

Documents of Western Betrayal and Arab Opposition (1915-1919) From *The Arab Awakening* by George Antonius¹

Islamfiche Project, with updated annotation and new preface by William Cleveland

Preface¹

When the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of Germany in October 1914, the Sultan-Caliph issued a decree of *jihad* calling on Muslims throughout the world to rally to the defense of the empire and its Islamic values against the Triple Entente. The governments of Britain and France were concerned about the effects of the Caliph's decree on the Muslims under their imperial rule, especially in India and North Africa.

This concern over Islamic loyalties explains, in part, the reasons for Britain's interest in pursuing an alliance with the Amir of Mecca, Sharif Husayn ibn 'Ali. The office of Amir of Mecca was the most prestigious Arab position in Islam. It did not confer political power on its holder, but an ambitious Amir could attract support from local tribes. Sharif (meaning descendant of the Prophet, Muhammad) Husayn was appointed Amir by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908. On the eve of World War I, he had consolidated his position and was calculating how he might best secure the hereditary rule of his family in Mecca and Medina. It was in this context that he approached the British High Commissioner in Egypt to inquire about Britain's willingness to recognize an independent Arab kingdom in exchange for Husayn's proclamation of an Arab revolt against his own Ottoman government. The series of letters known as the *Husayn-McMahon Correspondence* provide a record of Sharif Husayn's demands and the British response to them. Based on British promises of an independent Arab state with vaguely defined borders, Husayn proclaimed a revolt against the Ottoman Empire on June 10, 1916 and issued his own call to *jihad*. Husayn's tribal levies, commanded by his son Faysal, played a useful guerrilla role on Britain's right flank during the drive that led to the capture of Damascus in October 1918. As Faysal endeavored to set up an Arab government in Damascus, the contradictions between the British pledges to Sharif Husayn and agreements they had later made to the French and the Zionists became evident. However, because the *Husayn-McMahon Correspondence* was classified, it did not play a role in discussions over the post-war settlement in the Arab Middle East. The eastern Arab world was divided into new states under British and French mandates, a thinly disguised form of imperial rule.

Full disclosure of the British promises to Husayn did not take place until 1938, when George Antonius included translations of them in his book, *The Arab Awakening*. Antonius (1891-1942), of Lebanese Christian origin, was raised in Alexandria and educated at King's College, Cambridge. From 1921 to 1930, he was employed as a civil servant in the British government of Palestine. Following his resignation from British service, he served as the Middle East field representative of the New York-based Institute of Current World Affairs, an organization founded and funded by Charles Crane. It was while holding this position that Antonius wrote his ground-breaking study of the Arab national movement. In the course of his research, he was given access to a wide

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assortment of Arab documents by Amir Abdullah of Transjordan, one of the sons of Sharif Husayn. Among them was the Arabic language version of the exchanges between Husayn and McMahon. In *The Arab Awakening*, Antonius argued that Britain had broken its promises to Husayn and had denied the Arabs the national independence that they had earned through their revolt against the Ottomans. He also raised the uncomfortable question of the status of Palestine in the pledges to Husayn.

The secret *Sykes-Picot Agreement* was made public by the Russian revolutionary government to embarrass the former allies of the Czarist regime. Antonius used the agreement to demonstrate that less than four months after McMahon's assurances to Sharif Husayn, Britain and France had made contradictory arrangements for the division of the Arab territories once the war was over.

In the *Communication from the British Government to the King of the Hejaz*, the *British Government's Declaration to the Seven Arabs*, and the *Anglo-French Declaration*, all of which were issued between February and November, 1918, the British repeatedly assured the Arabs of the Allies' good intentions. According to Antonius, these assurances serve to reinforce McMahon's promises to Husayn and ought to have resulted in an independent Arab state. If that was not the British intention, then in Antonius' opinion Britain was simply guilty of duplicity

Documents:

Appendix A

THE McMAHON CORRESPONDENCEⁱⁱ

(covering letter to No. 1)

The Amir 'Abdullah to Mr. Ronald Storrs

Mecca, Ramadan 2, 1333.

[July 14, 1915.]

Complimentary titles.

I send my affectionate regard and respects to your esteemed self, and trust that you will ensure, as you know how to, the acceptance of the enclosed note which contains our proposals and conditions.

In this connexion, I wish to give you and your Government my assurance that you need have no anxiety about the intentions of our people, for they realise how closely their interests are bound to those of your Government. Do not trouble to send aeroplanes or warships to distribute news and reports as in the past: our minds are now made up.

What we would request is that you should make it possible for the Egyptian Government to resume the consignment of the bounty of grain for the poor of Mecca and Madina, which was stopped last year. The arrival of this year's grain, together with last year's, would be valuable here for the promotion of our mutual interests. To a person of your quick understanding, this hint will suffice.

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I beg of you not to send us any communications until you hear that our plans have matured, except for the reply to this letter and its enclosure, which should only be sent through the bearer. Perhaps you will think fit to give him a written warrant to enable him to pass through to you whenever we think it necessary to send him. He is dependable.

Compliments.

No. 1

The Sharif Husain's First Note to Sir Henry McMahon

Mecca, Ramadan 2, 1333.

[July 14, 1915.]

Complimentary titles.

Whereas the entire Arab nation without exception is determined to assert its right to live, gain its freedom and administer its own affairs in name and in fact;

And whereas the Arabs believe it to be in Great Britain's interest to lend them assistance and support in the fulfillment of their steadfast and legitimate aims to the exclusion of all other aims;

And whereas it is similarly to the advantage of the Arabs, in view of their geographical position and their economic interests, and in view of the well-known attitude of [f] the Government of Great Britain,ⁱⁱⁱ to prefer British assistance to any other;

For these reasons, the Arab nation has decided to approach the Government of Great Britain with a request for the approval, through one of their representatives if they think fit, of the following basic provisions which, as time presses, have not been made to include matters of relatively smaller importance, since such matters can wait until the time comes for their consideration: –

1. Great Britain recognises the independence of the Arab countries which are bounded: on the north, by 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; on the east, by the Persian frontier down to the Persian Gulf; on the south, by the Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden whose status will remain as at present); on the west, by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.

2. Great Britain will agree to the proclamation of an Arab Caliphate for Islam.

3. The Sharifian Arab Government undertakes, other things being equal, to grant Great Britain preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries.

4. With a view to ensuring the stability of Arab independence and the efficacy of the promised preference in economic enterprises, the two contracting parties undertake, in the event of any foreign state attacking either of them, to come to each other's assistance with all the resources of their military and naval forces; it being understood that peace will be concluded only when both parties concur.

In the event of one of the two parties embarking upon a war of offence, the other party will adopt an attitude of neutrality, but, if invited to join, will agree to confer with the other party as to the conditions of joint action.

5. Great Britain agrees to the abolition of Capitulations^{iv} in the Arab countries, and undertakes to assist the Sharifian Government in summoning an international congress to decree their abolition.

6. Clauses 3 and 4 of the present Agreement are to remain in force for a period of fifteen years. Should either party desire an extension, due notice of one year before the expiry of that period will have to be given.

Therefore, since the entire Arab nation is (God be praised!) united in its resolve to purpose its noble aim to the end, at whatever cost, it requests the Governments[delete s] of Great Britain to return an answer, whether negatively or in the affirmative, within thirty days of the

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receipts[delete s] of this message, in default of which it reserves its right to complete freedom of action, just as we will consider ourselves absolved from the letter and the spirit of the declaration which we made earlier through 'Ali Efendi.'

Compliments.

No. 2

Sir Henry McMahon's First Note to the Sharif Husain

Cairo, August 30, 1915.

Complimentary titles.

We have the honour to tender the gratitude due to you for the sentiments of sincere friendship for England which you display, and it pleases us, moreover, to learn that Your Lordship and your people are at one in believing that Arab interests are in harmony with British interests, and vice-versa.

In earnest of this, we hereby confirm to you the declaration of Lord Kitchener as communicated to you through 'Ali Efendi, in which was manifested our desire for the independence of the Arab countries and their inhabitants, and our readiness to approve an Arab caliphate upon its proclamation.

We now declare once more that the Government of Great Britain would welcome the reversion of the caliphate to a true Arab born of the blessed stock of the Prophet.

As for the question of frontiers and boundaries, negotiations would appear to be premature and a waste of time on details at this stage, with the War in progress and the Turks in effective occupation of the greater part of those regions. All the more so as a party of Arabs inhabiting those very regions have, to our amazement and sorrow, overlooked and neglected this valuable and incomparable opportunity; and, instead of coming to our aid, have lent their assistance to the Germans and the Turks; to that new despoiler, the German, and to that tyrannical oppressor, the Turk.

Nevertheless, we are fully prepared to despatch to Your Lordship whatever quantities of grain and other charitable gifts may be owed by Egypt to the Holy Land of Arabia and the noble Arabs. These will be forwarded, on a sign from Your Lordship, to whatever locality you may indicate.

We have made the necessary arrangements for facilitating the journeys of your messenger to us.

Compliments.

No. 3

The Sharif Husain's Second Note to Sir Henry McMahon

Mecca, Shawwal 29, 1333.

[September 9, 1915.]

Complimentary titles.

We received your note of the 19th Shawwal, [August 30,] with gratification, and have given it the fullest consideration, notwithstanding the obscurity and the signs of lukewarmth and hesitancy we descried in it in regard to our essential clause. We find it necessary to affirm to Your Excellency our sentiments of amity with Great Britain and our readiness to ensure her a favoured place in all circumstances and in every manner, for in that way can the true interests of our co-religionists best be served.

Your Excellency will suffer me to say, in explanation of what I mean by lukewarmth and hesitancy, that your statements in regard to the question of frontiers and boundaries – namely that to discuss them at this stage were unprofitable and could only result in a waste of time since those regions are still occupied by their sovereign government, and so forth – reflect what I might almost describe as reluctance or something akin to reluctance, on your part.

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The fact is that the proposed frontiers and boundaries represent not the suggestions of one individual whose claim might well await the conclusion of the War, but the demands of our people who believe that those frontiers form the minimum necessary to the establishment of the new order for which they are striving. This they are determined to obtain; and they have decided to discuss the matter, in the first resort, with that Power in whom they place their greatest confidence and reliance, and whom they regard as the pivot of justice, namely Great Britain.

In this, they are moved by considerations of the reciprocity of interests, the requirements of territorial organisation, and the wishes of the populations concerned; and also by their desire to see the foundations of their future life settled before hand, so as to avoid finding themselves, when their new life is being established and organised, in opposition to or conflict with Great Britain or one of her allies -- which God forbid! It should be noted that, in drawing up their proposed delimitation, they have not outstepped the bounds of the regions inhabited by their race.

For our aim, O respected Minister, is to ensure that the conditions which are essential to our future shall be secured on a foundation of reality, and not on highly-decorated phrases and titles. As for the caliphate, God have mercy on its soul and comfort the Moslems for their loss!

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

In conclusion, we believe in all sincerity that your loyalty will prevail, whether you are satisfied with us or displeased; and that you will not wish to seize upon the fact that some of our people are still with the utmost zeal furthering Ottoman designs, as stated in your letter under reference, as an excuse for treating our aspirations with such lukewarmth and hesitancy. I think Your Excellency is above denying that our demands are fundamental, nay, that they are the very substance and essence of our existence, be it from the material, the spiritual or the moral point of view. Up to this very moment, I have been endeavoring, in person and with all my powers, to enforce the prescriptions of our Sacred Law in my country and in all that concerns me in relation to the rest of the empire, until God issue His decree.

For these reasons, and the better to set your mind at ease, I may state that the people of all those countries, including those of whom you say that they are zealously furthering German and Ottoman designs, are awaiting the result of the present negotiations, which depend solely upon whether you reject or admit the proposed frontiers, and upon whether or not you will help us to secure their spiritual and other rights against evil and danger. Please communicate to us the decision of the British Government on this point, for our guidance as to what suits their policy, and as to what steps it behoves us to take. For the rest, it is God Who decrees the past and the future, He ordains all things, exalted be His Name!

With regard to our request for the despatch of the people's bounty, with the customary purses from the Ministry of Auqaf and all that it is usual to send with the Pilgrimage convoy, I had in view that their despatch would be a means of substantiating the terms of your proclamations to the world, and more particularly the Moslem world, in which you stated that your hostility was solely directed against the usurpers of the caliphate and, hence, of the rights of all Moslems. To say nothing of the fact that the said bounty comes from specific endowments which have nothing to do with politics. If you decide to send them, let the bounty due on account of the past two years be consigned in a special steamer to Jedda as usual in the name of the people, and let the skipper or the special officer who is usually charged year by year with the duty of delivery communicate with the authorities at Jedda on arrival at the port, and ask for the competent official who is to take delivery of the grain against the proper receipt to be signed by the receiving officer. It should be noted that only the signature of that officer may be accepted, and the skipper or special officer should be instructed that if any obstruction is attempted, he should threaten to return with his cargo to the port of departure. The consignment is to be

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formally received by the committee known as the 'Committee for dealing with the People's Bounty'.

If you should wish to reply to this note, let the reply be sent by the bearer.
Compliments.

No. 4

Sir Henry McMahon's Second Note to the Sharif Husain

Cairo, October 24, 1915.

Complimentary titles.

I have, with gratification and pleasure, received your note of the 29th Shawwal, 1333, and its tokens of sincere friendship have filled me with satisfaction and contentment.

I regret to find that you inferred from my last note that my attitude towards the question of frontiers and boundaries was one of hesitancy and lukewarmth. Such was in no wise the intention of my note. All I meant was that I considered that the time had not yet come in which that question could be discussed in a conclusive manner.

But, having realized from your last note that you considered the question important, vital and urgent, I hastened to communicate to the Government of Great Britain the purport of your note. It gives me the greatest pleasure to convey to you, on their behalf, the following declarations which, I have no doubt, you will receive with satisfaction and acceptance.

The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta,^{vi} and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo,^{vii} 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am confident that this declaration will convince you, beyond all doubt, of Great Britain's sympathy with the aspirations of her friends the Arabs; and that it will result in a lasting and solid alliance with them, of which one of the immediate consequences will be the expulsion of the Turks from the Arab countries and the liberation of the Arab peoples from the Turkish yoke which has weighed on them all these long years.

I have confined myself in this note to vital questions of primary importance. If there are any other matters in your notes, which have been overlooked, we can revert to them at some suitable time in the future.

I have heard with great satisfaction and pleasure that the Sacred Kiswah^{ix} and the charitable gifts which had gone with it, had arrived safely and that, thanks to your wise directions

Bounty’.

If you should wish to reply to this note, let the reply be sent by the bearer. Compliments.

No. 4 Sir Henry McMahon’s Second Note to the Sharif Husain

Cairo, October 24, 1915.

Complimentary titles.

I have, with gratification and pleasure, received your note of the 29th Shawwal, 1333, and its tokens of sincere friendship have filled me with satisfaction and contentment.

I regret to find that you inferred from my last note that my attitude towards the question of frontiers and boundaries was one of hesitancy and lukewarmth. Such was in no wise the intention of my note. All I meant was that I considered that the time had not yet come in which that question could be discussed in a conclusive manner.

But, having realized from your last note that you considered the question important, vital and urgent, I hastened to communicate to the Government of Great Britain the purport of your note. It gives me the greatest pleasure to convey to you, on their behalf, the following declarations which, I have no doubt, you will receive with satisfaction and acceptance.

The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta,vi and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo,vii 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.

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

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

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

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

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

(5) That, as regards the two vilayets of Baghdad and of Basra, the Arabs recognise that the fact of Great Britain’s established position and interests there will call for the setting up of special administrative arrangementsviii to protect those regions from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of their inhabitants, and to safeguard our mutual economic interests. I am confident that this declaration will convince you, beyond all doubt, of Great Britain’s sympathy

with the aspirations of her friends the Arabs; and that it will result in a lasting and solid alliance with them, of which one of the immediate consequences will be the expulsion of the Turks from the Arab countries and the liberation of the Arab peoples from the Turkish yoke which has weighed on them all these long years.

I have confined myself in this note to vital questions of primary importance. If there are any other matters in your notes, which have been overlooked, we can revert to them at some suitable time in the future.

I have heard with great satisfaction and pleasure that the Sacred Kiswa and the charitable gifts which had gone with it, had arrived safely and that, thanks to your wise directions

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and arrangements, they were landed without trouble or damage in spite of the risks and difficulties created by the present deplorable war. We pray Almighty God that He may bring a lasting peace and freedom to mankind.

I am sending this note with your faithful messenger, Shaikh Muhammad ibn 'Aref ibn 'Uraifan, who will lay before you certain interesting matters which, as they are of secondary importance, I have abstained from mentioning in this note.

Compliments.

No. 5

The Sharif Husain's Third Note to Sir Henry McMahon

Mecca, Zul-Hejja 27, 1333.

[November 5, 1915.]

Complimentary titles.

With great gratification have we received your note of the 15th Zul-Hejja [October 24] to which we would reply as follows.

First, in order to facilitate agreement and serve the cause of Islam by the removal of possible sources of hardship and tribulations, and in earnest of the particular esteem in which we hold Great Britain, we no longer insist on the inclusion of the districts^a of Mersin and Adana in the Arab Kingdom. 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 descendants of one forefather. And we Moslems intend, in those provinces, to follow the precepts laid down by the Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (God have mercy upon him!), and the caliphs who came after him, when he enjoined upon the Moslems to treat the Christians on a footing with themselves, saying: they are to enjoy the same rights and bear the same obligations as ourselves. They will have, moreover, their denominational privileges, as far as the public interest allows.

Secondly, since the provinces of Iraq were part of the former Arab Empire, and indeed were the seat of government in the days of the Caliph 'Ali ibn Abu-Taleb (God's favor be upon him!) and of all the caliphs after him; and since it was in those very provinces (and more particularly in Basra which was the first centre of Arab culture) that the civilisation of the Arabs and the expansion of their power flourished – a fact that gives them in the eyes of all Arabs, both far and near, the precious significance of an unforgettable heritage; for these reasons, we should find it impossible to persuade or compel the Arab nation to renounce that honourable association. On the other hand, since the safeguards referred to in your clause 5 concerning Great Britain's interests are naturally secured – for the safeguarding of British interests with which are bound up our own is one of our main concerns – we should be willing, in our desire to facilitate agreement, to allow those parts which are now occupied by British troops^b to remain so occupied for a period to be determined by negotiation, without prejudice to the rights of [e]ither party or injury to the natural wealth and resources of those parts. It being provided that, during the period of the occupation, the Arab Kingdom shall receive suitable pecuniary assistance towards the burden of expenditure which a nascent kingdom inevitably has to bear; and that the agreements in force with certain Chiefs in those parts will be respected.

Thirdly, your advocacy of speedy action seems to us to entail risks as well as advantages. In the first place, premature action might give rise among those Moslems who do not as yet appreciate the realities of the situation, to the criticism that, by proclaiming a revolt, we are seeking the disruption of Islam. In the second place, we have to consider who[what] our position would be against Turkey who is aided by all the might of Germany, in the event of one of the Entente Powers weakening to the extent of being compelled to make peace with the Central Powers: what attitude would Great Britain and her remaining allies adopt to preclude the

difficulties created by the present deplorable war. We pray Almighty God that He may bring a lasting peace and freedom to mankind.

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possibility of the Arab nation being left alone to face Turkey and her allies? We would have had no anxiety had the conflict lain between us and the Turks alone. These aspects of the question have to be considered, especially as, if we were to enter the War in an informal way, it might be contended by some of the belligerents that they have a right, in concluding the peace, to interfere in our affairs.

Fourthly, the Arabs firmly believe that, after the War, the German-ridden Turks will try to give them constant provocation, in religious as well as temporal matters, and to wreak the utmost vengeance upon them. On their side, the Arabs have resolved and vowed to fight the Turks and continue fighting them until not one of them (save for women and children) remains in any of the Arab countries. Our present deliberation is on account of the considerations stated above.

Fifthly, the moment the Arabs feel confident that, when the time comes for the conclusion of peace in Europe, Great Britain and her allies will not leave them in the lurch face to face with Turkey and Germany, but that they intend to help them and advocate their case effectively in the peace negotiations, from that moment will Arab participation in the War undoubtedly serve the general Arab interest.

Sixthly, our previous communication dated the 29th Shawwal, 1333, makes it superfluous for us to reply to clauses 3 and 4 of your letter, relating to forms of administration, advisers and officials, especially as it is clear from Your Excellency's declarations that there will be no interference in our internal affairs.

Seventhly, we request a clear and final reply, in the shortest possible time, to the questions and problems set forth above, so that the necessary action may be taken with the least possible delay. In our desire to secure agreement which should be satisfactory to both sides, we have gone to the furthest lengths on concession. For we know that the outcome of this war for us can only be either to achieve victory, which will secure to the Arabs a life worthy of their ancient glory, or to find destruction in the attempt. Were it not for the determination shown by the Arabs to realise their aspirations, I would have elected to retire to some mountain-top. But they pressed me to lead the movement to its goal.

Compliments.

No.6

Sir Henry McMahon's Third Note to the Sharif Husain

Cairo, December 13, 1915.

Complimentary titles.

Your note of the 27th Zul-Hejja, 1333, has reached me, and I was glad to find that you consent to the exclusion of the vilayets^{vi} of Mersin and Adana from the boundaries of the Arab countries.

I have also received with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction your assurances that the Arabs are resolved on following the precepts of the Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (the blessing of God be upon him!) and of the other early caliphs, which guarantee equal rights and privileges to all creeds alike.

Your statement that the Arabs are prepared to recognise and respect all our treaties with other Arab Chiefs is of course taken to apply to all territories to be included within the frontiers of the Arab Kingdom, for Great Britain cannot repudiate agreements already concluded between her and those Chiefs.

As for the two vilayets of Aleppo and Bairut, the Government of Great Britain have fully understood your statement [] in that respect and noted it with the greatest care. But as the interests of their ally France are involved in those two provinces, the question calls for careful consideration. We shall communicate again with you on this subject, at the appropriate time.

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The Government of Great Britain, as I have previously informed you, are prepared to give all the guarantees and assistance in their power to the Arab Kingdom. But their interests in the Vilayet of Baghdad necessitate a friendly and stable administration, such as you have outlined. The proper safeguarding of those interests calls for fuller and more detailed consideration than the present situation and the speed with which these negotiations are being conducted permit.

We fully approve your desire to proceed warily, and do not wish to impel you to hasty action which might obstruct the success of your objectives. But, at the same time, we deem it imperative that you should turn your endeavors to uniting the Arab peoples to our joint cause and to urging them to abstain from aiding our enemies in any manner whatsoever. On the success of your endeavors, and on the efficacy of the measures which, when the time comes, the Arabs will find it possible to take in aid of our cause, will the strength and permanence of our agreement depend.

In these circumstances, the Government of Great Britain have authorised me to declare to your Lordship that you may rest confident that Great Britain does not intend to conclude any peace whatsoever, of which the freedom of Arab peoples and their liberation from German and Turkish domination do not form an essential condition.

In token of our good faith, and as a contribution to your endeavors in our joint cause, I am sending the sum of [L.]20,000 with your trusted messenger.

Compliments.

No. 7

The Sharif Husain's Fourth Note to Sir Henry McMahon

Mecca, Safar 25, 1334.

[January 1, 1916.]

Complimentary titles.

I have received your note of the 9th Safar, 1334 [December 13, 1915], with the bearer of this, and noted its contents which have filled me with the utmost satisfaction and gratification, inasmuch as they set my mind at rest over one point, namely the arrival of Muhammad Sharif al-Faruqi and his interview with you.^{xiii} You will now have satisfied yourself that our attitude was not prompted by personal desires, which would have been foolish, but was the result of the decisions taken and the desires expressed by our people; and that our role in the matter was confined to conveying and putting into effect those desires and decisions, thus merely discharging a duty with which our people had invested us. It is, in my view, most important that Your Excellency should realise that.

As for your statements concerning Iraq and the compensation to be paid during the period of occupation, I would illustrate the friendly sentiments animating us towards Great Britain and the confidence we repose in her, both in word and in deed, in the spirit as well as the letter, by leaving the assessment of the compensation to her wisdom and sense of fair play.

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 account of France.

I find it superfluous to point out that this arrangement also serves Great Britain's interests best; that it safeguards them as fully – if not more – as it secures our rights; and that no other arrangement is possible by which it could fall to Great Britain to achieve the aim, which she has

give all the guarantees and assistance in their power to the Arab Kingdom. But their interests in the Vilayet of Baghdad necessitate a friendly and stable administration, such as you have outlined. The proper safeguarding of those interests calls for fuller and more detailed consideration than the present situation and the speed with which these negotiations are being conducted permit.

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at heart, of seeing her friends in contentment and happiness. All the more so as the proximity of the French to us would be a source of difficulties and disputes such as would render the establishment of peaceful conditions impossible. To say nothing of the fact that the people of Bairut are resolutely opposed to such a dismemberment, and would drive us to take a stand which might cause concern and trouble to Great Britain on a scale not far short of her present preoccupations, owing to what we firmly believe to be the community, and indeed the identity, of your interests and our own, and to be the only explanation of our willingness to deal with anyone else but Great Britain in these negotiations.

Thus any concession designed to give France or any other Power possession of a single square foot of territory in those parts is quite out of the question. In proclaiming this, I place all my reliance on the declarations which concluded your note, and this reliance is such that, at our death, it shall be inherited by those who live after us.

Your Excellency may rest assured, and Great Britain may rest assured, that we shall adhere to our resolve to which reference has already been made, and which was made known to Storrs – that able and accomplished man – two years ago. We are only waiting for an opportunity in consonance with out[r] situation. It appears to be drawing nearer, and the hand of destiny seems to be driving it towards us in timely and unmistakable fashion, as though to provide us and those who think like us with weapons for meeting the criticism and facing the responsibilities in store.

Your statement that you do not wish to impel us to hasty action which might obstruct the success of your objectives renders further explanation superfluous, except that we shall have to let you know in due course our requirements in the way of arms, ammunition and so forth.

Compliments.

No. 8

Sir Henry McMahon's Fourth Note to the Sharif Husain

Cairo, January 30, 1916.

Complimentary titles.

With great pleasure and satisfaction have we received your note of the 25th Safar, 1334, from the hand of your faithful messenger who never fails to give us your oral messages as well. We fully realise and appreciate the motives which animate you in the momentous issue with which we are concerned, and we do not question the fact that you are working for the good of the Arab nation without any ulterior motive whatsoever.

We have noted what you say with regard to the Vilayet of Baghdad, and we shall examine the matter with the utmost care after the defeat of the enemy, when the time comes for the conclusion of peace.

As for the northern regions, we note with great satisfaction your desire to avoid anything that might impair the alliance between Great Britain and France. It has not escaped you that it is our firm determination not to allow anything, however small, to stand in the way of our ending this war in complete victory. Moreover, when victory is attained, the friendship between Great Britain and France will be stronger and closer than ever, cemented as it will have been by the shedding of British and French blood – the blood of those who have fallen fighting side by side in the cause of right and freedom.

The Arab countries are now associated in that noble aim which can be attained by uniting our forces and acting in unison. We can pray God that success may bind us to each other in a lasting friendship which shall bring profit and contentment to us all.

We are very glad to hear that you are endeavoring to gain all the Arab tribes over to our joint cause, and to prevent them from giving any assistance to our enemies. We leave it to your discretion to choose the most suitable opportunity for the initiation of more decisive measures.

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The Arab countries are now associated in that noble aim which can be attained by uniting our forces and acting in unison. We can pray God that success may bind us to each other in a lasting friendship which shall bring profit and contentment to us all.

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