

BRITAIN'S MESOPOTAMIAN BURDEN AND OIL

TURKISH DEMANDS at Lausanne that the Mosul oil area be returned to Turkey because it is Turkish in population, have impelled the British to bring King Feisal of Irak to the seat of the Near East Peace Conference, say press dispatches, to prove that the territory in which Mosul lies is Arab, altho the town of Mosul itself may be Turkish. The Russians, it appears, have notified the Turks that Turkish insistence upon Mosul is the touchstone of Turkish good faith with the Russians. Some correspondents at Lausanne tell us that one project being considered is that Britain retain the Mosul territory, the price being a percentage of the oil to be awarded to Turkey and possibly also a loan based on it. This would mean, they aver, that the monopoly concessions the British claim to have obtained in the Mosul region would be recognized by the Angora Government, which in the past has maintained that no such concessions ever were granted. Yet it is also said that Angora will not consent to such an arrangement unless in the belief that British control of Mosul is doomed to end soon anyway, or by an exchange for great British recessions on the Straits and elsewhere. Meanwhile the British are described as showing a keener desire for Mosul territory than at first appeared, for they are now apparently extremely anxious to protect their prestige in this part of the world. But predictions are made that the strong opposition in the British Parliament to the whole course of what has been sarcastically called "the Mesopotamian adventure," because of its great expense to British taxpayers, will have to be reckoned as a factor in the negotiations of the British and Turkish delegations at Lausanne. Fear is expressed by certain American correspondents that in the oil negotiations the aim is to "settle secretly outside of a conference and without American participation one of the questions chiefly interesting to America and which may bring action from the American observers."

London newspapers remind us that a Treaty between Great Britain and Mesopotamia, or the Kingdom of Irak, was signed on October 10th at Bagdad, by which, according to the melencholy view of *The Times*, "the Government have linked up the fortunes of the British Empire with all the uncertainties of Mesopotamia for twenty years to come," and it recalls that:

"In the vicissitudes of the war it so happened that British arms detached this territory from Turkey. Thousands of British lives were lost in the effort and British treasure was freely spent in those deserts for a purpose that the

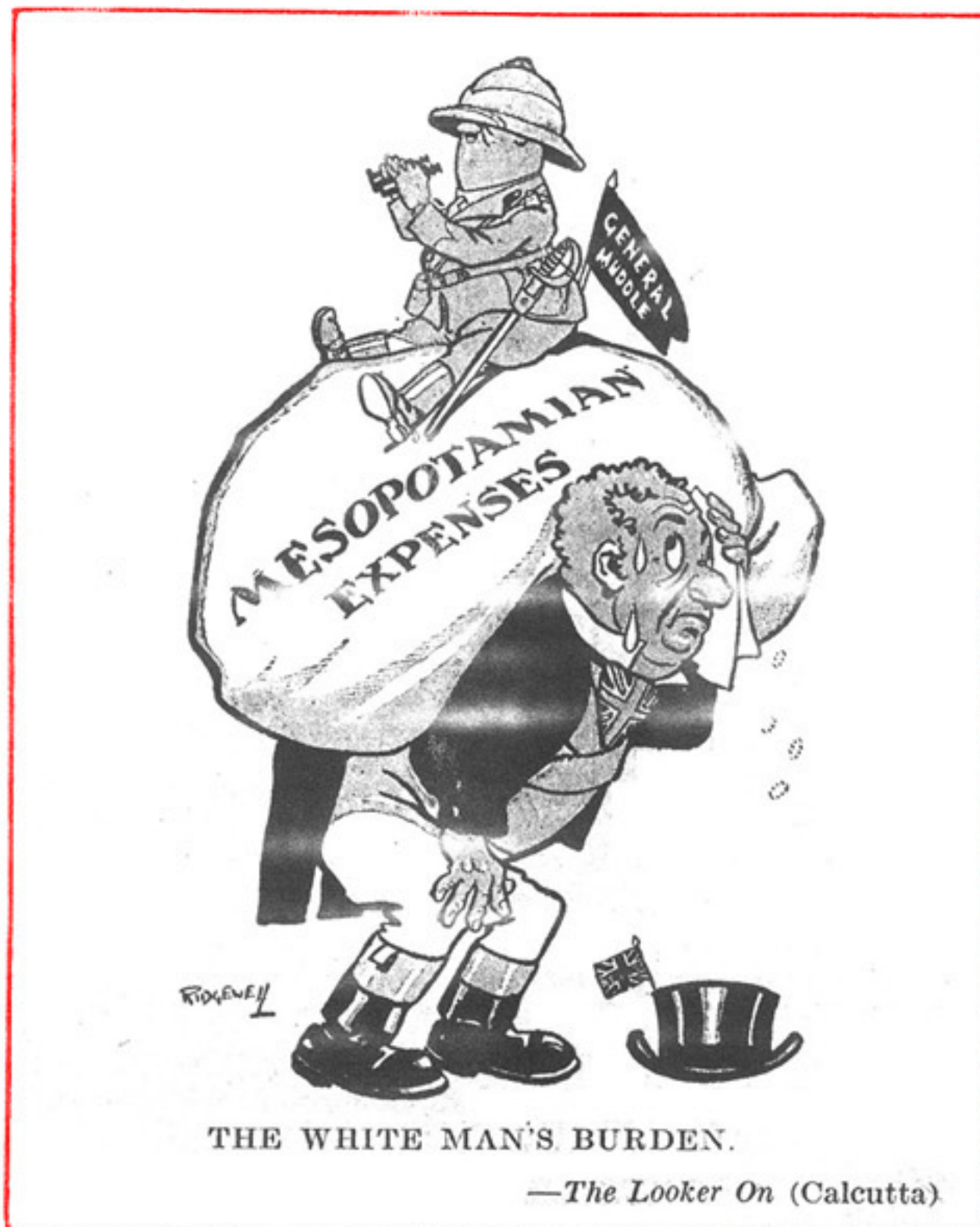
struggle in Gallipoli failed to achieve. At the end of the war we found Irak upon our hands, and our Government agreed to accept a mandate for the administration of this inhospitable territory. What relation Irak has to British Imperial interests, whether strategic or economic, no statesman has yet made plain. The strongest argument used for all the continuance of our connection with the country is that, since we have expended such energy in the effort to wrest the country from the Turk and to retain our control, it would be a confession of weakness if we were to relax the strain. The task since the Armistice has been wholly ungrateful. The population rebelled and the rebellion was crushed at great cost. More recently our Government have tried to act on the assumption that the people of Mesopotamia were, or could be made, a definite and coherent nationality. Since their speech is Arabic, they were given an Arab King from the family of the Sherif of Mecca, and the person of the King has been regarded as a possible nucleus of stable government. The King was provided with a Cabinet, and Mesopotamia, with its vague frontiers and mixed population, was treated as a nation, as an embryo State, to be ranked with the modern democracies included under the League of Nations."

This "abstraction having been set up," *The Times* goes on to say, the British Government made a treaty with it, providing for the adoption of an Organic Law by a Constituent Assembly, for the admission of Irak to the League of Nations, and for financial and military aid from Great Britain to the King of Irak. The whole proceeding is

"thoroughly artificial" according to this London daily, which adds:

"The Treaty is an evasion of the facts. The reason for the conclusion of a Treaty was that the politicians of Bagdad objected to the idea of a mandate, and traded on popular ignorance by objecting to a novel Arabic term. Our Government, therefore, considered themselves obliged to incorporate the normal provisions of a mandate in a Treaty recognizing the independence of Irak. By this Treaty, however, the British Empire undertakes many and serious obligations toward Mesopotamia, besides considerable obligations toward the League of Nations. The obligations of financial and military aid are on our side; on the side of King Feisal there is little more than an obligation to accept our advice and to refrain from accepting foreign advisers without our consent. The Treaty is unfair to the British Empire, which has always willingly undertaken an intelligible task, but shrinks from undefinable commitments. It is unfair to the League of Nations, which, in its present experimental stage should not be saddled with a burden that the British Empire can hardly bear."

Much less pessimistic is the attitude of the *London Economist* toward Irak and the Treaty, altho this financial weekly is not without its worries on the subject. It feels that the British



Government "can not retire from the country and leave the way open for the return of the Turk" and that it must "support the Irak Government, which it has set up under King Feisal." But it points out that:

"On the other hand, the British taxpayer has a right to insist that no more of his money should be poured into Mesopotamia than is strictly necessary; while, in view of the unpopularity which King Feisal and his Government reap from those who regard them as mere tools in British hands, it is also politic that British interference in Irak should be limited as closely as may be. The Treaty signed between Great Britain and Irak appears to satisfy in the main these conflicting desirabilities. It lays down with customary formality the lines of a régime of freedom, toleration and justice, while it exacts from Great Britain the undertaking to support the Irak Government, as occasion may demand, with financial and military aid. This undertaking necessitates, of course, the stipulation that the British High Commissioner shall have a voice in fiscal matters and foreign policy. Article 6 is one of the most important in the document. This article reads as follows: 'His Britannic Majesty undertakes to use his good offices to secure the admission of Irak to membership of the League of Nations as soon as possible.' Such admission would bring the British mandate to an end, and this clause, therefore, raises the possibility that, altho the Treaty is to run for twenty years, Article 6 makes it possible to hope that our Irak obligations may in this way be ended very much earlier. The Treaty, like most agreements of the kind, depends for its success upon the spirit in which it is administered. So far as the verbal text goes, it is an arrangement which appears to conform to the peculiar difficulties that face both the contracting Governments. But he would be a rash prophet who would predict that big and costly difficulties in connection with that country are yet over. We trust that the new Treaty will prove to be capable of being worked in a manner that will keep them within tolerable limits."

With regard to the pessimism in Britain about the future of Mesopotamia, or the Kingdom of Irak, as it is interchangeably known, the London *Daily Telegraph* publishes an interview with General Haddad Pasha, a distinguished Arab soldier and statesman as well as the official representative of King Feisal in England. Haddad Pasha does not see why Mesopotamia "which in the days of old, when ruled in succession by the Babylonians the Persians and the Arab Caliphs, was one of the mightiest kingdoms of these epochs, should not now regain its ancient glory." With modern industrial science he believes his country should become even greater than it was in ancient days, and he is quoted further as saying:

"It has been suggested that our population is somewhat sparse. But owing to the past misgovernment our population was bound to decrease. It is equally bound to increase with the advent of a sound government. We have in reality large reserves and resources of manhood to draw upon. I hear much talk of our alleged lack of labor. But I have no doubt whatever that the Bedouin tribes, which had refused until now to settle down, because of the way in which the Turk had ruled for centuries, will immediately return and establish their homes within our borders. No sooner had Feisal been proclaimed King than he began to receive daily applications from different tribes for land which they could cultivate and on which they meant to take up their permanent abode."

ANOTHER SPANISH CABINET OUT

CABINETS FALL in various countries for various reasons, but in Spain it is beginning to be said the one force that puts cabinets out of commission are the Army juntas.

The recent Cabinet of Premier Sanchez Guerra is described in the press as the sixth victim of the opposition of Army circles and the Madrid correspondent of the *Paris Temps* points out that any cabinet in Spain finds itself in a difficult position between the "nefarious influence" of the Army and the "antagonism of public opinion to Army interference." In the judgment of this observer the feeling against the Army juntas is becoming more and more wide-spread. A Spanish Senator is reported as asking that these "veritable Soviets of officers be forced to disband"; in the Chamber of Deputies a similar proposal has been voiced. Meanwhile this *Temps* correspondent advises us that:

"The King himself knows better than any one else the danger of having an Army divided and disorganized by

syndicalist methods. He knows that the infantry junta which arrogated to itself the exclusive right of nominating officers and regulating their advancement takes away one of the dearest prerogatives of the King of Spain who is supreme commander of the Army and the Fleet.

"Apparently, also, he must realize the outrage to his dignity that is offered in the pretensions of these military syndicates that they alone are competent to prevent favoritism in the Army. Thus it is obvious how delicate is the position of the King in Spain's present state of conflict."

Of curious interest, this informant goes on to say, is the fact that for several months the military juntas have been inclining more and more to establish friendly relations with the groups of the Left, and that between them and certain political organizations having small sympathy with the Monarchy, there has sprung up a close attachment. Such important journals of the Right as the Madrid *A B C* and the *Debate* are conspicuous by their frequent bitter attacks on the Army juntas, while the organs of the Left, we are told, which should be naturally the supporters of the civil power, take no stand against the Army juntas and on the contrary side with them in demanding that the Foreign Legion be suppressed. This correspondent advises us further that:

"They seem to forget the notable services rendered by the Foreign Legion and to consider it only as a germ of discord in Spain's great military family. . . .

"It would be a mistake for people in other countries to think that certain disturbances in recent days are forerunners of a military *coup d'état*. As has happened before in Madrid, once again it will probably be found that these disturbances are a case of much ado about nothing. Nevertheless, they serve to prove into what a low state of morale the Spanish Army has sunk as the result of the unfortunate Moroccan campaign.

"It may be that through such manifestations some energetic man will come to life and for the good of his country and its security undertake a complete reorganization of the Army. This reorganization must inevitably begin by the destruction of the Army syndicates which are pompously named at first Juntas of Defense and were later transformed by the imprudent General Villalba into Committees of Information."

