

Geneva,  
September 16th, 1924.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

**FRONTIER BETWEEN TURKEY AND IRAQ<sup>1</sup>**

LETTER AND MEMORANDUM  
FROM THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT

*Note by the Secretary-General:*

The following letter from the Turkish Government, dated September 5th, 1924, and the accompanying memorandum are circulated for the consideration of the Council.

The maps supplied by the Turkish Government have already been communicated to the Council. Only twenty copies have been supplied for the use of the Council, and, since they cannot be duplicated without great expense, it will be impossible for the Secretary-General to supply further copies.

LETTER FROM THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL.

Angora, September 5th, 1924.

*(Translation.)*

Sir,

With reference to my telegram of August 25th last (C. 423. 1924. VII), of which you were good enough to acknowledge the receipt in your telegram of the 30th of the same month, I have the honour to forward and to request you to distribute to the Members of the Council twenty copies of the memorandum from the Government of the Turkish Republic with regard to the question of the frontier between Turkey and Iraq, with maps annexed thereto.

*(Signed)* ISMET.

MEMORANDUM FROM THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT REGARDING THE FRONTIER  
BETWEEN TURKEY AND IRAQ.

*(Translation.)*

The Turkish Delegation at the Lausanne Conference asked for the maintenance of Turkish sovereignty over the Vilayet of Mosul. It repeatedly explained the ethnographical, political, geographical, economic, historical and military reasons why this Vilayet ought not to and could not be separated from Turkey. In spite of all these arguments, the British Delegation maintained that this province should be annexed to the State of Iraq, which could put forward no claim to the territory in question.

This divergence of view as to the Vilayet of Mosul led the two parties to agree, under the terms of Article 3 (2) of the Peace Treaty and Article VII of the Protocol concerning the Evacuation of Turkish Territory, that the frontier between Turkey and Iraq should be amicably determined within a period of nine months from the date of the negotiations to be entered into as soon as the work of evacuation had been completed. In the absence of agreement, the dispute was to be brought before the Council of the League of Nations.

The Conference held for this purpose at Constantinople from May 19th to June 9th of the present year unfortunately produced no result. The British Representative raised a question which could not have occurred to either of the two Governments at the time when they adopted the above stipulations. He proposed a frontier which would involve the cession to Iraq of the Turkish territory north of the Vilayet of Mosul; he added that, if they should not succeed in coming to an agreement in respect of the line proposed, the British Government reserved full liberty of

<sup>1</sup> Previous documents: C. 384. 1924. VII; C. 396. 1924. VII; C. 423. 1924. VII; Thirtieth Session of the Council, P. V. 3; C. 450, 1924, VII.

action as regards the frontier to be claimed when the matter should come before the League of Nations. It was clear that, in these circumstances, there was no chance of arriving at a friendly agreement between the two Governments. The result was that the Conference of Constantinople broke up on June 9th without reaching any result.

The memorandum recently submitted by the British Government to the Secretariat of the League of Nations, while it reiterated the arguments put forward by Lord Curzon at the Conference of Lausanne, again proposed the frontier-line which his Government had demanded at the time of the conversations in Constantinople.

Part II of the present statement contains the reply of the Turkish Government to the British arguments, together with a statement of the reasons why the Vilayet of Mosul ought to remain under the sovereignty of Turkey.

While reserving the right to develop its argument more fully in the course of the discussions, the Government of the Turkish Republic ventures to submit to the enlightened appreciation of the League of Nations certain general observations which, in its opinion, might facilitate the examination of the question in the sense indicated in the Acts of the Lausanne Conference.

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## I.

### I. — *The Question at Issue.*

The question which the Turkish and British Governments decided, by virtue of the Acts of the Lausanne Conference, to lay before the Council of the League of Nations is that relating to the fate of the Vilayet of Mosul. The Minutes of the Conference place this point beyond all doubt.

At the meetings held at Lausanne on January 23rd, 1923, during which the frontier of Iraq was under discussion, the two Delegations defined with perfect clearness the question upon which they were divided.

Lord Curzon, in opening the morning sitting, said that: "among the matters requiring to be laid down in the form of articles in the Treaty of Peace was the determination of the southern frontier of the Turkish dominions in Asia — *i.e.*, that between Syria and Iraq. The exchange of views took place and afterwards developed into an exchange of written notes... Unfortunately, this exchange of views and notes led to no result. The Turkish Delegation retained unchanged *their demand for the restoration of the Mosul Vilayet to Turkey*, and Lord Curzon was compelled to reiterate his refusal. There was, therefore, no alternative but to lay *the matter* before the commission, so that both sides should have the chance of *stating their respective cases to the Conference and the world.*"

It should here be observed that the question submitted to the territorial commission on which agreement had not been reached between the two Delegations was simply the question of the Vilayet of Mosul.

The Turkish Delegation having been asked to explain its point of view, Ismet Pasha read a statement which relates only to the "question of Mosul", and which gives the reasons why "Turkey cannot consent to the cession of the Vilayet of Mosul to another Power".

On the conclusion of this statement, Lord Curzon spoke as follows: "I welcome the opportunity of making a public statement on *this question*. There has been so much perversion, exaggeration and misrepresentation about the case of Mosul that it is desirable that the facts should be known. I am grateful therefore to Ismet Pasha for having summed up the Turkish case... I propose to take his case point by point and to give my reply, and I shall be only too delighted if *the Turkish case and the British case* could be printed side by side and referred to the opinion of the world." In the course of his long statement, he also referred only to the "Mosul Vilayet" and argued that it would be very undesirable "to cut out the Vilayet of Mosul from the mandated territory and to give it back to the Turkish delegation" (see Records of Proceedings, Turkey, No. 1 (1923), p. 354, para. 2).

The notes exchanged between Ismet Pasha and Lord Curzon and reproduced in the Blue Book entitled "Turkey, No. 1 (1923)" as an appendix to the Minutes of the sitting in question under the heading "Correspondence between Lord Curzon and Ismet Pasha *respecting Mosul*" only contain, as, indeed, the title indicates, the opposing theses of Turkey and Great Britain with regard to the rights of the former and the claims of the latter to the Vilayet of Mosul.

It is clear from these different quotations that the divergent theses of the two parties which the President of the British Delegation wished to have printed side by side and submitted to the public opinion of the world related exclusively to the Vilayet of Mosul. It was only in respect of this divergence that he pleaded at the afternoon meeting in favour of recourse to the League of Nations. Article 3 (2) of the Peace Treaty, which is the result of all these discussions, has no other object, therefore, than that of laying before the Council the divergence of views which had arisen regarding the Vilayet of Mosul and upon the solution of which the determination of the frontier between Turkey and Iraq depended.

The British Government maintains in its latest memorandum that what was laid before the Council was not the question whether the Vilayet of Mosul should belong to Turkey or to Iraq but what was to be the northern frontier of the State of Iraq.

In view of the foregoing, which indicates the true meaning of the issue and refutes indirectly the arguments put forward in the British Government's memorandum, it should have been possible not to dwell on this point at length. Allowing, however, for the influence which this appreciation of the dispute—if well founded—might exercise upon the issue of the question, the Turkish Government holds itself justified in dwelling somewhat longer upon this point. The question at issue between Turkey and Great Britain is reduced, it is true, in the last instance, to a question of frontier. All questions referring to the determination of the fate of a territory are always, more or less, only questions of frontier.

The Turkish Government, therefore, is especially anxious to lay stress on the following points:

- (1) The question of the frontier between Iraq and Turkey provided for by Article 3 (2) of the Treaty of Lausanne is identified, as has just been explained, with the question of determining the fate of the Vilayet of Mosul.
- (2) As the British claim, as formulated in the memorandum forwarded to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, contains, in addition, claims on the territory beyond the confines of the Turkish Vilayet of Mosul, it manifestly exceeds the limits of the question which the two parties have agreed to submit to the Council of the League of Nations. The Council accordingly will only have to give a decision on the claim referred to in so far as it is within the limits of the question at issue.

2. — *What the Two Parties agreed to submit to the Council.*

The intention of the two Governments in submitting their dispute to the Council is clearly shown by the statements of the President of the British Delegation at the Lausanne Conference.

After having set forth the disadvantages which the British Delegation felt to holding a plebiscite, Lord Curzon suggested "that this difficult and disputed question should be referred for examination and decision to the League of Nations." If this were done, "Turkey not being a Member, the first act of the League, under Article 17 of the Covenant, would be to invite Turkey to become a Member for the purposes of the dispute. The Council of the League would then institute an enquiry into the circumstances of the dispute and recommend such action as may seem best and most effectual in the circumstances... The Council will have to decide what method of examination to adopt. It may ask the Turks and the British for their respective views; it may decide to send a commission to take the views of the Kurds, Turks, Arabs and Christians on the spot; it may hold an enquiry in Europe, or it may appoint a single arbitrator to settle the matter. I do not know what it will do; but my point is that the Turkish delegation will be there just like ourselves, and when the two cases have been stated you will get the most impartial examination which it is possible to secure."

Without in the least wishing to encroach upon the high authority of the Council, and while fully sharing the opinion of the President of the British Delegation as to the impartiality with which this question would be examined, the Government of the Turkish Republic considers it expedient to make known its opinions regarding the just solution of the dispute to which the discussions of the Conference would appear to point.

The minutes of the two meetings of January 23rd make it clear that the two parties were not agreed upon the ways and means by which their disputes should be settled. It is equally beyond dispute that the British Delegation, while anxious to avoid a plebiscite, nevertheless agreed to refer the dispute to the Council of the League of Nations and to entrust to it the duty of determining the most suitable method.

Both Governments agreed that the objective nature of the principal factors in the dispute, such as the ethnographical situation of the territory in question and the expressed wishes of the inhabitants, necessitated recourse to a fair method of settlement, but they could not agree upon what this method should be.

Both Governments wished above all that the Council should determine the best method of discovering the real facts of the situation in the Mosul territory.

3. — *The most suitable method, in the opinion of the Turkish Government, of discovering the real facts of the situation.*

According to the terms of Article 3 (2) of the Draft Treaty handed by the Allies to Turkey on January 31st, 1923, the frontier of Turkey and Iraq, starting from the point where the frontier of Turkey and Syria joined the Tigris, was to be "a line to be fixed in conformity with a decision to be given by the Council of the League of Nations." In view of the considerations set forth above, with regard to the objective nature of the question at issue, which made it almost impossible to adopt immediate decision, the Turkish Government thought fit to propose that, failing a friendly agreement, the parties should be content to place the dispute before the Council, without specifying that the latter should, as proposed in the Allied scheme, definitely determine the frontier.

The same considerations apply *a fortiori* to the decision by a single arbitrator. The questions of fact indicated above are scarcely capable of a solution by arbitration. Whatever his skill, it would be practically impossible for one man to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants of a country and pronounce a judgment in accordance therewith. Although the system of commissions of

enquiry serves to ascertain a certain number of facts, it cannot be considered as being any more effectual than arbitration in this case; any result which might be obtained by this system in estimating the wishes of a population would not fail to be open to more or less well-founded doubts and would certainly lack the impressive authority of an appeal to popular opinion.

Accordingly, it is justifiable to think that the fairest method to be recommended would consist in having recourse to a plebiscite.

The main objections raised to this system by Lord Curzon at the Lausanne Conference are the following:

- (1) The plebiscite may choose a ruler, but it cannot determine a frontier.
- (2) A neutral army would be required to keep order.
- (3) A large part of the population being nomadic, it would be difficult to decide who was to vote.
- (4) The majority of the Kurds, and a large number of the Arabs, are illiterate and would not know how to vote.

It is for the Council to examine the weight of these objections, as the frontier question has been identified with that of determining the fate of the Vilayet of Mosul. The first objection amounts to saying that territorial questions cannot be the subject of an appeal to popular opinion. Yet it is evident that these questions lend themselves to it better than any others. Moreover, there is no reason to fear that the difficulties encountered in the case of the Teschen and the Upper Silesia plebiscite, which the British Delegation quoted at Lausanne, would be met with in the case of the Vilayet of Mosul. Even supposing that certain difficulties might possibly arise, that does not justify the separation of a province from a country, nor the subjection of its inhabitants to a foreign sovereign against their wishes.

With reference to the second objection — regarding the maintenance of order — it may be observed that the precedent supplied both by the election of the King of Iraq and by the referendum which, according to the statement of the British Delegation, was organised with a view to finding out whether the population of the three Vilayets wished to be united would seem to dispose of all misgivings on this point. The same precedents prove that the other objections, based upon the ignorance or the nomadic habits of some of the Kurds and Arabs, are equally without foundation.

#### 4. — *Additional reasons for believing in the necessity for a plebiscite in the Vilayet of Mosul.*

It can easily be seen from the various English declarations and notes relating to the Vilayet of Mosul that the movement on the part of the population of this Vilayet in favour of separation from Turkey forms the corner-stone of the British argument.

In his reply to Ismet Pasha's remark, pointing out that the people of Iraq and the Vilayet of Mosul had never had an opportunity of expressing their views, Lord Curzon said, on January 23rd, 1923, that such was not the case.

"We asked the inhabitants, he added, whether they would prefer to be united together in future — that is Mosul, Baghdad and Basra — or whether they would prefer to separate. *Al three of these areas answered that they were parts of a complete and indivisible whole*, and they declined to be separated. We asked them whether they wanted an Arab King and if so whom they would choose. Their replies were at that time divided, and therefore at the moment nothing could be done on that point..... In the course of 1921 the question of a single Arab ruler was solved by the election of the Emir Feisal to be King of the Arab State of Iraq. That was a vote in which the *Mosul Vilayet* joined, and by which he was unanimously elected." (Taken from the minutes, T. I. P. 289.)

Speaking of the Turkish population of the Vilayet, he asserted that "the whole of this people *except in the Kirkuk area* voted for inclusion in the Kingdom of Iraq and for the Emir Feisal as its King."

As regards the Kurds, there had been "constant manifestations of Kurdish discontent under Turkish rule;" the following details are quoted textually from the annex to Lord Curzon's letter of December 14th, 1922 (Blue Book, Turkey, No. 1 (1923), p. 367):

"This latter plebiscite (the one that was taken for the Emir Feisal's election) included the whole of the Vilayet except the Kurds in the Suleymanieh, Raniya and Rowanduz areas, who, being a compact body of people of an entirely different race and language, obviously required separate treatment. The Arab areas with the Kurdish districts adjacent to them, and the Turkoman towns, all gave their votes, and with the exception of Kirkuk all voted for inclusion in the Iraq State and for the accession of Feisal to the throne of Iraq."

The above-mentioned document repeats elsewhere (p. 371): "In 1919 the *inhabitants* of Mosul Vilayet voted *unanimously* in favour of continued incorporation with Bagdad and Basra. In 1921 the whole of the Arabs, the Kurds of the adjacent districts, and the whole of the Turkomans (with the exception of Kirkuk) voted again for inclusion in a State of Iraq, and chose the Emir Feisal as their King."

If these two statements are taken together, it will be seen:

- (1) That all the inhabitants of the Vilayet of Mosul, including *those of Suleymanieh*, voted unanimously in favour of union with Baghdad and Basra.
- (2) That all the Arabs and Kurds (the people of Suleymanieh of course excepted) and all the Turks, except those belonging to the Kirkuk region, voted in favour of the union and the election of Emir Feisal.

The document annexed to the British note of December 26th (Blue Book quoted above, p. 383) expressing regret at the Turkish Delegation's mis-interpretation of certain points admitted by the British Delegation, shows that "the people of the *Suleymanieh* area did not refuse to vote for inclusion in Iraq. When the vote regarding the Emir Feisal was taken they were not asked to vote because, as the previous British memorandum stated, being a compact body of people of an entirely different race, they obviously required separate treatment. The people of Suleymanieh have always recognised that their fate is bound up with that of Bagdad, which is practically their sole economic outlet."

Moreover, we read in the official report (Report on Iraq Administration, October 1920-March 1922, p. 12):

"*Suleymanieh* division rejected almost unanimously any form of inclusion under the Iraq Government. It has remained at its express wish under direct British control, exercised through a British political officer."

The same official report also makes it clear (p. 15) that "the *Suleymanieh Liwa* decided not to take part in the election of a King for Iraq.... The result of the referendum showed 96% of the votes to be in favour of the election of the Emir, the dissentient 4% coming mainly from the Turkish and *Kurdish* population of Kirkuk. In this *Liwa*, while the candidature of the Emir was rejected, there was no consensus of opinion as to an alternative."

Then comes the last British Memorandum. In regard to the plebiscite, the British line of argument has changed from that taken at Lausanne and agrees with the conclusions of the official report mentioned above. In contrast to the statements made at the time of the Lausanne Conference, to the effect that the Sanjak of Suleymanieh had not withheld its vote for inclusion in Iraq, it is now argued that the Sanjak of Suleymanieh "was excluded from both these referenda," *i.e.*, both from the 1919 referendum relating to the union with Iraq and from the referendum that was held at the time of King Feisal's election. On the other hand, whereas it was previously admitted that the inhabitants of the whole of the Kirkuk *Liwa* had refused to vote for the union with Iraq and to participate in electing the king, it is now stated that this applies only to the inhabitants of the town of Kirkuk (British Memorandum, p. 6).

It would therefore be reasonable to infer that the Sanjak of Suleymanieh not only did not vote for a union with Iraq, but even went so far as to oppose "any form of inclusion" with Iraq, whilst the Sanjak of Kirkuk absolutely refused to submit to the Emir Feisal's Government.

By relying solely on British statistics we can show that the whole population of these two districts — in all 247,000, *i.e.*, one-third (according to Turkish estimates 287,000, *i.e.*, more than one-half) of the population of the whole vilayet — is opposed to union with Iraq. If we take into consideration the obviously abnormal circumstances in which the rest of the inhabitants of the vilayet voted, we shall be justified in saying that even from the British point of view it could not seriously be contended that the population of the vilayet of Mosul had voted for any kind of union with Iraq.

All this shows the necessity of holding a plebiscite in the vilayet in question. Moreover is there any difference between a plebiscite and the procedure adopted by the "Allied and Associated Powers" under the Treaties of Peace concluded with the Central European Powers in the case of the Saar Territory, Upper Silesia, East Prussia and the districts of Schleswig and Klagenfurt?

Why should not a procedure which was thought fair for so many areas be considered equally fair for Mosul, which was occupied by the British Army after the cessation of hostilities, and the people of which refuse to be separated from their mother-country?

The fact that, in a territorial question of exactly the same kind which arose between Poland and Lithuania, the Council of the League of Nations recognised the necessity of holding a plebiscite in order to find out the real feelings of the populations concerned, is further confirmation of the necessity for following the same procedure in the present dispute.

The Turkish Government would agree to a reference to the people in the Vilayet of Mosul, under the supervision of a mixed commission composed of Turkish, British and neutral members. It would not be absolutely necessary to call in a neutral army while this reference was being held, since, according to the British Delegation's statements, the Vilayet of Mosul is "in the hands of the people themselves," who garrison it (Minutes, T.I., p. 290). In these circumstances the Turkish Government is of opinion that a limited number of neutral officers could see that the different populations of each district were fairly represented in the forces of order. A measure of this kind would give a minimum guarantee of a free and genuine vote. Although obviously no such measures could completely neutralise British influence over the minds of the inhabitants, the Turkish Government would agree to the holding of a plebiscite even under these apparently somewhat unequal conditions. Needless to say, any refusal on the part of the British Government, which maintains that the population is extremely anxious for separation from Turkey, would be tantamount to admitting its intention of subjecting this population to a foreign Government that it does not want.

The Government of the Turkish Republic ventures to hope that the Council of the League of Nations, actuated by a desire to arrive at an impartial and just solution of the problem, will take into consideration the foregoing remarks, which have been suggested partly by the proceedings at Lausanne and partly by the very nature of the dispute, and which, in Turkey's opinion, form the essential basis for a settlement that would both promote the necessary good understand-

ing between Turkey and Iraq and at the same time satisfy the people of the vilayet, who would feel that in this way they had been treated fairly.

## II.

### CONSIDERATIONS IN FAVOUR OF THE MAINTENANCE OF TURKISH SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE VILAYET OF MOSUL.

The frontier between Turkey and Iraq should be traced so as to maintain the Vilayet of Mosul under Turkish sovereignty.

The dispute brought before the Council of the League of Nations by the Turkish and British Governments is, as can be seen from the arguments contained in the first part of the present memorandum, concerned with the question whether the Mosul Vilayet should remain under Turkish sovereignty or pass under the dominion of the State of Iraq.

The frontier-line between Turkey and Iraq should follow the Diala the Jebel-Hamrin, the Jebel-Fuhul, the Wady-Tartar and the Jebel-Sinjar (see annexed map) <sup>1</sup>.

#### 1. — *Ethnographical considerations.*

The population of the Vilayet of Mosul consists of 503,000 inhabitants, excluding the nomad tribes—Kurds, Turks and Arabs—amounting approximately to 170,000 souls. The settled population of the province is shown, by the official statistics to be composed as follows:

	<i>Kurds.</i>	<i>Turks.</i>	<i>Arabs.</i>	<i>Yezidis.</i>	<i>Non-Musulmans.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Sanjak of Sulaimania . . .	62,830	32,960	7,210	—	—	103,000
Sanjak of Kirkuk . . . .	97,000	79,000	8,000	—	—	184,000
Sanjak of Mosul . . . .	104,000	35,000	28,000	18,000	31,000	216,000
Total population of the Vilayet of Mosul . . . .	263,830	146,960	43,210	18,000	31,000	503,000

According to the statistics supplied by the British Government, which it declares to be the only trustworthy ones, the total number of Arabs amounts to 185,763, a figure which is four times higher than is consistent with the truth.

It is an incontestable fact that the Arabs who are to be found in the Vilayet of Mosul are not the permanent inhabitants of the Province, but are nomads and only remain there during certain seasons. On the other hand, the figures relating to the Turks who have for centuries inhabited the country in compact settlements, especially in the regions of Tel-Afar, Kirkuk, Kifri, Taza-Khurmatu, Tuz-Khurmatu, Kara-Tepe, etc., and the villages of the Mosul plain, are under-estimated by 130 per cent.

The discrepancy between the figures of the two statistical tables, and the contradictory views to which they give rise, should therefore form the subject of an impartial investigation of the facts, conducted on the spot, with a view to establishing the exact ethnographical position of the country.

In regard to the authenticity of the respective estimates, it should be sufficient to remember that the Turkish statistics date from a period at which it is impossible to suspect Turkey of any bias, since she could at that time have had no interest whatever in concealing the real proportions between the various elements of the population. The arguments impugning the reliability of the Turkish figures on the ground that they were not brought forward by the Turkish representatives at the time of the conversations in Constantinople hardly need refuting. In point of fact, each party was so familiar with the data of the other that it was possible at Constantinople to be content with basing the discussion on the common conclusions of both series of statistics, conclusions which agreed in recognising the Arabs to be in the minority, as compared with the large majority of Kurds and Turks.

The Arabs are settled almost exclusively to the south of the Gayara-Sinjar Line and on the right bank of the Tigris; with the exception of a narrow strip from Fatha to Kirkuk; the region on the left bank of the Tigris is almost entirely populated by Kurds and Turks. Despite the assertion to the contrary contained in the British Memorandum, the Kurds and Turks constitute the majority of the population of the town of Mosul. The Memorandum, while admitting the truth that the three languages are spoken in the town of Mosul, attributes the use of Turkish to the official character of this language and the use of the Kurdish language to the close proximity of the Kurdish populations who trade with Mosul. The same line of reasoning also goes to show how the Turks of Mosul have come to learn Arabic. The argument that the Arabs have learnt Turkish because it was the official language is one which cannot stand against the testimony of the Arab centres in Iraq, where, in spite of the official character of Turkish, the population speaks only its native language.

The official proclamations addressed by British agents to the local population since the date of the occupation would certainly not have been published in Turkish in an Arab town. If there

<sup>1</sup> See Note by the Secretary-General on page 1.



were in the Sanjak of Mosul 170,663 Arabs and an almost equal number of Kurds, as compared with 14,895 Turks, as represented in the British statistics, and if the Arab language were the principal language of that region it would certainly be a surprising assumption that proclamations in Arabic could not be understood by the inhabitants.

The British Government admits that Tel-Afar, situated to the west of the town of Mosul, is a Turkish town and that there are a number of Turkish villages round Mosul. In actual fact the Nahias of Chehian and Achairi Seba attached to Mosul and comprising 146 localities, are entirely populated by Turks, and the Nahia which is dependent on Mosul and comprises 77 localities, has a population of which the Turks constitute by far the greater majority. The British Government admits the existence of a large number of Turks at Arbil, Altun Keupru, Kirkuk, Taza Khurmatu, Tauk, Tuz-Khurmatu, Kifri and Kara-Tepe.

The Turkish Government considers it superfluous to comment once more upon the distinction which has been made between the Turks and the Turkomans. It is a matter of common knowledge that there is no difference between the Turks of Anatolia and the Turks of the Mosul Vilayet.

Troughout the Mosul Vilayet the Turks are almost four times as numerous as the Arabs. The statement therefore that the Turks of the whole Vilayet are less numerous than the Arabs of Mosul city is one which can only be justified by counting as Arabs the larger part of the Turks of the Mosul Vilayet.

With regard to the origin of the Kurds, Major-General Sir Henry C. Rawlinson writes in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (9th Edition, Vol. XIV, p. 159):

"It was formerly considered sufficient to describe them as descendants of the Carduchi, who opposed the retreat of the Ten Thousand through the mountains, but modern research traces them far beyond the period of the Greeks. At the dawn of history the mountains overhanging Assyria were held by a people named Gutu, a title which signified "a warrior" and which was rendered into Assyrian by the synonym of Gardu or Kardu, the precise term quoted by Strabo to explain the name of the Cardaces. These Gutu were a *Turanian tribe* of such power as to be placed in the early cuneiform records on an equality with the other nations of western Asia, that is, with the Syrians and Hittites, etc..."

The same fact is admitted in a pamphlet entitled "Armenia-Kurdistan No. 62" published in the month of January 1920, under the authorisation of the British Foreign Office by the special section of the Commission for work preparatory to the conclusion of Peace.

The Kurds form a majority in all the three Sanjaks. The Yezidis, established only in the Sanjak of Mosul are Moslem Kurds of a different sect, bearing Moslem names.

The non-Moslems are mainly Nestorian Assyrians and Chaldeans settled also within the limits of the Sanjak of Mosul. They form only one-seventeenth of the total population.

The ethnographical features of the Vilayet of Mosul are therefore as follows:

- (1) The Arab element is insignificant in the Sanjaks of Sulaimania and Kirkuk;
- (2) In the Sanjak of Mosul there are only 28,000 Arabs as compared with 139,000 Turks and Kurds;
- (3) Finally, in the whole Mosul Vilayet there are only 43,210 Arabs and 31,000 non-Moslems, as compared with 410,790 Turks and Kurds.

More than four-fifths of the population of the Vilayet, therefore, consists of Turks and Kurds and less than one-fifth of Arabs and non-Moslems.

The British memorandum states that from the racial point of view, the Turkish claims demand the union to Turkey of a population of which they allege that one-twelfth only are Turks. In actual fact, the Turks form one-third of the population, but could not the very same argument be used against the conclusions of the British Government? Are not the latter asking that a population of which 23½% only, according to its own estimate, are Arabs, should be attached to an Arab State? All things being equal, neither of these arguments has more weight than the other. But all things are not equal. The Mosul Vilayet forms an integral part of an important section of Turkey in which the population consists of Turko-Kurd elements, whereas the territory of the State of Iraq is peopled by Arabs. In these circumstances, it is evident that the maintenance of the Mosul Vilayet under Turkish sovereignty would result in safeguarding the unity of a race with all the advantages attendant on such a course, whereas to make the Vilayet subject to a foreign State and a different civilisation would destroy its ethnographical unity, with all the serious consequences which would inevitably result.

## 2. — *Political Reasons.*

Although the opinions expressed by the British Government on the ethnographical situation in the Vilayet of Mosul, were not confined to an indication of the distribution of races and the probable numbers of each ethnographical unit — including as they did information on the political tendencies of each community — it is more particularly towards this aspect of the question that English political considerations gravitate. It might even be stated without fear of contradiction that all the other considerations which were brought forward at Lausanne and at Constantinople are abandoned in the memorandum submitted to the Council. It contains for instance, no mention of the obligations contracted by the British Government either towards the population, or when it assumed a mandate for Iraq, towards the League of Nations, or any consideration connected with the right of conquest. Under these circumstances it is not for Turkey to reintroduce matters eliminated from the discussion. As regards the question of the mandate,

however, the Turkish Government would be justified in departing from this attitude. The British Government would appear to agree tacitly that the question of the mandate, whatever may be its real value, has nothing to do with the Vilayet of Mosul. Indeed, any claim to the contrary, would undoubtedly place the Council in a very delicate position, for in such case the Council would have to legislate upon a question which would be of greater importance for the League of Nations, as principal authority under the terms of Article 22 of the Covenant than for the British Government, as Mandatory.

As has been pointed out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the first part of the present statement, there is no foundation for the alleged desire of non-Turkish inhabitants to separate from Turkey. In 1919 the British Delegation at Lausanne stated that the whole Vilayet of Mosul had voted for incorporation with Iraq and that in 1921, with the exception of the Sanjaks of Suleymania and of Kirkuk, the whole Vilayet (that is to say, the Sanjak of Mosul alone) had voted in equal numbers in favour of the union and of the election of King Feisul.

It is now asserted (page 6 of the British Memorandum) that the Sanjak of Suleymania was excluded from the two referendums and that the towns of Kirkuk alone opposed the King's election. The true facts, however, as stated in the official British report (see page 5 of the Turkish statement) are: that the liva (or district) and not the town of Kirkuk refused to be placed under the administration of the State of Iraq represented by the Emir Feisul; that the opposition emanated not only from the Turks, but also from the Kurds of this same liva (see the report quoted above, page 15); that the Sanjaks of Suleymania rejected "almost unanimously" all forms of inclusion in Iraq and decided to take no part in the King's election; and, finally, that two Sanjaks out of three in the Vilayet undoubtedly voted against union with Iraq. There is, in addition, every reason to doubt the freedom and genuineness of the vote, for it is difficult to imagine that the Kurds of the Sanjak of Mosul were unanimously moved by political feelings diametrically opposed to those of their countrymen in the Sanjaks of Kirkuk and of Suleymania, who number, according to British estimates, 197,900.

With regard to the wishes of the Arabs of the Vilayet of Mosul, the Turkish Government, on this point also maintains the opinion already expressed concerning the Kurds of the Sanjak of Mosul. This opinion is based on feelings of doubt — very considerable doubt moreover — caused *a priori* by the circumstances in which the two referendums cited by the British Government were held.

Had it been desirable to follow the precedent created by that Government and to extend the discussion to the alleged aspirations, the peoples in the North of the country in dispute, far more convincing examples might have been quoted, supported moreover by the evidence of recent events in Iraq. The Turkish Government, however, voluntarily refrains from following this line of argument, particularly in view of the fact that the Arabs of the Vilayet of Mosul, amounting in all to a minority of 43,210 individuals, are certainly not in a position to dictate the fate of the Vilayet even assuming them to be animated by separatist tendencies.

There is little to say with regard to the non-Moslem minority to which a remarkably large space is given in the British memorandum. Whatever sympathy the British Government may feel for those non-Moslems of the Vilayet of Mosul who espoused the cause of the Allies during the war, this sympathy cannot justify the separation from Turkey of a large province in which they formed scarcely one-seventeenth of the population. It is noteworthy that the memorandum of the British Government makes special reference to the Assyrian Nestorians. These people are not indigenous to the Vilayet of Mosul; they were obliged to leave their native country in the Vilayet of Hakkari, during the world war, because they had taken up arms against their Moslem countrymen.

The Turkish Nestorians who, encouraged by outside influences, left their country during the war, are few in number. They had for centuries lived in prosperity and security among their Moslem countrymen. Official documents confirm the fact that amongst the Nestorians now to be found in the Vilayet of Mosul there are a large number of Assyrians from Persia who would not be able to return to that country. (See *Report on Iraq Administration*, page 102-103.)

The British Government also mentions in its memorandum what an advantage it would be to Christianity in general if a British Protectorate were established over the whole territory inhabited by the Assyrians. It states, however, that the scheme has been abandoned for several reasons. The Turkish Government, convinced that the Turkish right over the Vilayet of Mosul will be recognised, would gladly dispense with a discussion on this point. But given the fact that a certain appeal is made, to sentiments of Christianity in general, it would be advisable to consider what are the real interests of these Christian communities.

The British Government desires to assemble in a compact mass on the frontier between Turkey and Iraq those Assyrians, Persian or others who, according to the official report quoted above "only desire to return to their own country" — that is to say, to Persia and elsewhere. (See page 102) and who "although they form politically an aggregation, are in reality solely concerned with their own tribes and villages and care little for the fate of others": a type "already inclined to live a life of mendicity in one form or another." (See page 103.) Such an agglomeration, formed in spite of the wishes of the community itself, inevitably leads us to ask whether it was the real interest of this community or other political considerations which induced this solution.

Does not the attempted scheme of a "buffer state" under the leadership of a mountaineer, one Aga Petros, supported by the British authorities to the great detriment of this same community (see pages 103-104 official report) suffice to indicate where the true interest of this little Community lies? Its entire interest lies in not being placed in antagonism to its Moslem countrymen.

The separation of the Vilayet of Mosul from Turkey is open to grave objections from a political point of view. The disintegration of a large part of Kurdistan, besides giving rise to implacable rredentism, would at the same time furnish a fruitful source of all kinds of agitation on both sides



and would cause permanent friction between Turkey on the one hand, and Iraq and Great Britain on the other. The artificial grouping on the frontier of Assyrians who might be utilised against the Kurds and who would be animated by a desire of aggression against Turkey certainly cannot be expected to produce the results that the British Government hopes to obtain, namely, the establishment of a lasting peace in these regions, good relations between Turkey and Iraq and the possibility of a safe existence for the Assyrians.

The Council will decide whether this State of affairs is likely to contribute towards the peace of the world, and whether a frontier entailing all these consequences is of real advantage to anyone concerned.

### 3. — *Historical, Geographical and Economic Reasons.*

For eleven centuries Mosul and the country extending to the northern frontier of Bagdad have uninterruptedly belonged to the Turks. From the time of the Abbasid caliphs, this country was in the hands of Turkish Governors, Turkish soldiers, and a Turkish population. Later, the Turkish dynasty of the Atabegs, followed by that of the Artuks, founded different independent States and reigned at Mosul, Sinjar, Jeziret-ibn-'Omar, etc. They have left numerous monuments, especially at Mosul. This town, again, owes much to the Seljuks who were in possession after the above dynasties and before the Ottoman dynasty. In ancient historical works, the country extending from the south of the Vilayet of Mosul as far as Bagdad is called Tataristan. A trace of this title still exist in modern maps in the name of Vadi Tartar.

From the point of view of the configuration of the territory, and of the climate, the dividing line between Anatolia and Iraq is the line Dialé, Jebel Hamrin, Jebel Fouhoul, Vadi Tartar, Jebel Sinjar. To the north of this line, the Vilayet of Mosul presents climatic and other conditions identical with those prevailing in Anatolia.

The fact that the Vilayet of Mosul forms part of Anatolia, from a geographical point of view, is also proved by the evidence contained in scientific works. The following is to be found in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

"Iraq-Arabi, name employed since the Arab conquest to designate that portion of the Valley of the Tigris and Euphrates known in older literature as Babylonia. Iraq is approximately the region below the Median Wall, from Opis on the Tigris at the mouth of Shatt-el-Adhem, to the neighbourhood of Ramadiéh (Ramadiya) on the Euphrates; that is, from nearly latitude 34° to the Persian Gulf, and from the Syrian desert to the Persian mountains" (Vol. XIV, p. 740).

The French Encyclopaedia confirms the same fact in the following terms:

"This name (Iraq-Arabi) is no longer used to-day to designate the ancient Babylonian territory. Iraq-Arabi now corresponds to the Vilayet of Bagdad, and part of that of Bassorah. Besides Bagdad, the most important town of all this region, the following may be cited as forming part of the ancient Iraq-Arabi: — Bassorah, Deir, Hit, Hilleh, Cornah, Koufa." (Vol. XX, p. 938.)

That the territory claimed by the British Government as forming part of Iraq and including a large portion of the Vilayet of Hakkari exceeds, even from the English point of view, the confines of Iraq is evidenced by Article 3 of the Treaty of Sèvres, as well as by map "3" in the annex thereto, which clearly indicate that the northern frontier of the Vilayet of Mosul is still below the line now claimed. Invoking the authority of the Treaty of Sèvres, Lord Curzon said at Lausanne that the mandate of Great Britain over Mesopotamia had been confirmed in the month of August, 1920, and that it was on that occasion that the frontiers of Syria as well as those of Iraq had been fixed, the northern frontier of Iraq being defined as following the northern limit of the Vilayet of Mosul, with certain variations (Verbatim Reports, Vol. I, Series 1, p. 289).

It is therefore evident that the northern frontier of Iraq is, in the opinion of the British Government a movable one. In 1920, it was the line of the Treaty of Sèvres; in 1923, it was still the same Sèvres line, and, at the present time, it is a line leaving the Sèvres line well to the south, and including a large portion of the Vilayet of Hakkari. Whatever may be the claims of the parties to the case, scientific truth established from such reliable sources as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the French *Encyclopaedia* cannot be altered; in other words the Vilayet of Mosul lies beyond the confines of Iraq.

The town and Vilayet of Mosul, being situated at the intersection of all the roads connected with Anatolia, Syria and Persia, are of great importance as regards the communications of Southern Anatolia with Persia and with Syria. This country is still more important from the point of view of communications between different parts of Southern Anatolia, for it is here that the roads connecting Suleymanie, Kirkuk, Diarbekir, Urfa, Bitlis, Siird, etc., intersect.

The Turkish Delegation, it is true, stated at Lausanne that economic considerations alone cannot determine a change of sovereignty over a given territory

The British Government seeks to deduce from this statement that the Turkish Delegation has admitted the strength of its economic arguments. It is of special importance to ascertain whether the contrary thesis is admissible, namely, whether territories supplying the economic needs of a State may legitimately be annexed by that State.

Subject to this reservation, however, the Turkish Government maintains that there is no such economic interdependence between the Vilayet of Mosul and Iraq as is argued by the British Government. It would indeed be difficult to believe that a vast and fertile territory, watered by two large rivers fails to be self-supporting. Even assuming that Iraq, notwithstanding the evidence of facts, had a barren soil, are countries which do not produce grain in sufficient quantities to be deprived of the possibility of importing it from neighbouring countries. There is no reason to suppose that the economic relations between Turkey and the State of Iraq should not in future be governed, in this respect, by the common interest of both countries to facilitate as far as possible its reciprocal exchange of their produce.

The British Government admits in its last memorandum that timber for building purposes required by Iraq comes not from Mosul but from other parts of Turkey. After the re-establishment of regular relations, it may be found that the grain which Iraq requires also comes from the North, although, owing to the lack of communications, grain from Mosul may have been partially replaced, at present, by grain from Diarbekir.

It need hardly be said that the Customs statistics quoted in the British memorandum do not in any way represent the normal economic situation in this country. If reference is made to pre-war statistics, it will be found that the movement of trade from Mosul is chiefly towards Diarbekir. The imports at that period by way of the Persian Gulf went as far as the district of Bagdad; they did not cross the northern limit of the Samara zone. A fresh factor has arisen to consolidate still further the economic unity of Mosul with Turkey. As a result of the construction of the railway connecting Mosul with the Mediterranean ports, the town became very much more closely connected with Anatolia. The Mediterranean is the quickest and easiest route between Mosul and the industrial countries of Europe, which she needs as an outlet for her raw materials, and a source of supply for manufactured products. Since the construction of this railway line, the Persian Gulf route has become of secondary importance for the town.

Finally, is not the theory of the economic indivisibility of Iraq and the Vilayet of Mosul, as maintained by the British Government, invalidated by the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916, which placed the Vilayet of Mosul under a French mandate?

#### 4. — *Strategical Reasons.*

The line suggested by the Turkish Government as the frontier between Anatolia and Iraq, while it is the necessary outcome of Turkey's immemorial rights over the Vilayet of Mosul, which are confirmed as much by the will of the inhabitants as by the various considerations stated above, also corresponds to strategical considerations. It is a clear and natural division between the two countries.

The argument that this frontier would constitute a threat to Bagdad and to its communications with Persia has little weight. Without quoting examples of capitals and important towns situated on or near frontiers, it would suffice to point out that the line proposed by the Turkish Government does not expose Bagdad to greater danger than any to which it would be exposed as a consequence of proximity to the Persian frontier. The assumption of a threat to Iraq is the less justified in that the history of the last two centuries has established the truth of the contrary assumption. Turkey has never had designs of any sort on neighbouring countries. She has always struggled, not to make conquests, but to defend her inheritance coveted by others. It is scarcely necessary to add that the Turkish Republic, a national State composed of Turks, and Kurds, would not think of attacking, and even less of conquering a country of which the population is of Arab race.

The Turkish Government does not wish to enter into the discussion of the so-called strategical advantages of a frontier which, no account of the evident rights of Turkey over the Vilayet of Mosul aims at depriving Turkey of that vilayet. Turkey cannot, however, pass over in silence all the general considerations which shed a clear light on the true significance of the reasons adduced by the British Government.

The latter maintains that the line claimed would be an ideal frontier because it consists of high mountain peaks which form a practically insurmountable barrier in winter on account of the snow and which in summer can be crossed only by a few passes difficult of access, and that this barrier would afford Iraq a better chance of security and a peaceful development. It is a well-known strategical principle, however, that invading armies do not as a rule select a line of country which is rugged and difficult to cross. They more often follow the valleys and plains.

Assuming for an instant that the mountains of Hakkari constitute the frontier, notwithstanding all the reasons militating in favour of the line proposed by the Turkish Government, the defence of Iraq does not thereby become any easier because the military forces which the State of Iraq might establish in these districts could not prevent enemy armies from invading Iraq along the valleys and plains. On the other hand, the advantage which a frontier of this nature would give to a foreign State owing this mountainous region for the purpose of provoking possible disturbances among the Northern populations is very evident.

There is no doubt that under these conditions the ideal frontier between Turkey and Iraq from the strategic point of view would be the one which would take into consideration the legitimate rights of the population of the Mosul Vilayet.

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### III

#### SUMMARY.

The present statement emphasises the following points:

1. The question at issue between the two Governments consists solely in determining whether the Vilayet of Mosul shall remain under Turkish sovereignty, or whether it shall be annexed to the State of Iraq.
2. All ethnographical, political, historical, geographical, economic and strategic considerations require the maintenance of Turkish sovereignty over the Vilayet of Mosul.

3. The British Government admits a majority of Turks and Kurds, as compared to Arabs, who only form a minority of the population, a negligible minority according to Turkish estimates.

4. The chief argument adduced by the British Government in claiming the annexation of the Vilayet to the State of Irak is the desire attributed to the population for separation from Turkey. The documents of British origin quoted in the present statement confirm the fact that an overwhelming portion of the population does not desire the union of their country with Iraq, which can lay no claim to the territory in dispute.

5. Notwithstanding the evidence of these facts, the British Government insists on the tendency of the population to separate from Turkey. The Turkish Government, on the other hand, maintains the contrary view.

This divergence of opinion on one and the same question of fact, on the decision of which would depend the settlement of the question at issue, renders necessary recourse to an equitable method of establishing the facts. This can only consist of a plebiscite.

6. Therefore the frontier between Turkey and Iraq can only be settled after the fate of the Vilayet of Mosul has been determined with the assistance of a plebiscite carried out under a minimum of guarantees to ensure freedom of vote.

The Government of the Turkish Republic is convinced that the Council of the League of Nations, guided by sentiments of the highest equity, will take into consideration the observations which it has the honour to present.

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