The Iraq Treaty.

Circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM from the High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated 27th February, 1922.
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No. 163 of 27th February.

Treaty with Faisal. As I informed you in my telegrams 815 and 816 (both) Faisal and Naqib and especially the latter pressed with great insistence for definite abrogation of mandate. Major Young will be able to supplement my reports in this respect. Since receipt of your telegram No. 87 I have discussed subject fully with them and both verbally and in writing have explained to them the position of His Majesty's Government and your own point of view as set forth in your telegrams and letters. In an attempt to circumvent sentimental difficulty I have also suggested alternative draft treaties, but they maintain their previous attitude unchanged in spite of all my efforts.

I have now received from Faisal a long letter setting forth his final views. He starts with his conversations with you in London and covers all the ground. This letter and our discussions come to this: Faisal and Naqib are definitely of the opinion that neither on line indicated by your modifications nor by alternative which you propose is it possible for them to proceed with treaty. It is clear, they contend, that in either case it is still intended to maintain mandatory relation. They are unwilling to accept this in principle, and it makes no difference whether it is expressed explicitly or in a camouflaged form.

Their view may be expressed in this way: "Our desire for Great Britain is sincere our need for friendship and
assistance is clamorous. We want no one but Great Britain, but we want her not as a mandatory but as an Ally and friend. His Majesty King George, in telegram with which he honoured me on day of my accession seems to have contemplated this. At the time when the idea and conditions of "mandatory" were formulated by Entente Powers they may have been reasonable and possible. Since then, however, much has happened and - to mention only one change - there has been an enormous increase in the strength of nationalist sentiment throughout Islam. Consequently intelligent opinion in this country can no longer willingly tolerate mandatory relation especially now that public have seen in what manner a parallel mandate has been interpreted or misinterpreted by French for whose presence in Syria, with its effect on Arab cause, Great Britain is morally responsible. If you will give us a frank and free treaty and complete independence you will find that everything you need for preservation of your own position and interests and welfare of foreigners is yours; if, on the other hand, you insist on "the proposal to "mandate" us I and Naqib cannot acceptodium and responsibility of being associated with such a policy and you will need an army strong enough to impose your will upon an unwilling people. If, in her own interests or because of her undertakings towards other Powers, Great Britain feels obliged to insist on pressing upon Iraq a treaty on line indicated by Secretary of State's modifications His Majesty's Government may prefer (since I and Naqib cannot accept the task) to ask the national assembly when it is convened, to consider treaty. We could not oppose such a decision but the only result of such a course would be, in our opinion, to let loose a storm of controversy upon the country and we cannot say what the result of reference or of the consequent delay would be".

In answer to above I have used the arguments
with which you furnished me in your communications and in addition I have argued somewhat as follows: If Great Britain and Iraq only were concerned, I am convinced that His Majesty's Government would, if only for her own convenience, respond to Iraq's aspirations towards freedom to utmost in spite of proverbial danger of patching old garments with new cloth provided that they were left in a position of sufficient influence to safeguard their own reasonable interests and ensure proper treatment of foreigners. In point of fact, however, abrogation of mandate may well be politically impossible for Great Britain vis-a-vis her allies and League of Nations too, since other mandatories and interests of those (1 group) may be affected by any action taken in regard to Iraq. In reply to this they express their firm conviction that Great Britain can not rid of mandate if she wishes. This is in spite of the views, policy and arguments of His Majesty's Government which I have not failed to place clearly before them.

My own comment is as follows: Our attitude appears to me to be weak in this that premises on which it is based, however sound at one time, are sound no longer, and I think we need to reconsider situation with all (1 group) on basis of actualities.

At the time when the Mandate relationship was devised it seemed reasonable and even benevolent in idea, name and form. Since then, however, situation has changed greatly. On one hand we find ourselves in a state of increasingly severe financial stress; on the other hand a strong wave of nationalism is passing over east. Although owing to absolute necessity of reducing our expenditure and withdrawing our troops we are no longer in a position either to fulfil our obligations under mandate in direction of defence or to enforce it if people of Iraq are unwilling, we still seem to cling/
cling to the idea that we are performing a duty to humanity by maintaining mandatory relation. A considerable proportion of people of Iraq are no doubt inarticulate. As for the rest, the moderate and pro-British party will find it very difficult to run counter to expressed opinion of Naqib and if we asked them to do so we should be putting their loyalty to us to too great a strain, while it may be taken for granted that small but potent element of intelligentsia will support and out-vie the attitude of Faisal. When it became known that not only Faisal but our staunch supporter the Naqib had been unable to come to an understanding with His Majesty's Government, the alternative of leaving the Treaty for consideration of National Assembly would I am convinced offer no likelihood of a different result. We should have very strong public feeling against us by the time the Assembly met and decision of Assembly would I think be a foregone conclusion. Moreover work generally will be paralysed until Treaty is concluded or at all events until terms are agreed upon between King and ourselves, and the question of British personnel, which hinges upon Treaty, and the Organic Law will be hung up. It seems to me, therefore, that before we go further His Majesty's Government must review the situation seriously and come to a final decision on this fundamental question of policy. Regard being had to our admitted inability and disinclination to force any solution on Iraq, and with fresh experience of Ireland and Egypt before us, it seems to me that we must consider whether we are or are not in a position to go to our Allies and the League of Nations and say in effect;

"In practice we have fulfilled our mandatory duties to Iraq for three years. The form of Mandate as first contemplated is now out of date and has moreover been interpreted
interpreted by France as circumstances seemed to her to
demand, the League of Nations is still ineffective and
meanwhile the internal situation in Iraq has been developing
quickly and satisfactorily and we cannot stop this process.
Our sole object is to do our duty by the people of Iraq
while maintaining sufficient influence to ensure that legi-
titimate British interests and welfare of foreigners in
country are safeguarded. We have never had any other
designs in Iraq. We consider that both from our own point
of view and that of people of Iraq this end can best be
achieved if our future relations are formulated in a treaty
of alliance (1 group) as between two independent states.
The terms which have been agreed upon between the two parties
are now communicated (1 group)." My object in expressing
myself so fully on such a point (and I do so with great
diffidence) is in order that you may know in what direction
I am thinking. It is my personal conviction that it is
only in this direction that we can expect to find success.
Considering impossibility of adopting any costly policy in
Iraq it seems in view of attitude of British tax-payer
more prudent to secure good-will of Iraqis by giving them
what they want the onus of failure thus remaining on them,
than to adopt any policy which would probably have contrary
effect.

This refers to your telegram No. 87 and subsequent
messages.

CCX.