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Précis of Personal Notes
Political and General concerning Tour
Cairo, Adana, Mersin, Aleppo, Tripoli,
Damascus, Beirut, Haifa, Jerusalem, Cairo.

28th June - 19th July 1942.

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ADANA.

On arrival at Adana I was impressed by the general courtesy of the Turkish Officials at the aerodrome towards arriving British passengers. Mr. Blair of the British Consulate (who is acting for us at Adana) was also most helpful. As the accommodation at the Consulate Rest House appeared to be rather strained I decided at first to stay at the Yeni Hotel in Adana. This hotel, although fairly modern, has only very few tolerable bedrooms and apparently only one with bathroom attached. In summer time the heat in this hotel is excessive and mosquitos and sandflies abundant. Adana area and many other districts are malarial and mosquito-nets difficult to obtain locally. Being unable to obtain a net myself I purchased quinine and dosed myself during my stay. Feeding at the Yeni Hotel is reasonably good, and the staff, though very uninstructed, are helpful and friendly. I found only one person on the hotel staff who spoke any language other than Turkish.

After a couple of days at this hotel I was invited by the British Consul to transfer to the Consulate Rest House and this invitation I accepted. This arrangement was more convenient and I was able to make useful contacts with the Consulate staff and with a number of visiting British Officials with some of whom I had been acquainted in the past. As a result of these contacts it was suggested to me that I should accompany one of these officials on a visit to the sea coast town of Mersin. This journey proved interesting and, being my first experience for some years of railway travel in Turkey, brought out certain aspects of change in comparison with previous experience.

The journey from Adana to Mersin covers a distance of approximately 50 miles. Normally this journey is supposed to take 2 hours. On the outward journey the train covered this distance in $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours and on the return journey in 4 hours. Uncertainty and irregularity in railway time-tables appears to be a marked attribute in Turkish travel nowdays. This local line, however, I found reasonably comfortable and not overcrowded, although my companion informed me that extreme overcrowding does often take place irrespective of the class of ticket for which one may have paid.

/Unpunctuality

Unpunctuality is apparently equally prevalent in the case of express trains including the Taurus Express itself. This train, I am told, is some times as much as 12 hours late. My own experiences of it were two; (a) When I accompanied a King's Messenger and Consulate party escorting diplomatic mail one night to the station. On this occasion the train was about 6 hours late and a long delay took place during which, on request, I assisted in the supervision of the diplomatic mail. Supervision of this mail is a matter of extreme importance at all times in Turkey. (b) When I started off myself in the Taurus Express. On this occasion we were informed that the train might be 40 minutes late. Actually the train was $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours late and nobody seemed to know anything about its whereabouts or movements in the interval, the Station Master himself being quite uninterested!

While at the Yeni Hotel on my second day I found 2 members of the German Consulate staff seated at a table next to myself. The names of these people I could not discover and I was informed that they were new arrivals at the German Consulate. They were joined later by another German whose name I think is Fritz Hans. I had the impression that I had seen this man before, possibly in Egypt, but I cannot be sure of this. On a later occasion I also noted a visit from Fraulein Paula Koch who is perhaps the most important and energetic of local German agents. This lady speaks, I am told, excellent Arabic and Turkish and has made herself a good deal liked both amongst Turkish local people and with the Arabs amongst whom she used to work in Syria. Her present duties include watching new arrivals in the Adana district, and this duty she appeared to be attempting to carry out efficiently in my own case. She visited the hotel while I was there and I found her seated at the next table to mine when I dined at a river side restaurant, and when I left Adana she and the two Germans whom I have previously mentioned were also on the platform. On this occasion, however, Fraulein Koch appeared to be meeting a person who emerged from the Taurus Express in which I was about to set off. This man looked like a Syrian but spoke reasonably good German. He appeared to be in an agitated condition when he emerged from the train, and he entered at once into energetic conversation with Fraulein Koch part of which I overheard until he was checked and taken to another part of the station. This incident I mentioned to a member of our Consular staff to whom I pointed out the new arrival.

In conversations with our Consul I got the impression that relationship between our Consulate and the Turkish Authorities is on a very sound basis. No attempt, however, is made on either side to draw together socially and Turks in particular are reticent in the matter of fraternization with British people. As, however, Turkish reticence is if anything even more marked with regard to Axis representatives this attitude is no doubt on the whole satisfactory and prevents any possibility of difficult incidents. It seemed to me quite clear from what I saw while staying at the Yeni Hotel, visiting various restaurants in Adana, and in my

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contacts at Mersin, that Axis activity is very definite in this part of the world.

MERSIN.

On arrival at Mersin I went to stay at the Taurus Hotel. This hotel is in a central position in the little town and is by the sea-shore. Though a good deal older than the Yeni Hotel at Adana, it is actually more comfortable and a good deal cooler. Mosquito-nets also are provided in the bedrooms. The food is not at all bad and the staff, though rough and ready, is also friendly. The town of Mersin has a very different aspect from Adana which is a typically old Turkish country town except for its one rather impressive modern suburb. Mersin, however, is typically a pleasant well-built Greek village, rather of the type that one meets with in Cyprus. Up to the last war this town was in fact almost entirely Greek. Of the past Greek and Armenian inhabitants, few if any still survive.

I called on the British Vice Consul, Mr. Parrish, who introduced me to various members of his staff. At this time the situation in Egypt had become tense and many conflicting rumours were prevalent both in Mersin and in Adana. On the advice of the Vice Consul I agreed that a signal should be sent via the British Embassy Cairo to my Headquarters, asking for instructions as to whether any change in my plans had become necessary.

Mr. Parrish has instituted an excellent custom in Mersin by which all British subjects are invited to meet every day at the Consulate at tea time. This invitation was extended also to myself and I therefore had an interesting opportunity of seeing the British community and of hearing various points of view. On this occasion an Official with whom I was acquainted invited me to dine at his residence the same evening.

After supper at the house of my British friend a call was paid upon us at a late hour by a Turkish Official of high standing. This gentleman spoke quite good French and talked in an interesting way for some time. I gained the impression that he considered it a foregone conclusion that Turkey would resist vigorously any attack upon her frontiers. He spoke of the careful military preparations which had been made and the close study that was being given to German methods of attack with a view to gaining experience from every incident in the progress of the war. He described some of these defensive measures. His attitude although tactful seemed to imply a definite pro-British bias combined with a full realisation of the great strength of German forces and of all that this strength would mean if pitted against the Turkish Army. It seemed to me that this conversation probably represented fairly accurately a great proportion of Turkish public opinion. My host informed me, however,

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that actually this Turkish Official is also in close contact with Axis representatives in Mersin and has at times been suspect; but on the whole it is thought that his contacts in that quarter are merely in keeping with the general Turkish tendency to balance one side against the other with Turkish security as the only real objective without any altruistic idealism. In spite of this particular interview my host confirmed the fact that it is almost impossible to maintain normal social intercourse even with friendly Turkish people. Personal calls only take place either on formal occasions or else under the cover of secrecy.

It was interesting to note both in Adana and in Mersin the reactions taking place around one to the serious news and the even more serious rumours which were constantly coming in. One noted at once the elation and energy which gathered in Axis quarters and one noticed also that the tone of the press immediately veered from a slightly pro-British tendency to a slightly pro-Axis tendency. This pro-Axis reaction was in a few cases very marked. One newspaper described the British Army in Libya as "hopping about like a lot of angry and helpless Desert fleas". One of the local newspapers suggested that the British position in Libya had become quite hopeless. A caricature in a picture paper which came out at this moment showed a large German soldier and John Bull sitting on the same seat on a sea-shore marked "Libya". The German soldier was depicted as swelling up to such proportions that the portly figure of John Bull was about to over balance at one end of the seat. One newspaper also gave head lines telling of a proclamation, alleged to have been dropped by the Germans over Cairo, expressing goodwill towards the Egyptians and asking them to show their own goodwill in return by refusing all co-operation with the British Authorities until the Germans themselves should arrive in the Capital in the immediate future (since my return to Cairo Egyptian personalities have also reported to me that some such proclamation was in fact made by the Germans). However, in spite of these newspaper agitations one still definitely got the impression that the great interest being shown by the Turks in the news from Libya implied that they were more alarmed than pleased at the possibility of a British reverse. The attitude of the general public was certainly not hostile to British persons during this period.

During my journey from Adana to Mersin I was much struck by the plentiful orchards of fruit of many kinds which were under cultivation, especially in the vicinity of Tarsus. I was locally informed, however, that this splendid supply is not advantageously made use of. Fruit for transmission is badly packed and often badly selected so that it is delivered at its various destinations either very unripe or much too ripe. Similarly reports suggest that the fruit cultivation so well established by the French at Alexandretta (now Iskenderey) is also deteriorating in quality and is badly organised for export. In Mersin, while I was there, a regatta and display was being organised amongst the Naval Cadets. This display was strikingly well done and the Naval Cadets appeared

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smart, fine looking, and efficient young men. In such opportunities as I had at Mersin and Adana of noting Turkish soldiers they were not by contrast at all impressive. Uniforms, even of officers, were shabby and ill-fitting, while many of the soldiers were in actually ragged clothing. Police organisation appears to be drastic and Secret Police active, and a severe police attitude is taken in the supervision of "public morals". A theft of petrol occurred at Adana while I was there from an official supply. Suspects from amongst Army guards were soon arrested and the next day a Senior Police Official announced that confession had been obtained. It is regrettable perhaps that to this information was also added the information that confession had only been obtained after stringing up the suspected persons by their thumbs and injecting some kind of drug into them to lessen their resistance when being cross-questioned! This statement was made to me by the British Officer to whom this story was officially told. It seems, therefore, despite reforms that a certain slipping back to old Turkish methods is already taking place.

In due course, a satisfactory reply having been received to my signal to Egypt, I proceeded by the Taurus Express from Adana to Aleppo. This journey proved comfortable. I was accommodated in a first class coupé-lit of a spacious kind. The Turkish car attendant, who spoke good English, was most helpful. The train was boarded at about 4.30 p.m. and although Aleppo was reached in the early hours of the morning passengers in the coupé-lit were not required to leave their compartments until 7.15 a.m. The dining car accommodation was comfortable and the food good though expensive. During the course of this journey I met a British Colonel travelling on leave from Ankara, and a British lady also travelling on leave from Ankara. This lady was the personal secretary to a high official on the Embassy staff at Ankara. Interesting conversations took place with these two fellow passengers during the course of my journey.

ALEPPO.

On arrival at Aleppo I proceeded to the Hotel Baron. This hotel is comfortable and well organised, and the food is quite good. It is, however, expensive and it is necessary to keep a check upon the addition of ones bill and the number of items put to ones account, as mistakes to the advantage of the hotel seem to occur rather easily. The management is Armenian. The hotel premises were built, I understand, just prior to the outbreak of the last war and some of the staff were present during the appalling Armenian transportations and murders which occurred at that time and which have not been forgotten by any of the population Moslem or Christian, who seem to look back with almost equal horror on what happened then.

/Soon

Soon after arrival at Aleppo I placed myself in contact with the British Consulate and was invited by Lt. Col. Summerhayes (Senior Political Officer) to visit him. This visit I duly carried out and was then also asked to dine with Col. Summerhayes the following evening. During the course of my visit I also took the opportunity to go on foot to the native quarters and visit the bazaars and to converse with many individuals amongst the population. My contacts included tribal people in from the Desert, shop keepers and bazaar porters as well as an official of some standing to whom I had an introduction. It was perhaps interesting that in every case in these various categories of people many questions were asked me about Turkey, and amongst the poorer people one of the first questions was for information as to the Turkish attitude towards religion and as to whether in fact the Turkish Government prevented people carrying out the pilgrimage to Mecca. I was also asked questions about the Turkish Government, the Turkish relationship with the British, and whether there was any chance of Aleppo being handed back to the Turks in the future. On the whole as a result of all these talks I got the impression that the local population was definitely suspicious that Aleppo might be handed to the Turks by the British at some future date and that although they viewed this possibility with some anxiety on the whole they were not averse to it (except of course the Christian population which would view such an eventuality with the utmost distress). The population of Aleppo and its district is of course to a very large extent Moslem. Christians whose families have traditionally resided in this district are quite a small minority. Distinct from these people there is however a very considerable refugee population of Armenians who have come in from Turkey and who of course would be in a very grave position should they find themselves again under their old rulers.

On the same day as myself there arrived at the Baron Hotel at Aleppo several members of the new Corn Commission. These members consisted of a Colonel and two Majors all of whom I had known previously. In the course of discussions with these three officers and also with various persons of Syrian nationality I gathered that the situation with regard to distribution of crops is still a complex problem. Roughly it is as follows. The harvest has been quite satisfactory and there should be little if any scarcity of flour in Syria. Unscrupulous people and especially unscrupulous wealthy landlords are however taking advantage of war conditions to prevent timely distribution of corn and are instead as far as possible hoarding away surplus supplies in the country districts. This is producing, especially in the towns, an artificial scarcity which may in the near future become really serious. In an endeavour to adjust this situation the British Authorities have brought pressure to bear on the Syrian Government to supervise the proper distribution of corn. The curious fact however is that although the Government has passed certain laws to enforce this, it is actually certain high Government Officials including the Prime Minister Husny el Barazi and also such wealthy land owners as Hikmat Haraki who are failing to carry out the laws which the Government has passed. British and French officers are now being

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appointed throughout the agricultural districts to supervise Government measures. It is understood that the British Officers are not taking executive action themselves but are as it were holding a watching brief and it is their duty to warn the local Syrian Government Officials of any evasion of the corn laws which may come to their notice. It is then the duty of the Syrian officials themselves to take adequate measures to enforce the law. It will no doubt be readily understood how such a situation may be exploited by unscrupulous people and how many sparks may be flying around in inflammable propagandist material.

In the Aleppo area progress in adjusting the crop situation appeared to be far from satisfactory though when later I visited Damascus I understood that rather greater co-operation between the population and the authorities was taking place there. It is of course essential that British and also French officers and officials in Syrian agricultural districts should combine great tact with definite severity in getting this matter put forward. It must be emphasised that the tact is however at least as important as the severity. British Political Officials were a good deal concerned, for instance, by distinct lack of "tact" recently on the part of a French officer. This young officer stated that his party had been fired from a certain village. He therefore caused an assault to be made upon the village which was sacked and burnt. The attackers getting out of hand, then turned their attention to one or two neighbouring villages which had not in fact committed any misdemeanour. During these attacks the women folk in these villages were taken into what was described as "safe custody" but of course a very different interpretation has been placed upon this custody by the local inhabitants. It will be readily understood how important it is to avoid such a grave mishandling of the situation which gives excellent propaganda to our enemies. It is likely that the officers now appointed, who have been carefully chosen, will carry out their duties with understanding. Another problem which was newly under discussion at Political Headquarters during my visit was the probability of the expulsion from Turkey of several thousand Greek refugees in the immediate future. These people were expected in the Aleppo vicinity almost at once and all preparations were already in hand to receive them as suitably as possible.

Staying at the Hotel Baron at the same time as myself was an Egyptian travelling with his wife en route apparently for Turkey. The name I understood to be Abou Bakr Rateb Pasha and Mme Rateb. It is not known in what capacity they were travelling but they seemed a good deal concerned at the news then coming in from the Western Desert.

TRIPOLI.

After three days in Aleppo I proceeded by the automotrice train to Tripoli. This little train leaves Aleppo at 7 in the morning and arrives at Tripoli about 12.30 p.m. It is quite

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comfortable and was not overcrowded when I travelled. It is under careful supervision and passports and passes are examined two or three times during the journey. At Tripoli the railway station and port is at a considerable distance from the town itself. Vehicles are scarce but I was able to obtain an ancient one-horse vehicle in which I reached Tripoli town in about half an hour. Hakim's Palace Hotel in spite of a somewhat unprepossessing entry is actually satisfactory as a temporary residence.

While in Tripoli I drove round the town and visited the port noting the position of the Air France premises etc., I also called on the British Vice Consul but found that he was away. In the course of conversation with citizens and notables I found a strangely undetermined attitude in political matters and towards the war. An intelligent man of position described the outlook in this way:- "Everybody here talks of patriotism whereas actually most of us have no idea of the meaning of the word. Only a few of us have any real say in political matters and those few are mostly rich people and property owners whose idea of patriotism is based largely on the welfare of their own estates and the safety of their Bank balances. We profess to be energetic supporters of national independence but we lack altogether in leadership and we seem to have no idea of what it would mean to fight for that independence ourselves. The idea at the back of most people's minds here seems to be a transformation of the Lebanon into a sort of easy-going Switzerland and that this transformation is to come about pleasantly by efforts other than those of our own people, who have a mysterious "right" to avoid all the hardships of personal leadership in a nationalist war. Our culture and progress, it seems, must be protected by outside powers. On the whole we generally consider the democratic countries to be those who should supply that protection, but we are not prepared to compromise ourselves by undue proclamation of our liking for the democracies until we are quite certain that they are going to win." My informant finished his little talk by saying: "I am rather ashamed at what I have been telling you but I do feel that on the whole it is even more shameful when we do not face up to facts and use grandiose language which has no meaning." The gist of my informant's talk seemed to be that leadership is quite lacking in Lebanon and also in Syria and that a solution of the local problems could only be brought about by definite forcefulness on the part of wide-viewed democratic leadership which must take control of the Lebanon and Syria at this critical time and yet withhold excessive domination when settlement has been achieved. In an endeavour to talk to another leading citizen who is a rich man and the owner of property the results were even less inspiring. His reply was: "I have my house, I own three cinemas and I have great difficulty in supervising even these because my servants cheat me if I don't watch them. I know nothing about politics, and why should I involve myself in dangerous matters in which I can do nothing. I therefore take no sides at all, and must be as impartial towards the Germans and Italians as towards anyone else."

BEIRUT.

For my journey to Beirut I took a place in a car. It so happened that I was the only European traveller in this car, my companions being Syrian Moslems one of whom was of Turkish origin. Although seeming a little unfriendly at first their attitude soon changed when they discovered that I could speak Arabic and thereafter conversation on the local situation was almost continuous. There was again a good deal of talk concerning Turkey and the young man of Turkish origin, who tried to put forward the merits of the country of his forebears was not at all agreed with by the other occupants of the car. They again brought up the rumoured anti-religious attitude of the Turkish Government and one young man also produced various stories of Turkish ill-usage of his own family during and before the last great war and of the general misery in Syria under Turkish rule at that time. The young Turk heatedly declared that all that had happened in the bad days of Ottoman Sultans and could not possibly happen under the present modern and progressive Government. The reply he received to this however was:- "We dont believe that the Turkish Officials have really changed, and anyhow we would rather risk many years under British domination than one single year under Turkish domination". The other men in the car, however, did not quite agree with this comment and they pointed out that in Tripoli, as at Aleppo, the Moslem population greatly predominates and much dislikes present Lebanese conditions and would not necessarily object to Turkish influences increasing. One of the passengers was a native of Palestine and I got the impression that he had left Palestine partly on account of his anti-Jewish sentiments, and, as usual, remarks were made as to Great Britain's responsibility in imposing Jews upon the Moslems in that country. Another passenger, however, immediately produced the argument that this was only partly British responsibility as the greatly increased influx of Jews had really been brought about by the secret intrigues of Hitler in making their position intolerable in Germany and in encouraging them to seek refuge in Palestine. The point was also made that the British though seemingly aloof, often eventually make sincere personal friendships with Moslem people whereas French and Italians when they colonise usually make promiscuous contacts, but seem to have no wish for friendship but only a desire to extract as soon as possible enough money to return to their own countries and buy property to retire to.

While in Beirut I called at the British Consulate where I was given a pleasant welcome by Lt. Col. Furlong with whom I was already acquainted from the time when I used to visit Syria when touring on duty from G.H.Q. Cairo. I also called at the British Legation (Spears Mission) on the Councillor (Mr. Hamilton) with whom I had helpful conversations both in his office and during an afternoon spent at his residence in the outskirts of Beirut. Mr. Hamilton kindly put me in touch with other local ~~and~~ British officials including the Air Attaché at the Mission. I also met

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the Senior R.A.F. Officer and an officer on the staff of the Naval "I" Branch. I had not many personal contacts amongst the Lebanese population in Beirut with the exception of Mr. Hector Klat and Dr. and Mme Raudeh (personal friends of General Nyri Pasha Said). M. Klat holds the position of Director of the National Library in Beirut and is looked upon with esteem as a poet and a patriot. I had a long talk with him at his library, over which he showed me, and on departure he presented me with a signed volume of his verses. I did not call on Dr. Raudeh (whose wife was trying to get a visa for Turkey) on account of information which I had received as to certain unsatisfactory activities in which he is alleged to have been involved.

DAMASCUS.

My journey by car to Damascus passed without incident, my fellow travellers being 3 Lebanese people of no particular interest. In Damascus I was invited to call upon the Senior Political Officer, Col. Gardner, with whom I had been acquainted when he was at the British Legation in Tangier and by whom I was invited to join his party to watch a review of New Zealand troops in Damascus town square. While in Damascus I also met officers on the Army and R.A.F. Intelligence Staffs.

Soon after arrival at my hotel in Damascus I was called upon by Dr. Yassir Mouayed Azm. Dr. Yassir is a prominent member of what remains of the Shahbandarist party of which his brother Nazih Bey is now considered a leader. I was informed that Nazih Bey had heard of my arrival and was coming in from his country house the following day in order to meet me. I accepted the invitation to go to the house of these brothers in Damascus the following day for a talk. Meanwhile I went with Dr. Yassir to pay my respects at the tomb of Dr. Shahbandar, the famous nationalist leader who was assassinated not long ago in Damascus. His tomb has been placed as a mark of exceptional esteem in the immediate proximity of the tomb of Saladin.

In the course of the same evening and during the following morning various persons including the editors of the two leading local newspapers, whom I have known in the past, also called upon me and discussed the political situation at some length.

My talk with Nazih Bey and his brother Yassir duly took place and was of considerable interest. The circumstances of Dr. Shahbandar's assassination were explained to me and although nothing actually hostile was said concerning the British Government's part in this matter there is obviously great bitterness felt at alleged lack of interest and the absence of assistance from the British authorities after the murder of this famous Moslem leader who had been well known for his helpful attitude to British interests. The

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trial of the suspected persons was apparently in the nature of a fiasco, the position being that while on the one side Vichy French, German and Italian influences and money were hard at work, the Shahbandarist party was lacking in funds and completely without support from either the local Government or the British authorities. A very prominent Syrian political leader was arrested under strong suspicion of having instigated the assassination but was acquitted without punishment owing, it is alleged, to the intervention of interested parties in powerful positions. The pro-British elements which still remain in the Shahbandarist party have apparently again been hurt by alleged special courtesies which the British authorities are said to have extended to this same personality during a recent visit of his to Cairo. It is said that this courtesy led this personality, on his return to Damascus, to make wide allegations that he had obtained full British and Egyptian support and that he was about to be assisted in supplanting the present Syrian Government with a regime of his own. So persistent were the rumours in Damascus that the present Government authorities are reported to have approached the British authorities to ask for an explanation. It is said that assurance was given that these rumours of British support for such changes were without foundation. Nevertheless, it appears that this incident has added further suspicions to an already complex situation. This complex situation includes a bitterly anti-French attitude and considerable unrest at high prices and scarcity of bread, suspicions and conflicting rumours as to British intentions in Syria, and lack of respect or confidence in the heads of the present Syrian Government.

Nazih Bey, who is himself a land owner, also discussed the difficulties of the present crop situation. He did not seem satisfied with the present organisation for crop control. According to him this is in the hands almost entirely of persons who have no knowledge of agriculture and who themselves have never owned landed property. He also suggested that the fact that Faiz el Khouri has selected, apparently without exception, personalities of Christian faith does not help to assure confidence from the Moslem land owners whose affairs they have to investigate. Nazih Bey also suggested that it is his considered opinion that the Government has set too low a value on the crops which they are proposing that land owners must be forced to sell. This and the lack of understanding between the population and the Syrian Crop Commission investigators is likely to lead to violent incidents, especially as searches of private houses and farms are already taking place in such a way as to cause resentment. As opposed, however, to this statement by Nazih Bey an interesting article on this subject was produced in the newspaper "Echos de Syrie" dated 14th July, in which a very different picture of the alleged stubborn and selfish attitude of rich agriculturists was described. Whatever the rights or wrongs it does from this seem clear that the matter had not so far been presented to the general public in clear terms by the Government and that dangerous misunderstandings perhaps existed on both sides.

Speaking of Syria and her independence and her future prospects my hosts emphasised that in spite of some disappointment

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in the British attitude towards Arab welfare, nevertheless, the majority of Arab opinion in Syria would support British leadership in any energetic measure to safeguard the future of Syria and other Middle Eastern countries. "Give us an energetic leader, your confidence, and a reasonably clear assurance of our future prospects and allow us the weapons necessary for self defence and you will find strong support in Syria amongst Moslems, the Druze and the Christians against those Axis influences which at heart we know to be a great danger to us and towards which it is fear rather than approval which is drawing some parts of the population at the present time. We feel great need for guidance and for a grouping together of the Arab Communities in Greater Syria and Iraq. Our feeling is that Damascus may be described as the heart of Islam and that Egypt may be described as its head. Neither can exist without the full health of the other, and the head must be required to guide the heart. In this time of crisis we look upon Great Britain as it were like a medical specialist without whose advice neither this heart nor head can achieve future health and security." This idea of the important position held by Egypt vis a vis the Middle East I found being expressed in many conversations in Damascus and the public utterances of official leaders there; and in the matter of the regrouping of Arab peoples in Syria I refer to previous reports and to the document put forward a year or two ago to Mr. Eden in London by Nuri Pasha Said when the latter was in exile in Cairo.

About Egypt I was asked many questions and much interest was expressed in the leadership of the young king and the good relationship between the Egyptian Parliament and the British Government. It seemed to be taken for granted that the Royal Family of Egypt and the Egyptian Government should hold an important position in future Middle Eastern affairs and that this future link should be in the nature of a treaty relationship but with certain special aspects of a closer sort; the whole being stabilised by the goodwill of the democratic powers of which Great Britain should be the spokesman and executive authority for all practical arrangements.

The following is a précis on the local situation as conveyed to me in the course of a number of conversations with various persons expressing the Syrian point of view.

In Syria two governments have recently succeeded one another. The first of these was founded by Hassan Bey Hakim. This Government was characterised by the fact that it included ministers from all the Syrian provinces including Jebel Druze and the Alaoites. Only Aleppo was left on the outskirts of this new Government. Leaving out the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Fayez Bey Khoury) the head and members of this Government were second rate people without any particular political colour and might in general be termed moderates. Hassan Bey Hakim himself was, however, considered as Shahbandarist in sympathy and Zeki Bey Khatib (Minister of Justice) as a militant Shahbandarist and head of that movement. Fayez Bey Khoury is also a member of the Nationalist Block.

/ On April

On April 18th 1942, another Government suddenly came into power under the presidency of Husni Bey el Barazi and was rather similar to the first Government except that Aleppo was represented by a somewhat unimportant man named Raheb Kekhia. A new position was also created for a young man named Mounier el Ajiani as leader of propaganda and of the youth movement. The new Premier is considered an able man but certain shady incidents in his past are not forgotten, particularly an incident concerning hashish. In the period which followed, certain moves towards independence took place especially through the actions of Great Britain. The troublesome question of common interests of Syria and the Lebanon were brought to some kind of solution by direct negotiations between the two respective governments. This agreement, however, loses some local value through the introduction of French interests. In economic matters this period was marked by the high cost of living and attendant difficulties. On the financial side important fiscal reforms were made, and on the religious side there was a marked movement on the part of the Ulema who held a congress, started an Islamic school of study, and published certain manifestos concerning public morals, and religious rules for women. Some of these manifestos of course provoked strong reaction from youth movements both amongst men and women. Amongst the most important transactions was the taking over by the Government of the monopoly in purchase and sale of corn which, however, is still causing a good deal of difficulty.

The following state of affairs actually exists at the moment. The regime starting in September has been looked upon as an individualist regime controlled by and for the benefit of certain individuals in power, and this opinion shows no signs of altering. The "Independent Sovereign Republic" is now spoken of as "The Republic of Sheik Tageddine" and Sheik Tageddine is looked upon as the Republic; and for this reason any attack against the Government becomes in fact a personal attack against the head of the State himself. Actually there is much disagreement concerning the character of Sheik Tageddine but nearly everyone admits that he has subtle intelligence and good sense, though his personal authority continues to be very uncertain. He tries to counteract this by ever increasing personal isolation and he is becoming gradually friendless. It is his aim to control everybody while trying to appear as the father and friend of all, but particularly in the latter aim he has so far signally failed. There is only one person amongst his collaborators who can be looked upon as a substantial individual element and that is Fayez el Khouri. The remainder are small shadows of their master.

As for French influence it is manifestly deteriorating, so much so, that most French Advisors seem to content themselves in drawing their handsome salaries, and interfere as little as possible. In the surrounding of the Delegation only one or two people, amongst whom may be said to be General Collet, are working with energy and devotion. From this it appears that on the whole the Free French are thought to have very little grip on the existing situation and the little they have they are said to be exploiting

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for their own ends. In the same period British influence also has by no means been strengthened. This is for various reasons, amongst which are the following:- Military reverses in the Middle East, the British lack of energy towards suspected elements, the lack of energetic leadership by British authority in matters of pressing interest to the public, the reticence of certain British authorities and the inexperience of certain others. The Syrian independence obviously brought about by British intervention and British support has not been explained to the people in such a way as to stimulate in them a realisation of British goodwill and thus has not increased British influence in the way in which it should have done. It must be added that in spite of lack of appreciation of the British goodwill in securing independence, nevertheless hostile propaganda is always clever in mentioning British authority as being supreme whenever anything goes wrong, when prices are high, when bread is scarce or anything else unpleasant takes place. This of course is the work of anti-British influences amongst which curiously enough it is being suggested locally there exists even some destructive jealousy from Free French sources. Duality of the Franco-British regime in Syria is always evident but it is often only the less attractive effects of that duality which are ascribed to the British.

In Syria at the present time though one may say there are no political parties yet there are certain individualists. The nationalist block has never really recovered from the blow received in 1939, and even the coming to power of Sheik Tageddine has not revived it.

The Shahbandarist party for practical purposes died with its leader and merely now consists of certain rather negative tendencies indicating possibly some eventual opposition to the Nationalist Block. The parties of pro-Axis tendency are no longer openly active, such for instance as the Nadi el Arabi and the Ousbet el Amal el Kaoumi. By contrast, however, a quite marked re-organisation is taking place in what used to be considered a communist setting. For instance the anti-Fascist and anti-Communist League is showing definite activity and while I was in Damascus a large meeting took place at which a number of well known leaders spoke to an audience numbering several hundreds of young men, while at the same time another gathering of over 100 women was addressed in a private house by a feminine leader of the same movement. Though an invitation to attend this meeting was not accepted, a number of the speakers I afterwards met when they assembled at an hotel at which I happened to be dining. These included Khalid Bagdash, Omar Fakhouri (the writer) and Antoine Thabet. It is not known yet what official attitude is being taken towards this new anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi movement, based as it is on a one time forbidden "communistic" outlook. Amongst other individualists in Damascus at present active for their personal interests are well known people such as Jamil Mardam Bey, Shouki el Kouatly, Lutfi el Haffar and one or two less well known such as Zeki el Khatib and Nasib el Fakri.

In matters of Germano-Italian propaganda it is unlikely at the moment that its activities exceed pamphlets and radio

/emissions

emissions. This sort of propaganda dwells on the past of which it makes good use. It lives also on military successes and on the attraction which force always has for people of the Orient. One must add that local people seem to consider that British counter propaganda has lost initiative and relies too much on out of date caricatures which seem still to be stuck up in the streets and on occasional propaganda notices very few of which seem to have received due consideration as to the kind of public to which they were required to appeal. In this matter it should of course be remembered that varied kinds of population exist in Syria, as for instance Christians, Moslems, Jews, wealthy land-owners, illiterate peasants, town merchants. These various sorts of population do not by any means think on the same lines and propaganda suited to one type might in fact be actually ridiculous or harmful in the effect it would have on others.

I was informed that at the worst moment of the Lybian crisis a German machine had flown over Damascus and had dropped propaganda pamphlets early one morning. On the same morning it was found that anti-British propaganda notices had been pasted up on various walls on the outskirts of Damascus. I am told that the German pamphlets were well produced and well worded and consisted in part of friendly declarations and also of two lists; one showing British statements and promises and the other showing what purported to be Axis corrections giving the real state of affairs. The local posters were apparently exhortations to the local population to buy up every sort of supply and commodity from the shops in order to inconvenience the British Authorities and in order to make use of all available cash as the Germans would be in Damascus within a fortnight when local Syrian money would all be replaced.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that a notable of Damascus previously entirely pro-British now summed up his views as follows:- "We Arabs are instinctively your friends and many of us have proved that in the past. We like you and you seem to like us. Your Government has often promised us support and has expressed its good will towards us, and for very many years we have relied hopefully upon this. We still remain your friends because we still believe in your honest intentions and prefer the British characteristics to those of other European nations who might supplant you. Let me ask you, however, exactly what concrete reason there is for us to feel appreciation at what you have done for us in the course of the past few years. In Palestine you have given large areas of our country to a foreign race. In Syria you allowed a large tract of country to be handed back, against our will, to the Turks. Now in Syria although you have set up independent states yet you are giving us no assurance that that independence will not be nullified by the support which you are giving to French influences. These influences though admittedly different in some ways from previous French influences are nevertheless strongly contrary to all that we wish for our future progress. During the Vichy regime in Syria I asked for an interview with the German General Von Hentig to ask for fairer treatment in the matter of the Shahbandar trial. This is what happened at my interview. He started off by adopting a stern

/attitude

attitude and said: "You are one of those people who have been spreading pro-British propaganda, why do you come to me ?". I replied that I certainly had not come to him to discuss any such matter and asked by what right he put such a question to me seeing that he was a foreign representative under the Vichy Government. He seemed surprised but immediately modified his attitude and I continued to express my grievances with regard to Axis intervention in the trial of the murderers of Dr. Shahbandar. I made the open accusation that it was German and Italian propaganda, much of ~~which~~ it broadcast by radio, which had stimulated and even suggested the means for Dr. Shahbandar's murder. I appealed to the Italian representative who was sitting opposite the General as to whether my words were not true and they both then frankly admitted that propaganda of this sort had been broadcast but they said it had been broadcast not by Italian or German speakers but by an irresponsible Iraqi. I at once replied that if in fact the Axis leaders considered that Iraqi an irresponsible fanatic how was it that they chose him to do all the broadcasting of their promises for the welfare of Arab races after German victory. At this General Hentig got up from his chair, came across and shook me warmly by the hand and said:- "My dear Bey you have scored a point over us, I will note your words and will see to it that these promises are made to you again from sources about which you need have no suspicion." He then asked me to suggest methods for increasing Arab realisation of German good intentions towards them. This of course I did not do but I must confess that I was much struck by the quick and skilful way in which an endeavour was made to secure my goodwill. I suggest that similar skilful methods, especially by personal contacts, with leading Arab personalities have been carried out by Axis influences while they were in Syria and I suggest that British authorities should take every step to counter the effects which such contacts may have produced. When I interviewed General Dentz a similar friendly attitude was shown me. At the moment strong propaganda is running through Syria to the effect that General Dentz has now arrived in Crete where he is organising a large invasion force of parachutists and troop carriers and that it is he who will shortly arrive in Syria to take control of that country for the benefit of all concerned. Propaganda of this sort spreads rapidly and undermines local authority a great deal."

Just before I left Damascus I was approached by the editor of a leading newspaper requesting my permission for my visit to Damascus to be written up in the form of an article of welcome. I of course explained that I could not give any such personal permission but thanked the editor for his friendly suggestion.

My return journey from Damascus to Beirut proved to be less agreeable than my other journeys. The driver of the car was almost placed under arrest at the first frontier post as he was found to be attempting to smuggle a large quantity of flour from Damascus to Beirut. He was not in fact arrested but became most truculent during the rest of the journey, and he and another occupant of the car exchanged a violently anti-British conversation. At that time they did not know that I myself understand Arabic. On arrival

/in Beirut

in Beirut the driver was still truculent and attempted to insist on my descending from the car in the centre of the town instead of at my hotel as arranged. He also tried to demand extra payment for my fare beyond what had been arranged. I, however, proceeded at once to a nearby Syrian Police Headquarters. I was courteously received and the Police forced the man to take me to my hotel and to conform to the arrangements made. There is no doubt I think that the driver's aggressive and noisy attitude in the town had been intended as an anti-British demonstration to the assembled crowd, but through the correct attitude of the Police his propaganda did not end quite as he had wished. I reported the matter to the A.P.M. who asked for my written statement. It is understood that these car drivers have been proving troublesome and that it is often difficult to take action against them owing to the reluctance of passengers to make statements officially. The Motor Drivers' Union in Beirut was apparently at one time an extremely strong organisation backed by wealthy notables and therefore often beyond reach of the law. At the present time of unrest it would seem desirable to keep a watch on the activities of these men who of course in their constant movements from place to place have special facilities for spreading propaganda, creating trouble, and carrying messages.

During my period in Damascus a minor strike took place and all the shops in the bazaars were closed for a day. This strike was supposed to be on account of the Government failure to control the bread supply. I heard however that actually it had been manoeuvred by the well-to-do business folk who object to the new forms of taxation which have recently been introduced. This adjustment is actually more fair to small business people but is resented by wealthier traders who got away with light taxation in the past. This is typical of the sort of confusion which is occurring in many administrative matters in Syria whereby prejudices are worked upon and misstatements spread for selfish reasons.

On the day that I finally left Beirut for Haifa there was also considerable rioting in the streets. Many large windows were smashed early that morning and by midday all business premises were closed throughout the town. Machine-gun firing was to be heard in the streets and rumours (unconfirmed) of casualties were being spread. From the cries of the rioters it appears that the high cost of bread was again a basic reason for this demonstration.

HAIFA & JERUSALEM.

In haifa I called upon Mr. Law the District Commissioner there who has been appointed from Jerusalem since my last visit.

Speaking of Syria mention was made of rumours reaching Palestine of unsettlement and lack of clear control in that country.

It is understood that the new Haifa-Beirut section of railway is about to be opened.

/In Jerusalem

In Jerusalem no special contacts were made other than those with British Airways authorities as I was only in that town for a very short period. The influx of refugees from Egypt, however, was still under local comment.

The customs authorities between Syria and Palestine were helpful and courteous to British travellers. The luggage of two Jewish passengers, however, was minutely searched by the Syrian authorities and one man was also stripped and personally searched by them. It is believed that there have been many attempts to smuggle gold out of Syria of recent weeks through the agency of local people.

CONCLUSIONS.

As a passer-by carrying out a brief tour through Turkey and Syria the following are the main impressions I gained:-

Turkey.

The attitude of the Turkish Officials and public as exemplified in the Adana/Mersin area during the most acute period of the Egypto-Libyan crisis was on the whole encouraging. Some degree of veering ~~xx pxxx~~ in press comments did not seem to be founded on the individual attitude of the public or of officials in general. There was some alarm, but the idea of a reverse for the British Forces in Libya seemed by no means welcome. It is suggested, however, that there is a great and understandable desire on the part of most Turkish people to remain neutral as long as possible and neither the people nor the Government are likely to involve themselves in complications merely in support of ideals or sentimental attachment to the democracies.

Amongst the British Community met during my visit to Turkey were a number of engineers attached to various undertakings throughout the country such, for instance, as the Steel Works at Karabuk. These men spoke mainly in friendly terms of the Turks. The following remarks, however, were made by a Senior Engineer with whom I travelled during part of my journey. This man, after three years in Turkey, was returning with his wife and son to England. He stated that in spite of a high salary he had been unable to tolerate local conditions any longer. He spoke of unnecessary hardships for his family, and, in spite of natural friendliness from his Turkish confreres, he stressed an increasing Nazi element throughout the engineering profession in Turkey. This he ascribed to the fact that many young Turks go to Berlin for their engineering instruction. These pro-Nazi Turks make themselves very much felt on their return and definitely set themselves against British interests. My informant also stressed the fact that the British Authorities have often been unwise in the type of Englishman they have allowed to go to Turkey and that in spite of engineering efficiency many of these men spread an unfortunate atmosphere by

/their

their undesirable personal conduct. The Nazi element among the Turks exploits this even to the extent of retaining British undesirables who are a bad advertisement for their country and by dispensing with the services of the sound type of Englishman. In the work in which my informant was employed he detected and officially reported on an actual Nazi association operating on "Party" lines. My informant and his wife were excellent types of steady English folk. He himself was in possession of high credentials and his wife had received remarkable farewell letters from the British and Turkish Communities and from the British Embassy in recognition of her energetic work for the welfare of the communities, both British and Turkish, amongst whom she had lived during the past three years. One ventures to stress that much depends in these difficult days upon the type of British personality which is being selected for sending to Turkey and which will make personal contacts for better or worse in the course of individual work in that country. Such personal contacts may indeed have greater influence than official contacts and professional propaganda.

Syria.

In Syria and the Lebanon the main impression one has gained during a brief tour is a feeling of confusion. To start with there are four not always mutually sympathetic Government administrations. The attitude in the Lebanon seems curiously ^{here} indefinite and though the independence of the Lebanon is welcome and obviously has the makings of soundness in the future, yet, is without proper directive, is unassured of itself, is inefficient in its administration, and is not altogether welcome from the point of view of Damascus. The people are elated and feel that they have attained to an aim which has for very long been urgently desired; leadership must, however, be provided. In Syria independence also has been sincerely welcomed but the situation is complicated by elements more strongly opposed to one another than in the case of the Lebanon and in fact the separation of the Lebanon from Syria is in itself resented by some elements in Damascus. The gratitude which might have been felt towards the British Government for the achievement of independence ~~now~~ has been obscured a good deal by uncertainties as to future policy and by the deliberate provocation of misunderstandings by Axis agents and by the confusion which still exists in administrative Government matters. To this are added many small pinpricking irritations such as the almost entire lack of small change, fluctuation of prices, and indefinite frontier regulations between Syria and the Lebanon. In Syria, as in the Lebanon, there is lack of any real leadership and no outstanding personality has appeared to draw together the whole country for the shaping of future progress. Though some admit it and others do not, both the Syrian and the Lebanese Governments look for guidance outside their own countries. In Syria there is distinct leaning towards Egypt as being the foremost Moslem nation of the Middle East, and this is more marked than tendencies to regard Turkey as the leader of modern Islam which do also exist in some quarters. The attitude to Great Britain

/immediately

immediately after the declaration of independence for Syria and the Lebanon was very friendly. Now it has reverted to a mass of suspicions, and foremost among these unfortunately is the local uncertainty as to the meaning of the Franco-British "duality" in Syria at the present time and as to what are its implications for the future. The most evident fact is that strong action is necessary to bring order into a situation which might easily drift from present uncertainties into an actually dangerous confusion of issues.

British Interests.

In Middle Eastern affairs British welfare obviously is deeply involved. The outstanding need seems to be maintenance of forcefulness and clear thinking on normal British lines. Intrigue and distortion of facts are uncongenial to the British temperament, and we are unwise if we try to use as political weapons an equipment in which we are likely to prove clumsy. In the tradition of British honesty we had a weapon of untold value and not least is its value here in the East. We must grow unhealthily complacent indeed if we ever think that dubious competitions in intrigue can helpfully replace it. Tact we do need, intrigue we do not. That we are not good "propagandists" is by no means to our discredit, but if we fail by strong and enthusiastic counter measures to refute the lies of our enemies that would be a dangerous and inexcusable. ~~four~~ ~~one~~ ~~two~~ ~~three~~ ~~four~~ ~~five~~ ~~six~~ ~~seven~~ ~~eight~~ ~~nine~~ (reference personal notes on Eritrea dated September 1941 and June 18th 1942.).

The preceding comments are a personal narrative only and as such are a summary of individual impressions and in no way do they present an official report.

Conversations during this tour were in English, French or Arabic.

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Note: Attached, as Appendix "A", are 14 points which are the suggestion of a prominent Syrian political personality at the present time resident in Cairo.

Appendix "A"

Précis containing 14 points
as basis for the re-organisation
of the Damascus Government.

1. The Declaration of Independence of June 8th 1941 is basic and was welcomed by the nation.
2. Next step to have been taken was to build up steadily new Syrian State along lines of the declared Independence with definition of rights and sovereignty of the built State by means of basic laws and a treaty. Here has come the clash through postponement of settlement till after the war - this spirit of postponement is very much felt.
3. Do away with interested French (Vichyists) order and establish a new regime.
4. Flat contradiction has so far occurred between measures carried out and declared Independence, e.g. appointment of President of Republic by a representative of abolished mandatory power, division of legislative sovereignty between French and Syrian Government, interference of French in small administrative affairs.
5. Send out to Syria broad minded counsellors willing to work along diplomatic lines; avoid colonial lines and colonial officials.
6. Attribute to Syrian Government sufficiently large powers that could be felt both by Government and people.
7. Support this structure by a reliable and strong popular party. Take care that elements which have formerly come into contact with the Axis be kept out.
8. Choose thoroughly efficient, honest and educated people.
9. Weed out all Axis elements from native population of country.
10. ~~more improve~~ and strengthen relations between Syrian nation and Egyptian nation and Government, through cultural and economic contacts.
11. Resort to strong and immediate measures to stamp out profiteering especially to guard against the acceptance by officials whether European or Syrian of secret levies or bribes.

(cont'd) ...

12. Do all possible to stabilize the market, avoiding inflation, and help make exchange of goods between Syria and neighbouring Arab countries much easier.
13. Unify departments of public security to prevent confusion and to avoid conflict of methods and interest.
14. The allied co-operating power (Britain or America) must be in clear and open understanding with the Syrian Government and leading party. No tendency may be permitted for playing one party against another for ulterior motives.