

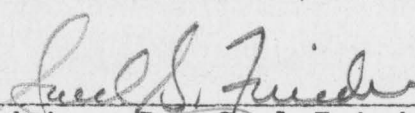
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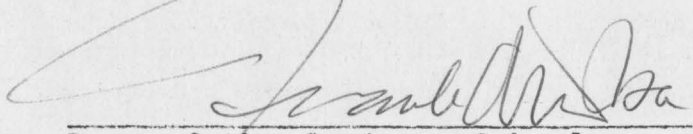
THE PLEDGE THAT WAS NOT A PLEDGE
THE HUSSEIN-McMAHON CORRESPONDENCE

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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ABSTRACT

THE PLEDGE THAT WAS NOT A PLEDGE
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Master of Arts in History

Youngstown State University, 1971

The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence has puzzled both politicians and historians of the British Empire and the Middle East. The dispute between the Arab claimants and the British, and later the Jewish spokesmen, boiled down to one question: Did Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, promise to the Sharif Hussein of Mecca and through him to the Arabs, the territory which later became the British Mandate of Palestine? The Arabs said that he did. British officials said he did not. The controversy which originated as a purely academic one, later was transformed into gloomy reality. King Feisal, the son of Sharif Hussein turned out to be the main claimant for Palestine. He and his aides started a "crusade" which aimed at making Palestine an Arab state. They found however that British officials held firm in their view that McMahon did not intend to pledge Palestine to the Arabs, that he did not do it, and that even if he wanted to, he did not have the authority to do so. Whitehall and not Cairo was in charge of British policy.

The relationship with the Arabs was only one phase of the whole picture of British foreign policy in which the French were an important part. The French claimed great Syria which included the future Palestine, and received it in the controversial Agreement of Sykes-Picot. This fact was acknowledged again and again by His Majesty's Government, which even twenty years after the famous correspondence took place, found the topic important enough to summon a special committee of investigation in order to hear and reevaluate the interpretations of prominent Arab and British personalities.

The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence which was "l'hot politique" of the post war era is still a fascinating one, for the simple reason that from time to time one can have the opportunity to obtain official documents which were withheld from the public in the archives of the interested governments and in private libraries of individuals who were involved in this episode. A case in point is the recently published "Westerman Papers", which to my knowledge did not get the appropriate attention, and in my judgement received a twisted interpretation. These papers provide us with new tools to reevaluate one phase of the international arena of the post-war period. Yet, important as they may be, they are only a part of the whole labyrinth of foreign relations. For this reason I have tried to exploit many of the sources which are pertinent to the correspondence

and have tried to show that McMahon did not pledge Palestine to the Arabs.

Though historians have recognized the value of this correspondence, nobody yet, as far as I have been able to gather, devoted a complete study solely to this topic. By putting this correspondence in the center of my paper I hope I have been able to add just one more dimension to this interesting subject.

Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, indicated in his correspondence with the Sharif that Great Britain would be ready to grant the Arabs some territories in the Middle East in exchange for an Arab revolt against the Turks.

The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, as it later was known, proved to be a source of major dispute between British and Arab politicians. Palestine was in the center of this argument and the question since then has been: Did Great Britain pledge Palestine to the Sharif? Historians of the Middle East and the British Empire have tried to answer it. The protagonists of the revolt, the leaders of the British Government, and the heads of the Zionist movement expressed their views in regard to these questions. Sir Henry took the trouble to air his opinion two decades after the Peace Conference at Paris.

In 1964, the Hoover Institute at Stanford University opened the "Westerman Papers" for research for the first time. These papers contain two documents prepared by the

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The British territorial pledge to the Arabs played a significant role in convincing Sharif Hussein of Mecca to join the Allies against Germany and the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, indicated in his correspondence with the Sharif that Great Britain would be ready to grant the Arabs some territories in the Middle East in exchange for an Arab revolt against the Turks.

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British delegation to the Peace Conference. They were at the disposal of William Westerman, Professor of Ancient History at Columbia University and a member of the American delegation at Paris. Yahya Armajani, a Professor of History at Princeton University and a coordinator of the Middle East Studies, referred to these documents in his book Middle East, Past and Present. He observed that "the documents state categorically that Palestine was included as part of the British pledge to the Arabs."¹ The reputable historian did not quote the passage on which he based his verdict. He did not even refer to it in a footnote. He provided no explanation as to why Westerman remained silent all these years and why Westerman ordered that the documents not be opened during his lifetime. Armajani did not clarify whether Westerman was the only one who had the documents and if so how come these important items in the peace negotiations were exclusively in his possession.

The purpose of this paper is to prove that Great Britain did exclude Palestine from her pledge to the Arabs. It will try to show on the basis of various sources, the Westerman Papers included among them, copies of which are now at my disposal, that Great Britain considered Palestine to be of special significance and excluded it therefore from her territorial pledge to the Arabs. It will attempt

¹Yahya Armajani, Middle East, Past and Present (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 294.

to prove that the Arab claim for the Holy Land was a mere afterthought produced by the Arabs to meet their ends after the Peace Conference and that Great Britain did not betray the Arabs.

THE ARABS BETRAYED

The Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, led by Sharif Hussein of Mecca and instigated by the British Government through her agents in the Middle East, broke out on June 5, 1916. It was the culmination of various activities on the part of British diplomats, who tried to win Arab support to their cause.

Lord Herbert Kitchener and Emir Abdullah initiated the communications which led to a British-Arab alliance during the Great War of 1914. Arab dignitaries and British officials had been in contact previous to this year. Reginald Wingate, the British High Commissioner of the Sudan, established relations with Sharif Hussein, through a religious dignitary in Ondurman. Lord Kitchener, a former Commander-in-Chief in India and one time Lieutenant in charge of the so-called 'archeological survey of Palestine', wanted a strong military buildup on the land which controlled the route to India and the territories around the Canal.² The Arabs of the Hejaz assented to his potential

²Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moments in the Middle East (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1903), p. 47.

Also George Antonius, The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1938), p. 130.

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THE ARABS BETRAYED

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²Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moments in the Middle East (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), p. 27:

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supporters for his plans. Thus he decided to take advantage of the visit of Emir Abdullah, the charming and impressive son of the Sharif, who passed through Cairo in the Spring of 1912.³ The High Commissioner was accompanied by Ronald Storrs, the Oriental Secretary at the British Agency in Cairo.⁴ He limited the conversation to the present state of affairs of the Hejaz and to relations between the Sharif and the Porte. At their second meeting, which took place on February 5, 1914, Abdullah, who by then was quite friendly with Storrs, asked Kitchener whether, in the event of a rupture between the Sharif and the Porte, the Sharif could count upon any support from Great Britain. Kitchener replied negatively. He said that British relations with Turkey were good and that in any case, any dispute between Mecca and Kushta must be considered a domestic affair, outside the interest of foreign powers.⁵ He also declined the Emir's request to sell him guns.⁶ At that time Kitchener did not consider Abdullah as a prospective ally of the British Government. The Emir was after all only the son of the Sharif of Mecca, a person who though holding an honorary title in

³Howard M. Sachar, The Emergence of the Middle East, 1914-1924 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 186.

⁴G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, Vol X (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1954), p. 827.

⁵Ibid., p. 829.

⁶Ibid., pp. 832, 833.

the World of Islam did not command great power and did not have much prestige. He was, in the final analysis, a subordinate of the Caliph-Sultan of Kushta, who had nominated him to his post only recently.⁷ His main function was to be the guardian of the Holy Places. Storrs even mocked at Hussein's chances to become the Caliph. The Oriental Secretary simply could not conceive how Hussein could gather enough troops and convince the Muslim fanatics to accept him as the new Caliph after he had revolted against the Vicar of Allah.⁸ Moreover, up to this point the Sharif and his sons had not distinguished themselves as warriors. They were raised in Constantinople and were numbered among the household of the Sultan.⁹ Treated both as distinguished guests and hostages they were not accustomed to command forces and lead troops on a large-scale military adventure. Cunning and not bravery was their main asset in dealing with friends and foes.¹⁰

For the moment, neither side pressed the subject of alliance further. Kitchener merely made it a point to report on the attitude of the Emir toward the Turks. He wrote

⁷Antonious, The Arab Awakening, p. 104. The nomination took place in September, 1908.

⁸Ronald Storrs, Orientalism (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1943), p. 153.

⁹Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁰Gooch and Temperley, p. 827.

a letter to Sir W. Tyrrel of the Foreign Office on April 26, 1914, in which he elaborated on these relations.¹¹ He observed that Abdullah seemed to be very upset since the Turkish Government had decided to continue the railway to Mecca. Kitchener noted that the Emir feared this would destroy the livelihood of the camel owning population of Arabia.¹² Even so Kitchener did not credit the Sharif and his sons with much revolutionary zeal. He and Storrs did not in any way picture themselves as instigators of a future Arab revolt.¹³

Hussein and his sons did not give up hope of obtaining British support. They suspected that the Turks were planning to change the unique position of the Hejaz by placing it under the direct supervision of an Ottoman Pasha. They became even more suspicious of their masters after Emir Feisal received only limited satisfaction for his family grievances from Kushta and concluded that it might be necessary to take arms against the Turks.¹⁴

An atmosphere of suspicion and lack of confidence developed between Mecca and Kushta in the three years before the War. During 1911, Hussein's forces failed in their campaign against a local Sheikh from Arabia, al-Idrisi.

¹¹Sachar, The Emergence, p. 125.

¹²Gooch and Temperley, p. 831.

¹³Ernest Dawn, "The Amir of Mecca al Husayn ibn Ali and the Origin of the Arab Revolt," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, CIV, (No. 1, 1960), pp. 18-20.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 20.

Hussein did respond to the battle cry of the Ottoman Vali who governed the Hejaz. As a result of his failure to defeat al-Idrisi in the battle of Qawz-aba-al-Ir bad blood developed between the Arabs and the Turks.¹⁵ Hussein was still considered to be numbered among the supporters of the Ottomans but they seemed to cool their attitude toward him. An important omen for a change in policy appeared after the end of the Balkan Wars. The Turks intensified by now the policy of centralization. Toward 1913 Wahib Bey, who was well known for his belief that the Arab movement could best be disposed of by forcible suppression, was appointed Vali of the Hejaz. His nomination appeared to be a deliberate intensification of Arab-Turkish relations since his predecessor in this office was acceptable with the Arabs. Hussein's plea with the Sublime Porte to make his office an hereditary one also came to naught.¹⁶ Even Feisal could not dissuade the Sublime Porte in a personal interview with him in early 1914 from turning a deaf ear to his father's grievances.¹⁷

¹⁵Dawn, "The Amir of Mecca", p. 15.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 23.

British attitudes toward the Sharif had to be re-evaluated with the actual outbreak of hostilities of World War I. Both German and British officials wanted to attract the Arab population to their side. Great Britain especially sought their support in order to reconcile the Muslim inhabitants of India, the Sudan and Egypt.¹⁸ Muslims all over the world could easily have resented the fact that Britain and France were in arms against the Ottoman Sultan, Caliph of Islam.¹⁹ No British or French Government could have ignored the feeling of the Muslim inhabitants in their empires. British main concern was directed toward the Muslims of India and was a sincere one. The Indian Muslims, consisting of a minority group on a large scale, held the Sultan of Turkey to be the spiritual head, Caliph, of the Muslim world.

Only three years before the Great War, when Italy went to war with Turkey in Tripoli, the Muslims of India expressed their sympathy with their spiritual leader, the Caliph. One could expect even more serious reaction to the news that His Majesty's troops were fighting the Turks. This could be especially true, since England, the Governess of India, was identified with the Christian world. In a case of war, the Muslims of India might feel obliged to stand behind

¹⁸B. N. Pandey, The Break-up of British India (New York: St. Martin Press, 1969), p. 82.

¹⁹A. P. Thornton, The Imperial Idea and its Enemies: A Study in British Power (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1968), p. 184.

the bearers of the Crescent who were fighting the adherents of the Cross.²⁰ The Mahdist revolt of the Sudan (1885) was also a fresh reminder to the British politicians that a backward local populous could serve as potential rebels against foreign masters.²¹ British officials had to make sure that "Deutschland uber Allah" would remain an unfulfilled desire and that the Muslim elements of the Ottoman Empire would not pledge their loyalty to Germany and her followers and by this set an example for Muslims elsewhere in Asia or Africa.²² They had to find a mediator between them and the Arab world.

The Sharif of Mecca was truly the best choice for the British-Arab cabal. An Arab Sheikh by birth, who traced his ancestry to Muhammad himself, and an Ottoman subordinate, this Muslim ruler was always suspected of harboring nefarious schemes against the Caliph-Sultan of Kushta. His position though superior to other Arab rulers in the Hejaz had always been precarious. If properly approached he just might rise against the Turks. He might be willing to help the British troops in exchange for a British pledge to guarantee his independence. This notion, adopted by Wingate and Kitchener, was further promoted by Storrs.²³

²⁰Pandey, The Break-up, pp. 83, 84.

²¹Thornton, The Imperial Idea, p. 69.

²²Sachar, p. 34.

²³Antonious, p. 130.

Great Britain approached the Arabs rather gingerly. With the sounds of the first shots of the Great War already in the air Kitchener, by now the Secretary of War, decided to get in touch with Hussein. On September 24, 1914, he ordered Storrs, at the Arab Bureau in Cairo, to send a secret and reliable messenger to Abdullah in order to find out what were the intentions of the Arabs. Did they plan to join the Sublime Porte in acts of aggression against the Allies or would they incline to take advantage of the opportunity to gain independence and to join Great Britain against their Lords in Kushta?²⁴ Storrs' messenger, a trusted Arab, back from Mecca, quoted Hussein as saying: "Stretch forth to us a helping hand and we shall never at all help those oppressors. On the contrary we shall help those who do good."²⁵ He went on to say that he expected His Majesty's Government to assist the Arabs against possible external aggression.²⁶

Kitchener realized that the Sharif and his sons were looking for some real incentive for their commitment to one side or another. He therefore sent an additional intentionally suggestive message on October 31: "It may be that an Arab of truth will assume the Caliphate at Mecca and Medina."

²⁴Storrs, Orientations, p. 140.

²⁵Ibid., p. 175.

²⁶Ibid., p. 176.

he wrote, "and so good may come by the help of God out of all the evil that is now occurring."²⁷ Two weeks later, on November 16, the British Government made it clear in an announcement published in The Times that her sole purpose in taking action in Arabia was to protect the Arab interests against Turkish aggression.²⁸ It also expressed sympathy with Arab attempts to emancipate themselves from Turkish rule. In April, 1915, Reginald Wingate informed the Arabs that his government would not sign any peace treaty with the Turks which would not guarantee that the Arabian Peninsula and the Muslim Holy Cities in the Hejaz would remain in the hands of an independent Muslim state. At the same time printed leaflets explaining British policy toward the Arabs were distributed or dropped from aircrafts to be read by the Hejazi Arabs.²⁹

British anxieties over Arab support intensified during the first months of the War. Allies' casualties increased daily on the shores of Turkey. Gallipoli was doomed to become a mass graveyard to hundreds of thousands of soldiers. By the end of July of 1915 approximately 250,000 Allied soldiers were dead or wounded.³⁰

²⁷Sachar, p. 125.

²⁸The Times, November 16, 1914, p. 6.

²⁹Esco Foundation, Palestine, A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies, Vol. I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 66.

³⁰Sachar, p, 70.

In addition to the catastrophic results of the Gallipoli front British intelligence recorded the movements of Arab bands and Bedouin tribes in the southern part of Palestine in the early months of the War. This movement coincided with a Turkish attack on the Canal in early February, 1915, which although unsuccessful, confirmed the view that serious danger might come from a land invasion through Palestine.³¹ The deteriorating situation forced members of the British Cabinet to find a way to mobilize the non-Turkish peoples of the Middle East against their masters. They decided to be more receptive to Arab nationalist aspirations.

Hussein did not break with the Turks. He knew that the Young Turks would not continue his tenure as Sharif unless he would issue a fetva,³² which would call the Muslims to join in a Jihad (Holy War) against England. Yet he felt that he needed additional reassurance from Great Britain before committing himself to her camp. Ergo, he decided to take further steps in seeking British support.³³ On July 14, 1915, he sent a dispatch to Cairo, addressed to the British

³¹ Monroe, Britain's Moment, p. 26.

³² Fetva: An official statement issued by a religious personality to the Moslem world.

³³ Sachar, p. 126.

High Commissioner. This was the first letter in the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence.

Hussein considered territorial gains as very important. In his first letter he presented to McMahon what could be described as his maximal plan. His request was for a territory which practically embraced the whole Arab Middle East. He asked Great Britain to recognize

1. The independence of the Arab countries which are bounded: on the north, by the line Mersin-Adana to parallel 37°N and then along the line Briejik-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat-Jazirat (ibn Umar)-Amadia to the Persian frontier: on the east, by the Persian frontier down to the Persian Gulf: on the south, by the Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden whose status will remain as at present): on the west, by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.

2. Great Britain should agree to the proclamation of an Arab Caliphate.³⁴

In his reply of August 30, 1915, McMahon declined to meet all the demands of Hussein. He stated:

We now declare once more that the government of Great Britain would welcome the reversion of the Caliphate to a true Arab born, an offspring of the Prophet. As for the question of frontiers and boundaries, negotiations would appear to be premature and a waste of time on details at this stage with the War in progress and the Turks in effective occupation of the greater part of those regions. All the more so as a party of Arabs inhabiting those very regions have to our amazement and sorrow, overlooked and neglected this valuable and incomparable opportunity: and, instead of coming to our aid, have lent their assistance to the Germans and the Turks: to that new despoiler, the German, and to that tyrannical oppressor, the Turk.³⁵

³⁴ Antonious, p. 414.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 416.

Great Britain boosted the Arabs' hope for an adequate reward for entering the War. They put aside, for the time being, the question of frontiers, but they repeated their idea of the renewal of the Caliphate.

Hussein did not retreat from his original plea. In his long reply to the High Commissioner on September 9, 1915, he stated among others:

I am confident that Your Excellency will realize beyond all doubt that I have had nothing to do with the proposing of those boundaries, which include only populations of our race, and that they were proposed by our people who regard them as being, to put it briefly, vitally and economically essential - as indeed they are.³⁶

McMahon did not delay his reply. On October 24, 1915, he dispatched a letter which afterward became a source of dispute between British and Arab politicians. The section of this letter, which deals with the territorial aspect of the negotiations, runs as follows:

The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation.

Subject to the modification, and without prejudice to the treaties concluded between us and certain Arab Chiefs, we accept that delimitation.

As for the regions lying within the proposed frontiers, in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally France, I am authorised to give you the following pledges on behalf of the Government of Great Britain, and to reply as follows to your note:

³⁶Ibid., p. 417.

(1) That, subject to the modifications stated above, Great Britain is prepared to recognise and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca;

(2) That Great Britain will guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression, and will recognise the obligation of preserving them from aggression.

(3) That, when circumstances permit, Great Britain will help the Arabs with her advice and assist them in the establishment of governments to suit those diverse regions;

(4) That it is understood that the Arabs have already decided to seek the counsels and advice of Great Britain exclusively; and that such European advisers and officials as may be needed to establish a sound system of administration shall be British;

(5) That, as regards the two vilayets of Baghdad and of Basra, the Arabs recognise that the fact of Great Britain's established position and interests there will call for the setting up of special administrative arrangements to protect those regions from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of their inhabitants, and to safeguard our mutual economic interests.³⁷

This letter did not please Hussein. In his answer he was ready to waive his claim on Mersin and Adana, but "as for the vilayets of Aleppo and Beirut and their western maritime coasts, these are purely Arab provinces in which the Muslim is indistinguishable from the Christian, for they are both the descendants of one forefather."³⁸

McMahon did not compromise. He sent another letter on December 13, in which he clarified to Hussein that the interests of France were involved in the two vilayets of Aleppo

³⁷Ibid., p. 419.

³⁸Ibid., p. 421, November 5, 1915.

and Beirut and therefore their future would be determined at an appropriate time.³⁹

The Sharif agreed that this was not the right time to insist on final agreements in regard to specific boundaries. He also acknowledged the fact that England, having certain agreements with France, would have to consult Paris before finalizing any deal with the Arabs. By the same token he did not want to miss the opportunity to convey to McMahon his determination to demand these territories in the future.

---We shall deem it our duty, at the earliest opportunity after the conclusion of the war, to claim from you Beirut and its coastal regions which we will overlook for the moment on account of France. ---Thus any concession designed to give France or any other Power possession of a single square foot of territory in those parts is quite out of the question.¹⁴⁰

Historians of the Middle East accepted the assumption that McMahon did pledge Palestine to the Arabs as part of the future Arab State. William Yale endorsed this view. A professor at Boston University and an ex-military observer at General Edmund Allenby's headquarters of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, he also served as an expert on Arab affairs to the Paris Peace Conference and to the King-Crane Commission. He was convinced that no matter how unsatisfactory were the terms of the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence the British were eager to reach some sort of an agreement.

³⁹Ibid., p. 423.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 425.

with the Arabs in order to gain their assistance in relieving the besieged British force on the Tigris. The Arabs would not embark on punitive actions against the Turks unless they had some sort of understanding with Great Britain.⁴¹ George E. Kirk was also of the opinion that there was a pledge to the Arabs and even though McMahon denied that he included Palestine in his commitment Palestine was not excluded since "there is no direct reference to Palestine in that Correspondence."⁴² Halford L. Huskins and Philip K. Hitti agreed with this evaluation.⁴³ Hitti even wrote that as early as 1914 the British in return for Arab support against the Ottomans were ready to commit themselves to a course of emancipation of the Arabs and an independent nation.⁴⁴ Ron Landau was also convinced that McMahon did

⁴¹William Yale, The Near East, A Modern History (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1958), pp. 256, 258.

⁴²George E. Kirk, A Short History of the Middle East (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1964), p. 146.

⁴³Halford L. Huskins, The Middle East: Problem Area in World Politics (New York: McMillan Co., 1954), p. 100: Thornton, p. 185.

⁴⁴Philip K. Hitti, The Near East in History, A 5000 Year Story (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1961), p. 498.

betray the Arabs. Great Britain promised them territories which included Palestine but failed to keep her word.⁴⁵

The Arabs entered the War with the territorial grants in mind. The United Kingdom was going to reward them for their services to the Allies. Furthermore, according to Yahya Armajani and other Arab apologists, even the area which later was known as Palestine was included in the British pledge to the Arabs. And why not? Palestine was an Arab land which nobody singled out specifically in any document of this period. The Correspondence, British declarations of policy and the doctrine of war, all pointed out the British intention to revive the Arab Caliphate, which for Arab contemporaries and future generations included all of the Arab empire of old. Palestine, a part and parcel of this entity, could not be separated from the future dominion of the true "Shadow of Allah on Earth."⁴⁶

⁴⁵Ron Landau, Islam and the Arabs (London: Ruscin House, Allen Unwind Ltd., 1958), pp. 240-246.

See also: Sidney N. Fisher, The Middle East, A History (New York: Knopf, 1959), p. 309.

George B. Cressey, Crossroads: Land and Life in South West Asia (Chicago: J. P. Lippincott, 1960), p. 234.

Anthony Nutting, The Arabs A National History From Muhammed to the Present (New York: Mantor, 1964), p. 317.

John Baget Glubb, A Short History of the Arab People (New York: Stein and Day, 1969), pp. 277-278.

⁴⁶One of the titles of the Caliphs of the House of Abbas was "Zilu Allah Al Ardi".

Did British politicians hold the same view? As we shall later see they most certainly did not. They never had any intention to bequeath the Holy Land to the Arabs. They held this territory to be of utmost importance to their strategical buildings in the Mediterranean and did not conceive for a moment to hand it over to any independent foreign power. Under these circumstances the only question which remained unanswered in this connection was: Was there any meeting of the minds between the British and the Arabs?

in exchange for active participation on the side of the Allies. They would not, however, to curtail French-British relations.

McMahon, the experienced diplomat and the true representative of his country, was precise and firm on the question of Great Britain's obligations to France. At the same time he used "guarded language" in his correspondence with the Sharif. Those who mistook his guarded language for weakness did not know the man, who had served in India prior to his arrival in Cairo. According to Ronald Storrs "all who were privileged to work under him, were struck with admiration for his faculty of bating up his mind on great matters, of courageously making decisions and of no less tenaciously maintaining them."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Storrs, pp. 191, 192.

CHAPTER III

THE MEETING OF THE MINDS

Both McMahon and Hussein considered the allocation of territories as part of Great Britain's commitments to the Arabs. They reached an understanding that these commitments would be executed upon the successful completion of the War, in exchange for active participation on the side of the Allies. They would not, however, jeopardize French-British relations.

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⁴⁷ Storrs, pp. 191, 192.

To such a man did the British Government trust the delicate task of conveying her will to Hussein. McMahon, on his part, made every effort not to commit England to more than was necessary to guarantee an Arab revolt against the Turks. As stated by Elizabeth Monroe, "McMahon was not of a temperament to deviate from Whitehall's instructions."⁴⁸

The Foreign Office knew of the grand ideas of Hussein, who first expressed them in his initial letter of July 14. It was difficult to be specific with him about the Levant for example, when England was in the midst of her negotiations with France.⁴⁹ McMahon's task under these circumstances was mainly to promote the faith of Hussein in the British Government. At the same time he opened a literal duel with the Sharif, which was aimed at minimizing the British undertaking for him. Did he actually succeed in doing so? The Arabs claimed that he did not. British officials maintained that Hussein and later his son Feisal actually admitted that Great Britain did not agree to the maximal demand of the Arabs.

The major controversy in the post-War period intensified mainly in regard to that part of Syria which later became the British Mandate of Palestine. Over the question of whether Palestine was excluded from Arab area or not, gallons

⁴⁸D. B. E. Bell, The Letters of Gertrude Bell Vol. II (London: Ernest Benn, 1927), p. 366; Monroe, p. 31

⁴⁹Ibid.

of ink have been spilled. The Arab view is that Palestine did fall within the area of promised Arab independence. The British Government maintained the contrary. The first point that strikes the reader is that nowhere in the letters exchanged between Hussein and McMahon does the term "Palestine" appear. The reason for this is quite simple. The name Palestine was not in use before the end of the War. It was introduced only at the Peace Conference of 1919. Both Hussein and McMahon referred to the administrative districts of the Ottoman Empire, which included among others the future Mandate of Palestine. George Antonious, who can be considered the main speaker for the Arab case, devoted the lion's share of his book The Arab Awakening to this issue. He was among the Arab representatives who served on a special committee summoned by the British Parliament in March, 1939, to consider the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. He maintained that while Great Britain mentioned certain portions of Arab lands by name and revealed that she would treat them in a special way, there is no reference to the "Sanjaq of Jerusalem". McMahon took the trouble to enumerate by name each province which he considered to be under British supervision. If he did not mention the important Sanjaq of Jerusalem, he obviously did not consider

Sanjaqs of Aleppo and Al Balqa belonged to the Vilayet of Beirut and that of Jerusalem to the Vilayet of Syria until 1867 when it became independent and could deal directly with Russia. Joseph S. Szyliowicz, The Contemporary Middle East: Tradition and Innovation (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 236.

51
Antonious, p. 178.

it to be part of British domain.⁵⁰ He further argued that McMahon did not exclude Palestine from his pledge to the Arabs even by implication as the British later explained. When Sir Henry wrote that "portions of Syria lying west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo" were to be excluded from the area granted for Arab independence, he could not have had Palestine in mind. McMahon referred only to the cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. He never had in mind to exclude the whole districts adjacent to them. It is true that the High Commissioner wrote about the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, but he obviously could not mean "district" in its Turkish term "Vilayet", since

there were no such things as the "Vilayet of Damascus", "the Vilayet of Homs" and the "Vilayet of Hama." There was one single Vilayet of Syria of which Damascus was the capital, and the two smaller administrative divisions⁵¹ of which Homs and Hama were the principal towns.

If McMahon could not refer to these names as representing districts he obviously thought of them as towns. In this case all he wanted was to exclude from the future Arab state the

⁵⁰Antonious, p. 177: Ottoman authorities ceased using the name Palestine at the time of the Egyptian Occupation 1839-40. Between 1864-1871 the territory was divided into three districts: Acre, Al Balqa (Nablus) and Jerusalem. The Sanjags of Acre and Al Balqa belonged to the Vilayet of Beirut and that of Jerusalem to the Vilayet of Syria until 1887 when it became independent and could deal directly with Kushta: Joseph S. Szyliowicz, The Contemporary Middle East: Tradition and Innovation (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 258.

⁵¹Antonious, p. 178.

coastal regions of northern Syria. This was Antonious' interpretation before the Special Committee which considered the Correspondence. He and the other Arab representatives concluded that the fact that McMahon did not make any mention of Palestine even by a paraphrase made it impossible for anyone to say that Palestine was excluded from the future land promised to the Arabs.⁵²

The representatives of the United Kingdom did not accept this view. They argued that only Aleppo was a town from which an Ottoman vilayet took its name. Furthermore, the vilayet of Syria or Damascus contained in it both Homs and Hama. If McMahon wanted to refer to vilayet, why the duplicity? Would not the vilayet of Syria by itself suffice to show the area he wanted to exclude from the Arab territory?⁵³ They held that it was understood that when Sir Henry excluded in his letter of October 24, the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo from the area of Arab independence, he also excluded those territories of the former vilayet of

⁵² Important Documents on Anglo-Arab Relations during the First World War were published in three British White Papers issued for purposes of the Palestine Round Table Conference of 1939. Report of a Committee set up to consider certain correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon (His Majesty's High Commissioner in Egypt) and the Sharif of Mecca in 1915 and 1916. Cmd. Papers 5974, p. 6:F

⁵³ Ibid., p. 33.

Beirut and the Sanjaq of Jerusalem. Great Britain thought that all the area from the Cilician border to the Gulf of Aqaba and including Palestine was left outside the Arab regime.

For Great Britain the term "vilayet" was not as important as for the Arabs. Her alliance with France was above semantic discussions. The French claimed Syria and by that, as we shall see, they meant also the region of Palestine. England therefore could not pledge this area to the Arabs.⁵⁴ Antonious' argument that there was no vilayet of Damascus was not in line with the basic facts which are known to us today and were known during the years of the controversy.

Paul L. Hanna, in his book British Policy in Palestine, stated that "vilayet" not always necessarily meant the whole Ottoman district, with this name.⁵⁵ He wrote that the word district presented a problem when it came to determine specific areas. The Arabic term employed was "Wilaya", and it was related to the Turkish "Vilayet". Still it did not signify the administrative district with the same name. There was, according to Hanna, the Vilayet of Aleppo and that of Syria

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁵Paul L. Hanna, British Policy in Palestine (Washington, D. C.: American Council of Public Affairs, 1942), p. 22.

was on occasion referred to as the Vilayet of Damascus. According to Hanna, McMahon did not exclude Palestine from his pledge by announcing that "the districts of Mersin and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arabs."⁵⁶ He could not do so for two reasons: Firstly, there was no land west of the Vilayet of Aleppo, which extended to the coast and secondly, because of the mention of Homs and Hama as districts on an equal basis with Damascus and Aleppo.

Karl Baedeker, in his handbook for travelers in Palestine and Syria, advised his readers that the term Damascus sometimes meant the whole Vilayet of Syria and sometimes only the city.⁵⁷

The British representatives in the Special Committee said that for them as for McMahon the word vilayet was a district and no more. The British High Commissioner used it in the vague term as it had been used by Al-Faruqi who was Hussein's spokesman in Cairo.⁵⁸ Those who stress the importance of the terminology used in the correspondence will have to reconcile between the wording of McMahon's letters and those of the following Official Report found in the Cabinet Papers. Lord Kitchener, Bonar Law and Edward Grey partici-

⁵⁶ McMahon's letter, October 24, 1915, cited in Antonious, p. 419; Hanna, British Policy, p. 23.

⁵⁷ Karl Baedeker, Palestine and Syria, Handbook for Travelers (London: George Allen, 1912), p. 296.

⁵⁸ Cmd. Papers 5974, p. 23:14.

pated in a meeting in the British Foreign Office on February 4, 1916. They discussed the question of Arab lands in the light of French-British understandings. They decided to direct Picot to inform his government that

the acceptance of the whole project [of French-British-Arab relations] would entail the abdication of considerable British interests, but provided that the cooperation of the Arab is secured and that the Arabs fulfill the conditions and obtain the towns of Homs, Hama, Damascus and Aleppo, the British Government would not object to the arrangement.⁵⁹

In another meeting which was held to discuss the Arab question Grey, after a meeting with Picot, wrote that "The four towns of Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Damascus will be included in the Arab State or Confederation." He went on saying that in this area the French will have priority of enterprise. This was also understood and agreed in McMahon's telegram no. 707 of November 20, 1915. The telegram stated that McMahon had contemplated that this sphere would be reserved for the development of special French interests.⁶⁰

Antonious thought that if McMahon had Palestine in mind he would certainly have excluded the Sanjaq of Jerusalem from the proposed Arab area. David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of England at the end of the War, maintained that it was Hussein's responsibility to cite all the places which he

⁵⁹Great Britain Foreign Office, "Arab Question", February 4, 1916, Cabinet Paper 37/142/10. A. N.

⁶⁰Cabinet Paper 37/142 No. 6 A. N. circulated in March, 1916.

considered to be part of his domain after the War. Still, in none of his letters did Hussein mention the Vilayet of Lebanon or the Sanjaq of Jerusalem.⁶¹ The reader has to keep in mind that McMahon's letters were always in reply to previous demands of Hussein. Hussein initiated the demands and not Sir Henry. If the Sharif, who was in the service of the Ottoman Caliph, did not see fit to mention the Sanjaq of Jerusalem as distinguished from Syria or Lebanon, why should this task fall on the envoy of His Majesty? If one accepts the fact that Vilayet was often used to show merely vicinity and not the administrative district, then one can agree that McMahon was able to exclude the Arab territories which are west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. Palestine was no doubt west of these districts.

The geographical controversy did not stop here. Sir Michael McDonnell, formerly the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Palestine, told the Special Committee that if McMahon intended to exclude Palestine, he had to mention the Sanjaqs of Hauran and Ma'an, since all of Palestine lies to the west of these areas. McMahon had to speak of Lake Huleh, the river Jordan, the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea and to exclude

⁶¹ One can see that the Vilayet of Lebanon and the Vilayet of Beirut are interchangeable like Syria and Damascus: David Lloyd George, The Truth About the Peace Treaties, Vol. II (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), pp. 1021, 1022.

the regions lying west of them.⁶² McMahon anticipated that someone might question his intention to exclude Palestine on the basis of the regions west of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. Already in 1922, he sent a letter to the Foreign Office explaining that he restricted himself to those towns to which the Arabs attached vital importance. There were no other places he could think of at the time, which were of sufficient importance to the Arabs for purposes of definition farther south of Damascus.⁶³

McMahon's explanation could not be a mere excuse which he used to save his reputation. He sent the letter to Philip Graves who was an authority on Middle Eastern affairs. This author had an illustrious career in the area. Prior to 1914 he was a correspondent of The Times at Constantinople. Later he became a staff officer in the Eastern Theaters of the War, and a member of the Arab Bureau. At the end of the War he was appointed as a special correspondent in Palestine. McMahon knew that Graves would brush aside any attempt to twist the facts. Yet to this man he explained that it was fully his intention to exclude Palestine as it was to exclude the more northern coastal areas of Syria. McMahon explained that he had not selected the Jordan as a border line since he wanted to find a more suitable frontier east of this river. He did not

⁶²Cmd Paper 5974, p. 32.

⁶³Philip Graves, Palestine, the Land of Three Faiths (London: Jonathan Cape, 1923), p. 53.

remember having heard anything from Hussein that gave him the impression that the Sharif did not understand that Palestine would be excluded from an independent Arabia.⁶⁴

McMahon's belief that all parties concerned understood that Great Britain intended to exclude Palestine from his pledge to the Arabs was long enduring. The deteriorating situation in Palestine and the war of propaganda which accompanied the actual violence of Arabs against the Jews forced Great Britain to re-examine her policy in the area. McMahon decided therefore that the British public should know the historical facts which accompanied the birth of the British Mandate over Palestine. He sent a letter to the editor of The Times, July 23, 1937, in which he wrote:

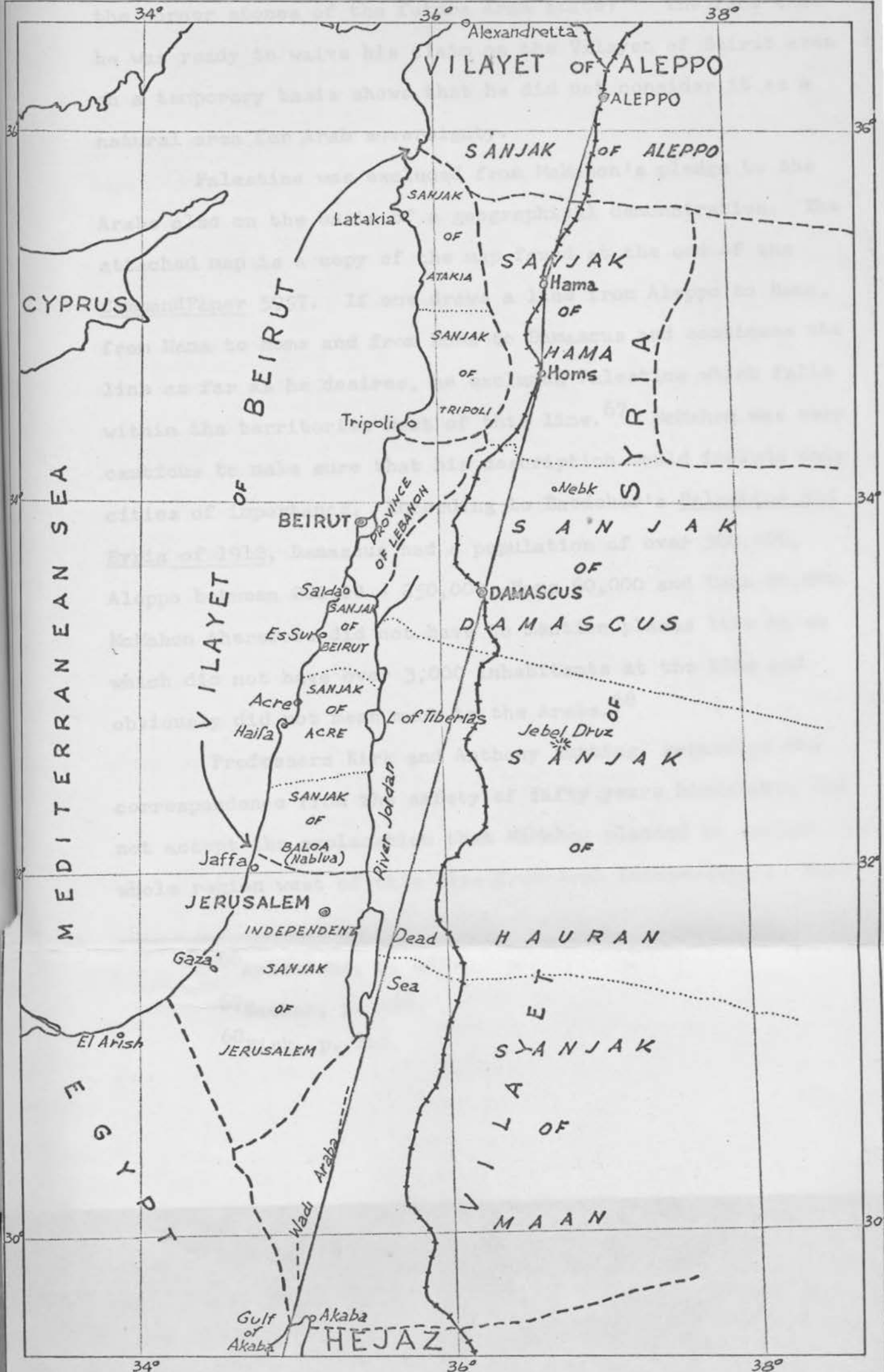
I feel it my duty to state and I do so definitely and emphatically, that it was not intended by me in giving this pledge to King Hussein to include Palestine in the area in which Arab independence was promised. I had also every reason to believe at the time that the fact that Palestine was not included in my pledge was well understood by King Hussein.⁶⁵

Hussein himself was ready to leave the Vilayet of Beirut to the British. In his letter of January 1, 1916, he consented to have at least an interim arrangement by which the Vilayet of Beirut and its coastal regions would be in the hands of the French. Would he do so in regard to Mecca, Jedda and other places which were purely Arab and which he considered to be

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁵The Times, July 23, 1937, p. 4.
The letter was signed on July 22.

Pre-War Turkish Administrative Districts comprised in Syria and Palestine



Scale
 Miles 50 40 30 20 10 5 0 50 100 Miles

the corner stones of the future Arab state?⁶⁶ The fact that he was ready to waive his claim on the Vilayet of Beirut even on a temporary basis shows that he did not consider it as a natural area for Arab sovereignty.

Palestine was excluded from McMahon's pledge to the Arabs also on the basis of a geographical demonstration. The attached map is a copy of the map found at the end of the Command Paper 5957. If one draws a line from Aleppo to Hama, from Hama to Homs and from Homs to Damascus and continues the line as far as he desires, he excludes Palestine which falls within the territories west of this line.⁶⁷ McMahon was very cautious to make sure that his description would include only cities of importance. According to Baedeker's Palestine and Syria of 1912, Damascus had a population of over 300,000, Aleppo between 200,00 - 250,000, Homs 60,000 and Hama 80,000. McMahon therefore did not have to mention places like Ma'an which did not have over 3,000 inhabitants at the time and obviously did not mean much to the Arabs.⁶⁸

Professors Kirk and Anthony Nutting, regarding the correspondence from the safety of fifty years hindsight, did not accept the explanation that McMahon planned to exclude the whole region west of this line from Arab independence. Kirk

⁶⁶Antonious, p. 425.

⁶⁷Sachar, p. 188.

⁶⁸Kirk, p. 146.

suggests that if the British intended to exclude Palestine, they should have added more points on the line, for example, Amman or Ma'an. To have excluded such points and then to contend that Palestine lay within the reserved area is as illegitimate, says Kirk, as for one to argue that the British counties of Hereford and Monmouth lie west of a line drawn along the points of Warwick, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle. There is no question that such counties like Palestine are west of the line - but they are also south of it and additional cities should be added to clarify this. What Kirk ignores, however is the disparity in size between Warwick and the other three towns in his hypothetical argument and between Amman-Ma'an and the four cities listed in the actual Hussein-McMahon Correspondence.⁶⁹ For the British to include Amman or Ma'an on equal footing with Damascus and Aleppo makes as much sense as a hypothetical division of the State of Ohio along a line drawn from Cleveland through Akron, Columbus and Willmington. Just as someone who is not an American or even an Ohioan may, in all probability, never have heard of Willmington, so the British officials in 1916 could have disregarded Ma'an as relatively unimportant.

McMahon's line was far from being accidental. It ran parallel to the Hejaz Railway, which no British official would leave in foreign hands. It also guaranteed that the Jordan

⁶⁹Newcastle, 260,000; Leeds, 517,000; Sheffield, 494,000; Warwick, 16,000.

Valley would be in the interior of Palestine and not on its frontier.⁷⁰ Above all, there was still the simple matter of British supremacy in the region.

British imperialists never intended to leave the Mediterranean in the hands of local rulers or as prey to foreign powers. Lord Arthur James Balfour, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, summed up British doctrine in regard to the region during a speech he delivered in Parliament on November 17, 1919. He said among others:

The question of Egypt, the question of the Sudan, and the question of the Canal form an organic and indissoluble whole, and that neither in Egypt nor in the Sudan, nor in connection with Egypt is England going to give up any of her responsibilities. British supremacy exists, British supremacy is going to be maintained.⁷¹

As the authors of the excellent book Africa and the Victorians, the Official Mind of Imperialism put it, "Africa remained peripheral to the Mediterranean, the Indian empire and the routes to the East."⁷²

⁷⁰Historically, the Jordan River was well within the mainland of Palestine, an item which was familiar to the British politicians who knew their old Testament.

⁷¹Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. CXXI. 1919. 5th Series, Col. 771.

⁷²Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, The Official Mind of Imperialism (London: McMillan & Co., Ltd, 1965), p. 17.

Could British politicians accept any kind of agreement which would put the Imperial troops at the mercy of the Arab leaders? Could British garrisons be effective in a situation under which the British units would become isolated in Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Damascus, dependent upon the whim of foreign rulers? Would the architects of the British Empire be able to assure the existence of these garrisons without guaranteeing their free access to the sea? One does not have to expand this subject in order to come to the conclusion that no one in the British Government would endorse this kind of political arrangement, which would be like an act of suicide on the part of Great Britain.

The line of Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and Damascus was not a matter of chance. The territories west of this line were exclusively Arab Muslims. In the areas to its east one could find non-Arab or non-Muslim ethnic groups, like the Maronites of Lebanon, who are a branch of the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Christians in Palestine and the Jews. The partition of the Middle East along this line was not apt to put the political equilibrium of the area out of balance.

This was only one more point in the strategical and political desiderata of Great Britain. She also had to safeguard the international interest in the region and to see that her plans would coincide with those of her allies.

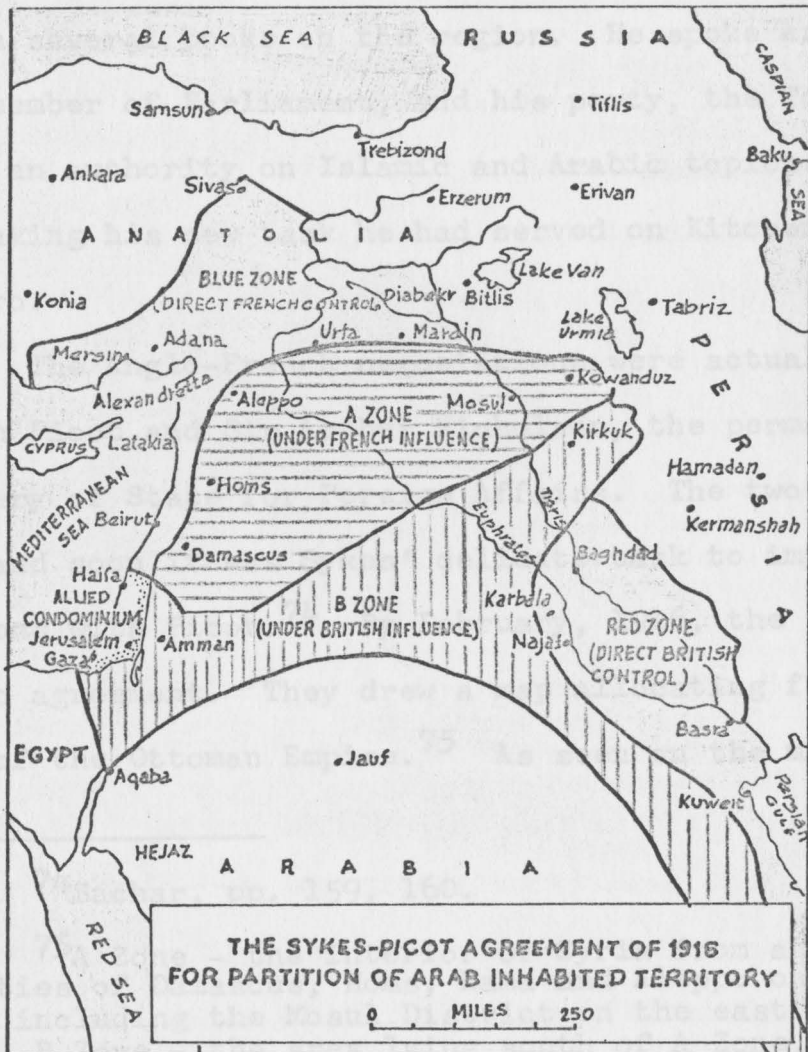
CHAPTER IV

THE CORRESPONDENCE AND OTHER BRITISH COMMITMENTS

Great Britain considered her alliance with France to be of paramount importance. On October 21, 1915, just three days before McMahon sent his crucial letter to Hussein, Foreign Secretary Grey informed the French Ambassador to London, Paul Cambon, of the correspondence.⁷³ One can assume therefore that McMahon's undertaking should coincide with another type of commitment which was concluded on February 4, 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

The question of territorial gains at the expense of the Ottomans had served as a counterpoint to British-French relationships for better than a century. In the autumn of 1915, the British Cabinet decided to look into this matter in order to prepare an outline for post War policy. It founded a special committee to study the subject and appointed as its chairman, Sir Maurice De Bunsenn of the Foreign Office. The Committee recommended that such territorial questions be determined by an Anglo-French survey. In November, 1915, the French envoy, Charles Francois Georges Picot, the former Consul General of France in Beirut and now a special adviser to

⁷³Hanna, p. 27.



**THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT OF 1916
FOR PARTITION OF ARAB INHABITED TERRITORY**

0 MILES 250

the Quai d'Orsay on Middle East Affairs, met with Mark Sykes, who represented the United Kingdom in the upcoming negotiations. Sykes, though not a professional diplomat, was a good choice to represent his country on Middle Eastern issues. He had traveled through the Middle East and had written several books on the region. He spoke Arabic. He was a member of Parliament, and his party, the Tory, regarded him as an authority on Islamic and Arabic topics. Before undertaking his new task he had served on Kitchener's staff in Cairo.

The Anglo-French negotiations were actually initiated between Picot and Sir Arthur Nicholson, the permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The two did not get along and soon it was Sykes' delicate task to improve the relations with Picot.⁷⁴ By February, 1916, the two reached a basic agreement. They drew a map allocating for themselves areas of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁵ As seen on the map, the region

⁷⁴Sachar, pp. 159, 160.

⁷⁵A Zone - the interior of Syria from and including the cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo on the west, to and including the Mosul District on the east.

B Zone - the area lying south of A Zone, bounded on the west by a line running approximately from Gaza to Aqaba, and reaching across Trans-Jordan eastward to the Red Zone, with a north arm jutting into Persia and a south arm descending toward the Persian Gulf.

Blue Zone - the province of Cilicia and Asia Minor and all of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo just outside the border.

Red Zone - the province of Basra and Bagdad in Persia.

Esco, Palestine, p. 59, 60.

was divided into four zones, two alphabet zones, A and B, and two color zones, Blue and Red. The British control over the Red zone gave her the oil-rich land stretching to the Persian Gulf. It also guaranteed that the route to India would be left under the guard of His Majesty's troops.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was signed in Paris on February 4, 1916. Its contents were subsequently revealed to the Russian Foreign Minister, Count Sergei Sazanov, who signed it on May 23. He demanded and was granted the liberty to annex Ottoman lands not inhabited by Arabs.⁷⁶

The agreement became a source of dispute mainly between the British and the Arabs. Antonious thought that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was a "shocking document". It was an act of stupidity which was born as a direct result of suspicion, hatred and cunning deeds. It was an extreme example of double dealing on the part of Great Britain.⁷⁷ His main objection to the agreement was that its borders served as obstacles in the way of Arab unity. The proposed frontiers would cut and mutilate the Arab nation which had just started to blossom. The traditional hostility of Great Britain to the idea of an Arab state, thus claimed Antonious, had been second nature to the politicians of Whitehall. The successors of Palmerston were now perpetrating to accomplish

⁷⁶Sachar, p. 169.

⁷⁷Antonious, p. 248.

his nefarious schemes.

It is true that in 1840 Palmerston, to protect Turkey from being crushed by the Arabs, asked the Concert of Europe to impress on France that she drop her support to Mehmet Ali, who wanted to depose the Sultan and take his seat by usurpation.⁷⁸ Yet, at the same time, the British Premier forced the Sultan and the Pasha of Egypt to give up their monopolies for the sake of the British idea of free trade.⁷⁹ British activities in the Mediterranean were therefore in line with her imperial policy. They were in no way a part of a deliberate anti-Arab program.

Antonious was not alone in his assault on the Sykes-Picot Agreement.⁸⁰ However, he was the only one who thought that Great Britain deliberately sold the Arabs and broke her promises to them in order to come to an understanding with the French.

Lloyd George wrote that Lord Curzon was convinced that the politicians who drafted the agreement simply did not

⁷⁸ Thornton, p. 35.

⁷⁹ Robinson and Gallagher, Africa, p. 78.

⁸⁰ Fisher, trying to imply that there was double dealing on the part of the British, wrote that "The Secret Sykes-Picot Agreement was signed only a few months after agreements embodied in the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence were concluded.": Fisher, A History, p. 370.

realize that their speculations and evaluations might ever materialize.⁸¹ They did not believe that one day they were liable to face a situation in which they would have to carry out their plans. Lloyd George himself thought that the agreement was a foolish one, since it placed Great Britain in an impossible situation. England committed herself to become the mediator of different countries and peoples who would not be likely to compromise once the War was over. Lloyd George concluded that at the beginning of the War, Palestine was not the main concern of the Allies. The resources and efforts of Great Britain and France were focused on Europe.⁸² Belgium, Poland and Istria and not Arabia, Syria or Iraq, demanded most attention. Thus the architects of the Aykes-Picot Agreement and their superiors in Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay could not be overconcerned with the future of the area per se. "The carving knife of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was a crude hacking of the Holy Land. The destiny of Palestine was left to the haggling of experts in the various foreign offices of the Allies."⁸³ Lloyd George stated that one of the blemishes of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was the imperfect and unscientific manner in which the boundaries had been drawn.⁸⁴ Philip Magnus, who wrote

⁸¹Lloyd George, The Truth, Vol. II, p. 1025.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 1115, 1116.

⁸³Ibid., p. 1116.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 1144.

a biography of Kitchener, put the blame for the incompatibility between the two undertakings on him. He determined that the Minister of War had no time to carefully supervise the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. As a result, Sykes assigned Damascus and its hinterland in all good faith to France, while McMahon in equally good faith, promised the Sharif of Mecca that this territory would become a part of an Arab independent kingdom.⁸⁵ Lord Curzon described it as a "fancy" sketch since it separated Mosul from Mesopotamia and did not consider the status of the region as a whole.⁸⁶

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was not a premature attempt to include the Middle East in an overall imperial program. The German and Ottoman threats to the British holdings of the land route to India and to the strip of dunes around the Canal was an imminent one. Great Britain could not afford the luxury of neglecting this strategical zone on account of her stern situation on the European battlefields. The Arab lands of the Middle East could serve as a buffer to Egypt. They also could be utilised as the

⁸⁵ Philip Magnus, Kitchener, Portrait of an Imperialist (London: John Murray, 1958), pp. 314-315.

⁸⁶ Thornton, p. 187.

guardians of the waterway, especially against the Germans who might establish submarine bases supplied and operated from their colony of Tanganyika.⁸⁷

The Middle East as a whole had been an important focus of concern for the European powers. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was merely an example of "frank imperialism."⁸⁸ The motive for the partition was obvious and clear. England wanted to guarantee her supremacy on the land route between India and Egypt.⁸⁹ Thus, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was in the final analysis a product of British imperial policy. It did take into account other commitments of Great Britain during this period.

The document, above anything else, was a war measure. It was drafted in the midst of the battles and could not answer all the problems which had arisen as a result of the war time actions. Yet even so there were no contradictions between this Anglo-French Agreement and Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. England betrayed neither France nor the Arabs. McMahon promised the Arabs much the same thing as requested by al-Faruqi, namely the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 184: The attack on the Canal in 1915, was a timely warning in this direction.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 187.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 188.

⁹⁰ Al-Faruqi was the representative of Hussein in Cairo.

There was no incompatibility between the two undertakings. The British Government was firm in this view and it stated clearly in her Report to the Special Committee that Sykes must clearly have negotiated the agreement in the belief that the reservation in the pledge of October 24, 1915, justified his concluding an agreement in the form which it eventually assumed. T. E. Lawrence, the former junior British Officer who became the symbol of the Arab revolt, was also disturbed by the fact that the British war commitments were not as clear as he wanted them to be. Yet in a letter to the editor of The Times, September 8, 1919, he discussed four documents which he considered most important to British policymaking during the War. Lawrence expressed his view that as far as he was concerned there were no inconsistencies or incompatibilities in these documents.

It may then be asked he concluded what all the fuss between the British, the French and the Arabs is about. It is mainly because the Agreement of 1916 (Sykes-Picot) is unworkable and in particular no longer suits the British and the French Governments.⁹¹

British pledges during the War were an important topic with many historians. Elie Kedouri, a prominent historian of British policy in the Middle East, praised the Sykes-Picot Agreement. He wrote that this document was the last responsible attempt on the part of Europe to cope with the

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The Times, September 11, 1919, p. 11. The documents are: a) The British promise to Hussein October 14, 1915. b) The Sykes-Picot Agreement c) The British Statement to the Seven d) The Anglo-French Declaration of November 9, 1918.

dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The revelation of the agreement by the Bolshevik regime after the Russian revolution did not shock the Arabs.⁹² Neither Antonious nor any other historian noted unrest in the Arab world as a result of the discovery of the secret agreement between France, England and Russia. No one seemed alarmed and nobody saw fit to protest against the British "perfidy". The Sharif and his sons did not protest, since they did not see any breach of faith on the part of Great Britain.

Hussein knew of an agreement between France and the United Kingdom. He also knew about the special treatment awaiting Syria at the end of the War. Muhammad Rashid Rida, a qualified Muslim, wrote in 1921 about this in his periodical Al Manar. According to him, Hussein instructed al-Faruqi on August 11, 1917, "not to meddle in any way" in matters concerning Syria. Only during 1918 did the leaders of the Hejaz cry havoc against the Sykes-Picot Agreement.⁹³ Grey wrote in his Memoirs that he never regarded the treaty between McMahon and Hussein as entailing any obligation on his

⁹²Elie Kedouri, England and the Middle East, The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921 (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1950), p. 65.

⁹³Thornton, p. 187; Kedouri, England, p. 39.

government except to fulfill a promise to give the Arabs independence. He also wrote that there was an understanding in the Foreign Office to keep secret the agreement, since the Turks were not yet defeated. Its revelation might hurt the Sharif and the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁴

Je de V. Loder, an expert on Middle Eastern issues and international relations, thought that England had to use the guarded language in order to keep on good relations with both the French and Arabs.⁹⁵ According to him, though, there was no contradiction between the promise of England to the Arabs and her agreement with France, there was always the fear that neither side would accept this point. Secrecy was needed therefore in order to maintain the good will of all the partners.⁹⁶ Pierre Van Paassen did not find any conflict between the British agreement with France and Russia and her undertaking to the Arabs. This impartial observer, who was born in Holland into a Calvinist family, and became an historian of the Middle East, discovered consistency in British policy in the area. He recorded in his book The Forgotten

⁹⁴Viscount Grey of Fallodon, K.G., Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916, Vol. II (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1925), p.235.

⁹⁵Je de V. Loder was a staff member of the Political Intelligence Department of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and later an important figure of the Eastern Department of the British Foreign Office

⁹⁶Je de V. Loder, The Truth about Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria (London: Allen and Unwin, 1923), p. 25.

Ally, which appeared in 1943, that all that Great Britain promised the Arabs was their independence.⁹⁷ She did it both in the Sykes-Picot Agreement and in the Correspondence. In all these documents she preserved the French interest in the area.

In the light of this evidence could there be a contradiction between the Sykes-Picot Agreement and McMahon's pledge to Hussein? It is obvious that all that McMahon could do was to transmit the will of his Government to Hussein. As we have already mentioned, this shrewd diplomat was in no temper to deviate from the instructions of the Foreign Office. He did not have any authority of his own. Whatever he wrote to Hussein was to be taken with a grain of salt and compared to other commitments made by Great Britain with regard to the Middle East as a whole. As for Hussein, this aspirant to the seat of the Caliphate was still the vassal of the Sublime Porte and his influence did not encompass even all the Arabian Peninsula. The Correspondence, therefore, cannot be considered, as Sidney Fisher put it, "a negotiation between representatives of two principals - the British Government and the Arab people."⁹⁸

The politicians of Great Britain sincerely believed that McMahon excluded Palestine from his pledge to the Arabs.

⁹⁷Pierre Van Paassen, The Forgotten Ally (New York: Dial Press, 1943), p. 118

⁹⁸Fisher, p. 369.

They pointed out that there was no provision in the letters which gave the Arabs the responsibility for the Holy Places in Palestine. This is an interesting point, since international concern in the future status of the Holy Land mounted in the first months of the War. All parties were concerned with this delicate matter. Russian history is an unhappy panorama of expectations and disappointments in connection with this region most sacred to the Christians. The Tsarist Government still remembered its disillusionment after the Crimean War. The Russians informed the British Embassy in St. Petersburg that before they could hold any negotiations on the future status of the Middle East they would like to know whether the Arabs would wish to put forward demands for these areas.⁹⁹

Russian interest in the Holy Land went back to the 18th century which witnessed the capitulatory arrangements in regard to the international supervision of this area. The most important treaties dealing with this issue were that of 1740 and later the Treaty of Kuchuck Kainarji of 1774. In both of these treaties Russia and France declared that the Roman Catholics would be under the protection of the French while the Orthodox Christians would be under the aegis of the Tsar.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹H. F. Frischwasser-Ra'anan, The Frontiers of a Nation (London: The Batchworth Press, 1955), p. 64.

¹⁰⁰Fisher, p. 301.

Great Britain had no right and no authority in 1915 to bequeath to the Arabs the area most sacred to Christianity. One can assume that if she thought to entrust Palestine to the Sharif she would make every effort to assure the safety of the Holy Places and to guarantee free access to them to pilgrims of every faith. She would in all probability insist on handing them over to an international body which would satisfy the needs of those who regarded them as sacred. Great Britain did not do so. She merely stated her intention to secure the Holy Places against all external aggression.¹⁰¹ England did not ask the Arabs' permission for this announcement. The Arabs did not protest either because they did not regard the question an important one or because they knew that His Majesty's Government would hold firm in this matter. She was not likely to overlook the great prestige and strategical importance of the Holy Land. Lloyd George remarked that the Arabs were not concerned so much with Palestine, because they knew about the genuine international interest in the area and because the Arabs of Iraq, Syria and Arabia did not consider the Arabs of Palestine to be of the same class as themselves.¹⁰²

Antonious wrote that McMahon stated in his letter of October 24, 1915, that Great Britain recognized as the area

¹⁰¹Vide McMahon's letter of October 24, 1915.
Supra, p. 15.

¹⁰²Lloyd George, pp. 1032, 1033.

of Arab independence all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif, in which she was "free to act without detriment to her ally France."¹⁰³ Both in this letter and in the following one which he sent on December 13, McMahon explained that he had to exclude portions of Syria on the grounds of French interests. Antonious concluded that since the Quai d'Orsay did not claim Palestine at the end of the War, England was free to hand it over to the Arabs. Leonard Stein, in his article "Promises and Afterthoughts, Notes on Certain White Papers Relating to the Palestine Conferences", rejected this verdict.¹⁰⁴ He argued that McMahon clarified the British-French relations to some degree and he did mention that England had to cooperate with France on the territorial questions as on any other aspects of the War. Yet McMahon did not promise that Britain would give the Arabs the areas which France would not be interested in.¹⁰⁵ McMahon merely excluded from his undertaking those areas which Britain was not free to act upon without detriment to French interests, at the date of his letters.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Antonious, p. 179.

¹⁰⁴Leonard Stein, "Promises and Afterthoughts. Notes on Certain White Papers Relating to the Palestine Conferences" (London: Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1939), p. 9.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰⁶The Lord Chancellor who served as the Chairman of the Special Committee held the same view.

Antonious also did not take into consideration the mutual distrust which prevailed between France and the Arabs. It was well known that the French wanted to control the Levant. She did not want Arab Muslim leaders as mediators between Paris and the local Christian population of the Levant. Henceforth, the Arabs could anticipate French opposition to their claim for any land which initially was designated to the French. When it came to the actual partition of the Ottoman heritage, France agreed to waive her claims on Palestine as a result of British pressure. Yet nothing is more certain than that she would not have consented to do so in favor of the Arabs.¹⁰⁷

Britain did not intend to guarantee Palestine to the Arabs. This is a definite conclusion reached by numerous British politicians. Sir Silbert Clayton, who was a member of the staff of McMahon and as such was in daily touch with him throughout the Correspondence, voiced his opinion of this case in 1923. He said that nobody intended to include Palestine in the general pledge to the Sharif. He said that it was "obvious that the peculiar interests involved in Palestine precluded any definite pledges in regard to its future at so early a stage."¹⁰⁸ Sir Winston Churchill, who served as the Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote in 1922:

¹⁰⁷ Stein, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Cmd Paper 5974, p. 8.

No pledges were made to the Arabs in 1915. An undertaking was given to the Sharif of Mecca that His Majesty's Government would recognize the independence of the Arabs within certain territorial limits, which specifically excluded the districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and the portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. His Majesty's Government has always regarded and will continue to regard Palestine as excluded by these provisos from the scope of their undertakings.¹⁰⁹

His successor in the Colonial Office, the Duke of Devonshire, was of the same opinion. He declared on March 1, 1923:

Whether they were expressed in the best terms or not it is perhaps not for me to say, but undoubtedly there never was any intention, when the pledge was given, to recognize the independence of the Arabs so as to include Palestine.¹¹⁰

Fourteen years later Major W. Ormsby Gore, Lord Harlech, one of the better known colonial secretaries, recalled the events of the War era, during which he served as a member of the Arab Bureau in Cairo under McMahon. To the best of his knowledge no one in Cairo had ever thought that Palestine west of the Jordan was allocated for a future Arab State. He wrote that "the unique character of Palestine was recognized by the Arab Delegates to the Peace Conference. It is recognized all over the World."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Documents Relating to the McMahon Letters. The High Commissioner Official Report (London: The Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1939), col. 1032/1034, July 11, 1922.

¹¹⁰Ibid., col. 233, January 1, 1923.

¹¹¹Ibid., col. 2249/50, July 21, 1937.

Throughout the entire War the representatives of Great Britain made it known to the Arabs that they viewed Palestine as having a special status and would not make it an integral part of any local regime. This was done in a series of personal interviews between the Sharif or his delegates and even more so by public proclamations, prominent among them the Balfour Declaration. This declaration, dated November 2, 1917, took the form of a personal letter which Balfour, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, sent to the Baron Edmund Rothschild.¹¹² This declaration, like other British statements, rose as a war measure. It aimed mainly at attracting people of various nationalities, races, and faiths to join the camp of the Allies. In this case Great Britain wanted to attract the Jews, in whom she saw a great potential, both financially and politically. The Jews were held to be rich and powerful, according to popular notion. They accumulated wealth through international trade and banking. They could help in the maintenance of the armies of the Allies. They also had great influence in the political life of the United States, where they could persuade President Wilson to adhere to the Allies' plea to enter the War on their side.

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Leopold S. Amery (who later was the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1924-29) as Secretary to Curzon on the Committee for "Territorial Desiderata" drafted the final version of this Declaration after Alfred Milner, the former High Commissioner in South Africa, gave up this task assigned to him: Thornton, p. 190.

The idea of forming a Jewish settlement in Palestine was raised with the hope of creating among others a buffer against any attempt to upset British supremacy in the region. It would also help to promote the standard of living of its inhabitants and serve as a client state. The Jews would become for Britain what the Lebanese Christians were for France, and the Armenians for Russia.¹¹³

Jewish-Arab cooperation was looked upon as an attainable goal. The Balfour Declaration, in contrast to the McMahon Correspondence and to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, was a public declaration. The Jewish representatives, prominent among them Chaim Weizmann, negotiated directly with the British Cabinet. The British representatives on their part informed the American Government of their intentions. After the publication of this declaration British leaders participated in the celebrations organized by the Jews, who expressed their gratitude to His Majesty's Government.¹¹⁴

¹¹³Antonious, pp. 261, 262: Sachar, p. 198: Already on April 19, 1915, a Special Committee of "Territorial Terms of Peace" under the chairmanship of Lord Curzon re-evaluated the strategic vulnerability of the Suez. All unanimously emphasized the need of British control in Palestine. Ibid., p. 187.

¹¹⁴Esco, pp 74, 75.

The Declaration disturbed the Arabs to some extent. Hussein demanded an explanation. Commander David George Hogarth, a leading figure of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, left for Jedda in order to explain the British policy in regard to the Arabs. Hogarth, a scholar and archaeologist, was considered one of the greatest authorities of his time on Arab history. He met Hussein in January, 1918, and had two interviews with him.¹¹⁵ He told the Sharif that in view of the unique position of Palestine and the Holy Places it would have to become a "special regime". The British Government would continue to support Jewish settlement in Palestine. This settlement could be considered an advantage to the Arabs since the leaders of the Zionist movement had expressed their sympathy toward them.¹¹⁶

Hogarth, back in Cairo, reported that Hussein assented to the conditions of his message. He was ready to endorse Jewish settlement in Palestine and "agreed enthusiastically saying that he welcomed Jews to all Arab lands."¹¹⁷ At the same time, the King did not seem content with the idea that Palestine would be a part of an international regime.

¹¹⁵ John Kimche, The Unromantics, The Great Powers and the Balfour Declaration (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968), p. 64: Hogarth met Hussein ten times during his visit in Jedda.

¹¹⁶ Hogarth Message Vide Appendix A.

¹¹⁷ Cmd Papers 5964, G. B. Foreign Office, Miscellaneous No. 4, 1937-1939, p. 4.

According to Hogarth, the Sharif had a fixed plan for the Arab lands and he would not retreat from his original demands which he proposed to McMahon in his first letter.¹¹⁸ As to Hogarth himself, he was of the opinion that the promises of Great Britain to Hussein could be forced into agreement with that of the Balfour Declaration.

Antonious accused England of betraying the Arabs. England did not keep her word to bequeath Palestine to the Arabs and to make it a part of the Independent Arab State. England, according to him, promised Palestine not only via the letters of McMahon and the Message of Hogarth, but also in the "Declaration to the Seven", the Anglo-French Declaration of November, 1918. The Feisal-Weizmann Agreement and the King-Crane Report also show that Palestine was meant to be incorporated into the Arab state.

Antonious interpretations of these vital documents to British policy in the Middle East do not agree with the full data at our command. The "Declaration to the Seven", June 16, 1918, was an answer of the Foreign Office to an appeal of seven Arab leaders. It spoke of the "Sanjaq of Jerusalem" as part of the regions which, in the future, would be governed according to the principle of the consent of the people. It

¹¹⁸ The Sharif said: "At the first opportunity after this war is finished we shall ask you what we avert our eye from today for that which we now leave to France in Beirut and in the Coasts.": Loder, The Truth, p. 22.

did not mention, however, independence. The same is true of the Anglo-French Declaration of November 7, 1918. France and England agreed to help set up indigenous governments in Syria and Mesopotamia, but no one promised independence. The King-Crane Report was a document of great importance for Antonious, who thought that it was "the only source to which the historian can turn for a disinterested and wholly objective analysis of the state of feeling in Arab political circles in the period immediately after the War."¹¹⁹ This is an interesting evaluation since the members of the Committee refused to meet with the Arabs who opposed Hussein. Stein was puzzled by this evaluation, since the Report did not mention even once, the Correspondence in connection with Palestine.¹²⁰

Sylvia G. Haim built a whole case against the thesis of Antonious. She wrote an article "The Arab Awakening, A Source for the Historian?" published in The World of Islam in 1953.¹²¹ She accused Antonious of twisting historical facts, and eliminating deliberately existing material, in order to fit his thesis. When Antonious discussed Hogarth's message he wrote that it set Hussein's mind completely at rest and that

¹¹⁹Antonious, p. 296: Vide Appendix B.

¹²⁰Stein, Promises, p. 17.

¹²¹Sylvia G. Haim, "The Arab Awakening, A Source for the Historian?", The World of Islam, Vol II (1953), pp. 237-250.

it was important from the standpoint of the revolt.¹²² But it also gave the King an explicit assurance that Jewish settlement in Palestine would be allowed only in so far as would be consistent with the political and economic freedom of the Arab population. Antonious, however, did not include this document, so important to the Arab case, in his appendix. Why? Perhaps because he could not use it to show Arab supremacy in Palestine. The Message as it appeared however in Annex F of the Command Paper 5974, denied most clearly Arab exclusive claims for Palestine.¹²³ It also endorsed the return of the Jews to Palestine and expressed the hope of Arab-Jewish understanding based on past experience.

In 1920, Colonel C. E. Vickery, a master of Arabic with the Arab Bureau in Cairo, left on an official mission for Jedda. His task was to inspect the original Arabic text of the letter of October 24, as it was received by Hussein. He recalled this visit when the Special Committee started its work on the Correspondence in 1939. He sent a letter to the

¹²² Antonious, p. 268.

¹²³ Cmd Paper 5974: "So far as Palestine is concerned we are determined that no people shall be subject to another." (Appendix F the Hogarth Message).

Hogarth did not observe any animosity between Arabs and Jews. In the Introduction he wrote to the book of Philip Graves, Palestine Land of Three Faiths, he blamed his country for the deterioration of Jewish-Arab relations. "The problem arose in the way in which England preached Nationalism to the Arabs."

editor of The Times. The letter appeared on February 21, 1939.

The following is a paragraph of Vickery's letter:

I read the letter (of McMahon) very slowly: it was not written in very scholarly Arabic and had no English translation in the margin and it is quite evident that Palestine was not included in the proposals to the King.

Antonious again remained silent.¹²⁴

It became almost second nature with Antonious to ignore documents which did not seem to integrate with his main theme, that of the British pledge of Palestine to the Arabs. He did not mention McMahon's letters to Graves and The Times.¹²⁵ Sylvia Haim protested against this unethical technique of Antonious. She wrote that "whatever the value of these later denials may be, they have to be mentioned in order that the reader might know the full case."¹²⁶ Feisal's letter to Felix Frankfurter, the Zionist leader, March 3, 1919, and Feisal's interview with the reporter of Reuter, December 11, 1918, are also omitted by Antonious. In both, Feisal talks about the racial affinity between Jews and Arabs, and of the absence of any conflict between Zionist Jews and Nationalist Arabs.¹²⁷

Yahya Armajani mentioned the British promises to the Arabs, and stated that Palestine was included in the British

¹²⁴The Times, February 21, 1939.

¹²⁵In both, McMahon denied any intention to give Palestine to the Arabs.

¹²⁶Haim, "The Arab Awakening", p. 244.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 245.

pledges. He did it on the basis of the "Westerman Papers", which unfortunately for him served as a double blow to the Arab claims for Palestine for two reasons: They considered the letters between Hussein and McMahon as a mere correspondence. They clearly excluded Palestine from the territory of Arab independence.

Nineteen documents are listed in the first paper under the title "Previous Commitments of His Majesty's Government in the Middle East." While most of them are Treaties, Agreements and Assurances, No. 12 is: "Correspondence beginning in July, 1915, with Hussein bin Ali Grand Sherif of Mecca."¹²⁸ Furthermore, while other documents later became known as declarations and agreements, "Hussein-McMahon Correspondence" remained the official title for this undertaking. This title remained the identification for this series of letters which was exchanged between Hussein and McMahon. Even those among the better known historians of the Middle East, who occasionally wrote about the "agreement" between Cairo and Mecca, still referred to these letters as the correspondence and not as the agreement. The authors of the "Westerman Papers" admit that Hussein never gave up claim to the independence of the Arabs in the Vilayets of Aleppo and Beirut and their littoral. Their problem however remains that his demands were not in harmony with what the British defined as Arab land. They

¹²⁸ a letter to McMahon November 5, 1918.

included portions of southern Kurdistan, east of the Tigris and

Jebel Hamrin which, though bound to have close economic relations with Mesopotamia, ought not on grounds of nationality, to be included politically in any Arab State. Again, they cover Palestine, where the Arab element is indeed at present predominant, but where the Zionist Jews have a special claim to considerations which they are likely to make good in the future, and where the presence of holy places belonging to three world religions make it impossible to settle the country simply in accordance with the political aspirations of the inhabitants.¹²⁹

In paragraph 21 the authors wrote that Great Britain had commitments to local Arab Sheiks, to safeguard their independence.¹³⁰ Ergo no one can force them to yield their present status in favor of a wider Arab Commonwealth. However if they expressed their wish to do so, they would have to seek permission of His Majesty's Government which was a side in the

¹²⁹ "Westerman Papers" Previous Commitments, p. 4:19.

¹³⁰ Previous Commitments, p. 5:21

Ibid., p. 21:50.

Only a portion of Syria (within the limits set out in the main body of this memorandum) is covered by His Majesty's Government's undertaking to Sharif Hussein to recognise and support the Independence of the Arabs (No. 12). The area in respect of which this pledge was given stops short at the western boundaries of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, and the districts between this line and the Mediterranean, comprising the entire Syrian seaboard, are excluded. Even in this mutilated Syria, the pledge was limited to "territories in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interest of her Ally, France."

Ibid., p. 21:56.

Nearly the whole of Palestine is included in the "Brown Area" in which Great Britain and France (No. 14, Article 3) and conditionally Italy (No. 16, Article 3) have agreed that there should be established an international administration, the form to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently after consultation with the other Allies and the representatives of the Sharif of Mecca.

existing agreements. Hussein asked Great Britain to help the Arabs to achieve independence. But Sharif Hussein made no claim, nor did His Majesty's Government give any pledge, that the area within which the independence of the Arabs was recognized should form any kind of a political unity.

The second crucial document of the "Westerman Papers" was "Statement of British Policy in the Middle East for Submission to the Peace Conference (if required)." It also dealt with the status of the Hejaz and Palestine. It was issued by the British Delegation at the Hotel Astoria in Paris on February 18, 1919. It recognized the government of the Hejaz as an independent Power and an ally since it fought on the Allies' side. It defined the borders of Palestine as being "between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea and between the cultivated and cultivable area of the Bedouin tribes." The form of Government to be introduced in Palestine should be that of an international character.¹³¹

There is no evidence that the Arabs considered the Balfour Declaration to be in conflict with the undertaking of McMahon, especially after the Hogarth mission. Great Britain had no reason to suspect that there would be any breach of faith between them and the Arabs. And why should she? The Arabs agreed to enter the War and did not threaten to pull out even upon discovering the "shocking" Agreement of Sykes-

¹³¹Statement of the British Policy, p. 11:37,38
p. 16:60

Picot and the British sympathy to the Jews in the Balfour Declaration. If immediately after the War the Arabs started to demand that Great Britain would fulfill her pledge to them, they did it not on the basis of previous British undertakings, but in order to meet the new realities which threatened to annul Arab supremacy and unity in the area.

Peace Conference in Paris after the War. Palestine became a center of dispute, now between the Arabs and Great Britain, but between Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay. It is not our task to elaborate on the political reasons which forced France to give in to British demands and to retreat from her initial claims to Great Syria. Yet germane for our purposes are the implications of Anglo-French relations on Arab rights in these matters.

According to the final draft of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, France had to recognize British supremacy over Palestine. She had to capitulate from her demand for "Syrie Integrale". Great Britain considered Palestine to be her own sphere of influence. She also had better claims for this land after its conquest by General Edmund Allenby.¹³ France recognized the superiority of England. She knew that England was after all at least a senior partner in any agreement. At the end of the War she decided to compensate herself by taking full advantage of her rule in Syria. Her interests were in conflict with those of Faisal, who hoped to become a sovereign

¹³ Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. 259.

CHAPTER V

ARAB CLAIMS FOR PALESTINE - MOTIVES AND RIGHTS

The Arabs did not exploit the McMahon overture at the Peace Conference in Paris after the War. Palestine became a center of dispute, not between the Arabs and Great Britain, but between Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay. It is not our task to elaborate on the political reasons which forced France to give in to British demands and to retreat from her initial claims to Great Syria. Yet germane for our purposes are the implications of Anglo-French relations on Arab rights in these matters.

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¹³² Leonard Stein, The Balfour Declaration (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1961), p. 259.

Arab ruler in Damascus. Setting aside for the moment his claims for Palestine, Feisal was willing to come to an understanding with the Zionists.¹³³

Feisal was convinced that the Jews had influence on the politicians of Europe. They would be able to solicit favorable reaction to his plan of an Arab Kingdom in Syria. He received Weizmann in Trans-Jordan. The two opened their negotiations in Amman. They departed as friends, or at least this was the impression of Weizmann, who later noted: "the first meeting in the desert laid the foundation of lifelong friendship."¹³⁴ Feisal did not have any reason to fear the Jews who promised him, for instance, an access to Haifa and Aqaba and the monopoly on the Hejaz Railway.¹³⁵

The meeting in Amman was the beginning of a series of negotiations between the Arab and Jewish leaders. They met in December, 1918, in London. T. E. Lawrence served as translator. Feisal stressed the danger both to Arabs and Jews. Both sides agreed to settle water and farm differences on a mutual basis and in direct talks. The atmosphere was cordial. Feisal, when later interviewed by a correspondent of the Reuters News Agency, came out with a very positive view on the prospective of Arab-Jewish cooperation in the area.

¹³³Sachar, p. 385.

¹³⁴Ibid., pp. 221, 222.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 282.

He was quoted as saying:

Arabs are not jealous of Zionist Jews, and intend to give them fair play: and the Zionist Jews have assured the Nationalist Arabs of their intention to see that they too have fair play in their respective areas.¹³⁶

To assure the Jewish representatives that he really meant what he said to this reporter he repeated his views of Arab-Jewish relations during a banquet given in his honor by Lord Rothschild. He said that "no true Arab can be suspicious or afraid of Jewish Nationalism." He went on promising that:

We are demanding Arab freedom, and we would show ourselves unworthy of it, if we did not now, as I do, say to the Jews - welcome back home - and cooperate with them to the limit of the Arab State.¹³⁷

The mutual trust doomed to a sudden end, the following year Feisal agreed to issue a joint Document with Weizmann. He signed it on January 4, 1919, but later attached an important clause, unknown to Weizmann. It read:

Provided the Arabs obtain their independence as demanded in my Memorandum dated the 4th of January, 1919, to the Foreign Office of the Government of Great Britain, I shall concur in the above article. Otherwise, the codicil declared the Agreement would be null and void.¹³⁸

For the time being there was no breach of faith between Feisal and the Jews. The Emir appeared before the Peace Conference on February 6, 1919 and said that he saw no reason why Arabs and Jews would not be able to live in harmony in

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 385.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 386.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 386

Palestine. Weizmann, in a speech on November 12, 1929, recalled his contact with Feisal. He said that Feisal expressed his satisfaction to the Zionist proposals to the Arabs, as far as support in Palestine in their dealings with the major Powers. The Emir was quoted as saying: "I have seen the Zionist proposals, I approve of them and I hope we shall work together."¹³⁹

After his first appearance before the Conference, Feisal wrote a letter to the American Zionist leader, Felix Frankfurter, in which he defined the Zionist proposals to him as "moderate and proper." He praised Weizmann's support to the Arab cause. He concluded by writing: "I hope that the Arabs may soon be in a position to make the Jews some return for their kindness."¹⁴⁰

The Zionist-Arab rapprochement was foredoomed. Feisal on his part demanded Jewish support in the open, in his dispute with France. The Jews could not fulfill such a demand and Feisal by this point no longer deemed Zionist assistance of any value.¹⁴¹ At the same time the Arab Bureau in Cairo was very active against the idea of a national home for the Jews in Palestine.

¹³⁹Chaim Weizmann, The Position in Palestine Speeches, Palestine Papers No. 2 (London: The Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1930), p. 16.

¹⁴⁰Frischwasser, The Frontiers, p. 107.

¹⁴¹Sachar, p. 282.

The British officials in the Middle East are much to blame for the deterioration of Jewish-Arab relations. The British officers, for example, had shown themselves hostile to the French in Syria. They were unsympathetic toward French claims for the Holy Land. They opposed the French naval occupation of Beirut, believing that Haifa could not possibly be developed "under the guns of Beirut."¹⁴² By the Spring of 1919, the French had become so suspicious of the British that Alfred Milner, by then the Secretary of State for War, had to reassure Clemenceau that Britain had no intention of depriving her ally of the Mandate over Syria.¹⁴³ Clemenceau still did not receive the guarantee that he sought. He left, therefore, for London to meet Lloyd George himself. In the course of their conversations Lloyd George demanded and received French acknowledgement that Palestine, from Dan to Beersheba, would be reserved for Jewish settlement under British mandate.¹⁴⁴

All this time the Arabs mounted their assaults against the Jews. The General Syrian Congress incited the Arabs to protest against Jewish immigration and against British mandate

¹⁴²J. De Hass, History of Palestine (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1934), p. 466.

¹⁴³Jukka Nevakivi, Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-1920 (London: The Athlone Press, 1969), p. 181: Alfred Milner, former High Commissioner of South Africa (1897-1905) and Secretary of State for War 1918, 1919.

¹⁴⁴Lloyd George, The Truth, Vol. II, p. 1037.

in Palestine and French rule in Damascus. The Bedouins, who as a matter of tradition tried to take advantage of any political instability, increased their raids into Palestine.¹⁴⁵ Feisal was now suspicious that the Allies would deprive him of his temporary independence. He feared the partition of his Great Syria and even more, the French rule over this land. His own followers, many of them devoted Ultra-Nationalists, exerted pressure on him. They wanted him to stand against the French.¹⁴⁶

The demand for Palestine was an act of despair on Feisal's side. He saw that even England, his former ally, would not undertake to guarantee his independence in Syria. He faced a new situation, in which he had either to capitulate on his demand for full sovereignty over Syria and become the puppet of the French, or risk new adventures. Thus he turned his eyes to Palestine which in his mind was always part of his father's demand from Great Britain and the British pledge before the War.

Feisal did not find a political vacuum in the Holy Land. Not only the Arabs, but also the Western powers showed increasing interest in this area which was an important bridge between the routes to India and the Persian Gulf. These

¹⁴⁵The Times, September 16, 1919.

¹⁴⁶Frischwasser, The Frontiers, p. 112, 117.

foreign elements knew that the way to hegemony in the Mediterranean was through the Arabs who rose phoenix-like to the international arena. Whether deliberately or not, they decided that the fastest way to the Arabs' hearts was by way of inciting them against the idea of the creation of the Jewish homeland.¹⁴⁷ No wonder that French and American officials who tried to mobilize the Arabs against the British did so by arousing the Arabs against the idea of a Jewish homeland sponsored by the British Lion. They warned the Arabs that the program contained within itself poisoning germs to the Arab movement which was still in its infancy.

The French incited the Arab Christians through their missionaries. They wanted to prevent British supremacy in Syria and Palestine and preached Arab hatred to the Jews. The peculiar interest of the American State Department was not realized as an influence on the part of the Arab movement. The Department wanted to see the re-establishment of Great Syria.¹⁴⁸ It expressed this wish through the American

¹⁴⁷Selig Adler, "The Palestine Question in the Wilson Era", Jewish Social Studies, A Quarterly Journal, (New York: The Conference on Jewish Relations 1948), Vol X:4

¹⁴⁸Adler, "The Palestine Question", p. 317.

Protestant missionaries in Syria and Lebanon who were violently anti-Zionists.¹⁴⁹ They even made a temporary alliance with the Young Arabs in order to fight Zionism and the implementation of the Balfour Declaration.¹⁵⁰

Arab historians saw in the revolt a sign for Arab nationalism. They said that Feisal started his revolt as a result of the executions of Arab leaders in Damascus by the Turks. Among the victims of 1916 were Abdul Hamid al Zahrawi, a senator from Homs who served as the President of the Arab Congress in Paris, Ali Umar Nashashibi of Jerusalem and the Emir Umar Jazairi of Damascus, who was a descendant of the Algerian Emir Abdul Qader. In all, twenty-two Arabs, Muslims and Christians were put to death during April of that year.¹⁵¹ There was full justification to start the Arab revolt against the blood-thirsty Ottomans who tried to put down the new Arab movement.

No one casts any doubt on the fact that the Arabs of the Hejaz did participate on the Allies' side in campaigns against the Turks. There is however a serious disagreement as to the scale of Arab participation, its sincerity, its goals and its effectiveness. These were important mainly to the Arab mouthpiece, who urged Great Britain to fulfill her

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 319.

¹⁵¹Antonious, pp 188-190.

part in the contract between McMahon and Hussein.

The Arabs were not entitled to claim British fulfillment of the McMahon undertakings since they did not carry out their part in this understanding. We have at our disposal ample evidence that the Arabs did not enter the War in order to fulfill their part in the understanding between Hussein and McMahon. Even after the exchange of the final note took place between Cairo and Mecca, the Arabs still sought an agreement between themselves and the Turks. When they broke off with the Turks they did not do it in the hope of getting any kind of reward hinted at in the Correspondence, but because Hussein discovered during one of his skirmishes against the Turks secret plans which showed that the Ottomans had a preconceived plan to dispose of him, regardless of his stand in the War.¹⁵² Furthermore, even in the midst of the War, Feisal found the time to go to Damascus and try to negotiate with Jemal Pasha a settlement by which the Arabs would betray the Allies and join the forces of Germany and Turkey.

It is clear by now that there was no contract, in the full sense of the word, which bound Hussein and McMahon. Neither of them ever presented any kind of document to be signed. Their understanding depended merely on their good will, and what is more, on their own interpretation of the text of the letters. We know, for example, that there were

¹⁵²Ernest Dawn, "The Amir of Mecca". p. 28.

few minor dissimilarities between the English translation used by the British Government, in her Report of 1939, and the Arabic text kept by the Arabs. These however were not of any decisive nature. The important point for our purpose is that faith and trust were the only ties which gave the basis for the cooperation between Mecca and London. Philip Graves wrote that there was no "agreement" with Hussein in the sense of a Treaty. Nobody negotiated with him on the basis of any draft instrument. McMahon indeed gave certain undertakings to Hussein but these were not to be mistaken for a treaty.¹⁵³ Ernst Frankenstein went even further. He said that if both sides did not understand one another and did not finalize their negotiations by a joint draft or at least a mutual agreement, then it is obvious that they failed to reach an agreement.¹⁵⁴ He also questioned the right of the Arabs to claim British commitments, since they did not complete their part of the undertaking. In the final analysis the Arab revolt was little better than a charade. England expected a great national uprising and not a mere local revolt. She hoped for zealous support accompanied by high devotion and not sporadic skirmishes of leaders who constantly questioned the use and

¹⁵³ Graves, p. 50.

¹⁵⁴ Ernst Frankenstein, Palestine in the Light of International Law (London: The Narod Press, 1946), p. 23.

justification to attack the forces of the Caliph. This condition was not fulfilled by the Arabs. The revolt at its best was of a local nature.¹⁵⁵

The Arabs could not claim Palestine on the basis of their contribution to the Allies' camp. Arab historians praised the revolt as a true symbol for Arab bravery and devotion. They maintained that Feisal had to play a double role in this War. He had to impress on the Pasha of Syria who was in a position to crush the revolt in its first stages, that the Arabs were loyal to him. At the same time he organized the revolt and later fought in the open on the Allies' side. The Arab support to the British was, according to these historians, a decisive factor in the War. The Arabs fulfilled to the letter their part of the deal with McMahon.

Objective historians and participants of the War did not share the same views with the Arabs. It is true that Balfour praised the Arab troops whom he judged from his Whitehall office to be "faithful, brave and efficient."¹⁵⁶ This opinion was not to be shared by those who knew the Arab fighters from personal contact.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 23

¹⁵⁶ Judd, Balfour, p. 291

T. E. Lawrence tried very hard to present his Arab companions at their best. Yet even he could not conceal the bitter disappointment he had of the participants in the Jihad announced by the offspring of the prophet. He shared the disillusionment in the Secret Dispatches from Arabia, which were included in a confidential paper called The Arab Bulletin, which was issued at Cairo from June 6, 1916 to December 6, 1918, and was originated by Lawrence.¹⁵⁷ In the Bulletin of November 18, 1917, one reads:

I don't think they have ever been near taking Madina as Feisal's forces are only a mob of active and independent snipers. The Sharif has to bribe his soldiers.¹⁵⁸

The money of course came from British sources. Again on November 26, 1917:

The tribal armies are aggregations of snipers only. As to Arab solidarity: No man quite trusts his neighbour, though each is usually quite wholehearted in his opposition to the Turks. This would not prevent him working off a family grudge by letting down his private enemy. In consequence they are not to be relied on for attack in mass.¹⁵⁹

It is a well known fact that General Allenby, the Commander of the British Expeditionary Force, allowed the Arabs to be the first to enter Damascus in the Fall of 1918,

¹⁵⁷T. E. Lawrence, Secret Dispatches from Arabia (England: The Golden Cockerel Press, 1939), p. 21.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 21: Nevakivi, The Arab revolt cost England 11 million pounds, p. 59.

¹⁵⁹Lawrence, Dispatches, p. 32.

in order to encourage them to fight and for the sake of British-Arab cooperation. Antonious praised not only the attacking forces but also the local Arab populace of Al-Kuds. He wrote that when the British called for volunteers to join Feisal's army "local enthusiasm outran the scarcity of able-bodied men."¹⁶⁰ Antonious, at the same time, admits that Emir al-Husaini, who started to look for actual volunteers came up with only 2000 men, but the remarkable thing for the author was that it was raised at all in the "stricken state of the country."¹⁶¹

In a statement issued by the Arab High Committee of Palestine in 1947, one finds a similar description:

When the Arabs, under King Hussein of the Hejaz joined the Allied Armies, Palestinian youth, Officers and men formed a considerable proportion of the Arab forces.¹⁶²

Lloyd George, expressing his views of the War, wrote in The Truth About the Peace Treaties:

The Arabs of Palestine who might have been helpful in many ways, were quiescent and cowering. Right through the War and up to the end there were masses of Arab soldiers from Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine in the Turkish Armies fighting against the liberation of their own race.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰Antonious, pp. 229, 230.

¹⁶¹Ibid., pp. 229, 230.

¹⁶²The Palestine Arab Case, A Statement by the Arab Higher Committee (The body representing the Palestine Arabs, April 1947), No. 3, p. 7.

¹⁶³Lloyd George, The Truth, Vol. II, pp. 1026, 1027, 1028.

He also rebuffed the chorus of Arabs who hailed Arab unity.

Arabia is not a state in any effective sense but a fortuitous concourse of tribes under chiefs, the limits of whose sway are determined not by frontiers, but by tribes which they for the time being control.¹⁶⁴

All in all, he acknowledged the Arab claim to be recognized as partners of Great Britain in the War, but he concluded by saying that what the Arabs were apt to overlook was that "their contribution in the conquest of Palestine and Syria was almost insignificant compared with that of the British Empire."¹⁶⁵

John Kimche even accused the Sharif of betraying Great Britain. He wrote that documents in the archives of the German Foreign Ministry show that Hussein was still on the payroll of Germany on June 21, 1915, and probably until some time later.¹⁶⁶ Even Yale who expressed anti-Zionist views had the courage to admit that "the Arabs attributed to the Hejazi forces of Feisal a far more important role than they actually played."¹⁶⁷

During the entire War Great Britain had another Ally, a loyal one, who rendered a highly sophisticated service to

¹⁶⁴ Nevakivi, p. 45: The Arab revolt was a failure

¹⁶⁵ Lloyd George, Vol. II, p. 1031.

¹⁶⁶ John Kimche, The Unromantics, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ Yale, The Near East, p. 329.

her - the Jews of Palestine. Antonious tried to blemish the Jewish contribution in the War. He wrote that "some of the reports that have been current about specific Jewish help are now known to be unfounded."¹⁶⁸ Antonious was not right in his verdict. The Jews did not wait for a British pledge. They entered the War on the side of Great Britain at the first opportunity they had. Already in the Winter of 1914-1915, thousands of Jewish refugees from Palestine took asylum in Egypt. These Jews were afraid that Turkey would treat them as her enemies since they were of Russian origin or were openly pro-Ally in their sympathies. Vladimir Jabotinsky, himself a Russian Jew who had given up a brilliant career as a foreign correspondent of a Russian newspaper, undertook to recruit these refugees for service with the British Army. He was able to persuade the British authorities to accept the Jewish volunteers in an auxiliary unit which served in Gallipoli, under the name the "Zion Mule Corps." He himself joined the soldiers in the battlefield. Among the outstanding warriors of this unit was Joseph Trumpeldour, who had received a Medal of Honor in the Russian Army for his outstanding services to his country. Though he lost his arm in the Russian War with Japan, he did not hesitate to serve in

¹⁶⁸

Antonious, p. 394.

the coming War. Colonel John Henry Patterson, an officer most sympathetically disposed toward the Jews, was selected to form and train a battalion of Jewish soldiers.¹⁶⁹ He had a high opinion of these two Jewish soldiers. He referred to Jabotinsky as "an officer who fought stoutly for us, and helped England and her cause in every possible way to the full extent of his power during the War."¹⁷⁰ This British officer reserved his highest evaluation for Trumpeldour, whom he considered "the bravest man I have ever seen in my life."¹⁷¹ This British Officer embarked, with 600 Jewish soldiers, in April, 1915, for the Dardanelles. The Jews did not wait to receive British assurances for support of the establishment of their coveted national home in Palestine. They shared the hardships and the plight of the Allies and distinguished themselves in the battlefield. Three Jewish soldiers even obtained military honors.¹⁷²

The Jews did not lose their interest in the War even after they found out that they were to serve in the

¹⁶⁹Richard Meinertzhagen, Middle East Diary, 1917-1956 (London: The Crescent Press, 1959, 1959), p. 48.

¹⁷⁰Malcolm Hay, Europe and the Jews, the Pressure of Christendom on the People of Israel for 1900 Years (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), p. 281.

¹⁷¹Joseph Trumpeldour, The Jewish Universal Encyclopedia in Ten Volumes, 1943 ed., X. 315.

¹⁷²Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, A History of the Jewish People (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), p. 728.

Dardanelles and not in Palestine.¹⁷³ Hundreds of Jews from Palestine and Egypt responded enthusiastically to the British call to serve in the Zion Mule Corps. They received the blessings of the Chief Rabbi of Alexandria who even administered their military oath. The Jewish confidence in the British cause ran very high during the War. It did not diminish even when, after the retreat from Gallipoli, the British High Command issued an order to disband the Zion Mule Corps.¹⁷⁴

The Jews proved themselves to be true allies of His Majesty's Government. Though lacking freedom of movement under the Ottoman rule they were able to organize one of the most highly sophisticated intelligence networks for the Allies, known by its code name "Nili."¹⁷⁵ From their center in Athlit, a tiny village on the Mediterranean shores just south of Haifa, the members of "Nili" were able to detect Ottoman movements and report them to the British. Thus they combined their agricultural activities, i.e. arranging anti-locust campaigns, with the more urgent one, that of spying on the Turkish forces in the area. The members of the

¹⁷³Ben Halpern, The Idea of the Jewish State (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 293-294.

¹⁷⁴Sachar, pp. 194, 195. The order to disband the Jewish Unit came on December 28, 1915.

¹⁷⁵Nili: "Neizach Israel Lo Yishaker." (The Eternal one of Israel Shall not lie).

Aaronsohn Family - Aaron, Alexander, Rebecca and Sarah - were the backbone of the secret operations. They reported among others on the concentration of Turkish troops in the Winter of 1916, in the area of the Suez. They supplied various British commanders with vital information. Lieutenant Leonard Woolley of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, was responsible for the spirit of cooperation which prevailed between the British Intelligence and Nili. Sir Basil Thomson, Chief of this organization, used information given to him personally by Aaron Aaronsohn, who managed to reach England under the cover of his anti-locust campaign. General Edmund Allenby and his staff members were also among those who expressed their appreciation to the Jewish spies. Captain Raymond Savage, a deputy military secretary of Allenby recorded, "It was very largely the daring work of the young spies (of Nili) which enabled the brilliant Field Marshall to accomplish his undertaking so effectively."¹⁷⁶

These members of Nili preferred to die rather than turn in their information to the Turks. After being captured in September, 1917, they were tortured by the Turks who finally hanged many of them. Sarah Aaronsohn siezed a pistol from one of her guards and shot herself to death. Like the rest of her comrades, she took her secrets to the grave.¹⁷⁷

The Jews no doubt tried to gain British friendship and trust, but they did it the hard way. They proved to

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 207.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. 208.

the Allies that they were ready to pay for this partnership with blood. Both Ismar Elbogen and Dagobert D. Runes, who devoted part of their research to the Jewish share in World War I, provide us with the most revealing figures.¹⁷⁸ In Runes' book one can find a whole chapter about the "Jew as a soldier-strategist and military adviser." He stated that 720 volunteers served in the Zion Mule Corps, which later became the 30th Royal Fusiliers. This Battalion, known as "The Judeans" pursued the Turks across the Jordan and participated in the final drive which resulted in Turkish collapse. According to this author 55,000 Jews, comprising 22% of the Jewish population of France, fought under the Tricolor. 17% of this number were killed. Of the non-Jewish population 14.9% fought with a casualty record of 16%. Over 2,000 Jewish soldiers received War decorations. One hundred and one Jews received the Croix de Guerre; 140, the Medaille Militaire and 311, membership in the Legion d'Honneur.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, of the 30,000 Jews who resided in France on the eve of the War, 12,000 volunteered.

¹⁷⁸ Dagobert D. Runes, The Hebrew Impact on Western Civilization (New York: The Citadel Press, 1951, p. 269: Ismar Elbogen, A Century of Jewish Life (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1944), p. 459.

¹⁷⁹ Runes, The Hebrew Impact, p. 269.

for service in the French Foreign Legion.¹⁸⁰ In the beginning of the War two Jewish Generals were in active service. During the War itself the number of Jewish Generals reached fourteen. France was not unique.¹⁸¹ In the British Empire 2.3% of the total population was in active service. Twelve per cent of the Jewish subjects of His Majesty served in the armed forces. Even more impressive is the fact that while only 2.3% of the non-Jewish Britons volunteered to the military, 20% of the Jews in the Army were volunteers.¹⁸² Over 10% of the Jews who served were officers. Of the comparatively few Englishmen who received the Victorian Cross, five were Jews.¹⁸³

There is no need to burden the reader with endless lists of figures of Jewish contribution to the armed forces who participated in World War I. Our purpose is to show that Jews fought for their countries and served even those among the various regimes whose attitudes toward the Jews were full of hatred and guile.¹⁸⁴ By July of 1917, 60,000 Jews in the Russian Army had been decorated and 2,600 recommended for commissions. Around 650,000 Jews, or 9.4% of the Jewish total in the Empire of the Tzar fought in the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 269.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 270.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 267.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 267.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 270.

armed forces as compared to a general total for all crown subjects of 7%. Over 15% of the Jewish soldiers lost their lives in combat.¹⁸⁵

In Rumania only 3.19% of the population were Jews, yet 4.6% of the Rumanian army were Jews. The anti-semitic bias in the country did not prevent the Military Cabinet of this East European Kingdom from bestowing 900 War decorations on Jews and promoting 218 Jews to commissioned officers.

In Italy the total Jewish population was 43,929 or 1% of the total inhabitants of the Italian Peninsula. Still 700 Jews were officers in the Italian Army. Two were full admirals, one rear admiral and eleven generals.¹⁸⁶ Elbogen reported that 10,000 soldiers perished in the Hungarian Army, and more than 12,000 in Germany.¹⁸⁷ Could the Arabs show a list of figures of comparative size? Could they claim that Arab soldiers inherited such glory and such fame in exchange for so many casualties? Obviously they could not, otherwise how could someone explain Arab historians silence on this subject. Yet, ironically the Arabs were the ones who demanded that Great Britain recognize their contribution during the War and fulfill her wartime commitments.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 271.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 271.

¹⁸⁷ Elbogen, Jewish Life, p. 459.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Great Britain did not betray the Arabs since she did not pledge Palestine to them. The architects of the British Empire did not have any intention of bequeathing any section of the Middle East to the sovereignty of Arab leaders who could not guarantee British supremacy in the area. Such supremacy was a "sine qua non" for the safety of the Suez Canal which served as the principal artery between London and Calcutta. In none of the phases which accompanied the negotiations between the British officials and Arab leaders can one find any clue for British willingness to compromise their total imperial scheme. All that His Majesty's representatives were empowered to pledge to the Arabs was independence from the Turks. This independence was to come as a reward for active Arab support to the Allies, a vital consideration of the understanding which the Arabs did not fully meet.

The Arabs themselves were not deceived into believing that Great Britain promised them Palestine. The claim for Palestine was an innovation, introduced by their leaders in a moment of despair. It was an afterthought of nationalist leaders, who required a scapegoat, an outlet, for Arab disappointment after the loss of Syria to the French.

Fortunately for the Arabs, the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence was not a contract, if for any other reason but that there was no meeting of the minds between the British and the Arabs. Moreover, since the Arabs did not keep their promise to support the Allies to the best of their ability they were not entitled to receive any reward. Hussein and his sons were not the true representatives of the Arab population of the Ottoman Empire. The Muslim inhabitants throughout the world would not be liable to pledge their loyalty to those who revolted against the Caliph-Sultan of Kushta. Their rebellion "ipso facto" made them eligible to inherit the fire of hell as it was proscribed in the pages of the Kuran.

McMahon played the role of the middleman and not the policy maker in the British-Arab negotiations. None of his undertakings to Hussein were ever accompanied by any official document, either from the British Parliament, its Foreign Office, or its War Cabinet.

If there was any post-War pledge which remained unfulfilled it was the British pledge to the Jews. This pledge was passed over by British politicians due to the fact that they did not merely try to fulfill previous promises and declarations. They had, above all, to adapt themselves to the rapid changes which occurred at the end of the War. Incipient Arab nationalism opposed any settlement with the prospective Jewish state. The competition with foreign powers

mainly with France, forced Whitehall to become receptive to Arab vocal claimants against any Jewish repatriation.

British officials in Palestine could not resist this Arab pressure and reported on a state of impasse between Arabs and Jews. Thus, previous British commitments had to be shelved in order to meet the new political occurrences. In view of these developments Great Britain tended to think of her pledges to the Jews as null and void. The Balfour Declaration, if not utterly abolished, was progressively eroded. The Jews, the faithful adherents and active supporters of the British policy remained the forgotten allies of His Majesty's Government.

(5) As regards the Moslems of Omar it shall be considered as a Moslem concern alone and shall not be subjected directly or indirectly to any non-Moslem authority.

(3) Since the Jewish opinion of the world is in favour of a return of Jews to Palestine and inasmuch as this opinion must remain a constant factor, and further as His Majesty's Government view with favour the realisation of this aspiration, His Majesty's Government are determined that in so far as is compatible with the freedom of the existing population both economic and political, no obstacle should be put in the way of the realisation of this ideal.

"In this connexion the friendship of world Jewry to the Arab cause is equivalent to support in all States where Jews have a political influence. The leaders of the Movement are determined to bring about the success of Zionism by friendship and cooperation with the Arabs, and such an offer is not one to be lightly thrown aside."

APPENDIX A

THE HOGARTH MESSAGE

The following are the terms of the message which Commander Hogarth was instructed to deliver to King Husain when he visited Jedda in January, 1918:

"(1) The Entente Powers are determined that the Arab race shall be given full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the world. This can only be achieved by the Arabs themselves uniting, and Great Britain and her Allies will pursue a policy with this ultimate unity in view.

"(2) So far as Palestine is concerned we are determined that no people shall be subject to another, but

(a) in view of the fact that there are in Palestine Wakfs and Holy places, sacred in some cases to Moslems alone, to Jews alone, to Christians alone, and in others to two or all three, and inasmuch as these places are of interest to vast masses of people outside Palestine and Arabia, there must be a special regime to deal with these places approved of by the world.

(b) As regards the Mosque of Omar it shall be considered as a Moslem concern alone and shall not be subjected directly or indirectly to any non-Moslem authority.

"(3) Since the Jewish opinion of the world is in favour of a return of Jews to Palestine and inasmuch as this opinion must remain a constant factor, and further as His Majesty's Government view with favour the realisation of this aspiration, His Majesty's Government are determined that in so far as is compatible with the freedom of the existing population both economic and political, no obstacle should be put in the way of the realisation of this ideal.

"In this connexion the friendship of world Jewry to the Arab cause is equivalent to support in all States where Jews have a political influence. The leaders of the movement are determined to bring about the success of Zionism by friendship and cooperation with the Arabs, and such an offer is not one to be lightly thrown aside."

APPENDIX B

THE DECLARATION TO THE SEVEN

His Majesty's Government have considered the memorial of the seven with the greatest care. His Majesty's Government fully appreciate the reasons why the memorialists desire to retain their anonymity, and the fact that the memorial is anonymous has not in any way detracted from the importance which His Majesty's Government attribute to the document.

The areas mentioned in the memorandum fall into four categories:-

1. Areas in Arabia which were free and independent before the outbreak of war;
2. Areas emancipated from Thukish control by the action of the Arabs themselves during the present war;
3. Areas formerly under Ottoman dominion, occupied by the Allied forces during the present war;
4. Areas still under Turkish control.

In regard to the areas occupied by Allied forces, His Majesty's Government draw the attention of the memorialists to the texts of the proclamations issued respectively by the General Officers Commanding in Chief on the taking of Bagdad and Jerusalem. These proclamations embody the policy of His Majesty's Government towards the inhabitants of those regions. It is the wish and desire of His Majesty's Government that the future government of these regions should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed and this policy has and will continue to have the support of His Majesty's Government.

In regard to the areas mentioned in the fourth category, it is the wish and desire of His Majesty's Government that the oppressed peoples of these areas should obtain their freedom and independence and towards the achievement of this object His Majesty's Government continue to labour.

His Majesty's Government are fully aware of, and take into consideration, the difficulties and dangers which beset those who work for the regeneration of the populations of the areas specified.

In spite, however, of these obstacles His Majesty's Government trust and believe that they can and will be overcome, and wish to give all support to those who desire to overcome them. They are prepared to consider any scheme of co-operation which is compatible with existing military operations and consistent with the political principles of His Majesty's Government and the Allies.

June, 1918.

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