likely to be true. The necessary guarantees could not be found, and arrangements were accordingly made for the R.A.F. to bomb the area so as to encourage obedience to Government. The casualties

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(1) Adviser, Ministry of Interior, to Administrative Inspector, Nasiriya, C/2667 of 19 Nov 1923, enclosed in Air 23/443.

(2) S.S.O. Samawa to Air Headquarters, S/1 of 27 Nov.1923. Air 23/443.

(3) Report on Operations against the Bani Huchaim, Air Officer Commanding, Baghdad, to S/S for Air, 12 Dec 1923. Air 5/344

may appear unimpressive by today'sstandards, but over a two week period 144 people were killed and an unspecified number wounded. (1)

A few weeks after the end of the operation Glubb, perhaps the most perceptive observer of local conditions, wrote to Air Headquarters:

> 'It is regrettable but it appears almost inevitable that aerial action should be associated with the payment of taxes. First, the tribesman thinks of Government merely as an institution which periodically descends upon him demanding money. If he sees Government applying coercion to any individual or tribe he naturally concludes that it is with the object of extracting money. Secondly, the average minor Government official seems to have much the same idea of his duties...the association of punitive action with the payment of taxes cannot be avoided. It can, however, be mitigated by constantly impressing on individuals that Government has no right to tax the community unless it gives something in return. I have very rarely heard an official take credit to himself for improving agriculture in his district, or public health...' (2)

A further acute analysis was written by another R.A.F.Intelligence Officer in April 1924:

> 'The primary cause of the recent outbreak was the growing irritation at demands for revenue which the tribes' poverty and fecklessness makes them unable to meet. That they in fact have little or no money is reported from all sources, both official and unofficial. Whether they would pay if they had is another question, but it seems at least possible that they would squander less recklessly what little they get if they saw a more tangible return for their payment of revenue. At present many of them feel that they are merely supplying pay for some tomato-eating Effendis in Baghdad.' (3)

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(1) Monthly summary of air operations, December 1923. Air 5/1287

(2) S.S.O. Hilla to Air Headquarters, enclosed in C/162 of 20 Jan 1924. Adviser, Ministry of Interior, to Secretariat. Air 23/445

(3) S.S.O. Diwaniya to Air Headquarters, B/D/2/1 of 29 April 1924. Air 23/446.

Soon after the operation had ended, an official report was sent to London by the Air Officer Commanding in Baghdad. In a Minute on the report, the Deputy Chief of Air Staff suggested that before it was circulated to other Government departments, certain passages should be omitted, amongst which was the following:

> 'Although the tribes had been continually lawless and disobedient (1) it appeared necessary before punitive action was taken that some definite instance of insubordination should take place.'

The tone of the Minute itself is not reassuring:

> 'If this report as it stands were to get into the hands of undesirable people, harm might be done not only to the Air Force but also to the Government...(the whole operation might be regarded as)...forcing an unnecessary and unprovoked quarrel on the people in order that drastic punishment might be carried out at a time when no definite claim could be fixed on these people and when the country was quiet and the main communications working normally, even to the extent that Political Officers could go... without opposition mapping and reporting on the country... I think that certain paragraphs should not be sent out without further consideration.' (2)

Later operations in the same area further suggest that these operations had simply been a form of exemplary punishment. In 1925, a squadron of aircraft was used to help the police in the sheep count, undertaken to collect the koda, or animal tax. The air diary records:

> 'This is the first serious attempt to exercise civil authority over the turbulent Bani Huchaim since the Samawa operations in 1923... It is interesting therefore to note that small police columns with aircraft co-operation were able to operate successfully on such a scale in this area without

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(1) None of the evidence supports this view.

(2) Report on Operations against the Bani Huchaim, Air Officer Commanding, Baghdad, to S/S for Air, 12 Dec 1923: Minute by D.C.A.S. of 5 January 1924.

encountering opposition.' (1)

If the first offensive had been in any way successful, it seems strange that two years had had to elapse before any further attempts were made to extend Government authority in the area. However, the deterrent effect had struck deep: in 1930 the S.S.O. Diwaniya commented:

> 'Although only a few desperate criminals are now prepared to resist the police, whole sections of the tribes might assist their criminal relatives against the police were it not for the threat of aeroplanes bombing them. This form of punishment will always be remembered in the Samawa qadha.' (2)

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Perhaps the most serious long term consequence of the ready availability of air control was that it developed into a substitute for administration. Several incidents during the Mandate period indicate that the speed and simplicity of air attack was preferred to the more time consuming and painstaking investigation of grievances and disputes. (3) With such powers at its disposal the Irac Government was not encouraged to develop less violent methods of extending its control over the country.

Although the R.A.F. ceased in theory to assist the Iraq authorities to maintain peace within the country under the terms of the 1930 Treaty, the presence of British aeroplanes in the

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(1) Monthly summary of air operations, September 1925. Air 5/1289

(2) S.S.O. Diwaniya to Air Headquarters, 1/D/15 of 23 August 1930. Air 23/112.

(3) For instance against the Yazidis in 1925, Shaikh Mahmud in 1930, and Barzan in 1932.

country after the end of the Mandate constituted a powerful deterrent to any attempts to disturb the status quo. During the Euphrates rising of 1935, due, as the Embassy knew, to long standing grievances over land tenure which had been cleverly exploited by the Baghdad politicians, the intervention of the R.A.F. was urgently requested by the Iraq Prime Minister, the British Ambassador, and senior officials in the Foreign Office, before being turned down in Cabinet. (1) The R.A.F. however, was used during the rising to ferry munitions for the Iraq Army, (2), and the aeroplanes were certainly made ready for possible action. (3). Cornwallis, just ending his tenure of office at the Ministry of Interior, considered that the Government was lucky to escape so lightly:

> ' (He) was blackly pessimistic when the tribes around Rumaitha and Suq al-Shuyukh were up, and was inclined to prophesy that Hai, Nasiriyah and Hilla must all go too. Indeed it was a close thing. He thinks that one of the chief reasons for the restriction of the revolt to the two small districts was the R.A.F. reconnaissance, and the (accidental) shooting down of our aeroplane. This persuaded the tribes that we were on the Government side. He got this from some of the shaikhs concerned.' (4)

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(1) Cabinet Conclusions Cab 28 (35) 17 May 1935. E 3081/1583/93. FO 371/18953

(2) Ambassador, Baghdad to S/S Foreign Affairs, Despatch 295 of 29 May 1935 E 3601/1583/93 FO 371/18953

(3) 'Arrangements were made for aircraft and Armoured Cars of the R.A.F. to be ready to take part in operations in the event of H.M. Government deciding that intervention was necessary.' Monthly summary of air operations, May 1935. Air 5/1292

(4) An R.A.F. aeroplane was shot down in the course of a reconnaisance flight over Rumaitha on 8 May. Private, Clark Kerr to Rendel, 30 May 1935. E 3592/2434/93 FO 371/18954.

Only by safeguarding the interests of the Iraq Government could Britain ensure the continuance of her own position in the country. Political power had to lie in the hands of those who, however grudgingly or resentfully, realised their own deep dependence on the British connection. Hence the R.A.F., in its task of preserving internal order was in reality merely propping one or other of the political groups who had combined to form the Government of the day. The presence of the Air Force made it possible for these groups to exercise an authority over the country that could only be dislodged by violence, and no opposition in the end could be effective against aeroplanes.

On the positive side, the R.A.F. helped to ensure its own survival by demonstrating convincingly its cheapness and efficiency as a peace-keeping force, and there is no doubt that fewer lives were lost, whether 'soldiers' or 'rebels', than would have been the case with ground troops. But inevitably, as Curzon saw, its main effect was to terrorise parts of rural Iraq into paying taxes to the Government, and, as other observers closer to the ground were able to record, it was hard to discover what tangible benefits these unwilling taxpayers received. Without the Air Force the Government's ability to control the country would have been severely limited, if not impossible. Amery's comment in 1925 holds good for the whole of the Mandate period, and probably

for some years after:

> 'If the writ of King Faisal runs effectively throughout his kingdom it is entirely due to British aeroplanes. If the aeroplanes were removed tomorrow, the whole structure would fall to pieces.' (1)

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(1) CP 235 (25) Visit of the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Iraq, 11 May 1925. CO 730/89/23385

Chapter VIII The Legacy of the Mandate

Early in 1931, following indications on the part of the Permanent Mandate Commission of their unease about the situation in Iraq, the British authorities at the Residency compiled a report outlining the main events of the period between 1920 and 1931. The report was naturally optimistic in tone: the authorities were concerned to stress the positive achievements of the Mandate. Before being sent to London, a manuscript copy went to the Ministry of Interior for Cornwallis' comments:

> 'Your statement...that it is beyond question that progress in general has been maintained is one to which I think few people would subscribe. I see instances of bad administration every day. In fact,half our time at the Ministry is spent not only in pointing out mistakes but in fighting definite acts of injustice...What is going to happen when our influence is removed? My own prediction is that they will all fly at each other's throats and that there will be a bad slump in the administration which will continue until someone strong enough to dominate the country emerges or, alternatively, until we have to step in and intervene.' (1)

In a sense, both Cornwallis' predictions were fulfilled, and he himself was in charge of the 'intervention'. However, his comment is misleading in one important respect. British influence was not removed, but exercised more covertly and less directly. Once the

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(1) Cornwallis to Young, 22 March 1931. Enclosed in Humphrys to Shuckburgh, DO 414 of 27 March 1931. CO 730/167/88231

main objects of British policy had been secured, the necessary control could as well be exercised from behind the scenes.

By 1932, the safety of British interests in Iraq was guaranteed. A small group of politicians and officials entirely dependent on the British connection had been installed in office, and provided they did nothing which could be interpreted by the British as an unfriendly act, they were secure from outside attempts to remove them. The coups and counter-coups of the period between 1936 and 1941 do not disprove this contention: only Rashid 'Ali's direct challenge to British aims and interests in 1941 brought the full weight of Imperial forces and British administration back to Iraq.

In any balance sheet for the Mandate, the Iraqi people outside the small circle of government, in so far as they were affected by its activities, were the losers. The Government was not carried on for their benefit, but for the benefit of the Sunni urban political class within a framework created and supported by the British authorities. In 1921 the author of the Muntafiq Administration Report expressed a sentiment which in its essence holds good for the Ottomans, the Mandatory authorities and the Iraqis:

> 'The National Government is not popular, nor is it unpopular. Were it not supported by British power it would not exist...' (1).

It is profitless to blame the British Mandatory authorities for

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(1) Muntafiq Administrative Report, 1921, p.60. CO 696/4

failing to ensure that the Iraq Government concerned itself with the wider interests of the nation, or made efforts to reconcile rather than to exacerbate the tensions within the state. It is nevertheless a fact that they did fail to do so. Many of the shortcomings of the modern state can be traced to the mechanisms and institutions founded at the time of the British Occupation and continued under the Mandate: tribal policy, land policy, inadequate safeguards for the minority groups, even the policy of working through a network of police informers on whose reports so much of this work has been based. (1)

The ideals of the Mandate, and the ends it actually achieved, were far apart. Britain left Iraq in 1932 because it was felt possible to take the risk, rather than because of a belief that a particular state of preparedness for independence had been reached: writing after the General Strike of 1931, Edmonds analysed some of the causes of discontent:

> 'The general impression left on the mind is that the bases of the Iraq State are still not as broad as one would wish: it dangerously resembles a pyramid balanced on its point. The Government is - I suppose inevitably - in the hands of a limited oligarchy composed essentially of Sunni Arab townsmen really representing a very small minority of the country. It is therefore

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(1) c.f. Montagu to Chelmsford 8 March 1919
'And then I shall never be satisfied myself until some investigation is made of the methods and powers and the use of the C.I.D. The statements I have heard since I have been connected with India about the shadowing of innocent people, about records, about the whole activity of the Department and the use made of it by the Government...make me think that an impartial investigation of its activities now that the war is over is very much...needed.'
Quoted in Waley, S.D., p.199

easy for any agitator to play on the racial, religious or personal prejudices of anybody who is not an Arab, or a Muslim, or if a Muslim not a Sunni or a townsman, or educated: when to these is added a proportion of the very class from which the oligarchy is drawn, the list is indeed a formidable one.' (1)

Since they had created this state of affairs, the British authorities were naturally disinclined to change it. Even after the end of the Mandate, the Embassy was more concerned to cover up for the Iraq Government than even to deplore their sins of commission: after the Assyrian massacre, Sir Francis Humphrys recommended that Britain should do her utmost to prevent a League of Nations Commission of Enquiry:

'...my belief is that the orchestra at Geneva should be prevented and not merely discouraged from starting a tune the last bars of which are likely to be played solo by a British bugle.' (2)

'In a conflict of interests...it is only natural that those of the mother country should come first...' (3)

Perhaps it is too easy to criticise, and forty years have passed since the end of the Mandate. The British authorities did attempt to make improvements, and to impose sound systems of local and central administration. But for long after the British left, and in many cases until today, there have been few major changes. The Iraqi cultivator is still extremely poor: the Kurds and Shias are still

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(1) Note by C. J. Edmonds, 10 October 1931. Enclosed in Despatch, Secret of 28 November 1931. E 5732/3715/93: FO 371/15324.

(2) Ambassador, Baghdad, to S/S Foreign Affairs Tgm 348 of 11 September 1933. E 5331/7/93 : FO371/16889.

(3) See Introduction page 13

second class citizens: a different minority rules, but it is still a minority of Sunni soldiers and officials. The plain between Basra and Baghdad is white with salt deposits: over-cultivation and inadequate irrigation has exhausted the soil, and Iraq has had to import grain for several years. Little of the prosperity of the oil revenues has percolated down from the capital to the provinces.

British attempts to deal with these problems, though often pursued with integrity and devotion, were largely failures because the solutions were not ends in themselves. When it was clear that British interests would no longer be at risk, and when the necessary mechanism to protect them had been perfected, it was time to withdraw, and the mission civilisatrice which was the Mandatory's intended role was quietly abandoned. In the course of the 1920's, Britain came to realise that less expensive and less overt means of control could be devised to serve the same ends. After the Mosul wilayet had been awarded to Iraq in 1926, and the first agreements signed with the Turkish Petroleum Company, there was a perceptible slackening of British control. Similarly, the terms of the 1930 Treaty, and the second round of oil concessions in 1931, enabled Britain to make her formal departure.

Just after the end of the Mandate, an R.A.F. Special Service Officer recorded a conversation between himself and a young man, new to the country '...enjoying a few days leave from the oilfields...at a quiet dinner party in Baghdad:'

"...surely the real reason of our attacking Germany through

here was to consolidate our position as regards oil. I suppose the Government was looking to the future. India must have wanted to extend its sphere of influence in the Gulf. Wasn't that the real reason?"

"No one ever mentioned those things at the time. I don't think the armies who fought were very interested in oil. If they fought for anything, wasn't it for something better than acquisition?"

"Do you mean Brave Little Belgium, a World Safe for Democracy, and that sort of thing, sir?"

"Something like that."

"Oh, come now, sir. Isn't that rather an academic line?" (1)

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(1) Macdonald, A.D. Euphrates Exile, pp 300-01.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

A Note on Shia Politics.

In September 1927, C.J. Edmonds wrote, in the course of a Note on the Political Situation:

> '...there is a fundamental difference between the Shia and the ordinary minority position. The Shia, aware that they are both more numerous and better armed than the Sunni Arabs, know that they could destroy the present Government if British forces were not behind it, though they could not replace it without British help.' 1

Not only were the Shia' more numerous than the Sunni Arabs' : they were more numerous than all the other groups in the country combined. Rough censuses, taken in 1920 and 1931, show that the Shia formed roughly 55% of the population, the Sunni Arabs 22% and the Kurds 14%.[2] Nevertheless, under Ottoman rule, British Occupation and Mandate, Iraqi Monarchy and Republic, the Shia have never played a part in politics or government in any way proportionate to their numbers in the country.

This note is an attempt to trace the more important activities of the Shia political leaders, tribal, religious, and 'urban', from the late nineteenth century until the conscription agitation of 1927, against the background both of the internal politics of Iraq and the course

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1. A Note on the Political Situation to 27/9/27 by C.J. Edmonds, enclosed in DO 2032, Sturges to Shuckburgh 1 Oct 1927. CO 730/123/40465 paper 49.

2. Delhi, BHCF, Miscellaneous, Census of Nationalities by Divisions, File 34/172. 1920 figures: Print no 270 of Civil Commissioner of 10 March 1920. 1931 figures: DO C/1206 Chapman (Interior) to Holt, 8 Oct 1931.

of Anglo-Iraqi relations. A feature of this period is the shift of ground on the part of many of the leaders from a position of fierce opposition to the 'Christian invaders' to one of actively seeking British help to secure Shia rights in the face of opposition and discrimination from the Government of Iraq.

In the period before 1914, the position of the traditional Shia leadership, especially the tribal shaikhs, had been undergoing a slow decline, largely though the gradual, if sporadic, pacification of the countryside by the Ottoman authorities. Most of the great tribal leaders of the past had ceased to be unquestioned sources of authority; their power over their tribes had dwindled as fragmentation accompanied the process of agricultural and pastoral settlement. In the more intensively cultivated areas, the sirkal, or sub-chief, tended to pay revenue to the government on his own account rather than through the medium of the tribal shaikh. The 'ulama in the Holy Cities had been twice cowed by the Turks, in 1843 and 1852-4, though fatwas were still pronounced in Najaf, Karbala', Kadhimain and Samarra' whose effect was binding. Here, however, the apparatus of authority existed more to issue condemnation against established governments elsewhere than to act as an alternative political body.[1]

Generally, the Shia in the Ottoman Empire as a whole occupied a position very roughly analogous to that of Roman Catholics in England

1. For a discussion of the role of the mujtahids, see Algar, H., Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906 : The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period, pp 1-25.

before 1829. They were excluded from public office, and not able, except in internal matters in their own centres, to use their own code of law: such institutions of public education as existed at this time were based on Sunni teaching, and thus unacceptable to the Shia. However, the position of the Shia of Iraq differed in three important respects from that of their co-religionists elsewhere in the Empire. First, they formed the majority of the population; secondly, they were close to the four Holy Cities, and finally, they were in constant contact with Persia. The two latter factors combined to isolate Najaf and Karbala' in particular from centres of Sunni Power and make them more or less independent enclaves in which the Ottomans tended not to intervene unless provoked. Hence the Cities looked more towards Qum and Mashhad than towards Baghdad or Basra.

Because of the nature of Shia religious beliefs, the 'ulama occupied a particularly vital place in the Holy cities. Najaf, Karbala' and Kadhimain were not only religious seminaries, like Cairo or Tunis, but also the centre of a living religious organisation, in the sense that the mujtahids, individually or collectively could pronounce authoritatively on current political or religious developments affecting Shias; the mujtahids were the guardians-of-the-day of a living tradition. They were consulted, or gave their views spontaneously, on a wide variety of issues.[1]

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1. See Algar, H., Keddie, N.R., Religion and Rebellion in Iran : the Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892.

Apart from the expeditions to destroy the powers of the clans of Karbala' and Najaf in the middle nineteenth century, the Ottoman authorities do not seem to have exerted particularly forcible control over the Holy Cities; Karbala' was the headquarters of a sanjak containing itself, and the qadhas of Hindiya, Najaf and Razaza, but the Ottomans seem to have exercised a light hand.[1] However, after the outbreak of war, Turkish requisitioning and conscription caused risings in Karbala' and Najaf, which ousted the Turks from both cities. By 1915-16 autonomous regimes had been instituted by the townspeople, and tactful overtures, together with payments of subsidies, had been made by the Political staffs of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force.[2]

In Sir Percy Cox' instructions received after the capture of Baghdad in March 1917, the Shia Holy Places were 'to form a separate enclave not under direct British control.'[3] However, later in the year, probably because Najaf in particular had become a notorious loophole in the blockade of supplies to the Turks, Political Officers were sent both there and to Karbala'. Early in 1918 Gertrude Bell visited both cities, and noted that the situation, though calling for tactful handling, was generally quiet;

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1. Longrigg, S.H., Four Centuries of Modern Iraq. p 313

2. See 'Atiyya, G.R., pp 96, 324. Although there was a lack of pro-Turkish feeling it is doubtful whether the two towns, together with the Hai and the Euphrates tribes, would have provided the necessary basis for a 'Mesopotamian Revolt'. See Lawrence, T.E., Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p.60.

3. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Foreign Department, 19 March 1917. Quoted Ireland, P.W., p 97.

there were at that time no signs of serious resistance to the British authorities. :

> 'It's the Shias of the saiyid class who know that they would have the least to gain by the return of the Turks: the alienation of the Shias has been a great asset to us and has meant for instance that we have never had any serious religious feeling to contend with in Karbala' and Najaf.' 1

Similarly, British policy was to appoint 'loyal' leaders on the Euphrates to act as revenue collectors and judges over their tribes, giving them fiscal and jurisdictional privileges far exceeding those they had known under the Turks.

The Najafis, however, did not take as readily to the imposition of British control, as the authorities evidently expected they would, though it seems probable that the difficulties encountered there derived from a power struggle between the 'ulama and the rest of the community which had begun long before the Political Officers arrived. There was a series of disturbances at the end of March 1918, and a young officer, Captain Marshall, was killed. Fines were levied and exemplary punishments made, some eleven people being publicly executed for their alleged complicity in Marshall's murder. The fact that the killidar of Najaf was prominent in expressing his gratitude to Major Frank Balfour, the Military Governor of Baghdad for the prompt action taken against the rebels suggests that Marshall's murderers may have attempted to curb the powers of the priesthood within the city during their own brief period of power.[2]

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1. Burgoyne, E., p 76

2. Wilson II, pp 74-76

In general, however, opinion within the Holy Cities did not show itself particularly in favour of continued British rule during the soundings known as the 'plebiscite' of late 1918 and early 1919. Large numbers in Najaf, Karbala' and Kadhimain declared themselves deeply opposed both to British occupation and to a Bristish-sponsored Arab administration. Other groups in Najaf wanted an Arab Government with no foreign Amir, whereas a more extreme group in Karbala' threatened those asking for any form of non-Muslim Government with severe condemnation. Since the declarations were signed by members of the population selected by either the Political Officers or the Acting Civil Commissioner himself, it is remarkable that so little enthusiasm could be found either in the Holy Cities, or in Baghadad, for any kind of British controlled regime.[1]

During the long period of uncertainty between the end of the war and the establishment of the Provisional Government in 1920, a kind of national sentiment developed in Iraq. An important feature of those years was the emergence of a brief but vital unity between the main Sunni and Shia political and interest groups. A Shia association, Haras al-Istiqlal al-Watani (Guardian of National Independence)[2] led chiefly by the Kadhimain 'alim Muhammad al-Sadr and the Baghdad merchant Ja'far abu'l-Timman, joined forces with al-'Ahd al-Iraqi, a society of Sunni Iraqi officers in the Ottoman army, many of whom had deserted to join Faisal in the Hijaz, and with other Iraqis who had retreated with the Turks to

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1. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia: See pages 50-52.

2. 'Atiyya, G.R., p 400.

Mosul, notably Hamdi al-Pachachi and Yusef al-Suwaidi. The first visible sign of this alliance was the attendance of the 'ulama of both sects at the mourning ceremonies for the late premier mujtahid of Karbala', Mirza Muhammad Kadhim al-Yazdi, in the spring of 1919. Although al-Yazdi's successor, Mirza Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Shirazi, was an elderly recluse, his son Muhammad Ridha was actively anti-British and took advantage of his father's position to publicise his views.

Early in 1920, in a letter to Chirol, Gertrude Bell wrote that although an alliance between the Sunni and Shia 'ulama definitely existed, she doubted its durability; the less traditional and more intelligent younger townspeople now had little respect for their religious elders.[1] However, this alliance was in fact vital if there was to be any question of involving the tribal leaders, since the younger nationalists, especially the Sunni, would have been incapable of achieving this by themselves. On 22 June 1920, ten of the Karbala' 'ulama, including Muhammad Ridha ibn Mirza Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Shirazi, were arrested and sent to Henjam for circulating a letter purporting to originate from Muhammad Ridha's father, urging the defence of Islam against 'the infidels'. By this time the nationalists, led most prominently by al-Sadr, were corresponding directly and through the 'ulama with tribal leaders urging rebellion. The talks between the Acting Civil Commissioner and the Nationalists had not produced the desired results; there was no sign of the self-determination

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1. Burgoyne, E., pp 157-58

promised by President Wilson and in the Anglo-French Declaration, nor of the formation of any national assembly.

The rising, as has been described, continued sporadically in the remoter parts of the country until the early spring of the following year. By the late autumn however, the more prominent leaders, including Muhammad al-Sadr, Ja'far abu'l-Timman, Shaikh Ahmad al-Da'ud and Yusuf Suwaidi, had fled across the desert to Mecca, to return in the summer of the following year as members of the Amir Faisal's suite.[1] By October, British forces had managed to regain control of the greater part of the country, and their task was facilitated by the arrival of Sir Percy Cox and the immediate inauguration of what seemed at first to be a more widely acceptable form of government. Significantly, Cox refused to accede to the requests of 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar of the Fatlah and Marzuq of the Humaidat that the 'ulama should be empowered to act as intermediaries to arrange a truce on behalf of the tribes; instead the tribal leaders were forced to 'come in' to local administrative headquarters in person.[2]

Whether by accident or design, the regime introduced after the 1920 rising took little account of the Shia leadership, and, perhaps less understandably, equally little account of the fact that the Shia accounted for over half the population of the country. Until January 1921, when al-Taba'taba'i

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1. Ireland, P.W., p 326

2. c.f. Gertrude Bell to her Father, 23 August 1919:
   'The position of the mujtahids will always be a difficulty. It's as though you had a number of alien people permanently settled at Canterbury and issuing edicts which take precedence of the law of the land.'
   Burgoyne, E., pp 157-58.

was given the Ministry of Education, no Shia had been offered a portfolio in the National Government. To point out that many leading Shia were Persian subjects simply evaded the problem. The selection of Faisal, and the institution of the mandate administration served further to drive a wedge between Sunni and Shia; Faisal's government was forced very quickly to the realisation that not only was cooperation with Britain preferable to cooperation with the Shia, but that there was no real alternative. Hence Shia interests were almost always relegated to second place, except, as in the conscription crisis of 1927-28, where they happened to coincide with British interests.

In the first few months of his reign, in the course of the early negotiations over the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, Faisal attempted fairly successfully to maintain cordial relations both with the 'ulama and with al-Sadr and abu'l-Timman. In Karbala' and Najaf, in the course of the 'referendum' for Faisal's election, the 'ulama had signed the official madhbata, though, ominously, a leading 'alim of Kadhimain, Shaikh Mahdi al-Khalisi made his acceptance of Faisal dependent on the rapid freeing of Iraq from external control and the convocation of a National Assembly within two months of the coronation of the King. In other places too, the fairly widespread lack of opposition to Faisal in these early months seems to have stemmed from widely held belief that Iraq was going to be given a substantial measure of independence; the King himself seems to have shared this belief.

By November 1921, however, when Fisher's announcement to the League became public knowledge in Iraq, the new regime became suspect. At a

meeting in Yusuf Suwaidi's house on 20 November the company formulated four demands which they intended to present to the King:

> 'The Convocation of the National Congress without delay.
> Withdrawal of Ministerial and Divisional Advisers.
> The appointment of a Minister of Foreign Affairs.
> The functions of the High Commissioner to be confined to those of a diplomatic representative.
>
> In default of compliance with these demands a declaration would be made deposing His Majesty.' 1

By 10 December, Muhammad al-Sadr was in correspondence with Badr al-Rumaiyidh, the Ramadi shaikh whose tribesmen fired the first shots in 1920, and widespread dissatisfaction was reported from the Middle Euphrates.[2]

In the winter of 1921 and the spring of 1922 the deadlock over the Treaty continued, and rumours flourished of the opposition leaders being in touch variously with Persia, the Kemalists, and the Kurds in an attempt to forge an effective anti-British alliance. At this stage, Faisal was eager to amass as much support as possible, and gave covert support to nationalist agitation. It was clear, however, that a quid pro quo would be demanded for any widespread cooperation from the Shia. At the Karbala' conference of April 1922, supposedly convened to rally the country against a possible invasion from Najd, Shaikh Mahdi al-Khalisi's demands touched Faisal's own government about as much as the British presence in Iraq:

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 26 Nov 1921. The company included Shaikh Ahmad al-Da'ud, Ja'far abu'l-Timman, Ali Bazirgan, Rashid al-Khoja, Muhammad al-Sadr and the al-Suwaidi family.

2. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 10 December 1921.

' 1) That the British should recognise complete independence with no mandate
2) The immediate convocation of the National Assembly
3) Half the Cabinet to be Shia
4) Half Government officials to be Shia
5) Declaration of a jihad against the Wahhabis.' [1]

The range of these demands indicates that the problem had shifted from a single desire to get rid of British influence. By early July 1922, Ja'far abu'l-Timman, who had been appointed Minister of Commerce in March, resigned: Miss Bell describes the situation in Baghdad:

> 'On Monday morning all the anti-Mandate lot went to Kadhimain to consult their oracle Shaikh Mahdi al-Khalisi who told them that as H.M. had not fulfilled the conditions of his election to the throne, namely that he would preserve the independence of Iraq, their oath of allegiance to him was null and void...Turning his attention to the Iraq Government he observed that before it existed the English governed the land: they still governed it, with a pack of spendthrifts superadded.' [2]

Eventually, in August, a hostile demonstration by nationalists against Sir Percy Cox in front of the royal palace forced the issue: Hamdi al-Pachachi and Ja'far abu'l-Timman were sent to Henjam, and the High Commissioner advised al-Sadr and al-Khalisi to leave at once for Persia if they wished to avoid arrest. Only the King's providential appendicitis saved him from deposition.

For a time, Sir Percy Cox' swift and decisive action calmed

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 8 April 1922

2. Burgoyne, E., pp 276-77.

down the agitation, though the next two years in Iraqi politics were nevertheless largely concerned with attempts to ease the terms of the Treaty and agreements. In the autumn of 1922, even the elderly and conservative mujtahids al-Na'ini and al-Isfahani had been persuaded by al-Khalisi to sign a fatwa forbidding Shia participation in the coming elections. In February, 1923 further arrests and deportations were made; Amin al-Charchafchi, 'Abd al-Rasul Kubba and Saiyid Muhammad Mahdi Basir al-Milli were sent to Henjam following critical articles in al-Nahdha, the newspaper of the Shia group of the same name. In March a brief reconciliation was reached between the King and al-Khalisi, but the latter withdrew on finding himself almost completely isolated from the rest of his colleagues. By May, arrangements were being made for madhbatas against the Treaty signed by the 'ulama and other leaders to be sent to Geneva and Lausanne; their tone reflected the demands made at Karbala' the previous year. By this time, however, a significant development had taken place, in that al-Sadr had advised his followers that provided the demands for Shia participation were met, he would be prepared to advise them to vote in the elections. Later in May Yasin al-Hashimi, then in opposition to the government led by 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, attempted to urge abu'l-Timman, just back from several months' confinement on Henjam, to return to politics, but without success.[1] Finally, at the end of June, after

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 23 Feb, 10 March, 3 May, 10 May, 26 May 1923.

pressure from the British authorities at the Residency and in the Ministry of Interior, and from his own Cabinet, Faisal was reluctantly forced to the conclusion that the 'ulama would have to be silenced. Fortunately for their opponents, the 'ulama were almost all Persian subjects: al-Khalisi and several members of his family were deported, an al-Na'ini and al-Isfahani were asked to leave. al-Khalisi never returned, but the two latter mujtahids were allowed to re-enter Iraq on condition that they revoked their anti-election fatwas and undertook never again to take an active part in politics.

At the time of his illness Faisal was forced to realise that while he might sympathise with demands for more complete independence, he could not be seen, particularly by the British but also by his own Cabinet, to endorse these demands, or to associate himself openly with the opposition leaders. Even more so after August 1922, it became abundantly clear to Faisal that non-acceptance of the terms laid down by Britain would mean either abdication or deposition. Also, whatever the King's personal predilections may have been[1] his ministers did not

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1. 'King Faisal himself went to extreme limits of complaisance and even of humiliation in previous negotiations with al-Khalisi to induce him to withdraw from agitation against Iraq Government and latter only forced to do so by al-Khalisi's illegal opposition to the elections... It was in fact notorious that next step contemplated by al-Khalisi was issue of decree proclaiming deposition of King.'

   High Commissioner to Ambassador, Teheran, Telegram 108 of 7 July 1923. Delhi, BMCF 23/15/1.

welcome support from the Shia hierarchy, a group whom they well knew by then to be as to the British. Finally the 'Sharifians', like their leader, realised how dangerously near to the wind they had been sailing; official circles in England as well as sections of the British press had canvassed the possibility of leaving Iraq altogether in the course of 1922 and 1923, and the publication of the Protocol brought home the fact that the British might not be available to prop up the regime for ever. Faced with threats, real or imaginary from Najd and from Turkey, it became necessary to rely even more heavily on British support.

It is difficult to gauge the immediate effect of the deportations on the various different interest circles in Iraq. The 'urban' Shia politicians were for a while nonplussed: some of the tribal shaikhs, notably 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar and Samawi al-Challub had been closely associated with al-Na'ini and al-Isfahani and were clearly deeply affronted at their treatment: a group of moderate shaikhs told the Special Service Officer at Hilla that while they realised that the 'ulama were at fault for interfering in politics to this extent, 'that knowledge in no way counterbalanced the feeling that their removal was a heavy blow at the religion of their sect.'[1] Dobbs was delighted:

> 'Present is unique opportunity through which the Shia Holy Cities can be purged of predominance of Persian influence which has been exercised for year to detriment

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1. SSO Hilla 30 June 1923
Delhi, BHCF 23/15/1.

> of true Arab interests with the object of prolonging anarchy amongst...the tribes. There might never be recurrence of so favourable an opportunity.' 1

A more detailed summary of the situation is contained in a contemporary intelligence report:

> ' It is interesting at this stage to speculate as to why the 'ulama have seen themselves so particularly hostile to the King and to the elections. They seem to be moved by several motives. First they desire a weak government which would allow their ignorant theocracy to rule the tribes and to exploit them.. They fear that if the elections take place and an elected assembly sits to ratify the British Treaty and to validate the measures of the Provisional Government, then the King and the Iraq Government will be able to claim that their authority is based on the will of the people and will gain in strength and no longer have to defer to the 'ulama. They believe that the Turks would be better for their interests because they would inevitably be weak. Secondly, they feel that, if the Iraq Government continues as at present constituted the Shias will have no influence in it. The Electoral Law was so formed that the elections must be hopelessly gerrymandered in favour of the Sunnis. Thirdly they have some personal dislike of the King which is rumoured to be due to His Majesty having sworn to them at the beginning of his reign to follow a policy which he has found impossible.' 2

The second and third grounds for the hostility of the 'ulama seem to have been correctly analysed, but the picture of credulous tribal leaders being pushed on to precipitate action by their religious leaders needs a little modification. Apart from the direct encouragement given to tribal leaders in 1920 by the 'ulama, it was frequently the case that

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1. High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, Telegram 361 of 11 July 1923. CO 730/41/35272

2. Intelligence Report of 5 July 1923. CO 730/40/37008.

the tribal leaders themselves sought validation of their anti-British or anti-Government activities rather than passively accepting the dictates of their religious leaders. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that before 1923 the 'ulama would tend to encourage rather than discourage concerted action on the part of the tribal leaders: it is rare to find them actually instigating such action.

Of course, by their action, Faisal and his government simply scotched the snake; the leadership, often no more than nominal, provided by the 'ulama, passed elsewhere. Throughout the mandate the same pleas were heard from the Shia for more Cabinet and civil service representation; promises were made but rarely kept. For the next few years, however, the Shia opposition ceased to be an active source of danger to the regime, and by the time of the next serious revolt, in 1935, the Iraq Army had become sufficiently powerful to crush all but the most carefully organised tribal forces. Again, it was only in 1927, when Shia interests in resisting conscription coincided with British interests in trying to discourage its introduction, that Shia grievances became once more a major factor in Iraqi politics.

The new leadership that emerged after the deportations was more flexible, and thus less united, than its predecessors had been. It is of course important to remember that the whole spectrum of Iraqi politics was personalised to an extent that is often baffling: few individuals can be credited with the pursuit of either consistent or

public-spirited principles, and the various permutations and combinations changed backwards and forwards through paths which are frequently impossible to trace.[1] In the broadest possible terms, Shia politicians and tribal leaders can be divided into those who would be prepared to cooperate with the Sunni' 'opposition' and those who would not, but again, these divisions lack permanence.

Thus, in 1924, al-Sadr joined Yasin al-Hashimi, Naji al-Suwaidi and Shaikh Ahmad al-Da'ud to attempt to influence the Euphrates shaikhs against voting the Treaty through the Constituent Assembly. abu'l-Timman, on the other hand, gloomily advised his colleagues that there was no point at all in opposition, since the British would get their way in the end.[2] He continued to refuse to involve himself in politics for several years, partly because of the futility of opposition, and partly because of his distrust of the Sunni politicians with whom it was necessary to work. Generally, al-Sadr seems to have advocated a policy of alliance with those Sunni politicians who tended to oppose the 'King's Party' (generally 'Ali Jaudat, Nuri al-Sa'id and Ja'far al-'Askari): this group consisted normally of 'Ali Mahmud, 'Abd al-Ghafur al-Badri, Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani, Yasin al-Hashimi, Rifa't al- Chadirchi, Bahjat Zainal and Maulud Mukhlis. On the other hand, the members of the Hizb al-Nahdha (Renaissance Party), led by Amin al-Charchafchi, which included the 'alim Muhammad Kashif al-Ghata' and the tribal leaders 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar, Sha'lan abu'l-Chon,

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1. Hikmat Sulaiman and Ja'far abu'l-Timman are exceptions here as men of principle.

2. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 5 April, 19 April, 1924

Samawi al-Challub, Saqban al-'Ali and Salman al-Dhahir, after some bitter experience of cooperation with Sunni politicians, were more inclined to remain a purely Shia body.[1]

These alignments, however, frequently failed to survive political crises, especially when Rashid 'Ali and Yasin al-Hashimi simply used opposition support to persuade either the more conservative members of the 'King's party' or even the more independent minded 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, of the necessity of the presence of either or both of them in the Cabinet: once in office their supporters looked in vain for the reforms and improvements they had promised. A further complication in the maze of political alignments was provided by those tribal leaders or landowners whose position and influence had been created or maintained by British favour. Notable here were 'Ali Sulaiman, 'Abadi al-Husain, Muhammad al-Rabi'a and Muhammad al-Saihud, all of whom supported Britain actively or passively in 1920, and who constantly clamoured for direct British rule, to protect their 'rights' more effectively than the government of King Faisal.

In 1920, a brief pan-Islamic unity had secured the cooperation of the Holy Cities, the nationalist leaders of both the major sects, the tribal leaders and the 'Sharifians' against the British. When it became clear to the Shia that their partners in the alliance were prepared to compromise with Britain in order to gain positions of authority for themselves, they naturally complained of betrayal, and of their having

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1. See also p212 Note 2

sacrificed Shia lives and property simply to instal a group of foreigners and upstarts aided and abetted by Britain.[1] Hence, after the rising, the Shia leaders maintained their hostility towards Britain, but made their cooperation with the Iraq Government conditional on their own grievances being redressed at the same time.

Tactically, however, the Shia remained at a permanent disadvantage, since they had so few sanctions in their hands, except the threat of armed insurrection. But after the major air and police campaign against the Bani Huchaim in the winter of 1923/24 it was evident that the British authorities would not tolerate any opposition to the Iraq Government which would upset the status quo.[2] Individual shaikhs could and did defy the government: 'Abd al-Wahid Sikkar's celebrated disputes with his sarkals continued for several years because the government could not afford to offend him, but the only serious tribal rising in lower Iraq took place in 1935, apart from some lesser incidents in the 1920's following disputes over the payment of taxes.[3]

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1. c.f. 'An arrival from Najaf states that the Shia agitators there... realise that they had made a great error in 1920 and that the only result of their losses in men and money had been that the bands of adventurers and upstart Iraqis who had instigated the rebellion (and carefully kept out of it themselves) have seized power, while genuine Iraqis, Sunnis and Shias of good family in many cases are oppressed for revenue and refused their fair share in the government of the country.'
   Abstract of Police Intelligence, 1 Oct 1927.

2. See Chapter VII pages 365-66

3. The accessibility of the riverain tracts to bombing seriously weakened the chance of a successful rebellion; here the Kurds had great natural advantages over the Shia tribesmen.

A further difficulty facing the Shia leadership was the lack of suitable or acceptable candidates for ministerial office or government employment. This deficiency was almost certainly greatly exaggerated by the opponents of the Shia, but the result was that only three Shia politicians, Ja'far abu'l-Timman, Muhsin al-Shallash, and Salih al-Jabr, held important Cabinet posts until the end of the second world war, which precluded the training of a body of suitably experienced Shia ministers. Furthermore, since the Shia had rarely ever participated in secular education under the Ottomans, they did not have the pool of ex-Ottoman officials to draw on which was available to their Sunni contemporaries. At the same time, the Sunni Iraqis could not afford to admit the Shia to a share in the government in a truer proportion to their numbers because this would inevitably undermine their own position. Hence the only outlet for much Shia agitation came to consist in their appealing to the British to preserve their rights. This process is increasingly discernible, on a variety of levels, in the years after 1924.

In April 1925 the Iraqi Prime Minister, Yasin al-Hashimi, who, with Nuri al-Sa'id was a fervent advocate of a stronger and larger Iraq Army, urged Muhammad al-Sadr to exert his influence in the Government's favour. Yasin and Nuri were deeply opposed to the proposals of the High Commissioner and the Colonial Secretary, which amounted to increasing the number of British Officers serving with the Iraq Army, and continuing to vest executive control in a British Inspector-General. They wanted al-Sadr

to raise protests and agitation from Shia tribal leaders and nationalists. al-Sadr could find no tribal leader prepared to cooperate. Fearing that a larger army in Iraq hands would simply extend the prevailing Sunni control, they were quite content that the British should continue to command.[1] Exactly the same reaction greeted Ja'far abu'l-Timman in 1927 when he was urged by the pro-conscription party, in the interests of national independence, to encourage the religious hierarchy at Karbala' and Najaf to consider conscription favourably. Again, it was the Shia tribal leaders who were foremost in protesting against the withdrawal of British Administrative Inspectors from the districts in 1930. In all these cases the British were looked on as the protectors of Shia rights, and Britain was naturally not averse to a state of affairs which gave her yet another lever with which to manipulate the Iraq Government.

By 1927, the less radical Shia including the followers of Amin al-al Charchafchi (the Nahdha group) seem to have realised that it might be possible to use conscription as a bargaining counter. Deputations were sent to the King to try to obtain the usual Shia demands, especially a higher proportion of places in the civil service.[2] Later in the year, it was reported from Kadhimain that:

> 'Abd al-Husain Chalabi said at the house of Saiyid 'Abd al-Husain al-Yasin that Nuri Pasha had told him that the conscription bill was intended to secure complete independence to Iraq and that it was the duty of all Iraqis to support it. He said that the quota would only be 20,000 and that the government would be grateful for the assistance of the 'ulama. Saiyid 'Abd al-Husain

1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 18 April 1925

2. Note by S/Ldr Buss, ? April 1927 in Air 23/432.

> al-Yasin commented that the 'ulama were quite prepared to assist, but they required it to be stipulated that half of Government appointments should be held by Shias.' 1

When it was realised that the Iraq Government was not going to yield to these demands, the Shia leaders turned almost unanimously to Britain to look after their interests, especially after the Kadhimain riots in July and a similar incident at Basra gave rise to widespread fears of an antiShia movement:

> '...It is said that the Government (Nuri, Ja'far al-'Askari, Yasin, and Amin Zaki) were making plans to weaken the power and prestige of the tribal chiefs and prominent Shias. It is also said that the reason for this is that they are desirous of enriching themselves by the purchase of lands from displaced shaikhs and landlords.' 2

And, later in the year:

> 'An arrival from Najaf states that the Shia agitators there have apparently come to know that the Government is fully aware of their activities and that he has been instructed to explain to the British that the activities of the party (not named) were in no way anti-British or directed against British interests...Were they given the slightest sign that they had the practical sympathy of the British Government they would hoist the British flag and throw out the foreigners.' 3

A far cry from Shaikh Mahdi al-Khalisi.

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1. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 3 May 1927
2. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 23 July 1927
3. Abstract of Police Intelligence, 1 Oct 1927

A few days after the Kadhimain riots, the Acting High Commissioner, B.H. Bourdillon, wrote to the Colonial Office:

> 'A leading Shia said to me a few weeks ago: "We know we are uneducated and cannot at present take our proper share in the public services. What we want is British control, to save us from Sunni domination, until our sons are educated. Then we, who are the real majority will take our proper place in the government of the country and shall not need British control..." ' 1

The Shia situation in Iraq resembled the classic colonial minority position elsewhere; the sect was denied effective power, and thus dependent on the colonial authorities to preserve or secure its rights. The major difference of course lay in the fact that it was conceivable that a united body of Shia might overthrow or seriously damage the prestige of the Iraq Government. At the beginning of the Mandate a united body of Sunni and Shia had very nearly thrown out the British, and it was the fact that the Iraq Government were themselves in a highly vulnerable position that enabled Britian to exercise such complete control over them. Thus Britain could only give effective support to the Shia on occasions when Shia and Imperial interests coincided; neither Britain, nor the majority of the Shia population, wanted the Iraq Government to introduce conscription.

For their part, the Iraq Government could not afford to make major concessions to the Shia, as these would give the Shia the opportunity of swamping their traditional enemies, the Sunni effendis. Thus they paid off the noisier and more powerful shaikhs with tax remissions and

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1. Secret, B. Acting High Commissioner to S/S Colonies, 15 July 1927. CO 730/124/40488.

beneficial land legislation, frightened the 'ulama into silence, and paid attention to the urban politicians as and when the need arose. Britain could not have installed the Shia in power, just as the Sunnis could not admit them to power afterwards. But though the Shia could not be dealt with by either party when strong and united, they could be used by both when weak and divided. The result of this political equation has been that the Iraqi Shia have largely been excluded from playing a major part in the government of their country, both individually and collectively[1]. With the Sunni in power, the British could control the country through them; with the Shia in power there could have been no Mandate.

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1. A situation which continues under the present Ba'ath Government. See Marr, P., Elites in Iraq, Middle East Journal, 1970. which tabulates the social and religious origins of ministers since 1958.

APPENDIX II

TENURIAL AND TAXATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN 'AMARA LIWA UNDER THE MANDATE.

> ' 'Amara has few officials, being the most orderly liwa in the country. It has one of the smallest police forces in the country, no army and no irrigation authority.'[1]

The report from which this extract has been taken was written in 1931, eleven years after the beginning of the Mandate. It does not mention what might seem to be the most salient feature of the organisation of 'Amara liwa, the exceptionally high concentration of landholding. 'Amara was an area of vast estates with no individual lazmas :

Table I

Size and number of agricultural properties in seven Liwas in 1930.

	1-64 acres	65-319 acres	320-640 acres	Above 640 acres
Arbil	7418	528	500	..
Diyala	4092	..	546	..
Baghdad	162	220	120	360
Dulaim	2344	109	121	3
Hilla	452	364	98	82
Diwaniya	8378	..	155	69
'Amara	..	10	5	50 [2]

1. Note by C. J. Edmonds 3 March 1931. Delhi, BHCF, Interior File 7/24/24 Vol II (hereafter referred to as Delhi, 'Amara, Vol I or II)

2. The richest landlords in the liwa were very wealthy indeed: 16 of them paid rents in excess of 25,000 rupees a year, and 5 of these a great deal more:

Falih al-Saihud	304,775
Muhammad al-'Araibi	281,143
Majid al-Khalifa	432,644
Shawi al-Fahad jointly with Salman al-Manshad	611,230

... continued on next page...

Throughout the Mandate these huge holdings were controlled almost exclusively by their landlords, and the whole liwa was only barely affected by the activities of central government. Those who held the tax farms of these great estates, or muqata'as, had total authority over their tenants, first under the terms of the Tribal Disputes Regulation and subsequently under the 1933 Cultivators' Law. Strategically the area was a highly sensitive one: it lay on one of the main through routes between Baghdad and the sea, and bordered an almost permanently unfriendly state. Further, the frontier was not marked by any insurmountable natural obstacle, so that when sheep tax, or conscription, was enforced in either Iraq or Iran, it was perfectly possible for the tribesmen living on either side to move over to the country which suited them best.[1]

During the First World War the great estates of the liwa, whose leases had been subject to periodic auction under the Ottomans, were assigned on a semi-permanent basis to the landlords in possession, on the understanding that they would be left alone in return for good behaviour. These arrangements were justified by the authorities at the time on the grounds that the British forces' lines of communication passed directly through the area, and that the cooperation, or at least the passivity of the local rulers was more important than revenue; and

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Note continued from previous page.

Ministry of Finance to High Commissioner, W.4373 of 16 August 1926. Delhi, 'Amara Vol 1.
Table I is from Admiralty Handbook, Iraq and the Persian Gulf, p 477

1. See Cornwallis to Humphrys, DO SA/55 of 11 September 1932, Delhi, BHCF Interior File 7/24/43, Situation in 'Amara Liwa. c.f. also 'Economic Disintegration in 'Amara Liwa in August 1932.' E 3627/3627/93. FO 371/16049

in fact no taxation whatsoever was collected by Government from the liwa until 1922.

Strategic and other related arguments were used to explain the continuation of a policy of non-interference throughout the 1920's. Unlike the arrangements in force in other parts of Iraq, where taxes were levied on the actual quantity of the crop, calculations in 'Amara were based on consolidated fixed assessments, and both animal and cereal taxes were collected from the muqata'a holders, who were thus landlords and tax-collectors at the same time. In return for this privilege of tax-collection, they were entrusted with total administrative powers on their estates:

> 'The existence of this tribal administration makes it unnecessary to appoint mudirs in charge of nahiyas. All that is required in tribal areas is a representative of Government who can convey orders to the shaikhs and see that they are obeyed. This duty is conveniently carried out by the raises of the baladiyahs in villages situated among the tribes.'[1]

Furthermore, the system continued under the Mandate, because of the fortuitous coincidence of the assumption of the identity of interest of landlord and cultivator with the desirability of maintaining the status quo. The advantages of a body of shaikhs and landlords who owed their powers entirely to the enhancement of their position by the British authorities soon became clear, and the advantages were shared; the 'special circumstances' of the 1924 treaty[2]

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1. 'Amara Administrative Report, 1922 Revenue Section. Delhi, 'Amara Vol 1

2. See page 341

brought further concessions to the 'Amara taxpayers in return for their support. From that time on an alliance was formed between the landlords and the effective rulers of Iraq, both British and Iraqi, which endured until the revolution of 1958. This alliance did not pass unchallenged, however, as the Ministry of Finance under the Mandate showed itself unwilling to acquiesce in these arrangements and made several attempts to put matters in the liwa on a more businesslike footing. These efforts caused an almost continuous contest between the Ministries of Finance and Interior and the High Commission, each advocating a greater or lesser degree of supervision of the 'Amara muqata'as. The result, broadly speaking was that Interior and the High Commission prevailed over Finance; it was held to be more expensive and more trouble than it was worth to disturb the 'Amara landlords.

In June 1915, after the British had captured 'Amara town, all the local land records were taken from the Municipality building and thrown into the Tigris by members of the Norfolk regiment.[1] The reason for this fit of exuberance has not been recorded, but its effect was to make it almost impossible to piece together the tenurial arrangements in force in the area at the time. It was known that the 'Amara lands had only recently been designated Miri, since they had been part of the Crown Lands (Sanniyya) Administration until 1909. 'Amara town itself

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1. Administrative Inspector, Kut and 'Amara liwas to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, No 1132 of 21 September 1923. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol I

was a recent creation which had grown up haphazardly around the Turkish cantonment. Originally, the province had formed the dira of the Bani Lam tribe, but in the course of campaigns culminating in a serious defeat in 1910, they had been conquered by and made tributaries of the Albu Muhammad. In Turkish times the area had been divided into large holdings which were auctioned to the highest bidders at approximately three year intervals, the land tax and the land being auctioned at the same time. This procedure was designed both to weaken the shaikhs and show the government's hand; it created the principle of a rigidly collected government share, and helped to cause dissension and rivalry among the shaikhs and rentiers bidding at the auctions.

> 'On the British Occupation the Turkish policy underwent a complete reversal, the tribal shaikh receiving the full support of Government. Such a policy stands above criticism by reason of its remarkable success in ensuring security for the British lines of communication. But with the coming of the Armistice it ceased to be justified.'

The auctions ceased, and the holdings were assigned to reliable resident tribal leaders. The landlords continued to carry out administration in the area, strengthened by the Tribal Disputes Regulation, which meant that the vast majority of the inhabitants of the liwa were denied the protection of the ordinary courts. Further, no tax at all was collected from the area until 1922, in spite of the fact that some of the landlords were known to be exceedingly wealthy:

> 'A definite example will help to show that the cost of collection is in point of fact appallingly high and that the economy of staff, both revenue and administrative which is claimed for the 'Amara system, does not in fact exist. Shaikh Muhammad al-'Araibi, the holder of the Chahala mucata'a, after paying in all his revenue, had

> in his hands six lakhs of rupees. This sum would be sufficient to meet the whole cost of the administrative, police and revenue budgets of the 'Amara Liwa and still leave the shaikh two lakhs per annum for his services as administrator, tax-collector and farmer.'

The landlords were not only extremely wealthy, but all-powerful, since there was no external supervision of the authority they exerted over their tenants. The same report mentions that:

> 'Today the actual proportion to be taken, as well as the fact that it was limited to the crops only, has been lost sight of, and the 'Amara shaikh now drives the hardest bargain he can with his sirkal, and also claims the government share on brushwood, grazing, etc.' 1

Such treatment would in time kill the goose that laid the golden eggs, but the process was a slow one, due to the surplus labour created by the sharp rise in population between 1920 and 1947, and even more to the legislation introduced in the early 1930's which turned the situation decisively in the landlords' favour. They no longer had to pay so much tax and had an even more secure hold over their tenants and sarkals than before. The Istihlak Law and the Cultivators' Law enabled the 'Amara shaikhs to maintain their positions with even less interference from Government.

Their tenants were very much less fortunate. Imprisoned in a cycle of perpetual indebtedness they were virtually in bondage to their overlords. The sirkals and fellahin borrowed from the mugata'a holders, who charged high rates of interest, to obtain advances on seed and tools. Debts mounted so high that there was no chance of the cycle being broken by actual repayment, and the only

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1. See Page 406 note 1

possible escape was flight from the land. Even as early as 1924 this situation was known to the authorities; Dobbs himself was moved to deplore the prohibition against a sirkal owing money to one shaikh transferring himself to another:

> 'His Excellency understand that the prohibition... was introduced at the instance of the shaikhs who alleged that they could not otherwise recover their revenue from the sirkalfor the purpose of paying it to Government. Sir Henry Dobbs is very doubtful whether the shaikhs have not plenty of other methods of enforcing payment. In any case the prohibition puts far too much power into the hands of the mugata'a holders who can always make out that their sirkals are indebted to them and His Excellency strongly advises that the prohibition should be cancelled.'[1]

This recommendation was not heeded, nor was any serious attention paid to Dobbs' plea that landlords should only be given long leases on condition that they gave equally secure conditions of tenure to their sirkals and fellahin. Leases were granted out on very long terms as before, and no safeguards were insisted on for the cultivators. Later in 1924 a committee was proposed to revise the tax farms of the area for the following year, but it never met[2] and for a time the Finance Ministry despaired of ever obtaining realistic tax returns from the area.

> 'If policy demanded the continuance of the old shaikhs, allowance must be made for their thriftless ways, and although new lessees, drawn from a more businesslike class and having no traditional dignity to maintain, might quite well have paid, the fact remained that the shaikhs either would not or could not.'[3]

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1. High Commissioner to Finance, No 8943 of 3 July 1924. Delhi, 'Amara Vol I
2. Finance to Interior, W.1110 of 1 July 1924 gives the committee's brief: a minute of 25 June 1925 by Sturges of the Residency states that it did not meet. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol I
3. Iraq Revenue Report, 1925, pp 25-26. CO 696/5

Suggestions for fundamental change were countered by arguments that there were insufficient administrative personnel available and that a violent reaction would be sure to follow. The use of military forces to control such an outbreak would, it was claimed, swallow up all the savings in cost which the changes were supposed to bring about.

Throughout his time as High Commissioner Dobbs showed himself implacably opposed to any changes in the 'Amara muqata'a arrangements. He had, as Revenue Commissioner in 1915-16, been personally responsible for setting up the terms under which the muqata'as were held, and was firmly convinced that they should remain in force. Even tentative suggestions from Interior that it was time to introduce the normal administrative apparatus into the area were vigorously countered:

> 'His Excellency would be glad to know...whether the policy of the Iraq Government is to split up large muqata'as in this liwa and create a large number of petty shaikhs. Since the Tigris is the principal line of communication between the sea coast and Baghdad and less precarious than the railway His Excellency is sure that the Iraq Government appreciates the great importance of maintaining peace along the line and of not disturbing without due consideration a system which has hitherto conduced to peace.'[1]

Later, in the course of 1926, Finance made a determined effort to obtain more money from the liwa:

> 'The true sign of Government, as distinct from the present realities, should be security of tenure for shaikh, sirkal and peasant.'

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1. High Commissioner to Interior, No 7095 of 30 May 1923. Delhi, 'Amara Vol 1

This would involve an alteration in the traditional arrangements, but this was considered to be desirable.

> '... the more we insist on revenue and direct administration considerations prevailing over the tribe, the more we must be prepared to face the obligations of normal government, including those of adequate personnel.'[1]

Characteristically, Dobbs took up the cudgels in a detailed reply. Finance had suggested that the larger muqata'as should be split up and given either to smaller shaikhs or town landlords (ahali landlords), on the grounds that this would enable more realistic tax collection to be made. The High Commissioner argued that there was complete peace on the Tigris, that the area was 'notoriously the easiest to manage in the whole of Iraq', since the shaikhs' position was always subject to periodic regranting, and that there were so few of them that it was easy to control them. He did not want this 'admirable system destroyed without good reason': the present tax yields were fairly high because administrative expenses were so low. The best policy, expressed in terms which are by now familiar to us, was to let sleeping dogs lie:

> 'The High Commissioner cannot without dismay compare this new arrangement (of ahali lessors) with that of an estate under a tribal chief, related by blood to the majority of his sub-lessees, resident on his own estates, restrained by a number of tribal sanctions and traditions from oppression or extortion, knowing intimately the affairs of his tribal cultivators and impelled by every consideration to be an indulgent landlord. The creation of new small estates under unsympathetic lessees may increase the gross

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1. Internal Note, Ministry of Finance, S.H. Longrigg to R.V. Vernon, 24 May 1926. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol.1.

> revenue as long as it is not pushed too far, but if adopted prematurely as a permanent policy and largely extended, it is bound, the High Commissioner believes, to create such social and agrarian discontent as will more than swallow up in the increased costs of administration the additional revenue so obtained.'[1]

It seemed especially important both to the High Commissioner and the Advisor to the Ministry of Interior that the process of tribal disintegration in the liwa should not be unduly or artificially hastened.[2] As we know, the fallacy here was that the authorities had themselves interfered in the natural process by deliberately shoring up the system. By giving more widespread powers to the landlords and tribal leaders than they had ever enjoyed in the past, they had created circumstances which made the tribal system seem far more robust than it actually was. Furthermore, dire consequences, in the shape of armed rebellions which the Iraq Government could not hope to be able to contain, were always predicted as the inevitable results of interference; similar warnings greeted contemporary attempts to introduce conscription. Thus the High Commissioner was able to exercise covert powers of veto; in 1927 Interior again suggested that some of the local raises should be made mudirs nahiya, and that taxes should be collected from them.

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1. High Commissioner to Finance and Interior, No 6558 of 8 June 1926. Delhi, 'Amara Vol 1

2. 'It would be unwise to hasten by Government action a process of disintegration which is taking place gradually and naturally through force of existing conditions...' Interior to Finance, Confidential C/1686/62/5/3 of 3 July 1926. Delhi, 'Amara Vol 1

Dobbs replied that:

> ' ... the proposal appears to be an unnecessary and extravagant one, and if it results in disorder in the liwa, His Excellency will expect the Iraq Government to deal with the situation without help from his officers.'[1]

Occasionally, the Ministry of Finance managed to press successfully for a review of the rents of the liwa. A committee in 1927 recommended small increases, and occasional dispossessions,[2] but the new totals represented a net increase of only 2.59 lakhs, composed of:

Increases	3.13
Decreases	0.54
Net	2.59 [3]

The basic policy of non-intervention continued. In view of this, the serious situation at the end of the 1920's seems surprising, for by

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1. High Commissioner to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, 14 May 1927 Delhi, 'Amara Vol I

2. Not always to great effect. In 1928 the Administrative Inspector 'Amara noted:

   ' The Aston Committee recommended that this person (Mahmud al-Muhammad Sa'id) be deprived of his muqata'a on the grounds of incompetence. Instead of this he was given his own muqata'as and the adjoining one at a badl less than that assessed by the Committee. His failure is not a surprise.'

   Adviser, Interior, to High Commissioner, C/211 of 22 November 1928. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol I.

3. Reports on the Assessments of the 'Amara Muqata'as. 19 May 1927 Ministry of Finance. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol I

1928 repeated and vociferous complaints of inability to pay were being heard from some of the richest men in the liwa.[1] 'Failures' of several prominent shaikhs were reported in August of that year, and the next seasons saw the process continuing. By 1929, after seven years of admittedly intermittent and unenthusiastic revenue payments, the discrepancy between tax demands and tax receipts was wider in 'Amara than anywhere else in the country. Receipts generally were low in 1929; it was a year of bad harvests, and the beginning of the great slump in agricultural prices, but the discrepancy in 'Amara was nearly 10 lakhs, while the largest elsewhere, Baghdad Liwa, was only 2½ :

Table II

	1925		1929	
Liwa	Assessment	Return	Assessment	Return
'Amara	25.37	24.37	29.41	19.23
Diwaniya	23.98	23.73	16.93	16.15
Hilla	17.40	17.51	12.28	10.98
Baghdad	14.65	13.53	11.20	8.78
Diyala	12.34	12.51	7.87	7.61

It is significant that in spite of the High Commission and the Ministry of Interior's relative indifference to the tax potential of the liwa, neither department had ever denied its actual wealth.

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1. Report on 'Amara liwa for August 1928. Administrative Inspector, 'Amara, n.d. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol I
2. Note by C.J. Edmonds to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, 3 March 1931 Delhi, 'Amara, Vol II.

In examining the situation in these last years of the mandate, we should from the beginning be aware that the 'plight' of the liwa's taxpayers cannot always be accepted without question. Their experience in previous years had taught them that they were unlikely to be bullied or cajoled in to payment, since uncomfortable pressures had rarely been brought to bear. Thus their situation could as well indicate lack of will to pay as lack of ability to do so.

> 'The effect of a slump in grain prices is particularly marked in the 'Amara area where a serious situation has arisen. Last year (1929) owing to slackness on the part of the administration in the collection of revenue the holders of the 'Amara muqata'as were allowed to fall into arrears. With the usual improvidence of the Arab they spent what they should have paid into the Treasury. Now that grain prices have slumped many of them find it impossible to pay what they owe while those that can pay are refraining from doing so in the hope of general remissions being granted.'[1]

However, a few months after this report was written a stern mutasarrif had threatened the major defaulters with eviction, and most of the money was miraculously found and paid into the authorities.[2]

Elation in the Ministry of Finance was nevertheless shortlived. Troubles began again in earnest early in 1931 when Finance attempted to substitute direct collection of animal (koda)tax from individuals for lump sum collection from the muqata'a holders. Interior

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1. Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 23 June 1930.

2. Administrative Inspector, Basra, to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, C/226 of 6 September 1930. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol II

pointed out the disadvantages of such a practice in view of the current system, since

> '...the lessees have undertaken certain duties, protection of bunds, surrender of criminals, compensation of victims of disorder etc in exchange for certain profits supposed to accrue to them from the lump sum method. If you deprive them of these assumed profits you cannot expect them to perform the extraordinary duties not normally demanded from those who pay taxes directly assessed... By making ...immense areas economically untenable you land Government with the expense of ensuring law and order and the maintenance of bunds, whose length is measured in hundreds of miles.'[1]

Convinced that Finance's attempts to interfere were misconceived, Edmonds was despatched by Interior on a commission of enquiry into conditions in 'Amara liwa.

> 'The first impression that 'Amara gives is that the administration exists primarily, one would say almost solely, as a sort of mincing machine for squeezing money out of the liwa. There is no doubt that the muqata'a holders, some of whom were very rich men in 1924 are today either ruined or seriously in debt. 'Amara seems to have been bled dry.'[2]

He discovered later that even the 1924 figures were misleading:

> '...in 1924 also the nominal demand bore no relation to the Government share and 'Amara's capacity to pay, and that Government also recognised the fact and wrote off nearly 10 lakhs.'[3]

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1. Edmonds (Interior) to Swan (Finance) DO C/69 of 1 Feb 1931. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol II.

2. Note by C. J. Edmonds to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, 3 March 1931 Delhi, 'Amara, Vol II

3. Note by C. J. Edmonds as postcript to Note of 3 March 1931, dated 9 March 1931. Edmonds noted that there had been a remission of 9.73 lakhs in 1924, but we know that political considerations had triumphed over financial ones in this case.
Delhi, 'Amara, Vol II. See also Iraq Revenue Report, 1925, pp 25-26, CO 696/5 and page 396 above.

Buried inconspicuously in the middle of the report lies the real answer; the progressive impoverishment of the soil of the area through over-cultivation. We know that the effect of falling prices was felt elsewhere in Iraq, and Table II above shows that the revenue demands were in most cases scaled downwards to adjust to these changes; by 1931, however, the real dangers inherent in the 'Amara system had come to the surface, and, if it had not been for the passing of the Istihlak Law, it seems probably that the whole arrangement of consolidated fixed assessments would have had to have been seriously reconsidered. The muqata'a holders' wide powers very nearly caused their downfall.

We should at this point reconsider a particularly important aspect of the 'Amara arrangements:

> 'Today the actual proportion to be taken (from the sirkal or fellah) as well as the fact that it was limited to the crops only, has been lost sight of, and the 'Amara shaikh now drives the hardest bargain he can with his sirkals....[1]

Since there were no sanctions to stop him, there was nothing to prevent the landlord extracting as much as he possibly could from his tenants, except the sheer incapacity of the soil to continue to bear crops at the same rate. As far as taxation was concerned, the muqata'a holder was equally limited by the amount he received from his tenantry, and on the basis of a fixed assessment he was likely to be in difficulties in years of bad harvests and low grain

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1. Administrative Inspector, Kut and 'Amara Liwas, to Adviser, Ministry of Interior, no 1132 of 21 September 1923. Delhi, 'Amara, Vol I

prices, even though, as seems most probable, his holding had been under-assessed in the first place. To maintain high income under the taxational system in force until 1931 the landlords of 'Amara would have had to have been prepared to invest heavily in agricultural improvements. Instead, the fields were constantly flooded with the aid of mechanical pumps, a form of speculation which brought high yields for a few years followed inevitably by soil exhaustion, since fallowing virtually disappeared.[1]

Furthermore, the fellahin and sirkals of the liwa worked on an almost exclusively share-cropping basis; there were no individual smallholdings in the liwa at all, and we have seen that the landlords lost no opportunity of taking a proportion of all the produce of their estates. There was no incentive for the cultivator either to diversify or even to increase production, for he could only benefit to the extent of a fraction of his labour, and the rewards for this extra effort did not seem worthwhile. The only equitable solution to the problem would have been to bring the spparatus of financial, administrative and organised irrigation control as applied elsewhere in Iraq to the 'Amara liwa. Even the Advisor to Finance was forced to admit defeat:

> 'I fully realise and sympathise with Your Excellency's desire to apply the law in 'Amara on the same lines as it is elsewhere, but laws cannot be applied unless the machinery exists to cary them out. This liwa is, I suppose,

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1. See page 351 For salination, see Fernea, R.A., pp 38-40, and Poyck, F., Farm Studies in Iraq

> the most tribal in organisation and the most devoid of communication of all the liwas; it is also the one in which the administrative organisation is the weakest. This situation cannot be changed in a day -- the Persian frontier cannot be closed by word of mouth, and the economic attraction to cross the frontier is strong...' 1

In the circumstances, Hogg felt that Finance and Administration should for the time being be left in the hands of the shaikhs. It was difficult to make piecemeal alterations to a system which had by then been in force for over fifteen years.

It remains to consider how it came about that the muqata'a holders retained their wealth over the following years. The only possible explanation lies in the increased population, and the new taxational arrangements brought about by the Istihlak Law. Tax was now confined to sales on surplus produce, a system which enriched landlords but barely affected their tenants who continued to go on paying their dues as before. Thus the landlords collected the same sums as before from their heavily indebted sirkals and fellahin but paid out a far smaller proportion of it to the Treasury. The Cultivators' Law, formally restricting the movement of indebted tenants, and defining closely the duties of sirkals and fellahin, further strengthened the hand of the landlords.

Thus the muqata'a holders' position was virtually unassailable; although their tenants might run away, there were plenty of others to

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1. Note by Adviser for Minister of Finance, 22 December 1931, Delhi, 'Amara, Vol II.

take their place.[1] The second world war increased demand for rice grains, which sent prices up again. After the war, the unpopularity and isolation of the Iraq Government forced it to fall back on traditional sources of support; the 'Amara shaikhs became prominent in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, and the Regent himself married the daughter of the Amir Rabi'a, ~~Muhammad al-'Araibi~~. The 'Amara shaikhs were now the counterparts of the urban notables of Ottoman times.

The 'Amara landholding system was the deliberate creation of one man, Sir Henry Dobbs, whose long tenure of office in Iraq ensured that the machinery he had forged would not be tampered with. In effect, he replaced a system of leasing and tax-farming by one of complete ownership in all but name. The sole function of the state in 'Amara liwa was to receive the land and koda taxes, collected by the muqata'a holders of their agents from their own estates. By this means a free cultivating peasantry were legally transformed into the bondsmen of their landlords, whose authority, as we have noticed before, had formerly depended on a degree of consensus and agreement that could now be dispensed with. The 'Amara shaikhs thus came to have administrative, financial, and

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1. See Hasan, M.S., Growth and Structure of Iraq's Population 1867-1947 Bulletin of Oxford University Institute of Statistics, 1958, pp 339-52. and Battatu, J., The Shaikh and the Peasant in Iraq (Harvard University Ph.D thesis, 1958) pp 157-60, which notes that a quarter of the population left 'Amara between 1930 and 1947, and generally, that 'the provinces where the concentration of landholding was more extreme seem to have suffered the most.'

finally wide political powers; all these gave them a vested interest in the status quo, and their great power gave the Iraq Government an equivalent interest in keeping them loyal. Only total overthrow of the State which the Mandate created would destroy this relationship permanently.

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Note on Bibliography

This work has been very largely based upon British archival material, mostly on correspondence to and from the High Commission in Baghdad. The most important categories are the India Office Files for the period between 1914 and 1921, the Colonial Office, Foreign Office and Air Ministry files for the Mandate period and after. A further source, which has proved especially useful for the detailed operation of the Mandate, and local politics and administration in Iraq, has been the file of the Baghdad High Commission, located in the National Archives of India. Other primary sources used were private papers and diaries in the Private Paper Collections of the Middle East Centres of the Universities of Oxford and Durham.

The only Iraqi materials easily available[1] are secondary sources. They consist of diaries and memoirs, written and published many years after the events they describe. No original documents in Arabic have been used. The disadvantage of the Arabic material is that it consists to a greater or lesser extent of pieces justificatives: it is, for example, only possible to obtain

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1. There is a collection of material from the Ministry of Interior between 1920 and 1932 in the Iraq National Archives (al-markaz al-watani li-hifz al-watha'iq) in Baghdad, which I was unable to consult.

a detailed account of the political infighting of the period from the Abstracts of Police Intelligence, although 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Qassab, Taufiq al-Suwaidi, 'Ali Jaudat and other polititians and civil servants have written memoirs. Hence these materials have been used only as a supplement to the archives, and have been treated with greater caution.

Furthermore, this study is concerned with British motives, and British policy changes; it is possible to follow each new development in detail, because each move is documented both in London and in Baghdad. If Iraqi archives were available in similar detail, it would be possible to reconstruct the manoeuvres of the court and the polititians and the growth of the new state in response to the demands of the British authorities and the country itself.

Of the published secondary sources, P.W. Ireland's 'Iraq: A Study in Political Development', published in 1937, has yet to be superseded as the most valuable and complete sourcebook. It is particularly useful as a guide to the complex events between 1918 and the ratification of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty by the Constituent Assembly in 1924, and for its careful analysis of what the author describes as the 'instruments of government', the Anglo-Iraq Treaties and their subsidiary agreements, and the Organic or Constitutional law. Ireland had access to original documents and correspondence of this early period, but the later chapters of his book are necessarily built on more tentative foundations. S.H. Longrigg's Iraq 1900-1950 should be used with greater caution: as an official of the Mandate administration, and later of the Iraq Petroleum Company, the author benefits from all

the advantages but also suffers under some of the disadvantages, of close personal contact with the individuals and events about which he is attempting to be objective. A.T. Wilson's account of his service in Mesopotamia, Loyalties, Mesopotamia 1914-1917 and Mesopotamia 1917-1920: A Clash of Loyalties is a most interesting record, which, forty years later, gives a vivid picture of the working of the imperial mind.

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1 a). UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

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1. India Office Library

India Office : Letters, Political and Secret, File 10 (LP & S 10)

Used for the period 1914-1921. Correspondence to and from Mesopotamia/Iraq, and interdepartmental correspondence. The Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India was responsible for the administration of Mesopotamia until 1916, when the India Office in London assumed control. The official connection with India and the India Office terminated with the formation of the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office in 1921.

2. Public Record Office

Air Ministry : Air Historical Branch, Series I (Air 1)

Used for the period 1914-1918. Papers and reports relating to squadrons of the R.F.C. and R.A.F: squadron histories and operational narratives.

Air Ministry : Air Historical Branch, Series II Part II (Air 2)

Used for the period 1930-1932. R.A.F. squadron histories and operational narratives. (Follows on chronologically from Air 5)

Air Ministry : Air Historical Branch, Series II, Part I (Air 5)

Used for the period 1921-1930. R.A.F. squadron histories and operational narratives.

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1. Many of the series quoted are not exclusively devoted to Iraq: FO 371, for instance, contains all the political correspondence of the Foreign Office between 1906 and 1947. Inclusion of a series in this list is intended to signify : 'Material relating to Iraq in File ...' The abbreviation used in the footnotes is given after the title of the File.

Air Ministry : Chief of Air Staff (Air 8)

Policy and planning, 1916-1932. Includes complete records of Cairo Conference, collected together.

Air Ministry : Unregistered Papers (Air 20)

Unregistered papers from Air Ministry branches, mostly 1915-1922. Relating to policy, strategy, administration, aircraft, British forces in the Middle East, and intelligence services in the Middle East.

Air Ministry : Overseas Commands (Air 23)

1922-1932. Reports and correspondence on operations (Iraq, India, Aden, Middle East and Far East Command). Includes War Diaries of Air Headquarters, Baghdad, 1923-1930.

Colonial Office : Miscellaneous (CO 537)

1921-1932. Mainly composed of secret despatches and telegrams withheld from the original classes of Colony Correspondence (i.e. for Iraq, CO 730, CO 732) at the time when they were bound: now declassified.

Colonial Office : Iraq : Sessional Reports (CO 696)

1921-1932. Printed reports from various government departments in Baghdad.

Colonial Office : Iraq (CO 730)

1921-1932. Correspondence between London and Baghdad, and interdepartmental correspondence on Iraq. The main source for the Mandate period.

Colonial Office : Middle East (CO 732)

1921-1932, but mostly (for Iraq) 1921-1922. Correspondence between London, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Aden etc., and interdepartmental correspondence on the Middle East.

Foreign Office : Commercial (FO 368)

1916-1920. Papers relating to Trade with Mesopotamia, the Blockade, etc.

Foreign Office : Consular (FO 369)

1925-1940. Consular reports and correspondence from Baghdad and Basra.

Foreign Office : Political (FO 371)

1916-1940. Correspondence between London and Baghdad and interdepartmental correspondence on Iraq. The main source for the post-Mandate period.

Foreign Office : Confidential Prints : Eastern Affairs (FO 402)

1900-1914. Reports on Turkey, with sections on Iraq.

Foreign Office : Confidential Prints : Eastern Affairs (FO 406)

1920-1935. Reports etc. on Iraq.

Foreign Office : Basra Consulate (FO 602)

1900-1914. Correspondence between Basra and London.

Foreign Office : Baghdad Embassy (FO 624)

1921-1945. Mostly after 1932. The bulk of the records of the period between 1921 and 1932 are contained in the Baghdad High Commission Archive, q.v.

Foreign Office : Private Papers (FO 800)

1900-1935. Private Papers of Foreign Ministers, Foreign Office Officials, and members of the Diplomatic Service. Papers of A.J. Balfour, Sir A. Clerk Kerr, Lord Cranborne, Sir L. Oliphant, Sir J. Simon, Sir M. Sykes.

Foreign Office : 'Amara Consulate (FO 838)

1941-1943. Reports on the political situation in 'Amara.

Foreign Office : Lausanne Conference (FO 839)

1922-1923. Miscellaneous papers and reports from Lausanne to London.

3. National Archives of India, New Delhi

Baghdad High Commission File (BHCF)

In 1941, when an Axis invasion of Iraq seemed likely, the records of the Baghdad High Commission, covering the period between 1919 and 1932, were removed from the British Embassy in Baghdad and taken to Bombay. They were taken over by the Indian Government after 1947, and are now in the National Archives of India, New Delhi.

This collection contains correspondence between Baghdad and London, and correspondence between the High Commission and British Advisers to Ministries, mostly Interior and Finance. It contains detailed information on local political and economic conditions, the relations between the High Commission, the Court and the Cabinet, and complete series of the weekly Abstracts of Police Intelligence (compiled by the C.I.D.) and the fortnightly Intelligence Summaries (compiled in the High Commission). Files are divided into subject sections, and subdivided into areas, episodes, persons, etc, e.g., File 6 (Ministry of Finance) 34/34 ('Amara Muqata'as) ; File 27 (Personalities) 411 (Salim al-Khayyun)

I b). Private Papers and Diaries.

These are located in the Sudan Archive, Durham University (D), or, in the Private Paper Collection, Middle East Centre, Oxford University (O). See also Part Ia)., Section 2 : Foreign Office Private Papers (FO 800).

G. Antonius (O)
F.C.C. Balfour (D)
Sir E. Bonham Carter (O)
H. Bowman (O)
Sir G. Clayton (D)
C.J. Edmonds (O)
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II a) PUBLISHED MATERIALS:

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Memorandum of Agreement signed at San Remo on 24 April 1920 between M. Philippe Berthelot ... and Sir John Cadman ..., Cmd. 675, 1920 (San Remo Agreement).

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Despatch to H.M. Ambassador at Washington, Enclosing a Memorandum on the Petroleum Situation. Cmd. 1351,1921.

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