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EXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARY
OF

INTELLIGENCE (POLITICAL) G.H.Q., E.E.F.,

DECEMBER 1917.

POLITICAL SUMMARY FOR DECEMBER 1917.

1. Participation of French and Italian Representatives
in the Commander-in-Chief's official entry into
Jerusalem.

Previous to the fall of Jerusalem, the Commander-in-Chief received instructions from the Foreign Office that the Commanders of the French and Italian contingents in Palestine - Colonel Piepape and Colonel D'Agostina - should accompany him on his official entry into the City as representatives of France and Italy respectively. It was also decided that M. Georges Picot, who earlier in the year, had been accredited to the Commander-in-Chief as French Commissioner, should take a part in the proceedings, on the strict understanding that his presence did not derogate from the purely military character of the function. M. Picot's appointment was made for the purpose of enabling him to co-operate with the British Government in any political questions that might arise in connection with clearly defined areas, subject always to the military exigencies of the situation. Concurrently a Chief Political Officer was appointed by the War Office, whose duty it was, subject to the Commander-in-Chief, to negotiate with M. Picot in these matters.

Shortly before the official entry into Jerusalem, M. Picot expressed himself dissatisfied with his position, maintaining that some months previously it had been agreed between the British and French Governments that, pending final settlement of peace terms, occupied enemy territory should be jointly administered by British and French, exclusive of Italians or other nationalities. The Italian Ambassador, on the other hand, shortly after the ceremony protested against a civilian official representing the French, whereas Italians were not similarly represented. A reply was sent to the Italian Government to the effect that M. Picot, who would have no administrative functions, was attached to the Commander-in-Chief to advise him in dealings with Arabs living in the French "sphere of influence". Later, the Italian Military Attache asked if M. Picot had entered Jerusalem as a member of the Anglo-French Advisory Committee. He was informed that M. Picot entered under instructions from the British War Office.

Policy with regard to the question of a joint
Anglo-French Administration of Occupied Enemy Territory.

On M. Picot's arrival in Palestine, the Commander-in-Chief was instructed by the War Office to allow the French Commissioner to join him - to treat him

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with every consideration, to invite his advice, but not to allow him any participation in the administration while military operations were proceeding. At the same time he was to avoid any impression being gained by M. Picot that the annexation of Palestine was contemplated by the British. M. Picot was to be given every facility for inspection, but his role was to be purely consultative and not executive. M. Picot expressed himself on several occasions disappointed and on 15th December the French Minister of Foreign Affairs begged the Commander-in-Chief to establish in Palestine, as soon as possible, a system of mixed administration "provided for in the Franco-British Agreement". A reply was sent by the Foreign Office on 20th December to the effect that His Majesty's Government had every intention of abiding by the terms of the Anglo-French Agreement, but that it was obviously impossible to establish a mixed administration so long as the area in question continued to be the scene of active military operations, adding that they would report when the situation was sufficiently secure to establish a civil administration.

Policy with regard to British Occupation of Jerusalem.

Martial Law was proclaimed on the occupation of Jerusalem, the Commander-in-Chief's proclamation being issued in English, French, Italian, Russian, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic. The words of the Proclamation were as follows:-

"To the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Blessed, and the people dwelling in its vicinity -

The defeat inflicted upon the Turks by the troops under my command has resulted in the occupation of your City by my forces. I therefore here and now proclaim it to be under Martial Law, under which form of administration it will remain so long as military considerations make it necessary. However, lest any of you should be alarmed by reason of your experiences at the hands of the enemy who has retired, I hereby inform you that it is my desire that every person should pursue lawful business without fear of interruption. Furthermore, since your City is regarded with affection by the adherents of three of the greatest religions of mankind and its soil has been consecrated by the prayers and pilgrimages of devout people of these three religions for many centuries, therefore do I make known to you that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest, or customary place of prayer, of whatsoever form of the three religions, will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faith they are sacred".

Military Governor was appointed in the person of Brig. Gn. Borton, C.M.G., who subsequently retired owing to ill-health and was replaced by Lieut. Col. Storrs, C.M.G. He was instructed to maintain a purely military administrative system, to ensure that as little change as possible was made in the existing organization for the time being, and

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to be responsible that the various representatives of the Christian, Moslem, and Jewish Holy Places and their communities were well treated.

The Commander-in-Chief ordered that French and Italian Contingents should form part of the garrison of Jerusalem, each detachment, in the first instance, not to exceed one hundred, including the normal percentage of officers.

In order to avoid possible diplomatic complications neither the British flag nor that of any of the Allies is allowed to be hoisted.

Policy adopted with regard to Christian Holy Places.

In view of possible friction arising between the various communities the following preventive measures were adopted - a guard of picked men from the Expeditionary Force, accustomed to police work, was set over the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem under an officer, who was given executive military authority within the sacred precincts and who was to be in touch with the Custodian of the Latins, and the Representative of the Greek Patriarchate. Shortly afterwards, the Commander-in-Chief modified this arrangement and the guard was subsequently found by British troops four days in the week, French troops two, and Italian troops one.

The French and Italians were given immediate charge of their unmixed religious establishments. (In this connection, no opportunity was lost by M. Picot of asserting French claims to protectorate of Latin Christinity in the East).

On 15th December a telegram was despatched to the Vatican setting out the arrangements which had been made in regard to the protection of the Holy Places and a reply of congratulation was immediately received from the Cardinal Secretary of State.

Policy adopted with regard to Moslem Holy Places.

A guard of picked Indian troops was at once set over the Mosque of Omar. It was established that no non-Moslem should be allowed to enter the building.

It was subsequently arranged that the Indian Moslem Troops should mount the guard 5 days and the Algerian Detachment 2 days in the week.

It was originally suggested that the Mosque of Omar should be under the custodianship of the King of the Hejaz, but for political reasons it was decided that this was inadvisable.

The Commander-in-Chief decided that the long existing Moslem Wakf in the doorway of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was to be respected and the hereditary custodianship preserved in remembrance of the magnanimous act of the Caliph Omar in respecting the Church.

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Moslems were also given the custody of Abraham's Tomb at Hebron.

Policy with regard to Arab, Jewish and Armenian questions.

Our general policy is to combine the interests of Arabs, Jews, and Armenians, with the object of securing their freedom from Turkish domination and to preserve their national aspirations, at the same time counteracting Turkish propaganda disseminated with the object of inducing Arabs to believe that our aims in Syria and Mesopotamia formed an effective bar to Arab unity.

The following considerations had to be taken into account - A purely Sherifian Government would prove unpalatable to many Syrian Christian and Moslem intellectuals. On the other hand King Hussein who knows the general principles of the Anglo-French Agreement but has no certain knowledge of "Entente" intentions as to the future, fears that we are marking time until our military successes enable us to hand over Syria to France with as few pledges as possible Jewish aspirations, moreover, as expressed through Zionist organizations, are rapidly materializing, and both Christian and Moslem communities in Palestine dread seeing their country and perhaps eventually parts of Syria in the hands of enterprising Jews.

With the object of overcoming these difficulties, the leaders of the Jewish Community and of the Arab Committee were brought into touch with one another under British auspices in Cairo during the month of December.

(a) In order to allay Arab suspicions and fears our policy has been to impress upon them that Zionism is a constant and inevitable factor; that as an Ally it represents a guarantee of ultimate Arab independence, but as a hostile element it would ensure Aran and Syrian stagnation; that our advocacy of Zionism was an earnest of "Entente" efforts on behalf of oppressed peoples; that world wide Jewish influences had been mobilized by the declaration in support of general "Entente" policy leading to realization of Arab national aims; that a way to a lasting agreement between Arabs, Jews, and Armenians was to be found in the support by each nationality of the reasonable aims of others; and that the combination with Armenians would enlist the support of British and American democracy.

The Moslems have been impressed by these arguments, but are nervous of the pace at which the Zionist movement is progressing. The better educated are inclined to be amenable to an Arab, Jew, Armenian programme.

(b) In order to allay the fears of the Syrians our policy has been to avoid any impression that we intend to force King Hussein, or any Sherifian form of Government, on peoples unwilling to accept it, and to induce the French Government definitely to

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disclaim any idea of annexing Syria and, while assuring the liberty of all Syrian Communities to help them along the path towards independence and self-government.

As a result, the Syrian Committee in Cairo, after two Meetings in December, decided that their best and only policy was to co-operate with Jews and Armenians on lines suggested by us and they were prepared to emphasize Jewish - Syrian Fraternity as regards Palestine in their propaganda.

(c) Our policy with regard to the Zionist movement is that the announcement recently made by the Foreign Secretary is sufficient for the present, and that any general measure of repatriation cannot take effect under existing conditions. Mr. Jack Mosseri and a deputation of the Jewish Special Relief Committee have been informed that there is no question of immigration into Palestine at present; that the offer of Jewish Volunteers as labourers and artisans cannot yet be accepted; that any material supplied to Palestine should be offered in the name of the Special Relief Committee, which should confine itself at present purely to the charitable aspect of the question. The essence of our policy is to induce the Zionists not to be too precipitate and thus alarm the other communities.

In dealing with all factions it has been insisted that for the present and under existing circumstances, military considerations are pre-eminent over all others.

The Chief Political Officer has been in consultation with the French Commissioner on the Arab-Jewish-Armenian question. M. Picot was inclined to agree with our policy but evidently he was not hopeful of reconciling Jewish and Arab aims.

Advices have been received that the Turks are instituting a spurious Arab movement - an attractive proposal of an Arab Nation under so called nominal Turkish suzerainty but with the real object of resuscitating dissensions among Jews and Arabs, Moslems and Christians.

German Jews are also trying their best to induce the Turkish Government to agree to a settlement of Jews in Palestine under Turkish rule to counteract the effect of Mr. Balfour's announcement.

In Palestine considerable sympathy has been shown by Moslems with the King of the Hejaz, and the British Government keeps him informed of this feeling, but the King is still rather reticent, fearing hostile propaganda.

Policy with regard to the Consults of the Allies in Palestine.

The general policy with regard to admitting
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the re-entry of the Consuls of the Allies into Palestine is governed by the consideration that so long as the country is under Martial Law and purely military administration, no Consuls can be admitted.

On 12th December the Greek Minister in London asked the Foreign Office whether a Greek Consul could be sent to Jerusalem, on the grounds that it is the seat of an important Greek Patriarchate, and the Greek Church feared that, during the British occupation, Greek Institutions and privileges were at a disadvantage as compared with the Roman Catholics. A reply was returned that Jerusalem was in military occupation, but that the Commander-in-Chief would be asked to render any necessary protection to Greek Institutions. The Greek Minister thereupon withdrew his application.

Exception was made in the case of the Spanish Consul, the Comte de Ballobar, who had rendered excellent service in safeguarding the interests of the Allies in Jerusalem throughout the War, for which the Commander-in-Chief personally thanked him on the occasion of his official entry. A somewhat difficult question arose when the Spanish Consul requested permission to go to Cairo on leave. It was contended that if he did so and then desired to return to Palestine, he would be on the same footing as other Consuls desiring to return. On the other hand the Commander-in-Chief was of opinion that he came under a different category in that his return would in no way prejudice the policy laid down as regards other Consuls of Allied and Neutral Powers.