

# HOW COLONEL T. E. LAWRENCE DECEIVED THE HASHEMITE ARABS TO REVOLT AGAINST THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

IN THE LIGHT OF SECRET BRITISH DOCUMENTS

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Seventy years ago, in June 1916 to be precise, Sherif Hussein ibn Ali, the Hashemite *amir* of Mecca, having been encouraged by the British with vague promises of “independence for the Arabs”, revolted against his suzerain, the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph, and became an instrument in the destruction of the Caliphate by Christian Powers. In the words of Robert Lacey, “his (Hussein’s) movement was less an Arab revolt than an Anglo-Hashemite conspiracy”<sup>1</sup>, cemented by about one million pounds sterling in British gold<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless Sherif Hussein, who was described by Reader Bullard, the British consul in Jeddah, as “a cunning, lying, credulous, suspicious, obstinate, vain, conceited, ignorant, greedy, cruel Arab sheikh”<sup>3</sup>, was not only deprived of the fruits of, what some Muslim scholars call, his “treachery” to Islam, but also lost his throne and thus paid dearly for having initiated a great schism in the ranks of Islam from the effects of which the region is still suffering. “Since the day the Arabs rebelled against the Ottoman Caliphate”, observes *Impact International*, “the self-destruct syndrome has not come to stop”<sup>4</sup>.

The chief protagonist in the Hashemite Arab revolt was Thomas Edward (Ned) Lawrence, “El 'Aurens” of Arabia reputation, “the man with the gold”<sup>5</sup>, remembered by some local Arabs, the fiftieth anniversary of whose death was commemorated by his supporters on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1985 at the Moreton

<sup>1</sup> Robert Lacey: *The Kingdom*, London 1981, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Storrs: *Orientalism*, London 1945, pp. 152-6.

<sup>3</sup> Lacey, op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> *Impact International*: “Can’t buy peace through supplication”, 15:19, London, 11-24 October 1985, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> David Holden and Richard Jones: *The House of Saud*, London 1981, p. 53.

village in Dorset, U. K. On that occasion, it was interesting to read in *The Guardian* newspaper of 20<sup>th</sup> May 1985, a message by “SM from Arabia on behalf of millions of betrayed Arabs”, left on the grave of Lawrence, which declared, *inter alia*:

“You had great visions for us Arabs, and we had high hopes that, with your help, and the help of your government, we could achieve not only freedom from the Ottoman, but regain, after 500 years of occupation, our identity and pride as a nation.

Alas, Aurens, the Arab world today, fifty years after your death, is in turmoil, with wars, conspiracies, divisions, and our future is uncertain...”

Fifty-one years after his death, and seventy years after the first spark of the Hashemite revolt in Arabia against the Ottoman Caliphate, impartial researchers are still trying to unravel the labyrinth of Lawrence’s role in, and contribution to, that revolt. Lawrence has been variously described by his supporters and opponents, the former deifying him as “the saviour” of the Arab people, while the latter denigrating him as an “Irish brat”, of doubtful antecedents and loyalty to the Arab cause, and more inclined to self-glorification. He has also been described as a homosexual by his adversaries, e.g. by Richard Aldington<sup>6</sup>, though without much evidence<sup>7</sup>.

Many publications about him, his biographies and published letters, and the British Foreign Office, War Office, Colonial Office and Cabinet Papers preserved in the Public Record Office, in addition to numerous other documents about him, available to researchers in various archives, constitute an invaluable source for the study of the subject, although John Griffith, Emeritus Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, where Lawrence was an undergraduate, said that he doubted whether — at this interval of time— it was possible to come to an objective, overall assessment of such a “fascinating and illusive figure”<sup>8</sup>.

Thomas Edward (Ned) Lawrence, who was born at Tremadoc (Caernarvonshire), in Wales, U. K., on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1888 as the illegitimate son of Sir

<sup>6</sup> See Richard Aldington: *Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry*, new ed., London 1969.

<sup>7</sup> See H. Montgomery Hyde: *Solitary in the Ranks: Lawrence of Arabia as airman and private soldier*, London 1977, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> *The Guardian*, London, 20.5.1985.

Thomas Chapman, an Anglo-Irish laded gentry, and his mistress and governess of his daughter, Sara Maden, partly Highland Scottish, began to take an interest in the Arab people as early as 1909. In 1911 he went to Jerablus (Carchemish) for archaeological digs, and at the end of each season's work, he travelled about, often wearing Arab clothes and living with Arabs and other local Muslim tribes<sup>9</sup>. His interest in the Arab people, and dislike of the Turks, came to the foreground during the Balkan wars (1912-3), when he wrote to Mrs. Reider from Jerablus on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1913, as follows:

“... As for Turkey, down with the Turks! But I am afraid there is, not life, but stickiness in them. Their disappearance would mean a chance for the Arabs, who were, at any rate, once not incapable of good government...”<sup>10</sup>

Early in 1914 Lawrence, archaeologist Sir Leonard Wolley and Captain S. F. Newcombe explored northern Sinai, on the Turkish frontier east of Suez, during a map-making reconnaissance from Gaza to Akaba, sponsored by the Palestine Exploration Fund. It was designed by Lord Kitchener, British High Commissioner in Egypt and later Secretary of State for War, as a camouflage for a survey of strategic importance by Captain Newcombe which made Turkey sore as she felt that this was a military game<sup>11</sup>.

When the Great War broke out in August 1914, Lawrence became a civilian employee of the Map Department of the War Office in London, charged with preparing a military map of Sinai. He wrote to Mrs. Reider from Oxford on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1914:

“... I have a horrible fear that the Turks do not intend to go to war, for it would be an improvement to have them reduced to Asia Minor<sup>12</sup>, and put into commission even there. It all depends on Enver's getting loose again...”<sup>13</sup>

By December 1914 he was a lieutenant, assigned to British Intelligence in Cairo, interviewing prisoners, drawing maps, and processing data from agents behind Turkish lines. He was also planning a strategy in the Middle

<sup>9</sup> David Garnett (ed): *The letters of T. E. Lawrence of Arabia*, London 1964, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163 and 181.

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps he anticipated the war-time secret agreements for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>13</sup> Garnett, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-6.

East for the defeat of Turkey with Arab participation<sup>14</sup>. Meanwhile he got himself attached to the newly formed Arab Bureau in Cairo from where he wrote to his archeologist friend, D. G. Hogarth, on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1915:

“(After the centre of Turkey shifts to Konya), we must, I think, look for a renaissance of the Turk when he has lost Constantinople (İstanbul). They will be much more formidable militarily —and less so politically”<sup>15</sup>.

About a month later (on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1915) he wrote to Hogarth as follows:

“... Poor old Turkey is only hanging together. People always talk of the splendid show she has made lately, but it really is too pitiful for words. Everything about her is very very sick, and almost I think it will be good to make an end of her, though it will be very inconvenient to ourselves...”<sup>16</sup>

Soon after, Lawrence was sent to Mesopotamia (Iraq) by the War Office on a secret mission. He was dispatched with Aubrey Herbert, carrying secret instructions from the War Office to negotiate with the Turkish commander, Halil Pasha, then besieging General Townshend's force Kut-ul-Amara. General Townshend had conceived the plan of buying off the Turks besieging him for cash payment. Lord Kitchener had adopted it, and General Lake, commanding in Mesopotamia, had accepted it, but most of the British officers in Mesopotamia were against the plan as they felt it was dishonourable. Sir Percy Cox had opposed it as worse for British prestige than the surrender of the garrison. Lawrence believed it was impracticable as the Turks would certainly refuse. However, Colonel Beach, Aubrey Herbert and Lawrence were sent to parley with Halil, offering him first a million pounds, and on his refusal, two million pounds to let the besieged garrison go free. Halil refused contemptuously and published the facts of the offer which were most damaging to British prestige.

Meanwhile, Lawrence, had hoped to promote a rebellion among the Mesopotamian Arabs against the Turks, and to secure their cooperation with the British army, but without success. The last thing the British Indian army

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 181-2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

officers wanted was the Arabs as allies<sup>17</sup>. Besides, the Ottoman Empire was considered to be very weak. In a series of wars, invasions and rebellions since the coming to power of the Young Turks in July 1908, Turkey had lost nearly all her remaining Balkan provinces, had her Libyan territory usurped by Italy, and her sovereignty in Crete denounced in favour of union with Greece. The secular nationalism of Turkish officers had provoked a corresponding feeling among educated young Arabs. Suddenly, the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, too, began to stir, and although the nationalism of the intellectuals and army officers in Damascus and Baghdad found no echo in peninsular Arabia, the mere hint of an Arab revival gave new impetus to international rivalries throughout the Middle East.

Once Turkey had declared herself on the side of Germany in the Great War, the British began to seek active Arab allies to protect their Middle Eastern interests and to harass the Turkish armies. The choice fell upon the House of Hashem, led by Ibn Saud's new enemy, in the words of Holden and James, "the diminutive, vainglorious but wily" Sherif Hussein ibn Ali, the *amir* of Mecca, whose name was inscribed, at Britain's instigation, as the leader of what came to be called "the Arab Revolt"<sup>18</sup>.

All through 1915 Hussein was being encouraged by the British, with vague promises of Arab independence, to revolt against the Ottoman Caliphate according to the Arab Bureau at Cairo, the British representative in Egypt had been in touch with Hussein and his sons, especially Abdullah, before the war. When Britain entered the war against Germany, the British Foreign Office telegraphed to the British Minister in Cairo at Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener's request, instructing that a special messenger should be sent to Abdullah to enquire what would be Sherif Hussein's attitude in the event of war with Turkey breaking out. Abdullah sent a written answer, expressing his preference for Britain over Turkey "so long as she protects the rights of our country, and the rights of the person of the present Emir..., so long as it supports us against any foreign aggression, and in particular, against the Ottomans, especially if they wish to set up any one else as Emir..., provided that Britain guarantees these fundamental principles in writing".

This request was met in a Foreign Office telegram of 31<sup>st</sup> October 1914 (on which date war was declared between Britain and Turkey). Sir Henry

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 201-2.

<sup>18</sup> Holden and Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 and 52.

McMahon, the British representative in Cairo, explained later how his fundamental aim had been to shorn the loyalties of the Arab soldiers fighting in the Ottoman armies:

“At the moment (1915) a large portion of the Turkish force at Gallipoli, and nearly the whole force in Mesopotamia, were Arabs... Could we give them some guarantee of assistance in the future to justify their splitting with Turkey?” he queried. “I was told to do that at once... It was the most unfortunate date my life”, later admitted McMahon<sup>19</sup>.

The Foreign Office telegram, dated 31<sup>st</sup> October 1914, was as follows:

“... If the Arab nation assist England in this war that has been forced upon us by Turkey, England will guarantee that no internal intervention takes place in Arabia, and will give the Arabs every assistance against external aggression. It may be that an Arab of the true race will assume the Khalifate at Mecca or Medina, and so, good may come by the help of God, out of all evil that is now occurring”.

This statement was transmitted to Abdullah by letter from Cairo, with the following addition:

“If the Emir of Mecca is willing to assist Britain in this conflict, Britain is willing to guarantee the rights and privileges of the Sherifiate against all external aggression, in particular that of the Ottomans...”

In the letter which Hussein sent to Sir Henry McMahon in July 1915, definitely proposing an agreement with the British Government, he laid down the following conditions:

“Mutual assistance to the best ability of their military and naval forces to face any foreign Power which may attack either party; peace not to be decided without the agreement of both parties”.

This condition was more emphatically stated in the Sherif's third letter to Sir Henry McMahon on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1915:

“When the Arabs know that Britain is their ally, who will not leave to themselves the conclusion of peace in face of Germany and Turkey, and will support and effectively defend them, then to enter the war at once will be in conformity with the general interest of the Arabs”.

<sup>19</sup> Lacey, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.

In reply, Sir Henry McMahon, acting on Foreign Office instructions, gave the following assurance in his third letter to the Sherif on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1915:

“Spare no effort to attach all the Arab peoples to our united cause, and urge them to afford no assistance to our enemies. The permanence and strength of our agreement depends on this. You may rest assured that Britain has no intention of concluding any peace in terms of which the freedom of the Arab peoples from Germany and Turkish domination does not form an essential condition”.

The Sherif took note of this assurance in his fourth letter to McMahon on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1916, and his action since that date brought it into operation. It was repeated in a Foreign Office telegraph to Sir Reginal Wingate, the new British diplomatic representative in Cairo, on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1918, for transmission to the Sherif (then King of the Hejaz), as follows:

“His Majesty’s Government, along with their Allies, stand for the cause of liberation of the oppressed nations, and are determined to stand by the Arab people in their struggle for reconstruction of an Arab world in which law shall once again replace Ottoman violence and artificial rivalries promoted by Turkish officials. His Majesty’s Government reaffirm their former pledges to His Highness in regard to the freeing of the Arab peoples”.

Meanwhile the boundaries of Arab independence also became the subject of correspondence. In a Foreign Office telegram of 14<sup>th</sup> April 1915 to the High Commissioner in Cairo, the British Government committed themselves to a public declaration that,

“They will make it an essential condition, in the terms of peace, that the Arabian Peninsula shall remain in the hands of an independent Sovereign State”. They added that “it is not possible to define at this stage exactly how much territory should be included in this State.”

That question was raised in July 1915 by Sherif Hussein in his first letter to Sir Henry McMahon, the first condition on which he proposed to cooperate with Britain against the Turks being:

“England to acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersin and Adana up to the 37<sup>th</sup> degree latitude on which degree falls Birijik, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, the Ama-

dia Island (Jezire Amadia) up to the border of Persia; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basrah; on the south by the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, up to Mersin“.

On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1915 Sir Henry McMahon, in his first letter to Sherif Hussein, gave a non-committal answer on this point, reaffirming Lord Kit-chener's pledges, but alluding to the discussion of boundaries as "prema-ture". On 9<sup>th</sup> September 1915 the Sherif, in his second letter, pressed for defini-tion. The substance of this was conveyed to the Foreign Office by Sir Henry McMahon on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1915, and in a private telegram of the same date to Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, he reported the results of the further conversations with Faroki (a member of one of the Arab national-ist organisations in the Ottoman army who had passed over to the British lines at Gallipoli, and had been brought to Egypt in October). Faroki de-clared that Germany had promised the Arab party the fulfilment of all their demands, and that they were at the parting of the ways. He said:

“The occupation by France of the purely Arab districts of Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus would be opposed by the Arabs with force of arms, but with this exception... they would accept some modi-fication of the north-west boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca”.

On 24<sup>th</sup> October 1915 Sir Henry McMahon, in his second letter to the Sherif, pointed out:

“The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta, and the portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab and should be excluded from the proposed limits and boundaries. With the above modifica-tions, and without prejudice to our existing treaties with the Arab Chiefs, we accept these limits and boundaries — subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories included in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca”.

The French interests were reserved.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1915, in his third letter, the Sherif agreed to the ex-clusion of Mersin and Adana, but formally reiterated his claim to the rest. Later he also claimed Lebanon. The Sherif's renunciation of Mersin and Adana



and the guarantees to the Christian Arabs were taken note by McMahon in his third letter of 13<sup>th</sup> December 1915. His reiterated claim to the Aleppo and Beirut *vilayets* (provinces) was ignored. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1916, in his fourth letter, the Sherif answered by declaring that he would not press his claims against France till after the war, but announcing his intention of then doing so. The Sherif never referred to boundaries again but he never withdrew his claims. On 29<sup>th</sup> July 1917 King Hussein expressed his views on the boundary question to Captain Lawrence. "If advisable, we will pursue the Turks to Constantinople (İstanbul) and Erzeroum so why talk about Beirout, Aleppo and Hail", he had declared<sup>20</sup>.

Upon such British promises Hussein and his Hashemites revolted against the Turks on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1916, capturing the small Turkish garrison in the Holy City. In October, Captain Lawrence sailed with British diplomat Sir Ronald Storrs for Arabia, where he met Sherif Abdullah, the second son of Emir Hussein, Sherif Ali and his young half-brother Zeid who sent his secretary to visit the camp of their brother Feisal near Medina<sup>21</sup>.

Having returned to Cairo in November, Lawrence urged his superiors to assist the Sherifian rebellion with arms and gold, and to make use of the dissident sheikhs by uniting them in their aspirations for independence within the framework of a general military strategy. He was ordered by General Clayton, head of British Intelligence in Cairo, to return to Arabia, where he joined Feisal's armies as a political and liaison officer. In a secret memorandum, dated 4<sup>th</sup> November 1918, submitted for the information of the British Cabinet, Lawrence observed that, when war broke out, an urgent need "to divide Islam" was felt. The British, therefore, took advantage of the dissatisfaction of the Arabic-speaking peoples against their "alien rulers". According to Lawrence, the British chose the Sherif of Mecca because of the rift he would create in Islam, because his geographical position gave him a fair chance of surviving, and because his preminence among the Arabs was based upon family prestige<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> FO 371/3384/183770: P.I.D. - Memorandum on "British commitments to King Hussein, secret, circa 5.11.1918; see also FO 371/22108/146/18; 153045/15, tel. No. 623; 174974/17; and George Antonius: *The Arab Awakening: the story of the Arab national movement*, London 1938.

<sup>21</sup> Garnett, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

Lawrence was not the only British officer to become involved in the incipient Arab rising, but in the Arabian Peninsula he quickly became —especially from his own accounts— its brains, organising force, military tactician and liaison with Cairo. He indulged in hit-and-run guerrilla operations and thus opened a small but increasingly irritating second front behind the Turkish lines. Akaba, at the north end of the Red Sea, was the first major victory, having been seized on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1917, after a two-month march, which later brought him the rank of lieutenant-colonel with the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

In this and other campaigns, Lawrence admits frankly: “All the subject provinces of the (Ottoman) Empire to me were not worth one dead English boy”<sup>23</sup>. He carried out his campaigns without endangering more than a handful of Englishmen. This did not apply to the Arabs and the Turks, although he wrote to a friend, on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1917, from Akaba:

“...This killing and killing of Turks is horrible. When you charge in at the finish and find them all over the place in bits, and still alive many of them, and know that you have done hundreds in the same way before, and must do hundreds more if you can”<sup>24</sup>.

Lawrence spent most of the years 1917 and 1918 in attempts to coordinate the Arab movements with the campaign of General (later Lord) Sir Edmund Allenby, the commander-in-chief of the British forces in the Middle East, who was advancing towards Jerusalem. In a letter to V.W.Richards, dated 15<sup>th</sup> July 1918, he admits that he had been “violently uprooted and plunged so deeply into a job too big for me, that everything feels unreal”. He lived only “as a thief of opportunity”, snatching the chances of the moment when and where he saw them.

“The job”, he went on, “is to foment an Arab rebellion against Turkey, and for that I have to try and hide my frankish exterior, and be as little out of the Arab picture as I can. So it’s a kind of foreign stage, on which one plays day and night, in fancy dress, in a strange language, with the price of failure on one’s head if the part is not well filled...”<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 183; see also the introduction to the Oxford edition of Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

<sup>24</sup> Garnette, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

Lawrence was not sure of success.

“Whether we are going to win or lose, when we do strike, I cannot ever persuade myself”, he declared. “The whole, thing is such a play, and one cannot put conviction into one’s day dreams...”

Nevertheless, with a bodyguard of Arab tribesmen, “picked riders from the young men of the deserts”, whom he described as “more splendid than a tulip garden”, “we ride like lunatics, and with our Beduins pounce on the unsuspecting Turks, and destroy them in heaps... it is all very gory and nasty after we close grips. I love the preparation and the journey, and loathe the physical fighting...”<sup>26</sup>.

Yet Lawrence did get involved in a number of raids, e.g. during the destruction of the Turkish Fourth Army in September 1918, when he had given orders to his men to take no prisoners. This is vividly described in the *Arab Bulletin* (No. 106). The excuse was that the Turks were supposed to have massacred the villagers of Tell Arar. In retaliation, 5,000 Turkish soldiers were killed, and Auda Abu Tayi, according to Lawrence, “tired of the slaughter, took the last 600 prisoners”. Many times Lawrence had been driven by what he thought as military necessity to commit atrocities upon the “enemy”, and even murdered his own wounded to prevent them, as he claimed, from falling into the hands of the Turks<sup>27</sup>.

When finally Lawrence and his Arab guerrillas rode into the chaos of Damascus on the evening of 30<sup>th</sup> September 1918, he witnessed the defeat of his aspirations for the Arabs in the moment of their triumph, when they broke into factionalism. In Damascus, according to Lawrence, Shukri el-Ayyoubi and the town council proclaimed the King of the Arabs and hoisted the Arab flag “as soon as Mustafa Kemal and Jemal had gone...”<sup>28</sup> Anglo-French treachery towards the Arabs, however, as reflected in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916, dividing the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire among the Gerat Powers, and revealed by the Bolsheviks after their revolution in November 1917, had already betrayed the Arabs and disgusted Lawrence.

On 28<sup>th</sup> August 1918 Sherif Hussein addressed a letter to Sir Reginald Wingate from Mecca, declaring that the fundamental purpose of his

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

movement was "to preserve the political state of Islam, which is threatened with decline by the demolition of the Ottoman Empire"; and that the justification of his revolt, and of the British Government's support, were contingent on the practical realisation of this fundamental aim. In view of the new circumstances, he wished to know how far the British Government still subscribed to what he regarded as the essential conditions of future success. He set forth the conception of the term of his formal agreement with the British Government, and affirmed that any substantial modification of them would leave him no option but to withdraw from all further participation in the Arab movement. He hoped that his fate might be decided by the British Government and not deferred for consideration by a peace conference.

But the terms now quoted by Hussein were unacceptable to the British as they stood. He had reiterated the demands in his letters written previous to the revolt, with several additions to them, and had totally ignored the reservations imposed by the British Government in their replies. He was doubtful of his capacity to realise his aims unaided, and fearful of the censure which he felt would be meted out to him as "a duped schismatic" by Muslims if he failed. The Muslims in general, according to Wingate, had hitherto regarded the Hejaz revolt, and the British share in it, with suspicion or dislike. In their eyes its justification was contingent on its success: failure would be seriously detrimental to British prestige and to Britain's future relations with them. The withdrawal of King Hussein from the active leadership of the "Arab Movement" would entail consequences little short of disastrous. It would remove "the only commanding figure", and reduce Arab military participation to spasmodic tribal activity against the Turks. Further disintegration would ensue, leading, in all probability, to a conflagration in central Arabia of which Britain's opponents would take full advantage, and seriously affect British military operations. It was highly important to reassure Hussein and to rectify his existing attitude. Wingate suggested that he should be supported as far as possible<sup>29</sup>.

Meanwhile Lawrence, disillusioned, left for home late in October 1918, but not before he wrote to Major R.H. Scott on 4<sup>th</sup> October, from Cairo, as follows:

<sup>29</sup> FO 371/3384/171983: Reginald Wingate to Arthur James Balfour, Ramleh secret despatch No. 219, 21.9.1918, forwarding the translation of a letter dated at Mecca on 28.8.1918 and addressed by the King of the Hejaz.

“...We were an odd little set, and we have I expect, changed history in the Near East. I wonder how the Powers will let the Arabs get on”<sup>30</sup>.

He arrived in England on 24<sup>th</sup> October, and six days later King George V sent for him formally to invest him with the military decorations awarded to him during the Arab campaign and which were already officially gazetted. Lawrence, however, astonished the King by begging to be allowed to forego all honours, including the Order of the Bath, the Order of Merit and the title of “Sir”. As he told his biographer, Robert Graves, the part he had played in the Arab revolt was dishonourable to himself and to his country and government. He had, by order, fed the Arabs with false hopes, and would now be obliged, if he might be quietly relieved of the obligation to accept honours for succeeding in his fraud. He declared that he would fight by straight means or crooked until His Majesty’s Ministers had conceded to the Arabs “a fair settlement of their claims”<sup>31</sup>.

He was demobilised as a lieutenant-colonel on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1919, later calling his war’s end status as a colonel “temporary” and “acting” to expedite travel from Cairo to London. A colonel at 30, he was a private at 34. He now began to prepare for the peace conference, and spent the next three years at Versailles, London and Cairo, in a fight for Arab independence, finding the work more exhausting, physically, mentally and spiritually, than any of the hardships and dangers he had faced during the Arabian campaign. He had much faith in President Wilson who, he hoped, would secure self-determination for the Arab peoples; but he was completely disillusioned when he returned from the peace conference (which he had attended in Arab dress). His disgust and bitterness, and that of his generation which had fought and won the war and which found out that all it had fought for was betrayed, are expressed in his introduction to the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Oxford text, omitted from the subscribers’ edition on the advice of George Bernard Shaw.

Lawrence complained bitterly:

“... When we achieved and the new world dawned, the old men came out again and took from us our victory, and remade it in the likeness of the former world they knew...

<sup>30</sup> Garnett, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

<sup>31</sup> Hyde, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

I meant to make a new nation, to restore to the world a lost influence, to give 20 millions of Semites the foundation on which to build an inspired dream-place of their national thoughts. So high an aim called out the inherent nobility of their minds and made them play a generous part in events: but when we won it was charged against me that the British petrol royalties in Mesopotamia were become dubious, and French colonial policy ruined in the Levant...

If I have restored to the East some self-respect, a goal, ideals; if I have made the standard of rule of white over red more exigent, I have fitted those peoples in a degree for the new commonwealth in which the dominant races will forget their brute achievements, and white and red and yellow and brown and black will stand up together without side-glances in the service of the world"<sup>32</sup>.

Any hope of such an achievement appeared to have been for ever defeated by a peace treaty, which was supposed to be founded upon the principle of self-determination for all the peoples.

On 8<sup>th</sup> September 1919 Lawrence sent a letter to *The Times*, part of which was suppressed by the editor. It was published on 11<sup>th</sup> September. According to M. Steed, the editor, in the suppressed part of the letter Lawrence had declared that he had been led to believe that the British Government meant to live up to its promises to the Arabs, and that it was because of this belief that he had encouraged the Arabs. He wished to inform the Arabs and the British public that he regretted what he had done because the Government evidently had no intention of living up to the promise it had authorized him to make to the Arabs<sup>33</sup>.

A few days later he wrote to Cecil Harmsworth at the Foreign Office, making a number of suggestions for the solution of the Arab question. He believed that there was a secret agreement between Mustafa Kemal and Feisal to cooperate against the French in Cilicia, and observed:

"Mustafa Kemal is alarmed at French activity there; he is just now pro-British since he trusts our Turcophils (Montagu, Amery, Aubrey Herbert); but in this connection I hope note is being taken of Bolshevik advance in Turkestan. A Wahabi-like Moslem edition of

<sup>32</sup> Garnett, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

Bolshevism is possible and would harm us almost as much in Mesopotamia as in Persia...”

Further on he claimed that no Mustafa Kemal - Feisal agreement existed, but Arabs of the “Young Arab” party were agreeable to it, and Feisal in a corner would be prepared to accept any help.

“Mustafa Kemal cannot make up his mind between Cilicia and Syria for action”, went on Lawrence, “and will not act except in desperate or very favourable circumstances... I would like to know whether we have ever thought of using Talat to damage Enver. His memoirs would be useful to us: and Mustafa Kemal is waving Enver like a banner in his movement. Of course Mustafa Kemal is much the more able of the two, but lacks Envers’s personal magnetism”<sup>34</sup>.

Lawrence returned to Oxford after his defeat. His mother described how, at this period of extreme depression and nervous exhaustion, he would sometimes sit the entire morning between breakfast and lunch in the same position, without moving, and with the same expression on his face. Meanwhile the Ottoman Empire was being parcelled out among the victors by a treaty, which was to be imposed on the Turks at Sèvres in August 1920. On 30<sup>th</sup> May Lawrence wrote to the *Sunday Times*:

“The terms of the Turkish Treaty (of Sèvres) are admitted as impossible by those who had a hand in framing them. No account was taken of the actual conditions of the former Turkish Empire, or of the military and financial strengths of the countries devouring it. Each party making the terms considered only what it could take, or rather what could be most difficult for her neighbours to take or to refuse her, and the document is not the constitution of a new Asia, but a confession, almost an advertisement, of the greeds of the conquerors. No single clause of it will stand the test of three years’ practice and it will be happier than the German treaty only in that it will not be revised—it will be forgotten”.

To show his opinion of the allies’ treatment of the Arabs, King Hussein of the Hejaz forbade his representatives at Paris to sign the Treaty of Sèvres and did not join the League of Nations.

In July 1920 Lawrence wrote to *The Times* that, in that week’s debate in the House of Commons on the Middle East, a veteran of the House had ex-

<sup>34</sup> FO 371/4236/E 129405.

pressed surprise that the Arabs of Mesopotamia were in arms against the British, despite "our well-meant mandate".

"The Arabs rebelled against the Turks during the war", went on Lawrence, "not because the Turkish Government was notably bad, but because they wanted independence. They did not risk their lives in battle to change masters, to become British subjects or French citizens, but to win a show of their own... It is not astonishing that their patience has broken down after two years. The government we have set up is English in fashion, and is conducted in the English language. So it has 450 British executive officers running it, and not a single responsible Mesopotamian. In Turkish days 70 per cent of the executive civil service was local. Our 80,000 troops there are occupied in police duties not in guarding the frontiers. They are holding down the people. In Turkish days two army corps in Mesopotamia were 60 per cent Arab in officers, 95 per cent in other ranks..."<sup>35</sup>.

In the *Sunday Times* of 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1920, he declared that there had been a "deplorable contrast between our profession and our practice". The British had said that they had gone to Mesopotamia to defeat Turkey, and had stayed there "to deliver the Arabs from the oppression of the Turkish Government", and to make available for the world its resources of corn and oil. They had spent nearly a million men and a thousand million pounds towards those ends.

"Our government", went on Lawrence, "is worse than the old Turkish system. They kept 14,000 local conscripts embodied, and killed a yearly average of 200 Arabs in maintaining peace. We keep 90,000 men, with aeroplanes, armoured cars, gunboats and armoured trains. We have killed about 10,000 Arabs in this rising this summer..."

The Government in Bagdad have been hanging Arabs in that town for political offences, which they call rebellion. The Arabs are not rebels against us. They are still nominally Turkish subjects, nominally at war with us... How far the killing of 10,000 villagers and townspeople this summer hinder the production of wheat, cotton

<sup>35</sup> Garnett, op. cit., pp. 294, and 307-8.



and oil? How long will we permit millions of pounds, thousands of Imperial troops, and tens of thousands of Arabs to be sacrificed on behalf of a form of colonial administration which can benefit nobody but its administrators?"<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Lloyd George decided to take the Middle East out of the hands of Lord Curzon in the Foreign Office and entrust it to Winston Churchill who went to the Colonial Office. Lawrence, who had previously discussed the situation with Lloyd George, was appointed political adviser by Churchill. He had stipulated that the promises made to the Arabs should be redeemed as far as was consistent with a French Syria. Churchill, with Lawrence, went out in March 1921 to the Cairo Conference, which was attended by all those responsible for the British Government and military organisations in the Middle East. Feisal was put forward as a candidate for the throne of Mesopotamia, and was elected the following June by an overwhelming majority of Iraqis<sup>37</sup>.

Lawrence had much to do with the candidature of Feisal. We learn from a cipher telegram which Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby sent to Lord Curzon from Cairo on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1921, that Lawrence had a long secret interview with Feisal on the British mandate in Iraq. Feisal expressed his appreciation of the general policy outlined, and promised to do all he could to make his part of it work. He would accept the British mandate condition and establish friendly relations with Bin Saud on condition of the Hejaz immunity from a Wahabi attack. He also asked for a British adviser on his personal staff.

"He regards the people of Iraq as not fitted yet for responsible Government", reported Lawrence; "and if he is left at the mercy of the local people in all things, there will be a disaster. He will require British help sometimes against his own people, and he hopes his opinion on the permanent garrison will be taken eventually... When his election is a fact, he will ask Sir P. Cox to arrange a friendly accord between himself and Bin Saud and will do his best to bring in the father (Hussein) as the third party. Abdullah warns me this will be difficult since Hussein flies into hysterics and resigns whenever any suggestion of an accommodation is pressed upon him"<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 316-7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 323, 328-9.

<sup>38</sup> FO 371/6350/E 4509.

Lawrence was also used by Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill in the subsidy negotiations with King Hussein, as he was used in the late 1918 and early 1919 by the Foreign Office in cajoling Feisal to accept an agreement with France over Syria<sup>39</sup>.

While Lawrence was at the Colonial Office, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, Dr. McInnes, became much disturbed at a passage in *Zionism and World Politics* by Horace M. Kallon, complaining about the military administration there, of sabotaging the Balfour Declaration of Jewish settlement in Palestine, and of establishing their own programme as a *fait accompli*.

“Anti-Semitism among high officials had not a little to do with the matter; ignorance, stupidity and incompetence among their subordinates not a little”, went on Kallon. “That they were not officially made aware of the Balfour Declaration helped. That, as Colonel Lawrence pointed out to Dr. Weizmann, the Episcopal diocese with missionary interests organized anti-Jewish propaganda helped”.

The bishop wrote to Lawrence on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1921, demanding a denial of the statement attributed to him, and suggesting that he might find it necessary to publish their correspondence in the press. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1922 Lawrence seems to have replied, referring the bishop to the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel. The following 10<sup>th</sup> May Winston Churchill pointed out that “the book in question was published before Colonel Lawrence became a member of the Colonial Office, and consequently, that expressions of opinion attributed to him by the writer are of no concern to this Department”.

The bishop, however, stuck to his point and on 23<sup>rd</sup> June wrote once more demanding a reply, adding that he would shortly be arriving in London. Lawrence drafted two replies to the bishop. The first one, which was not sent, was as follows:

“You wish me to deny statements which a third person declares I made to Dr. Weizmann. I will do nothing of the sort. I have never in my life denied any published statement attributed to me, and am not tempted to begin in your three-cornered case. Especially as I suspect you want my denials only to assure yourself and triumph over Dr. Weizmann, a great man whose boots neither you nor I, my dear Bishop, are fit to black...”<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Garnett, op. cit., p. 332.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 342-3.

There is little evidence to show that Lawrence was pro-Zionist and in favour of Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine, although Suleiman Mousa, in his Arabic work published in 1962 and entitled *T.E. Lawrence: An Arab View*, denigrates Lawrence's veracity and impact on the Arab revolt and considers him a less-than-covert Zionist.

Lawrence left the Colonial Office in the summer of 1922, and with the covert help of his wartime colleague, Air Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, enlisted under the assumed name of John Hume Ross in the R.A.F. on 27<sup>th</sup> August, in order to get away from it all. He also drafted the preface to the abridgment of the Oxford text of his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (drafted on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1922), in which he declared that England was out of the Arab affair with clean hands.

"Some Arab advocates (the most vociferous joined our ranks after the Armistice)", he observed, "have rejected my judgment on this point. Like a tedious Pensioner I showed them my wounds (over 60 I have, each scar evidence of a plain incurred in the Arab service) as proof that I had worked sincerely on their side. They found me out-of-date: and I was happy to withdraw from a political milieu which had never been congenial"<sup>41</sup>.

According to David Garnett, one of Lawrence's biographers:

"The desire to suffer, the readiness to suffer, was in my opinion the most abnormal feature of Lawrence's character... Lawrence is not normal in many ways, and it is extraordinarily difficult to do anything for him! He was hunted by pressmen, by free-lance journalists and photographers... It is no doubt true that Lawrence would not have liked to have been forgotten. He had the vanity of so many Irishmen. But the frontier between what was satisfying to Lawrence's vanity and what increased his persecution mania fluctuated extremely and cannot be drawn..."<sup>42</sup>.

Some of his later correspondence is very revealing and interesting, e.g. he wrote to D.G. Pearman in February 1928 from Karachi:

"... It will be generations, I expect —unless the vital tempo of the East is much accelerated— before any two Arabic states join volun

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 351-2.

tarily. I agree that their only future hope is that they should join, but it must be a natural growing-together. Forced unions are pernicious: and politics, in such things, should come after geography and economics. Communications and trade must be improved before provinces can join.

The nearest approach to an Arab empire at present is Ibn Saud's. It is a figment built on sand. Nothing static will rise in the desert, which has seen hundreds of such tyrannies as his, all cemented (less liberally, perhaps) with blood. It will pass"<sup>43</sup>.

He wrote to Sir Hugh Trenchard, Marshall of R.A.F., from Karachi on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1928, about the Wahabi movement as follows:

"I'm sorry for the Beduin, high-spirited, ignorant animals, led astray by fanatics. Religious theories are the devil, when they are ridden too hard, and begin to dictate conduct... Ibn Saud was a fine company-commander, who's a bit out of his depth with a battalion. He's trying to bestride two worlds, the desert and the towns. It has never been done so far, except episodically. Feisal wanted to attempt it in 1918, and I broke him away, then from nomads, roughly. I don't believe you can yet unite, or federate, or crush into one tyranny even, any two Arab-speaking districts; yet, nevertheless Ibn Saud... is our one real asset in his kingdom... Men of decision are rare in the desert and in London"<sup>44</sup>.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1929 he wrote to Professor Yale from London:

"It is my deliberate opinion that the Winston Churchill settlement of 1921-2 (in which I shared) honourably fulfils the whole of the promises we made to the Arabs in so far as the so-called British spheres are concerned...

... Leave for 50 years. If Iraq continues to put up a decent show, across three generations, then the Arab Revolt was worth while. In our life-time we cannot reap either credit or disgrace: and after I'm dead my bones will not care..."<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 577.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 599.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 671-2.

To Frederic Manning he wrote on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1930 from Plymouth:

“... I did not believe finally in the Arab movement; but thought it necessary, in its time and place. It has justified itself hugely, since the war, too...”<sup>46</sup>.

On 28<sup>th</sup> November 1934 he wrote to B.H. Liddell Hart from York:

“... Mustafa Kemal was a great patriot, and anti-foreign from 1913 onwards. His Nationalism was founded to combat the pro-German tendency of Enver”<sup>47</sup>.

In the month of his death he wrote to Eric Kennington from Moreton, Dorset (on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1935):

“... You wonder what I am doing? Well, so do I, in truth. Days seem to dawn, suns to shine, evenings to follow, and then I sleep. What I have done, what I am doing, what I am going to do, puzzle me and bewilder me. Have you ever been a leaf and fallen from your tree in autumn and been really puzzled about it? That’s the feeling”<sup>48</sup>.

In June 1929 he had written to an unknown correspondent:

“... I have done with politics, I have done with the Orient, and I have done with intellectuality. O Lord, I am so tired! I want so much to lie down and sleep and die. Die is best because there is no reveille. I want to forget my sins and the world’s weariness”<sup>49</sup>.

His death-wish came true on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1935. That day Lawrence wrote into Bovington Camp on his Brough motor-cycle to send a telegram. On his way back to Clouds Hill, where he lived, he had an accident, was thrown over his handlebars and received sever injuries to the brain. He lay unconscious for six days. The end came shortly after 8 o’clock on Sunday morning, 19<sup>th</sup> May when his heart stopped beating. He was buried in the cemetery next to the parish church of Moreton village, Dorset. It was a simple ceremony, attended by his closest friends<sup>50</sup>, including Sir Ronald Storrs, the chief pall-bearer, who tried to immortalise him in his well-known book *Orien-*

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 693.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 831.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 871.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 872-3.

tations<sup>51</sup>, as the American war correspondent I owell Thomas had tried to make a legend out of him during the winter of 1919-20<sup>52</sup>.

The personality, character, and exploits of Lawrence have come under much criticism. Without belittling the Hashemite revolt in Arabia, it has been suggested that the importance of that revolt has been much exaggerated by Lawrence in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*; so has his participation and role in that revolt. Richard Aldington, in his work *Lawrence of Arabia* (London 1955) throws much doubt on the veracity of Lawrence, and claims that his stories were “faked” and “boastful — the megalomania of a self-important egotist”<sup>53</sup>.

There is much evidence to support this view. For example, Lawrence told King George V that he once had a shot at “the famous Mustafa Kemal, generally acknowledged as the founder of modern Turkey, but only hit a staff officer beside him”<sup>54</sup>. On the other hand, he is reported to have told W.G. Childs of the British Foreign Office, in April 1926, that “by a curious accident” he (Lawrence) was able, in September 1918, “to have several conversations with Mustafa Kemal Pasha, and that among the topics discussed was that of Turkish war aims”<sup>55</sup>. These two stories have never been confirmed either by their protagonists or officially.

It has also been suggested that Lawrence and the British Government had “backed the wrong horse” in Arabia in the person of Sherif Hussein ibn Ali, instead of supporting “the stabler and more reasonable” Abdul Aziz bin Saud, who was the rising leader in Nejd<sup>56</sup>. Sir Arnold Wilson, who had been a political officer in Mesopotamia during the Arab revolt, in common with others who were attached to the India Office, was highly critical of the work of Lawrence and the Arab Bureau. St. John Philby, who likewise served as a political officer in Mesopotamia, shared Wilson’s view and felt that Ibn Saud and not Hussein should have been supported by Lawrence and the Arab Bureau. In Philby’s opinion the only monument to Lawrence’s work were the destroyed remains of the Hejaz railway<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Storrs, op. cit., pp. 453-4.

<sup>52</sup> Hyde, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>53</sup> *Lawrence of Arabia*, London 1955, p. 820.

<sup>54</sup> Hyde, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> FO 371/215/L 2540: Memorandum by W.G. Childs, London, 20.4.1926.

<sup>56</sup> Lacey, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

Robert Lacey, in his book *The Kingdom* (London 1981), goes so far as to claim that Lawrence had actually deceived the Arabs. He gives as evidence Lawrence's admission in the "Introductory Chapter" of his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, when he revealed:

"... The (British) Cabinet raised the Arabs to fight for us by definite promises of self-government afterwards. Arabs believe in persons, not in institutions. They saw in me a free agent of the British Government, and demanded from me an endorsement of its written promises. *So I had to join the conspiracy, and, for what my word was worth, assured the men of their reward.*

It was evident from the beginning that if we won the war these promises would be dead paper, *and had I been an honest adviser of the Arabs I would have advised them to go home and not the risk their lives fighting for such stuff... I risked the fraud, on my conviction that Arab help was necessary to our cheap and speedy victory in the East, and that better we win and break our word than lose.*"

For this great let down of the Arab people Lawrence later felt remorse as reflected in the following remarks:

"In our two years' partnership (with the Arabs) under fire they grew accustomed to believing me and to think my Government, like myself, sincere. In this hope they performed some fine things, but, of course, *instead of being proud of what we did together, I was continually and bitterly ashamed*"<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 135. There are no italics in the original text.

**Documents**

- Document No. 1 ..... Lawrence in Arab dress
- Document No. 2 ..... A photograph of Lawrence
- Document No. 3 ..... British map showing the Arab rebellion
- Document No. 4 ..... Sketch-map drawn by Lawrence, showing his guerrilla activities
- Document No. 5 ..... Private and secret letter, dated Paris, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1919, showing how Lawrence was being used by the British Government
- Document No. 6 and 6A ..... Photocopy of the original letter which Lawrence sent to the British Foreign Office in September 1919, mentioning also Mustafa Kemal





*Salâhi R. Sonyel*



Belge No. 1

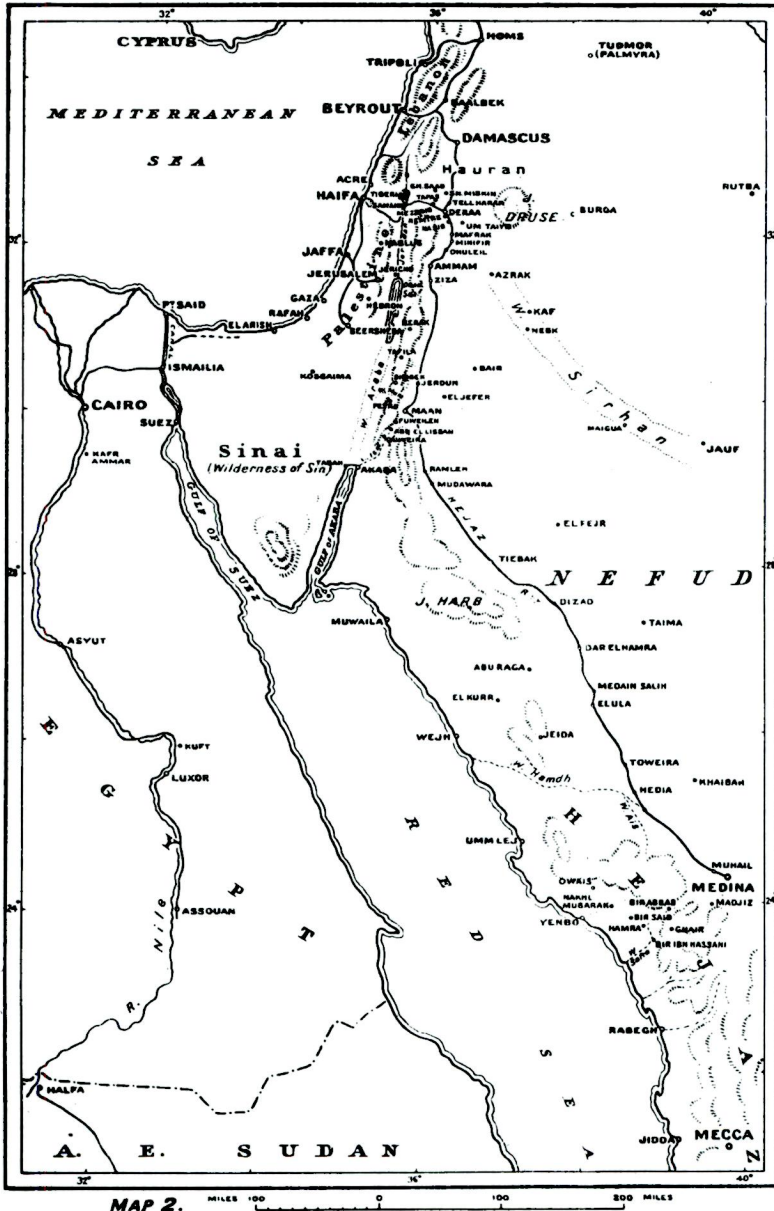
Document No. 1

*Salâhi R. Sonyel*



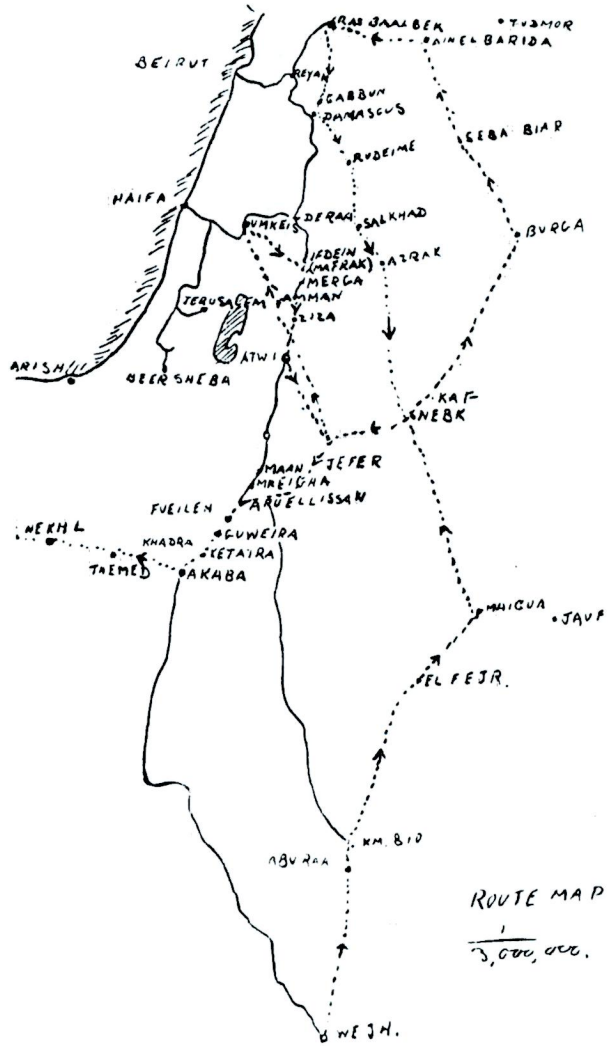
Belge No. 2

Document No. 2



Belge No. 3

Document No. 3



Belge No. 4

Document No. 4

*Salâhi R. Sonyel*



*Private & Secret*

BRITISH DELEGATION,  
PARIS.

September 3rd, 1919.

Private & Secret.

My dear Archie,

125340

I have received your letter No. 116059/ME44a  
of August 21st about Colonel Lawrence and have consulted  
the authorities here.

5 SEP 1919

The reply is that Colonel Lawrence should be considered to be under the Foreign Office, and that we do not share the apprehensions as to the effect of his presence in Paris at the proper time. It is considered, on the contrary, that there is little hope of a settlement ~~except~~ in an agreement between Feisal and the French, and that such an agreement would hardly be possible except with Colonel Lawrence's assistance. If he is properly handled, he may be able to get Feisal into a reasonable frame of mind, and if he cannot or will not, probably no one else can. If Feisal comes here for the ultimate settlement and then found that we were preventing him from having the advice of Lawrence, it would only make him more suspicious of an Anglo-French plot against him and all the less likely to be accommodating.

*Gravelle*  
*Vine*

*Dr. Sonyel 19/19*

**The Secretary**

**to the Army Council.**

Belge No. 5

Document No. 5

Reference: - Belge No 6  
 Document No. 6  
 FO 371/4236 80834

EMBULY RETURN OFFICE

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*W. L. S.*

To satisfy French agitation we should agree to evacuate (Syria) Damascus, Daraa and Amman and return to the "International" area of the Sykes-Picot agreement. We may also be able to stop the ~~French~~ <sup>French</sup> advance to Feisal: but this is more difficult, and it involves the French accepting our back ~~stop~~ <sup>stop</sup> ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> as distributable. 15 SEP 1918 The substitution of French military command on the Syrian coast for the present command of Marshall Alibey, and the delimitation of a Franco-Mesopotamian frontier, and the decision as to who shall be responsible for e.g. the Kurds.

Great Britain will in any case formally ask Feisal to accept a embassy for area B (Deraa - Akaba) and receive British advisors for that area.

Temporary arrangements will have to be made for imports and exports of the Arab zones, A and B, through Haifa, Beyrut, Tripoli, and Alexandria.

We should secure assurances from the French and the Arabs that they would mutually respect the boundary of the direct French zone of the Sykes-Picot agreement (which Feisal had been initial for the Damascus Government). It should be understood that division in either sphere will be regarded by us as our concern, till peace is signed with Turkey.

In the concern it should be noted that hostilities between Arabs & French will cut off all the food supply of the coast. The French should be informed that we will provide neither transport nor food for either side in each contingency.

If the French ever cease to respect the Arabs for about twelve months, they will then be impeded to help them. If they are impatient now they only unite the Arabs against them.

An outbreak will be caused if French troops pass their direct (S-P) boundary without Arab permission.

- A. Above all things in our interests a conflict between French & Arabs is to be prevented. If the Arabs come off badly first clash, the affair might fizzle out, but they hold the initiative, and a preliminary success would unite all Moslem Syria against the French in arms. Such action will probably force us back to the Baghdad and Jerusalem lines as a measure of security, and will probably make public a Mosul-Kamal - Feisal understanding against Alibey.
- B. Mustafa Kemal is alarmed at Feisal acting thus: he is just now pro-British and he trusts our Turco-philic / Marabout, Amoy, Aubrey Herbert): also that in his connection I hope will bring back of Bolshevist advance in Turkestan. A Wahabi-like Moslem edition of Bolshevism is possible & would harm us almost as much in Mesopotamia as in Persia. We are preparing the way for this by allowing Nod to plot with Kurds.
- C.
- D.
- E.
- F. Pay regard the situation in Mesopotamia as disquieting, & if we do not find our ways, will expect results there about March next.
- G. To regulate our affairs in the old Turkish Empire, and to have our main forces there in condition is but speedy aid to one another in the events that may happen shortly, it seems very desirable to have all our military commands coming into one. Marshall Alibey is qualified by ability to control our generals in Arab Moslem and in Mesopotamia and would have been to do it, if he would devolve the direct administration of Egypt to the hands of a subordinate.

T.H. Lawrence.

Reference: - Belge No. 6A  
Document No. 6A

FO 371/4236 30834

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1	2	3	4	5

Notes.

- A. I should say that no Mustafa Kemal - Faisal agreement exists, but Arabs of the "Young Arab" party are agreeable to it, and Faisal is a <sup>French</sup> ~~French~~ will be prepared to accept any help. There has been a revival of Jewish concern in Turkey lately, and notes are passing in London on the point.
- B. The Armenian in the Caucasus are not in danger from Mustafa Kemal unless they attack E. J. Sursock. The key to their question will probably be the political history of the Turkish Muslims in the next six months.
- C. Mustafa Kemal cannot make up his mind between Cilicia and Smyrna for action, and will not act except in desperate or very favourable circumstances.
- D. I do not believe that the elements that concluded the Tarsian agreement with us have any deep root in Tarsia, and a Bolshevik success in the Median neighbourhood might change the attitude of the Persians radically.
- ~~F~~ The dis-satisfaction against us in Mesopotamia is mostly in the towns; and will become active when the notables care enough to go out and make agreement with the country-people.
- ~~F~~ The Kurdish agitation is most mischievous. Kurds have no corporate feeling and no capacity for autonomy or nationality. Mustafa Kemal believes that we are doing it out of love for him.
- G. I would like to know whether we have ever thought of using Talbat to damage Enver. His memoir would be useful to us; and Mustafa Kemal is warring Enver like a banner in his moment. Of course Mustafa Kemal is mind the morale of the two, but lacks Enver's personal magnetism.

Belge No. 6A

Document No. 6A



