

The State of Irak.

The name of the new Arab State, under an Arab ruler in Mesopotamia (including the Mosul area), Mr. Churchill said, would be Irak. The provisional native Government there is now to be replaced by an Elective Assembly. The support of the Government had been accorded to the Emir Feisul, who had been informed that there is no objection to his candidature as Arab ruler. He was now on his way from Mecca. It was hoped that when the new State was set up the British forces could be withdrawn.

On the other hand, there was a movement for direct British rule—(laughter and cheers)—but we could not undertake this responsibility. Mr. Churchill could not say that Mesopotamia was, like Egypt, a place of cardinal importance to our interests. India could be better defended from her own frontiers, and our policy in Mesopotamia was to reduce our commitments.

Powerful rival interests to the Emir Feisul had to be placated, and Mr. Churchill interested the House with an amusing account of the powerful and fanatical Wahabi sect under Ibn Saud. They were far sterner in their code than even the old Calvinists. (Laughter.) These austere people had to be reckoned with, and we had decided on granting a subsidy of £60,000 a year.

The river communications between Bagdad and the sea would be maintained after the end of the year by 12 battalions and 8 squadrons of aeroplanes. Arrangements were being made for aeroplanes to fly regularly across the desert between Bagdad and Cairo. This might prove an important link in the chain of Imperial communications. When the Arab Government had been set up and a ruler had been chosen we should be prepared to enter into negotiations with him to enable us to readjust our relations with Mesopotamia upon a treaty basis. Turning to Palestine, Mr. Churchill said: "Here the problem is more acute than in Mesopotamia, but smaller, in a military sense. There is more danger of trouble in Palestine this year than there is in Mesopotamia; but the trouble could be much more easily dealt with. The only cause of unrest in Palestine arises from the Zionist movement and from our pledges and promises in regard to it. But for those promises the garrison maintained at our expense could be sensibly reduced. The difficulty about the provision of a National Home for the Jews is that it conflicts with our regular policy of consulting the wishes of the people in the mandated territories and giving them representative institutions—which institutions they would certainly use to veto all further Jewish immigration." (Laughter.) There were 500,000 Muslims and only 55,000 Jews. The Zionist movement had greatly alarmed the Arabs, who feared they were going to be swamped in their own country. Could we allow this Jewish colony to be overturned by the attack of the Arab population? That would be disgraceful. (Cheers.) His final words were a warning that all our plans would be of no avail unless we could secure a peaceful settlement with Turkey, and it was not to be expected that such a settlement could be reached by the exhibition of powerlessness on the part of Britain and France.

Extravagance