

Government in May 1937 but it was ascertained that there was then no prospect of facilities being offered for settlement of Assyrians anywhere in Australia.

5. The present position therefore is that approximately 20,000 are in Iraq and about 10,000 remain settled on the Khabur river. Events of the present war have tended to revive the problem of making some more suitable and more permanent arrangement for the Assyrians' future. The Assyrians have, both in Iraq and in Syria, rendered most valuable services to British Commonwealth forces in the Middle East. During the Rashid Ali revolt, in particular, the Assyrian levies recruited by the R.A.F. assisted in the successful defence of Habhaniyah against regular troops of the Iraq army and their praiseworthy conduct during this operation has undoubtedly exposed them to the risk of revenge at the hands of ill-disposed elements in Iraq after the war, when British forces now in the country are reduced to peacetime strength and it is certain that they will look all the more towards us to safeguard them after the war.

6. Experienced British officers are unanimously agreed about the excellent qualities of this small nation and feel that given certain degree of cultural autonomy within the framework of whatever State would consent to receive them they would become a valuable asset as a pastoral community. Those settled on the Khabur river have shown themselves to be a law-abiding and industrious community. The area, however, being hot and low-lying is not suited to them; nor, owing to the lack of capital for the irrigation works have they been able to do more than eke out a bare existence. They also live under the constant threat of raids by nomadic and other Moslem Arab tribes of the neighbourhood, which will become more dangerous as Syria achieves progressively more complete independence.

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