

[*Le Populaire* (Radical Socialist Daily), February 16]
SYRIA WANTS ITS INDEPENDENCE

BY AN ARABIAN DEPUTY

YOUR great official organ of France, *Le Temps*, constantly denies the truth of events that are occurring in Syria.

It goes without saying that, after having assured the French people a thousand times that the Syrians are seeking France, it is difficult for that journal, as for any of its imperialist clientele, to confess that the Syrians are vigorously resisting foreign occupation.

For several months such papers have been trying to prove to the people whom they have constantly deceived, that the popular protests against the French occupation were due solely to an underground English propaganda. That legend is proved false by the simple fact that English occupation is even more hated by the Arabs than that of the French, and that the resistance to the English at several places in Arabia and Mesopotamia is more obstinate than that which the French have anywhere encountered.

In England public opinion is beginning to see through the deceptions of its imperialist press, which has tried to persuade it that the Arabs would love nothing better than to have the Union Jack fly over them. Let us hope that French opinion in its turn will open its eyes. Both the French and the English should know once for all that the Arabs are joined by a common religion with the Turks, and have been politically identified with them for centuries, and therefore do not wish to separate themselves from their fellow believers and brothers in arms merely to submit to the domination of a

European nation, no matter what form the latter's suzerainty may assume.

There is a good deal of talk about Emir Faisal. That plays no part in our demand for complete independence. Not only his throne, but his very life would be in danger, were he to consent to any curtailment of Arabian independence.

Le Temps is very angry because some English newspapers in Cairo have published reports from Syria. It claims that since the French papers have refrained from telling what is happening in Egypt, the English press ought to keep silent about the situation in Syria. It assumes an air of telling the English: 'We might have made public all your disgraceful doings in Egypt, but we have not done so out of regard for our alliance. Now why do you not treat us on the same footing?' That paper gives the English to understand that opposition to the French is directed equally against the English, and it urges that the Allies must maintain a solid front in the Near East — that is, a united front for the purpose of oppressing the weak and helpless.

This is perfectly logical, if you intend to follow the policy of political bandits, but what is it from the standpoint of truly French principles? Those disturbances are not due to brigands. Of course, there may have been robberies and all that, but they have no connection with the resistance being offered by the people of Syria to foreign occupation. There have been no battles or even heavy skirmishes, but

that is because the men in charge, the real leaders, have never ceased to counsel patience until it is known what the Peace Conference decides with regard to Syria.

Nevertheless, there have been several bloody encounters. At Latakia there was a collision with the Nossairites, where some fifty French soldiers fell. At Tel-Kalek, in the vicinity of Tripoli [in Syria], when the French commander, at the order of General Gouraud, who had recently arrived, raised the French flag over the public buildings, disturbances ensued, followed by a week of fighting. The French troops lost 80 dead, not counting wounded. Some of their commanding officers were among the victims. On the other hand, the people of the country did not lose heavily, but they were forced to withdraw from the town upon the arrival of heavy reinforcements.

Soon afterwards an incident occurred at Baalbek, caused by the French trying to occupy a point situated within Arabia proper. The so-called 'brigands' in this case were led by a doctor of medicine who took his degree in Paris.

At Lebanon there was a brush with the Druses, and a Druse village was burned by the French troops. Here a few clear-headed men succeeded in preventing further conflicts.

At Mergeioum, where the French commander, at the suggestion of a few native Christians, conceived the odd idea of raising the French flag over the minaret of the mosque, there was lively fighting. In one of these conflicts the French troops lost 160 killed, two cannon, and several machine guns. On two separate occasions irregular Arab forces have taken French prisoners, but the government of Damascus hastened to return the latter, 40 in number. General Gouraud sent several battalions to Mergeioum to restore his

authority there, but they were unable to advance because volunteers rushed in from every direction under Emir Mahmoud Al-Faour. While affairs were in this state Emir Faisal arrived, and comparative peace ensued because the people expected that he would be in a position to assure their complete independence without reservations. Emir Faisal expressed himself very definitely on this point from the moment he arrived at Beirut. He thus calmed the people, who had begun to threaten his expulsion if he consented to any sort of a protectorate or compromised in the slightest their claim to independence.

In Lebanon, which is for the most part Maronite and more Catholic and Papist than the Pope himself, the French authorities attempted to replace several civilian functionaries, and even judges, without consulting the Administrative Council, which is a sort of legislative assembly there. This body protested with energy, repeating that even the Turks themselves had never presumed to interfere directly with the local government of Lebanon. Both in that state and the adjoining territory the Turks respected the native courts and the independence of local civil and military authorities. They asserted that the people of Lebanon did not understand French coöperation to imply political control, but merely technical and financial aid to the extent that the people themselves desired.

This protest by the Administrative Council of Lebanon, which is the only official body in Syria that has agreed to a French mandate, and has done so solely because it is anti-Mussulman, was published in an Arabian journal printed by the Maronites, which is employed as an official organ by the authorities in occupation. The French representatives thereupon suspended this paper for having ventured to pub-

lish a protest by the National Assembly where the words 'complete independence' were employed.

If the 250,000 or 300,000 Maronites, who are ordinarily such fanatical supporters of France and Catholicism, are so jealous of their independence, what about the 4,000,000 Mussulmans and the 400,000 'Orthodox' Christians of that province?

It is no use for M. Millerand to say: 'We have never thought of trespassing in any respect upon the independence of these people.' No one is deceived by such statements as that.

The armistice was signed in accordance with the conditions proclaimed by Mr. Wilson, but as soon as Germany and its allies were helpless the promises of the armistice were trodden under foot, as well as the Fourteen Points.

Such a violation of the promises of complete independence, so prodigally made to the Arabs on so many occasions, has resulted in reuniting closer than ever the Arabs and the Turks. It has taken but a few months to restore that intimacy.

After the armistice the Arabian state of Damascus, wearied of the war, abolished obligatory military service and hoped to maintain domestic order with a simple constabulary.

They thought, 'We are now independent under the protection of a European alliance or the League of Nations. We do not want to conquer other people, and no one will be permitted to conquer us. Therefore, let us do away with this useless waste.'

But, seeing the greed of the Allied Powers, they now think it necessary to have more than a little army of 15,000 troops which, together with the tribes already armed, would normally be able to defend them. So after the agree-

ment entered into between Lloyd George and Clemenceau, which opened their eyes to the kind of 'good faith' with which they were to be treated, they decided to restore obligatory military service, which will give that little country 150,000 fighting men, all trained during the late war with the Turkish forces and all equipped and armed from the German arsenals which were left in their midst. Now, as to the other tribes and races and peoples throughout that whole region, their numbers are very large, and they are all armed and resolute.

It is probable that France, by maintaining an army of 150,000 men in Syria, and by spending many billions of francs, will be able to subdue the Syrian Arabians. But that will not finish the task. The interior of that country borders upon other lands inhabited by Arabs, Kurds, and Turks, and by the immense desert. In starting a conflict with 4,000,000 Syrians, France will be making enemies of 15,000,000 Arabs in the Levant, most of whom are armed tribes, without including the other Mohammedan peoples who are speedily acquiring solidarity and organization under the blows that are being dealt them by the Entente.

If you believe that I am exaggerating, all you have to do is to investigate the facts yourself. But what good will it do to confirm the truth too late, and after floods of blood have flowed? Imperialism, greed of conquest — those are the things that caused the Great War, where after four years of fighting one group has crushed the other; but this victory has cost so dearly that victors and vanquished alike are involved in a common ruin. It looks as if this lesson, the most tremendous in history, has not taught us.

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WILSON AS A STATESMAN

BY DIETRICH SCHAEFER

THERE lies before us a stately quarto volume of 305 pages, presenting to the German people in their own language the collected speeches of President Wilson. We enjoy one advantage in this. No collection equally complete exists in any other language.

The book is remarkable in one other respect. It is entitled *Wilson! The President's Work as a Statesman Expressed in His Speeches*. We have a great number of collections of speeches, memoranda, letters, documents, and other original materials intended to illustrate by their own utterances the purposes and policies of other statesmen; but few are so comprehensive as this one, none exceeds it.

A person who reads the volume through acquires a clear picture of the political labors of the President. No ambiguity is left as to his purposes and methods. His work is open to the world.

At the outset we would point out one other thing. It may be objected that the character and policies of a statesman are not to be learned from his speeches alone, but that we must know his public activities as a whole. This is quite true, and such an objection is not met by the fact that the present volume contains something more than Wilson's public speeches or addresses. But here we meet another characteristic of Wilson as a public man.

The latest popular vogue in diplomacy is 'publicity'; although the

statesmen are just as secret in their doings to-day as they ever have been within the memory of man. This is particularly true in the model popular government of the United States. One of our Cabinet Ministers, who is particularly attached to doctrinaire political traditions, recently conceived the fancy that it would be helpful to reproach the men who directed our foreign policy during the war, with the reiterated charge: 'The German people knew nothing about all this.' That sort of a litany is far truer of Wilson's practice. He has limited the circle of his confidants to the very narrowest dimensions. A knowledge of the path he chooses to reach his goal is kept from the public of his country far more effectively than similar information is kept from the public of any European country. The American people know very little of their government's dealings with foreign nations. The addresses in this volume hardly touch that subject. Wilson is a master-hand at secrecy, and he practises with the highest skill not only this art, but also that other art, much cherished by diplomats, of using words to conceal thoughts. He is conscious of this. On April 20, 1915, at an annual gathering of pressmen, he said: 'There was a time when I stood in this place and said what I really thought.' Therefore, since the other sources from which we draw our knowledge of his policies are so scanty, his speeches and addresses are of exceptional interest. They do not lose interest because their author