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First Publication of

KING-CRANE REPORT ON THE NEAR EAST

A Suppressed Official Document of the United States Government

Editorial Note—Problems of the Near East again hold the attention of the peoples of the world, and as a result, all channels of information are flooded with propaganda that has as its source foreign interests, in many cases with selfish intent. Americans have but a limited knowledge of the hates and greeds that have repeatedly carried the peoples of the Near East into war and endangered the peace of the world. This report is founded upon impartial and thorough investigation by Americans for Americans and is presented at this time for the guidance of editors and writers.

Photo by International

Secret diplomacy won. Now it is collecting, and in the Near East millions are pleading for bread

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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 pretentions 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 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."

The program mostly speaks sufficiently for itself. Various points in it are commented upon elsewhere in this report. 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. The mandatory power will possess in this program a commitment to liberal government which will be found to be very valuable in starting the new state in the right direction.

CILICIA

1. General—(a) The Commision did not endeavor to give thorough hearings in this region, feeling that it is not seriously to be considered a part of Syria, and desiring not to open up as yet the question of the Turkish-speaking portion of the former Turkish Empire.

(b) The population statistics vary considerably, but there can be no doubt of a marked Moslem majority in Cilicia before the war, now probably somewhat increased.

2. Wishes of the People—(a) The Turks here, like most of those heard previously, wish to retain Turkish unity under the house of Osman, and leave the question of what shall be the Mandatory Power, if any, to the Turkish Government at Constantinople.

(b) The Arabs (who are mainly Turkish-speaking, but are chiefly Nusairiyeh or Alouites) ask for union with Syria under a French mandate.

(c) The Armenians (who are also chiefly Turkish-speaking) ask for the union of Cilicia with Armenia under an American mandate.

(d) The other Christians, a small minority, are mostly for France, particularly the Greeks, who are working in close relation with the French in the northern regions of Turkey.

Mesopotamia

It was impossible for the Commission to visit Mesopotamia at this time. Earnest requests to make such a visit were presented at Damascus and Aleppo, accompanied by complaints that the British occupying forces are restricting freedom of speech, movement, and political action, and that they show signs of an intention to allow extensive immigration from India, to the great detriment of the rights and interests of the inhabitants of the region.

A committee at Aleppo presented a program for Mesopotamia which parallels closely the "Damascus Program" for Syria. An abstract of their claims follows:

1. Mesopotamia should be completely independent, including Diarbekir, Deir-ez-Zor, Mosul, Bagdad, and Muhammerah.

2. The Government should be a constitutional civil kingdom.

3. The king should be a son of the King of the Hejaz, either Abdullah or Zeid.

4. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations is protested against.

5. No outside government should interfere in the country.

6. After the recognition of independence, technical and economical assistance is to be asked for from America.

7. Objection is raised to all immigration and especially to that of Hindus and Jews.

8. The complete independence of Syria is asked for.

9. It is asked that there be no interference of France in Syria.

It will be noticed that conformably to the custom of all nascent nations, wide boundaries are claimed, which would involve difficulties with adjacent areas, such as Deir-ez-Zor with Syria, Diarbekir with Armenia, and Muhammerah with Persia.

The Orthodox [Nestorian?—Ed.] Syrian Patriarch, from Der Zafran, near Mardin, met the Commission at Homs. He stated that 90,000 of his people were slain in 1915; when the British came in 1918, all were willing to submit to their rule; but emissaries came from Constantinople to stir up the Kurds and Arabs in favor of independence, and now the situation is much worse; the area occupied by his people should go with Mesopotamia, under the mandate of either America or Britain.

The entire data have been given, thus, so fully as to make it possible to test at every point the legitimacy of the inference drawn from the data, and of the final recommendations for action by the Peace Conference.

Further data from our final inference and recommendations were afforded by comprehensive reports of the entire survey, made by all three advisers. The recommendations of the Commissioners have thus been shaped, in the light of surveys made from different points of view, and taking into account a wide range of considerations—local, national, racial, and religious; considerations both of principle and of practical policy; and of the world's dire need of a peace everywhere justly and so permanently based.

II—GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Commissioners have sought to make their survey of Syria, and the report upon Syria now submitted, in the spirit of the instructions given them by the Council of Four, and especially in harmony with the resolutions adopted on January 30, 1919, by the Representatives of the United States, Great Britain France, Italy and Japan, and with the Anglo-French Declaration of November 9, 1918—both quoted at length in the Commission's instructions. The second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth of the resolutions adopted on January 30th are particularly pertinent to this report, and should be here recorded. The general purpose of the Peace Conference concerning these areas in the former Turkish Empire is here clearly disclosed.

2. For similar reasons, and more particularly because of the historical mis-government by the Turks of subject peoples and the terrible massacres of Armenians and others in recent years, the Allied and Associated Powers are agreed that Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia must be completely severed from the Turkish Empire. This is without prejudice to the settlement of other parts of the Turkish Empire.

3. The Allied and Associated Powers are agreed that advantage should be taken of the opportunity afforded by the necessity of disposing of these colonies and territories formerly belonging to Germany and Turkey which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, to apply to these territories the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in the constitution of the League of Nations.

4. After careful study they are satisfied that the best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who, by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical positions, can best undertake this responsibility, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as mandatories on behalf of the League of Nations.

5. The Allied and Associated Powers are of opinion that the character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions, and other similar circumstances.

6. They consider that certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a mandatory power until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the mandatory power. . . .

In every case of mandate, the mandatory state shall render to the League of Nations an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge.

The Anglo-French Declaration* was spread broadcast throughout Syria and Mesopotamia, and, as bearing directly upon our problem, may also well be called to mind at this point:

The aim which France and Great Britain have in view in prosecuting in the East the war let loose by German ambition is the complete and final liberation of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the native population.

In order to give effect to these intentions, France and Great Britain have agreed to encourage and assist the establishment of native governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia already liberated by the Allies, and in the territories which they are proceeding to liberate, and they have agreed to recognize such governments as soon as they are effectively established. So far from desiring to impose specific institutions upon the populations of these regions, their sole object is to ensure, by their support and effective assistance, that the governments and administrations adopted by these regions of their own free will shall be exercised in the normal way. The function which the two Allied Governments claim for themselves in the liberated territories is to insure impartial and equal justice for all; to facilitate the economic development of the country by encouraging local initiative; to promote the diffusion of education; and to put an end to the division too long exploited by Turkish policy.

Of this Declaration, M. Pichon very properly said in the French Chamber December 29, 1918: "Of course we admit the complete freedom of the Conference, and its right to give these agreemnts their proper conclusions, but these agreements are binding both upon England and upon us." This statement is the more significant because it is exactly these two peoples of the Allies who are immediately related to the problems in the Arabic-speaking portions of the Turkish Empire.

Our survey made it clear that this Anglo-French Declaration and similar utterances of the Peace Conference, and President Wilson's Fourteen Points, had made a deep impression upon the Syrian people and lay in the background of all their demands. The promises involved not only cannot justly be ignored by the Peace Conference, but should be faithfully fulfilled. This is particularly true of the British-French Declaration; for it is completely in accord with the repeated statements of the aims of the Allies, and was expressly directed to the Arabic-speaking portions of the Turkish Empire, especially Syria and Mesopotamia.

It is noted that these resolutions of January 30, 1919, and this Declaration of November 9, 1918, clearly look to complete separation of the Arabic-speaking areas from Turkey; propose that Syria and Mesopotamia shall not be colonies in the old sense at all; shall not be exploited for the benefit of the occupying power; but shall rather be directly encouraged and assisted in developing national independence as quickly as possible. And the Declaration makes the promises equally binding for Syria and Mesopotamia.

The resolutions and declaration invoked in the instructions given to our Commission thus form the basis of the whole policy of sending a Commission, and of ascertaining the desires of the people.

The sincerity of the professed aims of the Allies in the war, therefore, is peculiarly to be tested in the application of these aims in the treatment of the Arabic-speaking portions of the former Turkish Empire. For the promises here made were specific and unmistakable. It is worth consideration, too, that the whole policy of mandataries under the League of Nations might here be worked out with special success, and success here would encourage the steady extension of the policy elsewhere, and do something so significant for world progress as to help to justify the immeasurable sacrifices of the war. There is also probably no region where the Allies are freer to decide their course in accordance with the principles they have professed.

The gravity of the Syrian problem is further to be seen in certain well-known facts. The fact that the Arabic-speaking portion of the Turkish Empire has been the birthplace of the three great religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and that Palestine contains places sacred to all three, makes inevitably a center of interest and concern for the whole civilized world. No solution which is merely local or has only a single people in mind can avail.

As a portion of the bridge-land uniting Europe, Asia, and Africa, too—where in a peculiar degree the East and the West meet—Syria has a place of such strategic importance, politically and commercially, and from the point of view of world civilization, as also to make it imperative that the settlement here brought about should be so just as to give promise of permanently good results for the whole cause of the development of a righteous civilization in the world. Every part of the former Turkish Empire must be given a new life and opportunity under thoroughly changed political conditions.

The war and the consequent breaking up of the Turkish Empire, moreover, give a great opportunity—not likely to return—to build now in Syria a Near East State on the modern basis of full religious liberty, deliberately including various religious faiths, and especially guarding rights of minorities. It is a matter of justice to the Arabs, in the recognition of the Arab people and their desire for national expression, and of deep and lasting concern to the world, that an Arab state along modern political lines should be formed. While the elements are very various, the interests often divisive, and much of the population not yet fitted for self-government, the conditions are nevertheless as favorable as could be reasonably expected under the circumstances to make the trial now. The mixed and varied populations have lived together with a fair degree of unity under Turkish domination, and in spite of the divisive Turkish policy. They ought to do far better under a state on modern lines and with an enlightened mandatory.

In any case, the oversight of a mandatory power, and of the League of Nations, would prevent this attempt from taking such a course as that taken by the Young Turk Movement. The Arabs, too, will know that this is their best opportunity for the formation of an Arab

*This Charter of Freedom, issued a few days prior to the Armistice, is the standard by which the Near East judges the post-Armistice conduct of Europe.

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(Continued from page XXIV)

agreement of all the Moslems in the world. All affirmed that King Hussein is in no sense their political head, but only their religious head. Prayers are said in his name, and certain seals for public documents bear his name.

Certain Christians, on the other hand, affirmed that the sentiment of Syrian Nationalism is new and feeble, and that the expressions of it made before the Commission gave a false impression. They claimed that the Christians who adhere to this view do so as making a desperate effort to live on good terms with the Moslem majority, and that the Moslems much prefer a pan-Arabic or Pan-Islamic scheme, and would quickly abandon Syrian nationalism if they saw a chance for the success of either of these ideas. It would seem safe to assume that those who speak for themselves strike nearer the truth than others who assume to speak for them. Nevertheless, it is worth while to give consideration to the criticism.

Pan-Arabism* in a narrower sense would unite under one independent government the Arab-speaking portions of the former Turkish Empire. This would not necessarily be a theoretic Moslem state, though the large majority would belong to the different Moslem sects. It is hard to see how such a federated state, with its territory largely desert and lacking a center and speedy communications, could be more of a danger to the world than the Turkey of which it formed a part.

In a larger sense Pan-Arabism would wish to add also the Arab-speaking belt across North Africa. Since this is held by three great powers, each of whom has a larger population and infinitely greater resources than the Pan-Arab area contains, its accomplishment against their will is a mere dream.

Pan-Islamism in a narrow sense would re-establish one government in the former Turkish Empire by agreement of the two Moslem groups of north and south, the Turks and the Arabs. The Commission found no sign of a desire for the re-establishment of the rule of Turkey over the Arabs. One former deputy in the Turkish Parliament did indeed suggest that an Ottoman prince might be chosen as king of Syria, but this was an individual opinion. On the other hand, there were many expressions of joy and thankfulness because of the end of Turkish rule. If there is any thought of a federation of Arabs with Turks, or of a political union of any sort, the Commission saw no trace of it. Still less was there any sign of movement toward the realization of a larger Pan-Islamic idea. The Turks had some thought of this early in the war, but it disappeared in favor of a Pan-Turanian idea on a racial or linguistic rather than a religious basis, from the time when Jemal Pasha hanged the leaders of the Syrian Arabs.

One may conjure up the picture of an attempt at restoring the Saracen Empire, by the stages of Syrian, Arabian and Mesopotamian independence, followed by federal union in a strong conquering state, which would then become imperialistic in the directions of Persia, Armenia, Turkey and North Africa; but the Commission discerned no trace of such a notion, nor is it practically conceivable under present world conditions.

If the European civilization has sufficient wisdom to avoid further extensive self-destruction, it can with the greatest ease control the Moslem world; it is not necessary for those who labor to establish the League of Nations to contemplate the opposite possibility.

The fundamental question in this connection, and, indeed, in several other great immediate problems, is the basal attitude of the Christians toward the Moslem world: Shall this be friendly or hostile? In the war now ending, Christian governments gave their Moslem allies promises of fair treatment and full rights. Now the Moslems of Syria offer their hands to their non-Moslem fellow-citizens with the promise of putting religious separation out of sight. Shall they be taken at their word? Or shall they be told: We do not believe what you say; we do not trust you; we think it best to break our word with you, so that you may not have the opportunity to break your word with us?

The western world is already committed to the attempt to live in peace and friendship with the Moslem peoples, and to manage governments in such a way as to separate politics from religion. Syria offers an excellent opportunity to establish a state where members of the three great monotheistic religions can live together in harmony; because it is a country of one language which has long had freedom of movement and of business relations through being unified under the Turkish rule. Since now the majority declare for nationalism, independent of religion, it is necessary only to hold them to this view through mandatory control until they shall have established the method and practice of it. Dangers may readily arise from unwise and unfaithful dealings with this people, but there is great hope of peace and progress if they be handled frankly and loyally.

* This is the portentous programme set forth in the Turkish Nationalist Pact. It would apparently eliminate both France and Great Britain from the confines of the former Ottoman Empire.

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- Territory lost by Turkey after the World War, according to Treaty of Sèvres, 1920.

① Territories regained from Greece according to agreement at Mudania, Oct. 1922.
② Zone of Allied control; New limits shown thus: ..... Old limits of Zone of the Straits, shown thus: - - - - - -
③ Turkish Armenia, western boundary defined by Pres. Wilson.
④ Russian territory ceded to Turkey according to Soviet-Russia-Kemal agreement, Mar. 1921.
⑤ Territory regained by Turkey according to Franco-Turkish Treaty of Angora, Oct. 1921.
⑥ Syria, now French Mandate.
⑦ Mesopotamia, now Kingdom of Iraq. British Mandate.
⑧ Part of Mesopotamia, (Oil territory) claimed by Turkey.
⑨ Palestine, British Mandate.

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