

Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928

Helmut Mejcher

Institut kurde de Paris

Monograph No. 6

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by Helmut Mejcher

This book charts the way in which Britain attempted to extend its control over the major oil-fields of the Middle East at the end of the First World War. Dr Mejcher's major thesis is that the concept of the Mandate system was deliberately promoted by the British as a cover for the pursuit of their own national interest. In particular the award of the League of Nations Mandate for Iraq was central to Britain's successful efforts to secure control over the oil near Mosul and Kirkuk. But the author also shows how Britain's major rival, America, was able to use other internationalist arguments, such as the 'Open Door' principle, to wrest the Saudi Arabian fields from the British sphere of influence.

Before scholars were given access to the British government documents, the story of the use of the Mandate system in the struggle for oil could hardly have been told. Hitherto most historians have agreed with Lord Curzon that economic interests had little to do with Britain's decision to stay in Iraq. Dr Mejcher's own examination of these documents shows that for many of Curzon's contemporaries, oil and Iraq were synonymous. In so doing he adds a vital extra dimension to the study of British imperial expansion into Arab lands.

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Helmut Mejcher

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FOREWORD by Elizabeth Monroe

Plenty of books tell the story of oil once commercial quantities are discovered. Few record the diplomatic and commercial contests that took place in the days when its existence was only suspected. In Mesopotamia, discovery in volume took place only in 1927, but for fifteen years before that, the supposed 'oil of Mosul' was amassing file on file in British government departments.

The story of British tenacity in seeking and securing first, the mandate for Iraq and secondly, the inclusion of Mosul vilayet within that mandate gets into full swing in the last months of the first World War. Then, Admiral Sir Edmond Slade, who was the Admiralty's oil expert, launched two memoranda that quickened attention. In them, he assessed the likely post-war race physically to control oil resources. His reasoning prompted Sir Maurice Hankey, the balanced and unemotional Secretary to the Cabinet, to propound and amplify his idea. It was at least partly responsible for the British army's push on to Mosul after the signing of the armistice with the Turks on the battleship Agamemnon at Mudros on October 30, 1918. Thereafter, it runs through all British diplomacy, like the thread through a banknote, until Curzon emerges from the Lausanne Conference in 1924 with Mosul vilayet in his pocket to be referred to the League of Nations which in 1925 awarded it to Iraq.

Professor Mejcher, in the course of this story, shows that many other reasons for holding Mosul - some true, some mere excuses - found their way into British arguments. Iraq's northern mountains could prove a barrier to Turco-German expansion towards India; their Christian inhabitants needed protection; they could be turned into splendid levies; Iraq needed a mountain frontier if it was to be safe against invasion; the neighbouring plains might become a granary for the world. He includes descriptions of the way in which the mandate idea unfolded, of the installation of Feisal as King in the hope that he would do British bidding, and of American attempts, to establish within it the principle of the Open Door. His account of the subtlety with which Curzon overcame all contestants at Lausanne is coloured by his now-famous lie: "Oil had not the remotest connection with my attitude over Mosul."

Students who use this book should cap it with two others that have come out since Professor Mejcher wrote. One is Marian Kent's Oil and Empire (London 1976). (She appears under her maiden name, Marian Jack in Professor Mejcher's bibliography.) It supplements his tale with a detailed account - some think too detailed - of the foundation of the Turkish Petroleum Company just before the first World War; it also gives some useful information about the British acquisition, after the armistice, a big interest in an oil company till then thought untrustworthy - Royal Dutch Shell. The other book is Briton Cooper Busch's Mudros to Lausanne: 1918-1923 (State University of New York Press 1976) which describes the muddle in Southern Russia, Persia and the Caucasus which renders it surprising that successive Cabinets engaged in peacemaking with Turkey had time to remember Mesopotamian oil, - that necessity of Empire in the eyes of Admiral Slade, now thanks to Britain in the possession of Iraq.

ELIZABETH MONROE

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Much kindness and help came my way during the preparation of this study. In particular, I should like to thank Miss Elizabeth Monroe, Dr Roger Owen and Mr Albert Hourani. They gave me much of their hard pressed time to clarify my thought and findings on the British imperial mind and on the Middle East at large.

This thesis was originally submitted, in 1970, under the title: *The Birth of the Mandate Idea and its Fulfilment in Iraq up to 1926*, and it has meanwhile been quoted as such in literature. In its present shape, size and scope have been varied greatly - always too late to catch up with a rapidly decreasing commercial market for studies of this kind. Therefore, not all curtailments and changes necessarily imply revisions of interpretations and judgements made earlier. On the other hand, Dr Owen and also Dr Hopwood afforded me last valuable comments, which go to the credit of the narrative. Notwithstanding, any shortcomings in factual presentation as well as all views and judgements expressed are my sole responsibility.

Tübingen, November 1976

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Note on the spelling of Arabic, Turkish and Persian proper nouns.

Arabic, Turkish and Persian names have been given in their familiar, romanised form wherever possible. The spelling of unfamiliar place-names is taken from the Oxford Atlas. The names of unfamiliar persons have been transliterated according to a simplified version of the system to be found in C Brockelmann's Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur, supplementary Vol I (Leiden 1937).

PREFACE

In the eighteen years from 1910 to 1928 Iraq could scarcely have been called an oil-producer. In 1929 the annual production figure of 800,000 barrels compared badly with the 42.1 million barrels produced in neighbouring Iran, and likewise with the total world production in the year - 1,485.9 million barrels. Nevertheless it was in those 'unproductive' eighteen years in Iraq that the pattern of oil exploitation in the Arab Middle East took shape. Its basic features remained unchanged until the 1950's, and its eclipse has only very recently come about through the admission of indigenous Arab shareholders to the Western oil-oligopolies, and through nationalisation.

Successive Arab officials and governments had struggled to attain this aim. But individual and local struggle proved futile: it could easily be exploited and absorbed by the Western imperial practice of 'divide and rule'. The lack of technical know-how, of management personnel, of investment capital and perhaps even of social stimulus and the spirit of enterprise may have sapped what energy was left after the frustrations of alien political and economic domination. Success required the formation of a common movement, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the unification of all their efforts, before the dominating power of Western business administration could be made to pass away.

In contrast, the ascendancy of the West and the pattern of oil exploitation resulted from internal antagonisms and alliances that were unstable. Unrelenting internecine rivalry between the industrial

PREFACE

empires and giant oil companies such as the Royal Dutch Shell Group, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and the American Standard Oil of New Jersey was the prelude to every major oil-concession. Sober politicians and punctilious administrators became avid for the acquisition of oil. Before the turn of the century, technological progress in motor transport prompted metropolitan governments and the admiralties of imperial powers urgently to look abroad for unhampered supplies of the vital strategic commodity. The political methods by which the supply of oil was safeguarded were developed in the shadow of war. Having won a Pyrrhic victory over her rival Germany, Britain reached out to gather the most precious spoils of the tottering Ottoman Empire. The acquisition of Iraq's oil-bearing regions, together with production in Iran, would be enough to ensure an independent supply and help restore the hegemony of Britain in world shipping. Her mercantile supremacy and her function of policing the seas could be expected to offset the rising power of America.

Thus far, this kaleidoscopic view may be familiar from a great many books already written on oil. The new data presented in this book derives from the intimate link between the successful acquisition of the oil-bearing regions on the one hand, and on the other, from the combined effects of Iraqi subjection and submission in the unique circumstances of the country's emergence as a nation-state.

Britain's physical conquest and mandatory commitment in Iraq were like two sides of the same coin. Thorough observation of this almost trivial aspect throws up many relevant questions that have been needlessly excluded from previous books on oil policy. Without being cynical we can dissent from the assertion that the changed standards of international behaviour after World War 1, and in particular, of the conduct of relations between 'backward' and 'advanced' peoples - to use the imperial phraseology of those days - did not leave room for open and direct imperial expansion. Yet how were the restrictions that hindered British oil policy overcome? An assessment and a complete answer have to take into account the specific British contribution, intellectually and politically, to the birth of the international mandate formula which in the end helped Britain to acquire the oil. We must also examine the main steps of Iraq's constitutional development, prior to the Red-Line Agreement of 1928. This factor may well have been a powerful influence in British hands for maintaining submission.

The setting of this study is therefore very broadly based. The focus is as much on the contemporary conditions of imperialism, internationally and locally, as it is on the early days of oil enterprise.

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Knowledge of the two together sheds new light on the nerve-centres of the British Empire in a vital region during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Start of British interest in Mesopotamian Oil 1910-1914

1. The problem in perspective

Anyone who writes about British oil policy, and concerns himself chiefly with the years succeeding World War 1, is inescapably confronted with the question of its legacy before the war. There are many reasons why this is so. The Turkish Petroleum Company, since 1929 known as the Iraq Petroleum Company, was the principal instrument for developing British oil interests in the Arab Middle East. Its origins, both financial and diplomatic, can be traced to the years when Anglo-German trade rivalry was intensifying. The Baghdad Railway Era before the war had been a hey-day for bankers and concessionaires. The people were helped by a happy combination of diplomatic factors which caused their governments to ask them to act as intermediaries, with the result that under cover of diplomacy they could easily benefit trade and finance. Once granted governmental support from home, they could also bully the reluctant or unreliable rulers at Istanbul into promising them concessions and trading estates. Conversely, competitors in the field, by pretending that they had government backing, easily found access to the rival factions at the Porte.

Meanwhile, the Turks, burdened by the huge public debt and the imbroglgio in the Balkans, were very ready to play off the concessionaires against each other, or else to use them to draw in foreign diplomatic support for their various political ends. Naturally, the

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result of such involved intrigue was that a host of would-be concessionaires arose who believed, or alleged, that they had netted their catch. This process did not stop even when war broke out in 1914. Those who were lobbying for oil immediately set about influencing the shaping of war aims. Finally, when the Turks put out peace feelers, they engaged in an all-out attempt to shape the peace in a way that would ensure physical possession of the oil-bearing regions.

The armistice with the defunct Ottoman Empire, concluded on 30 October 1918, ushered in a new round of fierce wrangling over their military gains, so that the legality of the pre-war concession of the Turkish Petroleum Company soon came under heavy attack. As this proceeded, Britain and her junior partner France were forced into retreat. In the long drawn-out finale, both gave way reluctantly to the mighty phalanx composed of Standard Oil of New Jersey and the U S State Department.

Before the war, when the Young Turks curtailed Abdul Hamid's privy purse, American oil interests as represented chiefly by Admiral Colby Chester had been on the losing side. After the war, prospects for American oil interests became brighter, as the Washington authorities fought to have the Open Door policy put into effect in the Middle East - exactly as the State Department had so successfully done in China sixty years before.

Nor had the British changed very much from before the war. When we realize how the same personnel continued in office, and what was the shape and the temper of their policy making, the role of government in oil policy after 1917 clearly contradicts the widely accepted assertion that the war totally reversed 19th century standards of international behaviour and trade between so-called 'advanced' and 'backward' peoples. As it turned out, the continuity of the imperial quest for oil was unbroken. Perhaps the expansionist and monopolist oil lobby at Whitehall occasionally proceeded with more caution and concealment than they had before the war. After all, they now had to cope with the cheese-paring of the Treasury which ruthlessly curtailed imperial overcommitment and an electorate which preferred domestic interests to those of empire. Nevertheless, the oil lobbyists, both within the ministries and outside the government, were as undaunted as ever.

The permeation of the nerve-centres of government by capitalist wickedness, or by the conspiracies of imperialists, are mere 'agit-prop' explanations for this continual thrusting for the control of oil. The oil business as a commercial enterprise has dynamics and rules of its own.⁽¹⁾

Besides the fluctuations of the world's oil reserves and the effect of these on the market, any basic and comprehensive explanation must also include the belief that the ideological and traditional tenets of international trade policy were still as valid as ever. After the war the Manchester free-trade philosophy still maintained the dual outlook which it had had in the nineteenth century: namely, that the use of the world's raw materials belonged to that part of mankind most advanced in mastering nature (which happened - providentially - to be the West), and cancelled out any such petty notion as that of territorial sovereignty. Seen from this angle, in terms of ideology rather than party politics, the frontiers between free trade principles and protectionism become blurred. Thus everyone, whether expansionists and advocates of protectionism by government or the old and the new apostles of the Open Door principle or the critics of empire and imperialism (who in the economic as well as in the political sphere stood for rule by international sovereign organization), all were in complete agreement with one another. (2) In matters of trade policy they were 'Wilsonian' - as were Edward Grey and Bethmann Hollweg.

The translation of philosophy and theory into practice comes about by way of social and political interchange. There is an interesting similarity between the apogetics for territorial expansion and trade protectionism in the nineteenth century and the attempts to establish monopolies of control in the early twentieth century. This implies that the expansion of empire, whether formal or informal, stemmed from a defensive strategy; regional trade and transit trade were brought under monopoly control in order to prevent any deterioration of international trade or outright economic war. (3) The margin for compromise in such preventive measures was largely determined by political geography.

The accommodations in Mesopotamia made between England and Germany before the war provide an excellent illustration. (4) The negotiations that led to the final 'Baghdad Peace' of June 1914 consisted basically, of the meticulous and appropriate division of territorial spheres and the fair sharing of the channels of communication and traffic. Once the Young Turks' efforts to secure and develop for their own needs the resources of the Arab half of their empire were frustrated by this Anglo-German rapprochement in the area, the two powers had all that they needed for a mutual compromise. Germany's Baghdad Railway was terminated at Baghdad while the line further south, down to Basra and the Gulf, was to have a different gauge and British management. In Baghdad itself an equally inconvenient check was set

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up to prevent uncontrolled through-traffic to Khanaqin, the Persian border town: there was to be no railway bridge linking the banks of the Tigris. Goods had to be reloaded and transported by ferries belonging to the British firm of Mackay & Lynch Brothers, whose shipping monopoly on the Tigris was revived in order to offset the challenge that was to be expected from trade and transport on the German Baghdad Railway. Finally, seen against this background of skilfully arranged counterchecks, the provisions of the Basra port convention reveal their true significance and scope. The 60 per cent investment share granted to German building and construction firms, rather than increasing German imports, helped British and Anglo-Indian trade, which had roughly a 70 per cent preponderance in the Gulf.

Trade rivalry was, of course, part of the overriding strategic concept; either that or the economic motives were of a more sophisticated kind than just competition for quantities of transit goods. 'All-German' propagandists of the time like Paul Rohrbach (who was one of the more vociferous) never hesitated to point out the politico-strategic implications of the railway lines in the Near East: they were intended to provide the German Empire with a means of bargaining if ever the two rival empires found themselves on the brink of an economic war, the outbreak of which was forecast again and again.⁽⁵⁾ On the British side, Lovat Fraser maintained that the checks and balances were set up purposely to deny those bargaining assets - whether to Germany, or to the recovering 'sick man' at the Porte.⁽⁶⁾

2. First steps towards control over Middle Eastern Oil

Had Anglo-German trade rivalry and the two countries' strategic manoeuvres been the sole points at issue, one might say that the struggle was ended conclusively by the Basra Convention of June 1914. In similar fashion the struggle between Britain and Russia for mastery in Persia had come to its end seven years before. But since the overriding contest was between the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Royal Dutch/Shell Group for the control of the Middle East Oil and everything that went with it, Germany could not be appeased or contained by geographic limits of spheres of influence, no matter how clear-cut.⁽⁷⁾ Under the Baghdad Railway Convention of 1903 Germany possessed the right to exploit all minerals in a 20 kilometre strip each side of the railway track; hence

Britain had to be alert lest any investment partnership was formed which might disturb the Middle East oil market. Germany, although one of the leading investors in the Ottoman Empire, was short of capital; moreover her allotted concession area cut right across most of the oil-bearing regions of Mesopotamia.

Germany was not slow to reap the benefits of this concession. The partner that commended itself was the formidable Royal Dutch/Shell Group. This group was founded in 1907 by a merger of the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company (N V Koninklijke Nederlandsche Maatschappij tot Exploitatie van Petroleumbronnen in Nederlandsche-Indie, 1890) with the Shell Transport and Trading Company Ltd. (1897), a successor of the London firm of Samuel Brothers & Company. It had been Sir Marcus Samuel, who established the first oil tanker line between Batum in the Caspian Sea and the Far East at the turn of the century. In the following years, the Shell Transport and Trading Company Ltd., which originally had traded exclusively with the shells and crustaceans that abound in the ocean waters of the Dutch Indies, rapidly built up the largest fleet known in those days. In 1907 Shell alone ran thirty-one tankers, which added up to 102,000 tons gross register. In order to compete better against the distribution lines of the powerful Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey, the Shell Transport and Trading Company Ltd., in 1902 concluded a treaty with its immediate European rival, the Koninklijke Maatschappij. A year later, both companies founded the Asiatic Petroleum Co. as their common distribution agent. The Asiatic Petroleum Co. also strengthened the existing links with the French-Russian Rothschild combine at Baku. The founding of the Asiatic Petroleum Co. was the first step towards the full merger of the two companies. Thus the Royal Dutch/Shell Group succeeded the Asiatic Petroleum Company Ltd. (1903). From 1907 the Royal Dutch Group's London branch was the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company Ltd. By world-wide expansion of its concession areas in British Borneo, Rumania, the United States, Mexico and Venezuela as much as by its huge transport and marketing capacities, the Royal Dutch/Shell Group had a financially solid base. In fact, it was the world's largest oil concern after the American Standard Oil Group and, as such, a keen competitor in the rapidly expanding oil industry. (8)

For obvious reasons the activities of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group in Mesopotamia were not regarded with equanimity by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in neighbouring Persia or by its supporters in Whitehall and India. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company originated in 1901 when

William Knox d'Arcy, a British-born adventurer who had acquired considerable wealth by the discovery of gold-mines in Australia, obtained a concession from the Persian Government which covered an area of some 500,000 square miles. At the time 'considerable diplomatic assistance' from the British Government had helped secure the concession for d'Arcy.⁽⁹⁾ Further, when d'Arcy's means were rapidly being exhausted by the extremely costly work of prospecting, several ministries in Whitehall put forward the view that the d'Arcy concession holding should be retained as a purely British undertaking. The Admiralty was particularly adamant on this point since oil from Southern Persia was rapidly becoming an indispensable commodity, indeed a strategic necessity, for the Navy whose ships were now being converted from coal to oil burning. Any foreign incursions into the Middle East oil market and particularly into Persian oil supplies were a serious barrier to the self-sufficiency of the British Navy. Undoubtedly, the greatest threat was from the Royal Dutch/Shell Group: its large capital reserves and insatiable appetite for new concession areas throughout the world suggested that it might attempt to take over the d'Arcy holdings. Although it was a 40 per cent British-owned concern and registered in London, the Anglo-Saxon group was considered to be open to German influence because of the 60 per cent Dutch holdings in it.

Presumable such considerations were largely emotional. Ever since the Kaiser's involvement in the Boer War aroused British suspicion of German motives, simple anti-German feeling was likely to outweigh reason, which suggested that the Royal Dutch/Shell Group could not be counted on for support by any particular nation such as Germany because, as a profit- and marketing-orientated company as well as an international combine it had a policy of its own. This in turn made the Company largely immune to government intervention or appeals to patriotism.⁽¹⁰⁾

While the British Admiralty, egged on by such devotees of oil as Lord Fisher and Winston Churchill, was successfully dissuading the d'Arcy group either from selling out its shares or from taking on foreign loans and accepting new partners, its watchfulness over affairs in Mesopotamia was increasing. Rightly or wrongly the Shell Group was suspected of being ready to start an all-out price war in the Middle East once it had gained a foothold in Mesopotamian oil concessions.⁽¹¹⁾ Eventually the group was also to control the price of liquid fuel for the British Navy, for it was correctly assumed that since the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was debarred from having

any guaranteed marketing and transport facilities it would sooner or later have to conclude at least a marketing agreement with the Royal Dutch/Shell Group. In the event a partial agreement was concluded in 1912.⁽¹²⁾

Accordingly, British policy set itself three objectives. Firstly, it could strengthen the Anglo-Persian Oil Company by indirect subsidies such as contracts for fixed ratios of supply for the Admiralty and for the imperial railway system in India and elsewhere. Secondly, it could use diplomatic interference in Istanbul to frustrate the Shell Group's attempts to gain a foothold in the Mesopotamian petroleum concession. And thirdly, it could induce and help the d'Arcy group either to obtain a concession of its own or else to gain a majority shareholding in any oil concession for the vilayets of Baghdad and Mosul.

As it turned out, British policy, though far from being unified, was to pursue all three aims. Attainment of the first objective was greatly helped by the financial recovery of the d'Arcy group in 1908 when an oil ridge of great wealth and good quality was struck at Masjid-i-Sulaiman.⁽¹³⁾ Nevertheless, the exigencies of an imperialism bent on self-sufficiency demanded that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company should be made a ministerial or a government undertaking. Only in this way would the company be made independent of uncontrollable fluctuations on the world market. Inside the Government, the Admiralty was certainly the department most concerned about oil. Yet it refrained from putting the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's future on its list of financial obligations,⁽¹⁴⁾ arguing that if the company's stockholding were to be safeguarded against foreign incursions or enlarged the Treasury itself, possibly with the assistance of India, would have to step in. Both the company and the Admiralty were at pains to emphasise this to the Government. They exerted pressure by generating fear of an imminent and wholesale take-over by Shell.

The second objective of British oil policy which was to frustrate the Shell Group's expansion into the Mesopotamian market, was pursued by supporting the d'Arcy group as a competitor in the field. In 1901, (the year in which the Persian concession was obtained), d'Arcy, through his representative A L Marriot, a French ex-diplomat, had already applied for oil concessions in the vilayets of Baghdad and Basra. There had been several no less eager American competitors, foremost among whom was Rear-Admiral Colby Chester. But despite of all efforts no documentary ratification resulted.

By virtue of her Baghdad Railway Convention of 1903 Germany alone was in the lead. Having attained this position, Germany could not be outstripped even when in 1908 the Young Turks turned the tables at the Porte and, to the delight of the British, ushered in a pro-British liberal phase.

Such delight was short-lived. The events of 1908 gave an unexpected turn to British diplomacy. British statesmen soon came to realize that Turkey's rapprochement with the Entente might seriously disturb the European equilibrium by provoking a German intervention in Istanbul. In order to forestall this, Britain had to keep the Turks at arm's length. At the same time the British rapprochement with Germany in the Middle East, which was indispensable to the fulfilment of their oil policy, had to be strictly limited in geographic terms and kept indefinite enough to avoid alienating Imperial Russia. With regard to oil, therefore, Whitehall's policy had henceforth to concentrate on its third objective: that the d'Arcy group should become the senior partner in the Mesopotamian oil industry.

Fortunately, demands arising at Constantinople from the burden of the Public Debt, and from various expensive projects in the military and industrial field fitted in with the interests of British investment groups. A National Bank of Turkey was set up on whose board were Sir H. Babington Smith, Hugo Baring, the germanophile Sir Ernest Cassel and the Armenian-born C S Gulbenkian. This National Bank was certainly a more appropriate bargaining partner for the Deutsche Bank, which held the Baghdad Railway Concession, than any of Whitehall's government departments could ever have been. Contacts were soon established, and by 1911 African and Eastern Concessions Ltd. was registered in London. Backed by the National Bank of Turkey it was to be able to obtain oil concessions throughout the Ottoman Empire. However, as the Deutsche Bank and the Royal Dutch/Shell Group also held a 50 per cent shareholding, the Company had too much of a German/Dutch complexion to divert the watchfulness of the British.⁽¹⁵⁾ The next step for London, therefore, was to enlarge British shareholdings. This could be done in two ways: either by turning the Anglo-Saxon Group (which was the branch of Royal Dutch/Shell) into an all-British concern by buying the 60 per cent Dutch shareholding or by introducing d'Arcy as a senior partner by means of a partial merger of the Turkish Petroleum Company with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The name 'Turkish Petroleum Company' had been substituted for

that of African and Eastern Concessions Ltd. when on 23 October 1912 the Deutsche Bank had entered this latter company. Again, British policy came to pursue both aims. Yet the purchase of the 60 per cent Dutch holding in the Anglo-Saxon group proved futile for the time being and, in fact, remained a part of British post-war policy. In contrast, the partial merger between the Turkish Petroleum Company and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company offered prospects of success.

3. Germany and the Baghdad Railway Interlude

For German policy a rapprochement with Britain at the very heart of her empire in the East was most welcome: it could provide the starting point for the over-all Ausgleich in Europe over Belgium which Bethmann Hollweg so much desired. As a result the oil issue naturally became inextricably woven into the larger complex of Anglo-German policy in the Middle East. While those responsible for trade and finance in Britain and Germany observed with satisfaction the tentative steps towards a regional arrangement in Mesopotamia, various departments in Whitehall - the Board of Trade, the India Office and the Admiralty - assumed an increasingly hostile attitude towards Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy. British oil policy in Mesopotamia was thus being affected and disturbed by very complex motives, and the negotiations between Britain and Germany which led to the 'Baghdad Peace' on the eve of the war merit a brief description.

A considerable time was spent on negotiating the settlement of the Baghdad Railway track. A brief recital of contemporary comments illustrates the sort of obstacles to a speedy Anglo-German understanding. On 8 November 1899, The Times could still write that there was "no power other than Germany into whose hands Englishmen would more gladly see the enterprise (Baghdad Railway Concession) fall", because, as the commentator went on, there was none which had made such substantial advance towards meeting Britain's liberal economic policy.⁽¹⁶⁾ However, in the same autumn Lord Curzon, who had resigned his viceroyalty in India, gave voice to a feeling of increasing wariness in Whitehall. Nobody questioned the bona fides of German commercial enterprise, but German interests had a tendency to grow by methods which were not always acceptable to her neighbours. In the Gulf and Lower Mesopotamia German enterprise would only add to the complexities

of an already sufficiently difficult situation.⁽¹⁷⁾ Four years later, when the Baghdad Railway Convention was formally ratified at the Porte (1903), British observers were already regarding the enterprise as a "spearhead" of German imperialism directed against the peacekeeping British hegemony in the Gulf. On 5 May 1903, Lord Lansdowne, another former Viceroy in India (1888 - 1894), delivered a speech in the Lords which was celebrated as the establishment of a British Monroe Doctrine for the Middle East.⁽¹⁸⁾ The British pleaded their case by claiming that their traditional efforts in appeasing the Persian Gulf amounted to a 'self-denying ordinance' which set standards for new-comers in the region. It is true that the British Empire had scrupulously avoided posting any naval stations of its own in the Gulf area.

Lord Lansdowne carried the House with him. The Baghdad Railway Concession ceased to be simply a matter of business partly because it was called in to help and partly because it had entered the sphere of trade and high finance of its own accord. The silken paw of diplomacy began to show its hidden claws. Concessions, kilometric guarantees* and tariff prerogatives all turned into powerful levers, political instruments and Trojan Horses. The political armoury on both sides was enlarged by new additions.

* The system of kilometric guarantees consisted of advance payments by the Turks to the foreign railway contractor. The payment was based on a fixed sum for each kilometre to be built. The sum per kilometre was based on a calculation of the actual investment cost together with a projection of the future profit of the line. In order to be able to advance the payment, the Turks had to acquire foreign loans at high interest rates or else to mortgage other income sources. In the case of Germany, the big banks and particularly the Deutsche Bank were themselves industrial entrepreneurs in the Baghdad Railway enterprise. This meant, that they both received the kilometric guarantee sum and emitted the loan, which incurred high profits from interest. As capital was usually short on the German market, the kilometric guarantee served the banks and the investors as a security.

On the British side the shipping interest of John Mackay, later Lord Inchcape, was induced to merge with the small firm of Lynch Brothers & Co. which ran shipping on the Tigris, and to ask for a shipping monopoly in Mesopotamia.⁽¹⁹⁾ On the German side in 1906 the Hamburg steam line of Hapag set about capturing the Gulf trade and competing with Anglo-Indian transport to Turkey and Russia, and Count von Bulow, the German Chancellor, recorded this note: 'I am very pleased; this can only hurt the British.'^(20, 21) During the Windsor talks in 1907 and in revenge for diplomatic defeat at the Algeiras Conference in Morocco, von Bulow and his staff thwarted the British plans for summoning a conference A Quatre at which the London Government hoped that, backed by her Entente partners France and Russia, she would gain a fair share in controlling the railway line from a point north of Baghdad down to the Gulf. It was certainly true that the question of the terminus of the Baghdad Railway did not figure in official Anglo-German negotiations.⁽²²⁾ Britain, on her part, had good reason to be reticent; for since her treaties recently concluded with the Sheiks of Kuwait and Muhammara had not yet been confirmed by the suzerain Ottoman Government, her position at the head of the Gulf was precarious and subject to opposition. Why then should she bring this question up when German bankers were offering her the prospect of slipping into the enterprise and improving her insecure position in Lower Mesopotamia.

On the other hand, the Foreign Office thought it could atone for the blunder Britain had made in allowing Germany to get the Baghdad Railway concession. Britain thus put strong pressure on the Turkish Government, telling them that she would consent to a 4 per cent tariff increase only on the understanding that this new income, which the Young Turks were aiming to acquire, would not be used to subsidise the construction of the Baghdad-Basra link. In particular, the British gave pledges to the Young Turks that they would oppose any kilometric guarantees, by which means they hoped to gain the concession for the last section of the line. The Grand Vizier told Arthur Gwinner of the Deutsche Bank about the Turkish Government's impasse, and Gwinner proposed to his colleagues in the National Bank of Turkey that the British should have a share in the control of the southern railway section. Yet the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade would not entertain the idea of more participation. As Grey and Churchill (then President of the Board of Trade) told Cassel, he would have to bid for the best terms: it was essential that the British should have a share of at least 60 per cent.⁽²³⁾

As for the German demands for a share in the kilometric guarantees, it was suggested that some compensation should be paid to them. The Foreign Office and the Board of Trade spoke of a loan to the Turks by which they would be enabled to reduce their subsidy to the line and proportionately increase payment of the kilometric guarantees, (a sum to be paid for each kilometre constructed by the German company). By this means Grey hoped to free Britain of a double accusation: firstly that she was unduly bleeding the Turks, and secondly that she was subsidising the rival German enterprise - which was, in fact, precisely what she was doing.

The entire scheme had been worked out by George Stanley of the Board of Trade. ⁽²⁴⁾ In essence, its intentions were all-round conciliation. In the context of regional spheres of influence, Germany was given preponderance in central Anatolia and Northern Mesopotamia; Britain reserved for herself the south, while Russia would be given the option of controlling the branch-line from Baghdad to Khanaqin. France was to participate in a new line up the Euphrates Valley to Homs and provide a link with the Syrian railway network. ⁽²⁵⁾ The flaw in the scheme was that it overlooked the commercial dimension of the railway enterprise. Surely the German bankers were quite willing to buy British approval and co-operation by conceding them a major share in the Baghdad-Basra section of the line. By their own business principles and, of course, due to Turkish insistence, however, would they never allow a split in the management of the enterprise. The Baghdad Railway was conceived of as being a commercial and strategic whole. To safeguard its integrity, it was stipulated that the construction south of Baghdad should not start until the line had reached Baghdad from the north. Grey however wanted full power to begin at once. He furthermore wanted the Turks concurrence that the British controlled section should have a varied route, gauge and character. Obviously this aim was to obviate any future military use of the line by Istanbul. Yet timing was certainly the more urgent problem. The British were aware that once the line had reached Baghdad, they themselves would be in a much weaker position to prevent the "German spear-head" from reaching the Gulf. But Grey was in a dilemma. Even if construction of the British controlled section could start at once, at home he would still be the target of the severe criticism and public disapproval that was stirred up by a press hostile to Germany. To them the Baghdad-Gulf section was certain to prove the most profitable part of the entire line. Yet as a result of its prior com-

pletion and great profits Istanbul would, however, be able to pay more to the Germans. The system of the kilometric guarantees might indeed become quite a profitable source of income for rival Germany. For this reason Grey became the target of public disapproval stirred up by a press hostile to Germany which denounced his system as being devised to bleed the Turks.

For political reasons Istanbul was of course eager to exploit any situation in which the Great Powers could be played off against each other. Grey therefore quickly realised that his pledges to the Young Turks that the kilometric guarantee system would be revised had already led Britain into a position financially and politically unacceptable to Germany. Gwinner, who noticed the embarrassment of the British, tried to correct the course of Anglo-German rapprochement by reviving the resentment of the Young Turks about Britain's interference in Kuwait. When this was achieved the British were told that Turkey rather than Germany, was the real nigger in the woodpile.⁽²⁶⁾ Yet this move made by the Deutsche Bank proved counter-productive to the prospects of Bethmann Hollweg's 'General Ausgleich' with Britain; instead, Anglo-German understanding was localized and limited once more to the Middle East.

Not long afterwards Bethmann Hollweg derived some degree of consolation from a move made by Russia. Obviously the Gwinner-Cassel talks, initiated and supported by the London and Berlin Governments, had failed at an early stage. They lasted long enough, however, to penetrate to St. Petersburg, where Sazonov, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, began to accuse Britain of violating the principle of the Entente Convention, namely, that four-sided talks had to precede any negotiations with other powers involving questions of any magnitude. Sazonov, by way of retaliation, claimed this as a good precedent for starting talks with Germany over Persia. He argued that as Britain had tried to get her special position in Lower Mesopotamia confirmed by expansionist Germany, so Russia must get a similar recognition of her hold in Northern Persia. As the British Ambassador Sir Arthur Nicolson feared, the Neutral Zone as designated in the 1907 Agreement on Persia was in question. Russian tactics, which led to the Potsdam Agreement of 1910, were helpful to Bethman Hollweg's efforts to shift the Middle East question back into its true focus. According to Grey's quickly reformulated policy, Britain could not enter into a political understanding with Germany which would separate her from Russia and France, leaving her isolated and obliging the rest of Europe to look to Germany.

In contrast with the Middle East, however, Europe left no room for compromise on politico-geographical terms.

Henceforward Anglo-German negotiations on the Baghdad Railway question proceeded with as many twists and turns as the railway line on its meanderings through the valleys of the Anatolian mountains. First on the list of British objectives in the railway question was her intention to apply for a separate concession for a West-East railway line, as a route of her own for trade with the Middle East. The support given by the Government was like an ultimatum: if the concession were refused, British policy towards the Ottoman Empire would undergo drastic change. The Turkish response was immediate and in obvious accordance with its long-term projects to reorganize the Empire and streamline its rule. Istanbul offered to buy out the German rights on the Baghdad-Basra section and run the railway by means of its own company. For Whitehall, of course, any arrangement that granted more than nominal management to the Turks was anathema. As Whitehall was soon to show, where oil was concerned it would not tolerate their holding even nominal power.

4. The Agreement on oil that was too late

The Turk's suggestion that they should buy out the German rights in the Baghdad-Basra section of the railway line was no doubt influenced by the loss of their European dependencies in the Balkan wars. ⁽²⁷⁾ Istanbul was thrown back on its Asiatic and Arab provinces where it was determined to maintain itself as sovereign. Although it had bartered away most of its imperial assets and sources of income, such as the land tax and crops of Syria, as securities for foreign loans, it was as a sovereign power that Istanbul was determined to come to an agreement with Britain. Of course, the other side of the coin was that overtures like these were also designed to contain British influence and rule on the Eastern borders of Mesopotamia.

We have already seen that Britain was hardly interested in an Anglo-Turkish rapprochement as a means of preventing strong German intervention at the Porte. Rather, Istanbul must be kept at bay. Germany's good will had to be courted in order to make her accept d'Arcy's takeover of the National Bank's 50 per cent shareholding in the Turkish Petroleum Company. It was for the same reason that Britain was sounding out the Turks. Meanwhile,

in 1913 a British commission headed by Rear Admiral Sir Edmond Slade had arrived in Persia to study the oil regions and report to the Cabinet upon their imperial implications.⁽²⁸⁾ Government commitment was thus on the agenda of Cabinet discussions when Whitehall's intended junior partner's accession to the Turkish Petroleum Company was being engineered.

Yet, a week before the reconstitution of the Turkish Petroleum Company was in fact achieved, British exasperation with the Young Turks was aroused once more. On 12 March 1914 Sir Edward Mallet, the British Ambassador at the Porte, reported that the Turks had plans to set up an oil company of their own to work the oil in the three Mesopotamian vilayets of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. Mallet, whose pro-Turkish inclinations were known to Whitehall, also reported sympathetically on the Young Turks' efforts to balance revenue and expenditure and so reduce the imminent deficit for the next year of nearly L T 5,000,000.⁽²⁹⁾ Economy was to be effected (it seems) by changes in the budget list which would allow an increase in naval expenditure while the budget of the Ministry of War showed a curtailment of L T 2,000,000, the final expenditure for the Navy being fixed at L T 6,000,000. Unfortunately, we cannot yet judge how genuine were the plans of the Turks to set up an oil industry of their own. Istanbul had, to be sure, many reasons for starting such an enterprise: locomotive transportation on the expanding railway system would be cheaper when run on oil, to say nothing of the numerous pumping stations working the irrigation systems in Mesopotamia and other parts of the empire while, more importantly Istanbul was developing and enlarging its Navy so as to be able to meet the challenges of Greece's 'Military League' and the neo-Byzantinist expansionism in Crete and the Aegean led by the dashing Venizelos.⁽³⁰⁾

While British shipyards were receiving Turkish orders, Whitehall was steering a cautious course, bearing in mind that the Turkish Navy might one day help to enhance the fire-power of Germany's Grand Fleet against the British. Diplomatic reasons suggest themselves when we give full reign to imagination. Was not a Turkish-controlled oil company the best way to bar the Anglo-Persian Oil Company from gaining a foot-hold in Mesopotamia? Although by March 1914 Istanbul seems already to have been pledged to grant the d'Arcy group concession rights in Mesopotamia, they might have had last-minute pricks of conscience on hearing that the British Treasury was under very strong pressure to purchase a controlling

share in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. If this happened, d'Arcy would surely stand revealed as the pace-maker for British Government control in Mesopotamia.

The British Foreign Office inclined to the view that Istanbul was advertising its projected Ottoman Oil Company as a screen for German, and possibly French, capital interests, while at the same time attempting to strengthen its bargaining position over the issue of tariff increase with the British - who had a casting vote on the board of the Ottoman Public Debt. Germany, as the leading investor and creditor in the Ottoman Empire, was likely to press for preferential investments in an industrial field that promised to be so profitable.⁽³¹⁾ Of the total private investment of foreign capital in the Ottoman Empire of L T 63, 444, 000 in late 1914, Germany had contributed 45.4 per cent compared with 25.9 per cent from France and 16.9 per cent from Britain.⁽³²⁾ Mallet, of course, may also have attributed the news of a state-owned oil company to the demands of a small but energetic faction inside the Ottoman Government. Be that as it may, the Foreign Office saw fit to send a covert ultimatum to Istanbul stipulating that the d'Arcy group must be granted at least a 50 per cent shareholding in any company formed to work the petroleum in the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets, and that without this the Ottoman Government would never obtain British consent to a tariff increase or any other conveyances demanded of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration. A veiled threat was implied in the reminder that, in any case, London and Berlin were working closely together to bring about a satisfactory solution of the oil question. Special reservations were made concerning Basra vilayet and the Nejd. These consisted of strict observance of the "green line" of Kuwait, preferential rights for British subjects who were already interested in Basra oil, and a ban on the establishment of any foreign syndicate in the Nejd.*

* The "green line" of Kuwait had been laid down in the Anglo-Turkish agreement signed on July 29 1913, c.f. British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, vol 10, Part II ed. by G P Gooch and H Temperley, London 1938, p 192. Within the precincts of the line, which was drawn in green colour on a map annexed to the agreement and which in fact demarcated the borders of Kuwait prior to the later border settlements at the conference at Uqair in 1922, the Ottoman Government had agreed (1) to abstain from all administrative

On 19 March 1914, nine days after Istanbul had received this British demarche the Turkish Petroleum Company was reconstituted with d'Arcy now holding the 50 per cent share of the National Bank of Turkey. ⁽³³⁾ This re-constitution of the Company was greatly helped by Gulbenkian's skilful mediation: at its last stage the giant A. P. O. C. and Shell companies turned against him, but their attempts to squeeze him wholly out of the enterprise were in vain. Sixty days later, on 20 May 1914, the British Government purchased a majority shareholding of 51 per cent in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. ⁽³⁴⁾ While the Admiralty and the oil-lobbyists in Whitehall at once began to treat this as a precedent to commit the Treasury in Mesopotamia as well. At the end of June the Convention of Basra settled Anglo-German problems in the Arab Middle East. At the Porte the British and German Ambassadors were told that the application of the Turkish Petroleum Company for an oil concession comprising the two vilayets of Mosul and Baghdad would be granted, but that ratification and written confirmation had to wait until certain stipulations were made. Barely forty days later on 2 August 1914, the outbreak of war in Europe precipitated the last act which would have sealed the Baghdad Peace, though obviously not peace in Europe.

measures independent of the shaykh of Kuwait, (2) neither to establish garrisons nor to engage in any military actions without the consent of the British Government. Originating from this Anglo-Turkish Agreement, the "green line" settlement provided for what came to be called a "nationality clause" of the British i. e. no foreign power could have any dealings with Kuwait without prior consent by the British Government. In 1928 this green line enclave was excepted from the "Red Line Agreement", concluded in that year. (annex map of the Red Line Agreement).

18 THE START OF BRITISH INTERESTS

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. See D Hurst, Oil and Public Opinion in the Middle East, London 1966
2. See also chapt. 3 pp. 50-52
3. This point crops up in a great many memoranda written by Curzon and Amery during the war; see also 'The outlook in the Middle East' Round Table No. 37 Dec. 1919 p. 61, 'the so-called British zone in Persia being thus in reality simply a zone in which Russia undertook not to intervene. By hook or by crook we had kept behind our insulating walls'.
4. See B C Busch, Britain and the Persian Gulf 1894-1914, Berkeley etc. 1967
5. Cf R J S Hoffman, Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry 1875-1911, Philadelphia, 1933 also Rohrbach, Die Baghdadbahn, Berlin, 1911. On the German propagandist Rohrbach see: Walter Mogk, Paul Rohrbach und das 'Grössere Deutschland', München 1972
6. L Fraser, India under Curzon and after, London 1912. Fraser's favourite analogy and term was that of a British Monroe Doctrine in the Middle East.
7. Cf. K Hoffmann, Öpolitik und angelsächsischer Imperialismus, II. Kapitel, Die Weltgruppen, Berlin 1927
8. Ibid., p 31
9. M Jack, 'The Purchase of the British Government Shares in the British Petroleum Company 1912-1914', Past and Present No. 39 April 1968
10. This is not necessarily contradicted by the fact that in 1915 Henri Deterding became a naturalized British subject; see E M Earle, 'The Turkish Petroleum Company - A Study in Oleaginous Diplomacy', Political Science Quarterly, vol. XXXIX pp 265-279
11. M Jack, p 142, Footnote 9.
12. K Hoffman, p. 37
13. Cf. S H Longrigg, Oil in the Middle East, Oxford 1968, pp 18-19
14. Jack, p 146
15. Ibid., p 149
16. Hoffman, pp 159-161
17. Ibid. p 143
18. See footnote 6

19. See chapt. 2 pp 29-31
20. L Cecil, A Ballin Business and Politics in Imperial Germany 1885-1918, Princetown 1967
21. Cecil, p 83 Heyking to Bulow 25 April 1906 AA
Türkei Nr 165 Bd 26
22. Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914,
Bd 27, II p 568 See also Memorandum on Baghdad-
Basra Railway by A Hirtzel of the 10, 6June 1912, BT II/4
23. Memorandum by Grey together with a covering letter from
Hardinge to Llewellyn Smith of 11 Dec 1909, BT II/4
24. G Stanley to Llewellyn Smith 14 Dec 1909, BT II/3
25. See W I Shorrock, The Origin of the French Mandate in Syria
and Lebanon: The Railroad question, 1901-1914 International
Journal of Middle East Studies vol I 1970 pp 133-153
26. The policy of the Deutsche Bank and its directors Helfferich
and Gwinner towards the Ottoman Government, differed on more
than one occasion from the official line taken by the German
Government. For an analysis of this dichotomy of H Mejcher,
"Die Bagdadbahn als Instrument deutschen wirtschaftlichen Ein-
flusses im Osmanischen Reich, Geschichte und Gesellschaft
Bd I Nr 4 Bielefeld 1975 pp 447-481; for a concise and slightly
altered version of this article in English see by the same author
"Some Aspects of the German Baghdad Railway Policy", al-mu'-
arih al-arabi (The Arab Historian) vol I no I Baghdad 1975 pp 3-35
27. See G Arnakis and W S Vucinich The Near East in Modern Times
II Forty crucial Years New York 1972 pp 13-31
28. Jack, p 158; also Earle, p 269
29. Mallet to Grey 10 March 1914, FO 424/251 No 240
30. Arnakis, p 19
31. Cf J Thobie, Les intérêts français dans l'Empire ottoman au
debut du XX^e siècle: étude de sources, Revue Historique
CCXXXV, April-June 1966, pp 381-396 and 'Finance et poli-
tique: le réfus en France de l'emprunt ottoman de 1910',
Ibid CCXXXIX, April-June 1968, pp 327-350
32. C Issawi, The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914,
Chicago 1966, p 20
33. Cf G S Gibb and E H Knowlton, History of the Standard Oil
Company, vol 2, The Resurgent Years 1911-1927, New York
1955, pp 281-2
34. The investment by the Government totalled a sum of L2,200,000

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CHAPTER TWO

The impact of oil and other economic interests on Britain's Mesopotamian policy 1914 - 1918

1. The strategic and political dimensions of the campaign

In 1913 the German battle-cruiser Goeben was lying for sale off the Dolma Bagche Palace on the Bosphorus. There were no takers. The Turks knew that she drew two feet more water than had been intended; a year later under the threat of British guns she produced more steam than any other ship and coaxed them into the suicidal war that crushed their Empire. ⁽¹⁾

Basra was the first limb to be severed from the body that was the Ottoman Empire. The British in India wished to retain the vilayet permanently under British administration, thus revealing exactly where the shoe had pinched in the Anglo-German settlement on the eve of the war. ⁽²⁾ While the occupation of Basra had been planned as a means of forestalling Turkish intrigues among the Sheikhs of Muhammara and Kuwait and of protecting the oil wells of Southern Persia and the refinery at Abadan, the decision of October 1915 to start advancing on Baghdad, and the final capture of that city in March 1917, were the outcome of a much-criticised military strategy. ⁽³⁾ Sir John Nixon, the new Commander-in-Chief, and Sir Percy Cox, the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, were the best horses in the Indian stable.

The details of the contest in the early stages of the campaign need not concern us here, for the impact of economic interests

came only at a later date. Some of Lloyd George's hindsight may suffice to illustrate the kind of contest it was. To Lloyd George, whose policy had a tremendous impact on Mesopotamia after 1917, the decision to attack the Turks in Mesopotamia appeared strategically at fault. On the one hand the swamps of the Tigris were unhealthy terrain for European soldiers; on the other, the British by advancing hundreds of miles into this torrid country endangered their link with the sea. They should have concentrated instead on Gallipoli and Palestine or Alexandretta, and brought about a quick kill. Once the wrong decision had been made there was no return, even when Lloyd George became Premier. The British disaster at Gallipoli and the surrender of Townshend at Kut made it impossible to change course, as this would have tarnished Britain's imperial image throughout the Islamic world.⁽⁴⁾

The safeguarding of imperial prestige in the East no doubt had its place in the considerations of the politicians; nevertheless, the campaign in 1917 and 1918 was shaped by three outstanding developments that changed all previous calculations. First, the Russian Revolution inevitably brought about a fundamental change in Anglo-Turkish relations. Secondly, the new directives and the attempts to keep the campaign - at least in its political aspect - an exclusively British-Indian undertaking were no longer compatible with the terms and motives of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, nor with Whitehall's successive attempts to revise that Agreement. And thirdly, the rush for the oil-bearing regions of Iraq was an important motive behind the advance on, and the capture of, Mosul. While the first and second factors were connected, the third was the relatively late outcome of a different cause. In 1917, the prospects in the war as a whole were partly in favour of the British, partly against them. In this particular area, as has been pointed out, it certainly was the 'year of liberation from the promise of Constantinople, of the capture of Baghdad in March and Jerusalem in December, and of the attainment of positions from which to leap into the breaches left in Asia by the defection of Russia'.⁽⁵⁾ This was the net result achieved despite an extremely complex political situation. How to make the most of it remained uncertain for many months to come.

The democratization of Tsarist Russia wrought by the February Revolution gave, as is well known, a boost to the morale of the Entente, and relieved the British Empire of its concern about the need to come to terms with a strengthened Tsarist Empire at the end of the war. If by contrast Russia was a democracy, sharing

the liberalism of the West, the prospects for co-existence would be much brighter. Above all, the Entente was freed from the stigma of co-operating with a "reactionary and autocratic" regime. Yet satisfaction soon gave way to the fear that the newly democratized Russia might drop out of the war. This grim prospect made illusory any hope of a separate peace with Austria. Thus in May 1917 Lloyd George thought that he might have to make a bargain with Germany. Germany ought to evacuate Belgium 'in return for the restoration of her Colonies', and Britain from now on would have to concentrate all her efforts on a campaign to break up the Ottoman Empire. ⁽⁶⁾

Baghdad had already been captured, Armenia was occupied by Russian troops, and Murray, the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, was at the borders of Palestine. Lloyd George spoke of the policy of 'releasing subject peoples from Turkish oppression', which, if vigorously pursued, would yield considerable advantages. ⁽⁷⁾ But apparently nobody swallowed the bait; instead, in the light of the events in Russia, there were demands for a complete review, if not re-orientation, of Middle East strategy and policy. For lack of it, Smuts declined the Prime Minister's offer that he should supersede the 'creeping' Murray and lead an offensive campaign into Palestine and Syria. ⁽⁸⁾ And while Henry Wilson, later the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, warned the Cabinet that if Russia made a separate peace there might be a need for British re-inforcements from the Middle East for the Western Front to combat a more offensive and politically more uncompromising Germany, others went even further than demanding retrenchment in the Middle East and suggested a separate peace with Turkey. As the year went on this proposition gained ground in the Cabinet. Lord Milner had in the meantime urged Lloyd George to take fresh stock of the war situation as a whole. His arguments endorsed Henry Wilson's belief that diplomatic victory in the East would easily be achieved.

By June 1917, Lloyd George was no longer disinclined to conclude a separate peace with Turkey, although he no doubt would insist on terms designed to curtail some of the ambitions of the Committee of Union and Progress. In short their revolutionary zeal should be throttled in time before it spread throughout the Middle East. It was from this angle that Lloyd George had impatiently come to regard the overcautious naval and military experts as a drag on the progress of the war and also the prospects of an early peace.

Resolved to bring about an early peace in the Middle East at least, he set his mind on restoring the priority of politics over the narrow military vision of the Chiefs-of-Staff. He spurred the generals towards dashing new campaigns to the north. In his judgement it was necessary to get Syria into British hands. As Mesopotamia was already in British possession and Armenia in the Russian grip, some financial inducements might cause the Turks to talk peace.⁽⁹⁾ The Premier did not specify what he exactly meant by financial inducements; whether they should relieve the Young Turks of part of their huge pre-war debt or else compensate for the loss of the Arab provinces. In addition, Lloyd George made it clear that any settlement with Istanbul should provide for the liberation of Palestine from what he styled "Turkish misrule".

Lloyd George's aim was clear: he wanted peace with Turkey that would both cripple the C.U.P's imperial policy and give him all the territory and the scope he needed for reconciling his commitments to King Hussein, to the Zionists and to the French.⁽¹⁰⁾ Accordingly, while the Mesopotamian campaign had lapsed into stalemate on the northern borders of the Baghdad vilayet, and while events in Russia were still hanging in the balance, the War Cabinet in August authorised Allenby to advance to the north. But it did so without setting any geographic objectives, for the worsening Russian situation enabled the Turks to concentrate more forces against the British. Allenby was therefore commissioned to defeat the Turks who faced him and to follow up his success as the situation allowed.

At the end of July the Foreign Office reported that 'tentative feelers had been put out by certain elements in Turkey' with a view to peace negotiations. Although these had proved 'somewhat shadowy',⁽¹¹⁾ the Cabinet nevertheless jumped at the opportunity and authorised the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Arthur Balfour, 'to keep the door open for a continuance of these negotiations.'^(11, 12) It was these tentative peace feelers in Switzerland that developed into more regular contacts as the year drew to its close. The British terms were independence for Armenia and Palestine and autonomy for Syria and Mesopotamia under Allied supervision. According to Balfour the Turks had been offered suzerainty over Baghdad by Smuts, a pattern borrowed from pre-war Egypt.⁽¹³⁾

Owing to the Russo-German negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, however, the talks between the British Representative and Muhtar, the Turkish agent, became more and more protracted.⁽¹⁴⁾ The Turks were filled with extravagant hopes of recovering Mesopotamia and

Palestine. They also hoped that with the help of the Germans they might get portions of the Caucasus and enter into an alliance with a State like, for example, Georgia. Such hopes bolstered up the Turanian movement. (15)

Britain, on her part, had certainly no need to sue for peace: Maude and Marshall had achieved tremendous military successes. In Mesopotamia the Ramadi Ridge had been taken and Sammara had been captured in September. The offensive plans of the Turks had broken down and on December 9th, 1917, came the capture of Jerusalem. (16) New instructions issued to Allenby, together with Smuts' departure for Egypt to confer with Marshall and Allenby about the best method of co-ordinating and using all their resources, were designed to bring about a most vigorous prosecution of the war against Turkey. (17)

Owing to the requirements of British strategy Turkey's role had changed, and her defeat had now become a prime military objective. The train of thought in Whitehall, as notes by Cecil, Amery, Smuts and Kerr show, was that unless Southern Russia was secured against German domination, Britain's major war aim of destroying Germany's Mittel-Europa scheme and ending her domination of Turkey would have to be given up - a prospect which would spell defeat in the East. (18) The removal of Turkey from the war would safeguard vital communications between the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean forces and those in Southern Russia and the Caucasus. Turkey's elimination would also liberate the Armenian and Arab regions from control by Constantinople.

Obviously, all three objectives were closely interlinked. However, their attainment, as Amery insisted to Lloyd George, depended on a rapid offensive against Damascus and Mosul. The slowly arriving German reinforcements should never be allowed to restore the balance. (19) Writing of Mosul in particular, Amery underlined the importance of its capture for opening up communications with Armenia, yet at the same time, he stressed the extremely difficult transport problems between Baghdad and Mosul and further north to Armenia. He maintained that with the heat of summer now imminent, it was essential to concentrate every effort on Allenby's advance, rather than on taking and holding Mosul. He also drew attention to the possibility of opening up communications with South Russia through Vladivostok, as well as pointing out that peace with Turkey would have the advantage of securing free passage of the Dardanelles. Amery's suggestions played an important role in Cabinet discussions.

During these, the question of whether Japanese ground forces could co-operate in the Mesopotamian campaign again came to the fore. In the end this idea was buried, and the Dunsterforce mission took shape. (20)

Since the idea of using Japanese reinforcements is a good illustration of the narrowness of the imperial aims lying behind the Mesopotamian campaign the decision about their use merits a long parenthesis. The co-operation of Japanese forces up to a strength of two divisions had been discussed as early as October 1916, when the first proposed advance on Baghdad ran the risk of cancellation because of insufficient troops. By then the Gallipoli campaign was on the point of collapse. Yet the Japanese forces, though available, were kept at sea, cruising in the Mediterranean in the interests of the Allied cause.

Less than a year later, the turmoil in Russia cast serious doubts on the reliability of General Baratoff's Russian columns in Armenia and on the right flank of Maude's advance. In May 1917, Henry Wilson had pointed out to the Cabinet that the forward military policy in Palestine and Mesopotamia had been authorized on the assumption that Russian co-operation would be forthcoming. (21) By the end of September, however, any Russian assistance seemed hopeless. Things went from bad to worse when the Indian Government became alarmed about a possible Turkish attack through Persia. (22) Indeed, encouraged by the departure from Germany of Falkenhayn with troops and planes intended to retake Baghdad, the Turks were engaged in a menacing build-up for their forthcoming offensive. (23)

This threat once more strengthened the now tenuous bonds with Russia, and for weeks British operations were vigorously assisted by the Russians. (24) Yet by mid-December the Russian Commander in the Caucasus was reported to have put forward proposals for an armistice with the enemy. (25) Who but the Asiatic troops could fill the gap thus left in the Eastern theatre of war? From the United States, who had entered the European war on April 6 1917, no effective assistance or relief on the Western front could be expected before 1919. (26) But the Cabinet was divided over the employment of Japanese troops in Mesopotamia. The strongest objections came from Montagu, the Secretary of State for India. As it turned out, the views of the India Office prevailed over those of Curzon, Milner and finally Balfour.

The India Office had taken the same stand when, earlier in September, the employment of Chinese troops against the Turks in

Aden and in Egypt had been discussed. Its strong objections were shared by the Middle Eastern Committee. The suggestion of using Chinese troops led the Japanese to make similar claims to representation in the fighting forces. A long quotation from Montagu's letter of September 1917 to Hankey best gives the tenor of the argument:

"We would rather no action was taken against the Turks at Aden than that Chinese troops should be employed there... worse effect upon our prestige, not only among Arabs but among Indian troops.

We must not risk its being said in Asia that the British cannot do without the assistance of the Chinese or the Japanese, and this leads me to observe that if for political reasons the Chinese are represented in our fighting forces, the Japanese will probably make similar claims. All the facts which reach me show that the Japanese have great ambitions as the saviours of Asia and among them the policy of Asia for the Asiatics is gaining an increasing hold. They now practically dictate Chinese policy.

It may well be said that our military needs are so desperate that all such considerations as these must be sacrificed to the conquest of the common enemy. I shall be prepared to attach due weight to this argument when I learn that the employment of Chinese is of real military importance, and even that I shall implore the Cabinet to employ them let us say in Russia, but not with Indian troops nor in Mohammedan countries." (27)

When on September 24 Balfour, Curzon and Milner discussed the proposal that Japan be invited to send a small force to co-operate with the Anglo-Indian Expedition Force in Mesopotamia, no notice seems to have been taken of Montagu's objections. It appears that he was not even consulted; for on the following day Balfour thought it necessary to draw Curzon's attention to this omission, and to Montagu's objections, of which he was aware, Balfour assured Curzon that he himself still held the view that 'broadly speaking there was no Foreign Office objection to such a course'.⁽²⁸⁾ These exchanges suggest that all three must have agreed on its desirability. The 'triumvirate' remained in agreement for another month. In the meantime more objections were raised by the India Office, some of them very forthright, such as

'the probability of the Japanese requiring some quid pro quo in

respect of either territorial or commercial concessions, which might be embarrassing.' (29)

While Curzon was setting the pros neatly against the cons before taking any action, Lloyd George showed signs of impatience and reported that M Painleve, his French colleague, would welcome an invitation to the Japanese. Lloyd George showed how careless he was of imperial susceptibilities in Asia. The Entente was far nearer the forefront of his mind, likewise the growing menace of Bolshevism; 'Bolshevik doctrines were beginning to spread even in this country'. (30) His instinct was to pooh-pooh Balfour's concern lest the introduction of the Japanese in Eastern Siberia should involve war with the Bolshevik Government - a possibility which Balfour thought Britain must be prepared to face. (31)

In the Middle East, the view held by the India Office prevailed. The predominantly British-Indian character of the campaign was successfully safeguarded. Strategically, the attention of the Mesopotamian force was directed towards North Western Persia. (32) The thrust of the Palestine campaign into the heart of Syria was reinforced by superiority in firepower while for Mosul, the temporary halt of Marshall's two-pronged advance provided a respite. (33)

The details of the sudden autumn advance upon Mosul and its bold capture shortly after the Turkish armistice had been negotiated, have been recorded both by those involved in the campaign and by many indefatigable historians. By contrast, the motives underlying this last episode of the Mesopotamian campaign have been passed over in silence and even denied. (34)

There are various ways of explaining this mystification. The capture of Mosul had been merely one of the alternative strategic gambits by which Amery's overall plan sought in early January to open up communications with Armenia and South Russia. Further, Mosul had been the gate of entry for the Turco-German forces threatening Baghdad; its closure was a desirable objective for British commanders in Mesopotamia. (35) However, the menace had disappeared without a showdown over Mosul. Yet a coup de grâce against the Turks at Mosul seemed to fit in well with the stroke being delivered by Allenby in Syria. Again, the ridges north of Mosul commended themselves as a secure northern border for the open plains of Iraq; but in August 1918, when the moment for action came, no plan existed for a united Iraq. Mosul still belonged to the sphere assigned to the French by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. Although by late in 1917 that Agreement was for complex reasons regarded as

obsolescent by the influential Eastern Committee, the French Government, despite some hard lobbying by Mark Sykes, insisted that it still held good. (36)

In contrast, Lloyd George had already made it clear to his Cabinet that in the case of Syria he would use the right of conquest to reopen the whole question of the bargain made with France, and it was the Prime Minister's attitude which offered scope for self-interested British pressure groups. At the end of July 1918 and throughout the ensuing weeks when there was no military advantage in pushing forward in Mesopotamia it was the oil-interests and the concern of the Admiralty for the future oil situation of the Empire that most deeply preoccupied the Cabinet.

2. Mesopotamian Oil as a strategic and economic factor in the formation of the British war aims

The desire for Mesopotamian oil shaped policy and strategy in the latter part of 1918 and had been increasing as the war progressed (37) In fact, consistency with pre-war policy is one of the striking features in this quest for oil: a strong desire to own or control the oil had existed even before the purchase of the Anglo-Persian shares by the British Treasury had actually been signed. On 6 May 1914 the Admiralty, which had informed the Foreign Office about the proposed purchase, observed inter alia that the A. P. O. C. intended to find L T 100, 000 of capital in order to form a holding company for the d'Arcy groups shares in the Turkish Petroleum Company. The Foreign Office objected to this proposal on grounds of foreign policy because throughout negotiations with Germany and Turkey it had stated emphatically that the d'Arcy group and not the (Government-controlled) A. P. O. C. was the party interested in Mesopotamian oil. When war broke out, the Foreign Office did not change its policy. But the Board of Trade was not so easily shaken off, and neither was the Admiralty. The former suggested that the capital for the d'Arcy group should be subscribed by the Burmah Oil Company and that the Company should allow Mr. d'Arcy to participate in the capital to the extent of one-fourth. But the capital thus subscribed should be placed under the guarantee of the A. P. O. C. In fact, this proposal was embodied in an agreement subject to Treasury approval. On 2 November 1914, Greenway of the Company stated this position to the Foreign Office, pointing out that if the agreement of March were carried out, a secure hold would be established and

control of the Turkish Petroleum Company obtained.

In February 1916, after A.P.O.C. prospectors had carried out an extensive geological reconnaissance and had proved that over an area a hundred miles inland from the Shatt-al-Arab lying between Kuwait and Ur of the Chaldees there were possibilities of finding oil, the A.P.O.C. considered extending the concession for Baghdad and Mosul to include those districts. The Company claimed that they should be given all rights over any portion of the Ottoman territory that might come under British influence at the end of the war, and sounded out the Foreign Office on this proposal. They were told that H.M.G. was not prepared to express unqualified assent to their claims, and that any further consideration of the matter had to await more settled political conditions. As Maurice De Bunsen put it in a confidential note of March 1916 to the Admiralty: 'Sir E Grey considers it important that the assumption should be at once controverted that the company would, in any case, in the event of any change in the Middle East favourable to British interests occurring, be given complete oil rights over any portion of the Turkish Empire which may come under British influence.'⁽³⁸⁾

Though the company was deterred from pursuing its claims Grey nevertheless regarded the oil position as disquieting enough for it to be considered without delay by a special committee. This suggestion was transmitted to the Admiralty. To carry it out the committee was set up as the Petroleum Department at the Board of Trade. Besides the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, the Treasury and the India Office were also represented. There were two questions predominant on their agenda: first, whether the A.P.O.C. which was controlled by the Government should become involved in the exploitation of Mesopotamian oil; second, how control of the T.P.C. could be secured for the British and whether the T.P.C. had good grounds for claiming priority in any concession that might be granted outside the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets. This second question involved whether the A.P.O.C. should be given priority and Government support in obtaining concession rights in those districts to the south of Baghdad vilayet not covered by the T.P.C.'s concession.

In general both the Admiralty and the Board of Trade doubted whether the T.P.C. had good grounds for claiming priority outside the two vilayets. They stated frankly enough their desire to see the Government-controlled A.P.O.C. involved in Mesopotamia, at least in the strategically important zones at the head of the Persian Gulf. According to Parker of the Foreign Office, the India Office supported

the T.P.C.'s claims in the two vilayets, but was unaware that the d'Arcy group and the A.P.O.C. had interests outside the boundaries. The Foreign Office deemed it inexpedient that the A.P.O.C. should become interested in Mesopotamian oil at all. They feared that a Government-controlled undertaking of this kind would limit Britain's freedom of diplomatic manoeuvre. 'Government shareholding was a liability whenever the British Government wanted to act as a government'. (38a)

Oil enterprise in Mesopotamia did not prevent the Foreign Office from attempting to put Shell under British control. Shell, on their part, were willing to conform to British aspirations. However, they demanded a quid pro quo unacceptable to Whitehall. In the course of negotiations the Foreign Office realised that Shell, by demanding a large participation in the A.P.O.C., intended to hamper the development of the A.P.O.C. so as to retain, in alliance with the Standard Oil Company, the oil monopoly of the world. Incidentally, Gibb and Knowlton's contention that the British Government had promised the German 25 per cent share in the T.P.C. to the French as early as 1915 is not borne out by evidence; in fact, it is contradicted by the action of the Petroleum Imperial Policy Committee in 1918. (39)

While the Foreign Office was bound to dislike any such restriction of diplomatic freedom incurred by the shareholding, there were other handicaps left from before the war, such as the Government's support of Lord Inchcape's attempt to secure a monopoly of navigation in Mesopotamia, and the backing of Mr. d'Arcy's stake in the T.P.C. - though these were less of a liability. None the less, the Foreign Office was determined to await future developments. As Edward Parker put it:

'...although His Majesty's Government supported Lord Inchcape in securing a navigation monopoly before the war - indeed, invited him to negotiate for one - altered conditions are considered to make the monopoly no longer desirable despite previous assurances. It would seem, therefore, that H.M.G. are not precluded even in face of any pledges they may have given to Mr. d'Arcy in the pre-war period, from dealing with the oil question solely in accordance with the present or future conditions, political and commercial'. (39a)

The altered conditions were of an international character and resulted from war-time alliances. Would they be temporary, and revert in the end to what they were before, once these alliances came to an end? At any rate, so long as the alliances served their war-

time purpose men like Curzon, Balfour and Sykes persistently tried to defer any questions which might jeopardize them. However, the extent of their measures and the significance of their opinions cannot be assessed without first examining the formidable position of Lord Inchcape, local pressure for early investment in Mesopotamia, and also the world oil situation and its effects on imperial policy as assessed for the Government by the Admiralty.

The fate of Inchcape's interests

The case of Lord Inchcape embodies the entire problem of Britain's monopolistic policy in Mesopotamia. His position was formidable and broadly based. In the course of the Baghdad Railway negotiations before the war the British Government had asked him to obtain a navigation concession on the Tigris from the Turkish Government and to amalgamate his shipping lines from India to the Persian Gulf with the small firm of Lynch Brothers which ran shipping on the Shatt-al-Arab and the Tigris. Thus the firm of Mackay Lynch & Co. had been constituted at the suggestion of the British Government with a view to establishing British interests in Mesopotamia and off-setting the loss to German rail transport.

Soon after the capture of Baghdad in March 1917 Inchcape began to exert heavy pressure on the Foreign Office and the Middle East Committee for permission to start the business in Mesopotamia which had been forestalled by the outbreak of the war. He also urged upon those in charge of Mesopotamia the importance of developing a powerful banking syndicate in which British, Indian and Australian interests should be associated - a scheme for which he offered to exert his influence. As he concluded one of his letters to Lord Hardinge, on 30 October 1917:

'You will, moreover, I feel sure, appreciate how vitally important it is that German commercial penetration, which politically has proved so insidious in Turkey, should, at the initiation of a new era, be forestalled by timely British enterprise in Mesopotamia, where our interests centre.'⁽⁴⁰⁾

Inchcape also gained a powerful position in oil matters as one of the Government directors on the board of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. In this capacity he was also a member of the Petroleum Executive of the Board of Trade. He even remained a member of the executive when, in 1919, he was appointed Chairman of an Anglo-French Syndicate for the development of oil in Syria including Palestine and Arabia. The British group included the shipping interests

of Inchcape as chairman of P & O SS Co., Cunard SS Co., Frost Sons & Co., and Royden & Sons of Liverpool. Also involved were the Liverpool Commercial Trades Association, The Colliery Proprietors Speakman & Co. Ltd., Messrs. Falbe Halsey & Co., Messrs. David Mac Iver Sons & Co., and the Earl of Drogheda. According to Kidston from the Foreign Office, the Messageries Maritimes, as he called the shipping interests represented in that combine, were concerned mainly about the coal situation and wished to obtain control of a source of fuel oil in the Mediterranean so as to avoid being at the mercy either of the coal-mining industry or a gigantic oil trust, or of Governmental intervention and rationing measures.

On the other side the combination of private and public interests in a Government body of control continued to disturb the Foreign Office. Kidston's complaint concerning Inchcape may suffice as an illustration: 'The Petroleum Executive', he wrote, 'I believe I am right in saying, is largely composed of persons 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'. (41)

Officials like Kidston were no less concerned about the extent to which the personnel of Government departments might be involved in speculation and private purchase of oil shares. Being himself interested in oil shares he declined to act as a Foreign Office specialist in oil matters.

To return to Inchcape's interests in Mesopotamia. There was no doubt some cogency in his general argument that the development of that country's natural wealth necessitated action at the earliest possible moment. Also, because economic retrenchment was bound to come after the war, both from his own and from the Treasury's point of view to be self-sufficient was one of the prerequisites of holding on to the country. Besides, the British assumed that sooner or later German and Japanese competition would find its way into Mesopotamia. Naturally there was some agreement even among the contestants from the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade that Britain's commercial position must be strengthened and that the establishment of a British-controlled banking system ought to have priority. But there remained a gulf between the would-be monopolists and concessionaires on the one side and the politicians and opportunists on the other. Although some of them were aware of the new principles then current, what separated them was not so much matters of

principle as the question of what was advantageous, given the speeches made about war aims and the fact that Parliament was "anti-imperialist". As Mark Sykes put it at the meeting of the Middle East Committee on 18 February 1918:

'If we played our cards well and in accordance with the underlying political principles now current in the world, we should have a good chance of remaining in control of Mesopotamia after the war, but should we be charged with encouraging profiteering or establishing monopolies we should run grave risk of seeing Mesopotamia pass out of our control at the Peace Conference. The proposal put before the Committee was equivalent to handing over the future of Mesopotamia and its inhabitants to Lord Inchcape. Such a proposal would be howled down in the House of Commons'.⁽⁴²⁾

Pressure from the men on the spot

Percy Cox, Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, was most anxious that immediate steps should be taken to open up trade and banking facilities in Mesopotamia. As he was convinced - like Inchcape - that Mesopotamia would finally fall under British protection, the controversy over the principle of monopoly did not trouble him.⁽⁴³⁾ He suggested that the ground should be prepared for British companies to go ahead as fast as they liked, once Mesopotamia's status and political fate had been decided by the Peace Conference at the end of the war.

He himself had already taken some initiative in this direction by starting two demonstration farms near Baghdad to experiment with different varieties of high-grade cotton.⁽⁴⁴⁾ In fact, by sending the entire crop of 1918 to Bombay and Manchester for appraisal he had aroused the attention of the British Cotton Growing Association and the Empire Cotton Growing Committee, and had received an immediate reward in the shape of Rs. 75,000 for setting up two more demonstration farms to be run by the Agricultural Directorate.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Besides his interest in cotton, Cox also kept pointing out the immense potentialities of Iraq as a grain-producing country. His activities were, of course, not yet yielding commercial profits. It would take time to develop rewarding samples and grow adequate seeds for the large-scale agricultural development which the country needed. From this point of view his agricultural experimenting could easily be explained away as designed for the ultimate development and benefit of Iraq and its population. His real objective,

however, was to restore the Imperial autarky. He reckoned that Iraq could become an important contributor to Imperial wheat supplies, a commodity in which Britain had become 'unduly dependent upon extra-Imperial sources'.⁽⁴⁶⁾

In these early economic activities - agricultural experimentation, concession-hunting and particularly the secret debates which they involved - it is not difficult to detect the common desire to learn the lesson of Britain's unfavourable experience of trade in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia before the war. Significantly, there was a small but persistent body of opinion which laid the blame for having furthered the pre-war growth of German competition on these same principles which Inchcape and others were trying to revive. Both General Macdonogh, the War Office representative on the Middle East Committee, and G A Lloyd, the eminent expert for Mesopotamia and adviser of Percy Cox, pointed out that the pre-war growth of German competition had been brought about because British trade and shipping interests in the Persian Gulf had been virtually a monopoly in the hands of the British India Company, especially as managed by Lord Inchcape.⁽⁴⁷⁾ The methods of his firm had been unenterprising and narrow; indeed, a monopoly in the hands of one firm always tends to discourage enterprise. Thus for all its strength, Inchcape's position was seriously jeopardized by the fact that his interests as well as his management were rooted in the semi-political business principles and diplomatic power combinations of the past Baghdad Railway Era.

Inchcape, therefore, like Albert Ballin, his German counterpart, exemplified a period of overseas enterprise which fed upon competitive imperialist diplomacy. Their eclipse was implicit in the new contingencies and expedients of the post-war years.

In the last months of the war cotton, grain and navigation rights were interests which became negligible compared with the oil-rush originating in the Admiralty. Bound up with the oil problem was - thanks to American pressure - the whole issue of the Open Door principle. To assess the full impact of the oil issue and the Open Door challenge as well as that of the Admiralty's reaction to them on policy making, one has to look at the estimated capacity of world oil resources and of the demands of the Empire. The figures, and also the wording, are revealing.

Physical Control was the slogan under which a massive campaign was set in motion against the Open Door principle. That the Admiralty's oil expert, Slade, wanted more than the Open Door under

British control is clearly shown in one of the summary statements of the policy which he suggested. As he urged the Admiralty, it was necessary 'to encourage and assist British Companies to obtain control of as many oil-producing areas in foreign countries as possible, with the stipulation (in order to prevent control being obtained by foreign interests) that the oil produced should only be sold to or through British oil-distributing Companies. These oil-producing areas could be developed to assist in providing our requirements in times of peace whilst our own resources in British territory can be conserved for war'.⁽⁴⁸⁾ It is evident from his conclusion that, besides the figures and the principles, the Navy's war-time experience of the important role of bunker fuel for sustaining naval actions and blockades must have contributed greatly to the rush for oil and to the pleas for the establishment of monopolies.

The facts about fuel oil and oil reserves are as follows. Before the war, coal had begun to be replaced by oil, which as a means of raising steam was about twice as economical, and four times so if used in internal combustion engines. Not only were oil-burning vessels more economical, they were also faster. Therefore, as Slade emphasized, it was certain that oil would gradually take the place of coal for all maritime purposes. Consequently it was of paramount importance to obtain undisputed control of the greatest amount of petroleum possible. Moreover, the control should be absolute, with no foreign interests of any sort involved. However, as foreign interests were already taking between 20 and 25 million pounds sterling annually from the profits of British oil concerns, Britain would first have to become mistress in her own house. Clearly, because most of the new oil-deposits lay outside the boundaries of the Empire, her domain must be enlarged. But another factor rendered expansion necessary: experts reckoned that the exportable surplus of the main sources of supply hitherto tapped would begin to decrease rapidly after the war. Consequently the major oil-producing countries of the day would be in a position to impose serious restrictions upon the Empire's supplies.

The following table shows Britain's main sources of supply, the total output of those sources, the exportable surplus and the amount of the latter received by Britain in the year 1913.⁽⁴⁹⁾

<u>1913</u>	<u>Total output</u>	<u>Exportable surplus</u>	<u>Amount received by U K</u>
U S A	33, 150, 000	7, 120, 000	16% of total or 1, 100, 000
Rumania	1, 880, 000	940, 000	19% of total or 230, 000
Russia	8, 370, 000	670, 000	19% of total or 130, 000
Mexico	3, 480, 000	1, 740, 000	4% of total or 70, 000
Dutch	1, 500, 000		8% of total or 125, 000

When Rumania and later Russia dropped out of the Entente the supply percentages altered to the extent that 80 per cent came from the United States. Although it was agreed that this temporary dislocation and its causes would probably cease to exist after the war, other far more powerful factors were certain by that time radically to worsen the entire petroleum position. An inquiry ordered by the United States Senate in 1916 had reported that most of the American oil-fields had already reached and passed their prime and were on the down-grade. Given a rise in yearly consumption, the estimated resources would, according to the most optimistic calculation, last for less than 25 years. As a consequence the Americans reckoned that exports would have to be drastically curtailed. In Admiral Slade's view supplies from America would greatly diminish after the war, if not entirely cease within 10 years, because the Senate would not allow the petroleum resources of the U S to be endangered by excessive export. Predictions for the other sources of supply were similarly pessimistic. The output of the Russian fields, though likely to increase in the future, would nevertheless be absorbed by the increase of industrial development in Russia. No increase of supply was to be expected from Rumania, quite apart from any question of political control, because output there had also shown signs of diminution and was generally likely to be absorbed by the domestic market, or else controlled by the Central Powers. A great increase in output was likely from Mexico's large oil-fields; but since stocks in the United States were decreasing while consumption was increasing, the U S A was bound to augment her present intake of 75 per cent of Mexico's exportable surplus. A large proportion of Mexico's crude oil was in any case of very low grade and yielded only 60 per cent usable oil. The Dutch East Indies and the Burmah fields were not capable of great expansion and were likely to be absorbed by markets nearer the source of supply.

Slade next turned to the estimates of the future demands of

Britain and the Empire. The prospects were rather bleak. In the middle of 1918 annual imports of petroleum into Britain amounted to approximately 6,000,000 tons, made up of 3.2 million tons for home consumption, 1 million tons for building up stocks of naval fuel and 1.5 million tons for other purposes. The requirements of the Dominions, Colonies and India added a total of 4 million tons, making a grand total for the Empire of 10 million tons a year. Obviously the Empire had to look for fresh sources. At the same time the increasing demands of other countries, and the resultant stiffening of competition for the limited supplies available, had to be considered. In the Admiralty's view the greatest competition was likely to come from the German Empire. Having experienced the effect of Britain's absolute control over her coal reserves, she would presumably stick at nothing to prevent the control of liquid fuel from passing into British hands and try any means to secure it for herself. Severe competition was inevitable and Britain would have to prepare for it. In retrospect, Slade's Memorandum may also be seen as anticipating the impending naval rivalry between Britain and America, although this motive was as yet nowhere explicitly stated.

That the Admiralty did not act entirely on its own, but was under pressure from British oil groups, is clear from the way Slade's Memorandum was brought to the attention of the Cabinet Secretariate. Approaches made to Hankey, Secretary of the War Cabinet 'by people with knowledge of oil production' started the ball rolling. These people told him 'privately' that the future supplies of oil were very uncertain: the U S A would presumably consume all their home-produced oil, and a good deal of the Mexican production as well. Hankey was further told that the largest potential oilfields then known were in Persia and Mesopotamia, and that these included some as far north as Mosul. Hankey does not name the people who approached him, but it is likely that they were in contact with the Admiralty for Hankey's next steps indicate that his requests for more information were directed to the Admiralty. When he wrote to Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the Admiralty, on July 30 he received in reply Admiral Slade's Memorandum which bore the date of the previous day. As this was an elaborate document well supported by comprehensive statistics and analysis, it must have been in careful preparation for an appreciable time.

The approaches made to Hankey were well timed. Arthur Balfour was due to make a declaration on War Aims at a forthcoming Cabinet

Meeting. Clearly the matter of oil could not be left aside. As Hankey put it bluntly to Geddes:

' the retention of the oil-bearing regions in Mesopotamia and Persia in British hands, as well as a proper strategic boundary to cover them, would appear to be a first class British war aim... we should obtain possession of all the oil-bearing regions in Mesopotamia and Southern Persia'. (50)

Hankey himself gives evidence that this had never before been adopted as the foremost strategic aim in the Middle East. Even now the Chief of Staff's paper on the Future Campaign had declared both Palestine and Mesopotamia to be 'dead ends' for the enemy's new line of penetration to the East pointed to the Caspian and from thence through Turkestan or Persia towards India. Of course, Hankey must long since have had special knowledge of the oil, including that round Mosul, for he had been a member of the De Bunsen Committee early in 1915. This Committee's report had emphasised that the presence of oil made it commercially desirable for Britain 'to carry our control on to Mosul, in the vicinity of which place there are valuable wells possession of which by another Power would be prejudicial to our interests'. (51) The possession of Mosul was further advocated because it provided an opportunity for creating a 'granary which should ensure an ample and unhampered supply of corn to this country'. (52)

As the oilfields round Mosul were not covered in Slade's paper of the 29th, Hankey at once asked Slade for further information and for confirmation of what he had been told about Mosul. Slade not only confirmed his news but also showed Hankey a map on which the oilfields were marked. Hankey asked him to forward through the Admiralty a further short memorandum, and with it the map giving the evidence about oil deposits in Mesopotamia north of the line then held by the Expeditionary Force. As there was a Cabinet meeting next day, Hankey wrote at once to Balfour and Lloyd George without waiting for the additional memorandum; he received this the day before the meeting. As the two letters reveal not only the importance attached to the Mosul oilfields and the actual 'military stagnation' of the campaign in Mesopotamia, but also the lines along which opinion on the subject was developing, relevant extracts from the two letters are worth recording. In both of his statements Hankey drew attention to Slade's first paper and to the additional information he had received from him. Hankey wrote to Balfour:

'As I understand the matter, oil in the next war will occupy

the place of coal in the present war, or at least a parallel place to coal. The only big potential supply that we can get under British control is the Persian and Mesopotamian supply. The point where you come in is that the control over these oil supplies becomes a first class British War Aim. I write to urge that in your statement to the Imperial War Cabinet you should rub this in. You will do it much better than the Admiralty will, and as an ex-First Lord you have a greater interest in it than most...' (53)

In his letter to Lloyd George of the same date, Hankey referred in particular to the recent assessments made by the General Staff of the state of the Mesopotamian Campaign. He continued:

'There is no military advantage in pushing forward in Mesopotamia. Briefly the argument is that the German gun is now aimed at India, across the Caspian Sea, instead of, as formerly down the Baghdad Railway. From Mesopotamia we cannot affect their advance across the Caspian

Admiral Slade's paper, however, and more particularly the map which he has shown me, suggest that there may be reasons other than purely military for pushing on in Mesopotamia where the British have an enormous preponderance of force. Would it not be an advantage, before the end of the war, to secure the valuable oil wells in Mesopotamia?' (54)

At the Cabinet meeting next day, on the proposal of Walter Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, the matter was referred for further consideration to Lord Harcourt's Petroleum Policy Committee. (55) The Committee reviewed the earlier attempts to bring Shell under British control; like the Foreign Office, they rated as being too high the demands of Shell for sharing in the A. P. O. C. Later in the year, the Committee proposed to the Government that it should recognise as valid the concession obtained in 1914 by the T. P. C., and that it should purchase from the Public Trustee the German 25 per cent share and offer part of it to the Shell Company. Throughout, of course, Lord Harcourt's Committee exerted pressure on the Cabinet to increase physical control over the oil-bearing regions in Upper Iraq.

Meantime the Cabinet was preoccupied with the series of heavy German offensives on the Western Front. In Mesopotamia, the British Army refrained from any military activity during the hot season. But as the day of Balfour's statement on War Aims approached, the question of the oil-bearing regions came to the fore again.

Balfour had previously told Hankey that he regarded the acquisition of the oil-bearing regions as a 'purely Imperialist War Aim'. But Hankey, now also inspired by Harcourt, continued to try and convert him. The day before the statement was due he mixed the oil and water of the Upper Mesopotamian regions into a potion for the idealist. He wrote:

'it appears to me even viewed from the point of view of the idealist, that it is almost unavoidable that we should acquire the Northern regions of Mesopotamia...neither President Wilson nor any one else will wish to place the vast regions of Mesopotamia bordering the Tigris and Euphrates again under Turkish control...

The question I ask, therefore, is as to whether it is not of great importance to push forward in Mesopotamia at least as far as the Lesser Zab, or as far as is necessary to secure a proper supply of water. Incidentally this would give us most of the oil-bearing regions...' (56)

On October 2 Hankey's ceaseless efforts at last began to bear fruit. Marshall, who was in command of the Mesopotamian Campaign, was requested by the War Office to study the note that follows; and as it ended with a reminder that any action to be effective must be initiated without delay, he was on his way to Mosul by mid-October:

'The Turks have been placed in a position of extreme difficulty by the victories in Palestine and the collapse of Bulgaria, and a request from them for cessation of hostilities in the near future may result. It is advisable in these circumstances that as much ground as possible should be gained up the Tigris. Such action is important not only for political reasons but also to occupy as large a portion of the oil-bearing regions as possible. At the same time, the work on the L of C to the Caspian should not be retarded in any way as the development of this route is looked upon as of primary importance. In view of the possibility that General Allenby's Cavalry may be pushed on northwards towards Aleppo, the possibility of making a Cavalry raid by a small force up the Euphrates with a view to assisting his operations should be studied by you'. (57)

The early cessation of hostilities with Turkey had become so desirable an object that Marshall's advance along the Tigris developed into a race against time. Indeed, since his object was extensive occupation rather than defeat of the Turks, peace constituted a menace for the Mesopotamian Campaign. As this proceeded, the importance

of capturing Mosul itself caused some slight difference of opinion in the Cabinet. Nobody contemplated renouncing claim to the city; there was general agreement that it must in any case be taken away from Turkey. But some concluded that, in view of the urgency of eliminating Turkey from the war, it was more appropriate to obtain the surrender of the city by means of an armistice or by making it one of the conditions of peace. Others, however, preferred taking it by military action despite any consequent prolongation of the war. The latter view prevailed, chiefly because the intricate question had been decided of whether a peace or only an armistice should be concluded with Turkey. In the end, the pause which these deliberations involved gave Marshall valuable time in his advance on Mosul.

By October 21, Marshall, although pushing as fast as he could towards Mosul, was still about 140 miles away. Three days later Allenby was still 46 miles from Aleppo, while Marshall was further than this from Mosul. Both were once more urged to press on and occupy the two cities. Finally, on 30 October, the armistice was signed at Moudros. When Admiral Calthrop sailed into the Straits the British Forces in Mesopotamia were still advancing upon Mosul. Active hostilities had been in progress not far south of the town at the very moment when the armistice was signed. Its terms, however, included a provision by which Marshall and his forces were enabled to slip into the town. As Churchill put it later, 'the status quo was to be maintained, further advance of our troops being permissible only in so far as it might be necessary for the purpose of safeguarding our existing military position'. (58)

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Mallet to Grey, 22 May 1914 FO 424/252
2. Cf FO 424/252-253 and BT II/3-3; also H S W Corrigan, German-Turkish Relations and the Outbreak of the War in 1914, Past and Present, No 36 April 1967; Busch, Chapt 11
3. Cf A J Barker, The Neglected War London, 1967 pp 37-39
4. Lloyd George to Churchill, 5 Sept 1922, Lloyd George MSS F/10/3/44 Churchill to Lloyd George 6 Sept 1922, *ibid* F/10/3/45 Lloyd George who tried to wash his hands of it, was told by Churchill: 'We were both members of the War Committee of the Cabinet...we are clearly both responsible. After that I agree that there was no way out during the war except by fighting and winning'.
5. E Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956, London, 1963 p 37
6. Minutes of War Cabinet 135a, 9 May 1917 CAB 23/13
7. *Ibid*
8. In the Cabinet Meeting of 5 April 1917 Lloyd George had reproached Murray with creeping where he ought to have rushed. Unless he was replaced by a dashing type such as Birdwood or Bridges a great opportunity might be lost. Curzon defended Murray. Smuts later elaborated his point in a private letter to Lloyd George, 31 May 1917 Lloyd George MSS F/45/9/4
9. The financial inducements suggested were an offer of taking over the Turkish Debt and a guarantee of debt in Arabia, Minutes of War Cabinet 159a 8 June 1917, Special Secret File, CAB 23/16
10. Cf E Monroe, *op cit*, pp 38-44; N Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence, Beirut 1960 pp 18-24
11. Minutes of War Cabinet 200a 31 July 1917, CAB 23/13
12. *Ibid* cf also Laughlin to the Secretary of State 7 Oct 1918 Foreign Relations of the US 1918 Supplement I vol I p 340
13. Balfour to Beaverbrook, 9 August 1918, FO 800/206; see however P H Kerr to Balfour "Notes on Present Position of Turkey", 19 March 1918, *ibid* According to Kerr the authorised terms had been due to a misunderstanding falsely transmitted as the independence of Armenia.
14. *Ibid* cf, also P Guinn, British Strategy and Politics 1914-1918, Oxford 1965, p 277. Lord Beaverbrook, Men and Power 1917-1918 London 1956 p 193 records Sir Basil Zaharoff as conducting the negotiations for the surrender of Turkey.

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15. H Rumbold to Balfour 7 Jan 1918 FO 800/206
16. On the importance of the Ramadi Ridge, strategically and for a flood protection scheme, see Barker, pp 41617. At the War Cabinet Meeting of 1 Oct 1917 the position in Mesopotamia was regarded as secure, nevertheless Indian re-inforcements were forecasted for the year 1918, CAB 23/4. On Sammarah see War Cabinet Meeting of 9 November 1917, CAB 23/4. Following the break down of the Turkish offensive one Anglo-Indian Division was transferred from Mesopotamia to Egypt. As to Jerusalem, the propaganda preparation provided that in view of the unique character of the city and of the many difficult political and diplomatic questions involved in its future disposal no flag should be hoisted. Cabinet Meeting of 26 Nov 1917 CAB 23/4
17. Minutes of War Cabinet 332, 28 Jan 1918 CAB 23/5
18. R Cecil to Balfour, 28 Dec 1917, FO 800/207. Amery to Lloyd George, "The Turkish and South Russian Problem", 12 Jan 1918 Lloyd George MSS F/2/1/11. Smuts to Lloyd George 14 March 1918, *ibid* F/45/9/10. Kerr, "Notes on Present Position of Turkey", 19 March 1918 FO 800/206
19. Amery to Lloyd George 12 Jan 1918, Lloyd George MSS F/2/1/11
20. Cf Barker, p 417
21. Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting of 9 May 1917, CAB 23/13
22. War Cabinet 238, 24 Sept 1917, CAB 23/4
23. It was said that four divisions of German infantry with aerial squadrons and artillery had left Dresden for Constantinople and were destined for Baghdad, War Cabinet 230, 10 Sept 1917, CAB 23/4
24. War Cabinet 5 Dec 1917 CAB 23/4
25. War Cabinet 10 Dec 1917 CAB 23/4
26. This was Lloyd George's estimate in the Cabinet Meeting of 10 Oct 1917 CAB 23/13
27. Montagu to Hankey 20 Sept 1917 FO 800/199, also conclusion 7 of War Cabinet 234, 17 Sept 1917
28. Balfour to Curzon 25 Sept 1917 FO 800/199
29. Curzon quoted from a letter which he had received from Montagu who did not attend the Cabinet Meeting 242 of 1 Oct 1917, CAB 23/1
30. War Cabinet 330A 24 Jan 1918 CAB 23/13
31. On the general aspect of Japanese and American susceptibilities in that area, cf Guinn, pp 310-311

32. In the Cabinet Meeting 351A of 21 Febr 1918 Lloyd George urged his colleagues to look at the campaign from a broader point of view: 'If we imagined ourselves negotiating at the Peace Conference, what would be the better value of our present position compared with our present position with Damascus added as a further pawn? Was it worth the sacrifice of two or three hundred thousand tons of shipping? We might find it possible if Damascus were in our possession to persuade the French to be content with something less than the whole of Alsace-Lorraine in return for compensation in Syria. Fortunately the party in France which was most eager to recover Alsace-Lorraine was also eager to extend French influence in Syria', CAB 23/13
33. See footnote 16
34. Cf A T Wilson, Loyalties, Mesopotamia 1917-1920 Vol II, London 1931, p 10; L S Amery, My Political Life, Vol II, War and Peace 1914-1929, London 1953, p 169. Marshall's orders are reproduced almost literally with the exception of the mention therein made of the oil-bearing regions.
35. Cf Barker, p 415
36. M Sykes to G Picot, 3 March 1918, FO 800/221; similar communications were made throughout the summer, see Memorandum by M Sykes, 3 July 1918, FO 371/4354
37. Most of the material in the rest of this chapter has appeared in my article, 'Oil and British Policy towards Mesopotamia, 1914-1918', Middle Eastern Studies, Vol VIII No 3 London 1972.
38. M de Bunsen (FO) to Admiralty, March 2 1916 Annex 2 to Memorandum by Parker. The note was also sent to the Treasury, Board of Trade and India Office.
- 38a. Monroe, p 99
39. Gibb and Knowlton, *op cit*
- 39a. 'Memorandum Respecting Oil Concessions in Mesopotamia', by E Parker (FO), April 27 1918, Confidential, CO 730/10/(10967).
40. Lord Inchcape to Lord Hardinge 30 October 1917, CAB 27/23. As to the pre-war correspondence between Inchcape and the Foreign Office see FO 424/251.
41. Kidston to G R Clerk, 29 July 1919 FO 800/217
42. Minutes of the Middle East Committee, 18 Febr 1918, CAB 27/23
43. *Ibid*
44. Report on Deputation to England of Captain Roger Thomas, 'Mesopotamian Cotton', Nov 3 1919, IO 5160/1917.

45. The Empire Cotton Growing Committee was a branch of the Board of Trade, in which the private Association was well represented. On Thomas' success in Britain see W H Himbury (General Manager) to C C Garbett 30 June 1920, IO 5160/1917
46. 'Report on the Economic Situation in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamian Markets', by George Lloyd, 18-24 July 1916, sent by Percy Cox with a covering letter to A H Grant, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, IO B240.
47. See previous footnote. George Lloyd was the author of a valuable report on British Trade in Mesopotamia in 1908. Because of his great expertise Percy Cox had obtained the temporary loan of his services: see also FO 406/36
48. Paper by Admiral Sir Edmond Slade on the Petroleum Situation in the British Empire, 29 July 1918, CAB 21/119. The other conclusions were:
1. To press the Government to take the most energetic measures to prevent the enemy in any way from endangering the oilfields and works in Persia. This is indispensable to the success of the war.
 2. To push forward as soon as possible the further development of the oil lands of Persia and those in Mesopotamia by purely British interests.
 3. To push forward the exploration and development of all possible lands in the British Empire by purely British interests.
 4. To encourage and assist British Companies to obtain control of as much oil lands in foreign countries as possible, with the stipulation (to prevent control being obtained by foreign interests) that the oil produced shall only be sold to or through British oil distributing Companies. These oil lands can be developed to assist to provide our requirements in peace whilst our own resources in British territory can be conserved for war.
 5. To exclude from participation in British Petroleum business all foreign interests in any shape or form, such participation being only a stepping stone to ultimate control and a very great danger in any future war.
49. In an annex Slade added the production figures of the principal sources up to 1917. There were also figures on the American market drawn from the US Geological Survey 1917.
50. Hankey to Geddes, 30 July 1918, CAB 21/119
51. 'Report of the Committee (Maurice de Bunsen) on Asiatic Turkey', June 30 1915, p 7 CAB 42/3/12.

52. Ibid
53. Hankey to Balfour, 1 August 1918, Secret, CAB 21/119
54. Ibid As to Slade's 2nd memorandum of 2 August 1918 the relevant passages on Mosul read: 'The most northern indication of oil with which this paper deals is that at Zakha, about 60 miles NNW of Mosul. It is an important seepage worked by natives and there are said to be 30 hand dug pits from which an oil of good quality of about 9 specific gravity is obtained. The group of seepages in the neighbourhood of El Gayara 50 miles south of Mosul are reported to be the most important of all in this region. They are leased to natives from the Turkish Crown...Oil is being produced in moderate quantities and has been so produced for ages. It is of good quality with about 8 specific gravity. Oil indications occur on both banks of the Tigris between this place and El Fatha, 50 miles further down the river. The seepages there are stated to be very important'. Slade's remarks were, according to himself, based on German reports of the pre-war years and on more recent reports by geologists sent by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to examine some of the seepages on behalf of the Military Authorities. CAB 21/119, GT.5313, 2 August 1918.
55. Extract from Imperial War Cabinet 29 2 August 1918, CAB21/119
56. Hankey to Balfour, 12 August 1918, Personal and secret, CAB 21/119
57. War Office to GOC-in-C, GHQ Mesopotamia, October 2 1918, Secret Operations, in: Milner MSS H 115, Oxford, Bodleian.
58. 'The Question of Mosul', memorandum by Churchill, MED Nov 10 1922, CO 730/27. For more detail Cf Barker p 456

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CHAPTER THREE

The politics of Acquisition - conception of the mandate and its execution in Iraq up to 1926

1. The genesis of the mandate compromise

That Britain, if not India, would have to take a predominant role in Mesopotamia after the War, had been one of the basic premises in all discussions in Whitehall about Oil. Even the espousal of new principles in the international treatment of 'backward' countries did not divert politicians and oil magnates from this assumption. They believed that the choice of the right nomenclature would prove effective. To them it was a constant battle of wits. Curzon's thinking, seen in what he wrote later in 1918, may well be indicative of such a contest:

'a terminological variant such as 'perpetual lease' or enclave might be found, both to safeguard the reality which we must not abandon, and to save the appearances which the occasion might require'.⁽¹⁾

As it turned out, the word 'mandate' was coined to cover the colonial appetites of the Entente Powers.

Much has been written on the origin and meaning of the concept of mandate.⁽²⁾ But nowhere has its birth in war-time been traced back to British apprehensions about the future of the Empire's position in the Middle East. However, as those strands of imperial thinking from which the mandate concept sprang are interdependent with affairs in the Middle East, our description merits some detailed explanation.

The first stage in the genesis of the mandate compromise is

discernible in the Round Table efforts to develop a stronger sense of imperial responsibility in the Dominions and to arouse American sympathy for the problems of the British Empire. There were obvious reasons for joining forces, as had been shown in the years before the war. The political mobilization of the Dominions for the purpose of ultimate unity meant that for them to take greater responsibility involved some naval contribution to Imperial defence. In order to develop among the Dominions awareness of the importance of sea-power, Lionel Curtis, ⁽³⁾ one of the prime movers of the Round Table group, suggested that the West Indies should be handed over to Canada. Similarly, he said, Mauritius should be assigned to South Africa and the Fiji Islands to Australia. As the creation of Canadian naval stations in the West Indies, and naval programmes for the Dominions in general, were likely to arouse American suspicion, something clearly had to be done to inform American opinion. The necessity for this, however, disappeared for a while when in the discussions in 1909 Alfred Milner and also Frederick S Oliver opposed Curtis's suggestion unless a substantial quid pro quo were to be given by the Dominions. In particular Milner was convinced that 'some day everything might depend on the wish of the Dominions to possess those dependencies'. ⁽⁴⁾ As the war was to show, Milner was only too right. His plan to satisfy this colonial appetite as part of a process of imperial unification did not come to fruition. But in ceding B- and C-mandates to Dominions a move in the desired direction was ensured.

In spite of the rejection of Curtis's suggestion of 1909, the fact that on the one hand British maritime policy adhered to its two-power standard of naval superiority and, on the other, the Round Table continued to work for imperial unity, was reason enough for Lionel Curtis and Philip Kerr to try to educate American opinion through appropriate channels.*

* The two-power standard was a formula which ruled that the Royal Navy should have a predominance of 10 per cent in capital ships over the combined strengths of the next two strongest powers. For the confusion in British thinking about this standard at the time, cf. A J Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904 - 1919, I, The Road to War, 1904 - 1914* (London 1966) p. 145.

Obviously both these men and others with an Atlantic outlook were aware that the two interests of British policy and the Round Table objectives could easily be mistaken as conflicting with the growth of internationalism in the pre-war years. For the increasing internationalisation of trade and commerce was reducing the distinction between 'naval' and 'maritime' nations upon which Britain's naval supremacy was founded; further, the unification of the British Empire ran contrary to the pattern of a multi-national world.⁽⁵⁾

Taken together, in the light of such decided British obstinacy it was certainly opportune to 'inspire' opinion in America. It was planned to establish a network of Round Table groups as centres of information all over America. However, by 1914, Curtis and Kerr were forced to admit that there was no chance of creating Round Table groups in the U.S.A. One American who was an enthusiast for their ideas - George Louis Beer - told them that 'the U.S. groups would be regarded from the outset as intended to bring the U.S.A. under the English thumb and would be damned accordingly'.⁽⁶⁾ Beer was ready, however, to work for the Round Table groups; his problem was how to shake the U.S. out of its indifference to world affairs.⁽⁷⁾ In the course of their work, a kind of reciprocity developed between them. Beer found the British Empire a useful bait for attracting American thought into a worldwide field, and thus became a sort of 'country member' of the Round Table group. Simultaneously, this group was spurred on by him to greater efforts in educating American opinion about its theories.

This desire to court American favour outlived the notion of imperial unity and became very important when the genesis of the mandate concept entered its second stage. The point at which the gospels of Beer and the Round Table apostles coincided was over their views about the relation between 'advanced' and 'backward' peoples. Both proceeded from the old, starry-eyed notion that the relationship was between the purveyor of civilisation and people living in darkness.⁽⁸⁾ Trusteeship was therefore a contribution to the well-being of humanity as a whole. In its final shape of a mandate, this doctrine of trusteeship turned out in the end to be a useful cover for secret and more nakedly imperialist designs.

Meanwhile the United States had entered the war on the side of the Entente. Anglo-American contacts mushroomed at all levels of policy making; the American Inquiry for peace planning was set up, and the speeches of Lloyd George and Wilson on the subject of war aims influenced the policy making of the Cabinet Committees in

Whitehall.

Where Mesopotamia was concerned it was the India Office that was most worried about the rapid spread of the 'no annexation' doctrine. Speculations were aroused by Wilson's vague phrase about the 'absolutely unmolested opportunity for autonomous development' for the Ottoman dependencies, a phrase with which Lloyd George's Caxton Hall speech of 8 January 1918 fully agreed.⁽⁹⁾ Arthur Hirtzel, Under-Secretary of State in the India Office, immediately circulated a note entitled 'Future of Mesopotamia', which called for comment on the points made by Wilson and Lloyd George.⁽¹⁰⁾ Hirtzel pointed out that open or veiled annexation, even of Basra, was now presumably out of the question. Even the façade of Arab sovereignty which the Middle East Committee in Whitehall had envisaged for the British post-war administration of the Baghdad vilayet 'must be something more than a façade'. On the other hand, Hirtzel did not question the validity of the idea that somehow or other Britain must retain a predominating influence in Mesopotamia. He stated bluntly that Britain's commercial position ought to be strengthened in Mesopotamia in order 'to get ourselves started commercially, so as to be ahead of competitors whom it may be impossible to exclude after the war'.⁽¹¹⁾ Swift deliberations were required; peace feelers were already being put out by the Turks. According to Hirtzel there was the probability that peace negotiations might start 'at any time within the next few months'.

It was Hirtzel's note of 11 January that prompted Mark Sykes to draft a memorandum which proposed a scheme for imperial control of Mesopotamia almost identical with the ultimate Mandate. The memorandum was called 'Our Position in Mesopotamia in relation to the Spirit of the Age'.⁽¹²⁾ The section which is of particular interest read:

'we should (i) investigate the possibility of getting the United States of America to propose that we should, provided the people of Mesopotamia desire it, assume on behalf of the nations of the Entente responsibility for establishing a provisional regime in Mesopotamia for a period of twenty-five years, with the object of setting up a self-governing and independent state in Mesopotamia at the end of twenty-five years. (ii) At the end of the term of twenty-five years, the future of Mesopotamia to be decided by such international authority as may exist. (iii) That our tutelage should be limited by the open door commercially and by international guarantee of security from invasion from a military

point of view. No troops other than internal order troops to be maintained there. (iv) During our twenty-five years trusteeship we should at stated terms report progress on administration to such International authority as may exist'. (13)

Mark Sykes listed three recent events as indicating the new spirit of the age: America's entry into the war, the Russian Revolution, and the spread of the idea of no annexations. By these tokens the concepts of protectorates, spheres of influence, annexations, military bases and white men's burdens had to be consigned to the diplomatic lumber-room. He went on to stipulate that if Britain remained determined to run Mesopotamia, up-to-date reasons and up-to-date working formulae must be found. The lenses through which the scene must be surveyed, he prescribed, were those of 'our own Democracy' and 'World Democracy'. According to such a survey Mesopotamia was also seen as a potential storehouse of 'fuel and food for the world'. Its development and exploitation would feed and warm the workers of the world: it must not be allowed to lie idle. Its retention by the Turks would simply add to their military power. On the other hand, no development would result from the internal struggles between 'municipal oligarchies, a collection of riparian brigands and a fringe of Patriarchal nomads', if these were left without interference. (14)

All told, these were up-to-date reasons for intervening. Yet three conditions would have to be observed: the development of Mesopotamia ought not to be for the benefit of capitalistic groups, nor ought it to add to the military power of those running it, nor impair the political liberty of the inhabitants. Even to observe only two of these three conditions would not suffice; in that event anarchy without development was preferable.

Sykes also drew attention to the necessity of generating confidence in Britain and in the Government, both at home and in the realm of World Democracy. The British Government must show clearly that the people of Mesopotamia as a whole preferred British to Turkish administration; further, that British administration, once it had been called in, not only had the consent of the governed, but that it also understood itself to be the fore-runner of actual independence. Finally, and in sharp contrast to the recommendations of the De Bunsen Report of 1915, the administration ought not to be based on a system of commercial monopoly.

In order to elicit the desired invitation from the indigenous Arab population, Mark Sykes, never at a loss, gave the simple advice that Britain should make herself wholly indispensable by playing to the

desires of the Jewish and Armenian sections of the population, to the aspirations of the mercantile classes for prosperity and security, and to Arab Nationalism in general. He elaborated this last point:

(vi) We should subvention an Arab press on Nationalist lines, which would always hold up the Turks to odium and us as protectors of Arab Nationalism.

(vii) We should start an Arab Nationalist party recruited from the Urban Intelligensia and promote its members to official positions.

(viii) We should start an Education department and as many schools as possible, based on Arab Nationalism. ⁽¹⁵⁾

Further suggestions made were the subsidising of the more important Bedouin chiefs of the desert, full employment, and the spread of such civilized amenities as municipal lighting, water and trams. International assent to the British position in Mesopotamia should be obtained by the device of setting up international machinery of control.

The impact of Sykes's memorandum on policy making and on the formation of political opinion was somewhat diverse. Formally it even encountered outright refusal, for it never reached the agenda of the Middle East Committee. When it arrived at the India Office, Hirtzel rejected it; he told Lord Islington that it did not commend itself to him at all. Sykes, he said, lacked all contact with the actual local conditions and Percy Cox, the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, should be allowed to give his opinion instead. Islington, who was by this time Under-Secretary of State for India, agreed with Hirtzel, as did T W Holderness, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State. But Holderness observed that liaisons with Cox 'need not necessarily be antagonistic to the solution suggested by Mark Sykes'. He went on:

'We may find that the idea of a British protectorate over this region is not acceptable to our Allies and to the Americans without the addition of some international machinery, and we may have in the end to submit to this. But the time for suggesting this to them has not yet come. Meanwhile let us study the facts'. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Although Sykes's memorandum never reached the agenda of the Middle East Committee it did not entirely disappear from view, for some of its essence went into the drafted instructions for Cox. The Civil Commissioner must explore, and report as soon as possible, in what way consent of all those interested in good government -

Jews, Christians and the mercantile classes - could be obtained for a British Administration that should last 'at all events for a period of years'. Arthur Hirtzel used the analogy of the constituency that must be nursed in advance. Britain's relationship with Mesopotamia must not become that of a ruler and his subjects, but should be that of a candidate and his constituents. ⁽¹⁷⁾

In March 1918 Cox was summoned to London. Much to his dismay the talks in London proceeded under the 'evil star' of President Wilson. Wilson, everyone feared, would exercise the most powerful influence at the Peace Conference, and was likely to make any question of veiled annexation exceedingly difficult. Thus the essential problem of Mesopotamia's future status could not be thrashed out. As in the Middle East Committee, Sykes's mandate formula was not aired at all. Meanwhile, however, more sober estimates had been advanced by India Office officials. Appearances must be made to match the political realities. Britain would after the war be physically present in Mesopotamia. She could not cover up her presence by equivocal phraseology. Therefore, the question of how long the political and legal status of Mesopotamia might remain undefined was disregarded; there was a sudden rush to educate American opinion in favour of British rule in Mesopotamia. ⁽¹⁸⁾

More ingredients of Sykes's mandate formula began to materialise. True, to educate American opinion was a far cry from procuring an American invitation to the British to take charge of Mesopotamia; but if it were pursued at the right time it might ease Wilson's task in Washington when, at a later date, he was to be asked to tender such an invitation to Whitehall. When seen in retrospect, the efforts made to achieve this end were clumsy in the extreme. The 'anti-imperialists' together with the 'West Arabian School' in Whitehall reckoned that they had triumphed by ousting the Government of India from the principal role in the Middle East, only to learn that 'anti-imperialist' America regarded management by Whitehall as the greater evil.*

* The 'West Arabian School' comprised those officials in Whitehall and in Government service in the Middle East - particularly in the Arab Bureau in Cairo headed by D G Hogarth, who rejected the British Government of India's designs on the Arab Middle East. They were highly critical of the methods of rule and administration as practised in India. Instead they favoured indirect rule for the Middle East as it had been developed in the Sudan and in West Africa on

As we know there had been communications earlier between the Round Table and George Louis Beer in America. ⁽¹⁹⁾ In the spring of 1918 the India Office, in conjunction with Robert Cecil from the Foreign Office and people of the Garden Suburb, made use of these contacts.** On a recent lecture tour through America Lionel Curtis had given talks on the subject of British India, intended possibly as a fine example of a beneficial civilizing mission. In May 1918, Beer disclosed in a letter to Curtis that the United States might well be more sympathetic to the ambitions of the Dominions than to those of Britain. On the same lines, India in the Middle East was more acceptable to the American people than what might be represented as 'the wants of British Imperialists'. ⁽²⁰⁾ Disconcerted by this disclosure of the state of American public opinion, the India Office put the blame on Curtis for Beer's view about the role of India in Mesopotamia. Shuckburgh was furious with Curtis because he had obviously acted so unwisely as the envoy of the Garden Suburb. Curtis, blaming himself for having misinformed Beer during his recent lecture tour, frenziedly tried to make good by telling Beer that India was completely without interest in Mesopotamia.

Curtis's efforts to reinstate himself as a useful go-between were in vain. ⁽²¹⁾ He was no longer a trustworthy envoy but the busybody

principles of self-government, though not yet on principles of full national sovereignty. To this 'school' belonged such men as T E Lawrence and also Henry MacMahon, Mark Sykes and G N Curzon.

The 'Garden Suburb' consisted of a number of wooden huts erected during the war outside the Prime Minister's official residence to house his private staff. To it belonged such Empire enthusiasts and reformists as Philip Kerr and others who had previously been with Lord Milner in South Africa, where they were known as Milner's 'kindergarten'. They reconstructed South Africa after the Boer War on lines of federation. Together with Milner and the Canadian Arthur Glazebrook they founded in 1910. In Whitehall the Garden Suburb was, with some justification, often criticised as Lloyd George's private cabinet.

he was more usually considered to be. As for Beer, when his views were repeated it became clear that enough scope was left for manoeuvre and all the more so when he started grinding his own axe. By July, for instance, he replied with reference to Mesopotamia:

'Personally I should not hesitate to enquire about Indian interests in these questions, even at the risk of creating some friction there. If there is not real widespread interest, so much the worse. But if there is such interest, it would profoundly affect American public opinion and would save England from some adverse criticism if it should be deemed essential to retain the regions in question. There is also another way of preventing such criticism, and that is by getting the U S A to assume its share of the burden of civilizing the backward world. If the Allies, in due season, insisted upon this, it would be best for all. Possibly the most advantageous areas for such an experiment would be the Cameroons and Asiatic Turkey exclusive of Iraq'.⁽²²⁾

Obviously, George Louis Beer was prepared to prefer Indian management, not for India's sake but as camouflage for British acquisition of Mesopotamia, so arranged as to make that acquisition acceptable to American opinion. Shuckburgh and Hirtzel, after sensing his attitude, agreed that in order for them to support him H M G must be represented as advancing the Arab cause on Wilsonian lines.

The Arab cause to be thus advanced was indeed hardly the same as had been advanced by Sykes earlier in 1918; it was far more like the sombre picture drawn by Percy Cox of helpless people dependent for salvation on a civilised power. The essential thing was to set Beer's mind running along these lines; and since Curtis was no longer a trustworthy envoy, Lord Reading was enlisted as messenger. As Hirtzel wrote to Cecil before August 8:

'It is suggested that Lord Reading should see Beer, informally acquaint him with that policy (see below), and set his mind running on the right lines. It is not desirable - regard being had to the flux in which everything is - that Beer should present the appearance of being 'inspired' or that anything should be said to or through him which could be quoted hereafter as a pledge. It is suggested that the following papers might be given to Lord Reading:

Baghdad Proclamation of 19 March 1917,

S of S for India tel of 19 March 1917,

Sir Percy Cox's Memo of 22 April 1918,

which has been accepted by H M G. His Lordship would of course not think it necessary to go into detail with Beer; but these papers would probably enable him to establish the point that the policy of H M G is in accord with the principles of self-determination so far as that principle is applicable outside Europe...⁽²³⁾

In general, these tactics were consonant with the numerous communications between British officials and members of the American Inquiry and, in particular, with George Louis Beer.⁽²⁴⁾ Of course, Beer was no plenipotentiary of the American President. On the other hand, as Hirtzel had emphasized, he had to take precautions not to appear to his American colleagues to have been 'inspired'. But even if he could not be persuaded openly to advocate to the President that Whitehall should have a stake in Mesopotamia, he would still object strongly to international administration in the territories which were at the disposal of the Allies. For in a strict sense, national administration was one of the sine qua nons of the Round Table, ie 'concentration of responsibility'. As things turned out, Beer upheld this principle but remained in favour of the Anglo-Indian attitude to Mesopotamia. His report for the Inquiry on 'The Future of Mesopotamia', which he had written before the end of 1917, was left unaltered.⁽²⁵⁾

The full effects of Reports and Memoranda can seldom be precisely ascertained; this applies above all to evaluating their translation into action. In a sense their true significance may lie rather in the ideas they express than in what they bring about. Thus in the case of the India Office, a wealth of notes and memoranda reveal not only the motive forces of the moment. Taken together, they also reveal an astonishing process of formation of political opinion and a real change of outlook. Whether, or why, the India Office failed to win the full support of George Louis Beer is therefore relatively unimportant. The important thing is that the India Office gradually shifted its support from the Indian Government to British dependence on the United States. No doubt President Wilson did attract more attention (and more animosity) than any other politician. As Arthur Balfour once stated Wilson, since he had entered the war for World Purposes, had every right to a voice in questions of peace even where he was not militarily involved, as in the case of Turkey.⁽²⁶⁾

In detail, as Balfour pointed out, the realisation of the major purposes would give to the one and take away from the other, according to how the new standards in international relations determined.

The third stage in the formation of the mandate concept was marked by the internal struggle among the British over the shaping of new imperial standards in international relations. The beginning of this struggle can be dated from the middle of 1918. At the root of the struggle was an ever-growing sense of competition between enthusiasts for the Empire and supporters of the League of Nations. L S Amery, the most articulate of the Empire-minded faction, wanted a 'series of Monroe doctrines' that put each Power in its natural preserve; ie the tutelary Powers of the future must exercise their tutelage only in areas adjacent to their main property, without risk or interference from 'armed burglars at their gate'.⁽²⁷⁾ While demanding that the terminology describing the tutelary role must be sufficiently broad to allow the inclusion of the United States among those accepting it, Amery gave a strange warning against the unwise disposition of U S emissaries:

'To dump Americans with their vigorous but crude ideas down into the middle of the complicated Middle Eastern problem in Palestine would lead to endless complications in Egypt, Arabia and Mesopotamia, just as it would lead to complications if, even on American invitation, we (Britain) undertook the guardianship of Mexico or Guatemala'.⁽²⁸⁾

In arguing thus, Amery may well have been seeking to prime Balfour for forthcoming encounters with American politicians. Balfour was attracted by this theory of a 'number of Monroe doctrines', but wanted to consider how it would stand up to the test of practice.⁽²⁹⁾ Amery hastened to supply examples. He put emphasis on the economic and strategic lines of the groupings:

'There is one thing which I am sure would greatly influence the American attitude towards any possible increase of colonial Empire on our part, and which is also desirable for the reasons which the P(ri)me M(in)ister gave the other day, namely the need for capital (by which he really meant human capacity, for capital in the narrower sense will reproduce itself if the economic conditions are favourable)'.⁽³⁰⁾

The interesting point about Amery's talks and correspondence with Balfour is the ingenuity that he exhibited in combining these self-interested projects into a scheme for a new world order, designed and styled in sympathy with American predilections and susceptibilities.

For example, the Monroe doctrine was called the 'greatest principle of peace yet devised'.

While Balfour remained sceptical, Amery pursued his efforts undeterred. The next approach he made was to Smuts. As a Dominion politician who had once fought against the British he was an ideal envoy for carrying Amery's messages to an American audience. According to Amery, Smuts's scheme to place certain conquered territories under tutelage originated as a scheme intended for Eastern Europe.⁽³¹⁾ By December 1918, Amery was propounding to Smuts the notion that instead of a series of 'Monroe doctrines', a series of Leagues of Nations should be advocated - eg British, Danubian, American. Alongside these, and set up by them, must be minor Leagues of independent states, which would thereafter deal directly with the League of Nations.⁽³²⁾ But in addition there must be yet more minor areas, mandated under the main League to 'great states' in an association that might become permanent. In this category came Palestine, the Arab states and Mesopotamia, and Amery asked why these countries should not find 'their welfare in permanent association with the British League of Free Nations'.⁽³³⁾ He argued - from easily discernible premises - that the proposed constitution allowed a wide scope for self-determination and political independence within an imperial framework. Like his fellow imperial architects, Amery also went to great lengths to evolve terminology that would at one and the same time give blanket coverage to imperialism and pass muster in the United States. However, as he still regarded America as a 'lost' colony he let no opportunity slip for emphasizing the constitutional advantages of the Empire as compared with the United States. For instance, before October he wrote to Balfour:

'The title that seemed to be most satisfactory was 'United Nations of the British Commonwealth', the word nations emphasising that mere constitutional difference between the closer federal framework of our Commonwealth which can admit actual nations into equal partnership with itself. That is one of the reasons, for instance, why I think that a Zionist Palestine, if it really comes to something, would be much happier in association with us than with the United States. In the one case it could aspire eventually to become a partner nation and to have its representatives attending an Imperial Cabinet. In the other case it would either have to be a state or group of states, or else a protected dependency with no voice in the destinies of the whole. It could be a

Cuba or a Texas, but never a New Zealand or a South Africa'.⁽³⁴⁾

Disagreement between Amery, on the one hand, and Balfour as well as Smuts on the other, was not as fundamental as one might presume from the foregoing. Their views differed on the secondary aspects of regional application and the extent of imperial decentralisation. Moreover, whereas Balfour advocated an experimental stage before full inauguration, Smuts unhesitatingly earmarked Europe as London's proper sphere of influence, leaving further additions to the Empire to be decided by the defence strategies of its mature colonial partners and by the course of Entente diplomacy.

As it turned out, the tutelage of the Arab provinces of the defunct Ottoman Empire, as defined in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and accepted by the Dominions and the Entente powers, became as much a pretence as the Emperor's New Clothes. On the other hand it certainly was not the sop to the Americans that some historians have imagined it to be.⁽³⁵⁾ For it had been conceived by exuberant imperialists who thought that not only the Americans but also the French could learn from British experience of Empire. Further, thanks to the terms of reference governing imperial policy as conceived by most of the politicians we have so far encountered, their idea of a mandate was not to make it the deliberate step towards the creation of new nation states that in the event they proved to be. Rather, it was no more than British and French colonial policy in a new guise.

Finally, it has to be said that the mandate concept was not invented by just a few men whose power equalled their executive position. The components of a mandate as they conceived it allowed for contributions of widely differing origins.^(35a) These included the thought, and the commitment, of men earnestly seeking a scientifically viable solution to international conflict. In addition to the advanced sociological ideas shared by the Fabians and some heretical Liberals there existed an influential social and philosophical outlook with a similar scientific claim which nevertheless rejected the macrocosms of states, empires and civilizations as meaningful and indispensable entities of international order. On the threshold of the corridors of power, and with ideas that appealed to Empire-minded conservatives, Empire-reformers and Entente-liberals, men such as Lionel Curtis, Philip Kerr, Arnold J Toynbee, Leonard Woolf, John Hobson, Gilbert Murray and others may have been, on balance, more influential than their utterances showed in

stirring up, if not in giving shape to, ideas in the minds of politicians otherwise caught up in the practical conduct of the war.^(36, 37) As the development of the mandate concept has made plain, imperial practice supplied thinkers with principles of international order to as great an extent as anti-imperialist thought yielded arguments which could uphold existing imperial attitudes. For instance, as regards the exploitation of raw materials the Webbs like Hobson did not allow an absolute ius utendi or abutendi.⁽³⁸⁾ In practice, the progressive areas of mankind, ie the industrial civilizations which comprised the imperialist West, enjoyed varying degrees of access to any area where the mineral wealth of the earth was found. By the same token the indigenous African and Asian societies were classed as socio-political and human raw material to be used for producing showpieces of the 'New International Civilization'. In contrast, Philip Kerr's study on the Political Relations between Advanced and Backward Peoples, which appeared in 1916, was the first of its kind to foster the scientific study of international relations in the interest of securing international peace, although Kerr's propositions tend to derive from the brighter side of colonialism.⁽³⁹⁾

This inter-relation of the lines of thought surely does not necessarily imply cross-fertilization of ideas and individual brains. Judging by their commitment to the mandate concept we should do better to assume that the intellectuals, and even the politicians such as Lloyd George, Churchill, Curzon and the rest, each continued to rely, even if sub-consciously, on his own particular theories, whether pragmatic or conceptual in origin.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The fourth and last stage in the formation of the mandate compromise, which began with the work of the Supreme Council at Paris and, in 1920 at San Remo, showed how frustrating were the limits within which it could be applied. Enthusiasts for mandates, like Robert Cecil, Philip Baker and Eric Drummond, thought that Article 22 of the Covenant needed to be supplemented with a model mandate, so as to make a nation think twice before undertaking the task.^{(41)*} Such an elucidation, made before allocation of any mandates in the Middle East would also help to reduce existing reservations about the role of internationalism.

* The model mandate was, as a draft, to embody all the principles, the methods of their execution as well as the legal details of any actual mandate for illustrative purposes.

However, attempts to carry this out were curbed by a variety of diplomatic factors. When Smuts had retreated from a policy of annexation to that of mandatory rule in Africa, and when in January 1919 Lloyd George finally submitted the compromise formula of the three-tier mandate system to the Council of Ten, there was great relief among the members of the Peace Conference.⁽⁴²⁾ Nervousness had begun to spread as a result of the postponement of actual negotiations about the German settlement.⁽⁴³⁾ Now, instead, members became anxious not to reawaken a quarrel like that of the Dominions over the mandates. In order to prevent this happening, members were prepared to accept and pass without reservation the mandate compromise as drafted and sanctioned by Lloyd George.

Yet the Middle East was no less a hornet's nest than Africa and the Pacific Islands had been. The overriding question was whether and when the United States would take up the mandate for Armenia.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Connected to this was the problem of what should be done about Syria, Palestine and Iraq until Wilson had made up his mind. Wilson on his part refused to be stampeded into the role of a mandatory. His proposal for an intermediate redistribution of military control over the Ottoman Empire appealed only to Lloyd George, who was much concerned about the expense of having had 1,084,000 troops stationed in various parts of the Middle East ever since the Armistice. Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, was hesitant because he feared being the loser if a quick reshuffle occurred. Clemenceau pointed out that everything hinged on the situation in Russia, and that therefore French troops could not so easily be recalled from Odessa and the Caucasus. British supporters of the League of Nations were alarmed by the likelihood that a temporary measure of this kind would lessen the chances of the Arab provinces' being allocated along the lines of the war-time agreements.

The ranks of these supporters were unexpectedly reinforced when the India Office began to urge an immediate definition and approval of a Model A mandate for the Middle East. However, whereas the original supporters seem to have been pure theoreticians primarily concerned with the prestige of the League and regular procedure, but oblivious of day-to-day local complications such as those with which Arnold Wilson was dealing in Iraq, the India Office had practical points to make. A Model A mandate would provide the guide-lines that could set policy in Iraq on the right path and would help to devise a homogeneous administrative system for the entire Middle East. Such a pattern was expedient in order to

forestall tendencies among the Arabs to play off the Powers against each other.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Others perceived advantage in a package solution of the mandate issue because they foresaw that if the mandate settlement was split up so that allocations were dealt with separately, any parliament - whether in France, Britain or elsewhere - which had to pass the convention would have ample opportunity for obstruction.

Because so many complex motives were thus involved, President Wilson's suggestion that an Inter-Allied Commission⁽⁴⁶⁾ should enquire into the conditions of the Middle East was received as a welcome delay in the allocation of the mandates. This breathing space could be used for defining their terms. But more was involved. A three-point programme drawn up by Philip Baker was an attempt to reconcile the maintenance of the League's authority over the Supreme Council with the imperialists' designs for carving up the Middle East. It was also calculated that if the procedure suggested were followed both the League and the mandates would rise in the general esteem of the public, and would affect even Labour opinion favourably. As the programme read:

- (i) The Council of Five must instruct the Mandates Commission to draft the general principles of 'A' mandates.
- (ii) The Council of Five must decide that, while territorial arrangements must be made by the Allies, the Council of the League must draw up and confer all mandates.
- (iii) The Council of Five should publish the Commission's drafts as recommendations by the Allies to the League.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The second point reveals how deeply the discernible anti-imperialist intent of the scheme was compromised. Although the gap was bridged, the imperialists and would-be mandatories refrained from crossing it. They were beginning to feel the financial strain at home and the growing protests of the public against mandates; they opposed the drafting of any pre-fabricated constitution for mandates because this might burden them with too many material obligations. Conversely, it might deprive them of economic assets held by the territories they desired. Of course, natural shrewdness in avoiding what had not yet proved to be of practical value also played a real part. There was indeed danger that the terms of the model A mandate might become too artificial to meet the practical problems on the spot or to correspond to the capacity of the mandatory.

The League of Nations representatives did indeed display gross

neglect and indifference in this respect. Abundant empirical data could have been supplied, for instance by the proposed Inter-Allied Commission or even by its emaciated remnant the King-Crane Commission which toured the Middle East in 1919 to gather data for the Peace Conference. Yet the Bakers and Cecils were keener to exploit the delay than the findings. In this respect they undoubtedly shared a conviction expressed by D G Hogarth, though not his conclusions.

D G Hogarth, of the Arab Bureau at Cairo, had, like many of his colleagues on the spot, become utterly disillusioned with the Allies' policy in the Middle East.⁽⁴⁸⁾ He believed that the course of events in the various territories had already outrun the purpose of the Inter-Allied Commission. Indications as to who was to be the mandatory power were only too obvious to the local peoples: it was clear to him that they were not to be hoodwinked. Instead, they ought to be given time 'to realise and, in some way, accept their assignment to their respective mandatories.'⁽⁴⁹⁾ If the Commission departed before such acceptance was secured it would bring 'not peace, but a sword'. These were the tactics of nursing the constituency ahead, as had been suggested earlier by Hirtzel.

Unlike Hogarth, however, those who championed the League of Nations still saw a possible opportunity for getting Article 22 implemented before the mandates were formally assigned. By the beginning of August 1919 the Americans were starting to join the fray.⁽⁵⁰⁾ To be sure, nobody yet knew whether they would become a mandatory power; but by sending a draft A mandate of their own to London they were falling in with Cecil's invitation and indicating their readiness to participate in the preliminaries. Even more promising was the fact that Milner, Secretary of State for the Colonies, had in the meantime become the British representative on the special commission charged with the drafting of model mandates for all three classes. That Milner meant business was clearly demonstrated by his efforts to bring his French colleague, Monsieur Simon to the conference table.⁽⁵¹⁾

In spite of Milner's endeavours, Simon categorically refused to come to London and discuss the problem of the mandates for the Middle East. In giving his reasons Simon summarised the many problems of the Ottoman Empire which had not yet been dealt with by the Supreme Council. He argued that the Supreme Council must not be frog-marched by the Commission on Mandates. In essence, however, his fear was that the Supreme Council might interpret the Model A mandates as a replacement for the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 and the Anglo-French-

Italian Agreement of 1917. ⁽⁵²⁾ The impasse was complete. In Drummond's opinion the French would not only shelve the discussion of the general principles of A mandates until they knew the exact territories to be allotted to themselves, but would then try 'to whittle down the mandate to suit their convenience'. ⁽⁵³⁾ Cecil suspected the French of trying to 'give the go-by to the whole idea of mandates in Asia'. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ To Philip Baker it was a 'point-blank refusal to recognise the obligations involved in previous agreements'. ⁽⁵⁵⁾ of the Supreme Council.

Yet all these men's impassioned petitions to Milner to save their cause were in vain. Britain no longer possessed the means to wage a diplomatic war of attrition in the Middle East. Her all but exclusive occupation of the Middle East had been shorn of its diplomatic bargaining power because retrenchment of military expenditure there had become an absolute necessity. Britain's diplomatic strength was further diminished by the intrinsic incompatibility of her numerous commitments and declarations. Altogether, Britain's diplomatic position vis-a-vis her rivals in the Middle East was the direct opposite of the situation in which Lloyd George had expected to find himself at the end of the war. She was perched above a quicksand which once trodden upon would suck away all her constructive ability and initiative. Resistance would merely proclaim her weakness. Recovery from strength could be hoped for only through some happy circumstance at the end of a long line of least resistance.

This conclusion did not commend itself to Lloyd George. Much to the alarm of Curzon, Milner, Chamberlain and Herbert Fisher, Lloyd George suddenly became set on a large speculative deal with the French. In return for giving Syria to the French (with or without Palestine) plus Cilicia and Armenia, Great Britain was to have the Mandate for Constantinople and Asia Minor. Alternatively, if France cast envious eyes on the two last-named regions, it would be for her to surrender her ambitions in Syria and cede it, as well as Palestine and Cilicia, to the British. ⁽⁵⁶⁾ Lloyd George's opponents agreed that a British flag flying over Constantinople would expose the Empire to unfamiliar and treacherous winds, for a British Mandate for Constantinople would disturb the true orientation of Imperial policy in the East.

In particular, Curzon feared that Britain 'would presently become entangled in the cockpit of the Balkans, and might later on have to face the resentment of a resuscitated Russia'. ⁽⁵⁷⁾

The same division of opinion seems to have applied to Palestine, on which (according to Curzon) the Prime Minister had set his heart, talking about Jerusalem 'with almost the same enthusiasm as about his native hills'. By contrast Curzon, discarding all sentiment, pointed to the negligible strategic importance of Palestine for the defence of Egypt. He further mentioned the increasing difficulty of drawing a boundary between Syria and Palestine and placing the two countries under separate European Powers. Instead, the Cabinet ought to discard its commitments in Palestine. As he put it to Balfour, with remarkable foresight:

'I am so convinced that Palestine will be a rankling thorn in the flesh of whoever is charged with its mandate that I would withdraw from this responsibility while we yet can'. (58)

For Britain, the sine qua non among the mandatory stakes remained, of course, Iraq, including Mosul. Everybody insisted that it must be entrusted to Britain. Incidentally, it was evidential of this undisguised interest in Iraq that Lloyd George had excluded Iraq from the possible deal with the French which he suggested to the Cabinet. One may even assume that he proposed those alternatives (that France should have either Constantinople or Syria) on the assumption that France, because of her large financial interests in Turkey and Russia would be sure in the end to relinquish Syria to the British. Undoubtedly connected with this latent assumption was the importance which, according to Curzon, Lloyd George attached to the necessity of having a railway and a pipe-line exclusively in British hands from Iraq to a Mediterranean port. On the whole, however, the criteria for the delineation of frontiers were those suggested by Balfour: they should be economic and ethnographic rather than strategic.

In this context, Balfour urged that the fundamental concept underlying the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 should be maintained, namely 'a French sphere centring round Syria, a British sphere centring round the Euphrates and the Tigris, and a home for the Jews in the valley of the Jordan'. (59) Closer harmony between the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Covenant of the League of Nations could be brought about by the abandonment of the special privileges in the blue and red territories, ie the territories marked blue and red on the map of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. These ought to be absorbed into the general sphere of areas A and B. Further, the economic monopoly assigned to France and Britain respectively should be abandoned. Balfour's principles, no doubt, governed the

decisions which had been taken by the autumn of 1919, the most important - and the most secret - being the Lloyd George-Clemenceau arrangement by which Mosul was transferred to the British sphere. (60)

During the period in which the British Government abandoned Faisal to the French and both powers began to take up and consolidate their positions in the spheres which each claimed, work on the Model A mandate had come to a standstill. The dependence of the supporters of the League, and of their drafting experts, on imperialist diplomacy has often been overlooked in assessments and interpretations of Article 22. Before mid-September, in view of France's boycott of joint discussions in the Mandate Drafting Commission, Milner was maintaining that no further action should be taken until the Turkish treaty came up for negotiation. (61) He may in fact have welcomed the French boycott, for in view of the wave of nationalism that swept over the Middle East, and because of British experiments in Egypt and Persia, he felt that the design of any pattern of A mandates had to wait until the internal political situation in the Middle East had cleared up and strategic objectives on its north-eastern flank opposite Bolshevik Russia been attained. There was no longer any chance that a skeleton A mandate, a draft of the major principles only that allowed considerable flexibility of their execution on the part of the mandatory, would be approved by the Supreme Council, for at about the same time Lloyd George suggested adjourning the Peace Conference until after the Americans' attitude to a mandate had been made clear. (62)

Consequently, given no clear interpretation of Article 22, the A mandate became a kind of shuttlecock tossed between the individual mandatory and the Council of the League of Nations. More important, the supporters of the League and the promoters of the Mandates had frequently stated that it was entirely the business of the Supreme Powers to divide up the Middle East and allocate the shares. (This was in fact done at San Remo in April 1920).

The San Remo Agreement, as has often been pointed out, compromised Article 22 because of its disregard for the wishes of the inhabitants of the Arab provinces. Issues just as fundamental were raised, though not yet decided, when before June Lloyd George rejected the draft of the British Mandate for Iraq because it compelled the mandatory power to provide for equal trading rights with all other nations. (63) Lloyd George strongly favoured a restricted open door in Iraq. He really thought that Britain had acquired a

Garden of Eden which would soon yield huge profits to British trade and the economy. ⁽⁶⁴⁾ Yet Lloyd George's rejection of the Draft Mandate was also partly the resistance normally shown by standard policy-makers to any interference from international administration, or, more precisely, to the administrators who sought to usurp the politicians' power. He also reaffirmed his intention that mandates should serve primarily as vehicles for imperial acquisition; administrative needs on the spot must take second place.

2. The consolidation of British power in Iraq

a) The search for cheap rule

While the negotiations of the Supreme Council were in progress in the capitals of the West and at San Remo, national politicians in the Middle East were not idle. Leaders were emerging, thrown up everywhere by local nationalist movements. These demanded the recognition inherent in the principle of self-determination which had been so loudly proclaimed in the Allies' declarations. In Damascus on March 7 1920 the Syrian Congress proclaimed Husain's sons Faisal and Abdullah constitutional monarchs in greater Syria and Iraq. In Persia Reza Khan was intensively training his Cossack Brigade and was beginning to model himself consciously on Mustafa Kemal - the hero who had risen in defiance of the Treaty of Sevres and the British in Asia Minor. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ In Iraq, groups in the towns began to gather strength by setting up nationalist parties like the Hizb al-watani. In Egypt Saad Zaghlul and the Wafd kept Milner on tenterhooks. ⁽⁶⁶⁾

However locally confined, however parochial, the appeal of these leaders to the population may have been, to Englishmen on the spot and in Whitehall, Kemal, Ghandi, Reza Khan and Zaghlul loomed menacingly large. And this despite the Irish Question, which was a simultaneous rival for their attention. It is no exaggeration to say that the Irish Question haunted the British in the Middle East whenever the pattern of imperial rule was discussed. Milner warned Curzon in January 1920 that Egypt, unless handled very delicately, could become 'something like the Irish situation over again'. ⁽⁶⁷⁾ In March 1922 Percy Cox sought to assuage British anger over Iraq by referring to the 'fresh experience of Ireland in Egypt'. ⁽⁶⁸⁾ Yet how could this ever-present Irish Question be solved while the defeat, or at least the prevention of the rise of Kemal in the Middle East was becoming the policy of the day?

It was, of course, generally accepted that there was a 'real awakening in the East' ⁽⁶⁹⁾ which forbade colonization on the lines of the

Belgian Congo. But the politicians and advisers entrusted with safeguarding imperial interests in the Middle East were eager to claim that nationalist sentiment had been aroused and encouraged by the West, and that therefore the West was entitled to 'direct it into healthy channels' - a process already undertaken in India and the Sudan. ⁽⁷⁰⁾ Men on the spot - Arnold Wilson for example - took up the new 'civilizing mission' in a manner which, while thorough enough, was at the same time oblivious of the need to use up-to-date terminology and ambiguity for camouflaging the objectives of imperialist policy. It is true that at Baghdad Arnold Wilson, as Acting Civil Commissioner, was left to cope single-handed with a difficult assignment. In 1919 and 1920 there was no definitive Government policy for the post-war administration of Iraq. Thus what Arnold Wilson was in fact attempting differed hardly at all from what Percy Cox, during his talks in London in April 1918, had proposed as the only viable policy. ⁽⁷¹⁾

The formation of a new policy would have presupposed at least three conditions: first, a Cabinet with enough 'freedom' and energy to devote its attention to the problems of the Middle East and to the reorganisation of imperial command. Secondly, a clear conspectus of the new political and 'national' structure that the Middle East was henceforth to assume. Thirdly, the correct adjustment of Iraq's internal needs and her proper position in the Middle Eastern context. We have already alluded to the handicaps, both psychological and external, which affected the work of the Cabinet. Whitehall and, with some remarkable exceptions, the personnel in the Middle East had for far too long overlooked two essentials. These were that victory had been made increasingly possible by specific political promises and concessions offered both to the indigenous population and to the Western Allies, and that Britain had neither the military nor the diplomatic power to maintain her territorial presence in the Middle East or to exchange her political liabilities either for dictatorial treaties or at least for the appearances of stability.

Consequently, in trying to gather in the spoils with an arrogance out of all proportion to the narrow limitations of its' power the Lloyd George Government created for itself a devastating number of new enemies and critics both at home and abroad. In the process of trying to overcome these it also underwent the humiliating experience of suffering one diplomatic defeat after another while realising step by step the progressive dwindling of British power.

The steps of this enforced retrenchment can be summarised in the

following list:- the Kemalists' defiance of the Treaty of Sevres, the admission of the oil interests of France at San Remo, the fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria, the military withdrawal from Persia, the insurrection on the Euphrates in summer 1920, the boycott of the Milner Commission in Egypt, Ibn Saud's unrestricted challenge of the British-backed Hashemites' sway over Mecca and the Hejaz, and, finally, the acceptance of American oil interests in the Turkish Petroleum Company. In face of these defeats, how could Britain consolidate a position in the Middle East strong enough to safeguard physical control of the oil-bearing regions?

But retrenchment on these issues was not the only factor limiting Britain's political potential. The road was also lined with critics from inside the Coalition, with a press whose cheers were faint and taxpayers who felt that Britannia should have a less expensive trident. A particular feature were the so-called 'soldiers' views' in the Morning Post, the Daily Mail and the Daily News which recalled anew the accepted principles of the Empire's nineteenth century maritime strategy.⁽⁷²⁾ Britain's interests in the Middle East ought, they said, to stop where the tidal waters ended, and in preference to policing Mosul or watching the Caspian, the Government should put its trust in the barrier of the Himalayas, a good treaty with the Afghans, and baksheesh to the tribes in Khuzistan. Particularly wild attacks were made on Winston Churchill, who had been successively Secretary of State for War and Colonial Secretary. Branded as 'the real nigger in the wood-pile' and 'the most mischievous of Ministers', he was held responsible for the immense expenditure incurred in the Middle East.⁽⁷³⁾ Incidentally, it was on the financial issue that The Times joined in the criticism, albeit more moderately, and held Milner and Curzon equally responsible.

Another recurring target of the daily press was the Supreme Council, which was depicted as the most sinister example of despotism in the history of Europe.⁽⁷⁴⁾ The ultra-conservative Morning Post held up to condemnation the results of what it called the 'strategy of the Side-Show'.⁽⁷⁵⁾ These were claimed as disastrous because the Government had failed to supersede war-time strategy in Iraq and elsewhere with a clearcut policy. Elsewhere, Churchill was held up to ridicule for a speech in which he had explained 'how Mesopotamia could be held by armoured cars clanking across the Chaldean plain and by bomb-laden aeroplanes searching the recesses of the Kurdistan mountains'.⁽⁷⁶⁾ No doubt, much of the curious character of these conservative reactions to imperial acquisitiveness was due to the heavy physical drain caused by war casualties,

war-weariness and anxiety to get back to normal. Nevertheless, the huge expenditure of 32 million pounds a year in the Middle East was a highly relevant issue. That it rapidly developed into a fierce campaign against enterprises in Mesopotamia must be explained by the fact that at this time Iraq was, to all intents and purposes, a pivot of British strategy designed to contain the revolutionary unrest all too prevalent in the East.

This conflicting account of Iraq's significance was eagerly spread by pro-imperial newspapers such as the Yorkshire Post. It represented Iraq as a bulwark stemming the tide of Bolshevism in the Middle East. The Middle East was pin-pointed as the area where history would be made in the immediate future:

Mesopotamia, with Syria on the west, Turkey to the north, Persia to the east and a back door opening on the great trade routes of the Indian Ocean, is a centre from which a far-reaching influence may be exerted... There can be no question of the strategic value of Mesopotamia in the new conditions ruling in that part of the world... Mesopotamia runs, like a narrow wedge, up into a mass which is trembling on the brink of anarchy - Syria, Kemalist Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Persia and beyond to Bokhara and Afghanistan. Where is there firm government, security, peace, sanity in these countries? On all sides is war or rumours of war, everywhere whispers of that new power, symptoms of the virulent fever, which we call Bolshevism. Alone in all the Middle East Mesopotamia presents an example of stability... here is the last bulwark which may yet stem the tide, but if it gives way, what will hold back the flood? Assuredly, not the mountain frontiers of India. (77)

If the Yorkshire Post voiced the view of any of the Cabinet Members, it was that of Milner and Churchill,

Whitehall and the Cabinet now came into the picture. In January, March and May 1920 Iraq had been on the agenda of Cabinet meetings. Deliberations had turned on more general topics such as Army estimates, the importance of retaining Mosul for Iraq, and the military situation in northern Persia. (78) In marked contrast by June and before the outbreak of the revolt on the Euphrates Iraq came into the focus of Cabinet attention in the sense that it was realized that action must be taken to ensure its proper administration. Action was urgent for various reasons: after Iraq was allocated to

Britain at San Remo a common formula had to be found for covering an official, and public, repudiation of the unilateral proclamation of Abdullah as King of Iraq made by the Congress at Damascus.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Also, thanks to Curzon's and Montagu's advice, the Cabinet decided it was opportune to take a deliberate stand against the kind of administration set up by Arnold Wilson in Iraq. However, while devising an alternative administrative policy for Iraq, Cabinet discussion was soon pre-occupied with the contest between two rival policies: either to save every possible expense or to maintain expenses at their existing rate.

Milner was the most vociferous in support of the latter alternative. He was worried about what appeared to him as a panicky withdrawal of British forces from Persia. By May 1920 he had already spoken in gloomy terms of a 'Bolshevik Empire extending from Archangel to the Persian Gulf'.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Having propounded the danger in such global dimensions, he prophesied that this Bolshevik Empire in the East would be born by a chain-reaction of regional revolutions. 'A Bolshevik revolution in Persia', he stressed, 'would involve consequences for the British Empire, which it would be worth our while to spend not one, but many millions to avert'. Milner's apprehensions were not simply a bogey created for the sole purpose of driving his point home more forcibly to the Cabinet. He was violently opposed to Bolshevism personally, socially and politically. He used the term Bolshevik in much the same manner and sense in which the slogan 'democrat' had been used against the ideas of the French Revolution a century before, or perhaps as the term 'Maoist' is used today. Bolshevism in a Middle Eastern context was above all revolutionary nationalism, which, if it succeeded in uprooting the social basis of traditional ruling élites, would bring to power a kind of ideological élite with whom Britain would find it impossible to come to terms. Probably his experience in Egypt was beginning to affect his judgement. To knock the bottom out of the hopes of the newly-emerging elites and to take the gilt off the gingerbread of Bolshevism Milner advocated, as a short term policy, that at least a temporary agreement should be made with the regime in Russia.⁽⁸¹⁾ Concurrently, revolutionary unrest in the East should be stifled by military means.

In view of the reports now coming in about the mounting unrest in Iraq, he was arguing:

'It seems to me to be both premature and somewhat ill-omened to attempt to-day to lay down a plan for the administration of Mesopotamia, for it is my intimate conviction that, unless the dangers which now threaten us in

that quarter are faced in time, there will in another twelve months be no question of our administering Mesopotamia at all'.⁽⁸²⁾

Milner's opponents in the Cabinet, foremost among them Churchill, disagreed upon the choice of means rather than about the validity of his apprehensions. Thanks to the technical progress in armaments exemplified by the newly-created Air Force Churchill, still Secretary of State for War, was able to make an alternative suggestion which would be less costly than the maintenance of troops and garrisons.

Seeing that there was general agreement among the majority of the Cabinet that Britain would have to withdraw its forces from Persia, then the stronghold of Iraq could be held by the Air Force. In expounding his Air Force scheme for Iraq, Churchill scored an additional point by asserting that the administration of the country, if attuned to the new military methods of holding it, would also be cheaper than direct rule as it had hitherto been tried.⁽⁸³⁾ What was more, in circumstances of particular stress the new plan would also be elastic. For instance, when on 17 June the Cabinet decided to take preparatory steps towards creating an effective Arab State in Iraq, one of the accompanying draft military conclusions read:

'Contract to railheads in Mesopotamia, and develop Air Force there, and gradually re-occupy as our strength grows and circumstances allow in the next few years'.⁽⁸⁴⁾

What worried Milner and Curzon as well as the men on the spot about this policy was its strong 'element of gamble'. In view of the Turkish menace on the northern frontier of Iraq and the growing unrest in the country itself, the temporary reduction of the British forces would mean a gap between the maintenance of the Government's commitments for keeping law and order and the actual power available to guarantee their ability to fulfil these commitments should hostilities break out.

Incidentally, it was this ruthless and promising money-saving device of the Air Force Scheme which had commended Churchill as Managing Director for the Middle East. Again, owing to the worsening financial situation at home, the projected separate Middle East Office - at one stage, officials had dreamed of a viceroyalty of the Middle East - had been reduced to a sub-department of the Colonial Office. Thus, early in 1921, Churchill was made Secretary of State for the Colonies. His appointment also put an end to the long drawn-out struggle to unify British imperial control in the Middle East.⁽⁸⁵⁾

The Treasury's point of view likewise helped to shape the third

pillar supporting the British position in Iraq: namely, the Faisal Amirate. Whitehall's gamble on an Iraqi Amirate as a device for making the mandate less expensive was perhaps the outstanding feature of British policy-making on the eve of the Cairo Conference of March 12. First signs of this had emerged in the Cabinet a year earlier, in March 1920.⁽⁸⁶⁾ By the beginning of August, soon after his fall at Damascus, Faisal became the favourite of the Finance Committee of the Cabinet.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Owing, however, to the ensuing upsurge of Arab indignation in Iraq, his status as a candidate for headship of the Amirate was affected by the vacillations of Cabinet opinion. For might not Faisal, in the end, recoil on both the French and the British? But hesitation was gradually replaced by hope: the more Faisal could be made into a puppet ruler, the less obligatory would be the duties and responsibilities of the mandatory power. This consideration was a strong point for those who advocated a 'One-Clause' mandate at the Cabinet Meeting in October.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Nevertheless, by January 1921 Winston Churchill, in whose hands lay the final decision was still apprehensive lest by embarking on a Sherifian policy in Iraq Faisal might help to advance a movement aimed primarily at the destruction of British influence in the East. This was a contingency against which Percy Cox in a secret despatch had urged Churchill to insure.⁽⁸⁹⁾ Churchill took his advice seriously. 'A little more time and consideration', he wrote to the Premier, 'are needed before definitely launching Faisal. I must feel my way and feel sure of my way. I have seen Lawrence and am making certain inquiries'.⁽⁹⁰⁾

Churchill hesitated for two reasons. In contrast to the Prime Minister - who was convinced that the mandate, however rigidly defined in theory, would turn out differently in practice and would be more to the economic benefit of the mandatory - Churchill was apprehensive lest the mandate as drafted in January 1921 would deprive Britain of any material gains and would consequently expose Whitehall to attack at home on the subject of Mesopotamian expenditure.⁽⁹¹⁾ He thought that prospects of compensation for the expenses would quieten criticism at party political level. But would Faisal allow Britain to reap material benefits? Churchill's second problem was the cohesiveness of all issues in the Middle East region:

'The Arab problem is all one, and any attempt to divide it will only reintroduce the same paralysis and confusion of

action which has done so much harm during the last two years. It will be fatal to all prospects of success to introduce conflicting or divergent policies.

Faisal or Abdullah, whether in Mesopotamia or Mecca, King Hussein at Mecca, Bin Saud at Nejd, Bin Rashid at Hail; the Sheikh of Kowait; and King Samuel at Jerusalem are all inextricably interwoven, and no conceivable policy can have any chance which does not pull all the strings affecting them'.⁽⁹²⁾

It was here that Churchill sought advice from Lawrence, with his expertise in reading the shifting sands in inter-Arab relations.

Lawrence for his part, sensed a welcome opportunity for atoning for part of the British volte-face towards their Arab war-time allies.⁽⁹³⁾ Of course, Faisal had more friends among the British, who also thought that his candidature in Iraq would assuage their sense of guilt for having allowed the French to oust him from Syria.

However, none of these sentiments were much heard at the Cairo Conference. When on March 12 1921 Churchill, together with representatives of the Middle East Department, the War Office, the Air Ministry and the Middle East Service gathered together at Cairo, the agenda for discussions contained two major issues concerning Iraq. These were: (a) the immediate curtailment of British expenditure in Iraq, and (b) the establishment of an Amirate under Faisal as 'the best and cheapest solution'.⁽⁹⁴⁾ On both of these there was from the outset general agreement. The decisions taken for immediate implementation, all set out in great detail, extended from the exact schedule of Faisal's accession to the throne of Iraq down to the estimated number of army horses to be disposed of in order to save the Imperial Exchequer the cost of feeding them. The curtailment of British expenditure was to be brought about largely by the reduction of British military commitments.⁽⁹⁵⁾ This was to be done in two phases. In the first and immediate phase, before the outbreak of the hot weather, the Imperial Forces were to be reduced by one-third, irrespective of any political implications. By contrast, in the second phase, which was to start within the current financial year, further substantial reductions were to be made dependent on 'the prior formation of a local government of real prestige and authority'.⁽⁹⁶⁾ The exact sum to be saved during the first phase from April to

October 1921 amounted to five million pounds sterling. Further savings of about three millions were anticipated from the remaining months of the financial year. Thus the total annual expenditure of about 32 millions for the year 1920/21 was, for the following year, to be reduced to 24 millions. Further savings were to follow.

The establishment of the desired kind of government was regarded as identical with the acclamation of Faisal as King of Iraq. Other candidates such as the Naqib of Baghdad, Sayyid Talib of Basra, the Sheikh of Muhammerah, Ibn Saud, the Agha Khan and even Bourhan Ed-din, the Turkish Prince, were proposed only to be dismissed.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Judgement was made solely on the unassailable grounds of Faisal's usefulness as a political instrument. Since after Cairo Faisal largely failed to retain the support of his British proposers, it is worthwhile summarizing the advantages which the British saw in him.

Churchill's argument was that a Sherifian policy enabled the British Government 'to bring pressure to bear on one Arab sphere in order to attain their own ends in another'.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Percy Cox favoured Faisal for his diplomatic experience with the Allies and his capacity 'for raising an army quickly'.⁽⁹⁹⁾ Lawrence pointed out that the scattered, backward and only half-civilized Iraqi society needed as its first ruler 'an active and inspiring personality'.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Gertrude Bell, the eminent expert on tribal policies and Oriental Secretary to the High Commissioner at Baghdad, urged that rather than leave the Sherifian propaganda unopposed, the British Government should make use of 'the only pan-Arab propaganda ... likely to make headway'.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Clearly, the financial and political reasons why the British Government should launch Faisal in Iraq were overwhelming. As a complementary measure, favourable classes of Iraqi society such as the big landowners, the merchants, the Kurds and the levies from among the soldiers were chosen to curtail expenditure and consolidate control over the country, both aims being in the British interest. In the terminology of camouflage, of course, these stable elements of Iraqi society had to be mobilized in order to provide Faisal's accession with constitutional backing. In return for British power behind the Throne the monarchy was expected to make the country 'free from organised rebellion' by providing Iraqi society with a focal point.

The Conference also envisaged a variety of half-measures which were designed to accompany, if not actually to bring about, Faisal's

candidature. These would ensure that the second stage of financial saving should be a success. They were: provision for the modification of the mandate terms and the eventual conclusion of an Anglo-Iraqi treaty; eventual integration of the Kurds into the Iraqi body politic; the shaping of Iraq's external relations with the adjacent states of Persia and Turkey and the adjacent Arab tribes of the Shammar, as well as with the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh and Ibn Saud; and, finally, the formation of an Iraqi army.

It remained for the value of these measures to be proved by their results.

b) The nursing of the contracting partner

In the years after the Cairo Conference, from 1921 until 1928, Iraq showed an astonishingly full record of constitutional progress, at least on paper. By July 1924 there existed, though not yet in a ratified form, a fully-fledged Iraqi Constitution, known as the Organic Law, built up from an amalgam of numerous draft articles, paragraphs, sub-items and amendments.⁽¹⁰²⁾ Three weeks after its approval by the Constituent Assembly the Electoral Law was passed, and a year later in July 1925 the first Iraqi Parliament was convened. Hand in hand with this constitutional development of the State went the organisation of the provinces and municipalities. There was also the extension of the judicial system in its three aspects of Civil Law, Shariah Law and regulations about tribal disputes. Although innovations were made in all three spheres, the chief tendency was to transfer all law to the Civil Courts.

Although the Iraqi Constitution was meant to be a permanent instrument of indigenous government, it nevertheless tended to become an instrument of British policy from the moment its drafting was first begun early in 1921.⁽¹⁰³⁾ The shaping of the Royal prerogatives was the most notable example of this intrusion of British policy. British motives were complex. During the Cairo talks Faisal had solved the issue of British rule in Iraq by providing a cheap solution, and had also recommended himself as a contracting partner able to be quickly and conveniently at hand in case the safeguarding of British imperial objectives ever required settlements by convention or treaty. Indeed, it was with the help of Faisal's Royal prerogatives that Percy Cox, the High Commissioner, hoped easily to place Iraq's emerging parliamentary system under British control. 'The more nominal power the King has',

he wrote, 'the easier will it be for the High Commissioner to influence the course of events'.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ In practice this meant that in order to ensure a recalcitrant Constituent Assembly or Parliament did not obstruct any conditions or treaty obligations imposed by the British, the King had to be enabled to overrule either body by using the prerogative of veto, and legislation had specially to be prepared for such a contingency. In this respect, Faisal's accession in Iraq was skilfully engineered as a means of balancing the political extremism of the nationalists and the numerous factions constituted by parochial, personal or tribal bonds of allegiance.

Practice proved less smooth than theory when before the middle of 1921 Faisal was launched. Faisal's accession to the throne of Iraq had, for various reasons, to be made to appear as the result of the spontaneous and widespread acclamation of the Iraqi people. The main difficulty for the British was that while they had to efface themselves as the instigators of this acclamation in order to give Faisal the chance of gaining approval from different sections of Iraqi society and the French Government, they had at the same time to prevent his candidature from becoming an issue in the forthcoming election campaign for the Constituent Assembly.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ For, in such a campaign, he might conceivably have to enter into some binding engagements with the electorate in order to outbid rival candidates - such as Sayyid Talib of Basra.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ The British were afraid of events like those which overtook Faisal at the General Arab Congress in Damascus.

The danger that Faisal's kingship might become an election issue was all the greater because Churchill had set his mind on rushing through the King's accession. He was banking on the advantages of an early treaty relationship between Britain and Iraq. In his choice of priorities the mandate clearly came second. Before July he had made this note: 'There is also too much talk about Mandates, Mandatories and things like that. All this obsolescent rigmarole is not worth telegraphing about'.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Churchill had told Cox that he must neither permit Faisal's candidature to be hampered by the forthcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly nor, conversely, must he delay the elections because of Faisal's canvassing tour. Cox took a different view. He saw indications that the elections might, indeed, be used by Faisal's rivals for making the rule of Iraq an election issue. He assumed that Abdar-Rahman al-Gailani, the Naqib of Baghdad, and the much younger Talib of Basra, who both had republican leanings, would

gain considerable following in the elections. Cox therefore did not merely withhold the promulgation of the electoral law; he went further, encouraging all those who tried to prevent early elections, by raising their hopes that the Provisional Government as set up after the revolt of summer 1920 would be continued. (108)

While Whitehall was quick to take Cox's advice because it trusted his expertise in local affairs Cox, on his part, now urged Churchill to avoid the mandate formula in all further dealings with Faisal. (109) He also warned Churchill that any resort to a camouflaged form of the mandate would not help, because the Iraqis rejected the mandate principle. But this time it was Cox who had to give in. Significantly, British oil policy was an important ingredient in the decision to keep to the mandatory principle. As Churchill instructed Cox in a personal and secret letter of August 1921:

'... it should be explained to him (Faisal) that the British Government must proceed in a lawful and regular manner in regard to their treaty obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations and special undertakings like the Anglo-French oil treaty. Under the pressure of oil interests the U S are making difficulties in the Council of League of Nations if they join with the French against the Faisal regime. There, difficulties might well become insurmountable unless we follow absolutely correct procedure. Faisal would be most foolish to seek to cut himself off from the august authority of the Covenant of the League of Nations which gives him his status in the international circle and in the eyes of the whole world'. (110)

Deprived of the magic of the concept, the question of the mandate issue naturally boiled down to the problem of deciding what kind of advice the British should give as the Mandatory Power. As the draft Iraq Mandate had not yet passed the League Council, Britain resorted to a treaty by way of camouflage. The Cabinet draft of early 1922 emphasised the binding character of the advice the British Government would tender to Faisal. Faisal objected strongly to this stipulation. His substitute for the wording to be 'guided by the advice' read 'to accord all due consideration to advice given to him'. (111) Only by Cox's skilful mediation was a complete deadlock between Faisal and Whitehall averted. It was decided that in giving advice to Faisal the High Commissioner was not to be subject to detailed instructions

from Whitehall. This would apply above all in the crucial sector of finance. 'Comment or suggestions regarding details of expenditure should emanate from the High Commissioner and not from London'.⁽¹¹²⁾ In essence, Whitehall's compliance with Cox's wishes was really no more than expedient, considering what the Iraqis were expecting. What happened was that the financial clauses which originally had all been contained in one single Article and had clearly been subjected to the binding force of HMG's advice tendered through the High Commissioner were now partly tucked away in other Articles and partly, under provision of Article XV which was reserved for a subsidiary financial agreement, to follow after the signature of the treaty.⁽¹¹³⁾

But Whitehall failed to allay Faisal's mistrust. The King seems to have been fully aware of the political consequences which had (as in Egypt) usually followed from British or international control over finance. He therefore demanded a special assurance from Whitehall that the British Government would never 'allow international or private obligations and interests to prejudice the national interests of Iraq'.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Whitehall gave no such assurance. They were even more annoyed by a resolution opposing a mandate which Faisal had helped to prepare and on the British acceptance of which the Iraqi Council of Ministers intended to make its own acceptance of the treaty dependent. Ja'far Pasha, Subih, Nuri al-Said and other members of the Palace clique were all involved in it.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

Faisal's complicity in these efforts precipitated a major crisis of British trust in him. They turned sharply against him, condemned his character and never again showed any sincere respect for him. Cox was no exception: 'Faisal' he wrote home to Churchill 'unmistakably displayed the cloven hoof. I have endeavoured to be absolutely straightforward and frank to him, and to treat him like a brother, but there you are, when he is scratched deep enough the racial weakness displays itself'.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ A little later he described Faisal's tactics as 'without any doubt both crooked and insincere', while Cornwallis, Faisal's intimate friend and adviser, suggested that 'he must be saved from himself'.^(117, 118) These comments by the experts on the spot were rapidly repeated in Whitehall and their reverberations lasted throughout the following years.

Meantime by the end of July, while the Middle East Department began to draft alternative policies such as the removal of Faisal and

his replacement by Abdullah or the Naqib of Baghdad, the King was summoned to appear in London together with Cox. (119, 120) But Faisal, probably right in fearing that he would be asked to resign, stayed in Baghdad, loyal, not to the British but to his own cause. (121) Now two alternatives were proposed to Churchill. (122) To break the general stalemate in treaty negotiations which also seriously affected the drafting of the Organic Law, Cox urged Churchill to arrange for a debate on Iraq in the Commons, and to use the opportunity for making a general announcement about the alternatives facing British policy in Iraq, failing a settlement of the treaty with Faisal. These alternatives, which he intended should be reported immediately by Reuters, would have to be framed in such a way as to put Faisal under maximum pressure. In effect, though not in form, the announcement in Parliament was to be an ultimatum. In contrast, Hubert Young of the Middle East Department suggested leaving the treaty question to be decided in the forthcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly. Until then, he felt Britain would be well advised to set out, in carefully timed statements, what the Mandate really implied for the Iraqis. In both cases the final alternative was British withdrawal to the Basra vilayet.

Churchill rejected the two proposals. Parliament, he thought, was a body that must be placated with the news of success, not failure, particularly in view of its opposition to expenditure in Iraq. Thus Parliament should be given no idea of the tension that existed between the British Government and Faisal. (123) As for Young's proposal Churchill, on Cox's advice, rejected the idea of making the treaty an election issue. The High Commissioner, whose new policy was to separate Faisal from the Extremists, was for a moment at a loss as to what to do if in the elections the nationalists were openly backed by Faisal. (124) Consequently the elections for the Constituent Assembly were once again postponed.

Meanwhile Churchill began to wage a diplomatic war of attrition: all administrative work and constitutional debate were to be held up for the time being. The British presence was, however, still to be maintained. As he wrote to Cox before August 1922, 'I hope you will not get tired of playing a long game'. (125) The state of acute crisis was reached more quickly than Churchill had expected. By the 23rd of the month, when the Naqib's Cabinet resigned, Iraq was virtually being ruled by Air Force demonstrations.

Two days later, Churchill seemed already to have booked Faisal's passage into exile in Ceylon. (126) Churchill was sure that the Cabinet in Whitehall would never agree to spend the extra money necessary to quell another general rising in Iraq; the Cabinet would be divided between immediate withdrawal to Basra or else perseverance within the limits of the current expenditure. Churchill preferred the latter course. Yet as he was strongly inclined to remove Faisal from Iraq, he feared that such action, by demonstrating too openly the failure of British policy, might tip the balance in favour of those Cabinet colleagues who advocated evacuation. A similar consequence, however, was sure to result if there was a general rising prompted by Faisal's removal.

Churchill's successive steps during the days when Faisal was on the sick list and Cox was being consulted as to the likelihood of a general rising, showed how anxious he was to conceal the failure of the Cairo policy from Parliament and the Cabinet. On 28 August, when the Cabinet met unexpectedly to discuss unemployment and reparations, Churchill could have brought the Iraq issue onto the agenda; but, being anxious not to arouse those who advocated a 'bag and baggage policy', he preferred to wait for a meeting after the summer break. (127) Meanwhile, one more effort had to be made to bend Faisal to British will. 'My suggestion', he wrote to Cox, 'in principle is to take advantage of the present situation to establish the Naqib and the Ministry in a position of far greater strength than they have hitherto occupied and to reduce Faisal to a strictly limited and constitutional role'. (128) Now everything depended on whether Faisal would acquiesce in the action to be taken by Cox. In the end a stiff ultimatum brought about the desired effect; as Churchill had insinuated to Cox on 30 August:

'Faisal's answer to your forthcoming ultimatum is the point on which everything turns... I presume that you will point out to him that it is very likely that a final breach with him will involve a complete change in our whole policy in Arabia. At the present time it is only with great difficulty and a considerable expense that we are holding back Ibn Saud from attacking the Hedjaz, and if we disinterest ourselves in these regions, as well we may, Faisal will have accomplished the ruin of his house as well as his own downfall for a second time'. (129)

Obviously, after only a year, the Cairo policy had failed in all

but one respect: the lever of having the Hashemite dynasty in British hands had helped Britain to maintain her position in Baghdad. ⁽¹³⁰⁾

For it must be doubted whether the British, once having withdrawn to Basra, would have been able or even allowed by their allies to reconquer the oil-bearing regions of Baghdad and Mosul. In all other respects the Cairo policy had left a deplorable legacy: a wreck of a King, a halt to the policy of saving money, a host of postponements in constitutional development, and finally delay in the treaty settlement.

Owing to Faisal's temporary fall from British favour, Whitehall transferred its support from the Palace to the Iraqi Cabinet. ⁽¹³²⁾ Late in 1922 they were hoping that closer links between the High Commissioner and the ministers of the Naqib's cabinet, who each commanded a large following among the electorate, would in the forthcoming elections create the large majority needed to push through the treaty together with a new programme for the national economy. ⁽¹³³⁾ Whitehall planned further savings to reduce expenditure from £8,000,000 to £4,000,000 in the next year compared with £32,000,000 two years earlier. ⁽¹³⁴⁾ Despite the revival of the Turkish menace to Iraq in the wake of the Chanak crisis of late September 1922, the Lloyd George Cabinet, then on its last legs, hoped to make political capital out of the situation - provided that warlike measures could be avoided. As a Cabinet minute read, 'Trouble with the Turk was the time for friendship with the Arab'. ⁽¹³⁵⁾

The Armistice of Mudanya with the Turks, on 10 October 1922, fitted in well with the signing of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty by Faisal and the Naqib at Baghdad on the same day. But Mudanya did not remove the Turkish menace from Mosul; and the signing of the Treaty did not force the Iraqi extremists and nationalists out of the picture: they still had a say in its ratification. On the other hand, although the signing of the Treaty was, by itself, a success for British policy, the Treasury point of view must be taken into account when assessing its merits.

Briefly, as the Treaty did not commit Britain to giving any definite military or financial assistance, Whitehall thought that the prospects for saving were good. In contrast, to the experts on the spot, such studied vagueness increased uncertainty about the British Government's designs in Iraq. ⁽¹³⁶⁾ Uncertainty soon spread from the High Commissioner's staff to the Naqib and his ministers. As these people were primarily concerned about their large vested

interests in the country and their own safety, and as they feared that Britain might evacuate Iraq and the Turks return, they neither committed themselves as candidates in the election nor did anything to encourage other moderates to come forward. Their reluctance became more marked before the beginning of the Lausanne Conference on October 30 1922. In view of this impasse Cox suggested to Devonshire, who had succeeded Churchill in charge of the Colonial Office, that he should either give the Naqib the absolute guarantee of British support, or allow the latter to be replaced by a premier assisted by a ministry of ardent nationalists.⁽¹³⁷⁾ As Whitehall refused to give any guarantee, Cox had to resort to a reshuffle of the Cabinet. His manipulation resulted in a certain comeback for Faisal, when, on November 22 1923 the interim Premier Abd al-Mushin Bey al-Sadun was replaced by Faisal's henchman Ja'far al-Askari.

However, during al-Askari's tenure of office Faisal was once again placed in a quandary by British policy. Ramsey MacDonald had formed the first British Labour Government.⁽¹³⁸⁾ As peace with Kemalist Turkey had been concluded at Lausanne, he pressed for ratification of the Treaty with Iraq and its subsidiary agreements as a quid pro quo for fighting Iraq's 'frontier battle' in the north. In addition MacDonald bravely playing up to the League he had helped to foster, had the subject of Iraq put on the agenda of the League Council for June 11 1924. In Iraq this had all the appearance of an ultimatum- which in fact it was. The stringency of Whitehall's conditions were enhanced by the increase of imperial fervour among the British advisers in Iraq. Startled by the news of the election of a Labour Government, they regarded themselves as indispensable tutors of an ignorant trustee of Britain's imperial interests in the Middle East. Accordingly, the dispatches sent to J H Thomas, the new Colonial Secretary, were longer and were accompanied by a marked increase in proffered advice and the demands which Henry Dobbs made in Baghdad.⁽¹³⁹⁾ Where Iraqi efforts to lighten the burdens of the subsidiary military and financial agreements were concerned, Dobbs even overruled the Middle East Department by enforcing a policy of 'no amendments'.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ It is true that the Labour Government was at a loss for new ideas: J H Thomas, trying to devise alternative policies in case the Iraqi Constituent Assembly rejected the treaty, went back step by step through all the previous policies.⁽¹⁴¹⁾ Admittedly, other alternatives, among them such obvious expedients as British withdrawal

to the Basra vilayet, had been aired in close consultation with the Air Staff and the Committee of Imperial Defence. ⁽¹⁴²⁾ But they were dismissed on the grounds of the additional expenditure involved, loss of prestige throughout the East and the difficulty of justifying such action before the League.

In Iraq the political scene was meantime marked by a new polarization. The very coalition Faisal had sought to bring together and lead in political struggle with the British to consolidate his position in Iraq seemed intent on bringing about his fall and on getting rid of him. Yasin Pasha, his former Chief of Staff in Damascus, had joined forces with the republican Muhsin al-Sadun in opposing the treaty in its existing form. In fact, it was the previous Cabinet, composed of ardent nationalists, which dominated the Constituent Assembly and made life hard for Jafar al-Askari, Faisal's protegee and Prime Minister. In this dilemma, Faisal's chances of having a dynastic and political future in Iraq, and of being any more use as a British instrument of control, were very slim. Survival depended on whether he, together with Dobbs, could succeed in winning for the treaty a majority in the Assembly.

Much as already become known about the events which led up to the acceptance of the treaty. ⁽¹⁴³⁾ But new evidence has revealed some hitherto unknown ingredients of the final vote. From May onwards Dobbs, who clearly saw the political consequences of Faisal's elimination, meticulously avoided mentioning the fact that one of HMG's political alternatives included his removal. Dobbs' motives are well expressed in a despatch that same month. He wrote:

'I consider that the curtailed statement which I suggested is preferable because at all events it does not state definitely that if Faisal does not succeed HMG will adopt a course which would, I fear, be welcomed by the majority, in their present frame of mind. If they do not know that we contemplate the latter course in the event of failure of the King, they may fear that we will adopt some other course not so welcome, whereas if they knew definitely, they would work for and bring about his failure'. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

Thomas left Dobbs considerable discretion. Dobbs confined himself to creating a situation in which the air was full of rumours of a British policy which would consist in making her own bargain with Turkey about Mosul. The desired effect soon resulted. 'The Assembly' Dobbs reported home, 'immediately behaved with the contrariness of an Irish pig and bolted in the opposite direction'. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ The spread of the

rumour had fitted in well with the propaganda of the British-controlled Baghdad Times which was reporting that Turkey had colonialist designs on Iraq and that pro-Turkish agents in Baghdad had goaded the deputies into voting against the treaty, or at least into abstaining. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ On the whole, because it engendered anxiety about retaining the Mosul vilayet, this process improved the prospects of the treaty's being accepted. Dobbs, it is true, was still worried by the resultant rider in the Assembly's majority resolution which provided that both Treaty and Subsidiary Agreement should become null and void if the British Government failed to preserve Mosul for Iraq; but to his surprise Whitehall took no exception to this proviso. ⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

In their fresh attempts to make Iraq's constitutional progress depend on their imperial interests being safeguarded, the British used again the earlier gambit of strengthening Faisal's Royal powers as King at the expense of Parliament and the Ministry. Evidently, Whitehall, for short-term objectives, had tilted the balance between moderates and extremists too much in favour of the latter.

A significant feature of the passing of the Treaty on June 10 and the Organic Law a month later was the activity and subsequent rise of Yasin Pasha. According to Jafar al-Askari, Yasin Pasha had voted against the Treaty as a face-saving gesture, while at the same time inducing others to vote for it. ⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ He had also asked a certain number of deputies who opposed the Treaty to stay away from the debate and the vote. Dobbs reported, 'As things are, owing to the prospect of early office being dangled before him, it has been mainly owing to his instrumentality that the Organic Law, quite contrary to expectation, has passed through the Assembly smoothly'. ⁽¹⁴⁹⁾

But it was not solely on account of his clandestine services that on August 2 1924 Yasin Pasha, in spite of his public defiance of the Treaty in June, became Prime Minister. Dobbs feared that if he were kept out of office Yasin's position would become 'almost certainly analogous to that of Zaghoul in Egypt', as a result of the approaching elections, since the British had 'no alternative but to accept him as Prime Minister after having allowed him to drift into definite opposition to British influence'. ⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ He also agreed with Faisal that, for safety reasons, Yasin had better be made Prime Minister with no portfolio rather than a Minister in charge of a definite department. Yasin Pasha's assumption of the premiership, together with the appointment of members of the eminent Sadun, Gailani and Pachachi families as Cabinet ministers, ironically installed in the Government political groups of notables and nationalists who had relentlessly opposed the Treaty.

Dobbs and Faisal, though appearing opportunist in making Yasin Prime Minister, had no real choice of any alternative (Cabinet) which would be likely to exert any authority, or enjoy any influence, among the numerous political factions of Iraqi society.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ Nevertheless, the ease with which, on the eve of Iraq's first elections for Parliament, both men concurred in the assumption of office by the coalition of those opposed to the Treaty was due to their determination that full use should be made both of the Royal prerogatives under the Provisional Government and the various control mechanisms provided for once the Organic Law came into force.

By 1924 one of the primary concerns of British policy in Iraq was once again to enable Faisal to control Parliament and so obtain the necessary legislation to execute treaty obligations and grant concessions to British-backed oil companies. At Baghdad the debates in the Assembly, vitiated as they were by the combination of the political élite in a pronounced anti-Treaty and anti-British bloc, portended worse troubles in the future resulting from parliamentary rule.⁽¹⁵²⁾ In Whitehall Hubert Young, who ever since 1921 had been in charge of negotiating both Treaty and Organic Law, gave much attention to formulating legislative procedures which would leave room for Britain to interfere through the agency of the King.⁽¹⁵³⁾

By June 1924 he was preoccupied with routine parliamentary procedures. He considered carefully the optimum size of membership of a parliament made up of a Senate of the King's nominees and a Chamber of elected deputies. His estimate of the ideal number of members was the 'most favourable contingency for the combined Assembly to upset a decision of the Lower House'.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ As the number of senators was already fixed at 20, he departed from the minimum number of 56 deputies in the Lower House and went so far as to recommend that a law to which there were considerable objectors should be able to be passed by the casting vote of the President of the Chamber, ie by 29 votes to 28. In this way the combined strength of both assemblies would amount to 29 + 28 + 20 members during the passage of a law through Parliament. As the maximum of 48 votes against the law would still fail to reach the required two-thirds necessary for bringing about its rejection the law, no matter how strongly the British objected to it, would nevertheless be passed.

Since the number of senators was already fixed, and since the

number of deputies was more likely to increase than decrease, actual voting in Parliament was fairly secure against British interference. Young therefore resorted to the Royal prerogatives and to the emergency provisions included in the final Organic Law: 'for the purpose of forcing through any legislations which we consider desirable we must always fall back upon Art. 26(c) of the Law, ie we must wait until the session is over'. With further possible contingencies in mind Young continued: 'for the purpose of blocking objectionable legislation we must induce the King to withhold his approval, which by Art. 62(1) is necessary before a Bill becomes law...if by any chance we wanted legislation passed while Parliament was in session, we could move the King to dissolve and to legislate under Art. 26(c)'.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾

The lengths to which the British, with their political expertise, were resolved to go in order to prevent unwelcome legislation or constitutional manoeuvre, is neatly revealed by Young's reflection on an Iraqi motion for amending Art. 32 of the Organic Law. This Article stipulated that dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies must automatically bring about the dissolution of the Senate, while the amendment suggested that the Senate should be able to vote even on its own temporary extinction. As no Senate could be expected to do this, Young considered the possibility of declaring martial law in case the Senate, if subjected to intimidation or itself assumed a revolutionary role, failed to vote for dissolution. Article 32 was not amended, however: Part X of the Organic Law provided for the proclamation of martial law in case of regional disturbances but, significantly, only with the concurrence of the Cabinet, not of Parliament or the Senate.

The powerful prerogatives of the King, together with the emergency laws and the general framework of the Organic Law, were further underpinned by provisions intended to safeguard their continuance against interruption by constitutional amendments in general. These were to be restricted for the first five years after the Organic Law had come into force. Moreover, not only had each amendment to be accepted by a two-thirds' majority in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies respectively, but if and when these were accepted the bill had to be delayed until the elections for the next parliament before it could again be submitted to both houses. Only then could an amendment be submitted to the King for his approval and promulgation.

As if this were not enough, in the following year, 1925, LS Amery

as Secretary of State for the Colonies in the Baldwin Government, instructed Faisal how to make full use of his prerogatives.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Significantly, Amery in particular urged Faisal 'to take a more active part (than the English King did) in questioning the views of a minister or ministry'. In the case of disagreement between King and minister he emphasised that, providing the minister did not enjoy the support of Parliament, 'the natural course of a minister who could not induce the King to accept his views on a subject of any importance would be to resign'. On the other hand, while conceding that the King's views ought not to prevail if the minister was supported by a parliamentary majority, Amery expressed strong doubts whether, since there was no well-organized and rigid party system, this essential criterion of parliamentary support was ascertainable, or indeed feasible. He was obviously trying to leave the King considerable discretion in the matter. In this way he encouraged Faisal to interfere with the affairs of ministers and ministries in a manner which soon became known and widely criticized as 'Faisal's rule by whim'.

Faisal, eager to learn anything which could raise his hopes of consolidating authority in Iraq, nevertheless did not spare his criticisms of British presumption, implicit in the fact that both Amery and Dobbs expected that whatever the British Government decided to do would constitute the norm for the proper volonté générale of the Iraqis. The British Government held that the Iraqis could only show a correct political attitude, and good parliamentary behaviour, if they adhered absolutely to the Treaty as it stood. This attitude revealed a totalitarian sort of claim to control Iraq. More than that: while the Assembly had accepted the Treaty on the assurance that amendments were to follow immediately, Britain had gone back on her word and had, by the rigid provisions of the Organic Law, prevented Iraq's political intelligentsia from obtaining amendments by a process of smooth constitutional procedure.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ There were more signs that British influence would seriously restrict the procedures of Parliament and their scope for legislation. Such signs were seen in the habit of British advisers of sending confidential letters to the Mutasarrifs 'to ensure the return of deputies favourable to the Treaty' on the eve of the elections; in walk-outs during debates or voting in Parliament; and in the frequent reshuffling of the Iraqi Cabinet.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ Nevertheless, when the mutually destructive tensions between British and Iraqis moved away from the restricted stage of metropolitan Baghdad to the broader backcloth of a national

'representative' Parliament, partisanship among Iraq's rival political factions was intensified.

For the years 1925 and 1926, which were decisive for the settlement of the T P C oil concession, a good example of this tendency is provided by the increasing bitterness of the struggle between Abd ul-Muhsin on the one side, and Yasin Pasha, together with Rashid Ali al-Gallani, on the other. Initially the point at issue was the amendment of the financial subsidiary Agreement of March 25 1924. The British Labour Government, by underwriting this amendment in June 1924, had induced the Constituent Assembly to accept the unequal Treaty but had not been able to fulfil its promise. On November 4 1924 the Conservative Baldwin Government had come to power and Amery, its Colonial Secretary, prevented the amendment from being implemented by using the argument that as the Treaty had been submitted to the League of Nations on September 27 1924 the British Government was no longer in a position to act on its own. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

The Iraqis were quick to react. When in the summer of 1925 the British, prompted by suggestions from the International Mosul Boundary Commission, started talks with the object of getting both Mandate and Treaty prolonged from four to twenty-five years, the Iraqi Government under Yasin al-Hashami and then under Abd al-Muhsin as-Sadun resolved to use the opportunity to force the amendment of the Financial and Military Subsidiary Agreements. They had a strong case for complaint because the report of the British Financial Mission to Iraq in that year had confirmed their criticism that the financial burden was unbearable. ^(160, 161) Bourdillon, the Acting High Commissioner, made the same point to Amery: 'The demands for the lightening of the burdens imposed upon Iraq by the existing Treaty and agreements is one that can be neither ignored nor dismissed as unreasonable'. ⁽¹⁶²⁾

However, Amery turned a deaf ear to the Iraqi requests. He warned the Iraqi Government not to assume that Whitehall might in the end give way to the combined pressure of Iraqi demands and Labour Opposition at home. ⁽¹⁶³⁾ He referred once more to the Mosul frontier dispute. 'The Iraq Government must understand that the draft Treaty ... represents the only means by which HMG can obtain for them the frontier which they regard as essential for the future existence of Iraq'. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

The Iraqis' response to Amery's uncompromising attitude took various forms. Deputies who supported the Treaty were aghast at the prospect of having to meet the cost of increasing military expenditure

out of a revenue system which had not improved since it was drawn up provisionally by Colonel Howell during the military occupation.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Instead of the possibility of receiving grants-in-aid - the offer made at a later stage by Amery - they preferred to see the supplies of the British forces submitted to customs duty: grants, they realised, would only increase the public debt. There was a widespread belief that, because of their interest in oil and the increasing rate of their investment, the British Government would never desert Iraq or give up Mosul. In consequence some groups of deputies, particularly those under the influence of Yasin Pasha and Rashid Ali adopted delaying tactics and demanded that the debate on the Treaty be transferred from the Chamber of Deputies to a special committee.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾

By prolonging this debate and giving maximum publicity to their views they hoped that they would catch the imagination of the electorate.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾

In contrast, the Government Party of Abd al-Muhsin (Taqaddam) had doubts as to whether the British really were resolved to hold on to Mosul. It felt that the shock administered to Britain by the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality of December 17 1925 had brought relations between Britain and Turkey to a point of crisis and that if this were resolved it might be to the disadvantage of Iraq. On the other hand, as the Taqaddam Party relied upon the support of the Kurdish deputies it had become very sensitive to any turn in the Mosul question. It was hence open to the least pressure from Britain in this matter. This, and the dependence of Faisal and his supporters on the Sunni Kurdish deputies for balancing their position against the Shiab deputies, meant that a majority in favour of the Treaty was established in Parliament.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ Against this majority Yasin Pasha's motion for transferring the Treaty to a special committee stood no chance of success. Abd al-Muhsin, following up his sweeping victory over Yasin, proposed to continue the debate on the Treaty in 'secret session' in order to 'prevent the heat of the discussion being reported in the press'.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ In protest against this motion Yasin and eighteen other members walked out of the Assembly of Deputies and so took no part in the final ratification of the Treaty, which established the Faisal regime as Britain's contracting partner in Iraq. On January 19 1926 the Treaty was passed in the Senate, with only one dissenting vote. Britain's position in Iraq was consolidated. Yet was its attainment worth so much struggle and sophistry? For an answer we have to look at the complementary and no less intricate post-war struggle for the control of Iraq's oil wealth.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Minutes of the Eastern Committee, 24 April 1918 CAB 27/24
2. Cf F W van Rees, Les Mandats Internationaux, Paris 1917, Q Wright, Mandates under the League of Nations, Chicago, 1930 H Roth, Des Kontrollsystem der Völkerbundsmandate, Berlin, 1930 B Gerig, The Open Door and the Mandate System, London 1930 W R Louis, Great Britain and Germany's lost Colonies 1914-18 Oxford 1967, H D Hall, 'The British Commonwealth and the Founding of the League Mandate System in Bournea and D C Watt Studies in International History, London 1967, R v Albertini, Dekolonisation, Köln, 1966
3. Minutes of Round Table Meetings 1909-10, Lothian MSS GD 40/17/11, on the naval situation see Minutes of the Committee of Imperial Defence 11 July 1912, Adm 116/1677, Case 5846
4. Ibid
5. Amery, Memorandum: 'Notes on Possible Terms of Peace', 11 April 1917, CAB 24/10
6. Curtis to Kerr, 24 April 1914, Lothian MSS GD 40/17/3, Curtis quoted from a letter which he had received from G L Beer.
7. On G L Beer in general, see W R Louis, 'The Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer', Journal of African History, vol IV 1963, also "G L Beer: Memoir", Round Table No 40 Sept 1920.
8. A good example of this notion is also contained in a memorandum by Curzon of Dec 1917, German and Turkish Territories Captured during the War, p 14 'the high standards of civilisation which have been developed by the white man have conferred on him a general right of entry into the darker places of the earth where superstition and barbarism prevail'. CAB 24/4 Cf A Hirtzel, Note on Future of Mesopotamia, 11 Jan 1918.
9. IO 2571/17
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
12. FO 800/22, this copy of the Draft Memorandum is undated. However a marginal note on it reads: 'Sent by Sir A Hirtzel Jan 16 for observations'. The observations by the India Office people were dated 22 Jan 1918. The fact that the memorandum was received by Hirtzel before 16 as well as the contents of it suggest that Mark Sykes wrote the Memorandum shortly after Lloyd George's War Aims Speech. For the full text of Sykes' memo see Appendices I.

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13. Ibid
14. Ibid, p 2
15. Ibid, p 4
16. Minute on Hirtzel's note to Lord Islington 22 Jan 1918, IO 2571/1917 (L/PS/10/686).
17. Memorandum by Hirtzel, 31 Jan 1918, CAB 27/23
18. As Balfour put it in the Eastern Committee on 24 April 1918: 'An Arab State under British protection would satisfy him (Wilson) and with him the American public though less enlightened, if it were shown that the Arabs could not stand alone', CAB 27/24
19. See footnote 6. For the Garden Suburb of Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command 1914-1918 London 1961, vol II p 590; for the Round Table of C Quigley, 'The Round Table Groups in Canada, 1908-38', The Canadian Historical Review vol XLIII, No 3 1962, pp 204-24; W Nimocks, Milner's young men: the 'kindergarten' in Edwardian Imperial Affairs, Durham/USA, 1968; The Round Table, No 240 (Diamond Jubilee Number), Nov 1970
20. G L Beer to Lionel Curtis 13 May 1918, IO 2571/1917 Reg No P 3618, Curtis to Beer, 7 June 1918, Beer to Curtis, 11 July 1918, *ibid*.
21. Shuckburgh to Hirtzel, 5 August 1918, IO 3618
22. Beer to Curtis, 11 July 1918, see footnote 20
23. Hirtzel to Cecil, 8 August 1918, IO P.3618
24. For similar contacts mainly through Wiseman and Eustace Percy as well as Cecil cf L E Gelfand, The Inquiry, : American preparations for peace, 1917-1919, London 1963, chapt 4: 'The Inquiry And the Allies'.
25. G L Beer, 'The Future of Mesopotamia', in: Gray, (Ed), African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference, New York, 1923; also Gelfand, p 233
26. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 3 Oct 1918, CAB 23/14
27. Memorandum by Curzon, 5 Dec 1917, CAB 24/4 G.182
28. Amery to Balfour, 16 August 1918, Balfour MSS 49775
29. Balfour to Amery, 17 August 1918, *ibid*
30. Amery to Balfour, 22 August 1918, *ibid*
31. Amery, vol II p 165
32. Amery to Smuts, 17 Dec 1918 in Selections from the Smuts Papers W K Hancock and Van Der Pool, vol IV No 866, London 1966.

33. Ibid
34. Amery to Balfour, 24 Oct 1918, FO 800/207
35. Cf Louis, Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, As for discussion inside the government Cf M Beloff, Britain's Liberal Empire 1897-1921, London 1969, p 283-5
- 35a. Cf R Winkler, The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain: 1914-1919, Rutgers, 1952; See also footnote 2
36. Cf A J Toynbee, Nationality and the War, London 1915, also A Toynbee, 'The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence: Comments and a Reply,' Journal of Contemporary History, Vol V No 4, 1970 pp 185-193
37. L S Woolf, International Government, London 1916
38. J A Hobson, 'The Open Door', in : Towards a Lasting Settlement, C R Buxton, London 1915
39. Cf P H Kerr, 'Political Relations between Advanced and Backward Peoples', in: Grant and others, An Introduction to the Study of International Relations, London 1916
40. A good example, of course, is Lloyd George, cf Chapt III, footnote 91; as to Curzon cf chapt III; also contributions by various intellectuals in: League of Nations, Six Pamphlets, London 1920
41. Minutes of the Eastern Committee, 9 Dec 1918, CAB 27/24
42. Cf D Hall pp 351-2; Louis Great Britain and Germany's lost Colonies p 132
43. Cf H Nicolson, Peacemaking 1919 London 1933, 1967, p 47
44. In late 1918 it was temporarily contemplated to give America a mandate in East Africa or even Palestine, but probably due to Amery's strong protests Lloyd George discarded this idea.
45. Observations on Arabian Policy, by Mark Sykes 17 May 1917 PRO 30/30/12
46. On the King-Crane Commission see H N Howard, The King-Crane Commission, An American Inquiry in the Middle East, Beirut 1963
47. P J Baker to Robert Cecil, 7 August 1919, 'The Turkish Mandates - A Draft', Lothian MSS GD 40/17/75
48. D G Hogarth to G Clayton, 19 May 1919, Hogarth MSS
49. Hogarth to Balfour 19 May 1919, Lothian MSS GD 40/17/38
50. American Draft Class 'A' Mandate, M C 17, Milner MSS 153
51. The correspondence between Milner and Simon at the turn of July/August 1919 is contained in the Milner MSS 153 Oxford
52. Simon to Milner, 4 August 1919, Very Urgent, ibid
53. Drummond to Balfour 7 August 1919, Lothian MSS GD 40/17/75

54. Cecil to Milner, 8 August 1919, *ibid*
55. Baker to Cecil, 8 August 1919, *ibid*
56. Curzon to Balfour, 20 August 1919, Balfour MSS 49734
British Museum. The lengthy letter is in many ways revealing; it gives evidence of the general exhaustion of the ministers at the end of the war; it also reveals the mounting distrust of Lloyd George's policy in the East by the Cabinet. For the background of this letter see also Zeine, p 107. In this letter which Zeine has not seen Curzon explains why he cannot accept Lloyd George's offer to go to Paris and replace Balfour.
57. *Ibid*
58. *Ibid*, according to Curzon, Lloyd George when reaching out for Constantinople was, however, supported by a 'few stout Tories of the Walter Long and Eric Geddes School, who revel in the thought of the British flag flying over Constantinople'.
59. 'Memorandum: Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia', by Balfour, 11 August 1919, Balfour MSS 49752. For Lloyd George's views see: Note of Conversation between PM and M Loucheur, CAB 21/158
60. Cf Zeine, chapt VI, 'The Settlement of the Syrian Question - 1919', pp 107-127
61. Foreign Relations of the US, Paris Peace Conference 1919, vol XI, p 647
62. *Ibid* vol VIII p 203 on Oct 31 1919 Lloyd George informed the Cabinet that it was becoming clear that the US would not accept a mandate CAB 23/18
63. P H Kerr to Hurst 25 June 1920, Lothian MSS GD 40/17/75
64. Cf Churchill to Lloyd George, 14 Jan 1921, Lloyd George MSS F/9/2/55
65. Cf P Graves, The Life of Sir Percy Cox, London 1941, chapt XIX, 'Persian Interlude', pp 248-264
66. See E Kedourie, 'Sa'd Zaghul and the British', in E Kedourie The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies, London 1970
67. Milner to Curzon, 12 Jan 1920, Milner MSS 162
68. Cox to Colonial Office, 1 March 1922, CO 730/20/10151
69. C J Edmonds to Colonel Paulis, Febr 1925, 'Extract from diary', CO 730/73/10992
70. Document No 250, Memorandum by H Young, DBFP 1st series, vol XIII

71. See p 44
72. eg Major-Gen Sir F Maurice in the Daily News, 25 June 1920: "The moral is, first shape your policy to your means, then see that the means are properly used. History teaches the fate of empires which neglect this elementary principle. At present we are trying to stretch our means to fit our policy, and coming to rely more and more upon native and subordinate races to help us out. That way lies disaster".
73. Daily Mail, 7 June 1920
74. Daily News, 26 June 1920
75. Morning Post, 29 June 1920, article by Lieut Col Repington, who was military correspondent of that paper; previously from 1904-1918 he had written for the Times.
76. See footnote 73
77. 'A Middle East Policy' by a special correspondent, Yorkshire Post, 23 March 1921
78. Also Cabinet Finance Committee, 9 Febr 1920, CAB 23/20
79. Cf Zeine, pp 138-9
80. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, May 24 1920, Milner Papers, PRO 30/30/12
81. Ibid, also Milner to Curzon, 26 Jan 1920, Milner MSS 162
82. See footnote 80
83. W Churchill 23 March 1920, CAB 1/29, see also CO 730/2/33102, a marginal note by Churchill on a private and personal letter by Cox explaining the reported bombing operations against recalcitrant tribes, read: "Certainly I am a great believer in air power and will help it financed in every way", he had received the letter on 3 July 1921
84. Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers 17 June 1920, CAB 23/22
85. There was considerable intrigue and bitterness in this struggle between Committee and Department; its various stages and the involvement of personalities and principles in it are dealt with in my article: 'British Middle East Policy - the interdepartmental level 1917-1921' Journal of Contemporary History vol 8 no 4 London, 1973 pp 81-101
86. See p 60
87. Minutes of the Finance Committee, 12 August 1920, CAB 23/22
88. Conference of Ministers, 18 Oct 1920 CAB 23/23
89. Minute by Hubert Young 14 August 1922, CO 730/23/40582
90. W Churchill to Lloyd George 8 Jan 1921, Lloyd George MSS F/9/2/53

91. Churchill to Lloyd George 14 Jan 1921, Lloyd George MSS F/9/2/55
92. Lloyd George MSS F/9/2/54
93. Cf E Monroe, 'The Round Table and the Middle Eastern Peace Settlement 1917-1922', The Round Table No 240, Nov 1970 pp 487-490
94. Churchill to Lloyd George, 14 March 1921, FO 371/6350
95. Report on the Cairo Conference, p 36 Political Agenda 1, FO 371/6343
96. *Ibid* Report p 37 Political Agenda 2
97. Cf P W Ireland, Iraq, a Study in Political Development, London 1937 p 316; S H Longrigg, Iraq 1900-1950 p 130
98. See footnote 95, Report p 40, As Churchill continued: 'If Faisal knew that not only his father's subsidy and the protection of the Holy Places from Wahabi attack, but also the position of his brother in Trans Jordan was dependent upon his own good behaviour, he would be much easier to deal with. The same argument applied mutatis mutandis'.
99. *Ibid* p 40
100. *Ibid*
101. *Ibid* p 41
102. The best account is still P Ireland, chapters XIX, XX; for a brief summary of the main facts and dates of the constitutional development, see M Khadduri, Independent Iraq 1932-1958, Oxford 1960, pp 10-33
103. P Ireland, p443
104. Cf Percy Cox to Churchill, 4 Dec 1921, CO 730/8/60571
105. Cf Lloyd George to Churchill, 22 March 1921, FO 371/6350
106. For an assessment of his personality and character by the Arab Bureau at Cairo see: F C C Balfour MSS; Box 248, Durham University
107. Churchill to Masterton-Smith, 9 July 1921, CO 730/3/33549
108. Cox to Churchill, 25 May 1921, Private and Personal, CO 730/2/2598
109. Cox to Churchill, 18 August 1921, CO 730/4/41616. As he wrote in full: "Having as it were created a wave of enthusiasm for Arab nationalism it is most important for us and to our advantage that we should move with the wave and carry people of Iraq with us. To create wave with more sincere intentions and then to allow ourselves owing to technical difficulties to check it is to lose half advantage of our generous action. Therefore as far as our position

and policy here is concerned I should be inclined to take courage in both hands and give Faisal position he presses for".

110. Churchill to Cox, 20 August 1921, Personal and Secret, CO 730/4/41616. At that time Britain's oil policy played perhaps a decisive role in the decision of maintaining the mandatory basis of her policy towards Iraq.
111. Cox to Churchill, 4 May 1922, CO 730/21/21316. One of the main reasons for the prominence of Art IV was that the article originally included all financial clauses.
112. Cox to Churchill, 13 August 1921, CO 730/22/29351
113. Minute by Shuckburgh, June 1922, CO 730/22/25899
114. Cox to Churchill, 21 July 1922, CO 730/23/37877
115. Nigel Davidson to Major Young, 21 July 1922, CO 730/23/37397
Davidson was legal secretary to the High Commissioner at Baghdad. He also referred to news of an imminent tribal upheaval in Hillah which he described as a subtle plot that could be traced to the brain of Nuri; as he connected this scheme with the anti-mandate efforts of the palace, his account is worth quoting: "There is a serious danger in Hillah that the pro-British sheikhs may be goaded into rising - the Mut-asarifi Quaimiams are all Faisal's men and extremists - the anti-mandate sheikhs are treated generously in assessment etc. - their pro-British neighbours are done down in every way and the officials try to undermine their authority by corresponding with their subordinate sheikhs".
116. Cox to Shuckburgh, 28 April 1922, Private, CO 730/21/21941
117. CO 730/23/37397
118. 29 August 1922, CO 730/24/43046
119. See CO 730/23/37397 minutes by Bullard and Young
120. Churchill to Cox, 3 August 1922, Personal and Secret, CO 730/23/37397
121. Footnote 119
122. Cox to Churchill, CO 730/23/40582
123. Minute by Young, 14 August 1922, CO 730/23/40582
124. Cox to Churchill, 10 August 1922, CO 730/23/39941
125. Churchill to Cox, 17 August 1922, CO 730/23/40582
126. Churchill to Cox, 25 August 1922, Telegrams Draft "D", CO 730/24 - There were four alternative drafts.
127. Churchill to Cox, 28 August 1922, CO 730/24
128. Ibid

129. Churchill to Cox, 30 August 1922, CO 730/24/(43045)
130. See p 77
131. Cox himself had excluded military re-conquest on the ground of the expenditure involved.
132. The relationship between Faisal and the Naqib is far from clear; for an appraisal, tentative no doubt, see my article: 'Iraq's External Relations 1921-1926', Middle Eastern Studies, vol XII 1977
133. Though the elections were not mentioned in the Cabinet minutes of Oct 5, the British must constantly have had them in mind as they had been postponed and were due any time, Cf Ireland p 391
134. Minutes of the Cabinet meeting of 5 Oct 1922, The Iraq Treaty, CAB 23/39
135. Ibid
136. E Burgoyne, Gertude Bell 1914-1926, From her Personal Letters, London 1961, vol II p 301
137. Cox to Devonshire, 2 Nov 1922, CO 730/25/55421
138. Thomas succeeded Devonshire in the Colonial Office- for a portrait of B W Lyman, The First Labour Government 1924, London 1957 pp 6-7, 106
139. Ibid
140. Minute by Young, 26 April 1924, CO 730/58/19150, 20002, "Dobbs has now come down firmly on the side of 'no amendments'. It is a pity he did not wait for our tel...However we are committed now, and must support him - He said himself in his tel of 17 April that he saw no reason why minor amendments should not be accepted".
141. Thomas to Dobbs, 24 May 1924, CO 730/65/25650
142. Cf file CO 730/65/20941 which includes besides Memorandum by Shuckburgh for the C I D the observations thereon by the Air Staff of 2 May 1924.
143. Cf Ireland pp 393-405
144. Dobbs to Thomas 28 May 1924, CO 730/65/25650
145. Dobbs to Thomas, 6 June 1924, CO 730/60/27166 (Dobbs was an Irishman).
146. Cf Ireland, p 401, footnote 1
147. For the reactions among the British staff on the spot of Burgoyne pp 346-8 In the Middle East Department there was some apprehension about the delay of ratification in the Commons, see minutes by Young and Shuckburgh of 11/12 June,

CO 730/60/24646

148. Dobbs to Thomas, 12 July 1924, CO 730/60/33448
149. Ibid
150. Ibid
151. Ibid, minute by Clauson: "It is unlikely that had he (Jafar), remained he would have been in a position to control the Chamber of Deputies or would have been successful in securing the passage of the necessary legislation to implement the Treaty obligations of Iraq. On the other hand, Yasin Pasha is an able dictator and he has proved himself a sufficiently ardent nationalist to capture the imagination of the more vocal elements in Iraq politics".
152. See the following Intelligence Report No 24, 27 Nov 1924 (in FO 371/10098): "Unless Govt makes actively for the return of moderate men, the new parliament will be entirely in the hands of the extremists of the Hizb al-'Ummah People's party, who advocate a repudiation of the agreements subsidiary to the Treaty and the expulsion of all British Advisers. It seems very probable that in any case the majority of the new parliament will be in this complexion in which case the ship of the 'Iraq State' will shortly again be on the rocks.
The Hizb al-'Ummah have sent delegates to Mosul for the purpose of persuading the Hizb al Istiqlal there to combine with the Hizb al-'Ummah... Fakhri Al-Jamil... Baghdad landlord has promised pecuniary assistance".
153. The drafting of the Organic Law had originally begun in London, but was transferred to Baghdad on the eve of Faisal's accession to the throne so as to enhance his status in the country, cf CO 730/3/38479, 4/41616.
154. Minutes by H Young of late June 1924, and letter from Dobbs to Thomas of 28 June, CO 730/60/29283; 730/60/31055.
155. Young referred to a Draft Organic Law that, apart from minor textual alterations and a different numbering of the respective articles, came very close to the Final Draft.
Incidentally, the first parliament of 1925 had altogether 88 deputies, but there is no evidence for this assumption. On the whole Young was however in favour of a "buffer state" Mosul, see his minute of 20 June 1923, CO 730/40/30136.
156. Memorandum of a conversation between Amery and the Prime Minister of Iraq on 12 April 1925, in the presence of the

High Commissioner, CO 730/74/20175. In this conversation reference was made to an earlier talk with Faisal. The memorandum had been drafted by Dobbs; in a letter of 17 April 1925 Amery certified that it correctly represented all he had said, CO 730/74/20175

157. Cf B Bourdillon (Acting High Commissioner) to Amery, 2 June 1926, "It is...fact that the treaty and agreements would never have passed the Constituent Assembly had it not been for repeated assurances both verbal and written to the effect that HMG would sympathetically consider the amendment of the agreements...". CO 730/92/1535. See also Faisal to Bourdillon, 30 Dec 1925, according to Faisal, Dobbs personally had gone to the Assembly and given the members in the name of HMG a binding promise that amendments would follow immediately on ratification, CO 730/92/872.
158. P Ireland, p 423
159. Cf Cmd 2317, Papers relating to the Application to Iraq of the Principles of Art 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, p 7, Art IV: "No modifications of the terms of the treaty of alliance will be agreed to by HBMG without the consent of the Council of the League".
160. Cmd 2438 (1925)
161. The Agreements subsidiary to the Treaty of 10 October 1922 are printed together with the Protocol of 30 April 1923 in Cmd 2120. A great part of the burden was due to excessive military expenditure; Art IV of the Military Agreement stipulated that Iraq should spend "not less than 25 per cent of the annual revenue on military expenditure." By Art IV of the Financial Agreement the revenue was for this purpose defined as "the gross receipt in all cases under each head of revenue service with the exception of the commercial services, other than Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, of which the net-revenues shall be included". Revenues accruing from the Railways and Basra Port were, in accordance with Articles VIII and X kept separate from the general revenues and charged on Railway services and maintenance of the Port Trust. A further prior and fixed charge on the general revenues was the annuity plus interest at 5 per cent per annum of the total debt of R S 94, 09, 540 constituted by the transfer of (British constructed) works of public utility such as Irrigation, Roads, Bridges, Posts, Telegraphs etc. (most of them

under military need) from HMG to the Government of Iraq;
Cf Art V

162. Bourdillon to Amery, 7 Jan 1926, CO 730/92/1535. Other urgent telegrams had been sent to Amery on 19 Dec 1925, CO 730/80/57331, 27 Dec 1925, 30 Dec 1925, CO 730/80/58167, 58600, 5 Jan 1926, CO 730/92/431. Of relevance is also a lengthy report by Dobbs of 127 pages on Iraq 1920-1925, dated 6 August 1925, CO 730/77/37753
163. Amery to Bourdillon, 24 Dec 1925, CO 730/83/58502
164. Amery to Bourdillon, 8 Jan 1926, CO 730/92/691
165. Cf Minute by Shuckburgh, 24 June 1926, CO 730/94/13460
As to the Budgetary situation of Iraq in the years 1924/25 and 1925/26 see Appendices No. II
166. Bourdillon to Amery, 21 Jan 1926, CO 730/92/2579
167. Ibid, also dispatch of 5 Jan 1926, CO 730/92/431
168. Memorandum by Dobbs, 6 Dec 1925, CO 730/86/54618:
"The Kurdish representatives in the Iraq Parliament have been the chief steady factor in politics. They voted solid for the Anglo-Iraq Treaty and always vote solid for the British connection. The result of their withdrawal could be incalculable. Moreover without them the Shiah would have a predominance in the Iraq Parliament. This would be intensely resented by the Iraq Sunni ruling classes and would place the bigoted, ignorant and reactionary Shiah, led by the Ulama, in power".
169. See footnote 166

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CHAPTER FOUR

The American Challenge repulsed 1920-1923

1. The Oil Question: Challenge and response at the end of the war

As the war came to an end and in the years that followed, Britain managed to obtain secure control over Iraq. The dashing military advance on Anatolia proper, the quelling of the Iraqi uprising in 1920, the launching of the Faisal monarchy and the manipulation of the constitutional development and build-up of Iraq, all these actions make an impressive record of Britain's successes. And yet all this, which looks as if it had resulted from strong handling of the situation, was often simply 'muddling through'. Many reasons for this have already been adduced. One more factor, of primary importance, was the almost uninterrupted harrassment from American oil interests, supported as they were by the US State Department.

America's competition for a share in the exploitation of Mesopotamian oil has become well known for its ultimately 'salutary' effect upon the implementation of the Open Door principle. When set beside this policy, the long and unbending British opposition to it has come to be rated as particularly reactionary, for in the realm of international trade the Open Door principle passes as enlightened and progressive. In an imperial context, however, its connotations are quite different. It amounted to no more than the greed of one power checking the cupidity of its rivals. American oil groups made their debut in the Middle East under the pre-war administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.

In his eagerness to involve the United States in world policy Taft, in particular, persuaded bankers and merchants to make overseas investments: 'Dollar-imperialism' would generate world power. While Admiral Colby Chester, more adventurer and busybody than businessman, applied for railway concessions in the Ottoman Empire, 'dismal estimates of American petroleum reserves' spurred naval officials to advocate the acquisition of foreign oil resources as vitally in the nation's interest. Experience of fuel-rationing gained in the War added impetus to the demand, and the earlier apathy of the public as well as of most Government departments changed to alarm.

From this sprang the post-war 'movement for an aggressive American oil policy abroad'.⁽²⁾ No less eager than their British counterparts, American canvassers for oil had watched the formation of monopolistic tendencies in British overseas enterprise. Influenced by their estimates and their long-term conclusions Woodrow Wilson also became convinced of the threat that Britain's self-sufficiency in oil would inevitably pose to America's expanding trade. 'It is evident to me', he wrote before March 1920, 'that we are on the eve of a commercial war of the severest sort, and I am afraid that Great Britain will prove capable of as great commercial savagery as Germany has displayed for so many years in her competitive methods'.⁽³⁾

Rather than selecting favourites from among the many oil groups and supporting their challenge to their British rivals, the State Department embarked upon its already traditional Open Door policy. This - by reason of its main implications - involved wholesale opposition to British imperial policy as it seemed to be taking shape in the Middle East and elsewhere.

As for the Middle East, it proved no exception to the general rule that the Open Door policy, where ever implemented, is bound to disturb an existing balance of influence and substitute a new one.⁽⁴⁾ Admittedly, in the case of the nineteenth century China market where the United States, by implementing the Open Door principle for the first time, had asserted her interests against those of the European powers, the change in the old balance of influence had not been so much felt because it had brought China some consolidation of its Empire. As the Chinese had not invited the Americans, the ensuing consolidation of their rule was certainly an uncalculated though welcome side-effect. Yet it became a well-intended political aim of the young and revolutionary indigenous regimes in the Middle East. By courting American oil interests and trying to brush off the more sinister imperial powers of Europe, both Turkey and Persia entertained

hopes to consolidate and restore their rule.⁽⁵⁾

The British response, however, was due to their watching a still wider horizon. The penetration of American oil-interests into the Middle East, they rightly anticipated, would mean more than just a change in the balance of power in a limited area. As it was so important for Britain to maintain the balance of sea-power - or, rather, to keep her lead in controlling the seas - by holding a monopoly of supplies of oil from the Middle East, the challenge of America seemed to them closely connected with the question of the freedom of the seas. The prominence and interdependence of these two questions was underlined by the intermittent British claim to naval supremacy and her consequent power to maintain peace throughout the world. The Royal Navy must, therefore, be entrusted with the task of policing the world's oceans. These naval opinions were in general shared by the chief supporters in Britain of the League of Nations. The views of the Admiralty were stated thus by Balfour:

'They recognise that in the general interests of mankind sea-power cannot be narrowly limited to purposes of self-defence, nor ought the maritime nations to be required by law to occupy the role of profiteering neutrals - the prosperous spectators of other peoples' agony. The efficacy of sea-power to stop wars and to shorten them they are ready and even anxious to preserve, but they hold that it should be used for international purposes and should therefore be exercised under international control'.⁽⁶⁾

However, on the subject of sea-power there still remained a deep gulf between Balfour and the supporters of the League on the one side, and what may be called the Long and Wemyss school on the other. This school took the view that US naval power ought by a convention to be kept inferior to the British. It even appears that at some point in the back-stage peace talks in Paris, Walter Long and Admiral Wemyss told American delegates that 'the British Government would not sign the League unless America agreed never to build a fleet as large as the English'.⁽⁷⁾ In contrast Balfour, departing from the view that America (unlike the European continental powers) was both a land and a maritime power, advocated a joint Anglo-American naval force which would operate under League control. As a former First Lord of the Admiralty he was impressed by the way in which the United States, by committing her sea-power,

had altered the balance of power in the last war. As she was unlikely to show herself in this capacity in any future war, the role of sea-power must be internationally defined; above all, it must conform to American requirements. Any convention made on these lines would be seriously jeopardised by any such policy of a monopoly in oil such as that suggested by Slade and supported by the Admiralty and the Air Ministry. It was from this wider standpoint that Balfour opposed their recommendations as being imperialistic.

Though Balfour also rejected the views of the school of Amery and Curzon - who thought that US sea-power ought to be restricted to the area of America's proper strategic role in the changed world conditions after the War - he nevertheless shared their apprehension about upholding the principle of the freedom of the seas without any qualification. If this principle were upheld, the offensive power of the nations which depended on armies would be increased both absolutely and relatively. As a corollary, the strength of the maritime nations would be proportionately diminished. (8)

As we have seen, the question of the freedom of the seas touched the very marrow of British imperial thinking. Balfour took the view that a right solution of this question could only be within the framework of the League of Nations. He was opposed to the Admiralty's suggestion that there should be a monopoly in oil because when laying down their premisses they had wrongly assessed the Empire's position. Like Lloyd George, Balfour took the line that once the League was approved by Britain and the United States, everything else stood a better chance of speedy and satisfactory settlement. (9) Consequently, when America failed to approve the League Covenant, Balfour's attempt to settle the question of oil on the basis of a new international maritime law received a serious setback. The alliance was therefore strengthened between those who favoured actual physical control over the supply of oil, and those who wanted a monopoly in it.

Meanwhile in Whitehall Curzon - who was obviously delighted to be in charge of the Foreign Office - had tried to restrain all economic activity in Iraq which might prejudice or confirm the existing oil interests or concessions. (10) Up to a point his policy followed the advice given by Mark Sykes in February 1918, namely, that if Britain played her cards well and in accordance with the new principles in politics, it would be possible for her to remain in control of Mesopotamia. (11) Diplomatically, this advice assumed that it was of first importance that America should consent to Britain's acquiring

Mesopotamia. Events in the American Congress, however, soon led to the advice being disregarded. Convinced that the TPC concession before the war had been a valid one, and later obsessed with the new diplomatic possibilities offered by America's departure from the League, Curzon tried to get agreement upon an interpretation of the Open Door principle which would leave the existing concessions unimpaired and limit its applicability solely to the members of the League.

However, the restraint exercised by Curzon upon the development of oil in Iraq proved too restrictive for the rising interests in Britain. Since nobody knew exactly how much oil there really was, and since the vast amount spent on the military occupation of Iraq made it unthinkable to 'buy a pig in a poke', the Government was put under heavy pressure at least to allow prospecting for oil. As things turned out, Curzon was by-passed by the War Office. Without consulting either the Foreign Office or the India Office, the War Office early in 1919 despatched General Cowan and two oil experts to Iraq to start systematic surveying of the oilfields.⁽¹²⁾ Simultaneously, it began its survey of the desert 'for the purpose of advising on the practicability of having a pipe and railway line through the British sphere of influence'.⁽¹³⁾ This action placed the Foreign Office in an awkward position. It could neither restrain the War Office since they could plead military expediency, nor could it prevent the formation of large scale combines and syndicates for the eventual exploitation of the supposed oil resources. All it could do was exclude concession-hunters from the territories under military occupation. Unfortunately, the activity of agents cannot be measured; by the same token exact figures for either latent or overt accumulation of investment capital cannot be available. But a complaint from a Foreign Office official probably indicates the degree of interference from people interested in the oil:

' I should like to make it quite clear that we here at the Foreign Office are in no way responsible for the situation which has arisen. From the very first we have held strongly the opinion that in all the areas in our military occupation no sort of penetration by the concession-hunter should be allowed until the Peace Conference had given a final decision as to their future status. We have maintained this point of view over and over again in writing, and the breach in the wall has been made, not here, but in other quarters and we are not to blame

if the flood is now being let loose.⁽¹⁴⁾

It seems that the Foreign Office was using the term 'concession-hunter' in a very loose way. For (as was to be expected) the bonafides of Slade's papers of July and August 1918 had several times been questioned; at one stage the Government-controlled A. P. O. C. seems to have been treated like any other company. By autumn 1918 the First Lord of the Admiralty found himself compelled to state to the Cabinet that the papers, and their endorsement by the Admiralty, should not be read as an 'ex parte statement on behalf of the A. P. O. C. vis-a-vis its trade rivals, especially the Royal Dutch Company'.⁽¹⁵⁾ He was emphatic that the Admiralty were entirely impartial, and that their endorsement amounted only to supporting the argument that 'the oil-bearing districts of Mesopotamia and Persia were of very great national importance to us'.⁽¹⁶⁾ He also stated his hope that the Admiralty's views would not in any circumstances be used to support the claims of any one oil company against another.

However, settlement of the oil question did not simply lie in the lap of the Peace Conference but also hinged on the British claim that the concession which had been given before the war by the Turkish Government to the TPC, and in which the A. P. O. C. had a share was valid. Such protestations, even when made at Cabinet level, were therefore purely rhetorical. If the oil resources of Iraq were of great national importance to Britain then the A. P. O. C. undoubtedly appeared to be the best safeguard of these essential national interests. Anything less than this implied that the diplomatic situation did not allow Britain scope for pursuing to the full her national and strategic interests. But even if this were to happen the only choice lay between the old TPC, or a newly-constituted one. In either case it would however be supported, if not indirectly controlled, by the Government. The Admiralty, by emphasising the national importance of both the Persian and Iraqi oilfields, left little room for doubt that their sympathies lay with the A. P. O. C.

Although Curzon and the Foreign Office consistently maintained that they, and not the A. P. O. C. were the supporters of the d'Arcy group, their policy in practice concurred with the Admiralty view that the TPC must become the mainstay of British oil policy in Iraq since the A. P. O. C. held 50 per cent of its shares.⁽¹⁷⁾ This is best illustrated by the Anglo-French rapprochement which culminated in the famous oil agreement at San Remo. Because of the world-wide stir this caused, its genesis and chief purposes merit a brief survey.

In December 1918 when the British Government, acting on the advice

of Lord Harcourt's Petroleum Imperial Policy Committee, purchased the Deutsche Bank's 25 per cent shareholding in the TPC from the Public Trustee, the French put out feelers 'in regard to co-operation between His Majesty's Government and the French Government in oil development throughout the world'.⁽¹⁸⁾ At the time, these moves by the French were a cause of concern to the British empire-builders in the Middle East, for by late 1918 controlling the oil resources in the defunct Ottoman Empire had become an inseparable part of the extensive British strategy in the Middle East. Certain powerful officials, such as Curzon and Milner held that France was once more becoming the chief danger in the East. They felt that this rivalry - Fashoda-like - arose primarily from conflicting territorial ambitions rather than from mercantile challenge.⁽¹⁹⁾

Consequently, Mosul's oil was by this time not the ultimate reason for Curzon's supporting the drive to the north and for dislodging the French completely from the Middle East. Admittedly, when opposing French policy he used the oil question as his main argument, but only because he noticed that it carried great weight with the Cabinet by appealing strongly to Lloyd George. By comparison, Curzon's Fashoda spirit would have had little influence with the Prime Minister. Thus by 1918 Curzon regarded Mosul strategically as an intermediate station on the route to the Caucasus and the Caspian.⁽²⁰⁾ Even there he pointed to the oil wells of Baku and the loss to the British Empire if they ever fell into French hands. But again he used this fear in order to drum up support for his far-fetched strategic ideas for the East. Seen in the perspective of the rivalry between Britain and France, oil seems at this stage to have been only a means to a wider end.

France's oil interests could no longer be so easily disregarded when, on January 6 1919, the French Government officially suggested 'that in case it was considered that the rights of the Turkish Petroleum Company were valid the Deutsche Bank shares in that company should be ceded to them'.⁽²¹⁾ Upholding the validity of the 1914 TPC concession was of course the policy which Whitehall had decided to adopt. Bi-lateral negotiations were started which led to the Long-Berenger draft agreement of 8 April 1919. Dissatisfaction on the part of the French led to a phase of re-negotiating the draft, this time between Berenger and Sir Hamar Greenwood; their December draft raised France's share by 5 per cent. The French were still not very agreeable to Whitehall, but co-operation had become more and more desirable since otherwise the French would combine either with American companies or with the Shell group.⁽²²⁾ The final San Remo

Agreement of April 1920 specified the mutual acquisition of the mandates and put the 25 per cent German share into French hands. It was thus deliberately designed to meet the American challenge. For the time being it also prevented Whitehall from taking steps to assume control of Shell. The naturalisation and knighting of its boss, Henry Deterding, was a poor substitute. France on her part began to add co-operation to rivalry as a means to a wider end.

2. Another Round of Claims and Expedients

The spectrum of British official opinion on the question of oil embraces yet another group who had strong interests. This consisted of Edwin Montagu from the India Office and the men on the spot concerned with revenue, whether it went to the mandate state or to a British administration. Some, like Montagu, suggested that the Iraqis should participate in the Turkish Petroleum Company; others advanced the view that the development and working of oil should in the interest of the state of Iraq be nationalised, either in entirety or part.⁽²³⁾

Montagu's proposal was motivated entirely by events in Whitehall. By the end of 1918, the Petroleum Department was considering the reconstitution of the TPC without consulting the India Office, even though the latter was still in charge of Iraq. That this was largely theoretical is confirmed by the fact that at that stage the idea of a unified Iraqi state which could take its place with Britain, France and perhaps other powers on the governing board of an oil company was no more than a vague assumption. But it no doubt fitted well with the proclaimed intention of inaugurating the mandate.

By contrast, from 1919 onwards the proposals of the men on the spot were concerned with how to increase revenue. In this respect the working of the Naft Khana oilfields is of some interest. These oilfields, which had been assigned to the A.P.O.C. before the war and which were in a stretch of territory transferred from Persia to the Ottoman Empire, were regarded after the war as not lying in occupied enemy territory. Because of their particular territorial status the A.P.O.C. was therefore given permission by the Foreign Office to start developing them.⁽²⁴⁾ It is interesting to note that by April 1919 Sir Arnold Wilson, at a meeting at the India Office, was recommending that a new Company should be formed to work these fields and that the Treasury should hold an interest and control in the new concern equal to their holdings in the A.P.O.C. Wilson was further convinced that from the first

tests important deductions could be made concerning the prospects of oil in other areas of similar geological strata in Iraq.

The need for revenue, which Wilson had so early foreseen, began to cause anxiety to High Commissioner Percy Cox in 1920. In general, Curzon's restraining hand on the development of Iraq's oil resources not only deprived the officials there of urgently needed revenue, but according to Percy Cox also greatly increased the annual deficit because of the high price of the oil fuel and kerosene used by Iraq's railways and irrigation pumps.⁽²⁵⁾ The men on the spot argued that this deficit on the working of the transport system would be substantially reduced if oil fuel were obtainable at a cheaper rate. Similarly, they expressed doubts whether the irrigation pumps in the Baghdad area, which were essential for the cultivation of wheat and barley, could continue to work at their full capacity with kerosene the price it was. Burdened by the Treasury problems that sprang from an irrational choice of priorities, British and Iraqi officials saw on the one hand the rigorous curtailment of British expenditure and on the other hand rumours of a British withdrawal to the Basra vilayet. Both alike were puzzled as to why the development of the most important 'national' resource should be frustrated by considerations of high policy.⁽²⁶⁾

But the policy-makers had not entirely closed their eyes to the prospect of additional revenue from oil. In fact, Britain could lay a double claim to the oil wealth of Iraq. The oil revenues were earmarked to pay back any capital which the mandatory power might advance in future as well as to meet the costs of its service and administration. As a foreign oil company would take too much money out of the country in profits, nationalisation of the wealth derived from oil by the mandatory on behalf of the mandate state was therefore desirable. Needless to say, this idea of nationalisation did not conflict with the official view of the mandate as a cover for British interests. In readiness for such action the Cabinet had, by January 1920, expressed the opinion that:

'as a matter of principle the profits arising from the exploitation of the oil fields of Mesopotamia should accrue for the benefit of the State rather than for the benefit of Joint Stock Companies'.⁽²⁷⁾

As a result, the claims of the Standard Oil Company of America were dismissed because they ran counter to this principle. On the other hand, the high-handed action of the War Office was now retrospectively authorised. The Cabinet's lack of confidence in

their own principle is, however, obvious from the great caution that marked their final decision on 23 January 1920. This read:

'The War Office should proceed with the survey of the Mesopotamian oilfields but all prospecting must be done on behalf of the State and not for the benefit of private companies, and should be undertaken in such a way as to attract as little attention as possible'.⁽²⁸⁾

It must be assumed that this prospecting for oil served mainly as a preparation for the compromise which Churchill submitted to Hankey, the Secretary of the Cabinet, in June 1921. Prospecting had begun, after all, when Churchill was Secretary of State for War. His scheme amounted to a reduction of the TPC's territorial claim. Outside the new limits of the TPC's concession area the Iraqi Government would have a free hand to grant concessions to others.⁽²⁹⁾ From this point of view the findings of the prospectors allowed the British authorities to select and assign the more promising areas to the TPC before offering the remainder for the competitive bidding which would result from implementation of the Open Door principle. Of course, the TPC's working of the oil would still provide the main revenue for the administration. But this subtle arrangement contained two flaws which made it a vain hope that the scheme could be put into effect. First, it showed that the TPC's claim was still monopolistic, a kind of claim to which the Americans strongly objected. Secondly, since the new regime in Iraq would be anxious to augment its sources of revenue as speedily as possible, it would be extremely hesitant to throw open any areas containing promising oil-resources to development by foreign and private agencies whose chief aim was production and sale of crude oil which amounted to profit-making at Iraq's expense.

These flaws revealed once more the three-cornered antagonism which continually frustrated the settlement of the oil question: the TPC's monopolistic claim to the Iraqi oilfields, the American objection to this claim, and Iraq's own interest in its oil resources as a national asset and substantial source of revenue.

Although Britain had considered Iraq's interest in her own oil resources to be a convincing and useful argument which might be an effective screen for British interest in a world-wide oil monopoly, it was Iraq as the weakest party who was sold down the river when the British were forced to give up their monopolistic claim to the TPC concession.⁽³⁰⁾ Significantly, the destruction of

this "screen" was not brought about solely by the diplomatic power game. Strong criticism of the Government's support for nationalisation schemes came also from the Petroleum Department of the Board of Trade. It based its views on considerations of political and practical expediency and on its doubts whether the oil business was an appropriate field for the activities of governments. Obviously, it was airing the views of private interests. As the Minister put it:

'Apart altogether from the question of principle, the oil business is peculiarly unsuited for governments to engage in: it is speculative, very technical and requires audacity in an exceptional degree. The engagement of the necessary staff alone would be a serious item, as it is practically impossible to get experts of the proper calibre except by outbidding the large oil companies who are keenly competing at the present time for good men. If we refuse to carry out terms to which we practically stand pledged as regards the TPC we cannot expect to get any assistance from the principal oil interests'.⁽³¹⁾

There was also logic in its additional point that the need to raise at least £5,000,000 for initial expenditure before any substantial returns could accrue from the working of oil would drain the revenues of the new regime in its most crucial formative years. On the other hand, since neither the position of the new regime nor the status of Iraq was as yet fixed it would be extremely difficult for any company registered in Iraq to raise the starting capital in the international money market.⁽³²⁾

But it was primarily French opposition that made any demands which implied nationalisation of oil production in Iraq impracticable. The Whitehall officials who had negotiated the San Remo Agreement in April 1920 may well have been inclined to comply with Cox's demand for nationalisation. But as soon as the French, a year later, learnt of this desire to exclude private interests, they raised their claim from a quarter to a half share. They explained their previous 'self-restraint' on the grounds that they had understood the British Government to be committed to the recognition of certain private interests.⁽³³⁾

This French opposition to the attempts of the British to circumvent the Open Door issue by nationalising oil production was only one round in the intense diplomatic power game which Britain provoked by maintaining her pre-war monopolistic claims. Curzon's own tactics

with the Americans sprang, in the last resort, from the same misunderstanding of the limits of imperial power that fundamentally caused the men on the spot to fail to comprehend the political manoeuvring in London. (34) However, in order to see London's recalcitrance in its right perspective, attention must be drawn to the presence within the British camp of oil interests which were also challenging the TPC concession and its supporters in Whitehall. In one case, a British group went so far as to list the claims of twenty-two heirs of Abdul Hamid who disputed the right of the pre-war Ottoman Government to grant concessions, because, as they alleged, it had by a quasi-revolutionary act appropriated the property of Sultan Abdul Hamid's Private List. (35)

This group consisted of Hirsch Ltd. and the Central Mining and Investment Company on whose behalf Colonel Edwards was negotiating. According to the expert opinion of a Turkish Legal Commission of unspecified composition, the Iraqi regions had been part of Abdul Hamid's private properties, and had been confiscated by the Young Turks when they deposed the Sultan. They had refused to hand the properties over to his heirs when Abdul Hamid died. As a result of their appeal to the Sharia, the Legal Commission had decided in favour of the heirs. Accordingly it was argued that this property, now deemed to be private as it could not be treated as part of the Civil List, could not be divided between the Allies. Efforts were made by Edwards and by C C Muirhead Gould, one of his supporters, to satisfy the Admiralty and to comply with their proposition of an unrestricted British monopoly of oil in Iraq. As Muirhead wrote at the end of one of his numerous letters:

'Under these circumstances it is considered that Their Lordships might wish to make further inquiries both as to the legal position of the above mentioned firms, and as to their intentions with regard to the development of the oilfields to the best advantage of Her Majesty's Navy. I should further state that Colonel Edwards informs me that his Principals are prepared to accept any proposals or stipulations their Lordships might wish to impose in their development of the oilfields, and I understand that they are prepared to sink about 10 million sterling in these concessions'. (36)

The possibility of pursuing this course was officially raised more than once. For to the experts in the Government departments at Whitehall it seemed to offer a useful substitute in case the legal basis of the TPC concession proved to be shaky. Nevertheless, for the time being these claims had a real political effect because of

the doubt and uncertainty that they spread among British officials, and because they strengthened the case for arbitration. In the next two years the cause of Abdul Hamid's heirs twice took a sharp turn detrimental to British interests: first when Samuel Untermyer and other American oil interests began to act as their agents; and, secondly, when at Lausanne the Turks espoused their claim.

Yet the vital change in British oil policy resulted from the need of the Government to manoeuvre itself out of the deadlock into which it had allowed itself to be led by Curzon's high-handed tactics. Strictly speaking, Government support of the TPC claims had been achieved indirectly, by making the Iraqi regime the assignee of the Ottoman giver of concessions before the War. They hoped to bring this about by confirming the pre-war concessions contained in Article 311 of the Treaty of Sèvres by which the new regime in Iraq was to be bound. But the Treaty was never ratified by the Turkish Parliament. At the same time, the American Government withheld its recognition of the Draft Mandate for Iraq on the ground that the monopolistic TPC concession contravened Article 11 of the Mandate, which precluded discrimination by Iraq against nationals of other states.

In retaliation Curzon brought his heaviest artillery to bear when he stated that the United States Government had no right to interfere in the settlement of the terms of the mandates for Iraq and Palestine, on the ground that America was not a signatory to the Covenant of the League of Nations. He wrote to Davis in August 1920:

'Her Majesty's Government, while fully appreciating the suggestion for discussing with the US Government the various propositions mentioned by you, with which they are in full sympathy, are none the less of the opinion that the terms of the mandates can only properly be discussed at the Council of the League of Nations by the signatories of the Covenant'.⁽³⁷⁾

As we shall see later, Curzon made use of the League of Nations as a political instrument on a variety of occasions when the Foreign Office view or the Government's position needed support. Sometimes he seemed to have regarded it as the mailed fist on the long arm of the Foreign Office, sometimes as a limb that might be cut off without more ado. Some of the points which he advanced had been supplied by the Americans themselves. One such was the Act of the Philippine Legislature of August 31 1920, according to which any share in the working of public lands containing petroleum and other mineral oils and gas was confined to corporations or citizens of the

United States or the Philippines. (38)

Anglo-American relations in the Middle East began deteriorating rapidly. They were exacerbated by the bitter and long drawn-out controversy over the application of the Open Door principle. They were also hardly helped by the mounting suspicion (shared by all the rival oil interests) of the secret surveying done by the War Office and the working of the Naft Khana oilfields by the A. P. O. C. On the American side, Davis began to exert heavy pressure on the British Government by threatening to submit the TPC's claim to international arbitration. On the British side, Curzon brushed off all the representations made by Davis in a manner ill-suited to Britain's precarious diplomatic situation and her somewhat shaky position in Iraq. (39)

Though never mutually allied, the combination of Turkish menace and American pressure forced Britain into retreat. In the Middle East the Turks had reinforced their claim to the vilayet of Mosul by stepping up the military threat posed by Kemalists forces on its northern boundary. However, this threat resulted less from the superiority of the Kemalists forces than from the awkward military and diplomatic circumstances in which the British Government found itself once it had decided on severe cuts in military expenditure. Because expenditure had been so heavy in the previous years, 1919 and 1920, and owing to the unrelenting and fierce 'anti-Mesopotamia' campaign at home, the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq had begun almost a year before the Royal Air Force was ready to take over responsibility for policing and defending Iraq. The order was not to change before October 1922. The interim situation was well described by Shuckburgh of the Middle East Department: 'we must therefore play a game of bluff for nearly a year, unless we can square the Kemalists in the interval'. (40)

Except for Greece, there was no power to which Britain could turn for support in 'squaring' the Kemalists. The French, by their recent agreement with the Ankara Government, had relieved pressure on the Kemalists and their forces in Cilicia. (41) And as France had already received her share in the Turkish Petroleum Company by the San Remo Agreement of April 1920 there was no remaining bait in the Middle East with which to tempt her. As regards America, British officials had begun to have an uneasy feeling that the Kemalists were to some extent helped by American activity in Anatolia, and that their aggressive policy and threatening behaviour found encouragement in the strained relations which they knew existed between the British and

and American Governments.⁽⁴²⁾ Obviously there was no prospect of early peace negotiations with the Turks, and consequently no way of safeguarding the continuity of the pre-war TPC concessions.

Amid these pressing circumstances the embryo of a new policy can gradually be discerned in the minutes written by the experts. As Hubert Young of the Middle East Department wrote before May 1921: 'As a matter of fact we shall probably have to let in the Americans somehow, if we want to remove what we suspect to be one of the influences behind the aggression of the Ankara Government in the neighbourhood of Mosul. But we should prefer to do it as an act of grace rather than by compulsion!'⁽⁴³⁾

Again, in the middle of 1921, Whitehall was forced to admit that the TPC concession stood on shaky foundations. The Government had good reason to fear the outcome of any arbitration procedure. As Churchill stated the case in March 1922 when summarizing previous arguments on the oil issue:

'The highest legal opinion has been obtained privately by the TPC and it amounts in effect to this: that the claim although indubitably justified by abstract considerations of equity, rests upon a diplomatic rather than a legal basis'.⁽⁴⁴⁾

3. Whitehall's partial climb-down on the eve of the Lausanne Conference

When the prospects for the success of British Government support of the claims of the British-controlled TPC began to fade, the initiative passed to Churchill. Even before Curzon had replied to the American Ambassador in December 1921 that a full answer to his note of 17 November required 'most careful consideration from numerous aspects and by several departments', Churchill, being then Secretary of State for the Colonies, had reached the conclusion that there was no way of avoiding the Americans' participating in the TPC.⁽⁴⁵⁾ He wrote to Curzon:

'Before receiving your official letter of the 20 December... I had independently arrived at the conclusion that so long as the Americans are excluded from participation in Iraq oil, we shall never see the end of our difficulties in the Middle East. On the other hand, I am convinced that if we can satisfy their aspirations in that direction such pressing questions as the ratification of the mandates by the League of Nations etc. will prove comparatively simple and that even the Kemalist situation may be appreciably relieved'.⁽⁴⁶⁾

But, what is more important, Churchill had already taken action. Before Christmas he had discussed the matter with Philip Lloyd-Greame, Head of the Department of Overseas Trade. With Churchill's approval, Lloyd-Greame had authorised Greenway of the Petroleum Department to telegraph to Cadman of the A. P. O. C., 'authorising him to enter into negotiations for American participation in Mesopotamia'.⁽⁴⁷⁾ With a feeling for the diplomatic finesse called for by the precarious British position in the Middle East, Lloyd-Greame contrived that 'the first overtures should be made by the Standard Oil Company'.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Nothing must suggest the slightest lack of confidence in the strength of the British hand. In the same vein Churchill had confided to Curzon:

'I am impressed by the need for caution and for avoiding anything in the nature of an official overture, which, however cautiously worded, might be interpreted as an admission of the weakness of the Turkish Petroleum Company's claim. It would be far better if we could manoeuvre the Standard Oil Company into making the initial advances and negotiating some preliminary settlement in the matter direct with the Turkish Petroleum Company or the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Then, when the commercial negotiations were sufficiently advanced, we could reply formally to the American note'.⁽⁴⁹⁾

By this time, on January 16 1922, an informal conference had been held in Shuckburgh's room in the Middle East Department.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Curzon had left the initiative entirely to the Colonial Office. The dominant role played by the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office was clear from the number of its representatives compared with those of other offices. Shuckburgh, its Head, and Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, was in the chair. Besides Weakley from the Foreign Office and Clarke from the Petroleum Department there were three more members of the Middle East Department: Bullard, Clauson and Hall. The main decision taken was that if possible the attempt should be made to 'avoid arbitration by a prior settlement on commercial lines'.⁽⁵¹⁾ This desire not to submit the case to arbitration showed the monopolistic spirit that still coloured the thoughts of those present and the departments they represented. This spirit was equally in evidence when the question of Italian participation was discussed.⁽⁵²⁾ As early as August 1920 the Italian Ambassador, referring to the San Remo Agreement, had pleaded for some acknowledgement of Italian interests. Although no active steps were decided upon by the British it was felt that some kind of

Italian participation would strengthen the British position among those who questioned the claim of the TPC on the grounds that it violated the Open Door principle.

Fundamentally, the problem which confronted the meeting was how to maintain a British monopoly in face of all the foreign claims and aspirations. Since by any such monopoly Iraq stood to lose, Britain's real motives need to be examined. In the case of the oil-bearing regions of Iraq, Britain was determined to stick to 'appearances' in both the literal and figurative senses. The Open Door was in their words, a facade; British control of the oil-bearing regions, as well as the actual development of the oil, remained the ultimate aim.⁽⁵³⁾ The British were generally agreed that there were three possible courses they might take in order to get their share of Iraq's oil: first, participation in the shares of the TPC and thereby in the actual development of the oil; secondly, participation only in the output of oil; and thirdly, a share in the allocation to Iraq, provided for in Paragraph Eight of the San Remo oil Agreement.⁽⁵⁴⁾ By that Agreement up to 20 per cent of the share capital in the TPC had been assigned to the Iraq Government or a consortium of Iraqi firms. The British took the view that either the second or possibly the third of these courses could appease Italian interests; but they hesitated about what was to be done with US interests. Significantly, they were inclined to appease the Standard Oil Company by adopting the second course rather than the first; although some doubted whether American interests, rich in investment capital, would be satisfied with only a share in the oil output. Churchill in particular thought that as the US companies were concerned to secure the control of large quantities of oil, an assurance of a constant annual supply would prove a more attractive proposition than an undertaking that they could co-operate in the actual development of the oilfields. He summarized its advantages as follows:

'The United States Government would no longer dispute the validity of the Turkish Petroleum Company's claim: that their objection to the monopolistic nature of the rights which that Company wish to establish would be weakened, if not entirely waived; and that the claim of the Company would be recognised by the Iraq Government'.⁽⁵⁵⁾

In contrast, the Foreign Office, and also the Petroleum Department were very sceptical about whether the Standard Oil Company could thus be put off and the American Government be 'bribed' into acquiescing in only a facade of the 'Open Door' in Iraq.

In view of the large British share-holding of about 60 per cent in the TPC the prospects of success in 'squaring' the Americans by this means were very doubtful.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Nevertheless, Churchill cited as a good omen the North Persia Agreement, known as the Khostaria concessions, recently concluded between the A. P. O. C. and the Standard Oil Company. After all, with the A. P. O. C. the majority share-holder in the TPC and also the Standard Oil Company sitting at the same table, the two partners would surely be foolish to jettison the favourable atmosphere of co-operation they had so recently achieved.⁽⁵⁷⁾ The fact that the Khostaria concessions so quickly came to nothing - because the Persians rejected the offer of a half-share made unilaterally by the Standard Oil Company to the A. P. O. C. - did not weaken the spirit of Anglo-American co-operation.

The gambit was worth a trial because Curzon was about to negotiate with the Kemalists at Lausanne, and if he were successful it would strengthen his hand. While there, he would have to deal not only with the Kemalists but also with a series of disillusioned allies. Hence if the Americans had acquiesced in the proposal described above, Curzon's position would be much stronger. The same consideration had led Churchill to suggest modifying the provisions of the San Remo Agreement in such a way that the Italians might get their share out of what was due to Iraq. He estimated the political benefits that would result from such a measure: 'In the event of such a combination being possible, it would have an excellent effect on our relations with the Italian Government and incidentally might offer us assistance in getting them to accept changes in the Treaty of Sevres as affecting the Tripartite Agreement.'⁽⁵⁸⁾

Evidently, on the eve of the Lausanne Conference, Churchill was the real impresario. He had independently taken a considerable initiative in breaking the stalemate in Anglo-American relations.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Furthermore, he had lessened the Italians' intransigence by dangling before them a share in Iraq's own share of the TPC's output of oil. Eager to enlarge the possible field of diplomatic manoeuvring in the coming peace negotiations he ruthlessly proceeded on the assumption that the Iraqi Government could be bullied into doing whatever the British wanted. However, as no binding engagements were made the field remained precariously narrow.

In the course of events that led up to Lausanne, Curzon's scope for manoeuvre became still further limited by the events at Chanak.

Indeed Mustafa Kemal's success there had far-reaching effects on matters remote from the area. When the Chanak incident, besides leaving the British without an ally or a friend on the international scene, caused the downfall of Lloyd George, this meant a change of government in Whitehall.⁽⁶⁰⁾

There was, of course, a long record of disenchantment among Lloyd George's colleagues about his handling of the peacemaking. By the end of the war with Turkey, men such as Curzon and Milner had been frightened by the speculative deals which Lloyd George had suggested for appeasing the French. In the years that followed by far the most vocal critic was Cecil. He kept on describing the unsatisfactory state of affairs in Turkey, Hungary, Russia, Persia, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt and India. The Lloyd George Government must be made at least partially responsible, he claimed, for all the deplorable events that had occurred in those regions even if only because the Cabinet had always had more than one eye on by-elections and on the national press.⁽⁶¹⁾

But the accession of the Tories to power under Bonar Law was by no means as favourable to Imperial interests in Iraq as might have been expected from a Conservative Government. Not only did Bonar Law, the new Prime Minister, and the Duke of Devonshire, Churchill's successor at the Colonial Office, surpass their predecessors in their ignorance of the Middle East, but they made no attempt to conceal their preference for cutting down imperial and mandatory commitments and for leaving development and education to look after themselves.⁽⁶²⁾ In contrast, civil servants were on the whole more consistent. The Middle East Department, though aware of the overall need to curtail Government expenditure, nevertheless put up a stiff resistance to this mixture of nonchalance and ruthlessness so characteristic of party politics. The stiffening of the Department's attitude was no doubt partly instigated by the men on the spot. In the autumn of 1922, Percy Cox began to be anxious about disquieting rumours in Baghdad that Whitehall intended to hand back Kurdistan and the Mosul vilayet to Turkey.⁽⁶³⁾ He urged the Colonial Office to give some official assurance to the contrary. At the same time he warned them that any withdrawal from the Mosul vilayet would run the risk of unforeseeable disasters. In short, the withdrawal would be regarded in Iraq as a preliminary to final British withdrawal to Basra: without Mosul it would become extremely difficult to hold Baghdad. Revenue payment and recruiting for the levies would also be seriously affected, while the Christian

community of the Mosul vilayet, numbering some 80,000 people, would be faced with physical extinction by the advancing Turks.

But the British Government, with a general election just ahead of it, was in no position to make any statement of policy. This stumbling-block began to cause concern even to the departments in Whitehall - particularly to the Air Ministry, which was responsible at least for the military security of British personnel and garrisons in Iraq, and to the Middle East Department. Both feared that after the elections a new government might have too little time to decide on a final policy and that the Turks would encounter a British Government which had not made up its mind. But underlying the demands - both from the areas themselves and from Government officials in London - for immediate consideration of future policy in Iraq, was their view that imperial interests were a permanent trust for any government, whatever its political complexion. This principle involved the continuance of political planning without interruption in the departments responsible for Iraq.

Thanks to Shuckburgh's skill in organization, this process was set in motion by means of a flexible 'Group Council' attended by various departments and summoned whenever some final decision needed to be taken. The recommendations and the reports of this body throw more light on trends of thought, possible alternatives and possible new departures than do any other records. Thus on the eve of the General Election in the autumn of 1922, its views on Mosul were summarized by Hubert Young as follows:

(1) The Air Ministry regard our position in Iraq as quite satisfactory from the military point of view.

(2) That the Foreign Office do not anticipate that the Turks will really hold out for the retrocession of Mosul and Kurdistan.

(3) That in the event of their doing so it would be possible for us to offer:

(a) Either 5 per cent of the 20 per cent participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company which is now reserved for the Iraqi Government, or some percentage of the oil royalties derived from the Mosul vilayet and Kurdistan.

(b) A promise that if and when the Baghdad railway is completed (of which there is so far as I know, no intention whatever) we should promise that a friendly agreement would be come to with Turkey about the through running of the line.

(c) An announcement by Faisal and possibly Abdullah that they recognize the spiritual suzerainty of the Caliph.

(d) Representation of King Faisal at Constantinople, under Article 5 of the Iraq Treaty, which would entail Turkish representation at Baghdad.

(e) Treatment of Turks in Palestine and Iraq as foreigners with special privileges, provided that they extended capitulatory rights to Iraqis and Palestinians in Turkey.

(4) That both Foreign Office and Air Ministry were departmentally strongly averse from any territorial concession bargain made to Turkey, but that it might be necessary in the last resort for us to drop our demand for the modification of the Treaty of Sevres frontier to include Amadiyah in Iraq...⁽⁶⁴⁾

The Middle East Department was, on the whole, pleased with the attitude taken by the Air Ministry and the Foreign Office. As for Cox, he remained very concerned about Whitehall's largely non-committal answers and continued to forecast the danger of imminent threats from the Turks. Here it should be added that Cox exercised some influence on the forthcoming negotiations with the Turks. All telegrams from Lausanne to London which touched Iraq were repeated to him, and his views transmitted back to London.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. J A DeNovo, American Interests and Policies in the Middle East 1900-1939, Mineapolis, 1963, chapt 3, "Dollar Diplomacy In Turkey: The Chester Project, 1908-1913".
2. J A DeNovo, 'The Movement for an Aggressive American Oil Policy Abroad, 1918-1920', The American Historical Review vol LXI, No 4 July 1956.
3. Ibid, p 858
4. Cf K M Pannikar, Asia and Western Dominance, London 1967, p 147
5. See footnote
6. Memorandum by Balfour, Freedom of the Seas, 11 Jan 1919, Balfour MSS 49750
7. Cecil to Lloyd George, 4 April 1919, Cecil MSS 51076; on the Admiralty views and for an American comment on them see

- also: Skinner (US Consul General in London) to State Department, 5 Dec 1918, Foreign Relations of the US, 1919, vol I p 285
8. Cf footnote 6
 9. Cf Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, London 1938, vol I pp 185-6
 10. As Lloyd George, knowing of Curzon's still greater ambitions, once remarked to Cecil in Paris, Lord Cecil's Diary of the British Delegation, 13 Jan 1919, Cecil MSS 51131.
 11. See chapt II footnote 42
 12. Kidston to G R Clerk, 29 July 1919, FO 800/217
 13. Conference of Ministers, 23 Jan 1920, CAB 23/20
 14. Cf footnote 12
 15. Memorandum to the War Cabinet by the First Lord of the Admiralty. A Note in Reference to Admiralty Memorandum on the "Petroleum Situation in the British Empire", by Eric Geddes, 17 Sept 1918, CAB 21/119
 16. Ibid
 17. Chapt II footnote 38
 18. Cf Memorandum by the Foreign Office on French Govt's claim to oil rights in Iraq, Nov 1926, CO 730/100/21136, p 3, see also chapt VII.
 19. That the French course of action was nevertheless motivated by the desire of safeguarding the pre-war trade links and investments is a fact which does not constitute a challenge to the British.
 20. Cf Minutes of the War Cabinet 491B, 26 Oct 1918, CAB23/14
 21. Cf Chapt VII footnote 11
 22. Cf chapt III p 52
 23. As Montagu's observation to Harcourt best reflects the situation, it is worth quoting: "The basis on which we propose to remain in Mesopotamia is that of a Power controlling an independent Arab State, and we shall purport to control it primarily in the interests of the inhabitants...but one of our first acts as controlling Power will apparently be - by recognising the 1912 Agreement and reconstituting the TPC in our own interests - to deprive the new State of a free hand in disposing of one of its most valuable assets. The least that we can do, therefore, is to ensure that the interests of the new State are fully safeguarded, and I suggest that the best way in which this can be done is by providing for the participation

- of the State in the new Company", 23 Dec 1918, CAB 21/119
24. A valuable summary of the entire correspondence in regard to Naft Khana of the years 1918-1921 (15 pages) is contained under the headline, 'Oil Concessions in Iraq', dated 11 Jan 1922, CO 730/27/1948. The IO meeting took place on 8 April, Indicative of the secrecy of all oil business is that although the Naft Khana fields were by their unique territorial status free for being worked, the FO nevertheless insisted that actual working should be wrapped in the cloak of military necessity; also CO 730/28/11031, 7 March 1922, cf S Longrigg p 43.
25. Memorandum by Churchill 13 March 1922, CO 730/28. The figures for Revenue and Expenditure in the years 1921 and 1922 were as follows:
- | | Revenue | Expenditure | Surplus | Deficit |
|------|---------|-------------|---------|---------|
| 1921 | 528.25 | 572.13 | - | 43.88 |
| 1922 | 474.67 | 485.81 | - | 11.14 |
- (in lakhs of Rs, a lakh equaled 100,000 rupees, which at the then current rate of exchange amounted to somewhat over L 7,000); the figures are taken from the Administrative Reports: Colonial Nos 21, 29.
26. See chapt III p 60
27. Minutes of the Cabinet meeting 23 Jan 1920, CAB 23/20
28. Ibid
29. Memorandum by Churchill, 13 March 1922, CO 730/28; also Memorandum on Iraq Oil, CO 730/28/(Secret C.P.3832).
30. Thus the Iraqi regime suffered a fate similar to that suffered by the Turks on the eve of the war.
31. Memorandum by the Minister in charge of the Petroleum Department, Mesopotamian Oilfields, 22 April 1920, CAB 1/29/16
32. Minute by Shuckburgh, 8 March 1922, CO 730/28/11031.
33. Cf footnote 31
34. Gertrude Bell's voice may be representative for many others: "I feel sure he (Devonshire) will respect solemn obligations. I'm suddenly aware of how much I hated serving under Winston. He's as clever as he can be and I'm bound to say he hasn't let us down, but one never knew whether he wouldn't. Now they may be rather stupid, the new Cabinet, but they are not rogues - upon my soul I think that's what matters most". Burgoyne, vol II p 301.
35. A detailed account of the activities of this group is contained in

- a letter signed by C C Muirhead Gould of March 1921, CO 730/9/20161.
36. *Ibid*, also Letter by the Central Mining and Investment Company Ltd of 11 April 1921 in which reference is made to interviews of the group with John Tilley and E Weakley of the FO on 6 Dec 1920. This and other material was printed for use of the Middle East Department see CO 730/9/23580: Also minutes by H Young 3 May 1921, and Amery 7 May 1921, CO 730/9/20161. Further, Br High Commissioner at Constantinople (Acting) H C F Rattigan to Curzon, 29 June 1921 and Memorandum by Ryan, 28 June 1921, CO 730/10/34643
 37. Cf CO 730/9/20634. The file contains a survey of the correspondence between Curzon and Davis, the US Ambassador in Britain.
 38. Curzon to Davis, 1 March 1921, Foreign Relations of the US, 1921, vol II pp 82-84
 39. Cf also Longrigg, pp 45-6; B Shwadran, The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers, New York 1959, pp 207-208
 40. Shuckburgh to Masterton Smith, 9 Nov 1921, CO 730/7/55287
 41. These developments were discussed in the Cabinet meetings of 26 Oct and 22 Nov 1921, CAB 23/27
 42. Cf Oliphant (FO) to CO, 1 March 1921. He referred also to reports by A T Wilson of the previous year according to which American oil agents should have been connected with the revolt in that year, CO 730/9/10195. As for Cox's views see his letter to Shuckburgh of 25 March 1924, CO 730/58/13100.
 43. Minute by H Young 3 May 1921, CO 730/9/20161
 44. See footnote 29
 45. Foreign Relations of the US, 1921, vol II pp 93-4
 46. Churchill to Curzon, 1 Febr 1922, CO 730/27/3167
 47. Lloyd Graeme to Churchill, 12 Jan 1922, Personal and Secret CO 730/27/3167
 48. *Ibid*, On Cadman see J Rowland/Lord Cadman, Ambassador for Oil, London 1960
 49. See footnote 46
 50. Minute by Clauson, 12 Jan 1922, CO 730/27/1695
 51. CO 730/27/1695
 52. Italian requests for participation in any benefits that might accrue from the Agreement dated from August 1920.
 53. On the complexity of the Open Door principle in practice see J DeNovo, American Interests, p 202.

54. For the text see: J C Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, New York 1956, vol II pp 75-77.
55. Cf footnote 29
56. The holdings in the TPC as Churchill referred to them, had the following proportions: A. P. O. C. 50%, British Anglo-Saxon (Shell) 25% of which 60% were Dutch and 40% British, French (ex- German) 25%. Ever since the Long-Berenger Agreement (San Remo) the exact figures were: A. P. O. C. 47.5%, Anglo-Saxon 22.5%, French 25%, Gulbenkian 5%.
57. Churchill to Curzon, 1 Febr 1922, CO 730/27/3167
58. See footnote 29
59. From Lloyd-Greame's letter one may however assume that Churchill had been under the influence of the Oil Department.
60. It was a landmark in the relationship between the metropolis and the dominions.
61. Cecil to Grey, 12 April 1921, Cecil MSS 51076; Cecil to Smuts, 25 July 1922, *ibid.* See also his declaration of political opinion, 28 March 1922, Gilbert Murray MSS Oxford.
62. Devonshire had previously been governor-general of Canada. He was a free-trader. cf Denis Judd, Balfour and the British Empire, London 1968 p 111.
63. See H Young to Masterton Smith (Private Secretary to Churchill) for Churchill, 18 Oct 1922, CO 730/25/52191
64. *Ibid*

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Role of oil at the Lausanne Conference 1923

The role played by oil in the operations which eroded Iraq's share in the TPC's output, which helped to set the stage for the negotiations at Lausanne, and which continued to influence decisions made later on, is particularly relevant. For when in 1924 Lord Curzon was accused in Parliament of having fought on behalf of oil interests at Lausanne, the influence of oil was vehemently denied. Lord Curzon rejected as untrue the statement made by T Johnson, MP, that 'the trail of oil was all over the question of Mosul and Iraq'.⁽¹⁾ But Curzon's refutation, which he sought to uphold in a series of letters to The Times, was a white lie. He considered it opportune to lie both to Parliament and to the public, and again in the Blue Book on the Lausanne Conference of 1923, which he later quoted by stating that:

'Oil had not the remotest connexion with my attitude or with that of His Majesty's Government on the Mosul question, or the Iraq question, or the Eastern question in any aspect'.⁽²⁾

The truth however, was that while Curzon was negotiating on behalf of the British Government at Lausanne, the representatives of the British, French and American oil interests in the Turkish Petroleum Company were meeting in London. Significantly, Sassoon Effendi Haskail, the nominal Iraqi Finance Minister, also attended the London talks. These talks had begun in the autumn of 1922 on the initiative of Churchill and Lloyd-Greame.⁽³⁾ Their basis was a four-point agreement which had been concluded earlier in New York.⁽⁴⁾ At the time of the Lausanne Conference, Curzon was

kept fully informed of their progress.⁽⁵⁾ It was important for him to know, because since the Standard Oil Company and the French and British share-holding companies in the TPC were all backed by their respective governments, the proceedings in London to a large extent regulated Curzon's scope for diplomatic manoeuvre. On the other hand, as Curzon found it necessary to promise participation in the TPC to the Italians, and as a similar British promise to Turkey appeared inevitable if Britain was to retain the Mosul vilayet, diplomatic requirements began to complicate the discussions about the composition of the Turkish Petroleum Company.⁽⁶⁾ Furthermore, the Admiralty's argument that it was important for Britain to retain physical control over the oil-bearing regions of Mosul also constituted a very important ingredient in the difficult British decision, made at the time of the Lausanne Conference, to retain the Mosul vilayet. At one stage in the negotiations about a frontier compromise, it was actually the sole motive of the British.

Certainly, the significance and the complexity of the oil issue calls for a close examination of British decision-making at the time of the Lausanne Conference. The conference began on November 20 1922 and ended, after a temporary breakdown from February 4 to April 23, on July 24 1923. The Mosul question was left for bi-lateral settlement between Britain and Turkey. Of the many aspects of the conference three are particularly relevant for examining and assessing the role of the Mosul oil in British policy-making: first, Curzon's proposal of a frontier compromise in the north of the Mosul vilayet; secondly, the plans for a new composition of the Turkish Petroleum Company and for a graduated scale in the distribution of its profits; and thirdly, the beginning of the transfer of the Mosul question away from power politics and ordinary international diplomacy to settlement by the League.

On November 16 the Bonar Law Cabinet laid down the course to be followed by Curzon at Lausanne:

'at the Lausanne Conference the S of S for Foreign Affairs should be authorised to refuse to discuss any proposal which the Turkish Delegation might make for including Mosul within the Turkish frontiers, on the ground, among others, that Mosul had already been conceded to the Kingdom of Iraq, but that Lord Curzon should avoid committing the British Government more deeply than they are already committed to continued responsibility for Iraq'.⁽⁷⁾

The stipulation that Curzon should not commit Britain any more deeply was set out more explicitly in the assurances which Devonshire sent to Cox at Baghdad. Devonshire assured Cox that Whitehall still had a strong interest in retaining Mosul, that there would be strenuous resistance to Turkish claims to any part of the vilayet, that it would try to keep Amadiyah on the Iraqi side, and that it would do its utmost to avert the disaster of a withdrawal to Basra. But for reasons of high policy he could not pledge the Government's word. As he had written on November 8 1922:

'At the same time you will understand that situation might conceivably arise in which the necessity of achieving some object of still great importance might oblige us to consider the possibility of giving up Mosul'.⁽⁸⁾

Cox, who was already disturbed by the spate of rumours among the Iraqis at Baghdad that the British might withdraw to Basra, decided to instigate nationwide agitation for retention of the Mosul vilayet. The property-owning classes, in particular the big landowners, were becoming reluctant to commit themselves to supporting an apparently unstable regime which opposed the Turks, so Cox replaced the Cabinet (led by the Naqib of Baghdad, one of the richest landowners), with a new Cabinet composed of ardent nationalists.⁽⁹⁾

Meanwhile, at Lausanne private conversations between Curzon and Riza Nur Bey, the second Turkish delegate, began on December 4 simultaneously with the official negotiations. The next day, after protestations of friendly intentions by both sides, Curzon saw that, exactly as he had feared, the objective of the Turks was simply to hold Mosul. As he informed the Foreign Office:

'Turkey would meet us on every point, conclude satisfactory treaty and even break with Soviet, if only we could give them vilayet of Mosul'.⁽¹⁰⁾

While Riza Nur Bey was presumably asked to await the outcome of the consultations at Whitehall, Curzon worked out a compromise which touched only the question of the northern boundary of the vilayet, as distinct from the question of possession of the vilayet as a whole. This read as follows:

'It might perhaps be possible ostensibly and partially to meet Turkish wishes by offering them Kurdish part of Mosul vilayet following line of mountains and including Keni, Sandjak Rowanduz and Suleimani etc. while retaining for Iraq Amadiyah for the sake of Assyrian Christians, Mosul town, Erbil, Kirkuk and the whole of plain country inhabited by Arabs'.⁽¹¹⁾

Curzon, who had no local knowledge of the boundaries of the Mosul vilayet, asked that Hubert Young, or failing him Reader Bullard, might be sent to Lausanne. To the Middle East Department's surprise, Curzon ended with the statement that it was 'not intended to exclude Turkish participation in Mosul oil on lines already under examination'.⁽¹²⁾ As participation by the Turks in developing the oil had, until then, been envisaged only as the price of their acquiescence in the existing frontiers of Iraq, his statement inevitably met with severe criticism. As the Middle East Department bluntly stated the matter:

'The admission of Turkish interests in our oil projects would be extremely inconvenient... If we are forced to make concessions on the frontier, there seems no reason why we should also make concessions in regard to oil'.⁽¹³⁾

But Curzon had sound reasons for reserving a share in the Mosul oil for the Turks. The strip of territory which he suggested as a bargaining counter did not include land where discovery of oil was likely.⁽¹⁴⁾ It can hardly have been an accident that he retained the oil-bearing regions and foothills together with the doubtful asset of their Turkish towns, while bargaining away the bare mountains with their Kurdish tribes. But the working of possible oil, and maintaining friendly relations with the Turks on the spot, had somehow to be combined under British control. This makes it clear why Curzon urged so strongly that the Turks must continue to have a share in the oil of Mosul.

Strategically, Curzon's suggested compromise stood up to the critical survey of the General Staff: it seemed to them a defensible northern frontier for Iraq. As they explained:

'The portion ceded possesses indifferent resources and worse communications. It will not give the Turks an area through which they can easily move troops and it is unsuitable for use as a base for further operations against Iraq proper'.⁽¹⁵⁾

Most significantly - as it emerges from their long list of critical observations, and also from the wholesale criticism submitted by the Middle East Department in the Committee on Iraq - the experts did not consider a defensible northern frontier for 'Iraq proper' to be identical with a good strategic frontier for holding 'Mosul proper'.⁽¹⁶⁾ It was in fact on this latter aspect that they focused their arguments about defence.

Incidentally, it must be stated that previous historical accounts have oversimplified the question of Iraq's northern frontier as a

strategic requirement for safeguarding the territory of the Iraqi State. In general their argument has been that the Mosul vilayet had to be retained for Iraq in order to provide Iraq with a defensible northern frontier beyond the Mosul plains. It follows that this strategic reasoning has then been used for explaining away the political role of the Mosul oil. (17) Seen in this light, Curzon's policy could be reconciled with the orthodox view about the need for a strategic northern frontier for Iraq, but not with the need to assert British control over the Mosul oilfields. But, as is clear from the observations of contemporary experts on Curzon's compromise over a frontier for northern Iraq, one must differentiate between the strategic requirements for holding the Mosul vilayet and those for holding Iraq as a whole. The holding of the entire vilayet of Mosul had its own raison d'être, distinct from the frontier question of Iraq proper but by no means distinct from British reasons for holding Iraq. Therefore, as Iraq was held by the British for the purpose of maintaining physical control over its oil-bearing regions, and since the Mosul oilfields were a declared objective of British policy and also part of the TPC concession, the 'partial' strategic requirements for protecting the territory of the mandated Iraqi State from easy aggression in the north were absorbed in the wider strategic plans for holding and securing the oil-bearing regions and the territory covered by the TPC concession.

This strategic complication is clearly discernible in the general observations made by the Middle East Department, the Admiralty, and the Committee on Iraq. To establish this point, explicit evidence is needed because otherwise its central significance for the role of oil might be contested by reasoning at present indefinable. L S Amery of the Admiralty observed, in the committee meeting of December 8:

'It was most important to hold the territory in which oilfields and potential oilfields and pipe lines were situated; the question of how concessions with regard to oil were held was of less importance. The strip of country suggested by Curzon for bargaining purposes did not actually include the land where oil was likely to be found, but it was in close proximity to it'. (18)

Similarly, the importance of keeping physical control over the oil-bearing regions and oil supply was emphasised in a note of December 11 1922, prepared by the Middle East Department and summarizing the views of the ad hoc Committee on Iraq:

'The question of oil remains to be touched upon. The Iraq oilfields have not only not been developed, but have not even been properly prospected. There is no doubt that there are considerable deposits of oil, particularly in the Mosul vilayet though the exact quantities still remain a matter for surmise. This is not the place to go into the question of the claims of the Turkish Petroleum Company or the various international difficulties that centre round the question of oil concessions. It is possible that, even if Mosul reverted to Turkey, the rights of the British oil interests could be maintained. What is relevant to the present purpose is the desirability of keeping within the British sphere of influence what may prove to be one of the most important oilfields of the future'.⁽¹⁹⁾

The Committee on Iraq, it is true, had not been formed for the express purpose of working out arguments for the negotiations at Lausanne. More properly, it had the task of counteracting one of the legacies of the recent election campaign, in the course of which Bonar Law as well as Baldwin had pledged themselves to curtail drastically Britain's over-commitment abroad. Iraq had come to be a symbol of over-commitment; and this fact may well have compelled Curzon to make an exceptionally firm stand against the Turks at Lausanne. Seen from this angle, the decision to keep Iraq within the British orbit had by this time already been made. Whether or not one sees the two decisions in one perspective, physical control over the oil-bearing regions of Iraq, including Mosul, has clearly to be regarded as the most important argument for maintaining British control over that country. At no time in the next months or years was this argument absent from the field of policy-making: by January 1923, when Novar's memorandum was read to the Cabinet Committee, it echoed with it.

'The one serious reason advanced for continued occupation is to guard existing and potential supplies of oil, and that not only for ourselves but for America and other countries. It is not apparent why we should bear the whole cost of protecting property in which so many other powers are interested, while if the safety of the wells can be secured by a trifling backsheesh to the tribes, it will be better to adopt these methods rather than those of costly occupation'.⁽²⁰⁾

This utterance, coming from a thrifty Scot who was Minister for Scotland, was not a lonely voice. The minutes of the next committee meeting of January 18 1923 read:

'The situation with regard to oil was also touched upon; the value of holding control of the country in which the Mosul and the West Persian oilfields were situated in the event of war was emphasised, and the British financial interests in the Mosul oilfields explained'.⁽²¹⁾

This undeniably strong motive for retaining British control over Mosul, no matter whether directly or indirectly through the maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity and a mandatory regime, led to the rejection by the Committee of Iraq of Curzon's frontier compromise. When they were appraising Curzon's proposal the General Staff pointed out that in spite of its unfavourable factors, his suggestion possessed 'many advantages over the rendition of any portion of the Mosul vilayet proper', but the proposal was discarded on grounds of defence, owing to the strategic complication described above.⁽²²⁾ The vital line of communication between Mosul and Baghdad would be flanked for some 200 miles by a wild mountainous area inhabited by truculent tribesmen; and if there were constant trouble, great strain would be put upon the diplomatic line of communication to Constantinople - a capital not only renowned for its inefficiency in diplomatic matters, but ill-placed for controlling distant and unruly subjects. But the main criticism was that if the Kurdish hill-country on the north and east of the vilayet were cut off, and the foothills and the Turkish-speaking towns of Erbil, Kirkuk and Kifri were left under the control of Baghdad, the Turks would make more insistent claims for these towns which in time would have to be met. What was more, Turkey's case would be difficult to disprove on either principle.

Such arguments might seem trifling in comparison with the need for the Bonar Law Government to make drastic economies, and with the extraordinary risks which Britain would run by maintaining an uncompromising attitude towards the Turkish claims. Admittedly, some experts had pointed out that the rejection of Curzon's proposal saved the British taxpayer the extra cost of holding Kirkuk in great military strength.⁽²³⁾ But nobody raised the question of whether the Kurds might involve them in equal or even greater expenditure if they proved themselves as unruly when they were incorporated within Iraq as they did normally outside its northern frontier. Nor, again, did anyone consider whether taking an uncompromising stand on the territorial issue was in any way compatible with willingness to grant the Turks a share in the TPC. The Middle East Department clearly saw that risks of diplomatic

friction would be lessened if the international basis of the Company were widened. But the territorial aspect of the Mosul question remained unaffected by this consideration. In short, physical control over the oil-bearing regions had become the predominant idea in the minds of British policy makers. In this context the Admiralty's argument while limiting territorial control by the British to the Mosul vilayet, and remaining a powerful influence thereto, had changed gradually in regard to the working of oil since the time of Slade's memorandum. It now permitted any composition of the TPC that diplomacy might require. This question of the composition of the TPC also became a critical issue as the negotiations at Lausanne dragged on.

Meanwhile at Lausanne Curzon was considering his policy of offering the Turks participation in the Mosul oil on the condition that they relinquished any claim to the vilayet. The Turks, for their part, had approached the American observers at Lausanne, inviting them to support their claim to Mosul by offering them a generous share in the Mosul oil should Turkey acquire the vilayet. In fact, according to the report of November 22 1922 transmitted by Child and Grew of the American Delegation to the State Department, the share of the American interests in the oil lands of Mosul was to be 'greater than the share taken by any other power'.⁽²⁴⁾ Presumably, the Turks were referring to the Chester concession which, indeed, they granted on April 9 1923. However, the State Department, while pretending to pursue a policy of 'no favourites', distrusted the Chester project because of its shaky capital basis, its internal strife between Arthur Chester Jr. and the powerful Canadian partner Kennedy-Clayton, and finally its monopolistic character.

Seen from a diplomatic angle, overtures of this kind by the Turks were welcome to the State Department. At the same time its support for the Standard Oil Company remained firm. At no time was it faced with the alternatives of supporting either rival interests that accrued from the Chester concession or the interests of the Standard Oil Company. Had the State Department accepted the Turkish offer and thrown the weight of its prestige on the side of Admiral Chester's concession (confirmation of which the Turks seem to have made dependent on the extension of the concession to Mosul), such an act would have been tantamount to abandoning the interests of Standard Oil in Iraq (minus Mosul) and to dividing into two the area to which the TPC concession applied. Such a policy would also have defeated

its own avowed principle of 'the open door'. Thus the State Department preferred to come to terms with the imperial powers rather than throw in its lot with the revolutionary states of Turkey and - perhaps - Persia. (In this case, of course, the United States would have accepted monopolistic privileges of the same kind as those claimed by the imperialist powers). However, as the State Department chose to make no move about the Turkish offers, the Turks took the American course of action to be tacit support of their claim to Mosul. They therefore frustrated all the counter-attempts of the British to include in the Peace Treaty an article specifying the validity of the TPC's concession of 1914. ⁽²⁵⁾

In general, on the evidence of their offer to the American delegation at Lausanne it would seem that the Turks, by refusing in any way to acknowledge the validity of the TPC concession, intended simply to use it as an instrument by which they could secure the return of the Mosul vilayet. It appears that they contemplated abandoning the TPC concession once they had achieved their territorial objective. Since they regarded the territorial, rather than the economic, aspect of the Mosul question as more important, Curzon's hope of buying their renunciation of the territory by offering them a share in the Mosul oil was in vain.

On the other hand, if a compromise on the territorial question had been reached, it is difficult to imagine how the TPC with a concession extending across the frontier with Turkey, could have obtained congenial terms from both Ankara and Baghdad. Further, as the two regimes were primarily interested in profit-making by getting the maximum output of oil, they would have been likely to demand a say in the policy of the TPC. By contrast, the big Western share-holding companies, including Standard Oil, were interested more in selling crude oil to their branches or affiliated companies, than in making profits on production, for which, as the TPC was registered in Britain, the British partners would have had to pay large amounts of income tax. ⁽²⁶⁾ Most of these points were apparently raised in the negotiations in London which Sassoon Haskail attended, and in the talks held simultaneously in Baghdad between Mr. Keeling, the representative of the TPC and the nominal Iraqi Government.

Purely business calculations were thus mixed up with considerations of diplomacy. This can be seen by the way in which, during the Lausanne Conference, the Colonial Office exerted heavy pressure on the Iraqi regime to refrain from pressing for the maintenance

of the provisions contained in the San Remo Agreement. As the Colonial Office instructed the High Commissioner at Baghdad on January 2 1923:

'Question of Mosul oil concession is under consideration of His Majesty's Government in connection with Turkish treaty negotiations at Lausanne...San Remo Agreement provided for Iraq Government or native interests acquiring share capital up to maximum of 20 per cent which would of course mean subscribing large sum in cash, perhaps ultimately £2,000,000. No definite scheme has hitherto been framed for provision of such capital. It is now suggested that this right should be surrendered by Iraq Government in order to admit of Italian and Turkish participation, on clear condition that sovereignty of Iraq over Mosul vilayet is recognised by Turkish Government. Please press Iraq Government to give immediate consideration to this proposal. You should point out that definite assurance of possession of Mosul vilayet is Iraq's main interest in Turkish treaty, and is worth serious sacrifice...His Majesty's Government think that Iraq will benefit by showing that they are more concerned about integrity of their country than about oil dividends'. (27)

Presumably this instruction was meant to be pragmatic, but it was nonetheless deeply ambiguous and destructive to Iraq's economic aspirations. Its ambiguity originated in a conflict between two principles or propositions: first the claim of territorial integrity as a legitimization of national sovereignty, second the proposition that permanent national sovereignty over raw materials in abundance ultimately challenges the welfare of mankind. Of course, one can rightly doubt, whether in this case the TPC was the proper agent of mankind or whether it regarded itself as such. Theoretically, however, such a claim was intrinsic in the Open Door formula and it remained on the agenda of numerous international conferences on raw materials convoked by the League of Nations and its successors until the present day.

Again, in this case, the issue of the Mosul oil was obviously not tackled according to principles, but politically. Due to its pre-war oil concession, to the Open Door formula and in the absence of a Turkish diplomatic recognition of the successor state Iraq, the TPC claimed priority over Iraq, a late comer. But Iraq was merely a weak late comer. As such it had to give way to other

but more powerful late comers such as America - and, in a rather diplomatic sense, France. Under threat of loss of territory, Iraq had to forfeit its voting shares in the TPC. Ironically, however, both the maintenance of territorial integrity and the exclusion from the governing board enabled the TPC (and indirectly the A. P. O. C.) to court the American rival and consolidate its business policy in the exploitation of Middle Eastern oil. It was a business practice alien to the needs of the country, and primarily governed by the western rationale of income-tax-systems, profit margins and investment rates.

Thus the British Government was not only supporting the TPC's claim that its concession was valid, and buttressing the concession by widening the composition of the Company, but it was also actively showing its approval of the TPC's and with the A. P. O. C.'s methods of profit-making. Needless to say, these methods did not make enough allowance for the specific needs of Iraq at that particular stage of its development as a state. Outwardly complementary to this oil policy, of course, was the opportunist diplomacy which aimed to pacify the Middle East by offering a share in the Iraqi oil to the various competing oil and power interests in the area.

It should be emphasised that, as the instructions to Baghdad show, the Middle East Department was fully aware that their oil policy required serious sacrifice from Iraq. Accordingly, arguments were found by which its extent could be minimised. The prospect of revenue from royalties was held out to the Iraq regime, while at the same time it was pointed out that this income would 'not be dependent on profits which must be uncertain!'.⁽²⁸⁾ Further, it was asserted that if they accepted the fact that income would derive from royalties, the Iraqi Treasury would be saved both the trouble of finding a loan on the international money market for financing the purchase of its shares, and the burden of an accumulation of its liabilities at the most crucial stage of the country's reconstruction.

No less revealing of the dilemma of British policy, and also no doubt, of its ruthlessness, were the circumstances in which these instructions were sent to Baghdad. The British Government was in no position to give the Iraqi regime a binding assurance that the Mosul vilayet would be kept in Iraq, and yet at the same time it refrained from letting Faisal's Government know that it intended to reject any compromise on the territorial

question of Mosul. Although this reticence accurately reflected the precarious situation at Lausanne, the hope was that it would, all the same, stir up more feeling in Iraq against Turkey yet would also make the Iraqis more prepared for 'serious sacrifice' if required by Western oil interests.

Surprisingly, the difficulty of making any compromise on the territorial question of Mosul - a difficulty which was natural, since the boundaries of the TPC concession coincided with those of the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets - was not mentioned explicitly by the contending factions in Whitehall. But the difficulty was apparent in the attitude taken by Lloyd-Greame of the Department of Overseas Trade. This Department, more than any of the Government bodies concerned, was interested in furthering foreign trade and seeing that investment abroad remained unhampered by risky political moves made either by foreign powers or by the country in which capital was invested, or - for that matter - by British foreign policy. Therefore the Department was bound to be concerned not only about the harsh and uncompromising line taken by the British over Mosul but also about the indications on the Iraqi side that there would be no easy settlement of the terms of the TPC concession, even if the Mosul vilayet remained with Iraq. As a result Lloyd-Greame, in order to prevent such imminent complications from cramping the prospects of the TPC undertaking, began to believe strongly that Britain must clear out of Iraq altogether or at least withdraw to Basra.⁽²⁹⁾ He obviously reckoned the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets to be a territorial and economic unity which, in order to facilitate the working of the oil, must be safeguarded even at the cost of a political retreat to the Gulf, and not wrecked between the Scylla of Turkish intransigence and the Charybdis of Iraqi claims. Lloyd-Greame's true motives however remain open to speculation, in particular as regards his avowed maintenance of the TPC. There is some, but no conclusive, evidence, that a substitute was being considered for the TPC. In general, numerous intrigues about oil seem to have been going on behind the scenes. Apart from the Turkish, American and French rivals, in London itself Inverforth was said to have been trying to persuade the government to give up Mosul, in order to obtain a concession from the Turks. Similarly Lord Beaverbrook was reported to be interested in the Inverforth syndicate.⁽³⁰⁾ There may well have been more pressure groups who pushed for an oil deal with Constantinople rather than with the unstable and unknown

Baghdad Government, which might either prove too unreliable or else be swept away in the wake of an early British withdrawal from Iraq. Indeed, it was about that time, that the Colonial Office seriously began to consider a drastic shortening of the mandate period. Public criticism of imperial over-commitment was still running high and in the circumstances who could be sure that the tax payers' rage was not skilfully exploited, if not stirred, by such a press lord as Beaverbrook or the no less formidable Lord Inverforth. The rumours about Germany's advent in the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission may have been an additional worry for the oil magnates. There is indeed no end to speculation.

Anyway, the fact that Lloyd-Greame 'bolted' in the opposite direction from the risky course pursued by Curzon at Lausanne was an accurate reflection of the tenseness which the Anglo-Turkish talks were watched. By mid January 1923 the British and Turks at Lausanne were almost at daggers drawn - so much so that, tragically, Curzon the arch-imperialist and proud architect of the Empire in the East turned to the League of Nations and played this instrument with all the stops pulled out. There was no other course open to him. Britain had to persuade the League to try to weaken Kemal - an objective which she had failed to achieve by her use of the Greeks and their military forces. Priding himself upon holding the Turkish Delegation in a 'cleft-stick', Curzon wrote from Lausanne on January 19 1923 about his tactics:

'In the opposite case, either of Turkish refusal or Turkish delay, it is still open to me and I am disposed to invoke article XI of the Covenant seeing that the rumours and even threats of Turkish military advance upon Mosul are undoubtedly sufficiently definite to constitute a menace to international peace and to the good understanding between nations. In that case Turkey would be invited under article XVII to accept membership for the purposes of the dispute. If she accepted, she would fall under the operations of article XII to XVI. If she refused and invaded Iraq, the stringent sanctions of article XVI would then be applied to her with the united power of the League. Proceeding upon the above lines it seems to me that I have the Turkish Delegation in a cleft stick and that whatever attitude they may adopt, I ought to have the advantage of them both in the effect upon public opinion, and in the practical solution of the problem'.⁽³¹⁾

Curzon's resort to the League necessitated significant changes both in the kind of arguments used and in the methods proposed for settling the Mosul question. In the former case, ethnic criteria became predominant when he was advocating retention of the vilayet in Iraq; in the latter, the Mosul question, failing a Turco-British settlement, was to be submitted to an International Boundary Commission. The British motives for retaining the Mosul vilayet had not really changed: in their inner thoughts and their private discussions the views of the Admiralty remained uppermost. But on the rostrum at Lausanne the battle was fought by invoking instances of ethnic minorities, of remnants of people, and the market places used by the tribes in question. This facade was sustained by those masterpieces in trickery - Curzon's public speeches and the memoranda which he circulated among those present at the conference.

In Whitehall, where the departments concerned had no coherent policy for the minorities in the Mosul vilayet, officials were at first apprehensive that if there were recourse to the League of Nations the reins would slip from their hands. There were nevertheless moments when they watched Curzon's tactics with delight. One of Clauson's notes read thus: 'Lord Curzon's last memorandum is as much a pleasure to read as it must have been a pleasure to write'.⁽³²⁾ Formally, by Article 3, part 2 of the Treaty of Lausanne, the Mosul question was left to be settled between the two parties concerned within a period of nine months after signature of the Treaty. Failing such a settlement the matter would automatically go to the League of Nations.

It seems as if Whitehall did not place very high the chances of a settlement between Britain and Turkey. The Turks were expected to promise the inhabitants of the vilayet 'a new heaven and a new earth'. To counter this, the British set as their aim 'to frame a policy of counter-propaganda'. Even so, the Government were undoubtedly very uneasy that the League of Nations would probably have an important role to play.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. Quoted in Curzon's letter to the Times of 2 August 1924
2. The Times, 2 August, 9 and 16 August 1924
3. See the previous chapter IV, p 90

4. See p 160
5. Minute by J Shuckburgh, 10 Jan 1923, CO 730/47/1749
6. Foreign Relations of the US 1923 vol II p 949
7. Minutes of Cabinet 67(22), 16 Nov 1922, CAB 23/32
8. Devonshire to Cox, 8 Nov 1922, CO 730/25. As for Cox's previous correspondence on this topic, see CO 730/24/45342, 42989 which reflect the mounting anxiety on the eve of the Chanak crisis. As Churchill assessed the military situation on 19 Sept 1922, "It is quite possible that our troops at Chanak may be attacked by Kemal within the next ten days. Result would be a state of war between Britain and Angora... Kemalists would no doubt over-run the whole of Mosul if a state of war lasted for some time... question of its recovery would then be a matter for a peace conference and not for military operations".
9. See p 85
10. Decypher, Lord Curzon (Lausanne) 5 Dec 1922, CO 730/29/60539
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Note on Curzon's tel of 5 Dec 1922 by the Middle East Department, London 7 Dec 1922, CO 730/29/60539
14. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee on Iraq, 8 Dec 1922, CAB 27/206
15. Appreciation by the General Staff, 7 Dec 1922, CAB 27/206, Annexure I Lord Curzon's tentative proposals regarding cession of portion of Kurdistan. Incidentally this appreciation was taken by Reader Bullard to Lausanne.
16. On 16 Nov 1922 the Cabinet (CAB 67/22(2)) had approved of the formation of a Cabinet Committee on Iraq to examine the situation in regard to Britain's situation in Iraq, and to make recommendations to the Cabinet in time to be considered, if desirable, before the completion of the Turkish peace negotiations. Further it should examine whether the Treaty with Faisal ought to be ratified. The Committee was composed of Devonshire (CO), Derby (WO), Peel (IO), Amery (Admiralty), Philip Lloyd-Greame (BT), Samuel Hoare (Air), Viscount Novar (Scotland), Wood (Board of Education) Ronald McNeill (FO); joint secretaries were C W C Walker (Committee of Imperial Defence) and R W Bullard (Middle East Department of the Colonial Office); on 12 Dec 1922 the committee was enlarged by W Ormsby-Gore, (CO).
17. Cf Monroe, Britain's Movement p 103

18. See footnote 14 Also CO 730/27/60792, Oilfields in Mosul Vilayet, copy of a letter from Admiralty to Foreign Office, 7 Dec 1922, "the essential point is that Great Britain should control the territories on which the oilfields are situated, as we should then be in a position to control the supply at the source". Further, Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty, 16 Dec 1922, CAB 27/206.
19. Note prepared by the Middle East Department, 11 Dec 1922, Secret I. P. Q. 3, page 4, CAB 27/206
20. Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland, 10 Jan 1923, CAB 27/206
21. Minutes of the 4th meeting of the Committee on Iraq, 18 Jan 1923, CAB 27/206
22. See footnote 15
23. Note on Curzon's tel of 5 Dec 1922 by the Middle East Department, 7 Dec 1922 CO 730/29/60539
24. Foreign Relations of the US, 1923 vol II pp 900-902, The Special Mission at Lausanne to the State Department, 22 Nov 1922
25. Memorandum by R V Vernon, Middle East Department, 13 Dec 1923, Turkish Petroleum Company, Middle East No 5, Confidential, CO 730/44
26. Most of these points were apparently raised in the negotiations in London in 1922 at which the Iraqi Minister of Finance Sassoon Haskail was present. There were simultaneous talks at Baghdad between Keeling, the representative of the TPC and the Iraqi government as advised by the High Commissioner, see Memorandum by Amery on Iraq, Turkish Petroleum Company, Febr 1925, CO 730/72/(108).
27. Paraphrase of tel from CO to Baghdad, 2 Jan 1923. Very Urgent. A copy of the telegram was sent to Curzon on Jan 4. The secrecy of these instructions and the entire oil operation was underlined by the additional remark: No Distribution, CO 730/47/1749
28. Ibid
29. Minute by Clauson of the Middle East Department, 11 Nov 1922 CO 730/27/60792
30. Numerous oil-intrigues seem to have been going on behind the scene of Cabinet policy, e g Inverforth was said to have been working upon MacDonald to give up Mosul, in order to secure a concession from the Turks. Similarly Lord Beaverbrook was reported to be interested in the Inverforth syndicate, see Amery

to Chamberlain, 1925, FO800/258

31. Tgm from Curzon (Lausanne) 19 Jan 1923, CO 730/47/4365
32. Minute by Clauson, Middle East Department 5 Jan 1923, CO 730/29/222. Also Memorandum by the Middle East Department, British Policy in Iraq, 8 Febr 1924, Secret
C P 264(24), p 4 CO 730/64/6225

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CHAPTER SIX

Mosul oil and the settlement of Iraq's northern boundary 1923-1926

At Lausanne, nine months had been reckoned good measure for concluding a bi-lateral settlement of the Mosul issue. True, certain officials like Hubert Young were convinced that a period of six months would do just as well since they thought the Turks anticipated defeat on the Mosul issue and therefore welcomed any delay as a face-saving device. However, such illusions were soon destroyed. At the Qasim-Pasha conference, which lasted from May 19 to June 5 1924, the British and Turks again found themselves at daggers drawn. The British maintained their position that only corrections of the Armistice line of October 1918 were at issue. The Turks, relying on the procès-verbal of Lausanne, argued that the Mosul vilayet in its entirety was at stake. All efforts to negotiate a settlement eventually fell through: both sides using propaganda and counter-propaganda, began to mobilise the ethnic confusion of the Mosul vilayet to their support.

Meanwhile at Whitehall, the Labour Party had assumed the reins of Government. The personnel of the departments which had been eager in pursuit of oil were suddenly confronted with the necessity of changing their tone and temper in the unfamiliar conditions of a Labour Government. As an indication of how a change in the recipient could alter the form, though not the substance, of an argument, we have as an instance the Middle East Department. An element of uncertainty caused the Department to combine hesitation with defiance when they used the line of argument which

emanated from the Admiralty. As they surveyed the problems involved in the settlement of the northern frontier, they urged strongly as on previous occasions that the question of the Mosul oilfields was relevant 'to the extent that, if the Mosul vilayet was returned to the Turks the oilfields... would, of course, pass wholly out of our control'.⁽¹⁾ But in sharp contrast to their earlier assertive arguments, the Department ended in a minor key, making the reservation that 'the point is one that must be mentioned in this connection. It is not suggested that it can, or ought to be regarded as a determining consideration'.⁽²⁾

Much of the apprehension felt by the officials, who all stayed on in the Middle East Department when the Labour Government took office, sprang from the fact that once imperialist arguments fell on deaf ears, vote-catching problems like the Assyrian settlement lost all their force as arguments for territorial amalgamation between the Baghdad and Mosul vilayets. But fortunately for the imperialists, as well as for TPC concessionaires, the International Boundary Commission of the League of Nations began to realize, soon after their arrival on the spot, that whereas the remnants of people and ethnic minorities could be moved about, the hypothetical oil deposits could not be transferred from one region to another but had to be exploited wherever nature had placed them.

1. The Mosul Oil and the TPC Concession in the deliberations of the International Boundary Commission

The impossibility of moving the oil deposits accounted for the important and indeed very involved part played by the TPC concession in the fate of the Mosul vilayet. In addition, the entanglement of the question of the boundary of northern Iraq with the TPC concession was clearly discernible in the deliberations of the Mosul Boundary Committee.⁽³⁾ The three-man commission had been constituted in accordance with Curzon's 'cleft-stick' tactics. Bilateral settlement of the Mosul issue not having been achieved, Britain, after the expiration of nine months, put the case to the League Council on August 6 1924. Some pressure had to be applied in order to make the Turks accept the Council as the sole and final arbitrator. When once the Turks had given way, the Boundary Commission was nominated. But fresh trouble occurred and delayed its departure for Mosul. A dispute between Britain and Turkey had arisen over definition of the actual location of the Armistice line - this having recently been upset by the

movements of various Assyrian clans. An extra-ordinary session of the League Council was held in Brussels and the 'status quo' frontier, henceforth known as the Brussels line, was defined.

Meanwhile in the Middle East the whole question of oil, camouflaged as it was by political and ethnic pretexts, soon showed its real character. Now the problem of the TPC concession and its economic implications for the development of Iraq began to cause anxiety to the International Commission. Colonel Paulis, the Belgian member of the Commission, did not mince matters when he put forward the view that Iraq's salvation depended upon a large and speedy influx of international foreign capital. (4) He frankly told Henry Dobbs, High Commissioner at Baghdad, that he himself believed in Chartered companies for the development of backward areas. He thought there should be in Iraq something like the Mozambique Company which had 80 per cent British capital and ran the whole of Mozambique, including the local army, although the colony was nominally Portuguese. The Turkish Petroleum Company would be even more than a good parallel for thanks to its widely international financial backing it would not only dominate the Iraq Administration but would also induce many powers to take an interest in the stability of the country. Viewed from this angle 'the question whether Iraq did or did not accept the Turkish Petroleum Concession would weigh very greatly with him and his colleagues'. Indeed, Dobbs has recorded no disagreement on the part of Count Teleki, the head of the Commission, who was also present at the conversation. Paulis, who knew a lot about oil and had interests in some Rumanian oil companies, made another fine calculation when he expressed his view that 'there was no other combination of oil interests in the world which could undertake the exploitation of the Mosul oil, as the pipe-line alone would cost £1 a foot! The oil business had indeed been discussed when the Commission stopped at Ankara to exchange views with the Turkish Government. The Turks had solemnly and officially assured the Commission that, if the Mosul vilayet were assigned to Turkey, they would give the concession to the Turkish Petroleum Company; and this, as Paulis put it, 'would weigh heavily with the Commission in their considerations of the frontier question'.

It is now clear that, in the language used by the Boundary Commission, the term 'frontier question' stood for the larger question of the fate of the entire Mosul vilayet. Indeed, the

Commission seems to have considered its main task was to decide on the future interests of the Mosul vilayet rather than on the delineation of an ethnically sound frontier between Turkey and Iraq. It was the impression of Major Edmonds (one of the British officials in the entourage of the Commission and an expert on the Kurds) that the frontier question was made too dependent on the disposal of the Mosul vilayet, and not enough on the question of the limits within which Iraq could best attain economic, political, administrative and strategic stability. (5, 6) In February 1925 Henry Dobbs even informed Amery that Colonel Paulis had 'fallen under the influence of the French Dominicans at Mosul', and that it would no longer surprise him if in the end Paulis recommended that Mosul should be transferred to the French Mandate. (7) Impressions and morsels of information like these were at the time being forwarded in great number to the Colonial Office. In fact, under pretence of security, British officials kept a close watch on the members of the Commission and insisted on 'helping' them with questionnaires, with hearings, and even arranged procedure for them. Not only were their personal records scrutinised; their every word, mood and idiosyncrasy was also meticulously recorded and passed on to Whitehall. Of course, these measures reflected both the anxiety and the resentment that prevailed among officials on the spot and in the Middle East Department. They had, as Shuckburgh put it, 'to make the best of a bad job'. (8)

While the Commission occupied itself in collecting the views of qualified representatives of each village and racial element of the population, its overriding concern was still to settle the TPC concession before its recommendations about the frontier were submitted to the League of Nations. Count Teleki even went so far as to offer Dobbs his good offices 'to persuade the Iraq Government to sign the Turkish Petroleum Convention'. (9) Dobbs thus explained the motives of the Commission to Amery:

'Should both Iraq and Turkey agree, before Commission makes its recommendations in regard to the frontier, to grant concession to TPC over vilayet of Mosul and Baghdad so far as Iraq is concerned and over Mosul so far as Turkey is concerned, Commission will be able to argue that wherever frontier is fixed powerful oil interests will not be affected since they will enjoy concession over both vilayets in any case. If however the Iraq Government did not come to a decision until after frontier is fixed and a portion only of

the vilayet is assigned to Turkey Iraq may be giving oil in remaining portion of Mosul vilayet or in Baghdad vilayet to some other company be able to ruin the whole of Turkish Petroleum plan. Accordingly for so long as Iraq has not granted concession Commission would feel that international oil interests would be opposed to the placing of Baghdad and Mosul under separate administrations or to the division between Iraq and Turkey of the Mosul vilayet and the League of Nations might find it awkward to oppose these interests'. (10)

Dobbs suggested that the Convention to be signed by the Iraq Government should include a clause providing that the Convention should be 'null and void in the event of the whole of the Mosul vilayet not being assigned to Iraq'. (11) This proposal, while rallying American and French support for the British case in the frontier question, was intended to prevent the Commission from recommending a partition scheme that gave the right bank of the Tigris to Iraq and the left bank to Turkey, thus ensuring that Iraq could not bar the oil from reaching the Mediterranean. (12) Unfortunately, Dobbs did not say how seriously such a scheme was contemplated by the Commission. Perhaps it was one of his own numerous conjectures, which were often subtle but frequently mere guesswork. But such proposals, even if based on mere apprehension, reveal what was uppermost in the minds of men like Dobbs and officials of the Middle East Department who either shared his anxiety, or else dismissed the proposal as being too obviously designed to force the hands of the League of Nations Commission. (13, 14) In the end Dobbs' proposal was rejected by the Foreign Office, which had to be consulted in all matters that affected the League.

2. The subjection of the Iraqi Government and the Oil Convention of March 1925

The reasons underlying Whitehall's restraint were simple: the League of Nations Commission had to be made a success, therefore any complication likely to contribute to its breakdown was undesirable. The Commission was, in fact, a last resort of British policy in Iraq, the more so because the mandate period had by now been limited to four years. Therefore, the Boundary Commission's hand had not to be forced and neither had it (at least too obviously) to be used in the settlement of the TPC concession. (15) However, as it was still important to obtain the

signed consent of the Iraq Government for the concession. Dobbs was instructed 'to bring the utmost pressure to bear to induce the Iraq Government to accept the arrangement proposed without further delay'.⁽¹⁶⁾ Judging from previous experience, 'utmost pressure' could mean anything short of an ultimatum from Whitehall or a dismissal of Faisal's Cabinet - two measures which had been suggested earlier.⁽¹⁷⁾ Yet for obvious reasons such high-handed interference with the deliberations of the Iraqi Cabinet was unwise. Whitehall rightly feared that to dismiss even a few ministers on grounds of opposition to the draft Oil Convention would bring about the resignation of the whole Cabinet, an event which in its turn, would inevitably cause the oil question to become the key issue of the new election in Iraq as well as adding grist to the mill of the British Government's critics at home.

Incidentally, it was partly for these reasons that Dobbs preferred a stern ultimatum. Yet he also had more complex motives. Like Cox and many of the British advisers, he shared the view that unless the nationalists were integrated into the political system there was no hope of stability once Britain withdrew from Iraq.⁽¹⁸⁾ Therefore, the earlier there was a political showdown the better. He held that the nationalists ought to be made to follow the course set by the British, such as Britain herself had been forced to yield to the intransigence of the Americans. The Iraqi nationalists must not be allowed to evade their responsibility for facing an irreversible international situation, not to whip up public resentment at hopes unfulfilled. Nor must Whitehall delude itself into believing that agreement obtained from men of straw would be lasting. As Dobbs emphatically expressed it: 'I see no way without ultimatum in some form as only men of straw could be got to sign the Convention'.⁽¹⁹⁾ Dobbs did not think about the bad effect that high-handed actions such as an ultimatum would have particularly in matters of oil, on public opinion and on the League of Nations - both of them instruments on which Britain had come to rely. His suggestion was reminiscent of Arnold Wilson's attitude in 1920, ie 'all or nothing'.

In contrast, Whitehall which in 1920 had had no definite policy for Iraq, was now in 1925 fully in the picture. They calculated that because the Iraqis felt as strongly about the retention of Mosul as they did about a profitable share in the TPC concession, the two objectives could not be made incompatible with each other. As for Iraq, the proceedings of a combined Anglo-American geological survey party which arrived on the spot in 1925 were an impressive

demonstration of the intention of the two governments not to let any opposition stand in their way. Yet since they were more interested in controlling the oil-bearing regions, and in the territorial unification of the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets, than in the composition of the TPC, Whitehall tried to mediate between the Iraqi regime and the TPC. So whereas Dobbs had by February 1925 been instructed to pursue a less tough line at Baghdad, Amery, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, submitted a compromise proposal to TPC representatives in London.⁽²⁰⁾ His suggestion to the TPC was to divide its shares into two categories, A and B, the capital of the latter amounting to 20 per cent of the total capital. In other words, the capital hitherto issued should be increased by 20 per cent, in the form of new shares (the B shares) carrying no vote. These new shares were to earn interest in proportion to the total dividends declared by the Company and chargeable against royalties.⁽²¹⁾

Amery's compromise proposal was distinguished from other existing suggestions in that the Iraq Government was to be given a share in the profits of the Company - a share which the TPC had never intended to give. It would seem that Amery's proposal overlooked this point. It did not bridge the gulf between two widely differing interests: namely, (a) Iraq's desire to gear the development of its oil resources as a large scale revenue-raising enterprise to its total plans for economic and administrative development; and (b) the business arrangements of the TPC as they had been brought into line with the rates of British income tax. Amery was obviously concerned to dispel Iraq's suspicions about the TPC's commercial policy than willing to meet her demand to share in TPC policy-making. Nevertheless the compromise did not command itself to the TPC. While giving the Iraqi Government the opportunity to prove that it was able to raise investment capital for buying B shares, it deprived the Company of its convenient and long-standing contention that Iraq, being neither a shareholder nor capable of all of raising the capital required, could have no say in the management of the Company.

Amery's compromise came to nothing. It was after this failure to persuade the TPC that on March 7, after consultations with the Board of Trade and the Foreign Office, he instructed Dobbs to bring the utmost pressure to bear on the Iraq Government.⁽²²⁾ Dobbs was to threaten that the British would bring the constitutional development of the country to a halt. A week later, on March 14 1925,

Iraq signed the Oil Convention. Instead of obtaining a vote in the TPC's governing board, she was granted only the right to inspect the TPC's production plants and managerial bureaux.

As for the Mosul issue, by 1925 Iraq's signing of the TPC concession was no longer the sole pre-condition of settlement. A further condition was the revision of the Protocol of April 1923 by which Britain, then under severe financial strain and domestic pressure, had limited the period of her treaty with Iraq to four years after the ratification of peace with Turkey. The Mosul Boundary Commission, unconvinced that the Iraqi regime would be stable, stipulated that its recommendation to assign the Mosul vilayet to Iraq must depend on the extension of the period to twenty-five years. And while the Iraqis were mainly resolved to use this opportunity to procure the amendment of the burdensome Financial and Military subsidiary Agreements imposed on them under the provisions of the enforced unequal Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of October 1922, prolongation of the treaty period was an easy matter for the British.

In fact, the maintenance of Britain's special economic and political position in Iraq after the four year period had, from the start, been provided for in an apparently technical clause of the Protocol stating that nothing in the current agreement should prevent the negotiating of a fresh agreement. The settling of the TPC concession now revived the economic and financial motives which had originated this provision. It was the contingency foreseen by Churchill who, before May 1923, when out of office, had privately written to Devonshire:

'If things go well, there ought to be some return both indirect and direct in four years; and I certainly feel that in these circumstances we should have a special interest in the country secured to us. It would certainly be a pity faithfully to receive all the kicks and to reject any of the half-pence when at last they arrive'. (23)

Compared with the settlement of the TPC concession at Baghdad, the last stages leading to the final award of the Mosul vilayet to Iraq, in December 1925, were a mere postludium. Britain could camouflage the oil issue because the actual socio-religious composition of the population of the vilayet enabled her to make a cogent case on ethnic principles. Turkish deportations of Christians late in 1925 and the League inquiry through the Laidoner Mission confirmed this fact.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. Memorandum by the Middle East Department, British Policy in Iraq, 8 Febr 1924, Secret, C.P.264(24) p 4 CO 730/64/6225
2. Ibid
3. On the formation and some of the proceedings of the Boundary Commission of R I I A Survey of International Affairs, 1925, vol I pp 498-528. A detailed account of the proceedings on the spot is included in C J Edmonds, Kurds, Turks and Arabs, London 1957 pp 386-435; also Monroe, Britain's Moment pp 103-104, where Edmonds's view on the role of oil in the Mosul settlement is quoted. Edmonds makes special reservations for his "level". On that level, of course, he was officially not supposed to know more; however, it is difficult to believe that the plebiscite and the tiresome collection of ethnic data stood so much in the forefront of those men's perception that they identified their cumbersome work with the motives of London's policy.
4. Copy of the memorandum of conversation, 23 Jan 1925, CO 730/72/6291
5. See footnote 3
6. Extract from Diary of Major Edmonds sent by Dobbs to Amery on 5 March 1925, CO 730/73/12194
7. Dobbs to Amery, 11 Febr 1925, CO 730/72/7012
8. Ibid, minute thereon by Shuckburgh, 16 Febr 1925. Revealing of the kind of assistance given to the International Commission by British officials on the spot is the following remark by Dobbs namely that he had secured from the Commission the undertaking that they would keep the British assessor informed of the names of witnesses examined in order that he might be in a position to criticize their status and reliability. Dobbs, in his note to Amery, went on: "Commissioners admitted that they had drifted into position of being on the defensive against Iraq and of occupying themselves largely in trying to ferret out evidence against her claims, partly out of irritation with the police measures and Iraqi demonstrations and partly from the circumstances that the sphere of their operations is under the Iraq Administration". On Teleki's ideas about the Turanian Movement, Dobbs reported to Amery on 29 Jan 1925, CO 730/72/4885
9. Memorandum by Amery, Iraq: Turkish Petroleum Company, 18 March 1925, CO 730/82/13328

10. Dobbs to Amery, 2 March 1925, CO 730/73/10185
11. Ibid
12. Dobbs to Amery, 8 March 1925, CO 730/73/11184
13. Minute by Hall, 4 March 1925, CO 730/73/10185
14. Ibid, minutes by Vernon and Young
15. See footnote 9
16. Ibid
17. Dobbs to Amery, 26 Febr 1925, CO 730/73/9364
18. Withdrawal in this context was rarely used in the full sense of the word; Britain would still maintain her special treaty relationship, by which she enjoyed a fair measure of control.
19. See footnote 17
20. Ibid
21. The royalties had been fixed at 4/- (shilling) a ton on the crude oil raised. Accordingly as the dividends were to be set off against this rate, the shares would only pay if the dividends paid on them exceeded the equivalent of 4/- per ton. Further, if the Iraqi Government wished to dispose of any of the shares at any time, then these should be divided pro rata between the other holders.
22. See footnote 17
23. Churchill to Devonshire, Private, 7 May 1923, CO 730/39/21834

CHAPTER SEVEN

Agreement at last 1926-1928

1. Conflicting claims: C S Gulbenkian, the French and their American rivals

The concession to the Turkish Petroleum Company as signed on March 14 1925 was forced upon the Iraqi Government. The concession was ratified not by Parliament, but by the Iraqi Council of Ministers; and this was not because there happened as yet not to be any parliament but because the election and assembling of Iraq's first parliament was made to depend on the oil concession's first being settled.

In choosing this procedure the British Government had acted on its own. Admittedly, Whitehall had to a great extent been stampeded into action by the Turkish challenges over Mosul and in particular by the strong views which the International Boundary Commission took on the oil issue. Nevertheless, the British hoped that by circumventing the Iraqi Parliament they would be able to all intents and purposes to frustrate the nationalists and other dissident factions in their attempts to make the oil concession an election issue or a bargaining point. For the British rightly feared that if the concession were debated at all in Parliament it might result in the wrecking of the entire edifice of the Turkish Petroleum Company or else, as a preventive if not a retaliatory measure, in Parliament's being high-handedly dissolved. Rather than allow themselves to be confronted with this choice of evils, Whitehall preferred to step in and throttle Parliament in the first hour of its existence. For obvious reasons the

British Government had to steer clear of any situation that would compromise its moral authority beyond repair, or which might incur the loss of Mosul. From this angle, and also in broader perspective Britain's ultimatum-like procedure decisively secured the integration of the Mosul vilayet into Iraq and, at the same time, won the concession for the Turkish Petroleum Company.

Britain's course of action had increasingly come to be supported by the U S State Department and its favourite, the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. Compared with this phalanx, trouble-makers like Lord Inverforth who buzzed around Turkish and Iraqi ministers trying to involve them in a showdown with Whitehall, were negligible quantities and did not need to be dealt with.⁽¹⁾ Nevertheless, a variety of problems which came to a head in 1926 stood in the way of complete co-operation between Britain and America.

American policy had been working towards a rapprochement with the British in the Middle East ever since 1922/23, when, owing to American pressure and to a combination of diplomatic factors, the British Government, at a conference in New York (April 1923), began to favour a convention on Middle East oil.⁽²⁾ They held that four basic conditions ought to rule all further proceedings. First, the Open Door principle as defined by the State Department. Secondly, from the 24 plots that were selected from the concession area and opened for immediate operation by the Turkish Petroleum Company, 10 per cent free oil was to be granted to the d'Arcy group as compensation for their surrendering half of the original holding of 50 per cent of the shares to the American oil consortium. Thirdly, Mr. Gulbenkian's 5 per cent share interest was to be acquired and converted into an interest payable in cash or in kind, based on production of oil - by this means each majority group would be enabled to hold 25 per cent of the shares and voting rights. And fourthly, a working agreement was to be concluded with the object of dividing the crude petroleum obtained amongst the groups, in proportion to their holdings of shares.⁽³⁾

The details and the modes of application were left to negotiations that were continued in both London and Baghdad, behind the scenes of more overt diplomacy. By November 1924 a new agreement had been drafted which constituted a decisive departure from the 1923 convention.

Gulbenkian retained his 5 per cent share in the Turkish Petroleum Company. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the Royal Dutch/Shell group, and the Compagnie Francaise des Petroles each took up a $23\frac{3}{4}$ per cent share, leaving an equal share to the American consortium who, to the embarrassment of all, agreed to accept this share only if a working agreement

(condition No. 4) were arrived at which was satisfactory to themselves. Means for satisfying the Americans' demands were already included in the final provision by which the Turkish Petroleum Company, within two years after signature of the concession by the Iraqi Government, was to select 24 plots of 8 square miles each for immediate oil working, leaving the remaining area to sublessees. As De Novo rightly observed, 'the subleasing system was a deception - a tactical device to be scrapped when it had served to appease the State Department'.⁽⁴⁾ According to Gulbenkian it was 'eyewash' for the Open Door.⁽⁵⁾ Indeed, at the time it looked like becoming a troublesome device. To the Americans the subleasing system seemed to imply the truth of their contention that the Turkish Petroleum Company's primary function would be to distribute cheap crude oil. This American anxiety surely indicates the true dimension of the Anglo-American contest over oil. In the world oil business the American strength originated in what might be called a market monopoly. Originally confined to the North American continent it had gradually spread to Europe and in particular to the Far East. In contrast, the British strength was based on a production monopoly in the oil-bearing regions outside the United States, particularly in what the Americans later came to call the Eastern Hemisphere. From the American point of view therefore, the British and in fact the TPC's challenge essentially consisted in an attempt at intruding into the distribution and supply lines as well as the price structure, of the world petroleum market, and American controlled domain. The other way about, the British perceived of the American threat as an outright attack upon their production monopoly in the Eastern Hemisphere and in the Middle East in particular.

It is against this background, that Gulbenkian's worry must be seen. As his share was considered by him as his personal fortune which ought to entitle him to high profits, he rejected the American scheme of containing the TPC to their 24 plots; he claimed that by his 5 per cent shareholding he was entitled to a proportional share in the oil of the entire area to which the 'self-denying ordinance' of the Turkish Petroleum Company applied. (This ordinance placed the partners under obligation to bid for concessions and to develop oil within the general area of the old Ottoman Empire - Kuwait and Nejd excepted - only through the Turkish Petroleum Company). Gulbenkian's second claim touched the core of the Turkish Petroleum Company enterprise; it amounted to claiming a proportional share in the total gains, ie profits from production, refining, transport and marketing.

On an abstract level, Gulbenkian's assertions kept the issue of Open

Door versus self-denying ordinance alive. However, negotiations were not carried on at that level, and to be satisfied with abstract theory at this point would be an easy escape from the more difficult task of assessing the down-to-earth motives and compromises of the contending parties. On the surface it seems that Gulbenkian was the only trouble-maker. But the issue was more complex, and more than two parties were involved. The French were particularly tenacious. Gulbenkian's claims, while arousing fierce opposition from the Americans, rallied support from the French. The French feared that the American sub-leasing system would lead to a deterioration in their over-all understanding with the British about the oil in the Middle East and the world which had been reached in the San Remo Agreement of April 1920. In lacking the huge transport and marketing facilities of the American Standard Oil Company and the Royal Dutch/Shell Group, which possessed de facto monopolies over large parts of the consumer market, they also feared that the profits made at their cost out of transport and marketing would be divided between themselves by the two giants. (6)

2. British mediation and the Red-Line Agreement of April 1928

Since the British Government had all the power it needed in Baghdad to ensure that its objectives became an integral part of Iraqi policy, there was certainly no better mediator than the British for settlement of the oil imbroglio. However, with her own objectives at stake Britain was necessarily partisan in her own interest. Her main objective - to retain physical control over the oil-bearing regions of Iraq - had already been secured by the prolongation of the Mandate over the next two decades. In contrast her second but no less important objective - obtaining for a British national group a preferential and controlling majority shareholding in the Turkish Petroleum Company - had met with increasing failure. Taken together, by 1914 the d'Arcy shares and those of the British 40 per cent holding in the Anglo-Saxon Group (Royal Dutch/Shell) constituted a safe 60 per cent control of the Turkish Petroleum Company. By 1926 all that remained was half of the previous percentages, and by 1926 even this share in the oil enterprise in Iraq was in danger of further reduction.

At about this time the Americans, annoyed by Gulbenkian whom they regarded as British-inspired, cabled to London that America might well gain a proper share in Mesopotamian oil 'through other means than the Turkish Petroleum Company'. (7) It did not help much that Stanley Baldwin, head of the Conservative Government, categorically asserted

IRAQ AND THE RED-LINE AREA

July 31, 1928

Reproduced from the Original Map



The dotted line (on the original map a red line) drawn on this map is intended to follow the following lines:

- A-B The frontier defined by the Treaty of Berlin of 13th July 1878 and by the Treaty of San Stefano of 3rd March 1878.
- B-C The frontier demarcated by the Turco-Persian Frontier Commission in 1913-14 on the basis of the Protocol signed at Constantinople on the 4[17] November 1913 excepting in sectors a-b and c-d where the red line is intended to follow the line of the previous de facto frontier described on pages 139 and 140 of the Minutes of the Frontier Commission in a note dated the 1/14th October 1914 by the Russian and British Commissioners.
- D-E The limit of the territorial waters of the Arabian peninsula excepting the Sultanate of Koweit and the Farsan Archipelago.

E-F The Frontier defined by the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 1st October 1906.

F-G The red line is intended to follow the decision of the Conference of London on the 13th February 1914 in execution of Article 5 of the Treaty of London of 17/30th May 1913 and Article 15 of the Treaty of Athens of the 1/14th November 1913.

G-H The frontier defined by the Treaty of Constantinople on the 16/29th September 1913.

H-A The limit of the territorial waters of Turkey in the Black Sea.

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the validity of the 1925 oil concession. The British recognised from their records an ominous precedent - those American threats which had put pressure on them years before, on the eve of the Lausanne Conference. Britain had to take action, and her action confirms what other writers have suspected: ie that 'at times...the major objective of the parties was "to pass the buck" for responsibility in reaching a settlement'. (8)

The French who backed Gulbenkian were a primary target for British scorn. In the light of French claims, a brief synopsis of the main incidents in British Government support of the Turkish Petroleum Company will best show the two-fold purpose of Gulbenkian's opposition to American demands; such a synopsis can also help to put the Red-Line Agreement of 1928 into perspective.

The French were curtly told that their claim (according to which the Turkish Petroleum Company's concession had from the beginning been designed eventually to cover the entire Middle East) was a mere after-thought; similarly, that there was no foundation for the claim that Germany's 25 per cent share had been promised them during the war. The French made these claims in 1926 and 1927 in order to bolster up their demands for a share in the oil that was then already flowing from the Naft Khana fields in the transferred territories on the Iraqi-Persian border. (9) The Foreign Office observed that Britain's support of the Turkish Petroleum Company had varied with the changing circumstances and had been the basis of aims that were only limited. In 1914 her support, since it was confined to the vilayets of Baghdad and Mosul, had not precluded the Government from pressing other British claims for oil, unconnected with the Turkish Petroleum Company in Palestine and on the Farsan Islands. (10) Egypt, Kuwait and the transferred territories were exempted from the self-denying ordinance which was first thought of in those years. France could not figure as the natural successor of the defunct German Empire in the Middle East for the comprehensive Anglo-French oil convention of the San Remo Agreement had different and limited objectives in view. The 1920 Agreement, and the reconstitution of the Turkish Petroleum Company, had been initiated by a French note of January 6 1919 whose proposals and demands were not agreeable to Whitehall, but, for a variety of reasons, the British Government decided to co-operate - otherwise the French might have combined with the American consortium and with Shell, who were aiming at establishing control of European and Middle Eastern oilfields with Britain excluded. (11) Further, Britain wanted to have a pipe-line

from the Mesopotamian and Persian oilfields through French territory to the Mediterranean, and so the French had to be offered some compensation for abandoning their claims to the Mosul vilayet. It was for these reasons that the German 25 per cent share in the Turkish Petroleum Company was transferred to the French; and this transfer certainly did not annul the provisions of 1914 by which Whitehall was 'free outside the limits of the Baghdad and Mosul vilayets, to support British applications for oil concessions'. Finally, by 1926, Whitehall considered French claims to be contradictory to what they were doing in Syria: Monsieur Baron's mission to Syria in the spring of 1925 to explore the oil possibilities of that country was enlisted as evidence that the legal claims must be a very recent concoction. (12)

Indeed, the ulterior motive for France's support of Gulbenkian may have been to curb the eagerness of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Royal Dutch/Shell to divide the Middle East between themselves. Before 1919 the two groups had already proposed to Whitehall that they should work independently in Iraq: by 1926 their designs to do the same outside Iraq must, at least for a short time, have appeared to find support in British policy. Suddenly, Gulbenkian seemed to be running into difficulties with the Americans rather than with the Government-controlled Anglo-Persian Company and Shell.

Unfortunately, there is not enough evidence available to give a clearer picture of the very intricate tug-of-war between the parties. Everything that we may infer thus remains guesswork. The two companies may have tried to hinder any rapprochement between the Americans and Gulbenkian, by causing more friction and increasing their mutual isolation, in order to make Gulbenkian leave the Turkish Petroleum Company. Gulbenkian's claim to a proportionate share in the total profits of the oil enterprise was after all a dangerous precedent for eventual claims by the Iraqi and Persian Governments. By contrast, in Whitehall Gulbenkian's increasing claims were sometimes interpreted as shrewd tactics - raising the price of compensation for his withdrawal from the Company. Yet this much is certain - the attempts of the British to mediate were aimed at depriving Gulbenkian of his strong French backing, and at finding a compromise formula acceptable to the U S State Department.

Negotiations about the definition of business terms made more headway. Under the aegis of the British Government, they were led by the heads of the companies helped by their solicitors and attorneys: Teagle and Guy Wellman, head and representative of the American consortium, with Mr. Piesse as solicitor; Colonel Mercier, head of the French group;

Waltons, the solicitors of Shell; Linklaters, solicitors of the Anglo-Persian, and Sir William McLintock, the attorney employed by Gulbenkian. Together with Sir Warren Fisher, Permanent Secretary of the Treasury, Pineau and Cadman, respectively heads of the French and British Petroleum Departments, formed the clearing station.⁽¹³⁾

By their common effort a formula was worked out in 1927 which couched the 'self-denying ordinance' in the terms of the sub-leasing system. By resorting thus to camouflage all the parties, foremost among them the U S State Department, showed their desire to bury the tiresome question of the Open Door principle; and their last pricks of conscience were removed when, by October 1927, oil was struck at Kirkuk. Nine months later, after some regrouping in the American consortium, all the participants in the Turkish Petroleum Company signed the agreement which limited their activities to the area marked out on a French map by a red line, which included most of the old Ottoman Empire in the Arab Middle East.⁽¹⁴⁾ The three most controversial points were settled as follows. The Compagnie Francaise des Petroles was henceforth to purchase Gulbenkian's share of crude oil at market value. In the 'competitive' bidding for offers of oil concessions and selections of plots, the Turkish Petroleum Company was to have preferential rights of tender. In addition to the directors to be appointed by the groups of the Petroleum Company, the right of appointing one director was granted to the Government of Iraq.

3. Conclusions

To conclude so involved a tale, it seems desirable to sum up the role played by the hypothetical oil deposits in the extension of British control and influence over Iraq, including the Mosul vilayet. The influence of this oil, as has become evident, ran like a scarlet thread through the decision-making process in Whitehall. In autumn 1918 it led to the military advance upon Mosul, and resulted in the integration of the Mosul vilayet into Iraq and in Iraq's being kept under British control in the aftermath of the Lausanne Conference. Strictly speaking, the influence of the oil, together with considerations which did not conflict with it, marked almost every stage of British policy-making. Hardly a ministry or an official either disagreed in the debate, or even wished to have any disagreement with the Admiralty's contention placed on record, when Committee resolutions or Cabinet decisions were made in which oil was involved.

This absence of dissent supports the thesis that oil played a very important part in British Government policy towards Iraq. The

powerful influence of oil can perhaps also be inferred from the fact that, in Cabinet and Committee meetings it took up less time than (for instance) the exposition of the Assyrian problem or the needs of a treaty with Iraq. Oil was not mentioned because it was always in mind.

Yet the brevity of reference to it may well have been connected with the complexity of the topic. The Admiralty view-point, which was relatively simple, could be presented in half the time required for expounding the Turkish Petroleum Company's case. Further, the coincidence that all the assets of Empire were present together in one and the same country precluded any real option; there could be no real choice of priorities when British control over Iraq was strategically so important to their position in the Persian Gulf, to the security of the Persian and Iraqi oilfields and to the development of the air-route between Cairo and Karachi. Other considerations were that the water supply of the Upper Tigris for the irrigation schemes in Lower Iraq lay close to the oil-bearing regions, and that the Assyrians were settled very near the oil-wells north of Mosul.

All these issues could become interchangeable in argument, without necessitating any change of purpose and goal. It meant that one issue could be raised to camouflage various purposes which, although not really connected with it, nevertheless were in the fore front of the politicians' minds. The most glaring case of such camouflage was Hankey's advice to Balfour to gain control of the oil-bearing regions by arguing that it was necessary to secure the water supply for irrigation - that is, by using an argument more likely to appeal to the anti-imperialists and the humanitarian mind. This tendency to camouflage the more blatant imperialist intentions was a noteworthy feature of British policy. It was in a similar vein that, in January 1923, Curzon wrote from Lausanne that he hoped also to dissipate the fumes of suspicion that had arisen in such noxious abundance from the still untapped oilfields in the Mosul area.

Statistics about the racial composition of the population of the vilayet of Mosul no doubt enabled Curzon to make a strong case on ethnic grounds, and to support it by pointing out how the trade from the various tribes and townships was orientated towards non-Turkish marketing centres.⁽¹⁵⁾ But it would be wrong to assume that the case which he made to the assembled conference at Lausanne was solely an ethnic one. While the statistics he held in his hand provide impressive evidence for the ethnic argument, oil was nevertheless a ruling

criterion whenever a territorial concession to the Turks was contemplated. For instance, in Curzon's frontier compromise in December 1922, the territory ceded contained no oil deposits. By September 1923, Devonshire was ready to suggest to Curzon a frontier-line which, while retaining Mosul town for Iraq, went 'a long way towards satisfying the Turkish claim for the retrocession of the Mosul vilayet'.⁽¹⁶⁾ This was the 'Young-Meinertzhagen Line', yet, although this proposal was contained in the draft Colonial Office letter to the Foreign Office, in the letter actually sent it was dropped.⁽¹⁷⁾ The influence which oil must have had in any delineation of a northern frontier for Iraq is obvious from the fact that the Young-Meinertzhagen Line was not drawn without hesitation. Meinertzhagen's hand in it was proof of its strategic implications, for Meinertzhagen was the military expert of the Middle East Department. Yet the nature of the hesitations and the final apologetic tone about the proposal are revealing. The relevant draft paragraph ended:

'It is true that the area which would, under this proposal be ceded to Turkey would include one or two localities, in which it would appear from the map enclosed with the Turkish Petroleum Company's letter T2 of August 17 that oil is likely to be found, but his Grace does not regard this as an insuperable objection. There might indeed be some advantages in allowing to Turkey the possibility of carrying out those provisions of the Chester concession which relate to oil in the Mosul vilayet by placing under her control a portion of the vilayet in which oil is understood to be present'.⁽¹⁸⁾

When the Mosul question was finally settled by June 1926 and the British position in Iraq had been consolidated both the Admiralty and the Turkish Petroleum Company found their respective interests well secured. True, oil did not begin to flow in commercial quantities until the late thirties, while large-scale production did not start until the fifties. But, as the evidence produced has made abundantly clear, oil was already a disturbing influence in the politics of Iraq and the Middle East in the period under survey here. In fact, so decisive was this disturbance that politics, by interfering with prospecting and concession-giving was almost the sole cause of the long delay in the flow of oil.

Finally, any full assessment of the impact that the oil-bearing regions of Iraq had on policy-making by virtue of their sudden importance to the British Empire has also to take account of how the

structures of political debate and decision-making influenced the presentation of the oil case to the Cabinet and to the public generally. Assessments of official policy are largely dependent on what filters into records and minutes of debates and decisions. The oil-bearing regions of Iraq were held as an imperial trust by the Committee on Iraq and its predecessors and the Middle East Department. These Government 'bodies' had developed their own instincts and senses. Accordingly, when it took decisions on the major issues of British policy in Iraq, the Cabinet acted much like a 'higher' living being, guided by complex instincts and a whole set of separate senses. But even in a hierarchy of senses, to draw fine distinctions between the 'higher' and the 'lower' perception does not necessarily show accurately the comparative influence of each. In other words the Foreign Office, which always regarded itself as a 'noble animal' because it dealt with sovereign states, usually tended to translate economic or purely strategic terms brought to its notice into terms of high policy, and debate them on that more abstract level. Only rarely was this process reversed and the language of high policy decoded. Take for example the Foreign Office's apprehension about the Bolshevik menace in the East. Apprehension no doubt there was; but as they represented it, the gradual Bolshevik encroachment on the northern frontier of Persia portended first a Bolshevik alliance with the various nationalist movements from Afghanistan to Turkey, next the undermining of the Persian regime at Teheran, then the thrust to the Persian Gulf in an outflanking movement round the oil-fields worked by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and finally the liquidation of the oil enterprise, which was controlled by the British Treasury, in Southern Persia. (19)

Thus when the Foreign Office referred simply to the menace of Bolshevism, it also felt the same concern as did the Admiralty when it spoke straight-forwardly of the necessity of physical control over oilfields and oil-bearing regions. Hidden by a smoke-screen of 'ulterior' motives such as Turkish atrocities or Bolshevik menace, George Nathaniel Curzon could pretend to be honest even when misleading public opinion by his statement in August 1924 in The Times 'that oil had not the remotest connection with my attitude or with that of His Majesty's Government on the Mosul question or the Iraq question or the Eastern question in any aspect'. (20) Similarly, once the imperial requirement of physical control over the oil-bearing regions, drilling stations and pipe-lines terminals was secured, and Britain was represented in the actual production of oil, the Government, as in the

struggle between Gulbenkian and the Americans, could limit its intervention to a strictly mediatory role while at the same time holding its mailed fist in reserve for occasions of internal unrest or of war.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. See Chapt V p 138
2. Cf Shwadran pp 233-237. A very good Synopsis of the negotiations for American Participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company is included in CO 730/100/(E8197/43/65).
3. Ibid
4. J DeNovo, American Interests p 200
5. See footnote 2, Synopsis of the negotiations for American Participation
6. Cf p 118
7. Foreign Relations of the US 1925, vol II pp 239-245. Of course, the Americans earlier had tried the same, cf Gibb and Knowlton, p 293.
8. J DeNovo, American Interests, p 198
9. Memorandum by the Foreign Office on French Govt's claim to oil rights in Iraq, Nov 1926, CO 730/100/21136, p 6
10. Ibid, Memorandum p 5
11. This note referred to the Berenger-Long negotiations, see A de Fleuriau (Ambassade de France en Angleterre) to Balfour, 6 Jan 1919, copy in CO 730/100/21136
12. See footnote 9 memorandum p 5
13. The intricacies of these negotiations and Gulbenkian's position are set out in a letter by Gulbenkian, followed by a memorandum and sent to W Tyrrell, the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London, 11 July 1926, CO 730/100/21136
14. The American group, known as the Near East Development Corporation was constituted as follows:

	Share of the 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ % interest
Atlantic Refining Company	16 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent
Gulf Oil Corporation	16 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent
Pan American Petroleum Transport Co	16 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent
Standard Oil Company (New Jersey)	25 per cent
Standard Oil Company of New York	25 per cent

according to Gibb and Knowlton, vol II p 306.

15. See Appendix III

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16. Draft of letter from the CO to the FO, Sept 1923, CO 730/66/17369, marginal note thereon by H Young, 14 April 1924.
17. The border-line should leave the Tigris at its junction with the Khabai Su, following the thalweg of that river to the neighbourhood of longitude 45, passing thence between Ghara Dagh and Amadiyah to the junction of the Greater Zab river and the Rowanduz Chai; thence leaving Rowanduz to Turkey and Rania to Iraq. See footnote 16.
18. Ibid
19. See p 6
20. See p 130

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EPILOGUE

The story of the Middle East oil in its production phase has found so many authors that the fate of the Iraq Petroleum Company until it was nationalised on July 1 1972 under the rulership of Hassan Bakr, can easily be read up.⁽¹⁾ Here it seems appropriate to go back again to the broader perspective of the study and put the oil issue into its proper place besides the other problems which, at the time, confronted British imperial policy in Iraq and the Middle East.

Iraq entered the League of Nations on October 3 1932. Of all the mandates under Article 22 of the Covenant, it was the first to reach formal independence. Thus the year 1928 with which this study has ended, was a midway mark. Nevertheless, it is sufficiently advanced to allow a panoramic view. Territorially, the stakes by which the desired boundaries had been pegged out during and after the war had been well secured to mark Iraq's proper borders. This applies particularly to Mosul. Politically and socially, however, everything remained in turmoil and a new pattern was slow to take shape. The various Government institutions were no more than seismometers, carefully placed on the ground and secured by the politico-military presence of the mandatory power.⁽²⁾ Basically, these institutions were still only show pieces, to be fed with pre-fabricated results or manipulated data at critical moments of the experiment. Significantly, political parties tended to dissolve at the death of their founders and leaders,

while in the Cabinet deposed or defeated premiers were made Ministers of the interior or Finance by those who had defeated them for the premiership. All this shows how limited was the personnel available for top-level office, and, generally speaking, reveals a situation in which loyalties swiftly changed from one person or prominent politician to another. For those facing the task of transforming the almost absolute loyalty bonds of kinship and tribe into a new national cohesion, one of the major problems still to be solved was undoubtedly the amalgamation of the levies, recruited from the politically very conscious minorities of the north, with the bulk of the Iraqi Army. The Kurds in particular, who, until the Mosul settlement, had been kept in a 'revolutionised state' by the British as a means of warding off the Turkish menace, were likely to form the largest obstacle to the successful end of such an undertaking. (4)

Imperially, Iraq was fast being transformed from a costly charge into a pivotal point for the Empire's air communications with the East, and a strategic base and reserve for the protection of the Admiralty's oil-tap at Abadan and on the Mediterranean. (5) As for the oil deposits of Iraq and their role in Britain's imperial (defence) strategy, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's share in the Iraq Petroleum Company did not yet figure by tonnage on the charts and routine war-map exercises of the Committee of Imperial Defence: the oil-fields were still untapped, or only just being tapped, and the Committee preferred the latest annual figures in their yearly statistics. However, in 1928 the oil situation in the potential war theatres to the east and west of Suez was being studied in relation to certain possibilities: America might become either a bad neutral, who might turn off the supply from her direction, or else a good neutral from whom oil supply would continue to flow; and the quality of the Iraq oil compared favourably with that of Persia. Further, the composition of the Iraq Petroleum Company concession was scrutinized and the capacity of its pipe line to the Mediterranean port of Haifa assessed. It was observed with satisfaction that 10 per cent of the oil lifted in Iraq went to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and that, because the remainder was distributed in proportion to the shares held by the various groups, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company would receive altogether 30 per cent of the oil lifted by the Iraq Petroleum Company. Furthermore it was stressed that the Iraq Petroleum Company was, by contract, only entitled to 70 per cent of the carrying capacity of the pipe line, and had to pump oil for any other under-

taking working oil in Iraq within the scope of the remaining 30 per cent of line capacity. Altogether, the Committee of Imperial Defence reckoned that it might secure about 50 per cent of the crude oil delivered to Haifa, amounting to a maximum of 3 million tons, within about fourteen days' sea-carriage of the British Isles. (6)

In another way, too, Iraq was already involved in the machinations of power politics. Of course (and this is very significant) the fulcrums of the imperialist powers had changed in kind and in size. In the Middle East and elsewhere Britain and France were now asserting their power and their strategic positions under the pretence of nursing and protecting an infant nation state. The Christian minorities, it seemed, were losing this traditional function; they were ceasing to be the favourites of the power interests. Of all of them, the Assyrian Christians experienced this loss of patronage in the bloodiest way. In view of their fate, ground between the mill-stones of Turkish and Iraqi nationalisms now engaging in a new kind of power politics, it seems inappropriate to characterise as obsolescent the standards of the previous century during which they had received protection. It is true that with a little luck the Assyrians might have been persuaded to emigrate to Australia. Nevertheless, whether accident or not, their fate is a symbol of the 'randomness' which is inevitable when the greater powers choose their wards and trusts with purely utilitarian motives. In the light of the new patronage of the imperialist powers, and of the survival of their methods after the war, the League's failure to set up a permanent and efficient minority commission may be seen as more than accident. But could there be divided patronage for nation-states and minorities? In the Middle East, the answer to this question depended in our judgement, on whether the international organization of the League together with the internationalism of Islam would prevail over sectarian politics and the particularism of national states. In the light of the apprehensions in British official circles about Russia, it was more than doubtful whether such an amalgamation could be made to work. As an assessment made in 1925 reads:

'The future holds out little or no prospect of alleviation, for Russian political thought can hardly be expected to move to the left, whereas it may well move to the right; and if the ostensible internationalism of today disappears, it can only be replaced by the open acquisitiveness of a former age. Nor is this all; the eclipse of Germany and the dismemberment of

the Austro-Hungarian Empire have pro tanto removed two healthy checks on the Russian appetite, especially where Turkey is concerned... It is the Empire's interests to prop up a whole row of buffer States and these States, of course with infinite tergiversations, blackmail, and playing off of north against south will nevertheless come to recognise that on their national existence the British influence must exercise a preservative and the Russian a corrosive effect'.⁽¹⁾

This is the cordon-sanitaire idea for the Middle East as it had emerged very early in Mark Sykes' comprehensive visions and was to materialize thirty years later in the short-lived Baghdad Pact. But both now and then lasting attainment of this objective of British imperial policy was frustrated by the politico-religious nationalism with its two facets of pan-Arabism and Islamic idealism. These movements were the root cause of the Empire's dilemma in the Middle East. As it turned out, their power to attract the nations of the Middle East was also destined to endanger their political existence.⁽⁸⁾ Meanwhile, to put it in a nutshell, from an imperial point of view Iraq settled down after 1928 to become a dormant British asset, which could be capitalized in the interest of imperial strategy whenever need arose.

NOTES TO EPILOGUE

1. Besides Longrigg and B Shwadran, whose works on oil have been quoted, see also G Lenczowsky, Oil and State in the Middle East New York 1960; C Issawi and M Yeganeh, The Economics Of Middle Eastern Oil, New York 1962; Mikdashi, A Financial Analysis of Middle Eastern Oil Concessions 1901-1965, London 1966; G W Stocking, Middle East Oil, A Study in Political and Economic Controversy, Vanderbilt University Press, 1970. See also Jean-Jacques Berreby's oil-letters New Middle East, 1970, 1971. For an assessment of the French stake in the nationalisation of the I P C of L'Irak. De nombreux projets intéressants pour les sociétés françaises, Moniteur du Commerce International, Paris, No 1191 (14 Sept 1972). - This is of course only a selection.
2. See e g Draft Report of Amery's visit to Iraq from 19 March to 15 April 1925: "If the writ of King Faisal runs effectively through his kingdom, it is entirely due to British aeroplanes. It would be

idle to affect any doubt on that point. If the aeroplanes were removed tomorrow, the whole structure would inevitably fall to pieces. Any locally raised forces without assistance from the air would not maintain internal order or resist external aggression... So long as the Royal Air Force stays, Great Britain will have to pay a part, if not all, of its cost. I think that it will be possible to justify this expenditure on Imperial grounds quite irrespective of any obligations that we may have incurred towards Iraq. Iraq affords a splendid training ground for the Royal Air Force, Baghdad, so far as one can foresee, is likely to always be a pivotal point in our air communications with the East". CO 730/82/22162. See also letters between Dobbs and Devonshire of 29 Nov 1923 and 10 Dec 1923 as well as a lengthy minute thereon by H Young of 5 Dec, CO 730/43/60034, CO 730/43/58636.

3. For the disruptive effect which this state of affairs had on the formation and frequency of Cabinets, see M Khadduri, Independent Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics since 1932, London 1951, pp 29-30.
4. This factor, in part, accounts for the trouble between Kurds and Arabs soon after the achievement of independence in 1932.
5. The following sensational flights may be recalled to attract attention to the general air enthusiasm in those years: First Non-Stop Atlantic Flight by Alcock & Brown, 14-15 June 1919; First England-Australia Flight 12 Nov-10 Dec 1919; First Zeppelin Flight from Europe to USA by Dr Eckener in 1924; West-East trans-Atlantic Flight by Lindbergh in 1927.
6. See Committee of Imperial Defence - Oil Board, CAB 50/9, OB(SG) Series; also C I D Sub-Committee on the Protection of the South Persia Oilfields, CAB 16/62
7. R Lindsay to Austen Chamberlain, 16 Oct 1925, CO 730/86/50803
8. One could take the view that this dilemma was a conflict in ideologies; in fact men such as Milner, Kerr, the young Toynbee and many others seemed to look at the Islamic East as still being on the level of Auguste Comte's metaphysical stage of the development of mankind, cf also the Inter-Departmental Committee on Eastern Unrest, Report on Pan-Islamism and the Caliphate, 4 July 1924, FO 371/11066, E 5753. Members were: Sir Vernon Kell (Chair), S F Muspratt (WO), J W Hose (IO), G L M Clauson (CO), H J Seymour (FO), J F C Carter (Scotland Yard).

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APPENDIX I

Mark Sykes, First Half of 1918

Our Position in Mesopotamia in relation to the Spirit of the Age

Our position in Mesopotamia if judged by pre-war standards is sound. Our armed forces are quite able to hold the ground. The population is tranquil. Our rule is popular. Our relations with the surrounding tribes are exceedingly friendly. If America had not come into the war, if the Russian revolution had not taken place, if the idea of no annexations had not taken root, if the world spirit of this time was the world spirit of 1887, there would be no reason why we should take any steps to consolidate our position against a peace conference, it would be good enough.

However, we have to look at the problem through entirely new spectacles, Imperialism, annexation, military triumph, Prestige, White men's burden's, have been expunged from the popular political vocabulary, consequently Protectorates, spheres of interest or influence, annexations, bases etc, have to be consigned to the Diplomatic lumber-room.

If Britishers are to run Mesopotamia we must find up to date reasons for their doing so and up to date Formulae for them to work the country on. We shall have to convince our own Democracy that Britishers ought to do the work and the Democracies of the world as well.

Now the facts of the case are as follows:

- (i) Mesopotamia is one of the potential store-houses of fuel and food for the world. If it is properly developed the workers of

the world will be better fed and warmer than if it is not.

- (ii) The Turks if they have Mesopotamia will not develop it, and will only allow others to develop it in order to increase their own military power, since the Turk will remain militarist Imperial when even Prussia is Pacificist.
- (iii) The Mesopotamian peoples cannot develop the country themselves, there is no possibility of evolving an immediate government out of four or five hen like municipal oligarchies, a collection of riparian brigands and a fringe of Patriarchal nomads.

These are three strong reasons why some body should run the country. However a Modern Democrat would argue that if any one is to run the country it must be run in such a way that-

- (i) Its development should not be for the benefit of Capitalistic groups.
- (ii) Its development should not add to the military power of those who run it.
- (iii) Its development should not impede the political liberty of the inhabitants.

If any one or all three of these desiderata cannot be secured then Anarchy and no development is preferable.

If we are to run Mesopotamia we must satisfy our own Democracy and World Democracy that there is a real guarantee that these three fundamentals will be the actual basis of our administration.

In order to establish this conviction we must be in a position to show-

- (i) That the Mesopotamian peoples as a whole would prefer our provisional administration either to a return of the Turks or the immediate establishment of an independent state in Mesopotamia.
- (ii) That our provisional administration not only has the consent of the governed but is the fore-runner of actual independence.
- (iii) That our provisional administration is not based on a system of Commercial monopoly.

I believe that this can be done provided that we take steps now (a) to prepare the ground in Mesopotamia and (b) elaborate a scheme of provisional administration which we can present as a reasonable solution of the problem.

With regard to (a) it is not difficult to see how we are to work.

- (i) The Christians and Jews should be prompted to demand a perpetuation of our administration as security against possible

reprisals by the returning Turks. This can be worked through the Zionists and Armenian Committee.

- (ii) We should subvention the greater Bedawi chiefs of the desert.
- (iii) We should encourage trade at Baghdad so as to get the mercantile classes to feel that if we departed their property would be in danger.
- (iv) We should encourage the amenities of civilization as much as possible, by municipal lighting, water, trams etc.
- (v) We should see that there is plenty of employment.
- (vi) We should subvention an Arab press on Nationalist lines, which would always hold up the Turks to odium and us as protectors of Arab Nationalism.
- (vii) We should start an Arab Nationalist party recruited from the Urban Intelligensia and promote its members to official positions.
- (viii) We should start an Education department and as many schools as possible, based on Arab Nationalism.
- (ix) We should if possible form a strong local Committee of investigation for the purpose of elaborating in consultation with us a future regime.
- (x) We should work all the elements viz: the people who want jobs viz: the intelligensia, the people who want security of life and property viz: merchants, Christians and Jews, the people who want low taxation and no military service viz: the settled peasantry, the people who want position, viz: the notables, along converging lines which all lead up to a native state under British tutelage.

With regard to (b) we should -

- (i) Investigate the possibility of getting the United States of America to propose that we should, provided the people of Mesopotamia desire it, assume on behalf of the nations of the Entente responsibility for establishing a provisional regime in Mesopotamia for a period of twenty-five years, with the object of setting up a self governing and independent state in Mesopotamia at the end of twenty-five years.
- (ii) At the end of the term of twenty-five years, the future of Mesopotamia to be decided by such International authority as may exist.
- (iii) That our tutelage should be limited by the open door commercially and by international guarantee of security from invasion from a military point of view. No troops other than internal order troops to be maintained there, provided no possible enemy troops on

frontier.

- (iv) During our twenty-five years trusteeship we should at stated terms report progress of administration of such International authority as may exist.

M. Sykes

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APPENDIX TWO

Budgets for the years 1924/25 and 1925/26 with a rough selection of the more important items. Figures are taken from the annual Administrative Reports as they were written by Gertrude Bell for the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. Currence in lakhs of Rs: one lakh = 100,000 rupees = ca. L 7,000

1924/25		Revenues Items	1925/26	
<u>Estimates</u>	<u>Actuals</u>		<u>Estimates</u>	<u>Actuals</u>
		Taxes on Natural Produce		
109.50	111.36	a) agriculture	113.45	145.74
		b) total	149.90	183.10
<u>150.05</u>	<u>152.92</u>	Customs & Excise	<u>243.63</u>	<u>253.72</u>
<u>234.58</u>	<u>249.00</u>	Grand total	<u>533.52</u>	<u>581.02</u>
509.97	527.33			
Expenditure				
55.17	17.09	Public Debt	37.64	17.34
48.05	42.68	Interior	41.39	39.54
70.54	70.43	Police	78.02	76.71
21.99	19.36	Health	20.17	19.48
		Education:		
2.75	2.36	Ministry	2.08	2.14

		Expenditure		
19.93	18.97	Schools	20.72	20.65
118.26	97.74	Defence	143.83	142.07
14.50	13.59	Justice	13.20	12.98
....
<hr/>	<hr/>	Grand Total	<hr/>	<hr/>
575.59	464.86		556.50	513.38

Except for the high expenditure on Defence and Police this survey hardly corresponds to the budgetary situation as it crops up in the numerous notes of complaint from Baghdad. Actually, the distribution of sterling subsidies which P Ireland mentions on p 411, footnote 1, for the year 1927, was preceded by some financial transactions in 1926. They amounted to a grant-in-aid to the Iraqi army of 12 lakhs for the current financial year and 18 lakhs for the next, plus a reduction of claim in respect of transferred assets by 18 lakhs. These were measures to mitigate the worse effects of the slight economic depression, cf Bourdillon to Amery, 7 Jan 1926; Amery to Bourdillon, 11 Jan 1926, CO 730/92; also Longrigg p 163.

APPENDIX THREE

Data on the ethnic and religious composition of the people living in the Mosul vilayet. The figures are taken from a Memorandum drafted by Bernard Bourdillon in August 1924 and sent to Eric Drummond of the League of Nations to Geneva, CO 730/66/39525.

<u>Division</u>	<u>Arabs</u>	<u>Kurds</u>	<u>Turks</u>	<u>Christians</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Total</u>
Mosul	170,663	179,820 ⁺	14,895	57,425	9,665	432,468
Arbil	5,100	77,000	15,000	4,100	4,800	106,000
Kirkuk	10,000	45,000	35,000	600	1,400	92,000
Sulaimani	152,900	1,000	100	1,000	155,000
Total	185,763	454,720	65,895	62,225	16,865	785,468

+ including 30,000 Yezidis

The figures used by the Turks were as follows, CO 730/67, Geneva, Sept 16 1924.

<u>Division</u>	<u>Kurds</u>	<u>Turks</u>	<u>Arabs</u>	<u>Yezidis</u>	<u>Non-Musulmans</u>	<u>Total</u>
Sulaimani	62,830	32,960	7,210	-	-	103,000
Kirkuk	97,000	79,000	8,000	-	-	184,000
Mosul	104,000	35,000	28,000	18,000	31,000	216,000
Total	263,830	146,960	43,210	18,000	31,000	505,000

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"	24-27	1921	"
"	29-32	1922	"
"	45-46	1923	"
"	46-48	1924	"
"	50-51	1925	"
"	52-53	1926	"
24	4	1915-20	"G" Papers. These are printed papers, notes and memoranda on various subjects such as German colonies, circulated to the War Council or War Cabinet or its Committees.
"	10		
"	37		
"	66		
27	22	1917	Mesopotamia Administration Committee.
"	23	1918	Middle East Committee.
"	24	1918	Eastern Committee.
"	98	1920	League of Nations Committee.
"	133	1921	Cabinet Committee on Future of Constantinople.
"	206	1923	Cabinet Committee on Iraq.
"	268	1925	Cabinet Committee on Petroleum policy in Iraq.
"	296	1925	Committee on policy with regard to Iraq.
30	30	1920	First drafts of the Mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine.
50	9	1925	C I D - Oil Board.

2. Foreign Office

<u>F.O.</u>	<u>Vol</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>
406	36	1911	Eastern Department
424	251	Jan-March 1914	Correspondence respecting the affairs of Turkey
"	252	Apr-June 1914	"
"	253	July- 1914	"
371	6343	"	Report of the Cairo Conference
	6346,	"	"
	6348,	"	"
	6354,	"	"
	6353	"	"

<u>F.O.</u>	<u>Vol</u>	<u>date</u>	<u>title</u>
371	7780, 7782, 7802	1922	
"	8409, 9147, 9045	1923	
"	10120, 10110, 10098	1924	
"	11066, 10826, 10862	1925	
"	10870, 10859	1926	
800	156	1917-24	Private Secretary Archives Lord Curzon.
"	199	1917-24	Private Secretary Archives Lord Balfour
"	206, 207, 215		" "
"	221		General Papers of Sir Mark Sykes
"	219	1917-24	Private Secretary Archives Ramsay MacDonald
"	258		Private Secretary Archives Sir Austen Chamberlain
PRO 30/30/12			Miscellaneous Papers on Meso- potamia and Palestine received amongst Lord Milner's returned papers in Nov 1936

3. Colonial Office

<u>C.O.</u>	<u>Vol</u>	<u>date</u>	
730	1 - 17	1921	
"	19 - 30	1922	
"	37 - 50	1923	
"	57 - 68	1924	
"	72 - 87	1925	
"	92 - 101	1926	
4. Admiralty	Adm 116/1677,	Case 5846	Naval Estimates 1912-1921
	Adm 116/1675,	Case 929	Service in the Persian Gulf
5. Board of Trade	B T 11/3	1911 - 1912	Baghdad Railway
	B T 11/4	1911 - 1912	Baghdad Railway
6. Air Ministry (War Office)	Air Vol 829	Series No 5	Contains Cairo Conference Report

II Documents in the India Office Library

7. India Office

<u>I.O.</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Title</u>
	2571/1917	Future Administration of Mesopotamia
	470/1918	Fortnightly Reports by High Commissioner

<u>I.O.</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Title</u>
	1980/1917	Mesopotamia: Concessions
	5160/1917	Mesopotamia: Cotton
	3156/1918	Pt 2-4 Mesopotamia Administration
	4722/1918	Pt 1 " "
		Pt 3 Future Constitution
		Pt 11 Appointment of Sir Percy Cox as High Commissioner
		Pt 12 Creation of Provisional Council Of State
	5876/1920	Mesopotamia: Faisal as King
		Political and Secret Memoranda
	B 240	Economic Situation in Persian Gulf and Mesopotamian Markets, July 1916, by Captain George Lloyd
	B 265	Mesopotamia: suggested employment of Japanese troops - arguments against
	B 269	Military co-operation of Japan in the War
	B 281	Future of Mesopotamia, note by J Shuckburgh 3 April 1918
	B 322	Mesopotamia oil policy

III Private Papers in various places in Great Britain, which also contain official papers.

Lloyd George Papers	Beaverbrook Library, London
R Cecil Papers	British Museum, London
A Balfour Papers	British Museum, London
Milner Papers	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Gilbert Murray Papers	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Meinertzhagen Papers	Rhodes House, Oxford
Hogarth Papers	St Antony's College, Oxford
H Bowman Papers	St Antony's College, Oxford
Sledmere Papers of Mark Sykes (Selection)	St Antony's College, Oxford
Hubert Young Papers (Selection)	St Antony's College, Oxford
Fabian Papers	Nuffield College, Oxford
Lord Lothian Papers	Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh
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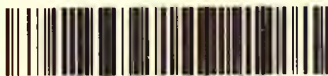
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