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“THE ARAB AWAKENING”
A SOURCE FOR THE HISTORIAN?

BY

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Oxford

George Antonius, C. B. E., was born in the Lebanon in 1891 of Greek Orthodox parents. He had the benefits of British nationality and education. He first went to Victoria College, Alexandria, then to King's College, Cambridge. In the 1920s, he became a high Civil Servant in the Mandatory Government of Palestine and subsequently, a prominent member in the Palestine Arab movement. He died in 1942 in Jerusalem². His book *The Arab Awakening* is the only book available in English at the present moment which deals with the question of the Arab literary revival of the nineteenth century and tries to link this literary revival with the later national movement. This is no doubt the reason why the book is often indiscriminately used as the only source of reference on the subject. It first appeared in 1938, when the political situation in Palestine made it necessary for the Arabs—as well as the Zionists—to make as much publicity in the West, and win as much support as possible.

In the first paragraph of the foreword to his book, the author says that the “object of this book is primarily to tell a story and to mark its significance”; not to give a final and detailed history of the Arab Movement, but only an outline in the form of a continuous narrative; such a continuous history of the movement is lacking, and what has appeared so far has been based on either Arabic sources or English ones, but not on a combination of the

¹ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, London 1938.

² Obituary notices in *JRCAS*, vol. XXIX, 1942, pp. 285-286, signed “H. E. B.”; *al-Mustami^c al-‘Arabi*, vol. III, no. 8, July 21, 1942; *The Times*, London, May 27, 1942.

two. The author makes it clear that he will try and fill the gap in the written history of the Arab movement by drawing from two different "founts of knowledge" and by aiming at an objective conclusion.

A glance at the table of contents would immediately arouse one's curiosity, for Antonius very cleverly heads his chapters with titles suitable to a detective story: *A False Start*, *The Start*, *The Plot*, and so on. The author's mastery of the language, and the suggestive power of his style become at once apparent.

In chapter I (*The Background*), Antonius defines the term Arab as denoting someone, not necessarily descended from the desert Arabs, whose culture, and especially mother-tongue, is Arabic. For him therefore, the Arab world extends as far west as the Atlantic. In spite of this definition, he confines his story to the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent. It is to be questioned whether in discussing an Arab revival it is permissible to leave out all account of the Egyptian national movement.

In chapter II, the author includes under the title "*False Start*" both the Wahhābi movement and Muḥammad 'Alī's desire for an Arab empire. Both movements failed; the first because of the defeat inflicted on it by Muḥammad 'Alī and his son, the second for more complex reasons. Muḥammad 'Alī was not an Arab and his driving motive was ambition, a thing which created differences even between him and his son who, through his early contact with the Arabs had come to feel as one of them and to desire a real Arab revival. It is questionable whether the attempt of Muḥammad 'Alī and his son to carve out an empire for themselves was really "an attempt to create an Arab movement." (p. 27.)¹ But there are two more factors in the defeat of Muḥammad 'Alī: i) the opposition of the British, and ii) the complete lack of an Arab national consciousness. It is thus that Antonius introduces King Husain and his sons who were Arabs, had the support of the British and, what

¹ For a full and scholarly treatment of this aspect of the Syrian expedition, see: Asad J. Rustum, *The Royal Archives of Egypt, and the Origins of the Egyptian Expedition to Syria, (1831-1841)*, Beirut, 1936. It is doubtful whether such a simple explanation of the events as that given by Antonius can be sustained. See further *Les Campagnes d'Ibrahim Pacha en Syrie et en Asie Mineure (1831-1840)*, MS edited by Assad J. Rustum, Arabic text, Heliopolis, n. d., and especially H. Temperley, *England and the Near East, The Crimea*, London, 1936, pp. 419-422.

is more important according to him, came at a time when the Arab national consciousness had been aroused by the literary revival in Syria.

In chapter III (The Start, 1847-1868), Antonius traces the genesis of this revival which culminated in the official recognition of *al-Jam'iyya al-'Ilmiyya al-Sūriyya*, a society whose membership of 150 included Arab personalities of all creeds. This chapter is useful for the information it gives about the activities of the different missionary societies which, according to the author, were permitted to flourish thanks to the rule of tolerance that Ibrahim Pasha introduced in Syria, and for the faithful dating of the opening of various schools, the introduction of printing presses, etc. . . . Antonius also differentiates between the programmes of the state schools, the foreign missions, both French and American, and the local ecclesiastical schools. His real tribute goes to the American Mission who gave pride of place to Arabic, and thus launched the great revival initiated by Nāṣif al-Yāzeḗjī and Buṭrus al-Bustāni, both Lebanese Protestants and men of learning and character. Al-Bustāni's literary achievements are described and the scattered material about the first newspapers and societies in Syria is given here in a concise and clear manner. In connection with al-Bustāni, the author mentions that he founded in 1870 a fortnightly political literary review the motto for which was "Patriotism is an article of faith, a sentiment hitherto unknown in the Arab world." (p. 50.) It can be safely said that Antonius himself subscribes to this belief. A poem, the first verse of which figures as an epigraph to the book, was read and secretly circulated by Ibrāhīm al-Yāzeḗjī among certain members of *al-Jam'iyya al-'Ilmiyya al-Sūriyya*. The author calls this poem the first cry uttered by the Arab nationalist movement. He goes on to say: "The poem did much to foster the national movement in its infancy. It owed its vogue to its easy cadence and the neatness of its rhymes, and above all to the fact that, echoing sentiments unconsciously felt, it could awaken true emotion in the people for whom it was intended." (p. 55). Emotions and sentiments unconsciously felt are, in his own words, at the origin of the political movement of which Antonius provides the defence and illustration; it must be added that Antonius shares these emotions, and

this enables us to define his first characteristic: a historian he calls himself, but he is a historian with a political passion. In the next few pages, he outlines the disturbances and the massacres of the mid-nineteenth century in Syria and ends the chapter with these words: "It (the upheaval of 1860) awakened men's minds to the horrors of their moral stagnation and rekindled the zeal of those who saw that at the root of the country's tribulation was the sectarian hatred that thrives on ignorance . . . The seed of patriotism was sown, and a movement came into being whose inspiration was Arab and whose ideals were national instead of sectarian." There is absolutely no evidence that Syria after 1860 saw the dawn of a new brotherhood or a lessening of the "sectarian hatred which thrives on ignorance." As a matter of fact, these sectarian differences were more securely established by the very results of the 1860 events when the Maronites were given safeguards against Druze and Muslim interference.

The next five chapters give an important account of the various secret societies and clubs which were forming themselves to combat Turkish tyranny; this is indeed the fullest accessible account of Arab political activities in Syria to be found in Western sources.¹ For the student, another important fact emerges from these and later pages, the fact that the author had access to Faisal's personal diary and bases—so he claims—his interpretation of the factors that led up to Arab-British friendship and to the Arab revolt, on the information he gathered from that diary and from the long conversations he had with the leaders of the movement such as Husain and many others. Antonius also touches on the problems of sectarian loyalties to be found in Syria, but he does not make it clear how politically important or unimportant these loyalties were. To take one example where he does not display his usual lucidity; he mentions (pp. 114-118) that a congress took place in Paris in 1913. The impression is that it was a gathering of a band of brothers assembled in amity and concord, to tender

¹ Brief histories of the secret societies in Syria are given by Amīn Sa'īd, *al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubra*, Cairo 1934, vol. I, pp. 6-50, vol. II, pp. 35-44. The account of these societies given in *La Vérité sur la Question Syrienne*, published by the command of the 4th Ottoman Army, Constantinople 1916, in spite of its unavoidable bias, is quite invaluable in the details it records and the documents it reproduces. A summary of the contents of "*La Vérité sur la Question Syrienne*" is given by A. Mandelstam, *Le Sort de l'Empire Ottoman*, Lausanne 1917, pp. 344-349.

disinterested advice on the ills which the Ottoman empire was then heir to. Such was not the case. The people who were assembled there had disparate and perhaps contradictory aims in view. There exists a contemporary letter, which makes this point clear, written to Rashīd Riḍa in January 1914 by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī, the President of the Congress, later a member of the Ottoman Senate, and subsequently executed in Syria by the Turks:

“I have already described to you in detail how, when I went to Paris, I found the affairs of the Congress in chaos, and how much pains we took to cover up the matter and to make, with the help of God, the Congress more presentable than could be expected. At the close of the meetings, the gathering which had been artificially brought together, dispersed. A short while later, the patience of the Beirutis was exhausted and they left for their country; so I remained all alone to represent the ideal. Khalīl Zainiyya and Ayyūb Thābit also stayed behind, but they had not sipped one sip from the fountain of Arab unity, no, nor from that of Syrian unity; their only interest was in Beirut and in Beirut alone. Because they are educated, they got on with me and I with them, and we became good friends until I left; and there was none of this friendship, nor its quarter, between them and their other Beirut companions, the Muslims.”¹

The men who convened this Congress were in fact, later on, glib exponents of French dominance in Syria, and strong opponents of Faiṣal’s Arab nationalist movement.² The later activities of Shukri Ghānim, the Vice-President of the Congress, are not mentioned. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, he was the spokesman for the Syrian Commission which strongly denied the Arab character of Syria.³ Of those other members of the Commission who ac-

¹ Amin Sa’id, vol. I, p. 43; this letter first appeared in *al-Manār*, 1334H., vol. XIX, pp. 175-180.

² Najīb ‘Azzūri, a man of rather dubious connections and questionable integrity, gives also his comments on the Congress. The delegates are said to be real nationalists at heart, but out of fear and common-sense, talk only of decentralisation; the real organisers are according to him Shukri Ghānim and the brothers Muṭrān, the rest only “des moutons de Panurge.” E. Jung, *La Révolte Arabe*, Paris 1924-1925, vol. I, pp. 67-68.

For the proceedings of this Congress see, E. Rossi, *Documenti sull’origine e gli sviluppi della questione araba (1875-1944)*, Rome 1944, pp. 11-15; Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, vol. X, part II, p. 826; Amin Sa’id, vol. I, pp. 25 ff.

³ See P. L. Hanna, *British Policy in Palestine*, Washington, 1942, p. 50. For full text of his speech, see D. Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Paris Peace Conference*, New York 1924, vol. XIV, pp. 399-416.

accompanied him at the meeting of the Supreme Council on February 13, 1919,¹ Jamil Mardam is probably the most interesting in his political career. He was one of the signatories of the Manifesto of the Syrian-Arab Congress of 1913.² During the First World War, he worked for the French and collaborated with Shukri Ghānim in anti-Faiṣal agitation; but in 1920 we find him in Damascus, prominent among those who advocated resistance to Gouraud to the last.³ His later career is well-known. The career of Charles Debbas, the Secretary to the Congress is no less varied.⁴ The explanation of all these differences and contradictions cannot lie anywhere but in the sectarian loyalties which are still so important in the Middle East.

With chapter IX (Great Britain's Pledge), we come to a point that will appear, as we go on with the book, to be its main theme; namely, the inclusion of Palestine in the territories promised by the British to the Arabs, a question which has now no more than an academic interest since for a long time before the establishment of the state of Israel, the conflict between Zionist Jew and Arab in Palestine had been a conflict of temperaments which expressed itself in a contest of physical strength. Antonius makes out a legalistic case to the effect that there could be no doubt as to the inclusion of Palestine in those territories. I shall not enter into the rights and wrongs of his arguments for that has no doubt been fully done by his opponents, whether supporters of the British or the Zionist case.⁵ I shall only point out on what the author bases his claim and how he has selected his material and sifted his sources so as to support his thesis. His argument is twofold:

i) that the British never excluded Palestine from the territories pledged to the Arabs nor did they ever mean to,

ii) that no Arab leader ever had doubts about that, and would certainly not have acquiesced in such an exclusion.

He bases his argument on the McMahon Correspondence, the

¹ D. Hunter Miller, vol. XIV, p. 399.

² Amin Sa'īd, vol. I, p. 29.

³ Amin Sa'īd, vol. I, pp. 25, 29, vol. II, pp. 36, 106.

⁴ See for instance P. Rondot, *Destins des Chrétiens d'Orient*, "Politique Étrangère", Feb. 1946, p. 54.

⁵ For instance, L. Stein, *Promises and Afterthoughts etc.*, London 1939; White Paper, 1939, Cmd. 5974.

Hogarth Message, the Declaration to the Seven, the Anglo-French declaration of November 1918, and the Faisal-Weizmann agreement.

In connection with the McMahon Correspondence, it has to be noticed that Antonius was the first person to make these letters known integrally to the European public, with the exception, of course, of the letter of October 24, 1915, which deals with the question of frontiers and which appeared as early as 1925.¹ The letters, as given by Antonius in the appendix, correspond, with a few minor variations in dating and similar details, to the official text. The latter text however makes available ten and not eight letters as Antonius does; these other two letters deal with the financial and other help that was demanded by Husain and granted by McMahon.²

On whether the British ever meant to include Palestine in the territories allocated to the Arabs, the author does not keep his promise of examining both "founts of knowledge", the English and the Arabic. For how else can one explain the complete silence over three denials of such an intention, which have to be mentioned in any consideration of the case? The first of these denials is a letter sent in April 1923 to Herbert Samuel, then High Commissioner for Palestine, by Sir Gilbert Clayton who had been closely associated with McMahon when he negotiated with the Sharif. Clayton makes it clear that McMahon never had the intention of including Palestine in the general pledge to the Arabs. The second is a letter written in 1922 by McMahon and quoted by Philip Graves.³ The third is a letter from McMahon in *The Times* of July 23, 1937.⁴ In both

¹ In the Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission, Seventh Session, 1925. Amīn Sa'īd had of course already published them in Arabic, vol. I, pp. 130-144. G. Kampffmeyer discusses what parts of the letters were first published, where and by whom, see "Urkunden und Berichte zur Gegenwartsgeschichte des Arabischen Orients," in *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen . . . zu Berlin*, Jg. XXVI-XXVII, Berlin 1924, pp. 124 ff.

² The official text is given in Parliamentary Paper, Cmd. 5957, 1939. Rossi, pp. 18-40, discusses the discrepancies between Antonius's translation and the text as published in the White Paper issued shortly after the publication of "The Arab Awakening". Rossi gives the ten letters contained in the White Paper. Amīn Sa'īd also gives ten letters, but the last two of which seem to be an incomplete version of the texts given in the Parliamentary Paper. Antonius does mention (p. 176) that there were other notes exchanged besides the ones he gives, but that they do not form part of what is commonly known as the McMahon Correspondence. He does not mention the number of these other notes, and one wonders whether there are more letters which are suppressed by all parties.

³ Philip Graves, *Land of Three Faiths*, London, 1923.

⁴ Text also to be found in Rossi, p. 40. Rossi gives as well the answer of Amir Abdullah to this letter, pp. 40-45.

these letters McMahon emphatically denies that he ever had the intention of including Palestine in the territories allocated to the Arabs. It is clear that, whatever the value of these later denials may be, they have to be mentioned in order that the reader might know the full case.

With regard to the Hogarth message, Antonius claims that it set Husain's mind completely at rest (p. 268). It is to be noticed that the Hogarth message is the only document of those on which Antonius builds his argument, which is not given in the appendix. Can it be that he did not think it advisable to give the full text since it is not as clear about the fate of Palestine as he would have liked it to be? ¹ The paragraph which he tells us gives an explicit assurance that "Jewish settlement in Palestine would only be allowed in so far as would be consistent with the political and economic freedom of the Arab people," (p. 268), runs as follows:

"Since the Jewish opinion of the world is in favour of a return of the Jews to Palestine, and inasmuch as this opinion must remain a constant factor, and, further, as his Majesty's Government view with favour the realisation of this aspiration, His Majesty's Government are determined that in so far as it is compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political, no obstacle should be put in the way of the realisation of this ideal."

With reference to the part played by Faisal, Antonius mentions the Weizmann-Faisal agreement which the latter signed on condition that the Arabs obtain their independence as stipulated in Faisal's memorandum of January 4, 1919, to the Foreign Office. In pages 286-287, he gives a text of the statement sent by Faisal on January 29, 1919, to the Peace Conference in Paris, and gives the impression that it was the only statement which the Conference had from Faisal. Both David Hunter Miller and David Lloyd George, writing about the appearance of Faisal before the Supreme Council on February 6, 1919, state that "Palestine, in consequence of its universal character, he (Faisal) left on one side for the mutual

¹ Since Antonius published his book, the Hogarth Message has been made public: Parliamentary Paper, Cmd. 5964, 1939. It appears together with Hogarth's notes on his interview with Husain. Maybe if Antonius had known of the latter, he would have made good use of them. Hogarth himself sums up judiciously the whole vexed question of the McMahon Correspondence in one long winding sentence in p. 126 in Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, vol. VI, London 1924.

consideration of all parties concerned. With this exception he asked for the independence of the Arab areas enumerated in his Memorandum.” At first sight one might think that the above mentioned memorandum to the Foreign Office is meant, and indeed Antonius would like us to think so, but not even he can reproduce this memorandum for it has not been revealed yet. But Faisal sent to the Conference on January 1st, 1919, a Memorandum in which he also leaves Palestine aside.¹ Needless to say that Antonius does not mention this memorandum, much less give it in the appendix. There are other documents which he passes over in silence:

1) a letter from Faisal to Frankfurter, much advertised by the Zionists, dated March 3, 1919, and sent from Paris.² Faisal is said to have written:

“Our deputation here in Paris is fully acquainted with the proposals submitted yesterday by the Zionist Organisation to the Peace Conference, and we regard them as moderate and proper. We will do our best, in so far as we are concerned to help them through; we will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home.”

2) The Times, London, December 12, 1918, reports an interview which Faisal accorded to Reuter’s Agency on the previous day. In this report—which is in the direct speech—Faisal talks of the racial affinity between Jews and Arabs, and of the absence of any conflict between Zionist Jews and Nationalist Arabs.

3) an interview accorded by Faisal to the Daily Mail on March 30, 1921.

Antonius, talking about the King-Crane Report (p. 296), says it “is the only source to which the historian can turn for a disinterested and wholly objective analysis of the state of feeling in Arab political circles.” It is a pity that he forgets to mention that this

¹ D. L. George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, London 1938, vol. II, p. 1042. For full text of the Memorandum of January I, see D. H. Miller, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, pp. 297-299 (Doc. 250). For the verbatim record of Faisal’s meeting with the Supreme Council on February 6, see D. H. Miller, pp. 227-234, and compare with Antonius, pp. 286-287.

For the constant vacillations, hesitations, confirmations and denials of Faisal on the Palestine question, see the excellent article by M. Perlmann, *Arab-Jewish Diplomacy (1918-1922)*, in “*Jewish Social Studies*,” April 1944, pp. 123-154.

² The authenticity of this letter has been contested by the Arabs; for discussion, see M. Perlmann, pp. 139-141. Antonius neither mentions this letter nor questions its authenticity.

report was not unanimous, and that William Yale and the other Middle East specialists attached to the Commission, presented another report disagreeing completely with the report of the accredited Commissioners, Henry King and Charles Crane. It is hardly probable that Antonius was not aware that the King-Crane Report did not have the sanction of the specialists, since he was in close association with Mr. Crane to whom the book is affectionately dedicated, and who, through the Institute of Current World Affairs of New York, created by him, supplied the funds to enable Antonius to write his book.¹ Crane had his strong likes and dislikes; he patronised Muslims and Arab Nationalists;² his subsequent views on Jews are also quite explicit: Ambassador Dodd in his Diary³ records two meetings with Crane in 1933; after the first one, Ambassador Dodd writes: "Jews are anathema to him, and he wishes to see them put in their place. His advice to me was of course: Let Hitler have his way"; in the second meeting, Mr. Crane talked of "his coming interview with the Pope about a sort of pact with the Islamic world that the followers of Muhammad might be protected from the Jews who are taking Palestine."⁴ As for the Reverend Henry King, the other Commissioner, he was the President of a Protestant College in Ohio. He represented the American missionary interest which had well-known and definite views on the political situation in the Middle East. The activities of the missionary interest after the First World War concerning this area are set out exhaustively by Mr. F. Manuel in his book "The Realities of American-Palestine Relations."⁵

Paradoxical as it may seem, the value of Antonius' book is great, not to the common reader for whom it was intended, but to the professional historian. Antonius, it becomes clear from reading

¹ "H. E. B." writes that in 1930, after his resignation from Government service, Antonius "entered the employment of Mr. C. R. Crane, as Senior Associate for the Near East of the New York Institute of Current World Affairs." JRCAS, 1942, p. 286.

² For his contacts with Arab nationalists, see Amin Sa'îd, vol. III, pp. 250-256. Aḥmad Amin, in his autobiography, *Ḥayātī*, Cairo 1950, p. 235, describes the monument that he saw in Constantinople over the tomb of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī bearing this inscription: "This mausoleum has been erected by the sincere friend of Muslims all over the world, the American philanthropist Mr. Charles Crane, in 1926."

³ London 1941.

⁴ Pp. 24-25, 55-56.

⁵ Washington 1950.

him, knows a great deal more than he chose to put down. Whenever he makes a statement, it is wise to assume that he has very good reasons of his own to do so; that is why he repays careful reading. An example: he gives what purports to be a paraphrase of the exchange between Kitchener and the Sharif of Mecca before the initiation of the McMahon Correspondence (p. 133). To my knowledge, this part of Kitchener's correspondence with the Sharif has not been either given or noticed by other writers on the subject.¹ But it may be of crucial importance; Antonius says that Kitchener's message "concluded with a hint that in the event of the Sharif being proclaimed caliph, he could count on England's recognition." There is of course no possibility at the present moment of knowing the exact wording of this hint, but it seems to have had a decisive influence on Husain's attitude to an alliance with England. It was as result of this communication that Faisal was dispatched to Syria to consult with the secret societies. We find Husain recurring to the promise (?) of a caliphate a few months after he threw his lot in with the Allies. In December 1916, Husain had himself proclaimed King of the Arab countries. The Allies took exception to this step about which they had not been consulted; Husain telegraphed to his agent in Cairo as follows: "You will present my compliments to any who might, on behalf of his Majesty's Government, discuss with you our new title, and you will remind them of the way in which, at the start of our negotiations the title of the Arab Caliphate was devolved on me. . . ." ² It is not too fanciful to wonder whether the "hint" spoken of by Antonius did not open up to Husain vistas undreamt of before. One may also wonder whether the bitterness, and the accusations of broken promises that were later to be made, had not their source in this "hint" rather than in the ambiguous and circumscribed commitments of McMahon. It is for points like these that Antonius is useful.

But faulty as his historical scholarship is, it is not the main

¹ This page of Antonius seems to have floated into a recent book by Mr. G. de Gaury, *Rulers of Mecca*, London 1951, where it figures as p. 267. There is a passing mention of the extent of Kitchener's promises in J. de V. Loder, *The Truth about Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria*, London 1923, quoted by Kampffmeyer, p. 127. Kitchener's message to Husain is referred to in McMahon's letter to Husain, of Aug. 30, 1915.

² Amin Sa'ïd, vol. I, p. 296.

ground for criticism. It is rather the perspective in which he throws the events which he chronicles that gives rise to the more serious misgivings. He is lavish with expressions such as the Arab nation, the Arab people, the Arab race, without the slightest regard for the fitness of these terms, or for the values they would represent to a Western reader who is unacquainted with the pattern of Oriental society, and for whom these terms would imply a monolithic unity. This pattern is still the old pattern where loyalties went to the family, the community and the religion. The main-spring for political action would be a desire for gain or power, not the assertion of a secular ideal such as the nation. Political ideals in the Western sense would be viewed with scepticism in such a society; the only ideals that would move its members would be religious sentiments, and these sentiments Antonius rules out from his purview. One is forced to the conclusion that Antonius was engaged in a strenuous attempt to push the Arab world into a Western mould for the benefit of his audience. As "H. E. B." writes, Antonius may have preferred to remain the "unofficial interpreter of Arab views to the British authorities", and indeed he may well have considered that to be his mission. For this reason his characterisation is not always credible; ¹ his heroes are always very heroic, and only his villains very villainous.

It may be argued that no historian can work without having a definite point of view, that Antonius adopts a nationalist one, and that in such a case he has to be assessed as a nationalist historian. The phrase 'nationalist historian' denotes someone who devotes his abilities and scholarship to the greater glorification of his nation or community. The phenomenon is no doubt widely prevalent, but it is nonetheless to be condemned. A historian may indeed have prejudices and preferences, but these have to be of a kind permissible to him. Seeing that he deals with the actions of

¹ Compare for instance the lay figure called Husain who appears in the pages of Antonius with the man with all his liveliness and his ambition as he emerges from the Memorandum prepared in Constantinople in 1912 and printed in Gooch & Temperley, *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, vol. X, part II, pp. 828-829; see also correspondence between Faisal and Husain on the question of a treaty alleged by Husain to have been concluded by the British with himself, *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, Series I, vol. IV, London, 1952, *passim*. For contemporary Muslim judgements on Husain see H. Lammens, "La Chute de la Mecque et du roi Husein", in "Études", Feb. 1925, pp. 267-285.

men in power, with right and wrong, and generally with what human beings do to each other, he is not permitted to set himself up as the defender of one imperfect cause against another—and all political causes are imperfect. Should he attempt to do so, this but shows a failure in his professional integrity. It is to be hoped that a good history of the Arab movement be soon written, one that would take into consideration the influence of Western political concepts on the organisation of Middle Eastern society, the weaknesses of nationalism, and what Antonius does not bring out, the strength of the traditional Muslim institutions. Indeed the pious glorification of the “Arab national movement” in which Antonius indulges, does not do justice either to the Arabs or to their complex history when they begin to come into contact with the West, to be influenced by it, and to react against it. But supposing that we accept, with all its implications, the fact that Antonius is a nationalist historian, the question arises: of what kind? and here we touch the root of his dilemma. The Christians in the Middle East, because of their position as a minority within Islam, have had to suffer many disabilities. A few of them, in contact with the West in the nineteenth century, became convinced that the way out of such disabilities was to work for secular national states where nobody would be discriminated against because of their religion. Such was the ideal, but the obstinate reality was that the Muslims had the supremacy and would on no account give it up. The Muslims would be quite prepared to consider themselves a nation, but in such a nation, they would also have the last word. From this difficulty there could be no escape. The eastern Christians, if they persisted in their advocacy of the secular national state in the Middle East, would have to bow to the dictates of the Muslims, or else come into collision with them, a thing which they had set out originally to avoid. So they acknowledged the supremacy of the Muslims in the new order of things and even proclaimed it desirable.¹ Thus we see Antonius making a rather

¹ P. Rondot, loc. cit., esp. p. 51; “Loi Révélée etc. . . .” in “L’Afrique et l’Asie”, 1950, no. II, p. 4; L. Jovelet in REI, VII, 1933, p. 489. For a recent exposition of this point of view, the reader may consult a curious article by C. Malik, The Near East: the search for Truth, in “Foreign Affairs”, Jan. 1952: or better still Niqūla Ziyāda, *Al-‘Urūba fī Misān al-Qawmiyya*, Beirut, 1950. And here is a pure and early manifestation of the phenomenon: Ilyās Ṭa‘ma, a Syrian Christian, owner of the paper *al-Hamrā’* in

curious statement. Talking of the system of education of Syria, he writes: "One of the lasting contributions which the development of Western education in Syria made to the Arab national movement was that it helped to transfer the leadership from Christian to Muslim hands. It did this mainly by its indirect attack on the position of the Arabic language as the instrument of national culture." (p. 93). The author is saying here, not only what the effect of Western education was—namely, that Muslims instead of Christians are becoming the leaders of the Arab national movement, but also that this development is better; why and for whom he does not attempt to explain. A statement such as this one is in complete contradiction with the argument current throughout the whole book that the Arab national movement transcends all sectarian differences, and is difficult to understand in that light. This statement, coming from a Christian, can hardly point to a traditional prejudice against Christians, but it might reveal on the part of a member of a minority group a desire for identification with the majority. Such a desire is not unknown elsewhere. The best parallel would probably be the movement of assimilation among Central European Jewries in the nineteenth century. Whether such a movement can be successful is questionable. In any case it entails many disadvantages, among them subservience, and the continual impoverishment of communal life. It would also lead to the fear on the part of the minority that if they did not agitate strongly for whatever aim the majority had chosen they would be accused of disloyalty. The bargain has turned out to be Faustian. May its price not be as prohibitive as Faust found it to be.

Brazil, was so captured by the Arab movement that he changed his name to Abū'l-Faḍl al-Walīd 'Abdullah Ṭa'ma, and thus addressed his readers on the occasion: "Let everyone of us say I am Arab and none is more Arab than myself; and if being Arab is only possible through being a Muslim, then let him say I am an Arab and a Muslim, I testify there is no God but God and Muḥammad is the Prophet of God". Reported by Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-'Umarī, *Tārīkh Muqaddarāt al-'Irāq as-Siyāsiyya*, Baghdād, 1925, vol. I, pp. 358-359.

Note of the Editor. For further researches see also: ¹⁾ WI I 217, II 329, VIII 22, 61, 99-173, IX 1-56, XIII 119, XV 117, XIX 138-148, XXII 67-82, XXIII 91, N.S. I 306-310; ²⁾ RMM LIII 43, OM II 228, 706, XIII 506, XVII 379, 450, XVIII 186-200, XIX 260, 266; ³⁾ Orient-Rundschau, 26.8.1936, 15.11.1937; ⁴⁾ Report of the Palestine R. Commission, July 1937, Cmd. 5479; ⁵⁾ R. Hartmann, Arabische politische Gesellschaften bis 1914, BASI 439-467; ⁶⁾ Razdel Aziatskoy Turtsii, Moscow 1924, Die Aufteilung der asiatischen Türkei, ed. E. Adamow, Dresden 1932.