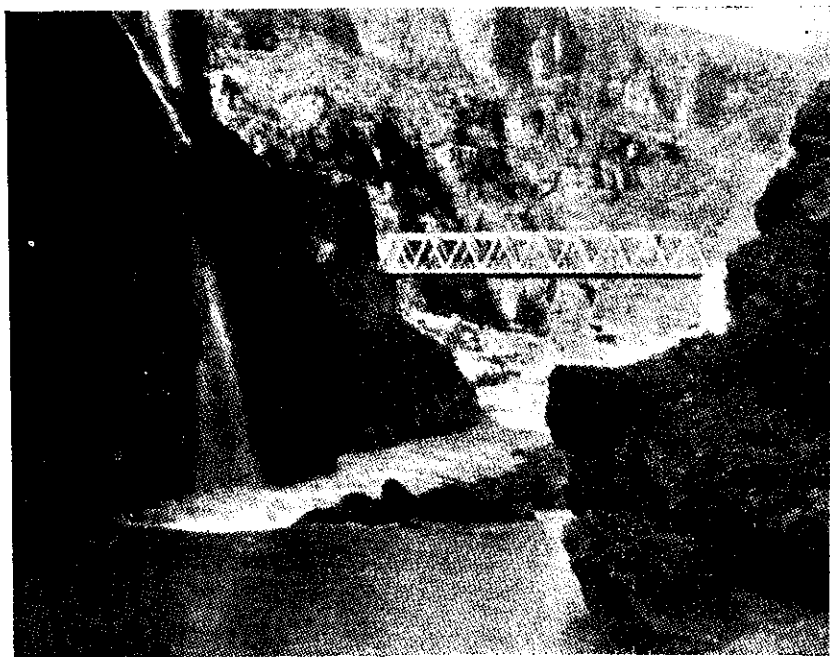


ALONG THE ROUTE TO TRANS-CAUCASIA



The main bridge over the Rowanduz River

(Continued from previous page)

and Assyria. It was Saladin's capital. And to-day, as Erbil, it is a pillar of fire by night and a shade by day to the surrounding plain. For the modern, or, more strictly, the contemporary town—the oldest continuously-inhabited settlement in the world—stands on a flat-topped, man-made mountain composed of the dust of its own centuries.

Bye-passing it, we scaled three successive ranges of Scottish hills. The few folk we passed among their twisting streams, stunted oaks and moss-covered rocks chillingly reminded us in their yellow-skinned, narrow-eyed approximation to Mongolian types of the Mosul consul's admonitory tales of feuds and hold-ups. But as we faced the terrific climb of the ill-famed Spilik itself, all our attention and fear passed to Junior's erupting radiator. But he made the grade. Morning light showed dead across the end of the valley over the Pass a mountain range like a ragged wall. However, from nearer a cleft appeared out of which rushed a torrent between deep-green pool and deep-green pool. Looking up through that jagged V, eroded mile beyond mile into the rock, we knew where the scores of cubic miles of Mesopotamia that have been built out into the Persian Gulf even in historic times have come from.

On to Tabriz

It was at the gorge's far end, where in a saddle of the hills it opens out into a radiation of lesser canyons, that mud-walled, mud-built Rowanduz itself appeared on the skyline immediately overhead. The only town of Iraki Kurdistan, it crowds the whole top of a long narrow tongue of land projecting between the gorges into space. The Berserini Gorge beyond was more open—rather like the very upper Buller in some ways. But even here, before Hamilton's gangs blasted undercuts through



A Kurdish woman and child

various headlands, caravans had always to detour at the cost of two thousand feet of extra climb. Then up, up, up, among the snowy tops we panted until, balanced on the crest, there was our front bumper in Iran and our packs behind in Irak! Thereafter, winding downwards along hillsides and the salt shores of Lake Urmia's inland sea (all open and dead and deserted as the moon) it was as many miles as we had climbed to reach Tabzir (Ta-breeze). Thence there is rail, a mere hundred miles or so, to the Caucasus.

Gentlemen of the Road

Now why has there been in our news no reference whatever, that I have seen, to this important supply route? I suspect that the Mosul consul's warning to us hint the answer. We had camped at the Rowanduz gorge mouth to wash ourselves and our clothes in that marvellous green water, when suddenly a man appeared from nowhere, and begged us to come on for safety to the Police Post at Gali Ali Beg. There we found, celebrating the Iraki king's birthday at a sort of coffee house, a dozen men, of

A GUINEA FOR 75 WORDS Message To Men Overseas

YOU have listened Sunday by Sunday to the personal messages from our soldiers overseas. Perhaps it has seemed to you that they all say the same things. You may even have wished sometimes that you could write their messages for them, or at least sub-edit them.

Well, here is your chance. Christmas is coming. Prepare a message of not fewer than 50 or more than 75 words that you would like to send to your own son overseas—about as much as he could send to you in half-a-minute before the microphone.

For the best of these messages we shall pay one guinea, and for the next two half-a-guinea each; but in addition to paying for them, we shall arrange, if that is the wish of the writers, that the messages themselves shall be included in the Christmas broadcast to the troops overseas.

This means that you must post your entries to us not later than November 15, 1941. You may send as many entries as you wish, but each must be accompanied by a coupon cut from this or a later issue of "The Listener." It will be understood also that this competition is open to everybody—not merely to those who actually have relatives or friends overseas.

Address your letter to the Editor, N.Z. Listener, Box 1070, Wellington, C.I. (Coupon on page 47.)

perfect physique and most intelligent appearance. They wore bright padded coats over open-necked shirts, and intricately-wound wide waistbands above loose baggy white trousers and bare feet; and each carried a long rifle, and, tucked into his cummerbund, a long notched knife. "Much more useful than a gun—it doesn't echo," one informed us.

We were invited to their village. It was the first time in my life I had been on a horse. And up the beast scrambling along a mere goat track straggling across the face of that ragged rock wall between the white-flecked blue sky above and the sheer depth below. Miles of nose-to-tail climbing brought us upon a mud village built something like a honeycomb. Scaling a rickety ladder of branches to where the chief had set a camelhair tent for our reception on his mud-on-branches roof, we sat round on piles of rugs and coloured quilts, all beautifully clean. A boy poured water over our outstretched hands—on to the floor. We drank glasses of black tea from a silver urn; accepted a bowl all round of curdled goat's milk; and ate, scooping with pancakes of Kurdish vegetable-and-wheat bread for spoons, each man for himself from the common heap of oil-cooked rice stuck with dismembered chickens.

Is This the Answer?

I must have seemed a strange "lady" to these Kurdish tribesmen and their Biblically-clad women. "Such knee-boots are wasted on a female" commented one. "Too small for real work; a bad bargain for her husband whatever he paid," rumbled another. But their pleasure to talk to us was real and their courtesy perfect.

If our friends of that day were not precisely to blame, it was certainly folk much like them who fired on the lorry that passed us at Gali Ali Beg, wounded its driver, and ran it off the road. The passing traveller has been for too many centuries the Kurds' lawful fun and pocket money for even bombed villages to persuade them otherwise all at once. So perhaps the cabled rumour that they now hold the late Iranian army's stock of small-arms is why we hear nothing of the Rowanduz Road.

"THREE MONTHS OF TORTURE"

SIDNEY Bechet (below), is regarded as a first-rate "hot" soprano saxophonist. That is to say he is one of the elite of swing music. As if that is not enough, however, Bechet recently added to his reputation by performing a unique stunt at the studios of the Victor Recording Company. A month or two ago, Victor issued a record of "The Sheik of Araby," played by a six-piece ensemble, the entire personnel of which was embodied in the person of Sidney Bechet. This fantastic effort was only



accompanied after weeks of painstaking rehearsal. When Bechet felt that he was ready, he presented himself at the studio laden down with soprano and tenor saxophones, string bass, drums and clarinet. The piano was already there. He recorded each instrument's part separately, listening to and recording the preceding part as he played the next one. The six parts were then progressively dubbed together. "Man!" cried Mr. Bechet, when the job was done. "that ends three months of torture."

As a stunt, the effort was interesting, but as a contribution to music it may be said (kindly, of course), that Mr. Bechet wasted a lot of good breath.