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THE ARAB GOVERNMENT  
IN SYRIA FROM  
THE CAPTURE OF DAMASCUS  
TO THE BATTLE OF MEISALUN  
(30 September 1918 - 24 July 1920)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for a Master's Degree in Arab Studies  
from the American University of Beirut

by

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This thesis is dedicated to the people of the Syrian Arab Republic who have offered me their most kind hospitality and shown me unfailing courtesy during my more than two years residence in their beautiful country.

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PREFACE

I commenced work on this thesis in October 1962. I have continued to work on it off and on since that date despite many interruptions necessitated by my duties, first at the American Embassy, Beirut and after March 1963 at the American Embassy, Damascus. In addition to the lapse of time, I have encountered innumerable other difficulties ranging from being snowbound in the mountains of Lebanon to problems caused by the various internal upheavals which have taken place during my residence in Syria. I would like to think that these vicissitudes have not had their effect upon this effort but I know that this is not the case. I therefore submit this thesis not with pride but rather with reluctance, knowing that the subject deserves more than I have been able to offer it in terms of time and talent.

In originally selecting the topic, I used the following two criteria:

a. Is the subject one which, if I had been born an Arab, would have more than a passing interest for me; and,

b. Would it require me to use contemporary Arabic sources to the extent that I was able?

I believe that the subject selected has fulfilled both requirements. For any student with an interest in history, the story of his own nation's struggle for independence is of consuming significance and for this particular subject there are many reasonably accessible Arabic sources, which though I have not been able to make use of them to the extent that I would

have liked due to language limitation and lack of time, have still been the major source of information upon which this thesis rests.

The most important sources in Arabic used in preparing this thesis are the 141 issues of Al Asimah, the official gazette of the Arab government in Damascus during the period under question, and the book Yaum Meisalun, by Sati al Husri, which is an invaluable contemporary account. In English the most important primary source is Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919 - 1939, First Series, Volume IV, edited by E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler; Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1952. In French the most valuable reference has been Un Gouvernement Arabe a Damas, Phillipe David, (Paris: Marcel Giard, 1923).

In the matter of transliteration I have attempted to be consistent if not completely accurate. I have not used diacritical marks but have attempted to render diphthongs in such a way as to differentiate their sound from that of the ordinary long vowel (e.g. Yaum instead of Yūm). Purists may object to my rather simplified approach to a difficult problem but any other solution considering my less than perfect knowledge of Arabic would be misrepresentation. For the same reason I have employed the spellings and names ordinarily used in English for cities and towns (e.g. Aleppo rather than Halab).

I am indebted to many people for assistance in the preparation of this thesis. I particularly wish to thank Dr. Zeine N. Zeine, my advisor, for his help but more so for his encouragement. Unfortunately, due to the distance involved I have not been able to consult with Dr. Zeine as much as I would have liked and definitely not as much as I should have. Whatever merits this work may have are due in large measure to Dr. Zeine's valued advice. Whatever faults it may have and any errors of fact or of

interpretation are my responsibility and only mine.

I also wish to thank Dr. Nabih A. Faris, for his encouragement and always helpful advice; Lt Colonel E. J. Fredericks, US Army, himself a student of Arab History, for generously giving me time to work on this paper; Mr. Jules Abbosh, Mr. Nasri Eid and Mr. Ibrahim Audeh to whom I am indebted for whatever knowledge of Arabic I possess; and Mrs. Gilberte Al-Rashy who generously devoted her free time to typing this thesis. I am also indebted to my wife, Joan, whose understanding and inspiration I could not possibly have done without; and to my children, John Philip, Martha Ann and James Angus who really didn't help, but except for whom there would have been little reason for me to complete this project.

I would also like to acknowledge a debt to the American University of Beirut. Its highly respected role as the leader in the field of higher education in the Middle East is, of course, well-known. Its influence for almost 100 years in the development of succeeding generations of young Arab leaders has been truly significant. But there is another aspect of AUB's role as a great educational institution which is less often recognized. For those fortunate few non-Arabs who study here, AUB provides an opportunity to work and associate with distinguished scholars and eager students of another cultural milieu, an opportunity which I don't believe is afforded by any other institution of similar standing and standards in the world. If AUB is a window to the Western World for the people of the Arab World, it is just as much a window to the Arab World for us of the West. This other role of AUB, in my opinion, cannot help but to further understanding and mutual respect between people of the Middle East and the West. It has been my great good fortune to have been a student at AUB and I shall hereafter be in its debt for giving

me perhaps the two most exhilarating and profitable years of my life.

Angus M. Mundy

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose and Background

The purpose of this thesis is to examine and discuss the Arab administration and government established in Damascus after its capture by Arab and British forces on 30 September 1918 until its forcible overthrow by the French on 24 July, 1920, at the battle of Meisalun. This government, while virtually stillborn, was the first solely Arab ruling institution to exercise other than ephemeral control over any portion of the Eastern Arab World since the conquest of Syria by the armies of the Ottoman Sultan, Selim II, in 1517. The thesis is concerned primarily with internal conditions in the parts of Syria under Arab control. It discusses the establishment of Arab government in Damascus from its inception as a military administration, through the period of self-declared independence, to its final routing by the French some nineteen months after its ambitious and hopeful beginnings.

It appears to the author that the majority of scholars have directed their attention to the fascinating and intricate international maneuverings which preceded and surrounded the Peace Conference after the close of the World War I. The peace settlement of course ultimately decided the destiny of the eastern Arab World and its effects are still in evidence both in the



Arab lands concerned and in the international situation of the present day. Fully recognizing the ultimate importance of these events, I have chosen to investigate that shortlived and transitory government--the product of Arab hopes, inspiration and blood--which existed in Damascus for more than twenty-one months.

It is an unhappy story. Its central figure, Feisal Ibn Hussein, takes on many of the aspects of the traditional Greek hero--who, despite almost faultless personal qualities, is brought low through a combination of outside circumstances which he could not understand, much less control. However, despite eventual failure, the Arabs under the leadership of Feisal and in the face of tremendous opposition did organize a government seated at Damascus, elected a parliament, drafted a constitution, developed administrative institutions, crowned a king, and elicited popular support not only in the areas over which it had military control but elsewhere as well. T. E. Lawrence sums up the Arab administration in this way; "The Syrians had their de facto government, which endured for two years, without foreign advice, in an occupied country wasted by war, and against the will of important elements among the Allies."<sup>1</sup>

While my purpose in writing this thesis is stated above, it will be impossible for the casual reader to comprehend the story without some knowledge of the events which led to the establishment of the Arab government in Damascus. While an exhaustive survey of the pre-World War I situation in the Arab East, the interests of the Great Powers in the area, and the details of the Arab Revolt are not the subject of this paper, I

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1. T. E. Lawrence, Revolt In The Desert, (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927) p. 327.

consider a brief survey of these topics pertinent and necessary. For more detailed information the reader is referred to the works cited in the footnotes which provide the detailed source material from which this information has been gathered.

### The Growth of Arab Nationalism Prior to World War I

The first and perhaps most significant factor which ultimately led to the establishment of an Arab government in Damascus was the development of Arab nationalistic feeling during the 19th century and through the years directly preceding World War I. Many factors entered into this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> The Arabs had always maintained a certain nationalistic spirit rooted deep in two of the most fundamental of all human institutions, language and religion.<sup>2</sup> This spirit which had long lay dormant during the hegemony of the Turks, co-religionists of the Arabs, began to germinate during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The major catalyst which stimulated the development of Arab Nationalism during the

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1. The most detailed sources treating the growth of Arab nationalism during this period are: George Antonius, The Arab Awakening (Beirut : Khayats, 1938) and Zeine N. Zeine, Arab Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism (Beirut: Khayats, 1958). Almost all published works dealing with the period devote some attention to the development of Arab nationalism. Since I have no intention in this introduction of presenting a full scale analysis of Arab nationalist feelings and movements, I have made no effort to go into detail. I believe the basic information, as presented, is correct and generally agrees with most recognized authorities.
  2. Zeine. Ibid, p. 123

latter part of the nineteenth and early centuries was the rapid increase in educational opportunities mainly under the aegis of western missionaries. The French had been established in the Arab East since 1625. The first Americans came in 1820 stimulating keen competition in the field of education between the two nationalities.

The opening of the Syrian Protestant College (now The American University of Beirut) in 1866 followed in 1875 by the opening of the French University of St. Joseph were steps of great significance, for in these institutions were educated many outstanding leaders of Syrian national and cultural life.<sup>1</sup>

The stimulation from these activities come to affect many of the young intellectuals of the Arab East. Renewed interest in the Arabic language fostered a movement to restore to the ancient language the power and beauty which had typified it in its classical age. Two Christian families of Lebanon, the Yazājis and the Bustanis led this revival. Nasif Yaziji and his son Ibrahim were poets who dedicated their talents and energies to revitalizing Arabic as a literary and cultural medium. Butrus Bustani, author of an encyclopedia and the first scientifically based dictionary of Arabic, and a noted publisher of reviews devoted to literary, political and educational aims was another leader in the van of the nationalistic fervor of the times. His work was devoted to the formation of an enlightened generation of Arabs through spreading of knowledge from the heritage of the Arab nation and from the culture of the West.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Antonius, pp. 40-45. Syrian in the traditional or larger sense.

2. Ibid, pp. 47-51.

An event of great significance in the course of the development of Arab nationalism took place with the proclamation of the Turkish Constitution of 1908. Sensing an opportunity for increased status within the Ottoman Empire, the Arabs welcomed the Constitution as an opportunity to reconcile the rising tide of national feeling with their old loyalties to the Ottoman Empire. Disillusionment followed very quickly as the Arab nationalists soon realized that the Young Turk government, with its Pan-Turanian policy, had no intention of permitting Arab aspirations to mature unhindered.<sup>1</sup> After the 1909, the Turks intensified their policies of Turkification and centralization of government and deliberately suppressed local customs not Turk in origin. Organizations societies and publications not strictly Turk in outlook and purpose were banned.<sup>2</sup>

The suppression of the Arab nationalist societies and tendencies only succeeded in driving them underground. Many of the more outspoken Arabs were exiled.<sup>3</sup> It was in this phase that the aspirations of the Arab nationalists, which had until then been vague and mercurial, began to assume a recognizable shape.

The years immediately prior to the outbreak of World War I were years of agitation and ferment. During the period a welter of secret and not so secret societies with nationalistic aims were formed. Some were transitory, espousing the principles of Arab nationalism to a greater or less degree, but usually calling for some sort of autonomy for Arabs within the Ottoman

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1. Zeine, pp. 73-75.

2. Ibid, pp. 75-79.

3. Antonius, p. 102 and pp. 107-108.

Empire. The most successful by far in gaining adherents and popular support for its program was a society formed among Arab exiles in Paris in 1911 known as al Fatat (The Young Arab).<sup>1</sup> This organization flatly rejected any form of suzerainty over the Arabs and called for complete Arab independence. It's membership grew rapidly and was largely comprised of professional men and intellectuals.<sup>2</sup>

In June, 1913, al Fatat sponsored, in Paris, a General Arab Congress which was attended by a Turkish delegate representing the Turkish government. The Congress proposed, and the Turkish delegate accepted, a program aimed at decentralization of authority within the Arab Provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The program also included the recognition of Arabic as the language of instruction in the schools in the Arab provinces.<sup>3</sup> Assurances were made by the Turkish representative to the effect that the Turks were ready to conciliate with the Arabs in recognition of their religious and cultural affinities.<sup>4</sup> Despite the promises little or nothing was done by the Turks to keep them and the resultant effect was to further disillusion the Arabs, many of whom became even more convinced that nothing short of absolute independence would be a satisfactory solution to the divergent aims of the Arab nationalists and their Turkish overlords.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid, p. 111; Zeine, pp. 80-81; A.H. Hourani, Syria and Lebanon (London, Oxford University Press, 1946) p. 40.
  2. T.E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom (2nd ed., London, Jonathan Cape, 1940) p. 46.
  3. The resolutions of this Congress are contained in full in J. C. Hurewits, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, Vol I: 1535-1914, (Princeton, D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc, 1956) pp. 268-269.
  4. Antonius, p. 116.
  5. Ibid. pp. 116-117.

In 1914, in the wake of obvious Turkish indifference or outright insincerity over the program of the General Arab Congress, a new secret society known as al Ahd<sup>1</sup> (The Covenant) came into being. The moving spirit in this organization was Aziz Ali al Misri, an officer of Arab descent in the Ottoman army. The membership of al Ahd was composed almost entirely of officers in the Turkish army who were of Arab origin<sup>2</sup>. In 1914 al Misri, who had had a rather distinguished career in the Ottoman army, was arrested, probably for his relationship with al Ahd, and condemned to death for treason. The clamor over this action was so intense, especially in Egypt, that the British intervened and through their intervention al Misri was pardoned and permitted to establish residence in Egypt where under the protection of the British he continued his work with al Ahd.<sup>3</sup>

Although accurate figures on the membership of al Fatah and al Ahd are not available, by the time the first shot was fired in the Arab Revolt on 5 June, 1916, cells and branches of both societies were flourishing in Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad and other population centers in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 118-119.

2. "Nearly one-third of the original Turkish Army was Arabic speaking." Lawrence, p. 46.

3. Antonius, pp. 118-121.

4. In the matter of numbers of individuals who were members of these organizations there is little agreement. George Kirk, A Short History of the Middle East, (5th ed., New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1959) states that al Ahd recruited 4000 members throughout the Turkish Empire. Amin Said, al Thawrah al Arabiyyah al Kubra, Vol II (Cairo, 1933) pp. 32-37 states that al Ahd's membership by 1914 was 315. Lawrence p. 48 appears to agree with Kirk that al Ahd was a large organization. He claims that seven of ten Iraqi officers were members. Perhaps the reason for the disparity in estimates of the size of the movement is that al Ahd had a cellular structure and most members knew only three or four other members. Antonius, p. 112, states that al Fatah eventually recruited a strength of more than 200, most Muslim but with a few Christian included.

By the time of the entry of Turkey into World War I, October 28, 1914, the stage was set for the culmination of the Arab nationalist movement. The people of the Arab provinces were unhappy over their being dragged into an unpopular war by the authorities in Istanbul; a large number of the Arab officers were disaffected due to their nationalist feelings and the activities of al Ahd; large numbers of the professional and intellectual elite were flocking to join al Fatah thereby adding important support to its separatist platform; and last of all was the realization by most knowledgeable Arabs that the Ottoman Empire was too weak externally and too divided internally to survive a protracted war against the Allies. In this context the question uppermost in the minds of the nationalists was how to best take advantage of the situation in order to achieve their aim, the independence of the Arab provinces and the establishment of a government, solely Arab, over the Arab heartland.<sup>1</sup> Given these conditions, the finding of a leader and obtaining of an outside source of support were the next requirements to be fulfilled before the dreams of the nationalists could be brought to fruition.

#### The Position of the Sharif of Mecca

Hussein Ibn Ali, 37th lineal descendent of the Prophet was appointed Sharif of Mecca by the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908.<sup>2</sup> Almost from

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1. Zeine, p. 73.

2. Abdullah Ibn Hussein, Memories of King Abdullah of Transjordan trans. by Philip P. Graves, (London, Jonathon Cape, 1950) pp. 41-56, explains the circumstances surrounding the appointment of Hussein to the position of Sharif of Mecca.

the time of his appointment Sharif Hussein used his position, which had in the years prior to his assumption of office been largely ceremonial in nature, to consolidate his self-assumed leadership of the Arab World. Due to his long enforced residence in Istanbul Hussein was fully aware of the weaknesses of the Ottoman Government.<sup>1</sup> His initial attempts to impose his control over the Hejaz were impeded by the Turkish governors who represented Ottoman political authority in the area, while the Sharif's position as "Guardian of the Holy Cities" was supposed to be primarily religious in nature. Due to his ambition and drive, Hussein, who was abetted by the weakness of a succession of Turkish governors, and the inability of the central Ottoman government to bring any effective force to bear in the Hejaz, was able, by 1912, to secure virtual autonomy in Mecca. In the years immediately preceding the war, the Sharif set about bringing under his control neighboring tribes and the small semi-autonomous principalities which had sprung up in Hejaz due to the inability of the Turks to maintain little more than a theoretical presence in the area.<sup>2</sup> He even attempted to bring Medina under his control. Hussein was constantly active in order "by intrigue and diplomacy to gain as much independence as possible."<sup>3</sup>

In 1914, the Turks, disturbed over the increasing strength of the Sharif and suspicious over his intentions sent a strong governor to Mecca to reassert Ottoman control. Hussein reacted violently and the Turks decided that at this crucial time an insurrection in the Hejaz would be exceedingly

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1. Abdullah, the Sharif's second son and Feisal his third were both members of the Turkish Parliament. Abdullah was vice-chairman. Lawrence p.49.

2. Antonius, pp. 124-125.

3. Zeine N. Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence, (Beirut, Khayat's, 1960) p. 3 citing Wingate, Wingate of the Sudan, p. 179.



inopportune and the governor was instructed to make peace with the Sharif on more or less his terms.<sup>1</sup> This abortive effort, however, apparently convinced the Sharif that the Turks would attempt to end his hard won semi-autonomy as soon as the time and situation were favorable.<sup>2</sup>

In April 1914, the Amir Abdullah, the second son of the Sharif, and a member of the Ottoman Parliament, while passing through Cairo was received by Lord Kitchener. Abdullah vaguely hinted to Kitchener and to his Oriental Secretary, Ronald Storrs, that the Sharif was open to suggestions and willing to accept help from the British in a move against the Turks. Kitchener declined to consider this overture on the grounds that Turkey and the British government were on friendly terms and British support of an insurrection in a friendly country's backyard was not in consonance with British policy.<sup>3</sup>

Kitchener reopened the matter of British support to the Arabs in September 1914 by communicating directly with Sharif Hussein, and asking if, in the event that the Sublime Porte, chose or was coerced into siding with Germany the "Arabs of the Hejaz would be with us (meaning the British) or against us."<sup>4</sup> Immediately after the Turks opened hostilities Kitchener followed through with an offer that "if Arab nation assists England in this war England will guarantee that no intervention takes place in Arabia and

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1. Abdullah, pp. 103-107.

2. Ibid, pp. 110-111.

3. Ibid, pp. 106-107 and G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (ed.) British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, vol X, part II (London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office) pp. 829-832. Antonius also summarizes this meeting pp. 126-129.

4. Sir Ronald Storrs, Orientations, (London, Nicholson and Watson, 1937) p. 149. The same quotation appears in Zeine, Arab Turkish Relations, p. 102.

will give Arabs every assistance against external foreign aggression.<sup>1</sup>

The motivations for Kitchener's overtures are at least in part fairly obvious. From the military point of view the mischief which would be caused by the insurrection of Arabs in the hinterlands of the Ottoman Empire could only help the overall Allied war effort. Secondly, an insurrection led by the scion of the most noble of Muslim and Arab families, against the acknowledged leader of the Muslim World, the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph (who had proclaimed jihad or religious war against the Allies)<sup>2</sup> would be bound to attract Arab Muslim support and perhaps support from other disaffected Muslim areas within the Ottoman Empire. And lastly, an advantage which is particularly noted by Zeine, that the Eastern Dominions of the United Kingdom were largely populated by Muslims who owed spiritual allegiance to the Ottoman Sultan in his role as Caliph. Obvious advantages would therefore accrue to the Allies if the "Holy Cities could be shown as not in the enemy's power, and that if access to them could be guaranteed, a danger to the fabric of the Empire would be removed."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid, p. 152. The text is in telegraphic language. See also Zeine, ibid, p. 102.

2. Antonius, p. 141. The Sultan had proclaimed jihad on 23 November 1914. In the declaration, which was countersigned by the Sheikh al Islam and other Turkish Muslim notables, there was a statement calling for all Muslim countries, including those subject to the Allied powers, (e.g. India) to join the Ottomans in Holy War against the Allies. While there was an obvious inconsistency in this step - since Germany and Austria-Hungary were as much infidel in Muslim eyes as were Great Britain, France and Russia, the proclamation caused some concern in Allied circles. Sharif Hussein, although subjected to considerable coercion refused to endorse the Sultan's proclamation. His refusal drew the sting of the jihad since as the foremost descendent of the Prophet, he was one of the most revered Muslim figures of the day. An interesting discussions of Hussein's position on this question is contained in Lawrence, p. 49 and Abdullah pp. 136-138.

3. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 5 citing Wingate. p. 181.

### The Damascus Protocol

Following the initiation of communications between the British in Cairo and Sharif Hussein, another overture to rebellion was made to the Sharif, this time from an Arab source. In January, 1915, a member of the prominent Bakri family of Damascus, arrived in Mecca with a message from al Fatat to the Sharif suggesting that Hussein, in company with the secret society, organize an Arab insurrection.<sup>1</sup> Hussein, his ambition stimulated by the offer, dispatched his third son, the Emir Feisal, to Istanbul, ostensibly to confer with Ottoman authorities, but with secret instructions to contact Syrian dissidents in Damascus, particularly the leaders of al Fatat.

Enroute to Istanbul Feisal stopped in Damascus and under the very noses of the Turkish authorities, contacted leading figures in al Fatat and al Ahd, was initiated into both societies, and informed them of the overtures made to his father by the British.<sup>2</sup> On Feisal's return to Mecca he again journeyed through Damascus arriving in May, 1915. At this time he was presented with a document approved by both al Fatat and al Ahd which later became known as the Damascus Protocol. This document was entrusted to Feisal for delivery to his father who in turn was requested to pass it on to his British contacts in Cairo. The Damascus Protocol was extremely important since it presented in succinct and unmistakable terms the essence of Arab demands for cooperation with the British. It is quoted in full in Antonius and will also be quoted here to emphasize the importance which the

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1. Antonius, pp. 149-150.

2. The exciting story of the Amir Feisal's journey to and from Istanbul is related in several sources. Among them are: Lawrence, pp. 49-52; and Antonius, pp. 152-159.

author attaches to it.

The recognition by Great Britain of the independence of the Arab countries lying within the following frontiers:

North: The line Mersin-Adana to parallel 37° N., and thence along the line Birejik-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat-Jazirat (Ibn Umar)-Amadia to the Persian frontier;

East: The Persian frontier to the Persian Gulf;

South: The Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden);

West: The Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.

The abolition of all exceptional privileges granted to foreigners under the Capitulations.

The conclusion of a defensive alliance between Great Britain and the future independent Arab state.

The grant of economic preference to Great Britain.<sup>1</sup>

This document was terse, direct and unequivocal. "The goal was independence, an independence secured against all foreign interference including that which went by the name Capitulations; but if England were to undertake to recognize Arab independence, an alliance with her would be welcome."<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the British had continued to pursue the possibility of encouraging insurgency in the Hejaz. In January 1915, Sir Henry McMahon had taken up duties as High Commissioner for Egypt replacing Kitchener, who was called home to direct the British war effort. Assisted by three competent and experienced veterans of Arab affairs, Sir Reginald Wingate, Governor General of the Sudan; Ronald Storrs, Oriental Secretary; and Lt Col G. F. Clayton, Chief of Military Intelligence, McMahon approached several Arab leaders living in Cairo. Among them was the founder of al Fatat, Aziz Ali Musri. Another contracted by McMahon's collaborators was Sayyid Rashid Rida, a distinguished Muslim intellectual. The results of the discussions with

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1. Antonius, pp. 157-158.

2. Ibid, p. 158.

these two as well as with other Arab nationalists living abroad convinced McMahon and his advisors that the time was opportune for the British to publicly commit themselves, and if they did not, the chance for a successful Arab insurgency would dwindle and wane.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, McMahon proposed to the British cabinet that the time had come for the British government to make definite public pledges to the Arabs. Kitchener, now a member of cabinet, gave the proposal strong support. Accordingly, the cabinet authorized the publication of a statement authored by Sir Ronald Storrs, stating that it was British policy that upon conclusion of the peace the Arabian Peninsula should be recognized as an independent state with full sovereignty over the Holy Cities of Islam. The statement also implied that the British would welcome the declaration of an Arab Caliphate. The declaration was published in early June, 1915, and distributed throughout Egypt and the Sudan and clandestinely introduced into Syria. Many copies were dropped over the Hejaz from Royal Air Force aircraft.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid, pp. 159-160.

2. Ibid. This was not the first approach made by Kitchener to Sharif Hussein directly. On 24 September, 1914, shortly after the war broke out in Europe, Kitchener addressed a message to Abdullah, the Sharif's second son. Abdullah, pp. 132 and 133, quotes the message as containing the following sentence; "If you (Abdullah) and His Highness your father still favour a movement such as would lead to the full independence of the Arabs, Great Britain is prepared to assist such a movement by all means in her power." Antonius, pp. 131-133 discusses the same correspondence, but does not quote the letter directly. However, he summarizes the Sharif's reply, signed by Abdullah as follows: "He defined himself as being willing to come to an understanding with Great Britain, but unable yet to depart from the neutrality which his position in Islam bound him to observe. He confined his remarks to the Hejaz, carefully avoiding to commit the rest of the Arab World, and hinted that he might find it possible to lead his immediate followers to revolt, in the event of the Turks bringing matters to a head, provided England were to promise effective support."

This declaration had one major shortcoming as far as the Arab nationalists were concerned. It made no mention of Syria and Iraq which were centers of dissidence and hotbeds of nationalistic feeling. From the point of view of the leadership and membership of al Fatat, al Ahd and other similarly inclined groups, little would be gained by the independence of the Arabian Peninsula unless Syria and Iraq were also included. The declaration therefore brought little encouragement to the Arab underground in Damascus and other centers outside the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>1</sup>

This is where matters stood on 14 July, 1915, when Sharif Hussein initiated the Hussein-McMahon correspondence.<sup>2</sup> It is obvious from the wording of the initial letter that the Sharif was offering Arab support, based almost exactly on the provisions of the Damascus Protocol which was drafted in Damascus by the leaders of al Fatat and al Ahd.<sup>3</sup> In the first letter Hussein requested British "assistance and support" for an independent Arab kingdom in the areas previously delineated by the Damascus Protocol; British agreement to the proclamation of an Arab Caliphate, and to the abolition of the capitulations by which foreigners residing in the Ottoman

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1. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 4.

2. The Hussein-McMahon correspondence consisted of ten letters exchanged between 14 July 1915 and 10 March 1916. The entire correspondence is printed in Parliamentary Papers, 1939, (Her Majesty's Stationary Office), CMD 5957. Four of the most important letters (numbers 1, 4, 7 and 8) are contained in Hurewitz, Vol II 1914-1956, pp. 13-17. Antonius includes the same four as appendices plus four more of the original ten (numbers 1-8) and adds the covering letter to letter number 1 from Amir Abdullah, pp. 413-427. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, reproduces two of letters with modified translation (numbers 4 and 9); pp. 241-247. The importance and meaning of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence has been dealt with by virtually every authority writing on the period. See Antonius, pp. 164-183 and *passim*.

3. See page 13 above for the terms of the Damascus Protocol.

Empire had been permitted unusual economic and legal status. In return the Sharif agreed to grant Great Britain economic preferences in the Arab countries for a period of not less than fifteen years. A further stipulation requested by the Sharif amounted to a sort of mutual defense agreement was also to remain in effect for not less than fifteen years.<sup>1</sup>

In the resultant exchange of correspondence which encompassed the period from 14 July, 1915, to 30 January, 1916,<sup>2</sup> Hussein agreed to one major change in his original proposal and deferred agreement on another until after the successful conclusion of the war. In his letter of 24 October, 1915 (McMahon's second in the series), McMahon accepted the territorial delineation contained in the Sharif's initial overture with one major exception:

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

McMahon continued that in:

The regions lying within the proposed frontiers, in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to her ally France, I am authorized to give you the following pledge(s) on behalf of the Government of Great Britain, and to reply as follows to your note; 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.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Hurewitz, pp. 13-14. The first letter was dated 14 July, 1915.
  2. The dates the letters were written not the dates of their receipt by the addressees.
  3. Ibid, pp. 14-15.

In the Sharif's third note to McMahon, dated January, 1916, Hussein consented to the exclusion of Mersin and Adana from the proposed Arab Kingdom. But the Sharif insisted that no such exclusion was justified for the portion of Syria lying west of the Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo districts:

As for the vilayets of Aleppo and Bairut and their western maritime coasts, these are purely Arab provinces in which the Moslem is indistinguishable from the Christian, for they are both the descendents of one forefather.<sup>1</sup>

In his third letter, dated 13 December, 1915, McMahon took note of the Sharif's position that the Turkish provinces of Aleppo and Beirut and the coastal districts of Syria were not justifiably divisible from Syria as a whole. However, McMahon maintained that the interests of Britain's ally, France, were at stake and that this question would have to be the subject of further negotiations at some undetermined future date.<sup>2</sup>

The Sharif responded in his last note of the series, by agreeing to the postponement of the question until after the successful completion of the war. However, the Sharif did include the following caveat concerning his view of the problem and his expected future course of action:

With regard to the northern parts and their coastal regions, we have already stated, in our previous note, the utmost that it was possible for us to modify. We made those modifications solely in order to achieve the ends which, Almighty God willing, we desire to attain. In that same spirit, we have felt bound to steer clear of that which might have impaired the alliance between Great Britain and France and their concord during the calamities of the present war. On the other hand - and this Your Excellency must clearly understand - we shall deem it our duty, at the earliest opportunity after the conclusion of the War, to claim from you Bairut and its coastal regions which we will overlook for the moment on the account of France.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid, pp. 15-16.

2. Antonius, pp. 423-424.

3. Ibid, pp. 424-425.



The "understanding"<sup>1</sup> which was arrived at through the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, viewed in the light of future events, was full of obvious ambiguities. It is quite doubtful that McMahon or his advisors were aware of the strength of nationalistic feeling in Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, which had reached its ultimate expression in the Damascus Protocol.<sup>2</sup> The two principals never met and the letters were couched in language and terminology which was possibly not totally clear to the recipients.<sup>3</sup> But the exchange served its immediate purposes: to stimulate a revolt in the Ottoman rear, to bring the Arabs into the war, and to partially neutralize the  Jihad  declared by the Ottoman Sultan by placing the scion of the most respected family in Islam in direct opposition to him,

#### Sykes-Picot Agreement

In November, 1915, the British Government informed the French of the negotiations under way between the Sharif and McMahon.<sup>4</sup> After the reaching

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1. I have selected the word "understanding" to describe the results of this correspondence. There may also be some justification for the use of the word "misunderstanding". However, I believe the use of words such as "commitments" and "promises" are too strong considering what occurred later. The exact meaning of the various letters has been discussed fully in other works, in particular Antonius, pp. 164-183. For a different interpretation, see Elie Kedourie, England and the Middle East, (London, Bowes and Bowes, 1956) pp. 50-57.
  2. George Kirk, A Short History of the Middle East, (New York, Praeger, 1959) p. 126.
  3. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 9-10.
  4. Stephen H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate, (London, Oxford University Press, 1958) p. 56.

of the "understanding" with Hussein and while preparations were being undertaken by the Sharif for the commencement of his insurgency movement with the help of British money, arms and advice,<sup>1</sup> negotiations were undertaken between the British, French and Russian governments in a series of diplomatic notes. The first of these notes from Sazanov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the French Ambassador in Petrograd, was dated 26 April, 1916 and the most important from the point of view of this study was a note from the British Foreign Office to the French Ambassador in London dated 16 May, 1916.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the correspondence was to define the terms under which the non-Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire were to be treated after the successful conclusion of the war. With regard to Syria:

What its authors aimed at was the creation of two clearly defined areas, one carved out of Syria and the other out of Mesopotamia - the first which should be French as Tunis is French and the English as Egypt is English. Between them was to lie a huge tract occupied in part by nomad Bedouins, in part by a sedentary Arab-speaking population, urban and agricultural, who should be independent in the sense that they would live their own life in their own way, but who would be under the patronage, and for certain purposes under the control, either of France or of

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1. Storrs, pp. 180-187. Ronald Storrs landed in Hejaz on 5 June, 1916 with 10,000 sterling. On the same date he was presented with a request for arms, and an additional 70,000 sterling. He had received authorization from the Foreign Office to pay the initial 10,000 on arrival and 50,000 sterling upon the opening of hostilities.
  2. The entire correspondence embodying what has become known as the Sykes-Picot agreement is contained in E. L. Woodward and Rohan Bulter (eds.), Documents on British Foreign Policy, First Series, vol IV (London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1952) pp. 241-251 (hereafter referred to as Documents). The notes pertaining to the Anglo-French agreement are dated 9 and 16 May, 1916 and were signed by Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to London, and Sir Edward Grey of the British Foreign Office respectively. There was a map appended to the letter of the 16th which graphically defined the areas. A copy of this map is contained in Antonius between pp. 248 and 249.

England, according as they belonged to what in the agreement was described as area A or area B.<sup>1</sup>

The Sykes-Picot agreement was not in language or in meaning in any way compatible with the "understanding" arrived at between Sharif Hussein and Sir Henry McMahon. The Sharif was not informed of the agreement. He eventually learned about it in December, 1917, some 18 months after he had inaugurated active insurgency. The Bolsheviks who had discovered the copies of the agreements in the Imperial Russian archives, had forwarded them to the Turks. Jamal Pasha, the Turkish Governor of Damascus, forwarded the details of the agreements by a clandestine messenger to the Amir Feisal who was leading the Arab Army against the Ottoman Forces in Syria. Feisal in turn passed on the incriminating evidence to his father in Mecca. At the same time Jamal Pasha caused the details of the agreements along with an overture for Turkish-Arab reconciliation to be published in the press

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1. The above quotation is from a memorandum prepared by A. J. Balfour on 11 August, 1919. The reference to areas A and B refer to the terms of the agreement reached between the French and British on 16 May, 1916. (See page 19, footnote 2). Briefly, in the interior of Syria and the Wilaya of Mosul, Great Britain and France agreed to recognize an independent Arab State, or Confederation of States, under the suzerainty of an unnamed Arab Chief. In part of this region, including what is now Jordan east of the Jordan river, and a strip of territory in the south of the Wilaya of Mosul, Great Britain was to have priority of enterprise and local loans, and she alone was to supply foreign advisors and officials. In the remainder, France was to possess the same rights. In the Syrian littoral, from a point between Acre and Tyre, up to and including Cilicia, France was to be at liberty to establish such direct or indirect administration as she might deem necessary after the agreement of the above mentioned Arab State or Confederation. In the Wilayas of Baghdad and Basra, England would enjoy the same privilege. In Palestine an international administration was to be established and the Sharif Hussein among others was to be consulted on its form. Great Britain however was to be awarded Haifa and Acre. Alexandretta (Iskanderun), although in the French area, was to be a free port as far as the British were concerned. See Documents, pp. 245-247.

in those parts of Syria remaining under Ottoman control.<sup>1</sup> This immediately caused considerable suspicion in the minds of many Arabs both in those areas still under Turkish control and also in the areas under control of the Sherif. It also had its effect among those actively participating in the revolt which by this time was well under way.

Sharif Hussein rejected the peace proposals of Jamal Pasha out of hand. The British, much embarrassed, claimed that Jamal's démarche to Hussein was nothing more than a distortion of "records of provisional exchanges and conversations between Great Britain, France and Russia, which were held in the early days of the War, and before the Arab Revolt."<sup>2</sup> Hussein apparently took the British explanation at its face value.

#### The Balfour Declaration

Another interest however was at work attempting to claim a share of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. Zionism, was a religious, socio-political and nationalistic movement which had developed during the last years of the nineteenth century and had rapidly gained strength.<sup>3</sup> Suppression, persecution and anti-Semitism, particularly in Bolshevik Russia but also in other European countries served to foster Jewish nationalism, which was at the heart of political Zionism.

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1. Antonius, pp. 252-257.

2. Ibid, p. 257.

3. A history of the development of the Zionist movement up to World War I is contained in Alan R. Taylor, Prelude to Zionism, (New York, Philosophical Library, 1959) pp. 1-38. Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1949) pp. 43-163 is a first person account.

In 1895, Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian Jew, who had won something of a reputation as a journalist, proposed a British sponsored colonization of Palestine or Argentina as a step towards "the eventual creation of a sovereign Jewish National State."<sup>1</sup> The fact that Herzl is on record as having been willing to accept a Jewish state in a location other than Palestine is clear evidence that nationalism and secularism were at the heart of the movement from its earliest beginnings.

In August 1897, Herzl convened in Basle, Switzerland the First Zionist Congress which established the World Zionist Organization and formulated a program which "has remained the essential foundation of Zionist policy" to the present.<sup>2</sup> Briefly, the program which was adopted by the Congress was that proposed by Herzl with a few minor modifications. Briefly, Zionist aims as approved by the Congress were:

- a. the promotion of Jewish colonization of Palestine;
- b. the establishment of an organization to bind international Jewery by means of institutions in each country containing Jews;
- c. the strengthening of Jewish national sentiment; and
- d. the acquisition of government consent for the attainment of the aims of Zionism.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1897 and 1914 the Zionist campaign met with little success in pursuit of its aims. Various approaches to the German Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Sublime Porte, and the British were all rejected for one reason or another. The Ottoman Sultan in particular appeared to have little interest in adding to his problems of diverse nationalisms by establishing the vocal

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1. Taylor, p.3.

2. Ibid, p. 4.

3. Hurewitz, Vol I. 1535-1914, p. 209.

Zionists in Palestine.<sup>1</sup> An interesting proposal by the British that Jews establish themselves in Uganda was rejected.<sup>2</sup>

After the death of Herzl in 1904, the leadership of the Zionists gradually devolved upon Chaim Weizmann, a Jewish chemist of Russian origin, who had established residence in England. By the outbreak of the war Zionist activities had shifted from the continent to England.

In the years prior to the outbreak of World War I, Weizmann, who possessed a remarkably persuasive personality, began to contact prominent British politicians with a view to winning their support for the Zionist program. In this he was aided by several prominent British Jews with influential contacts within British political and governmental circles.<sup>3</sup>

Among Weizmann's studiously acquired acquaintances was Lord Balfour, a respected aristocrat and prominent member of the Conservative Party.<sup>4</sup> In December 1916, Balfour became foreign minister in the coalition cabinet of Lloyd George. Strategically placed, strongly influenced by Weizmann and his Zionist colleagues, and mindful of Palestine's strategic position will regard to the Suez Canal, Balfour on 2 November 1917 wrote to Lord Rothschild, a prominent British Jew, a letter containing the following statement:

His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it

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1. Taylor, pp. 6-7.

2. Weizmann, pp. 83-888 gives an interesting account of this proposal and its rejection. Zionism without Zion was unpopular!

3. Weizmann, pp. 149-153. Among the most influential was Lloyd George, future Prime Minister.

4. Ibid.

being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.<sup>1</sup>

This communication, the famous Balfour Declaration, had the approval of the British Cabinet as well as President Woodrow Wilson of the United States and the French Foreign Minister, Jules Cambon.<sup>2</sup>

The Balfour Declaration was in obvious contradiction to both the "understanding" arrived at with the Arabs in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence and the provisions of the Sykes-Picot agreements.

#### The Hogarth Message

Sharif Hussein when informed of the Balfour Declaration was stunned and promptly demanded a satisfactory explanation. The British entrusted the delicate mission of placating King Hussein to David G. Hogarth, a well known scholar with considerable experience in Middle Eastern affairs and, at the time, Chief of the Arab Bureau in Cairo. Hogarth travelled to Jidda to meet with the Sharif in January, 1918. The essence of Hogarth's message was that the Balfour Declaration did not conflict with the earlier understanding between the Arabs and the British. Hogarth's message of assurance stated that the "Entente Powers are determined that the Arab race shall be given full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the world; but that

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1. Hurewitz, Vol II, 1914-1956, p. 26.

2. Weizmann, pp. 176-208 contains an interesting account of the negotiations in Britain, France and the United States leading up to the issuance of the Balfour Declaration.

because of the Holy Places revered by Moslems, Christians and Jews located in Palestine, a special regime for that part of the area would be necessary."<sup>1</sup> Hogarth claimed the Zionist leaders desired to achieve success for their movement through friendly cooperation with the Arabs and that Jewish friendship would bring support to the Arabs from other nations where the Jews had political influence.<sup>2</sup>

Somewhat later, on 16 June, 1918, to seven Arab representatives in Cairo (with a copy to the Sharif) Sir Reginald Wingate gave further assurances of independence to the Arabs who were by this time deeply engaged in the Arab Revolt. Major provisions of this message were as follows:

- a. With regard to the territories which were free and independent before the opening of the War, and those liberated from Turkish rule by the Arabs themselves, "His Majesty's Government recognize, the complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs inhabiting those territories, and support them in their struggle for freedom." This category included the independent states of the Peninsula and Hejaz as far north of Aqaba.
- b. As for the territories occupied by the Allied armies, their future government "should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed. This policy will always be that of His Majesty's Government." Under this category came Iraq from the Persian Gulf to Baghdad, and the southern parts of Palestine including Jerusalem and Jaffa.

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1. Antonius, pp. 267-268.

2. Ibid.



- c. Regarding finally the territories at the time still under Turkish rule, principally northern Iraq and Syria "it is the desire of His Majesty's Government that the oppressed peoples in those territories should obtain their freedom and independence."<sup>1</sup>

The suspicions were again allayed and the Arabs continued their insurgent efforts with renewed enthusiasm.

### The Fourteen Points

One more Allied promise was made during the war. On 8 January, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson enunciated his famous fourteen points in a speech before the United States Congress. Point Number XII was as follows:

The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.<sup>2</sup>

This statement from an entirely different quarter gave further reassurance of the Arabs:

Taken together, the British and the American utterances had a decisive effect in dispelling the doubts and apprehensions aroused by the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration; and the forces of the Revolt, refreshed by these new-earnests of freedom, turned with renewed vigour to their task.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Antonius, pp. 270-274; Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 22-23. Antonius states that the Declaration to the Seven was the most important policy statement made by the British in connection with the Arab Revolt.
  2. R. S. Baker and W. E. Dodd, The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson, (New York, MacMillan, 1919) pp. 108-151.
  3. Antonius pp. 273-274.

### The Arab Revolt

In the spring of 1916, the Turkish General Staff dispatched a relief expedition of 3,000 troops accompanied by German advisors to the relief of Turkish forces in Yemen. This force arrived at Madina via the Hejaz railroad in May 1916.<sup>1</sup>

At the instigation of the British, who were anxious to intercept the Turkish expedition in order to protect Aden, and who provided a few advisors, considerable equipment and an ample subsidy, Hussein finally openly declared himself in revolt against the Turks and the first shots of what soon became known as the "Arab Revolt" were fired on 5 June 1916 at Mecca. The Holy City was soon taken and Jidda surrendered to irregulars bearing allegiance to Sharif Hussein on 16 June 1916. Taif fell in September but despite several attempts Madina remained in the hands of the Turks.<sup>2</sup> On 2 November, encouraged by these initial successes, Hussein had himself proclaimed "King of the Arabs" in Mecca by a convocation of notables and religious leaders of the Holy City.<sup>3</sup>

The Revolt rapidly bogged down until T. E. Lawrence landed in Jidda in the fall of 1916. Lawrence persuaded Sharif Hussein to permit him to contact the Sharif's third son Feisal, who was commanding the Arab irregulars besieging Madina. Lawrence was immediately impressed by

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1. Field Marshal Earl Wavell, The Palestine Campaigns, (3rd ed., rev; London, Constable, 1931) pp. 53-54. Storrs, pp. 180-192 gives an interesting first person account of the opening days of the revolt.

2. Wavell, Ibid.

3. Antonius, p. 213. On 2 January, 1917, Great Britain and France recognized King Hussein as "King of the Hejaz" not as "King of the Arabs."

Feisal and after returning to Cairo recommended certain modifications in British military strategy and the installation of Feisal as the military leader of the Arab Forces.<sup>1</sup>

He recognized that the true policy for the Arabs lay not in assaults on the works of Madina nor in direct opposition to Turkish regular troops in the open field, for neither of which their forces were suited, but in gradually spreading the revolt northward up to the very gates of Damascus, with propaganda as the principal weapon, and in ceaseless raiding on the long Turkish lines of communication to Madina. The capture of Madina would merely rid the Turks of a military embarrassment, whereas the maintenance of a garrison there would cause constant drain on their resources. Lawrence accordingly persuaded Feisal to counter the Turkish advance on Mecca by a flank march of 250 miles to Wejth on the coast, where he would threaten the communication to Madina from the north. The success of this move, which was carried out towards the end of January, 1917, was instantaneous and striking. The Turkish advance on Mecca was stopped short, and the Turks were compelled to scatter forces along the Hejaz Railway. It was now decided instead to raise and train at Wejth a force of regulars for Feisal,<sup>2</sup> recruited mainly from Arab prisoners of war in the camps in Egypt.

The details of the Arab Revolt are not pertinent to this paper nor is that other interesting facet, the role of T. E. Lawrence. It suffices to say that after the capture of Wejth the Revolt gained momentum. Various Arab desert tribes were recruited to serve under Feisal's banner and the movement met with increasing success. Many Ottoman officers of Arab descent switched allegiance and joined Feisal. On 4 July, 1917, the

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1. Lawrence, Introduction to Book I of Seven Pillars to Wisdom, p. unnumbered "I had believed these misfortunes of the Revolt to be due mainly to faulty leadership or rather to lack of leadership, Arab and English. So I went down to Arabia to see and consider its great men. The first, the Sharif of Mecca, we knew to be aged. I found Abdullah too clever, Ali too clean, Zeid too cool.

Then I rode up country to Feisal, and found in him the leader with the necessary fire and yet with reason to give effect to our science. His tribesmen seemed sufficient instrument, and his hills to provide natural advantage. So I returned pleased and confident to Egypt, and told my chiefs how Mecca was defended not by the obstacle of Rabegh, but by the threat of Feisal in Jebel Subh."

2. Wavell, p. 55.

insurgents captured Aqaba a few days after British troops captured Bir Sheba on 28 June. Jerusalem fell to the British on 9 December 1917, and Jericho on 21 February, 1918. In mid-September, the British and the Arabs launched a coordinated attack on the Turkish forces in northern Palestine and southern Syria with the Arabs cutting off the vital communications center of Deraa on 18 September 1918. Between the capture of Aqaba and Deraa, the forces of the Arab Revolt had consistently harassed and raided the Turkish troops on the British right flank, destroying their communications, morale, and supply lines and being particularly effective against the Damascus-Maan portion of the Hejaz railway. In the latter part of September the Ottoman forces and those of their German allies fell back demoralized on Damascus.<sup>1</sup>

The value of the Arab revolt to the ultimate allied victory was not inconsiderable. When the British forces under General Sir Archibald Murray were advancing on Palestine in the spring of 1917, Murray states that he "realized with a sudden shock that more Turkish troops were fighting the Arabs than were fighting him."<sup>2</sup> General Wavell also has emphasized the military value of the Arab Revolt:

Its value to the British Commander was great, since it directed considerable Turkish reinforcements and supplies to the Hejaz, and protected the right flank of the British armies in their advance through Palestine. Further, it put an end to German propaganda in south-western Arabia and removed any danger of the establishment of a German submarine base on the Red Sea. These were important services, and worth the subsidies in gold and munitions expended on the Arab forces.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid, Chronology of Events, pp. IX-X.

2. Lawrence, p. 172.

3. Wavell, p. 56.

The Syrians themselves played a significant role in the Arab Revolt. Syrian officers and soldiers served under Feisal's flag. Many were deserters from the Turkish army. Many were recruits from the tribes, who through the efforts of Lawrence and other British Arab representatives generally supported the revolt. Although the attitude of the Syrian population as a whole was in support of the Revolt, the repressions of Jamal Pasha, and the serious privations of war prevented an outright rebellion in Syria itself.<sup>1</sup>

#### SUMMARY

It can be seen from the foregoing that it was British inducements which were in large part responsible for the decision of Sharif Hussein, Amir Feisal and the Arabs who followed them, to throw in their lot with the Allies. The Arab Revolt was of real significance in driving the Turks from the Hejaz, from Palestine and from Syria. The drama of 1916, 1917 and 1918 cast on the Arabian stage now moved abruptly to the conference rooms of Paris, where assorted statesman, politicians, generals and representatives of an untold number of special interests gathered to make peace. In the overall discussions, the fate of the Middle East represented only a small part of the settlement. A discussion of the overall Peace Settlement or even that part of it that pertained to Middle East is not within the scope of the paper. However the prime conflict was obviously

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1. Hourani, pp. 48-49.

the great disparity contained in the various treaties, agreements and letters exchanged among the Allies, the Jews and the Arabs during the war. These various contradictions were eventually worked out to no one's satisfaction, particularly the Arabs.

In defense of the British, it must be remembered that the major purpose of any nation engaged in war is to win. While the obvious contradictions contained in the various understandings to which Great Britain was a party can easily merit the charge of duplicity and insincerity, the fact is that Great Britain won the war. In so doing she gained her primary goal. In this view all else must be considered of secondary importance and it is unfortunate that the aims of the Arabs were inevitably placed in this category.

While the Peace Settlement is a fascinating subject, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the Arab Administration of Syria to which all the foregoing are mere preliminaries. That administration came into existence with the capture of Damascus on 30 September 1918. The Arabs under Feisal, after tasting the heady wine of victory, would now inevitably see their aspirations dim until they would taste the bitter wormwood of defeat.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FEISAL'S GOVERNMENT AND THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION IN SYRIA

#### Introduction

Feisal's government in Damascus can be said to have lasted from the capture of that city from the Turks by British and Arab forces on 30 September, 1918 until the defeat of Feisal's army by the French on 24 July, 1920 at the Battle of Meisalun. Feisal's claim to control over Syria was based in general on the various agreements and understandings arrived at between the Arabs and the British which were described in the previous chapter:

My father, King Hussein, received a message from the High Commissioner, Egypt, Sir Henry MacMahon, through a certain agent, in which promises were made by the High Commissioner that Great Britain would assist the Arabs, if the latter threw their lot with her.

Accordingly, my father relying on this promise, took up arms against the Turks, who had at that time proclaimed a Holy War against the Allies and against Great Britain in particular, and accepted willingly the responsibility of war.

We, the Arabs were formerly with the Turks and fought against them, not with the intention of dividing the country by giving a share to the French and a portion to the British.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Documents p. 1276. Also quoted by Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 109.

The Arabs of course had another claim to the areas in question--the right of conquest. For without a doubt Arab blood, Arab sacrifice and Arab courage were instrumental in the ultimate victory of the Allies.<sup>1</sup>

### The Capture of Damascus

The crowning military achievement of the Arabs under Feisal and the Allied troops under General Allenby was the capture of Damascus. Damascus holds a special place in the thought and imagination of the Arab. It was the seat of the powerful and fully Arab Caliphate of the Ommayyads. It is a city which has always treasured its heritage. Surrounded by lush gardens and orchards, it has always been to the Arab of the desert a symbol of beauty, bounty and grandeur--a veritable paradise. Its capture therefore was of more than military significance. The ignominious retreat of the Turks, led by the infamous Jamal Pasha, from Damascus symbolized the end of the four hundred years of Turkish hegemony over the Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

To the Arabs there is little question but that the capture of Damascus was an Arab victory. While Allenby's troops were instrumental in the actual military success, emotionally it was regarded as an Arab

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1. See pp. 29-30 above.

2. Cyril Falls, Military Operations in Egypt and Palestine from June 1917 to the End of the War (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1930) pp. 586-587.



victory by the population of the city and by the entire Arab nation.<sup>1</sup>

After centuries of subjection Damascus was freed by an Arab, in every sense a genuine and noble Arab, descendent of the Prophet, natured in the Arab tradition and the heritage of his native land... and endowed with a personality fully qualified for leadership.<sup>2</sup>

"No precise moment can be fixed for the fall of Damascus."<sup>3</sup> Politically its independence from Turkish domination was proclaimed about two o'clock on 30 September when the town majlis under the leadership of Shukri al Ayyubi raised the colors of the Sharif and the demoralized Turks under Jamal Pasha, the Governor, by this time evacuating the city, made no attempt to pull them down.<sup>4</sup> No formal surrender took place since there was no Turkish authority remaining, capable of arranging a capitulation.

There seems little doubt that Arab forces were the first to enter Damascus. These troops, who were irregulars, were indistinguishable from the local populace, and they entered by infiltration commencing about midnight 30 September.<sup>5</sup> The first regular troops of Allenby's army,

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1. An analogy can be made by comparing the capture of Damascus with the capture of Paris during World War II by the 2nd French Armored Division. Obviously General Le Clerc could not have captured Paris without American and British support and assistance. But to the people of Paris and of France it was a French victory, achieved by French soldiers under a gallant French General.
  2. Nejla Izzedine, The Arab World, Past, Present and Future, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co, 1953) p. 97.
  3. A Brief Record of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force; July 1917 to October 1918; Compiled from Official Sources and Published by the Palestine News, (Cairo: Government Press and Survey of Egypt, 1919) p. unnumbered (facing plate 51).
  4. David Garrett (ed) The Letters of T. E. Lawrence (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938) p. 256.
  5. Falls, p. 591. There appears to be no foundation to the opinion of some writers that the British delayed entry into Damascus in order to allow Feisal's troops the honor of entering the city first. See Longrigg p. 63.

the 3rd Australian Light Horse, entered Damascus from the west just before seven o'clock on the morning of 1 October. At about the same time, the first Arab regular units, led by Sharif Nasir, Feisal's uncle, and Nuri Shaalan and T. E. Lawrence, entered from the south.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the day the British and Arab forces were in complete control of the city and the Turkish soldiery was completely demoralized and in full flight along with its German allies. In the actual occupation of the city the combined Arab and British forces had captured prisoners totalling about 20,000.<sup>2</sup>

After the fall of Damascus, the combined Turkish and German armies were little more than a disorganized rabble, without artillery, transport or organization. Of an army which had numbered over 100,000 before the joint Arab-Allied drive to Damascus, which began on 19 September, only some 17,000 escaped to the north. The combined Arab-Allied force immediately continued the attack and arrived at the gates of Aleppo on 23 October. After the Turkish commander of Aleppo refused to capitulate to the British on the 23rd, the Arab forces, under command of Sharif Nasir which had been advancing on the east or desert flank of the British, entered the city on the evening of 25 October, and after heavy hand to hand fighting forced the Turks to abandon the city. The Arabs opened the gates of Aleppo to the British on 26 October 1918.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Detailed accounts of the fall of Damascus are contained in Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, pp. 664-665; Falls, pp. 588-591; Wavell, pp. 228-230; and The Advance of the British Expeditionary Force, p. unnumbered (facing plate 51).

2. Wavell, p. 230.

3. Ibid, p. 232.

### The Jaza'iri Challenge and Lawrence

The first British officer to enter Damascus on 1 October was the executive officer of the 3rd Australian Light Horse, Major A.C.N. Olden, who led the leading elements of his regiment into the city from the west. Olden's mission was to proceed through the city as quickly as possible to cut the Damascus-Homs road in order to prevent the escape of as much of the Turkish garrison as possible.<sup>1</sup> On his way through the city Major Olden stopped at the serai at about 7 o'clock in the morning where he was met by Amir Mohammed Sa'id al Jaza'iri, one of the descendants of the famed Amir Abd al Qadir, the legendary hero of Algeria who had been exiled to Damascus by the French in 1856. Amir Sa'id claimed to be the custodian of the civil government of Damascus as a result of his having been given this authority the previous afternoon by Jamal Pasha, just prior to the Turkish governor's departure. Amir Sa'id informed Olden that he had proclaimed the independence of Syria in the name of the King Hussein and that a government for the city had been established with himself and his brother, Abd al Qadir, as the principal executives. Amir Sa'id claimed that his partisans were now in control of the city. Olden, who appears to have been intent upon his military mission and anxious to avoid a political imbroglio, refused to recognize the Amir, and after obtaining the services of two guides continued through the city to cut the Homs road.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Falls, p. 589.

2. Mahommed Sa'id al Jaza'iri, Extrait des Memoirs de S. A. L'Amir Mahommed Sa'id, (Beirut: Catholic Press, undated) pp. 17-18.

The Jaza'iri brothers represented one of two factions vying for power within the city. Although smaller than the other faction which was composed of Feisal's adherents, it appears to have been better organized and it was supported by the large, loyal and brutal bodyguard of Algerians employed by the brothers. The larger faction, made up of members of al Ahd and al Fatat, and led by two former Turkish officers of Arab origin, Shuqri al Ayyubi and Ali Ridha al Rikabi, appears to have been somewhat intimidated by the aggressive and fanatical Jaza'iri brothers.<sup>1</sup> While complete control of the city was undoubtedly not yet established, it appears fairly certain that by mid-morning of 1 October, the cabal of the Jaza'iris held the upper hand.<sup>2</sup>

This is where the situation stood when Lawrence, Nuri Shaalan and Sharif Nasir entered Damascus about mid-morning on 1 October. Lawrence had long harbored a deep resentment and distrust of the Jaza'iris particularly Abd al Qadir. There is little doubt but that he considered them at the least opportunists and more probably traitors. He had been warned on one occasion by Col E. Bremond, the leader of the French Military Mission to the Arab forces, that Abd al Qadir was a Turkish spy.<sup>3</sup> Lawrence claims in The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, that on one occasion Abd al Qadir actually changed sides and fought with the Turks<sup>4</sup> and he consistently criticizes the brothers for their religion fanaticism, pomposity and overbearing attitude.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, pp. 666-667.

2. Ibid, and al Jaza'iri, p. 17. The strength of the active, armed supporters of the Jaza'iris is given as 1500-1800 by Phillipe David, Un Gouvernement Arabe à Damas, (Paris: Marcel Giard, 1923) p. 9.

3. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 399.

4. Ibid, p. 648.

5. Ibid, pp. 413, 419, 573.

There is little doubt that Lawrence's feelings toward Abd al Qadir and Mohammed Sa'id were deep and bitter.

When Lawrence and his Arab friends entered the serai, and found the two brothers claiming to be the heads of a government, a claim intolerable to them and odious to the Arab forces, he immediately announced the dissolution of the Jaza'iri brothers "government" over their most violent protest.<sup>1</sup> At the same time Lawrence, in a prearranged move, conferred the governorship on Ali Ridha al Rikabi. Ali Ridha, a member of al Ahd and the former Turkish Military Commander of Damascus, being absent from Damascus on a mission to contact the British forces, the acting governorship was conferred by Lawrence on Shuqri al Ayyubi.<sup>2</sup>

The Jaza'iris reacted almost immediately. Abd al Qadir collected his friends and retainers on the evening of 1 October and made a fiery speech alleging that Feisal was a British puppet and urging his followers to strike a blow for Islam. His supporters then spread out through the streets of Damascus in a sudden and fanatical revolt which lasted until the morning of 2 October. In the morning the Arab army, greatly reinforced by this time, quickly set the matter straight by opening fire on the Jaza'iri faction and inflicting about twenty casualties.<sup>3</sup> After the revolt was suppressed, both brothers fled. Mohammed Sa'id was soon apprehended and his brother killed while resisting his pursuers.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Garrett, pp. 256-257.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Longrigg, p. 64.

In this manner the Arab forces of Feisal overcome the first serious threat to their purpose. Despite the relative alacrity with which their challenge was handled, it is obvious that any weakness or indecision on the part of the forces of the Arab revolt could have been disastrous from the point of view of Feisal, Lawrence and company. The general confusion which reigned at the time, the absence of Feisal, the acknowledged leader of the Arab Revolt; the presence in Damascus of many still in sympathy with the Turks; the relatively well organized forces of the Jaza'iris; the honored position of family as the descendents of an Arab hero of the first rank; the well known fact that the family had suffered greatly under the Turks;<sup>1</sup> the mandate given Abd al Qadir by the departing Jamal Pasha; and finally the actual control which the brothers and their loyal Algerian bodyguard had over most of the city for some 24 hours before the arrival of the first British and Arab troops,<sup>2</sup> all must have had some influence on various groups of Damascenes. Despite these advantages, the opposition was quickly and decisively crushed. And while the instrument was Lawrence, the spirit and force which faced the challenge and triumphed was the inspiration of the Arab Revolt and the emotion with which it was regarded by the population of Damascus.

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1. Five members of the family had been executed by the Ottoman authorities. David p. 9.

2. Jaza'iri, pp. 13-17

The Enemy Occupied Territory Administrations  
and their Relationship to the Commander in  
Chief and Each Other

On 3 October, Amir Feisal entered Damascus by a special train from Dera'a. He had been proceeded into the city by General Allenby. Prior to Feisal's arrival Allenby had approved the formation of the Arab Government in Damascus and confirmed the appointment of Ali Ridha al Rikabi as a Military Governor who was to act under the authority of Amir Feisal, the military commander in the area. Allenby also stipulated the conditions under which the Arab and British armies would operate in Syria until a more formal government could be established. Immediately after these arrangements were made<sup>1</sup> Feisal arrived in the city amid great jubilation, met Allenby for the first time, and was informed that he was to assume the responsibility for administration of Damascus and the area east of the Jordan from Aqaba to Damascus immediately, pending the adoption of more permanent arrangements shortly. Feisal protested strongly citing the Hussein-McMahon correspondence and the other understandings noted in the previous chapter. Allenby insisted however that his orders must be obeyed.<sup>2</sup>

On 4 October Amir Feisal issued a communique proclaiming to all Syrians that "an absolutely independent Arab constitutional government embracing all Syria has been formed in the name of our Sovereign Lord Sultan Hussein."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 682.

2. Falls, p. 592 and Wavell p. 243.

3. Text of the proclamation is found in Sati al Husri, Yaum Meisalun, (Beirut: 1948) pp. 194-195.

By the same proclamation Feisal established a Council of State with powers of legislation and administration. Feisal also appointed Ali Ridha al Rikabi as his Chief Administrator.<sup>1</sup>

It is commonly accepted international practice, that territories occupied by conquering troops are administered by military authorities until more permanent political arrangements can be made.<sup>2</sup> Authority belongs at this stage to the Commander in Chief of the occupying forces--in this case General Allenby. On 17 October Allenby issued to Amir Feisal general guidance regarding his exercise of the authority delegated to him by Allenby at their meeting on 3 October in Damascus.

I gave the Amir Feisal an official assurance that whatever measures might be taken during the period of military administration they were purely provisional and could not be allowed to prejudice the final settlement by the peace conference, at which no doubt the Arabs would have a representative. I added that the instruction to the military governors would preclude their mixing in political affairs, and that I should remove them if I found any of them contravening these orders. I reminded the Amir Feisal that the Allies were in honour bound to endeavour to reach a settlement in accordance with the wishes of the peoples concerned and urged him to place his trust wholeheartedly in their good faith.<sup>3</sup>

On 23 October Allenby issued new instructions for the administration of the former Turkish territory already under allied or Arab control or likely to be occupied in the near future. Essentially there were to be three administrative areas to be known as Occupied Enemy Territory South, Occupied Enemy Territory West, and Occupied Enemy Territory East.<sup>4</sup> The

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1. Ibid.

2. More recent examples of these arrangements are the military administrations established in Germany and Japan at the conclusion of World War II.

3. Hurewitz, Vol II, 1914-1956, p. 30.

4. Hereafter referred to as OETA South, West and East.



first two comprised respectively the "Red" and "Blue" zones of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the third such portions of Zones "A" and "B" of that agreement as were under the control of the Allied and Arab armies. OETA South, roughly equivalent to Palestine was to have a British Administrator; OETA West, a French Administrator; and Ali Ridha al Rikabi was appointed by Allenby as Administrator of OETA East. Although the boundaries of the three administrations were roughly those of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, one major modification was made. The area of the Biqa valley comprising the former Turkish qadhas<sup>1</sup> of Baalbek, Rashayya and Hasbaya were attached to OETA East most probably in deference to Arab sensibilities.<sup>2</sup>

A significant initiative was made by the Arabs immediately after the capture of Damascus. Shuqri Pasha al Ayyubi after being relieved of his duties as Acting Military Governor of Damascus by Ali Ridha departed immediately afterwards with a small number of troops for Lebanon. On 4 October he raised the Arab flag over the Beirut serai in an obvious attempt to lay claim to the coastal region for Feisal's Damascus Government. While there are a number of versions of the reasons behind the Ayyubi mission to Beirut it seems certain that Feisal approved, hoping to present the British troops, who did not arrive in that city until 8 October, with a

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1. A small Turkish administrative district roughly equivalent to the French arrondissement or an American township.
  2. David, pp. 14-17 and Longrigg, pp. 66-67. Maps showing the boundaries of the areas are contained in Falls, sketch 42, and in The Brief Record of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, plate 52.

political fait accompli.<sup>1</sup> On 7 October Shukri Ayyubi in a ceremony at Ba'abda appointed Habib Pasha Sa'ad governor of Mount Lebanon, in the name of Feisal's recently announced Damascus government.<sup>2</sup>

On 8 October, upon the entrance of the British troops into Beirut the Arab flag was removed on Allenby's orders. Allenby appointed the senior French officer present as Military Governor of OETA West, a position analogous to that of Ali Ridha al Rikabi's in Damascus.

Feisal's efforts to bring Lebanon under his control had far reaching effects. It antagonized the French who were already suspicious of Amir Feisal's role in the area; it likewise antagonized the Christian elements of the Lebanese mountain who were shocked by the boldness with which Feisal had apparently attempted to incorporate the coastal region into the predominately Moslem hinterland, and it put Allenby on notice that his Arab administration at Damascus had ideas of his own and would probably prove to be unruly. In the long run it appears that Feisal's ill-considered attempt to pre-empt the British and French in the coastal region in defiance of Allenby's plans did the Arab cause no good and most probably considerable harm.

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1. See Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence for a discussion of the reasons behind Ayyubi's mission. It appears that some authorities believe that Lawrence was behind the move, others that the idea originated with Muhammad Sa'id al Jaza'iri, Ali Ridha al Rikabi, Nuri Sa'id or even Umar Bey Da'uq himself. In a personal interview, Akram Rikabi, son of Ali Ridha, informed the author that he believed Ayyubi's mission came about because in the context of the situation it was the obvious move at the time and the consensus of leaders on the scene approved of it. Lawrence (Garrett p. 670) states that Ali Ridha was behind it and that he recommended against it.

2. Ibid, pp. 27-40.

Arab Aspirations and the Policy of the  
Commander in Chief

It is obvious from the abortive mission of Shuqri al Ayyubi to Beirut and Allenby's reaction to it that Arab aspirations and Allenby's policy were not going to be congruent. Allenby's intention, according to his biographer, "was to administer, so far as possible, strictly under international rules for enemy territory occupied in war which laid down the principle that the Administrator is merely a tenant who can make no avoidable change in the existing laws and arrangements until the country is disposed of by treaty of peace."<sup>1</sup>

But to the Arabs, who were not particularly well versed in international law and who fully expected immediate payment of what they considered to be a lawful debt owed them by the Allies particularly the British, Allenby's position was incomprehensible. Feisal and his Arab subordinates considered themselves, and acted whenever possible as, the rulers of a territory to which they had a right by conquest and by treaty. "They could see only that this was an administration staffed by Arabs in an Arab country, in the presence of an Arab prince to whom independence, no less, had been recently and specifically promised."<sup>2</sup>

It is fairly evident that from the very beginning, Allenby was subjected to considerable pressures from various different interests who were interested in influencing, in so far as possible, the military administration in such a way as to insure that their various claims would

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1. Wavell, p. 261.

2. Longrigg, p. 67.

not be prejudiced at the Peace Conference by the ad hoc military arrangement. The French in particular were interested in installing safeguards to prevent runaway Arab Nationalism from threatening their claims under the Sykes-Picot agreement. To protect her interests France demanded certain guarantees which were embodied in a protocol signed in London on 30 September 1918, as British and Arab troops were about to enter Damascus. This protocol in effect established a method for protecting French interests in the areas allocated to them by the Sykes-Picot agreement but which were occupied or about to be occupied by British and Arab troops.<sup>1</sup>

The provisions of this convention required that in any area of French interest occupied by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, its commander, General Allenby, was to be required to appoint a French representative as Chief Political Advisor. Furthermore, the French official was to act, subject to the Commander-in-Chief's authority as intermediary between any Arab administration established in French zones of influence and the Commander-in-Chief. The Political Advisor's authority was of course limited to questions of administration and politics, and military problems were to remain the sole responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief. The Advisor's authority was further circumscribed by a provision of the protocol which permitted any person direct access to the Commander-in-Chief and permitted the Commander-in-Chief to communicate directly with his subordinates of whatever nationality without reference to the Political Advisor.<sup>2</sup>

While the loopholes here are obvious, the principal, at least, was firmly established. The French were, in the areas allocated to them under

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1. R. de Contaut-Biron, Comment la France s'est installée en Syrie, 1918-1919 (Paris: 1923) p. 65.

2. Ibid, pp. 65-66.

the Sykes-Picot agreement, were to provide, prior to the eventual Peace Settlement, whatever advice or political and administrative tutelage to the Arabs that might be necessary.

The land area eventually occupied by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and subject to the Military Administration established by General Allenby stretched from Aqaba and Gaza to Anatolia, an area roughly encompassed now by Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and southern portions of Turkey. Communications in the area were rudimentary and unreliable, a situation further aggravated by damage incurred during the war. Of necessity therefore Allenby was required to decentralize his authority and depend to a great extent on the local area commanders, their advisors and agents. It seems fairly well established that the English representatives in Syria, many of whom had fought with the Arabs, were sympathetic to their cause, so much so that the French soon began to complain bitterly of British partiality.<sup>1</sup> Allenby was forced to reiterate his position and policy on several occasions as it became obvious that the interests of the Arabs and the Allies were not congruent. "All nations and would-be nations and all shades of religions and politics are up against each other and trying to get me to commit myself on their behalf."<sup>2</sup>

Allenby was first forced to restate his position at the time of the abortive attempt by Shuqri al Ayyubi to claim Lebanon for Feisal's forces.<sup>3</sup> The French representative attached to the British forces, Captain Coulondre, immediately protested. Allenby resolved the questions as indicated above in

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1. Wavell, p. 259.

2. Ibid.

3. See above p. 42.

favor of the French, whereupon Feisal protested and threatened to resign from command of the Arab army if France occupied the coastal area with its important ports. Allenby thereupon asserted himself and reiterated his position--that he alone as commander in chief was in charge of the administration until the final settlement and that French officers, (and inferentially, British and Arab officers) serving as administrators must be regarded as Allied officers and not as national representatives. When Feisal insisted that he could not accept "French control", Allenby replied that there was no French control but only Allied military control and Feisal's political claims would eventually be considered, and that the French officers were present only for the convenience of transient military administration.<sup>1</sup>

Despite Allenby's insistence on the theoretical principles of military administration, it is obvious that throughout the period of military administration the national interests of the Arabs and French were reflected to a great degree in the activities of the various representatives. Allenby's sympathies "lay with Feisal and the Arabs"<sup>2</sup>, and during Allenby's term as Commander-in-Chief, which lasted until March 1919 when he was appointed High Commissioner to Egypt, and until the last British troops departed Feisal was permitted to fly the Arab flag in Damascus and other towns under his jurisdiction.<sup>3</sup> However despite these sympathies, Allenby, so long as he controlled Syria, maintained a strict impartiality and tried, in so far

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1. US Department of State, US Foreign Relations, Paris Peace Conference (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1942-1947) Vol V, p. 11.

2. Wavell, p. 262.

3. Elie Kedourie, England and the Middle East, (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1956) p. 128. The flying of the Arab flag was a point of considerable annoyance to the French.

as he was able, to use his authority and influence to maintain peace and order, and tight control over the nationalistic aspirations of Feisal and the Arabs.<sup>1</sup> The same cannot be said for Allenby's subordinates in the military administration, Feisal and his advisor's among them, who obviously did not feel so duty bound as their commander.

"The real actors are those agents, official and non-official, who are in close and constant personal touch with the Arab and Syrian leaders of all parties. The history of the Orient is made by individuals and small groups, who with or without the consent of their governments, succeed in bringing to pass events, circumstance and situations, with which the statesmen of Europe have to deal and frequently disentangle."<sup>2</sup>

Another important result of the policy initiated by Lord Allenby was the gradual degeneration of French-British relations. It appears that the French were never able to accept the idea that a viable state could be established in the Middle East without the direct or indirect control of one of the major powers. France proved willing to accept modifications in distribution of territory, and Clemenceau in December of 1918 did in fact agree to the transfer of Mosul from the French to the British sphere of influence and at the same time agreed that Jerusalem should come under British rather than an international administration as originally provided for in the Sykes-Picot agreement.<sup>3</sup> However the French appear to have never been able to accept modification to the principle contained in the Sykes-Picot agreement that the former Arab Turkish Provinces should come under the influence and control of either France or Great Britain. Feisal's

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1. Wavell, p. 262.
  2. William Yale, Report of 9 November, 1918 from the Reports and Correspondence of William Yale, Special Agent of the United States, State Department in the Near East, 1917-1919 (unpublished). Quoted by Kedourie, pp. 131-132.
  3. Documents, p. 251.

determination to achieve independence for Syria was understood by the French to mean that they were to be deprived of their share for the benefit of the British. As time went on a particular sore point with the French was the payment by the British to Feisal of a large monthly subsidy, which the French interpreted as a bribe by the English which permitted the Arabs to resist French influence in Britain's interest.<sup>1</sup> Later when the British supplied Feisal's army with some equipment and weapons, the French again interpreted this as an anti-French move by the English.<sup>2</sup> In the French view they had agreed to see established an Arab state in Syria with the stipulation that they would have the right to supply "advisors"-- and as stated by Lord Balfour "advisors whose advice must be followed."<sup>3</sup> The French view was succinctly expressed by Clemenceau in October 1919; "It is for France to reach a direct understanding with Feisal. But how can an understanding with him be possible if the Emir, who claims sovereignty over the whole of Syria, remains protected by England."<sup>4</sup>

It can be easily seen from the foregoing that there was a basic conflict from very beginning between Arab aspirations, Allenby's administrative policies and French interests in the area. Feisal's administration in Syria was born in a climate of distrust, frustration and ill will which colored every hour of its existence. While as will be shown, the success of the Arab Administration in Syria was definitely limited it should be constantly born in mind that what was accomplished was done in the face of hostility from the French and without substantive encouragement or support from Great Britain.

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1. Henry C. King and Charles R. Crane, Report of the King-Crane Commission (New York: Editor and Publisher, 2 December 1922) p. XXII.

2. Ibid.

3. Documents, p. 344.

4. Ibid., p. 468.



The Former Ottoman Administration and Its Relationship  
to Feisal's Administration

The Arab Administration established in Syria after its occupation by the Arab and British armies was called upon to rule an area which had been under Turkish control for 400 years. Until the signing of the Peace Treaty, the Turkish provinces remained sovereign Turkish territory. Despite the fact that there was obviously considerable sympathy for Feisal and the Arabs, old traditions die hard, particularly in the Middle East. T. E. Lawrence estimated that ninety per cent of the Syrian population had either remained loyal to Turkey or lacked sufficient interest in matters to actively support the Arab Revolt.<sup>1</sup> All the administrative machinery was founded on generations of Turkish heritage and tradition. The civil service was Turkish oriented despite the fact that almost all of its lower ranking and many of its high ranking members were Arab in origin.<sup>2</sup> Among the old, conservative, land owning sunni families of Syria there remained considerable pro-Turkish feeling, at least in part caused from distrust and suspicion of the youth, ambition and vigor of those who surrounded Feisal.<sup>3</sup>

There also appears to be evidence, at least among the traditional sunni families, that life under the Moslem Turks had not been so unpleasant. These conservative elements had belonged to the Muslim elite within the empire and had occupied a privileged position. Haj Amin al Huseini

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1. Lawrence, Arab Revolt, p. 325; Longrigg p. 70.

2. Garrett, p. 268.

3. Muhammed Kurd Ali, al Mudhakkat (Damascus: Matba'at al Tarqi, 1948-1949) p. 170.

testifying before the Royal Commission on Palestine in 1937 stated:

Under the Ottoman regime, the Arabs formed an important part of the structure of the Ottoman Empire. It is wrong to say that the Arabs were under the yoke of the Turks and that their uprising and the assistance which was rendered to them during the Great War were merely intended to relieve them from such yoke. The fact is that under the Ottoman Constitution they enjoyed all rights and privileges, political and otherwise, on an equal basis with the Turks...The Arabs had a complete share with the Turks in all organs of the State, civil as well as military. There were Arabs who held the high office of Prime Minister and Ministers, Commanders of Divisions and Ambassadors.<sup>1</sup>

Feisal, of course, despite his obvious distinguished qualifications, was not universally accepted. In some Syrian quarters objections to him were raised because of distaste for his father, his non-Syrian origin, his relationship with the bedouin, his friendship with Europeans, his particular brand of statesmanship and his associates, many of whom were viewed as opportunists. Among Syrians who opposed Feisal it appears that many may have harbored loyalties to the former regime. The Turks, through their assets in Syria, were well aware that Feisal's support was not monolithic and by October 1919, as Feisal's position began to erode, commenced a propaganda campaign designed to appeal to latent Turkish loyalties primarily on religious grounds.<sup>2</sup> Feisal appears well aware that a portion of the Syrian populations was disaffected and maintained religious and traditional loyalties to the former and he consistently defended his position not on religious or nationalistic grounds but on the basis that the Arabs had revolted against the Ottomans because of the fanaticism, oppression and Pan-Turkism of the young Turks.

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1. Great Britain Palestine Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence Heard at Public Session, (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1937) p. 292.
  2. Documents, pp. 478 and 566-568.

I very much fear that the mischief will spread throughout the Moslem world. The people will think that there is a definite intention to persecute Islam. You may still remember that the rising of the Arabs headed by my father the King, has given the first blow against the hated principle of fanaticism. The Arabs attacked the Moslem Turks because they were oppressors, and joined the Allies believing that they were fighting for right and justice irrespective of religion. I personally throughout the war have been fighting fanaticism at every time and place. Arabs gathered around me from every direction and every religion. Our unity was national and not religious. A great number of men who are working with me now in this national cause do not belong to my religion. This must prove to you how distressed I shall be if this high ideal is debased to religious conflict through misunderstanding, mismanagement and imprudence.<sup>1</sup>

Ottoman influence in Feisal's administration was not limited to religion, traditional feeling and pro-Turkish sentiment. Syria after all was a conquered territory and one which had been administratively organized as an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup> The language of administration was Turkish and the corpus of civil and criminal law was Ottoman.<sup>3</sup> As mentioned previously the civil servants were, particularly at the lower levels Arab in the main, but of course Turkish trained.

In the initial phases of the organization of the administration of OETA East, Feisal and his advisors had the choice of attempting to reorganize the entire administration, along Arab non-Turkish lines or of making use of whatever existed in the way of administration in Syria. The first solution, obviously unworkable, was rejected and Feisal elected to operate through the administration already in place buttressed by Syrians

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1. Ibid, p. 519. The quotation is from a note addressed to the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference by Amir Feisal on 6 November 1919.
  2. David, pp. 25-27 gives a detailed discussion of the Turkish administrative organization of Syria.
  3. The personal papers of Ali Ridha al Rikabi, the military governor of the Eastern Zone and Arab by origin, are almost wholly written in Turkish.

and Iraqis who had participated in the Arab Revolt. Very few of his loyal Hejazi friends found places in the new administration.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first acts of the Arab administration was to confiscate all material properties of the former Ottoman government...waqfs, buildings, railways, telegraphs, debts...in fact all assets and liabilities were taken over by the new government.<sup>2</sup> Concomitant with the confiscation order another decree was published restoring to the previous owners the property confiscated by the Ottoman government and originally belonging to exiles and those who fought with the Allies.<sup>3</sup>

In the provinces governors were appointed, usually well known citizens from prominent local families, for example in the Jebel Druze, Salim al Atrash, of the noble Druze family was so appointed.<sup>4</sup> The organic statute of 5 November 1918 established a Council of Directors, each of whom headed a major department (Interior, Justice, Finance, Sharia, War, Health, Security, Education, Intelligence, Public Works, Agriculture and Tribes).<sup>5</sup> On 9 December 1918 a government inspectorate was formed consisting of three such groups, one for finance, one for judicial affairs and one for other

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1. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 649 and H. W. V. Temperley (ed.) A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, Vol VI (London, 1924) p. 139.
  2. Syria, al Asimah, The Official Journal, Issue #6, 6 March 1919, p. 4, (hereafter referred to as al Asimah). The date of the decree confiscating Ottoman properties was 13 November 1918. Many of the decrees issued by Feisal's government were published in al Asimah months after promulgation.
  3. Ibid, Issue #14, 3 April 1919, p. 3.
  4. Longrigg, p. 84.
  5. See above p.40 and David p. 30.

state matters. In the decree establishing the inspectorate "compliance with all Ottoman laws and regulations" was prescribed as the standard for its activities.<sup>1</sup> An indication of the new government's reliance on Ottoman practice and precedent was the issuance of a decree requiring the use of Ottoman government forms.<sup>2</sup> Courts were reestablished using Ottoman law and precedent often under their former judges and administrative councils were reformed in the municipalities, qadhas and sanjaqs.<sup>3</sup>

In the resultant confusion of again establishing the administrative machinery in a country devastated by war, inefficiency and venality were bound to creep into the government apparatus. The Turkish civil service was never renowned for its efficiency or its incorruptibility and those officials appointed by Feisal from his own cadres were, in general, inexperienced. As a result the Administration of Syria possessed many serious shortcomings... among them nepotism and inefficiency.<sup>4</sup> "Under the Arab regime there is less public security; law courts are a trifle more venal, the high officials no less corrupt than their predecessors, though this is not a source of serious complaint, for nothing else is expected of high officials."<sup>5</sup>

While if efficiency and honesty were not characteristic of the Arab Administration of Syria, it should be remembered that these qualities were

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1. Al Asimah, Issue #10, 22 March 1919, p. 4.
  2. Ibid, Issue #5, 4 March 1919, p. 4.
  3. David, p. 33 and Longrigg p. 85.
  4. Paris Peace Conference, Vol V, p. 12.
  5. Gertrude Bell, Report on Syria in October 1919; quoted by Kedourie p. 159.

also not characteristic of the previous Ottoman Administration which, as has already been pointed out, was in general the basis of the Arab Administration nor for that matter are they characteristic of present day Middle Eastern governments. A tradition of years of corruption and inefficiency cannot be erased by such a change as occurred in Syria in 1918. There is no evidence that Feisal himself was ever a party to corruption, although he may not have possessed all of the qualities normally necessary for an efficient administrator.<sup>1</sup>

As time went on and the Arabs and Feisal became more and more disenchanted with the proceedings of the Peace Conference and less and less hopeful that the eventual settlement would favor their cause, some of Feisal's supporters began to push for a reconciliation with the Turks who under Mustafa Kamal appeared to be having more success in the negotiations, even though a defeated enemy, than the victorious Arabs. In March 1922, it appears that the Syrian government was actually seeking to engage experienced Turkish administrators to help improve government procedures.<sup>2</sup> In November 1919 the British government received a report that Turkish popularity, based on religious and Pan Islamic feelings was on the rise in Syria.<sup>3</sup> In April of the same year, a Syrian mission visited Turkey hoping to align the two countries against a settlement which did not favor the Arab position. While the mission was organized without the knowledge of Feisal, it obtained his qualified and reluctant approval before commencing

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1. Muhammed Kurd Ali, Memoirs of Muhammed Kurd Ali; A Selection; (Washington, American Council of Learned Societies, 1954) p. 43.

2. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 147.

3. Documents, p. 523.

negotiations with representatives of Mustafa Kamal. A tentative agreement was reached but never put into effect before the French occupation of Syria in July 1920.<sup>1</sup>

As can be seen from the above, Turkish influence remained strong in Syria after the war. It was particularly strong during Feisal's tenure in the civil service and among the old conservative Muslim families. While much of this residual influence was undoubtedly due to tradition, and the threat which the new regime represented towards the vested economic interests of those elements, the question of religion was of overriding importance. In 1916 the Arabs under Hussein had revolted against the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph. In the eyes of devout Muslims and even those not so devout the Ottoman Empire and Islam were virtually one.<sup>2</sup> Now the armies of the Empire were defeated and in their stead the Christian soldiers of the Allies occupied the heartland of the Muslim East, an indignity which the Crusaders had never been able to accomplish. In the eyes of many Muslims therefore, Feisal, his family and his supporters, had been instrumental in bringing about the downfall of the Ottoman Empire regarded by many as virtually synonymous with Islam itself. This situation was perhaps the single most important internal threat to Feisal's regime and one which he well recognized:

One of the objects of the Rising which I have undertaken, and of which I have assumed the responsibility...is to persuade the Moslem World of the false principles which the "Committee of Union and Progress" proclaimed, viz: the necessity for Panislamism and nothing else. Mecca was upheld against Constantinople and the Turks in order to maintain the "national principle" and to prostrate any other.

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1. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 147-148.
  2. See Zeine, Arab-Turkish Relations, pp. 117-129 for a discussion of the relationship between Islam and the Ottoman Empire.

Does not Your Excellency therefore see that the placing of the Arab Provinces under mandates of different Powers will be counted by the Moslems as a complete failure of the straightforward and righteous national policy which ought to be supported with all possible power and all firmness, and does Your Excellency not know that the losing of hope for unity of the Country will lead up to a very strong reaction, which will carry Ruin and Disaster in its steps not only in this country, but elsewhere, as well, as a result of Despair.<sup>1</sup>

Feisal's uneasiness with regard to his Syrian Muslim brothers was presaged in a report by the British Political Agent in Aleppo in June 1919. "By breaking up the Turkish Empire and delivering the Hedjaz, Mesopotamian and Syrian Moslems, England has caused alarm among all the Moslems who look to the Sultan as Caliph."<sup>2</sup> Feisal, the ally of England, was naturally placed in the same category as the English by those "Moslems who look to the Sultan as Caliph."

#### Economic Conditions in Syria

It must always be remembered that the area over which Feisal's Administration exercised its authority was a war ravaged and devastated land. Throughout the war the population had suffered from a dire shortage of food, which though more <sup>acute</sup> in Lebanon, was nevertheless serious in the area of OETA East. Food distribution and production had been disrupted due to lack of and inefficient use of transportation, hoarding, profiteering, corruption and a plague of locusts in 1915.<sup>3</sup> Immediate succor was provided by the British military organization in the interior and the

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1. Documents, pp. 386-387. The quotation is from an undated memorandum from Amir Feisal to Lloyd George (approximate date, September 1919).

2. Ibid, p. 291. See also Kedourie p. 173.

3. Antonius, pp. 241-242, estimates that in the whole of Syria 300,000 people died of malnutrition or starvation during the war.



French in the OETA West but the problem of food supply continued to vex Feisal's government until the fall of the Arab government.<sup>1</sup>

The monetary and banking difficulties of the Ottoman Empire in Syria are fully described by Sa'id Himadeh.<sup>2</sup> At the time of establishment of Feisal's government the banking system was in a state of collapse, credit was unobtainable and due to psychological and fiscal reasons the Turkish currency was greatly depreciated. In October and November of 1918 as the Arab Administration took over in Syria the value of the Turkish currency in circulation fell about fifty per cent in one month.<sup>3</sup> The currency situation was so bad that on 2 November Allenby, in his position as Commander-in-Chief, demonetized the Turkish paper currency and replaced it with the Egyptian paper money throughout the area of his jurisdiction. Turkish coinage however was permitted to remain in circulation. However for psychological reasons and because of the political turmoil prevailing at the time, the Egyptian currency did not secure ready acceptance in the area and was seldom taken at face value by sellers. The presence of residual Turkish paper money in Syria which retained a low but real value since it remained the medium of exchange in Anatolia, and the Middle Eastern habit of hoarding gold further complicated the monetary situation for the Arab Administration in Damascus throughout its short existence.<sup>4</sup>

The transportation and communication systems were in a general state of disrepair. The only rail lines in an operable condition upon the occupation of Syria by the British and Arab forces were the narrow gauge

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1. The Report of the French High Commissioner in Lebanon and Syria, 1922 (Paris: Emile La Rose, 1922) pp. 304-306.
  2. Sa'id B. Himadeh, Monetary and Banking System of Syria (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1935) pp. 34-57.
  3. Ibid, p. 49.
  4. Ibid, pp. 50-55.

line connecting Damascus with Rayak; the cogwheel line connecting Rayak with Beirut and the standard gauge line connecting Rayak, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. These lines and their rolling stock were suffering from years of wartime neglect.<sup>1</sup> The built-in problem necessitating the transfer of all goods shipped from Damascus to Aleppo or vice versa to be transferred at Rayak further limited the usefulness of the rail system to Feisal's Administration.

The road network, so important to any government for communications, security, transport and trade was entirely inadequate. The 100 kilometer trip from Damascus to Beirut took two days to accomplish by automobile which is indicative of the quality of the road net at the time.<sup>2</sup> This rudimentary road system did not provide on continuous all weather route from Damascus to Aleppo. Essentially Damascus was connected by all weather roads only with Beirut and Quneitira; Homs with Tripoli and Tartous; Hama with Banias, and Aleppo with Alexandretta, Maskana and Antioch. The Damascus-Aleppo route was completed only as far as Nebek.<sup>3</sup>

The division of Syria into the three OETA's resulted in Feisal's Administration being cut off from Syria's natural ports of Alexandretta and Haifa. The secondary ports of Syria at the time, Beirut, Tripoli, Tartous, Banias and Latakia were likewise denied to the Arabs since they were also located in OETA West under French Administration. French ability to control the ports placed the Arab Administration at a tremendous

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1. Report of the French High Commissioner, pp. 143-145.

2. Ibid, p. 147.

3. Ibid, pp. 147-159.

disadvantage particularly since Syrian industry at the time was virtually non-existent and almost all manufactured items had to be imported.<sup>1</sup>

From the above it is obvious that the economic problems facing the Arab Administration were extensive and difficult, particularly in view of the hostility of the French Administration in the coastal area. While initially the British army rendered considerable assistance, its gradual reduction and eventual evacuation in November 1919<sup>2</sup> reduced this form of support. British subsidies which had amounted to 150,000 sterling monthly upon the establishment of Feisal's Administration were reduced on 19 November 1919 to 75,000 placing additional economic burdens on the fledgling government.<sup>3</sup> Although the French were supposed to pay a similar subsidy commencing on the date of the British reduction the net effect of this move was to provide the French with a useful economic lever over the Arabs in Damascus whose move for independence was becoming more and more disturbing to them.<sup>4</sup>

#### Political Activity and Political Parties

The political activity which had developed in Syria during the years prior to World War I did not disappear with the establishment of the Arab government in Damascus but on the contrary increased and flourished. At

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1. Ibid, pp. 174-175.

2. Al Asimah, Issue #86, 22 December, 1919, p. 6.

3. Documents, p. 509.

4. Ibid.

times this activity proved as troublesome to Feisal's government as it had to the Turks.<sup>1</sup> The pre-war history of Syrian political parties was discussed briefly in Chapter One but a discussion of their activities after the defeat of Turks is necessary.<sup>2</sup>

The most influential of these organizations after the conclusion of the war was al Fatat. A great deal of its influence undoubtedly stemmed from the fact that virtually all of members were educated, respected and in many cases wealthy individuals. The organization was active and aggressive, and boasted some genuine heroes among its Syrian membership,<sup>3</sup> which of course included Feisal himself and the Military Governor Ali Ridha al Rikabi, Feisal's first lieutenant. The organization therefore had considerable popular appeal which it endeavored to strengthen by establishing branches in the towns and villages of Syria and a central propaganda office in Damascus. It proposed matters of internal and foreign policy to Feisal's government and often announced his decisions.<sup>4</sup> "No governmental measure, under Feisal's regime in Syria, could be carried out without the party's consent, be it tacit or explicit."<sup>5</sup>

From October 1918 to the end of 1919, al Fatat fully supported Feisal's policy of seeking full independence for the Arabs. But in the

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1. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 47.
  2. See above pp. 6-8 for the pre-war activities of al Fatat and al Ahd.
  3. Shuqri al Quwatly, later President of Syria and First Citizen of the United Arab Republic was imprisoned by the Turks for his activities in al Fatat. He attempted suicide while in jail.
  4. M. I. Darwazah, Hawl al Harakah al Arabiyyah, (Sidon, 1950) p. 37.
  5. Hisham A. Nashabi, The Political Parties in Syria, 1918-1939. (unpublished thesis, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1952) p. 20.

fall of 1919, the membership of al Fatat differed with Feisal, believing that he had adopted a policy of appeasement after his second trip to Paris in September of that year. The disagreement between Feisal and al Fatat seriously weakened his position in Syria and persisted until July 1920 when under the threat of French occupation al Fatat again gave Feisal its unqualified support.<sup>1</sup>

After the war al Fatat remained secret in name only, although membership could only be obtained after a vigorous selection and screening process. In order to expand the membership and still maintain the original character of the parent organization an offshoot was formed in 1919 by the leadership of al Fatat. Al Istiqlal (Independence), as the new organization was called, shared membership and policy with al Fatat but its partisans were not required to pass the vigorous screening required for entry into al Fatat. As a result its membership increased rapidly reaching eventually a quarter million.<sup>2</sup> Al Istiqlal appears to have been a loosely knit but vigorous society which embraced the principles of Arab Nationalism with uncritical but patriotic enthusiasm.

As noted in the previous chapter, al Ahd was the other major pre-war political organization. Its membership was almost completely composed of officers of Arab origin in the Turkish Army. Unlike al Fatat, al Ahd continued to restrict its membership and it remained essentially an organization of army officers and former army officers.<sup>3</sup> It did however split into two geographical branches, one made up of Syrian officers and

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1. Ibid, p. 22.

2. Ibid, p. 26.

3. Ibid, p. 31.

the other of officers of Iraqi descent. While the reasons for the split in the organization are not exactly clear, it is significant that the membership of al Ahd divided on geographic lines when the party was originally formed to insure the independence of the entire Arab nation. While the two branches continued to cooperate, the division lessened the party's influence and it became much less a factor on the Syrian scene during the period of the Arab government in Damascus than it had been in the years prior to the war.<sup>1</sup>

In the period immediately after the conclusion of the war, Syria was in political ferment. While al Fatat and al Ahd and later al Istiqlal were still the principal political organizations, other parties began to form. One of the important later entrants in the field was al Hizb al Watani (The Nationalist Party). This party was founded in January 1920 by Feisal himself who, by this time, no longer commanded the complete support of al Fatat. The principal tenet of its program was the demand for full political independence of Syria "within its natural boundaries", and to defend that independence by all means.<sup>2</sup> Understandably, the party platform called for a democratic monarchy for "natural Syria" headed by Feisal as King.<sup>3</sup>

The program of al Hizb al Watani also contained statements on civil and political rights and economic policy and called for support of Amir Feisal's program for obtaining Syrian independence, creating an army and

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1. Ibid, p. 30

2. Ibid, p. 34. While the definition of "natural Syria" was not defined, it appears to have included only Syria, Palestine and Lebanon. This delimitation of course represented a considerable withdrawal from the original position of the Arabs which demanded independence of the entire Arab Nation.

3. Ibid, pp. 33-34.

establishing security. While the program itself was rather sketchy and not too specific, al Hizb al Watani appears to have had most of the attributes of a modern political party.<sup>1</sup> It was the first Syrian nationalistic organization to include in its name the word for party (hizb).

In contrast with al Hizb al Watani, which was organized to support Feisal, two other organizations were founded to oppose him. As it became more and more apparent that Feisal's representations at the Paris Peace Conference appeared to be having less and less success, and as Feisal began to adopt a more compromising attitude in hopes of gaining at least some measure of success, the fervent nationalists became disenchanted. This situation pertained particularly after the signing of the Feisal-Weizmann agreement in January 1919,<sup>2</sup> and the reaching of the Feisal-Clemenceau accord in April, 1920.<sup>3</sup>

The ultra-nationalists under the leadership of Sheikh Kamil al Kassab formed an organization called al Lajnah al Wataniah al Ulia (The High National Committee) which had as its single major aim the promotion of military recruitment.<sup>4</sup> The formation of this committee was undoubtedly also influenced by the rumors that the French were about to land a large army in Lebanon, the mission of which would be to subdue Syria.<sup>5</sup> Shortly

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1. Ibid, pp. 35.
  2. See Antonius pp. 437-439 for text of this agreement.
  3. "He (Feisal) informed me (General Clayton) that on the advice of Lawrence he had agreed verbally with Clemenceau to use his efforts with the people to secure a French mandate for Syria on the understanding that France recognized Syrian independence." Documents, p. 265, Note 3.
  4. Nashabi, p. 37.
  5. Documents, p. 256.

after the formation of al Lajnah al Wataniah al Ulia, Sheikh Kamil formed a political party which took the name of al Hizb al Dimacrati (Democratic Party). The purpose of this party was in the words of Sheikh Kamil "to oppose Amir Feisal who has made an agreement with Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France, after Britain had betrayed the Arabs by going back on its word and reaching an agreement with the French that the latter abandon their claims to Mosul and Palestine as a first step toward the carrying out of the terms of the ill-omened Balfour Declaration."<sup>1</sup> Like al Lajnah al Wataniah al Ulia, al Hizb al Dimacrati appeared to have a single purpose... to organize opposition to the French. Accordingly it reacted violently to what it considered Feisal's policy of appeasement.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, al Hizb al Dimacrati was the most extreme of the Syrian parties active at the time and found itself fully in accord with the opposition which developed in the much more influential al Fatat.

A few other minor political organization were formed, none of which had much of a program, but all of which exhibited considerable fervor and enthusiasm. An exception was al Nadi al Arabi (The Arab Club). This organization was originally founded by Ali Ridha al Rikabi, the Military Governor of OETA East, in order to stimulate nationalistic feelings among not only Syrian but all Arabs. Its membership was restricted to intellectuals and most of its members belonged to the other political organizations already mentioned. On the whole the aims of al Nadi al Arabi were not political but patriotic. It was well organized and sponsored meetings,

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1. Quoted by Nashabi from personal correspondence, p. 37.

2. Feisal denied that he ever intended to abide by his agreement with Clemenceau. Documents, p. 265, Note 3.



celebrations and printed and distributed pamphlets. Its headquarters was in a downtown building near the serai and its meeting hall was used for the initial meetings of the General Syrian Congress, a fact indicative of its influence.<sup>1</sup>

All of the political parties and organizations mentioned above showed a single characteristic--they were patriotically and nationalistically motivated. Their supporters were fervent and idealistic and many of them belonged to two or more of the organizations. With the exception of al Hizb al Watani, none had a program other than a common demand for independence and a common opposition to any form of foreign subjugation or tutelage. Even the program of al Hizb al Watani was simple and embryonic. The commitment of all those organizations to absolute independence and their outspoken and constant reiteration of these demands tended to limit the bargaining power of Amir Feisal at the Peace Conference. Each tactical concession or political maneuver he made was interpreted by the outspoken proponents of independence as a traitorous act.<sup>2</sup> As the organizations themselves were without programs other than the demand for independence, allegiance to them was usually given based on the personalities involved. At first Feisal was the personality in whom was embodied all the trust and confidence of those Syrians who were politically active, but as time passed, and it became more and more obvious that the Allies, particularly France, had no intention of allowing a completely independent Arab nation to be established, other and less responsible leaders gathered support (e.g. Sheikh Kamil).

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1. Personal interview with Akram Rikabi, son of Ali Ridha al Rikabi. See also Gontaut de Biron, p. 195 and Nashabi, pp. 42-44.

2. Nashabi, p. 38.

Feisal began to be considered a failure for not delivering what the nationalists so fervently wished for. Support for him weakened, and in an effort to bolster it he formed al Hizb al Watani. As his disappointed and disgusted followers commenced to forsake him they joined organizations in opposition to him. From mid-1919 until Meisalun the story of Syrian political activity was mainly one of struggle between pro and anti-Feisal factions, ironically all of whom were fighting for the same objective - independence.

#### Public Order

The Arab government in Damascus, in addition to the economic and political troubles which constantly beset it, was continually plagued with problems of public order and security. These difficulties were to some extent the outgrowth of the economic and political problems, but other factors contributed greatly to the restlessness of the population. The occupation of the coastal regions by French troops, the continued presence of the British in Iraq and certain sectarian problems including those arising out of the forced exile of thousands of Armenians from Turkey to Syria, all precipitated clashes and altercations between one faction or another. The decision to withdraw British troops, a move which was completed on 25 November 1919,<sup>1</sup> was regarded by the Syrians as an open invitation to French military occupation and added further fuel to the smoldering fires of dissidence and disorder.

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1. Al Asimah, Issue #86, 22 December 1919, p. 6. As the British troops departed Damascus, an airplane flew overhead dropping leaflets wishing "with all our hearts a good future for Damascus and the Arab people" and thanking the Syrians for their hospitality.

The disturbances which broke out all over Syria began early in 1919 and by May, when Feisal returned from the Paris Peace Conference he "found guerilla warfare of a kind already in progress between Arabs and French in the coastal districts."<sup>1</sup> While at least initially, these incidents appear to have been minor in character, consisting mainly of clashes between French and Arab gendarmerie along the border of OETA East and West, the withdrawal of the British troops in November 1919 resulted in a sharply increased tempo.<sup>2</sup> Demonstrations and protests occurred in Homs, Idlib, Kerak, Aleppo, Hauran, Tel Kalakh, Marj'ayoun, Tyre, Baalbek, Antioch, Hama, Quneitirah and other areas during the months of October, November and December 1919 and January 1920.<sup>3</sup> Immediately after the departure of the British troops, the disturbances became so serious that Amir Zeid, acting in the absence of Feisal, issued a general proclamation calling for a return to law and order and cessation of assaults and attacks.<sup>4</sup> The proclamation of Zeid was coupled with issuance by the Military Governor, Ali Ridha al Rikabi, of strict orders prohibiting public meetings and demonstrations without prior governmental permission and the carrying of arms. Both Zeid and Ali Ridha appealed to the people for their cooperation and obedience to the Arab government in Damascus.<sup>5</sup>

In late November, the Damascus government received word that Baalbek, Rashayya and Shaturah, all located in the Biq'a valley would

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1. Temperley, p. 149.

2. Documents, pp. 478, 490 and 524.

3. Al Asimah, passim during the months indicated.

4. Ibid. Issue #79, 27 November 1919, p. 2.

5. Ibid.

be occupied by French troops, although administratively the area would remain under control of the Arab Government in Damascus. Since this very area was part of that which had been awarded to the French under the Sykes-Picot agreement, the implication to the Arabs were quite obvious.<sup>1</sup> Nuri Sa'id was deputized by the Arab Government to inform the French Commander in Beirut that "grave risks will result from this occupation because it is contrary to the desires of the people."<sup>2</sup> However despite Nuri's representations, the French occupation was carried out and resulted in an outbreak of new incidents in this area in December and January.<sup>3</sup> In January and again in June 1920, Arab guerilla activities particularly in the Biq'a and around Aleppo greatly hindered the French army which at the time was engaged in fighting the Turks in Cilicia.<sup>4</sup>

The general feeling of frustration and indignation resulted in the surfacing of latent animosities which had existed for generations just below the surface of Syrian life. Sectarian difficulties broke out in Aleppo in March 1919, involving the Armenian refugees who by this time numbered some 48,000,<sup>5</sup> and the Arabs. In January 1920 Christian villagers in Marj'ayun were killed and looted; in March 1919, the Arab government was compelled to issue a decree protecting the rights of the Protestant

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1. Ibid. Issue #80, 1 December 1919, p. 2. Also see p. 11 above.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid. Issue #81, 4 December 1919, p. 3 and Issue #82, 8 December 1919, p. 3 and passim. Nuri did succeed in having the French limit their troops to a few officers and small units.
  4. Al Husri, p. 161 and Kedourie, p. 170.
  5. Ibid. Issue #4, 27 February 1919, p. 6.

community in Rashayya;<sup>1</sup> and other incidents of intercommunal strife between the Alawites and the Isma'ilis, the Sunnis and the Druze and the Circassians and the Arabs were also reported during the winter of 1919-1920.<sup>2</sup> The entire internal picture during this period was one of disorder, strife and conflict. Some positive moves were made to alleviate the problem, as for example the formation in December 1919 of a non-political committee of Arabs and Armenians under the leadership of the Deputy Military Governor of Aleppo to promote mutual understanding between these two elements of the population.<sup>3</sup> But on the whole the disorder could not be controlled and "the Amir was powerless to prevent these disturbances."<sup>4</sup>

On the eastern border trouble also developed. The Iraqi officers in Feisal's army were as much concerned with British intentions in Iraq as the Syrians were with French intentions in Syria. Furthermore, Feisal had adopted a policy of appointing Syrian advisors whenever possible for political reasons,<sup>5</sup> and the Iraqis, who constituted a large proportion of the officers in Feisal's army,<sup>6</sup> began to sense that their opportunities in Syria were limited and that their best hope for power and position was in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> The split in al Ahd described above provided a base within the Iraqi

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1. Ibid. Issue #8, 19 March 1919, p. 8.

2. Kedourie, p. 170 and Documents, p. 567.

3. Al Asimah, Issue #1, 17 February 1919, p. 3.

4. Temperley p. 120.

5. Ibid, p. 139.

6. Bell, Syria in October 1919, quoted by Kedourie p. 161.

7. Gertrude Bell, Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia 1914-1920; CMD 1061 (1920) p. 138 quoted by Kedourie p. 181.

faction for the organization of anti-British activity aimed at displacing the British much as the Syrians were attempting to thwart French ambition in Syria.

The al Ahd organization in Iraq, like its Syrian counterpart, was quite active and its branches in Mosul, Basra and Baghdad were well organized.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the end of the war, the town of Deir Az Zor on the Euphrates river became a center of anti-British activity. The town itself was in an area in which definite boundaries had not yet been established between Turkey, Iraq and Syria, and in December 1918 the Damascus government had appointed a mutasarraf who acted under the supervision of the Arab governor of Aleppo. He was soon withdrawn however, after the British applied pressure, and replaced by a British Political Officer from Iraq who was able to establish his authority in name only since he had no military support.<sup>2</sup> During the following year, the Iraqi Branch of al Ahd, led by Feisal's Chief of Staff, Yasin al Hashimi, waged what amounted to propaganda warfare against the British in Iraq from the border towns of al Bukamal, Mayyadin and Deir Az Zor. On 25 December 1919, Deir Az Zor was again occupied by the Syrians who, after imprisoning the British Assistant Political Officer, forced the humiliated British to leave.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in early 1920 the border erupted in a series of raids and incursions into Iraq:

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1. Kedourie, p. 182.

2. Philip Ireland, Iraq; A Study in Political Development (London: 1937) pp. 254 and 255.

3. Stephen H. Longrigg, Iraq, 1900 to 1950 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p. 119.

From April onwards, the concentration of tribal raids on military supply camps and on military convoys between Shargat railhead and Mosul pointed to other purposes than mere desire for loot and to a higher control than that of tribal shaikhs. The methods employed seemed to indicate that the former officers of Feisal's Arab Army had not forgotten the tactics used by Colonel Lawrence and his fellow officers against the Turkish lines of supply in the Hijaz and in Syria.<sup>1</sup>

In late March 1920, British representatives in Iraq began to hear reports of a planned attack by Syrian - based Iraqis against Mosul.<sup>2</sup> In early June the attack materialized when a tribal force under an Iraqi officer, Jamil al Madfa'i, attacked Tell Afar and killed two British officers and two NCO's. A British army relief column chased Madfa'is force back to Deir Az Zor but only after suffering 15 casualties.<sup>3</sup> The British Political Officer in Mosul said in his report on the incident that "there is no reasonable doubt that the expedition was organized by the al Ahd organization in Syria, and that is armed from the Sharifian arsenal in Deir Az Zor, that Feisal deprecated it but was aware of it, and that it was actively encouraged and financed by Zeid."<sup>4</sup>

While there seems to be considerable evidence that the Arab Government in Damascus was providing at least passive and most likely some active support of the adventures of the Iraqis on the border of Syria and Iraq the circumstances at the time must be considered. The official position of the Damascus government did not support the movement. "Throughout the period, the Damascus government protested that the Deir Az Zor officials

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1. Ireland, p. 257.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 258 and Longrigg, Iraq, p. 120.

4. Ibid., p. 259.

were an embarrassment to it, but in reality they seemed to enjoy its support and approval."<sup>1</sup> At the same time Feisal himself was absent from Syria much of the time and when he was back in Damascus activity on the border tended to decrease.<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that the Iraqi officers, who had fought in the Arab Revolt were just as anxious to obtain for Iraq what Feisal was so desperately trying to obtain for Syria. Some of the more active Iraqis such as Nuri Sa'id, Yasin al Hashimi and Ja'far al Askari were very influential in the Damascus Government and were easily in a position, considering the situation at the time, of forcing events which Feisal did not approve of. That the British recognized this is somewhat supported by the fact that on 22 November 1922 the British arrested Yasin al Hashimi and exiled him to Palestine.<sup>3</sup> In protest against his arrest, 10,000 Damascenes demonstrated on 23 November, attesting to the support which Yasin, and presumably his aims could arouse in Syria.<sup>4</sup>

From the above it can be seen that Feisal's government was constantly beset by problems of public order and security. Many of these problems

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1. Ibid, p. 255
  2. Longrigg, Iraq, pp. 119-120
  3. Al Asimah, Issue #78, p. 2. Col Meinertzhagen (see Documents p. 523) states that Yasin was in contact with Mustafa Kamal. However, it appears to be just as likely that he was arrested for activities with the Iraqi branch of al Ahd whose aims were directly contrary to British goals in Iraq. Meinertzhagen's anti-Arab bias is so obvious throughout all his reports that he has, in this author's opinion, discredited himself as a source.
  4. Ibid. Yasin al Hashimi was imprisoned until 4 May 1920. Ibid. Issue #126, p. 6.



stemmed from Arab opposition to French and British plans for the area. The tensions and frustrations of the time, a naturally unruly populace, and undoubtedly the turmoil which followed in the wake of the war were also major factors in the breakdown of law and order. It appears virtually certain that the violence was beyond the control of Feisal. It also appears that Feisal fully realized that the outbreaks were counter-productive and were serving to increase the animosity of the French and irritate the British but in the face of constant pressure from his nationalistic supporters he had little maneuver room and was totally unable to call a halt to the disturbances.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Temperley, p. 120 and Kedourie, p. 172.

CHAPTER III

THE GENERAL SYRIAN CONGRESS;  
FEISAL BECOMES KING OF SYRIA

Introduction

The convening of the General Syrian Congress was closely linked with the dispatch to the Middle East of what has become known as the King-Crane Commission. While a discussion of the King-Crane Commission as such is not pertinent to this paper, it should be recognized that the sending of the commission acted as a catalyst for the convocation by Amir Feisal of the General Syrian Congress. The idea of sending a commission to the Middle East to "ascertain the political wishes and aspirations of the Syrian people" appears to have originated with Doctor Daniel Bliss, then the President of the Syrian Protestant College, now the American University of Beirut. Doctor Bliss was in Paris at the invitation of the United States Department of State to express his views, gained after long and devoted service in the field of education in the Middle East, on the Syrian situation. Doctor Bliss appeared before the Council of Ten on 13 February 1919 and expressed his opinion that an "accurate statement of the Syrian point of view" could only be obtained "by an examination on the spot by commissioners authorized by

the Peace Conference."<sup>1</sup>

Bliss's suggestion called for an "Inter-Allied or a neutral Commission" to be sent "at once to Syria in order to give an opportunity to the people of Syria, to express in a perfectly untrammelled way their political wishes and aspiration, viz; as to what form of Government they desire and as to what power, if any, should be the Mandatory Protecting Power."<sup>2</sup> Bliss based his suggestion on the Twelfth Point of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points which he felt was a commitment to extend an opportunity to the peoples formerly under Turkish Dominion to decide their own destiny.<sup>3</sup> To further strengthen his case Bliss quoted the full text of the Joint Declaration made by France and Great Britain on the Arabs on 8 November 1918 which had, in part, stated that the aim of the War in the Middle East had been to "establish national governments and administrations which shall derive their authority from the initiative and free will of the peoples themselves."<sup>4</sup>

Dr Bliss appeared before the American Commission to Negotiate Peace on 27 February 1919 and reiterated his position.<sup>5</sup> At about the same time Amir Feisal advised the military representatives on the Supreme Council that "the Associated Powers should send a Commission to Syria to establish the facts and ascertain the wishes of the people."<sup>6</sup>

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1. See Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, Appendix F, pp. 255-259 for complete text of Bliss's statement.
  2. Ibid, pp. 255-256.
  3. Ibid, pp. 255-256, see above p. 26.
  4. Ibid, p. 256 and Hurewitz vol 2, p. 30.
  5. Paris Peace Conference vol XI pp. 61, 66-67.
  6. Harry N. Howard, The King-Crane Commission (Beirut: Khayat's, 1963) p.25. This reference is extremely detailed and well documented. Since this thesis does not directly concern the activities of the King-Crane Commission, the reader is referred/to this volume for details.

The representations of Bliss and Feisal bore fruit when on 20 March 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proposed in a Secret Meeting of the Supreme Council at Paris that an Inter-Allied Commission be sent to Syria, and that it be composed of an equal number of French, British, Italian and American representatives, who should be given carte blanche to report on the facts as they found them.<sup>1</sup> After some deliberation, the Supreme Council accepted the recommendations of President Wilson, despite some opposition from the French and some serious reservations by the Zionists. However, the French steadfastly refused to appoint their representatives and although the British did appoint their commissioners, Sir Henry McMahon and David Hogarth, they later withdrew them in deference to the French. The Italians thereupon refused to appoint their members until the French and British took action. However on 27 March, President Wilson appointed Mr Charles R. Crane, a Chicago businessman, and Mr Henry C. King, the President of Oberlin College as the American Commissioners. Three technical advisors and an administrative staff were also appointed.<sup>2</sup>

After any number of vicissitudes, delays and false starts and over the opposition of the French, President Wilson dispatched the American Commissioners, on 29 May 1919. The opposition of the French was based on several factors; distrust of the British; fear that both the U. S. and Britain were opposed to French aspirations in Syria; and the knowledge that an impartial investigation might very well prejudice their claim. One observation sums this up:

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1. Hurewitz, vol II, p. 57-58.

2. Howard, pp. 41-45.

The French were opposed to this expedition. Never did they intend that it should go to judge by their obstructionist policy. Their official policy was to stand absolutely upon the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. After two months of futile conferences of all kinds President Wilson, in exasperation, determined to send out an American commission to ascertain what the Syrians really wanted.<sup>1</sup>

The British position was stated by David Lloyd George:

The United States, Great Britain and Italy had their delegates already, but it was France who had never appointed their delegates. The agreement to send the Commission had been put into a formal document which had been signed by all of them. The French Government had not carried out their part of the bargain. I did not accuse Clemenceau of not keeping faith, but I said that he certainly had not carried out the bargain.

The French finally refused to take any part in the Commission. I felt that they regarded our officers as the stimulators of the anti-French feeling. It might provoke further unpleasantness if we were to send out our representatives. President Wilson, however, felt that, being in a more impartial position he would appoint a purely American delegation to go to Syria to institute an inquiry as to the wishes of the inhabitants. I told the Peace Conference that the British Government was quite willing to agree to a similar investigation into the wishes of the people of Mesopotamia and Palestine. I formally declared at the Conference that "I was quite willing to abide by the decision of the inhabitants as interpreted by the Commission." President Wilson thereupon commented: "That was necessarily his own point of view. He had no other means on which to form judgement. He did not think that these peoples could be left entirely to themselves. They required guidance and some intimate superintendance, but this should be conducted in their interests and not in the interests of the mandatory."<sup>2</sup>

It appears that if nothing else the sending of the King-Crane Commission served to dampen the smoldering fires of frustrated nationalism which by this time had threatened to erupt throughout Syria. From this point of view the decision of President Wilson, taken in the face of

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1. W. L. Westermann, The American Problem and the Disruption of Turkey in E. M. House and Charles Seymour, What Really Happened at Paris (New York: Scribner's, 1921) p. 198 quoted in Ibid, p. 85.
  2. David Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference, 2 vols (New Haven: Yale, 1939) pp. 1077-1078, quoted in Ibid, p. 86.

French opposition, British reluctance and Zionist pressure,<sup>1</sup> was certainly wise and courageous. The importance of the decision can be judged from the comments of two responsible observers on the spot in the troubled Middle East. On 30 May 1919 General Allenby wired the British delegation at Paris informing it of a rumor current at the time in Beirut to the effect that the Commission would not come to Syria but a large French army would. Allenby warned that if the rumor was true the situation in Syria would become extremely serious and that he could not accept responsibility for what might happen. He urged that the Commission arrive as soon as possible in order to forestall a possible uprising.<sup>2</sup> A telegram from General Clayton in Cairo of the same date (evidently despatched after notification that only the Americans were coming) urged that to forestall trouble the Inter-Allied Commission come as one body.<sup>3</sup> Allenby considered the situation in Syria so serious that on 31 May he felt it necessary to warn Feisal:

I count upon you in the meantime to maintain order and discipline and to restrain any action that might endanger the future of your country. Any hasty action that would bring you into conflict with my troops would put an end to all your national aspirations at once.<sup>4</sup>

The French, even after the dispatch of the King-Crane Commission, persisted in holding out for the principles of the Sykes-Picot agreement. On 1 June Picot, who was then head of the French Civil Administration in OETA West, informed General Clayton that Syria's future would be decided

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1. Documents, pp. 260-261. Felix Frankfurter was endeavouring to persuade Wilson not to send the American representatives.

2. Ibid, pp. 256-257.

3. Ibid, p. 257.

4. Ibid, p. 260.

without reference to Feisal, and that the King-Crane Commission was a mere blind to placate the Arabs and Feisal until the final arrangements could be settled upon.<sup>1</sup>

However to the Arabs the King-Crane Commission offered a forum in which they could present their views. Feisal, realizing this, departed from Paris for Syria on 21 April after writing President Wilson welcoming the Commission and expressing his confidence that in Syria "it would find a country united in its love and gratitude to America"<sup>2</sup>. Upon his return to Syria Feisal immediately set about mustering political support for the long awaited arrival of the Inter-Allied Commission, truncated as it had become. His efforts soon bore fruit.

#### The General Syrian Congress and its Purpose

Feisal commenced his political maneuverings almost as soon as he returned to Syria in early May 1919. On 9 May Feisal addressed the notables of Syria in the serai in Damascus.<sup>3</sup> During this meeting, Feisal

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1. Ibid, p. 263.

2. Howard, p. 51.

3. Representatives were present from Hawran, Palestine, Jebel Druze, Jebel Amil, Homs, Baalbek, Hama, South Lebanon, Sidon, Salt, Aleppo and other areas as well as Damascus. Bedouin tribes, Kurds, Jews, Greek and Latin Catholics and Armenians were also present. Al Husri, pp. 202-213 and Documents pp. 267-272. Al Husri gives the date of the meeting as 5 May while Colonel Cornwallis (Documents) gives the date as 9 May.

presented to the assembled notables his aims, gave an account of his stewardship in Paris, and asked for what in effect was a vote of confidence in himself and his program. The assemblage responded enthusiastically. It was in this meeting that Feisal first publicly broached the idea of electing a representative assembly.<sup>1</sup>

The British Political Officer's report interpreted the results of this meeting as follows:

Feisal stands pledged to the independence programme and has received full powers from the notables. This gives him no new official standing since the notables had no mandates from their communities, but it is another proof that he stands very high in popular favour at present.<sup>2</sup>

The Political Officer also took note of Feisal's decision to convene a representative assembly:

The Pan-Syrian Conference, to which he (Feisal) refers in his speech, was to have been held with the object of bringing about a coup d'etat by the immediate declaration of complete independence without reference to the Peace Conference, and of discussing the form of Government to be set up. The Commander in Chief (General Allenby), however, disapproved the idea which has been abandoned.<sup>3</sup>

To back track a bit, it should be pointed out that Feisal was under considerable political pressure at the time particularly from Istiqlal which had become quite large and exceedingly vocal. Istiqlal was becoming impatient over what it considered to be non-delivery on the promises made to the Arabs and it was from this organization that the original idea seems to have arisen for the convocation of a representative assembly. Feisal, attempting to direct the energies of this enthusiastic group into

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 264.

3. Ibid., p. 264 and p. 287.



productive lines, readily agreed with the idea to convoke the Congress.<sup>1</sup>

There also appears to be little question but that Feisal was interested in presenting a united front to the Inter-Allied Commission which he expected to arrive in Syria shortly. He was particularly interested in seeing that the position of the people of Syria as presented to the King-Crane Commission reflected a possible solution to the Syrian question. He was therefore greatly disturbed by two things; one, the fact that the Commission was composed of Americans only; and two, the announced position of the British Government that it would not accept a mandate for Syria.<sup>2</sup> In Feisal's view these factors drastically reduced the acceptable alternatives which could be arrived at.

The convocation of the General Syrian Congress appears to have been viewed by Feisal as serving two purposes; first, to channel the political activity of the Syrian people, particularly those belonging to nationalist organizations into a productive channel; and second, to establish a representative body which would present a united front and back Feisal's independence program before the King-Crane Commission.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid, p. 264 and Howard, p. 119. See also Antonius, p. 292 for an enlightening analysis of the part played by al Istiqlal in the convening of the General Syrian Congress.

2. Documents, pp. 298 and 299 and Howard, p. 119.

3. See David, p. 48, who flatly states that the second of these reasons was the true motivation for the election of the Congress.

The Membership of the General Syrian  
Congress and the Method of their Election

The expected imminent arrival of the King-Crane Commission in the Middle East left little time for the process of electing representatives to the General Syrian Congress, their travel to Damascus and the development of a program to be placed before the King-Crane Commission.<sup>1</sup> Feisal hastily issued orders for the election of members to the General Syrian Congress from all Syria including Lebanon and Palestine (OETA West and South). In order to insure the completion of the elections in time to convoke the Congress prior to the arrival of the King-Crane Commission in Damascus, Feisal fell back on an Ottoman Law which had been enacted to govern the election of representatives to the Chamber of Deputies at Istanbul. The original Ottoman statute was dated 1293 AH (1876 AD) and had been amended in 1326 AH (1908 AD).<sup>2</sup>

This law provided for a two stage election process. In the first stage each group of 500 eligible voters had the right to nominate an elector for the second stage. A voter's eligibility was determined by the amount of direct and indirect taxes paid to the state. The electors, nominated in the first stage, elected by sanjaq the deputies who were to represent the area in the Chamber of Deputies. The representational base was computed on the basis of one deputy for each 50,000 male citizens or fraction in excess of 25,000.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The King-Crane Commission departed Paris on 29 May by train and arrived Istanbul on 4 June. It departed Istanbul by ship on 7 June and arrived in Jaffa on 10 June. It eventually reached Damascus on 25 June. Howard, pp. 82, 87-88.
  2. David, p. 53.
  3. Ibid, p. 54.

In 1913, just prior to the war, the Ottoman Government had held such an election. In his haste to assemble a Congress, Feisal determined to consult only the second stage electors since it was patently impossible to hold a general election, given the short period of time available and the political difficulties and popular unrest which prevailed at the time. Although the six years which had intervened had undoubtedly taken its toll, these electors, where possible, were assembled and requested to elect deputies from their regions.<sup>1</sup> The deputies elected in this fashion amounted to approximately 89 of whom 69 actually attended the opening session of the General Syrian Congress on 20 June 1919.<sup>2</sup>

The elections took place amid many difficulties particularly in the areas of OETA West and OETA South, which from the point of view of the Military Administration were not under the control of Amir Feisal. In OETA West, the Chief Administrator, a French officer, issued orders to his subordinates to put a halt to the elections on the basis that Feisal had no authority to call them and that such political activity, from the French point of view, had to be deferred until after the establishment of the "new order". In OETA South, the English likewise forbade the meetings of second stage electors.<sup>3</sup> Allenby, seriously disturbed by the deterioration of relationships between the French and the Arabs directed that the Congress, when elected, must limit its activities to preparing and presenting its views to the King-Crane Commission. At the same time Allenby forbid

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1. According to David the electors of the second stage totaled 31 in Beirut one of the most populous cities, 41 in Sidon, 21 in Tyre and 18 in Marjayoun. Ibid, p. 55.
  2. King-Crane Report, p. VII. Antonius p. 243 states that only 85 deputies were actually elected but agrees as to the number attending the first session.
  3. David, pp. 52-53.

the attendance of representatives from OETA South and West at the Congress. Although, as might have been expected, several delegates were elected and did attend the Congress, despite the order.<sup>1</sup>

Irregularities seem to have been common in the election of delegates, and the representative character of the Congress has been disputed.<sup>2</sup> There were no Jews elected,<sup>3</sup> but based on known population figures at the time, there were more than a proportionate number of Christians.<sup>4</sup> Despite this the King-Crane Commission considered the Congress representational and provided an answer to the criticisms of the French and others:

Criticisms were made against the plan of choice to the effect that it was unconstitutional and extra-constitutional, that the electors had mostly belonged to the Party of Union and Progress, and that the members of the Congress were not distributed in proportion to population...Much evidence goes to show that the program prepared represents well the wishes of the people of Syria.<sup>5</sup>

Another authority, George Antonius, echoes the King-Crane report in his analysis of the representational character of the General Syrian Congress:

Although the Congress had had to be elected in some haste and the customary routine of electoral procedure not fully observed everywhere, there is no doubt - as subsequent events amply confirmed - that it was a representative assembly in the true sense of the word, that its deliberations did reflect the fears and hopes of the vast majority of the population, and that the resolutions it passed may safely be taken as expressing those views and sentiments that were most widely held.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Longrigg, p. 90 and David, pp. 62 and 63.
  2. David, pp. 51-63.
  3. The King-Crane Report, p. VII notes that there were Jews among the second stage electors who nominated the representatives.
  4. Antonius, p. 293.
  5. The King-Crane Report, p. VII.
  6. Antonius, p. 293.

The representational character of the General Syrian Congress assumes greater importance when considered in the light of the fact that after the departure of the King-Crane Commission it remained in session and became to all intents and purposes the first Syrian Parliament. It should also be remembered that in the context of the Arab social structure, it would have been highly unlikely that a different method of election would have resulted in the election of an entirely different slate of deputies. The tribal and district leaders were well known and respected men who would have been asked to represent their followers or area no matter what method of formal selection was devised. Since this situation is only now changing in Syria, it is reasonable to assume that it existed during the period.<sup>1</sup>

While exact data is difficult to find it appears that the delegates to the General Syrian Congress were on the whole younger, better educated and more experienced than might have been expected at the time.<sup>2</sup> The group also included members from various occupations and ways of life including lawyers, soldiers, muslim ulema', landlords and tribal leaders, many of whom had been imprisoned or exiled by the Turks for political reasons.<sup>3</sup>

On the whole therefore it appears that the General Syrian Congress was composed of a group of men who adequately represented the Syrian population of the time. There was representation from all areas (though not precisely mathematical) and they were qualified by reason of background and education. They were genuinely patriotic. Their concensus as embodied

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1. See David, p. 79 for a similar appreciation.

2. R. Bayley Winder, "Syrian Deputies and Cabinet Ministers, 1919-1959," Part I, Middle East Journal (Autumn, 1962) pp. 407-429. The average age of the known deputies was from 38-43.

3. Ibid, Part II, Middle East Journal, (Winter-Spring, 1963) pp. 35-54.

in the Program of the General Syrian Congress presented to the King-Crane Commission on 2 July 1919, become the manifesto of Syrian aspirations from which the Congress, and the Syrian population as a whole, never varied in any substantive way.

To British observers, they and the genuine if ill-disciplined political force which they represented came as no surprise; that such were, for better or worse, the opinions of the strongest political elements in Syria was already appreciated by the French. In Beirut and Paris alike, they were condemned as the bombast of a self-chosen minority.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Program of the General Syrian Congress

The delegates to the General Syrian Congress arrived in Damascus, met as a group for the first time on 20 June 1919, and proclaimed themselves a representative body for all of Syria. The Congress remained in session for five months until its adjournment in December sine die.<sup>2</sup> The Congress's first order of business was to draft a program to be presented to the King-Crane Commission. This program was approved by the Congress on 2 July<sup>3</sup> "in an impressive display of patriotic fervor."<sup>4</sup> It was presented to the American Commissioners on 3 July by a committee of fifteen which was nominated by the full body of the Congress for that purpose.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Longrigg, p. 90.

2. David, p. 63 and 65. Al Husri, p. 245 states that the first meeting was held on 3 June. Longrigg, p. 90 agrees with David. Antonius, p. 293 states that the first session of the Congress was held on 2 July which is obviously incorrect since on that date it presented its program to the King-Crane Commission. In the author's opinion, ad-hoc sessions were probably held beginning about 3 June, but the first plenary session on 20 June after most members had had a chance to arrive in Damascus.

3. King-Crane Report, p. VII.

4. Antonius, p. 294.

5. King-Crane Report, pp. IV and VII and Howard, p. 119.

Because of the importance of this program in defining the national aims of the people of Syria, Iraq and Palestine, the full text is included as an Appendix.<sup>1</sup> Briefly however, the program demanded recognition of the "complete political independence" of Syria, including Palestine, with the Amir Feisal as King, under a "democratic, civil, constitutional monarchy" based on "broad decentralization principles." The independence of Iraq was also to be recognized. Both the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration were denounced. The idea of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine was repudiated, although Jewish citizens would enjoy "common rights and assume common responsibilities." Article XXII of the Covenant of the League of Nations, with its provision for a mandate system, was rejected, but American or British assistance which did not infringe on national independence or the unity of the country was acceptable. Finally the Congress denounced "any right claimed by the French Government in any part whatever "of Syria and rejected French assistance "under any circumstances and in any place."<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of the provision concerning foreign assistance, which was rejected by some delegates presumably on nationalistic grounds, the program was passed unanimously. Its publication was greeted with great joy throughout the country. Where the occupation authorities did not interfere, demonstrations were held and delegations arrived in Damascus to congratulate Amir Feisal and show their support to the Congress by their presence.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Appendix A. The text was extracted from the King-Crane Report, pp. VII and VIII. See also al Husri, pp. 245-248.

2. See Appendix A.

3. Antonius, p. 294.

Perhaps the best analysis of the program is contained in the King-Crane Report itself:

The program mostly speaks sufficiently for itself... It is the most substantial document presented to the Commission, and deserves to be treated with great respect. The result of an extensive and arduous political process, it affords a basis on which the Syrians can get together, and as firm a foundation for a Syrian national organization as can be obtained.<sup>1</sup>

The King-Crane Commission remained in Syria until 20 July, interviewing, inquiring and accepting petitions. On the whole they found that the great majority of the people of Syria agreed with or expressed desires congruent with those contained in the program of the General Syrian Congress. In their report the Commissioners recommended a mandatory system for Syria including Palestine, with the provision that the mandate be for a limited term and that the mandatory country aim at bringing the mandated countries to independent status as rapidly as possible. They recommended that Syria, including Palestine, be treated as one country, with Lebanon given a large measure of autonomy within the framework of the Syrian state. They further recommended that the form of government for Syria be a constitutional monarchy with Amir Feisal as King. They also recommended that Iraq be treated as a separate unit, to be given the same form of government under a monarch to be selected by plebiscite. And finally they requested that one mandate be established for Iraq and one for Syria-Lebanon-Palestine and based upon their findings recommended that the United States be asked to accept the mandate for Syria. Great Britain was second choice but they found themselves unable to recommend France at all, because of "the strength, universality and persistency of anti-French feeling among practically all

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1. King-Crane Report, p. VII.



Moslems and non-Catholic Christians." They believed that a French mandate, unless restricted to Lebanon could well lead to French-Arab hostilities. With regard to the Jews they felt that the Zionist program should be greatly reduced, that Jewish immigration to Palestine be definitely limited, and the concept of making Palestine a Jewish State abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

The recommendations of the King-Crane Commission virtually echo the program of the General Syrian Congress. The King-Crane Report was treated by the peacemakers as might have been expected. It was ignored.

It was only to be expected that so candid and forceful a statement would make extremely disagreeable reading for the Versailles peacemakers, as indeed it did. The report was pigeon-holed and ignored, and was not acted upon even in Washington. In the three years that elapsed before it became public property, Great Britain and France had desired and imposed a "settlement" of their own making, in which the advice of the King-Crane Commission had been totally and, as it turned out, unwisely disregarded.<sup>2</sup>

The First Session of the General Syrian Congress;  
Internal Developments after the Departure of the  
King-Crane Commission

The General Syrian Congress remained in session after the departure of the King-Crane Commission. Within the next two months the Congress gradually took on the character of a Parliament. As has been pointed out previously Feisal caused the Congress to be brought into being not only

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1. Ibid.

2. Antonius, pp. 297-298. Also see Howard, in toto, for a detailed, scholarly analysis of the King-Crane Commission, its investigations and report.

to present its opinions to the King-Crane Commission but to provide a constructive forum for the expression of nationalistic feelings.<sup>1</sup> However the events of the summer and early winter of 1919, particularly the "crisis of the withdrawal of British troops"<sup>2</sup> kept the very vocal Congress in a continual uproar and there appears to be evidence that Feisal would have liked to disband it if public feeling would have permitted.<sup>3</sup> With the French immovable in demanding their "rights" under the Sykes-Picot agreement, and the Arab Nationalists just as adamant in their demand for independence, which was perhaps even further crystallized by the political activity which surrounded the inquiry of the King-Crane Commission, Feisal found that his every move aroused suspicion and animosity from one side or the other. However despite the pressures building up on all sides, Feisal persisted in his demands for complete independence for Syria, threw his total weight behind the nationalist movement, and informed General Allenby that the French would enter Syria only by force of arms.<sup>4</sup>

The British officially informed Feisal on 26 June 1919 that under no circumstances would they accept a mandate for Syria. Earlier Feisal learned from his representative in Paris that the British were desirous of evacuating their troops from Syria as soon as feasible. Feisal interpreted these two moves as meaning that the British were going to abandon the country to the French, an eventuality to which he and the Syrians were totally opposed and which could lead to no other solution than war. Feisal was completely

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1. See above p. 82.

2. Al Husri, p. 96. The word "crisis" is al Husri's terminology.

3. David, p. 71.

4. Documents, p. 287.

confounded by the attitude of the British, who in his opinion appeared willing to abandon the Arabs, "to suit the exigencies of politics in Europe," after spending their blood and treasure for four years to liberate them.<sup>1</sup>

Between the departure of the King-Crane Commission and the withdrawal of British troops in November, nationalistic pressure, which manifested itself in various forms of public disorder, was rife.<sup>2</sup>

On 4 August 1919, a new phase in the government of Syria was entered upon with the naming of a "Council of Directors" (Majlis al Mudirin).<sup>3</sup> This was obviously a step toward the establishment of the form of government which the General Syrian Congress and the nation was demanding.<sup>4</sup>

Since the occupation of Damascus the government had been a military one, the executive authority being the Military Governor, Ali Ridha al Rikabi, who was subordinate to the Commander in Chief, General Allenby. The Military Administration had been, at least in theory, without political basis. The new Council of Directors, which replaced the Military Administration in fact, was a frankly political body "which shared in the responsibility of government and decided the policy of the country."<sup>5</sup>

The Council of Directors was composed of well known nationalists and supporters of Amir Feisal. They remained as the governing body of Syria from their appointment on 4 August 1919 to 8 March 1920, when Syria's independence was declared. The organization and composition of the Council of Directors was as follows:

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1. Ibid, pp. 232, 276 and 298.

2. See above page . Also see Documents, pp. 296, 367-370, 405, 409, 458-463, 478.

3. Al Husri, pp. 228, 231-234.

4. David, p. 72.

5. Al Husri, p. 228.

President - Amir Feisal (Feisal's brother Amir Zeid acted in his absence)

General Director for Justice - Iskandar Ammoun

General Director for Internal Affairs - Rashid Tali'a

General Director for Education - Sati' al Husri

General Director for Finance - (1) Sa'id Shuqairi; (2) Ahmed Hilmi

General Director for War - (1) Yasin al Hashimi; (2) Yusuf al Azmah;

(3) Ali Ridha al Rikabi

General Director for Security - Haddad Pasha<sup>1</sup>

The Council of Directors was not a responsible government in the sense that its actions were subject to the General Syrian Congress. The Council was appointed by the Amir and was subject to his authority. Further its responsibilities were limited specifically to "internal affairs", by the decree which established it.<sup>2</sup> Feisal continued to reserve to himself full control over foreign negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

Apparently the establishment of the Council of Directors was to serve two purposes; the first to take some of the steam out of the General Syrian Congress, which by this time was proving something of an embarrassment to Feisal by its very vocal demands for absolute independence, without taking what would have been the unpopular step of disbanding it; and secondly, to rejuvenate the internal administration of the country which had not proved efficient.<sup>4</sup> For a time the creation of the Council of Directors seems to have had the desired effect upon the General Syrian Congress,

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1. Ibid, pp. 231 and 232-234.

2. Ibid, pp. 232-234 gives the text.

3. David, p. 73.

4. Kedourie, pp. 162-163.

relegating the latter to the position of making "platonic proclamations addressed to the population or to the Government." Amir Zeid, during Feisal's absence on his second trip to Paris, appears to have found little reason to consult the Congress on any substantive matter.<sup>1</sup>

The long wrangling over the Syrian situation was brought to an end when Lloyd George, after consultation with Allenby, presented to Clemenceau on 13 September an aide-memoire agreeing to the withdrawal of British troops from Syria commencing 1 November 1919.<sup>2</sup> Lloyd George's plan stated that "neither the British Government nor the British Commander in Chief shall have any responsibility within the zones from which the Army has retired."<sup>3</sup> While Lloyd George did not specifically agree to French occupation of inner Syria (although he did agree to their remaining in the coastal area where they were already located), the plan would remove the British troops standing between the French and eastern Syria. Clemenceau immediately agreed to Lloyd George's plan.<sup>4</sup>

Lloyd George on 11 September requested Feisal to come to London. Feisal arrived on 18 September where he spent a month attempting to persuade Lloyd George to alter his decision.<sup>5</sup> Unsuccessful, Feisal went on to Paris where he arrived on 20 October. Here, without British support, he undertook to negotiate what has become known as the Feisal-Clemenceau

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1. David, p. 74

2. Documents, pp. 384-385 and 396; See Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, Appendix G for full text of the aide-memoire.

3. Ibid, Series 1, Vol 1, p. 690.

4. Ibid.

5. See Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 117-119 for details on Feisal's unsuccessful representations to Lloyd George.

Agreement in mid-January 1920.<sup>1</sup> This agreement, which it appears was never signed by Feisal,<sup>2</sup> stipulated that the French would recognize and uphold the existence of a Syrian state, provided that that state promised to call upon the French and "that government only" to supply it with the necessary advisors, counsellors and technical experts. The agreement stipulated that no French troops were to be stationed in Syrian territory except on request of the Head of the Syrian State. Other provisions called for the recognition of French as an official language and a guarantee that the "independence and integrity of Lebanon under French Mandate" would be preserved.<sup>3</sup> Upon his return to Syria, Feisal attempted to gain support for this agreement but ran into the intransigent nationalism of al Ahd and al Istiqlal, particularly the latter, which in a secret meeting of its governing committee rejected the agreement outright.<sup>4</sup>

During the four months that Amir Feisal was out of the country political tension and unrest increased. As the withdrawal of British troops proceeded, fear increased that the French would soon move in. The arrival of General Gouraud in Beirut on 21 November, just prior to the departure of the last British soldier from Syria was viewed with alarm.<sup>5</sup> In late October, Ali Ridha al Rikabi ( who still occupied the position of

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1. See above p. 64. The text of the agreement is found in Documents, pp. 625-627.

2. The British Political Agent in Beirut reported this fact on information supplied him by Feisal when he arrived in Beirut. Feisal stated that before signing he wished "to obtain consent of his people to its clauses." Documents, pp. 627 and 630.

3. Ibid, pp. 625-627. See also Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 126 for text.

4. Amin Sa'id, Vol II, pp. 122-123.

5. Longrigg, p. 95.

military governor) was called upon to state that "the occupation of OETA West by French troops was only a temporary measure taken by the Allies for financial reasons and because of the silence of America towards the Syrian question." His remarks, which were delivered to the General Syrian Congress, were obviously aimed at pacification.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly afterwards Amir [Zeid], acting in his brother's stead issued orders calling for obedience to government orders; forbidding assemblies without governmental permission and the carrying of arms; calling for the denouncing of spies; demanding the cessation of activities inimical to the public interest, and finally asking for understanding between the various religious sects.<sup>2</sup> On 14 October a discouraged Zeid requested permission from his brother to resign and return to Mecca.<sup>3</sup>

The disenchantment with Feisal's position and the problems which Feisal faced at the time in trying to please the Syrian nationalists were succinctly summarized by Major Clayton, British Political Officer in Damascus, in a dispatch written on 15 October 1919:

The feeling against the Sherifian family has undoubtedly been growing in strength for some time. They have failed to appeal to the classes, who merely desire security owing to the miserable ineptitude of the Administration, and the encouragement, or at least tolerance, extended to the Bedouin, especially men like Nuri Shalaan. On the other hand,

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1. Al Asimah, Issue #69, 24 October 1919, p.2
  2. Ibid. Issue #70, 27 October 1919, p. 2.
  3. Documents, p. 566. For other efforts of Zeid to maintain order see his speeches of 22 October and 1 December 1919, contained in al Husri, pp. 249-251 and 254-255, in which he obviously seeks to reassure the General Syrian Congress of Feisal's continued desire for complete independence and requests their understanding and cooperation. A succinct statement of the extreme position of the Congress is also given in al Husri, pp. 251-252.

they are not sufficiently extreme for the more ardent nationalists and the irreconcilable anti-French Party.<sup>1</sup>

On 4 December 1919, the General Syrian Congress adjourned at the request of Amir Feisal. The adjournment was to be in effect until the Congress was reconvened "by the Government or the Nation."<sup>2</sup> The demands of the Congress for immediate independence had become so violent and persistent that cooperation between it and Feisal was no longer possible. On 12 December, a demonstration took place against Feisal and Zeid in Damascus and on 14 December, Ali Ridha al Rikabi, who had always identified himself with the policies of Feisal, was forced to resign in face of nationalist pressure. The situation had deteriorated to the point that the British Political Officer reported to his government that "it is not clear who now is the head of the Arab Government in Damascus, though the Amir Zeid still remains as the figure-head."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Second Session of the General Syrian Congress; Feisal Becomes King of Syria

When Feisal returned to Syria in mid-January he found the situation rapidly worsening. Feisal first undertook to explain his position in a speech at Nadi al Arabi in Damascus on 22 January 1920. In this speech he reiterated his position concerning the complete independence of all

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1. Documents, p. 566. It should be noted that this report was written when Feisal's fortunes were at their lowest and when he himself was out of the country and was unable to influence matters by his personal presence.
  2. Al Asimah, Issue #85, 18 December 1919, p.3.
  3. Documents, p. 616. See also David, p. 83.



Arab Lands. "No Power has the right to conduct himself as master in your house", said Feisal. He asked for the confidence of the people of Syria in his Government and in himself. He stated that he would postpone the election of a National Assembly until Syria had gained its independence at which time he would transfer his heavy responsibilities "to the shoulders of the Nation."<sup>1</sup>

Feisal's next step was to regularize the position of the Council of Directors which, though it had been formed on 4 August 1919, had never received the sanction of the British authorities. Now since the departure of the British troops and their relinquishment of supervision of the military administration of Syria, there was no further bar to the establishment of this body in name as it already existed in fact. The decree taking this step was published on 26 January 1920.<sup>2</sup>

On 12 December 1919, a conscription law, enacted by the Council of Directors, was approved in the absence of Feisal by Amir Zeid.<sup>3</sup> Recruiting however had been in progress for some time and was presumably providing strength to the Arab Army.

Feisal's closest friends and advisors were now pressing him to declare Syria independent and proclaim himself King.<sup>4</sup> The disorders were continuing and Feisal after having taken steps to improve the administrative and military posture of the country decided to reconvene the General Syrian Congress to renew his mandate. Amir Zeid, representing the Council of

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1. See Husri, pp. 218-220 for full text. Also see David, p. 83 and Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 132.
  2. See above p. 92 and David, pp. 85-86.
  3. Al Asimah, Issue #87, 25 December 1919, p. 1.
  4. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 132.

Directors sent telegrams in mid-February to each of the original members calling them to Damascus. The telegrams indicated the purpose of the session "to be the proclamation of absolute independence and the designation of Amir Feisal as King of Syria." Feisal directed that the Congress convene when two-thirds of the delegates arrived.<sup>1</sup>

A rump session of the General Syrian Congress was held on 27 February, attended by many of the original delegates, representatives of political organizations, some of the 'ulema, lawyers, writers, journalists and other notables with strong nationalistic feelings. This session, which called itself the "Palestine Congress", emphatically rejected Zionism, declared Palestine to be a part of Syria and demanded independence for a United Syria.<sup>2</sup>

On 6 March 1920, the General Syrian Congress met for the second time in Damascus. The opening session was addressed by Amir Feisal. After quoting President Wilson on the right of self-determination, recapitulating the McMahon correspondence and other promises to the Arabs, and summarizing the contributions of the Arabs to the successful conclusion of the war, the Amir requested the decision of the Congress--and through it the decision of the Syrian people-- on the future of Syria and his role in it. He also stated that if the Congress should decide to make him King of Syria, that it should at the same time draw up a Constitution for the independent state.<sup>3</sup>

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1. David, p. 90. See also al Asimah, Issue #105, 1 March 1920, p. 5.

2. Ibid, pp. 92-94.

3. See al Husri, pp. 220-223 for the text of this speech. See also David p. 99 and Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 137.

In his address Feisal refused to attempt to influence the delegates, but stated that he had called them together to express the "voice of the people who have judged you worthy of representing them in these difficult days."<sup>1</sup>

Sheikh Kamil al Qassab, a violent nationalist, and founder of al Lajnah al Watanniyah al Ulia and al Hizb al Dimocrati,<sup>2</sup> replied to Feisal. He stated that:

The Nation desires that the Congress proclaim the complete independence of Syria and that it accept responsibility until the day when it will be replaced by another elected Assembly.

The Nation awaits the drawing up of a Constitution based on the principles of a parliamentary monarchy,--democratic and decentralized--for the whole of Syria within in its natural limits. The Nation also wishes that the Congress proclaim a constituent assembly, based on the national desire. This Congress must proceed energetically with the knowledge that the Nation wishes to live an honorable life and for that life is willing to go to an honorable death.<sup>3</sup>

The above represented the demands of the most vocal of the nationalists. The Congress accepted them. A committee of nine members, under the leadership of Hashim al Atassi was delegated to prepare a reply to the speech of the King. The reply delivered to the Amir and the Congress on 7 March 1920 virtually echoed the remarks of Sheikh Kamil. It called for the complete independence of Syria within its natural borders including Palestine; the establishment of representative government; the preservation of the rights of the minorities; and the complete rejection of Zionism and the creation of Jewish state in Palestine. It called for the withdrawal of foreign armies from all areas of Syria including Lebanon and Palestine,

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1. Ibid.

2. See above pp. 64-65.

3. Quoted from David, pp. 98-99.

and the granting of limited autonomy to Lebanon within in its pre-war boundaries. It called for complete independence for Iraq and the removal of all economic barriers between Syria and Iraq. Finally it announced that Syria would become independent as of 1500 hours, 8 March 1920, and that the Congress had chosen Amir Feisal as its first Monarch. The statement closed with the firm request that the Allies and other governments recognize the new Kingdom and expressed the wish that Great Britain and France would cooperate with the new nation.<sup>1</sup>

A decree embodying the above points was read to a large crowd in front of the serai of Damascus on the afternoon of 8 March 1920.<sup>2</sup> The crowd hailed King Feisal I of Syria with great jubilation. Immediately following the announcement of Syrian independence and selection of Feisal as the King of Syria, a similar proclamation was issued announcing the independence of Iraq and the proclamation of Feisal's brother Abdullah as its King. The major force behind this event was the Iraqi branch of al Ahd, which had been meeting in concurrent but separate session at the time.<sup>3</sup> Feisal immediately dissolved the now superfluous military administration and the Council of Directors and called upon his staunch and loyal friend, Ali Ridha al Rikabi, to form a Cabinet. The Cabinet was formed on 9 March, the day following the declaration of independence and consisted of the following:

Prime Minister

Ali Ridha al Rikabi

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1. The full text of this statement is contained in al Husri, pp. 255-259.
  2. The full text of the decree is contained in al Husri, pp. 261-265. The ceremony is described in al Asimah, Issue #107, 8 March 1920, pp. 2-3.
  3. Ireland, p. 258.

President of the Council of State	Ala ad Din Durubi
Minister of Interior	Riyad al Sulh
Minister of Education	Sati al Husri
Minister of Commerce and Agriculture and Public Works	Yusuf al Hakim
Acting Minister of Finance	Faris al Khoury
Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs	Sa'id al Husseini (Awni Abdul Hadi was appointed to this position <u>ad interim</u> )
Acting Minister of Justice	Jalal ad Din
Acting Minister of War	General Abdul Hamid (Yusuf al Azmeh, the Chief of Staff was appointed to this position <u>ad interim</u> ) <sup>1</sup>

Many of the new cabinet members had been members of the General Syrian Congress from which they were shortly forced to resign when the Congress directed that no member of the Cabinet could also be a member of the Congress.<sup>2</sup>

The government immediately composed letters to President Wilson, Lord Curzon and General Gouraud explaining the actions taken and the reasons for them.<sup>3</sup> The letters in effect informed the addressees of the

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1. Al Asimah, Issue #108, 11 March 1920, pp. 3-4; Al Husri, p. 234; and David, p. 102.
  2. Ibid. Issue #112, 25 March 1920, p. 5.
  3. See al Husri, pp. 268-273 for the full text. The letter to President Wilson was signed by Feisal and the others by the acting Foreign Minister Awni Abdul Hadi. The date of letter to Gouraud is given by David as 16 March. Dates of the other letters are unknown but it is presumed they were about the same date.

newly declared independence of Syria and requested their understanding and cooperation. The Prime Minister, Ali Ridha al Rikabi, also wrote to the French and British governments requesting recognition.

This letter in effect constituted the first policy statement of the new government. Briefly it expressed the aims of the new government as follow:

1. Protection and consolidation of the newly declared independence;
2. Maintenance of order with equality for everyone without distinction between races and religions; protection of the rights of minorities; and the protection of the property of the people and the nation;
3. Development of friendly relations between Syria and other nations.
4. Development of the nation's natural resources.
5. Assistance to the Allies in the preservation of peace in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

Both governments refused to accept the validity of the decisions of the General Syrian Congress and refused to recognize it stating that the solution of the problem of Syria was one reserved for the Peace Conference and that the unilateral declaration of independence of Syria was invalid. The British particularly objected to the right of any organization in Damascus to speak for Iraq and Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

In Lebanon, feeling also ran high and in a meeting at Ba'abda on 22 March, an assemblage of town and village officials and other notables

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1. See al Husri, pp. 265-268 for full text. Al Asimah, Issue #109, 15 March 1920, p. 1 also carries text of this communication.

2. Ibid, p. 261 and p. 85.

unanimously rejected all the decisions taken at Damascus.<sup>1</sup> Other opposition came from King Hussein in Mecca and the King's brother Amir Abdullah, who both felt that declaration of Syrian independence jeopardized the possibility of obtaining the complete independence of the Arab East as embodied in the understanding arrived at in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence.<sup>2</sup>

Administrative reforms were postponed by Amir Feisal, pending the enactment of a fundamental law. Although there was some agitation within the Congress for an immediate overhaul of government operations, Feisal expressly forbid this when he prohibited "innovation of this sort" and directed the adherence to Ottoman Law and the maintenance of administrative incumbents in their position.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Syrian Constitution

The ministerial statement was delivered to the General Syrian Congress on 27 March 1920. It contained a request for the Congress to commence work on the drafting of a Constitution for the Government/<sup>and</sup> announced the postponement of enactment of internal reform until the adoption by the Congress of a fundamental law.<sup>4</sup>

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1. David, p. 105.

2. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 139-140.

3. David, p. 106. See also al Asimah, Issue #110, 18 March 1920, p. 3.

4. Ibid. See also al Asimah, Issue #110, 18 March 1920, p. 3.

The committee worked on the draft of the constitution for approximately 10 weeks. Although it was never promulgated by Amir Feisal, it was unanimously approved by the General Syrian Congress on 3 July 1920, after a single, but rather prolonged, reading during the latter half of June.<sup>1</sup> The influence of the organic laws of European states is obvious throughout the document, which consists of 148 articles divided into twelve chapters.<sup>2</sup>

Essentially the Constitution, as adopted, provided for a representative monarchy, its capital to be at Damascus and Islam to be the state religion.<sup>3</sup> Although stating that the Syrian Kingdom was an "indivisible country with a political unity" it carefully avoided defining its boundaries.<sup>4</sup> Arabic was prescribed as the official language.<sup>5</sup>

The monarchy was designated as hereditary within the family of King Feisal. A chapter outlining the rights of individuals and groups was included. A bicameral parliament was provided for and the cabinet was made responsible to it.<sup>6</sup> Authority was vested in the person of the King but responsibility in the government (cabinet).<sup>7</sup> Special provisions for

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1. Ibid, p. 107 and al Asimah, Issues #128, 27 May 1920 to #140, 10 July 1920 passim.
  2. A translation of the Syrian Constitution is included in Appendix B. It was translated by the author from the official French text found in David, pp. 135-153. The date of the official translation (1919) is obviously wrong and has been corrected (1920). See Documents, p. 266 for indications that the Organic Laws of European countries had been considered in the drafting of the Syrian Constitution. The second reading was begun but never finished. See David, p. 107 and al Asimah, Issue #138, 14 July 1920, pp. 2-3.
  3. Appendix One, Article 1.
  4. Ibid. Articles 2 and 3.
  5. Ibid. Article 4.
  6. Ibid. Articles, 10-27.
  7. Ibid. Articles 28-97.



the representation of minorities were provided both for the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>1</sup> Election to the Chamber of Deputies were to be held every four years in a two-stage system.<sup>2</sup> Two-thirds of the senators, who were apportioned to the various electoral districts were to be chosen by the Chamber of Deputies of each province and one-third to be appointed by the King.<sup>3</sup> Other provisions established a judicial system, including a Supreme Court, and Provincial Governments based on the principle of decentralization.

Although many provisions of the Constitution were prescribed in very general terms (often they seem merely to instruct Parliament to pass a law on something) the provisions dealing with the election system were quite specific and the representational base was fixed at one deputy for each 40,000 inhabitants or fraction over 20,000. For minorities however, the representational base was fixed at 30,000 or fraction over 15,000.<sup>4</sup>

The provinces were to be formed on the basis of natural boundaries and economic interests, but in no case could they be less than 25,000 square kilometers in area or contain less than 15,000 inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> The Governor General of each province was to be appointed by the King but the Provincial Chamber of Deputies was an elective body to be elected in a single stage.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid. Articles 68 and 89.
  2. Ibid. Article 74.
  3. Ibid. Article 66.
  4. Ibid. Article 89.
  5. Ibid. Article 125.
  6. Ibid. Articles 126 and 135.

While constitutional scholars may be able to find many weaknesses in the Syrian Constitution of 1920, there is little question that it embodied in principle the ideals for which Feisal and the nationalists had been continually working. The Constitution was never tested in a practical way but as an initial effort it had many merits. It was the first document ever devised for a modern Arab State, and in many ways reminiscent of the Articles of Confederation, the first organic law of the United States, which while it eventually proved unworkable, was a step in the development of the present United States Constitution. The Syrian Constitution embodied all the institutions which have come to be considered the standard by which modern Western governmental systems are measured, i.e., protection of human rights and property; freedom of free expression and religion; representative and responsible government; an independent judiciary; and provisions for recall and impeachment of government officials. It is a remarkable document considering the conditions under which it was written; the time it was written; and the tradition of personal rather than institutional rule which had existed for time immemorial in the Arab East.

The Award of the Mandates; Meisalun  
and the End of the Syrian Kingdom

The initiatives taken by the Arabs in Damascus in declaring Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine, and Iraq, independent Kingdoms went unrecognized by the French and British. As the Government at Damascus

worked on framing its Constitution, the Powers were in the process of arriving at their own solution of the Syrian problem. On 25 April 1920, at the Conference of San Remo, the Mandates were awarded in conformance with article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Mandate for Syria including Lebanon was awarded to the French and Mandates for Iraq and Palestine to Great Britain and a coda was added requiring Great Britain to apply the Balfour Declaration in carrying out its mandate for Palestine.<sup>1</sup> The news of the award of the Mandates caused consternation among the nationalists. On 3 May 1920, Ali Ridha al Rikabi was asked to resign by King Feisal who was placed under heavy pressure by the extreme nationalists who were of the opinion that Ali Ridha was not determined or decisive enough to lead the Government in what appeared to be the forthcoming showdown with the French.<sup>2</sup> Hashim al Atassi was asked to form a new government by the King.<sup>3</sup> The Ministerial Statement issued on 3 May spelled out what had become the battle cry of the ardent nationalists:

1. the protection of the complete independence already achieved including the right to diplomatic representation.
2. The demand of unity within the natural borders of Syria and the rejection of the Zionist demand for the institution of a Jewish state in Palestine.

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1. David, pp. 123-124; Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 151-153; and Antonius, p. 305.

2. Al Husri, pp. 240-241. The reason for Ali Ridha's resignation was given to the author by Akram Rikabi in a personal interview. Akram states his father could not reconcile the King or the Congress to any deviation from their announced aims of complete independence.

3. Ibid. The members of the government were Sati al Husri-Education; Jalal ad Din-Justice; Faris al Khoury-Finance; Yusuf al Azmah-War; Abd al Rahman Shahbandar-Foreign Affairs; George Rizqallah-Public Works; Riyad al Sulh-President of the Consultative Council. See also al Asimah, Issue #123, 6 May 1920, pp. 3-4.

3. the rejection of any foreign interference which could compromise the national sovereignty of Syria.<sup>1</sup>

The Congress approved the statement on 8 May 1920.<sup>2</sup>

The French now considered that they had the authority to carry out their designs on Syria. At the time many French troops available to General Gouraud were involved in Cilicia facing Mustafa Kamal. The French arranged a truce with the Turks which enabled them to free the necessary forces to occupy Syria. On 14 July Gouraud issued an ultimatum to Feisal informing him that the French intended to take up the mandate awarded them, by force if necessary. The ultimatum demanded among other things the acceptance of the French mandate, reduction of the Syrian army and abolishment of compulsory military service; the punishment of extremists and those found guilty of anti-French actions; the acceptance of a French backed "Syrian" currency; and the guarantee of the French right to use the Rayak-Aleppo rail line. Gouraud set a three-day limit on acceptance of the ultimatum and warned that the responsibility for what would ensue would rest with the Arab Government if the ultimatum was rejected.<sup>3</sup>

Feisal attempted to negotiate. But his hand was impossibly weak. His army was ill equipped and was not in a position to offer any serious resistance to the French. But the nationalists never let up or allowed Feisal room to maneuver. On 19 July the General Syrian Congress issued a

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1. Ibid, pp. 242-244 contains complete text.

2. David, p. 129.

3. See al Husri, pp. 284-292 for Arabic text of the ultimatum. The general conditions had been communicated to Nuri Sa'id on 9 July by General Gouraud in Beirut. By 11 July the news of French intentions was already known in Syria and resulted in violent outbreaks and demonstrations against the French. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 160-161.

proclamation which stated that it "refused to permit any government to accept in the name of the country conditions opposed to those adopted on 8 May."<sup>1</sup> The proclamation further declared that if the Cabinet accepted the conditions imposed in Gouraud's ultimatum, such action would be considered "unconstitutional."<sup>2</sup> In reply to this proclamation, Feisal's Government ordered the General Syrian Congress dissolved on 20 July.<sup>3</sup>

On the same afternoon, the Cabinet decided to accept the conditions imposed by General Gouraud and orders were issued to execute the decisions including one to demobilize the army. The news of this action caused new violence to break out in Damascus.<sup>4</sup>

On 21 July news reached Damascus that French troops were entering the Wadi al Harir pass from the Biq'a. Feisal immediately dispatched Sati al Husri, as a personal emissary, to intervene with General Gouraud. Gouraud denied receiving Feisal's message accepting his demands within the prescribed time, and presented al Husri with a list of new demands.<sup>5</sup> He agreed to hold his troops in place until the following morning. Al Husri, returned to Damascus, after obtaining a delay from the French Commander of troops, who by this time had advanced to Khan Meisalun, until midnight 23 July. When he arrived in Damascus he found the Army, which had begun

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1. See above p. 108.
  2. See al Husri, pp. 259-260 for full text of this Proclamation.
  3. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 177.
  4. Ibid, p. 178.
  5. The new demands included the acceptance of a French mission including military, financial, administrative, economic, justice and police, and education sections to "study the application of the mandate" and the right for French troops to remain at the point of farthest advance in Syria. See al Husri, p. 138 and David, p. 129.

to disband, reforming. He delivered the new conditions to Feisal.<sup>1</sup>

Feisal replied stating that he would accept the conditions of 14 July, four of which had already been executed, providing the French withdrew to their original positions. He stated that the Syrians did not want war but that French occupation would undoubtedly lead to opposition and civil war.<sup>2</sup>

The final outcome by this time had become obvious. The French were determined to execute their purposes. Arab Forces, quickly remobilized, moved out to Meisalun under the leadership of Yusuf al Azmah and engaged the French at Meisalun on 24 July. They were quickly crushed and al Azmah killed. On 25 July, the French occupied Damascus and Feisal left for Kisweh, a village a few miles south of Damascus. Here he formed a new government under Ala ad Din al Durubi. He briefly returned to Damascus on 26 July. Although the new government had accepted the Mandate, the French refused to permit Feisal to remain in Syria. He was ordered by General Gouraud to leave as soon as possible and departed on 28 July by rail, first to Der'a, and later to Haifa where he was received with a British guard of honor. The Syrian Kingdom had come to an end.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 180-182.
  2. Al Husri, p. 144. See also Ibid, p. 182.
  3. Zeine, Struggle for Arab Independence, pp. 180-188 is undoubtedly the best account of the last days of the Arab Kingdom. Texts of the various messages and telegrams exchanged in the final hours of the Kingdom and the activities of al Husri himself, Feisal's emissary to the French, are contained in al Husri, pp. 121-144 and 293-294. The above text represents a simple summary of events and is based on the sources indicated.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADMINISTRATION OF SYRIA

UNDER FEISAL

Introduction

The Arab Government ruled Syria from 30 September 1918 to 25 July 1920. As has already been related the government evolved from a Military Administration to a Constitutional Monarchy, laws had been promulgated and an administrative system established. "There was a Constitution, due forms of law and administration, and a series of sovereign acts whose validity was admitted by practical acceptance and perpetuation, even by the French successors; Feisal's laws and regulations, and the assets and liabilities of his Administration were treated by the incoming Mandatory as valid until changed."<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to examine Feisal's administration in several important areas to attempt to determine its general nature and effectiveness.

Economic and Financial Policy and Programs

The economic problems which faced the Arab Government in Damascus

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1. Longrigg, p. 105.

throughout its tenure were grave and persistent.<sup>1</sup> However commencing almost immediately with the installation of the Military Administration, steps were taken to put the country on a sounder financial and fiscal footing.

Initially the Military Administration of Syria was subsidized by the British to the tune of 150,000 pounds sterling per month. This was reduced on 1 November 1919 to 75,000 pounds sterling. While this substantial sum contributed greatly to the support of the Arab Government it was augmented by fund raising measures of a self help nature which were inaugurated almost immediately after its establishment. The first steps taken in this direction were the confiscation of all remaining accounts and assets of the Ottoman Administration and their deposit in the treasury of the new government.<sup>2</sup> On 14 October 1918, the sale of revenue stamps was authorized. Initially the stamps were Turkish, but overprinted with a special government stamp.<sup>3</sup> New Syrian stamps were issued in November 1919<sup>4</sup> and the last of the overprinted stamps were withdrawn from internal use in January 1920. For external use Turkish stamps were still required pending the final Peace Settlement.<sup>5</sup>

Currency problems arose almost immediately after the occupation of Syria by the Arab and British forces which acted as a depressant to business

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1. See above pp. 57-60.
  2. Al Asimah, Issue #1, 17 February 1919, p. 2.
  3. Ibid. Issue #3, 25 February 1919, p. 6.
  4. Ibid. Issue #79, 27 November 1919, p. 6.
  5. Ibid. Issue #96, 26 January 1920, p. 2.



and encouraged the hoarding of gold.<sup>1</sup> Trading in gold was prohibited by General Allenby in March 1919<sup>2</sup> and just before the Declaration of Syrian Independence the Arab Government was forced to prohibit the exportation of gold. Shortly after the Declaration of Independence, a Syrian currency law was promulgated establishing gold as the currency base and the Syrian dinar as the unit. Silver and nickel coins of a value of 25 piasters (riyal), ten, five, two and one piaster were authorized for minting. However, the currency law permitted the circulation of Turkish coins and Egyptian paper currency until sufficient Syrian currency had been minted.<sup>3</sup> In the coastal region the French prescribed the use of a franc-based currency in April 1920 as a means of assisting in the solving of their own financial problems which were becoming acute due to devaluation of the franc and the high cost of maintaining an army of approximately 70,000 in the Levant. The Banque de Syrie began issuing the franc backed currency on 1 May 1920,<sup>4</sup> but this currency was not permitted to circulate in the area under the control of the Arabs.<sup>5</sup> One of the conditions of the ultimatum submitted to Feisal on 14 July 1920 was the demand for the acceptance of this currency.<sup>6</sup>

The Arab Government soon felt the problems of inflation and as early as December 1918 was forced to place price controls on basic commodities

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1. See above p. 58.
  2. Al Asimah, Issue #7, 10 March 1919, p. 3.
  3. Ibid. Issue #105, 1 March 1920, p. 4.
  4. Himadeh, pp. 61-64.
  5. Al Asimah, Issue #116, 12 April 1920, p. 7.
  6. See above p. 109.

such as salt, bread, wheat and tobacco.<sup>1</sup> In March 1920, the exportation of grains from Syria was forbidden, and steps taken to prevent smuggling. At the same time the government undertook to subsidize the market for bread by buying wheat at the market price and reselling it under government control at a lower price.<sup>2</sup> In May 1920 with the cost of living still rising and the political situation becoming more and more complex, a special committee was formed to study ways and means of combatting increases in the cost of living.<sup>3</sup>

The Arab Government undertook to improve communication and transportation. Contracts were let for the repair of roads and bridges destroyed or permitted to deteriorate during the war and the railroad between Rayak and Aleppo was brought under Arab control at the time of the evacuation of the British troops.<sup>4</sup>

The Arab Government took steps to raise money for its operations through new and increased taxes, measures which at times proved to be unpopular. The order by General Allenby to replace Ottoman currency with Egyptian currency caused, in fact, an increase of about 13% in taxes. After the evacuation of the British, the tax rate was modified to reduce taxes to approximately pre-war levels.<sup>5</sup> However, the increase in the size

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1. Al Asimah, Issue #4, 27 February 1919, p. 3 and Issue #10, 25 March 1919, p. 4.
  2. Ibid. Issue #111, 22 March 1920, p. 5.
  3. Ibid. Issue #122, 3 May 1920, p. 1.
  4. Ibid. Issue #10, 25 March 1919, p. 15 and Issue #77, 20 November 1919, p. 4.
  5. Ibid. Issue #132, 14 June 1920, p. 1.

of the army after the British evacuation, and the reduction in the British subsidy resulted in the enactment on 12 January 1920 of a new law which substantially raised the rates. Taxes on real estate were boosted 20%, entertainment taxes 100% and cattle and sheep fees 50%. The cost of document stamps was also doubled.<sup>1</sup> Taxes on exports, including virtually all agricultural products, were instituted in June 1920. Taxes ranged from one-half to five piasters a kilo on such products as meat, oil, live animals and wool.<sup>2</sup> The imposition of these new taxes and the increase of rates in those already in being seems to have caused considerable dissatisfaction, which by this time - June 1920 - was already/in view of the <sup>strong</sup> political situation.<sup>3</sup>

Another source of income to Syria but not necessarily to the government directly was the remittances sent by emigrants in America and elsewhere. Al Asimah in October 1919 estimated that the equivalent of more than a half million sterling pounds was sent to Syria each week by her "sons overseas".<sup>4</sup>

Positive steps were taken to improve the economic situation. In April 1919, a commercial resident established an office in Cairo for the purpose of stimulating trade and commerce.<sup>5</sup> And one of the first acts of

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1. Ibid. Issue #97, 29 January 1920, p. 2.
  2. Ibid. Issue #131, 10 June 1920, p. 1.
  3. Ibid. Issue #132, 14 June 1920, p. 1. This issue of al Asimah devotes virtually four pages to a defense of the government's tax program.
  4. Ibid. Issue #70, 27 October 1919, p. 4. See also Himadeh, pp. 55-56.
  5. Ibid. Issue #17, 13 April 1919, p. 8. The head of the office was Bashir al Qassar. It appears likely that Cairo was selected for the site of the office rather than Beirut for fear of French interference.

the Arab Administration was to establish an agricultural bank to provide a source of low-interest money for farmers, and landowners. The bank loaned money at 6% interest on loans secured by property and 7% on loans secured by jewelry and gold. It paid interest at 4% and collected small fees for other banking transactions.<sup>1</sup> There is no question that the bank functioned. It was forced to foreclose on at least 229 loans in the period August 1919 - January 1920.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps one of the most interesting steps taken by the Feisal's Government occurred late in the short lifetime of the Arab Kingdom. In May 1920 a National Loan Law was written which was never put into effect due to the French occupation. The law itself was rather ingenious. It provided for the establishment of a National Fund of one-half million dinars, to be derived by a bond issue against two million dunums of state lands in the vicinity of Aleppo, Hama and Homs which were to be mortgaged at the rate of four dunums to one Syrian dinar. The annual revenue of the state lands (primarily rents) would be used to pay 6% interest on the bonds and to repay them over a period of 24 years commencing in 1921. Bonds would be redeemed gradually based on an annual drawing and interest was to be paid annually on outstanding bonds. The loan fund was used as a revolving national debt. This law was never promulgated since one of its provisions was that it must be approved by the Parliament which was to be elected in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of 1920.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid. Issue #6, 6 March 1919, p. 5 and Issue #51, 18 August 1919, p. 8.
  2. Ibid. Passim during the period indicated.
  3. Ibid. Issue #125, 17 May 1920, p. 1.

While the problems of the Syrian economy as they existed between 1918 and 1920<sup>1</sup> were never fully solved by Feisal's government there appears to be good evidence that the country prospered and general business conditions were good until the political difficulties of early 1920 caused a general lack of confidence in the country's future and a resultant downturn in the economic picture. The income derived from the army of occupation and a general increase in emigrants remittances provided capital, and demand for goods was high after a four year period of general privation. Rents and wages also rose.<sup>2</sup> The impact of the measures taken by the Arab Government appears also to have had a stimulating effect on the economy, although considering the short period of time in which the government was in being, the results of its economic policies are difficult to assess. However there is no question but that Feisal's government did take steps to put the war-stricken country on a sound economic basis. It further appears evident that as the uncertainties of the political situation in the spring and early summer of 1920 were chiefly responsible for the downturn in the economic fortunes of the country during that period.<sup>3</sup>

#### Educational Policy and Programs

Feisal's educational policy was from the beginning one of encouragement and stimulation of learning. As early as December 1918 Feisal committed

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1. See above pp. 57-60.
  2. See Himadeh, pp. 55-57 who states that the "people seemed to enjoy an undreamed prosperity" until early 1920.
  3. Ibid.

himself to the improvement and expansion of the Syrian educational system, placing this aim second only to the maintenance of public order as a goal for his government. In a speech at Hama, and on 11 December 1919, at Aleppo, Feisal announced his policy of the promotion and improvement of education and expansion of educational opportunities. "Knowledge and character" were given by Feisal as the two prerequisites for the esteem.<sup>1</sup>

In consonance with Feisal's policy, the Arab Government started a program of educational expansion at all levels. An agricultural school opened its doors in Salamieh on 15 October 1919,<sup>2</sup> following the conversion of some military barracks in Dera'a into a similar school in January 1919.<sup>3</sup> The Arab Law School commenced its first session on 1 November 1919 in Damascus.<sup>4</sup> Its curriculum included political science, history and sociology.<sup>5</sup> It was supported from the budget of the Ministry of Education and supervised by it,<sup>6</sup> although a nominal tuition was charged.<sup>7</sup> Opening addresses were given by Abdul Rahman Shahbandar and Faris al Khoury.<sup>8</sup>

Plans were announced in April 1919 for opening in the fall of an Arab Medical College in Damascus in April 1919. The official announcement which appointed Doctor Amin Ma'aluf, Dean also expressed the government's

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1. See al Husri, pp. 195-201 for the text of the Aleppo speech. In the speech Feisal referred to another speech delivered at Hama a few days previously in which he stressed the same theme.

2. Al Asimah, Issue #63, 2 October 1919, p. 2.

3. Ibid. Issue #18, 17 April 1919, p. 3.

4. Ibid. Issue #75, 13 November 1919, p. 5.

5. Ibid. Issue #58, 15 September 1919, p. 5.

6. Ibid. Issue #63, 2 October 1919, p. 4.

7. Ibid. Issue #68, 20 October 1919, p. 5.

8. Ibid. Issue #75, 13 November 1919, p. 5.

hopeful determination to make the college "equal to the best in the world!"<sup>1</sup> The school was located in the facilities of the former Ottoman Medical College of Damascus, in which the language of instruction had been Turkish.<sup>2</sup>

The public school system had suffered greatly during the war. Many of the buildings had been destroyed and furniture and equipment lost and scattered. Under the Ottomans the public school system had never been adequate and many children, particularly Moslems, had had little opportunity for even primary education.<sup>3</sup> In Lebanon the people, particularly the Christians had benefited greatly from the large number of schools maintained by the Christian missionaries.<sup>4</sup> To some extent this was true in Syria where missionary organizations had maintained schools in Damascus, Homs and Aleppo. But these schools had been closed during the war by the Turks and as a result both public and private schools had been virtually non-existent for four years.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning with the school year of 1919, the Arab Government commenced a vigorous program aimed at satisfying the educational needs of the Syrian children. Fourteen elementary schools for boys and ten for girls were opened in Damascus.<sup>6</sup> In Aleppo a total of twelve schools in all were opened.<sup>7</sup> Teachers were hired on a basis of forty to fifty pupils for class.<sup>8</sup> To satisfy the demand for teachers, a general

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1. Ibid. Issue #21, 28 April 1919, p. 6.
  2. Report of the French High Commissioner, p. 107.
  3. Ibid., pp. 107 and 110.
  4. See above p. 4.
  5. Report of the French High Commissioner, p. 107.
  6. Al Asimah, Issue # 56, 4 September 1919, p. 3.
  7. Ibid. Issue #54, 28 August 1919, p. 5.
  8. Ibid. Issue #57, 11 September 1919, p. 7.

examination was devised to award temporary teacher's credentials to those without formal teaching training.<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing the need for higher and specialist training the Arab Government commenced to recruit qualified young men to pursue their education abroad in anticipation of their return to Syria for employment with the government. This program, for which recruiting began in the summer of 1919, provided a government subsidy to pay transportation, tuition and living expenses for qualified students desiring to study in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The impact of the various efforts to improve, expand and foster education in Syria is of course difficult to measure. At the most only one academic year (1919-1920) was affected and in this short period of time substantial results could not have been expected. However there is no doubt that Feisal recognized the need for improvement in education and wider educational opportunity and that the Arab Government took positive steps within its means to fulfill this need.

#### Agricultural Policy and Programs

Syria has always been essentially an agricultural country. This fact was well recognized by Feisal's Arab Government and early in its administration it took steps to improve and foster the growth of this

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1. Ibid. Issue #56, 4 September 1919, p. 3.

2. Ibid. Issue #31, 3 June 1919, p. 8.



important sector of the economy. On 20 February 1919, the administration formed a seven member committee to study the present and future needs of Syrian agriculture and to make recommendations for agricultural programs and budgets. The committee's terms of reference included the study of current conditions in the fields of agriculture; agricultural budgets; the cadastral system; the importation of new varieties of seeds and plants; the importation of modern agricultural equipment to include financing; the opening of equipment repair shops; the provision and use of fertilizers; the selection, treating and cleaning of locally grown seed, the control of insect pests and an instructional program for the farmers on use of pest control agents, instruction of farmers in animal husbandry and modern dairy practices; arrangements for the training of veterinarians; stimulation of the production of wine and other alcoholic beverages; the study of water resources to include the opening of wells in desert areas; the purchase of breeding animals for resale at reasonable prices on the installment principle to farmers and herders in need of them; the encouragement of reforestation and forest conservation; the development of agricultural societies and marketing cooperatives; and lastly, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, to open and supervise agricultural schools and demonstration farms.<sup>1</sup>

Some positive results of the above program began to appear in the spring of 1919 when agricultural officers were appointed in various parts of Syria to advise and assist farmers with their problems.<sup>2</sup> In the fall of 1919 agricultural schools were established at Salamieh and in the

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1. Ibid. Issue #36, 19 June 1919, p. 5.

2. Ibid. Issue #10, 22 March 1919, pp. 3-4.

Damascus Ghouta, and at least one experimental station at Blas. The first class at Salamieh consisted of fifty students.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the Agricultural Bank in early 1919 was another indication of the interest of the Arab Administration in stimulating agriculture and aiding the farmer and peasant.<sup>2</sup>

In June 1920, the Government of Syria enacted a law establishing Agricultural Councils at each level of local government and for the national government itself. <sup>These</sup> Councils were to be advisory in nature and were to study, investigate and report to local officials and the national government on agricultural problems in their district. They were also to serve as a means of distributing information to local farmers on current problems and government programs in the field of agriculture. Members of the Agricultural Councils, which varied from four to eighteen members depending upon the size of the district, were to be elected by the landlords and farmers of the area.<sup>3</sup>

From the above it can be seen that Feisal's government from virtually its earliest beginnings was aware of the agricultural problems of Syria and took steps to solve them. Again because of the short period of its existence the results of the steps taken in this field are difficult to measure and were no doubt limited.

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1. Ibid. Issues #59, 18 September 1919, p. 3 and #64, 6 October 1919, p. 3. Nine thousand dunums of land fruit trees and many vineyards were appropriated for the school at Salamieh. Ibid. Issue #22, 1 May 1919, p. 4.
  2. See above p. 117.
  3. Al Asimah, Issue #133, 17 June 1920, p. 1. Considering the date of the promulgation of the law, it is unlikely that the councils were ever formed.

### Public Health Policy and Progress

The health of a nation's population is always a major concern of any government interested in the welfare of its people. From available evidence it appears that Feisal's Arab Government did possess such an interest.

The basis of any effective public program is dependent on the accurate and expeditious reporting of statistics on communicable and infectious diseases. That the Arab Administration was aware of this is attested to by the 141 issues of al Asimah, the Official Journal of Syria, published during the period. Virtually every issue contains a tabulation of infectious diseases which occurred, not only in the area under Arab control but also in the areas under French and British control. Prevalent serious diseases at the time included typhus, small pox, bubonic plague, typhoid, meningitides and measles. While the accuracy of the data is open to question a reporting procedure did exist and was utilized.<sup>1</sup> The government several times took steps to improve the system by enjoining doctors to report serious illnesses, and in October 1919 concealment of infectious diseases by doctors was made an offense subject to legal action.<sup>2</sup>

In March 1919, health officials were appointed to various districts<sup>3</sup> and in October 1919, all bakers, barbers, food handlers and merchants were required to obtain health certificates from local health officers.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., passim. The most serious outbreak reported was an epidemic of plague in Beirut in November and December 1919. Total cases reported reached 221. Ibid., Issue #83, 11 December 1919, p. 4 and Issue #84, 15 December 1919, p. 3.

2. Ibid. Issue #55, 1 September 1919, p. 2 and Issue #70, 27 October 1919, p. 7.

3. Ibid. Issue #7, 10 March 1919, p. 7.

4. Ibid. Issue #68, 20 October 1919, p. 5.

The indigent and needy were not forgotten. In August 1919, a continuing program of free medical examinations was begun in Damascus.<sup>1</sup> The National Hospital in Damascus was established at the location but later military dispensaries were authorized to treat those who could not afford to pay.<sup>2</sup>

In the fall of 1919, the Arab Medical College opened its doors. It was operated in connection with the National Hospital. Secondary school graduates applying for entry were required to pass examinations in Arabic, foreign languages, physics, chemistry, history, geography and mathematics.<sup>3</sup>

Preventive medicine was likewise not neglected. Small pox serum was imported in April 1920 by the Public Health Department and children were authorized free inoculations.<sup>4</sup> And in the summer of 1919, a decree was issued requiring that pharmacists be examined and licenced. A minimum five year apprenticeship was required.<sup>5</sup>

#### Promotion of Industry

Syria, as has been pointed out, was during the time covered by this thesis and still is, essentially an agricultural country. From the point of view of economic development the first concern of Feisal's government

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1. Ibid. Issue #46, 2 August 1919, p. 8.
  2. Ibid. Issue #63, 2 October 1919, p. 4.
  3. Ibid. Issue #49, 11 August 1919, p. 5.
  4. Ibid. Issue #114, 5 April 1920, p. 7.
  5. Ibid. Issue #56, 4 September 1919, p. 4.

was the improvement of the country's agricultural situation.<sup>1</sup> However some tentative steps toward laying the basis for suitable small industries were taken. In May 1919, the government took steps to encourage the establishment of a privately owned glass factory in Damascus.<sup>2</sup> And in November of the same year, the Aleppo Chamber of Commerce announced plans to open a number of small industries to manufacture matches, paper, leather goods, silk, wool, glass, agricultural implements and food products.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Judicial System

Feisal's Arab Government spent considerable time and effort in the development of a judicial system suited to the needs and society of the nation. One of the first acts of the new government after the capture of Damascus was to certify the validity and legality of legal decisions and contracts made under Ottoman law prior to 30 September 1918. This action was taken on 8 October 1918. All cases awaiting decision were suspended until new courts could be appointed.<sup>4</sup> Shortly thereafter, a temporary law for judicial organization was promulgated establishing Islamic (shari'a) military and civil courts. Army officers were appointed to the military tribunals and members of the ulema' were appointed as judges

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1. See above pp. 121-123.

2. Al Asimah, Issue #28, 22 May 1919, p. 3.

3. Ibid. Issue #72, 4 November 1919, p. 3.

4. Ibid. Issue #1, 17 February 1919, p. 8.

in the religious and civil courts.<sup>1</sup> The civil and religious appointments were made in the name of Amir Feisal and included jurisdictions throughout OETA East and South.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1920 a decree was published establishing two Courts of Appeal, one in Damascus and one in Aleppo. The Damascus Court of Appeal was awarded jurisdiction over the districts of Damascus, Salt and Karak, and the Aleppo Court of Appeal over Deir Az Zor, Aleppo, Homs and Hama. Criminal courts consisting of three members each were also established in each of the districts named above and a fee schedule was also established by the same decree for payment of court costs.<sup>3</sup>

There is little doubt that the judicial system established in Syria borrowed heavily from the Ottoman.<sup>4</sup> But this could only be expected. At the same time there is evidence that Feisal himself, in the Arab tradition, often intervened personally in matters of justice, granting pardons and amnesties to lawbreakers.<sup>5</sup> However there is no doubt that a serious effort was made by the Arab Government to institutionalize justice on relatively modern principles.

#### Cultural Activities

The cultural life of the nation was not forgotten by the Arab Government. In March 1919 a National Library, under the supervision of Director of

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1. Ibid. Issue #2, 20 February 1919, p. 6.
  2. Ibid. Issue #4, 27 February 1919, p. 4 and Issue #6, 6 March 1919, p. 6.
  3. Ibid. Issue #98, 2 February 1920, p. 4.
  4. Report of the French High Commissioner, pp. 73-74.
  5. Kurd Ali, p. 49.

Education, was started in Damascus with the announced purpose of collecting manuscripts and new and old books. Scientific materials in all languages but especially Arabic were to be included in the collection. Notices were printed in al Asimah requesting owners of precious books and materials of historical value to donate or sell them to Dar al Kutub as the National Library was called.<sup>1</sup>

In the same month the Damascus Royal Museum was established to collect antiquities and artifacts.<sup>2</sup>

In August 1919 the Arab Academy was formed under the sponsorship of Feisal. The Arab Academy was in effect a historical foundation charged with the recording of the history of the Arab World after the departure of the Turks.<sup>3</sup>

#### National Defense

The Feisal's Arab Government undoubtedly devoted the greater part of its energy and wealth to the problem of National Defense. This was particularly true from the month of September 1919 until Meisalun. The withdrawal of British troops in the fall of 1919 created in the eyes of Feisal and his government a requirement for a larger and more effective army to oppose the threat of French occupation.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Al Asimah, Issue #12, 27 March 1919, p. 8.

2. Ibid. Issue #10, 22 March 1919, p. 7.

3. Ibid. Issue #50, 14 August 1919, p. 3.

4. See above pp. 94 and 95.

The nucleus of the Arab Army were those veterans who had participated in the Arab revolt. Many of the officers were Turkish trained although of Arab origin. After the war, many other former officers of the Ottoman Army returned to Syria and were placed in command of Arab army units. Some of the latter had held high rank and position in the Ottoman Army. By October 1919, according to the British Political Officer in Damascus, all the brigades of the Arab Army were commanded by officers who had served in the Turkish army during the war but not in the campaign against Arab and British Armies.<sup>1</sup>

There is some evidence that after the successful completion of the war, reduction in the strength of the army was contemplated for economic reasons. But there appears to be no real reason to assume that reductions were ever carried out although a small number of troops with a few guns and some selected officers were sent to Hijaz in an effort to assist King Hussein who was engaged at the time in hostilities with Ibn Sa'ud.<sup>2</sup>

The Arab Army which was raised by Feisal and Lawrence had been expert in guerilla and unconventional warfare.<sup>3</sup> However, the demands of a national and modern army were different. A program of translation of European military manuals on physical training, weapons and tactics was started<sup>4</sup> and an artillery unit was formed to provide necessary fire support.<sup>5</sup> Volunteers for training

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1. Documents, p. 567.

2. See the report of General Clayton to Lord Curzon, 23 June 1919. Documents, p. 288.

3. The campaigns of the Arab Army in World War I are still studied in US Army service schools as examples of successful guerilla and unconventional warfare.

4. Al Asimah, Issue # 1, 17 February 1919, p. 7.

5. Ibid. Issue #7, 10 March 1919, p. 4.



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4. Al Asimah, Issue # 1, 17 February 1919, p. 7.

5. Ibid. Issue #7, 10 March 1919, p. 4.

in various military specialties including armor, aviation, artillery and military engineering were solicited in July 1919. Volunteers were required to be of Arab nationality and provide guarantees that they would serve in the army upon completion of their overseas training.<sup>1</sup> All of the above steps are indicative of the desire of the Arab Government to place their army on a modern and conventional footing from the point of view of organization and training.

A Military Academy to provide a source of trained officers was opened on 1 October 1919,<sup>2</sup> and plans for the establishment of a non-commissioned officers school were made in May 1920, but appear to never to have been implemented.<sup>3</sup> Candidates for the Military Academy were required to be of good character and family and pass physical and educational examinations prior to entry.

A prime requisite of a modern army is up-to-date and standardized equipment. The Arab Army fell heir to large amounts of Turkish and German equipment. Efforts were made in early 1919 to exchange this equipment for British material. These and other requests made by the Arab Army for additional British equipment were conveniently "postponed" by the British government obviously to avoid antagonizing the French.<sup>4</sup>

By far the most active of the Arab Government's military activities was the recruiting movement of which began in fall of 1919 to increase the

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1. Ibid. Issue #42, 14 July 1919, p. 7.

2. Ibid. Issue #53, 25 August 1919, p. 4.

3. Ibid. Issue #122, 3 May 1920, p. 6.

4. See Documents pp. 357 and 371 for communications between the British War Office and Lord Curzon and the French Ambassador in London and Lord Curzon relative to the supply of British war materials to the Arabs.

size of the army.<sup>1</sup> The recruiting effort was stimulated essentially by two factors; the first, the need for additional military strength to cope with problems of internal security after the British decision to withdraw their troops;<sup>2</sup> and second, nationalist pressure for a strong military force to repel any possible French aggression. The latter movement was stimulated by the formation of al Lajnah al Watanniyah al Ulia by the ardent nationalist, Sheikh Kamil Kassab, in the fall of 1918. The purpose of this organization was the encouragement of military recruitment.<sup>3</sup> The government first discouraged the activities of the al Lajnah al Watanniyah al Ulia and banned its publications but soon subscribed to its principles and pursued an extremely active recruiting program until just before the French occupation.<sup>4</sup>

In August 1919 the recruiting machinery had already been established when twenty recruiting offices had been established throughout Syria.<sup>5</sup> By November, when the British troops finally departed, the recruiting drive was in full swing and was attracting young men throughout the country.<sup>6</sup>

Militia units were formed by Nadi al Arabi which took training on a part-time basis and similar units were formed under local sponsorship in

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1. The strength of the Arab Army in the fall of 1919 was about 7,200. See Syria in October 1919, a report by Gertrude Bell, quoted by Kedourie p. 161.
  2. See Documents, p. 460 for notes of a meeting in London on 13 October 1919, at which Feisal estimated that upon the withdrawal of British troops his army would have to be significantly increased for internal security reasons. Feisal's aim was an army of 15,000. Lord Curzon disagreed.
  3. See above p. 64.
  4. Al Asimah, Issue #60, 22 September 1919, p. 3.
  5. Ibid. Issue #49, 11 August 1919, p. 3.
  6. Ibid. Issue #75, 13 November 1919, p. 6. A report in this issue states that a cavalry battalion, an infantry battalion and a machine gun battalion were being organized in Aleppo and that 500 had volunteered in Salamieh, 4,000 in al Bab and other unspecified numbers in various other areas.

Jisr al Shaghour, Damascus and other centers.<sup>1</sup> On 21 December 1919 a compulsory military training law was approved by Amir Zeid. Essentially it provided for mandatory military service for all men between 20-40. Certain exemptions were permitted for students, teachers, the physically unfit and government officials. The term of service was for six months.<sup>2</sup> This was later extended in May 1920 when an amendment to the recruiting law extended the period of military service to one year.<sup>3</sup> Provisions were made in the basic law to permit the "buying off" from service obligations.

Popular support for the movement recruiting effort appears to have been widespread in areas under Arab control. Even priests and women volunteered.<sup>4</sup> Khalid al Azm, future Prime Minister of Syria, was married in his army officer's uniform in an interesting show of patriotism.<sup>5</sup>

While enthusiasm was obviously manifest, a modern army does not become a sufficient fighting force by spirit alone. Equipment, training and organization are equally if not more important. There appears little question that the Arab Army never became a cohesive and effective military organization during the short period of its existence.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid. Issue #58, 15 September 1919, p. 5; Issue #71, 30 October 1919, p. 3; and Issue #74, 11 November 1919, p. 4.

2. Ibid. Issue #87, 25 December 1919, p. 1.

3. Ibid. Issue #126, 20 May 1920, p. 1.

4. Ibid. Issue #58, 15 September 1919, p. 5 and Issue #86, 22 December 1919, p. 3.

5. Ibid. Issue #58, 15 September 1919, p. 5.

6. See Syria in October 1919, a report by Gertrude Bell quoted in Kedouri p. 161, for an appreciation of the effectiveness of Feisal's army in that month.

The army of course was disbanded just before the French occupation in compliance with the ultimatum of General Gouraud. Quickly reorganized, it fought a single gallant battle and was decisively defeated. All efforts to build a force large and efficient enough to combat the French had been in vain.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See above p. 111.

## Conclusions

### Evaluation of Feisal's Leadership

In our society success and failure are almost always taken as the measure of the man. A successful leader is one who accomplishes what he set out to do. By this standard Feisal was a failure. He failed to obtain independence for Syria and therefore in this sense he was a failure. Some authors imply or flatly state that Feisal lacked the necessary personal characteristics for leadership. They claim that he was indecisive and lacking in will power and that his background and heritage disqualified him for the leadership of Syria and made him unacceptable to the Syrian people.<sup>1</sup> The author does not believe this to be true. Feisal did possess the necessary attributes for leadership of Syria at that time and his failure was not due essentially to weakness, but to outside factors over which he had little or no control.

The report of the King-Crane Commission provides eloquent support for this opinion of Feisal's qualifications and abilities:

Emir Feisal has come, too, naturally into his present place of power, and there is no one else who could well replace him. He had the great advantage of being the son of the Sherif of Mecca, and as such honored throughout the Moslem world. He was one of the prominent Arab leaders who assumed responsibility for the Arab uprising against the Turks, and so shared in the complete deliverance of the Arab-speaking portions of the Turkish Empire. He was consequently hailed by the "Damascus Congress" as having "merited their full confidence and entire reliance." He was taken up and supported by the British as the most promising candidate for the headship of the new Arab State - an Arab of the Arabs, but with a position of wide appeal

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1. See Kurd Ali, pp. 42-43 and Kedourie, pp. 161, 163-165 for such appreciations of Feisal and his leadership.

through his Sherifian connection, and through his broad sympathies with the best in the Occident. His relations with the Arabs to the east of Syria are friendly and his kingdom would not be threatened from that side. He undoubtedly does not make so strong an appeal to the Christians of the West Coast, as to the Arabs of the East; but no man can be named who would. He is tolerant and wise, skillful in dealing with men, winning in manner, a man of sincerity, insight and power. Whether he has the full strength needed for his difficult task it is too early to say; but certainly no other Arab leader combines so many elements of power as he, and he will invaluable help throughout the mandatory period.

The Peace Conference may take genuine satisfaction in the fact that an Arab of such qualities is available for the leadership of this new state in the Near East.<sup>1</sup>

Another equally revealing and understanding portrait of Feisal was painted by Count Carlo Sforza who appears to have fully understood the personality and motivations of Feisal:

The Caliph was a powerful emperor reigning at Constantinople, surrounded by the respect of all Muslims of the world but in spite of that, what did we see from 1914-1918? Muslims fighting everywhere for England and France against other coreligionists, dying side by side with the Austro-Germans. For a beginning of Pan-Arabism there should be an Arab prince, victorious, rich and powerful... I have never forgotten Feisal, with his gaunt Bedouin face, his melancholy deep-set eyes, his slender figure, his natural dignity, his hidden humor, his rare mingling of West and East. Feisal held his sway over the imaginations of the Near East by his high intelligence but, above all, by his natural genius for that most anti-Arab of political gifts, compromise. One might say of Feisal that he forced himself on his compatriots by dint of gifts which, in a sense, made him a stranger among them.<sup>2</sup>

Other forces caused Feisal's failure and the failure of his Arab Government. The French demand for their "rights" under the Sykes-Picot Agreement was perhaps the most important of these. The French mandate which Count Sforza called "a hypocritical form used to cover the ancient

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1. King-Crane Report, P. IX.

2. Count Carlo Sforza, "The Near East in World Politics", The Near East, Problems and Prospects, ed. Philip W. Ireland, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942) pp. 19-20.

imperialism with a halo of undeserved sanctity"<sup>1</sup> would have undoubtedly been forced upon Syria in some form, no matter who its leader was or what form the government might have taken. A second and almost equally important force which contributed to Feisal's failure was the intransigent position of the ardent Arab nationalists of Syria. Unwilling to compromise and totally insistent on complete independence, they refused to permit Feisal the exercise of one of his most significant traits...the ability to compromise. Feisal caught between the thinly disguised imperialism of the French and the insistent demands of his subjects was never free to use effectively his talent for conciliation. The unwillingness of the British to intervene and the seeming total lack of interest on the part of the United States were negative forces which acted to Feisal's disadvantage.

Every positive step Feisal took to achieve a solution was viewed by one side or the other, French or Arab Nationalist, as a sign of weakness or stubbornness, concession or defiance. The French, backed by a powerful army and supported by a sense of mission and a centuries old interest in Syria, could not visualize that their tutelage, culture and assistance could be unwanted. The Arab Nationalists at the same time were unable to recognize the realities of the situation facing Feisal. Concentrating on their aim of complete independence they refused to accept the means available to them to achieve it - negotiation, compromise and conciliation. This ardent Arab Nationalism, the sole reason and support for Feisal's throne, was at the same time one of the most important causes for its downfall.

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1. Ibid. p. 13



Feisal was further handicapped by the necessity for his absence from Syria for extended periods of time. During the brief period of the Arab Administration in Syria, Feisal found it necessary to be away almost eleven months. Considering the traditional personal relationship between ruler and ruled in the Arab World, such long absences in themselves not only must have weakened his position politically but undoubtedly hindered Feisal in developing a strong administration.

Feisal's lieutenants numbered among them many men of ability and unquestioned patriotism. The King-Crane Commission reported that the "higher Arab officials include a number of dignity, ability, intelligence and apparent honesty and patriotism. Practically all are Syrian born."<sup>1</sup> Many of those who served in Feisal's Government later became some of the most well known and effective leaders in Syria and elsewhere in the Arab World. Among those of first rate reputation were Shuqri al Quwatly, Faris al Khoury, Nuri Sa'id, Ibrahim Hanano, Khalid al Azm, Abdul Rahman Shahbandar and Riyad al Sulh. The qualities and talents which later led these men to positions of importance and responsibility were certainly present and apparent in Feisal's time.

Perhaps the strongest evidence of Feisal's leadership ability is indirect. After almost thirteen months from the day of the defeat of the Arab Army at Meisalun, on 23 August 1921, Feisal was crowned King of Iraq, the handpicked choice of Winston Churchill and the most knowledgeable of his British Middle Eastern advisors.<sup>2</sup> Men of the nature of Winston Churchill do not base decisions on sentimentality. The qualities which

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1. King-Crane Report, p. VII.

2. Longrigg, Iraq 1900 to 1950, pp. 130-133.

led Feisal to leadership of the Arab Revolt and to be selected by the Syrians to be Monarch of the Syrian Arab Kingdom in Damascus were the same proven qualities which won him the nomination of the British as the chief instrument in the building of a sovereign Arab State in Iraq.

#### Evaluation of the Arab Administration

The Arab Government in Syria lasted less than two years during which it evolved from a military administration to a Kingdom with a Monarch, Government and a representative assembly. Initially it took over a war-devastated country which was economically weak, isolated and greatly hampered commercially. Throughout its tenure it was under strong pressure from an unruly populace and faced the active ill will of powerful outside interests. The spirit of Arab Nationalism, upon which the State and Monarch were based, was a powerful political force, deeply rooted in the structure of the country which gave the Government purpose and direction, although not always in the most constructive manner. Syrian Nationalism was emotional and confident basing its claims to independence, and for good reason, on the wartime and post-war assurances of the Allies.

Founded on this political foundation and under the leadership of Feisal, the Arab Administration showed " abundant vitality, an excellent comprehension of local conditions, a willingness to decentralize, toleration of all communities without rancour or fanaticism and the possession of a considerable number not merely of competent military

officers but also of civil administrators."<sup>1</sup>

More specifically this Arab Government elected a Congress, crowned a King, drafted a Constitution, established laws and administrative regulations, the validity of which were admitted by acceptance not only of the people themselves but even by the French after Meisalun.<sup>2</sup> The Arab Government sought solutions to the myriad economic, agricultural, defense and health problems. It established a judiciary and fostered cultural programs within the country.

The span of life of the Arab Government was too short, outside pressures too great, sources too meagre, to make a definite appreciation of the effectiveness of the government. However there is ample evidence that this Government was well aware of its responsibilities, amply endowed with talent and deeply rooted enough in the political and social structure of Syria to have survived if it had been given the chance.

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1. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, p. 105.

2. Ibid.

APPENDIX A

The Program of the General

Syrian Congress, 1919

We, the undersigned, members of the General Syrian Congress, meeting in Damascus on Wednesday, July 2, 1919, made up of the representatives from the three Zones, viz., the Southern, Eastern, and Western, provided with credentials and authorizations by the inhabitants of our various districts, Moslems, Christians, and Jews, have agreed upon the following statement of the desires of the people of the country who have elected us to present them to the American Section of the International Commission; the fifth article was passed by a very large majority; all the other articles were accepted unanimously.

"1. We ask absolutely complete political independence for Syria within these boundaries. The Taurus System on the North; Rafeh and a line running from Al-Juf to the south of the Syrian and the Mejazian line to Akaba on the south; the Euphrates and Khabur Rivers and a line extending east of Abu Kamal to the east of Al-Juf on the east; and the Mediterranean on the west.

"2. We ask that the Government of this Syrian country should be a democratic civil constitutional Monarchy on broad decentralization principles, safeguarding the rights of minorities, and that the King be the Emir Feisal,

who carried on a glorious struggle in the cause of our liberation and merited our full confidence and entire reliance.

"3. Considering the fact that the Arabs inhabiting the Syrian area are not naturally less gifted than other more advanced races and that they are by no means less developed than the Bulgarians, Serbians, Greeks, and Roumanians at the beginning of their independence, we protest against Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, placing us among the nations in their middle stage of development which stand in need of a mandatory power.

"4. In the event of the rejection by the Peace Conference of this just protest for certain considerations that we may not understand, we, relying on the declarations of President Wilson that his object in waging war was to put an end to the ambition of conquest and colonization, can only regard the mandate mentioned in the Covenant of the League of Nations as equivalent to the rendering of economical and technical assistance that does not prejudice our complete independence. And desiring that our country should not fall a prey to colonization and believing that the American Nation is farthest from any thought of colonization and has no political ambition in our country, we will seek the technical and economic assistance from the United States of America, provided that such assistance does not exceed twenty years.

"5. In the event of America not finding herself in a position to accept our desire for assistance, we will seek this assistance from Great Britain, also provided that such assistance does not infringe the complete independence and unity of our country, and that the duration of such assistance does not exceed that mentioned in the previous article.

"6. We do not acknowledge any right claimed by the French Government in any part whatever of our Syrian country and refuse that she should assist us or have a hand in our country under any circumstances and in any place.

"7. We oppose the pretensions of the Zionists to create a Jewish commonwealth in the southern part of Syria, known as Palestine, and oppose Zionist migration to any part of our country; for we do not acknowledge their title, but consider them a grave peril to our people, from the national, economical, and political points of view. Our Jewish compatriots shall enjoy our common rights and assume the common responsibilities.

"8. We ask that there should be no separation of the southern part of Syria, known as Palestine, nor of the littoral western zone, which includes Lebanon, from the Syrian country. We desire that the unity of the country should be guaranteed against partition under whatever circumstances.

"9. We ask complete independence for emancipated Mesopotamia and that there should be no economical barriers between the two countries.

"10. The fundamental principles laid down by President Wilson in condemnation of secret treaties impel us to protest most emphatically against any treaty that stipulates the partition of our Syrian country and against any private engagement aiming at the establishment of Zionism in the southern part of Syria; therefore we ask the complete annulment of these conventions and agreements.

"The noble principles enunciated by President Wilson strengthen our confidence that our desires emanating from the depths of our hearts, shall be the decisive factor in determining our future; and that President Wilson and the free American people will be supporters for the realization of our hopes, thereby proving their sincerity and noble sympathy with the

with the aspiration of the weaker nations in general and our Arab people in particular.

"We also have the fullest confidence that the Peace Conference will realize that we would not have risen against the Turks, with whom we had participated in all civil, political, and representative privileges, but for their violation of our national rights, and so will grant us our desires in full in order that our political rights may not be less after the war than they were before, since we have shed so much blood in the cause of our liberty and independence.

"We request to be allowed to send a delegation to represent us at the Peace Conference to defend our rights and secure the realization of our aspirations."

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1. Henry C. King and Charles R. Crane, Report of the King-Crane Commission, published 2 December 1922 (New York, Editor and Publisher) p. VII.

Appendix B

Syrian Constitution of 1920

1338 A.H.

1920 A.D.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL PROVISIONS

- Art. 1 - The Government of the Syrian Arab Kingdom is a civil representative monarchy. Its capital is Damascus and Islam is the state religion.
- Art. 2 - The Syrian Kingdom consists of an indivisible country having a political unity.
- Art. 3 - By virtue of the present constitution, this country has administrative autonomy. The Congress shall determine, by a special act to be promulgated for that purpose, the boundaries of this country.
- Art. 4 - Arabic is the official language of the government.

CHAPTER TWO

THE KING AND HIS PREROGATIVES

- Art. 5 - The throne of the Syrian Kingdom belongs to and shall pass from the eldest to the eldest among the sons of King Feisal I. If



one of the Kings has no son, the throne shall pass to the eldest of his nearest consanguineous male relatives. Should there be no consanguineous male descendants of King Feisal I, the Congress, by a two thirds majority, shall elect for Syria a King descended from the dynasty of King Hussein I of Hijaz.

- Art. 6 - The King shall not be enthroned before completing eighteen years of age. Should the throne pass to an heir presumptive, the Congress shall designate a regent to rule the kingdom in the name of the King. The regent must not be a member of the army. He must swear to respect the divine law, be loyal to the nation and the King and uphold the constitution.
- Art. 7 - Upon his enthronement, the King must swear before the Congress to respect the divine law, be loyal to his nation and uphold the Constitution.
- Art. 8 - The King is respected but he is not responsible.
- Art. 9 - The King is the commander in chief. He declares war, concludes peace and signs treaties. However, he must submit his decisions to the approval of Parliament. Treaties do not become valid without this approval. It is the right of the King, after obtaining the approval of Parliament, to grant general amnesty. He designates the Prime Minister, approves the formation of the cabinet, accepts its resignation, sanctions laws, reprieves the condemned and mitigates sentences, opens the sessions of Parliament, convokes it outside its ordinary sessions and prolongs its duration when necessary. He has the right to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies in accordance with Article 94. Currency is minted in his name. He bestows medals, military ranks and civilian government posts in accordance with regulations.

CHAPTER THREE

RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

- Art. 10 - The term "Syrian" is applied to all natives of the Syrian Arab Kingdom. Syrian nationality can be acquired or forfeited in accordance with the stipulations of the law on nationalities.
- Art. 11 - Syrians are equal in rights and obligations before the law.
- Art. 12 - The personal liberty of individuals is protected against all encroachments. No arrest can be effected except for cause and in cases provided for by law.
- Art. 13 - It is forbidden to torture or inflict injury upon anyone for any reason.
- Art. 14 - It is forbidden to violate freedom of belief and of religion or to forbid the religious ceremonies of any community, provided that these ceremonies do not endanger public security or offend other sects and religions.
- Art. 15 - The organisation of Sharia courts and clerical councils who deal, on the basis of their own legislation, in the civil affairs of individuals, and the administrative organisation of the public Waqfs will be the subject of regulations to be promulgated by Parliament.
- Art. 16 - Citizens, individually or collectively, must submit their public or private complaints in writing to the competent authorities and to the Representative Assembly.
- Art. 17 - The formation of associations, the holding of meetings and the establishment of societies can be freely effected within the bounds of the special regulations to be promulgated by Parliament.

- Art. 18 - All residences are inviolable. It is forbidden to forcibly enter them except in cases provided for by law.
- Art. 19 - The property of individuals and legal entities are guaranteed by law. The government cannot expropriate property except for reasons of public use and after payment of an indemnity in accordance with special regulations.
- Art. 20 - The press is free within the limits of the law and cannot be controlled or censored before publication.
- Art. 21 - The principles of teaching and of education in the public and private schools must be the same and must be inspired, in all Syria, by patriotic sentiments.
- Art. 22 - Elementary education is obligatory. It is free in all government schools.
- Art. 23 - The establishment of private schools is permitted within the bounds of the special law that Parliament will promulgate on the subject.
- Art. 24 - It is forbidden to compel anyone to pay any sum in the form of taxes, dues or assistance to others unless this obligation is based on an article of law.
- Art. 25 - Forced labor and forced requisitions are prohibited.
- Art. 26 - No one can be tried except by the courts of law established by law.
- Art. 27 - Exile for political reasons is expressly forbidden.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Cabinet

- Art. 28 - The Government of the Syrian Arab Kingdom is constituted by a cabinet responsible for its acts to the Chamber of Deputies.
- Art. 29 - The Prime Minister chooses his ministers and submits their names to the King.
- Art. 30 - Each cabinet, upon its formation, must submit its program to the Chamber of Deputies.
- Art. 31 - Each minister is answerable for the management of the affairs of his ministry to the Chamber of Deputies.
- Art. 32 - No law or regulation can be promulgated unless it is countersigned by the Prime Minister, and the Minister entrusted with its execution, and invested with the approval by the King.
- Art. 33 - All decrees must be countersigned by the Prime Minister and the minister entrusted with their execution.
- Art. 34 - No member of the royal family can be a member of the cabinet.
- Art. 35 - The army, navy, foreign affairs, posts, telegraphy, customs, telephones, railways, harbors, lighthouses, mines, the minting of coins, the issue of stamps and banknotes, the establishment of official banks, the manufacture of arms, war materials and explosives and the construction of public roads, all are exclusively within the competence of the central government.
- Art. 37 - The central government establishes the units of weight, the measures of volumes and lengths and the value of currency on the basis of the decimal system. It also fixes the rates of exchange of foreign currencies in all the regions of the kingdom.

- Art. 38 - The revenues from farming state domains and properties; revenues from public forests; the revenues from customs, public telephones, telegraphy, postal services and government banks; taxes on camels, sheep, monopolies, concessions, spirits, mines, harbors, light-houses, stamps, quarantines, ships, fishing, explosives and the revenues from the railways except those from the Hijaz Railway and its branch lines which are part of the Moslem Waqfs are assigned to the central budget.
- Art. 39 - The central government cannot sell or lease state domain except in accordance with a special law that shall protect the interests of the peasants and the country.
- Art. 40 - Should dangers or events that menace public security befall the Kingdom during parliamentary recess, and should sufficient time to convoke Parliament in order to promulgate the laws necessitated by the situation be lacking, the cabinet shall take the requisite decisions and execute them on the basis of a law approved by the King. These decisions shall, however, be submitted to Parliament at its first subsequent meeting.
- Art. 41 - In case of revolt in any region, a war or a general mobilisation, it shall be the responsibility to the central government to proclaim, provisional martial law in accordance with special rules that shall be promulgated by the Congress. In case of a revolt, the proclamation shall be applicable only to the region where the uprising is taking place.
- Art. 42 - Each minister has the right to assist, when he wishes, at the deliberations of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies. He enjoys priority to take the floor.

- Art. 43 - Each minister must comply with the summons of the Senate or the Chamber of Deputies and reply to inquiries addressed to him, either in person or through his chiefs of service, explaining any matter that pertains to the functioning of his ministry.
- Art. 44 - If a majority vote is not obtained by a minister questioned at the Chamber of Deputies about some problem, or by the explanations he submits, then that minister loses his portfolio. The downfall of the Prime Minister includes that of the entire Cabinet. A minister or the may request to postpone their replies.
- Art. 45 - Should five deputies file a complaint against the Cabinet, or any of the ministers concerning an act within their responsibility, and should two thirds of the Chamber approve holding an inquiry on the subject, the Chamber shall then entrust the matter to a commission, drawn by lots, which would effect its inquiry, summon the minister in question or any other, and collect the explanations they submit. The commission then presents its findings to the Assembly. If two thirds of the members approve the necessity of an impeachment, the matter shall be submitted to the Supreme Court. A special law shall be promulgated on the procedures to be followed in such cases.
- Art. 46 - Should the Chamber of Deputies decide to impeach the entire cabinet or one of its ministers, the former falls and the latter loses his portfolio.
- Art. 47 - No distinction is made between a minister and a citizen in ordinary misdemeanours, private rights and pecuniary guarantees. A minister, in such cases, is liable to trial at ordinary courts.

CHAPTER FIVE

PARLIAMENT

- Art. 48 - Parliament consists of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies.
- Art. 49 - Parliament convenes on 1 September of each year. Its session lasts four months. In case of need, sessions may be prolonged and Parliament can be convoked outside its regular periods.
- Art. 50 - Parliament is opened with the two chambers and the entire cabinet in attendance, with a speech by the King which details all the important political and administrative events that took place during parliamentary recess and the measures to be taken during the coming year.
- Art. 51 - The Senate and the Chamber of Deputies will promulgate a law on their proceedings, organisation and deliberations. They will elect every year, from amongst their members, two vice-presidents, secretaries and a council of administration.
- Art. 52 - The Senate and the Chamber of Deputies examine the election returns, accept resignations and declare the termination of tenure of their respective members.
- Art. 53 - The deliberations of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies are public but may be held in closed session if ten members so propose or a minister so requests and the majority of the assembly approves the proposal.
- Art. 54 - The members of the two chambers are free to express any opinion at the rostrum, without being liable to any responsibility, provided that they observe the internal procedures of these chambers.

- Art. 55 - The deliberations of neither chamber are valid if over one half of its members are absent. Resolutions are made with an absolute majority of votes of the members present at the meeting, except in matters where a two thirds majority is required.
- Art. 56 - The opinion of the members on the decisions to be taken are expressed either by a roll call, or by making a special sign or by secret ballot if the majority decides one is needed.
- Art. 57 - A senator or deputy accused of high treason, whose impeachment is deemed necessary by two thirds of his colleagues, will be referred to the Supreme Court for trial.
- Art. 58 - No senator or deputy may be arrested or tried for an ordinary crime during a session of Parliament except upon the approval of two thirds of his colleagues. Exception is made when a deputy is caught in a misdemeanour. In such a case the chamber to which he belongs must be immediately informed.
- Art. 59 - A senator or a deputy cannot undertake enterprises for the central government, a local government or municipalities nor conclude with them contracts for the delivery of supplies or obtain from them any concessions for himself or in collaboration with a third party.
- Art. 60 - Any senator or deputy and the cabinet can propose draft laws or draft amendments of existing laws. These draft laws and draft amendments of laws must be submitted first to the Chamber of Deputies and then to the Senate.
- Art. 61 - The civil, penal and commercial codes; laws on public health; rights of authors; patent rights; the press; public and private education; associations; meetings; societies; emigration; insurance;



nationality; units of weights, measures, dimensions and currency; labor laws as well as the laws of the Central Government are promulgated by Parliament and enforceable in all Syria.

Art. 62 - If a law, voted by the Chamber of Deputies, is amended by the Senate and sent back to the former which persists in its first opinion, and if the Senate again does not drop its amendment to the law but sends it back to the Chamber of Deputies which once more persists in rejecting the amendment, then a commission composed of an equal number of senators and deputies shall be formed in order to settle the difference. In case it cannot, the resolution of the Chamber of Deputies becomes enforceable provided it is approved by a two thirds majority. As for the annual budget, the Senate can send it back only once. And if the Chamber of Deputies persists in its original opinion, the decision it makes becomes enforceable.

Art. 63 - The Constitution may not be amended unless two thirds of the members of the Senate and two thirds of the members of the Chamber of Deputies deem it necessary. In that case, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies meet as a constituent assembly and decide by absolute majority the amendments to be introduced.

Art. 64 - Laws, adopted by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, are submitted to the King for approval and the promulgation of the order for their execution. If they are approved within one month, the laws become enforceable, otherwise they shall be sent back to the Chamber of Deputies accompanied by a document explaining the reasons that require their reconsideration. The delay for approval or return of Laws declared urgent is only one week.

Laws so returned are examined a second time by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Upon the new reading, they must be approved by the King who will order their enforcement within the prescribed time period.

Art. 65 - Besides the members of the Chambers, only the ministers or their delegates may have the floor in the Senate or the Chamber of Deputies.

#### THE SENATE

Art. 66 - The Chamber of Deputies of every province elects a number of senators equal to one quarter of the number of deputies in the national Chamber of Deputies and the King appoints a number of senators equal to one half of the elected senators.

Art. 67 - If the number of deputies of every province to the national Chamber of Deputies is not perfectly divisible by four, it will be rounded off and the number of senators to be elected by the Chamber of Deputies of the province will be arrived at by this procedure. Similarly, if the number of senators elected by the provinces is not perfectly divisible, it will be rounded off and the number of senators to be appointed by the King will be arrived at by this procedure.

Art. 68 - The number of senators of a minority will be equal to one quarter of the number of its representatives at the Chamber of Deputies for the entire kingdom, and the number of senators of a minority

for each province will be calculated on the basis of the total figure. Parliament will promulgate a special law on the method of electing senators for a minority and the distribution of senatorial electoral seats in each province. The same proportions will be maintained for the senators to be appointed by the King.

Art. 69 - The term of office of a senator is nine years, one third of the senators being renewed every three years. The designation of <sup>and</sup> the first/second one third to be renewed during the first six years will be drawn by lot, provided that the first third that is renewed will be excluded from the second selection of lots. The third one third consisting of senators who have completed a term of nine years, will be then renewed. A senator whose term expires, whether he completes the normal period of his term or not, is eligible for reelection.

Art. 70 - If the lot falls on a senator appointed by the King, the latter will nominate his replacement. If it falls on elected senators, their provinces will elect their replacements.

Art. 71 - Only a minister can hold a second post as senator.

Art. 72 - To be a senator, the following conditions must be fulfilled :

- 1 - One must be Syrian, at least 40 years of age and never have been convicted for a misdemeanour or be in bankruptcy or have been discharged of a bankruptcy. He must not have forfeited his civil rights.
- 2 - He must have already occupied a high administrative, military, political or judiciary post, have been elected a deputy

several times, or have enjoyed some renown for his learning and integrity.

Art. 73 - In case of the death, resignation or disqualification of a senator, who belongs to the category of those elected, a replacement will be elected for the same province and the term of the latter will expire with that of his predecessor.

#### THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

Art. 74 - The members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected by secret ballot in two stages.

Art. 75 - The general elections for the Chamber of Deputies will be held once every four years. They will begin on June 1st and end in mid-August.

Art. 76 - The term is four years. A deputy whose term expires is eligible for re-election.

Art. 77 - The term of a deputy extends until the next elections are completed.

Art. 78 - The elections are free. The Government cannot interfere in them or prevent them.

Art. 79 - Every Syrian who has completed twenty years of age and who has not forfeited his civil rights can vote at the first stage. Every graduate of a university has two votes. Every Syrian who has completed twenty five years of age, who has not forfeited his civil rights and who has not been sentenced to one month or more in prison, can vote in the second stage, provided he is literate and is not a civil servant, an officer or a servant.

- Art. 80 - Every Syrian, who has completed thirty years of age, who has not lost his civil rights, is not bankrupt or been discharged of a bankruptcy, and who has not been convicted of a misdemeanour can be elected.
- Art. 81 - Members of the armed forces on active service cannot participate in the elections. But those on leave can participate in their electoral districts.
- Art. 82 - Unless he resigns two months before the elections, a civil servant cannot be a candidate or be elected from an electoral district where he is on duty.
- Art. 83 - Unless they resign before the elections, officers of subaltern's or of senior ranks who are on active service cannot vote or be elected.
- Art. 84 - Only minister can add to his posts that of being a deputy.
- Art. 85 - The same person cannot hold (at the same time) the posts of senator and deputy.
- Art. 86 - Every deputy is considered to represent the Syrians.
- Art. 87 - There is to be one deputy for every 40,000 Syrians residing in the country. Below that figure only the fraction 20,000 will be taken into consideration.
- Art. 88 - Every District (Mudiriah) will be considered an electoral district. Those where the population is less than 40,000 but not less than 20,000 will elect one deputy. Those where the number of inhabitants is less than 20,000 will be attached to the nearest other district.
- Art. 89 - Every province will be considered for the purpose of the representation of minorities, as forming a single electoral district

if the number therein is less than 30,000. Below that figure the lowest fraction to be taken into consideration is 15,000.

- Art. 90 - Every group of two hundred voters in the primary stage have the right to elect a delegate to the second stage. Below that figure, the lowest to be taken into consideration is that of 100.
- Art. 91 - The districts are divisible into electoral areas provided that in each of the latter one number of voters at the primary stage is not less than 200.
- Art. 92 - A special law will be promulgated to establish the procedures to be followed in elections and all operations pertaining thereto, and rules to follow in the election of minority deputies.
- Art. 93 - In case of the death or disqualification of a deputy, the voters of the second stage in his electoral district will elect his replacement. The term of the new deputy will expire with that of his predecessor.
- Art. 94 - In case of a conflict between the Chamber of Deputies and the Cabinet, the latter falls if it does not obtain a vote of confidence from the former. If the new Cabinet upholds the policy of the previous one, the dispute will be submitted to the Senate. If the latter upholds the opinion of the Chamber of Deputies, the cabinet must comply, otherwise the King has the right to dissolve the chamber provided elections to the new chamber take place within three months. Should the new Chamber of Deputies persist in upholding the opinion of the former one, this opinion will prevail.

Art. 95 - The term of the new Chamber, elected in accordance with article 94 is four full years, from which is excluded the session it holds after its election in order to complete the annual session during which the preceeding chamber was dissolved.

Art. 96 - Any deputy may request the formation of a commission of deputies to inquire about an important act which took place in a ministry, administration or province. If the proposal is approved by the majority, the commission will be formed and it will present the findings of its inquiry. The commission is not permitted to become involved in executive affairs except for those which it has appointed to examine.

#### CHAPTER SIX

##### THE SUPREME COURT

Art. 97 - The Supreme Court will be formed by decree of the King whenever events so require. It will consist of sixteen members, half of them from the senate and half from among the judges of the Court of Cassation or the Apellate Courts. The members of the supreme court will be drawn by lot from their respective bodies.

Art. 98 - The Supreme Court will be divided into two sections: a chamber of arraignment composed of seven members, of whom four are senators and three judges of the Cassation or Apellate Courts. The second section will be a tribunal composed of the remaining nine members.

Art. 99 - The act of arraignment must be approved by at least six members of the Chamber of Arraignment and the warrant of arrest by at least six members of the Tribunal.

Art. 100 - The warrant of arrest pronounced by the supreme court is irrevocable. Its provisions will be enforced in accordance with laws in force.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### FINANCES

Art. 101 - Every year, at the beginning of the parliamentary session, the government must submit to the Chamber of Deputies the budget for the subsequent year.

Art. 102 - The general budget will be the subject of a law where the approximate annual receipts and expenditures will be listed in articles grouped in chapters, and other articles relevant to their expenditure. The Chamber will examine one by one the articles and the chapters and will approve the budget chapter by chapter.

Art. 103 - The government cannot exceed the limits fixed by the annual budget, unless special circumstances occur during the parliamentary recess, that require expenditures unforeseen by the budget. The government can then provide for and allocate the expenditure by virtue of a decision to be approved by the King which must then be submitted to the Chamber at its earliest session.

Art. 104 - Each annual budget has the force of law only for the current fiscal year. If the Chamber is dissolved before the budget is voted, the Government, then, until the meeting of the new chamber, will conform to the terms of the budget of the previous year in accordance with a decision to be approved by the King.



Art. 105 - The government must submit to the Chamber of Deputies an exact account of each fiscal year. This account will show revenues actually collected and expenditures effected. It will be arranged in conformity with the articles and chapters of the budget.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT

##### THE AUDITING DEPARTMENT

Art. 106 - The Auditing Department will consist of a President and four members selected by the government, whose nomination must be approved by the Chamber of Deputies and confirmed by the King. The members of the Auditing Department are appointed for life tenure and cannot be transferred or be dismissed without the concurrence of two thirds of the deputies present at the meeting of parliament and the approval of the King. If, during the exercise of their duties, they commit an infraction that requires impeachment, they will be tried by the Supreme Court upon the approval of two thirds of the deputies present at the meeting of the Chamber.

Art. 107 - The Auditing Department examines the annual general accounts of the Government and the books of the treasurers. It controls the execution of the central budget and presents every year to the Chamber of Deputies when it opens, a general report embodying the results of the examination and audit it made during that year. Every three months it presents to the central government a report on financial conditions sending a copy to the Chamber of Deputies.

Art. 108 - The organisation of the offices of this department, the qualifications required of its members, their attributes and all regulations pertaining to them will be the subject of a special law.

CHAPTER NINE

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

- Art. 109 - The conditions required to be a government employee are Syrian nationality, competence and merit.
- Art. 110 - General laws will be promulgated to specify the attributes of government employees, their grading, method of appointment and promotion and the limits of their responsibilities.
- Art. 111 - In the exercise of his duties, every government employee is responsible for his acts in accordance with the laws and regulations in force.
- Art. 112 - The appointment of a government employee cannot be revoked, nor can he be replaced except in the cases provided by the laws and regulations.
- Art. 113 - Every government employee must obey the orders of his superior as long as these are not contrary to laws or regulations.

CHAPTER TEN

LAW COURTS

Art. 114 - Courts of law are independent and protected against all pressure.

- Art. 115 - The establishment of law courts, their grading, their duties and jurisdictions will be stipulated in a special law applicable to all the provinces.
- Art. 116 - The selection of judges, their appointment, required qualifications, grades, promotions and penalties to which they are subject will be stipulated in a special law applicable to all the provinces.
- Art. 117 - A judge cannot be dismissed or punished except after trial.
- Art. 118 - Court hearings are public except those which the law allows to be held in closed session.
- Art. 119 - Each person has the right to defend himself in court by all legal means.
- Art. 120 - Law suits between citizens and the official administrations is within the competence of the ordinary courts.
- Art. 121 - It is forbidden to form law courts other than those stipulated by the law, or to establish commissions with the purpose of issuing judgements except the arbitration commission stipulated by law.
- Art. 122 - The same person cannot be a judge and hold another official post.

#### CHAPTER ELEVEN

##### THE PROVINCES

- Art. 123 - The internal administration of the provinces will be based on the principle of decentralisation, except for those general affairs that are within the competence of the central government which are clearly stated in the articles of the present constitution.

- Art. 124 - Every province will have a Chamber of Deputies that will examine the budget of the province, promulgate local laws and regulations in conformity with its needs, and control the acts of its government. This Chamber cannot promulgate any law that is contrary to the terms of this constitution and to the general laws that only this congress has the right to initiate.
- Art. 125 - The delimitation of the provinces will be effected on the following basis: none of them must cover an area less than 25,000 square kilometers or have less than 15,000 inhabitants. Natural boundaries and economic interests will be taken into consideration.
- Art. 126 - Elections to the Chamber of Deputies of a province will be in a single stage. The qualifications required of deputies and of voters at the primary stage by articles 79 and 80 of this Constitution are equally required for the elections of deputies to the provincial chambers, except for the provision concerning age of a deputy in these latter chambers which is fixed at a minimum of 25 years.
- Art. 127 - The term of a deputy at the provincial chamber is for two years. This term will last until the completion of new elections. Outgoing deputies are eligible for re-election.
- Art. 128 - Deputies in the provincial chambers are elected on the basis of one deputy for every 20,000 inhabitants. Below this standard figure, the lowest fraction considered is 10,000.
- Art. 129 - The number of deputies for a minority in the provincial Chambers of Deputies will be fixed in proportion to the total number of inhabitants of each minority at one deputy per 15,000 inhabitants.

Below this standard figure, the lowest fraction considered is 7,500.

- Art. 130 - The provinces will promulgate laws concerning the elections to their Chambers of Deputies.
- Art. 131 - Elections to the provincial Chambers of Deputies will be held once every two years on 1 July. These chambers will convene on 1 September of each year. Their sessions will be two months in length and can be prolonged upon the request of the governor or of seven deputies if approved by two thirds of the deputies present at the meeting.
- Art. 132 - The laws voted by the provincial chambers of deputies will be submitted through the Governors General to the King who will approve them and permit their execution. They will be approved and returned to the provinces within one month.
- Art. 133 - If the proposed laws submitted by the provinces are returned without being approved by the King for being contrary to this Constitution or to the general laws, the provincial Chamber of Deputies will examine them again. If the latter persists in submitting contents of its proposals, and if these, for the second time, do not obtain the approval of the King, the senate will have the final decision. The proposals sent for the second time must be approved or sent to the Senate within two weeks. The budget must be approved or sent back the first time within two weeks. If it is returned a second time to the King, it must be approved or sent to the Senate within one week.
- Art. 134 - The provincial Chamber of Deputies will promulgate its internal rules and elect its President, two vice-presidents, secretaries and council of administration every two years.

- Art. 135 - A Province is administered by a Governor General appointed by the King. He must possess the attributes required of a senator and must be a Syrian.
- Art. 136 - The Governor General appoints the principal chiefs of the services of the province except those pertaining to the Central Government, and confirms the nomination of civil servants in accordance with special regulations promulgated for that purpose. He has also the right to control the services which are the responsibility of the Central Government within his province.
- Art. 137 - The Governor General is entrusted with the administration of the province, the execution of the budget and the enforcement of the laws.
- Art. 138 - The Governor General presents every year to the Chamber of Deputies of the province a general report on the accomplishments of the government of the province during the preceding year and those to be undertaken during the coming one. He presents a copy of this report to the Central Government.
- Art. 139 - In case of a conflict between the Governor General and the Chamber of Deputies of the province, the Senate decides the issue. Should it deem the matter proper, the Senate can request the dismissal of the Governor General.
- Art. 140 - If, during the exercise of his duties, the Governor General commits an offense that leads to his trial, he will be tried by the Supreme Court.
- Art. 141 - The Governor General and the deputies of the province have the right to propose draft laws to the Chamber of Deputies of the province.

- Art. 142 - Should seven deputies of the province request the formation of a commission to inquire about an important act that occurred in any department of the government or in any part of the province, and should this request be accepted by the majority, the commission will be formed and will begin its investigation. It will submit the conclusions of its inquiry to the Chamber, without undertaking executory measures.
- Art. 143 - If a member of the Chamber of Deputies of a province is accused of treason towards the nation and two thirds of his colleagues decide he must be tried, he will be referred to trial before the Supreme Court.
- Art. 144 - The provinces have the right to organise law courts of all types.
- Art. 145 - A province will be divided, administratively, into "Mutasarifiahs" and "Mudiriahs". The Chamber of Deputies of the province will establish a special regulation for each, their attributes and all matters that pertain to the organisation of villages, and the appointment of mayors and their duties.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### GENERAL PROVISIONS

- Art. 146 - The Parliament will promulgate a law about the manner of administering the tribes and the solution of disputes that occur among them.
- Art. 147 - Each province will promulgate a law for the organisation of its municipalities on an electoral basis and the determination of the attributes of these assemblies.

Art. 118 - Standing laws remain in force until amended or abrogated.



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