

## THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN ARABIA

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IT IS proposed in this article to "sketch the modern political situation," as the editor suggests, "throughout the whole of Arabia." Considering the scope of the subject, however, and the variety of its many angles, even a sketch may overrun the contemplated space. For the whole of Arabia embraces the country that lies between the Taurus mountains, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the hills of Iran—from Aleppo, roughly speaking, to Aden and from Baghdad to Jerusalem—with a dozen principal states that are independent of each other and as many rules, primitive and modern and nondescript, ranging between the tribal and the mandatory.

Geographically, there are no distinctive frontiers between the north and the south of the country or between the east and the west; but politically the divisions are factual, and educationally they are conspicuous. The people of the north, of Iraq and Syria and Palestine, are more educated and, in a modern sense, more progressive than the people of the south of the peninsula proper; but they are also more dependent, economically as well as politically. In the north there are schools and mandates and political discontent; in the south there are no schools of a modern character, no mandates, and, outside a few of the states along the coasts and around Aden, no discontent arising from the intervention or the rule of a foreign power. In the north, one of the four mandatory States, Iraq, has achieved complete sovereignty, but is not yet so free from foreign intervention as the Yaman under the Imam Yahya or the dual Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd. In other words, there is more political independence and less education in the south than there is in the north; and there is in the north a state of things, political, social and religious, which is not known in the south and which is chiefly the outcome of a mandatory system of government.

Moreover, the north is a field of intellectual and political forces, which are dynamic and portentous, still clashing at certain surface points, but with a tendency nevertheless, even under a system of foreign supervision and division, to converge, to fuse and consoli-

date; while in the south there are material and moral forces, that is to say the tribes and that religious sway that finds its highest expression in a tribal solidarity, the greater part of which is today under the dictatorship of King Ibn Sa'oud. What chance these two national political currents have of meeting and flowing together in the future, is a question that concerns, not only Arabia, not only the Arabic-speaking world, even the world of Islam since Arabia is overwhelmingly Islamic, but also the leading powers of Europe. Here in fact is the most important feature, the very core of the subject; and after a brief outline of the present political situation in the various states, it will receive the attention it deserves.

## I

Beginning in the north, in the mandated countries, it is well to recall that the purpose of the Allies at the Conference of Versailles was to dispose in a nineteenth-century manner, of the territory that was wrested from the Turks—to the victor belong the spoils. But the democratic idealism of President Wilson, howsoever received by the veterans of a cankered diplomacy, overcame the colonization passion of the leading European powers and finally achieved a triumph in the newly conceived system of the mandate. Here was the salvation of a people who were not really conquered, who, on the contrary, had helped the conquerors in the hope of achieving their emancipation. This was of course guaranteed; for, besides the pledges made to King Husein<sup>1</sup> and the proclamations to the people of Iraq<sup>2</sup> and the people of Syria and Palestine,<sup>3</sup> Article XXII of the Treaty of Versailles is in itself the most conclusive. Here is a charter of rights to the people of the conquered territory. But the skeptics shook their heads. As an article in a covenant it is unparalleled, but as a working principle it is destined to failure. The skeptics were right. There is a gulf, indeed, between the mandate in theory and the mandate in practice.<sup>4</sup>

For this very reason, however, it is bound to succeed in its initial purpose. Curious as it may seem, the ideal of Woodrow Wilson, which has captured the heart of every people aspiring to emancipation, is proving to be as potent negatively as it was con-

<sup>1</sup>*Around the Coasts of Arabia*, chap. XII, p. 111-12.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Maude's Proclamation to the people of Iraq, March 8, 1917.

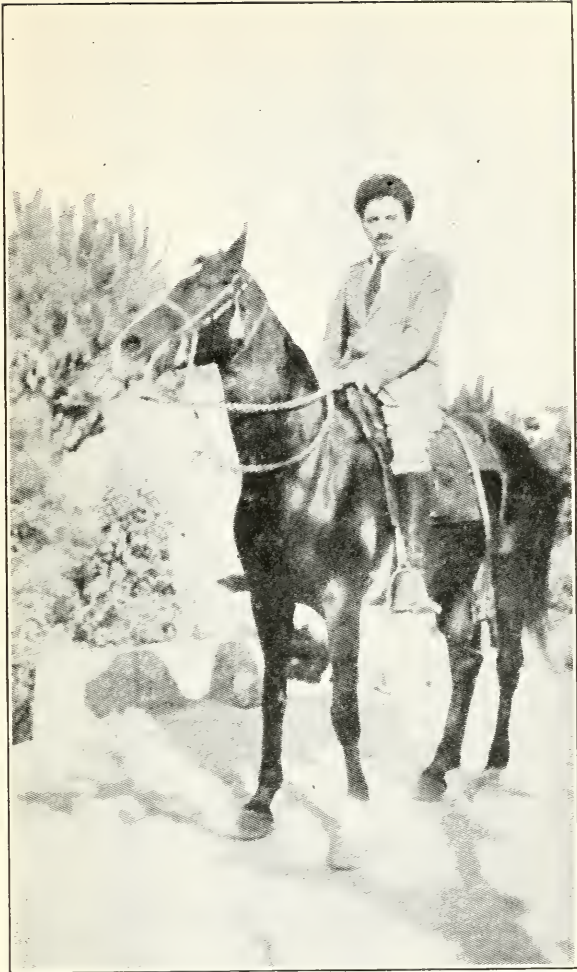
<sup>3</sup>The joint Declaration of Great Britain and France, November, 1918.

<sup>4</sup>The mandate is divided into three classes, A, B, and C. The reference in this article is to the Class A Mandate.

ceived to be in a positive manner. Whether its great author ever saw it in this light, whether his vision encompassed the happy default, which was to be tantamount to the happier achievement, is doubtful. But there it is standing on its head and accomplishing the miracle. The Powers are committed to the mandate; the mandate can not be put into practice as "a sacred trust of civilization"; the yoke of colonization can not be substituted for it; ergo, the mandate must be abandoned and the mandated people, having gone so far in the pursuit of their freedom and learned something of its modern ideology and practice, must be allowed to continue under another instrument, a treaty, which is consistent with this development.

That is what has happened in Iraq. For the League of Nations and the Mandatory Power have realized that, aside from the costliness of the undertaking, it is futile to continue in the effort to harmonize—let us concede that such was the case—between the theory and the practice of the mandate. It may not be so utterly devoid of good to all the parties concerned that it took ten years to arrive at this decision. But the people of Iraq have been consistent from the beginning. They never accepted the mandate, and they continued to struggle against it. I was in Baghdad when the first treaty between the British Government and the Government of Iraq was signed (October 10, 1922); and in spite of the fact that the mandate was not mentioned in it and that King Faisal in a proclamation assured the people that it guaranteed to them national sovereignty and the entrance of Iraq into the League of Nations four years after the settlement of the boundary dispute with Turkey, it was accepted under protest.

But the Constituent Assembly, convening in Baghdad a year later, refused to ratify it without certain amendments;—the hand was that of the Treaty, but the voice was that of the Mandate. The debates, the first of their kind in the City of the Khalifs, were fiery and coruscating. Even a Labor Cabinet, Mr. MacDonald's first, lost its temper, and with a dramatic gesture threatened to refer the treaty to the League of Nations, if it was not accepted *in toto*. The Assembly adjourned without taking notice. But the boundary dispute between Turkey and Iraq offered an opportunity for another threat—the loss of Mosul—and the Assembly was re-convoked. Out of a



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hundred and ten members only sixty-nine attended. Nevertheless, the treaty was put to the vote and passed by a very small majority.

But the opposition continued and the agitation for a revision came to a head four years later, when negotiations were started for another treaty more liberal in terms and more conclusive. King Faisal and his Prime Minister went to London for this purpose, and after several interruptions and resumptions of the negotiations, the treaty was signed (December 14, 1927) and the entrance of Iraq into the League of Nations was postponed another four years. For this and other reasons it was not ratified by the Legislative Assembly; it precipitated the fall of two Cabinets; it was a contributory cause of the suicide of the Prime Minister Sa'doun Pasha; and it remained the subject of Government negotiations and parliamentary debates in London and Baghdad until the question of ending the mandate was officially placed before the League of Nations.

Even the final treaty, which actually takes the place of the mandate, invests Iraq with full sovereignty and makes its membership in the League a certainty this year, has been opposed by the two Parties of extreme nationalism; for the British still retain a foothold in Iraq for the protection of their interests, principally the oil of Mosul and the air base, already established near Baghdad, in the line of imperial communications.

What is significant in this whole business of adjusting the rights of a great and a minor power, however, is that the ten years of a mandate tempered by treaties, have been a schooling in diplomacy, as well as in economy and common sense for both parties. The Iraqis will appreciate the security of their frontiers in the north and in the south, while continuing to cultivate the friendship of the Turks and the Wahhabis, and will not look with disdain upon the revenues of the oil fields; while the British, renouncing the diplomacy of creating dangers in frontier disputes to acquire advantages in treaties—a diplomacy that has lost its mask if not also its cunning—can not but feel satisfaction in the security of a pipe line between Mosul and Haifa and an air base in Hunaidi, which the Iraq Government must also safeguard and protect. Other lessons have been learned. The British will no longer, I think, make any material sacrifices for the mere maintenance of their prestige in an Oriental country; and the Iraqis will no longer indulge in the general de-

nunciation, at the expense of cutting their own throats, of everything British or European.

Let it not be supposed, however, that this present stage in the political development of Iraq, is due entirely to the opposition of the extreme nationalists; for, without attempting to discount their own contribution, it must also be stated that were they, through their committees, in direct charge of the negotiations with the British Government, the success would not have been achieved in such a measure and within such a short period of time. There is then another factor, which in a sense is more important. Indeed, the head of a state, especially in the Orient, can still direct or overcome certain tendencies of good or evil; and when the state is still in the making, like Iraq, the dangers and the prospects are intensified. He who is at the helm can either make or mar, can become a savior or a destroyer.

Now, King Faisal's reign did not have an auspicious beginning. The country was against him—its sufferance for the crown given under various means of pressure merits little or no consideration—and his only real friends were the British. He came to Iraq, and he stepped up to the throne of Iraq under great disadvantages; and while he knew the course he had to take, he saw the difficulties he had to surmount before he could get to the head of the road. He could not wear a crown that was to be forever dependent upon a foreign power; and he could not be so ungrateful as to ask his people, even if he could have led them at that time, to free the crown from its shackling favor. His problem was singular; but he saw it clearly and he faced it with dignity, sincerity, and courage.

How to retain the friendship of the British while striving to attain the confidence of the people of Iraq, that was King Faisal's problem when he came to the throne. Deftly and resolutely, with pliancy and *savoir-faire*, alternately open-minded and open-hearted—if not always convincing, he is always prepossessing—he set himself to the task of solving this problem; and that it took him but ten years to do so, considering the seriousness of its implications, national and international, is indeed praiseworthy. While the opposition was forging weapons against the mandate, he went his way, through treaty after treaty, to the point which he and the opposition held in common. Had he surrendered entirely to it, he would certainly have lost the opportunity to serve its purpose. By the same

token, had he been more mindful of British favor, he would not have had the ghost of a chance to bring about the adjustment that is as favorable to British interests as it is to the national aspirations of his people. As it is, neither the Arabs of Iraq nor the British can justly withhold from him their gratitude and their confidence and support. For the young Kingdom is now free to solve its own problems in the light of its own particular needs; and it is hoped that, with an enlightened parliament, a wise and far-seeing monarch, and a sound system of popular education, it will prove itself quite equal to the task.

## II

A similar state of political and national evolution we do not find today, unfortunately, in the other mandated countries, in Syria and Palestine and Trans-Jordan. For although the people of Syria and Palestine, at least, are not inferior to the people of Iraq in education and culture, in social and political development, in national leadership, they are nevertheless still subject to a mandatory power, which is floundering, to say the least, with the very instrument of its authority and realizing, without admitting, the hopelessness of the venture.

In Syria the situation does not justify much optimism. What the French have done in twelve years in dividing and constitutionalizing the divisions of the country, it will take twenty-five years, under a favorable settled condition, to undo. Whatever were the faults of the British in Iraq, for instance, they did not cut it up into different independent states, when they could have done so. Indeed, they could have created a Christian state in Mosul as the French did in Mt. Lebanon; they could have separated Basrah and invested it with a sham independence as the French did with the country north of Lebanon, that strip of coast between Tripoli and Alexandretta, which was called the Alawite State; and they could have allowed the Kurds to secede and be as free to have any government they liked, or no government at all, as the Druse in the south of Syria.

Whatever good the French have done in their mandated territory, conceding that such good would not have been possible without them, as the building of roads, for instance, and the settlement of frontier questions, can not efface the evil of dividing the country and deepening wherever it was possible the breach between its

people in the name of religion and sectarianism. Even in the Lebanon Republic sectarianism is the constitutional basis of representation in the Legislative Assembly; and this Republic, whose Constitution is Paris-made, is body and soul, even as its ardent apologists will tell you, under the thumb of the High Commissioner. If there was a wish to make it non-sectarian, progressive, and to give it a freer native hand, neither the Legislative Assembly nor the Government nor the people, I am sure, would protest. But there it is a Jesuitical creation, a twentieth-century engine with an eighteenth-century boiler; and when the explosion takes place, it will not be the fault of the French—Oh, no! It will be attributed to native incompetency, and the League of Nations will be told that the Lebanese are not yet fit for self-government.

And what have the French done in Syria during the past ten years, or since the mandate was issued? They have set up and changed three provisional governments in the effort to discharge the first duty<sup>5</sup> imposed upon them by the League. But the mandate has been in force since the summer of 1922, and Syria is still without an organic law, without a constitutional government. To be in default seven years and be still struggling with the problem of their first obligation, is not a record that can be conscientiously recommended. If a minor power, holding this mandate, had shown no better record in ten years, the League, it is not unreasonable to suppose, would have relieved it of its responsibility.

It must be said that France has contributed substantially to her own difficulties in Syria by antagonizing the forces of nationalism and allying herself with the forces of reaction. Not one of the three provisional governments referred to commanded the confidence of the country, or was sufficiently popular to be able to act as an intermediary between the French and their antagonists. On the contrary, the head of every provisional government—such is the innate defect of the heritage of bureaucratic fidelity—was more royal than the king, which was most unfortunate both to the nationalists and the French. For if Syria, like Iraq, had a responsible head, responsible primarily to the country and not unconscious of his other responsibility, the negotiations for a treaty to take the

<sup>5</sup>The First Article of the Mandate says that "the Mandatory Power shall frame, within a period of three years from the coming into force of this mandate, an organic law for Syria and Mt. Lebanon."



place of the mandate would have been equally successful.

But France is still hopeful and undaunted. The present High Commissioner, the patient and silent Ponsot, who has been struggling for the past five years with the First Article of the Mandate, may yet, by a happy chance, succeed. A national government in Damascus and a Franco-Syrian treaty may soon become a reality more through the pressure of circumstance,—the development, for instance, in Iraq—than any inspiration of his own or of the Quay d'Orsay.

His record up to the present time consists chiefly of several deadlocks followed by trips to Paris. In the spring of 1928 the Syrian Constituent Assembly drafted a constitution, six clauses of which, he declared, were unacceptable;<sup>6</sup> and in the repeated conferences between him and the leaders of the Assembly, he could not persuade them to accept his views. To Paris then for consultation. But he returned as he went: the Quay d'Orsay was inexorable. The nationalists at that juncture offered a compromise, which seemed most reasonable. They were willing to modify the clause about a united Syria and to strike out of the constitution the other five clauses on condition that they be embodied in the treaty that was to be concluded with France. But the treaty-idea was not relished at that time by the French Government, who insisted on the elimination of the six clauses, because, it was argued they made its position as a mandatory untenable. The mandate, the nationalists replied, is a temporary agreement, while the constitution is a permanent document and should contain, or exact as a pledge, the necessary provisions for safeguarding the rights of Syria as an independent state. But the mandate is in force, the French rebutted, and it should have priority over a document that is still under negotiations: the mandate must be unconditionally recognized. The nationalist said, no; and the Constituent Assembly was prorogued *sine die*.

During the year that followed the country was on the verge of another political disturbance. Damascus closed its shops in protest with the nationalists against the action of the High Commis-

<sup>6</sup>The six clauses referred to (1) the unity of Syria, or all the lands within the natural pre-war boundary of the country, (2) the organization of a national army, (3) the appointment of diplomatic representatives abroad, (4) the granting of pardons and general amnesty, (5) the declaration of martial law, and (6) the right of negotiating treaties with foreign powers.

sioner, resolutions were adopted to stand fast against the mandate, threats were made to lay the draft constitution before the League of Nations, and the newspapers began to preach a campaign of civil disobedience. Very soon after that, in April, Monsieur Ponsot returned from Paris to announce the birth of the Syrian Republic. His coming this time was hailed with expectation.

But he had in his portfolio, alas, four Paris-made constitutions instead of one; and when they were officially published (May 22, 1930), there was joy in Geneva and Paris and there were lamentations in Damascus and Aleppo. Even America was hasty in hailing a sister republic; the *New York Times*, itself, offering an orison and confusing Lebanon with Syria, rejoiced to see "the goodly cedar" put forth boughs again and the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled.

But the "goodly cedar" was not included in the Syrian Republic; nor were the other States—the Alawite, the Druse Mountain, and the autonomous city of Alexandretta—each of which had a constitution of its own! The unity of Syria was reduced to the Four Cities and the Desert.<sup>7</sup> But the nationalists did not capitulate, and it did not take Monsieur Ponsot long to realize that he had to make another trip to Paris. It was a long trip this time, for it entailed a visit to Geneva. Meanwhile there were whispers, which certainly reached the Quay d'Orsay, that the nationalists were weakening and that the talk, started in Paris, of making King Faisal King of both Syria and Iraq, brought confusion to their councils and created a split in their ranks.

That is why perhaps Monsieur Ponsot returned this time with more heart than ever. His proclamation the day after his arrival (November, 1931) was the sensation of his career. The most unpopular of provisional governments, Tajedin Hasani's, was abolished—there was rejoicing for a spell in the Four Cities for that—a day was set for the election of a national assembly, and an administrative council, made up of Francophile timber including the heads of all the defunct provisional governments and only one nationalist, the President of the Group Hashem Bey Attasi, was appointed by the High Commissioner to take charge of affairs under

<sup>7</sup>Damascus, Hims, Hama, and Aleppo are the four leading cities of Syria. The Arabs of the deserts, principally the Ruwallas and the 'Aneizas are now taking an active interest in politics: the Ruwallas under Nuri Sha'lan are pro-French, while the 'Anezas and their allies, under the leadership of Ibn Muhaid, are nationalists.

his direct supervision during the said election. In reality it was a government *ad interim* by the mandatory and its henchmen, who assured the country that the elections would be free of all official and non-official interference, of coercion, intimidation, and every other unlawful means of persuasion.

But the 5th of January, 1932, was not a feather in the cap of Monsieur Ponsot. It was a day of riots at the polls and later in the streets, the police, the city watchmen, and the French troops participating. Tanks and machine guns were also used to disperse the crowds and reestablish order. In the two principal cities, Damascus and Aleppo, the casualties were twelve dead and about thirty wounded. The elections were discontinued. Outside the big cities, however, they were, with one or two exceptions, peaceful and they resulted in the defeat of most of the nationalist candidates. In Aleppo, too, when they were repeated the following month, after the authorities had sentenced to forced absence one of the nationalist leaders and imprisoned three others, the nationalists were defeated by their opponents. But in Damascus, Hama, and a few other places the elections were postponed indefinitely.

These, very briefly, are the facts. But who is responsible for the riots and the resulting bloodshed? That the French authorities were in full control on that day, is beyond question. That the electoral law was published the previous week by all the newspapers, and that the secondary electors knew what were their rights and their duties, is also true. According to a clause in the electoral law, the official at the poll has to open the ballot box for the secondary electors, show them that it is empty, and then seal it in their presence before they place in it their ballots. In connection with this rule, the truth of the incident in Damascus that precipitated the first riot, seems to be well established. One of the electors, a nationalist, asked that the ballot box be opened and shown and then sealed, according to the law, before the vote is taken. This was refused—"these are the boxes and these are our orders," said the official—and the man was roughly handled and forced out of the place by the police.

According to the nationalists, this is one of the many like incidents that took place in Damascus, in Aleppo, and in other cities—even at one of the polls of the Arabs of the desert. They accuse the Government and its henchmen of packing the ballot boxes with

the names of their own candidates and sending them sealed—loaded dice!—to the polls. On the other hand, the Government accuses the nationalists of having deliberately precipitated the riots, because they were not certain of winning the election as they did in the spring of 1928. At the present writing, Monsieur Ponsot, still silent and patient, stands in midstream between a blood-bespattered election that is only half finished and a country that is still in the parturient pains of the birth of a republic. May the divinity of circumstance, working through Baghdad or Paris or Geneva, be of favor—and the sooner the better.<sup>8</sup>

### III

There may be something, too, up the sleeve of the said Divinity to favor Palestine. For the situation there, after the late Labor Government had given it a good airing and then made a mess of the various means of an attempted solution, is not much better than it was prior to August, 1929. The chance of a rapprochement between the Arabs and the Zionists was destroyed by Mr. Mac Donald in his letter to Dr. Weizmann explaining—in reality disclaiming—the Passfield White Paper. Since then the Zionists have been recuperating; and the upheaval of their last general conference at Basel is as significant as its reaffirmations. It may mean, in the world of Jewry, a more solid front; but it also reflects the danger of the situation in Palestine. For Zionism there is going through a crisis, economic and agricultural, which is unprecedented in the last ten years of its history, and the factional forces, within the general frame, are becoming more agitated and more centrifugal. The attempt to reënforce the frame from without, may partly succeed: morally and politically it is possible; but financially—another \$5,000,000,000. for temporary relief from America, for instance,—there is little or no hope. The Arabs, however, are no longer laboring under any illusion. Their press may be cocksure of the bankruptcy of Zionism in Palestine, but their leaders are taking nothing for granted.

<sup>8</sup>In electing the representatives there was a compromise between the Mandatory Government and the nationalists, and the president—the first president of the Syrian Republic, Mohammed Bey Ali al-'Abed—was also a compromise candidate. He is one of the richest men in Syria and was once Turkish Ambassador in Washington.

The Grand Mufti, Hajj Amin ul-Husaini, looms bigger and stronger today, in spite of the opposition of the moderates under the leadership of the Mayor of Jerusalem, Ragheb Bey Nashashiby. But just as every Zionist of whatever shade is for a national home in Palestine, so every Arab, whether moderate or extremist, is anti-Zionist. Local politics, personal ambition and family rivalries have much to do with the dissension. Aside from these, who of the two leaders is better at the helm depends upon the circumstances surrounding the issue. After the Passfield White Paper, the leadership of Ragheb Bey would have been more practical and beneficial; for he could speak the language and command the forces of peace which the Zionists would understand and respect. But after the letter of Premier Mac Donald to Dr. Weizmann, or when the issue calls for fighting strength and maneuvering skill, Hajj Amin is the man.

But London, where both of these leaders are known, has a different opinion; and I deem it my duty, as an Oriental who holds out modestly a rushlight of understanding, to correct it. In political circles there I heard it said that the Grand Mufti and the other Arab leaders, excepting Ragheb Bey Nashashiby, are what they call "duds." The Mufti himself is like a village preacher who still attacks from his pulpit the Darwinian theory. But Ragheb Bey is modern and progressive. This is partly true. Ragheb Bey is cosmopolitan, and he cuts more ice in London than a turbaned Hajji or a shaikh of Al-Azhar. But he can also be more misleading. He can be a Darwinian in London, if that will help London to better appreciate his political point of view; and he can be in Jerusalem even a revisionist when there is hope in it for an understanding with the Jews: but in neither instance does he yield aught of the integrity of his faith. This inconsistency on the surface is misleading; as a bit of color in his cosmopolitanism it is attractive but not convincing. And in the East, where a certain indelibility, though it conceal a sore spot, is still considered a virtue in leadership, it is even compromising.

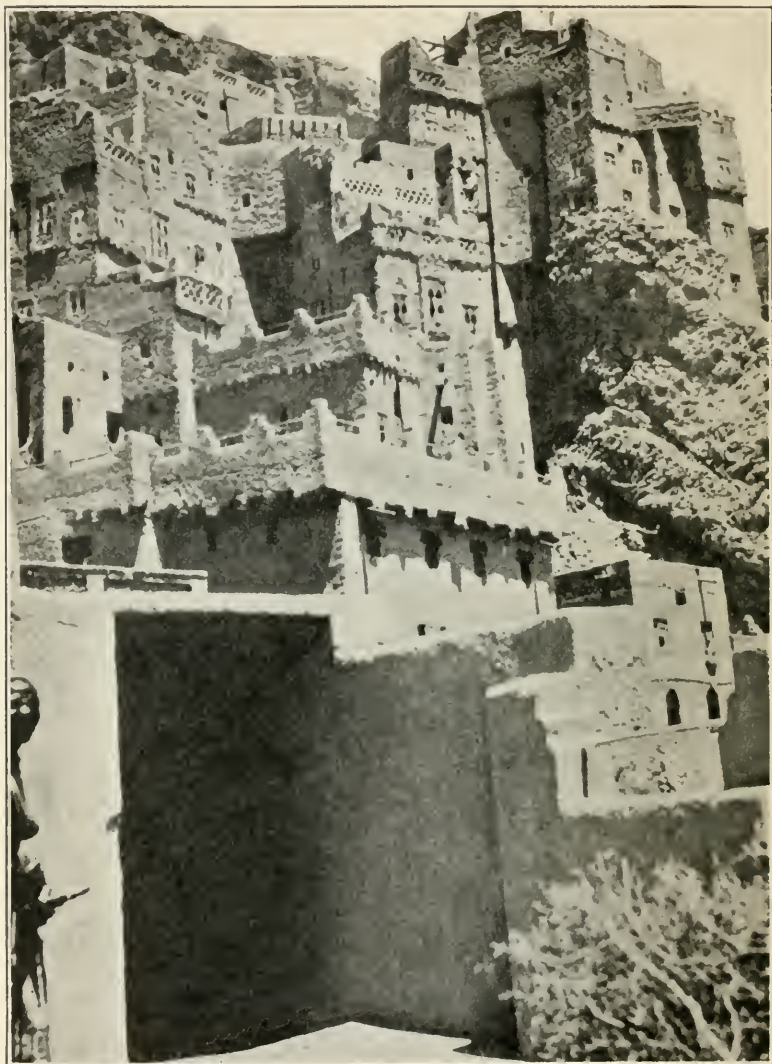
Be it moreover remembered that the East is emotional and that religion is still its strongest emotion. Given two equally strong men, therefore, especially in certain parts of the Muslem world, the one that wears a turban has more pull—invisible like the moon's—than the one in a hat or a fez. I hold no brief for the turbaned gentry; I know what they are on the whole: a bad man in a turban can

bring misery and destruction to a whole community, to a nation. But a strong and honest man in a *jubbah* and turban—London may find him a bit gauche, a bit stiff, pompous perhaps and otherwise inexpressive, intellectually at an ebb, socially impossible, even outlandish. He, too, to London is misleading on the surface, and a little under the surface. But instead of two truths, he has a single mind with a dozen lights—native torches, as it were,—for its supreme purpose. These lights did not shine in London, and the Grand Mufti was classed among “duds.”

But he has pulling power, this man; and that in politics, high or low, is not to be contemned. His recent outstanding achievement is the General Muslem Conference held in Jerusalem last December. It was feared, it was opposed: certain European powers tried to upset it; but he pulled it through. From every part of the Muslem world came representatives with grievances that were publicly expressed and others that were privately discussed and recorded. The programme of the Conference encompassed all the vital needs, religious and cultural, educational and industrial, social and political, of the Muslems of the world. From a university to be established in Jerusalem to the question of the Hejaz Railway, is a scope; the defense of the holy places, a bureau of propaganda and a national fund, are other subjects; but over and underlying all is the question of combatting and overcoming Zionism in Palestine. Here are the Arabs' front-line trenches, and Hajj Amin-ul-Husaini is the chief recruiting and commandeering officer. There should be a base of supplies, he made it understood, in every Muslem country. But Ibn Sa'oud, before him, once tried the Muslem world;<sup>9</sup> and it remains to be seen whether Hajj Amin will be more successful. The Jerusalem Conference, morally and to a certain extent politically, was a success; and even within its realities it is bound to add to the difficulties of both the British and the Zionists in Palestine. Outside pressure is seldom ineffective.

But the Arabs of Palestine are not depending wholly upon outside pressure. At the General Palestine Conference held in Nablus last September resolutions were passed (1) to adopt the Ghandi policy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience; (2) to promote native industry by boycotting Jewish and European goods; (3) to

<sup>9</sup>A General Muslem Conference was held in Mecca in the summer of 1926, under the auspices of King Ibn Sa'oud.



*Courtesy of the National Geographic Magazine*

SKYSCRAPERS IN A LITTLE TOWN IN SOUTHWESTERN ARABIA

oppose any move for an understanding with the Jews of Palestine so long as Zionism continues to menace the national rights and aspirations of the Arabs; (4) to continue the campaign for general and permanent contributions to the national fund; (5) to stop selling land to the Jews, and (6) to organize local committees throughout the country for the effective enforcement of these resolutions.

But the question of a national fund, at both Conferences, was paramount; and the representatives at the Jerusalem Conference pledged themselves to organize branch committees in their respective countries to carry on the campaign for general permanent contributions. This fund is to be used, not only for the purpose of propaganda, but also to help the Arab farmer, by loan or purchase, and thus prevent him from selling in sheer need his land to the Jews.

As for the British, their position in Palestine is becoming more untenable than ever. Events are moving fast, and the press of circumstances is reaching to the core of the problem. Indeed, it is hard to see how the British Government, now that the mandate in Iraq is abolished, can consistently uphold, to say nothing of the hopeless task of enforcing, a mandate in Palestine. But already there are alarms and excursions that presage something dramatic. Diplomacy is moving slowly down stage to publish a secret long withheld. The British are evidently tired of the Arabs and the Jews, and their real interests in Palestine are centered in Haifa, or the end of the pipe line of the oil of Mosul and the terminus of a contemplated railroad across the desert. There may be, too, an air base in the line of imperial communications.

Now, if any one can adequately protect these interests and is willing to shoulder the troubles of Arab and Jew—and is acceptable in this capacity to his neighbors, to Egypt and Syria and Ibn Sa'oud and Mustapha Kemal, even if he is only partly acceptable—Great Britain may be willing to sign the deed and wash her hands of "the sacred trust of civilization." A king! The Holy Land for a king! And Abbas Helmi, the ex-Khedive of Egypt, has of late been going up and down the world, visiting Angora, Syria, Jerusalem, Geneva; and Lord Reading came on a pilgrimage to Palestine and there met by chance the ex-Khedive; and the High Commissioner for Palestine went to Cairo to see his Colleague there and incidentally pay his respects to King Fuad; and the Premier of Egypt Sidki Pasha went to Beirut, the seat of the French High Commissioner,



for no reason of health or over-work—all these innocent peregrinations within the months of January and February of 1932. That is why I say events are moving fast in Palestine, as well as in Iraq.

#### IV

Beyond Palestine and in the Peninsula there is less immobility than usual, but little or no speed. In Trans-Jordan as well as in the States along the coast of the Persian Gulf, i.e., Kuwait, Bahrain, Trucial Oman, and Mascat, the relations of the British Government with the native rulers is, as the address from the throne might truly say, peaceful and friendly. There is an awakening among the people, however, which is finding expression in a demand for more schools, but is not yet strong enough as an element of protest against the "peaceful and friendly" relations between the controlling power and the dependent, the practically nominal native sovereigns. This is particularly true of Trans-Jordan, Kuwait, and Bahrain, where the progress in popular education is somewhat compensating for the political backwardness of the state. Trans-Jordan itself, an artificial creation of the post-war politics of the Allies, might be the first to be affected by any eventful change in Palestine or any unexpected development in the politics of King Ibn Sa'oud.

Of the other States along the coasts of Arabia, Hadhramout is in the same category with Mascat, and the Protectorates around Aden are still the subject of dispute, of open hostility between the British and the independent ruler of the Yaman, the Imam Yahya. The dream of extending Yaman sovereignty to what is considered its natural boundary to the south and southeast, to Aden and Hadhramout, is still cherished by the Imam. But his recent activities have been more to the north and there was fear at one time of a clash with King Ibn Sa'oud. How the dispute was settled deserves to be broadcast throughout the world. To the powers of Europe, to the League of Nations, to all those who are working for universal peace, an Arab ruler has set an example unique in history. Let me tell briefly of this otherwise insignificant affair.

The Idrisi territory, Asir, along the coast of the Red Sea, between the Yaman and the Hejaz, has been shrinking for the past eight years in both directions. The Imam Yahya invaded and occupied a section of it up to Midi; the Wahhabis had long before oc-

cupied Abha and the mountains around it; and the Saiyed Hasan ul-Idrisi, who feared the further encroachment of the Imam, concluded with King Ibn Sa'oud a treaty (October, 1926), which placed under that king's protection what he still held of Asir. Since then the relations between the two independent rulers, Ibn Sa'oud and the Imam, have been on the whole friendly; but last year the Yaman soldiers occupied a mountain called 'Aru, which was claimed by the Asiris to be of Asir and by the Yamanis as Yaman territory. The Wahhabi soldiers, therefore, to protect the rights of the Idrisi, moved upon the soldiers of the Imam Yahya, and there was an encounter. The Imam protested to Ibn Sa'oud, and after an exchange of notes, they agreed to have a joint commission of Najdis and Yamanis meet in Asir, investigate the case, and decide to whom Mt. 'Aru belonged.

The commission met, investigated, and disagreed. Whereupon the Imam wrote to his representatives saying that he was willing to have Ibn Sa'oud himself decide the case and that he would accept his decision whatever it be. Ibn Sa'oud was overcome. "How can I," he said, "when my opponent appeals to me, decide in my own favor? No, the Imam Yahya can not be more generous than Ibn Sa'oud. Mt. 'Aru is of the territory of the Yaman, and we are all Arabs. It makes no difference if it changes hands." Civilized Europe and America, please note.

King Abd ul-Aziz ibn Sa'oud and the Imam Yahya ibn Hamid ud-Din, the rulers respectively of the United Kingdom of the Hejaz and Najd and of the Yaman, are the two most prominent personalities in the Peninsula today. They are both expansionists with a Pan-Arab dream; they are both religious leaders of their respective sects, the Wahhabis and the Zaidis, and they are both now adopting a policy of peaceful penetration. Even though independent in their sovereignty, however, they both still depend more or less upon the good-will of the British Government.

But there is a marked difference in their personal traits. The Imam is austere and unbending, taciturn and secretive; King Abd' ul-Aziz is breezy and engaging, outspoken and direct; the Imam is narrow and exclusive in his religious attitude, even towards non-Zaidi Muslims, King Abd'ul-Aziz can be tolerant and hospitable; the Imam is devious and hesitating in making and executing his plans, King Abd'ul-Aziz is slow in planning and quick in execu-

tion: but the Imam is strong in his mountain isolation, while Ibn Sa'oud's power in a realm that reaches from sea to sea, including vast desert spaces, has in it an inherent weakness.

There is another difference arising out of the reactionary and often selfish attitude of that somewhat privileged class in the realm of both; namely, the *saiyeds* of the Yaman and the *ulema* of Najd. The Imam in dealing with the *saiyeds* is not so independent and so sure, so alternately pliant and inexorable according to the need of the moment, and consequently not so successful as King Ibn Sa'oud is with his *ulema*. This may be one reason why the Pan-Arabism of the former is more religious than racial, while that of the latter is fast becoming more racial than religious.

These two rulers, who in their rivalry for power have come so close to each other in Asir, have realized, like all the other leaders in the Arab world, the deep truth of the lesson of the last ten years—salvation through solidarity. Indeed, only by a united front can they hold their own and be in friendly relations with their neighbors to the north, the Turks, and to the east, the Persians, as well as with the European powers, especially Great Britain and France and Italy, who still exercise an influence in their affairs. But only by organizing their forces and laying the foundations of peace among themselves through mutual good-will and understanding, can they show a united front.

The settlement of the Mt. 'Aru question is an example of how this is being done: the meeting of King Faisal and King Ibn Sa'oud in the winter of 1930 and the subsequent treaty of peace and friendship between Najd and Iraq, is another; and not less significant are the official visits in the summer of 1931 of an Iraq delegation to San'a and another headed by the Prime Minister Nouri Pasha Sa'id to Mecca for the purpose of discussing with the Imam Yahya and King Ibn Sa'oud the preliminaries of an Arab federation.

Aside from these official activities, the popular interest, which is gaining in extension and intensity day by day, is beginning to crystallize and to have a voice and a course of procedure. After the General Muslim Conference previously referred to, a group of Arabs, Muslims and Christians from Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Trans-Jordan, and the Peninsula, held a meeting in Jerusalem on the 13th of December, 1931, and the following pledge was taken under oath by every one present:

First —To uphold the integrity of Arabia as a nation and to recognize no divisions therein.

Second—To direct the efforts in every Arab State towards the one goal of complete independence and complete unity, and to oppose every movement and every idea that has the tendency of making paramount local and divisional politics.

Third —To oppose colonization to the utmost in every form, because it is inconsistent with the dignity and the supreme purpose of the Arab nation.

A resolution was also adopted to hold in the very near future a Pan-Arab convention.

Let it not be supposed, however, that the success of the movement depends entirely upon the Arabs themselves. For Great Britain and France, even when all the mandates are abolished, will still have, as I have shown, interests in the country; and the right to safeguard them, even though circumscribed by treaties, can be invoked even at the instance of the least fear and suspicion.

Frankly, the complete success of the Pan-Arab movement, whether it results in a single empire or in a federation of states or kingdoms, depends upon the honest intention and the good-will of Great Britain and France, as well as upon the national and progressive spirit of the Arabs themselves. Moreover, the economic and educational factors are just as essential as the political. It may be said, therefore, that complete success depends upon five principal points:

1. The control of the nomad tribes and the establishment of law and order among them through the urbanizing process instituted by King Ibn Sa'oud. In other words, to transform the nomad population into peasants and make them producing and law-abiding citizens.

2. The withdrawal from the various petty States of so-called British protection, the discontinuance of the corruptive and nefarious system of stipends, and the transfer of the agreements the British Government has with the different small rulers along the coast of the Persian Gulf to Ibn Sa'oud and around Aden to the Imam Yahya, who will pledge themselves to protect British interests on the two routes to India, that is to say across the desert and through the Gulf and Red Sea.

3. The granting by the sovereign rulers of economic conces-

sions to mixed corporations composed of foreigners and natives, the foreigners to furnish also the technical knowledge, where it is needed, for the development of the resources of the country, provided that such foreign capital and technical skill are free from imperialistic interests and political control.

4. The establishment of national schools with a uniform liberal programme of education in the Peninsula as well as in the northern territories.

5. The inclusion in the treaties with the northern States, i.e., Iraq and Syria and Palestine, of a clause sanctioning the unity of these States with each other and with the other States in the Peninsula, provided such unity does not affect any previous commitment regarding the interests of the other signatory powers.

The first and the fourth of these five points—the urbanizing of the Beduin population and the national schools—have already been started and are being continued with considerable success.

The second and the fifth—the change in British policy in the Peninsula and the unity-clause in the treaties—must come inevitably, logically, since Great Britain and France, abandoning the mandate, must rely upon the principle of reciprocity for safeguarding their interests and maintaining their prestige in the Near East.

The third point—the granting of concessions—depends upon the fulfilment of the second and the fifth. That is to say, if the interested Powers, Great Britain and France, coöperate with the Arabs for the sake of peace and progress, as well as for reciprocal advantages, instead of impeding and opposing their activities to pacify and unify their country, foreign capital and technical skill for the development of its natural resources will be gladly admitted.

The most important of these points—the control of the nomad population and the national schools—depends wholly upon the Arabs themselves. Neither the French in Syria, for instance, nor the British in Iraq could achieve, in their relations with the Arabs of the northern desert, a fraction of the success of Ibn Sa'oud in Central Arabia; neither of them could fully control the tribes, even when they had to bribe their chiefs; and neither Great Britain nor France was sympathetic, to say the least, to a uniform national system of public education. These must come from within, from the Arabs themselves, and they are now on the path of fulfilment.

The other points must logically, inevitably follow; but let us

hope that they will follow, not as a result of force, but as the natural development of a policy, national and international, that is consistent with the progressive and humanitarian spirit of civilization. After all, this Arab movement is but an expression in Arabic of what has been and is still an expression in English, in French, in German, in Hindustani—an expression of national progress and human development. Upon it depends the future of Arabia, and upon it in a large measure depends the peace of the world. It is in this sense a world-movement and it may be summed up in three words: pacification, unification, education.