

SURVEY OF ARAB AFFAIRS
JEWISH AGENCY
1942/43

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Note to Reader:

From the early 1920s forward, the Palestine Zionist Executive and then the Jewish Agency after 1929, undertook regular assessments of political trends in Arab states surrounding Palestine. Of particular concern to the Jewish Agency leadership was the degree of Arab (dis)unity, especially as it might be expressed in opposition to Zionism. Information for such assessments was regularly gleaned from a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish sources in the Arab countries themselves, and was written either by those in the field, or by someone doing summaries at the Jewish Agency office in Jerusalem. As best as it can be estimated, this assessment was written in late 1942 or 1943 with no signature provided in the document. The file may be found at the Central Zionist Archives, Record Group S25/File 4928.

SURVEY OF ARAB AFFAIRS

When the present war broke out, it found the Arab countries at loggerheads with one another, and differing in their views and aspirations. Such was the situation, despite Britain's strenuous attempts to establish a united front – at least outwardly – among the various Arab emirs, kings and leaders. These efforts date back to 1936, when the Arab rulers issued a proclamation calling upon the Arabs of Palestine to end their strike, which had been in progress for six months, and to refrain from their acts of violence against the British and the Jews. They were continued throughout the period of the Arab riots in Palestine, from 1936 to 1939, and found expression by the intervention, in turn, of Sa'udi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, and Transjordan in Palestinian political affairs. They reached their culmination in the conference on Palestine held in London at the beginning of 1939, which was attended by official representatives of all the Arab countries, with the exception of Syria and the Lebanon, which were then still French mandated territories.

The policy of creating the impression in the world at large that there was full concord and understanding among the Arab rulers, and that they were prepared to assist one another, was pursued by Britain for two reasons. In the first place, there was the need to combat German propaganda, which was widespread, and which had gained a foothold in the Arab countries, even to the extent of partly undermining faith in British justice and strength. In the second, Britain had to safeguard her interests – political, economic and military – in the Arab countries in the event of her becoming involved in a new world war. And the signs of the approaching conflict were becoming increasingly evident as political tension mounted in Europe following Germany's seizure of Austria and Czechoslovakia and her incessant territorial demands upon Poland.

But this maneuver on the part of Britain proved unsuccessful. One of the reasons for its failure was that her efforts to win the sympathy of the Arab world had begun too late: German propaganda had already struck deep roots in the Arab countries. But the main reason was that Britain was not able to comply with the exaggerated demands put forward by a number of Arab countries – demands that she herself had fostered over a long period, and which were subsequently exploited by Germany on a large scale in an attempt to compete with British influence in the Near East. These demands were voiced by several of the Arab countries which wished to expand and increase their power at the expense of their weaker neighbours, or which had not yet succeeded in gaining their independence and standing on their own feet. The following is a picture of the political situation in the Arab world at the outbreak of the present war.

- (a) Sa'udi Arabia was trying to undermine the influence of Iraq and Transjordan in the Arab world, and to extend her domination over several areas in Transjordan and on the Persian Gulf, and also to place one of Ibn Saud's sons on the Syrian throne.
- (b) Iraq was trying to limit Ibn Saud's sphere of influence to the Arabian Peninsula. She was laying plan for the establishment of an Arab Federation, composed of Iraq, Syria, the Lebanon, Transjordan and Palestine, in which complete hegemony was to be accorded to Iraq. What particularly interested Iraq was the fact that the scheme for the Arab Federation provided that country with an outlet to the Mediterranean.
- (c) Abdullah, Emir of Transjordan, was in search of a throne. His plans to foster his ambition were constantly changing. At one time he thought of making a bid to regain his father's kingdom of the Hejaz; at another, he entertained designs upon the throne of Iraq. At yet another time he demanded to be made ruler of a federation comprising Syria, the Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan.
- (d) Egypt sought to spread her spiritual and political influence over all the Arabic-speaking Moslem territories north and south of her borders by proclaiming the young King Farouk as Caliph, or else by making treaties with the countries concerned which would ensure that they came under her domination and influence. It was this ambition which induced her to concern herself with the affairs of the Arab countries, and with those of Palestine in particular, after having for a long time been removed from them, their problems and their relations with Great Britain.

The truth of the matter is that the four above-mentioned countries, which enjoyed virtually complete independence in internal affairs, and which were tied to Britain by bonds of friendship, would never have contemplated the possibility of realizing their secret ambitions, but for the encouragement they received from Britain herself at the time

of the Arab riots in Palestine between 1936 and 1939. It was thanks to such encouragement that those ambitions became rapidly transformed into demands whose fulfillment each country sought from Britain in return for preserving peace within its boundaries and for undertaking not to harm Britain's interests in the East in the event of her becoming involved in a world war. The Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Huseini, now a resident of Berlin, who was well aware of Britain's delicate predicament on the

eve of war, turned the new trend in world politics to his advantage. Within a short space of time – i.e. during the conference on Palestine which took place in London in the beginning of 1939, and shortly afterwards – he contrived, by means of daring political maneuvering, to turn the Palestine question into one of general importance to the Arabs. He also succeeded in transforming himself from a local leader into an international figure whom every Arab, be a leader, king or prince, should help in his fight against Britain and his attempts to consolidate his position among his own people and overcome his enemies and rivals. The Mufti succeeded to a considerable extent in frustrating Britain's political plans in the Arab world – despite the fact that they would have greatly benefitted the Arabs – and in arousing widespread hostility towards Britain, whom, together with her allies, he represented as monstrous beasts with their jaws distended to swallow up the Arab world.

But the Mufti was not playing a lone hand. Everything he did was with the cognizance and agreement of Germany, who was closely following developments in the Arab world. Germany scattered money lavishly in order to gain the support of various Arab leaders and prominent figures whose “nationalism” was not proof against the glitter of gold, and in order to fan the flames of anti-British feeling that the Mufti had kindled in many breasts. Nazi propagandists and agents began to broadcast to the Arabs, both from the official and from secret wireless transmitters, preferring numerous suggestions for fulfilling Arab aspirations, -- aspirations that Britain could not possibly realize, and that Germany could not have realized either, had she ever been fortunate enough to gain control of the Middle East. These suggestions lacked any basis in reality: their sole purpose was to mislead the Arabs and exploit them in the German interest. Moreover, not only were they not capable of working out in practice, but they were mutually contradictory. For instance, at one and the same time the Germans offered Iraq and Sa'udi Arabia full control of the Arab Orient if they would help them to conquer that part of the world and expel the British and French from them. At the same time, too, they promised the Moslems of the Lebanon and Palestine full independence, while to Syria they proposed the formation of a quadripartite federation consisting of Syria, Palestine, Transjordan and the Lebanon. They also promised the Caliphate to the Egyptians. They even tried to enlist the support of Yemen by promising to extend her borders at the expense of Sa'udi Arabia and Abyssinia. By means of such “generosity”, and with the help of their agent, the Mufti of Jerusalem, the Germans succeeded in turning a not inconsiderable number of Arab leaders into staunch Nazi propagandists and sworn opponents of Britain – even if they did not emerge in their true colours until the war was actually in progress. The best illustration of this was afforded by the anti-British revolt in Iraq, while Rashid Ali al-Kilani was in power in May, 1941.

It is no secret that Germany achieved an appreciable measure of success by means of her maneuvers in the Arab world. But this success is not attributable solely to the large sums of money she expended or the promises she lavished. It was largely due to the propensity to make concessions and indulge in appeasement, the lack of a firm hand, and the indecision that characterized British policy, not only in Palestine, but in the neighbouring countries as well, during the two decades preceding the war. The British treated the Arab States as if they were great with strong armies and navies, a high and

well-established civilization, and a long and glorious tradition of independent policy. They purposely ignored the fact that the Arab countries had, up to twenty years before, been subject to the cruel and despotic rule of Turkey, who had kept them under her thumb for four centuries, and from whose domination they would not have been liberated but for the assistance rendered, and the many lives laid down, by British and French soldiers between 1914 and 1918. Furthermore, they ignored the fact that, although twenty years had passed by since the liberation of the Arab countries from the Turkish yoke, and their transformation into independent and semi-independent States, they had not succeeded in finding a common basis of understanding; nor had they made any attempt to establish an economic or social enterprise worthy of the name. The proportion of illiteracy had not decreased at all; and the areas of neglected, but cultivable, land remained exactly as they had been in Turkish times. In addition, Britain, who has a more profound knowledge of the Arab world than any other Western Power, did not permit her to give the same high-sounding assurances to the Arabs as Germany. For any attempt on her side to meet part of the Arab demands would inevitably have drawn fresh and exaggerated demands in their train. These would in turn have buoyed up German hopes and expectations of fanning the flames of anger and hatred against the British “oppressors” in the breasts of the Arabs, who would have been led to believe that the only way of getting what they wanted from Britain was to go over to the enemy camp and hasten the downfall of the British Empire.

Striking evidence of this is afforded by the attitude being taken up by the Syrians and Lebanese towards France. Before the outbreak of the war those two peoples would have considered themselves fortunate had they succeeded in inducing France to grant them semi-autonomy, and to sign a treaty of friendship with them on the lines of the Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi treaties. Now, however, that France has recognized their right to independence, and vested in them most of the authority wielded by her as the mandatory power, they repudiate all ties with her, whether political, economic or cultural. Furthermore, they are now demanding no more and no less than the complete abandonment of France’s historic rights in their countries, the repudiation of her international obligations towards them, and the withdrawal of her troops from their territory.

At the beginning of the war it appeared to detached observers that Britain had realized the error of her policy of appeasement in the Arab world, after several events had taken place which clearly showed that the Arabs were not interested in linking their fate with that of the British Empire, and that, despite the great moral and material assistance rendered to them by Britain between the two world wars, they were quite ready to come to agreement with the Germans and Italians, should they succeed in defeating the English and French and conquering the Near East. Every expert on Arab affairs is convinced that the attitude adopted by the Arab countries towards Britain would have been different – that it would have been friendly instead of hostile – had the British departed from the policy they had pursued for the previous twenty years; in other words, if they had tried to solve each Arab problem by itself, and especially if they had settled the political issues connected with Palestine without involving the Arab States. The British propagandists should have implanted in the Arabs the realization of the fact that the plan for Arab Unity

– whose praises were constantly being sung by the Italians and Germans, and whose implementation was continually being promised after the Axis victory – was not capable of realization, not on account of the opposition of the British, French or Zionists, but because of the political, cultural and economic situation among the Arab themselves. They should have impressed upon the Arabs that the differences in cultural levels between one Arab country and another, and the antagonisms and rivalries between the Arab States, precluded all possibility, at least in the ensuing period, of establishing a federation which would unite the whole Arab world, or even a greater or lesser part of it. And there were many obvious and convincing proofs that could have been adduced in support of this contention. Had Britain pursued such a realistic policy, she would have had no need, during the first two years of the present war, to bring influence to bear, unsuccessfully, upon Egypt to declare war on Italy, on Iraq to sever diplomatic relations with Germany, and on Saudi Arabia to issue a declaration, however short, from which it could be inferred that Ibn Saud was still loyal to his ally, Great Britain. In this manner she would have succeeded in preventing the infiltration of Italian and German propaganda into the Arab world, which led to the crystallization of numerous elements opposed to the principles and forces of democracy. Among these were some who, not having sold themselves to Nazis, hoped that there would be a long and bitter war of attrition between the Axis and the Allies which would leave both sides so weak that the Arab countries would be able to rid themselves of all foreign imperialist power and attain full independence without impediment or undue effort.

At this point it is worthwhile devoting a few words to the sadly mistaken view maintained by certain Arabs, who naively believed that they could build up their full independence on the ruins of the British Empire, or that they could obtain it through the prostration of the chief European powers – such as Britain and France – with vital interests in the East. These people forget, or else for some reason they pretend to forget, that the removal of British influence from the Arab world is not in itself sufficient to secure Arab liberation and independence. Peace and independence can only be preserved with the aid of armed might, abundant economic resources, etc., none of which are at the disposal of the Arab States, and which they can secure only with the help of a great wealthy and democratic power such as Great Britain or the U.S.A. Moreover, the proponents of this view seem to forget that in close proximity to the Arab world there is a State more powerful than any of the Arab countries. That State ruled over them for a long period, and to this day it would like to conquer or annex a number of areas rich in raw materials lying within the Arab world, such as Mosul in Iraq, or the al-Jazira and Aleppo districts of Syria, or even other areas, should the opportunity present itself. If this State has, during the past twenty-five years, taken no steps to gain possession of these Arab territories, which it has coveted ever since they were torn from its grasp, its caution is not to be attributed to fear of opposition on the part of the Arabs (it knows exactly what importance to attach to opposition that is backed neither by trained military forces nor modern weapons), but to the fact that Britain happens to be in the Mediterranean; and Britain is a power with which Turkey, for reasons we cannot enter into here, is not anxious to embroil herself. The best illustration of Turkey's imperialistic designs upon the Arab world is the way in which she peacefully extended her influence over the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1937, and then proceeded to incorporate it in her territory.

Possibly the responsibility for this unstable political situation in the Arab world at the outbreak of the present war is not to be laid entirely at the door of the central Government in London. Those chiefly to blame are the British representatives and emissaries in the Arab countries, who pursued one single policy from which they refused to deviate by so much as a hairsbreadth. This policy consisted in placating and appeasing the Arab States at the expense of each other, or of Zionism, or by giving assurances, or encouraging aspirations and demands, that were incapable of fulfillment, such as Arab Unity. Its sole purpose, as was apparent to any keen observer, was to gain time in order to complete the armaments program of the British Empire, and to prepare the ground for the entry of the U.S.A. into the war.

But the clearest testimony of the failure of this policy was the attitude of the Arabs themselves after the outbreak of the war. Of the 13,000,000 Arabs and the 17,000,000 Egyptians, the only ones to declare war on Germany, and subsequently on Italy, were the 300,000 inhabitants of Transjordan. And even they did not so wholeheartedly it was only as a result of the pressure exercised by their ruler, the Emir Abdullah, who apparently hoped to be amply rewarded by Britain alienated themselves from her. Or else it may have been due to the pressure exercised by the British themselves, who hold the mandate over Transjordan.

The attitude of the other Arab States varied. Saudi Arabia did not even make a declaration of neutrality. Nor did she see fit to deny the statements broadcast from German and Italian stations designed to impress upon Arab listeners that Saudi Arabia was hostile to Britain and sympathetic towards the Axis.

Yemen withdrew into her own shell and isolated herself from the other Arab countries, and waited passively for the Italians to come. She believed that there was no avoiding the bitter fate in store for her, and that it was therefore just as well to welcome the conquerors, and not place any obstacles in their path.

Egypt, it is true, severed her relations with the two Axis powers; but only after protracted negotiations with her "ally", Great Britain. Moreover, during the first three years of the war – up to the time when the English forcibly placed the Waqf party in power and arrested a not inconsiderable number of ministers, leaders and journalists who openly and aggressively opposed any real collaboration with the Allies – the Egyptians did not so much as raise a finger to help Britain in the fight she was waging against the Italians and Germans on their very soil. They looked upon the war as something remote that had not the slightest significance with regard to determining the fate, not only of the Nile valley, but of the entire Arab world. Even after its accession to power, the Waqf party did not succeed in inducing Egypt to join the war on the side of the Allies; nor could it prevent the holding of a number of pro-German demonstrations in the streets of Alexandria at the time when Rommel was advancing to al-Alamein. The attitude of Iraq underwent several changes in the course of the war. During the first year she was neutral. In the second, she went pro-Nazi and declared war on England. In the third, she turned pro-British. And in the fourth, she, so to say, entered the war on the side of

the Allies. But her entry into the war was by no means unconditional, or devoid of ulterior motives. The Iraqi Government stated openly that their country's participation in the war would be merely symbolic, and that her joining in the conflict was due to a wish to benefit by the victory of the Allies and to cover up the armed anti-democratic uprising of Rashid Ali al-Kilani.

Syria and the Lebanon, too, changed their tack more than once. They offered themselves as goods for sale on the international market: all comers were welcome. When the Germans and Italians came in 1940, they welcomed them and cooperated with them. When the British and free French came in 1941, they acclaimed them. In return for such behavior they are now demanding to be given a place at the Peace Conference, and to be regarded as loyal allies deserving of all kinds of political and economic "benefactions".

The Arabs of Palestine, at the outbreak of the war, were broken and helpless after their sustained outburst of violence, which had lasted for three years and drained their strength and ended in internal strife. On the day the war broke out most of their leaders were either in exile, gaol or enemy territory. Nevertheless, Britain concentrated in Palestine and the neighboring countries sufficient military forces to crush any open revolt or underground activity with all speed and the full rigor of the law. Yet the Nazi and Fascist propagandists succeeded to some extent – at a price – in the Husseini (the Mufti's) family into carrying on activities on their behalf. These activities mainly took the form of endangering security in certain areas by acts of robbery; attacks upon Arabs, Jews and Englishmen; spreading Nazi propaganda by means of private conversations and closed gatherings in the towns and villages; and the dissemination of aggressively worded broadsides directed against the Jews and English, invariably ending with a refrain assuring the Arabs of the imminent victory of the Axis powers which would liberate the Arab countries from British domination. Matters reached such a pass that some Arabs actually compiled lists of Jewish and English property in Palestine with details as to how it was to be apportioned among them. Others drew up plans for an internal uprising and the establishment of an Arab government that would welcome the Nazi conquerors when they approached the gates of Palestine. Moreover, no secret was made of those plans. They were talked of openly and exultingly in the cafes and other public places, within the sight and hearing of the British police. But the British authorities, instead of adopting a firm policy and trying to uproot this hostile movement, attempted to ignore it, and to pretend that it was non-existent. They endeavored to placate the Arabs -- mainly the pro-Nazi elements – by every possible means, e.g. appointing the extremists to high and responsible posts; bestowing pensions and honors; curtailing Jewish activities and restricting the possibilities of their furthering Zionist work, etc. The harsh official attitude towards the Jews was mainly expressed by a reluctance to accept Jewish volunteers in the armed forces in really large numbers; by making use of their professional, technical and military knowledge; and by closing the gates of Palestine to refugees who had escaped from the Nazi limbo. The ruthlessness displayed by the authorities towards the refugees of the "Patria", "Atlantic", and Struma have become a byword. Everything possible was done to gain the good graces of the pro-Nazi Arabs, who were waiting impatiently for the downfall of the British Empire, that they might trample in its dust.

Such was the situation In the Arab countries and in Palestine during the first two or three years of the war. It could have been totally different, had the Arabs been loyal to England; and had they been imbued with a realization of the principle of democracy, with a belief in the possibility of achieving Arab Unity, and with a desire to secure its fulfillment. But anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of Arab affairs – be he Englishman, Arab or Jew – knows that this was not so, and that any attempt on the part of British emissaries in the East to cover up the truth will not succeed in altering the facts. Anyone who follows developments in the Arab world is aware that the leaders in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere are concerned first and foremost with their own personal position and private interests; and that up to the third year of the war they balanced themselves carefully on the fence, so as to be able to declare themselves finally that Germany was going to win the war, they were prepared to make protestations of loyalty to, and sympathy with, that country, and to demand from her the price of neutrality and non-assistance to England in her fight against the Nazis. However, should the contrary take place, and final victory rest with England, they would hasten to offer her their congratulations, profess their friendship for her, and affirm their faithful adherence to the agreements between their countries and her. Then they would come forward and demand the price of their silence and of their refraining from going over to the enemy camp at the most critical juncture in the history of the British Empire. Nor is it to be wondered at that those Arab leaders who did not escape to enemy territory adopted such a vacillating attitude. Most of them were known to be men well versed in the art of exploiting certain political situations and turning them to their own advantage. And if their path had till then always been strewn with roses, it was because the British representatives in the East had always conceived it their duty to gain the friendship of such leaders in order to safeguard British influence and interests in that corner of the world. What is more, the British representatives had consistently scotched every attempt to remove those turncoat leaders from the political platform in the interests of their own peoples; and from time to time they helped them, by talking about Arab Unity, to appear in the guise of loyal and devoted nationalists waging a hard fight for the independence of their countries, in order that they might retain their influence over the masses of the urban and rural population, and create the impression that they were in the forefront of the struggle for the real and vital interests of the Arab world.

The question that is now being asked, not only by detached observers, but mainly by educated young Arabs concerned solely with the good of their people, is this. Have the Britain representatives in the East, after seeing and hearing all that has taken place there during the five years of the war, succeeded in acquainting themselves with the true state of affairs; and have they abandoned the policy of appeasement, concession and toadying that they have been pursuing for a quarter of a century, and that has not benefited the British Empire in the least, -- particularly in its hour of trial? Political developments in most of the Arab countries during the past two years; the enthusiastic proclamations of the British Foreign Secretary in the House of Commons to the effect that Britain regarded with sympathy all plans for political and economic co-operation among the Arab countries; the sanctioning of poisonous anti-Zionist propaganda in all Eastern countries; the lowering of French prestige in Syria and the Lebanon; the encouragement of extremist elements in Palestine to take the leadership into their hands once again; and

the abandonment by Britain of her true friends and the forces of progress in the East; all these, as well as other facts, enable a clear answer to be given to the question, namely that there has been no change whatever in British policy in the East. As in the past, the Arab world of today continues to suffer from political instability, from the absence of a faithful and disinterested leadership, and from inability to turn to its other interests – economic, social and cultural.

The notion is prevalent, especially in British circles, that an Arab Unity could be established which would embrace all the Arab peoples in the East and weld them into one political and economic framework. The establishment of such unity, it is claimed, would confer great benefits, both upon the Arabs themselves, and upon the British Empire, which has solemn ties with them and vital interests in their territories. But the truth of the matter is that such a scheme is more likely to prove harmful than helpful to the Arabs and the power with which they are associated. Each one of the Arab nations to be included in the unity scheme is concerned – despite its love for its sister-nations – about preserving its political independence, its sovereignty over its territory, and its prestige. This is the first obstacle to the creation of an Arab Unity as envisaged by its protagonists. There is no doubt – as we have lately seen proof – that dispre dominance and hegemony within the framework of the unity; and in the end it will lead to friction, and to a widening of the gulf that already exists between the Arab nations, instead of drawing them closer together and smoothing out the differences between them.

It is also argued – again chiefly in British circles – that in the past the Arabs succeeded in establishing a large and far-flung empire which lasted for a considerable period. But they seem to forget that the conditions and factors which existed in the distant past are not to be found today. Chief among them are the following:

- (a) A religious leader of the caliber of Muhammad, who gave the world a new and vigorous religion.
- (b) The weakness and decay of the great Persian and Byzantine empires, on the ruins of which it was possible to build up a new empire.
- (c) The famine and distress that prevailed in Arabia, and that compelled the Bedouin tribes to force their way out of the peninsula and subjugate the entire Orient.

And the opportunity can here be taken to point out that even if the Arab race originally founded the Moslem Empire, it dominated it for only a short time. It was soon supplanted by other races superior to it culturally or militarily, such as the Persians and Turks.

So far no great religious leader has come to light in our own day who could hope to emulate the influence of Muhammad. None of the attempts made by young King Farouk of Egypt to assume the religious leadership of the Arab world have yet succeeded. His

frequent attendance at the mosques, growing a beard, generous contributions to charitable institutions and fanatical support of every religious undertaking have not yet availed him. He has encountered strenuous opposition on the part of the other Arab kings and emirs, and scorn and contempt on the part of the intelligentsia throughout the Arab countries. Moreover, the Moslem religion, as an incentive to unity and a rallying point, has lost much of its former force. Otherwise Ibn Saud, who lives in the Moslem holy land, guards the tombs of the prophets and holy places, and administers his kingdom on the basis of Koran, would have succeeded in turning himself into the idol of Moslems, not only in the Arab countries, but throughout the world. But he has many enemies, and there are many who covet his throne, both in the Moslem and Arab worlds.

As for present-day economic conditions, they cannot provide a basis for a mighty shifting of population such as took place in the early days of Islam. Needless to say, the danger of famine is still very remote. And in addition to all the obstacles enumerated, mention should also be made of the vast distances that separate the various Arab countries, and the bad and primitive roads, which would make the administration of a central government a matter of difficulty. Nor should the fact be overlooked that, while the Arabs belong to the same race and speak the same language, each one of the Arab countries contains different Moslem sects, and has lived its own self-contained life for a long period without being dependent upon the other countries. This situation has, in the course of time, led to the creation of differences in ways of life that could not be reconciled overnight. Then there is the question of whether a uniform kind of government could be found which would unite all the Arab peoples. If, for instance, it were decided to adopt a constitutional parliamentary system, many Arab countries would be found incapable of adapting themselves to it, at any rate during the present epoch. In order to attain the prerequisites for such a regime, they would have to undergo a long transitional period. If, on the other hand, a monarchical form of government were chosen— it is one that is much nearer to the spirit and tradition of the Arabs — obstacles would nevertheless be encountered which would prove almost insuperable at present. It is hard to believe that a candidate for kingship could be found who would prove acceptable to all the Arab countries. Any candidate, whether of the Hashimite, Saudi, Yemenite, or Egyptian royal houses (and only a member of one of the families now ruling in the Arab East would come into consideration), would encounter strenuous and obdurate opposition on the part of the members of the other kingly families, who would feel that they had been unfairly discriminated against. They would make every effort to depose him at the first opportunity. It is even conceivable that civil war might result. Nor is it beyond the bounds of possibility that the issue would provide a pretext for several foreign imperialist powers to take a hand in the affairs of the Arab world with the intention of ousting Britain from the East.

It is therefore to be inferred from the foregoing that the establishment of general Arab Unity is practically out of the question at present, and that any talk of it is calculated merely to disturb the peace of the Arab world; to prevent all possibility of its progressing in the economic and cultural spheres; and to hold out a constant threat of danger, not only to the Arab world, but to world peace. But if Arab Unity is not feasible just now under present conditions in the East, the strengthening of the ties between the Arab

States – so long as it does not in the least prejudice the independence, political sovereignty or geographical integrity of any one of them – is not an impossibility. But such strengthening of the ties would, for decades to come, have to be expressed solely in fostering cultural and trade relations. However, it is to be feared that even an attempt within such a modest and cautious framework is liable to be fraught with appreciable difficulties in view of the absence of a sane political tradition in the East, and the fact that strong ambitions for domination are inherent in each of the Arab States; and these might act as a bar to concessions of even a secondary nature that might be demanded in the general interest.

So far all the talks that have taken place between the Egyptian premier and the representatives of the Arab countries, as well as the political discussions that have been held at Beirut, Damascus and Cairo between the heads of the Arab governments, have revealed that there is no point at present in discussing any fundamental or far-reaching scheme for unity, whether political or economic, among the Arab countries. It has also been demonstrated that the basis of cooperation put forward by some Arab leaders – e.g. in the fields of customs, education, transport, police and security – under the prevailing economic and social conditions in the Arab countries would be more liable to complicate matters and retard development than to achieve progress, solve problems and prepare the soil generally. The question now is whether England's representatives in the East will realise what the Arabs have already realized for themselves, and put an end, once and for all, to their talk about Arab Unity. Time will show.