

MEMORANDUM

of observations by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the petition submitted by representatives of the Assyrians in Iraq dated the 20th of October, 1931, and on the letter from His Beatitude the Mar Shimun and others dated the 23rd of October, 1931, with which the above petition was forwarded to the Chairman of the Permanent Mandates Commission.

1. Notes are attached in an appendix on the identity of the signatories to the petition.
2. It was reported in October, 1931, by the Administrative Inspecteur, Mosul, that His Beatitude the Mar Shimun had summoned a meeting of Assyrian Bishops and Maliks in Mosul. The discussions were secret and no information on the subject was communicated to the Administrative Inspector by His Beatitude. At the same time there was wide-spread talk of emigration among the Assyrians. The Administrative Inspector concluded his report with the statement that the Mutasarraf had personally instructed the Quaimmaqams of Dohuk and Zakho to do their best to convince the Assyrians of the Government's good intentions towards them but that he (the Administrative Inspector) feared that little good would result so long as His Beatitude the Mar Shimun persisted in agitating in Mosul. It remains to observe that, whereas the letter forwarding the petition was dated 23rd October, 1931, and was marked "copy to His Excellency the High Commissioner in Iraq", no copy was received by the High Commissioner until November 26th, after the petition had been published in the Press.
3. As regards the text of the petition and the accompanying letter, no specific charges or grievances are recited. The two documents merely record the opinion of the signatories that it will be impossible for the Assyrians to remain in Iraq after the termination of the mandate. The letter further appeals to the Permanent Mandates Commission to arrange for the emigration of the Assyrians to a country under the rule of one of the western nations or, failing this, to Syria.
4. In regard to the suggestion that the Assyrians should emigrate to a western state or to Syria, His Majesty's Government can only observe that, if the French Government or any other European Government could offer compact accommodation in suitable hill-country for the Assyrian nation in Syria or elsewhere and were prepared to finance their transport thither, and to guarantee them such permanent conditions as would make it worth their while to emigrate en masse, [souligné par l'auteur] neither His Majesty's Government nor the Iraqi Government, if the Assyrians themselves desired to accept the offer, would feel justified in opposing their wishes, in spite of the undoubted loss to the State of Iraq, which would be involved. Such a contingency however seems so remote that His Majesty's Government have not considered that any useful purpose would be served by their approaching the French Government or any other Government in the matter. It is understood that much vacant lands as are available in Syria are being settled with Armenian refugees and that in any case no mountain villages such as the Assyrians have been accustomed to inhabit would be available for settlement.
5. In view of the very full consideration which not only the Permanent Mandates Commission, but also the Council of the League of Nations have already given to the position of the Assyrians in Iraq. His Majesty's Government do not propose to comment further on the thesis that it will be impossible for the Assyrians to remain in Iraq after the termination of the mandate. It is sufficient to refer to the reply which the Permanent Mandates Commission during their 20th Session (1) suggested should be returned by the Council of the League to Captain Hormuzd Rassam's petition, namely that the League of Nations will continue to ensure that the rights of the minorities are respected, with all the greater zeal and sympathy if it is convinced that these minorities are loyally contributing to the security and prosperity of the State of Iraq. His Majesty's Government regret that His Beatitude the Mar Shimun and the other signatories should have submitted at this juncture a petition which suggests that the Assyrians are not disposed to make their contribution to the security and prosperity of the State of Iraq. His Majesty's Government feel confident however that, as soon as the Assyrians are convinced that the visions, in which they have been encouraged to put their faith, of an autonomous Assyrian State within Iraq or of

wholesale Assyrian emigration elsewhere are impossible of realisation, they will become a most useful section of the Iraqi nation. It is therefore, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, in the best interests both of the Iraqi Government and of the Assyrians themselves that such visions should be finally dispelled at the earliest possible moment.

[*Archives de la Société des Nations*, Section des Mandats, « Section Files », 1919-1946,
« Iraq », Boîte S1630, C.P.M.1282.]

Note by the Secretariat:

(1) See p. 234 of the Minutes of the 20th session of the Permanent Mandates Commission.