

# IMPERIALIST INTRIGUE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

By I. Rennap

"O Arabs, you should be prepared to befriend Britain, for strong powers that opposed her failed."

"Be strong, O Arabs, cautious, honest and alert Britain will be with you and befriend you."

*Emir Abdullah in his recently published book, "My Reminiscences."*

**A** Treaty of Alliance, concluded on April 20, 1946, between Emir Abdullah of Transjordan and the British government terminates the British mandate and makes Transjordan an "independent" state. The treaty permits Britain to maintain her air bases. The Transjordan government undertakes to provide facilities for the maintenance and training of British troops. Communications and transport for these purposes remain under British control. Britain will continue to supply the Transjordan government with "advisers." And the "independent" country's foreign policy will be subject to consultations between the two governments.

This treaty has been described by the London *Times* as merely a formal recognition of an "accomplished fact." Reuter's diplomatic correspondent is more outspoken, and states that "at the time when the maintenance of foreign troops on the territory of an independent state is one of the most controversial policies in the world, the provision that British troops are to remain in Transjordan can hardly escape criticism."

The implications of this treaty, however, are far wider than "controversial policies" and danger of "foreign criticism." Recent events indicate that the Middle East is one of the focal points of the intensified national independence struggles of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples. The whole structure of British imperialism is threatened as a result. Increased nationalist pressure for the withdrawal of British troops (recently the Levant States—Syria and Lebanon—today Egypt) has made necessary a strategic regrouping of Britain's vast troop concentrations in this area. The terms of the treaty make provisions for this possibility.

## ***A Vast British Military Camp***

The so-called Arab-Jewish problem, which constitutes Britain's "justification" for the maintenance of troops in Palestine, is today the smokescreen behind which military preparations of a formidable character are taking place. In Iraq, there are also large numbers of British troops. Al-

most simultaneously with the signing of the British-Transjordan treaty, Iraq signed a "security" pact with Turkey. Abdullah of Transjordan played no small part in these negotiations.

Thus, an "independent" Transjordan, reported ready to unite with Iraq in the near future under the rule of Abdullah, who has pledged to assist Britain in transforming Transjordan into a British garrison, is the final link in a vast military camp stretching from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Completing this chain is only a further step towards the fulfillment of a policy inimical to peace and security.

This policy involves the creation of a powerful barrier in the Middle East, with the assistance of upper-class Arab and Turkish reactionaries, against the "threat" from the resurgent national movements in this area, and against the Soviet Union whose successful solution of the national question in nearby Soviet Republics and whose role in the war have so deeply influenced the liberation movements in the Middle East.

In June 1921, Churchill, then Colonial Minister, declared in Parliament that a "policy based on support of the Hashemite dynasty (i.e., present rulers of Transjordan and Iraq) was best calculated to satisfy Arab nationalism." This policy, of which the recent treaty is but a continuation, was the basis of the Middle East "settlement" at the end of the first world war. Despite the promise of Arab independence given to Abdullah's father, Sherif Hussein, the Arab territories were carved up between England and France. Abdullah's eldest brother, Emir Feisal, was driven from Syria by the French when he proclaimed himself constitutional monarch over an independent "Greater Syria," and the Levant States were placed under French mandate. Abdullah attempted to raise a force of tribesmen to march against the French in Syria.

## ***Imperialist-Feudal Alliance***

But "cautious and honest" Britain successfully maneuvered these two Hashemite princelings, Abdullah and Feisal, to serve the British imperial policy, and simultaneously removed the friction between the two groups over the sharing of the booty. Britain took advantage of its mandate to establish Feisal as King of Iraq under British "tutelage." It set up a dummy constitution and parliament, and thus squelched an imminent national revolt in Iraq. But Britain maintained her air bases and her control of the country's economy.

Abdullah also received a consolation prize. According to the "interpretation" of the Balfour Declaration contained

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in the Churchill White Paper of 1922, Palestine, which was understood to include Transjordan, was not promised as a National Home to the Jews; but the Jews were promised a National Home *in* Palestine. On the basis of this "interpretation," Transjordan, historically and geographically a part of Palestine, was ruled to be outside the sphere where the terms of the Balfour Declaration operated. Transjordan was made into an Emirate under the British mandate, with Abdullah as "ruler."

Transjordan, some four times the size of Palestine, is the most backward of all Arab territories. A large area is desert. Its population of 350,000 is divided into two main groups, nomads and settled peasants, living and toiling in the most primitive conditions. Apart from a few small cigarette factories, industry is non-existent. Of considerable importance, however, is the Haifa-Mosul oil pipe line which traverses some 200 miles of territory, and which gives employment to thousands of workers. Despite Transjordan's 454 villages, there exist but ten municipal areas. Its upkeep (including the Transjordan Frontier Force under British officers) depends largely on British subsidies and those from the Palestine administration, which is also responsible for the limited public services now existing.

Thus was established the alliance between Britain and the Hashemite chieftains. They became the Arab custodians of British oil interests in the Arab countries, and Britain's chief support within the Arab upper-class, on which her imperialist domination over the Arab lands was established.

In the Arab Peninsula, however, Sherif Hussein, who had become King of the Hedjaz, refused to be as pliable as his sons. Whereupon "honest and alert" Britain disposed of him. Ibn Saud was given support in his successful war against Hussein, his dynastic rival, and the latter was driven from the Peninsula, and died in exile. The victorious Ibn Saud established his dynasty as virtual rulers of the Peninsula and received subsidies from Britain.

### **Enter American Imperialism**

The events that followed tightened the bonds between Whitehall and the Hashemites. Feisal and Abdullah and their cliques of landlords had not become "infected" by the penetration of the American imperialist rivals of Britain into the Middle East. Since before the war, American oil interests had moved into Saudi Arabia (as well as into the

other Middle East countries); and the "traditional" friend of Britain, Ibn Saud, showed himself to be no amateur in utilizing imperialist rivalry to lubricate his royal coffers, and to prevent Abdullah and Feisal from establishing Hashemite hegemony in the Arab lands. Thus Sheikh Asail al Fazu, Saudi Arabian minister to the United States, told a press conference that the American oil companies would have a first chance at any new oil fields discovered in his country, because Saudi Arabia "had tried the American companies and found they went quite well."

The entry of American monopoly into the Middle East gave a further impetus to imperialist intrigue. The Iraqi ruling circles played a leading role in the formation of the Arab League. Through its Hashemite lackeys Britain hoped to win League support for the creation of the "Greater Syria" Federation, composed of Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and part of Palestine, with eventual union with Iraq, under Hashemite rule. Behind the facade of an "independent" Federation, Britain expected to maintain her grip on the Arab countries and curb American penetration. At the same time, the Federation was supposed to act as a barrier against increasing Soviet influence. But apart from limited support among reactionary Syrian monarchists and certain chieftains of the Druse people who live in the Lebanon mountains of Syria, this plan was bitterly opposed in the League.



MASS DEMONSTRATION, organized by the Communist Party of Palestine, was held in Tel Aviv on Saturday, October 26, 1946 at 5 p.m. Slogans include: Shift the Problem of Palestine to UNO! Jewish Agency Leaders, Stop Negotiations with Imperialism in London! For a Jewish-Arab Agreement! Withdraw British Troops from Palestine! For a Jewish-Arab Democratic and Independent State!

## "No-Man's Land of Security"

If Britain's "power bloc" was to be established, new allies had to be found against the anti-Hashemite group and a new strategy had to be worked out. In this Abdullah has played a major part. Within the Turkish ruling class there is no dearth of anti-Soviet reactionaries who feel the same need for "security" as Abdullah and his kinsmen. This anti-Soviet orientation is to be seen from the London *Sunday Times* article written by Ahmed Eman Yelmani, editor of the Istanbul *Vatan*, in which he advocates making the Balkans and the Middle East into a "no-man's land of security" where "Russia would be left alone in the role of would-be tutor and creator of friendly governments"—in other words, left alone by exclusion and isolation.

Hence Abdullah's statement to a correspondent of the Istanbul *Cumhuriyet* that Turkey enter the Arab League met with a certain response. Negotiations between Iraqi statesmen and the Turkish government began in Ankara last February, ostensibly on cultural and economic matters between the two countries.

In the meantime, Abdullah launched an open offensive against his opponents in the League and the League generally, with the publication of his book, *My Reminiscences*. This had the effect of a bombshell in the Arab countries, particularly in Egypt.

Of the League he writes, "the present call for Arab unity is of doubtful origin and should be examined . . . subversive efforts are current and thus a union of Arab States is an intangible project" (p. 237). Egypt's dominating position in the League is attacked; "as long as the Arab League is centered in Egypt it is extremely dangerous." His eagerness to serve his British paymasters finds expression in reminding Ibn Saud of Britain's protest against the granting of oil and gold concessions to the American companies in the Peninsula, and in denouncing the concessions as ungodly and not in accordance with Allah's will; "these regions are holy and Ibn Saud may not desecrate them by permitting foreigners to introduce industry which would cause people to forget the Almighty" (p. 258). His hated rival is designated as a butcher and plunderer; while Syria and Lebanon are given a stern warning for not having accepted the "Greater Syria" project.

It will be seen then, that the British-Transjordan Treaty, coming almost simultaneously with the Iraqi-Turkey Pact,



MASS DEMONSTRATION in Tel Aviv. Slogans in this photo include: Against Deportation of Refugees! Halt the Persecution of the Refugees Who Reach Our Country! The Blood of Amram Rudenberg and Yechiel Schwartz, As Well As of All the Victims in the Yishuv, Demand the Immediate Withdrawal of British Troops from Our Land! The Way to Victory Over Imperialism Is Through Jewish-Arab Unity!

In Egypt, the growing movement for complete independence and the evacuation of British troops from the Nile valley has made it extremely difficult for the most pro-British reactionary to support any project which would entrench British rule more firmly in the Middle East; nor would Egyptian ruling circles tolerate Hashemite hegemony in the Arab countries.

In the Levant States, the Federation plan was exposed by the broad nationalist movement as an imperialist maneuver, and Ibn Saud, with one eye on Standard Oil royalties and the other on any move which might strengthen the position of his dynastic rivals, was also a bitter opponent. A powerful anti-Hashemite grouping thus crystallized in the League, constituting an obstacle to the maneuvers of Britain and its allies.

The situation in the Middle East was further complicated by recent events in Iran which have alarmed not only the British (and American) vested interests but their Arab friends as well. In an interview with Jon Kimche, Reuter's Middle East specialist, Abdullah declared in relation to the situation in Iran, that Soviet policy "menaced every Middle East country from the Suez to Afghanistan." Dr. Fahkeril Jamali, director-general of the Iraqi Foreign Office, speaking of the prospective revision of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1932, declared "certain Iraqi circles feel that British air bases give Iraq security."



is part of the new strategy adopted to achieve the same imperialist end. Britain is now attempting to bring its new puppet into the United Nations; and Abdullah as an "independent" monarch, strengthens Hashemite prestige in the Arab League.

### ***Palestine Partition***

There are already indications of further developments which may follow the eventual union with Iraq. The British partition plan for Palestine leaves the way open for the eventual inclusion of the non-Jewish part of Palestine into Abdullah's kingdom. This possibility has been strengthened by the revelation made in the London *Jewish Standard*, that "a meeting was brought about between Moshe Shertok (Zionist leader in the Jewish Agency) and Emir Abdullah" at which the latter "indicated that he was prepared to allow the entrance of 150,000 Jews into Transjordan, provided the Jews agree that he be crowned ruler of Palestine on both sides of the Jordan," and that "he is prepared to grant Jewish autonomous zones under his sovereignty." This has a remarkable resemblance to Ahmed Emin Yelmani's "solution" of the Palestine problem in which he advocated a "small Jewish state" as part of his "no-man's land of security."

It is not surprising, therefore, that these recent developments, coming on the eve of negotiations for the revision of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, have caused grave concern and dismay in Egypt. There it is asked how "independence" for Transjordan is compatible with the maintenance of British troops in that country when the core of Egypt's demands is the evacuation of British troops. In Syria, Transjordan's "independence" has been exposed as an imperialist trick. *L'Orient* stated explicitly that "this Treaty concluded outside the framework of the Arab League constitutes a handicap to all Middle East countries which would have liked to withdraw from foreign influence and to organize themselves outside the limit of any established systems and power blocs."

The constant splintering of Palestine, which historically and economically includes Transjordan, creates a fertile soil for recurrent communal frictions and for imperialist rule. And this "ending" of the tutelage of a mandated territory with the assistance of its ruling cliques is another indication of how British foreign policy has deviated from the principles of Teheran, Crimea and the San Francisco Charter.

*In the next issue:*

### **SONG OF THE MOUNTAIN-JEWS**

An Epic of the Tats in the Caucasian Mountains

Dedicated to Stalin

*Translated by* BER GREEN